APPROPRIATION AND RESISTANCE IN PHILIPPINE MARIAN DEVOTION

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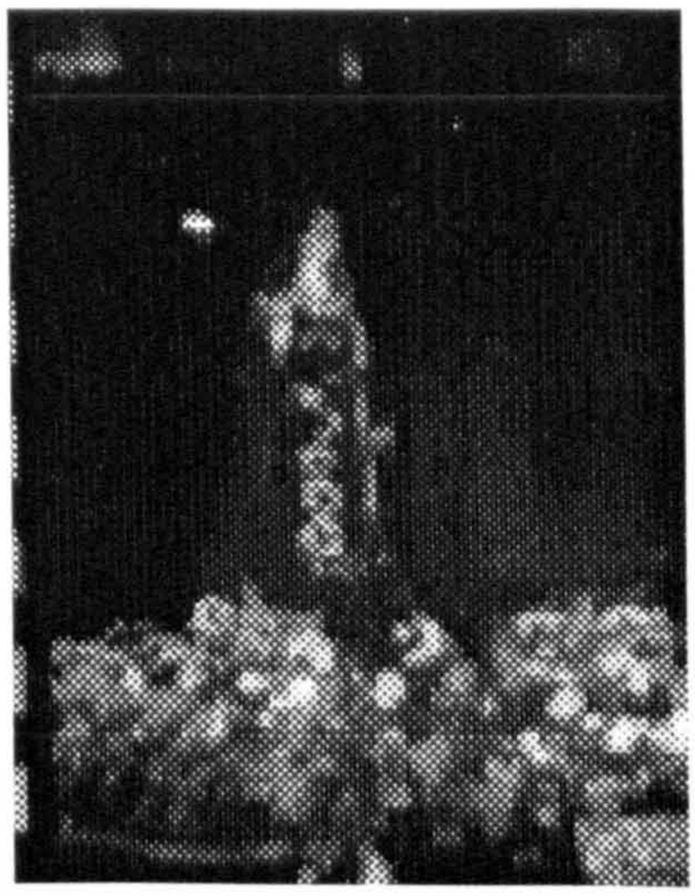
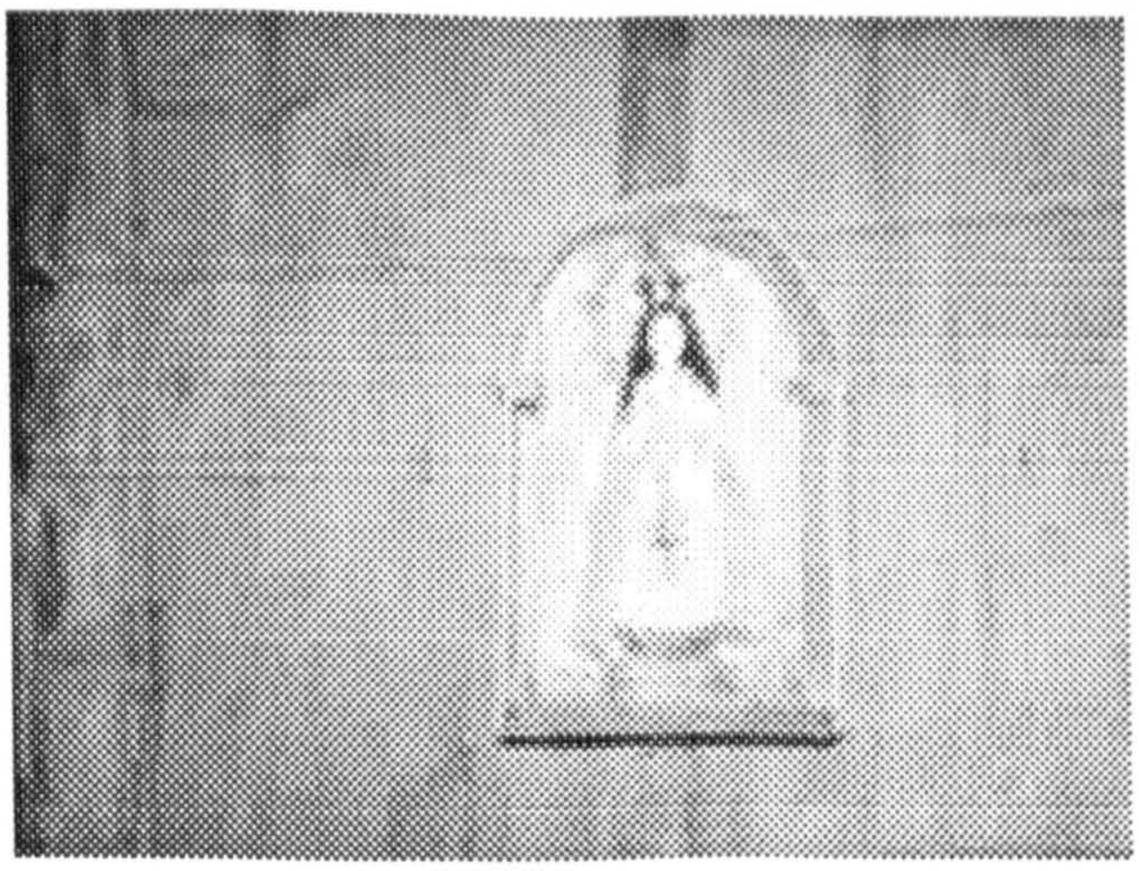
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a postcolonial study of Philippine Marian devotion using, among others, M.M. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and Homi Bhabha's theories on ambivalence (the "simultaneous desire for and disavowal of a given object"), mimicry and hybridity. It is also a historical study of Philippine Marian devotion, and it differentiates Philippine Mariology from the Latin American (both locations being former Spanish colonies and thus historically and culturally connected) in the way that Philippine pre-Hispanic animistic religion has shaped and continues to shape Philippine religiosity today. The syncretic or hybrid religiosity that emerged as a result of transculturation has, in the past, provided the impetus for native rebellion and resistance against the colonizers. As a specific example of this kind of religiosity, Marian devotion may also therefore be seen as a site of appropriation and resistance. Although the methods of appropriation, resistance and subversion are quite subtle, they may in fact be seen in the ambivalent attitudes to Mary that can be found among Filipinos in general: while people seemingly subscribe to the Marian stereotypes perpetuated by the Philippine Catholic Church and the dominant social classes, there is nevertheless a subversion of these stereotypes through an active re-situating or re-contextualizing of Marian symbolism. Indeed, while in many Philippine Marian events (e.g. the Marian festival or the Marian apparition) the traditional (or Church advocated) formats are generally followed, they have become objects of, to use Bhabha's terminology, mimesis or parody. Moreover, this ambivalence towards Mary is extended towards the Catholic faith as a whole, which has historically been associated with the legitimation of colonial authority.

The importance of this study is that, while many Filipino academics have written about the Passion of Christ and its significance for the colonized Filipino, there has been no attempt to analyze the Filipinos' identification with Mary as a form of resistance against oppressive colonial and neo-colonial discourses.





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PREFACE

In the past, representation of the Filipino, and of Filipino culture, has largely been done through Western eyes which tended to "Orientalize" Filipino culture and, thus, to reduce it to a lower status as the "Other", a fact which the Filipino gay critic, J. Neil C. Garcia, reacts to with swift vituperation ("Performativity, the *bakla* and the orientalizing gaze", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1(No.2, 2000)). Writing of his participation in a conference on sexual diversity and human rights in Manchester, England, Garcia discovered, to his shock and dismay, that he had in fact been forced into a position as a "local informant", "identifying myself as a 'native' in my suddenly brown, uncomfortable corner of the capacious and well-appointed auditorium". Furthermore, he states, "I simply could not believe what I was hearing: these white academics, rather erudite and otherwise responsible scholars in their own right, after a while started to speak in this global linguistic 'register' that shamelessly purported to represent even myself and my culture – conveniently failing to qualify their positionality, and to spell out the fact that what they were really talking about was most probably their own society alone."

Unlike Garcia, I have no "quarrel" (for lack of a better term) against such Western representations, for I feel that, in the glaring paucity of Filipino self-representation, this partial and incomplete representation at least serves the purpose of placing the Filipino on the cultural map of other societies. Moreover, Garcia clearly feels his marginalization not so much as *Filipino* in these representations (himself admitting that "I was used to being labelled 'colonial-minded' and/or 'burgis' in my own university back in the Philippines, usually by proponents of vulgar Marxism and 'Pilipinohiya', rabid and anti-intellectual nationalists I had been quick to label (retortingly) 'nativists'", but as a *Filipino homosexual*. His paper is in fact an attack on what he feels is a "misrepresentation" of Filipino gay culture by such Western academics like Fenella Cannell, and assumes that he himself is the *only* acceptable authority on the subject, the "Filipino critic of *kabaklaan* [homosexuality]" *par excellence*, when in fact, by his own admission, his position (as a "colonial-minded *burgis*"), already places him outside the spheres in which many Filipino homosexuals live out their lives. At best, like any other cultural critic, and indeed like the Western observers he himself attacks so stringently, Garcia must approach his subject from the "outside", not only as an intellectual but also as a *Westernized* intellectual at that – and as such he might be assumed to be guilty of mis- or at

least, partial, representation himself. Indeed, as he himself admits, his own reading of his subject is, at best, "provisional".

However, I do agree with Garcia on a particular point that he makes about Filipino cultural representation, and this is the fact that, when confronted with the task of presenting Filipino culture to a Western audience, one is necessarily forced to spend a considerable amount of time and effort in clarifying one's "situatedness", for much of Philippine culture can only be explained through description rather than outright assertion: many of the signifying codes of Philippine cultural performances can only be understood through their emotional resonances. It is one thing to intellectualize Filipino signifying practices from the *outside*, as detached observer and critic, and entirely another matter to understand these practices from the *inside*, as involved participant, as it is in the latter that much of the signification occurs and where the Western critic often falls into the trap of "misrepresentation", or imposing Western readings where such readings are inapplicable or inappropriate. The purpose of this preface, therefore, is to clarify my subject position and to try to explain the nature of Philippine culture to the outsider.

This dissertation emerged out of a curiosity about the nature of Filipino religiosity that developed slowly over a great number of years. In the development of this curiosity, my subject position as a middle-class, non-practicing Filipino Catholic who grew up and was largely educated in Western academic institutions outside the Philippines plays an important role. What this background indicates is that my own position may well be described in much the same way that I describe my subject matter throughout this dissertation: it is a hybrid position, both (or neither) inside/outside, Filipino/Western, subjective/objective, participant/observer. In short, I find myself quite often being in the lamentable position of, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, "almost, but not quite".

Such a position has been both an asset and a liability to the writing of this work. Being able to approach the subject matter from the "outside", as it were, has allowed me to perceive aspects of Philippine religiosity that perhaps are taken too much for granted by the "true insider". Yet there have also been times when I have often felt too much the cultural outsider, as Filipino religiosity, particularly those elements derived from animism, is something which is, to quote the Protestant missionary Ralph Toliver, "imbibed with mother's milk" – another way of saying that much of it is absorbed through early social interactions within the Philippine cultural milieu.

However, being nevertheless a Filipino and moulded accordingly by family preferences for certain Filipino cultural traits, I myself follow certain cultural codes that are distinctly Filipino. Certainly, despite a predominantly Westernized upbringing, I find my "Filipino-ness" cropping up in the most unexpected ways, particularly in matters of religiosity, allowing me to view the subject from the "inside" as well. In the end, I have come to realize that this "hybrid" position is not really unusual in Philippine society and in fact typifies the Filipino situation as a whole, for it soon became apparent that, by and large, Filipinos themselves are constantly engaged in a dialogue which seeks to reconcile which aspects of themselves can be considered "truly" Filipino and which are "impositions" of the many foreign cultures that have been merging and mixing in this little archipelago for centuries, and that such a dialogue has resulted in ambivalent Filipino positions towards both native and foreign cultural practices. And in the Philippine postcolonial situation, the "Other" is no longer the colonized "Other" as Homi Bhabha has historically situated the term, but the marginalized "Other", the position of the colonizer having been taken over by the dominant culture which tends to look at Philippine society not so much through a Western gaze but through a *Westernized* gaze, which, while it does not actively "Orientalize" nevertheless subscribes to "Orientalization" (and indeed, to "Occidentalization") to a certain degree.

I admit my own partial culpability/complicity in both processes of Orientalizing and Occidentalizing, and to some extent, this dissertation does indeed impose a Western framework (and a Westernized perspective) upon the analysis of Marian devotion. For example, in the course of my research for this dissertation on Marian devotion, I discovered that Filipinos often responded to my chosen topic with a mixture of surprise and amazement when they realized that my approach was not theological, inevitably following this up with the reassuring comment that "Surely all your research will serve to strengthen your belief". By this I understood that, for many Filipinos, Marian devotion is such a deeply ingrained part of their lives that they cannot quite imagine anyone actually studying it and to actually do so from a perspective that is not religious strikes them as implying a distinct lack of the "proper" religiosity expected of a Filipino Catholic. In fact, some people found the words "appropriation" and "resistance" in my title somewhat threatening, inclining them to the opinion that what I was doing must itself be "subversive" of the "Faith".

Clearly, both my choice of subject matter and the academic stance I assume in this study are not typical of the average Filipino. Yet, in many ways, my understanding of Philippine religiosity derives from my own participation, both consciously and unconsciously,

in these very same Philippine religious practices and to some extent subscribes to the local point of view. However, if my critique addresses a situation that the majority of Filipinos (including myself) participate in – that is, it is they who are the main protagonists in the process of "appropriation" and "resistance" – my purpose is primarily to attempt to articulate it.

To better illustrate this hybridized and somewhat ambivalent position, both my own and that of Philippine society in general, and to give the reader a brief preliminary glimpse into the nature of Philippine religiosity as it occurs on a daily basis, a little descriptive detail may be useful – particularly as such a position has greatly influenced the shape this dissertation has taken.

I grew up in a nominally Catholic household wherein religion was never actively imposed upon us, as my father was not at all a religious man. My mother, however, was herself a deeply religious person. One of the earliest memories I have of her is connected to what was perhaps one of her most prized possessions: a small prayer book bound in real ivory. As a child, I was fascinated by this book – between its onion-paper thin pages, it seemed to hold all the secrets and most profound mysteries of the world – mainly, I think, because of the rituals I came to associate with it. My mother would read from it every night, and after reading it, she would wrap it up carefully in a silk scarf and place it under her pillow with her rosary.

My mother also had a nightly ritual of praying to the various religious icons that resided upon a small table in her bedroom: a framed reproduction of Our Lady of Perpetual Help that I remember from the earliest days of my childhood when we were in India, a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and one of Our Lady of Fatima that she had bought when we lived in Portugal in the 1970s, a small ivory-hued image of the Santo Niño, and a small antique wooden statue of San Vicente given her by my sister – all of which were tended to lovingly and with great care and brought with her wherever my father's assignment as commercial attaché for the Philippine government took us.

My mother indulged my childhood curiosity about these rituals, patiently answering what questions I had as best as she could, but it was only years later, upon becoming more aware of the ambivalent nature of Philippine Catholic religiosity, that I realized that there was perhaps much more to these rituals than I had initially understood. While I found that I had

filed them in a small section of my mind that I had reserved for sacred things, the aspects which I remembered most were those that had been reinforced by Western practices of Catholicism to which I had been exposed in the schools I had attended – a convent school in India that was run by British nuns, St. Columban's School in Portugal which, while not precisely a Catholic school, nevertheless included a class in religion taught by an Irish priest – and in the Masses I had gone to with my mother as a child in Lisbon. All these had come to shape my own particular notion of Catholicism as something mysterious and dignified, and the sacred as something so vast and far above me as to be almost unattainable by ordinary human beings like myself – a notion that was, I soon realized, somewhat different from those of the average Filipino which, like my mother's devotions, are invariably centered around rituals and images and which often have a more material and concrete basis than the Catholic church would like.

To Filipinos, religion is accessible to everyone, and the "sacred" to be found everywhere. Indeed, in the Philippines, evidence of a deep Catholic religiosity is everywhere, in all aspects of life. One can equally expect to find a reproduction of an image of the Virgin Mary tacked onto a cheap wooden cart as on the walls of a prosperous house. Images of the crucified Christ, the *Señor Santo Niño*, and the Virgin decorate the side panels of jeepneys alongside cartoon drawings of semi-naked Caucasian women. Passengers on buses and jeepneys always make the sign of the cross every time they pass by a church – and churches, both old and new, are major landmarks in the Philippines. A 35-foot brass statue of the Virgin Mary looks benevolently down upon a major intersection along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), one of the most important thoroughfares in Metro Manila.

