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WHICH VISUAL LITERACY IN THE TEACHING OF CULTURE?

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Abstract
Visual literacy is not a magic key to the mysteries of the image not only because teaching and learning is no magic, but also because there is no image (and therefore no mysteries linked to it). Images are cultural forms or cultural practices which ought to be studied as such in their social context, but starting from the proper disciplinary background of the student. The gradual and maybe unending disclosing of this context, which has always an impact on the context of the learner himself or herself, must be at the heart of every visual literacy program inspired by cultural studies. Heavily inspired by the ways of looking permitted or enhanced by cybernetic culture, this program rejects explicitly many of the presuppositions of communications studies and art history.

Keywords
contemporary visual culture, digital culture, image, Internet

About the Authors
Jan Baetens teaches at the Institute of Cultural Studies and at the Department of Literary Theory of the Catholic University of Leuven, where he specializes in word and image studies and the global digitalization of culture and cultural heritage. He has published six books of poetry in French.

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A SMALL EXAMPLE TO START WITH (OR IS IT JUST ALREADY AN END?)

Suppose the students retrieve an image from an Internet-site and reuse it in their own site (or in a paper, or just store it). How can such a basic action, performed daily, often without any critical reflection, be linked with a concern for visual literacy (in the broad interdisciplinary sense we shall defend in this paper)?

A first concern should be here the relationship of the analysis of the image with the interdisciplinary background of the students. Contrary to many fashionable PBL (problem-based learning) methods, we do not believe that a previous disciplinary training is superfluous or can be learnt "on the job" (for a discussion on the use of interdisciplinary in cultural studies, see Baetens, "Etudes culturelles"). Rather than solving the problems at the moment they present the students, we prefer tackling those problems from within an already specified and organized disciplinary structure. Such a starting point means

however that there can be no "uniform" teaching of visual literacy at a more advanced levels, and this pluriformity should be accepted and even encouraged by the teachers, not in order to increase fragmentation, but to foster interdisciplinary cooperation within the groups of students.

A second concern should be with the analysis of the image "itself." Of course, given the fact that in our view there is no such a thing as the "image," this analysis should deal with the way the image is contextualized. If, for instance, the image has been found on a website, students should be trained to ask automatically questions on the nature of the site (who owns it? who makes it? who runs it? etc.), on the way this site creates or reuses its own visual material (how is the material presented? how is it described? what is the relationship with the "original"? etc.), on the way the image circulates in society, for instance, but not exclusively, financially (who owns it, who sells it, now and in the past) and symbolically (how can one determine the "value" of an image?), and, last but not least, with the student's own use and reuse of the image (why do I use this image and not that one, and why do I use it just this way and not that way? etc.).

In this paper, we would like to suggest some answers to some of the problems raised by the everyday practice of teachers confronted with the difficulties and challenges raised by the widespread use of images in contemporary culture and contemporary classrooms. After some preliminary historical remarks on the place and nature of images in cultural studies and digital culture, we shall engage a discussion with some traditional ideas on visual culture and images which are still popular in communication studies, but whose relevance we would like to put into question, in order to make room for a more cultural materialist approach of the image, both as concept and as practice.

FROM TEXT TO IMAGE

Some twenty years ago many Faculties of Arts in particular and many humanities in general underwent a tremendous and sudden shift from the teaching of literature to the teaching of cultural studies. In many cases, this shift resulted from the rejection of the traditional, Western canon, and its opening to new types of popular and subaltern writing: popular fiction, pulp fiction, women's literature, gay and lesbian writing, postcolonial texts, documentary fiction, etc. Yet this shift towards a new, postmodern, open vision of which texts are worth studying at the university, should not hide a second, even more important transformation: that of the gradual "visualization" of the Arts curriculum, even in formerly textual or literary programs. It is now generally accepted that the word "text" may refer as

well to a literary work of art as to a film, a photograph, a video game, etc.

The reasons for this second shift are many. First of all, since the core business of cultural studies is the critical, committed, and interdisciplinary study of contemporary life, its main object is necessary closer to the image than to literature. Contemporary is less textual than visual (film, television, video, multimedia). Therefore it would have been illogical to maintain the central position of literature in the cultural studies departments. Second, at a more abstract level, there is also the predominance of "theory" in the cultural studies paradigm. Given the fact that cultural studies has no "proper" object and no "proper methodology," only a very strong theoretical bias, it is perfectly understandable that the popularity of high-theoretical models inherited from literary studies would offer many new opportunities to the study of the image. Thoroughly analyzing images was a way to cope with one's love of contemporary visual culture without having to renounce the intellectual seductions of (literary) theory. Third, the emergence of the image at the heart of the literary curriculum has also to do with the crisis of traditional art history, which has been seriously challenged by the new field of "visual studies" (the name often given to specific forms of contemporary visual theory inspired by the political and methodological presuppositions of cultural studies). The violent resistance of art history toward these new forms of visual study has accelerated the global visualization of cultural studies itself: since traditional art history was so reluctant to innovation, many innovators tried to find their way in the field where fresh ideas and new objects were welcome, i.e., literary and cultural studies. It is not by hazard that in so many universities, the film studies program has developed from within the renewed literary curricula.

TWO VISIONS OF VISUAL LITERACY

Yet the emphasis put on the teaching of the image is one thing. The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this teaching are another, and even a completely different thing. Given the lack of visual tradition in the departments were the analysis of images is now currently taught, it should not come as a surprise that the motivation of the visualized curriculum has longtime been "external," i.e., borrowed from other disciplines. The discussion on visual literacy has been borrowed from several fields, mostly that of art history and that of communication studies. The status of these two influences is however completely different. The plea for visual literacy coming from the field of art history has been received in a very ambivalent way: on the one hand, it is undoubtedly so that there is a strong intellectual and ideological analogy between the cultural studies

emphasis on the social constructedness of all types of representation and the emphasis put by scholars such as Gombrich on culturally determined "conventions" in the making and receiving of images;[1] on the other hand, the link with traditional art history and even with Panofskyan iconology has made the influence of this way of thinking remain relatively modest: cultural studies agreed with the basic assumption of the cultural construction of visual representations demonstrated by art historians, but it had many difficulties to receive this message focused on objects and practices which were miles away from the study of contemporary life. The case of communication studies has been different. First of all, because of the strong relationship between communication and cultural studies at its beginnings: nowadays, their split is complete—the average communication studies have made an empirical turn, whereas the cultural turn of cultural studies has permanently been reinforced. Second, because of the promises of an almost instant instrumentalization of visual literacy: contrary to art history, where the earning of a solid visual literacy was a matter of blood, sweat and tears, and some artistic sensibility, communications studies proposed down-to-earth checklists and stepstone reading protocols for everybody wanting to buy it.[2] For all these reasons, art-historical pleas for visual literacy have played a less direct role than the discussions coming from the field of communication studies.[3]

In this paper we shall critically discuss this strategy before making a plea for a different way of conceiving and motivating the study of images in a broad, interdisciplinary program. For us, what should be at stake in the teaching of images exceeds by far the sole field of communication (often reduced to the stimulus-reaction paradigm). This teaching reveals on the contrary an intersection of many practices and interests, and can therefore function as a scale model of the teaching of culture itself.

ICONOPHOBIC ICONOPHILIA

The starting point of most theoretical reflection on the necessity of the teaching of visual literacy, i.e., the capability of making sense of images instead of falling prey to their fatal attraction, is both objective and subjective. It is objective to the extent that there is indeed a gap between what is taught at school and what is lived outside school: the former remains mainly visual, the latter has become overwhelmingly visual. It is also subjective, since it exhibits a new form of iconophobia which is the more pernicious since it considers itself a form of iconophilia. Indeed, behind almost every visual literacy program one finds the tacit assumption that the image is by definition tricky, manipulating, ambiguous, treacherous: one has to protect oneself from the bad influences of the images,

whose power has to be domesticated by a strong *Bildung*. Even those who promote and defend the necessity of a serious visual literacy do this always in the name of an ideal of freedom and emancipation that considers verbal propaganda as an *accident de parcours* and visual manipulation as the *essence* of the medium.[4] In his usual flowery style, McLuhan once coined the idea of "media fall-out" which is often used by visual literacy theorists in order to attack the bad influences of an "unmastered" and chaotic visuality. Inevitably, all the discussions concerning the cognitive and esthetic advantages of visual literacy are accompanied by the eternal lament on the unreliability of the images and of the people or companies relying on images for the communication of their message.[5]

For this very reason of the profound iconophobia of many apparently iconophilic but in fact deeply iconophobic scholars, we will try to follow here a different path of thought, and insist as much as possible on what happens in the classroom. And instead of taking the classroom as a place where media-free instructors help victimized students to get rid of the visual pollution and the corporate agendas hidden behind it, we will consider it a space of interaction, where teachers learn form their pupils as much as the other way round.[6]

We start from the observation that the gap between the predominantly verbal model of the school and the basically visual orientation of society is not new. It is an illusion to believe that other forms of social organization were less visual than our postmodern 21st century society: mid-19th century European societies, at the dawn of general public instruction, or turn-of-the 20th century American society, with its massive arrival of many semi-illiterate and non-anglophone immigrants, were no less visual societies than today's, and nevertheless the linguistic and textual bias of their educational systems was not considered problematic. We believe that there were two main reasons for this global acceptation, by the students as well as by society as a whole, of the non-visual as the main vehicle of education: on the one hand the fact that the relation of text and image was a matter of hierarchy (verbal literacy was more highly considered than visual literacy), not of dichotomy (once the hierarchy was accepted, it was easy to combine both media in all possible ways); on the other hand, the fact that the relationship of student and education was hierarchic too (education was accepted as a tool of driving society and giving form to it; together with other forces such as, for instance, the Family, the Church, the Army, etc., the School was accepted as an organization where the individual was transformed into a member of society). Today, both hierarchies have faded. Contemporary visual culture no longer accepts its implicit or explicit secondarity in comparison with the text, whereas the individual no longer accepts its secondarity towards society (and thus towards the

institutions society uses to enroll him or her). The first evolution makes that the discourse on the image has been altered dramatically: what counts now is not the position of the image in comparison with that of the text, but its proper characteristics, its own specificity, its very detachedness from the verbal model. The second evolution explains why students can no longer stand the gap between what happens in their lives and what happens in the classroom: the clash between the individual values of "life" and the collective values of the "classroom" creates an uneasiness that plays against the verbal norms of the institution.

Does all this mean that, due to its relationships with verbal models and its social underpinnings, an education in visual literacy is condemned to fail? Not at all, provided the problem of visual literacy is tackled differently.

TWO FALSE PROBLEMS AND A REAL ONE

A first important observation has to do with the very notion of visual literacy, and the problems related with it. A solid demythification is absolutely imperative here. Indeed, in general it is not the student but the teacher who has a visual literacy problem: the reading, interpretation, use, production, and transformation of images are much less problematic for the former than for the latter. If nevertheless the myth of the visually illiterate student survives, this is because of the general weakness of his or her historical knowledge (mainly in the field of art history). But this does not imply that the scholar's knowledge of art historical topics makes him or her a visual literate, certainly not if some kind of technology is implied (everybody knows the jokes on the smart professor unable to turn on the slide projector, not to speak of the snakelike charms of PowerPoint or Photoshop). If there is a problem of visual literacy, it is clearly the teacher, not only because many teachers know less about images than their students, but also because they are computer illiterate (not in the sense that they are unable to search and retrieve information on the Internet, but in the sense that they have difficulties to cope with more sophisticated software such as Photoshop, for instance). At least in First World countries, where Internet access is widely spread and cheap, visual literacy and computer literacy can no longer be separated, and in this regard, too, teachers are not privileged by their general knowledge and experience.

A second observation, which in many regards continues the previous one, concerns the frequent complaint (by teachers, of course) that the advanced computer skills of students may enable them to (technically) *do* with images what teachers can only dream of, but without giving them any serious (historical) *knowledge* of the images they are working

or playing with. This question is as unreal, as mythological (in the Barthesian sense of the word), as the question concerning the student's supposed visual illiteracy. What is wrong with it is simply the fact that the very existence of such a question is the evidence of the problem it tries to pinpoint. Indeed, the very disjunction of *doing* and *knowing* can only be asked by somebody who has no idea of what doing in this case means, and what are the consequences of such a doing for the knowing of the image. A minimum of computer literacy (and as we have seen, there is no difference any more between computer literacy and visual literacy) should suffice to demonstrate that "doing" things with images creates also a specific knowledge about them (even if this knowledge is no longer framable in art-historical terms). The visual encyclopedia of "doers" may seem flat, ahistorical, decontextualized, but is does not prevent it from being real knowledge.

The mutual implication of (historically oriented) knowledge and (technologically based) competence brings us to a rather different problem, which is not only more real but also crucial for every understanding of the image. This problem concerns the necessity to always link the image and its "archè" (Schaeffer), i.e., the knowledge one has on the way the image has been technically produced. The well-known and often abused anecdote of the "savage" not recognizing his or her own photographic representation has nothing to do with some lack of visual literacy (as if in order to read a photograph one ought to be trained in the reading of the characteristics of photography as a "language," as traditional defenders of the visual literacy claim to be necessary) but is not without relationship with the notion of "archè" (what is problematic in technologically produced images for people unfamiliar with this type of pictures is not the visual representation itself, but the difficulty to grasp where these pictures come from and to understand how machines, and not the human hand, can deliver just that type of images). In other words, the basic question of visual literacy is always, or at least should be, a careful reflection on the image. But as we will see, this image is never just a thing.

WHAT IS AN IMAGE?

Today, the image has been digitalized. It has become a binary code, to be reproduced on screens and other terminals, maybe just looked at, maybe printed, maybe even exhibited (on screen or not). But in fact this is not the right answer. The matter is that in the digital era, the image is not in the first place a digital image (without original, without aura, without whatever you want), but most of all something completely different: even more than in the past (since of course images have never been innocent, they have

always been transformations of other images) the image of our digital era has become the processing of an image. In other words: the *object* has become an *action*.

The consequences of this transformation are exceptional. If the image does not exist any more, then the same can be said of the spectator, who is no longer a spectator but a manipulator of visual data (more precisely, of digitized data). Looking has become manipulating. In the most modest scenario, this manipulation is an elementary form of interaction (selecting, clicking, zooming, etc.). In the more ambitious scenario, it concerns sophisticated forms of visual data retrieval, production and processing. In more philosophical terms, the act of looking is now *literally* situated at the side of the "haptical," not of the "optical"—even if, as we all know, each act of looking has, is, metaphorically speaking, a combination of optical (unifying, "seeing") and haptical (isolating, "touching") dimensions.[7] For the question of visual literacy, this displacement confirms anyway the relative inutility of an exclusive "optical" training: learning how to recognize, to name, and to comment on images, remains of course an interesting occupation, but must inevitably lead to failure if the training has no other aims.

Once again, it should be noted that this larger view on what an image is (not just an object, but at least a Janus-like structure combining a visual interface and an active spectator) is not a characteristic of contemporary culture alone. In other historical periods, the role of the spectator and of the context of observation was as important as it is today. Not only in the intellectual, psychological meaning of the word, which concerns the necessity of knowing the rules of the game (when looking at a Russian icon, for instance, the spectator has to be familiar with the technique of the "inverse perspective"; when looking at, say, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," one has to know or to learn that cubism was a reaction against "linear prospective," etc.), but also in the material sense of the word, which concerns aspects such as: the body of the spectator and the physical and biological aspects of the act of looking, the existence and use of "looking machines," the material and institutional context of the act of looking.[8]

More broadly speaking, and this is the way we would like to answer the question on the nature of the image, it seems fruitful and even necessary to analyze the image not as a thing, a medium, an art form or whatever, but as a *cultural practice*, in which many dimensions (technical, psychological, institutional, artistic, etc.) are intertwined.[9]

WHAT TO DO (AT SCHOOL)?

First of all, it is always a pleasure to put aside some bad solutions. In the light of what has been argued above, it should be clear that two scenarios should be avoided at all cost: on the one hand a crash-course in art history and on the other hand, an instruction in computer literacy. Of course, we gladly admit that both courses help to face real problems, and maybe to find real solutions to them: students have clearly a lack of historical background and teachers are commonly undercompetent in technical matters. And of course we do not pretend that this knowledge and these skills are not important; on the contrary, they are. But what is missing in both approaches is the dialectics of the cultural practice.[10]

If the teaching of the image pays attention to visual dialectics, one should give priority to at least the two following aspects. First of all a description and analysis of the different aspects and parameters involved by the notion of the image: the image itself, of course, both in a synchronic and a diachronic way; its institutional context, as a dialogue of a production and a reception side; its technical and technological environment, and the impact of these aspects on the image itself. Second, and this aspect is even more paramount, the underlining of the shifting status of the image, which can be "monument" as well as "document." As Luc Baboulet explains it:

> A monument perpetuates an event and the memory of an event…. It materializes the will of the individual of the group to keep alive a relationship with the past that has been lived, but that it is impossible to live again and fastidious to repeat. Ideally speaking, it is the event itself. Practically speaking, it is its substitute. A document, on the contrary, helps to circumscribe the event, to define its nature and the story behind it, not to reenact its intensity: a document belongs to history…. This is why each document is such a threat to the monument: the first has the capacity of introducing a reinterpretation, and even a reconstruction of the latter, which can then no longer be thought of or experienced in a direct manner, nor as it was done before. Indeed, it is history itself which transforms what it creates: it congeals during a certain time the meaning of the documents it manipulates, and by doing so history produces blocks of provisional memory: the monument, in such a case, is never far away.[11] (437)

Yet the most interesting perspective is of course the knitting of these two perspectives: the multipolarity of the image and its fundamental (but exciting) hesitation

between document and monument. The study of the 19th century visual representation of the Far West by Martha Sandweiss is a wonderful example of this approach.[12] Sandweiss's book pays wonderful attention to the multilayeredness of the circulation of photographs of the American West, enabling her to correct many misunderstandings on the relationships between verbal and visual culture in the 19th century. It manages to find a perfect balance between the historical and cultural dimensions of its corpus (which she does not call "monument" and "document," but the image "in history" and the image "as history"). For the teaching of visual literacy, one can only hope that a book such as this will be widely read and used. Its unobtrusive but very efficient interdisciplinarity can provide a role model for cultural studies (whose scope is more and more determined by historical instead of exclusively contemporary questions) and visual literacy (whose basic error is to believe that there is such a thing as the image or a visual language).

A SMALL EXAMPLE TO END WITH (OR IS IT JUST A BEGINNING?)

Suppose the students retrieve an image from an Internet site and reuse it in their own site (or in a paper, or just store it). How can such a basic action, performed daily, often without any critical reflection, be linked with a concern for visual literacy (in the broad interdisciplinary sense we defend)?

