

## DANCING INTO OBLIVION: THE PILIPINO CULTURAL NIGHT AND THE NARRATION OF CONTEMPORARY FILIPINA/O AMERICA

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### Abstract

How have performances developed by Filipino Americans over the twentieth century conveyed important lessons about culture, nation, and community? In other words, what do Filipino American cultural performances have to say about the formation of “national identity” and “community”?

I select three contexts to highlight these changes: the postindustrialization of the US economy; the reaction to race, taxes and education in the Bakke vs. UC Board of Regents decision; and the political realignment of the Reagan democrats. We see the continued immigration of Filipino so-called “professional” families to the United States. Their children seek senses of themselves amidst attacks on ethnic studies, affirmative action, and the presence of immigrants in California. And here the Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN) as a performance genre emerges. For the thousands of young Filipino Americans who have taken to the stage or for those who felt more comfortable in the wings, participating in these shows has been some of the only history lessons available about the Philippine revolution of 1896, the literary politics of Carlos Bulosan, the struggle of Ilocano and Visayan farm workers in Hawaii, the back-breaking labor in Salinas, Delano, Spokane, or Chicago.

They also turn their attention to the Philippines and to the outer diaspora, learning of the plight of overseas workers like Flor Contemplacion and the devastation of the archipelago’s natural resources. At the end of the twentieth century, performing a play or choreographing dances offers not only the possibility of entertainment, but also the chance to tell stories about the past, to call a community into being, to convey youthful insecurities, or to raise oblique and ambivalent critiques of the America they provisionally call home.

Cultural performances such as the PCN assume the burden of providing a “performative transcript” of who Filipino Americans are. With the dominant historical record so heavily biased toward professionals’ and elites’ accounts of the past, ordinary folks have often turned to the field of culture to symbolically enact what would not be possible elsewhere. But ordinary folks are not the only ones to recognize the power and dynamism of the terrain of culture. We already know that the powerful remind the rest of us of who they are, what they supposedly do, and why they deserve such an elevation station. In that alternative to the dominant historiography, we find oblique and sometimes parallel responses to the existing and oftentimes unquestioned written record.

### Keywords

cultural performances, Filipino American Studies, Filipino diaspora, national identity and communities

### About the Author

Theo Gonzalves is Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He completed his PhD in Comparative Culture at the University of California at Irvine and has taught courses in American, ethnic, and cultural studies. His work has been published in leading academic journals such as *Critical Mass*, *Amerasia* and the *Journal of Asian American Studies*. He has also served as Musical Director for the experimental theater troupe, Tongue in A mood, and was an advisory board member to Bindlestiff Studio, a Filipino American performing arts venue located in San Francisco. In 2005, Gonzalves was granted a US Senior Fulbright Scholar award to complete work on a manuscript on Filipino American performing arts.

Are Filipino Americans becoming more visible? To combat the collective Filipino identity crisis, some Filipino Americans are fighting for visibility by promoting cultural awareness and ethnic pride. For example, the mostly Filipino Kababayan Club of the University of California at Irvine (UCI) recently staged a play that showcased Filipino cuisine, music, dance, and customs, and portrayed a Filipina American discovering her cultural heritage. Due to the Kababayan Club's efforts to increase awareness about Filipino culture on campus, a course on Filipino Americans is now offered regularly at UCI.<sup>1</sup>

—Cao and Novas (177)

Umuwi na tayo  
Umuwi na tayo hey hey hey  
Uwi na tayo dahil  
Wala ng sense  
Ang aking mundo<sup>2</sup>

—Eraserheads

### MINNEAPOLIS IS BETWEEN SEASIDE AND SEATTLE

If Joe Bataan and Ermena Vinluan spoke to the aspirations and changing worldview of young folks coming of age during the late 1960s, then an even younger cohort would find their artistic anchors in radically different places. Bataan and Vinluan represent ways in which Filipina/o artists in the United States carried messages of criticism and solidarity. Forged out of mass-based social movements and the age of decolonization and national liberation, the arts of radical theater and popular music did more than entertain. For folks like myself, born a generation after those movements, coming of age in the early 1980s meant having to respond to different political, social and aesthetic contexts. If we may interpret the works of Bataan and Vinluan as creative corollaries to the tenor of the late 1960s and early 1970s, then the music and career of Reagan-era artists can reveal much about how folks in the 1980s expressed their anxiety over sexuality, gender, race and identity.

Many of us could relate to musician and performer Prince in a number of different ways. I was first attracted to the music. So many of the bands in the 1980s seemed to lack an original sound. Synthesizers and electronic drum machines were just beginning to

change the sound of music in the early days of hip hop on the East coast. But Prince's work pushed the technical limitations of the gear he was using (like the programmable Linn drum machine or the early Oberheim synthesizers)—forcing R&B and funk bands to begin to rely on more than the standard instrumentation and confines found in a rhythm section and lead instruments. His sound was the funkier, oddest music we had heard, fusing the muscular energy of rock and new wave with the showmanship and virtuosity of James Brown, Little Richard, Stevie Wonder, Jimi Hendrix, and Sly Stone.

The second reason for the attraction had more to do with how parts of his personal story resonated with ours. Growing up on California's Monterey Peninsula for many of us meant being relatively isolated. Tourists are drawn to the area's sea otters, fisherman's wharf, John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, or the sleepy artist colony in Carmel. Just below the postcard surface was our own buzzing music culture shaped by house parties, bootlegged cassettes and mix tapes of our favorite tunes, underground radio programming, and eventually, MTV. Disco was losing popularity in the early 1980s (though some would say not fast enough), and hip hop had not yet become a household term. At school, we kept our distance from the rockers, the smokers, and the punks by telling them (oftentimes showing them with bass-heavy car stereo systems) that we listened to soul music. That covered a lot of stylistic ground, what industry types would technically refer to as R&B, or later, urban music.

One outpost for our music was found at an unlikely place. Robert Louis Stevenson College Preparatory School (RLS) seemed to those of us at Seaside High School—one of the two public high schools on the Monterey Peninsula—to be the epitome of white privilege. Few of us at Seaside had friends that went or graduated from there. And while RLS' students prepared for college, the majority of my classmates turned to enlisted-rank careers in the Air Force or jobs in the towns nearby. To this day, I don't know exactly where RLS is.

During the week, RLS' radio station (a high school with its own radio station!) played what my friends and I did not like—hard rock. Sometimes, we would call it punk music, even after that style had passed and few seemed to be playing it. Whatever it was, we thought it loud and noisy. Even the DJs seemed bored, sometimes leaving a lot of dead air between the tunes. The only saving grace took place on Sunday—actually, the whole day was referred to as "Super Soul Sunday, 91.1 KSPB." One of our own Seaside classmates landed a Sunday spot featuring soul music—spinning a wide mix of artists and bands including Cameo, Lakeside, Mtume, Evelyn "Champagne" King, Patrice Rushen, Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force, Malcolm McClaren's "Duck Rock," Grandmaster Flash and Melly Melle, and, of course, Prince.

After jazz music, hip hop would become the nation's most popular musical contribution to the world, and eventually the soundtrack to late capital's marketing of popular culture. Few of us knew any better at the time, but whatever it was that pop music was supposed to be was changing, and Prince's music represented for many of us the best of what we were hearing, and more importantly, one really exciting way for us to see ourselves in different ways.

Part of my affinity for Prince was how, in the midst of his own hometown of Minneapolis, he and his partners were able to craft a unique sound. That style and attitude was independent of New York, Los Angeles, or any of the other major centers of American music. In interviews, Prince recalls how both black and white radio was boring. What would become the "Minneapolis sound" influenced countless other bands and singers. While MTV segregated its audiences, at one point refusing to play Rick James' million-selling singles solely because he was black, Prince toured all throughout the mid-west with a multiracial mix of band-mates. And before Madonna, Boy George of Culture Club, and Dee Snyder of Twisted Sister foregrounded challenging ways to musically experience sexuality and androgyny during the Reagan era, Prince shocked audiences and critics to take notice of his salacious lyrics, dance moves, and even his costuming. He wore bikini underwear, militaristic trench coats, lace gloves, and high-heeled boots. The idea of staking out one's own stylistic and creative turf continues to speak volumes to me now about how culture, style, and expression gets over—not simply what is received, but how it gets generated, under what circumstances, and with and for whom. For those of us at Seaside, Prince's music and style was a license to revel in pomp while accessing his interpretation of American musical history.<sup>3</sup>

Around the same time, another group of Filipina/o Americans, located in Seattle, had also developed an interest in Prince. It would not be until a few years later that I would make contact with the founders of the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHHS). Its founders had deep roots in the Seattle area for several generations, their histories also extending to other major sites like Stockton, California. FANHHS has become the largest community-based resource for the preservation, collection and dissemination of the histories of Filipina/os in the United States. When I had first heard about the group, I called their offices to get more information and learn more about their work. A few days later I opened a packet in the mail that contained, among other things, a list of "outed" Filipina/o Americans. It was long: a list of names of celebrities, politicians, and other persons of renown from several generations. I recognized the names of movie stars, athletes, and musicians: Lou Diamond Philips, Tamlyn Tomita, and Tia Carrera. But I was amazed to see Prince's name listed there as well.

Between Seaside, California and Seattle, Washington (and this is not to say this distance is exhaustive) is an underexplained identification and fascination with what it means to be Filipina/o American. I am still not clear on why “outing” Filipina/os would be important. Maybe it satisfies our curiosities and insecurities about those who could or should claim to be part of our communities. Or maybe the list speaks to the need to explain the recognition of a familiar name, the preferences for certain foods, or the silences about one’s ethnic heritage. And perhaps there is also a premium placed on the need to identify with celebrities as provisional leaders when those working in the electoral arenas continue to ignore immigrant communities or provide lame excuses for why participation is so lacking.<sup>4</sup> In any event, it seems “outing” those on a list serves a particular function—to generate common knowledge and sense around who is supposed to be included in one’s community. In other words, Cordova’s list is in part, an explicit statement about who may constitute Filipina/o America. In terms of the list, it offers interested readers the opportunity to link one’s anonymous and disconnected self to those who enjoy the status and elevated station of the celebrity.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the case for his inclusion on the list, the music and career of Prince is an appropriate starting point for framing how members of immigrant and long-standing communities would construct collective senses of themselves in the 1980s. I find it no accident that an artist like Prince, whose racial and sexual identity has always been ambiguous (if not troubling), would also become popular during the Reagan era. It is as if the aesthetic that he crafted, reaching deep into African American music cultures, while hailing from mid-Western, working-class and multiracial communities, would serve as a metaphor for how racial minorities would think through that period of hyperliberalism and nostalgia. I do not mean to simply say that Prince was an “answer” to Ronald Reagan’s administration per se. Rather, talking about what resonates with his music and style is an appropriate way to begin thinking about how the field of culture and cultural production are sites where we’ll find Filipina/o Americans negotiating what identities are possible in the absence of a social movement.<sup>6</sup>

For a generation of younger Filipina/o Americans coming of age in the 1980s, this artist’s career and history serves as an apt metaphor for grappling with complicated expressive forms of culture like the Pilipino Cultural Night. Just as the members of this generation would have little memory or engagement with the mass-based movements of the 1960s and 1970s, so would Prince’s music emerge after the zenith of the larger civil rights and Black Power moments. And while the art forms that Filipina/o Americans would generate with the PCN rely on a recombination of cultural performance traditions hailing

from the Philippines, so too would Prince's musical styles eclectically resonate with so many traditions of African American music and performance cultures—the blues, gospel, funk, doo-wop, and soul. Most importantly, Filipina/o Americans took time and effort to say something of importance as they saw it on stage, but would be taken to task for falling short of making coherent and sustained critiques of American life. So too would Prince be criticized. The overwhelming critical reaction from music writers would be to focus attention on the scandalous and salacious aspects of his showmanship. Critics emphasized the orgiastic spectacle of the music, thereby obscuring whatever stronger more complicated claims were made against the culture's racial and sexual fears.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I focus my attention on how college-aged Filipina/o Americans of the Reagan Era to the present developed a unique performance genre—the Pilipino Cultural Night. I examine an early and influential show as a detailed case study. I also move beyond one campus production and track what has become a genre performed by thousands of students over the past twenty years. Certainly there are other performances taking place in Hawai'i, the Pacific Northwest, Canada, the Midwest, the East Coast, and elsewhere. But the contribution of California's campuses is simply a manageable part of a much larger story about the negotiation of the nationalist imaginary of America's immigrant communities.

