

*Visual Transformations in  
Philippine Modernity:  
Notes toward an Investigation  
of the World-Media System*

*Capital Mediation*

Whosoever believes that there is such a thing as global capitalism necessarily also believes there is already in place a global media system: for what is capital if not a vast network of coordinated and leveraged mediations? Perhaps, the twentieth century shall one day be reckoned as the period when capital went from being just one form of mediation among many to being the ur-medium, cannibalizing (and thus, iterating) nearly all other media from the cognitive, to the cultural, to the psychological, to the visceral, to the televisual, to the digital.<sup>1</sup> Film, television, computing, and even architecture become functional extensions of capitalism. Such an event, if one can call a shift in the mode of production by that term, has tremendous consequences for the nature and function of visibility.

Although this project is primarily a study of the trajectory of Philippine abstraction in painting and in film, my subject matter

and the claims I make about it are in no way separable from Philippine history and, thus, from the history of Spanish conquest, U.S. imperialism, and the expansion and globalization of capital. My investigation explores the overdeterminations (that is, the delimitations of historical possibility) generated by colonial and imperial powers in both their cultural and economic dimensions and, at least as important, the vigorous Filipino efforts to transform these vectors of belittling, exploitative, and violent domination. Central to the overall form of this work is my claim regarding a generalized economization of the so-called cultural elements of life, that is, of cultural being/participation. In brief, what was formerly known as “Culture” (what the elite has) and then “culture(s)” (in the anthropological sense) has, under the capitalism of the twentieth century, been increasingly captured by the economic and made to function as an economic, more specifically, capitalist, mediation. Commodification has penetrated interstitial human spaces to the very viscera and thus, today, society (as thought and engineered by the global ruling classes) is largely composed of integrated machines to organize and coordinate these ever-expanding, ever-more-deeply penetrating cybernetic processes.

Culture, then, has been recast and reprogrammed by the acculturated who, at every level of the socius, labor under the heliotropism of capital and its leveraged exchange. This capitalization of action, thought, the unconscious, and desire, among other biosocial functions, is otherwise known as commodification. Its widespread practice implies that a political economy of culture is now possible. We are at least aware that the tremendous infusion of capital into the cinema, television, and Internet must have payoff for the investors, and we are also aware that media corporations, the military-industrial complex, and governments intertwine. But are we aware that while interfaced in that cybernetic relation, known as the image, we also produce and reproduce the world and ourselves along with it?

Perhaps in the Philippines, the political economy of culture can be most clearly grasped in its historical formation during the

period when the visual has become the new arena of operations for media capital. Thus, abstract art is here understood as a response to the condition put forth in a Fredric Jameson axiom: “We can think abstractly about the world only to the extent that the world itself has already become abstract.”<sup>2</sup>

Jameson’s riff on Karl Marx’s proof of the material determination of consciousness implies that abstract art indexes the becoming-abstract of the world as the becoming-abstract of the visual. Furthermore, the very process of abstraction—its encroachment upon and rearticulation of the visual realm—can be grasped as if from a subaltern perspective in the abstraction produced in the visual art of an imperialized nation such as the Philippines. Clearly, this thesis opens up a new set of possibilities for analyzing Filipino abstract painting and its consequences, even as it is fraught with risk. It also suggests a reconsideration of cinema’s role, both in the Philippines and globally, because cinema may be understood fundamentally as a medium of abstraction. Finally, this thesis regarding the becoming-abstract of the visual suggests a new set of insights into the accompanying problematics of modernization and modernity. But to say that part of the work of Philippine visual modernism is to bring about a new era of abstraction is to transcode it—to put language on images—and this transcoding is a risky hermeneutical act, one that the active, judging reader must inevitably evaluate.

Thus, my aim in *Acquiring Eyes* is to elaborate from a subaltern perspective the processes of the generalized subsumption of culture, and particularly of visual culture, by the economic sphere. In the course of such an elaboration, I would attach my own creative effort in tracking the formal shifts of a culture in capital to the radical counterhegemonic elements informing many of the Filipino cultural endeavors that I have been fortunate enough to study and thus to participate in. The twentieth-century emergence of the visual can be grasped in two moments that are dialectically separable—first, as a realm of freedom and, second, subsequently as an arena of expropriation. This movement in the visual is one of the

most significant zones of the unthought of political economy and geopolitics. Without understanding the history of visibility, the most basic insights into political economy and social organization will remain tragically inadequate. In practice, the Right has already put culture at the forefront of its political aims. The “free market” has made possible the accessing of bodies by commercials, objects, and desires that are designed to capture people’s struggles for survival and to capitalize on these. Thus, the Left needs to revamp its cultural program. As my work attempts to demonstrate, the operation of a capital logic in restructuring the seemingly unmediated plenitude that is the visual opens new sites for the contestation of the racist, patriarchal, and imperialist violence endemic to capitalism that today has rendered “little brown brothers” and sisters as diasporic service providers for members of the ruling class. We shall explore several modes of engagement and struggle striving to eventually surpass hierarchical society by economic democracy, that is (or would be), by socialism.

In turning to Filipino artists for guidance and inspiration in the contestation of global capital, I am implicitly also making an argument for the centrality of the Philippines and other Third World formations in launching any counternarrative to “the triumph of global capital” and its oft-unspoken yet “inevitable” and, therefore, officially justifiable damning of the majority to impoverished off-screen oblivion.<sup>3</sup> The number of people on planet Earth who live in “extreme poverty,” defined at \$1 per day, is more than one billion. If the dollar amount used to index “extreme poverty” is moved to \$2 then the number of people in that category is greater than 2 billion. Globalization, as the latest form of capitalism is currently called—whether understood as analytic conceit, imaginative fantasy, accumulation regime, or computational algorithm has been, is being, and will be contested through the various forms of agency of its expropriated producers. This agency of producers, the people, and their artists—whether sealed in the commodities you buy, silenced through military force, or displaced from view by media spectacles—

is oftentimes rendered invisible. Yet the agency of the silenced and disappeared is no less necessary to maintain the wealth of the world. Therefore, it is the agency of the producers that sustains the alienated and alienating consciousness of the planet. The extraction of value out of workers, soldiers, slaves, and out of *spectators* accumulates as wealth, that is, capital, to bolster the ever-increasing leverage of the world’s masters.<sup>4</sup>

What I call the world-media system is the auto-poetic institution of globalization, whose most visible conceptual product is the conceit of “Globalization” itself and all that follows from it. Thus, the world-media system would name the means by which globalization speaks itself in and through all of us, “each according to their (its) abilities, each according to their (its) needs.” In an ironic fulfillment of Marx’s prophecy from his early writings, many of us do exactly what we want and receive exactly what we deserve. However, what we “want” is what capital tells us (as its logic is embodied by us) and what we “deserve” is what the market pays. When human freedom has been overtaken by the world market and choice is possible only within the narrow parameters of a murderous, totalitarian world system, then one cannot help think of aesthetics in the terms of aesthetics under fascism as described by Walter Benjamin: We consume our own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the highest order.<sup>5</sup> In short, under globalization, humanity is enjoined to produce its own nonexistence.

First theorized by Marx as capital, the world-media system was perhaps initially apprehended as media per se, by Guy Debord, who formalized the medialogical paradigm under the category of the “spectacle.” As “the accumulation of capital, to the extent that it becomes an image,” and again as “the diplomatic presentation of hierarchical society to itself,” the spectacle is not just a mere relation but a relation of production and, hence, a consciousness-producing relation that produces material organization. The spectacle coordinates the production of consciousness with the production of commodities and, therefore, with the production of capital. The

world-media system names the organizational protocols that simultaneously structure culture and economy. It names the cofunctioning, conflation and, indeed, sublation of the logistics of material practices and of consciousness by the logistics of capital. Its machines of organization and accumulation penetrate government, television, mind, body, self, and utterance. They engineer perception, desire, speech, possibility, and what passes for “reality.” In short, they are the dominant network of abstractions that would organize all social processes in the service of capital.

### *Neorealism*

There are three key historical moments in *Acquiring Eyes*, the first marked most dramatically by the Second World War and National Artist H. R. Ocampo’s shift in the late 1940s from Social Realism (fig. 1) to Abstraction (fig. 2). A bartender, prisoner of war, novelist, short-story writer, newspaper editor, radio playwright and filmmaker, and reportedly a member of the people’s movement Hukbalahap, Ocampo went from producing a Social Realist art identified with an agrarian proletariat to an art of biomorphic forms and symphonic colors. The Social Realist works of the 1930s and 1940s were done in both literary and visual media, while the great abstractions that made Ocampo famous were done in paint. It is important not to read this change, as has been done before, as merely a conservative move on the part of Ocampo, a forsaking of the possibilities of popular struggle.<sup>6</sup> Such a reading would condemn Philippine modernism to being irrelevant or, worse, in the continuing struggle for decolonization. This dismissal of modernism misses the transformations not only of the aesthetic register but also of the sensorium of modern subjects, transformations, I would argue, that are the building blocks of the future revolution. Therefore, to underscore that the dramatic shift in Ocampo’s approach to creation occurred because of a transformation in the character of visibility itself, I argue that there occurs after the Second World War a historicocultural

foreclosure of certain modes of struggle possible, or at least viable, in the linguistic realm, and that this foreclosure is accompanied by a new historical role for the visual. Put another way, certain aspects of nationalist struggle that were no longer possible narratively became possible visually. It is certainly true that in the 1960s, Philippine literature in Tagalog also turned to innovations in both form and content, as part of the ferment of nationalist struggle. While I am unable to do this here, an important direction for future research would be an analysis of the relations between modernism in Tagalog literature and modernism in Philippine visual art. It is also true, however, that Philippine writing in English was—by then and with a few exceptions—viewed by scholars on the Left as all but moribund.<sup>7</sup> This foreclosure of narrative modes of struggle, particularly in writing in English, can be clearly viewed in the turn in Ocampo’s creative career. The fundamental shift in his work from Social Realism to Abstraction follows deep structural changes in two separate but initially related institutions, namely the visual and language. The ability of “visuality” and language to have purchase on and thus to structure reality shifts radically during the course of Ocampo’s career. For reasons I elaborate on below, this formative movement can be understood in the shift from social realism to abstraction in Philippine painting. Abstract art is here understood not as a mere set of formal innovations but rather as an index of and intervention in a set of shifting social conditions. The first section of this book examines Ocampo’s work, its shifts and aspirations, in depth.

The emergence of literary realism in the 1930s marked a preliminary shift in what might be thought of as the structure of the Real and its modes of representation. In *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel until 1940*, Resil B. Mojares cites the periodization provided by Salvador P. Lopez regarding the development of what Lopez calls Socialist Realism in the Philippines:

Lopez outlines the stages of Filipino literature in English, thus: The first period, from 1915 to 1925, was “the period of gram-

mar and rhetoric”; the second period, from 1925 to 1933, was a period in which the concern progressed to “expression,” that is, style and technique. The third period, he says, which began in 1933, was one in which the writers’ main preoccupation was no longer the mechanics of language or literary technique but the concrete social experience of the people. As Lopez expresses this post-1933 development: “Filipino writers have acquired *eyes*.” [Italics in original]<sup>8</sup>

Mojares continues:

It was then that the theory of socialist realism arose. It was undoubtedly at the outset flawed in conception and execution. Its development was also “suspended” by the Pacific War, which found many writers unprepared and left them confused and dazed.<sup>9</sup>

In representing “the concrete social experience of the people,” this period of socialist realism strives to render the particular general and thus functions by rendering the concrete abstract. It begins in the early 1930s and comes to a provisional close just after the Second World War. After a period of decline, during which abstract painting came to the fore, Socialist Realism became relevant again, and in a new way, during the late 1960s and through the martial law period (1972–1986). By and large, this first moment of Socialist Realism (1933–1945) corresponds with the first realist period of Philippine painting. If, as we are told, by the mid-1930s, “Filipino writers have acquired *eyes*,” one cannot help but wonder what they needed them for. In part, I venture, they were needed because the concrete materials of everyday life were becoming abstract—shot through with the vectors of alien social forces. Through a reading of H. R. Ocampo’s realist fiction, I will argue in detail that the interest in concrete experience and the acquiring of eyes (i.e., of a visual register of experience) has everything to do with the concrete be-

coming abstract. That is, lived experience comes to be seen as having a logic that exceeds the parameters of individual life and is informed by larger structural changes. I will examine closely the emerging significance of this organ, the eye, and of the historical forces that organized it. As a writer of Socialist-Realist fiction before the war, H. R. Ocampo is a convenient starting point since he often thematized the event of vision in his works as well as transcoded its processes. In his stories, what can be seen rises up, antithetically as it were, to what can be told and warps the telling almost beyond narratibility. Later, after the war, visuality almost entirely overtakes Ocampo’s artwork.

The trauma of the interimperialist conflict between the U.S. and Japan during the Second World War effected an overall restructuring not only of how the Philippines thought of itself as a nation, but how it organized itself at almost every level, from the sociological, to the economic, to the perceptual. To assert the existence of this transition is not to claim that there existed in the Philippines a unitary discourse about the nation or a unified imaginary with respect to its future. Neither can one speak of a unified set of practices that characterizes “The Philippines” after the Second World War. However, one can note a sea change of a sort, a global shift in the modes of social organization and of thought, which necessitated shifts in the strategies by which competing interests pursued their aims.

For example, let us look at another layer of the conceptualization of social process. Luis Taruc, one of the leaders of the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM), or National Peasants Union that developed out of the agrarian resistance movement Hukbalahap, wrote that, “the contrast between the prewar and postwar forms of mass organization was a good indication of how the metal of our movement had been tempered in the heat of the war. The haphazard and rather uncoordinated methods of the Aguman ding Malding Talapagobra (AMT), or General Workers Union, were replaced by the smooth-running committees that had division of labor and that sought to involve their memberships.”<sup>10</sup>

After the war, the PKM pursued its propeasant, antifeudalist/anticapitalist aims through legal as well as electoral channels. It became clear to the PKM that its interests required the concerted coordination of disparate forces working on a variety of fronts to arrive at tangible results. Events and strategies became ever more complex and interlocked; protest actions became at once specialized and integrated. While such bureaucraticization was dismissed during the reformation of the Communist Party in the 1960s, we should not overlook the changes in the concrete social situation that it, along with abstraction itself, implied. Causality was multileveled and required a similar organization of social struggle.

For example, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) founded on 26 August 1930, the anniversary of the “Cry of Balintawak” that triggered the revolution against Spain in 1896, coordinated the PKM, the Committee on Labor Organizations (CLO), and the Democratic Alliance (DA), the last of which, a neophyte political party, succeeded in electing six members to Congress. However, “no sooner had these peasant-backed DA congressmen [including Taruc] been elected than they were prevented from taking their seats in Congress on the opening day of its regular session in May 1946.”<sup>11</sup> This ouster, presumably over election irregularities, finally reached the Supreme Court. “After a protracted deliberation on the case, the high tribunal came out with the following findings: The ejection of the minority senators and congressmen had nothing to do with the alleged commission of fraud and terrorism but with the ‘parity’ issue, that is, whether or not American citizens should be granted parity, or equal rights, as Filipinos in the exploitation and development of Philippine natural resources and in the operation of public utilities [those ousted were known to be antiparity and thus anti-imperialist].”<sup>12</sup> Understandably, the ouster of the DA representatives disgruntled the peasantry of Central Luzon, many of whom were former Huks. Along with the top PKM leaders Mateo del Castillo and Juan Feleo, Taruc agreed to mediate between the government and the peasantry. Feleo ended up being murdered,

which provoked Taruc to issue the following “ultimatum” to Roxas: “The supreme test of your power has come. In your hands rests the destiny of our miserable people and our motherland. Yours is the power now to plunge them into chaos and horrible strife, or pacify and unite them as brothers in liberty.”<sup>13</sup>

Words, inadequate as they were, gave over to warfare and Taruc returned to Central Luzon where fighting between the Huk and government forces resumed. The entire span of the social—from grass roots to elected office, from peasant land reform to property rights of U.S. corporations, from warfare and assassinations to mediation and ultimatums—was effectively seen as comprising scenes of struggle. Although struggle certainly permeated every aspect of life under Spanish colonial rule, the normalization of national life under the U.S. Commonwealth pushed radical struggle into ever-receding spaces of marginalization, such as the seditious plays and millenarian peasant revolts.<sup>14</sup> In other words, hegemony or public consensus took hold of postwar life in ways that it did not under Spanish rule. Particularly during the period of neocolonialism, after the U.S. granted formal independence to the Philippines, the sites under the sway of hegemony only increased. Every aspect of social life was increasingly understood as implicated in an overriding social logic and, therefore, in the generalized struggle for social liberation. Furthermore, as we might observe today, forms of sociality were beginning to be conceived as the media of struggle. Ocampo, for example, shows in his novel how a grade-school contest over the correct use of an English word is part, and indeed process, of the vertiginous dynamic of colonization.

Generally speaking, in both the levels of politics and aesthetics, people grasped the object of struggle, that is, “the objective” in both senses of the word (the “goal” and the “nonsubjective”) not as existentially immutable but as conditioned by an assemblage of forces. Some of these forces were visceral, some political, some ideological, some violent, and some bureaucratic, among others. While the precise terms of conceptualization employed by this analysis were not

available at the time of these events, this inchoate trends were emergent. The objective had to constitute itself on shifting terrain.

We should note that the struggle for the objective of national liberation spanned the distance from U.S. military aid and industrial capital to communist nationalists in the plains of Luzon, and influencing everything in between. This objective of national liberation and its antithesis—that of unbridled profit taking by the U.S. and its conscripted class of compradors—was going to draw the subjectivity of nearly everyone in the Philippines into its warp in ways both conscious and unconscious. As Ocampo's oeuvre testifies, in the process the narration of reality in a manner adequate to real conditions underwent a tremendous crisis of inadequacy, which catapulted the visual into a new role.<sup>15</sup>

Not only Filipinos were drawn into the warp of the historical struggle between labor and capital, nationalist struggle and imperialism. The same is true for U.S. citizens, most of whom were and remain the direct beneficiaries of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, whether they know it or not. Thus, the Philippines (and much of the Third World) is, in many respects, part of the unconscious of the U.S. empire. This claim is not a casual observation but rather, would link psychic processes to geopolitical formations. Geopolitical processes inform what Jameson calls "the political unconscious" and thus, structure not only aesthetic and social form but also consciousness, language function, and perception. In historicizing such phenomenon, we restore an awareness of the geopolitical conditions of possibility to the phenomenological. This historicization consciously politicizes cultural events that are always already politically effected. This analytic strategy is part of the critique of reification, in which objects such as commodities or artworks or, for that matter, identities, are shown to be instances of social process and contestation, a strategy utilized in various ways by Filipino revolutionaries and artists. During the period under study, revolutionary objectives demand the dismantling of the epistemologically objective, that is, so-called objective reality. Objective reality was effectively

grasped as a mode of domination and thus, a scene of contestation. This book intends to assemble language adequate to the analysis of the geopolitically driven shifts in perceptual faculties and aesthetic form. In short, it seeks to historicize three moments of abstraction in the Philippines: Neorealism, Socialist Realism, and what I would tentatively call Syncretic Realism.

In giving the brief account above of the Philippine Left's political analysis of what might be called "the logistics of the Real" in the 1930s, I have drawn on Francisco Nemenzo's "An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippine Communist Movement."<sup>16</sup> His main thesis is that contrary to received wisdom, the PKP was not an internationalist but was principally an indigenous movement. This provocative claim, which goes against the received notions of the presence of a Communist International, runs parallel to my thesis on Philippine modernism that it was a principally *local response to global pressures*. In accord with Nemenzo's claim that "Communism in the Philippines sprang from an indigenous movement; [i]ts basic organizations antedated contacts with Comintern,"<sup>17</sup> we could say that modernism in the Philippines springs from indigenous conditions and struggles and develops its organization principles with far less connection to International Modernism than has been previously supposed. If this is correct, then Philippine modernism has far more autonomy and indigeneity than previously believed by its critics.

Also important for us in Nemenzo's history is his account of the movement's relation to intellectuals and to language. "The disciples of [Pedro] Abad Santos [who founded the Socialist Party in 1929] maintained that theoretical discussions are a waste of time. . . . People do not learn revolutionary theory by endless study meetings, but only by engaging in class combat. Two of their favorite maxims were: 'A single battle is worth ten schools' and 'Books make cowards out of men.'<sup>18</sup> Here, too, we grasp the growing frustration with the purchase words have on progressive history making, a frustration that would impel auditors toward practice as both maxims express a

growing skepticism regarding language's ability to organize the world in a politically effective manner. Thus, at the level of political analysis, we note three trends: the increasing awareness of social complexity, including the interrelatedness among various social registers; the decreasing purchase of language on nationalist aspiration; and the indigenous origins of what could be seen as a highly modernist, mass-based struggle: Communism. Therefore, with the increasing sense of logistical complexity pushing against the limits placed by hegemony and therefore culture, and with felt limits of language's ability to organize the social firmly in view, we can see social revolution and visuality appearing as parallel courses for history making.

For his part, H. R. Ocampo, one of the first non-objective painters in the Philippines and the principal practitioner of what came to be called Neorealism, wrote that he was "less interested in capturing a photographic semblance of nature" and "more preoccupied with the creation of new realities in terms of stress and strain."<sup>19</sup> In other words, the "non-objective" character of Neorealism was an effort to figure the new objective situation constituted through conflict—the struggle over the significance of things.<sup>20</sup> It is the principal argument of the first section of this book that H. R. Ocampo's abstractions were not mere copying of Western art forms, as has sometimes been asserted in a racist and imperialist manner. On the contrary, they were hard-won records of the new character of sociality and all that is implied by radical changes in the social fabric after the Second World War. Modernism in the Philippines did not just arrive on a boat with Victorio Edades's return to Manila in 1928, as is often repeated in the art-historiographical lore of the Philippines. Rather, like communism in the Philippines, modernism has strong indigenous roots. The creative power of Filipino people laboring under the leveraged constraints of U.S. imperialism and the full penetration of the money economy into the provinces must be credited with the occasion and execution of both the political and aesthetic revolutions that confronted forced modernization, modernism, and communism. While it is true that the "father" of

Philippine modernism, Victorio Edades, did return to Manila in 1928 from the University of Washington and the Armory show with a new set of tools and concepts, the origins of modernism are much deeper or more local than such a foundation myth would indicate. It has been said that "Edades opened the door to modern art and H. R. Ocampo walked right in." However, it is probably more appropriate, if less pithy, to say of Philippine modernism that a U.S. colonial modernity was installed with the help of "free trade," an English-language mass-educational system, a Euro-U.S. capital-dependent agricultural cash-crop export industry, which spawned a native oligarchy and reorganized rural waged labor, Central Intelligence Agency propaganda campaigns, a print-journalism culture, and an emergent mass-entertainment industry. Albeit fraught with compromises, Filipinos waged a modern revolution against their exploitation on various fronts, and cultural modernism was one of the fruits of this revolution.

Ocampo's abstractions (such as *Sampayan* [Clothesline], 1972, fig. 3) capture the changing dynamics of Philippine life as the people of Manila and its environs settle into the lower-intensity warfare that would characterize their encounter with the emergent world-system and rising globalization after the Second World War. This situation definitely includes the presence of restored U.S. forces—governmental, economic, and cultural—and the continuing disruption and exploitation in every level of the lived experience and practices of the Filipinos. But the great abstract paintings of Ocampo do more than merely grasp the shifting character of lived experience as shot through by vectors of aggregating and disaggregating force, often from sources unknown and driven by the proverbial maelstrom of modernity. Moreover, they do more than merely convert this transformation of lived experience into a formal principle that can be grasped less as a figure than as a process of figuration. Rather, these abstractions transpose the relations of reality being constituted through myriad relations of stress and strain into the visual realm. They convert the logic of Philippine social dynamics



into a visual practice. These causes make dynamics that were heretofore invisible appear at once conceptual and in excess of the conceptual as the visceral and the haptic—and in doing so, register the disruption of a reconfigured Philippines socius in visual terms. The increasing rationalization and fragmentation of modernity in its disruption of daily life and practice configure a visual that is simultaneously underpinned by logical rational calculus necessary to the organization of the new state but also experiential—haptic and visceral. Thus, it is not surprising that H. R. Ocampo developed a paint-by-number system as he streamlined and perfected his technique to compose the late paintings he classed as “visual symphonies.” At the height of his career, Ocampo even published an unfinished painting in a newspaper that subscribers were enjoined to complete at home by following the numbered color code (fig. 4). The rational-mathematic encroaches upon and iterates the visual-haptic.

As the following chapters will show, the transposition of a social logic into a visual process is in a fundamental way a consequence of a nationalist aspiration that becomes blocked in the register of narrative history—and indeed in history itself—and seeks another realm of freedom. As if the linguistic and even the semiotic were oversaturated, the visual represents a new opening, a new order of aesthetic or haptic experience, and a new terrain of social engagement. At almost the same moment, however, the visual is placed under siege by statist and capitalist visual technologies, including Cold War propaganda from the Office of Psychological Warfare under the Ramon Magsaysay regime and capitalized mass media bent upon organizing Filipino viewers as subjects of U.S. world hegemony. In the example above, perhaps what is most remarkable is that newspaper readers are invited to become viewers and painters. In creating a new set of visual forms and process, what also emerges is the displacement not only of language but also of a previous scopic regime. This displacement is effected by a social logic demanding a new type of visualization in which viewers themselves are enjoined

to construct an encoded visual reality. We should observe that the encoding of the visual is not (only) semiotic; rather, it is (also) experiential and affective.

The visual shift between what generically registers as a changeover from Socialist Realism to Neorealism also registers the intensifying displacement of a previous scopic regime and allows what we today describe as “visuality.”<sup>21</sup> Though both 1930s Socialist Realism and Neorealism are moments of modernism, the latter marks the complete transformation of the visual realm by the logistics of imperialism and its discontents. Although this claim remains to be proven, suffice it to say here that with the emergence of visuality proper, the perceptual apparatus itself, or the sensorium, suddenly becomes a scene of engagement, a zone of experience, and thus, a cyberspace of struggle. Through the publication of a paint-by-numbers, H. R. Ocampo invited readers to consciously participate in a generalized social, rational-mathematical process of sensual reorganization that, whether consciously or not, had readers in its grip. Thus, visual form might be understood as the result of a historical, participatory process and not as an organic registration of truth. If such a moment can be said to recognize the specificity and contingency of the visual, then it can also be seen as laying the groundwork for the emergence of the current concept of “visuality,” which presupposes the historicity of visual perception.

In Ocampo’s work, the abstraction of social dynamics into a visual register was in Ocampo’s works not only an intuition of an emergent tendency but also an engagement with the politics of social organization through visual and sensual means. As recent scholarship is beginning to show, the visual realm (cinema, television, advertising, digital media, their practices and theories) turns out to be decisive for the twentieth-century West in both global politics and economics. No less so, I will argue, in the Philippines.<sup>22</sup> Indeed what is fascinating is that in the Philippines, we can track the eruption of the modern visual, that is of visuality proper, *in the relative absence of technology*. Thus, from a forgotten novel of H. R.

Ocampo's that I will discuss in the following chapter, we might deduce that with imperialism, the visual has become the new bandwidth for the organization of social relations under the rubric of what will later in the century be called "globalization." Ocampo's novel, *Scenes and Spaces*, makes clear early on that the visual will be one of the pre-eminent registers in which twentieth-century conflicts will be fought. The contemporary corporate model of "selling eyeballs to advertisers" might suggest that the ends of visual mediations functioning in the interest of capital-logic were twofold: to acquire the eyes so recently being acquired by Filipinos and to enjoin these eyes to see in accord with the logic of capitalist acquisition.

### *Socialist Realism*

The second key sociohistorical moment here is the rejection of abstraction as a style by radical artists that took place during the Marcos period, when the "official" social status of abstract work, such as that of H. R. Ocampo, was at its zenith. This moment, which produced the group of works falling under the category of Socialist Realism, or SR, was informed by direct efforts to portray the abstract forces that held Philippine society in its grip. This second appearance of Socialist Realism fully understood that abstract forces were visible in concrete particularities through their effects on the lives of the people. In many cases SR was an expression of solidarity with, if not an accompaniment to the ongoing armed struggle against the Marcos regime and U.S. imperialism. If, with the introduction of television, Marcos spectacles and cosmetic urban renewal bent upon hiding the living conditions of the urban poor, the visual arena was increasingly becoming a medium for imperialism, how did artists make images that ran counter to imperialism in the visual realm? During this period, roughly between 1972 and 1986, artists—painters and filmmakers—created images capable of showing what commercial images and the images proffered by the dictatorship were at pains to avoid. These images connected transnational and oligarchic profits

with the daily experiences of suffering, debilitation, humiliation, and brutality endured by the masses. They questioned the logic of development and acquisition in such a way that Filipino eyes might clearly perceive the consequences of normative and normalizing modes of perception. Thus, despite the concreteness and grit of SR images, the images demanded abstract readings to achieve their amplitude—that is, their meaning in the struggle against dictatorship and imperialism. They were fundamentally dialectical. The entire SR movement can be thought of as the ramifying of the visual realm opened up by/as abstract art. In it the space of the imaginary, opened up as a realm of freedom by the dialectics of nationalist struggle, becomes a site of struggle. The weapons in that zone are the techniques and technologies of the imaginary.

Cinema becomes particularly relevant here. Tragically, in Philippine cinema, nearly all the films of the prewar era have been lost. What is known of the early moments of this long filmmaking tradition survives in the form of posters, program notes, short published reviews, and descriptions. Until his death, Agustin Sotto—who worked with Lino Brocka and at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and taught for many years at the University of the Philippines Institute for Mass Communication—was a key figure in Philippine film historiography and restoration. Filmmakers and critics Nick Deocampo and Emmanuel Reyes are currently reconstructing these elements the traumatic loss of which has robbed the Philippines of a powerful material record of its visuality. However, the films that are central to this project (many of which are also in danger of disappearing because of inadequate funding for archiving and preservation), are principally part of what is called the "Second Golden Age of Philippine Cinema," which began during the time of Marcos's martial law.<sup>23</sup>

Concurrent with the socialist realism of martial law cinema, there rose a strong suit of SR painters who included Neil Doloricon, Antipas Delotavo, Danny Dalena, Egai Fernandez, Pablo Baens Santos, Papo de Asis, Orlando Castillo, Renato Habulan, Al

Manrique, and Jose Tence Ruiz, among others. Many of these artists were active in the communist underground or in the broader progressive movement of the Left, and their paintings directly reflected the people's plights. For polemical reasons, I refer to the SR works of this period as *Socialist Realist*, in part because much of the work was conceived in the context of socialist/communist struggles against the state, and in part because I feel that the ongoing nationalist struggle for social justice that informs these works is essential when viewing them.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, as Flaudette May Datuin points out, other artists—including Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Julie Lluch, Brenda Fajardo, and Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi—belong to the “important aesthetic stream of the 1970s: social realism and its aesthetics of protest.”<sup>25</sup> These painters have bolstered the ranks of the current generation of activist painters composed of communists, feminists, activists, and fellow travelers.

Overall, the significance of the break between part 1 and part 2 of this book, a break which I locate at the declaration of martial law, is that from 1945 to 1972, abstraction tended to log the fragmentation of form resulting from new social forces playing over the concrete or objective surface of the world. What characterizes the SR moment is an effort to show how contesting social forces are impacted within objects and situations that nonetheless appear (through processes of reification) as ordinary or “natural” objects or situations. After the trauma of the war and the scramble for power inaugurated by Philippine Independence in 1946, it was the breaking up of traditional realist forms and the eruption of new realms that was thematized by cutting-edge visual artists. In the clamped-down context of martial law, visual artists strove to represent the repressed forces at work within the reality of Marcos-officiated conditions of imposed normalcy. “Reality” was imposed in order to contain objective contradictions. The SR movement provided interpretive strategies, i.e., weapons that would release these contradictions and render legible the abstract social forces ambient in the isolated situations and frozen objects.

The portion of my project on Philippine cinema endeavors to continue the analysis of certain structures of the becoming-totalitarian society outlined by Filipino cinematic works in the period during and immediately after martial law. Certain strains from this period, alongside the communist movement and its intellectuals, fellow travelers, social-realist painters and the EDSA revolt of 1986 (a revolt that was itself a media revolt), provide a crucial and sustained, albeit sometimes disguised, critique of U.S.-sponsored martial law and U.S. imperialism. The radical dispensation of these films are often propeople, prowoman, pro-*bakla* [“gay”], antifascist, anti-imperialist, and anticapitalist. These films of the Second Golden Age release strains of desiring and of desiring-liberation that irrepressibly persist today, albeit in other new forms. The chapters on cinema endeavor to highlight the contents of some of the most relevant categories of a confrontation between radical strains in Philippine cinema and society against the conservative and oppressive logic of the hegemonic Philippine *socius*. These confrontations—at once aesthetic, conceptual, visceral, and political—include the structuring of libidinal relations, the details of economic organization, the gendering and empowerment of subjects, ecological and geographical strategies of contestation and containment, class antagonism, and the social role of the spectacular and the sublime. To a greater or lesser degree, in both the SR movement and in the Second Golden Age, all of these abstract categories are suddenly understood as bearing upon daily life.

In SR painting, the figure is reintroduced into the visual as a way of concretizing and territorializing a barrage of increasingly abstract and deterritorialized forces. Furthermore, the consolidation of power in the figure of former Pres. Ferdinand Marcos allowed for the introduction of antithetical figures. Even though in many respects Marcos was a figurehead for a logistics of domination orchestrated by U.S. capital, as a conceit, dictatorship reintroduced the figure of the individual into the politicized media of social life. The image of Marcos was a strategy of control, and counterimages of members of

the masses, both in painting and in the cinema, became strategic weapons in the struggle for liberation.

Although there are several major directors worthy of serious consideration (the Philippines has the third or fourth largest film industry in the world, depending on how you count), I confine my discussion primarily to Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal. Lino Brocka attended the University of the Philippines on scholarship and, not having grown up speaking English, spent a lot of time as a propboy with the Department of Speech and Drama, even emptying out Coke bottles full of urine since the bathroom was too far from the theater for anyone to use during rehearsals. Upon seeing his films, talking with his compatriots, or reading his words, it is difficult to doubt that he was a man of the people. Not only are his films (of which there are approximately seventy) bent upon showing the struggles of the poor and the structural inequalities that overdetermine the character of these struggles, but he was the first and, perhaps, the only filmmaker during martial law who dared to show footage of urban protests, strikes, and rallies in his films. Ishmael Bernal, probably the only other filmmaker of the period to consistently create works on par with those of Brocka, himself made over fifty films. He was deeply impelled by the aesthetics and philosophical import of the dialectics of oppression. He also considered himself, rightly, I think, a feminist filmmaker. Because of the high-key aesthetic character of his work, he was claimed by both the Left and Right on the occasion of his death in 1996. Or, more particularly, members of the reigning conservative cultural establishment felt compelled to deny he had any ties to Marxism. However, the dialectical character of his films, together with their propeople affect attests to Bernal's Marxist axiomatics.<sup>26</sup>

If "Philippines 2000," as then Pres. Fidel V. Ramos's administration called the coming millennium during the late 1990s, is properly understood as the legacy of the Marcos regime, in principle it should be possible to establish a catalog of critical modes of cinematic thought that emerged during the period preceding the present,

which could then be re-evaluated in order to critique and transform the near-totalitarian order of globalization as it is currently manifest in the Philippines. In its investigation of spectacle, sexuality, and mediated desire, Philippine cinema interrogates the role of the visual in the conscription of bodies by power, along with the potentiality of the visual in assembling alternative mediations, analytic strategies, and communities.

In chapter 3, "Directing the Real: *Orapronobis* against Philippine Totalitarianism (2000)," I analyze Lino Brocka's banned film *Orapronobis* [Fight for Us, 1989]. By tacking back and forth between underground radio, "salvaging" (extrajudicial summary execution) of suspected rebels by Right-wing vigilante groups, the kidnapping and torture of activists and their families, and the commercial media coverage or noncoverage of these events, Brocka's *Orapronobis* organizes an alternative context for the signification of televised information that allows it to exceed the parameters of officiated reality and achieve greater amplitude. *Orapronobis* organizes what I call "the invisible of television," that is, all those myriad forms of social mediation that do not legibly appear in the corporate-controlled public sphere. In showing that the Corazon C. Aquino regime continues martial law practices under the sign of democracy, Brocka passes through the spectacle, built upon willed and systemic violation of the masses, in order to critique it, thereby creating alternative mediations and revealing an alternative reality mandating new actions. This presence of the abstract in the concrete—of a world view covertly embedded in the visible surfaces of the world—was one of the key principles deduced from socialist-realist practices during martial law.

Chapter 4, "Third Cinema in a Global Frame: *Curacha*, *Yahoo!* and *Manila by Night*," looks closely at Ishmael Bernal's powerful work *Manila by Night* (1980). I examine the film both in the context of martial law, which censored the film (refusing to allow "Manila" in the title and forcing a cut version to be released as *City after Dark*), and in the light of some theoretical issues central to my

work. These issues regarding the production of communitarian affects come to the theoretical and political fore well after *Manila by Night* was made but are nonetheless present in Bernal's film in a proleptic manner. To emphasize the extreme alienation endemic to the present scopic regime, I begin this chapter with a discussion of Chito Roño's *Curacha: Ang Babaeng Walang Pahinga* [Curacha: Woman Without Rest, 1998], Mike de Leon's *Aliwan Paradise* [Leisure Paradise, 1993], and what I call the NASDAQing of perceptual practices using the example of Yahoo! In the aftermath of martial law, the ascendancy of the new material forces of capture emerges as hegemonic image relations. This analysis of the present, which in effect shows the trajectory of hegemonic image function as the cutting edge of neoimperialism, underscores Bernal's counterhegemonic production of affect.<sup>27</sup> In this way, chapter 4 serves as a bridge to part 3's more sustained consideration of affect and the politics thereof.

The category "Third Cinema" that appears in the title and as a subject of this chapter would testify that the domain of the visual is one of the great scenes of struggle in the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, it would implicate all Hollywood and the vast television networks as agents of imperialism. The struggle that is Third Cinema hinges on the question of how to mediate social realities in a manner that transforms them in accord with the just claims of the people—those who in the contemporary are made to disappear, rendered otherwise invisible or (dis)figured under various iterations of the inhuman. Third Cinema poses profound challenges both to the mediating forces of capital and for the mediating forces of revolution. This situation, in which the visual is grasped as a *mise-en-scène* of revolution, is no less true in the Philippines.

### *Syncretic Realism (Realism as Mediation)*

The third plot twist in the trajectory of abstraction drawn in this volume manifests itself in a new type of strain on the figure. As my

discussion in chapter 4 already begins to show, the return of the figure in the 1970s did not make viable a continual reiteration of social realism as a counterhegemonic force, at least in the sense that the term Social Realism is ordinarily understood. The ouster of Marcos left many, if not most, of the fundamental relations of exploitation in the Philippines intact. That Marcos could disappear, and that democracy could be nominally restored while the masses continued to suffer, prostituted Filipinas became overseas Filipino workers (or OFWs), and radicals continued to be murdered, gave the lie to a particular fantasy about the importance of individuals. Clearly individuated bodies continued to exist, and most important, to suffer, but the causes and forces determining the suffering were once again imagined as structural and abstract. Because the structural and abstract forces of society have achieved a heretofore unprecedented penetration into and dissemination through the social body, today's questions, although still focused on issues of nation, gender, sexuality, and class, involve problems of faith, affect, solidarity, and the work of culture. Individuals themselves are composites of myriad and oftentimes contradictory social vectors. In contrast to the postwar period, the abstractions are not lurking at the margins of a normative reality but are infused in the everyday, even erupting through and mixing with its surfaces, as if the elements of daily life were at once themselves and the cybernetic instruments of some terrible conspiracy bent upon enforcing penury, suffering, indifference, and inhumanity even through the very avenues of liberation offered to "consumers."

In the early 1990s, the work of the two most visible collectives of figurative painters in Manila, Salingpusa [Informal Player] and Sanggawa [One Work], might be described by terms such as concrete expressionism or syncretic realism. Concrete expressionism is a category I use to describe an expressionist contortion and coloration of figures and metropolitan spaces meant to index the "normal" state of affairs. Many of the works endeavor to portray the great concrete structures such as the brutal overpasses and virulent sky-

scrapers that dominate the senses in Manila as volitional entities by themselves. These Metro Manila-based works are interested in showing different aspects of the causticity of life in the megalopolis of more than eleven million, in which more than 40 percent are squatters and a certain square mile has the highest population density in the world. As residents well know, Metro Manila's traffic is probably the worst in the world and the air quality is, in many parts of the metropolis, contaminated with three to five times the lead allowance specified as maximally tolerable by the World Health Organization. These outgrowths of Metro Manila's program—if that is an adequate term for a virulent uneven development beyond the control of any particular individual or group—have increased exponentially in their scale and aggressivity, making representations of the metropolis at once extremely difficult and absolutely essential.

Metro Manila has been particularly difficult to represent in part because there have been until quite recently few opportunities for aerial perspectives and no real urban cores. Skyscrapers abut shanties. Only the major roadway EDSA, upon which millions of commuters travel each day, seems to serve as a collective geographical referent. At any moment, there is often so much in the visual field that the conventions of representation would be short-circuited if one were to attempt to portray the energy and pressure of what is seen. Corporate culture has not been eager to develop technologies or visual practices that would allow the social relations that might appear to the eye, inscribed as they are across the surface of society, to be discerned or decoded. This is because doing so would tell of the suffering, privation, and bloodshed that produces social cohesion through the continuous, destructive war on the masses. Thus, the present generation of artists employs the affective qualities of form in their struggle with geography, space, interaction, and becoming in the struggle to represent and objectify lived experience. Although the best young painters in Manila during the 1990s had a kind of realist ethic, their aesthetics does not fully overlap with what falls under the heading of Socialist Realism. Furthermore, it would

be a mistake to believe that this generation of painters is interested only in representing the under- or unrepresented. Much of their work seems dedicated to creating new ways both to apprehend and transform the very conditions of existence. Thus, the paradigm of "representation" gives way to a paradigm of affect.

In my view a key figure in the 1990s dispensation of the visual is Emmanuel Garibay, who began by making images that dramatize a moment of seeing by engaging the viewer in a narrative set in an urban context. Garibay's work of the mid-1990s forces the viewer to slow sight down and move among the various elements, almost invariably poverty-worn faces in contemporary social situations on buses, jeepneys, or the street. In a highly cinematic manner, viewers adopt the standpoint of the various participants in a particular frame, and in making sense of the situation depicted circulate their identifications and emotions among the community. In addition to Garibay's jeepney work, there is a more recent strain of work which he calls his Kristology series. This work is in the tradition of Liberation Theology, or what Garibay and others in the Philippine context call "the theology of struggle." The influence of Christianity in the Philippines is profound, and for Garibay the spiritual realm, from Spanish colonization to the present, has been instrumentally severed from the daily experiences of the Filipino by a Church that has inherited the legacy of Spanish colonialism and continues to serve colonial masters. These paintings offer new and contemporary visions of Christ and other members of the Christian pantheon but not, at least in the best ones, as beings to be seen but as forms to be seen through. I cannot here attempt to describe these works in any detail. Suffice it to say that in the simplest of them (*Bisita* [Visitor], 1995), the viewer finds him or herself at a table with peasants being treated as a foreman or landowner. Only after beginning to look around does s/he notice that the virtual hands that are to be his/hers have stigmata. The rhetorical force of discovering who you are supposed to be, as you look at the faces around you, is stunning. Although it is almost unthinkable before seeing this work that a

painting could insist that you see through the eyes of Christ, this painting—which strives to restructure a paternalistic gaze into a fraternal and loving one—is only one example of Garibay’s ability to control or even commandeer the gaze to harness it for progressive purposes. In a fully denatured situation, perception is itself taken as a technology that must be remediated. Chapter 5 of this volume discusses the Christological work and chapter 6 deals with the questions raised by Garibay’s work regarding visibility and urban experience.

Although Garibay is for me the most interesting of the new painters with whom I am familiar, many members of the *Salingpusa* and *Sanggawa* groups also deploy modalities of seeing (and not only semiotic contents) that oppose the logic of globalization. It is significant to note that of all the abstract painters from the previous generation, most of these contemporary painters seem to feel the closest link to H. R. Ocampo. This, I believe, is because of the manner in which Ocampo questions the mediation of vision and takes painting as a medium that might remediate a vision under siege in the Philippine context. In this respect, one could speak of a continuity of struggle within the Philippine modernist tradition, or from Philippine modernism to what might tentatively be called Philippine postmodernism (or postfailed modernism), even though there has been a dramatic shift in the formal character of the work.

Finally, I want to add that the control and modulation of vision is being increasingly understood as fundamental to the maintenance of power. The artworks in the Philippines endeavoring to disrupt the habits of seeing, practiced at different levels of society and essential to the maintenance of the marginal status of the majority of Filipinos, use both indigenous and international elements. Inasmuch as they use indigenous elements, the works appeal to the individual and collective experiences of marginality. The extraordinary work of Elmer Borlongan is capable of showing the weight of history and lived experience corporally coupled to a moment of subjective self-creation. His lines and “distortions” render the

psychosocial tensions that literally bind the figure and from which the figure seeks relief. The figure’s form carries all the weight of the historical and the social. This form constitutes the figure, and is the condition from which it seeks liberation. The works of Fernan Escora depict the total penetration of “domestic” spaces by media and exterior forces. Dansoy Coquilla paints from an aerial perspective, a view very likely unthinkable and certainly unrepresented before the presence of transnational capital’s all-seeing grasp of the socius, not to mention its construction of flyovers and tall buildings.

The best contemporary paintings “affirm while they protest,” in Paul Gilroy’s phrase. They rely on complex modalities developed over the history of Philippine art and visual culture. Inasmuch as they use international elements, they aspire to create international alliances and understanding or to critically depict the presence of the global in the local. Clearly, the terms of Philippine oppression are dictated in part by external elements. The overcoming of this oppression depends upon forms of consciousness aware of international forces as well as upon forms of international solidarity linked to indigenous struggle. No Olympian mode has emerged or now could emerge (Coquilla’s aerial perspective depicts cross-eyed workers, pedestrians, and jeepney riders scuttling about). But what is visible in the connections being made between local situations and global media-politics by these painters are superhuman situations: supreme abjection, sublime technologization, new perspectives and points of view, and new theological and/or spiritual possibilities.

From the point of view that regards Philippine modernism as at once external and internal to international modernism rather than as peripheral and epiphenomenal, Philippine modern artworks do not appear as mere derivative imitations—which in the ignorance of a racist episteme, they sometimes have been accused of being—but rather as expressions of the unthought contradictions of modernity. To study Philippine painting should not be to embark upon some rarefied, high-cultural enterprise with the final goal of producing another coffee table book, generating “appreciation,” and increasing

the value of works owned by the collectors. Although it is always pleasant to have pictures of the work of artists, there is little to be learned from such a narcissistic undertaking that is not already known. Nor, in my opinion, should the study of Philippine painting be about waving one's wand about and pronouncing some works good and others bad, based upon merely formal criteria acquired by going to European museums. Rather, we must take the visual creativity of twentieth-century Filipino painters as an engagement with the larger social sphere and its transformed conditions of visibility. If we do not think of the painted canvas in some relation to commodification, to mass media, and to the systems of oppression these sustain and intensify (class hierarchy, patriarchy, homophobia, racism, and environmental devastation, among others), that is, if we do not learn to see a painting both as thought and as struggle, then there will be nothing to see in our galleries and museums but different iterations of money. Thus, in addition to providing an overview of the stakes, periods, and questions central to *Acquiring Eyes*, this introduction has endeavored to raise new sets of questions about what is to be done with the image.

## PART 1

## NEOREALISM

*Stymied Realism: Emergence of Visuality,  
Cinematization of Materiality,  
and Appearance of Abstraction in the  
Context of U.S. Imperialism (1928–1972)*

*The Artist as Filipino*

Hernando R. Ocampo, posthumously named National Artist in 1991—thirteen years after his death in 1978—was born in Santa Cruz, on the outskirts of Manila, in 1911. He worked as a boot-black, a bus-ticket vendor, a bartender in a cabaret, and a correspondence clerk for the Philippine Education Company, before he became a short-story writer, an assistant editor for the *Herald Mid-week Review*, editor of *This Week Magazine* of the *Manila Chronicle*, a screenwriter, a film and radio producer, an advertising consultant as well as, most famously, a painter. Jailed after the Second World War by the authorities on suspicion of being a collaborator with the Japanese,<sup>1</sup> Ocampo was a member of the Veronians, the best-known group of modernist writers before the war, as well as of the 13 Moderns, a group of modernist painters consolidated after the Second World War, and of the Neorealist Group. He was also



reported to be a member of the peasant communist movement Hukbalahap.<sup>2</sup> Ocampo was an early supporter and contributor to the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) and the Philippine Art Gallery (PAG), the first art gallery in the Philippines. He was also the founder and recognized leader of the Saturday Group, an informal, fluid group of artists who until now meet every Saturday to sketch, argue, and talk shop.<sup>3</sup>

H. R. Ocampo was a founding member of the literary group, the Veronicans, whose other members were Francisco Arcellana, Lazaro M. Espinosa, Cornelio S. Reyes, Ernesto C. Basa, Bienvenido T. Potenciano, Delfin Fresnosa, Estrella Alfon, N. V. M. Gonzales, Manuel A. Viray, Benjamin P. Alcantara, Angel de Jesus, and Narciso G. Reyes. As Angel de Jesus tells us in *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino*, “These thirteen young writers were the avant-garde of the short-story writers during the early 1930s. Their writing was characterized by a break with tradition, an absence of bourgeois-moralistic taboos, and a realistic approach to life. To improve their writing, they read Erskine Caldwell, William Saroyan, Ernest Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and William Faulkner.”<sup>4</sup> De Jesus credits Ocampo with founding the Veronicans. While the Veronicans clearly had modernist inclinations, modernism is said to have its beginnings with the December 1928 one-man show of Victorio Edades in the Philippine Columbian Club in Ermita, Manila. In 1940, Edades assembled a list of thirteen modern painters that included himself, Galo B. Ocampo, Carlos “Botong” Francisco, H. R. Ocampo, Vicente Manansala, Cesar Legaspi, Diosdado M. Lorenzo, Demetrio Diego, Jose Pardo, Bonifacio Cristobal, Arsenio Capili, Ricarte Puruganan, and Anita Magsaysay-Ho. Later, the Neo-Realist Group was composed of H. R. Ocampo, Cesar Legaspi, Vicente Manansala, Romeo V. Tabuena, Victor Oteyza, Ramon Estella, Carlos “Botong” Francisco, Victorio C. Edades, and Nena Saguil.

Unlike many others of the best-known Philippine modernist painters, Ocampo never left the Philippines despite having been of-

fered various fellowships. The abstract work for which Ocampo finally became most widely known—visual symphonies, molten landscapes, cybernetic figures out of some mid-century science fiction—is considered by contemporary critics and artists to be quintessentially if somewhat ineffably Filipino.<sup>5</sup> Although it is usually conceded at the outset that his work was difficult at the time of its creation and remains so to this day, it is first the garish colors of his canvases (they are said to glare) and then their busy interlocking fullness (a horror vacui dubbed the Pinoy Baroque), which secured the stature of Ocampo’s work as exhibit A of Philippine Modernism.<sup>6</sup>

During the Japanese occupation, H. R. Ocampo went from being associate editor of the commercially successful *Herald Midweek Magazine* to being an officer in Hodobu, the propaganda section of the Japanese Imperial Army working for intelligence purposes. What might his dramatic switch from painting socialist realism to abstraction have to do with his firsthand experience of the imbrication of media and politics? In a discussion of his career, de Jesus, Ocampo’s friend, colleague, fellow Veronican, and quasi biographer, takes pains to suggest that, although Ocampo may have been a “collaborator,” he was not a capitulator. He writes:

In 1943, the Japanese management of the *Liwayway* magazine created a committee to pick the best Tagalog short stories of 1943. The result was the publication of Ang 25 Pinakamabuting Maikling Kathang Pilipino ng 1943 (*The 25 Best Filipino Short Stories of 1943*). Among the authors, all young, undaunted and nationalistic, unintimidated by the Japanese fascists was Hernando R. Ocampo.<sup>7</sup>

De Jesus’s assertion that Ocampo was undaunted by Japanese fascists should not be read as merely an admirer’s effort to redeem what might be seen, in a Philippines organized around U.S. victory in the Pacific, as a compromising past. Caught between the U.S. and Ja-

pan, there are no easy or clear-cut nationalist positions. De Jesus recounts that during the war, Ocampo was detained overnight in Fort Santiago and cross-examined by “a Japanese Harvard graduate” on suspicion of having ties with the Hukbalahap. One of Ocampo’s associates, Manuel V. Arguilla, “was arrested when the Japanese discovered guerilla propaganda material in his locked drawer in the Propaganda Office, which they forced open. He was subsequently executed.”<sup>8</sup> De Jesus’s concluding remarks on Ocampo’s involvement with the Japanese propaganda machine sifts the good from the bad:

The projection of Tagalog in the minds of the Filipinos as the language they should adopt and develop was one of the few favorable aspects of the Japanese Occupation. Gradually since then, Tagalog has increasingly become the language of the people, supplanting both Spanish and English. This too was the time when Nanding [Ocampo’s nickname] began to intuitively sense the forces at play during the war. He began to understand with his friends that the Philippines was merely a pawn in a fight between giants. It was a subject often discussed by them in meetings far from the prying eyes of the Japanese and their spies.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, de Jesus sees Ocampo and his coterie of writers and painters as harboring an authentic Philippine nationalism. Ocampo is able to cut a path through the exigencies imposed by two enemies: the Japanese and the Americans. For de Jesus there are compromises involved, but beyond the gaze of the “prying eyes” of “the Japanese and their spies” authenticity stays. The character of this authenticity, which de Jesus sees in Ocampo, will produce “The Artist as Filipino.”

I cannot help but believe that Ocampo’s sense of himself as an object of visual surveillance as well of his sense of the “the Philippines as a pawn in a fight between giants,” along with the propaganda machine that he worked for, implicated him as a spectator and drove

him to emphasize painting. After the war, not only did H. R. Ocampo write less and paint more; he was immediately imprisoned for eight months by the American Counter-Intelligence Corps. He was imprisoned with many other Filipinos who would become significant national figures including Claro M. Recto—still considered today as one of the greatest and most uncompromising Philippine nationalists. Much later, in 1957, Ocampo became a member of Recto’s working group in Recto’s bid for the presidency. De Jesus reports that Ocampo advised Recto on his public image, nixing the idea of wearing a short-sleeved shirt, in an effort to appeal to the masses. I mention these events to suggest that Ocampo remained hostile to the United States, believed in authentic Philippine liberation, and was extremely conscious of the social role of images including their cultural, political, and commercial dimensions.

This involvement in images can be seen from the following: In 1945 Ocampo was employed as chief of Polaris Publishing as well as the Scripts Department of Polaris Films and Fernando Poe Productions. He also directed serial dramas.<sup>10</sup> He became editor of the *Manila Chronicle Sunday Magazine* from 1950 to 1953 and was producer-director of the Filipino Players Guild, a producer of radio shows. In 1954 he became director of the National Media Production Center, a Filipino and American organization that disseminated information on ongoing community self-development projects in health, agriculture, and education.<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, Ocampo was writing short stories and was involved in the founding of the Philippine Art Gallery (PAG) and the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP). In 1958 he joined Philprom as executive director of the agency’s Radio-TV-Cinema Department, where he worked for ten years. Asked by a journalist in 1955 to write his own epitaph along with other prominent personalities, Ocampo’s began, “Here lies frustration: / He had wanted to be an Artist / But he had to make a living.”<sup>12</sup> No doubt, Ocampo might be said to allude to the complex negotiations with power that he had to engage in, which demanded compromises, political and otherwise, from his work and his person. Ocampo

was a man who had known poverty as a child. He was a writer turned painter who worked in film, mass media, government bureaucracy, and advertising. Probably no other Filipino artist worked in more media and was more aware of the sociopolitical impact of these various mediations.

Ocampo began his career writing socialist-realist short fiction, then painted in a socialist-realist style, and worked in film, radio, and advertising. After the war, he founded a new style of painting, Philippine Neorealism, which even today is recognized by many as “Pinoy na Pinoy,” and as perhaps the most indigenous expression in Philippine visual arts. However, his work was subsequently taken up by the Marcos regime and he himself was coddled by Imelda Marcos. Thus, the central question of part 1 can be framed as follows: What happened to Ocampo’s socialist aspirations? Is his later work merely the compromised, degraded, and “bourgeoisified” product of a former radical gone soft? Or does there remain a set of aesthetic, political, and historical insights, a legacy, that might still be claimed for Marxism in the Philippines?

### *The Spectre of Abstraction*

Ocampo’s prewar novel, *Scenes and Spaces*, written in English and published serially from 1937 to 1939, is preoccupied with the problematic of forming a national(ist) subject in the context of American-style education available to Tagalog-speaking children. The novel does not yet exist in book form, in spite of its literary and historical significance.<sup>13</sup> As we will see in the following chapter, *Scenes and Spaces* is centrally concerned with the relativizing and marginalizing effect of the English language as the most pronounced and omnipresent agent of colonial power. It is as if the novel directly anticipates and consciously suffers from the problematic described fifty years later by E. San Juan Jr.: “It is . . . indisputable that so long as the Philippines remains a disguised U.S. satellite or neocolony politically, economically, and culturally, Filipino writing in the

English language cannot but be a minor, regional, or subordinate extension of British and American writing.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Ocampo extends this problem of writing under the yoke of colonialism, to the problem of subjectivity and masculinity. In this novel, most important for us, the problematic situation of colonial language, subjectivity, and masculinity, as well as of the history that constitutes language usage and is constituted in and through it, is narratologically shown to give rise to a transformed situation for the visual. “The visual” as an autonomous realm emerges, in fact, out of the breakdown of these other zones of linguistic and cultural function.

It is in this novel, then, that Jose Rizal’s great nationalist conundrum, teased out and summarized in the work of Benedict Anderson using Rizal’s own words, as “the spectre of comparisons,” receives a somewhat different treatment than than afforded to it by “The First Filipino,” as Leon Ma. Guerrero calls Rizal.<sup>15</sup> “What . . . [Rizal] meant by this [the spectre of comparisons] was a new, restless double-consciousness which made it impossible ever after to experience Berlin without at once thinking of Manila, or Manila without thinking of Berlin. Here indeed is the origin of nationalism which lives by making comparisons.”<sup>16</sup> Unable to participate in the transcendent, multinationalist, and comparative perspective that comes from the mix of worldliness and emergent nationalism possible for a Filipino-to-be from the *ilustrado* class, the spectre of comparisons that arises in *Scenes and Spaces* is regnant with a sense of localization, isolation, and relativization. For Anderson, Rizal’s novel, *Noli me tangere*, depicts a worldwide community of possibilities that underpins all comparisons and allows for judgment and, therefore, political direction. *Noli me tangere* shows that the Western dictum regarding human dignity finds its contradiction in the colonial Philippines. Moreover, Filipino colonial degradation can be taken to task from the standpoint of the West’s own ideal standards, particularly since it has been the application of these standards that caused the degradation. The bold, comparative critique of what Mark

Twain, in his famous parody “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” called “civilization without the covering” is only possible from the standpoint of such a universal transnationalism. Nationalism depends, in Anderson’s justly influential account, on local difference and relativization grasped from a universal plane. In other words, comparison produces abstract, universal standards by which to judge the particulars of a society. But Ocampo’s novel must do without such grandiose abstractions and, thus, never achieves the epic proportions and Olympian tone of certain passages in Rizal. Rather, a critique of sociality is wrought from the record of daily frustrations and simple but unrealizable aspirations. Here, we find the situation of a realism in which promises intimated in the whispers of daily life are negated by the mere turn of events. There is no *Solidaridad*, no “The Philippines a Century Hence,” no standpoint of transcendence and, hence, no Olympian voice. We find in the situation of realism enacted by Ocampo a reality to be narrativized first in fits and starts, abjected and only then abstracted. These abstractions, which for the sake of argument I date with the emergence of modernism, are the after-images of a failed narrative.

Like most Filipinos of his day but unlike many of his contemporaries in the arts, Ocampo never traveled to the West for education and exposure. His understanding of imperialism and nationalism emerges less from the partaking of transcendent perspectives and more from the locality and materiality of things. If there is a spectre haunting his work, it is the spectre of nonbecoming, the presence of incompletely explained forces that at once seduce, inhibit, and constrain what would seem to be the natural tendencies and capacities of people. Indeed, one could say that *Scenes and Spaces* is not haunted by the spectre of comparisons but, rather, by the spectre of abstractions, in which the abstractions are the hollow forms of what might have been. Thus, what emerges from the pen of Ocampo is a stymied realism depicting a stalled history.