The accessibility of the sacred has much to do with Philippine pre-Hispanic religious culture. One cannot live in the Philippines for long and remain unaware of the many folk religious practices that pervade Philippine Catholicism. There is, for example, a persistent belief in animism, or *anitismo*, even among devout Catholics like my mother. When my brother, and then my father, died, my mother insisted that we recite the novena for the dead for them. But this religiosity also had another element to it which could not be described as Christian: on the ninth and last day of the novena, we would prepare food and invite the relatives over to "celebrate". Before the feast, my mother or my aunt would place a plate of food on the table, which was, as everyone knew, for the spirit of the recently departed who was assumed to be still hovering in the vicinity. This is a common practice and I have seen it done in many other Filipino households.

It seemed strange to me at first that my mother, who was so devoutly Catholic, could at the same time believe in the custom of laying out food for the spirits so as to include them in the family get-together. Such practices as laying out food for the spirits during festivities, or preparing a meal of noodles during the birthdays even of those who had already passed away might well strike the outsider as rather odd – particularly as noodles, by virtue of their length, are associated with long life.

But I soon came to realize that such practices exist without seeming conflict alongside very Catholic traditions and the way many Filipinos refer to these beliefs, as though such practices were the necessary and important things to do, implies the familiarity of an old tradition. Indeed, they pre-date and do not seem to have at all been lessened by the introduction of Christianity into the archipelago.

When my brother began suffering from stomach pains but doctor after doctor could not determine the cause, a neighbor (who was Catholic) recommended that we consult *Manang* Vic, who owned the *sari-sari* (all-purpose) store in front of our house, and who was said to be the neighborhood *manghihilot* (healer). *Manang* Vic told us that a *duwende* (dwarf) had put a curse of illness on my brother, and that we should propitiate this malevolent being so my brother could get better. He also gave us the leaves of a plant he grew in his garden that we were to make into a bitter green tea by boiling them in hot water. I do not know if this tea had a chance to help: my brother was eventually diagnosed with colon cancer and died six months later. We were certainly too Westernized to accommodate what seemed to be absurd superstition – the offering of sacrifices to the malevolent *duwende* that was supposed to have cursed my brother. But sometimes the thought crosses my mind: *what if?* After all, a colleague of mine at the University, a well-read, well-educated and well-to-do writer swears that, after she consulted a spirit medium because her baby son was constantly ill, the illness went away. It seemed that there was an *engkanto* (fairy) who lived in her house whose own child had died and who had "adopted" the baby boy. When the family was thinking of selling the house and moving away, the *engkanto* became enraged and made the baby ill.

I have heard many more such narratives – how, as a child in the small island of Catanduanes, my *yaya* would lie awake and huddle close to her brothers and sisters in their isolated, bamboo house up in the mountains, fearfully awaiting the coming of the *aswang*, a viscera sucking vampire, because they had heard the sound of the *tiktik* bird which, as everyone knew, scouted for the *awang*; how a classmate got a skin rash (a curse or *usog)*

because an *engkanto* overhead someone compliment her skin and became jealous; how the big *balete* tree in the garden of my grandmother's house in Bato, Camarines Sur, had a resident *kapre*, a monstrous giant who smoked a cigar and lived in the branches of the tree. All these stories were told invariably in the voice of unwavering belief, as if they really happened, as if such creatures really existed.

There are many similar stories in the folklore of other cultures, no doubt. However, it soon became apparent to me that these folkloric elements derived from pre-Hispanic animism pervaded Philippine Catholicism to such an extent that the two aspects often became almost indistinguishable to many Filipinos. The most obvious case of fusion, or to use Homi Bhabha's term, hybridization, can be seen during Holy Week: Filipino penitential practices are clearly derived from Spanish Catholicism yet are imbued with value systems that existed in Philippine society well before the coming of the Spaniards.

Such values as pre-Hispanic Philippine society upheld, emphasizing as they did the concrete and the specific, were certainly initially at odds with the Spanish Catholic emphasis on the spiritual, as Spanish historical documents show. However, written as they were by Spanish missionaries who were highly prejudiced by their mission of conversion and by colonial administrations whose foremost intention was to assert the legitimacy of the colonial agenda, many of the historical sources present an inevitably biased, Eurocentric perspective. To this end, William Henry Scott's contributions towards asserting the local perspective by looking through what he called "the cracks in the parchment curtain" – in other words, reading between the lines what is *not* stated in the texts, or by what is merely referred to indirectly – have been an important source for Philippine historians in countering the authority of the Spanish accounts, and were indeed of great assistance to my own approach to this study.

One of Scott's major contributions to the analysis of Philippine culture and society is his view that, contrary to Spanish assumptions of social rigidity, pre-Hispanic Philippine social and political hierarchies were extremely flexible, and were grounded in native notions of mutual reciprocity. It is, in fact, this notion of mutual reciprocity and the contractual negotiations it insists upon that has produced an extremely flexible people with the ability to absorb even the most drastic changes with equanimity. Such negotiations, partaken even at the individual and personal levels, in effect allowed the survival of traditions that might otherwise have been uprooted and discarded. In a sense, therefore, it is the Filipino trust in

the value of this type of negotiable reciprocity that has ensured a measure of Filipino emancipation from oppression: rather than accepting the rigidity of colonial structures and discourses outright, Filipinos sought to negotiate with them – and upon their own terms – in the end subtly transforming them into more locally acceptable forms. Since such negotiations occurred in layers that were not immediately obvious to the outsider, it seemed to the colonizers that the Filipinos had quite docilely submitted to colonial authority, until subsequent events revealed that this submission was not quite what they had supposed it to be.

Today, any serious discussion of Philippine society must therefore take into consideration the fact that these notions of mutual reciprocity, particularly those concerning debts of gratitude or *utang na loób*, are extremely important to the way Philippine communities function. Such notions explain clearly what might seem to the outsider to be extremely puzzling and often absurd aspects of Filipino behavior, for example, the election to the Philippine congress, for a third consecutive term, of a public official who has been in prison for the repetitive rape of a minor since 1994, or even the election of the former first lady, Loi Ejercito Estrada, to a seat in the Senate on the basis of *awa* or "pity" because of the "unfair" treatment her husband, former Philippine president Joseph Estrada, supposedly received from the Macapagal-Arroyo administration that had deposed him. To the Filipino, however, the justification for such behavior seems perfectly logical and acceptable.

Such notions of reciprocity also clearly pervade Philippine religiosity to a great degree. Indeed, the concept of *utang na loób*, which is a main characteristic of pre-Hispanic animism, has been absorbed into Catholic practices to such an extent that Philippine Catholicism must be considered essentially a syncretic or hybridized Catholicism.

In the colonial past, once this hybridization became an obvious state of affairs, it was perceived as threatening and, towards the end of the colonial period, clearly subversive, as in the Filipino appropriation of the symbolism of the Christian messiah in Philippine revolutionary movements. Yet the Filipino appropriation of Marian symbolism was never really considered detrimental to colonial authority, perhaps because the fusions to be found in Marian devotional practices are much more subtle in nature and Marian devotion is generally viewed as pacificatory rather than incendiary. Thus, Marian devotion, which forms the core of Philippine religiosity and which has become such a natural part of Filipino life, has been rarely questioned or analyzed. It was only when Marian apparitions began to occur in the

Philippines with considerable regularity in recent years that elements of this fusion, particularly those that are subversive to the dominant culture, became more evident – mainly because media publicity threw into the national spotlight events which had been taking place quietly, and often unremarked upon, all over the archipelago. For this reason, while they are not the only ones that I discuss in the following chapters, the Philippine Marian apparitions serve as the main example of appropriation and resistance in this paper.

That Philippine religiosity is predominantly Marian in nature is an offshoot of the Marianism that the Spanish brought with them to the archipelago more than five centuries ago, so it is inevitable that many of the religious apparitions that are supposed to have occurred in the Philippines are Marian apparitions. What is unexpected, however, is that the first publicly recorded apparition occurred only in 1948 and not earlier. But once the Philippine apparition phenomenon began, it began with a vengeance, seeming to reach a climax in the early part of the 1990s when several apparitions were reported in chronological proximity, but still occurring with some regularity even today. In fact, even at the exact moment of this writing (27 May 2001), the Virgin is scheduled to appear at the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Convent in Ciudad Real in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. According to the columnist in whose article this information appeared, this would be the third apparition of the Virgin Mary to the members of the third order of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament religious group. In the main, the Virgin's messages to the group seem to be requests that the Filipinos pray for the Holy Father and to tell Filipinos how much she loves them.

A close consideration of the many Philippine apparitions like the one just mentioned will show that they strongly represent a point of convergence of seemingly opposite belief systems that can be found in Philippine Marian devotion as a whole. They epitomize and embody the deeply Catholic religiosity Filipinos have, yet, at certain points there are slippages, chinks in the religiosity, that allow peeks into areas that do not seem Catholic at all.

More than one cynic has commented that these claims of divine visitations are merely "copycat" apparitions resulting from exposure to media reports of apparitions occuring elsewhere in the world. In an e-mail sent to me by a Jesuit priest, he points out that this was almost certainly the case, writing that "Since the Fatima apparitions many years ago, the amount of devotional material imprudently published has encouraged many pious people to identify with the visionaries with or WITHOUT proper guidance. By proper guidance, I mean the kind of guidance received by Bernadette and Lucia. This task is assigned to

knowledgeable and responsible counsellors officially designated by Church authorities. Proper guidance was also lacking in cases reported in media about diabolical possession. After the movie *The Exorcist* became a bit hit, reports of possession multiplied horribly".

Research produced some interesting points that tend to support this opinion: on the surface, the past apparitions do seem to be "copycat" miracles – they contain almost all the elements necessary for an apparition to be considered authentic, rarely deviating from the expected formula, and suspiciously occurring in the wake of famous apparitions elsewhere in the world. Moreover, the replication and multiplication of miracles, often within the same locality, contained, to someone with my Westernized notions of the Catholic, a high degree of absurdity, particularly as they were so heavily sensationalized by the local tabloids: headlines such as "Poor woman saved from landslide by praying the Rosary", "Miracle at Quezon Boulevard" or "Virgin Weeps Blood in Novaliches" seemed particularly popular in the late 1980s. Miracles were happening everywhere in the Philippines, it seemed. At least two of these apparitions supposedly occurred very near to where I lived.

Miracles also occur invariably, although not exclusively, during religious feast days. Holy Week, when Filipino religious piety climbs to almost hysterical proportions, is in fact the most popular time for miracles in the country. During Holy Week, everything comes to a standstill: businesses shut down, and movie houses and television channels show reruns of old Hollywood movies on the life of Jesus and various saints. It is not unusual for newspapers to reprint the messages of the Virgin in apparitions in other countries, or for the number of alleged local miracles to suddenly increase: a statue of the Madonna weeping blood in some obscure barrio; an shadowy image of the Virgin mysteriously appearing on the rough plywood wall of a poor household in a squatter area; a young salesgirl in Cebu suddenly seemingly possessed by the Virgin Mary. It seems that just about anybody can be blessed with a divine visitation – and not just once, but repeatedly.

In fact, initially, it seemed to me that the repetitive nature of the miraculous served to detract rather than augment the sacredness of such events, lessening the phenomenon as a whole. There seemed to be no great difference between Filipino attitudes toward Catholic holy figures and their attitudes toward the deities of Philippine lower mythology. Both were invested with the casualness of a personal familiarity. Where was, I asked myself, the solemn dignity, the mysterious unattainability, of the sacred? Yet Filipinos take such great pride in their Catholicism, and to suggest that someone was not religious is tantamount to insult.

Perhaps I was too fixed in my Westernized notions of religion and too quick to judge? A closer look suggested a new perspective – that Marian devotion itself is clearly representative of *Filipino* notions of the sacred, that is, the religious *stereotypes* that come into play in the various Marian rituals, though they are foreign in origin, have been invested with Filipino values like *utang na loób* and might even be seen as *Filipino* adaptations of what is *considered* sacred by the West. If so, to what extent, then, did this Filipino value system pervade Marian devotion, and how did it affect Filipino attitudes towards Mary? These are the questions that this dissertation seeks to answer.

In moving from a personal experience of Philippine religiosity towards the more general experience of Philippine society as a whole, in making the transition from being a more or less active participant in this religiosity to becoming a detached student of it, it seemed to me the answers to these questions lay in the notion that the apparitions may be seen as larger representations of my mother's seemingly paradoxical type of religiosity and my Catholic neighbor's belief in folk healers. They seem to be, to use Bhabha's term, *interstitial* spaces where the local collides with the foreign, the pre-Hispanic with the Catholic, the lower class with the upper class, then fuse with each other in some places but also repel each other in others. In fact, Philippine Marian devotion appears to be an ambivalent space wherein can be found a wide range of cultural and historical influences coming together in a way reminiscent of the phenomenon that M.M. Bakhtin, in his study of language, has described as heteroglossia, for it reveals multiplicity, not only in meaning, but also in function.

I believe, therefore, that in understanding Philippine Marian devotion, in seeing this devotion as an important cultural signifier in which meaning is produced (and understood) by a multiplicity of cultural "voices" coming together in the rituals practiced to this end, the Filipinos can also come to a better understanding of the multiplicity of "voices" in themselves that is the result, not only of racial and cultural intermingling among various migrant groups from different parts of Asia even prior to the coming of the Spaniards, but also of being under Western domination for more centuries than they have had independence. It was only by the selective absorption of the foreign into the local culture, particularly of those elements that were congruent to native values and beliefs, that any form of survival was ensured. But the price of this selective appropriation has been to hybridize the Philippines to a great degree, not only in the intermingling of the blood of many races in the veins of the modern Filipino, but also in the fusion of many diverse cultures that is obvious in many Filipino practices today. The position of power that assumes the inferiority of the hybrid is negated by the fact

that those in that position of dominance are themselves hybrid products. Indeed, if, as I said earlier, my approach towards Philippine religiosity is shaped by a hybrid position, it is even more true of the Filipino people as a whole, whose claim to national identity may very well reside on the very notion of their hybridity as a race. It is in fact in the national acceptance of the fact that hybridity has become an integral part of the Filipino people that a true sense of national identity and unity of consciousness might finally and truly be achieved.

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of Philippine Marian devotion is central to the understanding of Philippine culture, and it is therefore important to see just how meaning is generated and negotiated within this devotion, and thus within Philippine culture itself. This dissertation is an attempt to analyze Philippine Marian devotion as an important signifying practice, and, through the use of a predominantly postcolonial framework, to argue that it is one in which the production of meaning has been shaped by colonial conditions and traditions. I also argue that it is in fact this heritage of subordination that informs Philippine devotional practices to Mary today: while these devotions conform to accepted dominant discourses, they are also the sites of Filipino subversion and resistance to oppression. That this is the case is strongly suggested by the ambivalent way in which many Filipinos regard Marian devotion and, indeed, Philippine Catholicism in general.

The association of subversion and resistance with religion is certainly nothing new: in its earliest form, Christianity itself was initially a marginalized response to oppressive practices perpetuated by the dominant authority of the Roman Empire. That Filipinos should locate their resistance to oppressive authority within religion is largely due to historical circumstance: for more than three centuries (1565-1898), the Philippines was a colony of Spain and thus converted (often forcibly) to Christianity. It is not surprising therefore that, as the eminent Jesuit historian John Schumacher has documented, native responses to the imposition of Christianity in the past often took the form of subversion within seeming conformity (that is, there is simultaneously appropriation and resistance, or what Bhabha refers to as ambivalence), a form of resistance that is still quite evident in Marian devotional practices even today. It is in fact the apparent conformity to dominant social discourses that is itself subversive, for it is paradoxically through such a conformity that freedom from oppression can actually be found.