The performative narration of Filipina/o America through the PCN stands in stark contrast to the work of artists like Joe Bataan and playwright Ermena M. Vinluan. Bataan was clearly a commercial musical success. My aim in presenting his career along with Vinluan was to call attention to the importance of the deep community base from which their works emerged. It might be tempting to think that Bataan merely helped to create a new market for Latin music. My goal has been to focus on Filipina/o American performers as producers of cultures; not merely as artists with interesting or curious notions, but organic intellectuals who, at times, help to generate new ways of thinking about what we often take for granted. While the 1960s and 1970s represent a moment in American culture where public space was widened and influenced by those on the left, the 1980s represents the rightward response, and crucially the narrowing of space where racial minorities experimented with and pledged cross-cultural support for international struggles. Also while both the cultural nationalist and cultural reactionist periods share critiques of prior generations, the former turns to the building of social movements whereas the latter is often characterized for its rootlessly narcissistic creative output. The Cultural Nights share the fact that they were created from the social ground up—expressions of popular and not professional forms of entertainment and socialization. But the Cultural Nights

more significantly draw upon the foundational work of Jorge Bocobo and Francisca Reyes Aquino, while also adapting the popularity of the Bayanihan's presentations.

### "EVERY TIME I HEAR THE WORD 'CULTURE,' I REACH FOR MY REVOLVER" (CHARLETON HESTON)

In the years after World War II, many Americans could bear witness to an era of rising expectations. From 1945 to 1973, the United States was paying its workers some of the highest wages among the industrial nations, allowing folks to take seriously the possibility of fulfilling the suburban dream. Millions would take advantage of massive investments in public schooling. The number of students pursuing higher education more than quintupled: from a little over two million in 1947 to more than thirteen million in 1988. The proportion of women students jumped from 29% to 54%; and by 1988, almost 20% of all college students were racial and ethnic minorities (Appleby et al. 1).

Those rising expectations would be challenged by two events: the advent of mass-based social movements in the late 1960s—a cohort coming of age, unable to reconcile the First World's strategic and economic ascendancy during the 1960s with continued racial injustices at home and struggles for national liberation by the world's African, Asian, and Latin American majorities—and the world economic crisis of the mid-1970s.

Over a twenty-year period beginning in 1973, the incomes of production workers would fall from \$12.06 an hour in 1979 to \$11.25 an hour in 1989, to only \$10.83 in 1993. The greatest losses occurred in families with children under 18, also, where the head of the household was younger than 30. For young Latina/o families with children, the decline during these years was 27.9%; for young African American families, the drop was a devastating 48.3%. By the time Reagan and Bush completed their terms in office, we witness a massive national redistribution of wealth upward. The top 1% of households would control 16.4% of all incomes, and 48% of the total financial wealth of the country. The bottom 95% would take 27.7% of the nation's total financial wealth (Marable 193-198).

What buttressed the changes was a resurgence of conservative nationalisms which re-coded race, class, and gender in the United States. In this period we re-visit themes of America's social contradictions: between its economic logic, which accentuated class differences in the form of union-busting, supply-side economic policies, and corporate bailouts; and the state's logic in de-emphasizing cultural differences, as seen in the neo-nationalist rhetorics of Margaret Thatcher's "A New Britain" and Ronald Reagan's promise of "It's Morning Again in America."<sup>8</sup> The former logic survives on a mantra of paying

attention only to the increasing of the profit margin. We would miss the mark, though, if we also failed to realize that the civil religion of capitalism has sown into it the antagonism between classes, between workers and owners. The latter logic thrives on smoothing away difference, favoring the construction of nationalism free from balkanization.

If the student strikes of 1968 represented the left-ward shift of American political culture—its emphasis on anti-establishmentarian and progressive thought and praxis—then the 1970s and 1980s represented its conservative reaction. The year 1978 marks a watershed in California politics, a harbinger for political discourse in succeeding years, especially in how the politics of redistributive justice would continue to be challenged. Around the issues of taxes and education, working-class white men and middle-class white homeowner activists would press the notion that social investment had gone awry, that the nation should check the concessions made to recent immigrants and racial minorities. The 1978 passage of Proposition 13, a popular California state initiative, limited the raising of property taxes, spurred similar “tax revolts” in several states. More significantly, the initiative was a popular referendum on how state revenue was being allocated in the rapidly “third worlding” of California’s inner cities and suburbs.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, the decision handed in the *Bakke vs. University of California* decision forced attention on the plight of the working-class white male, claiming to be the victim of reverse discrimination.<sup>10</sup> Both issues reflected growing anxieties of white working- and middle-class Californians, fueling the perception that state investment had swung too far to the left, that the folks to be held accountable for declining wages and opportunities were people of color. But recounting the politics of racial division among the working- and middle-classes should also take into account how such discourses not only resonated with but were managed from above.<sup>11</sup>

Conservative intellectuals seeking to rebuild coalitions on the right trumpeted the latest version of American exceptionalism.<sup>12</sup> The war on poverty had shifted into a war against poor folks, as social services and investment were drained from inner cities and ethnic enclaves. One of the pernicious subtexts of the assimilation paradigm has been the notion that a group’s unassimilability into mainstream American life can be explained pathologically. Poor folks were poor, the recycled logic went, because of a “culture of poverty” (Leacock).

Reagan’s 1980 presidential victory was the result of a political realignment. The Democrats’ coalition had fallen apart—they had lost the loyalty of the white male industrial worker. That winning conservative coalition was held together in no small part to the way in which racial differences spoke to and across his various constituencies—to those on the



far right (Christian fundamentalists), and white conservative Democrats. The union of these disparate groups was purchased with racial coding (Edsall and Edsall 198-214).

Reagan bandied about phrases like “welfare queen,” conjuring indelible images of women cashing in their food stamps and welfare checks while cruising around town in Cadillacs. His successor, George Herbert Walker Bush, warned voters during his first presidential bid with the image of Willie Horton, a black convicted criminal, scaring people into thinking that his then-rival, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, would let others loose on the population. Both media strategies so brazenly demonstrated how the leading conservatives of the day vilified racial and ethnic minorities. The subtext here is that the Democrats’ social and economic policies was actually responsible for poverty and criminality, and that they could not discipline the welfare cheats or criminals they helped to create or depend upon. The conservative tactics of racial coding proved it could be more pliable if its adherents followed the more successful strategy of employing a selective libertarianism. Rather than exclusively drawing attention to the racial bodies themselves, conservatives launched attacks on what they characterized as a bloated liberal welfare state. One example: California Governor Pete Wilson worked hard to win the loyalty of staunch anti-immigrant supporters by blaming “misguided immigration policies” for the state’s economic sluggishness, poorly-conceived systems of preferential treatments, welfare systems which created dependency, and bilingual education programs which impeded assimilation.<sup>13</sup>

“[T]he triumph of Reaganism represented a cruel and paradoxical conclusion to part of the rebellious impulse of the late 1960s (Marable 198). Part of the paradox to which political scientist and historian Manning Marable refers is the fact that several intellectuals and leaders in the African American community, many of whom, like Eldridge Cleaver, had placed some of their best hopes in the conservative nationalism that Reagan offered. Counted among Reagan’s supporters were activists like Southern Christian Leadership Council member Hosea Williams and aide to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy. They would blame the continued economic slide of non-white communities on the Carter administration’s failings (Marable 199-200).

These political rearrangements would also signal larger developments along the cultural divide— that the organizing and aesthetic strategies developed by racial minorities would continue to be successfully discredited, and that in its place, a reinvigoration of the premium placed on ethnic universalism. The corresponding cultural logic of the day—the cultural nationalism from above— would be reissued as “multiculturalism,” a token acknowledgment of difference and a re-validation of the ethnic paradigm. During

this period, Filipina/o American performing arts and cultural production underwent a disidentification with previous attempts and promises of cross-cultural linkage—echoing the difficulty of sustaining broad-based political coalitions across racial minorities in California. What survived in the midst of the government’s programs of austerity (Deukmejian and Wilson at the state level; and Reagan, Bush, Clinton at the federal level) were turns toward ethnic and cultural essentialism, the persistence of cultural forms of expression marked by their efficiency in communicating heroic, unified, and essentialized histories. The narrowing of the public space for the arts in general would also mean that cultural performers would work through leaner times. With funders investing in works, projects or artists that could be expected to turn a profit, experimental and marginal works found it difficult to grab popular attention (unless fetishingly sensationalized).

A number of developments take hold in the 1980s that are worth noting. Demographically, Filipina/o American families would continue to slowly make their way out from the central cities and into more spacious suburbs, while many of the more recent immigrant families would build communities without direct familial reference to earlier generations’ working-class experiences.<sup>14</sup> Funding for ethnic studies courses would fall under politically charged scrutiny. University administrations would tighten requirements for hiring, restricting positions to candidates with training from research institutions, excluding community activists, artists, and other specialists without “proper” credentials. And with the influx of Filipina/o immigrants to the United States, college-age children of the post-1965 generation would try to find themselves on college campuses with the help hundreds of student organizations. Student service funding would become the primary financial means on campus for developing relevant and meaningful “cultural programming.” In this scenario of diminishing and shifting resources (especially away from hard-won battles for semi-autonomous ethnic studies curricula and structures, and toward the more socially acceptable activities promulgated in student-services offices), college students constructed the first shows, out of the remnants of a waning Filipina/o American student movement and a hunger to stage their histories on their own terms.<sup>15</sup>

They would reconfigure what role culture would play in a time after the advent of the mass-based social movements. They would start with the context of a public culture which was shrinking for racial minorities. This was especially so given the contrast to the prior generation’s use of the discourses of cultural nationalisms to fuel art-making. In the previous chapter I discussed how the vocabulary and discourse of cultural nationalism was interpreted and put to creative use by artists like Ermena Vinluan and Joe Bataan—how their work became performative transcripts that talked about shared legacies of

colonization, while producing inspiring and complicated criticisms of their parents' aesthetic and political sensibilities. By the 1980s however, those hard-won lessons of cross-cultural political and creative work would give way to the privileging of ethnically-exclusive forms of cultural production.

