

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Affective Cartographies: Transnational Labor  
and the Spectacularization of Suffering  
in Globalized Spaces

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Comparative Literature

by

Lisa Bernardo Felipe

2013

© Copyright by

Lisa Bernardo Felipe

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Affective Cartographies: Transnational Labor  
and the Spectacularization of Suffering  
in Globalized Spaces

by

Lisa Bernardo Felipe

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Eleanor Kaufman, Chair

This dissertation explores the circulation of emotion and affect in contemporary Asian American and Pacific Rim transnational literature and film. This dissertation reveals how the nation-state appropriates emotive regimes as a way to exert power upon laboring bodies engaged in feminized forms of labor. This project also locates possibilities for resistance against the legacy of colonization and capitalism through multiple upheavals led by “the people.” These people’s movements are made possible by the circulation of affect—what I call the affect of imminence—that is marked by the sensation of impending possibility and is disseminated through informal networks that stand outside capitalist trajectories.

The first chapter, “American Dreaming: The Suffering Nation, Laboring Bodies and First World Fantasies,” reveals how affect becomes a biopolitical apparatus through the film *La Visa Loca* (2005) directed by Mark Miely and the novel *Gapô* (1988) by Lualhati Bautista. While *Gapô* reveals the psychological duress endured by sex workers under the American neocolonial rule, *La Visa Loca* maligns feminized labor overseas as a betrayal of the nation.

The second chapter, “Placing Suffering: Global Circuits, Local Spaces and the Spectacle of Suffering,” focuses on the politics of the suffering body in globalized spaces within the Pacific Rim. Through two films—Lukas Moodysson’s *Mammoth* (2009) and Rory Quintos’s *Dubai* (2005)—I illustrate how the hierarchies established by capital in globalized cities are reinforced by the commodification of women involved in feminized forms of labor. Here, I argue that the spectacularized representations of the suffering female body are exploited to fulfill desires for capitalist accumulation by the nation-state.

The final chapter, “Ephemeral Upheavals: Bodies, Borders and the Circulation of Affect,” locates the productive interventions of affect in Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) and Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* (1990). This chapter argues that resistance is possible through the circulation of affects, which I call the affect of imminence, embodied by the shared sensation of potentiality in these two novels. By considering the Spinozist/Deleuzian model of the body alongside Frantz Fanon’s figuration of the revolutionary body in constant flux, I argue that these novels represent possibilities for resistance by similarly affected bodies within the liminal spaces of the global city.

This dissertation of Lisa Bernardo Felipe is approved.

Lucy M.S.P. Burns

Jinqi Ling

Shu-mei Shih

Eleanor Kaufman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <u>Title</u>  | <u>Page Number</u> |
|---|--------------------|
| Introduction  |                    |
| Producing the Suffering Body.....   | 1                  |
| Chapter One   |                    |
| American Dreaming: The Suffering Nation, Laboring Bodies and First World Fantasies..... | 24                 |
| Chapter Two   |                    |
| Global Circuits, Local Spaces and the Spectacle of Suffering.....                       | 60                 |
| Chapter Three   |                    |
| Ephemeral Upheavals: Bodies, Borders and the Circulation of Affect.....                 | 104                |
| Conclusion  |                    |
| Digital Media and Promise of the Present.....   | 155                |
| Bibliography.....   | 165                |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| <u>Figure</u> | <u>Page Number</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1.1.....      | 44                 |
| 1.2.....      | 44                 |
| 1.3.....      | 44                 |
| 1.4.....      | 47                 |
| 1.5.....      | 52                 |
| 2.1.....      | 67                 |
| 2.2.....      | 82                 |
| 2.3.....      | 84                 |
| 2.4.....      | 89                 |
| 2.5.....      | 90                 |
| 2.6.....      | 90                 |
| 2.7.....      | 102                |
| 2.8.....      | 102                |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation tracks the multiple and often-difficult crossings people have to make in order to fulfill the dreams they set out for themselves. This work draws inspiration from these kinds of journeys, one that my own parents, along with three children, endeavored to make not too long ago. While I could never thank my parents, Liz and Samuel Felipe, enough times for their love and support throughout my educational career, I am even more grateful and humbled by the countless sacrifices you both have made to give us a home despite having left the only place we knew as such. Our own Pacific crossing as a family has forever shaped my worldview and I am evermore thankful for your bravery, tenacity and strength. You have made it possible for me and my brothers to seek out new dreams and imagine new possibilities for ourselves and I am here today because of your guidance and encouragement. To you both, I dedicate this dissertation.

My extended family has always been a great pillar upon which I can lean and for this I am grateful. To my brothers, Karl and P.J. Felipe, you are a constant source of laughter for me and while I may not say it often, I am quite proud to be your big sister. My thanks go out to the Escardas, Willie and Ida; the Byrnes, Stacey, Dean, and Khianna; and the Bernardos, especially Ver and Perla who open up their home to me each time I return to the Philippines. You all mean so much to me and I am happy to share this with you as well.

During my undergraduate years at Occidental College, I was fortunate enough to have been the beneficiary of a rigorous education that provoked, challenged and captured my imagination. These were indeed formative years and I would not have pursued graduate work if it had not been for the encouragement of Warren Montag from the English and Comparative

Literature Studies Department at Oxy. Thank you, Warren, for helping me discover this great love for intellectual inquiry and for your support all these years.

To my committee members, Shu-mei Shih, Lucy Burns, and Jinqi Ling, thank you for teaching such great courses. While I cannot even begin to qualify the value of your teachings, please know that you have inspired me to become a better student, educator, and scholar. Your feedback, criticism, and encouragement throughout the research and writing process pushed this project into fruition and for that, I am eternally grateful. To Eleanor Kaufman, my committee chair, I give my most sincere and deepest thanks. Your belief in my project kept me motivated and hopeful, even in my most challenging moments. I greatly appreciate all of the advice that you shared not only in writing this dissertation, but also in helping me navigate through the many peaks and valleys of graduate school and the job market. Thank you for all that you have done.

To my UCLA friends, especially Myrna Douzjian, Neetu Khanna, Talar Chahinian, and Marian Gabra: your friendship, through it all, has been my lifeline. I am so lucky to have met such brilliant and bold women who inspire me everyday to live up to the political engagements of our work. I am thankful to call you my dearest friends, my sisters, and look forward to seeing our lives unfold together.

Finally, to my partner and best friend, A.J. Cabalu: your companionship, affection, and optimism have saved me more times than I can count. Thank you for your patience and for your unwavering belief in me, without which this work would not have seen the light of day. I cannot wait to see what lies ahead for us because with you by my side, life is more buoyant, and the possibilities, boundless.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Lisa B. Felipe  
University of California, Los Angeles

### Selected Academic Employment

#### Dean of Humanities Graduate Student Researcher (GSR)

- Appointed as the GSR for the Dean of Humanities conducting research on TA programs to determine the strengths and needs of various UCLA Humanities departments. Spring Quarter 2013
- Also responsible for conducting research on the possibility of a Humanities major with a pre-med track program at UCLA.

#### Teaching Fellow: Undergraduate courses autonomously designed and taught

- Comp Lit 4DW: The Politics of Pleasure in World Literature  
This course examines how pleasure is constructed and defined through literature from such authors as Abdellah Taia, R. Zamora Linmark, Moshin Hamid, Cherie Moraga and Maiana Minahal and films from Alfonso Cuaron and Trinh T. Minh-ha. 5 Sections:  
Fall 2008/Winter 2009/Winter 2011/Spring 2012/Fall 2012
- Comp Lit 4DW: Re/Visions of the Other in World Literature  
This course examines the how the Other is spectacularized through literature from such authors as Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Ralph Ellison, Jessica Hagedorn and Ahlam Mosteghanemi. 1 Section:  
Fall 2009

### Selected Honors and Awards

- Dissertation Summer Award July 2011  
Awarded by the Department of Comparative Literature to facilitate completion of dissertation.
- University of California Pacific Rim Research Grant 2008  
Awarded for dissertation research in Manila, Philippines.
- UCLA Graduate Research Mentorship 2007-2008  
Awarded for dissertation research and faculty mentorship.  
Faculty Mentor: Eleanor Kaufman
- Summer Graduate Research Mentorship 2007  
Paper Title: "Beyond Singular Representations of Women: The Political in Contemporary Philippine Novel."  
Faculty Mentor: Lucy Mae S.P. Burns
- PhD Exams Fellowship 2007 Spring Quarter  
Awarded for excellence in graduate study coursework in

preparation for PhD candidacy exams.

### Selected Conferences and Invited Lectures

- “Placing Suffering: The Cartography of Capital in Transnational Film”  
Invited lecture at Occidental College  
Los Angeles, CA  
April 17, 2012
- “Filipinas in Transnational Spaces: Feminized Labor in the Global City”  
American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting  
Vancouver, Canada  
April 1, 2011
- “From Prompts to Papers”  
Comparative Pedagogies Conference, Department of Comparative Literature  
UCLA  
October 22, 2011
- “The Spectacle of Suffering: Commodifying Trauma of Contract Workers in Philippine Cinema”  
American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting  
New Orleans  
April 2, 2010

### Additional Specialization/Qualifying Examination Fields

- Ethnic American Diasporic Literature  
Includes Asian American, African American and Chicano/a literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Qualification to teach general Ethnic American literature.
- Filipino and Filipino American Literature  
Survey of Filipino and Filipino American literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Qualification to teach contemporary Filipino literature in English and Filipino.
- Women’s/Gender Studies  
Includes theoretical works on gender/women’s studies from Eve Sedgwick, Luce Irigaray, Neferti Tadiar, Anne Cheng, Gayle Rubin and Laura Hyun Yi Kang. Qualification to teach general feminist criticism courses.

### Languages

- English: Native Proficiency
- Filipino (Tagalog): Native Proficiency
- Spanish: Reading Proficiency

## INTRODUCTION

### Producing the Suffering Body

In his first ever publication, a contribution to the bilingual *Propagandista* periodical “Diariong Tagalog,” Jose Rizal writes about the motherland as such:

For whatever be the visage of the beloved country—a rich and mighty lady clothed in royal purple, with a crown of towers and laurels on her head; or a sad and lonely figure dressed in rags, a slave longing for her enslaved children; or some nymph, beautified and pretty like the dream of deluded youth, playing in a garden of delights by the blue sea; or a woman shrouded in snow somewhere in the north pole awaiting her fate under a sunless and starless sky; whatever be her name, her age, her fortune—we always love her as children love their mother even in hunger and poverty.

And how strange it is! The poorer and more miserable we are and the more we suffer for *our* country, so much the more do we venerate and adore her even to the point of finding joy in our suffering. (Rizal trans. by Raul J. Bonoan, 1996: 315)

Regarded as an important yet relatively overlooked essay, “El Amor Patrio,” published in Spanish in 1882 during Rizal’s first year in Spain, expressed the national hero’s adoration for the nation and a call to sacrifice one’s self for the love of the motherland already in duress under colonial rule. Whether personified as a majestically clothed queen, a slave suffering for her children or a deity of the natural world, Rizal’s *Patria* is feminized, a trope that he repeats over and again in his writings up until the poem “Mi último adiós” (“My Last Farewell”) written in his cell in 1896, the day before he was to be executed. Here, he points to the proportionality of the people’s suffering to their love for the nation, increasing all the more as they suffer until the pain, eventually, becomes a joyful sacrifice for the motherland. Four years later, Rizal publishes *Noli me tangere* (1886) while in Germany, which along with *El filibusterismo* (1891), not only becomes his definitive work, but the defining manifesto for the people’s struggle against their colonial oppressors. Dedicating the novel to his “motherland,” Rizal prefaces the text by pointing out the diseased body politic:

In the annals of human adversity, there is etched a cancer of a breed so malignant that the least contact exacerbates it and stirs it in the sharpest of pains. And thus many times amidst modern cultures I have wanted to evoke you, sometimes for the memories of you to keep me company, other times, to compare you with other nations—many times your image appears to me afflicted with a social cancer of similar malignancy [...]

And to this end, I will attempt to faithfully reproduce your condition without much ado. I will lift part of the shroud that conceals your illness, sacrificing to the truth everything, even my own self-respect, for, as your son, I will also suffer in your defects and failings. (Rizal: 1886)

Again personified as a woman, *patria* here is a cancerous mother whose son, Rizal, suffers along with her so that she may be cured of her colonial masters. Of course it comes as no surprise that Rizal's most famous representation of the nation as the suffering mother manifests in this text as Sisa, a peasant, whose youngest son Crispin is brutally abused and murdered by the church authorities. Sisa's loss and eventual descent into madness mirrors the Motherland to whom Rizal dedicates his novel, reinforcing the vision of the nation as an afflicted mother whose profound suffering renders her unable to care for her children, the way that Sisa was unable to care for her surviving son, Basilio. What makes these representations of the nation noteworthy rests on the feminization of the homeland—in itself a familiar trope—but that Rizal's initial vision of the Philippines as a nation is embodied through the suffering woman whose body becomes the locus of the very painful and violent process of decolonization. The weeping women from both *Noli* and *Fili*, along with Rizal, who in death was transformed as the martyred hero fueling the anticolonial revolutionary movement, remain the foremost embodiment of the people's struggle and suffering under the imposition of foreign powers. As Vincente Rafael writes in "'Your Grief Is Our Gossip': Overseas Filipinos and Other Spectral Presences": "much of the history of Filipino nationalism in the twentieth century has been articulated with reference as much to the purported life of Rizal as to his suffering and death at the hands of Spanish colonial rulers" (275).

About a century later, the Philippine nation—first imagined, as Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities* (1983), by Rizal—was fast becoming the world’s leading source for cheap foreign labor in construction, service and care giving industries. In 1988, then president Corazon Aquino, in giving a speech in Hong Kong to Filipino/a overseas contract workers (OCW), referred to her audience of domestic workers as the nation's "*bagong bayani*" or "new heroes," marking the first time that the nation-state has officially used the term to describe the OCW (Rafael 274). Before Aquino, during the early years of Martial Law, Ferdinand Marcos issued the Presidential Decree 422, more commonly known as “The Labor Code of the Philippines,” institutionalizing the recruitment and placement of Filipino/a laborers abroad. While Filipinos have worked abroad in the sugar plantations of Hawaii and in farmlands along the Pacific Coast from California to Washington, Marcos’s labor decree ushered in a new and more systemized way of recruiting, tracking and profiting from Filipinos as they worked abroad. In fact, the new law required that workers remit part of their earnings back to the Philippines: "It shall be mandatory for all Filipino workers abroad to remit a portion of their foreign exchange earnings to their families, dependents, and/or beneficiaries in the country in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor" (Presidential Decree No. 422, Article 22). As the Filipino labor force steadily increased throughout the 1980s, the number of women working in feminized fields such as nursing, care giving (as nannies and senior care givers), domestic work, as well as entertainment and sex work also increased. OCWs have become the nation's primary export as the remittances generated from their labor helped buttress the national economy ravaged by foreign debt. Today, about ten percent of the Philippines' GDP comes from the revenue generated by the remittances of OCWs abroad (Sandique-Carlos, 2013), which speaks to the success of the program initiated by Marcos and sustained by his successors. While

the institutionalization of foreign labor purports to ensure that Filipina workers are protected from exploitation abroad, OCWs are subject to labor abuses, rape, and murder as evidenced by the grisly statistic which estimates that, according to Rolando Tolentino, in “Diaspora as Historical/Political Trope in Philippine Literature” (2006), “five to six coffins carrying the bodies of dead OCWs return to the Manila international airport daily” (10). So when Corazon Aquino spoke to her audience of Filipina OCWs calling them the nation's *bagong bayani*, she mobilized the trope of the suffering woman used by Rizal to represent the nation under colonial duress in the 19th century in the present moment as a way to ensure the continued participation of the Filipina as exploited laborers in the global market.

This project tracks the circulation of emotive expression and affect in film and literature to show how affective exchange can either be appropriated as a tool to promote the desires of the nation-state for capital, or as a catalyst for the people's resistance to the exploitive practices of that very system. Presented by the nation-state as the *bagong bayani*, representations of the OCW become the locus upon which the desires of the nation-state to participate in the global economy collude with nationalism and capital. These desires are mobilized through emotive regimes—that is, emotions such as suffering, martyrdom and virtue that are designated to be performed by particularized bodies—that constitute the representations of women engaged in feminized forms of labor, especially in film. The Philippine film industry has become an active participant in the circulation of emotive regimes that dominate representations of overseas workers. While Rizal's representation of the suffering woman as the nation may have endured

throughout the 20th century in literature<sup>1</sup>, I argue that in our contemporary moment, this trope has been appropriated by the Philippine nation-state as a way to fulfill its First World fantasies, fantasies that are born out of the persistence of capitalism as a world economic system in which the laboring bodies of Filipinas become objects of exchange. As such, this project also examines the emotive regimes imbued upon the OCW as she traverses the borders of the homeland and begins to occupy the global spaces most privileged by capital: the global city. Located usually, though not exclusively, within the so-called First World, the global city is where the work of capitalist exchange is conducted, facilitated by modern infrastructures—roads, highways, high-rise buildings and information system technologies—that ensure the uninterrupted flow of capital. I will argue that the spectacularized representation of the suffering OCW, commodified within the global city, serves to reify her position as a racialized Third World subject, thus naturalizing her exploitable condition in the global market. Finally, this dissertation locates spaces within the global city that make the circulation of affect possible within networks that undermine the homogenizing thrusts of capital. These affective exchanges occur in the liminal spaces of the city—the freeways, the slums, private bedrooms, and seedy nightclubs—orchestrated by the marginalized masses—migrants, sex workers and the homeless—whose movements trigger the multiple and simultaneous upheavals that remap and reclaim the global city for the people.

---

<sup>1</sup> This trope of the suffering woman as symbol for the nation can be traced in many works from the Philippine literary tradition. Rizal's contemporary, Andres Bonifacio, for example, uses this symbol to speak against Spanish colonial rule in several poems including "Pagibig sa Tinubuang Bayan" ("Love for the Native Land") and "Katapusang Hibik ng Pilipinas" ("The Final Cry of the Philippines"). During the American colonial era, Amado V. Hernandez portrays the nation as a once-virtuous woman violated by U.S. imperialism. See for example "Kung Tuyo na ang Luha Mo, Aking Bayan" ("As Your Tears Dry, My Country") and "Inangwika" ("Mother Tongue"). For more contemporary examples see Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961) and Eric Gamalinda's *The Empire of Memory* (1992).

## The Body, Affect and the Circulation of Emotion

This project is situated between the fields of affect studies and transnational studies in this fashion foregrounding the way in which colonial legacies and capitalist desires maintain their stronghold upon the bodies of Third World subjects, especially women who remain objects of exchange within the global economy. Neferti Tadiar's work on fantasy-production provides a model from which I mobilize my critique of both the nation-state and capital as they appropriate emotive expression in order to re-signify the commodification of the Filipina OCW as heroic labor or inherently tied to the experience of nation-building and belonging. It is here that the work of collective imagining comes into play as the nation-state animates individual dreams for upward mobility to produce fantasies about what might constitute proper national belonging. In her book *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (2004), Tadiar describes a video of Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, aboard a yacht, parading the excesses afforded at the expense of the people while singing "We Are the World," arguing that such a display of First World dreaming remains "deeply implicated in the capitalist interstate world-system." She continues:

Such dreams are symbolic enactments of practices of imagination as a form of work that effectively operates in and as the political organization of the Philippine nation-state. If we understand imagination as a form of work, we must see that it is work that is incorporated into a system of production of universal value. In this aspect, [...] in its role in the global system of production, the material imagination constituting the Philippine nation can be seen as a form of labour, a constitutive part of the world-system, its material dreams are the consequences of—as well as bear consequences for—that international order of political and economic dreamwork, which I call fantasy-production. (5-6)

Defining fantasy-production as "the imaginary of a regime of accumulation and representation of universal value, under the sway of which capitalist nations organize themselves individually and collectively in the 'system' of the Free World" (6), Tadiar suggests that the imaginings of the

Philippine nation-state and its people are inextricably linked to the global economic system. For its part as a foremost source of cheap labor, the nation-state's figuration of the OCW as the suffering, martyred hero of the nation is a direct response to the mandate of participation in the global economy, utilizing the everyday dreams of ordinary folk in order to feed the fantasy of the *bagong bayani* to achieve that end.

It is here that I must parcel out the terms "fantasy" and "dreams," first as used by Tadiar and then as I deploy them through this project. Tadiar differentiates dreams and fantasies as follows:

When I speak of dreams, I use the term loosely to indicate that our actions are also wishes, the expression of which is constrained by the unconscious, or more accurately, the imaginary structures and logics of organization of our material realities. In my usage, fantasies are the hegemonic forms of expression of our desiring-actions. Dreams are the concrete work of imagination, while fantasies are the abstract forms into which this work becomes subsumed within the world-system of production. Fantasies, are on this view, alienated means of production, while the desiring actions in dreams are living labor. (6)

While Tadiar may, on occasion, use the terms interchangeably, the distinction between "dreams" and "fantasies" have to do with the worker's proximity to labor, articulated here as imagination. Employing Marxian terms, Tadiar draws a parallel between dreams and the commodities produced by imagination (labor), while fantasies become the alienated mode of production whereby the laborer is abstracted from the product of her own dream-work.<sup>2</sup> In dreaming, the worker is able to deploy the products of her own imagination, while the transformation of dreams into fantasies transforms the worker into the commodity as labor itself becomes commodified in the open market. The transformation of dreams into fantasies is the direct result of the intervention of the nation-state as it tries to manifest its own desires within the "world-system of production." Thus the making of the OCW as the nation's *bagong bayani* exemplifies this

---

<sup>2</sup> I use the pronoun "her" to signify the universal worker since the majority of this work considers the female transnational laborer and workers involved in feminized forms of labor. The sections where I refer to a specific male characters in the films and literature are the exceptions.

process of transformation: the dreams for upward mobility by the Filipino/a laborer are appropriated by the nation-state that it subsumes into the rhetoric of nationalism. To labor then becomes less about the fulfillment of the laborers' imagination—or in Marxian terms, it becomes less about laboring to produce a commodity which the worker herself can exchange—but centered on the fulfillment of the nation-state's desires to become a participant in the global economy, veiled and articulated as national belonging. Abstracted from her dreams, the product of her imagination, the OCW's labor becomes the object of exchange in the global market. Throughout this project, I maintain Tadiar's distinction between "dreams" and "fantasies," especially relevant for the trajectory of each chapter, the first two being critiques of the fantasies that reify the feminized laborer as a suffering and therefore exploitable Third World subject, while the final chapter locates the revolutionary possibilities of collective dream-works. Building on Tadiar's terms, I argue that ultimately, the circulation of affect and emotion animates these dreams and fantasies to varying outcomes depending upon the circumstances in which the work of imagination is deployed.

In my discussion of affect, I attend to the intensities that govern the constitutionality of the body, not just the human body but also any form with the ability to move and feel. The model of the body I work with here is derived from Brian Massumi, who in turn, builds on the work of both Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze, all of whom maintain the inextricable link between the body and affect. In *The Ethics* Spinoza posits that

[b]odies [...] are singular things which are distinguished from one another by reason of motion or rest; and so[...]each must be determined necessarily to motion or rest by another singular thing, namely by another body which [...] either moves or is at rest. But this body (also by the same reasoning) could not move or be at rest if it had not been determined by another to motion or rest, and this again [...] by another, and so on to infinity... (Spinoza 125)

Defined as something that has the ability to remain at rest or in motion, bodies in essence are determined by their ability to be moved and to move other singular beings with the same capacity. This ability to affect other bodies is what determines the constitutionality of the body itself. Deleuze in his *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988) explicates Spinoza's notion of the body as such:

Its nature is such that it registers effects, but it knows nothing of causes. The order of causes is defined by this: each body in extension, each idea or each mind in thought are constituted by the characteristic relations that subsume the parts of that body, the parts of that idea. When a body "encounters" another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts. (Deleuze 19)

I highlight the Spinozist-Deleuzian body here because the theory of affect I mobilize in this project cannot be divorced from the body. If affects, as Brian Massumi posits, are intensities that are always in the process of emergence, then the body as the site for feeling and transmitting of these intensities remains at the center of this process. While these intensities have some autonomy insofar as they can travel from body to body, the mobility of affect still relies upon its embodiment within a particular form. In *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002) Massumi defines affect as much for its transmissibility as for its emerging quality:

What is being termed affect in this essay is precisely the two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual and the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other [...] Affects are virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is [...] its openness. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. (Massumi 35)

Referring to the virtual as "something that happens too quickly to have happened," (30) Massumi argues that affect participates in both the virtual—its abstract nature—and the actual, both of which make up the body. The body then is both its corporeal, physical form and its potentiality

or virtuality upon which intensities or affects (Massumi uses these terms interchangeably) converge and circulate. Affect is the unconscious intensity that acts upon the body, and therefore, despite its abstract nature, it cannot be set apart from its functionalities. As Eric Shouse puts it simply: “An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential [...] Affect is the body’s way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience” (Shouse 2005). Thus the body is simultaneously the corporeal (the actual) as it is incorporeal (the virtual).

Before returning to the discussion of fantasies and dreams, it is important that I also maintain the distinction between feelings and emotions and affect. While affect is the abstract intensity operating upon the unconscious, feelings are the subjective sensations that are consciously felt, while emotions are the physical display of those sensations (Shouse 2005). As Massumi writes:

An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of experience, which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is the qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed professions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. (28)

Affect operates within and between bodies at the level of the unconscious, however, emotion registers as the outward expression of feeling, therefore bodies can claim ownership of emotions because their expression is based on subjective experience. As such, I maintain that emotions are rooted in the corporeal, whereas affects are based upon the interactions of the actual body with its planes of virtuality. This physicality required of emotive expression is, as I point out in the first two chapters, precisely what makes emotions so susceptible to manipulation and co-option, especially when emotive bodies are spectacularized. While the actual display of

emotions in and of itself may be innocuous, the spectacularization of emotive bodies aided by media technologies like film and television—technologies that are implicated in the production and circulation of capital—transform the body and emotion itself into symbols that circulate and can be commodified. In the same way that Tadiar concludes that fantasies are produced when the labor of imagination is absorbed into the global economy, I assert that the emotive body, when spectacularized and made available for mass consumption via media technologies, is prime for co-option for purposes independent of the body's wills and desires.

The figure of the OCW exemplifies this very process whereby the nation-state claims ownership of the Filipina laboring body as a way to fulfill its capitalist desires in the name of nationalist identity. This is achieved through the active circulation of the symbol of the martyred *bagong bayani's* suffering for the nation that has become the proxy for the lived experience of OCWs. This circulation, as discussed in chapters one and two, is aided by the Philippine film industry whose films commodify the suffering of OCWs by displaying the crying bodies of Filipino/as abroad as they perform feminized forms of labor. The model I use for the exchange of representations of emotive bodies is loosely based on Sara Ahmed's affective economies from her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). While I disagree with the way Ahmed collapses the terms "affect" and "emotion" onto each other by using them interchangeably, the process of exchange that the symbol of *bagong bayani* undergoes is similar to what she describes as the accumulation of affective value. Working within the framework of Marxism and psychoanalysis Ahmed writes:

...[e]motions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation. I am using 'the economic' to suggest that objects of emotions circulate or are distributed across the social as well as the psychic field, borrowing from the Marxian critique of capital. In *Capital*, Marx discusses how the movement of commodities and money, in the formula (M-C-M: money to commodity to money) creates surplus value. That is, through the circulation and

exchange 'M' acquires more value [...] What I am offering is a theory of passion not as the drive to accumulate [...] but as that which is accumulated over time. Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of circulation between objects and signs [...] Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate the more affective they become. (Ahmed 45)

Ahmed's analogy equates the value accumulation of money to the increase in value of affect through the circulation of signs. Using the example of material from the Aryan Nation, which she uses to preface the discussion of conservative British anti-immigration speeches, Ahmed argues that hate, as an affect expressed through these speeches, accumulates in value the more it is repeated and circulated. Similarly, I assert that the repeated circulation of the figure of the suffering *bagong bayani*, aided most especially by the OCW genre in Philippine cinema, increases the potency of the trope to the point that these symbolic representations of the Filipina laborer become the proxy for OCW experience in general. Another effect brought on by the accumulated value of the *bagong bayani* is the naturalization of suffering not only as part of the experience of work abroad, but also as it constitutes nationalist pride and belonging.

Where my analysis diverges from Ahmed's is in her refusal to locate emotive expression on the body. Citing the example of the term "bogus asylum seekers" used by UK Conservative Party politician William Hague in a 2000 speech, Ahmed maps how refugees are equated with the "bogy man" as a way to incite fear and hate. She writes:

[s]uch figures of hate circulate and indeed accumulate their affective value, precisely insofar as they do not have a fixed referent. So the figure of the bogus asylum seeker is detached from particular bodies: any incoming bodies could be bogus, such that their 'endless' arrival is anticipated as the scene of 'our injury.' The impossibility of reducing hate to a particular body allows hate to circulate in an economic sense, working to differentiate some others to other others, a differentiation that is never 'over' as it awaits others who have not yet arrived. (47)

While I concur with the model of circulation Ahmed presents here in terms of the accumulation of value, it seems implausible that emotive regimes remain "detached from particular bodies." In

fact, the "asylum seekers" Hague refers to in his speech come from particular places—Afghanistan, Rwanda, Congo and Sierra Leone, just to name a few—belonging to the so-called Third World. These are specific places with specific conflicts that produce specific bodies that are already racialized. These are specific black and brown bodies to be feared or hated, but at the very least excluded from the “British life” as they purportedly consume the resources of other “legitimate” refugees and British citizens.<sup>3</sup> Frantz Fanon, in the well-known story from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; 2008) writes of his experience of being interpellated by a small boy while walking through the streets of Paris. The fear of the small child, as well as the vulnerability felt by Fanon under the white gaze are specific to his black body, and while the child could have encountered and called out to another black man or woman, the fact remains that the emotive display of fear is associated with the racialized body of the colonial subject.

Perhaps Ahmed's disassociation of emotion from the body has to do with the collapse of the term "emotion" with "affect." Since affects operate as intensities that circulate between and within bodies in the realm of the unconscious, affective sensations refuse the subjective appropriation that emotions cannot avoid. As I point out in chapter three, the circulation of affect is both spontaneous and ephemeral and thus able to evade commodification by capital. Emotions, however, depend on embodiment; emotions are not only expressed by the body, but are also emitted from bodies. This is how Hague is able to mobilize anxiety as a way to designate the legitimacy of particular bodies over others and why the sight of Fanon's black body incites fear in the French child. For Fanon, the recognition of his body's corporeality is inextricably linked to its ability to elicit fright:

---

<sup>3</sup> In the speech titled “Common Sense on Asylum Seekers,” Hague explains that the UK “need[s] a system which makes it possible to process claims speedily, so that genuine refugees can be integrated into British life and bogus claimants sent back home.” For a full transcript of the speech see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2000/apr/18/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices2>

My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly; look, a Negro; the Negro is trembling, the Negro is trembling because he's cold, the small boy is trembling because he's afraid of the Negro, the Negro is trembling with cold, the cold that chills the bones, the lovely little boy is trembling because he thinks the Negro is trembling with rage, the little white boy runs to his mother's arms: "*Maman*, the Negro's going to eat me." (Fanon 93)

With the boy's fear, Fanon becomes hyper-aware of how his body is perceived by the white gaze. In fact, it is the awareness of this fear that makes his body into a spectacle, even to himself, as he bears witness to own his body "returned" to him splayed, open and coherent only as the Other to the white bodies gazing upon him. In this moment, emotive displays (the boy's fear and Fanon's anger) converge upon the body to reveal how colonialism categorizes the "Negro" body as "bad," "ugly," and "wicked." I emphasize here, and throughout my critique in both the first and second chapters, the importance of the visual effects produced by the emotive body, ones that are repeated over and over again. Thus the circulation of the fear embodied by the spectacularized black body not only ensures that *this* emotion is associated with *this* body, but it also reifies his colonized position set against white colonial supremacy.

As the white gaze spectacularizes Fanon's body, Fanon becomes the embodiment of the fear of the colonized black body, which in turn alienates him from his own body. Again, I emphasize that emotions need bodies for expression and other bodies to recognize them as such. This Fanonian example is a cogent representation of how an emotion can be simultaneously perceived from, and emitted and circulated by, interacting bodies in order to construct and arrest a singular vision of the black body. This is precisely the process that makes the construction of the OCW into the nation's *bagong bayani* possible. In the same way that the history of colonial subjugation is revealed in the way that the black body is perceived, the historical association of the suffering woman with the nation under colonial duress—especially as utilized by Rizal in his

literary works—is embodied by the OCW now cast as the martyred *bagong bayani* by the Philippine nation-state. In our present moment, this history interacts with the repeated representations of the emotive bodies of OCWs in films that are commodified both in the Philippines and in the global cities where Filipino/a laborers live and work. As spectacles to behold onscreen, not only is the labor of the OCWs commodified in the global market, but their emotive representations also become objects of exchange. Entered into the global economy, both the laboring and the emotive bodies of the OCW work to fulfill the capitalist desires of the nation-state.

Since emotions rely upon the corporeal body, the circulation of the representations of that body through media technologies, such as film, is crucial to the transformation of Filipina laborer as the symbolic *bagong bayani*. As such, the symbolic *bagong bayani*—charged with all the feelings embedded onto the mythology of the hero as embodied by Rizal and his tragic female characters—becomes proxy for the actual lived experience of Filipino/as abroad, making suffering and martyrdom a necessary part of the OCW work and national belonging. This fantasy, created by the nation-state and disseminated by the media technologies, reveals the process whereby emotive expression becomes an apparatus for capitalist desires. Again, I want to emphasize that I do not believe that emotions are inherently “bad” or necessarily aligned with capitalist logic or nationalist exploitation. It is only when emotive expressions inhabit exploited bodies—bodies which are themselves already objects of exchange—that these bodies and even the emotions they emit become susceptible to appropriation. In examining the representations of the Filipina domestic helper (DH)—who has “served as the predominant representative figure of Filipino OCWs”—Tadiar equates the abuse the DH body sustains while working abroad to the media reporting of these abuses (Tadiar 114). Pointing to news reports that give explicitly

gruesome details on the injuries sustained by DHs who have been murdered, abused or raped,

Tadiar writes:

Discursive autopsies are performed not only on dead maids but on living ones as well. It is as if their bodies can tell better than they can what they have lived through. Thus it is through the spectacle of the body that the ‘tragic tales’ are told. These typically include descriptions of the nature of the death or abuse of the domestic helper, her age, the number of months she spent abroad, the zero earning she sent back to her family, followed by a background of the family she left behind who are left with nothing in exchange for her body except for the debt she incurred to go abroad in the first place. What becomes clear from the form of these tales is, the disclosure of costs through which the domestic helper’s death is processed and through which her body is received [...] The domestic helper is the embodiment of a certain exchange-value, which the government, purportedly taking the perspective of her family, has a vested interest in. This embodiment of value is blatantly demonstrated by the way in which domestic helpers (their bodies) serve as collateral for the loans they take out to secure employment. (Tadiar 123)

I quote Tadiar at length here because of the important linkages she makes between the DH as the object of exchange and the process through which she is reduced to her corporeality. Elsewhere in *Fantasy-Production* Tadiar argues that domestic helpers “are bodies without subjectivity” who are paid not for their skill but for their gendered and racialized bodies, serving “a variety of functions and services which they are expected to provide at the beck and call of their employers” (115). Robbed of agency as an object of exchange, the material and symbolic bodies of domestic helpers become the fulfillment of the desires of those who use them as objects of exchange. While the Philippine nation-state is the primary agent within this transaction, Tadiar also includes the employer, the recruiter, the families of the domestic helpers, and the media as part of the larger economy that works to diminish OCWs into labor-commodities who have no power over products of their own labor (Tadiar 115). What I mean to emphasize here is that as the material body of the OCW becomes an object of exchange, so does her symbolic body as the *bagong bayani*. The emotive body of the OCW spectacularized in film then becomes a commodified object inasmuch as OCW themselves are already the exploited objects in the world

market. Building on Tadiar's assertions on the DH body, my work is focused on revealing the process of spectacularization that the symbolic body of the OCW undergoes as her image is repeatedly represented on film.