A first concern here should be the relationship of the analysis of the image with the interdisciplinary background of the students. Contrary to many fashionable *PBL* (problem-based learning) methods, we do not believe that a previous disciplinary training is superfluous or can be learnt "on the job."[13] Rather than solving the problems at the moment they present the students, we prefer tackling those problems from within an already specified and organized disciplinary structure. Such a starting point means however that there can be no "uniform" teaching of visual literacy at more advanced levels, and this pluriformity should be accepted and even encouraged by the teachers, not in order to increase fragmentation, but to foster interdisciplinary cooperation within the groups of students.

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is the relationship with the "original"? etc.), on the way the image circulates in society, for instance but not exclusively, financially (who owns it, who sells it, now and in the past) and symbolically (how can one determine the "value" of an image?), and, last but not least, with the student's own use and reuse of the image (why do I use this image and not that one, and why do I use it just this way and not that way? etc.).

NOTES

1 For an even more radical theory of this conventionalism, see Goodman.

2 See Lester.

3 For a good survey of these influences, see van Alphen.

4 For a survey of modern iconophobia, see Mitchell.

5 For a survey, see Messaris, *Visual Literacy* and *Visual Persuasion*.

6 See Thompson.

7 For a discussion of this terminology coined by Aloïs Riegl in 1901, see Manovich 253-4.

8 For a survey, see Crary, *Techniques* and *Suspensions*.

9 The basic study on the image as cultural practice is still Raymond Williams's book on television.

10 An interesting historical comparison can be made here with the origins of the so-called New Criticism, whose focus on close-reading was not all determined by some elitist, high-cultural ideology of "l'art pour l'art," but by the necessity to teach a new type of culturally underdeveloped students who were given the opportunity to enroll massively in college thanks to the so-called GI Bill. (For a testimony, see Hillis Miller xxx.)

11 The original French text: "Le monument est la perpétuation de l'évènement, sa mémoire…. Il matérialise la volonté de l'individu ou du groupe de garder un lien avec un temps vécu, impossible à revivre et fastidieux à répéter. Idéalement, il est l'événement lui-même; pratiquement, il en tient lieu. Le document, lui, permet de cerner l'événement, d'en préciser la nature et le récit, non d'en revivre l'intensité: il est du côté de l'histoire…. C'est pourquoi le document est aussi pour le monument la plus grande menace: il peut amener à reconsidérer, voire à reconstruire, l'événement, qui ne pourra plus, alors, être pensé ou revécu en direct, ni de la même manière. Par un mouvement inverse, cependant, le document peut se transformer en monument. Car l'histoire elle-même procède par concrétions, elle fixe pour un temps la signification des documents qu'elle manipule, créant ainsi des blocs de mémoire provisoire: le monument n'est pas loin."

12 For a detailed review, see Baetens, "Review of Sandweiss."

13 For a discussion on the use of interdisciplinary in cultural studies, see Baetens, "Etudes culturelles.")

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FROM SOCIAL REALISM TO THE SPECTER OF ABSTRACTION: CONCEPTUALIZING THE VISUAL PRACTICES OF H. R. OCAMPO

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Abstract
This study of National Artist H. R. Ocampo argues for the critical necessity of producing a theoretical language adequate to modernist abstract painting in the Philippines. It situates Ocampo's stylistic shift from Social Realism to what is called "Neorealism" in the context of a post-war exhaustion of the narrative possibilities of nationalism. Both as a result of foreign domination and in order to get at a "pre-ideological" reality, the visual is first sheared off from a matrix of linguistic signification unavoidably overdetermined by questions of the nation. Later, with the Marcos appropriations of Philippine modernism, the momentarily autonomous visual indexed by abstract art is itself shown to be caught up in the ongoing argument over authentic nationalism. Beginning with Ocampo's Social Realist short story "Rice and Bullets," the essay explores the logic of abstraction and figuration in Ocampo's work. The essay argues that his process of abstraction is intimately connected to people's struggles, the sense that politics was somehow deeper than available language, and a world-historical shift in the nature of signification. The essay then turns to the fate of international abstract art and proposes some readings of the later abstract paintings of Ocampo. Finally it draws on Vicente Rafael's reading of writer Jose "Pete" Lacaba's politicization during the First Quarter Storm, to indicate some of the ways in which abstract images dissociated from "reality" might be utilized in the struggle for social justice.

Keywords
Philippine abstract art, Philippine modernism, neorealism, social realism

About the Author
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In his relatively under-appreciated books on cinema, Gilles Deleuze explains that cinema is a new array of practices for which philosophy must find the concepts, writing that "the great directors of the cinema may be compared … not merely with the great painters, architects and musicians, but also with thinkers" (xiv). 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 visual, aesthetic practices to other situations of uneven development or inadequation. Just as Deleuze launches "a taxonomy, an attempt at the classification of images and signs" that are being produced in a relatively new medium which, *by its*

very function, changes the nature of the philosophical endeavor (for one of the lessons of the cinema books is that the cinematic medium disrupts the very fabric of philosophic thought), we might imagine new readings for Philippine modernism. This endeavor would be tantamount to seeing Philippine modernist painting as itself a medium, albeit a marginalized one, capable of disrupting the habitual patterns of thought – i.e., the thought of the *dominant*.

This possibility implies that there may be a distinctive lag-time between the operations of various forms of mediation and the emergence of their politico-aesthetic theory. Philippine Neo-realist painting, which followed a first moment of Social Realism in the Philippines, was practiced by H. R. Ocampo and others from the early 1950s until the late 1970s, and has been appreciated principally for its formal and affective innovations. Ocampo's Neo-realist work has been seen as innovative, brash, even garish, and quintessentially if ineffably "Filipino."[1] Although it is usually conceded at the outset that Ocampo's 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 secures the stature of Ocampo's work as "exhibit A" of Philippine Modernism.[2] But just what is it about these works that gives them their supposed Filipino-ness?

Despite the fact that early modernism in the Philippines began with Edades' intellectual dismissal of the formalist idealism and romanticism of the Amorsolo school, modernism itself has often been dismissed as a bourgeois art practice intent upon deleting the social content from art in order to satisfy fetishistic collector-patrons. While some of this criticism is certainly true in various ways, it is possible to offer a more nuanced and complex reading of Neo-realism.

In many respects the major developments out of Philippine Neo-realism, specifically Socialist Realism (Pablo Baenz Santos, Papo de Asis, Orlando Castrillo, Renato Habulan, Al Manrique, Edgar Fernandez, Antipas Delotavo, Jose Tence Ruiz and others) in its second moment of the late 1960s to the mid 1980s and what I sometimes call the Syncretic Realism that follows this second SR moment (in the 90s: Emmanuel Garibay, Elmer Borlongan, the later works of Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Julie Lluch and many others) endeavor to return the concept to art practice – that is, the images strive to transmit conceptual thinking about the world and politics via the artwork. This (re)politicization of the artwork is at once a response to the perceived shearing off of social reference in abstract art and to the fact that after abstraction, images are unavoidably abstract (because, historically speaking, the visual itself has become a technology of abstraction). Abstraction marks the emergence of a

shift in the character of the visual, and later movements in Philippine painting endeavor to directly politicize that transformation.

This process of the transformation of the visual is not generally understood anywhere, less so in impoverished societies where there exists a dearth of material support for the creative production of the meta-practices of theory and philosophy. Thus there is a pressing need for the adequation of social practices of all types with concepts. The discourse about the role and function of artwork needs creative support – it is a philosophical and moreover a political necessity.

While the schism between language and the imaginary may be posited as the condition of language in general, the incommensurability of linguistic concepts with visual and even social practices is particularly problematic for politicized intellectual endeavors intent upon specifying the terms of oppression and counteracting these conditions. 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 Regis Debray's noteworthy endeavor to inaugurate the field of mediology in *Media Manifestos* because Debray takes the emphasis off of the sign and its interpretation and places it on the technical apparatuses that deploy signs and the activity signs enable (Debray [n.p.]). Debray's work on mediation would imply that it is important to look back at historical artworks as practices— as activities enmeshed in and enabling other activities. This view would allow the technological and historical situation of the work to become part of its significance. There is a very real danger that when antiquated ideas serve as templates with which to understand 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 liberatory tendencies. Ocampo's paintings are saying something not only about visual transformation but also about linguistic transformation; they would speak about a transformed situation of the human being in the Philippines. In many respects Ocampo's paintings are paintings because they *cannot* be words or, for that matter, political activity (in the traditional sense). To look ahead for a moment, we might say that a better understanding of the transmission of forces undertaken by an H. R. Ocampo painting might potentially lead to a consolidation of a variety of new forms of struggle which work through a *politics of affect*, and this strategy might be developed even now. However, what is more often heard instead with respect to Ocampo and to modernism in general is a rehearsal of sacred shibboleths (the supremacy of Realism, for example, or in some cases the essential character of nationalism).

If truly radical struggles and events are articulations taking place somehow beyond

the threshold of consolidated thought, one might seek an account of why this situation dominates. In what ways are language and reason, *as we know them*, inadequate to revolution, cultural or otherwise?

In countries not in the so-called center of both the so-called world-system and the so-called Western philosophical-theoretical tradition (of which it may be said of many of them that for centuries their greatest export has been the concrete abstraction of themselves—precisely in the form of capital), one might imagine that some forms of abstract thought have been stolen away (just like the frozen, alienated subjectivity that capital indeed is). Perhaps theory is, like most things, produced in the periphery, and consolidated and consumed in the center.[3] At the very least, one can say that the condition of possibility for the West is what is now known as the Third World, and that this is no less true for Western theory. Abstraction, which in its development follows the development of capitalism, may be thought of as peeling an image of a concrete practice from its location of production—as concept, as map, as (exchange-)value, and also as photographic image—and placing this separated form in a new pathway of circulation that functions in accord with a new set of laws. These laws imbue the abstracted image with new properties. Therefore, to employ that specialized technology of abstraction called "theory," which, like that other equally discerning language known as science tends to accumulate in zones of capital concentration, might be construed here in the Philippines as an act of expropriating the expropriators. Of course, the cultural worker engaged in such creative re-appropriations must proceed with a sense of caution and some risk, endeavoring to be vigilant against doing the work of imperialism and to avoid becoming an expropriator himself.

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 entitled "Nationalism's Molten Prayers: The Early Writings of Filipino National Artist H. R. Ocampo," which first appeared in *Philippine Studies*.[4] As I attempted to make clear there, Ocampo is perhaps particularly suited here for what I have in mind in terms of the visual transformations characteristic of Philippine modernity, not only because of his innovation, but also because of his prolific activity outside of painting (as short story writer, as editor, as screenwriter). Furthermore, the developmental trajectory of his work, from social realism to abstraction and from writer to painter, is highly significant.

In the earlier essay, I discussed Ocampo's little known serial novel, *Scenes and Spaces*, in order to show that at the expiration of narrative possibility just before World War II, an

autonomous visual emerges. *Scenes and Spaces* took as its project the writing into being of a protagonist who might be an adequate (masculine) national subject in the context of US imperialism. However, unable to realize this project narratively because of real, historical limitations—Ocampo could not invent a realistic way for a Filipino masculine subject to exercise self-determination in a society dominated by a foreign (US) presence— Ocampo has his main characters veer off into hallucinatory visual experiences. These hallucinations are indeed peeled off of the narrative events even though they have nowhere to go in the narrative. A fervent portrait of the national artist as a young writer almost becomes a portrait of the artist as a visual dreamer—as if abstract visions in the Philippines were spilt nationalist struggle.

This temporal-historical movement from narrativity to visuality, and from social realism to abstraction, informs the movement of Ocampo's paintings of the thirties and forties (which have a clear pro-proletarian agenda), to his post-war abstractions. It is in this movement that Ocampo literally re-invents the visual and its possibilities. What is peeled off from daily life has a new autonomy and a new potentiality. Although to many critics, including some of the revolutionary socialist realists of the Marcos era, the neo-realist abstractions may appear as exercises in formalism, it is the wager of the present essay that the conceptualization of Ocampo's strategies of creation may be of service—not only to Ocampo's work, but more generally to those of us who would learn from the historical record of struggles against forms of fascism.[5]

POLITICS AND METAMORPHIC FORM

H. R. Ocampo, one of the first *non-objective* painters in the Philippines and the principle 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"[6] (58). In other words, the "non-objective" character of Neo-realism was an effort to figure those "new realities," a new objective situation, constituted through conflict—*the struggle over the significance of things*.[7] Noting that Ocampo understood his painting in contradistinction to photographic practice supports one of the principle claims of my work here: H. R. Ocampo's abstractions were not mere copying of Western art forms in a Filipino key, as has sometimes been racistly and imperialistically asserted. On the contrary, his paintings were hard-won records of the new character of sociality implied by radical changes in the social fabric after World War II. 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 in the Philippines has strong indigenous roots.[8] The creative power of Filipino people laboring under the leveraged constraints of US imperialism and the full penetration of the money economy into the provinces must be credited with the occasion for both the political and aesthetic revolutions that confronted forced modernization, namely, 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 (many of them borrowed from Kandinsky), the origins of modernism are much deeper or more "local" than such a foundation myth would indicate. It has been said in the Philippines 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 US colonial modernity was installed with the help of "free trade," an English language mass educational system, a Euro-US capital dependent agricultural cash crop export industry that fostered an indigenous (*mestizo*) oligarchy and reorganized rural waged labor, US CIA propaganda campaigns, a print-journalism culture, and an emergent mass entertainment industry. Albeit fraught with compromises, Filipinos waged a modern revolution against the exploitation of Filipinos on various fronts, and cultural modernism was one of this revolution's fruits.

Modernism, as already indicated, is said to have had 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 13 modern painters which included himself, Galo. B. Ocampo, Carlos (Botong) Francisco, H. R. Ocampo, Vicente Manasala, Cesar Legaspi, Diosdado M. Lorenzo, Demetrio Diego, Jose Pardo, Bonifacio Cristobal, Arsenio Capili, Ricarte Purugunan, Anita Magsaysay-Ho. Later, the Neo-Realist Group was composed of H. R. Ocampo, Cesar Lagaspi, Vicente Manansala, Romeo V. Tabuena, Victor Oteyza, Ramon Estella, Carlos (Botong) Francisco, and Victorio C. Edades and Nena Saguil.[9]

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, for intelligence purposes. What might his switch from socialist realism to abstraction have to do with his first-hand experience of the imbrication of media and politics? In a discussion of Ocampo's career, Angel de Jesus, Ocampo's friend, colleague, fellow-Veronican and quasi-biographer, takes pains to suggest that, although Ocampo may have been a collaborator when it came to working with the

Japanese, he was not a capitulator. De Jesus 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. (30)

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 US victory in the Pacific, as a compromising past. Caught between the US and Japan, there are no easy or clear-cut positions here. De Jesus continues his discussion of Ocampo's *vitae* by telling us that during the war, Ocampo was detained overnight in Fort Santiago and cross-examined by "a Japanese Harvard Graduate" on suspicion of ties with the agrarian socialist movement 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" (30). De Jesus's concluding remarks on Ocampo's involvement with the Japanese progaganda machine are as follows:

> 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. (32)

De Jesus sees Ocampo and his coterie of writers and painters as harboring an authentic Philippine nationalism. Ocampo is able to roll with the changes and to cut a path through 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" stays authenticity. The character of this authenticity, which De Jesus sees Ocampo to embody, will produce what he calls, "The Artist as Filipino."

H. R. Ocampo was also 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 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." (De Jesus [n.p.])

Before turning to Ocampo's paintings, I would like to look at a brief example of H. R. Ocampo's writing—a 1937 short story called "Rice and Bullets."[10] In this social realist tale, the protagonist, Tura, joins his fellow peasants in a protest against rice hoarders. The story emphasizes the hunger experienced by the main character and those around him (his family, the other peasants) as well as the creation of a sense of community and of power. In the final clash of the peasants with the police, Tura is shot and killed.

What I want to remark on here are Ocampo's tropological practices. The manner in which he creates figures in prose is not too distant from the modality of figuration in the painted works. As Tura answers his wife Marta's question about the stones he is carrying in his rice sack to a protest, 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. Tura has only stones in a sack that once contained rice. 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 semi-feudal, 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 important aspect of Ocampo's work 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 band-stand made one of his dramatic pauses. And as the moments 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. (64-5, emphasis 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, for Ocampo (at least here) the primary media of political action. That said, however, it is important to remember that Ocampo's painting would later develop a numeric color system that rivaled the abstract rationality of Mondrian or conceptuality of 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 is at this juncture not quite an account of, but rather an indication of, 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 entire 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 furiously begin to fill their rice sacks. 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 textural—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 here of Ocampo's Social Realist painting, *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 which 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 creation of an image that allows one person's situation to stand in 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 see already in "Rice and Bullets" that the circulation of color and form in Ocampo's work is inscribed within the struggle between labor and capital. Such an insight would confirm the hypothesis developed in "Nationalism's Molten Prayers" that the biomorphic abstraction of Ocampo's neo-realist paintings (1950s-1970s), hallucinated twenty to forty years earlier by the principle 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 his period as irresolvable in narrative. The social crisis in and as the masculine subject undergoes a dramatic and qualitative shift that catapults it into the visual. 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 non-narrative and therefore, momentarily at least, beyond the reach of history. As mentioned in "Nationalism's Molten Prayers" 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 painting look like military camouflage.

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. Though 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 non-narrative 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 posthumously, to the status of 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.[11]

To put it another way, where the viscerality of historical narrative (realism) drives one toward a struggle which will end in death, the viscerality of visual abstraction (neo-realism) drives to a struggle that may indeed be continued. The radical edge of this work was sheared off in H. R.'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 incompleted 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 strivings of 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 at another level because Mr. Remulla, the organizer, is an American—it is an American who catalyzes the bloodshed (white skin leads to bloodshed). This fact, coupled to 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 viscerality and

reason.

We know that Tura's politicization is first and foremost 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 swarm into the rice warehouse, 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 carefully, 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 but 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 Neo-realist painting has a definite precursor here.[12] This elimination of a distinct foreground and background could also be thought of as elimination of perspective, or rather, an intermixing of perspective such that many points of view are simultaneously available. It is here that "Rice and Bullets" alternate title, "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 lives 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) to 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 non-representation 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, the year Leon Ma. Guerrero began his translations of the work 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" (251), 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, Neo-realism appears as an acknowledgement 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 incisive translations of Rizal's implacable satire and Anderson's damning comparisons of these passages with the Guerrero translation's inability to accommodate the universe of differences mobilized by Rizal under the rigid template of Guerrero's post-war 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?" (252). 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" (251-2). Significantly, Anderson argues that Guerrero's principal translation problem was in the obfuscation of what he calls Rizal's "social realism" (252).