### SETTING THE STAGE: KAYSAYSAYAN NG LAHI, 1983<sup>16</sup>

In this section I provide detail on an early and influential cultural night—(University of California, Los Angeles) Samahang Pilipino's "Kasaysayan ng Lahi"<sup>17</sup> (1983). Part of the problem of researching this type of mass form is in determining definitive origins for the show. Mass forms like the PCN do not lend themselves to sticking to neat genealogies. For example, I found many early script writers and dancers referring to shows produced in the mid- to late-1970s. They would talk about large crowds, long rehearsals, the elements of the shows such as dances, music, and audience participation. It was tempting to allow each of the interviewed performers to take credit for coming up with the idea of the PCN. But what was more challenging was to find a way to discard a linear approach to rendering these histories or to assign credit to any one performer or campus. Rather, I think mass forms like the PCN force us to consider the largest ethnographic canvasses possible, to seek out not merely the logical succession of events, but to identify moments in time where individual actions, statements, objects or performances resonate with a context in need of interpretation. They may not intend to self-consciously speak to the signs of the times, but the PCN genre poses for us invitations to interpret the work of culture under the shadow of late capital. Before the show began, an opening act started the show.<sup>18</sup>

### THE WARM-UP AND THE EMCEE

Gary Bautista was billed as a "popular Pilipino singer/entertainer" on the evening's program. He donned the uniform of a lounge lizard—a white, shawl-collared white tuxedo jacket, black slacks, white shirt, with a pink-colored matching bowtie and cummerbund set. He began with a note-for-note rendition of American jazz and pop singer Al Jarreau's "We're in This Love Together." His moves were Vegas-like—smooth and polished—reminiscent of a bygone era caricatured by everyone from Steve Allen to Bill Murray. When he turned from stage right to left and back again, he tossed out the microphone with a wide flourish while holding onto the cord, as if to give him even more room on an already bare stage. It is clear he had studied these cabaret-like moves for years.

His accent gave away his Tagalog-speaking roots. Bautista dubbed himself “The Man with a Thousand and One Voices,” claiming to be able to perform 168 celebrity impressions. He got his start he claimed, by copying the voices of his teachers and fellow classmates. “It’s all muscle-control, really.” He delivered impersonations of Louis Armstrong, Dean Martin, Filipina/o singers Carmen Rosales and Rogelio de la Rosa. Bautista interviewed himself as both Ted Koppel and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. In Koppel’s voice, he asked if Marcos will ever give up power. “Never,” Bautista says as the late dictator. Still in character, Bautista/Marcos delivered a welcome, sending the audience into laughing fits. It also eerily echoed that slurring swagger and folksiness of John Wayne. “Long live your Philippine roots,” Bautista as Marcos said. The American president Ronald Reagan also surfaced—this time, chatting with wife Nancy about how a boy has stopped to look at a painting of George Washington hanging in the White House. “Did you know that was our first president—George Washington?” Reagan/Bautista answered as “Tattoo,” the character played by the diminutive Herve Villaichez, on the television series, “Fantasy Island.” He delivered his lines on his knees: “The plane! The plane!”

Time for another song. Bautista called for his “maestro” — a friend operating a tape player behind the curtain on stage. He launched into a sentimental Filipino ballad, “Kailangan Kita” (“I Need You”). During the instrumental break toward the end of the tune, he wondered aloud to the audience how others would have finished the song. Marcos surfaced again, followed by Paul Williams (Bautista is on his knees), and then Bautista finished off the tune in his own voice.

The next routine involved the impersonator’s rapid-fire delivery of a one-man children’s style show. Here, Popeye the Sailor, Cookie Monster, and Kermit the Frog made appearances. Time once again for another ballad: this time, Bautista sang as Julio Iglesias. Ballads afforded Bautista a chance to demonstrate vocal control and intensity. There’s also the sheer sentimentality and romanticism of the form which conveys a sense of gravity—offsetting the comedy bits.

Bautista returned to a comedy routine with another slate of characters (starting with a pixie of a character wearing extra-large sunglasses and an exaggerated bowtie) before he launched into “The Rainbow Connection” sung in rapid-fire succession of characters: Johnny Mathis, Jose Feliciano, Elvis Presley. Toward the end of this tune, more characters from the early part of the act jumped in, completing each other’s musical phrases—Reagan, Popeye, Mathis, Kermit ... and Bautista himself, although it is not all that apparent that it was him at first.

The closing number was James Ingrams' pleading ballad, "Just Once." Bautista jumped down into the first rows of the audience to pull a woman from the audience for a serenade. During the break between verses, Bautista asked her what she was studying. He wished her good luck, and jumped back on stage in time to hit the next verse.

Bautista was faithful to the original. In the audience you can hear some chuckling—they seemed to notice how close Bautista's sound was to the voice on the record. But certain turns of phrases, and on occasion, his struggling with some high notes reminded folks in the audience just how much distance there was from the source. When in character or while singing, you could hear no trace of his Tagalog accent. It was only when speaking directly to his audience that his native accent was revealed—and we were once again reminded that the songs and the comedy routines are translations of celebrity. (This is similar to the effect of listening to Jim Neighbors' operatic singing style being disconfirmed by his spoken southern twang.)

Bautista's act belonged to another time, to another generation—to my parents' generation—when audiences cherished song stylists and the art of impressions on weekly variety shows. The charm of his act was not in his ability to sing any one particular song with a great amount of accuracy. The appeal of his performance lies in his ability to help place the audience in several different places. We are reminded of where we were when we first enjoyed the tunes or heard the voices. It's because he can remove voices from their original contexts and force us to consider where or how we last left them. What were we wearing? Who were we with and what were we doing?<sup>19</sup>

Following Bautista's performance was the emcee for the evening, Dom Magwili. This was really a departure from Bautista's act. In presence, tone and demeanor, they couldn't have been more unlike. Magwili's accent was "American"—Californian, really. He wore a dark, double-breasted suit. His eyeglasses lent him a certain intellectual propriety over the evening's proceedings. He got a few laughs with the line: "Gary Bautista did everything I was going to do." Magwili opened the show with his rendition of the "Pinoy Blues." In introducing the tune, he explained that "the Blues does not have to be a sad thing. The blues can be happy too." Accompanying himself on the harmonica, he soon had the audience keeping a steady and rousing backbeat.

I get up in the morning  
I wake up my son  
He says, daddy, what's happening?  
I say let's go for a run

and on the road  
I ask him what he want to be  
and Jesus *mariajosep*  
He want to be like me  
A *Pinoy*<sup>20</sup>  
P-I-N-O-Y  
I said a *Pinoy*  
P-I-N-O-Y

I like my *pancit*  
Over hot rice  
I like my *lumpia*  
With beer and ice  
and when I want to gamble  
To Vegas I fly  
I always go first class  
'cause I always go in style  
I am a *Pinoy*  
P-I-N-O-Y  
I am a *Pinoy*  
P-I-N-O-Y

You ask me this question  
What's my responsibility  
To be American and *Pinoy*  
To my community  
Well you know that question?  
Got to make me stop  
'cause all I know, brother, is don't mess up, 'cause  
You are a *Pinoy*  
P-I-N-O-Y  
I said a *Pinoy*  
P-I-N-O-Y

Magwili's blues was instructive. In an interview, he explained that his tune served

as an answer to Bautista's slick song-styling, a self-conscious attempt to root the evening's performance in an explicitly Filipina/o American context. The troubadour accompanying himself on a harmonica spoke more to the histories of pre-World War II men and women who worked in agriculture and service trades than did the disembodied stylings of random celebrity. Magwili's tune indirectly drew the audience's attention back to the utility of cultural performance not for its own sake, but for its ability to create a resonance between the immediate audience and the narratives of pre-WWII laboring communities. While Bautista's impersonations were polished facsimiles of popular song, Magwili's tune suggested deep linkages to the gutbucket immigrant blues that writers like Bienvenido Santos attempted to document in short story—the song of the student, the migrant, the worker, looking for the America they had been promised in the Philippines.<sup>21</sup>

## THE SHOW

"Kasaysayan ng Lahi" featured live and recorded music accompanying the dancing and play. Two forms of live musics were presented: one in the form of a *rondalla* ensemble (stringed instruments playing Philippine folk tunes), and percussionists highlighting non-Spanish-derived musical and dance forms (e.g. *kulintang*).

The first suite began with a courting dance (two dancers, male female). They were both garbed in folkloric wear representative of particular regions. As the dance concluded, the dancers hitch-stepped off stage while a solo flute played. Drums and gongs rolled lightly at first, and then into a thunderous crescendo. From this, a steady rhythm was established for the next dance, this one featuring six men. The percussive music droned on heavily. The men exited, while six women took their place in the next part of this suite. The next dances were narrated. Magwili commented on the southern Philippine Muslim populations—pointing out how their costumes, music and dances presented "a different culture from the other groups" in the central and northern Philippines. The emphasis in this narration was on the ability of the southern Filipina/o to resist Spanish religious conversion and political domination. Here the *singkil* dance was a spectacularly imperial and mythic showcase. All of the folkloric elements were on display; and the dancers carried it off full of attitude and stoic bravado.

The dance was mesmerizing—the slow and at times rubato (out-of-time) chanting, contrasting the dirge-like pace of the percussion of the opening sequence. The male pole bearers created an arch through which women dancers with scarves bearing gilded fans moved slowly toward the front part of the stage. The chant shifted to a lilting melody, carried by the slowly measured ostinato of the drum and *kulintang*.

As the women left the stage, the men repositioned themselves into two quadrilles. They lowered poles toward each other into crosses. A single drumbeat issued the command for the pole-bearers to snap into a crouched position. They waited silently as the princess and her attendant made their way through the quadrilles, stepping lightly, pausing, and then moving once again. As the myth of the dance goes, both step through a forest of felled trees. The princess followed an attendant carrying a parasol.

With a stamp of her heel, the princess issued the command to begin the slow clapping of the poles. Her movement was shadowed by the attendant. A strike of the *kulintang* signaled the clappers to change rhythmic pattern. Both princess and attendant moved through one set of clappers, while another movement cue called out the rest of the princess' entourage to begin its ensemble movement through the quadrilles at a faster tempo. Her entourage exited as a prince made his entrance. Bearing a shield and sword, he stepped lightly through the clapping poles, banging his sword against his shield. The accelerated clapping signaled an earthquake shaking the forest. The prince guided the princess and attendant to safety.

