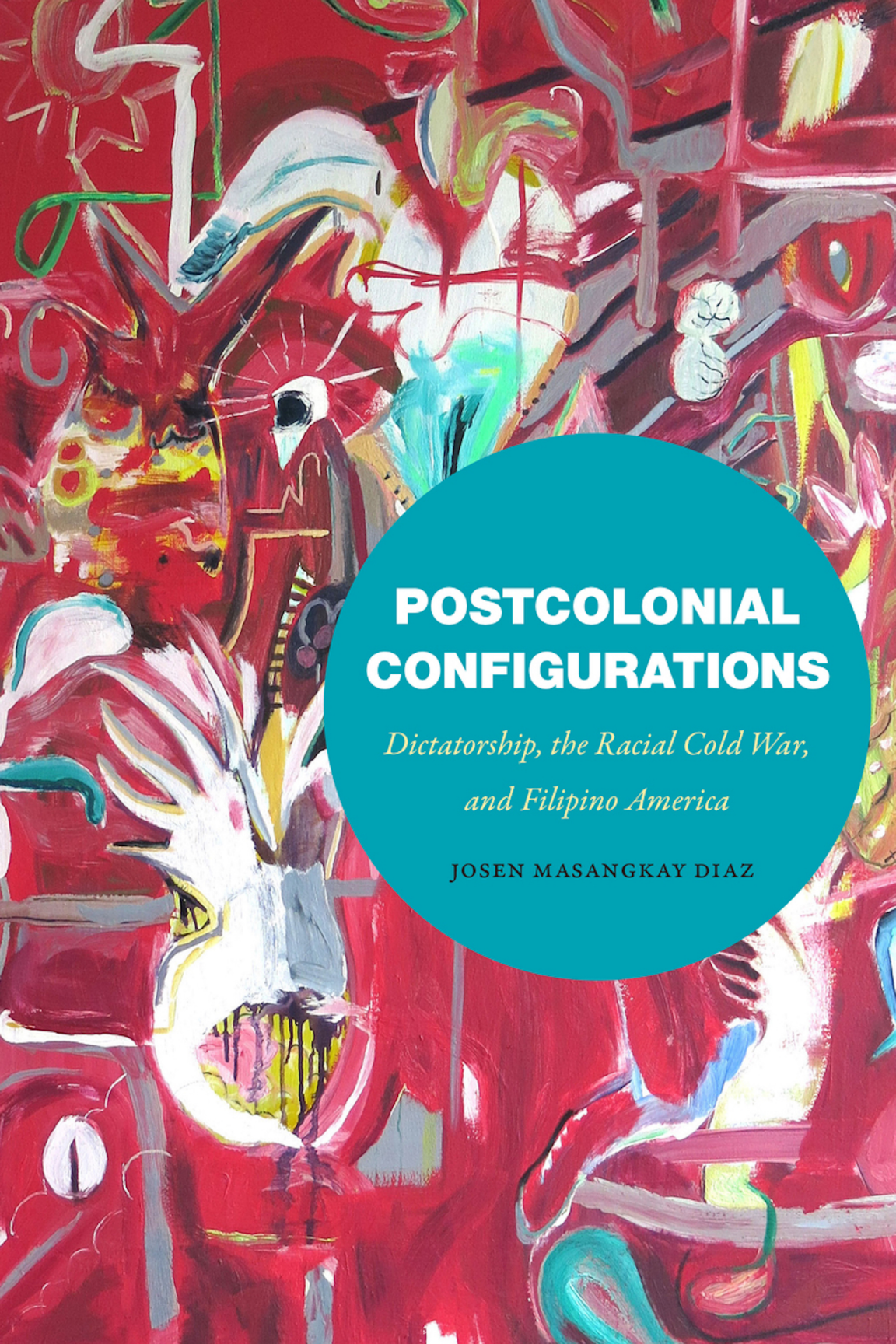

POSTCOLONIAL CONFIGURATIONS

Dictatorship, the Racial Cold War, and Filipino America

JOSEN MASANGKAY DIAZ

POSTCOLONIAL CONFIGURATIONS

This page intentionally left blank

POSTCOLONIAL CONFIGURATIONS

Dictatorship, the Racial Cold War, and Filipino America

JOSEN MASANGKAY DIAZ

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham and London* 2023

© 2023 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Matthew Tauch
Project editor: Ihsan Taylor
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Diaz, Josen Masangkay, [date] author.
Title: Postcolonial configurations : dictatorship, the racial Cold War, and Filipino America / Josen Masangkay Diaz.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022028091 (print)
LCCN 2022028092 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478019350 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478016694 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478023968 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Filipino Americans—History—20th century. | Filipino Americans—Social conditions—History—20th century. | Philippines—Foreign relations—United States—History—20th century. | United States—Foreign relations—Philippines—History—20th century. | Philippines—Politics and government—1946– | Philippines—Economic conditions—1946– | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE / Ethnic Studies / American / Asian American & Pacific Islander Studies | HISTORY / Asia / Southeast Asia
Classification: LCC E184.F4 D539 2023 (print) | LCC E184.F4 (ebook) | DDC 305.899/2110973—dc23/eng/20220815
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022028091
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022028092

Cover art: Carlo Ricafort, *The Baroque Precinct*, 2016. Oil on canvas. 36 × 48 in. Courtesy of the artist.

For my parents

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

ix *Acknowledgments*

1 Introduction: Unmaking Configurations

27 **ONE.** The Fictions of National Culture

58 **TWO.** Balikbayan Movements

85 **THREE.** The New Filipina Melodrama

113 **FOUR.** The Filipino Humanitarian

138 Conclusion: Reckoning with the Body

153 *Notes*

187 *Bibliography*

209 *Index*

This page intentionally left blank