*Scenes and Spaces* is interested in foreclosed relationships and the elements and consequences of foreclosed realizations. As I

will demonstrate at some length, inasmuch as it perceives cultural, military, and technological power as part of the battery of forces bearing on the nationalist project, *Scenes and Spaces* validates de Jesus’s assertion of the existence of the perception that the Philippines was merely a pawn in the fight between giants. At the same time, the novel is bent upon inscribing the struggle of the pawns. As we shall see, two major points emerge. First, in detailing the multiple frustrations of aspirant Filipino lives, it seeks to link the visceral and the conceptual, or one could say the indigenous and the ideological, the experiential and the abstract, the corporeal and the national; that is, it seeks to articulate the struggle of Filipinos with an imposing and generalized historicity perceived to come from without. Second, as the numerous interruptions of the realist reportage of *Scenes and Spaces* by the characters’ recurrent visual hallucinations prefigure, the struggle of history’s pawns is thrust into the visual. As the narrative possibilities collapse into the disappointment of real events, their trajectories of desire shear off into the visual and realize themselves as hallucinatory visions, in short, as visual abstractions of the what-might-have-been born from the now-unconceptualizable what is.

This reading of *Scenes and Spaces* is the subject of the first chapter. In chapter 2, I will show how this shearing off of visual abstractions from lived reality demarcates the very space that will soon be exploited by CIA intervention in the 1950s and then the Marcos spectacles from the 1960s to the 1980s, and today, by capitalist visual culture, generally. Thus, in some respects, *Scenes and Spaces* is a more radical work than Rizal’s *Noli* because, unlike *Noli*, it cannot project even an imaginary indigenous fulfillment within the framework of a nationalist ideology. Rather, it seeks to register ineluctable dissatisfaction and expresses the movement of struggle into the visual. If less satisfying than a revolutionary nationalist fantasy, such a problematic that would prove visibility itself is the great question of contemporary history and politics is perhaps more on the mark.

### *The Spectre of Comparisons*

We need a final contextualizing note here with respect to the first section of this book. When regarding the literary work of Ocampo, one might think of the situation of Lu Xun as described in Rey Chow's "'One Newsreel Helped to Change Chinese History': An Old Tale Retold." Chow deftly argues that Lu Xun's encounter with the cinema, an encounter which caused him to quit medicine to become a writer, places the trauma of the visual at the center of Chinese modernism. Lu Xun's encounter with the cinema led him to write. Of Lu Xun's viewing of a film portraying an audience witnessing an execution Chow writes, "not only does Lu Xun see 'the horror of an execution, we must also say that he sees the horror of the activity of watching.'"<sup>17</sup> Writing that "the effect of the film images on Lu Xun was that of a blow," Chow argues that "It is as if these men have, in the course of watching, become themselves a spectacle and a film. It is this spectacle, this image of a passive collective mesmerized in spectatorship that projects itself on the spectator Lu Xun with the effect of shock."<sup>18</sup> She writes further: "Clearly vision and visuality bear for Lu Xun the implications of a menace. This menace, a great force imposing upon him a heavy task against his own will, would henceforth [in the accounts of Lu Xun and of Chinese literary history] constitute the 'beginning' of his writing career which can be reinterpreted as an attempt to deal with the filmic spectacle and with his own implication as a spectator."<sup>19</sup> Thus, Chinese literary modernism has for its origins the trauma of the image. Cultural nationalism depends, in Chow's account, on becoming something like a spectator of comparisons. She writes:

Retelling Lu Xun's story as a story about modernist shock is, among other things, a good way of showing how "self-consciousness" is produced in the postcolonial "third world." This self-consciousness is inextricably linked to the position of be-

ing a spectator. To put it simply, Lu Xun discovers what it means to "be Chinese" in the modern world by watching film. . . . "Being Chinese" would henceforth carry in it the imagistic memory the memorable image—of this violence. National self-consciousness is thus not only a matter of watching "China" being represented, it is more precisely watching oneself—as a film, as a spectacle, as something that is always already watched.<sup>20</sup>

Although H. R. Ocampo does not have the international stature of a Lu Xun, a consequence of what very likely E. San Juan Jr. would justifiably call "academic racism," it is still the case for Ocampo that "becoming modern . . . is itself inextricably bound to perceptual changes brought by visuality."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, they entail a kind of autoethnography—a seeing of oneself and one's culture as "Chinese." Ocampo's forays into the visual do not, however, ultimately end up being reterritorialized for him by a "neurotic attempt" at literature in order to "resurrect a traditional practice that has . . . been shattered at its very foundations"; rather, they take over writing altogether.<sup>22</sup> Although I will have to defer the more detailed discussion of the ways in which, in Chow's words, "self-consciousness is inextricably linked to the position of being a spectator" to chapter 1, I want to foreground here that Ocampo's early experiences of spectatorship, which Chow sees in the case of Lu Xun as being the result of an encounter with "technologized visuality," emerge for Ocampo directly out of the social fabric. It is as if the linked traumas of imperialism and then the Second World War functioned as *cinema by other means*, reconfiguring the very materiality of Filipino life.

In effect, Ocampo's characters are rendered spectators in a world that is itself becoming image—as if the dynamic movement of reality itself shocked Filipinos into becoming its spectators. The concrete materiality around Filipino subjects—what I call a "stymied real" (by which I mean a material interruption in the processes of

becoming that might have taken place had it not been for the violence of U.S. imperialism)—is rendered abstract (today, we would say virtual) by economic, nationalist, and military forces. What this nomenclature suggests is that the *material organization of things is itself generative of a new order of visuality* remarkable with, or in this case without, the direct presence of what is recognizable as cinema. *Cinema is implicit in the organization of the world without being technically present.* This observation produces the following thesis: The becoming image of the world is embedded in social process, and the cinema and other technologies of image production are technical adequations to this becoming image, adequations that attempt to negotiate and manipulate that world. Such a cinematization of materiality explains S. P. Lopez's post-1933 remark, "Filipino writers have acquired eyes."

In modernity, a new order of the visual is inscribed in the way things are. And in Third World modernities, one must sometimes find these inscriptions of the emerging world-media system outside the explicitly technological sphere delimited by the conceits of "technology" and "development." It is here, at the level of social praxis, that we might identify the origins of visuality brought about, as it were, by the people's struggles to survive. This is the space, opened up by a labor of survival, laboring under a colonial gaze diffused through the very materiality of the socius, that visual technologies will soon invade, ramify, and colonize. In Ocampo's writings, pieces of reality seem to stare back at characters with mocking indifference, crushing the aspirations of national subjects and humiliating them. Such abstract vectors of force, inherent in the capitalist penetration of reality at all levels, lift visuality directly out of matter.

Moreover, my interest in Ocampo extends beyond the immediate context in which he painted and intends to lay more of the groundwork for a general theory of visuality. My work to date on the history of visuality has in part been about theorizing

what I call the emergent visual economy.<sup>23</sup> I have been interested in pursuing the shift of value production from the strictly material to the cultural realm (from factory to visuality) and elsewhere have utilized the history of cinema to trace the continuities between assembly line production and film production. In each of these technologies of production, the commodified object and the film image (the products) are constructed through a montage chain. In brief, my argument is that by bringing the logic of commodification to the visual, cinema brings the industrial revolution to the eye. Cinema functions as a deterritorialized factory interfacing with spectators/workers in different places at different times. It extracts value through the visual. Just as the factory exploits wage labor for the leveraged production of value (profit), the cinema exploits attention. This exploitation became generalized with the rise of television, video, computing, and the Internet. Visual work has become productive labor.

Without going into details, one of the theoretical consequences of my work is the revamping of Marx's labor theory of value as what I call "the attention theory of value." The attention theory of value has the merit of being able to explain, in part, why a Van Gogh painting can be valued at US\$50 million. When images are circulated in contemporary culture, the value produced by the looking of others accretes to the image and to its proprietors. In the case of the unique work of art, its mass mediation, through catalogues, reproductions, and scholarly articles, confers its value from the looking of others. The image, like the commodity, is built from the expropriation of subjective activity from its producers—be they workers on the assembly line, spectators in the cinema, or patrons in a museum. In the Philippines, this shift in the economic and social productivity of vision, which marks a profound change in the character of looking as the assembly line marked in the character of labor, coincides with Ocampo's abandonment of social realism. To demonstrate this thesis, I will look at his work in the light of what appears to me

as Ocampo's practical argument with the commodification of vision in which painting becomes an endeavor to challenge the exploitation of human productive capacities becoming endemic to visibility. Rather than a struggle in the traditional realm of political economy against the alienation of what Marx already called sensual labor, Ocampo embarks on a struggle against the alienation of the senses.

*Nationalism's Molten Prayers:  
Scenes and Spaces of Philippine-American  
Relations in the Writings of National Artist  
Hernando R. Ocampo*

*Would that they'd understood that many chambered is my  
being. A pedestal in each chamber. A god in each pedestal.*

—H. R. Ocampo

My epigram for this chapter, which I take to indicate a change in the structure of feeling not only of the writer but also, very broadly speaking, of the modern Filipino subject, is borrowed from H. R. Ocampo's short story, "Dark of Dawn," published in Manila in the *National Review* on 9 October 1936.<sup>1</sup> These lines, which index a new decidedly modern, schizophrenia, are part of what appears to be a vain attempt by a character, identified in the story only as "He," to explain his marital infidelities first to himself and later to a potential mistress. Pondering on his wife's possible opinions regarding his contemplated indiscretion, he thinks, "Could she understand this? That there is no disloyalty, no faithlessness. That in me are many chambers, in each chamber a pedestal and for each pedestal there need be a god. That for any one god in me there can be no encroachment upon any other god" (14). What is interesting here, I would argue, is not so much the age-old narrative of heterosexual

betrayal but, more, the innovative form used to express the dilemma. We are presented with a character fragmented in his interiority and composed of compartmentalized desires, absolute in their reality yet each far from universal in its sway. It is as if different moments of the protagonist's being had different trajectories, different becomings. As the penultimate event of the story, that is, at the point of the highest intensity of the contradiction of the protagonist's desire—in what would classically be the story's climax—Ocampo writes, “The atmosphere seems to swim about him as if he were liquid, as if he were drowning, smothering everything around him. He sees dark spots moving this way and that before his eyes” (14). The moral dilemma, rather than achieving some form of polarized resolution, results in something like an hallucinatory meltdown in which all particulate matter is suddenly in vertiginous flux.

Whether this vision—and it is a vision—will be radical or reactionary is perhaps too soon to pronounce. Politically speaking, the libidinal structure informing the creativity that will later be constructed in various ways as H. R. Ocampo's national(ist) artistry is, in its relation to nationalism, as complex a question as nationalism itself. What is important to observe first is the changing form of the question of agency. The question of right and wrong can no longer be considered from a single frame of reference. The frames themselves have become multiple and therefore fragmented. It might seem that the bipolar character of the ethical dilemma of “Dark of Dawn” is restated in the final exchange of the denouement:

I know I am doing you a great wrong. That I am inviting you to doom.  
—Is there?  
—Isn't there?

However, the parameters of the protagonist's moral disquietude—as the conceptual imbalance of the two final questions would show—remain in a state that is far from stable. Indeed, the “Is there?/Isn't

there?” shot/countershot with which the story closes escalates a crisis of personal integrity (“I am inviting you to [moral] doom”) to questions about the ontological temperament of the cosmos. My point here is less about the merits or demerits of infidelity or about H. R. Ocampo's assertion of masculinity as a modernist undertaking of cosmic proportions, although this latter may well return as central. For the moment I want to establish that already in 1936, long before the periods in his painting known as “The Mutants Period” (1963–1968) or the “Visual Melody Period” (1968–1978), polarized conflict already results in a field of fragments. Contradiction for H. R. Ocampo effects a compartmentalization of the self that implodes the narrative form to achieve a molten state in the visual.<sup>2</sup> Although the atmosphere “swim[ming] about him as if he were liquid” gives way here to a static image of the tête-à-tête in which the narrative breaks off, the molten state preceding closure of this kind will soon overtake such stasis and become predominant.

The above observation concerning ruptures in H. R. Ocampo's early narrative and their consequent disruption of the visual field brings me to the following question: How do we get from H. R. Ocampo's “Proletarian Period” (1934–1945), the period during which most of his fiction writing was done, to his “Visual Melody Period”—from *The Contrast* (fig. 1) to *Genesis* (fig. 2), that is, from Socialist Realism to Neorealism, or from figurative painting to abstraction.

This question breaks down into two questions, one specific and the other more general. First, what happened to the clear articulation of social protest in the paintings made by H. R. Ocampo during his proletarian period (between the late 1930s and mid-1940s) in the later non-objectivist or neorealist work?<sup>3</sup> That is, how does a clear-cut statement of social contradiction through the critical representation of inequality such as we can see in *The Contrast* (which shows a polar opposition between wealth and poverty) become a symphony of biomorphic fragments as in *Genesis*? Simply put, one might state the problem as follows: Where did the socialist



orientation go? Is it enough to say, as has been suggested, that Ocampo's style changed because, as is known, he read a lot of American magazines on the one hand, and went from poverty to relative financial security on the other? Or might we read this development of Philippine art and of "The Artist as Filipino," as Angel de Jesus's book about him is subtitled, in a more sociohistorical register rather than a merely biographical one?

To follow the question of and for Filipino socialism we must ask, does the transformation in the plasticity of Ocampo's work have any relation to the antagonism between labor and capital itself changing form? What happens between *The Contrast*, which depicts social contradiction and the struggles these imply, and *Genesis*, which suggests the birth of an authentic Philippine national culture? To see such a shift in form as being directly related to the logistics of capitalism and imperialism might offer an account of the emergence of modernism in the Philippines as more than just the migration of an idea or a set of ideas and styles. Quite often, art history imagines that a style can just be picked up at random and grafted on to an existing set of concerns. But is it possible, if only retroactively, to specify a set of necessary conditions for the emergence of particular aesthetic forms, in this case of Philippine Neorealism? To do so would demonstrate the historical materiality of aesthetic form, its historicity, while reinscribing the centrality of the people's struggle in the emergence of a Philippine nationalist tradition.

In 1968, the highly accomplished surrealist painter and then director of the National Museum of the Philippines, Galo B. Ocampo, included the following statement in his account of the emergence of Philippine modernism before the Second World War:

While representational art [Amorsolo et al.] in the Philippines was relatively stable, the entire society was on the verge of change; there was already a fragmentation of some sort, for Philippine society was even then in the process of shifting from the Spanish influence to the American. This state of affairs

facilitated the introduction of modern art, for it is easier to introduce some new cultural trait in a society that is in the process of change, than to launch it in a static society.<sup>4</sup>

Galo B. Ocampo's claim that Filipino society was in flux before the war and therefore the introduction of new aesthetic modes was possible stands. But we could make it more specific in order to increase its analytical use: How does U.S. hegemony contribute to the fragmentation of Philippine life and experience and in what way might Philippine modernism be endemic to this historical transformation of the social fabric? In other words, what are the social conditions of possibility for the so-called syncretism that characterizes the imbrication of traditional Filipino social forms with Western ones in Philippine modernism and how or in what way are they related to (forced) modernization? While the influence of Cezanne, Picasso, and Braque as well as of Surrealism, Impressionism, and the New York action painters (Jackson Pollock) is widely acknowledged in the Philippines, can the emergence of a new visual idiom be seen as both the consequence and condition of a new order of Philippine-American relations? These relations would necessarily include the Philippine-American war in which U.S. forces killed between 1/10 and 1/6 of the population of the Philippines. They would also include the trauma of both formal and informal occupations and the history of the Second World War. If so, then this aesthetic and cultural endeavor must logically appear as a new and essential component of this relationship, and, therefore, as a potentially transformative one, that is, as a moment and record of struggle.<sup>5</sup>

To return to the shift from *The Contrast* to *Genesis*:

In 1942, two years after *The Contrast* was painted, Aurelio Alvero already perceived what appeared to be a divergent aspect in H. R. Ocampo's style.

Hernando's paintings may be divided into two: those of a social nature and those pieces of pure design. Those of a social

nature are concerned with the presentation of the problems of labor in its struggle against capital. Most of them carry the stamp of a face that seems to have ingrained itself upon his brain: that of the socialist of Pampanga, Pedro Abad Santos. All his social-content paintings represent faces which are thin and gaunt and hungry, but all of them bear a semblance of the socialist leader. On the other hand, his pieces of pure design portray genre with a treatment very unlike all other paintings in the Philippines in their drawing and color.<sup>6</sup>

Pedro Abad Santos of Pampanga was a major spokesperson for the peasantry, the founder of the Socialist Party (1929), a Popular Front candidate for governor in 1937 and 1940, and an officer in the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), the Philippine Communist Party. Along with Juan Feleo, he “still has a special place in the hearts of many people of Central Luzon, not because they were officers in the PKP but because of their commitment to the movement.”<sup>7</sup> What, then, is the relationship between those paintings (and writings) that represent radical social struggle and those that effect “pure design?” Why is it that the latter type of works, the so-called nonrepresentational canvases that developed after 1950 are those which are considered by art historians as “Pinoy na Pinoy”—the highest articulation of something like Filipinoness in art?

Some say that it is precisely because of the emptying of content from their canvases that abstract artists thrived during the years of the Marcos dictatorship. Late in his career, in a 1972 interview with Cid Reyes, H. R. Ocampo said two things worth noting here: “My paintings are my autobiography,” and “Visual pleasure is the most important aspect of my work.”<sup>8</sup> Ocampo’s emphasis on self and upon pleasure seems not to see the politics of art making anymore—or perhaps, given his acknowledged debt to the Marcoses, he is seeing them too well. Nonetheless, what happened to the so-called social content of Ocampo’s work, particularly his proletarian identifications and the visual engagement with social struggle? Would it

also be possible to see the movement away from representation and toward abstracted designs—that is, designs abstracted from existing elements and given new forms by the artist—as the migration of some fundamental set of antagonisms? Might we posit a situation in which representation itself no longer offers an adequate conceptualization of or intervention in social relations?

As has been clearly documented, some of the inspiration for Ocampo’s biomorphic forms came from the shapes of things around his house in Caloocan: from leaves to the designs on an elaborate *parol* (Christmas lantern) to a urine stain on a wall.<sup>9</sup> In one of his manifestos for modernism in 1948 fittingly entitled “Towards Virility in Art,” Victorio Edades gives us a clue with respect to the migration of representation to abstraction:

Those who are familiar with the works of the many artists who change the natural shape of an object in order to fit it into the pattern they want to create can readily see a similar purpose in Hernando Ocampo’s works. The easiest way to understand this particular method of distortion is to examine closely the designs of exquisite Persian and Chinese rugs. The objects are stylized for the sake of good design and in order to suit the material. In our everyday life, we see many abstract designs of women’s dresses, curtains and table covers. If one examines these abstract designs, he will find that they are derived from leaves, flowers, fruits, trees, and human figures—from all conceivable objects we come in contact within our daily life.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the “good design” of Ocampo’s later “biomorphic forms” appears as part of a kind of second nature in which the forms of natural, technological, and mechanical products have already been incorporated into the organic fabric of the socius. Mass production in the form of “abstract designs” has entered the realm of nature vis-à-vis daily experience and thus, has necessarily altered perception.

However, to attempt to answer the question of form with respect to representation from a sociohistorical point of view, I would like to raise another. What can Ocampo's early writings of the late 1930s and early 1940s tell us about the later biomorphic paintings of the 1950s to the 1970s? These writings, perhaps more than anything else, help to explain Ocampo's formal shift in relation to his social concerns. I propose, therefore, that these writings be read at at least two levels that exceed the level of plot: first, as aesthetic theory and, second, as dream. Thus, we might find in his literary work something like a conscious analysis of the terms of aesthetic production and also, if Paul Valery is correct in saying that each epoch dreams the next, historical and biographical vectors that would affect his aesthetic production in ways that Ocampo himself might not have known.

Although we could spend a lot of time on the poems and short stories, especially "Rice and Bullets" (which I do in chap. 2), I would like to turn to H. R. Ocampo's little known novel, *Scenes and Spaces* (SS). This nearly forgotten work (which ought to be reissued as an early statement of one of the Philippines' most fecund minds) will be useful in specifying certain relations between realism and abstraction in the work of H. R. Ocampo and, perhaps, if to a lesser extent, in Philippine art.

*Scenes and Spaces* was issued serially in fifty-two installments over the course of fifty-eight weeks in the *Herald Mid-Week Magazine*, from 18 October 1939, with the last installment that I have been able to track down published in 4 December 1940.<sup>11</sup> The novel is divided into three books entitled "Maypajo" (16 chaps.), "Transition" (15 chaps.), and "Prism in the Sun" (21 chaps.). It is at once a coming-of-age story and a portrait of the artist as a young man. From what I can gather through reading and through conversations with Ocampo's descendants, much of it is autobiographical.

Because chances are that there are few readers now familiar with this novel I will begin my exploration of *Scenes and Spaces* by quoting its opening passages and then provide a summary of the key

components of the plot. But one can discern even from the title that the work will be characterized by a certain degree of fragmentation—that there will be scenes *and* spaces—and indeed the interludes become as important to the work as its inscribed events. In this novel, it is not only the elements of the plot that are important—the coming of age stories are shot through with the American presence—but also what is unwritten and unrepresented: Elements cut out from the story that can be told and elements falling in between the scenes or somehow exceeding the representable. What has been said of the abstract painting, *Genesis*, that, "In pictorial terms, the 'negative' spaces (space between objects) can become 'positive' and emerge as the objects themselves,"<sup>12</sup> is already true of this predominantly realist novel. The elisions, ruptures, and spaces-in-between that appear as interruptions or absences in the narrative continuity become essential to understanding what is indeed written. It seems as if, in order to understand what is seen, one also had to understand what is unseen, beyond the horizon of the word.

Although readers might think of Ocampo's device of incorporating fragmentation as but a convenient concession to the serial format in which the novel appeared or as an accommodation to the need to write in spurts for what was most likely a weekly check, I would suggest that for Ocampo the fragmentary character of his narrative production was not inconsistent with the fragmentary character of his experience and his vision. Indeed, this fragmentation is one of the themes of the novel, and, I should add here, it is directly linked to the penetration of Filipino society by American-style capitalism. As Filipino publications bearing such English titles as the *National Review* and the *Herald Mid-Week* already imply, the very media of Filipino expression were being fused with American cultural and economic forms of expression. We might hypothesize that what was occurring at the level of the individual periodical or article (the commodification of self-expression) also had its effects on the articulation of individuals and even of individual words (the commodification of self and the commodification of language).

It may well be that it is already a cliché that modernity is synonymous with commodification and fragmentation, that is, with the breakup of traditional forms of life and the inversion or evaporation of traditional values. It may also be widely accepted, although to a lesser extent, that modernism is the cultural complement of modernization, the registration of and indeed the software for the new temporalities, the new publics or markets, in short, for the entire array of emergent conditions of urban life characterized by industrial production and an intensified money economy. Nonetheless, it is a useful insight, when thinking about the tendency toward abstraction and, importantly here, the severing of vision from narrative life (the autonomization of vision), to recall that the logic of exchange-value that turns everyday things into commodities also imbues them with an abstract dimension. Exchangeability in the medium of money makes all things comparable to all other things (from rice to bullets) and, thus, places them in gradients of flow that are abstract. This has the effect of prying things loose from their social embeddedness and setting them in motion, both conceptually and materially. For example, consider deforestation or agrarian migration to Manila. With deforestation, the trees and whole forests actually move; they are thought of and realized as money. With agrarian migration, whole towns are uprooted by an abstract logic with real effects. Thus, the question, “What are the particular circumstances and consequences of rupture inscribed by this Filipino writer, national-artist-to-be H. R. Ocampo, during this particular period in Philippine history?” will help us illuminate some of the social factors bearing upon his aesthetic expression and possibly upon Filipino aesthetic expression in general. After all if, as Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, with the processes of modernization, “All that is solid melts into air,” what does this melting look like in the Philippines if not like an H. R. Ocampo painting?<sup>13</sup>

*Scenes and Spaces* tells the story of two brothers, Leonardo and Teodoro, as they journey from elementary school into early man-

hood. Although at first seemingly incidental, the presence of their teacher, Mrs. Morante, turns out to be decisive for the fate of the brothers and their family. Mrs. Morante, who relishes the English language and the hygiene of official state-nationalism, is in subtle ways that often escape full narration, a figure of authority, seduction, and destruction. Like many of the novels of early Western modernism, *Scenes and Spaces* begins in a pedagogical vein. The first scene, we quickly find out, is set in a classroom where English is being taught to Filipino first graders:

Johnny get your gun  
get your gun-n-n  
get your gun-n-n  
Johnny get your hoe  
get your hoe-oe-oe  
get your hoe-oe-oe

and

over there  
over there  
in the world  
in the world-d-d

and

it's a long way  
to Tipperary  
it's a long way  
to g-o-o

were the stray bits of songs that wafted from without into the stiff and correct schoolroom atmosphere. And the young teacher, Mrs. Morante, sitting on her elevated platform be-

tween the blackboards on the wall and the four rows of first grade (1-b) pupils, thought how noisy the neighborhood kids were, singing American songs one word of which they didn't even understand. Their parents ought to know better than let the children romp around aimlessly, singing, shouting, behaving like a bunch of scalawags (how she liked that word—scalawag—she liked the sound of it as the base of her tongue struck the roof of her mouth and rolled on to meet the back of her teeth before coming to the last syllable *wag*—scalawag; but she couldn't use it now or teach it to these innocent little darlings). Instead of sending them to school where they might learn something and be made into more vigorous and useful Filipino citizens, these ignorant mothers just didn't care and allowed their children to go around doing mischief, listening to dirty stories told by poolroom bugs, prostitutes, taxi-dancers, matrons, and pimps to their colleagues (now that was a nice word—colleague—too nice and too good to be used for such a lot) picking stray American songs from drunken American sailors and soldiers; instead of singing Jose Rizal was born on June 19; or Oh, children, obey your parents.<sup>14</sup>

Ocampo begins the novel with fragments from American songs sung by Filipino children, and the teacher's, Mrs. Morante's, reflection that they do not even understand what they are saying. But as the structure of this first long paragraph will make clear, it is not only the children who do not understand the dynamics of the presence of English as the power language of imperialist America. As Ocampo shows by dwelling upon Mrs. Morante's savoring of the pronunciation of "scalawag," the pleasures of American power are not merely rational, but also visceral. Although welded here to a word, this pleasure is affective and corporeal; it exceeds the word's meaning while being ironized by it.<sup>15</sup> The writer, whom Mrs. Morante's young pupil, Teodoro, will become over the course of the

novel, must be aware of just this aesthetic bind of colonization. Here, however, we are to notice precisely that there are aesthetic dimensions to power, and as Marinetti and the Futurists made clear, to domination and destruction as well.

Fittingly, the book begins in a traditional modernist writer's mode with a lesson about language.<sup>16</sup> To remark upon this didactic tendency is not in the least to trivialize it. In order to dramatize the imperialist transformations of language, Ocampo chooses to represent an institutional space designed to regulate the intersection between Tagalog and English. The depiction of the space of the classroom and of official pedagogy, that is, of the space for officiating the mind, offers an excellent opportunity to explore the intimate exchanges between two cultures. Ocampo's novel shows the classroom to be an improperly idealistic and idealizing space bent upon repressing the social conditions of its pedagogical aspirations.

Like Stephen Daedalus's brusque assertion to the school headmaster in James Joyce's *Ulysses* that God is a shout in the street, Ocampo's opening juxtaposes arbitrarily found fragments of human life—just voices out there—in a way that shows that these fragments from everyday life can be read as influential and meaningful in ways that may exceed common understanding. He is offering a reading lesson that would be unteachable in the classroom he depicts. Ocampo juxtaposes found fragments and from these the artist produces a legible image of the world. If I were to venture a reading of these fragments, I would say that they assert in an American key a relation between militarization and agriculture (Johnny get your gun/hoe) unfolding in the context of the presence of "over there" and "the word" in the here and now of small-town life, with the proviso that "it's a long way to go-o-o-o" until the promises of modernization are achieved. Thus, Ocampo decodes the shards of America he finds in Philippine life. Far from being inert elements, they are part of a general technology of imperialism and in the form of words, songs, and machines, among other mediations, combine, as it were, cybernetically with Filipino bodies.

One could say then that already, in these song fragments and the long opening paragraph which follows, the novel's primary theme and its variations are put forth: There is an American presence in Philippine life that will impose itself in ways that cannot be isolated—nor are they readily intelligible, nor regulated by individual will. Aspects of the world are being forced to operate according to a new logic. Mrs. Morante herself does not understand all aspects of what she is supposedly teaching for, as in the novels of European Realism written from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century show, world-historical social forces transcend individual will and reason. Ocampo will examine this—the cultural logic of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines—at length. His subject matter in *Scenes and Spaces* will be a survey of what momentarily appears as the tectonic collision of two cultural plates (that of the U.S. and that of the Philippines), which will grind against each other and in the process produce a generation—and an artist.<sup>17</sup>

In the opening passage above, Mrs. Morante's desires for a progressive national identity ("Jose Rizal was born on June 19") are ironized by her absurd pride and sense of superiority conferred by her knowledge of American English. She misses two important points that Ocampo's irony makes clear. The first point is that which she despises, the children's singing of American songs, is an index of precisely the conditions by which she has learnt English and maintains her superior airs. The precondition of her identity, or at least of her identifications, is U.S. colonialism made possible through military power and the presence of soldiers. The second point that Mrs. Morante misses is that the songs, the poolroom stories, and cabaret vignettes, are at once the very media of present-day instruction and what she must repress to maintain the image she has both of herself and of the Philippines. The drunken sailors are part and parcel of the "correct schoolroom atmosphere" dictated by the American colonial educational system that Mrs. Morante is a product of and disseminates, just as American protocols for national power (What should a nation look like? How do you make "useful Filipino citi-

zens"?) determine her understanding of a correct Filipino national identity. English here provides the language and the forms for the representation of nationalism, and it is shown to be inadequate. It is, perhaps, the supreme irony of this opening section that Mrs. Morante would exhort the children to obey their parents even though she derides their "ignorant mothers." Her contradictory inclinations show that she has a respect for the forms of authority while exercising only a limited ability in the critical analysis of authority. And this colonial relation, called "veneration without understanding," by Renato Constantino, and what I might be tempted to call a short-circuiting of thought, is, in part how colonialism perpetuates itself (as long as it is backed up by military and economic force). Ocampo, however, is not interested only in the intellectual analysis of a "colonial mentality." Mrs. Morante "liked that word—scalawag—she liked the sound of it as the base of her tongue struck the roof of her mouth and rolled on to meet the back of her teeth before coming to the last syllable *wag*—scalawag; but she couldn't use it now or teach it to these innocent little darlings." In the use of free and indirect discourse ("these innocent little darlings") to compose a portrait of Mrs. Morante's micro-psycho-dramas, Ocampo wrestles with what exceeds "mentality": How American power penetrates the fabric of Filipino lives, how it organizes lived experience, structures the libido, regulates affect, and inflects the imagination.

Moreover, Ocampo's ironies emphasize a principal tenet of Philippine modernism present in Manila after Victorio Edades's return to Manila in 1928—the rejection of idealistic and academic portrayals of reality. Formalizing his differences with the artists known as the Conservatives in a series of three articles written after the war, Edades wrote: "In most Academic artists, contemporary life inspires no independent action. They are held in bondage by the works of their predecessors and by accumulated art forms bearing *little or no relation to their own experience*. Their point of view is not creative but historical and archaeological. In essence, the Academic represents the conventional as opposed to the original."<sup>18</sup> Ocampo is here al-

ready interested in the realm of experience, in the quotidian, in the way in which life is positioned and structured by forces from outside but nonetheless lived.<sup>19</sup> These dynamic forces are not easily accessible to rational thought formalized in other eras and places because, rather than corresponding to ideals abstracted from earlier social formations, these forces pass through the very materiality of social life. Note that Mrs. Morante in this first paragraph is located very precisely in space: “Mrs. Morante, sitting on her elevated platform between the blackboards on the wall and the four rows of first grade (1-b) pupils, *thought . . .*” (SS, bk. 1:1; italics mine), as if the thought emerged out of that particular space itself. *Scenes and Spaces* plies the following dialectic: that people are, to a certain extent, artifacts of the sociohistorical scenes and spaces they occupy and that they simultaneously have intense volition. To rephrase Marx, Ocampo shows that we are media of history in the sense that it courses through us and overdetermines our possibilities, but also makers of history, in the sense that we create out of what we are thrown into what we will be.

The key thing to keep in mind with relation to the power of English and the authority it conveys in the Philippines is that no matter how contradictory its logic, its pleasures and effects are real. These effects will at once transform Filipino narrative and, with H. R. Ocampo, exceed it. This excess, this beyond narrative, has everything to do with the viscosity of a power that is subtle, diffuse, unlocalizable, and for these reasons, abstract while remaining material. Still in the first chapter, Ocampo deploys additional ironic representations of the sociolinguistic dynamics of American power (“‘Now children,’ Mrs. Morante began in English, trying to inject authority—not harsh but kind authority—into her voice” [ibid., 9]). The portrayal of these dynamics are designed to represent power’s complexity *and* corporeality: “And she concluded her sermon with the single word, ‘position.’ This she said in English, and the pupils automatically stiffened their backs straight against their desks, and their hands (the fingers interlaced) they woodenly thrust forward on

top of their writing boards” (ibid.). These representations will ultimately show how the logic of a new form of power, for which English is a cutting-edge instrument, produces a kind of experience that is beyond representation. “Position” demands an act of obedience that is a full-body experience. Although English here is a medium of instruction, the experiences it structures move beyond the linguistic into the corporeal and, as we shall see, the visual.

This is, perhaps, the correct place to recall that the imposition of English and an Americanizing educational system was not an act of sheer generosity on the part of the United States but, rather, was an effort of “pacification.” It was part of the cultural war effort made by the United States during the Philippine-American War. Indeed, this effort continues. Only a few years ago, the United States Information Service (USIS) prepared for a centennial “celebration” of the arrival of the Thomasites—approximately six hundred American teachers who traveled to the Philippines aboard the U.S.S. *Thomas* arriving in September of 1901.<sup>20</sup> The ongoing eruption of critiques on the uses of English clearly illustrate that the issue of English and Americanization has not yet been settled. In a section of *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, entitled “Pacification through Education,” historian Renato Constantino said:

The principal agent of Americanization was the public school system, and the master stroke of educational policy was the adoption of English as the medium of instruction.

Miseducated Filipinos invariably regard as one of the unqualified benefits of American colonial rule the rapid introduction, on a large scale, of the public school system. They point to the early efforts to put up schools as evidence of the altruistic intentions of the United States government. On the contrary, what initially spurred the establishment of public schools was the conviction of the military leaders that education was one of the best ways of promoting the pacification of the islands. In recommending a large appro-

priation for school purposes, Gen. Arthur MacArthur frankly revealed his purpose in these words: “The appropriation is recommended primarily and exclusively as an adjunct to military operations calculated to pacify the people and to procure and expedite the restoration of tranquility throughout the archipelago.”<sup>21</sup>

Constantino calls the Philippine educational system, rightly in my view, the “handmaiden of colonial policy” (317), arguing that it allowed for closer supervision and administration of Philippine society and that it co-opted Filipino minds, since English became under the colonial administration the key to individual advancement in government and business and the vehicle for the dissemination of American culture. It produced a psychological advantage for the colonial power, since the culture and language of the colonizer became the available medium for personal empowerment, and English also opened markets for the penetration of American products and investment, since it created aspirations for things American. No doubt such vectors continue to operate under the economic and cultural regimen known as globalization. Thus, Ocampo’s engagement with English and with the deep structural transformation it wrought on the Philippine narrative and the Philippine psyche itself seems particularly apt.

Before turning to the nonrepresentational dimensions of *Scenes and Spaces*, that is, to the departure from Realism, let me offer two points by way of summary. First, Ocampo shows that English humiliates as it empowers because Filipino users of the imperial idiom refer themselves to the judgments and sensibilities of a world that exists apart from the Philippines as it is, or at least, as it was. This is also clear from Ocampo’s parodies of the Filipino schoolchildren’s incorrect English usage. Although colonial subjects aspire to the stature of the colonizer, they are always undercut (at least in Ocampo’s representation) by their incomplete assimilation of the American idiom. Ocampo’s efforts to become a man of letters in English are

undoubtedly bound up with an aspiration to transcend this imperial relation.

Second, Mrs. Morante, in part because of the power conferred upon her by her knowledge of the imperial language, is an important if not the central object of desire for the male characters. The attraction to everything she embodies leads to the narrative complications. Despite her internally contradictory character, she has a profoundly seductive presence which, in excess of all her intentions, indelibly marks the male characters in the narrative: her pupil Leonardo, his brother Teodoro, and their father, whose name is the same as that of H. R. Ocampo’s father, Don Emilio. Mrs. Morante’s seductive appeal, which is linked to her authority as a schoolteacher and to her values (values which allow her to dispatch with an inconvenient husband and pursue her course as an independent woman), depends upon the presence of American power and simultaneously disseminates American power.

Lest anyone get the impression that *Scenes and Spaces* is unequivocally a modernist manifesto, full of found objects and hallucinatory prose, I should hasten to say that much of the novel remains quite conventional, deploying by and large the flat reportage of realism to construct a desiring woman as a femme fatale who unwittingly mediates imperialism. Book 1 narrates Leonardo’s first forays into sexuality, including his intense attraction to Mrs. Morante, and books 2 and 3 relate the story of the younger Teodoro’s coming into manhood following upon Leonardo’s failure, all of which take place over the long decline of Don Emilio’s fortunes. These intrigues are developed in a manner typical of the pulp of this period. Structurally, however—in ways I will not have time to do justice to here—*Scenes and Spaces* is extremely innovative. The novel is most original where, as in “Dark of Dawn,” the plot proceeds to its crisis points. These crisis points result from a pressurization of the fragmentation already discussed.

Generally, the movement is as follows: The plot winds itself into a severe complication by frustrating a character’s desires



and cutting short *his* aspirations. At the moment of subduction, the character has a vision. Here is the first vision that overtakes the older brother, Leonardo. Beaten up on the dance floor in front of Mrs. Morante, and then later sexually rebuffed by her, the despondent Leonardo falls into a reverie while staring down at the “dazzling pinpoints of the midday sun reflected by the street’s sharp and craggy pebbles” (SS, bk. 1:11; 11, 27 December 1939):

And after a few minutes images began to form themselves inside the closed lids of his eyes. At the beginning it was something blurred and indistinct—something like the unnatural and unrecognizable sequence of lights and shadows in a badly focused photographic negative plate. Later, however, the indistinct lights and shadows shifted slowly but continuously until they united to form a pair of eyes—beautiful, mischievous, and knowing eyes. The pair of eyes slowly receded and the image locally included in its recession, first the eyebrows and a well-shaped nose between them, then onto a pair of lovely lips, and so logically on and on, until finally the face of a woman was completed.

This composition takes place before the eyes of Leonardo when the unfolding of his desire is blocked by the realist plot, that is, by the imposition of external, “objective” factors on his subjective fantasy. Leonardo’s burgeoning manhood has at this point been doubly challenged, first because he was beaten up by a pimp in front of Mrs. Morante in a scuffle over her attention and, second, because of her treatment of him as a child during a moment of charged intimacy. “[S]he had seen only that he had a body big enough to desire but not man enough to respect” (ibid.). Leonardo recovers from his daydream with a start and suddenly feels that he has made a blunder, “a stupid and unforgivable man-blunder.” The vision shows him this; it is not reasoned out in language. Rather, the perception of a blun-

der arises from an interpretation of an image, which is itself a condensation of the narrative tensions.

It is important to emphasize that both challenges to Leonardo’s manhood have their root causes in the American presence—it was American former servicemen who founded Maypajo’s cabaret and subsequently transformed the character of the town with the ensuing night life, prostitution, and requisite thugs, and it was the Americans who transformed the educational system, began the institutionalization of English, and in effect conjured the likes of the seductive Mrs. Morante. That Philippine-American relations somehow underlie the subjective and narrative determinations of the characters makes Mrs. Morante’s appearance to Leonardo as an image logically persuasive: Whatever she is concretely, she is also an image of a process occurring behind or beyond her, and it is in part as an image that she attracts.

Thus, English/Americanization is the condition of possibility for narrative. Filipino life is depicted as working itself out in the context of a transformed psycholinguistic environment and undergoing a certain crisis that propels it out of Realism. Just as the trauma of the American presence becomes the condition for narrative in these scenes and spaces of Filipino life, the interruptions in narrative release a form of what might be called Filipino modernity, which is heretofore residual. These imagistic disruptions, these perturbations in the imaginary that disrupt the functioning of the symbolic order, exist in place of narrative and for that matter narrateable resolutions to particular tensions and conflicts. This historical situation generates particularly original forms, forms that have their impetus in blocked desires bound up in a blocked nationalism, and thus must find their realizations in visual culture and/or war. As if to mark such changing times, the American-instigated cabaret tells Leonardo the time each evening because of the regularity of the start of its music: 8 p.m. In addition to insisting upon a new tempo for life and, along with that, a new historical moment, the American presence, as the presence of the English language (with all of the military

and economic violence that makes its dissemination possible), deploys, at many levels in the narrative, new orders of power and seduction. The previously discussed Socialist Party maxims from this time, “Books turn men into cowards,” and “A single battle is worth ten schools,” take on a new resonance, as if they were denouncing the internal limits of available language and education.<sup>22</sup>

Even if many of the motivations depicted within the stories here are bound up with imperfect attempts to romance American forms, that is, even if myriad aspects of Filipino life (aspects which may include the writing of novels such as this one) are motivated by new orders of desire encoded by U.S. values, the crisis that results in the imperfect realization of these desires, as well as from the counterimpulses they arouse, produces something fundamentally new. Thus one could forcefully disagree here with the charge that Philippine modernism is a mere copy of First World modernism, or even that it is a simulacrum of Western modernism. Rather than being unoriginal or “neither copy nor original,” it is perhaps better to think of Philippine modernity as both copy *and* original. This formulation sublates Baudrillard’s intentionally antidialectical category of the simulacrum by implanting the nonhistorical in a particular place and time. Under the colonial imperative to copy American forms, original forms were generated. These forms themselves altered a new cycle of imperatives and resistance. The impossibility of achieving a national masculinity under the emasculating sway of a hegemonic imperial U.S. masculinity, for example, resulted in visionary artists or, alternately, rebels waging guerrilla war in the mountains. This situation, of the imposition of impossible because internally contradictory tasks on colonized peoples slated for exploitation is, then, an indispensable accompaniment to our understanding of U.S. modernization and modernity. Such a formulation positions Philippine modernism as the antithesis of the simulacrum, the real McCoy, as it were.

Thirty years later, during high (forced) modernization, “McCoy” (i.e., “Macoy”) and “the real McCoy,” perhaps not-so sur-

prisingly, served as nicknames for the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. For it was the Marcos “strongman” regime, with Marcos’s heroic war stories and fake war decorations (debunked, ironically by another real McCoy, Alfred W. McCoy), and the U.S. backing that propped the whole thing up that licensed, as it were, the reality of the U.S. From 1898 forward, U.S. policy makers themselves have considered the Philippines as being essential to U.S. political strategic and economic interests. Psychoanalytically, the wordplay works like this: Marcos is called “the real Macoy,” which, by virtue of being American slang, surreptitiously acknowledges that his actual power derives from the U.S. The use of the American vernacular at once emphasizes his inexorability and ironizes his image by naming the sham backing of U.S. power. “The real Macoy” names the falseness of the Marcos strongman regime that is truly the reality of Philippine-American relations.

In another twist, the use of this phrase to describe Marcos jabs at the U.S. as the scene and origin of the phrase itself, and of the reality it purportedly designates since U.S. reality is underpinned by the (for it) invisible realities inflicted upon the people by Marcos. Thus, Marcos really is the real McCoy, the truth of U.S. reality which is falsehood. Even the ability of the American past to become real through its persistence in the American present is anchored by contemporary Philippine reality. Thus, if Marcos is archetypal of Philippine modernity, the antithesis of the simulacrum, both copy and original, then (given the number of U.S.-backed dictatorships established worldwide), Third World modernisms are to modernism and postmodernism what the real McCoy is to U.S. reality: inexorable. Just as there is no imaginable U.S. reality without Marcos and his dictator copies disseminated worldwide, there is no modernism and postmodernism without Third World modernism.

The originality of the Philippine copy can be seen most clearly here at the ruptures within narrative form. In *Scenes and Spaces*, the narratives in which the desires embodied by characters are caught up in an effort to copy the forms of power and privilege legislated

formally and informally by U.S. imperial power break down when their aspirations become unrealizable—precisely the moments when vision becomes semiautonomous.<sup>23</sup> Vision splits off from narrative Realism, seeking its own potentials. Indeed, in the passage above, the vision of the desired object emerges out of Leonardo's field of vision, previously having been merged with it. Out of the immediate appearance of the environment, "the dazzling points of the midday sun," a pair of eyes resolve themselves. The recession of this image from "indistinct lights and shadows" receding to reveal eyes, "the eyebrows and a well-shaped nose," until finally the "face of a woman was completed" is described first by the focusing of a photographic plate and then a zoom out. Ocampo depicts these eyes as if they simultaneously came out of Leonardo's surroundings and peeled themselves away from his own eyes. It is as if, in the psychotechnical process of resolving itself, the world he was looking at and through, peels off the surface of his eyes and suddenly confronts him as an Other—a seductive Other, an Americanized Other, and an Other who can look back and chastise him for not being enough of a man. The image of Mrs. Morante is composed by a filmic zoom out from a world that was in her eyes.

In addition to speaking eloquently by condensing the relationship between masculinity and national subject formation, this peeling away of the visual from the law of the signifier, that is, from language itself (as a visual hallucination), also provides a thesis regarding the intensive use of images by the U.S. for purposes of imperialism. Visuality as an emergent site of Philippine autonomy also became a necessary zone of intervention and pacification by U.S. cultural imperialism through strategies of domestic organization and control as well as advertising. More generally, this splitting of visuality from literary Realism specifies the entry point of image culture into subjectivity as the point where irreconcilable differences and contradictions are negotiated.

Significantly, the image relation erupts directly out of what might first appear as unmediated reality. The photographic plate

which, as a yet-to-be-written history of Philippine visuality might demonstrate, has been to culture as finance capital has been to economics, qualitatively transforming culture's penetration and significance.<sup>24</sup> It is to be found at the inauguration of perceptual shifts that disrupt the psycholinguistic field—in short, those shifts first extolled under the rubric of modernism. A technological process, photography would seem to provide the model for a new order of interiority, a new regime of perception. Elsewhere, I have argued that the generalization of photographic imagery via mechanical reproduction induces what modern psychoanalysis identified as the unconscious.<sup>25</sup> However, what Ocampo's vision shows equally is that *a new regime of perception creates the scenes and spaces for the instrumental insertion of technology*. In an ostensibly nontechnological way, *out of the very materiality of quotidian existence*, Philippine modernity finds itself constituted in a dynamic said to be first and foremost technological—scholars ordinarily think of the technical apparatuses of imperialism as constitutive of the postcolonial Third World. Here, we may observe that it is the failure of forms of desire that come from outside, the parapraxis of daily life if you will, that gives rise to the dream and opens up the space of the imaginary.

In the introduction to this volume, I mentioned Rey Chow's retelling of Lu Xun's story as "a good way of showing how 'self-consciousness' is produced in the postcolonial 'Third World.'"<sup>26</sup> She writes, "This self-consciousness is inextricably linked to the position of being a spectator. . . . [For Lu Xun] National self-consciousness is thus not only a matter of watching 'China' being represented on the screen, it is more precisely watching one's self—as a film, as a spectacle, as something always already watched."<sup>27</sup> In Leonardo's cases, the eyes that coalesce in his vision emerge directly out of the materiality of Leonardo's environs, not from an encounter with technology per se. These eyes are "eye[s] in matter," as Deleuze says of Dziga Vertov's camera, a form of panopticism here far more insidious because far more ubiquitous than Bentham's. It is as if there is so much American will in things that the U.S. looks back at Leonardo

through the objects of everyday. First, the new properties of objects induce a new order of sight but only, it seems, so that one might see these objects looking back, belittling, accusing, and humiliating the seer. Thus, the dynamics of national subjectivity as well as what Rey Chow provocatively calls “autoethnography” are induced in the Philippines through the virulent imperialist forces impacted in—and impacting on—matter itself. This world is filmic even in the absence of film.

Like his eldest son Leonardo, Don Emilio, in his moment of crisis, sees the molten image embodying the seduction and power that has wrought the dissolution of his good fortune: Mrs. Morante. As a civic leader, it was Don Emilio who first wanted the school for the community, the school which brought Mrs. Morante; but it is also Mrs. Morante and the community’s contradictory reaction to the morals of the cabaret that have led to Maypajo’s hypocritical condemnation of Leonardo and will lead to Don Emilio’s financial ruin.

This contradictory situation explodes as follows: During an uproar Don Emilio saves his unwitting nemesis, Mrs. Morante, from being stoned by an angry mob. Afterwards, he goes through a restless night full of dreams:

And across the vast semi-translucent cellophane-like screen that hovered dizzily back and forth, back and forth the visual entirety of Don Emilio’s inner eyes came the face of Mrs. Morante. The face kept rippling and writhing like a mass of dough kneaded by a pair of playful hands now contorting itself hideously into an ugly and painful complaint, now fashioning itself into a demoniacal and lunatic sneer. (SS, bk. 1:9, 11; 31 Jan. 1940)

Again, veteran viewers of H. R. Ocampo’s paintings will recognize an apt description of their visual effects in the rippling and writhing mass of dough. It is during this dream sequence, which continues

with a composite face on the “vast semi-translucent cellophane-like screen” composed of Leonardo and Mrs. Morante and ends with a stone shedding her blood, that we first suspect that Don Emilio has banished the humiliated Leonardo in order to save face with the community. This act of Leonardo’s banishment, so crucial to the novel is, deftly, not narrated. It is a space among the scenes, an unlanguage event whose place is held by a visual eruption—this time not exactly an image, but a becoming-image—a protoimage. The visual, in a state that is indeterminate or not yet congealed, marks one of the most emotionally contradictory and devastating events of the novel, as if an image that retained its plasticity by being able to swing in and out of different states somehow expressed the vectors of force permeating material reality more organically than an image that resolved itself as representation. These dream images that will later find pure visual form in the paintings of H. R. Ocampo are vibrant distortions in the perceptual field that must be understood as displacements of real events. This is not to say, however, that the visions *mean* these events. It is the modality of vision, the fact of a transforming and potentially transformative visuality, which is given precedence.

Teodoro, Leonardo’s younger brother, also has a series of visions described in terms that could well describe H. R. Ocampo paintings to come twenty years later. Indeed, Teodoro begins to cultivate these visions and over the course of the novel, they become increasingly abstract. For it is he, and not Leonardo, whom Mrs. Morante used to ask to draw *for her*, who will become the artist. His first vision comes after a long illness, an illness resulting from an unnarrated accident, which occurs in the space between book 1 and book 2. This illness, given but brief mention, is directly, although subtly, linked to the American presence in the Philippines: The necessary condition of possibility for Teodoro’s fall from a horse was a “long vacation” in Nueva Ecija taken by Don Emilio and his family to avoid the public scandal over the unconsummated incident involving Leonardo and Mrs. Morante. Leonardo was attracted to

Mrs. Morante because of her contradictory embodiment of colonial ambitions and, therefore, the family would not have had to escape scandal in Nueva Ecija had it not been for her. These connections are not stated but must be deduced. Again, the vision occurs in the midst of a complex series of interruptions in narrative flow, that is, interruptions in what might have been the natural course of the lives of the characters before the American presence. Teodoro's vision literally *erupts* from the trauma of discontinuity:

*NevermindNevermindNevermind*, steadily repeated itself within him for quite a long while in a sob-whisper that was softer than the softest voice-whisper and his eyes became wide and dreamy as he stared at the street in front of the house. (SS, bk. 2:1, 9)

Here, explicitly, as meaning and history become emotive, voice gives way to vision:

Then the big round eye began to float gently. Floating, floating, gently, gently upward and upward. One big round eye gently floating upward seeing white blinding light. White blinding light all over.

Now it had suddenly ceased floating upward and was now hanging unmoving in space. The darkness, dazzling and complete, all around for a brief one-millionth moment.

And then the big round eye slowly came back seeing everything and nothing in a whirling sphere of soft jelly-like mass of white and black, of red and green, of orange, blue and violet.

*Everything and nothing. Everything and nothing.* (SS, bk. 2:1; 9, 7 Feb. 1940)

At the height of the vision, "everything and nothing" were "whirling. Whirling and whirling" (9) until "the one big round eye oblongated. And cell-like the oblongated body slowly divided itself into two rounded masses . . .

"And the whirling masses of white and black, of red and green, of orange, blue and violet slowly faded into thin air"(14). Teodoro's physical sensations returned and "his eyes saw the deserted street in front of the house, no longer bathed in the soft rays of the sun, for twilight had already descended and the street was now sadly quiet and reverently tranquil under the semidarkness of approaching night" (14).

The vision, which reads as nothing less than a rebirth out of the collapse of familiar space and time, ends with a call from Teodoro's mother, "Teodoro, . . . Teodoro. Where are you Teodoro? his mother called again" (14).

And the twelve-year-old boy slowly walked toward their house without answering his mother. He did not want to frighten her with the strength of his voice and the tallness of his being. (14)

Ocampo, who at this point in his life is both writer and painter, finds a rekindling of voice in visual experience. Not just a new vision but a new order of vision provides the distinctive quality of Ocampo's voice. It is an ontogenetic mutation in the making of an artist and a man. Because of the many events depicted here that are taken from Ocampo's life, one cannot help but see the novel as partially autobiographical. The eye, by turns autonomous, godlike, hallucinogenic, enlightening, and reproductive, gives birth to what de Jesus will call "the artist as Filipino."

Already here, in the prose of the early 1940s, we have a complex prototype for the late 1960s painting, *Genesis*. A new vision, a new birth and, yes, a "new society," emerges from the disappointments history has dealt to desire. The formal failure of a protonationalist bildungsroman in English gives rise to the visions that will characterize the later works of Ocampo, including perhaps what one might see as certain protofascist tendencies, tendencies that are echoed in the Marcoses' own co-optation of the people's

nationalist discourse for dictatorship. Very likely the seeds of fascism were planted when English became hegemonic, when the materials officially prescribed for the representation of daily life were imposed from elsewhere by force. Hence the structural and, indeed, instrumental inadequacy of English. In the scene above, however, the vision is a line of flight. Each flight into the visual in *Scenes and Spaces* represents a release from the narrative—here “everything and nothing,” the mantra issuing from the lips of the awakening dreamer, is precisely the abstraction of scenes and spaces, which then provides something to the visionary (after-images of knowledge, fortitude, pleasure) upon his return to the world of narratives. Indeed, the cell division of “the one big round eye” into “two rounded masses,” which becomes the whirling masses of color, indicates that the later paintings are made out of eyes, or more particularly, that the whirling masses of the later paintings are forged out of the objectively and subjectively transformed character of seeing. The apotheosis of the eye in *Scenes and Spaces* that marks the particular historical moment when the acquisition of a new order of eyes is fully realized, also points to a historically new aspect of materiality. The seer is fully imbricated in the seen, at once seeing and seen by his or her world. Therefore, subjects tend to become objects, objects tend to become subjects, and visuality and national consciousness become inseparable. Neorealism is the visual registration of the melting of subjects into objects and objects into subjects, the becoming molten of a typical, neocolonial nation caught in the abstract, capitalist logic of imperialist modernity.

In the second half of *Scenes and Spaces*, Teodoro’s visual experiences become somewhat of an obsession. As if to engage more directly in the fabric of existence, he is always endeavoring to conduct visual experiments by concentrating his gaze for long periods. But the story constantly interrupts. He aspires to a new order of vision but cannot sustain it. Teodoro’s visions provide a libidinal plenitude not available to him in the narrative of his life. At one point, for example, his friends pull him away from staring at the dazzling light of the sun

reflected upon the water to see a man and a woman making love—exciting, but somehow anticlimactic. Teodoro’s visual experiments are related to his powerful but blocked desire for Nena, a blonde American girl, and are intensified by his inability to speak of his love. What is actually never explicitly stated but is nevertheless made clear by the structure of *Scenes and Spaces* is that Leonardo’s naive but devastating flirtation with the English teacher is the cause of Don Emilio’s increasing poverty (his morally outraged friends shun him, he is forced to leave town), which is, in turn, the cause of Teodoro’s smaller allowance and, therefore, the indirect cause of Teodoro’s vision quest. Because of extreme poverty, Teodoro cannot properly court Nena and must envision his satisfaction and his manhood another way. Teodoro’s poverty, inexorably and multiply tied to an invisible American presence, is central to books 2 and 3.

In the novel’s climactic vision, an older Teodoro, plagued by guilt too complex to summarize here, cuts up an American-style suit that he has just purchased with money he stole from his sister. In a protonationalist gesture, he flushes these pieces of American culture down the toilet. While still on the bus from the tailor shop, he already imagines cutting up the suit, which was to be his entry ticket into an upper-class social club. He imagined the act “with a sadistic and deliberate vehemence that actually sent electromagnetic fluids of pleasure and satisfaction through every layer of his flesh to the very marrow of his bones” (*SS*, bk. 3:12; 25 Sept. 1940). He dreams of flushing the long and streaming ribbons swirling down the toilet, and when he goes home, he actualizes the dream. In short, in the toilet bowl he makes an H. R. Ocampo painting out of the swirling ribbons of the American suit.

Although in many previous occasions in the novel the characters had engaged in imaginative acts (Teodoro as a boy often imagines what he will say to girls only to say something idiotic when the time comes), this destruction of the American suit, which was to clothe him in imperialist trappings and give him upward mobility, is the first imaginative act in the novel to fully realize itself in practice.

After this incident, Teodoro gives up the social club, hangs out in bars, has affairs with numerous women and writes prize-winning short stories. From what I can tell, the novel breaks off here as it approximates autobiography, having accomplished its work of producing a Filipino artist and an artist as Filipino.

What does this reading of Ocampo's novel have to do with this chapter's opening question, "How did we get from Socialist Realism to Filipino Neorealism?"

The short answer is that a new period in U.S.-Philippine relations demands new terms for Filipino creativity and nationalist aspirations. Social contradictions, at least for some sectors of society, achieved an intensive penetration and diffusion that rendered their resolution unimaginable either in narrative or in historical form. In the coming intra-imperialist war and the Cold War atmosphere that followed shortly thereafter, both fulfillment and revolution, that is, in either case, a fully decolonized nationalism, became unthinkable for many Filipinos despite their strong anti-American sentiments. As Petronilo Bn. Daroy writes, "In the fifties, the quality of arts and letters reflected the fears and vacillations generated by the McCarthyist witchhunt and the policy of containment of the United States. . . . In place of politically committed literature, the cultural scene was deluged with abstract modernist art, the writings of Freud, Jung and Kierkegaard, and the novels of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Henry Miller."<sup>28</sup> For the moment, the nationalist revolution was on hold. The revolution that did take place immediately after the post-war period was forced modernization and alongside it, an aesthetic revolution—modernism, to be blunt—with its most revolutionary dimension in the visual sphere.<sup>29</sup> The political regeneration of the 1960s was yet to come, and as we shall see, it took up the visual in surprising ways.

For the moment, this account leaves out a political pronouncement in this turn of events, specifically the breaking off of vision from narrative and historical representation, as well as an adequate

account of the relationship between Philippine nationalism and Filipino masculinity. It is clear that these latter two have been inseparable and this is an urgent problem of history and for criticism. The characters in *Scenes and Spaces*, like H. R. Ocampo himself, look for fulfillment both as men and as Filipinos. Their vision emerges as a consequence of blocked desires. As America feminizes, infantilizes, and impoverishes the Philippines and its inhabitants, the assertion of a virile creativity ("Toward Virility in Art" is the very call of Philippine modernity) is an act of resistance and survival, even as it constitutes itself in relative conformity to patriarchy and bourgeois society.<sup>30</sup> This understanding of the simultaneity of modern forms of nationalism and masculinity may help to clarify H. R. Ocampo's absurdly macho statement in the 1970s that "The act of painting is very sensually satisfying to me, almost as satisfying as making love to a woman. In short, I am painting for my own sensual satisfaction."<sup>31</sup> Surely there is more to say here.<sup>32</sup>

With respect to the visual, what *Scenes and Spaces* illustrates is that where narrative possibilities collapsed, that is, at moments of deep crisis for the novel's characters, a molten and hallucinatory visual world erupted for these characters, as if historical struggle itself, unable to be resolved narratively, that is, historically, underwent a migration into the visual. History's narratological contradictions directly result in a reconfiguration of the visual arena. Thus, from Ocampo's writings, it is arguable that the shift in his visual style as a painter marks not just a personal change, or even just a change in the history of Philippine art, but a sociohistorical reconfiguration of the role of the visual in history. Such a shift in the relation between language and image, a shift which marks nothing less than a qualitative transformation in the character of perception and the mediation of history, is indeed confirmed by the rise of image culture and the movement of capitalist expansion and control into the visual. If mass media (cinema, TV, computers) are understood as technologies for the organization of the imagination on a global scale, there is much that remains to be said about Ocampo's

recognition of the primacy of vision and his effort to grasp it as a site of struggle and possibility, if not freedom. The acquisition of eyes by Filipinos is matched by an intensive effort on the part of the U.S. enfranchisement to acquire the eyes of Filipinos.

