

# "The Commodification of Everything": Disneyfication and Filipino American Narratives of Globalization and Diaspora

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Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

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“THE COMMODIFICATION OF EVERYTHING”:  
DISNEYFICATION AND FILIPINO AMERICAN NARRATIVES  
OF GLOBALIZATION AND DIASPORA

a dissertation

by

LORENZO ALEXANDER L. PUENTE

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## **Abstract**

“‘The Commodification of Everything’: Disneyfication and Filipino American Narratives of Globalization and Diaspora”

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This dissertation examines how contemporary Filipino American novels narrate the experiences of immigrant Filipino workers in the US in the context of neoliberal globalization. In particular, I analyze how these novels depict neoliberal global capitalism’s re-ordering of urban and suburban spaces in order to create safe spaces for consumption, and the impact of such re-ordering on immigrant Filipino service workers. This re-ordering of space, based on urban management principles pioneered by Disney Corporation that have become dominant across the US and in other places like the Philippines, has widened the gulf between those who have the means to partake of consumption and those who do not. The dissertation argues that the contemporary Filipino American novels under study perform the cultural task of capturing the disturbances brought about by the dizzying shifts in the nature of work, understanding of self, affiliation, and the world, and of reflecting back to the readers their personal and social costs.

Chapter One traces the roots of Disneyfication to the world’s fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highlighting the imperialist legacy imbricated in the Disney theme parks’ nativist and anti-poor tendencies. I argue that such bias underpin the strategies of Disneyfication that has dominated the US urban landscape beginning in the 1970s. Chapter Two analyzes Jessica

Hagedorn's two novels on the Philippines, *Dogeaters* and *Dream Jungle*, focusing on her literary representation of the Marcos dictatorship's attempt to use the strategies of Disneyfication to attract international tourists and to cover over the regime's violent exploitation of its own people in connivance with the then US-dominated global capitalism. Chapter Three discusses how Han Ong's *Fixer Chao* depicts the transformation of the subjectivity of an immigrant Filipino service worker against the background of New York City's gentrification in the 1990s. Ong uses the motifs of fragmentation, displacement, and conflation of moral good and material goods to present a Filipino American critique of neoliberal global capitalism's ethos of consumerism. Finally, Chapter Four studies Brian Ascalon Roley's *American Son* and Evelina Galang's *One Tribe* in terms of the novels' depiction of the immigrant Filipino workers' experience of the strategies of exclusion and control. Both novels delineate formal and informal means of surveillance targeted at Filipino immigrant workers, highlighting the way immigrant Filipino families and communities discipline their members, in particular the young females, to argue for assimilation into the Disneyfied mainstream American society and culture.

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## Introduction: Disneyfication as Spatial (In)justice

Jose Antonio Vargas, a Filipino American Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, revealed in an essay published in *The New York Times* that he is an undocumented immigrant. His Filipino mother, wanting to give him “a better life,” had sent him to the United States as a 12 year old to live with his Filipino grandfather, who had arranged for his passage by procuring fake documents. Vargas remembers one piece of advice his mother gave before he left Manila: “If anyone asked why I was coming to America, I should say I was going to Disneyland.” The mother wanted her child to have a ready alibi to escape suspicion. But we can also read the mother’s advice as her way of assuaging the child’s (and her own) pain of separation by reassuring him (and herself) that he was going to “Disneyland,” a name that evokes a fantasy of a place of endless happiness, prosperity, and security, and—for many Filipinos—a name interchangeable for America.

What the Filipino mother would probably not have realized was that evoking the name “Disneyland” was prescient not just as synecdoche for America. Her son would find himself in a Disneyfied United States—the American urban and suburban spaces, beginning in the 1970s, have been gradually but steadily transformed according to principles pioneered by the Disney Corporation. Disneyfication<sup>1</sup> is defined as “the

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Disneyfication,” initially associated with Disney movies, has in the past three decades been used more predominantly to describe the growing influence of the Disney theme parks on urban planning in the US. Alan Bryman suggests a more specific term, “Disneyization” to refer to this process. According to him, “Disneyfication” is more “associated with a statement about the cultural products of the Disney company” (5). In this dissertation I use the term “Disneyfication” not only because it is the more widely used term in the field, but also because, I argue, the “principles of the Disney theme parks” cannot be fully separated from “the cultural



process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world” (Bryman, *Disneyization*, 1). The term refers to the use of the strategies of spectacle, corporate management, and exclusion and surveillance in the re-ordering of urban and suburban spaces to maximize consumption activities. One significant consequence of this re-ordering of urban space is the further widening gulf that results between those who consume in such spaces and those who are there to serve them. Vargas’s grandparents belonged to the latter group (the grandfather worked as a security guard and the grandmother as a food server), as did Vargas, who worked menial jobs where he could.

The mother probably did not realize, too, that those same strategies of Disneyfication had been imposed on Manila by the Marcos regime in the 1970s (and perpetuated by succeeding governments), and these have contributed to making it almost impossible for working-class parents (like herself) to provide the basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, education—of their children. The Disneyfication of Manila further exacerbated the already wide divide between the Philippines’ ruling elite families and the impoverished masses, contributing to the mass migration of Filipinos searching for “a better life,” many of them by working as construction laborers and domestic helpers—memorably called the “Servants of Globalization” by Rhacel Parennas—attracted by the world’s Disneyfied spaces.

This dissertation aims to study how contemporary Filipino American writers narrate the Filipino and Filipino American experience of the development and

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products of the Disney company,” i.e. the symbolic capital of the Disney theme parks embodied in and spread by the Disney cultural products are carried over as the “principles of the Disney theme parks” are applied to other sectors of society.

commodification of urban and suburban space. Disneyfication is the term coined by American urban studies scholars in the 1980s and 1990s to refer to this phenomenon, and I am appropriating this term to describe the crisscrossing of economic, cultural, and political forces in urban and suburban spaces. Specifically, I am interested in studying how Filipino American fiction writers depict this re-ordering of space, brought about by neoliberal global capitalism's transformation of the nature of work, and its impact on the subjectivity and worldview of Filipino and Filipino American service workers who inhabit these Disneyfied spaces. I argue that these literary texts perform the cultural work of capturing the texture of these seismic shifts in the nature of work, and in the understanding of self and the world, and of reflecting back to their readers the costs that attend this re-ordering of space.

My interest in this topic stems from my childhood experiences growing up in the Philippines during the Martial Law years, witnessing the “re-ordering of space” that the Marcoses imposed by military coercion on the Filipino people. Growing up in a low middle class family, I remember how my parents and my uncles initially welcomed the Marcoses' attempt to “clean up” (both literally and figuratively) Manila, making it safe for local and international consumers. It soon became apparent, however, that Marcos's New Society benefited mostly Marcos relatives and cronies, and the re-ordering of space meant forcibly relocating urban poor communities outside Manila without provisions for basic necessities of water and job opportunities (many of them came back to Manila anyway). Exclusive gated subdivisions—First World bubbles amidst massive Third World poverty—mushroomed in the choicest residential areas of the city, while the poor congregated in any available empty lot, forming thickly populated slum communities. As

a child, I remember often wondering: Why so many people living in poverty? Why the extreme disparity between the few rich and the masses of poor people in the Philippines? What could be done to alleviate the situation of poverty?

The search for answers to these questions has preoccupied my life so far. As a college student at the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, I joined a social justice oriented student organization that regularly visited nearby urban poor communities. These slum communities were ensconced in what were empty lots in-between the posh subdivisions of Loyola Heights. Many of the slum dwellers are migrants from the provinces, most of them jobless and those who were employed worked mostly as drivers, domestic helpers, or washerwomen to the wealthy families in the surrounding gated subdivisions. Considered the lucky ones by the community were those who had family members working abroad as construction laborers and domestic helpers, or even *japayukis*, entertainers in nightclubs in Japan, but this invariably meant children growing up without one or even two parents.<sup>2</sup> The college organization I was part of helped organize the communities to resist attempts by the government to demolish to relocate their shanties to areas outside the city without consultation and without provisions in the relocation areas.

Even after Martial Law, the neoliberal reordering of space continued under succeeding governments. As Metro Manila continued to expand and “develop”—with the construction of more malls (e. g. Mall of Asia, which is the largest in this part of the world), the growth of more gated communities south of Manila, and the construction of

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<sup>2</sup> Rhacel Parrenas in *Children of Globalization* studies the social and personal costs of globalization on Filipino children growing up without one or two parents. See also the psychologist Lourdes Carandang’s study on children growing up without mothers in *Nang Mawala ang Ilaw ng Tahanan*.

more efficient highways and fly-overs<sup>3</sup> to connect these malls and subdivisions—the poor found themselves mostly ignored and excluded, building shanties in spaces not fit for residence, e.g. beside rail tracks, under high tension electric cables, near polluted streams, or even literally under city bridges. Even now, with the Philippines enjoying unprecedented economic boom under President Benigno Aquino, as “instant cities”—wealthy business and residential zones—sprout further outside Metro Manila, the poor hardly feel any improvement in their lot.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of poor, and soon also middle-class, Filipinos continued to go abroad in search of work and a “better life.” Initiated during the Marcos regime, the Philippine government strategy of brokering overseas jobs for Filipino contract workers continued as a major policy. Statistics show that about nine million Filipinos or ten percent of the total Philippine population, half of them women, work all over the world. Celebrated as “heroes” by the Philippine government because of the remittances that has kept the Philippine economy afloat, many of these overseas contract workers endure exploitation abroad and family crises at home because of their prolonged absence.

My own family experienced the difficulties of having a parent work abroad. After my mother passed away, my father was constrained to work as an engineer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia just to send me and my siblings through school. My siblings and I were quite young then, and we had to pretty much run the house by ourselves at a time when we needed a parent’s guidance the most. Indeed, the movements of peoples that form the

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<sup>3</sup> See Neferti Tadiar’s *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economics and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* for a discussion of post-Martial Law Philippine’s government infrastructure program.

radically changed “ethnoscape”<sup>4</sup> that Arjun Appadurai refers to (48) is lived reality for me as well as millions of other Filipinos.

In the United States, about three million Filipino overseas workers are based, many of them working as domestic workers and caregivers. As an international student here in the US, I observe a similar spatial ordering—public spaces dedicated to consumption activities, gated residential areas for the wealthy, and the exclusion of those who cannot afford to participate in these spaces.

How do Filipino American fiction writers represent the immigrant Filipino workers’ experience in the US of this reordering of space within the context of neoliberal globalization? How do these literary writers portray the way Filipino immigrant workers negotiate the US urban spaces’ Disneyfied terrain, and how such experiences impact their understanding of themselves, life, and affiliation? This dissertation seeks to answer these questions.

### Methodology

Why use literary texts to approach this phenomenon of neoliberal globalization and Filipino diaspora? What is it that a literary analysis of contemporary novels might add to the scholarly conversation on globalization and diaspora, which disciplines like sociology, economics, or political science are not able to provide?

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<sup>4</sup> “Ethnoscape” is Appadurai’s neologism to refer to the phenomenon of global movements of people (tourists, business executives, artists, migrant workers, refugees, etc.) and of the diverse forms of identities and communities they create (whether actual, virtual, or imaginary) wherever they go. Appadurai identifies “ethnoscape” as among the defining characteristics of contemporary globalization. The other characteristics he identifies refer to global flows in technology (“technoscape”), capital (financescape), media and communications (“mediascape”), and political ideologies (“ideoscapes”).

In the Philippine literary tradition, the social aspect of literary texts has very deep and strong roots. Through the centuries of colonial history, both under Spain and the United States, Philippine literature, in vernacular, Spanish, and English has been an important means of expression of social and political dissent. The novel especially, with the seminal role of the national hero Jose Rizal's late nineteenth-century novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* in the Philippine struggle for independence against Spain, has a strong tradition of social orientation, an orientation that continues in contemporary Filipino and Filipino American novels.

Moreover, as the American urban studies scholar Betsy Klimasmith reminds us, the novel has had a long history of analyzing urban spaces. Nineteenth century industrialization in Europe and in the US brought about social upheavals and re-ordering of urban space, and people attempted to make sense of the possible impact of such changes on their subjectivity and their concept of community. It was in this context, Klimasmith writes that "the novel emerged as the textual form that could creatively and critically explore the complexities that arose as city, home, and self converged. During the nineteenth century, the novel became a testing ground for examining relationships between urban spaces and the development of an unsettled and unsettling modern subjectivity" (5). She traces the development of the novel into the next century and its relation to the social sciences, highlighting what literature has to offer to studies of urban and suburban space:

By the early twentieth century, the social sciences, particularly geography and sociology, would contend for primacy in analyzing urban landscapes. Nineteenth-century novelists had several things that these social scientists

did not: a long tradition, an established language, and a range of prior narratives to draw on as they attempted to articulate what inhabiting city landscapes would mean to individuals and communities, as well as how urban settings would shape notions of individualism and community. (5-6)

My approach draws on and hopefully contributes to this literary tradition of analyzing the urban and suburban space by bringing into focus literary representations of the interrelationship between spatiality and the processes of neoliberal globalization. This dissertation studies five contemporary Filipino American novels: *Dogeaters* (published in 1990) and *Dream Jungle* (2003) by Jessica Hagedorn, *Fixer Chao* (2001) by Han Ong, *American Son* (2001) by Brian Ascalon Roley, and *One Tribe* (2006) by Evelina Galang. I selected these novels because they foreground the aspect of neoliberal globalization and diaspora in their narration. I also wanted to focus on Filipino American novels that dealt with the contemporary experience of Filipino immigrants in the US. I decided, however, to include Hagedorn's two Philippine novels set in the 1970s because they tell the story of neoliberal globalization's beginnings in the Philippines, which is crucial in explaining the phenomenon of contemporary Filipino diaspora to the US.

My objective in analyzing these novels is to examine how Filipino American novelists creatively render contemporary experiences of globalization and diaspora in the US. Specifically, I analyze these novelists' literary representation of Disneyfication, which is a distinctly American neoliberal global capitalist formation. I focus on the novels' imaginative depiction of the main dimensions of Disneyfication: the use of spectacle in the re-ordering of space, the dedication of these spaces for consumption activities, and the deployment of surveillance and exclusionary tactics to make spaces

safe for consumerism. In my analysis I study the interplay between the literary and the literal in the novels' portrayal of contemporary re-ordering of space and their impact on the laboring immigrants' subjectivity. I look at the novelists' use of literary elements—setting, characterization, plot, symbolism, irony—and the way these writers experiment with these elements and with the very form of the novel—in rendering real or imagined urban and suburban spaces. I pay attention especially to literary depictions of space, subjectivity, and community not as stable and unified entities but as crisscrossed by and in constant negotiation with global social, economic, and political forces.

#### Globalization and Neoliberalism

In this study I define neoliberalism as a political-economic theory that is based on strong private property rights and free market capitalism. According to this theory, the market proceeds according to its own dynamic; it is self-regulative and self-corrective. The government's role is to set up the supportive framework and structures (e.g. guarantee the value of the currency, provide peace and order), but should otherwise not interfere in the operations of the market.

According to David Harvey, the rise of neoliberalism was a reaction to the global economic doldrums of the late 1960s and early 1970s supposedly caused by an over regularized economy. U.S. and British neoliberals blamed the economic slowdown to government interference, the powerful labor unions and spending on social welfare—the basic features of Keynesian economics, set up after WWII to avoid the recurrence of the Great Economic Depression that hit economies worldwide in the 1920s. Harvey points out that it was not only Ronald Reagan's United States and Margaret Thatcher's Britain



that became the centers of this turn to neoliberalism, but also China under Deng Xiaoping.

It is this political-economic theory that undergirds late twentieth century globalization. The deregulation of national economies and the removal of barriers to free trade, and the development of information and communication technologies, has enabled a radical shift in the primary mode of production from Fordist to post-Fordist production, characterized by flexibility in organization, global distribution of sites of production, and the ability to operate as one unit in real time. Multinational companies have created a global network, supported by financial and other production services that have agglomerated in certain specific nodes—the global cities.<sup>5</sup> This economic globalization has enabled the creation of unparalleled wealth in human history.

Advocates of neoliberalism claim that the new wealth created by globalization ultimately trickles down to all peoples of the world, enabling those who have not enjoyed material wealth to participate in its creation and enjoyment. Thomas Friedman, for example, points to the spectacular economic growth of India and China, as well as other East Asian countries, as proof of neoliberal globalization's success. Neoliberals claim, too, that with nations engaged in free trade, there will be less need to engage in war, thus creating an era of peace that Francis Fukuyama trumpets as the “end of history” (6).

Studies by several sociologists and economists, however, contradict the claims of neoliberalism. Instead of equitable distribution of wealth, neoliberal globalization has redistributed wealth to the elite, pushed the middle class to poverty, and exacerbated the

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<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of the rise of global cities, see Saskia Sassen's *Global Cities* and Manuel Castell's *The Rise of the Network Society*.

sufferings of the poor. Stiglitz has exposed the devastation caused by the imposition of free trade on countries all over the world—from Latin America, to Africa, to Asia and Eastern Europe. International institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have become global enforcers of neoliberalism, imposing generic neoliberal solutions that only worsened the global economic crises. The deregulation of financial policies and the removal of trade barriers ravaged the economies of poor countries, vulnerable to the free and speedy movements of capital in and out of their economies, and unable to compete with heavily subsidized Western industries. Saskia Sassen has documented, too, the wide gulf between the new elite—highly skilled providers of global production services, e.g. financial analysts, corporate managers, technology experts—and the low-skilled and unskilled labor that comprise the vast majority in the so-called global cities, the financial nodes of globalization. Andrew Ross's recent study on China's unparalleled economic growth due to globalization shows its costs: widespread unrest among laborers and extensive ecological damage to China. According to Ross, the greatest threat China's growth offers is not military-industrial expansion but its capacity to control the norm of conduct--the level of labor wages, working conditions, and labor organizations—within the global economy as a whole. China is the gaping hole in the global network of labor unions, NGOs, and movement activists.

What is often left out in accounts of neoliberal global capitalism among Leftist sociologists and economists, like Harvey and Ross, is the ascendancy of the role of culture in society. George Yudice shows in *Expediency of Culture* how in recent decades societies have turned increasingly to cultural activities to reduce social conflicts and to

solicit funding (1). Several Disneyfication scholars, most notable among them Sharon Zukin, have studied the way Disney, Inc. and its imitators have exploited culture to create multi-million-dollar service industries. She writes: “Fredric Jameson is wrong about postmodern landscape of visual consumption. Disney world suggests that architecture is important, not because it is a symbol of capitalism, but because it is the capital of symbolism” (232). Contrary to traditional Marxist accounts of culture as mere superstructure, within neoliberal globalization, culture and the elements of its production—art, performance, even emotions<sup>6</sup>—have become major sources of finance and political power.

My reading of literary texts as literature follows Zukin’s view of this dynamic dialectic between culture and the economic structure (in contrast to the view of culture as mere superstructure). Literary texts as cultural production both reflect and influence economic arrangements. The contemporary Filipino American novels I selected foreground the narration of experiences of contemporary globalization, and such experiences are represented through the writers’ experimentation with the elements and form of the narrative. For example the use of motif of fragmentation in Han Ong’s *Fixer Chao* dramatizes not only fragmentation in the subjectivity of the immigrant Filipino protagonist, but also reflects the hypercompartmentalization in post-Fordist production. In Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*, the use of postmodernist narrative techniques such as the montage reflects Harvey’s “compression of time and space,” recreating the dizzying shifts in the understanding of the nature of work, subjectivity, and affiliations brought

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<sup>6</sup> For a study of the commodification of affect, see Jeffrey Santa Ana’s “Commodity Race and Emotion: The Racial Commercialization of Human Feeling in Corporate Consumerism.”

about by neoliberal globalization. The use of the epistolary form in Brian Ascalon Roley's *American Son* and the dramatization of Filipino tradition practiced by a Filipino immigrant community in Evelina Galang's *One Tribe* highlight diasporic modes of surveillance and discipline, reflecting the global network of neoliberal global capitalism. But by rendering the personal and social costs of these dizzying shifts in the nature of work, understanding of self and community, these novels too can shape readers' responses to neoliberal globalization.

#### Filipino American Scholarship on Globalization and Diaspora

Several Filipino American historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have studied the impact of globalization and diaspora on Filipino migrant workers, especially in the United States. These scholars focused on these phenomena's impact on Filipino American families, especially on women. The ethnographer Yen Le Espiritu examines the Filipino immigrant family's experience of confronting "US domestic racism and global racial order" (2), which is connected to their experience of US neocolonialism in the Philippines. She argues that Filipino immigrant families bring with them to the US native traditions and practices that help them deal with the challenges of diaspora, but some of which also reinforce gender oppression. The sociologist Rhacel Parrenas in her groundbreaking study *Servants of Globalization* compares and contrasts the experience of Filipino women domestic workers in Italy and in the US. She finds out that despite the surface differences, both share what she calls the defining feature of the migrant life: "dislocation" caused by the experience of "quasi-citizenship" in both the host and home countries, pain of separation from families, contradictions of class mobility, and non-belonging even within the Filipino migrant community. The sociologist Catherine

Ceniza Choy traces the history of the diaspora of Filipina nurses especially in the US, and she shows how Filipino American history is inextricably enmeshed with the story of US colonialism and neocolonialism. While most other studies on the migration of Filipino nurses focus on the economics, i.e. the pay differential between the Philippines and abroad, Choy brings in the role of a “culture of migration” in the Philippines. Choy also emphasizes the agency of the Filipino nurses (in contrast to the dominant depiction as objects or victims) within their very complex transactions (which include contemporary manifestations of racism and chauvinism) with American recruiters, hospital administrators, and fellow nurses.

More recent studies complicate and contribute to the scholarship by bringing in the hitherto overlooked aspect of queer sexuality, as well as the perspective of Filipinos in the Philippines. Martin Manalansan IV critiques the heteronormative bias in many of the previous studies on Filipino immigrants. He argues that sexuality is an important factor in the migration process, e.g., how the nation state, complicit with global capitalism, “unhomes” queers by pushing them to migrate only to be caught in the racism or hostility of the host country. Manalansan also points to the innovative ways queer migrants have constructed “non-normative family formations and hybrid cultural arrangements” (“Queer Intersections,” 236). Neferti Tadiar in *Fantasy-Production* interrogates the gendered hierarchical neoliberal capitalist fantasy of a “model Asian-Pacific family” (46) where the US and Japan are father and mother respectively, and where the Philippines is configured as mistress and prostitute. Tadiar examines the consequences of such a fantasy to different aspects of post-authoritarian Philippines, including a critical analysis of “fly-overs” (elevated highways constructed by the

government throughout Metro Manila) as both representation and means of production of neoliberal global capitalism (85). In a later book *Things Fall Away*, Tadiar studies the impact of neoliberal global capitalism especially on Filipino laborers, especially women, in the Philippines through an analysis of contemporary Tagalog “feminist, urban protest, and revolutionary literatures” (5), which Tadiar treats as “ethnographic material” and “theoretical resource” (18). Robyn Rodriguez in *Migrants for Export* exposes the role played by the Philippine government in the massive Filipino diaspora: as “labor broker.” “Labor brokerage,” according to Rodriguez, “is a neoliberal strategy . . . through which the Philippines state mobilizes its citizens and sends them abroad to work for employers throughout the world while generating a ‘profit’ from the remittances” sent by the migrant workers to their families back home. Rodriguez argues that the Philippine government’s practice of labor brokering, quoting a Filipino activist, is simply a legalized form of human trafficking (“Introduction,” x).

This body of Filipino American sociological studies on neoliberal global capitalism cited above offers a perspective taken for granted by dominant Western scholarship. Filipino and Filipino American scholars bring into the discussion the overlooked perspective of Filipinos in the Philippines and in the US in their experience of globalization, especially their “varied, creative . . . subjective practices” (Tadiar, *Things Fall Away*, 9) in dealing with global capitalism. Writing from the “peripheral” position of the Philippines vis-à-vis the Euro-American center, Tadiar argues, “brings into focus the liminal makings of globalization, its endgame, and its after life” and highlights the experiences and hopes of “those relegated to the global undersides” (9). A similar argument can be made for the significance of Filipino American scholarship on Filipinos

living in the US. Such a subaltern perspective makes this body of scholarship on globalization and diaspora important to other marginalized groups in the US as well.

The studies cited above focus on historical, economic, and social processes; however, none of them (with the exception of Tadiar, though she focuses on one specific form of infrastructure, the fly-overs of Metro Manila), pay attention to the aspect of spatiality, i.e. the role space plays in these historical, economic, and social processes. My dissertation aims to contribute to the scholarship on Filipino and Filipino American experience of neoliberal globalization by examining literary representations of spatiality, specifically in the form of Disneyfication as a distinctively spatial production of American neoliberal capitalism. Moreover, this dissertation brings into globalization and diaspora scholarship the insights coming from a literary analysis of contemporary Filipino American novels. The cultural work that these literary texts do is to capture the disturbances in the nature of work and understanding of the self and the world caused by contemporary globalization, and to reflect back to their readers their personal and social costs. At the same time, among the objectives of this dissertation is to contribute to Filipino American literary scholarship the perspective of globalization and diaspora studies, specifically Disneyfication studies.

Filipino American literary scholarship in the past three decades has been dominated by the framework of postcolonialism. The present state of the field is a far cry from the 1970s when Oscar Penaranda et al, asked to write an introduction to Filipino American literature, declared its non-existence: “We cannot write any literary background because there isn’t any. No history. No published literature. No nothing” (xlix). This invisibility, not just of Filipino American literature but of Filipino American

themselves, within mainstream USA is a theme that would be repeated in many Filipino American writings. Eric Gamalinda, writing in 1996, comments:

Many Filipino Americans still regard their own culture as inferior (that is, compared to America's), which further reinforces the Filipino's invisibility. It is no wonder that second- and third-generations of Filipino Americans feel they are neither here nor there, perambulating between a culture that alienates them and a culture they know nothing about, or are ashamed of. (3)

Filipino American literary and cultural scholars in the 1990s, notable among them Oscar Campomanes, would explain this "invisibility" in terms of a postcolonial framework. It is not that Filipino American literature is non-existent, Campomanes argues. Its so-called invisibility, rather, is a function of the parochialism of the dominant multiculturalist ideology of Asian American studies that "glosses over much of US Filipino writing that is largely diasporic/ exilic and postcolonialist in cast and oriented towards 'Philippine' locales and reference points" (78). Allan Punzalan Isaac extends postcolonialism to argue for a solidarity and alliance among former colonies of the United States (the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico) by articulating a language based on common sufferings brought on by imperialism. Dylan Rodriguez pushes to its logical conclusion postcolonialism's critique of white supremacy, arguing for the impossibility of the "Filipino American" subject within a rabidly genocidal mainstream white America.

