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Monsoon Marketplace:
Inscriptions and Trajectories of Consumer Capitalism and
Urban Modernity in Singapore and Manila

By

Fernando Piccio Gonzaga IV

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Abstract

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by

Fernando Piccio Gonzaga IV

Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chair

This study aims to trace the genealogy of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in Singapore and Manila. It examines their convergence in public spaces of commerce and leisure, such as commercial streets, department stores, amusement parks, coffee shops, night markets, movie theaters, supermarkets, and shopping malls, which have captivated the residents of these cities at important historical moments during the 1930s, 1960s, and 2000s. Instead of treating capitalism and modernity as overarching and immutable, I inquire into how their configuration and experience are contingent on the historical period and geographical location.

My starting point is the shopping mall, which, differing from its suburban isolation in North America and Western Europe, dominates the burgeoning urban centers of Southeast Asia. Contrary to critical and cultural theories of commerce and consumption, consumer spaces like the mall have served as bustling hubs of everyday life in the city, shaping the parameters and possibilities of identity, collectivity, and agency without inducing reverie or docility. Focusing on logics, functions, and processes that are said to be characteristic of the mall, such as monumentality, enclosure, prestige, modernity, and spectacle, I uncover their emergence and variation in prior consumer spaces across different periods and locations. Delving into the archive, I analyze the spatial, literary, and visual cultures of these milieus. I highlight changes in the form, meaning, and usage of significant words, images, ideas, narratives, objects, practices, and spaces commonly associated with the realities of consumer capitalism, public life, leisure time, and urban modernity.

Across the various chapters, I pursue several threads: Firstly, I explore different forms of modernity, particularly sanitary modernity, a regime of health, morality, beauty, and order, which the government applies to the cityscape and its population. As discernible in its temporality and influence, I trace how its character shifts from evangelical religion in the 1930s, to national development in the 1960s, to neoliberal cosmopolitanism in the 2000s. Secondly, I discuss the passage from a bazaar economy to a formal system, with its corresponding changes to the norms of commercial arrangement, consumer behavior, and visual perception. Thirdly, I look at shifts in the dominant basis of social value in the city from the display of material wealth, to the emulation of movie stardom, to the pursuit of an excessive lifestyle. Lastly, I examine different modes of spectacle, which commercial and leisure spaces have deployed in order to attract consumers, including those that produce absorption and immersion in spectators.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Our present historical period is marked by massive urbanization. Around the world, tens of thousands of people are gradually migrating to expanding cities, the largest of which will be located in the Asian region.¹ The current period is likewise characterized by the shift in the global economy towards the Eastern hemisphere. Over the next century, economic growth will be driven by Asian nations.² These social and economic transformations have coincided with the passage to a regime of neoliberal capitalism, which is defined by its industries of consumption, financialization, and consumerism. To stimulate business and attract investment, national governments have been compelled to lessen their regulation of market forces, which have become more powerful and more volatile. The offshore outsourcing of factories and services to emerging economies has resulted in a wider range of individuals gaining sufficient purchasing power. Approximately 1.8 billion more people are predicted to join the transnational class of consumers by 2025.³ The significant increase in the wealth of the members of the social and economic elite has led to enormous income disparities, which have corresponded with changes in the terms of social identity and the sources of social value. The ascendancy of consumer economies and culture industries during this period has coincided with shifts in the dominant forms of cultural entertainment and modes of visual perception.

I aim to study these entangled transformations by tracing changes to the configurations of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in Southeast Asian cities. Instead of simply focusing on monolithic systems and processes such as capitalism and modernization, I would like to examine how their variable forms are encountered and negotiated by urban residents, as articulated through the public culture. I am particularly interested in Southeast Asian cities, which first emerged in the world market as trading ports but have long had a peripheral relation to the more economically prosperous cities of North America, Western Europe, and East Asia. Even though recent scholarship in the humanities and social sciences is affording greater attention to Asian realities, I believe that the emphasis should not be skewed towards East Asia or South Asia but should include Southeast Asia. This region is an increasingly vital component of the global economy, especially with the further integration of its nations into the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.⁴

In this study, I attempt to uncover the entangled genealogies of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in Southeast Asia by examining the spatial and visual imagination and experience of commercial and leisure spaces, such as night markets, commercial streets, department stores, amusement parks, coffee shops, self-service supermarkets, movie theaters, and shopping malls, which have captivated the populaces of Manila and Singapore at important historical moments during the 1930s, 1960s, and 2000s. My starting point is the shopping mall, which, I

¹ Richard Dobbs, et al., *Urban World: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities* (McKinsey Global Institute, 2011).

² Richard Dobbs, et al., *Urban World: Cities and the Rise of the Consuming Class* (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012).

³ Dobbs, *Consuming Class*, 23.

⁴ *Riding the ASEAN Elephant: How Business is Responding to the Unusual Animal* (The Economist Corporate Network, 2013).

believe, contrary to its suburban isolation in North America and Western Europe, occupies a central position in the swelling metropolitan areas and burgeoning global cities of Southeast Asia. Their rise as consumer economies and cosmopolitan hubs correlates with the ascendancy of the shopping mall in their urban centers. I would argue that, in stark contradistinction to its significance in North American and Western European cities, it forms the nucleus of public and modern life in Southeast Asian megalopolises by shaping the parameters of identity, sociality, and agency among their residents. Similar to how Giorgio Agamben's use of the concentration camp as a model for Western sovereignty,⁵ I see the shopping mall as a paradigm for the convergence of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in Southeast Asia. Focusing on the dominant configuration of the shopping mall in Southeast Asian cities, I study the emergence and variation of its characteristic logics, functions, and processes in the public spaces of commerce and consumption that preceded it across different geographic and historical milieus. I look at how enclosure, monumentality, prestige, modernity, and spectacle have undergone alteration or transformation depending on the particular circumstances of the milieu.

When bestselling American "retail anthropologist" Paco Underhill declares that the shopping mall is dead,⁶ he is referring to the suburban United States' sprawling shopping malls, the quintessential landmarks of Western consumer society. Sitting in isolation along vast expressways that stretch into the distance, these shopping malls no longer hold the same vitality and significance that they had possessed in prior decades. The reality differs at the heart of Southeast Asia's bustling metropolitan areas, where the teeming public spaces of monumental shopping malls dominate the routine of everyday life.

Shopping malls have been frequently characterized in critical and cultural scholarship as "kaleidoscopic" and "polymorphic" palaces of spectacle and flânerie, where individuals are helplessly allured and transfixed. Turning shopping malls located in North America into universal models of capitalist consumption, such scholarship draws from the hyperbolic grammar of postmodernism and its disdain for materialist analysis. The name of Baudrillard is often invoked when the shopping mall is presented as a hyperreal marketplace of endlessly circulating signs, which shoppers can quickly and painlessly consume and discard while exploring its glittering atriums and arcades. Within its confines, categories, ideas, and identities that once were contradictory are conflated or juxtaposed, their value dependent on the profit they can generate. Baudrillard, in his seminal text, "Consumer Society," writes: "work, leisure, nature, and culture, all previously dispersed, separate, and more or less irreducible activities that produced anxiety and complexity in our real life and in our 'anarchic and archaic' cities, have finally become mixed, massaged, climate controlled, and domesticated into the simple activity of perpetual shopping."⁷ Film historian Anne Friedberg embraces this supposition when she argues in *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* that contemporary subjectivity has been shaped by the simultaneous historical emergence of moviegoing and shopping as dominant social practices. Individuals, for Friedberg, have become mobile voyeurs or virtual flâneurs,

⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 1998).

⁶ Paco Underhill, *The Call of the Mall* (New York, U.S.A.: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

⁷ Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society," *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 1988), 34.

who restlessly move from commodity to commodity and from identity to identity in an unrelenting itinerary of consumption. This experience of “perpetual displacement”⁸ is staged in the cloistered space of the shopping mall.

Not far in ethos from Friedberg’s arguments, urban scholar Margaret Crawford’s essay “The World as a Shopping Mall” explains how the physical cloistering of space is necessary to generate the fantasy world of the mall, where simulations of reality supersede lived reality. Like the rest of the anthology where it was published, the essay laments how public life is impoverished when the shopping mall supplants the city street as the principal site for the production of social identities and relations. Their paradigmatic structure is British Columbia’s West Edmonton Mall, whose design compresses the world into its domain by appropriating recognizable features from disparate contexts: Haussmannized Paris, New Orleans, Imperial Rome, and Victorian England. The experience of displacement supposedly leads to disorientation when the accumulation of incongruous realities overwhelms an individual’s capacity to apprehend his environment: “Confusion proliferates at every level: past and future collapse meaninglessly into the present, barriers between real and fake, near and far, dissolve as history, nature, technology, are indifferently processed by the mall’s fantasy machine.”⁹

These studies are useful because they reveal the workings of the capitalist regime of production, which transmutes contingent, heterogeneous realities into assorted, consumable images. Despite their percipience, such arguments remain haunted by Baudrillard’s phantoms in that they cannot acquire validity without relying on abstraction. In order to conceive of the shopping mall as an ominous site for dizzying exchanges and fragmented identities, they must first regard it as a space that is hermetically isolated from the dynamic forces and flows of the world beyond its walls. Their conceptual isolation of shopping malls could be rooted in the types of shopping malls they study, which are suburban sanctuaries located far from cosmopolitan hubs.

Offering a more cogent assessment in “Things to Do With Shopping Malls,” cultural critic Meaghan Morris reproaches the existing body of scholarship for regarding malls as utopias or Edens, which harbor “the desire of fallen creatures nostalgic for the primal garden.”¹⁰ She calls for a focus not on signification but on sentiment, on the varied emotional connections that individuals form with public spaces of consumption. From Morris’ perspective, shopping malls are complex landscapes where everyday life unfolds in a plurality of textures. In order to generate profit, mall management must subject shoppers to alternating strategies of enchantment and consolation. While Morris may challenge standard assumptions about the shopping mall experience, she confines the scope of her inquiry to gender practices at the expense of social structures.

Lizabeth Cohen’s *Consumers’ Republic* is an equally compelling example of scholarship that strives to account for the historical character of its objects of study. In this extensive social history of the United States after the Second World War, Cohen situates the ascendancy of shopping malls amid the development of U.S. consumer

⁸ Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, California, U.S.A.: U of California P, 1993), 122.

⁹ Margaret Crawford, “The World in a Shopping Mall,” *Variations of a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York, U.S.A.: Hill and Wang, 1992), 4.

¹⁰ Meaghan Morris, “Things to Do With Shopping Malls,” *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 1993), 303.

society.¹¹ According to Cohen's narrative, the federal government sought to stimulate the national economy by advocating mass consumption as a civic duty. Purchasing ready-made suburban homes, along with household commodities such as televisions and automobiles, became the principal political activity of post-war Americans. As the majority of the population relocated from the cities to the suburbs, regional shopping malls were built to compensate for the absence of traditional community centers. In underlining the historical significance of the shopping mall, Cohen commendably links local conditions with larger processes, an approach she could have complemented by considering the political and cultural imaginaries that animate these more conspicuous forces.

My study offers an intervention in the scholarship of the shopping mall by interrogating the ability of dominant critical and cultural theories of commerce and consumption to apprehend the complexity of local realities outside Europe, Australia, and North America, the intellectual sites where these theories were first developed and disseminated. The prevailing circumstances are markedly different in Southeast Asia, where the inscriptions and trajectories of shopping malls are integral to the urban landscape. I believe that a thorough study of these various forces and flows entails unearthing the variations, discontinuities, and transformations in their configuration and experience across different geographic and historical milieus.

Situated in the city center, where social activity is concentrated, the busiest shopping malls in Southeast Asia form a vital component of the rhythms of everyday life. Outside of office hours on weeknights and weekends, the giant interiors of the most prominent shopping malls throughout the region are filled with restless crowds. The residents of major Southeast Asian cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Jakarta are regularly welcomed within the palatial atriums and corridors of Pavilion KL, Mid Valley City, Siam Paragon, CentralWorld, Plaza Indonesia, and Grand Indonesia, whose comfortable and gleaming enclosures incarnate a new world. In the vibrant cityscapes of emerging economies, such monumental and prestigious structures epitomize the promise of modernity.

Like the Passage des Panoramas, the Passage de l'Opéra, and the Galerie Vivienne, arcades that liberated Parisians from the rain and mud, the Southdale Center, the first indoor shopping mall, provided relief from the harsh Minnesota weather. Accommodating the continual entry of flows of bodies, the shopping malls of contemporary Southeast Asia are immensely popular as sanctuaries from the enervating heat and humidity. In directing the focus in the scholarship of cities towards the centrality of shopping malls, I am shifting the emphasis away from the nostalgia for city streets, which preoccupies many urban planners. The vibrant public life of Southeast Asian cities is becoming concentrated in commercial structures, which, despite being configured as transcendent hypermodern enclosures, retain their exuberance as venues for social life.

I aim to uncover the entangled imagination and experience of consumer capitalism and urban modernity in Southeast Asia by focusing on resonances in the situations of Manila and Singapore, two metropolitan areas that are globally known for the size and number of their shopping malls. In a world with a rapidly urbanizing population, these Asian cities are frequently cited in international news magazines as prototypical urban areas of the twenty-first century.

¹¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 2004).

Manila may be the congested capital of a developing nation that has a high demographic of poverty yet it houses two of the five largest shopping malls in the world,¹² a paradox that reflects the Philippines' profound class disparities. Due to the lack of order, greenery, and comfort in the cityscape, shopping malls have become the most popular public spaces. Often crowded with people, many of them are located within the vicinity of Epifanio de los Santos Avenue or EDSA, the busy central highway that connects the various cities and municipalities of Metropolitan Manila. With its prosperous economy, Singapore consistently ranks at the top of global indexes of per-capita-income and quality-of-life.¹³ The bustling city-state's main tourist attraction is Orchard Road, its commercial district, which is neatly lined with towering trees and shopping malls. In Singapore, a shopping mall adjoins every prominent public space, including the junctions of its extensive mass transit system. Both cities originally thrived in the colonial era as international ports, nodes for the dynamic circulation and exchange of goods and ideas. Today, they occupy contrasting poles of political and economic development, a sphere of variance that should allow patterns to be discerned in the configurations of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in Southeast Asia.

Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that a comparative approach, which juxtaposes similar realities from disparate milieus, enables scholars to work with ideas without having to treat them as universalized abstractions.¹⁴ Employing a comparative approach opens a critical epistemological space where concepts and categories can be seen as varying across different locations and periods without the constraints of a linear historical framework. Juxtaposing the heterogeneous circumstances of the neighboring urban landscapes of Manila and Singapore reveals miscellaneous sources of social value and modes of visual perception.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To be able to comprehend how urbanization and neoliberalism have unfolded in Asian cities, I start with the anthropological premise that these seemingly overarching realities are configured and experienced in different ways across various geographic locations and historical periods. Instead of being immutable processes, which find their culmination in the space of the shopping mall, capitalism and modernity have undergone variation and transformation based on the concrete circumstances of each milieu. In investigating the configuration of the shopping mall, I situate and examine it in relation to those of the commercial and leisure spaces that preceded it. Identifying the logics, functions, and process that are said to be characteristic of the shopping mall, I attempt to uncover and analyze their emergence and variation across various locations and periods. This genealogical method, which looks at the realities of different milieus in juxtaposition, enables me to interrogate the basic assumptions among many critical and cultural theories that consumers are docile

¹² Syed Balkhi, "25 Largest Shopping Malls in the World," *Visual News*, 18 October 2013 <<http://www.visualnews.com/2013/10/18/25-largest-shopping-malls-in-the-world/>>.

¹³ See Knight-Frank and Citi Private Bank, *The World Wealth Report: A Global Perspective on Prime Property and Wealth*, 2013 <<http://thewealthreport.net/The-Wealth-Report-2012.pdf>>; and Mercer Human Resource Consultation, *Quality of Living Survey*, 2012 <<http://www.mercer.com/qualityoflivingpr>>.

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Princeton UP, 2000).

and that malls are spectacular. Contrasted with prior consumer spaces, shopping malls offer a changed configuration of spectacle, which no longer merely entails cognitive absorption or emotional immersion. Their forms of enclosure and monumentality are modifications of existing forms. Instead of functioning as sources of luxury and prestige, they exhibit a new mode of social value, whose potential for transcendence is based less on material possession.

My study offers a point of departure from much of the scholarship on Southeast Asian shopping malls with its genealogical and interdisciplinary approach. Sociological studies that situate Southeast Asian realities amid larger transnational networks are typically concerned with examining how Singapore is an important global city. According to Saskia Sassen's seminal work, a global city functions as a vital node in the world market for the convergence and interaction of flows of ideas, technologies, and finances.¹⁵ Kris Olds and Henry Yeung's "Pathways to Global City Formation" and Brenda Yeoh and T.C. Chang's "Globalizing Singapore" conceive of the shopping malls that dominate Singapore's cityscape as dynamic sites where these transnational flows concentrate. Critiquing the dominant framework for categorizing global cities, Olds and Yeung advocate a more inclusive method capable of accounting for the heterogeneous forces that shape their urban landscape.¹⁶ Yeoh and Chang are detailed in highlighting the negotiation that transpires between transnational norms and local realities.¹⁷ To stimulate growth, global cities become reliant on external flows of bodies whose penetration of the territory of a nation is not without conflict. In the case of Singapore, the government must reshape the urban landscape into an attractive destination where flexibility and innovation are economic virtues while keeping these external flows from ruining the national fabric. By interrogating dominant frameworks of understanding, both articles point to the importance of uncovering trajectories that have been concealed or suppressed. They suggest but fail to pursue a method for analyzing the configuration of urban space in relation to the imagination and experience of modern and public life.

An important work about contemporary Singapore, Chua Beng Huat's *Life Is Not Complete Without Shopping* characterizes the island city-state as an advanced capitalist economy, where prosperity is measured by the capacity for consumption.¹⁸ Equating the cultures of consumerism and capitalism, Chua contends that their entirety can only be glimpsed in fragments through mass products such as film and fashion and social practices like idling and shopping. He underlines the complexity of studying consumption in a heterogeneous society like Singapore's where distinct ethnicities coexist. Contesting the notion that globalization has universalizing effects, he describes how companies must indigenize commodities imported from other locations in order to enhance their profitability. According to Chua, Singaporean national identity is made salient in this process of appropriation and adaptation. Similar to his other books, Chua offers an insightful departure, although his tone betrays a postmodernist disdain towards shopping malls as frivolous zones of play, where individuals flit aimlessly through ephemeral identities and fantasies. A method that traces the cultural history of commercial arrangements and practices would have

¹⁵ See the Global Cities Issue of *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2010.

¹⁶ Kris Olds and Henry Yeung, "Pathways to Global City Formation: A View from the Developmental City-State of Singapore," *Review of International Political Economy* 11 (2004): 489-521.

¹⁷ Brenda S.A. Yeoh and T.C. Chang, "Globalizing Singapore: Debating Transnational Flows in the City," *Urban Studies* 38 (2001): 1025-1044.

¹⁸ Chua Beng Huat, *Life Is Not Complete Without Shopping: Consumption Culture in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore UP, 2003).

been more effective in exploring the centrality of the shopping mall as a public space of commerce and consumption.

Rolando Tolentino's pioneering writings about Manila shopping malls share the same disdain when he regards the consumer spaces that he studies as enfeebling sites of leisure activity where docile, apolitical bodies regularly congregate.¹⁹ Denouncing the shopping mall for concealing from its visual experience the suffering of its subcontracted service workers, he asserts that the shopping mall bears no trace of history and locality. For Tolentino, the configuration of the mall embodies the larger, external forces of transnational capitalism and consumerism. He characterizes its occupants as pliable consumers who are oblivious to the oppression prevalent both inside and outside the enclosure of the shopping mall. Tolentino shows foresight in studying emerging areas of inquiry such as Filipino popular culture, although the critical framework he applies can be constrained by a fetishistic affinity for orthodox approaches, which fail to account for the changing realities of political struggle and social media. Instead of dismissing the shopping mall as a site without history and locality, it must be situated amid the emergence and ascendancy of the consumer spaces that preceded it. Its enclosure should be seen as the result of the concentration and reconfiguration of the different modes of commercial arrangement and practice tied to these preexistent spaces. This way, the shopping mall could be understood as the center of the city, where the routine of everyday life unfolds.

Charting the struggle over the reconfiguration of Manila's public spaces, John Sidel and Eva-Lotta Hedman demonstrate aspects of the genealogical method that I pursue in my study. They argue that the inefficacy of political actors in the Philippines has resulted in a void in the social landscape, which the shopping mall experience has filled, although they disregard the pervasiveness of the mass media in influencing perception and behavior.²⁰ Despite the thoroughness of their research, they exhibit the hyperbolic grammar of postmodernism in painting the shopping mall as a site where individuals flee from an oppressive social reality into a palliative fantasy world. While praising the shopping mall for providing a democratic space where class hierarchies are effaced, they stress that democratic practice has ultimately been displaced into the normative activity of making consumer choices. They neglect to consider that in the Philippine situation, popular elections are the principal democratic practice, which stifles the potential for democracy by confining the sphere of politics to the activity of choosing from the ready assortment of political candidates. Their work highlights that the purpose of historical research should be to examine the contours of existing conditions in order to generate new possibilities. I intend to extend their discussion to contiguous logics and practices associated with consumer capitalism, public life, leisure time, and urban modernity.

My own study is historical in that it unveils the profoundly historical character of seemingly singular realities by locating them within the variable and contingent constellations of forces and relations that constitute them. Instead of adopting the standpoint of conventional history as a coherent chronology of momentous figures and events, I believe that history must be apprehended as a network of milieus that are

¹⁹ For instances, please see Rolando B. Tolentino, *Sa Loob at Labas ng Mall kong sawi / Kaliluha'y Siyang Nangyayaring Hari: Ang Pagkatuto at Pagtatanghal ng Kulturang Popular* (Quezon City, Philippines: U of the Philippines P, 2001) and *Almanak ng Isang Aktibista* (Quezon City, Philippines: U of the Philippines P, 2011).

²⁰ Hedman, Eva-Lotta E., and John T. Sidel, "Malling Manila: Images of a City, Fragments of a Century," *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, Post-Colonial Trajectories* (New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 2000), 118-139.

embodied in particular spatial and temporal conditions. Instead of being understood as linear stages of development, milieus should be grasped as disparate and variegated in their atmosphere and tendency. Each milieu has established norms by which relations are formed and congealed among meanings, words, images, ideas, narratives, objects, practices, and spaces. These relations produce particular modes of perception, behavior, and action by which realities are apprehended, imagined, experienced, and articulated. Excavating and mapping the interconnections, resonances, and departures of inscriptions and trajectories can unsettle the fixity and permanence of dominant concepts and categories.

Foucault sees genealogy and archeology as complementary methods for excavating and mapping the multiple configurations of imagination and experience, which produce reality but remain invisible.²¹ Archeology excavates the inscriptions and trajectories that are often submerged beneath the surface of public knowledge because they are deemed illegitimate or inconsequential according to the established norms of objectivity and rationality. Diachronic in its approach, genealogy maps the resonances among these realities across different locations and periods. Through the rigor of these methods, the coherent, rational character of conventional history is exposed as a network of variable, heterogeneous realities, whose meanings, configurations, and usages are liable to change based on the prevailing circumstances. A reality that appears to be inconsequential in one milieu is revealed to be a ground of possibility in another.

My study is partly motivated by the recent proliferation of websites and threads in Singapore and the Philippines that exhibit an uncritical nostalgia for urban public spaces that were prominent and popular in previous historical periods but no longer exist in the same form. These online forums are dedicated to collecting and exchanging photographs and memories of lost spaces, which have been destroyed, forgotten, or refurbished, with the recurring claim that everyday life was more pleasurable in the past. Aside from the devastation of the Pacific War, the cityscapes of Manila and Singapore have been transformed by ruthless development, which has disregarded the preservation of historic and aesthetic buildings.

To be able to excavate and map the variations, discontinuities, and transformations in the entangled configurations of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity, I explore the spatial, linguistic, and visual imaginings and experiences of prominent and popular commercial and leisure spaces in Manila and Singapore. In focusing on inscriptions and trajectories, my study occupies the indeterminate terrain between the planes of urban planning and common usage, between official discourse and mass culture. I attempt to locate variations, discontinuities, and transformations in the meaning, configuration, and usage of words, images, ideas, narratives, objects, and practices, which have been closely associated with the realities of consumer capitalism, public life, leisure time, and urban modernity. My conception of the dichotomy between inscriptions and trajectories is based on the contrast Michel de Certeau draws between strategies and tactics in his seminal work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.²² Whereas inscriptions are fixed determinations, which prescribe a usage or understanding, trajectories are

²¹ See Michel Foucault, ““Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,”” *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York, U.S.A.: The New Press, 1998): 369-391.

²² See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, California, U.S.A.: U of California P, 1984).

routines or movements that adapt or circumvent these determinations according to particular pursuits.

As my source materials, I work with different literary and visual cultures, including periodical articles, government documents, literary writings, documentary photographs, print advertisements, exposition pamphlets, tourist guidebooks, architectural blueprints, and narrative films, where the processes, logics, and conceptions of consumer capitalism and urban modernity are articulated and negotiated. In these public artifacts, I read for traces and indexes of the heterogeneous inscriptions and trajectories that shape the imagination and experience of everyday life in Southeast Asian cities.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

I am interested in studying the complex relationship between capitalism and modernity by focusing not so much on their overarching determinations but on their variable manifestations. Beyond their seemingly monolithic character, terms like ‘capitalism’ and ‘modernity’ could be grasped as markers that bear a precarious coherence. Under scrutiny, they dissolve into amorphous constellations of images, ideas, objects, spaces, and practices, to which different individuals affix their own meanings and apply their own purposes.

In works written and influenced by Marx, capitalism and modernity are automatically understood to be equivalent processes. According to Marx’s theory of history, the uprooting of peasants from agricultural lands and their submission to wage contracts with their transplantation to manufacturing factories unsettles longstanding social hierarchies and provides greater purchasing power.²³ Jürgen Habermas argues that the two are not necessarily the same because the word ‘modern,’ having been used as far back as the late fifth century, predates the economic changes identified with the advent of capitalism.²⁴ I would say that capitalism and modernity are two distinct sets of circumstances that may coincide at times. In this study, I examine situations or spaces where they appear to coincide, often creating the impression that they both belong to an overarching, monolithic system.

As an initial assumption, based on the existing body of scholarship about it, we could define capitalism as a regime of producing, circulating, exchanging, and consuming goods, which shapes the social identities and relations of individuals. But instead of treating capitalism as an expansive and anonymous process by which capital continuously augments itself, it might be more manageable to limit our understanding to a concrete set of normative circumstances. Employing the term ‘consumer capitalism,’ I would comprehend it as a regime of social practices by which the commercial exchange of objects is entangled with the cultural activity of consumption. In choosing to grasp it as a regime of social practices, I am emphasizing how consumer capitalism should be seen as the encounter of individuals with realities conventionally associated with capitalist exchange such as standardized products and commercialized spaces. Along the lines of thought of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, this idea of consumer capitalism involves the acquisition and consumption of mass-produced commodities but without the standardized responses that Benjamin

²³ For example, see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party, Later Political Writings* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1996), 1-30.

²⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 3.

and Adorno believe accompany these activities. By depicting it as an encounter, my usage of the term does not discard the dynamism of the process but tries to account for capitalism's discontinuous qualities and unpredictable effects.

My study departs from the dominant Marxian conception of commerce and consumption as uniform processes. Marx famously writes in *Capital Volume I* that the value of a commodity is originally derived from its natural, material properties.²⁵ When the value of a commodity is constituted as an exchange value in the marketplace, this value becomes dependent on the negotiation that transpires between seller and buyer, who carry with them distinct, even contradictory assumptions and customs that will vary depending on the circumstances. I would emphasize that commercial exchange depends on the convergence of the varying interests and desires of the seller and the buyer within a physical space where the two interact. With profit as their motive, sellers must turn to an array of techniques to entice buyers to make a purchase. They must reconfigure the commercial space such that it enhances the allure of the items being sold. Consumer capitalism consists of norms of arranging and occupying commercial spaces as well as norms of displaying and examining commercial products, which are negotiated according to shifting circumstances.

My understanding of consumer capitalism deviates from the Frankfurt School's fundamental premise that the consumer is a passive victim of a pervasive system of domination. Like me, its theorists are interested less in production and exchange, which are Marx's preoccupations, than in culture and consumption.²⁶ Tracing the entangled emergence and expansion of consumer capitalism and mass culture, their writings strive to resolve the question as to why Marx's proletarian revolution has failed to materialize on a large scale. They surmise that, with the evolution of capitalism, every previously autonomous area of existence has become colonized and commodified. Individuals have been rendered docile and atomized, devoid of agency and collectivity. Like much of the scholarship on shopping malls, these critical and cultural theories of commerce and consumption assume that consumers, being pliable to external influence, cannot deviate from the norms of the established order. I would rather see shopping malls and consumer spaces as dynamic sites that individuals navigate according to their own trajectories.

Marx's theoretical sketches in the *Grundrisse* elaborate on his conception of the activity of consumption, which succeeds the process of exchange. Occurring beyond the visibility of the public sphere, consumption is said to form a direct, reciprocal relation between consumer and commodity.²⁷ Fulfilling the image of identity that is inscribed in them, commodities deliver gratification to consumers during their private use. While deeming consumers to be isolated and atomized, the Marx of the *Grundrisse* appears to contradict the common assumption among Marxists that the consumer is alienated from the activity of consumption. Contrasting it with the arduous necessity of production, he describes consumption as a free, active, and affirming process. In the language of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, an individual returns to his natural identity as a producer whenever he consumes a commodity. Drawing on his various senses and capacities, consumption is the means by which the individual can re-appropriate the aspects of life that were alienated from him during production. Enabling him to overcome his

²⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I* (New York, U.S.A.: Penguin, 1990).

²⁶ For example, see Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

²⁷ Karl Marx, "Consumption and Production," *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (London, U.K.: Penguin, 1993), 90-94.

reduction to a commodity in the labor market, the individual's consumption of objects for his physical subsistence turns him into a self-producing consumer.

Michel de Certeau refutes the assumption that no variance exists between the transmission and reception of influence when he re-imagines consumption as an act of creative production.²⁸ This shift away from the idea of a docile consumer is said to coincide with the burgeoning importance of creativity and innovation in neoliberal capitalist economies. According to de Certeau's concept of consumption, because individuals cannot escape the given conditions of their existence, they learn to manipulate these conditions by putting them to new uses and purposes. Enacting their own modes of operating, they define and expand the scope of possibility by choosing, creating, rejecting, and extending routes through the spatial and social landscape. In place of the conventional dichotomy between the public and private spheres, de Certeau introduces the opposition between the planes of visibility and invisibility, where the workings of rational determination and creative production respectively unfold. De Certeau likens the trajectories of consumers to fluids and bubbles, which remain invisible to the determinations of a transcendent authority, although he submits these trajectories to the rationality of linguistics in order to analyze them. Whereas de Certeau imagines the consumer as a solitary flâneur who navigates space with his individual agency, I would prefer an idea of space suffused with the presence of amorphous crowds, whose collective movement is suggested by de Certeau's fondness for organic metaphors. Contrary to recent conjecture in political theory, the agency of dynamic consumers is not merely a product of the emergence of neoliberal capitalism. Consumption has always been a creative activity, which is defined by multiple attempts and failures. What instead has changed is the configuration of the relations among consumers, spaces, and commodities.

Interrogating De Certeau's idea of consumption as a tactic of resistance against strategies of domination, I believe that consumption occurs in the indeterminate frontier between these two poles. Commercial exchanges are not essentially oriented towards the reinforcement of the established hierarchy or the exploitation of the docile consumer. As I have stressed, their dynamic process undergoes negotiation. I am interested in exploring how, instead of being private and solitary as Marx conceptualizes it, consumption, especially in the prominent and popular sites of commerce and leisure of Southeast Asian cities, can be public and communal. Contrary to de Certeau's understanding, consumption cannot necessarily be reduced to the intelligibility and rationality of language but has heterogeneous spatial and visual dimensions, which shape the experience of commercial structures and the apprehension of commercial products.

Because the new forms of employment and experience that are concomitant with urbanization of individuals typically result in greater income, consumption, and knowledge, consumer capitalism is often entangled with urban modernity. But the precise relationship between these two realities differs with each geographic location and historical period. The systematic expansion of commercial consumption to include the mass of individuals who gain increased purchasing power from joining the workforce historically occurred within the domain of the city. In the urban landscape, they would be exposed to structures, images, and technologies that exhibited and communicated the latest ideas and styles.²⁹ Their consumption was sustained by the

²⁸ See De Certeau.

²⁹ See, for instance, Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings*

continual introduction of new commodities, many of which were distributed and encountered as modern marvels. To be able to construct their identities with modern sophistication, they needed to acquire these new commodities, but they were also compelled to learn how to utilize them in the appropriate manner. Aside from interacting with other urban residents in public spaces, they obtained this knowledge from the literary and visual cultures that circulated through periodicals and movies, which they could access by residing in the city.

Modernity as the configuration of space and modernity as the experience of newness are two disparate realities even though they may share the same terminology. If modernization is taken to denote the linear process by which an area undergoes a form of development, modernity could be used to indicate the tentative attempts to apprehend, articulate, and manage this process. In this study, I focus on how urban modernity is the experience of modern realities in the cityscape. According to Marshall Berman's seminal book about the experience of modernity, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, the introduction to urban life often unfolds as an encounter with the unfamiliarity and newness of its flows and rhythms.³⁰ This encounter could mean the perception of modern forces as signifying the promise of change in the arrival of the uniquely new and previously impossible in the world. I would add that urban modernity could likewise be equated with mobility across the public spaces of the cityscape. Mobility in the cityscape would include the style by which crowds of bodies navigate urban enclosures that circumscribe movement. These multiple versions of modernity all lack the overwhelming sense of alienation and exploitation conventionally associated with capitalism.³¹

Although modernity could be understood to entail the overarching formalization and acceptance of norms of rationality and objectivity,³² modernity in this study is regarded as being a dynamic constellation of realities. Apprehending modernity in terms of its spatial, linguistic, and visual imagination and experience allows it to be conceived as a variable phenomenon whose configuration is contingent on its surrounding forces and relations. When referring to its variable character, I would rather not describe modernity as an extension, a divergence, or an othering because these terms create the impression that Western modernity is ordinary, primary, or superior. Instead of 'alternative modernities,' which implies deviation from an established norm, I would prefer the provisional term 'multiple modernities.' This term enables us to understand modernity as constituting a distinct reality within each geographic location and historical period. With its variable configurations, modernity may even actually consist of disparate forces bound together only by a vague similitude. Whereas Marshall Berman creates an account of modernity in Western Europe and North America through the works of intellectuals and artists,³³ I intend to explore these multiple modernities through their expression in the public culture, where norms of representation and validity are negotiated with a mass audience.

on Media (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. and London, England, U.K.: Belknap P/Harvard U P, 2008), 19-55.

³⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, U.S.A.: Penguin, 1988).

³¹ This idea finds its utmost expression in the work of Marx.

³² Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," *Public Culture* 11.1 (1999): 155.

³³ See Berman.

OUTLINE

Focusing on the characteristic logics, functions, and processes of the shopping mall, I examine their emergence, variation, and transformation in different consumer spaces in Manila and Singapore at important historical moments during the 1930s, 1960s, and 2000s. I trace how changes in the perceptions and experiences of capitalism, publicity, and modernity coincide with shifts in the spaces and practices of commerce, leisure, and consumption. These changes correspond to reconfigurations in the parameters and possibilities of identity, sociality, and agency. I uncover different versions of modernity, such as sanitary modernity, a regime of configuring bodies, practices, and spaces based on overlapping ideals of health, beauty, morality, and order, whose logic is incarnated in the polished and rarefied enclosure of the shopping mall. Depending on the milieu, the foundation of sanitary modernity changes from evangelical religion to national development to cosmopolitan neoliberalism. I look at modifications to enclosure, the spatial expression of private property, which is built into the shopping mall's structural regulation of interior and exterior. Charting the passage from the bazaar economy to a formal system, I inquire into changes in the commercial arrangement of shelves and displays, alongside shifts in commercial practice from reciprocation to standardization. I interrogate the conceptions of spectacle and carnival, which are commonly deemed to be conventions of the shopping mall, by unearthing how the logics of spectacle and carnival existed in other versions in previous commercial and leisure spaces. I examine how shifts in the relation between consumer and commodity, in the dominant forms of commercial arrangement and social practice, correspond with changes in the relation between spectator and spectacle, in the prevalent modes of cultural entertainment and visual perception. These changes coincide with shifts in the basis of the transcendent value of social prestige, which has been acquired from prominent consumer spaces, from financial wealth to movie stardom to material excess.

Each chapter in my study is devoted to examining one or two paradigms of consumer space, particularly the configurations of commercial streets, department stores, amusement parks, night markets, movie theaters, self-service supermarkets, and shopping malls, which have gained prominence and popularity in the cityscapes of Manila and Singapore. Situating the paradigms of consumer space amid the prevailing circumstances of different geographic locations and historical periods, the study reveals that the configuration of each paradigm is contingent on its particular milieu. The discussion of each configuration is tied to the analysis of a set of characteristic logics, functions, or processes. Alternating its focus between the cityscapes of Manila and Singapore, my study examines important historical moments, which mark tumultuous moments of transition when the imminent conditions of modernity, independence, development, or globalization have threatened to unsettle and overturn the established order.

The first two chapters focus on Manila during the historical period around 1935, the year the United States granted political autonomy to its colony, the Philippine Islands. Whereas government and business appeared to be capable of controlling modern forces in their construction of the infrastructure, architecture, and technology of the cityscape, the populace struggled to harness their possibilities for their own purposes. Chapter 1 studies how their need to demonstrate their ability to assimilate modernity as proof of their readiness for independence was articulated in the awkward figures that dominated the public culture of the 1930s. After examining how the U.S. colonial regime introduced sanitary modernity to the Philippine Islands,

I analyze how the commercial street of Calle Escolta accommodated modern forces while maintaining its prestigious identity by assuming the form of a symbolic enclosure. Regarding consumption as a means of grappling with modernity, I explore the preoccupation with modern femininity in the public culture of the historical period as Filipino women departed from the cloister of the household to participate in the burgeoning consumer economy. To conclude the chapter, I look at the architecture and construction of the Crystal Arcade, a commercial building erected on Calle Escolta, the principle site of elite commerce and consumption in 1930s Manila, which was celebrated as the paragon of modernity at the time. Because the political independence of the Philippine Islands was imminent, the Crystal Arcade was taken to exemplify the ability of Filipinos to exploit the possibilities of modernity with success.

Focusing on the logic of the gaze in 1930s Calle Escolta, Chapter 2 analyzes how the shift in the dominant mode of cultural entertainment and visual perception from theater to cinema corresponds to a change in the regime of commerce and consumption. I examine how this reconfiguration of spectatorship and consumption to a more concentrated and fixed form coincides with the transformation of social prestige in the commercial street. Even in this early paradigm of consumer space, I argue that individuals do not necessarily visit the commercial street to purchase goods. The activity of inhabiting the commercial street clothes them in an aura of social prestige that is no longer dependent on material possession but on spatial occupation.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the spatial and social landscape of Singapore Municipality during the 1930s, when it was a Straits Settlement, a Crown Colony of the British Empire. Contrasting the bungalow and the shophouse, the respective residential spaces of the British expatriate community and the local Asian population, chapter 3 uncovers a languid form of modernity, which hesitates to embrace imminent modern forces out of the fear of being transformed. In this chapter, I study how the British colonial regime's efforts to govern the entrêpot are marked by impotency, especially because the public life of the local Asian population was shaped by its orientation towards the spatial mobility of the entrêpot economy. Because the colonial regime struggled to manage the dynamic flows of the entrêpot economy, it tried to emphasize its imperial ideals through the monumentality of its official architecture. The teeming, heterogeneous character of the urban landscape unsettled the boundaries between private and public space that it strived to establish.

Looking at the parallel prominent and popular consumer spaces of the period, the department store and the amusement park, the fourth chapter examines the logics of spectacle that prevailed in these spaces. It starts by interrogating the conventional ideas of the paradigmatic enclosures of the department store and the amusement park, which, I argue, entailed negotiating the flows and rhythms of the world outside by creating exceptional conditions of comfort and mobility. I examine how the paradigmatic forms of these consumer spaces were reconfigured for the contrasting uses of 1930s Singapore Municipality's colonial expatriates and Asian inhabitants. These two public sites of commerce and consumption represented the emergence, through indoor tableaux and carnival rides, of an immersive mode of spectacle, which, no longer reliant on cognitive absorption, was founded on emotional participation.

Chapters 5 and 6 are situated in 1960s Singapore when the newly independent government under the People's Action Party implemented a program of sanitary modernity, which reconfigured the island's spatial and social landscape for national

development. Chapter 5 examines its complementary logics of pragmatic governmentality and national crisis, which enabled it make continual adjustments to its mechanisms and policies as it strove to replace the cyclical time of poverty with the linear time of development. It analyzes the official discourse of the People's Action Party, which contrasted its effective rationality with the fleeting emotion of the orators and crowds protesting on the streets. Lastly, the chapter explores how the temporality of development is negotiated in the popular leisure space of the milieu, the coffee-shop, through an ambivalent waiting, which straddles the urgency of work and indolence of repose.

Chapter 6 unearths the shift in the dominant regime of commerce and consumption from a bazaar economy to a formal system, which disallows negotiation and reciprocation. It focuses on the pasar malam or night market, which, instead of being its primordial antecedent, was a necessary byproduct of Singapore's modernization that embodied a form of alternate modernity. The chapter takes a detour through the example of Change Alley, which, despite having become entrenched in the popular imagination and everyday life of local residents, became perceived as a primeval disorder that existed at the heart of Singapore. While they formed a vital part of social life of the early stages of national development, the night markets and their itinerant hawkers needed to be regulated and eliminated because they represented undesirable and recalcitrant realities that the government struggled to control.

Chapter 7 sees 1960s Manila as a pivotal moment of national aspiration, which was beset by failed attempts at modernization due to persistent corruption, poverty, and violence. As the urban population swelled with hopeful migrants from different parts of the Philippine archipelago, the commercial street shifted to Rizal Avenue, the hub of entertainment and transportation, where all the population converged. Functioning as the nucleus of public life where multitudes of Filipinos could buy affordable goods and watch movie narratives, the centrality of the Avenida signaled a changed meaning of prestige now founded on popularity. The everyday spectacles of movie theaters and neon signs in the popular commercial street, nicknamed Manila's Broadway, represented a corresponding shift in the prevalent mode of spectatorship. Ordinary individuals aspired to emulate new heroes in the figures of movie stars and national politicians, who embodied the synthesis of ordinariness and transcendence.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the 2000s, the historical period when neoliberalism capitalism, the information economy, and online media became more dominant in the urban areas of Southeast Asia. In contemporary Manila, the popularity, ubiquity, and centrality of shopping malls was the result of a population shift away from the vicinity of downtown towards the suburbs, and the emergence of EDSA as the main thoroughfare facilitating movement throughout the metropolis. The rise of shopping malls as new centers of social life has coincided with the improvement in the Philippine economy due primarily to domestic consumption from the income of call center agents and the remittance of overseas migrant workers. The chapter focuses on the transformation of the logics of monumentality and enclosure as incarnated in the contemporary shopping mall, which strives towards comprehensiveness and completeness by incorporating previously distinct domestic and public spaces. It explores the dominance of media networks, which have established their contracted celebrities as models of social prestige in the megalopolis. Lastly, it examines the zoning of the outside of millennial shopping malls through their elliptical configuration and manufactured greenery, which would appeal to the global awareness of Filipino consumers aspiring for cosmopolitan sophistication.

My dissertation concludes with an analysis of contemporary Singapore in its shift from attaining development to maintaining progress, into a cosmopolitan hub for transnational flows of capital, culture, and culture, which is competitive in the world market. In the past decade, it has sought to restructure Singapore into a leading global city, promoting the city-state as the tourism capital of Southeast Asia. According to an expanded definition of tourism, highly educated foreign talent working in the country would supposedly lend it vibrancy and competitiveness. As industrialized nations like Singapore have shifted their focus towards the knowledge and service economies, migrant workers are being made to replace educated citizens who are finding professional employment. This openness to the determinations of neoliberal capitalism has resulted in worsening income disparity and social inequality, which are embodied in the regimented spaces of shopping malls. The chapter concludes by analyzing how the new social prestige of excess causes simmering discontent in the local citizenry, which the asymmetrical configurations of shopping malls govern by accustoming bodies to mobility and flux.

PART I – 1930s MANILA
CHAPTER 1 — CALLE ESCOLTA: WALLED STREET OF MODERNITY

In one of the Philippine Islands' leading English-language newspapers, a French company is selling an airplane trip from Manila to Paris in only six days. Its notice reads: "Sounds like a dream, like the Magical Flying Carpet, but the newspapers say it's so... Next thing will be the Moon and Man." Written with the breathlessness of casual language, the notice approximates the inescapable excitement of this historical moment. The excitement arises from the growing awareness among the population that realities which before could exist only in words and narratives are finally capable of becoming concrete and factual.

Despite this excitement, the lingering effects of the global economic depression at the end of the 1920s continue to influence the everyday life of Filipinos into the succeeding decade. Reporting diminished profits, companies have reduced the salaries of their employees.¹ Individuals have less purchasing power, less additional funds for necessary expenses such as buying supplies and leisure activities like watching movies. For Filipinos, the future seems less comprehensible and certain. As women enter the workforce as regular salaried employees, their husbands find their sense of self-assurance within the household being unsettled. With nostalgia for the recent past, Filipinos fondly remember the so-called Roaring Twenties, a time of relative prosperity for the Philippine Islands, which benefitted from the increased demand for raw materials caused by the First World War. Through beguiling cultural representations, the 1920s haunt the public culture as a moment of jubilant, carefree celebration, whose ethos has since waned.

Anxieties over the future worsen when the Philippine Islands are granted a definite trajectory towards political independence. One newspaper regularly features a section entitled the Philippine Question, which collates reports and discussions in the U.S. print media concerning this issue. Periodicals soon reflect the growing apprehension that the national economy would falter without the steady demand of U.S. markets for Filipino products.² Politicians and journalists debate over whether the pre-independence period should be extended or political independence should be overturned.

For Filipinos, the decade of the 1930s is a particularly ambivalent moment, unpredictably oscillating between optimism and anxiety. People are learning that every possibility is open to fulfillment, not only possibilities for progress but also possibilities for failure. Although the future has grown more opaque due to the succession of tumultuous events, the common outlook remains faithfully buoyant. People tend to be absorbed in the moment at hand, confident in the unrelenting capacity of modern forces for transformation. Embodied in technology and architecture, modernity at this historical moment appears to unfold as an immense, inexorable phenomenon, which ordinary individuals lack the means of controlling or harnessing on their own.

¹ See Daniel Doeppers, *Manila, 1900-1941: Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis* (New Haven Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale U Southeast Asian Studies, 1984).

² The Philippine economy relies on its duty-free export of agricultural raw materials, such as sugar, hemp, coconut oil, and copra, to the United States. In exchange, the U.S. economy exports duty-free consumer goods to the Philippine Islands. Anticipating the declaration of Philippine autonomy, the U.S. government starts to restrict the access of Filipino products to its markets in 1934.

Into the fourth decade of U.S. colonial occupation, the Escolta has developed into the thriving financial and commercial center of Manila, P.I., a dynamic terrain where flows of goods, ideas, bodies, and finances converge and circulate. In excavating the characteristic logics and functions of the shopping mall in the public spaces of commerce and consumption that preceded its emergence, this chapter focuses on 1930s Calle Escolta as an exemplar of the commercial street. It looks at how the Escolta, along with the retail stores and usual pedestrians that occupied its domain, provided evidence of the Philippine Islands' progress towards modernity and its readiness for independence. In this chapter, I examine two dominant tendencies that I gleaned from the public culture of national periodicals, print advertisements, and fictional narratives from the 1930s. These tendencies pertain to the equation of sanitation with urban modernity and the emergence of women in public life. I start by discussing sanitary modernity, which I define as a mode of configuring bodies, practices and spaces according to overlapping norms of order, morality, and hygiene. In another section, I analyze how the commercial street accommodated modern forces while maintaining its prominent identity and status by assuming the form of a symbolic enclosure. As integral aspects of public spaces in the modern cityscape, sanitary modernity and symbolic enclosure are logics that recur in different milieus but assume different configurations and purposes.

Seeing modernity as multiple and elusive, I consider how its reverberations are imagined and experienced through the many new capacities, identities, infrastructures, and technologies, that are emerging into significance at this historical moment. Perceived as constituting a sweeping and supernatural phenomenon, modern forces are treated with awkwardness and uncertainty when ordinary individuals try to harness them for their own purposes. Regarding consumption as a means of grappling with modernity, I explore the preoccupation with modern femininity in the public culture of the period as Filipino women depart from the cloister of the household to participate in the burgeoning consumer economy. To conclude the chapter, I study the architecture and construction of the Crystal Arcade, a commercial building erected on Calle Escolta in the 1930s that was celebrated as the paragon of modernity at the time. Because the political independence of the Philippine Islands was imminent, the Crystal Arcade was taken to demonstrate the ability of Filipinos to exploit the possibilities of modernity with success.

THE DIVINE INTERVENTION OF SANITARY MODERNITY

With the United States' occupation of the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, the landscape of the archipelago was palpably transformed. For the length of the Spanish colonial era, the pervading atmosphere was recurrence and stagnation. Majestic state and church structures built of wood, stone, or adobe tended to be damaged or demolished by typhoons, fires, and earthquakes.³ The local population of the Philippine Islands experienced time as an inevitable cycle in which newly built structures would eventually be destroyed through the agency of nature and the sanction of god.⁴ Due to their inherent fragility, physical structures failed to

³ Sylvia Mendez Ventura, "Earthquakes, Typhoons, Floods, and Other Acts of God," *Turn of the Century*, eds. Gilda Cordero-Fernando and Nik Ricio (Quezon City, Philippines: GCF Books, 1978), 197-201.

⁴ In their homilies, Catholic priests in the Philippines have attributed these catastrophes to the wrath of God for sinful thoughts and actions.

transcend the rhythm of recurrent catastrophes. This cyclicity was echoed in the immobility of society, as individuals stayed bound to their given circumstances throughout their lifespan. Most natives subsisted with scarce hope of ascending through the established hierarchy, which was dominated by landowners and friars of Spanish descent.⁵

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was a watershed, which divided history into before and after. Ships traveling between Spain and its colony previously needed to pass around the American or African continents.⁶ Shortening the duration of travel from Manila to Barcelona from a few months to one month,⁷ the opening of the Suez canal enabled Enlightenment ideas from Europe about state and society to be more rapidly disseminated. Towards the end of its rule in the last two decades of the century, the Spanish regime facilitated the construction of the steam-driven Manila-Dagupan railroad and the horse-drawn Manila-Malabon tramway, although it neglected to improve public infrastructure and education. Without the inertia of the previous regime, the colonial government of the United States effectually introduced advances in infrastructure and transportation conventionally recognized as modern. Its distinction from Spanish rule was remarkably evident due to the seemingly lasting changes to everyday life it managed to deliver to a recalcitrant landscape. Assuming the force and veneer of divine intervention, it brought electricity to streets, buildings, and homes. Enhancing mobility, it paved and illuminated the roads to ensure the quick and efficient movement of bodies and goods. Under U.S. rule, wood, stone, and adobe structures were reborn with iron, glass, and concrete.

Through the intervention of state and capital, modernity in Southeast Asia during the early twentieth century was primarily embodied and encountered in the novelty and daring of groundbreaking infrastructure, architecture, and technology. In *Engineers of Happy Land*, his rich historical montage of fin-de-siècle Dutch East Indies, Rudolf Mrázek describes how modernity is made tangible and visible in the ubiquitous innovation of roads, vehicles, clothes, houses, and radios such that it becomes experienced as an unrelenting, transformative force.⁸

As the new regime broadly and effectively renovated spaces, structures, bodies, and practices with modern configurations, Filipinos learned to equate modernity with the United States. Under the U.S. colonial government, the commercial street of Calle Escolta has risen to prominence as the unambiguous expression of progress in 1930s Manila with its stylish façades, orderly interiors, and imported products. Aside from being built from innovative materials such as plate glass and reinforced concrete, its buildings feature the emerging technology of air-conditioning. From the beginning of its rule, the U.S. regime established extensive public education and civil service systems. Similar to the work of national periodicals, public schools have trained Filipinos in the rudiments of modernity, such as modern ways of viewing realities, expressing emotions, and inhabiting spaces. The reach of their influence has added to the inexorable, monolithic, and almost supernatural character of modernity. Qualified scholars, regardless of social and economic background, have been sent to the United States to study as government *pensionados*. On their return, they are embraced, in the public culture of the time, as the ‘prophets’

⁵ The dominance and inescapability of this hierarchy is captured in the plight of Sisa and her sons Crispin and Basilio in José Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*.

⁶ *Botica Boie Philippine-American Drug Co. 1830-1930 Centennial Memorial* (1930), 2.

⁷ Edilberto C. de Jesus, “The Tranvía,” *Filipino Heritage*, vol. 7, 1788.

⁸ Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton, U.S.A. and Oxford, U.K.: Princeton UP, 2002).

of new ideas, fashions, and possibilities. With their foreign cultivation, they personify the ideal that ordinary Filipinos are expected to strive to attain.

The United States believed that its manifest destiny in the Philippine Islands was intrinsically tied to the fostering of sanitary modernity in the everyday life of the populace. From the onset of its rule in the last years of the nineteenth century, it strove to enforce rigorous standards of health and hygiene in order to prevent the physical and mental degeneration of bodies in the tropical environment. Among the purported symptoms of this degeneration were pallor, fatigue, passivity, and laziness. Warwick Anderson writes that the U.S. colonial administration regarded the cityscape of Manila, with its crude structures, faulty drains, and unpaved roads as sordid and primitive. Recognizing the foul, stagnant moat that surrounded the Walled City of Intramuros as a probable source of disease, it filled the moat with hard soil and turned the area into a golf course. It constructed a modern water supply system to replace the cans, jars, and buckets that had been used to collect water from rivers, springs, and roofs.⁹ *Tiendas*, which opened to the road, were considered unsanitary and were ordered enclosed.¹⁰ Native markets were rebuilt with reinforced concrete and were placed “under municipal supervision.”¹¹ Health officials would regularly visit their premises to inspect if the vendors at these markets wore clean, unsoiled clothing, kept clean hands and trimmed nails, and used clean, white wrapping paper. Prohibited from touching raw meat with their bare hands, vendors were supplied with forks for handling while the meat was stored in copper-wire cages.¹² According to the logic of these government policies, only if public spaces of exchange like stores and markets were made orderly and sanitary could they facilitate commerce and consumption.

The project of introducing modern sanitation has often coincided with that of delivering moral order to the cityscape and its populace. When arrival of the U.S. army turned the Escolta into an area of saloons, Governor-General William Howard Taft ordered these sinful establishments closed in order to restore its reputation.¹³ The resoluteness of this action, which involved effective state intervention in unruly economic forces and flows, signaled the importance of the commercial street to the landscape of the city. It reveals an attitude towards commerce in an important public space as needing to be proper, respectable, and clean in order to be conducive to commerce. Notably under the administration of Justo Lukban from 1917-1920, systematic efforts have been undertaken to transform Manila into a modern city without vice and sin. Recreational activities like gambling, cockfighting, and prostitution, whose usage of bodies and finances is deemed immoral, were made illegal. Having been prohibited and banished from the landscape of the city, cabarets, cockpits, gambling dens, and lodging houses can usually be found several meters from its territorial boundaries. These governmental actions have shaped the configuration and understanding of commerce and leisure in the public spaces of the Escolta as sanitary, lawful, and modern in character.

⁹ Frank Murphy, “Message of Governor-General Frank Murphy,” *Blue Book of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippine Islands: Bureau of Public Printing, 1935), 71.

¹⁰ Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2007), 115-116.

¹¹ “Gateway” to Manila, 6th ed., 1934, 43.

¹² W. Anderson, 115.

¹³ Lewis E. Gleeck, Jr., *The Manila Americans* (Manila, Philippines: Carmelo and Bauermann, 1977), 4-5.

Driven by the entangled ideals of order, beauty, health, morality, and hygiene, the project of sanitary modernity represents the efforts of the state to exploit modern forces for its objectives, even if these forces frequently elude its full control. Through the implementation of this project, persistent desires and dreams for civilization and progress are incarnated in the cityscape. With evangelistic and pietistic intensity, spaces are sculpted and arranged according to its norms such that any reality that fails to comply with them cannot be called modern. When constant and effective in its articulation, modernity is experienced as pervasive and inexorable due to the profoundness and mercilessness with which it eliminates outworn realities and introduces new configurations into the routine of everyday life. It becomes perceived as a sweeping, almost supernatural phenomenon whose possibilities individuals can barely grasp. Prior to the emergence of modernity as a discourse, new realities that were abruptly introduced into society carried a divine character as though they had originated from the hand of god.¹⁴ It is only with modernity that newness assumes a more secular form, even if it retains traces of its religious character.

Excavating the underlying impetus among modernist leaders, intellectuals, and planners to configure and regulate urban spaces, Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts that they tend to interpret underdeveloped local realities as sites of filth, congestion, and disease.¹⁵ To be able to identify local realities as requiring development, they have needed to occupy standpoints of rational objectivity, which detach them from the immediacy of their surrounding environment. Without the act of objective detachment, they would remain too immersed in their environment to be conscious of the extent to which it fails to satisfy the norms of human habitation and consumption. They would be unable to recognize it as sordid. For Chakrabarty, this capacity to distinguish between the conditions of squalor and productivity is a principal quality of modern identity.

The project of sanitary modernity relies on the logic of hierarchy and enclosure for its epistemological foundation. Timothy Mitchell writes that, in order for modernity to function as a productive presence, it needs to define itself in stark opposition to its outside. According to his reading of Derrida, the contours of an enclosure delineate and enforce a spatial and symbolic hierarchy between an interior and an exterior, which corresponds to the dichotomy between an ideal fullness and its fragmentary supplement. I would add that a rigid, dialectical schematic for apprehending and organizing reality is imposed on otherwise heterogeneous and contingent conditions. For modernity to be established as the predominant reality within a particular space, the governing authority must identify, degrade, and banish all the undesirable and recalcitrant elements that it considers to be a threat to the identity and stability of its domain. It is unable to deal with recalcitrant elements without banishing them. As the site understood to contain them, the outside becomes the spatial representation of these excluded elements that modern forces have cleansed from the interior.

The logic of sanitary modernity is exemplified in the emerging technology of air-conditioning, which is installed in many of the newly constructed buildings on Calle Escolta in the 1930s. With the intent of acquainting its residents with modern

¹⁴ Reynaldo Ileto, "Orators and the Crowd: Independence Politics, 1910-1914," *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 1998), 148.

¹⁵ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Of Garbage, Modernity, and the Citizen's Gaze," *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: U of Chicago P, 2002), 65-79.

ideas about health and hygiene, W.L. Blakemore, a British colonial official in Singapore, explains how the technology operates in one of his radio broadcasts. “Air-conditioning actually comprises a number of processes and the first is the purification of the air in a room by removing from it not only all dust and dirt but also a considerable proportion of the bacteria and the odors arising from food and from the perspiring occupants of the room; in addition the fresh air which is introduced into the room is passed through filters to remove all dust and dirt and most of the bacteria.”¹⁶

Air-conditioning entails cleansing a circumscribed domain, in order to make it more habitable for its occupants, by eliminating contaminants like filth, stench, and noise. Understood to be “the natural result of tightly closing all doors and windows with a view to rendering the room more or less air-tight,” it requires the formation of an enclosure, to whose outside the contaminants are expelled and exiled. The technology of air-conditioning demonstrates the severity of the logic of sanitary modernity, which purges the public spaces of the cityscape of their impurities.

The activity of comparison that allows hierarchies and enclosures to be created is only possible from an objective standpoint, which must first situate itself on the outside of the local environment. Seemingly arriving from elsewhere, the objective standpoint is outside because it is governed by norms that are alien to the prevailing circumstances. Because they represent an ideal that must be attained, these norms are oriented towards enforcing change. Governed by these norms, the standpoint of rational objectivity is inescapably defined by its opposition to the realities it focuses its gaze on. Being rigidly dialectical, the project of sanitary modernity is fundamentally antagonistic. By turning the heterogeneous realities that are external to it into objects of its apprehension and knowledge, it establishes its sovereignty over the interior of a domain. As it augments its presence within a domain, modernity shifts from being fragmentary and elusive to being monolithic and inevitable.

The configuration of sanitary modernity is contingent on its milieu. Defined by national development in the 1960s and neoliberal cosmopolitanism in the 2000s, it is shaped by evangelistic and pietistic religion in 1930s Manila. American historians have written how the U.S. government’s doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which led to its colonial occupation of Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands, was rooted in the belief of its divine exceptionalism.¹⁷ Entwined with this belief was the missionary zeal to effect religious renewal in individuals.¹⁸ The U.S. colonial regime’s endeavor to civilize the cityscape of 1930s Manila by eliminating its undesirable elements carries in it the messianic desire to cleanse the world of its sinfulness. As though authorized by the indiscriminating and uncompromising force of religious renewal, it strives towards the conversion of the entire social body.

To the residents of the cityscape, who witness the profound changes to its infrastructure, architecture, and technology, these changes appear as something uniquely new, which had been previously impossible. Because newness had long been tied to the unfamiliar and uncertain, qualities that were perceived as heavenly in origin, Filipino Catholics continue to experience it as a divine miracle even if its

¹⁶ W.L. Blakemore, “Air Conditioning” (Singapore: Government Print Office, 1940).

¹⁷ In particular, please see Anders Stephanson, “Blessings of Civilization, 1865-1914,” *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire or Right* (New York, U.S.A.: Hill and Wang, 1995), 66-111.

¹⁸ See Jackson Lears, “Crisis and Regeneration,” *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York, U.S.A.: Harper Perennial, 2009), 167-221.

entanglement with religious practice no longer prevails.¹⁹ Unfolding in a modern cityscape, it adopts the guise of a transcendental and supernatural force, which ordinary individuals lack the ability to comprehend, harness, or reproduce. They can only relate to it in emotional terms with a sense of wonder or excitement.²⁰ Determined by the residual influence of evangelistic and pietistic religion, the form assumed by modernity in 1930s Manila is rooted in tradition.

The equivalence of modern and sanitary in the 1930s is discernible in the literary and visual culture of print advertisements. Here, the meanings and emotions generated by discourses of sanitary modernity are frequently deployed in order to sell commodities. If the value of consumer goods is based on their modernity, the form assumed by modernity during this period is shaped by its degree of health and hygiene. San Miguel Brewery promotes the quality of its beverage products, which it claims are bottled under safe, purified factory conditions by technical experts. In this advertisement, the image evoked of a factory conjures the idea of a strict enclosure from the filth, disorder, and disease of the local environment, a domain where commodities are purged of their sordid elements. The material quality of items for consumption is tied to the sanitary character of their spaces of production, which are guaranteed by modern scientific knowledge. The variety of print advertisements for consumer goods reveals a consistent logic in the way modern forces can reconfigure bodies and spaces by transforming the norms of knowledge and practice.

Aided by the latest technology, Kolynos Dental Cream claims to whiten dirty teeth to a degree of whiteness that is seldom humanly attainable. Scientific advances have created consumer items that enable the individuals who use them to exceed the limits of their inborn physical appearance and hygienic capacity. By eliminating the presence of filth that was previously ineradicable, they offer deliverance from the necessity of given circumstances. In treating consumer items as instruments of bodily transcendence, print advertisements disclose how the application of sanitary modernity to the cityscape is not completely implacable and unequivocal. Instead, modernity is an unpredictable encounter whose negotiation requires the intervention of an outside force for it to become more manageable.

The value of consumer items rests less in their material possession and public display than in the symbolic activity and social identity they make realizable. For individuals unaccustomed to modern realities, they function almost like sacred objects such as *anting-anting*, which are believed to be fountains of divine power. In his pioneering study of millenarianism, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Reynaldo Ileto describes how these amulets would be used to enhance the strength and authority of their wielders.²¹ Although consumer items may not share their mystical provenance, they are likewise tapped as means for overcoming the limitations of the natural body. The impression of them as sources of transcendental power augments the capacity of their owners to grapple with seemingly inscrutable and uncontrollable modern forces.

¹⁹ Reynaldo Ileto, "Orators and the Crowd: Independence Politics, 1910-1914," *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 1998), 148.

²⁰ See Luning Bonifacio Ira and Isagani R. Medina, "What Will They Think of Next!" *Turn of the Century*, eds. Gilda Cordero-Fernando and Nik Ricio (Quezon City, Philippines: GCF Books, 1978), 219-225.

²¹ Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 1979), 25.

Warwick Anderson traces how the U.S. regime's strategy for confronting the squalor of local realities shifts from spatial segregation to bodily discipline. As the belief in the native body's natural resistance to germs was superseded by the concept that immunity could be cultivated and acquired,²² the government began to intervene in the culture of the population. Training Filipinos to adopt hygienic practices, it subjected elements understood to be private, domestic, or interior to the discipline of its public health policy.²³ In reconfiguring customs and habits, it aimed to mold weak, filthy, immature natives into productive, orderly, modern citizens.²⁴ Teachers in the extensive public school system instructed their students about the value of washing hands and wearing shoes and the danger of eating raw vegetables and spitting on the street.²⁵ The female salespeople who tended to the luxury shops of the commercial street were expected to cleanse their appearance and behavior of undesirable elements according to the norms of commercial display.

Modern forces prove to be less manageable for individuals than for the government, which has authority over the resources of its territory. Displaying their own capacity for harnessing the possibilities of modern forces was one way for Filipinos to demonstrate their readiness for political independence. Filipinos' innate capacity for mimicry was supposed to enable them to acquire modernity and independence without delay. But from the standpoint of colonial officials, because Filipinos were inherently primitive, they could never be fully assimilated into a state of civilization.²⁶ Any natural incapacity for order and hygiene would be compensated for by their possession of technological implements such as consumer goods, whose use they must repeat until it has grown habitual and ingrained.

An advertisement for Ivory soap offers to introduce the conditions of cleanliness, health, and happiness to the lives of consumers at the price of only a few centavos: "A little thing like Ivory soap—bringing you the blessing of cleanliness, as the first aid to good health—plays an important part in your happiness and enjoyment of life... Form the Ivory habit. Take advantage of the cleansing Ivory lather to keep yourself in the pink of physical condition. Ivory for bath, Ivory for face and hands—washes away more than dirt and the stain's impurities. It washes away the blues—makes life seem better and brighter."

In the advertisement, Ivory soap is transfigured into a sacred object, whose "blessing of cleanliness" will bestow "good health" through faithful use. Although seemingly inconsequential because of its size and appearance, this commodity is presented with the supernatural capacity to purge undesirable elements such as germs and sorrows.²⁷ The advertisement presupposes the ineradicable presence of undesirable elements, without which consumers would be disinclined to reacquire the product once it has been used up. It presents sanitation as the continuous process of eliminating undesirable elements from the bodies of individuals, which entails the simultaneous application of technological advances and repetition of hygienic practices. Because Filipino consumers may find modern realities to be unfamiliar and unmanageable, their adoption of them requires persistence. Only if they embrace as

²² W. Anderson, 88.

²³ W. Anderson, 4-5.

²⁴ W. Anderson, 71.

²⁵ W. Anderson, 117.

²⁶ See W. Anderson, and Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2006).

²⁷ Ann McClintock offers a similar analysis of soap advertisements in "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 1995), 207-231.

their “habit” the activity of washing their bodies with Ivory soap will they find the bliss of heavenly paradise on earth.

The discourses of sanitary modernity that circulate and resonate in print advertisements promote the capacity of modern commodities to deliver the miraculous benefits of modernity to the everyday life of individuals. Embodied in the transformative products of technological advances, the profound changes introduced by modern forces are commonly perceived to be supernatural and divine, beyond the reach of ordinary individuals to generate without an interceding agency. Pivotal for political independence, the attainment of modernity among individuals is not dependent on the accumulation and exhibition of material objects. It relies on the performance of variable gestures and practices, which is more equivocal and therefore more elusive.

PUBLIC FIGURES OF TRANSITION

According to Benedict Anderson, the first newspapers provided a concrete space for imagining the modern because they started to present the experience of time not as the incarnation of an eternal plan preordained in the heavens but the occurrence of concurrent events across varied locations.²⁸ Writing about the shift from religious to modern consciousness, Anderson argues that newspapers supplanted soothsayers as popular prognosticators of future events²⁹ while empirical realism gained currency in the nineteenth century. Individuals would seek advice from soothsayers because they could foretell interruptions in the normal cycles of life such as personal misfortunes and natural calamities. As the increasing number of scientific advances and political revolutions expanded the horizon of possibility, newspapers afforded previously inconceivable future realities the concrete value of factual truth.

Serving as indexes, dictionaries, and manuals of modernity, newspapers educated their readers about words, objects, attitudes, practices, and situations understood to be new or innovative.³⁰ Respected national periodicals during the 1930s like *The Tribune* and *Philippine Magazine* publish in English, the established language of modernity in the Philippine Islands. When the monthly *Philippine Magazine* claims that its audience is the “most wide-awake and progressive people in the Far East,” it is contrasting modern consciousness and activity with the slumber of tropical inertia. Based on the content of its articles, the language of this claim implies that physical changes to infrastructure, architecture, and technology must be complemented with an open standpoint towards novel and transformative ideas, relations, and practices. The Sunday edition of *The Tribune* devotes regular sections to modern science, youth, and women, which identify and promote the norms of modern thought and behavior. Aside from espousing the virtues of rationality and efficiency, they instruct burgeoning segments of the Filipino populace about the proper means by which they can negotiate rapidly shifting circumstances.

²⁸ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed (London, United Kingdom and New York, U.S.A.: Verso, 1991).

²⁹ Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “Language, Fantasy, Revolution: Java 1900-1950,” *Making Indonesia*, eds. Daniel S. Lev and Ruth McVey (Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1996), 34-35.

³⁰ Matthew Isaac Cohen, *The Komedia Stamboel: Popular Theater in Colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903* (Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.: Ohio UP, 2006), 11.

In the supple bodies of figures of transition depicted in the public culture of the time, modernity discloses itself as a reality that is not so much complete and immutable as discontinuous and uncertain. Reinhart Koselleck explains that modernity or ‘new time,’ its German transliteration, is a term used for comprehending the encounter with something that appears to be uniquely new, which hitherto had not been possible.³¹ Appearing to be uniquely new and previously impossible, this reality cannot be easily articulated using the conventional frameworks of understanding. But because its presence has force in the world, it must nevertheless be articulated in language, even if the words, which are meant to denote it, struggle for legitimacy. As the historian Rudolf Mrázek illustrates it in his account of Indonesian modernity, the incongruence between language and experience makes the encounter awkward and uncertain, such that previously fixed norms of imagination and perception are unsettled.³²

Believed to be controllable only by government and business, in their construction of the infrastructure, architecture, and technology of the cityscape, modernity appears to render ordinary individuals incapable of harnessing its possibilities with their own capacities. Equipped with increased purchasing power as members of the growing workforce, individuals cannot avoid dealing with modern forces when inhabiting commercial spaces, purchasing imported products, and adopting urban lifestyles. Although instances of modernity have become discernible in the language they speak, the fashion they wear, and the bearing they assume, these instances are the concrete aftereffects of variable, fleeting actions. Apprehended as something uniquely new and previously impossible, modernity is given definition by the experience of different individuals, who struggle to make sense of its unfamiliar contours by delineating them in multiple, unpredictable ways. Their personal encounter with it is troublesome and tentative, a situation that is culturally represented less by the exploits of heroic demigods than by the misfortunes of humorous caricatures. While seemingly frivolous, these comic figures of transition are significant models of conduct, which demonstrate how awkwardness and embarrassment are acceptable responses in dealing with modern forces.

One unwitting prophet of modernity is Kenkoy, the hapless, gangling protagonist of Tony Velasquez’s comic strip *Album ng Kabalbalan*,³³ which starts being published in the popular Tagalog-language *Liwayway* magazine in the 1930s. Kenkoy represents the almost comic awkwardness of the attempt to grapple with modernity. He exemplifies how consumption constitutes an often improvised fashioning of identity. His spontaneous response as a consumer of styles to the growing dominance of modern influences is expressed through an exaggerated physicality. He could be seen as the literary transfiguration of a vaudeville performer, who humorously incorporates an incongruous miscellany of styles into his appearance and demeanor. The clown archetype that Kenkoy invokes finds itself thrown into an unfamiliar and disorienting situation whose norms he fails to master.³⁴ Attired in an oversized white cotton suit with his hair slicked back with pomade, Kenkoy speaks in broken English with cannibalized words like ‘Bay-gali,’ ‘Beri,’ and ‘Wat-sa-mara.’ The disjointed language that he employs reveals the difficulty in smoothly reconciling

³¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner, et al. (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 2002), 162.

³² Mrázek, xvi.

³³ The title of the comic strip could be translated into English as ‘Album of Follies.’

³⁴ Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York, U.S.A.: Columbia UP, 1992), 224.

seemingly incongruous realities during this period. Episodes in the comic strip examine the tentative, everyday attempts of Filipinos to assimilate the novel social practices that U.S. culture has been introducing and disseminating. Coming at the expense of its protagonist, the comic strip's vaudevillian humor compensates for the humiliating awkwardness of these attempts, which typically result in failure.³⁵

Psychologist Jaime Bulatao explains how the normative behavior of Filipinos appears to be determined by *hiya*, which he describes as an overwhelming feeling of shyness, timidity, or embarrassment.³⁶ According to Bulatao, *hiya* often materializes in an unfamiliar and disorienting situation that is beyond the capacity of an individual to comprehend or control. Unable to cope with the perceived judgment of the public, the individual grows anxious and elusive almost to the extent of paralysis. Working with this provisional concept, I would say that ordinary individuals experience their encounter with modernity as a disorienting situation, in which they must confront unfamiliar realities without having the knowledge or capability to do so. The debilitating experience of *hiya* keeps them from experimenting with untested adaptations, whose awkward performance could easily result in embarrassment. As depicted in the exaggerated physicality of Kenkoy, modernity forces a transformation to their bodies, which allows them to manage unpredictable realities with their existing capacities. They must rely on the aid of consumer products and lifestyles to be able to alter their appearance, behavior, and attitude. This reconfiguration of bodily capacities includes making the feeling of embarrassment more acceptable as part of their assimilation into modernity. As a transitional figure, Kenkoy demonstrates how embarrassment could be embraced in dealing with modern forces despite the possible awkwardness or failure of the encounter.

