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MODERNIST POETIC PRACTICES IN ENGLISH POETRY FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA: A COMPARISON BETWEEN JOSE GARCIA VILLA AND ARTHUR YAP

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Abstract
The paper develops a comparison between Jose Garcia Villa (1908-97) and Arthur Yap (1943-2006) as the principal Modernists of English poetry from Southeast Asia. Though they wrote from very dissimilar backgrounds, and in very different circumstances, each represents for his time and place a radical assimilation of Western poetic practices into a new form of experimental writing. The comparison delineates the various ways in which their example reveals the scope and limits of what can be achieved through a systematic subversion of traditional modes of poetic writing in Southeast Asia.

Keywords
Philippine poetry, postcolonial poetry, Singapore poetry

About the Author
Rajeev Patke was educated at the University of Poona (India) and the University of Oxford (UK), and teaches at the National University of Singapore. His publications include *The Long Poems of Wallace Stevens* (Cambridge UP, 1985) and *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford UP, 2006). He is currently co-authoring *The Routledge Concise History of SE Asian Writing in English* (forthcoming, 2009) and co-editing *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in Continental Europe and its Empires* (forthcoming, Edinburgh UP, 2008).

José Garcia Villa (1908-97) and Arthur Yap (1943-2006) are probably the principal Modernists of English poetry from Southeast Asia.[1] Narratives of the anxiety of influence familiarize us with patterns of development in which colonial and postcolonial talents work subserviently in the shadow of Western traditions. Such narratives are given an unusual twist by Villa and Yap. At the outset of their careers, each derived impetus from American models, but then took that momentum in new directions. The radical nature of their achievement helps highlight the principal tension that underpins the literary history of English in Southeast Asia: the scope for innovation in the dialectic between conformity and experiment, which is also the scope for resistance to tradition in the context of societies whose readers look to their writers for the role they might adopt in respect to the cultural development of literary cultures emerging from colonialism. In this paper, I hope to focus

on this tension by providing an overview of their writing through concise answers to five questions:

1. When does a radical new talent present itself within the literary history of new nationhood?
2. How does the stylistic development of these talents stand out from general trends among their contemporaries?
3. What is the nature of the resemblance between the two poets?
4. What are the limits to the similarity between the poets?
5. What is the cultural significance of their poetic practices?

The first question can be answered quickly: the case of Villa and Yap suggests, rather unexpectedly, that it did not take very long after the inception of a new tradition for talents to come along who were willing to challenge its conventions, almost before they had a chance to consolidate themselves. Villa and Yap opened up radical possibilities for which there was no inkling in their models or contemporaries. This feature seems more significant than the fact that Filipino writers took to English no sooner than the Americans introduced them to the language, while it took a much longer time for the colonial language to become the vehicle for literary aspirations in the Malayan peninsula.

The experimental dimension to Villa and Yap is attended by a specific irony. Each evokes in the country of his birth a response that remains mixed: admiration mingled with unease or disapproval. While their innovativeness has received the acknowledgement of eulogy, pastiche, or parody, no subsequent poet from either country has shown either the desire or the capacity for a comparable degree of risk management in respect to language, form, or audiences. This gives their work a fascination different from that evinced by poets with safer styles and more secure reputations.

My second question is premised on the recognition that poets develop their styles through a process of imitative learning, and postcolonial cultures reinforce this pattern by inducing recurrent anxieties about poetic identity. How does the stylistic development of Villa and Yap resemble, and differ from, such patterns?

Villa's early poems remind us of effects familiar from e.e. cummings and ideas associated with the "Ars Poetica" of Archibald MacLeish (see Villa's "Proem": "The meaning of a poem is not a meaning / of words" [*Poems by Doveglion* 1]) and a host of echoes, including Dickinson, Hopkins, Blake, and Donne. Yet a distinctive voice, full of self-conviction, announces itself very early. This voice is intent on repressing its cultural

location. It believes that poetry transcends such materiality in its aspiration for the aesthetic. In his "Guggenheim Fellowship: Plan for Work," written in 1942, Villa himself wrote that poetry has "the advantage over prose, in my belief, in being able to deal directly with essences" (*The Anchored Angel* 132). This belief subsidizes a good deal that is banal or mannered in Villa, but it also enables effects that are striking because they provide the "brilliance" and "consecration" he demanded of poetry ("I demand brilliance and / consecration…" ("Poem 213," *Poems by Doveglion* 7). His work succeeds whenever his approach to the familiar appears fresh rather than strained or affected, as with the following example of synaesthesia in the poem "Descriptional":

> I could feel it
> like a stab of sun. I could hear it
> like a flower, like a curve of rose:
> (*Poems by Doveglion* 6)

Through all the stages of its development, his poems reveal a fiercely resistant individualism, a tendency to idealize the poetic quest for the aesthetic sublime, and a sensibility based on enthusiastic assimilation to a deeply subjective version of the Western tradition. With hindsight, it is tempting to read the early poems as driven by an over-determined urge to reject the prosaic, the quotidian, the uncomprehendingly paternal, and the insistently bourgeois for a realm of the spirit where "Doveglion" felt like an apt rather than an absurd self-nomination.

The work of the 1940s is not self-evidently the work of one reconciled to prolonged existence as a self-exile. But the later poems of the 1950s do evoke a sense of fading inspiration, a muted lion pent up in a metropolitan cave of his own making. More puzzling than Villa's abandonment of poetry is the reception he got in the forties and early fifties from an audience of Western elders and peers. The hyperboles of Edith Sitwell and Marianne Moore now seem less like the intuitiveness of liberal souls than a mixture of the paternal, the patronizing, and the indulgent, the dated vagaries of a metropolitan taste for the marginal and the exotic. The later evanescence of his American reputation now seems no less ironic than the wary and belated recognition he was granted from the Philippines. While his sharp tongue, vivid style, and haughty tone continued to exercise a canonical influence over a handful of poets during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, others reacted to his work with hostility, suspicion, or indifference.

Regardless, it is possible to recognize that Villa's poetry had a natural affinity for

the neo-Romantic, a confident ear for rhythms and for what he described as "reverse consonance," allied to a tonal range with a propensity for the rapt and the rhapsodic. In "A Note on 'Reverse Consonance'" Villa explains: "The last sounded consonants of the last syllable, or the last principal consonants of a word, are reversed for the corresponding rhyme. Thus a rhyme for *near* would be *run*; or *rain*, *green*, *reign*. For *light–tell*, *tall*, *tale*, *steal*, etc." (*Selected Poems and New* 76-7).

His work was the intense outcome of a temperament drawn to the idea of "pure" poetry. It is also evident that his work suffered the consequence inevitable to a temperament unwilling (or uninterested) in making his social and cultural distance from his rarefied conception of literariness an aspect of self-awareness. This willfulness had two consequences.

Villa's poetic world remained selective in focus and hermetic in effect. It insisted on giving no signs of the poet having lived life in the Philippines, or in New York, or amidst any of the mundane realities which comprise most of life for most people. Villa was quite emphatic about this: "Land is not real country: it is commerce, agriculture, politics: a husk country," he wrote in "A Composition" (*The Anchored Angel* 135). It was determined to personalize feeling as idea or image rather than experience, memory, or history. His poems lived a life more convincingly as sounds, arrangements of words and lines, and ideas and symbols rather than emotions, feelings, thoughts, and desires. Language remained de-linked from the world of reference, suspended in the realm of abstraction.

On the more or less positive side, the poetry realized in print a fanciful imagination that was as sensitive as it was fastidious, and a sensibility in love with the idea of poetry, even more than with the idea of love or God or the freedom to pursue them both. The poetry fed on what Villa called the metaphysical dimension to experience: "a single motive underlies all my work … the search for the metaphysical meaning of man's life in the universe" (*The Anchored Angel* 132). His notion of the metaphysical essence of life suffers from being kept resolutely empty of contingent detail. Poem after poem ekes out an existence sustained exclusively by the will to play with sounds, syntax, punctuation, and symbols. Once the limited possibilities of such restricted means had been exhausted, there was no option but silence or the "found poems" which he called "adaptations."

Next, turning to Yap, we note that his poems share a number of features more or less consistently throughout his career. The quirky energy and intelligence of his poetry owes little to song. He had no interest in stanzaic form or a logic of rhythm bound to conventional meter and rhyme. Instead, he practiced a free verse closer to English as a language learned from books, spoken as a second tongue, unmindful of its bookish diction

and formal syntax. He also abjured the use of the capital letter. A practice modeled after e. e. cummings carried the nuance that this poetic voice was not going to present itself as anything but lower case: modest, diffident, self-effacing.

The poems show little or no interest in tackling conventional motifs such as love, or the poet's emotional private life: in that sense they are anti-Confessional and non-lyrical (although occasional poems do articulate moments of lyric perception and an awareness of nature). His main strength is the dramatic mode applied to the short poem. His work divides into meditative or dramatic poems. The first kind vocalizes the poet thinking aloud in print; the second presents assorted Singaporeans, drawn from all strata of the social, economic, and demographic registers, whose accurately mimicked speech habits reveal more than the fictional characters might realize about the poet's oblique intentions.

The meditative poems generally use a style that ranges from the prosaic to the pedantic. At its extreme, it is either inadvertently or deliberately self-parodic. It is modeled on *langue* rather than *parole*. Its vocabulary and syntax are drawn from books; its rhythms are remote from ordinary speech or song. It becomes distinctive largely through quirkiness of tone, and the laconic habit of playing with words, phrases, and ideas. The poet rarely articulates his views in person, except through the involved implications of irony and satire.

What makes Yap striking is the manifest oddity of every poem at the level of tone and syntax. What makes the practice compelling to its admirers is how the obliquity of approach is rarely gratuitous. It appears that the rejection or avoidance of conventional expectations concerning poetry happens as an incidental consequence of the poet trying to be true to an inward sense of fidelity to what we might call the "truth-value" of a specific insight into the human predicament. The poems demonstrate a sense of integrity in relation to human experience, a reflective and a skeptical cast of mind. The opening of a single poem ("stained glass") will have to suffice here as example.

> stained glass
> was awesome silence,
> was such quiet it indicated paraphrases everywhere.
> the branches outside were your fingers
> held in benediction.
> (*the space* 108)

People can be put off Yap's writing because it appears self-preoccupied, oblique,

compressed. It is witty if you have a taste for the laconic; it feels dry or sterile if you do not relish word-play and are discouraged when you find no obvious purchase for emotions and feelings as the peg on which to hang poetry.

A broad consideration of the two poetic topographies brings us to my third question: in what sense do the poets resemble each other? There is a short answer to this question: they are both Modernist, although in different ways. This answer can bear with a little elaboration.

"Modernism" is a complex and controversial notion. In somewhat synoptic fashion I use the term to refer to a set of crises and questionings that affected how artists and writers handled four types of cultural relation: between art and its medium; art and reality; art and artist; art and its audience.[2]

The Modernist features in Villa and Yap are fairly self-evident. Both poets show an acute degree of self-reflexivity about language, rhythm, and form as elements of the poetic medium; about the relation of the poet or his art to representation or self-expression; and about the ways in which the audience's expectations of poetry must accommodate the revised view of art implicit in the poet's practice. Both are severe in the demands they make of their readers. Neither is prone to compromise. Both were drawn to painting as a sister art. Villa may have been secretive about his work in the visual media, but Yap's paintings were exhibited in several venues in the 1980s, and both provide evidence of being conversant with the discourses of Modern art.

Villa's early aesthetics was based on scorn for servile imitation and the willingness to abandon conventional syntax and cohesion for experiments with rhythm, line breaks, patterns of sound and syntax, and elliptical development of mood, idea, and argument. The "converse rhyme" of his early poems remains a more subdued and hence more successful innovation. In contrast, his 1949 venture into the commas, whose use he described as "poetic" and "functional" rather than grammatical, leaves the reader with a mixed effect. At its optimal, it does slow down the linear movement to a pace which in "A Note on the Commas, Vol. 2" he said that he hoped could convey a sense of "quiet dignity," (*Selected Poems* 81), as in "Poem 109":

> The,soul,swarms,with,angels,
> If,Soul,but,knew,it.
> I.heard,an,angel,once,
> Declaim,within,the,Orbit:
> (*Selected Poems* 90).

This effect may have a distant ancestor in Emily Dickinson's habit of using the em-dash as her principal punctuation mark (or Hopkins's idea of Sprung Rhythm). But such echoes do not prevent the practice from appearing both intrusive and limited in its effects, symptomatic of the desire to experiment, but inadequate as a technical resource that would reward sustained repetition.[3]

Next, there is the elliptical compression of syntax, accompanied by the intensification of accented syllables and lexical effects based on alliteration, rhyme, or neologisms. Villa's "Poem 117" is a concise example:

> More,miracled,and,
> Gazing,from,new,light-
> Nings: from,blázerock,stérnrock,
> I: journeyer,yet,I,go
> My,
>
> Jacob,warlock,seek.
> (*Selected Poems* 95-6)

In such a poem, the degree to which the reader is expected to struggle to keep up with the poet is considerable. The poem as rhapsodic utterance can also be experienced as poem-puzzle, a race towards the meaning, in which the poet has chosen to enforce a handicap on his readers by telescoping semantic connections, compressing syntax, and making abrupt changes of tone and reference.

In Yap's case, modernist attitudes control and drive the tone and the syntax: irony is the principal cognitive instrument; humor the chief antidote to boredom, passivity, and despair. An extract from a single poem will have to suffice here for illustrative purposes:

> statement
>
> of course your work comes first.
> after that, you may go for a walk,
> visit friends but, all the same,
> it is always correct to ask
> before you do anything else.

so if you say: please may I jump
off the ledge? And go on to add
this work is really killing,
you will be told: start jumping.
(*the space* 29)

In the usual Yap poem, the focus is always on the human condition in all its contingent specificity, the specifically Singaporean in its urban manifestations, always monitored by the implicit presence of a sternly paternal State. The individual or the group is caught by a candid and discerning camera in a moment of marginal and accidental self-revelation. The skilful mimicry of habits of speech and thought become the poet's way of absenting himself and his attitudes from the world of his poetry. Yap's irony cuts two ways: never taking an obvious or clear position on an issue pluralizes the possible reactions one could give to the predicaments he dramatizes, leaving the reader both free and uncertain about the attitude the author would like to elicit from the reader. An ethics is implied but elided in Yap's world of relativity. A short poem, "there is no future in nostalgia" illustrates the ambivalence neatly. In it, the reader is left uncertain if the poet accepts or regrets the changes that are an inevitable part of the urban landscape:

there is no future in nostalgia

& certainly no nostalgia in the future of the past.
now, the cigarette-seller is gone, is perhaps dead.
no, definitely dead, he would not otherwise have gone.
he is replaced by a stamp-machine,
the old cook by a pressure-cooker…
(*the space* 59)

The compression or elimination of connectives, the telescoping of syntax and thought processes, the obsessive interest in jokes, mimicry, parody, and subversion are some of the other features that constitute Yap's postmodernism.

That brings us to the fourth question: what are the limits of similarity between them? Here too, the answer is self-evident: Villa and Yap are dissimilar in most respects. Villa was always explicit about his metaphysical conceptions and aspirations; Yap would persuade us that the notion of metaphysics is too far-fetched to apply either to his social ventriloquism

or to his meditations on landscapes and mindscapes. Nothing could be further from Villa's exuberant and flamboyant personality than Yap's aversion to the direct personal expression of feelings. Villa is often abstract or symbolic; Yap is almost always tied to the quotidian in its concrete specificity. Villa elides all of contingent reality from his poetry; Yap opens his poems to so much detail that he leaves many readers wishing there was more of the poet to guide them through his welter of the observed and the audited. One has too much metaphysics; the other appears to be almost all physics.

They resemble each other only in a relational sense. Each in his time takes a risk and introduces a rupture. Each for his time and place rejects certain relatively simple choices, and takes on a more experimental approach to poetry. And that is salutary.

Finally, what then is the general cultural significance of a comparison between their poetic practices and careers? Both Villa and Yap (the former rather more obviously than the latter) turned their backs on a significant aspect of the cultural aspirations of the societies they came from. Consider, first, the relatively minor rebellion constituted by Yap's life and career. In a Singapore dominated—albeit benignly—by the canonical status and poetic commitments of Edwin Thumboo, it took some courage for Yap to go his own way, choosing to write in a style that constantly risked being dismissed as mannered and eccentric. Perhaps he had no choice, in the sense that he wrote the only kind of poems he could write. Nevertheless, a moral can be derived: poets cannot afford to be burdened with a sense of their belatedness or distance from traditions, whether local or global. Nor can poets afford to worry over how other poets handle language, form, or subject matter; they might do worse than look for their own way of doing things, without being fazed by the risks taken in writing at a distance from all models and everything that is merely modish.

Consider the relatively major form of rebellion symbolized by Villa. Not only was the young Villa severe on Filipino writers of the late 1920s and early 1930s; his entire life, sensibility, and taste were turned exclusively towards a Western metropolitan culture that may have endorsed him for a while, but which he was never really part of. Proud and rebellious isolation were his self-appointed role and destiny. He was always special and knew, better than others, why he was special — that remained the constant implication of his poetry and criticism. This was unabashedly elitist, a form of confirmed snobbery. It deferred too much to a culture he was not part of. Assimilating himself to it still kept his poems in a poetic environment that remained rarefied, lacking the muscle and fiber that makes, for example, the Yeatsian rag-and-bone-shop of the heart propitious ground on which to sustain its neo-romanticism.

A style fed on e. e. cummings was not likely to supply the energy for the strenuous

uphill grappling of a Hopkins or a Donne. In that sense, Villa's work and life acquire a forlorn and mutedly heroic quality. However, the significance of Villa is greater than the sum of his achievements. If he paid a heavy price for the pursuit of an inward-gazing Muse, his single-minded dedication to an exalted sense of vocation, like Yap's more fugitive but equally dogged self-conviction, still stand as tokens of a courage that most postcolonial poets lack when they tackle the challenge of how to establish a relation between the voice from the margin and the historical Babel of voices that is the fictive metropolitan centers of the American and the British traditions.