Returning momentarily to the argument of "Nationalism's Molten Prayers," 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: ludic, hallucinatory passages in an otherwise realistic reportage, which could well describe paintings that Ocampo would not execute 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 specter of comparisons was transformed into the specter of abstraction.[13] 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 the historical juncture marked by Neo-realism, the dismissal of the actual becomes the greatest indictment of it. Perhaps this giving way to an imaginary seemingly de-linked 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.[14] In the conjuncture specified by World War Two and the period immediately following, both in the Philippines as well as elsewhere, only in a place outside of narrative and beyond logical history could freedom be posited. The realpolitik of the increasingly reactionary and increasingly totalitarian nation-state could not satisfy. Thus the specter of comparisons is, by 1945, 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 a signifier whose chain of signification was inexorably tied to the nation-state, offered a realm of freedom, was precisely the specter by which a comparison of the real might be gleaned. It became, for a short time, that imaginary realm which 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 Neo-realist 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" (9). For Greenberg, 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 strawman], on the other hand, the reflected effect has already been included in the picture ready for the spectators unreflected enjoyment. (15)

What is correctly stated though improperly analyzed in this extremely confused essay (whose confusion is due precisely to a purported aesthetic clarity in distinguishing Avant Garde from Kitsch, the progressive from the reactionary) is that the forces of industrialization are also the cause for the emergence of modernism: "[a] society, as it becomes less and less able, in the course of its development, to justify 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" (3-4). The break-up of the forms of traditional society, the fragmentation of the public and universal literacy are simultaneous.

My point is that 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)—these developments in art and criticism occur 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, is *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, "[c] ontent 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." (6) 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. (6)

This moment in the aesthetic, which today might be summed up as "the medium is the medium" characteristic of the thirties and forties, may be usefully contrasted with Marshall McLuhan's formulation of some years later that the medium is the message, which, coincides with the emerging commercial and ideological success of abstract expressionism. The moment of abstraction in painting is the moment in which the visual achieves a definitive split with signification—the 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 for those who like labels. In between, the Nazis, the Soviets under Stalin, and the conservative Right in the United States all rejected abstract art because of qualities related to its perceived decadence (its fall out of meaning). In hindsight, it is clear that it was the ostensible rejection of ideology and the very non-languagableness of abstraction that put off dogmatic regimes. Only during the Cold War, when congress sensed that abstract expressionism might do more to promote an ideology of American Freedom worldwide than it would to offend the taste of conservatives, did the CIA along with the Museum of Modern Art in New York get behind the promotion of abstraction both ideologically and financially.[15] From the point of view of the state, AE meant the national and cultural superiority of the US. 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 CIA and the MOMA and to the production

of ideology for the international interests of US incorporated, mirrors to a certain extent the question of whether Ocampo's neo-realism 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 further 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" (Rubin cited in Craven) – an ideology of non-ideology if there ever was one – we can, for better or for worse, gain insight on 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. (Craven 2)

Here Pollock's style returns as code. As the massive literature on Pollock's work testifies, his paintings, which for Greenberg were part of a movement that avoided content "like a plague" 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 (5-6). The struggle to claim Pollock and Abstract Expressionism generally from and for various political quarters testifies less to the greatness of the work, which is all good enough, and more to the emergence of a new realm of visuality, the struggle for which characterizes the second half of the twentieth century. 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) – whether cultural modernism 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 worldview? Furthermore, in what way is the new 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. 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 world historical shift in human relations and sensibility, bringing with its harsh brutalities previously unimagined and lucid spiritual flights of re-creation (Berman). To bring this point home, one might refer to the modernism of dictatorship and simultaneously the modernism of the EDSA 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. These facts reveal, rather, 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 ramified 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 its 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 up of the visual itself. Indeed it was the same arguments which, presented in a different key, brought the US government around to abstract art—art was unconstrained and freed from representation (and offered up to be 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 socio-historical forces and to understand that one works with art/text/artist to discover and re-transmit 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 during an accident caused by overhasty construction and who had their protruding limbs hacked off and their cries ignored so that construction could continue right on top of them. The Film Center was to be the complement to 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, painting haunts 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 pumps out tears of blood in the smallest denomination of 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 intensifying further still 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 visuality 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, of value and, therefore, of meaning.

MAGIC, MULTIPLE, MYRIAD PERSPECTIVES AND DENATURALIZATION

In their extremely important work *The Philippines: the Continuing Past*, Renato and Letizia R. Constantino write that "[t]he end of the war [and the installation of Manuel Roxas as first president of the Philippine Republic on July 4, 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 guerilla ranks" (188).[16] Nonetheless, *The Continuing Past* describes a new level of CIA interference with 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 US 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 *US 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*. (238, emphasis 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. Though propaganda was by no means invented here, WWII had brought it to new levels of sophistication (from Hitler to Frank Capra), particularly regarding the waging of war with images. With US financial backing, Lansdale and Magsaysay were able to coddle 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." (240-1)

While cameras were used to survey polling booths in 1951, the *Philippine 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" (240), was installed among counter-guerilla tactics that included civilian commando units, dogs, and air force strafing and bombing with US supplied napalm.

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, cooptation 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" (259) hired especially to cover his campaign, Magsaysay, "The Man of Action," whom Pete 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.[17]

The "Magic Eye" turns an organ of revolution into an instrument of counter-revolutionary 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 US 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 via print journalism, EDCOR films, commercial cinema and, in the case of the safe-conduct passes, aircraft. 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 becomes 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 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." (A8)

Fig. 1. *The Hat Weavers*, 1940

Here again 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 neo-colonial gaze of the US, now operating out of the materiality of daily life in the Philippines. In 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*" 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, it is fascinating that Ocampo's early figurative painting *The Hat Weavers* (1940, Figure 1) depicts a family of peasants without eyes. Their bodies are turned and their heads are bent as if looking at the hat-weaving work that the mother-figure is

doing. The detail in the fringe around the perimeter of the hats tells us that the overall resolution of the image as a whole 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.

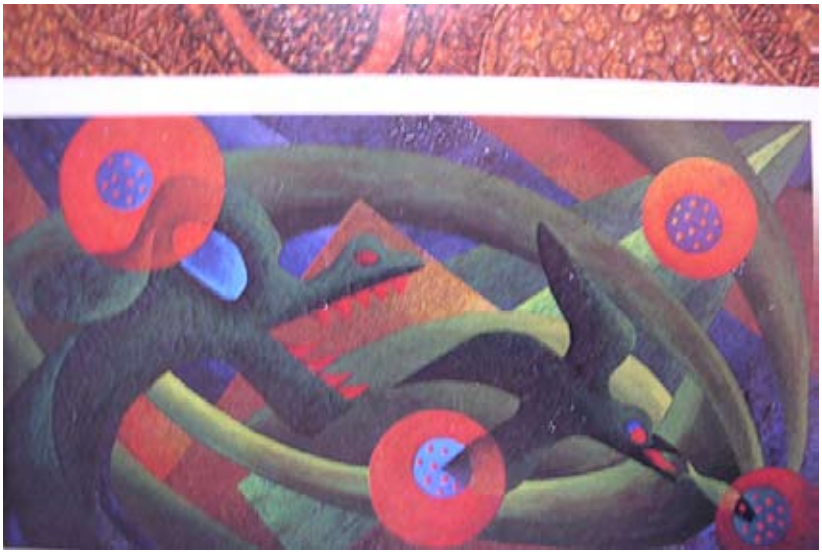

Fig. 2. *Practical Politics*, 1949

By the time of *Practical Politics* (1949, Figure 2), 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 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. The dragon-body is in fact the environment, and this environment ensnares its prey. The fiercest animal in the universe of the painting appears as an excrescence of its cosmic structure, a structure which in turn provides the *mise-en-scène* for the predatory politics depicted. 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 indicative of 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 here 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—in any case they can be seen through. 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 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.

Though not yet christened Neo-realism, 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 the H. R. mantra, "Unity, coherence, emphasis" even as it provides a would-be nationalist image.

Particularly interesting for us here is that these eyes have many pupils. As already suggested by my reading of this work, these pupils represent the masses yet 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, becomes 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 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.

Fig. 3. *Masks*, 1956

By the time of *Masks* (1956, Figure 3), it is not just eyes and allegorical icons that appear, new faces seem to grow 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 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 undecideability 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 viewers are absorbed by the logic of the painting and then overtaken, incorporated into its material. Are we having fun, are we encountering 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 well … 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, co-present 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 on the process of subjectification for a particular historical moment.

Fig. 4. *Politico Cancer*, 1958

A few years later, in *Politico Cancer* (1958, Figure 4), Ocampo portrays interlocked entities of shifting form and shape. Though 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 sense in the protoplasmic soup of the *socius*. What foreshadows the mutant 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

far greater development in the late 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 entities by an unregulated growth that renders boundaries and meaning undecidable.

SPECTACULAR ANTITHESIS / SPECTERS OF COMMUNISM

In the late 1970s, summing up the period under discussion here, Angel De Jesus writes as follows:

> In 1947 Nanding [H. R.] 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 canvasses. 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. (62)

In his essay "Patronage, Pornography and Youth," Vince Rafael elegantly counterposes a spectacle-driven Marcos-era scopic regime, welded during the mid-sixties to the co-factors 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 January 26 and January 30, 1970 (150). I mention this contest

between (the) spectacle on the one-hand and (the) movement on the other because it seems to confirm the anti-fascist pro-people strains and strategies of Ocampo's later work. In short, it will help us to reframe the question I posed in "Nationalism's Molten Prayers" regarding H.R.'s later work: where did the socialist orientation go? Thus far 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 how so?

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-sixties 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. (150)

While I analyze the bomba film and the exploitation of women "made to represent instances of larger intentions at work" elsewhere,[18] 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" (150). 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 which 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 Kerkleveit's proto-revolutionary 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, in Jose (Pete) Lacaba's account of the frenzied First Quarter Storm rally that marked his 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 form 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." (158-9)

As Rafael notes, Lacaba's experience of the chaos of the FQS, which Lacaba says leads to his own polticization, 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 Neo-realism. But reading with the grain of Lacaba's account, Rafael makes another important point here. Lacaba's politicization does not result from these dissociations alone. When Lacaba tries to help a student only to find himself attacked, he screams "Putanginamo!" ["You son of a bitch!"] 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" (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" (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 pre-condition of dis-identification 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" (161).

It is this anti-reificatory gesture designed to unbuild 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 is stunted revolutions, socialism in a bourgeois frame, where it is understood that the frame is the pressure of national bourgeois society on visuality and the socialist imagination, the separation of nationalist democratic aspirations from a discourse that can sustain them. We can identify this frame with the world-media-system, with a global sea-change in the dispensation of language and visuality and with the specificity of the latter half of the twentieth century in the Philippines. What is in process inside the 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.[19]

Ocampo's late images are, then, specters of communism, the brilliant potentiality of a set of communal desires for an interdicted community. I want to emphasize that Ocampo's work is not a series of idyllic pictures of "what things would look like if we had egalitarian society." What is important here is process. The work is a continual engagement with a violent world that foists compromise and humiliation on national-democratic aspiration, a world that has rendered Ocampo's nationalist and proletarian hopes for the Philippines abstract and is thus rendered abstract in turn. It is an abstract realization of the "frustrated desires" and "feverish dreams"[20] of an artist who "had to make a living" in the postcolonial context of the Philippines.

Why is it important to argue thus? First, to call Ocampo's work socialism in a bourgeois frame is not to diminish Ocampo, in spite of what ultimately may be for us his disappointing compromises and ideological depoliticization. Ocampo's stature is, finally, not central here. What is important is that seeing Ocampo's work as socialism in a bourgeois frame, as specters of communism, 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 is perhaps better for us not to dismiss Ocampo's work but instead to claim it, just as the land, the state, and all that has been expropriated in the name of private property are to be claimed by and for the people. In building a revolutionary culture, part of what we must do is to show how what is comes from the people and how it can be used by the people. This struggle involves unearthing the social logic that, though repressed, nonetheless drives the production of the object world, including art and visuality, but also private property and labor. Furthermore, we must indict the reactionary social logic that reifies and enframes the world of objects, of art, of commodities, and of vision itself. In Ocampo's words, "The organic totality and unity of things give the whole, as well as each cell, its significance." (20) 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 all things.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION: CAN THE SPECTER SPEAK?

Having said all this, I must admit that some of the later works of H. R. leave me somewhat frustrated because the aesthetic uplift I experience in front of these works has nowhere to go, less perhaps I claim it as a motivation for writing this article. While his portrait *Che* (Figure 5, 1968) and the painting *Man and Carabao* (Figure 6, 1969), which Ocampo considered to be one of his most important works, still resonate in a figurative register, paintings such as *Sampayan* which is still just figurative, *The Last Days of September* (Figure 7, 1972), which one assumes was done just after the declaration of Martial Law, and *Homage to Gomburza* (Figure 8, 1977) 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 perception 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. (109-12)

Fig. 5. *Che*, 1968

Fig. 6. *Man and Carabao*, 1969

Fig. 7. *The Last Days of September*, 1972

Fig. 8. *Homage to Gomburza*, 1977

Guillermo is right to note the non-realization 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 post-war nationalism. The later works achieve a near total detachment from referentiality.

While it is clear that many of the visual melody paintings achieve a dynamism and unity heretofore unimagined by Ocampo or perhaps 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 de-reification 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.

Such frustration was the conclusion of the upcoming generation of painters and filmmakers who would turn again to social realism. I have said that Neo-realism opened a realm of freedom, the visual, which almost immediately became a site of contestation. Formally speaking, abstract art was one 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" (82). 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 sixties and early seventies grew increasingly abstract and as poverty and violence grew more concrete, the people demanded more.

NOTES

1 See for example, Torres, *Philippine Abstract Painting* 62-3.

2 "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 decor…. 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." (Torres, *Philippine Abstract Painting* 24)

3 The pursuit of such a question 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 worker beyond the sheer appearances of things and give him or her 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 a country which has largely dominated intellectual production during the latter twentieth century and which developed the theory of the signifier – France. Such intellectual formations can in no way be separated from the fact of France's "anthropological tradition," meaning its imperialism, and the dialectic of empowerment and threat posed by its domination of the Other. One might say similar things about Marx, Freud Lukacs, Althusser and the other great theorists of abstraction.

4 See my "Nationalism's Molten Prayers: The Early Writings of Filipino National Artist H. R. Ocampo," *Philippine Studies* 47 (Fourth Quarter 1999): 468-91. The complete study is forthcoming as *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle and the World-Media System*, Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

5 Though 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 the latter life and work of H. R., one should also remember here that the late Lino Brocka also on many occasions made films primarily to make money—for other 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 lifework. 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.

6 "Non-objective " here is meant as used in discourse about the "13 moderns," that is, in contradistinction to the objectivity of realism. Romanatic allegory (Juan Luna), and impressionism (Amorsolo) all had their moments prior to and during what is considered to be modernism.

7 "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 film makers of Italy." (Paras-Perez 6)

8 See Nemenzo. See also Kerkvliet.

9 See De Jesus.

10 "Rice and Bullets" first appeared in the *Sunday Tribune Magazine*, April 18, 1937. The text I am using is from *Philippine Cross-Section: An Anthology of Outstanding Filipino Short Stories in English*. 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", in *Philippine Short Stories: 1925-1940* edited by Yabes. De Jesus, 60-9.

11 Reynaldo C. Ileto, in his important work *Filipinos and Their Revolution*, 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." (167) 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.

12 See Paras-Perez on HRO and the elimination of foreground and background.

13 It is noteworthy that "the specter 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)

14 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 hears; 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 Greenberg 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*.

15 For an excellent history and analysis of this moment in the history of AE, see Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollack and After*.

16 Renato Constantino is one of the exemplary Philippine historians of the twentieth century.

17 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 Daroy 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" (82).

18 See Beller, "Third Cinema" 331-68.

19 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)

20 In "An Interview With H. R. Ocampo" conducted by Torres and Munoz," 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 symbols. I do not say to myself I will do a painting that will demonstrate this or that idea." (18-9)

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ANTI-US IMPERIALISM AS ASSERTION OF BLACK SUBJECTIVITY AT THE TURN OF THE LAST CENTURY

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Abstract
US imperialism of the Philippines at the turn of the last century raised difficult and painful issues for African Americans struggling to gain justice and equal rights in American society. Kelly Miller, an African American academician and active polemicist for Negro rights, wrote in 1900, at the beginning of the Philippine American War, his essay "The Impact of Imperialism on the Negro Race" to exhort his fellow black Americans to oppose the US colonization of the Philippines and to support Philippine independence. Miller saw through the American government's policy of "benevolent assimilation" toward the Philippines and recognized its racist underpinnings. For Miller the imperialist wars revealed the moral bankruptcy of the American government in violating the principles of the Declaration of Independence and reneging on its promise of equal rights to black Americans. In this essay I will argue that Miller espoused anti-imperialism as an assertion of a morally ascendant black subjectivity. In the face of rabid violent exclusion of blacks in American national life, Miller proposed an alternative narrative of history that contested the white narrative of racial supremacy. African Americans, in remaining loyal to the principles of equality and justice, would suffer so much more but would eventually and inevitably constitute a superior civilization based on moral principles. I will show, however, that like most other black middle class antiracist thinking of his time, Miller's alternative narrative of black ascendancy was undermined by his acceptance of Western ideological paradigms of civilization and standards of moral superiority. Yet, Miller's position raises important questions about the discursive "containment" of uplift ideology in the context of the imperialist debates.

Keywords
Kelly Miller, Philippine American War , US imperialism

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Matthew Frye Jacobson, in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, studies the reconfiguration of "whiteness" during the turn-of-the-century American imperialist wars. Non-Anglo European immigrants—the Irish, Russian Jews, Poles, Italians, and Greeks—who had not been considered white enough by the Anglo-Americans were nonetheless, conferred (as citizens) "the fruits of white supremacist conquest" (206). The Anglo-Americans drew the color line around the newly constituted fellow Caucasians in the face of the perceived threat of savagery represented by blacks and the other colored

peoples in the territories abroad (7). Those outside the color line—the colored peoples, especially the Blacks who lived within the national body—were constituted as enemies (Kaplan 219).

For African Americans who had been struggling to gain justice and equal rights in US society, this period would be one of the most difficult, what Raymond Logan described as "the nadir," in black American history (qtd. in Gaines 437). As interest in overseas expansion rose in the last decade of the 19th century, black Americans experienced renewed onslaught of political and social repression. They saw their hard-worn political rights being worn away by the unabating tides of racism. William Loren Katz, in his preface to *The Black Press Views American Imperialism (1898-1900)* by George Marks, describes the sufferings of the blacks at the turn of the last century:

> Beginning in 1890 each state of the old Confederacy wrote into law, often into its constitution, provisions for the disfranchisement of its black citizens and their segregation in public schools, conveyances, and facilities.
>
> In the South, mob action accompanied discriminatory laws and decisions. From 1889 to 1901, when overseas expansion escalated, 2,000 black men, women and children were lynched, often with unspeakable brutality. (viii)

He narrates too, how African Americans elected into government office were murdered and black voters terrorized (viii). The racist rhetoric around the Cuban crisis, and especially in the Philippine-American War, betrayed a "homologous identification" of the black Americans with the Cubans and the Filipinos from the whites' point of view.