If, as I have argued elsewhere, mass media itself functions to short-circuit the perception and languaging of social contradiction through the synchronization of imagination, desire, and viscerality, among others, with the exigencies of capital (the belief, for example, that social problems may be solved through capitalist development and consumerism), what as yet unrealized potential might Ocampo's interventions in the composition of visibility have?<sup>33</sup> Such questions are not asked in order to ignore or forget the adoption of his paintings and of abstraction generally by the Marcoses or to obscure the fact that his work, like abstract expressionism in the U.S. that was utilized by the CIA to promote American interests, was made to function in consonance with the Marcos political and ideological program, the "New Society."<sup>34</sup> Rather, they assert that the history of these works is alive and that their significance remains to be contested in a struggle which is not just about the paintings but about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, the character of the society in which we live, and the form of the society which we work to bring into being.

Shortly after the war, Ocampo's paintings are no longer about representing someone or a situation in any traditional sense. Rather, they are about the very process of arriving at an image. In a world becoming saturated with images from American popular culture, film, and CIA propaganda, Ocampo went from making images to making protoimages. These abstract, or "Neorealist," works are of an extremely demanding kind and ask the viewer to attend to his or her own participation in sight. They function to foreground the sight of the seer in its very process and, thus, they insist on the agency of seeing and on the participatory subjective practice that informs its processes rather than assuming the givenness of the to-be-seen. This process might be read as providing a critique of reification, that is,

providing a visual situation in which visual processes antithetical to those germane to commodification are being called upon. As we shall further explore in the next chapter, sight has been profoundly structured by the dominant modes of representation that bear not only upon what we see as significant, but how we see at all.

The overall effect of Ocampo's work is a radical denaturalization of the ostensible immediacy of vision. The process of seeing is slowed down, rendered pleasurable *and* intellectual and in certain ways returned to the viewer rather than remaining a programmed subroutine of media-machines. Ocampo achieves these effects in part through effecting a deconstruction of the apparent integrity of the object and utilizing some of the compositional strategies developed by Cubism. In a manner that equals or exceeds the complexity of many of his European counterparts, he registers and puts into play competing organizational logic, all of which differently inflect and reflect the compositional elements by casting them into different visual arrays. These arrays, like the optical gimmicks studied by psychologists of perception, move by shifting certain elements from the foreground to the background or in Ocampo's case, to varying middle grounds. His canvases, instead of providing just two visual conformations (like the classical visual example of vanity, which reads either as a young attractive woman looking in a mirror or an old and witchlike hag), provide multiple conformations that do not, finally, resolve themselves. Viewers feel the play of their will and desire in the creating of the vision, even as they experience the resistance of the material to easy interpretation. The edges are not as hard as European Cubisms and the palette is profoundly different. The interfaces with historical experience that the paintings provide are at once in the modern mode, yet completely particular haecceities.

What I think has been established here by reading *Scenes and Spaces* as aesthetic theory is that Filipino Neorealism at once (1) marks a qualitative transformation of the historical status of the visible, and (2) strives not to represent static objects or stable identities but dynamics. Filipino Neorealism shows a multiplicity of logics play-



ing out over the surface of the visible. The novel would assert that something happens to language that renders it fundamentally inadequate to represent experience. It also correctly predicts that visuality will become the new, if not pre-eminent, site of political struggle. The nonnarrative, nonrepresentational, affective, and imaginary character of experience is ascendant. Vision and visuality exceed narrative and rationality. It is (at least here) vision, not narrative, that partially breaks the stronghold of plots imposed by American forces in collaboration with national elites, because it can formalize if not conceptualize the abstract logic that holds objects and people in their sway. Neorealism is “nonrepresentational” precisely because it represents the epistemological consequences of a cultural logic and not objects themselves. In responding to the nonnarrative, metaphysical, and visceral meltdowns of imperialism, it allows a viewer to create using the transformed, quasi-cybernetic, incorporating character of the existential terrain. The later paintings of H. R. Ocampo, such as *Genesis*, show dynamic elements that might become part of any number of visually logical arrays busily sought by a desiring eye. In an incredible suspension of objectification, which is the ultimate tendency of capital during this period, they restore the creative force to the eye as it pleurably searches for some coalescence. These paintings, then, seek the liberation of vision through the dereification of the visible object. I think they are about suspending the process of the codification of the objective world of the imperialist Real. If objectivity and objectification are precisely the removal of agency from living beings, the formal decodification of the very process of objectification returns power to the viewer, allowing the eye to dance in a relatively free quest for new orders and meanings as it has a chance to create for itself outside of any narrative schema. But the extraordinary success of these canvases is perhaps small compensation for the incomplete realization of Filipino liberation.

*From Social Realism to the  
Spectre of Abstraction:  
Conceptualizing the Visual Practices  
of H. R. Ocampo*

From Gilles Deleuze’s books on cinema we may learn that the cinema is a new array of practices for which philosophy must find the concepts and furthermore that the great directors are not only to be understood with the great painters, architects, or even musicians—“that they may also be compared with thinkers.”<sup>1</sup> Understanding the challenge that cinema poses to thought thus—that is, as a new type of rift between the old antagonists practice and theory—one might transpose Deleuze’s challenge of finding concepts for aesthetic practices to other situations of uneven development. The reading of Philippine modernism offered in this book so far implies a distinctive time lag between the operations of various forms of mediation and the emergence of their politico-aesthetic theory. In many respects, the major developments out of Neorealism, specifically Socialist Realism in its second moment of the 1970s and 1980s and Syncretic Realism of the 1990s, endeavor to return the concept to

art practice—that is, the images strive to transmit conceptual thinking about the world and politics through the artwork. However, particularly in impoverished societies where material support for the creative production of the metapractices of theory and philosophy hardly exists, one may perceive a pressing need for the adequation of social practices of all types with the concepts. The discourse about the role of the artwork needs our creative support.

Of course, the schism between language and the imaginary thematized in the last chapter may be posited as the condition of language in general. However, the incommensurability of concepts with activities is particularly problematic for political endeavors intent upon specifying the terms of oppression and counteracting these conditions. It is the argument that relation connecting signifier to signified was strained to the breaking point in the realm of nationalist discourse during the postwar period. Given the non-narratibility of nationalism, how to think about the political role and potential of Philippine painting—what does it achieve, what might it be good for? We might draw inspiration from Régis Debray's notable endeavor to inaugurate the field of mediology in *Media Manifestos* because Debray reduces the emphasis on the sign and its interpretation and places it on the technological apparatuses that deploy signs and on the activity signs enable. This view would allow the technological and historical situation of the work to become part of its significance.<sup>2</sup> When antiquated ideas serve as templates with which to understand the new works of art and new social formations, as they quite often do (and not only in the Philippines), the radical character of certain artworks falls away from the very discourse that might amplify their tendencies for liberation. The transmission of the new forms of struggle that daily occupy the time and bodies of so many is interrupted. This transmission might potentially lead to a consolidation of these struggles through a politics of affect and, therefore, to certain definite victories. However, what we hear instead is a rehearsal of sacred shibboleths (the supremacy of Realism, for example, or in some cases, the essential character of nationalism).

If the radical struggles and events are articulations taking place somehow beyond the threshold of consolidated thought, one might ask why this situation dominates. In what ways are language and reason, as we know them, inadequate to revolution, cultural or otherwise? Such, however, is not my immediate purpose here. Suffice it to say that the abstraction of cultural form in and as concept presupposes a set of conditions that take the cultural workers beyond the sheer appearances of things and give them some acquaintance with their inner logic or systems. Thus, Deleuze writes of the most radical challenge to signification in history, that is, the cinema, in France, a country that has largely dominated intellectual production during the latter twentieth century and which developed the theory of the signifier. Such intellectual formations can in no way be separated from the fact of France's "anthropological tradition," which means its imperialism and the dialectic of empowerment and threat posed by its domination of the Other. Marx's great *Capital* was written by a thinker who had roots in the German philosophical tradition and the Jewish hermeneutical tradition, doing research in the seat of the British Empire—an ideal combination, in his case, of abstraction, alienation, and perspective. In other words, abstract thought of a certain type particularly germane to capitalism implies the historical sedimentation of intellectual capital as well as of capital itself. Its ethereal power has its sine qua non in historico-material conditions, and this contradiction is even built into it at the molecular level. Marx, Lukacs, and the Frankfurt School extend the thought of capital to express the claims of the subsumed on the subsumers, of the occluded centers (the proletariat, the "periphery," and the "Third World") on the visible center (the bourgeois, the "center," and the "First World" metropolises).

In countries outside the so-called center, of which it may be said that for centuries their greatest export has been capital, one might imagine that thinking of a certain kind with mastery in mind (like the frozen, alienated subjectivity that capital indeed is) has been stolen away as well. Therefore, to employ that specialized tech-

nology called “theory” which, like that other equally discerning language known as science, tends to accumulate in zones of capital concentration, more usefully be construed in the Philippines as an act of expropriating the expropriators. Of course, one must proceed with caution and some risk while being vigilant against doing the work of imperialism.

What I propose here—both as a way of testing the above claim regarding the potential merits of building theoretical concepts for and with Third World practices and as a way of extrapolating the liberatory potential of twentieth-century Philippine painting—is to extend my preliminary study of National Artist H. R. Ocampo. As I have made clear in the previous chapter, Ocampo is perhaps particularly suited here in terms of the visual transformations characteristic of Philippine modernity not only because of my own intense personal admiration for his work but also because of his prolific activity outside of painting (as a short-story writer, editor, and scriptwriter) and, even more important, because of the trajectory of his work from Social Realism to Abstraction. For it is in this movement, from the paintings of the 1930s and 1940s, which have a clear pro-proletarian agenda, to the postwar abstractions, which to many, including some of the revolutionary socialist realists of the Marcos era, may appear as exercises in formalism, that the conceptualization of Ocampo’s strategies of creation may be of service not only to Ocampo’s work, but also more generally to those of us who would learn from the struggles of others against the forms of fascism.<sup>3</sup>

### *Politics and Metamorphic Form*

In 1937, H. R. Ocampo wrote a short story called “Rice and Bullets.”<sup>4</sup> In this social-realist tale, the protagonist, Tura, joins his fellow peasants in a protest against the rice hoarders. The story emphasizes the hunger experienced by the main character, his family, and the other peasants, as well as the creation of a sense of community and

power through a protest action. In the final clash of the peasants with the police, Tura is shot and killed.

I want to remark here on Ocampo’s tropological practices. The manner in which he creates figures in the prose of “Rice and Bullets” is not too distant from the modality of figuration of his paintings. As Tura answers his wife Marta’s question about the stones he is carrying in his rice sack to a protest gathering, one can almost see Ocampo’s brush at work: “Mr. Remulla said we must have three big stones in our sack. He said the stones would represent the three biggest islands in our country” (61). The economy of means in this passage is noteworthy. In a sack that once contained rice, Tura only carries stones. These stones, which have replaced food and, as such, have become images of starvation (the land without its fruits), compress several levels of meaning. In the literary sense of representation, they represent the Philippines, both for Tura and, in a way that seems to exceed this character’s understanding, for the general situation of agrarian workers under a semifeudal, capitalized agriculture. But Ocampo’s powers of condensation also allow another reading of the term “represent” here inasmuch as the stones, which have replaced food, can also be used as weapons. Thus, we also have here “representation” in the political sense, as in the phrase “democratic representation.” That this representation is necessarily violent, given the circumstances of peasants and workers, and that this violence against an oligarchy can be mediated by an aesthetic work, suggests the possibility of a symbolic violence capable of taking up the trajectory of a thrown stone.

Another aspect of Ocampo’s work that one might want to attend to here is his figuration of thought as event:

Hedged in far behind in the crowd, Tura heard nothing of the man’s talk except such stray words as “we must eat,” “we want rice,” “give us rice,” “we are hungry”; yet, *without fully knowing why*, Tura shouted with the rest when the man in the bandstand made one of his dramatic pauses. And as the mo-

ments passed, Tura became more enthusiastic, more excited, and as his excitement and enthusiasm rose, he began to forget the rumbling and vinegar-like gnawing in his stomach. Tura was now perspiring and feeling hot and good and strong. He felt he could do anything—anything. (64–65, italics mine)

Whether Ocampo is correct in his assessment of politicization in the above passage, that is, that it takes place at a level that is distinct from consciousness and rationality (“without fully knowing why”), is not essential to establish here. What I want to draw attention to is the belief that the translation of the immanent social forces of protest and rebellion, which realize themselves as both bodily event and activity, take place for Ocampo at a level that one might want to call deeper than consciousness. In other words, rationality and knowledge are not the primary media of political action for Ocampo. That being said, however, it is important to remember that Ocampo’s paintings would later develop a numeric color system that rivaled the abstract rationality of Mondrian or the conceptuality of the composer Jose Maceda. The rational production of irrational affect becomes not just an artistic strategy on the part of Ocampo but also, as we shall see, the political *modus operandi* of imperialist logic whereby the sensual displaces the rational in the phenomenological organization of daily life.

Ocampo’s skepticism regarding the adequacy of thought to politics, which to a certain extent explains his lifelong engagement with the dynamics of the visual, extends to what at this juncture indicates—the failure of words. Facing the guards before the warehouse

Tura wanted to shout something back at these men of the law who had sided with the rich Chinese; he wanted to shout something about insistent rumblings and vinegar-like gnawings inside the stomach. But these words struck, uncomfortably solid in his throat. He swallowed a big lump to relieve himself. (66)

The point at which words fail signals the possibility of a different level of activity. In the scene above, Tura is forced to swallow the inarticulate lump of his anger. This lump, which one might imagine on a canvas of Ocampo as taking its form from one of the three stones in Tura’s rice sack, is the only thing eaten in this story of hunger. However, what is swallowed here into the empty sack of his stomach will dramatically re-emerge in the chaos of the story’s climax.

After the peasants break into the warehouse, they begin to fill their rice sacks furiously. When the police come, the trapped men try to escape:

Tura was once more confronted by another policeman. He was no longer in a position to dodge his opponent, so he clutched his sack tighter, then swung it against the khaki-clad fellow whose gun was aimed at him. The policeman staggered, but at the same time Tura felt a sudden stinging hotness coursing from his belly on through to his back. He held on for a while to his sack of rice, stalked on as if on air, half-consciously feeling the warmth of something trickling from his belly, vaguely hearing the noise around him. Then the sack slipped from his weakening fingers. He felt a swimming sensation and vaguely he saw the precious grain spilling on the dirty ground.

Oh, no! No! You cannot take that away from me. That is for my wife, my children. Tura heard himself calling his wife and children, as his fingers clutched at the rice. Tura dived face downward, face foremost for the scattered grains of rice on the ground. Here, here. Tura heard himself calling his wife and children, as his fingers clutched the rice. Here is the rice for you. You need not live on *salabat* any more. You need not be hungry anymore.

But his voice seemed strangely hollow. It seemed to come from a distance, a very far distance beyond. (69)

When, after he has been shot, Tura says, “You cannot take that away from me,” the context tells us that he is thinking about the rice, but that the rice means life. From everything we have seen of him, his worries about the hunger of his two daughters, Ine and Clara, his son Totoy, and his wife Marta, we know that it was his life that was for his wife and children. Overall the story works expeditiously to build a concept—the equation between blood and rice. The struggle being waged in the narrative is not just over rice but over blood. In Ocampo’s metamorphic mind, each “glittering white grain” becomes a drop of red blood, even though the blood never once appears in the story. Blood is the unseen, the idea that exists in the spaces between the other ideas presented in the story. Once this idea is clearly articulated by the elements around it, the warehouse piled high with rice becomes a warehouse piled high with blood—with the lives of the peasants. As one understands the formal operations of Ocampo’s mind in the isomorphism established between the rice grains and the drops of blood, it becomes clear that blood is the unspoken third term for which rice is the first and bullet is the second term. The bullet offers itself as that which divides one from the other socially, and links one to the other formally. Thinking visually, one can almost see the formal—that is, spatial and textual—metamorphosis of one element into the other: grain/bullet/drop. This flow of form is staged between the extremes of wealth and poverty (one thinks again here of Ocampo’s *The Contrast*).

Attendant to this morphing of three forms then, there emerges in the story the fundamental contrast between “the vinegar-like gnawing in [Tura’s] stomach” and the hoarded rice in the warehouse, a contrast that is ultimately a contradiction between rich and poor, between morality and immorality, and between life and death. Each of these polarized factors serves as the *mise-en-scène* for the struggle that results at once in the death of the main character and the formal compression of rice into bullets into blood. Aside from having one of the central qualities of Maoist Realism, that is, the cre-

ation of an image that allows one person’s situation to stand for many, the circulation of rice, bullets, and blood within the story marks the general condition of the peasant producing for capitalized agriculture.

Thus we already see in “Rice and Bullets” that the circulation of color and form is, in Ocampo’s work, inscribed within the struggle between labor and capital. Such an insight would confirm the hypothesis developed in chapter 1 that the biomorphic abstraction of Ocampo’s neorealist paintings (1950s–1970s), hallucinated twenty to forty years earlier by the principal characters in Ocampo’s serial novel (*Scenes and Spaces*, 1939–1940) results from the foreclosure of narrative possibility by history. If the 1937 short story shows the irresolvable subjective crisis precipitated in history and exploding in a revolutionary form of activity, the serial novel *Scenes and Spaces* shows us that by 1939, Ocampo viewed the fundamental historical contradictions of this period as irresolvable in the narrative. The social crisis in and as the masculine subject undergoes a dramatic and qualitative shift into the visual sphere. Historically produced, the character’s personal traumas disrupt realism itself by producing intense visual hallucinations that refer to real conditions but at the same time provide a form of experience that is nonnarrative and, therefore, momentarily at least, beyond the reach of history. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the political corollary to the historical foreclosure of narrative possibility that gives rise to visuality is guerilla war. Perhaps, this is why so many of Ocampo’s paintings look like military camouflage (fig. 5).

From “Rice and Bullets,” we may see clearly that Ocampo’s conception of narrative movement, so forcefully articulated in *Scenes and Spaces* as the working out of a fundamental antagonism between American imperialism and Philippine nationalist aspiration in the lives of Filipinos is, in his mind at least, also a struggle between labor and capital. Although this will be obvious to some, I want to leave no space for doubt that it was also obvious to Ocampo. Even though his work undergoes a profound shift in emphasis, one might

say from the narrative abstract, in which terms like labor and capital or the “United States” and the “Philippines” are the organizing principles of analysis, to the visual abstract, in which aesthetic form structures a nonnarrative experience, the historical framework does not fall away. Indeed, one can see Ocampo’s endeavors as an artist as precisely the aesthetic vehicle for his rise, albeit posthumous, to the status of a National Artist, thereby confirming a thesis underlying his work: Historical struggle has achieved a dimension that exceeds rational language and must necessarily be waged in the realm of the senses.<sup>5</sup>

To put it another way, where the viscosity of historical narrative (realism) drives one toward a struggle that will end in death, the viscosity of visual abstraction (neorealism) drives one to a struggle that may indeed be continued. The radical edge of this work was sheared off in H. R. Ocampo’s canonization by the Marcoses, just as the Marcoses utilized a nationalist progressive discourse for fascistic ends. It is for us to return to the uncompleted possibilities of Ocampo’s work and of Philippine modernism more generally in order to determine what potentialities for the contemporary struggle for justice still remain in the work done in the past.

If we return now to our story of 1937, in which rice, bullets, and blood are given a formal and, therefore, conceptual continuity, we can see that the only red in the story is from the farmers’ protest banners and placards—as if the color of blood is to be drawn from the posters and as if the posters are drawn in blood. Blood is a language and, thus, so are rice and bullets. When formalized by Ocampo’s narrative, each of these elements achieves a linguistic dimension as well as a visceral one. White’s migration to red in the story (rice to blood) is echoed in another level because Mr. Remulla, the organizer, is an American. It is an American who catalyzes the bloodshed, with white skin leading to bloodshed. This fact, coupled with the fact that the bolts closing the warehouse were “somehow” open (Tura “was among the first to reach the warehouse door where, somehow, the bolts were removed” [67]), raises a set of

questions regarding the sequence of events in the story which, in turn, raises questions about the political relationship between viscosity and reason.

We know that Tura’s politicization is corporeal and visceral, even animal. The hungry crowd concentrated around the bandstand is likened to “a swarm of ants gathered around a lump of sugar” (63), and also to “a swarm of locusts” (67), as they gather in the rice granary, and further described as “unshod.” And at one point, Tura moves through the crowd “with a strength hitherto alien to him, not unlike an animal athirst which had suddenly sensed water a short distance ahead” (65). However, if one reads the story closely, one cannot but suspect that the warehouse scenario was a carefully reasoned trap organized by the merchants to flush out the rebel leaders. At the very least, the structure of the event and its morphology stages a dynamic interplay between the visceral and the rational. The men who move like a swarm or a herd are caged by the walls of the warehouse, the guns of the police, and the “law” of capital. This law, which is at once a rationality of the irrational and an irrationality of the rational, functions through the dissolution of solid distinctions, that is, of objectivity: Rice becomes bullets becomes blood. Indeed, the shifting point of view of the last three paragraphs of “Rice and Bullets” cited above shows a flattening out of the distinction between subjective and objective. Tura’s “Oh no! No!” suddenly rendered subjectively is already part of the objective world. The last paragraph, “But his voice seemed strangely hollow. It seemed to come from a distance, a very far distance beyond,” at once takes the reader out of the story like a kind of zoom out to a long shot. However, it also sutures the reader’s consciousness to Tura’s consciousness in death—as if we have gone infinitely out of and infinitely into the story’s canvas. Ocampo’s famous “elimination of foreground and background,” noticed as one of the powerful formal achievements in the later Neorealist paintings finds a precursor here.<sup>6</sup> This elimination of a distinct foreground and background could also be thought of as the elimination of perspective, or rather, an intermix-

ing of perspective such that many points of view are simultaneously available. It is here that the alternate title of “Rice and Bullets,” “We or They,” becomes interesting. The reader identifies with Tura but that identification is not allowed to remain unproblematic. Is it “We” who will die in the struggle for justice, or is it “They”? In many respects, the success or failure of socialist revolution depends upon the answer to that question. The story creates a mediating structure in which it at once posits a schism between its readers and those engaged in social struggle even as it allows its readers to hear the urgent call of those who have lost their life in the fight against exploitation.

#### *Vision in Excess of Signification*

Ocampo’s subtle insistence that it is American capitalism and its logic that is the catalyst of the tragedy in “Rice and Bullets” implies that the dialectical interplay between rationality and corporeality is particularly complex. Like the Marlon Brando figure in Gillo Pontecorvo’s film, *Burn!* the invisible hand of capital organizes the revolutionary desires of the colonized people of Quemada (who in *Burn* are first slaves of the Portuguese and later “free” wage workers for the British) for the benefit of empire. From “Rice and Bullets” and from *Scenes and Spaces* we may conclude that Ocampo saw the American presence as the condition of possibility for the particularity of his life and work. It was the past that would be prologue not only to his own creative activity but also to that of the Filipino people. In his work, it is as if to Ocampo’s mind the West had had tremendous influence on Philippine literature and painting, to say nothing of Philippine life, history, and economy, but that the Philippines was not and would not remain the void, the space of nonrepresentation, forever. Precisely through the medium of literary and painted works, the Philippines might find a forum for its expression, its version of a world history to which it has been an essential yet nearly invisible component.

If one accepts Benedict Anderson’s thesis that by 1959, when Leon Ma. Guerrero began translating the novels of Dr. Jose Rizal, Philippine nationalism had passed from being “primarily a popular insurrectionary movement, outside of and against a state, to an era in which it is partially transformed into a legitimating instrumentality of a new-old state,”<sup>7</sup> then it is tempting to associate Ocampo’s turn away from Social Realism to Neorealist abstraction as an intervention toward forestalling such a reactionary codification of the nation-state. At the very least, Neorealism appears as an acknowledgment or symptom of a new dispensation of an emerging discursive regime regulating nationalist aspirations, which were once guided by the pleasure principle, with a reality principle. Anderson’s fabulous translations of Rizal’s implacable satire and his damning comparisons of these passages with the Guerrero translation’s inability to adequately accommodate the universe of differences mobilized by Rizal under the rigid template of Guerrero’s postwar nationalism allow us to take the measure of the impending failure of a nationalist imaginary.

Regarding the fabulous play of difference in Rizal’s *Noli me tangere*, Anderson muses, “Everything here is a call to arms. But in the independent Philippines of the 1950s, how much of all this was really bearable?”<sup>8</sup> While Rizal had to unmask “the colonial state and its reactionary ecclesiastical allies” and simultaneously conjure a “Philippines profoundly distinct from Mother Spain,” Guerrero translates for a Philippines whose “real freedom was enchained by American military bases and the American-imposed Parity Agreement, and which was ruled by children of the revolutionary mestizo elite of the 1890s . . . who now intended firmly to be full masters in their own house.”<sup>9</sup> Significantly, Anderson argues that Guerrero’s principal translation problem was in the obfuscation of what he calls Rizal’s “social realism.”<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the argument of “Nationalism’s Molten Prayers” (chap. 1), it is worth recalling that the irresolvable contradictions rigidly framed by real constraints and expressed in and through the

narrative social realism of H. R. Ocampo's novel *Scenes and Spaces* erupt in the visual as abstraction. They take the form of ludic, hallucinatory passages in an otherwise realistic reportage, which could very well describe paintings that Ocampo would not make for some twenty years. To say that social realism became no longer "bearable" (to borrow Anderson's word) would be to assert that where it was not entirely censored, the spectre of comparisons was transformed into the spectre of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> This eruption of abstraction necessary for comparison into the visual itself, which follows what we can see as the foreclosure of narrative realism undergone by the postwar nation, suggests that the nation, if it is to be conceived in an insurrectionary mode, can only be compared not with another existing realm (Manila with Berlin, in Anderson's example), but rather with a place that does not properly, which is to say, does not *yet*, exist.

At this moment identified with Neorealism, the dismissal of the actual becomes the greatest indictment of it. Perhaps this giving way to an imaginary seemingly delinked from history is what is meant by Clement Greenberg's mysterious assertion that art for art's sake became, for American Abstract Expressionism, the logical conclusion of Social Realism.<sup>12</sup> In the conjuncture specified by the Second World War and the period immediately following, both in the Philippines as well as elsewhere, only in a place outside of existing narrative constraints and beyond logical history could freedom be posited. The realpolitik of the increasingly reactionary and increasingly totalitarian nation-state and its representative could not satisfy. Thus by 1945, the spectre of comparisons is not only a sense of other places existing simultaneously and interdependently with one's own realm but also the sense of a human potentiality, an immediacy of pleasure and experience which, in the universe of full commodification, exists only in the no-place of the imagination. Abstraction in painting was an afterimage of the experience and aspirations of a previous era. The province of abstract painting—of visuality not subservient to the signifier whose chain of signification was inexorably tied to the nation-state—offered a realm of freedom.

It was precisely the spectre by which a comparison of the real might be gleaned. It became, for a short time, the imaginary realm that posited an alternative to the totalitarian grip of geography, history, narrative, and capitalist rationality. As will become clear momentarily, this space of the visual and of the imaginary, the Neorealist Abstract, was not a neutral zone, a mere chimera, to be left aside by statist regimes. The autonomous visual almost immediately becomes a site of struggle and has ever since been put under siege by state forms.

In his 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," Greenberg writes, "Kitsch is a product of the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses of Western Europe and America and established what is called universal literacy."<sup>13</sup> For him, kitsch was akin to fascism, ersatz culture so realistic "that identifications are self-evident immediately and without any effort on the part of the spectator":

The ultimate value which the cultivated spectator derives from Picasso are derived at a second remove, as the result of reflection upon the immediate impression left by the plastic values. It is only then that the recognizable, the miraculous and the sympathetic enter. They are not immediately present in Picasso's painting, but must be projected into it by the spectator sensitive enough to react sufficiently to the plastic qualities. They belong to the reflected effect. In Repin [Greenberg's kitsch straw man], on the other hand, the reflected effect has already been included in the picture ready for the spectators' unreflected enjoyment.<sup>14</sup>

What is correctly stated although improperly analyzed in this extremely confused essay (whose confusion is due precisely to a purported aesthetic clarity in distinguishing Avant-Garde from Kitsch, the [elite] progressive from the [mass] reactionary) is that the forces of industrialization also led to modernism: "A society, as it becomes less and less able, in the course of its development, to jus-



tify the inevitability of its particular forms, breaks up the accepted notions upon which artists and writers must depend in large part for communication with their audiences.”<sup>15</sup> The breakup of the forms of traditional society, the fragmentation of the public, and universal literacy are simultaneous.

The movement from Social Realism to Abstraction in the United States and the simultaneous need to distinguish good abstraction (the avant-garde) from what turns out to be bad abstraction (kitsch) by artists and critics on whom modernity has bestowed “a superior consciousness of history—more precisely, the appearance of a new kind of criticism of society” (4)—occurred almost simultaneously, albeit with different emphasis and on a different scale, in the Philippines. Furthermore, and this is central to my argument, what was at stake ultimately involved for artist, critic, and state maker alike *the relation of the artwork to the signifier*.

It is, I think, this relation to signification, which though nearly conceptualized by Greenberg, could not yet receive adequate theorization. For the avant-garde artist, “Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself.”<sup>16</sup> But because the avant-garde artist “cherishes certain relative values more than others,”

he turns out to be imitating not God—and here I use “imitate” in its Aristotelian sense—but the disciplines and processes of art and literature themselves. This is the genesis of the abstract. In turning his attention away from subject matter of common experience, the poet or artist turns it in upon the medium of his own craft.<sup>17</sup>

This moment in the aesthetic, which today might be summed up as “the medium is the medium,” characterizes the late 1930s and 1940s for Greenberg in 1957. It may be usefully contrasted with Marshall McLuhan’s formulation in the 1960s that the medium is the mes-

sage, which coincides with the emerging commercial and ideological success of Abstract Expressionism. The moment of abstraction is the moment in which the visual achieves a definitive split with signification—painting becomes something *in itself*. It is only in a second moment, which historically falls almost immediately after the first, that the medium itself becomes the message, that is, when these eruptions in the visual will be recuperated for and by a network of signification belonging to an emerging new order: the Western postmodern. Abstract Expressionism’s nonreferentiality, its refusal of signification, signifies. Thus, the contest over whether or not Abstract Expressionism in the United States belongs to its multicultural identifications and influences, unionization, Communist sensibilities and the revolutionary politics of Latin American painters such as Siquieros or to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and to the state-supported production of ideology for the international interests of U.S. Incorporated mirrors, to a certain extent, the question of whether Ocampo’s Neorealism is part of the legacy of the full-scale revolutionary movement of the Hukbalahap or of Marcos-style fascism.

The reterritorialization of a momentarily autonomous zone of visuality can be grasped from the following: If in the 1940s Jackson Pollock could respond to the question, whether in his all-over drip paintings he painted from nature, with “I am nature,”<sup>18</sup> we can, for better or for worse, gain insight into the entry of his art making into the realm of signification from a passage describing a work by Boanerges Cerrato in David Craven’s “Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Postcolonial Approach to ‘American’ Art.”

[Boanerges Cerrato’s *Triptych*, 1986] is an all-over drip painting with brushstrokes that quite self-consciously echo those of Pollock. Yet in the upper register of the painting, where the all-over stops, are trees sprouting forth, so that the all-over suddenly represents the gnarled forms and twisted movements of undominated nature—a nature that in turn signifies anti-

imperialist values in contemporary Nicaraguan culture. Such a reading of unbroken nature as a force for national liberation and against foreign intervention is found in much of the recent literature there, as for example in the famous *testimonio* of Omar Cabezas or in the geographical poetry of Ernesto Cardenal.<sup>19</sup>

Here Pollock's style returns as a code. As the massive literature on Pollock's work testifies, his paintings—which for Greenberg were part of a movement that avoided content and aspired to create “something valid solely on its own terms, in the way nature itself is valid”—represented a tremendous crisis for semiotics and, one might well say, in the semiotic itself.<sup>20</sup> The struggle to claim Pollock and Abstract Expressionism generally from and for various political quarters testifies less to the greatness of the work and more to the emergence of a new realm of visuality, the struggle for which characterizes the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, what appears is nothing less than a new arena of human expressivity and imagination, which then becomes contested semiotically, ideologically, and not least, economically.

The more general issue of whether or not cultural modernism in the Philippines, which became something of a battle cry even before the Second World War and is still heard with respect to economy and technology to this day (in, for example, the Ramos, Estrada, and Arroyo presidential administrations' repeated calls for the modernization of the Armed Forces) was/is a force of imperialist Westernization seems central here if, given what has been said, still somewhat undecidable. If the strategies for the production of visual works loosely grouped under the category modernism were (are) taken in part as technologies of visual production, then what is the role of these strategies of assemblage in the formation of consciousness, affect, and world view? Furthermore, in what way is the sensorium, thus (in)formed, related to the markedly political realm of Western cultural and economic domination? These questions, which must be

taken together, can in no way be answered rashly. It is better, I think, to offer a dialectical hypothesis capable of sustaining two contradictory yet mutually presupposed strains of organization: Modernity as cultural production was simultaneously a force of oppressive domination and national liberation. Like industrialization and television, modernism is a name for practices constitutive of a historical shift in human relations and sensibility, bringing with it harsh brutalities previously unimagined and ludic spiritual flights of re-creation. To bring this point home, one might refer to the modernism of dictatorship and simultaneously the modernism of the EDSA 1 revolution. Each of these, it could be argued, is a child of modernity.

That H. R. Ocampo was chosen personally by Imelda Marcos to create the centerpiece of her monument to modern Philippine culture, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and that such cultural endeavors (including the notorious Film Center, which collapsed during hurried construction upon still unaccounted-for workers, only to be summarily completed, upon the insistent command of Imelda, atop their unexcavated remains) were central to the justification of authoritarian rule does not reveal the essence of Ocampo's paintings. Rather, these facts reveal the terms and stakes of the struggle over the realm of imagination opened by his plastic forms. Indeed this space of the autonomous visual was to be reunified by state propaganda, mass media circuits, and advertising. The argument regarding the reactionary character of abstraction, its contentless formations, its bourgeois clientele, its emphasis on contemplation and desire to ingratiate itself to an elite viewer are arguments that are fairly well known in the Philippines but they miss the most important event indexed by abstraction—the opening of the visual itself. Indeed it was the same arguments which, presented in a different key, brought the U.S. government around to abstract art—art was free and unconstrained by representation (and thus consumed by equally free patrons). Aside from missing the historical significance of abstraction, these arguments effectively posit an entity such as art or culture or modernism and take it as a static thing that is in

itself reactionary or progressive. This way of talking about art covers over the fact that speakers about art are also users of art and put art to work for specific purposes. Better I think to see cultural works themselves as negotiations of overbearing sociohistorical forces and to understand that one works with art/text/artist to discover and retransmit for the future their liberatory aspirations.

In considering the possibility of an ongoing dialogue about visual culture in the Philippines I cannot help thinking here of an image discussed in Tony Perez's video investigation of ghosts at the Film Center: a graffiti portrait of Imelda Marcos crying blood-red five-centavo coins, painted in the bowels of the abandoned building. Perez was at the Film Center on one of his controversial spirit quests in an effort to establish contact with some of the ghosts of the workers who were buried alive and who had their protruding limbs hacked off and their cries ignored so that construction could go on right on top of them. The Film Center would complement the Cultural Center of the Philippines, another of Imelda's cultural showpieces, positive proof of the humanity of the dictatorship and its "City of Man." It seems all too appropriate that this painting haunts the Film Center and that, more generally, the painting haunts the film. The painting puts Imelda under the Film Center, abandoned to remain with the workers she claimed to love but in actuality so despised and betrayed. She cries out tears of blood in the smallest denomination of the devalued Philippine currency—each tear, a person. The painting becomes a part of the infrastructure that supports film and newer media, here left to console and to accuse, to remain with the dead and yet remind the living of what conditions underlie their perception. Imelda's tears are worth five centavos, next to nothing, and that is what the people are worth to her. The entire edifice of the visual, this painting seems to assert, is built upon this devaluation of the people as coin, and their devaluation is at once buttressed and justified by the drama of the spectacle.

If one understands film as still intensifying further the struggle in and over the visual—opening it up, widening it out, part of a

grand endeavor to codify every aspect of appearance, of visibility itself—then one can also understand some of the reasons for the re-emergence of figurative painting after the moment of abstraction. Painting returns to the battlefield of the visual fully aware that it is a mediation of forces, that no matter what is depicted it can never be anything other than abstract. Like the commodity form itself, which introduces and generalizes abstraction to all social relations, the image will have a use value and an exchange value—it is what it is (precisely the aspiration of abstract expressionism according to Greenberg) and it is also a unit of social currency.

*Magic, Multiple, Myriad Perspectives,  
and Denaturalization*

In their extremely important work *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*, Renato and Letizia R. Constantino write that "The end of the war [and the installation of Manuel Roxas as first president of the Philippine Republic on 4 July 1945] did not usher in a new social order, it merely adjusted the national life in accordance with the imperatives of American imperialism and the goals of the restored native elite and their new allies, the American reserves from the guerrilla ranks."<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the book describes a new level of CIA interference in Philippine media, a concerted effort, which in my view marks a strategic shift related to the continuing expropriation of the country. Self-consciously now, media, particularly images, were utilized for the expropriation of the imagination.

The chapter entitled "CIA, Philippines" details the arrival of CIA operative Edward G. Lansdale in 1950 and the effort to foster U.S. imperialist interests (which included the routing of the Communists) through the cultivation and eventual election to the presidency of Ramon Magsaysay.

Lansdale's special baby was the Office of Psychological Warfare which was directly under Magsaysay. Subsequently

renamed the Civil Affairs Office, it initiated a wide variety of counterinsurgency projects. That many of these activities also projected Magsaysay in the *public eye* was of course not accidental. Working closely with JUSMAG and the *U.S. Information Services*, the CAO mounted a massive anti-Huk propaganda campaign, distributing in a two-year period over 13 million leaflets and other materials and conducting over 6,000 meetings. *USIS provided much of the literature and films*; JUSMAG helped to select targets for air drops of propaganda materials. Thousands of safe-conduct passes *with Magsaysay's picture on them* were airdropped over Huk territory. *Interestingly enough, these same passes were also dropped over provinces where there were no dissidents at all.*<sup>22</sup> (Italics mine)

This rain of images serves well to hail a new order of the organization of the social by means of the image. Without such a thesis, there can be no adequate understanding of the current role of film and television either in the Philippines or worldwide. Although propaganda was by no means invented here, the Second World War had brought it to new levels of sophistication (from Hitler to Frank Capra), particularly regarding the waging of war with images. With U.S. financial backing, Lansdale and Magsaysay coddled an appreciative and, therefore, malleable press and radio, often staging events such as the firing of an inefficient staff member or the capture of rebels for press photographers.

One of the most successful propaganda projects was Magsaysay's own pet program, the Economic Development Corps, or EDCOR. Hailed as Magsaysay's answer to the Huks' "land for the landless" slogan, EDCOR was supposed to resettle Huk surrenderees in public lands. . . . As a program to help the landless, EDCOR's impact was negligible, but as propaganda it was a big success. . . . [P]osters, pamphlets and films depict[ed] EDCOR farms as the promised land.<sup>23</sup>

While cameras were used to survey polling booths in 1951, the *Philippines Free Press* called Magsaysay the "Man of the Year" and *Time* magazine carried his picture on its cover. Meanwhile, the Magic Eye, "a Huk surrenderee who, unseen by barrio folk would point out his former comrades as they filed past,"<sup>24</sup> was installed among counter guerrilla tactics that included civilian commando units, police dogs, and Air Force strafing and bombing with napalm supplied by the U.S.

The Magic Eye, which used the eye of the rebel as a reactionary weapon against rebellion, serves well to illustrate the dominant mode of social control in the visual sphere. Whether through propaganda, surveillance, co-optation, or violation, the visual field operated as site of struggle and a means of imperialist-nationalist control. With the help of "more than three thousand instant journalists"<sup>25</sup> hired especially to cover his campaign, Magsaysay, "The Man of Action," whom academic and journalist Petronilo Bn. Daroy called a "McCarthyist" and an "Anti-Communist," won the 1953 presidential elections, after which Lansdale and his CIA team went on to work in Vietnam.<sup>26</sup>

The "Magic Eye" turns an organ of revolution into an instrument of counterrevolutionary surveillance. Both the "Magic Eye" and the "Public Eye," showered in a rain of images—Magsaysay from the sky—testify to the fact that the visual organ is the target of macropolitical entities such as the Philippine state, the CIA, and the U.S. superstate. The EDCOR films mentioned by the Constantinos, showing the Huk surrenderees resettled in "the promised land," attest to the general condition that to a large extent necessitates the rise of mass media, namely, that here in the moment of modernity the masses emerge as both objects of representation and potential audience. Eyes are adjusted individually, through the intimidation and torture necessary to produce "Magic Eyes," and on a mass scale through a campaign of low-intensity psywar through print journalism, EDCOR films, commercial cinema and, in the case of the safe-conduct passes, air-

craft. Visual technologies are henceforth to be grasped as weapons and, in turn, visuality, as an arena of struggle. What emerged in Ocampo's work as a realm of freedom was to become an arena of new types of contestation.

Another Lansdale psywar tactic was what he called the "Eye of God" where government troops would identify villages known to be sympathetic to the Huks. At night, the psywar teams would creep into the town and paint an eye on walls facing the houses of suspected sympathizers. The notion of an all-seeing malevolent eye was supposed to have been "sharply sobering."<sup>27</sup>

Here again, as we saw in chapter 1, Filipinos find themselves caught in the regard of an Other who resides in the materiality of things. Lansdale's "Eye of God" is a literalization of the neocolonial gaze of the U.S., now operating out of the materiality of daily life in the Philippines. In the light of Salvador P. Lopez's pronouncement as he spoke of the emergence of Philippine realism in literature in the 1930s that "Filipinos have acquired *eyes*" (discussed in the introduction) and of the fact that the climax of Hernando Ocampo's serial novel *Scenes and Spaces* occurs in a hallucination of an ontogenetic mutation, in which consciousness momentarily explodes into a transcendent, all-seeing collective eye (discussed in chap. 1), it is fascinating that Ocampo's early figurative painting, *The Hat Weavers* (1940, fig. 6) depicts a family of peasants without eyes. Their bodies are turned and their heads are bent as if looking at the hats being woven by the mother figure. The detail in the fringe around the perimeter of the hats tells us that the overall resolution of the image should clearly resolve the eyes of the figures. But the facial features are completely blunted, at best dull impressions. Bright spots on foreheads, shoulders, chests, and legs show tension and it is clear that this family lives, feels, and survives as an organic unit. But it is also clear that, although seen, they do not themselves see or, at the

very least, see themselves as they are here seen. Just as the story "Rice and Bullets" builds an abstract form with and for a character who in certain ways is without abstractions, the very representation of these figures shows that they are caught in a new logic. They may have eyes to weave hats but they cannot see themselves with the eyes of modernity and history, eyes that see *them* as materials with which to weave the future.

By the time of *Practical Politics* (1949, fig. 7), figurative realism has almost entirely disappeared from Ocampo's work. This painting, in which a small fish is pursued by a large bird that is in turn pursued by a larger dragon, is like *Big Fish Eat Little Fish*, but this time the largest animal has a head that seems to grow organically out of the structure of things. In fact the dragon-body is the environment, and this environment catches its prey. The fiercest animal in the universe of the painting appears as an excrescence of its cosmic structure, a structure that in turn provides the mise-en-scène for predatory politics. And although the forms seem to be organically linked, respecting in every way Ocampo's compositional mantra of "unity, coherence, and emphasis," the world depicted is in no way "natural." Indeed, the mathematics of nature appears to have generated some abstract forms—geometric, even "futuristic," forms and perspectives indicating a new set of laws. These new laws of nature, modernity's "second nature," in which a human-made environment appears in its thrownness and confronts humanity as both alien and given, has a strange efflorescence. Four red orbs with large blue dots covered by numerous small red spots seem to float on the canvas. Where the animal figures cross them, these orbs (or is it the animals themselves?) become transparent. Add to this transparency two significant details: (1) the eye of the fish is composed by one of the small red spots on the blue discs of the red orbs and (2) the colors of the animal eyes, red for the bird and blue for the serpent, match the colors of the orbs. Simply put, what these details add up to is that these outgrowths are the new eyes, disembodied, composite, and transparent, or what can be seen through.

The new visual organs, disembodied, composite and, to take the allegory one step further, composed of the eyes of the masses (the small red dots, one of which makes the eye of the fish) are organized by the upper classes (the largest most vicious animal). The multiple eyes organized by the form of single orbs yield new sights. Not the least of what can be seen is the vision of practical politics elaborated here, a vision that includes the predatory dynamics of an environment given form by the largest monsters and by the growth of new eyes.

Although not yet called Neorealism, this image could well qualify for the title: It is an autopoetic image, an image of the Philippines seeing itself in terms of a naturalized class violence, with the strange excrescence of its new organs of visuality serving as both object and means of representation. The new eyes are seen and seen through. The eyes appear in the landscape and apprehend it. What they apprehend is the predatory conditions that produced these new eyes. This efficiency of form, which produces something like a free-standing tautology particular only to a new mode of the present, fulfills H. R. Ocampo's mantra—"unity, coherence, emphasis"—even as it provides a would-be nationalist image.

Particularly interesting is that these eyes have many pupils. As already suggested by my reading of this work, these pupils represent the masses yet they are organized—made into organs—by larger structures, giving them a form at once traditional yet hybrid: eyeball, iris, pupils. These organs which, while singular, see and see through the multiplicity of the masses, are the outgrowth of an environment in which class exploitation has been naturalized. As noted in my discussion of Lansdale above, the cultivation and organization of eyes became a central concern in mid-twentieth century Philippine politics. Ocampo's painting both represents and sees through the new eyes while providing a new type of visual work for them in order to extend their capacities. Given its objects and themes, the painting appears deeply enmeshed in the dialectics of seeing and understands its engagement as at once a historical, political, and economic undertaking.

By the time of *Masks* (1956, fig. 8), it is not just eyes and allegorical icons that appear. New faces seem to have grown out of the cellular material of the socius, each with a double set of teeth. These faces—maniacal, jovial, haunted, and frozen—stare out at the viewers as if to confront each of them as one of their own. The ambiguity of the affect of these faces, which almost sinisterly hit notes between mirth, cynicism, and malevolent hypocrisy has, I would argue, a freezing effect on viewers. Confronted by the ambiguity of these masks, our own features freeze in similar ways, until the cellular material of the painting infiltrates our own faces and forces us to greet the staring masks with a mask of our own. It is as if the viewers are absorbed by the logic of the painting and then overtaken, incorporated into its material. Are we having fun, are we countering evil? We don't know. Hence, in our bafflement, we are forced to wear the same undecidable expressions as those hallucinatory characters whom we face. This viral denaturalization of our faces, a denaturalization that causes our skin to freeze and then to be overtaken by the cellular material of the mask even as we grow a double set of teeth, is accomplished, I want to emphasize, through a visual exchange. Here again is the induction of "self-consciousness" through the being constituted as both spectator and spectacle which, as Rey Chow correctly claims, is the necessary (pre)condition of postcolonial "Third World" nationalism. The masks are modern, alien, and Filipino. Is this Philippine art? Is this Filipinoness? Is this me as Filipino? The profound resonance of such questions is only multiplied by their absurdity. In front of the painting, we are incorporated into an almost biophysical transformation through the viral logic of the gaze. Those masks in the painting could well be people just like you and me. Indeed, they probably are. It is only that we are all caught up in a transformative visual relation, copresent with the nation as crisis situation. The transformed medium of sight, like an ether that renders its elements abstract, spectral, and alien, unavoidably induces a cellular mutation. A viewing of *Masks* thus *dramatizes* the operation of Philippine

visuality in the process of subjectification during a particular historical moment.

A few years later, in *Politico Cancer* (1958, fig. 9), Ocampo portrays interlocked entities of shifting form and shape. Although this work precedes the Mutants Period (1963–1968) and the Visual Melody Period (1968–Ocampo’s death in 1978), it has attributes that will be picked up and emphasized in the later work. Here, crabs, frogs, scorpions, mushroom clouds, claws, snakes, antennae, and amoebic blobs grin, eat, and proliferate in the protoplasmic soup of the socius. What foreshadows the Mutants Period is the mutagenic stew, which gives rise to distorted yet lifelike forms, and what foreshadows the Visual Melody Period is that each of the forms has shifting boundaries that allow it to be taken both as autonomous and as incorporated into a larger form. In a manner that will receive greater development in the later work of Ocampo, each form is territorialized and deterritorialized by its context, as if the boundaries of its community and function are constantly shifting. Thus, amoebic entities become eyes in a larger structure, eyes that, as in the masks, look out with a malevolent grin, with puzzlement, or not at all. Just as each medium-sized section of distinct coloration collects the elements internal to it and posits itself as an entity, the whole painting, in which all of the elements appear to be contained in a bluish background, may well constitute a larger entity. The cancer here is precisely the disorganization/reorganization dynamics imposed upon all the entities by an unregulated growth that renders boundaries and meanings undecidable.

### *Spectacular Antithesis/Spectres of Communism*

In the late 1970s, summing up the period under discussion here, Angel de Jesus wrote:

In 1947 Nanding [H. R. de Ocampo] was cited in Manuel A. Viray’s article, “The Best in Literature in 1946,” published in

*Filipino Youth Magazine* in its February issue as “a writer of anguished poetry reflective of his proletarian tendencies and bitter inner life.” Reviewing the Philippine cultural exhibition at the Carnegie Endowment International Center in New York City in September 1953, the *New York Times* critic commented that there could be no mistaking the politically slanted symbolism in Nanding’s canvases. Similarly, in Alejandro Roces’ column, “Roses and Thorns” in the September 15, 1961 issue of the *Manila Times*, there is quoted the conclusion of a story written in 1937 entitled “Rice and Bullets.” Roces was reminded of the story because a few days before, a group of squatters in Paco had assaulted a Namarco truck and ripped open the sacks of rice that it was carrying. All these remind us that Nanding has roots which link him ineluctably with the life of the common people. This feeling is what even now suffuses his abstractions and keeps him the humane, gentle man that he is.<sup>28</sup>

In his essay “Patronage, Pornography and Youth,” Vicente Rafael elegantly counterposes a spectacle-driven Marcos-era scopic regime, welded during the mid-1960s to the cofactors of the emerging market economy and the traditional patronage system, against “the destruction of the spectacle” achieved by the First Quarter Storm—the anti-Marcos demonstrations of 26 January and 30 January 1970.<sup>29</sup> I mention this contest between the spectacle on the one hand and the movement on the other because it seems to confirm the antifascist pro-people temperament and, indeed, strategy of Ocampo’s later work. In short, it will help us reframe the question I posed in chapter 1 regarding H. R. Ocampo’s later work: Where did the socialist orientation go? I have shown that the visual emerges as a realm of freedom and then as a realm of contestation. Unable to find realization in representational narrative, Ocampo’s nationalist aspirations became the molten prayers in the visual that are his paintings. De Jesus says that Ocampo’s links with the people “suffuse” his abstractions. But is this possible?

Let us contrast Ocampo's later work with Rafael's concluding analysis of the four elements he discusses in "Patronage, Pornography and Youth," namely, the biographies of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, their public performance of their relationship, three portraits of Imelda hanging in Malacañang, and the *bomba*, or "bold" films, that achieved popularity in the mid-1960s and after. Rafael writes:

[Imelda] served as his [Ferdinand's] favorite bomba, exploding her lethal charms for an audience grown habituated as much to the staging of scandal as the commodification of politics. In both politics and the movies, women were made to represent instances of larger intentions at work, galvanizing the interests of people while demarcating their position as mere viewers of spectacles. (WL, 150)

While I will deal with the bomba film and the exploitation of women "made to represent instances of larger intentions at work" at some length in chapter 4, my interest here is in the situation of spectators who, confronted by the Antonio Garcia Llama image of Imelda, "are at once in front of the portrait, yet also at the margins of the frame—spectators to the extent that [they] have been incorporated into a prior and largely invisible spectacle" (ibid.). This painting and the other commissioned works discussed by Rafael are powerful, rhetorical instances designed to posit spectators and place them in a fantasy where acceding to Marcos power affords the security of patronage. They are, simultaneously, recorded traces of the architecture of the Marcos fantasy that balances the needs of the growing world market economy with the "traditional" patronage system under a nationalist rubric.

Rafael finds the antithesis to the Marcos-pacified spectator, who like Benedict Kerkvliet's protorevolutionary peasants during the first half of the twentieth century, resort to a demand for the moral obligations of patronage to redress the injustices imposed by wage

labor,<sup>30</sup> in Jose F. Lacaba's account of the frenzied First Quarter Storm (FQS) rally that marked Lacaba's politicization:

Caught in the middle of the clash [the FQS], the writer finds himself confronted not with cops and youths but with the fleeting advance and retreat of images and sounds that are wholly removed from their putative origins. He thus finds himself in extreme intimacy with opposing forces at the very moment that he is unable to personalize those forces. His position, therefore, differs considerably from that of the viewer of Imelda's portraits. While the latter is the subject that receives and reciprocates a pervasive and ever distant gaze, the former is one who loses himself in the swirl of disembodied voices that he is unable to respond to and the rush of sights that he can barely recognize. He is shocked out of his position as a spectator and finds himself contaminated by the confusion that he witnesses. As a result, he is cut off from his identity as a reporter. "It was impossible to remain detached and uninvolved now, to be a spectator forever," Lacaba writes. "It was no longer safe to remain motionless. I had completely forgotten the press badge in my pocket." (WL, 158–89)

As Rafael notes, Lacaba's experience of the chaos of the FQS, which leads to his politicization, results from the loss of a stable perspective that is "reinforced by the radical detachment of images from their sources unleashed by the clash" of demonstrators and police. From a formal and aesthetic point of view, one cannot help noticing that the loss of a stable perspective and the radical detachment of images from their sources—the "swirl"—also characterize the abstractions of Neorealism. But reading with the grain of Lacaba's account, Rafael makes another important point—Lacaba's politicization does not result from these dissociations alone. When he tries to help a student only to find himself attacked, he screams



“Putang ina mo!” at the cop. “Responding to the force of authority, the writer begins to assume a position allied with the students. He takes up the language of youth” (WL, 159). Rafael is quite specific here that this language, its taunts to the police, its chants and slogans, is collective and communal in character. “The rally itself created a context that made language seem coterminous with community. The power of slogans came from the sense that they gave adequate expression to individual impulses, indeed gave those impulses a form that one did not realize they had” (WL, 157). In short, without the context of mass action, the abstraction of images from events remains only a freeing up of objective identifications and a precondition for the disidentification with power. As the freeing up of images from their sources, abstraction is a condition of revolution but not a sufficient cause.

Rafael concludes thus: “As the events of January 26 and 30 showed, the politics of youth, at least during its wild but short-lived moments, offered an alternative to existing conceptions of authority and submission. Rather than accede to the state’s attempt to reify power, they sought to literalize politics, converting mass spectacles into a mass movement. By disordering the calculated disorder launched by the Marcos regime, they furnished a counterlegacy to the years of dictatorship that were to follow” (WL, 161).

It is this antireificatory gesture designed to dismantle the edifice of sight that also characterizes the work of the later Ocampo. Wanting to see in the late Ocampo’s work a Communist art is misplaced. Rather, what one sees are stunted revolutions, *socialism in a bourgeois frame*, where it is understood that the frame is the pressure of national bourgeois society on visibility and the social imagination, the separation of nationalist democratic aspirations from a discourse that can sustain them. We can identify this frame with the world-media system and with a global-sea change in the dispensation of language and visibility. What is in process inside this bourgeois-imperialist-nationalist frame is a churning and ceaseless attack on the conventions of the picture plane and, hence, on the

static and reificatory character of the frame itself—that is, on the way hegemony wants us to see.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Ocampo’s late images are spectres of Communism, the brilliant potentiality of a set of communal desires for an interdicted community. His work is not a series of idyllic pictures of “what things would look like if we had an egalitarian society.” What is important here is the process. The work is a continual engagement with a violent world that foists compromise and humiliation on national-democratic aspirations, a world that has rendered Ocampo’s nationalist and proletarian hopes for the Philippines abstract and thus, is rendered abstract in turn. It is an abstract realization of the “frustrated desires” and “feverish dreams” of an artist who “had to make a living” in the postcolonial context of the Philippines.<sup>32</sup>

Why is it important to argue thus? First, to call Ocampo’s work socialism in a bourgeois frame is not to diminish him, in spite of what ultimately may be for us his disappointing compromises and ideological depoliticization. Ocampo’s stature is, finally, not central here. His place as an artist is significant in bourgeois society. In those terms, adequate testament to his greatness has been given elsewhere. What is important is that seeing Ocampo’s work as socialism in a bourgeois frame restores the revolutionary aspirations of Philippine nationalism to the center of artistic innovation and creativity in the Philippines. What is great in this National Artist and, indeed, what is most unique, came from the revolutionary identifications, inclinations, and exigencies that composed him.

If Ocampo’s work constitutes the imaginary satisfaction of a real desire, it is still not the imaginary reconciliation of a real contradiction. Rather, it is a working through of real contradictions on the imaginary plane, one of the historically ascendant arenas of political struggle. Radicals and activists perhaps had good reason to dismiss his work during the rise of Socialist Realism in the late sixties and early seventies. But thirty years later, it may be more useful for us not to dismiss Ocampo’s work but instead to claim it, just as the

land, the state, the future, and all that has been expropriated in the name of private property are claimed by the movement. In building a revolutionary culture, part of what is to be done is to show how what *is* comes from the people, and how it can be used by the people. We must unearth the social logic that, although repressed, nonetheless drives the production of the object world, including art and visuality. Furthermore, we must indict the reactionary social logic that reifies and enframes the world of objects, art, and vision. In Ocampo's words, "The organic totality and unity of things give the whole, as well as each cell, its significance."<sup>33</sup> As in Ocampo's paintings, we must break the spell of reification and show the social splines competing for the significance of the work and, more generally, for the future of things.

Having said all this, I must admit that some of the later works of H. R. Ocampo leave me somewhat frustrated because the aesthetic uplift I experience seem to go nowhere. While his portrait *Che* (1968, fig. 10) and the painting *Man and Carabao* (1969, fig. 11), which Ocampo considered to be one of his most important works, still resonate in a figurative register; paintings such as *Sampayan* (1972, fig. 3), which is still just figurative; *The Last Days of September* (1972, fig. 12), which one assumes was done just after the declaration of martial law; and *Homage to Gomburza* (1977, fig. 13) have a different set of effects. Alice Guillermo writes:

H. R. Ocampo's *Man and Carabao* is no longer the romantic pastoral image of man and his faithful beast of burden. The image has become depersonalized. It is not a painting of a particular man or a specific carabao. Yet it is precisely the depersonalization of the image which made it possible for H. R. Ocampo to imbue the painting with his own imprint. The shapes are fragmented just as reality now demands to be viewed according to relatively different contexts.

"Unity, coherence, and emphasis" would still be valid, but their validation depended on the highly individual per-

ception and manipulation of the artist. Colors are given harmonic sequences of carefully arranged tones and intensities—harmonies so precise that the artist could formulate them in numbers—but it was a formulation, a system unique to H. R. Ocampo because he devised it. He strictly followed rules but they were rules he made. Eternal verities as palpable truths evident to everyone were—like prewar peace and plenty—dimly remembered memories. There are only facets of truths now just as in H. R. Ocampo, there are only fragments of shapes hinting at an image, a personality.<sup>34</sup>

Guillermo is right to note the nonrealization of the image and the personality, or rather its realization in fragmentation and abstraction, as being the distinguishing feature of Ocampo's work and, one could add, of postwar nationalism. The later works achieve a near total detachment from referentiality. Guillermo seems to see this as a form of individualism.

While it is clear that many of the paintings in the Visual Melody Period achieve a dynamism and unity heretofore unimagined by Ocampo or any other Filipino painter, perhaps the moment has not yet arrived for an adequate reading of these works beyond what has already been said regarding their dereification of objects, their engagement of visuality as process, their inducement to aesthetic pleasure through visual process, and their philosophico-aesthetic effort to restore agency to the viewer in an era when sight has been grasped as an alienable activity through the mass production and reproduction of power.

As we shall see in the next section, such frustration was the conclusion of the forthcoming generation of painters and filmmakers who would return to Social Realism. I have said that Neorealism opened a realm of freedom, the visual, which almost immediately became a site of contestation. Formally speaking, abstract art was the result of this contest. However, as intellectual sharpshooter Pete Daroy writes in a critique of liberalism, "as the Filipino intellectual

became more abstract in defense of freedom, the more he was increasingly forced to abandon his criticalness towards the status quo.”<sup>35</sup> The liberatory power of abstraction had its moment and, with capital’s near total encroachment on the visual today, still has something to offer us. But as the social situation itself during the late 1960s and early 1970s grew increasingly abstract and as poverty and violence grew more concrete, the people demanded more.