NOTES

1 Villa's creative period extended from the late 1920s in the Philippines to midway through his long permanent residence in the USA. His first two volumes of poetry were published from Manila, the rest from the USA: *Many Voices* (1939), *Poem by Doveglion* (1941), *Have Come Am Here* (1942), *Volume Two* (1949), *Selected Poems and New* (1958), and several subsequent selections. Yap's poetic career, based entirely in Singapore, extended from *only lines* (1971), *commonplace* (1977), *down the line* (1980), *Man Snake Apple* (1986) to *the space of city trees: selected poems* (2000).

2 Modernism is a name given retrospectively to a historical phase in artistic consciousness, and refers to a set of beliefs, preoccupations, and practices whose effects were first discernible in Western Europe and North America. They were at their most intensive during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Later, they spread unevenly and belatedly to artists and writers in all societies that responded to the productions of the Western Modernists with a spirit of sympathy and emulation. Artists become more self-conscious about the limitations of their medium, or about news ways of drawing on the expressive resources from the old medium and its grammar of conventions. The ways in which art is supposed to imitate or represent or refer to reality are found to be problematic or untenable or irrelevant or uninteresting by artists. They question the traditional idea of art as imitation, representation, or didacticism, and turn increasingly to the idea of art as a complex form of self-expression. Artists feel alienated from their audiences, or audiences feel frustrated by what they cannot comprehend as art because the production and reception of art becomes problematized, either because artists refuse to supply what audiences expect, or artists require audiences to revise their notions of art in order to follow what they are doing.

3 The comma poems are perhaps seen at their best when concise, as in some of the epigrammatic "Aphorisms," *Selected Poems and New*, 120-8, 134-42.

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A REACTION TO "MODERNIST POETIC PRACTICES IN ENGLISH POETRY FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA: A COMPARISON BETWEEN JOSE GARCIA VILLA AND ARTHUR YAP"

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Abstract
This follow-through develops Patke's characterization of Jose Garcia Villa as a heroic figure by an account of the reception to his poetry in the Philippines since World War II. Villa's insistence on the primacy of art alienated him from critics in the late sixties and seventies who saw him as a "mental colony." Later postcolonial criticism, however, allowed for a more favorable interpretation of Villa.

Keywords
Philippine poetry, postcolonial poetry, Singapore poetry

About the Author
Jonathan Chua is editor of The *Critical Villa: Essays in Literary Criticism by Jose Garcia Villa* (Ateneo de Manila UP, 2002).

Rajeev Patke's astute comparison of the poetry of Jose Garcia Villa and Arthur Yap invites further reflection on the two poets. One may, for instance, ask to what extent are the poets subversive? In Villa's case, while his experimentations clearly broke away from traditional forms of writing, those experiments, too, were "imported" from the colonial master. Was Villa merely reproducing the metropolitan center in another fashion and therefore not so subversive after all, or did he really clear new grounds for overtly subversive expression?

Those questions obviously require extensive study. This is a more modest undertaking. Only a tentative amplification of Patke's assessment of Villa may be made here, as I am unfamiliar with Singaporean poetry—and it is to Patke's credit that he has generated among his auditors some interest in Arthur Yap. Patke sees a "forlorn and mutedly heroic quality" in Villa, whose life and poetry were marked by a dogged individualism. An account of the Philippine reception to Villa since the fifties may serve to illuminate this image of Villa.

Although Villa enjoyed a fairly high reputation in the Philippines after the World War II and throughout the fifties, it sank in the decades that followed. What militated

against him was the radicalization of campuses. The volatile sociopolitical situation of the mid-sixties and the seventies led Philippine intellectuals and artists to question and rethink established notions of art and literature. What was the function of art and literature? What was the role of the artist and the writer in a society wracked by political and economic inequities?

In a way, it recalled the debate between "Art for Art's sake" and "proletarian literature" (the "Villa-Lopez controversy," as it is called in various sources) of the late 1930s. However, the "Lopez side" had acquired a distinctly anti-imperialist color. The position was not simply that literature should serve as a means of social protest, but also that social injustice was ultimately intertwined with the country's neocolonial relations with the United States. English itself was the enemy, and literature, if it wasn't the type that critiqued the Establishment or that spoke to and for the masses, was complicit in the oppressive system.

In this context, Villa's metaphysical rhapsodies or "pure poetry" were out of place. The title of Domingo Castro de Guzman's article—"Villa, Is, a, Mental, Colony"—sums up the general disposition of the time. His denunciation of Villa was not unusual:

> His contribution to the continued deepening of the oppression and poverty of the greatest number of his own countrymen cannot be overestimated; it is enormous….
>
> Together with Nick Joaquin, it is Villa's pre-eminent responsibility that two generations of writers (to limit ourselves to writers) were almost entirely irrevocably wasted and lost. Lost to the enemy: lost to *be* enemies.
>
> It was specifically Villa who espoused in this country the image of the American oppressor as a cultural magus and fountainhead, thereby effectively cloaking the fact of his being *the* oppressor. And this manner of apologizing is indeed more effective than that of directly claiming that the American imperialist is *not* an oppressor; for to make such a claim is to raise the counterclaim. (26)[1]

Before the twin threat of the raised fist and the sickle, Doveglion was a dead duck. In the rhetoric of the times, Villa, who had been a rebel, as Patke stresses in his article, was Villa the traitor.

Since the overthrow of the Marcos government in the mid-1980s, however, the climate has been kinder. Other modes of social analyses sit side by side the orthodox Marxism. The influx of postcolonial theory, particularly that strain which stresses the agency of the colonial subject, has given critics a new conceptual vocabulary to take Villa.

San Juan, who in the 1970s castigated, in no uncertain terms, Villa as an instrument of US colonial policy, has written a "Homage to Jose Garcia Villa" in which Villa comes across as a transgressing writer. Villa threatened the metropolitan center as much as he embraced it (San Juan 191-216). Linguist Andrew Gonzalez sees in Villa's poetry a kind of postcolonial writing back. For Gonzalez, Villa "used the resources of a second language to begin innovating with these resources much as a first language speaker does. In the process ... he embodied the Filipino having perfected his art as form and his mastery of the English language" (qtd. in San Juan "Homage" 199-200).

This theoretical turn salvages English, and Villa, as it were, is its secondary beneficiary. What is ironic is that postcolonial theory is decidedly political, precisely that which Villa wanted to avoid in favor of the universal or (one of his favorite words) "essential." As Patke observes, Villa's poetry "insisted on giving no signs of the poet having lived life in the Philippine, or in New York, or amidst any of the mundane realities which comprise most of life for most people." Thus, too, was his insistence on parthenogenesis.

A similar irony resides, as critic Oscar Campomanes has suggested (at the open forum), in the current reception to Villa in the United States. It is multiculturalism which has revived an interest in Villa among the Asian-American, specifically the Filipino-American, literary community. Villa's ethnicity, the very aspect of his subjectivity which he tried to repress, resurrects him. Timothy Yu writes perceptively that the initial attraction of the American literary establishment to Villa was a function of Orientalism: Doveglion was an exotic bird (41-59).

What is interesting in all this is that throughout these rewritings of his literary life, as rebel, colonial puppet, and now postcolonial mimic or the subaltern who spoke, Villa himself never budged from his position: "I can state … that a single motive underlies all my work, and that this motive defines my intention as a serious creative artist:—the search for the metaphysical meaning of man's life in the universe—the finding of man's selfhood and dignity in the mystery of Creation" (*The Anchored Angel* 132). It was the critics who did.

There may be something here of Norma Desmond insisting that "it's the pictures that got small" (*Sunset Boulevard*). But here, too, lies something heroic about the poet's unflinching devotion to a Romantic concept of art. It is traditionally the artist's task to challenge, and in Villa's case, he challenged history itself.

> Any,hero,is,the,author.
> Any,age,is,the,infant.
> (*Selected Poems* 134)

As things have turned out, perhaps history has had its revenge. But if History is the victor, Villa was a worthy challenger: "And,if,Thesues—then,Minotaur" (*Selected Poems* 149).

"A Leonard Casper deserves an E. San Juan," Villa was supposed to have remarked. Perhaps that may be taken as his succinct statement about the instability of critical opinion vis-à-vis the object of criticism. There are, and have been, various and even conflicting ways of seeing Villa. Patke's is one, and it is both persuasive and attractive, if only because it stresses the courage that self-avowed postcolonial writers need have if they are indeed to write back.

NOTE

1 See also E. San Juan, Jr., "U.S. Imperialism and Philippine Literature." *Asia-Philippines Leader* 15 Sep. 1972, 10, 43-4; and Lucila Hosillos, "Escapee to Universality (Portrait of a Filipino Poet as Escapee to the Non-existent Kingdom of Universalism." *Diliman Review* 18 (1970): 320-40 for similar tirades.

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AMERICAN GLOBALITY AND THE US PRISON REGIME: STATE VIOLENCE AND WHITE SUPREMACY FROM ABU GHRAIB TO STOCKTON TO BAGONG DIWA

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Abstract
What do we make of the abiding significance of state-sanctioned human captivity and imprisonment on a massive, unprecedented scale as a primary American modality of civilization? Democracy? Modernity and (postmodern) Nation-building? The American prison intertwines as it animates two structural logics: 1) white supremacy as a historical modality of social (dis)organization, and 2) the circulation, militarization, and mobilization of allegedly local or domestic US social formations across global geographies, including and beyond the Philippines. This paper considers the formation of the United States prison industrial complex as an epochal global regime that is integral to the fabric of an incipient world ordering.

Keywords
American imperialism, American state prison, War on Terror

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INTRODUCTION: AMERICAN GLOBALITY AND CARCERAL STATE VIOLENCE

To consider the US prison as a global practice of dominance, we might begin with the now-indelible photo exhibition of captive brown men manipulated, expired, and rendered bare in the tombs of the US-commandeered Abu Ghraib prison: here, I am concerned less with the idiosyncrasies of the carceral spectacle (who did what, administrative responsibilities, tedium of military corruption and incompetence, etc.) than I am with its inscription of the *where* in which the worst of US prison/state violence incurs. As the bodies of tortured prisoners in this *somewhere else,* that is, beyond and outside the formal national domain of the United States, have become the hyper-visible and accessible raw material for a global critique of the US state—with Abu Ghraib often serving as the

signifier for a *generalized* mobilization of sentiment against the American occupation—the intimate and proximate bodies of those locally and intimately imprisoned *within the localities of the United States* constantly threaten to disappear from the political and moral registers of US civil society, its resident US Establishment Left, and perhaps most if not all elements of the global Establishment Left, which includes NGOs, political parties, and sectarian organizations. I contend in this essay that a new theoretical framing is required to critically address (and correct) the artificial delineation of *the statecraft of* Abu Ghraib prison, and other US formed and/or mediated carceral sites across the global landscape, as somehow unique and exceptional to places outside the US proper. In other words, a genealogy and social theory of US state violence *specific to the regime of the prison* needs to be delicately situated within the ensemble of institutional relations, political intercourses, and historical conjunctures that precede, produce, and sustain places like the Abu Ghraib prison, and can therefore only be adequately articulated as a genealogy and theory of the allegedly "domestic" US prison regime's "globality" (I will clarify my use of this concept in the next part of this introduction).

Further, in offering this initial attempt at such a framing, I am suggesting a genealogy of US state violence that can more sufficiently conceptualize the logical continuities and material articulations between a) the ongoing projects of domestic warfare organic to the white supremacist US racial state, and b) the array of "global" (or extra-domestic) technologies of violence that form the premises of possibility for those social formations and hegemonies integral to the contemporary moment of US global dominance. In this sense, I am amplifying the capacity of the US prison to inaugurate technologies of power that exceed its nominal relegation to the domain of the criminal-juridical. Consider imprisonment, then, as a practice of *social ordering and geopolitical power*, rather than as a self-contained or foreclosed jurisprudential practice: therein, it is possible to reconceptualize the significance of the Abu Ghraib spectacle as only one signification of a regime of dominance that is neither (simply) local nor (erratically) exceptional, but is simultaneously mobilized, proliferating, and global.

The overarching concern animating this essay revolves around the peculiarity of US global dominance in the historical present: that is, given the geopolitical dispersals and dislocations, as well as the differently formed social relations generated by US hegemonies across sites and historical contexts, *what modalities of "rule" and statecraft give form and coherence to the (spatial-temporal) transitions, (institutional-discursive) rearticulations, and (apparent) novelties of "War on Terror" neoliberalism?* Put differently, what technologies and institutionalities thread between forms of state and state-sanctioned dominance that are

nominally autonomous of the US state, but are no less implicated in the global reach of US state *formation?*

The intent of this initial foray into a theoretical project that admittedly exceeds the strictures of a self-contained journal article is primarily suggestive: on the one hand, I wish to examine how the institutional matrix and technological module of the US prison regime (a concept I will develop in the next section of the essay) is a programmatic (that is, strategic and structural rather than conspiratorial or fleeting) condensation of specific formations of racial and white supremacist state violence and is produced by the twinned, simultaneous logics of social ordering/disruption (e.g. the prison as *both and at once* the exemplar of effective "criminal justice" law-and-order and culprit in the mass-based familial and community disruption of criminalized populations).

On the other hand, I am interested in considering how the visceral and institutionally abstracted logic of bodily domination that materially forms and reproduces the regime of the American prison is *fundamental,* not ancillary, to US state-mediated, state-influenced, and state-sanctioned methods of legitimated "local" state violence across the *global* horizon. To put a finer edge on this latter point, it is worth noting that given the plethora of scholarly and activist engagements with US global dominance that has emerged in recent times, and the subsequent theoretical nuance and critical care provided to treatments of (for example) US corporate capital, military/warmaking capacity, and mass culture, relatively little attention has been devoted to the *constitutive* role of the US prison in articulating the techniques, meanings, and pragmatic forms of state-building within post-1990s social formations, including those of the US's ostensible peer states, as well as places wherein militarized occupation, postcolonial subjection, and proto-colonial relations overdetermine the ruling order. In place of considering the US prison as a dynamic, internally complex mobilization of state power and punitive social ordering, such engagements tend to treat the prison as if it were, for the most part, a self-evident *outcome or exterior symptom* of domination rather than a central, interior facet of how domination is itself conceptualized and produced.

In this meditation I am concerned with the integral role of the US prison regime in the material/cultural production of "American globality." In using this phrase I am suggesting a process and module of state power that works, moves, and deploys in ways distinct from (though fundamentally in concert with) American (global) "hegemony," and inaugurates a geography of biopolitical power more focused than common scholarly cartographies of American "empire." For my purposes, American globality refers to the postmodern production of US state and state-sanctioned technologies of human and

ecological domination—most frequently formed through overlapping and interacting regimes of profound bodily violence, including genocidal and protogenocidal violence, warmaking, racist and white supremacist state violence, and mass-scaled imprisonment—*and the capacity of these forms of domination to be mobilized across political geographies all over the world,* including by governments and states that are nominally autonomous of the United States. American globality is simultaneously a vernacular of institutional power, an active and accessible iteration of violent human domination as the cohering of sociality (and civil society) *writ large*, and a grammar of pragmatic immediacy (in fact, urgency) that orders and influences statecraft across various geographies of jurisdiction and influence.

It is in this sense of globality as (common) vernacular, (dynamic, present tense) iteration, and (disciplining) grammar that the current formation of global order is constituted (obviously) by the direct interventions of the US state and (not as obviously) by the *lexicon* (as in the principles governing the organization of a vocabulary) of US statecraft. American globality infers how the US state conceptualizes its own power, as well as how these conceptualizations of power and American state formation become immediately useful to—and frequently, structurally and politically overbearing on—other state formations and hegemonies. The prison regime, in other words, *is indisputably organic to the lexicon of the US state,* and is thus productive of American globality, not a by-product or reified outcome of it. In the remainder of this essay, I raise the possibility that the US conceptualization of the prison as a peculiar mobilization of power and domination is, in the historical present, central to how states, governments, and social orderings all over the world are formulating their own responses to the political, ecological, and social crises of neoliberalism, warfare, and global white supremacy.

GLOBAL AMERICANA: GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON AS PUBLIC RELATIONS

A recent example illustrates more concretely how the technology of American globality works through the apparatus of the US prison regime. In 2005, members of the US Congress convened what amounted to a choreographed public relations visit to the maximum security units at the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The state propaganda and rhetoric surrounding this visit seemed to signify the importance of the US prison apparatus to the fabrication of American globality as something that is, in fact, *good for the world*. The political theater of the Congressional tour organized a state response to an emergent historical question that had obtained momentum since the Bush Administration's

initial declaration of a War on Terror: What, institutionally and allegorically, does the transformation of the prison at Guantanamo Bay into the core carceral element of this perpetual global war *mean* within the schema of contemporary US dominance? Here, it is the prominence of the prison as a staged scene, or perhaps, as an institutionally performative site for the statecraft of Global Americana, that provokes theoretical attention. Reporting for *The Washington Post*, Mike Allen described the visit:

> As part of a major Pentagon public relations offensive, dozens of lawmakers are being flown to the maximum-security units here for VIP tours conducted by generals who portray the cells as safe and even comfortable places for suspected terrorists to spend their days....