In Kenkoy's many interactions with his taller, more sensible sweetheart Rosing, who is drawn in the traditional *baro't saya*, the rapidly changing gender relations in local society are illustrated. In one episode, he overhears two anonymous men talking about how beautiful, cultivated women allow men to help them descend from buses. Seeing it as his chance for physical contact with a beautiful woman, Kenkoy decides to test this idea at the University of the Philippines campus, but the female student whom he tries to help strikes him on the head with a heavy textbook. Juxtaposed with the gangling demeanor of Kenkoy, the educated female student conducts herself with greater dignity and sophistication. Even though women have grown more educated and urbane, Kenkoy's traditional attitudes towards women have failed to adjust to this transformation. His efforts to relate to her as a compliant object of his affection are unexpectedly met with resistance from an individual who is now cognizant and assertive of her rights.

The shifting entanglements of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in 1930s Manila are embodied in the changing identities, functions, and relations of individuals. Inscribed in the pages of national periodicals is a newfound fascination with modern femininity as growing numbers of Filipino women perform salaried labor outside the extended economy of the household. From being homemakers who routinely manage the enclosure of secluded domestic space, women have become workers and consumers who frequently navigate the dynamic public spaces of the cityscape. In the burgeoning economy of mass consumption, the multitude of female shoppers who accumulate personal items with their newfound

³⁵ See James T. Siegel's analysis of humor in his seminal study of Javanese culture, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Princeton UP, 1986).

³⁶ Jaime C. Bulatao, "Hiya," *Philippine Studies* 12 (1964): 4.

purchasing power is the crucial target market. Regular columns and feature articles in periodicals instruct their female readers about how to behave in social settings and engage in leisure practices. Contrasted with Kenkoy, they deal more adroitly with the unremitting arrival of modern forces and changes. As a widely circulated figuration of the effects of modernity on urban bodies, Filipino femininity could be seen as a site where the boundaries of private and public space as well as work and leisure time are unsettled and negotiated.

The stereotypical image of a traditional Filipino woman is founded on the character of Maria Clara in José Rizal's seminal novel *Noli Me Tangere*.³⁷ Throughout the novel, she is portrayed as being shy, genteel, mawkish, and docile, as lacking of the composure and assurance that reason would bring. Accustomed to the cloister of feminine propriety, Maria Clara can only apprehend the contingencies of the world outside on affective terms. In most of her attempts to interact with the world, she is rendered inert by the onslaught of uncontrollable emotions. In the figure of Maria Clara, traditional Filipino femininity is defined by its withdrawal to the private domain of domestic space, where reality is more calm, forgiving, and certain.³⁸

This normative characterization is echoed in Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero's 1940 English-language drama, *The Forsaken House*, which sketches the character of the mother as being unconditionally subservient to her husband's will and voice. The notes of the play script describe the traits of the mother as those typical of a Filipino woman who was born and raised under Spanish colonial rule, when female education centered on the leisure activities of embroidery and dancing.³⁹ Her behavior, like the behavior of her children, must conform to the prevailing norms of the time in order for her family to maintain a respectable standing in the established hierarchy. As depicted in Guerrero's works from this period, the spaces that can be occupied and the actions that can be performed are strictly circumscribed. Even in the apparent serenity of the domestic space, the female voice is mute. In the 1940 comedy *Wanted: Chaperon*, children, particularly daughters, are forbidden from pursuing leisure activities in public unless accompanied by a chaperone. Although they already are young adults, they are not afforded the confidence that they could navigate the cityscape on their own. It is only in the 1930s that wearing makeup in public becomes perceived as normal, whereas before, Filipino women with cosmetics would be mistaken for a vaudeville *artista* or a cabaret *bailarina*.⁴⁰ Only female performers who were by profession subject to the public gaze formerly owned the right to decorate their faces with the accoutrements of feminine beauty. Due to changing perceptions, the right to govern the movement and appearance of their bodies is gradually extending to ordinary women.

³⁷ In *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 2012), Denise Cruz explains how this stereotypical image resulted from a myopic reading of Rizal's more ambiguous novel that fixated on specific scenes where Maria Clara was interpreted to behave with these attributes. See the chapter "Nationalism, Modernity, and Feminism's Haunted Interactions," 67-109.

³⁸ Anne-Lise François argues in her book, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 2008), for the re-imagining of purportedly docile Romantic heroines as assuming a more ambivalent stance, which presents them to the contingencies of the world without completely yielding their identities or actions to their determinations.

³⁹ Claro M. Recto, *Vintage Recto: Memorable Speeches and Writings*, ed. Renato Constantino (Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1986), 134.

⁴⁰ Nick Joaquin, "Popular Culture: The American Years," *Filipino Heritage*, vol. 10, ed. Alfredo Roces (Quezon City, Philippines: Lahing Pilipino, 1977), 2740.

As a consequence of Spanish cultural influences, families predominantly invested less in their daughters' education.⁴¹ They believed that women should be raised to become homemakers. Women who desired to work needed to seek the permission of their husbands especially because their absence from the household would supposedly result in its degeneration. The positive laws of 1930s Philippines continue to reflect and to reinforce these social norms. Because women have no property rights inscribed into law, their husbands are legally free to sell familial property without their consent. Their participation in the public sphere of politics is restricted until they win the right to suffrage in September 1936.

Regular salaried labor has furnished Filipino women with new identities and functions outside the circumscribed domestic space of the household. Under Spanish rule, they were known to engage in limited commerce, selling their wares along the roadside while squatting on the ground. They provided services as housemaids, seamstresses, milkmaids, teachers, and midwives.⁴² When the colonial government established the tobacco monopoly in the late eighteenth century, large numbers of Filipino women were enlisted to work in cigar and cigarette factories in Manila because they were believed to be more patient and careful than Filipino men.⁴³ Scores of new employment opportunities open to women much later, in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the modern service sector, where they work as salespersons, typists, stenographers, and bus conductors. The regular wages that they derive from these occupations has equipped them with the purchasing power to become prodigious shoppers, the foremost contributors to the burgeoning consumer economy.

In the 28 November 1935 issue of the *Graphic*, the article "The New Filipino Woman" elaborates on the character of modern femininity. The current historical moment is portrayed as a pervasive upheaval, in which new forces and tendencies are continuously unfolding and emerging, causing the established order of imagination and experience to be reconfigured. It observes that newly employed women from throughout the Philippine Islands are gradually overcoming their ingrained "social conservatism." The greater purchasing power that they now wield has enabled them to navigate the complexities of domestic and public spaces with expert facility.

"Confessions of a Beautiful Shopgirl," an essay published in the 24 September 1932 issue of the *Philippine Free Press*, is written by a young salesperson at one of the glittering stores on Calle Escolta. The writer explains that the allure of the commodities she would encounter while strolling along the Escolta has driven her to find a satisfactory job, which would afford her the necessary funds to acquire these commodities instead of relying on the financial support of her husband. According to her account, her dealings with male customers who flirt and haggle with her have taught her to conquer her "original shyness" or *hiya*—to become more "sophisticated" as a modern individual. This overcoming of the ingrained social conservatism of Maria Clara means learning to employ personal relations, which had formerly dominated and debilitated her, to her own advantage as a commercial agent. Without being overwhelmed and bewildered according to the conventional perception of women, she must skillfully manage the onslaught of bodies, words, images, emotions, objects, and finances circulating in the marketplace. Instead of allowing herself to be reduced to an inert object of sexual desire, she appropriates their representation of her

⁴¹ Doeppers, *Manila*, 66.

⁴² Ma. Luisa Camagay, *Working Women of Manila of the 19th Century* (Quezon City, Philippines: U of the Philippines P and U Center for Women Studies, 1995), 23.

⁴³ Camagay, 5.

for her autonomous purposes, such that she is able to acquire and accumulate her own objects of desire.⁴⁴

Roberta Lee's regular Modern Etiquette section in the *Philippines Free Press* aims to furnish Filipino women with the tools of modern social sophistication. Dispensing advice about seemingly mundane matters such as answering phone calls and behaving at dinner parties, the author offers simple prescriptions about how modern Filipino women should act amid the maelstrom of changes in technologies and lifestyles. In these easily consumable gospels of etiquette, becoming modern and sophisticated is rooted in knowing how to adapt to the profound social changes without being rendered inert. According to an article from the *Graphic's* Home and Fashion section, training Filipino women to become modern and sophisticated individuals is vital due to their integral role in the national economy.⁴⁵ In helping commercial establishments to flourish from the business they provide, they must be skillful and efficient consumers, adept in the art of shopping, which means knowing what to buy, where to buy, and when to buy.⁴⁶

These varied prescriptions suggest novel ways for bodies to reconfigure their relations with their rapidly changing environment without becoming disoriented or paralyzed. Inhabiting the public spaces of the cityscape with adeptness, Filipino women are unsettling and expanding the limits of what they are commonly perceived to be capable of accomplishing.

Typifying the modern Filipino woman, Monina Vargas, the female protagonist of Deogracias A. Rosario's 1930 Tagalog-language short story, "Greta Garbo," is a headstrong consumer of the dominant words, images, and lifestyles circulating at the time.⁴⁷ The short story unfolds inside a train headed for Baguio, a chilly highland resort city north of Manila, where the protagonist plans to elope with her lover, a famous aviator. As she awaits his arrival inside the train, the casual flow of her euphoric thoughts is interspersed with her increasingly anxious countdown to the train's imminent departure. The Tagalog narration is frequently injected with words and catchphrases borrowed from Castilian and American idioms, which emphasize the easy admixture of cultural configurations in cosmopolitan Manila. The narrative's brisk, adjective-less sentences, evoking fleeting, fragmentary images like in a movie, seem to approximate the speed and spontaneity of modern urban life. Unlike Guerrero's plays, events are set not in a house, the conventional, interior domestic space of rest and reproduction, but in a train, the paradigmatic, modern public space of movement and progress.

The people whom Monina Vargas encounters can recognize her resemblance to Greta Garbo because Greta Garbo's Hollywood movies are popular in Manila. The short story captures the emergence of a form of social prestige that involves the imitation of movie stars. Espousing Garbo as her modern feminine ideal, Monina copies the way that Garbo's onscreen characters transcend the mundane necessities of everyday life by acting boldly and forcefully to realize their desires. In the first paragraph of the story, she uses her clear reflection in a mirror to refashion her

⁴⁴ "Confessions of a Beautiful Shopgirl," *Philippines Free Press*, 24 September 1932, 20-21.

⁴⁵ "When a Woman Goes Shopping—," *Graphic*, 31 August 1932, 42.

⁴⁶ "Bargain Sales and the Housewife," *Graphic*, 17 August 1932, 39.

⁴⁷ The ambivalent character of Monina Vargas could be contrasted with the menacing figure of the Coed, who, according to Denise Cruz, was perceived as having little control over her own behavior and morality amid the onslaught of modern forces. See D. Cruz, 91.

appearance with the interceding agency of makeup into the likeness of Greta Garbo. Her unspoken exclamation to herself, “Aakyat sa Baguio si Greta Garbo,”⁴⁸ which opens the story, enables her to affirm her reincarnation as a movie star and to propose the fulfillment of a future action. Like a guiltless consumer in the marketplace of love, Monina exercises her freedom to choose from a range of suitors without having the will of her parents imposed on her.

While waiting for her lover, she glances intermittently at the pages of *The Tribune*, the most prominent English-language newspaper of the time, which becomes the vehicle of truth that reveals to her that her lover is already married. Although their romance started only a few months back, they have decided to elope, perhaps because the proprieties of the era prevent them from being together. Their romantic relationship can only rely for its certainty on the imagined identities they are supposed to have assumed as Greta Garbo and her onscreen lover. The tenuousness of their relationship is captured in this extract of a near accident, which reveals the fragile intimacy that results from ambiguous physical contact: “Hesus!—ang pagitlang sigaw ni Monina, nguni’t hindi lamang maalaman kung sanhi sa halik ni Octavio sa kanya o sa karitelang kaunti nang matumbok dahil tila ‘zigzag’ ang takbo ng automobil.”⁴⁹

To overcome the debilitating cloister of domestic space and the bewildering dynamism of public space, Monina Vargas must refuse these traditional options by choosing to occupy a precarious frontier beyond their domain. Instead of submitting to the normative role of a woman as a docile consumer of mass products, she insists on defining the terms of her own identity. Because her romance with her lover is illicit and secret, she must avoid being recognized in public as Monina Vargas. To save herself from the public humiliation that would diminish her social prestige, she must cleanse her appearance of legible traces of everyday life with the severity of sanitary modernity. She must adopt the name and guise of Greta Garbo, an illusory and precarious identity that is based less on the daily persona of Monina than on a circulated image of celebrity.

Contrary to conventional narrative expectations, the actual climax of the short story is not the failed arrival of Monina’s lover but the triumphant accident of Monina’s misrecognition. As the dominant strand in the narrative is revealed to be not so much the unpredictable romance between the lovers than the indeterminate identity of the protagonist, the grave tragedy of unrequited love is elevated to the farcical triumph of personal fulfillment. As it is described in the short story, Monina’s physical resemblance to Greta Garbo is supposedly lost when she tumbles from the train with the awkwardness of a vaudeville performer. Despite losing the accoutrements of her appearance, she is identified as Greta Garbo by a hovering newsboy, who earns a living from circulating the truths of national periodicals. While the newsboy’s utterance may be laced with sarcasm, his affirmation of this identity in language lends it solidity. Instead of facing public humiliation, she experiences a minor embarrassment, which compensates for the agonizing dispossession of her expected lover with the accidental acquisition of her desired identity. This moment of unavoidable embarrassment actualizes the creation of a modern identity. But in contrast to Kenkoy, Monina Vargas’ ability to affirm her own identity is ultimately

⁴⁸ Deogracias A. Rosario, “Greta Garbo,” *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology*, rev. ed., eds. Bievenido Lumbera and Cynthia Nograles Lumbera (Pasig City, Philippines, Anvil, 1997), 138. “Greta Garbo is going up to Baguio!”

⁴⁹ Rosario, 140. “Jesus!—Monina cries, but no one can tell if the cause is Octavio’s kissing her or the carriage almost being hit by the zigzagging automobile.”

beyond her control. Ruled by dynamic forces that she cannot fully harness, her identity dwells in the realm of coincidence and hearsay.

Adroitly navigating between domestic and commercial spaces, women demonstrate an ability to grapple with heterogeneous modern forces. The modernizing determinations of newspapers and businesses aim to shape women into efficient salesclerks and customers by purging from their bodies the economically unproductive elements of inertness and unpredictability. Departing from the rigid identities that had formerly prevailed, Filipino women learn to adopt an ambivalent stance that enables them to straddle different social roles. While only the government is presumed to have the capacity for harnessing the possibilities of modernity, they intimate a nascent facility for doing so without reinforcing established binaries and hierarchies. Often consigned to the domestic space of labor and reproduction as fledgling and docile bodies, their achievements tend to be disregarded or suppressed. Through the unmanageable agency of modern forces, they reveal how individuals could eventually become capable of experiencing possibilities beyond the limits of necessity that had previously been attainable only through material wealth and social standing.

SYMBOLIC ENCLOSURE

Amid the determinations of the colonial regime's project of sanitary modernity, ordinary Filipinos are able to negotiate modern forces on their own terms through their encounter with them in the commercial street. In the principal site of modernity in 1930s Manila, Calle Escolta, they become acquainted with practices of inhabiting public spaces, purchasing imported products, and adopting urban lifestyles, which differ from those predominant in past historical periods. It is the Escolta's configuration as a symbolic enclosure, which, open to mobile flows of goods and bodies, enables it to function as such as site.

Prior to the advent of modernity, the atmosphere of social prestige characteristic of the commercial street arose from the multiplicity of luxury shops and imported goods that could be found within its domain. This exclusive atmosphere was molded and nourished through decades of repeated practices and reaffirmed notions. In 1930s Manila, the image of prestige has become entangled with the image of progress. Although the two images may partly coincide, their duality reveals a tension in its configuration. While the commercial street must be enclosed in order to maintain its existing identity, it must simultaneously be open to the arrival of new flows from various locations. This tension could be seen as a defining aspect of modernity in that any reality becomes modern only through its success in governing the mobility of flows that threatens to transform its identity. It must learn to accommodate the flows that bring propitious novelties and changes without losing the fundamental contours of its identity to their influence.

Under Spanish colonial rule, the pueblos of the Philippine archipelago were topographically structured such that the church, the seat of religious sovereignty, occupied the spatial and social heart of the community.⁵⁰ As a sign of their centrality and authority, churches were built to be tallest structures under its territorial

⁵⁰ See Robert Reed, "From Suprabarangay to Colonial Capital: Reflections on the Hispanic Foundation of Manila," *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad (England: Avebury, 1992), 45-81.

dominion.⁵¹ The ringing of their bells defined the perimeters of the pueblos, which became the limits of civilization, because all Christian residents were required to live within hearing distance of the bells.

In Manila, commerce thrived in the cosmopolitan *arrabales* or suburbs sprawled outside the Walled City of Intramuros, where the Spaniards resided and governed in seclusion. Dominated by non-Christian Chinese merchants, commerce was perceived by the Spanish regime to be composed of forces and flows that were unmanageable yet necessary. The Spanish regime considered Chinese migrants who refused to adopt Hispanic and Catholic practices as being an undesirable and menacing alien presence, which it could not afford to restrict completely for business to prosper. It allotted a residential and commercial enclave for them in the area across the Pasig River, beyond the fortifications of Intramuros but within reach of the fortress' cannons.

With the rise to dominance of capitalism and modernity in the cityscape under the U.S. colonial administration, the nucleus of the urban domain has shifted away from the seats of government and religion to the hives of finance and business. In previous historical periods, individuals experienced their relation to royal and religious sovereignty as strict enclosure and exclusion, which constrained the majority of the populace from participating in practices of authority. Concentrated at the apex of the established hierarchy, authority was severe, opaque, and implacable. The shift of the urban nucleus has meant a passage from the centrality of monolithic spaces of despotic authority to that of heterogeneous spaces of commercial flux. In contrast to the spaces of royal and religious sovereignty, the configuration of the commercial street is less rigid and hierarchical and more permeable and flexible.

In order to preserve its identity, the enclosure of the commercial street must be able to manage the circulation of bodies, ideas, and goods that enter and exit its domain. In a way, its modernity is determined by its ability to contain the effects of mobility. The enclosure of the commercial street must be partly porous in its configuration to allow for the continuous entry of external flows, which would bring it prosperity and prominence. This configuration must enhance the opportunities for potential customers to arrive and to return without difficulty to provide business to its array of shops. Without the constant delivery of luxury goods to its shops, the commercial street may be able to delineate a space of exception but it would be unable to generate an atmosphere of prestige.

The term *enclosure* refers historically to the fencing off of open fields in England in the centuries preceding the Industrial Revolution. While the fields had been used as communal pasture for household animals, their enclosure turned them into private property whose farmland could be rented out at higher rates.⁵² Causing the populace to abandon the subsistence agriculture of the countryside for the wage labor of the factory, enclosure became linked with the rise of capitalism and modernity.⁵³ The term has come to suggest the oft-violent process of privatizing vital resources, which should be shared in common, into means for appropriating profit. This process entails a delineation of boundaries, which circumscribes the scope of activity that is permissible within a spatial domain but inapplicable to its outside.

⁵¹ Manila Electric Company, *66 Years of Service* (Manila, Philippines: 1969), 8.

⁵² See J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure, and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1996).

⁵³ See Amy Chazkel and David Serlin, "Editor's Introduction," *Radical History Review* 108 (Fall 2010): 1.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault explains how the social institutions where disciplinary power normally shapes individuals into docile bodies for mass production must rely on physical enclosures for its efficacy. Foucault sees an enclosure as a strictly circumscribed space that is discrete and isolated from other spaces. According to his definition, enclosure “is the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony.”⁵⁴ At the barest level of its definition, enclosure requires the demarcation of an inside from an outside. For Foucault, the properties of discreteness and isolation are integral for the enclosure to function as a domain of routine discipline and hierarchy, which governs the practice of norms and the behavior of bodies. Enclosure implies a degree of thickness and impenetrability in delineating boundaries, without which it cannot produce and maintain homogeneity and order. Strictly circumscribed with walls or fences, a physical enclosure constrains the mobility of bodies within its perimeter.

These two definitions offer two ideas of enclosure as privatized property and disciplinary space. For both, enclosure becomes crucial in order to augment productivity and capital in an industrializing economy. Whereas the first suggests a spatial delineation that must be enforced by legality and violence, the second points to a domain that derives its coherence from the imposition of norms. Foucault exposes the hidden meaning of enclosure, which is the enforcement of norms within an exclusive domain. Reliant on the predominance of normative perceptions and practices to maintain the coherence and restrictedness of its identity, an enclosure need not be strictly circumscribed with physical barriers.

In the landscape of 1930s Manila, the physical spaces where the public activities of commerce and consumption occur are unavoidably less stringent in their delineation and operation. Constrained by the existing technologies of construction and ventilation, strictly circumscribed forms of enclosure have yet to confine these spaces because the tolerable magnitude and concentration of the urban populace do not require their existence. Even without spatial barriers such as walls and fences, the constellation of forces that is inscribed in their physical architecture is enough to generate a delimiting experience of symbolic enclosure.

Although dense with dynamic and heterogeneous activity, the Escolta forms a short, narrow, and compact thoroughfare, bounded on both ends by two busy public squares, Plaza Moraga and Plaza Goiti. The succession of monumental buildings, window displays, and arcaded sidewalks, which line the length of cobbled road, frame the interiorized enclosure that the street becomes because of its physical architecture.

For instance, the entrance to the Escolta from Plaza Goiti is marked by two imposing buildings, each of which fill an entire block. Commanding the view of the skyline from Plaza Goiti, their distinct appearance signals the passage into the symbolic enclosure of the commercial street. On the left side of Calle Escolta, the four-story, Beaux-Arts Regina Building, which was expanded in 1934 to its current size, houses several mining companies. A domed cupola with a box-like base crowns its façade of arched windows, carved faces, and swirled trimmings. On the right side of the street, the slightly older, five-story, Art Deco Perez-Samanillo Building presents a pronounced visual contrast with its bold lines and polygonal edges.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 1995), 141.

⁵⁵ The Regina Building and the Perez-Samanillo Building, along with a few other buildings on the Escolta that survived the devastating conclusion of the Pacific War, continue to exist at the present day with slight renovations to their structure.

Symbolic enclosure relies on the implicit inscriptions of the physical architecture to establish affective and epistemological limits to the use of space. These symbolic inscriptions cause a tentative yet legible identity to cohere around the domain of the enclosure. The delimitation of enclosure is crucial for producing and maintaining the atmosphere of social prestige that is characteristic of the commercial street. By demarcating an interior domain, which could be contrasted with an outside world, enclosure enables the commercial street to validate its claims to exceptionality. The affective and epistemological limits it engenders allow for a space of exception to be distinguished that is symbolically isolated from the larger landscape. Only through enclosure can a public space insist on the primacy of particular norms of perception and practice, which diverge from the prevalent norms of the world that extends beyond it.

Individuals are free to enter, navigate, and exit the length of Calle Escolta but its set configuration symbolically inscribes the ways bodies, images, and objects circulate and conjoin within its domain. Enclosure sketches the schematic by which individuals can inhabit public spaces of commerce and consumption. Placing prevalent norms and rhythms under suspension, it institutes its own economy of relations between consumers and commodities by espousing orderly and hygienic conditions for displaying, examining, and acquiring products. The Escolta unfolds as a public space whose possibilities for commerce and consumption are confined only to individuals who possess the financial means for accumulating luxury goods.

Despite its seemingly tenuous character, the symbolic enclosure of Calle Escolta persists due in part to the pervasiveness of the established hierarchy. Permeating the everyday life of individuals and communities, the logic of enclosure shapes the parameters of their imagination, perception, and practice. Assuming different permutations in the spatial and social landscape of 1930s Manila, it produces and circulates the inescapable notion that the world is structured by limits. The existence of a fortress called the Walled City on the opposite bank of the river, where royal and religious sovereignty long prevailed, stifles the notion that the entire cityscape is imperceptibly striated with walls. These walls are incarnated in the atmosphere of social prestige that has encrusted around the compact, bounded confines of Calle Escolta.

During this historical period, the urban domain of Manila is imagined and experienced as being insulated from its outside, the outskirts that extend beyond the terminuses of the *tranvía* system. While providing enhanced mobility, the system of streetcar lines circumscribes the limits of the city. The underdeveloped, rural districts that constitute Manila's outskirts are commonly called the "ends of the earth,"⁵⁶ defining the boundaries of civilization. Manila's inhabitants are still able to recall past experiences of everyday life when, because of the slower, less efficient means of transportation available such as horses and rafts, they rarely traveled long distances. Most of them would spend their entire lifespan never leaving their district of birth. The perception that the terminuses of the streetcar lines mark the "ends of the earth" instills the notion that the spaces of the city are delimited, especially when contrasted with the vast expanse of the suburbs.

As an enclosure, the commercial street of 1930s Calle Escolta relies for its identity as a prominent space of exception on its distinction from its surrounding landscape. Its prominence as the paradigmatic modern space in the urban domain is

⁵⁶ Quijano de Manila, *Manila: Sin City? and Other Chronicles* (Quezon City, Philippines: National Bookstore, 1977), 258.

underscored because it is situated at the heart of a modernizing cityscape, which likewise must define itself in opposition to its outside. From within the enclosure of the capital city, Manila's outskirts are commonly perceived in periodical articles to be a sordid, inscrutable, and menacing landscape where its civilized norms remain invalid. In these fringes, to which they have been exiled by the project of sanitary modernity, the undesirable and corrosive elements of illegality, violence, and immorality are believed to thrive. In contrast to the sordid image of its outside, the commercial street of Calle Escolta must demonstrate that it represents the paragon of modernity in the cityscape by upholding norms of orderly and hygienic commercial display, arrangement, and behavior. The commercial street must guarantee to its visitors that the monetary exchanges performed along its length are not dishonest or criminal. Given the fixed, incontestable character of their high prices, its shops must prove that they can be trusted to supply superior products, whose quality is commensurate to their price. Freeing its public spaces of theft and violence, the commercial street must provide a domain of security and predictability for the wealthy customers and luxury products that occupy these spaces.

Venues for illicit leisure activities can be found at the point where the cityscape ends and the outskirts start. Boisterous cabarets, which the inhabitants of Manila frequent for their entertainment, are typically situated near the terminuses of the different *tranvía* lines, surrounded by lodging houses.⁵⁷ They encircle the perimeter of the urban domain like brazen markers of a mode of existence that is permissible only outside city limits. Immediately north of Santa Cruz and Sampaloc, the district of La Loma is highlighted in newspaper articles as a nest for malefaction and depravity, where muggings and gunfights are ordinary experiences.⁵⁸ Due to the sense of enclosure of the capital city, newspapers engender the sense that violence and turmoil only occur elsewhere, far from Manila, in seemingly remote areas of the archipelago like Central Luzon or Lanao province. The strict insistence on affective and epistemological limits can result in violent situations when these limits are transgressed by the undesirable elements that have been exiled from the interior. As glimpsed in news articles, when violence erupts, it is experienced as something spontaneous, explosive, and cataclysmic.

In the symbolic enclosure of the prestigious commercial street, the figure of the poor exists as a contained reality, which seldom enters the prevailing discourse of the time except with diminished value. In the public culture, poverty is commonly understood to be an inescapable condition that is inherent and predestined. Along with the antediluvian structures and illicit practices with which it is associated, every visible trace of poverty has been expunged from the public spaces of the Escolta. Any intimation of a mode of life that contravenes the prevailing discourse is apprehended as the vague echo of an alien reality. If the figure of the poor is given any meaning, it is only in reference to a world that excludes it.

For individuals seeking personal emancipation, the article "A Vacation in the Slums," from the 14 November 1935 issue of the *Graphic*, recommends a brief immersion in conditions of poverty: "The spiritual fires which you will undergo will not be a rebirth (you are good from the beginning), but in your exultation, you will feel like saying, 'I am born again!'"⁵⁹ According to the article, the experience of living among the poor will eliminate self-pity and cultivate sincerity in the slum tourist because he will learn from the poor to be more instinctive in his actions. A

⁵⁷ Joaquin, "Popular Culture," 2734.

⁵⁸ See *Philippines Free Press*, 28 April 1934, 36.

⁵⁹ F.R. Fernando, "A Vacation in the Slums," *Graphic*, 14 November 1935, 16.

vacation in the slums is intended to benefit not the poor but the tourist. Because the conditions of existence are understood to be innate and immutable, the goal of ameliorating poverty cannot have value.

The symbolic enclosure of the commercial street must permit the spatial mobility of commodities across its territorial domain while regulating the social mobility of individuals through the established hierarchy. It cannot attain prosperity and prominence without successfully managing the tension between the hierarchy and stability of prestige and the dynamism and variability of modernity. Its configuration appears to suggest how modern forces could be governed without reducing their complexity and potential to restrictive binaries.

With its domain recurrently penetrated by the realities it aims to exclude, modernity unfolds as an unending process. It has become commonly regarded as dynamic and sweeping in character because it is unremitting in its efforts to purge from its domain the elements it deems undesirable. By serving as its impetus, these undesirable elements are fundamental to its character. It must constantly introduce or retain traces of their presence within its domain to keep from losing its vitality.

EXCEPTIONALITY AND EXEMPLARITY IN THE COMMERCIAL STREET

Among the most striking buildings on Calle Escolta, the Crystal Arcade is extolled as a paragon of progress when it is inaugurated on 1 June 1932. The *Manila Daily Bulletin's* editorial on that day declares the new building to be proof that Manila's cityscape is gradually modernizing.⁶⁰ Presenting a solution to the sordidness of local realities and the uncontrollability of modern forces, the Crystal Arcade could be seen to exemplify a future configuration of public space. Costing one-and-a-half million pesos to build, the fully air-conditioned Crystal Arcade is christened a "new paradise for shoppers." Commonly used to refer to the benefits of modern changes, the term 'paradise' suggests a state in which consumers can withdraw from the oppressive immediacy of their local environment to experience the blissful comfort of modern life.

Stretched across a sprawling lot in between the Brias Roxas building and the Capitol Theater, the Crystal Arcade is a broad, majestic structure with sweeping horizontal lines and circular edges. With an exterior characterized by multiple levels of plate glass, this building is comprised of two curved, rectangular wings that meet at the center, where its name, inscribed in script, projects from an intricate wrought-iron screen of elegant spiral and geometrical patterns. On one level, ledges with foliage hang outside the bands of horizontal glass windows that wrap around the length of each wing. At the opposite ends of the structure, a rectangular tower, whose long, vertical window is embellished with undulating lines, emerges slightly from the façade. Standing out from the other, less architecturally stylish and monumental buildings that line the Escolta, the Crystal Arcade offers a visible example that Filipinos can overcome their lack of reason, composure, and productivity in harnessing modern forces to create something uniquely new and previously impossible in the world.

The Crystal Arcade's prominence as a paragon of progress could be better understood through Giorgio Agamben's delineation of the distinction between the exception and the example. According to Agamben, in his influential book *Homo*

⁶⁰ *Manila Daily Bulletin*, 1 June 1932, 4.

Sacer, the two concepts are similar in that each of them has a precarious relation to the norm that it is meant to define. The exception is appended to the normal case because it represents the limit to the norm's identity. In contrast, the example exists as part of the normal case but transcends the norm when it demonstrates and concretizes its identity.⁶¹ Because it is a nascent reality, which must establish its presence in the cityscape, modernity requires cases of exemplarity and exceptionality to be able to emphasize its identity and newness. The order and elegance of the commercial street is counterposed as an exception to the purported lack of sanitation and civilization of the rest of the nation. The Crystal Arcade is heralded as an example of the degree of progress that the Philippines can achieve in the future. But the Crystal Arcade is understood to be more than any ordinary example in that its configuration exceeds the mundane necessities of everyday life. Its exemplarity is informed by its exceptionality. As a unique exception to present circumstances, it serves as the exemplar of an anticipated future, which has yet to exist.

This exemplarity is important because Filipino businesses appear to be less prosperous than their Chinese and Japanese competitors. Local participation in the wholesale and retail businesses comprises only twenty percent and eight percent of the total. An issue frequently discussed in publications is why Filipinos have failed to achieve a higher level of economic success. One reason surmised is that they are inherently "sentimental," a governing trait that causes them to be "impractical" and "unbusinesslike."⁶² According to this notion, effective commerce relies on a professional demeanor that is rational and pragmatic, which is not easily overwhelmed or undermined by emotional attachments. Due to their excessive sentimentality, Filipinos are supposedly incapable of decisive action, which would entail sacrificing outworn structures and customs to suit the demands of changing conditions. Excessive sentimentality is portrayed as the irrational and unproductive obstacle that keeps Filipinos from developing the capacity to create a financially prosperous economy and govern a politically independent nation. Built by a local family corporation, Tavera-Luna, some of whose members were esteemed nationalists, the Crystal Arcade demonstrates in its architecture and construction how Filipinos can introduce something new of their own making to the cityscape.

The supplement accompanying the *Manila Daily Bulletin* issue states that the Crystal Arcade contains fifty-nine stores and forty-two offices spread across forty thousand square meters of allotted space. Its preeminent occupant is the Manila Stock Exchange, which shares the ground floor with Sun Photo, Frigidaire, Syyp Tailoring, the Bombay Silk Palace, and the Nippon Bazar, as well as a soda fountain and ice cream parlor. Aside from these establishments, on the day of its inauguration, the building houses Central Luzon Mining on its topmost story and Sarabia Optical and the Philippine Hat Factory on the second level. The relocation of establishments originally scattered across the commercial street within a single, air-conditioned physical enclosure presents individuals with a more convenient form of consumer space, which would facilitate commerce. In its example, the growth of the cityscape is no longer primarily dependent on state action but on private initiative. The structure of the Crystal Arcade is built to accommodate four more stories, whose addition, its local architect Andres Luna de San Pedro remarks, would depend on the sentiment of the community and the profitability of the building. Its configuration carries the kernel of an imagined future of continual development and expansion.

⁶¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 1998), 21-22.

⁶² "Filipino Participation in Business," *Philippines Herald Yearbook*, 23 September 1933, 14.

Because the terrain of Manila is prone to earthquakes, past achievements in monumental architecture under Spanish rule such as palaces and churches have ended up being destroyed. To deal with this inescapable geological fact, the Crystal Arcade has been engineered to withstand natural calamities. Made of durable reinforced concrete, it uses local Rizal cement, which is claimed to be resistant to damage from a range of external forces, from automobile tires to earth tremors. The building stands on a boat-type foundation, which was designed using precise scientific calculations to keep stress from concentrating at any single point. Its basement is equipped with drainage pumps to prevent flooding, which happens occasionally on the Escolta during the monsoon season due to overflowing canals. In its construction, the builders of the Crystal Arcade have attempted to surmount the barriers to modernity posed by nature. With the intent of accommodating a large number of customers, they have tried to address the clutter that unrelenting modernization produces. In contrast to the length of Calle Escolta, which can hold one hundred twenty vehicles at most, its three thousand square meter basement has allocated two hundred parking spaces, which are meant to decongest the traffic caused by vehicles parked along the street. Oriented towards the future, the building strives to overcome not only the languid cyclicity of nature but also the burdensome excess of modernity.

According to the *Manila Daily Bulletin* supplement, its builders conceived the Crystal Arcade to be not merely structurally utilitarian but also aesthetically unique. In being visually elegant and modern, its configuration transcends the demands of basic necessity. Faithful to the name of the building, its interior is a study in glass and lighting. Each story forms a glistening wall of Belgian plate glass. With a total cost of one hundred eighty thousand pesos, more plate glass has reportedly been used in the Crystal Arcade than in all the structures on Calle Escolta. The construction of a building with the amount of glass found in the Crystal Arcade in a city prone to earthquakes demonstrates the audacious vision of its builders for a monument that transcends its local environment. It means that the technologies and techniques used to construct the building are advanced enough to incorporate glass components that could withstand moderate earthquakes.

So as to augment the radiance of the interior, insets of prismatic glass have been built into the floor. Store window displays are illuminated with lighting encased in x-ray reflectors. Two resplendent glass skylights, designed by the German stained glass company Kraut, are situated at the front and rear of its palatial atrium. Secured to steel frames so as to keep them from falling during earthquakes, the skylights comprise small panels ringed by a rectangular band of diamonds and triangles in two tones of blue, red, rose, green, yellow, white, and orchid. The dazzling use of glass and lighting is designed to turn the building from an example into a spectacle, which insists that individuals relate to it as an object to be viewed and examined. Suspending the mobility of individuals within its domain, its exceptional appearance compels them to stand still as it absorbs their attention.

For the builders of this historical period, the importance of a building should be reflected in its ornate and monumental architecture. The Crystal Arcade's long lateral lines, which emphasize the sweeping width of the exterior, are influenced by the latest architectural styles from Germany, the United States, and Japan. Its floor is decorated with French and Alsatian ceramic tiles, while its galleries and passages feature mosaic tiles. Its principal interior and exterior trimmings are made of Bavarian granite, which was chosen because the tropical climate supposedly causes marble to

lose its color, texture, and luster.⁶³ The building's walls are covered in Belgian leatherette of subdued gold, brown, and silver hues. Two reliefs of Filipino life, carved by Guillermo Tolentino, unfold directly above the entrance to the elevators on the main story, whose shafts are decorated with multi-colored, brown-toned Moroccan marble. The modernity of the cityscape becomes evident through its successful appropriation of building materials and aesthetic practices from foreign nations commonly believed to be more scientifically and culturally developed. The builders of the Crystal Arcade illustrate how Filipinos are able to negotiate and harness external forces without awkwardness and embarrassment by making them more suitable to the local environment. As an exemplar of modernity, the Crystal Arcade defines the terms by which sordid local realities are conquered from outside and uncontrollable modern forces are accommodated within its enclosure.

The aesthetic highlight of the building is its majestic double staircase, which ascends without visible support from the center of the atrium. The flying staircase comprises two large, semi-spiral staircases, which wrap around shiny, polygonal columns of Italian marble. Climbing three stories, the two freestanding staircases first meet at a suspended landing and then continue onto the topmost deck. The ability of the flying double staircase to defy the effects of gravity is celebrated as a feat of engineering. According to its builders, the Crystal Arcade represents "the last word in modernity," suggesting that it is paradigmatic among all the existing structures in the Philippine Islands for its assimilation of modern design and technology. As the paragon of progress in the tropics, it has exhausted the capacity of ordinary language to accord value to its achievement. As the exemplar of a future reality that individuals cannot yet fully articulate in language, it implies inevitability in that the paragon it represents will eventually develop into the norm. Its very existence is testimony to its uniqueness, which must be witnessed as spectacle for it to be appreciated. But as a spectacle to be regarded with wonder or excitement, its exemplarity, which represents an ideal that urges emulation, comes into conflict with its exceptionality, which highlights a uniqueness that resists replication.

The predominant practices of sanitary modernity aim to overcome the limitations of the local environment by carving out a terrain where commerce and consumption can transpire without impediment. The residue of failed modernization is equated with the excess of unrelenting modernization. Both become regarded as undesirable impurities, which must be excised and purged from the public spaces of the cityscape. The complexities of modernity and enclosure are inscribed into the Crystal Arcade's configuration. The building is supposed to provide an objective standpoint, which positions individuals at an antagonistic relation to the local environment. Instead of functioning as a compelling example that would spur action towards progress, it unfolds as an immersive spectacle that denies its spectators any impetus towards movement. More than the threat of natural calamities, the actual danger is that its exceptionality might turn it into the final word in modernity, which would mean that no other structure could be built to improve on its achievement.

⁶³ S.A. Pilar and R.D. Perez III, "Crystal Arcade," *Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. III: Philippine Architecture* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), 223-224.

PART I – 1930S MANILA

CHAPTER 2 – THE EYES OF THE CONSUMER: SPECTATORSHIP AND CONSUMPTION IN THE COMMERCIAL STREET

Visible to the gaze of pedestrians even from afar, the movie theater's striking vertical sign marks its monumental presence on the commercial street amid the rows of alluring window displays.¹ Rising above the marquee on the right end of the building, the rectangular sign announces the name 'CAPITOL' in bold, embossed letters. On closer approach, pedestrians will notice that the sign extends from a stylish, geometric wrought-iron screen of crisscrossing lines, squares, and circles. On opposite sides of the sign, sharp profiles of two women in traditional Filipino dress, facing in opposite directions, have been carved from the concrete exterior. The woman facing the west cradles a mask while the figure turned towards the east is playing a harp. The building's cascading edges recur in the pleated patterns of the women's dress, below which representations of film reels and sprockets unravel in opposite directions. These figures of women that emerge from the façade are depicted almost like oblivious or ambivalent prophets of modernity, who cannot escape being transformed by the dynamic forces acting all around them. While evoking the residual influence of tradition, they hint at the nascent shift in the dominant modes of cultural entertainment, visual perception, and social prestige.

Constructed for one million pesos in a record time of one hundred twenty days, the Capitol Theater is said to testify to its builders' fervent belief in the nation's future prosperity despite the uncertainty of political independence.² Predominantly modern in style with traces of local imagery, its architecture discloses the passage between different modes of social prestige, from the display of material wealth to the aura of spatial occupation. The Capitol Theater's principal motif is the *sampaguita* or jasmine flower, which is incorporated into the black-and-white wrought-iron grillwork of the foyer, staircase, and lobby inside. Its ceilings and walls are painted in light shades of spotted gray and blue, which complement the granite columns and black marble stairs.³ Resembling the exterior of the ticket booth, the floors of the main entrance, mezzanine, and lower vestibule are covered with speckled Venetian terrazzo tiles, the first structure to do so in the Philippine Islands. With their monumental architecture, the most prominent venues for theater and cinema reflect the high significance that is assigned to these forms of cultural entertainment. Built to be as grand and as ornate as palaces and churches, these venues are able to charge higher prices for their tickets, which restrict most of the audience to members of the elite. But as this form of cultural entertainment is becoming more affordable and accessible, its modes of visual perception are growing more widespread and influential.

¹ The evocative descriptions of Manila incorporated into this study have all been culled from a scattering of sources located in the American Historical Collection, the Lopez Memorial Museum, the Filipinas Heritage Library, the Ateneo de Manila University Rizal Library the University of the Philippines Main Library, the National University of Singapore Central Library, and the United States Library of Congress. The American Historical Collection and the Lopez Memorial Museum have been particularly invaluable for their archive of periodicals, pamphlets, maps, directories, postcards, and photographs from before the Pacific War. The Lopez Memorial Museum has digitized many issues of *The Tribune* and the *Sunday Tribune Magazine*. The University of the Philippines' Main Library has microfilm copies of the *Philippines Herald*. The U.S. Library of Congress houses copies of the *Manila Daily Bulletin* and the *Philippines Free Press* from the same period. Random selections of the *Philippines Free Press* and A.V. Hartendorp's *Philippine Magazine* can be found on microfilm at Ateneo de Manila University's Rizal Library.

² See *Capitol Theatre Inaugural Program January 8th, 1935* (Manila, 1935).

³ Hilarion Vibal, "Capitol Theatre, New Architectural Gem of City, Attains Beauty through Simplicity, Demureness," Capitol Theater Supplement, *Philippines Herald*, 9 January 1935, 1.

In 1930s Manila, the movie theater is starting to emerge as the principal public space for leisure and entertainment in the cityscape. In many Southeast Asian megacities today, the movie theater is an integral component of the shopping mall, the nucleus of urban life. Cultural theorists and urban scholars have tended to be preoccupied with how the experience of the shopping mall, and that of the consumer spaces that preceded it, equates to the dominance of spectacle. They describe how the individuals who frequently traverse its domain are inescapably beguiled and stupefied by the dazzling attractions they encounter. By looking at the case of 1930s Manila, I argue that spectacle and spectatorship shape perception and consumption in a less malevolent and unequivocal way. In this chapter, I focus on how the ascendancy of the commercial street as a public space of urban modernity is entangled to the emergence of cinema as a prevalent mode of visual perception. I explain how the shift in the dominant form of cultural entertainment from the theater to the cinema corresponds with a reconfiguration of the relation between the spectator and the spectacle to something more concentrated and nonreciprocal. Central to the canon of film theory in North America and Western Europe, conceptions of the gaze such as those of Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey are borrowed from Lacanian psychoanalysis. Concerned with illicit sexual desire in normative familial relations, they revolve around the Greco-Roman myth of Oedipus, which appears to have limited influence on the cultural traditions of Southeast Asia as compared to tropes from the Ramayana or the Quran.

As my starting point, I examine not so much the gaze's origins in the private dominion of the family than its workings in the social landscape of the city. Highlighting its relation to modern consumption, I discuss how film spectatorship is shaping the visual relations that individuals establish with bodies and objects through their apprehension of store window displays. In the next section of this chapter, I study how this reconfiguration of spectatorship and consumption coincides with the transformation of social prestige in the commercial street. In the genealogy I attempt to trace, social prestige rests first on the accumulation of financial wealth, then on the approximation of movie stardom, and then on the demonstration of excessive conduct. Even in this early paradigm of consumer space, I argue that individuals do not necessarily visit the commercial street to purchase goods. The activity of inhabiting the commercial street clothes them in an aura of social prestige that is no longer dependent on material possession. In contrast to the prominent leisure spaces of previous historical periods, where social prestige would develop from a public exchange of gazes, the movie theater represents a new, more visual mode of social prestige that emanates from the anonymity and mobility of the urban domain.

FROM THEATRICAL TO CINEMATIC SPECTATORSHIP

In 1930s Manila, the commercial street is the principal public space of commerce and consumption. A commercial street such as Calle Escolta originally derived its prominence from being lined with elegant shops that sold alluring luxury products imported from other nations. The abundance of luxury shops and the variety of imported products found in the enclosure of the commercial street engendered an atmosphere of social prestige. Enveloping the cobbled roads, concrete walls, and glass windows of Calle Escolta, this atmosphere was an integral characteristic of its identity as a commercial street.

The commercial street's identity as a source of prestige has since grown entangled with its character as a site of modernity. During the historical period of the 1930s, the façades and

interiors of Calle Escolta's buildings and stores exhibit its status as the nucleus of the urban domain by adopting modern norms of architectural beauty, social conduct, and commercial arrangement. Affirming the exceptionality of the city in relation to the rest of the nation, its spatial and visual configuration demonstrates the acme of progress and prosperity that the city has attained. Its existence functions as concrete proof that the residents of the city possess sophistication because they are attuned to the ideals of urban modernity.

Because the financial means for purchasing luxury goods is limited to the members of the social and economic elite, many of the regular inhabitants in the commercial street of Calle Escolta visit its shops merely to browse their glittering window displays. The prevalence of this leisure activity reveals a new commercial arrangement, which allows the consumer to relate to the commodity in a clearer, more orderly visual manner. Its configuration is shaped by a constellation of visual practices of commerce and consumption, including a nascent mode of spectatorship, which emerges with the shift of the primary form of cultural entertainment from theater to cinema. Transforming a relation that had been based on contact into one founded on sight, it denies any form of mutual negotiation between individual and object. As the visual attributes of the commodity are emphasized over its material properties, an image is produced that becomes detachable, mobile, and exchangeable.

Replacing the *sarswela*, an indigenized opera derived from Spanish theater, as the primary form of cultural entertainment in Manila, a local variant of vaudeville called *bodabil* flourished during the Roaring Twenties.⁴ The stronghold of *bodabil* was the Savoy at Plaza Santa Cruz, on the opposite side of the Santa Cruz Church at one end of Calle Escolta, where the impresario J.C. Cowper based his stars under the company name Nifties.⁵ Originating as an intermission between *sarswela* performances or movie shorts, vaudeville captivated Filipino crowds with its bawdy and boisterous medley of music, dance, magic, acrobatics, and comedy.⁶ Like the *bangsawan* in British Malaya, vaudeville relied on a spontaneous and intense bond between performer and audience, which lost its ascendancy with the advent of cinema.

As a popular form of entertainment, vaudeville was supposedly influenced by amusement parks like New York's Coney Island,⁷ which shared its characteristic logics of heterogeneity, novelty, and exuberance.⁸ A typical vaudeville performance consists of an assortment of short, distinct acts, which has no overall narrative coherence.⁹ Each act needs to be strikingly different from the other acts in order to sustain the interest of the audience throughout the entire performance.¹⁰ The series of acts must unfold as unremitting bursts of fervent energy so that the enthusiasm generated in the crowd of spectators continuously stays at a high level.¹¹ Vaudeville performances often include individuals who can accomplish astonishing feats of extraordinary

⁴ "To Bring Back Vaudeville," *Philippines Free Press*, 17 September 1932, 5.

⁵ "To Bring Back Vaudeville," 35.

⁶ Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon, "Canuplin: The Little Tramp Time Left Behind," *Primed: Selected Stories 1972-1992* (Manila, Philippines: Anvil, 1993), 95.

⁷ Robert M. Lewis, *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910* (Baltimore, U.S.A.: John Hopkins UP, 2003), 15.

⁸ Qtd. in Lewis, 319-320

⁹ Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York, U.S.A.: Columbia UP, 1992), 123; Lewis, 17.

¹⁰ Qtd. in Lewis, 337.

¹¹ Jenkins, 9; Lewis, 17.

skill.¹² Almost any activity can be turned into a vaudeville spectacle as long as it has the potential to captivate and to entertain a crowd.

Bandleader Borromeo Lou, who would organize and direct productions, was responsible for establishing the genre in Manila. His coterie of *bodabil* stars included the pretty, urbane dancing comedian Dimples Cooper, the almond-eyed torch singer Diana Toy or Toytoy, and the Filipino Fred Astaire Bayani Casamiro.¹³ The funny, rotund, raspy-throated Vicente Ocampo would perform his hit tune, “Sitsiritsit, Alibambang.”¹⁴ The seductive torch singer Katy de la Cruz would enchant audiences with jazzy renditions done in her gravelly voice.¹⁵ The talent and variety of its performers are what caused vaudeville to thrive as a form of entertainment during this historical period.

One of the most popular and successful *bodabil* performers in Manila was Canuplin, the ‘Fabulous Magician,’ who was an indigenized caricature of Chaplin. Garbed in the trademark oversized coat and pants, his moustache exaggeratedly drawn, he owned a unique talent for eliciting bountiful laughter from his audiences.¹⁶ At the acme of his career in the 1920s, Canuplin would earn P125 each week, approximately eighteen times more than his accompanying performers. Global in his appeal and reach, he toured Singapore, Batavia, Bandung, Surabaya, Celebes, Bangkok, Okinawa, Tokyo, Kobe, Korea, Guam, Honolulu, San Francisco, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.¹⁷ Adept at accommodating varied influences and audiences, he formed an early part of a lineage of Filipino migrants that has provided sources of enjoyment and diversion in cities around the world.

Because vaudeville, like other theatrical genres, is performed live in front of an eager crowd of spectators, which does not hesitate to announce its opinions, its audience closely shapes its performance. Theatrical performers tend to modify aspects of their performance according to the responses they elicit from the crowd in attendance. Vaudeville acts like Canuplin were masters at prolonging jokes in order to draw longer, richer laughs.¹⁸ Their crude delivery of their jokes is meant to provoke a visceral reaction from the spectators in the form of immediate and intense pleasure.¹⁹ Canuplin typifies how the most skilled vaudeville performers would develop a reciprocal bond with their live audience. This bond would be founded not so much on a predetermined familiarity between the two but on the ability of the performer to adapt and improvise according to the expectations and demands of the particular audience. Since the principal aim of the vaudeville performance is to entertain, the continual need to meet audience expectations and demands becomes one of the integral conventions of this genre.

Canuplin evoked Kenkoy in his motley appropriation of styles and in the awkward physicality of his performances. As a performer, it was imperative for him assume an ambivalent and amorphous stance to be able to accommodate heterogeneous realities with adroitness.

¹² Lewis, 315.

¹³ Luningning B. Ira, “Two Tickets to the Vod-a-vil,” *Filipino Heritage*, vol. 9, 2509; Jose A. Quirino, “The Laugh Merchants,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, 21 February 1965, 14.

¹⁴ Luningning B. Ira, “Two Tickets to the Vod-a-vil,” *Filipino Heritage*, vol. 9, 2509; Jose A. Quirino, “The Laugh Merchants,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, 21 February 1965, 13.

¹⁵ Luningning B. Ira, “Two Tickets to the Vod-a-vil,” *Filipino Heritage*, vol. 9, 2509; Jean Pope, “With a Song in Her Heart,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, 25 September 1966, 44.

¹⁶ Maglipon, 95.

¹⁷ Maglipon, 95; Jean Pope, “The Limelight that Waned,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, 9 October 1966, 42.

¹⁸ André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Volume One*, translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles, U.S.A. and London, U.K.: U of California P, 1967), 79.

¹⁹ Jenkins, 35.

Because of its dynamic quality, vaudeville could be seen as a transitional cultural form, which enabled individuals to negotiate the uneasy passage to modernity. Canuplin epitomized the vaudeville performer who could willingly adopt an interim stance of *hiya* or embarrassment in dealing with elusive modern forces.

As a form of theater, vaudeville is centered on its performers,²⁰ whose talent, energy, and magnetism determine the success of the performance. Among his famed repertoire of magic tricks, Canuplin would pour water into a makeshift funnel, which he had folded from the pages of a newspaper. With a hilarious poker face, he would unfold the funnel to reveal that the water had vanished. Folding the funnel again, he would make the water reappear.²¹ The applause he received was so thunderous that he would sometimes have three encores.²²

Because vaudeville acts are made to perform to a large audience within a short span of time, their performance needs to be accentuated. They must project a vigorous personality, which is compelling enough to engross the audience in the brief moment they are visible onstage.²³ Their constant vigor has resulted in the common impression that vaudeville performances are ‘electric.’²⁴ To be successful, it is imperative for vaudeville performers at the outset to develop an immediate bond with their audience. Some of them even resort to assaulting their spectators with words or objects just to elicit an animated response.²⁵

The interactive bond that forms between the performer and the audience in vaudeville is akin to the reciprocal relation between the gazer and the gazed. Vaudeville performers are constantly aware throughout the duration of their performance that they are being watched. The awareness of their unavoidable visibility obliges them to be open to adjusting their performance to suit the expectations and reactions of the audience. If performers could not hear the comments of their gazers or see the expressions on their faces, then they would be less likely to make immediate, spontaneous changes to their performance. Each theater performance is variable and unique due to the live presence and active interaction of its spectators.

The decline of vaudeville coincides with the ascendancy of cinema as the primary form of cultural entertainment in Manila. By the mid-1930s, multiple movie theaters, which typically screen Hollywood pictures, have opened to the public across the landscape of the city. This shift in dominance from theater to cinema marks the passage in the prevailing mode of visual perception, which shapes the relation between the consumer and the commodity.

Whereas theater performances are flexible and adaptable, being partly improvised according to the reaction of the audience to the ongoing performance, film narratives are predetermined and invariable mass products. Regardless of the circumstances of its commercial distribution and exhibition, the material attributes and narrative details of a particular film remain constant. With the broadening popularity of cinema, spectators are growing accustomed to this convention of homogeneity when consuming cultural entertainment. Film spectators are learning to relate, in a different normative way from theater audiences, to the fictional events that unfold before their eyes. Unlike theater performers, film characters do not directly address individuals

²⁰ Bazin, 102.

²¹ Maglipon, 103.

²² “Borromeo Lou ‘Comes’ Back,” *Philippines Free Press*, 2 June 1934, 29.

²³ Qtd. in Lewis, 328.

²⁴ Lewis, 319.

²⁵ Jenkins, 77.

in their seats by staring back at them. They are oblivious to their audience as though a physical wall demarcated their presence to each other. Unlike that between theater performers and audiences, the relation between film characters and spectators is fundamentally detached and impersonal,²⁶ similar to the changed relation between commodities and consumers.

During a theater performance, everyday life continues to unfold. Even while seated to watch a performance, members of the audience are easily distracted by the miscellany of small events simultaneously occurring inside the theater. Restless individuals are free to walk around the theater as the performance is being staged. Munching on snacks, some of them like to chat with their seatmates about the performance, if not about assorted topics. In contrast, within the enclosure of the movie theater, individuals are absorbed by the potent medium of cinema. Despite being monochromatically black and white, the film narrative effectively presents a vivid, faithful reproduction of reality, which is highly engrossing. Uninterrupted by discontinuities in its presentation, which could cause the audience's attention to wander, its formal coherence is able to sustain the interest and absorption of the audience throughout its duration.

Seminal film theorist Christian Metz asserts that cinema diverges from theater in that it dissipates the sense of community and heightens the state of individualism.²⁷ Whereas the theater audience loudly prattles, laughs, and heckles while interacting with the performers and with one another, the film spectator quietly withdraws into the isolation of a darkened room. The dichotomy that Metz establishes seems to be contradicted at least by the early days of cinema in Southeast Asia, where the collective social practices of the theater audience would be carried over into film spectatorship. With the assumption that their gaze could still be reciprocated, early film spectators behaved as though the characters on the screen could respond to their reactions. The individualism from Metz's conception of cinema does not necessarily grow more predominant with the spread of the medium. In the movie houses of Southeast Asian cities, the communal experience of film spectatorship extends beyond the physical enclosure of the theater. The individuals gathered outside interact with one another when they converse with their friends over food or gaze at the appearance of strangers.

For their potency as modes of representation and entertainment, theater performances rely principally on the physical presence of performers, who must magnify and project this presence to the audience. If vaudeville performances need to be energetic and novel in order to enthrall their audiences, the qualities of energy and novelty are already inscribed in the very medium of cinema with the unrelenting speed and startling richness of its montage of images. Dependent not on the physical presence of performers but on the formal arrangement of images, the film narrative focuses on mundane objects and minute details, which are elevated to the significance of protagonists. By narrowly defining the field of vision contained within the frame, the camera causes the spectator to identify with the perspective from which it presents the events in the film narrative.

The loss of the physical presence of spectacular performances on the theater stage with the passage from theater to cinema as the primary mode of visual perception is compensated by the newfound significance of mundane objects on the movie screen. Despite the diminution of immediacy and reciprocity in the relation between the spectator and the spectacle, this change is barely noticed. Because the film medium infuses its fictional world with briskness and

²⁶ See Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8.3-4 (1986): 63-70.

²⁷ Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen* 16.2 (1975): 64.

materiality, the spectacle that unfolds on the movie screen remains compellingly vivid and immediate.

Because its images are formally organized and narrowly composed, the camera trains the spectator to view the objects and details it highlights with a focused gaze. As a mode of visual perception, the focused gaze isolates itself from the world by ignoring the troublesome realities that might distract its concentration. It surrenders to the more enthralling world that unfolds before its eyes on the movie screen. The gaze of the spectator echoes that of the consumer who devotes heightened attention to the products he is contemplating buying.

In her landmark essay, Laura Mulvey explains how the pleasure that spectators derive from watching the events of a film unfold on the screen comes from the sense that they cannot be seen.²⁸ In addition to Mulvey's argument, their focused gaze becomes possible due to the implicit awareness that this gaze cannot be reciprocated. Individuals continue to regard the images on the screen with fascination and fixation because they know that the bodies or objects being regarded cannot gaze back at them. If these onscreen realities could return their gaze, then they would look away out of a sense of propriety or embarrassment. The focused gaze finds potency in its anonymity, which, for the cinema, rests on from the experience of darkened theater.

Cinema is commonly associated with modernity.²⁹ Its quality of modernity is primarily the result of its emergence alongside advances in technology and improvements to infrastructure in the cityscape. Unlike theater, whose performances appear to be replicable through skill and practice, the financial and material resources entailed to produce a film demonstrate the difficulty in harnessing modern forces. Through its use of montage, film has the capacity to establish novel relations among disparate realities. These are connections that formerly could only have been conceived or legitimated in the imagination. Unveiled on the screen, they are witnessed as being tangible and realizable within the world of the film narrative. Their appearance corroborates their claim to truth. Soldered through cinematic juxtaposition, these relations are apprehended as being definitive because the viewer cannot negotiate their terms. The focused gaze is important for the passage to modernity since it obliges individuals to embrace the prefabricated realities being presented on the screen amid the uncertainty of the changing world outside the theater.

CONSUMING WINDOW DISPLAYS

The shift in the relation between spectator and spectacle in the passage from theater to cinema as the dominant mode of visual perception coincides with a shift in the relation between consumer and commodity. The spatial occupation of the commercial street as a consumer space is tied to its visual apprehension. Because the practice of leaving the domestic space of the home is an exception in the routine of everyday life, the activity of inhabiting the public spaces of the cityscape must be validated by a definite function. The residents of the city visit the length of

²⁸ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 9.

²⁹ For the foremost example of how the link between cinema and modernity has been examined in theoretical terms, see Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. and London, England, U.K.: Belknap P/Harvard U P, 2008), 19-55. Among his conjectures, Benjamin asserts that the rapid succession of disparate images through film montage trains individuals to inhabit bustling urban spaces without being bewildered.

Calle Escolta with the implicit primary purpose of gazing at the miscellaneous items being displayed behind the many glass windows and counters. Meandering along the sidewalks of the Escolta, pedestrians spend their leisure time outside the home engaged in this new pastime of browsing. To browse, in this case, is to scan products on display without the immediate complementary action of purchasing them.

Commuters arrive at the Escolta by alighting from their streetcars at Plaza Goiti or Plaza Moraga, the busy public squares that enclose the opposite ends of the commercial street. The *tranvía*, the system of streetcars that transports the residents of Manila across its domain, has ceased to run through Calle Escolta because the road's narrow dimensions can no longer accommodate the growing volume of vehicles traveling along its length. The removal of the streetcar line from the length of the commercial street is another instance of the cityscape being reconfigured to address the burdensome excess of unrelenting modernization. Because pedestrians who wish to traverse the Escolta must proceed on foot across the sidewalks fronting its shops, they are able to regard the commodities being offered with closer scrutiny at a more leisurely pace. This practice of carefully browsing through the merchandise on display while casually walking the length of the street turns Calle Escolta from a conduit for movement into a destination for consumption. Pedestrians do not simply rush through the street with their minds focused on their destination but move unhurriedly so that their eyes can observe the assortment of realities found within its domain.

The pastime of browsing in the commercial street has been made possible since shops are increasingly dependent on window displays that exhibit selections of their stock in order to attract customers. The prevalent use by the shops on Calle Escolta of glass window displays for the sale of their goods suggests that a reconfigured commercial arrangement now determines the interactions between consumers and commodities in the modern urban domain. The striking allure of the window display commands the attention of pedestrians amid the bustle of the commercial street. It prizes them from their distracted meanderings. With its orderly, transparent glass frame, the window display acts as a miniature stage or panorama for commodities, which consumers can easily peruse while strolling along the sidewalk.

The pastime of browsing occupies the border of mobility and idleness. Oscillating between these two states, pedestrians unhurriedly scrutinize the window displays of luxury shops while restlessly traversing the busy sidewalks of the commercial street. For the pastime of browsing to occur, some form of enclosure must impel individuals to linger within a specific domain. Configured as a symbolic enclosure, the commercial street confines the circulation of bodies to a public space whose centrality to everyday life has begun to supplant the dominance of the household.

The technologies and techniques that shops have adopted to draw customers and sell commodities correspond with changing ways of enacting commercial practices, producing consumer items, and inhabiting public spaces. Particular modes of commercial arrangement and behavior regarded as modern were first honed in the Western hemisphere before being applied to the shops of colonial ports operated by Europeans and Americans. In her history of consumer capitalism in England, Dorothy Davis relates that in Coventry during European civilization's late medieval period, the sale of products would unfold through the ground floor window of a tall, thin building, which served a triple function as home, workshop, and shop. Standing in the narrow street outside while people and horses passed, customers would deal with the shopkeeper

over a shop board, typically a counter or dressing board of two-and-a-half feet in length, which would be pulled up at night as a shutter.³⁰ To entice passers-by to purchase something on impulse, tradesmen would display their goods atop these shop boards during the day.³¹ Their wives would often hover by the window to chat with passers-by, whom they would attempt to coax into buying.³² The resort to these methods illustrates how the homogeneity of goods needed to be surmounted through the deployment of attractive images and persuasive words. Without these enticements, potential customers would not stop walking to consider the goods being sold.

The development of mass production and the expansion of the urban workforce in Great Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to a large increase in the supply of goods for sale.³³ Because most of their goods would be stored inside the building, away from the curious eyes of passers-by, shops needed to devise new, effective methods for drawing customers.³⁴ Milliners, who sold fancy goods such as bonnets, ribbons, gloves, straw hats, and trimmings, learned to exhibit their best products in the doorways of their shops because they found their shop windows to be too small for this purpose. Soon, the customary practice would be for shops to have their windows, doorways, and frontages crammed with a selection of the products being sold. Recounting his stay in Manila in the middle of the nineteenth century, Robert MacMicking describes a similar sight in the *tiendas* of Binondo: “The great object of the Chinese shopmen appears to be, to show the most varied, and frequently miscellaneous, collection of goods in the smallest possible space.”³⁵ Among merchants, the belief arose that customers tended to acquire products with which they were able to establish a connection through the use of their sight. Devoid of any effective means of mass advertising, goods needed to be visible to become desirable as acquisitions. Merchants attempted to exhibit as wide a selection of items as possible to entice passers-by to stop, look, and buy. Only then could customers regard the products they were considering with their eyes.

Shop windows grew in size so as to allow customers a larger vista of the goods being kept inside the shops. Commercial display became tied to spatial illumination. Shops would be lit from the outside with gas lamps, which would illuminate interiors whose halls and ceilings were covered with mirrors.³⁶ Inside, goods would be hung haphazardly from architectural structures like walls, pillars, and railings.³⁷ The sale of goods became more dependent on the immediate relation established between consumer and commodity and less on the abstract need of the consumer that lingered in the mind. Customers expected to be able to scrutinize goods physically and visually before deciding on a purchase.

Although buyers frequented shops that they knew carried particular types of quality items, the haphazard commercial arrangement that prevailed in shops slackened the speed of commerce. Because goods would be gathered in random piles, customers needed to exert effort

³⁰ Dorothy Davis, *A History of Shopping* (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2007), 20.

³¹ Davis, 103.

³² Davis, 110.

³³ See Eric Hobsbawm, “Origin of the Industrial Revolution” & “The Industrial Revolution, 1780-1840,” *Industry to Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York, U.S.A.: The New Press, 1999), 12-56.

³⁴ Johann Friedrich Geist, *Arcades: The History of a Building Type* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: M.I.T. P, 1983), 36.

³⁵ Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: Filipiana Book Guild, 1967), 17.

³⁶ Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), 96.

³⁷ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 2004), 72.

in rummaging through these piles before selecting their purchase. Without being visually isolated from other commodities, commodities could not be carefully examined and contemplated. The clutter prevented particular items from being prominently displayed in order to suggest their purchase.

The mass production of plate glass in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries transformed the aesthetic of store window displays. Window displays would be enclosed with the ceiling and background paneled in oak or mahogany, an innovation that was partly meant to prevent the stock from being damaged. Whereas before, customers could scrutinize the goods being sold at fairs, bazaars, and marketplaces, window displays now restricted their physical access to these goods. This impenetrable spatial detachment heightens the visual and affective relations between consumer and commodity.³⁸ It enables mundane objects, which are consumed out of necessity, to be turned into alluring commodities, which are exchanged in the marketplace. Without the test of physical scrutiny, the significance of the object's material properties is diminished in favor of its visual attributes.

Whereas the activity of commerce would be cumbersome and protracted due to the muddle in which goods would be presented, the framing of window displays creates order in the commercial arrangement. A modern form of sanitary order is introduced when the window display wrests the commodity from the arduous circumstances of its production such that any evidence of these circumstances is purged from sight. The commodity has to be isolated not only from its physical origins but also from its spatial conditions so that the focused gaze of the consumer can examine it more carefully without distraction. Unhindered by the clutter of commodities, the consumer is allowed to compare a particular commodity to other commodities with greater clarity and discretion.

The window display uses transparent plate glass to frame the commodity as an object for display and scrutiny. The surrounding façade of the building acts as an extension of the frame that helps direct the attention of the viewer towards the object. Like the film narrative, the window display is no longer completely reliant on the skill and energy of an individual performer, such as a shopkeeper or a salesclerk, to invest the object with an aura of significance beyond its basic properties. The frame itself endows the object with significance. Isolated and emphasized by the frame, the object enclosed behind the glass window calls the attention and stokes the curiosity of pedestrians.³⁹ It is transformed into a spectacle, which compels individuals to relate to it as a singular reality on exhibit to be viewed, examined, and contemplated like paintings on the wall of a museum, inventions in the hall of an exposition, or images on the screen of a theater. This novel commercial arrangement establishes the relation between consumers and commodities not as physical but as visual in orientation. The value of the commodity no longer stems from its inspection by hand but from the fixation of sight. The consumer is permitted to examine the object only in his spatial detachment from it. This dissociation between consumer and commodity allows the commodity to be packaged in such a way to highlight qualities it might have that are not readily present in the object.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the work of Arthur Fraser for the Marshall Field's department store in Chicago epitomized the dominant theatrical, picturesque aesthetic of the time. In order to evoke images, narratives, and affects that would enhance their desirability, commodities would be arranged in extravagant tableaux of lifelike mannequins and scenic

³⁸ Leach, 62-63.

³⁹ See Gunning.

backgrounds adorned with colored lighting, tinted glass, and silk and velour draping.⁴⁰ Store window displays became a characteristic artifact of urban modernity, with a visual and aesthetic configuration that strove to capture the attention and curiosity of the busy crowds in a bustling city. Navigating through a sidewalk with a loose concentration of bodies, the pedestrians who inhabit the commercial street must often deal with the miscellaneous forces that continually impinge on them. Amid these hectic conditions, window displays must be enthralling enough to impel preoccupied pedestrians to halt their movement and to regard their reality even for a quick duration. Similar to the potency of the film narrative, the allure of the window display must coax individuals into focusing their interest on the object being presented to the public gaze.

While the commercial street may thrive on the mobility of bodies and goods, their immobility forms an equally integral facet of its economy. The act of gazing requires motionlessness and concentration, without which the gazer cannot view his object long enough to create a vivid image of it in his mind. The ability to stroll along the sidewalks of the commercial street without the urgency of reaching their destination affords pedestrians the freedom to be stationary for this purpose. Laura Mulvey explains how the focused gaze operates outside the linear movement of conventional time. Both the experiences of narrative progression in the film and everyday life in the theater are interrupted when individuals become absorbed by the spectacular images unveiled on the screen.⁴¹ Similarly, in the commercial street, the spatial movement of consumers must be suspended before they can exert the concentration needed to form a close visual relation with the commodities on display. Akin to the film frame, the store window, which they focus on their attention on, shapes how the object it contains is to be apprehended. It must be configured as an alluring spectacle that causes the restless time of transit through the cityscape to surrender to the still time of absorption in the commodity.

The spatial detachment that the window display institutes between the consumer and the commodity approximates the dissociation of the spectator from the immediate presence of the spectacle in the shift from theater to cinema. The act of gazing presupposes this detachment. Because the commodity is positioned behind an impenetrable glass case, the consumer is temporarily deprived of access to its material properties, which would have been used as a basis for determining its value. He is compelled to rely on the image that is projected of the commodity by the configuration of the window display. Constrained from negotiating its reality, like the spectators of films, consumers must learn to embrace the image of the commodity that is being presented to them for consumption regardless of its material properties. Through the potency of images, commodities are swathed with a singular aura, which would entice consumers into acquiring them.

Analyzing the rise to prominence of the oil painting, John Berger highlights the heightened perception of materiality that accompanies the emergence of consumer capitalism. He explains how oil paintings became valuable acquisitions among members of the burgeoning merchant class because they represented for them the objects that lay within the grasp of their newfound wealth. Objects rendered through the medium of oil painting were more textured and tangible, and therefore more graspable, more capable of being acquired.⁴² Marketed to the public through theatrical, picturesque store displays, commodities were endowed with an alluring aura of materiality. The spatial detachment between the consumer and the commodity transmuted the materiality of the commodity into an aura fashioned from its striking visual attributes. It was this

⁴⁰ Leach, 64 and 69.

⁴¹ Mulvey, 14.

⁴² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, U.K.: British Broadcasting Corporation/Penguin, 1972), 88.

potent aura of materiality and not their distinct material properties that made commodities more desirable. Incapable of completely absorbing the restless gaze of wandering pedestrians, shops needed to rely on the capacity of window displays to entrench the potent images of commodities in their memory. Once it is imagined with vivid materiality, the commodity can persist in the mind of the consumer even after it has disappeared from his field of vision.

Exemplified by the oeuvre of Norman Bel Geddes, the modernist sensibilities of the late 1920s sought to streamline store displays, eliminating the ornamental clutter that smothered commodities, in order to focus the interest of consumers on the actual objects being sold. Spotlit against plain backgrounds of neutral color, commodities began to be set without adornment atop platforms or pedestals.⁴³ Commercial goods and retail spaces have served as vehicles for introducing the latest ideas and styles to eager consumers. In desiring, imagining, and encountering the uniquely new, the principal quality of modernity, the perceptions and experiences of consumer capitalism and modern life intersect and are reconfigured. By presenting something uniquely new, the alluring glass frame of the store window display induces a concentration and an intensification of attention that elevate the significance of the object on exhibit as a bearer of possibilities. This object is made to signify the potential for a more desirable existence beyond the demands of necessity that is yet indeterminate and indescribable. Reduced to a circumscribed visual enclosure, the world offers itself to individuals as a consumable reality that seems manageable and attainable.

THE AURA OF SOCIAL PRESTIGE

The shift in the relation between consumer and commodity based on a new mode of film spectatorship shapes the configuration of social prestige in the commercial street of 1930s Manila. Social prestige is determined by spatial and visual practices that are performed in public, including the normative ways sites of leisure are navigated and images of status are apprehended. Defined by the residual logic of royal and religious sovereignty, the primary form of social prestige is founded on strict exclusivity, which distinguishes one group of individuals from the rest of the populace according to their perceived wealth and status. Its value rests on the notion that the accumulation of material possessions correlates with elevated standing in the established hierarchy.