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At the heart of this book is a fascination with and appreciation for all the tremendous and banal ways that the "I" gives way to other forms of collectivity and sociality, of friendship and kinship; the ways that we are formed by one another, moved by one another, undone by one another. I offer my gratitude to the many people who have helped form, move, and undo my thinking over the past several years. Any good that comes from these pages belongs to them, too.

Against much advice to move on from a place, I hardheadedly attended graduate school where I finished college. As it turns out, the reasons to stay kept coming. I learned from a stellar group of teachers there: Patrick Anderson, Fatima El-Tayeb, Yến Lê Espiritu, Rosemary George, Shelley Streeby, Nicole Tonkovich, and K. Wayne Yang. I still refer back to a course that I took with Lisa Yoneyama during my first quarter of graduate school, where I learned that theory is only as useful as its political commitments. Jody Blanco insisted on slow and careful scholarship and asked difficult questions that I often find myself repeating when I sit down to write. From Introduction to Asian American Literature to McNair thesis to dissertation, Lisa Lowe has been an unfailing model of incisive and principled study and deeply generous mentorship.

My gratitude to a cohort of classmates that turned into a group of dear friends: Amanda Solomon Amorao, Christina Carney, Zulema Diaz, Kyung Hee Ha, Ren Heintz, Anita Huizar-Hernández, Eunsong Kim, Joo Ok Kim, Ashvin Kini, Rebecca Kinney, Angela Kong, Salar Mameni, Jacqueline Munguia, Marilisa Navarro, Linh Nguyen, Yumi Pak, Jason Magabo

Perez, Christopher Perreira, Reema Rajbanshi, Violeta Sanchez, Lila Sharif, Vineeta Singh, Davorn Sisavath, Thea Quiray Tagle, Sarika Talve-Goodman, and Salvador Zárate. Chien-ting Lin has been an astute interlocutor, tempered cheerleader, and steady travel partner. I cannot imagine making it through graduate school without him. Elsewhere on campus, Victor Betts, Nancy Magpusao, Agustin Orozco, Joseph Ruanto-Ramirez, Patrick Velasquez, and Edwina Welch kept the doors open.

I moved to Oakland for a short time to think away from San Diego. Between writing days, donut breaks at the lake, and nights out, Nick Mitchell, Yumi Pak, Molly Porzig, Dorothy Santos, Hyejin Shim, and Thea Quiray Tagle helped make that year an important one.