Few Filipino American literary scholars have attempted to use a globalization framework in their analysis. Eleanor Ty uses the frame of globalization and diaspora in her discussion of Han Ong's *Fixer Chao* and Brian Ascalon Roley's *American Son* to



expose the negative impact of consumerism on Filipino American youth. She identifies the materialism and the resentment it engenders among Filipino American working class families as the cause of violence among Filipino American youth gangs. Jeffrey Santa Ana in his essay “Feeling Ancestral” argues that the expression of negative emotions (“shame, melancholia, anger”) dominant in Filipino American writings, as well as in other Asian American cultural productions, performs the cultural task of critiquing neoliberal global capitalism’s construction and commoditization of a post-racial “global subjectivity.” Santa Ana explains that these negative emotions are rooted in “feeling ancestral,” an affirmation that race and ethnicity matter “in an era of transnational capital—an era in which race supposedly no longer matters, according to the neoliberal logic of personal responsibility and privatization” (458). Published recently is Martin Joseph Ponce’s *Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading*, which studies a wide range of transpacific Filipino literary texts that “foreground the politics of queer diaspora reading” (27). Ponce’s project is the use of literary analysis to “illuminate the connections, correspondences, and continuities as well as the dissensions, divergences, and disagreements structuring the articulation of Filipino” (21).

This dissertation contributes to Filipino American literary scholarship on globalization and diaspora, focusing on neoliberal global capitalism’s production of space, specifically in Disneyfication. It attempts to complement the dominant Filipino American literary postcolonial scholarship with a literary analysis that pays attention not only to historical and sociological processes but also to spatial processes, in particular to the phenomenon of Disneyfication as a material formation of US neoliberal global capitalism. This dissertation puts into conversation disciplines that don’t normally overlap:

postcolonialism, globalization studies, urban studies, as well as Philippine and American studies. What an analysis of contemporary Filipino American novels contributes is the way these novels capture the impact of these historical, sociological, and spatial processes and reflect to their readers their social and personal costs.

### Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One discusses the concept of Disneyfication--with its three dimensions of spectacle, consumerism, and spatial control--as a dominant principle in the management of present-day urban and suburban spaces across the United States. The chapter traces the roots of Disneyfication to the World's Fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I argue that although scholars have pointed to the 1896 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1939 New York World's Fair as important influences to the Disney theme parks, what has been occluded is the imperialist aspect of such world fairs, an aspect that is more prominent in the 1904 St. Louis Exposition that featured the Philippines, a new territory acquired by the US, through a large exhibit highlighting Filipino tribal people. This imperialist legacy is imbricated in the Disney theme parks, with its nativist and anti-poor tendencies. Such bias underpin the strategies and principles of Disneyfication that has dominated the US urban landscape beginning in the 1970s.

Chapter Two analyzes the Filipino American writer Jessica Hagedorn's two novels on the Philippines' Martial Law period (1970s-80s), *Dogeaters* (published in 1990) and *Dream Jungle* (published in 2003), in terms of their narration of the Marcos dictatorship's appropriation of the principles and strategies of Disneyfication. I focus specifically on Hagedorn's literary rendering of the regime's use of spectacle to attract

foreign capital and to cover over the regime's corruption, exploitation of, and violence against its own people. I will show how Hagedorn imaginatively dramatizes the Marcos regime's "fantasy-production" as a participation in the ideology and material practices of the US-dominated Western neoliberal globalization. I argue that Hagedorn's novels dramatize in both content and form the Marcoses' instrumentalization of spectacle—in the regime's use of display, architecture, communications media—to rationalize Martial Law and gain the complicity of the Filipino people in the regime's massive corruption. At the same time, Hagedorn imaginatively portrays how ordinary Filipino people used traditional practices such as *chismis* (gossip) and rumor to question the master narrative underlying the regime's use of spectacle. Hagedorn's depiction of the specific form of fantasy-production in Marcos-era Philippines is significant because it highlights the impact of neoliberal globalization on the Filipino people, especially the phenomenon of contemporary Filipino diaspora, particularly to the US.

Chapter Three focuses on Han Ong's *Fixer Chao* (published in 2001) as a critique, from the point of view of a Filipino immigrant laborer, of the culture of conspicuous consumption in New York City at the turn of the twenty-first century, the height of neoliberal global capitalism in the United States. Ong narrates the impact of New York's gentrification on immigrant laborers who are excluded from sharing in the prosperity, and are allowed in only as menial service workers. *Fixer Chao* problematizes New York City's ethos resulting from the neoliberal global capitalism's "commoditization of everything" (David Harvey's formulation) that renders other people (in particular Asian ethnic minorities) as commodity, mere "conduit to pleasure, to

comfort, to the filling of a need” (261). Ultimately Ong questions the Filipino immigrants’ complicity with such ethos that defines a “better life” in consumerist terms.

Chapter Four analyzes the Filipino American experience of control and surveillance in Disneyfied urban and suburban spaces, as depicted in two contemporary Filipino American novels, Brian Ascalon Roley’s *American Son* (published in 2001) and Evelina Galang’s *One Tribe* (published in 2005). Roley’s novel tells the story of a mixed-race working class Filipino American family struggling to survive in the midst of Los Angeles conspicuous consumption, while Galang’s work narrates the experiences of a Filipino American community in Tidewater, Virginia Beach, navigating the contradictions of US multiculturalism. An analysis of the two novels shows the range and extent of the mechanisms of exclusion and containment targeted at ethnic minority low wage workers, specifically working-class Filipino Americans. I argue that Roley’s and Galang’s novels highlight a Filipino American perspective coming from a history of US colonialism and neocolonialism. Such a perspective illuminates the ways this colonial history is imbricated in and interacts with contemporary mechanisms of control and surveillance. In both works, Filipino American women bear the brunt of exclusionary and disciplinary tactics of Disneyfied America, especially within their own Filipino American families and communities. In *American Son*, the immigrant Filipina low wage earner is abjected by and disavowed by her son in order for him to claim membership among white middle-class Americans. In *One Tribe*, the young Filipino American women are objectified and commodified by the community in its attempt to purchase an “entrance ticket” to Disneyfied America.

## Chapter One: A Brief Cultural History of Disneyfication

The literary scholars Kamari Clarke and Deborah Thomas have shown that the phenomenon of contemporary globalization cannot be fully understood without the knowledge of the history of colonialism and neocolonialism. Globalization, they point out, run on grooves etched by the history of colonialism, and the various contemporary configurations of racialization are deeply rooted in the history of colonial racism. Building on Clarke's and Thomas' insight into this link between contemporary globalization and colonialism, I argue in this chapter that Disneyfication--a material spatialized formation of American neoliberal global capitalism--cannot be fully grasped without a knowledge of its provenance in the world's fairs, a nineteenth century and early twentieth century colonialist material formation. Several Disneyfication studies have noted the strong influence of the US world's fairs, specifically the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1939 New York's World's Fair, on the Disney theme parks. These studies (specially by Nelson and by Weinstein) detail the four kinds of attraction featured in the two world's fairs that the Disney theme parks would bring together and develop to perfection: "amusement parks and rides, stage-set representations of vernacular architecture, state-of-the art technology, and a special construction of the ideal urban community" (Zukin, "Disney World," 225). In addition, scholars like Sharon Zukin, point to shared themes among the world's fairs (particularly in the 1939 World's Fair) with the Disney worlds: the linking together of progress and consumerism and the perfectibility of US cities toward a painless utopia (227). What has not been fully examined—and what this chapter aims to contribute to the scholarship on

Disneyfication studies—are the colonial roots of Disneyfication and in what ways the colonialist ideology manifests itself in contemporary material and spatialized formations. Such a discussion is important given the growing dominance of the influence of Disneyfication in the US and abroad. There is need to be critical of the ideology of US supremacism, articulated through progress and consumerism with their accompanying racialized exclusionary tendencies, that undergird Disneyfication as material formation of US neoliberal global capitalism.

### Disneyfication and the World's Fairs

The strategies and principles of urban space management operative in the Disney theme parks and becoming more dominant in the US and abroad can be better understood by studying the theme parks' cultural history, specially their provenance in the US world's fairs held in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Scholars have shown the world's fairs' influences on the Disney theme parks (as well as the older amusement parks, e.g. Coney Island<sup>7</sup>) in terms of physical lay-out as well as the kind of amusement they offered. According to Steve Nelson, the Columbian Exposition was the first world's fair to be in a “unified environment constructed from scratch on a previously undeveloped site” (107). The vast area (633-acre lakeshore site), carefully landscaped—complete “with canals, bridges, fountains, promenades, reflecting pools, statues”—to highlight the more than two hundred “stark-white” neo-classical cavernous pavilions, comprise a fantastical “White City” (109-110). Also, the Columbian Exposition was the first world's fair to include an entertainment area, the

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<sup>7</sup> Several scholars have pointed out that despite Walt Disney's avowed disdain for Coney Island, which he had visited with his daughters, the amusement park had deeply influenced Disneyland (Weinsten 132).

Midway Plaisance,<sup>8</sup> “a mile-long corridor of concessions, games, sideshows, shops, restaurants, and theaters,” which attracted more people than the “educational and artistic exhibitions” (Weinstein 134).

The 1939 New York Fair would up the ante of the lavishness of the pavilions and exhibits. The Fair was “gargantuan,” located in a “1200-acre site. . . fashioned from a smelly marsh in Queens in the largest land reclamation project yet undertaken in the eastern United States” (Nelson 120). Organized around the theme, “A Happier Way of American Living Through a Recognition of the Interdependence of Man and the Building of a Better World of Tomorrow with the Tools of Today,” the exhibits featured fantastic mechanized props, such as the talking convertible and the “Milking Merry Go-Round.” Amusements included a “life-sized 3000-pound mechanical elephant” (Nelson 123).

But the similarities between the two US world’s fairs and the Disney theme parks go beyond the physical layout and use of mechanical exhibits and amusements. First, all three share a worldview or ideology of American exceptionalism: America as superior to all other nations, as pinnacle of modernity and progress, as embodiment of perfectibility (Findlay 132). Several scholars point out that the world’s fairs in the US, much more than those held in other countries, are focused on the “self-promotion” of the host country. Nelson argues that these fairs are preeminently “manifestations of national pride and American global preeminence” (106). Likewise, as scholars like Raymond Weinstein have shown, Walt Disney meant his theme parks to concretize the “essence of America” (150), to be the “embodiment of [his] . . . prepossession toward America’s most

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<sup>8</sup> The Ferris Wheel, designed to rival the Eiffel Tower, was the centerpiece of the Midway. 264 feet high, with a capacity of 2160 passengers, the Ferris Wheel was said to be the source of the Fair’s success (Weinstein 134-135).

important beliefs, values, ideals, and symbols” (151). This “essence of America” represents a way of life that the rest of the world envies and wants to be a part of (Zukin). Writing specifically about Disney World’s EPCOT, Findlay notes that like the US world’s fairs, the EPCOT World Showcase is meant not so much to foster intercultural understanding, but “to bolster and champion American attitudes and ethics” (142). That Disney succeeded can be gleaned from the fact that many Americans see the theme parks “as national shrines and living museums of American history” (Weinstein 154), and that many people around the world consider the Disney theme parks as “synonymous with America” (Mills 2).

Second, the world’s fairs and the Disney worlds share a corporate character. The world’s fairs’ representation of America as pinnacle of civilization and embodiment of perfectibility is concretized through the advanced technology put on display by participating US corporations. Nelson notes that the 1893 Exposition’s “mechanical displays were a jumble of odd devices that celebrated technology for its own sake” and “because . . . the corporations who paid for and occupied major pavilions wanted to promote their products, manufactured items soon took center stage” (107). Most popular among these exhibits are kinetic, belt-driven mechanisms, that, Nelson points out, “paved the way for the computer graphics and elaborate robotic presentations of EPCOT” (111). Likewise, Zukin describes the 1939 World’s Fairs as a blend of “progress and consumerism,” a characteristic that it shares, Zukin points out, with the Disney worlds (Zukin, “Disney World” 227). Examples of the corporate exhibits include the Ford pavilion that featured a closed course through which visitors could drive new Fords while enjoying scenic views of the Fair (“anticipating the drive-through rides



of today's theme parks," according to Nelson) and Chrysler's " 'Talking Plymouth,' a loquacious convertible that answered visitor questions, waved its windshield wipers at passersby, and read the serial numbers from dollar bills in people's pockets" (Nelson 123).

This motif of the link between progress and consumerism characterizes, too, the Disney theme parks. Weinstein notes that the "[f]uturistic rides and attraction presented in Tomorrowland, based on state-of-the-art technology, underscore both Disney's optimistic view of the world and America's basic belief in progress, pragmatism, applied science, and materialism" (Weinstein 152). One must not forget that Disney primarily is a corporation catering to "mass leisure consumption" (Zukin, "Disney World" 219):

[this kind of entertainment] relied upon the centralization of economic power typical of modern society. Consumption at Disneyland was part of a service-sector complex relating automobiles and airplanes, highways, standardized hotels, movies, and television. Furthermore, the social production of Disneyland related a major corporate presence—the Disney Company—to entertainment 'creation,' real estate development and construction, and product franchising. In all these senses, Disneyland suggested the social and economic potential of liminality in the modern society (?)

Steve Mills speaks of Disney as a post-Fordist , post modernist capitalism. In contrast to the Fordist model of assembly line production, the Disney theme parks is a synergy of multimedia involving a service-sector complex that upends the linear model of Fordist production, and instead offers a cultural capitalism that commodifies everything. Disney

therefore as a globalized, multi media, multi service-sector complex shows how in contemporary society, the cultural and the economic are integrally intertwined, i.e., the cultural is no longer superstructure to the economic base, but where culture is precisely capital.

Third, the world's fairs and the Disney worlds share similar ways of looking at people of other cultures and ethnicities. Steve Nelson argues that both the fairs and the Disney theme parks treat the exhibition of other cultures as sideshows and foil to US preeminence and modernity. He specifically points out that the EPCOT World Showcase, like the world's fairs, portrayed "America firmly astride the world with lesser nations around to provide visual relief, cheap labor, and vacation opportunities" (132). "The goal," Findlay says, "is to make the world appear both comprehensible and entertaining" (145). Other cultures are presented as less technologically advanced compared to the US, and as such, belong to the past—quaint and exotic—and commoditized as entertainment for the American middle class (Findlay 142). "The World Showcase [at EPCOT] is an unabashed derivative of the Midway villages at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, with its attempts to condense world cultures into easily recognizable cuisines, behaviors, costumes, and architectural styles" (Nelson 128).

#### The 1904 St. Louis Exposition and the Disney Theme Parks

This treatment of non-Western cultures as sideshows should not be surprising, given the inextricable link of the history of the world's fairs with imperialism. According to the historian Paul Kramer, there has been a long tradition of European countries putting colonies on display in expositions, beginning with the 1851 Great Exhibition at London, which featured an Indian exhibit. In the 1880s, there were expositions almost

exclusively meant to showcase colonial possessions, such as the 1883 Colonial Exposition at Amsterdam (*Blood of Government*, 238-239). In the US, it was this European colonial tradition that was tapped in the 1904 St. Louis Exposition when the fair organizers decided to include a display of the newly acquired US territories, namely Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Kramer comments that in the exposition, “the new territories and their progress [were presented as] the story of the nation’s own advancement across successive frontiers and through evolutionary time” (Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 253).

Focusing on the Philippine exhibit, Kramer narrates how the exposition commissioners deliberately assigned the Filipinos to an isolated section among the woods away from the neoclassical pavilions housing the industry and fine arts exhibits, and even away from the agricultural, forestry, and horticultural exhibits. The exposition organizers saw the need “to keep Filipinos in the ‘natural’ environment from which they had incompletely emerged,” and, Kramer comments, by placing the Philippine exhibit at a considerable distance from the rest of the fair, delineates the Philippines, in its savagery, as “a place unlike other places, including the US” (Kramer 252).

The American colonial government had meant the Philippine exhibit to showcase to the American people the “progress” the US occupation had benevolently given to the Filipinos, putting “emphasis on [the] Philippines as a modern zone of production and, to a lesser extent, consumption and on Filipinos as laborers and consumers” (Kramer 241). The other main objective of the colonial government was “to expose the collaborating elites to an impressive, intimidating vision of American power” (Kramer 247). Filipinos were still waging war against the American colonial government in the Philippines, and

the government had hoped to impress and instill awe among the participating Filipino elites. Kramer writes that William Taft, then Governor of the colony, had hoped that

just as [the exhibit] would put the Philippines on display before American eyes, the exposition would unfold the United States before its new Filipino subjects, providing them an intimidating vision of its benevolent might and reconciling them to its colonial rule. In this sense, he was acknowledging the need to persuade Filipinos to recognize US power.

(Kramer 238)

The ordinary American fair-goer, however, only saw the exhibit of Filipinos as no different from “the display of ‘savage’ peoples [that] had become a staple of anthropological displays at Euro-American expositions” (Kramer 248). The exhibit drew many American visitors who came away with the image of Filipinos as half-naked dog-eating savages, a racist image that has remained among many Americans even up to today. The popularity of the exhibit prodded a fair reporter to write that the “display of ‘exotic’ peoples came dangerously close to the midway, whose rank commercialism tended to make such collections of people merely a popular show, and to allow the exhibit to generate into a money-making scheme” (Kramer 264).

Interaction of some white female Americans with Filipino Scouts who were part of the Philippine exhibit led to a melee involving about 200 people when white male Americans violently attacked the Filipinos for supposedly transgressing the color line (Kramer 278).

Ultimately, the exhibit

rather than convey the commission’s intended message of an evolving Philippines beneath America’s uplifting influence, the photographs [of

Filipinos displayed in the exhibit] had unintentionally stoked a racist anti-imperialism. ‘I have often heard it remarked in Congress,’ [an adviser to Taft] wrote, ‘that from the looks of the people in these photographs we ought not to bother much with the Philippines.’” (Kramer 265).

When the historians of the Disney, therefore, point to the theme parks’ provenance in the US world fairs but limit the discussion to the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago and the 1939 New York World’s Fair and exclude the 1904 St. Louis Exhibition that featured the US new territories, the historians elide the imperialist legacy that is subtly imbricated in the Disney theme parks.

#### Walt Disney’s Nativism

When Walt Disney idealizes the Main Street of the turn-of-the century small towns—described in Disneyland’s press release as “Walt’s and anyone else’s home town—the way it should have been” (cited in Lipsitz 189)—it is a nativist town that he models it after. “Main Street USA,” according to Zukin, is based on Disney’s memory of his hometown, Marceline, Missouri, before the advent of World War I (“Disney World,” 222). Biographers of Disney tell us that he did not have a happy childhood, coming from an impoverished family with a father who drifted from one job to another to failed business ventures. By transforming the Main Street of his childhood to Disneyland’s Main Street USA, Disney engages in a highly selective, overly simplified version of history that, according to one of Disneyland’s planners or “imagineers,” erases “all the negative, unwanted elements and program[s] in the positive elements” (cited in Zukin, “Disney World,” 222). Part of what is erased or oversimplified in the idealized vision of Main Street is the history of nativism and racism among the turn of the century

townspeople. Main Street USA erases all forms of conflicts—only “positive elements” are programmed in, as the imagineer explains—and the “negative, unwanted elements” not allowed in even in the original turn of the century Main Streets included the immigrant agricultural laborers, mostly Filipinos and Mexicans, as well as African Americans.

According to William Graebner, Disneyland represents the “collective dream” that idealizes the 1950s as “the last ‘good’ decade: an innocent, peaceful, and secure time”:

all of Disneyland was fantasyland, an imaginary world of universal experience where poverty didn’t exist, where slavery had never happened, and where no work was ever really done. Like the postwar suburbs, which generally excluded blacks and other minorities, Disneyland was designed not for all families, but for those—mostly white and middle-class—that could afford the admission charge and desired the isolating experience that the park provided. And in the shops on Main Street, park patrons lined Walt Disney’s pockets and did what in the fifties seemed very much an act of benevolence: They consumed. (Headnote to Lipsitz 179-180).

George Lipsitz enumerates instances of racism in Disneyland, as well as in Walt Disney himself. One Disneyland restaurant had an “an ‘Aunt Jemima,’ theme echoing the vicious ‘Mammy’ stereotypes of black women invariably as fat, nurturing, child-like, and totally devoted to their white masters.” Lipsitz points out, too, that “for years the jungle cruise encountered a ‘humorous trapped safari,’ which depicted ‘four red-capped

porters, all blacks, who cling bug-eyed to a tree with their white client above them as a menacing rhinoceros stands below” (192).

Walt Disney’s business practices were influenced too by his personal prejudices. Lipsitz charges that Disney “never employed African-Americans as studio technicians, and did not allow them to work in Disneyland in *any* capacity until pressured to do so in 1963 by civil rights protests.” His anti-Semitism was well-known, too, among those who worked around him (192). Lipsitz comments:

Disney tried to cloak himself in the American flag and to appropriate for his own purposes the patriotism of his customers. Yet his version of the national narrative was highly selective, prejudiced, and distorted. If his amusement park united its customers in a shared fantasy, it was one tailored to the economic and social interests of a small group of people and not one reflective of the larger shared experience of unity and disunity out of which the complex American nation and society have been forged. (192).

Disneyland, constructed in the 1950s, reflected the dominant ideologies of the time. Its idealization of the turn of the century Main Street is an affirmation of the conservatism and consumerism of the 1950s, a “repon[se] to the lasting significance of social upheaval during the Great Depression” (Zukin 221). Thus, as Lipsitz notes, “unlike the real town squares of turn-of-the-century small towns, Disneyland’s Main Street offered little space for leisure and none for work . . . Main Street’s real social life depended on shopping, on funneling (as rapidly as possible) enormous numbers of consumers into a ‘comfortable’ environment for making purchases” (199).

But just as the 1950s Disneyland idealized the turn of the century, projecting onto Main Street its conservative ideology, so can we interpret the spectacular popularity of the contemporary Disney worlds, beginning in the 1970s—with the political turmoil, the defeat in the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, the Oil Crisis, etc.—as symptomatic of a desire to return to America of the 1950s, represented by Disneyland, idealized as “the last ‘good’ decade: an innocent, affluent, peaceful, and secure time” (Graebner’s headnote to Lipsitz, 179). But Disneyland did not only reflect its time, but also its space. Located in Anaheim, “Disneyland’s emergence corresponded with the increasing suburbanization of Los Angeles . . . . The park provided an alternative to the heterogeneous public spaces of the city, and it powerfully projected its image of middle-class suburban consumer culture as a norm to which other groups should aspire” (Lipsitz 190). What we have in the Disney worlds today and in Disnification is an “abstract[ion of] the desire for security from the vernacular and project[ing] it into a coherent landscape of corporate power” (Zukin, “Disney World,” 232). Zukin argues a correction to the Marxist cultural critic Fredric Jameson: “Jameson is wrong about postmodern landscape of visual consumption. Disney world suggests that architecture is important, not because it is a symbol of capitalism, but because it is the capital of symbolism” (“Disney World,” 232). What Zukin proposes here is a necessary complement to David Harvey’s depiction of the postmodern, i.e. post-Fordist, economy. Whereas culture, in Harvey’s depiction, remains a superstructure with the economy as base, the success of the Disney worlds shows how culture, in the postmodern world, no longer is merely derivative but has become constitutive of capital. Spectacle then is no longer mere



manifestation or reflection of an underlying economy, but itself becomes the source of economic power.

### The Disney Theme Parks' Financial Success

Today, the Disney company is the world's largest multimedia entertainment corporation in terms of revenue (Siklos), operating in the segments of studio entertainment, cable and television networks, theme parks, consumer products, and interactive media. Among these segments, however, the theme parks have been one of the largest sources of revenue, and in these years of economic recession, have "accounted for the most notable shift" to positive growth in profit for the company (Barnes).

The success of Disney's theme parks, specifically Disneyland and Disney World, has made them models of management of public spaces for business companies and government and non-government entities. Diane Ghirardo in *Architecture after Modernism*, points out that "the approach to public space, work space, and urbanism embodied in Disneyland and its successors came to appeal both to developers and architects as a standard against which to assess buildings and public spaces" (46 [cited in Eeckhout 404]). Disneyland's influences can be seen across the urban centers of the United States; city governments directly sought the Disney company's involvement in the development of public spaces (e.g. the gentrification of Times Square and the redesign of Seattle's civic center), and many different developers copied the "apparent successes of the Disney method" (Warren 231). The influences of Disneyland can be seen in "urban festival marketplaces and shopping malls, museum displays, ski resorts, and planned residential communities" (Zukin, *Cultures* 55). A journalist commented that the Disney Company has become "America's urban laboratory" (Ball cited in Zukin, *Cultures* 55),

and several scholars have pointed to the growing dominance of the principles of the Disney theme parks in urban planning in the US and abroad (Bryman, *Disneyization* 1).

### Dimensions of Disneyfication

The Disney company's approach to the management of public space is characterized by three main dimensions that trace their provenance in the world: its use of "visual culture, spatial control and private management" (Zukin, *Cultures* 54). The first dimension, the use of "visual culture," refers to the use of a "fictive narrative of social identity—not a real history, but a collective image of what modern people are and should be" (55). Although most people associate the Disneyland and Disney World images with "fantasy of escape and entertainment," Zukin argues that they really are a "tightly structured discourse about society," a narrative that embodies a "collective fantasy of American society . . . that represent[s] an image of America that foreigners want to visit . . . a way of life that others want to join" (51). Bryman uses the term "theming," which he defines as "clothing institutions in a narrative that is largely unrelated to the institution or object to which it is applied, such as a casino or restaurant with a Wild West narrative" (*Disneyization* 2). Bryman's definition, however, makes it appear like one can use any arbitrary "theme" or narrative for an institution or location. I argue though that the "visual culture," theme or narrative associated with Disneyfication is intrinsically bound with American global capitalism with its ideology of consumption and a "national public culture based on aestheticizing differences and controlling fear" (Zukin 49). Much like the US worlds' fairs, spatial arrangements, architecture, displays, and signage constitute spectacles of power that point to the global supremacy of

American culture and technology, and determine who are allowed to participate and who are to be excluded in such spaces.

The second dimension, “private management,” refers to the corporation’s almost full sovereignty within its domain given by the local governments, making it an area of “private government” (Bryman, *Worlds* 115). Bryman comments that the Disney worlds comprise a “social order that is controlled by an all-powerful organization” (*Disneyization* 9). In the case of Disney World, the formation of Reedy Creek Improvement District allows the Disney company to construct buildings without building permits from the local county and without having to pay impact fees that are usually charged to land developers. In exchange, Disney World generates substantial earnings for the local counties from taxes (Bryman, *Worlds* 117). Walt Disney explained the “rationale for the special treatment” of his company:

We must have the flexibility in Disney World to keep pace with tomorrow’s world. We must have the freedom to work in co-operation with American industry, and to make decisions based on standards of performance.

If we have this kind of freedom, I’m confident we can create a world showcase for American enterprise that will bring new industry to the State of Florida from all over the country. (116)

The “flexibility” and “freedom” that Walt Disney highlights are necessary for the corporation to fulfill its main objective: consumption. Bryman writes: “Disneyization is about consumption . . . in particular, increasing the inclination to consume, is Disneyization’s driving force” (*Disneyization* 4). Apropos is the directive to the Disney

staff that Michael Eisner, former CEO of the Disney company, gave: “Success tends to make you forget what made you successful . . . We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective” (cited in Wasko 28).

Disneyfied spaces are dedicated to hyperconsumption, based on an ideology of materialism as progress and modernity. The US world’s fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, as spectacles of imperialist power, were ultimately founded on the same ideology of materialism and acquisitiveness cloaked in the rhetoric of the white man’s burden and civilizing mission.