## PART 2

## SOCIALIST REALISM

*The Violation of the Real:  
Socialist Realism and  
Its Dis-contents (1972–1986)*

From 1972 to 1986, the Marcos dictatorship engendered significant shifts in modes of art making, particularly regarding the presence of the figure. Put another way, one could say that the Philippine *socius* engendered new kinds of imagistic figures that on a grand scale, included the Marcoses’, but in the less substantially capitalized venues of art making included their antitheses—images of the common *tao* shown in their suffering. The overall return to figuration, in what was to become the most important art of the period, was part of a general return to Social Realism in painting and the beginnings of Social Realism in the cinema.

Reflecting on this period sometime between 1986 and 1988, Alice Guillermo begins her essay, “Twenty Years of Protest Art,” thus:

Progressive art in the Philippines has a history and tradition that go back to the 19th century with Juan Luna’s *Spoliarium*,

an allegory of colonial oppression in the context of the Propaganda Movement, and with the artist's Social Realist trend in his later works. After decades of idyllic Amorsolo genre, it was in the years surrounding the Second World War that the trend in socially conscious art came to the fore as artists and writers took sides in the debate between proletarian art and art for art's sake. But it was in the last twenty years, from the mid-sixties to the present, that a truly nationalist and pro-people art came to take shape.<sup>1</sup>

Through the figure and work of H. R. Ocampo, we have already examined the conditions under which the social realism just prior to the Second World War first emerged and then, shortly after the war, was submerged. One can understand the re-emergence of Social Realism in the 1960s as an effect of the reconsideration of audience, content, and purpose by artists working in an environment transformed by a growing people's movement in dialectical tension with the capitalist will to contain it. Moreover, the visual first opened up by abstraction and then ramified by propaganda, advertising, and mass media, becomes a privileged site of struggle, but now always already abstract—particular and concrete, perhaps, yet visibly *informed* by identifiable social forces. The general politicization of social life and particularly the politicization of culture under martial law characterize this dialectic. Although the politicization of culture will reassert itself after 1986 with qualitatively new intensities and modes of experience, artists of the Marcos era clearly understood that culture was a medium for the making of subjects. In short, aesthetic form was “an ideology in its own right” and that ideology interpellates subjects.

In other words, many of the concepts later formalized by cultural theorists such as Louis Althusser and Fredric Jameson were already “Third World” practices. The Marcos regime depended on spectacle and its ability to promulgate ideology and organize perception. It conscripted a large number of intellectuals for speech

writing and agenda setting, while it organized fanfare and pageantry and attempted to control the universities. Thus many artists began to strive for forms capable of representing the situation of the Philippines such that the subjects of/for these representations would be linked to the democratic aspirations of the mass movement. These forms were necessarily and often by definition antagonistic to the aesthetic program promulgated by the Marcos regime. They were meant to propel their subjects toward the center of history rather than drive them to its margins.

Just as Guillermo remarks above on a shift in the dispensation of artists and art in the mid-1960s she seems to note a politically necessary aesthetic shift that, in certain respects, brings the Marcos era to a close. Her Aquino-era essay concludes with the following summary:

[O]ld guard fascist elements remain at the highest levels of the Aquino government. These have, in fact, been conducting a more vicious campaign against the peasantry all over the country and insist on the military solution to long-standing social and political problems in order to maintain the domination of the conservative elites. Imperialist intervention in and control of the national life is even more heavy-handed and obvious. Under such conditions, the people's struggle continues. The visual artists continue in their work in art and culture as weapons of social change. As in the mural for the last BAYAN national conference, the face of Marcos may no longer be there, but there are dark, monstrous shapes, no less fascist and no less anti-people against whom the people continue to struggle for the sake of the present and future generations of Filipinos.<sup>2</sup>

These dark, monstrous shapes one might also see in Ocampo's *Last Days of September* (1972, fig. 12). This echo, however intended, predicts a return to abstraction, or at least to a more abstract style after 1986. Foreboding social forces would once again not be attributable

to a particular figure. However, during the martial-law period, that is, somehow between the height of abstract painting and whatever new dispensation was to follow the end of dictatorship, a “re-established” Social Realism, or Socialist Realism, had a new and dynamic role to play.

It would, however, be a mistake to believe that the re-establishment of Social Realism was a move away from Abstraction. Rather, it was the rejection of Abstraction as a genre. As Althusser wrote in *Reading Capital*, “The whole empiricist process of knowledge lies in the operation of the subject named Abstraction. To know is to abstract from the real object its essence, the possession of which by the subject is called knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> Of course, the Social Realists were not empiricists, they were not trying to create works that had an ideology of no ideology. Their works are affiliated with a political program and they considered their works as interventions in the ruling imaginary in order to foster some engagement with the real conditions of existence. Nonetheless, Socialist Realist works were thought to depict objective conditions. Thus these works are doubly abstract—abstract in their grasping of the world for representation (the capturing of its essence), and abstract in their deployment of an image as a piece of social technology (the image as one abstraction in the marketplace of abstractions). In many respects, it was this doubling of abstraction, dialectics if you will, that necessitates an end to “Abstract art” and produces this period of realist images.

Guillermo traces the seeds of sociopolitical art to the emergence of militant student organizations beginning in 1969 and the publication of several important texts including *Philippine Society and Revolution* (1979) and Jose Ma. Sison’s *Struggle for National Democracy* (1972). “With a nationalist, scientific and mass orientation, these groups began to re-evaluate Philippine culture and art.”<sup>4</sup> This re-evaluation was explicitly political. She notes that “the largest and most organized art group to appear in the premartial law period was the Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista at Arkitekto ’71 (NPAA),” which was, as a division of the CPP and, as its acronym

implies, presumably to be to culture what the New People’s Army (NPA) was to military engagement. She also records that the key text on aesthetics from the early seventies and for a long time after was Mao Tse-Tung’s *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Art and Literature*. Mao raises the period’s fundamental question, “For whom?”

In her dissertation, “Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Marcos Regime,” Guillermo further records that the first revolutionary art group to emerge after the First Quarter Storm in 1970 (NPAA ’71 and ’72) had as active members Fortunato Pascual a.k.a. Renato Pagarigan, Marcelino Cadiz Jr., Cesar Camacho, Ernie Forcadilla, Carlos Soriano, Rudy Floresca, and Norma Respicio. It also “had a national chapter and regional chapters with a total membership of around two hundred.”<sup>5</sup> Their attitude toward the reign of Abstract art can be summarized by an NPAA spokesman, who, when interviewed by writer Conrado de Quiros said:

Bourgeois (elitist) art is in the first place abstract and esoteric. The products of our local painters (particularly those who would like to look upon themselves as avant-garde) are understandable only to them. They do not address anyone in particular, they simply produce works and leave them to the laws of the capitalist market. Revolutionary art is the reflection of society. It is part of the superstructure (culture) that derives its existence from an economic base.<sup>6</sup>

Strictly speaking, revolutionary art in the Philippines was no less abstract for all that. Indeed, it signified in terms of a philosophy of historical practice and transformation. Guillermo comments that “unlike their forerunners in the 1950s who painted social themes but hobnobbed with Manila’s elite, the NPAA saw that these ‘patrons’ of Philippine art were in cahoots with U.S. imperialism, for they were no other than the despotic landlords, the corrupt businessmen, and the vicious bureaucrats. Thus, the NPAA created an art that was never neutral but always clear in its partisanship with

the people. Their common subjects were the suffering and exploitation of the basic masses and the voracious nature of imperialism, at the same time that they condemned the servility of elitist art.”<sup>7</sup>

If not for aristocrats and bureaucrats, for whom was art? Mao Tse Tung’s answer to the question of “for whom?”—an answer that was taken as a guiding principle for art making and also as offering a critique of Abstract art, regardless of what nationalist aspirations were “suffused” in it—was that art should be for the following four kinds of people who constitute the masses:

Who, then, are the masses of the people? The broadest sections of the people, constituting more than 90 percent of our total population, are the workers, peasants, soldiers and urban petty bourgeoisie. Therefore, our literature and art are first for the workers, the class that leads the revolution. Secondly, they are for the peasants, the most numerous and most steadfast of our allies in the revolution. Thirdly, they are for the armed workers and peasants . . . which are the main forces of the revolutionary war. Fourthly, they are for the laboring masses of the urban petty bourgeoisie and for the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, both of whom are also our allies in the revolution and capable of long-term cooperation with us. These four kinds of people constitute the overwhelming majority of the Chinese nation, the broadest masses of the people.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, just as art and image making in general was becoming a weapon against the people, utilized by the elite, the people lay their claims to art. As images are being used to stave off Socialism, they might also be used to bring it about. Thus, images are directly linked to historic-material struggle and this struggle is grasped as collective: From a revolutionary standpoint, the image is posited as a medium, a mediation, in the dialectical struggle of labor with capital.

Jose Ma. Sison, founding chairman of the *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM), or Nationalist Youth, in the mid-1960s, and of

the re-established Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) that he currently chairs in exile, details some of the material conditions of the struggle imposed by the Marcos era as follows:<sup>9</sup>

The cost of the U.S.-inspired fascist dictatorship to the Filipino people is extremely high. More than six million were displaced from their homes and land. Some 150,000 people were killed, and another 100,000 were injured in the course of AFP military operations. Many were subjected to torture and summary execution. At least 70,000 were arbitrarily detained for at least one month. Hundreds of thousands were subjected to the humiliation of taking an oath of allegiance to the regime and being misrepresented as NPA and MNLF surrenderees.<sup>10</sup>

The U.S.-backed war on the Filipino people waged by the fascist-aspiring dictatorship and an army of bureaucrat-capitalists, military personnel and co-opted intellectuals and media, took on violent proportions that would have (once) been considered intolerable in the West, despite the fact that from the official U.S. perspective, the whole thing just looked like foreign policy as usual, which it was. The beefing up of the military, the plundering of “development funds,” the seizure of lands, and the enrichment of cronies, among others, became possible through the continual infliction of pain in a variety of forms, from impoverishment, to miseducation, to torture, to murder. What becomes clear from any study of martial law is that the near-universal condition of bourgeois society in which the state makes continuous low intensity warfare on its citizenry was manifest as a continuous state of emergency papered over by Marcos-sponsored spectacles. This violence was layered over the already existing forms of historical violations ranging from urban squalor to factory exploitation, to feudal indentured quasi slavery. This warfare on the people was the road to credibility (or creditability), where the state could demonstrate its control in order to borrow U.S. funds

and then borrow more funds to service its debt. Thus, the dictatorship paved the way for finance capital. To manage it all, militarization was accompanied by lavish cultural projects and Imelda Marcos's vision for the Philippines.

Thus, it was during martial law that the cultural sphere explicitly became an arena of political struggle. The already existing nationalist art and art practices were conscripted by the state and made to signify for the dictatorship. Imelda Marcos kept herself busy with scores of elitist pep talks bearing such titles such as "Film as Art," "The Compassionate Society," and "City of Man." In one of these harangues, with the sinister title "Culture: The Human Face of Development," she wrote, or more accurately read out loud, "We aim to preserve [culture] and nourish it, determined, as we are, to remain truly Filipino in the pursuit of progress. Our identity, our cultural integrity, remind us that the human being is sovereign, that human values must not be surrendered in the ambition of material wealth."<sup>11</sup> This nationalist drivel she had the gall to utter while she, Marcos, and the cronies robbed the country blind using terrorist tactics, intimidation, and murder. Undaunted, she continues: "It is timely, perhaps, that as we speak of a new world economic order, our culture should speak to us from the deepest wellsprings of our human heritage. The message is essentially a reassertion of the true, the good, and the beautiful: Let these be the ultimate ends of our material endeavors." Reading these speeches today, one can almost see how she believed that the ends justified the means, that high culture served as the legitimization of all the exploitation and violence orchestrated through dictatorship. For she presented herself as the true, the good, and the beautiful incarnate, the quintessence of the Filipino soul. She was the embodiment of the legitimization of the means to development: in short, mass murder. Imelda Marcos was, precisely, "the diplomatic presentation of heirarchical society to itself," as Guy Debord says of the spectacle.

Imelda's shameful writings and speeches remain a classic if unwitting testament to the logic of alienation. As Debord says of

the spectacle, in Imelda's speeches, "the true is a moment of the false." Here is a case in point from another of her speeches: "The Cultural Center, in a profound sense, is the reality of our being, the countenance of our race, the heart and soul of our humanity." From such doubletalk, we may clearly see how it became the work of Socialist Realism to show in what respects the hollow duplicity of official national culture accurately registered only the hollow duplicity of official national politics. Imelda Marcos, as her book jacket tells us, was "the symbol of the Compassionate Society herself," payment enough, we were to assume, for all the exploitation and human-rights violations inflicted on the masses. She spoke and acted as if her presence were justification enough for the murder, cronyism, banditry, and disappearances perpetrated by her regime. The aesthetic figure and the figure of the aesthetic here both built from the blood of the people confronted the Filipinos as something hostile and alien. One thinks again of Ocampo's *Masks* (fig. 8) as discussed in chapter 2. The people needed to create an art that expressed their own revolutionary humanistic concerns.

Meanwhile, Guillermo details the emergence of Kaisahan in 1974. "The group consisted of young and talented artists, mostly Fine Arts graduates from different universities, and who already had initial professional experience in art exhibits and in editorial cartooning. These included Pablo Baens Santos, Orlando Castillo, Edgar Fernandez, Antipas Delotavo, Renato Habulan, Papo de Asis, and Al Manrique, later joined by Neil Doloricon and Jose Tence Ruiz."<sup>12</sup> Guillermo writes, "There was a common agreement that art should shift its orientation from the elite and urban sector to the large majority of the people. This implied a content meaningful to the people because it is drawn from their experiences and from current social and political issues with an understanding of the root causes of the country's ills."<sup>13</sup> These root causes, were of course, the Marcoses and everything that made them possible, even necessary: from U.S. imperialism, to capitalism itself, to fascism, to bureaucrat capitalism, feudalism, and cronyism—all names for the practices that

combined in the constellation of forces giving the Philippine socius its form and dynamics.

The Kaisahan 1976 Manifesto was a further declaration of aesthetic principles: “For us, therefore, the question ‘For whom is art?’ is a crucial and significant one. And our experiences lead us to the answer that art is for the masses. It must not exist simply for the pleasures of the few who can afford it. It must not degenerate into the pastime of a few cultists.”<sup>14</sup> The new subject matter included

the workers with their tools who constitute the solid base of industry, and the factories spewing pollution, the farmers in the fields, not pretty as in Amorsolo but strong and enduring through the centuries of struggle, the ticket vendors in the city and others like them who must earn from meal to meal, the youth and old women waiting listlessly in doorways, the ethnic minorities, the Bontoc and Mangyan in the poor huts. Aside from the few still lifes, the paintings are mostly faces of people, Mang Juan the carpenter, Aling Omeng on the sidewalk selling fruit, and people we barely know or whom we have always ignored. Such an art also serves to join people into a stronger sense of national community as we engage in the process of defining our national identity in terms of the many instead of the few. As we have for a long time defined national identity in terms of the *ilustrados* and urban elite classes, it is now time to define it in terms of the people and their genuine aspirations.<sup>15</sup>

The groups that emerged out of Kaisahan, after 1979, Buklod-Sining and Binhi, “answered the growing need for popular forms, especially murals for rallies and mass actions commissioned by various causes and organizations. They introduced a striking visual element in street demonstrations in the vivid murals and in huge papier-mâché effigies. Increasing militarization was a predominant theme in the visual arts that expressed the people’s protest to

hamletting, military abuses, and massive violations of human rights.”<sup>16</sup>

For the purposes of contextualization, and also to show the character of certain conscious interventions in the visual, I want to include several images by Social Realist painters. Although these may be seen in another of Guillermo’s indispensable works, *Social Realism in the Philippines*, I offer my own brief commentary on these works.<sup>17</sup> These paintings turn walls—often used as barriers against the progressive forces—into screens, and offer counterviews to state-controlled perceptions of the Philippines. In a street mural entitled *Fight for the People’s Right to Know, Fight for Press Freedom* the existing chain of command in the hog-tying of the media from U.S. President Reagan on down is literalized: At Reagan’s whisper, Marcos chokes the publisher who chokes the editor who stifles the media even as it would try to report stories of terrorism and murder.<sup>18</sup> Quite often, such street murals were done on the spot. Painter Edgar Fernandez relates that often during protest marches, the artists would work behind the people as they marched, painting protest slogans and images on whatever available surfaces. Patricio Abinales relates that artists sometimes carried large stencils of a dog body and a Marcos head in order to slap up image after image of Marcos as America’s dog as the protestors marched. As the people moved, the artists would leave a trail of slogans and images on the walls, which were quickly covered up by soldiers who followed the marchers with white paint.

In *Tigilan ang Demolisyon* [Stop the Demolition], Papo de Asis excoriates state-mediated commercial expansion by graphically rendering its material fallout and human costs. Beneath the myriad signs and logos of corporate capital and the watchful silhouettes of armed guards, land-grabbing developers bulldoze squatter encampments. A tarp laid upon the ground on which development proceeds becomes at once a ceiling and a shroud for the squatters—who today make up more than 40 percent of Manila’s twelve million-plus population. Their blood (but also their power) is visible through the red rips in this shroudlike covering. Below the shroud are people orga-



nizing to protest the onslaught of a capitalism and in the foreground stands, Pieta-like, its most vulnerable members, the children, and the future. Overall, the image reminds us that this struggle is part of three temporalities—at once ongoing, for the future, and of the past—since under the shroud the ghosts of people’s lives haunt the “development” projects already achieved.

In *Justice under Martial Law*, by Orlando Castillo, Marcos is wrapped in and sanctified by the mantel of U.S. power, surrounded by graphic representations of the brutal forms of social control, including intimidation, kidnapping, torture, and salvaging exercised in the name of justice. It also depicts sufferers giving one another comfort in their sorrow. Marcos’s Aryan salute shows that the colonial condition underpinning his situation, his power, and his fascist appeal is a consequence not just of the politics between nation-states but also of racism. This image might productively be thought to express what Vicente Rafael calls “White Love.”

In *Itak sa Puso ni Mang Juan* [Piercing the Heart of Old Juan], Antipas Delotavo creates a dialectical image in which corporate power confronts the body and soul of the common person through the medium of the image. Juan, whose thin body is bowed down by a lifetime of hard work, walks past a Coca-Cola advertisement. Unbeknownst to him but visible to the viewer of the painting, the extension of the logo becomes a bolo and pierces his heart. This painting addresses something like the unconscious of those subject to imperialism. The syncretic character of the image, that is, the fusion of Coca-Cola and the bolo argues that, under imperialism, people can be killed by the vernacular, particularly when the vernacular is hard wired to capitalist mediation. As we saw in chapter 1, the oppressive force of the new vernacular was an important theme in Ocampo’s novel *Scenes and Spaces*, but here, the vernacular has become a vernacular of images. Like language, these have an unconscious function. The critical awareness of their manipulations behind the scenes, as it were, meant that images required ideological analysis and the creation of counterimages. Coca-Cola and the bolo are both

tools and each has a social logic impacted in it: the internalization of Western commodity culture in the case of Coke, and the exploitation of the peasantry by the *hacenderos* in the case of the bolo. Of course, there is more to both Coca-Cola and the bolo than these exploitative forms of implementation, but this conjuncture is foregrounded. The painting implies that in imperialism, these two cultures are fused and this fusion has detrimental unconscious effects. Furthermore, what remains unconscious sustains the material conditions of exploitation; repression of knowledge regarding the mode of production is what sustains the regime. The theme of the unconscious of an imperialism that functions sensually and culturally is further deepened when we see that the watercolor that renders the background of the Coca-Cola logo contains in its apparently random staining pattern, a representation of the rallying masses, as if they were somehow the unconscious of the image—its repressed. Thus, the dynamism of Ocampo-style abstraction, as well as its pressure against commodity reification, is grafted directly to the revolutionary masses. Here are the forces who will break the plane of the image and provide it, through class struggle, with new resolution, depth, and force.

With the emergence of the masses on the stage of the aesthetic, it is, however, arguably the cinema that goes farthest in re-establishing the depth of the image and the amplitude of what and who are represented. The two essays that follow this introductory section embark on a detailed consideration of films of two of the great filmmakers of this period: Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal.

In a recent essay entitled “Brocka, Bernal and Co.: The Arrival of New Filipino Cinema,” Bienvenido Lumbera credits the Left, correctly in my view, with the radical transformation of Philippine cinema in the early seventies. “[C]inematic production under the ‘New Society’ was going on [in] a climate often disrupted by reports, both oral and printed, about encounters between the military and the New People’s Army (NPA) and widespread human-rights violations committed by government forces.”<sup>19</sup> Lumbera adds:

The anti-dictatorship movement, in the face of the formidable government propaganda machinery, had taken the stance of distrusting the “official” versions of social realities. This was a stance easily communicated to the populace which was quite aware that media was in the hands of Marcos friends and relatives. Affirmation of the need to distrust was fed by the proliferation of underground and “alternative” media which came in the form of mimeographed and photocopied news items and opinion articles coming from “outside” and “below.” In such a milieu, directors and scriptwriters learned, without even trying, to be analytical and, sometimes, critical. (345–46)

Given the mediocre output of the industry and the growing politicization of urban audiences, it was not unexpected that the newcomers to the industry would turn out to be malcontents, innovators and iconoclasts. The imposition of Martial Law in 1972 by President Marcos had the effect of making even the most apolitical members of the industry aware of the State’s employment of its powers to control the minds of Filipinos in the name of “saving the Republic.” (347)

We should note that Lumbera’s historical sketch of this period avoids the primary pitfall in the making sense of the Philippine conjuncture described by E. San Juan Jr. as “the failure to comprehend the Filipino people’s history as a process of national liberation and self-affirmation.”<sup>20</sup> Such a failure, as I hope to make clear throughout this volume, must be avoided in cultural history as well as political history. Partisan scholarship views national liberation and self-affirmation as the driving forces of cultural transformation. Such an approach is particularly fruitful in understanding Philippine cinema.

Both inside and outside of the industry grew cinema at once people affirming and critical of the concentration of power. Outside the industry, Kidlat Tahimik in *Turumba* (1972), a film similar to

Gillo Pontecorvo’s *Burn* in its ambition to correlate global political economy with colonial history, but profoundly different in affect tells, through a child’s eyes, the story of how a German businesswoman contracts a small-town family to produce papier-mâché souvenirs for the Munich Olympics, thus destroying the town’s tradition. The film is a powerful registration of the global in the local from a moment that proceeds from the utilization of such terms. Kidlat’s other well-known movie, *Perfumed Nightmare*, is the story of a French businessman who brings a jeepney, a Philippine-produced multipurpose automobile/bus based on the Second World War jeeps brought by the Americans, and its driver (played by Kidlat) to Paris to service his gum-ball machine route.<sup>21</sup> The film is at once hilarious and sad, full of a kind of seditious pathos that seems characteristic of the colonial experience of the Philippines. Kidlat’s elegy to the omnipresent jeepney, “We have turned a vehicle of war into a vehicle of life,” also expresses the situation of the Philippines and his aspirations for the cinema.

The Second Golden Age, as noted previously, is also a sexually explicit, or “bold,” period. Films such as Bernal’s *Aliw* [Pleasure, 1979] or Celso Ad Castillo’s *Burlesk Queen* (1977), explored the relation of sex work and subalternity. A particularly striking work dealing with sexuality and dictatorship is Mike De Leon’s *Batch 81* (1982). This film correlates fraternity initiation rights, their homoeroticism and homophobia, with the cacique system and Marcos fascism. In fraternity hazings that might well be described in terms developed in Klaus Theweleit’s analysis of the German *Frierkorps*, we witness the creation of a “body armor” among neophytes that robs them of their capacities to love and structures their libido toward violent ends.<sup>22</sup> Violent homosociality climaxes not in male-male sexual liberation but in the flow of blood. This careful titration of homoeroticism with homophobia mediated by the fraternity system is portrayed as the libidinal recipe for martial law. Marilou Diaz-Abaya’s *Moral* (1982) offers an expanded field for women’s relationships with one another, and proposes, in Gina Marchetti’s

words, that the New People's Army might "act as a matrix through which women find a new identity."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the link between individual aspirations, collective potentials, and armed struggle is made.

These brief descriptions only scratch the surface of some of the issues raised by the Second Golden Age. In the following two chapters, I discuss Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis* and Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night* in depth and place these works in a historical and theoretical context. Indeed, I argue that in addition to being compelling movies, these works are simultaneously film theory and political practice. In the process I try to show that the modality of the visible is not ineluctable—at least in its specifics—but rather, it is negotiable and thus, a contingent, historically specific realm of struggle.

*Directing the Real:  
Orapronobis against  
Philippine Totalitarianism (2000)*

*The present is a problem of history.*

—Georg Lukács

Examined as a whole, the cinema of the martial-law period could be shown to have assembled a battery of techniques to interrogate assorted interlocked structures of oppression, structures which at once made dictatorship possible and sustained its aspirations. This chapter continues the analysis of these structures of oppression in a society perceived to be becoming increasingly totalitarian. These structures (relations, desires, overdeterminations, the emergence of visual media) were engaged by many Filipino cinematic works during and immediately after martial law. To grasp the history of Philippine visuality in terms of a liberatory struggle in the context of a world-media system that is an extension of capitalist relations into the visual, sensual, and experiential, we must specify the particularities of these critiques and raise questions concerning their continuing relevance.

A protracted analysis of this period might highlight certain contents of the relevant categories of a confrontation between radi-

cal strains in Philippine cinema and the Philippine socius—the structuring of libidinal relations, economic organization, gendering and empowerment of subjects, ecological and geographical strategies of containment, class antagonism, the role of the spectacular and the sublime, and others—by examining the cinematic forms through which these categories were instantiated. To pursue this project through to its completion, one could collect the most abrasive elements of the cinema of Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, Kidlat Tahimik, Celso Ad Castillo, Peque Gallaga, Eddie Romero, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, and Laurice Guillen, among others. If “Philippines 2000,” as the developmentalist slogan of the 1990s went, is properly understood as the legacy of the Marcos regime,<sup>1</sup> it should in principle be possible to establish a catalogue of critical modes of cinematic thought that emerged during the period preceding the present, which then might be re-evaluated to critique and transform that new order of totalitarianism known as globalization, or transnational capitalism.

The present chapter, however, is far more modest in scope. First, I will be concerned primarily with Lino Brocka’s critique of the spectacle in *Orapronobis* [Fight For Us, 1989], and second, with the critical reception of the film. Though the film has been correctly viewed as a passionate call to arms, its struggle with representation and spectacular relations forms a necessary preamble and accompaniment in the mass effort necessary to counteract the aggression being waged upon the global majority by what, after all these years and all these shifts in historical “periods,” remains “the ruling class.” In this Socialist Realist film, the visual realm is seen as being co-opted by the ruling class. The film makes it its business to demystify the free-floating abstractions regarding the social deployed by mass media. However, it also argues that today, organized class struggle, or the lack thereof, no longer ought to be discussed as a consequence of the mystification of the commodity form as a mere artifact of the capitalist mode of production. The film argues for the necessity of grasping a new order of expressivity for the commodity form that is *productive*

of culture: a mediator and a medium. *Mediations* of hierarchical society—mediations that include the movies but also psychical and social relations, are engines of production that produce the immanence of a perceived reality. This “reality” is not existentially neutral, but rather an interested category created in and through the minds of a people. Taken as a whole, capitalized culture processes disaffection, endured violence, and even revolution, crushing it into forms productive for capital. The reality *perceived* as the terms and possibilities of existence is constantly being made and remade, both “objectively,” and in the mind. The eye, now understood as being in a cybernetic relation to mass media, is the privileged organ for the negotiation of reality.

Certain aspects of the form that perceived reality takes are achieved consciously, while others are not. The means of production of perceived reality are owned by a minority in spite of the fact that everyone labors to create reality. Perhaps Brocka’s works are best grasped as figurations of the current situation in accord with a Gramscian sense of prediction. Their realism, that is, their active construction of a real, predicts a future alternative to the one slated by transnational capital. The films are machines that can be utilized to bring that alternate future into being. Therefore, my chapter foregrounds the communitarian creativity demanded by Brocka’s forceful dismantling of the arena of reality constructed by television and mass media in compliance with hierarchical society.

### *Censorship and Sensibility*

In her essay “Media and Thought Control: The Subjugated Consciousness” written just after the fall of Marcos, Alice Guillermo provides a lucid account of the relationship between state power and the shaping of perception in the public sphere:

Throughout the duration of the [Marcos] regime, the State manipulation of the print and broadcast media was not an

occasional effort but a total and systemic operation . . . to break their spirit of freedom and to make them an adjunct of State power. In retrospect, it is amazing, indeed, shocking, how the dictatorial regime applied its full force to destroy the once proud Philippine press and media in order to perpetrate the widespread exploitation and plunder of the country's resources.

. . . The manipulation of the news became the order of the day. The Malacañang press boys fed the news sifted and deodorized to the different crony newspapers. "Developmental journalism" was the euphemism for a manipulated press in which writers were [en]joined or coerced to show the bright touristic side and conceal the harsh reality of Philippine conditions. Nothing was spared from censorship: columns and articles by staff writers and contributors were submitted for censorship; even photographs, especially those for magazine covers, had to be approved by the watchdogs of the State. There were guidelines for film and television as well as for the press. There were "talking tips" for talk shows, as in the last and unlamented Panawagan '86, where government apologists bullied the opposition with the arrogance of power. But onerous as these were, they were only the milder forms of coercion, compared to the slapping of multimillion lawsuits on journalists, the imprisonment, torture and killing of many courageous writers in Manila and all over the country with hardly any hope of justice.<sup>2</sup>

Though Philippine media censorship remains and, therefore, retains its pernicious character, today's MTRCB (Movie and Television Review and Classification Board), as the official organ of censorship is only the most visible and (as with most excessively visible phenomena) all too easily understood form of an oligarchic domination of representation. If one were skeptical about state power, one might even think that the MTRCB fuels a heterosexist, patriarchal fetishism precisely to sustain the narrow debate over legitimate representation cathected to hegemonically sexualized images.<sup>3</sup>

Through this psychic ambush in the registers of morality and taste, the MTRCB diverts thought away from the troubling issues around hegemonizing representations and the systemic class and gender inequalities they foster. Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis* (a banned film) is an effort to decode television and television society's strategies of control. By passing through the explicitly televisual world and then the life world, it endeavors to show the lived dimensions of symbolic struggle in media.

To decipher current televisual practices and their active role in the organization of the imagination in accord with the exigencies of globalization will not make the MTRCB any less nefarious. It should, however, prove that the censorship board's existence is symptomatic of a far more encompassing paternalism, one that is ultimately bent on the continued violation of the lives of the Filipinos to increase the profits of a global elite. This paternalism, although outwardly merely patronizing, is inwardly fearful and warlike, being, as it is, founded on violence and dedicated to denying representation, political and otherwise, to large numbers of people.<sup>4</sup> It is the conscious posture of the ruling elite in relation to the threatening masses and, as such, is infused with bourgeois-Christian rectitude and propriety—the hypocritical pseudomorality of hierarchical society. One must hasten to add here that the more thoroughgoing practices of the domination of representation—for which the presence of the MTRCB serves both as cloak and index—rely on additional as well as completely different orders of mediated control such as military and economic violence.

*Orapronobis* reveals precisely this broader yet less visible order of political domination by launching a critique of the enfolding of space and meaning by television. It reveals the interested character of the virtual replacement (simulation) of historical and geographical experience by television. Speaking generally, profit makers and their media—which include not only film and television but also private armies, banks, and machine guns—are concerned with rendering the negative effects of the systematic violation that underlies their wealth (the atrocities, the salvaging, the poverty, the pain, the

ravaging of people, resources and land, the destruction of potential, of mind, of children, of health) inert, that is, incapable of arousing mass indignation and mass action. The acts of terrorism, war, economic hardship, and bulldozing of squatter encampments are also mediations of power. These mediations of power, like the wage and the conditions that force workers to accept its pittance, are forms through which power expresses itself materially in the lives of the people, and as such are some of the cutting edges with which capital organizes the masses against their own class interests. Finally, these media are also perception machines and are on a continuum with the media that comprise the public sphere. We are speaking about a system of interlocking mediations that includes both what is done to people and what appears to them. A common logic informs the corruption in government, the removal of people from their homes and the expansion of Skycable. Foregrounding the battle for acquiring eyes registers the ways in which the organization of perception has become a central component in all political-economic activities. Without grasping the continuities among the various mediations, without understanding how capital takes up various forms of human activity and converts it into media for its own expansion, the solicitation of “veneration without understanding,” to borrow Renato Constantino’s phrase, by mediated images cut (by corporations including the Philippine Government) to the measure of domination is very difficult to grasp. This matrix of perceptual and, therefore, of social organization is at once a symptom of the power of the dominant, and recursively, an engine of that power.

The systematic enforcement of the general deprivation of human rights (to one’s own body, to land, to wealth—the social product) is accomplished in a variety of ways, but probably nothing is more detrimental to an understanding of the sustained and continual deprivation of what Walter Benjamin utopically named “the masses’ right to represent themselves” than the form that for-profit television takes as it takes over representations.<sup>5</sup> The spectacle, as Guy Debord reminds us, is a social relation, and the delimitation of the “analysis”

of the spectacle to how much pubic hair is shown or how many breasts also delimits our understanding of our relations with one another. My reading of this form of censorship in which two bodies cannot touch each other in certain ways if they are having sex but can if they are killing one another<sup>6</sup> places it as part of a generalized enforcement of austerity measures on the poor majority. This sensual impoverishment is at once consistent with, but of a different order than, the “morality” of colonial Catholicism. In the First World, by contrast, sexually explicit material of a certain kind is quite pervasive because desires can be aroused that are then transferred to and momentarily fulfilled by commodity consumption. Indeed, the commodity in this form of sexualized economy is the sexiest thing of all and, if only momentarily, fills the space of whatever fetish has been aroused. Arousal cathects to the purchasing of cologne or toothpaste or transportation or whatever, and supports the psychic validation of the universe in which the commodity is sex and sex is the commodity. In the Philippines, the subaltern population does not even have such sad recompense for its labor, and the arousal of all that ambient desire (no matter how reactionary in form) is a dangerous thing if it has nowhere, that is, no form of life, to which to cathect. The tragic delimitations of the parameters of life already result in the conflation of differentiable “components” of the life force, namely, sexuality and aggression, which often results in terrible eroticized crimes against members of the same class (as in cases of police extortion and brutality) or against daughters (as in rape and incest). These are the desperate expressions of power of the powerless and are also endemic to the very mode of power exercised by the state. The eroticization of brutality enables state function; the naturalization-effect of this form of eroticism legitimates it.

If First World commodity sexualization does not immediately result in buying sprees, the desire for a lived plenitude that is available at the imaginary level for a few seconds from a shot of eroticized human flesh can be effectively sublimated in a work ethic because First World workers do, in exceptional cases, achieve high levels of

spending power. Moreover, even the average U.S. wage-worker receives a huge dividend from the U.S. imperialist project. Furthermore, work is so highly specialized that it is separated from daily life in a way that allows for high degrees of sublimation. Repletion is a possibility that can be entertained and on occasion realized. In the Philippines, however, the idea that hard work might lead to bliss could only be a bad joke. With nowhere to go, the arousal of too much libido among the masses might actually kill Ramos, Erap, and all the cronies. The MTRCB excises visible fucking to keep the power elite from getting fucked, so that, in spite of what they say, they can go on fucking behind the scenes.<sup>7</sup>

Generally speaking, the level of tabloid analysis of images (and I include all the major daily newspapers in this category) is even more deleterious than it is embarrassing. The thumbs-up-thumbs-down-*baduy-bakya-galing* journalism of many of the columnists who are household names is complicit with present-day Philippine totalitarianism in an almost wholesale manner. Of course this is why these columnists and lifestyle editors are allowed (meaning, in the first instance, paid) to pontificate on our images: These are the people that give modern-day totalitarianism its pretty faces, its liberal facades. Civil society in the Philippines could not tolerate the constant shredding and destruction of the media walls, which, like the white walls surrounding squatter areas, serve to disguise the conditions of life necessary to perpetuate an elite's illusions about itself. In this, the Filipino elite is no different than their First World counterparts who also have no desire to see the material contradictions that would give the lie to their seemingly placid lives built on the violation of others, but these contradictions are closer at hand. Pulling down the walls is not in the interest of the owners of the papers, other media, or their advertisers, the ultrawealthy nationals and the multinationals—at least until an opportunity for “development” arises. If under capitalism the MTRCB is ever willingly disbanded, it will only be because the mediated arousal of heretofore unpredictable desires will no longer pose a threat to the entrenchment of power,

but will instead stimulate new heights of consumption and compliance. At present, however, a sexual revolution on the screen would be too close to what the dominant regime would consider a political revolution in that it might threaten the structuring of desire that sustains oppression.

The near-total saturation of thought by dominant media, to say nothing of the de facto prohibition of certain radical foreign films (not Hollywood) that might provide lessons in visual literacy adequate to ripping apart some of the social illusions constructed by the ultraright (capitalist, patriarchal) media, has left few media makers and critics able to perform the necessary remedial analysis. This generalized impoverishment has led to a delimitation of the imagination's ability to posit social alternatives. For example, to my knowledge there are exactly zero critical readings of Brocka in which he appears as a radical theorist of media practice, despite the fact that his public remarks on filmmaking, on representation, and on art would constantly dwell on the responsibilities and practices of the artist in an oppressive society.<sup>8</sup> Additionally Brocka's media praxis is itself a theory, despite the fact that it has not been apprehended as such. In showing how *Orapronobis* endeavors to decode television and, further, to offer a radical pedagogy of the mass media, this chapter will try to codify the film's critique of the misunderstandings, misdirections, and instrumental illusions programmed by mass media (the mediation of the masses). To my mind Brocka's films along with the work of a handful of other visual artists, represent the most sophisticated thought on visuality and power in the Philippines for this period and perhaps into the new millennium. *Orapronobis* attempts nothing less than a remediation of the mass-media system. It aims to shatter the status quo constructed by and in viewers/citizens through their engagement with mediated (mis)understandings, desires, and drives. In its visceral reconfiguration of the socius lies its revolutionary force.

A final preamble: For readers who might think that since we have come through the fascism of the Marcos and Aquino regimes

into the liberal democratic era of Ramos, Brocka's analysis is dated, I ask these readers to bear in mind the following observation made by Amando Doronila as quoted by Guillermo in her 1986 essay cited above:

The restoration of oligarchical formations will give us a false picture of pluralism in the media, but in fact the pluralism is that between members of the ruling class. In pre-martial law years, we deceived ourselves in believing that we had a media operating in the best democratic traditions of capitalism. In fact, what we had was a plurality of conservative ideas competing noisily within the framework of the ideological values of that social order; they were permitted to enjoy the "freedom of the press" in the interests of the elite.<sup>9</sup>

If *Orapronobis* is dated, it is not because this weighted pluralism has vanished, but because the media system is more one-dimensional than ever before.

### *The Invisible of Television*

*Orapronobis* opens in October 1985 with the gruesome murder of rebel sympathizer Father Jeff (Gerard Bernschein) by right-wing vigilante leader Kumander Kontra (Bembol Roco). Temporally, the film passes through the 1986 EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) revolution and into the present, tracing the release of political prisoner, liberation theologian, and former priest Jimmy Cordero (Philip Salvador). The film splits Jimmy between his two families, one which is post-EDSA and bourgeois and the other which is pre-EDSA and provincial. Following his post-EDSA liberation from incarceration he marries Trixie (Dina Bonnevie), the media liaison for the Free Jimmy Cordero Committee of the Alliance for Human Rights. However, upon seeing his pre-EDSA girlfriend Esper (Gina Alajar) on television, her silhouetted figure giving testimonial about a massa-

cre outside of Manila in which her husband was killed, he renews his acquaintance with her and hence moves closer to the rebels with whom she is associated. While on a fact-finding mission to gather testimony of human-rights abuses by Kumander Kontra and his vigilantes, Jimmy discovers that he has a son with Esper. Thus, Jimmy's politicization is framed by two forms of family life and two disparate futures, a post-EDSA one of self-protective bourgeois forgetting and a pre-EDSA one of continued struggle. These collide as Trixie becomes more conservative, refusing to politicize her brother's murder, and Esper and her son are abducted in broad daylight in front of the press. In the climactic scenes, both Esper and her son are killed by Kontra. The aftermath, in which Jimmy lifts his murdered son's body away from press photographers and right-wing politicians, and slowly carries it into a church is utterly devastating—a pieta of incredible pathos. When Jimmy returns home to Trixie and their sleeping newborn, it is only to retrieve a gun left by a friend and to make a phone call to join the underground.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the film effectively intertwines elements of necessity (intolerable outrage), faith (the terrible sanctuary of the church in the mourning scene), and struggle (the underground movement) so that history (its transformation) becomes the only medium of salvation.

Immediately after the point-blank shooting of Father Jeff in the opening sequence, *Orapronobis* cuts to a February 1986 footage of the EDSA uprising. Poetically, it is here, amidst the people, that Brocka places the credits. The EDSA footage is also accompanied by helicopter noise and a soundbite from the U.S. media coverage: "in constant contact with Ms. Aquino, as you know there has been no split in the ranks between Cory Aquino and Enrile and Ramos." This voice over sampled from U.S. media coverage immediately raises questions as to who has been in constant contact with Aquino and at the same time introduces the surveying presence of world (U.S.) media. The fact that EDSA is a global media event also implies that the U.S. global has a hand in it. Following this dialectic, which immediately problematizes news "coverage" as reporting and shows



that it is a part of making, the film will investigate less-publicized workings of this global hand.

Other mediations are quickly taken up. In a jail, men watch the last Marcos television broadcast being aired. As Marcos stone-facedly cautions civilians to stay out of the line of fire and fields questions from U.S. reporters about press censorship, one of the audience members points an imaginary handgun at the screen and asserts, “You’re dead, old boy.” Pulling the trigger, he shouts “Bang,” and the TV screen suddenly goes to static. Thinking the television simply conked out, his friend ironically comments, “You’re a good shot.” But all at once, everyone realizes that Marcos may be off the air. We, as Brocka’s audience have seen that this broadcast is watched by the members of a jailed audience, who although absent from the television picture are here represented during and indeed in the fall of Marcos. The dictator is not an autonomous power, but a social relation. Imagining his downfall is part of bringing him down. Brocka takes aim at television from the point of view of the people, people who challenge the hierarchical mediations of social control in both conscious and unconscious ways. Although in a highly mediated way, the imaginary shot fired at the television does indeed destroy Marcos. This network of mediations—its foreclosures and potentialities—is the epistemological subject of the film.

The imprisoned audience shown during the credits demonstrates a role of alternative media of the kind that Brocka is undertaking to create: TV programming is perceived not as a text in itself, but along with its effects on others. Audiences embody contexts for the significance of mediated events—the signal impacts on flesh. The space of the visual taken up by H. R. Ocampo and the modernists has here, under the program of forced modernization, become generalized and ramified by mass media. Brocka analyzes this space in terms of its social functions. Furthermore, his contextualization of media by the presence and reception of audiences is thematically underscored and made active as members of the jail-room audience tune in to Radio Bravo to help themselves

understand the meaning of the interruption of television flow that occurs when Marcos disappears from the screen. This is a moment of self-reflexivity in the film that scripts an active role for the audience as users and makers of media, not passive receivers. Not only are common people—audience members—characters in the diegesis, they also utilize media to question other media. The underground radio station announces “a confirmed report that rebel troops have taken over all government television stations.” The seizing of the means of communication meant the imminent fall of Marcos. However, as Brocka will emphasize, the cry that rises in the jail, “We will be free!” is to be disappointed. The terms of power may have changed in the shift from dictatorship to what might loosely be called the rule of multinational capital (strategically misnamed “democracy”). However, oppression remains and in certain respects escalates—both because of and as the mediation of the masses.

What is important to remember here is that EDSA was a media revolution. The people taking over the streets by taking over the radio and the television airways during the EDSA revolt allowed for the eruption of a communal disaffection as well as the deployment of communal force. Eyes, first “acquired” by early Social Realism in the 1920s and functionally expanded by Neorealism in the 1950s through the 1970s became, for a moment at least, the very media of revolution. Of course, one cannot ascribe full credit for such a transformation in the operations of visibility to single artists or movements. However, we can trace the manner in which visibility is functionalized. In the case of EDSA’s People Power revolution, what was at first only imagined (the fall of Marcos, the seizure of state power) was broadcast into being as individuals saw themselves as mediators of historical transformation. Although this media revolution was historically unprecedented, the large armatures of mediation (the capitalized means of production) quickly rose up to contain and redeploy the liberatory energies of the masses to conservative ends. The fact that media could be seized and utilized to bring people into the streets at once shows the extraordinary power of the people and stands as the exception

that proves Guy Debord's rule: "The spectacle is the diplomatic presentation of hierarchical society to itself." Spectacular social programming is ordinarily orchestrated by an elite to organize people in such a way that their activities—even their struggles for fulfillment and liberation—become sources of profit for that elite.

After showing footage from the EDSA revolt, the film shows the release of Jimmy, introduces Trixie, and then moves ahead two years in time to November 1988. In solidarity with the struggle against the oppression that continues to persist under the Aquino administration, *Orapronobis* attacks gaps in mass-media feed that are less obviously elisions than was the dead air that followed the final Marcos broadcast. But the elisions in mass-media coverage are there and they are historically no less significant, even if they are more difficult to see. Indeed their invisibility in many ways makes them historically more significant than Marcos's departure because it is due in part to these invisible gaps (that is, the unreported, the unknown, the marginal) in media flow that many of the conditions initiated and intensified by U.S. imperialism and martial law persist. The continuous flow of images and sound from TV creates the illusion of a complete if composite picture, but what actually occurs is a kind of fragmentation that isolates events and removes a more organic interrelatedness. For the purpose of profit, viewers are pressed to identify with images that do not and cannot address the lived experience of most of the population—it is forced from view. It is for this reason that Brocka bases the key events of the film around a composite of highly mediated popular events to put them into a different array and reveal their inner logic. The assassination of Father Jeff, the presence of Radio Bravo, the formation of vigilante groups after EDSA, to give but a few examples, allude to well-known events taken up by mass media, events that must be put in a relation alternative to that suppressed by capitalist televisual organization.

To establish certain continuities that position martial law as a preface to the present, Brocka cuts from the EDSA period forward in time to Cory Aquino's presidency but back to Kumander Kontra,

still around in November 1988, this time stopping a group of men who are walking home from a basketball game. In his capacity as leader of a paramilitary right-wing vigilante band during the Aquino regime, Kontra and his men accuse the villagers of aiding rebels, then, at gunpoint, demand the villagers' identification cards, and scatter the terrified group with a shot in the air. As the villagers flee, Kontra and his men shoot them in their backs in a field by the road.

Directly from these harrowing murders, the camera cuts from the countryside and moves us slowly through the domestic space of Jimmy and Trixie, past Trixie lying pregnant on the couch, watching a talk show called *Forum*, and directly into the televisual (televised) space of the show. Viscerally, the camera movement is slow and "natural" by cinematic standards. However, our gaze that just witnessed the vicious and cold-blooded murder of nine unarmed men is now welded to a cool televisual gaze in which public officials and human-rights activists politely discuss two issues that "remarkably" still haunt the liberated (liberalized) Philippines: salvaging and political prisoners. Brocka's camera is not content with this contrast and moves right through the screen onto the sound stage of *Forum* and then into the studio and editing suite where one can see the image being recorded on several monitors. The overall effect is one of extreme conceptual dissonance that troubles the fact that the camera movement and editing feel so seamless. The debate on atrocities is no longer simply more noise amidst television's infinite accumulation of noise—it has become the inadequate public manifestation of the terror we have just witnessed, a manifestation carefully modulated at every stage of its production.

Without rehearsing all the details of the plot, allow me to suggest that *Orapronobis* restores the human tissue to television's soundbites by suturing the viewer's televised gaze to a seeing that occurs beyond the policed spaces of television. The arrogant governors who on talk-shows excuse the vigilante groups, the senators who tell eyewitnesses to atrocities not to judge all vigilantes based on a single case, the pandering hosts who seem to be there only to make sure

that nothing is said that might impel viewers away from the TV and into the streets, are all taken to task with the showing of the effects of their public “positions” on the lives of the film’s people, its characters.

The people whose lives the film takes up register the subjective experience and, therefore, the invisible meanings and unreported effects of the deceitful clichés uttered by the inheritors of privileges consolidated under martial law. At the same time, the few televised words of human-rights activist Sister Marie (Ginnie Sobrino) and later of Jimmy are seen as organic elements of lives that extend beyond the screen. Their commitments and their struggles, their protests and denunciations are not safely contained by the soundbites that the TV format has reduced them to, but resound in the larger social space that *Orapronobis* intends to invoke. Images created by television’s fetishistic “zoom in” on a “scoop” (that which is scooped out of the flesh of lived relations) are given a new amplitude by the film’s representations of lived realities beyond the screen.

TV appears on Brocka’s screen so often in *Orapronobis* that, by the final injunction to armed struggle, viewers cannot help but be struck by the radical notion of the presence of an invisible and suffering world existing in excess of television’s “view-topia.” Armed struggle is understood as one of the media by which this excess is represented. Despite TV’s claim to cover everything (“Give us twenty minutes, we’ll give you the world”), Brocka shows capitalist television as a decontextualizing force capable of liquidating the meanings of human struggles by converting them into isolated spectacles. In cutting from the life world to the televised world with the regularity with which most directors cut from the restaurant to the bedroom—the very mode by which television inserts itself into quotidian experience—Brocka insists upon a re-evaluation of the televisual transmission of power. He passes televisual space through cinematic space, recutting its images to the measure of a people’s history.

And yet despite the critique of television created by passing the viewer’s gaze through it and through spaces beyond it, Brocka knows that television, like cinema, is also a medium of struggle, a

space to be fought for. The struggle for the invisible of television (what exceeds its representations) and against the invisible that is “tele-vision” (visual modalities of social regulation) is waged both by contextualizing TV and by occupying it. When Malou’s husband is kidnapped by the vigilantes who are in cahoots with a governor and the police, she goes on television to appeal for the return of her husband. For the viewer of the *Orapronobis*, Malou’s appeal for the return of her disappeared husband is exceedingly poignant, even if it is an appeal that might easily be lost on a garden-variety channel surfer trained by too much TV watching not to envision the social connections that accompany abstracted images. Even though we know almost nothing about these two peripheral characters, we see that Malou and her husband are part of the human fabric of history. They struggle for a more democratic society and are the latest quasi-arbitrary victims in a systematic and life-shattering war on the people’s complex and enduring struggle for the right to live with dignity.

So when Commander Kontra shouts “Long Live Democracy” and “Investigate Communist atrocities” during a rally, or is honored on television as an outstanding citizen by the International Movement of Democracy, the viewer is in a position to decode the televisual perversion of the term democracy—s/he understands what kind of democracy is being celebrated: the kind that is only nominally “democracy” but is, in fact, brutal inequality. Kontra’s rhetorical tactic is not just particular to him but can be recognized as being widespread in the televised world. Like others of his ilk, he labors for a society in which people by any means necessary are denied the right to express themselves. He calls such a society—one that gratifies an ego premised upon the violation of others—a democratic one. The hollowness and outright deceit of the word “democracy” in the mouth of Kontra provides viewers with a conceptual weapon against political charlatans. Brocka helps us to debunk those liars who pretend they have achieved democracy for the nation merely by pronouncing its name. Furthermore, he shows that those who operate in such a manner are the enemies of the people.

Brocka's analysis of the role of media in political oppression in the postmartial law era is in part an effort to create a kind of television literacy capable of deciphering the coded appearance of a screened reality. The destruction of the "integrity" of the televisual image does not result in white noise or static, but in meaning. The bald intentionality of the corporate-produced and -controlled images, their concerted effort to preserve the status quo and the dominant hierarchy, is broken out of the images' pretensions to either objectivity or mere entertainment. Consequently, the exploration of the struggle over television is necessarily an exploration of the possibilities of alternative media for the formation of empathy and the creation of connections among seemingly isolated people and events. The music sung after the murders in *Sta. Filomena*, the powerful testimony of the lone survivor of Kontra's killing spree (who, wounded and taken for dead, had his ear cut off when the vigilantes took trophies from their corpses), the photographs made by still cameras that go off everywhere, all testify to the experience of struggle. In doing so, they propose a community that while disappeared from the screen space of mass media has the capacity to engage it. Music, the testimonial, the photograph, cinema, and armed struggle are all media with which to reinspect the dominant in the active construction of an empowered community, and it is with these counter-hegemonic mediations that *Orapronobis* allies itself. What is required is the coordination of all of these (voice, song, image, war), since these are precisely the fronts on which domination is secured.

In its thoroughgoing way, *Orapronobis* shows how the terms of its struggle are mediated even in the play of children as they pretend to kill one another, and in the words and feelings of the central characters as they debate the consequences of their political commitments in their most intimate moments. The film explores the total saturation of subjective possibility by the terms of the social. By passing the viewer's perception through the disparate sensual elements of a broken world, Brocka insists that we become aware of a common ground of exploitation, and with it, a common struggle

to make sense of dissipated events. In short, our sight passes through the sight of people who in various ways do not accept the meanings that are given to them and who, instead, endeavor to challenge the meanings broadcast by dominant society. In a social (and cinematic) sense, the people, through thought and action, strive to become authors, directors of meaning. As viewers of Brocka's film, we might participate in that endeavor: Jimmy is freed from jail by Trixie, a media liaison, but that liberation is incomplete. It is through Jimmy's deep connections with others, connections which in complicated ways extend well beyond the middle-class nuclear family, that he is driven to join the movement.

#### *Reception and Transmission*

In one of his contributions to *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. reflects upon the poignant "dying" scenes in both *Bayan Ko: Kapit Sa Patalim* [My Country: Clutch the Edge of a Knife, 1985] and *Orapronobis*, then muses: "I am a captured spectator, enrapt in Brocka's melodrama, and I respond emotionally to his endings. After some thought, however, I question what his melodramatic strategy has added to my understanding of the story of exploitation and oppression."<sup>11</sup> In this question del Mundo, mistakenly, I think, posits a schism in Brocka's work between passion and the intellect. He continues:

In Brocka's melodramatic strategy, the protagonist's suffering is pushed to the extreme, so that whatever choice is made in the end appears inevitable. The problem here is that the individual protagonist's extreme condition derails the articulation of the process of exploitation and oppression. The people's story is reduced to an individual's story.<sup>12</sup>

In disagreeing with del Mundo, one could recall that in Hegelian dialectic, particular elements are not reduced to the indi-

vidual but raised to it after passing through the universal. “The individual”—a concept somewhat removed from bourgeois individualism—emerges dialectically in the passing of the particular through the universal that raises it to the individual. Such a progression—particular-universal-individual—better describes the dialectical aspirations of Brocka’s work. His plots (scripted by Jose F. Lacaba) begin with concrete particulars (well-defined characters in well-defined cultural situations, Mao’s “typical” figures), and pass through the cultural logic to achieve what will become their characters’ “inevitable” individual fates. This inevitability, which is one of the requisites of classical tragedy, far from being a sign of weakness or contrivance on the part of Brocka, testifies to the strength of his grasp of the cultural situation. Brocka’s distinct coupling of his cultural understanding to narrative form is the mark of both a dramaturgic and historical vision of rare acuity. While both underrepresented and sensationalized by dominant media, the extreme situations of Brocka’s characters are less the exception than the rule; these situations are the cutting edges of capitalist “development.” One thinks of Malcolm X: “Yes, I am an extremist. The black race here in North America is in extremely bad condition. You show me a black man who isn’t an extremist and I’ll show you one who needs psychiatric attention.”<sup>13</sup> In an echo of Realist aesthetics set forth by Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung, Brocka begins with a well-defined yet unstable set of variables gathered from life and inserts it into the universal machine of Philippine society to show the extreme individualized situations churned out by society’s inexorable logic.<sup>14</sup>

The mastery of these films of Brocka is visible in the fact that everything that happens makes sense. This radically differentiates Brocka from other Filipino filmmakers such as Mike de Leon, Kidlat Tahimik, or Ishmael Bernal, since with the latter group it is the nonsensical elements that force the viewer to return and interrogate the reality principles put into play by their filmic texts. In de Leon, Tahimik, and Bernal, the excesses of the Real impact on the form of

the films and create stress fractures or crumples in the Realism. These breakdowns, breakthroughs, and breakouts register the very inadequacy of “reality” as it is held in place by power and the forms of understanding it allows. I would suggest that in Brocka’s case, it is the category of “melodrama” that when applied to *Orapronobis* or *Kapit Sa Patalim* leads del Mundo astray. Melodrama, the genre that is associated with some of Brocka’s more commercial works implies a nonsensical excess of feeling, but in Brocka’s Social Realist films, the emotionalism, even when it achieves irrational proportions for his characters, is understandable as a valid response to the situation in which they find themselves. The overloading of certain characters’ capacity to understand or endure is both product and productive of what used to be called the “objective situation.” Brocka is not merely after a visceral response, the films do not all end in uninformed indignation. Nor do they end in some Hegelian contemplation of World-Spirit, that is, in some kind of ethereal understanding. In the best of Brocka’s cinema (*Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* [Manila in the Claws of Neon Lights], *Insiang, Macho Dancer, Tinimbang Ka ngunit Kulang* [You Were Weighed but Found Wanting], to name a few) the cultural logic of Philippine society is illuminated by being made visible in its overdetermination of individual life. Individual possibility is delimited in time and place by the conditions of totalitarian society. In the manner of Lukacsian realism, an interplay of external conditions and internal perceptions structures the narrative.<sup>15</sup>

Del Mundo states that “Brocka succeeds in drawing an emotional response, but the issues that he attempts to articulate require more than this kind of response.”<sup>16</sup> Brocka’s work, I would suggest, is far closer to a propeople’s aesthetic than del Mundo seems to perceive, designed as it is to enable the spectator to grasp the operations of the cultural logic upon and through the individual in such a way that the individual becomes at once a symptom and an agent of historical conditions. This aspect of Brocka’s films leaves many spectators, at least, full of an intellectually informed yet nonetheless

profound grief capable of organizing change. The work is a synthesis of the subaltern passion and informed analysis crucial to lasting revolutionary production. Understanding here is an active engagement with the world, an act that Neferti Xina M. Tadiar understands as implicit in the social relation named in the Tagalog word *kapwa* (co-being).<sup>17</sup> The passionate and intellectual critique of fascistic media-society launched by Brocka's cinematic organization posits an active reassembling of the life world.

In reaction to Jimmy's recanting of nonviolence upon the death of Esper and his son, despite the complication that he has another son with Trixie (and, therefore, an investment in bourgeois society), del Mundo writes that "his decision . . . appears to be an admixture of revenge for the dead and concern for the living. Still, the question remains—without the motivation of revenge, would Jimmy choose violence?"<sup>18</sup> Del Mundo's word, revenge, admittedly a great theme of the melodrama, again seems to disfigure Brocka's narrative. Del Mundo states that "Since, I presume, Brocka is not merely making an entertainment film and he wants us to make a decision, would we, the spectators, choose violence without the motivation of revenge?" and goes on to ask, "Can we make that choice based solely on his representation of the process of exploitation and oppression?"<sup>19</sup>

In the first place, perhaps the word "revenge" should be replaced by the word "justice." Not only does justice better describe what Jimmy wants in a way that is consistent with his character and his sense of community, but the term, far better than revenge, expresses a dialectical relation between the living and the dead. Nothing can bring Esper and her son back from the dead—there is no ad-equation possible—but it would seem absolutely necessary that conditions were so changed that what we have just witnessed could never happen again. Jimmy joins the movement not to seek revenge—it is not an individual vendetta he embarks upon—but to seek justice, and Brocka's film sees this act as the only response adequate to the murderous totalitarian logic that has the Philippines in its grip. When

civil society is a form of war against the people, uncivil methods comprise the requisite response.

One might recognize two important axioms of contemporary materialist thought: First, that the laws of capitalism are the laws of chance, in other words, that the field of human possibility is already delimited by capitalist society. Second, all lives caught in capital's flux may, to a certain extent, be grasped as symptomatic of a particular totalitarian historical imaginary. What happens to whom is at once arbitrary *and* systemic: Jimmy is less Jimmy, an identity and far more Jimmy, the one who was born in a particular place and time and who was made by a world that he helped to make. As opposed to invoking an individualizing legalistic framework that insists on the examination of events on a case-by-case basis and regards those persons involved as individuals who are solely accountable for their actions, *Orapronobis* manages to depict characters whose volition is caught up in the movement of history, indeed *is* the movement of history. Inasmuch as we are compassionate with Jimmy's suffering, a suffering that Brocka is at pains to show is not in the least bit unique but typical in the profound sense of that word, we might also recognize in the denaturalization of his identity the dialectical principles underlying our own formation. One thing is certain: There is no *ad hominem* solution to the problem of justice raised in *Orapronobis*. No tribunal will bring Esper and her son back. Whatever extensive social change might be required to bring about justice for them is also required to bring about justice for, or to, viewers, as the case may be.