So many have offered insight, support, and encouragement at various stages of research and writing: Paul Michael Leonardo Atienza, Elizabeth Ault, Christine Bacareza Balance, Nerissa Balce, Sony Corañez Bolton, Rick Bonus, Long Bui, Lucy Burns, Genevieve Clutario, Sara Jo Cohen, Kathleen De Guzman, Adrian De Leon, Karlynne Ejercito, J. C. Fermin, Valerie Francisco, Vernadette Gonzalez, Karen Hanna, Emily Hue, Allan Isaac, Jenny Kelly, Marisol LeBron, Zack Linmark, Allan Lumba, Simeon Man, Martin Manalansan, Alden Sajor Marte-Wood, Najwa Mayer, Victor Mendoza, Paul Nadal, Edward Nadurata, Mike Hoa Nguyen, Jan Padios, Robyn Rodriguez, Joy Sales, Mark John Sanchez, Stephanie Santos, Thomas Sarmiento, Cathy Schlund-Vials, Sarita See, Mejdulene Shomali, Harrod Suarez, Neferti Tadiar, June Yuen Ting, Tony Tiongson, and M. T. Vallarta.

At the University of San Diego, my colleagues in the Department of Ethnic Studies have cleared out space for me to grow into the job: Esther Aguilar, May Fu, Angel Hinzo, Perse Lewis, Jesse Mills, Gail Perez, and Alberto Pulido. Kate Boersma, Christopher Carter, Evelyn Cruz, Colin Fisher, Evelyn Kirkley, Judith Liu, Marcelle Maese, Amanda Makula, Julia Medina Antonieta Mercado, Channon Miller, Amanda Petersen, Atreyee Phukan, T. J. Tallie, Karen Teel, and Jillian Tullis have offered mentorship and camaraderie. Support from Noelle Norton, Kristin Moran, Pauline Powell, and the rest of the dean's office has advanced my research. My students—past, present, and future—make it all make sense.

Since 2012, travel to Manila has been instrumental to my work. Oscar Campomanes, Carlos Celdran, Adam Crayne, Jomar Cuartero, J. Neil Garcia, Wendell Jose, Rolando Tolentino, and Brian Ziadie helped make the city feel less overwhelming. At National Central University in Taiwan, the Center for the Study of Sexualities provided an intellectually rich and

warm place to present early iterations of this book. I thank Naifei Ding, Chien-ting Lin, and Amie Parry for their hospitality.

My visiting fellowship with the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA provided invaluable time and resources to complete significant sections of the book. I thank Victor Bascara, Melany De La Cruz, Barbra Ramos, Irene Suico Soriano, Karen Umemoto, and David Yoo for their support. At the University of Hawai'i, Belinda Aquino, Pia Arboleda, Brian Chung, Elena Clariza, Vernadette Gonzalez, Joyce Mariano, and Clemen Montero offered space for me to workshop my ideas at a critical time in my writing. They made my visit especially generative. I spent a summer with the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at UW-Madison, learning about the intricacies and joy of language from Clemen Montero. It has proven invaluable.

Earlier versions of chapter 2 and chapter 3 were published in the *Journal of Asian American Studies* and *ALON: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies*, respectively. Rick Bonus, José Capino, Martin Manalansan, and Anita Mannur along with the anonymous reviewers provided invaluable feedback that helped me develop the current chapters.

Ken Wissoker has been an advocate from the beginning, helping me rethink how I share ideas with others. My thanks to Ryan Kendall, Ihsan Taylor, the talented team at Duke University Press, and Cathy Hannabach at Ideas on Fire for making the publication process much easier than it could be. The careful engagement that the two manuscript reviewers offered to this book is one that I hope to repay.

My gratitude to friends in San Diego and elsewhere for offering healthy respite from the work: Andrew Amorao, Carmela Capinpin, Dennis Chin, Ray Elkins, Jayzee Francisco, Rena Fried-Chung, Vivian Fried-Chung, Kenny Gong, Hazel Hamann, Taica Hsu, Harper Keenan, Trinh Le, Emma Lierley, A. J. Kim, Ana Laura Martinez, Roy Perez, Kimmy Wong; the Kaus and the Vasilezes; and Candice Kandi Custodio-Tan, Grace Shinhae Jun, Suparna Kudesia, Kristina Piggy Mananquil, and the rest of the Asian Solidarity Collective crew.

J Alexander Diaz and Erin Diaz (and Cole and Sloane) and the whole lot of the Masangkays and the Diazes here, in Manila, Taal, Lipa, Imus, and everywhere along the way guided and trusted me. My grandmother Norma Masangkay is my favorite historian and the best storyteller I know. My parents, Arsenia Masangkay Diaz and Jose Alejandro Diaz, are on every page of this book, migrants of the martial law period whose experience of movement and becoming might not otherwise materialize into any form of

historical monumentalism but whose lives have become the embodiment of care and worldmaking. I write most things with them in mind.