As modern forces have extended their dominance over the cityscape, the basis of social prestige has shifted from the accumulation of material possessions to the circulation of consumable appearances. Whereas social prestige had been formed from the mode of reciprocal visibility of the theater performance, it has come to be shaped by the attribute of physical absence of the film narrative. Instead of originating in leisure spaces such as parks and theaters where members of the elite would parade their most extravagant clothes and ornaments, the form of social prestige that emerges in the commercial street derives from the mobility and anonymity of the urban domain.

Among the many important public spaces in Manila, the Escolta has become established among the populace as the foremost site of commercial activity for the social and economic elite. The abundance of luxury shops and the variety of imported goods have engendered an atmosphere of social prestige. Calle Escolta's prominence as a commercial street has been shaped through decades of repeated practices and reaffirmed notions as a destination whose

⁴³ Leach, 306-308.

shops members of the elite regularly visit to acquire material possessions. Its resonance as an elite space for commerce and consumption produces an aura of social prestige that clings to the various individuals who are perceived to frequent its domain.

By the middle of the 1870s, Calle Escolta, the parallel Calle San Vicente, and the adjacent Calle Nueva had gained prominence as sites where imported products could be purchased on retail.⁴⁴ Around Manila, *tiendas de chucherías* emerged, offering an assortment of knickknacks and novelties including hats, eyeglasses, clocks, perfumes, toys, mirrors, and paintings. The area of Calle Escolta became particularly famous for its *bazares*, shops carrying the European luxury goods that the newly affluent Chinese *mestizos* and native *indios* keenly desired. The largest Chinese-owned bazares were those of Chua Farruco and Velasco Chua Chengco on Calle Nueva. They sold carriage ornaments, dinnerware items, cooking stoves, Chinese silks, European cottons and yarns, Viennese furniture pieces, and Parisian musical instruments. These shops would have enormous backrooms, which were supposedly meant for storage but often kept the most luxurious and expensive products.⁴⁵ Hidden from public view, these products relied on their concealment for their exclusivity. Akin to royal and religious sovereignty, whose authority was opaque and impenetrable, the commercial street gained prominence not only from what it offered but also from what it withheld.

Indispensable for production of social prestige, its selection of luxury goods greatly appealed to Manila's social and economic elite, who liked to appear in public on special occasions dressed in the latest Parisian fashions. Listening to the military brass band play while viewing the spectacle of the sublime sunset, members of the elite would regularly promenade the Luneta at dusk in carriages decorated with resplendent European ornaments.⁴⁶ Displaying images of wealth and status, they presented themselves to the gaze of other individuals in order to affirm their standing in the established hierarchy. Contingent on the visibility of their bodies and the legibility of these images, this social standing rested on their ability to demonstrate unequivocally their ownership of luxury goods.

Their frequent use of the luxury goods that they had acquired from Calle Escolta to project images of wealth and status increased the prominence of the commercial street as the principal source of social prestige in the city. These individuals who gained social prestige were those who had access to the backrooms where luxury goods were hidden. The value of their social prestige stemmed less from their capacity to acquire ownership of material possessions than from their skill at flaunting these alluring objects in public. It was the immediate physical presence of luxury goods that supplied the basis for social prestige, although the prominence of their visibility was magnified by their concealment from and inaccessibility to most of the population. The only reason why social prestige derived its value from material possession is because, being stored in backrooms, luxury goods could be seen nowhere else in public than on the bodies of the individuals who owned them.

Historical accounts from the last decade of the nineteenth century describe shops on Calle Escolta as carrying commodities from Madrid, Paris, Rome, Macao, London, and New York. The Escolta's most prominent luxury shops included the Botica Inglesa, the Perfumería Moderna, and the *bodega* La Estremeña, as well as La Estrella del Norte and La Puerta del Sol,

⁴⁴ Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life: 1850-1898* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2000), 75.

⁴⁵ Wickberg, 107-108.

⁴⁶ Wickberg, 131.

both of which have continued to operate into the 1930s.⁴⁷ Personal narratives from the early years of the U.S. colonial government note the predominance of European establishments offering a variety of products and services: Swiss jewelries, French millineries, Spanish tobaccos, English emporiums, German chemists, and Spanish physicians.⁴⁸ Manila's claim to prosperity and centrality was validated by the concentration of a miscellany of alluring items from across the globe within the compact area of the commercial street. As the visibility of imported goods was uncommon in the public spaces of the cityscape, their possession and exhibition were associated with access to external flows from overseas. Based on the accumulation of alluring items imported from overseas, the qualities of luxury and prestige were rooted in the ability to exceed the given circumstances of the local environment.

In one account, a traveler observes that the shops on Calle Escolta use plate glass instead of capiz shell in their windows despite the frequency of earthquakes. He interprets this detail as a sign of splendor: "On the Escolta mingle wealth, fashion, and official dignity in elaborate shopping tours, ending in lavish purchases for the maintenance of style or the gratification of taste... Many of the stores are resplendently brilliant and gorgeous."⁴⁹ His quote reveals that the apprehension of the commercial street as a site imbued with an atmosphere of social prestige relies on the legibility of excess within its domain. The traveler recognizes how the configuration of the commercial street is oriented towards surmounting the practicalities of the local environment. In spite of this recognition, he fails to discern the important shift in the modes of commercial arrangement and visual perception that the usage of plate glass signifies.

In the 1930s, this shift is illustrated in the coexistence of two contrasting retail spaces on opposite ends of Calle Escolta. Situated not far from Plaza Moraga on the southwest side of the Escolta, La Estrella del Norte has long established itself as a prominent source for luxury items.⁵⁰ In its newspaper advertisements, La Estrella del Norte maintains its commitment to selling "the finer things in life," namely exquisite jewelries, clocks, perfumes, watches, chinaware, and silverware. Located near Plaza Goiti on the southeast corner of Calles Escolta and David, Heacock's Department Store is housed in the seven-story Heacock Building. Carrying a variety of the latest products and technologies, including cameras, radios, bicycles, iceboxes, and sporting goods, it is known for its automatic electronic doors and wall-high window displays.⁵¹

Their contrast in physical appearance and commercial arrangement highlights how the form of social prestige changes with the emergence of glass window displays. Pedestrians are able to develop a visual relation with commodities without needing to access the exclusive backrooms of shops. Seeing these objects in the isolation of their window displays allows individuals to dissociate them from the bodies of their typically elite owners. They learn to accept the notion that any individual, regardless of wealth or standing, can obtain them. As the visual attributes of these objects gain in potency, the aura of social prestige that they produce becomes transposable. Disengaged from the physical body, their value grows more affixed instead to their spatial domain as it is assimilated into its atmosphere.

⁴⁷ Teodoro Agoncillo, "Manila in the 1890s," *History and Culture, Language and Literature: Selected Essays of Teodoro Agoncillo*, ed. Bernadita Reyes Churchill (España, Manila, Philippines: U of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2003), 330-331.

⁴⁸ Lorelei D.C. de Viana, *Three Centuries of Binondo Architecture 1594-1898: A Socio-Historical Perspective* (España, Manila, Philippines: UST Publishing House, 2001), 50.

⁴⁹ Adjuntante E. Hannaford, *History and Description of the Picturesque Philippines* (Springfield, Ohio, U.S.A.: Cromwell and Kirkpatrick, 1900), 47-50.

⁵⁰ *The Tribune XIV Anniversary*, 17 June 1939, 49.

⁵¹ F. Sionil José, "Manila 7 Decades Ago," *Philippine Star*, 9 May 2004.

Leisure time beyond the work regime is increasingly spent outside the domestic space of the household and within the public spaces of the cityscape as part of the growing routine of everyday life. In past historical periods, identity and sociality would primarily be formed from the time individuals spent interacting within their immediate circle of relatives and friends. The production of identity and sociality has since become a more public process as it has shifted to the prominent and popular sites of leisure and entertainment in the cityscape. Inhabiting these sites, individuals derive social value through normative practices of urban life like viewing a cultural performance or traversing the commercial street. Through the dynamic exchange of gazes that ensues, the previously exclusive practice of consumption becomes entangled with the public performance of value. In order for images of prestige to be communicated and circulated, leisure must first be reconfigured as a dynamic social activity, which occurs beyond the cloister of domestic space. They require open and vibrant public spaces, where the residents of the cityscape can encounter individuals beyond their immediate relations as models of identity and status.

When the theater and the cinema each first emerged as important forms of cultural entertainment in the cityscape, they functioned as leisure spaces akin to the park, where the social and economic elite would regularly parade before the public gaze. Garbed in their most sumptuous clothes, members of the elite presented themselves for the observation and evaluation of other individuals in order to elevate their standing in the established hierarchy. In the 1930s, most Filipinos rarely watch movies because they find ticket prices to be too expensive. At the time of its inauguration, the regular prices for a movie at the premier Capitol Theater are forty centavos for Orchestra seats, eighty centavos for Balcony seats, and P1.50 for Loges seats. A private box with five seats costs five pesos. Children are charged only half the admission price.⁵² During this decade, the peak average yearly wage of an unskilled worker in the formal labor sector is roughly P450, in stark contrast to the P1550 mean annual salary of a permanent employee in the national civil service.⁵³ According to a 1938 survey of the lucrative cigar and cigarette industry, women laboring as leaf strippers earn merely fifty-eight cents per day, twenty-two to twenty-eight cents less than the average wage of female and male cigar makers.⁵⁴ Reserved for special occasions, movie screenings are social events, when individuals dress in the latest Parisian fashions as though they were attending a grand theater production.

The production of social prestige in physical enclosures like parks, theaters, and cinemas has depended on the interplay of gazes. Inhabiting a public space of leisure and entertainment, the gazers of the spectacle presented within this domain become subjected to the gaze of the other individuals who inhabit the domain alongside them. The striking visual attributes of their visible material possessions are consumed as proof of their elevated standing in the established hierarchy. As one gaze affirms the impression of wealth and status nurtured in another gaze, the multiplication of complementary gazes enhances the social value of the gazed.

Since the gaze is performed in public view, the relation formed between the gazer and the gazed remains open to negotiation. Individuals know that they are constantly being watched but they never stare back at their gazers even though they could easily do so if they wished.

⁵² See *Capitol Theatre*.

⁵³ Daniel Doeppers, *Manila, 1900-1941: Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale U Southeast Asia Studies, 1984), 76.

⁵⁴ Doeppers, *Manila*, 97.

Conscious of their subjection to the public gaze, they adjust their appearance and behavior accordingly while acting as though they were oblivious to the gaze. They recognize that returning the gaze would interrupt the concomitant processes of producing their identity and increasing their value because it would cause the gazers to stop gazing and look away. Because the possibility exists that the gazed will see the face of the gazer and hold the gazer to account, the gazer's perceived image of the gazed must be faithful to the concrete appearance of the gazed. In this interplay of gazes in enclosed public space, social prestige relies on an impassive awareness of the gaze that refuses to reciprocate. Its aura of exclusivity seems to issue not so much from an ostentatious display of wealth but from a simple gesture of refusal. The individuals who acquire an aura of social prestige are those who have access to a scope of activity that is normally withheld from the majority of the populace.

The historian Anthony Reid has written that in Southeast Asian societies, social prestige was a crucial means for individuals who did not belong to the royalty or the aristocracy for ascending the established hierarchy.⁵⁵ Without the fortune of having inherited their wealth and status, merchants and migrants used the earnings they amassed so that they could display possessions and perform activities understood to bear the value of luxury and prestige. Expanding on Marx's ideas about capitalism, Thorstein Veblen explains how the acquisition and consumption of commodities cannot be dissociated from the performance and perception of social value.⁵⁶ The large importance he ascribes to the perception of appearance at the expense of other factors highlights how the performance of value may not necessarily be functional or deliberate. For Veblen, the possibility exists of social prestige developing from perceptions that are unmoored from any grounding in intentionality and rationality. I argue that the influence of emerging practices of film spectatorship causes the allure of an object's visual attributes to become dissociated from the necessity of its material properties. Without this dissociation of the visual from the material, the perception of a commodity would not be capable of being extensively circulated with the validity of truth.

From Veblen's perspective, the self-fashioning of individuals is defined by their inclination towards social comparison and emulation. In order to elevate their standing in the established hierarchy, they strive to display images of wealth and ease in their appearance, property, and etiquette. They must convey to other individuals the notion that they are free from the burden of labor, utility, and necessity by exhibiting their capacity for expenditure beyond the daily requirements of physical subsistence and comfort. For Veblen, the values of commodities and consumers are determined by the visibility of bodies, objects, and practices that conceal from public view their undesirable, unsightly elements. This perspective reveals that, in lieu of gaining ownership over luxury objects, the activity that actually produces the greatest social value is oriented towards the transcendence of everyday life. More than merely enabling individuals to elevate their social standing, it has endowed them with the unique capacity to surpass the bounds of given circumstances.

The exclusivity of social prestige is defined less by the rigid hierarchy of dispossession than by the symbolic economy of inaccessibility. Because value is contingent on access to a particular scope of activity, when a substantial part of the populace gains the financial means to accumulate more possessions, the basis of this value easily shifts beyond material wealth. As it depends less on the ownership of luxury objects than on the practice of extraordinary actions,

⁵⁵ See Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume One, The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale UP, 1988).

⁵⁶ See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, U.S.A.: Dover, 1994).

social prestige is equated to the capacity to act without adhering to the established norms and routines.

In 1930s Manila, the aura of social prestige that can be acquired from the Escolta is not restricted to those who possess the financial resources to purchase its goods. This image can become affixed to anyone who performs the simple activity of inhabiting the commercial street for a period of time. The majority of individuals frequent the shops on Calle Escolta with the main purpose of browsing the miscellaneous products on display behind the numerous glass windows and counters. Inhabiting the domain of the commercial street, they bask in its atmosphere of social prestige and urban modernity, which delivers them from the immediacy of the local environment. But because they consider the goods sold on Calle Escolta to be expensive and unaffordable given their modest budget, they refrain from making any purchases.

Individuals have the option to acquire items similar to those sold along Calle Escolta at lower prices from the neighboring areas. Unbranded versions of most of these products are available at the *tiendas* of Calle Rosario, which is perpendicular to the western end of the Escolta.⁵⁷ Individuals searching for cheap *hecho derecho* or ready-to-wear clothes can find them on Pasillo de la Paz, which is adjacent to the Crystal Arcade.⁵⁸ From Calle Escolta, they can easily walk a few blocks northwards to Calle Gandara for reasonably priced shoes.⁵⁹ If individuals desire even cheaper goods, they can travel farther north to Divisoria Market.⁶⁰ Surveying the miscellaneous items being offered at the shops along the Escolta, individuals are made aware of the range of possible purchases. But their commercial activity on Calle Escolta is limited to browsing. If they decide to purchase any of the products, they do so from the shops located in the nearby streets and alleys, where the prices of these products are more affordable.

At this historical moment, commercial spaces are predominantly understood to be sites where goods are purchased but where bodies do not linger. Because of their discontinuous and cramped environment, they are not treated as destinations that bodies can visit to relax and revitalize. Contrary to Veblen's theory about the impetus of consumption, the example of 1930s Calle Escolta demonstrates that individuals are not entirely driven to inhabit commercial spaces for the purpose of purchasing luxury goods. If they examine the goods available there but then purchase similar items elsewhere, then the significance of the commercial street for them does not come from the opportunities for commerce that it facilitates. It becomes significant for the social value that individuals unintentionally acquire from occupying its domain.

The new aura of social prestige that is produced in the commercial street of Calle Escolta is without a concrete object that individuals need to purchase and display in order to acquire this aura. Instead, the image of social prestige circulates within this domain like an immaterial commodity, which individuals can acquire just by being seen as physically present in this public space for a continuous or recurrent duration. When individuals visit the commercial street to browse the contents of shops situated along its length, their presence within this domain becomes associated with the capacity of their bodies. Because they are publicly perceived to examine the

⁵⁷ Laling H. Lim, "At the Edge of Manila," *The Manila We Knew*, ed. Erlinda Enriquez Panlilio (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil, 2006), 22.

⁵⁸ Luning B. Ira, Isagani R. Medina, and Nik Rios, *Streets of Manila* (Quezon City, Philippines: Philippines: GCF Books, 1977), 61.

⁵⁹ Nick Joaquin, *Almanac for Manileños* (Manila, Philippines: Mr. & Ms. Publications, 1979), 311.

⁶⁰ Wickberg, 75.

luxury goods being sold there, they become misrecognized as having the financial resources to obtain ownership over these goods.

The pedestrian who inhabits the commercial street is subjected to the focused gaze of anonymous observers. The irrevocable anonymity or non-identity of these observers echoes the inescapable privacy of the darkened movie theater. In the symbolic enclosure of the commercial street, the form of the gaze does not rest on the possibility that the gazer and the gazed will witness each other's presence. Because the gazers remain invisible to the gazed, the gazed is unable to return their gaze. As the relation between gazer and gazed loses its elements of reciprocation and negotiation, visual perception becomes disentangled from its grounding in physical interaction. The image that anonymous gazers create of the gazed gains potency regardless of its fidelity to concrete appearances. Because the pedestrian is kept from recognizing his gazers or reciprocating their gaze, he cannot prevent his identity from being transformed into a consumable and exchangeable image. His inability to resist this process by staring back causes its product to increase in validity. Freed from the material properties of the human body, this image becomes capable of being circulated.

In the commercial street of 1930s Calle Escolta, social prestige seems to derive its value not from material abundance but from arbitrary association. Because the commercial street is easily accessible to visitors, anyone who inhabits its domain has the capacity to acquire the aura of social prestige. Without the visibility of increased wealth and status, the social value of an individual is further enhanced through the agency of gossip. Circulating random impressions that situate the bodies of individuals within the commercial street, loose circuits of verbal exchange cause the aura of prestige to become tightly intertwined with their public persona.

Social prestige seemed attainable only to those who possessed the financial means for purchasing luxury products. For the rest of the populace, it radiated with the allure of an object nestled behind an impenetrable glass case. Even without their awareness, they are already acquiring its value through the simple act of inhabiting the space of the commercial street for an extended span of time.

PART II – 1930S SINGAPORE

CHAPTER 3 – BETWEEN SPACES OF REPOSE: THE PRODUCTION OF PUBLIC LIFE

The river snakes inward from the limitless expanse of the sea. It swells with the steady hustle of transport and exchange. Navigating the undulating waters of the harbor, boats of various sizes and shapes carrying heterogeneous bodies and goods continually arrive, dock, and depart. This colorful panorama of multitudinous trajectories forms the anatomy of Singapore's entrepôt economy. Disparate in character and purpose, these trajectories diverge in their use of the existing infrastructure.

In 1930s Singapore Municipality, the spatial mobility of capital contrasts with the rigid dominion of the state. From the sea, the skyline of Collyer Quay presents a vision of monumentality befitting a Crown Colony of the British Empire. Conveying imperial values of order and civilization, its elegant array of buildings aims to establish an official notion of public life. Proud cupolas and flagstuffs rise from the roofs of the majestic structures that stand alongside one another, facing the sea. Their upper floors, which house financial and mercantile offices, have verandahs formed by tall, neoclassical columns at least two stories in height. Rounded arches and horizontal striations characterize the ground floors, where the godowns are located. Together, these monumental structures form the image of a flourishing port where global flows of goods and bodies converge. Their combined image evinces a potential for modern transformation, which conflicts with the tendency of the colonial regime to affirm the validity of its norms while maintaining the permanence of its rule.

The prominent sites of commerce and consumption in the municipality do not necessarily make visible to public knowledge the exchanges that cause its economy to flourish. North of the Collyer Quay, wooden lighters on the Singapore River slowly pass underneath a short, steel suspension bridge, the Cavenagh Bridge, which connects two sections of the town: Fullerton Square, the General Post Office, Collyer Quay, and Raffles Place with Empress Place, the Victoria Memorial Hall, High Street, and the Padang. Advancing up the river, they are skillfully steered towards a bending wharf called Boat Quay, where over a hundred other, moored lighters are clustered around its granite steps like a tapestry of rattan cocoons. Presenting a counterpoint to the mercantile offices on Collyer Quay, Boat Quay contains the disregarded substratum of Singapore's entrepôt economy, the labor of dockworkers entrusted with transporting imported goods for exchange and export. The front of the wharf is lined by two- and three-story shophouses, which have godowns on the street level; hence one of its Chinese names, *chap bui kui khi*, or 'eighteen shops by the river.'¹ Its atmosphere is hectic with the nonstop industry of tireless workers unloading goods from *sampans*, *twakows*, and *tongkangs* and loading them on bullock carts and transport trucks. They carry on their backs heavy crates, which must be placed there by two other workers.² The goods that they transport include rice, coffee, sugar, dried fish, fruits, vegetables, timber, rattan, cement, gambier, and rubber,³ vital components of Singapore's prosperous entrepôt economy. Aside from its strategic location, Singapore is said to have attained success as a port because of its unregulated market.⁴

¹ Oral History Department, *Recollections: People and Places* (Singapore: Oral History Department: 1990), 29.

² Stephen Dobbs, *The Singapore River: A Social History, 1819-2002* (Singapore: Singapore UP, 2003), 66.

³ Geraldine Lowe-Ismail, *Chinatown Memories* (Singapore: Talisman, 2011), 9.

⁴ Wong Lin Ken, "Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepôt Port, 1819-1941," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 9.1 (1978): 56.

At this important historical moment, Singapore is a Straits Settlement, one of the British Empire's most prized Crown Colonies. The British Empire derives a significant part of its revenue from Malaya's highly lucrative rubber industry, whose growth in the twentieth century has coincided with that of the automotive industry. At the start of the decade, into the second century of imperial rule, Malayan rubber comprises more than forty percent of the global production of rubber. It accounts for approximately one-fourth of all Singapore exports.⁵ Because the shipments of rubber from British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies pass through Singapore's ports, the settlement supplies two-thirds of the world's rubber in the middle of the decade.⁶

In Singapore Municipality, talk of rubber suffuses the pages of the local newspapers. Speculators in the stock market continually obsess about the prospects of rubber, their investments injecting additional revenue into the economy. The settlement's other profitable exports include tin, the chief commodity of the nineteenth century, and to a lesser degree, copra, rattan, palm oil, and canned pineapples.⁷ Unstated in the public culture of newspapers, the commerce of opium is immensely lucrative for the British Empire.⁸ The profitability of vice could be said to form the economic underbelly of colonialism. The British Empire partly established the port of Singapore as a conduit for the opium trade.⁹ The revenue it derived from the leasing of opium farms was large enough for a time to sustain the administration of the settlement without any need for taxation.¹⁰

Opium's financial importance for the maintenance of colonial rule is merely suggested in capsules of news, which dwell on the seamy character of opium dens where Chinese addicts lie in a stupor. Acting as a palliative for illness and loneliness, opium assuages the pain of migrants such that they end up working to the point of exhaustion and even death.¹¹ More than simply expropriating profit from its mass consumption, the British regime depends on opium to fortify its rule through the dependency and languor that the vice is believed to induce in its consumers. The specter of opium consumption hovers over the Asian inhabitants, who are accused of sordidness and criminality, even though a state of self-induced languor is omnipresent among the colonial officials.

This chapter is concerned with how the conditions of everyday life in a colonial port are shaped by its infrastructure for domicile and leisure, aspects of which will later be incorporated into the shopping malls. Juxtaposing the historical image of 1930s Singapore to that of 1930s Manila, I start by describing the bustling yet congested urban landscape of an entrepôt. I examine how the British colonial regime's efforts to govern the entrepôt are marked by impotency. The teeming, heterogeneous character of the urban landscape unsettles the boundaries between private and public that it strives to establish. Contrasting them with local spaces of domicile and recreation, I look at the more exclusive consumer spaces of Singapore's expatriate community,

⁵ The Rotary Club and the Municipal Commissioners of the Town of Singapore, *A Handbook of Information* (Singapore: 1933), 54.

⁶ Robert Bruce Lockhart, *Return to Malaya* (London, United Kingdom: Putnam, 1936), 93.

⁷ Willis' *Singapore Guide* (Singapore: A.C. Willis, 1934), 99.

⁸ See Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800-1910* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1990); and Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (Singapore: NUS P, 2007), 186-207.

⁹ Wong, 52.

¹⁰ Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia, 1770-1890* (London, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 124.

¹¹ Trocki, 67.

tropical bungalows and social clubs. Providing refuge from the contingencies of the world, these elite enclosures embody a form of modernity that is slow to arrive, a languid experience of progress.

Albert Winsemius' seminal report highlights that 1930s Singapore Municipality was modern as an entrepôt economy but lacked development in its manufacturing industry. Beset by their incapacities in an unfamiliar environment, colonial officials and foreign expatriates were often wary of harnessing modern forces. In conclusion, I analyze their final recourse towards governing the urban landscape, the monumentality that the British regime introduces to the commercial street and square as a means for propagating official norms.

THE LANDSCAPE OF AN ENTREPÔT

Singapore entered the world market in 1819 as a laissez-faire entrepôt with liberal economic and immigration policies, which insisted on the absence of taxes, quotas, and monopolies. These administrative policies were based on the burgeoning ideology that the market would only prosper if freed from the encumbrance of government control. Developing the island into a port was a vital element of Britain's plan for overcoming the Netherlands' monopoly on trade in the region.

With the landmark opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Singapore prospered as the principal conduit for the exchange of raw materials and consumer goods between Europe and the Far East.¹² In the late nineteenth century, it served a clearinghouse for products from China, India, Arabia, East Africa, the China Sea, and the Indian Ocean, which would be traded for iron, steel, textiles, and novelties from Manchester. In recent decades, it has flourished as a hub of re-exportation for goods from Great Britain, India, China, the Philippine Islands, the Netherlands East Indies, Siam, and North Africa.¹³ Due to the dynamism of its entrepôt economy, Singapore Municipality has long existed as a heterogeneous landscape where multitudinous forces and flows from overseas converge, concentrate, and interact. As the British regime's overriding concern has been the revenue it derives from its colony, its laissez-faire approach to municipal administration has tended to neglect the amenities needed for the subsistence of the local populace.¹⁴ Whereas the local populace has found subsistence by forming autonomous communities, the colonial regime has established its dominion by reconfiguring the spatial landscape.

Being a domain for the continuous, unregulated circulation of bodies, goods, and ideas, the port of Singapore unfolds as a panorama of variegated movement. Historical descriptions and photographs disclose how individuals of varying ethnicities, communities, and cultures occupy the same public spaces, pursuing different itineraries according to different rhythms. Migrants from the Middle Kingdom find themselves mingling with other Chinese ethnicities they would normally not have encountered in their hometown. Interacting with one another using disparate languages, local residents exchange incommunicable words and gestures, which often fail to

¹² Brenda S.A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford UP, 1996), 35.

¹³ Rotary Club, 53-54.

¹⁴ Martin Perry, Lily Kong, and Brenda Yeoh, *Singapore: A Developmental City State* (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 56-57.

generate understanding.¹⁵ Gliding across the macadam road, a Hakka woman, in dark, flared trousers cut between her ankles and knees, balances across her left shoulder a bamboo stick, from whose ends dangle shallow baskets of assorted vegetables tied to bent wooden strips.¹⁶ A child rides in a harness strapped to her back while she wears a somber look that is slightly wrenched with supplication. Self-assured Straits Chinese clerks, garbed in gray suits with their hair neatly groomed, stride to their offices on the upper floors of the town's monumental buildings with unyielding purpose. Along the edge of the road, they cross paths with two Malay women, an older woman and her adolescent daughter, garbed in *kains*, long skirts with batik patterns, and *kebayas*, translucent blouses with sinuous embroideries. Strolling with a dignified air next to her more carefree companion, the mother has a small, empty rattan basket hanging from her right forearm. Buoyant Jawi Peranakan students, in felt caps, dark jackets, and striped sarongs, chat animatedly while traversing the street. They pass Nattukottai Chettiars, moneylenders characterized by their shaved heads and white dhotis, waiting impassively for clients while seated cross-legged on elevated mats beside a wooden box, where their paraphernalia is kept.¹⁷ In the near distance, Tamil laborers untiringly wield metal implements to loosen and shovel earth from a deep trench along the road, a bundle of cloth covering each of their heads from the heat of the sun. Leaning forward, shirtless Hockchew and Henghua ricksha pullers, in trimmed pants and straw hats, jog trot barefoot as they propel a roofed cart, where a large European man is perched awkwardly. Their abrasive shouting at the pedestrians blocking their path competes with the furious honking of automobiles, which deftly navigate the narrow streets lined by parked vehicles and makeshift stalls. At the center of an intersection, a burly Sikh traffic officer, wearing a thick beard, a blue turban, dark puttees, and a khaki uniform, directs the movement of vehicles across the intersection with the rattan wings attached to his back. This variegated panorama of everyday life that unfolds on the streets contrasts with the post-independent government's systematic reconfiguration of social identity into the four administrative categories of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others.¹⁸

The topography of Singapore Municipality can be divided into localities where the members of different ethnic and linguistic communities reside and congregate. These localities have congealed into communal spaces as they have been used as sites of administration, worship, and labor. As initially delineated in the town plan of 1822, the larger areas of Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India have been designated for the respective occupation of the

¹⁵ Yeoh, 53.

¹⁶ The extended descriptions of Singapore found throughout this study have been constructed from the rich collection of periodicals, pamphlets, directories, blueprints, and photographs housed in the National Archives of Singapore, the National University of Singapore Central Library, and the Singapore National Library's Lee Kong Chian Reference Library. The extensive Southeast Asian Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library has a digital database that contains almost every issue of *The Straits Times*, *Singapore Free Press*, and *Malaya Tribune* from before the Pacific War. Digitized copies of these periodicals can be scanned using a powerful word search engine. Official government documents can be viewed at the National Archives of Singapore, although the government's permission must be sought in order to view some of the classified documents. For historical photographs of Singapore, a wide selection of them has been gathered and published in several hardcover books, most notably Gretchen Liu's *Singapore: A Pictorial History 1819-2000*.

¹⁷ Mark Ravinder Frost and Yu-mei Balasingamchew, *Singapore: A Biography* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet/National Museum of Singapore, 2009), 231.

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of Singapore's racial policy, please refer to John Clammer, "Race as Ideology: The Evolution of Ethnicity as the Basis of Social Classification," *Race and State in Independent Singapore, 1965-1990: The Cultural Politics of Pluralism in a Multiethnic Society* (Aldershot, England, U.K. & Brookfield, Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 1998), 27-50.

Chinese, Malay and Indian communities. The British regime demarcated these districts to restrict the interaction between the Asian inhabitants and its colonial expatriates, who lived to the west of the town. Within these districts, temples and businesses were established, around which specific ethnic and linguistic communities have settled through time. Malays, Hadramis, Bataks, Minangkabaus, Bugis, Banjarese, Javanese, and Boyanese have gathered around the Sultan Mosque near the Kallang and Rochore Rivers. Tamils, Malayalees, Sindhis, Bengalis, Gujeratis, Hindustanis, and Punjabis have concentrated in the vicinity of Serangoon Road and Kampong Kapor. Hokkiens have settled along Amoy and Telok Ayer Streets around the Thian Hock Keng temple. Teochews have gathered in Boat Quay, South Bridge Road, and Circular Road, where they work as lightermen. Cantonese dominate Temple, Pagoda, and Mosque Streets, where they have established blacksmiths, potteries, haberdasheries, restaurants, and bakeries.¹⁹ Eurasians reside in the area of Queen Street and Waterloo Street. Europeans are cloistered in the Tanglin, Claymore, and Lower Bukit Timah districts.²⁰ Although particular streets and occupations have come to be marked with the identities of particular ethnic and linguistic communities, the topography of the municipality has no rigid boundaries that enforce the segregation of communities. Instead of being physically obstructed from interacting with each other, individuals belonging to these different communities mingle freely in its crowded public spaces.

The heterogeneity of local realities poses an administrative and epistemological impasse for the British colonial regime in its effort to govern the territory with order and efficiency. Because this heterogeneity exceeds its preset frameworks, it can deal with local realities only by reducing their complexity to easily consumable and workable classifications and statistics. Overarching racial categories are substituted for a variety of ethnicities, communities, and cultures. Fixed integers that summarize a period of time are made to denote a fluctuating population that varies with frequency. Epistemological enclosure and exclusion are prerequisites for effective administrative rule. The state must purge from the knowledge it forms of its territory and population the elements that cannot be managed and subdued. Unfortunately for the British regime, the order and efficiency that it successfully applies to its production and management of administrative knowledge do not easily translate to the spatial and social landscape of the municipality. It must resort to other means of consolidating its authority over the territory such as configuring the infrastructure and architecture used by the population to project an image of colonial sovereignty.

Not simply a port for the transport and exchange of goods, Singapore is a harbor of passage and rest for bodies journeying to the cities of Jeddah, Medina, and Mecca for the *Hajj*. The majority of pilgrims from the Netherlands East Indies cross the Indian Ocean through Singapore to circumvent the Dutch regime's strict regulation of the outflow of bodies from its territories. For many of these pilgrims, the settlement provides an interim space between their origin and destination. Lacking the necessary finances to complete the journey, they are forced to stay in Singapore to save funds before proceeding or to settle debts upon returning.²¹ Their presence confirms Singapore's identity as a secondary home for migrants from across Asia.

¹⁹ Lowe-Ismail, 43-45.

²⁰ Lowe-Ismail, 43-45; Yvonne Quahe, *We Remember: Cameos of Pioneer Life* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1986), 58; Yeoh, 45.

²¹ William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 2nd ed., (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford UP, 1994), 38-39.

A large majority of the local Chinese inhabitants are comprised of males who originated from Southern China.²² Commonly called *singkeh* or ‘new arrivals,’ many of them were driven from their homes by the famine, poverty, and unrest that accompanied the demise of the Qing dynasty.²³ Their mass migration to Singapore has caused the island’s population to increase dramatically over the span of sixty years from one hundred thousand to half a million.²⁴ The number of Chinese women on the island started growing only recently. Prior to the twentieth century, it never exceeded six percent of the total population²⁵ because laws in the Middle Kingdom proscribed Chinese women from migrating.²⁶ In the absence of a traditional family unit, many of the Chinese inhabitants of Singapore Municipality have endured the routine of everyday life without the reprieve of domestic space. They find sources of relaxation and regeneration outside the household, in the public streets of the urban domain, where they spend a substantial part of their leisure time.

Among the *singkeh*, Singapore is believed to be a land of promise where individuals are free from the bounds of traditional norms.²⁷ Social mobility is fluid due to the absence of the imperial examinations and legal restrictions that established hierarchy in the Middle Kingdom.²⁸ Unlike in the Philippine situation, poverty is regarded as a condition that can be surmounted with a resoluteness of will and action. One potent image that widely circulates is the story of the migrant who arrives with only a singlet, shorts, and a sleeping mat in his possession but through years of perseverance becomes a millionaire.²⁹

Chinese migrants flock to Singapore nursing the promise latent in this image. Arriving on the island, they are met by members of their respective clan associations or *bang*, each of which was formed by Chinese either with the same surname or from the same village. Operating more effectively as small, autonomous governments, which must compensate for the inadequacy of the colonial administration, these voluntary organizations find employment for new arrivals. Under the rule of laissez-faire ideology, they function as sites of mutual aid for disadvantaged members, specifically the poor, the old, the disabled, and the displaced.³⁰ Forming a community that exposes the limits of the state, their existence undermines the authority of the British Empire in Malaya.

Most of the Chinese in Singapore live on the narrow, teeming streets of Chinatown, which they call *Gu Jia Chui* in Hokkien or *Kreta Ayer* in Malay.³¹ Chinatown is packed with shophouses, which have a width of sixteen to eighteen feet and a depth of three to four times this width.³² On the first and second floors of these shophouses, windowless rooms are divided into

²² Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History 1819-2000*, 305. According to the 1931 census, only thirty-six percent of the Chinese population in Singapore is locally born.

²³ Ong Siang Ong, *One Hundred Years’ History of the Chinese in Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford UP, 1984), 70.

²⁴ From 1871 to 1931. See Yeoh, 35.

²⁵ Qtd. in Yong Sai Shing and Chan Kwok Bon, “Leisure, Pleasure, and Consumption: Ways of Entertaining Oneself,” *Past Times: A Social History of Singapore*, eds. Chan Kwok Bon and Tong Chee Kiong (Singapore: Times Editions, 2003), 158.

²⁶ James Francis Warren, *Ah-ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore, 1870-1940* (Singapore: Singapore UP, 2003), 33.

²⁷ Roff, 32.

²⁸ Yen Ching-Hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800-1911* (Singapore: Oxford UP, 1986), 143.

²⁹ Roff, 34-35.

³⁰ Yen, 46-47.

³¹ Oral History Department, 5. The name is a compound noun formed from the words for ‘bullock-cart’ and ‘water.’

³² Yeoh, 143.

small cubicles no larger than two double beds, where a family as large as seven lives. Due to the lack of space inside the cubicle, belongings are stored in boxes, which are placed on overhanging shelves. Food is kept in cupboards dangling from the rafters. The members of large families must sleep on the floor or under the bed.³³ Hawkers who are leasing the cubicle must share it with the wares they peddle, including food and fruit. Their usage of cramped space reveals how the normative boundaries of urban life between individual and collective and between work and leisure are disregarded and dissolved.

Because their cavernous interiors open to the outside only through the front door on the ground floor, the louvered windows on the upper floors, and the air well in the middle section, shophouses provide little sunlight and fresh air for their inhabitants.³⁴ While they are supposed to provide a refuge for rest and regeneration, the inhospitable living conditions of the shophouses drive the residents to spend their leisure time outside their walls. In contrast to Manila, the practice of inhabiting public spaces in Singapore is less entangled with norms of urban modernity. The residents of 1930s Manila are increasingly spending their leisure time in public as part of the growing routine of everyday life in the city. Browsing window displays and attending movie screenings in the commercial street with greater frequency, they are learning to fashion their behavior and appearance from the bodies and goods they encounter. The residents of 1930s Singapore are forced outside the domain of the household due to the brute circumstances of everyday life. Because they are impelled to spend more time in consumer spaces than in domestic spaces, the configuration of consumer spaces performs an important role in defining their identity and sociality.

The ground floors of the shophouses are reserved for trade and retail. The sidewalks that stretch outside the entrances to the shophouses form a continuous arcade, which was built to facilitate the passage of pedestrians while sheltering their bodies from the heat of the sun.³⁵ Identified in official documents as a verandah, the arcaded sidewalk is referred to in colloquial language as a five-foot-way, *gor kaki*, or *kaki lima*³⁶ because it is supposed to measure five-feet high, although this exact dimension is not regularly observed. Separating the five-foot-way from the road are open drainages approximately three feet in depth, which are meant to prevent the monsoon rains from flooding the area but seldom succeed at doing so.³⁷ Because they are occasionally treated as receptacles for urine, feces, and rubbish, the drainages sometimes reek of sewage.³⁸ Unlike the Parisian arcades, the Singaporean five-foot-ways were not designed to function as enclosures that would protect pedestrians from the undesirable elements of the local environment. While they may similarly shelter pedestrians from the weather, they do not stimulate unhindered strolling and shopping. Their frequent congestion with bodies and goods dissuades pedestrians from inhabiting them for long periods of time.

The congestion within the shophouses extends to the five-foot-ways, which are crammed with an assortment of bodies and objects. Heaps of storage boxes are pressed against the sides of walls and posts as though they formed part of these structures.³⁹ The empty rattan baskets piled on the edge of the road are debris from the early morning hustle. Due to the limited area within

³³ Barrington Kaye, *Upper Nanking Street Singapore: A Sociological Study of Chinese Households Living in a Densely Populated Area* (Singapore: U of Malaya P, 1960), 2.

³⁴ Yeoh, 96.

³⁵ Yeoh, 247.

³⁶ Lowe-Ismail, 13.

³⁷ Lowe-Ismail, 39.

³⁸ Yeoh, 99.

³⁹ These descriptions have been constructed from various historical accounts and archival photographs.

the shophouse, their corners are utilized for storing private belongings and commercial products. While five-foot-ways are supposed to regulate passage between the inside of the household and the outside of the municipality, they are lax in their enforcement of spatial and social boundaries.

Five-foot-ways unfold as sites of ceaseless activity. Although codified as official conduits for movement, sections of the five-foot-ways are turned into popular destinations for commerce, where basic products and services are offered at affordable prices. Between one set of posts along the five-foot-way, a barber stands upright while cleaning meticulously the ear of a seated customer whose face is scrunched up and head is tilted away. Within another section, a woman eagerly listens to an impassive, graying man hunched behind a desk translate into speech the contents of a letter from his family residing across the sea. At a wooden table along a different foot-foot-way, an individual watches with disquieted eyes while a fortuneteller slowly reads the future from the arrangement of numbered sticks, which he had let fall on top of the table. Several hawkers hover along the edge of the road beside makeshift tables with goods displayed atop them such as silks, tea cloths, and pillowcases. Squatting patiently on the ground, other hawkers wearing conical hats guard large cylindrical baskets carrying an assortment of fruit and produce. Despite the official codification of its use, every inch of public space bears the potential to be appropriated for private purposes. Striving to exceed the limits of their given conditions, these enterprising individuals operate without the consent of the state in pursuing their livelihood.

Constructed by the government for the public use of pedestrians but appropriated by residents and hawkers for own private uses, five-foot-ways are zones where the normative boundaries of private and public are contested and negotiated.⁴⁰ The boundaries between private and public space could be delineated according to the access that individuals have to a particular domain. The identity of a domain as private or public seems to be determined by who can occupy and reconfigure this domain to his or her own benefit. Commonly referring to a residential or commercial space, the term 'private' becomes applicable to a domain when an individual or group exercises ownership over it by recourse to legality or custom. Although any domain where strangers frequently concentrate and interact could be called 'public,' it must be officially designated as such by the decree or consent of the state. Even private property must be legitimized by the state, through the enforcement of its laws. In the absence of sanction from the government, individuals can settle the terms of private and public with their own actions. When activities that are normally concealed from the rest of the world are conducted out in the open, individuals who were formerly denied access to them become capable of participating in their enactment and creation.

For the municipal authority, the congestion of the verandahs frustrates the maintenance of sanitary order in the town.⁴¹ It recognizes that the streets of Singapore are increasingly burdened by the escalating magnitude of vehicular traffic. Its solution is to purge the streets and verandahs of the congestion of bodies and objects by designating them as public spaces of transit. Inscribed in official documents, the configuration of these spaces is defined by the type of bodies that can occupy these spaces and the type of practices that can occur within them. For the state, the identity and purpose of the verandah are not ambiguous and negotiable. The state has strictly defined it as a conduit for movement, which is never meant to fill up with an abundance of bodies and objects. The rigid notion of public life that the state aims to establish is founded on imperial norms of order and civilization, not so much of modernity, which remains an ambivalent concept for colonial officials and expatriate residents. Although the local populace's

⁴⁰ Yeoh, 245.

⁴¹ Yeoh, 246.

experience of public life rests on the heterogeneity and dynamism of the port, the state insists on an official notion that is replicable throughout the urban domain.

The logic of this official notion of public life is evident in colonial postcards of the local landscape that tourists and expatriates would mail to overseas addresses.⁴² Susan Stewart explains how postcards, which found ascendancy in the early twentieth century, reduce a complex reality to a miniature object that is more manageable and consumable.⁴³ Postcards of Singapore Municipality portray the sites of residence, labor, and commerce associated with the Asian population as being ruled by congestion and disorder. The colonial perception of local public spaces is concretized and solidified when the pictures of Asian religious rituals found in these postcards fill the frame with the innumerable bodies of participants. Inscribed in most of these postcards is the phrase, 'Greetings from Singapore,' which reinforces the equivalence between image and reality by binding the identity of the municipality to the picture in the postcard.

Colonial postcards disclose the effort to contain the heterogeneity and dynamism of the urban landscape.⁴⁴ Imposing on their viewers a standpoint of detachment from the local environment, they feature photographs that were taken with a perspective from above, which attempts to include the entirety of a given reality within the boundaries of the frame. Postcards of local sites could be juxtaposed with those of colonial sites, which illustrate the efficacy and authority of the state. In the crammed photographs of the residential areas of the island's Asian inhabitants, local domestic space is equated with the decrepit exteriors of shophouses, whose throngs of occupants loiter along the unpaved road that runs between them. Projecting from the darkened windows of the shophouses, long bamboo poles with assorted laundry hang above the road in haphazard profusion. The exteriors of shophouses are typically captured on camera from a slanted angle in order to highlight their haphazard profusion. In contrast to this image of congestion and disorder, colonial postcards characterize the sites of municipal government and commercial capitalism as being vast and empty spaces devoid of the presence of crowds. Shots of colonial buildings are bright and spacious to emphasize their objective visibility. In photographs of prominent sites such as Collyer Quay and Queen's Place, the landscape of the colony is presented as an orderly and sanitary vista with only a handful of bodies scattered across the expanse of the frame. These visual representations of colonial public space epitomize the state's idea of the Asian population as dispersed and languid amid the majesty of empire. Colonial postcards exhibit a proclivity for the exteriority of the local environment, whose visibility would subject it to control.

The modern technology of the photographic camera enables reality to be recorded as documentary evidence for government action.⁴⁵ This emergent use of photography as documentary evidence seems to coincide with the shift of the dominant visual mode of perception from theater to cinema. By reducing heterogeneous reality to a manageable image, it permits individuals to assume a position of rational objectivity that withdraws them from the

⁴² See Cheah Jin Seng, *Singapore: 500 Early Postcards* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006).

⁴³ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 1993), 137-138.

⁴⁴ These characteristics are likewise evident in images from the Colonial Office Photographic Collection of The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

⁴⁵ See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: U of Massachusetts P, 1988).

immediacy of their local environment. Selecting what objects can be included in the frame and by deciding what poses can be captured, the camera structures the gaze. With an inclusive gaze, the camera redefines the boundaries of private and public. By unveiling and circulating as an image what had been concealed, the camera affords every private reality it captures a public character.

In the 1930s, Singapore bears a stigma in the public culture. In the images and narratives that circulate among individuals who are unfamiliar with the everyday landscape of Singapore Municipality, the settlement is conceived as the ‘Cesspool of the East’ and ‘Sin-galore.’ Chinatown is commonly understood to be its black heart of vice and disease, a sordid, depraved zone of crime, gambling, prostitution, violence, and opium-addiction. What remains unsaid in the public culture is that this undesirable, forbidding environment is actually a product of the colonial regime’s ad hoc, laissez-faire approach to governance.

Because Singapore’s entrepôt economy is founded on heavy physical labor, government and business are unsettled by worries that the vice and disease prevalent in public spaces would jeopardize trade by enfeebling and destroying the bodies that inhabit them.⁴⁶ It becomes urgent for the municipal commission to forge a territory that is free of vice and disease. Starting in 1929, the municipal commission strives to reconfigure the urban environment of Singapore into a healthy, disciplined, virtuous, and sanitary domain where labor is productive and trade is prosperous.⁴⁷ In order to realize its plans for the colony, it must render visible and public the private spaces hidden from surveillance where vice and disease are believed to thrive.

James C. Scott asserts that the state must render legible the contents of its territory to improve its ability to govern.⁴⁸ When he employs the term *legibility*, Scott is referring to the official inscriptions on spatial, linguistic, and political culture imposed by the characteristic workings of the state. In the case of Singapore Municipality, bodies that are hidden from public sight and knowledge must be made visible for the purposes of documentation and surveillance.⁴⁹ The colonial regime must be able to monitor the activities of the Asian population, which it suspects to be sordid and criminal when conducted behind closed doors. Assuming the private domain to be a site of reproduction, the municipal authority operates according to the notion that if the local inhabitants were left to the secrecy of their enclosed spaces, then their inherent maladies would rapidly and extensively propagate.

This impotency is exposed in one of the photographs that supplement W.J. Simpson’s seminal 1907 *Report on the Sanitary Condition of Singapore*. Here, the camera attempts to document the bleak, congested interior of a shophouse. In the foreground of the photograph, a gangling man wearing loose white garments is seated on a stool to the left of the frame. His face has been penciled in. Behind him, spectral figures, engulfed by the darkness of the background, peek from barely visible doorways that line a dim, narrow corridor. Due to the inability of the photographic technology of the time to operate in poorly illuminated spaces, the corporeal form of their actual bodies fails to be captured on film. Resisting the effort to invade their private domain, they withhold their corporeality from being turned into official evidence of the putative sordidness of local realities. The outlines of their bodies have been roughly drawn with pencil to

⁴⁶ Yeoh, 86.

⁴⁷ “Sin Taken Out of Singapore,” *Sunday Times*, 12 March 1933, 9.

⁴⁸ See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale UP, 1998).

⁴⁹ See Kah-Wee Lee, “Vice and the City: Embarrassments of Nationalism in Singapore, 1960-1980,” *Asian Cities: Colonial to Global* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam UP, forthcoming).

signify their presence for the purposes of governance, but the use of pencil sketches to represent them in a photograph places the truth of their presence under doubt.

Unsettling the categories of documentary and administrative truth, these spectral figures inhabit an interim space between existence and erasure. Nestled in the ambiguity of their visual presence, they refuse to be made public according to the terms of the state.

LANGUID MODERNITY

Much of the scholarship about 1930s Singapore highlights its unconditional embrace of modernity. This notion seems to be based on the assumption that the municipality was a flourishing port where bodies and goods converged and circulated without regulation.

Singapore historian Chua Ai Lin opens her study of the everyday life of the English-speaking Straits Chinese during this period with an extract from an essay entitled, “Our Modern Age,” which was published in a Kuala Lumpur youth magazine. “The atmosphere of the present age seems to be saturated with modernism. Words that we know, terms that are acquainted with, phrases that we hear of oftentimes, clauses that we can make use of and sentences that we can employ fail to describe this age of marvels—wonderful inventions, large buildings, rapid travel, scientific discoveries, etc. On the earth, in the air, on the sea, under the sea are wonders innumerable. Almost every day brings us new thrills...”⁵⁰ The extract depicts the struggle to articulate the uncontainable phenomenon of modernity. The length and structure of its sentences approximate the exhilaration and breathlessness with which the individuals of the time encounter the profusion of modern forces. Although it appears to pervade every known sphere of life, modernity for these individuals is a phenomenon that can only be glimpsed at with profound uncertainty because it cannot be fully communicated in language. Because it confronts them as something uniquely new and previously impossible, they lack the verbal means for lucidly articulating its contours. As a variegated reality that exceeds their existing ability to domesticate, control, or reproduce it, they can relate to it only in emotional terms with a sense of wonder and excitement.

Writing about modernity as a temporal experience, Reinhart Koselleck argues that the apprehension of modern forces is characterized by a palpable sense of accelerating time. This sense of accelerating time may stem from the encounter with a relentless, rapid succession of uniquely new realities. It is accompanied by an effort to translate the experience of modernity into knowledge by subsuming it under historical categories. Perceived to be unstable and ephemeral, the present age is frequently defined as a point of transition in relation to the future, which is understood to be an imminent event that is fundamentally other.⁵¹ According to Chua Ai Lin’s account of 1930s Singapore, the accelerating time of modernity is evident in the embrace of consumer artifacts that are products of radical technological advances. She focuses on the Straits Chinese community’s usage of machines of transportation like the automobile and spaces of entertainment like the cinema. She describes the concrete relations that the individuals deemed the prophets of modernity have with artifacts considered to be modern but neglects to analyze

⁵⁰ Qtd. in Chua Ai Lin, *Modernity, Popular Culture, and Urban Life: Anglophone Asians in Colonial Singapore, 1920-1940* (Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2007), 1.

⁵¹ See Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner, et al. (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford U P, 2002).

how they apprehend these artifacts as modern. In her account, modernity is taken as a given historical fact instead of unfolding as a malleable personal experience.

Contrary to Chua's account, the multiple, nuanced ways in which these varied consumers perceive and express their experience of accelerating time reveal that the prevailing attitude towards modern forces in the middle of the decade is less emphatic and more ambiguous. This attitude bears the awkwardness and ambivalence with which individuals struggle to deal with a seemingly incomprehensible and unmanageable phenomenon. For colonial expatriates, this impending phenomenon threatens to upset the comfort and stability to which they have grown accustomed in the domestic and leisure spaces they inhabit. Instead of urging them to adapt to change in the world, their experience of modernity prods them into slackening the passage of time while they await the arrival of the inevitable.

For the inhabitants of the Straits Settlements, the model of dignified and prosperous living can be found in the lifestyle of the British colonial officials and expatriate managers. They, along with an expanding group of wealthy Chinese *towkays* and middle-class civil servants, reside in the secluded domiciles of the Tanglin district, which spreads out from the western end of Orchard Road. These residents of the exclusive Tanglin district nourish their elite lifestyle with imported British necessities and ornaments acquired from the department stores in Raffles Place. The members of the expatriate community in Malaya consider such products imported from the Mother Country to be vital because of the significance that British culture during the Late Victorian and Edwardian periods attributes to the decoration of domestic space.⁵²

The conventional image of a colonial plantation house, which dates back to the establishment and development of the spice plantations of British Malaya, is a black-and-white, one-story bungalow, which sits in solitude atop a hillock, enclosed by a large, manicured garden like that of an English country estate.⁵³ Originally built to house plantation owners and expatriate officials, bungalows were designed in the Palladian style, which was intended to highlight traditional English values of elegance and status.⁵⁴ In communicating these values, their design fulfilled a purpose similar to that of the monumental structures in Collyer Quay and Raffles Place. Among the typical features of the bungalow in Singapore is a high-hipped roof with short ridges. The ground floor of the structure is made of brick, on top of which rises a timber frame.⁵⁵ Because of their black timbered sections and white rendered walls, bungalows are commonly referred to in Singapore as 'black-and-whites.' The isolation and languor of colonial expatriate life, which is encapsulated in the short stories of W. Somerset Maugham,⁵⁶ finds its clearest expression in the bungalow.⁵⁷

The domestic space of the tropical bungalow is founded on an implicit regime of delineation and exclusion. Without any wooden, stone, or brick fences to prevent encroachers

⁵² Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale UP, 2006), xi.

⁵³ Julian Davison, *Black and White: The Singapore House, 1898-1941* (Singapore: Talisman, 2006), 144.

⁵⁴ Norman Edwards, *The Singapore House and Residential Life, 1819-1939* (Oxford, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Oxford UP, 1991), 20.

⁵⁵ Davison, 3.

⁵⁶ W. Somerset Maugham's classic short stories about colonial expatriate life in British Malaya can mainly be found in two collections, *The Causarina Tree and Other Stories* and *Ah King and Other Stories*.

⁵⁷ Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London, U.K. and Boston, U.S.A.: Faber and Faber, 1989), 7.

from venturing near the bungalow, the form of enclosure is principally symbolic. Like in the symbolic enclosure of the commercial street, a constellation of reaffirmed notions and repeated practices has instead determined how individuals should relate to this domain of residence. Planted along the perimeter of the property, dense vegetation functions as the organic intimation of a fence, which ensures privacy and security.⁵⁸ The long driveway, which winds around the slope of the hillock before bringing guests to the car porch at the front of the house, heightens the sense of seclusion and status. The size and appearance of the garden that surrounds the bungalow are supposed to reflect the standing of its resident in the established hierarchy.⁵⁹ In contrast to the shophouse, the bungalow is comfortably spacious yet rigidly enclosed such that space becomes the foremost measure of social value.

Similar to royal and religious sovereignty in the Philippines, the authority of the elite in Singapore has been determined by the opaqueness of its location. Because the norms of propriety in the expatriate community prescribe that guests share the same social level as that of the resident,⁶⁰ the symbolic enclosure of the bungalow must be maintained by regulating the flows of bodies that traverse its domain. A box with the resident's name guards the entrance to the driveway. Even if the lights in the bungalow may indicate that the resident and his family are actually home, a 'NOT AT HOME' sign is occasionally left under the resident's name. Unexpected and unwanted guests must slip their calling cards into the slit atop the box before being invited to enter the premises. This practice has allowed expatriates to exert control over the admission of bodies into their domicile when the habitual norms of propriety fail. The privacy of the bungalow is determined by its ability to restrict access by forces from the outside.

The space of the bungalow was configured to diminish physical contact between its European expatriate residents and the local Asian inhabitants. The colonial authorities believed that exposure to the local inhabitants fostered disease.⁶¹ The kitchen areas and servants quarters of bungalows, where Asians worked and resided, were designed to be detached from the main house. Zoning laws segregated the serene, sprawling enclaves of bungalows from the squalid, congested districts of shophouses such that their residents would be kept from inhabiting the same public spaces.⁶² Without the privacy they enforced, they would be unable to revitalize the physical body and reproduce the social identity of its occupants.

Despite these legal inscriptions, the segregation of communities in Singapore has not been as rigidly enforced as that in British India and Africa due to the fear among the colonial authorities that doing so might alienate the local Chinese who are chiefly responsible for the settlement's prosperity.⁶³ Echoing the Spanish regime in Manila, the British government in Singapore presumes that its Chinese residents possess an innate facility for commerce. This presumption shapes the political and economic policies of the government, which cannot afford to marginalize them from the affairs of the territory. The colonial regime must resort to methods of imposing its authority that are not blatantly repressive.

Early into British rule, secluded villas were first established west of Singapore Town, where the nutmeg, gambier, and pepper plantations were located.⁶⁴ Appropriating the conventional form of the bungalow, wealthy Chinese *towkays* in the last decade of the nineteenth

⁵⁸ Edwards, 143.

⁵⁹ Edwards, 144.

⁶⁰ Edwards, 165.

⁶¹ Yeoh, 87.

⁶² Yeoh, 163.

⁶³ Yeoh, 39.

⁶⁴ Davison, 42.

century would have mansions built facing the road as a way of displaying their newfound standing.⁶⁵ The constellation of meanings and practices affixed to the form of the bungalow became transformed as bungalows were constructed for different purposes and in different environments. Bungalows were produced in mass quantities by the prominent architectural firm Swan & McLaren for the use of the expatriate staff of shipping, banking, brokerage, and telegraph firms, aside from the growing professional workforce of doctors and barristers.⁶⁶ During the 1920s, the Public Works Department employed the form of the black-and-white bungalow to provide housing for mid-level managers in the Malayan Civil Service. As the expanding population spread to the outskirts of the town, the affordability of private means of transportation made the enclaves of bungalows more accessible and less secluded. The increase in the capacity for spatial mobility of local residents reduced the efficacy of the bungalow's symbolic form of enclosure.

For the British expatriates living in exile in the settlement, bungalows were meant to function as private sanctuaries of solace and regeneration.⁶⁷ They were patterned after suburban English homes, which were originally built in response to the swelling, aggressively industrializing cities that were helplessly being overburdened by pollution, overpopulation, and crime. The high ceilings of bungalows in Singapore were designed to alleviate the hot and humid air of the tropical environment.⁶⁸ Bamboo chinks, which can be pulled up and down depending on the time of day, shield residents from the glare of the sun. These details in the architecture and design of the bungalow have the effect of detaching its residents from local conditions. Enclosed by a vast panorama of rolling greenery, the relative stillness of the bungalow contrasts with the unending restlessness of the town.

Residents enjoy unwinding in the verandah, a roofed, open-air area that encircles the structure.⁶⁹ Adjacent to the interior of the house while exposed to its outside, the verandah offers a secure feeling of intimacy with the natural surroundings of the bungalow.⁷⁰ The feeling of intimacy with nature cultivates attitudes and practices of leisure and relaxation. After an enervating workday, the predominantly male residents are said to recline in the comfort of a rattan chair to write letters or read newspapers while sipping tea or whisky.⁷¹ It is in the verandah that they learn about changes in the affairs of the world without having to immerse themselves in these affairs. Lulled by the soothing pleasures of the verandah, they rely on the mediation of newspapers, like month's old issues of the *Illustrated London News*, for a form of relation to the tumultuous world beyond their enclave. Dependent on the precarious character of words to create a picture of events from the immediate past of a distant location, they apprehend the world as unfolding in a realm outside of their grasp.

In contrast to 1930s Manila, consumption in 1930s Singapore does not necessarily equate with the adoption of a modern lifestyle and identity. Print advertisements in English-language newspapers recurrently emphasize how the consumer items they are promoting will bring their users not so much modernity than comfort. The provision of comfort swathes individuals in an experience of timeless withdrawal from the concerns and pressures of the world. In 1930s

⁶⁵ Edwards, 98.

⁶⁶ Davison, 80.

⁶⁷ Davison, 144.

⁶⁸ Davison, 3.

⁶⁹ In *Singapore House, 1819-1942* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1988), Lee Kip Lin argues that it is difficult to say if the Malay house or the European house preceded the other.

⁷⁰ Davison, 62.

⁷¹ Davison, 12.

Singapore, a languid form of modernity appears to prevail. Despite its seeming opposition to the dynamism that is characteristic of modernity, this tendency could be considered as one version of modernity because it arises as a response to the arrival of modern realities. If modernity is understood to be an encounter with external forces, then its languid form assumes a detached standpoint from which it torpidly gazes at the tumultuous world that extends beyond its circumscribed enclosure without embracing its looming influence. As a form of modernity, it delineates the inside from the outside, but it ignores the imminent threat of the outside while it retreats into the reposeful sanctuary of the inside. Whereas the common experience of modernity imparts the tenor of an accelerating present, the languid configuration of modernity proffers the glimpse of a hesitant future.

Similar to the verandah of the bungalow, the verandah of the shophouse functions like a liminal zone, which individuals occupy and cross as they move from the exterior of the structure to its interior. In the shophouse verandah, however, the official boundaries of private and public are contested and negotiated. Isolated from the bustling crowds and streets of the town, bungalow verandahs carry no such tension. Within their domain, the boundaries that delineate the private from the public are untroubled and preserved, because the outside world that immediately spreads beyond the verandah is merely an extension of the bungalow's private enclosure. This extended space of enclosure spares residents from worries over being witnessed or disturbed. It allows them to behave in the verandah with the same guarantee of privacy that they would have inside the bungalow. Privacy seems to mean exemption from the visibility and dynamism of the urban domain.

If for locals, shophouse verandahs are liminal sites of spatiality, for expatriates, bungalow verandahs are liminal sites of temporality, which lie between the time of work and the time of repose. In their soothing embrace, the urgency of time is suspended, creating the ideal environment for leisurely consumption. Enclosure is fundamental to colonial rule not merely because it excludes locality but because it marginalizes change.

When not relaxing in the sanctuary of their bungalows, the European residents of Singapore Municipality like to expend their leisure time in the lush confines of the social clubs, the principal public space for the production of expatriate identity, community, and standing. After a long day of mingling with their firms' heterogeneous workforce, the social club allows them the pleasure of being in the company of individuals with the same race, gender, and language who share similar norms of value, understanding, and practice. One of the routines they enjoy from six-thirty to nine-thirty on weekday evenings is playing card games and chatting about rubber prices while drinking a gin *pahit*, gin mixed with Angostura bitters, or a whisky *stengah*, whisky diluted with soda water.⁷² On weekends, the clubhouses empty early into the morning, past the closing hours of renowned leisure establishments like the Raffles Hotel.⁷³

The two most exclusive European social clubs in the settlement are the Singapore Club and the Tanglin Club, both of which were established in the 1860s. Housed on the topmost floors of the Fullerton Building, above the rooms of the General Post Office, the Singapore Club is dominated by senior civil servants and wealthy business magnates. Comprised of esteemed government officials and expatriate professionals, the Tanglin Club on Stevens Road has

⁷² Lockhart, 85.

⁷³ *Forty Good Men: The Story of the Tanglin Club in the Island of Singapore, 1865-1990* (Singapore: Tanglin Club, 1991), 86.

functioned as the nucleus of elite British social life. The supposedly more egalitarian Singapore Cricket Club, whose membership consists mostly of European company managers, is situated in a monumental structure at the southern end of the Padang, across from the Eurasian community's Singapore Recreation Club. Started in 1894, the Singapore Swimming Club in Tanjong Rhu has clerks and assistants from mercantile firms as the large majority of its three thousand members. Similar to those in Manila, the clubhouses of these social clubs typically have a bar, a lounge, a card room, and a billiards room among its facilities, although clubs headquartered on more spacious grounds also have a swimming pool and a tennis court. These exclusive facilities provide communal opportunities for relaxation and revitalization.

The members of these social clubs are predominantly young European bachelors, who sign up with them upon their arrival on the island.⁷⁴ Similar to most of the Chinese inhabitants, they are recent migrants who expect to return to their homeland after several years of work. The members of social clubs are levied regular dues, aside from the entrance fee, whose value determines the elite status of the club. Prescribing their own hierarchy of rules and ranks, clubs require their members to observe a lofty standard of gentlemanly behavior.⁷⁵ Guests, who could disrupt the club's rarefied economy of norms, are normally permitted entry only on a special day of the week.⁷⁶ As strict physical enclosures, social clubs try to create a pleasurable leisure experience for their members by eliminating undesirable realities from their confines.

Providing sanctuary from the unmanageable heterogeneity and contingency of the world outside, the social clubs define, recuperate, and nurture their members' identity and standing. In an enclosed, oscillating system of social reproduction, norms of perception, behavior, and relation that are gestated in the bungalow are brought to the club and norms of perception, behavior, and relation that are cultivated in the club are conveyed to the bungalow. The notion and experience of public space become reconfigured as the routine trajectory of expatriate life is confined to the passage from bungalow to office to clubhouse and back to bungalow. According to this purview, public space, where individuals mingle with the public, comes to be equated with the enclosure of the social club. By restricting the access of external flows, these enclosures succeed in maintaining the identity and standing of its occupants.

In the public culture of Singapore's expatriate community, a subtle and plaintive awareness persists that the old conduct of life in the settlement is gradually disappearing. Through lyrical entries in memoirs, periodicals, and travelogues, longtime expatriates express a vague nostalgia for the more pleasant Singapore of the past, particularly for spaces, events, and practices that have lost currency, such as carriage rides along the Esplanade. This nostalgia for vanishing realities is entwined with the helpless lament that the arrival of modernity is depriving individuals of needed time for rest and regeneration. The British government in Singapore does not appear to share the fervent embrace of the U.S. regime in Manila for the transformative force of modernity. The words 'modern' and 'modernity' have yet to gain significance in the public culture, as evident from their scarce, perfunctory presence in the official vocabulary of documents and newspapers. In place of 'modernity,' a more commonly used term is 'progress.' Denying the value of its name seems to mean refusing the potency of its presence.

The daily editions of local newspapers like the *Straits Times* and *Malaya Tribune* bear no concrete sense of locality. By seldom assigning names to local political actors and events, they

⁷⁴ *Singapore Swimming Club: The First 100 Years* (Singapore: YTJ Total Communication, 1994), 17.

⁷⁵ John G. Butcher, *The British in Malaya 1880-1941: The Social History of a European Community in Colonial South-East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and New York, U.S.A.: Oxford UP, 1979), 60.

⁷⁶ *Forty Good Men*, 86.

refrain from affirming the viability of politics in the local sphere. Their pages are dominated by the results of sporting events and advertisements of Hollywood movies. Instead of reporting extensively about local news, they focus more on world affairs, whose implications are often removed from the everyday life of the settlement. Presented for public consumption as a factual record of the contemporary world, newspapers reinforce the implicit truth of enclosure by delimiting the frame through which the complexity of reality can be apprehended. Their taut economy of words and narratives domesticates the gravity of events.

Without a concrete sense of locality, the newspapers of Singapore Municipality replicate the aura of enclosure of the tropical bungalow and the social club by projecting a similar experience of timelessness. Rosalind Morris has argued that the officials of an empire in decline tend to be beguiled by fantasies of beginning anew,⁷⁷ but in the case of Singapore's British expatriates, there is a denial of the possibilities for commencement, a listless surrender to the inert verandah space between reverie and implementation, image and action. The persistent, tacit awareness prevails that, because the forces of modernity cannot be controlled and exploited, embracing them will only hasten the demise of the comfortable conduct of life that expatriates have long enjoyed. The domain of the tropical bungalow and social club ceases to be a site of spatial refuge for imperial reproduction, a reprieve from the chaos of local realities, and becomes a site of temporal refuge for imperial survival, an enclosure of time, a sanctuary from the inevitability of modern upheavals.

CIRCULATORY LABOR AND PHYSICAL CULTURE

In the 1920s and 1930s, a parallel sphere of activity emerges alongside the enclosed world of European social clubs, namely the amateur sporting clubs of Malaya's new, educated middle-class professionals. If the European social clubs are cloisters of languor and repose, the Malayan sporting clubs are workshops of dynamism and development, where new modes of identity and sociality are constructed.

Multitudes of locals are first introduced to sports in schools that the colonial government and local philanthropists instituted. The sporting clubs they join as members of the urban workforce aim to cultivate their physical culture, especially as an alternative social practice to vice.⁷⁸ From among the members of sporting clubs, teams are organized to compete in inter-club and inter-state tournaments in tennis, football, ping-pong, badminton, and many other sports. The time of local clubs is not entirely devoted to sports and athletics. Clubs frequently hold leisure and entertainment activities such as parties, picnics, and dances.⁷⁹ Because political activity among the local populace is illegal during this historical period,⁸⁰ the modes of physical productivity and social organization that are performed in Singapore's amateur sporting clubs create a nascent political space. As sport was not a common practice for Chinese migrants,⁸¹ it

⁷⁷ Rosalind C. Morris, "Imperial Pastoral: The Politics and Aesthetics of Translation in British Malaya," *Representations* 99.1 (2007): 159.

⁷⁸ Richard Holt, "The Amateur Body and the Middle-Class Man: Work, Health, and Style in Victorian Britain," *Sport in History* 26.3 (2006): 352.

⁷⁹ "Around the Clubs in Malaya," *Sunday Tribune*, 22 April 1934, 16.

⁸⁰ Trocki, 238.

⁸¹ Susan Brownell, "Sports in Britain and China, 1850-1920: An Explanatory Overview," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 8.1 (1991): 284-290.

serves as an opportunity of the English-speaking Straits Chinese to demonstrate their readiness for self-governance.

Originally formed in response to the strict racial hierarchies of the elite social clubs, inclusive amateur sporting clubs multiply during the 1920s and 1930s, when the fever for collective activity accompanies the rise of the professional class. For legitimacy, clubs are expected to obtain an exemption from registration, which taxes associations that are not oriented towards the public good.⁸² Local sporting clubs create a notion of public life that diverges from that of the colonial regime.

News about amateur sporting clubs dominates the pages of the English-language *Malaya Tribune*, the “Independent” and “Progressive” “People’s Paper,” which locals like to peruse. The list of clubs whose athletic, social, and artistic activities are reported in local periodicals covers a spectrum of designations and significations. It includes the Amicable Athletes Association, Amateur Sporting Association, Playfair Athletic Union, Solar Athletic Union, Asian Athletic Club, Straits Bachelors Physical Culture Association, Balestier Friendly Athletic Party, Upper Serangoon Recreation Club, Union Sporting Association, Siong Boo Athletic Association, Chinese Companion Athletic Association, Sincere Lads Badminton Party, Juvenile Football Club, Sime Darby Sports Club, Straits Union Football Club, Telok Ayer Epworth League, Straits Chinese Epworth League, Paya Lebar Epworth League, Lion City Club, Post Office Club, Lotus Club, St. Joseph’s Old Boys’ Association, Ai Tong Old Boys’ Association, Chinese Association, Chinese Friendly Association, Thong Nghee Kok Association, Beng Choong Kok Association, Siew Sin Sia, Malay Recreation Club, Malay Teacher’s Association, Overseas Telegraph Chinese Staff Association, Malay Public Servants Cooperative Credit Society, Singapore Short Hand Writers’ Association, Young Men’s Christian Association, Young Women’s Christian Association, Chinese Christian Association, Straits Chinese Reading Club, Chinese Students Literary Association, Mayflower Musical & Dramatic Association, Malay Musical Association, United Chinese Musical Association, Lunar Athletic and Musical Party, United Chinese Amateurs, Silver Star Minstrels, Merrilads Musical Party, and Gaylads Minstrels. The desire for collective activity even spreads beyond the cities with reports of young residents of *kampongs* establishing informal clubs in ramshackle huts.⁸³ By the middle of the decade, one thousand five hundred formal sporting clubs are in existence throughout the Straits Settlements.⁸⁴

An article that appears in a July 1925 issue of the *Singapore Free Press* tentatively defines the amateur social club as “a sort of defense alliance tacitly concluded between a number of individuals, all moving in the same sphere of life, against the troubles and perturbations by which humanity is assailed.”⁸⁵ This understanding of the purpose behind local collective activity is reflected in a regular column, ‘Around the Clubs,’ found in the Sunday edition of the *Malaya Tribune*, which asserts that sporting clubs should be vehicles for mutual aid. According to the article, mutual aid is necessary due to the lack of political consciousness among the local populace.⁸⁶ Insisting on the importance of its solution, the article obscures the underlying problem, the lack of effective governance by the British regime due to its *laissez-faire* policy.

Intended to provide a sanctuary for collective recreation and relaxation, the sporting club unfolds as a factory for self-improvement, where locals are educated in the rudiments and

⁸² “Shock for Colony’s Clubs and Societies,” *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 6 July 1936, 6.

⁸³ Malayan Club News, *Straits Times*, 24 March 1935, 11.

⁸⁴ “Clubs Prepare to Challenge ‘Black Ordinance,’” *Sunday Times*, 5 July 1936, 1.

⁸⁵ “Clubs and Their Members,” *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 July 1925, 14.

⁸⁶ Around the Clubs in Malaya, *Sunday Tribune*, 22 April 1934, 16.

responsibilities of autonomous governance. Club activity features elements of democratic rule. Members are tasked with drafting the club's constitution with its own rules of conduct and association. Operating like small governments, clubs hold meetings, collect dues, and elect officers.⁸⁷ Through membership and involvement in amateur sporting clubs, locals are afforded the political capacities formerly restricted to expatriates and ratepayers. In training their bodies to be adept in sports or the arts, their bodies are made adaptable for cooperation and organization with other bodies.

In developing robust physical and social bodies for the purposes of public life, sporting clubs become zones of possibility for the transformation of character and collectivity.⁸⁸ A May 1934 article from the *Sunday Times* argues: "Sport influences us to act honestly, correctly, to be gentlemen. Together with our body our mind becomes stronger. Our brain becomes more elastic; it offers more resistance, it moves quicker, and it is more readily responsive."⁸⁹ Cultivating practices of fairness and teamwork,⁹⁰ competitive sports instills in club members norms for the healthy conduct of relations with other individuals. Instead of treating the tumultuous world outside as a threat needing order, it teaches them how to behave in public amid the presence of crowds with composure and initiative. A coincidence is established among anatomy, cognition, and sociality. As the body is reconfigured, the mind becomes stronger and more agile in dealing with the troubles and contingencies of modern life.