> [T]he Cubans's perceived racial identity (as Negro) bolstered the argument about their incapacity for self-government—the power to represent themselves. Filipinos were similarly portrayed as stereotypically "Negroid" in popular writing and political cartoons. (Kaplan 228)

The conflation, especially of the Filipino rebels (called "Niggers" by white soldiers) with the African Americans betrayed how the whites regarded the blacks (Bresnahan 164-8).

Amy Kaplan, in her study of black soldiers during the Spanish-American War, "Black and Blue on San Juan Hill," points out that this "homologous racial identity" was

nevertheless "open to conflicting political interpretations." Southern Democrats used the same argument—the inferiority of colored races, black or brown—to oppose annexation of the Philippines so as not to add more Negroes to the republic (228).

African American communities were divided on the question of American imperialism (Marks xvii). Booker T. Washington, who was recognized by the government as spokesman for black Americans, campaigned vigorously among his people to support the Republican foreign policy (Katz x). Some blacks saw the colonization of the Philippines as a chance for black imperialism, to enrich themselves as Negro colonists (Marks 101). Majority of the black writers—members of the press, novelists, essayists—however, took a strong position against American imperialism:

> Many editorials in the black press took the side of their "brown brothers" and decried the exportation of post-Reconstruction disfranchisement, Jim Crow laws, and the resurgence of violence and virulent racism to the new outposts of empire. (Kaplan 228)

This present study will focus on one black American's formulation of resistance to American imperialism—Kelly Miller's, an academician and active polemicist for Negro rights, whose writings have been largely ignored by contemporary scholars. Miller's "The Impact of Imperialism on the Negro Race," written in 1900, at the beginning of the Philippine-American War, encapsulates many of the issues imperialism raised for black Americans. The article is among the very few extant fully articulated essays on the Philippine-American War written by a black American during the period.

Roger Bresnahan, in *In Time of Hesitation: American Anti-Imperialists and the Philippine-American War*, comments that Miller realized in 1900 what W. E. B. Du Bois understood only much later, "that suppression of brown men in Asia would lead to further suppression of black men in America" (13). Miller saw through the American government's proposed policy of "benevolent assimilation" toward the Philippines and recognized its racist underpinnings. For Miller, the imperialist wars revealed the moral bankruptcy of the American government in violating the principles of the Declaration of Independence and reneging on its promise of equal rights to black Americans. I will argue that Miller espoused anti-imperialism as an assertion of a morally ascendant black subjectivity. In the face of rabid violent exclusion of blacks in American national life, Miller proposes an alternative narrative of history that contests the white narrative of racial supremacy. African Americans, in remaining loyal to the principles of equality and justice, suffered so much more but eventually and inevitably constituted a superior civilization based on

moral principles. I will show, however, that like most other black middle class antiracist thinking of his time, Miller's alternative narrative of black ascendancy was undermined by his acceptance of Western ideological paradigms of civilization and standards of moral superiority. Yet, Miller's position raises important questions about the discursive "containment" of uplift ideology in the context of the imperialist debates.

KELLY MILLER'S LIFE-TIME WORK OF DEFENDING AFRICAN AMERICAN RIGHTS

Kelly Miller, educator and essayist, was born on July 23, 1863 in Winnsboro, South Carolina. He is the sixth of ten children of a free Negro, Kelly Miller, Sr., a tenant farmer, and Elizabeth Roberts, a slave. His father served in the Confederate army and he had a paternal uncle who later became a member of the South Carolina legislature. The young Miller rose from poverty through scholarships and graduated from Howard University with a degree in mathematics in 1886. While studying in college, he worked at the US Pension Office and was able to buy a farm out of his savings as gift to his parents at his graduation. After college, he continued working at the Pension Office, at the same time pursuing his studies in mathematics, physics, and astronomy. Miller became a mathematics professor at Howard, in 1890, where he also earned a master's degree in 1901 and a doctorate in 1903. In 1894, he married Annie May Butler, a teacher in Baltimore Normal School, by whom he had five children (Frazier 456).

Miller was appointed Howard's Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1907-1918 and is credited for developing the university's curriculum, broadening it to include the physical and biological sciences and sociology. Through all his years with Howard, Miller wrote and lectured extensively throughout the country on the race issue. Miller turned from the teaching of mathematics to sociology, in the interest of defending and promoting his race (Woodson 138). Miller, during his lifetime, was best known for his "significant contribution to the higher education of the Negro" (Frazier 456) and his "open letters" to Thomas Dixon, Jr. and to Presidents Roosevelt, Wilson and Harding in defense of African American rights and dignity (Review of *The Everlasting Stain* 573). It was his presentation and analysis of the state of Negro education that the US Bureau of Education chose for its 1901 *Report* (Eisenberg 182). He assisted, together with others, W.E. B. Du Bois in editing *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Johnson 15). Miller was the founder of the Negro Sanhedrin Movement, the first attempt to form a coalition of all black American groups in the US in the early 1920s (Hughes 3).

A colleague at Howard University described Miller as "one of the most conspicuous publicists of the race, being the author of several books and numerous pamphlets, beside making frequent contributions to periodicals, both in America and abroad" (Holmes 377). He was one of the first African American academician to write regularly for the black press, with articles appearing weekly for twenty years, in "more than 100 newspapers" (*The New York Times*). The Associated Publishers, in its notice for Miller's *The Everlasting Stain*, called the author as "the greatest pamphleteer of the Negro race, having distributed over half a million documents in this form" and "the greatest essayist the Negro race has yet produced" (Review of *The Everlasting Stain* 573). Moreover, Miller traveled extensively throughout the country, giving speeches before groups of blacks and even whites (Eisenberg 183).

Given Miller's involvements, it was inevitable that he would be drawn into the fierce public debate at the beginning of the twentieth century between W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington on the issue of "industrial education" and "higher education." Though Miller defended Washington vigorously, he could see the "narrowness of the views of the advocates of the industrial education" and advocated "higher education for the Negro because he thought that only through a liberal education could the nature of men be 'uplifted'" (Frazier 456). For Miller, the two poles, representing two different approaches to the Negro problem ("conservative" and "radical"), were both strategically necessary to win Negro rights. Miller, the mathematician that he was, described the dispute as an "attempt to decide whether the base or the altitude is the more important element of the triangle." (Miller, *Race Adjustment* 11-2, 28)

Miller's approach to the race problem was characterized as "analytical and rational … an appeal to reason and … to conscience" (Frazier 456). Miller, in all of his writings, flatly rejected the white supremacist theory of black racial inferiority, brilliantly refuting the claims of "scientific racism" (e.g., Miller "A Review of Hoffman's Race Traits"). He believed in the basic equality of races and in the important contribution Negroes could make to the nation. Miller's published essays are collected in four volumes: *Race Adjustment* (1908), *Out of the House of Bondage* (1912), *An Appeal to Conscience* (1916), and *The Everlasting Stain* (1924).

MILLER'S ANTI-IMPERIALISM AS ASSERTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SUBJECTIVITY

"The Effect of Imperialism on the Negro Race," one of Miller's earliest essays,

written at the beginning of the Philippine-American War, allows us to look at the issues imperialism raised for the black Americans. The article gives us an idea of Miller's views on imperialism and his formulation of the Negro subjectivity and position vis-à-vis the dominant white Americans.

For Miller, the connection between domestic and global racism was very clear. Miller opens his essay: "The welfare of the Negro race is vitally involved in the impending policy of imperialism" (157). The whole essay is an illustration of this *vital* connection between imperialism and the African American. Miller discusses imperialism in the context of the entire history of black struggle for justice and equality in American society. He goes back to two significant moments in this history: the adoption of the Declaration of Independence and the amendment of the federal constitution. Miller claims the Declaration of Independence as "the emancipation proclamation of the human race" (158). For the black slaves "this has been the one ray of hope which has been held out to the Negro amid more than a century of trial and vicissitude" (157).

The fact that Miller calls on the entire black American history to discuss imperialism indicates what he recognizes as the grave importance of the situation: American imperialism is a landmark event in black-white relationship in America, an event that will impact black Americans radically, just as the Declaration of Independence and the amendment of the constitution did, but toward the opposite direction of repression and disempowerment. In such a crisis, Miller calls on the full force of African American revolutionary legacy.

Miller's stress on the significance of the Declaration of Independence is crucial, too, to his critique of US imperialism and his formulation of the Negro subjectivity. The principles of the Declaration become for Miller the benchmark of morality that defines being an American, and ultimately, being civilized. Miller twits the Anglo-American for his "bad logic" though having a "good sense": "the Revolutionary fathers did not dare apply the logic of their principles. They lacked the courage of their conscience." It took a hundred years before the abstract principles were given "the first step toward its realization" (157).

Miller critiques contemporary US society as controlled by might rather than principles: "all sensible men know that might is still the effective force in government. In spite of constitutional compacts or written promises, the strong will rule the weak, the rich will control the poor, and the wise man will dominate the fool." Miller, in his version of Social Darwinism, sees this status quo, characterized by the domination of the weak by the powerful, as a product of "social forces at work" but which will give way to a higher form of civilization (158).

Miller points out that the present form of American government is predicated on "equality of power and prowess" and "any element which falls obviously short of the general average will be illy used, and especially so if characterized by a physical or social brand which renders them easily distinguishable" (158). Democracy is equality of privileges but only for those with the power to maintain and protect them. Miller gives the example of the red man who has been excluded from the republic (158). Miller recognizes that in the world of Anglo-American realpolitik, principles do not count for much.

For the blacks, who are "characterized by a physical and social brand" of inferiority, the struggle for equality and justice will both be long and arduous: "The Negro has suffered much and must suffer much more…. So great is the gauntlet of difficulties that the Negro must run before he reaches the mark and the high calling of American citizenship." Note that the "American citizenship" Miller refers to here is a citizenship in a future, more perfect America, not the America he critiques acerbically in the previous paragraphs. "The cruelties, outrages and political repression," however, "which the Negro suffers are but temporary obscuration of the light" (158). Characteristic of Miller's writing is a pervading sense of confidence that the blacks will achieve justice and equality": "This glorious transformation is of necessity a slow and gradual process…. We must be patient with the inevitable" (158).

Implicit in Miller's presentation of black subjectivity is the narrative of the morally ascendant black. His idea of the moral black partakes of the powerful black jeremiad tradition. The black jeremiad, the Negro version of the Puritan jeremiad, sees Negro suffering in terms of biblical topology and interprets this suffering as a sign of being "chosen" (Hubbard 342). Miller, in relating the long history of black suffering uses the *topos* of the Israelites in the wilderness and in Egyptian slavery, and even points to blacks outdoing St. Paul in his sufferings.

> In the wilderness of sorrow he was sustained by a vista of the promised land. What though the African was ruthlessly snatched from his native land where he basked in the sunshine of savage bliss and was happy? That during the hellish horrors of the middle passage the ocean basin was whitened with his bones and the ocean currents reddened with his blood? That for centuries he labored and groaned under the taskmaster's cruel lash? That down to the present day he has had to endure more than Pauline perils of fire and sword and wrath of race? (157)

Note the image of the suffering Christ when he says, "The Negro has suffered much and must suffer much more" (158).

Miller's version of this black tradition is reworked in a theory of history cast in the scientific discourse of the time. This theory, of which we get glimpses of in "The Effect of Imperialism on the Negro Race" is developed more fully in another essay written five years later, "As to the Leopard Spots." Miller published this essay to refute Thomas Dixon's racist article in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Dixon, author of *The Leopard's Spots*, a white supremacist novel, on which Griffith's controversial film, *Birth of a Nation*, was based, claimed that "no amount of education of any kind, industrious, classical or religious, can make a Negro a white man or bridge the chasm of centuries which separates him from the white man in the evolution of human history" (30-1). In his refutation, Miller debunks the claims of "scientific racism" as long discredited and cites social scientists' declaration that there is no scientific basis to claims of innate superiority or inferiority of races (36).

As an alternative to a racial determinist theory, Miller proposes a theory of human civilization that posited a pattern of growth and decay in the development of "races and nations," a republican cyclical trope that was quite common in the nineteenth century and earlier:

> In the course of history the ascendance of the various races and nations of men is subject to strange variability. The Egyptian, the Jew, the Indian, the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, has each had his turn at domination. When the earlier nations were in their zenith of art and thought and song, Franks and Britons and Germans were roaming through dense forests, groveling in subterranean caves, practicing barbarous rites, and chanting horrid incantations to graven gods. (34)

Miller sees the environment and social forces as the source of the differences in the levels of development of cultures, with superiority as a relative label. For example, Miller points out that the Anglo-Saxon civilization may be dominant now but it would not be in the future.

> In the great cosmic scheme of things, some races reach the lime-light of civilization ahead of others. But that temporary forwardness does not argue inherent superiority is as evident as any fact of history. An unfriendly environment may hinder and impede the one, while fortunate circumstances may quicken and spur the other. Relative superiority is only a transient phase of human development. (33)

In Miller's version of social darwinism, human civilization advances as "the torch

is handed down from race to race and from age to age, and gains in brilliancy as it goes" (41). Achievements of genius by each civilization are passed on to the next and belong to no particular race or nation. For example, the multiplication table belongs to the whole human race, "it is the equal inheritance of anyone who can appropriate and apply it" (42). That is why Miller, in the essay, "The Effect of Imperialism Upon the Negro Race," can claim the Declaration of Independence as a declaration for all mankind (158). The principles of the Declaration does not belong only to Anglo Americans in what has been described as Miller's narrative of "a moral progress of mankind" (Frazier 456).

In this theory of history, Miller locates the Negro as a young race: "The Negro represents a belated race which has not yet taken a commanding part in the progressive movement of the world." This however is not to be taken as a sign of inherent inferiority, but rather, simply that there has been "an unfriendly environment" that "hinder and impede" ("As to the Leopard's Spots" 33).

This theory underpins much of Miller's analysis in "The Effect of Imperialism Upon the Negro Race." Miller can confidently proclaim that the Negro will "work out his salvation," his sufferings in the past and his situation now are necessary "in order to fulfill the law of sociologic righteousness" (158). Given this teleology, the black American can, therefore, endure all kinds of suffering, can consider all "cruelties, outrages and political repression" as mere "temporary obscuration of the light"(158). But there is one thing that the Negro will not endure: "any policy which strikes at the vital doctrine of the Declaration of Independence would be, to him, like blotting out the sun from the sky" (158)—and imperialism was such a policy.

Miller captures clearly the African American dilemma in the imperialism debate. The Republican Party, the party that "effected freedom" for the blacks and "promised immediate fulfillment of abstract rights" (159) now espoused aggression and oppression: "The party of Lincoln and Sumner, in its latest declaration of principle, had so far forgotten the tradition of the fathers as to recognize them by only a faint and empty reference" (160). But the "unsophisticated black yeoman," "the simple-minded black voter" (159), had given blind allegiance to this party. Miller bitterly comments that the ordinary black "ate the bread of their political enemies without the slightest suspicion of ingratitude" (159). Moreover, in the last four years, under the administration of this party, the black "race has suffered severer onslaughts on its political rights, a more cruel carnival of lynching and murder, and sharper proscription of civil privilege than at any time since emancipation" (160). Despite the shoddy treatment by this party of freedom, blacks continued to serve American society: "The Negro is the only American who practices political and civic self-

sacrifice; for what other class of citizens would proclaim to the country, 'Though you slay me, yet will I serve you?'"(159). This party was now playing with the emotion of the black people by calling on them to show their gratitude and loyalty to the US by supporting and participating in the war against Filipino freedom fighters (contemptuously referred to as "Niggers" by white American soldiers [qtd. in Bresnahan 166]).

On the other hand, the Democrats, the traditional enemy party that withheld equality and justice from blacks in the South, were now espousing anti-imperialism. But it was well known during this time that the anti-imperialism of the Democrats stemmed from racism as well: they were afraid that colonization would increase the number of inferior peoples in the republic (Jacobson, "Windows on Imperialism" 183). Miller graphically dramatized this painful irony:

> One says to the other: "Although we suppress the Negro in the south, you shall not suppress the Malay in the Orient." The other replies: "You are stopped from protesting by your first admission," and then turning to the Negro, it says coyly: "Because these fellows suppress black men in Louisiana, you ought to resent it by helping us suppress brown men in Luzon." Between the two, the brother in black, or rather the brother in colors, finds cold consolation indeed. The Negro is thus placed politically between the devil and the deep sea. The logic of the situation suggests a stationary posture, with the hope that either the devil will withdraw or the sea recede. (161)

Miller's discussion of the two parties is a critique of the Anglo American. He points out how the Anglo-Saxon race has turned its back on the principles of the Declaration of Independence , both in its treatment of the blacks and its choice to follow the path of imperialism. The United States is not even attempting to hide its incursion with its favorite phrase "consent of the governed"; the war vs. the Philippines was naked aggression: "the United States is attempting to force, *vi et armies*, an alien government upon a unanimously hostile and violently unwilling people" (162). The Anglo-dominated American government had shown abuse of power, an utter disregard for the principles on which its country was founded.

The whole trend of imperial aggression is antagonistic to the feebler races. It is a revival of racial arrogance. It has ever been the boast of the proud and haughty race or nation that God has given them the heathen for their inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for their possession. It is always their prerogative to rule them with a rod of

iron and to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. Rudyard Kipling, the mouthpiece of the larger imperialism, has clothed this ancient doctrine in a modern dress in his famous "White Man's Burden." A glorious triumph, indeed for those who esteem themselves the "Lord's anointed," but it cannot be received so enthusiastically by "the lesser breeds without the law" (163-4).

Miller links American imperialism to the "larger imperialism" of the Anglo-Saxon race (163). Because of this "racial arrogance," the Anglo-Saxon race had proven itself unworthy of leading humanity to the higher form of moral civilization.

Miller sees through the seduction by Anglo American government: "the boasted benefactor has espoused a new doctrine whose principles are subtly subversive of all the benefits previously bestowed upon the black beneficiary" (161). Black support and participation in the imperialist war versus the Filipinos would pull under the blacks the moral ground on which their claim for justice and equal rights stands:

> The Negro's just ground of complaint is that he has been violently deprived of rights which the nation has guaranteed him. It is his duty to himself and to the principle involved to make the nation live up to its pledges or stultify the national conscience….
>
> Acquiescence on the part of the Negro in the political rape upon the Filipino would give ground of justification to the assaults upon his rights at home. The Filipino is at least his equal in capacity for self-government. The Negro would show himself unworthy of the rights he claims should he deny the same to a struggling people under another sky. He would forfeit not only his own weapon of defense, but his friends would lose theirs also. (162-163)

Miller acknowledges the Filipinos as the blacks' "equal in capacity for self-government" (162). In supporting the right of the Filipinos for self-determination, Miller rejects the Anglo-American supposed "civilizing mission" as "racial arrogance" (163). He implicitly asserts as well the right of the blacks for equal participation in the American national life. At the same time, Miller asserts the morality of blacks who are able to recognize and respect the human rights of another people, based on the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

Miller arrives at what for him was the only choice for the blacks: non-participation in the imperialist war vs. the Filipinos, even at the cost of more suffering and losing whatever

rights the blacks already have:

> It is infinitely better for the black man, that he be, for the present, violently deprived of his rights in the South than that he should be lulled into acquiescence with the suppressive policy which must ere long steal away his own liberty. (163)

Miller says that "though all men should forsake it [the principle of the Declaration of Independence], yet should not he [the black American]" (164).