This dance is part of a larger so-called Muslim suite. More than any other in the repertoire of the PCN genre, this suite emphasizes a militaristic view of southern Philippine culture (part of a reference to a history of anti-Western resistance), and a gendered code of protection. The prince tames the unstable and wild for the safe passage of his princess. This popular dance serves to reinforce the narrative of masculine protection of the docile and demure yet sensually beguiling female presence. The dance narrates privilege amidst the exotic and percussive reality that is imagined about life in the southern Philippines, about its reputed danger. Ultimately, it also part of the young Filipina/o American's projection of its nascent anti-imperial critique. The Muslim suite represents more than an ethno-regional group's folkloric performance. It also represents that part of an identity to which the young folks aspire.<sup>22</sup>

The narration moved forward to the era of Spanish colonization of the archipelago beginning in the sixteenth century (between 1521 and 1898). The narrator emphasized the brutality of colonization rather than the liberal benevolence of discovery, countering the privileging of European authority. The narration pointed to the presence of a culture already at work in the archipelago. The text, though, provided a weak counter to the what was next presented on stage—a suite of dances demonstrating strong Spanish and European influences on performance and folk forms.<sup>23</sup>

A very clear example of this influence is in the conversion of natives to Catholicism. The narrator points to the strong presence of religion for the lowland Filipina/os



represented in this particular suite of dances. This was represented on stage by a priest leading a small delegation in a candlelit prayer processional. The folk forms do more than demonstrate the assimilation of New World choreography and performative rules. The PCN organizers also found normative gendered codes as well in courtship dances such as the *cariñosa* and *la jota*. According to the narration, these dances display the “secretive, demure, traditional Filipina...” (Taylor and Villegas).

Three couples slowly entered from stage left. The women were outfitted in long flowing gowns reminiscent of Spain’s influence—butterfly sleeves, hair tied into buns, and fluttering fans to hide shy faces. The women approached their male dance partners, also wearing *barong tagalog*, usually an untucked and semi-transparent long-sleeved shirt traditionally made of piña cloth. They dance in three-quarter time to the *rondalla* ensemble.

Once again, the narration made explicit the contradictory nature of the presentations. As if to counter the heavy colonial debt registered in this suite of dances, the narrator pointed out that not only do the Christianized Filipina/os of the central regions have “grace, style and musicality,” they “also have fierce tempers.” He pointed out that Filipina/os could take credit for the invention of phrases taken for granted in the American vernacular such as “running amok.” The American invention of larger gauge weapons such as the Colt .45 pistol was due to the intransigence of the Filipina/o on the battlefield. The text attempted to balance the message that natives could so easily assimilate European cultural forms against the strain of resistance to colonial elite culture. The narration continued with histories not embedded in the dance—unfair taxation of lands by the Spanish, the nascent nationalism fermenting in the late nineteenth century, and the sporadic revolts against civil authorities all throughout the archipelago.

Following that was a series of monologues featuring what has emerged as some of the leading figures in the national imagination of the Philippines. The monologues took the form of a museum in which the statues talk back to the audience. The first was Andres Bonifacio, credited for launching a secret, anti-colonial organization, popularly known as the Katipunan. Bonifacio’s heroic rhetoric captured the temper of the modern political sensibility—repeating concepts such as freedom, equality, fraternity. His was the voice of the uncompromising nationalist hero—a masculinism which identified the proper role of the young nationalist male as protector of the motherland: “My fellow Filipinos, the hour has come to shed our blood.”

Next was Apolinario Mabini offering a more personal testimony: “They [the Americans] have raped our women, and stolen our lands.” The character was blocked simply with the actor sitting in a chair, center-stage, amplifying his intellectual stature by

deemphasizing his physicality. Mabini, portrayed here in poor health, has been reputed as one of the intellectual architects of the late nineteenth century ilustrado movement. He was followed by Melchora Aquino. She thundered on the failed revolution to unite Filipina/os. She addressed the audience as Katipuneros, imploring them to “defend the rights of the Filipino people” and “the preservation of the Philippine heritage.”

The quartet of heroes was rounded out with a monologue by propagandist José Rizal. “We know how to die for our duty and principles.” After his stirring speech on the escalation of violence in the Philippines as the Spanish struggled to hold on to the colony, the character walked to center stage. The sound of gunshots was heard; he slumped forward in his final step. Rizal’s death here summed up the narration of a decidedly nationalist version of Philippine history, one emphasizing anti-colonial critique, martyrdom, and the cultural adaptation of folk forms. Up to this point in the show, the organizers seemed to have summed up as well their reckoning with the Filipina/o’s entrance to modernity itself.<sup>24</sup>

The narration emphasized how the category of modern history is not simply about the one-sided conquering of natives, but also about the resistance to and adaptation of the modern West, using modernity’s terms in the quartet to explain the ways in which exemplary patriots expressed an unambiguous politics. In the next section, the narration shifted from its heroic proportions—histories centered on leading figures—to the lyrically personal.<sup>25</sup>

The lowland scenes continued with the Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter celebrations, idyllic depictions of barrio life during the fiesta. The jaunty dances, *maglalatik*, *sakuting*, *pandanggo*, and *tinikling* were all prominently featured. The dancing set the stage for a young couple’s courting scene.

Carmen: “Do you really love me? Really really love me?”

Rogelio: “Do you have a green card?” [He is leaving for America.] “When I come back, I’ll build you a big BIG nipa hut.”

Carmen: “How long are you going to be away?”

As they hold each other closer to share a goodbye kiss, the scene was broken with comic relief of Carmen’s ate. The crowd laughed and sighed familiarly. Loud crashes were heard next; the stage goes dark. The narrator interrupted the blackness by announcing the coming of the Philippine-American war. The war disrupted not only the idyllic dancing but also the nascent romance of Carmen and Rogelio, stand-ins for the union of the nation

itself. American President McKinley's speech is recited: "We could not turn them over..." For Filipina/o American audiences, McKinley's lament—about claiming no other option possible other than the "benevolent" Christianizing and democratization through arms—is probably the most recognizable text summarizing jingoistic ambition in the archipelago.<sup>26</sup>

The narration then juxtaposed the notion of making dreams happen (how immigrants rhapsodized about streets "paved with gold") against the harsh labor conditions found in pre-World War II Hawai'i and on the mainland. The context of this early twentieth century history serves another crucial aspect in the show's work. It establishes for the PCN organizers the material link between the United States and the Philippines. The PCN organizers draw loosely on Philippine histories under Spanish colonial rule to reckon with some interesting juxtapositions wrought by modernity. When referring to the Spanish-influenced dance suites, dancers and choreographers laud the Filipina/o's ability to assimilate cultural forms. But the choreo-history would also elide the oppression of colonial rule, and the dispersed acts of resistance throughout the archipelago during the same period. In turning to the early decades of American colonial rule, the PCN organizers make sense out the United States' colonization of the Philippines by viewing Filipina/os as part of a cheaply paid pool of reserve labor. In this regard, the narrations tend to rely less on celebrations of cultural assimilability and more literally toward the subordinated status of Filipina/os as workers caught in the streams of a global economy.

Little detail is paid to the inter-war years in the next stage movement. The next material moves from a narration of the Philippine-American War to the importation of agricultural labor to Hawai'i and the north American West Coast. The action on the stage at this point consisted of depicting stooped laborers of the West Coast. Where they once dreamed of going to school in the United States, learning skills to raise their economic lot with hopes of returning the Philippines, the narrator claimed "the land of opportunity turned out to be paved with hard labor," and the insult of anti-miscegenation laws.

The PCN organizers' main reference for this era is the personal history of Carlos Bulosan, the rich tapestry of personas and circumstances drafted in his now canonical *America is in the Heart*. The work has had at least two distinctively different audiences. With its initial release in 1943, Bulosan's *America* was lauded by mainstream reviewers as a paean to the liberal orthodox of American assimilation, testimony to the nation's guiding and durable myth of personal achievement over adversity. However, with its re-release in 1973 by the University of Washington Press, a new cohort of readers would draw inspiration—activists and academics seeking narratives to a usable and heroic Asian American literary history. For the editors of the landmark literary anthology *The Aiiieeeee!!!* and for several

others teaching in the early years of the revisionist disciplines, Bulosan's text did more than vindicate American culture at mid-century: it spoke eloquently to young people's growing identification with international radicalism and a nascent cultural nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

For PCN organizers in the 1980s, Bulosan's *America* was one of the few available texts that provided a moving portrait of Filipina/o American life. Its rhapsodic moments complemented the melancholic eloquence and unimpeachable credentials of a Popular Front-era writer. Back on stage, many PCN organizers would draw on Bulosan's text. The narration also illustrates more tableaux on stage, such as the building of Agbayani Village—low-cost residences for several aging Mexican and Filipina/o farm workers in central California.

The post-World War II era—where Bulosan's narrative ends—becomes more difficult to narrate on stage for the students. The organizers of the show did not have the luxury of being able to rely on many historical works. For these stories, students relied on the recovered histories from their parent's generation. These young folks are now only one generation removed from the characters they portray on stage. In this case, they narrate the coming of the second wave of Filipina/o immigrants to the United States, largely arriving in the 1940s—many as returning soldiers or their wives (Vallangca; Pido).

This is illustrated in a farce—a scene where young Filipinos are recruited into the US Navy, not permitted to rise above the rank of stewards. Here they point to the absurdity of the recruitment process, the culture clash of “naive natives” shouted down by humorless naval officers. Three young recruits meet Captain “Guapo” (Tagalog for cute, good-looking, referring to a male) and his Filipino aide. Downstage left, sitting at a table, the captain and his aide, are seated.

CAPTAIN: NEXT! (Baduys push & shove each other to go first, acting scared. Pedro is finally forced to go first, cowardly approaching the desk.)

CAPTAIN: (tough) What's your name?

NARIO: My name is Pedro Isidro Prodigalidad Espiritu Santo Salagubang Batum-bakal, Ser ... But you can call me Boyet. (Starts to take a few steps back)

CAPTAIN: Come back here boy!

NARIO: (Turns to audience) See, he knows my name already! (Walks back to table)

CAPTAIN: Have you ever had any serious illnesses?

NARIO: (Acts confused, doesn't understand English) Ah, no espeaking English... (turns to AIDE) Ano yung sinabe niya? (*What did he say?*)

AIDE: Nagkaron ka na nung malalang sakit? (*Have you ever had any serious illness?*)

NARIO: Nung maliit ako yung kuya ko ay nagka bulutong pero hinde ako nahawa. Yung ate ko naman nagka beke pero hinde nahawa. Yung nanay ko naman namatay sa jabetis pero hinde pa ako patay. Malusog ako. (*When I was young, my brother got chicken pox but I didn't catch it. My sister got mumps but I didn't get it. My mother died of diabetes but I'm not yet dead. I'm healthy.*) (Flex muscle)

CAPTAIN: (Turn to AIDE) What did he say?