The third dimension, “spatial control” is used as a means to reinforce both the theme or narrative, and the culture of consumption within the public space Zukin explains that Disney World, achieves this control through its landscape that

creates a public culture of civility and security that recalls a world long left behind. There are no guns here, no homeless people, no illegal drink or drugs. Without installing a visibly repressive political authority, Disney World imposes order on unruly, heterogeneous populations—tourist hordes and the work force that cater to them—and makes them grateful to be there, waiting for a ride. Learning from Disney World promises to make social diversity less threatening and public space more secure. (52)

Gatekeeping -- making sure the “right sort” of people come into the theme parks-- is an important aspect of spatial control, achieved primarily by charging high entrance fees and transportation expenses. Reports show that seventy-five percent of adult visitors to the Disney theme parks are “professionals, technical personnel, or managers, with

only 2 percent representing laborers.” Among the visitors, only three percent are black and two percent Hispanic (Wasko 162-163). These demographics make it obvious that the “right sort” of people for the Disney worlds are white middle-class families. In fact, Fjellman observes that the Disneyland and Disney World are “the major [white] middle-class pilgrimage center in the United States” (cited in Wasko 163).

Another key component in Disney’s spatial control is its utilization of the service industry, emphasizing “control over its labor force and their interaction with consumers” (55). The Disney company puts heavy importance on “contact with the customer,” with the employee “responsible for managing impressions more than for doing anything real” (70). The Disney World employees “produce *emotive* labor” (70; italics are Zukin’s):

Those in the front regions, in direct contact with customers, are often entertainers—actors or musicians who are glad of the chance to put on a costume and perform. Together with waiters and some retail sales clerks, these employees interpret and exemplify the consumption experience. They “act out” rather than merely sell a product. They are hired because they bring to the job some cultural capital that they have developed outside the work relation. Their ability to simulate empathy with customers is similar to that of successful salespersons in clothing stores: the saleswoman who exemplifies “the look,” the salesman—often gay—who develops ‘the perspective’ on a wardrobe. (70).

Within this symbolic economy, those placed in the “front regions in direct contact with customers” are “European” employees, due mainly, according to Disney World, to “language requirements.” “Minority” employees are often placed in the “back” regions,

in charge of “low-status tasks of maintenance, security and food preparation” (74-75).

There is an “internal stratification” among the Disney employees, and according to Zukin, the status disparities is “one of the crucial social issues” this model has to grapple with (75). But this is in keeping with the Disney narrative of the ideal American society as basically white middle class, reproducing “the safe, socially homogeneous space of the 1950s, within acceptable limits of aesthetic diversity” (64).

### Conclusion

A study of Disneyfication’s cultural history allows us to understand the phenomenon and the cultural, economic, and political assumptions that underlay Disneyfication’s principles and strategies. Bringing into the scholarship on Disneyfication its roots in the history of colonialist tradition of the world fairs enables us to interrogate its visual culture based on a narrative of US global predominance, its conflation of quality of life with commoditization and consumption, and its strategies of exclusion and surveillance. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has proposed the concentration camp as paradigm for contemporary society (181); I argue that Disneyfication studies can offer a necessary complement to Agamben—the Disney theme park as one of the forms that this postmodern “concentration camp” takes in the context of US neoliberal global capitalism. Disneyfication then can be seen as a distinctly American formation of Foucauldian biopolitical power, a management of population that ensures the highest quality of life for its members, but creates a “caesura” for all others.

Stacy Warren’s study of how the citizens of Seattle succeeded in resisting the Disneyfication of its public square counter Disneyfication advocates’ claim of its inevitability. The Occupy Movement’s symbolic taking back of public spaces in its

resistance against corporate dominance, is an act of counter Disneyfication as well.

Ultimately, Disneyfication studies can contribute to spatial justice, the taking back of public spaces from corporate control and transforming them into genuinely democratic spaces.

## Chapter Two: Hagedorn and the Marcoses' Disneyfication of the Philippines

Jack Lindquist, former president of Disneyland, narrates in his memoir, *In Service to the Mouse*, a meeting with Imelda Marcos at the Malacanang Palace in the late 1960s. Lindquist traveled from the US to propose to the Marcos government a Philippine Pavilion in the World Showcase at EPCOT. Imelda, who had been to Disneyland with her husband fifteen years before and had met Walt Disney himself, was impressed with the Disney design for the pavilion, which would present the history and culture of the Philippines, as well as include a Filipino restaurant and a large space for selling Philippine merchandise. But when told of the \$9.6 million the Philippine government had to shell out for the construction and operation of the pavilion, Imelda derisively laughed. She scoffed, "Nine million dollars is an astronomical figure for us. If I had that much money, I would not spend it on a pavilion in Florida to try to attract more tourists to Manila. I would use it to build sanitation facilities and schools and such for my people." Imelda then gave a long tearful monologue on how much she loved her people. Before Lindquist left her office, Imelda reminded him that unless Disney funded the pavilion, there would not be any Philippine participation in the World Showcase. Looking back to that meeting, Lindquist wryly comments in his memoir that Imelda must have had in her mind all the shoes she could buy with that money.

Interestingly, although Imelda Marcos turned down the Disney proposal, several years after the meeting with Lindquist she would build a Philippine village theme park similar to the proposed EPCOT pavilion, and, more significantly, she and her husband, the dictator Ferdinand, would appropriate principles and strategies pioneered by the



Disney theme parks, not only in their attempt to transform the Philippines into a tourist destination, but more importantly to gain consent from the Filipino people for its Martial Law regime. Just as the Disney theme parks were built based on a narrative that embodied a “collective fantasy of American society” expressed through a unified “visual culture” (Zukin, *Cultures of Cities* 51), the Marcoses would specifically use this strategy of “visual culture” or spectacle in its attempt to transform the Philippines, specifically Manila, into a cosmopolitan center of culture and arts, as part of an overarching nationalist narrative of modernization.

Filipino American writer Jessica Hagedorn narrates the story of the Disneyfication of the Philippines under the Martial Law Regime in the 1970s and 1980s in her novels *Dogeaters* (published in 1990) and *Dream Jungle* (published in 2003). *Dogeaters* dramatizes the impact on different sectors of Manila society of the Marcoses’ ambitious development and redevelopment of Manila, while *Dream Jungle* depicts the government’s ventures in ethnic and film tourism in other parts of the country and their impact on the lives of the local people and communities. This chapter examines Hagedorn’s literary representation of the re-ordering of space by the Marcos dictatorship, focusing on the Marcoses’ use of spectacle to attract foreign capital and to gain the Filipino citizenry’s assent to its “New Society” ideology of Filipino modernity. I argue that Hagedorn’s fictionalized rendering of the Marcos government’s use of spectacle exposes what the spectacle was supposed to cover over: the regime’s complicity in the exploitation of and use of violence against its own people in the service of the US-dominated neoliberal global capitalist order.

Using postmodernist literary techniques, Hagedorn in *Dog eaters* and *Dream Jungle* constructs a montage representing both what the Marcos regime sought to make visible through Disneyfied spectacle and what the regime, in tacit complicity with the US, sought to hide: its massive corruption and human rights abuses. Reading *Dog eaters* alongside *Dream Jungle* allows a deeper understanding of the processes of neoliberal global capitalism; *Dream Jungle* provides context, a wider view to *Dog eaters*'s depiction of the Marcoses' attempts at transforming Manila into a spectacle of Filipino modernity. Disneyfied Manila is revealed as a spectacle meant to cover over the exploitation of the whole country and the use of military violence to stifle dissent. Reading the two novels together clarifies the relationship between the Philippine hinterlands and the global city that Manila has become: Manila as spectacle is built on the exploitation of the rest of the country. That is, the economic wealth siphoned from the hinterlands pay for the government's white elephant projects; at the same time, the violence of the politico-military regime makes possible the transformation of the hinterlands into spectacles to benefit the Marcos cronies and their international corporate partners.

This study builds on Stephen Hong Sohn's work, "From Disco to Jungle: Circuitous Queer Patronage and Sex Tourism in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dog eaters*," wherein he argues that "the Marcos-era queer culture in the Philippines . . . was inextricably associated with the postcolonial nation-state's modernization imperative" (339). Sohn shows how the novel "problematically link[s] queer sexuality with the corruption of a Marcos-era economic policy" (317), complicating previous scholarship on the insurgent queer body in *Dog eaters* (e.g. Viet Nguyen's "Queer Bodies and Subaltern Spectators"). I will attempt to show that a key instrument in the Marcos regime's strategy in co-opting

“Marcos-era queer culture” (as Sohn discusses in his essay), as well as other sectors of Filipino society, in particular, Filipino service workers, was its use of Disney Corporations’s strategy of spectacle in public spaces in Manila and other places in the Philippines. Much of the previous scholarship on *Dogeaters* has used a postcolonial frame to examine the aspects of gender, hybridity, language, and, especially for queer identities. Many of these have focused on the agency and subversive potential of each of these aspects.

*Dream Jungle*, however, has not received as much scholarly attention, and undeservedly so. Perhaps the most substantive commentary on the novel comes from the Filipino cultural critic Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez, in her essay on ethnic tourism in the Philippines. Gonzalez contextualizes *Dream Jungle*’s dramatization of the Western attraction to the Philippine jungle and to the primitivism—at once both savage and innocent—this jungle represents within the history of US colonialism of the Philippines and within contemporary global neoliberal economic policies that includes tourism as a developmental strategy (167). She specifically references Hagedorn’s two Philippine novels as “demonstrat[ing] how different technologies and discourses of display, violence, and empire worked to produce the Philippines and Filipinos for global consumption as laborers and commodities” (144). Gonzalez, however, accuses Hagedorn of complicity in exoticizing and commodifying Filipino ethnicity for Western consumption. But I argue that such criticism misreads Hagedorn’s project of turning on its head the racial slur on Filipinos as primitive and savage dogeaters.

What has been left out of the discussion of both novels—and what would bring to the fore Hagedorn’s insightful critique of neoliberal global capitalism—is an examination

of the aspect of spatiality and its influence on the social processes within such aestheticized spaces. Specifically, I use the frame of Disneyfication studies to interrogate how the Philippine martial law regime, as depicted in Hagedorn's novels, appropriated the strategy of spectacle not only to attract tourists but also to gain the assent and even complicity of the citizenry. The Marcos dictatorship actively promoted through a unified architectural landscape and control of communications and mass media a spectacle of modern Filipino national identity that, as cultural scholar Neferti Tadiar critiques, was implicated in the fantasy-production of neoliberal global capitalism. Although couched in nationalist and patriotic spectacle, the Marcoses' appropriation of Disneyfication is ultimately oriented toward a participation in the fantasy of globalization based on western, specifically American modernity as representing "a way of life that . . . [the rest of the world] want to join," an "image of what modern people are and should be" (Zukin 51; 55).

#### Fantasy-Production and the Philippine Martial Law Regime

The link between the Disney theme parks and the Marcos' attempt to reinvent the Philippines went deeper than similar strategies: Both participated in a wider "fantasy production"<sup>9</sup> of neoliberal global capitalism, with its narrative of progress and modernity based on consumerism. Disneyfication is a specific American form of this neoliberal fantasy-production, and its appropriation by the Philippine nation-state to attract foreign

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<sup>9</sup> The term "fantasy production" is used by the noted Filipino American sociologist Neferti Tadiar to refer to "an imaginary framework that subsists within actual material practice." Tadiar explains: "Fantasy is . . . not 'thought divorced from projects and actions.' Rather 'it is belief which is radically exterior, embodied in the practical effective procedure of people" (*Fantasy-Production*, 9). Tadiar's concept of "fantasy-production" is closely related to Disneyfication's use of symbolic narrative; the main distinction would be that Tadiar's concept refers to a wider, general fantasy of neoliberal global capitalism, while Disneyfication is a specific formation of American global capitalism.

capital and to cover over its corruption and use of violence against its own people, shows not only the US dominance of the global economy in this period, but also the connection between contemporary globalization and the history of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines.

The Filipino American scholar Neferti Tadiar, in *Fantasy-Production*, examines the ways by which “the Philippine nation participates in the dreamwork of the Free World” (32). Employing Slavoj Žižek’s concept of ideology as “an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality,” wherein fantasy is not “thought divorced from projects and actions,” but “belief which is radically exterior, embodied in the practical, effective procedure of people” (9), Tadiar shows how particular government and non-government material (including the infrastructural) and cultural productions in the Philippines are enmeshed in the Western fantasy of “development” and modernity. Specifically, Tadiar points to “Filipino aspiration to be incorporated into the scene of American desire,” but shows, too, how the Philippines “serves ‘the American dream,’ both as a productive colony and an absent presence in the US imaginary” (27). Citing Lauren Berlant’s description of the fantasy of the American Dream as “a popular form of political optimism [which] fuses private fortune with that of the nation . . . promis[ing] that if you invest your energies in work and family-making, the nation will secure the broader social and economic conditions in which your labor can give value and your life can be lived with dignity” (Berlant cited in Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production*, 27), Tadiar argues that

[t]he Philippines has served this US fantasy to the extent that its labour, its natural and social resources, its territory and its symbolic presence,

together with those of other US colonies and territories, have served to guarantee precisely those social and economic conditions promised by America. (27)

Tadiar, in *Fantasy-Production*, focuses on post-Martial Law Philippines in her analysis of the Philippine nation-state's participation in this dreamwork (for example, her astute discussion of the President Fidel Ramos's administration's infrastructural project of constructing "fly-overs" as expression of neoliberal desire for "unhampered flows" [88]). This chapter applies Tadiar's concept of "fantasy-production" in reading the spectacle of Manila's aestheticized spaces during the Marcos regime as portrayed in Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* and *Dream Jungle*.

Why focus on the Martial Law regime? The Marcos years represent a watershed moment in the history of neoliberalization in the Philippines. Although the Philippines, after its nominal independence from the US at the end of World War II, continued to be strongly influenced politically, culturally, and economically by its former colonial master, the Martial Law years would see an even more radical reorientation of the Philippine economy to the US-dominated global economy of the 1970s and 1980s. David Harvey, in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, points to this same period as the beginning of the global dominance of neoliberalism, and it is no accident that at the height of this neoliberal ideology that espoused "freedom" and "democracy," the US government, especially under the Reagan administration, supported and even created military dictatorial regimes, ostensibly as part of Cold War politics, that assured "free market" access to United States corporations. The extent of the Philippine Martial Law regime's incorporation into the US-dominated neoliberal globalization can be gauged as

well in the unwavering personal loyalties between Pres. Reagan and Pres. Marcos, with Reagan supporting Marcos even after the People Power Revolution in 1986 ousted the dictator.

Neferti Tadiar, in a later work *Things Fall Away*, points to the martial law years as the period of “state-directed turning over of the national economy to export-oriented industrialization and tourism, which meant . . . turning the national body—its people, its resources—over to multinational capital dominated by the US” (26). The economy’s “turning over” to neoliberal global capitalism meant sacrificing the welfare of the Filipino industrial workers by cutting wages and benefits to below minimum standards and by abrogating their right to organize, to attract foreign investors to especially designated “export processing zones.” While engaging in a “rush to the bottom” competition for foreign manufacturing businesses, the Marcos regime at the same time exploited the service industry in its bid to attract foreign capital through tourism, on the surface promoting cultural tourism, but underneath peddling the more lucrative sexual tourism. Tadiar points to

the massive growth of prostitution that had taken place since the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1972 and that had consequently earned Manila the reputation of being the sex capital of the world. . . . During this period, between three hundred thousand and five hundred thousand prostituted women were working in the areas surrounding the U.S. bases, impelling one US soldier to remark, “Pussy, that’s what the Philippines is all about.” (25)

She argues that “the figure of the prostitute [became] the paradigmatic figure of the crisis of Philippine culture to the extent that the national economy drives its people to the same kind of living” (26). Prostitution, for Tadiar, becomes not merely the “central metaphor” for the national economy’s reorientation toward neoliberal globalization, but also the government’s actual practice in promoting sex tourism.

Tadiar’s use of the metaphor of prostitution to tell the story of the radical “turning over of the national economy to neoliberalization” during the Martial Law years aligns the labor of prostitution with that of “manufacturing and other export-led industries ” (29), focusing on bodily or manual labor. However, her use of prostitution as metaphor is limited in that it fails to give sufficient emphasis to the transformation of the idea of labor in the context of neoliberal globalization. The growing dominance of post-Fordist mode of production with its emphasis on labor as “service,” is highlighted in Hagedorn’s literary representation of the way the Marcos regime exploited culture, as well as “emotive” or “performative” labor in the service sector, in its attempt to sell the Philippines as “tropical paradise” and playground to moneyed tourists.

I argue in this chapter that Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* and *Dream Jungle* exposes the Marcos military government’s appropriation of this key principle in Disneyfication, that of the use of the spectacle of a unified narrative or theme in its “visual culture,” not only to attract international tourists, but also to rationalize its regime to the world, specifically the corporate world and capital lending institutions, and to its own people, specifically to gain their consent and complicity. According to Luis Francia, in *A History of the Philippines*, the Marcoses created a narrative of the Philippine “New Society,” a counterpart to Eisenhower’s “the Great Society,” which is at bottom a narrative of



Philippine modernization with its regime as the pinnacle of Philippine history (231).

A key component of this narrative or theme is the portrayal of President Marcos and his wife Imelda as the Father and Mother of this new Philippine society, a motif played out in the Marcoses' mythologizing themselves as Malakas (Strength) and Maganda (Beauty), in Filipino folktales the first Filipino man and woman who come out of a bamboo, whole and perfect, in a commissioned painting displayed in the Malacanang Palace (Rafael, "Patronage" 122). That the Marcos couple took seriously the creation and popularization of such narratives can be seen in the several books, films, and art work they commissioned. The grandiose edifices built during this period are expressions, externalization of this narratology. It is important to note though that despite the nationalist trappings of this "visual culture" of Marcos-style Disneyfication, the teleology of modernization it is founded on participates in the fantasy of US-dominated Western neoliberalism. Quite telling is the way the Marcoses, despite their nationalist rhetoric, "fashioned themselves after the Kennedys," according to Hagedorn in an interview. She notes that President Marcos and Mrs. Marcos "sold themselves as our Camelot, our hope. They were young, they were smart, and they were good-looking. The masses—the upper class and middle-class—everyone sort of bought into their glossy image" (Collins 1223). The narrative behind the spectacle the Marcoses' employed was syncretic and multilayered. Filipino modernity is necessarily imbricated in American, as well as the larger Western, neoliberal ideology of progress based on consumerism—the underpinning ideology of Disneyfication.

Behind the Disneyfied spectacle, however, were rampant corruption and human rights violations. Government projects funded by international corporations and by the

World Bank became cash cows for the Marcoses and their cronies (Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 242). It is estimated that throughout his regime, Marcos stole between \$5 billion to \$10 billion from the national treasury (Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 265). The human rights abuses were even more egregious. At the onset of Martial Law, the Marcos regime arrested 30,000, most of them peacefully protesting the military rule, took over radio and television stations, and muzzled the independent press (Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 239). Amnesty International reported that four years into the martial law regime, the government “held at least 6,000 political prisoners, with torture a routine method of interrogating political dissidents . . . [and] [f]emale detainees . . . often sexually molested or raped” (Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 239). A human rights group, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, documented from 1973 to 1985 a total of 2,255 extrajudicial killings, with “334 disappearances between 1977 and 1983, where no corpse was ever found” (Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 239).

#### I. Manila as Spectacle of Filipino Modernity in Hagedorn’s *Dog eaters*

Considered the doyenne of contemporary Filipino American literary writers, Hagedorn has written a significant body of works in different genres (poetry, short stories, novels plays) exploring the Filipino and Filipino American experience of globalization and diaspora in the United States and in the Philippines. But it is her first novel, *Dog eaters*, set in the martial law years of the Philippines, that has attracted the most critical and popular attention. *Dog eaters* recreates the Philippines of the 1970s and

1980s, using postmodern narrative techniques<sup>10</sup> of “fragmented time lines” and “multiple narrators” (Nguyen 126) that depict Manila’s unique “milieu” of “outrageous blend of Spanish elitism and elegance gone seedy, American flash and decadence, and Third World desperation and brazenness” (Evangelista 41-42). In my literary analysis of *Dogeaters* I show that Hagedorn employs these narrative techniques of montage and multiple voices to put into relief the depiction of the regime’s use of spectacle alongside the rendering of events and people the regime excluded or covered-up. On the one hand, Hagedorn’s novel represents the network of spectacle (a unified architecture of megalomaniac edifices; radio, television, and film productions; an international beauty contest and film festival) to define an exclusive safe space in Manila for the local elite and international consumers. On the other hand, the novel undermines the regime’s illusory Disneyfied spaces by interweaving a counter network of the dispossessed and the exploited; torture victims and a beauty queen turned rebel; slums and a guerilla camp. *Dogeaters* then fictionalizes Manila as space crisscrossed by multiple contending energies and forces populated by multiple protagonists whose subjectivities and bodies are no less shot through by multiple forces of sexual, cultural, economic, and political, desires. Hagedorn’s project is to turn on its head the US racist stereotype of Filipinos as savage dog eaters--a racist stereotype that has entered the US popular imaginary through

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<sup>10</sup> Hagedorn’s use of postmodern techniques has been criticized by Epifanio San Juan as a sell-out to the Western “multiculturati” (5) and by Nguyen as a “participat[ion] in postmodernism’s tendency to avoid historical complexity and depth” (127). But several scholars like Savitri Ashok and Maria Zamora have shown that Hagedorn’s aesthetics is essential in dramatizing “the novel’s central concern with the politics of representation” (Zamora 89), specifically paying attention to the “marginalized multitudes erases or merely glossed over in [nationalist] abstractions” (Ashok 5).

the 1904 St. Louis Exposition—by rendering the US neoliberal global capitalists as top dog in Manila’s dog-eat-dog world.

The novel opens with a literal spectacle, an American movie being screened in “Manila’s ‘Foremost! First-Run! English Movies only!’ theater” (3). The movie, *All That Heaven Allows*, nostalgically features a “perfect picture-book American tableau . . . Hollywood’s version of a typical rural Christmas” (3), peopled by characters in cashmere cardigans and scarfs, driving American cars (6). The Hollywood movie representing America and its way of life functions in Hagedorn’s novel as the overarching spectacle, the main source and object of desire, towards which the novel’s characters—consciously or subconsciously--and movement of the novel are oriented. Rio Gonzaga, a young girl from an upper-class Filipino family, one of the novel’s narrators, finds herself in the US by the end of the novel; Joey, a male prostitute, son of an African American service man stationed in the US navy base in the Philippines and whose teenaged mother drowned herself, longs for America and his American father he has never met; Lolita Luna, sexy actress, kept mistress of one of Marcos’s trusted generals, constantly dreams of Los Angeles and New York “to indulge in her passion for shopping” and where she can escape her controlling lover (171); the desire for America by Trinidad Gamboa, a saleslady at a department store, and her boyfriend Romeo Rosales, a waiter at a sports club, is mediated by their obsession with imported signature clothes and other commodities. The giant theater screen featuring the spectacle of America thus functions as horizon and *telos* for the whole novel.

Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* is divided into two main parts, and the first part is entitled “Coconut Palace,” alluding to an actual palatial residence called the Coconut Palace, one

of the First Lady's pet projects, made almost entirely of different parts of the coconut tree in combination with rare and expensive marble, shells and corals. According to Gerard Lico, a Filipino architect, the Coconut Palace, designed to evoke traditional Filipino architecture shows the Marcos government's obsession "about identity in the built form as this was translated in Philippine kitsch, a vague evocation of the vernacular, and profuse utilization of Filipino motifs" (119). The building cost an astronomical thirty-seven million pesos (6 million dollars), the money diverted from a national fund supposed to support poor Filipino coconut farmers (Lico 119). In her novel, Hagedorn uses the Coconut Palace as a metaphor for the Philippines under Martial Law—and she knows Filipino readers would call to mind the historical edifice—with the government's excesses and corruption and the poverty of the people. The chapters in the first part of the novel feature a Marcos crony billionaire monopolist and several opportunistic middle-class Filipinos "who always [knew] which side [was] winning" (8). Interspersed with these chapters are those narrated by working-class Filipinos—an ordinary sales lady employed at a high end department store; her boyfriend, a waiter at an exclusive sports club frequented by the rich and powerful; and a young Filipino-African American, abandoned son of a US navy serviceman, working as a male prostitute.

Although the Coconut Palace is only referred to metaphorically in the first part of the book, an aestheticized space that Hagedorn describes and prominently features is that of SPORTEX, an elegant high-end department store catering to the Filipino elite and international tourists. SPORTEX is a thinly veiled reference to the glitzy Rustan's department store, owned by the Tantoco family who were cronies of President Marcos, which carried the latest and most expensive international name brands. Mrs. Marcos

reportedly used the department store as her personal closet, having the whole store closed whenever she wanted to do her shopping. Interestingly, the façade of the department store's main branch in Makati City, the financial center of Metro Manila, resembled the monolithic design of Mrs. Marcos's Cultural Center, imposing and intimidating to ordinary Filipinos who could not afford to enter its doors. A commercial version of the First Lady's cultural center, Rustan's showcased commodities that supposedly represented "world class" Filipino products (mostly native handicrafts), but profited mainly from purveying expensive Western signature products. The department store, in other words, was a space of spectacle for the version of modernity that the Marcoses and their cronies were selling to their people and to international tourists.

In the novel, the department store is owned by the family of tycoon Severo Alacran, a monopoly capitalist who controls the coconut industry, manufacturing, and the national mass media. Personally managed by Mrs. Alacran, the SPORTEX department store is the Alacran family corporation's flagship of cosmopolitan glamor and expensive good taste with its "air-conditioning, escalators, displays of imported merchandise, and innocuous, piped-in Muzak" (159). To match the store's "image of austere elegance," employees are required to wear "crisp black and white uniforms and polished black shoes" without "any jewelry except watches" and are expected to be constantly on their toes keeping their counters "spic and span" and waiting on foreign clients (159-160).

Within Hagedorn's fictionalized mapping out of Manila, this high-end department store belongs to the network of spectacles constructed by the Marcos military regime in cahoots with the US-dominated neoliberal global capitalist order. The department store as spectacle of luxurious Western commodities purveys the ideology of Western culture

as modernity and progress. In the novel, another node in this network of spectacles is the exclusive Monte Vista Golf and Country Club frequented by the business, political and military elite as well as foreign dignitaries. This aestheticized space for recreation and entertainment is depicted as a hub where different powerful forces and interests intersect, loop together, and branch off in new directions.

A thinly veiled reference to the Wac-wac Golf and Country Club frequented by the Marcos cronies, Monte Vista is the place to be seen and to see the powerful and wealthy (61); where the business, artistic, political, and military elites, as well as foreign dignitaries hobnob together; where business deals and political machinations are hatched. The club, of course is exclusive, and the only poor people allowed in are those employed by the club or nannies of the rich families. Nannies are required to “dress in . . . spotless white uniform and matching white plastic slippers,” their conspicuous white uniforms serving both as status symbol for their employers and as means of control (a reminder for the nanny of her low position, as well as for others to identify her easily and prevent her from accessing spaces that are off-limits to non-elites (a sign in bold letters by the pool says: “NO YAYAS ALLOWED TO SWIM”) (61).