The prolonged period of Spanish colonial administration created a perception of the dominant religion (that is, of Catholicism) as an oppressive instrument of colonial authority and, later, of the local elite that emerged from the colonial period. That this perception is accurate to a certain extent even today was recently acknowledged by the Philippine Church in the aftermath of violent demonstrations of protest by the poorest classes at the gates of Malacañang Palace in Manila last May 1, 2001. In a mass at the Edsa Shrine two weeks later,

Cardinal Sin, the Archbishop of Manila, asked "for forgiveness from the poor who...had long been neglected by the Church and exploited by a powerful few".[1]

In order to understand fully the importance of this rather rare admission of culpability by the Philippine Catholic Church, one must realize the extent of the influence that the Church holds over Philippine society. Catholicism pervades almost every aspect of Filipino life, paradoxically both uniting diverse social groups and at the same time widening social gulfs. For centuries, it has served as an important unifying factor in what is actually a culturally diverse archipelago composed of more than 7,000 islands. However, the class-based biases that continue to inform Filipino perceptions of Catholicism are also strongly divisive. The dominant social class (that is, the bourgeois class) tends to insist on a distinction between officially sanctioned Catholicism and what it disparagingly refers to as folk Catholicism, or the hybridized Catholicism that resulted from an incomplete indoctrination of the Catholic faith in many parts of the archipelago during the Spanish colonial period. Such an attitude can be seen clearly in an article by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist, Neal H. Cruz, comparing the massacre of 16 cultists in Bukidnon to a similar event concerning an earlier cult named the *Lapiang Malaya*.[2] The article presented Cruz's opinion of Filipino religiosity, and indicated his frustration with the existing situation. This view is summed up in the following paragraphs:

> These two massacres of fanatics who still believe in the power of amulets show how backward the Filipino people are. Many are still ruled by superstition. Shy swains still rely on love potions or *gayuma.* Some readily believe in "miracles" based on images on banana plants and tears or blood streaming down the faces of statues. Various religious cults mushroom here and there. Many people would rather go to faith healers for treatment of their illnesses than to qualified doctors. Whole communities in Metro Manila are panicked by reports of *mananangals* and *aswangs* lurking in their neighborhoods, made worse by ratings-hungry media organizations that give the reports credibility by airing them in their programs. Former Cabinet members and television personalities believe in *dwendes* and *nuno sa punso.* A cult leader in Cebu killed himself by having assistants pour gasoline on him and setting him on fire, believing that he would rise from the dead after three days. Some people even kill their neighbors, accusing them of practicing witchcraft.
>
> These [events] happen only in movies about some remote corner of darkest Africa, but it is endemic in a modern Christian country in the 21st century like the Philippines. Superstition and ignorance reign not only in isolated and poor communities. Surprisingly, you will find them among college graduates and the rich in the cities. Obviously, our educational system has failed in this respect.[3]

In other words, Cruz saw Filipino religiosity as the result of ignorance and "superstition" compounded by media sensationalism. Unfortunately, this negative view of Filipino religiosity is shared by a majority of educated, Westernized Filipinos who condemn such practices as Cruz mentioned as barbaric and unworthy of "a modern Christian country".

The key words, "modern" and "Christian", both imply a preference for the dominant Philippine capitalist culture that is enjoyed only by a privileged few. There is, embedded in this discourse, a strong preference for the "Western", by which is usually meant "American", and which carries with it strong associations of economic progress and prosperity. The subject position of the intelligentsia of this class (of which Cruz is a member) invariably assumes that such progress cannot be attained without an overhaul of native Philippine culture whereby all "detrimental" elements must be removed or at least transformed into more acceptable Westernized versions. An example of this is the concept of mutual reciprocity, particularly that of *utang na loób* (debt of gratitude), which tends to foster a patronage system (that is, a culture of dependence) and which, as it is considered deleterious to the establishment of good work ethics important to progress, must be eliminated or at least modified.

However, while this capitalist class seems to actively promote Westernization, it is also greatly responsible for stifling it to some degree. While such a transformation of Philippine society as it endorses might certainly be economically and socially beneficial, the same dominant class is itself guilty of perpetuating this patronage system to keep itself in power. The concept of mutual reciprocity is also often the only way by which the poor can have access to Westernization and progress, as seen, for example, in the way many of the upper classes subsidize the education of household helpers in exchange for cheap labor. The recent scandal involving *jueteng*, an illegal numbers game, which brought down the Estrada presidency, has also been seen as the result of this patronage system. A study conducted by the Center for Community Services of the Ateneo de Manila University found that

> When asked to characterize a good leader, community members who participated in the study, done over a two-month period last year, pictured a person who is dependable, helpful, generous, and approachable. This is exactly the same description they gave of the patron and *jueteng* lord. ...It also did not matter to those asked that the source of funds used to provide for community needs is illegal. What was important to them was that an influential and wealthy person was taking good care of them and their community. Thus, the culture of dependence that *jueteng* fosters in communities is something that the patron will forever try to maintain. And even if they want to rise above this cycle, the poor remain trapped in it.[4]

Furthermore, this dominant class also upholds conservative Church positions on social issues that tend to sacrifice modernization for morality (as, for example, in its insistence in the face of overpopulation and health concerns that contraception promotes immorality). This point of view also subscribes to the belief that the Church is the ultimate authority on religion in the country and marginalizes those elements that are not officially sanctioned by the Church despite the fact that many members of this class also practice variations of folk religiosity. In other words, Westernization and progress are ideals upheld by the dominant capitalist class often at the expense of the poor.

In a Catholic country where about 80% of the population is poor, this kind of progress is out of reach, attainable only, and at great cost, either by entering into the kind of patronage system described above or by "contracting" oneself to do menial (but higher paying, if in foreign currency) jobs outside the country and even then, frequently suffering discrimination and abuse at the hands of foreign employers. Those who remain behind are also often discriminated against, this time by their own countrymen, for being "ignorant and backward" (that is, illiterate and uneducated – a condition perpetuated by social and economic inequality), and constantly abused by corrupt politicians in the highest echelon of power.[5] In such a country, where the poor are constantly the underdog and where, moreover, there is an extreme scarcity of Catholic priests, it is inevitable that ancient, pre-Hispanic structures and traditions should predominate among the masses – after all, this is all that is available to, and affordable by, them. Catholicism and Westernization, as four centuries under Western domination showed, are expensive luxuries. It is also inevitable, therefore, that among the majority of Filipinos, attitudes towards both Catholicism and Westernization are to a great extent ambivalent.

Questions of religion are intricately tied to problematic questions of identity. Centuries of Western domination have, in fact, resulted in a crisis in national identity that Filipinos have attempted to resolve time and again without much success. Exactly who, or what, is the Filipino? Originally, the term Filipino referred to the *insulares* (or *creoles*), full-blooded Spaniards who were born in the Philippines, and only gradually did it come to include first, the Spanish mestizo class and then the *principalia*, or the strongly Hispanized native elite, both of whom came into economic prominence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The term, therefore, was originally elitist, with strong racial biases.

However, in the nineteenth century, oppressive colonial policies resulted in a new awareness, particularly among the *ilustrados* (the "enlightened" class, or those who had been educated in European universities and exposed to the ideas of the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution), that Spanish interests were being attained at the expense of native economic expansion. Reform movements instigated by the *ilustrados* soon appropriated the term Filipino to refer to themselves, and, with the onset of the revolution of the masses against Spain, came to infuse it with a national consciousness that had previously been markedly absent among the natives, particularly among the masses. It was at this point, many Filipino historians believe, that the true history of the Filipino people begins, for it was only then that Filipinos began to play an active role in the creation of their own history.

Unfortunately, the spurt of nationalism was cut short when the Spaniards turned the colony over to the United States in 1898 and Filipinos once again found themselves powerless against a new form of Western domination based on "benevolent assimilation" that lasted until they were eventually granted independence in 1946, at the end of the Second World War. However, independence from the United States came at the cost of what many Filipinos considered rampant exploitation of the country's natural resources, particularly with the American insistence on the Bell Trade Relations Act of 1945 which allowed for an 8-year free trade relations between the US and the Philippines after the granting of independence, in which Americans were given "parity rights" or the right "to dispose, exploit, develop, and utilize 'all agricultural, timber, and mineral lands' of the Philippines, together with the operation of public utilities and the exploitation of the 'waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and mineral resources of the Philippines'" (Agoncillo 1990: 433).

Needless to say, such American post-war policies led to strong anti-imperialist sentiments, particularly among the intelligentsia, many of whom joined forces with leftist grass-roots movements like the Communist Party of the Philippines from the 1950s to 1980s. There also emerged a widespread re-awakening of nationalism, which resulted in several attempts to "rewrite" history from the point of view of the Filipino, the argument being that all previous historical writings on the Philippines had been written by colonial administrators (first Spanish and then American) and were inevitably biased in their favor – that is, they were not histories of the Filipinos but histories of the colonial administrators in which the Filipino was invariably depicted negatively. The new histories produced by historians like Gregorio F. Zaide (1958) and Teodoro F. Agoncillo (1960), both titled *History of the Filipino People*, sought to present a new, nativistic perspective on Philippine history in which the

Filipino was praised rather than discriminated against. This was followed by Renato Constantino's 2-volume Marxist reading of Philippine history (*The Philippines: A Past Revisited*) in 1975, in which he implied that Zaide's work was not a valid reading of Philippine history as it continued to indiscriminately use colonial sources, that Agoncillo's interpretation was too oriented towards the *ilustrado* class, and that a true history of the Filipino people must take into consideration the working class, the masses, who had largely been forgotten in previous historical texts, but without whom the Philippine revolution would never have taken place. In other words, Constantino proposed what he called "a people's history". Reynaldo Ileto (*Pasyon and Revolution*, Ateneo de Manila University Press 1979), however, challenged this assumption by asserting that a true history of the Filipino people must be read "from below", meaning that the real sources of Philippine history must be found among texts that circulated among the people themselves – hence his reading of the Passion of Christ (the *Pasyon*) and other oral texts as important sources of revolutionary principles during the Philippine revolution against Spain and in the various insurgencies that constantly occurred during the years of the American occupation. This was followed almost a decade later by Vicente Rafael (*Contracting Colonialism*, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989) who showed, using the Filipino notion of mutual reciprocity, that Filipinos during the colonial period were actually entering into complex negotiations with colonial discourses, that is, they were in effect "contracting colonialism", on terms that were misunderstood by the colonial authority and which provided the natives with an avenue of resistance to colonial rule.

These works provoked new insights on the Philippine colonial situation, and began a new strain of academic writing on the subject in which the voice of the native, long silenced by Spanish and American historians, slowly began to emerge as engaging in a discourse of resistance and subversion. However, among the majority of Filipinos, the question of national identity continued to be problematic. After the Marcos dictatorship was dismantled in 1986 and People Power put Corazon Aquino into power, there was a brief resurgence of nationalism while the words of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, whose assassination sparked the revolution and threw his widow into politics, were still fresh in the minds of the people: "The Filipino is worth dying for", he said. The question this provoked (again) was: "But who *is* the Filipino?" Fervent nationalists believed the answer was to eradicate all the signs of colonial domination, resulting in some suggestions that bordered on the absurd. One became a favorite example in fallacious reasoning in the English classroom: "We should change the name of the Philippines, because the name "Philippines" comes from King Philip II of Spain, and as long as we are named after this Spanish king, we remain a colonized people. Instead,

we should change the country's name to Maharlika, which is a native term and means brave". Another example is given by the Filipino writer, Nick Joaquin, who once had a meal with a Filipino family who insisted that the path to nationalism was by way of returning to old, native traditions:

> At this dinner, a round gray stone about the size of a baseball, actually a piece of rock salt, was passed around. That, said my hosts, was how the ancient Filipinos salted their food. You pressed the stone on your rice and fish, you rubbed it against your meat, you soaked it in your broth, for the desired saltiness. ...I'm afraid they all looked down on me when I said I'd rather have ordinary table salt.[6]

The government was more conservative: there was a concerted move to push Filipino products (The "Buy Filipino" movement) as being better than imported ones in an attempt to boost both the economy and the sense of nationalism, and a decision to use Filipino as the medium of instruction in all state universities. Neither attempt was successful in the least: illegally imported goods from Korea, Taiwan and China were still cheaper than good quality local products, Western brand names still continued to fascinate even the poor Filipino, and, although there was an attempt to Philippinize foreign words (for example, "computer" became "kompyuter") Filipino could not accommodate the majority of modern terminology that had to be used in the educational institutions, particularly in the sciences.

The bourgeois class (or, the *burgis*), however, shaped as it was by Spanish colonial history, insisted on the opposite, that Filipinos should embrace all things Western. As Mariel N. Francisco and Fe Ma. C. Arriola, authors of *The History of the Burgis*, have put it, "The principal ingredient of the *burgis* culture is Westernization".[7] But *burgis* is not just a culture, it is also a political and economic class composed of the upper 10-15% of the population. It is the dominant capitalist class that I referred to earlier, and which looked down upon the rest of the Filipinos as being "backward and ignorant".

In the end, no real consensus was reached, and the identity of the Filipino remains uncertain, especially in the midst of one political, social or economic upheaval after another, with a vague notion that it is the traumatic colonial experience that is to blame for everything – including the people's "indolent" approach to life, for the Spaniards had so often denigrated the "indolence of the Filipinos" that Filipinos had come to believe in it themselves.

Joaquin quite accurately summed up the attitude of most Filipinos towards the West as follows: "Our feelings towards Western culture are therefore ambivalent. We are fascinated by it and we are also repelled. We fear and resist it even as we hanker for it."[8] But, as he also pointed out, "Identity is not a *being* but a *becoming*, a *process*".[9] It is not a matter of simply stripping away the layers of foreign cultures and histories to find the "true Filipino" underneath, but of trying to see *what we are as a result* of the imposition of these "alien cultures, alien histories", and moving on from there.

The best place to start on any analysis of Philippine culture, therefore, is in the here and now, the point at which Filipinos find themselves after fifty years of independence from colonial administration. And the best example of that culture is Philippine religiosity, for if there is one thing that the majority of Filipinos agree upon and take pride in, it is the fact that the Philippines is the *only* predominantly Catholic country in all of Asia. However, the *exact* nature of that religiosity has also provoked the most heated of debates in academic circles, precisely because of the conflicting views of nationalism that I mentioned above. On the one hand, Philippine religiosity is looked down upon as the result of "backwardness and ignorance", the product of "superstitious" pre-Hispanic elements which only serve to retard much needed progress. On the other hand, there is an opposite view that glorifies these same elements as personifying the "true Filipino".

Academic debates on Philippine religiosity in the past three decades have tended to see Philippine folk religion as distinct from Philippine Catholicism, but it may in fact be argued that Philippine Catholicism *is* folk Catholicism. Despite the efforts of the Philippine Catholic Church, the majority of Filipinos continue to practice what is essentially a hybridized Catholicism with elements drawn from Spanish, American and Filipino cultural and religious discourses and practices.

In reaction to the attempt by Westernized Filipino intellectuals mostly from the Ateneo de Manila University (for example, those subscribing to the school of thought propounded by Frank Lynch and Mary Hollnsteiner) to dissect Philippine culture and society through the use of Western theoretical models, academic discussion on Philippine culture at the University of the Philippines in the late 1960s and 1970s tended to center on the notion of "*sikolohiyang Pilipino*" or Philippine psychology. It is interesting but perhaps not surprising that the first regional conference held in 1977 by proponents of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*

centered on Filipino folk Catholicism, [10] particularly the nature of Filipino religious psychology. The findings of the conference were as follows:

> In conclusion, it can be said that the conference did not only furnish us with ideas and insights, but it also helped focus our attention to the limitations of the past and current outlooks and methodologies which may have been one of the roots of the dearth of scientific literature on the different aspects of our culture that we need in our search for our identity as persons and as a people. It has also revealed to us the richness of the indigenous practices of local groups as a treasure from which we could retrieve priceless uncut gems which we could shape, polish, and mount on a beautiful modern setting to accentuate its worth as an heirloom.[11]

In effect, the efforts of the conference were basically an attempt to validate Filipino folk religious practices and traditions by arguing that Filipino culture and society must be evaluated upon its own terms. But even this brief conclusion indicates a certain condescension towards the subject, identifying it, through the use of words such as "indigenous practices" and "uncut gems" that are "heirlooms" that must be placed in "a beautiful modern setting", as something quaint and outside the mainstream experience. Despite the group's avowed intention of looking at Filipino culture from the "inside", it was still caught up in what was essentially a patronizing academic stance that insisted on looking down upon these practices.

However, one outcome of this conference and others like it was a new interest in Philippine folk religiosity, which resulted in a great number of new studies on Philippine *anitismo* (the pre-Hispanic religion practiced by Filipinos) and folk traditions, particularly as the emergence of Filipino faith healers at around the same time was exciting interest in foreign circles. But no significant new insights were added to the study of Philippine religiosity until 1979, when Ileto provided a new perspective on Philippine religiosity by showing how folk Catholicism could be, and was, used as a strategy of resistance to colonial oppression (*Pasyon and Revolution*, 1979). Likewise, Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism* suggested that Filipino understanding of the Christian concepts taught by the Spanish missionaries should be seen in terms of native cultural values, particularly that of *utang na loób*, thereby indicating that Filipinos allowed themselves to enter into negotiations with the missionaries but on their own terms and not necessarily those of the colonizers'. Ironically, both writers were, in fact, writing from the "outside" and using Western theoretical frameworks: Ileto was a faculty member of the James Cook University in Australia, while Rafael was at the time an assistant professor at the University of Hawaii.