Miller sees a long, continuing black American struggle for justice and equality. His final image of the African American keeping his gaze on the Polaris (representing the principles of the Declaration of Independence) is a picture of hope, which at the same time underscores the darkness of this period of American imperialism. Miller uses here a symbol that has a central place in slave narrative and other forms of black writing, thus contextualizing the moment in the entire history of black struggle in America.

CRITIQUE OF MILLER'S FORMULATION OF BLACK SUBJECTIVITY

Despite Miller's claims to an alternative theory of history and formulation of a morally transcendent black subjectivity, his propositions are undermined by his acceptance of Western paradigms of cultural superiority and moral ascendancy. According to Miller's theory of civilization, for the black Americans to grow as a people, they would need to assimilate the superior Anglo American culture. African Americans have to be exposed to this civilizing process before they can take their rightful place of leadership of a higher form of civilization. Miller writes, "The aptitude of any people for progress is tested by the readiness with which they absorb and assimilate the environment of which they form a part" (Miller, "As to the Leopard's Spots" 41). But wouldn't assimilation of Anglo-American culture erase the distinct character of the African American culture? Isn't the perceived need for assimilation an internalization of the Western regard for black American culture as inferior? Miller's civilizing process can be interpreted as a version of the prevalent "uplift ideology" of the time. As Kevin Gaines writes:

> The ethos of racial uplift was generally assimilationist in character, reiterating the so-called progressive era's stock assumption of racial Darwinism and of "civilization as the scale upon which individuals, races, and nations, as contemporaries routinely put it, were ranked. Because it shared many of the assumptions of an evangelical

> worldview, the rhetoric of racial uplift often resembled the imperialist notion of the "civilizing mission." (434)

The criteria Miller uses for his formulation of moral ascendancy is Western, specifically, Puritan American. Miller proposes an ascendant Negro with middle-class Puritan Christian values for education, patience, hard work, generosity, forgiveness, spirituality, and gentility. Only a black elite with a high level of education and spirituality can aspire for Miller's imagined black subjectivity. Miller's class bias can be discerned in his criticism of the ordinary black: "the unsophisticated black yeoman" and the "simple-minded black voters" whose loyalty to the Republican Party was "marked by a blind hysteria bordering upon fanaticism" ("Effect of Imperialism"159).

In the essay, "As to the Leopard's Spots," Miller explicitly pointed out that "the vast majority of any race is composed of ordinary and inferior folk…. It is only the few choice individuals, reinforced by a high standard of social efficiency, that are capable of adding to the civilization of the world" (35). It seems that Miller, though refuting innate racial difference, nevertheless, participates in marking certain people's superiority and inferiority. According to Gaines, in his study of the antiracist works of Pauline Hopkins, such marking of difference by black middle class writers was the *modus operandi* of complicity with the dominant power:

> [T]he tendency among marginalized racial, religious, and gender minorities who used the idea of civilization at the turn of the century to give credence to their own aspirations to status, power, and influence…. Writers like Hopkins believed that claiming affinity with dominant notions of race and civilization would oppose racism. Their assimilationist perspective was crucial to their claim for the status of bourgeois professionalism, leadership, and practice. (434)

Gaines quotes Wilson J. Moses's observation: "The quest for gentility despite the many obstacles erected by the white majority is one of the important themes of Afro-American life in the Victorian age" (435). In attempting to replace the idea of "race" as locus of power struggle, Miller's elitism enacts the same operation of branding certain people as superior and inferior. His formulation of an alternative theory puts him in a position of privilege, as a way of escaping the negative effects of racial discrimination.

Finally, Miller's theory, aside from being assimilationist and elitist, can be interpreted as romantic as well. Though his theory of the inevitability of black rights could

provide psychic refuge from the rabid oppression during this time, it could be escapist as well, in its refusal to recognize the politics and violent struggle for power that moved those social changes. Positing a theory that located the cause of the rise and fall of races and nations to impersonal social forces through which no one could be held morally responsible for the destruction of peoples, can be a way of avoiding conflict with the more powerful dominant whites.

Yet, Miller's position in "Effects of Imperialism," raises important questions about the discursive "containment" of uplift ideology in the context of imperialist debates. Miller's support for the Filipinos' right to self-determination is a crucial point. In arguing for immediate independence for the Philippines, Miller is rebuking racialist theories of white supremacy and colored peoples' inherent uncivilizability, and is also repudiating his own theory of the cyclical growth pattern of civilizations. At this point, Miller stands on what for him is the foundational principle of all civilization—the principle of equality of all people enshrined in the Declaration of Independence—a principle which Miller ultimately grounds in his Christian belief ("Address to the Graduating Class" 4). Miller, at this moment of crisis for African Americans, stakes his claim for Negro dignity and rights in black Christian tradition. In this cultural legacy, Christian forbearance and suffering are profoundly revolutionary and transformative. Miller's own example of a whole life-time devoted to forceful and trenchant polemics against whites who spread the false notion of white racial supremacy showed that he was not teaching mere passivity or acquiescence. He meant blacks to defend their rights in a Christian manner consistent with the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

Richard Brodhead, in the essay, "Why Could Not a Colored Man," argues that "there is no such thing as total domination." He observes that "when one group is subjugated by another, its cultural institutions get carried into subjugation with it, and [these] institutions … are remade into forms for possible resistance" (200). In "Effect of Imperialism," Miller harnesses the entire African American revolutionary tradition by retelling its history and projecting the powerful cultural symbol of the image of the slave gazing at the north star, in the context of the black jeremiad tradition.

CONCLUSION

Kelly Miller's essay, "The Effect of Imperialism Upon the Negro Race" encapsulates the important issues raised by imperialism for the black Americans at the turn of the century. His essay allows us to study the strategies of resistance to white supremacist

ideology that sought to erase black subjectivity. The study has shown though that despite the attempt to formulate an alternative narrative, Miller, like many other black middle-class antiracist writers were complicit as well with hegemonic conceptions of Western superiority. Questions, though, arise about the neatness of such a "containment" in the context of the imperialist debates.

Miller's work remains important in studying the contestation of narratives deployed in the violent power struggle during this period of American history. Eric Sundquist's criteria for evaluating the value of minority writing applies to Miller: "At the very least … the value of a work of literature—what defines it as literature, for that matter—derives from its contribution to articulating and sustaining the values of a given culture, whether or not that culture is national or 'racial' in scope" (18).

Ultimately, Miller's assertion of a counter narrative, seeking to unseat the "inevitability" linked to supposed Anglo-Saxon dominance, as well as his willingness to repudiate even his own theory, reveals that Miller saw racism for what it was, as "fundamentally a theory of history" (Saxton qtd. in Jacobson 6).

> It [racism] is a theory of who is who, of who belongs and who does not, of who deserves what and who is capable of what. By looking at racial categories and their fluidity over time, we glimpse the competing theories of history which inform the society and define its internal struggles. (Jacobson 6)

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INVENTING VERNACULAR SPEECH-ACTS: ARTICULATING FILIPINO SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract
How vital is an immigrant's native language for group self-affirmation? While the Filipino American community in the US (now the largest group of citizens of Asian descent) has not so far demanded bilingual education in the way the Chinese Americans or Chicanos have, the influx of new immigrants more conversant in "Filipino" (the official term for the national language of the Philippines) than in English is producing changes in ethnic self-identification more serious than before. The demand for college courses in Filipino is only a symptom of the greater awareness of exclusion and marginalization within the larger polity supposedly characterized by pluralism and multiculturalism. Filipino professionals and workers speaking in Filipino are growing, but they have been penalized in many ways. Can language serve as a means to assert national autonomy? The right to speak or communicate in one's native language is not just a minor attempt in identity politics but represents a crucial index to elucidating and unraveling the liberal-democratic rationale for the continuing neocolonial subordination of the Filipino people to white-supremacist corporate globalization.

Keywords
bilingualism, Filipino-American, identity politics

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Editor's Note
This paper was presented in a forum organized in June 2001 for the Conference of Filipino Organizations on Language and Community in the University of California at Irvine. This was part of the educational mobilization by Filipino student groups to demand that the university offer credited classes in Filipino/Pilipino. While there are credited and sustained courses in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and other Asian languages, there is none for Filipino despite the fact that Filipinos and Filipino Americans constitute a substantial bulk of the ethnic student population. It has been noted that Filipinos today constitute the largest bloc in the Asian-American category—roughly 3 to 4 million in the total of 12 million—but they have not asserted politically their demographic presence.

From the time Filipinos arrived in the United States as "colonial wards" or subaltern subjects in the first decade of the twentieth century, the practice of speaking their vernacular tongues (whether Ilocano, Cebuano, Tagalog, or any of the other dozen

regional languages) has been haunted by an interdiction. This accompanied the defeat of the revolutionary government of the first Philippine Republic at the end of the Filipino-American War (1899-1903) and the institutionalization of English as the official medium of communication in government, business, education, and so on. American English became an instrument of political and ideological domination throughout colonial rule (1898-1946) and neocolonial hegemony (1946-). With competence in English as the legal and ideological passport for entry of Filipinos into the continental United States as *pensionados* and contract laborers, the vernaculars suffered virtual extinction in the public sphere. In exchange, the Philippines acquired the distinction of belonging to the empire of English-speaking peoples, texting messages intelligible at least to the merchants of global capitalism if not to George W. Bush and the Homeland surveillance agents at the airport. That is also the reason why Filipina domestic workers are highly valued in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and other countries in Europe and the Middle East—for their ability to speak English useful for their employers' needs.

US linguistic terrorism has continued via subtle cooptation and juridical fiat. Up to the last quarter of the twentieth century, the custom of speaking the vernacular in the workplace was discouraged, if not prohibited. Filipino nurses and government employees talking in Filipino/Pilipino were penalized, triggering legal suits by the aggrieved immigrants or naturalized citizens. "English Only" needs to be vindicated. Filipinos need not be heard or listened to so long as they performed according to expectations. Why learn

or study the Filipino vernaculars when "they" can speak and understand English? With the sudden increase of Filipino migrants after 1965 and the growth of the multicultural ethos of the eighties and nineties, Filipinos discovered anew that they have always been speaking their native languages even while they ventriloquized in English. Filipino (usually referred to as "Pilipino") has indeed become a lingua franca for recent immigrants in the "land of the free," making it possible for the newly arrived from the "boondocks" to read post-office guidelines and tax regulations in Filipino.

But Filipino is still an "exotic" language, despite its vulgarization and accessibility via Internet and satellite media. While today courses in Arabic have become necessary aids for preparing all students for global citizenship, a college course in Filipino is a rarity. In the fifties and sixties, when the Huk insurgency disturbed the peace of the Cold War Establishment, courses in Tagalog were introduced in the universities as part of Area Studies; experts were trained at least to read captured documents from the underground, if not to assist in the propaganda and psy-war effort of the local military (San Juan). In the seventies, politicized Filipino Americans successfully initiated projects to teach Tagalog inside and outside the academy. With the displacement of the Philippines as a contested zone in Southeast Asia (despite the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front), administrators have shifted resources to the study of Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese cultures. After all, is not the Philippines now a suburb of California? And has not the current Arroyo administration reversed the trend of Filipinization by promulgating English as truly the privileged language for individual success, prestige, and acceptance?

Historical necessity has once more intervened in the "belly of the beast." Filipinos have become the largest group in the Asian-American ethnic category and are slowly beginning to realize the political impact of this demographic trend. With the upsurge of Filipino Americans entering college and moving on to graduate schools, and given the heightened racial and ethnic antagonisms in this period of the borderless war against terrorism (recall the hundreds of Filipinos summarily deported in handcuffs and chains), a new "politics of identity" seems to be emerging, this time manifesting itself in a demand for the offering of credited courses in Filipino as part of the multiculturalist program (San Juan). Last year I was requested by the community of Filipino and Filipino-American students at the University of California, Irvine, to share my ideas about the "language question." The following provisional theses attempt to address this question in the context of the struggle of the Filipino nationality in the US for democratic rights and the Filipino people in the Philippines and in the diaspora for national self-determination. There are other still undiscerned factors overdetermining this complex conjuncture, particularly

in this stage of the advanced corporatization of the US university in late modernity; the following observations are meant to induce an exploration of the totality of social relations subtending this issue.

I.

In dealing with the issue of linguistic freedom and bondage, I begin with the thesis that language cannot be separated from material-social activity, from human interaction. Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology:* "Language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other humans" (50). Language is essentially a social phenomenon, embedded in collective human activity. Consciousness and language cannot be divorced; both are social products; they originate from work, from the labor process, whose historical changes determine the function of language as a means of communication and, as an integral component of everyday social practice, a signifier of national or ethnic identity.

Work or social labor then explains the structural properties of language. This does not mean, however, that given the unity of thought and language, linguistic structures imply different ways of thinking, world outlooks, etc. Race, culture, and language are not equivalent, as proclaimed in Hitler's idealizing slogan: "Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Sprache." We do not live in isolated language compartments with singular "takes" on reality. Forms of thought manifest a certain universality that are not affected by linguistic differences, even though speech acts derive their full import from the historical contexts and specific conditions of their performance. "Ideas do not exist separately from language" ("From the *Grundrisse"* 53). And since the ideas of the ruling class prevail in every epoch as the ruling ideas, the uses of a particular language often reveal the imprint of this ruling class. Various classes may use the same language or operate in the same linguistic field, hence this domain of sign usage becomes, to quote Voloshinov/Bakhtin, "an arena of class struggle" (23). For example, Rizal used Spanish to counter the corrupt abuses of the friars and reach his Spanish-speaking compatriots as well as reform-minded Spanish liberals in Spain. Likewise, Tagalog and other vernaculars were used by the Filipino elite in persuading peasants and workers to conform to American policies and ideas.

In sum, language as a practice of signification is not only reflective but also productive and reproductive of antagonistic social relations and political forces. It is a vehicle and an embodiment of power. Language usage manifests the pressure of

contradictory class relations and concrete ideological structures that are registered on the level of special subcodes and idiolects. Language then is a socio-ideological phenomenon whose empirical manifestation can be investigated with scientific rigor.

Within this frame of inquiry, let us examine the status of Filipino/Pilipino vis-a-vis English within the Filipino community (totaling nearly three million) in the United States. A historical background is imperative in assessing the worth of languages relative to each other, specifically in the context of the fraught relations between the Philippines as a former colony, now a neocolony, of the United States, and the hegemonic nation-state, now the "only remaining superpower" in this period of "endless war" against terrorist multitudes.

With the violent conquest of the Philippines after the Filipino-American War of 1899 to 1914 (I include the wars that tried to pacify the Moros) which cost 1.4 million Filipino lives, the US imposed colonial institutions on the subjugated natives. The process of what Renato Constantino famously called "the mis-education of Filipinos" began with the imposition of English as the chief medium of instruction. This was not because the teacher-volunteers in the St. Thomas knew no Spanish, as one historian puts it (Arcilla), but because this was the language of the US ruling class, the vehicle in which to inculcate the American "way of life," its institutions and normative practices, in their colonial subjects. Contrary to the supposed intention of democratizing society, the use of English "perpetuated the existence of the *ilustrados*—American *ilustrados"* loyal to the United States, analogous to the Spanish-speaking Filipino elite who sought reforms within Spanish hegemony. Constantino cites Simoun's denunciation of the latter in Rizal's novel *El Filibusterismo*:

> You ask for equal rights, the Hispanization of your customs, and you don't see that what you are begging for is suicide, the destruction of your nationality, the annihilation of your fatherland, the consecration of tyranny! What will you be in the future? A people without character, a nation without liberty—everything you have will be borrowed, even your very defects!…. What are you going to do with Castilian, the few of you who will speak it? Kill off your own originality, subordinate your thoughts to other brains, and instead of freeing yourselves, make yourselves slaves indeed! Nine-tenths of those of you who pretend to be enlightened are renegades to your country! He among you who talks that language neglects his own in such a way that he neither writes it nor understands it, and how many have I not seen who pretended not to know a single word of it! (qtd. in *The Filipinos in the Philippines* 55)

In 1924, the American scholar Najeeb Saleeby deplored the imposition of English as the means of trying to accomplish what Alexander the Great and Napoleon failed to accomplish, that is, impose the conqueror's language on the multitudinous groups speaking different tongues. It was already a failure twenty-five years since the US established schools in the pacified regions. But in preserving imperial hegemony, the policy was not a failure at all. It has proved extremely effective: English as linguistic capital has functioned to sustain the iniquitous class hierarchy and maintain the subordination of the nation-state to the power that monopolizes such capital in the form of control over the mass media, information, and other symbolic instruments and resources in a globalized economy. I think the purpose was not to make every Filipino a speaker of English, just those classes—the elite and intelligentsia—that have proved crucial in reinforcing and reproducing consent to US imperial rule.

The historical record is summed up by Constantino: "Spanish colonialism Westernized the Filipino principally through religion. American colonialism superimposed its own brand of Westernization initially through the imposition of English and the American school system which opened the way for other Westernizing agencies" (*Neocolonial Identity* 218). Superior economic and technological power, of course, enabled the American colonizers to proceed without serious resistance. Inscribed within the state educational apparatus, American English as a pedagogical, disciplinary instrument contributed significantly to the political, economic, and cultural domination of the Filipino people. American English performed its function in enforcing, maintaining, and reproducing the values and interests of the imperial power and the dominant native class. Its usage was not neutral nor merely pragmatic; it was a deliberately chosen ideological weapon in subjugating whole populations (including the Muslims and indigenous communities), in producing and reproducing the colonial relations of production, and later of neocolonial relations.

Again, as I said in the beginning, no language (like English) as a system of signs is by itself exploitative or oppressive. It is the political usages and their historical effects that need evaluation. Consequently, the use of the colonizer's language cannot be separated from its control of the educational system, the panoply of commercial relations and bureaucratic machinery which instilled consumerist values, white supremacy, and acquisitive individualism within the procedural *modus operandi* of a so-called "free enterprise" system. Over half a century of tutelage de-Filipinized youth and "taught them to regard American culture as superior to any other, and American society as the model par excellence for Philippine society." (Constantino, *Identity and Consciousness* 39)

Individual and public consciousness had been so Americanized that a Filipino national identity was aborted, suppressed, unable to emerge fully except in outbursts of revolt and insurrection—a durable tradition of revolutionary resistance that we should be proud of.