Julia Rhee has listened to every facet of this book, the good and the bad, even when it existed as a set of hopes, anxieties, and a hundred pages of iPhone notes. My love to her (and to our Mona and Mory) for carving out the sweetest corner of the world for us, the place I rush to return at the end of every day.

INTRODUCTION

Unmaking Configurations

FILIPINO AMERICA AS NATIONAL HISTORY

In 2011, the names of activists Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes were etched onto the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (the Wall of Martyrs Memorial) in Quezon City, Manila. The wall is part of a larger memorial that remembers those who "lived and died in defiance" of Ferdinand Marcos's dictatorship in the Philippines.[1] In 1982, gunmen murdered the men outside the meeting hall of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (Local 37) at Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington. The investigation and trial that followed the assassination linked the killings to union leaders in the United States, cronies of Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos, and the Marcos regime itself. As of 2011, Domingo and Viernes were the only Filipino Americans whose names were listed on the wall.[2]

On the Bantayog, Domingo and Viernes join hundreds of other heroes of the anti–martial law movement, individuals vetted by a Research and Documentation Committee to ensure "that the name of obscure, unknown martyrs in remote places may be brought to light."[3] Every year, the committee charged with the maintenance of the memorial adds more names to the wall.[4] The quest to identify, name, and honor those who might otherwise be "unknown martyrs" has become a key feature of the struggle to "never again, never forget" martial law and the Marcos dictatorship, which lasted

FIGURE I.1 Bantayog ng mga Bayani memorial sculpture.
Photo: Rhea Claire Madarang/Rappler.

from 1965 to 1986.[5] This vetting seeks to uncover the individual stories of the heroes to reveal the extent of the regime's violence.

In addition to the wall, the memorial includes a sculpture that represents the "self-sacrifice of a fallen figure of man, held in one hand by the rising figure of a woman who symbolizes the Motherland, while her other hand reaches for the glorious son of freedom" (figure I.1).[6] Following the arc of homogeneous, empty time, the memorial underwrites the dictatorship as an aberrant yet significant moment within an otherwise progressive national history that gestures toward liberation.[7] Not reflective of the country's colonial inheritances or its cacique politics, the memorial positions the dictatorship as an unprecedented abuse of governmental power. The "glorious son of freedom" is the abstract and universal telos of a national sovereignty guided by the liberal promise of republicanism. Characterized by a "political anxiety" about the state of the Philippine republic, the memorial confirms the nation as the primordial location of freedom, where freedom exists in contradistinction to an exceptional dictatorship and in accordance with post-1986 state discourses about the return to democracy.[8]

Memorializing marks no beginning or end; rather, it operates as an ongoing task of historical revision, wherein grappling with and making sense

of martial law and the Marcos regime offer an avenue for contending with and legitimizing present political conditions. Within this framework, the memorial overdetermines the lives of the martyrs, who are called into recognition by the memorial itself, and transforms them into a singular entity made to personify the romance of the "Motherland." This memory work constructs "monuments of a historical consciousness" that arrest Domingo and Viernes as figures of a national history about the fall of dictatorship and the rise of democracy.[9] As heroes of an anti–martial law movement and defenders of the republic, they come into visibility within the boundaries of this national story.

In several US-based studies of the Marcos dictatorship, however, the assassination of Domingo and Viernes is a catalyst for memorializing a distinct Filipino American social movement.[10] Domingo and Viernes's political work with the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP, or the Union of Democratic Filipinos) reveals the ways that Filipinos in the United States cultivated a transnational anti–martial law movement that threaded the violence of the dictatorship both to US imperialism in the Philippines and to the racialized and classed discrimination of Filipinos in the United States.[11] Their struggle against the labor exploitation of Filipino cannery workers and the displacement of low-wage and poor communities by urban development in Seattle reflects a political consciousness that formed alongside Black, Indigenous, Third World, and other resistance movements in the United States in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Within these narratives, Domingo and Viernes personify the efficacy of transnational political organizing in the United States, where the Filipino American activist embodies an emergent racial consciousness grounded in knowledge about the interconnectedness of US colonialism and racism. Such studies generate reflections about martial law that position Filipino America as a nucleus for expansive transnational connections.