But these works are also limited by their subject matter: both Ileto and Rafael refer to a distant past and a distant situation. Ileto's discussion on the Passion, for example, focused on a predominantly male expression of dissatisfaction with the colonial agenda wherein male revolutionaries saw Christ as a symbol of resistance to colonial oppression, while Rafael's discussion on Filipino and Spanish notions of authority and exchange focuses on examining the texts in which these were embedded. Mary, who forms the heart and soul of Catholic devotion in the country, is mentioned only passingly, and, by Ileto, at least, only in so far as she figured as the suffering mother in the Passion and later as the primary model for the notion of *Inang Bayan*, or Mother Country.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to address these relatively silent spaces in existing discussions of appropriation and resistance in Philippine religiosity. It is an effort to continue the discussion begun by Rafael and Ileto and move it towards the contemporary period. In this sense, it approaches the subject matter through a multiplicity of paths: historical, social, cultural and religious. It is also an endeavor to shift attention from Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary, for while Jesus has clear revolutionary significance in his triumph against persecution, Marian devotion has by and large been seen as a colonial instrument that was effectively used in the imposition of the Spanish colonial discourse. In this study, however, using a postcolonial (Bhabha-ian) and a Bakhtinian approach among others, I suggest that Marian devotion, as an important symbol of Catholicism, itself provided Filipinos with a method of resistance to colonial oppression and continues to provide this resistance in the contemporary period. For, despite the common view of Mary as the perfect expression of orthodox Catholicism, I suggest that, to the contrary, Philippine Marian devotion epitomizes the hybridization of Catholicism and folk religion that has been so disparaged by the dominant, *burgis* discourse but which is actually practiced by the majority of Filipinos, even those in elite levels of society. As such, it exemplifies the "ambivalence" to which Joaquin refers, wherein can be seen (to use both Bhabha's definition of the term and Bakhtinian terminology) an appropriation of "the already said", and yet a simultaneous resistance to, the discourses that have been provided by the "authoritarian word" of Catholicism and American hegemony.

If Jesus Christ is appropriated as an active, militant, even sometimes violent symbol against oppression (see Ileto 1979), appropriation and resistance in Marian devotion takes more subtle and peaceful forms. The fullest expression of this resistance, I suggest, can be seen if Philippine Marian devotional practices are viewed through Bakhtin's concept of the carnival (Bakhtin, Introduction, *Rabelais and His World* 1984 ed.) as Marian celebrations

have been infused with the kind of carnival atmosphere that Bakhtin describes and in which harmonious community relationships come to the forefront. It is in the sense of community that prevailed in these occasions that one can find a resistance to oppression in the expression of "folk laughter" even within a seeming conformity to the dominant Marian discourses. Indeed, given the importance placed on Marian devotion in the Philippines, it seems the most logical site in which to locate discourses of dissatisfaction, resistance and negotiation.

However, the multiplicity of "voices" inherent in Philippine Marian devotion makes any attempt at analysis a particularly difficult task. The convergence of social, cultural and historical forces within the devotion requires that the subject be looked at simultaneously along both synchronic and diachronic axes. I have tried to deal with the complexity of the subject in a systematic way by first presenting the historical context to provide a solid basis upon which to situate my analysis of the present devotion (Chapters 1 to 3) and by identifying the various stereotypes that emerged from historical circumstance (Chapter 4), before moving on to a discussion of more specific examples of Marian devotion to show how the resultant religiosity challenged and subverted dominant religious discourses (Chapters 5 and 6).

The use of certain useful concepts derived from various theoretical concepts proposed by Bakhtin and Bhabha, along with several anthropological notions derived from what has come to be known as performance theory, has made the task of analysis a little easier. These three theoretical approaches have many similarities (and indeed must have influenced each other to some degree) and together provide a useful framework for the analysis of Marian devotion. Since these theories are used simultaneously throughout this study, the brief critique that follows indicates the points at which they converge with or diverge from each other.

Theoretical Approaches

The critic Robert Young has pointed out that Bhabha has tended to approach the problem of colonial discourse through the analysis of specific historical moments, using a specific frame of reference or concept, and criticizes these concepts as "static concepts, curiously anthropomorphised so that they possess their own desire, with no reference to the historical provenance of the theoretical material from which such concepts are drawn, or to the theoretical narrative of Bhabha's own work, or to that of the cultures to which they are addressed" (1990: 146). In other words, Bhabha seems to imply that his concepts are timeless and would hold for all colonial conditions. For example, when Bhabha talks about mimicry,

Young asks, "is [he] describing a forgotten moment of historical resistance, or does that resistance remain inarticulate until the interpreter comes a hundred and seventy years later to 'read between the lines' and rewrite history?" The question applies to Bhabha's notion of colonial discourse in general, and Young comments that, on this subject, Bhabha himself remains ambivalent: "Sometimes Bhabha writes of colonial discourse only becoming ambivalent when enunciated at a certain moment of colonial history," Young says, "thus implying that elsewhere, at home, it was not, or at the very least that its equivalent potential previously remained unactivated. At other times he intimates that it was in fact always already ambivalent, which suggests that such ambivalence is always already inscribed at a textual level" (Ibid.: 152-153).

However, Young also acknowledges the fact that ambivalence is the one unifying concept that runs through all of Bhabha's works. The ambivalence of colonial discourse, in fact, necessitates a multiplicity of approaches – that is, "it cannot be approached in terms of a single illuminating concept" and thus, "each article... addresses a particular structural figure...through a reading of a specific historically located text"(Ibid.: 146). In other words, Young notes, Bhabha does not provide a history of colonial discourse because such linearity is in fact the basis of the "Europeanizing claims he is trying to invert" (Ibid.:147).

Bhabha himself emphasizes the importance of ambivalence in the analysis of colonial discourse. In one of his earliest works, "The other question: difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism", presented as a paper in the 1982 Essex Conference on "The Politics of Theory",[12] he enunciates this importance quite clearly:

> It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. The absence of such a perspective has its own history of political expediency. To recognize the stereotype as an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power demands a theoretical and political response that challenges deterministic or functionalist modes of conceiving the relationship between discourse and politics, and questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination. My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the *identification* of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. (1982; in Francis Barker, ed. 1986: 149)

According to Bhabha, it is precisely *because* of the ambivalence in colonial discourse that the colonial relationship is inherently self-destructive and lends itself to subversion. Thus, while, in this study, I often focus on specific historical moments wherein resistance and assimilation are clearly represented, it is primarily through the concept of ambivalence that I approach my topic, for ambivalence is a feature, not only in these specific moments, but within the ongoing dialogue between dominant and marginalized forces – in the way that Filipinos responded to colonial discourse in the past, and in the way they seek to address the discourses of the dominant institutions in postcolonial society.

There are two key periods of colonial intervention in Philippine history, both of which have shaped the nature of Philippine religiosity to a great degree – the repercussions of which can still be felt today. These are the Spanish and the American periods, throughout which Philippine Catholicism was constantly subjected to historical upheavals that variously resisted it, appropriated it, and transformed it or did all three.

Of the first space of colonial intervention, the seventeenth century, which contained the initial phase of Spanish missionary fervor in the country, is particularly important. Many religious accounts and histories of the time show how the processes of transculturation first began to take place and Bhabha's view of the colonial situation as "the intervention of historicity, mastery, mimesis" (Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders", 1984: 94) is particularly appropriate in this context. It was during this period that religious beliefs and devotions to the Virgin Mary were first introduced to the country and that Filipinos were first exposed to the apparition discourse.

This early period of the Spanish Conquest exemplifies what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as the "contact zone", or "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (1992: 6). Being so, it also epitomizes what Homi Bhabha calls the space of hybridity, the "ambivalent third choice" in colonial relationships characterized by "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft et al 1998: 119). In Bhabha's own words, "The colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory; or in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency" ("Signs Taken For Wonders", 1984: 97). Phrased otherwise, the colonial

authority brings into this "ambivalent space" certain "rules of recognition" by which its power may be enforced; however, because the colonized comes into this space with his own preconceptions and cultural interpretations, what is produced instead is a hybrid, which is inevitably disruptive.

The term hybrid is widely used in post-colonial discourse, and, although it was popularized in Anglophone circles by Bhabha's appropriation of it, it nevertheless clearly owes a great deal to the idea of transculturation proposed by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s and which was used widely in Latin American academic circles. Bakhtin himself uses the term to refer to the anarchic power of multivocal language situations and thus, of multivocal narratives (Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," 1986 ed.). The idea is also contained within his theory of the *carnivalesque*. However, I shall be using the term as Bhabha contextualizes it because he situates the concept specifically within the space of colonial interaction. While the term is problematic in the sense that one might argue that there is no such thing as a "pure" and homogeneous condition and that all cultures may actually be seen as hybrids, the term is useful as a way of determining the changes that occur at the point of colonial contact, where we must assume, for the sake of convenience, that each culture comes into the interstitial space with more or less dominant characteristics that serve to differentiate it from the Other (see Bhabha *The Location of Culture* 1994; see also Barker 2000).

During the second space of colonial intervention, the American occupation (1898-1946), the American secular education system and mass media played a great role in shaping the Filipino worldview. Unlike the Spanish educational system, which was open only to the small percentage of the population that composed the upper class, the American educational system (run largely by Protestant missionaries) was available to the majority and was a powerful tool in the pacification and Americanization of a nation with which America had so recently been at war. Media, too, was a useful tool in promoting American hegemony, and it succeeded so well that in no time at all, Filipinos were so Americanized that they were often referred to by Americans as their "little brown brother". Both education and media significantly changed local attitudes towards religion, and this may be seen in the nature of Philippine marginal religious groups and in the way Filipinos began to think about Roman Catholicism. In particular, they "Hollywoodized" the Philippines in the sense that the new Filipino dream became one of instant fame and fortune, and Filipino role models shifted, to a large degree, from religious icons to movie screen idols (see Chapter 6).

Both spaces produced significant hybrids of already existing hybrids, and it is the latest result that is my concern here: In Chapter 5, I argue that the utterances and speech plans of many Philippine religious leaders today, learned, assimilated and transformed within these two spaces of intervention, subvert the accepted and expected form of the Marian apparition through the processes of mimicry and duplication, because through these processes, the object of mimicry is considerably lessened in value – yet the mimesis also gains an identity of its own separate from the original, which may be seen from the outside as a menace (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse", 1994), but which, from within, is actually an assertion of native values and traditions.

The similarities between Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry and Bakhtin's concept of dialogism lie primarily in the notion of "Otherness" postulated in both approaches.

Bakhtin has been hailed as one of the most important critics of language and literature. His concept of dialogism, or the idea that language is dialogic because every speech act springs from previous utterances and contains an expectation of a future response, has provided an important method for the analysis, not just of language and literary genres, but also of other aspects of life, showing that language in fact interacts with the social situations around it. In fact, in more recent times, Bakhtin has come to be seen not just as a linguistic or literary critic but also as the creator of a systematic philosophy that extended to other areas of life as well.[13] For example, in his study of language, he has also shown that the idea that "in order to better understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture" is one-sided and would merely be "a duplication and would not entail anything new or enriching". It is necessary, therefore, for

> the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people because they are located outside us in space and because they are *others*. (Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*", 1986: 7)

In other words, it is by looking at a culture from the *outside*, that is, through the eyes of another culture, that new insight on that culture may be attained.

This notion of outsideness/otherness is an extension of Bakhtin's theory that the *self* can only have meaning in relation to the Other, and is one of the reasons why I have chosen Bakhtin over other theoretical approaches. For example, Saussure and Derrida's concept of language as a closed system fails to fully consider the importance of the Other in the creation of meaning.

The notion of the colonial "Other" has come to be an important concept in the study of postcolonial situations. But Bakhtin claims that "such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched".[14] However, in his seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said showed that the Western concept of the Oriental "Other" was basically a Western construct, a stereotype created out of Western fantasies of the Orient and reproduced in Western writings about the East. It was a false construct and therefore one that failed to present the realities of the East. Homi Bhabha extended this notion of the stereotyped/constructed "Other" in his concept of hybridity (which itself is based on a Bakhtinian type of hybridization) in which cultures *do* merge and mix and produce something entirely new. He also suggested that stereotyping was an important colonial activity, one, moreover, that was ambivalent in nature, simultaneously showing a fascination with and a repulsion for the colonized Other. For this reason, while Bakhtin's theory of dialogism is important to this study in view of the fact that I shall be looking at the apparition phenomenon as a form of text made up of different kinds of utterances, it cannot fully embrace the total complexity of the subject.

Young points out in his critique of Bhabha's reaction to Said's concept of Orientalism that Bhabha sees 'Orientalism' essentially as a discourse, and as such, "It cannot be assumed that representations are just static entities which may or may not correspond to the 'real' – because they must always also form part of an address, whether written or spoken, with a specific addresser and addressee" (Young 1990: 142). Colonial discourse, therefore, may be seen as taking place between the colonizer as addresser and the colonized as addressee, with an emphasis on "conflictual positions" that make up the subject (Ibid.). Thus Bakhtin's notion of the speech will, wherein the addresser takes into consideration the addressee even prior to the act of communication, is, in Bhabha, situated within a post-colonial context. However, Young raises the question of "who 'the colonizer', 'the colonized', or 'the native' actually is", because in the process of hybridization, such identities necessarily become transformed and subverted in a "strategic reversal of the process of domination" (Ibid.: 154) – there is a loss of power by the colonial authority and an

appropriation of it by the colonized. Such slippages in identity may be read within accounts of colonizer/colonized relations in Spanish historical documents of the colonial period, and even in the way Filipinos reacted to American hegemony during the American colonial period. Such reversals of positions of power are certainly also evident in the Philippine apparition phenomenon as well, for the believer does, to a great extent, manipulate the visionary's actions and gestures to conform to what he or she expects of the event, which the visionary must take into consideration in order to exert any form of power him- or herself.

In a sense, therefore, these overlapping notions of self and Other, colonizer and colonized may also be seen in terms of performance, and indeed, the aspect of performance has come into prominence in anthropological studies, particularly in new approaches to the study of religious ritual. This new perspective focuses on rituals as actions rather than texts, on the immediacy of the experience rather than its representational value. Because the main participant in the ritual is seen as an actor, he or she has the responsibility to realistically create the presence of reality.

This notion has certain similarities to Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, particularly in the way in which one relates to the Other and vice versa. Goffman showed that the way by which an individual presents him- or herself necessarily influences others' perception of him: "when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have" (1959: 15). Being aware of this, the individual therefore can consciously or unconsciously manipulate his or her actions in order to elicit a desired response. In other words, he "plays a part" or engages in a performance. Clearly, this interpretation of the nature of performance also has similarities to Bhabha's notion of mimicry turned menace wherein "the fetish mimes the form of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its 'otherness,' that which it disavows" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse", 1994: 91).

Among the characteristics of the performance of the individual that Goffman has identified, several have a bearing on the Philippine Marian apparition phenomenon, particularly on the actions of the visionary. First of all, the performer *must believe* in the part that he or she is playing, whether he is "taken in by his own act" or not, because

> When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on – and this seems to be the typical case – then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the "realness" of what is presented. (Goffman 1956: 28)

In connection with this, Laura Kendall's study of shamanistic performance in South Korea, finds that the subject of her study, a woman named Chini, *failed* in her role of shaman because she could not *act* like one: "To become a shaman, she must find it in herself to perform as one" (Kendall 1996: 18). Thus, if the actions of the Philippine visionaries are to successfully convince audiences of the validity of the apparitions, there is a need to present that conviction through their own actions: they must show that they themselves truly believe in the apparition whether or not they actually do. In the event that their actions fail to be convincing at any point, the entire "show" results in failure. Indeed, as Edward Schiefellin points out in an essay entitled. "On Failure and Performance", "Performances – whether ritual or dramatic – create and make present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse, or terrify. Unlike texts, however, they are ephemeral: they create their effects and then they are gone..." (1996: 59). Failure to do this resulted in the failure of the performance. Thus, despite the fact that rituals are traditional actions that are performed again and again, each performance is in itself a *new* enactment subject to new conditions. Because of this, "the enactment of *all* ceremonial (or theatrical) performances is inherently risky...and a successful mastery of the risks of performing is a necessary condition for the creation of performative *authority*" (Schieffelin 1996: 80).