Within these spaces of spectacle, armies of service workers—most of them from the low and lower-middle classes of Metro Manila—make possible the daily operation of such spaces. Featured among the multiple voices of *Dogeaters* are two such service workers: Trinidad Gamboa, a plain-looking saleslady at SPORTEX and her handsome, much younger boyfriend, Romeo Rosales, a waiter at the sports and country club, both of them from working class families in the province. They belong to the masses of Filipinos from the provinces and hinterlands who migrated to Manila in the 1970s and

1980s in search of jobs and, for some of them, refuge from the militarization of the hinterlands. They parallel, during this time of the country's radical economic reorientation towards neoliberal capitalism, the movement of raw materials from the hinterlands onto the urban centers, and from there shipped to supply the needs of global centers. *Dogeaters*' depiction of the conflation goods and people (Appadurai's concept of "ethnoscape") within neoliberal global capitalism ultimately highlights how migrant workers are regarded as no different from raw materials—consumable and disposable.

The novel however dramatizes at the same time the migrants' agency. Coming to the city represents for Trinidad and Romeo the chance to reinvent themselves. Appadurai speaks of the work of the imagination, of migrants reinventing their identity, of creating possibility within global capitalism. Hagedorn's novel, however, dramatizes the limitation of the extent of such imaginative agency—the spectacle of commercialization that neoliberal globalization purveys shapes the fantasies of ordinary people. In the novel's aestheticized dog-eat-dog world, material goods are conflated with happiness, flattening out the dimensions of life's meanings and purpose to acquiring commodities. Through the novel's leitmotif of the movie theater as well as other forms of mass media (radio and television), Hagedorn shows how the Filipino communications and entertainment industry is complicit with the regime's and the global neoliberal order's fantasy production in service of the dominant ideology. But by enflaming the desire for expensive material goods beyond the means of majority of ordinary Filipinos, the spectacle of conspicuous consumption becomes a strategy for recruiting service workers willing to accept exploitative terms in hopes of partaking of the spectacle.



Like proverbial moths drawn to the flame of an oil lamp in a Filipino folktale, both Trinidad and Romeo come to work in these spaces attracted by the spectacle and the way of life it represents. Both had been sent by their low middle-class families to Manila for college studies, expecting them to help the family financially after they finish their studies. But the lure of the big city has waylaid them: The homely looking Trinidad, obsessed by her fantasies of romance with handsome local movie actors, drops out of college to work as a movie theater ticket vendor, her way of imagining getting as close as possible to her matinee idols; Romeo Rosales neglects his studies, too, for his dream of becoming a movie celebrity, enamored with the flashy lifestyle of the rich and famous. Aptly, they meet in a movie theater, and their illusions bond them together—Trinidad, the fan, getting her idol, and Romeo, the frustrated celebrity, getting a devoted fan willing to spend on him. The two take advantage of each other, replicating the dog-eat-dog ethos of the global city.

Trinidad's job as saleslady at SPORTEX enables her not only to support her boyfriend's expensive taste but also to be in an environment that allows her to sustain her illusion. Trinidad does not have to pretend to appear enthusiastic before clients or her bosses because she "loves her work, holds dear the small prestige associated with being an Alacran employee" (160). For her, being associated in any way with one of the country's wealthiest families increases her worth and her job at SPORTEX keeps her in constant touch with the "amazing lives of the rich and their wives" (160). She revels in being surrounded by expensive commodities, and is happy to receive a "twenty-percent discount on 'all SPORTEX items purchased,'" affording her the illusion of being among the rich and famous. She works at keeping "spic and span" not only her counter, but also

her appearance by getting a “perm and manicure” (160). She’s enrolling in a “conversational Japanese” class “under Mrs. Alacran’s sponsorship, so she can sell more goods to the hordes of Japanese tourists who shop at SPORTEX” (160). Trinidad’s dream is to be “voted Miss Sportex” and get “a real Seiko as a prize for selling more than anyone else in the entire store” (161). Trinidad is the ideal service worker who actually believes and actively participates in the company’s, and, by extension, Disneyfied Manila’s ideology of consumption.

Trinidad maintains such enthusiasm despite “work[ing] long hours without any breaks, [not being] paid overtime, rush[ing] through her lunch in less than forty minutes. . . . [receiving a] meager salary,” and without “fringe benefits or medical insurance” (160). Service workers like her get below-minimum pay, without benefits or job security, and subjected to Mrs. Alacran’s infamous temper if they happen to cause her displeasure (160). Hagedorn’s description of the high-end store’s employees’ lounge as “dingy . . . located in the dark and dirty recesses of SPORTEX’s vast, subterranean basement,” underscores the low status and esteem the company accords its workers. The workers stay, kept on by promises of a pay raise if they make a big sale to Japanese tourists, with a chance at receiving a token Seiko watch “as a prize for selling more than anyone else in the entire store” (160).

Similarly, Trinidad’s boyfriend, Romeo Rosales, works in a space exclusive to local and international elite. A waiter at the Monte Vista Golf and Country Club, he sees the lifestyle of the wealthy and aspires to be one of them. His dream is to become a movie and television star, and he lives out his fantasy by wearing signature clothes he can barely afford with his meager salary. That is why, his relationship with Trinidad works

for him; he is not even attracted to Trinidad, but he hangs on to her because she can buy him discounted name brands at SPORTEX.

Romeo, however, finds it uncomfortable visiting Trinidad at the upscale department store. He feels the hostility of the salesclerks at SPORTEX: “The store never failed to make him feel poorer and shabbier than he actually was, especially when the salesclerks seemed to make a point of ignoring him the few times he ventured into the men’s department” (160). Romeo also soon finds that his dream of becoming a movie star is beyond him. Apparently lacking in talent, Romeo’s auditions lead nowhere. Even in his work place, his request for promotion is rebuffed by the club manager.

Standing outside SPORTEX to wait for Trinidad, Romeo is caught in a crossfire between the military and a fugitive. He is mistaken for the fugitive and summarily executed by the military. The last time we see him in the novel, Trinidad is wailing over the body of her dead boyfriend, his life snuffed out merely for being at the wrong time and place (168)--the disposable life of disposable people. Within *Dogeaters*’ depiction of a society created by an alliance between a corrupt military regime and the Western dominated neoliberal global capitalist order, ordinary peoples’ lives don’t count for much. Here Romeo’s life is taken in the name of preserving the state—the military uses him to cover up for the assassination of the opposition stalwart, Senator Avila.

In the second main part of the book, Hagedorn, alludes to another grandiose edifice—the Manila Film Palace--in a key chapter entitled “Paradise.” Hagedorn references the Parthenon-like film center that the First Lady constructed to house the Manila international film festival. Mrs. Marcos’ ambition was to transform Manila into an international film center to rival Cannes, host of the world’s most prestigious

international festival. The design of the building in imitation of the Greek Parthenon was Imelda Marcos' brainchild, and it exposes how, notwithstanding the regime's advocacy of Filipino identity through Manila's built cityscape, for the Marcoses' the epitome and standard for beauty remained Western. A façade of power, the building intimidates the ordinary people to assert the authority of the Martial Law regime. At the same time, the building is a subliminal argument, an evidence of the Marcoses' association with Western civilization, thus with modernity and progress.

In the novel, Hagedorn narrates how in the government's rush to finish the construction in time for the opening of the festival, the main scaffolding collapses and kills and buries workers in the wreckage. To make sure the building was ready for the opening day, the First Lady "orders the survivors to continue building; more cement is poured over dead bodies; they finish exactly three hours before the first foreign film is scheduled to be shown" (130). The horrific scene is based on an actual incident that the government tried to hush up. In Hagedorn's fictionalized version, the description of the international film palace and the narration of the death of the Filipino construction workers become an indictment of the Marcos regime's and that of neoliberal global capitalism's exploitation of Filipino laborers. The imagery is stark: the monstrous neoclassical building, a Temple in honor of western dominated globalization, literally consuming the bodies of laborers. In *Dogeaters*, the image of glitzy Metropolitan Manila literally built on the bodies of Filipino workers buried in quick-drying cement functions as a subterranean monument, an enduring critique of the national elite's collaboration with neoliberal global capitalism in victimizing Filipino workers. The imagery reveals, too, what Disneyfied Manila is built on and which the Marcos administration took pains

to hide from view. As another node in the novel's network of spectacles, the edifice dedicated to an international film festival—mainly of Western art movies—is used by Hagedorn to underscore her critique of neoliberal global capitalism's ideology of Western supremacy.

It is interesting though that the character in the novel who talks about the building is someone who has never set foot, and not likely to ever set foot in that building—the impoverished male prostitute mentioned earlier who grew up in Manila's slums. Joey Sand's point of view and attitude toward the Marcos edifice is that of the cynicism of the outsider, of the excluded. The only time he gains entrance into Manila's Disneyfied spaces--mainly five-star hotels—is when he is servicing wealthy Western gay tourists. For them, as a Filipino American critic Allan Issac wrote, Joey is an “eroticized commodity in the international tourist market. [He] becomes a fantastic commodity, in the form of a sexually available brown boy . . . . Potential clients are eager to consume [his] ‘othering’ markers” (160). But Joey, the critic continues, “recognizes that because of his difference, desire and bodies are commodities that he can possess [and] use and perform to create a prelapsarian fantasy” (161). As a service worker in a space of consumption, he renders emotive, imaginative and performative labor, often using his fantasy just to get it up for old Western men, with, as he describes “flesh hang[ing] loose like an elephant” (132). He may not care for sex with his clients, but what he gets off on are commodities. At the Hilton Hotel, after servicing a client, Joey tells him to dial room service. He narrates: “I am still naked. We both pretend not to notice how hard I'm getting. ‘Cheeseburger deluxe,’ I say, dreamily. “French fries with ketchup . . . Mango ice cream . . . and a Coke” (77).

Notice how the commodities Joey orders are mostly American fast food, even the ice cream, though the flavor is mango, is an American dessert. It does show globalization in the usual sense of US cultural imperialism in the Philippines. But Joey's desire for American commodities is also indicative of Joey's desire and longing for America itself. Joey fantasizes: "I'll hit the Jackpot with one of these guys. Leave town. I'll get lucky like Junior. Some foreign woman will sponsor me and take me to the States. Maybe she'll marry me. I'll get my green card. Wouldn't that be something?" (40). He keeps on hoping that a former American client who sent him a postcard from Las Vegas, would bring him to the U.S., but he knows it would never happen (148). For his Western clients, Joey is like a tropical paradise's natural wonders to visit and enjoy, to photograph but leave afterwards.

Through the twists and turns of the novel, near the end Joey is on the run, having accidentally witnessed, as he leaves the Intercontinental hotel, the murder of the opposition senator, the fictionalized version of the martyred Senator Benigno Aquino, commonly held to have been killed by the henchmen of Pres. Marcos. The military is after him, his foster father who raised him tries to sell him to the military, but he is able to elude them and through a friend gets in contact with members of the New People's Army. They bring him to the communist encampment in the mountains. Joey narrates that after a long hard and dangerous trek through the mountain's forests,

A clearing suddenly emerges out of the tangle of twisted vines, the most blades of leaves and prehistoric trees. There is a camp, a smoldering fire. A barefoot boy runs up to them. Joey stands still, frozen by the sea of faces turned toward him, wary yet curious, young men's faces. "Lydia!"

one of them calls out [to one of Joey's guides]. The woman embraces him, says something in greeting no one else can hear. The old guide squats by the fire. Lydia and the man look back at Joey . . . The barefoot boy offers water." (232)

The imagery is that of nature, of welcome and embraces, of hospitality and wholeness. In the final chapters, Joey at last finds a space where he heals, grows in social consciousness, and becomes a communist cadre.

Hagedorn proposes here an alternative space characterized by simplicity, sharing, and solidarity—a vision of the anti-city, of a just society—in direct contrast to the city's frenetic fragmentation and corruption--a dog-eat-dog world. It is telling that in Hagedorn's fiction, she omits the historical event of the 1986 People Power Revolution that led to the ouster of the Marcoses. What she dramatizes instead is a romanticized version of the communist guerilla's camp. In this alternative space, members of different sectors of Philippine society come together in solidarity, as portrayed in the developing relationship between Daisy Avila, daughter of the assassinated senator and a beauty queen turned rebel, and the former hustler now member of the communist cadre Joey sands. Unfortunately, Hagedorn's romanticized ending is not borne out in Philippine history. After the successful active nonviolent movement led by civil society ousted the Marcos government, the communist leadership would start a violent purge of its own ranks, suspicious of its members who wanted to go back to the city that supposedly was experiencing a new democracy under President Corazon Aquino.

## II. Selling the Philippines as Spectacle of Primitivism in Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle*

Fourteen years separate the publication of Hagedorn's two Philippine novels (in between, Hagedorn published in 1996 her second novel, *The Gangsters of Love*, about an immigrant Filipino family in San Francisco and Manhattan; in 1993, *Danger and Beauty*, and, in 1999, *Burning Heart*, collections of her work in various genre; and in 1993, *Charlie Chan is Dead*, an anthology of Asian American fiction). While in *Dogeaters* Hagedorn proposes a communist guerilla encampment in the Philippine jungle as a counter space to neoliberal global capitalism's Disneyfied Manila, it seems to me that in *Dream Jungle*, Hagedorn seems to indicate that there is no such space, that there is no outside to neoliberal global capitalism's Disneyfication of space. Indeed, recent urban studies have shown that the socio-economic-political processes within the urban space are the same processes operating in extra-urban spaces. In fact they argue that there is no space that is not influenced by these processes. This we see in Hagedorn's second Philippine novel, *Dream Jungle*. If *Dogeaters* focuses on telling the impact of neoliberal global capitalism on the hyper-urban space of Metro Manila, *Dream Jungle* allows the readers to see the impact of the same global processes on the extra-urban by bringing us to the hinterlands of the Philippines and shows the readers the inextricable connectedness of the so-called periphery and global center. The compression of time and space that David Harvey speaks of in describing the post-modern condition is illustrated in Hagedorn's *Dream Jungle* in the context of Martial Law Philippines in the 1970s and 1980s.

Hagedorn's novel apparently focuses on the thread of history and its repetition as evidenced in her use of excerpts from the sixteenth century documents of Antonio



Pigafetta, chronicler of Ferdinand Magellan's circumnavigation, specifically on the "discovery" of the Philippines, as comparative frame for her fictionalization of two controversial events that occurred during the Martial Law era. The first of these events is the supposed discovery of a Stone Age tribe in the jungles of the Philippines by the wealthy Spanish mestizo Marcos crony, Mande Elizalde—Zamora Lopez de Legazpi in the novel—and the second, the transformation of the Philippine jungles into movie sets for the Hollywood epic production of a Vietnam War movie, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*—in the novel rendered as Tony Pierce's *Napalm Sunset*. What threads these two seemingly unrelated events is the novel's main protagonist, Rizalina Cayabyab, a young intelligent girl from a poor family who was born in the town near the jungles where the Stone Age tribe supposedly lives and where the Hollywood movie is shot. In *Dream Jungle*, the girl Rizalina, or Lina, becomes a domestic servant in the mansion of the Spanish playboy explorer Zamora Lopez de Legazpi, discoverer of the Paleolithic tribe, and later becomes a member of the canteen staff servicing the Hollywood cast and crew members through the help of Vincent Moody, one of the American actors, who is smitten by her beauty. The trajectory of Lina's life parallels that of Philippine history, to use the cliché formulation: five hundred years in a Spanish convent and forty years in Hollywood. By the end of the novel, Lina is living by herself somewhere in Santa Monica, California, working as a prostitute.

Although Hagedorn's dramatization of the compression of time and space seems to focus on the repetitive history of colonial conquest of the Philippines, in my analysis of the novel I will focus on its compression of time and space as dramatization of the economic processes of neoliberal global capitalism and these economic processes'

transformation of the way people understand themselves, others, and the world. The trajectory of Lina's life, from her childhood in the Philippine hinterlands of Mindanao to domestic servitude and sexy dancer in Manila to a prostitute in California, becomes then a parallel to the trajectory of commodities within neoliberal global capitalism. Lina is like the timber and minerals extracted from the Philippines hinterlands, processed in Manila for the use of the elite in the world's global centers. Moreover, the relationship of Lina with commodities is not merely metaphorical; in the novel, Lina is a commodity, no different from the timber and minerals. My analytical framework of spectacle allows us to pay attention to the processes of transformation by which Lina as migrant worker (even in her homeland, the Philippines, she is an internal migrant) is transformed into an object or commodity.

*Dream Jungle* recreates the manufacture of spectacle. It narrates the creation of two kinds of indigenous theme parks, as it were, catering to moneyed tourists and scholars and to big-budget Hollywood moviemakers. The first of these two "theme parks" is a forest reservation for a supposed Paleolithic tribe, recently discovered, called the Taobo. Zamora Lopez de Legazpi's discovery of the cave dwelling Taobo tribe in the jungles of Mindanao at the "southernmost tip of the Philippine archipelago" (6) creates a sensation around the world, and international scholars, as well as curious celebrities, descend on the Philippines to see and study the tribe first-hand. Zamora revels in his new-found fame: "The publicity, the absurd headlines in Manila that screamed: Ex-playboy Saves Our Cavemen! . . . I loved it. Journalists clamored for interviews. It all happened fast, much too fast. I agreed to be interviewed by everyone. Such fun." (123). Sociologists from all over the world as well as international celebrities like the French

actress Miss Gigi Fontaine (a character based on the Italian actress and photographer Gina de Lolobrigida, who was commissioned by Imelda Marcos to write a coffee-table tourism book on the Philippines)—with her camera bags, “stiletto eyes, and heavy perfume”— and the “mute American Transatlantic pilot, Charles” (a reference to Charles Lindberg, who was interested in Philippine wildlife) come to visit Legazpi demanding to be brought to the forest people (40). “So many people . . . [f]amous and not” (41) came as ethnic tourists.

Lopez de Legazpi’s mansion, *Casas Blancas*, becomes the main staging ground for the Taobo “theme park”; the Spanish playboy explorer hosts European and American guests and throws constant parties to entertain them. Rizalina, a precocious servant girl at the mansion, describes the “endless parties on the terrace, feasts laid out on a long buffet table, plenty of rum and Coke to drink” (38). Having been born and spent her early childhood in a dirt poor town in Mindanao’s hinterlands, Rizalina is fascinated by the spectacle of excess. She “loved the master’s parties [--] the loud music, the carefree dancing, the lewd remarks” and “gawked at the perfumed women in their ostentatious dresses, at the fat arrogant men chewing cigars” (38). As servant her job at the parties is to go around with a tray of appetizers or dessert to entice the guests and at times to clean up dead drunk female celebrity guests. This is Lina’s introduction to the life of the super rich.

Literary scholar Aguilar-San Juan comments that Lopez de Legazpi is interested more in the fame and glory that his “discovery” of the tribe brought than in actually helping the tribal people (Aguilar-San Juan 5). His anthropological discovery, for the rich scion, signals that he has at last made something of himself, an achievement he can

throw at the face of his successful businessman magnate father, Don Flaco. Before the Taobos, he casts himself as *Amo Data*--“Spirit Father”—a protector-god who has come to help them. To befriend the tribe, he has brought into the middle of the thick jungle via his private helicopter sacks of rice, bags of clothes, and, what fascinate the tribal people most, necklaces of colored plastic beads. Some in the tribe, especially the older women, remain suspicious and hostile toward Zamora, and they curse the native guide who has brought Zamora to their hidden dwelling place. But Zamora’s offer of “help” to the Taobo is not to be refused; he is always accompanied by his burly bodyguards who carry AK-47s, always ready to help their master get what he wants. Once he has “befriended” the tribes, Zamora starts to bring in his foreign friends by helicopter, parading his discovery before them.

The President of the Philippines, his popularity dipping alarmingly, also wants to cash in on the discovery of the Stone Age tribe. Fritz Magpantay, the president’s nephew, says this of his uncle and his wife: “Surely there would be some way to turn this ‘discovery’ of Zamora’s into a public-relation coup. My uncle and his wife were avid believers in what they called ‘the power of PR’ (59). The President hails Zamora to the Presidential Palace to offer his protection to the tribe against loggers and their private armies, making Zamora the chair of a President’s Indigenous Minority People’s Foundation (PIMPF) meant to assist the tribe.

Zamora’s official designation as the President’s delegate to the ethnic minorities serves merely to underscore his role vis-à-vis the newly discovered tribe—as the acronym of the foundation none too subtly imply: PIMPF. Zamora, as stand-in for the government, becomes a middleman who makes the tribe accessible for exploitation by

the international elite. To return to Neferti Tadiar's metaphor of prostitution for the Marcoses' neoliberalization of the Philippine national economy, Zamora functions as pimp, exoticizing and commodifying the tribal people's ethnic identity for the consumption of the international elite.

Zamora's party is cut short when the supposed Stone Age tribe is determined to be a hoax. In the novel, a fictional Filipino anthropologist, Prof. Amado Cabrera (echoing the conclusion of respected international anthropologists in the 1970s) declares: "The ethnographic evidence is nil. We have all been made fools. The Taobo were a marvelous prank, cooked up by our vey own notorious mestizo trickster . . . Mr. Zamora Lopez de Legazpi" (306). Cabrera charges that "Zamora, the president, and the first lady cooked up this elaborate scheme just so they could get their hands on forty thousand acres of prime rain forest. In the process they gained international cachet as environmentalists and protectors of indigenous peoples" (308) and that the President's Indigenous Minority People's Foundation "was a money-laundering scam" (306). Hagedorn, in an interview, comments that in her research for materials for *Dream Jungle*, she had heard people say "that the 'discovery' of the Tasaday was used as a diversion by Marcos from the corruption and excesses of his oppressive regime" ("Conversation," Aguilar-San Juan 6). Hagedorn, however, in her novel leaves the question of the Paleolithic tribe's authenticity open-ended. The novel is not interested in deciding on the issue; rather, it devotes its energy to exploring the dramatic possibilities of the event and shedding light on Zamora's megalomania and the event's destructive impact on the tribe's life.

The second “theme park,” as it were, in the novel is the jungle transformed by Hollywood director Tony Pierce into a movie set for his film production of a Vietnam War movie, *Napalm Sunset*. A thinly veiled reference to *Apocalypse Now*, Pierce’s opus dramatizes the US debacle in the Vietnam War, the film a caustic criticism of war and imperialism. Hagedorn’s narration of the film production sets up in relief the ironies of the making of an anti-war and anti-US imperialism Hollywood movie in the Philippines, a US neocolony, under the auspices of a brutal Martial Law regime under the Marcoses.

In the 1970s-80s, the Marcos Martial Law regime aggressively sold the Philippines as haven for the production of “exploitation movies,”<sup>11</sup> offering international film producers tax-free and uncensored production, as well as the availability of cheap Filipino labor both as performers and as behind-the-scene support staff (*Machete Maidens*). Several Australian and American film makers came and churned out cheap sex-and-gore movies, but the biggest production enticed by the Marcoses to come to the Philippines was that of Francis Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*. The Marcos government not only gave Coppola complete free-rein in his filming, but it also provided military security for the crew against Communist rebels in the area, and even put at the director’s disposal—for rent, of course--the use of the Philippine Air Force helicopters and their pilots as props for the movie. A member of Coppola’s production staff commented that the production of *Apocalypse Now* would not have been possible, and would never be possible again, without the kind of support the Marcos government gave them.

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<sup>11</sup> The term “exploitation movies” refer to cheaply produced American movies that openly exploited women, especially Filipina women, as sex objects in movies thinly disguised as horror or action movies.

In *Dream Jungle*, the town mayor Fritz Magpantay, a “jovial little gangster” distantly related to the President (192), is the film production’s “protector,” “fixer,” “landlord,” and “biggest fan” (247). The mayor provides security for the actors and crew members against the communist and Muslim rebels operating in the jungles nearby (276). He also acts as intermediary when there is conflict between the foreigners and the Philippine Air Force helicopter pilots who have been put at the disposal of the film makers for the bombing scenes. During breaks from filming, the helicopters go on bombing sorties against the rebels, and at those times are not able to return in time for the next take. The mayor has to come in to iron out the problem. Mayor Magpantay, as character in the novel, stands in for the Martial Law regime and as protector of the foreign film production represents how Third World national and local governments function vis-à-vis foreign capital within the neoliberal global capitalist dispensation—as middlemen, or pimps, making their country’s resources totally accessible to foreign exploitation.

For the film producer and director, Tony Pierce, the whole arrangement is perfect. He tells an interviewer: “The beauty of a location like this is that it offers you everything you need. Beach, ocean, jungle, lake, mountains, waterfalls, cheap labor” (247). The very fact that a real war is going on ten miles from where he is filming his war movie “excites him” (276). The irony of the situation—Americans making an anti-war and anti-imperialism movie in a Third World former colony of the US through the patronage of a military dictatorship—seems lost on the film makers. One of the American actors observes: “The cast and crew walk around here like they own the place. Pierce is the worst. Thinks this country’s nothing but a backdrop for his movie. The people don’t

matter, except when they service him and his family. They serve us, they feed us, they fuck us” (179). Pierce feels and acts like a god in his movie production—his omnipotence includes the power to reconfigure the Philippines into his vision of Vietnam, with a cast of thousands of Filipino performers—paid very cheaply-- transformed into South Vietnamese peasants and Vietcong guerillas. It is not only Filipino labor that is commoditized here, but Filipino ethnicity as well as raw material that the Hollywood production manufactures into Vietnamese ethnicity for the consumption of a Western audience. Pierce along with his Hollywood crew, in collusion with the Filipino militarized state, manufactures a grand spectacle exploiting Filipino service workers and Philippine state resources—a model of radical free trade espoused by neoliberal global capitalism.

Moreover, Hagedorn’s narrative exposes another layer of Hollywood spectacle in recreating the behind-the-scene story of the movie production. The scholar Karin Aguilar-San Juan comments that in *Dream Jungle*, Hagedorn is interested “In recreating the culture of excess and absurdity that surrounded the real filming of *Apocalypse Now*” (5). Into the remote, neglected areas of the Philippines where people lived in poverty, the Hollywood film producers bring in First World supplies and amenities. For the American and European cast and crew members and their guests, there is

so much food . . . The villagers had not seen anything like it. Refrigerated trucks deilivering hundreds of fancy steaks and plump chckens, all the way from God knows where. Workers hired from nearby towns stood behind counters, ready to ladle out whatever was on today’s menu. (178)



The director, Tony Pierce “had his own tent, his own cook, and a personal waiter” (179) from a Philippine five-star hotel (183). The foreigners are “dressed in fashionable jungle gear,” and one of the stars of the movie even flies in “scantily dressed party girls . . . from L.A.” (175). There are drugs and sex on the set (182-183). The Westerners have created a First World bubble in the midst of the Third World Mindanao Island.