### Transnational Dreams and the Global City

At the beginning of *Fantasy-Production*, Tadiar asks, “[o]f what consequence are Philippine dreams?” (1). This project not only considers these dreams—articulated in film and literature—in the Philippine context, but also in the light of the journeys that mobilize these dreams into the diaspora. In so doing, I make a case, as Tadiar does, for the importance of the Philippines as a discursive platform in examining the ways in which capitalism creates the fantasy of the laboring-body in order to ensure its own longevity. Moreover, insofar as the Philippines is a leading supplier of labor to the rest of the world, this project performs the critical work of exploring new dimensions of the nation-state's imbrication in capitalist logic. As Tadiar writes in her second book *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (2009):

...[t]he Philippines is the site of the heightened dynamics and social contradictions in the universalizing processes that shaped the last few decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. The Philippines therefore affords a view of local social conditions that underwrite the nation's own participation in the transnational processes that have resulted in, for example, the establishment of a new international division of labor, the emergence of a new urban-based transnational finance economy, and the political democratization and neoliberalist restructuring of formerly authoritarian nation-states. This peripheral story of the Philippine life brings into focus the liminal makings of globalization, its endgame, and its present afterlives. (Tadiar 9)

Constitutive of the present transnational moment, the Philippine context provides a compelling framework with which to interrogate the makings of the class of migrant workers providing cheap and unskilled labor, a great number of whom are women involved in feminized forms of

labor in the care and service industries, but also those involved in sex work servicing foreign nationals as part of the tourist economy. The exchange of the Filipina laborer begins in the Philippines with the institutionalization of the OCW process—as evinced by government agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)—however, “Philippine life” continues wherever OCWs travel en masse to urban centers like Tokyo, New York, London, Dubai, Milan, Riyadh and Los Angeles. This project therefore follows the trajectory of OCWs as they travel to global city-centers as essential parts of the world economic system.

Through the films and novels that depict versions of Philippine life outside the physical confines of the nation-state, I show how emotive Third World subjects become trapped by not only the *bagong bayani* role imposed upon them, but also the gendered and racialized position they occupy within the global market. While these are indeed overwhelming forces pressing upon the both the representational and physical bodies of the OCW, this project also locates possibilities for subversion by the feminized and racialized Third World subject. As the capitalist logic makes urban centers across the globe heterogeneous in order to make way for the uninhibited flow and efficient accumulation of capital, I argue that the circulation of affects can bring about the potential for revolutionary upheavals constructed by the dream-works of “the people.” The category of “the people” employs Fanon’s vision of the people in *Wretched of the Earth* as ordinary folk—the masses—who are actively involved in the process of decolonization. As such, “the people” become active participants in their own making and remaking; they activate the potentiality of affective intensities that circulate within and between bodies, breaking away from the colonial and capitalist regimes seeking to maintain their subjugation. Circulating freely, these affects interact with the imaginative labor of the people, mobilizing new visions of

life, which I set in opposition to the appropriation of the suffering body made possible by the commodification of the emotive body.

As the people's dream-works become subsumed into the desires of the nation-state, they are transformed into longings for upward mobility, the terms of which are set by the so-called First World. Chapter one considers the novel *'Gapô* (1988) by Lualhati Bautista and the film *La Visa Loca* (2005) by writer-director Mark Miely in light of the First World longings of the nation-state that become imposed onto everyday Philippine life. Here, I argue that the nation-state's desire to participate in the world economy collude with old colonial binaries, especially as defined through the history of Philippine-U.S. relations. *'Gapô* specifically depicts the trauma from the legacy of American colonialism through the lives of those living near the U.S. military bases in Olongapo City. Bautista's novel exposes the suffering brought on by the First World longings of those trapped within the prostitution-state. Embodying this status is the novel's protagonist, Magda, a sex-worker whose desire to meet and marry an America soldier is matched only by her love of American consumer products. Critical of the way in which the *karaniwang mamayan* (ordinary citizens) remain trapped within the colonial binary, *'Gapô* also points out the Philippine nation-state's culpability in ensuring that such binaries remain in tact.

*La Visa Loca* also exposes the impossibility of First World longings, but does so by reinforcing a patriarchal model of nationalism, casting women as traitors for participating in the global economy as OCWs. Depicting OCW work by men and, most especially, by women as treasonous, the film equates leaving the homeland for work abroad as an act of prostitution in league with the foreign exploiter. Presenting the male protagonists, Jess and his father, as emasculated, the film manifests the contradicting desires of the nation-state to restore the cohesion of the body politic through the restoration of the patriarchal family, as well as its

desires for capitalist inclusion through the OCW. I contend that these schizophrenic demands placed upon the Filipino/a body not only exposes the impossibility of the nation-state's First World longings, but also the trauma and suffering embedded onto the OCW, symbolized by Jess' eventual crucifixion in the film.

Chapter two examines "Philippine life" abroad through two films: *Dubai* (2005) directed by Rory B. Quintos and *Mammoth* (2009) written and directed by Lukas Moodysson. In this chapter, I mobilize the concept of "transnational migration" from Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc. For Glick Schiller, *et al.*, the OCW phenomenon provides the foundational evidence of their comparative study, which includes labor migrations in from the Caribbean, leading to their widely cited theory of transnational migration. In "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transitional Migration" (1995) they write:

Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. In identifying a new process of migration, scholars of transnational migration emphasize the ongoing and continuing ways in which current-day immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society. (48)

In both *Mammoth* and *Dubai*, the continued relationships that OCWs have with their families back home provide the emotional impetus for the characters who are reduced to crying spectacles onscreen. In *Dubai*, emotive display is not only appropriated as the way to naturalize suffering as constitutive of the transmigrant labor experience, but also a way to reinforce patriarchal nationalism—consistent with *La Visa Loca*—by privileging the continued effort of the male protagonists to work as OCWs abroad over that of the female lead. Restored to the homeland to give birth to her child, the return of the female protagonist in *Dubai* is framed as a heroic act parallel to that of Rizal's martyrdom. In addition, I also use the concept of the "global city" theorized by Saskia Sassen to suggest that the film glorifies the pristine urban spaces of Dubai as

an acceptable site for the suffering of the laboring Third World body. The incongruous representations of the transmigrant body—OCW work is more acceptable for men, rather than women, and suffering for the nation is acceptable when working in modernized global cities—reveal the contradictory desires that OCWs are asked to fulfill as symbols of the nation's *bagong bayani*. I also deploy the rubric of the global city in order to demonstrate how the feminized laboring body becomes doubly commodified in the global market not only for its labor power but also, insofar as its emotive suffering becomes an objects of exchange. In depicting New York City's modernity in opposition to the primitive wildness of spaces in Thailand and the Philippines, I argue that *Mammoth* casts suffering as particular to Third World realities, thus reinforcing old colonial binaries which position these spaces as temporally belated. Moreover the representation of transmigrants involved in feminized forms of labor—sex and care-giving work—also serves to naturalize this kind of exploitive labor to Asian female bodies, further reifying the temporal belatedness of the so-called Third World.

In the third and last chapter, I examine transnational negotiations within Asian American literature through reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) and Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990). Here, I consider the Spinozist/Deleuzian model of the body as one marked by its ability to renew and be affected by other bodies, alongside Fanon's figuration of the revolutionary masses in constant flux from *Wretched of the Earth*. Through this parallel, I show how these novels represent possibilities for resistance through the affect of imminence—that is, the feeling of impending possibility—which disrupts the spatial and temporal bounds set by the legacy of colonialism and the logic of capital. Here, I return to the global city—exemplified in these novels by Manila and Los Angeles—not exclusively as the space privileged by capital and the site of transmigrant exploitation but as the locus for the circulation of affects

within and between bodies excluded by capitalist exchange. In *Dog eaters*, I highlight the informal spaces through which the affect of imminence circulates—in bedrooms, darkened movie theaters, night clubs and city slums—and argue that these spaces belie the productivity of capital and reveal the fevered First World fantasies of the nation-state. However, I argue that while in the first chapter ‘*Gapô* depicts the tragedy of such abject longings, *Dog eaters* presents the possibility of resistance through the revolutionary movement of the people as theorized by Fanon.

In my consideration of the *Tropic of Orange*, I examine further the potentiality of the people’s movement made possible through the circulation of affects in the liminal spaces of Los Angeles as the global city: the freeways, borders and immigrant communities. While *Dog eaters* may present a limited vision of revolution, I argue that *Tropic* opens up the definition of capitalist upheaval as an ongoing process that is constantly in a state of becoming, consistent with the way in which affect is produced and circulated by receptive bodies. In direct opposition to the emotive body appropriated by the nation-state as fulfillment of its own longings for inclusion in the global market, the bodies presented in this novel have the agency to make and re-make the terms of their own subjectivity by imagining new global cartographies that undermine the border imposed by colonialism and reinforced by capitalist logic.

This project moves from the Philippines and beyond to consider the emotive regimes and affects that mobilize the dreams and fantasies expressed by and embedded onto the gendered and racialized bodies of the so-called Third World. These bodies travel through the borders of multiple nation-states as their labor is commodified in the global market, reflecting our current transnational moment. This dissertation reflects the movement from the nation-state to the urban cities across the globe in order to map out the movement and circulation of these emotive

regimes and affects. The trajectory of these movements cannot be limited to the borders of the nation. In fact their potency—both as exploitive tools and catalyst for upheaval as emotions and affects, respectively—seems to increase as they interact with more and more bodies. As the capitalist logic homogenizes the cartographies of urban cities while reifying the old colonial binaries of colonialism, it is ever more important that our cultural productions imagine possibilities for subverting such oppressive regimes. This project, through its critique of the emotive regimes mobilized by the nation-state's First World longings and by locating the possibility of revolt through the circulation of affects, is such an undertaking.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**American Dreaming: The Suffering Nation, Laboring Bodies  
and First World Fantasies**

As the New World Order—that is, the post-Cold War system of deterritorialized labor and capital production dominated by multinational and transnational corporations—seeks to organize individual and collective realities across the globe, nation-states from the so-called Third World vie to remain relevant by yielding to the demands of global capital. Within this schema, industrialized nations—mostly aptly represented by the G8 or the Group of 8—remain positioned at the helm of the ebbs and flows of the market. Their collective decisions shape policies on climate change, energy, national security, and health care emergencies like the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Their primary concern, however, remains centered on economics, and as nation-states with the strongest economies—among them France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States—they remain in control of capital and continue to define the rules of engagement followed by the rest of the world. That most of the G8 nations wielded colonial power over vast geographic territories, illustrates the logic of the transition from colonialism to our present capitalist moment, and despite the end of formal colonial rule, the influence of these nations remain central to the nation-states from the so-called Third World.

The United States' influence over the Philippines characterizes such a relationship that began during the colonial era immediately following the Spanish-American War in 1898 and extends to our present moment. This chapter examines the relationship between these two nation-states, marked by their historically uneven interface, which continues to replicate and reify old colonial binaries through two works: Lualhati Bautista's novel *'Gapô at isang puting Pilipino, sa mundo ng mga Amerikanong kulay brown* (*'Gapô and one white Filipino in a world of brown Americans*) (1988) and Mark Miely's film *La Visa Loca* (2005). *'Gapô* chronicles the

interactions between Filipino/as and American soldiers in and around the U.S. military bases in Olongapo City ('Gapô for short), and depicts the trauma from the enduring imperial occupation of the Philippines, despite the official end of colonialism four decades earlier. I contend that Bautista's novel exposes the tragedies and the suffering that ensue as Filipino/as enact First World longings embodied by the fantasy of the American Dream. Such fantasies underlie the desire of the nation-state to participate within the global market dominated by the First World agenda exemplified by the United States. The tragedies in the novel are caused by the impossibility of such First World longings as former colonial subjects are continually denied coevalness, to borrow Johannes Fabian's term (2002, 1983), on the global stage. Yet as the nation-state pursues its own First World desires as a relevant participant within the global economy, the Filipino/a body becomes the object of exchange through which these desires are fulfilled. Such pursuits not only reify old colonial binaries, but also trap the Philippines within in a prostitution economy, whereby the U.S. takes on the position of the "pimp" while the Philippines becomes the feminized sex worker, as Neferti Tadiar contends in *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*. In this chapter, I trace the feminization of the Philippine nation-state embodied by sex tourism industry serving American soldiers around the U.S. bases in Olongapo depicted in 'Gapô in which the novel's female protagonist, Magda, is an active participant as a sex worker. Through this text, I contend that the First World longings of the nation-state translate into the impossible pursuit of the American Dream by the characters in the novel, producing suffering bodies, which becomes emblematic of Filipino life.

*La Visa Loca* also shows the suffering that ensues from the impossible pursuit of the American Dream through the trauma endured by Jess, the film's protagonist, as he repeatedly

attempts and then fails to procure a U.S. visa. However, while *Gapô* provides a generalized critique of the uneven interface between the U.S. and the Philippines, the film does so at the expense of the Filipina OCW as a way to restore a patriarchal nationalist identity. I contend that the film co-opts the trope of the woman as the suffering nation that proliferates Jose Rizal's work, by casting men at the privileged position of heroic martyr for the nation and female OCWs as traitors to the cohesion of familial unity. While at first Jess is figured as emasculated, his emotive body is made into a spectacle as it becomes the locus of the suffering endures through the pursuit of the American Dream. In the end, by abandoning his First World longings and reclaiming his position as the head of his household, the film positions the restoration of Filipino masculinity over the desire for upward mobility. I critique the masculinist project of the film and argue that the restoration of a patriarchal nationalist identity not only victimizes the already exploited symbolic body of the OCW, but the film's representation of suffering reifies the colonial position of the Philippines as temporally belated and therefore susceptible to First World exploitation.

### The Nation Imagined

Former Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's 2004 "Presidential Inaugural Address" exemplifies the process through which the nation-state actively imagines a national identity. In this speech, she promotes a Filipino identity that is purportedly linked to the promise of a just democracy:

We know now what we can do when we set our minds to it. We know now how well we can unite the people around our respective causes. Can we not work together to rally the nation behind the paramount objective of its salvation? *Upang magtagumpay at matamo ang ating pangarap kailangan magbuklud-buklod tayo. Magbaba ng mga hadlang na naghahati sa ating bansa. Magtaguyod ng kabuhayan para sa maralita. Katarungan para sa lahat. Iyan ang saligan ng*

*tunay na pagkakaisa*. [In order to achieve our wishes we must unite. Down with the obstacles that separate our country. Let us establish means for the poor to subsist. Justice for all. That is the basis of true national unity.] ... The unity we seek is not one of conformity but unwavering respect for the rules and institutions of democracy, a modern country founded on social justice enjoying economic prosperity. To achieve a united country, we need to face the deep divisions of our nation squarely, not only the truth but also the solution. That solution must engage all segments of society in a new government of political reform and economic change. (Macapagal-Arroyo 2004.)<sup>4</sup>

Imbued with the Catholic motifs of faith and salvation, Macapagal-Arroyo posits national unity as the only possible solution to the poverty and injustice that remain all too pervasive in the Philippines. Here justice—which comes in the form of a “modern” democratic state—is presented as a destiny that is merely waiting to be fulfilled by the nation and its people. The fulfillment of this two-fold promise of democracy and economic development thus becomes the driving force for a national unity that requires further sacrifice from its citizens, with the poorest among them—about 5.1 million families currently living on or below the poverty line—carrying the largest burden.

Continuing with the rhetoric of development and democracy, Macapagal-Arroyo dismisses the fragmentation constitutive of the Philippines’ geographic reality and instead focuses on the span of ocean water which bridges the gaps between its seven thousand islands:

Our nation must embrace a vision of economic opportunity, social cohesion and always and ever democratic faith. I offer my hand and I hope it will be taken with the same faith. ... *Hindi tayo hanay lamang ng mga islang paligid ng tubig kundi bayang pinagdurugtong ng karagatan at nagkakaisa sa mayamang katangian ng iba't ibang bahagi ng sambayanan. Hindi tayo pinaghihiwalay ng sawing pag-asa kung hindi pinagbubuklod ng kaunlaran nating pinapangarap.* [We are not merely a row of islands surrounded by water, but we are nation joined by the ocean, united by the richness in character derived from the various parts of our nation. We cannot be divided by defeated hope if we remain bound by the prosperity that we all long for.] Our ability to unify will be judged by our ability to come together under a common vision that will erase the divisions that hold us back as a nation. (Macapagal-Arroyo 2004)

---

<sup>4</sup> All translations in this chapter are my own.

Here, development and democracy are again employed for the purposes of a singular national identity. Not only does the president re-define the success of democracy in terms of economic growth, but also she calls for the deliberate erasure of difference for the sake of a singular national identity. In a bilingual speech, addressed to a heterogeneous population, one cannot help but bear witness to the irony of this desire to imagine the Philippine nation as a truly cohesive whole. Furthermore, this “win” from the president comes at the heels of countless accusations of voter fraud and manipulation, corruption, massive mishandling of voter registration and ballots and election-related violence and death. Immediately, the legitimacy of the elections, which should serve as the ultimate expression of the will of the people and a representation of the collective imagining of the nation, is nullified. In manipulating the outcome of the elections through violence, coercion and outright cheating, the president and her administration disavow the legitimacy of those who refuse to adhere to her vision for the nation. This speech merely serves to signal the movement towards a singular vision for the nation that is driven entirely by economic interests.

Such a call for the disavowal of difference bears to mind other moments within our recent history that have resulted in violence against masses of dissenting voices. As democracy is positioned as the natural partner of economic progress—progress reserved exclusively for the elite ruling class in the Philippines—it becomes clear that the mention of unity through justice is merely an empty gesture. No longer is input of the masses the driving force behind what might be considered a “successful” democratic nation, and no longer does the rhetoric of democracy revolve around notions of equal representation or civic participation. Here democracy is invoked as the ultimate reward reaped through economic expansion; a fair and just state can apparently be bought and sold. That Macapagal-Arroyo evokes the faceless and nameless judges of the

Filipino people—“Our ability to unify will be judged by our ability to come together under a common vision...”— speaks to this deep-rooted desire to become a player within the world (economic) stage, as well as the fantasy of belonging to a fraternity of nations invested in the economic welfare of the Philippines. This desire for community, I argue, is drawn along the lines of economics more than anything else, the same way that democracy has become aligned with economic progress. In fact, apart from belonging to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines is also a member of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), International Finance Corporation (IFC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four (G24), and many more organizations which count the promotion of economic growth among member nations as their primary organizational mission, or are major lenders of capital to the Philippine government.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the nation as we see it here is re-imagined as a singular and cohesive unit, not only within itself and its people, but also within the larger coalition of other nations, all tuned to the same system of global capitalism.

The Philippine nation, re-imagined as such, is an expression of the desire to become a player in the global stage dominated by mostly Western industrialized nations, such as the United States. The Philippine desire to participate in this system of global capitalism becomes central to the discourse of nationhood because capitalism has made it impossible to pursue economic development outside of the global capitalist system. Membership in such organizations is then symptomatic of the nation-state’s desire for inclusion in the world economy as a way to ensure the flow of capital into the nation. The particular relationship of the Philippines with the U.S. as a former colonial subject collude with these desires; as a consequence the pursuit of

---

<sup>5</sup> CIA The World Factbook. “International Organization Participation.” Wed. 10 May 2013. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2107.html>>

capitalist modernity and upward mobility represented as the American Dream becomes implanted upon the Philippine national imaginary. The clamor for American consumer goods, for example, evinces how this desire becomes implanted onto everyday life as signifiers of First World affluence, not to mention the privileged space these goods quite literally occupy inside the *balikbayan* (homecoming) boxes sent home to relatives by the OCWs. Such First World longings by the Third World is a phenomenon that Neferti Tadiar explores in her book *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (2005). Pointing out that such desires lead to real government policies with real political and economic repercussions, Tadiar contends that dreams and desires—formerly relegated to the realm of the immaterial—cannot be divorced from what we see as real the everyday realities of global capital. Citing the First World dreams of the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, as seen through a home video of the couple reveling in their yacht, Tadiar writes this:

The tawdry dreams of the Marcoses to be equivalent with world power ... as well as the dreams of ‘ordinary’ Filipinos singing American songs, apparently nostalgic for a world they never lost, are deeply implicated in the dreamwork of the capitalist interstate world-system. Such dreams are symbolic enactments of practices of imagination that effectively operate in and as the political and economic organization of the Philippine nation-state ... Inasmuch as the Philippines is, as the supplier of global labour, a constitutive part of the world-system, its material dreams are the consequences of—as well as bear consequences for—that international order of political and economic dreamwork, which I call fantasy-production. (Tadiar 5-6.)

Defining fantasy-production as “the imaginary of a regime of accumulation and representation of universal value, under the sway of which capitalist nations organize themselves individually and collectively in the ‘system’ of the free world,” Tadiar contends that dreams and fantasies actually mobilize and shape the terms of the nation-state’s participation in the world economy (Tadiar 6-7). Distinguishing dreams from fantasies, Tadiar argues that fantasy-production is the product of

the imaginary absorbed into the capitalist economy, while dreams are products of the imaginary that remains under control of the subject. Using Marxian terms as analogous to the relationship between imagination and fantasy, she posits that fantasy-production is the alienated form of production resulting in the laborer's abstraction from the product of her own imaginary. As I have outlined in the introduction, the difference between dreams and fantasies have to do with their proximity to the subject's imaginary force. Extending this line of analysis, I add that as fantasies become subsumed into the capitalist logic, the laborer becomes alienated from both her labor, the products of that labor and indeed the entire economic system itself. As Marx writes

[t]he production process of capital ... labour is a totality—a combination of labours—whose individual component parts are alien to one another, so that the overall process as a totality is *not* the work of the individual worker, and is furthermore the work of the different workers together, only to the extent that they are forcibly combined and do not voluntarily enter into combination with one another ... Hence just as the worker relates to the product of his labour as an alien combination, as well as to his own labour as an expression of his life, which although it belongs to him, is alien to him and coerced from him ... therefore conceives as a burden, sacrifice, etc. (Marx 260-1:1972)

Extending the analogy of fantasy-production as an alienated means of production, Marx's discussion of alienated labor here elucidates the process through which the subject is alienated from her imaginative labor, therefore becoming susceptible to the appropriation. Marx points out that within the capitalist system, labor is not merely the product of an individual's work but combined work of multiple people. Alienated from her labor, work becomes something she sees as burdensome, something that she is coerced into performing rather than a process that comes natural to her lived experience. This estrangement also alienates the worker from the products of her own labor, thus her claims of ownership is removed from both, despite the fact that the labor originates from her body. Equivalent to alienated labor, the imaginative labor of the individual coalesces with the labor of others until they become alienated from their own productive dream-works. While in Marx, the alienated labor of the proletariat is appropriated by the capitalist, in

this case, the alienated imaginative labor of the worker is appropriated by the nation-state in order to fulfill its First World desires. While Tadiar does not discuss this very process in these terms as I have done here, it is important to track this process through Marxian logic in order to show not only how imaginative labor becomes alienated from the worker, but also to show that imagination, dreams and fantasies cannot be merely relegated to the realm of the immaterial. Imaginative labor gives shape to the subject's dreams for upward mobility, but as this chapter will show, when appropriated by the nation-state, these dreams—as fantasy-production—become the tool with which the laborer is exploited.

Bautista's novel *'Gapô*, depicts the tragedies that ensue when the dreams of individuals collide with the legacy of American colonialism in the Philippines and the capitalist desires of the nation-state in order to create the fantasy of the American Dream. In the novel, the imaginative labor of the characters for upward mobility becomes the very tool through which they are exploited. Appropriated by the nation-state, imaginative labor becomes the fantasy of the American dream, the fulfillment of which leads to the exploitation of the protagonists, which is analogous to the process in which the worker is alienated from her labor and has no ownership of what is produced by this work. Thus despite the repeated attempts to attain what the characters perceive to be upward mobility, they remain estranged from this fantasy, having been excluded from the possibility of fulfilling this dream as Third World subjects.

The narrative of *'Gapô* revolves around the people that work and hang around the Freedom Pad, a typical Olongapo nightclub located near the Subic Bay Naval Station geared towards providing diversions for American soldiers stationed at the base. The protagonist, Michael Taylor, Jr., is the son of Dolores, a Filipina sex worker, who herself was employed at the Freedom Pad, and an American soldier who as was once a customer. Mike is well known

around the area for his singing voice, which he uses to earn a living singing at the bar, and his hatred for Americans, stemming from being abandoned by his father. Often mistaken for an American because of his fair complexion, what he considers an unfortunate inheritance from his white father, Michael is merely one of the many children literally born out of the conditions of the state-sanctioned prostitution-tourist industry that surrounded the U.S. military bases in the Philippines, until the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo prompted their closure in 1991. Another central character, Magda, a sex worker who exclusively caters to the American soldiers in the hopes of one day marrying one of them. Although much younger than Michael's mother, Dolores and Magda formed a friendship, especially after Magda moved into the apartment that Michael and his mother were sharing in order to save some money. Before Dolores died, it was Magda who helped take care of her during what seemed to have been a very difficult illness and because of this, Michael continues to feel indebted to her, despite his abhorrence for Magda's preference for everything American. Unlike Michael, who rejects American products, Magda prefers not only to be seen with American soldiers, but she also loves buying "state-side" goods whenever she has the money. Her ultimate dream is to meet and marry an American soldier, which propels her to continually take on clientele with the hopes that one day she would meet someone who would actually marry her. The tenacity with which she searches for a husband among the Americans that frequent the Freedom Pad is surpassed only by her desire to consume American products:

Inubos ni Magdalena ang kinita niya kagabi sa mga produktong *imported*. Hindi siya magkandadala sa dalawang naglalakihang *grocery bags* nang umiwi. *Corn beef*, *Hersey* [sic], *Baby Ruth*, de lata, de bote, de karton. Pati popcorn at tasty bread. Pati *Cosmopolitan* at *True Love*. Maski mahal at maski hindi niya naiintindihan, bibilhin ni Magda basta US.

Halos pinuno niya ang *cupboard* sa kusina ng apartment nila ni Mike. Itinulak na lang niya sa mga sulok-sulok ang sarsa ng litson ni mang Tomas, bagoong ng Ilokano, at patis...

(Magdalena spent all the money she earned last night on imported goods. She was almost overwhelmed by the two large grocery bags when she went home. *Corned beef*, *Hersey* [sic], *Baby Ruth*, in cans, bottles and cartons. Including popcorn and tasty bread. Including *Cosmopolitan* and *True Love*. Despite the price, and even if she doesn't quite understand what they were, Magda buys them as long as they are from the U.S.

She filled up most of the kitchen cupboards in the apartment she shared with Mike. She just pushed aside and into the corners the Mang Tomas brand lechon sauce, Ilocano shrimp paste and the fish sauce...) (Bautista 45.)

Pushing aside the various locally made foods that occupy her kitchen cupboards, Magda makes room for her new "stateside" acquisitions of chocolates and canned goods. Although she is not hungry, she cannot resist opening the packages and cans as the desire to consume these products get the best of her. For Magda, the ability to acquire these consumer goods has become a marker of the possibility of attaining upward mobility. Beyond their monetary value, American products are coveted because they have come to signify the fantasy that is the United States, as embodied by the American dream of economic progress. As proxies for the fantasy of the U.S., the consumption of these products signifies an approximate fulfillment of these fantasies. I say approximate here precisely because these consumer goods remain just that: products made by the United States proliferated throughout the world to ensure the stable position of the U.S. within the New World Order, which simultaneously ensures that these Third World fantasies like Magda's remain in tact and primed for the continued consumption of U.S. goods embodying U.S. dreams.

Magda's desire for an American husband can be read much in the same way, although the realities of the once-thriving hospitality industry around the military bases, as well as the uneven relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines add other dimensions to Magda's American dreams. Tadiar sees this kind of clientele relationship between these two nation-states as belonging to the same apparatus that governs the relationship between Magda and her American GI partners. She contends:

[i]n her relationship to the US, the Philippines is an exploitable body, an industry hooked up to the to the US desiring-machine through a system of flows of labor and capital in the guise of free exchange (export-oriented, capital and import dependent) but functioning in the mode of dialysis, which gives one the strength and life depleted from the other. As such the Philippines is the prostitute of ‘America’ who caters to the latter’s demands (ostensibly demands of global production and consumption), in other words, a hospitality industry, a hostess to ‘American’ desires, a hooker. As the greatest of her foreign investors, that is the most powerful of her multinational clients, the US establishes free trade zones on the body/land of the Philippines over which it exercises a considerable degree of monopoly...obtaining free entry and exit rights ... This mode of relations between the Philippines and America operates according to a fantasy of heteronormative relations between masculine and feminine ideals that has become dominant in economically advanced nations—a sexual masquerade in which the Philippines serves the US as a feminine ideal, servicing its power the way Philippine prostitutes service US military men, symbols of US nations (masculine) strength. (Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production* 47)

I quote Tadiar at length here because her lucid analysis explicitly connects the thriving sex industry surrounding the military bases to American economic policies in the Philippines. The clientele relationship between these two nation-states—whereby the Philippines, paid with capital, services American desires for a free and open market to distribute its goods and products, as well as free trade zones where its corporations are granted parity—then becomes the model for the relationships between U.S. servicemen and Filipina hostesses. The passing of trade agreements such as the Philippine Trade Agreement, better known as the Bell Trade Act (1946) and its subsequent addenda—i.e. the Laurel-Langley Agreement ratified in 1955—granted U.S. corporations almost unlimited access to the Philippine market despite heavy Filipino opposition against the parity rights extended to U.S. businesses. One scholar notes that not only was this trade agreement considered an imposition upon Philippine sovereignty, but that it also perpetuated the status of the Philippines as colonial property. However, afraid that the U.S. would renege on its promise of paying for the damages sustained from fighting with the Japanese during World War II, and in dire need of foreign investment capital to stimulate the economy,

the Philippine Congress decided to ratify.<sup>6</sup> Thus like the relationship between a Filipina sex worker with her American G.I. client, the Philippines bears the brunt of U.S. economic exploitation despite the seemingly consensual and profitable veneer of these trade agreements. All implicated within the same uneven system, the capitalist-heteronormative desire of both the U.S. and the American G.I. make prostitutes of the Philippines and the Filipina both.

Bautista's novel also takes on overwhelming forces leading to the exploitation of both the Philippines and the Filipina body, by connecting the narrative in her novel with the history of colonial violence on Philippine soil. In the section titled "*Maikling Balik-aral*" ("Short Review") the unnamed narrator calls attention to the historically uneven relationship between the Philippines and the United States, hidden behind the veil of friendship between two purportedly sovereign nations. Here the narrator contends that essentially "[a]ng giyera ng 1945 sa Pilipinas ay giyera ng Hapon laban sa Amerika" ("the war in 1945 in the Philippines is Japan's war against the U.S.") (48). Referring to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines from 1942 to 1945 during which Filipinos were brutalized and Filipinas were forced into prostitution servicing Japanese soldiers as Comfort Women, Bautista links the position of the Philippines as American colonial property prior to World War II as the reason for Japanese hostility. As such, the Philippines becomes the site through which U.S. battles are fought, and consequently it is made to bear the aftermath of war:

Pero naging malungkot ang naging itsura ng Pilipinas na naging sentro ng maraming sugapaan. Inilibing and libu-libong casualty ng death march. Namatay ang lubu-libong sugatan at maysakit. Sunog ang mga gusali, paaralan, kalye, tulay, mga alagang hayup, pagawaan at bukid. Humarap ng pinaka-grabeng krisis pang-ekonomiya si Presidenteng Osmena. Nagrekomenda si Senador Milliard Tydings ng Estados Unidos na bigyan ang Pilipinas ng sandaang milyong dolyar para sa rehabilitasyon at rekonstruksiyon. Tsk, tsk; sabi ng kongreso ng Amerika; h'wag n'yo namang kawawain ang Pilipinas.

---

<sup>6</sup> Meadows, Martin. "Recent Developments in Philippine-American Relations: A Case Study in Emergent Nationalism." *Asian Survey*. 5.6. (June, 1965): 305-318.

(But the Philippines was saddened that it became the center of many battles. Thousands of casualties from the death march were buried. Thousands of the sick and wounded die. Buildings, schools, streets, bridges, animals, factories and farms were all burned. President Osmena faced the worst economic crisis. U.S. senator Milliard Tydings recommended that the Philippines be given one hundred million dollars for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Tsk, tsk; said the American congress; do not feel too sorry for Philippines.) (48)

Instead, the U.S. agreed to give the Philippines sixty-two million dollars but with the condition that it amend its constitution to include exclusive parity rights to the United States, which not only gave U.S. business interests preference above all, but it also allowed them to exploit the natural resources of the Philippines without much oversight.

As the site upon which American conflicts are fought, the Philippines bear the repercussions of war, which has become characteristic of the relationship between these two nation-states. Much like Tadiar, Bautista begins to dismantle the myth of this “friendship” and exposes the blunt reality that this relationship has been defined by violence and exploitation from the very beginning. As the United States’ colonial dream found fulfillment in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War (1898), where Filipinos fought the Spanish alongside Americans, only to be met with more violence from those who they thought were their allies. The result was the death of thousands of Filipino soldiers and civilians at the hands of American soldiers during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902). These are the violent facts which are disavowed when the supposed partnership between the U.S. and the Philippines is invoked, often for the economic gains of the U.S. or Philippine elite. In the end, Bautista likens the U.S. to a treacherous “friend”: “...oo pare; alam kong nadamay ka sa laban ko, at nawala ang lahat ng kamag-anak and ari-arian mo dahil sa ‘kin. Ngayon tutulungan kita sa kabuhayan mo pero...patulog sa tabi ng asawa mo” (“...yes, friend; I know that you were drawn into my war,

and that you lost all your relatives and belongings were because of me. Now, I will help you earn a living but only if you let me sleep with your wife”) (49).