Sporting activity redefines the limits of productivity and community. Cooperating with bodies and dealing with contingencies are skills that correlate with the effective running of the entrepôt economy, where the dominant mode of labor is based not so much on the production of commodities than in their circulation. In developing the capacity for self-determination, individuals must learn to work as a collective in order to harness the dynamism of the entrepôt economy.

The labor of dockworkers as conduits of exchange unsettles the normative parameters of capitalist production. According to the established definition,⁹¹ labor power appropriates materials from nature to manufacture a consumable and exchangeable product. Aside from the time it expends on production, its value is dependent on the unique skills that it applies to this process. Consumption is the complementary process by which the material properties of a product are exhausted through its use. Conventionally assimilated into the process of circulation, the arduous labor of transporting goods for exchange in the marketplace is often forgotten in the definition of an industrial economic system. Mass circulation is understood to transpire in a sphere separate from production and consumption, which are regarded as distinct processes because they entail the material transformation of products. The value of circulatory labor is supposedly less because no unique skills are required to perform it, only physical strength and logistical efficiency.

Without the labor of circulation, the economy of the entrepôt would not flourish. This mode of labor transforms the value of goods in an entrepôt by enabling them to be rapidly conveyed across distant geographic locations. Instead of merely being based on the exchange of goods in commercial space or the exchange of gazes in leisure space, value is partly founded on

⁸⁷ Roff, 182.

⁸⁸ *Singapore Cricket Club, 1852-1985* (Singapore: Singapore Cricket Club, 1985), 15.

⁸⁹ Maurice Dekobra, "Marriage and the Modern Youth," *Sunday Times*, 18 February 1934, 2.

⁹⁰ Patrick Khaw, *The Singapore Recreation Club, 1883-1963* (Dissertation, National University of Singapore, 1986-1987), 18-19.

⁹¹ For example, see Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *Capital Volume I*.

the mobility of flows across the urban landscape, without which exchange cannot happen. Special skills are required to transport large and heavy quantities of items as quickly as possible without damaging them and reducing their value. Through the effective labor of circulation, products arrive at their destination in the same condition as when they were dispatched from their source. They are afforded a suitable and affordable monetary value that permits individuals in distant locations to participate in the novel styles they suggest.

Deriving revenue from the continuous import, exchange, and export of goods, an entrepôt depends on the vibrancy of flows and forces that traverse its domain. Mobility conventionally denotes the ability to travel from one destination to another without ever settling on a single location.⁹² Expanding the definition of work, circulatory labor produces the fuel of the economy, spatial mobility, which, in Singapore, has less value as a harbinger for modernity than as an impetus for commerce. Spatial mobility provides the conditions under which capitalist exchange may occur with success. It is through the development of an efficient system of circulation on a mass scale that an economy is able to expand.

For the Chinese migrants who toil as dockworkers, the sporting activity of amateur clubs is an aspiration, which would fulfill the promise of Singapore. Cultivating a form of physical culture, which would prepare the Asian inhabitants of the Crown Colony for self-governance, it trains bodies for civility and cooperation. Through participation in a sporting club, their collective labor would be transformed into mutual aid.

IMPERIAL MONUMENTALITY

The British colonial regime struggles to deal with the potential of the local populace for collectivity and transformation.⁹³ Without other recourse outside of violence, it must depend on the infrastructure of the public spaces that they frequently inhabit to be able to contain them.

Most commercial activity in Singapore Municipality is concentrated in two vibrant districts on opposite banks of the Singapore River: the area of High Street and North Bridge Road north of the river, and that of Raffles Place and Battery Road south of the river. The numerous stores on High Street and North Bridge Road are lodged in the nondescript shophouses of two and three stories that line these wide streets. Without an awareness of the town's geography, High Street could easily be mistaken for North Bridge Road. The probability of this misrecognition diminishes its atmosphere of social prestige. Because it adjoins roads lined with cramped and congested residential shophouses, which are similar in physical architecture and appearance to its own shophouses, no symbolic enclosure can be formed in the domain of this commercial street. The symbolic enclosure of a commercial space, like that of Manila's Calle Escolta, relies on the distinction of a spatial domain from the surrounding urban landscape through its exceptional structures and delimited dimensions.

High Street has particularly gained renown as the premier shopping district primarily due to esteemed Sikh, Gujerati, and Sindhi textile and silk merchants and tailors such as K.A.J. Chotirmall & Co. and Wassiamull Assomull & Co.⁹⁴ Residents and tourists like to visit its short stretch of road for the variety of products available there. Whereas Maison "Vogue" features the latest fashionable garments from Paris, London, and New York, Shanghai Trading offers the

⁹² See the Oxford English Dictionary for this set of definitions.

⁹³ See Yeoh.

⁹⁴ Yeoh 45.

most elegant luxury handicrafts from Malaya, China, and Japan.⁹⁵ Even if High Street may contain a number of luxury shops carrying imported products, without the logic of symbolic enclosure to generate an atmosphere of social prestige, it is a commercial street only in name.

Evidence that its buildings have aspired for monumentality in their construction is barely noticeable. In contrast to Manila, monumentality in Singapore Municipality is found less in commercial and leisure spaces than in government and mercantile offices, which do not aim to attract bodies but to transmit values. Unlike on Calle Escolta, the exteriors of the shops on High Street do not form a continuous series of wall-high glass window displays, which would present an array of the commodities being sold inside for the enthralled perusal of the public rambling outside. Unembellished signs with the names of the stores are suspended vertically from the façades of the buildings or are embossed horizontally above the openings of the verandahs. Scarcely found in the everyday architecture, modernity has assumed a different, less brazen configuration in the local landscape as though it were being shyly articulated. It looms in the distance as a vague promise, which the colonial regime is wary about harnessing.

Ever since Singapore was established as an *entrepôt* in the early nineteenth century, its spatial heart has instead been its financial and business hub. Unfolding parallel to Collyer Quay, Raffles Place, where the offices of the most important firms and banks are located, is the nucleus from which monetary and commercial flows radiate. Configured as a commercial square, with a more clearly delineated perimeter than that of Calle Escolta in Manila, Raffles Place more effectively functions as an enclosure, where the ideals of empire are reproduced.

To reach Raffles Place, commuters riding the trolleybus can alight at the Post Office and walk through Battery Road,⁹⁶ another renowned shopping street. Unfolding as a compact passageway in between tall buildings, Battery Road functions as a vestibule that leads to the enclosure of the commercial square. Emerging from Battery Road, pedestrians enter Raffles Place under the shadow of two monumental structures. Occupying the north end of Raffles Place, the lone, towering building of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, or Chartered Bank for short, has a large dome on top of its northwest corner. Tall, classical columns stretch across its middle stages. The rounded shape of the arches of the ground floor verandah mirrors that of the smaller windows of the topmost floor. The John Little & Co. department store shares the east side with a row of narrower buildings of similar height. This building is distinguished from the other structures by its giant, triangular gable, whose outline follows the contours of the massive, pitched roof. The corners of its façade are crowned with small, rounded pediments. Balustrades embellish the space in between the pediments. The wide arches of the verandah on the ground floor are designed to accommodate the flood of crowds visiting the department store. Monumental edifices establish Singapore Municipality as an important and prosperous urban domain. Many of them were built in the ornate Victorian Eclectic style by the prominent architectural firm Swan & McLaren during the post-war economic boom of the 1920s. The work of Swan & McLaren has typified official architecture, which conveys the British Empire's norms of order, elegance, and civilization.

The combined presence of several luxury shops within the symbolic enclosure of Raffles Place adds to its prestigious atmosphere. On the east side to the right of the Bank of Taiwan, the preeminent luxury shop René Ullman is easily recognizable because of a large clock, three feet in diameter, which hangs outside its walls.⁹⁷ Among the fancy products that René Ullman sells

⁹⁵ *The Straits Times*, 15 December 1935, 31.

⁹⁶ *Willis* 1934, 33.

⁹⁷ "New Public Clock," *Straits Times*, 2 October 1935, 12.

are fabrics, dresses, buttons, buckles, brooches, rings, pendants, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, watches, and clocks. It distributes in Singapore the Swiss timepieces “Cyma” and “Movado” and the Parisian fragrance “Parfums d’Orsay.” Although it has in its inventory elegant crystal desk clocks and diamond pocket watches, its most alluring items are its exquisite gold, silver, and lacquer cigar and cigarette boxes and cases, which are ornamented with maps of the Far East and trimmings of jade, ivory, and tortoise shell.⁹⁸

Raffles Place is a rectangular plaza with a large central area reserved for parked rickshas and automobiles. A road runs around the plaza, in between the ground floors of buildings and the rows of parked vehicles. Standing on the northwest side of the square, Raffles Chambers is a palatial structure with series of thin, vertical windows marking the upper floors of its broad façade. Like those of the Chartered Bank and Collyer Quay buildings, its ground floor verandah is characterized by horizontal striations. Three pediments of similar dimension adorn the roof. The triangular pediments on the corners flank the circular pediment at the center. Two stages below each pediment, a balcony projects from the façade. The bronze figure of a dynamic Hermes, with tiny wings sprouting from his helmet and feet, soars from the top of the circular pediment.

The soaring figure of Hermes embodies the norms of imperial beauty, which are incarnated in the architecture of Singapore Municipality. Typified by towering columns, majestic cupolas, and horizontal striations, the uniformity and monumentality of the buildings render these norms of order, elegance, and civilization legible and consumable in a dynamic entrepôt. Colonial architecture must be designed in a manner that evokes the British Empire’s confident authority⁹⁹ and effective governance.¹⁰⁰ Unlike municipal buildings in Selangor, which incorporate Oriental motifs, those in Singapore are unabashedly classical in design. This preference for classical styles highlights the enduring quality of empire¹⁰¹ because the symmetry of classicism is supposed to signify eternal order.¹⁰²

Monumentality refers to the quality by which a physical structure establishes a distinct and reverberant presence within a domain through a concatenation of its visual appearance and cultural significance. Monuments must be legible enough to be an arbiter of social value and distinct enough to be a reference for spatial orientation.¹⁰³ Their external structures must emerge from the congestion and heterogeneity of the surrounding urban environment, which threaten to submerge and marginalize them. They must be striking and memorable such that they linger as indelible images in the consciousness of pedestrians.

State monuments are intended to function as highly visible symbols of the dominion of official authority.¹⁰⁴ Since the municipal authority cannot penetrate and influence every domestic space, where social identity is produced and maintained, the colonial regime relies on commonly viewed and utilized buildings to reinforce the norms it wants ingrained in the local populace. The objective visibility of these norms in the monumental architecture is intended to ensure their validity and permanence. The aim of the municipal authority is for the residents to apprehend the cityscape from a standpoint of rational objectivity that is congruent with its own. Even if they

⁹⁸ “Wonder Watches,” *Straits Times*, 11 December 1933, 8.

⁹⁹ Metcalf, 186.

¹⁰⁰ Metcalf, 202.

¹⁰¹ Metcalf, 16.

¹⁰² Metcalf, 193.

¹⁰³ See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (M.I.T. P, 1960).

¹⁰⁴ See J.L. Sert, F. Léger, and S. Giedion, “Nine Points of Monumentality” (American Abstract Artists, 1943).

may have been designed to exude prominence and attract clientele, commercial monuments that echo the appearance of state monuments perform a similar function.

Enhancing the significance of their particular local district and the greater urban area, their quality of monumentality draws bodies with the impression of centrality they evoke. Monumental structures fortify the immutability of empire amid the imminence of flux. Similar to mountains and valleys, monuments impose their presence by filling the range of vision of observers. Their resistance to being apprehended at one glance compels observers to spend more time regarding them. The visual stability that these buildings present amid the stark plurality of languages, bodies, and cultures enables individuals gazing at them to situate themselves against their surroundings by supplying them with a more manageable, rational frame of perception. With this frame of perception, the residents of the settlement can aspire and strive to attain a higher plane of progress in the hierarchy of civilization.

If public life is unsettled due to the congestion and mobility of the municipality, monumentality reestablishes public life. Amid the burgeoning practice among the local inhabitants of Singapore Municipality to appropriate public spaces for their own autonomous purposes, monumentality fulfills the desire of the British regime to promulgate its own rigid notion of public life based on imperial norms of order, elegance, and civilization. Monumentality does not operate with the opaqueness of the palace or the church, which exuded authority from within their enclosure without disclosing their entire appearance. Instead of remaining opaque, authority now relies on its objective visibility, which renders its presence incontrovertible and unconquerable. By filling the range of vision, monumentality keeps the eyes of observers concentrated on the façade such that the impression prevails that the identity of all its contents has been made exterior and public. The importance of this visibility is highlighted by how the outlines of monumental buildings are kept lit at night, with the façades of the most prominent structures being fully illuminated.

The enclosure of the commercial square operates by expunging and denying its public dimension so that it could be reproduced in more manageable and benign form. By insisting on its monopoly of public life through the visibility and objectivity of its monuments, it divests the inhabitants of the municipality of their opportunity to participate in the appropriation of urban space. It refuses any correspondence between public good and private initiative.

But the vicinity of municipal and commercial buildings is not a site frequented by the local populace, as evidenced in postcards of the public spaces of 1930s Singapore. The center of Raffles Place is a parking area allotted for automobiles and rickshaws but not for individuals that wish to congregate. The road where these vehicles pass runs around the center, alongside the frontages of the buildings, such that individuals traversing the commercial square are impelled to be in constant motion. The spatial configuration of the commercial square prevents them from standing still for an extended duration to gaze at their façades.

Because the enclosure of Raffles Place is marked by mobility, the ideals communicated through the architecture of these buildings have no audience. As the final recourse in a dynamic landscape that has decreased efficacy because of its location, monumentality reveals the impotency of empire.

PART II – 1930S SINGAPORE

CHAPTER 4 – FROM SPECTACLE TO SPECTACLE: LEISURE AND MOBILITY IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE AND THE AMUSEMENT PARK

The urban landscape of 1930s Singapore Municipality is dominated by two paradigmatic consumer spaces situated at its center and periphery: the department store and the amusement park. While they may function as public sites that draw on the heterogeneity and mobility of the port, they are configured as physical enclosures that offer reprieve from its congestion and commotion. The department store acts as a commercial space where individuals can experience comfort and luxury within its orderly and sanitary interiors. The amusement park serves as a leisure space where crowds can revivify their energy and productivity through its vigorous and immersive spectacles. Albeit seemingly disparate, they must be studied in relation to each other because they flourish as consumer spaces during the same historical moment, when consumption emerges as a mass activity. With their corresponding tendency to incorporate and systematize the entirety of the world in order to attract bodies and increase earnings, department stores and amusement parks could be seen as being complementary in the everyday life of Singapore's populace.

Regarding the department store and amusement park as antecedents of the shopping mall, this chapter aims to excavate and examine its characteristic logics, functions, and processes, which are discernible in these consumer spaces even in nascent or fragmentary form. In contrast to the tropical bungalow or the social club, the physical enclosures of these consumer spaces do not operate as idle cloisters from the contingency and mutability of the outside world. Their permeable walls enable them to accommodate regular flows of bodies, ideas, goods, and technologies, which could be exploited to generate revenue. Tracing the entangled imagination and experience of consumer capitalism, leisure time, public life, and urban modernity, I analyze the array of mechanisms and discourses that are used to entice visitors to arrive, linger, and return.

Interrogating the dominant assumptions about the character of department stores and amusement parks, I start by unearthing their configuration in the geographical and historical milieu of 1930s Singapore. I discuss the relation of these consumer spaces to the bustle of its entrepôt economy and the routine of its everyday life. Focusing on their deployment in the department stores and amusement parks of 1930s Singapore, I reexamine the conceptions of spectacle and carnival, whose logics are said to prevail in contemporary consumer spaces such as shopping malls. I look at how the dynamics of commerce and leisure converge when the commercial space of the department store supplies luxurious comforts to induce customers to consider acquiring its merchandise and the leisure space of the amusement park presents vigorous spectacles to entice visitors to continue paying for admission. The workings of the spectacles that are presented in these consumer spaces shift from cognitive absorption to sensorial immersion in enhancing their potency. The mobility that arises from the interaction of spectacle and carnival appears to engender an incipient form of modernity in a milieu that is hesitant about its imminent potential.

WORLDS OF COMMODITIES

Prior to its relocation to Orchard Road and Marina Bay in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, the financial and commercial heart of Singapore Municipality in the 1930s is Raffles Place, whose prestige and prominence derives from the mercantile offices and luxury shops that line its perimeter. It is home to Robinson & Co. and John Little & Co., two department stores opened in the mid-nineteenth century that occupy the east side of the commercial square with their backs towards Collyer Quay and the Singapore Strait. Department stores have been described by historians as providing a modern form of commerce and consumption, which reorganizes and transforms established modes of circulating, displaying, and acquiring goods.¹ Although department stores introduce new configurations of commercial space and consumer practice, their rise to dominance in Singapore Municipality does not coincide with the modernization of the cityscape like in Western Europe or the United States. The British colonial regime that governs the Straits Settlement has a more ambivalent stance towards modern forces. Discernible from its tentative presence in the public culture of periodicals and advertisements, modernity seems to arrive late in Singapore. It assumes a languid form because the individuals that control the government are hesitant about its possibilities. Unsure about how to harness modern forces, they regard them as a threat to their comfortable existence. Conscious of its inevitability, they withdraw from the contingency of the local environment into the refuge of tropical bungalows and social clubs without hastening modernity's arrival.

Due to this prevailing ambivalence towards modernity, the department stores of 1930s Singapore fulfill contrasting functions for its British expatriates and Asian inhabitants. Depending on the consumer, they offer comfort and stability from the urban domain or prestige and transcendence in the established hierarchy.

Even though department stores are situated at the center and amusement parks are located on the periphery of the urban domain, both types of consumer spaces have become incorporated into the routine of everyday life. As a normative activity, local residents regularly visit these public spaces during their leisure time. Their common, recurrent usage as public spaces allows them to shape their visitors' modes of perception, sociality, and action. Centrality is an integral aspect of the department store² since it strives to attain the same level of monumentality and prominence as the palace and the church, the seats of sovereignty in previous historical periods. Diverging from these enclosures, which radiated authority by restricting access to their interiors, commercial spaces accommodate the heterogeneity and mobility of the urban landscape. As part of their configuration and operation, they welcome the continual arrival and return of various bodies, ideas, goods, and technologies.

The department store incorporates the commercial street. Within its strict physical enclosure, it combines the sale of an extensive range of products, which consumers previously needed to obtain from various shops scattered across different locations. Its sanitary confines and orderly displays afford more convenience to shoppers amid the heat, humidity, and congestion of Singapore's roads, which they had needed to negotiate in order to make multiple purchases. The walls that would separate the different types of shops and goods in the commercial street disappear from the floor area of the department store. They are superseded by walls that enclose

¹ For instance, see Susan Porter Benson, "Palace for Consumption and Machine for Selling: The American Department Store, 1880-1940," *Radical History Review* 21 (Fall 1979): 199-221; and Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Princeton UP, 1981).

² Harry E. Resseguie, "Alexander Turney Stewart and the Development of the Department Store, 1823-1876," *Business History Review* 39 (1965): 303.

the span of the floor area to facilitate movement within this domain while discouraging exit from it. John Little & Co. prides in its commercial configuration as “Twenty Shops under One Roof.” Among the variety of products it offers on wholesale or retail are clothing, jewelry, hosiery, millinery, perfume, tobacco, furniture, drapery, hardware, silverware, crockery, food, medicine, alcohol, textiles, watches, clocks, electrical goods, leather goods, sporting goods, and arms and ammunition. While carrying luxury goods such as Jones sewing machines, which cost between fifty-eight and seventy-five dollars, it sells affordable items like Du Maurier filter tips, which are priced at fifty to fifty-eight cents. In print advertisements published in reputable English-language newspapers like *The Straits Times* and *The Malaya Tribune*, John Little & Co. presents itself as containing a world of imported products, which would cater to a diversity of individuals.

At the most basic level of its commercial configuration, the department store functions as a facility for the provision of goods. Deviating from the conventional history of the department store in Western Europe and the United States, Singapore’s department stores do not serve primarily as sites of modern consumption for recent entrants to the urban workforce with newfound purchasing power. From the range of goods being sold to them, the different segments of the island’s populace derive varied meanings, which do not necessarily involve the fostering of modernity in their disposition and deportment. John Little & Co. and Robinson & Co. are renowned for being the main sources of British products for Singapore’s expatriate community. Through the lifestyles and identities that they make possible with their acquisition, these products aid expatriates in coping with the solitary experience of exile. With branches across the Straits Settlements and the Federated States, John Little & Co. is the sole distributor in British Malaya for prestigious items like A.B. Jones & Sons chinaware, Walker & Hall’s cutlery, Hedges & Butler wine, Bird’s custard, J.A. Hunter & Co. meats, Smith & Wellstood’s stoves, Coleman lamps, and Burroughes & Watts billiard tables. Amid the dynamism of the entrepôt, which threatens to unsettle established norms, these products furnish the domestic spaces of expatriates with objects that produce comfort and stability through a taste of home. By reproducing norms of spatial arrangement and social practice from the Mother Country, the use of these products enables colonial expatriates to retain aspects of their everyday life before their relocation. Creating a domain of languid comfort, it allows them to withdraw from the onslaught of heterogeneous forces that threaten to transform their existence.

The value of imported goods as consumer items is transformed when they are acquired and exhibited for the purpose of enhancing social prestige instead of reproducing everyday life. From their beginnings in the cities of Western Europe and the United States, department stores have acted as venues for the affirmation and propagation of elite culture³ by supplying affordable status symbols.⁴ With their stylish products and displays, department stores offer models of appearance and behavior by which customers can fashion themselves with the distinct gestures and accoutrements of affluence and modernity. In 1930s Singapore, where the promise of modernity is less emphatic, many local merchants and professionals accumulate goods in order to project images of their flourishing wealth and status.⁵ By acquiring the aura of prestige affixed to imported goods, local residents born without the advantages of inherited wealth and status are able to elevate their standing in the established hierarchy. Exhibited as opulent household ornaments, these items bear a similar significance to the shimmering Manchu robes that

³ Miller, 3.

⁴ Rudi Laermans, “Learning to Consumer: Early Department Stores and the Shaping of Modern Consumer Culture (1860-1914),” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 10 (1993): 97.

⁵ Lee Kip Lin, *The Singapore House, 1819-1942* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1988), 104.

prosperous Chinese *towkays* would wear in the nineteenth century. Simply by buying from the exquisite selection of British imports at John Little & Co. and Robinson & Co., any inhabitant of the settlement can imitate the enviable, prestigious lifestyle of a colonial expatriate.

Robinson & Co. claims to specialize in style with an array of products that possess “a marked degree of taste and discrimination.” Operating its own manufacturing workshops, the department store is acclaimed for its accurate reproductions of period furniture in the Elizabethan, Jacobean, Louis IV, Adam, and Hepplewhite styles. The unavailability of the original items creates a lack of familiarity among consumers that allows copies of them to acquire their value. Local residents can purchase mahogany oval-shaped armchairs with classical motifs and tapered legs to display in their drawing rooms alongside the portraits and photographs of their parents and ancestors mounted on the walls in gilded, pedimented frames. Even for those who do not originate from the Mother Country, a British lifestyle becomes easily obtainable through the power of money. The Asian inhabitants of Singapore Municipality assume that accumulating these products will reproduce its social norms in their households. Meant to elevate the social standing of individuals not born with wealth and status, the possession of luxury items upholds the validity of the established hierarchy instead of transforming its norms.

Through their multiplicity of novel and imported products and lifestyles, the department stores of 1930s Singapore Municipality are able to deliver both colonial expatriates and local inhabitants from the necessity of daily circumstances in the bustling entrepôt. Writing about the emergence of consumer society in the United States, William Leach describes how, in order to guarantee continual profit, capitalism nurtured a culture that is oriented towards the prospect of the future.⁶ Oriented towards repetition and stability, the mode of consumer capitalism fostered in 1930s Singapore’s department stores holds the future in abeyance by upholding the elite norms of the established order. Instead of promoting the flourishing of modernity in the urban landscape, these department stores offer individuals an experience of luxury, although in a form that is not completely languid.

In the examples of John Little & Co. and Robinson & Co., the department store is revealed to be a public enclosure that shapes the identity and behavior of its customers not merely through their acquisition of its products but also through their occupation of its premises. Within this domain, the monumental splendor of a royal palace and the elite comfort of a social club are presented alongside the dynamic heterogeneity and mobility of an entrepôt economy. Subsuming the commercial street’s dazzling multiplicity of commodities under a strict enclosure, the department store tries to reproduce the dynamism of the urban landscape without its disorder. It aims to establish a commercial configuration that would regulate the physical and perceptual movement of bodies such that these flows arrive, circulate, and return with frequency and efficiency.

THE RISE OF MODERN COMMERCIAL ENCLOSURES

At the barest outline of its schematic diagram, the department store could be understood as a reconfiguration of commercial space, which rationalizes the spheres of capitalist circulation

⁶ See William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 2004).

and exchange. In the department store, commercial activity is systematized and expedited through the organization and standardization of product prices and sales cycles.⁷

The configuration of Singapore's department stores is patterned after the paradigms of department stores in London, Paris, New York, Chicago, and Shanghai, which were the influential capitals of commerce and leisure at the time of their construction. The prototype of the department store is said to have emerged in Paris in the nineteenth century. Its emergence coincides with the ascendancy of mass production as its configuration consolidated commercial spaces and ordered commercial transactions to prevent the oversupply of goods.⁸ Before the French Revolution, retail activity in Paris was performed through guilds. Regulating the entry of artisans into trades to keep trades from overlapping, guilds restricted the production and circulation of items such that each workshop specialized in a single type of item. Workshops would be located in the same quarter to facilitate the exchange of related materials. This proximity in the spaces of production and circulation enabled artisans to discuss easily with other artisans product prices and market conditions.⁹ In the Parisian quarters, an intimate sense of community is said to have prevailed among the artisans, suppliers, and customers who regularly interacted in the conduct of everyday life.¹⁰ Commercial exchange transpired as a circuitous and organic activity, which was defined by the familiarity and trust that developed between the producers and consumers of goods.

Around the 1830s to 1840s, a new type of commercial space appeared in the Parisian cityscape. Large shops called *magasins de nouveautés*, such as the Ville de Paris, offered an assortment of fancy dry goods, which were supposed to improve the appearance of men and women,¹¹ including silks, cloths, woolens, hosieries, gloves, hats, shawls, cloaks, and overcoats.¹² Wooden signs on their windows would declare with embossed brass letters, 'No Abatement,' or 'No Second Price,' which meant that the prices on the tags attached to the goods on display were not negotiable.¹³ Because the bargaining that transpired between the seller and the buyer was believed to slacken the turnover of goods, these items were assigned low, fixed prices for the purposes of higher turnover.¹⁴ For the entrepôt economy of Singapore, where department stores developed from dry goods shops, the expansion and organization of commercial space was crucial due to the volume of goods that passes through its domain.

The bond of familiarity and trust that prevailed between sellers and buyers in the workshop and bazaar is what obliged individuals to frequent the same commercial spaces. Deprived of this profound personal bond, commercial spaces must rely on other factors to entice individuals to visit their premises and purchase their products. Their reconfiguration as department stores has enabled them to govern more effectively the movement not only of goods but also of bodies. If the department store needed to systematize and streamline the circulation of

⁷ Miller's pioneering study of department store's modern tendency towards rationalization and systematization is anticipated in Emile Zola's 1883 serial novel, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which portrays the *grand magasin* as a capitalist machine.

⁸ David Chaney, "The Department Store as a Cultural Form," *Theory, Culture & Society* 1.3 (1983): 22.

⁹ T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Princeton UP, 1986), 52.

¹⁰ Miller, 214.

¹¹ Laermans, 83.

¹² Miller, 25.

¹³ Dorothy Davis, *A History of Shopping* (London, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 2007), 258-259.

¹⁴ See Miller.

commercial products to be able to govern it, it relied on the extension of its structure and the ornamentation of its façade to induce the arrival of potential customers.

The prodigious expansion of the most prosperous department stores in the United States epitomizes how commercial spaces begin to aspire for the magnitude and majesty of monuments. Commercial activity in the United States' thriving cities during the middle of the nineteenth century was dominated by large retail stores dealing in dry goods like A.T. Stewart's five-story 'Marble Palace' on 280 Broadway in New York. Unconcerned about the appearance of their commercial space, these large dry goods stores had austere interiors and haphazardly arranged products.¹⁵ With the dawn of the new century, Macy's in New York and Marshall Field's in Chicago rose to the height of twelve to twenty-five stories as they replaced norms of design such as plain wooden flooring and ornamentation with the splendor of marble, bronze, and mahogany.¹⁶ Macy's massive flagship store in Midtown Manhattan was a popular tourist destination because of its size.¹⁷ Like other major department stores of the period, Marshall Field's featured a grand central rotunda, where upper floor galleries opened towards a vast atrium with a resplendent glass skylight. Its rooms and corridors, with red marble flooring, were lined by Grecian pillars and illumed by Tiffany chandeliers.¹⁸ In Raffles Place, the highlight of John Little & Co.'s refurbished building is a grand entrance portal crowned by wrought iron and copper grills that leads customers into the elegant teak foyer with a staircase of terracotta tiles.¹⁹ The monumentality and ornateness of the early department stores bear an excessive character, which proves that the need to maximize profit was not the principal factor behind their expansion. Aside from drawing clientele, which could directly result in increased revenue, its material qualities establish the new centrality of the marketplace in the urban landscape.

Built with the majesty of palaces and churches, department stores differ from these opaque sites of authority in that they welcome change in their continuous flows of bodies, finances, and goods. Departing from the monumentality of state buildings, which is designed to transmit official norms, the monumentality of commercial structures is intended to attract new customers. By incorporating within its luxurious enclosure the commercial street, whose incarnation in the Singaporean landscape is nondescript in appearance, the department store elevates commercial space to a prominent destination for the populace.

While drawing bodies is one integral aspect of its operation, it must cause these bodies to linger and return. Before the emergence of department stores, individuals who intended to acquire an item would normally spend a short amount of time within the domain of a commercial space. After they entered a shop, perused its selection, and made their purchase, they promptly left without being permitted to linger. Because the whole range of choices was not subsumed under a single structure, customers could easily wander to other shops and streets.

Reconfiguring the normative practices of commerce and consumption, department stores permitted their customers to enter their premises without requiring them to make a purchase at the exact moment of their initial visit. The relaxing of the impermeability of the commercial enclosure dissociated the concrete activity of inhabiting commercial spaces from the direct purpose of acquiring consumer items. So that customers would be enticed to linger and return

¹⁵ Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago, U.S.A.: U of Chicago P, 1990), 63-64.

¹⁶ Leach, 76.

¹⁷ Benson, 199.

¹⁸ Benson, 202-203.

¹⁹ "John Little and Co.," *Straits Times*, 19 September 1910, 7.

aside from merely entering, retail stores have transformed the use of their physical enclosure into a pleasurable and memorable experience. Evoking the majesty of palaces and churches in their architecture, they must engender the comfort of tropical bungalows and social clubs within their interior. The department store represents the coincidence of the logics of enclosure of these spaces in the luxurious sanctuary it inaugurates in the urban landscape. While the monumentality and ornateness of its architecture prompts individuals to stand and gaze, its prospect of comfortable reprieve induces them to arrive, circulate, and return.

Unlike the department stores of Western Europe and the United States, the department stores of Singapore Municipality function less as public spaces for women who are leaving the traditional confines of the household to join the growing urban workforce because of the considerably smaller female population.²⁰ Dominated by its large male majority, Singapore's department stores emulate its social clubs with their facilities for relaxation and revitalization but without the stringency of membership. On its first floor, John Little & Co. has a café where merchants and brokers meet to discuss business deals while drinking its signature coffee. Visitors to the department store are entitled to free use of the rest lounge adjoining the café with its reading, writing, and telephone facilities. Because their physical enclosure is permeable, department stores are able to furnish the ordinary individuals who occupy their domain with the luxuries normally reserved for members of the elite. To impel their visitors to spend more time within their domain, department stores must grant them reprieve from the perceived disorder and sordidness of the outside. Transporting individuals from the routine of everyday life with their characteristic order, luxury, and comfort, they offer an elite experience of repose to a broad range of the population.

In 1930s Singapore, comfort and service are repeatedly emphasized in newspaper advertisements as the essential qualities of effective commercial spaces. For the residents of the Crown Colony, the degree of comfort that a commercial space can provide is significant because of the unpleasant congestion and disorder of the town. Due to the common belief that the heat and humidity outside its enclosure can render bodies sluggish and unproductive, the quality of service it offers is presented as bearing the potential to liberate local bodies from their sordid condition.

The unique form of comfort that the department store provides is not simply reliant on the presence of free facilities such as reading lounges and writing rooms, or services that wrap purchases for customers and accept returns of purchases without additional fees.²¹ The strict physical enclosure of the department store generates comfort through the absence from its domain of undesirable elements that would dissuade individuals from spending more time within it. Pursuing the logic of sanitary modernity, it strives to eliminate all visible and tangible trace of the filth, congestion, noise, violence, vice, and poverty that supposedly prevail outside in the local environment. Individuals who browse through the commodities for sale in the commercial street are not always able to concentrate on the purchases they are making due to the distracting hubbub of their surroundings. The dust, heat, and humidity keep them from lingering too long outside. By presenting its interior as being a safer, cleaner, and more pleasant alternative to the urban domain, the department store aims to accommodate the bodies of consumers for as much time as permissible.

²⁰ See Leach and Laermans for examples of this argument about the profound relation between the emergence of department stores and the modernity of employed women in Paris, New York, and Chicago.

²¹ Resseguie, 303.

Instead of being derived entirely from the presence of the luxury of elite domestic spaces and the absence of the disorder of urban public spaces, its comfort is equally shaped by the absence of the unpleasant labor of production and circulation. Rationalizing their spaces, the early department stores sought to conceal employees who were not salespeople, particularly those belonging to their manufacturing workshops, in order to keep their domain free of the image of arduous labor.²² As the sphere of production previously integral to its configuration was suppressed from sight, the commercial space was transformed principally into a site of exchange and consumption.

As Marx writes, dissociating the production of a commodity from the creation of its value results in value being determined in the market without regard for the circumstances of its production. Instead of being based on the labor time devoted to its production, the value of a commodity becomes founded on perceived needs associated with its usage and consumption.²³ Considering that Marx does not place much emphasis on the properties of the marketplace, I would add that the value of the commodity becomes determined by the circumstances of its exchange. When the arduous labor that produces the commodity is hidden from the sight and knowledge of the buyer, the norms of productivity and efficiency no longer dominate the value of the commodity in the process of exchange. Veblen underscores the role of sight in creating the value of the object.²⁴ I would argue that as the basis for the value of the commodity shifts to its physical and visual relation with its potential consumer, this value is increasingly shaped by the spatial configuration where the relation unfolds. The commercial spaces of the roadside bazaar and the department store offer distinct circumstances of exchange, which would cause the values of their selections of products to differ.

More important than concealing the arduous labor of the workshop and the factory in order to produce an experience of comfort, the department store must subdue the purported disorder of the bazaar. Part of the comfort that a department store provides comes from the convenience of its fixed prices, which spares individuals from the effort and anxiety of bargaining. Its clean and pleasant atmosphere entails the absence not only of unruliness but also uncertainty. Department stores try to establish a profound link between the practice of buying and the feeling of comfort such that the formerly troublesome task of acquiring goods becomes pleasurable when performed in their domain. Because of the reputable image that department stores strive to exhibit, customers are obliged to trust in their determination of quality items and judicious prices. Standardizing the quality and value of products helps regulate the responses of customers to these products. In exchange for orderly displays and fixed prices, customers who enter department stores are expected to comply with their norms of commercial conduct such as scanning their items in a civilized manner and accepting their prices as a truthful value. Customers must deal with salesclerks, who have no authority to alter the prices of the products on sale. Unable to participate directly in determining the value of the items they are considering, customers are restricted to a dualistic decision of buying or passing. In 1930s Singapore, where members of the heterogeneous population belong to different cultures and speak in different languages, the institution of fixed prices enables sellers and buyers to overcome their inability to communicate with each other. Yielding certainty and comfort for potential buyers, the institution of fixed prices facilitates and expedites the process of exchange and profit.

²² Leach, 75.

²³ See Karl Marx, "Chapter One: The Commodity," *Capital Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin: London, U.K., 1976), 125-177.

²⁴ See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, U.S.A.: Dover, 1994).

The comfort found in Singapore's department stores is not an idle form of comfort like that of tropical bungalows and social clubs. Instead of merely withdrawing individuals from the urban domain and the reproducing the norms of the established order, this form of comfort is entangled with the dynamics of mass consumption. Outside, in the commercial street, individuals must be able to explore the area according to their own route and pace while they consider the various products on display. Their mobility is often hindered by the congestion and commotion of the urban domain. The orderly spaces and fixed prices found in the comfortable enclosure of the department store afford them more freedom to meander without distraction and impediment. When they stop walking to devote more attention to a specific product, they are not pressured to resume their movement. Spared from having to haggle with the sellers of products, their energies are not expended in the act of buying but can be used to consider more purchases. This fluid circulation of bodies is supposed to result in the rapid exchange of goods.

Comfort might conventionally be understood as an antithesis to modernity in that it constitutes a timeless reality where individuals can seek refuge from the immediacy and contingency of circumstances. The mobile form of comfort found in the department store complicates this opposition. Although comfort is integral to the operation of the department store for enticing customers to visit and return, mobility is equally crucial for enabling them to consider the selection of available products. In the department store, customers are impelled towards continuous circulation but within a pleasant environment that does not drive their bodies to inevitable exhaustion or pressure them into a hasty decision.

The rise to dominance of consumer capitalism coincides with the new precedence that businesses give to the bodies and spaces that facilitate the sale of products. As the ends of consumption are emphasized, commercial exchange is reconfigured into a consumable experience.

WORLDS OF SPECTACLES

When the lights at the center of Singapore Municipality dim at the cessation of the workday, the amusement parks on the periphery of the urban domain come to life. The dazzling lights and ebullient sounds of these bustling public spaces dominate the surrounding landscape as crowds from Singapore's heterogeneous population are drawn within their enclosure by the prospect of euphoric reprieve. The New World and Great World Amusement Parks are respectively called in the Chinese and Malay languages, *youyicksang* and *taman hiburan*, which literally mean 'parks of entertainment.' Located on the outskirts of the municipality, away from its typical congestion and commotion, they claim to provide sources of leisure that are "out of the ordinary." Instead of being exceptional, I would argue that they are ordinary because they serve as routine public spaces for the majority of the populace. Singapore's amusement parks are open from dusk until midnight all year round, unlike their prototype, New York City's Coney Island, which operates only during the American summer months of June to September.²⁵ Frequent throughout the year, they function less as an alternate world of brief fantasy than as an integral component of everyday life.

²⁵ Enormously popular for its mechanized entertainments and artificial lights, Coney Island was extolled as a miniature version of Broadway. See Robert M. Lewis, *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910* (Baltimore, U.S.A.: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), 280.

Similar to the department store, the amusement park could be seen as a product of modernization in the sense that advances in the technology and infrastructure of production, electricity, and transportation have enabled its existence and success. Through the thousands of lights that amusement parks use to illuminate their premises, they permit public activity to continue into the evening. Providing a venue where the residents of the Straits Settlement can congregate once the sun has set and the workday has ended, they reconfigure the long established routine of everyday life. In contrast to Coney Island, which can be found at the terminus of several trolley lines,²⁶ they are closer and more accessible to individuals traveling via public transit from the heart of town. Unlike the amusement parks in the United States, those in Singapore Municipality are central to the social life of the residents because they frequently host private gatherings like wedding celebrations and national events such as trade fairs.

The amusement parks of 1930s Singapore do not necessarily grant individuals reprieve from the hectic conditions of the urban domain because they depend on large crowds and mobile flows for their success. Serving less as sanctuaries from than extensions of the established order, they offer not so much a reversal of social norms than a revival of weary bodies. Contrary to Foucault, disciplinary institutions are not the only common enclosures tasked with shaping bodies for capitalist production during this historical period.²⁷ As a public space with as much centrality as educational, industrial, and religious institutions, the park similarly reproduces official norms of behavior and collectivity among its visitors. Underdeveloped in the Crown Colony, schools and factories fail to perform this dominant function because they do not deal with a large majority of the population. Compared with amusement parks, department stores seem to act more like a secondary refuge because, situated at the center of the urban domain, their circumscribed enclosures form a momentary break in the normal routine of work and leisure. The luxury of their confines palpably differs from the commotion of their surroundings. Due to the limited amount of time that visitors can linger before being expected make a purchase, the reprieve they grant remains a fleeting experience.

Exemplified by the enormously popular Coney Island in New York and Great World in Shanghai, amusement parks are configured as strict physical enclosures with a multiplicity of attractions, novelties, and spectacles, which are meant to entice, captivate, and enrapture the broad range of the population. Whereas Singapore Municipality's commercial streets and department stores cater to an affluent minority, its amusement parks strive for a wide majority. In contrast to elite venues for leisure and entertainment like the social club, their strict physical enclosure is not intended to exclude ordinary individuals but to accommodate heterogeneous crowds. Instead of focusing on a particular economic or ethnic group, they target an inclusive market of consumers, whose size in numbers will determine the scale of their profit.

The New World Amusement Park, or *Xin Shinjie*, is described in historical accounts as being the busiest and most boisterous of the island's amusement parks. Extending for four and one-fifth hectares,²⁸ its park grounds are sprawled between Jalan Besar and Serangoon Road, on the edge of Little India. Inaugurated on the first of August 1923, it was built by its proprietors Ong Boon Tat and Ong Peng Hock near the racecourse alongside Serangoon Road to tap into the

²⁶ Lauren Rabinovitz, *Electric Dreamland: Amusement Parks, Movies, and American Modernism* (New York, U.S.A.: Columbia UP, 2012), 8-9.

²⁷ For this seminal argument, please see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 1995).

²⁸ Tan Kar Lin, "The 'Worlds' Entertainment Parks of Singapore (1920s-1980s): New Urban Form and Social Space for Culture and Consumption" (Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2004), 37.

crowds who regularly gather there.²⁹ It operates according to the emerging business principle that profit can be derived from products with low prices if a large quantity of them is sold. In the 1930s, the regular admission fee is ten cents, a price affordable enough for Chinese laborers, who earn on average ten to twelve dollars per month.³⁰ The cost is steeper for the Tamil laborers who construct and repair the roads of the municipality because they receive only fifty to sixty cents in daily wages.³¹ The low admission fee is intended to appeal to the majority of the local populace, the principal target market of the amusement parks.

The history of Coney Island illustrates how the popular and financial success of the amusement parks in the early twentieth century becomes possible due to the increase of the urban population and the development of the transportation infrastructure.³² At the convergence of several trolleybus routes, the New World Amusement Park is easily accessible to residents of Singapore Municipality via public transit. Through one of these routes, individuals can reach the park from the High Street crossing by riding in the second-class section of a northbound trolleybus for merely four cents.³³ Despite their location on the periphery of town, amusement parks could be said to possess centrality not merely because they form part of the routine of urban life but also because they recreate some of the bustle of its daily rhythms. The exhilarating experience they generate in their enclosures involves an immersion in crowds and the circulation of bodies, conditions that are associated with the bustle of the cityscape but are bereft of its disorder.

Exalted in its advertisements as “the pioneer park of all Malaya,” the New World Amusement Park promotes itself as the “First in Conception and the First to study the needs of, and cater for First-Class Amusements for all classes.” In contrast to Singapore’s social clubs, which restrict access to their domain, it proclaims that it is an inclusive enclosure. It is inclusive in that its multiplicity of attractions, novelties, and spectacles reflects a systematic effort to appeal to the different segments of the Crown Colony’s heterogeneous population. Starting as an experiment to test the market as a Temporary Exhibition and Recreation Ground, the New World Amusement Park opened partly due to the success of the 1922 Malaya Borneo Exhibition in Telok Ayer, which offered an assortment of musical bands, football matches, open-air cinemas, and dance performances.³⁴ It was closely patterned after the indoor amusement centers of Shanghai, the model of leisure and entertainment in Singapore at this historical moment. Shanghai’s vibrant amusement centers, like the Great World Entertainment Center on the junction of Yan’an and Xizang Roads, resemble the monumental department stores on Nanjing Road with six stories of theaters, funhouses, cinemas, roof gardens, food stalls, gambling stalls, restaurants, fortune-tellers, puppet shows, shooting galleries, wrestling matches, and acrobatic performances.³⁵ By incorporating miscellaneous leisure and entertainment activities, these enclosures refashion pleasure into an experience of abundance and variety.

²⁹ Tan K.L., 24.

³⁰ Yvonne Quahe, *We Remember: Cameos of Pioneer Life* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1986), 83.

³¹ “Tamil Laborers Go to Evening Classes,” *Sunday Times*, 26 July 1936, 15.

³² John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York, U.S.A.: Hill and Wang, 1978), 7.

³³ F.W. York and A.R. Phillips, *Singapore: A History of its Trams, Trolleybuses, and Buses, Volume One: 1860’s to 1960’s* (DTS Publishing, 1996), 44.

³⁴ Tan K.L., 5.

³⁵ Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Policing Shanghai 1927-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., and London, England, United Kingdom: U of California P, 1995), 105.

The main entrance archway of the New World Amusement Park on Jalan Besar is composed of a large, rectangular arch with two smaller, rectangular arches adjoining it on its sides, each which is covered by a flared roof with the figure of a serpentine dragon at its apex. Beyond the archway, a vacant lot in between the sidewalls of two shophouses serves as a vestibule, which enacts the passage from the reality of the local environment to the world of the leisure enclosure.³⁶ The length of the vestibule adds a layer of anticipation to the experience of entering the park grounds. Crossing a narrow backlane, the opposite end of the vestibule forms a circular foyer, where a curving row of structures acts as a gate between the outside and the inside of the park grounds.

Visitors to the New World can opt to enter the main park grounds through one of two portals, which are positioned in between two sets of ticket booths flanking a bandstand. The portal on the left faces the Sunlight Hall, which, with a maximum capacity of one thousand and four hundred seats, is home to the acclaimed City Opera.³⁷ The right entrance portal directs individuals to the Moonlight Hall, whose length is perpendicular to the iron fence that encircles the park. The Moonlight Hall is known for the *bangsawan* and *kroncong* performances of Miss Riboet.³⁸ Aside from staging concerts and operas, the park's array of halls features Filipino vaudeville acts, Javanese *wayang wong* performances, and international boxing matches. Interspersed with these halls, outdoor stages capture the attention of visitors with troupes of *gewutan* girls, who sing and dance with acrobatics and magic in provocative costume,³⁹ and pairs of *joget* dancers, who swing and twirl with cheerfulness and grace without physical contact.⁴⁰ Instead of being limited to music or theater, these public venues present assorted forms of entertainment, which would appeal to the diverse tastes of the park's visitors. The spatial proximity of different attractions, novelties and spectacles to one another results in an experience of profuse and unending enjoyment.

Continuing from the Moonlight Hall on the right, individuals pass an indoor cabaret and an open-air cinema, which, like the hall, extend lengthwise from the fence. The open-air cinema consists of a large, rectangular area occupied by several rows of seats, which are arrayed between a screen at one end and a projector at the other. A tea garden and a beer garden, where individuals can find refreshments, are situated on the side of the cinema facing away from the cabaret. Along the left part of the enclosure, another open-air cinema follows the Sunlight Hall, their length parallel to the iron fence. Individuals need only walk past the hall and the cinema to find carnival rides like the thrilling Ghost Train and the more relaxing Merry-Go-Round. The Twilight Hall sits to the right of the Merry-Go-Round and to the back of the pagoda. Behind the Twilight Hall on its right is the New World Restaurant. The lively Solar and Lunar Halls are positioned at the far end of the park, near Serangoon Road. Scattered across the different areas of the enclosure, commercial stalls sell miscellaneous products such as clothes, toys, and knickknacks. Food kiosks offer favorite hawker fare, including congee or rice porridge, *satai* or

³⁶ This detailed description of the spatial configuration of the New World Amusement Park is based on blueprints submitted in 1923 and 1938 to the Building Control Authority, whose approval was required for the construction and refurbishment of physical structures.

³⁷ "The New World," *Straits Times*, 2 August 1928, 10.

³⁸ Malay Opera Season, *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 29 March 1930, 10.

³⁹ Yong Sai Shing and Chan Kwok Bon, "Leisure, Pleasure, and Consumption: Ways of Entertaining Oneself," *Past Times: A Social History of Singapore*, eds. Chan Kwok Bon and Tong Chee Kiong (Singapore: Times Editions, 2003), 165.

⁴⁰ Tan Sooi Beng, *Bangsawan: A Social and Stylistic History of Popular Malay Opera* (Penang and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The Asian Centre, 1997), 148-149.

skewered meat with peanut sauce, and *kway teow* or stir-fried noodles with dark soy sauce. To enhance the atmosphere of variety and excitement in the enclosure, the amusement park features enthralling carnival sideshows such as colorful birds, two-hoofed animals, and flea circuses, as well as an excessively fat lady with billowing folds of flesh.⁴¹ People can spend time at one of the numerous shooting galleries, where they try to hit small cylinders attached to a wooden lattice by firing cork pellets from an air gun.⁴²

Prefiguring shopping malls, Singapore's amusement parks represent a novel paradigm of consumer space, where traditional forms of leisure and entertainment like theater performances and social dances are assembled and arranged within the same enclosure as modern forms of leisure and entertainment such as the motion pictures and carnival rides. Presented alongside each other, these disparate realities are afforded equal value without being submitted to a hierarchy of technological progress or cultural sophistication. Amusement parks are configured like international expositions in the way they strive to encompass the entirety of the world within their enclosure through their multiplicity of attractions, novelties, and spectacles. While evoking the impression of organic randomness, their spatial configuration organizes their contents so that they could be encountered as a series of consumable experiences. The amusement parks of Singapore are patterned less after the international expositions of London, Paris, or Chicago than the amusement parks of Shanghai, whose goal is not technological innovation or national development but popular entertainment and commercial profit.

Aside from containing its multiplicity of objects, enclosure forms an integral aspect of the amusement park because it regulates the entry and exit of flows. In Singapore's amusement parks, high perimeter walls strictly demarcate and circumscribe the park grounds from the world outside. The enclosure created enables the amusement park to impel its visitors to linger and circulate within its perimeter. Without enclosure, it would not succeed in generating an enjoyable carnival atmosphere, which diverges from the less pleasant and more hectic experience of the municipality. Its function as an enclosure is rooted in the origins of its configuration. The antecedents of Singapore's amusement parks in the colonial metropole, the English pleasure gardens, were designed to serve as a sanctuary from the sordidness of the rapidly industrializing Victorian city.⁴³

Located south of the town, the Great World Amusement Park, or *Dan Xinjie*, illustrates how a strictly circumscribed enclosure permits the amusement park to generate an experience of relaxation and revitalization that cannot be found in the urban landscape. Stretching for more than five hectares, the Great World encompasses a trapezoidal area bound by Kim Seng Road, River Valley Road, Zion Road, and the tail end of the Singapore River.⁴⁴ Marketing itself as "Malaya's foremost family park," it claims that its goal is to provide sources of recreation and diversion according to the "proper way to enjoy leisure."⁴⁵ The "proper way" suggests a mode of leisure that is clean of the undesirable elements of disorder, violence, and vice. Only through the formation of an enclosure can illegal leisure practices like gambling, prostitution, and opium-addiction be purged from public space. Symbolic enclosure was effective when expelling

⁴¹ When Night Falls in Singapore, *Sunday Times*, 26 November 1933, 10.

⁴² "Shooting Gallery Targets on Hooks and Strings," *Straits Times*, 10 May 1933, 12.

⁴³ Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 4.

⁴⁴ Tan K.L., 37.

⁴⁵ Qtd. in Tan K.L., 84.

difference and poverty, but for consumer spaces that aim to accommodate the settlement's profusion of bodies, a more rigid form of enclosure is required to eliminate vice.

The functional correspondence between the park and the municipality is founded on the ascendancy of a mode of leisure without vice. Deemed to be undesirable regardless of the profit they would bring, practices of vice need to be prohibited from the domain of the park to prevent the negative image that might accompany them from dissuading droves of visitors. In addition, I would argue that the revenue from vice is outweighed by its expenditure of energy, which is counterproductive to the *entrepôt* economy. In the public culture of English-language periodicals, the uncontrollable bodies of local inhabitants are believed to engender disorder and violence, which could diminish the pleasure of the park. To be able to spend time in the park grounds, visitors must not simply pay the fee of admission but must also adhere to the norms of behavior. By insisting on the adoption of modes of recreation and sociality that are devoid of undesirable elements, amusement parks prescribe how bodies should expend energy and gather together. Crowds are allowed to form temporarily as long as they disperse soon after. Bodies are rid of their proclivities for disorder and violence, which could threaten to subvert the established order if performed in unison. Shaping the physical and social conduct of bodies, the amusement park operates complementarily with the work regime.

The social function of the amusement park is founded on its capacity to expose the residents of the island to contingency and heterogeneity without endangering their individual wellbeing or disrupting the established order.⁴⁶ Located on the geographical periphery of the urban domain, the amusement park attempts to inaugurate a new city devoid of the illicit elements that have produced the undesirable reputation of Singapore Municipality as a lawless abyss of sin. Through the amusement parks, local businesses demonstrate how a more effective mode of management different from the *laissez-faire* policy of the colonial regime could cleanse public spaces of their sordidness.

Subduing the behavior and movement of ungovernable bodies, the amusement park offers the exhilarating experience of an alternate world without entirely departing from the parameters of the established order.⁴⁷ Within its enclosure, norms of productivity, mobility, and collectivity appropriate to the workings of a bustling *entrepôt* economy are instituted and reproduced. This idea of the amusement park could be likened to Adorno and Horkheimer's classic analysis, in which undesirable and subversive elements of contingency and heterogeneity are subsumed by the culture industry and displaced into more benign forms. The amusement park alleviates the fatigue and anxiety of individuals without resorting to languid comfort or total abandon. Its economy of the carnival accustoms bodies to new possibilities of productivity, mobility, and collectivity by momentarily suspending their limits but without exercising these possibilities to the point of exhaustion, violence, and death.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SPECTACLE

With the aim of drawing a broad range of individuals, department stores and amusement parks feature a heterogeneous array of spectacles. Commodities and experiences are reconfigured by these consumer spaces into spectacles to entice bodies to visit them with greater number and frequency. Because department stores and amusement parks have contrasting logics and

⁴⁶ Russell B. Nye, "Eight Ways of Looking at an Amusement Park," *Journal of Popular Culture* 15 (1981): 67.

⁴⁷ Nye, 66.

functions, the spectacles they contain have dissimilar configurations. The transformation of commodities and experiences into immersive spectacles in the department store reflects how the detachment between spectator and spectacle is superseded in the amusement park.

Matthew Isaac Cohen, historian of the Netherlands East Indies theater company the Komedi Stamboel, relates that public events during the late nineteenth century were called *tontonan* or ‘spectacle,’ a derivation of the Batavian Malay word *nonton*, meaning ‘to observe.’⁴⁸ For individuals at this early moment of modernity in Southeast Asia, a public event was something that demanded to be witnessed and observed with an attitude of astonishment. This understanding implies a degree of detachment between the observer and spectacle that permits the observer to be astonished about the spectacle. Referring to the world expositions of nineteenth-century Paris, Timothy Mitchell expands on this idea when he defines the spectacle as a paradoxical reality that is both viewed and experienced.⁴⁹ While the configuration of the spectacle positions the individual who gazes at it as a detached spectator, the gaze establishes an intimate relation between spectator and spectacle. According to these images of the spectacle, the spectacle is reality of forceful visibility, which is not merely seen but is also experienced when the viewer becomes absorbed in its world.

Originally mundane in character, the spectacle is an object or an event that is endowed with an irresistible allure when it is presented to the public in a consumer space. Gaining potency as a visual experience, it insists that it is significant and singular enough to merit the attention and interest of an individual for an extended duration. It transforms the individual momentarily gazing at it into a spectator completely absorbed in its reality such that he is led to abandon any activity or movement he might have been pursuing. Incapable of averting his attention, the spectator is withdrawn from the normative flow of time. The spectator surrenders to its reality because the spectacle demands that it be apprehended and embraced as it presents itself, without the possibility of negotiation. As an experience, the spectacle is defined by a diminution of immediacy and reciprocity that remains imperceptible. Instead of being able to determine the shape of this reality, the spectator can only respond to it with wonder or excitement.

Arranged together in glass cases or on wooden shelves, the products sold in department stores have less of an allure for potential buyers. Because they are collected as a large variety of objects, they are difficult to grasp in their entirety as a coherent unit of meaning. Individual items must be isolated from the rest in order to be more effective in enticing customers to purchase them. Singapore’s department stores strive to generate interest in their goods among the populace by resorting to innovative marketing techniques. Staged to highlight the value of particular products, special public events and exhibits are used to draw individuals into visiting the enclosure and regarding their merchandise. Creating a more potent allure would entail not only the visual enhancement of an individual item but also the material configuration of a theatrical spectacle, which transforms the act of examining a commodity into an significant physical and emotional encounter.

John Little & Co. periodically hosts mannequin parades in its café or tearoom on Saturday mornings. Garbed in the latest fashions, female models demonstrate how the miscellaneous garments and accoutrements being offered at the department store could be assembled aesthetically for daily wear. Whereas clothes on sale would be merely slung over nondescript banisters or draped around inanimate dummies, these living mannequins are

⁴⁸ Matthew Isaac Cohen, *The Komedi Stamboel: Popular Theater in Colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903* (Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.: Ohio UP, 2006), 10.

⁴⁹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley, California, U.S.A.: U of California P, 1991), 6.

embodied images of vogueish consumption. Invoking the imagination of consumers, the living mannequins compel their audience to situate commodities beyond the rarefied confines of commercial spaces, in the realm of everyday life. The items on display become desirable not so much because consumers can identify with the models exhibiting them but because they can visualize themselves utilizing these items.

Lifting commodities from their imprisonment behind glass displays, they endow commodities with an aura of palpable materiality. The desire in consumers for commodities typically derives from the physical detachment that persists between consumers and commodities. Making tangible the potential for use of commodities, models act out the surmounting of physical detachment for consumers to witness as an achievable possibility. Objects that were formerly inaccessible to sight obtain a heightened allure when they are suddenly imbued with materiality through the public performance of their usage.

When the functionality of a commercial product is demonstrated before the eyes of potential customers, the focus of their attention shifts between the item in use and the body of the user. The spectator observes the models parading in front of her as though she were watching a theater performance, except that the models do not interact with her by reciprocating her gaze or adjusting to her response. The spectacle unfolds with the immediacy of a theater performance but with the immutability of a film narrative because the models are not actors who are allowed to improvise their movements but laborers who are required to execute their instructions. Restricted to controlling the intensity of her gaze, the spectator is kept from fully participating in the construction of its reality.

Indoor store displays pursue the logic of spectacle even further with their immersive environments. Emulating the commercial methods of other department stores, John Little & Co exhibits a medley of goods amid evocative staged settings. These sensuous and colorful store displays incarnate motifs that are strange and fantastical in relation to the landscape of Singapore such as elements of Egyptian temples and Japanese gardens. Like performances of the *bangsawan* opera, they vividly recreate scenes from *The Arabian Nights*, transforming commodities into actors whose play of meanings and allusions transports spectators to imagined realities that have no existence in the world. Aside from store displays of exotic locales, a common type of staged setting favored by department stores evokes Parisian boulevards and salons, drawing on notions of Paris as the global capital of fashion and culture.⁵⁰ The reproduction of an aspect of the world as a spectacle within an enclosed public space echoes the workings of international expositions like London's Great Exhibition, Paris' *Exposition Universelle*, and Chicago's Columbian Exposition, which established a systematic method for displaying objects and cultivated the leisure activity of browsing displays.

If the glass window displays of the commercial street restrain consumers from the physical scrutiny of commodities, the evocative staged settings in the department store immerse consumers in a fantastical world of commodities, which they would be unable to access otherwise. Contrasted with the local environment outside the enclosure of the department store, the ornate detail of the staged setting conveys the notion to the customer that the value of the commodity has an extraordinary quality. Instead of suggesting the ordinary practices that individuals would commonly apply to these products, they simulate the imaginary environments where these products could ideally be utilized. The functionality of the product becomes a means for transcendence when it is transplanted to an unfamiliar milieu for most of the local populace. Store displays offer customers an experience of spatial displacement without physical movement.

⁵⁰ Laermans, 91.

With the aid of their imagination, the individuals who inhabit these embodied panoramas are momentarily transported from the ordinariness of their everyday life even as their bodies remain within the enclosure of the department store.

Similar to the workings of the mannequin parade, the textured artifice of indoor store displays presents commodities with a captivating aura of palpable materiality. Instead of visualizing the moment of their usage, it illustrates how commercial products could be assimilated into everyday life as part of the furnishing and decoration of domestic space. Evocative in orientation, the ornate detail of the staged setting facilitates the immersion of the consumer in the environment created. Despite the effort to recreate reality, the unreal luxuriance and perfection of the commercial arrangement causes the consumer to remain detached from the commodity. By surrounding individuals with the experience of a timeless location away from the necessity of changing circumstances, the indoor store display helps mitigate the imminence of modern forces.

Michael Fried examines the contrasting modes of apprehending meaning in the pictorial representation of realist painting and the theatrical experience of minimalist art. In the case of the realist painting, all the possible terms for its interpretation can be found within its frame. Departing from figurative mimesis, the work of minimalist art relies on the circumstances of its exhibition and reception for its meaning.⁵¹ Straddling the two modes, the indoor store display offers a pictorial representation of an unfamiliar scene but one in which the detachment between spectator and spectacle has been partly dissolved. Exceeding the bounds of cognitive absorption, the spectator becomes immersed in the material reality of the spectacle when consumers are permitted to inhabit the same environment as the commodities on display. Within this luxuriant environment, a buyer can examine an item from different positions and angles, each of which yields a different perspective of the item. More than her interaction with the salesclerks and customers at the department store, the amalgamation of these perspectives shapes the value that the buyer ascribes to the item she desires to own.

The spectacles created to sell commodities in a department store derive their potency from the novel experiences they present to consumers, although in both the examples of the mannequin parade and the store display, the physical detachment between the consumer and the commodity is maintained. Dissociated from its reality as the spectacle unfolds, the consumer is allowed full participation only once she has paid for its purchase. If the environment of the department store creates a timeless present, its products suggest their future acquisition. The department store is dependent for its revenue on the consumer's detachment since it is the source of the commodity's allure. Vigorous spectacles that find potency by dissolving this distance are the primary attractions of the amusement park. In this form of spectacle, the loss of detachment causes the basis of the allure to shift from visual apprehension to emotional immersion.

The spectacles presented in the department store propose a heightened experience of consumption in order to gather larger crowds of customers. Foucault highlights the profound link between the dynamic and collective qualities of an immersive spectacle. Analyzing the public punishment and torture of criminals who violated the laws of the sovereign, Foucault sees the spectacle as a ritual, ceremonial event, which affirms and reinforces prescribed norms of behavior and collectivity. Inscribing in the memories of individuals their position in the social

⁵¹ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, U.S.A.: U of Chicago P, 1998), 153.

hierarchy relative to the sovereign, it must be theatrical and excessive in its configuration and execution to attain efficacy. But its form of theatricality occurs without reciprocation and negotiation as it deploys an array of images and sensations that enthrall and govern the spectator. Due to the absorption of the spectator in the reality of the spectacle, every detail of the event becomes endowed with an unimpeachable truth to be communicated.

In a snippet of lines, Foucault mentions how the public event of the spectacle shares the carnival's sensuousness and animation: "With spectacle, there was a predominance of public life, the intensity of festivals, sensual proximity. In these rituals in which blood flowed, society found new vigor and formed for a moment a single great body."⁵² This conception of spectacle expands its parameters beyond the cognitive apprehension of an object that is solitary and docile to the sensorial immersion in an experience that is collective and dynamic. Foucault's conception insists on the active participation of the crowd as an integral condition for the effective operation of the spectacle. Inscribed in the performance of the spectacle is the potential for the formation of a crowd, which will witness and validate this performance. Because the spectacle unfolds from a single position in space, its spectators must compress their bodies together in order to improve their vantage point. The irresistibility of its allure derives from the vigor of its performance, which accordingly invigorates its spectators. The physical proximity of the bodies in the crowd can cause their energy and enthusiasm to spread through contagion. Through the commonality of this shared experience in public space, the potential to inaugurate a new community arises. Foucault's conception reveals how the spectacles in consumer spaces such as the amusement park become more immersive and sensual when the physical distance and visual relation between them and their spectators are superseded.

Whereas the department store provides a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere, the amusement park presents a dynamic and exhilarating experience. In contrast to the spectacles in a department store, which are deployed in order to sell commodities, the spectacles in an amusement park are themselves the commodities. If the former aims for future accumulation, the latter aspires for repeated participation. With their vigorous modes of visual apprehension and physical immersion, the spectacles arrayed in an amusement park strive to impress on spectators the desire to return to the park to repeat their experience of these spectacles. The dual tendencies inscribed into their configuration are evident in one of most highly popular forms of entertainment during this period, boxing, which exhilarates the crowds of men who frequent the amusement parks. Foucault's conception of spectacle is evoked in the shared experience that this spectacle of brutal physicality fosters in its audience through its immediacy and intensity.

Featured boxing events are normally held at the open-air New World Arena, which is located at the left end of the New World Amusement Park near Serangoon Road. Individuals can pay fifty cents, one dollar, two dollars, or three dollars to sit at one of the sections, which segregate the arena's two thousand five hundred seats.⁵³ Local periodicals regularly report on the latest boxing news about professional fighters that hail from across the globe: Y.C. Song and Young Gauder from Singapore, Young Johnson from Ipoh, Rough Joe Diamond from Batu Pahat, Arthur Soares from India, Mohamed Thajudeen from Ceylon, Ventura Marquez from Mexico, Som Pong and Boon Mah from Siam, Aimé Raphael and Eugene Huat from France, Mohamed Fahmy and Fattah Hassan from Egypt, and Al Rivers and Gunboat Jack Hood from the United States. Promoters like to bring to Singapore Municipality talented boxers from the Philippine Islands such as Young Frisco, Kid Leyte, Joe Bautista, Con Cordero, Tiger Flowers,

⁵² Foucault, 216.

⁵³ "The Between Seasons Period," *Sunday Times*, 18 February 1934, 16.

and Johnny Mortell. Among the more admired prizefighters is the speedy, adroit, and plucky Battling Guillermo, the Filipino Wildcat.⁵⁴ Another migrant Filipino entertainer, Ignacio Fernandez is a former bantamweight, featherweight, and lightweight champion, known for his tough jaw and right cross, who gained fame while boxing in Madison Square Garden in New York in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁵⁵ Most of them are said to fight in the quintessential Filipino style of “lashing out from the hips with sweeping round-arm blows and countering often with tigerish ferocity.”⁵⁶

The compelling sight of tenacious vigor and bloodless violence demands that the boxing event be viewed and experienced. Bare, without the ornate detail of an indoor store display, this spectacle derives its potency from the limitless exertion of the fight, the intense excitement of the crowd, and the thrilling uncertainty of the outcome. The boxing event’s selling point is not the prestigious acquisition of an object but the memorable duration of an experience, which would beguile spectators into paying to view another spectacle.

The audience remains detached from the boxing event because it does not bear the physical consequences of the violence on display. In spite of this physical detachment, the gripping intensity of the fighters and the infectious excitement of the crowd combine to transform the cognitive absorption of the spectator into emotional immersion. According to Joyce Carol Oates, who devoted a perceptive book to the sport, the naked display of vulnerability, pain, and mortality allows the audience to form an intimate bond with this spectacle.⁵⁷ Because it appears to unfold as a spontaneous and unrestrained activity, the spectacle of the boxing event is experienced with immediacy.

The crowd is made to witness a form of restricted and civilized violence,⁵⁸ where what is deemed illicit under the laws of the municipal authority is permitted to exist within a circumscribed domain. In the immersive spectacle of the boxing event, the vigorous exertion of labor that the department store conceals is put on display. The fight stretches the parameters of physical action under the work regime of an *entrepôt* economy. Oates writes, “Boxers are there to establish an absolute experience, a public accounting of the outermost limits of their beings; they will know, as few of us can know of ourselves, what physical and psychic power they possess—of how much, or how little, they are capable.”⁵⁹ The fighters publicly demonstrate how the capacities of the human body can be pushed to their limit. The boxing event exemplifies how the exceeding of physical necessity often occurs on the threshold of death.

In the amusement park, the immersive spectacle of the boxing event is arrayed with other attractions, novelties, and spectacles to engender and enhance the carnival spirit. Through the economy of the carnival, heterogeneity and mobility are fostered within circumscribed bounds.

CARNIVAL SPIRIT AND MODERN LIFE

The configuration of Singapore’s amusement parks appears to coincide with the diagram of Fredric Thompson, the organizer of the popular Luna Park on Coney Island. In his 1908 essay,

⁵⁴ Penang Boxing, *Straits Times*, 15 December 1933, 14.

⁵⁵ “New Ring Role for Ignacio,” *Straits Times*, 5 November 1949, 12; “Former Top Boxer Fighting for His Life,” *Straits Times*, 5 April 1989, 13.

⁵⁶ “Som Pong Too Good for Newcomer,” *Singapore Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 17 August 1936, 16.

⁵⁷ Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing* (Hopewell, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Ecco Press, 1995), 8.

⁵⁸ David H.T. Scott, *The Art and Aesthetics of Boxing* (Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.: U of Nebraska P, 2008), 3-4.

⁵⁹ Oates, 8.

“Amusing the Million,” Thompson attributes the success of his amusement park to the production of “carnival spirit” in its atmosphere. The amusement park should be “designed to give the natural, bubbling animal spirits of the human being full play, to give people something fresh and new and unusual, to afford them respite from the dull routine of their daily lives.”⁶⁰ Contrasting the routine of everyday life with the exceptionality of the amusement park, he writes that individuals are actually overgrown children who seek opportunities for play outside the space and time of their onerous work regime. The amusement park aims to restore to individuals their fundamental character. Thompson explains that the gaiety and vibrancy of the amusement park are not generated spontaneously but must be carefully manufactured. Harnessing the need for play, the amusement park stimulates the “carnival spirit” by immersing its visitors in a multiplicity of enthralling and exhilarating experiences.

According to Thompson, interest and excitement about the park must first be engendered among the public by circulating compelling images and stories of the park’s attractions, novelties, and spectacles. Every element in the park should be designed with the aim of enhancing the carnival spirit. The visual attributes of the architecture should evoke a sense of allure and dynamism. The continuous introduction of extraordinary events throughout the park grounds should keep visitors in a perpetual state of motion and rapture. In Thompson’s diagram of the amusement park, the pleasurable carnival spirit is generated only when the experience of space and time is suffused with the logic of spectacle.

Foucault’s disciplinary enclosures rely on the spatial and temporal regimentation of bodies, which obtains efficacy by rendering them perpetually visible to obscured figures of authority. Diverging from this model, the economy of carnival is based on the ubiquitous visibility of spectacles, which provides miscellaneous sources of enthrallment to the meandering crowds of anonymous bodies.

The profound entanglement of spectacle and carnival reveals the amusement park’s restless dynamic of absorption and mobility. The economy of the carnival is founded on the workings of a series of spectacles, which governs the physical and perceptual movement of bodies throughout the enclosure. The array of spectacles presented in a carnival is designed to foster a vigorous and exhilarating experience of visual apprehension and physical immersion. If each spectacle operates by absorbing the energy and attention of individuals, the arrangement of spectacles in a carnival propels them from one spectacle to another without surcease. Far from producing an uncontrollable reality, where social restrictions are abandoned, the form of carnival found in the amusement park regulates the flow of bodies.

In amusement parks such as Singapore’s New World and Great World, the heterogeneity and mobility of the urban landscape are incorporated and systematized like in a department store. Although some visitors might be drawn to the park by a single attraction, they end up being exposed to numerous spectacles because of its sprawling topography. Experienced as a burst of energy, the momentary duration of each spectacle constantly compels spectators to shift their attention and location. Whenever a spectacle completes its duration or its performance dissatisfies the spectator, the spectator can promptly sample another spectacle a few meters away. The hold that spectacles have over their audience remains tenuous since individuals could easily lose interest in a spectacle once its intensity has diminished. Even if individuals become engrossed in a fantasy, its grip on them is fleeting because the configuration of the park stimulates mobility and dynamism.

⁶⁰ See Frederic Thompson, “Amusing the Million,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, September 1908, retrieved from: <nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/people/text2/thompson.pdf>

Contrary to the dominant understanding of modern consumer spaces,⁶¹ the amusement park does not cause isolation and withdrawal in individuals but fosters participation and immersion in crowds such that normative social relations are reconfigured. Pursuing random itineraries, bodies loiter and meander according to the prescribed configuration of the park grounds. They drift along to the flow and rhythm of other anonymous bodies, which are pulled in different directions by the various attractions, novelties, and spectacles organized within the enclosure. Although the performance of a spectacle gathers bodies in the same public space, different spectacles attract different sets of bodies, forming multiple crowds. Because of the momentary duration of each spectacle, permanent crowds never form. Moving from attraction to attraction in circuitous trajectories, they swell, disperse, and dwindle. Acted on by a multiplicity of forces, which are integral to the park's operation, the modes of collectivity that develop are subject to continual negotiation.

Caught in this shared, sensuous experience, these meandering crowds constitute a precarious community, whose potential stays unrealized. In the comfortable sanctuary of the department store, crowds are never allowed to form as the energy of their bodies is kept at a relaxed level despite their constant mobility. By animating the bodies of spectators with their contagious dynamism, the spectacles in the amusement park threaten to energize their collectivity. Mitigated by their random movements, this energy dissipates when the different members of the crowd shift their attention to other spectacles.