Republican and Democratic lawmakers say they are drawn to the prison out of curiosity and concern about the physical conditions and treatment of prisoners. House Government Reform Committee Chairman Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.), who led a small delegation Monday, said close scrutiny is essential to improving the United States' image abroad and *"winning the hearts and minds of the modern Arab world."* (emphasis added, AO1)

It is the public rehearsal of a certain political script that bears significance in this moment: the global American prison here (momentarily) displaces the more conventional grandstanding abstractions of the US state as a vehicle for "democracy and freedom" in the "modern Arab world" (and other places), and becomes the geographically sited module through which an epochal ideological-spiritual campaign might be "won." It is not merely the *presence* of the US prison that wins hearts and minds, it is the *state's performance through and ongoing crafting of* the prison that forms the lexicon (organizing principle) of an effective global war that does not only desire strategic obliteration, but also articulates as a discursive movement toward authentic hegemony (that is, winning the *consent* of those subjected or effectively "ruled" by American globality). Mike Allen's detailing of the visit continues,

> The tours appear to be having the intended effect. Some lawmakers who have made the trip one or more times have praised the conditions there in interviews with their hometown television stations and newspapers. Rep. Jon Porter (R-Nev.), part of Monday's tour, said of the inmates he had seen from a distance: *"Many of them are happy to be there."* (emphasis added)

Rep. Porter's assertion constitutes a valorization of the prison that ruptures anticipated narratives of righteous punishment, well-administrated criminal justice, or even the wartime necessity of defining and containing "enemy combatants." His is the utterance of a global project that extends beyond the formalities of the Guantanamo Bay prison and resonates no less than a celebration of the end of the (Arab) world: it is under such a historical-ideological mandate that it is entirely rational, logical, and perhaps convincing to simply *say*—with no credible evidence at all *and* with apparent self-assurance—that people held captive under the auspices of legal non-existence and suspension of nominal Geneva Convention rights do *not* experience the "state of exception," but in fact flourish in an affect of well-being and the sober operation of state care. (Interestingly, acclaimed liberal documentary filmmaker Michael Moore's recent product *Sicko* (2007) perpetuates this discursive structure by juxtaposing the US health care system's and state's failure to attend to the serious medical needs of a number of post-9/11 Ground Zero workers/volunteers with the allegedly adequate—even lavish—medical and dental attention given to prisoners at "Gitmo"; while Moore's typically satirical fare may have intended to ridicule the notion of Guantanamo Bay prison as an example of decent and free health care, the political effect of this narrative-visual strategy was to inspire outrage at the notion that the well-being of emblematic "Americans" might be subordinated to the physiological needs of War on Terror detainees.)

Hence, it would be an egregious political and intellectual mistake to dismiss—that is, politically minimize and undertheorize—such public relations campaigns and state propaganda as superficial reflections of the US government's endemic corruption, arrogance, or stupidity. Rather, I am interested in meditating on a historical question that envelops the moment of these and other pronouncements of global power: What are the *conditions of possibility* for Rep. Porter's profound assertion, particularly in the face of massively accumulated evidence (including mounting survivors' testimonials) indicating that the structure of feeling created by the US prison's globality is, in fact, terror? Reports from *The Washington Post* certainly describe terror: Ameen Saeed Al-Sheik, Abu Ghraib detainee No. 151362, thus recounts a defining moment in his imprisonment: "[An American soldier asked:] 'Do you believe in anything?' I said to him, 'I believe in Allah.' So he said, 'But I believe in torture and I will torture you'" (Higham and Stephens AO1+). It is to these conditions of possibility, enacted in the formation and structural logic of the US prison regime, that we now turn.

THE US PRISON REGIME AS WHITE SUPREMACIST (GLOBAL) MOBILIZATION

We might imagine the US prison, not as a discrete institution or reified place, but rather as an abstracted site—a prototype—of organized punishment and (social, civil, and biological) death. I begin this section with two points of departure, in an attempt to initially provoke a conceptualization of the American prison regime that focuses on the intertwining of two structural logics: 1) white supremacy as a historical modality of social (dis)organization, and 2) the capacity of allegedly "local" or "domestic" US social formations to circulate, militarize, and mobilize across global geographies.

The emergence of the American prison industrial complex since the 1970s is generally addressed as a problem of the "American nation," and until recently has largely been situated by academic scholars, progressive activists, and imprisoned intellectuals within the domains of the domestic social formation. Yet, even the concise definition of the prison industrial complex penned in 2001 by US political prisoner Linda Evans (released in 2001) and activist Eve Goldberg facilitates an inquiry that pushes past parochial geographies of the US national form: "Like the military/industrial complex, the prison industrial complex is an interweaving of private business and government interests. Its twofold purpose is profit and social control. Its public rationale is the fight against crime" (Evans and Goldberg). Beyond the strictures of conventional criminological approaches to the US prison apparatus, Evans and Goldberg are suggesting an organic connection between the architecture of the prison industrial complex and the structuring forces of neoliberalism and globalization: the socioeconomic transformations of US capital, alongside contemporary elaborations of the US racist state in the post-Civil Rights moment, simultaneously a.) fabricate populations vulnerable to criminalization (black, brown, poor, and generically redundant to the contemporary economic organization of the US); b.) withdraw state social services for people most in need of resources for social and biological reproduction; c.) militarize and juridically empower the policing and criminal justice apparatuses in unprecedented ways while amplifying their fundamentally punitive institutional demeanours; and d.) generate a dynamic statecraft, public discourse, and popular culture of policing and imprisonment that organize a grammar of social necessity and ideological consent around the emergence and expansion of the prison industrial complex.

Here we must remember that among the millions of people held captive by the US state in prisons, jails, youth prisons, and immigration detention, people of African descent are imprisoned at rates astronomically high relative to their proportion of the

national population (exceeding 400% of their national demographic proportion), and at rates dwarfing those of white Americans (see Gershowitz). Native Americans repeat this pattern, although their smaller demographic numbers often obscure their heightened criminalization by the US state. Latinos, Latinas, and other racialized brown people are increasingly targeted in ways that directly derive from, and expand, the historical structures of white supremacist policing and imprisonment that target Black and indigenous people, in part through the specificities of migrant/immigrant policing and criminalization. Despite composing the national majority of the US population, white Americans compose less than half of the incarcerated US population. Black, Brown, and indigenous peoples constitute upwards of 60% held captive. For the unfamiliar, a few other facts assist in laying bare the accelerated nature of this massive state-sanctioned project:

1. Between 1972 and 2003, the imprisoned (jail and prison) population in the US increased more than 600%; for the five decades prior to the 1970s, the incarcerated population had remained relatively stable, hovering between 100,000-200,000.
2. The US boasts of the highest rate of incarceration in the world, at 702 per 100,000 in the general population; this rate is between 500 and 800% that of comparable industrialized nations.
3. African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites (2,290 per 100,000 versus 412 per 100,000), while Hispanics are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of whites (742 per 100,000).
4. According to one of the most rigorous criminological studies to date (examining the period 1980-1996), the imprisonment increase does *not* derive from objective changes in the commission of crimes, but rather is almost entirely owed to politically formed changes in sentencing and criminal justice policy (see Gershowitz).

Thus, as the US prison, jail, INS/Homeland Security detainee and incarcerated youth population approaches and surpasses the 2.5 million mark (as of this writing), the quantitative evidence refracts the prison's qualitative transformation into a fundamental organ of state reproduction and civic ordering.

Variable, overlapping, and mutually constituting white supremacist regimes have in fact been fundamental to the formation and movements of the United States, from racial chattel slavery and frontier genocide to recent and current modes of neoliberal

land displacement and (domestic-to-global) warfare. Without exception, these regimes have been differently entangled with the state's changing paradigms, strategies, and technologies of human incarceration and punishment (to follow the prior examples: the plantation, the reservation, the neoliberal sweatshop, and the domestic-to-global prison). The historical nature of these entanglements is widely acknowledged, although explanations of the structuring relations of force tend to either isolate or historically compartmentalize the complexities of historical white supremacy.

For the theoretical purposes of this essay, white supremacy may be understood *as a logic of social organization* that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized "human" difference, enforced through coercions and violences that are structured by genocidal possibility (including physical extermination and curtailment of people's collective capacities to socially, culturally, or biologically reproduce). As a historical vernacular and philosophical apparatus of domination, white supremacy is simultaneously premised on and consistently innovating universalized conceptions of the white (European and euroamerican) "human" vis-à-vis the rigorous production, penal discipline, and frequent social, political, and biological neutralization or extermination of the (non-white) sub- or non-human. To consider white supremacy *as essential to American social formation* (rather than a freakish or extremist deviation from it) facilitates a discussion of the modalities through which this material logic of violence overdetermines the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that compose American globality and constitute the common sense that is organic to its ordering.

While the US prison industrial complex constitutes a statecraft of perpetual domestic crisis that emerges from this social logic of white supremacy, the US prison *regime* is becoming profoundly undomesticated in a twofold sense: the technologies of carceral racial domination have distended into localities beyond the US proper (they are extra-domestic), while the focused and mundane (though no less severe) bodily violence of the prison's operative functions have constituted a microwarfare apparatus, accessing and penetrating captive bodies with an unprecedented depth and complexity (the regime is in this sense defined by an unhinged, undomesticated violence). In this context, the (racial) formations of punishment and death inscribed on the various surfaces of the US prison regime—from the nearby to the far away—are in fact generally *unremarkable*. It cannot be overemphasized that this carceral formation produces a normal and trite violence, a naturalized facet of American social intercourse across scales and geographies, forming the underside of a civil society that is historically unimaginable outside its modalities of formal exclusion and civil/social neutralization.

Yet, it is precisely as this prison regime rearranges, remobilizes, and redeploys its normalized structure of white supremacist bodily violence into geographies beyond the American everyday that it *momentarily* surfaces as a spectacle of public consumption and even a critical public discourse, in such moments as the photographic revelation of the US military's torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. While the "national" scope of the US prison industrial complex constitutes a profound social and political crisis of epochal scale, it also composes an institutional symbiosis that has yielded an authentic conjunctural articulation of state violence that is both organic to the domestic US carceral and capable of rearticulation, appropriation, and mobilization across global geographies.

Thus, to understand the prison as a *regime* is to focus conceptually, theoretically, and politically on the prison as a pliable module or mobilized vessel through which the state generates particular practices of legitimated violence and bodily immobilization. "Prison regime" is a conceptual and theoretical (not a discretely "institutional") phrase that refers to a *modality* through which the state organizes, rationalizes, and deploys specific technologies of violence, domination, and subjection—technologies that are otherwise reserved for deployment in sites of declared war or martial law: in this usage, "prison regime" differentiates both the *scale* and *object* of analysis from the more typical macro-scale institutional categories of "the prison," "the prison system," and, for that matter, "the prison industrial complex." The conceptual scope of this term similarly exceeds the analytical scope of prison management, prison policy, and "the prison (or prisoner's) experience," categories that most often take textual form through discrete case studies, institutional reform initiatives, prison ethnographies, and empirical criminological surveys.

Rather, the notion of a prison regime invokes a "meso" (middle, or mediating) dimension of processes, structures, and vernaculars that compose the state's modalities of self-articulation and self-conceptualization, institutional crafting, and "rule" *across* the macro and micro scales. It is within this meso range of fluctuating articulations of power that the prison is inscribed as both a localization and constitutive logic of the state's production of juridical, spatial, and militarized dominion. A genealogy of the prison regime foregrounds the essential instability—*the unnaturalness*—of its object of discussion, suggesting a process of historical analysis and theorization that methodologically extends beyond 1.) the particular and mystified institutionality of the discrete and narrowly bounded entity we know as The Prison; and 2.) the juridical and institutional formalities of the state's supposed "ownership" of and orderly proctorship over The Prison as it is conventionally conceived.

On the contrary, I am examining the ways in which *it is the prison regime that possesses*

and constitutes the state. I am suggesting a doubled meaning to the notion of "possession." First, in the sense of a haunting intervention—the state's "possession" by the sometimes ghostly and always haunting technologies of power and violence that emanate from the prison (echoing sociologist Avery Gordon's conception of ghosts and haunting as material social forces), and second, as a denotation of the significant political influence of the prison regime's designated agents and administrators on the broader architecture of the state.

This conceptualization of the prison regime resonates with Michel Foucault's meditation on the displacement of unitary sovereign powers in modern and postmodern social formations. He is, of course, famously concerned with the production of regimes of power through situated apparatuses and institutions (e.g. the asylum, the clinic, the prison, the military), which in turn circulate power socially through various embodiments, including symbolic orderings, "sciences," para/military technologies, and strategically sited and situated human bodies. In his lecture of 14 January 1976 Foucault contends:

> Our object is not to analyze rule-governed and legitimate forms of power which have a single center, or to look at what their general mechanisms or its overall effects might be. *Our object is, on the contrary, to understand power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the points where it becomes capillary*; in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions, and especially at the points where this power transgresses the rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques and acquires the material means to intervene, sometimes in violent ways. (emphasis added 23)

Foucault's "capillary power" designates the manner in which power circulates, materializing through the form and movement of its outermost (extreme) points of expression. The prison, precisely such a capillary site for the production and movement of power, exerts a dominion that reaches significantly beyond its localized setting. This is to argue that the post-1970s emergence of a reformed and reconceived prison regime has become central to constituting the political logic as well as the material reproduction of the United States social formation.

I am thus reconceptualizing the prison as a putative "centering" and consolidation of power that, in practice, *necessarily exceeds and violates its official directives and juridical norms.* As a regime, the prison functions through excesses and violations, at times uncodified or nominally "illegal," though generally occurring within generously interpreted rubrics of institutional policy and protocol: that is, this regime *constitutively* belies and abrogates its

"rule-governed" and "legitimate" discursive-institutional inscription as The Prison.

Finally, to situate the prison's strategically sited technologies of violence and human subjection *as a normal and "everyday" regime of punishment* is to firmly locate these alleged excesses of the state within the larger socio-historical fabric in which they are entangled, and of which they are constitutive. The state's contemporary modality of power and enunciation—its statecraft—works through the constant exceeding of its announced material boundaries and juridical limits. Brutality, torture, and excess should be understood as an essential element of American statecraft, not its corruption or deviation. This is to suggest that The Prison, as a state articulation of rigidly centered and conservatively ordered institutional power, does not actually exist, and that it is best conceptualized as a rigorously reproduced mythology of sober and narrowly deployed state power. This mythology effectively rationalizes and re-narrates a domestic (or systemically internal) site of aggressively one-sided, racially gendered warfare. It is in this conceptual and theoretical context that the racist bodily violence so excruciatingly rendered in the 2004 Abu Ghraib prison photos (Higham and Stephens AO1+) is in no way unique or exceptional, but rather *forms a small portion of a long historical genealogy of incarceration and punishment*.

FROM ABU GHRAIB TO STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA: RETHINKING THE LOGIC OF THE SCANDALOUS AND THE MUNDANE

Located within a genealogy of the US prison regime, the drama of Abu Ghraib can be understood as significantly entangled with the durable affective and sentimental structures of racial chattel slavery. Literary and cultural theorist Saidiya V. Hartman has convincingly argued that this genealogy of human captivity is founded on the Black captive's/slave's availability for the multiply invested coercions of the "free" white master community:

> [T]he fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion. (21)

Prison torture and other state practices of carceral bodily violence, within and

beyond Abu Ghraib, can be conceptualized as a technology of captivity that is traceable to the epochal everyday of slavery's regulated antiblack violence.

Reading through Hartman's genealogy, Abu Ghraib becomes "scandalous" only as a globally visible production of the illicit, the private (or secret), *and the normal* of the United States as a social and racial formation that is not only inseparable from, but is in fact produced by its regimes of bodily capture and disintegration. Here, the scandal of hypervisibility enmeshing the prison tortures at Abu Ghraib unwittingly reveals both the normality and *unremarkability* of the US prison regime's historical everyday, which is traceable in its current racialized and white supremacist form to the nominal abolition of racial chattel slavery and the replacement of the slave plantation with new forms of antiblack criminalization and an incipient apartheid prison apparatus; note that the text of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which is commonly referenced as the passage that formally extinguished the institution of slavery in 1865, reads as follows: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,* shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (emphasis added). Thus, the logic of chattel enslavement was formally transposed from the body of the (racially defined) slave to the body of the (racially criminalized) prisoner/convict: as such, the everyday matrices of social and political intercourse historically composed by the epoch of US racial slavery have sustained through the institutional nuances and movements of the prison regime. The exhibited tortures at Abu Ghraib prison, to the extent that they have been treated with analytics and rhetorics invoking (or at least inferring) novelty, uniqueness, and discontinuity with precedent (and for that matter contemporaneous) forms of US militarization and incarceration, have generated a political and theoretical noise that substantively fails to account for their substantive legibility within the prison regime's longer genealogy, as well as the simultaneity of its geographically dispersed violences.

By way of example: virtually simultaneous with the international circulation of the Abu Ghraib photos was a mind-numbing series of revelations in the *Los Angeles Times* regarding the normative operation of the California Youth Authority (CYA), among the largest prison systems in the world devoted to incarcerating children and youth. In April 2004, California State Senator Gloria Romero (a noteworthy progressive critic of the California criminal justice apparatus) publicly released a videotape depicting a pair of CYA officers overpowering and mercilessly beating Vincent Baker and Narcisco Morales in a small office at the Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility, Stockton, CA (Warren "Videotaping" B1+). CA Attorney General Bill Lockyer chose not to charge the guards

with a crime, citing "insufficient evidence." A second surveillance tape surfaced the next month, also from Chaderjian YCF, showing another correctional officer releasing a trained German shepherd on Manuel Renteria. Renteria survived the attack, suffering severe nerve damage (Warren "Attack" B1+). A month or so prior to the eruption of the Abu Ghraib scandal, in February 2004, the families of Deon Whitfield and Durrell Taddon Feaster filed claims against the CYA, contending that the two young men's "suicides" were produced by heinous institutional negligence, cruel and unusual punishment, and hostile indifference to the young men's medical needs (Chong B6). The CYA was also accused of tampering with evidence after doubts arose over the verity of its hasty characterization of the deaths as suicides. The litany of institutional violence during this most recent period (2004-2005) continues *ad nauseam,* ranging from consistent reports of sexual assault by guards and the ongoing use of long-term (sixty-ninety days) isolation confinement, to the innovation of single person steel cage "classrooms" and the first-resort pepper-spraying of imprisoned mentally ill youth.

I offer this snapshot of normalized "torture" and "brutality" in California youth prisons to suggest that excessive carceral state violence, while nominally illegal, is generally state-sanctioned (that is, unprosecuted and unacknowledged as such) even when it obtains momentary currency in the realm of public discourse. Further, such critical counter-state testimonials addressing the "local" sites of the US prison regime amount, with a few notable exceptions, to little more than a muted echo of the far more widespread and urgent discussions of prison torture that have been articulated by outraged Americans and elements of the global left in relation to prisoners tortured and brutalized under the auspices of the American prison regime, but whom are located *outside* the domestic dominion of the US proper. Thus, throughout 2004, this state-proctored punishment and biological/civil/social death of racially criminalized children and young adults in California largely eluded the most immediate political concern, if not broader social vision, of these multiple US and global publics, which were preoccupied with making political fetish of the US military's prisons in Cuba and Iraq.