What of Filipino and the other vernaculars? When the Philippines was granted Commonwealth status in 1935, an attempt was made to develop a national language based on Tagalog. Pilipino evolved, despite the objections of other regional groups; so deep was the legacy of the "divide-and-rule" strategy that it undermined the weak Filipino elite. Note that, of course, the ruling bloc of local landlords, compradors, and bureaucrats was completely subservient to US will even up to and beyond formal independence in 1946. Up to now, it is no secret that the Philippine military is completely dependent on US largesse for its weaponry and logistics, including the training of its officers in counter-insurgency warfare (as witness the prolongation and systematization of joint training exercises against the Abu Sayyaf and other insurgents in violation of the Constitution). Over 80 percent of Filipinos can speak or understand Filipino in everyday transactions throughout the islands. While some progress has been made today in institutionalizing the use of Filipino as an intellectual medium in university courses, English remains the preferred language of business and government, the language of prestige and aspiration. Decolonization of the Filipino mind has not been completed, hence Filipino remains subordinate, marginalized, or erased as a language of power and self-affirmation of the people's sovereign identity.

Just as in other colonized parts of the world, the Philippines was a multilingual society during the heyday of Spanish imperialism. While formal colonialism no longer obtains, a linguistic imperialism continues, with English employed as the international language of science, technology, business and finance, world communications, and international academic studies—despite some nativization of American English in the Philippines. This will continue unless the political economy and power relations in the whole society are changed.

II.

The rise of the US Empire in Asia beginning with the defeat of Spanish power translated into a reassertion of Anglo-Saxon "manifest destiny." This is a continuation of a long saga of territorial expansion from the Eastern seaboard of the continent. When Filipinos entered US metropolitan territory, first in Hawaii as recruited plantation workers in the first three decades of the last century, the US was already a racial polity founded on the confinement of the indigenous Indians, the slavery and segregation of blacks, the

conquest of Spanish-speaking natives, and the proscription of Asian labor. The US was and is a multilingual polity, with English as the hegemonic language.

A language community is not by itself sufficient to produce an ethnic or national identity. English cannot by itself define the American national identity as such, even though it is within this linguistic community that individuals are interpellated as subjects, subjects as bearers of discourse—persons defined as subject-positions sutured within discourses of law, genealogy, history, political choices, professional qualifications, psychology, and so on. This construction of identity by language is open to incalculable contingencies; what makes it able to demarcate the frontiers of a particular people is a principle of closure or exclusion. And this fictive ethnicity is accomplished in the historical constitution of the US nation-state based on the discourses of the free market and white supremacy.

Etienne Balibar has shown how the French nation initially gave privileged place to language or linguistic uniformity as coincident with political unity; the French state democratized its citizens by coercively suppressing cultural particularisms, the local patois. "For its part," Balibar observes, "the American 'revolutionary nation' built its original ideals on a double repression: that of the extermination of the Amerindian 'natives' and that of the difference between free 'White' men and 'Black' slaves. The linguistic community inherited from the Anglo-Saxon 'country' did not pose a problem—at least apparently—until Hispanic immigration conferred upon it the significance of class symbol and racial feature" (104). In other words, the phantasm of the American race defined as English speakers materialized when the Spanish-speaking indigenes of the Southwest were defeated in the war of 1848. Thus, the national ideology of the "melting-pot" of a new race emerged "as a hierarchical combination of the different ethnic contributions," based on the inferiority of Asian labor immigrants and "the social inequalities inherited from slavery and reinforced by the economic exploitation of the Blacks" (Balibar 104). It is within this historical process of ethnicization of the American identity on an assimilative or pluralist ideology that we can then locate the supremacy of American English over the other languages of various ethnic groups within the polity. It is also in this historical context of the formation of the American multicultural pluralist imaginary that problems of citizenship, equality of rights, multilingualism, neocolonialism, nationalism or internationalism, should be placed and analyzed.

In the United States today, various languages are spoken and practiced everywhere—Spanish being the most widespread, Black English vernacular (BEV), creole in Louisiana and New York City, Russian in Brooklyn, and so on—testifying

to a multilingual society. But as studies have demonstrated, the failure of the school authorities in the US to recognize BEV as a separate language have continuously retarded the educational progress of black children (Spears). BEV, as well as the other varieties of Spanish, function as symbolic markers signifying membership in a particular ethnic group.

Why is one's use of a particular language important? Language usage or behavior is closely connected with the individual's perception of herself and her own identity. The British sociolinguist Robert Le Page has proposed a theory of language use in terms of acts of identity. According to Le Page, "the individual creates his or her own language behavior so that it resembles that of the group or groups with which he wishes to be identified, to the extent that: he can identify the groups; observe and analyze such groups; is motivated to adapt his behavior; and is still able to adapt his behavior. By so doing the individual is thus able to locate himself in the 'multi-dimensional' space defined by such groups in terms of factors such as sex, age, social class, occupation and other parameters for social group membership, including ethnicity" (Cashmore 173). In Britain, the use of a modified Jamaican Creole by second-generation Britishers of Caribbean descent is an example of acts of identity-formation, an assertion of an ethnic identity associated with such cultural interests as Rastafarianism, reggae music, and so on. By consciously adopting this Creole or patois, the youth are expressing their solidarity, ethnic pride, and symbolic resistance to what they perceive as a repressive and racist society.

One may ask: Has the Filipino community in the US considered language as one of the most important social practices through which they come to experience themselves as subjects with some critical agency, that is, not merely as objects trained to consume and be consumed? Have Filipino scholars examined language as a site for cultural and ideological struggle, a mechanism which produces and reproduces antagonistic relations between themselves and the dominant society? In my forty years here, except for a few academics influenced by the late Virgilio Enriquez, I have not encountered among our ranks any special awareness of the importance of Filipino and the other vernaculars.

In the dismal archive of ethnic studies of Filipino Americans, we encounter a species of identity politics that is unable to escape the hegemonic strategies of containment and sublimation. Ironically, this politics is really designed for encouraging painless assimilation. For example, Antonio Pido's *The Pilipino in America* (1986) is a repository of scholastic clichés and rehash of received opinions, at best an eclectic survey that tries to coalesce the contradictory tendencies in the research field as well as those in the community during the Marcos dictatorship. Recently, the collection *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity* (1997) edited by Maria P. P. Root, tried to advance beyond

the Establishment banalities, but to no avail, although gays and lesbians have succeeded in occupying their niches amid the cries for "healing the cultural amnesia and sense of shame" (78). I have no problem celebrating Filipino firsts, but I think historical memory of this ingratiating kind cannot decolonize our psyches since we use such memory to compete with other people of color in grabbing a piece of the American pie. Pido's contribution to this anthology compounded the muddle in its reflection of a neoconservative climate of the nineties with the multiculturalist belief that Filipinos have transcended their ethnicity in assuming some kind of mutant or freakish existence: "Such solidarity did not happen to the Pilipino Americans because they are Pilipinos who are in America, as their parents and grandparents were, but rather because they are Americans who are Pilipinos" (37). An ambivalent opportunist indeed if not an enigmatic trickster figure. None of the essays, if I recall, deal with the discrimination of Filipinos on account of their speaking Pilipino/ Filipino at the workplace, or elsewhere.

In a study on Filipino Americans, Pauline Agbayani-Siewert and Linda Revilla comment on the Filipino group's lack of a "strong ethnic identity." They give a lot of space to the issue of whether Filipino should be spelled with an F or P. In spite of disagreements among post-1965 and pre-1965 immigrants, they note that Filipinos are distinguished by their adherence to "traditional Filipino values" relating to family togetherness and respect for elders. So what else is new? What is interesting about their survey is that they touch on the issue of language, remarking that "language is a questionable indicator of Filipino immigrants' acculturation," without adding that of course their country of origin has been thoroughly Americanized in language, if not in customs and habits. They cite a study which indicated that 71% of Filipinos speak a language other than English at home, although 91% of them claimed being able to speak English well or very well. Their conclusion: "This suggests that most Filipinos who have been naturalized citizens [Filipinos have a 45% naturalization rate, the highest among Asian groups] and who can speak English well still prefer to speak their native language at home" (152). What does this signify? In general, third generation children no longer speak the languages of their grandparents.

One interpretation is that of Yen Le Espiritu, author of the ethnographic collection, *Filipino American Lives* where he concedes that Filipinos, despite some mobility and cultural adaptation, are still not fully accepted as "Americans." This is not bad because Espiritu claims that Filipinos are really "transmigrants," that is, they resist racial categorization and at the same time sustain "multistranded relations between the Philippines and the United States" (27). This hypothesis is flawed. Espiritu wants Filipinos to have their cake

and eat it too. While some may succeed in manipulating their identities so that they both accommodate and resist their subordination within the global capitalist system—a tightrope performance not really warranted by the biographies she presents—they do not constitute the stereotype. Especially in the case of those who came in the last two decades, Filipinos have not really become full-blown hybrids conjured by postmodernists-postcolonial academics. The majority of the testimonies gathered by Espiritu provide incontrovertible proof that despite sly forms of resistance, institutional racism has continued to inflict damage on the lives and collective psyche of the Filipino community, whether some of them are perceived as transmigrants or not.

In fact the transmigrant paradigm cannot explain adequately the linguistic behavior of Filipinos. Siewert and Revilla report that Filipinos have begun to challenge the "English only" policies at the workplace. They cite one case in the Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, where seven Filipino workers filed a grievance for having been penalized for being told to use English only for business purposes. The policy was eventually rescinded, but we are not informed what the views of the experts are. Since they are obsessed with acculturation or cultural assimilation, they probably feel that the case was not really significant since Filipinos are bilingual anyway, and they can be flexible or versatile in adapting to the exigencies of their minority situation. Never mind that they have to suppress their need to speak in Filipino.

To recapitulate: The development of US capitalism concomitant with the growth and consolidation of American English has proceeded up to 1898, with the onset of imperial expansion. The Civil Rights movement succeeded (through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and later the Bilingual Education Act of 1968) to mandate the use of non-English voting ballots and the funding of bilingual education programs serving primarily Hispanics to expedite their transition to competent English users. Due to various revisions, bilingual education programs (which started in 1963 in Miami, Florida, to help the children of Cuban exiles) only serve a small proportion of the total population. And yet some were alarmed by the increase of Hispanics in many states. One of them, Senator S. I. Hayakawa, a naturalized Canadian immigrant of Japanese descent, founded the US English in 1983 after sponsoring a bill in 1981 to make English the official language of the US (Fischer et al.[n.p.]).

In actuality, what has been happening in the last decades involves an implicit "reorganization of cultural hegemony" by the ruling elite faced with a sharpening political, social, and economic crisis of the system since the end of the Vietnam War. We may interpret this English-Only movement as an index to the resurgent nativist hostility to the recent influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia—aliens that supposedly

disunite America and threaten the supremacy of the "American Way of Life" (Nunberg). The English First anti-immigrant phenomenon can easily be demystified and translated as the symptom of a moral panic, a fanatical zeal to preserve the status quo, "a fear of cultural change and a deep-seated worry that European Americans will be displaced from their dominant position in American life" (Douglas Massey qtd. in Zelinsky 192). This symptomatic reading finds its rationale in Antonio Gramsci's insight:

> Each time that in one way or another, the question of language comes to the fore, that signifies that a series of other problems is about to emerge, the formation and enlarging of the ruling class, the necessity to establish more "intimate and sure relations between the ruling groups and the popular masses, that is, the reorganization of cultural hegemony. (16)

III.

In 1985 then Education Secretary William Bennett judged bilingual education a failure because it only promoted ethnic pride despite the fact that programs like the Transitional Bilingual Education program and the Family English literacy programs no longer seek to fund classes conducted in the original ethnic languages. Four million language-minority students are now herded to monolingual "immersion" English classrooms which, according to one expert, often fail to teach anything but English. And this is supposed to explain why they don't have equal educational opportunities and become complete failures.

One opponent of the bills to make English the official language, Rep. Stephen Solarz, expressed a sentiment shared by many liberals who endorse pluralism or multiculturalism under the shibboleth of a common civic culture. Language is a matter of indifference so long as the cement of the civic culture holds the market-system, individual rights, and private property together. Solarz argued that the proposals

> represent a concession to nativist instincts and are incompatible with the cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism that constitute fundamental strengths of our nation…. We are … a tapestry of many races, creeds, religions, and ethnic backgrounds—each independent, but all interwoven with one another…. The glue that bonds these diverse communities together is not commonality of language, but a commitment to the democratic ideals on which our country was founded." (251)

Aside from these banalities, Solarz also opined that those proposals could pose significant threats to the civil and constitutional rights of citizens with little or no English proficiency.

> In this he was right because English triumphalism signifies a mode of racialization: the institutional subordination of other communities and other languages to white supremacy and its cultural hegemony. This was in part the thrust of the challenge made in the class-action suit of 1970, Lau v. Nichols, in which 1,790 Chinese children enrolled in the public schools in San Francisco, California, argued against the SF Unified School District that they were not being provided with an equal education because all instruction and materials were in English, which the children did not understand. Futhermore, the plaintiffs contended that English-only education for non-English-speaking children was unconstitutional because it violated the 14th Amendment, which guarantees to all citizens the equal protection of the laws. Moreover, such education was illegal under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which rules that "no person in the United States shall be … subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal financial assistance" (the District was receiving funds from the federal government). The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of the Chinese students, but only on the basis of the Civil Rights Act; the Constitutional issue was avoided and the Court left the remedy to local school boards. (Fischer et al. 242-5)

It is this 1974 Lau decision that can serve as the basis for litigation against public educational institutions that refuse to provide language services to students of limited English-speaking ability. It is a legal precedent on which institutions receiving federal money can be held accountable. But it is not one which engages the question of injustice, discrimination, and inequality in a racial polity such as the United States. It is not one which addresses, more specifically, the subordination of nationalities (like Filipinos) and their diverse languages as a consequence of the past colonial subjugation and present neocolonial status of the Philippines, their "national origin." This is not a matter of personal opinion, feeling or subjective speculation, but a matter for historical inquiry and empirical verification.

Following the mandate of federal laws, Tagalog or Filipino is now being used in census forms, ballots, postal notices, and even in public announcements of flights to the Philippines in some airports. Is this a sign that the racial polity has changed and abolished

institutional impediments to the recognition of the identity and dignity of the Filipino as a cultural-political subject? Are we now living in a class-less and race-blind society? Scarcely. Such events as Filipino History Month or Independence parades, in fact, confirm the hierarchical placing of the various ethnic communities within the pluralist schema that reproduces monolingualism and Anglocentrism in everyday life. Even the concession to fund classes in Filipino, or, to cite a recent trend, Arabic—suddenly classes in Arabic multiplied after 9/11—may be a deceptive means of convincing a few that linguistic, racial, and sex discrimination are amenable to such piecemeal reforms.

Apart from the neoconservative backlash of the eighties and nineties, the advent of post-9/11 hegemony of the "only remaining superpower" entrenched in a National Security State, the imperilled "Homeland," almost guarantees a regime of unmitigated surveillance and policing of public spaces where ethnic differences are sometimes displayed. Filipinos speaking Tagalog make themselves vulnerable to arrest—recall the case of 62 overstaying Filipinos deported in June, handcuffed and manacled like ordinary criminals throughout the long flight back to Clark Field, Philippines; and recently, the case of eight Filipino airport mechanics in Texas, victims of racial profiling and suspected of having links with Arab terrorists.

Filipino sounds completely unlike Arabic or Russian. What has made Filipino or Tagalog visible in our multicultural landscape is of course the huge flow of recent immigrants who are not as proficient in English as the earlier "waves" after 1965. Movies, music, and other mass-media cultural products using Filipino are more widely disseminated today than before. In addition, the resurgent nationalist movement in the Philippines, despite the lingering horrors of the Marcos dictatorship from 1972-1986, has brought to center-stage the nightly televised images of rallies where the messages of protest and rebellion against US imperialism are often conveyed in Filipino. The nationalist resurgence in the Philippines, as well as in the diaspora of 7-9 million Filipinos around the world, has rebounded miraculously from the sixties and has continued to revitalize Filipino as the language of critical protest and nationalist self-determination. I don't have to mention the anxiety and tensions provoked when children cannot understand their parents who, as Siewert and Revilla indicate, prefer to use Filipino or other vernaculars at home.

IV.

We are surrounded now by a preponderance of newly-arrived Filipinos who use Filipino to make sense of their new experiences, a necessary stage in their arduous life

here, before they are able to gain mastery of standard English and feel more capable of directing their lives. But learning English language skills alone does not automatically translate to access to limited opportunities, not to mention genuine empowerment, as witness the plight of black Americans, or the 60 million functionally illiterate citizens in this affluent, technically superior society. Meanwhile, these Filipinos feel dispossessed and marginalized, completely alienated, either resentful or more servile, depending on the complex circumstances of daily life. If and when they enter school (formal or informal), their language experience (in Filipino or other indigenous languages) is delegitimized by a pedagogical system which operates on the assumption that knowledge acquisition is a matter of learning the standard English, thus abstracting English from its ideological charge and socioeconomic implications.

Correct me if I am wrong, but I don't recall anytime when Filipinos have demanded access to bilingual education in the same way that Latinos and Chinese Americans have, as noted earlier. And I know that your request for classes in Filipino/Tagalog is nothing compared to the substantial programs in bilingual education among Hispanics. Still, it might be useful to quote the educational scholar Donaldo Macedo's comments on the current philosophy:

> The view that teaching English constitutes education sustains a notion of ideology that systematically negates rather than makes meaningful the cultural experiences of the subordinate linguistic groups who are, by and large, the objects of its policies. For the education of linguistic minority students to become meaningful it has to be situated within a theory of cultural production and viewed as an integral part of the way in which people produce, transform and reproduce meaning. Bilingual education, in this sense, must be seen as a medium that constitutes and affirms the historical and existential moments of lived culture….. [S]tudents learn to read faster and with better comprehension when taught in their native tongue. The immediate recognition of familiar words and experiences enhances the development of a positive self-concept in children who are somewhat insecure about the status of their language and culture. For this reason, and to be consistent with the plan to construct a democratic society free from vestiges of oppression, a minority literacy program must be rooted in the cultural capital of subordinate groups and have as its point of departure their own language. (309)

Macedo rightly emphasizes the daily lived experiences of linguistic minorities

rooted in collective and individual self-determination. He considers their language as "a major force in the construction of human subjectivities," since language "may either confirm or deny the life histories and experiences of the people who use it." Again, I refer to my earlier premise that it is language use that is decisive and consequential. We need to underscore the role of language as cultural or symbolic capital, a theme which Pierre Bourdieu has elaborated in his works.