Thompson underscores how spectacles must be configured such that they impact on spatial and temporal experience. In the carnival, visitors are treated to an abundance and variety of spectacles, whose vigor and exhilaration permeate the atmosphere. Since these visitors cannot remain in its enclosure for a prolonged duration, the amusement park must regularly incorporate thrilling novelties into its economy to maintain their interest. This comprehensive experience of dynamism corresponds to the "full play" that Thompson envisions—the capacity of the amusement park to present a seemingly boundless array of spectacles whose variable and immersive character allows the carnival spirit to dominate its domain. Thompson's conception of play could be understood as the suspension of the norms of functionality and productivity that prevail beyond the walls of the enclosure. In the amusement park, the experience of continued immersion in a series of miscellaneous spectacles generates an atmosphere of complete immersion in an alternate world of carnival.

The contagious dynamism of the amusement park's immersive spectacles is epitomized in thrilling carnival rides such as the Merry-Go-Round, the Ferris wheel, the Ghost Train, and the Dodgem bumper cars. Their speed and mobility capture and emphasize the dynamism of the modern urban landscape but without its disorder and transformation. The carnival ride is an adaptation of modern forms of transportation like the automobile, airplane, and motorboat but for the purposes of recreation.⁶² To be able to immerse spectators in a consumable moment of exhilaration, it reconfigures their advanced technology of vigorous motion without their preset functionality of conveying bodies from one location to another. The carnival ride dissolves the physical detachment between spectator and spectacle by allowing individuals to participate directly in its pursuit of vigorous motion. Whereas the spectacles in the department store withhold the participation of the spectator, the spectacles in the amusement park depend on it for their potency. In spite of this synergy, the degree of the spectator's physical participation in the

⁶¹ For instance, see studies of the shopping mall in North America and Western Europe.

⁶² Nye, 71.

spectacle of the carnival ride is limited because its operation, while dynamic, follows a prescribed trajectory.

The configuration of the carnival ride challenges the conventional idea of spectacle because it refuses the concentration of sight. In the workings of the carnival ride, less emphasis is given to visual apprehension than to immersive experience as the object of the spectator's gaze is displaced onto the rapid change in scenery. The carnival ride could be said to enact the spatial displacement of the indoor store display. Strapped to the carriage by a safety belt, the spectator is physically transported by its technology, which dictates his movement along a trajectory while determining the scenery within his sight.

Writing about the theatricality of Donald Judd's minimalist art, Michael Fried explains how it replaces the object of representation, which grounds the meaning of realist painting, with the encounter with "objectlessness" or "endlessness." Without a fixed object for the gaze to concentrate on, meaning becomes derived from the circumstances of the encounter, which shape the evolving responses of the viewer throughout its duration.⁶³ In the case of the carnival ride, the constant need to readjust the gaze to the quickly changing scenery is what immerses the spectator in the experience. The spectator is captivated by the seeming endlessness of the instantaneous experience, which transpires far beyond the normal limits of human activity. I would say that, for the spectator, the experience of time feels distended, as a comprehensive image of apprehended space saturates this singular moment.

Visitors to the amusement park find the carnival ride to be thrilling because it enables them to participate in an innocuous form of danger.⁶⁴ In contrast to the boxing event, which offers a spectacle of violence from its fighters, it is the mortality of the spectators that is exposed to peril. The immediate threat to their bodies makes spectators aware of the parameters of their abilities. Thanks to the advanced technology of the carnival ride, the peril that confronts them does not result in pain or injury. Their encounter with the limits of human activity occurs on the threshold of death, which renews their experience of life.

Frederic Thompson's idea of carnival echoes common notions and experiences of carnival, which, conflating the definition of the popular carnival with that of the amusement park, imagine the carnival as a euphoric space of play, diversion, and abandon. The theoretical conception of carnival that has much currency is that of Mikhail Bakhtin, although the nuanced contours of Bakhtin's concept are often elided due of the potency of the common image of carnival. In the end, the notion of Bakhtinian carnival that prevails is an idea that has been cleansed of its more subversive elements. It is a form of carnival that engenders renewal, but to a degree that is not threatening to the established order.

Bakhtin's conception of carnival is based on his image of the medieval carnival, a periodical event of popular merriment, which, over the span of two weeks, celebrated the changing of the seasons.⁶⁵ According to Bakhtin, the enclosure of the medieval carnival offered a secondary space outside the routine, cyclical reality of hierarchy and etiquette, a world where individuals of different ranks and ages could freely mingle without concern for prescribed norms, values, and practices. In the space of the carnival, official rituals and ceremonies, spectacles that

⁶³ Fried, 159.

⁶⁴ Nye, 71.

⁶⁵ See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.: Indiana UP, 1984).

required individuals to dress and behave according to their position in the social hierarchy, were mocked and inverted. Highlighting the carnival as a zone of freedom and play, the common notion of Bakhtinian carnival disregards an important dimension of Bakhtin's actual concept, the dynamism of the force of life, which emanates from carnival laughter.

For Bakhtin, laughter is the foundation of carnival in that it is an activity that transgresses and ruptures rigid norms, values, and practices, which are believed to be eternal. Instead of being directed at a single individual or object, it unfolds as the laughter of all towards all. Immersed in the entirety of the world, it embraces even the base, mundane elements of life. Carnival laughter is a subversive force, which, overturning the fear of necessity, exceeds the bounds of possibility. In marking the changing of the seasons, the carnival celebrates the dialectic of change, dynamism, and renewal, which encompasses negation and affirmation as well as destruction and creation. The experience of this dialectic, which for Frederic Thompson is meant to enhance the carnival spirit for the purposes of profit, is, in Bakhtin's conception of carnival, the enfleshment of the force of life that impels transformation.

Bakhtin and Thompson describe forms of carnival from disparate historical periods. Although the names for these configurations are verbally and phonetically identical, the milieus to which they belong are separated by a disparity in perception and experience. The common confusion of their contradictory conceptions suggests the passage to a regime of capitalism and consumption that has commodified the forms and spaces of leisure and entertainment. These two conceptions of carnival may coincide in the way that the carnival embraces heterogeneity in its openness to every reality but they diverge over the effect of this heterogeneity. The boundary between them is delineated by the logic of spectacle, which begins its rise to dominance during the historical period of Thompson's amusement parks. At first glance, both Thompson and Bakhtin seem to agree about the temporary suspension and reversal of norms that the carnival enables but Bakhtin imagines this process to be subversive in character. The political potential of Bakhtin's carnival is suppressed in Thompson's carnival, which assimilates the logic of spectacle into its commercial economy for the purpose of attracting visitors and increasing earnings.

Contrary to Bakhtin's idea of the carnival as a radical space of exception intended to mark the cyclical change in seasons, the systematization and standardization of the carnival as part of the routine of everyday life renders its effects ordinary. The routine quality of the carnival embodied in Singapore's amusement parks heightens the impact of the form of renewal it offers by causing its impact to be more widespread and imperceptible. For Bakhtin, the carnival is supposed to be recuperative. In the amusement parks of 1930s Singapore Municipality, the form of this recuperation impedes the flourishing of political potential. The crowds that could assemble for collective action are always temporary, inclined to dispersal among the miscellany of spectacles spread across the park. Visitors to the park are revitalized with a new dynamism, which remains limited to the individual body and does not translate to the social order. Any potential for transformation is contained within the economy of the carnival.

The official newsletter of the Great World Amusement Park describes the efficacy of the carnival attractions presented within its enclosure: "As one strolls through the park, troubles are forgotten, the mind is refreshed and stimulated, and one's interest and motivation in work is rekindled."⁶⁶ According to Frederick Olmstead, the architect behind Coney Island, its configuration of leisure space was intended to alleviate the anxiety and discontent of urban life.⁶⁷ In 1930s Singapore, the amusement park provides a revitalizing source of reprieve for visitors

⁶⁶ Qtd. in Tan K.L., 83.

⁶⁷ Kasson, 15.

without leaving them in an idle condition of languor. Instead of sheltering them from the flux of the urban domain, its enclosure complements the workings of the *entrepôt* economy by preparing them for their return to the work regime. I would interpret the amusement park's process of delivering individuals to an instinctual, childlike state as an integral aspect of the ecstatic reprieve it offers. In this process of renewal, the park temporarily suspends the norms of productivity of the work regime so that bodies could continue to exert energy without losing their intensity. The danger of rest is the probability of decreasing momentum, which must be maintained at a robust level in a bustling port with ceaseless flows.

By momentarily shifting their concentration away from the discipline of the work regime and towards the pleasure of the carnival spirit, the amusement park allows the bodies of visitors to be revitalized according to their own perceived terms. In contrast to the department store, whose enclosure is founded on labor's concealment, the amusement park renders visible and palpable the exertion and dynamism of labor but within circumscribed bounds. Instead of granting reprieve to individuals from the physical activity that prevails under the work regime, the park maintains an optimum level of exertion. Regulating the capacities of bodies through the miscellany of immersive spectacles arrayed in its economy of carnival, it harnesses the heterogeneity and mobility of the urban landscape while subduing their transformative force.

The ecstatic reprieve experienced in the amusement park diverges from the languid comfort found in the tropical bungalow and the social club. The dynamic modes of visual apprehension and physical immersion that it provides to its visitors restores and extends the potential of their bodies for vitality and mobility. It purges visitors of their torpor by permitting them to expend energy without submitting this exertion to the established norms of rationality and functionality. In the amusement park, the exertion of labor becomes pleasurable because it is not measured against the demands for productivity and efficiency of industrial production and *entrepôt* circulation. Instead of defining the mobility of flows based on commercial objectives, it allows each body to meander according to its own individual trajectory and velocity. By keeping them at a constant state of activity, the amusement park tests the limits of their capacities for increased productivity. Despite the lack of explicit constraints on the scope of their activity, visitors to the outdoor park are not afforded complete rest from the heat and humidity of the tropical environment, which could leave them fatigued.

The unremitting dynamism of bodies and goods must be fostered and determined in the consumer spaces of the municipality because its *entrepôt* economy relies on spatial mobility to facilitate circulations and exchanges. It could be argued that the primary aim of the department store and the amusement park is to regulate the physical and perceptual movement of commerce and consumption across their domain. Instead of being strictly circumscribed due to the ungovernable complexity of the urban landscape, their enclosures must remain permeable in spite of their walls. This permeability enables their array of enticements, which strives to encompass the entirety of the world, to succeed in drawing bodies into their enclosure. Due to their limited area, these bodies can never linger within their enclosure for an extended duration. The department store and the amusement park, while they may evoke the impression of comprehensiveness, must anticipate in their configurations the continual introduction of novelties. Offering the promise of future spatial and social mobility, these consumer spaces must always hold in reserve something uniquely new.

The prevailing attitude towards modernity among the colonial officials governing the municipality is ambivalent and languid, which translates to the slow assimilation of modern forces into the existing infrastructure, architecture, and technology. In 1930s Singapore,

modernity appears to thrive less in consumption than in mobility. The municipal authority strives to introduce a nascent form of sanitary modernity by insisting on consumer practices and social relations cleansed of habits that are sordid, primeval, and illegal. Against the recalcitrance of the local environment, the popular sites of commerce and consumption function as public spaces where the uniquely new and previously impossible are produced, negotiated, and managed. These sites could be said to harness the possibilities of modern forces in the service of propagating the norms of an entrepôt economy.

The promise of newness, which is inscribed in the commodities and spectacles of consumer spaces, is the prospect that crowds will cohere into tighter form of collectivity. But because the promise of newness easily dissipates in the moment of acquisition or consumption, it is highly probable that these crowds will disperse as well. By continually fragmenting the crowds that gather in their enclosures, the department stores and amusement parks of 1930s Singapore Municipality institute a form of modernity without antagonism or community.

PART III – 1960S SINGAPORE
CHAPTER 5 – TEMPORALITIES OF DEVELOPMENT: SANITARY MODERNITY AND
EMERGENT NATIONHOOD

The fire rages as thick, portentous billows of dark smoke devour the night sky. It commences with a cracking spark, a fatal malfunction of modern circuitry, whose gravity is ignored in the revelry of the crowd. Nourished by the wooden composition of the structures, the flames spread like electricity.

Three catastrophic fires over the span of a momentous decade mark important stages of Singapore's early national development upon its independence from the British Empire and the Malaysian Federation. As highlighted by Loh Kah Seng in his oral history of the event, the massive fire of Bukit Ho Swee in May 1961 signifies the relocation of the population from urban shophouses and rural villages to housing estates.¹ The fire of the popular People's Park Market in Chinatown on Christmas Eve of 1966² initiates the supersession of itinerant hawkers and night markets by hawker centers and shopping malls.³ Finally, the tragic fire of the hundred-year-old Robinson's Department Store in November 1972⁴ marks the gradual shift of the main commercial district from Raffles Place to Orchard Road.

Signaling the passage between regimes of commerce and consumption, these fires could be interpreted as a metaphor for the sweeping process of creative destruction, which exists at the heart of the entanglement of capitalism and modernity. No longer indicative of the cyclicity of nature, the metaphor discloses the vulnerability of older structures and the ruthlessness of modern forces. From the transcendent standpoint of government, creative destruction is crucial for overcoming cyclical poverty with linear development. Through this dynamic process, realities that are regarded as stagnant, frail, and decrepit are purged from the spatial and social landscape to make way for those that are considered to be new, durable, and technological.

In this chapter, I explore how modernity is configured and experienced in 1960s Singapore. I inquire into Singapore's initial phase of national development, when its newly independent government implements an extensive program of sanitary modernity in order to establish social order and attract foreign investment. By analyzing the official speeches of the People's Action Party, which has controlled the government since 1959, I examine its pragmatic mode of governance. I highlight how this mode corresponds with Aihwa Ong's conception of neoliberal governmentality, which refers to the flexibility that the state must adopt towards its mechanisms and policies to be able to anticipate and exploit the shifting conditions of the world market. I discuss how the People's Action Party consolidated its authority by contrasting its effective rationality with the fleeting passion of the orators and crowds protesting on the streets during this historical period. Focusing on the discourse of sanitary modernity in 1960s Singapore, I look at how the relocation of the population from congested urban shophouses and sprawling rural villages to regimented housing estates could be equated with the passage from the cyclical time of poverty to the linear time of development. Lastly, I explore the configuration of the

¹ Loh Kah Seng, *Squatters into Citizens: The 1961 Bukit Ho Swee Fire and the Making of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: Asian Studies Association of Australia with NUS Press and NIAS Press, 2013).

² "People's Park Shopping Center is Wiped Out by Fire," *The Straits Times*, 27 December 1966, 1.

³ See Frank Chua, "A History of the Singapore Pasar Malam: A Market Experience in Pre-Modern Singapore," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2002): 113-142.

⁴ "Nine Feared Dead," *The Straits Times*, 22 November 1972, 1.

coffee-shop, one of the important leisure spaces during this period, where urban residents with intermittent employment experienced languid expectation between arduous work and listless repose.

THE GAZE OF PRAGMATIC GOVERNMENTALITY

In 1959, the local People's Action Party assumed control of the Singapore government at a historical moment when public spaces would be deluged with political protests and labor strikes. Over the succeeding decade, it starts devoting the resources of the newly independent state to an extensive 'cleanup' program to improve order and sanitation in the cityscape.⁵ Haunted by the repercussions of British laissez-faire policy, it is impelled by the belief that effective management of the national economy for the purposes of development is founded on a legible and credible image of stability and control.

Resolute and ruthless in its implementation, the Singapore government's program of sanitary modernity primarily involves cleaning and beautifying the public spaces of the cityscape with orderly roads, sprawling trees, and tidy surroundings. As one of its primary motives, the People's Action Party explains that this undertaking is in response to the threat of disease that has accompanied the congestion of the city center.⁶ Because the bodies that inhabit this domain are clustered tightly together without sufficient circulation of fresh air, the presence of disease in one body could easily spread to other bodies within the same enclosure. From the standpoint of the Singapore government, physical disease is entwined with social disorder, both of which are contagious and uncontrollable. With the aim of rendering the cityscape more manageable and manipulable for national development, the state attempts to cultivate practices of collective discipline and civic responsibility in the bodies of the populace.⁷

When the Singapore government proclaims that the standard of discipline and hygiene that is observable from the cityscape will be understood as reflective of the nation's morale and wellbeing,⁸ it discloses the intrinsic entanglement of the ideals of order, health, morality, and beauty. The People's Action Party's vision of sanitary modernity dominates this historical period. Permeating through the public culture, this vision is articulated in the speeches of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his lieutenants in the government, party stalwarts such as Finance and Defense Minister Goh Keng Swee and Culture and Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam. The visual quality of its vision of sanitary modernity is evident in the meticulousness behind its self-representation. Deploying motifs of cleanliness and vitality, it has as its logo a vigorous red thunderbolt, which, shaped like an angular, inverted 'S,' strikes through a blue ring. Garbed in pristine white shirts and trousers, the People's Action Party's members run for public office on a platform of effective and reliable service, which contrasts with the complacent and laissez-faire approach of the former colonial regime. The color white is supposed to signify the party's cleanness from corruption and stagnancy. Cleaning and beautifying the cityscape are portrayed

⁵ *The Straits Times*, 2 May 1967, 4.

⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Papers of Lee Kuan Yew: Speeches, Interviews, and Dialogues*, vol. 3 (Singapore: The National Archives of Singapore, 2012), 384.

⁷ Lee K.Y., *Papers*, vol. 3, 83.

⁸ Lee K.Y., *Papers*, vol. 3, 80.

as vital endeavors for producing a national image of stability and control, which would entice foreign capital to invest in Singapore.⁹

If the logic of sanitary modernity in 1930s Manila was governed by moral ideals of cultural cultivation, its configuration in 1960s Singapore is determined by pragmatic principles of economic development. The established idea of development during this historical period comes from U.S. National Security Adviser Walt Whitman Rostow, who conceives of development as a linear, multistage process of economic evolution from a seemingly insurmountable rudimentary state.¹⁰ Rostow's conception resonates with the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary of development as an unfolding or disclosure from a basic or latent condition,¹¹ although his is a more stringent interpretation of the latter. Rostow equates the insurmountable rudimentary state to a retrogressive traditional culture, where commerce is marked by constant fluctuation, and therefore paralyzing uncertainty. For Rostow, development entails the emergence of modernity from the demise of tradition. These two states cannot coexist within the same temporality because that the flourishing of one means the destruction of the other.

In his seminal work, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, the anthropologist James Ferguson argues that development is mistakenly seen by transnational aid agencies as the passage from a primordial state, when its implementation plan is actually incongruent with the conditions of its target location.¹² The success of this plan rests on the continuity of a centralized authority, which would direct the rationalization and organization of a territory and its population according to a transcendent vision. Ferguson explains how the project of development apprehends its domain of intervention as a blank space that can easily be affected and manipulated. This intervention would entail translating an extensive geographical location into a comprehensible epistemological object. Perceived as past in its temporality, the primordial state becomes surmountable only through the future of development. The sustained project of development expands the centralization of state power while divesting issues like poverty of the exigencies of political struggle such that they are handled instead as problems with technical solutions.¹³ The sole responsibility for resolving issues about social and economic conditions becomes transferred to experts without affording validity to the participation of the individuals who will be affected by the implemented policies.

Ferguson's findings corroborate Dipesh Chakrabarty's argument that modernist leaders and intellectuals have tended to assume a standpoint of rational objectivity in relation to the local environment for the purposes of national development. Adopting an objective standpoint has enabled them to grasp the landscape of the nation not so much as a blank space than as a delimited enclosure, which would be more pliant to their ideas and actions. Upon identifying the deficiency of the local environment through the input of foreign-educated experts, modernist leaders and intellectuals describe it as being corrupted and ravaged by negative realities, which must then be banished to the outside of its domain. Their standpoint of rational objectivity apprehends the local environment with an unyielding cinematic gaze, which aims to reduce its unmanageable indeterminacy and reciprocity in favor of a more coherent picture of its contents.

⁹ Lee K. Y., "The Future of Singapore Depends Heavily on its Cleanliness," *Papers*, vol. 3, 83.

¹⁰ See W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1960), 4-16.

¹¹ "Development, *n.*," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <<http://dictionary.com>>.

¹² See James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: U of Minnesota P, 1994).

¹³ Ferguson, 256.

Chakrabarty's argument seems to suggest that a grand endeavor like national development, regardless of its goals or intentions, unavoidably entails sacrificing the realities that are understood to frustrate its completion, including customary practices and historical spaces. These obstructive realities are denounced as past temporalities, which have no place in the more expeditious temporality of a modern nation. Based on this logic, discontinuous and recalcitrant pockets of social and economic activity, which threaten to hinder or disrupt large-scale processes, must be subsumed and coordinated for the greater productivity of development. The principal danger is that the transcendence of rational objectivity has the potential to develop into that of remote detachment from the immediate circumstances of everyday life.

For the Singapore government, the temporality of national development requires unreserved commitment and perseverance. As sociologist Chua Beng Huat has famously written, the People's Action Party has maintained popular support for its decisions and actions by repeatedly invoking a picture of national crisis, which can only be addressed through collective sacrifice.¹⁴ This recurrent narrative obtains the acquiescence of the populace by bemoaning Singapore's isolation as an island and its lack of a hinterland amid the threat of other Southeast Asian nations. The urgency of national crisis that it emphasizes opens the normative time of linear development to the possibility of revision. Characterizing the work of development as imperative, the Singapore government alerts its citizens to the looming danger of complacency. Lee Kuan Yew paints an analogy: "Life means that either you move forward, you can sustain, maintain, improve, or you fall backwards. It's like riding a bicycle. You cannot stand still. Even a champion bicyclist must move a little. Otherwise, he drops."¹⁵ For Lee Kuan Yew, success equates with mobility. Failing to move forward, one falls backwards. Given Singapore's precarious geopolitical situation, its citizens must continuously act to prevent its retrogression and collapse. They must adjust the rhythm of their everyday life to the pace of nation's drive for modernization. Any diminution in their collective discipline and civic responsibility inevitably results in the loss of progress.¹⁶ Entwined with the vision of economic development, the narrative of national crisis turns the struggle for progress into a perpetual process, which, never being completely achievable, demands unrelenting effort and resolve. Oriented towards the future, the present strives to reconfigure existing conditions to increase the likelihood of its arrival. This process of struggle must be visible and intelligible as an image of progress.

The struggle for progress is a perpetual process because it must continually adjust to prevailing circumstances. In order to realize the lofty aims of national development, the form assumed by sanitary modernity in the 1960s must be more adaptable and resilient. Its standpoint of rational objectivity must remain open to alteration without deviating from the established trajectory of economic progress. Culture and Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam explains in an essay published in the PAP Tenth Anniversary Celebration Souvenir that the root of the People's Action Party's ability to manage contingency is its grounded approach to governance. "It is because the Party has the capacity to recognize hard facts and form its theory from them and not the other way round. It is pragmatic. It is sincere and dedicated about its ultimate goals but it is prepared to change its strategy though not its basic objectives in the light of changing facts."¹⁷

¹⁴ See Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London, United Kingdom and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 1995) for the fullest articulation of this idea.

¹⁵ Lee K.Y., vol. 3, 176.

¹⁶ Lee K.Y., vol. 3, 383-384.

¹⁷ S. Rajaratnam, "PAP's First Ten Years," *The Prophetic and the Political* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies/Graham Brash, 2007), 27.

For S. Rajaratnam, his party's ideology and policy have efficacy because they are shaped by actual circumstances. Always cognizant of events and trends in the global economy, its government possesses the willingness and capacity to refashion the landscape of Singapore to meet the demands of the moment. Faced with the probability of becoming dissociated from reality, the state is assured enough to be flexible about its plans without losing the force of its conviction. While transcendent in its position, it remains aware of the role of change in realizing its vision instead of allowing a lack of foresight and adaptability to undermine its authority.

Political scientist Kenneth Paul Tan describes this approach to governance as Singapore's unique mode of pragmatism, which is exemplified by the People's Action Party's administration of independent Singapore.¹⁸ The People's Action Party has demanded from the local populace the patriotic willingness to undertake the necessary sacrifices for national development, which constantly change depending on the circumstances. Legitimized by the technocratic knowledge and experience of its leaders, its pragmatic mode of governance is supposedly free of ideology and politicking, which have impeded the goals of economic growth of other Southeast Asian nations. Under this flexible regime, state policies are treated as matters of bureaucratic efficiency or technical expertise, which have resulted in the elimination of political debate and struggle from the landscape of the nation.

Tan's ideas about Singaporean pragmatism are echoed in Aihwa Ong's conception of neoliberal governmentality, which denotes the capacity of a governmental authority to adapt its policies according to the exigencies of the situation.¹⁹ She explains that East Asian and Southeast Asian nations, in order to draw on foreign capital and migrant labor for economic growth, have established zones of exception within their territories in the form of circumscribed areas where political and economic laws are suspended. Instead of relying primarily on suppression and exclusion to enforce their policies, they deploy an array of strategies and mechanisms to deal with disparate realities. In Singapore's case, as its policies are constantly amended or replaced to suit the demands of prevailing circumstances, these strategies and mechanisms often end up being incongruous with those of previous policies.

In persuading the population to become more amenable to the changes to its everyday life brought by development, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew urges the inclusive stance that the citizens of a prosperous nation must adopt towards the flows from its dynamic outside. "Every time an airplane and every time a ship lands, new modern influences enter into our thinking and our feeling—we are not wallowing behind in quiet self-contentment and ignorance."²⁰ As an entrepôt that is heavily reliant on external trade for its economic survival, Singapore must be ready to embrace the transformative forces from the outside that accompany the rapid influx of goods.

Although Ong situates the ascendancy of neoliberal governmentality alongside the emergence of global capitalism in the 1970s, this mode of governance is already evident in Singapore during the late 1960s with its economic shift from import substitution to export promotion. According to the discourse of the People's Action Party, this shift is necessary due to its lack of resources from being isolated in Southeast Asia without a hinterland.²¹ Having

¹⁸ See Kenneth Paul Tan, "The Ideology of Pragmatism: Neo-liberal Globalization and Political Authoritarianism in Singapore," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 42.1 (2012): 67-92.

¹⁹ See Aihwa Ong, "Introduction: Neoliberalism as Exception, Exception to Neoliberalism," *Neoliberalism as Exception* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 2006), 1-27.

²⁰ Lee K.Y., *Papers*, vol. 3, 99.

²¹ *Singapore: The First Ten Years of Independence, 1965-1975* (Singapore: National Library Board and National Archives of Singapore, 2007), 110-112.

cleansed its interior of undesirable and recalcitrant realities, the rational objectivity of its pragmatic governmentality has configured its domain to be receptive to its exterior while maintaining an identity oriented towards development. Singapore has come to rely for its economic growth on the offshore manufacturing of electronic components for multinational firms from the United States and Europe.²² Refusing the unproductive rigidity of authoritarian sovereignty, the nation must resemble a symbolic enclosure to be able to manage the arrival and impact of transnational flows with success. If it failed to embrace its outside as beneficial to progress and prosperity, it could be consigned to the abyss of squalor and underdevelopment. Attuned to the necessity of accommodating foreign capital for the sake of national development, the 1960s Singapore government provides the prototype for the regime of neoliberal governmentality that Aihwa Ong delineates.

THE INSURGENCY OF CROWDS AND ORATORS

Amid the drive for modernization, the landscape of 1960s Singapore is enlivened with public spaces that provide commerce and leisure to the majority of the populace. The formation of large crowds in popular venues such as amusement parks, night markets, and movie theaters poses an obstacle to the People Action Party's linear trajectory of development because it pursues a divergent temporality. Ambivalent towards the ideals of collective discipline and civic responsibility, which are directed towards the fulfillment of a visionary plan, the members of these crowds are focused on the current moment in which they are gathered together in a single location. The promise of the future is less of a concern for them than the immediacy of the present they are immersed in.

Even if both periods are marked by the presence of large crowds in public spaces, these crowds seem to constitute a different mode of collectivity from that found in the amusement parks of 1930s Singapore. The crowds that would frequent the amusement parks of 1930s Singapore were more amorphous and transient, being pulled and dispersed in various directions by the miscellaneous, fleeting attractions, novelties, and spectacles presented for their consumption. Convening to watch a movie, share a meal, or meet with friends in a more limited and less heterogeneous space, the crowds of the night markets and movie theaters in this milieu are more concentrated and relaxed. Because of their shared participation in a communal activity where they mingle with groups of likeminded companions, they approximate the configuration of community. In contrast to the type of national citizenry geared towards industrial production envisaged by the 1960s Singapore government, this mode of communal activity is not shaped by the larger goal it is supposed to achieve as a collective. It gives primacy to the time spent as part of the collective. The state's effort to regiment bodies in the confined enclosure of the housing estate results in their escape to inclusive and spontaneous public spaces, where the social interaction of classes and ethnicities is less governed by its determinations.

With nearby bus terminals, several movie theaters are assured of a momentary collection of mobile bodies within their expansive domain. The public spaces adjoining them are lively venues of assembly, where people dawdle at outdoor hawker stalls after leaving or before entering their interiors. Situated at the rear of the Shaw Organization's monumental Capitol Theater, away from the junction of Stamford Road and North Bridge Road, Saint Gregory's Lane

²² W.G. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1994), 322.

is an ebullient site where people gather to consume food at the delicious assortment of hawker stalls.²³ Within a block from the Alhambra and Marlborough theaters at the intersection of Beach Road and Middle Road, the Satay Club is a famous row of hawkers selling skewers of minced meat roasted over an open fire and eaten with a peanut dip. Movie-goers who enjoy low-budget sci-fi, western, war, and horror genre films flock to the Serangoon district's Rex Cinema, which sits in between a depot for buses on MacKenzie Road and a series of shophouses on Selegie Road.²⁴ A lane to the left of the building is known for hawkers peddling *rojak*, vegetable salad with black prawn paste, *mee goreng*, fried noodles with tomato chili ketchup, and *mee siam*, rice vermicelli with sweet tamarind gravy.²⁵ Their exuberant atmosphere extends late into the night, long after most of the commercial establishments in the city center have closed for the day.

The experience of these public spaces challenges Christian Metz's conception of the cinema as being devoid of sociality and community with its solitary spectator acting like a hidden voyeur that gazes at the world of the film from a furtive distance.²⁶ The spectators of the popular movies of 1960s Singapore belong to a larger, more vibrant collective, which expands outside the walled enclosure of the theater. Sharing a meal to converse before or after a movie solidifies the potential for collectivity that is pregnant but unfulfilled in the anonymity of the darkened theater. Occupying a more languid temporality, which withdraws from the state's relentless pace of development, their bodies linger in the company of the transient crowd instead of hurrying to resume their routine tasks. Despite the bustle of the burgeoning economy, they extend the duration of the movie spectacle beyond the conclusion of its narrative by creating a space where they can discuss and relive the movie in public. Through this collective reception of media, a community of sentiment could form.²⁷

The vigorous public life of crowds at these theaters carries over to that of protests on the streets. The state harbors the notion that the ebullient crowds typical of these leisure spaces could easily mutate into the unruly hordes that congregate to fight for their social and economic rights as citizens and employees. Even official historical accounts describe 1960s Singapore as having a dynamic political culture with multiple agents representing diverse interests and claims in parliament and in public.²⁸ Unionists and students frequently organize large rallies to articulate their demands for improved compensation and education.²⁹ During these impassioned events, as captured in photographs, the mundane streets lined by decrepit shophouses are transformed by the extraordinary presence of youthful demonstrators raising placards and chanting slogans in cadence. Focused on the necessity of immediate circumstances, their temporality departs from that of the linear trajectory of development.

²³ Kim Cheng Boey, *Between Stations: Essays* (Artarmon, New South Wales, Australia: Giramondo, 2009), 150.

²⁴ Chan Kwee Sung, *One More Story to Tell: Memories of Singapore, 1930s-1980s* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2005), 39.

²⁵ Chan, 40.

²⁶ See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton (London, U.K.: Macmillan, 1982), 42-78.

²⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: U of Minnesota P, 1996), 8.

²⁸ T.N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (New York, U.S.A.: Cambridge UP, 1998), 301.

²⁹ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore, 1945-1955* (Singapore: Singapore UP, 1973), 183-201 & 238-250.

With the authoritative language of scientific objectivity, the report of the United Nations Technical Assistance team concludes, based on research from a five-month period in 1960-1961, that these protests are obstructive to development. The team is led by Dr. Albert Winsemius, who serves as the principal economic adviser to the Singapore government during its period of rapid growth. Proposing a detailed plan for development, the U.N. report argues for the necessity of sacrificing the entrenched *entrepôt* trade to bolster the laggard manufacturing industry, which would increase the employment opportunities of the swelling population.

The United Nations report attributes the nation's high unemployment and low productivity to the frequency and forcefulness of the protests. According to the document, the availability of jobs in the manufacturing industry has decreased by almost twenty percent due to "unsatisfactory industrial relations, resulting in unrest, low productivity, and irrational wage demands."³⁰ Based on the logic of its argumentation, economic progress becomes attainable only when the seemingly irresolvable conflict between government and labor has been overcome. For the People's Action Party, this resolution means subordinating the shortsighted needs of the protesters to the visionary plans of the state. The Winsemius report criticizes the use of labor strikes as a negotiating tool because it fails to adhere to dominant norms of civic responsibility.³¹ Employers are said to consider the demands of unions to be irrational because these demands rely on the unfounded notion that employers are able to increase their wages.³² In other words, workers believe that they are not being adequately recompensed for the value of their labor. From the standpoint of the report, protesters lack the reason and foresight to undertake a long-term project of national development because their actions are impulsively driven by the exigencies of the prevailing situation. Willing to resort to open confrontation with government and business, they undermine the public image of social order and stability crucial for a prosperous economy.

The foremost rival of the People's Action Party in the 1960s is the Barisan Sosialis, which, composed of its former party members, derives its political influence from the popular support of students and unionists from Singapore's predominantly Chinese population. To diminish the threat it poses to his party's control of the government, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew denounces the Barisan Sosialis for being a communist front, whose actuations derive not from reason but from emotion. Running left of the People's Action Party in the political spectrum, the more radical Barisan Sosialis insists that Singapore's membership in the Malaysian Federation be unconditional, without constraints on the political and economic rights of its citizens.³³

The star of the Barisan Sosialis is the eloquent, charismatic Lim Chin Siong, who can enthrall audiences with his powerful oratory. Employing passionate language, Lim Chin Siong's speeches unfold almost like spectacles, which reconfigure a boisterous, amorphous crowd of people into a coherent, robust collective that is pliable to his commands. Oratorical words are potent and transformative in that they possess the capacity to absorb individuals, inflame their emotions, and shape their actions. Instead of merely capturing the attention and interest of individuals, they have the ability to assemble and mobilize crowds.

³⁰ United Nations Industrial Survey Mission, *A Proposed Industrialization Programme for the State of Singapore* (New York, U.S.A.: United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance, 1963), xxi.

³¹ United Nations, 89.

³² United Nations, 82.

³³ T.N. Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story,'" *Our Comet in the Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, eds. Tan Jing Quee and Jomo K.S. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: ISAN, 2001), 35.

The potency of oratorical words is dependent on the quality of the personal encounter between the orator and his audience. The orator's performance is shaped by the reciprocity of circumstances. Like an adept theater actor, the orator must continually adjust his delivery to the immediate reactions of the audience. When addressing a large crowd, he must perform without the aid of a film camera to magnify his minute gestures and expressions. The orator must turn to exaggeration and repetition in his delivery in order for his message to be intelligible from the distance of his position and indelible in the memory of his audience.³⁴

Oratorical language absorbs its audience such that its audience wholeheartedly accepts the truth of its statements not because of their rational premises but because of their emotive effects. In contrast, the Singapore government relies on its transcendent authority, which utilizes both reason and coercion to direct the energies of the populace towards its vision of development. If the orator interacts with the crowd in order to gain its allegiance, the state disregards the response of the crowd because it believes that its policies have validity and efficacy regardless of public opinion. From its remote position of governance, the state cannot afford the time to negotiate with the variable demands of the crowd due to the urgency that its lofty aims be accomplished. Because the officials of the People's Action Party possess the best technocratic education and expertise, they, and not the majority of the population, know the best course of action for the nation.³⁵

Copying the vigorous behavior that they witness around them, members of the audience assimilate their bodies to the energy of the crowd. In his seminal yet controversial work on crowds, Gustave Le Bon writes about the mode of contagion that is central to how they cohere and behave.³⁶ Due to the tight physical density of the crowd, emotions that arise in one part of the group easily spread throughout the entire mass of bodies. Instead of the unanimity of reason, the affinity from the fervor of the crowd is what produces its collectivity. Founded on the indeterminacy of infectious emotion, the crowd lacks a nucleus to bind its parts together. Because its binding force is spontaneous and unpredictable, its vigorous activity is considered to be uncontrollable and fleeting.

Lee Kuan Yew declares that, among the several political parties and organizations in this milieu, the People's Action Party alone possesses the expertise and experience to direct Singapore along a linear trajectory of national development. With its capacity for pragmatic governmentality, only it can maintain the stability and control necessary to achieve progress and prosperity amid the prospect of unforeseen events. For Lee Kuan Yew, the process of modernization requires careful planning and calculation, which only his party is capable of furnishing the government. In a March 1968 speech, he explains, "... the fact that we are alive and prosperous and thriving today and not bewildered and confused and frightened, is because we quietly analyzed, anticipated, and had foreseen all the problems that were going to come upon us."³⁷ His statement implies that a government reliant on the fervor and uproar of the crowd lacks the intellectual capability for effectively managing the national economy. Lee Kuan Yew exhibits the profound influence of Gustave Le Bon, who insists that the crowds from which orators derive their authority are driven entirely by instinct and sentiment. Devoid of reason and

³⁴ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, U.S.A.: Macmillan, 1896), 36.

³⁵ Kenneth Paul Tan, "Meritocracy and Elitism in a Global City: Ideological Shifts in Singapore," *International Political Science Review* 29.1 (2008): 12.

³⁶ Le Bon, 10.

³⁷ Lee K.Y., vol. 3, 319.

intentionality,³⁸ the members of crowds are easily swayed by external ideas³⁹ instead of being able to negotiate their impact. According to this provocative perspective, any structure of rule that relies on emotion for its authority will be forced to submit to the pressing demands of this emotion regardless of their soundness.

To mitigate the menacing potential of oratorical language as a political weapon, Lee Kuan Yew contends that powerful orators who have been gifted with the talent for influencing the sentiments of the crowds are not necessarily skilled as effective administrators.⁴⁰ While they may be capable of stimulating emotions and governing bodies, they might not be successful in implementing governmental policies. Without the composure of reason, orators would be unable to resolve urgent, overarching problems with prudent, resolute decisions. Contrasting the Barisan Sosialis with the People's Action Party, Lee Kuan Yew emphasizes the inherent disjuncture between visionary words and concrete actions, which must be gradually overcome over a protracted period in order for progress and prosperity to become achievable. According to him, efforts impelled by passion are typically unsustainable because passion quickly dissipates. Orators beguile with seductive words of intense passion, which are appealing because of the transformative force they carry, but these figures ultimately lack the capability and perseverance to harness and translate this force into a material presence in the world.

Lee Kuan Yew's 1969 National Day Rally Speech reinforces these ideas about pragmatic governmentality, "It is sound government to plan on the basis that the worst will happen. In fact, it is not often that the worst does happen. So we find ourselves better off for having made the maximum effort to meet maximum difficulties when less than the maximum troubles us. Any government that makes plans on the basis of tomorrow being a sunny day will soon find that it has led the people into dire difficulties. For if it rains, and no wet weather arrangements have been made, confusion and chaos must result."⁴¹ In the speech, running a government is equated to managing contingency. With an expanded definition of national crisis as a natural condition, the speech insists that an effective government must see reality as being perpetually tumultuous and unpredictable. Orators, who herald visions of the future with beguiling words that only exist in the immediate time of their utterance, are not equipped to deal with unforeseen circumstances. The ruling government must use its reason to establish a reciprocal link between the present and the future such that its decisions and actions are informed by an anticipated image of prospective events. In the Winsemus report, protest leaders are characterized as lacking coordination. The collective actions they stage are deemed to be shortsighted in that they fight simply for the immediate benefit of their members without regard for the rest of the populace.⁴² Despite the intent to transform the established order, focusing on the demands of the present without considering plans for the future only ends up perpetuating the cyclical time of the established order.

To dissuade the populace from publicly expressing their dissent to governmental policies, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew frequently denounces the crowds that gather in protest on the streets with the negative label of communist. He shares the misgivings of Gustave Le Bon, who considers membership in a crowd to be a threat to the preservation of the established order because it enables individuals to realize large-scale endeavors they would have been unable to

³⁸ Le Bon, 18.

³⁹ Le Bon, xxii.

⁴⁰ Lee K.Y., *Papers*, vol. 2, 351.

⁴¹ Lee K.Y., vol. 3, 155.

⁴² United Nations, 83.

accomplish alone.⁴³ Le Bon's prejudices against the crowd reveals its possibilities. The capacity of revolutionary crowds to undermine and overturn the established order comes from their disregard for the dominant norms of propriety and rationality.⁴⁴ Because membership in a crowd is anonymous, individuals who become assimilated into crowds are more willing to forgo their inhibitions, which would constrain their actions.⁴⁵ Having little concern for the future,⁴⁶ they act without considering the range of probable consequences. The crowd represents both promise and danger because its collectivity enables its members to exceed the necessity of given conditions.⁴⁷

THE DISCIPLINE OF PUBLIC HOUSING

The state attempts to subdue the disorder and subversion of protesting crowds through its program of public housing. According to the People's Action Party's vision of national development in this milieu, future images of progress and prosperity are realizable only in the present moment through a sustained revision of the spatial and social landscape. To be able to undertake its program of sanitary modernity, the Singapore government relies on the Land Acquisition Act of 1966, which authorizes it to repossess private land with the rationale of public utility.⁴⁸ The force of the law permits it to have infrastructure it deems filthy, unruly, or backward to be earmarked for refurbishment or destruction. Its cleanup campaign is part of the larger endeavor of urban renewal, which would transform the congested and disorderly cityscape of Singapore into that of a livable, First World nation. In order to accomplish its ambitious goals with unequivocal success, urban renewal must be relentless and ruthless in eliminating recognizably undesirable and recalcitrant realities from the urban landscape until this transformation has been rendered palpable and legible.⁴⁹

In order to free the city center from its ruinous accumulation of bodies, the Singapore government relocates large segments of the population to public housing estates situated on its outskirts.⁵⁰ With a relentless pace of construction, these new structures are introduced to the landscape to overcome the oppressive squalor of the local environment and signal Singapore's passage to economic development. Remaining unchanged from before the Pacific War, the crowded conditions of Chinatown help to affirm conventional notions about the cyclical character of poverty. As the colonial regime has no resolute plan to confront this problem, dozens of inhabitants continue to share dim, airless shophouses. In the early part of the decade, approximately half of the island's population resides in makeshift houses and informal settlements.⁵¹ Because the streets where these shophouses are located are the usual venues for

⁴³ Le Bon, 6.

⁴⁴ Le Bon, xix.

⁴⁵ Le Bon, 10.

⁴⁶ Le Bon, xix.

⁴⁷ Le Bon, 10.

⁴⁸ Martin Perry, Lily Kong, and Brenda Yeoh, *Singapore: A Developmental City State* (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 166.

⁴⁹ See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.: Yale UP, 1998).

⁵⁰ Perry, Kong, and Yeoh, 229.

⁵¹ Aprodicio A. Laquian, *Slums are for People: The Barangay Magsaysay Pilot Project in Urban Community Development* (Manila, Philippines: University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1969), xv.

collective protest against the conditions of colonial rule, decongesting the city center simultaneously diminishes its potential for unrest.

As can be glimpsed in the highly popular commercial films of P. Ramlee, the *kampongs* or rural villages sprawled far from the city center are testimonies to uneven development. Because only the main roads are paved, the houses of the kampongs sit along rugged dirt paths shaded by the tangled branches of unpruned trees. Fostering social interaction among its residents, the seemingly haphazard configuration of the kampong allows for the formation of community. The exteriors of houses have rudimentary tables and benches where residents can linger, relax, and mingle. Residents assemble daily at the public standpipes, which supply water to the kampong for washing and bathing. They encounter each other when queuing up to use outdoor toilets. The routine of everyday life is punctuated with multiple opportunities for conversation and friendship. Instead of enhancing industrial productivity, the experience of time in the kampong produces communal sociality. Based on the image it creates of the kampong, according to these conditions, the gaze of the state is able to equate rural squalor with social idleness and productive stagnancy. From its transcendent standpoint, the community of the kampong is concerned with nothing more than the occupation of an extended duration of time within a single domain of space, which remains isolated from the bustle and progression of the urban landscape. For the purposes of economic progress, the languid community of the kampong must be replaced with the robust citizenry of the nation.

The government under the People's Action Party presents the public housing estates as a modern alternative to the derelict kampongs. Circulated as a record of Singapore's modernization and development through the initiative of the People's Action Party, a resonant photograph from this historical moment vividly contrasts these two images. The photograph features a half-finished residential block, distinguished by a pristine façade with perpendicular angles, ascending high above a haphazard mosaic of stilt huts of assorted sizes, colors, and shapes. Clustered tightly at the edge of a marsh, the stilt huts bear a worn, coarse color from the patchwork of materials that were used to construct them. The discarded surplus of other construction efforts, they include roofs of overlapping zinc sheets and walls of upright wooden planks. In speeches, these makeshift structures are interpreted as signs of poverty and underdevelopment, whose destruction will permit the creation of modern edifices. The photograph is to be taken not as the frozen snapshot of a cyclical present but the organic blueprint of a transitional stage. Juxtaposed together in the same photograph, the two images convey the idea of an evolutionary trajectory in which one replaces the other. Less discordant than complementary in their linear temporality, they sketch the imminent vision of a future city.

In a July 1964 speech, Lee Kuan Yew declares that Singaporeans should learn to accept residential flats in public housing estates as vital elements of future modern life.⁵² He argues that public housing flats provide comfortable spaces of domicile and regeneration, which, with modern facilities for water, electricity, and sanitation, are shielded from the tumult and sordidness of the tropical environment. With the plan of granting citizens ownership over their homes, the government permits Singaporeans to loan money from their Central Provident Fund, a mandatory savings scheme, to pay for the purchase of assigned residential units in these public housing estates. This policy will keep individuals propertied but indebted, two conditions that inculcate collective discipline and civic responsibility among the citizenry.

Identifying one of the motives behind the public housing program, Lee Kuan Yew explains that individuals who own their own homes will be less inclined to join mass

⁵² Lee Kuan Yew, "Reaching Out to the Malays," vol. 2, 218.

demonstrations because the potential for violence would threaten the safety and stability of their domestic space.⁵³ The idea seems to be based on an understanding of the causal relation among the personal, the local, and the national in terms of private property, social order, and economic development. Without the social affinities formed through the daily interactions of the shophouse or the kampong, responsibility to the public good of the community is fostered through the discipline of ownership of a spatial enclosure.

Examining this regime of order against Foucault's conception of discipline reveals its point of departure as an apparatus of government. Foucault defines discipline as the regimentation and regularization of individualized bodies in space and time.⁵⁴ This discipline is instilled through an invisible authority, the perceived ubiquity and eternity of whose gaze causes these bodies to govern themselves.⁵⁵ Its function is to increase their productivity for the purposes of industrial production. The discipline of public housing in 1960s Singapore transplants residents from the disarray of the kampongs to the uniformity of the estates, where they are distributed into circumscribed and interchangeable residential units.⁵⁶ The regimented area and remote location of the public housing estate constrain their interactions and movements. Their mandatory ownership of a parcel of this estate obliges them to accept its spatial order, which synchronizes their bodies with the regularity of the industrial work regime. Becoming part of their duty to the public good of the national community, citizens are compelled to submit themselves to the work regime to be able to repay their loan from the state for the purchase of their home. As a mechanism of normalization, the discipline of public housing represents a shift in the management of dissent towards its treatment as a deviation from the norm tied to the disruption of sanitary order.⁵⁷

The collective discipline of 1960s Singapore builds on Foucault's conception of discipline in that it entails submission to a regime of order that is founded on the logic of capitalism. A manifestation of discipline on a different level, it is the necessity of securing their private property that ties individuals to the importance of maintaining social order. Even without the physical threat of the internal security apparatus, citizens must learn to control their own behavior because they are now owners of private property and thus stakeholders in national development. Enlisted as interested stakeholders, the residents of the public housing estates become active participants in the cultivation of sanitary modernity in the cityscape. Their productivity improves because they are compelled to keep focused on the future as they work hard to pay back their housing loan.⁵⁸ Akin to the logic of the capitalist market, the aggregate of individuals concurrently performing the same activity leads to the outcome of a collective endeavor. If every resident works to maintain the wellbeing of his household, then the combined effort of every resident will ensure order in the community. Instead of the invisible eye of surveillance, the invisible hand of the market is what instills discipline.

By highlighting the contrast between the realities of the housing estate and the rural village, the government fosters the idea that effective national development is possible only at

⁵³ Lee K.Y., vol. 2, 433.

⁵⁴ See Michel Foucault, particularly "Docile Bodies," *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 1995), 135-169.

⁵⁵ See Foucault, "Panopticism," *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228.

⁵⁶ See Abidin Kusno, "Urban Pedagogy: The Appearance of Order and Normality in Late Colonial Java, 1926-1942," *The Appearances of Memory: Mnemonic Practices of Architecture and Urban Form in Indonesia* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 2010), 182-200.

⁵⁷ Foucault, 299.

⁵⁸ "Ministry to Launch 'Keep Singapore Clean' Month," *The Straits Times*, 24 August 1968, 11.

the expense of the realities it regards as constituting retrogressive culture. Retrogressive realities are normally characterized with a cluster of negative meanings, which includes potent words such as ‘traditional,’ ‘primeval,’ ‘irrational,’ ‘obscurantist,’ and ‘backward.’ These words evoke the notion of a benighted future caught in cyclical time, which has not reaped the benefits of development. The government suggests that the established culture of everyday life be condemned to the past because its complacency and stagnancy could inhibit progress. For the nation to prosper, it must devalue the comfortable routine that local residents have long maintained and cherished with an image of undesirability.

In a July 1968 speech about Singapore’s strategies for economic survival, S. Rajaratnam argues that its spatial and social landscape is predisposed to progress and prosperity. Because most Singaporeans are migrants to the island, they are not haunted by visible reminders of outworn traditions such as ruins, which would fetter them with norms that no longer correspond to the contingencies of the world.⁵⁹ Abandoned and decaying in physical space, ruins implant themselves in the popular imagination. Paradoxical in their emotional resonance, ruins establish an indelible presence in historical memory that restricts the scope of personal action.⁶⁰ Redolent of lost experiences, which cause paralyzing nostalgia or regret, ruins keep individuals from adapting to changing circumstances through sacrifice. Inscribing in their anatomy an incapacity for transformation, these images of the past deter individuals from undertaking the sacrifices that are crucial for modern forces to be translated into concrete reality. From the standpoint of government, ruins like the shophouses and kampongs are unproductive and obstructive. Through the implementation of sanitary modernity, they must be visibly purged from the panorama of a developing nation because they engender cyclical tradition and poverty. Whereas the state is accommodating towards dynamic external flows, it is unyielding towards recalcitrant local realities, which would inhibit individuals from their forward progression.

In a speech that stresses the urgency of modernization, Finance and Defense Minister Goh Keng Swee asserts that the populace must learn to transcend its outworn beliefs and customs, which no longer coincide with the time of national development: “... in the traditional villages, people live very much as they did over the past thousands of years. They grow food for themselves, and the little extra they have, they sell or barter for the things that they need. They believe in the ancient gods, in evil spirits and practice the most benighted superstitions which had been handed down to them over the ages.”⁶¹ For Rostow, economic development is driven by large-scale productivity, which consists of the aggregate of individual producers. With a local economy oriented towards the immediate necessities of subsistence production, the kampong is said to represent a primitive space, whose lack of productivity fails to conform to the dynamic of capitalism. The traditional culture of the kampong limits productivity because its norms attune its residents to the reassuring rhythms of everyday life.

According to the speech, the social landscape of the kampong frustrates the linear trajectory of national development with “benighted” ideas and practices, which cause its inhabitants to become caught in a cyclical experience of time. Local residents tend to cling closely to traditional culture such that they are less open to changes associated with modernity, which would lead to progress in the form of centralized government, scientific advancement, upgraded infrastructure, and societal order. From the purview of the speech, traditional culture

⁵⁹ S. Rajaratnam, 257.

⁶⁰ Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, Introduction, *Ruins of Modernity*, eds. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A. and London, U.K.: Duke UP, 2010), 6.

⁶¹ Goh Keng Swee, *The Economics of Modernization* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1995). 18.

fosters the belief that everyday life, along with its values and practices, will not change even with the succession of generations. Its temporality is not simply hesitant but complacent in its implicit predisposition that the prevailing situation does not require improvement. In the cyclical experience of time, the present does not unfold as a uniquely new and previously impossible reality but recurs under the bewitching guise of the future. Instead of being propelled by development, bodies remain stationary, transfixed by the ghostly image of a future that never arrives. This non-arrival of the future is perceived like an incorporeal ruin that lingers in the background of consciousness as a remote presence, whose potential decays before it has even materialized. Being impossible to fulfill, it reinforces the comfort and stability of the present.

The speech suggests that people being relocated to the public housing estates become accustomed to the more rapid rhythms of modernity,⁶² which coincide with the dynamic flows of capitalism. By being inculcated with modern norms of perception and behavior, the populace can be made more amenable to the high levels of productivity vital for rapid industrialization. Their energies must be channeled into a definite outcome and not squandered through a purposeless sociality. Divested of their proclivity for comfort and idleness, bodies are trained to assemble and labor with greater, and more sustained, effort and efficacy. Any collectivity they form must be oriented not towards the terminal refuge of leisure but towards the recurrent discipline of work. Instead of concentrating in a single location for a prolonged duration, bodies are organized spatially and temporally according to the regimentation and regularization of the housing estate, which readies them for the increased productivity of development.

In the speech, the time of poverty, where traditional norms are maintained in a pleasurable cycle, is contrasted with the time of modernity, where new resources are deployed in a relentless progression. Whereas sanitary modernity in 1930s Manila was defined by the miracle of evangelical religion, sanitary modernity in 1960s Singapore is shaped by the march of national development. No longer experienced as a sudden and sweeping realization of a previously impossible vision, it is gradual and unrelenting in its evolution towards a concrete goal. In the temporality of modernization, the arrival of the future is guaranteed as an inevitable improvement over the present. Its ruthless linearity is evident in the reconfiguration of Singapore's landscape, in the replacement of rural villages with housing estates and itinerant hawkers with hawker centers.

Sanitary modernity in 1960s Singapore inscribes the temporality of the exception into the established order of the nation. Instead of degrading the uncivilized outside, it cleanses the indolent inside so that the nation could accommodate the promise of external flows. Through the intervention of pragmatic governmentality, technical adjustments are continually undertaken to prevent the path of linear development from reverting to cyclical underdevelopment.

COFFEE-SHOP TIME

Confronted with the ruthless pace of development, many Singaporeans spend spend their leisure hours in a *kopi tiam* or coffee-shop, one of the centers of social life, alongside movie theaters, during this historical period. This popular leisure space functions less as a public sphere of dialogue and debate than as a temporal enclosure of inactivity and sociality, where individuals can withdraw from the overpowering gaze of the state. Theirs is a form of collectivity divergent from that of the crowds protesting on the streets.

⁶² Lee K.Y., vol. 3, 189.

Each day at the coffee-shop typically starts early in the morning and ends late, around ten, in the evening. Predominantly male, the regular customers of the coffee shop are said to enjoy lounging on a bentwood chair at one of the marble-topped tables while sipping a hot beverage. During this period, a cup of tea or coffee costs ten cents with additional five cents for condensed milk.⁶³ Although this scene could be interpreted as a picture of everyday life untouched by industrial capitalism, the reality is that Singapore's entrepôt economy can only supply these men with intermittent employment.⁶⁴ Experienced as a temporal enclosure, the coffee-shop offers momentary sanctuary from the erratic fluctuations of the capitalist market and the relentless determinations of sanitary modernity.⁶⁵ Affording them commonality through their simultaneous activity, the duration of their occupation of the coffee-shop unfolds without speed or urgency. For its regular customers, the coffee-shop is a venue not so much to relax and revitalize from drudgery but to await and anticipate the inevitable. Instead of being an abyss of productive energy, the coffee-shop is defined by languid expectation, which straddles the time of work and the time of repose with its postponement of definite action.

The first *kopitiam*s were opened by Chinese migrants from Hainan who worked as cooks and servants in the households of British expatriates. Left idle when their employers returned to the Mother Country, they established eateries and bakeries with the culinary skills they had developed,⁶⁶ an example of how the cyclical poverty could be surmounted through unremitting effort and resolve. Khairudin Aljunied characterizes these coffee-shops as sites of contestation, which serve as staging grounds for the articulation of economic rights and the exchange of subversive rumors.⁶⁷ Contrary to his argument, if coffee-shops were important sources of dissent against the dominion of the state, then their activities probably would have been strictly regulated. These consumer spaces might have been marked for elimination from the landscape instead of being appropriated as an instrument to contain disorderly and recalcitrant hawkers. In opposition to the contagious vibrancy of the streets, where vigorous crowds assemble in protest, the configuration of the coffee-shop instills steadiness and calmness in the bodies that inhabit its enclosure. Distributed across the arrangement of seats and tables, bodies must adhere to the unhurried rhythms of service in this establishment. Instead of pursuing a disruptively resistant temporality, they suspend their participation in the linear march of national development as they occupy an interim node along its trajectory.

Instead of focusing on overt practices of contestation, I prefer to see the coffee-shop as a public space where the inhabitants of this historical moment await the eventuality of national development. Writing about the temporal experience of eviction on the periphery of Saigon, where construction projects are delayed due to incompetent bureaucracy or insufficient funding, Erik Harms explains how its residents either surrender to the oppression of their expectancy or

⁶³ *Vintage Singapore: Souvenirs from the Recent Past* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet and National Museum of Singapore, 2006), 69.

⁶⁴ See Chua Beng Huat, "Nostalgia for the *Kampung*," *Political Legitimacy and Housing: Stakeholding in Singapore* (London, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 1997), 152-167.

⁶⁵ These thoughts about the configuration of the coffee-shop in Singapore during the 1950s and 1960s are based on its representation in P. Ramlee's commercial films.

⁶⁶ Lai Ah Eng, "The Kopitiam in Singapore: An Evolving Story about Migration and Cultural Diversity," (Working Paper, Asia Research Institute, 2010), 8.

⁶⁷ See Khairudin Aljunied, "Coffee-shops in Colonial Singapore: Domains of Contentious Publics," *History Workshop Journal* (2013).

assume control over its duration.⁶⁸ Refusing to lapse into complacency and despair over the uncertainty of the future, they exploit the flexibility that this uncertainty permits by improvising on their situation. By providing the idle stability of refuge from the urban landscape, the coffee-shops of 1960s Singapore prepare their occupants for handling its contingency and heterogeneity. Defined neither by the stringent reason of the government nor by the spontaneous emotion of protesters, their experience is shaped by the steadiness and calmness of their leisure. This temporality does not concretely work towards the fulfillment of the future and does not spontaneously react to the urgency of the present but ambivalently lingers in the moment.

Their act of waiting is not a resignation to the fate of cyclical time because it continues to be oriented towards the future. Filling the hours with languid activity, it neither fights against nor surrenders to the listless expectation of a promise that may never be fulfilled. Although the occupants of the coffee-shop permit time to unfold, they never yield to its pressure. They confront the nakedness of time without flinching. Without letting it discourage and devitalize them, they ambivalently welcome the awareness that the current environment will eventually be destroyed and supplanted through development. Bereft of any anxiousness over the uncertain future, which Harms describes in his article, they refuse the terms of their given circumstances by embracing the inevitability of change on their own autonomous terms. Oscillating constantly between the work regime and consumer space due to their intermittent employment, their experience of time is not so much cyclical as elliptical.

One attraction that coffee-shops have for customers is the radio set they have installed in their enclosure.⁶⁹ Radio has maintained its wide influence as a mass medium of communication because television only officially arrives in Singapore in the early 1960s.⁷⁰ Listening habitually to Rediffusion broadcasts, the customers of coffee-shops leave the radio open the entire day,⁷¹ such that the sound of the radio is assimilated into the atmosphere of everyday life. Radio Malaya regularly provides individuals with news updates about prevailing circumstances according to the official discourse of the established order.⁷² Within the routine of everyday life in the coffee-shop, individuals become attuned to the regularity of news broadcasts. Unable to find steady employment and unwilling to join political protests, the act of listening to the radio is their primary participation in the affairs of the outside world. The Broadcasting and Television Act of 1963 has given exclusive control over the mass media to the state. In contrast to the persuasive language of orators, which must accommodate the immediate response of their audience, official radio broadcasts deliver an authoritative monologue, which the audience must accept as unimpeachable truth.⁷³ Intervening in the mundane routine of everyday life, the immediacy of radio news adheres to the contemporaneousness of governmental pragmatics, which must ready citizens for the unsettling transformations necessary for development. Even if the truths disseminated constantly change depending on the demands of prevailing circumstances, they retain their validity because of their immediacy.

⁶⁸ Erik Harms, "Eviction Time in the New Saigon: Temporalities of Displacement in the Rubble of Development," *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (2013): 357.

⁶⁹ Lai, 7.

⁷⁰ Judy Yong, "TV comes to Singapore," *The Straits Times*, 16 February 1963, 1 and 4.

⁷¹ *Vintage Singapore*, 172.

⁷² Chan Chin Bock, "How the Place Has Changed!" *The Straits Times*, 16 January 1955, 6.

⁷³ Eddie C.Y. Kuo and Peter S.J. Chen, *Communication Policy and Planning in Singapore* (London, U.K. and Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: K. Paul International & East-West Communication Institute, 1983), 49.

The contrast between the languid waiting of intermittent employment and the unremitting bustle of rapid modernization is poignantly captured in the films from the late 1950s and early 1960s of the prolific director, actor, and musician P. Ramlee, the most popular movie star during his heyday. Produced at the passage between regimes, his enthralling films, which, like bangsawan operas, are creative amalgamations of the comedy, drama, musical, and fantasy genres, record the multiplicity of changes that define the historical moment. While many of P. Ramlee's films highlight the comic awkwardness of negotiating social disparities and technological advances, they often conclude with the pleasurable closure of a requited romance that culminates in traditional marriage.

P. Ramlee's 1961 popular movie *Seniman Bujang Lapok* explores how the ordinary inhabitants of a kampong can transcend the routine of everyday life and can acquire the quality of movie stardom. Hired for contractual work as film actors, they must familiarize themselves with the language and medium of cinema when they are accustomed to the improvisation of a bangsawan performance. In contrast to the brisk rhythm of the scenes set in the studio, those that transpire in the kampong feature stretches of cinematic time in which the protagonists experience idleness. Illustrating the camaraderie among underemployed individuals, the coffee-shop is the paradigmatic public space where they congregate while awaiting their next adventure. Similar to evictees in Erik Harms' account of modernizing Saigon, the protagonists in P. Ramlee's films continually move from opportunity to opportunity because they are not tied to a regular occupation.⁷⁴ Flexible with the temporality of capitalist production,⁷⁵ these resourceful companions are successful at finding new sources of income depending on the contingencies of the moment. By depicting the condition of intermittent employment, P. Ramlee's work highlights how individuals circumvent their prevailing circumstances in order to pursue a more autonomous lifestyle, which may not subscribe to the strict regularity of the work regime.

Exceeding the walled enclosures of movie theaters, the images of popular movies and movie stars circulate throughout the ordinary sites of transit and leisure that the residents of the island traverse as they journey to and from work and home. Unlike the spectacles of department stores and amusement parks, their apprehension is not fixed to a single location. At the junctions of roads, they can be seen displayed on the sides of delivery trucks waiting for the stoplight and on the bodies of human billboards standing on the sidewalk. Prominently posted on the walls and pillars of rooms and corridors that Singaporeans frequently inhabit, they suffuse everyday life with their presence. Because of the distribution and mobility of residents during this historical period, spectacles are more widely circulated without the aims of complete absorption and immediate efficacy. Ubiquitous and indelible in their visual presence, these images are not imposing or overwhelming. Differing from those that dominate 1960s Manila, these everyday spectacles do not insist that pedestrians or commuters devote their full attention to them until they become absorbed by their visibility or withdrawn into their fantasy. They linger in the background of the field of vision almost like casual reminders of an important course of action. The configuration of these spectacles is not designed to transfix or immerse spectators, but to enable its assimilation into their everyday life.

These spectacular images decorate the interiors of coffee-shops, which are relatively bare except for a scattering of characteristic ornaments such as cylindrical birdcages dangling from the ceiling. The walls are covered with polished white tiles, from which hang posters and calendars with the images of commercial products and movie stars. Because coffee-shops are

⁷⁴ Harms, 360-361.

⁷⁵ Harms, 359.

highly popular spaces of consumption during this period, commodities are advertised on the business paraphernalia such as saucers, cups, trays, and lanterns. Cards featuring the images of popular stars such as Lin Dai, Maria Menado, Rose Yatimah, and Rita Chao are widely distributed for the individual collection, possession, and consumption of consumers. Although these stars exist at a remove from everyday life, the mobility and portability of their images enable ordinary individuals to develop an intimate bond with the sense of transcendence that they evoke.

Withdrawn from the gaze of the state and the voice of orators, the customers of coffee-shops communicate with the impassive images of stars. They encounter the unchanging face of the star, which does not respond to their gestures but only stares back at them. If members of the elite feigned indifference to the gaze of others as part of their inaccessibility, the faces of stars express their impassiveness alongside their ubiquity. Instilling stability and calmness amid inescapable flux without causing time to revert to a cycle, their omnipresent impassiveness fosters an alternate temporality that is immanent in relation to the relentless and ruthless pace of national development from above.

The proliferation of images of movie stars throughout the cityscape reveals the role of popular movies in negotiating the possibilities for transformation inherent in the historical moment. Films of P. Ramlee such as *Labu dan Labi* highlight the dynamism of the period with a fantastical narrative, which features its protagonists imaginatively adopting a miscellany of new identities that transcend their given conditions.⁷⁶ Amid the dynamism of the period, it is the temporal enclosure of the coffee-shop that cultivates a suitable mode of expectation, an unhurried stance that embraces an openness towards the inevitability of change.

⁷⁶ Timothy Barnard, "Decolonization and the Nation in Malay Film, 1955-1965," *South East Asia Research* 17 (March 2009): 85.

PART III – 1960S SINGAPORE

CHAPTER 6 – THE LOGIC OF THE BAZAAR: THE ITINERANT COMMERCE OF NIGHT MARKETS

This chapter is concerned with the passage between regimes of commerce and consumption, from a bazaar economy to a more formal system. The initial impression might be that the pasar malam existed in a primitive state of nature and innocence prior to the modernization of British Malaya. Contrary to this assumption, I would like to argue that the pasar malam was a vital part of the process of modernization. It was a byproduct of the extensive reconfiguration of the spatial and social landscape, which marked Singapore's development into a First World nation. Commerce and leisure during this period were highly social, transpiring in boisterous outdoor markets, the regulation of which resulted in a corresponding change in the prevalent modes of public activity and local community. The pasar malam posed a threat to the government because it represented an alternate form of modernity, which did not coincide with the government's vision of modernization.

In this chapter, I look at how the passage from a bazaar economy to a formal system corresponds with changes to the norms of commercial arrangement and consumer behavior. After starting with a description of the pasar malams of 1960s Singapore, I interrogate Clifford Geertz's conceptions of the economic system of the bazaar and its characteristic practice of bargaining. In the next section of the chapter, I explore the history of Change Alley, an important commercial space with the configuration of the bazaar that became entrenched in the popular imagination and everyday life of Singaporeans. I analyze the language of the report of the 1950 Hawkers Inquiry Commission, which reveals the official perception of itinerant hawkers and night markets as retrogressive, recalcitrant realities that are detrimental to public health and social order. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of Operation Hawker Control, which formed part of the program of sanitary modernity to manage the creativity and autonomy of these realities so that progress and prosperity could be attainable.

THE RISE OF THE PASAR MALAM

During the 1960s, a type of night market known locally as the *pasar malam* proliferates throughout Singapore. The *pasar malam* attains significance in the everyday life of the populace as a result of the Singapore government's plan to reconfigure the spatial and social landscape for national development. As part of its modernist vision, the newly independent government, under the control of the People's Action Party, gradually relocates the population from congested urban shophouses and underdeveloped rural villages to public housing estates with electricity, running water, and proper sanitation. Envisaged to form self-contained communities, clusters of monolithic residential blocks are erected along concentric circles on the outskirts of the city.

To compensate for the absence of commercial facilities in these newly created residential areas, pasar malams serve as the main source of basic provisions, which spares residents from the inconvenience of having to travel long distances to retail stores in the city. Appropriating the empty fields that surround the housing estates, they are improvised public spaces of commerce and consumption, which have arisen without direction from the state. These itinerant bazaars have flourished in 1960s Singapore due to the dearth of regular employment and sufficient

compensation for the majority of the populace. The Hawkers Code of 1950 mandated that every inhabitant of Singapore possessed the right to appropriate any vacant area of public space for the purpose of economic subsistence. “In view of serious unemployment prevailing in Singapore, the Ministry of Health accepts the situation that our unemployed should not be prevented from hawking as a way out to earn an honest livelihood.”¹ Beset with the overpopulation of its territory, the colonial regime recognizes the need to relax its control of commercial activity to allow the populace to subsist on its own initiative. Despite its seemingly rudimentary character, the pasar malam is an inevitable byproduct of Singapore’s drive for modernization that represents an autonomous form of incipient or fledgling modernity. In contrast to the government’s comprehensive plan for modernization, it is a form of modernity that represents a divergent response to modern conditions in its paradoxical accommodation of tradition. It adheres to its own norms of arrangement and practice. Because it signifies that an alternate form of modernity could exist to that of the state, its creative potential must be suppressed.

At the end of the workday, crowds of residents from the nearby housing estates regularly gather at pasar malams to spend their leisure time. Independent Chinese vendors typically dominate the stalls,² which carry a wide variety of items with negotiable prices including slippers, shorts, trousers, hats, jackets, fabrics, pots, silverware, chinaware, rattan ware, radios, and Japanese novelties.³ Cloth blankets, spread out on the ground, display their wares by the light of fluorescent lamps. At the numerous makeshift food stalls, families dine on fried noodles and skewered meats. Punctuated with the teeming activity of ebullient crowds, the energy and radiance generated by these night markets suffuse the dark, sprawling fields where they are being held. Forming a vital component of the routine of daily existence in the new residential areas, they have become centers of public leisure and social life in the early stages of national development. Akin to the amusement parks, they generate a welcoming atmosphere that different segments of the community can participate in without exclusion. Diverging from these public spaces, they are oriented less towards the provision of sources for recreation than towards the creation of opportunities for collectivity. As complementary to the work regime, night markets supply a venue for individuals to expend their purchasing power on basic necessities. Positioned next the confined interiors of residential units, they act as an inadvertent refuge, where sociality can emerge as a byproduct of commerce through the concentration of bodies.

Contrary to the determinations of the state, not the housing estate but the pasar malam fosters the promise of community. Instead of producing atomized and alienated consumers, the pasar malam serves as a venue where the inhabitants of housing estates can interact with each other. In the newly established residential areas of independent Singapore, the primary conditions for community derive not from the regimented structures of the housing estate but from the spontaneous crowds of the pasar malam.

Emulating the rhythm of periodic markets, the pasar malams move daily from one location to another across Singapore. Establishing a constant commercial presence in residential areas with large populations, a night market operates in the vicinity twice or thrice a week. Pasar malams embody the sense of mobility, dynamism, and possibility of the historical moment. Their pattern of movement could be traced to that of the itinerant hawkers who would accompany the

¹ “New Code for Pasar Malam,” *The Straits Times*, 2 March 1966, 4.

² Yue-Man Yeung, “Traveling Night Markets in Singapore,” *Changing Cities of Pacific Asia: A Scholarly Interpretation* (Hong Kong: Chinese UP, 1990), 243.

³ *Papineau’s Guide to Singapore and Spotlight on Malaysia*, 18th ed. (Singapore: André Publications, 1965), 133; “Spores Barter Trade Bazaar,” *The Straits Times*, 15 September 1966, 11.

performances of Chinese wayang troupes as they toured the different parts of the island.⁴ Instead of depending on customers to journey far in order to replenish their basic necessities, this nascent type of commercial space incarnates the spatial mobility of the entrepôt economy by making supplies available to residents in their housing estates. Demonstrating the resourcefulness of individuals outside the determinations of government and business, their improvised mobility exploits the new infrastructure of the emerging modern cityscape. By providing convenient spaces for the acquisition of basic necessities, they create the conditions for the subsistence of everyday life amid the radical changes of modernization.

Known to have begun operating in the British military bases, night markets soon appear in Changi Village, Jalan Kayu, Clementi Road, and Jalan Jurong Kechil. With this birth narrative of its inconclusive origins, official government documents apprehend the pasar malam as a uniquely new phenomenon.⁵ According to *The Straits Times*, the famous Woodlands Fair is said to have started with only two or three stalls in late 1958.⁶ Spreading rapidly throughout the island, the night markets reach a peak total of sixty-six authorized sites in the middle of the 1960s.

By April 1967, the government has managed to regulate the movement and behavior of the hawkers, stalls, and markets within its domain such that the most prominent and popular pasar malam sites are made to follow a prescribed weekly schedule. Based on their own pattern of operation, this official schedule overdetermines their commercial activity. The designated sites for Mondays include Balestier Road, Jalan Bukit Ho Swee, Jurong Road, Frankel Avenue, and Tanjong Katong Road. On Tuesdays, pasar malams open at Guillemard Road, Jalan Batu, Jalan Rumah Tinggi, and Pesiaran Keliling. The noteworthy locations on Wednesdays include Changi Village, Orchard Road, Race Course Road, Aljunied Road, and Hocksan Estate. On Thursdays, night markets can be found at Beo Crescent, Clementi Road, Kallang Estate, Jalan Eunus, Lorong Chuan, and St. Michael's Market/Courtyard. At the end of the working week, crowds gather for the pasar malams at Bukit Panjang Village 10th Milestone, Jalan Kayu, Persiaran Keliling, Upper Serangoon Road, Tai Thong Crescent, Margaret Drive, and Kampong Java Road/Keng Lee Road. More night markets operate on Saturdays, with sites like Tanglin Halt, Telok Blangah Road, Cantonment Road, Industrial Road, Kampong Kapor Road, and Sumbawa Road. Sunday is the day assigned for Changi Road, Short Street, Alexandra Road, Short Street, Pesiaran Keliling, and Sembawang Hill Estate. As a culmination, the largest and liveliest pasar malam is held every Saturday at the Woodlands 14^{3/4}th Milestone, where one thousand and two hundred stalls from the various night markets concentrate.⁷ In order to be rendered governable, night markets have needed to be treated as quantifiable and circumscribed enclosures. Aside from imposing a schedule of operation, the government dictates the number of stalls that each pasar malam can contain. To prevent them from spreading uncontrollably throughout the public landscape, it delimits their presence within an authorized area.