While the CYA's (non)scenes of captivity and bodily violence preceded, accompanied, and enmeshed the international spectacle of Abu Ghraib prison, they ultimately merely reinscribed a domestic structure of punishment and death that has been 1.) culturally assimilated into the normative functioning of the US state and its presumed symbiosis with civil society; 2.) institutionally integrated into American modalities of social reproduction across scales of locality, region, and nation; and 3.) politically coded as a necessary evil, that is, hegemonically constructed as a primary technology of post-1970s

"law and order" and the executor of a presumptive communal and personal "security."

Looking closely at the current formation of the US prison regime, in this sense, illuminates the white supremacist animus of what many call the American empire. The violence of US-led neoliberal globalization and American state-fashioned (declared and covert) warfare actually speak to the complexity of the US prison regime as a *production* (and no less as a harnessing and deployment) of technologies of racial bodily violence. This also suggests a practical/activist and scholarly/theoretical centering of white supremacy (in particular, white supremacist state violence) as a fundamental condition of American globality in this moment. A new paradigm of state and state-sanctioned, mass-based and intimate coercion posits strategic, racially articulated human imprisonment (and the violence therein) as the *premise* (rather than the utilitarian and self-contained "means") of hegemonic power itself: thus, American global statecraft has become unimaginable outside its prominent productions of incarcerating technologies as material paradigms of dominance, occupation, and political ascendancy.

There is a surface resonance here with Negri and Hardt's conceptualization of Empire as the "right of the police":

> In order to take control of and dominate such a completely fluid situation, it is necessary to grant the intervening authority (1) the capacity to define, every time in an exceptional way, the demands of intervention; and (2) the capacity to set in motion the forces and instruments that in various ways can be applied to the diversity and the plurality of the arrangements in crisis. Here, therefore, is born, in the name of the exceptionality of the intervention, a form of right that is really a *right of the police.* The formation of a new right is inscribed in the deployment of prevention, repression, and rhetorical force aimed at the reconstruction of social equilibrium: all this is proper to the activity of the police. (Hardt and Negri 16-17)

In fact, the notion of American globality I have begun discussing here already exceeds Negri and Hardt's formulation to the extent that it is a global *racial formation,* and more pointedly a global mobilization of a *white supremacist social formation* (read: a United States of America formed by the social-economic geographies of racial chattel slavery and their recodification through the post-13th Amendment innovation of other technologies of criminalization and imprisonment).

The US prison regime's production of human immobilization and death composes some of the fundamental modalities of American national coherence. It inscribes two

forms of domination that tend to slip from the attention of political theorists, including Negri and Hardt: first, the prison regime strategically *institutionalizes* the biopolitical structures of white racial/nationalist ascendancy—it quite concretely provides a definition for white American personhood, citizenship, freedom, and racialized patriotism. Second, the prison regime reflects the moral, spiritual, and cultural inscription of Manifest Destiny (and its descendant material cultural and state-building articulations of racist and white supremacist conquest, genocide, and population control) across different historical moments.

To invoke and critically rearticulate Negri and Hardt's formulation, the focal question becomes: How does the right of the US-as-global police to kill, detain, obliterate become *voiced, juridically coded, and culturally recoded?* The structure of presumption—and therefore relative political silence—enmeshing the prison's centrality to the logic of American globality is precisely evidence of the fundamental power of the US prison regime within the larger schema of American hegemony. In this sense the US prison regime is ultimately really not an "institution." Rather it is a *formulation of world order* (hence, a dynamic and perpetual labor of *institutionalization* rather than a definitive modernist institution) in which massively scaled, endlessly strategized technologies of human immobilization address (while never fully resolving) the socio-political crises of globalization. The US prison regime defines a *global logic of social organization* that constitutes, mobilizes, and prototypes across various localities. What would it mean, then, to consider state-crafted, white supremacist modalities of imprisonment as the *perpetual end* rather than the self-contained means of American globality?

I am suggesting a conception of the prison regime that focuses on what cultural and political theorist Allen Feldman calls a "formation of violence," which anchors the contemporary articulation of white supremacy as a global technology of coercion and hegemony. Feldman writes,

> The growing autonomy of violence as a self-legitimating sphere of social discourse and transaction points to the inability of any sphere of social practice to totalize society. Violence itself both reflects and accelerates the experience of society as an incomplete project, as something to be made. (5)

As a formation of violence that self-perpetuates a peculiar social project through the discursive structures of warfare, the US prison regime composes an acute formation of racial and white supremacist violence, and thus houses the capacity for mobilization of an

epochal (and peculiar) white supremacist global logic.

This contention should not be confused with the sometimes parochial (if not politically chauvinistic) proposition that American state and state-sanctioned regimes of bodily violence and human immobilization are somehow self-contained "domestic" productions that are exceptional to the United States of America, and that other "global" sites simply "import," imitate, or reenact these institutionalizations of power. In fact, I am suggesting the opposite: the US prison regime exceeds as it enmeshes the ensemble of social relations that cohere US civil society, and is fundamental to the geographic transformations, institutional vicissitudes, and militarized/economic mobilizations of "globalization" generally. To assert this, however, is to also argue that the constituting violence of the US prison regime has remained somewhat undertheorized and objectified in the overlapping realms of public discourse, activist mobilization, and (grassroots as well as professional) scholarly praxis.

Here I am arguing that it is not possible to conceptualize and critically address the emergence and global proliferation of the (US/global) prison industrial complex outside a fundamental understanding of what are literally its technical and technological premises: namely, its complex organization and creative production of *racist and white supremacist bodily violence*. It is only in this context, I would say, that we can examine the problem of how "The Prison" is a *modality* (and not just a reified product or outcome) of American statecraft in the current political moment. It is only a theoretical foregrounding of the white supremacist state and social formation of the United States that will allow us to understand the US prison regime as an American globality that *materializes as it prototypes* state violence and for that matter, "state power" itself through a specific institutional site.

A POINT OF DEPARTURE: PRISON MASSACRES, WARS ON DRUGS, AND TRANSPACIFIC CARCERAL FORMATIONS

The nuances and possibilities of American globality reflect in the shifting carceral formation of the Philippines, which is already poised to at least significantly (if not almost entirely) inaugurate a prison-policing-criminal justice nexus that reflects and refracts that of its longtime colonial, neocolonial, and neoliberal relation to the United States. The 2005 atrocity at Bagong Diwa Prison (see Abou-Alsamh), which is only one of many otherwise unremarkable carceral mobilizations of the politically homicidal Philippine state, offers one appropriate point of departure for this concluding analytical reflection. On March 15, at this well-known prison near the outskirts of Manila, the Philippine National Police (PNP)

massacred 22 imprisoned Muslims—a slaughter distinguished only by the fact that the deadly police raid of the facility was shown on national television. To consider the gravity of the Bagong Diwa standoff is to also suggest that the *site, scene, and statecraft* of the prison massacre constitutes a landmark departure in the post-martial law history of the Philippine state, as well as for the social formation within which it is situated.

Aided by US-trained Philippine paramilitary and US influenced SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) assault team style units, the PNP smashed a one-day old rebellion of over a hundred prisoners at Bagong Diwa with a massive deployment of gunfire, poisoned gas, and armored personnel. According to Philippine state officials, two political prisoners and leaders of the Abu Sayyaf insurgency disarmed and killed three prison guards on March 14, which in turn provoked the larger rebellion. The rebellion made two immediate demands: 1.) quick and fair trials; and 2.) a moratorium on the Philippine government's military operations against Muslim independence/sovereignty fighters and civilians in the southern Sulu region. Despite the rush of government and media propaganda that characterized the alleged leaders of the prison rebellion as "Al Qaeda-linked," this particular rebellion exceeded any insular sectarian agenda. Rather, the Bagong Diwa uprising revealed a profound—and perhaps unprecedented—political opposition to the institutionalized dehumanization of the Philippine prison regime in the "post-martial law" period.

The Bagong Diwa rebellion echoes a recent and global lineage of anti-authoritarian and counter-state prison insurrections from Attica, New York, to Robben Island, South Africa. The Bagong Diwa prison rebels eventually revised the rebellion's original platform, and reissued four demands: 1.) freedom from bodily harm in the resolution of the standoff (a crucial public demand in the face of a PNP that was painstakingly prepping its domestic warfare weaponry in anticipation of a propagandistic media spectacle); 2.) timely and fair hearings of their collective cases; 3.) respect for human rights (which was a gesture for political solidarity from the Philippine and global Left); and 4.) access to media in order to air long-standing grievances with the prison administration. The recent historical record of the Philippine jail and prison apparatuses contextualizes these demands: in 2004, as in recent years, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights named the PNP as the nation's most consistent and flagrant abuser of human and civil rights. The November 2004 slaughter of a dozen striking sugar plantation workers in the Tarlac province, for example, capped a touchstone year of state-conducted and state-sanctioned political killings, including the open assassination of numerous progressive and radical activists, human rights workers, and journalists. In August 2006, Amnesty International

availed that the Philippines is bearing witness to a veritable renaissance of state-sanctioned political assassination and blatant violations of fundamental human rights, including the programmatic extermination of "leftist or left-oriented groups" (Amnesty).

In excess of political killings, the Philippine government's intensified campaign against poor drug users, addicts, and low-level dealers has resulted in a dramatic increase in the jail and prison population, as only 3.5% of the detained can afford to post bail, and most are forced to wait extremely long periods for their day in court. The PNP is notorious for kidnapping, torturing, and periodically killing ordinary civilians who have been arrested and/or detained under the auspices of this "war on drugs" as well as other, more arbitrary circumstances. Gambit (a pseudonym), a veteran Manila women's jail guard interviewed by the author in late 2006, summarized the condition in which he worked:

> Everything's overcrowded.... Because of the (changes in drug) law, the jail population has increased.... It began about six years ago, with the Congress' passing of RA 9165.... The drug war has been going on for awhile ... but over the last five years, the jail population increased suddenly. We're really overcrowded. Our normal occupancy is 200 persons. Now, we're at 552. Last year, we reached 634.... The average time people wait for their drug trials is two years.

The initiation of an authentic war on drugs in the Philippines has closely followed the script established by the early-to-mid 1980s Reagan Administration. As Gambit notes, the Philippine Congress passed (and Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed) the momentous national drug law RA 9165 in 2002, establishing both the juridical form and political mandate to accelerate the already-intensive policing, punishment, and detainment of targeted population pockets in Manila and elsewhere. RA 9165, also known as the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act" (echoing the Reagan Administration's template-setting 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act), accomplished a sweeping pronouncement of domestic warfare against anyone arrested for drug possession (including the implementation of the death penalty for dealers caught with 50 grams of shabu, an amphetamine), and facilitated Arroyo's allocation of one billion pesos for the "war against drugs." The Act also created (again in resonance with the US drug war's institutional matrices) the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA, invoking its notorious American counterpart, the DEA), which was charged with enforcing RA 9615 through militarized campaigns against selected drug suppliers and "community policing" type efforts (suggestive of First Lady Nancy Reagan's headlining of the omnipresent "Just

Say No" propaganda of the mid-1980s). Arroyo, picking up the example set by the Nixon Administration of the early late 1960s and early 1970s, also prevailed on the momentum of RA 9615 to reorganize and coordinate the labyrinthine tangle of law enforcement agencies throughout the Philippines, and issued a number of executive demands on provincial governors around the country.

Recent assessments by a number of state and non-governmental organizations have revealed that Philippine prisons and jails lack basic infrastructure, and are extremely overcrowded: reflecting Gambit's revelation, Manila jails consistently operate at more than 300% capacity, while the nation's primary prison bloats at 500% of operating capacity. These institutions consistently fail to provide imprisoned people with basic nutritional sustenance: most facilities lack drinkable water, and poor ventilation helps spread sickness and has caused an unknown number of preventable deaths. According to a 2005 report issued by the US Department of State, people imprisoned in the Philippines are most often forced to depend on their families or other providers for food because of "the insufficient subsistence allowance and the need to bribe guards to receive food rations" (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). Finally, as alluded to in the demands issued by the Bagong Diwa rebels, the Philippine judicial process is inordinately slow and inefficient, and contributes greatly to the endemic possibility of prison and jail insurrections as well as individual escape attempts.

In light of this veritable state of emergency, the four-point Bagong Diwa platform in fact appears rather sober and tame. The insurrection, which refrained from a large-scale killing of prison guards in exchange for a violently interrupted negotiation with the state, was largely structured as a politically principled response to the atrocities normalized by the Philippine prison system. Further, the substance of the Bagong Diwa demands echo the classical communiqués penned and voiced by imprisoned liberationists (overwhelmingly of African, Mexican, Native American, and Puerto Rican descent) in the Folsom Manifesto (1970) and Attica Rebellion (1971), as well as the current generation of political discourse emerging from such places as the Lexington (KY) Women's High Security Unit (1988-1989), Central California Women's Facility (1997), Pelican Bay (CA) Security Housing Unit (2001), and the Guantanamo Bay detention facility (2002-present), among other sites of human captivity. The rebels of Bagong Diwa, whether or not one finds sympathy with the ideological persuasions of their alleged leaders, can nonetheless be apprehended as part of a contemporary, living history of rebellions by imprisoned women, men, and children against prison regimes—including that of the Philippines—that have been formed, inspired, and otherwise influenced by the expansive institutionalized violence of the US state.

The Philippine national government, under the leadership of President Arroyo and with the eager cooperation of both the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), has apparently learned valuable lessons from the contemporary emergence of the US prison regime. By way of example, it is worth considering the significance of an otherwise unnoticed April 2006 announcement issued by the US Embassy in the Philippines:

> More than 50 Philippine law enforcement specialists will graduate from a week-long prison management seminar sponsored by the US Government in a ceremony being held on Friday, April 28....
>
> The sessions in "Advanced Prison Management" were led by two expert instructors from the US Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP). The 53 seminar participants were drawn from several Philippine government agencies, including the Bureau of Jails and Penology Management, the Philippine National Police, and Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The interview with Gambit reinforced the language of this agenda while suggesting that such intergovernmental conversations have obtained consistency and momentum since at least 2002:

> DR: Do you know if there have been any conversations between the Philippine jail and prison administration and those in the US?
> G: Oh yes, there are officers that go [to the US] for seminars.
> DR: What do they teach in these seminars?
> G: The officers go to the States, they go to penology seminars; the officers and wardens show off their pictures from the trips, so I see them. Only the officers get to go. These seminars started in Washington, DC.... Their focus is on turning the jails in the Philippines into "therapeutic communities" ... they want the jailers to have "positive interactions" with the prisoners.... The officers disseminate this information to us [the guards].

The strong advisory and supervisory roles exerted by US military and government officials, along with the increasingly international presence of American prison administrators and "correctional officers" (prison guards) in and beyond the Philippines thus suggests a particular historical accounting of such events as the Bagong Diwa prison siege: that

is, this massacre (alongside other moments of Philippine carceral formation) implicates substantively more than the contained violence of the Philippine National Police or even the Philippine national government.

Rather, according to (in turn) Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, Presidential Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, and Pres. Arroyo herself, the events of Bagong Diwa prison encompassed an embryonic architecture of domestic carceral warmaking, premised on the technologies of criminalization, policing, and nation-building:

> "The message is, anybody who tries something like this in the future will be dealt with in a similar fashion." (Reyes qtd. in "Abu Sayyaf Leaders ")
> "We do not intend to please everybody. The government did what was necessary and we believe we have the support of the majority of the people.... (Bunye qtd. in Office of the Press Secretary "Palace")
> [T]he President commended the law enforcers "who risked life and safety" and said they "exemplify the best of the criminal justice system." ... [The President said] "The rule of law is supreme. The law enforcers who risked life and safety in Bicutan exemplify the best of the criminal justice system." (Arroyo qtd. in Office of the Press Secretary "GMA")
> "We must ever be prepared to face the wayward forces that threaten our freedom, our streets and our homes. We must be prepared to fight evil with our moral will to uphold what is good and right." (Arroyo qtd. in "Abu Sayyaf Leaders")

It is in the broader context of this historical snapshot that frames my argument that the emergence, expansion, and everyday functioning of the US prison regime offers both a material genealogy and pragmatic institutional framework through which other national governments—in particular those in (neocolonial) political alliance with American globality—may conceive, modify, and deploy new modes of political repression, social control, and domestic warfare. There are thus several, tightly entwined common threads that link Bagong Diwa to the emergence of the US prison regime as the preeminent global matrix for large-scale human immobilization and punishment.

First, Bagong Diwa entailed a coordinated and public slaughter of imprisoned human beings by a domestic police force under the open sanction of a national government: President Arroyo minced no words when she averred in the hours after the killings that the dead Muslims ("terrorists") deserved their fate, and that the law enforcers

involved in the massacre "exemplify the best of the criminal justice system." While the scenario of the prison massacre is neither new nor unique in the Philippines, Bagong Diwa introduces an additional element: here, the state-proctored slaughter of prisoners is neither cause for scandal nor is it concealed from public view. In fact, March 15, 2005 introduced the collaboration and corroboration of the mass media as well as the mobilization of a popular (and global) consensus that draws from the sturdy ideological toolboxes of "law and order," "national/Homeland security," and "anti-terrorism." Such is the common language of the US prison regime writ global.

Second, Bagong Diwa demonstrates how the state's organized killing of its own captives—whether by siege, individual assassination, medical neglect, or other means—can pronounce and perform a *logic of human expendability*, often defined through the overlapping categories of "race," region, and religion. In the case of Philippine prison and criminal justice system, poor, indigenous, and Muslim peoples are clearly primed for social liquidation, while in the US, poor people of African, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Native American descent are most frequently targeted for group-based punishment and periodic elimination.

A third, interesting convergence between these seemingly distant sites of incarceration: in US and Philippine prisons, jails, and youth facilities, Muslims—many of whom, in the US, are Black "prison converts"—consistently constitute a captive political bloc, often taking the lead in challenging prison guards and administrators in moments of crisis or insurrection. There is all the more reason for imprisoned Muslims (including and beyond members and affiliates of the Abu Sayyaf) to embody the leading edge of insurgency against proliferating state terror and institutionalized dehumanization.