In a gesture that I agree with, Rolando Tolentino's important work on *Kapit Sa Patalim* and *Orapronobis* refers to the latter film not as Realism or Social Realism but as "Socialist Realism." Because the film's narrative "[p]rovides a catalogue of historical events of the period," it is writing "a history of the present, implying the interconnectedness of macropolitical structures."<sup>20</sup> Tolentino states that "among the junctures are the anti-Marcos cardinal who endorsed the proliferation of vigilante groups in Aquino's regime; the com-

mon usage of ‘stainless’ (aluminum) jeeps as police vehicles, highlighting the fear instilled by their presence,” among others.<sup>21</sup> The whole film, as noted above, is a compressed composite of well-known situations and events. Tolentino writes:

[T]he spectator is witnessing two histories: the one unfolding in the film’s narrative; the other which the film quotes, the actual events and people—the proper names and historical details—which constitute the film’s nationalist agenda. In relation to this larger history, in *Orapronobis*, Brocka shifts from his traditional realism to a Socialist Realism, positing armed struggle as the only instrument for genuine social change.<sup>22</sup>

I would only want to add here that what Brocka posits is not that armed struggle is the “only instrument for genuine social change” but that at present it is an indispensable accompaniment to the war for eyes, for bodies, for consciousness and for the future that is currently being waged in and through the many mediations of history. In witnessing what Tolentino calls the “two histories,” that of the narrative and that of Philippine society, an answer to del Mundo’s question of commitment is implied. “We” are not to choose violence “solely” on the basis of Brocka’s “representation of the process of exploitation and oppression,” but on the basis that we recognize that whether we are victims or beneficiaries or both of martial law and the imperial U.S., the logic illuminated by Brocka informs our very lives. Brocka’s reorganization and dramatic activation of a history in fragments illuminates the totalitarian-aspiring logic of media-capitalism and its ability to conscript biopower.

Tolentino, quite rightly, critiques Brocka’s production of *Inangbayan* (Mother-nation) and thus, the emplotment of the characters Trixie and Esper. He writes that “[t]hough mothering represents an ideal of preservation and protection, the women made to represent the mother-nation evoke this ideal not for themselves but for others.” However, this tension between the fact that “women . . .

form the backdrop”<sup>23</sup> and the fact that “the film’s quotation of actual history serves as a mnemonic device for nationalist aspiration”<sup>24</sup> in his essay remains unresolved. This lack of resolution of nationalist aspiration utilizing the trope of the feminine to signify the mother-nation in a patriarchal mode is less an intellectual failing on Brocka’s or Tolentino’s part than a historical schism. The tense intersection between feminist practices and militant nationalist resistance is abundant with conflict and unexplored potential. Indeed it would seem that one contemporary challenge for Philippine cinema would be to create narrative templates with which to read the intersections among the feminization of labor, the contempt for women, the spectacular eroticization of women, and the role of multinational capital in the structuring of daily life alongside practices of women’s empowerment. I take up some of these issues in the next chapter.

Tolentino sees what in a laudatory way I have been calling Brocka’s extremism as an important reconfiguration of the Western sublime:

Brocka’s films can be read as working to present a contrast to the Eurocentric undertaking of the sublime. Experience neither yields to spectacularization nor to the emotive and uninterpretable level of awe. . . . Brocka’s films provide a critique of the sublime as a metaphysical and transgressive experience devoid of a social basis from which it arose and is disseminated. His films do not codify the sublime [think of the death of Jimmy and Esper’s son] but presents the relational and historical fields in which it emanated, providing the social conjunction in which to analyze experience and modes of experiencing.<sup>25</sup>

Such a recognition of the social basis for the transgressive experience resulting from the cinematic presentation of an extreme situation prompted Emmanuel Reyes to write in November of 1989 that *Orapronobis*

clarifies once and for all that within the power structure of the government, there exists an untouchable force that upholds terrorism as a means of preserving order. They respect no laws, yet they derive their authority from it [the law]. Completely oblivious to the President [Aquino], they abduct, murder and maim anyone perceived as a threat to the social order. It is unfortunate that these monsters bred by Marcos to prop up his reign have been adopted by the present dispensation to preserve its own existence.<sup>26</sup>

Although Reyes is too generous here for exempting Aquino from knowledge of terrorist tactics and human-rights atrocities, his assessment of the continuity of the transfer of power from Marcos to Aquino is, in the main, correct. The connection between the historicized sublimity described by Tolentino and the political demands made by Reyes is key here because this kernel of affectivity, in which the unconceptualizable (or at least unconceptualized) systemic violence of the social is registered and converted into a politics, is central to revolutionary aesthetics. Rhetorically forceful, the demand Reyes makes for government accountability for the violations viscerally communicated by Brocka's film will, nonetheless, go unanswered:

If *Orapronobis* has upset the Aquino government so much, they have no one to blame except themselves for giving Brocka and Lacaba stories of atrocities to tell to their countrymen. . . . Instead of accusing the filmmakers of lack of patriotism, they should address the question of whether the issues raised by Brocka are true.<sup>27</sup>

The banning of *Orapronobis*, not simply the censorship and forced recutting inflicted upon other films, testifies to its real, disruptive power. Its extreme force, its historicized sublimity, was perceived as a clear and present danger by the ruling regime—a loaded gun, even if only an imaginary one.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Work of Art in the Age of Transnational Reproducibility*

“[T]he means by which *Orapronobis* elicits audience alertness is not so much representational as technical. It would be valid, though somewhat pedantic, to say that montage is actually the main actor in the movie.”<sup>29</sup> Joel David follows up on this keen insight by noting both the “successful conversion of symbols of personal comfort (religion, politics, even escapist cinema) into objects of social menace,” and the editing “which facilitates transitions and make[s] narrative commentaries in the process (as in the use of the religious-icon insert in the final rape scene) [and] progress[es] beyond film language to imaginative storytelling.”<sup>30</sup> David's very astute points have been extracted by this writer from a highly aestheticizing language, a language cathected to “Cinema” as an art form and concerned primarily with “the future of cinema.” If montage is the main actor in the film, and the film achieves a poetic stature that David sees as imaginative storytelling, what are the social conditions of possibility that allow a world in fragments to achieve such expressive power? If montage is the main actor in *Orapronobis*, then it is the organization of fragments that ultimately achieves the relational and historicized sublimity of the film.

Montage is poetic because as it articulates the conditions of life, it also articulates the mode of the organization of life. It is eloquent because it intervenes in this organization. It achieves sublimity here because of its passionate indictment of social oppression and its efforts to reorganize lives in fragments cut up by murdered dreams. *Orapronobis* is not about the history of cinema but about history itself. Furthermore, it is intent upon making history. That cinema and mediation are central here is a product of the new paradigm for the organization of social life: montage.

We should, however, beware of falling into pure formalism. While David's sharp critical comments stand, they are in danger of being lost in the precious supplications of the aesthete. Brocka's rejoinder to such an attitude, that is, one which puts cinema, or any art form, first, is worth quoting here:



The only way one can elevate local cinema from its present *bakya* status to an artistically acceptable level is to introduce gradual changes until one succeeds in creating one's desired audience. . . . The sincere Filipino filmmaker should get over his hang-up about making the Great Filipino Film; he should, instead, think seriously about developing the Great Filipino Audience.<sup>31</sup>

Brocka's words testify to the recursive commitment of his filmmaking as well as to the social basis of his media theory. What he calls the filmmaker's "responsibility to the audience" is an effort to address what Renato Constantino called "The Miseducation of the Filipino." If, as Constantino wrote, "[t]he most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds,"<sup>32</sup> Brocka's conviction implies that the liberation of a people is achieved through the freeing of their minds. It must be immediately added that the freeing of the mind is in no sense abstract or transhistorical. As with the condition of the sublime sketched by Tolentino, there is no transcendental realm of purity for freedom. Freeing is always in the concrete—a loosening of the grip of the structures of oppression. There is, in Brocka, more than a taste of this kind of event, an indignation and an understanding, a reorganization of the social fragments, demanding a different world.

In showing capitalized mass media as a force of unfreedom with zones for potential struggle, Brocka's reading of Philippine society in *Orapronobis* invokes the dialectical principle of the unity of opposites. When David names montage as the main actor in the film, what he is perceiving is the organizing force of the mind of the director (with scriptwriters, editors, among others) in creating a semiotic machine. Indeed, such fragmentation and reassemblage of sensibility by mass media is the mode of the dominant. The cutting and suturing of the life world by media, by state-terrorist tactics, by economic exploitation, by forced migration, and by the torturer's implements is the very mode of domination. Life is broken into fragments and the pieces are forcibly organized into semiotic arrays.

The struggle for the significance of the pieces, for the assemblage of a convincing narrative or interpretation, is basic to politics. Brocka's appropriation of the modality of the dominant (montage) against the dominant results in a renewal of an imagination that is held under siege. Because montage may be apprehended as the main actor in the film, the false unities and placid normativities of totalitarian society that give it its "inevitable" character, its "cultural identity," and so on are denatured while the process of active human assemblage is made visible. In calling for justice for Esper, for Jimmy, for their son, and for the other victims of right-wing terror, viewers themselves posit a new social order with a different collective basis that must be evolved from what exists. The audience's subjective contribution to the making of history, *its* reorganization of the social fragments, is bent to the work of freeing.

Thus, the most important question one might ask of filmmaking is not what can one do for film, but what can a film do for its audience, that is, what can it help its audience to do? The director's job is to direct the creative power of the audience. The director's responsibility is to help the audience learn to free itself, that is, to cultivate among audience members practices of freedom. Images abstracted from daily life must be organized by yet other abstractions, those which are the remainders, legacies, and promises of a liberatory nationalism. The film is a vehicle, a means, and not an end, a medium. It is a social machine among other social machines that makes possible the application of a new order of subjective force (labor power) in the world.<sup>33</sup>

There are several corollaries here. First, if one considers the quality of contemporary filmic production to be degraded, then it is so only because of the degradation of the audience itself. The abstractions the audience uses to organize ambient abstractions are, from the perspective of the people's struggle, dysfunctional. This, of course, is a purely negative critical approach, but it foregrounds the relationship between commercialism and the systematic destruction and delimitation of the people's abilities to organize society for their own interests.

Second, in addition to shearing off the reactionary elements of a film and of filmmaking (showing precisely where and how film and other media endeavor to shut down the imagination of social alternatives), the progressive critic—whether writer, filmmaker, or audience interlocutor—is called upon to foreground and intensify the progressive dimensions that might be found in any film form. Commercial cinema and television, it must be remembered, do tap into the revolutionary desires of its audience, its desires for the freedom, fulfillment, and plenitude that would be theirs if they but had their fair share of the social product, even as it conscripts these desires for capitalism. Revolutionary cultural practitioners must seek the progressive and the utopian everywhere, for no revolution can make pure negation its basis. It must, in Paul Gilroy's phrase, affirm while it protests.<sup>34</sup>

It is for this second reason that Brocka's films appeal to the dignity that has not yet been taken from his audience. The audience's sense of outrage at the conditions portrayed in Brocka's cinema depends upon its construction of its own integrity—in the present and into the future. Our passional investments, our indignation, our belief in a higher justice that we might collectively achieve in history is the spiritual dimension of a materialist vision. Even if our integrity is compromised in daily life, even if everything intimates that we live in the totalitarianism of late capital, the collective outrage articulated by and through the films of Brocka enjoins audiences to become the makers of a more dignified mode of life. Although for some it might be tempting to dismiss Brocka's films as failures because they have not brought about the social changes the works would imply, it is far better to see them, along with the EDSA revolution, not as a disappointment, but as a promise that is ours to keep—part of a history of struggle that is activated as its continuities and implications are invoked. If the nation-state is posited by the IMF as a template for capitalist domination through the management of social mediations, alternative media must unleash the communitarian potential that exceeds this model of organization and control.<sup>35</sup>

### *Third Cinema in a Global Frame: Curacha, Yahoo! and Manila by Night*

"Could be the *Fila-peeens*. . . .  
That's definitely the *Fila-peeens*."

—Max California offering expert commentary on  
a bogus snuff film in Columbia Pictures' *8mm*  
(1999, d. Joel Schumacher)

#### *The Violation of the Real, or a Topography of Mediatic Marginality*

The mention of the Philippines in a Hollywood film text is extraordinary, the allusion to its film industry perhaps unprecedented. The context for the epigram above is the lurid L.A. underworld of sexual deviance, regnant with freaks, perverts, and foreigners. There is something reminiscent of *Blade Runner* in *8mm*'s fetishized, spectacularized Los Angeles. Here, the multicultural fallout of globalization, along with its hybrid genders, ethnicities, and hardcore practices, particularly in the realm of unregulated sexuality, seems to have left wet dens of iniquity amidst the bleak and infinite urban sprawl not as in some allegorical Philip K. Dick-sci-fi future, but rather as the city's *present*, if subterranean, reality. In every crack in the urban fabric of *8mm*, an image is trying to happen. Like germinating seedlings, rubble and excess seek celebrity in the L.A. light.

From Max (short for Maximum?) California's point of view, it is clear that the Philippines is somehow part of this sprouting trash.

8mm here is the indecent, small-gauge cinema format indexing the rampant unregulated world of degradation and deviance, a world which the principled, well-funded world of 35mm (embodied in *8mm* by investigator Nicholas Cage) seeks to stamp out. However, the glossy, well-heeled global—that is the perspective of Cage as mediator between high finance and ground-level degradation—cannot entirely eliminate the appearance of the subterranean realm (as unseen L.A., as the “Third World,” as perversion and criminality) because of the traumatic fact that therein lies its bread and butter as well as its excess and waste, all those failed movie stars and foreshortened stories that are the conditions of possibility for the production of just one success. Just as exploited workers create the wealth of the highly visible corporate executive, the drama of the experiential reality indexed by the low-budget production and its low-budget world feeds the Hollywood film. The degraded masses, on whom the Hollywood story is based and upon whom it is an attack, are at once its spectators and aspirants. Thus, these low-production-value extra people are not merely raw material, we are instead the marginalized fallout of the Hollywood film. The energies of real life, the forms of our desire, the structures of our process that are abstracted to generate Hollywood film, are simultaneously absorbed by the universal film and excluded from its representations. Thus, “real life,” or that which is unfilmizable, is organized, at least in part, by Hollywood as an institution and, as far as representation is concerned, subsumed by it.

Columbia Picture's *8mm* tells us in no uncertain terms that in its view the degraded media festering beyond the Hollywood frame include the world of Philippine cinema, a small-time, low-production-value perversion that is part of the slag thrown off by the great L.A. image smelter. Philippine cinema is represented by a snuff film that is vague, terrifying, obscene, and bogus—characteristics that Third Cinema has always had to negotiate.<sup>1</sup> In the Filipino film

within a Hollywood film in *8mm*, the presumably real gang-bang and faked murder of the woman identified as a Filipina is an image of the violating real that Hollywood wants to show but cannot. Put another way, her situation (what she presumably is: object of desire/degraded whore, and her function, what she presumably represents: Third World licentiousness/freedom from moral inhibition), is at once internal to Hollywood's visual logic and radically excluded from its representation. Inside and underneath the official images—what can be shown—is her blood. This topographical peculiarity characteristic of the violating real is both the condition of the image as it appears in the global frame and a constitutive feature of the political economy of the image. The ongoing crisis of peripheral victims is both the condition and result of what I call the visual economy, partly induced by, but not completely revealed by/as, the Hollywood film.

In the last chapter, we examined Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis*, a culminating work of the second Golden Age of Philippine cinema in order to understand how techniques of Social Realism were utilized to counteract hegemonic social mediations. This chapter continues our analysis of visuality during martial law through a discussion of one of its most significant films, Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night* (1980). Before looking closely at this film, however, I would like to develop several theoretical points to better situate *Manila by Night* and to present both its prescience and radical agenda in the strongest possible light. The points I develop at the outset of this chapter rely on more recent films and should, by virtue of their late moment, illuminate emerging tendencies during martial law as well as introduce some of the issues central to part 3 of this book. Thus, this chapter begins by exploring what can be thought of as the double articulation of the image preliminarily described in the dialectical topography plied by *8mm* and sketched out above. Images today have a local enunciation and a global dispensation; alterity is always already included as well as excluded. If subalternity is currently represented and occluded in one and the same gesture, and *if subalternity*

*drives the image and is driven by it*, what are some of the modes of disrupting the image-relation captured in the lattice work of commodification?

Jean-Louis Comolli, in arguing that society is “driven by representation,” approaches an expression of this dialectic, “If the social machine manufactures representations, it also manufactures itself from representations—the latter operative at once as means, matter, and condition of sociality.”<sup>2</sup> If the image today is inseparable from a commodifying network that structures relations of domination from the macropolitical to the psychological can we identify modalities of the image or of image making capable of disrupting, or even reversing, the hegemony of the commodification that has the visible in its grip?

As the title *8mm* suggests, the small-gauge, alternative film, presumably closer to reality, is at the center of the Hollywood narrative, but it is also what the Hollywood narrative cannot be. Nonetheless, this alternative cinema is consonant with at least some of the desires manifest in the Hollywood text, and its character is inflected by Hollywood’s historical warping of the perceptual field. My title above, “Third Cinema in a Global Frame,” expresses both the generalized condition for the emergence of images—the global frame that my work over the last decade elaborates as the emergent visual economy—and the situated, contestatory *potentialities and trajectories* of certain images, here, third images. In suggesting at the outset that Philippine cinema is both internal and external to Hollywood, I am arguing that there can be said to exist something like a hegemonic visual field that overdetermines the function and to some extent the fate of images, as well as strategic interventions in that field. This field, it must be emphasized, does not exist independently of imperialist politics, economic inequality, and historical violation. Indeed, I argue that it has developed in dialectical relation to these and is in many respects the realization (meaning the great achievement, and indispensable perpetuator) of hierarchical domination. Note that the perceptual field is not unitary, but its logistics are overdetermined

in ways not yet adequately conceptualized. Just as the commodity form, as objects and fashion, can be overtaken for alternative practices, so too, can the image. However, the process of commodification enabling even these radical (dis)engagements continues to foster the concentration of wealth. This, too, pertains with the image.

If, as our Debordian refrain states, “The spectacle is the diplomatic presentation of hierarchical society to itself,” what is the political economy of that presentation and how is it implicated in the organization of class, nation, and gender as well as in the micromanagement of daily life? For it is in the visual today that the data (events) constitutive of conceptualizations, accountings, narratives of social organization, desire, and proprioception are globally and locally negotiated with an immediacy congruent with both the speed of light and the circulation of capital. These negotiations in and of the visual—their technologies and the cybernetic participation they demand—negotiations that may be thought to have given rise to the currency of the term “visuality,” are a *development of the productive forces*. Thus, they also announce the transformed terms for the situation of sensual labor—an extension and expansion of the potentialities of the machine-body interface that has been under intensive development since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

To pursue an investigation into the double articulation of the image (locally syntagmaticized, globally paradigmaticized) I make three principal efforts. First, this chapter is part of my ongoing effort to establish firmly the concept and consequentiality of a visual economy. As we saw with H. R. Ocampo and Lino Brocka, the place of the visual becomes a place for the negotiation of social forces and these forces become more and more central to sustaining capitalist imperialism. The various texts I treat within the confines of these pages will be analyzed as iterations of such a visual economy. They are in dialogue, as it were, with the changing role of the visual and with the social stakes implicit in visual engagement. Thus, they are necessarily considered in their specific and general significance, their local instantiations and their global trajectories.

I use the term “visual economy” not to imply a closed semiotic system in a particular text, but to *demarcate the historical transformations of visual attention into a socially productive activity (sensual labor) realized by and as shifts in visual cultural technologies*. In brief, the image during the twentieth century achieved an economic logic; today it functions economically at a variety of levels including the extraction of biopower from spectators and the organization of their desire, thought, and perception. This thesis organizes an unusual approach and will receive further elaboration below; the interested reader may wish to treat the endnotes to this chapter as an abbreviated appendix.<sup>4</sup>

My second effort is to show how the various moments in the visual economy discussed in this chapter interlock with each other and with the protocols of globalization generally. In analyzing films, further advancing the attention theory of value, indicting the Internet economy, and, toward the end of this essay, endeavoring to transmit a radical communitarian affect capable of doing progressive work in the world, I try to make legible links between the (a) practical reduction of people/populations to images, (b) experiences of/as images, (c) the utilization of images as a mode of capitalization, and (d) the possibilities of struggle available in the new media environment. The project of historical materialism has long been to reveal the operation of the dialectic, that is, of mediation, such that new points of radical intervention become available. My efforts to show that the social mediations of film form, experience, daily practices, traditional forms of labor, and the stock market, function (for capital) on a continuum in the systems-language of the image would contribute to that project. The world-media system implies that something approaching *all* social relations pass through the image—but how? By showing that the microrealms of experience and mind are functionally correlated with mass media and finance capital, we can grasp that there has been what used to be called a world historical shift in the organization of contemporary life, marked affectively, if not yet conceptually, by the term “globalization.”<sup>5</sup>

For my third effort, the chapter poses this question: How might an apprehension of the visual economy foster anticolonial struggles in the Philippines and in the postcolonial world? As I hope will become clearer, the binding of human attention in mediation implies that any possible answer to the question concerning radical engagement with mass mediation cannot be merely cognitive or intellectual in character. For it is largely through *the rational calculus of affect* that capital organizes and reorganizes populations. The print nationalism of the Benedict Anderson variety was just the crude beginnings.<sup>6</sup> Today, rational and irrational behavior is rationalized for production through the mass dissemination and careful tweaking of structures of feeling. This chapter ends less with a discussion of the theoretics and more with an engagement in a politics, of affect. If capitalist mass media endeavor to micromanage the psyche in the interests of capitalist society right down to engineering conceptions of reality, acceptability, geography, normativity, and existence, how might one intervene in these scenes of social production and organization to realize alternative, subaltern communities? Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night* strikes me as an early statement and promising treatment of this revolutionary problematic.

Let me return then to that topographical anomaly noted in *8mm* so reminiscent of the traumatic repression (desire and disavowal) associated with (commodity) fetishism, by which Philippine cinema can be grasped as at once internal to and excluded from Hollywood image-logic.<sup>7</sup> In *Aliwan Paradise* [Paradise Entertainment, 1993] Philippine filmmaker Mike de Leon, fully cognizant of the fetishistic relation of the regulated image-world to the images of emergent worlds constituted as brutal, primitive, pornographic, and otherwise not fit for degree-zero (universal) representation, ironically exhorts Philippine image makers to convert their violent situations and trash into capital through the medium of the image. This film, which pointedly positions Social Realist cinema (and, therefore, the radical cinematic tradition of the Philippines) as just another form of entertainment, might be seen as a calculated re-

sponse to the dialectics of desire and disavowal or better yet, desire and annihilation that underpins the “unequal symbolic exchange” between First and Third Worlds.<sup>8</sup> What is really behind the ideology of a radical cinematic tradition and the pandering to festival audiences? In a hilarious and devastating reworking of Lino Brocka’s classic Social Realist film *Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* [Manila in the Claws of Neon Lights, 1975], the provincial couple, drawn separately to Manila and forced into misery and prostitution, does not meet a violent and inevitable death as they did in the Brocka original, but rather willingly participates in a demented and de-meaning media circus bent on staging their melodramatic reunion atop the infamous trash heap of Smokey Mountain. On this mountain of garbage, on bent knees with cameras rolling and trash-pickers all around, the couple passionately declaims their love as a mad director (played by de Leon) rants about the festival successes of Third World filmmakers who market poverty, misery, and pain as spectacle. The accusation is this: Those who convert the Third World into image convert it into capital like any other expropriator. De Leon raises difficult questions not only about the fetishism of the Third World by festival audiences but also about the general economy of fetishism with respect to a Third World that is at once essential to the valorization of capital but cannot be recognized as such. *The desire for and disavowal of the Third World at the level of First World image consumption is seen as congruent with the desire for and disavowal of the Third World by global capital generally.* Just as global capital needs the reality of Third World labor in order to valorize itself, the global psyche/aesthetic also needs images of Third World realism to valorize itself. These two registers of production are not essentially separate spheres; indeed, they are codependent. Moral conscience is just another form of surplus value necessary to the perpetuation of exploitation by smug First World elites. But de Leon refuses this alibi of concern. Because the fall of the Marcos dictatorship did not bring about a substantial diminution of oppression, a new progressive aesthetic—different from Social Realism—is mandated, if not

available. Implicit in the logic of de Leon’s vision is this: Since the fall of Marcos, the unitary image of power, and thus the ground of representation and the meaning of Realism, have been altered. These shifts testify to and constitute the new terms of the visual economy. This problematic regarding how to utilize the productivity of the image in the struggle for justice in the present context of a generalized social production organized through the visual will lead us beyond Socialist Realism, even as it emerges out of a Socialist Realist practice.

### *Toward a Critique of the Political Economy of the Filipina as Image-Sign*

Meanwhile another transformation in the architectonics of the image is being registered in Manila. Chito Roño’s film *Curacha: Ang Babaeng Walang Pahinga* [Curacha: Woman Without Rest, 1998], about the last day in the life of a *torera* [live-sex performer], maps Manila directly onto Curacha’s (Rosanna Roces’s) body as it traces her passages through the city. The conditions of Manila are impacted in her body; she passes into Manila as Manila passes into her. This interpenetration is mediated by the cultural logic of the image—it is the dynamics of the visual and all that which underlies and follows from these dynamics, which determine her fate in the film. As I shall show, Curacha is, in a deep sense, an image of Manila.

*Curacha*, one of many “bold” films that since the close of the Ramos regime have had a resurgence, at once conforms to the exploitative expectations of the genre and utilizes it to question the conditions for such exploitation. In *Curacha*, explicit nudity and sex challenge the limits set by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), but here the requisite protagonist sex worker is presented as symptom of and metaphor for the Philippines. This trope is in itself not without precedent and, indeed, should not surprise us given the extensive critical literature that is itself bent on renegotiating the sign *Filipina*.<sup>9</sup>

The emergence of *Filipina* (as domestic helper, prostitute, national symbol, subject position, in short, as semiotic chit) already signifies a deep structural shift in her implantation in the socius. However, what is new in *Curacha* is the extent to which the protagonist, herself an image, takes herself to be such. After an impressive black-screen opening in which one cannot be sure whether the dull thumping sound slowly increasing in intensity comes from a train on the tracks or lovers in bed, we see the light rail transit out of Curacha's window as she rises from her bed and contemplates her unclothed body before a mirror:

Already on my body is the map of the whoredom of the Philippines. My breasts, Ermita. My cunt, Quezon Avenue. My armpits, Balik-balik. My neck, Baclaran. And my groin, these, these are the dark crevices of Quiapo.<sup>10</sup>

When we are introduced to Curacha, she has already been taken up as physical spectacle—not only as live-sex performer but in all of her relations—and thus her consciousness has become spectral in relation to her body, a disembodied voice, a voice-over. Therefore, she sees herself and Manila from the outside, from the perspective of alienation, that is, *as image*. The visual economy that catches her up has transformed all of her relationships including those to herself and to the city. Indeed, as she becomes image and voice-over, Manila becomes cinematic.

On several occasions in the film, Manila is shown to generate images spontaneously—it has become an image machine. In an early scene, Curacha sees trash pickers, dressed in rags, who find a discarded santo among piles of plastic bags and garbage. Eagerly picking up the statue one scavenger says, “There are signs. Feel the wind, it's different,” and indeed as this sign of signs promises, Manila is shown throughout the film to generate signs in a fundamentally new way.

Ultimately, Manila's new generation of signs depends on Curacha and those whom she represents themselves becoming signs.

Manila's condition as image-machine is inseparable from Curacha's situation as image. Curacha, taken as an image, forced to produce her body as image and to submit it to their logic in order to survive must evacuate her body and its living connections. Like the angels in Wim Wender's film *Wings of Desire* (1988), she becomes a free-floating consciousness that observes a denatured Manila. And also, like the angels in *Wings*, she can no longer grasp Manila in a way that is experientially immediate not because of some modernist malaise or abstract historical aporia, but rather, because her experience of the modernized city is always already mediated by her decorporealization, that is, her experience of herself as an image. Her image-ification, a logic internal to Manila, or at least to the general visual economy that has Manila in its grip, follows from her having been deprived of her rights to her body (as woman, as proletarian, as sex worker, and, extradiegetically, to a certain extent at least, as Rosanna Roces, bold film star). The sexed-gendered-capitalized logic of images—the same logic that is Hollywood's bread-and-butter—has taken her body and catapults her experience of Manila into that of an outsider, a spectre in a land of images.

In being taken as image, Curacha sees the world as images and is also the vehicle of our seeing. She is the apparatus, that is, the technology, and the social relations embedded therein, through which we see. This *dispositif* of Filipina female sex worker as vehicle of the image and of the imagination as well as embodiment of a definite set of social relations (cinematic, sexual, and material) is at once a deeply poetic as well as a powerfully analytic structure. To paraphrase Stephen Heath, she is the social and the technical as Filipina.<sup>11</sup> As in the topography of other marginalized images described above in *8mm* and *Aliwan Paradise*, Curacha is at once the condition of possibility for the cinema spectators' participation in Manila and radically excluded from Manila. She is included as excluded. Her alienated labor under the regime of the image in its gendered and economized instantiation means that existing for the pleasure of others, Curacha hardly exists for herself. As spectators, we participate in and rein-

force this logic: We see her to see through her. Her gender and poverty put her in this position, and this position is also her only means to life. The cinema is at once metaphor for and realization of this *topos*. She is at the nexus of the visual and the economic and, indeed, is a figure of their cofunction. As she is to Manila, she is to the spectator: internal to and excluded from both Manila and from the spectators' pleasure.

*Curacha* is set in 1988 during one of the coup attempts against Cory Aquino and, in my view, seeks to register a cultural shift accompanying the end of martial law. In one scene, as Curacha is leaving a hotel after a sexual liaison with a Reform the Armed Forces Movement (R.A.M.) colonel, she sees in the lobby a girl about eight years old who has just won a beauty pageant. They exchange looks. The child, proud yet bashful in her pageant gown with her prize ribbon and bouquet of roses, is herself already being taken up in a visual economy she cannot possibly understand. Curacha, whose life is the logical outcome of this economy, sees this child's hope and her innocent desire to please in a profoundly poignant light. The child's aspiration to beauty stands in sharp contrast to the vicious logic that forces Curacha into penury and prostitution. And then she is gone, another image, this time of the continuity from innocence to whoredom, thrown up in Manila's churning and ceaseless montage. What amplifies the import of this scene is that Curacha's liaison with the colonel has an important, if strangely peripheral, significance. The colonel was unsure whether or not to participate in the military coup against Aquino and bases his decision on his ability to achieve an erection—something he has not accomplished for some time. Calling his penis "Colonel," Curacha repeatedly coos the words "coup, coup, coup" to it, until, delighted, the Colonel stands up and fucks Curacha while shouting "Long live the Philippines." Thus, *Curacha* insinuates that the economy that converts women into images sustains the militaristic machismo that will undo the substantive promises of female president as the representative of People Power. That the people appear under the sign of Woman is correct; that

their interests will be liquidated under the same sign (as objectification, as castration) is the ongoing violation.

In a disturbing sequence toward the end of the film that could be read as commentary on the fate of phallic women, a mother summons a crowd to view her child. After collecting money from the crowd, amid catcalls and exhortations, she forces her child to lift her dress and reveal that she has both male and female genitals. The humiliated child stands, dress up and knees shaking, shuddering and weeping before the crowd. What is obscene here is clearly what family, economy, normative sexuality, and mass psychology wreak upon this child's subjectivity. The sex-gender system, patriarchy, and spectacle are here linked clearly. Although the events of the coup, which form the backdrop of the rest of the film, fail to depose Aquino, the visual and economic gradients that inform the coup and are part of a general cultural logic will, within the narrative frame, destroy Curacha and, beyond the frame, destroy many like her. The literature on Filipina maids and sex workers both in the Philippines and abroad is growing, but this literature is minute compared with the numbers of women who are daily pressed into service because of the vectors of economic, gendered, sexualized, and visual oppression.

In addition to near-hallucinatory moments in which Manila spits forth an arresting image, *Curacha* is punctuated by a series of magical-realist-style scenes in which the gritty and explicit realism of the film is consciously interrupted—as if to register the limits of realism as such in the new economy of signs. Early in the film, just after her encounter with the young pageant winner in the hotel lobby, Curacha kneels in church to pray. The church fills with a beatific light and the Virgin Mary comes to life. All the women rush to kiss her, but when Curacha approaches, the Virgin Mary greets her with a slap on the face. As she abruptly wakes from her reverie, the military are ready to storm the church. Curacha's dreams of absolution and salvation will not stop history, nor will these dreams save her from its violations. In the terms prescribed by reality, her dream is a dead end.



Later, during a skirmish around a military barricade, one of Curacha's friends, a fellow sex worker, recognizes a hometown sweetheart among the soldiers. Amid the bullets they stand up in the embrace of a kiss and so remain while the street and the military fade away. These fantasies, which emerge directly and seamlessly out of the material of the city, hang out of the film like tacky decorations; they are inassimilable dead ends. They have no reality other than being the dreams of Manila's inhabitants and cannot, within the semiotic economy of the film, be dignified by the objective structure as real. And yet these fantasies are not, finally, so different from the other images coughed up by Manila, images that would ultimately include the substrate that is the film itself. For all of the images, from Curacha's viability as a *torera* to Rosanna Roces's viability as a bold star, are the subjective efflux of material conditions of life, and they recombine more or less successfully with the very materiality composing Manila. These images, both those that are believable and enduring and those that are fleeting and hollow, are among the relations with which Manila is negotiated and made.

In the final scene Curacha loses consciousness in a crowd from a drug overdose, her last words are "Wala akong makita" [I can't see anything]. The film ends; and without her the viewer can see nothing either because she has been the condition of our seeing. The viewer's gaze sutured to hers from the first moment of Curacha's self-study in the mirror can neither see nor see through Curacha's body when her consciousness is fatally severed from her body, that is, when she can no longer bear to labor to maintain herself. She has been the vehicle of sight all along, her derealization and dispossession a precondition of the image of the Manila we have seen. When she can no longer bear the burden of our look and of our looking, the burden that is her labor to bear, images such as those wrought with her as vehicle are no longer possible. When she gives out, Manila disappears. Thus, she is the condition and ground for the representation of Manila, for it is precisely her sensual labor and the social order it implies that sustains the megalopolis. Without her, Manila does not exist as such.

I want to emphasize that the economic straits of the principal characters of *Curacha* and their condition of being taken as images are not separable. Women and a feminized Third World are posited as sites of pleasure and profit by militarized, patriarchal capitalism while being conveniently (instrumentally) considered to be without subjectivity. Their derealization (objectification and alienation) projects them forward as image and the image becomes a territory for the negotiation of their fate. Curacha's condition is not exceptional, but general—for the laboring lower classes and in particular lower-class women form the ground on which Manila stands. It is as woman and as image that this group is captured and exploited. In other words, in this economy they must do battle as someone else's fantasy. However, before she loses consciousness, reeling in Rizal Park, Curacha reminds the viewer of the limits of this conceit:

Somebody asked me once why the stories I tell about myself are all different. Why should I give them that? Do they own me? And you, even you. Why should I tell you when in the first place you just paid fifty pesos. You still don't own my fucking life!

Just as the striking worker must do battle as a commodity, that is, in the terms of what s/he produces and is produced as, Curacha fights as an image. However, her insistence on her not-yet commodified living, persisting below the threshold of representation, gives the lie to that which is representable. The image is the visible side of struggle which, although appearing everywhere, is underpinned dialectically by human will and potentiality that might well be unrepresentable. *She* is internal to and excluded from the image. While eschewing the definitive truth value of the image, *Curacha* simultaneously insists that the logistics of the visual and the economic confront the masses with palpable force. Furthermore, the film testifies that the visual and the economic, once separable realms, are ever more deeply imbricated. Curacha's fate, the foreclosure of her becoming, is sealed at

the nexus of economy and spectacularity. As the spectacular intensifies, so does the spectral (her spectrality); both of these testify that the hold of the impoverished on matter further decreases.

The conversion of corporeal beings into images (for capital, but also for themselves) marks a diminution in the general agency of individuals against the leverage of the visual-economic. In this context, being taken as an image means that you are someone else's vehicle, that you are deprived of your body, and that your consciousness haunts your alienated body rather than controls it. Mind lives on the body rather than in it. The body is a means to an end. The host body is caught in the field of forces beyond its self-control. Such a condition of deprivation and marginality has, in differing degrees, long been the characteristic situation of the slave and the worker, but the ascendant visual component of this alienation—technologies of gender, class, and race mediated by and as the image—means that a larger and larger community exists in this relation of alienated corporeality. If such is an image for and condition of the masses, then it is perhaps to the maintenance of spectres and phantoms that popular culture, which is commodity culture, is dedicated. The spectacle and the spectral are, in this instance, dialectical opposites. We consume images in order to maintain ourselves as such. Imaginary fulfillment for imaginary lives.

This relationship in which generalized disembodiment gives rise to generalized viscosity (as we now can call the logistics of seeing) is the violation of the real. This phrase means *the violation that is the Real* (the violation of closure in representation, by a reality churning in excess of its signifiable limits—a violation not, in my view, an ontological condition of the signifier but a historical one) and also *the violation of the reality principle* by forces that overload its function and, thus, the function of the subject. The impact of images then is not merely formal; we have more than a genre, realism, violated by a mutation of reality itself. As my discussion of *Curacha* shows, subjectivity itself (the sustainability of the subject form) is violated materially. Thus, as in classical Realism, the rationality of capitalist

society is not intelligible (or at least legible for the subject) simply logically or structurally through the concept, but affectively, as intensity, sensibility, or viscosity. Only in an apprehension of the conversion of material relations into image relations and of image relations into material relations, that is, only upon grasping the inseparability of visual and material organization, might one utilize the intellect as a political pathway to the province of the image. In *Curacha*, only in exceeding reality and the realism that is Manila might one have a chance to *see* Manila—to grasp it as an image/machine. Otherwise, we are left with an impossible Realism unable to register the historico-technological shift in the social fabric. In other words, it is necessary that those tacky magical-realist moments break the conventions of Realism in order that they register a shift in the dispensation of reality itself. Power is unreal, that is, it is the unreality foisted on the disempowered by the tyranny of image-capital. This is the postdictatorship shift I mentioned, a change in the modality of social organization that can be expressed as a becoming image of the world, or a becoming world of the image. As the real violates subjectivities not only through intervention but also through the absolute pulverization of their expectations of normative narrativity in life, conventions of realism must also be violated if they are to express this transformation. Those tacky hallucinations in *Curacha* achieve their gaudiness only because they will not turn a profit. They cannot be validated by “reality” and are left to express the unrealized aspirations of subalterns. Thus, they are the images of Third Cinema, of Third Cinema in a global frame.

### *Context for Third/Postcolonial Cinema*

Without the capitalized technological organization of the imaginary there would be no Third Cinema, not least because there would be no Third World.<sup>12</sup> Stated differently, social production through the mediatic expropriation of sensual labor is at the core of contemporary social relations and the maintenance of hierarchical society.<sup>13</sup>

Struggles over what have been called “real conditions” such as wages, the workplace, the urban environment, and decolonization, must be mediated increasingly by images. The image is not a set of functions separate from the workaday logistics of capital; it is a set of functions that is increasingly on a continuum with the cultural logic of late capitalism. To paraphrase Marx, the anatomy of the image is the key to the anatomy of capital. The conditions out of which recent and contemporary progressive struggles emerge—those against racism, imperialism, homophobia, and patriarchy—develop in relation to the leveraged mediation of human activity understood and misunderstood as capitalism. Thus, racist, homophobic, patriarchal, and imperialist vectors of inequality are the conditions of production and possibility of capitalist media(tion). Although not reducible to capital, these vectors of oppression are cultured and functionalized by capitalism, that is, by capital logic and the agency of the functionaries whom it colonizes (entrepreneurs and consumers among others). The world-media system is that which alienates the productive labor of the majority of people and transforms it into a power over them. More and more, this labor includes the imagination of enjoyment and freedom. As we might glean from the Wachowski Brothers’ movie, *The Matrix* (1999), images function like a global positioning system in reverse, organizing our proprioception. As extensions of the computer-mediated, militaristic world of corporate capital, no image or web page is exempt from the ongoing economy of violence.

To calibrate this highly schematic presentation for the home viewer, I must say that Peter Weir’s film *The Truman Show* (1998) struck me as being Hollywood’s confirmation of the hypotheses being sketched regarding the emergence of “media” as the dialectical extension of the algorithms of capital. In *The Truman Show*, not only did media exceed its supposed province to structure the built environment and determine the conditions of visibility and invisibility, it also organized the unconscious while regulating social narrative and tailoring perception along the way; and all at a profit!<sup>14</sup> Holly-

wood films like *The Truman Show*, *The Matrix*, and *Fight Club* are not really understood at all if they are not understood in part as First World Social Realism—that is, they depict situations in which perception is woven directly into production and in which the imagination is technologically engaged against the interests of its biological host.<sup>15</sup> Biopower constantly threatens capital with the development of its own consciousness, and this consciousness must be evaporated by and into artificial intelligence. This is the great problematic of late cinema. Without the sociotechnological organization of imaginaries of location, of the possible, of the normal, and of the desirable on a massive scale, without the continuous micromanagement of the historical codes of race, gender, class, and nation as well as myriad codifications that exceed the resolution of any particular analysis, the world could not continue as it does. The crisis that goes by the shorthand “Third World” would incessantly demand redress.

### *Perception as Production*

I want to suggest how, all along as it were, globalization as we know it has been the coming into being of the *economization of perception*, a viral process structuring technology, capitalization, and behavior in the management of the crisis of capital. The economization of perception places increasing emphasis on visibility and the sensual aspects of what Marx called sensual labor.<sup>16</sup> Toward this end, I next endeavor to establish the stakes in the global organization of perception through a brief discussion of what I call the NASDAQing of perceptual logistics—the privatization of publicly held perceptual practices. Then I will turn to the extraordinary effort of Ishmael Bernal in restructuring perception against the image/nation of the Philippines as mandated by martial law. Understanding the industrialization of perception in and as media, particularly as a medium for First World command/control over laboring populations worldwide allows the achievement of some Third World filmmakers to be

viewed in high relief. Certain differences in Philippine cinema from hegemonic mediations, its strategies of image-formation, and for the induction of consciousness provide mechanisms to achieve what Edward Said calls “freedom from domination in the future” in the now.<sup>17</sup> If the great achievement common to both Marxism and psychoanalysis was the positing of a systemic logic underpinning the world of appearances, then certain Filipino filmmakers may be said to have also engaged in such processes of liberatory decodification of the visual realm. These films may show how mediatic relations inform the practices of everyday life in ways not visible in First Cinema; ways, moreover, not visible for a reason.

My discussion of *8mm*, *Aliwan Paradise*, and *Curacha* thus far elaborates strategies by which bodies caught in the regime of images are opportunistically reduced to the status of the image. What is essential to grasp is that the catching up and functionalizing of bodies as images is part of the generalized operationalization of materiality through/as image. The conscription of bodies is both a rational and an affective process—it coordinates the numismatics of capital with the suppleness and subtlety of desire. Debord writes, “The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image.” Capital, by definition, does not sit idle and, therefore, as image it must be grasped as a leveraged *interface*, a social relation, a mediation that constitutes nothing less than a new order of productive social and economic organization. It operates as the technological organization of the imaginary resulting from the new exigencies of capital accumulation (management and containment of the masses) and the falling rate of profit (extension of the workday/increase of productivity). The image on the screen and the image that subsumes our existence are components of the same historicomaterial process. Thus, cinema is the historical condition of the emergence and operationalization of the image as such as well as a cipher of its function.

In *The Cinematic Mode of Production*, I argue that cinema and its succeeding if still simultaneous formations, particularly televi-

sion and computers, are deterritorialized factories in which spectators work, that is, in which they perform value-productive labor. Not only do the denizens of capital work to maintain themselves as image, but they also work in the image.<sup>18</sup> In enlisting viewers to build the pathways for their infrastructure, both as fixed capital and in themselves, corporate America recognizes through its practice that the sensual pathways to the body are productive of value, even if the mechanisms of value production have not been theorized. Sensual pathways are cybernetically (re)configured to produce value for capital. Such a relation of the senses and particularly of the visual to production did not emerge overnight. Early cinematic montage extended the logic of the assembly line (the sequencing of discrete, programmatic, machine-orchestrated human operations) to the sensorium and brought the Industrial Revolution to the eye by welding sensual labor to celluloid. To a large extent, cinema was the intensification of commodity fetishism, that is, of the peeling away of a semiautonomous, psychically charged image from the materiality of production. With important modifications, the situation of the workers in a factory foreshadows the situation of spectators in the cinema. In the movie theater, we build the world and modify ourselves along with it.

Generally speaking, we perform two fundamental kinds of labor in front of the screen. First, as we watch, we circulate, incorporate and, therefore, valorize images which are, for the most part, produced by money to make more money. Anne Friedberg explains that with respect to advertising, merely recognizing a product’s image grants existence to that product, whatever we might think of it.<sup>19</sup> I would like to extend the argument. Incorporating an image, that is, looking at it, also valorizes two other aspects of the image: (1) its medium and (2) numerous dimensions of the world that it posits.<sup>20</sup> Films, not only as vehicles for advertisements, but also as vehicles for the medium of advertising itself, increase the range, penetration, and eloquence of the commodity-form, lifting out an image track whose origins could be traced through the history of exchange-value

from abstraction to fetishism to cinema.<sup>21</sup> Just as workers add value to commodities produced in an assembly line through a serial process, our participation in the expressivity of commodities (that is, image commodities) increases their social viability and, therefore, their power and value. Stated simply, today looking produces value. The increase in the cachet of individual brands and celebrities also indicates an increase in the value of the media pathways that are the conditions of visibility for the said items.

The second type of labor consequent from the hypothesis that “to look is to labor” involves value added by work that spectators perform on themselves. Not only do the spectators give their subjective potential, that is, sensual labor over to the production of a world objectified as exchange value (or “reality”), they also retool themselves. The subjective affects disseminated by the mass media and experienced by the spectator are nothing less than behavioral software. These programs make available to bodies an ever-changing array of postures, attitudes, tastes, desires, dispensations, and interchanges that is correlated with the market itself (what to buy now, what to desire now) and other aspects of social interaction (how to behave at work, how to be or become attractive, how to handle rejection, how to use a computer, what is beautiful) that feed the market and capitalist production generally. This constant retooling facilitates what Antonio Negri calls social cooperation—the informal, unpaid work taken up and organized by capitalist command (society).<sup>22</sup> If such is the case, then everything we see on the screen can be read as an experiment in social production.

The important thing is that in the mediatic production of the world both the objective valorization of images and the subjective transformation of self work in concert. Furthermore, the experience of social production, appears in the realms of fantasy, desire, intimacy, emotion, entertainment, viscosity, and celebrity—in short, as anything but economic. The increasing scientificity, statisticality, and outright Pavlovian behaviorism of media corporations testifies that the ostensible realm of freedom for the imagination is orga-

nized by a relentless economic calculus. What makes matters worse is that perception, given up to us and processed through ordinary language, has little or no ability to reckon with this calculus.<sup>23</sup>

If image technologies are utilized to consolidate hegemony through the structuring and expropriation of the imaginary, if they valorize themselves and their interlocked corporate dominance of hierarchical society, what alternative functions might they serve?<sup>24</sup> If we take seriously the socially productive aspects of cultural interfaces, their programmatic function as well as their widespread dissemination, some clear implications for a democratically aspiring cinematic practice emerge.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Codification and Private Property*

Before I return to Philippine cinema, a return which will also help to remind those of us who might be in a position to forget, that, along with all of the new regimes of labor, the old ones—which include proletarianization, quasi-feudal indenturedness, migratory labor, unpaid work of women and children, diasporic servitude, and prostitution—continue to prevail, a few words on codification are in order. Jean-Louis Comolli’s classic essay on the cinema, “Machines of the Visible,” helps specify this key relation between these modes of exploitation and the codification of media:

What happened with the invention of the cinema? It was not sufficient that it be technically feasible, it was not sufficient that a camera, a projector, a strip of images be technically ready. Moreover, they were already there, more or less ready, more or less invented, a long time already before the formal invention of cinema, 50 years before Edison and the Lumière Brothers. It was necessary that something else be constituted, that something else be formed: the cinema machine, which is not essentially the camera, the film, the projector, which is not merely a combination of instruments, apparatuses, techniques. Which is a

machine: a *dispositif* articulating between one another different sets—technological, certainly, but also economic and ideological.

Commoli continues:

The cinema is born immediately as a social machine, and thus not from the sole invention of its equipment but rather from the experimental supposition and verification, from the anticipation and confirmation of its *social profitability*; economic, ideological and symbolic. *One could just as well propose that it is the spectators who invent cinema: the chain that knots together the waiting queues, the money paid and the spectator's looks filled with admiration* [italics mine]. “Never,” say Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, “is an arrangement-combination technological, indeed it is always the contrary. The tools always presuppose a machine, and the machine is always social before it is technical. There is always a social machine which selects or assigns the technical elements used.”<sup>26</sup>

The development of cinema as a quasi-organic outgrowth of social relations—a development fueled by the needs and behavior of the masses foregrounds the institutional and, more important, the economic character of its codification. The struggles over the patenting of mechanisms, formats, and overdistribution represent acts of expropriation. As Commoli implies, it is really the social body that invents the cinema—it is a collective product in both a Marxist and Vertovian sense. Forms invented or built by spectators, which ultimately include the cinema machine, narrative forms and celebrities are in one and the same act codified and expropriated as private property. The imagination and attention of spectators are taken as raw material by media capitalists, strategically misidentified as producers.

To see how powerful the act of codification is under private property, reflect on the human genome project and the struggle for

ownership of sections of the planetary genetic code. Despite the fact that DNA has been in operation for some years now, companies that can decode a particular sequence of base-pairs and constitute that sequence as a gene are able to patent that gene, thereby *recoding* the genetic code as private property—theirs.<sup>27</sup> Such an extraordinary act of expropriation, in which a fundamental element belonging to the biosphere is ripped from something like a state of nature and becomes capital by being legally owned in perpetuity by a group of private individuals finds parallels not only in the land-grabbing activities of colonization, but also in the apparently miraculous surge in the value of Internet companies like Yahoo! and eBay. How is it, as in the case of Yahoo! that as of 1 February 1999 twenty pages of code can come to be worth \$37 billion—more than Boeing; or again, more than the combined lifetime income of one million average Filipinos?<sup>28</sup> With Deleuze and Parnet's keen sense of the social determinants of technological innovation in mind, it becomes easy to see that Yahoo!'s modification of the screen as interface, that is, its transformation of the interactive character of the image is the result not only of two brilliant guys tinkering in their Silicon Valley garage, but also of all human history and of the history of technology (to say nothing of taxpayer funding for the development of the Internet). If Hollywood has not done so already, Yahoo!'s \$37 billion price tag demonstrates beyond doubt the material consequences of the codification of a platform for the processing of human attention. Not just another case of public funding for private profit, the Internet revolution, which has made Silicon Valley one of the largest capital sinks in the history of the world, marks the codification of perceptual practices and potentialities built (1) over time and (2) through the labor of everybody. As with land grabbing and the patenting of genetic code, what is occurring in the Internet (counter)revolution is the expropriation of a radically new set of capacities and possibilities for the image screen: The codification of this potentiality under private property results in the private expropriation of what is essentially a collective product.<sup>29</sup> “Tech stocks”

and the “tech sector” are in effect the massive expropriation of emergent means of production, the privatization of collectively achieved potentials. To reformulate Proudhon’s famous dictum “Property is Theft,” one could say “Yahoo! belongs to us.”<sup>30</sup>

If the production of mediatic interfaces by the activities of the masses is credible, then one may as well say, regarding the emergence of new media such as Rupert Murdoch’s Star Cable and Asian MTV all over South and Southeast Asia, that student, agrarian, proletarian, communist, and feminist movements in the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, among others, are responsible for these new networks—much as, as Commoli has it, the queues around the block invent the cinema—and in my opinion this claim would not be wrong. Following on Antonio Negri’s axiom that the innovations in capitalist mediation are dialectical consequences of the masses’ organization of themselves highlights the strategies by which capital converts revolution and revolutionary aspirations (as the struggle for social existence and enjoyment) into a consumption/production dynamic. Indeed, only by restoring the relation between mass media and the masses are we able to grasp the historical significance both of these new networks and of the agency of the masses.<sup>31</sup>

### *Philippine Cinema in a Global Frame*

I have provided a topography for Philippine images, in the context of the Hollywood imaginary, outlined the attention theory of value, and argued that global media is the cutting edge of capitalization (expropriation). My analysis of *Curacha* shows that the dialectical antithesis of the society of the spectacle is the subaltern experience of the spectral—of becoming nonexistent in image-society. I now turn to a film work that utilizes images to structure attention for counterhegemonic ends: Ishmael Bernal’s *Manila by Night* (1980), an example of Philippine cinema during martial law period.<sup>32</sup> Virtually unknown in the West yet considered by many Filipino critics to be the best Filipino film ever made, *Manila by Night* engages the

unofficial, after-hours life in Manila, specifically the nighttime life that dodges curfews and exceeds the official daylight representations of the place Imelda Marcos advertised as The City of Man. *Manila by Night*, which was censored by the Marcos regime, exceeds the coverage of urban life by the muzzled press as well as by the high white walls erected by the Marcoses around squatter encampments in hopes of attracting foreign investors. Shot outdoors, on rooftops, in clubs, and on the street, this large canvas film traces the intersecting nighttime lives of approximately ten principal characters, including a taxi driver, a blind masseuse, a drug addict, a drug pusher, a *provinciana* waitress, a prostitute, and a club manager. The film is as much about conversation and mise-en-scene as it is about narrative, yet each character pursues one or another dream, leading to involvements and complications with the other characters. An important element of this film is that, in principle at least, anybody could be anybody else’s lover, and often, no sooner do we see two characters in the same frame than we find them making love, in a bathtub, in an alley, in a trash cart, even in bed.

There is one scene in *Manila by Night* which I find particularly extraordinary. Fittingly perhaps, but, in this case strangely, too, it is the formal climax of the film. Just when we know that the excruciatingly exquisite balancing acts sustained by each and all of the characters are about to come tumbling down, and that no one in the nighttime world will be fully exempt from the defeat Manila inexorably deals to its children, a kind of ecstasy overtakes the film, some of its characters, and also, some of its audience members—myself included. The formal climax of the film is a five-minute quasi-psychedelic sequence in which two characters, Kano and Alex, experience an unexpected euphoria. At the start of the scene, which takes place on a rocky jetty jutting out into Manila Bay, Kano says:

You know man, Manila is better than Olongapo. In Manila, wow, man, it explodes. Wow! Ka-pom! It’s great man, it’s great. It keeps turning and turning, plugging and plugging away . . .

so you, you've got to keep riding, otherwise you'll be left behind. Even you will explode. You have to be fast, keep riding, keep tripping. It's okay man, don't you think?

*Manila's* climax is a strange one because, although structurally in the proper place, the interlude does not qualify as a genuine event in any of the multiple plots Bernal develops. In fact, it is dramatically out of synch with another event that I shall mention momentarily.

The climactic sequence emerges out of the intertwined narratives of *Manila by Night*. In some respects, Robert Altman-like, the film proposes to map Manila by detailing an expansive population of characters—each of whom must feed his or her own dreams by preying on the dreams of others. Manila, as a kind of totality machine assaulting every aspect of existence, creates intensive subjectivities, driven to mete out blows—many of which are fatal—to the very dreams (and dreamers) that sustain the city's life.

During the course of the film the taxi-driver Pebrero, for example, deludes each of his three lovers—two female, one male—by trafficking on their dreams of love and security. Here, at the moment that I am calling the climax of the film, he is about to be found out by all of them. Moreover, Pebrero will soon discover that one of his loves, Ade, whom he believes is a nurse vested in white and whom he believes will be his own salvation, is a prostitute. Another character, the blind masseuse Bea, is about to be mercilessly sold to foreigners on the street by her boyfriend who was, in his turn, swindled out of his dream of wealth by a recruiter promising him work in Saudi Arabia. But the climax of *Manila by Night*, which we should properly expect to result from some combination of all the interlocking and tangential stories that have been developing at different paces and that, as a composite, constitute the very essence of whatever it is that Bernal's Manila is, does not involve any particular discovery or life-altering action. In fact, the climax is almost broken out of the film, foregoing the conventions of realism so stu-

diously pursued throughout, and occurring in an experiential register that is entirely different from logical time and narrative sequence.

In that great scene on the rocks, Kano, a cop-eluding lesbian drug dealer, and Alex, a lost, drug-addicted bisexual son of a former prostitute, experience an unexpected epiphany. The city as an infernal machine produces an enthralling excess, and it is here in the theater of the nighttime world, beyond the artificial illumination of martial law and its sanitized picture of development, that real people seek their dreams. While Kano and Alex, both of whom have failed in love, are ruminating in the deep thought of drug-induced reverie and exchanging quiet words and swigs of beer, a group of drag queens and ball-costumed revelers swoops down on them, filling the pier with laughter and sparkling gowns, which with all of its giddy energy somehow ignites what might be, for lack of a better word, some extraordinary variety of hope. Inspired by the drag queens, the drinkers strip off their clothes and jump from the rocky pier into the glistening water.

But the euphoria that fills the screen is not hope of an ordinary sort, rather, it is an ecstatic form of abandon, the beautiful and life-giving equivalent of running amok. More than anything else, it is an overflowing of the sheer force of being alive—life miraculously reborn in the face of surrounding and utter defeat. Bernal's footage of all the glittering queens hurling themselves into the water, then the hurried undressing of the drinkers on the rocks (Kano in her men's underwear) and the slow motion of their bodies leaving Earth, jumping off the very edge of Manila and into the dark sparkling liquid, is a form of ecstatic dissolution, a breaking apart of Manila's ostensibly natural laws of massive dejection and indiscriminate violation. The dissolution is intensified here by the metallic notes of urban jazz punctuating the images—sonic bursts individually full of hardness and longing but, in concert, creating the sizzling echo of what once might have been a melody.

Intercut with the glorious slow-motion splashing of Alex (the diamond spray thrown from his hair over the black water) and re-



peated pogo-sticklike jumping of Kano (her breasts dripping silver rivers) are shots of effulgent sparklers in the too-green grass and of Roman candles propelling their luminous loads upward in gravity-defying aspiration. In some no-place of the imagination that lays closely upon the geography of urban life, the water is suddenly covered with floating candles.

What Bernal's version of Manila's montage-effects depicts, and indeed creates, is an urban miracle of no less magnitude than the one he portrays in his other masterpiece, *Himala* [Miracle, 1982]—a quasi-religious cleansing that approaches joy. The duration of the scene, the uncalled-for ecstasy of the shots of fire and light, portray and produce a transcendence of reality through an excess of reality. As in *Himala*, the miracle appears only to disappear again, but here, in *Manila*, the miracle is just a nodal point in a continuum of excess, a kind of special effect of generalized urban intensity, that in spite of its momentary jouissance, hardly even creates a ripple in the characters' progressions toward other less aesthetic forms of dissolution as the real of Manila tears them apart.

The synthetic fusion in which each shimmering image exceeds its dissonant gaudiness and explodes in a celestial release is formally the climax—if one understands by “climax” the moment of highest emotional intensity—because the combination of cheap fireworks, floating candles, and tattered lives (all of which show their flaws) break out into a beyond-Manila that realizes emotionally what will never be realized narratively. What is more, such a beyond Manila could never be realized in any strictly Realist portrayal of the lives of these characters. In *Manila by Night*, this special montage-crystal occupies the place in which all of the characters' stories have crossed, and in crossing have intensified to the point of being about to unravel. At the moment of greatest tension, the transcendence of circumstance that each character is seeking and that will in reality only be bestowed negatively through violation and pain finds its positive projection, as it were, in a sublime pageantry of water and light. The actors' bodies (which in any case Bernal nearly always

portrays beautifully, I think by avoiding full objectification and allowing them to find their dignity in time and space) achieve an overwhelming glory as they physically express a kind of liberation. For a moment anyway, *Manila's* grainy elements collide in a beatific spectacle that stands out against the darkness. Afterward, the characters will be destroyed, shadowed again in the background buzz that is Manila's implacable, oleaginous virulence.

Although the climax is a peripheral event on the periphery of an all too-human city, its combination of earth, water, fire, and light is a formal extension of the very elements that have preoccupied the film's narrations as, for example, the bath, city lights, passion, the street. In *its* montage, Manila, the city, weaves together strands of urban experience, shot through with uncountable people's hopes to be more than they are. The characters, plying the totalitarian matrix of Manila yet bound by their earthly conditions, their poverty, the materiality of their desire, their weaknesses, and the oppressive virulence of Manila itself, nonetheless struggle to rise.

Its inhabitants whose possibilities are overdetermined by the condition that is Manila, and whose activities and living labor (which includes their dreams) reproduce this condition, seek transcendence in their dreams and desires, yet meet violation. *Manila* already shows that dream-work is work, part of the sustaining labor of Manila. The jeweled water and celestial fire of the scene on the rocky pier represents a recombination at a higher level of the very elements (motifs of sexuality, plenitude, and celebrity) that compose both *Manila by Night* and Manila itself. It is here at the city's dark edge that the effluent rubble—the ruins of city life—find a brilliant radiance and a spiritual dimension.