While the Bantayog incorporates the Filipino diaspora in the United States within its invocation of Philippine national history, the United States itself remains an aporia, a peripheral presence that lingers on the edges of the memorial but does not fully materialize within its conception of dictatorial power. The memorial frames the dictatorship as a national dilemma rather than a quandary about state and imperialist power, even though Marcos enjoyed US support during much of his reign. The US-based histories, on the other hand, overdetermine Domingo and Viernes as Filipino American. The proclamation of an already coherent and uncomplicated Filipino American subjectivity attends neither to the terms of its formations during

the Marcos era nor to the risks of its invocation as such. Even as both memorializations situate the assassination as part of a wider story about martial law, the declaration of its importance often embeds Domingo and Viernes within the discourses that have come to define the study of the dictatorship. The two men become recognizable only within the parameters of these limited frames. More importantly, their recognition elides other forms of sociality that materialize within and between the pathways of transpacific relations.

How do these narratives memorialize Filipino America? How do they remember martial law and dictatorship in ways that idealize the nation and the transnational? In what ways do these ideals inhere through specific conceptualizations of race, gender, and subjectivity? How might one begin to rethink these formations in order to reimagine authoritarianism not as aberrational to but as a critical function of liberalism? How can we reimagine Filipino America to highlight other forms of exclusion and belonging that impart insight into the continuity of colonial modernity in shaping our discourses of subjectivity?

This book turns to Filipino America as a kind of postcolonial memorialization, a project that suspends an event or the experience of an event as a cohesive recollection while it moves other moments of Philippine-US collaboration inside and outside visibility. To apprehend it in this way rather than treating it as a static category of racial or ethnic difference is to point to it as a nexus for laying bare the collaborations of Cold War politics—the intertwining programs of dictatorship, colonial and imperialist war, and liberal reform—that make race and gender legible as distinct forms during specific periods. Rather than privilege a set of answers about the Filipino relationship to America, this memorialization helps resituate Filipino America as a persistent question about the terms that surround its invocation. I begin here to destabilize the familiarity of Filipino America, to disrupt its cohesion, to engender a different critique and politics of Filipino and America that is attuned to the discourses of raciality that encircle Philippine-US dictatorship.[12] More significant than revealing the truth (or what Lisa Yoneyama calls the "how much" of history) of dictatorial violence, I treat dictatorship as a consequence of empire, one whose legacies manifest themselves in the very discourses by which we come to remember it.

The year after the assassination, Dorothy and Fred Cordova founded the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) in Seattle, providing a home for the collection of archival documents and the showcase of Filipino American culture and history.[13] The organization was the culmination

of the Cordovas' decades-long work to establish programs dedicated to the two-pronged project of Filipino American cultural preservation and identity formation among Filipino American youth. Fred Cordova's 1983 pictorial history, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans*, showcased the collection by including two centuries' worth of photographs and oral histories. It serves as one of the first composite histories of Filipinos in the United States. In its opening pages, Cordova dedicates the book to "Filipinos, who are forgotten Asian Americans, forgotten Filipino Americans, forgotten Pinoys, forgotten Americans."[14] For Cordova, Filipinos' elision not only from US national history but also from the minoritized discourses of Asian American history conveys the specificity of Filipino American abjection. The underlying task here, to remember forgotten Filipinos, is not simply an attempt to recover something that was lost. To remember is to conceptualize Filipino America as the emergence of a once-marginalized form of Filipino subjectivity whose expression heralds the arrival of a distinct racial formation.[15] Within the broad reaches of US history, the Filipino and the US colonial history of the Philippines are often rendered insignificant if not entirely erased. Yet Filipino America in Cordova's collection marks the transformation of the Filipino, no longer a "little brown brother" or an immigrant "alien," from the object of US exclusion to the subject of US multiculturalism.[16] The invocation of a Filipino American "national history," more specifically, attempts to resolve the incommensurability that has characterized a Filipino ontology within US colonial epistemologies and US citizenship.[17]