Later, Bautista cites further instances of American disavowal and forgetting which characterizes its relationship with the rest of the world:

Nabasa nila sa diyaryo nang masakerin ng mga rebelde ng Mindanao ang isang tropa ng military. Nakalimutan nila ‘yong matagumpay na masaker na ginawa nila sa My Lai Village ng Vietnam, kung saan pinatay nila pati mga sanggol ... Naalala nila nang muntik ng patayin dito si Pope Paul; nalimutan nila and matagumpay na asasinasyon kina Martin Luther King as magkapatid na Kennedy. Nakita nila ang maliliit at malalaking kapintasan ng Pilipinas at nalimutan nila ang maraming mahirap-patawaring mga krimen at karahasan sa Amerika.

(They read from newspapers when rebel soldiers from Mindanao massacred an American military troop. They forgot their successful massacre of the My Lai Village in Vietnam where they killed even the babies ... They remembered when Pope Paul was almost killed [in the Philippines]; they forgot the successful assassination of Martin Luther King and the Kennedy brothers. They see the big and small faults of the Philippines and they forget their many unforgivable crimes and the violence in the United States.) (90)

Here Bautista points to the forgetting that must first be enacted in order to promote American exceptionalism. This fantasy of the United States as the ultimate bastion of democracy and freedom, set against the barbarism of the rest of the world, requires the disavowal of such violent marks throughout its history of conflict with its Others, in South East Asia and on its own soil. Seldom is this history of violence evoked or remembered when we think of the fulfillment of the American dream, the fantasy that for Magda and others like her is simply characterized by the liberal consumption of American products and upward mobility. Such are the dreams of the Philippine nation-state as well, so this critique of American forgetting goes beyond the one-sided indictment of U.S. exceptionalism in light of such violence; it also becomes the denunciation of Philippine fantasies of fulfilling the myth of the American dream.

For the characters in *'Gapô*, the consequences for entertaining such fantasies end in tragedy: Magda who falls in love with Steve, an American soldier who has seemingly genuine feelings for her, but is actually married with children back home. Michael who trusted and befriended Steve is betrayed by this revelation, and in a fit of rage, smashes his guitar unto his head and kills him. Fed up with abuse sustained from the American soldiers he encounters, Michael's reaction is the tragic culmination of the years of feeling abandoned by his father and hatred for the exploitation of Filipinos under American neocolonial rule. Compounded by the brutal murder of his friend Modesto, at the hands of soldiers at the military base in which he works, as well as the robbery and the abuse that his other friend, Ali, sustains from his American lover, just days before. In the end, the makeshift "family" that Magda, Michael, Ali and Modesto cultivate throughout the novel as they look out and take care of each other is destroyed by the violent consequences of this Philippine-American friendship. And although Bautista offers an example of what could be a nurturing relationship between a Filipina and an American soldier through the character of William Smith and his Filipina wife, this relationship is also torn apart when the military abruptly sends William back to the U.S. to prevent him from launching an official report on the murder of a Filipino base worker at the hands of a U.S. soldier. Thus, at the end of the novel, we are left with a grim vision of Philippine-U.S. relations maintained for the sake of diplomacy, despite the violence and exploitation experienced by ordinary citizens exemplified by those in the novel. As Bautista writes:

Sa kabila ng mga krimen at maraming iritasyon sa relasyong Pilipino-Amerikano, sinisikap ng dalawang bansa na mapanatili ang diplomatikong ugnayan at pagkakaibigan. At habang nagpapatuloy ang pagkakaibigang iyon, habang ibinababa rito ng mga eroplano at barko ang mga dayuhang kano, magpapatuloy and mga Modesto at Johnson at William Smith, kung paanong magpapatuloy din ang mga babaing gaya nila Dolores at Magdalena at ang mga lalaking gaya nina Michael Senior at Steve, kung kanininong kasalanan mahuhugot at ianak ang mga batang gaya ni Michael Taylor, Junior.

[Despite the crime and the many irritations between the Philippine-American relationship, the two nations try hard to ensure their continued diplomacy and friendship. And while this friendship continues, while American foreigners continue to land planes and ships [in the Philippines], people like Modesto and Johnson and William Smith will continue, in whatever way women like Dolores and Magda will also continue, and men like Michael Senior and Steve whose sins will be drawn out and revealed by children like Michael Taylor, Junior.] (152)

Here Bautista defines the relationship between these two nation-states as one that is built on crime and violence. As the perpetual victim of such violence, the Philippines nevertheless maintains this “friendship” in the face of its exploited citizens. Although both Subic Naval and Clark Air Force Bases have since closed, U.S. military presence remains in the Philippines through the of joint military exercises aimed at the War on Terror. As a front on the post-9/11 War on Terror, the Philippines is once again the site onto which American desires are exerted. A far cry from the equal partnership of two sovereign nation-states and any ideas of a community of nations built for betterment of their citizens, this uneven affiliation carries with it the residues of American colonialism, re-shaped by militarism and the New World Order.

This uneven relationship between the United States and Philippines is built upon the vestiges of colonial rule and the complex relationship between market realities, and the desires of each of these nation-states compounds this already exploitive affiliation. At the heart of this inequality is the First World denial of the Third World subject’s coevalness. Here, I build on Johannes Fabian’s discussion of the multiple constructions of time and its relation to the process of signifying the colonial Other in the field of Anthropology. In *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (2002) Fabian defines the denial of coevalness as “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (31). Working in conjunction with colonial regimes, anthropology has built discursive practices around its (colonized) object of study based

upon what Fabian calls allochronicity, that is, the distancing of the object as temporally belated and outside of the logics of western teleologies. Building upon Fabian's critique of the field, I argue that the First World's denial of Third World coevalness—as exemplified by U.S.-Philippine relations—limits the latter's participation in the global market. While the colonial object of anthropology is excluded from the developmental narrative based on Enlightenment conceptions of developmental and progressive time, former colonies—many of which are labeled as “developing” as per the standards of capitalist modernity—are denied temporal sameness or equivalence. As First World nations help moderate the trajectory of the time of capital, they help determine the coequality of others and their viability within this construction of time. To stand outside the time of capital is to remain excluded from the New World Order.

As Magda, Michael and the other Filipino characters in *'Gapô*, attempt to enact their First World fantasies, they are repeatedly denied full access to the American Dream as old colonial structures remain intact. Otherness is thus maintained and coequality is denied despite the illusion that some semblance of this dream can be achieved since, at least on the level of official state discourse, the relationship between the United States and the Philippines is presented as one that is based on equality and partnership. The persistence of this discursive system is perhaps the reason why the deployment of such First World fantasies remains quite effective, and in fact both nation-states are implicated in maintaining this illusion of equality. The Philippines, however, remains dependent upon the conditions imposed by global capital maintained by First World powers, like the U.S., and therefore stands outside the trajectory of capitalist time.

Mark Miely's comedic film *La Visa Loca* presents the temporal belatedness ascribed to the Philippines and frames it as a direct result of the historically exploitive relationship between the two nations. The film is centered on Jess Huson (Robin Padilla) and his pursuit of the

American Dream through his repeated attempts to secure a U.S. visa. A hired driver for tourists at a Manila hotel, Jess dreams of coming to the United States to work as a caregiver to join his girlfriend Annette, a Filipina who is already working as a nurse in California. Motivated by Annette's desire to get married and his own desire to earn a better living in order to better care for his diabetic father, Jess makes frequent attempts to apply for a visa, despite the shame of the repeated rejection and ridicule he suffers at the hands of the American consul. As the film progresses, we see that this humiliation begins to wear on Jess, and yet he maintains the desire to go abroad to become an OCW, forcing him to eventually make a spectacle of himself for the entertainment of Western audiences in exchange for a U.S. job and a valid visa. While the protagonists from *'Gapô* seem to suffer in solitary silence for the American Dream, in *La Visa Loca* suffering is made into a spectacle, highlighting in visually potent ways the consequences of such dreams and fantasies.

*La Visa Loca* represents suffering as a spectacle on multiple levels in order to highlight, in visually potent ways, the consequences of pursuing such dreams and fantasies. We bear witness to Jess's humiliation at the hands of the American consul as he is subject to a visa interview, which looks more like an interrogation as he is seemingly forced to confess to some kind of terrorist affiliation. Not only are his intentions to come to the U.S. questioned, his very identity is negated by the American consul who accuses him of having a non-Filipino last name. This scrutiny, while based on the vestiges of the U.S.-Philippine colonial relationship, becomes exacerbated by the spectre of the War on Terror in the post 9/11 world. Thus he is doubly interpellated as the perpetual colonial Other *and* as a suspected terrorist. Of course, this means that because his last name, Huson, does not sound Spanish, the logical assumption, at least for the consul, is that he might be Muslim. This assumption comes from the fact that the

Philippines remains a front on the War on Terror largely due to the of the activities of such groups like the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) based the southern part of the nation. To parcel out perceived threats, foreign bodies are thus interrogated, policed and marked the same way that their foreign passports are resolutely stamped before entering the U.S. border. In fact, Miely takes cues from this singular act of approval or disapproval into border crossing—whether in airports or at American embassies through out the so-called Third World—when the film opens with images of repeated stampings of Philippine passports during the credits (figure 1.1). These images of marked passports then dissolve to reveal the scene of Filipino/as standing in line waiting to see the American consul (figure 1.2). What is striking about this scene is that every person down the line displays the black ash cross-markings on their foreheads, indicative of Ash Wednesday, which signals the beginning of the Lenten season (figure 1.3). Peering away from behind someone’s back, the audience first encounters Jess, with a similar cross on his forehead, and as he looks up towards the ceiling, we hear his voice making penances and appealing to God to grant him a U.S. visa. These crosses marking Jess, and all those in the queue with him, serve as a reminder of the Spanish colonial past, responsible for, among other things, the propagation and practice of Catholicism in the region. As these bodies are literally marked by the legacy of colonialism, they are simultaneously poised to take on another inscription from yet another former colonial regime: the United States. Doubly marked by this baggage, the process of applying for a U.S. visa and Jess’s assured rejection signals the never ending process of recasting Filipino/a bodies as Other, compounded not only by the inherent exclusivity of the United States, but also by the veiled accusation geared at questioning Jess’s belonging and affiliation.



Figure 1.1



Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3

The suspicion that Jess undergoes at the hands of the consul functions as a way to exclude him from gaining access to the kind of upward mobility promised as part of the overseas contract worker experience. Those vying for visas in the film have certainly bought into the idea that the American Dream can be had as long as they are granted entry into the United States;

Annette's insistence that Jess join her in California instead of wasting his life away "back home" is similarly rooted in that belief. That the OCW condition has come to mean guaranteed economic success speaks to the effective promotion of overseas work by the Philippine nation-state as it seeks to maintain the constant flow of laboring bodies into the developed world. Yet, access to this kind of work, especially in the United States, especially with its heightened post-9/11 security policies that are more exclusive as ever, cannot be guaranteed. Coupled with the most recent collapse of the U.S. economy, the perception of immigrants as a drain in the U.S. economy further restricts the mobility of those who aim to come to the U.S. from the developing world. The restriction placed upon people like Jess highlights the contradiction between the desires of the Philippine nation-state and the realities of the laws prohibiting Filipino citizens access across particular borders. As the repercussions of such contradictory realities play itself out in the film, suffering then becomes posited as a constitutive part of the pursuit of the economic prosperity promised by the American Dream.

As Jess's dreams to come to the United States are literally grounded, his job as a car driver for tourists in a Manila hotel serves as a constant reminder that while those from the First World are able come and go as they please across Philippine borders, people like him must remain bound by the restrictions of their citizenship. It is through this job that he meets Nigel, a foreign national who has come to the Philippines in search of the bizarre or the unusual for his television show called "Planet Strange." Although his national origin is left ambiguous—he speaks with a kind of British accent while claiming to be from the United States—this character, with his cameraman in tow, represents the genre of sensationalist television shows, moonlighting as documentaries, which aim to take its mostly Western audiences into the so-called Third World to expose seemingly bizarre or strange behavior. Such shows seek out difference in order to

make spectacles of the supposed backwardness of its objects. Nigel comes to the Philippines looking for precisely that and he hires Jess to take him and his cameraman to investigate various claims of divinity or miraculous occurrences, including a woman who claims to have healing powers when the spirit of the infant Jesus invades her body and an old man who claims to be impervious to bullets as long as he wears his amulet. Immediately, Nigel decides that these people are indeed fakes, and unable to take any viable footage for his show, Nigel becomes angry and frustrated, until Jess suggests that he film the Kristos, or Christs, who nail themselves to the cross during Holy Week to atone for their sins or to appeal to God for some great need or desire. Nigel considers this, but when the man they originally hire to be a Kristo takes off with the money they already paid him, Jess himself volunteers to be crucified in exchange for employment as a caregiver at the convalescent home owned by Nigel's brother in Florida.

It at this moment in the film where the scene at the consul is replicated and exaggerated by Miely in order to show the multiple ways in which the Filipino body is marked and is made into a spectacle for the purpose of gaining access to the economic prosperity that has come to be associated with the OCW condition. Much like the scenes at the American consulate, the cross symbolizes the burden of the Philippines' Spanish colonial past, although instead of ash marking on the forehead, Jess is made to literally carry this burden as he drags the wooden cross to the site where he will be crucified (figure 1.4). After carrying the cross some distance, he then lays on top of it, arms outstretched bracing himself for the impact of the nails that are going to be hammered into his hands. At this point, Jess struggles to remind himself that all this suffering is for a chance to be able to fulfill his role as his family's breadwinner by becoming an OCW in the United States. The sound the hammer makes as the nails are pounded into Jess's hands is akin to the sound of the pounding of stamps seen and heard during film's opening credits, as well as in

the scenes at the consulate when, one by one, the papers of those in line with Jess are stamped and granted visas. The pounding sounds of the hammer and the passport and visa stamps link these scenes together the way that suffering is linked to the experience of working abroad and the efforts to get there in the first place. The suffering sustained from the fulfillment of these desires mark the OCW body in the same way that Jess is marked by the wounds on his hands. As these Filipino/a bodies are marked by the desires of their nation to work abroad in order to maintain the flow of remittances that buttress the Philippine economy, they are also marked as laboring bodies whose access to the First World remain contractual and conditional. This shows that while they may have received these visas that permit them to cross borders, difference is nevertheless maintained by their provisional status. That Jess is made to feel these inscriptions on his corporeal body is symbolic of the trauma sustained by being marked in such a manner.



Figure 1.4

The crucifixion is already a spectacle in itself. Done in the context of the widely observed Holy Week, this event is merely the one part of a set of gatherings culminating in the celebration of Easter at the end of the week. Enacting Jesus Christ's final sacrificial act, the *Kristos* not only march to the crucifixion site viewed by whole towns or communities, they also

become the central event as crosses are hoisted up from the ground and displayed with their hanging bodies. Jess becomes part of this spectacle, and as his body nailed to the cross is put on display for the community and Nigel's camera to behold, his suffering becomes the currency through which his American visa is bought. By displaying the trauma in this spectacular way, Miely reveals in a visceral fashion the suffering that has become a constitutive part of the OCW experience. More importantly, by equating Jess's suffering with the martyrdom of Christ, Miely re-claims martyrdom for the nation as an exclusively male endeavor, in opposition to the nation-state's co-option of the Filipina OCW as the nation's *bagong bayani*. In fact, I argue that the film restores heroic martyrdom to the realm of the masculine in order to undermine the Filipina OCW whose work in feminized forms of labor have come to symbolize OCWs in general. In so doing Miely draws a direct line from the martyrdom of Christ and Rizal to the Filipino man who is doubly emasculated when they are forced to themselves work in feminized labor fields abroad—cleaning house or taking care of children, seniors and the sick—to fulfill the demands of the global market or when Filipina OCWs become the primary breadwinner. The excessive emotive display that Jess is forced to perform for both Miely's lens as the director of the film and for Nigel as he films the "oddities" of the world for Western audiences serves to reinforce the male heroic martyrdom exemplified in the Philippine imagination by Rizal. As Vicente Rafael writes of Rizal in "'Your Grief is Our Gossip': Overseas Filipinos and Other Spectral Presences" (1997):

Rizal's potency rested on his ability to evoke populist visions of utopic communities held together by an ethos of mutual caring, the sharing of obligations (*damayan*) and the exchange of pity (*awa*). These notions were reminiscent of the great themes set by the widely popular narrative of Jesus Christ's passion translated into various vernaculars (collectively known as *Pasyon*) since the eighteenth century. Recognizing the power of Rizal's memory, American colonial and Filipino national elites collaborated in monumentalizing his absence, as for example in the erection of the Rizal monument at

the place of his execution in 1912, as they sought to regulate both the sites and occasions of its commemoration. (275)

By allying Jess with both Rizal and Christ, Miely dredges up all the feeling associated with two of the most potent symbols for sacrifice and martyrdom in the Philippine imagination, while in the process elevating both Jess and male sacrifice in the face of the feminization of the Philippine workforce abroad.

While Miely elevates masculine suffering through Jess, the event also highlights the practice of distancing which serves to cast the colonial and Third World-ed subject as temporally and spatially distant from the modern world. In fact, Nigel's entire project of finding, filming and exposing various "anomalies" from the Philippines maintains the image of backwardness ascribed to the so-called Third World. His role as the host of this television show functions similarly to that of the American consul who denies Jess's visa because his last name does not sound Filipino enough. Nigel's endeavor to locate the Other creates the spectacle of Jess's crucifixion, which is then re-presented by none other than himself as a barbaric act based on a backwards belief system. What gets erased is Nigel's part in staging this event and that in his search for the Other, he had to help orchestrate the very event that marks them as different.

In "Spectacle of the Other" Stuart Hall discusses how difference is maintained at the level of discourse and asserts that the power of representation is absolutely necessary in reinforcing the privileged position of the Self. He writes:

We often think of power in terms of direct physical coercion or constraint. However, we have also spoken, for example, of power of representation: power to mark, assign and classify; of symbolic power; of ritualized expulsion. Power, it seems, has to be understood here, not only in terms of economic exploitation and physical coercion, but also in broader cultural or symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone or something in a certain way—within a regime of representation. In includes the exercise of symbolic power through representational practices. Stereotyping is a key element in this exercise of symbolic violence. (259)

To have power over discourse ensures control over the object being represented, defined and classified. Nigel exerts power over Jess as he holds the key to fulfilling his desire to work in the U.S., but by presenting the crucifixion as a spectacular event as an authentic show of atonement and that somehow Nigel just happened to have captured on film, Nigel also builds on the body of knowledge that has already been produced and disseminated about the backwardness of those belonging to the developing world. The image of Nigel posing for a photograph in front of Jess's crucified body (figure 1.5), displayed for the entertainment of his viewers, is indicative of the kind of representational power that Nigel is able to wield over Jess. Here, Jess is made into a spectacle on multiple levels. First, within the ceremonial observances of Good Friday—from the procession in which the crosses are carried, to the actual crucifixion itself—the Kristos remain the highlight of the day's events and therefore there is always an audience of townspeople watching. This audience is an integral part of the actual process as they bear witness to the suffering of these men as they atone for their sins, ask God for favors or give thanks for fulfilled desires. While some come to watch the Kristos to become a part of the spectacle of the scene, many also come to pray with the Kristos and commiserate with them as they empathize for the sufferings of these men, many of whom are part of their community. When Jess participates in the event, he comes as an outsider both as a city-dweller coming to a rural provincial town and as someone who brings other outsiders: the crew of an American television show. Without having roots in the community, Jess's "sacrifice" becomes an empty exhibition because his outsider status does not afford him the kind of communal empathy the other Kristos might garner, but more importantly his suffering is ultimately staged as he takes directions from Nigel on when to pray, kneel, make the sign of the cross and display emotion.

As the object of Nigel's show, Jess's body is further spectacularized by the camera's gaze, which serves to reify his position as a temporally belated Third World subject. In fact, the premise of Nigel's television program, "Planet Strange," is to locate, film and commodify the "strange" practices of people around globe, casting the objects of this program outside of the modern world. As the object of the camera's gaze, Jess's image remains frozen in the way that Fabian argues that anthropology "petrifies" representations of the colonial Other. He writes:

Anthropology emerged and established itself as an allochronic discourse; it is a science of other men in another Time. It is a discourse whose referent has been removed from the present of the speaking/writing subject. This "petrified relation" is a scandal...Among the historical conditions under which our [anthropology] emerged and which affected its growth and differentiation were the rise of capitalism and colonialist-imperialist expansion within the very societies which became the target of our inquiries...More profoundly and problematically, they required Time to accommodate the schemes of a one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and their negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition). In short, *geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*. (144-45).

Nigel's representation and eventual distribution of the image of Jess's body through television media is merely a continuation of the representational project that is embodied by the field of anthropology in Fabian's analysis. Cast as allochronic or asynchronous from the time of modernity—the temporal position occupied by the anthropologist and in this film, Nigel—Jess is made to represent the backwardness of the so-called Third World. While Miely seems to critique this kind of representational project by exposing the way that Nigel stages an event, which he then presents as "authentic," Nigel maintains the privilege of framing what was just filmed for his audiences as such: "Some people do it for atonement, some people do it to ask for something. Jess Huson is one of hundreds of penitents all over this archipelago, the nation with the largest Christian population in Asia. He is celebrating Good Friday by having himself nailed to a cross, a pledge that he may get a better life. This is Nigel Adams, and you're watching "Planet Strange." After yelling, "cut," filming ends and he then gleefully, having just accomplished his

goal, tells the people around him to gather around for a photograph (figure 1.5). Positioned at the center of the screen, Nigel poses with his American cameraman and two others, while Jess's body hangs on the cross behind them, his head covered in a shroud and flanked by two more townspeople costumed as Roman soldiers. After being made into a spectacle by the television camera, Jess's body is spectacularized by another camera yet again.



Figure 1.5

Even after all this trouble, in the end, Jess decides to stay home in order to finally take the helm at the head of the household. He almost leaves for the U.S. but after some soul searching, he realizes that he needed to finally take ownership of his family. For Jess, this means rekindling his relationship with his former girlfriend, Mara (Rufa Mae Quinto), and becoming the father to her son after she reveals to Jess that the boy is his biological son all along. This revelation serves as an even more bigger reason to remain in the Philippines and what ultimately allows him to fully commit to his role as patriarch. In so doing he is able to reassert some agency over his own body that has been brutalized in the process of gaining access to an American visa. What is problematic about Jess's newfound agency is that it comes at the expense of casting the women in the film as selfish because of their own desire for upward mobility, the pursuit of which ultimately takes them away from the homeland. Deviating from

the discourse of the Philippine nation-state, which celebrates the suffering of OCWs for the motherland as the *bagong bayani*, the film instead casts them as traitors to the homeland.

The first Filipina OCW that the audience encounters in this film is Annette, Jess's original girlfriend living and working in California as a nurse. Despite her physical absence from the homeland, her presence remains a domineering force in the lives of both Jess and his father through the phone. Through her shrill voice and Jess's timid reaction to her constant anger for his failure to acquire a visa, Miely manages to portray this absent character as essentially odious. A nagger and complainer, she embodies the figure of the Filipina who leaves and because of financial success, subsequently develops a sense of superiority to those who she has left behind. That she sends Jess's father the expensive medication he needs for his diabetes is occluded by her constant dissatisfaction with Jess's failures, and the pressure she exerts from afar seems to affirm that she might never be satisfied despite all of Jess's efforts to please her. While Annette is at worst a mere annoyance for Jess—an annoyance that he easily forsakes for Mara—his mother embodies the Malinche figure in the film. Little is revealed about his mother initially, only that she left her family in order to work in the U.S. As Jess enters his teen-age years, his father receives a letter, which the audience is made to believe carries the news of his mother's death from a car accident. Jess's father tells him that his mother's siblings in New Jersey, where she was living, decided to bury her there instead of sending her body back home to her husband and young son. Later in the film, Jess is hired to drive a couple, an American and a Filipina, staying at the hotel where he offers his services. As soon as Jess and the woman see each other, there is a moment of recognition from both of them and as it turns out, his mother did not die and instead merely abandoned her Filipino family for an American husband. That the woman who Jess knows as his mother decides to deny him a second time, despite their mutual

recognition in the car, traumatizes him and also helps him decide to abandon his American dreams, dreams which he believes to be the root of his mother's betrayal.

Ironically, despite being the main symbols of treachery and betrayal to the nation, both Annette and the mother of Jess are limitedly represented throughout the film; Jess's mother is in one small scene while Annette remains a disembodied voice on the telephone. Such is the portrayal of women in Miely's film, and although Mara, Jess's new girlfriend, is portrayed in opposition to these women, the film nevertheless posits the desires of the Filipina OCW as a betrayal to the homeland. Contrast these images to the earnest portrayal of Jess who wants nothing more than to try and take care of his family, or his jobless, porn-watching, womanizing father who is cast as flawed and yet ultimately wise and endearing. By juxtaposing these contrasting images—of those who have left the Philippines versus those who stay behind and remain loyal to the homeland—the film suggests that leaving home to pursue economic gains, especially as a woman, is a form of betrayal. When Jess finally decides to stay home, he is not only rejecting the abuse that he sustained from Nigel and the officials at the embassy, but he is also rejecting the ideals of those like Annette and his mother who side with the forces who have repeatedly abused the homeland for the sake of foreign capital.

As the Philippine government continues to cast the OCW as the nation's new hero or *bagong bayani* in order to maintain and recruit Filipino/a workers abroad, Miely presents the martyrdom of both Jess and Jesus Christ amidst the pressure to succumb to the desire for economic success as an OCW. That Christ was crucified to absolve the sins of his people gestures to the kind of redemption that Jess undergoes when he decides to stay home. This comparison marks Jess's "sacrifices" as particularly masculine, which privileges male heroism around which the narrative of the film is organized. Heroism and sacrifice here do not apply to

the painful departure of the OCW who leaves the homeland to earn a living elsewhere for the family she leaves behind. Rather, Jess is figured as a hero because his crucifixion signals his “return” to the homeland as both father and son. Realizing that a U.S. visa is not worth all that he has endured, he abandons his First World desires in order to take his place as the head of the family, relinquishing his ailing father from his duties as patriarch and becoming a father to the son he did not know he had. Much like Jesus’ redemptive return to his father’s kingdom, thus completing the Holy Trinity, Jess’s return rescues the traditional familial structure—which continues to be undermined as men and now, mostly, women leave for long periods of time to work abroad—from the lure of globalization. Moreover, his decision to stay signals a conscious effort to remain loyal to the homeland, despite knowing that he will never attain the kind of upward mobility that working abroad offers. In choosing to remain in the Philippines, he chooses not to suffer outside of the homeland, but rather to struggle within the economic limitations that force many to leave the country in the first place. In the end, the film deviates from the rhetoric of the nation-state and instead valorizes male martyrdom in the face of a global economy that forces him to occupy the subordinate positions either as an obsolete head-of-household (as women OCWs become the primary breadwinners) or as a debased worker within feminized fields of labor like care giving, which is the job Jess would have done if he had gone to the U.S.

By forsaking his First World dreams, he also abandons both his mother and his U.S. girlfriend, both of whom are figured as traitors against the nation. This brand of nationalism, however, depends on a blanket assertion of masculinity thus maintaining patriarchal rule over the bodies of women, Mara being the symbol of such an assertion of control as Jess is restored as the father of her son. It is only when he takes the helm away from his ailing father and finally

embraces the role of father and husband is he able to relinquish his American dreams and take part in the Philippine nation. The final disavowal of his Americanized girlfriend and mother, both of whom are depicted to have exchanged the motherland in fulfillment of their First World longings, marks both the reassertion of his masculine power over these women who have dominated his life and his resolve to remain loyal to the Philippine nation. While Mara may have been exempt from this representation, the women in the film are all depicted as traitors to the nation in their pursuit of jobs abroad as OCWs or at home as sex workers or nightclub dancers who sell their body as a way to earn a living. The parallel between the sex worker/entertainer and Jess's mother and Annette is quite clear when these women are differentiated from Mara. The night before the crucifixion, Jess takes Nigel and his cameraman to a nightclub filled with scantily clad dancing women. Having accomplished finding "entertainment" for his clients, Jess leaves to pick up Mara and her son, and the three of them head to a church to pray at each station of the cross that commemorates Jesus's crucifixion. Framed as the devout and virtuous, Mara is set against the women who, at the precise moment she is praying with Jess, are selling their bodies to foreigners, which parallels Jess's mother and Annette, who have already sold their labor for the sake of foreign capital as OCWs. Thus the film suggests that along with the nightclub dancers, Annette and Jess's mother have all committed the same act of betrayal against the nation.

Tadiar takes up the parallel between labor and sex in her second book *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (2009). Referring to Marx's often-quoted supposition from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1959) that "prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the laborer" (42), Tadiar

points out that linkages that Marx makes between the exploitive qualities of labor and prostitution, which feminizes labor that is exchanged for wages. Tadiar writes:

Marx invokes the metaphor of prostitution in order to show this corporeal debasement of the worker under capitalism [...] The debasement of labor lies in its function as 'a mere being for something else' and, more particularly, as a mere bodily being to be used and exchanged by and for capital. To emphasize the worker's debasement, Marx constructs this condition of labor as a repulsive condition of feminization and emasculation [...] Prostitution thus becomes the expression of the unnatural condition of labor which workers must rise against. The unnaturalness of this condition is, of course, predicated on the presumption of workers as male and therefore entitled to their masculinity. (33)

While Miely seems to follow Marx's supposition that when one exchanges labor power for wages he becomes akin to a prostitute whose body becomes the object of exchange, Miely applies this metaphor only to the labor of women in the film. Even though Jess seems unsatisfied with his job as a driver for foreign tourists, OCW women are the only ones that are likened to the nightclub dancers, whom audiences are left to assume are also involved in sex work. Only when he pursues work abroad is he depicted as emasculated and ridiculed by the consul who refuses his visa, his girlfriend's shrill demands on him and by Nigel, to whom he must grovel in order to even be considered for job recommendation. The presumption that Marx makes about workers being exclusively male, as Tadiar highlights, is the same kind of assumption that the film makes when it legitimizes Jess's labor above the labor of all the other women in the film. Jess even tries to take on the financial responsibility for both Mara and her son before knowing that the boy is actually his, undermining Mara's single-handed efforts to raise and support her own child. By privileging the labor of men, the film also legitimizes his claim for masculinity in the face of the overseas work that relegate women into prostitutes, who in exercising their First World desires have also become traitors to the nation. Despite Jess's privileged position in the film, it is he who brings Nigel and his cameraman to these nightclubs in order to exploit the bodies of young Filipinas. And while the film valorizes Jess as the hero,

the film overlooks the fact that it is he who acts as a middleman for the exchange of Filipina bodies, and that people like him within the tourist industry make it easy for foreigners to exploit the bodies of women within this economy.

Both the U.S. and the Philippines are implicated within this economy of desire, despite the largely unequal interface between these two nations; the First World fantasies launched from the Philippines remain integral in imagining a nation that has more than seven thousand islands, one hundred and seventy dialects, and a multitude of ethnic identities and affiliations. Recall the inaugural address delivered by former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, which re-imagines the nation, essentially, through mutual suffering for economic development. Of course, the people who actually suffer for the nation's economic stability are never from the elite ruling class, to which Macapagal-Arroyo belongs. It is one thing to bear upon one's back the dreams of upward mobility and hopes of providing for the needs of one's children, or caring for aging and ailing parents. It is another for the nation to appropriate these and dreams and re-make them into longings for the American Dream, which remains in the realm of fantasy because of the economic and political unevenness characterizing Philippine-U.S. relations. As this chapter exposes the ways in which the American Dream is mapped onto the Philippine imaginary through the history of U.S. colonial exploitation, it also acknowledges the culpability of the Philippine nation-state, which wholly buys into this ideal, even if the fulfillment of such desires comes at the expense of Filipino/a workers abroad. The contradictory demands of the Philippine nation-state and the restricted access to the U.S. despite these demands alienate Filipino/a citizens from local realities. As these desires propagate the notion that fulfillment can only be attained through suffering, the trope of the suffering nation—once a banner for the anticolonial struggle—has been re-imagined for the sake of ensuring the free flow of capital into the nation-

state as the *bagong bayani*. The next chapter takes up the same figure of the *bagong bayani*, as well as the symbolic representations of Third World women in transnational film, in order to show how emotive expression, much like circulation of First World fantasies in this chapter, can be appropriated in order to commodify transnational women laborers in the global market and to reify suffering as constitutive of the feminine experience.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Placing Suffering: Global Circuits, Local Spaces and the Spectacle of Suffering**

The Bonifacio Global City (BGC), a district within Taguig City, is one of the many corporate owned and managed “city” developments in Metro Manila created specifically to ensure the continued flow of capital into the Philippine nation-state. Once a U.S. military base known as Fort McKinley—named after the president who sanctioned the U.S. colonial agenda with the acquisition of the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American war—the property later became Fort Bonifacio, the headquarters for the Philippine Armed Forces, when the Philippines gained independence from the U.S. in 1949. As part of then-president Corazon Aquino’s efforts to reclaim military and U.S. military base land for more productive and profitable purposes, Fort Bonifacio became a jurisdiction of the government organization called Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) in 1992. After partnerships with several corporations the BCDA, along with the Ayala Land Inc., became the umbrella conglomerate now known as the Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation (FBDC), which now manage the Bonifacio Global City. Organized in sectors built to accommodate corporate head quarters for multinational corporations, mega-shopping malls, hotels and high-rise residential properties, located in an area with relatively easy access to the international airport and Makati—Manila’s main financial center—and with public services like police and security and utilities (water, power, sewage and garbage) privately managed by the FBDC, the BGC embodies the efforts of the Philippine nation-state to become a player in the globalized economy. With its free trade zones; clean, wide streets; luxurious hotels; and public open-air spaces like parks, the BGC, or the Global City, as it is more popularly known, is positioned as a hub from multinational businesses like Del Monte Corp, HSBC, GE, Intel, Sony and more. This where the business of

capital is conducted and as such, the BGC's pristine spaces belie the prevailing perception of the rest of Manila as congested, noisy and polluted.