This dimension, created as it is by an excess of reality that moves it beyond Realism, is at once impossible and central. It is the condensation and displacement of the repressed of Manila actualized as an experience. Bernal's representation of an impossible joy creates an image of that which emerges from Manila's material conditions, almost never materializes, and yet sustains nearly all of Manila's survivors.

The scene then, both as a representation of experience and as an experience, is an excrescence of urban life, an ecstatic outgrowth of the urban combinatory logic, which exists only in and as a spiritual dimension. It is the redemptive promise of urban subsistence, of the materiality of montage, masterfully given aesthetic form. Manila is a cinema and its illusions, as well as its spirit, are made out of its people. The climactic scene, beautiful as it is, is also sorrowful because its ephemeral beauty which I felt lift me up as it broke me apart is the only form that redemption will ever receive. In fact, the formal climax is answered almost immediately by what narratively is the film's real climax—the murder of Ade, the nurse. But this murder, stark as it is with her body on the pavement—seen by no one, and almost a matter of indifference—with the same Roman candles going off again, is no match for the intensity of the miraculous scene at the pier. What was aesthetically realized as an explosion is narratively realized as a collapse. The characters, although reaching out beyond Manila, destroy what is internal to it and to themselves. As in those tacky hallucinations in *Curacha*, the characters of *Manila by Night* experience the impossible. But the audience can, too, and because the experience is composed with the materiality of reality but not subject to its terms, the experience of the impossible remains inalienable and, ultimately, radical.

Ade's murder, probably committed as a result of Pebrero's disillusionment regarding her purity, shows that as in *Himala*, there is in *Manila* no miracle, less perhaps the one that occurs subjectively as a result of the intensive dissolution of our souls. For it was the very breakup of reality principles by the tawdriness of the Real itself that conveyed the previous ecstasy—and the present shock of despair. Thus, consistent with the experience of the real breakup of reality that is life in Manila, Bernal's cinema gives form to an ultimate Realism in which spectacular illusions in spite of being illusions are nonetheless real—genuine subjective experience produced out of the material conditions of collective life.

What, then, is the "truth" of Manila? The city is an embodied spirit, the sum of the relations of its inhabitants, imbuing us with

hope, transfixing us in the miraculous illusions generated by its radiant complexity, and clutching us by our limitations. It exists in us and through us, orchestrating our necessity and our faith. Its image is built out of its people. *Manila by Night* belongs to the people of Manila and knows itself thus, for the film shows the space and time where people may live—away from the image of Manila expropriated and violently sustained by the Marcoses with their curfews, censorship, and society galas. Manila appears here as a *mise-en-scène*, a medium, and a monster. In its monstrosity, it judges others by destroying them through their frailty. Manila also appears as a genuinely cinematic city: Its vicious moments and individualities confront one another like single shots violently smashed together in montage. The story they tell can only be known in its collective aspect and, therefore, in its shared humiliation and beauty through the brutality of the spectacle. Like cinema, the city is driven by spectacle and results in spectacle, slamming its bits and pieces into one another, spewing out images of shock continuously reinstituting the spectacle as the pre-eminent form of collective experience. Manila is itself generative of spectacle: shards of trash and bodies illuminated by human dreams. But here, the logic of spectacular Manila is legible: It is a machine, running on people power that destroys its people.

If *Manila by Night* is, indeed, an effort to represent the unrepresentable totality of Manila, then the film is consistent with the mission of the best Philippine filmmakers and critics of the 1970s and 1980s—to develop a film language adequate to the complexities of contemporary Philippine existence. Like other Socialist Realist cinema of the period, *Manila by Night* endeavors to represent the processes underpinning social experience. And yet, the film stages for viewers a confrontation with the sublime—precisely an encounter with that which is so massive it exceeds being represented in its totality. Manila's sheer scale in both its ecstatic and murderous dimensions threatens the puny individual with annihilation. The film shows that it is not simply social logic that overdetermines individual possibility and experience, at least, not simply social logic

experienced cognitively. The scale and inexorability of Manila's annihilating functionality has an affective, spiritual aspect that Bernal seeks at once to register and redirect. The euphoria built out of collective, brutal dissolution becomes a structure of feeling with communal aspirations.

In Bernal's hands, cinema becomes a quasi-organic expression of urban experience, tracing out, as it does, myriad worlds at once isolated and interlocked. In exploring the unique totalitarian character of life in Manila (its utter containment by Manila's unconceptualizable algebra), the film mimes the organization of the city itself and gives us, through the fusion of violence and beauty, a chance to confront our participation in the usury undergirding Manila's fury. Like Manila and its inhabitants, Bernal produces real beauty out of the violence of life, but unlike Manila's elite and "their" daytime culture, Bernal does not elide the tragic character of Manila's ultimate, immense, and ineluctable brutality. The collectively produced vision reveals the reality of illusion as well as the reality of reality and recharts their relation to one another. Like a refrain of the climax, the slowly building high of *Manila's* great final scene—in which hundreds of people prepare with renewed intensity for the coming of yet another day—leaves, as the watermark of its sublimity, a radical question: If our dreams make shit out of the lives of others, is there, somewhere, another dream?

In closing, let me add that Manila's irresolvable contradictions simultaneously machine the concept of social totality and an aesthetic experience that illuminates the spiritual dimensions of a materialist struggle. As such the film exceeds the merely rational or sociological while preserving their clarity in the resolution of that dynamic object called society. From a rational point of view we can see that Manila is itself an organism, a medium of social organization. Historical circumstances provide the *mise-en-scène* and Manila's denizens mediate among its determinations. The polymorphous ways of loving, of desiring, of dreaming, and of surviving are visible as forms of living labor. Thus, as in Brocka's *Orapronobis*, Manila's par-

ticular montage shows the cinematicity of material existence structured by the constraints of a martial law imposed in the service of U.S. capital. Again taking up Commoli's cue, we could say that the people of Manila invent this film, or again, that it is made out of them—and for them. However, and this is where the aesthetic is central, the film that is Manila is not structured like narrative cinema—progress is not linearly connected with plot development according to a World Bank-approved script, and individuated subjects do not emerge either triumphant or even altogether consolidated. As we shall see in the next section, the empathy, tragedy, and solidarity of their dissolution leaves viewers new materials with which to think and make the world.

In the light of capital, the codification of pleasure by media functioning hegemonically insists that we seek our liberation at our own expense, that is, for another's profit. At the most fundamental level, there is an irresolvable contradiction between the social function of the hegemonic media text and its freedom-hawking poetics. Freedom cannot be a for-profit industry. With *Manila by Night*, there is possible something like a harmony existing between the functional and the aesthetic. In the film, the nightclubs, the city lights, the prostitutes, and musicians—all with their allure of celebrity—exceed the condition of desire and disavowal, of fetishistic remove, in the production of new affects. Just as workers steal time and, indeed, themselves from factories to hold strikes, or progressive film theorists steal their pleasure against the grain of Hollywood, *Manila by Night* steals images of unofficial Manila from those who would control its representation, effectively stealing cinema from capital, and coupling a conceptualization of totalitarian domination with an aesthetics of liberation.

This aesthetic experience is already the weak actualization of a stalled historical community, its auratic presence, its ghost. Just as dominant cinema is built out of real social relations and cultured under the heliotropic effect of private property, alternative cinema is built out of real social relations but moves them in another direction

and subverts the frame of capital. In *Manila by Night* the community interdicted, through the mutual incorporation of spectators and images, achieves collective presence, fleeting in some respects but enduring in others. Thus, the Manila of *Manila by Night* is produced in the viscera, in the loving and in the aspirations of its viewers—one geocity among the many geocities, but nonetheless real for all that.

## PART 3

SYNCRETIC REALISM  
(REALISM AS MEDIATION)*Materialist Spirituality and  
the Politics of Affect (1986–)*

Given the interpenetration of culture and economy, of technological mediation and sociality, of the corporeal and the machinic, of capitalism and visuality, could we boldly re-narrate the broad historical outlines of the twentieth century as follows? In 1900, under the rubric of what J. A. Hobson called “imperialism,” capital achieves a fully global presence.<sup>1</sup> Rather than expiring in a crisis brought about by this limit to its expansion (as predicted by Marx, Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg), the so-called highest stage of capital begins the colonization (and correlation) of bodies through image technologies such as cinema. Not only does capital expand geographically, it also burrows into the flesh. This dual movement is a response first to the falling rate of profit, which mandates that capital endlessly requires both a new province of expansion and exponential increases in the efficiency of production, and second to the emerging need to correlate the movements and aspirations of a new,

historically produced, social category known as “the masses” with the exigencies of capitalism.

Money, what Marx called “the vanishing mediator,” overtakes the various media themselves, or rather, through abstraction, money—as the bedrock of social relations—tends to convert all things into images (images of capital). Image technologies, as we know them, are the intensification of the transformation of the socius by the money form. As a result of the penetration and development of money—or rather, in dialectical relation to an image with its obverse side directed to fantasy and the spectator and its reverse side tied to money and capital—the body, as something like the final frontier, becomes first psychological (the interruption of the logos by the image), and then, in the postmodern, a surface or an image (the epiphenomenalization of the logos by the image that already began in the modern).<sup>2</sup> Put another way, the industrial production of commodities generates the industrial production of images, which enables the industrial organization and exploitation of the imaginary.<sup>3</sup> In this schema, the three great stages of image technology—namely, the photographic negative, the electronic analog signal, and the digitized image—correspond to Ernst Mandel’s three phases of industrial-capital expansion, the mechanical, the electronic and the nuclear/digital revolutions, respectively. First making the imaginary, and then making it productive for capital, on an ever-increasing scale with ever-increasing precision is at once the prerequisite and the condition of the systematic brutality that was the twentieth century. Like the fundamental twentieth-century insight about the social character of language that spans structuralism to poststructuralism (which, in my view, results from language’s becoming denatured by the large-scale reproducibility of images: Sassure, Bakhtin, Volosinov, Benveniste, Derrida), we can say about the network of cinematic relations what once was thought to apply principally to a no-longer quite organic and, thus, quasi-technological language: Cinema is out there (in the world) and in here (in our heads). To jam on Derrida: The *outside* is the *inside* is the image.

What, then, would such a narrative—one that albeit critically follows the trajectory of the hegemony of capital—mean for the Philippines? Utilizing more restrained language, E. San Juan puts it like this:

With its “total war” policy, ineptitude and corruption, Aquino’s re-feudalizing state (retooled by Fidel Ramos) has intensified various social contradictions since the collapse of peace talks with the National Democratic Front in 1987. Culture also has become subtly instrumentalized, as in the past, to serve oligarchic rule and transnational corporate interests. The ensemble of signifying practices—ranging from petit bourgeois writing, to feminist mobilization, to cultural resistance practiced by the beleaguered Moro and Igorot peoples—is now envisaged as heavily contested terrain, fulfilling Voloshinov/Bakhtin’s hypothetical premise that “the sign becomes an arena of class struggle.”<sup>4</sup>

This connection between “total war” and the sign as an arena of class struggle gives rise to what I would call a mediological model of struggle. As my argument in *Acquiring Eyes* is meant to show, “mediation” in the double sense of the term as it comes to us from Marxist dialectics, on the one hand, and may now be affiliated with Régis Debray, on the other hand, should signify the new order of capital with the contradictions made visible. Such a use of the term *mediation* posits every exchange as being potentially posited as capitalist data—as an articulation of the money form—now understood as an image. Thus, every exchange potentially partakes in the antagonism between labor and capital. Since, as Bakhtin/Volosinov already showed, consciousness is constituted in signs, and signs are exchange, this implies at once a continuity between consciousness and the social as well as the potential of antagonism (and profit) with every utterance, every thought. However, what already appears as the total penetration of life by the logic of capital exceeds even

this model since the function of images exceeds what Bakhtin and Lacan understood as language function and posits a whole new sphere of sociality, less and less regulated by sign-function but nonetheless operative.

The pressure exerted by “total war” on the sign noted by San Juan in the post-1986 context indicates a qualitative increase in the penetration of media by political economy. The very function of the state and of globalization is being negotiated at the level of discreet moments of media interface. This micromanagement of individuals by an ever more precise technology of the global obviously multiplies the number of instances both of domination and resistance. What, then, are some of the consequences for our study of this cybernetic relation between mediatic capital and the body? First, and this is mentioned only for its suggestive power, is that Philippine modernity includes dictatorship and culminates in People Power; Aquino marks the transition to what in the West is called postmodernism. There is much to be said about the meaning and even the relevance of this latter term, but I leave that question aside for the moment. However, as I argue in chapter 6, what I mean here by *postmodernism* is less a set of forms, or even a period, *but rather a modality of capital in which the economization of culture and the senses* occurs and becomes more or less hegemonic. Second, as a relation that extends the logic of capital, the image in the twentieth century has been a site of contestation as never before. It is used as a mode of intersubjectification, sometimes in accord with the logic of the spectacle, to coordinate an ideology to bind the masses, and sometimes as a counterhegemonic relation to posit alternative groups and communities. Third, ideology is no longer the principle or even unifying form that secures power through “an imaginary relation to the real.” Rather, power appears in fragments, as affects on the “objective” side, as partial subjects or intensities on the “subjective” side. Affects posit a universe on the smallest shreds of evidence. Fourth, and most important for the immediate purposes of our discussion, the People Power moment marks a significant return of subjectivity in-

stantiated in tentative modes that are experienced as transformational. Structures of mass production, including the imposition of homogenizing impoverishment and those media products seeking to mass-produce the imaginary, are contested through particular, often individuated, responses.

Indeed, part of the way one breaks with the regime that Neferti Tadiar calls “fantasy production,” in which particular forms of domination and their particular forms of resistance are regulated by a dialectically higher calculus of incorporation, is through eccentric, idiosyncratic commitments, desires, and identifications that affirm the agency of an embodied subject over and against the tremendous forces of mass social organization.<sup>5</sup> In many respects, People Power, which relied on underground radio and the capture of a television station, was an *affirmation of the subjectivity of the masses*, while People Power II, which relied on cellphones to overthrow Joseph Estrada and install then-Vice Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as president, *was a mass affirmation of subjectivity*.<sup>6</sup> Part 3 of the present volume aims to begin an account of the mediation of subjectivity and the growing self-consciousness regarding the productive power of subjectivity that characterizes the period between the two People Power moments.

I want to emphasize that I do not use the phrase “the productive power of subjectivity” lightly. It marks a reformulation of my hypothesis regarding the “productive value of human attention,” a hypothesis I develop both within these pages and elsewhere. In the spectacular regulation of the masses, subjectivity was enlisted by the Marcos regime through the mediation of images (and the extension of image-logic in mind-controlling cuts—coupage—of torture and war) in order to produce the regime. Such self-regulation imposed from without should be considered as part of the informal sector, a kind of work which, although not directly productive of value, produces the conditions for the production of value; in short, the worker and the state. Later, with the full flowering of mass media, computers, cellphones, and Internet, subjective production is tapped by

individual companies, speculated on by banks and governments and, practically speaking, effectively built into the official economy. However, the conceptualization of these practices lags far behind.

Nonetheless, what has achieved a rather high level of self-consciousness is the auto-perception of interfacing with culture as a subject. This is just fancy language for people realizing that something inordinate is being asked of them every time they are asked to accept the conditions of daily life, conditions which, in order to be maintained, demand acquiescence ever more frequently. Just as capital penetrates the body to demand participation in its regimes, bodies experience the power of withholding that participation and using their agency elsewhere.

In what follows, I focus principally on one painter's interrogation of these conditions. Although such an approach is in no way adequate to the incredible variation and complexity of the contestatory elements circulating in contemporary visual culture in the Philippines, it seems expedient. No doubt, because of personal limitations, I leave unanswered far more questions than I may ask or even point toward. There are easily a dozen other painters and a dozen other filmmakers working today whose work merits the serious attention I give to the work of Emmanuel Garibay. Nonetheless, I have tried to take up issues that are less matters for speculation than they are for activism.

### *Kristology and Radical Communion: The Works of Emmanuel Garibay*

#### *Aesthetics and Cultural Production*

No art escapes politics and no politics escapes belief. Like it or not, each stroke of the artist's brush, each blossoming of form, is doubly implanted in the social and the spiritual. However noumenal the work of art purports to be or is, the particular character of its elevation is inexorably overdetermined by history and culture. But this circuit between the material and the cosmic, mediated by the communal, might not in itself explain anything. Furthermore, it seems to leave only the smallest aperture for autonomous creation.

For the sake of a narrative regarding their autonomy during the mid- to the late 1990s, many contemporary artists in the Philippines ignored the historicity and, therefore, the politics of their art practice in the name of eternal values, truth, spontaneity, whatever. Thus, their autonomy was that of the market. Painter Emmanuel Garibay's cultural participation is just the opposite: He embraces

the historicity of his living—its never having been possible before and never being possible again—in order to offer a transformative engagement with the present. This commitment to the social does not compromise his art, but rather deepens it immensely. Indeed, it is because his work posits cultural activity as social mediation that shall be cast as productive labor that Garibay's work offers so much to the Philippines. He understands culture making on the part of the artist and viewer as work that participates in producing not only an aesthetic experience but also a society. Stated boldly, he is one of the few artists in the Philippines who has grasped that we are living in a time of a cultural revolution in which cultural activity is becoming an ever more important medium in the consolidation of the world. This and his sense of the Catholic Church as an institution for the expropriation of Filipino spirituality make Garibay's work unusual. However, perhaps its most noteworthy dimension comes from the fact that the passion informing his aesthetic practice still finds its source in the continuing mass-based struggle for an egalitarian society and economic democracy.

### *(Philippine) Art*

Is there any art that is not fundamentally of the spirit? Polemically speaking, no. Despite its popicization, commercialization, and postmodernification, the very term invokes the mediation of that which is material and that which is immaterial, the body and the soul in an old language, the meat and the software in a current one. The postmodern declaration of the nonexistence of art is at once utopian and pretentious. Utopian in that it posits an equal legitimacy for all cultural works and, therefore, a democratic relationship among communities of cultural participants. Pretentious in that it purports to have transcended hierarchies that continue to oppress. Have all people, everywhere, no more need for the poet who gives form to that which a community would like to express but by itself cannot?

In the Philippine context, the need for alternative expressions and the legitimation thereof is particularly urgent, particularly in that realm of practice known as the "fine arts." This chapter and the one that follows it is part of an effort to make a space for a new form of artistic practice as well as a new understanding of the social role of art. But there are many stumbling blocks. Plagued by economic hardship, "brain drain" to the First World of scholars, intellectuals, artists, and professionals, continuing media censorship, "Christian" theology founded on resignation and prohibition, various bureaucratic and cacique legacies of martial law, all more or less coordinated by the Lakas-Laban-Ramos-Estrada-GMA front for multinational corporate profiteers and the IMF, the people's culture has suffered. Nonetheless, some outstanding artists have emerged. Generally speaking, however, not only are writers and artists in the Philippines lacking in opportunities to see and study the current work of some of their global contemporaries, they are also lacking in time and resources to practice their craft. Although without a doubt there are extraordinary minds and talents working in the Philippines, many artists who achieve some success become content with the fairly mindless (fetishistic) patronage of the upper classes and the newspaper's "arts community" and then thrive in an atmosphere where the only criticism existent is a drop in sales. These Philippine success stories become machines for making more of precisely the same thing that brought them their popularity in the first place, and they become cozy in their patronage by a narrow and elite society existing parasitically within the larger Philippine nation. What results for this kind of artist is that his or her style freezes and dies.

As debilitating as these circumstances seem, no radical artist—whether painter, writer, filmmaker, or activist—can afford to ignore the entrenchment of this elite culture. Philippine oligarchic culture requires such a bland aesthetic diet to maintain its callousness toward the very hardships that make its own existence possible. Nourishing the blindness of much of the art-viewing public are a number of sycophantic writers and cultural "critics" who give the



wealthy what they want in order to ensure for themselves the next editorship. The struggle and, indeed, the violence that does appear in Philippine cultural production, predominantly in the cinema, serves at once to displace the real social violence that it indexes, as well as to inure its audience to violation through controlled exposure. Thus, the world of “culture” becomes a training ground and, indeed, a proving ground for the status quo of radical inequality. Whether an audience participates in violence that gives them individual pleasure in the cinema, or whether it participates in the repetitive valorization of banal status symbols placed under the category of “art,” the character of dominant cultural production and consumption is one with the economics of disempowerment for the majority. Cultural products are consumed either as leisure *qua* dressage or as elitist artifacts existing for the purposes of narcissism. These products confer distinction upon the culture consumers, differentiating them from the *bakya* crowd’s presumably mindless consumption of sex and violence.

Beyond the it’s-good-to-kill and it’s-good-to-be-rich brands of culture (which are really two lines of the same oligarchical designer) are cultural practices and aspirations built from materials beyond the purview of the Filipino bourgeois mainstream and ersatz San Miguel nationalism. Many indeed are the ways of organizing space, time, sensibility, and belief that do not corroborate self-serving middle class and oligarchical fantasies about development, progress, and their essentially virtuous role in these capitalist projects. And again, many are the visions and social relationships that challenge the sensibilities, tastes, psychic dispensations, and, indeed, the constitution of the privileged members of class society. It is with such materials—both those aspects of the people’s lives seeking liberation and those aspects of social life that delay social justice—that Garibay renders in his images. His images provide a surface on which these social vectors, vectors that are operative in the viewers, can be renegotiated in and by the viewer as s/he relates to the canvas. For this reason, it is better to think of Garibay as the architect of a medium rather than as an author.

In order to explain more about how I understand Garibay’s work to engage with cultural politics, I include below something like a personal record of my participation with Garibay’s work. The fact that his work had for a time such an important effect on my own thinking and understanding of Philippine culture and politics, and the fact that I see this kind of intimacy with the work as part of the work make the narrative and chronological elements that inform my comments seem essential.

#### *Revelations of Emmanuel Garibay, 1999*

Of Garibay’s sixteen solo exhibitions, *Revelations* (1–21 June 1999) is his most complex and ambitious, to date. The paintings in this exhibit are profoundly analytical—intellectual art—but nonetheless passionate, visceral, expressionistic, and mass based for all that. *Krus* (fig. 14), an aerial view of the interior of a cathedral, puts the viewer simultaneously in the position of God and of transnational capital, giving a bird’s-eye view of the masses contained by the traditional church. But the people who fill the space of the cathedral and thus, collectively, take on the form of a cross, are not contained by the architectonics of institutionalized religion nor by frozen conventions of perception. Looking at the colors out of which they are composed swarming in what simulates slow motion, I experienced a feeling of being pulled into a vortex—as if the masses indicated the dissolution of the cathedral space and, indeed, a kind of abyss. I felt that this crucifix was also a crucible in which something not yet known or predicted was being forged. In there, but not contained by that historically sedimented form of the cross, lay a sublime unfathomability and possibility incarnated in a differentiated, myriad, yet concentrated community. The power of the people to dislodge the stone walls, to disrupt space and form, implies as well their power to disrupt social structure and all of its inequalities. In my experience of this painting, such power was being manifest. It was me, but more than me, making meaning here. For if, as being in

the rafters of the church implied, I was seeing from the perspective of God, then what was mirrored for me was God's image in the masses. But the godliness attributed to me, as a viewer gazing from above on my congregation, is not of the form that God is traditionally imagined—all-seeing, all-knowing, omnipotent, individual. Before *Krus*, I look down at my communicants as if I were God and for my reflection, I see the corrosive force and potentiality of the masses. Thus, the image of God emerges through a vision of the masses, and the point of view of God, which before this painting I embody, is subtly altered. I am not distant, all-seeing, all-knowing. Rather, I am intermixed, interspersed, *of the* masses. And only a god which finds itself thus could be a real god—real in the sense that it might actually deliver some of what is disingenuously said to be promised by the commodified god who is sold in the false advertising of the modern church. Because of my power, God's power is *there*.

The God of the modern Church, the God of congregated commodities, whose aerial view of the world is congruent with capital's view of swathes of the globe of globalization, is undoubtedly shocked to see his power of resolution dissolved by the amorphous churning of the people. Put another way, within myself I felt that the popular God whose perspective I have interiorized even as I have not believed in it, had to confront a contradiction in his self-image, a contradiction which says, "You do not have power over us, You are an effect of us, not perhaps unreal for all that, but profoundly misidentified." Garibay says that it is important to break up the face of power, so that it will not appear monolithic. God, for Garibay, does not have one face, and in some of Garibay's works, such as *Simbahan* (fig. 15), she does not have any.

In *Simbahan*, three primary images are superimposed: the crucified, opened body of a headless woman, a retablo consisting of Warhol-like repeated images of a cardinal, and a church official seated with legs open, brandishing a collection basket on the end of a stick as if it were a flyswatter or a billy club. This powerful composite

image manages to convey the formal intersection and interdependence of the luxury of the church cloth, its sinister celebrity mass production of generic and mechanical church officialdom, the church's role as oppressive disciplinarian and tax man, and the patriarchal evisceration of the crucified, beheaded female. Set off against a distressed aqua background recalling the tints of venerable church art, the harmony of the composition, one might even say its dark beauty captures and represents the uneasy synthesis of church power and wealth with the large-scale and brutal oppression of the majority of Filipinos. There is something ominous in the canvas's sublimity, as if the combinatory of different cultural reference frames produced a virulent awe. Exposed to such syncretic realism, which affectively operates in the register of the sublime and only secondarily, at the level of analysis operates to index the colonial situation of spirituality, one also thinks of the contemporary moment: the Philippine diaspora, an ethic of sacrifice, and the continuous flow of female OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) back to the Philippines in coffins.

Not identifying the godhead with a man or with any individual *per se* is consistent with the formal endeavor in Garibay's current works to portray people not as individuals but as multiplicities and composites.<sup>1</sup> It is as if Garibay is endeavoring to develop a representational strategy adequate to the complexity of social life. The many-sided aspect of things is not due predominantly to temporal and geometric translocations and their formal (psychological and perceptual) fallout as with cubism. Within each of his latest figures (*Pianoman*, fig. 16; *Gabay* [Guide], fig. 17; *Bigat* [Density]) are multiplicities, as if concrete individuals—though phenomenologically laminated (that is, in everyday perception) under an ideology of identitarian individualism attendant to certain dimensions of capitalist atomization—were actually composed of myriad elements. These figures are composites of different personalities, experiences, influences, fates. In *Bigat*, literally tens or hundreds of figures are contained within a single silhouette. Like the Neorealism of H. R. Ocampo or the Socialist Realism of Brocka, one sees the lines of

social stress formally expressed in the image. Where with Ocampo, they reorganized the surface of the image, and in Lino Brocka they overdetermined the narrative outcome of his tragic emplotments, in Garibay they have been fully internalized by the figure such that they interrupt an identitarian framework entirely.

In *Manila* (fig. 18), one of the standout works in the show, we view the canvas *through* individuals, or rather, individual bodies. Instead of one person being composed of many, there is a layering of people who appear on skeins of paint in a semitransparent fashion. There is, for example, a beggar woman holding her child, almost a ghost in an unresolvable sea of activity and detritus. We must see through her to see Manila, and we must see through Manila to see her. Thus, the painting insists upon a kind of dialectical perception in which all elements are cause, effect, and combinatory possibility. As in Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night*, the people are in the city and the city is in the people. What is ostensibly solid in these works of Garibay, be it church dogma and iconography, bodies in strife or in love, or the masks of clansmen and traitors in Makapili, is, in Garibay's vision rendered permeable, *as if perception—seeing beyond reification—could unsettle tyranny*. In his relentless effort to desolidify social relations, to denaturalize and dereify objects that in effect are social relations, he enhances our seeing, and it is in this way that he realizes his role as artist. Seeing means here the dissolution of forms that hold sway over the imagination and are held together by the power that constitutes hierarchical society—the power of patriarchy, the Church, imperialism, and capital. Eyes that have been acquired by the logistics of domination must be acquired anew. In a world consolidated through the hegemony of particular forms of mass-produced, mass-disseminated perception, the acquisition of new modes of seeing becomes a basic requisite for revolutionary practice.

Garibay began his career in the early 1990s by painting the common *tao*: on public transportation, on the street, in the shanty, playing basketball, dancing. The best of these early works engaged the viewer in a complex intersubjective dynamic in which s/he is

invited to adopt a point of view carefully organized and coded by the framing as well as the perspective(s) of one or more of the figures in the canvas. At a certain point in the mid-nineties, these common figures began to have stigmata—Garibay embarked upon depicting the masses as messiah. This Christological work originally sacrificed some of the complexity of the dynamism of spectatorship achieved early on for a formally bold (indeed scandalous) if somewhat dogmatic figurative approach (*St. Andres*, 1996, fig. 19; *Pinoy Christ*, 1995, fig. 20). In *Revelations* [cut] images for the new Church continue to be represented, that is, there is still an iconography being produced for an anti-imperialist, anticapitalist, antipatriarchal, egalitarian (call it Communist) church, but the analytic complexity has also returned.

In *Sacraments* (fig. 21), for example, figures struggle for existence around a glowing cup of red wine, reminding viewers that incarnation is a sacrament, that God, if and when manifest, is manifest in peoples' struggles for becoming. The figures, more like spirits straining to achieve form, are rendered in earth tones that emphasize their corporeality and mortality. The drama of this materialist spirituality, of the sanctity of incarnation, floats, and subducts around the *copa* in a relationship to him who is about to take the sacrament—almost like the conventional position of an idea for a character in a comics frame. Thus, the painting is the picture of an idea of materialist spirituality being apprehended by one who is about to take the sacrament, one who might, indeed, realize the sacred through an understanding of life as the incarnation of a communal spirit. If what is inside of us is also what is outside, then the degradation of things and people ostensibly outside ourselves (through racism, classism, patriarchy, hatred, stupidity, greed, and narcissism) is also the degradation of what is within us. Such a theory of incarnation is consistent with the idea that human beings are composite beings, that is, that what is indeed within us and constitutive of us is community. The sacrament is in realizing the collectivity that is at once the subject's condition of possibility and the other side of his or her

interiority. To make visible this communitarian dimension of individuals, to give eyes new capacities for understanding the collective character of society, self, and sacrament is also part of the artistic project. Perhaps, this process of communitarian vision will become more important as other artists with aspirations for social justice take it up.

One finds in Garibay's work a new vitality in the spiritual project by understanding with and through the paintings the faith manifest in the suffering and survival of common people—the struggle for existence and becoming as the practical expression of spirit. The works are forms of communal expression. That such a spirituality might realize a collective striving to finally achieve what has up to now been improperly called humanity seems to me to be the only theological project currently worth undertaking. For it is in the moment of the full installation of the world-media system that humanity might finally grasp that its immaterial production, its spirit, is also its alienated product.

A final note here on *Revelations* that might be another essay in itself has to do with the connotative formal elements in Garibay's oeuvre, elements that signify narratively, intertextually, and historically in excess of their affective renderings. The German cross, for example, which appears in several of the paintings from *Revelations* (*Ama Namin*, fig. 22 [cut]); *Dogma, Dogma and Wisdom* along with the Klu Klux Klan hoods (in *Tres Personas* and *Ama Namin*) signify the racism and fascism accompanying colonization and imperialism. The presence of these U.S. and European elements, which resonate with the ornate vestments of Garibay's white friars and people of the cloth, are no mere indexical markers of a history of violation in and of the Philippines. The essentialism and objectification that make possible slavery or vigilante lynchings or a holocaust are the epistemological underpinnings of a capitalist "civilization" developing dialectically with white suprematism utilizing race as a determinate of value. Racism, although perhaps not originally a part of emergent capitalism, is taken up by capital and inflected by it in accord with

individualist ideology. Racist stereotyping, under capital, is the other side of capitalist individuality, which is to say that racism and fascism are of a piece in modernity. Individualist identity is built on systemic violence. Hitler is the pretty face of the holocaust; Marcos, the pretty face of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines; and Jesus served as the face of colonization [Manuel Ocampo's eagle, Christ, swastika painting]. The consolidation of people as identities, stereotyped or otherwise, is directly correlative to the consolidation of mass ideology in the charismatic faces of iconic leaders. These codifications of personality, at both the micro level of the concrete individual and the macro level of an iconography for a social body, freeze the history as well as the potentiality of human form. They stand in for social movements and block the egalitarian perception of historical process. If concrete people envision historical agency to exist only outside of themselves, that is, if they imagine that real power exists in icons, they transfer their own power to these figures.

Put more generally, the consolidation of form is an expression of power. It is a material and ideological dispensation of the social, not nature, that codifies individuality and sanctifies its icons. Garibay's inclusion of elements of Western iconography shows that these forms and their socially resonant meanings have a set of general consequences that accompany a political history of domination and barbarism. Their inclusion is at once an invocation and an overturning of their force, and the struggle being waged in and through the canvases—and thus, in and through the viewer—is also a struggle with the forces signified and signalled by these icons, which themselves persist in and through the viewer.

In *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines*, Alice Guillermo notes that the theme of crucifixion utilized in the mode of protest goes back to H. R. Ocampo's depiction of Christ on a cross flanked by two others against a background of factories polluting the air (*Calvary*, 1945, fig. 23). She also mentions that Edgar Fernandez, one of the members of the Social Realist movement, took up the

theme in 1978, as did Pablo Baens Santos, who “did the first Social Realist painting portraying the worker as Christ crucified” (*Bagong Kristo*, 1980).<sup>2</sup> Guillermo’s informative discussion also places these latter works, and others by Leonilo Doloricon and Arnel Mirasol, in the context of Theology of Liberation and what, in 1986, was called by Fr. Louie Hechanova the “Theology of Struggle.”<sup>3</sup> The sign of the crucifix and the significance of religion and *the perspective from which these are regarded* become particularly important with the rise of revolutionary cultural movements.<sup>4</sup> I also want to emphasize that these developments should not be grasped only as a deepening of the intellectual tradition of protest art or an advance in its semiotic complexity. While such a development is in part the case, the movement of forms and ideas does not take place in a vacuum. The changes in art practice at once register and bring about historical material shifts in the overall dispensation of visual culture. The effort to make art for and with the masses only coalesces as the masses make efforts to disengage their own production from its subjugation by capital and the cultures of capital. Thus, we see the negotiation of the sign of the cross and of the meaning of Christianity emerging once again, not in the Spanish period of colonialism, but in the presumably secular moment of neoimperialism. Religion is grasped as *a technology* of domination, *a medium* of confrontation and struggle.

The second part to this “footnote” on formal elements regards Garibay’s growing cannibalization of the styles and palettes of other Filipino painters. This is a fairly new dimension to Garibay’s engagement with the medium: formerly his expressionist distortion of form, although loosely associable with El Greco or Francis Bacon (while the perspective was closest to Turner) evolved, as it were, out of Garibay’s own vision and sensibility molded primarily by the Social Realist practitioners. What also appears on the thirty-six canvases of *Revelations* are tributes to many of the innovative and distinctive painters of the Philippines. Like his extremely talented contemporaries, Jose Tence Ruiz and Baguio’s Santiago Bose, Garibay seems to be endeavoring to treat the history of Filipino painting as something

like a vernacular, an accumulation of styles, forms, and colors that were hard won over the history of twentieth-century Philippine art, and potentially of further use. I cannot help but see Manansala’s *Jeepneys* in Garibay’s *Manila* or the backgrounds and compositional outlines of Ang Kiukok or Marcel Antonio when I look at some of the smaller canvases discussed above. Also visible is the free hand of Rene Robles and the formidable distorting eye of Elmer Borlongan in some of the works. And of course, as the Klu Klux Klan figures immediately state, one finds a trace of the iconography and compositional principles of the great Manuel Ocampo.

At the risk of being at once overly schematic and overly synthetic, we could say that taken as a whole, the canvases stage a contest between the forms of Western domination and the creative power of the Filipino masses and of Filipino culture. This is not a static engagement to be viewed dispassionately. Although theological motifs and the hold of imperialist Christianity make up the primary thematic focus, the contest is played out in the deep structures of Filipino identity, belief and practice, that is, in the very organization of life itself. The viewer of Garibay’s work is not exempt from these dynamics. Indeed, the viewer’s processing of the visual here, emphasized by the process the viewer must undergo to react to and understand Garibay’s images, is part of the process constitutive of culture and, therefore, of life. Garibay’s work provides new and necessary tools for the conceptualization of inequality is the visual and therefore its possible overturning. By revealing the contestation frozen under and thus mystified by socially accepted forms, he enjoins the viewer to participate in the struggle against collective violence and for collective liberation. Otherwise, the forms given by society are left unchallenged and serve principally as weapons to perpetuate the victory of the powerful over the oppressed.

Garibay’s reorganization of conventional forms of figuration, spatialization, individuation, and church dogma is wrought in solidarity with the socially disruptive power of the masses in search of liberation. His representations show that conventional social and

aesthetic form is not a natural or neutral incarnation but rather, a battle strategy of the powerful. By offering the viewer an experience of the deleterious effects and sinister dimension of hegemonic forms, and also an experience of the radical communion of solidarity, these works sensitize a viewer so that the viewer might rethink the strategy, process, and stakes of liberatory struggles and participate in their completion. There are important lessons here for a variety of viewers, from those who are ensconced in conventional views of religion and society, to those on both the Left and the Right who believe that economics and militarization are the primary determinants of the character of civil society. The experience of Garibay's canvases puts cultural work on the same level as labor—indeed, as I have suggested earlier, posits it as a form of labor—and places community building, identification, experience, and belief, that is, work of the imagination at the center of the revolutionary project.

### *Kristos, 1998*

Let me now move back in time to examine some of Garibay's earlier works in order to flesh out the scope and penetration of his project.

The *Kristos* exhibition at Boston Gallery in September 1998 displayed, for the first time in Garibay's work, a sustained aspiration, both conceptual and formal, to confront abstract structures. This endeavor, which in my view marks a development in his political compassion, was manifest in the works as an effort to depict the structural underpinnings of images. This puts his work in dialogue with H. R. Ocampo, Philippine modernism generally, and the trajectory of abstraction as worked out in this volume. For example, one of the things on display was the figure becoming unglued, or rather shredded on the surface and reduced at its core. It was as if Garibay had to violently rend the images at their seals to open the figures of Christ and Mary, among others, to new readings. What secures the integrity of Christian iconography and how might disrupting the iconographic displace or deflect the forces imposing their

seemingly transcendental coherence? Pictorially speaking, this 1998 effort is on the order of a stylistic shift like the coalescence, or perhaps dissolution, that was Pointillism, or Analytic Cubism; in its own way it would mark the historical unsustainability of a certain kind of image making. The shifting properties of historical flux demand the dissolution of the iconic figure if justice is to come into the world. One sees the beginning of a new level of intensity in the overlaying and intercalation of images, as if the crowds and multitudes of the earlier works (*Black Nazarene*, 1995) were somehow to be found within a single figure. This multiplicity of the figurative image, which would be developed so thoroughly and rapidly in *Revelations* the following year, seems to render within or through the figure itself the crowds and packs that go into its making, but which also contest its meaning. Moreover, this furious struggle, this contest over something on the order of the meaning of God, plays itself out in the manner that the paint was put on canvas. The paintings convey the profoundly ominous humors of corporeal suffering, mortality, apocalypse, catastrophic doubt, and deferred redemption.

The large oils, *Black Saturday* and *Second Day* represent the coming together of the previous months of sketches and experiments. In *Kristos*, we have the emergence of something like a new style: diaphanous with harsh scrapes of vibrating purples, strident violets, harsh oranges, dirty solar yellows, and blood red. The palette is at once brighter and more violent than in earlier work, but the paintings are somehow darker. The paintings have a muted glare, with a morbid glow throughout.

In spite of their confusion, their chaotic surface, the two large paintings mentioned above manage to create images, but spectral ones, in both cases of a dead god. But even though they create images that are in keeping with the Christological project—the reformulation of Christian iconography—set upon by Garibay, they are terribly searching and painted in a radically new way. Up until this show, on several visits to Garibay's studio, I had felt that he was losing some of his confidence and vision, some of the clarity of pur-

pose that characterizes the earlier works. Gone seemed to be the former control and near-programmatic clarity of execution that was the exceptional hallmark of his earlier socialist-expressionist oeuvre bent upon depicting the corporality, poverty, and grit of daily life for the masses in Manila. But Garibay has incorporated his confusion and the ambiguity of not knowing exactly where his work was headed into the works themselves. In *Second Day*, all of the sketches and oils on paper of wings and of contorted, even tortured figures—of which there were at least fifty made in the ensuing months—achieve a far more forceful statement than any previous attempt of this kind. This painting struggles for its forms; the intensity, the seriousness, and the difficulty is apparent at every moment, in every place. The moribund limbs of ghastly flesh tones, the amorphous head with blunted features, the stunted wings, the open nail holes in the hands and feet, and the shrouding of the figure in what is less an image of cloth and more an image of profound confusion yield a figure burdened by the dark forces of dissolution yet struggling to raise himself upwards.

Of *Black Saturday*, Garibay says it is “about the death of god which we are presently living through. [The painting] decries the hollowness of culture and institutions.” But in spite of its bleak and indeed frightening regard, the painting still expresses a degree of hope—in a blood-red heart that bears the emblem of the Katipunan and the shape of a triangular flag. *Black Saturday* is, like many of the best of Garibay’s paintings, a work that takes time to see. Just as when engaging the didacticism of early cathedral art, one must observe *what* is represented when confronted by a Garibay canvas. Of course, the viewer must correlate the *what* with the *how*. The figure of the dead Christ whose head seems to be dropping into the hollowed-out, even abandoned body of a Katipunero (a soldier of the revolutionary war against Spain) is composed of a number of different elements. There are two large heads of the Virgin Mary with the hollowed eyes behind them and, of course, the two huge punctured hands seeming the color of dead flesh that seem at once to protect

and restrain these disturbing, masklike faces. But what comes out as one looks is that all of the gestural elements that are first read as emotive devices—the sound and fury of the figure—are images as well. The fabric “X” contains a portrait of Jesus Christ, another piece contains a church official, while another contains a different image of the Virgin Mary, all of which look as if they have been painted on rubber with the texture of rough canvas and then stretched as they are sucked by gravitation into the black hole of oblivion that exists somehow beneath the principal figure of Christ.

*Armchair Christ* (fig. 24), also a 1998 work, shows a white clergyman, his race signaled by rectangular black nerd glasses, an aquiline nose, and garments of the Catholic Church. He sits in a luxurious armchair, clutching his sword, his wine, and the Bible decorated with a German cross, with one foot planted firmly on the Philippine flag. He appears at once covetous and exhausted, hunkered into his chair, soporific but somehow still warily holding on to the vestments of power. He ministers to a congregation of little brown crosses scattered below his feet and his head is in a box, or rather, a television set. The cabinet that contains his head is everywhere attached to strings or wires, and it is anybody’s guess as to whether these control him or he controls with them. What is clear is that the cultural logic of which today he is at once symbol and symptom is on a continuum with the cultural logic of television and its aggressive, incorporative imperialism. As mentioned earlier, *religion is grasped as a technology of cultural control and organization accompanied by a historically new metaphysics*. A tension between the cybernetic Father and his congregation is established with the little crosses which, while scurrying about in search of guidance, seem to bow down to this clergyman, or regard him with awe. The other possible function of these cross-shaped bits of brown wood would be the wooden hand pieces for the strings of marionettes. The strings attached to the television cabinet that contains the church head echo the moralistic puppeteering that, in many respects, is the goal both of commercial mass media and actually existing, organized Christianity.

*Bathala*

Although the preparation for the shows of 1998 and 1999 obviously include all of Garibay's preceding output, the pathbreaking work here is probably his 1997 painting, *Bathala* (fig. 25). This large canvas also utilizes the overlaying and intercalation of images, but the palette is far closer to Garibay's earlier work: more on the brown, red, and rust range with some dusky yellows and moribund purples. In many ways, one sees here the chromatic universe of his preceding Socialist Realist, or Socialist Expressionist work, with its emphasis on daily life. There is much in this painting that is of the flesh, of labor, of privation, pollution, and viscous urbanism. The overall effect is less ominous than the theological angst of the large works of *Kristos* or of the painting *Simbahan*, but nonetheless as intimidating. The work is utterly transfixing, at once terrifying and inspirational, having as it does, the charge of a manifesto.

The principal figure, rendered much larger than life size, is Christ as a Filipino worker, or better, a Filipino worker as Christ. Clad in a flimsy T-shirt, his presence is so huge as to be scarcely containable by the already large frame. What is immediately striking aside from his sinewed yet mammoth form are the two sets of eyes in his head, an arrangement that makes it impossible to see the worker as a subject in the practical psychologistics of everyday life. Yet he is most certainly not an object either. While the lower set of eyes appears almost to address the viewer, the upper set gaze penetratingly beyond the viewer as if s/he might be, or ought to be elsewhere. This worker holding a red hammer and a scythelike crowbar seems to erupt out of himself, towering above the urban images and crane masts that at once index Manila's intensive urbanization during globalization, and remind us what the worker has achieved. The new city of the rich has been built by the Filipino worker. Because of his double vision here, his double being, he cannot be located and pinned in the dynamics of the gaze. Rather, his internal state appears momentous and transcendent, in spite of and, indeed, because of his presence in the here and now. Rather than being doubled

through presence in the built environment and absence in the public sphere that confers existence, the worker is present in the built environment and rising out of it. The annihilation of the worker in spirit, as being, which is part of capitalist development, is here given its opposite instantiation. Thus, the viewer the worker's visage interpellates, the viewer that this worker god calls into being, cannot position himself or herself in relation to the figure's gaze. In trying to reconcile the two sets of eyes, the viewer must embark upon his or her own dislocation. This dislocation process, which is brought about by the encounter with the rising worker, is central to an encounter with the worker god, a force that will transform the subject-object relations resulting from the capitalist objectification of labor and the laborer.

Before looking at the other details of this canvas, it is worth noting that the dislocation produced in the viewer is an exemplary incident of the dialectics of Garibay's images. With so many of his paintings, one cannot regard the image from the security of an established, unmoved interiority. The viewer is not sheltered or flattered, as s/he so often is in the depiction of landscapes, gardens, and portraits, among others, or again as in the suture of mainstream cinema. The viewer is not free to participate in the unfolding of the image from his or her safely protected position as a sequestered, contemplative aesthete or voyeur. To begin experiencing the image involves embarking on a kind of subjective displacement whose movement is directed by the structure of the image—its refusal of easy uploading, its induction of dislocation. *To see the image, the viewer must practice his or her own transformative movement.* In other words, the image and the viewer are mutually constituting—the image works like a kind of software. Although one could say that this mutually constitutive interactivity is the general case with images—we bring ourselves into being in relation to what we see—the point is that Garibay's consciousness of this phenomenon coupled with his struggles toward social equality lead him to design images that do not reconstitute subjects who can continue to live as they did be-



fore. He works to provide a new form of perceptual experience to enable consciousness to achieve a new collectivized modality. He also works to dismantle images constitutive of hegemonic subjects. The eye is the principal vehicle here. By recasting icons and drawing viewers into complex scopic dynamics, the displacements his paintings inaugurate either strive to produce new experiences of community, or new experiences of the spiritual, phenomenon that in his work are finally inseparable. In *Bathala*, the doubling of the worker's eyes functions to disturb subject-object relations endemic both to identity formation in the psychologistics of capital and to property relations.

Bathala, which is the name for the indigenous Filipino god, tries to offer a new image of the worker as well as to dispossess viewers of preordained ideas regarding divinity, and further to link these two discursive universes concerning human endeavor. If the built environment is composed of aggregated alienated labor—that is, built by workers yet not belonging to them—and confronts workers as something alien and as a power over them, is not the same true of a God of a hierarchical world? In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx writes, “The worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. From this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over-against himself. The poorer he himself is, his inner world becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object, but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object.”<sup>5</sup>

What Marx says about the world of objects applies equally to human spirituality: “The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts

him as something hostile and alien.”<sup>6</sup> Garibay himself speaks of an alienated spirituality, of a divinity coming from the people but not belonging to the people, confronting subjects as hostile and alien. As one of my students at the University of the Philippines pointed out, one might observe that the same relation pertains to action film star and later president Joseph Estrada. He is the expropriation of the people's hopes for social justice—the people's product now confronting them as something hostile and alien. In the cinema, he always stood up for the little guy and thus achieved a mass following, meaning, the masses created him; now he robs the little guys blind. Garibay's work over the past several years has challenged the legitimacy of an alienated spirituality and reclaim its potential from its condition as private property of the ruling classes—a part of their capital.

Marx argues that “on analysis of this concept [of private property], it becomes clear that although private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labor, it is really its consequence, just as the gods *in the beginning* are not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later, this relationship becomes reciprocal.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, private property is not a natural or originary institution; it is an historically constructed institution built through the accumulation of alienated labor under capital. Marx shows that private property is not endemic to human nature but, rather, comes about through the practice of estrangement (the taking [alienation] of the worker's product in exchange for a less valuable wage) and the development (extension) of the money economy. The naturalization of private property and of the competitive avariciousness imputed ontologically to humanity that such a naturalization of private property implies is a mystification, a story about human nature necessary to the legitimation of capitalism. In Garibay's analysis, a white, imperialist divinity external to humanity, or for that matter, any spirituality established as a force over and above humanity confronts the worker as hostile and alien (*Simbahan*). The stolen spirituality of the people contributes to the legitimation of structural exploita-

tion, that is, the systematic taking of the power and, indeed, the life of labor. Calling the taking of human life over the lifetime of the worker a form of institutionalized murder would not be incorrect. The worker is not able to live his or her life, but lives only to give his or her life to capital. Thus, any Christian Church that does not empower workers in their world-historical struggle with capital exists in a profoundly self-contradictory state. Amidst the Church's fire and brimstone against the sin that is murder, it in fact sanctions murder through its liquidation (alienation) of the worker's spiritual quest to realize humanity.<sup>8</sup> Garibay's work, with its continual invocation of the Philippine Revolution, the Katipunan, and thus the subsequent genocide of the Philippine-American War (1898–1907) in which from one-tenth to one-sixth of the population of the Philippines was killed by U.S. soldiers, argues that that genocide and the culture that is still the legacy of that genocide is part and parcel of the larding of capitalism with Christianity.

The worker Christ of *Bathala* wears the Katipunan amulet around his neck as he rips through the world of Manila and organized religion as if it were a gauze masking his emergence. Behind the amulet, out of his heart, comes a fist. The usurpation of the Philippine Revolution of 1896 by the Americans in 1898 and the appropriation of Filipino spirituality by the organized Church have conspired to take from the Philippines its human dignity and human divinity. It has profoundly impoverished the spiritual life of the Philippines, utilizing, in a manner consistent with capital, the creative power of the Filipino people as a weapon against them. Beneath the emerging worker Christ in *Bathala* is the Church's crucified Christ, a nearly trivial emblem falling away, and to his right is the image of a passive, almost-masked Virgin Mary, also being rent. In the background are municipal buildings, Malacañang (the seat of government), and the nearly atmospheric miasma of development figured not only by the cranes but also by the impressions of buildings and of general structural cacophony. From under Bathala's left arm peers a furtive President Ramos. All in all the painting glorifies

the destructive/creative power of the (Filipino) worker who has built the metropolitan center, the church, the political elites, the facilities and, indeed, the faculties of spirituality ("the development of the senses is part of the history of the entire world down to the present"—Marx), and in a moment of emergence, a moment which involves the simultaneous ripping apart and reconstruction of all aspects of life, might now build a new order.<sup>9</sup> Such a new order would also necessarily be a new perceptual order capable of apprehending as well as directing both the history and significance of the acts of creation that have built both the objective and interior wealth of our species.

In a conversation we had in 1997, Garibay spoke about this painting. I include some fragments here.

G: . . . the idea of demolishing the old order . . . the crowbar.

B: *The image of the Virgin Mary, why is she like that?*

G: Actually it's like a piece of cloth that's being torn off, torn apart, as if the whole thing is rejecting the current of Western theological dogmatism that has been imposed on us and has introduced a kind of religiosity that is very enslaving apart from being alienating. It makes us worship ideas as well as images that have nothing to do with our history, with our experience, with our culture, so it's all part of a false culture.

Here [in the heart that also looks like a fist] is a subtle suggestion of somebody suffering and on top of that is an amulet. An amulet is not just for good luck, it is also for keeping in touch with who you are. When you speak of religious consciousness or any kind of consciousness, it is important that you are always aware of your identity and you need to have something concrete to remind you of your identity. The idea of the *anting-anting* is to keep you in touch with your roots. I have always thought that one of the earliest forms of religion was ancestor worship. When you are in touch with

your ancestors, you are always in touch with yourself. That's why if you read the Old Testament Yahweh introduced himself as the God of your ancestors.

B: *What about the four eyes?*

G: It's there to give the image some kind of an extrahuman attribute, a divine attitude. It's also there to distinguish the image of the body from the soul. If you notice the lower part of the body, the hands are old and decaying and up here you have four eyes. You cannot really put words to it, but it suggests the divine.

B: *Is there any relation between the replacement of the colonial God with the indigenous God?*

G: Yes, maybe. I wasn't conscious of that when I did the piece, but once it's out of my hands, it's open to anybody's interpretation.

G: As far as this image is concerned, I don't think it would make any normal Filipino think about his identity. But I hope it is strong enough to provoke some kind of searching.

B: *How do you see your Kristology series as addressing the way people imagine their spirituality?*

G: There is another painting you may have seen. It's an image of four people seated at a table and drinking (*Emmaus*, 1997, fig. 26). Except for one person, everyone is around the table drinking and laughing. I don't know if you are familiar with the last chapter of Luke . . .

B: *Fill me in . . .*

G: It's the postcrucifixion event and the word has got around that Jesus Christ is no longer in the tomb. So the scene starts with two of his disciples walking to a place called Emmaus and along the way, they meet a stranger and they have some

kind of lengthy conversation with him until they reach the place. They invite the stranger to stay with them for the night but the stranger needs to move on. It was only when they were about to eat at the table that they realized that the stranger whom they were walking with was Jesus, which is very strange because if you know somebody very well, it is almost impossible to have such a long discussion with him for seven miles and not recognize him. The thing I wanted to raise is that most so-called Christians always have a limited concept of the Christ image. They always think in terms of that person in Palestine who lived two thousand years ago. So the concept of Christ [derives from] a very obscure historical event, in many cases made up by his disciples. The point is it is very difficult for most people to contextualize their faith because the colonial packaging of the Christian faith has been deeply embedded in their consciousness and it's so hard to get away from that. So the figure at the center is a woman—she could be mistaken for a man because she has short hair—she is drinking with them and seems to be telling a joke and everybody is laughing around her. But the point is that the joke is that people are laughing because they thought all along that Jesus was a man, and that Jesus Christ is a Caucasian-looking guy—all these conventional concepts about Jesus Christ. I have a different image of Jesus Christ which is that of a woman, a very ordinary-looking Filipino woman, who drinks with them and has stories to tell. The idea of laughing is very common among Filipinos—we laugh at our mistakes. It's all part of understanding the culture and it's also part of contextualizing the concept of faith within the culture.

I've been trying to come up with an acceptable marriage of some of my beliefs. It is not a traditional or a conventional kind of belief system—an ideology that I have sort of accepted as part of my involvement in mass struggles. The point is that I realized there is an angle in Christianity not to turn off a

kind of spirituality that is always going around. It is actually very anti-Church. I only start to realize now that if you analyze the story of Jesus Christ, he was very much against conventional religiosity. That is why even in conventional representation, in stories—if you try to read the Bible again—you will notice that most of the so-called ministry of Jesus Christ took place outside the church. He was always involved in the people's lives. The real liturgy takes place outside the church. It is in society where liturgy really takes place. Jesus Christ was crucified outside. The only time he was in the church was . . .

B: —*to knock it down, right?*

G: Yes, to knock it down. He was always waging war with church officials. That's just one part of it. Another important part is the humanism in his teachings. They put a lot of faith in humanity's capacity to become divine by transcending their obsession for a conventional concept of power in terms of military power, a means to control and to dominate. It's actually very simple.

B: *We were talking the other day about the differences between Western ideas of power and capability.*

G: Capability is *kakayahan*. The Filipino language doesn't have a direct translation of "power." It's really kind of strange . . . it was just introduced to us by outsiders.

### *Painting the Audience*

It should be noted here that although I have been tracing backwards in time the movement of the dominant strains in Garibay's style, Garibay himself does not see his innovations supplanting previous compositional modes. Rather, he says, he is adding to his repertoire. While this may be debatable (because, after all, we are still permit-

ted to wonder how much an artist or an author can actually be relied upon to explain the significance of his or her work), a 1998 work, done after *Bathala* and during the preparation for the *Kristos* show, *Sleeping Boy*, is a beautiful work in an earlier style. A father is depicted having his morning coffee with the newspaper. Outside the window are the shanties and then on the horizon the skyscrapers, and above them, an intense blue sky. The coffee held in one hand almost spills from the looming, distended cup, but is secure. Behind a pair of blue jeans hanging on a peg an image of the Madonna peeps out. This is a quiet moment, before the father leaves for work, but even now the city is everywhere, coming in through the window and noisily beckoning out of the pages of the morning paper. Soon he will enter the city, which has already entered the shack. This is itself a powerful tension. However, the miracle of the canvas is the position and the expression of the sleeping boy on his father's shoulder. Despite the inexorable encroachment of the world, he is truly, profoundly at peace in his father's arms. We appreciate that as time takes the father into the city, time will also take the boy—but this is a moment of intimacy, protection, and sanctuary, a reason for life.

To represent this moment, to amplify it, is also to represent its sanctity, its dignity, in a way that confers dignity on the class of human beings who are being robbed of their humanity every day. Although this is in some ways a simple work, its straightforward depiction of a moment of elevated existence in the everyday world of history holds forth a certain quality of human interaction that might serve as a standard by which to judge the rest of what we do with and to one another.

As should be clear, however, the intertitle above, "Painting the Audience," is not meant to mean only representing the audience. Garibay is involved in the construction of his audience. On the occasion of a late-1996 show at Boston Gallery, I offered a few observations in response to criticism of Garibay's work as emotionally dark and even ugly.<sup>10</sup> Such comments, when intended derisively, could have only been offered by members of a Philippine/global

bourgeoisie who prefer to remain as ignorant as possible of the hardships faced by others—hardships that make their lives and their opinions on art possible.

When asked if he's a Realist, Garibay responds almost defensively, "Is there anything else to be?" The subject matter of his larger works from 1993 to 1995 includes scenes within buses and jeepneys, as well as of densely populated squatter areas, pedestrian walkways, and encounters on flyovers (vehicular overpasses). With an extremely expressive palette favoring purple and orange hues, hard black lines, and glaringly harsh smoky whites, Garibay captures the stridency and complexity of life in Manila in a way that few artists can or, for that matter, have thought to.

I always think of Manila as a cinematic city, one that is very difficult to represent through any static image. Garibay's solution to representing the dynamism and indeed the voracious character of this virulent, living megalopolis, is—in his work of the early to mid-nineties—to place the viewer within the image's *mise-en-scène*. By using extreme closeups of faces in profile to compose the left and right edges of his canvases or again by putting a dinner plate in front of a viewer along with a pair of hands, the spectator is not allowed to remain a mere onlooker, but is immediately immersed in the life of the canvas and in its myriad details. Borrowing from cultural critic Neferti Tadiar, we might say that the works both provide an experience [*pinagdaanan*] and a passageway [*daanan*; also *pinagdaanan*, passageway that was taken].

For Tadiar, experience is "the practices of mediation between self and social reality, that is, the cognitive, passional, visceral, physical, and social relations which individuals engage in as part of the process of producing themselves."<sup>11</sup> Thus, in Garibay's *pinagdaanan* works, the artist is creating not only a canvas but a subjective event for the viewer, that is, he is helping the viewers to create themselves. Such direction is never value neutral. Therefore, as one engages in what Sartre called "directed creation" in front of a Garibay canvas, he or she also participates in Garibay's vision of social transformation.

In one painting (*Bisita*, 1995), the viewer stares down at his or her plate of food and across a group of peasants. As if in virtual reality, we are oriented here by finding our virtual hands or gloves. In this case, however, our prosthetic hands have stigmata. As we explore the environment further, and our eyes take in impoverished surroundings, the thin amiable faces made from lifetimes of work and sweat, the meager meals, the heat, the persistence of life, and the dignity around us, it dawns on us that we are seeing through the eyes of Jesus Christ. Garibay manages to put us in Jesus Christ, and in another way, to put Jesus Christ in us. Thus, the eye does not function, as in bourgeois aesthetic reception, as an eye of contemplation. It functions as an eye of empathy or compassion, an active, intersubjective, creative consciousness-producing eye. Garibay has grasped the eye as a technology and in a quasi-cinematic way, organized vision such that it passes through various moments in the painting to provide viewers with an experience otherwise unavailable to them.

Moreover, Garibay's spirituality is not of the kind marketed by the institutionalized religions. There is no formulaic moralism here. Alongside the *pinagdaanan* works, Garibay has been developing a Kristology series that features Jesus Christ as the peasant carpenter, that is, as Marx's "homo faber," man the maker. These works are part of a larger endeavor to create a contemporary iconography, that is, images that draw upon the institutionally sanctioned modes of perception (in which the suppliant looks reverently at the holy law), yet communicate a far less distanced, otherworldly message than does traditional sacred imagery. The iconography, which in the mid-1990s had not attained the development detailed above, was less dark than the Socialist Realist work. This Christological series is part of what might be termed Garibay's liberation theology, which in the Philippines is more commonly known as "Theology of Struggle," and is practiced by Garibay not only as a painter but as an occasional seminarian. The best of this Christological work inserts itself into the way people have been taught to look—their line

of theological sight, as it were—but takes the feeling of reverence out of the stratosphere and directs it toward life and those who live it. The Kristology series represented an adjustment to accommodate dominant modes of seeing used to conferring reverence on a set of known icons and to transform them.