While the ongoing work of FANHS illustrates the immensity and generosity of the Cordovas' historical and cultural projects as well as the "integrity and strength of local experience and knowledge" that such projects encapsulate, the declaration of a Filipino American national history reappears elsewhere and is worth untangling.[18] The invocation of a national history privileges a unidirectional diasporic trajectory that positions the United States as both origin and final destination, arranging Filipino America within the temporal and spatial parameters of the US nation form. Cordova's history begins with descriptions of the "Louisiana Manilamen" and ends with the Filipino American soldiers of World War II, bookended by historic firsts. Contextualizing contemporary migration as a product of US conquest, empirical studies of the Filipino diaspora in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s have often followed such an approach.[19] These explorations, however, consider the Filipino experience in the United States through an additive model that situates Filipino America as the accumulation of historical experience in which history overdetermines the effects

of coloniality. By concealing the overlaps and intersections that have constituted such migrations, these studies fail to address the limitations of this empiricism. In the epilogue of his book, Cordova writes, "We waste precious time in perennially asking these questions about ourselves among ourselves but never listening to ourselves for the answers which should come from within ourselves in our search for ourselves."[20] National history "answers" this slew of historical inquiries. The equation of Filipino America with national history irons out the tensions that invisibility provokes, conflating racial subjectivity with racial arrival.

The promise of a national (as well as a transnational) history establishes Filipino America as an already cohesive and coherent formation, constantly sewing its seams even as they threaten to come undone. FANHS's origin story absents the assassination of Domingo and Viernes, killed by Marcos associates in the same city where the Cordovas founded the organization.[21] This is not to argue that FANHS is responsible for attending to anything and everything having to do with Filipinos in the United States. It only suggests that the theorization of invisibility as the defining characteristic of Filipino American raciality renders the assassination illegible within the epistemological frame of Filipino American national history. Such a framework would assume a distinct experience and subjectivity that positions a cohesive national history as the prescription for the injury of invisibility. The absence that invisibility imparts obscures a dialectical struggle between the visibility afforded by historical and political recognition based on racial difference and the materiality that recognition elides. Where Filipino American national history might foreclose other subjectivities that exceed its articulation of belonging, the assassination unsettles Filipino America by unraveling it from the subject of national history and revealing it as the condition of living under both Philippine authoritarianism and US liberalism. The labor struggles between Filipino and other Asian workers and US agribusiness in the US West during the period, for instance, reveal a critical contradiction of US multiculturalism. Continuous assaults on immigrant labor in the 1970s and 1980s, misaligned with the civil rights legislation of the late 1960s, highlight the ways that the imperatives of racial capitalism always underscore the celebratory declarations of liberal progressivism.[22] Labor policies under the Marcos regime transformed Filipino labor into a capacious vehicle for facilitating the movement of multinational capital within the country while rendering Filipinos themselves subject to the restrictions of martial law. Filipino workers' struggles pinpoint the disjuncture

between the promise of freedom, on the one hand, and the actualization of that freedom, on the other.

Claims for subjectivity often absorb acceptable difference within US national discourses in ways that sustain liberal race projects.[23] While political representation attempts to address the invisibility that Cordova described, it fails to attend to the myriad forms of power and violence that have constituted Filipino colonial and diasporic formations.[24] I argue for an incessant interrogation of the subject that highlights its racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized constitution. However, I also insist that the study of subjectivity is imperative for understanding the interconnectedness of seemingly oppositional modes of state governance that cohere as colonial modernity. The "achievement of subjectivity" as an epistemological endpoint occludes the radical possibilities inherent in the study of Filipino America.[25] By unhinging the Bantayog, the narratives of Domingo and Viernes, and FANHS from the contours of heroism and self-determination that shape them, these projects reveal Philippine-US dictatorship as a crisis where the representation of that crisis is the ground on which one can contend with the multiplicity and extensiveness of state and imperialist power.

Even as these narratives reframe the lives of Domingo and Viernes according to the parameters of national history projects, Domingo's and Viernes's intellectual and political work confounds the bounds of these arrangements. That the two men are visible, recognizable, and knowable is precisely the point: this visibility, recognizability, and knowability reveal the ways that we come to know the past and the means by which the past comes to be made known to us.[26] The heroization of Domingo and Viernes as martyrs of the transnational anti–martial law movement functions through a conceptualization of power as coercion and suppression, and freedom as the absence of power. When such heroization operates through national memory projects, it reinforces the supremacy of the masculinized citizen-subject as a mode of self-determination and the historical agent of national progress, one who acts bravely in order to access rights afforded by the state, rights that are limited only in their distribution, not in their constitution.[27] This subject is the vehicle through which the republic functions as a benefactor of the people; at the same time, he is the modality by which challenges to the state also gain political legibility. Heroization is a memorial in itself, a way to personify politico-juridical law; and in transmogrifying the labor and energies of a people, it contains difference in the production of the subject of modernity.