It is in this space of spectacle that Rizalina works as a canteen staff for the cast and crew. Vincent Moody, her American actor boyfriend, helps her get the job so they can be together. The two had met before the start of the film at a sleazy bar, the Love Connection in Manila’s red light district, where Lina worked as a sexy dancer. Moody has offered to bring her to the US with him, but Lina has refused to believe his sincerity. It is only after a narrow escape from Mayor Magpantay’s attempt to rape her that she becomes determined to leave for the United States, leaving her infant daughter with Aling Belen, a family friend. Sexually abused by her father as a child; subjected to constant threat of abuse by her employer, the playboy explorer Zamora; and now almost raped by the mayor, Rizalina knows her precarious situation as a poor attractive woman in her own country. The salacious Mayor’s description of the beach area as “undefiled,” “virgin territory” are expressions of his desire to sexually exploit her (254). Lina realizes too the impossibility for her to break out of the cycle of poverty—she comes from a long generation of domestic workers. She narrates:

My nanay’s nanay, my Lola Isay, worked as a servant all her life. She keeled over dead while washing her master’s dirty underwear. And my great-grandmother was a yaya who cared for rich people’s children. And so on and so on, washerwomen, yayas, cooks, housecleaners, gardeners

who toiled in Manila or Cebu, big cities far enough from here that they hardly saw their families or children. Just like my mother, they sent home every peso and centavo they earned for the education and betterment of [their children]. You see how far that got any of us. (15)

Lina recognizes her subjectification as a woman from a poor family, and sees in Vincent Moody her chance to break the cycle of abjection by starting a new life in the United States. She becomes aware of her power as a woman, acknowledging the flirtation of Tony Pierce and the depth of Vincent's infatuation with her. She becomes obsessed by the sight of the Bengali tiger flown in from California for the movie, subconsciously aware of how the tiger symbolizes her new-found fierceness and will to break out of the subjection she has been relegated to as a peasant woman (272).

By the end of the novel, Lina is in Santa Monica, California. One of the final images we have of her is that of a beautiful self-assured woman wearing a backless dress in the middle of a vast industrial space that has been turned into an art gallery in Los Angeles. We find out that she supports herself, but she purposely remains vague about her job, perhaps, as a prostitute. The countryman who sees her observes that she has become "another person entirely than the one he had expected to see" (311). She has completely cut off her ties with her family in the Philippines, even with her mother and her daughter, and wishes only to live her own life and to disappear in the anonymity of city life in the U. S.

By the end of the novel, the transformation of Rizalina into commodity is complete. She becomes an object, a product in a warehouse—the giant industrial space that we see her in the final scenes. Like the raw material extracted from the hinterlands

of the Philippines, processed and manufactured, and now delivered for consumption in the global center, Lina has come a long way.

### Conclusion

Reading Hagedorn's two Philippine novels side by side illuminate the socio-economic-political processes unleashed by the Marcos Martial Law regime's radical reorientation of the national economy towards neoliberal global capitalism and their impact on people's understanding of self, others, and of the world. This chapter's focus on the use of spectacle within spaces of hyper-consumption highlights the way the re-ordering of space interacts with these socio-economic-political processes. Such frame of analysis allows us to see how these spaces of spectacle, whether in the urban setting of Manila or in the extra-urban bubbles of ethnic and movie tourism, transform the subjectivities of service workers into the ideal subjects of neoliberal global capitalism—disposable labor.

The two novels clarify for us the *modus operandi* of the Marcos government's appropriation of the Disney Corporations strategy of spectacle—on the one hand reinventing Manila as a modern cosmopolitan center of arts and business, on the other hand deliberately exploiting Western stereotypes of Filipino primitivism as a selling point to attract foreign tourists. The Philippine government spectacularized and cashed in on the stereotype of the Philippines as land of savage dog-eaters, an image that had stuck since the 1904 St. Louis World Exposition that prominently featured the various Philippine tribal groups. Perhaps, one can read the Stone Age tribe fiasco as an attempt by the Marcoses to reinvent the savage Filipino tribal identity into that of the noble innocent primitive.

If the objective of Disneyfication is to create a safe space for consumers, the Marcos regime succeeded in making the Philippines a safe space for consumers—that is for foreign and national elite consumers to exploit its own people. Also, the reorientation of the Philippine economy toward the neoliberal global market and its consequent re-ordering of space resulted in the dislocation of the Filipino masses. The corruption and militarization made it impossible for thousands of Filipinos to live a decent life and pushed them to search for work and security outside the Philippines, triggering the contemporary trend of Filipino diaspora to different parts of the globe, but especially to the US. The Marcos regime succeeded in laying down the cornerstone for Disneyfication in the Philippines. Essentially, the succeeding government administrations have followed the blueprints drawn by the Marcos government, and the majority poor continues to be exploited and marginalized.

### **Chapter Three: The Gentrification of New York City and the Immigrant Filipino Worker in Han Ong's *Fixer Chao***

Han Ong's satirical novel *Fixer Chao* prominently figures the gentrification of New York City at the turn of the millennium. The novel features in particular the redevelopment of Times Square into a spectacle of hyperconsumption with its "neon surplus" (47) and dazzling facades of megastores, movie houses, theaters, and hotels along Forty-second Street, complete with a "giant Mickey and Minnie, who, looking down seemed to be sanctifying [the] eager appetites" of participants in the consumption (336). The novel, too, spends significant energy describing the interior of homes of Manhattan's new elite, spaces that have been gentrified, private and intimate spaces that nonetheless partake of the ethos of public commercial spaces. But amidst the redevelopment, the novel also sets out remnants of Times Square's past: a few old decrepit apartment buildings and especially the Savoy, a dark and sleazy bar frequented by New York City's outcast: junkies, hustlers, transvestite hookers "way past their prime" (7), those excluded from the global city's new wealth. The novel's storyline is how a denizen of the Savoy machinates the impossible--bridging the gap between the two worlds, albeit fraudulently.

The protagonist in *Fixer Chao* is an out of luck gay Filipino immigrant, William Narciso Paulinha, recruited to pose as a Hong Kong feng shui master to fleece wealthy Manhattanites. The fraud's instigator, Shem C., a failed Jewish American writer seeking to get back at New York's elite circle for ignoring him, transforms Paulinha into Master Chao, enabling him to gain entrance into the homes and confidences of Manhattan's elite

hungry for the latest fad: feng shui; only, Master Chao is to do the geomancy all wrong. Paulinha's encounter with New York City's uberwealthy and their lifestyle of hyper conspicuous consumption heightens and brings to a crisis his internal tension between adherence to an ethical good versus desire for material goods (the pun of good versus goods is a leitmotif throughout the novel). In the end Master Chao is found out, and to escape the Manhattanites' ire and the long arm of the law, he flees to California, living incognito, happily "benumbed" and spending his days in "mall after white mall" (377).

Previous studies of the novel have astutely read it as an expression of resentment and protest against the exclusion of ethnic minority workers from sharing in the spectacular wealth brought about by neoliberal globalization. Eleanor Ty, in her analysis of the novel in "Abjection, Masculinity, and Violence in Brian Roley's *American Son* and Han Ong's *Fixer Chao*," shows how the consumerist culture of American global capitalism imposes "Hollywood ideals of glamour and power" on Filipino American male youth that causes them to "suffer, and, consequently, lash out against others when they fall short of capitalist notions of success" (120).

Jeffrey Santa Ana, building on Ty's study in his paper "Afro-Asian Anger: Audre Lorde, Han Ong, and Class Rage in Late Capitalist New York City," argues that the emotion of anger in *Fixer Chao* is an "expression of critique of inequality in capitalist society" and that the "violent and alienating global city of New York" portrayed by Ong "is a backdrop for the ongoing fact of racialized subjection under the capitalist commodity structure." Santa Ana points to "the political-economic dimension of feeling," such as anger, that "express[es] from beneath the surface of [the] writing,

anxieties about commercialization and the fragmentation of human life in late capitalism” (n.p.). Santa Ana, in a later essay, further develops this concept of a “political-economic dimension of feeling.” In “Feeling Ancestral: The Emotions of Mixed Race and Memory in Asian American Cultural Productions,” he shows that the dominant emotions of abjection and anger in Asian American cultural productions express “a particular structure of feeling that utterly contradicts the capitalist paradise of globalization, as seen in the many images of diversity in multinational commerce” (458). Santa Ana coins the term “feeling ancestral” to refer to this “particular structure of feeling” which “express the experience of history and cultural memory and articulate ties to immigrant ancestors and ethnic forbears” (459). He argues that “feeling ancestral describes the dialectic between the celebratory color blindness of racial mixture in global commerce, on the one hand, and cultural memory in the emphatic and often painful identification with heritage and genealogy, on the other” (459).

This present study builds on the work foregrounding the context of American global capitalism by Ty and Santa Ana on contemporary Filipino American fiction. In this chapter, I extend Ty’s and Santa Ana’s examination of the relationship in *Fixer Chao* between American global capitalism’s consumerist culture and the Filipino immigrant worker. I show that Ong represents the Filipino immigrant laborer as not merely “victim” to rapidly changing material realities, but a desiring subject with agency and a complex relationship with material goods influenced by his background as a Filipino American worker and by the specific material formation of American global capitalism in New York City at the turn of the twenty-first century. What this essay focuses on—and what has been left out in critical studies of *Fixer Chao*—is the aspect of Ong’s depiction of

spatiality: the role space plays in the formation of the subjectivity of immigrant workers. In this chapter I argue that Ong represents how the ethos of hyperconsumerism, engendered by the reorganization of urban space, transforms the consciousness of immigrant workers into becoming ideal subjects of neoliberal globalization—commoditized and disposable. Paulinha’s transgression of space as Master Chao comes with it the commoditization of his body, affect, ethnicity, and identity. Han Ong’s novel *Fixer Chao* exposes the personal costs to immigrant service workers of neoliberal global capitalism’s gentrification of New York City at the turn of the twenty-first century.

One previous study that attempts to explore the aspect of spatiality in the novel is Hsuan Hsu’s “Mimicry, Spatial Captation, and Feng Shui in Han Ong’s *Fixer Chao*.” Hsu uses Roger Caillois’s concept of “spatial captation” and Lacan’s adaptation of this concept to explain the use of mimicry in Ong’s novel, not for subversion (as in Homi Bhabha’s sense), but as desire to be part of and disappear into the environment (688). Although Callois considers this desire to be assimilated or “devoured” by the environment as a pathology, Lacan sees this “captation” as positive, a metaphor for the “dissolution of narcissism’s barriers, and the relinquishment of space (that is an abstract field presided over by the gaze) in favor of a sense of place that addresses and assimilates the subject” (689)

Hsu’s psychoanalytic approach in his study of Ong’s depiction of space in *Fixer Chao*, however, tends to obfuscate the analysis of space itself, and Hsu himself points out the need to ground his psychoanalytic analysis in the socio-political dynamics operating within specific spaces (689). This chapter focuses on the study of space with its dynamics of culture, politics, and economics as depicted in *Fixer Chao* and the role it



plays in shaping the consciousness of people who inhabit it, specifically those of immigrant service workers who occupy the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. I bring into my discussion the framework of Disneyfication elaborated on by urban sociologists like Sharon Zukin. I intend to show that the framework of Disneyfication enables us to analyze the interactive dynamics of spectacle, consumption, and surveillance operating within privatized public space that Ong depicts in his novel.

This essay is a contribution to the continuing study of neoliberal globalization and its impact on individual lives, cultures, and societies in the United States from a specifically Filipino American literary perspective. While cultural studies scholar such as David Harvey theorize neoliberalism's "commodification of everything" (165) from a global perspective, this essay problematizes this commoditization from the particularized perspective of Han Ong's Filipino American protagonist in *Fixer Chao*. While sociologists like Saskia Sassen delineate the material formation of globalization specific to New York City based on statistics<sup>12</sup>, this present study analyzes Ong's fiction's subjective and imaginative account of New York's transformation into a global city from the eyes of a Filipino immigrant worker. As a cultural analysis in conversation with urban and globalization studies, this chapter is interested in studying the way Ong, in *Fixer Chao*, uses representation (specifically, literary techniques and devices) in telling

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<sup>12</sup> Sassen herself notes the limitations of the statistics she presents in her study. She writes: "Employment and earnings statistics . . . provide only a partial description of the socioeconomic conditions in New York . . . under the current economic regime, one characterized by the dominance of producer services and finance. They leave out components of the economic and social order that are not captured through these kinds of figures. . . [Also] employment and earnings statistics do not convey the concrete conditions of life in these cities for the population at large."

the story of the radical reorganization of urban space in the context of globalization. In this essay I show that Ong's literary depiction of the Filipino immigrant worker's experience of New York City's Disneyfication allows us to imagine the impact of American global capitalism on the subjectivity of the Filipino immigrant worker.

### I. The Disneyfication of Times Square in *Fixer Chao*

The New York of Ong's *Fixer Chao* is a city in radical flux. As Paulinha and his "white trash" friend Devo walk across the city from East Village to Chinatown, Devo marks the physical changes in the neighborhood he grew up in. "My God . . . I can remember when this block used to be---," he keeps on saying, while walking through the streets filled with young people who have recently moved into the neighborhood whose party tones and shrieking make them "feel like tourists from a depressed country" (28-29).

Nowhere are these changes more sharply marked than in Times Square—New York City's "symbolic heart" (Eeckhout 380), and by extension, that of the United States--and a significant part of the novel's action occurs within this "fluid area in midtown Manhattan centered around the diagonal slicing of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Broadway—a slicing that stretches out over five blocks, between West 42<sup>nd</sup> and 47th Streets" (Eeckhout 381-382).

The area is a huge commercial and entertainment center with "more than six hundred stores totaling about 150,00 square meters of sale space" (Tonnelat), with "two lavishly restored historic theaters," "high-tech game arcades," and "two big multiplex movie theaters" (Eeckhout 388). The most famous dimension of the area is "the spectacle of its gigantic and multicolored signage that dresses up the facades of all the

buildings fronting the square” (Tonnelat), what Ong describes in the novel as the “neon surplus of Times Square” (47).

The sociologist Sharon Zukin has pointed to the ways New York City’s business improvement districts (BIDs) have been influenced by Disney World’s symbolic economy, especially in its “strategies for organizing space “ (65). Zukin enumerates the strategies the BIDs have implemented:

Their first goal is to *clean up* an area, to keep it free of litter that the city’s sanitation services cannot control. They also secure space by erecting barriers or otherwise limiting public access and making rules about appropriate behavior. Private security guards help enforce that strategy. They control the public’s mobility by keeping people moving through public space and organizing where and how they sit—and also determining who may sit. (65)

“Clean up” as a BID strategy therefore, as Zukin shows, operates on both the levels of sanitation as well as policing people admitted into the space and keeping out undesirables.

Such strategy of “Disneyfication” in New York City, I argue, is not limited to specific BIDs, but has become the dominant ethos of New York as a global city. The process of gentrification that New York City has gone through in recent decades, as described by Saskia Sassen in *The Global City*, is not simply a matter of neoliberal global capital flowing in therefore making “disposable” income available for redevelopment of New York’s inner city. Gentrification is very much shaped by the strategies and ethos of “Disneyfication,” and understanding these allows us to appreciate

better the terrain and the culture within that terrain that Ong's protagonist has to negotiate.

But together with the glitzy, shiny "New Times Square" as the Business Improvement District calls it (cited in Tonnelat) are remnants of the old Times Square. Ong describes "one gated and padlocked front" of a former porn shop (47); a peep show joint called Peep's Corner fronting the decrepit apartment building where Paulinha lives (48); the tenements themselves where New York's poor reside (290); a boarded up empty lot in which a building had been torn down, "bearing witness to the New York . . . of last year, or at most two, three years ago" (258-259). But none represents the old Times Square better in the novel than the Savoy, a bar in the Times Square area "frequented by hustlers and transvestite hookers way past their prime and by junkies who resembled stick figures and moved as if struggling underwater" (7). It may have miraculously survived the maniacal clean up project of Mayor Rudy Giuliani, but Paulinha realizes "it was only a matter of time before redevelopment claimed it" (259).

Paulinha's much older Filipino friend, Preciosa, had come to New York decades ago and "had seen it change from one sure thing to another" (15). In particular she remembers Times Square's "seedy heyday," associating with it the "smell of come" (15-16). In his history of Times Square, Bart Eeckhout, notes that the "white flight" to suburbia in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the American downtowns' "physical deterioration, escalating crime, racial tension, drug abuse, pornographic shops, and sexual vice" (386) best represented by Times Square which earned the moniker "the Sleaziest block in America" (Hannigan cited in Eeckhout 386). Yet, Eeckhout, citing Alexander Reichl, argues that during this time "the area was in fact a thriving (if risky and

disturbing) multi-purpose entertainment center and a popular tourist destination”

(387). Eric Rofes in his review of Samuel Delany’s *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* points out that the old Times Square, “a primarily working-class, poor neighborhood” provided a space for interclass contact, for sex and sociability that opened up possibilities for “friendship, knowledge, and pleasure” (105). It is such interclass contact that had long characterized Times Square, as a line from a 1930s musical celebrates it as a place “Where the underworld can meet the elite/ naughty, bawdy, gaudy, sporty, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street” (quoted in Reichel 55). Eeckhout argues that “Next to the New York subway, Times Square for much of the twentieth century used to offer the city’s most heterogeneous social landscape, with tuxedoed patrons of Broadway shows walking side by side with three-card-monte players and stoned youngsters” (415).

What the Savoy represents in the novel and what is at stake in its inevitable destruction to give way to redevelopment (259), is the existence of a democratic public space. According to Stephane Tonnelat, a public space is one that is “accessible to anybody,” not just in the sense of the possibility of physically entering the place, but also in the sense of the possibility to interact with others and “of finding things to do in the environment” (Par. 8). Using this criterion, he argues that although the present Times Square remains accessible, the area with its increasing redevelopment and surveillance, transforming “the ecology of Times Square into a more controlled environment,” making it more difficult for “peddlers and other street level workers’ to operate in the area, it may cease to be public anymore (par. 40-41). Eeckhout is less tentative in his conclusion: the new Times Square “hardly acts as the kind of public space where, the French thinker Roland Barthes’s utopian words, ‘subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act

and meet” (409). Reichl argues that the current Times Square has “sacrificed the provocative, raw energy produced by the friction of different social groups in close interaction for the stultifying hum of a smoothly functioning machine for commercial consumption” (cited in Eeckhout 409).

What the Savoy represents then in the novel is an alternative space to the homogeneous (financially, culturally, and racially) space that Disneyfication has turned Times Square into. Seen through the perspective of the dominant white middle class, the image of the Savoy, like that of the old Times Square, is dominated by moral and cultural perversion; but as Eeckhout, drawing on Samuel Delany, argues about the history of Times Square, the Savoy “although an imperfect place, was a public space of genuine diversity that served a wide range of racial, ethnic and income groups” (416). The name Savoy is a pun for “subway,” the hidden, underground transportation structure of New York that serves as the city’s lifeblood. Eeckhout points to the New York subway, as well as Times Square for most of its history, as offering “the city’s most heterogeneous social landscape” (415). In *Fixer Chao*, the subway is among the few spaces where Paulinha experiences a rare connection with other people. He recognizes a bond with fellow passengers, “put-upon citizens on the subway with their air of being mysteriously afflicted [he] now recognized as fellow errand-runners . . . grimly determined to beat the city’s million hindrances . . . . (17).

The Savoy for all its sadness and shadowy seediness is after all a haven for New York’s outcasts like Paulinha. The bar’s physical arrangement provides refuge for the down and out: “everything was done to facilitate your journey to the bar, the seats encouraged slouching, and the red lights made everyone’s ugliness seem just a bit more

tolerable” (150). The habitués somehow form a bond, no matter how tenuous, as seen in one moment when they all listen and bob their heads to the same jukebox song whose “lyrics gave everyone an opportunity to reflect on their own misfortunes” (149). What is at stake then in the impending loss of the Savoy to give way to redevelopment (259) is the loss of the last democratic public spaces in the heart of New York City in the name of redevelopment and commercialization.

## II. The Privatization of Public Commercial Space and the Commercialization of Private Spaces

Ong’s *Fixer Chao* as an imaginative literary representation of contemporary New York City society draws the reader to consider the connection between the spectacle of hyperconsumption in the city’s urban space (the prime example of which is Times Square) and the private, domestic, intimate spaces—the homes or residences—of those who participate in the consumption activities. Paulinha as Master Chao as it were takes the readers on a tour into the most private spaces in the apartments of Manhattan’s elite, and what we see is that just as Disneyfication has resulted in the loss of public spaces through their transformation into “privatized” commercial spaces, the same ethos of spectacle and hyperconsumption dominate the most intimate spaces of the homes of the rich. In the plush apartment of the Dowager, an elderly Jewish widow who “had prized possessions as other people had dust in their households,” one of the most expensive items, a small Modigliani painting heavily framed in gold, graces a toilet. The painting has a special lighting, and below it is a vase of fresh flowers set on top of the toilet tank cover, according to Paulinha, “as if in the pagan tradition of propitiating deceased

relatives” (238). Even the supposedly most private spaces in the home is turned into a spectacle of the fetishization of commodities.

We see a similar ethos in the home of Lindsay S., a collector of orientalia, whose apartment houses a private museum. Among various items, holding the space of honor is his throve of Buddha images: “Ensnoced behind glass, hundreds of Buddhas of dazzling variety—made of gold, silver, copper, porcelain, jade, different kinds of wood, even plastic; pendant- and TV-sized, and everything in between; some were toys, some jewels, and others ancient temple relics” (71). The Buddhas, specially lit and sitting on library shelves, fill up a whole wall. Paulinha tells us that Lindsay acts more as a proprietor, an “owner” rather than as a believer (71). For the owner, the Buddha icons are objects, commodities for his own affective consumption, and even Paulinha dressed as Master Chao “narrowly escape[s] being pinned on the wall as a trophy” (79), merely another object in the midst of commodities.

It is very telling that Paulinha’s first window into the homes of the rich are the glossy pages of magazines like Conde Nast *House & Garden* and *Metropolitan Home* (48). Shem C. provides Paulinha these magazines and earmarks specific pages for Paulinha to study in preparation for his “job,” and it is through these pages that he first “enters” the posh Upper West Side apartment of Suzy Yamada, a successful Japanese-Canadian businesswoman. The Conde Nast *House & Garden* magazine features pictures of the whole apartment including the bedrooms “showcase[ing] the same spacious, light-filled apartment from various imaginative angles” (52). The main caption reads: “What was once a cramped duplex has been transformed by Suzy Yamada and the architectural



firm of Stowan & McKettrick into an expansive habitat that resembles, in feel, a SoHo loft” (52).

The Yamada residence is showcased in a magazine that features as well pages dedicated to advertising home items like pillows, throws, and those made of leather, each of the items with corresponding price tag. In these magazines, private space is treated as a display room for the public’s consumption, but not only in the sense of advertising commodities. The Yamada home is transformed into consumable printed images, “devoured” or consumed by those attempting to become part of Manhattan’s elite set. For Suzy Yamada, showcasing her home in the magazine, is an affirmation of her status as “success.” In other words, there is a whole slew of interests and industry serviced here by the magazine publication—the homeowners’, retailers’, architects’, the publication editors’, as well as that of the larger consuming public.

The residence as space of spectacle of consumption is shown as well in the novel’s description of the actual Yamada residence, especially in Chapter 14 dedicated to narrating a party hosted by Suzy Yamada. The palatial home becomes a space for Yamada to showcase her wealth and exquisite taste, as well as a space for “business transactions”: guests eyeball each other feeling out possible lucrative contacts (90); scholars and artists like Chan Chuang Toledo Lin and Max Brill Carlton display their knowledge and advertize their latest opus (122). Shem and Paulinha as Master Chao use this space to find more contacts and clients for their fraud (100).

The heart of the Yamada residence is a room, discreetly hidden, that serves as “home base of operations” for Suzy Yamada’s business of importing antiques from Japan; the room contains all her business documents—invoice forms, inventory books,

list of clients—and a safe. Also in that room is a picture frame of her Japanese mother, a widow who had to raise her children by working as a “laundry woman and as a caretaker of people’s houses” (182)—a family secret Suzy Yamada wants to keep from the Manhattan elite set. The contents of that hidden room, as well as the existence of that room in the Yamada residence, illustrate the erasure of distinction between the public and the domestic, the personal and the commercial.

An important aspect in the close connection and interaction between Disneyfied public spaces and gentrified private spaces is that of exclusion and control. Both these spaces comprise, as it were, a bubble, an exclusive zone of consumption activities. This zone is inhabited by those with “private areas of expertise . . . admen, screenwriters, Wall Streeters, realtors, magazine editors,” who have found themselves suddenly prosperous . . . a group that knew how to perpetuate itself . . . World without end” (55). The rich seem to be “moving inside a protective bubble of money and privilege” (109).

The residences of the rich are guarded by doormen and receptionists whose task is to screen visitors, protecting apartment owners from outsiders. The parties of the rich, like the one hosted by Susie Yamada, is by invitation only. In the first place, the very process of gentrification of New York’s residential apartments have pushed away, even rendered homeless, these apartments’ former residents comprised of the working class and the poor, many of them immigrants. The dynamic of gentrification and Disneyfication is to carve out exclusive spaces, and within these spaces, that of competition and consumption.

### III. Feng Shui and Disneyfication as Reordering of Space

In *Fixer Chao* this dynamic for hyperconsumption and unending competition creates constant fear and anxiety. It is this fear that “had paved the way for [Shem’s and

William's] entrance onto the scene," a fear that Ong represents as having specific neoliberal global capitalism mark to it, for it is the "fear of even the slightest decrease in the prosperity that they'd become used to" (96). What the elite wants of Master Chao is "inoculation" from the vicissitudes of globalization. Many of them have become "suddenly prosperous" and their desire is to "perpetuate" their status, "[world] without end" (55). What they want are "buffers against the harsh world of New York: peace, harmony, prosperity settling over their frantic modern lives" (56). This anxiety is heightened by the end of the millennium, a period associated with fears of the end-of-the-world and its accompanying judgment. There is a spiritual hunger that Paulinha recognizes: "New York, though it was hard to believe from the evidence in front of me, was a desert, and in it, the people yearned for wind and water" (60). The exclusive focus on the material, on consumption creates a thirst for the spiritual, and the approaching end of the millennium adds the element of fear to this thirst:

[the] nagging awareness that the year 2000 was around the corner had as good as driven these people back to the time-consuming faiths of their parents and their grandparents. Their return was like an insurance policy for the next life . . . . People were being encouraged to go further inward, where true peace could be located. Stability. Family values. The good old days. A return to tradition. (125)

In a world dominated by neoliberal capitalism, the Eastern spirituality that Master Chao embodies represents nostalgia for simpler times, a desire for "[a] return to tradition." But Ong also shows that this fascination for things Asian, specifically Chinese and Japanese, in a multicultural turn in U.S. society at the last decade of the twentieth

century and moving into the early decades of the twenty-first century, is connected to the rise of East Asian economies, especially that of China, in the global economy. Ong represents the American obsession with Eastern culture, specifically Eastern spirituality, as a projection of ambivalence, of both fear and desire to cash in on the growing dominance of Asian economies in the global market.