The immediate aftermath of March 15, 2005 entwines the fourth thread connecting Bagong Diwa to the global expansion of the American prison regime: it is wholly possible that the legacy of this rebellion and state-conducted massacre will facilitate an era of Philippine "prison reform" and prison expansion, both of which will undoubtedly be informed, assisted, and politically supported by the US government and military, as well as its expansive prison establishment. There is historical precedent for this possibility: it was in the immediate aftermath of the Folsom Manifesto, Attica rebellion, and a number of other early 1970s insurrections by politicized imprisoned people in the US that the foundation was poured for the industrialization and astronomical multiplication of the prison apparatus as a primary method of political repression and social (dis)organization. Reformist calls for institutional change resonated through the mid-to-late 1970s, as a fragile alliance of imprisoned activists, "prisoners' rights" supporters, attorneys, liberal

policymakers, criminologists, judges, elected officials, and prison administrators enacted a broad agenda that would ostensibly improve prison living conditions (for example, alleviating the overcrowding and undernourishment of "inmates"), stamp out the most heinous forms of institutional corruption, and "professionalize" (and multiply) prison staff.

This generally well-intentioned reformist agenda, however, was quickly absorbed into the political impetus and economic drive for more and "better" prisons. In concert with the racist and anti-poor mobilization of the reactionary "War on Drugs" of the 1980s, the United States increased its total incarcerated population almost tenfold in about one a generation: by 1990, more than a million people were held in American jails and prisons and shortly thereafter the US became the world's per capita leader in human warehousing (see Wacquant). The rapid growth of women's prisons through the 1990s, and the more recent transformation of US "immigrant detention" facilities (through the militarization of the US-Mexico border and domestic War on Terror) have further extended the scope of this apparatus.

As such, the Philippines is poised for a dramatic prison and jail expansion, buttressed by a state and popular mandate to "reform" the institutional methods and enhance the bureaucratic scale of its capacities to mass-incarcerate. The Arroyo administration, in concert with the PNP and AFP, will likely justify a commitment to Philippine "law and order" by pointing to things like the Bagong Diwa insurrection and a constellation of other mobilizations and movements as alleged threats to national and local "security," particularly in the long-cast shadow of American globality and its resident articulation as War on Terror neoliberalism.

The final and most important strand linking the Bagong Diwa massacre to the globality of the US prison regime is the political onus it bears upon people who are committed to struggle for human liberation and freedom in the face of such overwhelming state violence. A profound and potentially revitalizing political possibility remains embedded in this moment of mourning and commemoration. This possibility opens with the recognition that the Bagong Diwa tragedy of March 15, 2005 is an allegory of the everyday for the increasing numbers of ordinary people who must suffer and die at the hands of the PNP, the Philippine jail and prison apparatus, and the US prison regime writ large. There is, in other words, a *kinship of captivity* that is shared by ever-increasing numbers of people in localities across the world that are somehow touched by the virus of American globality, and its unholy matrimony of mass-based human immobilization and acute bodily punishment.

A mounting movement for the fundamental transformation of the American prison,

policing, and criminal justice systems has taken flight since the late 1990s and has begun to blossom in the resurgence of the late 19th century US abolitionist movement, whose most revolutionary dreams—the decisive overthrow of slavery, white supremacy, US apartheid, and normalized state terror—remain to be fulfilled. As this movement grows in relevance and political scope, it has become increasingly clear that Filipina/o activists, teachers, writers, professional intellectuals, and ordinary people are situated to assume an epoch-shaping responsibility in rendering themselves accountable to a living history. The nightmare of the American prison regime is bleeding into our very pores, as its violence is literally becoming the way of the world—even and especially in our so-called "homelands." Bagong Diwa has abruptly called us forth as protagonists in this state of emergency. As the soil hardens on the mass graves of the 22 prisoners killed at Bagong Diwa, the question remains as to whether and how we will muster a response.

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FORUM ON VICENTE L. RAFAEL'S *THE PROMISE OF THE FOREIGN*

Editor's Note

In a lecture followed by a forum, Rafael discusses his book *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines* (Duke UP, 2005 and Anvil, 2006). He argues that translation was key to the emergence of Filipino nationalism in the nineteenth century, and that acts of translation entailed techniques from which issued the promise of nationhood. Such a promise consisted of revising the heterogeneous and violent origins of the nation by mediating one's encounter with things foreign while preserving their strangeness. He examines the workings of the foreign in the Filipinos' fascination with Castilian, the language of the colonizers: in Castilian, Filipino nationalists saw the possibility of arriving at a lingua franca with which to overcome linguistic, regional, and class differences, yet they were also keenly aware of the social limits and political hazards of this linguistic fantasy. Their belief in the potency of Castilian meant that colonial subjects came in contact with a recurring foreignness within their own language and society. Rafael shows how they sought to tap into this uncanny power, seeing in it both the promise of nationhood and a menace to its realization.

The responses in the forum, and Rafael's own response to these responses, are published in this issue of *Kritika Kultura*.

A BOOK REVIEW OF VICENTE L. RAFAEL'S *THE PROMISE OF THE FOREIGN*

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Abstract
The book *The Promise of the Foreign* is without doubt well-written and contributes to our understanding of the fundamental assumptions informing nationalist discourse, as well as the contradictions and complex realities at work in Philippine society. However, the book is arguably silent on how such translation can also be radicalized into an ethical technology or strategic pedagogy such that the foreign within various socio-political sites of analysis like the natives, masses, the Chinese are not just regarded as contaminations between the Philippines and the outside but rather as ambiguities that create the conditions of possibility of the nation-state and its efficacy as a symbolic and political force in everyday life.

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Vicente Rafael argues that translation was a key to the emergence of Filipino nationalism in the nineteenth century and such techniques can be gleaned from various texts such as Rizal's novels, Balagtas's *Florante at Laura*, rumors, and speeches.

At the onset, one can see the intimate but fraught connection of literature to nationalist discourse and the ensuing function of translation, a project that Rafael started with his earlier book, *Contracting Colonialism*, where he maintains that the limits of translation opened up the convergence of linguistic and historical negotiations for the Philippine nation to be articulated as a possibility and imperative.

Here again in this book Rafael treads on a similar framework, demonstrating amply its efficacy, as the "promise of the foreign" is predicated also in language—in this case Castilian—that resulted not in closer union of the colonizers and colonized, but in each other's misconceptions with the effect of estranging both and preserving the foreignness.

Rafael uses the scene in the novel *El Filibusterismo* in which he says the class in Physics becomes an extension of the church and scientific education becomes lamentable since students regurgitate lessons and are never allowed to use the instruments. For Rafael the scene is instructive of how communications between teachers and students are

never smooth, and that they find themselves in the midst of other signs that interrupt the circulation of the language of authority. Rafael points out how *lengua de tendia,* spoken by the Castillian professor, elicited laughter from students, showing how Castilian can be spoken in ways that evade linguistic authority; at the same time, students recognize an authority that comes from the intermittent and interruptive language. This classroom scene is charged with various semantic registers, according to Rafael, that anticipate the crisis built into the economy of colonial communication.

It is this crisis in colonial communication that enables people to appropriate the foreign, as noted by Rafael in comedyas where actors dress up in medieval European fashion. For Rafael, costumes are technics for bringing distances up close the way a photograph conveys the sense of nearness of what is absent. The eccentric costumes in comedyas make the actors as if in contact with someplace else, with foreign kingdoms of an unseen and indeterminate past. Hence, foreign costumes have the same generative power of language in which audience and actors are suspended as though they are in constant dialogue and communion, transcending time and space barriers.

Aside from the crisis that language generates among speakers and listeners, Rafael also discusses the disseminative power of Castilian as demonstrated in Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*. Rizal himself alludes to the novel as being untimely, as though intimating that the novel would best be understood in the future. In one scene in the *Noli*, the protagonist Ibarra visits Pilosopo Tasio in his study room, busily writing hieroglyphics. Surprised about the old man's writing, Ibarra is told by Pilosopo Tasio that future readers will be more discerning and acute and will be in better position to reckon with his work. Hence, the foreign language allows the work to survive and spread beyond the point of its initial emergence. Even if neglected or suppressed, Rafael writes, the *Noli* written in Castillan can be discovered through its continuous translation and transmission.

Similarly, such continuous transmission has already been at work with Balagtas' *Florante at Laura,* since the author used Castilian words as well as references to Classical Greek mythologies and tragedies. Rafael writes that *Florante at Laura* instigates as much as it dramatizes the possibilities of translation that dwell in the midst of untranslated words. The work mobilizes the vernacular to conjure the foreign and brings it to lodge in the familiar, enabling the promise of the foreign as which is always yet to come, of others who are always yet to hear, and in hearing, respond.

The Promise of the Foreign is without doubt well-written and contributes to our understanding of the fundamental assumptions informing nationalist discourse, as well as the contradictions and complex realities at work in Philippine society. Ernest Renan

wrote that the nation is also, ironically, a product of collective amnesia, that perhaps against nationalist ideologies of purity, one should see the nation as a product of various contentions and misunderstanding that we oftentimes forget or suppress (8-22). By radicalizing our concept of what and who we are collectively, and instead of arguing from essentialist standpoint about what makes us unique, we may begin to see the wisdom in how a community imagines itself based not on who we exclude but rather on who we include. The nation therefore is a complex project and translation is indeed a key to understanding such complexity.

The book unfortunately is silent on how such translation can also be radicalized into an ethical technology such that the reckoning of the foreign within various sociopolitical sites of analysis can be seen as dialectically producing or reproducing the nation. If Rafael believes that the intellectuals and the public have been successful in appropriating the foreign through comedyas or novels, Rafael must also tell us whether there is still a need for a revolution. Furthermore, if we can see translation at work from Latino poetry to *Pasyon*, and comedias to novels, then we must be able to situate the revolutionary poetry of Bonifacio and Del Pilar or the essays of Jacinto as culmination of this nascent nationalism. Ultimately, Rafael must also explain the validity and viability of this nationalist project, especially now that the world seems to be endangered by the borderless war on terrorism and that the United States is bent on exterminating all the "foreign" for them.

The book should also articulate how we, who have been muted or oppressed by the foreigners, are able to learn from our miseducation, since Rizal himself had to reckon with foreigners' misconceptions about Filipinos as well. In other words, the nationalist project must also be transformed into a strategic pedagogy to avoid the mistake of being indebted to the colonizers for the formation of the nation. The foreigners need not be colonizers and since we have been dealing with foreigners even before the colonization of Spain, our precolonial experience up to the present must inform us of how we are constantly reconstituting ourselves and being reconstituted in the process.

After reading this book, we must ask, how do we argue from the translational to the transnational, knowing that a lot of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) today suffer from maltreatment, harassment, rape, and discrimination? In what way translation devices can be used to advocate for social change, better pay, and recognition? Caroline Hau hints at the necessity of social transformation in her book *Necessary Fictions*, arguing that the study of literature should also lead to a reassessment of nationalist goals and programs "precisely because this Filipino community takes shape through the violence of exclusion and struggle, this community must always be made and unmade and remade" (282). However,

here, the book fails to account for the political viability of translation in nationalism. Vicente Rafael's *The Promise of the Foreign* may offer a vision of the future of our nation and that we shall always be haunted by it, but the main question still remains—how are we going to arrive there?

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A BOOK REVIEW OF *THE PROMISE OF THE FOREIGN*

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Abstract
Primarily taking issue with Rafael's definition of translation as "that double process of appropriating and replacing what is foreign while keeping its foreignness in view," this review attempts to show the unusually restrictive nature of this definition and proposes a more empirical approach to the study of translation and lexicalization.

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Vicente Rafael's latest effort does not lack in sporadic brilliance and some valuable insights. To read the "meaning" of the processes of linguistic appropriation through the Tagalog literature of the Spanish era and to develop a theory of the development of an incipient public sphere from this is indeed an interesting and very promising undertaking. But the overall argument of the work seems to rest on excessively speculative premises. At the risk of oversimplifying Rafael's argument, this review shall only look into two main ideas of his work. The first has to do with his peculiar and restrictive definition of "translation." The second has to do with the notion expressed in the title of the work as the "promise of the foreign."

Rafael defines translation as "that double process of appropriating and replacing what is foreign while keeping its foreignness in view" (xvii). Since the act of linguistic borrowing functions as the marker for the limit of translatability in Rafael's sense, it might be instructive to look into the problem of what he calls the "opacity" of borrowed words in order to demonstrate the unusually restrictive nature of this notion of translation. For the present purposes, two polar states may be conceived in the process of linguistic borrowing. The first may be characterized as complete opacity in which completely unintelligible and "foreign" words are embedded in an otherwise intelligible language. Depending on the frequency of occurrence of semantically opaque words within an utterance, such a situation may lead to a breakdown in communication due to an overburdened communication load.

In the interest of facilitating the process of communication, translators make sure that they do not include too many foreign words in their translations. When they do use such words, they frequently make use of various techniques of varying degrees of subtlety which may bring the meanings of these words across to the reader despite their unabated foreignness. The second pole, on the other hand, is the situation wherein borrowed words have become completely naturalized by the receiving language to the point that all memories of their foreignness have practically been effaced. One may sometimes hear, for example, upon exiting a cinema where a film was shown in which some Spanish lines had been uttered, people talking with wonderment about how the Spanish language had so many Tagalog words such as "pero," "sige," "siguro," "kumusta," etc. This erasure of origins may not necessarily be due to any ideologically enforced nationalist amnesia *à la* Renan but due to the inexorable processes of linguistic appropriation. Rather than remaining opaque as they were at the beginning, such borrowed words have become completely transparent in practically all their contexts of usage in the sense that they are no longer even identifiable as "foreign" except for a small percentage of the receiving population with an adequate knowledge of the source language. Indeed, some borrowed words which have undergone intensive morphological adaptation may even require expert linguistic knowledge to determine their origins. One need only look at such seemingly pure Tagalog words as "tanglaw," "tangi," "binibini," and "liham" from Chinese and "tadhana," "samantala," "sinta," and "dalaga" from Sanskrit (Manuel 1948). The thoroughgoing naturalization of borrowed words does not at all entail that their form or meaning may not undergo drastic changes in the process of their linguistic absorption. These may even actually come to mean something altogether different in the process of shedding all traces of their former opacity.

In between the two poles can be found a whole range of linguistic phenomena which possesses neither complete transparency nor complete opacity. To define "translation" therefore as a double process of "appropriation"/"replacement" in which the end product always keeps its opacity or foreignness "in view" arguably does not hold for what may be the greater number of acts of translation and lexical borrowing. Rafael's insistence on the "foreignness" of translation may be traced to the influence of Walter Benjamin's (50-62) theory of translation which, in a somewhat awkward combination with James Siegel's (85) discussion of the Indonesian term "aneh" (odd/strange), implicitly underlies the whole structure of his argument. Although this rather knotted issue shall not be dealt with at length here, it should be pointed out that by elevating the interlinear version (in which the translation follows the syntax of the original literally) as the absolute utopian translational ideal, Benjamin clearly presupposed readers of translations who are fluent in both the

source and target languages. Much earlier than Benjamin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, in opposition to Martin Luther's Germanizing translational strategy, similarly called for a "foreignizing" practice in translation (Koller 43). In advocating this, it was eminently clear to him that he was dealing primarily with an elite readership which had linguistic access to both the original and the translation. Finally, Wilhelm von Humboldt, another advocate of Schleiermacher's views, differentiated between "die Fremdheit" (foreignness) and "das Fremde" (the foreign). According to him, the translator should make the reader feel the presence of the "Other" rather than put "otherness" at the forefront (Koller 44). The point is to let the translation reveal the "foreign" rather than let the simple fact of its "foreignness" obscure it. In stressing this, Humboldt asserts somewhat paradoxically that the true contact with the foreign entails an overcoming of its foreignness. This is one sense of Benjamin's idea that "the true translation must be translucent" (die wahre Übersetzung ist durchscheinend) in order to let the "pure language" shine on the original (59). Both Rafael's theory of opacity and Siegel's interpretation of "aneh" in which unintelligibility and "oddness" are at the forefront seem to remain at the level of "foreignness" rather than moving on to the level of the "foreign."

In fact, Rafael's thesis on the ineradicable presence of the foreign entails the existence of a reader capable of "making strange" what may have already become commonplace to the greater part of a language's speakers. The phenomenon of linguistic "purism" for example, presupposes a select group of people capable of distinguishing and demarcating between pure and impure, between indigenous and foreign. "Purism" as a language movement, in its various forms and shades, is therefore a phenomenon typically found among bilingual intellectuals and elites (Thomas 138-9). Contemporary Filipino English-speaking intellectuals coming face-to-face with the substantial literary and linguistic traces of Spanish colonialism would probably feel the foreignness of the past and of the ilustrado origins of Philippine nationalism quite keenly and even with a sense of tragedy. But it could have been quite another thing what the audiences of the Tagalog *komedya* or of the *awit* "Florante at Laura" may have felt while encountering the Spanish words embedded within their language. Looking at the particular case of "Florante at Laura," it is empirically implausible that the approximately 216 borrowed word-forms in that text, among them "reino," "ciudad," "caliz," "palacio," "mundo," etc., should all have the same degrees of opacity for its intended audience. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by a barrage of meaningless signifiers, they must instead have felt varying degrees of familiarity with the words which they heard uttered on stage or read from books. Balagtas's footnotes actually served to signal the few points in the text where he feared

that the opacity of words may endanger understanding. Indeed, these nineteenth century Tagalog texts could be seen as representing the culmination of a long process of linguistic naturalization of Spanish words into Tagalog rather than the jarring and discomfiting juxtaposition of two distinct languages as Rafael seems to imply. Simply put, what may actually be phenomena of linguistic borrowing and lexicalization within a monolingual community is somewhat inappropriately represented by Rafael as code-switching by bilingual writers in front of an uncomprehending audience. One may suspect that Balagtas so freely "traffics" in "untranslated bits of Castilian" because, for all intents and purposes, and with respect to his audience, the greater part of these bits of Castilian had already become an integral part of the Tagalog lexicon and the Tagalog linguistic imagination after centuries of more or less intensive linguistic contact with the colonizers. This of course requires further proof, but the same applies to Rafael's opacity thesis.