A performance usually requires the use of certain signs. Goffman refers to the importance of "front" or "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the particular performance", dramatic realization, the way in which the performer "typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure", and idealization, wherein the individual's performance "will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole" (1956: 32, 40, 45). All of these make use of what Bakhtin has called the "already said", wherein the apparition event (front), the visionary's dramatic production of miracles (dramatic realization), and the emphasis on the accepted formulaic structure of the event (idealization) are all based on precedents authenticated by the Church.

We tend to believe that an individual will naturally present himself in a way that is favorable to him and *trust* in the fact that the signs he portrays are genuine unless proven otherwise, because we think that societal notions of shame, fear and guilt impose enough restraints on social actions. However, the fact that the audience takes its cue from the performance of the invididual makes misrepresentation easily possible, and, similar to Bhabha's concept of colonial paranoia that is inherent in hybridization, wherein the colonizer perceives the mimesis as threatening, "paradoxically, *the more closely the imposter's performance approximates the real thing, the more intensely we may feel threatened* [italics mine]" (Goffman 1956: 66-67). Indeed, in the Philippines, the misrepresentation of the stereotype of religious piety results in great animosity towards the imposter, and there are undoubtedly similar repercussions for the visionary-imposter as well (Chapter 5).

Anthropologists have come to view the performances of shamans worldwide as a kind of performance that mixes deception and genuine belief: "Field ethnographers seem quite generally convinced that even shamans who know that they are frauds nevertheless also believe in their powers, and especially in those of other shamans: they consult them when they themselves or their children are ill".[15] Like the performances of shamans worldwide, the Marian visionary re-enacts the ritual of the apparition as it has been established in approved precedents (Chapter 5).

The foregoing discussion has been merely a brief summary of the theoretical approaches used in this dissertation, and many of the terms mentioned above will be clarified further as they become relevant. However, it may be of use to the reader in the sense that it provides a general reference by which the subsequent chapters should be read.

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[1] "Sin: Ballot, Not Bullet; Pen, Not 'Balisong'", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 13 May 2001, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[2] The *Lapiang Malaya*, or the Freedom Party, was a militant sect that was established in the 1940s. In 1967, the *Lapiang Malaya*, then led by an 86-year old charismatic shamanistic type of figure named Valentin de los Santos, staged an "uprising" against the Marcos dictatorship along Taft Avenue in Manila. As the revolutionaries were armed only with bolos, amulets, and "bullet-defying" uniforms during the encounter, what resulted was a massacre which subsequently became known as the "Black Sunday massacre". De los Santos survived and was taken to a mental hospital where he was pronounced insane. Ileto identifies this sect as the continuation of sects like the *Katipunan* secret society that led the revolution against Spain in 1896. Similar cults to this are discussed in Chapter 6. See Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989

ed.), and Elizabeth A. Pastores, "Religious Leadership in the *Lapiang Malaya*: A Historical Note", in Leonardo N. Mercado, ed. *Filipino Religious Psychology* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1977), 149-165.

[3] Neal H. Cruz, "Bukidnon Massacre a Replay of Lapiang Malaya Massacre", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 17 August 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[4] Angelita Gregorio-Medel, "A Culture of Dependence", [Newsbreak Weekly] *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 29 March 2001, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[5] It is in fact in the best interests of the dominant capitalist class to keep the masses uneducated and unskilled, as this provides for a cheaper labor force. Many Filipinos cannot afford to finish high school and are drawn into the labor force at a young age. The World Bank web site provides current figures on the educational attainment and enrollment profiles of Filipino youths ("Educational Attainment and Enrollment Profiles: A Resource Book based on an Analysis of Demographic and Health Survey Data", by Deon Filmer, The Development Research Group, 1999, <http://www.worldbank.org/research/projects/edattain/profiles/eap/ph13a/dtall.pdf>), which show that, as of 1998, only 0.292% of the poor from ages 15 to 19 have actually finished Grade 9. Statistics provided by the International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) show that of Filipino youths aged 15-17 who are in the work force, only 1.98% are undergraduates, while 15.02% are high school graduates, and a large 35.13% have been educated only up to third year high school (October 1998 figures, "Fig12b: Highest Educational Attainment of Youths 15-17: Those in the Labor Force and Those not in the Labor Force, Philippines" [Table], <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/policy/papers/philippines/fig12b.pdf>). These figures indicate that a large portion of the labor force is composed of unskilled youths forced away from education and into the labor force out of economic necessity.

[6] Nick Joaquin, "Of Potatoes, *Guisa* and National Identity," (1986), in Guillermo Pesigan et al, *The Art and Function of the Essay* (Quezon City: Department of English, Ateneo de Manila University, 1991), 70-71).

[7] Mariel N. Francisco and Fe Ma. C. Arriola, "Prologue", *The History of the Burgis*, reproduced in Pesigan et al, *The Art and Function of the Essay*, 78.

[8] Joaquin, 70.

[9] Ibid., 72.

[10] *Unang Kumperensyang Rehiyonal sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino* [The First Regional Conference on Philippine Psychology], 13-15 January 1977, Divine Word University, Tacloban City.

[11] Estela C. Astilla, "A Summary on Religious Leadership and Synthesis of Group Discussions", Leonardo N. Mercado, ed. *Filipino Religious Psychology: Ulat ng Unang Kumprehensiyang Rehiyonal sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino, 13-15 Enero 1977, Divine Word University, Tacloban City* (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word University Publications 1977), 179.

[12] A revised form of this essay entitled "The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism" may be found in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Locations of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 66-84. The differences in the two essays are relatively slight and often only a matter of reorganization and editing.

[13] See Michael Holquist, Introduction to M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), trans. by Vern W. McGee.

[14] M. M. Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff", in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 7.

[15] A.L. Kroeber, cited in Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1959), 32.

Chapter 1
A BRIEF HISTORY OF PHILIPPINE MARIAN DEVOTION

Given the centrality of Marian devotion to Philippine religiosity, it was surprising to read, in the report of the proceedings of the First Regional Conference of the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* group, that none of the participants was very clear on the origins or the exact nature of Philippine Marianism. When a foreign participant, Fr. Herman Wijtten, asked about Philippine popular devotions to Mary and their origins, he received the following answers from two members of Filipino religious Orders:[1]

> **Fr. Mangulabnan**: "The only historical thing I could find on the Marian devotion at the moment is an unpublished doctoral thesis written by Fr. Pedro Zafe in UST, "Marian Devotion: Its Role in the Evangelization of the Philippines." Even the historical origins are not clear there.
>
> **Sister Maria Josefina Fran:** "I think we would appreciate much more our devotion to the Blessed Mother if we knew its historical background – how it came to the Philippines and helped our people. How come we Filipinos are devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary?"

Unfortunately, Zafe's dissertation is nowhere to be found in the University of Santo Tomas's vast collection of books and, while there have been several attempts to collate the histories of the various Marian images in the country, none of these seems to have been the product of rigorous research. Indeed, many of them lack proper documentation and as a result come across as legendary. This situation indicates that, despite its importance to Philippine Catholicism, Philippine Marian devotion has been a greatly neglected area of study among Philippine academics.

Despite the lack of such contemporary analytical studies, however, a great deal of primary literature on the conversion of the Philippines to Christianity is available in the form of Spanish chronicles and the histories of the various Spanish religious Orders. Many of these are contained (in both original and translated form) in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson's extensive 53-volume collection entitled *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, while John Schumacher's collection of key missionary accounts and administrative letters and documents (*Readings in Philippine Church History* 1979) is invaluable for its inclusion of many documents from the Spanish archives in Sevilla, Madrid and Valladolid.

While these accounts do not foreground Marian devotion, imbedded within them are many interesting descriptions of Marian festivals and Marian miracles. It is through these

sources that we can say with some degree of certainty that the history of Marian devotion in the Philippines began as early as 1521, when the great Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, presented the Queen of Cebu with a statue of the Madonna and Child, although the conversion to Marian-centered Catholicism only began in earnest much later in 1565 when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, coming to the islands under orders from Philip II to begin a settlement, found that same statue and interpreted it as a sign of divine approval of his mission.

Marian traditions were thus introduced to the Philippines from the very start of the Spanish colonial period. But while they were greatly strengthened and enhanced in the succeeding centuries, they also became heavily hybridized. The following section describes briefly how Marian devotion came to assume the central position it now holds in the country and the various influences that have shaped it in the past.

Philippine Marian Devotion and Its Importance to the Philippines

While Marian devotion began to flourish in the West from the eleventh century, it declined in most places in the sixteenth century as a result of the Protestant Reformation and the Inquisition. But the cult of the Virgin enjoyed great popularity in the Iberian Peninsula from the late fourteenth century, and when Iberian expansion overseas began in earnest at that time, both the Portuguese and Spanish explorers and settlers took the cult with them wherever they went. Even if Marian devotion diminished in Europe, it became widely popular where it was transplanted: "The New World was soon teeming with Marian apparitions, miraculous images and wonders assimilated to the Iberian tradition, constituting the core of religious life in the empire. As a Jesuit has faithfully recorded, 'the [Latin American] Continent was stamped with the imprint of Our Lady, with thousands of geographical names from her mysteries and dedications.'"[2] That this was also certainly the case in the Philippines may be seen in the survival of many such names until the present.

However, William A. Christian Jr.'s lucid and well researched work, *Local Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain* (1981), makes clear that religious devotions in Spanish local religion did not rigidly follow theological precepts but were in fact the products of a syncretic Catholicism that contained many local traditions and superstitions. It is this *syncretic* religious perspective that informed the efforts of many of the conquistadors and clergy who arrived in the Philippines in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The priests who came to

the Philippines with a mission of conversion were often themselves practitioners of popular forms of devotions, and thus in many ways assisted or at least tolerated the popular local variations of these that sprang up in the country. In some cases, the local variations became so divergent from the acceptable (that is, they became too infused with native elements that they became subversive) that the Spanish clergy felt the necessity to discourage them, but these often became so deeply embedded in Philippine society that they could no longer easily be uprooted (Schumacher 1979: 239).

The Christianity that finally took root in the Philippines, therefore, was not the same Christianity that the Spaniards brought with them either, being a hybrid of Spanish Catholicism, Mexican syncretic Catholicism and native Filipino beliefs. As Lynch points out "Latin American folk Catholicism is in large part a transplanted and transformed peninsular Spanish Catholicism, while Filipino folk Catholicism is the local development of both these sources" (Lynch (1975) 1984: 199). Mexican popular or folk Catholicism, in fact, influenced Philippine Catholicism to a great degree because of the galleon trade between Acapulco and Manila (1564 to 1815), which allowed for a great deal of transculturation to take place. Many Philippine religious devotions and religious images come from Mexico, brought not only by the Spaniards themselves but by Mexican sailors coming on the galleons.

Many of the images were brought to the Philippines from Mexico and Spain between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, and, despite the native additions to the celebrations (mostly in the form of music and dance), devotions to these images were generally patterned after those in the countries of origin. Although there must have been some degree of ecclesiastical discomfort with the more hybridized devotions from Mexico (like those for the Virgin of Guadalupe, for example, which the Church tried to veer towards the more traditional devotions to the Spanish Virgin of Extremadura; see Mojares 2000), on the whole, many of the devotions were fostered diligently by the Spanish friars. These included lavish parades of Marian images during the Virgin's feast days, pilgrimages to the various shrines, and the saying of special masses.

A 1904 Jesuit publication entitled *La Virgen María Venerada en sus Imágenes filipinas* identifies sixty images of the Virgin extant in the country, 22 of which could be found in Manila alone.[3] Given the fact that the feast days of these images were considered holidays, it is no wonder that, as the historian John Schumacher comments,

> even the archbishop [of Manila] himself began to wonder whether external celebration was not being carried to excess by the early part of the eighteenth century. So many had the holydays become on which no servile work was done that the whole life of the colonial society was being brought to a halt. (1979: 158)

While the fiestas were not limited to Marian celebrations, the fact that her images and shrines outnumber those of other saints and of Jesus Christ shows that a majority of them were certainly devoted to Mary. It was inevitable, therefore, that Philippine religiosity should have an especially Marian slant.

As early as 1571, the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title *of La Purisima Concepción de Nuestra Señora*, was declared Patroness of the Philippines by the Spanish colonizers, a tie which was affirmed by the Philippine Catholic Church through the reconsecration of the country to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984. In 1985, the Philippines declared the year to be a Marian year, an act which, according to a religious newsletter, *Marian Messenger*, "so impressed the Pope" that he declared 1987 a global Marian year, "in effect copying the nation's example".[4]

In 1999, a pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines pointed out that, in an effort to better understand the nature of Filipino spirituality,

> The Marian shrines and statues that are the objects of fervent devotion by Filipinos were also studied, for Filipino spirituality is eminently Marian. The Filipino who is ill sends his/her petitions to Mary's shrine in Peñafrancia or Manaoag. When we go on long, risky travels, we have Masses said in Antipolo. Out of 27 religious shrines in the country, 18 are in honor of the Mother of God.[5]

In the year 2000, the Philippine celebrations for the great Jubilee year of the Roman Catholic faith were crowned with a tribute to the Virgin Mary, following the call of the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime, Cardinal Sin, for a congress on the Holy Trinity with a "Marian perspective". This was announced after the Pope's statement during the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome last Christmas Eve, 1999, that Mary might be found "on the path that leads from the Father to humanity, as the mother who gives the Savior Son to everyone."[6] Today, the Philippines, with the active encouragement of the Catholic Church, is probably the only country in the whole of Asia that claims a special relationship with the Virgin Mary.

Even from this very brief background, it is obvious that Marian devotion has a particular place of importance in the religious tradition of the Philippines. But because Philippine Catholicism is a heavily syncretic Catholicism that incorporates not only elements of Spanish popular religiosity and Mexican additives, but also many native animistic elements, Marian devotion contains many hybrid elements as well, which can be clearly seen in the Philippine Marian apparition phenomenon. During the years of the American occupation wherein the Philippines finally became a part of the global economy, this hybridized religiosity further incorporated elements from American and other Western religious traditions and discourses. Given the importance of the Marian symbol to the Filipinos, it is not surprising that Marian discourses from the West aroused particular interest and were quickly absorbed into local devotions, as may be seen in the way Philippine Marian apparitions have clearly assimilated the characteristics of modern Marian apparitions elsewhere in the world. While the nature of Western Mariology is the result of social developments that are often inapplicable to the Philippine situation, they nevertheless provide us with a useful basis for the examination of Philippine Marian devotion.

In the next section, I give a short description of Western Marian devotion culled from various influential writings on the subject, beginning from the 1950s, when the Vatican proclaimed as dogma the Assumption of the Virgin – a pronouncement which was considerably influenced by popular Marian devotion and which in turn has impacted on this devotion worldwide – and show the points at which the Western devotion may or may not apply to the Philippine situation.

Marian Devotion in the Western World

In the year 1950, the Roman Catholic Church declared the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as dogma, largely due to popular demand. The promulgation of the dogma, influenced as it was by the popular will of Catholics worldwide, fascinated Carl G. Jung greatly. In Chapter XIX of *The Answer to Job*, he commented,

> It was interesting to note that, among the many articles published in the Catholic and Protestant press on the declaration of the dogma, there was not one, as far as I could see, which laid anything like the proper emphasis on what was undoubtedly the most powerful motive: namely, the popular movement and the psychological need behind it. (1958: 461)[7]

He saw the popular movement behind the dogma as reflective of the collective unconscious, in particular of the need for a feminine principle in the divine Christian hierarchy, and believed that the increasing number of reports of visions of Mary in the years prior to the proclamation of the dogma was symptomatic of this collective need. "One could have known for a long time," he writes, "that there was a deep longing in the masses for an intercessor and mediatrix who would at last take her place alongside the Holy Trinity and be received as the 'Queen of Heaven and Bride at the heavenly court'" (Ibid.: 461-462). Jung interprets the phenomenon further in terms of the unconscious human need for "a saviour, a peacemaker, a 'mediator pacem faciens inter inimicos'" and argues further that, "The motive and content of the popular movement which contributed to the Pope's decision solemnly to declare the new dogma consist not in the birth of a new god, but in the continuing incarnation of God which began with Christ" (Ibid.: 462).

Jung's notion of an unconscious and collective need in the human psyche for an intercessor and mediatrix finds an echo in this study, both in terms of the pre-Hispanic animistic religion in the Philippines as well as in the Roman Catholic religion which he addresses. In Chapter 3, I shall discuss in greater detail how the notions of intercession and mediation formed a link between Catholicism and the Philippine pre-Hispanic animistic religion (*anitismo*), which eased the process of syncretism considerably, and how the Spanish missionaries were quick to take advantage of such similarities. In fact, I will argue that it is in the mother's role of intercessor or mediator that Mary is important in the Philippine context (see Chapter 4).