AIDE: He said "no."

CAPTAIN: (Confused with the first answer then asks) Where do you live, boy?

NARIO: Bukawi, Ser.

CAPTAIN: (Turn to AIDE) What did he say?

AIDE: He was born on Kapis, but when he was five they moved to Tondo. When he turned twelve they moved to the Babuyan Islands. But now he lives in Bukawi.

CAPTAIN: He said all that, huh?

AIDE: Yes, Ser.

CAPTAIN: Congratulations! (Shake NARIO's hand) You're in the Navy.

NARIO: (Acts excited) Oh thank you, thank you, thank you. (Starts to kiss CAPTAIN's hand. Turn to other baduys and start to show off. Other two get excited and try to beat each other to be first. MANUEL finally goes first.)

CAPTAIN: What's your name, and quit eyeballin' me, boy!

MANUEL: My name is Manuel Ebanquel, Ser.

CAPTAIN: Spell EBANQUEL, boy.

MANUEL: "EBANQUEL": "E" as in Ibon [Tagalog for bird], "B" as in Bibby Ruth, "A" as in "you're Adorable" (Pinches the CAPTAIN's cheek)...

CAPTAIN: Don't you pinch me again, boy!

MANUEL: Yes, Ser. "N" as in Envelope, "Q" as in Cuba, "U" as in Europe, "E" as in another Ibon, and "L" as in Elephant.

CAPTAIN: "Ebanquel" — are you sure that's your real name, boy?

MANUEL: (Hurt by the question, MANUEL starts walking away, hand on forehead, shaking head)

CAPTAIN: Come back here, boy. Are you sure that's your real name?

MANUEL: (Walks back, angry, almost crying) Of course Ebanquel is my real name. What do you take me for... granted? (Snubs CAPTAIN. JUAN butts in, very cocky, thinks he is better than the others)

JUAN: Do not paying attention to him, Ser. He is stupid. (Turn to MANUEL, ridiculing him) You are so estupid. You do not eben know how to spell your name!

CAPTAIN: What's your name, boy?

JUAN: My name is Juan Desoto.

CAPTAIN: Spell DESOTO, boy!

JUAN: "Desoto": "D" as in Desoto, "E" as in Esoto, "S" as in Soto, "O" as in Oto, "T" as in To, "O" as in O—"Desoto!"

CAPTAIN: Congratulations! (Shakes their hands) You are now all in the navy!

The script allowed the audience to share the recruits' laughter, to poke fun at authority, recalling for so many families, how the lives of their fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins were during service. We also do not have to understand any of the native Philippine dialects to take in the humor of the scene. The humor deflected whole careers submitted to humiliation and pain, while parodying the absurdity of determining qualifications for jobs with no hope of promotion. For several years Filipinos were only allowed to serve as stewards in the United States Navy. The skit originated in San Diego: many of the group's leaders came from navy families. Their fathers and uncles related stories of being passed over for promotions and other benefits leaving them oftentimes only with everyday forms of resistance—indirect verbal jabs, jokes, and innuendo. What is funnier than the over-the-top accents is how the characters switch languages playfully, sometimes leaving their would-be bosses in the dark. This play is extended with a dance routine choreographed to the Village People's "In the Navy." One of the dancers swabs the deck and wildly swings the mop to turn directions, nearly taking off the head of the dancing captain, also a part of the dance routine. Several audience members are pulled from their seats to join on stage.<sup>28</sup>

From that playful sequence, the narrator returned to describe the "third wave"—professionals and family members coming after the watershed immigration law reform of 1965 who are saddled with underemployment. A few figures are poised on stage, not interacting with each other, but miming their professional tasks—a medical doctor, a business person, a lawyer, a sales clerk, a housekeeper.

The usage of the term *third wave* refers to the emergence of a relatively new demographic cohort of Filipina/o migration. Conceived primarily to liberalize the United States' international image as a beacon of democracy against its Cold War rivals, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was initially designed to handle the large influx of European migration. Legislators and social scientists alike did not expect migrants from

Latin America and Asia to take up the offer in the large numbers in which they did. The Act abolished the existing system of fixed quotas per country. The 1965 reform allowed for 20,000 per country with upper limits set per hemisphere. The Act would also be key for another set of reasons. The act would help to set a pattern that gave rise to the growing class differences and heterogeneity of Asian American communities. The sociological literature reveals the emergence of essentially two Asian-Americas—the first composed primarily of relatives petitioned by persons of Asian descent. The newer immigrants, especially those from the Philippines, having had fewer ties to the generation of laborers and students emigrating in the early part of the century. Able to secure migration status largely by fulfilling the United States' labor shortages, these newer immigrants of the third wave were those who possessed technical skills needed by various sectors. Thus, it is not a coincidence to witness the presence of Filipina/os in the medical arts and other technological fields.<sup>29</sup>

The tendency in the existing Filipina/o American historiography is to uncritically laud the post-1965 generation for its relatively stable and upwardly mobile class status. This has the effect of vindicating a liberal view of history, privileging individuated access to material wealth without broaching topics like addressing more equitable forms of the redistribution of wealth and certainly without a thoroughgoing critique of capital. Those who celebrate the third wave's achievements draw on the colloquial telos of rags-to-riches in narrating Filipina/o American history, coddling bourgeois aspiration while turning away from civic and community accountability. Where once upon a time there were colonial subjects, insurrectionists, underpaid and disadvantaged students and laborers, now there are teachers, doctors, engineers and other so-called "professionals" to testify to the hard-won (and individuated) victory of achieving the American dream. The logic cherished in so many historical and performative narratives pats the author on the back, reminding the "meritorious" individual that they do not need preferential treatment or "handouts." The authors of this kind of logic reward the post-1965 immigrant for her apolitical presence. And oftentimes it is a history which seems to conclude in the present: with awards on Broadway, with elected office, or corporate sponsorship.<sup>30</sup>

As I said, that is the tendency—both in the popular culture (within which the PCN operates) and historiographically as well. However, the 1983 show complicated that tendency a bit. In this section of the show, the narration turned intensely personal, as the students projected some of their own family stories onto the stage—including lost promotions, job discrimination, and frustration in the midst of a nation's booming economy.

They did not broach the history of the later 1960s, when that rising material wealth and continued promise of prosperity exploded from criticism by the new social movements. Instead, the narration closed with the character of Rogelio. He is now much older, reciting a letter to his love, Carmen, back home in the Philippines. He never made enough to return, not on years of unsecured wages as a farm worker in California. He writes from the retirement home built by young activists, lamenting the fact that he would see his last days in the United States and not in the country of his birth. “Maybe I won’t ever be a rich man. But there is one thing I am proud of: I am Pilipino.” It is bittersweet, but hardly a resolution for the character.

Eventually, that generation of older Filipina/o workers who came to the United States and Hawai’i before World War II would die away. I experienced this firsthand while researching my master’s thesis at San Francisco State University in 1992-1993. I had interviewed about forty veterans of the Philippine and United States armies who had served during World War II. A sense of urgency fell on the project almost immediately, as one of the veterans, himself an historian for the Filipino Infantry, had passed. So many others would follow. Each year, the Infantry would host a reunion dinner at the San Francisco Army Presidio—an event where families and retired soldiers could reminisce and share stories with younger folks. Their numbers diminished each year, with family members outnumbering the surviving older men. This passing of these earlier generations is also true of farm workers and city laborers who came to the US before WWII. The *manongs* and *manangs*<sup>31</sup> of San Francisco’s International Hotel, Seattle’s International District, Stockton’s Manilatown and Los Angeles’ Temple area would pass on, marking an end to long-standing neighborhoods, and adding gravity to the work of oral historians and concerned students.

Rogelio was a projection of the student’s reckoning with the historical memory of men and women like the aging laborers and former students they would come to know—folks who were passing away. The long and hard work of mounting the PCN, and finding a way to narrate Filipina/o American and Philippine history on stage would continue, almost as a direct response to being removed from those earlier communities.

## THE SHOW MUST GO ON: DEFINING THE PCN GENRE

What followed the 1983 UCLA show is important in understanding the development of a performance genre. While there were certainly several other presentations that predated the 1983 show—ones utilizing variety-style formats, such as revues, declamations,



dances, short plays and other mixed media installations—the shows which came up during the mid- to late-1980s served as the true proving grounds for the strengthening of the form of the PCN. How was this achieved? How did the diffused cultural productions of a seemingly heterogeneous group of Philippine- and US-born Filipina/os become standardized, replicated, and ultimately, predictable?

In this next section, I point to several theatrical and folkloric devices and features which have become staples for the PCNs on numerous college and university campuses (although the activity is not exclusive of the province of college-level) for the past twenty years. I identify what has become the basic structure of the PCN and detail its constitutive relationships. I rely on two sets of primary sources for my analysis: oral histories of and interviews with performers and their consultants (conducted by myself as well as those deposited at several campuses), and attendance at PCNs from 1989 to 1999. In the case of my research on the campuses of San Francisco State University (1993) and the University of California, Irvine (1996), I engaged in participant-observation. While the above may have a judiciously qualitative and scientific ring to it, my version of participant-observation research also meant doing some acting, writing, composing, and piano-playing (not to mention the lugging around of lots of equipment).

To understand how the PCN has become so terribly durable over the past twenty years, we have to begin with the important role played by the campus' Filipina/o American student organization. Without the campus organization, there is no PCN. In many cases, the PCN is the most significant activity for the group. Many groups have been around for more than twenty-five years. San Francisco State University's Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE) was founded in 1967, the University of California, Berkeley's Pilipino American Alliance (PAA) in 1969, and the University of California at Los Angeles' Samahang Pilipino in 1972 (Quinsaat 158).<sup>32</sup>

During the Spring, officers for the following academic terms are elected by the organization's membership. Certain positions are reserved exclusively for coordinating PCN logistics. Some organizations prefer to have a "cultural (the de facto PCN) coordinator" sit on the group's executive board. Others prefer to have such positions not directly on the board itself, but having to report to a person with a more broad mandate, sometimes titled as a "political and community coordinator," or "special events coordinator." In either case, those vying for the elected or appointed positions realize their work will be exclusively devoted to the planning of a very large event.

Beginning in the Fall, students are delegated various production tasks—set designing, costume-making, prop-making, catering, dancing, music, and so on. Many

hours of rehearsal time and planning are sacrificed by several students. For the most part, each organization's leadership relies on what it recognizes as its core members—those unelected and highly motivated individuals who volunteer time, labor, and some out-of-pocket funds—some, for several months ahead of the show's run. The numbers begin to swell as the production nears. This is true for rehearsals requiring large numbers, such as the dance suites, where it would be typical to see more students in the few weeks before a show's run.