Challenging the overdetermination of political unity that the memorials underline, I read this heroization as an attempt to remember the production of death but not the widescale management of life that leads to such death, let alone the language by which we conceive of and name that life.[28] Beyond a conceptualization of power as suppression, I point to the inextricability of state and imperialist power that is multimodal, multivalent, and expansive and that operates as much through repression as through acts of false liberation. Interrogating forms of subjectivity that materialize as state recognition emphasizes the criticality of other social forms, often rendered feminized and queer, that are not simply invisibilized or marginalized by dominant forms of citizenship and belonging but rendered incommensurable and expendable by these parameters. These tempting versions of political subjectivity that cohere within strictures of global capitalism foreclose the creative possibilities necessary for social disruption and upheaval. I search for ways to name the dead and the living that do not overdetermine their being and becoming in the world.[29]

* * *

Postcolonial Configurations is about dictatorship, coloniality, and subjectivity. Interrogating Filipino away from America to explore the processes by which the two were defined, redefined, and sutured during the Marcos dictatorship, this book proposes "postcolonial configuration" as a modality for reconsidering the continuous and perplexing relationship between Filipino and America throughout the Cold War. A configuration is a racial and gender formation that becomes recognizable, namable, and legible at the intersections of overlapping state and national forces. These forces are transpacific collaborations that invest in development and modernization and take shape as authoritarianism, liberalism, and imperialism. This means that "binational" partnerships orchestrated by the Philippine and US governments are rarely, if ever, equitable alliances or strictly confined to "foreign policy." Rather, the distinct political orders of dictatorship and representative republicanism—what Hannah Arendt has described as the long-standing "affinity between democracy and dictatorship"—are often framed as oppositional state systems but are shaped by a more intricate geopolitics that make each integral to the other's function.[30] A configuration identifies subjectivity as the critical avenue for identifying and comprehending this affinity. Subjectivity consolidates postwar, postcolonial anxieties in the Philippines and the United States into cohesive, portable forms. Distinct from calls for and investments in new archives, new histories, or new ways

to consider the transnationality of Filipino America, configuration offers a different way to contend with the ongoing significance of the Filipino to, within, and alongside America. It is less interested in defining what Filipino America is, is not, or should be. Rather, configuration allows the incongruencies and incoherences that shape the Filipino relationship to America to guide other inquiries into state and imperialist power.

This book decenters the usual figures of Filipino American national history not to recuperate new ones but as a way to point to other socialities that often fall by the wayside of Filipino and Filipino American studies as well as studies of dictatorship in the Philippines and to offer other ways to consider the legacies of US-backed authoritarian regimes. It mines old figures for different lessons to explore the ways that colonial epistemologies continue to bear on knowledge production.[31] To unmake a configuration is to interrogate the logic of wholeness—of subjectivity, nation, and culture—and the violence that often underlines it.[32] Unmaking traces the fissures that always constitute the projection of cohesion to reveal what Frantz Fanon has called the "empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been."[33] Unraveling the seams of wholeness exposes other expressions of lifemaking that have always been, knowledges of the world that are suppressed yet continue to make themselves known in some way even if they fail to bind together into recognizable forms.[34] Unmaking seeks neither recovery nor revision; instead, it attempts to inch closer to articulating a Philippine historical experience.[35] I propose that we risk losing Filipino America as an object of recognition or recuperation, or as the center of intellectual work, in order to catalyze other points of political possibility. This is not an attempt to dismiss the concrete ways that diasporic experiences engender important forms of recognition.[36] It only wrestles with the tenacity and dynamism of coloniality to shape our language for ourselves.[37] It is, above all, an effort to envision other ways of thinking alongside and inhabiting the world.