The BGC follows the model of the "global city," theorized and critiqued, most notably, by Saskia Sassen. Brenda S.A. Yeoh in "Global/Globalizing Cities," summarizes this conception of the global city as such:

[...] the 'mega-cephalic' corporate and financial epicentres and localized 'basing points' for capital accumulation within a 'hierarchical articulation of global space' [...] This involves the identification and recoding of cities at the top of the pecking order (London, New York and Tokyo) [...] as 'global cities' distinguished by a disproportionate concentration of corporate head-quarters, international financial services, advanced producer services, advanced telecommunication facilities and other supporting social and physical infrastructure. (607-8)

Through the global city model, cities are ranked according to their viability within the globalized economy. Urban cities from the so-called First World rank highest within this scale because the stability of their physical, technological, economic and political infrastructures ensures uninterrupted commerce.<sup>7</sup> Sassen further qualifies this concept, by linking the "global city formation to the concentration of command-and-control functions in a few cities and points to increasing socioeconomic polarization as a consequence" (Yeoh 608). In her critique of global cities, Sassen asserts that while these are favored spaces within the global economy, the constitution of such landscapes create new geographies which foreclose possibilities for those who are not centrally involved in the business of capital. The power structure within these cities then shifts from promoting local forms of subsistence to catering to multinational or transnational needs which, more often than not, remain at great odds. In "The Global City: Introducing a Concept" (2005) Sassen concludes that as much as the global city is built on transnational business and the passing and the easy accumulation of capital, its infrastructure is

---

<sup>7</sup> For examples of global city rankings, see "Globalization from Below" The Ranking of Global Immigrant Cities" (2005) by Benton-Short, Price and Freidman.

still necessarily based on the local, which not only includes the physical buildings and computing and communication technologies, but also the physical labor—the maids, janitorial and security services, cooks, and construction workers—ensuring the livability of the city.

As these cities are remapped to reflect new geographies and new hierarchies according to one's proximity to the central functions of globalization, Saskia asserts that belonging and ownership of the global city comes into question:

One way of thinking about the political implications of this strategic transnational space anchored in global cities is in terms of the formation of new claims on that space. The global city particularly has emerged as a site for new claims: by global capital, which uses the global city as an "organizational commodity," but also by disadvantaged sectors of the urban population, frequently as internationalized a presence in global cities as capital. The "denationalizing" of urban space and the formation of new claims by transnational actors, raise the question: Whose city is it?

The global city and the network of these cities is a space that is both place-centered in that it is embedded in particular and strategic locations; and it is transterritorial because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other. If we consider that global cities concentrate both the leading sectors of global capital and a growing share of disadvantaged populations (immigrants, many of the disadvantaged women, people of color generally, and, in the megacities of developing countries, masses of shanty dwellers) then we can see that cities have become a strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts and contradictions. (Sassen 39.)

I quote Sassen at length here in order to highlight the process through which disadvantaged sectors emerge in and around the global city. Exemplary of such a process is the rise of the BGC as a transnational business center wherein the interests of the national government remain consistent with those of the private business sector. As such, the government becomes part of the conglomerate that owns this "city" with the same vested interests in accumulating capital at any cost, much like a corporation. The collusion of the public and private interests literally remapped and developed this once colonial space as a global city, while poverty and the urban decay that constitute the rest of Metro Manila remain largely ignored.

This chapter deploys Sassen's construct of the global city as a space shaped and remapped by global capital. I build on this formulation and further argue that while global cities remain the locus of the business of globalization, spaces outside the urban city are also being remapped by the unbound flow of capital. Through two films—Lukas Moodysson's *Mammoth* (2009) and Rory B. Quintos's *Dubai* (2005)—I expose the persistent presence of capital from the cosmopolitan cities of Bangkok and Dubai to the rural spaces of Thailand and the Philippines in order to illustrate the totalizing effect of the global economy. Moreover, I also argue that suffering is spectacularized in representations of women in feminized forms of labor in these films as global locals are fetishized global locales to promote the promise of upward mobility embedded onto the acquisition of capital. Consequently, women from the so-called Third World are cast as docile and controllable bodies whose skills are singularly engaged as feminized laborers in the global city. Thus, alongside Sassen, this chapter also deploys Michel Foucault's formulation of the "docile body" from *Discipline and Punish* to reveal how transmigrants, specifically the OCW, are managed into disciplined laboring bodies in the global city.

*Mammoth* is the highly anticipated 2009 film by Swedish writer-director Lukas Moodysson. His films, including *Fucking Åmål* (1998), *Together* (2000), *Lilya 4-ever* (2002), and *A Hole in My Heart* (2006), garnered critical acclaim and earned him the reputation as one of Sweden's great up-and-coming directors. *Mammoth*, however, was received, at best, with some tepid reviews, at worst, with hisses and boos at the Berlin International Film Festival screening in 2009. A film, which on the surface explores some familiar motifs of transnational films—multiple, intersecting storylines set in cosmopolitan (First World) centers and in Third World spaces, told in multiple languages and explorations of modern-day geopolitical dilemmas vis-à-vis transnational movements—has invoked some strong feelings about the validity of such a

project. The critiques seem to be aimed at the failed promise this film represents in Moodysson; that his first foray into English-language filmmaking was such a critical and box office failure was perceived by critics as stemming from the public's fatigue of the self-righteousness exhibited by filmmakers when they decide to make geopolitics the subject of their art. One critic writes that the film's treatment of issues of globalization is a "fatuous, self-serving and fantastically dishonest exercise in pseudo-compassion."<sup>8</sup> Another writes that the film is "crude liberal hand-wringing of a familiar kind."<sup>9</sup> However the hostility towards the film seems as much about Moodysson's shortcomings as a filmmaker as it is about the politicized topic he chose to explore, which I argue implies the desire for the separation of politics and art, and that somehow the collusion of the two leads to less convincing or authentic artistic production. As mainstream critics express fatigue over the emotion and sentimentality presented in the film, I contend that this visceral reaction results from the critics' confrontation with the anguished and weeping bodies dispersed along the global landscape. As the film, without much subtlety, forces its audience to confront the suffering of women whose bodies are commodified in the global market as nannies and sex workers, it implicates those of us who occupy the privileged spaces of global capital as exploiters within this system, whether or not we recognize the role we play.

As *Mammoth* maps out the process through which women are commodified, the film seeks to implicate the bourgeois First World subject in the exploitation of women in the global city. In this film we see not only the trajectories of First World capital in and out of the so-called developing world, but also the exchange of Third World bodies engaged in feminized labor. While the reviews remain critical of the film's engagement with global politics, the critique I

---

<sup>8</sup> Bradshaw, Peter. "Mammoth-Review." *The Guardian*. 4 Nov. 2010. Web. April 2011. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/nov/04/mammoth-film-review>>

<sup>9</sup> French, Phillip. "Mammoth-Review." *The Guardian*. 6 Nov. 2010. Web. April 2011. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/nov/07/mammoth-review>>

level here focuses not on the validity of the film's subject matter, but rather on the way it chooses to represent the bodies of women onscreen. Almost exclusively victims of exploitation, the women in this film are made into grieving and crying spectacles, thus making their distress constitutive of the feminine experience and their position as subjects from the so-called Third World.

The film begins in New York City, in a loft of a young and affluent nuclear family: Leo (Gael Garcia Bernal), Ellen (Michelle Williams) and their daughter, Jackie (Sophie Nyweide). From New York, Leo a web and video game savant, travels to Thailand with his business partner, Bob, in order to finalize the multi-million dollar investment of a Singaporean multinational corporation into Leo's gaming web site. During the plane ride to Bangkok, Bob gives Leo a pen inlaid with ivory mammoth tusk he is to use to sign the contracts and to commemorate the success of their business venture. Leo looks at the pen with fascination as Bob explains that the ivory comes from mammoth remains found in Siberia, dried and processed for five years then inlaid into the pen, which accounts for its \$3,000 price. I highlight this scene not only because the impetus for the title is revealed here, but also because this scene marks the first of many border crossings in the film motivated by capitalist exchange. The ease with which this crossing is made by both Leo and Bob who are given unlimited access to Third World locales as they travel via private jet thus bypassing the kind of public scrutiny from security and immigration authorities at the airport. That they travel to Thailand—whose sex tourism industry seems to be the primary reason it was chosen as the meeting place—in order to finalize a multi-million dollar deal, rather than to Singapore where his investors' company is based or even remain in New York, further highlights the kinds of exchanges, both within formal

and informal economies such as sex tourism, Leo and his cohort are availed because of their position as a participants within the global economy.

The next time we encounter Leo, he is in his hotel room in Bangkok. His suite looks much like his loft in New York: clean, spare, modern and loaded with technology. Leo explores his room and on a table of toiletries and baubles for hotel guests, he sees an aerosol canister labeled “personal oxygen.” Curious, he releases air from the can and inhales deeply. Taking the canister with him, he slowly walks over to the set of large windows in his suite and for a moment he gazes at the urban sprawl of Bangkok (figure 2.1). We too, encounter Bangkok in this way—from a comfortable distance, behind heavy glass windows, within a high-rise hotel building—and while part of our line of sight is partially obstructed by Leo’s darkened outline at the center of the screen, from this view, Thailand, at least Bangkok, looks just like any other urban center. This is precisely the point: what Leo sees in Bangkok—concrete structures jutting up from the ground, highways congested with cars cutting through the center of the city, smaller buildings clustered together making up the teeming urban gray mass—is not unlike what he sees in New York in his daily life, thus Bangkok is positioned as a global city, through which capital passes without much restriction. As Leo occupies the privileged spaces of a globalizing city like Bangkok, as a First World subject, the film itself endows him with the same privilege at the center of its narrative. This moment in which Leo occupies the center of the screen, as he gazes into the concreteness of Bangkok from his high-rise hotel window, is an apt visual representation of his central position throughout the film. As representative of foreign capital, helping fuel and define such spaces, the city and its laboring bodies are shown to be in tune with Leo’s needs and desires. The bottle of personal oxygen he carries with him around his posh suite shows that even freely flowing air can be bottled and manufactured for the transnational elite. That Leo does not

have to breathe in the smog seen in the film settling over the city in a haze—a consequence of car exhaust and manufacturing, markers of capitalist modernity—while the Thai masses live with the pollution in the everyday, represents the hierarchies organizing the global city.



Figure 2.1

*Mammoth* also highlights the unofficial economies that help buttress the GDP of the nation-state, making Bangkok a viable global city. Within moments of Leo’s arrival, a woman, presumably a hotel employee, knocks on the door offering him a massage. Leo quickly declines, then immediately calls his wife in New York. Though unable to reach her, he leaves a message in which he speculates whether or not the hotel employee is actually offering sex along with the massage. He laughs out loud as if in disbelief that such “services” are available to him despite the fact that the woman at the door never actually offers him sex. This assumption, of course, is derived from the knowledge that Thailand is a major destination for sex tourism in the world, with a large percentage of profit from general tourism coming from the unofficial market of prostitution wherein so-called legitimate businesses, like major hotels, are implicated in the exchange of women. Tourism, for many nations like Thailand, is not only a major source of revenue but is also integral in the effort to pay off its national debt owed to institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. In fact, the IMF and World Bank see tourism as a viable way to

increase national GDP and require the development of tourist industries for many indebted nations.

Such economic conditions, exacerbated by high unemployment is a consequence of globalizing a national economy in which local companies and local means of employment are replaced by trans- and multinational corporations creates, what Saskia Sassen calls “alternative circuits of survival” within the global city. In “Women's Burden: Counter-Geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival” (2002) Sassen explores “counter-geographies,” that is the “alternative global circuits for making a living, earning a profit and securing government revenue” that have increasingly become feminized as women take on the roles of primary wage earners (273). She points out however, that women, immigrants especially, do not have access to the privileged corporate sectors of the global city so they are relegated to working low-wage jobs in service industries as maids, nannies or as illegally trafficked prostitutes and mail-order brides. As nation-states, especially from the global South, use tourism to buttress their economies, the sex trade industry has become a part of the formal economy of tourism.

Sassen writes:

As tourism has grown sharply over the last decade and become a major part of the development strategy for cities, regions and countries, the entertainment sector has experienced parallel growth and recognition as a key development target. In many places, the sex trade is part of the entertainment industry and has grown similarly. At some point it becomes clear that the sex trade itself can become a development strategy in areas with high unemployment and poverty and where governments are desperate for revenue and foreign currency. (269-70)

Sassen points out that both the Philippines and Thailand, to varying degrees, have institutionalized the exchange of women in entertainment and service industries locally and abroad to ensure the continuous flow of remittances buttressing the national economy. While, in the case of the Philippines, the exchange of labor in service industries is brokered primarily

through the government institution Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) and women working in entertainment are exchanged through independent agencies—agencies supplying organized gangs with Filipinas as singers and dancers and often as prostitutes in countries like Japan—the nation-state remains the beneficiary of about \$1 billion in remittances every year (Sassen 271). Such organized efforts to import the Filipina laborer is not only a result of and becomes motivation for the desires of the Philippine nation-state to remain relevant in a globalized world economy as explored in the first chapter, but such concerted efforts also creates a population of exploited and exploitable women existing in the fringes of global cities like Tokyo and Dubai.

While the labor of Thai women, like Filipinas, is also exported through the concerted efforts by the Thai nation-state for service industry work, local women must also contend with the new urban cartographies defined by the flow of capital into the globalized city. It is here where we have to consider the spaces forgotten under the schema of the global city. Sassen argues in “The Global City: Strategic Site, New Frontier” (2000) the localization of global economies leads to the “rupture of the traditional dynamic whereby membership in leading economic sectors contributes conditions towards the formation of a labor aristocracy” wherein “‘women and immigrants’ come to replace the Fordist/family-wage category of ‘women and children’” (Sassen 86). As local geographies are organized to accommodate the flow of capital—free trade zones, communication infrastructure, transnational corporate hubs, high-priced hotels and residences, highways and roads—the spaces that used to mark the local disappear from plain sight and become sites for the exchange of and easy exploitation of women and immigrants. The Bangkok Leo encounters is such a space and here we see how capital levels the varied topographical landscapes everywhere. The hotel employee who offers him

massage services; the man on the motor bike, whom Leo observes from the window of his air-conditioned car, half of his face hidden by a mask in an attempt to keep out the smoggy air; the waiter who serves lunch while Bob loudly encourages Leo to partake in what the city has to offer, a scarcely veiled encouragement to procure a prostitute—these characters are seen briefly, and their quiet presence gestures to a world that exists beyond the privileged spaces within the global city, their existence made peripheral by capital's remapping of urban spaces and the film's limited visual scope.

Everywhere, specters of the people marginalized or made useless by capital haunt the alienated globalized space of Bangkok where local life is only represented vis-à-vis Leo. He feels this haunting as a kind of urban ennui and a longing for an experience outside the homogenizing thrusts of capital. His solution is to leave the city to escape the alienation he feels amidst the concrete and steel structures of Bangkok, to search for spaces left untouched by capitalist modernity. This search for difference and authenticity leads him to the coast where he chooses to stay in a hut on the beach, rather than in another posh resort hotel. There he feels seemingly at home and at ease, which is ironic after staying in a hotel that mimics the kind of comfort and conveniences he is accustomed to in his New York City loft. Immediately, Leo buys shorts and a t-shirt from a vendor on the beach. When the vendor sees Leo's watch he shows him the imitation version and, amazed at the "realness" of the knock-off watch, Leo decides to buy it too. Soon after, as if to shed the vestiges of urban decay from his body, he runs into the ocean and wading into the water, he faces the sunset seemingly at peace.

This movement from the city to the more rural spaces of Thailand marks Leo's quest for authenticity in the face of the homogenized urban landscape. Here, authenticity is marked by under development, where so-called Third World identity is seen and experienced through

“traditional” cultural expressions that are posited against capitalist modernity. This desire for authenticity however, illustrates how First World significations reify so-called Third World subjectivity as something that is perpetually temporally belated. The way that capital is able to flow in and out of these locales actually makes this process easy and all the more efficient because these spaces are reorganized to fulfill the needs of the transnational elite. As the needs and wants of this elite are fulfilled, the particularities of global spaces are emptied out and replaced by the infrastructure of capitalism. Certainly this phenomenon is apparent in Bangkok, but as Leo tries to escape to a space presumably untouched by the capital, we quickly realize no such place, at least in the film, exists. Leo is not privy to this insight, however, identifying completely with this part of Thailand and recognizing it as an authentic embodiment of Thai culture. But what he recognizes as the markers of “culture” has actually already been transformed by capital. The beach vendor selling imitation name-brand products is but one indication of the reach of capitalist consumption. Here, the mobility of capital is made explicit by the ready availability of foreign consumer products. That these products, like Leo’s new watch, are imitations of the “real thing” highlights the ability of capital to replicate itself in other locales. As it does so, it simultaneously redefines the value of objects with symbols of name brands that elevate their value.

As the flow of capital through national borders makes possible the hypermobility of transnational elites, spaces outside the global city are transformed and become susceptible to transformation by capital. Like the global city, rural spaces—the beach community Leo visits, for example—become part of this larger network. Unlike the homogenized urban concrete and steel structures however, these rural areas are constructed to bear more prominently the markers of “culture” as a way to seduce the business of transnational elites. Moreover cultural

authenticity is also expressed through tourist lures like eco-friendly lodging, nature adventures, such as cave explorations and snorkeling, signaling specificity and differentiation from urban city living. Such enticements for transnational subjects not only transform local economies into tourist economies—where hotels replace local industries and traditional forms of subsistence replace service work—but also reposition cultural authenticity as natural, quaint and primitive. These expressions of cultural authenticity then become tantamount to ascribing temporal belatedness to the spaces that appear opposed to the global city model, and this difference allows for the capitalist appropriations of local culture for the consumption of transnational elites.

Leo's more relaxed attitude upon reaching the coast signals not only the physical move away from the global city to a space perceived to be unmarred by capital, but also the move from capitalist modernity to the "time of the Other"—to borrow Johannes Fabian's term—a temporal position suspended in the past and utilized to preserve old colonial binaries.<sup>10</sup> As I have discussed in the first chapter, by casting the so-called Third World as temporally belated, it is denied coevalness or equivalence in the global stage. What Leo fails to recognize however is that this temporal belatedness, exemplified by his natural surroundings, is actually the product of the very thing he is escaping from in the city; that the pristine beach, the hut where he chooses to stay (as opposed to the posh hotel where his driver initially takes him), the bar he visits whose patronage comprises other expats and transnationals, all signify the totalizing influence of capital. His desire for escape is so profound that when he befriends the expats in a beach bar, he lies to them and says that he has been traveling across the globe in the last few months. While this lie indicates his growing urban fatigue, it is, more importantly, a disavowal of his own participation in the global economy. This is, by no means, a recognition of the exploitation built

---

<sup>10</sup> Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

into the practice of capitalism; as a transnational subject Leo does not have access to this kind of awareness, at this moment or at any point in the film. Rather, this denial expresses his alienation from the urban spaces he usually occupies, an inherently self-centered affliction consistent with the privileging of the transnational elite. While the film ultimately exposes the fallibility and unreliability of this character in the end, for the most part the film presents Leo as deserving of sympathy. Seemingly unassuming and soft-spoken, he shirks at the possibility of going out to nightclubs and seems to possess a genuine desire to connect with Thailand, the people around him and even his wife, whom he calls almost obsessively in the beginning. The development of this character as “just a nice guy” shows that the film seems to absolve Leo from his complicity with global capital. In fact, it remains so invested in maintaining the supposed demarcation between the homogenous city and the “authentic” rural space that the film presents the character’s time at the beach as one of introspection where he is able to finally recognize the perceived absence of human connection in his life from all those years living in the urban city.

Predictably, Leo becomes involved with a Thai sex worker named Cookie (Natthamonkarn Srinikornchot) whom he meets in a nearby bar. While he does not immediately solicit her services, he does see her again when she visits his hut on the beach and offers to take him to see some local sights, the first stop being a visit to a Buddhist altar with the mummified remains of a monk encased in glass, still shrouded in traditional saffron robes and wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses. Everywhere in this film we see local realities colliding with the homogenizing time of capital, and the bespectacled mummified monk exemplifies such intersections. Yet, rather than bear witness to what Partha Chatterjee, in “Anderson’s Utopia” (1999), calls the “heterogeneous time of modernity”—that is, the collusion of capitalist modernity with the heterogeneous “local” times of postcolonial nations (Chatterjee 132)—*Mammoth* makes rigid the

delineations between the cosmopolitan city, like New York and Bangkok and its rural settings in Thailand and, as I will explore later in the chapter, the Philippines. Not only are the landscapes shown as vastly different—the city’s high rise buildings, concrete highways and congestion versus the lush greenery, the wild animals roaming dirt roads and the huts and makeshift low-laying structures—but shots of city scenes are often saturated in bright white light, a stark contrast to the natural lighting used everywhere else in the film. This artificial white light, akin to the glow of fluorescent lighting, is used most particularly whenever the story returns to Leo’s wife in New York, in her most still moments as she attempts to fight off insomnia in their loft or in the hospital where she works as a doctor as she cares for an unconscious young patient who has stabbed by his own mother. The differing ways these spaces are represented by the director, Moodysson, amplify the multiple movements, within the films narrative and with its characters, from cosmopolitan centers to rural spaces, but also inhibit the simultaneity of temporal realities. In its white sterility, the New York and Bangkok Leo encounters are static and seemingly immovable; these are behemoth cities borne out of globalization, moving only in accordance with the homogenous empty time of capital, while the rural spaces outside the global city remain trapped in perpetual underdevelopment even as capital shapes their local economies. While Moodysson may have aspired to depict the interconnectedness of these characters through emotive expression—they are, after all, just mothers suffering for their children, lovers with the same desires, and children yearning for care—the film actually makes difference more pronounced through these rigid spatial demarcations, without critically addressing the role that the free flow of capital plays in reshaping the relationships between the characters and the places in the film. Rather than a narrative featuring attempts to forge human connections through shared experiences in spite of the dehumanizing urbanity of the global city, what we get instead

is a vision of a world connected by the circuits of capitalism, from the privileged spaces where the most obvious work of globalization is carried out (the global city) to spaces outside the global city where capital remains a dictatorial, albeit more covert, force.

Embedded within the relationship between Cookie and Leo and the differences in the representations of Thailand and—as I will discuss later, the Philippines—is the United States’ role in propelling these countries as tourist destinations, particularly as sites for sex tourism. Beginning in World War II, continuing through the Vietnam War and, in the case of the Philippines, sustained by the extended housing of U.S. military bases (Chapter One), the labor of the Thai and Filipina sex workers are inherently tied to the tourist industry. Laura Hyun Yi Kang in her book *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian American Women* (2002) argues that the figuration of the Asian American woman as a docile and exotic subject stems largely from the ways in which Asian women have been historically racialized in order to exploit their labor—in factories and in brothels—for the sake of capital. She writes that the sexualization of the Asian female body is the product of efforts of the U.S. government in collusion with international banking institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, and the national governments of these Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines:

Thailand was officially designated as the official rest and relaxation (R and R) site for American troops during the Vietnam War through a 1967 treaty with the Thai government [...] The sudden and intense wartime demand for R and R created an economic boom so that by 1970 the American soldiers spent \$20 million [...] When the United States eliminated Sydney and Hong Kong as R and R sites in the latter part of the Vietnam War, there was even greater emphasis placed on Thailand to fulfill this role. However, the construction of more hotels, bars, and other infrastructure, much of it financed by short-term, high-interest loans, resulted in an oversupply following the gradual withdrawal of the troops in the early 1970s. Having gained international reputation as a sexual playground, the military-catered sex service industry reoriented itself toward an increasingly civilian clientele. Although there were similar shifts of sex services toward foreign, civilian and predominantly male clientele in South Korea and the Philippines, Thailand would assume a singularly notorious place in the formation and

growth of what has alternately been called “tourism prostitution” or “sex tourism.” (Kang 172)

Tracing the transition from R and R to tourist destination, Kang points out that the current tourist industries in Thailand and the Philippines were born out of the sustained U.S. military interest in this region. Following military withdrawal, the development of the tourist industry became part of a concerted international effort as a means of “combining the creation of new travel destinations with the emerging international agenda of economic development” (Kang 173) which included loans for infrastructure from the World Bank, and local private corporations, endorsements from the United Nations and smaller foreign investors who, were able to set up businesses in Thailand despite a law that required businesses to be at least fifty percent Thai owned (Kang 173-175). One well-known example, which Kang cites is the case of L.T. “Cowboy” Edwards after whom the Soi Cowboy district of bars and clubs was named, after he opened “The Cowboy,” one of Bangkok’s first bars. A consequence of foreign-owned business is Western-style entertainment venues like go-go or girlie bars that push the female Thai worker as the main consumer product. As Kang concludes, “[c]onsidering that international tourism is categorized as an export-commodity in the calculation of balances, its women sex workers can be said to perform a kind of export-oriented labor” (Kang 175).

Using the sex tourism industry in Thailand as a way to resolve Leo’s urban ennui, the film mirrors these exploitive practices as it continues to commodify the labor of the sex worker. While the film makes it quite clear that Leo did not seek out Cookie for sex and that we are meant to take the time they spent together as an expression of Leo’s sincere feelings for her, in the end he still maintains his privileged position as a transnational subject. Furthermore, the emotive connections between the characters depicted by the film—the feelings of alienation, guilt, obligation, sadness and anguish—become expressions of the uneven relationship between

those favored and marginalized by capital. Such a binary is constitutive of this globalized economy, which again as Sassen points out, creates a hierarchical labor system, whereby the financial sector at any given global city is valorized while immigrant and female workers are relegated to the low-wage service or caregiver positions. These binary divisions rely on the deliberate devaluing of these groups, especially immigrant women, and the work they perform within the global city. Leo's relationship with Cookie exemplifies this dynamic as they remain permanently locked within their roles as privileged transnational and exploited sex worker. Again, the film tries very hard to show the pair's regard for each other by framing their bond as natural and borne out of a genuine desire for human connection, and as their friendly relationship becomes a sexual one, this too is presented as an idealized romance between two consensual people. The film, however, fails to recognize that this relationship is a result of a direct intervention of capital, and that their connection manifests the exploitation of women built into the uneven relationship between the privileged transnational subject and the exploitable sex worker. They did after all meet in a bar, a thinly veiled cover for what it really is: a brothel wherein young Thai women "entertain" older white men as part of the exchange fueling Thailand's tourist economy. Sex work, like service industry and manufacturing work, constitute the kinds of exploitive work largely performed by women. What I critique here is the erasure of Cookie's agency as Leo's desires and needs take precedent over everything else, and that the film always privileges the fulfillment of his desires at whatever cost and that Cookie, like the beach, the lush greenery of the tropics, the dirt roads they traverse, is merely just another tool for Leo to unhitch the burdens of modernity. That we never know Cookie's real name or the fact that she is likened to the elephants freely roaming the rural landscape which so fascinate Leo, and that in the end—when he realized the potential damage he has done to his relationship with

his family at home and to Cookie after promising her a job in Bangkok and a leisurely life together—Leo abandons her sleeping in the beach hut, leaving behind his two watches and his mammoth pen as compensation, exemplify the uneven relationship between the hypermobile transnational who may come and go as he pleases and the exploitable local forced into sex labor in order to subsist.

In an interview titled “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine” (1985), Luce Irigaray discusses the effects of the commodification of women within capitalist exchange. Describing the process whereby women lose their subjectivity, she argues that

[i]n our social order, women are ‘products’ used and exchanged by men, Their status is that of merchandise, ‘commodities’. How can objects of use and transaction claim the right to speak and to participate in exchange in general? Commodities as we all know do not take themselves to market on their own; and if they could talk...So women have to remain an ‘infrastructure’ unrecognized as such by our society and our culture. The use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualized bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as ‘subjects’. (Irigaray 131)

Losing the ability of speech, commodified women are therefore unable to participate within this economy because they remain invisible, since for Irigaray, the inability to signify one’s self automatically equates to the loss of agency. Here, I must point out that in *Capital* (1887), Karl Marx actually posits the possibility of “speaking” commodities: “Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, belongs to us as objects is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange-values.” He goes on to say that “the use-value of objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects” (Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader* 328). Here Marx makes a distinction between the value of an object in and of itself, versus its value after it has been exchanged and made into a commodity; although an

object has value as itself, it is also valuable as an object of exchange between men. If commodities were given the ability to “speak,” as Marx has done, it seems that among all other values, the exchange-value gains more privilege. These objects see themselves as pure exchange-values, as commodities that are worth something only if they are exchanged. When Irigaray asserts that women have been commodified, what she offers is more than just a critique of the masculine psychoanalytic discourse, but a critique of capitalism and the way in which this system denies women’s subjectivity so that women themselves, like Marx’s talking commodities, have internalized their own subjugation and see themselves as valuable only when set against or exchanged by men.

Left without the power to signify and withheld from the right to their own in both processes of production and reproduction, woman and their value are then dictated by the men who use their sexualized body as commodity while she is prohibited from actually participating in the transaction. This is where Irigaray’s critique of Sigmund Freud in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) intersects with a critique of capitalism. For Freud, femininity remains an essentially passive and unsolvable variable, wrapped up in mystique and mystery. These conclusions work to simultaneously deny women the ability to create definitions for themselves and claim reproductive agency. As in the capitalist system, women have value because they hold within them the fruit of men’s reproductive labor, thus her value lies solely upon her sexed body. However, her body remains necessary for man’s “seed capital” to thrive. She ensures that his children—and they *are* his because only he has the agency to claim the children for himself when he passes his name to them—are able to survive so he may enjoy the fruits of his own reproductive labor. Indeed for Irigaray,

[...] the patriarchal order is [...] the one that functions as the *organization and monopolization of private property to the benefit of the head of the family*. It is his proper

name, the name of the father, that determines ownership of the family, including the wife and the children---for the wife, monogamy; for the children the precedence of a male line, and specifically of the eldest son who bears his name---is also required to ensure 'the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of a single individual – a man' [...]. How then can the analysis of women's exploitation be dissociated from the analysis of modes of appropriation? (Irigaray 130)

Equating the capitalist exploitation of women with their private subjugation as mothers, Irigaray concludes that the common denominator between these two is the appropriation of women as private property. What then happens at home within the nuclear family is representative of women's subjugation on the social scale within the capitalist system. In my first chapter, I argue that the maintenance of the patriarchal family structure in the film *La Visa Loca* is crucial in maintaining the female OCW's allegiance to her son and her soon-to-be husband, as well as the nation state. While her labor might have been removed from the global market, the film's resolution nevertheless positions her as an object of exchange, as she instead becomes the object through which the son, the father and the nation maintain their alliance and dominance.

To deny women from participating in the sexual economy not only mirrors the exploitation she experiences as a commodity within capitalism, but it also denies her from forming homosocial bonds with other women, important for Irigaray because this ensures the realization of a genealogy of women. Commodified as such, she is unable to become a productive and reproductive participant within the sexual economy, facilitating instead the formation of homosocial bonds among men through the exchange of her body. This is the very reason why Thailand, as a setting for the film, is significant for it is through the feminized laboring body, and the feminized national body of Thailand that capitalist transactions are completed. As Tadiar argues in *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*, in the case of the Philippines, "[p]rostitution thus pertains not only to the metaphorical construction of the Philippines as both female and feminine (signifying its lack

of political and economic power and its status as possessed territory with permeable boundaries), but also the actual conscription of female workers and their sexualized labor” (Tadiar 30). Applicable to the depiction of Thailand and Thai sex workers, both the female body and the feminized national body becomes the sites for the (masculine) exchange of capital.

While it would seem that Moodysson’s film links women’s plights together, it instead emphasizes Irigaray’s point. The commodification of Cookie and Gloria (Marife Necesito), Ellen and Leo’s nanny, most aptly represents the tenuous ties between the women in the film. As dominant preoccupation of the film, the purported emotive connections between mothers across geopolitical boundaries, is exemplified by Ellen and Gloria’s interactions. While Leo spends his time in Thailand, Ellen remains in New York with their daughter Jackie who is cared for by Gloria while Ellen works the night shift as a surgeon. For most of the film, Ellen battles insomnia, troubled by the tragedies she sees everyday in the hospital and wracked with guilt because of her distant relationship with her daughter who has developed a deep attachment to Gloria. Meanwhile, as Gloria cares for Jackie, she too is dealing with the trials of motherhood as an overseas contract worker (OCW) whose children in the Philippines struggle to come to terms with her prolonged absence. Immediately, Moodysson’s masculinist tendencies show through the heteronormative division of familial roles. While Leo is in Thailand unhitching the burdens of modernity, Ellen must perform her gendered role as caretaker to their daughter. Even her job as a surgeon is feminized as she cares for a young boy in critical condition after his own mother stabs him. As her night shift schedule interferes with her ability to maintain a strong bond with Jackie, she is also confronted by the deteriorating health and eventual death of her patient, the boy who was stabbed by his mother. Struggling through these losses, she is shown as a character of limited dimension whose anxieties revolve around her failings as a mother and care taker. Her

failure to perform her ascribed gender role—which the film presents as her shortcomings as a mother—parallels her inability to save the boy’s life, consequently manifesting as chronic insomnia.

Similarly, Gloria is shown exclusively as a mother and caretaker. As a nanny, she has become a proxy for Jackie’s absent parents, replacing Ellen as the primary mother figure in the girl’s life. Meanwhile, it is revealed that Gloria has two children whom she provides for in the Philippines. Left to the care of their grandmother, Salvador and Manuel are unable to fully cope with the prolonged absence of their own mother while Gloria is left having to constantly reassure them of her love through the phone or, when she is able to, through the material goods she sends them from the States. Here the film draws parallels between Gloria and Ellen: both are so wedded to their roles as mothers that they take on this role with children who are not their own. However, these obligations to other people’s children—Ellen with her young patient and Gloria with Jackie—prohibit them from fulfilling their role as mother to their own biological children. For Ellen, this causes such a break in her psyche that she is left wandering her austere apartment, bathed in harsh white light, feeling uneasy and unable to sleep, while Gloria has to live with the tragedy of her son’s physical and psychological trauma as he is raped when he tries to earn money in an attempt to bring his mother home (figure 2.2).