I had mentioned that some members shoulder some out-of-pocket expenses, usually in the form of handbill, poster, or program printing and reproduction. But, funding for the show is also a long-term and sometimes complicated issue. Students have tapped special student government programming grants from student activities offices (on most campuses, under the direction of the Dean of Students), or the office of the university president. The amounts granted for such shows have wildly varied: from a student organization's budget at a small campus laying out \$300, to nearly \$20,000 for one evening's worth of entertainment. The group's finance officer tracks all the major expenses: securing a venue ("the bigger the better"); buying new costumes ("last year's simply will not do"); and paying for choreographers, caterers, and printers.<sup>33</sup>

The production of PCNs since the 1980s also reflects the larger changes in immigration from the Philippines and changes within post-1965 Filipina/o American families. The decade of the 1980s saw large numbers of Filipina/os immigrating to the United States. The population jumped 126% between 1970 and 1980 (Reimers 116). When Filipina/os settled in the United States in this period, they would develop a pattern that would be identified as "dual-chain migration," revealing the community's cleavage along class lines. On the one hand, working-class families would petition for relatives with similar life chances— educational attainment, job skills, and so forth. Many of these families had known the migratory life of labor camps or the urban experience of single-resident occupancy hotels. Some would find their second- and third-generations moving out of the central cities of Los Angeles or San Francisco, to the outlying areas or districts— to Daly City, San Leandro, or Carson. On the other hand, another cohort of what has been described as professional and technical workers— especially those working in the medical arts or information technology fields— would find that their migration to the United States would be facilitated by the 1965 reforms of immigration laws. Another Filipina/o America would begin to settle outside of the traditional urban cores, built on the middle-class expectations of dentists, nurse practitioners, insurance brokers, real estate agents, software engineers and attorneys. They would make their homes in places like Milpitas, Hercules,

Pinole, Carson, and in the suburbs of Chicago, Houston, and Jersey City.<sup>34</sup>

Not only were Filipina/os coming the United States, but the children of the generation of post1965 immigrants were also coming of age, attending colleges and universities in large numbers as well. At the University of California, the number of undergraduate degrees conferred to Filipina/os had more than quadrupled between 1982 and 1992. Most of these young folks would be spending their time in chemistry and engineering labs, or social science lecture halls or life science facilities (“Corporate Student System Report”; “CPEC Report”).

The PCN’s growth is the result of this population coming of age, and, in the course of learning from each others’ shows, developing friendly rivalries among the campuses. One student leader of Santa Clara University’s Barkada (the campus student organization devoted to Filipina/o American culture), pointed out that they considered the University of California at Berkeley to be the campus to emulate. Even though SCU’s Barkada had only been putting shows on for half the time that Berkeley’s Pilipino American Alliance had been, organizers looked to the area’s largest campus as the standard which defined the genre. In terms of comparing one’s PCN work to similarly-sized liberal arts colleges, you would think SCU students would choose campuses like St. Mary’s College in Moraga (only 50 miles away), or the University of San Francisco (another Jesuit college, just 45 miles north). What made more sense was that SCU Barkada looked to U.C. Berkeley to set the performative standard, and that they saw the PCN not simply as forum for the expression of campus rivalry, but as a site for creating more elaborate forms. In other words, the students remind us how important it is to take ownership over emerging aesthetic and performance standards where few existed for Filipina/o Americans in mainstream public culture. Students from Berkeley and UCLA would travel by van and car to watch each other’s PCNs. Master calendars were needed to help plan around each campuses shows, in an attempt to avoid scheduling PCNs on the same night or nights as others (Payomo; Alves).

## NATIVE ELEMENTS

What has emerged from these elements—the efforts of student organizations, the influx of college-aged Filipina/os and Filipina/o Americans throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the encouragement of friendly inter-campus rivalries and support—is what choreographer Joel Jacinto has referred to as the “Pilipino Cultural Night genre” (PCN genre). Jacinto and his partner Ave Jacinto are co-founders of their own folkloric

performing arts troupe in Los Angeles, California. Both have been active in folk dancing since their student days at UCLA and have returned often as consultants (Jacinto and Jacinto).

Jacinto points out that the PCN genre, unique to the United States and developed by Filipina/o Americans, should be understood as a performance in the modern, Western sense of separating audiences from performers. Modern performance assumes a passive, inert audience, while the performer remains detached, usually accentuated with defined play spaces on stages, rostrums, in plazas, and so forth. The PCN genre is to be contrasted from the more organically and highly ritualized exchange out of which folkloric forms are based. In the ritualized settings of folk forms, dances and songs are not done for others so much as they are done with others. Whereas modern audiences are required to sit patiently and silently until the performance has finished, the ritual context stresses participation, call-and-response (Asian Pacific American Roundtable).

To build on Jacinto's understanding of what the PCN genre is, I add the following. The PCN genre is an ensemble of performances consisting of two halves. The first half consists of the use of Filipina/o folkloric forms: song, dance, music, and costuming. Here the organizers have unwittingly drawn from two competing schools of thought regarding folk forms and performance. On the one hand, PCN organizers rely on folk forms invented by Francisca Reyes Aquino to authenticate their understanding of Filipina/o culture. That is, the folk forms help to ground the students' experimentation with fashioning identities—more broadly speaking, crafting a sense of transnationalism from within the context of the United States. They are becoming, through the shows, different kinds of Americans as well as Filipina/os. On the other hand, the folk forms also draw from the highly stylized rendition of the Philippine dance theater work popularized since the late 1950s (paradigmatically through the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company, or simply, "the Bayanihan", the Filipinescas Dance Society, and several others). Bayanihan choreographers such as Lucrecia Urtula were taken to task by traditionalist standard-bearer Francisca Reyes Aquino for speeding up tempos, liberalizing costuming protocol, even performing dances and songs out of context or sequence. In other words Aquino and the traditionalists would later criticize post-war stylization. Dance theater is not folkdance, Aquino would claim, and therefore does not have a claim on authenticity. This tension between these two streams remains blurred if not altogether ignored in the PCN genre (Okamura 18).

The second half of the genre consists of a theatrical narration—a play or a skit<sup>35</sup>. The shows employ a narrative portraying vital concerns from a distinctively Filipina/o American view. At their worst, as I have said, some plays have merely been clumsy vehicles

for moving the dance suites along. But when the narrations have been more carefully conceived and written, they have done more. (Again, a lot of this depends on the ambitions of those tasked to write and edit scripts.) It is in the theatrical narrations that the PCN is more fully defined as a genre—one not originated nor performed in the Philippines, and later adapted to American needs, but rooted in and reflective of Filipina/o American young folks' concerns, anxieties and aspirations. While the language of the folkloric aims for the epic— aspiring to the telling of the grandest tales, the inheritance of a nationalist patrimony, the language of the PCN's play is that of the lyrical—personalized and intimate testimony of undertheorized (or inadequately theorized) Filipina/o American subjectivities.<sup>36</sup>

The PCN's theatrical narrations are an important part of the genre. They allow organizers and performers to communicate beyond the nationalist vocabularies established in the choreography of Aquino and the Bayanihan. While the performers assume the roles of royalty, ritualized animals, and even gods in the folkloric suites, they quite literally re-embody themselves in their theatrical narrations. These mini-plays allow organizers to explicitly raise topics of direct concern to their experiences in the United States. These would include poking fun at their parents' reticence concerning family histories, the latent homophobia found in their peer groups, anti-gang exhortations, organizing around the support for affirmative action and equal opportunity programs, celebrating the Pinoy boxers of the 1930s, re-telling the stories of Flor Contemplacion, Benigno Aquino, Ferdinand Marcos, or the fates of mail order brides and the citizenship fight waged by World War II-era Philippine veterans; the struggle for Filipina/o American and ethnic studies on college campuses, and young people's challenges to their parent's traditional views on a whole host of issues (especially marriage and courting), and the prevalence of (and silence around) domestic violence. Of course, none of the topics raised in any of the shows amount to systematic analyses or expositions. Entertainment rarely makes for hard-hitting cultural commentary. Rather, the shows, and in particular the theatrical narrations, represent imminent and incomplete arguments for how memories are preserved by this generation.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps the most widely used PCN genre devices is the reverse telos. What is being reversed in several productions is the liberal expectation—the very durable paradigm of assimilation itself. The PCN genre is an unwitting imminent critique of the assimilation paradigm, an oblique and complicated answer to, as much as it is a symptom of, the possible ways we would talk about the state of ethnic relations in the United States. That way of talking ethnicity, paradigmatically through the work of Park's Chicago School, is fundamentally a story or a proposition for how conflict among ethnic groups is resolved.

The assimilationists advance what has been recycled in popular discourse as the “Melting Pot” (also—significantly—the title of a play written by Israel Zangwill in 1909, viewed by then president Theodore Roosevelt, and influential for dramatizing how recent immigrants could cast off memory, language, and their insistence on intra-ethnic marriage to realize a “New World Symphony”).

What Park would grapple with, first as a newspaper reporter and later as an influential sociologist, was how Chicago’s racially segregated residents—how the multilingual, multiethnic, and multireligious urban setting of his city—could live together. The assimilationist’s premium has been built on the liberal expectation that immigrants would sever their allegiance to the Old World to conform to the New (Omi and Winant 14-23).<sup>38</sup> How would this be reversed in the PCN genre?

The protagonists are presented at the beginning of the show in need of historical help: they do not know their history or “culture.” This is the source of some amount of consternation and humor on their part. In a familiar turn of the quest motif, the characters meet guides—elders, spirits, parent-figures—who “transport” them to the Philippines. During their journey, the characters come in contact with a host of sounds and visions in the form of the dance suites. They marvel at what they have missed or taken for granted for so long, unexplained by their parents, or written as out of bounds in any of their school books. They have gone native, having gone to the source itself (the Philippines). The bird dances, the courtship waltzes, the warrior chants—all confirm for the characters to what they should refer when thinking of the Filipina/o. No text contains what they seek. All previous texts have been ruled invalid. They rely on the visceral engagement with bodies for their authentication—costumed, armored, dancing, playing.