THE FILIPINO QUESTION

The Filipino question has long organized colonial historiography. After its defeat in the war of 1898, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States for $20 million. The war between the US military and Philippine forces that followed this cession resulted in the loss of over 500,000 Filipino lives (nearly a million by some accounts) and the formal declaration of US colonial tutelage over the archipelago. The period of US colonization, officially from

1898 to 1946, saw the development of a US governmental system in the Philippines as well as the rise of public institutions that would outlast the colonial era. In the first decades after the war, Filipino workers migrated to the United States as US colonials, serving as a new laboring body in the United States, particularly in Hawai'i and along the West Coast, that helped to manage agricultural development and industrial expansion and mitigate the ongoing effects of emancipation, immigration, exclusion, and burgeoning labor movements. Filipino workers moved to and from the United States until the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 granted commonwealth status to the Philippines and designated US colonials as new foreign aliens.[38] By the time Domingo and Viernes organized Filipino cannery workers in Seattle in the late 1970s, these laborers had long been navigating what Rick Baldoz has called "transpacific traffic," the movement of people and goods that followed the rise of US overseas empire as well as the expansion of US capitalism alongside empire.[39]

Filipino raciality in the United States has been constituted precisely by the conditions attached to the early decades of Philippine sovereignty. The years that defined the Philippine commonwealth also structured the exclusion of Filipino colonials from the United States. Yet exclusion, in terms of immigration mandates as well as the violent attacks on Filipino migrant workers in the 1920s and 1930s along the US West Coast, operated not as antithetical to the US "benevolence" represented by the granting of commonwealth status and later independence but as an important extension of it.[40] The violent struggles illustrated by the race riots in Exeter and Watsonville, for example, evidenced the dangers of the project of inclusion, however tentative, of colonial subjects into the national body.[41] The categorization of the colonial subject as foreign alien mandated by Tydings-McDuffie made possible the removal of the Filipino from the US ideal of racial homogeneity while maintaining the project of US benevolent empire, what the Insular Cases evidenced as "foreign in a domestic sense."[42]

During World War II, the Philippines operated as the stage for the Pacific Theater, an interimperial war between Japan and the United States for control over Asia and the Pacific. After the Japanese imperial occupation of the Philippines during the war, the Allies' victory returned control of the archipelago to the United States. With the US declaration of Philippine independence in 1946, colonialism took different shape. Washington orchestrated a series of economic and political mandates that severely restricted the reach of Philippine sovereignty. The postwar, postcolonial period saw the repeated failure of US promises to the Philippines: the revocation of benefits

for Filipino veterans who fought for the US military during World War II; the US management of the Philippine economy through the Bell Trade Act (and the subsequent Laurel-Langley Agreement); and the fortification of the US military in the country through the Joint US Military Assistance Group. The Bell Trade Act tied the Philippine economy to US investments, and the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 ensured US military control over the Clark Air Base in Angeles City and the Subic Bay Naval Base in Olongapo. Throughout the 1950s, when the Philippine government, together with the US Central Intelligence Agency, waged a vociferous battle against the Hukbalahap (Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon, or People's Anti-Japanese Army) resistance, such collaboration further entrenched the nation within the geopolitical program of US imperialist war, while the Filipino people languished under the control of a deepening oligarchy.

To argue that US politics has compromised Philippine independence is to restate a well-known fact. What is important to emphasize is that Philippine leaders' struggle to define national sovereignty against such realities produced an array of political projects that attempted to resolve these contradictions. While President Ramon Magsaysay distinguished himself as "America's boy," Carlos Garcia advanced a Filipino First stance. He implemented an isolationist policy that mediated continuous US efforts to saturate the Philippines with US imperial programs, what he described as "a new Asia policy for the Philippines."[43] US neocolonialism also compelled Filipino intellectuals to expound on the effects of postcoloniality on the Filipino condition. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, statesman Carlos Romulo ruminated on the Philippines' global position to express the possibility of renewed affiliations between the Philippines and the Third World. While, as Augusto Espiritu has written, Romulo was a staunch anticommunist and clear Washington ally, his articulation of Afro-Asian affiliation at the meeting defied any easy subservience to the Philippines' former colonizer. He supported the conference delegates and their decolonial aspirations.[44] The conference challenged Romulo to distinguish a Philippine sovereignty that, while in tension with its alliance with the United States, was accountable to the decolonization struggles of nonaligned nations.[45]

Certainly, by 1955, the United Nations and its financial arms became extensions of Western hegemony, especially their deployment of an integrationist paradigm that espoused widescale international cooperation.[46] It was in the spirit of this liberal internationalism that the US military sanctioned the continued occupation of nations in the Pacific, Asia, Latin America, and Africa as part of a broader effort to protect the "free world" against