Jung's comment on the proclamation of the dogma of Mary's Assumption into Heaven referred to the rise in the number of visions of Mary in the years prior to the proclamation and he saw this as evidence of the popular will which eventually led to the proclamation of the dogma. It is interesting, therefore, to see that the number of apparitions worldwide has considerably increased since then. In the past four decades alone, Marian events have been recorded in Burundi, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and even the United States, and a cursory scan of internet sources will reveal that there have been as many as 30 purported Marian apparitions in North and South America since the 1950s and another 39 elsewhere in the world.

This rise in the number of apparitions has produced new demands that reinforce Jung's theory of a deeply rooted desire among the populace for a female intercessor within

the Catholic hierarchy. About forty years after Jung gave his analysis, these popular demands that Mary be accorded co-Redemptrix status by the Vatican began to coalesce into an organized movement called the *Vox Populi Mariae Medatrici* ("The Voice of the People for Mary Mediatrix") headed by Mark Miravelle, a theologian from the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. In 1993, Miravelle initiated a signature campaign to convince the Pope to name Mary as co-Redeemer alongside her son Jesus Christ, despite the basic New Testament belief that 'there is one God, and there is one who brings God and mankind together, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). The campaign was endorsed by "500 bishops, including 42 cardinals" and signed by people from 155 countries.[8] By 1997, Miravelle had managed to garner more than four million signatures from people around the world.[9]

Unfortunately, however, the Vatican's response has been discouraging. During the 12th International Mariological Congress held in Czestochowa, Poland in August 1996, a theological commission composed of a panel of 15 theologians from different countries, including the renowned French theologian, Father Rene Laurentin, came to the conclusion that any pronouncement of Mary as Mediatrix and co-Redemptrix would be premature. According to the official declaration of their findings, "the titles as proposed are ambiguous"; Vatican II, though it used the titles "Mediatrix" and "Advocate" in connection with Mary (and in a very moderate way), never used the title "Coredemptrix" at all; and any proclamation of Mary giving her such titles (which lacked "theological clarity") would only result in "ecumenical difficulties".[10]

Theological panels such as this one created for the purpose of examining the status of the proposed Marian dogma are generally seen as consultative bodies for an ultimate proclamation by the Pope himself, but to date, Pope John Paul II has refused to take a definitive stand on the issue. The fact that the *Vox Populi* movement has continued to draw advocates, however, indicate that millions of Catholics worldwide believe that Mary's mediation is an important facet of Catholicism and that it is time that this importance be officially recognized.

The notion of a female principle is not entirely new, and draws on archetypal notions of a goddess figure that are present in many societies. Joseph Campbell, for example, links the Virgin Mary to the idea of the "universal goddess", who "makes her appearance to men under a multitude of guises" and whom the hero must inevitably encounter and come to "know", for "The hero who can take her as she is, without undue commotion but with the

kindness and reassurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world" (Campbell 1968: 116). Despite the half-hearted efforts of a few Philippine academics to prove that there is a connection between the Philippine cult of the Virgin and distant race memories of creator goddesses (mentioned in Wendt 1998; see Mojares 2000; see also Chapter 3), I do not think that this is the case in the Philippines where there is certainly no corresponding virgin figure in folk mythology who follows this prescribed pattern.

Nevertheless, the idea of the universal goddess clearly has significant value in western societies as shown in the many scholarly studies that have been done on the subject of the Virgin Mary in recent years. Of these works, one of the most thorough and most drawn upon is Hilda Graef's two-volume treatise, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (1963), which traces the development of Marian doctrine and devotion from biblical times to the present, and which is essentially a survey of the most significant of the arguments that shaped the nature of Mariology in the Western world. Marina Warner's *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1985; 1990) takes Graef's study one step further. Warner's view of Mary is essentially cynical. She compares the Virgin to other similar goddesses in the pantheon of other religions, and concludes that, like them, Mary too will quietly pass into history, having lost her relevance to present times. While she amends this in the *Afterthoughts* included in the 1990 reprint of the text by saying that she now believes that that day is still distant, she nevertheless stands firm in her opinion that that day is inevitable. Julia Kristeva's psycho-feminist treatise on the Virgin, "Stabat Mater" (originally entitled "*Hérethique de l'amour*"; 1977), written after reading Warner's opus, agrees that the cult of the Virgin Mary, not to mention religion in general, is now dead. We see motherhood in terms of the "*consecrated* (religious or secular) representation of femininity", she writes, but this is nothing but an "idealized" misconception, a "fantasy" of a "lost territory" (1986: 161), the result of which has been either a negation of it by feminists, or an acceptance of it by society in general. The decline of religion requires a new way to understand the discourse of motherhood, a new method by which to address "the need for an ethics for this 'second' sex, which, as one asserts it, is reawakening" (1986: 185).

But while feminists like Kristeva argue that the cult of Mary is dead in the West, we cannot say likewise for the Philippines, where the religion still flourishes and the cult is alive and well. In this final frontier of Catholicism, wherein "the ban on contraception condemns them to childbearing without respite" (Warner 1990: 275), women remain in bondage to the patriarchal notions of femininity and motherhood. A more recent work, which disagrees with

both Warner and Kristeva, is *In Search of Mary* (1996) by Sally Cunneen, the main thesis of which is that there is today a need to determine what the Virgin Mary means to us on the very personal level as by knowing her we learn more about ourselves. Cunneen argues that because the Virgin has had the versatility to adapt to all people's expectations, and indeed the wonderful ability to *mean* all things to all people throughout the centuries, Mary is very much alive today. However, as I pointed out earlier, these works situate Mary primarily in a Western context and as such provide an interesting counterpoint to my own discussion, but their conclusions cannot in general be applied in the Philippine context.

The unconscious desire for a female principle found in the notion of the mediatrix that Jung describes and the archetypal concept of the universal goddess that resounds through many recent Western writings on Mary are often affiliated with the notion of the virgin birth. Indeed, much of Mary's significance in various societies arises from this archetype of the virgin mother, for certainly the entire idea of a god-saviour being born of a virgin is not unfamiliar in societies outside the Christian world. It is, Joseph Campbell writes, a perpetual mythological theme, "in the voices of the prophets a familiar cry". Like Jung, he traces the story back to a deeply rooted human need:

> The people yearn for some personality who, in the world of twisted bodies and souls, will represent again the lines of the incarnate image. We are familiar with the myth from our own tradition. It occurs everywhere, under a variety of guises. When the Herod figure (the extreme symbol of the misgoverning, tenacious ego) has brought mankind to the nadir of spiritual abasement, the occult forces of the cycle begin of themselves to move. In an inconspicuous village the maid is born who will maintain herself undefiled of the fashionable errors of her generation: a miniature in the midst of men of the cosmic woman who was the bride of the wind. Her womb, remaining fallow as the primordial abyss, summons to itself by its very readiness the virginal power that fertilized the void. (1968: 308)

Virginity, however, is a rather rare motif in Philippine mythology: very few references to a virgin birth can be found in Philippine folk tales, and virginity is often not at all the result of any social emphasis on chastity or even of celibacy. Both concepts are Western and patriarchal in orientation, and generally taken in tandem with the importance placed on primogeniture – none of which figured prominently in pre-Hispanic Philippine culture (see Chapter 3 for a more complete discussion). These notions only emerged in the Philippines as a result of the Catholic morality imposed by centuries of Spanish evangelization, and it is no surprise that Mary's appeal to the Filipinos should be in her guise as Mother rather than as Virgin Goddess – an idea that is supported by the chronicler Antonio Pigfetta's report that it

was only after being shown a statue of the Madonna with the child Jesus that the Queen of Cebu "was overcome with contrition and asked for baptism amid her tears".[11] The Queen in fact was so taken with the statue of the Child Jesus that she asked for, and eventually received, the statue "to keep in place of her idols".[12]

The Queen's delight with the statue of the child Jesus (or the Señor Santo Niño de Jesus as it is now widely known throughout the Philippines) is echoed by many Filipinos and it is from this child figure that one of the largest religious cults in the country today, the cult of the Santo Niño, has evolved. But the image of the child Jesus is important in another very significant way: in the Philippines, a child is presumed helpless and dependent on its mother. Thus the cult of the Santo Niño may be seen as springing from (and is indeed closely intertwined with) the Filipino notion of motherhood which holds a unique place in Philippine society and in which are incorporated the same concepts of mediation and intercession that can be found in Western notions of Mary as Mediatrix and co-Redemptrix. Because the Filipino emphasis is on motherhood, however, the popular folkloric theme of the "helpful crone and fairy godmother", which Campbell also associates with the Virgin Mary, is perhaps more significant to a discussion of the Filipino perception of Mary than that of the virgin birth. Campbell describes this figure as follows:

> What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny. The fantasy is a reassurance – a promise that the place of Paradise, which was known first within the mother womb, is not to be lost; that it supports the present and stands in the future as well as in the past (is omega as well as alpha); that though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings, protective power is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart and even immanent within, or just behind, the unfamiliar features of the world. One only has to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear" (1968: 71-72).

This idea of the "benign, protecting power of destiny", equated as it is with the idea of the mother, is important to my analysis of Mary as being perceived predominantly by Filipinos as a mother figure, and I shall be referring back to it for, though Filipino mythology has no universal goddess, as I mentioned earlier, there was, however, a "pre-existing cult of the dependable and moral mother" (Mulder 1997: 18) which easily accommodated the idea of Mary as the *mother* of God (in the ordinary sense of motherhood), though not necessarily of Mary as *Theotokos* in which the notion of a virgin birth plays a crucial role.

Jung and Campbell notwithstanding, contemporary analyses and discussions of Mary's place in the world today are largely informed by Western intellectual approaches and

societies in which the cult of the Virgin is seen to be in decline. Perhaps because of this, there has been a recent move to "personalize" interpretations of Mary's symbolism, to insist that, while the general trend seems to indicate that the cult is dead, on a personal level, Mary remains somehow significant, either as an instrument by which patriarchal societies have stifled the voices of women and therefore must be fought, or as a re-worked model in which the "female as goddess" is uplifted and re-sanctified.

Yet the intensity with which such debates are held nevertheless points to the fact that Mary remains an extremely important symbol, not only in Christianity but also in all aspects of life and in various parts of the world. Moreover, the fact that Marian apparitions continue to be the most widely reported throughout the world indicate a continuing preoccupation with her, and indeed a continuation of ancient Marian traditions.

Mary has seemingly been appearing to people for centuries (possibly as early as the fourth century when her cult first emerged in the West), and while many of the ancient apparitions survive only as events in the lives of saints – that is, they are no longer seen as "apparitions" in the modern sense but as legends drawn from apocrypha or myths in the first two millennia and it is rather doubtful, in fact, whether many such miracles as these legends recount would pass muster in today's more demanding times – many new apparitions continue to take place. In fact most of the apparitions approved for devotion by the Church occurred in the nineteenth century: the famous apparitions in Paris (to Catherine Labouré in 1830), in La Salette (to two children, Maximin Giraud and Melanie Calvat, in 1846) (which may have led to the proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854), in Lourdes (to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858), and in Pontmain (to several children in 1871), all in France, and in Knock, County Mayo in Ireland (to fifteen people of various ages in 1879). The twentieth century apparitions include those in Fatima, Portugal (1917), Beauraing, Belgium (1932 to 1933), and in Banneux, also in Belgium (1933). In more recent years, the apparitions at Akita, Japan have been included among this select group. The long-lasting apparitions in Medjugorje, which have attracted much attention worldwide, have not received Church approval, however, although the Yugoslavian Catholic Church has decided to assist in the organization of pastoral activity in the area in order to promote proper devotion. Of the thirty or so apparitions recorded in North and South America during the last fifty years, only three were approved by the local bishop. These apparitions occurred in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Argentina, countries with strong historical links to Spain, and all of them were apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

The Catholic Church is generally conservative in its approach to apparitions. It has authenticated only a very few of the hundreds of apparitions that have been reported around the world. The oldest of these recognized apparitions is the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531 to an Indian named Juan Diego. Even then, it was only recently, almost 500 years after the event, that Juan Diego was finally considered for sainthood and this because of a miracle alleged to have occurred in 1990.

Many reported apparitions, in the Philippines and elsewhere, never make it past the first stage of investigation. In the Philippines, church response to apparitions has often taken the stance of non-involvement and non-commitment until the events play themselves out. However, despite the Roman Catholic Church's clear reservations about the authenticity of many modern apparitions, the fact that there is such a proliferation of them indicates that, in many parts of the world, Mary remains an important religious symbol. Although there are similarities in Marian devotions across cultures, *exactly* what she symbolizes, however, varies according to each culture's historical and cultural positions. While some aspects of Philippine Marian devotion are of relatively recent origin and influenced by twentieth century Western Marianism, it is clear that its overall nature has been shaped by Spanish colonial conditions. In the chapter that follows, therefore, I shall concentrate primarily on the aspects of Philippine Marian devotion shaped by colonial Marian discourses that have been absorbed into the local Marian practices to show how these continue to thread through many Marian narratives in the country today.

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[1] Open Forum, "Part Two: Psychology of Religious Experience in Popular Devotions", in Mercado, ed., 101.

[2] This is a reference to noted Spanish Jesuit historian Constantino Bayle, and the quote is from his *Expansion Misional de España* (Barcelona, 1936), 69. In Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 31.

[3] *La Virgen Maria Venerada en sus Imágenes filipinas* (Manila, 8 December 1904). Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental, Madrid, Spain.

[4] *Marian Messenger* (1987?). I obtained a copy of this newsletter from the Center for Peace, Asia in 1995, but unfortunately lost the copy in the massive flooding that occurred in Metro Manila in August 1999.

[5] Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, "A Pastoral Letter on Filipino Spirituality", 10 July 1999, <http://www.cbcp.net/>

[6] "Marian Festival Starts Jan. 27," [news report], *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 January 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>.

[7] All references to Carl Jung will be taken from Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, The Collected Works of Carl Jung, Vol. II (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1958), R.F.C. Hull, trans.

[8] "Controversy Flares Over Proposed Marian Doctrine" [News], <http://www.cephasministry.

com/catholic_rediscover_mary.html>

[9] Richard Owen and Michael Hornsell, "Pope is Asked to Name Mary as Co-redeemer," *The Times* (London), 21 August 1997, 4.

[10] "Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy: Request for the Definition of the Dogma of Mary as Mediatrix, Coredemptrix and Advocate"[News], <http://www.churchnet.org.uk/news/files2/marian.htm>

[11] Antonio Pigafetta, " Primo viaggio intorno al mondo", in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, Vol. XXXIII (Manila: A.H. Clark, 1905), 159. Pigafetta was the Italian chronicler who accompanied Ferdinand Magellan on his voyage around the world.

[12] Ibid., 161.

Chapter 2
THE COLONIAL LEGACY – MEDIEVAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PHILIPPINE MARIAN DEVOTION

Philippine Marian devotion today shows many medieval characteristics that were clearly derived from the manner of its introduction into the country. Although Spanish colonization of the Philippines began in the 16th century or what might be described as the end of the European Middle Ages, Spain itself lagged behind the rest of Europe in entering into the Renaissance. That this was so was due to the Moorish occupation of the southern Spanish provinces and the subsequent *Reconquista.* Thus it was that the Spanish conquistadors and missionaries brought with them to the Philippines a great many medieval traditions, such as feudalism and medieval practices connected with Catholicism. There they eventually took root and remained in place well into the 20th century.

The retention of such medieval practices was mainly the consequence of two historical circumstances. First of all, the archipelago was closed by the Spanish authorities to all but the Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco for most of the colonial period (for this reason, Philippine Catholicism was considerably influenced by Mexican Catholicism, for peninsular Catholicism could only come to the archipelago by way of Acapulco). The closing of the Philippine ports to the rest of the world resulted in the creation of what was in effect a time warp – for example, it was only in the 19th century that medieval literary forms like the romances (called the *awit at corrido* in Filipino) emerged in full flower in the Philippines.

Second, the distance between Spain and the Philippines was too great to allow for the proper observation of the King's edicts, resulting in what historians have called the "I obey but do not execute" formula (Phelan 1959: 154) While this may have primarily concerned the laws of governance in the islands, it nevertheless also affected the policies of the ecclesiastical authorities in Manila and in the provinces. As Phelan points out, such an attitude allowed a "great maneuvrability in executing orders from Spain" on the part of the Spanish but also a "comfortable latitude of freedom" on the part of the Filipinos "to be selective in their responses to orders emanating from Manila" (Ibid.: 155).