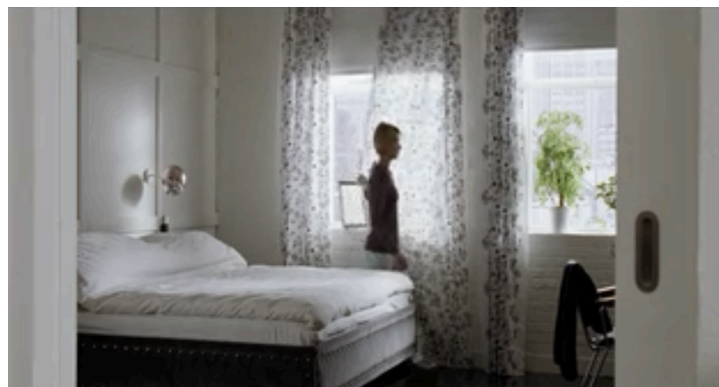


Figure 2.2

While the film makes the connections between Gloria and Ellen salient through some sincere moments—for example, between Gloria and Jackie when she takes Jackie to a church gathering among Filipino/a OCWs living in New York and then buys her a picture book of Filipino words or when Ellen, after losing her young patient on the operating table, is seen crying in the hospital locker room from grief—the roles these women take on remain nevertheless problematic for two reasons. First, they are portrayed exclusively as mothers and caretakers with all of their joys and anxieties wrapped up in their ability to care for children. As such, their connection is not only naturalized as belonging exclusively within the realm of femininity, but the fulfillment of this femininity is intrinsically linked to their ability to parent and care for children. Thus, as Ellen and Gloria’s children suffer from their absences, they alone—rather than parceling culpability onto the absent fathers, economic need or career obligations—carry the burden of the tragedies that befall their children. Moreover, as these women are linked through motherhood, the film purports that somehow such a connection fosters a kind of natural community among these women forged through their mutual suffering as they carry the weight of motherhood. Moodysson reinforces this point towards the end of the film when a crying Cookie is shown talking to her baby on her cell phone the same way that the tearful Gloria often assures her children, via long distance calls, that she will come home to them very soon (figure 2.3). Again, this not only reifies the position of women as natural mothers but it also posits suffering as a constitutive, and therefore acceptable, part of the experience of femininity.



Figure 2.3

Second, and more importantly, as Ellen, Gloria and Cookie are linked through their experiences as mothers, the particularities of each of their geopolitical realities are eclipsed for the sake of promoting the universality of feminine struggle. Here, Ellen’s choice to work long hours as a surgeon is equated with the circumstances that compel Gloria to work in New York instead of remaining in the Philippines or ones that drive Cookie to sex work in order to earn a living. Given the grief Gloria and Cookie exhibit in the film it is quite unlikely that they would willingly make such choices. Likening Ellen’s ability to work as a surgeon, and then hire a nanny to care for Jackie, with Gloria and Cookie’s experiences as mothers is tantamount to suggesting that “choice” is something that all three women can equally exercise.

As I have discussed in the Introduction, the remittances from OCWs in feminized labor sectors, namely the service industry help buttress the Philippine GDP. According to the most recent statistic from the Central Bank of the Philippines, OCWs remitted \$21.4 billion, close to 10%, of the national GDP, making the exchange of the Filipina laboring body in the global market integral to fulfilling the desire of the nation-state to remain competitive in the globalized economy.<sup>11</sup> As high unemployment levels in the Philippines hold steady for the last few years,

---

<sup>11</sup> Focus Economics. “Remittances hit Record High in 2012,” 15 Feb 2013. Web. May 2013. < [http://www.focus-economics.com/en/economy/news/Philippines-Remittances-Remittances\\_hit\\_record\\_high\\_in\\_2012-2013-02-15](http://www.focus-economics.com/en/economy/news/Philippines-Remittances-Remittances_hit_record_high_in_2012-2013-02-15)>.

with most of the population employed in low-paying service sector jobs, the pull to find work elsewhere as an OCW becomes less about choice and more about necessity. Similarly, when tourism in Thailand remains a big part of the nation-state's revenue with sex tourism helping drive this part of the economy, often sex work becomes a more viable way of earning a living, especially for young women living in more rural areas where local subsistence industries are replaced by the tourist industry. As nation-states like the Philippines and Thailand are compelled to compete globally, local economies are restructured in order to better facilitate the flow of capital. Certainly this is true for global cities like Bangkok, as well as the more rural areas that generate tourist traffic, as is the case for the Philippines where the urban financial sector, Makati, located in Metro Manila, is privileged as the seat of economic wealth. The realities create the discrepancies in opportunities for women embodied by both Gloria and Cookie, virtually obliterating individual agency and choice when it comes to employment.

Moreover, the film denies the privileged position that both Leo and Ellen occupy as mobile cosmopolitan subjects, compared to Cookie's grounded position and Gloria's contractual status. As with Leo's relationship with Cookie wherein his point of view is positioned at the center of the narrative, the same goes for Ellen and her interactions with Gloria. While Moodysson's narrative "arrives" in the Philippines long enough to peer into the lives of Gloria's sons, Gloria's steadfastly flat representation renders her as either caring for Jackie or crying for her sons. She is supposed to connect Cookie and Ellen—whose lives represent the supposed contrast between the grounded and exploited laboring body without agency and the so-called First World subject whose labor is marked as choice rather than necessity—since her OCW position allows her relative mobility and relative access to the privileged spaces of capital. However, the film reduces her to a caring and crying caricature, thus exposing not only the

limitations of creating solidarity among women whose relationship is premised upon capitalist exploitation, but also revealing that, rather than shared suffering, Ellen and Gloria are bound by the circuits of capital which maintain the dynamic between exploiter and exploited bodies.

The “visits” the film takes to the Philippines merely reinforce the spatial ambiguity that the Philippines, and certainly Thailand as well, occupies in this narrative. The ease with which the film travels between New York, Thailand and the Philippines through some masterful editing along thematic ties implies the permeability of borders as the world shrinks into known and knowable spaces. However, this closeness, celebrated as the biggest accomplishment of globalization, undercuts the very real disparities between the lived experiences of those belonging to the global sites privileged by capital and those from “over there,” the places classified as underdeveloped and not yet fully integrated into the capital landscape. Hence as the film permeates borders to show what it must be like to live “over there,” the grief that both Gloria’s sons, Salvador (Jon Nicdao) and Manuel (Martin de los Santos), experience is coded as something that is particular to the so-called developing world, as exclusively Third World suffering because it happens in Third World spaces demarcated by tropical flora, dirt roads, makeshift buildings and mounds of unkempt trash. Much like Leo’s foray into the rural spaces of Thailand, the film visits the Philippines long enough to show Salvador abused by a pedophile, a white man, thus framing this kind of suffering as constitutive of the so-called Third World and the spatial remoteness ascribed to such places.

*Mammoth* begins and ends with Ellen’s nuclear family in tact, and despite Leo’s infidelity in Thailand and the tragic circumstances compelling Gloria to return to the Philippines, we see the relative stability afforded to those who occupy the privileged spaces of the globalized economy. In the end Leo, Ellen and their sleeping daughter occupy the center of the screen,

marking quite literally the central position they occupy as mobile, transnational subjects living within a globalized city in the United States. When Ellen utters her final line of the film, “We are going to have to find a new nanny,” and Leo quietly agrees, the developing kinship between Ellen and Gloria as mothers seen throughout the film, is eclipsed by the immediate need of finding a new nanny. Thus, while the film promotes the connectedness between Ellen, Gloria and Cookie as one forged by the emotive expression of suffering built into the experience of motherhood, it is in fact capitalist consumption that creates and sustains this network of women. While Gloria’s labor is consumed by Ellen as she works as a surgeon, thus maintaining her consumer power, Cookie’s laboring body is also consumed by Leo, and others like him, who partakes in sex tourism in Thailand. Here the laboring body of the nanny and the sex worker are simultaneously created and exploited by the global economy and in the end, the film “forgets” about the services they perform in the same way hotel employees and other Bangkok locals are erased from view in Leo’s exploration of Bangkok. Suffering then is something we witness, something we visit and encounter sometimes when we travel “over there,” and never the thing we bring back “home.” Such is the place occupied by those privileged by capital.

My conjectures about *Mammoth* are based on the co-option of emotive regimes that I bring up in first chapter, and while in this case the nation-state may not have been directly implicated, the film nevertheless remains complicit in commodifying the suffering of Third World women whose bodies as workers in feminized forms of labor are already the objects of exchange. *Dubai* is another film set in a global city in which suffering is commodified and normalized as part of the transmigrant experience. Directed by Rory B. Quintos, and written by Ricky Lee, the film focuses on the intertwining lives of three Filipino OCWs: brothers Raffy (Aga Muhlach), Andrew (John Lloyd Cruz), and their friend, Faye (Claudine Barretto). As its

title suggests, the film is set in Dubai, one of seven emirates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a nation second only to Saudi Arabia, in hosting the highest number of Filipino OCWs. As reported by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), in 2012 there were over two hundred and fifty thousand newly hired and re-hired contractual workers in the UAE, with the majority of the total OCW population, an estimated eighty to ninety percent, comprised of women engaged in domestic or care-giving work (POEA, “Overseas Employment Statistics 2008-2012”). An estimated eighty percent of the UAE’s population comprises of expatriates, many of whom come from South and Southeast Asian countries, and its membership to the conglomerate of oil producing nations known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) evinces the UAE’s deep level of involvement in the world economy. Like *Mammoth*, the film’s projection of suffering onto the screen naturalizes such suffering as a constitutive and essential part of the OCW experience. However, while *Mammoth* becomes implicated in reifying the temporal belatedness and spatial remoteness of spaces in the so-called Third World through representations of emotive suffering, *Dubai*’s representation of OCWs celebrates the suffering an docile transmigrant body as the foremost embodiment of national pride and belonging. In so doing, the film reinforces the image of the OCW as the *bagong bayani* (new hero), an image—as I point out in the Introduction and Chapter One—constructed by the Philippine nation-state, thus reinforcing the utility of docile bodies in the global market.

*Dubai* opens with sweeping views of the landscape, an upbeat song plays in the background and then glimpses of a pick-up truck speeding down an empty road, cutting across the amber dessert of the UAE (figure 2.4). As the camera pans closer to the car, we see the driver, Raffy, singing happily with the song playing on his radio. As Raffy drives towards the city center, the Burj Al-Arab, the famous luxury hotel whose iconic architecture mimics a ship’s

sail, comes into view, along with the Dubai's pristine streets (figure 2.5). His cell phone rings twice during this drive as he receives calls from clients of the shipping company where he works and then a girlfriend confirming their date for that evening. As Raffy drives towards the city center, the Burj Al- Arab, the famous luxury hotel whose iconic architecture mimics a ship's sail, comes into view, along with the Dubai's pristine streets. He travels further into the city and his car merges onto the wide highway, running alongside a row of shiny concrete and glass high-rise buildings. As the camera pans further outward, the car disappears into the hundreds of other vehicles moving along the neat highway and becomes but a small part of the rapidly moving city. All of this—the beautiful views of the dessert landscape, Raffy speeding down an open road upbeat and seemingly without care, the wide pristine streets of the city, the gleaming high-rises punctuated by the Burj Al-Arab in the distance—set the stage for the idealized depictions of the Dubai landscape replicated throughout the film (figure 2.6).



Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6

In idealizing this locale, the film becomes complicit with the desires of capital in a number of ways. First, in presenting Dubai as a place of infinite possibilities, the film propagates the idea that upward mobility can be achieved quite easily through hard work, ignoring the very real limitations in citizenship and labor laws designed to maintain the contractual, temporary and often exploited position of the OCW. As OCWs conform to the prohibitive laws of the UAE nation-state, they are also subject to the Philippine nation-state in its desire to assert a presence within the global economy. By casting OCWs as the “*bagong bayani*” or “new heroes,” their labor is framed as the ultimate expression of nationalism, hence the suffering endured while partaking in contractual work outside the borders of the homeland becomes appropriated as a natural part of citizenship. I contend that the film is similarly

invested in the symbol of the *bagong bayani* and presents suffering as part of the OCW experience. Moreover, as the film idealizes the picturesque locales of Dubai, the severity of the characters' difficulties are eclipsed, purporting that suffering for the nation becomes more acceptable as long as one is surrounded by the kind of beauty that capitalist modernity affords.

No one in the film is a bigger advocate of Dubai life than Basi (Michael De Mesa), one of Raffy's closest friends in the city. On the night of Andrew's arrival in Dubai—made possible by his brother, Raffy, after being apart for nine years—he is welcomed into the city with a small gathering on the beach, with the Burj Al-Arab, on its own man-made island, serving as the backdrop for the festivities. Basi, in an attempt to introduce Andrew to Dubai says this:

Siguradong magugustuhan mo rito sa Dubai, Andrew. It's a very, very open city. Mixture dito ng traditional at saka modern. At kahit saan ka tumingin, all you see is prosperity. Ayan, nakikita mo 'yan? 'Yan ang Burj Al-Arab, 'yan ang pinakamagandang hotel dito. The only seven-star hotel in the world! Ang buong interior 'nyan, ba, gawa sa ginto... Well respected pa ang mga Pinoy dito, whether it be blue collar or professional. At dito sa Dubai, halos zero ang crime rate. Ang bilis kasi ng justice system. Hindi katulad dun sa atin. O, what more can you ask for? [I'm sure that you are going to like Dubai, Andrew. It's a very very open city. There is a mixture here of the traditional and modern. And wherever you look, all you see is prosperity. There, do you see that? That is the Burj Al-Arab, the most beautiful hotel here. The only seven-star hotel in the world! Its entire interior is made of gold [...] Filipinos are also well respected here, whether they are blue collar workers or professionals. And here in Dubai the crime rate is quite low because of the efficient justice system. Not like ours back home. What more can you ask for?]<sup>12</sup>

Basi's description of Dubai highlights the wealth and opulence that can be found in the city as exemplified by the Burj Al-Arab. Repeating the myth that it is the world's only seven-star hotel—a marketing strategy aimed at creating and maintaining the hotel's reputation as a destination onto itself—Basi equates wealth with goodness, and that such a gilded structure reflects not only wealth, but also the abundance of opportunities for OCWs, opportunities that may not exist elsewhere and certainly not in the Philippines. In fact, Basi compares the UAE

---

<sup>12</sup> The translations throughout the chapter are my own.

and the Philippines and privileges the former's low crimes rates and expedited justice system. Such a comparison is made throughout the film and Dubai's exceptionality is maintained, especially by the stark contrast between the depictions of Dubai's pristine streets and Manila's unkempt landscape. The glimpses of the Philippines offered by the film—either the rural town where Raffy and Andrew grew up, or the chaos and congestion seen in the end when Faye returns home—emphasize that it does not yet bear the markers of capitalist modernity in the same way that Dubai does. Here Philippine spaces embody either the failure of capitalist intervention, as evinced by its rural and “underdeveloped” provinces or its unfulfilled desire to become a player in the global economic system, as evinced by the chaos, pollution and congestion that embodies representations of Manila. Either way, these spaces are figured as temporally belated, being nowhere near the developed capitalist modernity displayed on the streets of Dubai. Despite the nostalgia expressed by the characters throughout the film for the homeland, it has nevertheless bought into the hierarchies established by the global market as it sells the promise of upward mobility attained, it seems, with such ease through contractual work abroad. Yet, as with the Thailand we see in *Mammoth*, it seems that capital's influence is so far-reaching that even spatial remoteness and underdevelopment has become tools for capitalist accumulation. If we are to take Bangkok's frenzied activity as a signifier for capitalist modernity, then certainly Manila remains part of this milieu. However, the hierarchy established by privileging life in Dubai over the Philippines serves to express the desire for the kind of position the UAE occupies within the New World Order. The excess seen in the Dubai embodied by the gilded Burj Al-Arab is favored over the kind of excess that Manila has become known for, the excess of pollution, garbage, poverty and urban decay. In *Things Fall Away*, Tadiar writes of Manila's urban excesses as such:

The urban excess is, however, itself the product of the abiding crisis that defines and fuels so-called national development and its modern metropolitan dreams. The hegemonic figuration of that crisis in terms of the bodily suffering of prostitution and overseas domestic work...becomes on the metropolitan scale, one of the ceaseless assaults on the modern senses by human garbage...What makes for Manila's assaults is its overwhelming excess that comes about precisely as the natural leavings of the modernist political economy and the aesthetic of development. (Tadiar 146)

Here Tadiar reads urban excess as the by-product of capitalist work that has come to define development naturalized as a nationalist goal in the Philippines. As such, the desire for modernity is embedded in the imaginings of the Philippines as a nation, the fulfillment of which requires the labor of feminized bodies as sex workers and OCWs. While the film *Dubai* does not take on the politics of the largely feminized labor force in the UAE—an estimated seventy to eighty percent of the OCWs in the UAE are women<sup>13</sup>—the parallel between domestic and sex work is certainly seen in *Mammoth* with Gloria and Cookie. As with *Mammoth*, *Dubai* privileges globalized spaces that are marked by pristine and organized excess rather than the perceived chaos of Manila, and by extension the Philippines, as it undergoes the task of economic development that it has yet to fulfill. For the film, to be in a place such as Dubai, already a First World-ed space, in the end is better than being in the Philippines, whose urban excesses mark its belated entry into the capitalist modernity.

All of this is to say that the film downplays OCW hardship in Dubai, presenting suffering as bearable, and even ideal only when endured in such beautiful surroundings. The scenes of Raffy, Andrew and Faye speeding through the dessert in off-road vehicles and ATVs, playing with camels, dining and dancing with belly dancers in the open desert air, or of Andrew and Faye sight-seeing in Dubai, visiting museums or outdoor markets with their abundance of exotic spices, clothes and other wares, or even attending beach parties—all popular tourist activities—

---

<sup>13</sup> See Migrant Forum Asia's report on the status of women laborers in the UAE (2010).

emphasize the seemingly easy lifestyle afforded by OCWs in Dubai. Moreover, any kind of conflict that arises in the film is minimized. For example, when Andrew's newly-married friend's employment contract is set to expire, which means that he has to spend the first months of his marriage away from his wife who is working in Dubai, everyone, including Andrew, emphasized that in just a matter of a few weeks, he will be back to work, implying the abundance of employment opportunities in the city. Even Andrew, whose visa status is unclear, is able to find two jobs, allowing him to quickly save for a visa and a plane ticket to Canada, the place where he is determined to go in order to fulfill their mother's dreams of upward mobility for him and his brother, a dream that only seems accessible in the First World. Moreover Raffy's struggles upon first arriving in Dubai—losing his job when his fellow OCW workers accuse him of stealing, living with various friends until eventually becoming homeless and being forced to sleep under a bridge—are eclipsed by the conflict the film is instead preoccupied with: the love triangle between Andrew, Faye and Raffy. As with the beautifully shot amber-toned desert landscapes, the wide streets and gleaming high-rise buildings of the city and its gilded hotel, the downplayed conflicts and the carefree lifestyle of OCWs in the film imply that upward mobility can be accessed with relative ease through transnational labor, especially when contrasted with life back home. As OCW suffering is reduced to the dueling intentions of two brothers for one woman, *Dubai's* advocacy of overseas work is unmistakable.

It is here that the film reveals the biopolitical apparatus operating on the laboring body of the OCW apparent throughout its narrative. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault examines the institutions, namely forms of carceral punishments that serve to discipline the body, thus implicating it within a political economy:

...the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest in it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out

tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with the complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely a force of pro-domination; but on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection...the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (Foucault 173)

For Foucault, political economy refers to the relations between control emitted by institutions, individuals and collective bodies who also become the objects of that power. In “From Biopower to Biopolitics” (2006), Maurizio Lazzarato observes that Foucault actually critiques Marx for rooting and reducing every social power relations to the interaction between capital and labor. Lazzarato points out that Foucauldian political economy “encompasses power *dispositifs* [apparatus] that amplify the whole range of relations between the forces that extend throughout the *social body* rather than, as in classical political economy and its critique, the relationship between *capital and labor* exclusively” (Lazzarato 12). Nevertheless, as with Marx, Foucault similarly underscores the productive utility of the living body vis-à-vis the force governing that body. He argues further that the body’s utility can only be fully realized when it is both productive and subjugated, when it labors under force. Foucault makes it quite clear that force does not exclusively entail direct physical violence upon the body, or even in the realm of consciousness through ideology, but is instead implemented through a system of technologies that can simultaneously impose force upon the subject on multiple fronts.

As the OCW’s body becomes the “object of knowledge”<sup>14</sup> her body is invested with the network of biopolitical apparatuses that exerts force upon it. This network of forces disciplines bodies producing, what Foucault calls, “docile” bodies:

---

<sup>14</sup> In “The Body of the Condemned,” Foucault writes about the relationship between power and knowledge in the subjugation of the body. He writes: “One would be concerned with the ‘body politic,’ as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes, and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge” (175-6). Requiring no acts of actual physical violence, he argues that bodies become objects when power is exerted upon them, as they become known or knowable entities.

Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile” bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of utility). In short, it disassociates power from the body; on the other hand, it turns “aptitude,” a “capacity,” which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labor, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (Foucault 182)

What I want to highlight here is the relationship between aptitude and domination. Using the dynamic between labor and capital, Foucault parallels exploitation that results from abstracting labor from its product with the discipline of the body, that, in fact, the body’s increased utility increases the force exercised over it. This is the process through which the body is made docile, which I argue is very same process through which the symbolic body of the OCW is regulated.

As I have laid out in the Introduction, emotive expression becomes susceptible to co-option by the nation-state through the spectacularization of the suffering body. In *Dubai* and in *Mammoth*, the Third World body is made to perform excessive emotive expression as a way to depict the “real” hardships that OCWs must endure. The representation and then dissemination—through the world-wide distribution of these films—of these sorrowful, weeping bodies, however, serve to reify the suffering embedded in the experience of transnational labor, but also in maintaining the docility of bodies that come from the so-called Third World. As Kang notes in *Compositional Subject*, the racialized and gendered representations of Asian women have long been dominated by images of their docility and dexterity, thus marking them as bodies primed for factory work requiring a delicateness or quickness of touch (Kang, 170). These figurations of the female Asian body—as both controllable and suited for factory work and—is part of the concerted effort of nations such as the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to reassure transnational or multi-national corporations of the viability of their investments in these nations (Kang 169). The same apparatus of control is at work here in

the film as it spectacularizes the suffering of the emotive OCW bodies. The constant weeping that Raffy, Faye and Andrew renders them as disciplined, docile bodies, always ready to endure the hard, often exploitive labor that constitutes OCW work. Raffy's speech at his friends' wedding perhaps best shows the willingness for suffering that have come to exemplify representations of OCWs:

Grace, kausap ko si Paul noong isang gabi. Sinabi nya sa akin na malungkot siyang umuwi ng Pilipinas, hindi dahil sa magkakahiwalay kayo. Malungkot siyang umuwi ng Pilipinas dahil wala man lang siyang dalang appliances...Pero sabi ko hindi...Meron kang iuuwi...'Yun ang sense of pride mo para sa mga kababayan natin dito na nagtratabaho. Sila ang tunay na kapuri-puri sa lahat, 'di ba? Minsan, madalas nagagawa tayo ng mga pagkakamali, parang nakakalimutan na natin ang mga pinangarap natin sa buhay...Tapos kadalasan pa, nasasaktan mo pa kung sino ang mahal mo. Pero kelan man, tayong mga Pilipino, hindi natin nakalimutan kung bakit tayo nasa ibang bansa. Nandito tayo para sa mga mahal natin sa buhay...Kahit magwatak-watak tayong mga Pilipino, hindi tayo magkita-kita, iisa lang naman talaga ang hangad natin, ang yung maging buo ang pamilya natin...May sabihan nga, ang mga Pilipino, kahit saan mong dalhin sa buong mundo, da best 'yan. [Grace, I was speaking to Paul the other night. He told me that he was sad to go back to the Philippines, not because the two of you will be separated. He was sad to go back to the Philippines because he cannot even bring appliances back with him [...] But I said 'no' [...] You have something you are bringing back [...] That's your sense of pride for all our countrymen working here with you. They are the true virtuous ones, right? Sometimes, we make mistakes, as if we have forgotten the dreams we used have for our lives [...] Then often, you hurt the ones you love the most. But at any time, we Filipinos, we never forget why we are in a different country. We are here for our loved ones [...] Even though we Filipinos have been separated, and we cannot be with each other, we only have one dream and that is to make our families whole again. There is a saying, that Filipinos, wherever you may end up in the world, they're the best.] (Quintos, *Dubai*)

Addressing his two friends who decided to get married in Dubai despite the groom's impending return to the Philippines as his work contract is set to expire, Raffy expresses the multiple commitments—to one's family, nation and self—that OCWs must fulfill as they work abroad. The fulfillment of these commitments are bound to the emotive expression of hurt and suffering—both in the language utilized by the film in this scene and the tears that Raffy's audience sheds as the camera pans around the room—that are simultaneously imbued with

notions of national pride and virtue. More than a teary send-off to one's friend, this scene embodies the symbolic transformation of the Filipino OCW into the *bagong bayani*. As the *bagong bayani*, not only is Raffy made to carry his own and his family's dreams for upward mobility, but he is also made to carry the longings of the Philippine nation-state; national pride, in this scene, comes only with the experience of pain. The construction of the OCW into the *bagong bayani* then becomes part of how the laboring body is made docile as suffering becomes constitutive of national belonging and the fulfillment of upward mobility. As Sara Ahmed argues, and as I have discussed in the Introduction, emotions accumulate in value as they are circulated in the public imaginary (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 45) films like *Dubai*, and many others like it, produce images of suffering Filipinos abroad, reinforcing the notion that pain must remain part of the experience of working abroad and national belonging.

As the bodies of OCWs are made docile for the nation-state to commodify their labor abroad, they are also controlled and regulated in the countries in which they work. Nowhere are the limitations imposed on the Filipino/a laborer more explicit than in the uneasy ending of the film. As Raffy and Andrew vie for the affections of Faye, Andrew's resentment for his brother for abandoning their dream of moving to Canada—as a way to honor the desires of their deceased mother who was a Canadian OCW herself—finally tear them apart. To make matters worse, Faye finds out that she is pregnant with Andrew's child, prompting her to return to the Philippines to give birth after rejecting Andrew's offer of marriage. After a car accident, which seriously injures Andrew, finally brings the brothers back together, they both accept the choices that the other makes for himself—Raffy, decides to settle in Dubai and Andrew travels to Canada to fulfill his own dreams—making peace with what happened to Faye in the process. Framed as a happy ending, neatly tied together as each of the characters make their own way, the

conclusion of the film unconsciously reveals the precarious position of the OCW. First, as UAE laws prohibit foreign nationals from citizenship, and as the length of visas for foreign workers remain limited, Raffy's plans to settle in Dubai are, at best, tenuous. Second, Andrew's residency in Canada is also provisional as his tourist visa limits his access to legal employment.<sup>15</sup> Posited by the film as a triumph for Andrew and as a fulfillment of his mother's dream, and while Canadian immigration laws may not be as stringent as those in UAE's, the constraints he will have to endure without a valid work visa, a means of employment and no feasible contacts, however, belie the narrative of upward mobility presented by the film. Though his experience in Dubai may have allowed Andrew to quickly earn the money enabling him to make the initial move to Canada, in the end, he remains a foreign national whose ability to freely traverse borders is still bound by the laws governing Philippine his citizenship.

Faye's return to the Philippines best represents the anxieties over the OCW's provisional position in the UAE. Pregnant and unmarried, she hastily makes plans to leave the life she's made in Dubai in order to avoid imprisonment and forced deportation for charges of fornication. Such are the laws in the UAE for female foreign nationals, and while Faye could have stayed if she decided to marry Andrew, this option seems equally unacceptable for her and she resolves to return home. Again this exemplifies the uneven laws that govern the gendered OCW, but the film continues to de-emphasize Faye's dubious legal position for the sake of narrating a sentimental, melodramatic, and yet uplifting story that can be packaged for mass consumption. Thus Faye's abrupt departure is sold to audiences as a necessary part of her bildungsroman narrative, rather than as a moment exemplifying the uneven geopolitical realities that must be

---

<sup>15</sup> Philippine nationals who wish to become permanent residents of Canada need to show proof of paid employment for at least one year before they are even considered for work permit or resident visas. For Canadian immigration policies see: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp>

endured by the gendered overseas worker. While such a supposition may be beyond the scope of the film, I maintain that this deliberate de-emphasis of the volatile position that Filipino/as occupy as contractual laborers is part of the appropriative project that posits the labor of the OCW subject as constitutive of Philippine citizenship. This is certainly seen throughout the film in the moments where the hardships of OCWs are framed as something that must be endured for families back home and the homeland; as the *bagong bayani* of the nation, their martyred suffering is all that is required of them.

The parallel of martyred heroism with overseas work is made even more apparent in Faye's seemingly triumphant return home. Greeted at the airport by her mother—with whom she has had conflicted relationship growing up—the two women are seen making peace with their differences. During the car ride home, Faye looks out the window then suddenly commands the cab driver to stop the car. As the camera moves from Faye's tearful, yet smiling face to the view outside her window, we see that she is gazing at the Jose Rizal monument in Luneta Park. As the camera pans back to Faye's face, and then returns to the monument once again, the film parallels Rizal—martyred national hero whose two anti-colonial novels *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo* embody the struggle against Spanish imperial rule—with Faye, the nation's new hero (figures 2.7 and 2.8). As I point out in the Introduction, the OCW as the *bagong bayani* has become the new image of heroism in our present globalized moment. Perhaps this comparison is apropos as Rizal himself, preceding the term, was a transnational body: an affluent mestizo (mixed descent of Chinese and Spanish), educated in both Spain and France, writing and publishing both his canonical novels in Germany where he lived in exile. His heroism is marked with martyrdom and sacrifice as he willingly returned to the Philippines despite knowing he would surely face imprisonment. His execution in front of a Spanish firing

squad, where his memorial now stands in Luneta Park, is arguably the weightiest expression of sacrifice in the Philippine imagination, with the monument acting as remembrance for the moment when Rizal, rather than being shot in the back thus marking him as a traitor to his nation, instead turns around to face the oncoming bullets. The parallel between Rizal and Faye however belies the incongruence built into the terms through which Rizal and the OCW are both figured as national heroes. For one, Rizal was a bourgeois subject and the work he performed outside what was yet to become modern-day Philippines, never constituted any kind of exploitive labor. Apart from his years of exile, his residence in Spain and France was a choice; as a part of the Philippine elite, he was able to traverse borders with relative ease to fulfill the expectations of his class through a cosmopolitan education. For Faye, and the millions of OCWs around the world she is supposed to embody, their deployment abroad is made possible by the concerted efforts of the nation-state to export the laboring bodies of its citizens so that it may fulfill its dreams of capitalist modernity. Thus, rather than the choice of personal sacrifice which characterizes Rizal's heroism, the OCWs "heroism" is borne out of the imbalances perpetuated by our globalized economy, a heroism which is imbued with abject suffering that *Dubai* spectacularizes and exploits as a way to frame Faye's narrative and eventual return to the homeland. Here the notion of the heroic return to the homeland, which I discuss in the first chapter, is repeated. While in *La Visa Loca* Jess's "return" is framed through the restoration of masculinity, Faye's return is allegorical to the kind of nationalist love and fidelity that Rizal is popularly believed to have displayed through his final act of martyrdom. However, this moment in the film is an active disavowal of the real reason Faye had to return in the first place: the threat of imprisonment. As the film disavows the tenuous position of female laborers in the UAE, it remains complicit in creating the mythology behind OCWs as the nation's new heroes and

therefore complicit in the desires of the nation-state as it funnels exploitable bodies into the world market.



Figure 2.7



Figure 2.8

As I have stated in the introduction, the display of emotion itself is not the problem; bodies feel, react and emote. The sensations that bodies emit, process and circulate are, a large part of what enables us to become part of human networks that allow us to feel belonging and embodied in this world. But when the symbolic bodies of the Filipino/a laborer—displaying these emotive expressions—are turned into spectacles that are then commodified, they become part of the apparatus of control used by the nation-state to ensure that the material bodies of OCWs remain, where they are, scattered about in the world, suffering for the fulfillment of the nation’s First World longings. The fantasy-production of the OCW—to use Tadiar’s term and to recall my analysis in the first chapter—is made possible by the spectacularization and

dissemination of emotive expression, which subsume the simplest of the dreams for a better future into the fold of capitalism. In the following chapter, I take up the figure of the suffering woman again to argue that emotive bodies can refuse spectacularization and therefore resist co-option and commodification by the nation-state. I also consider the possibility for upheaval through the circulation of affect made possible by Third World-ed bodies whose existence in the fringes of the global city actually allows for the formation of networks that disavow capitalist logic. While this chapter focuses on the reification of the fantasy of the *bagong bayani*, the final chapter shows how the labor of dreams can open up new ways of embodiment in this world.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**Ephemeral Upheavals: Bodies, Borders**  
**and the Circulation of Affect**

*Everything and everybody got in lines—  
citizens and aliens—  
the great undocumented foment,  
the Third World War,  
the gliding wings of a dream.*

-Karen Tei Yamashita

Chapters one and two reveal how the nation-state, complicit with the desires of capital, appropriates the suffering of the gendered OCW as a necessary part of citizenship in order to justify and encourage the exchange of her laboring body in the global market. As the OCW is commodified, what is circulated and exchanged in this process, not only is her laboring body but also her suffering. Through the circulation of the emotive regimes like suffering, as seen through the films *Dubai* and *Mammoth*, the collective body of the OCW as the nation's *bagong bayani* (new hero) materializes as an extension of the *inang bayan's* (motherland's) suffering resulting from the legacy of colonialism and capitalist exploitation. In addition, the previous chapters reveal how capital organizes the cartographies of the places in which the laboring body of the gendered subject is exchanged. As the spectacularized suffering of these bodies is commodified through cultural productions, so-called Third World spaces are reified as places where suffering and capitalist exploitation are innate parts of daily living. Thus the pursuit for capital renders these spaces Third World perpetually temporally belated, a contrast to capitalist modernity.

While the previous chapters are critical of the way the circulation of affect leads to the commodification and exploitation of the gendered laboring body, this chapter considers how emotive and affective economies can serve to undermine nationalist and capitalist trajectories

that circulate among bodies who occupy the peripheral spaces of the global city. These alternate corporeal networks by and large stand outside capitalist and nationalist trajectories, often disturbing the homogenizing and exploitive practices built into the logics of both. Two novels—Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* (1990) and Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (1997) (hereon after referred to as *Tropic*)—disclose the possibilities for capitalist and nationalist upheavals through the feelings and affects that circulate between and among the masses within the metropolis. These texts track the makings of subjects outside and within multiple national borders as they negotiate the colonial legacies and capitalist desires that mark them as racialized, gendered and queered bodies. Moreover, these texts make central the liminal spaces of the urban cities—freeways, women’s bedrooms, border towns, and darkened movie theaters—inhabited by the homeless, beauty queens, hustlers, maids and, immigrants. On the surface these spaces and the bodies that occupy them seem to constitute the urban city’s underbelly; the excesses resulting from capitalist production: too much noise, too much pollution, too much traffic, too many closely clustered buildings. Manifesting in these spaces as refuse—what Neferti Tadiar calls the “things that fall away” from the developmental trajectory of capitalist modernity (Tadiar, *Things Fall Away* 5)—these bodies and spaces are the marginalized and exploited leavings consciously disavowed by the process of development. Unlike however, the Third World spaces “visited” by *Mammoth*’s cinematic gaze (chapter two) that remain perpetually cast as sites of exploited and exploitable bodies, the spaces presented in both *Dogeaters* and *Tropic*, while they may have sprung from capitalist circulation and colonial legacies, become the loci for the upheavals of those very systems.