Night markets draw massive crowds of people because the retail stores concentrated in the city center normally close on weekdays at five and on Saturdays at one in the afternoon.⁸ Assuming a paradoxical duality, the pasar malam fills a void in commercial activity that has been

⁴ Chao qtd. in Yeung, 238.

⁵ Information about governmental policy towards itinerant hawkers and night bazaars can be found in various official documents of the Hawkers Department of the Ministry of Environment housed in the National Archives of Singapore.

⁶ "Saturday Shoppers' Secret," *The Straits Times*, 7 April 1960, 9.

⁷ Please see the official documents of the Hawkers Department of the Ministry of Environment at the National Archives of Singapore.

⁸ *Ibid.*

left not only by modernization, in the national development plans of the government, but also by tradition, in the established operating hours of businesses. This paradoxical duality reveals its incipient modernity, which occupies and renegotiates the frontier between tradition and modernization.

Due to the immense popularity that pasar malams are believed to have, the owners and managers of the retail stores in the city center consider extending their operating hours into the evenings. In an effort to improve their decreased profits, these commercial spaces attempt to establish regular stalls at the night markets such as sales outlets for local shoe manufacturers.⁹ Retail stores are beguiled by the possibility that joining a night market would enable them to exploit the purchasing power of its typical mass of consumers. The pasar malams derive the force of their popularity from the imagined boundlessness of the crowds that are believed to congregate in their domain with frequency. The force of their popularity compels stores to modify their temporal and spatial patterns of operation, to ‘modernize’ their business strategy such that profit is augmented.

Aside from being appropriated for a commercial function, the sprawling fields of pasar malam sites are frequently turned into venues for wayang performances and political rallies. Recognized in the public culture as spaces where crowds of people regularly gather, the night markets have become a pivot around which other important communal activities occur. This centrality has further entrenched the pasar malam in the social life of the nation. In the consciousness of government and business, the pasar malam is a source of spontaneous collectivity, where the unpredictable multitudes can be addressed at a historical period that predates the ascendancy of the mass media. Despite the likelihood of crowds assembling at the pasar malam, the problem is they might misconstrue the message that is being conveyed to them.

An etymology of the usage of the term ‘*pasar malam*’ in the public culture of local newspapers across different historical periods reveals the changing constellations of meanings that envelop the term, along with shifting functions for the commercial space and its contingent crowd. Through the course of the 1960s, the usage of the term gains in frequency and significance until it comes to connote not simply a nighttime marketplace.

Before the Pacific War, Singapore’s amusement parks continually promoted the presence within their enclosures of foreign pasar malams where commercial products would be sold and cultural performances would be staged. An advertisement in two August 1932 issues of *The Straits Times* announces that a “Real Pasar Malam,” which has been organized at the Orient City Fair on Anson Road, will feature forms of entertainment from the Netherlands East Indies that have “never appeared in Malaya before.”¹⁰ As one of many attractions being presented within the larger amusement park, the Javanese pasar malam is portrayed as an authentic novelty. This claim of authenticity implies that its reality is foreign to the landscape of the colony. As a novel presence, its staging is presumed to capture popular attention, which would lure curious crowds to its location.

Three decades later in August 1953, *The Straits Times* reports that the dominant Malay nationalist party the United Malays National Organization has hosted a pasar malam together with a beauty contest, a *kroncong* concert, and a dress competition at one of its political rallies. Translating the name ‘pasar malam’ into English, the news article substitutes for it the terms

⁹ “Record Shoe Production,” *The Straits Times*, 31 July 1964, 13.

¹⁰ *The Straits Times*, 23 August 1932, 14; *The Straits Times*, 25 August 1932, 6.

“bazaar” and “fun fair.”¹¹ Still one among an array of attractions, the pasar malam is deployed as a spectacle not so much in a leisure space, which intends to generate pleasure and profit, but at a political assembly, which aims to produce interest and support. The incongruity of the secondary attractions with the main event reveals an understanding of how the popularity of the pasar malam could help turn an unsuccessful political rally into an important social event, which would draw individuals who do not share the ideology of the party and who may be indifferent to politics. From its description of the event, the news article evinces that the organizers are not entirely certain about how to control and exploit the pasar malam’s potential for collectivity. Seemingly guided by a notion of social contagion, the organizers appear to hope that the enthusiasm of the audience towards the entertainment attractions will transfer to their interest in the political speeches. As discernible in the public culture, the pasar malam is apprehended as a site of possibility, which is tapped for its potential for producing collectivity even if the crowds that it gathers may be in a state of distraction.

I would argue that, even though the term had been earlier used to denote an open-air market, the pasar malam of 1960s Singapore is generally regarded during this period as a departure from prior commercial spaces. Even if it resembles the Malay bazaar, the most widely circulated English-language newspapers in British Malaya do not apply the term ‘pasar malam’ to it at the outset. For example, a news article from the 7 April 1960 issue of *The Straits Times* refers to the weekly evening bazaar in Woodlands with only the generic name “Woodlands Saturday market.”¹² Newspapers start calling it the “Woodlands fair” several months later. When they first emerged in the landscape of the island, the night markets seemed to represent a uniquely new phenomenon, which the public culture initially lacked the linguistic means to articulate. Confronted with a vaguely familiar phenomenon, which cannot be ignored because of its potency, newspapers eventually settle on the most suitable loanword, ‘pasar malam,’ to indicate its presence. The adoption of this name, which referred to a different type of commercial space that is comparable in form, affixes its emergent reality with meanings associated with that commercial space.

Because it is experienced as a new reality, the emergence of the pasar malam could be seen as simultaneous with the young Singaporean nation’s drive for modernization. The pasar malam of 1960s Singapore complicates the dichotomy between traditional and modern commercial exchange. Despite its supposedly rudimentary form, it could be understood as modern because its emergence is an immediate response to conditions that have ensued from this drive for modernization. Its emergence signifies a reconfiguration of everyday life that corresponds with changes to the spatial landscape of the island. The existence of the pasar malam reveals the complexities of large-scale development, which create opportunities for ordinary individuals to improvise based on given circumstances and resources. Harnessing the creativity and contingency of modern forces, it introduces a uniquely new reality into the burgeoning city. If modernity is taken to denote a concentration of flows, such as those of bodies, finances, or technologies, then the pasar malams could be interpreted as the inescapable surplus from Singapore’s rapid modernization. Instead of being an antecedent from a primordial stage of capitalism, it is a vital byproduct of capitalist development.

THE IMAGE OF THE BAZAAR

¹¹ “UMNO Plans 3-Day Fair,” *The Straits Times*, 12 August 1953, 4.

¹² “Saturday,” 9.

The common notion of the pasar malam during this historical period is shaped by multiple images that circulate in the literary and intellectual culture of the time. Together, these images engender the perception of a commercial space whose fundamental character is simultaneously creative and contingent yet disorderly and irrational. Due to this paradoxical duality, the autonomy and modernity of the pasar malam of 1960s Singapore have needed to be restrained and obscured so that a sweeping vision of national development could triumph without hindrance or exception.

In two pioneering monographs published during the 1960s from his fieldwork on open-air markets in Southeast Asia and North Africa, Clifford Geertz defines the bazaar as a network of social relations that involves the production and consumption of goods and services.¹³ Instead of that of a covered bazaar, the configuration of the pasar malam in 1960s Singapore is closer to that of the souk, the type of open-air market that Geertz focuses on as his object of study, even if these two types of commercial spaces are not precisely equivalent. Referring to the *pasar* in small municipalities on Java and Bali, Geertz describes the bazaar economy as a discontinuous commercial activity, which is fragmented into numerous, disparate interpersonal exchanges.¹⁴ He contrasts it with the formal or incorporated system, in which economic activities are rationally and systematically coordinated on a grand scale towards accomplishing a definite goal.¹⁵

Writing about the *suq* in a rural town in Morocco, Geertz concludes that, lacking a dominant presence from established trading partners and standardized commercial products, the bazaar has no formal mechanisms for efficiently collecting and communicating information about market conditions throughout its domain.¹⁶ The foremost activity in the bazaar economy is the acquisition of signs, in the form of notions and opinions concerning the quality and cost of products. Without the steadying influence of formal mechanisms, traders are forced to rely not so much on the reputation of trusted merchants but on the proliferation of unverified ideas.¹⁷ For Geertz, the exchange of goods in the bazaar is shaped by the exchange of signs, which, being transient and uncertain, are bereft of the stability and regularity needed for large-scale economic processes.

The bazaar for Geertz is predominantly horizontal and amorphous in its configuration. Due to the small type and size of the basic items sold in the bazaar, Geertz describes its interpersonal exchanges as being microscopic and variable.¹⁸ “Goods flow through the market channels at a dizzying rate, not as broad torrents but as hundreds of little trickles, funneled through an enormous number of transactions.”¹⁹ Deploying the evocative force of metaphoric language pertaining to water, Geertz portrays commercial activity in the bazaar economy as a precarious convergence of the autonomous trajectories of sellers and buyers. Because bazaar merchants typically operate independently and spontaneously without regard for each other’s motives, the total economy they constitute is loosely coherent and vaguely defined. From

¹³ Clifford Geertz, “Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou,” *Meaning and Order in a Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*. Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and Lawrence Rosen (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge UP, 1979), 124.

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns* (Chicago, U.S.A.: U of Chicago P, 1963), 28.

¹⁵ Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes*, 28-29.

¹⁶ Geertz, “Suq,” 124.

¹⁷ Geertz, “Suq,” 205.

¹⁸ Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes*, 30.

¹⁹ Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes*, 31.

Geertz's standpoint, the bazaar's horizontal and amorphous configuration evinces its fundamental disorder and irrationality. Geertz's bazaar economy has no overarching regime or binding authority to coordinate its multitudinous exchanges while managing its disruptive realities. He implies that, because the bazaar economy is essentially incompatible with any formal system, large-scale development can succeed only if the discontinuity and unpredictability of the bazaar are subdued.

Because the bazaar merchant earns his livelihood in an environment where stalls with similar items are situated close to each other, his trade is characterized by contingency and chance. Instead of developing a healthy market for his goods, he must wait for a suitable opportunity where he is able to give his best effort at selling his goods.²⁰ Reliant on unverified ideas about the market and long periods of inactivity, the bazaar merchant must learn to be adept when dealing with the uncertainty of signification and temporality. Unlike a salesclerk in a retail store with fixed prices, the bazaar merchant often improvises when interacting with customers as the prices of products change depending on the circumstances of the sale. He must be quick to shape his tactics according to the demands of the moment. The successful seller must cultivate his proficiency in persuasive language, which would make buyers amenable to purchasing his goods. Adjusting his sales techniques to match the customer, he must beguile the customer with enticements while the customer responds in turn with feigned interest until both of them have settled on a provisional price. In previous historical periods, the process of bargaining was a means for guaranteeing the quality and value of goods.²¹ Through the prevailing process of bargaining, the autonomous gestures and actions of each individual contribute to the determination of the price at which the product is sold. Both the seller and the buyer must draw on their creativity in dealing with the contingency of the other.

Unpredictable commercial relations are seen as detrimental to the establishment of the norms and routines through which modern governments and economies function. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the modernist leaders and intellectuals of developing nations have needed to adopt a standpoint of rational objectivity, which detaches the observer from the observed with the lucidity and obduracy of the photographic gaze. In defining their vision of modernity, they conceive of a paradigmatic outside, which, representing the filth, heat, congestion, disease, and torpor of the local environment, must be kept in exile.²² According to Chakrabarty, the notion of this outside has been epitomized by the experience of the bazaar. Attempting to encapsulate the complex workings of the bazaar, Clifford Geertz shares this notion when he cannot avoid characterizing the bazaar as rudimentary, chaotic, and inefficient, as being a recalcitrant obstacle to the coherence of modernization and development. The unreliability of its commercial exchanges and personal interactions is a potent source of apprehension about the bazaar. Because it fails to conform to preset categories of administrative knowledge, it engenders the inescapable sense in the government that it cannot be controlled. As long as the bazaar exists, it presents the likelihood of disorder.

THE HEART OF THE ENTREPÔT

²⁰ Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes*, 35.

²¹ Dorothy Davis, *A History of Shopping* (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2007), 99 and 182-183.

²² See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Of Garbage, Modernity, and the Citizen's Gaze," *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: U of Chicago P, 2002), 65-79.

Geertz's conception of the bazaar corresponds with the perception in the public culture of Change Alley, the principal shopping district for residents and tourists during this historical period. This correspondence in different images of the informal market shapes how the government responds to its potential for autonomy and collectivity. Adjacent to Raffles Place, Singapore's hub of finance and business, Change Alley is a cramped yet bustling passageway formed from the narrow space between two commercial buildings. The pervading image of Change Alley derives its allure from its association with dominant notions about the exuberant atmosphere of the bazaar and the dynamic practice of bargaining. Found in dizzying profusion due to the tightness of space, the products on sale within this passageway are suspended from pillars and ceilings and crammed onto tables and blankets. Distinguished by its multiplicity of hawkers, products, and customers, Change Alley is christened the "Street of a Thousand Faces," a name that is supposed to reflect Singapore's identity as a major international port with its concentration of global flows of merchants, products, and customers. Entrenched in the popular imagination, Change Alley exemplifies how the bazaar involves an abundance and variety of minute activity. Although this commercial space has importance because it is perceived to be a representation of Singapore, its fate as a bazaar in the urban landscape corresponds with the changing attitude towards the pasar malam.

Viewed from the outside, where it blends into the assemblage of building façades on Collyer Quay and Raffles Place, the entrance to Change Alley is barely discernible. Newspaper accounts mention that pedestrians who are unfamiliar with the topography of the area will easily walk past the passageway. It lies concealed as though it were a more rudimentary form of commercial relation that the modern capitalist regime embodied in the surrounding structures needed to supersede and suppress because of its perceived primacy and sordidness. While the nearby Robinson's Department Store is configured as an orderly, comfortable, and sanitary enclosure with fixed prices, Change Alley is experienced as a more unruly, boisterous, and dynamic space with negotiable prices. Their coexistence highlights how their contrasting norms of commercial arrangement and practice must be seen in reciprocal relation to each other, especially during the 1960s, a pivotal moment of transition.

In this bazaar, the narrow passageway constitutes a world into itself. With towering buildings enclosing its domain, Change Alley is cooler in temperature than the outside. To shelter the stalls from the discomfort of the sun and rain, improvised roofs have been assembled from zinc sheets and canvas tarpaulins, which are supported by a crude frame of wooden beams.²³ The physical structure of the bazaar is makeshift and adaptable, having been hastily erected to accommodate a large mass of consumers. As an enclosure with restrictive space and ventilation, Change Alley is not meant for strolling and lingering. Differing from the pasar malam, the cramped yet porous enclosure of Change Alley continuously impels its visitors to circulate then depart without occupying its domain for an extended duration. The constantly shifting configurations and contents of this bazaar add to the perception in the public culture of its heterogeneity and disorder.

Within the enclosure of Change Alley, the numerous stalls display seemingly infinite stocks of products, which have been crammed onto wooden tables and makeshift racks as though the profusion of discounted wares would guarantee bountiful sales. Each stall appears to have maximized the limited space it has been allotted. Wooden posts, which support the structure of every stall, carry bags of different sizes, colors, and shapes in haphazard tiers. Squadrons of toy

²³ Kim Cheng Boey, *Between Stations: Essays* (Artarmon, New South Wales, Australia: Giramondo, 2009), 129.

airplanes are tied to posts with their noses pointing outward. Shirts and blouses on clothing hangers are suspended from the ceiling like banners. Mounds of plastic balls are kept in nets, which hang close to the roof. The profusion of products prevents any single product from instantly gaining prominence in the eyes of consumers. The haphazard configuration of the bazaar refuses the logic of the spectacle in that spectators are unable to stand still for a prolonged duration to gaze at the objects on display. Frustrated from the complete absorption of spectatorship, consumers are instead immersed in the exuberance of the hectic mass of bodies and objects surrounding them within the cramped enclosure.

If Singapore is an *entrepôt* economy, Change Alley is taken to be its microcosm. The bazaar of Change Alley has garnered fame as a commercial space where any item from around the world could be obtained at an affordable price through personal negotiation. Because Singapore is a trading port that imposes no taxes, quotas, or duties, the prices of goods are known to be lower there than in their country of manufacture.²⁴ Prices are said to be even cheaper in Change Alley, which has earned the appellation, ‘Shopper’s Paradise.’ With the emergence of the *pasar malams* in 1960s Singapore, this form of commercial space becomes omnipresent throughout the landscape of the island.

As early as the 1930s, Change Alley was already recognized as Singapore’s version of Petticoat Lane,²⁵ its principal site of the *jual murah* or ‘cheap sale,’²⁶ where basic necessities could be purchased at low prices. Even then, assorted “odds and ends of necessities”²⁷ would be sold in its stalls: water, toothpaste, soap, socks, stockings, shirts, singlets, sarongs, pants, cottons, silks, towels, rubber shoes, thermos flasks, fountain pens, pencils, scissors, nails, razors, eyeglasses, toffee sticks, tinned goods, fresh fruits, hot drinks, cold drinks, curry puffs, fancy goods, and curios.²⁸ Adjacent to Johnston Pier, where travelers from the sea disembarked, Change Alley epitomized the multicultural character of Singapore as the polyvocal sound of diverse tones, languages, and accents would punctuate its atmosphere. In order to communicate with customers, merchants could speak in broken English, French, German, Italian, and Russian. Their primary language was the *lingua franca* of bazaar Malay, with which individuals who desired to haggle for lower prices needed some familiarity.²⁹ In the public culture of the time, Change Alley was described as a “town bazaar,” a “hive of industry,” where “jubilation” and “animation” continued to thrive despite the gloomy business climate of the economic depression.³⁰ This image of vibrancy, which was attached to the bazaar of Change Alley, became associated with the *pasar malams* of 1960s Singapore.

By the middle of the 1960s, the same miscellany of basic necessities and luxury products continues to be available for purchase within its domain. Stalls with names like Oriental, Albert Store, Idea Silk, Alley Photo, Haiyen Trading, Fairy Shoes, Poh Seng, Jit Seng, Koh Heng, Hong Sheng, Hua Hua, Mohammad Tamby, Nihalchand Ramchand, and House of Russian Goods³¹ offer a wider range of goods, which has expanded to include skirts, blouses, hosiery, embroideries, watches, sunglasses, umbrellas, lighters, souvenirs, rugs, batiks, costume jewelries,

²⁴ *Tourist Treasure Log: Singapore, the Shopper’s Paradise* (Singapore: Tecco Organization, 1968), 73.

²⁵ See Willis’ *Singapore Guide* (Singapore: A.C. Willis, 1934 and 1936).

²⁶ See *The Straits Times*, 16 March 1934, 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Willis 1934, 47; “Change Alley,” *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 9 October 1933, 8; Tessi Cornelius, “Change Alley Changes,” *Singapore Free Press*, 5 August 1946, 4.

²⁹ Willis 1934, 47.

³⁰ Chinese Topics in Malaya, *The Straits Times*, 10 December 1931, 16.

³¹ Kim, 133; *Papineau* 1965, 91.

leather goods, electronic goods, and bootleg tapes.³² Even if the social and economic configuration of Singapore has changed dramatically over three decades, the character of Change Alley appears to remain the same. The persistence of its seemingly rudimentary character heightens its poignance in the collective imagination while reinforcing its impression of commercial backwardness.

Browsing through the numerous stalls at Change Alley has become a habit for many Singaporeans such that they consider their day to be incomplete if they fail to visit the passageway at least once.³³ Forming a vital part of the everyday routine of residents and the exceptional experience of tourists, Change Alley dwells in the heart of the idea of Singapore. Its embrace as an important public space implies that any perception of it as disorderly could engender the notion that the same negative quality exists at the heart of Singapore.

Because of its profound significance to Singaporeans, the image of Change Alley resonates in the earliest perceptions of the pasar malam. In the April 1960 news article from *The Straits Times*, the Woodlands Saturday market is given the sobriquet, “little Change Alley.”³⁴ Although the sobriquet could have been meant to associate the Woodlands Saturday market with the boisterous crowds, miscellaneous goods, and affordable prices for which Change Alley has become known, it evokes the passageway’s perception of illegality when the article presumes that the goods sold there were smuggled. According to the article, many of the three thousand shoppers who traveled from Johore Bahru resorted to dressing in their new clothes and shoes on their return across the Causeway in order to avoid paying the customs tax. Even from its inception, the pasar malam is seen as possessing an indeterminate quality, perhaps from the energy of its atmosphere or the allure of its merchandise, which compels ordinary citizens to perform an illicit action. Likened at first to Change Alley, without any other point of reference, the pasar malam differs from the compact passageway in that it is more expansive and variable, and therefore more difficult to regulate.

Tourist guidebooks, which aim to provide travelers to Singapore with an enjoyable visit to the island, have portrayed the consumable experience of Change Alley as being strange and thrilling because of its innocuous dangers.³⁵ For these travelers, the bazaar derives its allure from its exceptionality, which assures them that their experience of it will resemble an adventure. Unfamiliar with the norms of bazaar exchanges and bargaining practices, tourists are advised to be judicious and not hasty when purchasing products. Lying at the cusp of danger, this unfamiliarity is the source of the thrill. According to these guidebooks, they should guard against unscrupulous salespeople, paid by commission, who try to offer them incredibly cheap bargains. Before deciding on a purchase, tourists should compare the prices from various stalls to ensure that they are obtaining the best price for the product. They are told to examine and evaluate carefully the appearance of trustworthiness of the merchant and his stall. They should scrutinize every product they intend to buy in order to see if they possess genuine trademarks.³⁶ All these different visual factors must be considered to guarantee the quality of the product and overcome the uncertainty of the bazaar. Mistrust is highlighted in these guidebooks as an inevitable characteristic of the bazaar, as even being the source of its sense of menace and adventure.

³² R. March, “The street of a thousand faces,” *Singapore Free Press*, 21 January 1952, 7; Talking Shop, *The Straits Times*, 13 August 1953, 9; “Shoppers’ Paradise for Visitors,” *The Straits Times*, 11 June 1967, 5.

³³ “Lunchtime in Change Alley,” *The Straits Times*, 1 July 1950, 12.

³⁴ “Saturday,” 9.

³⁵ For example, see *Willis’ Singapore Guide* from 1934 and 1936, *Papineau’s Guide to Singapore and Spotlight on Malaysia* from 1965 and 1966, and *Tourist Treasure Log: Singapore, the Shopper’s Paradise* from 1968.

³⁶ Talking Shop, *The Straits Times*, 13 August 1953.

Whereas this image of the bazaar is effective in drawing tourists to the island, it has propagated the idea of Singapore as an uncivilized space of sin, where primitive and illegal practices are allowed to thrive.

Instead of projecting an image of prominence in the international community through its allure as a tourist destination, Change Alley represents an alternate commercial space that keeps Singapore from being regarded as fully prosperous. In a 1972 speech, “Singapore: Global City,” Culture and Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam stresses the importance of conquering Singapore’s identity as the Change Alley of the world market, as an international entrepôt for raw materials and low-cost products.³⁷ For him, the global reputation of a developing nation is essential for economic growth. He asserts that any effort to attain progress and prosperity by abandoning the established entrepôt economy for a more effective model of national development must strive to overturn the prevailing impression of Singapore as a bazaar.

Condemning the disorder and illegality of the bazaar as early as 1957, the newly independent Singapore government attempts to establish a dichotomy in the commercial configurations of Change Alley’s stalls and stores. Whereas stores reward consumers with fixed pricing, stalls are said to cheat them through deceitful bargaining.³⁸ This perception has persisted since the early twentieth century, with newspaper accounts describing the municipal administration’s distrust of hawkers. With an explicit goal of cultivating ethical commercial practices according to its prescribed norms, the state requires that merchants at Change Alley display tags with the actual prices of their items. Because the populace generally considers bazaar merchants to be unscrupulous, the state must legally enforce norms of propriety in order to stimulate the confidence and business of consumers. In the images of the bazaar that it propagates, the People’s Action Party creates the picture of an unruly, recalcitrant reality, which inescapably conflicts with the public good. Its attitude towards the bazaar of Change Alley reflects its eventual policy towards the pasar malams of 1960s and 1970s Singapore. Even though Change Alley may have grown entrenched in the imagination and routine of the populace, the state betrays a willingness to regulate and even eliminate its presence from the cityscape.

OPERATION HAWKER CONTROL

In its public pronouncements during this historical period, the Singapore government expresses an ambivalent attitude towards the commercial presence of the pasar malam. Early in the decade, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew commends hawkers for demonstrating the same qualities that are responsible for the burgeoning national economy, the “drive and enterprise” to realize possibilities from limited resources.³⁹ The itinerant hawkers that comprise the night markets are valued for being an outlet for the disposal of old stocks of goods, whose oversupply could have an adverse impact on the economy. The existence of such commercial spaces is supposed to help mitigate the turbulent effects of inflation by providing low-wage workers with affordable necessities. In these official pronouncements, workers are assumed to be capable of turning to physical violence and political unrest if they are unable to find adequate subsistence.

³⁷ S. Rajaratnam, *The Prophetic and the Political* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies/Graham Brash, 2007), 225.

³⁸ “There’ll Be ‘Changes’ in Change Alley Now,” *The Straits Times*, 6 November 1957, 1.

³⁹ “Premier’s Pledge to Hawkers,” *The Straits Times*, 28 January 1963, 6.

As night markets proliferate across Singapore, such that they dominate its public leisure and social life, the image of the pasar malam is made to be associated with undesirable, retrogressive realities. As seen in official statements and speeches, the People's Action Party condemns pasar malams for being unsightly, obstructive sources of filth, noise, garbage, congestion, and disorder in its rapidly modernizing landscape. Embodying a mode of commerce that is flexible and dynamic, they constitute an indeterminate and ungovernable presence that deviates from the ruthless linearity of economic progress.

These negative perceptions of itinerant hawkers and night markets are anticipated in the report of the Hawkers Inquiry Commission of 1950, which investigated the degree to which street hawkers constituted a ruinous presence in Singapore's spatial and social landscape. Initiated by the British colonial regime, the commission concluded in its report that food hawkers were a primary source of filth and disease because they plied their trade under unhygienic conditions. Due to the lack of a fresh water supply within the vicinity of their commercial space, they tended to reuse wash water from the same bucket when preparing dishes and cleaning utensils.⁴⁰ Hawkers who sold ice cream were ostensibly responsible for past epidemics because the milk in their ice cream enabled bacteria to proliferate, resulting in roundworm, hookworm, diarrhea, gastroenteritis, dysentery, and cholera.⁴¹ While these undesirable conditions may vary in the degree of harm they pose to health, the accumulation of medical terms envelops the seemingly innocuous words 'hawker' and 'hawking' with a cloud of negative meanings. The accumulation of these negative terms creates the impression of an inevitable sequence of fatal events, which could ensue from the failure of the state to manage imperceptible realities.

Not merely unsuspecting carriers of filth and disease, hawkers are unyielding barriers to order and lawfulness: "... the biggest retarding factor in the department's unremitting efforts to clean up the congested areas of the town... They have absolutely no respect for law and order..."⁴² Characterized as uncivilized, brazen, and irrational, they are deemed obstacles to the effective operation of the government, which is hindered from bringing sanitation to the overcrowded urban center. "[I]n the disorderly sprawl of hawkers, blocking up entire streets with a jumble of goods in defiance of all order and reason is to many citizens an offence against their civic pride. Singapore has a reputation among Eastern cities for cleanliness and order, and it is felt that this is being tarnished."⁴³ In the extract, their makeshift occupation and appropriation of public space for the sake of their livelihood is depicted as a violent transgression against accepted norms of rationality and propriety. Their commercial behavior is said to sully the pristine image of Singapore in the world market. The state is revealed as lacking the capacity to govern internal forces that operate beneath its determination and external forces that flourish outside its territory.

The government's attitude and policy towards hawkers and markets appear to be based on its notions about the unruly and contagious character of local crowds. It assumes that the presence of hawkers and markets will inevitably generate crowds, which it is less effective in managing due to the incongruity between its dependence on reason and their constitution from emotion.⁴⁴ Contingent on the size and behavior of the population, the effectiveness of the colonial government is diminished when these attributes become understood as existing beyond

⁴⁰ Hawker's Inquiry Commission (Report, Singapore Government Printing Office, 1950), 43.

⁴¹ Hawker's Inquiry Commission, 35.

⁴² Hawker's Inquiry Commission, 46.

⁴³ Hawker's Inquiry Commission, 8.

⁴⁴ See Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, U.S.A.: Macmillan, 1896).

the limits of control. One threat to the authority of the state that hawkers pose as a mass of bodies is their ability to project an image of themselves as being destitute and therefore requiring sympathy. “Their numbers are too large, and the economic pressure driving them to hawk and the public to buy from them, is too great for police control to be effective... Corruption of the police force is a major social evil, far more serious in its effects on the life of a city than any probably influence of typhoid or dysentery. The tradition of reasonable impartiality, integrity, and objectivity in the public services is hard to establish and easy to break. It is fundamental not merely to public health but to every other activity of modern civilized government.”⁴⁵ Although hawkers are a source of physical disease, the more profound menace is the social disease that they have the potential to engender. This notion is echoed in the language of the People’s Action Party in its ‘Keep Singapore Clean’ campaign of 1968-1969 when it describes sources of filth and unruliness as “anti-social” forces. The perceived connection between disease and disorder enables mechanisms of sanitary modernity to be applied to bodies, spaces, and communities with legitimacy and force.

In the extract, modern government is conceived as being objective and rational in its operation. With their recalcitrant behavior towards regulation, hawkers create a relation of tension and antagonism between the state and its populace. They signify the possibility that the determinations of the British colonial regime can be subject to negotiation and even disobedience. Together, they constitute an emotive force, which could cause government officials tasked with cleansing their unruly presence from the cityscape to lose their rationality as an instrument of the state. “We believe that the presence of very large numbers of people making their living by activities widely known to be illegal tends to bring the law into contempt and consider it wrong that people who are not in intention law-breakers or criminals should be in a position in which they habitually regard the police as enemies. We regard it as politically unhealthy that the police, for a relatively trivial reason, should be driven to frequent use of force against a group of people who command wide public sympathy.”⁴⁶

As evident in the 1950 report, the British colonial regime is cognizant of the potent influence that public perception has on the scope of its authority. It acknowledges that the relation between the state and its populace is vital such that social stability and economic growth are endangered when this relation becomes precarious. Because the resort to illegality for the sake of livelihood challenges legal norms, it puts into opposition the impoverished citizens who are forced to evade them and the government officials who are obligated to defend them. Objective and rational in their operation and appearance, government officials lack the emotive force of hawkers for eliciting popular support. When they attempt to rid the cityscape of sympathetic figures like impoverished hawkers, they are immediately turned into an enemy of the public. Representing the limits of effective governance, the presence of itinerant hawkers and night markets exposes the inability of the state to manage the physical and emotional behavior of the crowd. For these reasons, from the standpoint of government, hawking and bargaining epitomize a form of commercial activity that is undesirable. As a symbol of cyclical underdevelopment, which bears an irresistible emotive force, the bazaar undermines the influence that the government has over the populace. The colonial regime desires to eliminate the recalcitrant presence of hawkers and markets from public spaces but cannot do so without more draconian measures it is unaccustomed to implementing with its laissez-faire approach to governance. Cognizant of the emotional pull exerted by hawkers on the populace, future

⁴⁵ Hawker’s Inquiry Commission, 7.

⁴⁶ Hawker’s Inquiry Commission, 16-17.

governments must resort to methods that avoid public confrontation and physical violence to be able to contain them.

In the 1960s, independent Singapore's project of national development coincides with its program for sanitary modernity. The ruling government, under the control of the People's Action Party, implements Operation Hawker Control as an integral phase of its cleanup campaign to address the problems that itinerant hawkers and night markets pose. It considers such commercial spaces to be sources of social and economic pollution that must be overcome before national development can become a reality. Local newspapers document this struggle over the usage of public space. At the start of 1963, citing "innumerable complaints," the government prohibits the Woodlands Fair from operating due to the traffic congestion that it creates. Understood to be a form of social disorder, traffic congestion is supposed to be detrimental to the performance of the economy because it impedes the movement of industrial and commercial flows and processes.⁴⁷

To halt the operation of the Woodlands Fair, national police and city council officers establish roadblocks, which create a bottleneck from the long lines of stalled trucks, vans, and automobiles meant to transport goods to the night market. The plan is to relocate the pasar malam two miles closer to the city, to the less congested Bukit Panjang Village, but the pasar malam hawkers contend that the distance of the move would deprive them of customers since they service mainly Johore Bahru and Naval Base residents.⁴⁸ The incident reveals how pasar malams are particularly reliant on the existing infrastructure for the movement of bodies and goods because they are operate in remote locations. After discussions between the Singaporean government and hawker representatives, the two parties agree to move the site of the night market three-quarters of a mile closer to the city, to the 14³/₄th milestone on Woodlands Road. The government instructs the hawkers to occupy only the left side of the road at least ten feet away from the grass verge to allow ample space for parked vehicles.⁴⁹ The dispute between the government and the hawkers assumes the form of a struggle over the usage of public space. The state insists that it maintain its monopoly over the ability to improvise for the purposes of livelihood, particularly concerning minute decisions that are contingent on the circumstances. A previous sanitary campaign, during the 1930s, succeeded in reducing the number of itinerant hawkers licenses by ten percent each year until the number had been halved.⁵⁰ Commencing in 1965 and 1966, the state, through the Ministry of Health's Hawkers Department, requires every hawker to apply for an operating license. Only a limited number of license applications are approved. A license entitles a pasar malam hawker to use a pitch of 24 square feet for 3 months with an advance fee payment of six dollars.⁵¹ Hawker pitches are then assigned at designated pasar malam sites through a balloting system. The short validity of the license forces hawkers to submit themselves periodically to the authority of the state for its permission to operate. Based on the possibility that hawkers would elicit sympathy from the populace for their plight, the government relies on legal norms to regulate public commercial activity.

⁴⁷ "Causeway Night Market Goes," *The Straits Times*, 4 January 1963.

⁴⁸ Francis Rozario, "Police Enforce Ban on Woodlands Pasar Malam," *The Straits Times*, 6 January 1963, 18.

⁴⁹ "Government Picks New Site for 'Pasar Malam,'" *The Straits Times*, 12 January 1963, 4.

⁵⁰ Over a period from 1931 to 1938, the total of twelve thousand itinerant hawkers licenses was halved. See Hawker's Inquiry Commission, 45.

⁵¹ "Pasar Malam Fee Fixed," *The Straits Times*, 5 March 1966, 7

Issued in March 1966, a New Hawkers Code establishes the basic illegality of hawking. From then on, for hawking to qualify as a lawful activity, it first needs the sanction of the state, which is determined by a narrow set of criteria. With the intention of regulating all commercial movement and behavior on the island, the New Hawkers Code attempts to circumscribe the spatial and temporal configurations of stalls and markets. According to this code, pasar malam hawkers can ply their trade only from five in the afternoon to eleven in the evening. They are prohibited from setting up their stalls within four yards of fire hydrants, within ten yards of road junctions, and within fifty yards of markets, hospitals, schools, police stations, and places of worship. They cannot occupy opposite sides of the same street, as well as roadsides where the parking of vehicles are disallowed. All forms of hawking are banned from sidewalks, drains, stairways, five-foot-ways, and bus routes. Hawkers have to seek the authorization of the government if they wish to change the selection of their goods or the position of their stalls. They are forbidden from erecting permanent structures of any size or shape. Regulating the allocation and usage of public space, the code affords more room to pedestrians, residents, and shoppers. It reveals the burgeoning importance, from the standpoint of government and business, of the economic function of the consumer in the transition to progress and prosperity.

To be able to retain their license, hawkers are required to pass stringent medical examinations. The Environmental Public Health Act of 1968 orders hawkers to keep their bodies, clothes, implements, and spaces in a perpetual state of cleanliness. Public Health Inspectors from the Hawkers Department's Special Squad are tasked with enforcing the law by regularly examining the conditions of hawker stalls. By law, hawkers must ensure that the food they sell never comes into contact with any surface or object that is considered to be dirty. Instead of disposing of their rubbish in nearby drains, they are expected to collect and discard them in bins, which they themselves have to furnish. Through the force of these new legal norms, the state strives to render hawkers' assumptions and practices concerning health and hygiene congruent with its image of a disciplined modern cityscape.

In exchange for an operating license, hawkers are obliged to act like "responsible Singapore citizen[s]." This prescribed identity means that they are "not to endanger traffic," "not to be a menace to public health," and "not to break law and order."⁵² Under the New Hawkers Code, being "responsible" as a "citizen" is equated with abiding by the established norms of public conduct. In designating "indiscriminate hawking" as a "menace," the code suggests that unregulated behavior is harmful to society and illegal in character. By attributing negative meanings to their activity, it tries to diminish their reputation, which is a source of sympathy. In order to create a compelling image of order and stability, the state must shift its methods for enforcing its authority over public space from violence to legality such that hawkers become perceived not only as health hazards but also as social nuisances.

The state believes pasar malams to engender illegality because the hawkers who comprise them apparently possess the knowhow to circumvent the norms of law and propriety in order to pursue their livelihood. They represent autonomy from government control, which is interpreted as a form of social disorder. In official documents, an overriding fear springs from the notion that allowing hawkers to establish their commercial presence in a public space will cause illegal hawkers to converge, multiply, and spread. Illegality, and the dissent it is thought to generate, is portrayed like a disease that rapidly and uncontrollably permeates the landscape.

The efforts of the state toward reconfiguring the cityscape for national development are implemented not without resistance. In May 1966, two hundred hawkers, who operate stalls at

⁵² "New Code for Pasar Malam," *The Straits Times*, 2 March 1966, 4.

pasar malams located in Mountbatten, Guillemard, and Tanjong Katong, go on strike against the new balloting system, particularly because of its restrictive delineation and distribution of hawker pitches.⁵³ Constituting a momentary collective, they object to the conditions being imposed on them. They express their autonomy over the usage of public space by standing on their pitches without conducting business. Due to their ability to generate collectivity and elicit sympathy, their mass protest is interpreted as proof of the potential for disorder and violence that is feared could easily translate into subversion and upheaval.

The Singaporean government's ultimate plan is to expunge the presence of hawkers and markets from the streets and five-foot-ways by transplanting them to indoor structures, where proper facilities for electricity, water, and sanitation would be provided. Night markets are banned from residential areas at the dawn of the new decade. The number of approved licenses for hawking is gradually reduced until the last pasar malam is eliminated from the cityscape in 1978. In confronting the recalcitrant local environment with its unwavering political will, the Singaporean government espouses a vision of national development that it insists be accepted without condition or deviation. Every reality that inhabits its domain, regardless of the form of modernity it embodies, must comply with official standards of modernization under the threat of exile.

⁵³ "200 Pasar Malam Hawkers Go On Strike," *The Straits Times*, 18 May 1966, 5.

PART IV – 1960S MANILA

CHAPTER 7 – PANORAMIC POPULARITY IN THE NEW COMMERCIAL STREET: THE EVERYDAY PRESTIGE OF MOVIE STARDOM

The photograph unveils the dynamism of Greater Manila's principal commercial street during the 1960s, Rizal Avenue, or the Avenida, as it is most commonly called. Hovering high above street level, the elevated standpoint of the camera offers a transcendent vista of the boulevard as it unfolds into the distance. The photograph's saturated colors infuse the assemblage of objects within its frame with an evocation of life. Causing the façades of buildings to glimmer ethereally in the dusk, the combined radiance from the neon lights, advertising billboards, and theater marquees creates the picture of an exuberant urban atmosphere, where the bustle of social and commercial activity extends into the nighttime. Discernible details in the photograph point to the commercial street's multiplicity of attractions, which includes affordable mass products and popular commercial movies. The skewing, blurred streaks of light along the length of the avenue trace the urgent movement of vehicles. Diminutive and nebulous in the background compared to the immensity and concreteness of the boulevard's infrastructure, the ghostly figures of pedestrians fill the sidewalks. Seizing their bodies, the camera lifts them from the anonymity of the crowd and the mundanity of life. Reproducing the immediate circumstances of the historical moment as a visual representation, which could be disseminated across a larger network, the photograph attempts to depict an ordinary scene in the burgeoning metropolis. While remaining nameless, the figures it captures and circulates bear the potential to acquire a transcendent quality of stardom, which forms the new basis for social value.

In this chapter, I examine how the entangled experiences of consumer capitalism, public life, and urban modernity in the commercial street have been reconfigured due to the rapid growth of the urban population. The milieu of 1960s Manila is marked by the shift of the main commercial street from Calle Escolta to Avenida Rizal, which corresponds with the passage in the dominant basis of social value from affluence to popularity. I start by tracing the history of Rizal Avenue as it developed into 'downtown,' the heart of commercial and leisure activity in the metropolis, where the multitudes of Filipinos regularly converge. I look at the different factors behind the paradoxical duality of popularity that prevails in the Avenida, particularly its easily accessible mass commodities and spectacles. I inquire into the concentration of everyday spectacles of movie stardom, which has supplanted social prestige as an important source of transcendence in relation to the established hierarchy. Lastly, I analyze representations in the public culture of figures that invoke the allure of movie stardom, such as flamboyant 1960s Manila Mayor Antonio Villegas. The milieu's sense of dynamism and transformation is epitomized by the dominance of popular movie stars and youthful national politicians, who negotiate the frontier between ordinariness and transcendence.

THE PANORAMA OF DOWNTOWN

By the 1960s, Rizal Avenue has found significance in the public culture as 'downtown.' Connoting a concentration of mass activity, the term 'downtown' refers to a popular public space where multitudes of people from the different cities and municipalities of Greater Manila regularly gather to spend their leisure time.

The Avenida represents the reconfiguration of the commercial street from an exclusive enclosure of luxury and prestige into a popular hub of leisure and arrival during a period of rapid growth in the urban population. In previous historical periods, the commercial street's prominence derived from its function as the site that the elite residents of the cityscape visited to accumulate luxury goods, which would enhance their social value. Because an atmosphere of social prestige enveloped the commercial street from decades of repeated practices and recurrent notions, pedestrians who inhabited its domain could easily acquire an aura of social prestige. As government and business introduced orderly infrastructure, stylish architecture, and advanced technology to the commercial street, it gained centrality in the cityscape as a paragon of urban modernity and an exemplar of future development.

In 1960s Manila, crowds of people regularly throng the domain of the commercial street as it has attained popularity as downtown, the nucleus of the cityscape that contains a wealth of humanity and activity. Its centrality is no longer based on its exemplification of prestige and progress. It has instead become the favored destination where the multitude of individuals can buy affordable products and watch entertaining movies. If the identity of the commercial street is partly defined by its openness to external flows, the commercial street of 1960s Manila accommodates not only luxury products and novel technologies, like in 1930s Manila, but also popular diversions and multitudinous bodies. From serving as a means for ascending the established hierarchy, as it had in prior historical periods, it now functions as a venue for participating in mass activity. In the language of the time, the center of commerce and leisure has grown more inclusive and democratic for people regardless of their social standing or material wealth.

Originating as the periphery of the cityscape, the Avenida has developed into its heart. The swelling volume of bodies, goods, and vehicles that traversed the area necessitated the reconfiguration of the existing cityscape and the construction of new infrastructure to facilitate their movement¹. Rizal Avenue was formed in 1911 from the merging of Calle Salcedo with Calle Dulumbayan, whose name is a Tagalog word meaning 'town's end.' With the resoluteness of sanitary modernity, this merging entailed the demolition of the community of houses that occupied the space in between the two streets.

Due to its relatively central location and broad dimensions, Rizal Avenue inevitably became a vital part of the urban dynamic. Prominent sites of business and entertainment arose on different sections of its span. One of its most notable early structures was the four-story Kneedler Building on the corner of Avenida and Carriedo, which, at the time of its completion in 1912, was the city's tallest edifice. Other prominent buildings included the 1901 Manila Grand Opera House, which hosted important political and cultural events such as the inaugural Philippine National Assembly, and the 1917 Olympic Stadium, which presented popular sporting and entertainment events like the regular Saturday-night boxing matches.² The events that these sites staged regularly drew crowds of people to the area.

In the decade leading up to the Pacific War, commercial establishments proliferated across Rizal Avenue partly due to the prospect of profit from the steady presence of these crowds. The Avenida came to be called Little Tokyo because the majority of these

¹ Nick Joaquin, *Almanac for Manileños* (Manila, Philippines: Mr. & Ms. Publications, 1979), 16.

² Nick Joaquin, "Popular Culture: The American Years," *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, ed. Alfredo Roces (Quezon City, Philippines: Lahing Pilipino, 1977-1978), 2735.

establishments were Japanese-owned.³ The establishments on Rizal Avenue were known for accepting cash and staying open until ten in the evening.⁴ Japanese bazars and refreshment parlors dominated the west side of the street. The east side was lined by Filipino-owned shops, which sold household and automobile supplies, bargain books, and sports and electrical goods.⁵ Amid the thoroughfare's prominent buildings, the Japanese-owned Mori Bicycle Store was an idiosyncratic landmark because of the giant cyclist that soared from its roof.⁶ The Avenida's centrality in the cityscape developed from the size and bustle of the crowds that descended on the thoroughfare for its affordable recreational activities and commercial products.

In the years succeeding the Pacific War, the nucleus of the cityscape shifted from Calle Escolta to Rizal Avenue as the anatomy of the population changed. The destruction of Manila at the end of the war impelled the families who resided in its core to relocate to the suburbs while Manila was being rebuilt.⁷ The relocation of these residents coincided with an influx of migrants from across the archipelago. Driven by the scarcity of resources and opportunities in their localities, they have been allured by the potent image of Manila as a Promised Land, which delivers its inhabitants from poverty.

Tens of thousands of Filipinos started settling in Manila immediately after the Pacific War because the city served as the center for the distribution of relief goods to war survivors and refugees. The devastation to farmland and livestock from the war deprived families of important agricultural resources, which they had relied on for their livelihood. The mass internal migration of Filipinos to the city continued over the next decade with the escalation of the Hukbalahap rebellion in Central Luzon.⁸ Congesting the existing spaces of the cityscape, the rapid increase in the urban population has caused its perimeter to be extended and redefined.

By the 1960s, the Avenida has turned into a synecdoche of Manila, an evocative name that recurrently alluded to the public culture. It has become known as the ambivalent destination on the map where Filipinos who have journeyed from different parts of the archipelago are first acquainted with the sobering realities of urban life.⁹ With bodies ceaselessly alighting from the trains in nearby Tutuban and the buses in adjacent Quiapo, the area unfolds as a restless site of transit and arrival. The Avenida epitomizes the new, common image of Manila as a city of ambulant workers and internal migrants—a constantly changing domain that welcomes all Filipinos seeking more favorable opportunities.

Rizal Avenue stretches for five kilometers to Caloocan but it is the popular shopping district from Carriedo Street to Claro M. Recto Avenue that has grown synonymous with the name Avenida. This section of Rizal Avenue imposes a straightforward path across a labyrinth of shorter and narrower roads and alleyways dating to the Spanish regime. Between Carriedo and Recto, four winding streets intersect with Rizal Avenue—Bustos, Ronquillo, Raon, and Soler—

³ Augusto C. de Viana, *Halo-Halo, Hardware, and Others: The Story of the Japanese Commercial Community of Manila: 1900-1945* (España, Manila, Philippines: U of Santos Tomas Publications, 2008), 85-86.

⁴ A. de Viana, 87.

⁵ "Filipino Business Invades Avenida Rizal," *Tribune Magazine*, 13 September 1931, 7.

⁶ Joaquin, "Popular Culture," 2736.

⁷ *The Fookien Times Philippines Yearbook* (Manila, Philippines: Fookien Times, 1967), 193.

⁸ Paulo Alcazaren, Luis Ferrer, and Benvenuto Icamina, *Lungsod Iskwater: The Evolution of Informality as a Dominant Pattern in Philippine Cities* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil, 2011), 61-62.

⁹ Luning B. Ira, Isagani R. Medina, and Nik Rios, *Streets of Manila* (Quezon City, Philippines: GCF Books, 1977), 99.

each of which contains the surplus of corporeal and commercial activity from the main thoroughfare. The profusion of activity in the commercial street causes it to spill over into the immediately surrounding areas.¹⁰

The Avenida has gained renowned for the multiplicity of affordable goods, which can be found in the shelves and bins of its stores at cheaper prices than in those of the Escolta. Even if the centrality of the cityscape has shifted to Rizal Avenue, Escolta Street has retained its prominence as a source of luxury items. Along Rizal Avenue, many of the stores that carry affordable goods are called emporiums, which are less regimented and more informal versions of the conventional department store. Democratic in their accessibility to any consumer, their stocks of commodities include cassette recorders, electric fans, pocket calculators, thermos flasks, dinner plates, greeting cards, paperback novels, plastic flowers, and ceramic elephants.¹¹ One side of Rizal Avenue is said to feature shops that sell casual clothing, beauty products, costume jewelry, and leather shoes, while the opposite side contains stores that carry home furniture, household appliances, sporting equipment, and electrical supplies.¹²

More products and services are offered in the different streets that are perpendicular to Avenida Rizal. On Ronquillo, the western part of which runs alongside Bustos, individuals can have lighters repaired and stamps manufactured. Shoppers in search of metal tools and spare parts visit Soler, which passes in between Recto and Raon. Although it is home to a range of printing houses, dental clinics, and billiard halls, Raon is known as a site where phonograph records, record players, musical instruments, and transistor radios can be tested and purchased. It has been christened Manila's noisiest street¹³ due to the dissonance of radio and stereo speakers blaring at full volume that competes with the cacophony of cars, buses, and jeepneys rumbling, honking, and screeching at the same time.

Variety and affordability are important attributes of the products and services found in the commercial street of 1960s Manila. The selection of commodities for sale aims to accommodate the needs of the multitude. Commerce has become more democratic in this sense since it adjusts to the expectations and demands of the majority, many of which had lacked the purchasing power to acquire these products. When a wider selection of commodities becomes accessible due to the new purchasing power of a large number of consumers, the basis of social value shifts, not so much towards a heightened level of prestige than towards the enhanced allure of popularity. Whereas prestige relied on the singular visibility of luxury items on elite bodies, popularity rests on the imagined repetition of common objects within an amorphous mass.

This historical period is characterized by the proliferation and popularity in the metropolis of brands and stores of leather and rubber shoes. Rizal Avenue and Carriedo Street are both lined by shops and emporiums that sell shoes of all shapes, colors, and designs. The

¹⁰ The descriptions in this particular chapter have been partly gleaned from original copies of 1960s periodicals housed in the Filipiniana section of Ateneo de Manila University's Rizal Library. These periodicals include weekly editions of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, *Sunday Chronicle Magazine*, *Philippine Panorama*, *Philippine Graphic*, and *Philippines Free Press*. Miscellaneous personal photographs of 1960s Manila circulate online on blogs and threads. Nick Joaquin's voluminous writings about its popular figures, trends, events, and lifestyles distinguish him as the preeminent cultural historian of the period.

¹¹ Ira, Media, and Rios, 99.

¹² Sylvia L. Mayuga, "Love Never Gives Up," *The Spy In My Own Country: Essays* (Manila, Philippines: Sylvia L. Mayuga, 1981), 107-108.

¹³ Ira, Medina, and Rios, 109.

relative success of the local shoe industry is understood to be a triumph of Filipino economic nationalism, an idea with much currency at the moment as a governmental policy that regulates the influx of imported goods and nurtures the growth of local businesses. The proliferation and popularity of shoes seem to correspond with the changed characters of social value and mobility, which shape the tendency of the historical period.

On the Avenida, the commercial spaces that specialize in the sale of shoes include Madison Shoe Craft, Shoeworld, Douglas Shoe Store, Cuylin Shoe Store, Sportman's Shoe Store, and Princeton Shoe Store. The Winthrop Shoe Palace and Sullivan Shoe Emporium are located across the street from the Ideal Theater. The Alex Shoe Palace sits on the ground floor of the Avenue Theater. The accumulation of shoe stores is pronounced on Carriedo Street, which has become famous as a marketplace for footwear. Formerly known for its range of booksellers, Carriedo is now recognized as the poor man's Escolta with the following establishments offering affordable products: New World Shoe Store, Peacetime Shoe Store, Shoelite Shoe Store, United Shoe Palace, Esco Shoes, Josenia, Sea Hawk, Western Shoes, Joe's Department Store, and Shoe Mart. The names of shoe brands and types that suffuse the public culture are equally numerous. They include Gerwin, Gregg, Taylor, Edwardson, Marvel, McDowell, Orchids, Alex, Atlas, Bantex, Chancellor, Camara, Craftsman, Spartan, Playboy, Playmate, Plymouth, Jayson's, Jayson's custom-built Challenger, and Jayson's custom-built Viscount.

In advertisements for the product, the slogan of Custombuilt Jayson's shoes proclaims: "Not one... not two... but three layers of pure rubber are handcrafted to the sole for maximum strength, spring, and traction... And for added durability, all-toe, arch, and ankle shoes are reinforced." Jaguar Action Shoes, "the shoes of tomorrow, made for you today," are fashioned from Polycord, a newfound material that is said to be superior to natural rubber. A similar advertisement for Dragon Sandals describes the product as having soles that are as strong as a tractor.

Print advertisements for shoe brands characterize their products as being comfortable, enjoyable, and durable. Among the many attributes that are highlighted in advertisements to sell different products, durability is frequently given significance as an attribute that would appeal to consumers. The implicit assumption is that, because the manufacture of mass products at low cost does not guarantee outstanding quality, most mass products are unable to withstand the bustle and congestion of urban life. The emphasis on durability as a selling point to consumers of 1960s Manila demonstrates how the quality of a mass product, while seemingly unimportant by previous standards of profitability, could be used to distinguish its exceptionality within a crowded market.

Shoes are among the first new possessions that migrants to Manila obtain on their arrival at Rizal Avenue.¹⁴ The multitudes of Filipinos who have been transplanted from other regions of the archipelago purchase them as a replacement for their outworn *bakya*, the wooden sandals that they would wear as a fact of everyday life in their rural villages. In contrast to the *bakya*, which is considered to be a shameful sign of poverty and underdevelopment, shoes are embraced as modern means of perseverance and prosperity. Shoes enable individuals to move across spaces, both physical and geographic as well as economic and social, with greater ease and speed. The capacity for freely, regularly, and energetically traversing the metropolis, which durable shoes permit, signifies an enhancement of everyday life.

Transcending plain functionality, objects as ordinary and unremarkable as shoes are invested with values of mobility and modernity. Their availability and affordability reflect the

¹⁴ Ira, Medina, and Rios, 99.

democratic tendency of the period. Because anyone can obtain them for individual use, everyone can participate in the new form of modernity they encapsulate. In contrast to 1930s Manila, modernity no longer implies exclusive hygiene and comfort but affordable vitality and endurance, qualities that would enable bodies, structures, and objects to cope with the hectic, unrelenting character of 1960s Manila. As discernible in print ads that use modernity as a selling point, shoes could be seen as a metaphor for an age of dynamism and movement, which is exemplified by the transgression of tired boundaries and the espousal of newfound rights.

This historical moment is marked by the growing currency of the word ‘popular.’ It refers to anything that a large number of individuals is said to appreciate, favor, and consume. Popularity finds its fullest significance in a period in which the reach of the media has spread across the archipelago while the majority of the population has concentrated in the city. From the standpoint of government and business, the epistemological category of ‘popular’ allows for groups of citizens and consumers within the mass of individuals to be distinguished from each other. Because disparate individuals who would rarely mingle now inhabit the same public spaces, the realities they prefer must be demarcated in character. But the popular likewise suggests an accumulation of interest, usage, and approval that is not completely governable. As the multitudes have claimed the public spaces of the metropolis with their immense presence, the aura of social prestige as a means of ascending through the established hierarchy has surrendered its value to the unpredictable force of popularity.

Popularity could be understood as a state of ordinariness that attains transcendence through its desirable commonality, the participation of a multitude in an achievable, shared activity. While based on the accessibility of what is popular, this shared practice should be seen as being more than a simple act of conformity. My conception of popularity resonates with Benedict Anderson’s idea of unbound seriality, in which a provisional image is formed of a broad series of bodies, objects, or activities in simultaneous coexistence.¹⁵ According to this understanding, popularity’s force comes from the visualization of this series as virtually infinite, as being open to encompassing every possible reality. But unlike Anderson’s concept, in the case of Manila, ‘popularity’ rests on the threshold of community. It implies a tenuous commonality, which could quickly dissipate without having left a more indelible affiliation.

The crudely popular is deemed ‘*bakya*,’ a term that has metamorphosed from a mundane noun into a pejorative adjective. ‘*Bakya*’ denotes primarily a plain physical object for everyday use, the wooden sandals that Filipino migrants from the different parts of the archipelago discard for shoes when they enter into the urban life of Manila. Through a shift in meaning, the word has come to refer to any reality that is cheap, shoddy, uncouth, and provincial.¹⁶ Realities that are labeled ‘*bakya*’ include local merchandise, ungrammatical English, and Tagalog cinema. Attracting a large patronage, they are believed to possess the capacity to generate substantial profit. Regardless of their social value, the quality of profitability now extends to commodities that the multitudes of individuals are capable of acquiring. Businesses attempt to tap into the force of popularity without being able to domesticate or control it.

¹⁵ See Benedict Anderson, “Nationalism, Identity, and the Logic of Seriality,” *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2004), 29-45.

¹⁶ Jose F. Lacaba, “Notes on ‘Bakya’: Being an Apologia of Sorts for Filipino Masscult,” *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila, Philippines: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1983), 117.

The multitudes wield a newfound power to transform the value of a commodity by using their numbers to withdraw or to grant patronage. The proliferation of shoe stores and brands demonstrates the growing influence of mass consumer demand. The screening run of movies in the area's theaters depends on a film's success in drawing crowds of spectators. In this historical period, popularity holds potency as a transformative aura, which causes the relations among bodies and objects to be reconfigured towards affinity and collectivity. Because the values of commodities are fashioned by common impressions, these values can easily and unpredictably change depending on the sentiments of the public. Even supposedly fashionable or sophisticated practices that are embraced by the multitudes can acquire the label of 'bakya.'¹⁷ In binding together the disparate individuals who participate in the collective activity of appreciating, favoring, or consuming the same object of interest, as in Benedict Anderson's idea of unbound seriality, the force of popularity provides the basis for a more coherent form of affiliation.

EVERYDAY SPECTACLE

During this historical period, crowds of urban residents regularly descend on the Avenida in order to watch the popular Hollywood and Tagalog movies that are being shown at the glittering theaters arrayed throughout the area. Designed by prominent local architects like Juan Nakpil and Pablo Antonio to bear a monumental presence in the cityscape, the façades of these movie houses are characterized by their striking rectangular shapes, angular corners, and rectilinear striations. Ascending vertically above the passageways, neon red, blue, and yellow signs are suspended from metal frames that extend from these façades. In fat, block letters, they announce the name of the store or theater located beneath them, signaling to meandering pedestrians their approximate position within the teeming boulevard. Neon lights suffuse the area of the Avenida with their radiance, enhancing the exuberance of its atmosphere.

Among the glittering movie houses that draw the largest crowds of people is the Ideal Theater, a landmark that has stood at the entrance to Avenida Rizal via Carriedo Street since 1933. It is dedicated to screening the latest features from the major Hollywood studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer or MGM, which is known for its glamorous, big-budget musicals.¹⁸ In its architecture, the Ideal Theater resembles an angular echo of Calle Escolta's Crystal Arcade, which was destroyed at the end of the Pacific War during the liberation of Manila. It is a broad building composed of two rectangular wings that are adjoined in the middle by a slightly taller structure, creating a recess at the center of the building's façade. Adorning the façade, three vertical fins rise in between four columns of windows, which are crowned by intricate geometric ornaments.

Aside from the Ideal Theater, the other movie houses along the Avenida that showcase English-language films are the Avenue, Ever, and State Theaters. On the east side of the Avenida, in between Carriedo and Raon Streets, the distinctive structures of the State and Ever Theaters stand adjacent to each other. With an imposing height like the Avenue Theater, the rectangular State Theater has a middle section ornamented by ornate grilles that extends above the rest of the building with a roofed turret. The box-shaped Ever Theater beside it has a simpler

¹⁷ Lacaba, "Bakya," 20.

¹⁸ Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York, U.S.A.: Henry Holt and Company), 440. See also Ethan Mordden, "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer: The Supreme," *The Hollywood Studios: House Style in the Golden Age of Movies* (New York, U.S.A.: Simon Schuster, 1989), 89-170.

façade with dramatic vertical striations, which circumscribe the three rows of thin windows embellishing the center of the façade. Farther along the Avenida, the elegant Galaxy and Scala Theaters are located on the west side, past the junction with Claro M. Recto Avenue. Found on the opposite side of the street, at the farthest end of Rizal Avenue, the Noli and Apolo Theaters are known for screening popular Tagalog movies.

The radiant lights from the neon signs, advertising billboards, and movie theaters lining the Avenida combine to generate an exuberant atmosphere, which is said to evoke New York City's Broadway Avenue. During the Roaring Twenties, Times Square, the famed public space of entertainment on Broadway Avenue, would draw nightly crowds of half a million people. Illuminating the streetscape, dazzling multicolored neon displays advertised an alluring miscellany of commodities including soaps, clothes, sodas, cigarettes, spirits, automobiles, and movies. Due to their captivating resplendence, the people who visited Times Square became as excited about seeing these lit displays as they were about watching the theater performances being staged in the area.¹⁹ Similar to New York City's Broadway Avenue and Times Square, the popularity of Greater Manila's Avenida Rizal marks the shift in the center of the city to the site of the accumulation of leisure activity, where everyday spectacles unfold. Due to the abundance and variety of spectacles arrayed in the commercial street, individual attractions combine to turn the domain of the entire commercial street into a spectacle. Subsumed under the mundane rhythm of everyday life at the city center, where the majority of the population concentrates, these spectacles are no longer exceptional but ordinary in character.

The configuration of everyday spectacle appears to straddle the border that delineates the concepts of Foucault and Debord, in between exceptionality and immanence. Foucault describes the workings of spectacle in maintaining prescribed norms as a collective, sensorial immersion.²⁰ The spectacle's exceptionality rests on its excessive, public display of violence and authority, which is necessary for it to have a memorable impact on individuals. For Foucault, each spectacle must unfold within a distinct, circumscribed location to be able to capture the interest and saturate the experience of its audience. This dual operation of cognitive absorption and emotional immersion is evident in the workings of the carnival economy of 1930s Singapore's amusement parks. In the commercial street of 1960s Manila, the abundance and variety of spectacles in the form of neon lights, advertising billboards, theater façades, and popular movies generate a broader atmosphere of spectacle, which would more closely resemble Debord's understanding.

Diverging from Foucault, Debord conceives of a form of spectacle that is capable of exercising control without the excessive public display of dominion.²¹ For Debord, the efficacy of the spectacle does not derive from the authority of a transcendent sovereign, which, existing at a distance from everyday life, must demand loyalty to its beliefs through force. During this historical period, the spectacle no longer needs to be aggressively captivating and haunting in its workings because a multiplicity of spectacles dominates a larger part of the cityscape.

Unlike the spectacles of 1930s Singapore's amusement parks, the spectacles of 1960s Manila's commercial street are situated not on the remote periphery of the cityscape but at its

¹⁹ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 2004), 340.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 1995), 216.

²¹ See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, U.S.A.: Zone Books, 1994).

vibrant nucleus, whose character shapes their configuration. In contrast to the immersive mode of spectacle found in the amusement park, the everyday form of spectacle prevalent in the city center exceeds the stillness of cognitive absorption and the singularity of emotional participation. To be able to gaze at any of the spectacles arrayed within its domain, pedestrians traversing the commercial street must stand in place for a short duration. But attempts at sustained apprehension are immediately frustrated by the bustle and congestion of the metropolis. At best, the eyes of pedestrians can only fixate from time to time on the spectacles around them, as if they were permitted a form of captivation without commitment. Performed recurrently and routinely, this disinterested absorption in the commercial street's profusion of spectacles becomes instinctual and immanent.

Debord suggests that the efficacy of the new mode of spectacle is dependent on its profusion, which suffuses the field of vision with its presence. By being arranged haphazardly throughout the domain of the commercial street, a constellation of spectacles assumes a luminous yet nebular configuration, which can accommodate the restless and hurried pedestrians who are unable to devote their full attention to individual spectacles. Based on the seemingly ubiquitous visibility of a small constellation of spectacles encountered in succession, the abundance of spectacles throughout the cityscape is experienced as being infinite even if the other spectacles remain unseen.

The spectacular experience of the commercial street approximates that of a panorama. Popular in London and Paris in the early 19th century, stationary panoramas would situate individuals in a darkened room where they would be encircled by an immense painting, which wrapped around the room without interruption.²² By concealing every trace of the surrounding structure and the outside world, the panorama enabled spectators to withdraw into its illusionary reality.²³ Early descriptions of this visual form of diversion highlight the infinitude the spectator experienced.²⁴ The everyday spectacles found in 1960s Avenida Rizal obtain their potency from the sense of endlessness they generate, through which the cityscape presents itself to sight like a vast, uninterrupted panorama. Attempting to contemplate a single spectacle, the eyes of pedestrians encounter other spectacles scattered around it, which attract their gaze with equal force. Enticed to regard a constellation of spectacles, the duration of their gaze extends indefinitely such that these spectators are perpetually immersed without being completely absorbed. As the dazzling visibility of neon lights, advertising billboards, and theater façades dissolves into the bustling atmosphere of the metropolis, the public experience of the commercial street is transformed into an intense exteriority. Due to its visual infinitude, the entirety of the commercial street cannot be completely grasped, staying fully exterior as a reality.

Whereas Foucault regards the spectacle as enabling the foundation of a new community, Debord perceives it as alienating individuals from their productive capacities, social relations, and lived experiences. But in the milieu of 1960s Manila, the agency of language in public spaces of dialogue and debate extends the scope of possibility and action. Individuals exercise the faculty of their imagination when they strive to acquire some degree of transcendence by emulating the appearances, gestures, and actions of movie stars. In frequenting the teeming commercial street, they are regularly immersed in the immediacy of the metropolis. While

²² Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley, California, U.S.A.: U of California P, 1998), 150-151.

²³ Angela Miller, "The Panorama, the Cinema, and the Emergence of the Spectacular," *Wide Angle* 18.2 (1996): 43.

²⁴ Qtd. in Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: The MIT Press, 2013), 4.

Debord visualizes a world of abstraction where no form of collectivity or community is possible, inhabiting the commercial street of Avenida Rizal means participating in the shared experience of a mass activity. The tendency towards atomization is diminished due to the popularity of collectivity in this milieu. If any degree of atomization occurs, it is more the result of the hectic character of the commercial street, which keeps crowds amorphous as individuals pursue disparate trajectories. These crowds tend not to cohere into a tight social body due to the increased value of popularity, whose configuration lies on the threshold of community.

Accommodating the entirety of Manila's immense population, the movie houses of this historical period are inclusive, vibrant sites of public consumption akin to Singapore's amusement parks and bangsawan operas. Unlike the theaters of 1930s Manila, which were exclusive sites for enhancing social prestige, these venues allow crowds of urban residents to congregate and intermingle. Before the Pacific War, the majority of Manila's populace would visit the cinema only twice or thrice a year. This leisure activity was a luxury reserved for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries, in which individuals would dress in their best clothes like they were attending a formal evening gala.²⁵ Once exceptional, it has grown everyday. It has become a popular pastime for Filipinos, who habitually watch movies in the evenings or on the weekends, in their time away from work.

No longer simply attracted by material commodities to visit the commercial street, individuals are enticed by the spectacular diversions of movie theaters, popular movies, and movie stars. Superseding the elegance of window displays, which has been rendered mundane due to the wealth of mass activity, the stylishness of movie theaters emphasizes the new significance of the cinema as a principal public space for leisure and entertainment. The bodies of the multitude are regularly drawn into the interiors of movie theaters as a routine practice in their navigation of the cityscape. Amid the bustle and congestion of the urban landscape, the circumscribed enclosure of the movie theater creates a sanctuary where cognitive absorption can occur in duration.

Emulating the domain of department stores but now made more accessible, the entrance to many of these theaters offers the luxurious welcome of an open lobby, which, with brilliant lights and polished floors, as well as a sweeping staircase that curls upward towards the balcony, evokes an inclusive atmosphere of social prestige for the multitude. In the movie houses of 1960s Avenida Rizal, the transcendence of the structure commingles with the ordinariness of the practice. Lingering outside in the arcaded sidewalks that front these theaters, street vendors sell boiled peanuts or green mangoes with *bagoong* or salted shrimp paste, which spectators can consume as snacks while watching the movie²⁶ as though they were withdrawing into a public space of leisure and entertainment with the comfort of home.

Within the spatial interiority of the movie house, they encounter the visual exteriority of the movie spectacle. Swathed in the anonymity of a darkened room, amid the swirls of thick cigarette smoke and the noises of restive chewing mouths, they surrender to the alluring images of an objective world, which flicker to life on the giant screen before them. Different from the spectacle of the commercial street, the spectacle of the popular movie is more comprehensible, more capable of gaining their affinity. With the mode of perception of cinema having superseded

²⁵ Quijano de Manila, "The Nation: 1965," *Philippines Free Press*, 12 June 1965, 2.

²⁶ Felice P. Sta. Maria, "Foods and Wares for the Road," *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, vol. 8, ed. Alfredo Roces (Quezon City, Philippines: Lahing Pilipino, 1977-1978), 2224.

that of theater, the spectators of 1960s Manila no longer behave as if the characters on the screen would adjust their actions to their responses. Akin to the consumers of the commodities in Avenida Rizal, these spectators enter the movie house with the assumption that the film narrative is a mass product, which adheres to a prescribed template. Part of their pleasure in being entertained comes from the fulfillment of their expectations, which simulates the regenerative solace of domestic space. Unfolding in the sanctuary of a darkened room amid the irreproachability of a glittering screen, the interiority of the cinematic experience assumes a form of intimate exteriority.

Unlike in the historical period before the Pacific War, the urban residents of 1960s Manila no longer visit the theater to be gazed at as models of prestige. Their proclivity for collective anonymity reveals how social value has shifted from prestige, which requires visibility to an envious gaze, to popularity, which entails participation in an amorphous mass. The anonymity of the darkened theater is a site where the imagined seriality of popularity can be conceived. Because it obscures the magnitude of the crowd gathered inside, it allows spectators to envisage an infinite series of bodies simultaneously performing the same activity. Through this imagined seriality, individuals can attain the transcendence of having exceeded the necessity of everyday life without renouncing the mundaneness of their membership in a crowd.

The most popular movie houses in the downtown area are often packed with the bodies of spectators. Whenever all the seats inside the venue have been occupied, the box office that guards its entrance posts the sign, 'S.R.O.' or 'Standing Room Only.'²⁷ Individuals that insist on entering the theater despite the large size of the audience are forced to sit on the small steps in between the ordered sections of seats or stand in the narrow aisle behind the last row in the section. Drawn by its force of popularity, they are willing to forgo comfort in submitting themselves to the dense communal experience of watching a movie spectacle in a crowded theater.

Despite the engrossing realism of its images, they are not entirely absorbed by this spectacle. The soreness and numbness from the awkward positions that their bodies assume for the duration of the movie interrupt their complete surrender to its world. The imagined seriality of popularity may be enflashed in a movie house that is Standing Room Only. But it is the communal, sensorial experience of bodies packed together, which seldom transpires in the frenetic urban landscape beyond its enclosure, that accelerates the tendency towards community.

MOVIE STARDOM

The historical moment catches the tail end of the Tagalog movie industry's heyday in the 1950s and early 1960s, when major local studios Sampaguita, LVN, Premiere, and Lebran dominated the imagination and experience of everyday life. The most successful film studio is Sampaguita Pictures, which is renowned for producing highly popular costumed fantasies such as Manuel Conde's internationally acclaimed, Agfacolor historical epic *Genghis Khan*.²⁸ The productions of Sampaguita Pictures would premiere with a glamorous parade of movie stars at the monumental Life Theater on Quezon Boulevard, next to Plaza Miranda. Attracting audiences with equal allure and familiarity, movie stars are commodities that enable studios to increase the

²⁷ See *Philippines Free Press*, January 1962, 32-33 and 36.

²⁸ Jessie B. Garcia, "The Golden Decade of Filipino Movies," *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila, Philippines: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1983), 44.

probability of success of their productions amid an unpredictable market.²⁹ Because popularity is ungovernable and uncertain, film studios must rely on set templates for movie spectacles that feature their stars. With repeated plotlines and characterizations of minimal variation, these templates afford their audiences the comfort of being able to anticipate how the spectacle will unfold in the sanctuary of the theater. The efficacy of the spectacle derives less from the unique newness it presents for spectators than from the emotional affinity the spectators develop with the narrative and its protagonists.

Movie stardom is the new configuration of social prestige in 1960s Manila. In its earlier form, social prestige was based on wealth and status. Individuals would ascend through the established hierarchy by accumulating luxury goods for public display, which enabled their standing to acquire more value. Social prestige is now founded on popularity, which allows the transcendence of infinite commonality through the mundaneness of mass activity. By sharing an affinity for their favorite movie stars, audiences are able to participate in an imagined multitude of likeminded spectators. Movie stardom provides models of emulation for ordinary individuals to exceed the necessity of everyday life by refashioning their appearance, gesture, and lifestyle.