The distance of the Philippines from Spain also had a profound impact on the kind of Catholicism that emerged in the islands: it considerably delayed, if not impeded altogether, the arrival of vital missionary workers. The lack of religious manpower to proselytize in the islands was in fact a constant problem, as shown in the correspondence between the various archbishops in Manila and the King's court in Madrid. This led to ineffective conversion in many parts of the Philippines as well as to the retention of conventions of worship that had become outmoded even in Spain.

Philippine Catholicism, and indeed, Marian devotion, thus managed to maintain an essentially medieval cast influenced only by internal factors and by the inevitable seeping in of religious traditions from Mexico. It was only in 1789 that Spain began to allow European ships into Philippine ports, and the galleon trade itself was only terminated in 1813. But by the end of that century, the country was actively engaged in a war of independence against Spain. This was soon followed by a brief war against the Americans that the Filipinos lost and by decades of subjugation to American rule. The American influence on Philippine Catholicism will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6. However, it must be pointed out that even during the American period, devotions to the Virgin and celebrations of her feast days continued unabated all over the country (Schumacher 1979).

This chapter focuses on these colonial narratives, many of which have survived to the present time and which, to a large extent, has come to constitute what Bakhtin calls "the already said" – previous utterances by others that we in turn make use of, for if, according to Bakhtin's theory, when we use language, "we are actually dealing with someone else's words more often than with our own... someone else's speech makes it possible to generate our own and thus becomes an indispensable factor in the creative power of language" (Holquist, *Foreword*, in Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1984), then these narratives form the language which Filipinos have learned from centuries of Spanish missionary efforts to promote a Marian devotion in the country and which they in turn use, either to react, challenge, transform or defend what has already been spoken.

Medieval Narratives

Many of the stories that proliferated during the colonial period continue to be nurtured in many parts of the country today, particularly as the fame (and fortune) of many localities are often dependent on the fame of the Marian shrines associated with them. Many

of these, particularly the legends of the miraculous powers of the Virgin, were introduced by the religious orders. The Dominicans, for example, had a special devotion to the Virgin of the Rosary and were particularly interested in promoting the devotion among the Filipinos, as Diego Aduarte's *Historia de la provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Iapon, y China, de la sagrada orden de predicadores* (1640) shows.[1] In fact, Fr. Diego writes of Don Fray Domingo de Salazar, the first bishop of the Philippines, that

> He was especially devoted to our Lady of the Rosary, whose grace and favor he had many times experienced; And he desired to see this same devotion well established in all. When he spoke upon this matter, he seemed to surpass himself; and some believed that our Lady spoke in him, because of the grandeur of the heavenly ideas which he uttered on this subject. (Aduarte in BR 31:47)

Likewise, a history of the Jesuits by Fr. Pedro Murillo Velarde (1693-1753), entitled *Historia de la Provincia de Philipinas, 1616-1716* (Manila, 1749) is dedicated to "two of the most celebrated images of the Virgin in the Philippines", those found at San Pedro Macati, and at Antipolo, respectively. That he relates many miraculous occurrences concerning these two images, is not surprising: he had been chaplain to both sanctuaries at some point (Boxer 1975: 106). Moreover, in Lutgarda Aviado's accounts of Marian images in the Philippines, it is immediately clear that a spate of miracles tended to occur when an image was first introduced into a location, but petered out once a stable devotion had taken root. Sometimes, after decades of inactivity, a single miracle would again suddenly take place, effectively reviving a stagnating devotion to the image.

Such "propaganda" may also be seen as the motive behind some of the Philippine apparitions today. Like many of the legends that were in currency during the Spanish period, some of the modern apparitions listed in the Commission on Apparition and Phenomena's archives strongly imply that the underlying purpose of the apparition was to further devotion to a particular saint, the Virgin or to Jesus Christ. Rosa Crisostomo, who claimed that Jesus Christ appeared to her from 1982 to 1983, asked that Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, recognize the congregation for the devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help that she founded. Similarly, the Apostleship of Love and Mercy, led by a man called Priscillano Cases, claimed that both Jesus Christ and the Virgin appeared to the group, which supported the devotion to the Twin Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in 1991.

The themes of Marian legends from the past are in fact often echoed in many modern Marian narratives today. As Zimdars-Swartz points out, the themes of modern apparitions "have for the most part been inherited from the Marian piety and Marian visions of the Christian middle ages. Fundamental here are the themes of the Virgin's exceptional powers in times of crisis and her loyalty to those who place themselves in her care" (1991: 6).

In this connection, William Christian, Jr. (1981) has shown that many of the Marian shrines that emerged in sixteenth century Spain were either built in order to ask the Virgin for help in times of calamities or to thank her for help already rendered. As in sixteenth century Spain, many of the legends attached to Marian images in the Philippines tell of how the Virgin appeared to save communities from harm. Examples of these are the Virgin of La Naval in Manila, who is believed to have saved the Spanish forces from Dutch fleets on June 9, 1652 and Nuestra Señora de las Aguas Santas (said to be the first statue to have come directly from Spain; 1612), who saved the town of Los Baños from the Japanese in the 1940s.

More important to this study is the fact that these same themes (representations of the "already said") run through more contemporary accounts of the Virgin as well, as in the alleged appearance of Mary at the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) to soldiers ordered to run down civilians with their tanks during the People Power Revolution that ousted Marcos in 1986. It is believed that her intervention caused the soldiers to switch to the side of the people, making the revolution a peaceful one. A shrine was later built at the exact spot along EDSA where Filipinos confronted Marcos' tanks to remind the nation of her supposed intervention, and today the Virgin of EDSA's shrine is the most popular gathering spot for protest rallies. When it became obvious in January 2001 that the impeachment trial of President Joseph Estrada would lead to his acquittal by pro-Estrada senators despite the weight of the evidence against him, Filipinos once again gathered at the EDSA shrine in a massive show of protest that eventually led to his ouster.

Today, many Filipinos still firmly believe that Mary will come to them in their time of need. During a massive landslide at a garbage dumpsite in Payatas, Metro Manila in July 2000, the tabloid, *People's Tonight*, headlined an indigent woman's claim that she was saved from certain death by her frantic prayers to the Virgin Mary,[2] and when the current political and economic crisis hit the country, the immediate response of public officials was inevitably to ask people to go to church and pray.

If Marian devotion did decline in Europe by the sixteenth century, it began to enjoy a great revival of interest worldwide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This revival of interest, many claim, is due to an increasingly urgent spiritual crisis affecting peoples all over the world. In the Philippines, however, apparitions (Marian or otherwise) seem to be a response, not so much to a spiritual crisis among the people – for Filipinos consider themselves very devout – but to other kinds of upheavals, both natural and man-made, which have become an accepted part of Philippine daily life. The Filipino is resigned to the fact that, if the country is not being ravaged by typhoons, floods, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions, it is suffering from economic and political instability (all these have taken place in the Philippines within the last ten years alone). In other words, Mary is still considered an all-around "helper-saint" today as she was centuries ago: apart from guiding people through natural calamities, her help is sought for everything, from solving a personal crisis (resolving household disputes or marital problems, healing a sick relative, passing an important exam) to solving an economic or political crisis on the national level. Indeed, as Table 1 (see below) shows, national crises often produced Marian apparitions, and 1991, which was a particularly catastrophic year for Filipinos, had at least six known apparitions.

Year	Crisis	Apparition
1948	Years right after the end of the Japanese occupation during WWII	Lipa
1986	Lack of confidence in government; People Power Revolution	*Esther *Apparition at EDSA
1991	The return of Marcos's body to the Philippines; Mt. Pinatubo eruption; province of Pampanga buried under floods of *lahar* (a mixture of mud and molten lava)	*Agoo *Carmelo Cortez *Apostleship of Love and Mercy (minor) *Ruel Darang (minor) *Puring (minor) *Lola Thelma (minor)

Table 1: Correlation of Crisis with the Apparition Phenomenon

In this context, Mary has even been said to have messages for politicians. A visionary only identified as "Esther" claimed in 1986, a politically turbulent year for the country,[3] that the Virgin's messages to her were in fact about the Philippine political situation. Likewise, the Apostleship of Love and Mercy said that the messages they received from Jesus and Mary directed to then Philippine president, Corazon Aquino, were on the subject of

whether or not the body of ousted president, Ferdinand E. Marcos, should be allowed to return to the country.[4] .These were minor apparitions, however, and the groups too marginal to have made much of an impact on society in general.

As in apparitions elsewhere, some of the best known of Filipino Marian apparitions have also given messages that are apocalyptic in nature, prophesying dire punishments for those who refuse to believe as in the Castillo, Rudio and Nieva apparitions. Indeed, Zimdars-Swartz notes that many modern Marian apparitions have apocalyptic themes, usually tied in with the view of Mary as mother. She writes, "On a personal level, Mary is seen as a tender and concerned mother who calls her children away from the brink of disaster and offers them safety and comfort under her sheltering mantle"(1991: 19). In the Philippines, however, the promised apocalypse does not necessarily deal with the end of the world (a belief that involves the Christian ideas of heaven and hell which, in turn, being abstract concepts, remain hard for the "concrete" mentality of Filipinos to fully appreciate – see Chapter 3) but are dark references to catastrophes similar to those that the Filipino is familiar with. The Virgin's messages to Allan Rudio, for example, are mainly about natural catastrophes, with references to the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991,[5] shortly before the time of the apparitions, and to future eruptions of this and other Philippine volcanoes if Filipinos did not heed her call to prayer and repentance.

It is in fact apparent that, within this context, Mary's function is that which Campbell has referred to as "the benign protecting power of destiny". Filipinos put their trust in her precisely because life as they know it is all too often uncertain and cruel. It must be kept in mind, after all, that the Philippines is a Third World country characterized by extreme poverty, underdevelopment, and an almost total dependence on agriculture. Infrastructures are notoriously unsound, and housing facilities are substandard. Many Filipinos, particularly in the urban centers, live in little more than shanties hammered together out of corrugated iron and cheap plywood, with old rubber tires the only things keeping the roof from being blown away during typhoons. Many of these shanties are built right beside or even over polluted rivers and creeks. The sewage system is inadequate, the drains constantly blocked by garbage: a single rainfall immediately produces widespread flooding. The country is annually ravaged by more typhoons than there are letters in the alphabet. It also lies along an active earthquake belt. Given the fact that a single natural calamity out of the many that the archipelago experiences yearly can cause deaths in the hundreds and wipe out entire harvests,

it is not surprising that the response of the public should be: "We are just children who are afraid to turn our backs to God".[6]

Apart from the legends, it is also clear that biblical stories and the biographies of saints enjoyed popular circulation in the Philippines during the colonial period. Saints and miracles have been a part of the Catholic religion for centuries, and hagiography was a particularly important medieval concern as we can see from the number of medieval manuscripts on saints' lives that survive today. Lives of saints and of the Virgin were particularly in demand and were published extensively in the colonies (Boxer 1978: 44-45). An account from the Spanish Franciscan missionary, Marcelo de Ribadeneira, emphasizes how eagerly the Filipinos read or listened to the stories of the lives of saints and of the Virgin:

> [The natives] ordinarily ask the ministers to tell and recount to them the lives of the saints and particularly like very much to hear the life and miracles of our Lady and of the woman saints who were penitents. They are careful to write it all down and they read it frequently with great delight for their souls, and try to do works which are in conformity with the examples that they hear from the friars.[7]

Such was the native delight in these stories that many of the saints' lives eventually became a part of Filipino oral tradition (Hornedo 1991: 76). Furthermore, it was a common practice to hold a *pabasa*, the reading or recitation of the story of Christ's Passion, in Filipino houses during the Lenten season, a practice still important to Philippine Holy Week celebrations today. The stories also became the basis for the dramatic street performances that still take place every Holy Week, the most notable of which is the *pasyon*, the ritual enactment of Jesus Christ's suffering and crucifixion on Good Friday (leading to what some scholars have called "Good Friday Christianity" or "Calvary Catholicism"; Barker 1998: 4).

As a people, Filipinos enjoy community celebrations tremendously, and Spanish chroniclers are unanimous in describing the pleasure with which the natives enjoyed performing dramatizations of the lives of saints, dancing during these presentations, and singing during vespers. That devotions to the Virgin and to the saints included processions and ritual performances must, therefore, have made them very attractive to the natives, and they entered into the festivities wholeheartedly. Ribadeneira describes such events with obvious delight:

> [The natives] perform in their own language dramatic representations of the lives of the saints with such interior feeling that the spectators, whether Spaniards or Indios, are moved to many tears of compunction and are impelled to change their lives. ...The skill and grace with which they dance, executing every movement no matter how difficult is something worth seeing. This they do on the feast-days, especially that of Corpus Christi.[8]

Indeed, "There is so much interest for music," Ribadenera states, "that there is no place, no matter how small, which does not have its chapel of musicians with oboes, so that on the great feasts at vespers and at the solemn Mass God may be praised and served. The singers are many and they practice every morning and afternoon in the school."[9] Ribadeneira's interpretation of these performances in the light of religious devotion notwithstanding, this raises the question of whether or not the natives were attracted to the religious rituals for their own sake or simply for the performances that they enjoyed so much and which fostered their love of community celebrations. Indeed, one writer frowned upon the fact that during Lent, "the young men and women often make use of the pretext of reading the *Pasión* in order to make love to each other."[10]

The medieval Christian focus on hagiography no doubt also influenced the narrative structures and content of many of the biographies of ecclesiastics that may be found in the histories of the various religious Orders (Fray Diego Aduarte's account of the Dominicans, for example). Such accounts naturally echo those of the saints, for the latter provided the referential basis by which good, Christian lives must be judged. Moreover, not only did the Spanish friars provide constant models of behaviour in the course of their sermons, they punctuated these sermons by providing examples of the appropriate mode of behaviour themselves.

In many ways, the exemplary behaviour of the missionary friars was even more effective than the saints' lives in convincing the natives to convert to Christianity, for they were people that the Filipinos interacted with on a personal and everyday basis. Fr. Gaspar de San Agustin, for example, claims that in 1598, eleven years since the Dominicans first arrived in Pangasinan, almost all the natives in the province had been converted through the example of the missionaries, often at great cost to themselves. He writes,

> The miracles by which these people have been converted have been the lives of the ministers, although other miracles have not been lacking also, for the Lord from time to time has manifested the power of His hand...After three years during which only a few boys were baptized, since they would not give the girls for baptism, they began to believe in the religious. This beginning of

> belief the Lord took from what the Indios perceived about the way the friars lived, their fasts and penances, their patience in trials, and the fact that they not only did no evil to them but rather helped them in their necessities. Then they began to grow more gentle and to believe what they told them.[11]

Such was certainly also the case in a native's account of a conversion that William Henry Scott presents in an essay, "The Conquerors as Seen by the Conquered", an English translation of a modern Spanish text of Chapter 61 of the Franciscan Fray Juan Pobre de Zamora's "Historia de la perdida y descubrimiento del galeon San Phelipe con el glorioso martiro de los gloriosos martires del Japon" (late seventeenth century).[12] The account is that of a dialogue that Fray Juan had with a Bicolano Christian called Tomas which includes an original letter written in Philippine script by one Panpanga, a native chieftain of Gumaca (in Quezon province), to his brother, Tomas' friend. The letter writer clearly indicates a disgust with all things Spanish based on personal experiences which he recounts in detail; the Spaniards, priests and soldiers alike, he writes, provided examples of nothing but greed, hypocrisy and violence. Yet, this same chieftain, who had gone to the extent of disowning a sister for converting to Catholicism, eventually became a convert himself:

> "But how did he become a convert?" [Fray Juan asks Tomas.]
> "I learned about it a year ago from his brother Antonio, Tomas replies] and it was like this. When the friars of Saint Francis reached Gumaca and learned that many Filipinos were roaming around those mountains, they went to look for them, and coming across Panpanga, showed him such love and told him so many things that he came to town, and there, when he saw the holy life of the friars and there were no Spaniards to impede it, he became a Christian helped by the Grace of God, and was the cause of many other Filipinos coming down, for they had a great love for him, and thus Gumaca was settled and is now one of the best towns on the opposite coast because of the many who had come down from the tingues and the mountains." (Scott 1992: 71-72)

Medieval hagiography and the legends of the Virgin, however, had the intrinsic quality of reducing notions of values into the binary opposition of good and bad, and of reinforcing the idea that Catholicism was superior to *anitismo*, Spanish to Filipino, and so on.