These differences and continuities in mode—iconography vs. experience—can be appreciated from two brief examples. In *Love Gift* (1993, fig. 27) viewers find themselves in a crowded Manila bus. Composing the edge of our vision on the left of this cinema-screen-shaped canvas is an elderly woman deeply engrossed in the events of a pornocomics that is also open to our view. Composing the right edge is a man's head in extreme profile with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. The smoke and the ash that pour off it obscure a portion of the passenger seated in front of him and mix with the general viscosity of the air both inside the bus and in the toxic city whose factories can be seen through the windows. These windows and the handrails bolted to the roof of the bus force our vision forward to the canvas's vanishing point, which happens to be in the torso of an evangelical preacher. With Bible raised by a thin arm, the man's mouth opens wide as he yells his passion into the microphone of a megaphone strapped around his waist. At first glance he just adds to the already horrendous noise on this bus ride from hell. As we glance around at our fellow passengers, we see in front of the woman with the comics a couple (he is thin and wiry, she has her back to us but seems fashionable), a young man with his head down on the seat in front of him, and several other figures all finding ways of coping with the chaos and discomfort of the trip.

Near the center of the canvas, almost directly in our face, the preacher's partner, a young woman is asking the smoking man in front of us for a donation. She is bent beyond her young years. Her posture, sloping shoulders, and sunken chest make her look pitiful and obsequious, someone almost contemptible. But as we look at her face which, despite its prominence in the center of the canvas,

we have somehow overlooked because of the color values and the strong vanishing point of the composition, we see in her regard an extraordinary strength of purpose, at once determined, forbearing, and profoundly dignified. Looking back around the bus again, we can see that all of the characters, although avowedly minding their own business, betray an awareness of this woman's presence and that of the preacher. Everyone is caught between this call of the sacred and the noisy grime of the profane. Indeed going back to the preacher, we see that the Bible is spatially the highest element of the canvas, highest, that is, along with the light on the roof of the bus, which could serve as the preacher's halo. Returning your gaze to the young woman, it dawns on you, or it did on me: You are the next petitionee.

What you are expected to give, and whether you will or not, is not specified because here the illusion is broken. Clearly, you cannot put your coins in the slit of her cloth-covered box; you cannot put money directly into the canvas. The viewer is left with the question, "What does the painting want?" "What am I to put into the canvas?" But the fact that all the bus riders are aware of a presence they are trying to ignore, and the fact that that presence is being communicated by oracles that are all too sweaty, worn-out, and loud, indicates that the very seeing of others as subjects in the world is part of what might be our gift. The gift is bidirectional. Because of what we put into the canvas, the passengers turn from objects for the organization of space to thinking and feeling beings. We can then return to the painting and explore the expressivity of their hands and postures as we imagine their inner lives. This experience in the construction of community (we are, after all, riding the same bus) might well last beyond the viewer's stay before the work of art.

In Garibay's 1996 work, *Madonna and Child*, which is more characteristic of what was in the 1996 Boston show, the iconic mode is foremost. Here the viewer is placed more traditionally in front of an object for visual contemplation. She has one bare leg up and the

other flat on the ground in half a lotus position, with her ankle tucked in at her crotch. She wears a diaphanous nightgown that barely covers her upper thighs and exposes the side of her torso. The Madonna is turned slightly toward her young son, whose legs are intertwined with hers. Both of their faces are turned toward her raised hands from which a blinding golden light emanates. In the background of her shanty is a lone red dress that appears badly placed, disturbing both the composition and the scene.

But it is this insistent dress that creates a back-and-forth movement of the eye—from its garish rouge to the Madonna—similar to that which brings the viewer's eye from the preacher to the young woman and back in *Love Gift*. The fact that in today's Manila, the Virgin Mary is a whore begins to eat away at the visual pleasure derived from the male-identified gaze first directed at this image. Indeed, it calls into question the ersatz and oppressive deification of Woman as commodity par excellence. What we begin to see is not just a body sealed under the indifference of reification, but a woman and mother who, like so many, is forced to sell her body to provide for herself and her child. This established, other aspects of the painting begin to work their magic. The golden light between Madonna and child is at once a space of communion and of difference, of a beautiful intimacy and of separate dreams. Mother and child are each illuminated by the light, but she looks into it as if it were infinitely deep while the boy looks through it, one eye on us.

The overall effect is that the viewer can now explore the mystery of the subjectivity of both figures. The flyover, often so prominent in Garibay's work of this period, is reduced to occupying the top-most portion of the opening of their fragile home. Meanwhile the city, its bright lights from the surrounding shanties, and the illuminated sky fill the rest of the window. The closeness of the two figures dominates the scene. But despite the fact that Manila as such does not occupy center place in this canvas, its presence still haunts it in its entirety. Between mother and child, ensconced both in the holy light that has its source in the hands of the Madonna, and the light

of the city that begins to blend in with it, the boy holds a blue toy truck in his hands. It is as if a fragment of urban manhood had driven out of the sky and right into his private world.

This masculinity is at once a promise and a problem. Even though playing with toys, the boy challenges our desiring gaze as it is directed at the body of his mother. His is an experience of the intertwined logic of economics, gender, and sexuality that both pushes poor women into prostitution and hardens the boy in his male role as the protector of woman, who is taken for and held property (by men). Although Manila is in some respects safely excluded from the intimate space secured by the Madonna, it is also at the very core of the boy's developing interiority.

As our eyes turn back to the Madonna and her troublesome red dress, they also pass from the suppleness of her skin to her almost mediocrally rendered face. Her body (for which, incidentally, Garibay's partner Chic was the model) is painted with incredible care, even devotion. But lest we think that the softening of our objectifying gaze and our attention to the specificity of her body means that we possess her, her face steadfastly remains somewhat unreal. This impression of unreality creates the iconic character of the painting, for although we may understand some of what Manila has forced her to do, we will not walk away with the illusion that we know how it feels to be her. As in *Curacha* (discussed in chap. 4), the refusal of a resolution here compels the viewer to meditate upon the lived spaces of others, the internal and external conditions that contribute to sexual and economic regimes of oppression, as well as the experience of oppression itself. Such a meditation demands a kind of empathy that not only enacts and reveals the mode by which Garibay creates his audience, but also has the potential to recreate the world. The mode of apprehension, that is, the visual, becomes a work site for the transformation of reality.

Of Garibay it may be said that he endeavors to put the viewer in the painting and the painting in the viewer. It is thus in the profound sense of his dialectics of seeing that he is, indeed, painting

his audience. Such a practice restores to Realism its soul because his images—rather than existing as frozen objects revealing the supposedly immutable truths of history to an objective observer—appear as subjective practices that demand subjective activity from the audience. Thus, one grasps that—even as objective conditions do produce forms of subjectivity—subjectivity may also transform objective conditions.

*Seeing through the Revolution:  
Visuality, Intersubjectivity, and  
Urban Experience*

*Thus, in imagination, individuals seem freer under the dominance of the bourgeoisie than before, because their conditions of life seem accidental; in reality, of course, they are less free because they are more subjected to the violence of things.*

*—Karl Marx, *The German Ideology**

*Bisuality sa Maynila*

Behind the great commercial screen along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) that is Megamall (the third largest mall in the world), a breathtaking sight has conspired to be born. No, it is not the people, on the march once again, storming the pavement to depose globalization.<sup>1</sup> Coming off the Ortigas flyover, the privileged guide their aircon bubbles through a gentle descent—into a sugary land of steel and reflective glass. Along Emerald Avenue, running parallel to EDSA behind Megamall, the spectacular mirrorings and refractions, the great glitter of multinational corporatism under the inspiring sun of the tropics seems at times to be in cahoots with beauty itself—it is something spiritual! Here, in the car, through tinted windows, in the imagined communion of prosperity, the soul is engineered just by looking—in accord, of course, with the manifest destiny slated by Progress. “Progress with honor,” as the economists



say. Or so one might feel before descending back into the gnarled traffic, the diesel fumes, the teeming pedestrians.

Given the affective if momentary viability of the transport-effect described above (since multiplied in Greenbelt, Rockwell, Eastwood, and other developments), it could be argued that postmodern architecture is one of the markers of a general acknowledgement and employment of what I call the historical emergence of the visual economy. *This visual economy is characterized by the productive potentiality of the gaze, wherever it may fall.* More than just a pastiche of previous styles, postmodern architecture should be grasped as a continuation and extension of the logic of cinema and television—it has highly sophisticated designs on the imagination—while the hardware of the visual economy (that which endeavors to program all forms of visualization) should be gleaned as interlocking sets of technologies (paintings, movies, TVs, computers, buildings) that enlist the eye to instrumentally consolidate a world. Vision is regularly allied with belief—seeing is believing, as has been said. But in the temporality signaled by the word *today*, we are dealing with new orders of belief and new orders of technology for its management. The industrialization of the eye is upon us.

As it becomes more apparent that technologies of visibility are at the cutting edge of capitalist economic growth and neoimperialism, continuing the investigation into the programmatic visions—and the efforts to produce countervisions—in the Philippines, that is, the investigation into aesthetics and visual practices, should resolve a keener and more clearly partisan dramatization of the struggle that is globalization than could be staged by the traditional methods available to sociology, ethnography, and political economy. It has been my wager that a careful consideration of Philippine visual culture reveals the anticapitalist and proto- or quasi-nationalist or outright nationalist modes of struggle endemic to the visual. What I have written is not intended to supersede but, rather, to complement the anticapitalist critiques of the wage-labor and agrarian exploitation continuing to enrich property owners while further

impoverishing the propertyless. It may, however, chart new directions for struggle in a world in which world views are no longer all-encompassing (they do not necessarily add up to an ideology), but momentary, fragmented and, contradictory, in spite of (or perhaps because of) their totalizing tendencies.

Never before in the history of the development of the senses has the eye as sensual surveyor been taken so seriously (as organ of pleasure, as pathway of control, as medium of incorporation) by capital. This employment of the eye is clearly manifest in the urban-built environment: Witness the corporate building as screen, spectacle, and signature. Verily, these postmodern buildings foster a seeing beyond or, if you will, a beyond-seeing, engaging the gaze and the glance in a form of distraction that allows for the achievement of no genuine focus or for the resolution of any genuine object. Postmodern edifices redact the cultural logic of late capitalism to induce particular mental and sensual states for the reorganization and control of human minds—cognitive mapping in reverse. The eye is caught up in a play of seeing that enjoins it to see without cognizance and beyond the pedestrian dimensions of sight, in part—and this is especially true in Manila, where pedestrians are de facto second class citizens—by not seeing the pedestrian.<sup>2</sup>

Before turning to the pedestrian and to pedestrians—some of the subjects of the painting of Garibay (*Prusisyon*, 1995, fig. 28)—a few more remarks on the present condition and, hence, regulation of sight are in order. For it is Garibay's struggle with the hegemony of contemporary visibility, the particularities of his struggle and their correlates that makes him such a significant painter. To extend the critical appreciation for his work of what, in the last chapter I called "painting the audience" (a dialectical relation that viewers understand viscerally with some immediacy), one must also come to terms with what he is working against. But such a clear-cut distinction between the visuo-economic relations induced and structured by capital expansion and globalization—relations that pre-exist and exceed the work of Garibay—and what he accomplishes through his

interventions in these relations is not as easy to make as might be hoped, for the preceding statement provides a formal organizational sequence, a logical “1, 2” in which there is a known world and a response by Garibay where, for this analysis at least, none such sequence properly exists. I only understand aspects of what Garibay’s work has been struggling against through my engagement with his paintings and through our conversations; and the following thoughts on the postmodernization of vision that precede my next discussion of Garibay’s vision machines would be incomplete without my having encountered his work. Furthermore, my “understanding” is itself only partial and radically incomplete. The writing of this work (this work of writing) in these last chapters is an attempt to formalize some of the intuition and inspiration conveyed by my encounters *kasama si* [together with] Garibay. It is also an effort to participate in and inflect the struggle over acquiring eyes.

Postmodern architecture posits and partially realizes a new historical moment for the political economy of sight—it grasps vision as a socially productive activity and uses it instrumentally. This is another way of saying that the urban fabric is itself posited as a scene of production by what has been called late capital. Rather than machines for living, postmodern buildings are first and foremost machines of capture. They capture attending sight and put it to work for proprietors. Of course, these buildings are themselves machines for the organization of global society—hardware for planners and clerics and developers and bankers to manage the extension of capital. The banks, airlines, mining companies, communication corporations, agribusinesses, and telemarketers housed therein all labor to spread the multiplying tendrils of capital more widely and deeply. But here, the economic structures that they network into place utilizing the violence of traditional business methods are expressed architecturally, that is, spatially and visually as well—the organizational principles of modernization accede to the spectacular. These buildings are no longer equipment for living, but more akin to weapons of war—assault vehicles working on a variety of

levels.<sup>3</sup> Most centrally for this essay, postmodern buildings and other contemporary visual technologies put the eye to work for the *proprietors* of a particular edifice, image, or corporation. Furthermore, inasmuch as these formations work collectively to create a general economy of visibility (and a corollary one of invisibility), they collectively regulate vision in the interests of proprietors. The spectacular dimensions of the capitalist management of global resources include a set of visceral and perceptual affects which are *necessary* optico-experiential dimension of capital’s global arborescence. The tremendous shifts in telecommunications, mass media, and the urban landscape testify to the imbrication of sensual transformations as one of the organizational fulcrums for continued accumulation of capital. As ever larger agglomerations of capital struggle to valorize themselves to return a profit, new pathways of production are opened up that first transform and then harness the senses. The history of capital, as implied above and already noted by Marx in the 1840s, is also the history of the development of the senses. Again, “the forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.”<sup>4</sup>

In *The Cinematic Mode of Production*, I developed the thesis that cinema brings the Industrial Revolution to the eye and brings the protocols of the assembly line (the *chaîne de montage*) to the sensorium, thereby making vision and sensation directly productive for capital.<sup>5</sup> One can immediately see from the Philippine context that the emergent visual economy, which now appears as the central, defining feature of postmodernity, instituted as it is by mass media and taken up by architecture and culture does not necessarily mean postindustrialism even when, in a given geographical region, architecture or mass media function in a postmodern mode.<sup>6</sup> Cybernetic value production and value transfer, with the eye as the principal interface, coexist today with intensive industrialization and with the labor practices characteristic of the special economic zones. In the Philippines, emerging industrialization, the service industry, agribusiness, and an emerging visual economy are simultaneous

events. As we saw from the visions in *Scenes and Spaces* in chapter 1, emergent image relations during the late 1930s were already implicit in the social logic, that is, impacted in the transformed fabric of the real even without the presence of image technology as such. Today, steel-and-glass buildings, huge billboards, and music television (MTV) exist right alongside sweatshops and strive to disenfranchise the imagination as surely as blocked land reform, union busting, and an anti-Communist military strive to disenfranchise labor-power. All of these are of a piece.

In fact, it is the proximity of the “old” and the “new,” of traditional modes of exploitation and high-tech modes that force a radical reconceptualization of each. In the status quo of the *jettzeit*, the “old” is really a new old and the “new” is really an old new—a systemic accommodation to preserve the traditional orders of exploitation and class. Thus, what has shifted is not the fundamental character of hierarchical society but the modes of its maintenance and the economics of scale. Old forms require the new technologies of regulation and control to maintain their function, and new forms are not autonomous technologies but the functional supplements to basic structural inequalities. In the *jettzeit*, it is the mediatic extraction of sensual labor that sustains hierarchical society—such is the defining feature of what is called postmodernism.

For clarification here, we might look to Ernest Mandel: “Far from representing a ‘post-industrial society,’ late capitalism thus constitutes *generalized universal industrialization* for the first time in history. Mechanization, standardization, overspecialization, and parcellization of labor, which in the past determined only the realm of commodity production in actual industry now penetrate into all sectors of social life.”<sup>7</sup> This general tendency of the logic of capital noted by Mandel underpins many aspects of the theories of postmodernism and confirms that capital penetrates visibility and takes it as a scene of production. Society devotes a specialized array of technologies to the industrialization of sensuality and the visual. Capital’s ever-intensifying stranglehold on human life depends ever-

more heavily on the organization of the visible to seize the imaginary. What must be stressed is that if visibility is a scene of production, it is also a site of struggle, a battle zone.

This utilization of the visual as an arena for the legitimation and valorization of capital (and capitalist society) is significant because the technologies of the visible in Manila have a saturation different from that of Manila’s First World metropolitan counterparts. The phenomenon described by the term “uneven development,” in which presumably different levels of modernization coexist in the same locale, implies competing scopic regimes, that is, visual logics that are identifiably different, even if they can be seen to work in tandem.<sup>8</sup> The golden arches of McDonald’s, the three meters of supple thigh visible through the slit of an evening dress high on a billboard, and now the one-meter wide deodorant ball flowing in frictionless slow motion over a depilated armpit on a huge TV screen towering over the sonic, olfactory, and visual brutality of EDSA inflect visibility rather differently than the horse-drawn calesas in Intramuros and Laoag or the huge basket-laden, oxen-drawn carts of itinerant vendors on Commonwealth Avenue. The contrasting scopic regimes, together with the contrasting temporalities and modes of production implied by the appearances of these differentiable image-objects, affect the significance of the act of painting. In the case of Garibay’s paintings, the struggle for the visual is paramount. It is in and through vision—not just “seeing” but an activation, recognition, and reorganization of its process—that his work so powerfully posits alternative forms of community and communion, and inveighs against the perspectives, ethics, and judgments mandated by hegemonic points of view. I see many of Garibay’s works as opening new pathways for the accommodation of subjective potential, that is, of sensual labor. Utilizing the viewer as a medium, the images construct sensibilities and perceptions at once different from and antagonistic to those that fuel capital’s objectifying tendencies. Whether or not Garibay is conscious of all this in the register of concepts is not the point. The point is that his images function in a

way that is postmodern in modality but profoundly anticapitalist and anti-imperialist in ethos.<sup>9</sup> They combat a kind of organized displacement of subjects in which their sense of place and corresponding identifications, especially among the bourgeoisie, are systematically transposed such that they feel themselves foreigners in their own country.<sup>10</sup> In capturing the new modality of the visible, Garibay's paintings combat the situation of the unrepresented, and of the unrepresentableness of Manila and of the Philippines.

What does it mean to say that Manila is unrepresented and unrepresentable? Whose unconscious is it? As Tadiar has written, there have been until recently (with the inauguration of the flyovers) no bird's-eye perspectives readily accessible in Manila and there even now exists no signature monument or building that has been invested as a symbol of Manila.<sup>11</sup> Manila, as an experiential city, does not exist for most of its inhabitants from the abstract perspective of the cartographer. Its inhabitants do not use an aerial perspective or a set of universal coordinates such as north, south, east, and west to navigate it. Manila, in general, is not an image before it is an experience. In another essay Tadiar critiques Manila's appearance as "noise" to First World writer and raconteur Spalding Gray.<sup>12</sup> These works dwell upon the ways in which Manila is at once inaccessible to First World modes of knowing, while also, in part, the result of them. Tadiar's work, like Garibay's, endeavors to provide points of reference for Manila dwellers, cultural moments that can express the conditions of life. Both of these cultural producers are engaged in a struggle for form—how does one formalize a set of relations that exceed hegemonic modes of knowing in order to consolidate and amplify the power of people whose lives are rendered invisible by the dominant and dominating modes of life?

Those readers familiar with Paris or New York will also be aware of the thousands of images they have seen of these cities, images that result in an accretion of fantasy upon the urban fabric itself and have the effect of elevating some of its aspects. It is as if a city's material presence could be buoyed up upon a sea of images. The

streets themselves are invested with cachet. All of the films, novels, philosophies, music, narratives, poems, and myriad glamors that have fueled and resulted from these great urban concentrations of the world's ill-gotten wealth infuse the walls of edifices, monuments, and parks, the restaurants, cafes, and people with an existential excess, a metaphysical presence, a supervaluation. It is as if all the representations, all the spectacular skins that the surfaces of these cities have shed as images have been folded back into the very material that composes the so-called global city to give it an inner life.

Manila, on the other hand, who has seen it? With the exceptions of Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, Chito Roño, and a few others, no filmmaker has consciously tried to produce Manila as a thinking *mise-en-scène*, that is, no one has represented it as a machine for the production of ideas and events. Until very recently, I have seldom heard Manileños/as evoke objectified reference points to describe the city's quintessence. Not being an empire state, the Philippines has no Empire State Building. For many Manila dwellers today, it is the traffic and Megamall that serve as the Eiffel Towers, Space needles, and other universal landmarks available in other metropolitan areas. Traffic, however, clearly is not a place, but rather, a horrendous phenomenon that can add up to four hours or more to each working day for metropolitan workers, and Megamall is more an experience than a sight. Thus, to suggest that Garibay represents Manila is to suggest not only that he creates recognizable images of Manila, but that he is also able to activate its structures of feeling, that his work somehow transmits aspects of Manila's life world. His urban canvases produce Manila in a way that it can be used by its viewers. They allow for the possibility of an analysis of experience; they are thought machines that utilize the materials of daily life to forge visions with which to make new concepts. They also serve as a repository for knowledge and history, or better, as scenes for knowledge and history making.

Among these aspects of Manila captured by some Garibay canvases is the struggle against invisibility, against sheer disappearance

wrought by the megaiterations of global forces that explode in all their noxious acrimony in Manila's Third World urbanity. Manila has no logo, no iconography onto which its essence accretes. "Philippines 2000" never achieved the same self-evidential authority as "I love NY." The hardship, violation, contradiction, and indignity foisted by Manila upon its inhabitants permeates quotidian experience but is not adequately available as representation. Put another way, official and capitalized representations do everything they can to refract generalized pain as consumable pleasure and beauty.

In what follows I consider in detail an effort to capture the quotidian for representation. It should be understood, however, that in a global situation of generalized representation in which daily experience is composed from mass-mediated representations, an effort to represent the unrepresented and unrepresentable is also a program. Indeed, the programmatic character of such an effort at once analytically reveals the programmatic character of generalized capitalist representation and structures an alternative.

### *Composure and Composition*

There are two distinct but complementary ways of looking at Garibay's 1993 work, *An Encounter on the Road to Fantasy* (fig. 29). One can think about the painting from a narratological as well as a compositional point of view. At first glance, the painting is an image built around two male figures, one inside a car and the other outside, regarding each other through a rolled-up window while the car is stopped in a traffic jam. From the standpoint of composition, the eye is led through a series of flows and stops, to various stress points or points of impact: roughly from the encounter at the car on street level, to the junction of the three elevated freeways, to the high rises on the horizon. If we slow this movement down, the sequence of perception orchestrated here is as follows: Taking a cue from the spatial organization implied by the automobile's roofline and right-rear window post, first the eye sees the profile of the male passenger

and then the face of the male beggar outside of the car. There are three bright white patches—on the roof, on the male passenger's head, and on the beggar's head, which help to move the viewer's eye between them. Then, after the eye oscillates between these two faces and their encounter, it perceives the little girl in the beggar's arm, the occluded face of the female passenger, her ear, and her earring, then the driver and the pipe smoke. These heads establish something like a line that is generalized by the roof of the car and counterbalanced on the viewer's far right by the red bus, the bus's roof, and its white pinstripe. The blackish red roof and the window posts, with their reflection of the searing sun, deftly partition the canvas at points passing through all of the classical golden sections without fixing any of them. If extended, the plane made up by the side of the bus and by the side of the passenger car would intersect somewhere in the right rear fender of the yellow Volkswagen in front of both vehicles and just behind the girl's head.

While these observations are clearly approximations of a possible series what happens next cannot ever be convincingly rendered as it were, sequentially. The eye may explore the region bounded by the bus and the car, that is, the space of the principal figures, or it may seek an outlet beyond the impact point of their planes, behind the girl's head, and follow the flyover with its traffic jam, beggars, and vendors to the point where it intersects with two other overpasses. Thus, the canvas is effectively divided into three regions, a kind of ground level that includes the car, the bus, and the space between it; the zone underneath the two flyovers coming from the upper left and upper right edges of the painting that includes the traffic, more street life, and the squatter shanties; and finally, the skyscraping corporate city and the virulent sky it appears to have produced. Because the flyovers on the extreme left and right are almost in the planes established by the sides of the principal vehicles, the entire composition has the form of a skewed box, or better, the prow of a discombobulated ship seen from the inside (in which the spine of the hull's bulkhead juts out at an angle too obtuse and

not in line with plumb). This axis of vision, which in art theorist David Michael Levin's words is "the line of greatest desire: a line imposed by the will to power," is visually compelling, if not free flowing.<sup>13</sup> The painting is structured such that the viewer wants to follow this axis—we want to go *there*, that is, forward, to the metropolitan center and to development.

The non-Euclidian dimensions of the geometry create zones of stress that give an overall sense that there is too much within the canvas to be properly contained by the volume it establishes. Nearly all of the principal lines of the composition are stress-bearing structures—the side of the car, the road ahead, the flyovers above. The infrastructure of the canvas is under tremendous pressure and, like Manila itself, would perhaps collapse if there were room enough for it to do so amidst all of its congestion. While all of the elements are propping each other up by virtue of being so tightly packed together, where the eye seeks release it strikes a surface or line; it collides with opposing vectors of material pressure (social, solar, gravitational). Put another way, each line of stress figured in the painting as the pressure of the imploding city has a vector component that accosts the viewer. The eye thus encounters a kind of counterpressure resulting from the tensors that keep the whole scenario from caving in. Therefore, it is as if the gaze were a force that threatened the equilibrium of the composition. Put it this way: Sight is posited as having material agency. While this power of sight is significant in the canvas, we must also remember that within the trajectory of the argument of *Acquiring Eyes*, sight is being returned to its source (the seer) as a medium of social change. Meanwhile, the contents of the foreground seem to spill upward along the road toward the great, elevated city in the background only to be blocked by the traffic jam and the shanties. The eye must travel across the jutting planes and hard edges of the vehicles to arrive at what is at once its structurally (formally) prescribed destination and the source of Manila's noxious conditions—the corporate architecture of the postmodern city. Indeed, to emphasize the immensity and compass of the built

environment, the buildings that occupy the picture's vanishing point compete with the sky and seem to crowd it out. Development is at once equated with the promise of heaven and that which makes it impossible to get there.

If Garibay's pressurized three-tiered spatialization of Manila's tensions were the only thing accomplished by this image, the canvas would already be significant. But here he accomplishes much more. The coloration—characterized by sulfurous yellows, burnt ochers, and caustic lavender grays—unifies the expanse and allows the viewer to imagine that the entire scene has a kind of coherence or inner logic despite its ostensible chaos. The multitudinous miasma is informed by a logic of totality. Moreover, as in most of his paintings, especially those dealing with urban experience, the people in the painting are the subjects, as it were, and Manila is present as the *mise-en-scène* for particular kinds of subjective experience. The entire environment is, therefore, denaturalized (historicized), and people live their lives in a world of human making. Rendering the historicity of the present visible is a central project for protest and revolutionary art. It is in this intimate relationship between subjects and their denatured environment that viewers may find the profoundly dialectical character of Garibay's canvases: Manila creates the conditions for particular kinds of urban experience, but this experience itself produces Manila as what it is. As we have already seen, many of Garibay's canvases simultaneously thematize the scopic dimensions of this production, and draw upon the viewer's vision to imagine a recomposition of Manila's social and material order. For example, the paintings oftentimes depict an arrested moment in what amounts to the experiential production of Manila, and the viewer's animation of this often archetypal moment through his or her visual attention illuminates the terms of its production, that is, the terms by which subjects participate in the daily making and remaking of Manila (as in Bernal's *Manila by Night*, chap. 4). Often in a Garibay canvas, the viewer must extend his or her perspective through the standpoints embodied by the characters of his composition. Be-

cause the viewer's own experience may be transformed in an extraordinary way through a sharing of compassion, his or her participation in creating Manila's becoming may also be altered. I will try to show how this program works in *Encounter*.

Let us now examine how the compositional elements of the canvas effect a narrative. The title itself, *An Encounter on the Road to Fantasy*, immediately situates the foreground, middle ground, and background of the canvas in a teleological narrative and undercuts that developmental narrative by labeling it a fantasy.<sup>14</sup> It also states the ambition of the Caucasian male passenger (the achieving of his fantasy of wealth and plenitude), and expresses the form of one of its impediments—an encounter with elements of Manila, in this case a member of its population—in a way that conforms to the spatial logic of the composition: The passenger wants to move through the three regions of the canvas to reach the paradisiacal privileges of development. His spatial trajectory through time as well as his desired destination conform to the painting's formal organization of the trajectory of the viewer's eye toward the vanishing point. But as noted above, the viewer's eye moves through the space of the canvas toward the high rises along a series of flows and stops, stopping at the yellow Volkswagen, finding the little girl's head, seeking the intersection of the three branches of the flyover, before finding the city in the sky, which everything else seems to lead up to and, indeed, to support. Each of these stopping points for the eye interrupts its journey on the road to fantasy and stages a kind of encounter. We should note that "encounter" is also the word used to describe the clash of New People's Army (NPA) troops with Philippine Army regulars. As I will try to show, these interruptions at the onset of the journey function retrospectively like a refrain, visual events—in the last analysis, standpoints—that will become material echoes of the central subjective experience narrated in the painting. These refrains will generalize and amplify that experience, which I will come to momentarily, to attempt a fundamental transformation of the viewer's vision.

As the male passenger gazes down his nose at the beggar on the other side of the window, he lets out a little breath, ceasing to draw on the tobacco in his pipe and causing it to emit a wisp of smoke. This smoke inside the car corresponds to the smoke that permeates the upper portion of the canvas and sets up a visual equation between the passenger's pleasure and Manila's horribly polluted state—it is as if his little pleasures have impeded visibility, reduced resolution, and devastated the environment. His head also occludes his female companion's face and blocks the possibility of her registration of anything independent of his vision—as if he sees for both of them. This representation of one eye seeing for two heads emphasizes both the power and the violence of his seeing, a seeing which the thrust of the painting tells us will not finally interfere with his journey to First World conditions. His gaze through the glass is at once curious and hard (as if, while looking at the beggar, he is confronting a suspicious work of art); it composes itself through the comfort engendered by its powers of exclusion.

As one hand keeps the pipe safely in the male passenger's mouth, the other (which appears only semihuman in its three-fingeredness) is raised in gentle disgust to block or reject the appeal of the man—or is he only a boy?—on the other side of the glass. For his part, the boy peers intently in, curious and beseeching. The driver stares straight ahead, hardly differentiated, consumed by his job, but his whitish shirt and gloves link him chromatically to the male passenger journeying inside the car and to the boy begging outside the car. Despite their different roles here, their different social positions and all that these differentiated positions imply about the situation of the present and its history, the figures are tarred with the same brush. We see a material that reveals the flesh, that is, a materiality underlain with human flesh. The common human substance coded by the composition's diaphanous whitish browns is emphasized by the whiteness of the rearview mirror and suddenly by the whiteness of the smoke—all of which might reveal to us that the eye is a human eye, and the environment before us a human

product. Garibay's principle of composition expresses the situation of human creation generally—all things visible bear a human trace. In Garibay's paintings, everything visible is infused with the human, without any of the violence of hierarchy and of history being erased. This is the presence of the social totality in the objects. There is a spiritual element to such an antiromantic thesis, a hypothesis about a shared species life that collides subtly yet inexorably with the inequalities frozen on the canvas. Above all, one finds in the canvas's interruption of a typical movement the sense of a profound interrelatedness among individuals, the objects and spaces they have made, and the dynamics that give them life. The humanization of Manila's sublime materiality and brutal corporeality does not, again, entail an idealized notion of the unity of the species; rather, it gives things and those who are taken as things a point of view and, therefore, it represents a history while positing a set of possibilities alternative to the inertia of historically sedimented objects and values. The wide angle of this and other of Garibay's canvases dramatize that individuated (point) perspective itself—the axonometric and the rational-scientific—is profoundly strained by a dialectical spirituality. In a world visible as human relations, the seeing eye cannot posit itself as a fully autonomous individual, just as space cannot be arranged to recede to a mathematically calculable vanishing point placed properly for the appreciation of a transcendental subject.

One might find an expression of this spiritual element in the way in which the girl-child removes herself from the economy of the gazes established between the passenger and the beggar, in spite of the fact that she is being used as an exhibit by which to appeal to the sympathies of the white passenger. She is looking somewhere else, seeking somewhere else, despite the ineluctable conditions of her life, so profoundly determined by the spaces and situations into which she has been born. The direction of her gaze is approximately 180 degrees away from the central axis of vision in the painting, diametrically opposing the place where a viewer would have to look from if he or she were to gaze straight down the road to fantasy. Garibay uses the

colliding planes of private transport and mass transport (one iteration of the intense conflict between privatization and public interest) to make her experience and her self-remove from the foregrounded events an essential node, if not the ultimate focus, of the experience being structured by the canvas. Physically, she is completely contained by her situation but she is looking beyond it. What is her experience? How do we relate to her sadness, her imagination, her possibility? The white of the bus's pinstripe extends across her forehead, like a crown of thorns, and the yellow of the Volkswagen behind her suffuses her hair with something like a halo. This surprising and subtle yet direct authorial intrusion by Garibay marks and facilitates the redemptive aspects of his vision coming into play. It is a subjectively imposed glyph inscribed by the painter to claim a place in the world for the theosophical. This Christological glyph, this invocation, indexes the sanctity of human endurance and the affirmation in suffering that is the persistence of life: as if survival, a belief in the future in spite of the present, partook of the divine. It also welds together two narratively distinct realms, that of the life world of the masses and Christianity. Garibay's invocation of the sanctitude of aspects of the everyday life of the masses foreshadows, in this 1993 work, a critique of received culture and religion that will come to occupy Garibay in the mid- and late nineties and beyond, in which the alienated spirituality of Filipino Christians (alienated because cathected to colonial icons and narratives), is redirected and reappropriated for the people's movement. In the present encounter, however, as the white and the sulfuric yellows begin to take on a divine cast, the entire painting is permeated with a higher presence. Everything in view is made from suffering flesh, and nonetheless the flesh still lives. It is as if clearly seeing the horror of existing social relations and still being able to imagine continuing in time became something like the meaning of the work. (In my immediate language: "Ah, *she* is Christ, Christ is everywhere, Christ is nothing but the necessity of revolution.")

This double vision—apprehending the abstract in the concrete, an *alternative* universal in the particular—allows us to return



to the painting's initial encounter and try to better understand the way in which the viewer's line of sight into the passenger vehicle bisects the visual exchange between passenger and beggar. They stare through the back-door window in a particular relation, characterized by contempt, repulsion, and superiority on the part of the passenger, supplication, envy, and curiosity on the part of the beggar, and antagonism on both of their parts. Although this is a relation between individuals, it is also a structural relation, a systemic event engineered by the immensely brutal totality machine that is Manila. For me, this description does not exhaust the positional interiority of the two figures. Indeed, I feel that there is much, especially about the beggar's visage, that I do not understand. We see through the scene of their encounter in such a way that resolves nothing for the two of them, but it does place us in an interesting position—neither exactly in a car nor on the street. Our line of sight through the back-door glass to the rearview mirror and to the driver runs almost parallel to the girl's and also along the line corresponding to the road to fantasy, that is, to development. The viewer's gaze is not returned, or rather, *it is only after the viewer begins to trace out relations that inhere in Manila, that Manila looks back*. Looking through the medium of the encounter, that is, literally the back-door window, but analogously the painting and also Manila itself (for they are all media), we might wonder with respect to the driver, what is it like to drive at the behest of another's fantasy? What might be seen in the reflection of the rearview mirror? The fact that we are seeing through the same medium as the passenger and the beggar, that is, the glass, but also through the very matter of Manila from a perspective that only unfolds during passage through the elements of the canvas, allows the viewer to perceive the amplitude of this particular encounter as an event that loudly calls into question the means and ends of the developmental paradigm. But perceiving the event as such, that is, traversing the canvas in such a way that the encounter indicts the developmental fantasy with every brushstroke on every square inch of its surface, creates in relation to Manila an

aesthetic and spiritual dimension in the very materiality of city, that is, to all of what comprises it. A largess of vision, accompanied by sulfuric illumination, fills the compassionate eye as it now explores the middle ground, picking out the individual vendors going from car to car with their wares or seeing the individual shanties housing the many lives of the embattled people of the Manila megalopolis. One is spurred to imagine each individuated element in its particularity as an antithetical desire to what is visible as the general situation. Amidst the generalized virulence are countless attempts to live. Curiously, the sulfurous smoke that bathes the entire metropolis in a kind of passionate communal intensity is absent in one large region. The back glass of the passenger car and the view into it are partially exempt from the acid hues and, thus, from the communal sensibility permeating this view of Manila, as if the protection which separates these Caucasian beneficiaries of Manila's condition also exempts them from understanding its condition.

If we wanted to render a provisional account of *An Encounter on the Road to Fantasy*, we find that the painting itself is such an encounter. That is how it understands its historical and artistic function. Its skirmish with the viewer, although triggered by the representation of a specific event on the road to a particular fantasy, is also an encounter that is taking place everywhere all the time and is the process of history itself. Humans put history into practice, and these practices make history. This dialectic has far-reaching implications for Garibay's social role as a painter. Because he sees that history is made through the myriad subjective, intersubjective, and communal relations, he turns these relations into compositional principles. Garibay himself paints in relation to Manila, thinking with and through Manila's materiality so others might do the same. His canvases activate social relations such that the viewers may develop compassion for Manila's oppressed while simultaneously taking responsibility for the role of their perception and belief in creating Manila's brutal conditions. His work demands that I confront the contradictions between my aspirations for a just order and my com-

plicity with the forces of domination. The work revitalizes my perception and belief by directing me toward an experience of a community I might have a part in making. The encounter offers a challenge: that I might entwine my subjective potential with the people's struggle to live; that I might work for the potentiality of life rather than the lurid isolation of death.

### *The Matrix*

Interruptions in the false utopias proffered by capitalist-infused technologies (TV, architecture, Hollywood films, and special economic zones, among others) for the organization of the senses and the imagination, whether occurring "accidentally" by the eruption of what could still be called the human in the global and local scenographies organized by capital or through resistance practices including revolution and art, can be fostered and made more effective through affiliation, alliance, intensification, organization, and extension of the self. When the glitches in the capitalist fantasy occur by accident (running over a pedestrian, really seeing an impoverished child begging on the street), they are the mark of an intolerable contradiction in which the deplorable condition of the species appears to be at once radically misrepresented by the fantasy-scape that the capital-organized world presents and simultaneously essential to the perpetuation of its fantasy. These realizations of a different order of society—realizations that can take any form from revelation to abjection—create a form of knowledge-producing experience that provides the fundamental materials of art, revolution, and spirituality. Moreover, the form of these contradictions—their estrangement effects—changes with time and points the way toward contemporary counterhegemonic expression.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, when glitches in the antihumanitarian program are not fortuitous but precipitated by design, one finds one's self a participant in revolution—in the conscious struggle against the totalitarianism of capital. Although this chapter was writ-

ten and first published well before the release of *The Matrix*, it is precisely the red-pill type of disruptions in the seamless capital-generated fabric of domination I am talking about. Even a Hollywood film such as *The Matrix* is clear about the fact that underneath the simulations of capitalist prosperity, people live in Third World-like conditions of struggle. Without a doubt, this world-historical social relation was generative of the conceit of the Hollywood film, just as protorevolutionary conditions ought properly be understood as the driving force of nearly all human innovation and creativity. We can see that even in Hollywood, albeit in disguised fashion, the masses are the subject of history. Thus, Garibay's work, taken with that of Brocka, Bernal, and Ocampo, show us that calculated interruptions in capital's informational processes—its mediations of vision, space, time, and meaning—have political as well as spiritual and aesthetic dimensions and organize experience through a variety of media including paint, cinema, music, pamphlets, hearsay, and armed struggle. Need it be said that no work or word exists in isolation, and none, including the present volume, is exempt from some complicity with the forces of evil? Rather, in the Philippines like everywhere else, when speaking about the struggle for liberation, we are speaking about efforts—partial, tainted, fallen efforts—to create a space for life in its most open sense.

## *Conclusion, or What Now?*

*Acquiring Eyes* demonstrates that fundamental shifts in visibility are at once constitutive changes and practical effects of modernization in the Philippines. Images, in short, are social relations and are, therefore, at once ciphers of these relations and productive of them. Thus, this book reads paintings and films not only for their manifest contents, but for what they have to say as media regarding modes of life and struggle.

In tracing the ascension of visibility in the Philippines, I have detailed three moments of abstraction gathered under the headings Neorealism, Socialist Realism, and Syncretic Realism. If I had to single out one idea as the most important contribution of this book, it would be that visibility is not ephiphenomenal in relation to postcolonial modernity but central to it. The visual as a semiautonomous realm emerges first as a realm of freedom and then as a zone of bitter struggle. In the postcolony, the historical struggle shatters language-based nationalism and its narratives, particularly as the nation is handed over by the neocolonialists in the U.S., and the visual opens up as the emerging interface between expropriators of all stripes and the people who labor. In short, in the postcolony the visual is at once a new area of colonization and a means to sustain

the traditional relations of domination. It is, therefore, also a site of value production and a site of struggle.

While I have made the arguments in this book primarily utilizing examples of metropolitan visual culture, I have done so in order to look at the movement of hegemony and counterhegemony. The best way to establish the emergence in the Philippines of what elsewhere I have called the cinematic mode of production was by focusing on the autoethnographic dimensions of Philippine modernism and its legacy, that is, by focusing on cultural products in which the nation was being imagined vis-à-vis an imperialist Other. It is from the perspective of the Philippines, in which early modern visual shifts occurred in the relative absence of technology, that I have settled on the term “world-media system” to indicate the cofunctioning of what has been called the “world system and globalization,” and what I call the “cinematic mode of production.” In the dialectics of domination and resistance, economic, political, and corporeal domination takes the cultural form of the foreclosure of viable national liberation narratives in English and the growing expropriation of visibility while resistance adds to its standard practices forms of innovation in the visual sphere that are adequate to create figures of counterhegemony and posit strategies that are counterhegemonic. This dialectic of peoples’ struggles and global capital works toward an overall transformation in the mode of production. In the world-media system, visual attention becomes productive of society. Today, the Philippine socius, like societies all over the globe, is dominated not only by economic, military, and “political” vectors, but also by images from cinema and television that coordinate fantasy, desire, proprioception, ideas about possible futures, and images of race and nation with the agendas of the world market and global capitalism. These visuo-cybernetic extensions of the capitalist world system extract human time as they enjoin viewers to participate in and, indeed, produce the conceits of globalization. It is only through the dialectical transformation of vision into a socially productive activity that culture emerges as the necessary scene of domination and confronta-

tion it has become. Thus, I have tried to provide a historical material account of what elsewhere has been called “The Cultural Turn.” I have also tried to provide a Marxist account of Filipino cultural forms, and sketch, albeit in an overly general way, the transformations that have taken place in the social production of value that would necessarily modify the labor theory of value such that “sensual labor” comes to mean visual attention and, more generally, human attention.

In the Philippines, important changes in visuality arise with the disruption and displacement of nationalist narrative by the U.S. imperialist presence. During that time, as I have argued, the visual becomes first a realm of freedom (as linguistic breakdown of narrative in English and as abstract art) and then, during the 1950s, a site of struggle. Then, during martial law (1972–1986) and its regulation of the people through a careful balance of brutality and spectacle, visuality becomes an explicitly political arena of engagement for radical image makers. After the EDSA revolution (1986), the subjective and experiential aspects of visuality come to the fore. The deposition of the Marcoses and the decentralization of power and the vast penetration of the social fabric by commercial (capitalized) images means that the agency of one’s own vision becomes a point of political departure. As noted earlier, we are enjoined to produce actively our own destruction. The spectacle is the obverse of the spectral—the spectrality of the subject and the populous. Alienated visuality, sensuality, and spirituality must be restored, or at least be struggled for, in the next phase of social revolution, just as the reappropriation of other alienated products of humanity (general wealth) must continue to be a purpose of our struggle.

Obviously, there is far more work to be done here in developing what might be thought of as a revolutionary sensorium. This sensorium would be able to viscerally perceive the direct connections between, for example, spectacle glamor and debilitating poverty, connections that are necessarily obfuscated in the legitimating marketing, politicking, and subject formation of current global capitalism—not just cognitive mapping but also perceptual trans-

forming. One current trend in the Philippine art world toward formal abstraction, that is, “abstract art,” a trend that includes the “MMDA art” today appearing on every wall facing a road in Manila, seems to me to be exactly what is not necessary here. This work seems particularly formalist and dehistoricizing, as if around only to provide a familiar, soft-focus relation to the outside and to make the rest of the world go down easier. We need new modes of abstraction, not more old ones.

In any case, the three moments of abstraction detailed in this volume are correlated with historical time frames covering the periods from just before the Second World War to U.S.-backed martial law under Marcos, from martial law to the People Power revolution, and from People Power to the recent People Power 2. Overall, the book charts the shifting properties of the visual as visuality becomes increasingly central both to Filipino struggles for autonomy and self-determination and for global capital’s intensifying domination through the process called globalization. The three moments are briefly recapitulated below.

*Phase 1, Neorealism:* Neorealism is characterized by the autonomization of vision and the splitting of visuality from narrative, after the Second World War. My argument focused primarily on National Artist H. R. Ocampo, who was a novelist, a short-story writer, a screenwriter, and most famously, a painter. His serial novel of the late-1930s wound characters into irresolvable conflicts in which their aspirations were impossibly frustrated and broke off into hallucinatory passages that were predominantly visual. These hallucinatory passages that exploded out of an otherwise realist narrative described the formal character of the paintings he was to execute after the war and into the 1970s. During H. R. Ocampo’s career and through his work, vision emerges as a scene of struggle on a new scale and in a transformed mode, becoming nothing less than a potential realm of freedom. When the narrative possibility of nationalist fulfillment was shut down, that is, as it became apparent that Philippine nationalist aspirations were not to realize themselves in history, H. R.

Ocampo invented a form of abstraction known as Neorealism, which represented a radical break from both the narrative and visual-realist traditions prevalent at the time. The height of this form of abstract art followed the postwar evisceration of the Huks and continued through the return of a heightened level of activism in the 1960s.

In Ocampo's Neorealist works, representation never falls out entirely, except in a few cases, but the transformative gesture of the artist, the distortions wrought, the abstractions formed, produced an aesthetic and perceptual thrill that was an exercise of aesthetic power both on the part of the viewer and the painter. As such, it took up the new properties of social materials caught in the field of U.S. neocolonialism (and shot through with the abstract logic of racism, capitalism, neocolonialism, and patriarchy) but was also an extension of the autonomy of the subject, an expansion of capacities that allowed him/her to participate in the largess of the world, and to exercise new forms of agency. This search for virility and plenitude in the visual I read as a kind of would-be nationalism that in the postindependence Philippines was somehow a compensatory reservoir for nationalist aspiration incompletely realized in the nation that was strategically granted by U.S. interests. The unfreedom experienced by the Philippines under an interimperialist war and then under President Magsaysay in a Cold War context did not satisfy.

Shortly before and after the war, aesthetic debate between "conservatives" and "moderns" was, according to artist and art historian Rod Paras Perez, a debate between "ideal" and "feeling," or, we might say, between concept and viscosity.<sup>1</sup> The ascendancy of the sensual over the ideal, of the image over the word, allowed for the valorization of individual and indigenous elements, including what became the unique palette of Filipino Art, the particular cluttered and interlocking spatial organization christened the "Pinoy Baroque" by Emmanuel Torres, distinctive Pinoy elements such as the jeepney, the carabao, and the myriad new forms these generated.<sup>2</sup> This visual arena achieved viability, even as the visual came directly under attack by CIA agents in their media manipulation of the Philippine

electoral process after the Second World War, and later by U.S. popular culture, generally. The fact of "psywar" shows that the unconscious and the process of language dysfunction implied by that idea were becoming more relevant in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> Even if there was a diminishing narrative basis for nationalist affirmation (the narrative of revolution became difficult to tell during the period between the Second World War and the onset of martial law) and even as the visual was being conscripted for imperialist ends, there was a sensual possibility in the visual. Here one might grasp the dialectics of these images: the *work* of art during this period is the struggle against the historical and narratological foreclosure of reality.

*Phase 2, Socialist Realism:* Socialist Realism is marked by the growing understanding that the battle for perception was the battle for reality. Filmmakers and painters develop strategies for directing the Real through the directing of perception. The schism of the signifier/signified is understood as pre-eminently social and, therefore, the arena of politics. The NPAA artists wanted to expand perception in order to clarify and demystify the stakes of social struggle and represent society as process. They also wanted to appeal to a mass audience. This investigation and resolution of social appearance/appearing strove to indicate class struggle as the basic organizing principle of society and, thus, as the hermeneutic key to its mystifications. Socialist Realist images sought to provide the conceptual tools to dismantle the appearance of things, that is, they strove to de-reify things and show them as relations. This dismantling entailed a new level of abstraction, one that had internalized the analysis of the commodity form, in that it saw the materials of daily life as abstractions from the system of class society and sought to provide a symbolic technology of abstractions to re-articulate social form and make clear the necessity and immanence of revolution.

In the cinema of this period, subjective realization through collective forms is still central but, in the manner of Lukacsian Realism, reality will delimit subjective fantasy unless communal struggle realizes new subjective possibilities socially. For example, in Lino

Brocka's *Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag* [Manila in the Claws of the Neon Lights], Manila is understood as an image that gives rise to a fantasy about the promises of urban life, but the narrative shows that this fantasy of prosperity, which in fact organizes the destiny of the characters, cannot be realized under present social conditions and, indeed, leads to their ruin. It seems to me that Filipino Socialist Realism understands, as will Jean Baudrillard and Sean Cubitt in different contexts, that capital reorganizes social life as it reorganizes perception and that there is a growing inadequation between these two spheres. The increasingly self-conscious organization of a set of fantasies that are incommensurate with exploitative material conditions and yet necessary to sustain these otherwise unendurable conditions and which, at another level, further preclude a coming to terms with this particular relation between apparent and real conditions is the meaning of cultural imperialism. Given that many Socialist Realist films and paintings endeavor to portray the structuring of the perceptual field as a process of imperialist capitalization, one could well see Filipino Social Realist cinema as a precursor to the recent Hollywood film *The Matrix*. In showing the operative modes of collective fantasy and then showing the forces that organize reality beneath the fantasy, we can see that culture and cultural form become the cutting edges of economic exploitation. The predominant dialectic here can be described as follows: the work of art is a *moment of struggle in the collective struggle* against the foreclosure of reality.

*Phase 3, Syncretic Realism:* Syncretic Realism is characterized by an intensifying awareness of the imbrication of perception and reality. If seeing, creating, and being are not becoming coterminous, then at the very least their tendencies toward becoming one another are ineluctable. If cultural programming is the medium of social organization, then cultural intervention is potentially, if not necessarily, revolutionary. There comes to the fore a sense that to transform perception and perceptual practices is already a material transformation, a shift in the programming. Syncretic Realism, one possible

nomenclature for contemporary work, combines contradictory elements (that is, elements that would negate one another's existence) and uses elements from the built environment to express subjective and/or experiential sensibilities of hopelessness, outrage, sublimity, and endurance as part of the social totality. The social logic is shown to be in the materials themselves or, put another way, perception is staged as a material process. Thus, the artist (or at least, the art) posits the viewer as always already part of the material, therefore, as a producer and medium.<sup>4</sup> The predominant dialectic is that the work of art mediates affects, each of which is potentially transformative. *The work of art functions as a network, a kind of connective tissue* that enables experiences, links, and alliances that take viewers beyond themselves and toward an outside. It is a cybernetic engagement with the viewer, a kind of social reprogramming. The scale of the interventions in the contemporary is thus far, at least, that of the microperceptual, the momentary, the affective, and the spiritual rather than that of the macrostructures of class and nation. The capitalist world-media system, otherwise known as globalization, finds its antithesis in subjective and affective links and practices that instantiate new orders of solidarity.

Let six billion flowers bloom!

## APPENDIX

## Ishmael Bernal Filmography (1971–1993)

- 1971 *Pagdating sa Dulo* [Reaching the Top]  
*Daluyong* [Wave]
- 1972 *El Vibora* [The Viper]  
*Inspirasyon* [Inspiration]  
*Till Death Do Us Part*  
*Now and Forever*  
*Zoom Zoom Superman*  
*Popeye atbp.* [Popeye etc.]
- 1973 *Pito ang Asawa Ko* [I have Seven Spouses]  
*The Sleeping Dragon*
- 1974 *Scotch on the Rocks to Remember, Black Coffee to Forget*  
(Unreleased)  
*Mister Mo, Lover Boy Ko* [Your Husband, My Lover]  
*Lumayo . . . Lumapit ang Umaga* [Morning Moved Away  
. . . Then Moved Close]
- 1975 *Ligaw na Bulaklak* [Wildflower]  
*Babaeng Hiwalay sa Asawa* [Anna Karenina; Woman Separated from the Husband]
- 1976 *Tisoy* [Mestizo]  
*Nunal sa Tubig* [Mole in the Water]  
*Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon* [Two Nests, One Bird]  
*Lahing Pilipino* (Bonifacio Episode) [Pilipino Race]  
*Walang Katapusang Tag-araw* [Never-Ending Summer]
- 1977 *Lagi Lamang ba Akong Babae?* [Do I Always Remain a Woman?]
- 1978 *Isang Gabi sa Iyo, Isang Gabi sa Akin* [One Night Yours, Another Night Mine]  
*Ikaw ay Akin* [You are Mine]
- 1979 *Menor de Edad* [Underaged]  
*Boy Kodyak*  
*Bakit may Pag-ibig pa* [Why is There Love?]  
*Aliw* [Pleasure]
- 1980 *Salawahan* [Unfaithful]  
*Good Morning Sunshine*  
*Sugat sa Ugat* [Wound in the Vein]  
*City after Dark* [*Manila by Night*]  
*Girlfriend*
- 1981 *Pabling* [Playboy]
- 1982 *Ito ba ang Ating mga Anak?* [Are These Our Children?]  
*Galawgaw* [Frisky]  
*Relasyon* [Affair]  
*Hindi Kita Malimot* [I Can't Forget You]  
*Himala* [Miracle]  
*Broken Marriage*
- 1984 *Working Girls I*  
*Shake, Rattle and Roll—Pridyider Episode*
- 1985 *Gamitin Mo Ako* [Use Me]
- 1986 *The Graduates*
- 1987 *Hinugot sa Langit* [Drawn from Heaven]  
*Working Girls II*  
*Pinulot Ka lang sa Lupa* [You were Merely Picked Up from the Earth]
- 1988 *Nagbabagang Luha* [Red Hot Tears]
- 1989 *Pahiram ng Isang Umaga* [Lend Me One Morning]
- 1992 *Mahal Kita, Walang Iba* [I Love You, No One Else]
- 1993 *Wating* [Streetsmart]

## Lino Brocka Filmography (1970–1991)

- 1970 *Wanted: Perfect Mother*  
*Santiago*
- 1971 *Tubog sa Ginto* [Dipped in Gold/Gold-plated]  
*Now*  
*Lumuha Pati mga Anghel* [Even the Angels Cried]  
*Cadena de Amor* [Chain of Love]  
*Stardoom*
- 1972 *Villa Miranda*  
*Cherry Blossoms*
- 1974 *Tinimbang Ka ngunit Kulang* [You were Weighed but Found Wanting]  
*Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* [Three, Two, One]
- 1975 *Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* [Manila in the Claws of Lights/Manila in the Claws of Neon Lights]  
*Dung-aw* [Lamentation]
- 1976 *Lunes, Martes, Miyerkules, Huwebes, Biyernes, Sabado, Linggo* [Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday]  
*Insiang*
- 1977 *Tahan na Empoy, Tahan* [Stop Crying Empoy, Stop Crying]  
*Tadhana: Ito ang Labing Filipino—Reform Movement Episode* [Fate: This is the Filipino Race—Reform Movement Episode]  
*Inay* [Mother]
- 1978 *Mananayaw* [Dancer]  
*Ang Tatay Kong Nanay* [My Father Who's My Mother]  
*Gumising Ka Maruja* (Wake Up Maruja)  
*Hayop sa Hayop* [Animal to Animal]  
*Rubia Servios*

- 1979 *Init* [Heat]  
*Ina, Kapatid, Anak* [Mother, Sibling, Daughter]  
*Jaguar*  
*Ina Ka ng Anak Mo* [You are the Mother of Your Child]
- 1980 *Nakaw na Pag-ibig* [Stolen Love]  
*Angela Markado*  
*Bona*
- 1981 *Burgis* [Bourgeois]  
*Kontrobersyal* [Controversial]  
*Hello, Young Lovers*  
*Binata si Mister, Dalaga si Misis* [Bachelor is the Husband, Maiden is the Wife]  
*Caught in the Act*
- 1982 *PX*  
*In Dis Corner* [In This Corner]  
*Palipat-lipat, Papalit-palit* [Fleeting, Changing]  
*Mother Dear*  
*Cain at Abel* [Cain and Abel]
- 1983 *Strangers in Paradise*  
*Hot Property*
- 1984 *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* [My Country: Grip the Knife]  
*Adultery* (Aida Macaraeg Case No. 7892)  
*Akin ang Iyong Katawan* [Mine is Your Body]
- 1985 *Miguelito, ang Batang Rebelde* [Miguelito, the Rebel Boy]  
*White Slavery*  
*Ano ang Kulay ng Mukha ng Diyos?* [What Color is the Face of God?]  
*Napakasakit, Kuya Eddie* [How Painful, Brother Eddie]
- 1987 *Maging Akin Ka Lamang* [If You Could Only Be Mine]  
*Pasan Ko ang Daigdig* [I Carry the World]
- 1988 *Tatlong Mukha ng Pag-ibig—“Ang Silid”* [Three Faces of Love—“The Room”]  
*Natutulog pa ang Diyos* [God is Still Asleep]



- 1989 *Macho Dancer*  
*Kailan Mahubugasan ang Kasalanan?* [When can Sin be  
 Washed Away?]  
*Orapronobis* [Fight for Us]  
*Babangon Ako at Dudurugin Kita* [I Will Rise and Crush  
 You]
- 1990 *Kung Tapos na ang Kailanman* [When Eternity Ends]  
*Gumapang Ka sa Lusak* [Crawl in the Mire]  
*Hahamakin ang Lahat* [Will Despise Everything]  
*How are the Kids?*  
*Biktima* [Victim]  
*Ama, Bakit Mo Ako Pinabayaan?* [Father, Why did You  
 Forsake Me?]
- 1991 *Sa Kabila ng Lahat* [In Spite of Everything]  
*Kislap sa Dilim* [Sparkle in the Dark]  
*Makiusap Ka sa Diyos* [Plead with God]

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Notes to the Introduction

1. The number of twentieth-century texts testifying to the subsumption of human mediation by capital are too numerous to list. See, for example, Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1971); Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 2002); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983); Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Leuin, (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1980); Regis Debray, *Media Manifestos*, trans. Erich Reuth (London and New York: Verso 1996); Sean Cubitt, *Digital Aesthetics* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); and my own work on the cinema. Each of these texts understands, in one way or another, mediation in the process of being subsumed and recodified by capital.

2. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 66.

3. Here I would like to link my work to writers such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, and Samir Amin.

4. See my forthcoming book, *The Cinematic Mode of Production* (University Press of New England).

5. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Shoken Books, 1969).

6. See, for example, Jose Maria Sison, "Message to *Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista-Arkitekt,o*" included as "appendix C," in Alice Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970–1990* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), 247–48. Sison calls for "overthrowing the art of the exploiting classes which is promoted by U.S. imperialism and its running dogs" (ibid., 247). He must have in mind

Abstract Expressionism, which was widely promoted by the CIA, and more generally abstract art.

7. See Bienvenido Lumbera, "Nationalist Literary Tradition," in *Nationalist Literature: A Centennial Forum*, ed. Elmer A. Ordoñez (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995), 1–16.

8. Resil B. Mojares, *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel Until 1940* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1998 [1983]), 307.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Luis Taruc, *Born of the People* (New York: International Publishers, 1953), 218, cited in Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), 131.

11. Alfredo B. Saulo, *Communism in the Philippines: An Introduction* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990), 37.

12. *Ibid.*, 38.

13. *Ibid.*, 39.

14. See Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000) and Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

15. An important postwar literary attempt to map the totality of Philippine social relations was Amado V. Hernandez's *Mga Ibong Mandaragit*. See Rosario Ramirez Malay, "Mga Ibong Mandaragit and the Second Propaganda Movement," in *Nationalist Literature: A Centennial Forum*, ed. Elmer A. Ordoñez (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995), 223–32.

16. Francisco Nemenzo, "An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippine Communist Movement," unpublished manuscript ca. 1983, 12. My thanks to Patricio N. Abinales for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, 17.