Various manifestations of nationalism as an ideology have indeed traded in notions of purity and the rejection or eradication of the foreign, but elite and state nationalisms particularly in the Philippines have always desperately held on to their connections to the foreign with much pride and even arrogance. By incessantly repeating the colonial origins of all that is good and advanced in the Philippines, the state functionaries and the elite intelligentsia make sure no one forgets this, much less themselves. As if a foreign language were their only claim to civilization, Filipino government officials coming from an impoverished and demoralized country make it a point to flaunt their English skills in international fora while their more dignified counterparts from other countries insist on using their own languages for all official functions. Some Filipinos overseas would even be offended upon being identified as "Filipino" and would indignantly retort to the effect that "You see, I'm not actually Filipino, I'm half Spanish and half Chinese." They therefore bring back into play an already forgotten and perhaps irrelevant distinction since most of them could not actually migrate back to China or Spain even if they wanted to. Undoubtedly, some examples of ideologies of national purity could be found among the anti-American Tagalog-speaking intelligentsia at the turn of the century, but despite having a certain tolerated status even within contemporary state ideology, these cannot at all be considered as constituting the hegemonic form of official nationalism in the Philippines.

Finally, given the Philippine context, Rafael's second point regarding the disruptive "promise of the foreign" (182) which foretells the coming of a completely other cultural and social order seems somehow confusing. Who or what actually serves as the "other" in relation to the repressive Philippine state in the age of English globalization? These are the great majority of children and youth unable to finish their schooling because of

sheer poverty even as the public educational system undergoes rampant privatization and commercialization. These are the modern-day young *indios* forced to pay fines or clean the toilets in elementary and high schools for making the mistake of uttering words in their own language during the "English Only" campaigns. These are the sleepless workers in call centers forced to do violence to their tongues to make callers feel like they are listening to native speakers of English in Texas or Dublin. These are the hundreds of thousands of modern-day slaves aggressively being marketed and exported by the Philippine state and whose only comparative advantage in relation to millions of other impoverished workers in Asia and Africa is their purported English proficiency. It seems to make no sense to say that the promise for their liberation emanates from the foreign. Maybe their grasp of a foreign language may help them earn dollars, but this seems to be quite different thing from liberation in its most genuine sense. Traditions of struggle and protest have had a long history in the Philippines of creatively drawing from both foreign and indigenous sources. What is perhaps more fundamental than the disruptive presence of the foreign are continuous acts of "translation" among the oppressed and between themselves and the revolutionary intelligentsia in order to arrive at a lasting consensus on the necessary transformation of Philippine society. Too long have Filipinos been told to wait for the promises of the foreign, maybe it is time to pin their hopes somewhere else.

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COMMENTARY ON *THE PROMISE OF THE FOREIGN*

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Abstract
Guided by key Heideggerian insights, this review focuses on two points: 1) the relationship between what is foreign and what is one's own; 2) language and history. The promise of the foreign belongs to the allure of the unknown, and the impulse to know the unknown belongs to the "de-distancing" character of the human—the tendency of human beings to bring things to nearness, thereby negating the distance that stands between them and the things they encounter in the world. Rafael has shown that the Filipinos were driven by the desire to bring what is foreign (in their case, Spain) near to them (e.g., by way of assimilation) in order to own and be owned by what otherwise remains distant and alien. But along with the promise of the foreign comes the risk of betrayal. The betrayal of the promise is ultimately the result of the mistaken fundamental assumption that one can get around language and history. The important and fascinating work of Rafael serves as a warning against an even more tragic betrayal: the betrayal of one's own history, which includes not the just the past and the present, but even more that which is yet to come.

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> "The distance to my fellow-man is for me a very long one."
>
> —from Kafka's notebooks

The following commentary on Vicente Rafael's *The Promise of the Foreign* focuses on two points. The first is on the relationship between what is foreign and what is one's own. The second is on language and history. This commentary will rely mostly on Heideggerian insights, which perhaps can be justified only by the fact that Rafael himself acknowledges the influence of the philosopher, albeit in a little endnote in the introduction (195).

Let me now begin with the relationship between what is foreign and what is one's own. Because the subject of Rafael's study is colonial Philippines, specifically Spanish Philippines, it might appear that identifying what is foreign (Spanish/Castilian) and

what is one's own (in the case of Rafael's work, what is native or local, namely, Filipino/Tagalog), as well as recognizing what happens when the two come into contact and interact with each other, is quite convenient. But because Rafael's conception of language and translation extends far beyond their customary meanings, or better yet, is more primordial or originary, his fascinating work on Spanish Philippines therefore offers possibilities of understanding human beings as such, insofar as, in the words of Rosalind C. Morris, there is a "foreignness in us all" (blurb, back cover).

The insight that there is a foreignness in all of us is important not only because we now live in the postcolonial era, which has the character of "post-" only because the colonizers are gone but in which the dynamics of colonization is arguably still at work. It is important more so because, as we saw above, with or without colonizers this foreignness still remains. The colonial experience, it can be argued, only serves as an instance (a very important instance, one might add) where a people, confronted as it is by the foreign, becomes more acutely aware of questions of identity and the difficult decisions that such questions often necessarily demand.

The promissory relationship between the Philippines and Spain was maintained by various forms of transactions, mainly by way of the Castilian language, as Rafael shows in his close reading and analysis of Filipino novels, the *comedia*, revolutionary newspapers, the *pacto de sangre*, etc. The Castilian language, as Rafael sees it, "presented an array of possibilities," and precisely "to seize upon these possibilities was to recognize and respond to the promise of the foreign." For Rafael, these "acts of recognizing, responding, and thereby assuming the responsibility for what comes before and beyond oneself" constitute "the practice of translation" (14).

All three—the foreign, promise, and translation—involve distance. There is the distance between one's own identity and that of the foreign. There is the distance between the present dispensation and a promise (which, as we have seen, is always something that is to come). Finally, there is the distance between two languages involved in any translation. Thus, because all three cases involve distance, so too, all three cases involve something like a bridging of gap, of distance. This bridging of distance manifests what Heidegger calls the "de-distancing" character that belongs essentially to the human being (*Being and Time* 97-102). Heidegger claims that human beings cannot tolerate distance. Human beings want to shrink distances, to negate what they experience to be the limiting force of distance, and this by various technological ways (usually in transportation and communication).

The urge to bridge distances is partly due to the allure of the unknown. But with the

allure of the unknown comes the risk. Or better perhaps, part of the allure of the unknown is precisely the risks that come with it, as Rafael has amply and vividly shown in his study. Bridging the gap between the foreign and one's own may bring with it the promise of a new and richer identity. But it may also lead to betrayal and therefore a disruption in the unfolding of one's own identity.

Let me now consider the question of language and history. It is quite evident that Rafael takes language, and therefore translation as well, in its wider and more originary sense. We can see this, for instance, when he speaks of "ways of doing and making do, rhetorical practices, mechanical instruments, and repetitive gestures that could be summed up as the technics of translation" (14-5). Thus, although Rafael, in identifying Castilian as the lingua franca of the Spaniards and Filipinos, initially means by language the medium of verbal communication (both written and oral), he nonetheless understands by language something that goes beyond its merely anthropological and instrumental interpretation.

For Heidegger, language is not solely or even primarily a means of communication or expression. When thought through its essence, one can see that language is the house of Being, by which I understand Heidegger to mean that it is in language that all that is, and all that can be, can be made manifest, communicated, preserved, and safeguarded. Furthermore, reversing the dominant interpretation of language as a means of expression, it is language itself that speaks (*Pathmarks* 239). The "use" of language as a means of expression only comes after or is made possible by the fact that something has spoken to us human beings beforehand, that something made itself manifest in a meaningful way. That we can recognize something like a "horizon of being" (*Horizont des Seins*) or "referential context" (*Verweisungszusammenhang*) within which we can express anything at all or communicate allows us to see that the possibility of expressing anything or communicating rests on the prior experience of meaningfulness (*Being and Time* 398, 66).

We can also see that it is language that makes possible the telling of history, indeed makes possible history itself insofar as history involves the telling of stories that are handed down from one generation to another and continue to shape the lives of peoples in a decisive way. Now, there is something common—and common in a very essential way—between being, language, and history in that there is something in all three that escapes every attempt to objectify, manipulate, predict, and control each of them. Neither being nor language nor history can be completely objectified or placed under the control of human beings. Heidegger calls that which escapes every sort of control and objectification simply *das Unumgängliche*, "that which is not to be gotten around." In "Science and Reflection," Heidegger writes: "Here something disturbing manifests itself. That which in the sciences

is not at any time to be gotten around—nature, man, history, language—is, as that which is not to be gotten around [*das Unumgängliche*], intractable and inaccessible [*unzugänglich*] for the sciences and through the sciences (*Question Concerning Technology* 177).

Though perhaps not explicitly, Rafael has also shown the slippery character of both language and history precisely by uncovering the risks involved in the act of translation and the writing of history. He has shown that somehow there is always something that remains untranslatable, something that always remains open and indefinite in the writing of history. Rafael in fact ends his book saying that the promise of the foreign "continues to call, periodically issuing from the sources that we can never fully locate, in languages just beyond what we are capable of translating, and often at the fringes of what is socially recognizable. It is a call that remains to be heard" (182).

That which we can never fully locate, that which lies beyond our capability to translate, that which often escapes social recognition, is not this precisely *das Unumgängliche*, "that which is not to be gotten around"? The possibility for the promise of the foreign to make itself known as a call that remains to be heard rests on the historical character of human beings, which likewise cannot be gotten around, cannot be fully understood. J. M. Coetzee himself seems to see this when, in attempting to answer the question of what a classic is, he writes: "Historical understanding is understanding of the past as a shaping force upon the present. Insofar as that shaping force is tangibly present in our lives, historical understanding is part of the present. Our historical being is part of our present. It is that part of our present—namely, the part that belongs to history—that we cannot fully understand, since it requires us to understand ourselves not only as objects of historical forces but as subjects of our own historical self-understanding" (13).

Now, if there is something in being, language, and history that is not to be gotten around, it only means that there is something in the human being itself that is not to be gotten around insofar as the human being is the one being who stands in relation to being (as the one for whom being itself is a question) (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 10), the one being who alone has language and is in language, and the one being who alone is essentially historical. This insight allows one to see that the betrayal of the promise of the foreign that Rafael has shown in his careful study of Spanish Philippines consisted precisely in the assumption by the Spanish colonizers that they could get around the Filipinos, that they could get around language (both Castilian and Tagalog), and that they could get around the history (and hence destiny) of the people they had chosen to colonize. But alas, as we have seen, there is no getting around language. There is no getting around history. There is no getting around a people.

Rafael's study thus portrays the folly of any attempt to get around that which in the first place is not to be gotten around. But now that the colonizers are gone and the Filipinos live in the postcolonial era, the greater danger lies in the possibility that Filipinos get around their own language, their own history, and their own destiny. That, as Rafael shows, a part of the Filipino people's past is a call that remains to be heard should remind them that marching blindly into the future, without taking heed of their own history, could lead to a betrayal far more tragic than that carried out by the foreign. For what could be more tragic indeed than betraying one's own?

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RESPONSE TO *THE PROMISE OF THE FOREIGN*

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Abstract
In his "Response to *The Promise of the Foreign*," Roland Tolentino generates a battery of provocative questions that seeks to resituate Rafael's trope of "the foreign," particularly in the field of Philippine Studies. Here, Tolentino asks nine questions that open up "the foreign" into zones of contacts with other contexts: the foreign in relation to the linguistic context of the period; its relationship with the vernacular, particularly in the case of the recodification of the baybayin; its involvement with act of writing and rewriting; its viability as a social project and its political efficacy; the foreign and its relation to social class; the foreign in light of the present bilingual condition; its relation to a second colonial language, American English; its reckoning with the indigene/colonized/native/vernacular; and lastly, its relation to the untranslatable.

About the Author
Roland Tolentino is Professor at the University of the Philippines Film Institute. He has a PhD in Film, Literature and Culture, from the Critical Studies Division, School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California. His scholarly books include *Sipat-Kultura: Mapagpalayang Pagbabasa, Pag-aaral at Panunuri ng Panitikan (Cultural Eye: Towards a Liberating Reading, Study and Criticism of Philippine Literature,* forthcoming, 2007), *Transglobal Economies and Cultures: Contemporary Japan and Southeast Asia* (co-editor, 2004), and the six-volume *Popular Culture Series* (2004). His books of fiction include *Sakit ng Kalingkingan: 100 Dagli sa Edad ng Krisis* (2005), *Kuwentong Syudad* (co-editor, 2002), and *Sapinsaping Pag-ibig at Pagtangis: Tatlong Novella ng Pagsinta't Paghinagpis* (1999).

Rafael presents us another thought-provoking study on late 1800 nationalism. I am especially interested in the forces and affects of subjection and agency in what he terms as translation or the circulation of the foreign for active and inactive viable use value for the nationalism of the period. My reaction revolves around the process of translation and how this trope can be used in my area of discipline, Philippine Studies. At this time, I am provoked to raise more questions than try to figure out the links between Rafael's translation and Philippine Studies.

First, are there particular historical linguistic shifts in translation tactics from the early efforts of the natives of the colony to the exemplary intellectual nationalist pursuits of the ilustrados? How has Spanish evolved in relation to the evolution of various vernaculars in the colony? Might not the analysis of Rizal's novels, Baltazar's play, the Katipunan newspaper, and the various comedias come into varying translation contacts and shifts in

language, its regimentation by the Spanish colonizers, and its alternative use by the native intellectuals in the various historical periods concerned?

Second, how does Rafael's translation figure in the first great translation project of the Spanish colonizers, i.e., the recodification of baybayin (native alphabet writing and linguistic system) to romanized Spanish? How does Rafael's notion of foreign figure in the massive linguistic, social, political, cultural, and economic paradigm shifts from precolonial to Spanish colonial periods? From what historians have revealed to us, the baybayin was still very much in use even up to the 1800s. Does this mean that the vernacular—at least in writing—has remained untranslatable? What does this refusal to be translated mean for the foreign?

If the Filipino word for translate is "salin" and originally used in the recodification of the baybayin writing into Spanish, the acts of writing and rewriting, not just words and phrases coming into being, also come into play in translation. How does the original baybayin defy Spanish translation? How does translation account for a divergent writing native writing strategy that remained in use even in the 1800s?

Third, on the one hand, can the foreign be always just out there, refusing to be domesticated but still sustaining the viability of a future social project? How does it lose its social and linguistic efficacy to stir nationalism and simply be co-opted for colonial and neocolonial formations? At what point can the foreign be discarded, not vital to linguistic and nationalist discourse? On the other hand, is the foreign truly untranslatable? In what the ilustrados have undertaken in their Castillian translation for nationalism, is the translation the only optimizable linguistic discourse to carry out the nationalist project?

Fourth, is the Castillian language the metalanguage to localize the nationalist discourse? It seems that the analysis of major language formations through literature has to contend with the Castillian language. What is then the political efficacy of choosing to be regimented with the language of colonial power? Is there no way out for nationalists except to choose to engage primarily with Spanish? If not, what are the gradations of subjection in which contending nationalist projects can emanate from various vernacular languages and ilustrados' writing in Spanish?

Fifth, to speak of the ilustrados is to speak of a small yet critical segment of Filipino intellectuals of the pre-Philippine Revolution period. How might a further class analysis of the contending and dialoging forces that lead up to the ultimate nationalist project—the Philippine Revolution of 1896—inform us of a more nuanced rereading of the history and nationalism of the period? Outside the divergent translation tactics used, how does class reconceptualize the period's various nationalist projects?

Sixth, for Filipinos of the present time, the bilingual education has created a nation of everyday translations, and the classroom as site of everyday translation. We are asked a question in English by our teachers, and we are told that our mind goes through a delicate process of translation: first, how does the question translate in the vernacular first language; second, what would be our response; third, how do we translate our response to English? How does this everyday translation of the foreign exhibit the characteristics of linguistic nationalism Rafael defines in his study?

Seventh, if the translation was indeed vital to the nationalist cause, how then does the coming into the fore of another foreign—American English—recodify the engagements? How does the study of the historical moment of late 1800 nationalism foreground the next major linguistic shift in the American colonial project of the Philippines? What remains of the phantom of Castillian translation in the next colonial setup? I would have wanted to know where nationalism lies thereafter, how it has engaged the newer colonial setup in a divergent and parallel take of Spanish colonialism.

Eighth, is it only the foreign that substantiates the translation process? How might the indigene/colonized/native/vernacular engage translation for nationalism? What are the primary operations for the vernacular, or in the Philippine case, for the vernaculars to substantiate nationalism via a primary engagement in its locus, rather than through the foreign? Or is nationalism already a foreign translation? As with what others have asked of Benedict Anderson's project of nationalism outside the West—only through the frame of western nationalism—what are we then left with to imagine ourselves if we cannot imagine ourselves and our nationalisms outside the purview of the foreign? While theorizing a pragmatic use of the foreign, how then does one activate the processes of indigenization, democratization, agency and collectivity, adaptation, rewriting, and rereading of the foreign? What, if at all, is the political efficacy of the vernaculars, or one's capacity to translate across languages?

Lastly, where in translation does the untranslatable lie? And what does it mean that the supplement—the untranslatable—remains as such? What is the untranslatable in the nationalist discourse of the period? What in the untranslatable gives weakness to the promise of the foreign, where we to paraphrase Derrida's formulation that the letter does not always arrive, meaning that the promise is not always fulfilled? In these unfulfilled instances, how can it be read in favor of a productive nationalism which can be revitalized for the present counter-official nationalist time?

I realize, of course, that the battery of questions may seem unfair to Rafael. But then, I too am translating his foreign in order to realize my own relationship with his discourse.

SCENES OF TRANSLATION: RESPONSES TO RESPONSES

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Abstract
In his "Response to Responses," Vicente Rafael thanks and answers the questions raised during the forum. To Gary Devilles's comment of his "remaining silent" in the way translation can be "radicalized into an ethical technology or a strategic pedagogy," Rafael offers the trope of revenge—a desire for justice, which results from the Spanish misrecognition of Filipino attempts at translation—and the language of secrecy and solidarity of the 1896 Revolution—which results from the failure of Castilian to become lingua franca—as political technics in themselves. To Ramon Guillermo's comment of the book's impoverished, restrictive, and imprecise notions of translation, Rafael reiterates and contends his multivalent conception of translation: always doubled and open-ended; dialectical and dialogical; "that which is new and for this reason yet to be assimilated and understood;" in sum, "that which is always inside *and* outside, eccentric yet inherent to the social order," constitutive as well as disruptive. To Remmon Barbaza's Heideggerian reading, Rafael thankfully re-emphasizes the recurrent motif of the foreign as *call* and the affinity of this with the foreign as *promise*. Finally, to Roland Tolentino's "disconcerting" series of questions, Vince Rafael warns against the fetishization of translation when detached from its particularity, and its envisagement as "the subjugation of the other in order to realize one's sense of self, a self predicated on the mastery of the other's discourse."