These upheavals are necessarily multiple and varied, comprised of the movement of those excluded and often exploited by the homogenizing effects of capitalism. Rather than seeking to

install new regimes in place of old ones, these upheavals aim to disturb hegemonic systems though a continued process of revolt. Frantz Fanon similarly recognizes that such a movement must be an essential part of a decolonizing national culture:

[...] thus it is not enough to try to get back to the people in that past out of which they have already emerged; rather we must join them in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called into question. Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallized and our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light. (Fanon 227)

Discussing the role of native artists in establishing a decolonized national culture, Fanon asserts that, like the native bourgeoisie, the artist must recognize that he is estranged from “the people” he seeks to represent in his work. The native artist must then work to meet the people where they are in the “zone of occult instability” in order to be part of the making and remaking of national culture. Therefore the invention of a decolonized nation rests upon the will of the people rather than belonging exclusively to the perceived arbiters of culture: the novelist, the poet or the musician. For Fanon, decolonization rests upon the movement of the people marked by continued and sustained emergence, the shape of which remains in constant flux and therefore resists appropriation by any given regime for its own purposes.

By positing upheavals to occur within the “zone of occult instability”—that is, spaces not only marked by volatility but also secrecy, mystery and concealment embodied by the word “occult”—Fanon seems to signal the near impossibility of identifying, let alone sustaining such upheavals. In fact, I argue that such challenges are revealed in Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*: that while there emerges a critique of the neo-colonialism in the novel, it nevertheless, as I will elaborate later in the chapter, finds difficulty in moving beyond merely expressing the potentiality of subversive acts. What I do emphasize here with *Dogeaters*, is that subversion of the colonial

legacy and of capitalist exploitation is spurred on by the subject's refusal to become a spectacularized suffering body, and in the process, disavowing the trope of the nation as suffering woman. Unlike what I have shown in the first two chapters with the filmic representations of OCWs, with this novel, the circulation of emotion avoids co-option by capital because emotive display occurs in the spaces that "fall away" from the purview of capitalist logic: in the privacy bedrooms, seedy nightclubs and in the mountainous jungle. In these spaces emotive display is restored to the subject, and she herself remains the sole owner of the feelings that manifest from her own dreams and desires. My consideration of *Dog eaters* offers a contrast to the abject commodification of the female body as discussed in both the first and second chapters. While Hagedorn also mobilizes the trope of the suffering women liberally throughout her text, and violence is perpetuated against female and queer bodies—from rape to torture to bondage—the novel offers a vision for ways bodies can gain agency through revolutionary work that takes them outside the oppressive scope of the nation-state. This model for claiming agency through revolution is, by no means, a perfect alternative for the totalizing forces of U.S. colonial legacy and capitalist commodification; as I will argue later in the chapter, Yamashita's *Tropic* actually offers a more realized vision of upheaval than the guerilla revolution depicted in the *Dog eaters*. Nevertheless, Hagedorn's novel provides not only a divergence from the prostituted, suffering and objectified bodies represented by the films in the previous chapters, but also shows how Jose Rizal's vision of the woman as the nation under duress can begin to claim the revolutionary struggle for herself, rather than being just a passive symbol around which heroic men can rally.

*Dog eaters* depicts a Manila in the throes of a military dictatorship based on the oppressive regime of Ferdinand Marcos who was in power from 1965 to 1986, the last fourteen

years of which was a military dictatorship. The novel follows the intersecting lives of several characters, including Rio Gonzaga, a pre-adolescent girl from a bourgeois *mestizo* family; Severo Alacran, the powerful businessman who owns the Sportex department store and the TruCola soft drink company; Joey Sands, a gay nightclub DJ and hustler; Daisy Avila, the beauty queen turned revolutionary daughter of dissenting senator, Domingo Avila; and General Ledesma, the sadistic military leader responsible for the rape and torture of Daisy Avila. There are several other secondary characters, most notable of whom are The First Lady, the fictionalized version of Imelda Marcos, Ferdinand Marcos's wife; Orlando "Romeo" Rosales, an aspiring actor; Trinidad "Trini" Gamboa, Sportex salesgirl and Romeo's girlfriend; Uncle, Joey Sands' adoptive caretaker who abuses him and teaches him how to steal; and Lolita Luna, *bomba* (softporn) star and mistress to General Ledesma. Told in multiple, disjointed storylines interspersed with fake newspaper reports, actual historical texts, letters, and gossip, the narrative climaxes with the assassination of Senator Avila, representing the moment of upheaval in the novel. Considered a canonical Asian American text since its publication, *Dogeaters* has become the locus of productive discourses on postcolonialism, postmodernism, nationalism, queerness and gender, and transnationalism. As Juliana Chang writes in "Masquerade, Hysteria, and Neocolonial Femininity in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*":

Its kaleidoscopic multiplicity of narratives, set in a former colony of the United States, as well as Hagedorn's status as a Filipino American author writing about the Philippines, has facilitated productive linkages between postcolonial theory and theories of postmodernism; American Studies and postcolonial theory; Asian American Studies and theories of transnationalism. A number of critics have also articulated feminist and queer analyses with theories of nation and colonialism, noting the centrality of native female, queer, and maternal subjects in the novel. (Chang 637)

My intervention conjoins postcolonial and feminist critique with theories of affect and emotion that I have utilized throughout this project, and focuses on Daisy Avila, the primary symbol of

redemption and revolution in the novel. Through this character's refusal to become an emotive spectacle for the benefit of the nation-state, her feelings remain a subjective experience rather than something that becomes subsumed into the capitalist world system as an object of exchange. In so doing, I argue that Daisy symbolizes a possibility for the Filipina to claim representations of her body from co-option by the nation-state as a way to fulfill its own First World longings.

Daisy Avila is introduced in the chapter titled "Sleeping Beauty" as she competes in a national beauty contest called the Young Miss Philippines. Juxtaposed with her activist-politician father, Senator Avila—a vehement opponent of the dictatorial regime—and her mother Maria Luisa Batongbakal, a professor of Philippine history, Daisy is depicted as gullible, naïve and shallow:

Senator Avila declares that our torrid green world is threatened by its legacy of colonialism and the desire for revenge. He foretells more suffering in his eloquent speeches, which fall on deaf ears. He is ridiculed and vilified in government-run newspapers. The underground circulates a pamphlet of his writings, "The Suffering Pilipino": "We Pinoys suffer collectively from a cultural inferiority complex" [...] He describes us as a complex nation of cynics, descendants of warring tribes which were baptized and colonized to death by the Spaniards and Americans, as a nation betrayed and then united only by our hunger for glamour and Hollywood dreams. Is it a supreme irony then, when such an otherwise wise man as the Senator allows his gullible daughter to participate in a government-endorsed beauty contest run by the First Lady? (Hagedorn 100-1)

By describing the political stance of the Senator in stark contrast to his beauty queen daughter, the passage presents the collision of Philippine colonial legacies, nationalist desires, First World longings, and the trope of the suffering nation. While the passage reveals the Senator's critique of the First World longings implanted onto the Philippine imaginary by the legacy of American colonialism—a critique which I discuss extensively in the first chapter—the passage perhaps best embodies the novel as whole in the way that it represents and condenses the often contradictory visions that make up Hagedorn's depiction of Philippine, specifically of Manila, life. Presented

as an cosmopolitan (global) city—thanks, in part, to the First Lady’s “beautification” efforts that have erected “cultural centers” and established landscaping with gardens that displace or cover up squatter establishments—Manila’s urban environs in the novel become the simultaneous seat of oppressive military dictatorship and political activism, the locus of everyday hopes and dreams and longings for the American Dream, the place for the fulfillment of queer corporeal desires, and the imprisonment of the female body. Daisy Avila’s participation in the beauty pageant brings all these contradictory dynamics to the fore as she becomes simultaneously celebrated as the pageant queen and the object of *tsismis* (gossip) on pageant rigging; the representation of Filipina beauty and virtue and the source of shame for her activist father and intellectual mother; and the center of a spectacular event as an object of desire and a commodified body through corporate sponsorships.

Expected to embody all of these roles at the same time, something in Daisy’s psyche breaks and she spends the subsequent weeks after her win in seclusion, doing nothing but crying or sleeping. Ironically, she becomes terrified of sleeping because as soon as she does, she dreams that she is weeping and wakes up with tears in her eyes. In her reclusive absence, she becomes an even bigger spectacle as reporters, photographers and fans wait outside of her family’s home for even a small glimpse, while the popular gossip talk show host, Cora Camacho, even tries to bribe the household staff for information on her condition. Fast becoming a liability for the corporate sponsors she is supposed to promote upon her coronation, she also becomes the object of even more *tsismis* with news circulating that she might be pregnant, having illicit affairs or using drugs. The *tsismis* take on a national scale when Cora Camacho lambasts the Senator withholding interviews about his daughter and then shames Daisy publicly when the First Lady appears on her show “Girl Talk”:

When Cora sweetly suggests taking away Daisy's crown and title, the First Lady's eyes, as if on cue, fill with tears. She stifles a sob, and pulls out a handkerchief, which she dabs carefully at the corners of her eyes. "Walanghiya!" ["Shameless!"] Senator Avila scowls at the extreme close-up of the First Lady's anguished face. "Daisy Avila has shamed me personally and insulted our beloved country," the First Lady sobs. She blows her nose. The camera discreetly pulls away" (107).

The contrast here between Daisy's spontaneous weeping in her bedroom and the rehearsed public display of emotion from the First Lady marks the difference between the personal expression of suffering and spectacularized emotive expression. A genuine expression of suffering, Daisy's tears manifest feelings of grief, perhaps from the realization that she is unable and unwilling to fulfill the prescribed roles placed upon her body, or from the distress of having to perform the idealized version of Filipino femininity, or the refusal to become an object of exchange as she becomes beholden to the pageant's corporate sponsors. While the novel does not give the exact reason for her uncontrolled weeping, her body's visceral reaction to winning the beauty pageant signals the refusal to inhabit the spectacularized and feminized role she must take on as a symbol for Philippine femininity.

On the other hand, the First Lady willingly inhabits fantasies of the ideal Filipina, as exemplified by Maria Clara, a character from Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere*, who has become the foremost symbol for feminine beauty, chasteness and loyalty.<sup>16</sup> Seeming demure, she cries on cue, speaks of Daisy's shamelessness and approximates her suffering to the suffering of the nation. Her performative display of emotion, as Chang argues, reinforces desires of the patriarchal nation-state: "In *Dog eaters*, female figures such as the First Lady and talk-show host

---

<sup>16</sup> Maria Clara is Ibarra's betrothed in *Noli me tangere*, Rizal's novel that I discuss in the Introduction. Just like Sisa, Maria Clara has become symbolic of the nation in duress under colonial rule as she is subject to abuse by her father, Padre Damaso, the priest who is responsible for the conflict in the novel. Unlike Sisa, however, she has become symbolic of Filipina femininity because of her beauty, loyalty, piety and martyrdom. Prohibited from marrying Ibarra, she is relegated to spend the rest of her days in the convent where she suffers through the knowledge that she is the illegitimate daughter of a priest and that she will never again be with her beloved, Ibarra.

Cora Camacho create and embody spectacle in service of the state. These spectacles of proper femininity operate as masquerade—the performance of a paternally sanctioned femininity, a fantasy designed to placate patriarchy” (Chang 642). Once again, Neferti Tadiar’s formulation of fantasy-production, which I mobilized in my critique of the spectacularization of the suffering OCW body in the first chapter, proves relevant here as the First Lady in the novel exemplifies the construction of ideal femininity, a fantasy that has been subsumed into the fabric of the national imaginary. By appearing on live television, the First Lady allows herself to be a part of the media sensationalism that surrounds Daisy. As I will elaborate in my discussion of *Tropic*, televised media remains imbricated within capitalism as a tool for capitalist exchange. Certainly television media carries on the same role here as it seeks to spectacularize Daisy’s emotive body while at the same time facilitating the work of the First Lady to further codify the singular vision of femininity onscreen. Through this spectacular display, the First Lady’s emotive body reinforces the trope of the nation as the suffering woman mobilized in order to uphold an oppressive dictatorship and the commodification of the female body. That Daisy’s shame comes from her inability to perform both the fantasy of femininity for her nation and fulfill her role as an object of exchange for her corporate sponsors speaks to the continued collusion of both nation and capital operating upon the OCW body.

One day, overcome with fatigue, Daisy finally succumbs to a deep heavy sleep and when she wakes up, she realizes that she has finally stopped crying. Recovered from private suffering, she agrees to appear on television to be interviewed by Cora Camacho. Promoted heavily by both Cora and network, the event purports to reveal the intimate details of Daisy’s life and the intimate spaces of her home. Naturally, as with the First Lady’s television appearance, the interview becomes a spectacle:

The entire country tunes in, even in those remote reaches of our tropical archipelago, places where one battered TV is shared by an entire village. Cora promises an intimate look at Daisy's life, loves, and wardrobe.

The moment Cora asks her first question, Daisy seizes the opportunity to publicly denounce the beauty pageant as a farce, a giant step backward for all women. She quotes her father and her mother, she goes on and on, she never gives the visibly horrified Cora a chance to respond. She accuses the First Lady of furthering the cause of female delusions in the Philippines. The segment is immediately blacked out by the waiting censors.

Everyone in the country is elated by the new scandal. Daisy refuses to grant more interviews. "Hija [daughter], you surprise me," the Senator compliments his daughter. "She doesn't surprise me at all," his wife says. (Hagedorn 109)

Fueled by the gossip arising from the interview, Daisy becomes yet another symbol taken up, this time, by the anti-government cause. Through the frenzy she meets and marries foreign banker, Malcolm Webb, further eliciting gossip onscreen and off. Wary of the attention, she again locks herself away from the limelight in her family's home and tells her husband who "no longer finds the publicity useful" to leave (111). While it is ironic that the more that Daisy refuses to become a spectacle, she becomes an even bigger fodder for the media, her continued refusal to participate in the sensationalized significations of her body not only highlights her struggle to retain agency, but also a more developed sense of political consciousness which allows her, in the end to take to the mountains as a guerilla fighter after her father's assassination.

While to be sure there are many events and characters that contribute to the richness of Hagedorn's text, I choose to focus on Daisy because she provides a model for the active defiance against the processes that aim to subsume her body into the national imaginary for purposes that are beyond the scope of her own dreams and desires. After her father's assassination, Daisy is arrested, tortured and raped by General Ledesma as he tries to force her into revealing the whereabouts of her guerilla boyfriend, Santos Tirador. Hagedorn depicts this the scene of violence as occurring simultaneously as the popular melodrama "Love Letters" is heard on the

radio. As Daisy's torture becomes parallel to the portrayal of suffering by the radio actors, Hagedorn seems to implicate both—the General's and the production and dissemination of a radio melodrama showcasing the suffering of women—as part of the same violence dispelled against the bodies of women. Despite all that has happened to her, Daisy does not succumb to the violent torture. In the end, she becomes a guerilla fighter, which signals her final act of rebellion against the nation-state who has tortured and raped her and murdered her father and lover. Framing Daisy as the model for female subversion in her discussion of Baby Alacran and Lolita Luna—two of the novel's other female characters—who despite their demonstration of hysterics also remain subversive, Chang writes:

Global capital, structured by neocolonialism, produces and perforates heterogeneous and uneven femininities, which in turn provide heterogeneous sites for comprehending and confronting systems of dominance. While characters like Baby Alacran and Lolita Luna would not conventionally be understood as resistant subjects, a reading of their hysterical symptoms and acts demonstrates how hegemonic modes of interpellation (patriarchy, the nation-state, capital) fail to fully capture them. Like Daisy Avila, their relatively privileged status does not completely reconcile them to their places within the neocolonial order. Recognizing how gender hierarchies produce them as failed models of normative, autonomous subjectivity, they gesture toward an alternative. (Chang 659)

To be sure there is a class discrepancy between Daisy and the OCWs represented in films I have discussed in previous chapters, and Daisy's provenance from a revered political family may have aided her escape into the mountains. Indeed, the kind of upheaval presented in the text is limited by the outmoded representations of revolution that never go beyond the revolutionary moment. In the end, while Daisy seems to find community among the other guerilla fighters in her cadre, and while she and Joey Sands—who witnessed the Senator Avila's assassination and then subsequently smuggled into the mountains for his protection—may have found a kinship with each other, this kind of rebellion is essentially limited to a handful of people. By contrast, the preferable model of upheaval I wish to highlight in this chapter through the *Tropic of Orange* involves a multiplicity of bodies and works through the circulation affect. As I will later show,

the infinite possibilities that are embedded in affective exchange make way for multiple and continued upheavals, rather than the singular event presented in *Dogeaters*. Nevertheless, Daisy's refusal to become a spectacle in fulfillment of the nation-state's First World fantasies is important in highlighting the possibility of re-casting national belonging through active rebellion and activism, rather than through the abject suffering of female bodies.

As *Dogeaters* depicts the possibility for the refusing the impulses of the nation-state through the despectacularization of emotion, Yamashita's *Tropic* depicts the circulation of what I call the affect of imminence, that is, the sensation of impending possibility circulating through and between bodies that constitute the masses. The possibilities that result from the circulation of the affect of imminence is ambivalent in the same way that affects in general behave as forms of pure potentiality. Nigel Thrift, in explaining Spinoza's notion of emotion or affect (*affectus*), notes such an ambivalence in "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect." According to Thrift, Spinoza defines affect as the "property of the active outcome of an encounter, [that] takes the form of an increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act, which can be positive—and thus increase that ability (counting as 'joyful' or euphoric)—or negative—and thus diminish that ability (counting as 'sorrowful' or dysphoric)" (62). Referring to the "The Origin and Nature of the Affects" from *Ethics* in which Spinoza writes of "passions"—"love, hate, anger, envy, pride, pity, and other feelings"—as properties belonging to simultaneously to the body and to the mind, Thrift elaborates that each affective encounter, depending on its source, can be perceived in vastly differing ways. He writes:

This emphasis on relations is important. Though Spinoza makes repeated references to 'individuals' it is clear from his conception of bodies and minds and affects as manifolds that for him the prior category is what he calls the 'alliance' or 'relationship'. So affects, for example, occur in an encounter between manifold beings, and the outcome of each encounter depends upon what forms of composition these beings are able to enter into. (Thrift 62)

Highlighting the importance of relations forged through affect feelings, Thrift identifies here the genesis of perhaps of the most important political imperatives of affect studies: the potential for impactful interaction of bodies made possible by the circulation of affect. While both the emotion and the body's reaction to it remain open and ambivalent, the sheer possibility from such interactions remains even more crucial in any endeavor against hegemonic institutions.

It important to point out here that when I speak of the body, I refer to Gilles Deleuze's definition of the body in *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy* (1988) as the constitution of things in general: "[a] body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity" (Deleuze 127). As such, the planes of the body become the basic unit for all interaction and therefore the locus for emerging potentiality:

We call longitude of a body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of momentum and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between unformed elements. We call latitude the set of affects that occupy a body at each moment, that is, the intensive states of an anonymous force (force for existing, capacity for being affected). In this way we construct the map of the body. The longitudes and latitudes together constitute Nature, the plane of immanence or consistency, which is always variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed by individuals and collectivities. (127)

As Deleuze sees it, a body constitutes a physical mass (longitude) and intensities allowing for the capacity to interact with other bodies (latitude), enabling the body's physical mass to affect and be affected by other masses it comes in contact with. This interaction between the planes of the body—the very make-up of Nature—is marked by movement and variability. If the essence of Nature is rooted upon the ability of bodies to "compose and recompose" themselves, then the interaction among bodies must also be governed by the constant process of becoming.

This Deleuzian sense of the body as an always-emerging entity is, of course, rooted in Spinoza's definition of the body's composition and its process of interaction:

In the first place, a body [...] is composed of infinite number of particles; it is the reactions of motions and rest, of speeds and slownesses, between particles, that define the individuality of a body. Secondly a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also define a body and its individuality. These two propositions, appear to be very simple; one is kinetic and the other dynamic. (Deleuze 123)

The distinction between the two capacities of a body presented here rests upon the behavior of the body within itself and its behavior among other bodies. While presenting the body as a thing in constant motion of varying speeds is quite compelling, I am rather more interested in the body's latter capacity to affect and be affected by those around it because, as I will discuss, of its connections to Frantz Fanon's formulation of anticolonial movement. Deleuze writes of the second bodily proposition: "[c]oncretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable" (124). Defining a body or group of bodies neither by their organic make-up nor as individuated subjects, but rather through affective investments is a radical way of thinking about subject formation because the body here is made to depend upon its relationality to affect and other bodies with similar affective investments.

For me, this is where Deleuze's affected bodies and Fanon's vision of anticolonial movement converge. Deleuze's description of the changeability of the body's longitudinal and latitudinal planes is somewhat akin to the process of decolonization spearheaded by the people as described by Fanon. This commonality rests upon the movement of the collective: Deleuze sees Nature, described by Spinoza, as undergoing constant re-creation the potential outcomes of which are unbound and therefore infinite. For Fanon, the people's movement is imbued with the

same potentiality that opens up the future to new possibilities, which may even include new upheavals. While the movement of the body remains at the level of the unconscious for Deleuze, Fanon attributes agency to the people who themselves will the decolonization process. In both cases the locus of power is dispersed onto the bodies that make up the collective; however while Deleuze speaks in general terms about bodies at large that constitute Nature, Fanon makes it quite clear that these are colonized bodies undergoing decolonization in establishing a national culture. For Fanon, the upheaval of colonial regimes must rest upon the movement of the people, and while the native artist may have a hand in documenting their movement through the theater, in poetry, song or literature—all of which are taken instead as the markers of national culture—the native artist and intellectual must be the ones to join the anticolonial movement as defined by the people:

We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up. A national culture is not a folklore, not an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature [...] A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people created itself and keeps itself in existence. (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 233)

Here Fanon urges the native intellectual to learn and work within the rhythm of the people's struggle, a struggle already in the making. For him, national culture cannot be static and merely portend to know the needs and desires of the masses. A national culture must be the culmination of efforts by its people and, perhaps more importantly, it must be an affirmation of the people's continued struggle, the same struggle that ensures the very existence of national culture itself.

The nation imagined as such can only be possible, not exclusively through the circulation of print media as Benedict Anderson suggests<sup>17</sup>, but rather through the circulation of affect. Here is the epicenter of revolutionary force: as colonialism affects completely and devastatingly the colonized individual and collective bodies, the struggle against such a force must therefore constitute a collective body united and moved by a similar affect. I read affect here as the “rhythm,” which Fanon identifies as the propulsion for the people’s movement, and as the collective engage in libratory movements, the affects that spring forth and circulate among individual bodies fuel the struggle against colonial regimes. Once again, I highlight the relationality of bodies to others and the revolutionary potential that can arise from these relationships.

These affective relationships between bodies are necessarily at the heart of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist narratives in this chapter and certainly in Fanon. As Arun Saldanha writes in “Skin, Affect, Aggregation: Guattarian Variations on Fanon” (2010):

‘It’ [affect] *happens* to bodies, and this is precisely what makes them agents in the realm of discourse and technologies of power. Beneath and before the ideological mechanisms

---

<sup>17</sup> In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). He contends that the modern nation is sovereign because it asserts itself as independent from the powers of the divine, and limited “because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if not elastic, boundaries, beyond which lies other nations” (7). More importantly, is that the nation is ultimately united by its mutual and simultaneous inventing by the people, locked within a relationship of, what he calls, a “horizontal comradeship.” For Anderson it is this deep affiliation or “fraternity” which not only fashions the nation into being, but also compels individuals to sacrifice his or her own body to maintain the imagination (7). The emphasis throughout this text remains on the simultaneous movement of separate individuals to invent the nation at precisely the same historical moment. What makes this possible is language, specifically the mass distribution of the printed word, which, under the banner of a common vernacular, pieces together individuals into a nation. For Anderson, nothing illustrates the imposition of homogenous empty time—a term borrowed from Walter Benjamin “in which simultaneity, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar”—than the novel for it is through this medium that the teleological movement of time becomes disseminated to the reading masses, thus making the novel a “technical means for ‘representing the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (25). This universalized theory of nationalism, I argue, provides a limited model for the nation borne out of colonization, despite incorporating examples of nationalisms from former colonies within his discussion. If the emergence of the modern nation arises from the “spontaneous distillation of a complex crossing of ‘discrete’ historical forces” (4)—the Enlightenment project of secularization, the capitalization of print media, and the shift from Messianic time to teleological temporality—the agency of the people to imagine the nation, on that is implicitly anticolonial as Fanon describes it, is taken away.

analyzed in semiotics and the social sciences, a body engages in interactions with circumstantial forces and things that mingles with a body's very being as it moves around, making it different from before. Affect can be said to refer to the constant self-refreshing of bodies through their inevitable sensory and proprioceptive embedding in the world. This conception of embodiment is intrinsically geographical, as it requires tracing a body's *encounters* with objects, conditions, and other bodies, which are possible only in certain places. (Saldanha 2414)

Working from the Spinozist model of affective relations, taken up by Deleuze and later by Brian Massumi, Saldanha points to the connections forged as the body moves about in the world at large as it affects and is affected. What I want to highlight here is what he calls “the constant self-refreshing” that bodies undergo as part of the experience of being in the world. Employing the language of technology—to refresh a web page recalls information that was once there, while summoning newer content—he seems to parallel the fast-paced circulation of information among bodies simultaneously plugged into cyberspace with the fluctuating movement of bodies. Such a parallel is quite salient when we think of how technology, social media in particular, can play an important role in disseminating information and drumming up support and solidarity among the bodies on the ground and those across the world in recent revolutions in Libya and Egypt. As I will discuss later, I remain skeptical about the ability of certain technologies, like televised media, to sustain any kind of people's movement because of their collusion with capital. I do recognize, albeit cautiously, the potential of new media technologies, because of their interactive processes, for inciting upheavals that can lead to actual, on the ground movement. I also recognize that the language of technology holds some discursive utility here as the term “self-refreshing” signals the constant movement of the body within its environs, among other bodies while it simultaneously undergoes internal upheavals within itself. All of this to say that Fanon has long since recognized that the refreshing of bodies within itself and amongst other receptive bodies is necessary in the process of decolonization, that the people must be affected by the

impulse to dismantle the colonial regimes and at the same time affect others to do the same, all the while evaluating and re-evaluating the very processes through which decolonization can be achieved.

The self-refreshing body is essential to the circulation of the affect of imminence, which relies upon the capacity of bodies to become conduits for revolutionary struggle. Such a capacity relies upon the emergent quality of the body—its ability to change and be changed and to absorb and transmit feeling—presented in both *Dogeaters* and *Tropic* as constitutive of the upheavals in the texts. Thus, I identify the body as the catalyst for change as it becomes not only the primary site of the expression of anxiety, fear, hope, excitement and a multitude of other emotions, but as the conduit through which affect is circulated. The conglomeration of affect preceding and during the moment of change is precisely what I call the affect of imminence; whether they are experienced by individual bodies or by the multitude, these affects of upheaval mark a paradigmatic shift within the bod(ies) involved, but also the spaces these bodies occupy.

From the start, Yamashita's *Tropic* explores the processes of upheaval among bodies within spaces and temporalities whose solidity have come into question. Despite beginning at a very specific chronotopic moment—in Mexico, at the latitudinal line of the Tropic of Cancer, during the morning of the Summer Solstice—we find that from here, time and space start to curve, stretch in some places and contract in others, producing synesthesia among the multiple characters in the novel. Each of the seven main characters—Rafaela, Bobby, Emi, Buzzworm, Manzanar, Gabriel, and Arcangel—experience the distortions of time and space in their own particular way throughout the week during which the events of the novel take place. While at first these characters seem unaware of the final moment of upheaval serving as the novel's

climax, they bear witness to a world that seems to be anticipating a shift, a world that seems to be slowly stretching like a taut rubber band near the point of snapping.

The novel opens with Rafaela, a Mexican immigrant to L.A. who has recently returned to Mexico with her son, Sol, after separating from her husband, Bobby. The caretaker of Gabriel Balboa's Mazatlán vacation home, Rafaela finds herself in the middle of what seems to be a daily migration of bugs and small animals towards the Tropic of Cancer, the imaginary cartographic line upon which the house stands. Each day she participates in this movement by sweeping away the collection of fauna that have come to occupy the house in the night:

Every morning, a small pile of assorted insects and tiny animals—moths and spiders, lizards and beetles—collected, their little brittle bodies tossed in waved along the floor, a cloudy hush of sandy soil, cobwebs, and human hair. An iguana, a crab and a mouse. And there was the scorpion, always dead [...] Every morning it was the same. Every morning she swept this mound of dead and wiggling things to the door and off the side of the veranda and into the dark green undergrowth with the same flourish. (Yamashita 3).

Surprised to see that nature has invaded the house as she and her son slept, Rafaela at first used a large vacuum to clean the dried up insects and shoo away the larger animals, like garden snakes, frogs and the occasional crab. Before long, the old metallic vacuum, unused to the debris of teeming wildlife it has been forced to suck up everyday, finally breaks down. Since then, sweeping has become the only cleaning alternative for Rafaela, who has come to accept the strangeness in the animals' behavior in this Mazatlán house.

Despite Rafaela's acquiescence to this daily exodus, the locals remain perplexed by the anomalous behavior the natural world seems to be exhibiting. The following day, Rafaela encounters Señor Rodríguez ridden with anxiety about the appearance of crabs so far inland and the brick wall he is building around Gabriel's property. Later, Rafaela realizes what troubled the Señor:

Approaching the house, Rafaela looked for the usual landmarks: the orange tree Rodriguez's brick work, the new fence. Perhaps it was the rain—a thick lens through which she perceived this wet world. She was not sure, but the fence was somehow curved, or maybe even longer, or stretched. That was it. The fence stretched south in a funny way, like those concave mirrors in drug stores and 7-11s in the States. Rafaela was not sure. (70)

At the same time, Buzzworm experiences a similar curving of space and time in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles. The self-proclaimed “Angel of Mercy,” Buzzworm is famous in the neighborhood for the service he provides, disseminating information regarding everything from rehab facilities, and homeless shelters to medical facilities. As the neighborhood's “walking social services,” he is most often the first call for anyone in trouble or needing help (26). The same Tuesday that Rafaela gazes out at the curved earth, Buzzworm comes to the aid of a young boy who is narrowly missed by a bullet's curved trajectory:

Crossing the street, he heard shots and the screech of tires hauling off. He ran around the corner, found a kid glued to a chain-link fence turning several shades of green. Kid recognized Buzzworm and blubbered something about curving bullets [...]

“So you dodged the bullets.”

“No. They curved by me sudden-like.”

“Some say when your time comes, you see everything timelessly. I suppose you oughta see the bullets coming your way.”

“Weren't my time. Wasn't like that. Was more like space curved. Shit. Ain't nobody gonna believe me.” (85-6)

Experienced simultaneously by Rafaela, the boy and Buzzworm, the curved fence and the visible curved trajectory of the bullets signal the deviation from the accepted solidity of spaces. Here the seemingly pliable spaces in Mazatlán and Los Angeles belie the concreteness of the spaces upon which cities are built, putting into question whatever may be resting upon such a faulty foundation. That these peculiarities in the structure of spaces can be felt and seen in both Mexico and the U.S. mark the intrinsic connection between these two spaces despite the geopolitical borders that divide them. Of course, this link conjures up the often-contentious relationship between the two countries revolving upon not only issues of immigration from the

last thirty years, but also the historical territorial disputes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century culminating in the Mexican-American War that led to the Mexican cession of what we now recognize on the map as the American Southwest. Thus, the pliability of the spaces in *Tropic* not only calls the forth this relationship forged through conflict, but the volatility and arbitrariness of the cartographic lines upon which whole economic and political systems are based.

As the characters bear witness to the dubious concreteness of spaces in the text, the trajectory of calendrical time also comes into question. Perhaps as a way to reassure the visibly shaken boy after his encounter with the curved bullets, Buzzworm gives him a watch to keep for good luck. This gift of a timepiece to show that it was not yet time for the boy, is symbolic for what Buzzworm sees as “personal time”:

Everybody’s got a timepiece and a piece of time. Watch was an outward reflection of your personal time. Had nothing to do with being on time. Had to do with a sense of time. Sense of urgency. Sense of rhythm. Cadence. Sense of history[...] Time could heal, but wouldn’t make wrongs go away. Time came back like a reminder. Time folded with memory. In a moment, everything can fold itself up and time stand still. (86)

As fluid as the spaces, time here can bend, stand still and is recognized as a rhythmic movement. Rather than following standard time, Buzzworm believes that each individual recognizes time in his/her own way and that everyone can lay claim to time as they see fit. Time here is perceived, it is a feeling that is wrapped up within one’s own remembering, and therefore is constructed through individuals’ personal perception of the world. By putting into question the solidity of both time and space, Yamashita calls forth the problematic foundations upon which these standards are established, namely that what we recognize on maps and clocks as universal systems for pinpointing where and when we are in the world are based upon the legacy of Western colonial violence. Indeed the establishment of the Greenwich Meridian Time (GMT) as both degree and Universal Time (UTC) zero places Europe, the United Kingdom specifically,

quite literally at the center of the world. When I say colonial violence, I refer to the violence inflicted upon the colonized body that Fanon describes so adeptly in *Wretched of the Earth*, and the complete disavowal of systems of thought and modes of being that remain inconsistent with Western Europe. Jinqi Ling, in his recent comprehensive study of Yamashita's novels, *Across Meridians: History and Figuration in Karen Tei Yamashita's Transnational Novels* (2012) points to the re-mapping of the world's geography based on Enlightenment ideals and Western European economic interests. Citing the work of Mary Louise Pratt's now classic text *Under Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Ling writes:

Pratt identifies two modes of colonial mapping of the world in tandem with the general Enlightenment practice of natural history, a discipline that “naturalizes the bourgeois European's own global presence and authority” through exhaustive cataloging and naming of its findings from its interior explorations. These two modes of mapping are first, “surface mapping of the globe,” which “correlates with an expanding search for commercially exploitable resources, markets and lands to colonize”; and second, the “navigational mapping” that is “linked with the search for trade routes” or with the need for exploratory or military operations. (Ling 116)

That the novel begins with the unsettling of the Tropic of Cancer—part of the set of cartographic lines established to aid Western European colonial expansion—immediately undermines the logic of colonial systems that have come to establish these imaginary longitudinal and latitudinal lines as absolute markers for organizing the world. As it further destabilizes calendrical time, *Tropic* posits an alternative to the trajectory of the clock through the “personal time,” disavowing the temporal centrality of Western Europe.