By the end of the show, the characters reach an epiphanic state of cultural awareness and pride that they take back with them to the US This motif—of the quest, a “reverse exile”—is the most familiar one deployed throughout the shows. For our young characters, “something” is missing, that which is re-placed by an imagined return to the Philippines where the “crisis” of Filipina/o American identity is “solved.”<sup>39</sup> The tacit assertion being made here is that the Philippines—as represented in its folkloric repertoire—is a sturdy repository of knowledge, a warehouse of unchanging, static, and therefore authentic representations of Philippine life which can be accessed and brought back. The exercising of the reverse exit motif refuses to acknowledge the fact of cultural change, indeterminacy, and reconstruction at work in both the Philippines and in the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Why this may be referred to as a reverse telos has everything to do with how the American academy has tenaciously clung to the premium of assimilation as the paradigm

for ethnic relations. Assimilationists advance the liberal expectation that succeeding generations would inter-marry with other ethnic and racial groups. They'd move out of cloistered ghettos; they'd change eating patterns, change patterns of dress, speech, and diet; they would attain higher levels of educations by breaking admissions barriers. And while such designations were merely taken for extrinsic manifestations of cultural change, the premium of assimilation would be best manifested in a cohort's move toward out-marriage and one's primary associations.<sup>41</sup>

The telos of American assimilation would argue that the children of immigrants would no longer dream of the mother- or father-land as their parents did. Rather than having less significance for succeeding generations, the role of culture looms larger for the PCN performers. These moves could be seen as resonating with the more politically-toothed and socially-charged articulations of Afrocentrism or Chicana/o nationalism. Calls for communities to laud "mother Africa" or "Aztlán" as homelands and to claim the lineage of kings and queens registers an implicit critique of American culture. I am not arguing that PCNs are explicit or theoretically sophisticated ideological constructions. But it is not much of a leap to see that the existential reference to the Philippines is also at its root a nascent critique of what has been available for Filipina/os to make sense of themselves in the United States. The attention (obsession, even) to homelands for US-based racial and ethnic minorities "outside" of the nation suggests how the dominant national narrative is more deferred than realized. The PCN genre has allowed students to viscerally engage historical figures and struggles, to actually become historical figures they most likely did not learn about in textbooks, or even from their parents, making obscured or distorted pasts come alive with their own characterizations and stylizations. To become Filipina/o-Americans for many organizers and performers of the PCN genre means having to narrate buried pasts between the Philippines and the United States on stage using some of the most durable folk forms available.

What is also reversed is the reticence of Filipina/o parents concerning personal histories. Part of the problem of narrating these more recent histories is not only due to the paucity of available written work, but in how parents have communicated the lessons of the past. In another essay, I explored this familial reticence, which, when viewed from another angle, represents a generational silence, on the part of the post-1965-era Filipina/o parents. Because of the shame and fact of discrimination, many Filipina/o parents would see no need to pass along their homeland languages and personal histories. As many so colloquially ask, "Why learn Tagalog or Ilokano in the US? You're in America—they speak English here... You'll only get an accent..." It would go much deeper than that. Many

Filipina/o parents would remain silent on the value of teaching Philippine history to their children.<sup>38</sup> In so many shows, students take the opportunity to play out these frustrations. Most of the time, playing the role of one's parents on stage makes for some easy laughs. Oftentimes though, the humor reveals a keen insecurity on the part of the students, a resentment even, directed toward elders for not having communicated more cultural knowledge.

Ultimately, what the PCN genre teaches us is that cultural productions are also crucial sites for re-interpreting and sometimes critiquing the commanding logics of American assimilation whether issued by the academy or discussed around the dinner table. And because the premium is not placed on historical accuracy so much as it has been placed on theatrical impact and community-building among its performers and organizers, the genre has been subject to a range of criticism. Namely, critics have argued that the PCN genre reinforces static constructions of Filipina/o-American "identities." The critics argue that the origins of the folk forms need to be more concretely historicized. Some point to the orientalizing function of the Muslim dance suites in several PCNs, particularly how students have undertheorized their importation of folkloric forms from the southern Philippines, opening themselves to the charge of being sloppy interpreters of Filipina/o culture (Gaerlan 275). Several others take PCN organizers to task for simply regurgitating familiar plot lines from previous years or from other campuses, offering contrived resolutions to weighty topics, or even relying mechanistically on social realism as the prevailing aesthetic of the presentations. In other words, the criticism hones in on the point that the entire show has become an epic—a grand and bloated re-statement of Filipina/o-American "culture" (Gonzalves 163-82; Vergara).

I was guilty of making those criticisms as well. I joined a small but growing chorus in the early 1990s that became increasingly dissatisfied with the shows for a number of reasons. Certainly one set of responses had at its root a kind of postmodern skepticism toward what the show had become, kind of like a grand narrative itself. For many of us, the PCN genre was that narrative which no longer seemed convincing. We could sit through any number of performances—from San Francisco, to Davis, to Santa Clara, to Los Angeles, and La Jolla—and couldn't help but think we had seen only variations of the same show time and again. Like the art critics in a more rarefied scene from a generation before us, we muttered about how there seemed to be nothing inventive, compelling, moving, or even fun in the work. I found myself more comfortable with a sense of detachment from the form of the genre, wishing it could be more playful, more experimental, even more political.



My critical stance could be partly explained by my work as a performer on PCNs as well. At one end of the range of experiences, I found the kind of fellowship that the student organizers had promised. On the other, we also saw trouble coming as the rising tuition rates drove so many of our classmates off campus. A lot of folks had the goal of making their way back to campus, if only they could save up enough money from their part- and sometimes, full-time jobs. Placed in this context the cultural performances seemed more like massive vanity projects, and less like a genuine organizing tool for helping classmates finish their schooling. That was the gravity attached to our performances; and that is where the criticism for the cultural nights emerged—out of those strange conversations about why we really needed and wanted to put on the shows.

Part of the reason for my critical reaction came out of working on PCNs as a performer and musician. It was easy to be consumed with hectic rehearsal schedules and other meetings. And certainly one of the benefits on working on productions such as these is to take in the great sense of fellowship that the work provides. But enjoying the hard work meant also placing the experience of working on the show with others into larger contexts. I and some classmates had developed strong criticisms of the show's forms. For some of us, this meant having to think in terms of social movements—to think that art and culture should, in their broadest and noblest senses, serve the political sensibility and spirit of the day. But some of my assumptions were wrong: my problem was in relying on static notions on how histories are told, not paying enough attention to how the examination of culture oftentimes confounds traditional forms of storytelling if not the academicized narration of histories. I have had to revise my evaluation of the genre, to realize that the PCN genre is not only evidence of the absence of mass-based movements, but more importantly a register for how Filipina/o American memories are sustained within the middle-class aspirations of their parents and only sometimes against the common sense of the day.<sup>42</sup>

I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter how a young generation of Filipina/o Americans negotiate the stories they perform as they come of age in the last years of the twentieth century. With nearly a century separating them from the brutal violence that announced America's presence in Southeast Asia (the battle of Manila Bay, the Philippine-American War), the students, themselves also a generation removed from the mass-based social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, perform histories they have not read, narrate their insecurities about cultural awareness, and take for granted the authenticity of folk forms.

## NOTES

1 Cao and Novas fail to mention that the presence of Asian American studies classes at the University of California, Irvine has been due largely to the efforts and sacrifice of hundreds of students, faculty, staff, parents and community members. They, like most folks struggling to make ethnic studies a reality on campuses throughout the country, know that it's easier said than done.

2 Let's go home  
Let's go home hey hey hey  
Let's go home because  
My world no longer  
Makes sense

3 See White 9093, 11-13, 52-54; Nilsen; Vincent 267-285. See also the following interesting analyses: Walser 79-90; Danielsen 275-92; and McClary 152-7. I'm also thankful to Professors Dwight Hopkins, Carolyn Mitchell, and Rutherford S. Gonzalves for our discussions about the role that sexuality has played in Black music's toggling of the secular and the sacred—Prince fans all.

4 During the 1992 election season, two Filipina/o American elected officials mounted a voter registration campaign to register a few thousand new voters from the Filipina/o American community living in the San Francisco Bay Area. To explain why their efforts yielded only a paltry amount, the politicians blamed low participation on the weather—"El Niño" was at fault. Sad to say that this is what passes for so-called "leadership" in the Filipina/o American "community."

5 The list also challenges the notion that Filipina/o Americans often do not belong to many ethnic and racial communities, including at times Asian American ones. I thank Dorothy Fujita Rony for suggesting this line of discussion.

6 See Loza; Mattern; Aparicio; Austerlitz; Floyd Jr.; Glasser; Lipsitz *Dangerous Crossroads*; Rose; Manuel; and Caruncho.

7 Music journalist Ricky Vincent places Prince's music in an appropriate context: "What separated Prince from other artists of the 1980s was his ability to create grand visions, entire worlds of erotic indulgence and freedom. He explored with authority the range of bizarre and carnal emotions that most of us keep hidden.... The "sexually obsessed" generation that bought every record from Prince in the 1980s has today been forced to deal with the end of the sexual revolution and the mortal risks of AIDS" (278- 9).

8 See Krieger; Hall *The Hard Road*; and Rogin.

9 Edsall and Edsall are on target in their analysis of how the consensus over race, rights and taxes was organized in the late 1970s: The tax revolt, in tandem with sustained partisan conflict over racial policies—and over social/moral issues ranging from gun control to school prayer to abortion—catalyzed the mobilization of a conservative presidential majority. California became the testing ground for this new conservatism—California with its soaring property taxes, especially in the Los Angeles area (which already faced a school busing order); with its Democratic legislature and its Democratic governor both unwilling to use revenue surpluses to provide tax relief; and with its easy access to the ballot for almost any group seeking a statewide referendum... The tax revolt was a major turning point in American politics. It provided new muscle and new logic to the formation of a conservative coalition opposed to the liberal welfare state. The division of the electorate along lines of taxpayers versus tax recipients dovetailed with racial divisions: blacks (along with the growing Hispanic population) were disproportionately the beneficiaries of government-led efforts to redistribute rights and status, and the black middle and working classes were far more dependent on government programs and jobs than their white counterparts. Race melded into a conservative-driven agenda that sought to polarize the public against the private sector. The tax revolt provided conservatism with a powerful internal coherence, shaping an anti-government ethic, and firmly establishing new grounds for the disaffection of white working- and middle-class voters from their traditional Democratic roots” (130).

10 “In this case as in many others, guesses about the perceptions and expectations of whites supersede the constitutional rights and empirical realities of blacks and other minorities. It certainly stands in sharp contrast to the 1973 Rodriguez decision, which minimized the importance of education as a federally guaranteed right when the case involved Mexican American children. In Bakke, white expectations and perceptions of being hindered in their pursuit of the educational opportunities they desired were considered worthy of federal protection” (Lipsitz *The Possessive Investment* 37).

11 See Schrag; Omi and Winant 113-136; Goldfield 296-317; and Ehrenreich. Also see Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 US 265 (1978). For an analysis of how the Bakke decision was debated within and around Asian American communities, see Takagi 109-39. Legal scholar Derrick A. Bell’s analysis of the Bakke decision is on target: “Working-class and upwardly striving middle-class whites perceive correctly that the share of educational opportunities available to their children are limited. That share, they believe, is threatened by programs designed to help minorities. Their belief is strengthened by the conviction that blacks are not supposed to get ahead of whites, and by the realization that poor whites are powerless to alter the plain advantages in educational opportunity available to the upper classes” (457).