About the Author
Vicente L. Rafael, Professor of History at the University of Washington, is the author of *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (2000) and *Contracting Colonialism* (1993) (both from Duke UP), and editor of *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines and Colonial Vietnam* (Cornell, 1999) and *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures* (Temple UP, 1993). His most recent book, which he discussed in the Kritika Kultura Lecture Series, is *The Promise of the Foreign* (Duke UP, 2005 and Anvil, 2006).

I thank Gary Devilles, Ramon Guillermo, Remmon Barbaza, and Roland Tolentino for their very spirited and careful engagement with *The Promise of the Foreign,* and Lulu Reyes for her tireless efforts at organizing this gathering. In responding to these responses, I'd like to link their observations and criticisms with some of the recurring concerns of the book. I will take them in the order that I received them.

Gary Devilles has provided a succinct summary of some of the major arguments of the book. He faults me, however, for "remaining silent" on the way translation can be "radicalized into an ethical technology or a strategic pedagogy." The book, he says, fails as a project of "political criticism." If this were the case it would indeed be a serious lapse. But I think that his concerns with the political and pedagogic uses of translation have in fact been addressed throughout the book. The first three chapters track the ways by which

Filipino attempts at translation fail to yield recognition from Spain, and how this chronic misrecognition results not in assimilation but in phantasms of revenge. Revenge as a kind of desire for justice is certainly political. And it has many lessons to teach, as the endless conversations between Elias and Ibarra in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere,* and Simoun and Basilio and Padre Florentino illustrate in *El Filibusterismo*. The desire for revenge is what brings about the fevered figure of the "filibustero" which remains radically eccentric and thus foreign (because subversive) to colonial society. What I had hoped to show were the ways by which translation becomes political to the extent that it entails the promise of communication at the same time that it generates estrangement, conflict, and violence. In this way, mistranslation is not something accidental and external to translation; rather it is the latter's condition of possibility.

Devilles's second concern has to do with the question of translation as a basis for "a strategic pedagogy of emancipation." In fact, I try to deal with this problem in Chapter 7 on the Revolution and the Afterword (which unfortunately he doesn't seem to have read because he nowhere makes references to them in his response). As I show in these sections, the Revolution of 1896 was in part instigated by the failure of Castilian to become what the ilustrados hoped it would be: a lingua franca with which to solicit Spanish recognition of Filipino rights and promote progress in the colony. That failure produced momentous events, such as the growth of secret societies, especially the Liga Filipina and the Katipunan, which functioned as "subterranean public spheres." Modeled after Masonic lodges, secret societies engendered cryptic symbols and new practices of belonging and solidarity. We can see this especially around the blood compact, or *pacto de sangre*. It was precisely this new language of secrecy and solidarity that connected Filipino nationalists across social and geographical divides while sending menacing messages to the Spaniards. On the eve of the Revolution, Spaniards saw how the technics of translation could be used against them as they found themselves confronting the emergence of a revolutionary language that they could neither fully comprehend much less control.

The history of translation at the origins of both Spanish colonial rule and Filipino nationalism show that language, whether Castilian, Tagalog, Latin, or any other vernacular, resists full assimilation into any ideology. And it is this resistance that gives to language, *any* language, even our "own," an irreducibly foreign quality. (For after all, what does it mean to speak in our "own" language? How can we "own" language" when the very terms of ownership are themselves linguistic? How can we dominate that which we are dependent on for any act of dominaton? How can we speak of a "mother tongue" that is meant to express our being in all its plenitude when the very act of speaking always

already entails syntax, grammar, delay, error, deferral: in other words, time and space that distance and thus alienate us from the "mother"?)

But by the same token, the structural foreignness of language, the fact that it resists reduction and assimilation into any political project is also what makes it a resource of hope, if by hope we mean a sense of futurity, an afterlife that is historical and worldly, rather than transcendent. Simultaneously inside and outside of us, language always leaves open other possibilities, sustaining against all odds the sense of what is yet to come. Language is not life itself, but a supplement without which life would be unlivable. It is not society itself, but that without which the very terms of sociality would never emerge. It is not freedom itself, but the gift without which the giving and taking that underpin a sense of justice and therefore freedom would remain unthinkable. And finally it is not discourse itself, for language always exceeds any given discourse, even as it is that without which any sort of discursive formation would be untenable. Without language there can be no human future just as there cannot be a just reckoning with the past. This uncanny and thus essential foreignness of language constitutes its promise (of contact and communication, for example) and threat (of misunderstanding and violent conflict, for example).This is one of the lessons conveyed by the Revolution of 1896—the "pedagogy" of the *pacto de sangre* and the demands of *Kalayaan*, for example—when considered in relation to a history of translation and untranslatability.

Let me now move to Ramon Guillermo's comments. His main criticisms of the book are that 1) it offers an impoverished, or as he says, "restrictive" notion of translation, and 2) its use of the term "foreign" is too confusing and imprecise.

On the first point, that my notion of translation is "restrictive," I say "read what I wrote." Guillermo quotes one definition of translation that I offer in the book: "a *double* process of appropriating and replacing what is foreign while keeping its foreignness in view." A few sentences later, he gives a critical paraphrase, a translation if you will, of my view of translation in the following way: "to define translation as a process in which the end product always keeps its opacity or 'foreignness' in view arguably does not hold for a vast majority of translation and lexical borrowing." It is curious that he drops the word "double" in his rephrasing of my definition, thereby eliding the dialectical, rather than merely mechanical, process of translation that I am concerned with. The doubleness of translation—its ability to both negate and conserve the foreignness of the original—is precisely what makes every act of translation open-ended and subject to revision. Good translations are those that keep and sustain this open-endedness. They assume the necessary errancy of every translation from the original. In doing so, they keep

the original alive as its living double. Bad translations are those that merely negate the foreignness of the original. They entomb the latter, keeping it buried and forgotten in the translated language. Good translations are invitations to return to the original and thus begin translating anew. Bad translations discount the originals as definitively dead and safely buried, out of sight and out of mind. Good translations recognize that the task of the translator is never over, given the ineluctable foreignness of language. Bad translations disavow this foreignness and regard language as a mere object that can be dominated and then forgotten. Finally, good translations acknowledge their on-going contamination by aspects of bad translations, whereas bad translations remain oblivious to its limitations.

That translation is necessarily dialectical (which is to say dialogical, entailing endless conversations between translations and the original, among different translations, and indeed between the living the dead) implies that it also entails an ethical relationship between the translator and what he or she translates. Even those that I've been calling "bad translations" must work to repress this dialogical relationship. For the translator, the act of translation places him or her in a position to decide what and how to convey the original in another language. Translation thus always involves decision, and decision always risks losing something of the original. Put another way, the risk of loss is inherent in every act of translation precisely because the translator takes on the burden of deciding what aspects of the original to convey and how to convey them. In doing so, the translator bears responsibility for the original and its afterlife in the other language. Once the question of decision and responsibility is set aside, translation becomes purely mechanical and conventional, treating words as if they were mere instruments of communication. Guillermo is right when he says that the vast majority of translation practices tend towards forgetting the original. But that forgetting is something arrived at, not simply given. The process of forgetting—or what in some instances can be thought of as the work of mourning—the foreign origins of one's "own" language is precisely what is at stake in the origins of nationalism emerging from a colonial history of translation. These ethical, political, and methodological dilemmas of translation proliferate throughout the book. They are hardly the elements of a "restrictive notion" of translation.

With regard to Guillermo's second criticism, that my use of the term "foreign" is too "confusing," let me try to clarify that term. It is of course the question of the other, which has as many aspects and qualities as there are positions from which to see and speak with it. The "foreign" or the "other" can be language itself (whether Spanish or the vernacular, for after all, language comes *before* us in both the temporal and spatial sense of that term. Language for this reason always exceeds the human even as it is essential to the making

of humanity). The foreign can also be the "filibustero" who haunts colonial society by virtue of being everywhere and nowhere at the same time. It can be the figure and name of "Rizal" that stirs the imagination of both colonizers and colonized though for different reasons. The foreign at one point may refer to the weirdness of the comedya when viewed by Spanish and European audiences, though not by natives for whom its alien allusions have already been conventionalized. It can refer to Ibarra, newly arrived from Europe like some arrogant *balikbayan* from the perspective of the friars, even as the friars themselves can appear foreign from the perspective of the ilustrado propagandists and the modern day Filipino readers who have inherited ilustrado conceptions of the Spanish regulars. Maria Clara's stunning beauty appears foreign in comparison to the appearance of other women in colonial society; at the same time her bastard origins gives her foreignness a malevolent cast in contrast to her idealization as an image of the immortal and no less alien Virgin Mary. Florante when heard, then seen, by Aladin appears foreign, yet no less seductive, and vice versa. Death, whose envoys haunt all of nationalist discourse, is radically foreign to life, yet that without which life would have neither shape nor meaning nor history.

The "foreign" then is that which is new and for this reason yet to be assimilated and understood. It is excessive of existing social and epistemological categories, and its appearance seems always sudden and shocking, causing indeterminate effects. Once it is domesticated and recognized as such, the foreign is shorn of its novelty. It becomes obvious and familiar and so no longer really foreign. It is given a privileged place in the social order, either elevated and deferred (like God, or the Governor General, or a missionary priest when viewed by colonial-Christian subjects), or denigrated and spurned (like evil spirits or their literary equivalents: Doña Consolacion and Doña Victorina in Rizal's novels when viewed by male ilustrados, or the "katipunized" Filipinos feared by the Spaniards, or the "despotic" friars as viewed by the ilustrados). If the foreign seems confusing, that is because the same figure or person can appear at one and the same time wholly familiar and wholly out of place. The foreign can be the colonizer when seen from a postcolonial perspective; but so, too, the first generation of nationalists when seen from the perspective of the colonial order and from the vantage point of the nation-state barely capable of recognizing the strangeness of its origins. Capital is inherently foreign due to its defamiliarizing and alienating effects on the world. Given its promiscuous and predatory movements and uncertain origins (as I try to explain in the Introduction of the book), the foreignness of capital (whether it comes from within or outside) gives merchants associated with capital's workings an alien quality. But the face of laboring classes can also come across as foreign when they rise up and take on the power of life and death over the

capitalists who depend on the extraction of labor power.

The foreign, in sum, is that which is always inside *and* outside, eccentric yet inherent to the social order, capable of constituting as well as disrupting its institutions and conventions. It thus possesses an inexhaustible power to set society in motion towards different historical paths, which include revolution. And this is why the foreign is the focus of expectations and anxieties, fetishized and struggled over, the object of dread as much as desire.

Turning now to Remmon Barbaza's response, I am grateful for its openness and generosity. He makes explicit a number of themes that can only remain implicit in the book by translating, as it were, my arguments into the more technical terms of Heidegger's philosophy. He strikes a particularly important chord when he stresses a recurring motif in my description of the foreign: it is that which, above all, *calls*. It is this calling that comes across in languages that is always yet to be understood (including one's own vernacular) that creates the relationship between all sorts of speakers and all sorts of hearers. Opening up a passage between and among colonizers and colonized, the call, or what I also refer to as the promise, of the foreign sets up a kind of public sphere. Always fraught, it is a space of recognition predicated upon misrecognition, and where translations of all sorts circulate by various media: Christian rituals, comedyas, newspapers, novels, rumors, gossip, and at certain key moments, violent confrontation, and even death. (Two examples: the space opened up by Ibarra's return and carriage ride through Manila discussed in Chapter 3; and the secular public sphere opened up by the rhetoric of pity and the forging of horizontal ties in "Florante at Laura" discussed in Chapter 6).

At the same time, the call of the foreign, because it requires translation and thus the ever present possibility of mistranslation, lends itself to reification. It poses the danger of restoring rather than rescinding the metaphysics of domination so characteristic of colonial regimes. Rather than a call for justice yet to come, for example, the foreign could just as easily be mistaken as a threat to the existing order or to an essential identity—whether colonial or national—and thus become an object of fear and a target of repression. Hence the strangeness of "katipunized" Filipinos under Spanish rule was transformed into the threat of peasant armies calling themselves "katipunan" under the Malolos Republic, and into "bandits" under US rule. Both official and popular nationalism on the left and on the right have sought in the foreign (e.g., the United States, the "Chinese," the "Japanese," the "Arabs," "Muslim terrorists," or just plain "Muslims," "Igorots" and other non-Christianized peoples, etc.—a list that is as long as the racial epithets that accompany them) a source of the country's oppression or embarrassment, and an enemy against which to

consolidate their own identity and power.

The most recent example of the intractable ambivalence of the Filipino relationship to the foreign, one that resides, as I've stressed, inside *and* outside the country and the individual, can be seen in the rise of the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW). As Guillermo and Barbaza allude to in their responses, the OFW is but one in a long series of social formations that have troubled the shape and substance of national identity. The phrase itself is worth unpacking. The original term "Overseas Contract Workers" was changed—translated?—into "Overseas Filipino Workers" in the wake of EDSA I in the later 1980s. Replacing "contract" with "Filipino" simultaneously politicizes and domesticates the globalized transformation of contractual labor. Renaming the expatriated worker "Filipino" means that s/he belongs to the nation, yet derives his or her identity (not to mention salary) from foreign sources. The basis of his or her humanity as "worker" (and not merely abstract labor power) is split between the nation and global capital. The OFW is thus "Filipino" only by being "overseas." S/he is at home only by being abroad, and thus present only by being absent. Recognized as a "bagong bayani" for the remittances s/he sends home, the OFW is nonetheless misrecognized as sheer labor power indentured to both the economic needs of the nation-state and the demands of their foreign employers.

"Filipino" by virtue of being away from and alien to both the nation and the world, OFWs exceed every existing social category. It is their excess that constitutes their novelty and hence lies at the basis of their foreignness. The OFW is the familiar that becomes foreign that becomes familiar that becomes foreign all over again. The state has sought to domesticate (which is to say, dominate) their troubling and unstable identity by calling them "heroic," as if their travels were epic and their work revolutionary. Yet their presence, realized through dollar remittances, comes across as a state of permanent displacement and on-going absence. Disposable yet essential to both the nation and global capital, the OFW is untranslatable into the conventional categories of the nation-state or into the terms of liberal or even socialist cosmopolitanism. The fact that the Philippine is dependent upon OFW remittances to keep its economy afloat, and that thousands upon thousands of Filipinos continue to seek employment abroad, says something about the complicated ways by which the call of the foreign continues to haunt the Filipino present and its foreseeable future.

Finally, let me turn to Roland Tolentino's response which I must admit seemed the most disconcerting of all. At the end of a blistering series of questions, Tolentino writes, "I realize, of course, that the battery of questions may seem unfair to Rafael. But then, I too am translating his foreign in order to realize my own relationship with his discourse."

He admits that he is not being fair with my text, that he is treating it the way one would a foreign object (to wit, "his foreign," though I might ask, "foreign what?" Note how quickly the foreign is fetishized when it is left detached from anything in particular). He throws a "battery of questions" at the book, the fury of his questioning is startling; I am stunned by this violence and wonder at the cause of this rapid fire "barrage." Perhaps, this is because he already has the answers to his own questions, and so seeks not engagement but rather power over the text. This insistent questioning entails a practice of translation that seeks to gain purchase over "his foreign" so as to realize "my own relationship with his discourse." Translation is thus envisaged as the subjugation of the other in order to realize one's sense of self, a self predicated on the mastery of the other's discourse. It is a familiar notion of translation, one that has its roots in the Spanish missionary project of evangelization that entailed the translation of the Word of God into the vernacular on the one hand and the reduction of the vernacular into the grammatical and semantic terms of Latin and Castilian on the other. In Tolentino's style of questioning, I cannot help but hear the echo of the Spanish priest at the confessional intent on tracking down the sins of the convert.

I do not, of course, mean to return his unfair treatment of my text with an equally unfair treatment of his questions or mode of questioning. That would be too much like Simoun in the *Fili*, seeking to return like for like, violence for violence. And thanks to Rizal, we all know the grave consequences that such an approach leads to. To be fair to him, I do think that a number of his questions are well worth considering: the fate of the baybayin (which in fact I've taken up in my first book, *Contracting Colonialism,* but which is of course far from the last word on the subject); the place of English in the wake of the Filipino-American War and the US occupation of the Philippines (a topic that I hope to return to in my future work, but which I had begun to broach in Chapters 6 and 7 of my earlier book, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino Histories*); the foreign origins of nationalism (which in fact is a major motif in the present book and which I've sought to clarify above); the workings and effects of bilingual education in the contemporary Philippines (which would require at least three books and two lifetimes to even begin to approach). The other questions on the vernacular, on untranslatability, on Castilian's role as a lingua franca, etc.: some are addressed in my remarks above, while the rest are taken up in the book.

I do not want to be unfair by reproducing these discussions here chapter and verse, but I suspect that even if I did, even if the editors of *Kritika Kultura* opened up their virtual pages to the reproduction of the entire book, it would still prove unsatisfactory. There would always be a lack. Something would always escape, remaining untranslatable, eluding the mastery of an insistent and unrelenting interrogation. Perhaps it would be

something that would have already fled across the Pacific, retracing the route of the Galleons that carried an assortment of foreigners and natives, each a stranger to the other and to themselves, and who would in time come back to visit, again and again and again, the scene of translation.

KOLUM KRITIKA

IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES: AN INTERVIEW WITH ROMESH GUNESEKERA (FEBRUARY 2, 2007)

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About the Interviewer

Lawrence L. Ypil teaches literature and writing at the Ateneo de Manila University. He has published poems and essays in journals and magazines in the Philippines and abroad, and has won first prize in the Carlos Palanca Awards 2006 for his poetry collection *The Highest Hiding-Place*.