Everywhere in this text the progressive movement of calendrical time and the cartography that helped establish it are either distorted or disregarded entirely. Human technologies and structures, symbols of civility and development, are often usurped by the impulses of the natural world: homes fail to keep away fauna, brick walls curve to the shape of the earth, militarized borders are permeated and the concrete structures of the L.A. freeways

contract and expand as the teeming masses traverse its expanse. The dynamism in this world is first and foremost a response to colonial conquest marking the history of the Americas and comprising both spatial and temporal violence. Yamashita's novel undermines these colonial and capitalist regimes by manipulating the singularities presented by calendrical time and the preeminence of globalization. One character that embodies both the critique of imperialism and its legacy of capitalist production is Arcangel, the ancient, magical *luchador*<sup>18</sup> with extraordinary strength and a divinity consistent with his name. Traveling from the south to the north of the Tropic of Cancer, he is often mistaken for a vagrant but his seasoned physique and unknown origins testifies to an existence that disavows temporal limits. Yamashita introduces Arcangel as such:

*No one knew where he came from,  
or how long he has lived,  
how many years,  
decades,  
and yet he seemed like a child,  
yet not such a child to be without season  
nor such an old to be without reason.*

When he removed his clothing, he revealed weathered skin stretched like fragile paper over brittle bones, revealed the holes in the sides of this torso and the purple stain across his neck, the solid scars of tissue that padded his feet. He possessed the beauty of an ancient body, a gnarled and twisted tree—more like bamboo than birch, more birch than oak, more like oak than pine, more like pine than sequoia, more like sequoia than cactus, more like cactus—was the secret of his youth and the secret of his age. (Yamashita 46-47.)

From the start, Arcangel defies absolute signification. His unquantifiable age can only be defined as a liminal space, the place somewhere between the vivacity of youth and the awareness that comes with age in which he eternally dwells. The mystery of his age also corresponds with his unknown origins, but while this might signify an ephemeral and displaced existence, in truth

---

<sup>18</sup> *Lucha Libre* (Free Fright) is Mexican-style wrestling is much like American professional wrestling. The wrestlers or *luchadores* (literally, fighters) don masks and take on personas usually based on archetypal models of heroes or villains.

he is simultaneously rooted to the precise moment where we find him in the text. The description of his body as a wizened tree evinces this rootedness. However as soon as Yamashita represents him as a tree, she disrupts the very image of him as such by comparing him to a bamboo, then an oak, a pine, a sequoia and finally a cactus, which is not a tree at all. Described in a chain of similes—“more like bamboo than birch, more birch than oak, more like oak than pine, more like pine than sequoia, more like sequoia than cactus, more like cactus”—it seems Archangel can only be figured through multiple approximations.

It is unclear whether he is merely a skilled actor, an eccentric street performer or if he is an actual supernatural, ageless and with the ability to traverse national borders unimpeded. While his exact age and origin are unknown, South America is quite central to his work and his identity:

He said that he had come from a long way away, from the very tip of the Tierra del Fuego, from Isla Negra, from the very top of Machu Picchu, from the very bottom of the Foz de Iguazu, but perhaps it was only long way in his quixotic mind. And yet his voice was often a mix of unknown dialects, guttural and whining, Latin mixed with every aboriginal, colonial, slave, or immigrant tongue, a great confusion discernable to all and to none at all. (47)

Transcending time and space, Arcangel’s belonging to the Americas signals a kind of mestizaje identity expressed in a language that, in its incorporation of disparate languages and dialects, is distilled into pre-discursive mutterings. Simultaneously understood and indiscernible, his “language,” indeed Arcangel himself, is similar to the uncanny colonial experience felt by Ibarra the protagonist from Jose Rizal’s novel *Noli me tangere*. In the following passage Ibarra describes the experience of coming home and seeing a European-style garden in the tropics:

The sight of the botanical garden drove away his gay reminiscences. The devil of comparisons placed before him the botanical gardens of Europe, in the countries where much effort and much gold were needed to make leaf bloom or bud open; and even more, to those colonies, rich and well-tended, and all open to the public. (Rizal 51)

For Benedict Anderson in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998), what Rizal refers to here as the “devil of comparisons”—a phrase translated by Anderson as “spectre of comparisons”—is simultaneously a recognition and misrecognition of the Manila Botanical Gardens that seem to mimic, with much effort and cost, those sprawling gardens in Europe, from which Ibarra has just returned. For Ibarra, this vision of Europe quite literally transplanted onto one of its colonial properties at the same time conjures feelings of the freedom he enjoyed as a classed mestizo there and anger for the subjugation his homeland must endure under its Spanish masters. Such an affect brought on by the acute awareness of the colonized subject’s position has often been likened to Freud’s uncanny, the feeling of simultaneous familiarity and foreignness, which can be, although not always, fraught with terror.<sup>19</sup> This is to say that Ibarra, and indeed Arcangel—characters whose mestizo identities are marked by the linguistic and geographic borders which they traverse—manifest the confusion, anger and terror of the colonial subject.

Over one hundred years and a vast ocean separate the narratives of *Noli* and *Tropic*. Consequently, Ibarra and Arcangel embody the colonial condition in seemingly radically ways: whereas the former stands for the critique of the abuses of colonial clergy, the latter is a fantastical nomad whose street performances seek to link the colonial legacy to global capitalism. However, despite these differences, the affects that arise—from Ibarra’s experience of Manila in the late 1800s and from those who encounter Arcangel in his travels in this contemporary moment—demonstrates the tenacity of colonial violence. When Fanon describes such violence in *Wretched of the Earth*, he writes of its pervasive and invasive nature; it occupies every realm of daily living to a point where “colonialism has not simply depersonalized the individual it has colonized; this depersonalization is equally felt in the collective sphere, on the

---

<sup>19</sup> See Sigmund Freud’s 1919 lecture titled “The Uncanny.”

level of social structures. The colonized people find that they are reduced to a body of individuals who only find cohesion when in the presence of the colonized nation” (Fanon 293-4). In fact, the sequel to *Noli*, *El Filibustrismo* (1891) features the return of a radicalized Ibarra, obsessed with seeking revenge against the colonial regime and determined to incite a violent revolution. An example of the kind of pathology described by Fanon, Ibarra’s turn to violence results from the decimation of his former idealism under the duress of colonial rule. Indeed, colonization makes mundane the everyday violence endured by the body, making each living moment an extended state of emergency.

This is where the comparisons between Ibarra and Arcangel diverge: while Ibarra seems to collapse beneath the awareness of his subjugation, Arcangel bears the weight and then bears witness to the violence through time and space as he transforms himself with each street performance. Once, playing a prophet in a street performance in Montevideo, he proclaimed the arrival of doomsday in fifty-two-year cycles, using the moment of colonial contact as the flash point of disaster:

*Ah woe is the great land of Brazil,  
discovered in 1500  
by Pedro Alvarez Cabral.  
Doom! Doom! Doom!  
Doom in the year of 2020!  
Or,  
Woe is Patagonia  
discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1519.  
In this year also,  
Héran Cortés discovered México.  
Ah, all is lost!  
Doomed.  
Doomed to destruction in 2039!  
And what of Argentina  
discovered by Magellan in 1520?  
Think of it!  
The year 2040 is not so far away.  
He pointed to a young man.*

*In your lifetime you will see it!  
If you believe you will be spared,  
Think again.  
Only death will spare you.  
Every year  
there has been a historic discovery of our lands  
to make the sate of doom a certainty. (Yamashita 50.)*

He continues northward to the U.S. and then to Canada, outlining the moments of “discovery” that have dotted North American history in order to show that catastrophe is not merely a condition of the global south: “In 1610, Henry Hudson discovered the Hudson Bay. In 1621, the Pilgrims discovered Plymouth Rock. There was no escape! If doom did not come as he first predicted, in 2012 then it would also be expected in 2044, 2048, 2054, 2062, 2070, 2078 or 2087” (51). Beyond a contrivance showing the shared histories of the Americas, Arcangel’s performance reanimates the historical past by resignifying each point of colonial contact as time zero towards the annihilation of the present. Each year of “discovery” is then re-inscribed as the beginning of the end—rather than the beginning of colonial conquest—illustrating that much like the potentiality ascribed to the present moment, the past can also be made to occupy a space of becoming. Under this new cyclical time described by Arcangel, the future too is changed and is made to carry the possibility of doom. While apocalyptic narratives abound in our cultural productions especially of late, the frequency with which these doomsdays occur to match the widespread efficiency of colonial conquest seems to guarantee that at whatever time and space, the end will not only come, but it will do so every half a century. Here, the apocalypse ceases to be a singular moment of upheaval, but a reoccurring set of events that preemptively places the future in a constant state of emergency. Thus, as the colonial doomsday maintains its cycle, by Arcangel’s count, the present moment already finds itself occupying the space of catastrophe.

The fact that we have been operating within a permanent mode of crisis as exemplified by a cyclical apocalypse is something that Giorgio Agamben and Slavoj Žižek among others, have theorized, especially in the aftermath of 9/11 and the most recent collapse of the world economy.<sup>20</sup> What I highlight here however is not so much the constant state of fear produced by such a state of emergency, nor the events that produce such affects, but the moment that anticipates the event. More than the actual catastrophic event, the multiple moments prior bear the affective charge of potentiality that *Tropic* so adeptly presents. For example, the affects that surround the imminence of Arcangel's predictions have not yet foreclosed into the terror of catastrophe; that while the end might be near, the present brings with it an unfolding consciousness of colonial violence. Ling identifies *Tropic* as working within a politics of decolonization premised upon the active acquisition of subaltern consciousness based on Fanon:

Key to such a decolonization process is the acquiring of a critical consciousness or gaining an ability to generate self-knowledge, on the part of the colonized, as a precondition for their rise to the status of the Fanonian historical actor. In my discussion of *Tropic of Orange*, I use the interrelated concepts of decolonization and consciousness [...] not to reintroduce the outmoded humanist belief in casual history or in the fully rational and accountable human subject. On the contrary, I see the dialectical tension arising from the interplay between these concepts as an effective way to engage with the complex workings of affect—desires, anxieties, aspirations, or confusions—that mediate the course of decolonization [...] (Ling 113)

Here, Ling relates the processes of coming into consciousness and decolonization—in themselves already inextricably linked—to the affects depicted within the novel that also facilitate the decolonization process. While I consider what Ling calls affect to be emotions,<sup>21</sup> the fact remains that the circulation of emotive expressions of “desires, anxieties, aspirations, or

---

<sup>20</sup> See Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception* (2005), Slavoj Žižek's *Welcome to the Dessert of the Real* (2002) and Žižek's interview in the film *Children of Men* (2006) directed by Alfonso Cuarón in which he notes that the fictional world in which the film is set parallels the current moment of permanent state of emergency.

<sup>21</sup> In the Introduction, I discuss the importance of the distinctions between affect, feeling and emotion. Whereas affects are the abstract sensations at the level of the unconscious, feelings are sensations the register in the consciousness and emotions are the visible expression of those sensations. Brian Massumi and Lauren Berlant are among those who maintain these distinctions.

confusion” in the novel leads to a wider awareness of the colonial regimes acting upon the bodies of the characters. For example, Rafaela’s anxieties on the day of the Summer Solstice become the discursive tool through which the colonial legacy that provides the logic for the world’s cartography is revealed. My analysis of *Tropic*, as I will discuss, builds upon Ling’s discussion and argues that the circulation of affect not only enables the multiple events of upheaval in the novel, but it also makes way for new cartographic visions of the global city and the Americas which subverts both the colonial legacy and capitalist logic.

Indeed there are various moments in the text that can be construed as “the event” and yet the emphasis of *Tropic* remains the interstitial happenings that take shape as the characters interact and are moved by the affects that circulate between them. In fact the big event, the accident between a Porsche and a big rig that shuts down a large part of the Harbor Freeway, and much of the activity on the eastside of L.A., merely serves as the catalyst for the occupation of the freeway that comes after. This freeway take over—during which the city’s homeless occupy abandoned cars and the 110 freeway itself, creating a makeshift community in a space previously impassable by foot—forces to light the economic inequalities so easily glossed over in a decentralized global city such as Los Angeles. It is here that Slavoj Žižek’s discussion of the revolutionary event in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (2002) proves insightful. Žižek argues that the event—in this case the Cuban revolution—actually belies the stagnation that follows its fruition:

Making virtue out of necessity, today’s Cuba heroically continues to defy the capitalist logic of waste and planned obsolescence: many products used there are, in the West, treated as waste—not only the proverbial 1950s American cars which magically still function, but even the dozens of Canadian yellow school buses [...] probably given as a present to Cuba to be used there for public transport. Thus we have a paradox that, in the frantic era of global capitalism, the main result of revolution is to bring social dynamics to a standstill—the price to be paid for exclusion from the global capitalist network. (Žižek 6-7)

It is fitting that the symbols for stagnation used by Žižek are the recycled cars and buses that have remained operational long after they have been discarded or relegated as collectible antiques elsewhere, for these cars were also at once a primary symbol for capitalist production and consumption. For Žižek, their continued use in Cuba post revolution shows, rather than the failed promise of revolution, the proof of the fulfillment of the revolutionary event. He goes on to write:

The decaying houses *are* the proof of fidelity to the Event. No wonder revolutionary iconography in today's Cuba is full of Christian references—apostles of the Revolution, the elevation of Che into a Christlike figure, the Eternal One [...]: when Eternity intervenes in time, time comes to standstill. No wonder that the basic impression of Havana in 2001 was that the original inhabitants had escaped, and squatters had taken over—out of place in these magnificent old buildings, occupying them temporarily, subdividing large spaces with wooden panels, and so on. (Žižek 8)

What Žižek describes here is Cuba's entombment into an eternal present that is either suspended in the wake of the state's desire to prolong the revolutionary moment or suspended in its wait for the time after Fidel Castro (Žižek 7). Similarly entombed are the former homes of Cuba's elite class, now occupied by the squatters undoubtedly produced by the "Special Period," an extraordinarily bleak time when in the 1990s, Cuba's economy lay in ruins after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These decaying homes, along with the antique cars and the deified figures from the revolution, show that "fidelity to the Event" constitutes fidelity to the symbols it produces, symbols that in such a state of arrested development remain equally suspended in an unmoving present.

In light of this discussion of Cuba's suspended post-revolution state we return to post-catastrophe L.A. in the *Tropic of Orange*, as the two bear some striking resemblances. As fires from the exploded big rig burn the areas that flank the Harbor Freeway and the trapped motorists

abandon their cars in the middle of the freeway, the city's homeless begin their migration and occupation:

Manzanar continued to conduct, watching the fire engulf the slope. Even he, who knew the dense hidden community living on the no-man's-land of public property, was surprised by the numbers of people who descended the slopes. Men, women and children, their dogs and even their cats, bedding caches of cans and bottles [...] sidling along the lined of abandoned cars, gawking into the windows and kicking tires, remarking on the models, ages, and colors, as if at a great used car dealership. (Yamashita 120-121.)

As the people claim and occupy these vehicles, soon a new freeway community begins to take shape:

In a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways. Occasional disputes over claims to territory arose, but for the moment, there were more than sufficient vehicles to accommodate this game of musical chairs. Indeed it was a game, a fortunate lottery, and for the transient, understandably impermanent and immediate. Besides, great walls of fire raged at both ends. What to do now? What to do next? [...] A commissary truck opened for business, as did a recycling truck. A moving van was emptied of its contents: washing machines, refrigerators, ovens, chairs, tables, sofas, beds [...] Watermelons, bananas, and cantaloupes were hauled off one truck as were Wonder Bread, Cacique tortillas and Trader Joe's fresh pasta. Someone passed out bottles of Tejava and Snapple. Cases of cold Perrier were taken to the fiery front. (121-122)

Here, Yamashita shows the flurry of activity arising from the first event in the novel. Prior to the accident the freeway and the cars that traverse it belong to the infrastructure that makes the work of capital possible within the global city. As I have discussed in the second chapter, a global city, such as Los Angeles, functions to facilitate the exchange of capital and through that process, it becomes a homogenized space in which those who do not or cannot participate are made obsolete and relegated to the liminal spaces of the city. As the accident renders the freeway impassable, the space and the vehicles that once carried out the business of capital are thus abandoned and made obsolete, unable to fulfill the work of capitalist exchange. Like the Cuban cars and abandoned mansions, the people here have come to occupy and re-appropriate the

vehicles and the spaces that once belonged to the world of capital. However, while the Cuba described by Žižek seems to be at a perpetual standstill, the Harbor Freeway almost immediately becomes a hub of activity and the center of alternative modes of exchange undermining capitalist logic. For example, the value of the vehicles here is assessed not through their market value but the amount of interior space, with the larger cars and vans becoming more desirable than the smaller “luxury” or sports cars, in that they are able to provide better shelter. Exchange is not mediated through currency but through argument and conversation and as the contents of the trucks are emptied out, consumer products—fruit, bread, tortillas, etc.—are shared, passed around and divided among the members of this new community. That Yamashita includes the recognizable brand names of these goods further shows that while they were originally intended to enter the market, they are now a part of a new economy outside of the purview of capital.

These exchanges on the freeway are spontaneous and ephemeral; this new community understands that they cannot possibly inhabit this space permanently. The transient and immediate nature of this community is essential because it embodies the potentiality that results from the circulation of affects. In fact, its existence is made possible by the affects that surround the event, compelling the homeless out and onto the freeway to occupy a visible and central space momentarily in order to disrupt the capitalist logic that governs the global city. Of the many characters in the novel, Murakami Manzanar is perhaps the most attuned to the affects that circulate in the spaces of Downtown L.A. where the Harbor Freeway stands still. Born in the Japanese internment camps located in Manzanar, California during the Second World War, he was once a medical doctor but then decided to abandon his practice and his family to live in the streets of Los Angeles. Much like Buzworm, Manzanar seems to acutely feel the pulse of the city, specifically through the teeming Harbor Freeway, the rhythm of which he perceives as a

symphony that he can conduct from the freeway overpass. He is quite similar to Arcangel because they have both chosen to live on the streets and because their transient existence has allowed them to bear witness to various moments of upheaval.

Witnessing the freeway accident and its aftermath, Manzanar observes that the city, once organized by the cartography of labor—“[e]veryday he saw them scatter this way and that, divvying themselves up into the garment district, the entertainment industry, the tourist business, the military machine, the business sector[...]" (237-38)—has now been re-mapped:

Little by little, Manzanar began to sense a new kind of grid, this one defined not by inanimate structures or other living things but by himself and others like him. He found himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor. On a distant overpass, he can make out the odd mirror of his figure, waving a baton. And beyond that, another homeless person had also taken up the baton. And across the city, on overpasses and street corners, from balconies and park benches, people held branches and pencils and toothbrushes and carrot sticks, and conducted [...]

And of course the movement of traffic had almost altogether stopped, not only in the freeway valley below but virtually everywhere. The tenor of this music was of a different sort, at times a kind of choral babel [...]. As the members of the choir grew exponentially, the thing began to have grandiose proportions only Manzanar could appreciate. (238)

It is here that I locate the affect of imminence operating most evidently as both a result of a moment of upheaval and as a catalyst for yet another explosive event in the novel. With Manzanar at the helm, for a brief moment the inhabitants become part of one large symphony, in which everyone, from a homeless person across the street to the people across town take up the same rhythmic movement. More than simply following Manzanar's lead, the people have also taken up their own batons as they too stake a claim upon the production of the movement. The circulation of affect here among individuals on the Harbor Freeway and beyond synchronizes the movement of the people into a harmonious symphony powerful enough not only to stop all other movement within the city, but to also restructure the city's cartography. No longer are people organized and divided through the work they perform in order to sustain the infrastructure of the

global city. Instead they are connected by the affective network that has exponentially grown to include city folks beyond the freeway. The disruption of capitalist logic that began with the occupation of the freeway and the establishment of a new mode of exchange among the homeless, has come to fruition in this moment where the people, in tune to the same music, redefine the landscape of the city according to their own will.

As the city's cartography is reorganized by the symphony of the people, the Mexico-U.S. border is dragged northward as Arcangel makes his way to Los Angeles. The orange that was once growing in Gabriel's tree in Mazatlán has found its way to Arcangel's suitcase and with Sol by his side—who is under his care—he moves the Tropic of Cancer northward as he pulls the broken down bus he was riding with nothing but his naked body hooked to the bus with steel cables. An organ smuggler, the son of her neighbor in Mazatlán and who the reason why the mother and son have fled as she was afraid that Sol might be taken for his organs, has instead kidnapped Rafaela. Sol, left in the Arcangel's care, remains by the performer's side as a crowd quickly gathers around to witness this super human feat. Immediately, the media appears to cover the event:

[...] Arcangel and a broken bus and a boy and an orange and, for that matter, every thing else South were about to cross it: the very hemline of the Tropic of Cancer and the great skirts of its relentless geography.

Televisa, Univision, Galaxy Latin America and local border stations, congregated to eyeball the event. If there were a dozen local and national stations, there were a dozen eyes, translating to a dozen times a dozen times a dozen like the repetitious vision of a common housefly. Arcangel strained for this vision even though live television had no way of accommodating actual feats of superhuman strength. The virtually real could not accommodate the magical. Digital memory failed to translate imaginary memory. Meanwhile, the watching population surfed the channels for the real, the live, the familiar. But it could not be recognized in the tube [...] In other words, to see it, you had to have been there. (197)

Echoing the swell of music in Los Angeles, the crowd witnesses Arcangel's strength and in so doing becomes a part of the movement that quite literally displaces the established borderlines

linked to colonialism. As spontaneously as the people congregate, so do the television crews. Yet unlike the people, the technology seems unable to capture the moment of magic in which a naked old man manages to pull a heavy bus with only his body while seemingly pushing the boundaries of the North so that the South may once again stake its claim upon the spaces that it once occupied. The failure of the televised media here to mediate for its viewers—those watching television in their homes—functions in a number of ways. First, the untranslatability of this event onto digital media refuses spectacularization. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, the spectacle of bodies works to idealize and naturalize suffering as part of the experience of the so-called Third World subject as she is commodified in the global market. Achieved through the mass dissemination of these narratives through media technologies—television and film in particular—the spectacularization of the suffering body onscreen also becomes the commodified object as it is made to stand-in for the “real” experiences of transnational laborers in global cities in the First World. That Arcangel’s feat refuses such a spectacularization marks this event as something that cannot be commodified, consumed and then made to become a proxy for the actual real.

As the magical becomes actualized in this moment, the inability of television media to adequately present the surge of people towards the border—and for that matter, the collective choir stretching across Los Angeles—disrupts the capitalist exchange embedded onto the spectacularization of the event. When an event of upheaval enters into the camera’s scope and is then disseminated for the consumption of the masses, it not only becomes commodified as such, but it becomes the proxy for reality, rather than an approximated account filtered through the camera person’s eye, the reporter’s editorialization and flanked by the advertising that shores up the economy of the twenty-four-hour news cycle. As the event is filtered through the machine of

capitalist production it becomes part of the body of narratives that we repeat to ourselves over and over again courtesy of its unrelenting replaying onscreen, narratives which make real the event that has now been transformed into a fantasy as it is exponentially filtered, mediated and disseminated. Yamashita describes the news coverage of Arcangel's push for the border through the multiple the multiple lenses that have gathered to capture the event: "If there were a dozen local and national stations, there were a dozen eyes, translating to a dozen times a dozen times a dozen like the repetitious vision of a common housefly" (197). In contrast to the crowd rallying around Arcangel, and the growing city-wide symphony spurred by Manzanar's baton, representations of the event by television media in *Tropic* arrest the magic and therefore the power, of the event. Instead, what is produced through the mediation of media technology is the fantasy-production, to recall Tadiar's term, of the event, which is why the viewers, try as they may by "surfing" through various stations, remain alienated by the people's movement unfolding at the border.

It is here that Žižek's discussion of what he sees as the twentieth century's obsession with the Real proves pertinent. For him, much of the trauma from the experience of catastrophe stems from the collision of our fantastical desires—as embodied by the proliferation of end-of-the-world narratives we produce as a culture—with the actual event, 9/11 being his primary example.

He writes:

We should therefore invert the standard reading according to which the WTC explosions were the intrusion of the Real which shattered our illusory Sphere: quite the reverse- it was before the WTC collapse that we lived in our reality, perceiving Third World horrors as something which was not actually part of our social reality, as something which existed (for us) as a spectral apparition on the (TV) screen - and what happened on September 11 was that this fantasmatic screen apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality (i.e. the symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality). (Žižek 16-17)

The image Žižek refers to is that of catastrophe, which he claims has been the object of fantasies, the realization of which helped produce the shock of 9/11. A phenomenon once relegated to the realm of fiction, the World Trade Center attacks made real the long-desired object of fantasy: catastrophe. Furthermore, the repetition of this event on television screens during the days that follow embodies the desire to repeat the possession of the desired object and, more importantly, reveals how spectacularization deprives the event of its substance:

[...] that the late-capitalist consumerist Californian paradise is, in its very hyperreality, in a way *unreal*, substanceless, deprived of material inertia. And the same 'derealization' of the horror went on after the WTC collapse: while the number of victims [...] is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see [...] in clear contrast to reporting on Third World catastrophes, where the whole point is to produce a scoop of some gruesome detail: Somalis dying of hunger, raped Bosnian women, men with their throats cut [...] Is this not yet further proof of how, even in this tragic moment, the distance which separates Us from Them, from their reality, is maintained: the real horror happens *there*, not *here*?

So it is not only that Hollywood stages a semblance of real life deprived of the weight and inertia of materiality—in late-capitalist consumerist society, 'real social life' itself somehow acquires the features of a staged fake [...] Again, the ultimate truth of the capitalist utilitarian despiritualized universe is the dematerialization of 'real life' itself, its reversal into a spectral show. (13-14)

Referring to a 1998 film, *The Truman Show*, in which the protagonist discovers that he has been the subject of a long-running “reality” television show, Žižek maintains that the repeated spectacular representation of the WTC attacks deprived the event of its reality, in the same way that Truman’s world becomes deprived of materiality as he realizes that everyone and everything he knows are fictitious and staged. The irony is that the sensationalized broadcasts of the Twin Towers collapse were devoid of the carnage that most often characterizes the media coverage of the so-called Third World. Not only does this contribute to the “derealization” of the event but it also works to maintain the distance between First and Third World reality, thus ensuring the exceptionality of this event over all other terrible events elsewhere. In the second chapter, I argued that the spectacularized suffering of feminized laborers on film serve to reify the so-

called Third World as the locus for abject misery, while representations of such suffering is commodified as part of the effort to commodify the labor of Third World subjects themselves. Here Žižek makes a related point: in late-capitalist consumer culture, “real social life”—commodified as a spectacle—becomes the fantasy.

Linking the above arguments is the commodification of the broadcasted image presented to the masses as “real life,” thus revealing the collusion of media technology with capitalist production. The inability of televised media to transmit Arcangel’s and the peoples’ exodus towards the border disrupts this very process of commodification, preserving this moment of upheaval in the realm of “real social life.” That the event must be experienced live and in person illustrates that, much like Manzanar’s collective choir, the effective circulation, indeed the very experience of affect depends upon the corporeal. If we are to return to Spinoza’s supposition that a body must be defined by the affects that it is capable of experiencing and transmitting, it becomes quite clear why televised media in the text are unable to mediate the experience of the event for the people, for the body must be present in the moment in order to make the circulation of affect possible.

As Sara Ahmed writes of emotion in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), feelings are first and foremost a social experience:

The crowd becomes like the individual, the one ‘who has feelings’. Feelings become a form of social presence rather than self-presence. In my model of sociality of emotions, I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. (Ahmed 10)

While, as I have discussed in the introduction, Ahmed works primarily in the realm of emotion rather than affect, the circulation of affect in the context of the novel works in similar ways. As

bodies—any kind of body—are constituted by the capacity to affect and be affected, the interaction between bodies becomes paramount to being. Thus, as Ahmed argues, the emotive interaction between bodies give shape to the “surfaces or boundaries” that make up everything else so much that what one body feels gets transmitted beyond the boundaries of that body and onto others that surround it. Without the surface of bodies to affect, the process of becoming—a process that is also inherent to the body according to Spinoza—is arrested. This is the reason why I argue that any event of upheaval must essentially be an ephemeral experience so that, just like Fanon’s formulation of the movement of the people, it can make way for other upheavals to follow. To broadcast an event and purport to deliver a kind of authentic experience of it would not only remove the corporeal body from the matrix of that experience, but it would transform the event as something we are compulsively doomed to repeat and consume as it becomes commodified by televised media. As Žižek points out, the repeated depictions of 9/11 via the twenty-four-hour news cycle created a singular narrative of the event, leading to a singular fantasy of the event (Žižek 15). The tension I bring to the fore here is between the circulation of the image of the event versus the circulation of affect in and around the event. Whereas the former results in reifying the event into a singular narrative so that it can then be commodified, the latter makes way for a heterogeneous experience of the event. As much as Yamashita’s depiction of the people’s movement towards the border embodies the circulation of affect made possible by the interaction of bodies, she also presents this event as a form of upheaval that opens up the space for the affective disruption of capital’s desire to arrest and then commodify a lived social moment.

Within this discussion of what constitutes “real social life,” as Žižek puts it, versus the fantasy of the event, we are seemingly faced with another irony in the *Tropic*: the event we are to

perceive as authentically “real” revolves around the very supernatural act of an old man pulling a bus while rearranging the cartography of the North-South divide this itself is perhaps the best realization of the magical realism Yamashita utilizes in the novel. As Ling discusses in his book, magical realism is part of the process through which Yamashita engages history in her novels, including *Tropic of Orange*. Citing Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier’s meditation on “*lo real maravilloso*” (“the marvelous real”) Ling writes:

In parallel, magical realism transforms the ordinary into the marvelous and the mythic, or vice versa to bring out the relevance of “an unexpected alteration of reality,” “and amplification of the scale and categories of reality,” and an unaccustomed insight [...] Yamashita’s characterization of this narrative mode as a tool for satirizing reality and her description of the nature of her writing in general as “historic fiction” is significant [...] Such a materialist recognition points to magical realism’s more fundamental functions of evoking the “return of the repressed history” and, through such a return, of unleashing utopian desires of liberation in the wake of political decolonization set in motion at the end of World War II [...] (Ling 21)

As the people, led by Arcangel, pull the borders of Mexico to encompass the California border, their collective movement confronts the violent colonial history that established these lines of demarcation in the first place. The magical way in which the people not only permeate, but also help expand the interstitial borderland space into Los Angeles, serves to defy the exclusionary function of the borderline. Magic realism thus makes possible the subversion of the colonial legacy in the Americas, which as Ling points out is part of the project of political decolonization undertaken by Yamashita in a number of her works including *Tropic*.

As an aesthetic form, magic realism allows Yamashita to confront the histories that shape the North-South cartography, and so it functions throughout the novel from the initial moment Rafaela encounters the daily exodus of the animals towards the Tropic of Cancer until the very final instances of upheavals at the end of the text. The most notable instances of these supernatural moments are associated with Arcangel’s character because of the very direct way in

which he confronts and disrupts both the colonial legacy and capitalist transnational economy operating in the Americas. Such a confrontation occurs during the laborious trip to the border, and as the earth yields to his movement, the vast borderland appear before him, stretching from the Pacific to the east:

*...all 2,000 miles of the frontier  
stretched across from Tijuana to the Pacific,  
its straight edge cutting through the Rio Colorado,  
against the sharp edge of Arizona  
and the unnatural angle of New Mexico  
sliding along the Rio Grande,  
tenderly caressing the supple bottom of Texas  
to the end of its tail  
on the Gulf of Mexico  
It waited with seismic sensors and thermal imaging,  
with la pinche migra,  
colonial of destitute skirmishing at its hard line,  
with coyotes, pateros, cholos,  
steel structures, barbed wire, infrared binoculars,  
INS detention centers, border patrols, rape  
robbery and death. (Yamashita 198)*

In the same way that Arcangel is able to see the thin line of the Tropic of Cancer threaded through the lone orange from Gabriel's tree, he is also able to see the expanse of the borderline that separates the north from the south. Manifesting in this vision is the violence that characterizes the United States' border policy from the initial appropriation of Mexican land, the exploitation of migrants by the "coyotes" who purport safe passage to the U.S., to the militarization of the border. These images appear simultaneously to Arcangel as a way to signal that such violence has been caused by the very existence of this demarcated space. Once again, Arcangel is made to confront and bear witness to turmoil that surrounds conquest and the hardening of the lines that create the North-South divide, where the South is made to occupy the space deprivileged by the movement of capital. While his performances all over Latin America reveal the colonial violences that are manifested as apocalyptic cycles, Arcangel's movement

here discloses the fantasy of an open global market, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) being the primary example in the text. Rather than forging better relations between the U.S. and Mexico through “free” and “open,” Arcangel’s vision brings to bear the fortification of the border to preserve the United States’s preeminent position within the global economy.

Continuing his approach towards the border, Arcangel envisages the back and forth exchange of Mexican bodies from the U.S. to Mexico:

It waited with its great history of migrations back and forth—in recent history,  
*the deportation of 400,000 Mexican*  
*citizens in 1932*  
*coaxing back of 2.2 million*  
*braceros in 1942*  
*only to exile the same 2.2 million*  
*wetbacks in 1953*

The thing called the New World Border waited for him with the anticipation of five centuries. Admittedly, strange one, but Conquistador of the North he was. Ah, he thought, the North of my dreams.

South of his dreams, it had been a long journey [...] Here was a mere moment of passage. As he approached, he could hear the chant of the border over and over again: *Catch ‘em and throw ‘em back. Catch ‘em and throw ‘em back. Catch ‘em and throw ‘em back.* It was the beginning of the North of his dream but they questioned him anyway. (Yamashita 198)

Calling forth the repatriation of anywhere from about half a million to over a million people of Mexican descent—most of whom were American citizens—and the Bracero Program—that brought hundreds of thousands Mexican laborers into the U.S. to work in farmlands, enduring often exploitive conditions—Arcangel’s movement opens up these historical moments not to only himself, but to the swell of people following him northward. As the land opens itself up to Arcangel, belying the exclusionary function of the border, he is transformed into a “Conquistador of the North,” but rather than repeat the colonial conquest of the South, he envisions a new kind of North in his dreams. This dream of the North, its new imagining, is one that is left ambivalent in the text; and to be sure, the border, personified as a collective voice

does resist Arcangel's reimagining of the North, repeatedly chanting "catch 'em and throw 'em back," demanding a visa, passport and the ability to speak English as legitimization for his presence in this now-contested space.