In *Fixer Chao* Han Ong utilizes the concept of Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of geomancy, to perform different narrative functions. On a literal level, it is a ruse used by Paulinha and Shem to play to particular anxieties of the New York City elites being conned. Ong portrays Feng Shui's wild popularity among Manhattan's elite (222) to indicate the sense of emptiness or absence of spirituality among people whose only religion is the consumption of commodities. On a figurative level, Ong uses Feng Shui to represent the desire for "peace and harmony," the antidote to the fears and anxieties brought on by the turn of the millennium and the randomness of success and failure in a neoliberal capitalist system. As sociologist Charles Emmons shows in his study of Feng Shui in Hong Kong, Feng Shui is a "magical system" that "serves the function of relieving society in the very competitive, largely westernized laissez faire capitalism system" in the city (49). I add, too, that Ong's representation of Feng Shui can be read as a projection of neoliberal global capitalism's desire to re-order space to "inoculate" it, to create safe spaces dedicated to consumption activities. In *Fixer Chao*, Feng shui then becomes a metaphor for Disneyfication, this desire to "clean house," to rearrange and transform space, in this case, on a city-wide level. After all, Emmons in his study of the popularity of Feng Shui in Hong Kong cited earlier notes that "Feng Shui is compatible with modern capitalism in Hong Kong in the sense that both have been highly

competitive” (47), that is, the art of geomancy is often used to bring in prosperity, often at the expense of competitors.<sup>13</sup> Emmons uses the example of the Feng Shui mirrors that are supposed to be effective in protecting their owners, but in warding off evil or bad luck, these dangers can be directed to others instead (46).

The use of Feng Shui in the novel is ironic, too, in the sense that the Manhattan elite is seemingly obsessed with gaining harmony and wholeness, but their very practice of preserving their wealth and getting ahead is based on the neoliberal capitalist strategy and ethos of fracturing and digitization. While the wealthy characters in the novel are anxious to achieve wholeness and harmony for themselves and their immediate families, they give no thought to the fragmentation they cause on the rest of the city, or even on the people who do the lowest level of service labor for them—their servants, nannies, doormen—most of whom are immigrant workers.

#### IV. Fragmentation of the Urban and Social in *Fixer Chao*

Disneyfication as a strategy for urban management is based on principles of compartmentalization and fragmentation. It erects walls, literally and figuratively, around spaces where the middle and upper classes live and engage in consumption activities, creating exclusive zones for the rich, transforming into private spaces what were supposed to be public spaces—“spaces where people gather . . . represent[ing] different levels of wealth, come from different social backgrounds, have different features and bodies—look different—behave and dress differently, strangely” (Bodnar

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<sup>13</sup> Emmons points out that in traditional Chinese peasant society, Feng Shui has been used in competition with others: “When one family built its graveyard higher on the same hill than someone else’s, that family improved its own lucky position at the expense of the lower one.” Feng Shui’s spirit of competition, according to Emmons, makes it “more amenable to Hong Kong’s laissez faire capitalism than what one might think” (40).

177). The sociologist Judit Bodnar argues that though the metaphor of fragmentation has always been used to describe the condition of modern society, “some aspects of the current physical and social landscape are sufficiently new to warrant a contemporary discussion” (174). Saskia Sassen, in *The Global City*, notes the “massive changes” in New York City’s social structure and spatial organization that have accompanied the city’s transformation into a global financial center in the last three decades of the twentieth century (4). Alongside the rise of a new class of highly paid professional workers---managers, financial analysts, technology and communication experts, but also artists, designers, political consultants—who live a life of new conspicuousness of consumption and drive the rapid gentrification of the city (341), is the massive growth of a class of low income disposable workers—the low skilled or unskilled workers who serve as cooks, maids, waiters, nannies to service the needs of the elite. This new economic order has produced in New York the “worst income inequality in the US” (270), a “greater prevalence of poverty (232), with “blacks and Third World immigrants . . . disproportionately concentrated in lower-paying, more traditional service industries, notable health and social services and in the low-paying jobs of the producer services” (324).

This polarization between economic classes is accompanied by spatial divisions, with the “highest paid segment of professionals living in Manhattan” and “the other categories of professionals living in New York [with] far lower average earnings, were far more likely to live in the outer boroughs of the city (265). Most of the highest paid professionals living in Manhattan are “white and young, 90% of them being non-Hispanic whites, and over half of them under 45 years of age” and those in the boroughs

tended to be minorities who are also highly segregated among themselves based on ethnicity (264-265).

Key to understanding the contemporary social terrain of New York City is an understanding of the process of gentrification. According to Sassen, “[g]entrification was initially[in the 1970s] understood as rehabilitation of decaying of low-income housing by middle-class outsiders in central cities” but in the 1980s,

it was becoming evident that residential rehabilitation was only one facet of a far broader process linked to the profound transformation in advanced capitalism: the shift to services and the associated transformation of the class structure and the shift toward the privatization of consumption and service provision (261).

The rehabilitation of the inner city by the new rich in this process of gentrification has driven out poor minorities, but at the same time has attracted even more minorities in the low-level service industry.

In Ong’s *Fixer Chao*, Paulinha initially experiences the gentrified and Disneyfied spaces of New York City as like a gated residential area to which he is denied access. As an unskilled Filipino immigrant worker, he finds himself on the outside, and he can only dream to get in. The “outside” is peopled mostly by minorities like him, engaged in shadowy, low level forms of service. On the first floor of the apartment where Paulinha lives is a sleazy joint called the Peep Corner run by two Indian brothers Veejay and Sunjay who charge twenty-five cents to anyone who wants to watch through a wooden panel naked dancing women (16). They have a cousin, Neil, who works for them as an

all around boy, part of whose job is mopping up with disinfectant the floors of the booths after every customer's use.

Paulinha, himself, confesses that at a particularly low point in his life, he had worked as a hustler, servicing frustrated middle-aged middle-class white male businessmen who needed to take it out on anyone—especially those with immigrant faces-- to mollify their feelings of being excluded from the spoils of neoliberal globalization (12). “[T]hey want somebody to pay, be humiliated, physically put under them like restoring their natural position in the world” (12). In this bottom rung, the Filipino immigrant worker “competes with frisky Puerto Ricans and athletic black boys for a cut of the overweight white businessman business” (12).

There are also the so called white trash like Jokey (29) who becomes part of the hustling scene in New York's Port Area; but unlike the minorities, Jockey, who is white, is allowed upward mobility, becoming successful as a movie actor. Seeing Jokey on the giant screen makes William painfully aware of his downward mobility, of “a contest which [he] was losing, the gap widening further” (158).

From the low point of hustling, Paulinha attempts to raise himself by taking on various casual jobs—as a typist, receptionist, data entry recorder, and transcriber (4-5)-- but nothing seems to work out, and he finds himself, at the age of thirty, with no hope of improving his lot

Once, walking with his friend Devo down the streets of New York's Chinatown, smelling the stench of bloody meat sold in the butcher shops that reminds him of his childhood in Manila and seeing the signs and newspapers in Chinese language, William has a sensation of disorientation:



So many things emphasized a sense of being at a remove, of being in America and not in America at the same time, that I could have sworn I was dreaming and that this was the same place I visited every night--not-Manila and not-New York, not-past and not-present. Stuck in limbo. Between departure and arrival. A place like the future, thought of and imagined in ways that barely touched the circumference of its incomprehensibility. (32)

Paulinha has a sense that he has after all not left the Philippines and the “Third World” life his family had attempted to escape in search of a “better life” (262). He experiences his life in New York as “[s]tuck in limbo,” going nowhere; being in “not-past and not-present” renders him non-existent. In this same scene, as Paulinha walks on, he sees behind the window of a busy restaurant, “hung pieces of meat dripping juices onto a metal trough, like some primitive timekeeping device, each ping on the stainless-steel surface one second,” and a thought flashes in his mind: “My whole life the same way . . . dribbling away” (32). This image of the “meat dripping juices” becomes for Paulinha a representation of his sense of hopelessness and desperation, of his life wasting away.

But, I would like to point out, these cut “pieces of meat,” too, symbolize the fragmentation in the subjectivity of the immigrant worker produced by the fragmentation of the urban and social within the neoliberal economic order. This fragmentation in the subjectivity of the worker is also represented by Ong through Paulinha’s description of his various occupations as prostitute, typist, receptionist, data entry clerk highlighting body parts that the jobs require, seemingly expropriating or “cutting off” these specific parts from the rest of the body. In talking about his former job as a typist, Paulinha

describes how his “fingers danced on a keyboard, revealing their autonomy from the rest of [his] body” (4). The mouth to “suck cocks” (12) is expropriated from the rest of the body, just as the fingers for typing or entering data, or the ears and voice are expropriated from the rest of body in “soul destroying repetitive . . . task” (5). William narrates his experience in working in a multinational corporation:

I worked as a data entry clerk for Arco, the big oil company notorious for owning the tanker that spilled millions of gallons of crude oil into the waters surrounding some parts of Alaska. My stint there was postdisaster, but it didn’t bother me one bit. . . . I keyed code numbers into the boxes that asked for project headings. What these “Projects” were I was never quite sure of. I typed names of employees, their titles and designations, locations pertinent to these reports, comments. Comments written by whom? Come to think of it, I wasn’t sure of anything that I was typing. It all became abstract: merely speed and touch; keystrokes like paddling in water until I could get to the first fifteen-minute break. (5)

His employment as data clerk is all a matter of “speed and touch.” He does not have to know anything beyond encoding the data assigned him. The company hires him only for his hands, nothing else. In fact, success in such kind of job depends on Paulinha’s ability to compartmentalize what he thinks from his hands that type in data. Asking about the corporation’s involvement in the environmental disaster, for example, would have promptly resulted in being fired.

Aside from physical dismembering, the motif of the cut “pieces of meat” represents, too, the relational fragmentation between people in the context of labor.

There is disconnection between Paulinha and the people he deals with in his various occupations. There is no recognition of connection, much less solidarity, between the hustlers –mostly immigrant laborers-- and their “customers”—mostly while middle-aged middle-class gentlemen--a disconnection dramatized by Han Ong’s use of the technique of “montage” with “jump cuts like a staccato beat” in his narration of bathroom scene in the Port Authority Bus Terminal (12). Representing the lack of human intimacy and emotional connection between Paulinha and his series of clients, the narrator instructs the reader to imagine a montage “through one long sentence, attribute[ing] each segment to a separate talking head, forming a comic chain: Yeah suck that dick, come on fuckhead, that’s it, take daddy’s juicy dick in your hot mouth, isn’t daddy’s dick juicy, come on, yeah, yeah, yeah” (12). Paulinha fails to see his connection with the elderly immigrant Jewish lady from Poland, “a survivor of the camps,” whom he worked for as a transcriber of her memoirs. Her stories of sadness and life full of ghosts could have connected with Paulinha’s as a fellow immigrant, but he could not get beyond the lady’s slips in grammar and locution, with “sentences that snaked back and forth and then back again until you weren’t sure how everything had begun and where you were” (6). As a mail clerk, pushing a metal cart “up and down three floors, distributing mails” to the lawyer’s secretaries, he never gets “beyond their bright, shiny names: Mary, Violet, Clarita, Sara, Jamina” (4). William fails to see his connection with his supervisor, “a kindly black woman” who must have lived a lonely life, “the exact one [he] lived through” (5).

Han Ong’s highlighting of the disconnections in the relations of labor production go along with the Marxist critique of the alienation capitalist production engenders. But

in the context of twenty-first century neoliberal global capitalism, the degree of alienation is ratcheted up to the nth degree. The motif of dismemberment, especially in the figure of distinct body parts of the immigrant laborer, can be read as mimicking the basic strategy of hyper compartmentalization that characterizes neoliberal global capitalism. Digitalization-- the technological process of breaking down data into the smallest possible discrete components --makes possible “the compression of time and space” (Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 284) that bankrolls the production strategy of distributing worldwide different component parts of a commodity to maximize profits to a previously unimagined degree. This digitalization, this breaking down into the smallest discrete parts, to render anything consumable and disposable has become the template, the logic of being and relating in a neoliberal globalized capitalist society.

We see in Paulinha the representation of fragmented subjectivity, and the novel can be read as a narrative of the process of Paulinha’s total fragmentation as a neoliberal global capital subject. Early on in the novel, we see Paulinha as alienated not only from his country of origin, but also from his past. Looking at Philippine stamps, William feels “sad, knowing that a whole part of [his] life was over, and that [he] didn’t miss it one bit” (17). The “compression of time and space” that has enabled globalization has also meant depriving the marginalized of “time” (history) and “space” (belonging). Without time and space, the subject is deprived of meaning.

What holds Paulinha’s subjectivity from completely fragmenting is something from his past that he holds on to--his desire to be good (30). A lapsed Catholic, Paulinha nonetheless sees goodness as a means of “penance” (50) for his sins, a way of becoming

whole again. He experiences goodness as something light and life-giving and connects him to other people, an energy that pushes against the dominant pull towards disintegration in the global city. Paulinha says: “My good deed of the last few months was one that was easy, like breathing. It was to take care of someone whom I loved, Preciosa X” (15). Preciosa is an older Filipino woman immigrant living in the same building as Paulinha does, who suffers from a hip injury. Paulinha has adopted her as family, and he comes in to clean her apartment, do her laundry, pick up her mail, return library books, and anything else she needs. Running errands for her, Paulinha, in a “rare instance” feels “connected to everyone else in the city” whom he now recognizes as “fellow errand-runners . . . grimly determined to beat the city’s million hindrances to get our days behind us” (17).

He tells Devo, his friend: “I want to be good, I really do, badly do,” but he has enough self-awareness to know that the “statement, coming from [him], definitely need[s] the conviction-lending strategy of repetition” (30-31). Paulinha makes this declaration only because he feels an opposite pull: “But I’m broke” (31). He says: “I want to be better than what I am now but I have to put it aside for just a little bit so I can make some money, but as soon as I have the money, I’ll resume my plan of being good” (30). This is Paulinha’s central dilemma in the novel, and it is interesting to note that what he perceives as preventing him from being good is his lack of financial means. To follow his logic, having money is a necessary condition to “resume [his] plan of being good.” It is also interesting to note that his statement “I’m broke,” a colloquial expression for having no money, can also be read in terms of the novel’s motif of fragmentation as an internal fracturing: “I’m broken.” William aligns poverty with brokenness, and the

solution to brokenness, is to “make some money.” Therefore, to push William’s logic further, being good (i.e. whole) is closely related to having money, and the relationship is so close that at some point it becomes difficult for William to distinguish the two from each other and makes possible the replacement of the good by material goods.

What started William’s question is his awareness that Shem’s offer to employ him as a fake feng shui master to humiliate the rich—to leave a big “fuck you sign” in the middle of their living rooms—involves doing something wrong, involves losing his innocence. William realizes that he has “indeed walked over a line which demarcated not-youth from youth, and I realized further that I was not sad about this” (30)

For William, walking over the line demarcating the innocence of youth from not-youth meant walking over the line demarcating the world of the immigrant workers and that of the wealthy. He has strayed into the spaces of the rich before where he was made to feel unwelcome, like the fancy shop he went into to admire the goods, but he was greeted by unwelcoming stares (352). Or once, watching a show at the Lincoln Center with Preciosa who was given free tickets, he feels ill at ease, feeling he does not belong to a place where the elite come together “to celebrate their separateness” from the rest of humanity (42). Significantly, he is dressed in white shirt and black pants, the uniform of the waiters at the Lincoln Center; Paulinha is allowed in the theater only as a waiter.

But seeing the houses of the rich as feng shui expert Master Chao, he realizes “there are no words to adequately prepare someone accustomed to shit all their life for an encounter with real sparing wealth” (171). He cannot believe that “these fanged, long-fingernailed people could be in the same world as [himself], that [he] could even reach

them” (59). As a feng shui master, William a.k.a. Master Chao, is welcomed and highly regarded by the elite for his supposed expertise—managing relations between the physical and the metaphysical worlds. For William, entering the public and private spaces of the rich has the feel of visiting a Disney theme park (he tells the wealthy African American Rowley, “I’m just visiting your world”). The “hot” theme of the moment is “multiculturalism,” and William is successful only in so far as he follows the “script” of the service industry. Like the “front area” employees of Disney World, the job of William as Master Chao is to manage emotions; what he produces is “emotive labor” (Sharon Zukin’s term). To be able to do this effectively, Paulinha has to put on a peaceful, dignified demeanor all the time. Success, as William realizes, depends on turning his back on who he is. Shem hires William to play feng shui master merely because he looks Chinese, never mind if he’s Filipino and not Chinese. The first lesson for the Filipino American worker to succeed in New York is not to be Filipino but to pretend that he is East Asian. To be able to enjoy the privilege of being part of the “model minority,” the Filipino American has to pretend he is Chinese or Japanese. Filipinos and other dark-skinned Southeast Asian ethnicities are not included among the so-called “model minority.”

Within New York’s supposedly egalitarian multicultural society, Filipino immigrant workers, as well as other dark-skinned Asian workers, most of them women, are given the place only as domestic servants and nannies. William encounters Filipina maids in the palatal homes (59, 103) and he overhears one of the party guests, Paul Tan Chuang Toledo Lin, the wealthy Chinese American scholar advising the editor of a Lifestyle magazine, a Jewish American woman kvetching about her outspoken Indian

nanny, to get a Filipino (103). “They make the best servants,” Lin says, to which William retorts to himself, “not in opposition, but to ease the joke to its punch line: Why? . . . Because they kneel by instinct and bend over like clockwork “ (104). Filipino immigrant workers find a place within this economy as, in Rhacel Parrenas’s term, “servants of globalization” (*Servant of Globalization*, 243) because of their subservience, trained through the Philippine’s long history of colonialism by Spain and the United States.

Those who go against the script like Cardie Kerchpoff’s Indian nanny who questions her employer are likely to be ejected from this economy. William, too, as Master Chao, by adhering to the societal script, attains success; and it is when he veers off the script set down by Shem and New York’s elite society that he gets into trouble and gains enemies who would eventually tear him down. Shem has taught William “to think of these people [the rich] not as human beings like [himself] but rather as physical obstacles to the material benefits long due [him]” (106). Instead, William begins to see them as human beings, especially those who have been stepped on and victimized in the New York elite’s social pecking order. His sympathy stemming from his own grievances as a Filipino immigrant worker, William begins to see his mission of revenge as not only Shem’s but more importantly his. He wreaks his own revenge on the New York elite, savoring the curses he dispenses to them. “There were. . . so many rich New Yorkers to be separated from their money—rich people who, I had to admit, were almost all white. This put me face to face with the enveloping extent of my racial grievance” (249). William soon recognizes himself as an avenging angel, “a representative of shadowy people somehow connected with the dead or who were themselves dead, people



with only half-clear plans who had picked me as their agent [of justice]’ (245). He recruits his friend Preciosa, the failed actress, to impersonate a witch, and together they perform a reverse exorcism to call on all the negative energies of the universe—in behalf of all suffering immigrant laborers, especially Filipino immigrant laborer—to afflict the rich of New York City.

#### V. Transformation in the Subjectivity of the Filipino Immigrant Worker

Paulinha’s career as Master Chao abruptly ends when he is exposed as a fraud by a reporter of a celebrity magazine hungry for a scoop. To escape the ire of the elite and the long arm of the law of the global city, Paulinha temporarily hides out in his friend Devo’s cabin outside New York City before escaping by bus to California. He calculates he can subsist on his thirty-five thousand loot (his savings from his stint as Chao) for at least nine months: “nine months—more than enough time to be reborn. I would play dead for nine months, and afterward, like Jesus Christ before me, be resurrected, come out of hiding to adopt to a new situation that someone like me...would not seem likely to inhabit” (354). Paulinha seems to have had the notion that he could just walk away from it all. In a conversation with his Filipino friend, Preciosa, during an intermission in the program at the posh Lincoln Center, tells Paulinha: “We don’t have to stay. There’s a choice, you know. You don’t have to be unhappy” (41). What Preciosa says here about walking away from the Lincoln Center can be interpreted metaphorically to mean walking away from the larger New York culture and society with its ethos of materialism and consumerism. At the end of the novel, Paulinha does walk out, but can one really simply walk away? Not so, Ong’s *Fixer Chao* seems to be saying. One’s subjectivity is shaped by one’s interaction with the spatial environment with its economic and cultural

processes; a new being is born, that is, the ideal subject of neoliberal global capitalism: a commoditized and disposable service worker.

Paulinha's close encounters with the elite of New York City have given him insights into their worldview--but it has also not left him unscathed. From his stint as Master Chao, one of William's most important realizations has to do with the elite's obsessive pursuit of "pleasure"—and how he is not inure to the same materialism. Enjoying an expensive Boston scrod from a diner, William wonders how the scrod he is dining on is far removed from the original fish that it was, with its bones and skin and scales, and he arrives at an insight into the seductions of "luxury":

‘Tis was what it was to be alive. To focus the bulk of your thinking, your concern, your brain-picturing elsewhere: not to think of the fish as fish, but as a conduit to pleasure, to comfort, to the filling of a need, like having punched a jukebox selection. Not to think of man as man, but rather as the conduit to things from heaven made available by the expenditure of cash. To think of him as like a lightning rod, one finger in the far reaches of the firmament, while his feet were plunked right down on the ground, inside your home, to conduct whatever electricity could be stolen from God straight to you. And I was just like the clients I made fun of, with no connection to anything except an overwhelming desire to be made comfortable—skin peeled, bones removed . . . (261)

Paulinha, made privy to the inner workings of the mind of the rich through listening to their most intimate confidences, recognizes their insatiable greed and deep insecurities, fears of losing their hold on their wealth and privilege. The success of the

wealthy, William realizes, is achieved by an iron will to drive out any business competition at all cost. Suzy Yamada, New York's most successful businesswoman reaches the top through machination and manipulation. Shem, too, despite his avowed sympathy with the marginalized, is obsessed with achieving success and being accepted finally by the elite as one of their own. Shem's revenge, William realizes, is "a struggling writer's revenge for having been overlooked, consigned to drone work while his archrival held in one hand acclaim, and in the other, an income of six figures" (245-246). William knows that he is a mere instrument not only for revenge but for Shem to gain his place back in the inner circle. Shem stops at nothing, even using his own young daughter, Beulah, to get back at his wife and her lover by coaching Beulah to accuse her stepfather of sexual abuse (244).

The global city's idea of success and luxury then is predicated on manipulating and using other people as mere "conduit to pleasure, to comfort, to the filling of a need" (261). It is a worldview and way of looking at people that makes them mere means to an end. The elite circle, Paulinha realizes, regard each other as both competition and means to this end. In other words, Ong seems to indicate, the world of the rich is just as fragmented and fragmenting as the world of the poor.

But Paulinha is aware that he, too, is not inured to the greed and materialism that he condemns in the rich. The "quality of life" that his own family aspired for is an expression of the same desire. Responding to Preciosa's question why his family immigrated to the U.S., Paulinha replies:

They wanted a better life. This was how it always ended: at the wall conjured by those words, true though they were. What did those words

really suggest except that the life being led was suddenly made intolerable by news of another life available elsewhere? News that revealed the first life for the unnecessary sacrifice that it was. The images of this good life, this better life that existed on the other side of a line suddenly drawn by knowledge, were at the same time fuzzy and vivid: It was the vividness of a background detail in a photograph, with the background turned out of focus and made, in effect, for lack of a better word, dreamlike. So we saw objects clearly, but had no idea of their true context, what was behind them. It was only that these foreground details that we kept put eyes on represented, for us—my family and me—luxury. The *idea* of luxury. That was the most important thing for us, who believed so strongly in the categorization “Third World.” (262-263)

The “images of this good life” for William and his family consisted of objects like the “wall-to-wall carpeting” they often saw in “many Hollywood movies.” William recalls “being dazzled by brand names which wealthier school friends, when they invited [him] to their homes, would take out and make a show of: General Electric, Sunbeam, Hoover, Proctor-Silex, Pfizer, Zenith” (263).

It is the same desire for “a better life” that has attracted many immigrant laborers, especially from the so-called Third World to the United States. The dominance of neoliberal global capitalism is also the dominance of its values for materialism and consumerism. But as James Ferguson explains in *Global Shadows*, the desire for “First World” way of life (e.g. preference for Western style house over the traditional mud hut) among many sub-Saharan Africans is an expression of their desire for respect, to not be

looked down on by the rest of the world. Ferguson points out that many Africans perceive that there is an implicit standard by which they are being measured, and in the contemporary global order, those standards are that of materialism and consumerism (32). Although the Philippine context is very different from that of sub-Saharan Africa, Ferguson's insight is helpful in explaining Filipino obsession with anything "Made in America," much less with migrating to America. U.S. colonization of the Philippines succeeded in inculcating a "colonial mentality" that regarded anything American as superior and anything Filipino as inferior, "primitive."

But now as William recalls the US brand names that dazzled him as a boy, he also remembers that

in the bathroom at the Port Authority, there had been a hyperactive automatic hand dryer which was a Proctor-Silex. I remembered laughing to myself when I saw it, like a secret joke between two different versions of myself, both of whom recognized the words 'Proctor Silex' finally for their true, their hidden meaning, which was: as a shorthand for all the changes that are bound to happen in the process from wanting to get there to finally getting there, the process from dreaming the dream to eventually getting it—or some would say, killing it. (263)

William recognizes what reaching for the American dream has cost him—his identity, his dignity, his values, his family from whom he has been estranged all these years in the U.S. He realizes that he and his family, in buying into the American dream hook, line, and sinker, has exchanged the good for the neoliberal global capitalism's idea of material "goods," as "images of [the] good life."

In the end, William gains a bitter but “clear eyed assessment of the world as it was” (355). Paulinha definitively turns his back on being “good” when he refuses to comfort Kendo, the rebellious son of Suzy Yamada, as he lays dying. Paulinha realizes that Kendo’s death is the ultimate revenge against Suzy—“[here] was the big thing Suzy Yamada was to be deprived of to pay for what she had stolen from others” (345). At the same time, Kendo can be interpreted as a representation of William’s younger self, and Kendo’s death represents the death of Paulinha’s innocence. No longer is he “as if at a school and accepting everything on the blackboard as essential, as insurmountable because they’d been set down before [he] walked in” (106).

David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, discusses De Certeau’s treatment of “social spaces as . . . open to human creativity and action” where “walking . . . defines a ‘space of enunciation’” (213). As William walks, he “enunciates” his new identity, now not so much based on ethnicity, as on a common history of dispossession and anger. He begins to discover a new meaning, he fashions a new definition of what it means to be good. As he continues walking, he begins to realize that under the sun “it was only a matter of time before [he] began not looking Chinese, or even Filipino.” He has turned darker and began to look like a Native American, a “John Wayne Indian.” He comments: “I liked California. It was full of people like me, ghosts with histories receding daily” (374). It is tempting to imagine that in the end, William’s “present and past dissolve into a transcendent future” (Gurvitch’s description of “radical revolution,” cited in Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* 225), that is, the marginalized, especially the immigrant laborers, erupt in revolution against the global city.

At the end of the novel, Paulinha learns to appreciate “what had been a lifelong irritant—that [he] walked around the world unseen, as if invisible.” For him it has now “become a strange and beautiful blessing, freeing [him] to live his life all over again” (377). This “invisibility,” long a mark of abjection for Filipino immigrant laborers, now becomes a weapon for survival, that which enables him to live. The mere act of survival, becomes now a daily “triumph” (377). But towards what end?