12 It is also important to note that the conservative nationalism of this era was not solely the province of Republican administrations. In a report to the Trilateral commission, European, American, and Japanese intellectuals and government officials, meditated on the ungovernability of Western democracies. Among those assembled for this effort were advisors to the Kennedy and Carter administrations. Not quite ten years after the strikes of 1968, and the mounting of mass-based movements, this document draws our attention to how some of the men who sat next to or either had the ear of power bemoaned the signs of the times. They point to growing pessimism and a lack of democratic faith among the citizens of the First World. For authors of the document, and for several others who were associated with the Trilateral Commission's work, the collapse of Western democracies was to be blamed on the "hippies" and the "campus radicals." Crozier puts it this way: "At the present time, a significant challenge comes from the intellectuals and related groups who assert their disgust with the corruption, materialism, and inefficiency of democracy and with the subservience of democratic government to "monopoly capitalism." The development of an "adversary culture" among intellectuals has affected students, scholars, and the media.... In some measure, the advanced industrial societies have spawned a stratum of value-oriented intellectuals who often devote themselves to the derogation of leadership, the challenging of authority, and the unmasking and delegitimation of established institutions, their behavior contrasting with that of the also increasing numbers of technocratic and policy-oriented intellectuals. In an age of widespread secondary school and university education, the pervasiveness of the mass media, professional employees, this development constitutes a challenge to democratic government which is, potentially at least, as serious as those posed in the past by the aristocratic cliques, fascist movements, and communist parties" (6-7).

13 On the "Mississippification" of California, see Lipsitz *The Possessive Investment* 211-33.

14 See Majors. See also discussions of the state of art-making from visual and performance disciplines in Villa. Villa conceived of a series of dialogues with leading critics, artists, and scholars over the multicultural education in previously elite art institutions, the possibility of art-making under shrinking national budgets, and more. On Filipina/o American immigration in the post-1965 period, see Liu et al. 487-514 and Liu, 673-705.

15 See Hu-DeHart 50-55 and Hirabayashi and Alquizola 351-64.

16 Of the approximately 1,000 attendees, the majority of respondents to an evaluation questionnaire heard about the event by word of mouth. The majority of respondents were also students either at UCLA or other campuses, had prior interest in such performances, and were between the ages of 18 and 21 (Samahang Pilipino PCN).

17 “History of a Race”

18 I appreciate the approach to cultural research undertaken by scholars like Limon. I find helpful Rosaura Sanchez’ handling of discrete texts as part of “macro-textual” commentaries. There’s a way in which specific cultural studies remain locked formalistically onto the objects themselves. Sanchez’ work avoids that. I agree with Lowe and Lloyd’s take on how culture is not simply a static field, but is activated and mobilized for specific purposes: “[C]ulture becomes politically important where a cultural formation comes into contradiction with an economic or political logic that tries to refunction it for exploitation or domination” (24).

19 On “imperso-nation,” see Chakravarty. Countering the notion that impersonators seek the spotlight, Chang points out how such performers seek the comfort and anonymity of shadows: “Critics love auteurs, not interpreters. You and the karaoke crowd, as Kraftwerk once coldly called them, are velvet hotel-showroom dummies. Even after the show is done, the shine that mimicry confers on you flows upward. The faceless crowds in the mountain motor lodge or the beachside bar don’t want you, they want a faithful facsimile of the original” (44). Bhabha’s formulation may be playfully applied as well: “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (86).

19 Interview with Dom and Sachiko Magwili and Santos 3-20.

20 *Pinoy* is colloquial for “Filipino.”

21 See Gaerlan 251-87. One of my former instructors during my undergraduate days was fond of hyping up the risk of traveling to that region: “Mindanao: It’s like Dodge City down there!”

22 Dance scholarship helps us to make sense out of the narrative nature of dance, especially from artists working in communities that work through the legacies of colonization. The most useful works in this field of study combines a healthy postmodern skepticism toward anthropological authority with a refusal to get bogged down with the tedium of aesthetic formalism. These works take seriously the notion that dance can assume the burden of telling complicated stories and experimenting with challenging identities in hostile times. See Foster *Choreographing History* and *Corporealities: Dancing; Ness Body, Movement, Culture*, “Originality in the Postcolony”, and “When Seeing is Believing”; Delgado and Muñoz; Savigliano et al.; and Browning.

- 23 On engendering nationalism in late nineteenth century Filipina/o politics, see Rafael 591-612. I appreciate Canclini's discussion of how Latin American "cultures" need to be understood not as unified and autonomous, but as unevenly developed (in certain areas, he would argue, overdeveloped), while thoroughly imbricated in the political and economic realities of the day.
- 24 This distinction between the epic and the lyrical is drawn from Harris.
- 25 Featured in the films *Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs and Empire* and *This Bloody Blundering Business*). Also featured in Jacobs et al.
- 26 See Bulosan; and Peñaranda et al.<sup>36</sup> Scholar E. San Juan, Jr. noted how in the 1970s Bulosan's resurrected text became important to young California activists, students and artists. Denning discusses Bulosan as a Popular Front-era writer testifying through a "migrant narrative" (269-82).
- 27 For accounts of Filipina/os in the US Navy, see Quinsaat and Espiritu 105-15. Ordinary folks occasionally mount extraordinary challenges to power. More often than not, they rely on what James C. Scott documents as "everyday forms of resistance."
- 28 See Liu and Liu et al.. Although focused largely on Southern California, Ong et al. updates the theoretical work and historical documentation of Cheng and Bonacich. Both works track how Filipina/os have been part of the global flow of natural and human resources over the twentieth century.
- 29 A Filipina mother opposes affirmative action and affirms the myth of individuated achievement in Cruz 29. For an example of Filipina/o Americans celebrating bourgeois liberalism, see Bautista.
- 30 Reaching even further back, Quinsaat's edited reader on Filipina/o American history lists a broad range of student and community-based organizations working in the early part of the twentieth century, editing weekly periodicals, holding picnics, sparring with debating teams, and other activities.
- 31 *Manong* and *manang* are terms of respect when addressing or referring to a man or a woman, respectively.
- 32 Colleges and universities have in place mechanisms for funding the operation of officially-chartered student organizations. Those organizations agreeing to adhere to certain guidelines regarding programming and taste are eligible for funds provided by Deans of Students. The fund is a percentage of student body fees assessed at the beginning of each academic term.

33 On the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 see Reimers, chapter 3.

34 I refrain from referring to it as such because many performers take umbrage with the use of the term. Critics argue that this dimension of the PCN is more substantive.

35 Garcia Canclini discusses how the nationalist patrimony is inculcated in public displays—through parades, murals, museums, and processions. “The dramatization of the patrimony is the effort to simulate that there is an origin, a founding substance, in relation with which we should act today. This is the basis of authoritarian cultural policies. The world is a stage, but what must be performed is already prescribed. The practices and objects of value are found and catalogued in a fixed repertory. To be cultured implies knowing that repertory of symbolic goods and intervening correctly in the rituals that reproduce it. For that reason the notions of collection and ritual are key to deconstructing the links between culture and power.... The historical patrimony that is celebrated consists of founding events, the heroes who played the main roles in them, and the fetishized objects that evoke them. The legitimate rites are those that stage the desire for repetition and perpetuation of order” (110).

36 The imminent critique suggested in the shows could also be read as part of the larger political unconscious to which Fredric Jameson referred. I turn to Avery Gordon’s poignant formulation of how intellectuals engaged at the cultural sidelines can draw inspiration for their work. “[T]o fight for an oppressed past is to make this past come alive as the lever for the work in the present: obliterating the sources and conditions that link the violence of what seems finished with the present, ending this history and setting in place a different future” (66). Avery Gordon’s eloquent description of her vision of what sociological writing (as well as most other disciplines) could or should be is extremely moving. It provides an indication of what the nature of a “vindicationist historiography” could mean for academic and intellectual work in the academy. And to counter those who hold that re-writing history is a muddled series of self-inflicted guilt-trips, or the narcissistic foray into *de riguer* tribalism, Gordon’s description updates the stakes that academics could be making, amending Walter Benjamin’s notion of the imminent critique. Benjamin’s thunderous writing reads more like a sermon than orthodox theorizing. But the effect is more powerful: he reminds us how much conjuring goes on when writing and fighting for the past. “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way is really was” (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of the Antichrist. Only

that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious." The PCN organizers do more than perform on stage—they pass along fragmented versions of who they think they are or could have been.

37 See also Lal; Linder; Lyman; and Park.

38 "Reverse exile" is here bracketed to call attention to the problematic of American-born Filipinos who do not "go back" to a place where they have never been. Confer Campomanes' explication of the exilic motif in Filipino literature where he situates Filipino American literature in a "reverse telos" in Lim and Ling 51. On the significance of the quest motif, Said states: "In all the great explorers' narratives of the late Renaissance (Daniel Defert has aptly called them the collection of the world [la collecte du monde]) and those of the nineteenth-century explorers and ethnographers, not to mention Conrad's voyage up the Congo, there is the topos of the voyage south as Mary Louise Pratt has called it, referring to Gide and Camus, in which the motif of control and authority has "sounded uninterruptedly." For the native who begins to see and hear that persisting note, it sounds "the note of crisis, of banishment, banishment from the heart, banishment from home." This is how Stephen Dedalus memorably states it in the Library episode *Ulysses*, the decolonizing native writer—such as Joyce, the Irish writer colonized by the British—re-experiences the quest-voyage motif from which he had been banished by means of the same trope carried over from the imperial into the new culture and adopted, reused, relived" (210-1).

39 "Where would we be ... without a touch of essentialism?" For Hall, paying attention to the overdetermined labor of cultural production means having to admit that there are no pure forms. "Always these forms are the product of partial synchronization, of engagement across cultural boundaries, of the confluence of more than one cultural tradition, of the negotiations of dominant and subordinate positions, of the subterranean strategies of recoding and transcoding, of critical signification, of signifying. Always these forms are impure, to some degree hybridized from a vernacular base. Thus, they must always be heard, not simply as the recovery of a lost dialogue bearing clues for the production of new musics (because there is never any going back to the old in a simple way), but as what they are—adaptations, molded to the mixed, contradictory, hybrid spaces of popular culture" ("What is This" 28). Hall redirects my attention concerning how we've had to rely on conceptions of culture which are inadequate for grappling with performance genres like the PCN. We're forced to reconsider what our disciplinary inheritances have been. On the postmodern destruction of anthropological authority and the positing of the "cultural" as an autonomous sphere, see Behar and Gordon; Clifford; and Marcus and Fischer.



40 See Gordon *Assimilation in American Life* and *Human Nature*. For critiques and revisions, see Steinberg.

41 See Gonzalves “When the Walls Speak” 31-63. Victor Merina recalls what happened when he was taunted as a young boy for his Filipina/o accent: “My parents encouraged the Filipino culture at home. The one thing we all regret now ... they didn’t want us to learn Tagalog [the main language of the Philippines] or a dialect from their islands, which is called Ivatan. At first they spoke both dialects at home with my sister and me. But after the incidents of language at school, they made a conscious decision not to mix the languages. So they didn’t speak any Tagalog to my sister or I when we were growing up. In retrospect, we all regret that now” (45).

42 Gramsci on “common sense”: “Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the ‘folklore’ of philosophy, and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is. At those times in history when a homogeneous social group is brought into being, there comes into being also, in opposition to common sense, a homogeneous—in other words coherent and systematic—philosophy” (419).

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