19. H. R. Ocampo, journal entry dated 1953, cited in Angel de Jesus, *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino* (Manila: Heritage Publishing, 1979), 58. "Non-objective" here is as used in discourse about the "13 moderns," that is, in contradistinction to the objectivity of realism. Romantic allegory (Juan Luna), and impressionism (Amorsolo) all had their moments prior to and during what is considered to be modernism.

20. "The term Neo-Realist was coined by the writer and painter E. Aguilar Cruz simply to indicate a new mode of looking at reality, perhaps with the same unflinching vision as the Neo-Realist filmmakers of Italy" (Rod Paras-Perez, *Hernando O. Ocampo: National Artist 1991* [Manila: The Saturday Group and Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1991], 6).

21. Even Fernando Amorsolo's Second World War paintings testify to a shift in what appears. His romanticized impressionism, faithful to an idealization of indigenous life, is no longer sustainable.

22. Put another way, one could say that Ocampo succeeds where an earlier communism in the Philippines fails but, I hasten to add, only if one also says that he fails where a later communism succeeds. Deeply sympathetic to the proletarian, agrarian, and nationalist aspirations of the movement from the mid-1930s until well after the war, Ocampo saw the complexity of struggle, the relation of will and force to the objective, and the inadequacy of language to bring about social change. While the communists waged armed struggle to combat the failure of words, Ocampo waged a visual struggle. Both the battlefield and the visual field were transformed. In the process, regrettable historical compromises have been made by the progressive forces that drove both a political and an aesthetic revolution. It is difficult to judge these compromises, but I think ultimately we must.

23. The "First Golden Age" centers on the career of director Gerardo de Leon. See Joel David, *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 1990).

24. Many Philippine cultural critics use the term "Social Realism" and reserve the term "Socialist Realism" for "the political art of socialist

countries in the period of reconstruction following the revolution, as in Russia, China, and Cuba” (Alice G. Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines, 1970–1990* [Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001], 5). I use the term “Social Realism” when referring to its usage by other critics.

25. Flaudette May Datuin, *Home, Body, Memory: Filipina Artists in the Visual Arts, 19th Century to the Present* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2002), 120.

26. For an outline of the dialectical structure of Mr. Bernal’s *Nunal sa Tubig*, see Eulalio R. Guieb III, “Historico-Geographical Imaginations in Ishmael Bernal’s *Nunal sa Tubig*,” in *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Culture*, ed. Rolando Tolentino (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

27. For a description and analysis of *Aliwan Paradise*, see Robert Silberman, “*Aliwan Paradise* and the Work of Satire in the Age of Geopolitical Entertainment,” in *Geopolitics of the Visible*.

28. Because the debates about Third Cinema’s struggle to realign the frame (and thus the imaginations, aspirations, knowledges, and activities of viewers) are widely available, if less widely read, I will not attempt here anything like a list of Third Cinema’s narratological, formal, representational, or local affinities with the interests of Third World and diasporic peoples. Instead, I limit myself to the following formulation of one prominent media theorist:

They are poisoning the human mind in incredible doses through commercial cinematography, grossly commercial, and I believe that these questions have to be a real concern for all people who feel or think properly. I am sure that any politician with a sense of responsibility has to worry about increasing alienation, that unceasing intoxication their countries’ masses are suffering from. They must understand that all canned propaganda, which comes from the empire through transnationals, is anti-education, deforming, degenerating, They must realize that this is like bacteriological warfare.

This war is far worse than bacteriological warfare. It is more humiliating, more degrading, more unbearable. The new Latin American cinema offers other kinds of material, of a different quality. For me this struggle, this film movement, constitutes a great battle, a great battle of enormous transcendence, not just for our identity, but for our liberation, freedom and survival, because if we do not survive culturally, we will not survive economically or politically. (Fidel Castro, 1985 Havana Film Festival closing address, cited in Haile Gerima, “Triangular Cinema, Breaking Toys, and Dinknesh vs Lucy,” in *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willeman [London: British Film Institute, 1989 {reprinted 1991}], 71).

#### Notes to Part I, “Neorealism”

1. Ocampo worked in Hodobu, the propaganda section of the Japanese Imperial Army for intelligence purposes. For an example of one of his essays extolling the virtues of Japanese government, see “The Tenno of Nippon,” *Philippine Review* (Mar. 1943): 30–32.

2. Ocampo’s involvement with the Hukbalahap is doubted by or unknown to some of his descendents with whom I have spoken. Nonetheless, several contemporary painters who are or have been involved with the movement and continue to be influenced by his life and work affiliate him with the Huks. In support of his socialist affinities, early titles of his paintings include *Laborers*, *Beggar*, *Freedom to Starve*, *Slum Dweller*, and others.

3. The AAP was founded by Purita Kalaw in 1948. The PAG was founded by Lydia Arguilla together with Estrella Alfon, Flora Lansing, Trinidad Tarrosa-Subido, and Consuelo Abaya.

4. Angel G. de Jesus, *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino* (Manila: Heritage Publishing, 1979), 22.

5. See, for example, Emmanuel Torres, *Philippine Abstract Painting* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), esp. pp. 62–63.

6. “Pinoy Baroque: a festive spirit, love of image-clusters or that fear of emptiness (horror vacui) which compels the Pinoy to fill every

space with busy detail, flattened perspective, and lush, curvilinear forms designed to reflect the grass-roots Pinoy's taste for the flamboyant and exuberant in his lifestyle, environment, and décor. . . . It is abstraction more at home with subject matter—specifically the human figure—than without it. It also welcomes the decorative element found in folk, popular and indigenous arts and crafts” (Emmanuel Torres, *Philippine Abstract Painting* [Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994], 24).

7. De Jesus, H. R. *Ocampo*, 30.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 32.

10. *Ibid.*, 36.

11. *Ibid.*, 38.

12. *Ibid.*, 62.

13. I am grateful to Odette Alcantara and particularly to Lilia Quindoza-Santiago for their assistance and generosity in helping me to get a photocopy of *Scenes and Spaces*. (Soon available from the Ateneo de Manila University Press.)

14. E. San Juan Jr., *The Philippine Temptation: Dialectics of Philippines-U.S. Literary Relations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 52.

15. Leon Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino* (Manila: Guerrero Publishing, 1998).

16. Benedict Anderson, *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 229.

17. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 8.

18. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

19. *Ibid.*, 9.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 15.

22. *Ibid.*, 11.

23. See the following: “Kino-I, Kino World,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2d ed., ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (Routledge, 2002); “Numismatics of the Sensual, Calculus of the Image: The Pyrotechnics of Control,”

*Image [é]Narrative 6: Medium Theory* (2003); “Dziga Vertov & The Film of Money,” *boundary 2*, 26, no. 3 (1999): 151–99 [<http://128.220.50.88/journals/boundary/v026/26.3beller.html>]; “*Capital/Cinema*,” in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics/Philosophy/Culture*, eds. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); “The Spectatorship of the Proletariat,” *boundary 2*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 171–228.

#### Notes to Chapter 1, “Nationalism’s Molten Prayers”

1. Hernando R. Ocampo, “Dark of Dawn,” *The National Review*, 9 Oct. 1936, 13–14. Page numbers of subsequent citations of this work will be indicated in the main text. My title is from H. R. Ocampo’s poem “The River of Molten Prayers.”

2. Ocampo’s periods are ordinarily denoted as follows: 1929–1934, Aping Amorsolo Period; 1934–1945, Proletarian Period; 1945–1963, Transitional Period; 1963–1968, Mutant Period; 1968–1978, Visual Melody Period. It is with the beginning of the Proletarian Period in 1945 that Ocampo says he started to paint like H. R. Ocampo. See Angel G. de Jesus, *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino* (Manila: Heritage Publishing, 1979), 60.

3. Ocampo’s later paintings have been variously described as abstract, biomorphic, non-objective, and neorealist. For reasons which I will try to make clear, I prefer the nomenclature “Filipino neorealism” when referring to Ocampo’s later work.

4. Galo B. Ocampo, *Contemporary Paintings of the Philippines* (Manila: National Museum, 1968), 8. Perhaps Galo B. Ocampo’s formulations in this pamphlet are somewhat tempered by the venue provided for his remarks: the American Embassy Ballroom. Without drawing it out, he invokes the forced modernization of the Philippines as a reason for the nation’s lack of global influence in the arts: “A society that is in a state of continual change—where there is rapid change of status and shifting values in a compressed time period—could not possibly evolve a cultural trait stable enough to be developed to the fullest extent. Philippine society is the subject rather than the cause for changes. Not unless there is a reversal in this tempo of

change could such a revolution in the Philippines occur" (ibid., 16). However, could it be argued that vertiginous, uneven development and the incredible contrasts brought about by Third Worldification make the aesthetic production of countries like the Philippines the essential modernism of any global fantasy, at least as much as it constitutes both the necessarily excluded periphery for Western modernity and, as importantly, a prediction of the new proximity of social contradictions everywhere?

5. Although I cannot give even the most abbreviated proper history of Philippine-American relations here, it is necessary to mention a few facts. The Philippine-American War, which has been called the first Vietnam and is almost unknown in the United States, took place officially from 1898–1903 during which time "thirty-thousand killed a million." As Mark Twain commented, "It seems a pity that the historian let that get out; it is really a most embarrassing circumstance" (in E. San Juan, *The Philippine Temptation: Dialectics of Philippines-U.S. Literary Relations* [Philadelphia: Temple, 1996], 3). Unofficially the war continued until 1906 or 1907. The Americans killed at least 10 percent of the Philippine population of 10 million including many women and children during this period as well as invented a variety of tortures and the first concentration camps, techniques that would later be used by the Nazis. Nominally given independence in 1946, the Philippines in many respects remains a neocolony of the United States, at least inasmuch as multinational corporations, the World Bank, and the IMF continue to set the parameters for both Philippine domestic and foreign policy. One needs to keep in mind not only the history of the utilization of the Philippines by the U.S. as a center for agriculture, shipping, military activity, and prostitution, along with mail-order brides and semiconductor production, but also as a dumping ground for toxic waste, the overproduction of commodities, and commodified American culture. The U.S.-supported Marcos dictatorship, of which the present may be seen as the legacy, has left parts of the Philippines environmentally devastated, under what is effectively an oligarchic rule (see Benedict Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures*, ed. Vicente Rafael [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995]),

and in an economic position in which its single largest source of revenue consists in the worldwide export of its own nationals as laborers.

6. Cited in Santiago Albano Pilar, *Pamana: The Jorge B. Vargas Art Collection* (Manila: UP Vargas Museum, 1992), 56.

7. Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), 51.

8. See Cid Reyes, *Conversations in Philippine Art* (Manila), 23–28. The interview was conducted in May 1972.

9. See Angel de Jesus, *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino* (Manila: Heritage Publishing, 1979). That Ocampo took many of his shapes from daily life is general knowledge among Philippine art historians.

10. Victorio Edades, "Towards Virility in Art," *This Week* (26 Sept. 1948), reprinted in Rod Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1995), 37–38.

11. Again my thanks to Odette Alcantara and to Nieves Epistola for informing me of the existence of the novel, and especially to Lilia Quindoza Santiago, both for providing me with a copy of what exists of *Scenes and Spaces* and for sharing her insights into the life and work of H. R. Ocampo.

12. "Genesis: Hernando R. Ocampo," in *A Portfolio of 60 Philippine Art Masterpieces* (Manila: Instructional Materials Corporation Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 1986), 173–76.

13. See Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), for an excellent elaboration of some of the conditions associated with modernity.

14. *Scenes and Spaces*, *Herald Mid-Week Magazine*, 18 Oct. 1939, 9.

15. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism would be very useful here. His effort in "Discourse in the Novel" to theorize on the polyvocality of language through the framework of class struggle could prove useful in this colonial context. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981).

16. It is not necessary to assert that Ocampo read James Joyce, who begins *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with a children's rhyme

and *Ulysses* with Stephen Daedalus going off to teach his classes, to suggest that if an artist wants to write in a new idiom, that is, if the artist believes that reality expresses itself in a new mode, s/he has to teach his or her readers to read it.

17. Among the effects of the presence of imperialist power is the othering of certain materials and events of daily life in such a way that a binary is constructed. This has the effect of positing the imperialist power and the “host nation” as monolithic forms. For example, the language in which H. R. Ocampo’s National Artist Award is given states that Ocampo is to be awarded because “pre-eminent achievements that have enhanced the Filipino’s cultural heritage deserve the recognition and acknowledgment of our Government in pursuit of its policy of preserving and developing Filipino culture and a national identity,” subsumes individual and regional variation under the category/conceit of the nation-state, a form which is itself consolidated through the conceptualization of a monolithic Other. After I presented a version of this chapter at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, Jim Clifford challenged the simplifying and polarizing image of the collision of two cultural plates implying that the encounters being described were much more complex. Although I take his point—and indeed argue that Ocampo’s later painting dramatizes the formal complexity of the interactive polyphonic character of history—it is important to recognize that there were many forces (including racism and nationalism) at work precisely to construct “The United States” and “The Philippines” as distinct and relatively monolithic entities.

18. Victorio Edades, “Liberating Ourselves from Academicism,” *This Week*, 19 Sept. 1948, reprinted in Rod Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1995), 35.

19. See, for example, H. R. Ocampo’s poem, “You can Never Completely Be,” in Rod Paras-Perez, *H. R. Ocampo: National Artist 1991* (Manila: Saturday Group and CCP, 1991), 15. “You can never completely be here / Never completely here or there. . . / For there are melodies, Darling. / Disturbingly complete. . . / And with their nostalgic melody/ Parts of you shall be transported / Inexorably from one world to another. / Thus wherever you are, Darling / You can never

completely be.” The melody in the poem that reorganizes the fragments of thought and body might be imagined to foreshadow the Visual Melody Period to come years later—as if other logic have taken over aspects of the figure. The Visual Melody paintings are mediations among multiple logics, hence, their Neorealism, for the reality of social materiality is in the abstract vectors that pass through them and organize them. It is as if the later paintings are composed of systems of splines (vector summations of forces at a given point from a variety of stresses). Thus, neorealist paintings might be understood as depicting a world in which, darling, “you can never completely be.”

20. As a recipient of a Fulbright award in 1999, I happened to be privy to such plans, plans which I did my best to lambast.

21. Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: The Author, 1975), 314–15.

22. Cited in Francisco Nemenzo, “An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippine Communist Movement,” unpublished MS, ca. 1983.

23. It should be noted for future reference that this escalation of contradiction leads here neither to Marxian notions of totality nor to postmodern sublimity. The revolution goes elsewhere.

24. See Vicente Rafael, “The Undead: Notes on Photography in the Philippines, 1898–1920s,” in *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

25. Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production*. See my chapter on Lacan, “The Unconscious of the Unconscious.”

26. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Petronilo Bn. Daroy, “From Literature to Revolution,” in Elmer A Ordoñez, ed., *Nationalist Literature: A Centennial Forum* (Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press and PANULAT/Philippine Writers Academy, 1996), 234.

29. Speaking of the arrival of modernism in the Philippines, Paras-Perez writes, “There is no question that Edades [the Father of Philippine Modernism] ushered a revolution, not in terms of a particular style, but within the context of a new Filipino sensibility” (*Edades and the 13 Moderns* [Manila: CCP, 1995], 28).

30. See Victorio Edades, “Towards Virility in Art,” the third in a series of polemics written in support of modernism, in *Edades and the 13 Moderns*, 37–38, originally published in *This Week*, 26 Sept. 1948.

31. Paul B. Zafaralla, “More on H. R. by H. R. Himself,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 June 1991, C-1 ff. Thanks to Karen Ocampo Flores for informing me about the existence of this interview.

32. For an analysis of the relations between Philippine nationalism and masculinity, see Neferti X. M. Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: University Press, 2004; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004).

33. For more on the organization of social production by visual technologies, see my essays, “Cinema, Capital of the Twentieth Century,” *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 3 [pmc@unity.ncsu.edu] (Oxford University Press, May 1994); “The Spectatorship of the Proletariat,” *boundary 2*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 171–228; “Capital/Cinema,” in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics/Philosophy/Culture*, ed. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); “The Film of Money,” *boundary 2*, 26, no. 3 (Fall 1999).

34. The cultivation and utilization of art for ideological and political ends is an old story. For a particularly interesting case, that of the dissemination of abstract expressionism as a pro-American vehicle during the Cold War, see *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

#### Notes to Chapter 2, “From Social Realism to the Spectre of Abstraction”

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), x.

2. Regis Debray, *Media Manifestos*, trans. Eric Rauth (London and New York: Verso, 1996).

3. Although some might object that Ocampo was much favored by Imelda Marcos, even commissioned by her to create the curtain for the stage of the cultural showpiece of martial law, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and that such a connection vitiates any possibility of a radical political agenda in his latter life and work, one should also remember here that the late Lino Brocka on many occasions made films primarily to make money so he could make his other socially committed films. Do such compromises place the work of an artist beyond redemption? I am suggesting that it is possible to amplify the radical strains in a life work. Neither a work nor a life is necessarily over just because either the viewing is finished or someone dies. There is a trace or a legacy, and so much depends upon what we make of it.

4. “Rice and Bullets” first appeared in the *Sunday Tribune Magazine*, 18 Apr. 1937. The text I am using is from *Philippine Cross-Section: An Anthology of Outstanding Filipino Short Stories in English*, ed. Maximo Ramos and Florentino B. Valeros (Manila: Bardavon Book Company, 1950), 60–69. All subsequent page references to this work will be given in the main text. The story has also appeared under the title “We or They,” ed. Leopoldo Yabes, *Philippine Short Stories: 1925–1940* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1997).

5. Reynaldo C. Ileto, in his important work *Filipinos and Their Revolution* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 167, makes an important point on the issue of emphasis, “Controversies in Philippine history have arisen out of the practice of locking events and personalities to singular, supposedly factual meanings.” As I am trying to show, Ocampo’s strategies for the organization of form work precisely to unlock elements from rigid (“realist”) templates in order to at once portray real social contents as multiform: interlocked, yes, but not in a static determination. Such a formal endeavor has an aesthetic as well as a political aspiration, to show interconnectivity but also to return emotional and intellectual agency to the subject/viewer—to engage an audience as a participant in social creation. This has, if I may be so bold, a democratizing effect, rendering to viewers

equal agency rather than forcing them to conform to a hegemonic interpretation, but also rendering figurative elements in a canvas compositionally equal in terms of their fluidity and import.

6. See Paras-Perez on Ocampo and the elimination of foreground and background in *H. R. Ocampo National Artist*, 1991.

7. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), 251.

8. *Ibid.*, 252.

9. *Ibid.*, 251–52.

10. *Ibid.*, 252.

11. It is noteworthy that “The Spectre of Comparisons,” the title of Anderson’s consummately erudite study is taken from a phrase penned by “the first Filipino,” Jose Rizal himself. As already noted, Anderson writes that “What he [Rizal] meant by this was a new, restless double-consciousness which made it impossible ever after to experience Berlin without at once thinking of Manila, or Manila without thinking of Berlin. Here indeed is the origin of nationalism which lives by making comparisons” (*The Spectre of Comparisons*, 229).

12. In his essay “The Late Thirties in New York,” dated [1957] 1960, Greenberg writes, “Abstract art was the main issue among the painters I knew in the late thirties. Radical politics was on many people’s minds, but for these particular artists Social Realism was as dead as the American Scene. Though that is not all, by far, that there was to politics in art in those years; someday it will have to be told how ‘anti-Stalinism’ which started out as ‘Trotskyism,’ turned into art for art’s sake, and thereby cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come” (see Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* [New York: Beacon Press, 1961], 230). As is becoming well-known, this claim has an ironic twist: In New York and around the globe, Abstract Expressionism was being promoted by the CIA because it was viewed as a viable Cold War weapon proclaiming American freedom (see *Pollock and After*).

13. Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 9.

14. *Ibid.*, 15.

15. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

16. *Ibid.*, 6.

17. *Ibid.*

18. William Rubin, “Pollock as Jungian Illustrator” (pt. 2), *Art in America* 67, no. 8 (Dec. 1979): 86, cited in David Craven, “Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Postcolonial Approach to ‘American’ Art,” *Oxford Art Journal* 14, no. 1 (1991): n66.

19. Craven, “Abstract Expressionism,” 2.

20. Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 5, 6.

21. Renato Constantino and Letizia R. Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past* (Manila: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), 188. Renato Constantino is one of the exemplary historians of the twentieth century.

22. *Ibid.*, 238. Italics mine.

23. *Ibid.*, 240–41.

24. *Ibid.*, 240.

25. *Ibid.*, 259.

26. Petronilo Bn. Daroy’s brilliant and biting critique in “Magsaysay: Our New Folk Hero” sets out to debunk the myth of Magsaysay, describing him as someone who never confronted the big questions regarding the significance of his capitulation. “So it is but proper that instead of suggesting ‘grandeur,’ Magsaysay’s life should suggest ‘glamour,’ and instead of being described in tragic terms, it should be described as ‘The Story of the Fellow Who Made Good’” (see Petronilo Bn. Daroy, *Against the National Grain* [Manila: Rem Printing Press, 1966], 48). What is startling about the essay cited above is that in a section entitled “Portrait of the Anti-Communist,” it grasps Magsaysay as an intellectual *type* exhibiting personality traits and mental habits apparently becoming widespread in the Philippines. This text also contains the important essay “The Failure of Liberalism.” Daroy writes, “Since criticism of democratic institutions was readily submitted to the rigid terms of Cold War politics, liberalism became merely a commitment to ideas, in principle. A criticism here could be made of the liberal Filipino intellectual: He did not protest enough against the forces which tended to limit the



freedom of expression and of thought in the national culture. Instead, he contented himself with the rhetorics of his own liberalism, which rhetoric, in turn, became expressive of his incapacity to manifest his commitments in action" (ibid., 82).

27. Michael L. Tan, "Made in the Philippines: Psywar," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 July 2003, A8.

28. Angel de Jesus, *H. R. Ocampo: The Artist as Filipino* (Manila: Heritage Publishing, 1979), 62.

29. Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 150. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *WL*.

30. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*.

31. Almost as if to confirm Greenberg's thesis that art for art's sake is the logical conclusion of Social Realism, Ocampo said of his Transitional Period (1945–1963), "It was during this period also when I eliminated cast shadows, single-source-of-light and chiaroscuro, modeling, all in the interest of flattening the planes and making my forms, hues, tonal values, and texture achieve notable composition and design. In other words, the canvas itself became my subject matter, and my sole objective in painting became the production of a living, organic, and logical unit. I tried to achieve this objective not by disregarding nature. As a matter of fact, I studied nature more closely and diligently, not for the purpose of copying its visual aspects, but more for the purpose of learning its logic and principles" (Zafaralla, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 9 June 1991).

32. In "An Interview with H. R. Ocampo" conducted by Emmanuel Torres and Tita Muñoz, Torres says, "Whether you paint non-objective or abstract-surrealist, one notices a preoccupation with Freudian symbols, metaphors of frustrated desires that lie buried in the unconscious, the images of fevered dreams." Although the comment is provocative, strictly speaking, the paintings are not metaphors, they are the realization of these desires in the abstract, not symbols but activations. Ocampo would agree. He responds, "That is true, although frankly, I have never done a painting with a conscious intention of producing Freudian sym-

bols. I do not say to myself I will do a painting that will demonstrate this or that idea" (Eric Torres and Tita Muñoz, "An Interview with H. R. Ocampo," in *Philippine Modern Art and Its Critics*, ed. Alice M. L. Coseteng [Philippines: Unesco National Commission of the Philippines, 1972], 18–19; originally published in *Esso Eliangan Magazine* 11, no. 4 [1966]: 10–11, 15).

33. H. R. Ocampo, in *Philippine Modern Art and Its Critics*, 20.

34. "Man and Carabao: Hernando R. Ocampo," by Alice Guillermo, in *A Portfolio of 60 Philippine Art Masterpieces* (Manila: Instructional Materials Corporation, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 1986), 109–12.

35. Daroy, *Against the National Grain*, 82.

#### Notes to Part 2, "Socialist Realism"

1. Alice Guillermo, "Twenty Years of Protest Art," in *Images of Change*, ed. Alice Guillermo (Quezon City: Kalikasan Press, 1988), 11. I have no wish to argue with Professor Guillermo here over periodization. Guillermo is correct to point out in this essay that without the preparation of radicals before the declaration of martial law in 1972, the protests afterward would have been impossible.

2. Ibid., 17.

3. Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970), 35–36, cited in Colin McCabe, "Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure," in *Narrative Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Phil Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 181.

4. "Twenty Years of Protest Art," 11.

5. Alice Guillermo, "Protest Revolutionary Art in the Marcos Regime," Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Philippines, 1995, 108–9.

6. "Protest/Revolutionary Art," 116.

7. Ibid., 117.

8. Mao Tse-Tung, *On Culture* (Philippines: Militant Press, 1971), 22–23. The passage is from "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art."

9. "In November 30, 1964, his [Sison's] group established the Kabataang Makabayan (KM), bringing in its fold students who were politicized by the growing Philippine involvement in the Vietnam War. The bulk of KM's formal membership, however, came from the children of peasants organized under the Malayang Samahan ng Magsasaka (MASAKA) [Free Association of Peasants], the party's legal peasant group based in Central Luzon. . . . The organization committed itself to a 'struggle for national democracy' and prepared an elaborate political program that covered practically everything from Philippine economy to culture" (Patricio N. Abinales, "Jose Maria Sison and the Philippine Revolution: A Critique of an Interface," *Kasarinlan: A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies* 8, no. 1, [3rd Quarter 1992], 18).

10. Jose M. Sison and Julieta de Lima, *Philippine Economy and Politics* (Philippines: Aklat ng Bayan Publishing House, 1998), 97. The passage appears in a paper entitled "Crisis of the Neo-Colonial State," 22 Apr. 1986.

11. Imelda Marcos, *The Compassionate Society and Other Selected Speeches* (Philippines: National Media Production Center, 1976), 126. The speech, "Culture: The Human Face of Development," was "originally the welcome address of the First Lady at the Cultural Presentation for the Participants to the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, 3 Feb. 1976, Cultural Center of the Philippines" (*ibid.*, 127).

12. "Twenty Years of Protest Art," 13.

13. *Ibid.*, 14.

14. Kaisahan 1976 Manifesto, cited in "Protest/Revolutionary Art," 134.

15. *Ibid.*, 134–35.

16. "Twenty Years of Protest Art," 15.

17. Alice Guillermo, *Social Realism in the Philippines* (Manila: Asphodel Books, 1987).

18. This image and those that follow can be found in Alice Guillermo, *Social Realism in the Philippines*, an indispensable work for those interested in the history and politics of Philippine visuality.

19. Bienvenido Lumbera, "Brocka, Bernal and Co.: The Arrival of

New Filipino Cinema," in Bienvenido Lumbera, *Writing the Nation: Pag-akda ng Bansa* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2000), 345.

20. E. San Juan Jr., *The Philippine Temptation: Dialectics of Philippines-U.S. Literary Relations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 70.

21. For aspects of the debate over Kidlat Tahimik's work see Fredric Jameson, "Art Naif' and the Admixture of Worlds," and E. San Juan Jr., "Cinema of the 'Naïve' Subaltern in Search of an Audience," both anthologized in Roland Tolentino, ed., *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

22. Klaus Theweleit, "Male Bodies and the 'White Terror,'" in *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

23. See Gina Marchetti, "'Four Hundred Years in a Convent, Fifty in Hollywood': Sexual Identity and Dissent in Contemporary Philippine Cinema," *East-West Film Journal* 2, 2 (June 1988): 24–47, 45.

#### Notes to Chapter 3, "Directing the Real"

1. "Th[e] martial law government, which the President [Marcos] described as constitutional authoritarianism, consciously aimed to establish an egalitarian society by the year 2000" ("The Ideology and Culture of the New Society," Nicanor Tiongson, Ma. Luisa Doronila, Alice Guillermo, and Fe B. Mangahas in *Synthesis: Before and Beyond 1986*, ed. Lilia Quindoza Santiago [Manila: Interdisciplinary Forum, University of the Philippines, 1986], 50). The authors are citing Marcos's *Towards a Filipino Society* in order to expose its deceit. "Philippines 2000" takes up this deceit as the prodevelopment, proglobalization battle cry of the dominant classes.

2. Alice Guillermo, "Media and Thought Control: The Subjugated Consciousness," in *Synthesis*, 67–68.

3. One thinks of the endless discussions of "pumping scenes"—the mere mention of which under such a nomenclature is designed to force embarrassed smiles and degrading laughter to accompany thoughts

of love. Recall also the infamous proteinous festoons garnishing Meryl Streep's genitals. I refer, of course, to the uproar aroused by the cutting of (the image of) Meryl Streep's pubic hair in the movie *Bridges of Madison County* when it was shown in the Philippines. Perhaps this trimming is one contemporary equivalent for the impromptu haircuts forced upon members of the general population by police and military men during martial law.

4. The MTRCB is a regular target of public scorn that expresses individual indignation for having one's taste usurped by a group of righteous censors. The elitist patronage that results in the patronizing edits executed by the MTRCB's long, blunt scissors has other manifestations, some equally as obvious. I am thinking here of the musical and visual accompaniments, provided as a public service by network television to Ramos's State of the Nation address, which were to have serenaded our souls upwards in paroxysms of sublimity as The Leader hit the highlights of his magnificent achievements. Then again, there is the playing of the national anthem and the mandatory standing at attention before film screenings. This practice, which creates a mindless yet corporeal acquiescence to state power, policed by everything from an abstract love of country completely out of line with the present conditions imposed by the owners of the country to the serial fear that runs as follows: "I don't believe in this b.s., but others do, so I better act as if I do," ought to be ridiculed into the ground. In the theater, our communitarian identifications and yearnings are systematically coerced into honoring that which oppresses the majority of moviegoers: the official state and its ideologies. Of course, there may be divergent readings here.

5. The denial of "the masses' right to represent themselves" Benjamin ascribed to fascism. The phrase could well be used antithetically to posit an ethos of Realism. See "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969).

6. I would like to thank Harry Benshoff for this formulation.

7. My usage of the word *fuck* here registers some of the relations between eroticism and violence that has not been adequately taken up in late-capitalist society. A moment's reflection reveals that the proximity

or conflation of these differentiable levels of human endeavor is one of the dominant strains of Philippine cinema but, and also, in a different way, of Hollywood.

8. "In these times, when the government-controlled media hide the truth, when most of what we get is silly gossip, pretty flesh, and sensationalized crime, we must go to the streets to find out what is happening. We must listen to those who dare risk their lives and livelihoods, who reiterate once more the utmost duty of the artist, that he be a committed person, taking the side of any human being who is violated, abused, oppressed, or dehumanized, and that he use whatever instrument is his—the pen, the brush, or the camera. I accept this award for all such artists, dedicated persons whose names may never be known or published, doing their share, whether on the streets or in prison camps. Some of them may even have died, or at this very moment be fighting for their lives. This award, then, is for these artists" (Lino Brocka, "Acceptance Speech during the Ramon Magsaysay Awards, September 1985," in *Lino Brocka, The Artist and His Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando [Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993], 205–6). It should be noted that not only does Brocka speak of the role of the artist in society, but that he also turns the occasion of the Magsaysay Awards into a performative media event that fosters his progressive political causes.

9. Guillermo, "Media and Thought Control," 72.

10. I am indebted to Augustin L. Sotto's entry for *Orapronobis* in his extraordinary filmography of Lino Brocka for some of the information in this paragraph. This essential work for Brocka scholarship comprises the last seventy pages of *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*.

11. Clodualdo del Mundo Jr., "*Kapit sa Patalim* and *Orapronobis*: Stories of Our Country and Brocka's Melodramatic Strategy," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, 189.

12. *Ibid.*, 190.

13. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Alex Haley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 454.

14. See Alice Guillermo, "Mao Zedong's Revolutionary Aesthetics and Its Influence on the Philippine Struggle," in *Mao Zedong Thought*

*Lives*, vol. 1, ed. Jose Maria Sison and Stefan Engel (Utrecht: Center for Social Studies and New Road Publications, 1995). See also Colin McCabe's discussion of Engels and Lenin in "Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), esp. 190–93.

15. See Georg Lukacs, "The Ideology of Modernism," in his *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963).

16. Del Mundo, "Kapit sa Patalim and Orapronobis," in *Lino Brocka*, 190.

17. Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, "Properties and Potentials of a People's History," a paper delivered at the conference "What Comes After Progress?" University of California, Santa Cruz, 14–15 Nov. 1997. Tadiar models the concept from the work of Virgilio Enriquez.

18. Del Mundo, "Kapit sa Patalim and Orapronobis," 190.

19. Ibid.

20. Rolando B. Tolentino, "Inangbayan, the Mother-Nation," in "Lino Brocka's *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim and Orapronobis*," *Screen* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 368–88, 380.

21. Ibid., 380.

22. Ibid., 381.

23. Ibid., 385.

24. Ibid., 380.

25. Ibid., 382.

26. Emmanuel Reyes, "Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis*: The Film of the Decade," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, 196–98. Reyes's piece originally appeared in the *Manila Times*, 5 Nov. 1989.

27. Ibid., 198.

28. Already in December of 1987, Comrade Julian Banaag of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee said in an interview, "Mrs. Aquino and her fellow advocates of the 'total war' [against Communism] are examples of fake liberals who are in the habit of mouthing liberal platitudes only to justify their counterrevolutionary warmonger-

ing, their denial and repression of the masses' just demands, and their groveling towards foreign imperialists. . . . The Aquino faction is now waging a ruthless war against the people and the revolutionary forces. It has reneged on its promises of reforms and social change, and has instead pursued essentially the same policies as the overthrown Marcos fascist regime in all major spheres of social and national life" ("Questions Concerning Analysis of the Situation and the Party's Tactics" [an interview with Comrade Julian Banaag], in *The Filipino People Will Triumph!: Conversations with Filipino Revolutionary Leaders* [Central Publishing House, 1988], 21–22). When compared with Amado Guerrero's 1970 assessment, little seems to have changed: "Once more fascism is conspicuously on the rise under the Marcos puppet regime. Massacres, assassinations, kidnappings, and arrests on trumped-up charges are being flagrantly committed by the reactionary armed forces and police. Patriotic mass actions are brutally dispersed and demonstrators are murdered, maimed, and arrested en masse. Brutal steps are taken to dissolve patriotic mass organizations. Even when the writ of habeas corpus is not formally suspended, an actual state of martial law is enforced. People are detained indefinitely, tortured and killed, and homes are searched, looted, or even burned without the niceties of reactionary laws. All of these abuses are being perpetrated on an increasingly larger scale" (Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* [Manila: Pulang Tala Publications, 1971], 219–20). What is important to note here is that from 1970 to 1987, that is, from before martial law to the period afterwards, the Communist Party consistently maintains that "the fascist acts of the Marcos [or Aquino] puppet regime fall under the U.S. program of counterinsurgency." Indeed, the twentieth century in the Philippines has been characterized above all by the repression and exploitation of the Filipino masses by U.S. imperialism and its Filipino collaborators, the landlord class, the comprador class, and the bureaucrat capitalists. However accurate this statement is, it is incomplete if it excludes radical shifts in the strategies of domination. Brocka provides an important addendum here: All social events might be construed as mediation, and all mediations involve both the deployment and the solicitation of force.

The technological control of social mediation has undergone an important historical shift, radically multiplying the sites of domination and, therefore, of contestation.

29. Citations from Joel David, *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema*, introduction by Bienvenido Lumbera (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1990), 188.

30. Ibid.

31. Lino Brocka, "Philippine Movies: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Film Center, 1983), 260–61. The ethos expressed in this comment might be seen in relation to Brocka's pivotal role in the selection of Roland Joffe's *The Mission* over Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* for the 1986 *Palme D'Or* at Cannes. See Augustin L. Sotto, "Lino Brocka: The International Director," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, 115 ff.

32. Renato Constantino, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," in *Sinaglahi: An Anthology of Philippine Literature*, ed. M. L. Santaromana (Manila: Writers Union of the Philippines, 1975), 14.

33. For more on the work of spectatorship as labor and on cinema as the paradigm of an emergent visual economy see my essays, "Cinema, Capital of the Twentieth Century," *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 3 [pmc@unity.ncsu.edu] (Oxford University Press, May 1994); "The Spectatorship of the Proletariat," *boundary 2*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 171–228; "Capital Cinema," in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics/Philosophy/Culture*, ed. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Heller (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1998); "The Film of Money," *boundary 2*, 26, no. 3 (Fall 1999).

34. See Paul Gilroy, "Diaspora, Utopia and the Critique of Capitalism," in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London: Routledge, 1997), 340–49.

35. Earlier versions of this essay appeared in *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures*, ed. Rolando B. Tolentino (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000); *Third Text*, no. 45 (Winter 1998–1999); and in *Kampus Journal* 1, no. 1, College of Mass Communications, UP, Quezon City, Sept. 1995.

#### Notes to Chapter 4, "Third Cinema in a Global Frame"

1. For it is marginal scum like ourselves who, here, and in general, that is, as subject *matter*, hold the fascination of both the principal character and the normalizing frame of the film *8mm* alike. We should note that both character and normalizing frame work at the behest of money. Cage's character, like commercial cinema itself, follows the narrative trail scripted by the perverse desires of a wealthy sponsor for authentic trash. Nonetheless and however fascinating we scum may be in general as marginal subject matter, it is we who are excluded from cinema in particular, that is, as subjects, precisely because of and through our generalized treatment as matter. If the question is "Can the subaltern speak in *Hollywood*?" the answer is, "Never."

2. Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 121.

3. Those interested in pursuing the historical development of the senses may wish to consult Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," especially the section entitled "Estranged Labor" and those following. See *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1978).

4. Although the economization of the visual has been, for some reviewers and academics, a difficult idea to grasp, it is becoming less so for the organic intellectuals at corporations like Microsoft. For ten years I have been arguing the implications of what I call the "attention theory of value" derived from an analysis of the political economy of the spectacle and Marx's labor theory of value. In essence, my work has been to read hegemonic media culture as the hypostatized relations of intensifying hierarchical domination in which people give their living labor, that is their biopower, to the proprietors of media technology in exchange for a wage that is little more than company scrip: pleasure, entertainment, diversion, amusement, and others. Of late, this expropriative relation endemic to and embedded in capitalized media technologies is being conceptualized and thus acted upon by corporations. Now that attention can be self-consciously and instrumentally structured for profit

it is big news. See, for example, the lead article in the *Business Day* section of the *New York Times* (Monday, 17 July 2000, C1) which reports that attention is the next big thing at Microsoft. “Most Internet entrepreneurs treat the users’ attention as a Third World country to be strip-mined,” said Jakob Nielsen, a Silicon Valley expert on software useability,” but Microsoft is working to develop products to give users better management tools for their own attending under the name “Attentional User Interface,” a “software cloak” that monitors the user’s actions using a camera as well as incoming messages via e-mail and phone. Tellingly, but unsurprisingly, the software tracks and prioritizes inputs by assigning them dollar values. The machinic organization of attention has also finally received a touch of legitimacy from the Ivy League (see Jonathan Crary’s new book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999]). See also the most recent work of Sean Cubitt, particularly “Cybertime: Ontologies of Digital Perception” available at <http://www.imaging.dundee.ac.uk/people/sean/cybertime.html>. In addition to my works cited in notes below, for more on what I have called “the productive value of human attention,” see my essays, “The Circulating Eye,” *Communication Research* 20, no. 2 (Apr. 1993): 298–313; “Cinema, Capital of the Twentieth Century,” *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 3 (Oxford University Press, May 1994); “Identity through Death/The Nature of Capital: The Media-Environment for *Natural Born Killers*,” *Post-Identity* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 55–67. It should be noted that the present essay does not set itself out to make in its entirety the argument for the materiality and political economy of the visual, but is rather a contribution to what is at long last becoming an ongoing discussion.

5. For my course on globalization at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I generated a list entitled “488 Books on Globalization Courtesy of Amazon.com.” All of these books, with two exceptions, had been published in 1990 or after.

6. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). My implicit suggestion to grasp this work from a technological point of view is

of course a reading of it. For another example of a text which could be read as describing the organization of affect and sensibility by mediating machines see Elaine Scarry, “The Structure of War,” in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987).

7. See, for example, Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (London: British Film Institute, 1996).

8. “To the extent that we recognize a history of unequal exchanges between the South and the North, we must also recognize the unequal ‘symbolic’ exchanges involved” (Teshome H. Gabriel, “Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films,” in *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willeman [London: British Film Institute, 1989], 38). My use of the terms *Third Cinema* and *Third World* does not ignore the refiguration of the signified of “Third World” as “postcolonial,” “global south,” “post-Third World,” “postcolonial Third World,” and others, nor is it meant to designate nonheterogeneity among those living the disastrous effects of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. It is not necessarily bound by nation and it acknowledges the figures center/periphery and global/local, as well as the critiques that have been made of these figures. Third World might be thought of here as less an identity or an essence but rather as a performance, a representation structured by hegemonic media as well as by Third Cinema. I retain the term “Third World” because it designates unbridled and continuing antagonism between capital and subalterns everywhere, and Third Cinema because of the alliances it potentiates among subalterns. “Third World,” recall, was first a neutral term used to designate nations nonallied with the U.S.-Soviet conflict, and was subsequently taken up as a battle cry by decolonization movements. If images enforce colonization by other means, then it makes sense to create and/or retain images of decolonization.

9. See, for example, Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, “Prostituted Filipinas and the Crisis of Philippine Culture,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 27, no. 4 (1998): 927–54, as well as her essay “Sexual Economies in the Asia Pacific,” in Arif Dirlik, ed., *What’s in a Rim?* (Boulder, CO:

Westview, 1993). See also the writings of Jo-Ann Maglipon, “Maid to Order in Italy,” and “The Women Left Behind,” in *Primed: Selected Stories* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1993).

10. I am indebted to the work of Elaine C. Martinez, a graduate student in my Advanced Film Theory seminar at the University of the Philippines, June–Oct. 1999. Her seminar essay “Orders of Oppression: *Curacha* and Post-Resistance,” transcribes much of the dialogue drawn on here and offers insightful commentary including the following, “The female heroine looks at her image and sees her nakedness, subtly it becomes a fetish, the object of the gaze becomes the spectator herself, she and the viewers become one. She is aware that she is the image.”

11. In “Technology as Historical and Cultural Form,” Stephen Heath writes, “The process of cinema . . . is that of a process through which in particular economic situations a set of scattered technical devices becomes an applied technology, then a fully social technology; and that social technology can, must, be posed and studied in its effects of construction and meaning. That formulation, however, is itself still problematic: the process is that of a relation of the technical and the social as cinema” (*The Cinematic Apparatus*, 6). In *Curacha*, one sees the particular devices of gender, economy, and representation cohering in a relation of the technical and social as Filipina. “The Filipina” does not just exist, she is a sociohistorical, technico-economic-mediatic achievement built as much by the mail-order bride Internet web pages, and the desires of the men who buy as by Spanish colonialism, U.S imperialism, and the martial law pimping of Filipinas. However, what must never be forgotten is that it is the human who labors under the overlying grids constituting “the Filipina” who bears the burden of the category, and she alone whose living labor redeems it.

12. “As originally conceived, Third Cinema was and continues to be participatory and contributive to the struggles for the liberation of the peoples of the Third World,” in “Third Cinema as a Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a Third Aesthetics,” Teshome H. Gabriel (*Questions of Third Cinema*, 55).

13. Today, mediation is always also the mediation of sensual labor, whatever else it might be.

14. The brilliant graphic advertisement in which Truman’s visage is composed entirely from a composite of hundreds of computer-blended images from scenes in his life reveals that not only is the media conscious of its tendency to organize the imaginary and the built environment according to the protocols of capital, it is also aware that it is, in short, the unconscious—or, even, “the unconscious of the unconscious,” a phrase which I have taken as the title of an essay forthcoming on Lacan. For the structuring of the built environment by media see Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-Regional Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

15. I would like to thank Bill Nichols for bringing to my attention the relevance of the category Social Realism with respect to *The Matrix*. For a quick read of *Fight Club*, see my essay “Fight Club’s Utopian Dick,” available at Popmatters.com (2000).

16. The colonization of the senses implies a set of histories for which I can only set out the broadest outlines here. It would entail the worldwide institutionalization of various scopic regimes and new orders of discipline and productivity. Make no mistake, however, the colonization of the senses is not a metaphor. It is the deepening of the historical condition of coloniality that allows the violent exploitation associated with coloniality to continue and intensify for the sake of profit. Thus, as most already recognize, postcolonialism is colonialism by other means.

17. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993), 282. The phrase is the title of the final chapter of the book.

18. *The Cinematic Mode of Production*. If the point seemed questionable eight or ten years ago, corporations such as FreePC, which gives out “free” computers in exchange for recipients agreeing to supply extensive personal information and to spend a certain amount of time online, demonstrate practically that looking at a screen can produce value. If, six or seven years ago when I argued that looking is posited by capital as labor, the idea was difficult for academics to fathom, today Mypoints.com advertises with the copy “We’ll pay you to read this ad,”

in the *San Jose Mercury News*. Another web-site banner displays roving eyes with the caption “We’ll pay you for your attention.” Numerous works on the mediatic organization of the imaginary exist. See, for example, Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Where Metz says that “cinema is a technique of the imaginary” (3) and indeed modifies spectators through a system of “financial feedback” (91), the scope of today’s revolution emerges from a reversal of the terms, the imaginary is a technique of cinema, or rather of mediation. Such a reversal deontologizes the unconscious and suggests that its functions, which is to say its existence as such, emerge out of a dynamic relation to technology (technology being understood here as sedimented, alienated species being). Thus, Metz’s sense of what the spectator does in the cinema, “I watch, and I help” (93), can be grasped as labor for the modification of the technology of the body through financial feedback. See also the following essays from *The Cinematic Apparatus*: Stephen Heath, “The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form”; Jean-Louis Commoli, “Machines of the Visible”; and Teresa de Lauretis, “Through the Looking Glass.” Commoli says explicitly that “the spectator . . . works” (140). For a broader theory of the social organization of the imaginary see Cornelius Castoriadis, trans. Kathleen Blamey, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998). And for a contemporary account of the fundamental shifts in the social logic of mediation wrought by the emergence of “the videosphere,” see Regis Debray, *Media Manifestos*, trans. Eric Rauth (London and New York: Verso, 1996). For a sustained meditation on shifts in the character of the subjective, see the later works of Paul Virilio, especially *War and Cinema* (London: Verso, 1989) and *The Vision Machine* (London: British Film Institute, 1994). My own works, particularly those noted below, specifically address the cinematic image as machinic interface emerging as a response to the crisis for capital known as “the falling rate of profit.” See my essays “The Spectatorship of the Proletariat,” *boundary 2*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 171–228; “*Capital Cinema*,” in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics/Philosophy/Culture*, ed. Eleanor Kaufman and

Kevin Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and “Dziga Vertov and the Film of Money,” *boundary 2*, 26, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 151–200 [<http://128.220.50.88/journals/boundary/v026/26.3beller.html>].

19. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

20. Media theorists such as Sut Jhally or Robin Andersen are, it seems to me, quite correct when they argue that advertising asks us to imagine the resolution of our deepest crises through a social system that cannot possibly solve them. See Robin Andersen’s excellent book, *Consumer Culture and TV Programming* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995). See also Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

21. Indeed, cinema is an elaboration of the fetish character of the commodity. Visual technologies after 1895 served to increase the separation between the materiality of form and its pyrotechnical abstraction already present in fetishism.

22. See Antonio Negri (“Twenty Theses on Marx,” trans. Michael Hardt, *Polygraph 5: Contesting the New World Order*): “When the capitalist process of production has attained such a high level of development so as to comprehend every even small fraction of social production, one can speak, in Marxian terms, of a ‘real subsumption’ of society in capital. The contemporary ‘mode of production’ is this ‘subsumption.’ What is the form of value of the ‘mode of production’ which is called the ‘real subsumption?’ It is a form in which there is an immediate translatability between the social forces of production and the relations of production themselves. In other words, the mode of production has become so flexible that it can be effectively confused with the movements of the productive forces, that is with the movements of all the subjects which participate in production. It is the entirety of these relations which constitutes the form of value of the ‘real subsumption.’ We can develop this concept affirming that this form of value is the very ‘communication’ which develops among productive forces” (ibid., 139).



23. As Wlad Godzich has demonstrated in his essay “Language, Images, and the Postmodern Predicament,” *Materialities of Communication*, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer (Stanford: University Press, 1994), the absolute increase in the presence of images precipitates a crises in language and its negative capability to slow down images—which, he reminds us, operate at the speed of light—and hence to organize the world. This argument could be extended to say that the rise of image-culture also induces the modern psyche—psychologistics develop as language becomes increasingly inadequate to a world of images. Cinematic images, called dreams in Freud, or the *objet petit a* in Lacan, do not so much express psychoanalytic truths as create them, that is, through cybernetically interfacing with bodies and creating new architecture for their sensual labor. In this schema, and here I am simply pointing to directions for further research, the psyche as well as psychoanalysis are responses to the mechanical and electronic reproduction technologies—new provinces for so-called immaterial labor and informal economy. Today’s visceralities and intensities, but also information processing and analysis, are the new scenes of work in the image-mediated attention factory of globalization.

24. Cinema, as “a technique of the imaginary” (Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, 3) and film theory, particularly psychoanalytic film theory, describe certain formats of psychic instantiation. To give perhaps the most widely anthologized example Laura Mulvey’s analysis of the male gaze in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” recently reprinted in *Feminist Film Theory*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: University Press, 1999), 58–69, but also the many readings which go against the grain of her analysis endeavor to schematize, with various inflections, modalities of subjectification. These theories of the cinematic apparatus, which provide counternarrative to hegemonic forms of desire and their associated violences are themselves strategies for recalibrating the image. What Mulvey’s essay calls “the patriarchal unconscious,” which in her account structures film form and reduces woman to a signifier of male meaning, is represented and thus to a certain extent recast by her writings. My effort in the analysis of *Curacha*

above is to show that, broadly speaking, the scopic regime constituent of the patriarchal unconscious and generative of film pleasure also informs the organization of pleasure and thus of production in the social fabric of the Philippines. Without doubt there are competing and complementary logics at work and factors which exceed the scope of this analysis. Nonetheless, the connection between the cinematic organization of visibility, the psyche, pleasure, lived experiences, and social production is essential to grasp. Rather than thinking that it is merely the institution of cinema in its traditional sense which “as a whole has filmic pleasure alone as its aim” (Metz, 7), we must realize that something like filmic pleasure is the great achievement of the entire socioeconomic complex built on colonization and patriarchy and indeed that it is this form of pleasure that fosters, legitimates, and sustains socioeconomic violence. We must question the price of such plenitude.

25. My own analysis of the organization of the social, that is, the world of labor, weapons, space, desire, human interaction, sexuality, the imagination, among others, through the technology of the image is close to the idea of “desiring production,” in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Helen R. Lane and Robert Hurley (Indianapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) or Negri’s dialectic of social cooperation and capitalist command in “Twenty Theses on Marx,” and close again to ideas about the subsumption of society by capital (the capitalization of all social interchange) as also expressed in Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Indianapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and Brian Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). The important difference here, as I see it, is that taking the cinema as a paradigm shift in the way in which value is leveraged from human bodies, more clearly articulates aspects of the historical conditions of possibility of the postmodern and of globalization than do the above accounts, because it shows the industrialization and generalization of capitalist mediation. It also identifies the image as the privileged interface between bodies and societies.

26. Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, 122. The citation from Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet is from *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 126–27.

27. Rice institutes in Asia, soybean conglomerates, and pharmaceutical companies in the rainforest are prime examples here.

28. I would like to thank Warren Sack for his insights into Yahoo! A conversation we had in the Pogonip proved to be very thought provoking.

29. The perplexity attendant to the situation of Yahoo!'s value is similar to that of the perplexity with which the colonized greeted bankers coming to the colonies. Bankers arrived with a card table and some paper, and within a few years owned everything. Speculators may not be wrong to believe that today's Internet companies are the banks and railroads of tomorrow, but before the business community is allowed to blabber on with its New Age idealism, it is best not to forget the kinds of expropriation which took place at the behest of these predecessors. As of 17 Jan. 2000 Yahoo!'s market capitalization was \$93 billion.

30. Even at the explicitly economic level, we have with the Internet as with biotech and the military-industrial complex another case of public funding for private profit. Here is Clinton in his State of the Union Address, 27 Jan. 2000: "Information technology alone now accounts for a third of our economic growth with jobs that pay almost 80 percent above the private sector average. Again, we should keep in mind: Government funded research brought supercomputers, the Internet and communications satellites into being." In other words, taxpayers paid for information technology but it belongs to a few hundred corporations.

31. If one takes seriously the disciplinary agenda of mass (a.k.a. global) culture, it should come as no surprise that in the Philippines the former U.S. military base facilities in Subic and Clark are now special economic zones dedicated to export processing, elite tourism, cultural events, and Duty Free shopping. The conversion of the bases from militarized zones to zones of commerce and pleasure in which Philippine tax laws are suspended, indexes for the Philippines not a lessening imperialism alongside an increasing wealth more evenly distributed; rather it

underscores that neoimperialism utilizes a warfare conducted through the medium of business, and more to the point, the business of culture and sensuality. The marketing of pleasure at once makes war on the masses, and provides its own justifications.

32. The martial law period and the years immediately after constitute the period that is often referred to as the "Second Golden Age of Philippine Cinema." In "A Short History of Philippine Cinema," in *Introducing Southeast Asian Cinema Series no. 3*, ed. Kenji Ishizeka (Tokyo: Masaru Inoue, 1991): 40–51, Augustin Sotto describes eleven periods in Philippine cinema history from 1897–1991. The First Golden Age of Philippine Cinema is usually associated with the work of Gerardo de Leon during what Sotto refers to as the "Seventh Period" (1946–1963.) On *Moral* see Gina Marchetti, "Four Hundred Years in a Convent, Fifty in Hollywood': Sexual Identity and Dissent in Contemporary Philippine Cinema," 24–47, 45.

#### Notes to Part 3, "Syncretic Realism (Realism as Mediation)"

1. See J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948). See also V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Pluto Press, 1996).

2. See chap. 4, n23.

3. Just as the commodity produces "new needs," the image-commodity produces these needs themselves as new production regimens.

4. E. San Juan Jr., *The Philippine Temptation: Dialectics of Philippines-U.S. Literary Relations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 75. The citation is from V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 23.

5. See Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, *Fantasy Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong University Press, 2003; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004).

6. See Vicente Rafael, "Generation Text: The Cell Phone and the Crowd in Recent Philippine History," web-published manuscript, hardcopy forthcoming.

## Notes to Chapter 5, "Kristology and Radical Communion"

1. Unfortunately, at present (2003), this trend seems to be disappearing from his work.

2. Alice Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970–1990* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001), 158.

3. *Kalinangan* editorial 6, no. 1 (Mar. 1986): 3–4, cited in Guillermo, 157. Guillermo also quotes at length from Fr. Edicio de la Torre's *Touching Ground, Taking Root*. I excerpt two paragraphs:

The theologians of struggle look at history not from the perspective of the "winners and victors," but rather from the eyes of the "losers and victims" of history. They recognize the fact that history is not made by emperors and dictators but rather by those who are relegated to the fringes of society. They affirm with Jesus the blessedness of the poor in bringing about God's reign (Lk. 6:30).

The theology of struggle is not written by comfortable hands nor by passive hands, but rather by hands that are tortured, hands that have struggled and bearing the marks of suffering and oppression. This theology is written and preserved not in carefully worded propositions, but rather in the songs, stories, poems, testimonies, artworks and reflections of the struggle.

4. See citation of Edicio de la Torre, n3, above.

5. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 72.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 79.

8. I am indebted to Enrique Dussel for this insight.

9. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 89

10. "Painting the Audience: Realism of Emmanuel Garibay," *Philippine Daily Inquirer Sunday Magazine*, 26 Jan. 1997.

11. Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, "Prostituted Filipinas and the Crisis of Philippine Culture," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32, no. 4 (1998): 927–54, reprinted in *Gendering the International*, ed. Louiza Odysseos and Hakan Seckinelgin (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

## Notes to Chapter 6, "Seeing through the Revolution"

1. At least not when this was written, in 1998–1999. In any case, People Power 2 was not particularly antiglobalization.

2. The elision of the pedestrian is particularly powerful in Manila. Unlike in New York where the passer-by might find him or herself spectacularly refracted in a gold-tinged image of the street while passing a building, the areas immediately surrounding Manila's glassy surfaces are sanitized against those who do not have cars.

3. See the work of David Harvey, Manuel Castells, and Paul Virilio here.

4. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2d ed. (New York and London: Norton, 1978), 89.

5. Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Towards a Political Economy of the Society of the Spectacle*.

6. See my essays, "Identity through Death/The Nature of Capital: The Media-Environment for *Natural Born Killers*," *Post-Identity* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 55–67; "Capital/Cinema," in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics/Philosophy/Culture*, ed. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Heller (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1998); "City of Television: Metropolitan Affects and the New Americanism," *Polygraph* 8: *New Metropolitan Forms* (Durham, 1996): 133–51; "The Spectatorship of the Proletariat," *boundary* 2, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 171–228; "Cinema, Capital of the Twentieth Century," *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 3 [pmc@unity.ncsu.edu] (Oxford University Press, May 1994); "The Circulating Eye," *Communication Research* 20, no. 2 (Apr. 1993): 298–313.

7. Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978), 387, as cited in "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," by Rosalind Krauss, *October, The Second Decade 1986–1996*, 427–41, 439.

8. Indeed, a greater differentiation of the visual in the Third World (the heterogeneity not only of what can be seen but of modes of seeing) is presupposed by the ethnographic urbanist term "uneven development."

9. This statement implies a new thesis on the postmodern—the formal determinants that have been used to mark a distinction between

“the modern” and “the postmodern” (depthlessness, pastiche, and so forth) are less critical in periodization than is the economic dimension of the cultural form in question. In what way does the form to be studied organize social production. “Postmodernism,” therefore, cannot be impacted into the cultural artifact alone, for it is the functionality of the cultural form in the space of a culture which has been largely subsumed by the economic that should ultimately determine its “postmodernity.” Thus, postmodern forms should henceforth be grasped less as objects and more as relations, that is as functional modalities. Given the tendency of cultural production to rehabilitate previous cultural moments and postmodernize their functions (all of the contemporary retro movements including the retro-modern in magazines such as *Wallpaper*), we may anticipate that the continued existence and development of capital will vitiate the term postmodernism’s ability to say anything useful about culture since anything culturally present will function in a postmodern mode as a medium for the capture of human attention now posited as abstract universal attention time.

10. “And then you realize that the physical fact of Filipinos migrating abroad is really just the tip of the iceberg. . . . Most of us are expatriates right *here* in our own land. America is our heartland whether we get to go there or not” (Conrado de Quiros, “Bracing for Balikbayans,” in *Flowers from the Rubble* [Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1990], 140); cited in Vincente L. Rafael, “‘Your Grief is Our Gossip’: Overseas Filipinos and Other Spectral Presences,” *Public Culture* (1997): 267–91, 272.

11. See Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, “Manila’s New Metropolitan Form,” *Discrepant Histories*.

12. See Tadiar, “Manila’s Assaults,” *Polygraph 8: New Metropolitan Forms* (Durham, 1996), 9–20.

13. David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (New York, Routledge, 1988), 508; cited in Robert Yarber, “Suspension of Disbelief: The Body of the Painter in the Face of the Virtual,” *Art and Design*, no. 48:63–71.

14. The word “fantasy” shows the subjective dimension of the allegorical impulse accompanying the developmental narrative. In the fantasy of development, material conditions of existence are abstracted

as stages in a teleological unfolding of modernization. “Fantasy” at once shows the agency of the subjects who imagine relations thus, that is, as being nonsynchronously anterior or posterior, and derails the objective pretensions of such a conceptualization.

15. It is of no importance here that the bourgeois intellectual might isolate one of the terms in this statement on aesthetics and politics and show that its meaning is contested; the formulation is assembled in the midst of contestation. What is of most importance here is that the formulation is open to use as a weapon of the people against those who, consciously or not, deny the people’s potentialities. If discourses and images are not understood as weapons in addition to whatever else they are, then they are not understood at all.

#### Notes to “Conclusion, or What Now?”

1. “[E]ssentially the issue was between feeling and ideal, between the ideal that wrought forms into perfections and the emotion that charged forms with human imperfections, with a sense of uniqueness” (Rod Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns* [Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1995], 13).

2. See pages 277–78, note 6, part 1 on “Pinoy Baroque” (Torres, *Philippine Abstract Painting*). This bit of autoethnography probably deserves an analysis in its own right.

3. Recall Sigmund Freud’s idea of parapraxis, the “Freudian slip,” in which it is the breakdown of language that reveals the presence of the unconscious. Jacques Lacan tells us that “the unconscious emerges through the structure of the gap,” that is, in the failure of language function. Psywar, which, like the culture industry as analyzed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, should be thought of as “psychoanalysis in reverse,” was designed to induce language failure (the failure of narrative analysis at the behest of some deeper level of meaning and event) and create anxiety. This is precisely the register of activity best taken over by the image.

4. The late Santiago Bose’s work is particularly ripe for such an analysis.

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# *Acquiring Eyes*

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and the World-Media System*

*Jonathan Beller*



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