Literacy must be based on the reality of subaltern life if it is to be effective in any strategy of real empowerment, in the decolonization of schooling for a start. It is only by taking into account the language of everyday lived experience and connecting this with the community's struggles to survive and maintain its integrity and autonomy, can we fully grasp what role the use of Filipino plays in the nationality's pursuit of a truly dignified and creative life as full-fledged citizens. This is, to my mind, a pursuit that cannot be achieved except as part of the collective democratic struggles of other people of color and the vast majority of working citizens oppressed by a class-divided, racialized, and gendered order.

And this system—globalized or neoimperialist capitalism—is the same one suppressing the possibilities for equality, justice, and autonomy in the Philippines. There is as yet no truly sovereign Filipino nation. I believe it is still in the process of slow, painful becoming. If so, how do we size up or assay persons who claim to be Filipinos, or whose geopolitical identities are somehow linked to the nation-state called the Philippines? Benedict Anderson theorized that modern nations are "imagined communities" made possible by print-capitalism and the "fatal diversity of human language" (46). If that is true, then the Philippines was imagined through American English mediated in schools, mass media, sports, and other cultural practices. Both the institutions of print capitalism and the schools were controlled and administered by the United States for half a century; even after formal independence, most of us dream and fantasize in English mixed with Tagalog (Taglish), or one of the vernaculars.

We see then that language and the process of thinking form a dialectical unity. While Filipino has become the effective *lingua franca,* the community in the Philippines is still imagined in a babel of languages, with Cebuanos, for example, refusing to recite the pledge of allegiance unless it is in Cebuano. Less a political gesture than a symptom, this situation reflects the inchoate or abortive project of constructing a Filipino national identity, the clearest proof of which is the failure to develop one language through which the intellectual, political, and economic development of the masses can be articulated.

We have no alternative. We need to continue the task of reshaping our cultural identity as Filipinos whether here or in the Philippines, in this perilous age of anti-

terrorism. I want to quote Paolo Freire, the great Brazilian educator, whose work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been a profound influence everywhere. Freire reminds us:

> At a particular moment in the struggle for self-affirmation, when subordinated to and exploited by the ruling class, no social group or class or even an entire nation or people can undertake the struggle for liberation without the use of a language. At no time can there be a struggle for liberation and self-affirmation without the formation of an identity, and identity of the individual, the group, the social class, or whatever…. Without a sense of identity, there can be no real struggle. I will only fight you if I am very sure of myself…. This is why colonized peoples need to preserve their native language…. They help defend one's sense of identity and they are absolutely necessary in the process of struggling for liberation. (186)

Whether here or in the Philippines, we are still, whether we like it or not, entangled, caught, implicated, in this ongoing process of struggling for liberation. A liberatory and radical approach to language as part of cultural production and pedagogical praxis is in order. How can we tell our stories in our own words? How do we retrieve the lost voices of our people, valorize their lived experiences, and in the process transform the way Filipinos as a group are treated in the metropolis?

To re-appropriate the submerged or erased revolutionary legacy of our people, we need a language that is an integral and authentic part of that culture—a language that is not just "an instrument of communication, but also a structure of thinking for the national being" (Freire 184), that is, a tool for self-reflection and critical analysis, a creative and transforming agent committed to solidarity, social responsibility, and justice for the masses. That language needed to reconstruct our history and reappropriate our culture cannot be English but an evolving Filipino, which draws its resources from all the other vernaculars. If we allow English to continue in the Philippines as a hegemonic cultural force, this will simply perpetuate the colonial legacy of class-racialized inequalities—need I remind you that we are still a genuine neocolony—and allow imperial ideology to determine the parameters of our historical and scientific development, the future not only of the Philippines but also the future of those who choose to leave and settle in other lands that, however, remain, alas, still part of an inescapable globalized market system. This is the task challenging us today and for as long as we speak English to request or demand the authorities that the teaching and learning of Filipino be given some space in this university.

Allow me to conclude with quotes from Lenin on the question of the equality of languages:

> Whoever does not recognize and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat…. For different nations to live together in peace and freedom or to separate and form different states (if that is more convenient for them), a full democracy, upheld by the working class, is essential. No privileges for any nation or any one language! … such are the principles of working-class democracy. (100, 116)

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KOLUM KRITIKA

HOW ARE HISTORICAL TEXTS TO BE READ? MY FINAL REJOINDER TO JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.

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About the Author
Floro C. Quibuyen is Associate Professor in Philippine Studies at the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines. His latest book is *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism* (Ateneo de Manila UP, 1999), considered "one of the most provocative books" for the 1990s decade in the 10-volume *Southeast Asian History Readers*, published by Iwanami-shoten in Japan. Dr. Quibuyen's professional experience ranges from teaching (University of the Philippines and the University of Hawaii at Manoa) to filmmaking and video production.

Editor's Note
This article is the fourth in a series of academic exchange between Dr. Floro C. Quibuyen, author of the book *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism*, and Fr. John N. Schumacher, S. J., who made the review of the book. Fr. Schumacher's review article, "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: A New Approach," appeared in *Philippine Studies* 48:4 (2000): 549-71. Dr. Quibuyen made a reply to this review article with the essay "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: Critical Issues" that appeared in *Philippine Studies* 50:2 (2002): 193-229. Then, *Philippine Studies* 50.3 (2002) published the "Reply of John N. Schumacher to Floro Quibuyen's Response to the Review of His *A Nation Aborted*" (435-7).

The two authors debated on many aspects of Philippine historiography and the study of Philippine national hero Jose P. Rizal, the Reform Movement, the Philippine Revolution, and the American occupation of the Philippines. In particular, the authors discussed their differing views on the use of historical sources (Schumacher's criticism of Quibuyen's use of Coates, Craig, Palma, Laubach, Quirino, Valenzuela, and Buencamino, and Quibuyen's defense of such sources); the utilization of theoretical and conceptual tools in the study of history (Schumacher's point of the basic differences between a historian interested in the use of empirical method and a political philosopher "primarily interested in theories" who made use of Marx, Fanon, and Gramsci); and the presentation of historical facts and the various modes of interpreting historical phenomena and conditions.

1

John N. Schumacher's critical but sympathetic review article, "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: A New Approach," recognized my book, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism*, as "a major contribution to the intellectual biography of Rizal" albeit marred by "errors of proofreading and of fact."

I would have been grateful at this endorsement but Schumacher added that my "Gramscian Marxist jargon" was distracting and "irrelevant to an understanding of Rizal"

because he has been able to arrive at conclusions similar to mine without using my complex terminology. In my reply, "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: Critical Issues," I argued that Schumacher and I had differed fundamentally regarding 1) sources and interpretations; 2) the political visions of Burgos, Del Pilar, Rizal and Bonifacio; 3) the ideological currents of the 19th century; and 4) the failure of the Revolution and the impact of American conquest.

I also pointed out Schumacher's factual errors. Among these are his claims about Burgos (he was the source of Rizal's concept of the Filipino nation—false!), Bryan (he was an anti-imperialist who supported Philippine independence—false!), Rizal (his Kristong Pilipino image was limited to certain number of Tagalogs, mostly among the colorums—false!), the Dominicans (Paciano was grateful for their generosity—a misleading half-truth!), the Pact of Biak-na-Bato (it was the best choice for Aguinaldo—false!).

However, in his last and final rejoinder, "Reply of John N. Schumacher to Floro Quibuyen's Response to the Review of His *A Nation Aborted*," Schumacher ignored the points I made. Unmindful of the facts I brought up in my counter arguments, he accuses me of dwelling on "theories"—in contrast to his interest in "facts" and adherence to the "empirical method"—and not reading his 1973 book!

Schumacher's brief against my reply to his review of my book is a terse one: "[Quibuyen] could not have read [my] book [*The Propaganda Movement*] very carefully to make some of the erroneous assertions not only in his book, but of his article replying to me."

Aside from these unspecified errors, I am also accused of four unscholarly misdemeanors: 1) trying to impress Schumacher with "arguments from authority"; 2) refusing to recognize my "fallibility"; 3) denying the "obvious meaning" of the Del Pilar text, and, thus, disagreeing with Schumacher "without reading the writings of [Del Pilar]"; and 4) conveniently [ignoring] the crucial words "with intent" in my citation of the 1948 Genocide Convention definition.

Schumacher also scolds Ateneo's internationally circulated journal, *Philippine Studies*: "Most scholarly journals do not allow such replies as Quibuyen's." I can only hope that this was not the reason why *Philippine Studies* disallowed a last rejoinder from me.

I am compelled, however, to address Schumacher's remarks—in the interest of truth and fairness. Hopefully, a more open journal will not be deterred by Schumacher's rebuke of *Philippine Studies*. Needless to say, my disagreements with Schumacher do not in any way diminish the esteem that I continue to hold for him.[1]

Schumacher ought to be the first to know that *Philippine Studies* seriously considered my reply to his review of my book. A month after receiving my draft (22 March 2001), Schumacher's fellow Jesuit, Fr. Joseph A. Galdon, then editor-in-chief of *Philippine Studies*,

wrote me, "We will have our editors review it and will let you know if it is okay to publish it in *Philippine Studies*." About three months later (11 July 2001), Fr. Galdon sent me the welcome news, "Our editors have approved your article and we are happy to publish it in the March 2002 issue of *Philippine Studies*."

Thus, Schumacher would have done everyone a service—especially Fr. Galdon (now retired) and the editorial board of the *Philippine Studies*—had he specified my "new errors." I, for one, would have been grateful to Schumacher. Not only would it have contributed to my growth as a scholar, but also, and more importantly, educated the thousands of students and teachers who rely on *Philippine Studies* as a valuable resource on Rizal and Filipino nationalism.

2

Those who have read my reply to Schumacher's review can judge for themselves if I was trying to impress Schumacher with "a historian's argument from authority."

A major issue separating me and Schumacher is the question of how to regard the entry of the United States forces in the Philippines at the turn of the century—was it, as I put it, a "genocidal American conquest" or was it, as Schumacher prefers to call it, "the American intervention" (Schumacher 552). One of the sources I cited in explicating the term "genocidal" was a Vatican official whose designation Schumacher seemed to question. The title "Vatican foreign minister" was from CNN news, which I cited in my endnote no. 12. I cited Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran's description of the TNI's repression of East Timor civilians as "genocidal" because of Schumacher's claim that it is a "gross exaggeration" to refer to America's "intervention" in the Philippines as "genocidal" when compared to the far higher death toll in former Yugoslavia or Rwanda (more on genocide in Section 5).

My references to Marx, Gramsci, Fanon, and "militant student organizations" were not meant to advance a "historian's argument from authority," much less impress Schumacher. They were meant to disabuse him of his misconceptions about these names (in his book review)—that's why I put them in my "Postscript."

3

Schumacher chides me for my failure to recognize [my] own "fallibility," unlike Rizal. This reminds me of the time when Rizal was accused of exactly the same thing by a Spanish Jesuit, Fr. Pastells, who, obviously, felt exempt from such judgments, particularly

in his disagreements with a colonial ward. But that was more than a hundred years ago, during the moribund days of the Spanish Empire. So let's focus on Schumacher—does he recognize his own fallibility?

Consider the issue of Rizal's Morga. In pages 194-196, I disputed Schumacher's claim that Rizal committed an "obvious fallacy" on the question of the friar haciendas by demonstrating that 1) at least one premise of Schumacher is false; and 2) that, at any rate, his argument is irrelevant to Rizal's point. I cited Fr. Chirino's observation of the irrigated fields of Laguna, and UP historian Jaime Veneracion's recent book on the history of Philippine agriculture (there were irrigated fields in pre-colonial Bulacan) to disprove Schumacher's claim that before the friar haciendas were set up, e.g., Calamba (a region in Luzon), there were no irrigated fields at all in those places. I also argued that even if Schumacher's premise were true, his argument would be irrelevant to Rizal's point, which was not merely about the creation of haciendas but also about their expansion, "either by additional land purchases or donations, or outright usurpation."

How does Schumacher respond to my argument? Instead of addressing my citation of Fr. Chirino and Dr. Veneracion, Schumacher changes the subject. He turns his attention on Marx, while repeating his criticism of Rizal. Schumacher pronounces: "for Marx, facts still had to yield to ideology"; Rizal "in his Morga more than once erred, distorted certain facts—he was after all writing propaganda, whether or not one wishes to call this a lie." Which facts yielded to ideology in the case of Marx, or yielded to propaganda in the case of Rizal, Schumacher does not say. He also assumes that we all agree on his notions of "ideology" and "propaganda." Convinced of the absolute truth of his assertions, he feels no need to demonstrate it to us—because, as he puts it bluntly, he "has no intention of wasting anyone's time."

4

Regarding our disagreement over whether Del Pilar was a separatist or an assimilist, it would have been better for Schumacher to directly answer my question on page 207—"Did Del Pilar actually say that 'the effective strategy was to aim first at assimilation'?" Considering his knowledge (and my alleged ignorance) of "all the other letters where Del Pilar makes similar assertions," Schumacher could have at the very least cited a more convincing passage than the one he cited in his book review. Instead, Schumacher simply asserts that the separatist meaning he gave to Del Pilar's text is the "obvious meaning" and dismisses my contrary reading of it by accusing me of not having read Del Pilar. He

is certain that I haven't read Del Pilar because "Del Pilar's books appear neither in the references for the *Philippine Studies* article, nor in the bibliography of Quibuyen's original book."

I'm not sure if I follow Schumacher's logic. Del Pilar is not in the bibliography of my original book and my reply-article; does this mean I haven't read him? Unknown to Schumacher, Del Pilar is cited in my 1996 PhD dissertation—where *Epistolario Pilar* (I) is cited in footnote 9, page 664, and *La Soberania Monacal* in the Bibliography.

But let's grant, for the sake of argument, that I haven't read Del Pilar, and that the only text I've read of Del Pilar is the text cited by Schumacher in his review of my book. Does this argumentum ad hominem refute my contention? My contention is that the cited Del Pilar text only shows Del Pilar's affirmation of a Filipino cultural identity, and that it is a big jump from this premise to the conclusion that Del Pilar was for the establishment of a sovereign Filipino nation, just like Rizal and Bonifacio.

Consider the following. Pedro Paterno extolled the indigenous civilization of the Filipinos, but—as everyone knows—he never embraced the nationalist project of separating from Spain. Fr. Jose Burgos affirmed the inherent worth of Filipino culture, all the while regarding himself as a loyal subject of Spain. This is evident in his *Manifiesto*, where he argued—"It is to our interest to maintain Spanish rule, sheltering ourselves under its great shadow, a source of protection and of the highest culture." Thus, if we go by Schumacher's reading of Del Pilar's text, then we will have to also consider both Paterno and Burgos as separatists—which is absurd.

Moreover, if Del Pilar believed in separation just like Rizal and Bonifacio, as Schumacher claims, then why did Del Pilar not heed Rizal's call to return to the Philippines to wage a more militant struggle, this time with the masses? The fact is, unlike Rizal and his fellow separatists Antonio Luna, Jose Alejandrino, and Edilberto Evangelista who all responded enthusiastically to Rizal's call, Del Pilar clung on to *La Solidaridad*'s doomed propaganda campaign in Madrid to the bitter end (although there's an apochrypal story that he did see the light eventually, at his deathbed). As I pointed out in my PhD dissertation:

> Del Pilar stubbornly insisted that the best, least painful way to achieve progress for the Philippines was to get Spain to recall the reactionary friars from the Philippines and to grant the urgent institutional reforms. In this strategy, so thought Del Pilar, the Propaganda campaign in Spain was essential. It was for this purpose that the *Comite de Propaganda* in Manila sent Del Pilar to Spain in the first place. When he

> gladly assumed his assigned task, Del Pilar was confident that the job could be done in one or two years. Thus, in 24 May 1889, he wrote Rizal, "For my part, I would wish to have the work of propaganda finished this year or next year at the latest." When, after two years, his mission had not been accomplished, rather than radically changing his strategy, Del Pilar hang on doggedly to his original project, still hoping (against hope) that his efforts and sacrifices would eventually bear fruit.[2] It was over this question that Rizal broke from Del Pilar. When it dawned on him that the campaign in Spain was futile, Rizal called on the Filipino expatriates to come home, unite with the people, and wage a national, mass-based struggle that would lead to the formation of the Filipino nation. Thus, Del Pilar, and not Rizal, was the true believer in constitutional reforms. In this, he antedates the Filipino elite's peaceful, parliamentary struggle for independence during the American colonial period. If anything, Del Pilar was the precursor of the modern bi-nationalist Filipinos.[3] (663-4)

Schumacher urges me to read Del Pilar alongside Rizal. My position is that we should even go further. We should read our Filipino thinkers alongside each other—Burgos, Paterno, Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, Apolinario Mabini—and even beyond the 19th century, to Manuel Luis Quezon and Claro M. Recto. As I've argued in my reply, the thread of binationalism runs from Burgos and Del Pilar to the American sponsored Quezon. As I've discussed in my book, the other thread—the radical separatist line—extends from Rizal and Bonifacio to the anti-imperialist Claro M. Recto. We need this broader context if we are to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of reform and revolution, assimilation and Hispanization, separation and independence in the history of Filipino nationalism.

Secondly, our understanding will be even more enriched if we viewed 19th century Filipino nationalism from a comparative transnational perspective. As I've explained in my reply, a comparison with Hawaii is instructive. For example, *Ka Lahui*'s concept of "a nation within a nation" would help us understand that the affirmation of native cultural identity and language is not tantamount to a call for an independent nation-state.

5

In his fifth remark, Schumacher commits another blatant misrepresentation of my argument. He declares, "Quibuyen, citing the 1948 Genocide Convention definition, conveniently ignores the crucial words 'with intent.'" I urge Schumacher to turn to page

222 of my reply-article and actually read my citation of Article II of the 1948 Genocide Convention. Only one pretending to be blind or dyslexic could miss the phrase that I highlighted in bold letters—***with intent to destroy, in whole or in part***. Yet Schumacher asserts that no genocide occurred because "no American government wanted to wipe out the Filipino people." I cannot believe that Schumacher could actually say this, for it would imply that he doesn't know the meaning of the crucial phrase—***in part***.

If Schumacher actually reads the provisions of Article II, he will also see that genocide is not limited to "killing members of the group." Article II explicitly states that an act "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" may also constitute genocide.

Schumacher's assertion—"Millions died in World Wars I and II, but no one would call this genocide"—is laughable if it did not come from so distinguished a historian. Consider this fact:

> The A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima killed between 70,000 and 80,000 people in one second, and an estimated 140,000 died by the end of 1945. In Nagasaki, an estimated 70,000 people died by the end of the same year. Tens of thousands of others died subsequently as a result not only of the blast and fire but also radiation, sometimes taking its deadly toll over many years. (Tanaka)

By the terms of Article II of the 1948 Genocide Convention, the dropping of the atomic bomb on two cities by the United States—the only country in human history to have done so—was an act of genocide.