Images of movie stars circulate throughout the public spaces of everyday life as visual commodities, whose striking visibility enables them to stand out from the unremitting bustle of the metropolis. In the 1960s, the most popular actors are Fernando Poe Jr. and Joseph Estrada, whose personas are embodiments of the anomie and disquiet of youth typical of this historical moment. On the screen, Fernando Poe Jr. typically assumes the character of an incorruptible, taciturn individual, who, through the course of the narrative, avenges his oppression by nefarious forces.³⁰ In his movies, Joseph Estrada tends to play social misfits, whose outlook and behavior have been roughened by their experience of poverty.³¹ Having gained widespread significance as cultural archetypes, the position of these cinematic personas in relation to the dominant hierarchy challenges the norms of possibility for self-transformation.

In contrast to the glitter of social prestige, which relies on the complete suppression of the unpleasant basic conditions of existence, the allure of movie stardom exists partly because it exhibits elements of its mundane origins. Reflecting the paradoxical duality of popularity, the movie stars of the 1960s stand apart from the multitude while continuing to belong to it. Their cinematic personas vigorously transcend the circumstances of poverty and oppression without ever purging them entirely from the makeup of their identity. Instead of divesting individuals of their productive capacities as Debord argues, movie spectacles amplify the scope of possibility by offering these viable models for emulation. Because traces of everyday circumstances remain visible in them, the images of movie stars foster the notion among the public that the mundane could suddenly be transmuted into the extraordinary. The allure of the movie star derives from this transformative potential, which is shaped by a stance of defiance towards the established norms of hierarchy and advancement.

The personas of movie stars are formed from the consonance of their onscreen adventures with their real-life experiences. Every visible aspect of their quotidian personality, including every gesture and action that they perform in public, contributes to the composition of the spectacle that they present. Because their personas feature traces of everyday life, with which the majority of the population can identify, individuals are able to foster an affinity for them.

²⁹ Richard Dyer, *Stars*, new ed. (London, United Kingdom: British Film Institute, 1998), 11.

³⁰ See films like *Markado* (1960).

³¹ Estrada's representative works from this period would include *Asiong Salonga* (1961) and *Gerun Busabos, Ang Batang Quiapo* (1964).

Richard Dyer suggests that the allure of movie stars could be based on what Weber understands as charisma but without its accompanying political will. Weber explains how charismatic figures rise to prominence regardless of their wealth or status because charisma bears an intangible, exceptional allure that is almost divine or magical in character.³² Weber's theories were conceived in a historical period when public figures assumed the form of transcendent demigods. The transcendental quality of 1960s charisma could be understood as being shaped by the commonality of its mundane origins. Founded on the paradoxical duality of popularity, the pull of charisma allows movie stars to garner widespread appeal as models of aspiration and emulation.

With monumental personalities, which dominate the popular imagination of them, movie stars straddle fiction and fact. The immediate assumption is that movie stars, being mass commodities of the culture industry, validate the established order, and yet the movie stars of 1960s Manila reinforce norms while transgressing them.³³ Attaining value without reliance on the traditional means of financial wealth or social status, their presence in the world broadens existing possibilities by demonstrating how dominant norms could be interrogated and negotiated. Popular films featuring movie stars are principal examples of how the prevalent form of everyday spectacle is not only meant to be viewed and examined but also to be experienced and enacted. By developing an affinity with movie stars, whom they desire to emulate, spectators are able to participate in the unfolding of movie spectacles. Instead of merely immersing ordinary individuals in a fleeting, dynamic experience, the spectacles of movie stardom impel them to the continuous, transformative process of refashioning their identity.

Distinguished by the possibilities for transformation that they incarnate in their public persona, the national politicians of the 1960s are like movie stars whose spectacle absorbs the attention and interest of the multitudes of Filipinos. Nick Joaquin's description of the public display of Manila Mayor Arsenio Lacson's effigy reveals how national politicians attempt to tap into the popularity of movie stardom by presenting themselves as extensions of its possibilities into the political sphere. "A blaze of electric bulbs framed the portraits of the candidates, full length, in full color, in action, in the style started by Lacson: the giant figures jutting right out of the frame, waving a hand, or pointing at the beholder, or striding forward into the air."³⁴ Assuming legible poses of motion and vitality, national politicians recognize that their seemingly mundane gestures and actions bear the potential to be apprehended as consumable images. Their popular personas are constructed through the accretion of commodified narratives of their qualifications, accomplishments, and promises that circulate in the public culture.

Embodying the central tendency of this historical moment, the most prominent politicians during this period are youthful, spontaneous, and energetic figures. News photographs in local periodicals like to depict them in an array of vigorous poses, chatting and orating with various types of lively expressions etched on their faces. Configured as models for emulation, whose appearances and gestures are consumed like commodities, these public figures present

³² Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York, U.S.A.: Free Press of Glencoe/Collier-Macmillan, 1964), 358.

³³ See Emanuel Levy, "Social Attributes of American Movie Stars," *Media, Culture, and Society* 12 (1990): 247-267.

³⁴ Quijano de Manila, "Ayos Na Ang Buto-Buto," *Reportage on Politics* (Manila, Philippines: National Bookstore, 1981), 203.

themselves as active builders of the infrastructure of the nation. Beyond the precariousness of words and the ambivalence of promises, they seem to be capable of translating vision to reality. They are recognized in the public culture as being dynamic, a quality that has become equated with the capacity for transformation.

Filipino politicians vie to be identified with the youth, an important segment of the electorate. The portly provincial governor and later national senator Benigno Aquino Jr. enralls the public with his youthful dynamism. The idealistic heir of President Ramon Magsaysay, Senator Raul Manglapus assembles a third force to the dominant political parties, the Party for Philippine Progress, which strives to garner the support of the Filipino youth with its optimistic discourse about the urgency of change in the established order. For Nick Joaquin, 1950s Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay and Manila Mayor Arsenio Lacson epitomized the new, dynamic type of national leader appropriate to the historical moment. Joaquin contrasts Magsaysay and Lacson with the dominant political figure before the Pacific War, Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon, whom he characterizes as being imperious and jaded.³⁵ According to Joaquin, national leaders during Quezon's time were considered to be demigods whose unique talent and upbringing bestowed on them the quality and right to govern.³⁶ This impression corresponded to the perception of modern forces during the 1930s as being governable only by transcendent figures.

Gaining fame as a radio commenter and newspaper columnist who would lambast corruption and incompetence in the government, Arsenio Lacson was typified by his "strenuous style." Rugged, brash, and vigorous in disposition, he was like "a brute wind hurtling through a wasteland of old men."³⁷ Ramon Magsaysay captivated the nation with his staunch integrity and earthy magnetism, which formed into a collective the disparate segments of the populace that usually refrained from participating in the political sphere. "Into his Great Crusade, Magsaysay had drawn the press, the intelligentsia, the businessmen, the church, and a lot of people previously indifferent to politics—a motley mass that ranged from college boys and society girls to writers and movie actors, each group forming a movement that helped swell the following, not to mention the finances, of the crusade."³⁸ Through the movie stardom of this national politician, the transformative potential of the multitude became circumscribed in the voting power of an electorate.

The public personas of national politicians differ from those of movie stars in that their actuaciones uphold the established order by modifying its configuration without overturning its hierarchies. The two Philippine presidents during the 1960s adopt this pretense of transcendent action by incorporating aspects of political reform and social transformation into their government programs. Appropriating connotative terms like 'democratic revolution,' the Liberal Party's Diosdado Macapagal plans to remake Filipino society through his New Era programs, which will implement his policies on land reform and trade liberalization. Presenting himself as an individual who has broken from the cyclical time of poverty and underdevelopment in the Philippines, he envisions the nation as reproducing his own personal trajectory from indigence to success. His critics in the local newspapers assess him as being long on vision but short on

³⁵ Quijano de Manila, "In This Corner: Arsenio Lacson," *Gloria Diaz and Other Delineations* (Quezon City, Philippines: National Bookstore, 1977), 33.

³⁶ De Manila, "Arsenio Lacson," 34.

³⁷ De Manila, "Arsenio Lacson," 33.

³⁸ Quijano de Manila, "The Winners '61," *Reportage on Politics*, 52.

execution, a public figure that personifies the disjuncture between visionary words and concrete actions.

His successor, Ferdinand Marcos of the Nacionalista Party, campaigns for the presidency on the promise of restoring to the nation an image of greatness. With the goal of realizing his slogan, “Stop the era of hunger and fast-forward the Filipino,” Marcos focuses during his first administration on the monumental tasks of providing R & R, or Roads and Rice, to alleviate poverty and modernize infrastructure. He sculpts for the public a persona of himself as a vigorous, youthful, and dynamic leader, although he is reported to lack Quezon and Magsaysay’s charisma. The hundreds of pushups that Marcos claims to perform regularly for fitness are meant to project an ability to harness the productive energies of the nation. In the early years of his government, he redeploys all the available resources of the state for the purposes of development. When he declares, “no progress can be possible until actuated by the human will,”³⁹ Marcos is insisting that modern visions be matched with decisive actions. His redeployment of resources and insistence on decisiveness enable the state to enlarge its dominion over the archipelago such that the machinery of Martial Law could easily be implemented to further development by suppressing dissent.

Their personification as figures of transformation deprives the multitude of its own transformative potential when their concentration of political possibilities causes the majority to depend on their agency for improving the established order. Through the irresistible allure of their movie stardom, the collective faith of the populace in their capabilities facilitates their promulgation of neoliberal capitalism and despotic sovereignty for realizing their visions of national development.

Embodying the tenacious dynamism of 1960s Manila, Manila Mayor Antonio J. Villegas is a physically imposing figure. Standing six feet, he owns a broad, boyish face with the tough jaw of a brawler and a mole on its left cheek.⁴⁰ Another one of President Magsaysay’s protégés and adherents, Villegas likes to style himself as a popular movie star whose valiant feats will bring salvation to a once glorious city now mired in poverty, underdevelopment, and sordidness. He endeavors to rekindle the promise of Manila. The symbol of his office is a sunburst because, he explains, “the sun is the source of life, light, and energy.”⁴¹ Garbed in his trademark plain red shirt, he mouths his catchphrase of salutation and triumph, ‘Yeba!’⁴²

Exhibiting movie stardom’s duality of ordinariness and transcendence, Villegas’ public persona celebrates his simple origins. Having risen from the blighted communities of Tondo at the heart of Manila, Villegas is described as such: “He has daring and determination—afire with ambition, impatient with the humdrum, in a hurry to grow up, always on the lookout for the quickest way to get where he wants to go, never letting any opportunity pass unexploited, always competing with his elders and cashing in on his youth.”⁴³ Driven by restless ardor, he strives to overcome the hierarchy of age out of the conviction that he alone possesses the capabilities to introduce change to the established order. Time for him is experienced as a constraint, whose reality he must infuse with activity so that possibilities could be afforded a concrete presence.

³⁹ *Fookien Times* 1967, 49.

⁴⁰ Quijano de Manila, “Take-Over in Manila,” *Reportage on Politics*, 90.

⁴¹ Quijano de Manila, “The Manila of His Affections,” *Philippines Free Press*, 26 June 1965, 50.

⁴² See Antonio J. Villegas, *Building a Better Manila* (Manila, Philippines: 1963).

⁴³ Napoleon G. Rama, “Go! Go! Go!” *Philippines Free Press*, 30 March 1968, 2.

His unrelenting pursuit of activity is propelled by the belief that the trajectory of development could easily become undone.

Villegas proudly proclaims that his policies are “all government, no politics,”⁴⁴ in other words, visionary language joined with effective action. Articulating his vision of modern Manila, the mayor asserts, “A city progresses on motion, not on stagnation.”⁴⁵ As part of his urban renewal program, which he christens ‘*Punyagi sa Kaunlaran*,’⁴⁶ Villegas aims to purge the cityscape of its undesirable elements of filth, noise, disease, illegality, and disorder. He believes in beautifying the urban landscape by planting trees, paving roads, covering drains, burying wires, building parks, and eradicating slums. Echoing the clean-up campaign of the People’s Action Party in 1960s Singapore, this program of urban renewal invokes the logic of sanitary modernity with its ideals of order, health, beauty, and morality.

To rid the streets of technologies that cause congestion and pollution, he has unruly jeepneys banned and smoke-belching vehicles impounded. To cleanse the urban landscape of sounds that bring cacophony to its daily rhythms, he disallows the “public nuisance” of horns and loudspeakers. To free the sidewalks for the passage of pedestrians, he demands the strict enforcement of the law proscribing the use of sidewalks for illegal parking and automobile repair. The mayor closes stalls and stores without the proper operating licenses so that public spaces may conform to modern norms of commercial conduct.⁴⁷ Because ‘Standing Room Only’ audiences pose a fire hazard, he prohibits them from the interiors of movie theaters. He makes smoking illegal in public spaces such as theaters, clubs, factories, hotels, restaurants, stores, elevators, and buses. Every effort is aimed at reclaiming and reconfiguring the cityscape for the purposes of development. When Mayor Villegas declares, “*Sumunod sa batas nang tayo’y maligtas*,”⁴⁸ he is placing his faith in the capacity of modern norms of propriety and legality to emancipate the populace from its cycle of squalor and underdevelopment. He strives to demonstrate how the promise of movie stardom could be fulfilled with a happy ending to his narrative of transformation.

Despite these tangible accomplishments, Antonio Villegas nurtures a handful of unfulfilled plans in his mind. Aside from rehabilitating Intramuros as a cultural center, he intends to construct, for fifteen million pesos, a five-story residential building in North Harbor with a rooftop garden and a ground-floor supermarket.⁴⁹ Failing to be realized, these visions are shelved alongside other projects whose design and execution are carelessly accomplished. When his government relocates eighty thousand squatters from Tondo, Intramuros, and North Harbor in 1963, their new residence of Sapang Palay, thirty-seven kilometers from Manila,⁵⁰ is discovered to lack adequate facilities for housing, food, water, electricity, medicine, transportation, and employment.⁵¹ Administrative ineptitude causes Manila to suffer from a garbage disposal problem in the middle of the decade.

⁴⁴ Andres Cristobal Cruz, “A Failure in Political Nerve,” *Weekly Graphic*, 19 January 1966, 18.

⁴⁵ Felix M. Caliwag, “Go,” *Sunday Times Magazine*, 31 January 1965, 27.

⁴⁶ “Striving for Progress.”

⁴⁷ A.C. Cruz, 18.

⁴⁸ “Follow the law for our liberation.”

⁴⁹ See Villegas.

⁵⁰ Michael Pinches, “Modernization and the Quest for Modernity: Architectural Form, Squatter Settlements, and the New Society in Manila.” *Cultural Identity and Urban Change in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays*. Ed. Marc Askew and William S. Logan. Victoria, Australia: Deakin UP, 1994), 26.

⁵¹ Aprodicio A. Laquian, *Slums are for People: The Barangay Magsaysay Pilot Project in Urban Community Development* (Manila, Philippines: University of the Philippines College of Public Administration, 1969), 11

Rendered visible as knowledge in the public culture, rumors of these unrealized visions of development disclose how the movie stardom of national politicians can diminish the possibilities for transcendence and autonomy of ordinary individuals even while it gathers them into a collective. The personas of national politicians belong to the multiplicity of mass commodities that proliferates throughout the cityscape in order to exploit the new force of popularity wielded by the enlarged populace. Their alluring yet impotent words exemplify how Debord would conceive of the spectacle, as the seizure of transformative potential.

PART V – MILLENNIAL SOUTHEAST ASIA
CHAPTER 8 – ZONING THE MEGACITY: THE COSMOPOLITAN MODERNITY OF
SUPERMALLS

In 2005, credible rumors surfaced that Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had manipulated the outcome of the past national election. This case of electoral fraud was the latest in a series of allegations of malfeasance, which prompted multitudes of Filipinos to call for her resignation. Arroyo had ascended to the presidency in 2001 through a People Power uprising, in which the amassing of ordinary citizens on the streets of the megalopolis led to the overthrow of her popularly elected predecessor, the former movie star Joseph Estrada. Unlike in the prior uprising, the crowds demanding for her ouster never swelled to a size that would have compelled her to abdicate her position. The failed prospect of revolution corresponded with the rise to dominance of the shopping mall and the mass media in the Philippines.

Since the early 1990s, shopping malls have developed into bustling public spaces of commerce and leisure, where urban residents with increased purchasing power can gather and interact. In any one of the most popular supermalls, eight thousand merchants are estimated to serve more than two million people on a single weekend day.¹ The shopping mall has transformed into the dominant hub of social life in the burgeoning megacities of Southeast Asia, which have benefitted from the gradual shift of the world market towards China and Asia. In this chapter, I examine how the centrality of shopping malls to the daily rhythms of millennial Manila may have contributed to the absence of transformative politics.

The original shopping malls, in their current configuration and nomenclature, emerged as the U.S. population relocated to sprawling suburban areas during the post-World War 2 economic boom in order to flee from the perceived blight of inner cities. According to social historian Lizabeth Cohen, this mass migration coincided with the development of consumer society in the United States as pre-packaged suburban family homes were sold to Americans along with their requisite automobiles, televisions, and refrigerators.² The rise of shopping malls in Metropolitan Manila has corresponded with the movement to the suburbs and the expansion of the metropolis since the 1960s and the growth in consumption during the 2000s. But instead of being isolated in the outskirts of the cityscape, they form the heart of the urban nucleus.

Configured as democratic enclosures, shopping malls in Metro Manila accommodate a broad abundance and variety of bodies and practices. Their incorporation of disparate commercial and leisure spaces in the model of the shopping mall that was developed in Western Europe and North America is not entirely new. It was prefigured by the department stores in Shanghai during the early twentieth century, which, emulating Shanghai's amusement parks, offered a multiplicity of commercial and leisure activities. Contrary to dominant critical and cultural theories of commerce and consumption, the shopping mall is not a domain of carnival, spectacle, or fantasy but a venue for a more complex process of routine and reprieve. In addition, the emergence of the shopping mall in Manila appears to coincide with the advent of digital media and video gaming. Although the virtual realities they present do not replace actual experience, their characteristic modes of visual and spatial perception shape the use of the shopping mall. Less exceptional in character than the consumer spaces that preceded it in prominence and popularity, the shopping mall unfolds as

¹ Johanna Paola D. Poblete, "Mall Evolution," *Business World*, 19 December 2005, S5/6.

² See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, U.S.A.: Vintage, 2004).

a new form of domestic space, a secondary home for urban residents who spend a significant part of their time outside the normative enclosures of work and domicile.

In this chapter, I uncover how shopping malls in Metro Manila have contained public life by analyzing their reconfiguration and incorporation of the different logics, functions, and processes of prior commercial and leisure spaces, which I focused on in the preceding chapters. I start the chapter by describing the blank monumentality of supermalls, which have become part of the routine of everyday life in the megalopolis. I examine their orientation towards comprehensiveness and completeness. I discuss how the rise to dominance of mass media networks has caused the figures of social prestige to shift from movie stars to media celebrities. These changes are situated amid the increased purchasing power of urban residents due to earnings from call centers and overseas remittances. Expressed through the mode of cosmopolitan sophistication, the greater global awareness of Filipinos is managed through shopping malls that feature elliptical corridors to stimulate mobility and manufactured parks to recreate nature.

MEGACITY MANILA

The early twenty-first century has been characterized in news magazines and research reports as a period of large-scale urbanization, particularly in the Asian region, the new center of the global economy. The mass migration of people into metropolitan areas has produced an increase in megacities, which are defined by a population of over ten million.³ Over the next several decades, the global economy will grow more dependent on metropolitan areas, as a wider number of urban residents obtain larger purchasing power for consumption.⁴ The international news media tend to describe the economic trajectory of burgeoning megacities, many of which are part of emerging national economies, as being beset by congestion, crime, unrest, and underdevelopment.⁵ Manila is frequently cited as the foremost example of an unmanageable megalopolis, whose seemingly insurmountable problems are hampering the Philippines' prospects as a dynamic site for capital investment and economic progress.

Present-day Metropolitan Manila's most crowded shopping malls are all located along its main thoroughfare, Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, which is a broad, bustling highway that extends southward and northward over twenty-four kilometers. More commonly known by its acronym, EDSA, it connects the different cities and municipalities comprising Metro Manila with each other. Despite regularly being clogged with unruly vehicles, it is the primary conduit of movement throughout the megalopolis for its more than twelve million residents.⁶

³ Richard Dobbs, et al., *Urban World: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities* (McKinsey Global Institute, 2011).

⁴ Richard Dobbs, et al., *Urban World: Cities and the Rise of the Consuming Class* (McKinsey Global Institute: 2012).

⁵ See, for instance, Jenny Kleeman, "Manila: A Megacity where the Living Must Share with the Dead," *The Guardian* 15 October 2010, retrieved from: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/15/philippines-overpopulation-crisis>>.

⁶ In the 2010 national census, the population of the National Capital Region or Metropolitan Manila was 11.85 million, with a growth rate of 1.78% over the previous decade. At the end of the 1960s, the population of the same geographical area was nearly 4 million. See Philippines, National Statistics Office, *2010 Census of Population and Housing* (Manila, Philippines: National Statistics Office, 2010), retrieved from: <<http://www.census.gov.ph/content/population-119-million-was-recorded-national-capital-region-results-2010-census-population>>.

Before the 1960s, EDSA was officially called Highway 54, a two-lane circumferential thoroughfare that cut through fields of wild cogon grass.⁷ The gradual migration of the urban populace from the congested and corrupted heart of Greater Manila to the flourishing *arrabales* or suburbs of Rizal province extended the boundaries of the cityscape. Shaping the idea of Manila in the public culture, this mass internal relocation has increased the importance of EDSA as the main conduit of passage, which interconnects the urban area's different localities, such as Quezon City, San Juan, Pasig, Mandaluyong, Pasay, and Makati. From this agglomeration of cities and municipalities, President Ferdinand Marcos established Metropolitan Manila, the National Capital Region, in 1975. EDSA becomes inscribed in the collective imagination as the site of two popular revolutions in 1986 and 2001, which overthrows the corrupt, despotic governments of Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada. During the several days when these revolutions unfold, stretches of the highway are emptied of vehicles dispersed in transit and occupied by bodies assembled in protest as multitudes of Filipinos fight to translate the ideals of democracy into reality. These energies for protest have since been diverted to the shopping malls that line the thoroughfare.

The uncontrolled development and overpopulation of Metro Manila has resulted in deficient infrastructure, which strains to accommodate the profusion of vehicles that congests the streets. For most of the day, EDSA is swarming with thousands of vehicles of diverse shapes, types, and colors headed for various destinations. The flow of traffic is snarled up at the points of the highway where private bus companies compete with one another for passengers. Bunched together at designated bus stops, giant buses impede the movement of the vehicles behind them while waiting for their interiors to be filled with the bodies of commuters. These buses discharge plumes of thick smoke from their mufflers, which force commuters to cover their noses and mouths with towels or handkerchiefs. Without concrete action from government and business towards the enforcement of laws, the air in Metro Manila is at hazardous levels due to the combined pollution from the movement of vehicles, operation of factories, and construction of buildings.⁸

With scarce greenery, concrete and metal are EDSA's pervasive motifs. Dotted the sides of the highway, dilapidated commercial buildings are being joined by lustrous residential skyscrapers, whose incessant construction underscores the burgeoning national economy. The walls of buildings, sides of vehicles, and surfaces of billboards have blackened and aged from the dust, soot, and smog of the megalopolis. Marked by congestion, heat, noise, and pollution, the cityscape is inhospitable to pedestrians, who are deterred from browsing for products or congregating with friends on the streets. As the overwhelmed cityscape has expanded with the swelling population, public commercial and leisure activity has been driven indoors, where the experience of urban life is more manageable and pleasant.

Located on different stretches of EDSA, with an average area of approximately one dozen hectares, Metro Manila's most popular shopping malls are shaped like colossal blocks of reinforced concrete. Amid a gray cityscape destitute of majestic landmarks, their monumental physical presence occupies the panorama of their immediate surroundings. Their monumental presence in the cityscape signifies their importance as the center of social life in the megalopolis. With the expansion of the cityscape, these central public spaces encompass entire geographical districts larger than a single commercial street, which are far in distance from each other. Their centrality coincides with the dominance of domestic consumption and neoliberal capitalism in the Philippine economy.

⁷ Sylvia Mendez Ventura, "The E.D.S. in Edsa," *Ragtime in Kamuning: Sari-Sari Essays* (Manila: Anvil, 1993), 43.

⁸ Evangeline C. Santiago, "The Air in Manila could be Cancerous," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 16 July 2013, retrieved from: <<http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/114205/the-air-in-metro-manila-could-be-cancerous>>.

The monumentality of shopping malls is no longer founded on the baroque aesthetics of their architecture because, unlike the department stores and movie theaters of past commercial streets and squares, their exterior follows a utilitarian design. In previous historical periods, information was circulated less extensively and efficiently without the reach of the mass media and its communication infrastructure. Important urban spaces such as government and commercial buildings needed to emphasize their significance in the cityscape with their physical presence and appearance. Due to the brute functionality of their exterior, shopping malls do not transmit values like state monuments but establish their presence without compelling individuals to contemplate their appearance. Their dominant presence comes not from their stylishness or ornateness but from their enormity in relation to nearby structures. Their monumentality has no pretense to dialogue with its surrounding environment. It does not aim to entice pedestrians to cease movement and stay outdoors while their eyes regard its exterior, which would only delay their entry to its interior. Denying contemplation and absorption, the monumentality of their exterior derives value not from its allure but from its blankness. Indifferent to baroque excess, which signifies traditional Filipino aesthetics,⁹ blankness becomes indicative of the flourishing of capitalism and therefore of progress.

Paco Underhill, a retail consultant for shopping malls, has ruefully observed that suburban shopping malls in the United States, which have influenced the design of shopping malls in Metro Manila, possess blank façades with no windows, plants, or sidewalks on their exterior.¹⁰ According to Underhill, the exterior design of shopping malls does not reflect their interior activity. The incongruence between the interior and the exterior is a result of the enclosure of the interior from the outside, which resulted when stores that lined the street were made to face not the street but other stores.¹¹ This disjointed relation to the street, which urban planners had treated as the principal site of social life in the city, produces the physical enclosure of the shopping mall as a world-into-itself. The shopping mall acts as a supersession and erasure of the commercial street by directing public activity indoors, within the millennial megalopolis' new center of social life.

Configured to draw and keep bodies indoors, shopping malls convey the idea that their commercial structure is meant not to be viewed but to be inhabited. Because their interiors are comfortable and spacious, they are treated as destinations that urban residents travel to visit for a prolonged duration. Having been incorporated as nodes into the regular trajectories of urban residents, they need not attract individuals with their appearance because their usage has become profoundly entrenched in the routine of everyday life. Simultaneously monumental and mundane, they stand as impassive images of the regularity and clarity of an aspired progress and prosperity amid the bustle and congestion of the megalopolis.¹²

The blank monumentality of shopping malls contrasts with the irresistible allure of advertising billboards, which dominates Metro Manila's cityscape. Most of these giant billboards feature the immense, captivating images of celebrity endorsers of commercial products. Infusing the ashen skyline with luminous color, they are the only visible spectacles along the busy main thoroughfare of EDSA. Because state and commercial structures are typically nondescript in appearance, these giant advertising billboards easily capture the attention of commuters and motorists especially at night, when their bright illumination

⁹ See Rene Javellana, Fernando Nakpil Zialcita, and Elizabeth V. Reyes, *Filipino Style* (Singapore: Archipelago, 1997).

¹⁰ Paco Underhill, *The Call of the Mall* (New York, U.S.A.: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 21.

¹¹ Underhill, 19.

¹² According to its own narrative, the first SM Shopping Mall succeeded despite the political and economic turmoil in the Philippines in the period approaching the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. See "About Us," The SM Store, retrieved from: <<http://www.smdeptstore.com/content/about>>.

generates radiance in the surrounding area. Despite their magnitude and luminosity, they are designed not so much to add vibrancy to the urban landscape than to accentuate the significance of commercial products and their celebrity endorsers. The blankness of monumental buildings such as shopping malls enhances the allure of other urban structures because it prevents the eyes of commuters and motorists from fixating on them. It induces bodies to be drawn within their interior domain, unlike the allure of advertising billboards, which compels the eyes of passers-by to gravitate towards their pure exteriority. Unable to gaze at them for an extended duration due to the unremitting bustle and congestion of the megalopolis, commuters and motorists are kept from complete absorption in their reality.

THE NEOLIBERAL ENCLOSURE OF ZONING

The configuration of Metropolitan Manila's shopping malls is an amalgamation of different forms of urban spaces, which had been distinct and autonomous in previous historical periods. Through their daily usage by the population of the cityscape, these shopping malls have become the dominant sites where social identities and relations are formed and negotiated. Their circumscribed form of spatial and temporal enclosure enables them to perform a miscellany of important functions for their visitors.

Appropriating an intrinsic logic of the department store and the self-service supermarket, the shopping mall is typically configured as a circumscribed space with a safe, comfortable, air-conditioned atmosphere. Its interior domain derives its efficacy as an enclosure by maintaining a contrast with its exterior environment even while remaining open to the continuous arrival and circulation of bodies, goods, and finances. As a walled enclosure, the shopping mall provides sanctuary to urban residents from the heat, humidity, congestion, crime, pollution, and poverty of the tropical megalopolis.

Victor Gruen, the architect who designed the original shopping mall in the 1950s, envisaged it as an enclosure, a city-into-itself, which, isolated from the rest of the urban landscape, stands out from it. Gruen called for modern individuals to be liberated from the "unsightliness" of structures characteristic of the cityscape such as billboards, signs, alleys, garbage, loading docks, telephone poles, electric wires, smoke stacks, and mechanical equipment.¹³ For Gruen, the shopping mall is able to overcome the clutter of modernization by reproducing the city without these undesirable realities. It shelters individuals from the urban blight of crime, disease, poverty and violence by presenting them with a safe and pleasant environment, which retains the sophistication of metropolitan life. Especially in the case of shopping malls in Metro Manila, where many crimes occur without impunity due to the ineffectiveness of the police and the judiciary, its fortified enclosure guarantees security for wary businesses and shoppers.

Aside from adopting the norms of order and cleanliness embodied in the supermarket, the shopping mall furnishes its customers with the experience of comfort and luxury of the department store. Emulating the department store of 1930s Singapore, it must conceal the unsightly and arduous conditions of material labor and everyday life from the normal field of vision in order to generate a pleasurable atmosphere. It upgrades the configuration of the department store in that it overcomes the physical limitations to profitability with its more spacious floor area and less regimented product arrangement. Because of this more expansive configuration, bodies are able to meander throughout its domain without immediate constraints to the duration of their activity. They can navigate the atriums and corridors of the

¹³ Victor Gruen and Larry Smith, *Shopping Towns U.S.A.: The Planning of Shopping Centers* (New York, U.S.A.: Reinhold, 1960), 75; Jeffrey M. Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004), 128.

shopping mall without ever having to deal with the inconvenience of cramped stalls or the danger of speeding vehicles.¹⁴ In the shopping mall of millennial Manila, bodies are free from the threat of unexpected and uncontrollable violence. The contingency of the cityscape is made more manageable through the leisurely rhythm that the mall establishes.

Instead of merely suppressing the perceived sordidness and uncertainty of the factory and the bazaar, the shopping mall transcends the brute systematization and commercialism of the department store. It does not so much as reproduce the department store's luxurious and mobile comfort than sublimate it into the experience of a utopic city. More effective than visionary plans for constructing a new capital that have been frustrated by entrenched incompetence and corruption, the shopping mall represents an exemplary domain where progress and prosperity are achievable realities. In a nation such as the Philippines, utopia might be difficult to imagine given the historical failure of economic development, which has resulted in an oscillatory, equivocal form of modernity. Utopia often means a home within a gated residential subdivision far from the congestion and pollution of Metro Manila. The shopping mall succeeds in supplanting the ungovernable disorder of a third-world megalopolis with the contained utopia of a world-class city. Its utopic quality comes not from its coherent realization of an urban paradise that is envisaged at a transcendent distance from everyday life. It derives instead from its legible distillation of cosmopolitan values of global citizenship, which otherwise would stay incomprehensible due to the heterogeneity of the cityscape. Even if the utopic city is unattainable as a comprehensive spatial reality, its seemingly transcendent possibility is made tangible in the domain of the shopping mall.

This utopic quality only becomes palpable due to the potent experience of enclosure that is produced. The logic of enclosure was inscribed into the configuration of the original shopping malls, which were cloistered from their immediate environment. Shopping malls were initially designed to function as enclosures from the harsh weather of their geographic locations. Victor Gruen's unrealized early 1950s design for the Montclair shopping center in Houston proposed a covered street as a response to the humidity of Texas.¹⁵ Based on Gruen's design, the first shopping mall, the Southdale Center in Edina, insulated shoppers from the inhospitable, wintry weather of Minnesota. The shopping malls of Southeast Asian cities perform an analogous function as spatial and temporal enclosures, which shelter urban residents from the heat and humidity of the tropical climate.

The typical configuration of the shopping malls in millennial Southeast Asia is designed to intensify the experience of enclosure. Because few visible windows are situated along the main corridors of the mall, its occupants are prevented from gazing outside. The most prominent windows are built into niches on the ceiling such that they allow daylight to filter into the interior, but they are inaccessible to the normal field of vision. By disrupting any attachment that the occupants of the mall can form with the realities continuing to unfold beyond its walls, the lack of windows establishes the interior of the mall as the predominant world for consumers. The displacement of the waning pull of the exterior by the heightened predominance of the interior does not necessarily cause an immersive fantasy to be created where consumers can lose themselves in reverie or euphoria as has been described in critical and cultural theories of shopping malls.¹⁶ Bustling constantly with flows of bodies and goods,

¹⁴ Please see T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Princeton UP, 1986) for a discussion on how the incomprehensibility of the city and its norms could be rendered more legible through a systematic reconfiguration of its spatial and visual experience.

¹⁵ Hardwick, 113.

¹⁶ For example, see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, California, U.S.A.: U of California P, 1993) and Margaret Crawford, "The World in a Shopping Mall," *Variations of a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York, U.S.A.: Hill and Wang, 1992).

the mall is kept from creating an immersive fantasy for consumers because of its ubiquity and centrality in the urban landscape.

In the busy shopping malls of burgeoning Southeast Asian cities, individuals do not inhabit their domain as though rapt in an ecstatic state of play. Contrary to most critical and cultural theories of shopping malls, they are able to wander through the atriums and corridors of the mall without lapsing into a hallucinatory trance. The shopping malls of Southeast Asian cities do not provide an immersive escape from reality because they form an integral element of the routine of everyday life. Similar to the amusement parks of 1930s Singapore, the shopping malls of millennial Southeast Asia draw on the energies of urban commerce and consumption. Although they may include phantasmagorical carnival attractions in order to lure large crowds, the presence of these spectacles is ultimately not meant to distract potential customers from the paramount activity of purchasing commodities. In contrast to amusement parks, shopping malls are oriented less towards reinvigorating bodies for the work regime than towards correlating their movements with the rhythms of the cosmopolitan cityscape and the world market. Albeit with decreased intensity, individuals must negotiate the teeming corridors of the shopping mall like they would navigate the more expansive streets of the urban landscape. While exceptional in its centrality, the mall's mundane character is revealed in how the skill of dealing with the heterogeneity of the mall, with its multitudinous flows of bodies, images, and goods, has become part of the normative capacity needed to subsist amid the contingency of the cityscape. Synchronizing the bimonthly expenditure of their salary to its patterns, consumers become habituated to the seasonal cycle of new clothing fashions and electronic products. Through this correlation of trajectories and temporalities, which refines the style and pace of the movements of bodies, the shopping malls of Southeast Asian cities cultivate cosmopolitan sophistication among urban residents.

Through its walled and air-conditioned environment, the spatial enclosure of the shopping mall engenders the experience of temporal enclosure. Even while it recreates and refines the rhythms of the cosmopolitan cityscape within its domain, the mall enforces its own temporality, which, instead of echoing the relentless pace of urban life, prolongs the duration of time by suspending its awareness. The inaccessibility of transparent windows along its atriums and corridors deprives its occupants of a reminder of the world unfolding outside. Unlike factories for industrial production or terminals for public transportation, which must regiment time to operate with efficiency, the interiors of shopping malls are devoid of large, easily visible clocks. The bright, artificial lighting, which permeates their domain, allows human activity to continue interrupted regardless of the hour. Without windows and clocks to apprise them of the hour, the occupants of the mall are less compelled to adjust their actions to the urgency of deadlines even while their style and pace are synchronized with the bustle of the cityscape. On reprieve from the demands of the work regime, they are free to linger in the world of the shopping mall. But because the mall is a porous enclosure, where flows are continually arriving and departing, they are conscious that the suspension of the temporality of the outside is momentary.

The circumscribed configuration of the shopping mall permits it to contain and influence both physical and perceptual movement. In spite of the concrete walls that enclose its domain, the shopping mall is configured like a symbolic enclosure, which is necessary for it to operate as a public space of commerce and leisure. Adjacent to open-air Metro Rail Transit or MRT stations, the shopping malls of millennial Manila welcome the continuous entry of bodies into their enclosure, which is important not only for their profitability as commercial spaces but also for their centrality as public spaces. Functioning as nodes that the immense flows of bodies in the cityscape routinely traverse, they are bustling hubs of public activity, which accommodate the mobility and dynamism of the urban environment. Their configuration reveals a new form of symbolic enclosure, which, renegotiating or dissolving

the established boundaries between private and public and between inside and outside, submits space to the more inclusive logic of zoning.

Zoning refers to the process of categorizing and organizing space according to different functions. Its logic could be understood as inclusive because, instead of marginalizing or banishing inconsequential and recalcitrant realities through the violence of enclosure, it regards every reality as carrying the potential for productive use. The reconfiguration of space into circumscribed zones aims to magnify the value of a location by improving the coherence of its contents. While this reconfiguration builds on the historical conditions and existing circumstances of this location, it can transform its character as a circumscribed zone by suspending or modifying prevailing norms and arrangements. Notable examples of the geographical application of zoning to national territories would include Export Processing Zones and Special Economic Zones.¹⁷ I see zoning as a term that be used to describe the more fluid negotiation of spatial reality and social identity.

The family corporations that own and run Metro Manila's shopping malls aspire for greater interconnectivity and synergy between their commercial spaces and the urban landscape. The vision of the Ayala Corporation in the middle of the 1990s was for bridges to extend from Salcedo and Legazpi Villages, where businesses were located, to the Ayala Center and to the Mass Rail Transit so that workers could travel unimpeded from their offices in Makati to their homes in Quezon City while passing through the shopping mall.¹⁸ With this tendency towards more profound integration between the various spaces in the megalopolis that residents occupy or traverse through their daily routine, the configuration of the shopping mall would become a convergence between public and domestic space, which embraces modes of practice formerly restricted to one type of space.

The mall embodies a new form of domestic space, which serves as a secondary or complementary home but without the reassuring privacy of the household. Shopping malls have incorporated many of the vital functions that domestic spaces would previously fulfill, including providing venues for sleep with adjoining hotels. Private activities, which would occur in the circumscribed cloister of the household, now transpire in the dynamic theater of the mall such that the mall could be seen as representing a transformation of domestic space. The public performance of formerly secluded activities has caused the renegotiation or dissolution of established categories of space into permeable zones of variance. Diverging from supermarkets, which afford little room for conversation and collectivity, malls contain coffee shops and event halls where individuals can gather and interact. In millennial Manila, commercial space has become reconfigured into a center of social life where individuals find opportunities for relaxation and revitalization in the company of friends and family outside the sanctuary of domestic space. Whereas they would directly return home after work in previous historical periods, urban residents linger in the shopping mall before undertaking their long journey. Transforming the character of collectivity into that of a virtual community, their interconnectivity with each other through social media enables them to be mobile without a diminution in the quality of their social relations. According to an international survey, Filipinos are among the most active users of social media.¹⁹ In the modified privacy of the zoned public space of the mall, their gaze has been diverted from surfaces of spectacles to the screens of smartphones.

¹⁷ See Aihwa Ong, "Zoning Technologies in East Asia," *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 2006), 97-118.

¹⁸ V.S. Bunoan, "Ayala Center Beyond 2000," *Business World*, 13 November 1995, 32.

¹⁹ Doris C. Dumlao, "Filipinos among Most Active in Social Media, Survey Shows," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13 June 2013, retrieved from: <<http://technology.inquirer.net/26335/filipinos-among-the-most-active-in-social-media-survey-shows>>.

Despite its aim to encompass the entirety of the world, the shopping mall can never completely recreate domestic space within its domain. The shopping mall may differ from the amusement park in that its configuration does not impel bodies to exceed their capacities while they expend their energies wandering through its enclosure. Nonetheless, its iteration of domestic space is not strictly cloistered from the transformative flows of the urban landscape. Acting as a disciplinary site of social production, the shopping mall propagates norms of identity and behavior that are informed by ideals of global citizenship. These norms find less significance in their affirmation of familial or local value than in their resonance with transnational realities. The shopping malls of millennial Manila cultivate the ability to negotiate the heterogeneity and complexity of the outside, which forms the basis of cosmopolitan sophistication. Now an intrinsic element of the inside, which causes it to be transformed, the outside is emulated and exhibited through gestures, appearances, and lifestyles that are infused with transcendent meanings.

ONE-STOP SHOPPING

The family corporations that own most of the shopping malls in the Philippines during this historical period have assets extending into different areas of commerce such as banking, real estate, and telecommunications. The most popular shopping malls in Metropolitan Manila are enormous structures christened Supermalls by the Sy family's SM Prime Holdings, which operates approximately forty-five shopping malls throughout the archipelago, alongside dominant retail businesses, banking services, and residential developments.²⁰

The configuration of these shopping malls epitomizes the inherent tendency of capitalism to subsume every possible reality. Fredric Jameson has famously argued that capitalism has attained an expansive configuration, which has penetrated spheres of existence that had formerly been impervious to commodification.²¹ Whereas prior commercial spaces, such as those of 1930s Manila, had demonstrated the capacity of Filipinos to harness modern forces, the commercial spaces of millennial Manila are constructed with the primary purpose of generating profit. This contrast is evident in the visual disparity between the ornate stylishness of 1930s commercial buildings and the blank utilitarianism of millennial shopping malls. The contemporary shopping mall renegotiates or dissolves established categories of space, particularly those delineated for domestic and commercial activity, when it incorporates private practices into its public domain. Embodying the logic of neoliberal capitalism, it signifies the triumph of the world market over communal affinity and national identity.²²

Straddling the border between the cities of Pasig and Mandaluyong in the Ortigas Center,²³ the monumental structure of the enormously popular SM Megamall primarily consists of two massive, rectangular blocks, whose length is parallel to the midway point of EDSA. Designated Mega A and Mega B, these two extensive, six-story buildings are adjoined at their ends by a new annex, the Mega Atrium, which is an expansion of the multilevel bridge connecting the two wings. In the early 2010s, two additional annexes are constructed on the sites of the open-air parking areas fronting each block. Situated near the

²⁰ See the websites of SM Prime Holdings <<http://www.smprime.com/>> and SM Supermalls <<http://www.smsupermalls.com/information>>.

²¹ See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Global Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.: Duke UP, 1991).

²² David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK and New York, U.S.A.: Oxford UP, 2005), 3.

²³ Pobleto, S5/6.

headquarters of the San Miguel Corporation and the Asian Development Bank, SM Megamall is flanked by two luxury shopping malls, Shangri-La Plaza and SM's The Podium, which cater to the nation's social and economic elite.

By convention, the interior of an SM Supermall resembles its exterior in that it is rectangular, plain, and utilitarian. Emulating the logic of the supermarket, the simplicity of its architecture is supposedly meant to heighten the allure of commodities by diminishing the prominence of other realities, which could dampen their influence on consumers.²⁴ Across the vast hall that forms the interior of each building, extensive galleries rising four stories allow individuals to survey the stores located at different sections of the shopping mall. Fastened to rounded metal bars, glass panels serve as transparent parapets, which afford a clear view of several levels. Filtering through the long, undulating skylight built into the roof, daylight complements the bright illumination of the interior. Within the domain of the shopping mall, the visual allure of boutiques and their products is no longer subdued by the bustle and congestion of the city, as was the case in the commercial street of 1960s Manila. Due to the enhanced clarity of this domain, consumers are more able to browse the boutiques of the shopping mall like how they would gaze at the attractions of the amusement park but now across different levels. Facilitated by the contiguous arrangement of boutiques, their eyes can easily drift from one object of sight to another. Instead of resulting in prolonged contemplation, their stillness fulfills an immediate purpose. Once a boutique has captured their interest, their act of observation is accompanied by one of movement towards the boutique, where they can more closely examine its products. These stages in the process of consumption are part of the complex assemblage of operations inscribed into the configuration of the shopping mall.²⁵

SM Supermalls typically do not feature a multiplicity of dazzling spectacles, which would cause consumers to cease their movement around the mall as they surrender to the stillness and duration of complete absorption. The absence of baroque aesthetics in their configuration, which would distract from commercial activity, is intended to allow consumers to form a more definite bond with commodities. At best, the polished surfaces of the interiors of SM Supermalls can offer blurred spectacles from the gleaming reflections of overhead lights and mobile bodies. Bereft of dynamic visual attractions to absorb and immerse individuals, millennial Manila's shopping malls are not characterized by their spectacular experience. Their most alluring spectacles are the commercial films screened in their multiplex cinemas, which are among the wide range of options available to consumers. Incorporating every possible product and service into their domain, they reconfigure commercial space into a three-dimensional database, whose objects are easily accessible and obtainable depending on the necessities of the moment.

The rise to dominance in the Philippines of the shopping mall coincides with that of the personal computer during the early 1990s such that their logics could be seen as entangled. Differing from the haphazard and regimented commercial arrangements of the informal market and the department store, the configuration of the mall resembles that of the database in its collection of objects, which can be approached according to multiple modes and functions.²⁶ Similar to how Lev Manovich conceives of the database, the mall exhibits a tendency towards comprehensiveness and completeness in its expansion to encompass a broad range of products and services.²⁷ In the domain of the mall, the logic of the database corresponds with that of capitalism in the equal value they affix to each object regardless of

²⁴ "The Mall Phenomenon," *Manila Times*, 28 September 2007, A8.

²⁵ Please see the analogous definition of video gaming in Alexander Galloway, *Gaming: Essays in Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: U of Minnesota P, 2006).

²⁶ Lev Manovich, *The Language of the New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: MIT P, 2000), 218-219.

²⁷ Manovich, 224.

its original composition or purpose. Building on Manovich's understanding of the database, I would say that the shopping mall may be hierarchical in its commercial arrangement but this hierarchy is variable and contingent.²⁸

Because the space of the mall emulates the landscape of the city, its enhanced clarity compels individuals to adopt an objective position, which now becomes applied to consumption. Capable of assuming vantage points that would permit them to view different levels simultaneously, it is transcendent and three-dimensional in its perspective. More inclusive as a mode of visual apprehension, it shapes the ability to accommodate heterogeneity and complexity. The modernist mode of apprehending space entailed submitting it to a detached standpoint of rational objectivity, which categorizes and organizes realities according to dichotomies of exclusion and banishment. Because the shopping mall is oriented towards comprehensiveness and completeness, its new mode of 3D consumption does not impose any permanent hierarchies but only prioritizes varying objects based on the demands of the situation. Even without the freedom to influence the contents of stores or the prices of goods, 3D consumption confers authority on the spectator in the form of the capacity to decide on importance. In contrast to spectatorship, which occupies time by causing physical stillness and cognitive absorption, 3D consumption resembles video gaming in that it involves a concrete action directed towards a definite goal.²⁹ Its authority to decide within a limited scope of action suggests that the consumer is never completely distracted but must constantly negotiate the given realities of the shopping mall.

Even more so than the dominant consumer spaces that preceded it, which tried to incorporate the commercial street within their domain, the shopping mall strives to encompass the entirety of the world by featuring a broad range of products and services for various types of consumers. Instead of simply offering standardized products and services, as was the case of the commercial spaces of 1960s Manila, it attempts to target diverse niches in interest and taste. Like the amusement park of 1930s Singapore, it aims to appeal to the heterogeneous urban population. In previous historical periods, individuals needed to brave the undesirable realities of the urban environment such as heat, humidity, and congestion when traveling to the different sections of the city in order to obtain an assortment of items. The residents of the millennial megalopolis who visit the enclosure of SM Megamall are able to accomplish a series of important tasks without being forced to deal with the oppressive weather, traffic, or pollution. The shopping mall affords them the transcendence of fulfilling the requisites of urban life by overcoming the given constraints of the cityscape.

SM Supermalls have been advertised as destinations for "one-stop shopping," where a comprehensive selection of commodities can be found within a single, expansive enclosure. The official SM slogan proudly declares, "We've Got It All For You," a notion that, having been packaged and circulated as a catchy jingle, has become entrenched in the collective imagination. Run by the family of SM Department Store founder Henry Sy, the management of SM Supermalls underscores that "a sense of completeness" is essential to the success of any shopping mall.³⁰ According to this business principle, SM Megamall is popular because it has been effective in projecting an image of comprehensiveness and centrality in order to entice shoppers who desire convenience to frequent its domain. With no prominent retail stores being located outside its enclosure, the idea of commercial space in millennial Manila has become equated with that of the shopping mall.

²⁸ Galloway, 3.

²⁹ Galloway, 1.

³⁰ Jennee Grace U. Rubrico, "Supermalls Gain Popularity, but Retailers Not Favoring One Format," *Business World*, 14 September 2009, S1/1.

Like the department store and self-service supermarket, its predecessors as a circumscribed commercial enclosure, the floors of SM Megamall are segregated into sections, where stores are clustered together according to the category of product or service that they provide. Borrowed from the vocabulary of urban planning, 'zoning' is the official term used to refer to this delineation of the topography of the shopping mall into commercial districts. This appropriation of the language of urban planning hints at the apprehension of the mall less as a private enclosure than as a public terrain, which constitutes an organic element of the cityscape. Instead of rigidly circumscribing the boundaries of interior and exterior, the process of zoning subsumes and organizes the entirety of the urban landscape based on provisional degrees of variance. According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the management of difference in the period of neoliberal capitalism has shifted from exclusion, which was inscribed through the authority of legal norms, to inclusion, which is negotiated through the contingency of everyday practices.³¹ With echoes of Singapore, Metro Manila faces a worsening shortage of land from overpopulation and development that prevents it from banishing undesirable realities because no room for such banishment exists.

By zoning its domain, the shopping mall can more predictably and effectively direct the physical and perceptual movement of consumers. It has assigned the stores with the most affordable products to the ground level, whose larger floor area can accommodate the crowds of shoppers who regularly flood the mall. Although supermarkets are situated at each end of SM Megamall, the one found at the south end of Building A has the commercial configuration of a gourmet grocery. A miscellany of clothing boutiques and food establishments dominates SM Megamall's second and third levels. The SM Department Store, which offers a democratic range of outstanding basic products and affordable luxury goods, rises for four stories in Building B. The shops found at Building B's Cyberzone specialize in the retail and repair of high-technology devices like phones, cameras, and computers. Diverging from the practice of other shopping malls, which exclude these spaces from their domain, SM Megamall has allotted the fourth floor of Building A for antique shops and art galleries. The fifth level is devoted to the provision of services with its beauty salons, skin clinics, wedding planners, design companies, music schools, residential showrooms, photo studios, and travel agencies. Occupying most of the fifth level of Building B, the Megatrade Hall is a large multipurpose facility, where corporate events and trade exhibitions are held. In keeping its commercial promise to encompass the entirety of the world, SM Megamall strives to include products and services that are not found in the other shopping malls, which are its main competitors.

The shopping mall incorporates a miscellany of commercial and leisure spaces into its configuration but relegates some of these consumer spaces to sections of its domain that are less accessible to customers such as corners and basements. Called euphemistically the Lower Ground, the basement of SM Megamall has an extensive floor area, which invokes the dominant consumer spaces of previous historical periods with its sources of basic necessities. Diverging from the topography of Singapore's shopping malls, whose food courts are located at the topmost levels, SM Megamall has situated its food court at the basement of Building A. It comprises reasonably priced stalls that serve tasty, popular dishes like grilled seafood, roasted pig, sautéed vegetable, and barbecue chicken from the prominent regional cuisines of the archipelago such as Kapampangan, Ilonggo, Bicolano, Cebuano, and Ilocano. Not directly visible or accessible from the main atriums and corridors of the shopping mall, the food court is housed in the basement because its affordable selections are primarily intended to cater to mall employees with low wages.

³¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.: Harvard UP, 2000), 194-195.

Less expansive in its physical configuration with lower ceilings and dimmer lighting, the basement of SM Megamall features an assortment of shops that provide basic products and services including shoe repair, film processing, and clothing alteration. Occupying the north end of Building B, near a row of fabric retailers, SM operates the local franchise of Ace, a giant hardware store. Such types of shops, which dominated commercial districts in previous periods, have since been relegated to the periphery of public activity with the establishment of hypermodern department stores and shopping malls. Even if they are considered to represent an image of capitalism that is less pristine, mature, and palatable, they are nonetheless included in the domain of the mall, which must offer as wide a range of commodities as possible to attract as many consumers as it can manage. The basement is not so much the antithesis of the shopping mall than a vital component of its economy since it is made to contain the commercial realities that cannot be allowed to occupy the more cosmopolitan upper levels of the mall. Through the inclusive logic of zoning, the shopping mall is able to incorporate consumer spaces that have become commercially peripheral by assigning them to sections that are not directly accessible.

In order to attract their typical audience and exploit their revenue potential, the shopping mall has subsumed public spaces of leisure and entertainment that were popular in previous historical periods. A raucous amusement center sits at the center of SM Megamall's basement, in the lowered section underneath the driveway that runs between the two main buildings. Aside from carousel-type rides for children, it has gaming arcades, where points scored at the machines can be exchanged for prizes like at a carnival. Formerly configured as an enclosure on the periphery of the city, the amusement park has been condensed and incorporated into the structure of the mall so that the mall would be able draw the young Filipinos who constitute an emerging segment of its market. The shopping mall has targeted this niche so that future consumers who presently lack sufficient purchasing power could gradually be assimilated into its economy. In contrast to its precursor, the amusement center is not spacious enough to impel bodies towards vigorous movement. Concretizing the logic of video gaming implicit in the configuration of the mall, the amusement center keeps bodies stationary and contained within its delimited enclosure, where their restless energies are channeled into the miscellaneous diversions available. If situated along the upper levels of the mall, these spectacles would capture the attention of consumers and distract them from their shopping.

As the only other potent form of spectacle that completely absorbs the visitors to its domain, the movie theater is an integral component of any successful shopping mall in the Philippines. Primarily located in shopping malls during this historical period, movie theaters offer enthralling spectacles, which reinforce the bond between ordinary individuals and media celebrities. Housed on the third floor of Building A, SM Megamall's multiplex cinema, christened Movietime, is not isolated on the uppermost levels like in Singapore but is integrated with the normal rhythms of the mall. Having become part of the routine of everyday life in the millennial megacity, movie theaters are not so much spectacular as functional in their architecture. Instead of relying on stylish façades or radiant marquees to lure audiences, they proffer multiple options to cater to the diverse interests and tastes of the urban populace.

The incorporation of movie theaters into the routine of everyday life correlates with the ubiquity of media celebrities. Exploiting the pervasive infrastructure of the mass media, the major television and radio networks GMA and ABS-CBN have consolidated their influence over the populace. They respectively call their loyal viewers '*Kapuso*' and '*Kapamilya*,'³² terms of endearment for the multitudes of Filipinos who have developed an

³² These terms respectively mean 'comrades by heart' and 'by family.'

affinity for their contract stars by religiously following episodes of their drama serials and reports about their private affairs. The celebrities under contract with these media networks are the popular public figures of this historical period with their commercial films generating enormous profits at the local box office.

Despite their ubiquity across the archipelago, media celebrities stand apart from their audience. They speak, dress, and behave in an accentuated manner befitting members of the transnational elite, which emphasizes their exceptionality and transcendence in relation to the rest of the nation. Top-earning media celebrities such as Anne Curtis and Piolo Pascual have mestizo features because of their mixed Caucasian ethnicity, which is attractive for the desirable incorporation of foreign realities that it personifies. Kris Aquino, the youngest daughter of assassinated politician Ninoy Aquino and former president Cory Aquino, is a skillful talk show host, who has gained immense popularity for being truthful about the dramatic narratives of her romantic affairs. Unlike the movie stars of the 1960s, who occupied a transcendent position while retaining elements of their ordinary origins, the media celebrities of this period derive potency less from their mundaneness than from their familiarity. In noontime variety shows, they act as charitable patrons to their fans with the gifts they frequently bestow on them. Supplanting the traditional role of elders or priests, celebrities counsel their fans about how they should subsist in everyday life. This hierarchical interactivity between performer and audience is defined by how the popular support of the audience is met with the material patronage of the performer. In contradistinction to the established model of patronage, in which the underprivileged offers tribute for political or economic advantage, money and advice flow from the dominant to the underprivileged.

The popularity of media celebrities rests on the intimate bond that their avid spectators are able to form with them through the circulation of private information about the multiple facets of their public image. Through their access to gossip about personal circumstances, ordinary Filipinos are able to relate to media celebrities as though they were part of their extended family. During this historical period, gossip is no longer concerned with novel ideas for transforming the established order. Deployed as a mechanism for extending the reach of mass media networks, gossip is preoccupied with fabricated stories about celebrities that would maintain the interest of spectators. Disseminated primarily through images on the television screen, millennial gossip is no longer incorporeal and indeterminate but concrete and univocal. This mode of gossip does not undermine the established hierarchy but fortifies its dominion by binding the imagination, which gossip would have animated, to the entertainment industry.

The exteriority of advertising billboards emphasizes the transcendence of media celebrities. Dominating the cityscape with their enormity and radiance, the images of celebrities on these billboards cannot easily be apprehended at a single glance. This perceptual impasse highlights their inaccessibility at a remove from everyday life. While media celebrities occupy a transcendent position, they are made familiar to the populace through the circulation of gossip. Instead of diminishing the prestige and authority of celebrities, gossip allows individuals to develop an emotional bond with them. Divested of its subversive potency, gossip reinforces the established hierarchy by propagating the perception of equality through a sense of intimacy. Because the private life of celebrities has been made public knowledge in the sensationalized news media, the boundaries between these categories have become dissolved into zones of variance such that accessibility to information is now based on degrees of awareness.

Oriented towards comprehensiveness and completeness, Metropolitan Manila's shopping malls fulfill previously autonomous services, which urban residents could access

only by traveling to retail shops, public hospitals, or government offices located in different parts of the city. In addition to buying accessories for their vehicles, motorists can apply for a driver's license within the enclosure of SM Megamall. The business establishments housed inside SM Megamall include medical clinics and fitness gyms, which try to ensure that the bodies of consumers stay healthy and energetic. The customer service counter at the SM Department Store acts an efficient, miniature community center, which can accept payments for public utilities, insurance plans, and credit cards, as well as applications for birth, marriage, and death certificates. With their aim to subsume the entirety of everyday life, supermalls like SM Megamall are no longer simply concerned with shaping the modes of visual perception and social practice of urban residents. They have adopted typical governmental functions, which the state fails to perform competently, such as monitoring and authenticating the life cycle of individuals. Because of the shopping mall's popularity and centrality in the megalopolis, formerly dominant institutions such as state and church have acknowledged the diminution of their authority by outsourcing their facilities to its enclosure, which has become the principal site where the population is administered.

On weekends, a vacant section of the shopping mall is cordoned off so that Mass could be celebrated for devout Catholics who wish to practice their religion. The centerpiece of the Ayala Corporation's Greenbelt mall complex is the small, modernist domed chapel, the Sto. Niño de Paz. Shopping malls feature weekly religious masses so that shoppers who are planning to attend mass can just head directly to the mall instead having a detour through the church. Although the church used to represent the center of the city in the Philippines, it now exists as a supplement to the shopping mall, which exceeds it in influence on the populace and importance to the cityscape.

Called 'Cities,' SM Supermalls reproduce the world within their spacious interiors as purged of its undesirable realities and sublimated with cosmopolitan norms. Amid a congested and polluted urban environment, which has resulted from a corrupt and incompetent government, Metro Manila's shopping malls have assumed many of the important functions of cities. Under the cosmopolitan configuration of the shopping mall, these functions are made to operate with the convenience and reliability appropriate to a global city. Incorporating public spaces that had centrality in previous historical periods, including movie theaters, bus terminals, places of worship, and coffee shops, shopping malls unfold as heterogeneous sites for commerce, leisure, and community. Drawing the mass of humanity, they have become the nucleus of everyday life in the megalopolis.

Like the city it incarnates, the shopping mall expands by incorporating and sublimating the outside that stretches not only beyond its immediate frontier but extends to the entire globe. This tendency to encompass the entirety of the world is pursued to its logical extreme in Jakarta's Grand Indonesia and Bangkok's Terminal 21, shopping malls whose interiors are subdivided to resemble famous locations around the world. By reconfiguring and incorporating external realities, these malls tap into consumers' desire for cosmopolitan sophistication and transnational mobility. Grand Indonesia has sections that replicate New York City's Chinatown and Rockefeller Center, as well as Dutch windmills and Italian trellis. The different levels of Terminal 21 are designed to resemble shopping districts in London, Tokyo, and Iran. These shopping malls embody the tendency to emulate the cosmopolitan sophistication of the global cities of industrialized nations by encompassing them within its enclosure. Like shopping malls in other Southeast Asian megacities, which are oriented towards inclusion, the cosmopolitan modernity of the shopping malls of Metropolitan Manila incorporate the influence of external realities in other geographical locations that are perceived to be more prestigious and prosperous in the hope of acquiring their prominence.

THE SOCIAL VALUE OF MILLENIAL HEROISM

Whereas the Philippines had experienced an oscillatory, equivocal form of modernity, in which instances of modernization would be undone by government corruption and incompetence, it has succeeded in boosting its economic performance a decade into the new millennium. The improved national economy corresponds to increased purchasing power for a broader range of the population, whose members have developed a greater awareness of consumer rights and cosmopolitan ideals that exerts pressure on the established order for transformation.

In the aftermath of the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution, which ended the corrupt dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos, the government of Fidel V. Ramos aggressively pursued the liberalization of the national economy commenced by Diosdado Macapagal in the early 1960s.³³ Driven by the policies of neoliberal economists and transnational organizations, the government radically lowered its tariffs on the importation of goods. Through the sweeping privatization even of profitable national industries, it opened its markets to the dynamism of global competition. Instead of nurturing local agricultural and manufacturing production for long-term growth, the Philippine government embraced the immediate benefits of foreign direct investment as the primary impetus for national development. Along with this perennial myopia from the government, the political instability that succeeds the Ramos government ensures that the nation remains an embodiment of failed promises, the perennial ‘sick man of Asia.’ Under the administration of Benigno ‘Noynoy’ Aquino III, the Philippine government strives to implement an anti-corruption campaign, which has boosted its economic performance and investment appeal to the top tier of the Southeast Asian region.

Beginning with the new millennium, the national vision of progress is furthered by the success of the multibillion-dollar business process outsourcing industry,³⁴ whose 20% annual growth has resulted from companies in industrialized nations transplanting part of their operations to more affordable offshore locations. Overtaking India, the Philippines has developed into the principal global hub for call centers.³⁵ With seventy-percent of them concentrated in Metro Manila, call centers in urban areas are staffed with hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who have been hired to address the customer care and technical support issues of North American consumers as though they were based in the continental United States. Through additional training, they have adopted an American English accent and memorized Pop Culture trivia in order make their disguise more credible.

Transforming the social landscape, call centers have fostered a community of educated employees with oral English proficiency and ample purchasing power. Due to the success of the business process outsourcing industry, more urban residents receive salaries that would enable them to become regular consumers. This opening of new sources of income to a broader range of the population has caused the normal trajectory for ascending the established hierarchy to be transformed. Their exclusive training as call center agents imparts to them a newfound assurance about their social identity, based on their transcendence from their given conditions. The perception in the world market of a booming economy has improved the optimism among Filipinos about the future progress of the nation.

³³ Walden Bello, *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Department of Sociology and Focus on the Global South, 2004), 92-103.

³⁴ “Booming PH Outsourcing Industry Faces Worker Shortage,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 8 October 2013, retrieved from: <<http://business.inquirer.net/146547/booming-ph-outsourcing-industry-faces-worker-shortage>>.

³⁵ Vikas Bajaj, “A New Capital for Call Centers,” *The New York Times*, 25 November 2011.

As spatial and temporal enclosures, which provide services across geographic and cultural boundaries, call centers highlight the interconnectivity of the world in the period of global capitalism. Representing a form of migration without mobility, call center agents are required to familiarize themselves with the language and culture of a distant geographic location under the pretense of cultural assimilation without ever moving overseas. The non-stop operation of call centers has transformed the routines of the work regime and everyday life into a 24-hour cycle. When the workday in North America concludes, that in Southeast Asia commences. Because the shifts of call center agents extend past midnight into the early morning, the stores, restaurants, and cafés in the vicinity have reconfigured their daily schedules to be able to supply these new consumers with needed commercial and leisure spaces. The perpetual 24-hour workday aligns with the universalizing circular time of neoliberal capitalism. Dealing with external realities based on their temporality in overseas locations compels individuals to synchronize the rhythms of their everyday life with the economic cycle of the world market.

Another source of increased purchasing power for Filipinos comes from the remittances of overseas workers. Since the middle of the 1970s, when the Marcos regime started sending workers to the Middle East to avail of the labor shortage during its construction boom, the Philippine government has vigorously promoted overseas employment for Filipinos. It has established the bureaucratic infrastructure to manage this mass migration. Continuing the national narrative of migration that began after the Pacific War, the population has become dispersed across the globe.³⁶ While a significant majority of them are based in North America and the Middle East, multitudes of Filipinos have concentrated in nations like Spain, Malaysia, Italy, and Australia. Employed in various jobs, they work long, arduous hours as nurses in London, as entertainers in Tokyo, and as teachers in Baltimore. Many talented Filipino musicians can be found performing in the house bands of bars and hotels all over East and Southeast Asia. Educated Filipino maids and nannies, known for speaking good English, are the hiring preference in Hong Kong and Singapore. The desire for better opportunities has driven resourceful migrants to settle even in the remotest regions. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, approximately one-tenth of the entire Philippine population is estimated to be residing abroad.³⁷

The enormous revenue from the remittances of overseas Filipino workers has significantly contributed to the economic boom of the early 2010s. Remittances have been celebrated by the government as the principal buttress of the Philippine economy amid the fluctuations of the world market for fueling an increase in domestic consumption, which now comprises two-thirds of the national economy. In 2013, the families of overseas of Filipino workers received US\$20 billion in remittances, an amount that increases each year by approximately 6%. Constituting nearly ten percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product,³⁸ remittances have augmented the purchasing power of a broad range of Filipinos.

³⁶ For prominent examples of studies of Overseas Filipino Workers, please see Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, California, U.S.A.: Stanford UP, 2001); and Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: U of Minnesota P, 2010).

³⁷ See Philippines, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos" (Philippines: Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2012), retrieved from: <<http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2012.pdf>>.

³⁸ Kathleen A. Martin, "OFW Inflows Seen to Hit \$23.6 B in 2014," *Philippine Star*, 23 December 2013, retrieved from: It is a new form of heroism, founded on the necessity of sacrifice for the family. This sacrifice is accompanied by loneliness and hardship, which might not be returned with goodwill. It would entail separation from the family. <<http://www.philstar.com/business/2013/12/23/1271095/ofw-inflows-seen-hit-23.6-b-2014>>.

Because of their significant contribution to the economy, Overseas Filipino Workers are extolled by the government as the new national heroes. No longer defined by the transcendent actions of youthful politicians or movie stars, heroism is now exemplified by migrants who must toil in distant locations in order to support their families back in the Philippines. Without the awkwardness and tentativeness associated of vaudeville performers, migrants are characterized in the public culture as industrious and resolute despite the loneliness and mistreatment they experience in a foreign nation.

The importance accorded to them draws on resonant narratives about persecuted exiles that return as triumphant heroes, including those of Jesus Christ, Bernardo Carpio, José Rizal, and Ninoy Aquino. The migrant labor of Overseas Filipino Workers is a new form of heroism, founded on the necessity of sacrifice for the family, which extends to the nation. Their separation from their family for long periods is accompanied by their experience of hardship and loneliness in a foreign land. Instead of being based on transformative actions for overturning the established order, as was the case during the 1960s, heroism is now founded on mundane contributions towards improving the domestic economy. It is akin to the heroism of female shoppers in 1930s Manila, whose consumption was understood to benefit the progress of the nation. The ordinary heroism of overseas workers is informed by the transcendent prestige of media celebrities, who use their status to offer patronage to underprivileged fans. Partly responsible for the nation's economic growth, Filipino migrants have found greater authority in expressing their opinions. Having been exposed to the everyday life of other geographic locations, where resources are more abundant and facilities are more efficient, they have developed higher expectations from government and business. They are less inclined to settle for the necessity of existing conditions.

The role in the economy of call center agents and overseas migrant workers highlights the importance of external realities to the constitution of the nation. Without establishing a profound connection with these external realities, the nation would be unable to attain progress and prosperity. Its outside no longer assumes the form of a domain where undesirable realities have been banished or where uncorrupted traditions continue to thrive. Driving its economic growth, the outside now forms a vital element of its identity as a nation. Reflecting the changed configuration of the world market, which relies on affiliations and transactions across geographic and cultural boundaries, it comprises global flows of online information and financial speculation. Dependent on the influx of foreign capital, the Philippine government must regulate and refashion its urban landscape to comply with the world market's prerequisites for investment. Due to the profound influence of these external realities, the relation of the Philippines to the world market could be understood less in terms of rigid enclosure than in terms of permeable zoning.

The increased purchasing power of growing number of consumers requires shopping malls to reconfigure their commercial spaces to accommodate the aspirations of these new consumers for cosmopolitan sophistication. The SM supermalls' main competition comes from the elegant shopping malls of the Ayala Corporation, a family-owned conglomerate of Spanish descent, which has been responsible for developing Makati City into a thriving financial center.³⁹ Catering to individuals with greater purchasing power, the prominent and popular Ayala shopping malls in Metropolitan Manila are TriNoma in Quezon City, and Glorietta and Greenbelt in Makati City.

Enclosed by Makati Avenue, Pasay Road, Paseo de Roxas, and Ayala Avenue, the sprawling Greenbelt shopping mall complex consists of five individual structures, numbered Greenbelts 1 to 5, which encircle a luxuriant, welcoming public park. Situated amid the

³⁹ In particular, see Ayala Corporation, *Ayala at 175* (Makati City, Philippines: Ayala Corporation, 2009), 22-25.

prosperous, urbanized landscape of Makati City's Central Business District, Greenbelt functions as a nucleus of elite commerce, sociality, and leisure for the discriminating tastes of its young, educated, and dynamic professional workforce. To entice Filipino consumers to frequent its public spaces, Greenbelt features glamorous interiors and boutiques, which generate a pleasurable atmosphere of urban modernity and social prestige that adheres to global norms of cosmopolitan sophistication. Greenbelt considers itself to be an "epitome of the Filipino taking on the world stage."⁴⁰ It embodies the implicit assertion that Manila could occupy a similar plane of progress as the important metropolitan capitals of Southeast Asia such as Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok.

Among Metro Manila's many shopping malls, Greenbelt 5 could be described as having the most elegant and luxurious interior. Its gleaming, polished floor panels are speckled like marble. Lights shaped to resemble icicles hang in clusters from the palatial ceiling like avant-garde chandeliers. Suspended from the roofs of its galleries, square prisms with frosted glass provide soft illumination. Similar to their counterparts in the shopping malls of global cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong, the brand-name boutiques on the ground floor feature high ceilings, whose spaciousness evokes an exquisite form of comfort rare amid the bustle and congestion of the megalopolis. Along with the stylishness of the decor, the whiteness of the interior enhances the mall's exceptional atmosphere of social prestige and urban modernity. Luxury malls such as Greenbelt 5 have based their configurations on those of department stores and grand hotels from before the Pacific War. These glamorous commercial spaces are alluring to urban residents because they allow them to partake in a quintessential elite lifestyle, which is no longer that of traditional affluent families but of contemporary media celebrities. They offer the appurtenances of sophistication, which have seemingly grown more attainable due to the increased purchasing power that many young Filipinos have come to possess.

The increase in the purchasing power of Metropolitan Manila's populace has prompted a significant change in SM Supermalls, which have been reconfigured to acquire the prestige of Ayala Malls, even though their identity as mass commercial spaces is difficult to overcome. Known for the blank utilitarianism of its architecture, SM Megamall has been refurbished with a sleeker, more elegant appearance with polished floors and soft lighting. Although SM Megamall gained popularity for stores with affordable goods, boutiques that carry more fashionable and expensive items are being opened in sections of the mall previously dominated by these stores. In the past, these boutiques could be found only in luxury shopping malls such as The Podium, Power Plant, and Shangri-La. A stylish, gourmet-type supermarket has been established in a large area formerly occupied by a bookstore and a toyshop. Meant to address the growing cosmopolitan sophistication of urban residents with greater purchasing power and global awareness, the refurbishment and expansion of SM Megamall reveal a new aesthetic for SM supermalls, whose design had given more importance to profit than to style.

The SM Supermalls' reconfiguration is an attempt to address the transformation in the perception and behavior of urban residents. Aside from the increase in their purchasing power, their wider exposure to the diverse cultures of other geographic locations through affordable international travel and online access has enlarged their interests, tastes, and expectations. Their awareness of transnational norms has compelled them to fashion themselves into global citizens. Millennial identity is no longer founded on the dichotomy between squalor and productivity but on the manner of cosmopolitan sophistication, which is defined by the ability to zone heterogeneity.

⁴⁰ "Greenbelt," Ayala Malls, retrieved from: <<http://www.myayalamalls.com/ayala+malls/id/3/Greenbelt>>.

Social value now rests on the ability to negotiate the influence of external realities, in terms of the knowledge and assimilation of global styles and trends. One instance would be proficiency in American English, displayed by the agents of call centers and the graduates of exclusive schools. Another example would be the experience of vacationing in nearby cities like Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Singapore, as captured in digital photos shared via Facebook or Instagram. This profound connection with the outside is the new means of transcendence from the necessity of given conditions. No longer based on the practice of exhibiting inaccessible objects or participating in anonymous crowds, it is founded on the process of dealing with unfamiliar realities. Cosmopolitan sophistication derives its prestige from the adroit ability to utilize and combine a variety of modes in adapting to the demands of shifting circumstances.