In the final lines of the novel, Paulinha speaks of his epiphany: his life before California has been like “a rough draft, a vague outline to be crossed over, exceeded, to be transcended, as if that life was the earthly life and this one, the California one, with myself benumbed and calm and floating inside the bubble of mall after white mall—places that were like hospitals with their piped-in music and blanching light—as if this life, finally, was the heavenly one” (377). Paulinha survives and “triumphs,” but only to live a life “benumbed,” spent “inside the bubble of mall after white mall.” Such Disneyfied spaces, safe and orderly, devoted to commodities become for Paulinha “the heavenly one.” Paulinha achieves his family’s American Dream, but at the cost of his identity and subjectivity. In the end, Paulinha is completely transformed into the ideal subject of neoliberal global capitalism: objectified and commoditized.

**Chapter Four: External and Internal Mechanisms of Control and Surveillance  
in Roley's *American Son* and Galang's *One Tribe***

Walking down the glitzy 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Promenade, an *al fresco* shopping mall in upscale Santa Monica, California, a tackily attired small, dark-skinned middle aged Filipino woman appears out of place in the midst of expensively dressed, mostly white, shoppers and tourists. The perfumed crowd there, and even the salesclerks, makes sure she feels out of place. As she nears a group of young people coming the opposite direction, she not only has to step out of their path, but she even has to squeeze herself beside a bench, for they walk straight on even if it is obvious that they see her, one young man even clipping the Filipino woman's shoulder. When she enters a boutique and approaches the make up counter, the redhead fashion model-type salesclerk turns away taking no notice of her. In Brian Ascalon Roley's novel *American Son*, spaces of spectacles discipline and exclude unwanted "elements" like the poor-looking Filipino woman, not so much through formal agents of control (like the police or security guards or even surveillance paraphernalia), but through informal interaction—dirty looks, turning away, purposely ignoring, clipping another person's shoulders--with those who participate in the consumption activities.

Similarly, M. Evelina Galang's novel *One Tribe* depicts modes of control and exclusion targeting ethnic minorities, in this case a Filipino American community in Virginia Beach. But more than the police squadron that regularly patrols the streets of the Filipino American neighborhood or the security guards who routinely harass Filipino American teenagers in the malls, control and surveillance of the community is achieved



through the community members' interaction with each other, disciplining one another through *tsismis* (gossip) and *hiya* (shame). In Galang's novel, traditional cultural practices like the beauty pageant and Independence Day programs meant to showcase ethnic pride become displays of assent and yet self-abjection to US consumerism.

What ties together the two novels' dramatization of discipline and control of Filipino immigrants living within spaces of consumption is the Filipino immigrants' internalization of external modes of exclusion and containment targeted at them. Roley's *American Son* tells the story of a mixed-race working-class Filipino American family struggling to survive in the midst of Los Angeles's conspicuous consumption, while Galang's *One Tribe* narrates the experiences of a Filipino American community in Tidewater, Virginia Beach, navigating the contradictions of US multiculturalism. In these two novels, the authors depict the range and extent of the mechanisms of containment aimed at ethnic minority low-wage workers, specifically Filipino immigrants, and the impact of those mechanisms on their subjectivities.

What Roley and Galang contribute in their novels to contemporary discussion on such mechanisms is the Filipino American perspective, which comes from a long history of US colonialism and neocolonialism. This perspective highlights the ways in which, for the Filipino immigrant, this history is imbricated in and interacts with contemporary mechanisms of control and surveillance in the name of commoditization. For Filipino immigrants in the United States, such encounters with mechanisms of control and surveillance begin even before they set foot in the United States. The sociologist Yen Le Espiritu, in her study of Filipino American families and communities, argues that what

makes the situation of Filipino immigrants different from most other ethnic minorities is their encounter with racialization before they even arrive in the US. She writes,

Filipino American racial formation is determined not only by the social, economic, and political forces in the United States but also by US (neo)colonialism in the Philippines and capital investment in Asia. The Filipino case thus foregrounds the ways in which immigrants from previously colonized nations are not exclusively formed as racialized minorities within the United States but also as colonized nationals while in their “homeland.” (1)

As “colonized nationals,” Filipinos have been subjected to regimes of racialized and gendered exploitative mechanisms of control and containment in their own country (as demonstrated in Chapter Two : “The Disneyization of the Philippines in Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* and *Dream Jungle*”). Even before they come to the United States, many of them have already internalized their regimentation and abjection as racialized subjects. But as I argued in Chapter One (“A Cultural History of Disneyfication”), following Kamari Clarke and Deborah Thomas, contemporary globalization runs on grooves etched by the history of colonialism and neocolonialism. The contemporary flow of the Filipino diaspora to the United States is determined by the former colonial master’s need for cheap service workers, as well as, to a certain degree, the continuing attraction for the former colonial subjects of the fantasy of the American Dream (Choy x). Finding themselves in a racially and ethnically hierarchized spatial arrangement in US urban and extra-urban spaces, Filipino immigrants recognize the strategies of control and

surveillance targeted at them as familiar cues about where to locate their bodies, how to behave, and what kind of labor they are to perform within a hierarchized corporate landscape. In other words, even before they set foot on US territory, Filipino immigrants have already been subjected all their life to imperialist structures of discipline and control; thus the depth and extent of self-abjection of many of Roley's and Galang's characters stem from multiple generations of colonial subjugations.

But *American Son* and *One Tribe* depict not just the Filipino American historical context of colonialism and neocolonialism, but also the contemporary processes of neoliberal global capitalism, of which Disneyfication is a distinctly American socio-cultural-economic formation. This chapter focuses on analyzing the novel's depiction of Disneyfication's strategy of containment and surveillance. Although Anthony Giddens has observed that surveillance "is fundamental to all types of organization associated with the rise of modernity" (qtd in Bryman 141), Disneyfication scholar Alan Bryman points out that in the context of contemporary US urban landscape, which is exemplified and, in many cases, strongly influenced, by Disneyfication, surveillance has become even more intensified--all for the "furtherance of consumption"<sup>14</sup> (141). Bryman writes:

Disneyization [Bryman's preferred term for Disneyfication] is driven by consumption and by consumerism in particular. It is the *raison d'être* of Disneyization. Citizenship under Disneyization almost comes to be defined in terms of one's capacity to consume. Consequently . . . those without the capacity to consume or who are deemed to have a limited

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Eisner, CEO of Disney Corporation, unashamedly announced this to his staff in a 1981: "We have no obligation to make art . . . . We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" (qtd in Wasko 28).

capacity to do so, or those who might hinder the consumption inclinations of consumers are either excluded or are kept under the watchful gaze of security cameras and guards. (172)

The Disney theme parks excluded from the very outset those without the capacity to consume by requiring stiffly priced entrance tickets. Inside the theme parks, staff and security are instructed to keep under strict surveillance those who might possibly disrupt the consumption activities, and those who do are discreetly whisked away by security (Zukin, "Learning from Disney World," 52). Walt Disney himself, in envisioning his utopian Celebration community, which was meant to be a model for urban centers across the US (but since then scaled down by Disney Corporation CEOs into a gated residence within EPCOT), explicitly indicated the kinds of people he wanted excluded: the homeless, tramps, and beggars (Zukin, "Landscapes of Power," 224-225).

These strategies of control and surveillance perfected by Disney Corporation have become widely used in the planning and management of urban and extra-urban spaces across the US. Michael Sorkin has noted the development of what he calls the "new city" characterized by its "obsession with 'security,' with rising levels of manipulation and surveillance over its citizenry and with a proliferation of new modes of segregation" (xiv). If, as Bryman argues, Disneyfication is a lens through which contemporary urban and extra-urban society can be seen, what observations then can be made about this more intensified application of strategies of control and surveillance in both public and private spaces? What is the impact of such strategies of surveillance and exclusion on the subjectivities of those under intense and constant scrutiny, mainly ethnic minorities. Specifically, in the context of this study, how do Filipino American fiction writers

represent Filipino immigrant experience of negotiating this landscape rife with technologies of exclusion and surveillance targeted at them? How do these fiction writers portray the impact of such control and discipline on the subjectivities of Filipino immigrant workers, their families, and communities? How do these novels dramatize Filipino American resistance to these regimes of containment?

### I. Roley's *American Son* and Spatial Control in Suburban Los Angeles

In *American Son*, Roley lays out the racially and economically fractured urban and suburban topography of post-1992 riot Los Angeles. Already the “most segregated city in the country” by the late 1960s (Fulton cited in Song 45), Mike Davis points out that “Events since the 1992 riots—including a four-year long recession, a sharp decline in factory jobs, deep cuts in welfare and public employment, a backlash against immigrant workers, the failure of police reform and an unprecedented exodus of middle-class families—have only reinforced spatial apartheid in greater Los Angeles” (*Ecology of Fear*, 361). Roley’s novel gives us the lay of the land, traversing the neighborhoods of Venice, Compton, and East Los Angeles; the posh developments of San Vicente, Brentwood, Palisades, Beverly Hills, and Bel Air; and even the nativist rural white communities of northern California.

In *American Son*, Roley situates the Filipino American Sullivan family in South Santa Monica, the “poor end” of the upscale Santa Monica suburb, bordering the poorer suburb of Venice (21). The family’s location at the border of sharp divide, with its cultural, economic, and political antagonisms, mirrors and interacts with the racial, financial, and familial tensions within the mixed-race Sullivan household. The small, dark-skinned, painfully self-conscious Filipino immigrant mother is a single parent,

having been abandoned by her abusive racist American husband, a military man who had then just returned from his station in Germany. She has taken on several low-paying service jobs to raise her two teenage sons, the elder Tomas, who behaves and dresses up in the stereotypical attire of a Mexican gangster, and Gabe, the quiet, obedient, “ideal” son who is ashamed of his Filipino mother. Tomas trains and sells attack dogs to wealthy celebrities, as well as steals and resells stolen goods, to augment the family income. By the end of the novel, Tomas succeeds in initiating his younger brother into a life of crime and violence.

Told from the point of view of Gabe, the younger son, the novel details the subtle and informal exclusionary and containment mechanisms used in predominantly white middle-class suburbs, both in private and public spaces. Accompanying Tomas to deliver attack dogs to his celebrity clients living in the wealthy neighborhoods of Palisades, Beverly Hills, San Vicente, or Bel Air (143), Gabe observes the “countryside” feel of the residential areas with the absence of sidewalks, of cars parked on streets, and of house numbers on the curbs; and the huge lawns fronting the houses, many of which are hidden from view behind gates or fences and trees. Breaking the illusion of countryside is the presence of intercoms and video cameras on gates (40), signs and technologies of hostility and fear of outsiders. Viewed in this context of hostility and fear, the absence of sidewalks can be seen as an indication that people who cannot afford cars are unwelcome in the neighborhood; the cars—mostly Mercedes and BMWs—are parked not on the curbs but way beyond the gates, because of fear of vandalism or theft, as well as because of the luxuriously uninhabited land between street and house. The lawns and trees hiding the houses are part of an armature of a veritable fortress, and soon the attack

dogs trained by Tomas would be part of this armature, meant to keep strangers out.

Gabe tells us that these dogs are “cheap” and “not even the best guard dogs,” but after they mauled and killed children, owning one became “cool” and “like having a tattoo or being branded on a shoulder or arm” for many wealthy young whites (21). Indeed, in Roley’s novel, the voracious consumption of surveillance and other security paraphernalia has become a new form of status symbol among the middle class. Mike Davis has observed this phenomenon among the wealthy, noting that “up-market lifestyles” have become “defined by the ability to afford ‘electronic’ guardian angels to watch over the owner and all significant others in his or her life” (*Ecology of Fear*, 368).

Gabe observes, too, the techniques of exclusion and surveillance in commercial public spaces within the urban and suburban spaces. However, he hardly mentions the formal mechanisms of control conventionally associated with these spaces, like the presence of security officers and surveillance cameras. Although Gabe refers to an upscale Starbucks protected by “iron railings” (38), what Roley is interested in and painstakingly details are subtle and informal mechanisms of discipline in public spaces. Despite the fact that guards and security cameras seem to be out of sight, the “work” of surveillance operates through the gaze of salesclerks and customers. At the Brentwood Country Mart, an upscale commercial space frequented by wealthy Jews, Gabe observes people’s wary glances at Tomas as they eat, and the bookstore manager’s suspicious look, before telling Tomas to move on (38-39). Indeed, in the novel, Roley heightens the sense of this panoptical terrain of Los Angeles through this use of the motif of “looking” as containment.

But just as looking is a mechanism of discipline, withholding it (i.e. by ignoring) can be just as effective and can even be more potent. Gabe's mother, a small, dark-skinned, Filipina immigrant, seems to be both invisible and hypervisible at the same time, and is dealt with accordingly by agents of public space. The ethnic minority mother is deliberately but subtly, ignored by a salesclerk. As soon as the cosmetics saleslady sees the ethnic minority woman approach the counter, she begins chatting with another salesclerk across the aisle. Gabe's mother stands waiting and leans over the counter to indicate she needs the salesclerk's help, but the girl merely continues chatting (180). In another instance, a group of young people, "college-students type," walking along the mall corridor, almost runs over the Filipino mother as though she is invisible, despite the fact that they see her. Gabe narrates:

The times I have been here with Tomas, people always step aside, even older men in suits with a girlfriend or secretary whom they reluctantly guide out of our way. But now my mother steps out of other people's paths, and I do too. We near a group of skinny college-student types. They look like engineers, nerdy, and I would not normally get out of their way. But even though the pale one in a yellow button-down shirt sees Mom, he acts as if he does not notice her, and she actually has to squeeze beside a bench to let them pass. The biggest one clips her shoulder. (179)

Such blindness on the part of the white salesclerks and students towards the Filipina immigrant is an exclusion and containment technique: unwanted people are ignored, i.e. not given the service they need, so they should move on and out of the commercial center; a simple activity as walking along the mall corridors becomes a power play for



those belonging to the dominant group against powerless minorities, a lesson on society's pecking order, on who belongs and who doesn't. That the Filipina mother has "to squeeze beside a bench to let them pass" (179) is a form of bodily discipline, circumscribing the immigrant woman's very steps, her gait, the path of those steps, the posture and turning of the body to make herself compact in order to let the group pass. Apparently, she has not made her body small and thin enough, for "[t]he biggest one clips her shoulder" (179). Such blindness is a denial of the materiality of the immigrant woman and of her right to exist.

The mechanisms of spatial control and surveillance then are not only external and their agents are not only security officers, but salesclerks and consumers towards one another, e.g., looking anxiously at someone who appears different, the refusal to give way to somebody along their path. Individuals internalize the norms and regulations of the Disneyfied space and become themselves nodes of control and containment, disciplining others as well as themselves. The blindness to the presence of the immigrant Filipino woman has become internalized, a psychological and bodily reflex. Much like the guard dogs trained (i.e. disciplined) by Tomas, participants in activities of consumption are trained through daily experiences of formal and external structures of exclusion and containment to internalize these mechanisms. But the rules and roles internalized from these mechanisms of control and surveillance differ and are stratified according to class, race, and gender. Members of the dominant groups are trained to take on the role of attack dogs, just as members of minority groups, outsiders trying to get in, expect to be barked at and attacked.

It is quite telling that when Gabe runs away from home and passes as white in the middle of nativist rural northern California, he remains diffident, expecting to be found out at every turn. It is as if he has ingested a surveillance camera which monitors his every gesture from the inside. It is night when his Oldsmobile breaks down, and when he sees from afar some young people coming his way, he “keep[s] in a shadow” (64) so they will not see him. In the diner, an elderly woman presumes he is a college student and she and the waitress are quite solicitous of the young man. Despite the kindness and hospitality shown to him, Gabe has the “feeling people are waiting on [him] to leave” (70), a sense that he has wherever he goes. Although passing as white, he has a keen sense that he is nonetheless not welcome. He says, “I have noticed that lots of times people have no clue where they are welcome or not, though that has not been my problem—at least, I know when to leave although maybe not necessarily when to stay” (97). Gabe has imbibed this sense of always being an outsider wherever he goes, and his diffidence and obsequiousness in dealing with white Americans seem to come from this self-abjection.

When Gabe is offered a ride to Oregon by Stone, the tow truck driver, and he cannot avoid engaging in conversation with him, Gabe readily agrees with everything the driver says, mainly criticism of living in Los Angeles (82) and asks him questions that are likely to please him (88). When Stone starts his diatribe against Mexicans and, especially “Cambodians, Vietnamese, Laotians . . . those mute Asians [who] won’t even learn to speak English” (84), Gabe feels uneasy. Perhaps out of fear of being discovered, Gabe overcompensates by starting his own diatribe, inventing a story based on what he has seen, especially on Tomas’s activities, without letting the driver know about Tomas:

Where we live it's a big problem for my mom . . . She has to sleep in the back of our house because of drive-by shootings . . . We get all kinds. The Mexicans come up and it's like they're still roaming all the barrios killing each other in Mexico. They have their neighborhoods they mark up with graffiti. Like pissing dogs. The new ones have macho mustaches and slick their hair back like they're short Indian-looking guys. The Cambodians are the worst. It's like their war isn't over yet. (86)

But Gabe's sense of fear of being discovered seems to be founded. The conversation with Stone starts to take a sinister turn when the truck driver shows Gabe a pendant with his dead daughter's picture in it and leads Gabe's finger to a bullet-hole on his chest (87), and these two Stone seems to indicate are in some way connected to Asian gangs in Los Angeles. Gabe is filled with mortal fear when Stone speaks of "alien abduction" to explain how the locals keep the area safe. Stone excitedly tells Gabe, "You know how journalists keep coming up here to study reports of alien abductions? . . . Well there's plenty of abductions, but it isn't aliens who do it . . . These locals are crazy . . . They take troubles into their own hands. When undesirables come up, they tell them to get lost, and if they don't, that's their own peril" (88).

It is in this context of Gabe's self-abjection and self-preservation that we can look at the novel's key scene: Gabe's betrayal of his own mother. When Stone sees Gabe's Filipina mother from outside the diner, Gabe tells him, "That's our maid" (116). Gabe has spun his lies throughout the long journey to Oregon, and he is now unable to extricate himself. Supposedly the good son, Gabe had always been ashamed of his Filipino mother (30), her shortness and dark skin color making impossible his attempts at passing. It is

quite telling that during the ride to Oregon, when Gabe worries about his reflection in the mirrored glass it is the physical markers of his ethnicity—that which come from ethnic mother--that he wants to erase: his narrow eyes; straight, black hair; high cheekbones; and “slender Asian hips” (90). In denying his Filipina mother, Gabe is denying himself, his ethnicity, in order to preserve himself, or at least to maintain his sociality with whites, represented by the tow truck driver. Gabe’s willingness to betray his own mother to preserve the illusion of whiteness exposes the depth of his self-abjection. Gabe’s character represents here an assimilationist ethos that is willing to sacrifice personal identity, family, and ethnicity in a desperate attempt to be accepted into dominant US society.

But Gabe’s diffidence and racial self-abjection are what he has imbibed from his Filipina mother. In the novel, the immigrant Filipino mother’s excessive diffidence because of her accent, is a learned reaction (both bodily and psychological) from her constant experiences of Americans looking down on her, of being “clipped on the shoulder,” or simply not being able to understand her on account of her accent (179). The immigrant woman reacts obsequiously and submissively to the public humiliation and bullying by a white woman when the Filipino mother hit the bumper of the lady’s SUV at Gabe’s exclusive Catholic school (178). In another instance, she is too timid to tell the perfume salespeople at Fedco that her number was bypassed (customers had to take numbers because there were too many people), and, instead, though upset, simply takes another number and cries in her chair (147). In the incident where the cosmetic saleslady ignores her, Gabe’s mother’s reaction is to merely look around to make sure nobody else witnessed her humiliation. When the salesclerk finally attends to her, after

Gabe's rebuke, the small immigrant mother can only look at her "deferentially" and say, "I'm just looking" (183).

Gabe's paternal aunt, who has kept touch with them even after her brother abandoned his wife and children, explains to Gabe that Manila "wasn't kind to [his mother] during her childhood" (168). The letters from the Philippines that punctuate the main sections of the novel give us subtle indications what those subjections were.

Written to Gabe's mother by her authoritarian elder brother Betino, the letters serve as transnational attempts at control and surveillance of his wayward sister (i.e. because she had left the Philippines for the United States and married an American). The brother's letters, too, function as a reminder of the transnational dimension of the strategies of surveillance and control practiced in Los Angeles, as well as in other cities of the US. The brother, a member of the elite Laurel family, lives in a first world bubble—his mansion is in Forbes Park, the most posh neighborhood in the Philippines—amidst massive poverty (134).

In the letters, Betino addresses Gabe's mother with her familial pet name, "Ika" (11), and though a diminutive is usually interpreted as a term of endearment, as used by the authoritarian older brother, it becomes a term of diminution, of being put in one's place. The patronizing tone and content of the letters say as much: the brother subtly rebukes Gabe's mother for her sons' negative behavior, putting her down as a mother by telling her to send her sons to the Philippines so he could discipline them and teach them "what it means to be a Laurel," a prominent Filipino family (11). Apparently, the traditional elite Laurel family had fallen into hard times when Gabe's mother was a young woman, and this might have been one of the factors for her to migrate to the

United States (135), although it is possible that she also left the Philippines to escape the control of her patriarchal and authoritarian family (her fear of her father's ghost [26-27] may not only be due to superstition but to guilt). The older brother has since then become a successful, "well connected" (11-12) businessman, and as head of the family after the father's death, has taken over the responsibilities and duties of a Laurel patriarch, which includes caring for and disciplining the members of the family, especially the females. In his letters to his sister, he constantly asks her to come home to the Philippines and put her two sons under his care. Hearing of Tomas, and later, Gabe, too, becoming undisciplined and violent, is unacceptable to him as patriarch, and he uses all means of persuasion to convince her to send them to him. He reminds her how quiet and obedient her sons were when they were young boys (57), and also reminds her of her religious piety as a child ("We all thought you would become a nun, but instead you became an American!" [135]) and her dutifulness as a sister (136)—qualities of tractableness in women and children valorized by the patriarchy. His frustration, though, comes out in his last letter when he admits she and her sons "are equally difficult to figure out" (136).

The letters, too, reveal the neocolonial and global capitalist values of the elite Filipino families. In the letters, the brother repeatedly praises Tomas' and Gabe's "mestizo looks," betraying the Filipino elites' racism imbibed from the country's Spanish and American colonizers. Betino's elitist racism is corroborated by his injunction to her sister to make Tomas befriend "nice American and Asian children of successful families" instead of "poor Mexican children" (12). On the one hand, the injunction allows us to imagine the subjection, the second-class status, the self-hatred internalized by Ika as a

dark-skinned female member growing up in a racist, patriarchal Spanish mestizo elite family (113). On the other hand, the brother's injunction shows the Filipino elites' participation not only in globalized ideologies of racism, but also in global capitalism's low valuation of the poor. This is attested to by the brother's proud remark that though there are more poor people now in the Philippines, his "circumstances have improved" (135) and that "armed guards keep the poor people and crime out" of the exclusive neighborhood of Forbes Park (134). Also, the brother looks down on "many poor, uneducated domestic laborers and bar girls who must live abroad to earn money" whom the brother blames for the "low valuation of Filipinos" abroad (134). The spatial exclusion and surveillance directed towards minorities in the Disneyfied spaces of the US are practiced as well in neocolonial Manila. By portraying such continuities across national borders, Roley in *American Son* highlights the transpacific network of neoliberal global capitalism.

This double subjugation—by the mechanism of exclusion and containment in the gentrified spaces of suburban Los Angeles and by the elitist patriarchy in her family in the Philippines—continue to operate within her own Filipino American family. On the one hand, her family in the Philippines—that "nagging extended family"—also attempts to control and run her life through phone calls and letters. On the other hand, she suffers the racism and abuses of her American husband who marries her because of his Orientalist fantasy of the "meek and obedient" Filipino Asian woman, and complains that "he had been fooled because she came with a nagging extended family" (24). But even after Tomas throws his drunk father out of the house for physically abusing Gabe and

threatening to hit his mother (24), the father's violence and rejection of his wife are continued by the two sons, albeit in more complex and subtle ways.

Tomas takes on the paternal role in the family, protecting and standing up for his painfully shy mother against people who bully her—the “yoga mother” whose SUV's bumper she hit accidentally, as well as their Filipino and American relatives—and helping provide for the family's needs by training and selling attack dogs and by stealing household fixtures (a couch, sink and faucet, stereos), even jewelry that would match his mother's skin tone. But at the same time, he shows his disdain for his mother's and younger brother's passivity and deference toward the dominant white Americans. He rejects the stereotype of the “invisible” Asian as meek and mute, and, instead, puts on the persona of the hypervisible stereotypical aggressive and violent Mexican gangster. He wears a big gold cross and thin T-shirts that show off his lean, muscular body and the image of the Lady of Guadalupe tattooed on his back (45), and he drives a big Oldsmobile, the preferred car of gangsters (41). At home, he behaves like the stereotypical boorish Mexican macho gangster—doing nothing around the house and leaving messes for the woman (i.e. his mother) to clean up, staying out many nights for weeks without bothering to tell his mother he would not need dinner, and bringing over girlfriends knowing that would deeply upset his religious mother (190). He embarrasses his mother and shows his contempt for their Filipino American relatives by smoking pot in full view of everyone, and even teaching one of his young cousins how to use a gun (194-195). In his exclusive Catholic school, Tomas gets into trouble for taunting Korean students who could hardly speak English, and is kicked out for breaking the windows of a Japanese student's car with a tire iron (30).



Tomas' putting on the persona of a Mexican gangster is an expression of his anger and resentment at the exclusion and containment he and his family experiences as members of a working class ethnic minority. The scholar Eleanor Ty has studied what she calls the "negative effects" of globalization on Filipino American youth in Roley's novel (as well as in Han Ong's *Fixer Chao*), focusing on the youth's turn to violence and crime as a result of an "over-valorization" of material goods and their failure to "match the high expectations of the American Dream," and on the multiple pressures immigrant children experience from competing loyalties to their adopted country as well as to their "home" country (120-121). The attack dogs Tomas raises and trains are metaphorical representations of the deep anger and resentment seething within him. Ironically though, the attack dogs that embody his resentment for being excluded from the conspicuous consumption he sees around him are the same guard dogs that become part of the dominant white middle-class American's armature for his and his family's exclusion. His resentment and anger then, as represented by the attack dogs, can be seen as complicit with the status quo. On one level, Tomas, too, has internalized the dominant white middle-class strategies of exclusion and containment against ethnic minorities like himself. His act of taking on the persona of a stereotypical Mexican is a rejection of his Asian Filipino ethnicity, and this rejection of his ethnicity shows that he has bought into the mainstream Americans' stereotype of Asians as passive and helpless. As a teenager, Tomas started hanging out with Mexicans, who he saw as "tougher" than Asians, and beat up anyone who called him Asian, as well as made fun of other Asian students (30). But in rejecting his Asian ethnicity, Tomas is rejecting his mother and his brother, and, of course, himself. His harshness and violence toward his own family is an externalization

of his self-hatred. On another level, Tomas' resentment and anger for being excluded from the conspicuous wealth show how he has bought into the dominant white middle class' ideology of consumption. His animosity towards wealthy Asian students—the Koreans and Japanese in his exclusive Catholic school—is an expression, too, of envy of other Asian ethnicities that are “allowed in” spaces of consumption. His acts of criminality—stealing from houses of the rich and his participation in the looting during the 1992 L.A. riot (171)—are directed towards accumulating commodities that his family cannot afford. Tomas, putting on the persona of a Mexican gangster, is an expression of this desire for the “big time,” a participation, albeit in illicit ways, in American neoliberal capitalism's drive to accumulate wealth at all cost. As Song cautions, “to view gangs as somehow intrinsically embodying a resistance to power and race oppression is to romanticize their social limitations, for these gangs . . . seem to replicate—primarily because they can do little else—the same cultural logic that leaves them powerless and oppressed” (51). Although Song is commenting specifically on the gang's territorialism as replicating “the logic of property rights and the need for their violent protection by anchoring membership to geography” (50), his reminder applies to the tendency to view Tomas's criminality and violence as embodying a subversion of capitalism.