These demands from the border however, remain futile as the masses surge through and finally permeate the border: "*Then came the kids selling Kleenex and Chiclets/the women pressing rubber soles into tennis shoes,/the men welding fenders to station wagons and/all the people who do the work of machines:/human washing machines/human vacuums/human garbage disposals*" (200). The people who first enter are recognized by the labor they perform. Alluding to the low-wage manufacturing and service work, the equivalence of these laborers to machines disclose how they have been dehumanized by the labor they perform for Americans and U.S. multinational companies on both sides of the border. To cross the border "showing their [empty] hands" (199) not only shows the triumph of the people over the immigration papers, passports and visas required at the border, but it also indicates their return to humanity. In this new New World envisioned by Arcangel, the people need not prove their legitimacy or utility in the labor market in order to legitimize their entry into the so-called First World; they simply enter. As the crowds flood in to occupy this space, they bring with them the goods of exchange from the Southern Americas—corn, coffee, bananas, music, pre-Columbian artifacts—the diseases brought into the New World by the conquistadores that wiped out the *indigenas* and the spirits of dead intellectuals, writers and revolutionaries: Bolívar, Che Guevara, Benito Juárez, Pablo Neruda and others. Paralleling the movement of the homeless towards the freeway in L.A., and their subsequent occupation of a space they once had no access to, the flood of people, goods, disease, and the spirit of the dead and the ideologies they represent signal the disruption of the capitalist logic that regulates and legitimizes the flow of bodies and commodities across the

border. This is the new dream of the New World. Dreams often offer uncanny ephemeral visions of lived reality, and the potentiality of Arcangel's dreams is precisely what I emphasize here. As the U.S. nation-state maintains its borders in order to ensure economic dominance over the South, new dreams of the North—forged by a movement of the people, such as the one led by Arcangel and Manzanar—offer an alternative vision of what it means to inhabit a space privileged by capital. This new dream makes supple the hardened borders that divide the North and the South, and so the movement in and around the border becomes a manifestation of the will of the people, rather than the needs and wants of the nation-state in collusion with capital.

The simultaneity of the events led by Manzanar and Arcangel suggest that the burgeoning movement on both sides of the North-South divide—as evinced by the flight of fauna towards the Tropic of Cancer, the shifting latitudes of the earth and the cosmic vibrations palpable to the characters in the novel—has come to fruition. As the L.A. symphony crescendos, Manzanar finally catches sight of Arcangel and alongside him the marching crowd has defied the restrictions of the border. Here, the interstitial spaces of the freeway and the borderland converge in a triumphant moment in which the marginalized people of the North and South—the homeless, the migrants, “*citizens and aliens [...] the great undocumented foment*” (201) —seem poised to fulfill the new dream of the North. Yet, as soon as the people's movement begins to take shape, it is disrupted and takes form as something else entirely: “Despite the celebratory nature of Manzanar's great laboring choir, the terror of gunfire ripped across the valley of cars. Manzanar knew it had started with a single shot—the one that penetrated the body of the young woman sunning herself on that news van. That was all it took” (239). The movement to reconfigure the global cartography has resulted in the shooting of the crowd at the Harbor Freeway wherein, among many other casualties, Emi the young Japanese American reporter for

the local news. A lone gunshot, from one of the military men ironically deployed to keep the peace, activated a barrage of gunfire and suddenly the harmony that seemed to have united the city and erased the North-South divide is transformed into chaos and terror. As the embodiment of a tragic outcome of a moment of upheaval, the freeway shootings remain consistent with the ambivalent nature of the people's movement forged from the circulation of affect. Affects that circulate are pure potential, and while the sensations that circulated through the crowd as Manzanar conducted his symphony and the as Arcangel marched towards L.A. may have been positively charged, what happens next cannot be guaranteed. This ambivalence ensures the constant self-refreshing of bodies and outcomes. Without the promise of a constant becoming, we end up with Žižek's vision of post-revolution stasis, or worse, the pathological and compulsory repetition of the catastrophic moment, replayed over and over again on television until it begins to take on the veneer of fantasies, exemplified by the overproduced apocalyptic movies from Hollywood.

In fact Emi, even as she lay dying from her wound, sees the artificiality of the scene before and recognizes how it can be manipulated into an even bigger spectacle:

Buzzworm wove the van through the droves of screaming and panic-stricken people like so many walk-ons, avoiding the sudden car explosions and shattering glass, careening around the digitally-constructed dismembering of cats, dogs and even a horse. A cast of thousands—military and civilian—ran this way and that in an epic disaster. Emi looked on with dull approval; it was B fare. The explosions could be extended, the ride sped up, the sensation of violence intensified. (249)

Evaluating the freeway massacre through the criteria of the Hollywood disaster film, Emi sees how the event she is meant to experience as “real life” could be made even more sensational for mass consumption. As a television reporter, she is accustomed to framing a scene, transforming it from a lived event to something newsworthy enough to broadcast. No other character in the novel understands the process through which the images onscreen are transformed and

commodified: “I worked hard to make it this far, but I don’t have illusions about what I do. I take a show speed it up electronically [...] we slash and burn [...] You hardly ever notice. Cut. Cut. Snip. Snip. Snip. The point is to keep the integrity of the show (well sort of), and still get everything to wrap around the commercials” (126). While most of the novel’s main characters exists in the fringes of or are exploited in the global city, Emi recognizes that much of what she does for a living is part of the capitalist mechanism. Revealing the editing she must do in order to make a show more viable for consumption, she admits that she only needs to maintain some semblance of the original image so that they can be presented in between commercials. Not only does Emi know that selling products has become the main purpose for television media, she has wholly accepted this fact and sees herself as a player in the game. As an unapologetic participant in the process of commodifying the events she reports, the Harbor Freeway massacre is the fantasy of catastrophe made real, and then returned to fantasy again as Emi imagines her dying moment as part of a movie.

In the end, her death becomes part of a singular narrative about the events at the freeway to be repeated on television thus, creating the fantasy that will stand in for “what really happened.” Even in the middle of the chaos, Buzzworm’s view of the scene is already transformed from lived reality to sensational TV programming: “[...] he could see the military, in jungle camouflage, making its move down the freeway canyon. The *live* monitor didn’t show this. It was too busy repeating the beginning of the end, ad nauseam [...] Finally her death would be unforgivable. Emi’s enraged media would see to that. A thousand homeless could die, but no one could forget her ultimate sacrifice” (251). In the same way that the media is unable to broadcast representations of the events at the border, Buzzworm observes that fails to capture the scope of the event. Instead it follows the storyline of Emi’s shooting in which Buzzworm is cast

as the hero trying to help and Emi as the martyred heroine whose death will incite the anger of television viewers. Never mind the death of the city's homeless whose very presence discloses the failure of the upward mobility promised by participating in capitalist consumer culture. Never mind the armed military that fired at the unarmed masses. Never mind that Emi, far from a heroine, was just sun bathing atop her news van right before she was shot. The media has seen to it that the story it chooses to tell, with the cast of characters it chooses to play already assigned roles, will play itself out on television. This story will in turn become proxy for everything that has occurred at the Harbor Freeway, erasing the heterogeneous experience of the event, from the community of the homeless that has taken shape on the freeway to the meeting of Arcangel and Manzanar as the symphony of the collective reached its peak.

While televised media attempt to arrest the event into a singular narrative, true to the Fanonian model of revolution, already the people seem to have moved on. From the chaos on the freeway, another event emerges: Arcangel's, as El Gran Mojado, lucha libre battle with Super NAFTA. At the same time as the chaos at the Harbor Freeway, the crowd that has followed Arcangel through the border seems to have become the audience for the Mexican-style wrestling match wherein opponents don masks and take on fictional personas, inspiring either the audience's cheers or derision. Vying for the audience's support, Super NAFTA addresses them first:

Kids this is your challenge, too. And the challenge is this: It's the future [...] Well isn't that what everyone really wants? It's a piece of the action! And that's what progress is all about. A piece of the action. How about twelve percent? Look at it this way. What's twelve percent of a billion dollars? One hundred and twenty million! That's multimillions. And it's not a lottery. It's your cut. (257)

Next, El Gran Mojado presents his rebuttal:

*There is not future or past.  
You all know I am witness to this.*

*There is no aging. There is only changing.  
What can this progress my challenger speaks of really be?  
You who live in the declining and abandoned places  
of great cities, called barrios, ghettos, favelas:  
What is archaic? What is modern? We are both.  
The myth of the first world is that  
development is wealth and technology progress.  
It is all rubbish.  
It means that you are no longer human beings  
but only labor [...]  
How will ninety-five percent of us  
divide twelve percent? (258-59)*

Herein lies the ideological tension explicit throughout the text: between capital and the dream of an alternative mode of being; between progressive and cyclical time; between those at the center of the global city and those existing in the fringes; and between the North and the South embodied, quite appropriately, by a spectacular wrestling match. While Super NAFTA promises upward mobility through a “cut of the action,” El Gran Mojado calls out the unfairness of having the majority of the people clamor for pittance of the profit. The former sees progress through the acquisition of wealth, the latter disputes the notion that wealth equals development. NAFTA argues that he fights to ensure the children of their future while El Gran proposes that capitalist development transforms humans into machines of labor. Even the monikers of each *luchador* allude to this tension: whereas “Super NAFTA” stands for the free flow of goods and capital between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, “El Gran Mojado” or “The Great Wetback” reveals that the same freedom of movement excludes the people that NAFTA is supposed to benefit.

In the end, Super NAFTA and El Gran Mojado destroy each other, the former succumbing to a fiery death, while the latter is obliterated by a last minute missile deployed by his opponent. This final climactic scene following all the other events of upheavals in the novel: the bending, expansion and contraction of the land; the freeway accident, its occupation and the ensuing riots; the rise of the collective choir in L.A. and the movement of the people that shatters the border;

the freeway shootings; and Emi's death. One event sparking the next, one upheaval happening simultaneously with another—all signaling the volatility and the potential contained in the present moment as each ending opens up the space for something to begin anew. Thus the point of entry for the novel—the appearance of the thin line of the Tropic of Cancer, flexing to signal the earth's pliability—also marks its point of departure: the tensing of the line, until it is finally released. While Arcangel may have carried the line with him through the attenuated border, Rafaela and her son Sol, have all along been at the heart of the line's movement from Mazatlán to the Pacific Rim Auditorium where Arcangel meets his end. Throughout this time, Bobby, Rafaela's husband, has undertaken his own journey through the border then back again, as he makes sense of his place within the contact zone, to use Mary Louise's Pratt's term, that is Los Angeles. Bobby's identity is itself a contact zone: "Dude speaks Spanish. Comprendo? So you figure it's one of those Japanese from Peru. Or maybe Korean from Brazil. Or Chinamex. Turns out Bobby's from Singapore [...] Bobby Ngu. They all got Ngu names. Hey, it's not his real name. Real name's Li Kwan Yu. Bobby's Chinese. Chinese from Singapore with a Vietnam name speaking like a Mexican living in Koreatown. That's it" (15). Bobby Ngu's identity skims the Pacific Rim, until it finds itself in L.A. among the Mexican immigrants, like his wife, whom he employs in his cleaning business.

A character rife with the symbolic possibility for forging immigrant affinities that defy singular significations, Bobby's initial investment in upward mobility and the myth of the model minority belies this potential. This also drives Rafaela away to Mexico, unable to understand Bobby's acquiescence to the unjust pay scale for immigrant laborers, including the janitors under his employ. As the sole provider for his family, both in L.A. and in Singapore, Bobby knows no other mode of being apart from hustling to earn a living: "Never been so happy as when he got

married to that woman. Can't explain. Happier he is, harder he works. Can't stop. Gotta make money. Provide for his family. Gotta buy his wife nice clothes. Gotta buy his kid the best. Bobby's kid's gonna know the good life. That's how Bobby sees it" (17). In the end, Bobby's outstretched arms holding on to, then finally letting go of each end of the severed Tropic line as it begins to snap back into place. Ling sees this final scene as the fruition of Bobby's coming into consciousness:

Yamashita does not specify what Bobby embraces, but given the way he matures in the novel, he seems to reembrace his family: Rafaela and Sol and the values that they represent. At the same time, he begins to imagine a future not crisscrossed with borders. Bobby, the quintessential third world immigrant to the United States, is finally awakened to an awareness that he and many other immigrant laborers are actually "doin' time in El Norte" (102), as well as to the coercive fiction of progress and freedom authorized by the ideologies of the line that, as Manzanar observes, treats the rest of the rest of the world as "garbage." (Ling 144-45)

Certainly, his reunion with his family indicates that he has come to recognize what Rafaela has known all along: the exploitation of immigrant laborers under his employ is necessarily tied to the his own labor to fulfill the promise of upward mobility imposed upon him as a "good" Third World subject who has been allowed into the privileged space of the global city. Building on Ling's assessment of Bobby's evolution into consciousness, I argue further that his forward flight—"[a]nybody looking sees his arms open wide like he's flying. Flying forward to embrace" (Yamashita 268)—symbolizes a future that rests upon the recognition one's bondage to the globalized economy and more importantly, the ability to forge relationships challenging the divisive and dehumanizing effects of such a system. While this final scene highlights Bobby's maturity, it also features Rafaela's transformation into an angel in her husband's eyes. Like Arcangel, and to some extent Gabriel—both of whom take on the roles of messenger and protector symbolized by the angel—Rafaela is made to take up the labor began by Arcangel and made possible by her already-developed consciousness. Furthermore, as Sol's parents, she and

Bobby become the caretakers of the effort to cultivate multiple affinities as embodied by the boy's mixed ethnicity and his alliance with Arcangel as he traversed the border of the North. That the final event in this novel transpires within the Pacific Rim Auditorium signals to me a privileging of the potential embedded in forging alliances within the demarcated space of the Pacific Rim, which not only includes a vision for hemispheric cohesion, but one that reaches across an ocean in order to dream up possibilities for a new people's movement.

While the novel ends with the nuclear family in tact as Bobby is returned to his family, I want to emphasize that I am not advocating for a return to the traditional model of the family in which the father maintains his privileged position the head of the family. What I mean to highlight here, as I have done throughout my work, is the possibility of dreams, versus the exploitive potential of fantasies. This is a distinction that I make throughout this project aided by Tadiar's supposition that to imagine is to labor and the product of this work can either provide us the means to dream of other ways of being, or trap us within the exploitive systems that make us into objects and into fantasies that seek to dominate whatever possibilities we imagine for ourselves. As Tadiar writes:

[...] if imagination has only now entered the everyday social life of people, in particular, third world peoples, then they—we—have only been collectively dreaming the dreams of others, trapped in their imagination of us and our worlds. Or perhaps we have not been dreaming at all and, instead, have lived in the rote mythographies of our given social identities. It would seem that our imaginations were confined by the boundaries of our political territory. (Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production* 5)

*Tropic* stands in opposition to the “rote mythographies” ascribed onto migrant bodies, ethnic identities and affiliations, onto the linearity of time and the solidity of space, and onto the bodies of Third-Worlded women as they are commodified in global cities. In the end, Rafaela, Sol and Bobby—all of them together—stand at the precipice of the on-going struggle to dream new dreams for the future that is always in the process of becoming.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Digital Media and the Promise of the Present**

Activated by my initial interest in representations of Filipino/a overseas contract workers, this project tracks the process through which the images of gendered and racialized subjects, embodied by the Filipina OCW, becomes spectacularized and then co-opted by the nation-state as a way to fulfill its desires for economic relevancy in the globalized world market. Shaped by the legacy of more than four hundred years of Spanish and U.S. colonial history in the Philippines, and working in collusion with the globalized capitalist economy, this desire has been integral to the nation's imagination of itself. Emerging from this imaginative work is the OCW, whose labor generates such a significant part of the nation's gross domestic product that it became necessary for the nation-state to ensure the continuous flow of laboring bodies into the world market. As part of this effort, the OCW figure is imbued with the same emotive charges that mark the symbolic representations of the nation as woman—martyrdom, suffering, virtue, and sacrifice—thus transforming the OCW into the nation's new heroes or *bagong bayani*. Deployed most notably by the Philippine national hero Jose Rizal in his anticolonial literary works, the suffering body the OCW is made to symbolically occupy was first born out of the struggle against colonialism. Thus, what was once a symbol of revolutionary struggle against the colonial masters has now become symbolic of capitalist desires.

The makings of the OCW into the *bagong bayani* required the concerted effort of the nation to mobilize a large and continuous contingency of Filipino/a workers for work abroad, which it fulfilled through government institutions geared specifically to recruit and train workers, to facilitate work visas and to track and record the labor output of OCWs. The transformation of the overseas laborer into the heroic, suffering hope for the nation also happens at the level of

representation. Former president Corazon Aquino first articulated this vision of the overseas laborer when she called her audience of Filipina domestic helpers the nation's *bagong bayani* in the late 1980s, a trope that has since become deeply embedded into the national imaginary, aided in large part by the proliferation of films about the OCW experience. As suffering and martyrdom overdetermine representations of the "*bayani*" (hero) and the feminized nation, the representations of OCWs in film are also dominated by the same emotive regimes. I focus my critique on film throughout the project because of the proliferation of OCW films produced in the Philippines and because these films profit from the display of emotive OCW bodies. Reifying the notion that suffering is not only constitutive of overseas work, but also part of one's duty to the nation, these films often become complicit with the Philippine nation-state's fantasy-production of the OCW as the *bagong bayani*, taking the place of not only Rizal's heroines—who are symbolic of the nation under colonial rule—but of Rizal himself, the nation's quintessential martyred hero.

The making of the OCW as the *bagong bayani* is also an inherently transnational process. In fact, the birth of the term itself—from a speech of former president Corazon Aquino addressing an audience comprised of mostly Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong—highlights the exchange of Filipina bodies in the global market, but also the efforts of the nation-state to subsume these laboring bodies into the nation even as they remain physically outside of its geographic confines. Additionally, OCW migrations differ from existing models of diasporic migration and settlement. Their trajectories include prolonged yet temporary residency in multiple countries, underscoring the limited and contractual nature of OCW employment and the tenuous position they occupy as they are often denied or excluded from the basic labor and human rights protections afforded to citizens of their "host" nations. Moreover, as Filipino/a

transmigrants, to use Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc's term (1994), travel to and work in various in global cities in Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and North America, OCW films not only depict what they perceive to be the "real life" experiences of transmigrant experience, but the distribution of these films also follow the trajectories of OCWs themselves.<sup>22</sup> All of this is to say that as Filipino/a transmigrants become products of exchange in the global market, their filmic representations are also marketed and sold overseas. Doubly commodified, the labor of OCWs as well their spectacularized suffering and martyrdom for the nation become part of the apparatus that serves to further ensure that the *bagong bayani* remain docile, laboring bodies in service to the nation as it fulfills its First World dreams.

While films I take up in this project remain complicit with the nation-state and the logic of capital, I find that the novels, *Dogeaters* and *Tropic of Orange*, provide models for the circulation of affects which open up spaces for imagining the subversive potential of immigrant, feminized and queered bodies. In juxtaposing these novels alongside transnational OCW films, I aim to highlight the transnational quality inherent in these texts as they depict the interface of local life—Manila in *Dogeaters* and Los Angeles/Mazatlán in *Tropic*—with global realities. Additionally, my analysis also makes way for the convergence of affect theory within the study of transnational Asian American texts, especially in considering how colonial legacies maintain their spectral influence in our present moment. Moreover, my consideration of the Spinozist-Deleuzian model of the body alongside Fanon's vision of the decolonizing body provides a new framework for thinking about the affected body as one involved in the on-going struggle against colonial legacies and capitalist exploitation. As I have discussed, Deleuze's formulation of the body—derived from Spinoza—is defined through its relationship with other bodies:

---

<sup>22</sup> OCW films like *Milan*, *Caregiver*, and *A Mother's Story* all had worldwide screenings in cities with high concentrations of Filipino/a immigrants and transmigrants such as Dubai, Los Angeles, Rome, and London, complete with red carpet premieres and/or appearances from the stars of the films.

“[c]oncretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable” (Deleuze, *Spinoza a Practical Philosophy* 124). For Deleuze the body is defined through its ability to affect and be affected and through its relationship with other bodies, whereas for Fanon, the on-going process of decolonization is possible only when bodies—which he collectively calls “the people”—move together under a singular rhythm towards the making of their own national culture (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 233). While the terms that Deleuze and Fanon use are ostensibly different—and while for Deleuze the process of affective relations between bodies happens unconsciously—the relationality of bodies mediated by the circulation of affect remains constant in both. By putting this Spinozist-Deleuzian model of the affected body in conversation with Fanon’s decolonizing collective body, through my analysis of *Tropic of Orange*, I disclose the potentiality of anti-colonial and –capitalist upheavals through the circulation of what I call the affect of imminence between individual and collective bodies. I define the affect of imminence as the sensation of impending possibility, the circulation of which, as I have shown in the *Tropic of Orange*, has enabled those who have been precluded or exploited in the global city—immigrants, the homeless, the disenfranchised, the poor—to participate in the multiple upheavals of the colonial and capitalist systems.

In locating the potential embedded in the affected bodies that make up the collective, I open up the space for thinking about the transnational movements of the people as a model for revolutionary upheaval. Arcangel’s journey towards the border in *Tropic* exemplifies this movement as he, along with a mass of people representing the global south, displaces the cartographic lines that have marked and divided the world map, a consequence of the colonial

legacy imposed onto the rest of the world, and in the process, he becomes a catalyst for other upheavals in the text. While this vision of upheaval is one that is essentially fleeting and ambivalent, in that outcomes are never guaranteed, it is this exact ephemeral quality that ensures the continued struggle against exploitive systems. This movement is “self-refreshing,” to recall Arun Saldanha’s term (Saldanha, 2010), as it opens up the possibility for other upheavals to take place; rather than a singular event, revolution becomes part of a series of cataclysmic moments that are fashioned by the people themselves.

My work envisions the upheavals of neocolonial and capitalist regimes as part of the process that bodies undergo as they emit and circulate affects. In analyzing film and literature, I recognize that this vision of upheaval is largely a symbolic one. In fact, the makings of the feminized nation and the Filipino/a OCW as the *bagong bayani* occurs largely in the realm of symbolic representation. This speaks not only to the power of our cultural productions to shape our everyday lived experiences, but also to the important labor that our imagination performs. Our private imaginings—of the potential of our bodies, of our aspirations for ourselves and those we care about, and of the longings we hope to fulfill—become the labor that comprises the dreams that we project out into the world. In casting these dreams outside of ourselves as we strive to make the imagined manifest in the real, these dreams become vulnerable to appropriation. They can be taken from our bodies, warped, twisted, and worked over and then returned to us, unrecognizable or worse, still resembling the original workings of our imagination and yet, somehow different and alien. This uncanny feeling, we may recall, resembles the same colonial spectre that haunted Rizal upon seeing a small piece of Europe, a garden, transplanted upon the tropical climate of his motherland. The alienation we experience when the labor of our imagination, our dream-work, is co-opted from us precisely is what the

transformation of the OCW to the *bagong bayani* epitomizes, a process that Neferti Tadiar calls fantasy-production (Tadiar 2004). The fantasy-production of the OCW as the *bagong bayani* permeates almost every aspect of Philippine life. One merely has to walk through a Manila mall or drive through its streets to see the kinds of products and services geared towards the *bagong bayani* and their families, or watch Philippine television or movies to see representations of the OCWs onscreen. No doubt the media performs its job of reifying the fantasy-production of the OCW efficiently and adeptly for the nation-state.

In our present moment, new media technologies are playing increasingly large roles in shaping our culture and mediating the way that we interact with each other. These interactive technologies, accessed primarily through the Internet, include digital videos housed exclusively online from sites like YouTube and Vimeo; social media like Facebook and Twitter; web logs or blogs; and “wiki” sites, web sites that allow users to alter, erase, manipulate, and add content on site pages. While celebrated as part of the democratization of cultural production because of their interactive nature, I argue that these digital media become yet another frontier upon which the bodies of already oppressed subjects can become even more susceptible to exploitation. One such example is the Coca-Cola viral video campaign launched in December 2011 called “Where Will Happiness Strike Next: The OFW Project” as part of their global branding effort dubbed “Open Happiness.”<sup>23</sup> The nearly four and a half-minute video showcases three overseas Filipino workers (OFW) or overseas contract workers (OCW) who have won trips back to the Philippines for the Christmas holiday, courtesy of Coca-Cola. The long-form advertisement features Jose Maria Balbon, an x-ray technician living in Saudi Arabia; Leonie Villanueva, a caregiver in Italy; and Joey Doble, also a caregiver working in Italy; as the three tell stories of hardship,

---

<sup>23</sup> The video is available to view online from Coca-cola’s online video library (<http://www.coca-colacompany.com/videos/coca-cola-where-will-happiness-strike-next-the-ofw-project>) or from the company’s official YouTube channel ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_eklBOodOKQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eklBOodOKQ)).

loneliness and sacrifice from being away from family for so long, all of them expressing dreams of returning home someday. As the video progresses, Balbon, Villanueva, and Doble find out that they have been granted plane tickets to return home and the camera follows them through their travels and tearful reunions with their families. Of course, the brand and the product were present throughout—from the Coke vans that picked them up from the airport to the drinks the families toasted in their first meals together. Despite the documentary-style film making employed by the video, it is still quite evident what is being marketed. By and large, worldwide audiences did not really care that the video was part of an international ad campaign that positioned the brand as part of the pursuit and fulfillment of happiness. A bona fide success, McCann Worldgroup Philippines, the ad agency responsible for the viral video, reported that within three days after the video was uploaded onto Coca-Cola's YouTube channel, both the original and English-subtitled versions garnered more than a million views—to date, the combined total views is almost two million—generating thousands of comments and Facebook “likes.” Fueled by Tweets, shares on Facebook and blog features, the video also became a “trending topic” on social media worldwide for two consecutive days.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps one of the best examples of how the emotive display of sadness, nostalgia, longing and joy of OCWs become spectacularized and subsumed into the capitalist world economy, this advertisement campaign from Coca-Cola exemplifies how media technology, new media specifically, can be used to reify the fantasy of the OCW as the nation's *bagong bayani*.

The critique that I present of the complicity of media technology—film in the first two chapters and television in the final chapter—with the desires of the nation-state and the capitalist economy can certainly be extended to new media technology, like this Coca-Cola ad. I discuss

---

<sup>24</sup> McCann World Group. “News.” 12 December 2011. Web. April 2013.  
<<http://worldgroup.mrmclient.com/2011/12/coca-cola-and-mccann-worldgroup-philippines-touch-filipino-hearts-with-new-viral-campaign/>>

this advertisement here to underscore the potential for the utility of my project in structuring a discursive practice for analyzing the circulation of emotive regimes and affects in new media technologies that act to further harden the fantasies we tell ourselves. While this critique is rife with possibilities, we can also look to the ever-refreshing immediacy of new media as a way to perhaps open up these calcified fantasies into new dreams.

Certainly, it can be productive to think about new media and its potential for mediating our experience of the world and as a way to re-imagine new possibilities. For example, Patricia Clough, in her review of the various divergences that constitute the affective turn, discusses the work of Brian Massumi, Eugene Thacker and Mark Hansen, among others, in theorizing the body vis-à-vis media and new media technologies. Explicating Hansen's theorization of affect itself, Clough writes:

For Hansen then, the technical expansion of affective capacity transforms the relationship of the past and the future. The technology, it would seem, allows enough preconscious presence to be made present so that the future can be recognized as discontinuous with the past. That is to say, the technologies of new media offer openness to the future, where the past is not pushing the present into the future. Rather, the present is drawn to the future. The future draws the present out of the dynamic of autonomic complexity which Hansen refers to as affect [...] (Clough 212)

This conception of the new media is predicated upon the emerging quality of these technologies, a quality that intensifies the experience of the present moment for the subject. Disturbing the perceived linearity of the time, new media, according to this framing, captures the future—its ambivalence and potentialities—and brings it into the realm of the present. This certainly seems consistent with my own privileging of the revolutionary potential of the present moment wherein bodies exist and become conduits for affective circulation. As such, the potentiality of the future is harnessed in the present moment as one upheaval makes way for the next one, triggering another and then another, and so on. The process of becoming then ceases to be a future-

oriented endeavor that culminates in a permanent self, but rather an imperative for the present moment.

While I recognize that new media technologies can perhaps open up these kinds of possibilities for the body, and while the exploration of such potentialities makes for a productive extension to the analysis I have performed through out this project, I remain skeptical. As the Coca-Cola ad shows, the emerging and interactive qualities of this medium are largely used in the service of spectacularizing the emotive display of the OCWs and then commodifying emotions in the service of selling a product. When technologies remain imbricated in capitalist exchange, the overwhelming force of capitalism undermines the potential utility for imaginative labor. This is where, for the last time, I turn to the body, which has been the focus of this project all along. For me embodiment does not merely constitute physicality and biology, but relationality to other bodies. This relationship with other bodies shows me the parameters of my own body because I can see or feel those other bodies that occupy the spaces I occupy. But beyond that, the relations that bodies maintain inhabit the seemingly empty in-between spaces wherever we may be, thus creating a network of connections that break or cohere as bodies move about in the world. These linkages are the affects that allow us to relate, to feel our own bodily intensity as we feel those other intensities around us. It is in these relations where I locate the labor of imagination where we may begin to dream up new possibilities for ourselves, and where we may launch those dreams into the physical world. As these relations remain ephemeral, they escape the arresting force of the exploitive systems that seek to harness and harden dreams that are produced when bodies feel and move, as they will. To maintain the fluidity of these relations is perhaps also a dream in itself. If so, then it is one that carries with it all the hopes that motivate this work: the hope for bodies to own their imaginative labor, the hope for affiliations

that undermine the ghostly presence of colonial power relations and, finally, the hope for the future fulfilled in the present.

## Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London/New York: Verso, 1991.
- . *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. London/New York: Verso, 1982.
- Basch, Linda G., Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bautista, Lualhati. *Gapô*. Manila: Cacho Publishing House, 1988.
- Bonoan, Raul J. "Rizal's First Published Essay: El Amor Patrio." *Philippine Studies* 44 (1996): 299-320.
- Bradshaw, Peter. "Mammoth-Review." *The Guardian*. 4 Nov. 2010. Web. April 2011. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/nov/04/mammoth-film-review>>
- Chang, Juliana. "Masquerade, Hysteria, and Neocolonial Femininity in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*." *Contemporary Culture* 44.4 (2003): 637-663.
- Chatterjee, Partha. "Anderson's Utopia." *Diacritics* 29.4 (1999): 128-134.
- CIA The World Factbook. "International Organization Participation." Wed. 10 May 2013. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2107.html>>
- Clough, Patricia T. "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2010. 206-225.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988.
- Dubai*. Dir. Rory B. Quintos. Perf. Aga Muhlach, Claudine Barretto, and John Lloyd Cruz. Star Cinema, 2005. Film
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008.
- Focus Economics. "Remittances hit Record High in 2012," 15 Feb 2013. Web. May 2013. <[http://www.focus-economics.com/en/economy/news/Philippines-Remittances-Remittances\\_hit\\_record\\_high\\_in\\_2012-2013-02-15](http://www.focus-economics.com/en/economy/news/Philippines-Remittances-Remittances_hit_record_high_in_2012-2013-02-15)>.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan New York: Random House, 1995.
- . *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Vol. III. New York: The New Press, 2000.
- . *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- French, Phillip. "Mammoth-Review." *The Guardian*. 6 Nov. 2010. Web. April 2011. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/nov/07/mammoth-review>>
- Hagedorn, Jessica. *Dogeaters*. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Hall, Stuart. "Spectacle of the 'Other'." *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1997. 223-290.

- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. New York: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Kang, Laura Hyun Yi. *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2002.
- La Visa Loca*. Dir. Mark Miely. Perf. Robin Padilla, Rufa Mae Quinto, and Johnny Delgado. Unitel Pictures, 2005. Film
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. "From Biopower to Biopolitics." *Tailoring Technologies* 2.2 (2006): 11-20.
- Ling, Jinqi. *Across Meridians: History and Figuration in Karen Tei Yamashita's Transnational Novels*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Macapagal-Arroyo, Gloria. "2004 Presidential Inaugural Address." 30 June 2004. Office of the Press Secretary, Republic of the Philippines. March 2008  
<[www.news.ops.gov.ph/inaugural\\_speech2004.htm](http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/inaugural_speech2004.htm)>.
- Mammoth*. Dir. Lukas Moodysson. Perf. Michelle Williams, Marife Necesito Gael Garcia Bernal. Memphis Films, 2009. Film
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. 2nd Edition. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978.
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2002.
- McCann World Group. "News." 12 December 2011. Web. April 2013.  
<<http://worldgroup.mrmclient.com/2011/12/coca-cola-and-mccann-worldgroup-philippines-touch-filipino-hearts-with-new-viral-campaign/>>
- Meadows, Martin. "Recent Developments in Philippine-American Relations: A Case Study in Emergent Nationalism." *Asian Survey*. 5.6. (June, 1965): 305-318.
- Migrant Forum in Asia. "Women Migrant Workers in the UAE: Not Quite the Portrait." Quezon City, Philippines: Migrant Forum in Asia, 2010.
- Rafael, Vicente L. "'Your Grief is Our Gossip': Overseas Filipinos and Other Spectral Presences." *Public Culture* 9 (1997): 297-291.
- Republic of the Philippines. "Index of Human Rights Research Philippines." 1 May 1974. University of Minnesota Human Rights Library. University of Minnesota. 15 January 2013 <<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/Philippines/>>.
- Rizal, Jose. *Noli me tangere*. Trans. Soledad Lacson-Loecin. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
- Saldanha, Arun. "Skin, Affect, Aggregation: Guattarian Variations on Fanon." *Environment and Planning* 42 (2010): 2410-2427.
- Sandique-Carlos, Rhea. *The Wall Street Journal*. 15 January 2013. "Philippine Remittances Rise Sharply". 1 March 2013  
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324235104578243521016725186.html>>.
- Sassen, Saskia. "Global City: Introducing a Concept." *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11.2 (2005): 27-43.
- . "The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier." *American Studies* (2000): 79-95.
- . "Women's Burden: Counter-Geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival." *Nordic Journal of International Law* 71 (2001): 255-274.
- Shouse, Eric. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). 15 January. 2013  
<<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>>.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *A Spinoza Reader: Ethics and Other Works*. Trans. by Edwin Curley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Tadiar, Neferti X.M. *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of*

- Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- . *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Thrift, Nigel. "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect." *Geografiska Annaler* 86 (2004): 57-78.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. "Diaspora as Historical/Political Trope in Philippine Literature."  
Los Angeles: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, UCLA, 10 October 2006. Web.
- . *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2000.
- Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Tropic of Orange*. St. Paul: Coffee House Press, 1997.
- Yeoh, Brenda S.A. "Global/Globalizing Cities." *Progress in Human Geography* 23.4 (1999): 607-616.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* London & New York: Verso, 2002.