About the Interviewee

Romesh Gunesekera, Sri Lankan-British novelist, is the author of most recently *The Match* (2006). His earlier works of fiction either earned or were shortlisted for various awards: *Monkfish Moon* (New York Times Notable Book for 1993), *Reef* (finalist for the Booker Prize and the Guardian Fiction Prize), *The Sandglass* (BBC Asia Award for Achievement in Writing and Literature, 1998). This multi-awarded writer has lived in Sri Lanka and the Philippines before coming to Britain, and has been writer-in-residence in Copenhagen, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Southampton. He was plenary speaker in the international conference "Reading Asia: Forging Identities in Literature" held in February 2007 at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Lawrence L. Ypil (LY): Was your novel *The Match* difficult to write?

Romesh Gunesekera (RG): In a way it was easy in the sense that I enjoyed writing it, and it kind of wrote itself. I've said it before that my plan was to write this novel now—well, last year, 2006 was when I wanted to write it—for lots of reasons. One tiny but careful reason was the interest in Sri Lankan cricket in the book. Sri Lankan cricket hasn't featured in my writing before, though Sri Lanka has and a lot of subtler accents to the Sri Lankan story. These are things that I'd been trying to explore and understand: the tragedy of the war, the constant fighting, the politics—Sri Lanka has had a very tough time. But [this book will have] an upbeat story about Sri Lankan cricket. Out of nowhere, it seemed, in the middle of the nineties Sri Lanka burst into the sports scene as a champion team, and in 1996 won in the World Cup and that was a very, very big thing. So I thought it would be nice at some point in my writing to try capturing that, and 2006—ten-year anniversary—would be when to write it. But I would be writing about a sport—I'm not a sportswriter—and I didn't think

I'd be interested in it. So I thought about it just to see whether I could think of characters or any way of handling a story about it. For a long time too I kept thinking about its being a story that used a Philippine experience, or *my* Philippine experience.

LY: Why was that important? I can imagine if it came as a cricket novel initially, you could have let the characters stay there.

RG: I thought of bringing something into the fictional world that I inhabit, you know, that imaginative world which I populated in certain ways. I wanted to bring that experience there. I wanted to extend that world again to the Philippines—not that I haven't written about the Philippines, because when I started writing I was here in Manila. And for a long time that I was in England I wrote stories that were set in the Philippines. But the stories that got published at that time, when I was getting published for the first time, were about Sri Lankan characters in Sri Lanka and that was *Monkfish Moon.* I got completely absorbed in that, captivated, it was like I wanted to hear more voices, meet more of these imaginary creatures, people. So in a sense I kind of let the Philippines fade away a bit. And I thought, can I somehow bring it back? So there were two sorts of ideas: I saw I could write about a sport even though I'm not a sports person, and I could write a story set in the Philippines, or use that experience somehow. I set off toying with both ideas, thought of a combination, and it seemed to me great.

LY: How important was for Sunny to be from, or to have grown up in, the Philippines?

RG: I thought it was just right because writing about a character growing up in Sri Lanka and playing cricket seemed to me like too much work. There would be a lot of people reading it and I would have to think whether this conforms to the reality that's there. I wanted to be really free in my imagination—I mean, I never played cricket when I was in the Philippines, but what a great idea it was. So I experimented and wrote to see whether it could work, kept at it for five years and wrote it in 2006. I just started doing it , just did a bit to see if it was worthwhile, and then a bit more, and then a chapter, and then I thought, well, I'll write this book now.

LY: One of my experiences was flipping back and forth between your novel and your biography. And so reading about your life, I must admit, was an important part of the shaping of my reading experience of *The Match*. Was that something you were conscious of doing? I couldn't help reading it as semi-autobiographical, a memoir of sorts.

RG: Well, yeah, I wanted to play with the idea. I've been writing for a long time, even before my first book, *Monkfish Moon,* was published. I was writing stories for ten, fifteen years before that came out. So by the time I was writing *Monkfish Moon*, I had no need to write autobiographically. Most writers have to start autobiographically because that's the material they have. But I kind of got rid of all that ten years before...

LY: …before your first book came out?

RG: When my first novel, *Reef,* came out, again people thought it was autobiographical. It's a first-person story that reads very autobiographically. It's about a guy who leaves Sri Lanka, comes to England, but most of it is set in Sri Lanka. He was a servant boy who achieves something for himself and ends up running a restaurant in London. A lot of people used to think it was my story and I was pleased about that because it meant I made the fiction really work, if it felt like it was a real person's story. Since then, I suppose, like with *The Sandglass*, I thought I will make this autobiographical because I kind of established my point that fiction doesn't need autobiography. So now, maybe I can [write autobiographically], because [my fiction] worked. But it didn't work [like that] in *Sandglass* because there are probably just two sections in it that's true-to-life.

LY: Do you find that important for fiction to do, at this point, for fiction to establish itself as "not real"? Is that something you feel that the novel wants to prove, especially in light of the popularity of non-fiction?

RG: I think it's important not only to prove that. I think it actually gives fiction its staying power. It even applies when I think of poetry because poetry is usually more commercialized particularly at the moment, I suppose with this thing going on between performance poetry and printed-word poetry: performance poetry is having a great time because it has immediate effects and it's great fun and I enjoy it. But with written poetry, I think people are beginning to forget just how powerful it is. With performance poetry, a lot of it is just blown out of the water, you miss something.... Good poems have a sense of time, they handle time almost perfectly. Well, they survive. And when you think of fiction, when it's fiction that relies entirely on the real world and gets its strength there, is contained by it, then it becomes fettered as well, whereas fiction that creates a world is actually a world that's always fresh. But because of the way the world is at the moment—and this is interesting—there is always the temptation to play with reality. I find fantastic the way it is

played with. If you go to Dublin you'd see people walking around like they were Leopold Bloom—you know, the main character in *Ulysses*— following his footsteps and stopping where he dropped his hat, and so on, forgetting for a moment that he didn't exist, that he didn't actually *walk* like people do. I think that's wonderful, I think we all love that kind of...

LY: ...fantasy.

RG: Yeah, and the fiction that is not fiction that interplays the real world and the imaginary world. And a bit like V.S. Naipaul, I suppose. He uses his autobiography quite blatantly, but it's very interesting what he does with his own story.

LY: There are very good novels that obviously have nothing to do with the author, that are clearly, to the extent, imagined—is there an expectation for the novel to say something about a real world?

RG: Yeah, it has to say something about the real world but it doesn't have to say anything about the author. I suppose that's the difference. But with this book, I've decided to play it much more with people, and still it's not my story in the sense that my relationships aren't the same as Sunny's relationships, and so on. I just use it like a template, the locations.

LY: Do you mind that it could be read as a semi-autobiographical novel?

RG: I don't mind, actually. It doesn't make a lot of difference how people read it. What I hope is that people read it and feel it and think about it and see that the value of if has more to do with their responses—what they think, what they feel.

LY: How's your reception in Sri Lanka?

RG: Up to now, pretty good *(laughs).*

LY: Because we do have the case of a Third World writer who doesn't live there, who is celebrated by the West and totally not liked in his home country.

RG: I think at the moment it's OK. I'm aware that there are schools of thought about people like me and there are criticisms of my life, you know, by people who think that I'm outside

and have no business looking in this way, or that I'm doing things that I shouldn't be doing or whatever. To me, really, the best reviewers, the best critics, are the ones who can come open to a book—completely open-minded and responding that way. I run into trouble with critics who have a slightly closed mind, who have an agenda, a doctrine, or a manifesto, or they're looking against...

LY: …and the novel becomes mere proof of whatever they already have in mind…

RG: ... and it happens that the novel is not looked at as fiction. For example, in *Reef*, Triton is of the oppressed class, if you like, I mean, he is a poor boy who makes a living as a domestic servant, and he has to make his own way. Now, it could be convenient to think that people in that position would be radical revolutionary types, but in fact, in most societies they're incredibly conservative. The radical left tends to have come from some education...

LY: …a middle class one.

RG: Yeah. You know, some people read things and think it's autobiographical, that the author is trying to say something through the characters. I'm not. I really have nothing to say. I just want the characters to come alive, that's all. I don't mind what they say, they can say all sorts of uncharitable things. But sometimes people might confuse what Triton (in *Reef*) says about what's happening in the country as *my* saying that.

LY: Do you have a particular audience in mind when you write your novels?

RG: No, not at all, other than someone like me who's interested in reading a book the way I used to like to read … someone who wants to go somewhere and read, go to libraries that don't actually have cobwebs and just pick a book and start reading. But I suppose the audience for me has changed in the sense that I'm "discovered" … so when I write a book now, I'm conscious that maybe millions won't be reading it, but at least a few people will, and those people will be reading it with a pure ideal of just having a good read and doing something with their minds. I don't think I'm going to write a book for a particular group of people because the readers I know of, those who write to me, are from all over. Some of them know Sri Lanka but don't like my Sri Lankan stories, some of them have no idea where it is.

LY: I was wondering if you had a white British audience in mind and you were writing as a Third World writer, in that sense of the label.

RG: No, not really. I mean, I don't buy that kind of label at all. Take *The Match* for example, because of the different locations [in it] it brings in potentially very different levels of knowledge about the world from what a reader brings into it. So a reader from Sri Lanka probably wouldn't know anything about Manila, and wouldn't have any idea when I write a sentence with a kind of true-to-life or anything; the reader won't necessarily have a way of picking up on atmosphere clues to get any sense of it. So the words have to work as one, and to me that's the interesting challenge. In that book, I hope it would be readers in the Philippines who'd read it, who wouldn't...

LY: …who wouldn't know anything about cricket...

RG: …who wouldn't know anything about cricket or Sri Lanka, but who would read a sentence and go, "Hey, this doesn't make sense" or what-else, so that's the kind of challenge, but the same challenge I would have had with anything I write. Some readers will come with familiarity and some with complete unfamiliarity and some may make the same sentence into two different things—the pleasure of recognition or the pleasure of discovery. It's not easy and that's why good writing is quite hard. I mean, it's easy to write the first draft but it's hard to get it to inspire your share of readers.

LY: In the conference earlier, you mentioned an interesting word, "autogeography." Can you talk about that some more?

RG: It's related to what I was saying about autobiography. For a long time I think my first books said very, very little about me, but then they were coming out in fashion—the biographies on the back of books. I used to think that, you know, sometimes people's biographies are more interesting than the books themselves *(laughs)*. They've done all sorts of things and it's really interesting that very often the book has nothing.

LY: It becomes a question of authenticity, I think. In autobiography, one is impelled to be loyal to the life. So it's interesting to use "autogeography," as if one would have to be loyal to the space...

RG: I was just interested, I suppose, in using my life because obviously writers use their lives and experiences and emotions. Some tell their story, and that's the story; others use it and transform it into something else and to me that's what art is. And unashamedly, I'm interested in art and emotion.

LY: How important was going to Manila for you, as Romesh (versus as Sunny of *The Match*)? As Romesh, because I'm interested in the fact that you were in Manila at a very critical time, I think, in Philippine history.

RG: In Philippine history it was a critical time, but I don't think I was aware of that *(laughs)*. I mean, I knew lots of journalists here, and there are lots of journalists in the book, and an important part of the book is the idea of authenticity, the idea of what's true—is it the journalist's view of the world, or the photographer's view of the world? And of course more than that, reality is actually the transmitted views about reality. So I was very interested in that. But when I was a kid, yes, I was aware of big things happening, was lucky enough to know people who were involved in certain spheres of interest. But I wasn't political myself, so I suppose I was observing, watching. But a crucial thing about the Philippines for me was my reading experience. It is interesting because the different places I lived in had provided different experiences. In Sri Lanka, when I was growing up, my reading experience was reading a lot of pulp fiction—thrillers, westerns—I loved it. I'd buy it second-hand, read it, sell it. Buy it, sell it; buy it, sell it, that whole thing. And some of it was American, but only the westerns probably. It was when I came to the Philippines where all the American books were.

LY: Who were you reading then?

RG: I started out by reading what's still in the bookshops now, those serious books. Then I began to discover living American writers, and that was a real discovery for me—that I was actually picking up a book written by someone still alive. And it was here—coming back to what we were talking about—where I would know something about the author. This Jack Kerouac, for example—and he does this, that. And that was very, very heavy for me, like, "What, people do this sort of thing?" That's probably when I wanted to write stories, see them in print in some form. What matters to an author is not necessarily publishing books or readership, just creative satisfaction...

LY: Were there any particular writers who made you want to write?

RG: Yeah, it was the beat generation—American, basically. They were gone already, way past, but as always I was a little late in finding things out. I suppose they were the ones who made writing look easy, as if anyone could do it. And there's a good thing about that, and a bad thing: the good thing is that it provided the encouragement—anyone can do it, so can I. The bad thing is...

LY: …it's a lie *(laughs).*

RG: Yes, it's not true. So you can kick yourself for a long time! *(Laughs.)* And then when I went to England, suddenly there was this unimagined world, with books all over the place, with lots and lots of things I was not familiar with. It was really exciting.

LY: I want to ask you about—since this is an Asian Identity conference—the place of the novel in Asia: were you influenced by any Asian novelist? And I'm also wondering whether you've thought about the genre itself, and how important—or not important—it is in Asia.

RG: I mean, an interesting talk yesterday was about the short story and the novel in Asia, and it was interesting to focus on the fact that there's a lot of talk now about looking at Asian writing. But a lot of them are looking at, basically, novels, whereas probably there are more short stories than novels that are significant to historical Asia. I think the novel is a very special problem. I think it's a brilliant invention, if it is invented. I don't completely accept the notions that these forms are culturally bound. I'm not sure—I mean I can see lots of arguments that say that the novel came out of this particular tradition, particularly Western, modern tradition that may not be similar with other traditions...

LY: Like in your case for example, it seems like the Western novel is your...

RG: Yeah, if you take a materialistic view of literature, why not? The stuff that I read, of course, were the stuff that was around because of the colonial history of the places I happened to live in. Therefore, I haven't read Sri Lankan stories, though there was a very long tradition of Sri Lankan writing in English. And that's a problem as well, they weren't around in the bookshops I looked in. And even if they were around, they didn't attract

me, you know? *(Laughs.)* They didn't look good, they didn't grab me … I [also] didn't like the James, the Dickens, and the Shakespeare until much later … But when I was initially writing, I was just purely responding to what was around, the stuff that's been published. And I tried responding to the words I was using as well. And then I started reading what other people were reading in different parts of the world—I read more Sri Lankan and Indian writers. But as a writer your choices are really pretty weird—all sorts of things … [When I was writing] my first novel, I abandoned it because it was almost the complete opposite of what I really write; the novel was fabulous, big, surreal, magic realist—only because [the style] was so popular. Everyone writing in the seventies of my sort of age was doing that sort of thing—they were doing, you know, Marquez. I remember someone telling me, "Read this book, there's been nothing like this before, this guy's going to get really, really famous one day." And you think, "Yeah, really? I'll give it a try." And it was fabulous. And as I was writing that kind of book, I thought, "There's no point in me doing this," *(laughs)* because...

LY: …he already did it *(laughs).*

RG: And he did it better than I could have done it at the time, I'm sure … So as a result *Monkfish Moon* was probably the smallest book that was published in that decade *(laughs).* So I suppose, at the time of writing, you [move away] from the monstrous stuff … So yeah, I think the problem with the novel is the form in the world, that it has its own traditions. I don't see it as an English tradition, although there are English roots to the novel, or say, a Russian tradition. I think it's something in the world which anybody reading the novel contributes to it, to that tradition. It's a bit like with anyone who's starting to write poetry: you do in a sense invent a tradition, you make a tradition for yourself … somehow in that way you're extending it. What is fundamentally human, I suppose, [is that with] poetry you always think, "What is my connection to this? How long is the line of connection?" And that feeling comes whatever language you use.

LITERARY SECTION

POEMS

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About the Author

Mary Kennan Herbert, American poet, was born in St. Louis, Missouri and now lives in Brooklyn, New York where she teaches literature and writing courses at Long Island University. Several collections of her poems have been published by Ginninderra Press in Australia. Her work has won awards and appeared in literary and theological journals and other periodicals in over twenty different countries around the world. She is currently the poetry editor for West View, a newspaper in New York City.

BOREDOM IN GEEZERLAND

Been there, done that, these pills
will keep us happy, that one will
kill the bad cells in one's ticker.
By the way, we want to write, still.
How many more decades will we
receive from the Deity? If the sky
stays blue for thee, how many days
remain? Will you watch us cry,
or get bored with our stories? It's
getting repetitive in swift decades.
We could easily quote morose wits,
Pope or Twain in epigrams, skits,
anything to keep our audience here.
The Three Stooges or Lucille Ball
skip onto our stage to bring you cheer.
Embrace fading peers, give one last leer.

NOT POSSIBLE TO COMMUNICATE JOY

It was advised in April 1865
to permit Confederate cavalry
to keep their horses, so they
could go home and plow, alive,
turn the sweet earth again into hay.
War and peace spin in their orbits,
presidents and shahs live and die.
We have written so much poetry
to keep their names alive, their wits
part of us, words flowing into estuaries.
An unstable environment: the tides
of life and limb ooze into us
and out again, a visual and verbal mess.
And, singing, a poem once again rides,
promises to deliver, to confess.

SPRING SEMESTER

Dude, it's a segue from inner
snows and winds like knives
to late spring's thunder
and sweat, then summer lives.
Winter's hostile faces
melt into May's benign
diffidence. Sunlit classes
even become, well, just fine.
Last lectures may loom
like Mr. Death's bad breath,

but his air-conditioned tomb
is erased soon enough.
Bikini wax, sounds of surf,
a sandy decolletage, combine
into Shakespeare's rough
magic, a B+, a master design
the template of which, you may
recall, was in the typhoons
at mid-term. At last, a merry
end, like the Grail, ours to take.

GRILLED BY A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

"Why do the forties fascinate you so?"
The therapist's eyes were lasers. Our words, webs.
I was the token poet. "I was a child then,"
came my lame reply. "That was my decade."
Dancing around years, I proffered harmless answers.
But a shrink won't accept platitudes. I was pinned.
"If you had been in the army, I could see it, men
writing about WWII, but a child remembering?
A young girl on the home front describing bomber?"
I confess. The ideas came from lost times,
rhymes from another time, clichés, ill-advised images
so old-fashioned as to be flags of my obsessions,
my age. A time when there was a door open,
a future, when I would eagerly reach for my pen.