## II. Control and Surveillance of a Filipino American Community in Galang's *One Tribe*

M. Evelina Galang's novel *One Tribe* narrates the story of a Filipino American community in Tidewater, Virginia Beach. Virginia Beach is a resort city with the world's “longest pleasure beach” (Jones) bordered by flashy hotels, casinos, and restaurants catering to moneyed locals and tourists. It has the largest concentration of

Filipino Americans in the Northeastern United States, mostly families of active and retired Filipino US navy men. The majority of the men work as cooks and stewards. In Galang's novel, the Filipino immigrant community of Tidewater—comprised mostly of low wage service workers--occupies neighborhoods that are predominantly Filipino, and the community has been active in putting up cultural shows and even set up a Filipino community center. The novel's protagonist is Isabel Manalo, a middle-class Filipino American teacher and performance artist from Chicago who has been hired by the Tidewater community schools' American superintendent Dr. Calhoun to teach Philippine culture and history to the Filipino American students. According to Dr. Calhoun, bringing in a teacher of Filipino culture and history is a way of showing to the Filipino youth that the Republican city administration values diversity (44). Isabel realizes soon enough that she has been brought in to contain and spy on the restive Filipino American youth who have formed violent street gangs. As Isabel enters more deeply into the world of the second-generation Filipino immigrant youth, she begins to understand the multiple pressures they have to contend with that drive them to violent gang wars. As she tries to bring into the open the experiences of suffering, injustice, anger and fears of the youth, the community elders, as well as the American superintendent, turn on Isabel and prevent her from continuing her contact with the teenagers. In the end, a group of Filipino American teenage girls set out in a makeshift boat to the sea at the height of a hurricane, in a desperate act of self-annihilation.

Very little scholarly study has been done on Galang's *One Tribe*. Martin Joseph Ponce in *Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading*, briefly discusses the novel's problematization of cultural unity and of the relationship between

identity and reading (184-185). What Ponce as well as other scholars analyze more in-depth are Galang's short stories in *Her Wild American Self*, published in 1996. In her short stories, Galang experiments with both theme and form in portraying the Filipino American women's experience of gendered racism, an experimentation she continues to develop more fully in *One Tribe*. Given this formal and thematic continuity between Galang's earlier short fiction and *One Tribe*, Ponce's and the other scholars' work on *Her Wild American Self* can be useful in interpreting Galang's novel. Phillipa Kafka discusses Galang's short fiction, as well as other literary works by contemporary Asian American women writers in terms of their "responses to American success mythologies" (105). She concludes that these contemporary Asian American writings show the pitfalls of selling out to American success mythologies and that they argue for "syncretism," a "non-binary recombinant modification of both Asian and American success mythologies" (105). Especially helpful for my study is Ponce's analysis of the problematic ways practices of "home" or traditional Filipino practices are imbricated in the gendered disciplining of Filipino American females (192).

Helena Grice studies Galang's experimentation in form in her short story "Figures," focusing on the writer's representation of "silence" and signification through a "lexicon of color" (186). She argues that Galang (along with other contemporary Filipino American women writers) "blends feminist and/or historical writing with experimental and transformative modes of narration, which are themselves sources of creative and oppositional energy" (181). Grice's study reminds us of Galang's careful attention to form in *One Tribe*. In a conversation with Nick Carbo, Galang talks about writing her novel and acknowledges the influence of Hagedorn's non-linear narrative style as well as

R. Zamora Linmark's experimentation in *Rolling the R's*, Evan Connell's *Mrs. Bridge*, Ron Hansen's *Mariette in Ecstasy*, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, in her own "notions of what the shape and substance of the book can be. My novel has vignettes and dramas and these little things I call 'word photos' interrupting the narrative as a way to show the fabric of storytelling in this Filipino American based world" (291-292).

It is interesting that Galang, in explaining her narrative style in rendering "what it means to belong to this TRIBE" uses a spatialized image of "traffic across Metro Manila":

In my understanding of our lives as members of the Filipino Diaspora—we are a community where history and narrative are as disparate and collaged as traffic across Metro Manila. (Who goes in a straight line? It's always *ikot-ikot*—taking short cuts which are actually long, snaking avenues of traffic jams and dead ends and hard to breathe diesel oil.)" (Carbo and Galang 288)

Galang in *One Tribe* experiments with form as a means of getting across the Filipino experience of always getting "interrupted" (Carbo and Galang 289), both on the level of storytelling (for example, the use of digression) and of writing their own history (interrupted by multiple colonizers). Together with these formal experimentation, Galang draws from Filipino literary traditions and cultural beliefs, such as the use of the stock character of the mad/wise philosopher character (from Jose Rizal's character of Filosofo Tasio) and references to spirits of the dead accompanying the living. Perhaps the lack of scholarly attention given to *One Tribe* is partly due to the western readers' bafflement by

Galang's experimentation in form and use of a Filipino storytelling sensibility?

Whether or not this is the case, what is certain is that these formal preoccupations are central to Galang's literary project. Galang experiments with novelistic form to explore what it means to be part of this Filipino American community in the face of gendered racism and Filipino "invisibility" in mainstream American culture, as well as internal fractiousness in the Filipino American community (Carbo and Galang 292).

In Galang's novel, the Filipino American community, comprised mostly of low wage service workers, is situated at the fringes of the Disneyfied spaces of Virginia Beach, and targeted for exclusion and containment. Similar to the Filipino American family of Santa Monica, California in Roley's novel, the Filipino immigrant community of Tidewater finds itself excluded from the spaces of spectacles. The Filipino American teenagers bear the brunt of control and exclusion tactics in commercial public spaces. They are regularly under surveillance and bullied by the police (43). Miguel, one of Isabel's students says, "if we're walkin' around with our friends . . . and we're all Pinoy, white cops stop us and they think for sure we've got guns or drugs on us" (202). A group of Filipino American teenagers are arrested at the mall by the security guards who "were coming down hard on gangs." Miguel, one of the youth being arrested, complains: "We just shopping, me and my friends, and they haul us in like criminals" (358).

Galang depicts the city administration's containment of the Filipino community through the police force and the city's public schools. Dr. Andrea Calhoun, the school superintendent works in close coordination with the police and is responsible for the militarization of the schools. Isabel narrates how her

students at Westover had to walk through metal detectors every morning just to get to class. She's been there at lunch when security guards announced random searches, frisking freshmen for scissors and blades, for guns. They lined the students up along a wall, spread their legs and arms wide like they were sure the kids had something on them. They checked everything even the insides of their socks and shoes, the linings of their jeans, the spaces along their inner thighs. All this to have lunch. (119)

The disciplinary presence and gaze of the white police officers Macmillan and Smith stalk the whole novel. Regularly patrolling the Filipino American neighborhoods, they “talk about the [Filipino American] kids like they're animals” (44), and arrest without evidence for shoplifting the Filipino American activist Ferdi Mamaril (316). The smiling Republican politician Will Peterson, always present in important activities of the Filipino American community, is described by Dr. Calhoun as “a nice young man . . . who's concerned” (44), but according to officer Macmillan is the authority who puts pressure on the police to “reign in” the teenagers and make sure they behave (43).

But more insidious than these formal agents of exclusion and containment, Galang shows in her novel, are the forms of discipline within the Filipino community targeted especially at the youth, specifically at Filipina teenagers. I discussed earlier in this chapter the Filipino American community's experience of transnational racialization because of the history of US colonization and neo-colonization of the Philippines. Filipino immigrants have this experience of racialization even before they set foot in the US. Such experiences of racialization both in the Philippines and in their adopted

country dovetail with their experiences of Disneyfied America's mechanisms of containment and surveillance. The long history of racialization and the intensified tactics of control and exclusion create the possibility of internalizing these mechanisms and tactics. Galang carefully delineates the subtle ways the elders especially train this disciplinary mechanisms at the youth, especially female teenagers.

As Espiritu shows in her influential work *Home Bound*, just as the Filipino immigrant home and community are sites of nurture, "a safe place. . . in an inhospitable world," they are also sites of power differential, of exclusion and repression--"an unsafe, violent, and oppressive site for people on the margins such as women and children" (15). Following Grewal and Kaplan's "call to be attentive to 'scattered hegemonies---to the multiple, overlapping, and intersecting sources of power—as opposed to hegemonic power" (3), Espiritu argues that the Filipino American community's assertion of ethnic identity and "moral integrity" (167) is accomplished on the back of its women, specifically the young Filipino American women. According to Espiritu, for ethnic communities like the Filipino American community, "gender is a key to immigrant identity and a vehicle for racialized immigrants to assert cultural superiority over the dominant group" (157). She explains that "Because womanhood is idealized as the repository of tradition, the norms that regulate women's behaviors become a means of determining and defining group status and boundaries" (160). Thus, women, as the "designated keepers of the culture" (176), as embodiment of "the moral integrity of the idealized ethnic community, . . . are expected to comply with male-defined criteria of what constitutes 'ideal' feminine virtues" (167). Any deviation from these criteria,



especially among second-generation young women, are “interpreted as signs of moral decay and ethnic suicide” and are thus “carefully monitored and sanctioned” (167-168).

Such attempts by the ethnic Filipino community to assert Filipino identity through traditional performance of community might seem subversive of mainstream America. But as Dylan Rodriguez argues in *Suspended Apocalypse*, such contemporary discourse of “Filipino American” expressed through cultural traditions of parades and beauty pageants are attempts at conforming to the mainstream American ideology of “model minority,” expressions of desire and tactics of arguing for assimilation. The performances of these traditional practices are mechanisms of internal control and surveillance that the Filipino American community direct towards itself at the expense of female Filipino American youth in particular.

In *One Tribe*, this control and containment of young Filipino American women is represented through Galang’s depiction of the Filipino American beauty queen.<sup>15</sup> During a Filipino community celebration at the beginning of the novel, Isabel Manalo, the novel’s protagonist and main narrator, observes the beauty queen, Miss Virginia Beach-Philippines:

On the other side of the hall, directly facing the statue of Mama Mary, was a rattan throne with a back that bloomed up and out like beautiful palm leaf. And placed in the center of the throne was a girl in a silver beaded

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<sup>15</sup> In the Philippines, beauty contests were started by the American colonial government in the 1930s, but the tradition of Filipino beauty pageants is really a syncretism of American, Spanish Catholicism and Southeast Asian influences. Fenella Cannell’s influential study on beauty pageants in the Bicol region of the Philippines has shown its roots in Southeast Asian value for spectacle and beauty and desire for participation in the people’s imagined “America.” I add though the influence of religious spectacles in Spanish Catholicism, as seen, for example, in the secularized Sagada or Reyna Elena (Emperor Constantine’s mother Helen, who according to Catholic tradition searched for and found the sacred Cross on which Jesus was crucified)

crown, her hair stacked in curls and her face painted like a porcelain doll. Her dress was a traditional Maria Clara spun of white lace and pina fibers. When Isabel first saw the girl, she thought she was a statue, sitting alone in a corner of the hall, mirroring the stillness of Mama Mary . . . a wax figure in a hall of colorful beings . . . . The queen teen haunted her, painted up like one of those tragic clowns. She wondered why Miss Virginia Beach-Philippines was sitting all alone. (18)

Dressed in traditional Filipino finery with a “silver beaded crown,” enthroned on the same level as the statue of the Virgin Mary, the beauty queen is the “designated keeper of the culture” and is thus “under intensive scrutiny” by the community. As the idealized image of Filipino womanhood, she ceases to be human, and instead becomes a mere “statue,” a “wax figure,” constrained, still, alone—a “tragic” image. Later in the novel, Galang describes the new beauty queen, Lourdes, as “look[ing] so uncomfortable weighed down by two crowns, her sashes slipping off her shoulder like bra straps” (302) and “drowning in her gown, a traditional Maria Clara” (311). Lourdes finds heavy and impossible her family’s and the community’s expectations of her.

The image of the Filipina beauty queen represents the community elders’ expectation of the young Filipina American, and thus Galang’s juxtaposition of this image with that of “the rest of the girl teens grooming themselves like a litter of kittens, seemingly unaware of their adoring public” (19) highlights the stark contrast between the community’s expectations and who the female teenagers are. Galang devotes much of the energy of the novel in depicting this tension, dramatizing the crushing impact of the unbearable weight of the expectations on the young Filipina American. She describes

the objectification and commoditized circumscription the young women go through in their training and preparation for the beauty contest:

They stood there for maybe ten seconds, which was a long time when you were being studied for your nose, your posture, the shape of you—a long time when others were judging the shell your spirit lived in. . . . Then Tita Nita told them, “Turn,” and they did, this with their bums to the audience. The hall was silent, the audience checking out each ass on stage, marking cards, grading their daughters’ beauty. (294).

Isabel went through the same pressures growing up in a Filipino American family, and to her uncomprehending American boyfriend, Eliot, she asks: “Do you know what it’s like to be told every single day of your life not to forget where you come from and then you fuck up and you can’t tell them because somehow that will show that, once again, your disrespectful behavior has revealed that you have indeed forgotten who you are and where you come from?” (168) If a Filipina American transgresses the strict moral code of conduct, she is disciplined not only by her family but also by the whole community through the cultural strategies of “tsismis” (gossip) and “hiya” (shame).

Joseph Martin Ponce’s commentary on “Miss Teenage Sampaguita” in Galang’s *Her Wild American Self* is apropos here in the discussion of Galang’s use of the beauty pageant. Ponce writes that the story on the teenage beauty queen “dramatize[s] the familial pressures imposed on Filipina Americans to succeed academically, to embody the chaste ‘national’ beauty without becoming ‘a sexy little tropical flower’” (195). Using Espiritu’s study, Ponce points out that in the Filipino American community this idealization of the “chaste” Filipina beauty is meant to claim a “moral distinctiveness”

vis-à-vis a flawed American morality, an argument for Filipino Americans, in Espiritu's words, as "family-oriented model minorities, and their wives and daughters as paragons of morality" (160).

But the Filipino American tradition of beauty pageants, as practiced in the context of contemporary US neoliberal capitalist society, Galang shows in her novel, is also a participation in American culture of spectacle and consumption.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on "glamor" (19; 88) and its accoutrements in the beauty pageants and the criterion based on the amount of money raised by the contestant contributes to the young Filipina Americans' commoditization. For the girls, and especially their parents, glamor means dressing up in "bright Las Vegas gowns, the kind with slits that traveled from the ankle to the hip, and miniature rhinestones crisscross[ing] their backs" (294). Galang's reference to Las Vegas aligns the traditional Filipino beauty pageant with the spectacle of consumption that Las Vegas is famous for. Moreover, Isabel explains to her sister the money-making side of the beauty pageant: "They do it to raise money. To build

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<sup>16</sup> As the ethnographer Fenella Cannell argues in her study of beauty pageants in the Bicol region of the Philippines, beauty pageants are "performances" through which "people . . . attempt to come to terms with an idea of beauty and glamour which refers to images of a mostly unattainable West [i.e. America] . . . imagined as a place of power, wealth, cleanliness, beauty, glamor, and enjoyment" (224-225). Cannell astutely connects the idea of beauty in these pageants with the "unequal histories and positions of the Philippines and America":

One of the meanings of this beauty is clearly what we would call glamour: the glamour of wealth in a poor country, of dazzling clothes and make-up, of poised and practiced, artificially-cultivated walks and voices, of feet balanced on high heels and hair held up with pins and spray; of imperfections cunningly disguised and seemingly vanished away. . . Of the ability to speak in foreign tongues. . . Clearly, this way of constructing beauty as glamour relates to the unequal histories and positions of the Philippines and America. What I have been stressing in this paper, particularly, is that these performances deal with the *imagined* America which is experienced as a key source of power and allure. (249)

buildings and churches . . . [but] the money they raised melted away, slipped into the linings of their fishtail dresses and the hoods of their royal capes” (219).

Galang further highlights the connection between the beauty pageant and consumption through her characterization of Mrs. Nita Starr, mother of Lourdes (the winner of the beauty pageant) and the main proponent of the beauty pageant in the Filipino American community. Mrs. Starr comes from a poor family in the Philippines and was practically sold off in marriage by her mother to Louie Starr, an American serviceman stationed then in the US military base (328). “Hello, American Joe. You wanna buy a little flower?” Nenita Starr remembers how her mother called the attention of the American serviceman (328). Louie Starr buys the family a house in exchange for their daughter whom he brings back with him to the US as his wife. The marriage soon sours, but Nenita Starr gets to live her family’s American Dream in a carpeted house with a living room dominated by “big white sofas . . . wrapped in plastic” and walls she had studded “with glass tiles so visitors could see themselves from every angle, like a dressing room at a department store” (329). Galang shows how Nenita Starr, treated as a commodity by her own family, lives in a house that is more like a display room—a commodified space--rather than a home.

Much like the Starrs’ living room that is meant more as spectacle for other people, the beauty pageants and community celebrations are meant ultimately for an American audience. The community’s preoccupation with putting up a good show, with avoiding anything that would bring *hiya* or shame to the community is its way of arguing for assimilation into US consumerist society. When Isabel puts up a nationalist play critical of US colonial history in the Philippines, Mrs. Starr is embarrassed and scandalized.

She complains: “What will Americans think . . . ? We should be respectful. Show the beautiful side . . . . What are Americans going to think?” (313).

Galang depicts the beauty pageant and other public presentations as cultural labor by the Filipino American community meant as an expression of a desire to be recognized as “full citizens” and to partake of US “power, wealth, cleanliness, beauty, glamor, and enjoyment” (Rodriguez 224-225). In other words, it is an expression of the desire to be included in and to participate fully in Disneyfication. Indeed, the Filipino American community’s representation of the beauty queen-- with the physical and moral containment of the young Filipina Americans and the spectacular display of expensive finery and jewelry, as well, as the big amount of money they are able to raise—can be seen as a strategy to access US multiculturalism’s concept of the “ideal minority,” associated with East Asian ethnic communities with the “right” (conservative Republican) values and the economic means to participate in American global capitalism. As Filipino American cultural scholar Dylan Rodriguez acerbically observes, contemporary discourses of “Filipino America,” for example, in Filipino American community newspapers and popular cultural productions, has been assimilationist. He writes,

the material discourse and popular cultural circulation of Filipino Americanism encompasses a broadly pitched desire for (1) civil recognition as a viable and self-contained collective subject of the US polity (including and beyond nomination as ‘citizens’ of the nation), and (2) cultural valorization as cooperative with and richly contributing to the

historical telos of American nation building in the post-civil rights, multiculturalist moment. (34)

Thus popular cultural shows, such as those showcasing indigenous Filipino music and dances put up by Filipino American communities, are vehicles of visibility, means of self representation aimed at claiming a place for Filipino Americans within a supposedly democratic multicultural US society. But such formulation of Filipino Americanism, according to Rodriguez, refuses to consider

seriously the ongoing symbiosis of two epochal historical developments: (1) the elaboration of militarized white supremacy as the central social formation and political logic of ‘race’ in the US national formation, and (2) the constitution of an American liberal sensibility, governmentality, and contemporary multiculturalist social discourse in and through material historical arrangements—and indelible traces—of genocidal state violence. (2-3)

US society and its mode of involvement with the rest of the world in its contemporary socio-economic-political-cultural formations is founded on a logic of militarized white supremacy, that continues to engage in “war through other means” (Foucault’s inversion of Carl von Clausewitz’ principle in “Society Must be Defended,” 15) against those it deems as enemies: non-white ethnic minorities, such as Filipino immigrants. In this view, the racist war that the United States waged in the Philippines against Filipino revolutionaries at the turn into the twentieth century has not really ceased, and neither has the violent racism against Filipino immigrant agricultural workers in the US in the 1920s and 1930s. In contemporary US society, Rodriguez argues that given the “genocidal”

logic of American white supremacy, “there is not, and there really cannot exist a Filipino or ‘Filipino American’ subject, or collective identity, in even the most temporarily coherent—much less momentarily stable or authenticated—sense of community and identity” (2).

Rodriguez’s abstract notion of the impossibility of the existence of the category of “Filipino America” is a concrete reality experienced by the Filipino American youth, especially the young women in Galang’s *One Tribe*. The young Filipina Americans are the object of the Filipino American community’s disciplinary practices, and, as Espiritu points out,

this strategy is not without costs. The elevation of Filipina chastity (particularly that of young women) has the effect of reinforcing masculinist and patriarchal power in the name of a greater ideal of national and ethnic self-respect. Because controlling women is one of the principal means of asserting moral superiority, young women in immigrant families face numerous restrictions on their autonomy, mobility, and personal decision making. (158)

Rodriguez asserts that “this affective and political allegiance produces the moral discursive apparatus of Filipino American common sense as a racist technology of bodily punishment for the sake of ‘community’: Filipino American civil society is to be vigilantly protected from subjects, bodies, and (anti)social practices that contradict, violate, or oppose the juridical ordering of American civil society” (79).

When Isabel contradicts the “assimilationist” ethos of the Filipino American community, teaching the students the history of US colonialism (304) and the vulnerable



situation of Filipina migrant workers serving as entertainers and domestic helpers, the community elders begin to turn on her. Isabel initially attempts to resist getting involved in the production of the beauty pageant, and for this she is branded as “contravida” (291), an antagonist. For trying to bring out the bottled emotions of the youth, their experiences of pain and injustice, the parents accuse her of “bad conduct,” “teaching lies,” and “encourag[ing] the girls to act in provocative ways” (346-347). Isabel is sanctioned and ordered not to meet with the teenagers, on pain of losing her job (347).

In *One Tribe*, the young women engage in gang wars against other Filipino American female gangs, often resulting in physical violence that leaves both mental and bodily scars. Not accepted by the dominant white American society and neither allowed to be themselves by their elders in the Filipino American community, Galang shows how the young Filipino American women turn on each other to express their muted rage. At the novel’s end, a group of teenagers pushes off into the sea on a makeshift boat at the height of the hurricane, a defiant act at once of self-assertion and self-annihilation<sup>17</sup> (392).

The turn to violence then among the Filipino American youth, especially the women, towards each other and towards themselves, can be seen, following Rodriguez, as a response to the impossibility of their existence as Filipino Americans. On the one

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<sup>17</sup> Galang’s literary depiction of the troubled internal world of teenaged Filipino American women reflects sociological findings. Ethnographic studies on Filipina American students show a high rate of “seriously considering suicide” as well as “actually attempting suicide.” Espiritu cites a 1995 study of San Diego, California public schools that show that, in comparison to other ethnic groups, Filipino female students had the highest rates of seriously considering suicide (45.6 percent) as well as the highest rates of actually attempting suicide (23 percent) in the year preceding the survey. In comparison, 33.4 percent of Latinas, 26.2 percent of white women, and 25.3 percent of black women surveyed said they had suicidal thoughts. (177)

hand, they are objectified and commodified by their community in order to purchase “entrance tickets” to Disneyfied America. On the other, the dominant white middle class America continues to deploy technologies of exclusion and containment directed toward these young ethnic minority women in urban public spaces.

### Conclusion

Both Roley’s *American Son* and Galang’s *One Tribe* narrate the experiences by Filipino American individuals, families, and communities of exclusion and containment in the context of American neoliberal global capitalism. In both novels we see at work Disneyfication’s holy trinity of spectacle, consumption, and control: spectacle—a unified spatial display underpinned by an ideology of materialism as modernity—is aimed at heightening consumption activities; consumption—the pleasure of acquiring commodities—is heightened not just by spectacle but by the exclusiveness guaranteed by control; control—the screening and managing of participants in consumption activities aimed at maximizing consumption—is ultimately achieved when participants buy into the ideology of consumerism on display through spectacle. I argue in this chapter that Roley’s and Galang’s novels show how the internalization of mechanisms of control is achieved through the Filipino immigrants’ assent to the ideology of consumption as concretized in spaces of spectacles. In the two novels, Roley and Galang depict how the Filipino immigrant families’ and communities’ desire for inclusion into America’s Disneyfied spaces is expressed oftentimes through extreme forms of self abjection. In such familial and communal self abjection, Filipina women, idealized as bearers of Filipino selfhood, bear the violence of abjection: the two novels show how immigrant

Filipina women are objectified and commoditized by their families and communities in order to purchase “entrance tickets” to Disneyfied America.

Just as Filipina Americans are targeted by the technology of control and surveillance in Disneyfied urban spaces, so are they disciplined within the Filipino American community. In *American Son*, the immigrant Filipina low wage earner is abjected and disavowed by her son Gabe in order for him to claim membership among white middle class Americans who nonetheless finds him out. In *One Tribe*, the young Filipina Americans are objectified and commoditized by the community in its desire for visibility and assimilation. The two contemporary novels show the exacerbation of the marginalization of immigrant women like the Filipina Americans in contemporary US society dominated by neoliberal global capitalism. Ultimately, the novels expose Disneyfication, a specific material formation of American neoliberal global capitalism, as grounded in a governmental white supremacist project dedicated to

the sanctity and quality of white life, figurative and physical integrity of the white body, and the social and moral ascendancy of the (usually transparent) white subject [that] animate[s] the multiculturalist ‘turn’ in US civil society and form the condition of historical [im]possibility for contemporary Filipino Americanism. (Rodriguez 49)

Galang in *One Tribe* however contradicts this “impossibility” in her depiction of the Filipino American community center as heterotopia. The space, usually the site of the fractiousness of the Filipino community, is transformed albeit fleetingly by the end of the novel into a space of dialogue and understanding among the warring Filipino American youth gangs. Isabel “saw the kids breaking down walls, she felt their energy

releasing into the night, voices calling out and tears shooting from the moon” (345).

Galang frames this scene with a vignette of her students’ reenactment of the 1986 People Power Revolution led by Cory Aquino against the dictator Marcos. Galang draws on the significance of the People Power event in the Philippines in her dramatization of the dialogue among the Filipino American youth gangs. By juxtaposing both, Galang is imaginatively drawing parallelisms between the two and expressing her aspiration for the Filipino American youth to recognize themselves as “one tribe.” Galang shows that the historical People Power Revolution and her depiction of the youth dialogue are acts of reclaiming spaces and affirming solidarities fractured by consumerist and racist forces of neoliberal global capitalism. For Galang, ultimately, being Filipino American is not an impossibility, but an aspiration—an imaginative act of reclaiming space and identity.

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