Indeed Schumacher is right that no one wanted to wipe out the whole Filipino people. The goal, as the Generals stressed, was to force them to submit by whatever means necessary. As in any imperialist war of conquest (witness the tragedy of the first nations of North America), the killing of tens of thousands and "causing serious bodily or mental harm" to an even greater number of Filipinos was a military imperative—intended to destroy the people's will to resist. By the definition of the Genocide Convention, the US government was guilty of the crime of genocide. No self-quotations by any professional historian—be he an award-winning historian with outstanding contributions to Philippine history—can alter this fact!

WHAT IS A HISTORIAN?

I have yet to find an argument based on fact in Schumacher's reply to my reply to his review. Even on the level of facts, Schumacher does not address my arguments. For example, instead of directly answering my question on page 207—"Did Del Pilar actually say that 'the effective strategy was to aim first at assimilation'?"—Schumacher brings up again his criticism (first raised in his book review) of the English translations of Dr. Encarnacion Alzona of the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission. I never disputed this in my reply. Then Schumacher invokes his PhD dissertation to emphasize the importance of context in the reading of texts. I could not agree more. So, what is Schumacher trying to say?

Sadly, Schumacher's main argument boils down to a rebuke for my apparent laziness—my not seriously reading his book.

But why should Schumacher presume that my reading his 1973 book "very carefully" would convert me to his interpretations of Del Pilar and Burgos? As I've explained in my reply, Schumacher's citation of Burgos flatly contradicts his claim that we have to go back to Burgos for Rizal's idea of the Filipino nation. Regarding Del Pilar, I have argued that Schumacher's interpretation is based on assumptions that I find unwarranted. Even if I read Schumacher's book word for word one hundred times over, I will still question his assumptions regarding the meaning of concepts such as "assimilation" and "separation."

Simply appealing to facts or to original texts does not necessarily settle a disagreement in interpretation. The crucial question is, How are these texts to be read? This is the fundamental difference between Schumacher and me.

For myself, the value of a work of history, or the worth of a historian, does not lie in the absence of errors. Errors, in any case, are easy to spot, and just as easy to correct. In fact, this two-fold process of spotting and correcting errors is part and parcel of the pursuit of knowledge in all the disciplines.

In history, what is difficult and requires real intelligence and perspicacity is the work of interpretation—the construction of powerful concepts with which to weave the facts into a coherent narrative; a living story that has meaning and relevance to a people who constitutes its subject. This is what separates the little kids from the big guys. And, contrary to Schumacher's belief, this serious work has nothing to do with whether one is a professional historian with a PhD in history. Simon Schama, celebrated professor of history at Columbia University, one of the big guys in the field, holds no PhD![4] (For that matter, the towering intellectuals of the 20th century did not hold a PhD—Nobel laureates Albert

Einstein and Bertrand Russell).

What is Schumacher's point in attributing my disagreements with him to my being a "political philosopher"? Is it to insinuate that, not being a historian, I have no expertise to dispute the findings of a professional historian? I will leave this for others to consider.

Is Schumacher implying that professional historians never have serious disagreements? Surely, Schumacher knows that historians have disagreed on which facts are relevant and significant. And even when they have agreed on the same set of facts, they have disagreed on the interpretation. In fact, such disagreements are what make history the liveliest of the social sciences in the Philippines.

This has been going on for some time. Thus, a number of historians have gone beyond the archival, documentary approach of the old positivistic paradigm to break new ground—from the *Pasyon and Revolution* of Reynaldo Ileto to the *Kasaysayang Bayan* ("History of the Country") of UP historian Jaime Veneracion. Their empirical (yes, empirical), ethnolinguistic, ethnohistorical researches demonstrate, for example, that the ilustrados' *independencia* and *nacion* are not equivalent to the Katipunan's notion of *kalayaan* and *Inang Bayan*. A younger crop of historians, typified by members of ADHIKA (*Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa, may Hilig at Interes sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas*) [Association of Those Who Are Experts in and Who Are Interested in Philippine History] have followed their lead and have embarked on equally ground-breaking research.

I find this development exciting—especially the debates they generate. Debating critical issues on Filipino nationalism are crucial at this juncture in our history, when our people are navigating precipitously between the Scylla of populist fascism and the Charybdis of US imperialism in their desperate search for a just, democratic, and prosperous future. Instead of prematurely cutting them short, scholarly journals have the moral responsibility to encourage and facilitate such debates.

NOTES

1 Once upon a time, when I was the only Rizal teacher in UP Diliman who disagreed with Renato Constantino, Schumacher graciously accepted my invitation and gave a scholarly presentation to my P. I. 100 class—I still owe him a sumptuous dinner treat for this.

2 Could this be, to venture a psychological hypothesis, due to Del Pilar's refusal to admit defeat and failure? If he came home empty-handed, what would he then say to the *Comite de Propaganda* which financed his campaign? Thus, when in 1895 the *Comite*, through its secretary, Apolinario Mabini, informed him that the funds were no longer forthcoming and that he should close shop, Del Pilar responded with uncontrollable rage (see Ikehata, 1989).

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4 Simon Schama, born in London in 1945, received his degrees from Cambridge in 1966 and 1969. He was fellow and Director of Studies at Christ's College, Cambridge University, from 1966-76 before becoming fellow and tutor in modern history at Brasenose College, Oxford. He then spent 13 years as professor at Harvard. He is currently University Professor at Columbia University, New York, where he specializes in European cultural and environmental history and the history of art. His publications include *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (1977), which won the Wolfson Prize for History; *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (1978); *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987); *Citizens: a Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989); *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (1991); *Landscape and Memory* (1995); and *Rembrandt's Eyes* (1999). Between 1999 and 2002 he was writing, presenting and filming the fifteen-part *A History of Britain* for BBC Television and the History Channel for which he has been nominated for an Emmy (2003). Three volumes of *A History of Britain* connected with the series (volume 1: *At the Edge of the World*; volume 2 *The British Wars* and volume 3 *The Fate of Empire*) were published between 1999 and 2002. He is currently at work on a book about the Anglo-American relationship and an eight part television series for the BBC, *The Power of Art*. He is also the art critic for the *New Yorker*. He was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth in 2001. See www.columbia.edu/cu/arthistory/ html/dept_faculty_schama; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/1390893.stm

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LITERARY SECTION

POINSETTIAS

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About the Author

Danton R. Remoto is Associate Professor at the Department of English, Ateneo de Manila University. He earned his BA and MA in English Literature from the Ateneo, his MPhil in Publishing Studies from the University of Stirling, UK, and is finishing his PhD in English Studies at the University of the Philippines. He has published eight books, including *Skin Voices Faces: Poems* and *Black Silk Pajamas: Poems*. His forthcoming books include a collection of short stories as well as a selection of his new poems in English and Filipino.

Under the pine trees, three girls were walking to the Session Hall in Teacher's Camp, their light-brown uniforms blending with the softly-falling dusk.

I slung my blue jacket on my shoulders and stood up from the stone steps of Benitez Hall. My classmates had gone to the hall ahead of me. The sun was beginning to dip behind the trees, leaving a wash of colors—pink and salmon and red, with tints of gray that deepened with the night.

The emcee was a short young man with hair slicked to one side. He introduced the Director of the 20th Quezon City High School Seniors' Conference, a big, muscled man with a voice that matched his build. The emcee also called onstage the coordinators for accommodations, meals, security, secretariat, and socials. Polite applause. From where I sat at the back, the newsletter coordinator was a plain-looking girl, tall and skinny. The coordinators were last year's students; this year, they volunteered to help run the conference.

The French windows in the newsletter room were wide open. A chill wind roamed inside. I buttoned my jacket and turned up its collar.

"Hi!" called out a voice that was warm and even. I turned around. The newsletter coordinator. She was nearly as tall as I, her head tilted regally to one side. She had a big mouth and bee-stung lips. She looked like a model.

"Hello," I said. "I'm Teddy Cruz, and you're the newsletter editor, right?"

"Yes, I'm Roxanne, Roxanne Gonzalez." She had high cheekbones and a wide forehead. Her jaws were angular, the kind of face you'd see on a magazine cover. She looked like Margie Moran, Miss Universe of 1974. Her eyes were large, and they had a way of turning brown in the light. But when she smiled, I thought I saw sadness in those eyes.

"Please fill in the personal data sheet. We'll wait for the others to arrive." She turned around and walked to the door, pasting a piece of paper scrawled with "NEWSLETTER" in blue pentel pen on the door. Her shiny hair flowed down her shoulders. Black Levi's hugged her long long legs.

Roxanne presided over the meeting. "Jhun-jhun, Let-let, and Mai-Mai, please you can interview the delegates for the *Gazette* issue. Ask them about the trip from Manila. First impressions, fresh impressions."

"What about me, Roxanne?" said the guy from across me. He looked like an airhead, one of those guys who had nothing between his ears, except earwax. His name was Jonathan Livingston Sy Go.

"Okay, Jon. Can you write an editorial based on the theme of the conference? The theme is—"

"Oh, yes, I know: 'Youth: Moral Values in the New Decade.'"

"Oh, nice to know *you* know the theme. Now write an editorial, please, around 250 words, okay, Jon?" Beneath the cool voice, I noticed a quick temper. And then she looked at me.

"Ted, could you please do the literary page?"

"Okay. Will do." Then I smiled to catch her attention.

She ignored me. Then she added. "Please turn in all assignments by five P.M. If there are no more questions, you may go to your rooms and rest. There's an acquaintance party tonight. Enjoy."

Everybody stood up and left the room, except me.

"Aren't you going to the party?"

"No, I've two left feet, you know. How about you?"

A sigh. Then: "I've to finish this for a paper in class." She showed me a small book bound in black cloth. *A Farewell to Arms*. "Don't let me keep you here," she said.

Oh, you only want to continue reading the corny story of Catherine and Lieutenant Henry, I wanted to tease her, but all I said was goodbye.

Inside my room, I took off my jeans and changed into the blue Nike jogging pants my father gave me last Christmas. I lit a cigarette, a habit I began only last month. Like many of my classmates, the first time I smoked I did it in the bathroom of our house. It

must be those ads (*Come to Marlboro country*), with the virile cowboy in tough brown leather jacket and boots, because I had a hard-on the first time I smoked.

The cigarette butt glowed. Smoke quivered in the air. I wanted to be alone, to think, because I was confused again. I heard the wind, a sound lost instantly among the pine trees. I thought I heard a familiar voice, floating from another country. I stood up and closed the windows. What shall I give the *Gazette*? A poem, perhaps?

I picked up my pen and yellow pad paper. Writing. Writing was like a sudden urge, an itch, a lust even, which I had to stay through words. The words ran inside me, like blood.

* * *

In Bulacan, I saw farmers in threadbare pants and faded shirts. Behind them lay the fields heavy with ripe grains. When we reached Pampanga, a mountain broke the smoothness of the horizon. Mount Arayat. The familiar mountain of memory. Above it, the sky was an immense blueness.

We stopped for lunch at the Vineyard, a restaurant in Rosales, Pangasinan. After lunch and pissing in one of those toilets where you held your breath so you would not have a migraine later, we went back to our buses. We passed a bridge with steel girders and high arches. But below it lay burning sand and stones, not the mighty, roaring river I had expected.

When the air became raw and sharp, I knew we were going up Kennon Road. Suddenly, smoke came from the hood of the La Mallorca. "The bus is burning!" cried the girl behind me.

The driver stood up, a stocky man with a beer belly and skin the color of dry earth. "We only need water. Don't worry, we'll be all right," he said. My teacher, Mrs. Genova, noisily volunteered her Tupperware filled with water. We snickered.

Then we continued with the trip. Mountain and sky, river and ravine. The sight of a landslide made us shift in our seats again. But it was a four-month-old landslide, caused by Typhoon Miling. One side of the mountain was gone. But the landslide had created a wide and calm lake. From the lake, a young tree was beginning to grow.
And when we reached Baguio, the first things I saw were the poinsettias, like blood on the face of a hill. My Biology textbook said the red petals of the poinsettias were not really flowers, but leaves. Thus, you can say that the poinsettias are masters of disguise.

* * *

I would have awakened later but for the noise in the room. "That Ruby from Holy Family Academy has a very soft body," said Bing Bong.

I plumped my pillow into a fat missile and aimed it at him.

"You're just jealous. Where did you go last night?" asked Bing Bong.

Gerry was my new classmate. He was wearing only his undershirt and his shorts, showing his young, hard biceps and hairy thighs. He said, "I saw him in the newsletter room. Seems like he's making a pass at the newsletter coordinator. Remember the *Vogue* model?"

I wanted to say, "You're just jealous, Gerry," but I held my horses. I found Gerry cute, and he always teased me. He must have sensed I liked him, even if I did not show it directly. I said, "Hey, I wasn't making a pass at her." Then: "But of course, I'd love to—"

Gerry just smiled at me, a wicked glint in his eyes.

After breakfast, we went to the Session Hall. The list of delegates and the groups they belonged to were tacked on the bulletin board. I belonged to Group 5, with my classmates Edgar Allan Pe and Daffodil Tulip Pastilan. During the first session, Daffodil was elected secretary and I, chairman. In the afternoon, Attorney Honey Boy Velez in a dark-blue suit bored us to death when he gave a two-hour speech on the theme of the conference that began with Jose Rizal's quote "The youth is the hope of the Fatherland." *Lolo* Pepe must be break-dancing in his grave by now. I sat at the back and did some doodles.

After the sessions ended, I left my essay in the newsletter room, with a short note for Roxanne. After dinner of fresh Baguio vegetables and fish *escabeche*, I walked back to the room and saw her, but she was busy reading Hemingway. On the table lay my essay, unread.

I rushed back to my room, fists deep in the pockets of my jacket, gnats of annoyance following me. Nobody, nobody ignores a frigging Aries. My classmates were all there. Gerry said we should drink. We pooled our money together, then sent Angel, Gigi, and Mandy to smuggle a case of beer in. We tried to be quiet since drinking was against the house rules, but as the empty beer bottles multiplied, the noise level also rose. My classmates told stories and jokes about women with boobs like the bumper of a car, or what they would do if they meet Bo Derek on the street. We smoked weed and drank and burped. A haze began to form before me. Then a hiss of words: *"I like you, Teddy, but I'm sorry. . ."* Sheena had said that evening in their yard, the garden perfumed with *ylang-ylang* and jasmine. *"My family is moving to Canada in summer. Let us write to each other. Good luck and best wishes. . . ."* The beer bubbled and foamed, and I drank my San Miguel cold and bitter.

Afterward, I was so drunk I just staggered to my bed and fell asleep. *Good luck and*

best wishes. As if she were congratulating a mere acquaintance on graduation day. Sheena and I had been dating for a year, watching movies at Virra Mall and fumbling with each other's zippers in the dark. But being convent-bred she had her rules. The navel was the border zone. Everything below that was a no-no. So while watching *Blue Lagoon* I would give her a French kiss and run my tongue around her nipples and try to pull down her Bang Bang Jeans but she always slapped my hand. The noise of a hand being slapped would bring snickers from the other lovers around us. We would stop, look at each other, and then begin kissing again. I whispered to my Catholic girlfriend that the pillar of salt wants to see the burning bush but she would not hear of it. She would just kiss me back and run her fingers down the spine of my back, up and down and up again. It was so hard I always had blue balls and would jerk off the moment I reached home. I liked her but when she left I began to like men as well.

The sunlight streaming from the window woke me up. I got up from bed with a morning hard-on. My classmates were still asleep. All bombed out. Gerry was on the bed next to mine. Such luck. His woolen blanket had fallen on the floor. He was wearing his gray jockeys. He also had a hard-on, which tent-poled his jockeys. I had to tear myself away from the Tower of Babel so my morning could begin. It was difficult. My throat was turning dry. But I had to, so I took a shower, lathered my face, and shaved. I remembered my dream last night (Gerry and I taking a bath together, at dawn, our fingers exploring each other's bodies), and I slapped cold water on my face. I had to pull myself together, because later in the day would be the panel interview for the Ten Most Outstanding Delegates of the conference.

The Director, the Conference Secretary, and a man introduced as the dean of an Opus Dei university interviewed us. The results would be added to the scores each candidate got for their performance during the conference. We were interviewed individually, behind closed doors. It was all beginning to sound like the Miss Universe beauty contest, and so while they interviewed me, I sat straight, with my right foot pointed forward.

The first two questions were a breeze. The Opus Dei dean, who looked like any of your kind uncles, asked the third question: "What do you think of such adolescent preoccupations as masturbation, drinking, and drugs?" He spat the word *adolescent* from his lips as if it were some illness.

I was uneasy because I had expected a question about the conference itself. He was sooooo damned smug I said, "Well, sir, I think masturbation is just normal. In fact, even those who are no longer teenagers still do it. Drinking is, too. Drugs? Umm—"

"Do you do these things?" he said, taking off his thick glasses that looked like goggles, and then fixed his sharp eyes on me.

What the hell do you care? I wanted to tell him, but I kept my cool. *Ang mapikon, talo*. He who blows his top first, loses. "Of course, I jack off, like everybody else. I drink beer, yes. Drugs? Sometimes, I smoke marijuana, but only that, and rarely. Besides, it's hard to find—" I would have rambled on, but the dean had told me to stop.

During the awarding ceremonies, after the emcee had called the names of the tenth down to the third Most Outstanding Delegate, I knew I had lost. I was sitting beside Gerry, inhaling the fragrance of his *Brüt*. The night was cold and our warm thighs were grazing each other. I was thinking of the many things I could do to his hairy thighs when my name was called as the Most Outstanding Delegate. Gerry gripped my hand tightly, and then he hugged me. I wished he would never let go. But he did, and so I walked to the stage and received my heavy gold medallion and a certificate done in sheepskin. My classmates' Instamatic cameras kept on popping.

The Opus Dei vote could only pull me down a few points, I heard later from the grapevine that always clung and grew after the results of any contest had been announced. After the awarding ceremonies, there were some more boring speeches so I asked Gerry, "Would you like to take a walk? It's cooler outside."

Down the footpath we walked. Dusk had already settled among the leaves, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of pine. A moon hung in the sky, ripe and full and yellow, like a harvest moon. Is there still a man on the moon? I wondered suddenly, remembering our housemaid Ludy's tale one childhood night so many years ago. But I let the memory go.

Gerry and I sat on a concrete bench encircling a dry fountain. A mermaid in stone sat in the center of the fountain.

"Congratulations again," Gerry said as he sat beside me. Vapor rose from his lips as he spoke.

"Thank you," I answered. He looked good in his black long-sleeved denim shirt, with one button down, and faded blue jeans. His eyes were big and penetrating. I wanted so much to touch his face and tell him I like him. I knew he knew what I wanted to tell him, but the words remained frozen on my tongue.

It was he who broke the awkward silence. "Perhaps we should be heading back?" Then he snickered. "I think any moment now a snowflake would settle on the tip of my nose."

Which I would melt with a kiss, I wanted to say, dangerously witty to the very end.