OUTSOURCED COSMOPOLITANISM

Signifying new forms of social prestige and urban modernity founded on cosmopolitan sophistication, the shopping malls owned and operated by the Ayala Corporation are distinguished from the other prominent commercial structures in the megalopolis by their organic and circular architecture. Impelling the continuous movement of bodies, the meandering corridors of Ayala Malls typically radiate from a central atrium where public events like trade expositions and music concerts are staged. Subsuming the relaxing and revitalizing experience of nature under their domain, these shopping malls furnish public spaces with lush greenery where their customers can linger and socialize.

The crowds who visit an Ayala Mall such as the Greenbelt complex could be said to wander around its hallways as though they were unwinding in a park, except that the mall has supplanted the park as the dominant point of reference when defining leisure spaces. No longer simply public sites of commerce and consumption, shopping malls have attained centrality in the megalopolis as popular hubs of social life where friends can convene. In the safety of the coffee shops housed in shopping malls, people hold informal business meetings about legal documents, insurance plans, or architectural blueprints. Grandparents use their extensive corridors as an opportunity for exercise where they can walk without being troubled by the traffic and pollution typical of the megalopolis. The shopping mall strives to become the principal public space in the megalopolis by embracing business and domestic activities, which, in previous historical periods, would not have been performed in sites of commerce and leisure. Instead of aiming to transform every individual that occupies its domain into a consumer, which would require it to deploy more resources for social production, the shopping mall provides spaces that could accommodate non-shoppers.⁴¹ This operation towards comprehensiveness and completeness issues from the prospect that non-shoppers could be enticed to purchase goods or draw other shoppers.

In the Philippines during this historical period, shopping has become significant as a communal routine. The term ‘mall’ has gained currency in the public culture to refer to the activity of spending extended durations of leisure time within the domain of the shopping mall without necessarily making any purchases.⁴² This practice has become so prevalent that the root noun must be transmuted into a more active gerund in order to capture its dynamism. An adjective that refers to the occupation of space, the term is transformative in that it re-imagines the practice that uses a space supposedly intended for the monetary acquisition of goods into a space for the free consumption of time.

⁴¹ Underhill, 67.

⁴² “‘Malling’ Consumes Filipino Shoppers,” *Business World*, 25 August 2008, S1/1.

If urban residents would frequent leisure spaces in 1930s Manila to acquire value from the act of gazing and in 1960s Manila to immerse themselves in the bustle of the crowd, they do so in millennial Manila because it has become incorporated into their everyday routine. They are compelled to inhabit the shopping mall due not so much to its prestige or popularity but to its ordinariness. The mall has no definite purpose for them. Its function depends on the use these individuals assign to it each time they enter its domain. Part of the complex assemblage of operations inscribed into the configuration of the shopping mall, malling is a combination of different practices, which is modifiable according to the demands of circumstances.

With the aim of subsuming the entirety of life, Ayala Malls strive to immerse consumers even more profoundly in the holistic, cosmopolitan experience of the shopping mall by featuring pleasurable spaces that individuals needed to travel beyond the urban landscape in order to visit. Instead of relying on the visual allure or emotional impact of dynamic spectacles to absorb consumers, they try to heighten the attraction of their public spaces by emphasizing the serene, organic flow of life characteristic of the inclusive, circular time of modernity.

The unregulated urbanization of Metropolitan Manila has ruthlessly eliminated greenery from its streets and plazas to create more room for transportation facilities and construction projects. Because the activity of urban leisure is historically entangled with the experience of the public park, shopping malls, which aspire for comprehensiveness and completeness, reproduce within their enclosure the nature that was eliminated. Malls try to include pleasurable realities associated with natural greenery such as practices of relaxation and revitalization, which entailed reprieve or flight from the sordidness of the megalopolis. Situated at the center of the circular Greenbelt complex, Greenbelt Park consists of a lush array of plants, trees, rocks, ferns, and flowers of varying types, sizes, and colors. The cafés and restaurants at Greenbelt 3, one of the buildings in the complex, have tables in the main outdoor plaza, which faces a pond enclosed by plants. Tall palm trees ascend to the roof of the building. One of the banks of a stream, which leads from the pond, is lined with smoothed oval stones in different hues of gray. Greenbelt Park's style mimics the organic aesthetic of exclusive beach resorts in the Philippines but makes this pleasant experience of luxurious nature accessible to the multitude of Filipino consumers.

For cultural critic Rolando Tolentino, the reproduction of the park in the enclosure of the mall signifies the mall's assimilation of its outside.⁴³ I would argue the outside that is subsumed is actually non-existent in the megalopolis or even in the countryside. It is an artificial or manufactured outside. With the enlargement of the population and expansion of the cityscape in the decades after the Pacific War, the undesirable realities that modernization had excluded and banished to the exterior were reincorporated into the interior. As opposed to the corruption at the heart of the city, the outside became re-imagined as an innocent, pre-modern terrain of pristine nature. This outside has since been sublimated into the manufactured park environment of the shopping mall. But what is assimilated into the enclosure of the shopping mall is not so much the organic nature that is exterior to the urban landscape but the manufactured nature that is created in beach resorts for foreign tourists and gated subdivisions for affluent residents. Reproducing the luxurious greenery of resorts and subdivisions in the shopping mall domesticates nature, which had been deemed uncivilized and savage, for the purposes of mass consumption.

⁴³ See Rolando B. Tolentino, *Almanak ng Isang Aktibista* (Quezon City, Philippines: U of the Philippines P, 2011).

I would add that the assimilation of nature into enclosure of the mall represents the outsourcing of the outside of the city. Outsourcing could be understood as the delegation of responsibility to something external or peripheral, which does not constitute part of the actual configuration.⁴⁴ In the newer shopping malls of millennial Manila, the pleasant experience of nature, which was conquered and eliminated through urbanization, is outsourced to a manufactured park environment. Modernization has reached its zenith because it is now capable of subsuming the pre-modern outside without needing to erase vestiges of its pre-modernity. The upgraded form of inclusive, cosmopolitan modernity in the period of global capitalism involves the commodification and appropriation not only of tradition but also of nature.

The organic aesthetic of miniature parks for relaxation and revitalization is complemented with the circular architecture of meandering corridors for movement and dynamism. Elliptical and rambling in its topography, the Greenbelt mall complex privileges no main entrance. The different wings that combine to form the whole complex can be accessed through various entrances positioned along its vast circumference. Greenbelt adjoins the Glorietta shopping mall and the Landmark department store through a busy, elevated walkway ornamented with floors and posts of rusticated stone. Interspersed with flat glass panels and titled wooden screens, curving concrete roofs shelter the walkway. This stylistic contrast between linearity and circularity is a motif that recurs throughout the complex's corridors, atriums, galleries, and plazas. Becoming prevalent during the current historical period, the organic asymmetry of its overlapping, circuitous configuration engenders a sense of spontaneous inclusiveness, which signifies a new cosmopolitan sophistication that builds on the rigidity of modernization by deviating from it.

Comparing the linear SM malls and the circular Ayala malls, Rolando Tolentino explains that they represent two stages in the topographical evolution of shopping malls in Metro Manila. Contrary to this narrative of evolutionary progression, the two paradigmatic configurations have coexisted since shopping malls started proliferating in the early 1990s.⁴⁵ The first shopping mall in Makati, the Ayala Corporation's Glorietta complex, was built in 1993 from the agglomeration of the different commercial structures spread out across the area, including the SM Department Store and Rustan's Department Store. Evoking the nation's Hispanic roots, the name Glorietta refers to a public space of assembly.⁴⁶ Resembling a skewed cross, the topography of Glorietta is composed of spokes that branch off from a central plaza capped by a glass dome like the rays of the sun. Circular passageways, which run parallel to the central plaza, bisect the spokes. Instead of being a uniquely new phenomenon, this elliptical aesthetic has become more pronounced and prevalent, even in the architecture of SM supermalls, as Filipinos have obtained greater purchasing power and global awareness.

The Ayala Corporation's TriNoma in North EDSA possesses an even more labyrinthine topography. Entered through a different part of the central atrium, each curling corridor overlaps with other curling corridors before winding its way back to the central atrium. Browsing the mall's miscellaneous stores, shoppers can follow these multiple trajectories without ever arriving at a dead end. By creating the possibility for ceaseless movement with its lattice of corridors, this elliptical configuration entraps bodies within the enclosure of the mall. Its circularity represents a tendency towards inclusion and completeness, which turns the 3D consumption of the shopping mall into the mobile experience of ceaseless commerce. One of the main principles in Victor Gruen's conception of the shopping mall, the Gruen Transfer or Gruen Effect, transpires when commercial space

⁴⁴ "Outsourcing, *n.*," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press.

⁴⁵ See Tolentino, *Almanak*.

⁴⁶ Llita T. Logarta, "Center of the Center," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 14 May 1993, D1.

obliges individuals to linger for an extended duration, which would generate more opportunities for purchases.⁴⁷ By extending time, the circularity of neoliberal capitalism, as incarnated in the elliptical configuration of the millennial shopping mall, has supplanted the equivocal and oscillatory character of underdevelopment.

While forming part of the routine everyday life, the shopping malls of Metropolitan Manila transform everyday life through their legible incarnation of transnational norms of social prestige and urban modernity. Having become a ubiquitous and ordinary presence, the promise of progress now entails the sublimation and zoning of the outside within the circular time of neoliberal capitalism. It is as though the cosmopolitan sophistication of industrial nations has needed to be reconfigured into a more attainable and affordable reality, a more localized iteration, in order to suit the growing global awareness of the burgeoning Filipino workforce.

⁴⁷ Hardwick, 2.

PART V – MILLENNIAL SOUTHEAST ASIA
CHAPTER 9 – THE INFLUX OF INNOVATION AND BUZZ: UPGRADING THE
COMMERCIAL STREET IN THE TIME OF NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis of the late 2000s, the Singapore economy became the top performer in the world with double-digit economic growth. This strong economic performance has translated into the hypermodern infrastructure, which is continuously being constructed throughout the cityscape. It has been accompanied by the large influx of foreign professionals and workers, which is said to have resulted in palpable changes to the everyday life of the local citizenry with worsening congestion, crime, and inflation.

Such contradictory changes are visible in its new commercial center, Orchard Road, which the ruling People's Action Party is striving to configure into a tourist destination that would lure foreign travelers and professionals. The most popular section of Orchard Road extends from the junction with Scotts and Paterson Roads to that with Koek and Killiney Roads. Despite the heat and humidity of the tropical climate, crowds of enthusiastic pedestrians amble along the broad, sculpted sidewalks of Orchard Road. Stretches of the boulevard are shaded by a canopy of trees, which reaches the tops of buildings. The boulevard is lined with the glittering shopping malls, for which it has gained prominence as the great commercial street of a leading global city.

In this chapter, I inquire into the conditions surrounding Singapore's drive to develop into a global city, into a cosmopolitan hub for the flows of capital and talent of the rising Asian regional economy. I start by examining its shift from the necessity of development to the urgency of prosperity with an emphasis on the role of the tourist industry in creating the conditions for innovation in the knowledge economy. Revisiting the history of Orchard Road, I discuss how it is being reconfigured into the great commercial street of a global city with the buzz of public life. I explore how these changes have brought about growing social and economic disparities between a new class of super-rich and the majority of the populace. The super-elite now defines the millennial mode of social prestige of an excessive lifestyle. The growing disparities have caused dissatisfaction in the local citizenry, whose energies are contained through mechanisms of asymmetry and mobility that accustom them to change.

INNOVATION IN THE TOURISM CAPITAL

The economy of Singapore has vigorously flourished since independence due to the prescient and pragmatic ability of its government to recognize and accommodate dominant trends and emerging changes in the world market. Driven by its unwavering program of sanitary modernity, the People's Action Party, which has controlled the government since 1959, has exerted effort and resolve in shaping the spatial and social landscape of Singapore in order to attain the goals of economic growth. After being under the vigorous leadership of Lee Kuan Yew for three decades, the island city-state has continued to be prosperous in the passage to its second and third generations of effective, visionary administrators, who continue to possess the ability to anticipate global conditions, make resolute decisions, and realize concrete actions. It is supposedly their adeptness at this ability that has enabled Singapore to shift successfully from its orientation towards economic survival as a developing nation to its global competitiveness as a world-class city.

With its stance of pragmatic governmentality, which involves flexibility in ideology and policy, Singapore has been able to anticipate and adjust to changing conditions by

reconfiguring its domain due to the scope of its state infrastructure. The state maintains extensive influence over various aspects of the social landscape, including racial identity, language use, residential housing, family size, personal income, creative expression, and public space.¹ For the effective administration of the populace, the majority of the residents are assigned one among the main racial classes of Chinese, Malay, and Indian, which officially correspond to the prescribed languages of Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil. With the aim of transforming Singapore into a First World nation, the government has frequently implemented public campaigns to refine the behavior and etiquette of its populace such that they conform to social norms considered to be universal.²

Having since become a ubiquitous, ordinary presence in Singapore, sanitary modernity is no longer predominantly shaped by national development but by neoliberal capitalism. The dissimilar effects of these two sets of processes are discernible in their divergent temporalities. The intervention of sanitary modernity in the spatial and social landscape of Singapore has ceased to be a linear, incremental evolution towards the attainment of nationalistic ideals of progress and prosperity. It now involves the abrupt, intractable permeation of transnational flows of capital, which are contingent on unpredictable fluctuations in the world market. In accommodating these flows, the territory and economy of the nation have needed to become more pliable to constant restructuring, regardless of the degree of change in political or economic direction.³

Joseph Schumpeter defines capitalism along these lines as a dynamic process of creative destruction, which, thriving on change, perpetually seeks renovation, in the form of new products, markets, infrastructures, and technologies.⁴ In millennial Singapore, the restless dynamism of creative destruction is evident in the regular replacement of unsuccessful retail establishments and refurbishment of outworn commercial arrangements. Unprofitable physical spaces are continually being demolished and reconstructed particularly when substantial revenue is not imminent in the near future. Ambivalent towards the social or historical significance of realities that are objects for potential renovation, creative destruction finds urgency in renewal depending on the economic opportunities of the situation. In the current historical period, the unique newness formerly associated with modern forces has assumed the form of innovation, which, based on Schumpeter's definition, consists of improvements to given conditions. Unlike in prior periods, new realities have become less capable of being perceived as previously impossible because the limitless access to extensive information on the Internet has caused them to resonate with the traces of preexistent realities. The potential of modernity for transformation has been superseded by the capacity of innovation to affirm the establish order through its improvement. The centrality of creative destruction to the pragmatic governmentality of Singapore is the root of its shift towards innovation as the key engine of its new knowledge economy.

The ruling People's Action Party has relied on a picture of national crisis as a rationale for implementing its vision of progress.⁵ Singapore's history is marked by a shift in the focus of this picture of national crisis from the urgency of achieving development, which

¹ See Martin Perry, Lily Kong, and Brenda Yeoh (*Singapore: A Developmental City State* (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, 1997).

² See John Clammer, "Race as Ideology: The Evolution of Ethnicity as the Basis of Social Classification," *Race and State in Independent Singapore, 1965-1990: The Cultural Politics of Pluralism in a Multiethnic Society* (Aldershot, England, U.K. & Brookfield, Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 1998), 27-50.

³ See Kenneth Paul Tan, "The Ideology of Pragmatism: Neo-liberal Globalization and Political Authoritarianism in Singapore," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 42.1 (2012): 67-92.

⁴ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New York, U.S.A.: Harper, 1978), 82-83.

⁵ See Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London, United Kingdom and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, 1995).

means providing for the subsistence of the local population, to the importance of maintaining prosperity, which entails fostering competitiveness in the world market. The drive for global competitiveness has resulted in the growing influence of the requirements of transnational capitalism on the policies of the national government. Regarded as desirable form of innovation on the macroscopic level,⁶ Singapore's capacity to reconfigure its landscape at will in order to create an attractive home for capital, is considered to be a crucial factor for strong economic growth.

During the government of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong from 1990 to 2004, the entrepôt of Singapore is re-imagined as a global city, which would be able to compete in the world market with other industrial nations. According to the definition in the news magazine *Foreign Policy*, which twice publishes a Global Cities Index in the late 2000s based on Saskia Sassen's seminal theory, globally interconnected cities have developed into the key engines of the world market. Containing an array of international ports, corporate headquarters, consultancy firms, art museums, and research institutes, they function as influential hubs where transnational flows of finance, culture, and innovation concentrate, interact, and flourish.⁷ Under the current administration of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the son of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore has thrived as a regional center for financial capital, scientific research, and corporate management, with a large number of foreign professionals and migrant workers that has come to comprise a third of the entire population.

In a speech addressed to the Economic Society of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong stresses that Singapore must strive to become a leading global city to be able to maintain its prosperity. Singaporeans must make the necessary sacrifices for this patriotic purpose. Presenting a new picture of national crisis, Lee Hsien Loong asserts that Singapore is in constant competition against other global cities in Asia such as Shanghai, Seoul, Dubai, Doha, and Hong Kong.⁸ If Singapore were to lose out on foreign capital and talent to these other global cities, its national economy and global standing would decline. For this reason, it must not settle for modest economic growth, which would cause an insurmountable diminution in optimism among its citizenry. "[W]ithout growth, we have no chance of improving the collective wellbeing. Far more countries worry about growing too slowly, than growing too fast... If we are content to just be above average in the league of cities, we will fail. This is the greatest danger if we tell ourselves to slow down, enjoy life today and not worry about tomorrow."⁹ Regardless of its level of prosperity, the nation would surrender its state of progress if it were to immerse itself in the present at the expense of preparing for the future. Instead of merely failing to move forward, complacency on the part of the nation now means failing to move forward in a vigorous manner. The new national crisis is the looming threat of slow growth.

In his personal narrative of the official Singapore Story, Lee Kuan Yew explains that the necessity of drawing foreign capital and talent for economic survival led to Singapore's policy to reconfigure and market itself as a Garden City. With the landscape of "a First World oasis in a Third World region," Singapore would convey a legible picture of order and stability, which would then entice transnational corporations in search of a guaranteed return on investment.¹⁰ A 2011 subcommittee report on "Making Singapore a Leading Global City" from the Economic Strategies Committee suggests that intensified competition among metropolitan areas to attract transnational flows is the reason why Singapore must strive to

⁶ See Confederation of Indian Industry and INSEAD, *Global Innovation Index Report 2009-2010*, 46.

⁷ See *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2010.

⁸ Lee Hsien Loong, Economic Society of Singapore, 8 June 2012, Speech.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First – The Singapore Story: 1965-2000: Singapore and the Asian Economic Boom* (New York, U.S.A.: HarperCollins, 2000), 58.

project the image of a livable city, which is simultaneously a hub of innovation and a home for talent. To become a livable city for foreign capital and talent, Singapore must turn itself into Asia's leisure and lifestyle capital by staging art and entertainment events that would increase its prominence in the world market. Aside from being a thought leader in urban planning and economic development, it must transform itself into a center for design innovation and creative entrepreneurship, which would tap into the purchasing power of the burgeoning class of Asian consumers. It must no longer simply remain open to external flows but must actively compete with other cities to draw these flows to its domain. The types of transnational flows it incorporates must not merely augment its growth as an industrialized nation but must also enhance its productivity as a knowledge economy.

According to the subcommittee report, which echoes similar government documents, Singapore is an ideal hub for transnational flows because, aside from the exceptional character of its “multicultural heritage,” it has a strategic location as “gateway between the East and the West.”¹¹ Its origins as an entrepôt economy with a heterogeneous population have afforded it the capacity to manage the continuous arrival and interaction of flows of bodies, images, ideas, technologies, and finances, which often may be incongruent with each other. Under the regime of neoliberal capitalism, the pragmatic governmentality of negotiating the incorporation of these flows requires speculation about their market capitalization. Transnational flows are evaluated based on their potential to contribute directly to Singapore’s economic performance and global competitiveness. Through its assimilation, the outside becomes an intrinsic element of the inside.

The goal of the Singapore government to establish a cosmopolitan hub for transnational flows translates into its plan to create a domain where the commercial exchange of art, the financial speculation of capital, and the immaterial production of innovation could flourish. In its vision of a global city, which is competitive in the world market, only transnational flows and cosmopolitan ideals that lead to profitability have value. Aside from foreign capital and talent, such transnational flows would include low-wage migrant labor, which is responsible for constructing the infrastructure of a global city.

At the dawn of the new millennium, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong espouses the People’s Action Party’s image of a New Singapore, an upgraded approach to the national economy based on changing global conditions.¹² Despite its hard-earned status as an industrialized nation, he echoes Lee Kuan Yew when he asserts that Singapore must not lapse into complacency but must strive to improve on its success in order to guarantee its future. According to the People’s Action Party’s official narrative of the Singapore Story, newly independent Singapore found itself isolated in Southeast Asia because it did not have a hinterland to supply it with raw materials. To overcome this seemingly desperate situation, it needed to devote all of its resources to the national crisis of economic survival. This image of isolation in the world market continues to be invoked in speeches by government ministers.

From the standpoint of the People’s Action Party, Singapore has succeeded in achieving progress and prosperity because of its ability to accommodate and exploit flows that are external to its territory. Its adeptness at pragmatic governmentality is demonstrated by how it has anticipated future possibilities and manipulated present circumstances in accomplishing its economic goals. The temporality of national development in the 1960s differs from that of neoliberal capitalism in the 2000s. National development had entailed a

¹¹ Singapore, Subcommittee on Making Singapore a Leading Global City, Economic Strategies Committee, “Highly-Skilled People, Innovative Economy, Distinctive Global City,” Report, Economic Strategies Committee, 2010, 69-70.

¹² See Goh Chok Tong, “New Singapore,” Singapore National Day Rally, 2001, Speech.

gradual, evolutionary process, which occurred over several decades. Due to the greater interconnectivity of national economies, volume of financial speculation, and volatility of the world market, instances of future progress have become more swiftly realizable in the present landscape. Constantly changing physical spaces and economic policies have become accepted facts of everyday life in Singapore.

Recognizing the profound shift in the global economy towards an emphasis on knowledge and innovation, Goh Chok Tong's speech stresses that local institutions and companies need to foster a culture of creativity and risk-taking, which would stimulate individuals to develop the novel ideas and methods crucial for economic competitiveness. In the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Oslo Manual, which borrows from Joseph Schumpeter's original definition, innovation is described as the improvement of existing products, structures, processes, and markets for greater productivity, efficiency, convenience, and profitability.¹³ For the OECD, the principal purpose of creativity and risk-taking derived from innovation is to enhance bureaucratic efficiency and corporate profitability, and not to produce the uniquely new and previously impossible. The basis of the value of creativity and risk-taking is their contribution to the improvement of the established order.

In line with the integral role of innovation in the knowledge-based economy, scholar Richard Florida highlights the emergence of a creative class of workers from industries such as architecture and design, arts and education, and science and engineering, who are tasked with the immaterial production of generating new ideas, images, and technologies.¹⁴ To be able to harness their creativity successfully towards innovation, they are afforded more independence and flexibility with their work and time. Departing from the strict discipline of the industrial or bureaucratic work regimes, their productivity is not reliant on a fixed, regimented schedule. Under the upgraded work regime of immaterial production, neoliberal and cosmopolitan values like self-expression, risk-taking, and tolerance are given utmost importance.¹⁵ In order to foster innovation in its economy, the Singapore government encourages its citizens to adopt a similar mode of "non-conformist thinking," but which should lie "within the limits of decency and decorum."¹⁶ This preferred mode of non-conformist thinking is oriented towards generation not of the uniquely new and previously impossible but of a form of newness that builds on the given limitations of existing infrastructure, bureaucracy, or technology.

For the state, creativity is problematic because, being concerned with introducing newness to given conditions, it has the potential to refuse or subvert norms on which the established order has thrived. In order to profit from innovation in the knowledge-based economy, businesses must be able to harness creativity as a human resource while confining it to non-subversive bounds or 'Out-of-Bounds Markers.' The immaterial production of newness must not challenge or undermine the authority of the established order but must address problems in efficiency or profitability as technical issues, which require the replacement of components or the adjustment of methods. Otherwise, it might conflict with the regimented organizational culture of Singapore, which has allowed it to operate with high bureaucratic efficiency, albeit with high employee turnover.¹⁷ Companies and institutions

¹³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Oslo Manual: Guides for Collecting and Interpreting Innovation Data*, 3rd ed. (Paris, France: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development & Statistical Office of the European Communities, 2005), 17.

¹⁴ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York, U.S.A.: Basic Books, 2002), 8.

¹⁵ Florida, 9.

¹⁶ Goh, "New Singapore."

¹⁷ See Chong Li Choy, "History and Managerial Culture in Singapore: 'Pragmatism,' 'Openness,' and 'Paternalism,'" *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 4.3 (1987): 133-143.

have operated effectively because they assign each employee to perform a specific set of tasks based on predetermined protocols, which have been refined through time. The restriction of the transformative potential of creativity to the OB Markers of innovation means that organizational hierarchies and social practices would only be subjected to change if they hampered bureaucratic efficiency or corporate profitability.

The government deploys the term ‘OB Markers’ in reference to the scope of critical debate that is permissible in the local public sphere. Any violation of its parameters could be met with the force of the law in the form of arrest for sedition or prosecution for libel. Because OB Markers are vaguely described, their definition and enforcement assume the form of self-regulation on the part of individuals based on their perception of these bounds. The extent of their legal transgression depends on the degree of their perceived threat to the authority of the state.

To be able to manage creativity in its domain within OB Markers, the state ends up relying on the newness brought by external flows, in the form of foreign capital and talent, which are more easily governable within its domain due to its regulation of their arrival and their precondition of transience. The transformation of Singapore into an attractive destination for transnational flows has become tied to the development of the tourism industry, to which the government has given more emphasis since the late 1990s.

To help the national economy stay globally competitive, the Singapore Tourism Board proposes to turn Singapore into a tourism capital of the twenty-first century. In its “Tourism 21” report from the late 1990s, it suggests that if New York and London are regarded as the capitals of finance, Milan and Paris are the capitals of fashion, and Rome and Mecca are the capitals of religion, then Singapore can present itself as the capital of tourism. Being tourism capital is an intrinsic aspect of being a global city. Its allure as a destination finds its epitome in its ability to draw tourists, whose favorable response would further enhance its reputation in the world market.

Having rapidly grown since the late 1990s, the Singapore tourism industry experiences a record year in 2012 with 14.5 million tourist arrivals and \$23 billion in tourist receipts.¹⁸ While contributing to the national economy, tourist arrivals are encouraged by the government because they are expected to have an indirect impact on Singapore’s prominence as a cosmopolitan hub for transnational flows. Applying an expanded definition of tourism, the “Tourism 21” report conceives of a tourism capital as a destination not only for tourists and but also for investors and professionals. If tourism implies the temporary influx of foreign bodies, its definition could be extended to refer not only to bodies visiting for the pleasurable experience of going sightseeing and shopping but also to bodies establishing a provisional presence to earn from business and employment. In the “Tourism 21” report, vibrant tourism is equated with the influx of foreign capital and talent. Not conventionally associated with tourism, these external realities are favored by the government because their presence would contribute to Singapore’s economic growth. No longer transient and disconnected, foreign tourists now exert a significant influence over the local environment and its global competitiveness.

According to the “Tourism 21” report, Singapore must compete with other global cities to attract foreign talent, which would allow it to maintain its prosperity in a volatile world market. Based on the implicit assumption that the creativity and contingency of the local environment must be contained within OB Markers, the theory is that foreign talent would infuse its corporate culture with innovative ideas and methods, which would augment its efficiency and profitability. As Richard Florida argues, the neoliberal and cosmopolitan

¹⁸ Singapore, Singapore Tourism Board, “Annual Report on Tourism Statistics,” Report, Singapore Tourism Board, 2012, 1.

values of risk-taking and independence, which fuel immaterial production, are contrary to the rigidness and regimentation of the established work regime. From the standpoint of the government, creativity should issue not from autonomous and enterprising hawkers, as was the case in the past, but from educated and skilled professionals, who would bring a unique approach to corporate culture without overturning its norms.

Through the spectacle of tourism, foreign capital and talent will form emotional affinities towards Singapore, which the “Tourism 21” report says is crucial to its success as a leading global city.¹⁹ By refashioning preexistent urban spaces and cultural artifacts for public consumption, the tourist industry is able to create a pleasurable image of order and stability, which would allow residents and visitors to establish fondness for the city. Heightening the resonances of indelible urban experiences, it aims to draw and keep foreign capital and talent in its domain even while these realities are never permitted to integrate fully with Singaporean society, which could cause it to lose its strict racial demographic. Because the possibility exists that transnational flows would flee to other global cities if another financial crisis were to occur, they must be enticed to settle in Singapore for an extended duration regardless of the unpredictability of global economic conditions.

In building its infrastructure and maintaining its livability as a global city, Singapore must simultaneously resort to foreign workers from Bangladesh, China, and India in the construction and service industries even though their increased number causes discontent among the local citizenry. The national economy’s reliance on the low wages of migrant labor would allow the salary scale and technical knowledge of the local population to rise. The duration of their residency in Singapore is more precarious and transitory than that of foreign capital and talent because the necessity of their labor is based on the favorability of political and economic factors. Manageable without labor unions, their contractual employment is flexible according to the volatile fluctuations of the world market, which determine production costs. This underbelly of the global city remains concealed from its prominent narrative of progress and prosperity.

In order for it to benefit from the flourishing of the global tourist industry, Singapore must be cultivated as a brand with a consumable and compelling commercial identity. The government must build on its image in the world market as a ‘shopper’s paradise’ by enhancing the ‘buzz’ of the cityscape.²⁰ With its redefined conception of tourism, the “Tourism 21” report appears to be less concerned about increasing the number of tourists and the length of their visit than attracting the type of individuals who will bring vibrancy and excitement to its domain.²¹ This vibrancy and excitement must assume a benign form, which would not threaten its established order but would contribute to its global competitiveness.

Previous tourism campaigns had emphasized Singapore’s Oriental identity by marketing it as a city in Asia or a gateway to the West. Implemented from 2004-2009, the ‘Uniquely Singapore’ campaign highlighted its exceptionality amid other global cities particularly in the Asian region. Initiated at the start of the decade, ‘YourSingapore’ is oriented towards allowing foreign visitors to customize their experience of Singapore depending on their interests and tastes. Addressed to these discerning consumers, the official website describes Singapore as follows: “She is a dynamic city that inspires; constantly innovating to offer fresh experiences. It is her own blend of offerings that sets her apart from other destinations. / However, we live in an ever-changing environment, with the digital age enabling travelers to actively shape and define their own travel stories. / Thus Singapore

¹⁹ See Singapore, Subcommittee on Making Singapore a Leading Global City, Economic Strategies Committee, “Highly-Skilled People, Innovative Economy, Distinctive Global City,” Report, Economic Strategies Committee, 2010.

²⁰ “Tourism 21: Vision of a Tourism Capital,” Report, Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, 1996), 14.

²¹ “Tourism 21,” 22.

enables travelers to design their own journeys—stories they can call their very own. Undoubtedly, each account will be different, but that is what makes them intriguing and enduring. A multitude of stories told through the eyes of people from all over the world and the local residents themselves.”²²

Representing a shift away from essentialist norms of identity and culture to cosmopolitan values of flexibility and innovation, the ‘YourSingapore’ tourism campaign renders the cityscape more pliant to the demands of transnational flows of bodies. Cognizant of the advantages of Singapore’s malleable spatial landscape, it introduces a standpoint by which it could be consumed through a capacity for customization akin to that of a video game. While evoking an illusion of interactivity, the algorithms of a video game restrict the seemingly free actions of its operators to pre-programmed parameters.²³ Based on the workings of pragmatic governmentality, a similarly flexible mode of apprehension is temporarily afforded only to transient guests to its domain. Instead of being presented with ready-made attractions, foreign tourists are allowed to participate actively in their consumption of the cityscape. Because tourists can claim ownership over their experience of the local environment, they become more emotionally invested in it. This openness to innovative customization according the logic of video gaming helps dispel the notion of Singapore as being rigid and authoritarian, which circulates in the international news media.

THE BUZZ OF A GLOBAL COMMERCIAL STREET

Proof of Singapore’s prominent standing as a global city is its commercial street, Orchard Road. In contrast to the commercial streets of previous historical periods, which acquired prestige from their elegant retail shops, Singapore’s foremost boulevard is renowned for its spectacular shopping malls. The commercial street of millennial Singapore no longer assumes the form of an exception in the cityscape, which stands apart from the rest of the nation as a utopic aspiration for it to realize. Instead, it finds prominence as an exemplar, the proud epitome of the progress and prosperity of the entire nation in the world market.

The history of Orchard Road is defined by its passage from a conduit for movement to a destination for shopping. Corresponding with Singapore’s transformation from an entrepôt port into a global city, this passage has meant a change in its spatial and social norms towards the cosmopolitan ideals of neoliberal capitalism. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Orchard Road was known as a forested thoroughfare, which passed through the nutmeg, fruit, and pepper plantations sprawled across the surrounding hills. As areas of the plantations were gradually converted to residential use, it provided important access from the bustling municipal center to the cloistered expatriate enclave, where European colonial officials and company employees resided in tropical bungalows. By the first decade of the new century, commercial spaces started to be established on stretches of the thoroughfare. In addition to the Orchard Road Market and the Singapore Cold Storage Company, which were commercial spaces that supplied basic necessities, the Pavilion Theatre served as a movie house that screened British and American features for the expatriate community of the nearby Tanglin district.

Built in the early 1920s, the stately Amber Mansions, which contained boutiques, apartments, offices, and restaurants, sat on the bend at the eastern end of Orchard Road where Penang Lane diverged from the main thoroughfare. Its construction signaled the emergence

²² “An Experience to Call Your Own,” YourSingapore Brand Story, YourSingapore, <<http://www.yoursingapore.com/content/traveller/en/browse/aboutsingapore/singapore-brand-story.html>>.

²³ See Alexander R. Galloway, *Gaming: Essays in Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: U of Minnesota P, 2006), 12-19.

of Orchard Road as a site for the commerce and consumption not only of basic necessities but also of luxury goods. With the growing affordability of private motor vehicles before the Pacific War, automobile showrooms lined the length of Orchard Road.²⁴ Automobiles served as status symbols for local residents, who desired to flaunt their material wealth. In the late 1950s, C.K. Tang relocated his prominent emporium from River Valley Road to the Scotts Road junction. Called “Singapore’s Treasure House of Old World Lovelies,” it sold exquisite items such as linen, jade, satin, glassware, silverware, teakwood, and camphorwood. With the introduction of these retail establishments, Orchard Road gradually developed into a prominent destination for consumers in search of unique luxuries.

In 1960s Singapore, the most prominent site of commerce, Raffles Place, was a delimited public square that lacked the space to accommodate the growing mass of consumers. The shift in Singapore’s commercial center from the enclosed quadrangle of Raffles Place to the expansive boulevard of Orchard Road commenced when the landmark Robinson’s Department Store was destroyed by fire in November 1972. Erected on the site of the Pavilion Theatre in time for the 1973 Lunar New Year, the air-conditioned Specialists’ Shopping Centre was Orchard Road’s first major shopping mall, featuring an amalgamation of retailers, restaurants, jewelers, tailors, salons, and supermarkets, along with branches of Robinson’s, John Little’s, and B.P. de Silva.²⁵ The Specialists’ Shopping Centre was contiguous to the Orchard Road car park, which would be reconfigured in the evenings as Glutton’s Square, a boisterous venue for delicious hawker food.²⁶ The relocation of popular retail establishments to a broader commercial complex signaled the new centrality of Orchard Road as a site for mass consumption, where large crowds could regularly congregate not only on the weekends but also in the evenings.

The rise of Orchard Road as a boulevard of shopping malls coincided with the demise of the pasar malams as the principal sites of public leisure and social life in independent Singapore. When the campaign of sanitary modernity to cleanse pasar malams from the cityscape began its implementation on Labor Day 1978, the Orchard Road Pedestrian Mall was envisioned as a new venue where relocated hawkers could be gathered for the purposes of tourism. Presented as a paragon of progress, Orchard Road gained further prominence as Singapore’s main commercial street, whose synergy of consumer spaces and practices aims to cater to the diverse interests and tastes of the heterogeneous local population.

The subsequent construction of Wisma Atria in 1986 and Ngee Ann City in 1993 adjacent to the Orchard MRT station represented pivotal stages in the continual reconfiguration of Orchard Road into a boulevard of shopping malls. Shifting its primary orientation from supplying commercial products to urban residents to embodying the cosmopolitan aspirations of the entire nation, it helped to create an urban landscape that would appeal to the desires of global tourists and enhance its standing in the world market.

In line with the new vision of Singapore as a world-class global city, the “Tourism 21” report from the late 1990s envisages Orchard Road as its ‘great street.’ It plans to reconfigure the boulevard into a premier commercial street on the same level as Fifth Avenue in New York, Champs Elysées in Paris, and Nanjing Road in Shanghai. As a great street, it would supposedly function as a social nucleus for shaping the population into a community. Reminiscent of how the legibility of state monuments was designed to instill values of proper public life, the spectacle of the commercial street is intended to foster commonality of identity among the populace. By being visible to the gaze of the international community, the

²⁴ Chua Ai Lin, *Modernity, Popular Culture, and Urban Life: Anglophone Asians in Colonial Singapore, 1920-1940*, Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2007, 50.

²⁵ “This is a True City of Shops,” *The Straits Times*, 30 May 1975, 5.

²⁶ Terry Tan, *Stir-fried and Not Shaken: A Nostalgic Trip Down Singapore’s Memory Lane* (Singapore: Monsoon Books, 2008), 232.

commercial street becomes a source of prominent national identity to urban residents through the image of cosmopolitan sophistication it bestows on them. In the historical period of neoliberal capitalism, national identity has become more profoundly entwined with global reputation based on its adherence to transnational norms and not its opposition to imperial values.

For architect Victor Gruen, the designer of the original shopping mall, commercial spaces can function as a vital source of community despite being oriented towards the generation of profit. In his writings, Gruen rued how the reliance on the automobile, which grew amid the urban flight that marked the post-war economic boom in the United States, led to the disorderly development of the suburbs. Believing that the city is responsible for fostering community, he advocated for the reproduction of important urban realities in the suburbs. His solution was the shopping mall, whose tendency to gather bodies would restore the social life of crowds like at a traditional town square.²⁷ Through the shared practice of consumerism within its enclosure, suburban residents would be regenerated as a community.²⁸ In the commercial street of a global city such as Singapore, thriving consumerism demonstrates cosmopolitan sophistication, the ability to negotiate heterogeneous flows according to transnational norms. The literary culture of the time recurrently highlights how, being part of a young and prosperous nation without an extensive history, Singaporeans could be characterized with the expertise and prestige of shoppers.²⁹

As a great commercial street in the urban nucleus, Orchard Road will serve as the main tourist destination of the global city of Singapore. From the standpoint of the “Tourism 21” report, a vibrant tourism capital must provide consumers with “delightful” and “memorable” experiences. Acknowledging that cosmopolitan individuals have broader exposure to diverse experiences, the report understands that tourists carry with them higher standards and expectations. In order to be successful as tourist attractions, urban spaces must be upgraded into consumable experiences, which are endowed with a greater potency of “pulling power.”³⁰ They must be configured as spectacles, which have the tendency to be inscribed in the memories of individuals due to the immense pleasure they generate. These tourist attractions are characterized with the adjective “must-see,” whose urgency implies that a visit to Singapore lacks a sense of completeness without their consumption.

One recommendation from the “Tourism 21” document is to design attractions with a consumable, “unifying character,”³¹ which tourists could easily grasp. Tourism is no longer reliant on the sense of thrill from an exotic adventure like the bazaar, which lies at the cusp of danger. To present the wealth of experiences with the haphazardness of the bazaar would only disorient and repulse potential customers. Seeing culture and history as commodities that can be acquired and exchanged, the document suggests that their heterogeneity and complexity be domesticated and customized for public consumption. Reconfiguring urban spaces that are culturally and historically significant for the purposes of the tourist industry would entail simplifying, conflating, and exaggerating their unique characteristics.³²

Coherence in the legible characteristics of different tourist attractions would help constitute a city’s brand identity, which, according to eminent public policy consultant Simon Arnholt, has a significant impact on its global reputation. The image that a geographic

²⁷ Victor Gruen and Larry Smith, *Shopping Towns U.S.A.: The Planning of Shopping Centers* (New York, U.S.A.: Reinhold, 1960), 38.

²⁸ Jeffrey M. Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004), 134.

²⁹ See *The Strait Times* 6 August 1993.

³⁰ “Tourism 21,” 5.

³¹ “Tourism 21,” 33.

³² T.C. Chang and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, “‘New Asia – Singapore’: Communicating Local Cultures through Global Tourism,” *Geoforum* 30 (1999): 108.

location has in the world market shapes the general impression of the quality of its products and the aptitude of its residents. Arnholt argues that tourism is the principal means by which a city or a nation can enhance its brand,³³ which would influence its monetary value in terms of market capitalization.³⁴ In the period of neoliberal capitalism, not just companies listed in the stock exchange but also nations competing in the world market rely on the public perception of their economic potential in order to attract investments.

Exploring innovative methods to upgrade the buzz of public life in Orchard Road, a government document entitled “Street of Singapore” proposes possible changes to the configuration of its streetscape.³⁵ Although not all of these proposed changes are eventually implemented, the document reveals the dominant aesthetic of commercial spaces in Singapore during this historical period. Throughout the document, the urgency of generating vibrancy or ‘buzz’ is reiterated. ‘Buzz’ is an important byword in the public discourse of this milieu. Orchard Road’s transformation into the great commercial street of a global city requires that its streetscape be infused with buzz. According to Arnholt, buzz is crucial to the branding of a geographic location.³⁶

Based on its definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, buzz refers to a state of excitement, which is often accompanied by “busy talk” about its source.³⁷ In marketing terms, buzz denotes the “explosive self-generating demand” for a product.³⁸ Unlike the liveliness of the bazaar, buzz is not limited to an enclosure but is expected to spread across networks of interpersonal communication through contagion. In the “Tourism 21” report, it assumes the form of a manufactured atmosphere of vibrancy, which is intended to generate crowds and profits.

From the standpoint of the “Tourism 21” report, Singapore’s image of prosperity in the world market has become linked with Orchard Road’s experience of vibrancy. If Orchard Road were to be seen as possessing buzz, this impression would extend to the entire nation. In the current historical period, the government treats buzz as a potent sign of progress, which is capable of attracting foreign capital and talent. Two types of global flows of information help generate buzz. As a scientific measure of excellence, global rankings in international news magazines create hype about the standard of living in a city.³⁹ Initiating buzz about their experience of a destination, tourists could act as a complementary vanguard of positive feedback. But because an administrative authority can intervene only by creating the conditions for it, buzz is considered to be uncontrollable once it is initiated.

Infusing Orchard Road with buzz would mean turning it into a site “Where it all happens.”⁴⁰ Re-imagined as the cosmopolitan nucleus of a leading global city, the commercial street would be made to contain the entirety of the world. Victor Gruen argues that a psychological climate conducive to shopping must be produced in commercial spaces. This climate must offer a buzzing pedestrian experience to entice consumers to linger and return, which would result in greater profit.⁴¹ “They must represent an essentially urban environment. They should create opportunities for manifold activities. They must be busy and colorful, exiting and stimulating, full of variety and interest. They must not only make walking enjoyable, but must also provide places for rest and relaxation. They should surround

³³ Simon Arnholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions* (New York, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 22.

³⁴ Arnholt, 5-7.

³⁵ See “Street of Singapore: Remaking Orchard Road,” Singapore Tourism Board, 2003.

³⁶ Arnholt, 60-61.

³⁷ “Buzz, *n.*,” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press.

³⁸ Renee Dye, “The Buzz on Buzz,” *Harvard Business Review* 78.6 (2000): 140.

³⁹ Dye, “Buzz on Buzz,” 143.

⁴⁰ “Tourism 21,” 31.

⁴¹ Gruen and Smith, 147.

the shopper with pleasurable experiences. All the senses should be rewarded.”⁴² According to Gruen’s theory, a commercial space would acquire buzz if it features a multiplicity of dynamic and revitalizing activities. Gruen’s theory differs from Frederic Thompson’s conception of the carnival spirit, which requires bodies to be in continuous states of movement and pleasure without ever lapsing into the stillness of repose.⁴³ Both Gruen and Thompson explain how the configuration of commercial or leisure space must be systematically devised to intensify movement and pleasure, unlike the pasar malam, whose liveliness and ebullience spontaneously issue from the crowds that autonomously gather in its domain.

In official documents from the current historical period, the vibrancy of public life in the commercial street is equated with buzz. Contrasted with Frederic Thompson’s carnival spirit, buzz does not require a strict physical enclosure, where it could bombard consumers with an abundance and variety of dynamic spectacles. Buzz relies less on overwhelming multiplicity than on irresistible uniqueness.⁴⁴ It can originate from a singular object whose allure is potent enough, regardless of its size, to generate excitement. Instead of springing from the contingency of simultaneous circumstances or the creativity of autonomous individuals, as was the case with the ebullience of night markets, the experience of buzz must be carefully manufactured to produce an intended outcome. Even if it is ultimately uncontrollable, capable of proliferating without the intervention of an administrative authority, buzz is desirable to the government. Prompting large crowds of people to inhabit a space, obtain a product, or participate in an experience, it has the potential for exponential success.

In line with its plans to transform Orchard Road into a great street, the government encourages shopping malls to refurbish their façades with the buzz of spectacles.⁴⁵ Street fronts should be designed such that they do not only attract pedestrians to gather outside the mall but also induce them to circulate inside. Instead of being monumental in scale, which would merely cause pedestrians to linger on the sidewalk while they gaze at their façade, Orchard Road’s shopping malls must be translucently spectacular. Whereas spectacles are typically opaque in visual appearance, this form of spectacular architecture entices bodies to visit its boutiques with alluring traces of its interior.

The “Street of Singapore” proposal recommends that the exteriors of shopping malls be reconfigured into “urban verandahs,” which would enhance the buzz of public life by regulating the usage of the commercial street. According to this official document, the focus in the design of the commercial spaces on Orchard Road must shift away from a rigid disjunction towards a permeable interaction between interior and exterior in order to elevate the vibrancy of the streetscape. Historically in Singapore, the verandah has referred to the structural extension of a circumscribed enclosure. It has assumed the form of either an open-air porch encircling the perimeter of a bungalow or a covered walkway connecting the frontages of shophouses. In both cases, the verandah provides an interim space, which negotiates the passage between private domicile and public environment. With shopping malls, the strict categories of private and public are dissolved into flexible degrees of variance. Urban verandahs facilitate movement between enclosure and streetscape by impelling bodies to circulate throughout the entire commercial street. No longer needing to compensate for the inadequacy of space like the shophouse or to shelter from the upheaval of time like the bungalow, they never aspire for prolonged occupation. The diffusion of physical

⁴² Gruen and Smith, 147-148.

⁴³ See Frederic Thompson, “Amusing the Million,” *Everybody’s Magazine*, September 1908, retrieved from: <nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/people/text2/thompson.pdf>

⁴⁴ Dye, 140.

⁴⁵ See “Street of Singapore.”

boundaries through the zoning of the commercial district turns each shopping mall into part of the complex assemblage of consumer spaces in the streetscape. Because the urban verandahs are meant to project the image that these shopping malls are interconnected, they are supposed to induce pedestrians to visit the various malls arrayed in the domain of the commercial street.

Into the second decade of the new millennium, two of the most popular shopping malls along Orchard Road, Wisma Atria and Plaza Singapura, built respectively in the middle of the 1970s and 1980s, have refurbished their exteriors with the appearance of architectural innovation. Wisma Atria has been made to resemble Ion Orchard, which stands beside it on the southeast corner of the major intersection between Orchard Road and Paterson Road. Forming a monumental presence in the area, the glittering exterior of the Ion Orchard is shaped like a gigantic globule clothed in an undulating mosaic of glass panels. Soaring metal poles evoke tree trunks with branches spread out to support a membranous glass canopy, which shelters the small plaza fronting the main entrance to the mall. Its amorphous shape appears to be a whimsical attempt to mimic the oeuvre of Frank Gehry. Representing a stark deviation from its former boxlike structure, the refurbished façade of Wisma Atria is jagged and asymmetrical, reminiscent of the configuration of the soaring Orchard Central at the midway point of the boulevard. The cosmopolitan aesthetic of asymmetry in these newer designs indicates a trend in the commercial and residential architecture of Singapore towards an exhilarating sense of newness.

The small plazas fronting each of these two shopping malls are designed to enhance the buzz of the larger streetscape by gathering transient crowds, who are expected to disperse before they grow chaotic. Leading up to a large video screen, which hovers above the main entrance to the mall, Wisma Atria's sloping plaza is composed of neon steps that are illuminated at night. Whereas several of the glass panels on the façade of Ion Orchard act as store window displays, a cluster of them combine to project video images. Because the series of images on these outdoor video screens are repeated, they do not aim to enthrall pedestrians for an extended duration. Meant only to attract attention and not to transmit information, these video images are designed to prompt consumers to continue their movement after glancing at them for a moment.

A mid-1990s article in *The Straits Times* reports on the response to the proposed and implemented changes to introduce buzz to its cityscape. The owners and tenants of business establishments along Orchard Road warn that an amalgamation of incongruous activities, such as those planned to enhance the buzz of street life, should follow an "international standard," which "means no hawker carts, loud boisterous music from *pasar malam*."⁴⁶ Based on its perception in the public culture, the *pasar malam* is generally understood to engender the vibrancy and excitement of teeming crowds, although it simultaneously generates undesirable realities such as noise and disorder.

For it to become the great street of a global city, the image of Orchard Road must be made to comply with transnational norms of leisure and entertainment, which means excluding the recalcitrance of the local environment represented by the *pasar malam*. Embodying ideals of cosmopolitan sophistication, it must manufacture buzz without having to rely on the sordidness of the boisterous bazaar atmosphere in order to draw crowds.

THE SOCIAL SEGMENTATIONS OF NEOLIBERAL ENCLOSURES

⁴⁶ Tan Yong Meng, "Street Life's Fine, But Keep Orchard Road's Image Intact Please," *The Straits Times*, 12 February 1995, 21.

Scattered throughout the island, shopping malls dominate the spatial and social landscape of millennial Singapore. While many of them are concentrated in the urban center, they act as community hubs for public housing estates on the outskirts of the city. The ubiquity and variety of shopping malls in Singapore exhibit the logic of zoning, whose inclusive categorization and organization of urban space based on productive use allows businesses to target different segments of the heterogeneous population. Shopping malls are even regimented into upper and lower levels, which correspond to the delineation of the established hierarchy.

Catering to various niches, the shopping malls located in the city center are visited for their specific selections of commercial items: Forum The Shopping Mall on Orchard Road for children's products, Far East Plaza on Scotts Road for street fashion, Funan DigitalLife Mall on North Bridge Road for consumer electronics, Park Mall on Penang Road for home furniture, Velocity@Novena for sports and fitness goods, and Tanglin Shopping Centre on Tanglin Road for antiques, carpets, and other oriental artifacts.

Situated next to a youth hub and a skate park, the Somerset area's Cathay Cineleisure aims to appeal to young Singaporeans. Contrasted with other commercial spaces within the domain of Orchard Road, it provides sites of assembly and community for the local youth population, which would otherwise loiter in the void decks of housing estates. The state appears to have configured the Somerset area to contain the growing restiveness and delinquency of young Singaporeans, who have become dissatisfied with the employment opportunities available to them given the influx of foreign professionals with college degrees.

As exemplified by several of the buildings that line the oldest stretch of Orchard Road between Scotts Road and Tanglin Road, aging or neglected shopping malls are often not demolished but instead turned into commercial spaces that cater to peripheral niches. Erected in the mid-1970s, Orchard Towers has been rehabilitated as a destination for adult entertainment. Likewise left unrefurbished, the nearby Far East Shopping, which was constructed around the same period, has allotted one of its floors to shops that sell golfing equipment. Older shopping malls have been turned into public spaces of commerce and consumption for segments of Singapore's migrant workforce: Golden Mile Complex on Beach Road for Thais, Peninsula Plaza on North Bridge Road for Burmese, and City Plaza in the Katong district for Indonesians. Flanked on the north side of Orchard Road by Tangs Plaza and Paragon Mall, Lucky Plaza houses remittance centers, employment agencies, and beauty salons for Filipino nationals. Particularly on Sundays, the vicinity of Lucky Plaza is filled with thousands of Filipino domestic helpers, who congregate in the frontages of adjacent commercial establishments. Their boisterous presence in the commercial street discloses the underbelly of the global city of Singapore.

Evinced by the sudden inadequacy of the urban infrastructure, the population of Singapore has swelled in recent years, since Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong assumed control of the Singapore government in 2004. To boost the productivity of the national economy despite its small workforce, the Singapore government adopted the policy of allowing a large influx of foreign workers and professionals. Whereas migrant workers have been hired to construct the monumental infrastructure of a global city, expatriate employees have been enlisted to introduce a dynamic approach to the economic system. By 2010, more than one-third of the population consists of foreign nationals.⁴⁷ The rapid increase in the population over the span of a few years has troubled a large majority of Singaporean citizens, who believe that the influx of foreign nationals has led to worsened congestion, crime, and inflation.

⁴⁷ "Singapore's Angry Migrant Workers," *The New York Times*, Editorial, 27 December 2013.

The neoliberal policy towards the relaxation of controls on the influx of bodies and finances has resulted in worsening income disparity between the highest and lowest salary earners.⁴⁸ The drive to reconfigure Singapore with the hypermodern infrastructure of a global city has necessitated the hiring of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers, who, housed in cramped accommodations, are paid insufficient wages that occasionally arrive late. On the other end of the economic spectrum, one-third of Singapore's robust financial services industry consists of expatriate professionals, a large majority of whom earns more than three hundred thousand dollars per annum.⁴⁹ Singapore's income disparity has become the largest among industrialized nations,⁵⁰ even while its populace continues to receive the highest income per capita in the world.⁵¹ Outnumbering those in Europe, Southeast Asian multibillionaires, who own more than ten billion dollars in assets, are predicted to overtake those in the United States within a decade.⁵² David Harvey asserts that the rise to dominance of the regime of neoliberal capitalism has brought about increased wealth for the social and economic elite alongside intensified conditions of poverty for the underprivileged.⁵³ The outcome of unregulated capital flows, income disparity and social inequality are characteristic byproducts of the policies and processes that create a global city.

The disagreement between state and citizenry over the future of the nation reveals the tension between domestic issues and global aspirations. The People's Action Party insists that the new national crisis in Singapore centers on its need to stay globally competitive to be able to maintain its prosperity for its aging 'pioneer generation.' The majority of the citizenry is more concerned about the worsening congestion, inflation, and inequality. Discernible in the public culture, its sentiments reveal that the vision of progress can no longer be justified according to the dominant discourse of national crisis, in which the state demands sacrifices from the populace so that the nation could accomplish its lofty economic goals. According to the contentious Population White Paper that the Singapore government disseminates in January 2013, the persistent problem of a low fertility rate has grown urgent because a nearly one million Singaporeans, more than a fourth of its current citizenry, will reach retirement age by 2030. Entitled "A Sustainable Population for a Dynamic Singapore," the Population White Paper details an ambitious plan to naturalize fifteen to twenty-five thousand new citizens each year to arrest the decline of the local population.⁵⁴ Faced with the further expansion of the total population, many Singaporeans are already dissatisfied with the crowded public transportation system and the prohibitive real estate market when their everyday life had been relatively comfortable prior to the policy changes that brought about the large influx of foreign nationals. While the People's Action Party stresses the urgency of strong economic growth, they do not see the necessity of Singapore's global competitiveness in the world market. They worry that the White Paper intimates a future Singapore, whose culture will no longer be characterized by norms of social practice that would make it distinctly Singaporean.

The disparities between elite and underprivileged, between the prosperity of the global city and the survival of the local populace, are inscribed into the enclosed configuration of several shopping malls. Unlike in previous historical periods, this disparity rests less on rigid segregation than on flexible zoning, in which disparate realities are allowed

⁴⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK and New York, U.S.A.: Oxford UP, 2005), 16.

⁴⁹ HSBC Expat, "Expat Explorer Survey," 2013.

⁵⁰ Tom Benner, "Singapore Poverty in the Spotlight," *Al Jazeera*, 9 November 2013, retrieved from: <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/singapore-poverty-spotlight-20131178362669442.html>>.

⁵¹ Knight-Frank Research, *The Wealth Report 2012: A Global Perspective on Prime Property and Wealth* (Knight Frank and Citi Private Bank, 2012), 10.

⁵² Knight-Frank, 11.

⁵³ See Harvey.

⁵⁴ See Singapore, "A Sustainable Population for a Dynamic Singapore," Population White Paper, January 2013.

to coexist and interact in the same spaces. Instead of being departmentalized according to categories of products and services, these malls are divided into two autonomous halves, with the palatial upper floors dedicated to the elite with their luxury products and the confined basement levels catering to the majority with affordable goods. While this spatial demarcation may be symbolically circumscribed, it remains physically porous.

More spacious and less crowded than those below the ground, the upper levels of Ion Orchard and Takashimaya-Ngee Ann City contain expensive boutiques like Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Tiffany & Co., Hermes, and Chanel. The walls, floors, and posts of these upper levels are marbled with speckled stone. Soaring high above the floor, their ceilings feature soft lighting to heighten the grandeur of the interiors. Complementing their window displays, the walls of boutiques dazzle with illuminated patterns or video screens. The interiors of these shopping malls are designed to evoke a sense of elegance and prestige, which would appeal to the foreign tourists with newfound purchasing power that frequent them.

In contrast, the basement levels are the most crowded sections of the shopping mall because the stores with the most reasonably priced items are found there. This part of the mall regularly teems with crowds of local citizens. Concealed from the sight of shoppers above the ground, the design of the basement levels is less palatial with low ceilings and plastic flooring. The division between the upper and basement levels represents a new form of enclosure, which is no longer founded on the strict dichotomy between interior and exterior. Even though the commercial enclosure may be circumscribed according to categories of luxury and mass, this delineation is not enforced with violence.

ASYMMETRY AND MOBILITY IN THE SHOPPING MALL

As expressed in the slogan of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Singapore government's plans for the cityscape aim to reconfigure its public spaces into sites "to live, work, and play." While evoking the exhilarating experience of an amusement park according to Frederic Thompson's idea of the carnival spirit, play in millennial Singapore, under the regime of neoliberal capitalism, transpires in two forms, along the poles of its social and economic disparities. On the one hand, play could refer to the excessive lifestyle of the super-rich, this period's elite, which, deriving its abundant wealth from financial speculation, is not bound by norms of legality or propriety. On the other, it could denote the restless movement of ordinary individuals, who, stressed from the regimented corporate culture and worsening price inflation, are in search of sources of relaxation and revitalization. Both modes of play involve a form of leisure from the exhaustion of the work regime and the mundaneness of everyday life that affords individuals reprieve from the pressures of conforming to the demands of prevailing circumstances.

In attracting global flows of capital, Singapore has become known in the public culture of the international news media as a site of excess for the super-rich.⁵⁵ Several multibillionaires have renounced their citizenship in other nations to migrate to Singapore due to its minimal taxation and secure environment. Other members of the transnational super-elite, who reside in other geographic locations, like to fly into Singapore via their private jets in order to party at exclusive clubs at the Marina Bay Sands casino complex, where bills frequently reach six digits. The fascination in the public culture with this extravagance reveals how excess has become the basis of social prestige in the period of

⁵⁵ Shibani Mahtani, "Wealth Over the Edge: Singapore," *The Wall Street Journal* 7 March 2013, retrieved from: <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324662404578334330162556670>>.

neoliberal capitalism.⁵⁶ In millennial Singapore, excess involves the superfluous expenditure of exorbitant sums of money for the sole purpose of private pleasure. The new mode of social prestige means pursuing a lifestyle that, indifferent to the consequences of its actions, occurs at a transcendent distance from the everyday life of the rest of the populace, which must cope with the rising costs of basic necessities.

Instead of strictly being based on material abundance, social prestige is defined by the capacity to transcend the necessity of given conditions. In previous historical periods, social prestige was founded on the visible possession of luxury goods, to which the majority of the populace lacked access because of the exclusivity of the commercial street and the limit to their purchasing power. When these luxury goods started to be exhibited in glass store displays and shelves, the sight of these objects was made more public and democratic. Dissociated from the practice of owning inaccessible objects, social value became rooted in the activity of occupying the commercial street. Particularly in 1960s Manila, with the rapid growth of the urban population, the basis of social value shifted to popularity, to the common act of participating in an amorphous mass. Prestige in this milieu derived from imitating the gestures, appearances, and lifestyles of popular movie stars, who, despite the allure of their transcendent status, continued to bear traces of their ordinary origins.

Epitomized by the extravagant everyday life of the super-rich, social prestige is no longer founded on the visible possession of material wealth but on the legible performance of social superiority, which far exceeds the bounds of conventional norms of behavior. Inhabiting the rarefied top tier of the established hierarchy, the members of the super-elite no longer even bother to negotiate these norms. With the characteristic impunity of neoliberal capitalism, they conduct themselves as though their abundant wealth has exempted them from the mundane concerns and constraints that afflict a large majority of the population.

The members of the millennial super-elite are able to pursue lives of excess due to the financialization of capitalism. They have obtained their abundant wealth from their investments in the stock market. Even if transnational flows of capital are sources of financial volatility and economic inflation, the Singapore government cannot tightly regulate them without the likelihood of their departure for other global cities. Because it is concerned with virtual transactions, financial capitalism necessarily involves the transcendence of material boundaries.

The excess of the super-rich is visible only through sensationalized representations in the news media. Restricted to members of their economic clique, their social activities are not physically accessible to ordinary individuals, who, frequenting different public spaces, never interact with them. Unlike the media celebrities of Metropolitan Manila, who seem to relish their public adulation, they refrain from forming bonds of patronage. In the zoned landscape of the global city, their everyday life constitutes the new definition of privacy. Their indifference is often apprehended by the local citizenry as an acute hostility, exemplified by sporadic transgressions of legality and propriety.

The public image of their excessive lifestyle shapes the growing dissatisfaction the local citizenry experiences towards the People's Action Party's immigration policy, which it believes has brought about worsening congestion, inflation, and inequality. This dissatisfaction circulates online through alternative news websites such as the Temasek Review (TR Emeritus) and The Online Citizen, which have furnished Singaporeans with a virtual public space for obtaining unofficial facts and exchanging political views within the limits of the state's OB Markers for critical debate. The increase in expressions of dissent is a

⁵⁶ For example, see Kevin Kwan, *Crazy Rich Asians* (New York: Doubleday, 2013).

growing problem for the ruling People's Action Party, whose control over the government appears to be threatened for the first time in fifty years by consecutive electoral victories from the Workers' Party of Singapore.⁵⁷ As the main opposition party, the Worker's Party has condemned the Singapore government's policies on security, censorship, and immigration.

Amid the growing disparity and dissatisfaction, government documents describe how the dimension of play that is being introduced to the cityscape is intended to alleviate the stress of the work regime and everyday life. Opportunities for play would transform Singapore into a livable home for the Singaporean citizenry and foreign talent. Based on this idea, the configuration of the shopping malls in millennial Singapore could be understood as containing these emerging anxieties and desires through contiguous passageways of mobility and asymmetry.

The configuration of these shopping malls impels bodies towards continuous movement as they meander from store to store. In the "Street of Singapore" document, the heat and humidity of the local environment are said to cause "shopper inertia," the lack of energy and motion in consumers that hinders the ability of commercial spaces to generate profit. For the document, one problem that needs to be resolved is how to create pleasure in shoppers despite the weather and traffic such that they continue to circulate and consume. Victor Gruen calls for the strategic arrangement of "magnets" such as department stores,⁵⁸ which would "pull" consumers to visit the different sections of the shopping mall like they would browse the miscellaneous spectacles of an amusement park. Focused less on visual appeal than on physical movement, the shopping malls of millennial Singapore are configured with constricted passageways and permeable verandahs such that the bodies of consumers are not simply pulled towards spaces or spectacles but are circulated throughout the commercial street and the urban landscape. Instead of harnessing mobility for the productivity of the *entrepôt* economy, mobility is channeled, similar to supermarkets of 1960s Manila, into regulating the energies of crowds for the intensification of the consumer economy.

To heighten the buzz of human activity and exploit the mobility of the urban landscape for the primary purpose of profit, the "Street of Singapore" document urges that commercial structures such as shopping malls be situated within a two hundred meter radius of a Mass Rapid Transit or MRT station and connected to the station through underground passageways. The most popular shopping malls on Orchard Road, namely Ion Orchard, Plaza Singapura, and 313@Somerset, derive part of their success from being adjacent to MRT stations. Since they are likewise connected with other shopping malls, they accommodate continuous flows of bodies. The Orchard MRT station adjoins the underground levels of two shopping malls, Ion Orchard and Wisma Atria, whose entrances are situated on opposite sides of the turnstiles. Through underground passageways, pedestrians can easily access the nearby commercial spaces of Wheelock Place, Shaw House, and Tang Plaza.

Singapore's commercial, financial, and residential spaces are connected through an extensive public transportation network. The efficient and convenient service of the underground rapid transit system enables individuals to travel between shopping malls across different parts of the island without ever seeing the sun or the sky. Facilitating continuous mobility, this spatial interconnectivity keeps bodies from accumulating at public spaces for prolonged durations. Because the shopping malls and housing estates are almost seamlessly

⁵⁷ See Seth Mydans, "Slimmer Win in Singapore Gives Pause to Ruling Party," *The New York Times* 9 May 2011, A11, retrieved from: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/09/world/asia/09singapore.html>>; and Chun Han Wong, "Ruling Party Suffers Blow in Singapore By-Election," *The Wall Street Journal* 27 January 2013, retrieved from: <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323539804578266192267043164>>.

⁵⁸ Gruen and Smith, 134.

interconnected through the network of trains and buses, malls become extensions of the home with shoppers comfortably dressed in shorts and slippers. For this reason, shopping malls unfold as routine hubs of everyday life.

The three compact, asymmetrical underground levels of Ion Orchard frequently teem with human activity. Bereft of open spaces where bodies could gather and interact, the shopping malls in millennial Singapore are meant not for collectivity but for mobility. Because the underground corridors in many of these malls have narrow widths and low ceilings, their occupants are impelled to move quickly as though they possessed a definite purpose and destination. The movement of bodies throughout the enclosure is regulated by the presence and absence of seats, fountains, and maps. The lack of benches where shoppers could sit and rest deprives crowds of opportunities for assembly. Because shopping malls are designed to stimulate mobility, play is intended to be a temporary experience, which does not drain too much time and effort from the work regime and social reproduction. As a mode of repose, leisure is consigned to the home.

Escalators facilitate the circulation of bodies throughout the different levels of the shopping mall. Staircases exist to connect floors but, being poorly illuminated, they remain unnoticed in the corners of each floor. Movement is instead emphasized and produced through the strategic arrangement of escalators, which operate without interruption during operating hours. Working with mobility, the shopping mall must coordinate the arrival of flows from the street with their circulation in its enclosure.

Located in a reclaimed area beyond the opposite end of Orchard Road, the new financial district of Marina Bay was built to connect “seamlessly” with an agglomeration of commercial stores, residential units, food establishments, concert theaters, and art galleries.⁵⁹ On weekends, crowds vigorously traverse the underground passageway that connects Raffles City Shopping Centre, City Hall MRT station, CitiLink Mall, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, Marina Square Shopping Mall, and Suntec City. Due to the tendency for mobility inscribed into this passageway, its stores rarely prosper, and are frequently replaced. This dearth in financial success suggests that the business establishments situated along the underground passageway might be intended less for profit than for another purpose. Aided by the heat and humidity of the outdoor environment, the underground passageway bypasses the City Hall and Supreme Court buildings such that crowds of pedestrians are prevented from easily accessing these important public spaces.

The seemingly unruly movement of these crowds often assumes an organic order. Appearing to flow incessantly in opposite directions, two columns of bodies threaten to sweep along anyone who obstructs their path such that those who wish to stand still must step aside. The density and pace of the crowds that frequently inhabit the basement levels of shopping malls require individuals to be skilled in navigating their corridors. No opportunity for disorientation or fantasy is afforded them since they must continually be alert to changes in circumstances. Aside from stimulating mobility, the narrow passageways of shopping malls in millennial Singapore accustom its residents to change.

Echoing its exterior, the interior of the Ion Orchard is configured according to a motif of asymmetry. The walls of each boutique on its basement levels bear a distinct design and texture. The ceilings along these basement levels are ornamented with metal grills shaped like small, assorted perforations, which alter in shape as they proceed across the length of the corridors. Even the floors of the corridors are undulating. By creating the conditions for buzz, the aesthetic of asymmetry partly addresses the criticism that Singapore is rigid and boring.⁶⁰ Whereas the dynamic design of pre-Pacific War amusement parks generated exhilaration, the

⁵⁹ “Marina Bay,” 5.

⁶⁰ Citation?

asymmetrical aesthetic of millennial shopping malls domesticates change. Contrary to how shopping malls are conceived in cultural theories of commerce and consumption, asymmetry is not introduced to instill distraction and disorientation in bodies but to accustom them to change through the experience of constant newness.⁶¹ Given that change is a fact of everyday life in Singapore, it has intensified in a situation where disparity and inequality are commonly believed to be worsening. The shopping malls in the commercial street of Orchard Road help manage the growing dissatisfaction over these social and economic changes by turning incessant and uneven change into an architectural innovation.

When overdone, the asymmetry of millennial shopping malls can lead to smaller crowds and profits, such as in the case of Orchard Central in the youth-oriented Somerset area.⁶² Among the tallest buildings on Orchard Road, the Orchard Central shopping mall did not initially garner financial success because its configuration is conducive to mobility. From the side of the junction of Orchard Road and Killiney Road, the façade of the Orchard Central can be seen to resemble the striking face of a jagged mountain cliff, which highlights the sense of newness and exuberance it aims to present in the form of innovation and buzz to young Singaporean consumers. For one, the flow of bodies into its enclosure is hindered because it is not directly connected to an MRT station through an underground passageway. Situated in remote areas on each level, many of its escalators do not induce bodies to circulate throughout its enclosure. An outdoor escalator, extending across its façade on Orchard Road, ascends several stories above the street. The escalators on its upper levels are suspended high above the ground floor to provide individuals with the thrill of danger. Instead of stimulating mobility, these escalators are designed to be like carnival rides by heightening the experience of exhilaration, which entices individuals not towards circulation but towards repetition.

In the attempt to infuse its configuration with dynamism and innovation, the Orchard Central embraces asymmetry to the point of exaggeration. Clusters of floors have disparate themes and designs. With Moorish mosaic patterns in its flooring and lighting, the second basement tries to evoke an exoticized Mediterranean atmosphere. The embossed walls on the eighth level have been made to resemble machinery in a boiler room. Linearity in the contours of the walls and ceilings throughout the Orchard Central shopping mall is a rare exception. On every level, the shapes and sizes of the stores vary such that visitors might be led to assume that the narrow corridors end in cul-de-sacs. Disorienting to consumers, the configuration of Orchard Central deprives them of a clear vantage point from which they could survey the miscellany of commodities on sale. The mall has viewing bridges suspended high above the ground floor but they do not permit customers to view boutiques across different levels. These bridges are designed less to enhance the clarity of consumption than to intensify the stylishness of asymmetry. Aiming not so much to attract masses than to create niches, its disorienting configuration is the primary reason for its initial emptiness. Although disorientation may be needed to entrap consumers in the enclosure of the mall, exaggerated disorientation drives them away.

A different form of mobility that is effective in drawing and managing crowds is produced in the expansive, circular architecture of the VivoCity shopping mall, which links the Telok Blangah area with the Sentosa island resort. Fostering an atmosphere of ceaseless and spontaneous motion, the structure of the mall is shaped like an amorphous three-leaf clover with curving galleries overlooking a sprawling ground level. Called a “race course” configuration, it is meant to enhance the visibility to the mall’s different sections and boutiques.⁶³ No rough, angular surfaces or edges exist in the design of the atrium and its

⁶¹ See Quentin Hardy, “The Monuments of Tech,” *The New York Times*, 1 March 2014.

⁶² Jessica Lim, “Orchard Central Tenants Struggle,” *The Straits Times*, 4 March 2010.

⁶³ *City of Waves: VivoCity* (Singapore: Page One, 2008), 36.

galleries. The long, meandering streaks that mark the ceilings of the galleries on the second level originate from the center of the plaza on the ground floor like flows of life issuing from the earth. This motif of organic curvature can be found even on the contours of seats and their backrests. In the VivoCity shopping mall, asymmetry is given less emphasis than synergy. As a business strategy, synergy means the augmentation of profitability of two units through the agglomeration of their resources.

Because of its virtually seamless interconnection with the VivoCity shopping mall and the Harbourfront MRT station, the Sentosa island resort could be seen as an organic extension of the city. Through Singapore's efficient transportation system, tourists can easily access Sentosa via a monorail, which continually delivers bodies to the different sets of attractions on the island, including a beachfront, a spa, a theme park, and a casino. Pedestrians can reach the island by traversing the Sentosa Boardwalk through a series of automated escalators. The rest offered by the island resort becomes a singular node in the larger trajectory of mobility in the global city. Adjoining the city center and not the urban periphery, Sentosa signifies the fulfillment of the potential of the amusement park to be assimilated into the routine of the cityscape. Featuring the Resorts World Casino, Marine Life Park, and Universal Studios Singapore, the Resorts World Sentosa entertainment complex is a more whimsical, family-oriented version of the Marina Bay Sands integrated resort with pastel colors, butterfly roofs, leaf lampposts, and candy trees. Circumscribing disparity, Sentosa represents the synergy between public leisure and financial speculation.

Despite having similar configurations, which aspire for comprehensiveness and completeness in incorporating urban spaces and social practices, the shopping malls of Southeast Asian cities have disparate effects depending on their particular constellation of circumstances. Characteristic logics, functions, and processes, such as monumentality, enclosure, and spectacle, can be traced to those of prior commercial or leisure spaces, which had obtained prominence or popularity in previous historical periods. Driven by the dynamism of capitalism to manage the energies of individuals in order to gain a competitive advantage in the world market, the shopping malls of millennial Singapore attempt to exploit the experience of the uniquely new and previously impossibly through innovation, asymmetry, and buzz.

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