This assumption of superiority on the part of the colonizing power can be seen in most, if not all, colonizer/colonized relationships. Bhabha points out that such cultural differentiations form an important part of the colonial authority:

> Colonial authority requires modes of discrimination (cultural, racial, administrative...) that disallow a stable, unitary assumption of collectivity. The 'part' (the colonialist foreign body) must be representative of the 'whole' (conquered country) but the right of representation is based on its radical difference. (1984: 96).

Hence, from early Spanish missionary accounts, it is clear that Christianity was presented to the natives not as "a more perfect expression of their pagan beliefs" but as something totally different and new. Any resemblance between the two religions was dismissed as "a diabolical conspiracy in which the devil deceived unbelievers by mimicking the rituals of Christianity."[13] And, as in the Americas, the first step in the Christianization process in the Philippines was to destroy all evidence of the pagan religion – sacred groves were cut down, and pagan idols were burned because they were visible symbols of the devil's power over the natives[14] - in a violent assertion of difference that showed the supremacy of the Christian faith over that of the native.

But given such an emphasis on the Western notions of good and evil and the power of prayer (notions through which the "authoritarian word" was implemented), it was inevitable that the natives would come to believe that all things may be answered simply by prayer, for God rewards the faithful. Coupled with the much maligned (because it encouraged overdependence on supernatural forces) Filipino sense of fatalism, that is, the *bahala na* (from *Bathala na*, meaning "leave it to *Bathala* or God", or, more loosely, "come what may") attitude, and with the pre-Hispanic belief that in order to be granted favors by their ancestral spirits, all that was necessary was to propitiate them with the proper sacrifices, it ironically encouraged the idea that prayer is the only recourse in times of need even when other, more practical solutions might be more to the point. This idea is so deeply rooted in the Filipino psyche that no one seems to have questioned the logic of former Philippine president Corazon Aquino's self-righteous crusade against Joseph Estrada prior to his ouster in January 2001, which mainly involved going to all the different churches in Metro Manila and praying the holy rosary in an appeal to the Virgin to "exorcise" the country of the Estrada "demon".

Spain's policy of religious conversion in her different colonies did not vary greatly, and this inevitably created similarities in the Catholicism that took root in these various places. Apart from the fact that, as I mentioned earlier, the dominant colonial instinct was to eradicate all traces of the pre-existing religions in the colonies, it eventually became common Spanish practice to overlay native rituals and celebrations with a Catholic counterpart in the hopes that such a practice would assist in the Hispanization of the natives by encouraging

them to transfer their devotion from a native deity to the Catholic saints. "The early Christian church," Boxer writes, "often took care to found its sanctuaries in sites which had formerly been dedicated to heathen deities, this facilitating conversion and continuity at the same time. The cult of the Virgin in Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, which is particularly popular with the indigenous inhabitants, certainly owed something in its early stages to the fact that the Virgin's miraculous appearance (in December 1531) occurred, and her church was subsequently built, at a place which had been sacred to the Aztec corn (maize) goddess" (Boxer 1975: 105).

It was in fact as an important instrument of Hispanization that Marian devotion was introduced in all the colonies, as a number of recent studies on Latin American Marianism shows. Terry Rey's class-based analysis of Marian devotion in Haiti entitled *Our Lady of Class Struggle – The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (1999), shows how Marian devotion was used by the Church in an attempt to erase the native (Vodou) religion. Likewise, Eric Wolf's discussion of Guadalupe ("The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol"; 1979), informs us that Spain sought to replace native Aztec worship with Marian worship. This was also clearly the case in the Philippines and can be seen in the way the fiesta of the Virgin of Antipolo was manipulated by the Spaniards "to promote the notion of a colonial society in which Spanish and natives were united in their mutual veneration of the Madonna who spread her protective mantle over all sections of the population, and in which at the same time made the existing social and political order appear natural and willed by God" (Wendt 1998:11).

But these studies also reveal the fact that such a strategy of enforcing colonial discourses upon native societies was in effect a two-edged sword: in most of the cases, instead of eradicating the native religion, it merely allowed the native religion to continue out of sight, camouflaged in a guise more acceptable to colonial authority. Moreover, it placed the native religion in a good position to subvert Catholicism in an unobtrusive way. That such a subversion occurred is evident in the emergence of heavily hybridized forms of Catholicism in the various colonies.

There can, of course, be no exact equivalence between past and present, and I certainly do not assume that there should be. However, because many elements of modern Filipino Catholicism derive from the colonial past (one must remember, after all, that it has only been little more than a century since Spanish rule was terminated in 1898 and the

Philippines only gained independence from American rule in 1946), an understanding of historical circumstances necessarily facilitates the analysis of the present situation. Spanish medieval traditions are in fact the basis for much of the religious narratives that circulated amongst the natives during the colonial period and even afterwards. As the discourse of the colonizer, they were imposed upon the native constituency as the indisputable authority on all matters that pertained to the colonial situation, and as such, discouraged any kind of dialogue. In other words, they constituted the type of utterance Bakhtin refers to as the "'authoritarian word' - one that does not permit any other to oppose it or offer any qualification or emendation" (Danow 1991: 24). However, that this insistence on monologia remains only on the part of the dominant authority, for it is constantly challenged by marginalized discourses which, in effect, succeed in engaging the authoritarian word in a dialogue that often transforms or even subverts its authority, was evident all throughout the colonial period, as I shall show in the next chapter.

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[1] All references to Diego Aduarte's *Historia de la provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Iapon, y China, de la sagrada orden de predicadores* will be taken from Emma Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493-1803*, Vols. 31-32 (Manila: A.H. Clark, 1903) unless otherwise specified.

[2]The Payatas disaster was the result of typhoon flooding and rains lasting for a week. Barangay Payatas, the home of professional garbage scavengers, lay beside a garbage dumpsite that serviced most areas of Metro Manila. The rains had loosened the mountain of garbage that had accumulated at the site, eventually leading to a landslide that killed more than 150 of the residents. "Rosary Saves Marian Devotee," *People's Journal*, 17 July 2000, 1-2.

[3] In the presidential elections of 1986, the government claimed that President Ferdinand Marcos had won over his main opponent, Corazon Aquino, the widow of the well-known anti-Marcos politician, Benigno Aquino, who was assassinated at the Manila International Airport upon his arrival from exile in the US. However, this claim was undermined by rampant accounts of electoral irregularities, which eventually led to a widespread multi-sectoral revolution against Marcos later that year.

[4] After he was removed from power by the People Power Revolution of 1986, Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, lived in exile in Hawaii, where Marcos eventually died from a liver illness. The issue of whether or not to allow the body to return to Manila for burial was an important and divisive issue in Philippine social and political circles at this time.

[5] The Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991 had particularly catastrophic effects on the entire province of Pampanga, with lahar flows covering entire towns and villages, rendering many Filipinos homeless.

[6] Letter to Fr. ____, S.J. by Bong Ko and Jimmy Villarin, 24 August 1994.

[7]Marcelo de Ribadeneira, OFM, *Historia de las islas del Archipiélago Filipino y reinos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japón*, ed. Juan R. de Legísma, O.F.M. (Madrid, 1947), 62-62. Originally published in 1601; in Schumacher 1979: 85.

[8] Ibid., 86-7.

[9] Ibid., 49.

[10] *Los Religiosos Españoles de Filipinas (Apostolado de la Prensa*, no. 82, Madrid, October 1898), 47, in Schumacher, 179. The use of the popular *pasyon* as opposed to the one provided by the Church itself, particularly the version entitled *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal ni Jesucristong*

Panginoon Natin (An Account of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ), more popularly known as the *Pasyong Pilapil* (its authorship previously believed to be a native priest named Mariano Pilapil), is the subject of Reynaldo Ileto's book, *Pasyon and Revolution.*

[11] Gaspar de San Agustin, *Conquista de las Islas Philipinas*, 1698; in Schumacher 1979:56.

[12] Scott translated the text that Father Cayetano Sánchez Fuertes, OFM, published in 1983 using an original copy of the document found in the *Archivo Ibero-Oriental*, Madrid.

[13] "Tratado de las islas Filipinas..." in Juan Delgado, S.J., *Historia sacro-profana, política y natural de las islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas* (Manila, 1892); in Schumacher 1979: 15.

[14] Delgado, in Schumacher, 53. This practice was not limited to the Philippines. Indeed, the earlier Spanish American conversion experience was quite similar. Charles Gibson writes that "Spaniards were willing to use force on occasion to destroy temples and idols, extirpate human sacrifice and other practices, and punish recalcitrants." [Charles Gibson, "Indian Societies under Spanish Rule", in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Colonial Spanish America* (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 375)]. Such practices, interestingly enough, find an echo in the way natives were "helped" to eternity by the receiving of the blessed sacraments, whereupon they often died shortly afterwards. Ironically, however, in Latin America at least, while the first impulse was to destroy everything that was pagan, there also came a belated attempt to "examine, record and inquire" led by the Dominican Fray Diego Dúran, who wrote that "a great mistake was made by those who, at the beginning with great zeal but little wisdom, burnt and destroyed all their [the natives'] ancient paintings, for we are now left so unenlightened that they can practice idolatry before our very eyes." Quoted in J.H. Elliot, "The Spanish Conquest", in Bethell 1990: 50. This seems to be one instance wherein the Spanish religious did not apply their Latin American experience to the Philippine situation.

Chapter 3
ANITISMO AND FILIPINO CATHOLICISM

If, as shown in the preceding chapter, Philippine Catholicism may be characterized as retaining many medieval characteristics, animism (or *anitismo*) also shapes Filipino perceptions of Catholicism to such a degree that one can argue that Philippine Catholicism is merely a Christianized animism. While the Philippine Catholic Church insists on a distinction between Catholicism and *folk* Catholicism based on what is and what is not officially sanctioned as "true" Catholicism (thus in the discussion that follows, I refer primarily, though not exclusively, to folk Catholicism as the form of Catholicism which has been heavily infused with *anitismo*), even the Church itself often promotes the practice of certain forms of Philippine religiosity which can by no means be considered orthodox Catholicism.

The distinction between Philippine folk Catholicism and what the Church considers as orthodox Catholicism is in fact so imperceptible that a cultural outsider might not immediately discern the difference. The reason for this is that the animistic elements are manifested mainly in the *attitude* of the people towards religiosity rather than in the religious traditions themselves. Moreover, at the points of similarity between the two religions, the fusion is often so subtle that the result is something that cannot be satisfactorily described as being predominantly one or the other. Instead, what is generally termed as Philippine Catholicism or the Catholicism practiced by the majority of Filipino Catholics, is best explained as a hybrid or a new creation in itself which contains within it the discourses of *both anitismo* and Catholicism. What constitutes the "already said" or the "authoritative word" in Philippine Catholicism in general is thus actually dualistic, drawing as it does from the two religious traditions. In this chapter, I will show the extent to which *anitismo* has pervaded Catholicism, and the repercussions this holds for Philippine Marian devotion in particular.

The General Nature of the Hybrid

If Philippine Catholicism is to be viewed as a hybrid, it would be useful first to clarify the definitions of the words transculturation and mimicry in the way they are used in the sections that follow, for it is through the processes suggested by these terms that the hybrid was produced.

Coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, the term transculturation is now commonly utilized in postcolonial theory as referring to "the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropoles" (Ashcroft et al., 1998: 233). Taken in connection with his discussion of the tobacco and sugar monopoly in Cuba, Ortiz himself used the word

> to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of Cuban folk, either in the economic or institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life
>
> ...[It also] expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another, because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word acculturation really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. In the end...the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them. (Ortiz 1947: 98, 101-102.)

The relevance of this definition to the present study lies mainly in the fact that many academics in the Philippines still use the term acculturation to refer to the hybridization of Philippine religiosity when the term transculturation much more satisfactorily describes the actual process that has taken place, for the changes that occurred were by no means unilateral. If I use the term acculturation at any point in the following discussion, therefore, it is primarily because this is the term that is used by the writer being cited or in the work being discussed, and if I use the term interchangeably with the Bhabha-ian term hybridization, it is because the two terms actually refer to one and the same process.

Given this definition of transculturation, it is clear then that the main difference between Latin American and Philippine Catholicism lies in the way the religion was transculturated within the colonial space. Pre-Hispanic Latin American religious practices were in many ways more sophisticated than those of *anitismo,* the pre-Hispanic animistic religion practiced by Filipinos, and both Spanish reactions to the local religion and local reactions to the imposition of Christianity varied accordingly. In Latin America, for example, centuries of worship had produced strong deities that were difficult to uproot and retained definite features that existed uneasily alongside the Catholic figures, producing an often

multi-faceted religious figure that was clearly syncretic. Thus, as Wolf shows us, the Virgin of Guadalupe is a hybrid composed of the Virgin Mary and the native goddess, Tonantzin. He argues, in fact, that the success of the devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico was largely due to the native association of Tonantzin with the Virgin Mary, and, contrary to the aims of the Spanish missionaries, she became a national symbol precisely because she came to represent the Indian's personal, political, and social aspirations – a great deal of which has had to do with liberation from the colonial situation.[1] Likewise, in the introduction to his work on Carribean culture, *The Repeating Island – The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992) Benítez-Rojo shows how *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* is actually a hybrid composed of three separate figures, the aboriginal Taino deity Atabey, the European Virgin of *Illescas,* and the African Oshun, each of whom is herself a hybrid of other older deities. In the Latin American context, therefore, the Virgin Mary is clearly a syncretic object, and thus an important signifier of the syncretic religion that developed in this part of the world. This is also true of Marian worship in certain parts of Asia - Boxer mentions that such is also the case in Macao, where the Virgin's popularity is "partly explained by the parallel Buddhist cult of the Goddess of Mercy, Kwan-yin who was also the goddess of sailors and the sea in some of her manifestations, including that of the local Goddess, Ama" (Boxer 1975: 105).

In the Philippines, however, deities took the form of nebulous nature spirits that were more often than not personalized according to the needs of the worshipper and therefore also localized within small villages or tribes. Certainly, with very few exceptions, the Philippines had no archetypal god or goddess figure whose veneration was wide-spread and crossed tribal or even inter-island geographical boundaries. Thus, the pre-Hispanic *anitos*, or spirits, were seemingly seamlessly absorbed into Catholicism. Moreover, what was not so apparent to the colonizers and therefore remains relatively unchanged up to the present, is the fact that what was emphasized in Filipino *anitismo* was not so much the deity itself, but the worshipper's *relationship* with that deity, and it is this that has come to characterize Filipino Catholicism to a great extent.

The survival of animistic elements and their integration into Catholicism was also the result of the fact the Philippines was the last colony to be established by Spain. Apart from the fact that the Spaniards approached the conversion of Filipinos more warily as a result of their Latin American experience (there was, for example, an effort to obtain the "acquiescence" of the natives prior to conversation), the Catholicism that came to the

Philippines was a "third-hand" Catholicism, that is, a Catholicism based not only on a clearly hybridized Catholicism from Latin America, as social anthropologist Frank Lynch has pointed out (Lynch, in Yengoyan and Makil 1984: 197, 199; see also Boxer 1975) but also on a hybrid Spanish Catholicism that contained many Iberian folk elements (Christian 1981). This prior hybridization facilitated the entry of new elements into Philippine Catholicism without unduly alarming colonial authority. Thus Philippine Catholicism was a hybrid produced by other hybrids, in a process that could be called what Benítez-Rojo, in his discussion of the Virgin's place in Cuba, has cleverly described as a "contradictory vertigo" (Benitez-Rojo 1992: 14).

In many ways, the Philippine hybrid took on the "guise" of Catholicism by imitating its "desirable" characteristics (that is, those that were acceptable to the colonizer) even as it used inherently Filipino referents by which to address these elements. This inevitably produced a situation which Homi Bhabha refers to as "almost, but not quite", a "mimicry" of colonial discourses that was agreeable to the Spaniards at first, but which ultimately assumed distinctly threatening qualities.

In one of his key essays, "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," Bhabha begins with a quotation from Lacan:

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (1994: 85, 86)

Lacan's description of mimicry in this passage, along with Freud's theories on the nature of the unconscious, forms the basis for Bhabha's own concept of mimicry. For Bhabha, mimicry is "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge," resulting from "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.* Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference." Furthermore, it is

> the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges

and disciplinary powers. (Ibid: 86).

In other words, for Bhabha, mimicry is the desire of the colonial authority to recreate the colonial subject in its own image for purposes of asserting social control and establishing authority. But mimicry can quickly turn into menace, Bhabha tells us, precisely because it exposes the ambivalence of colonial discourse, for mimicry not only duplicates colonial discourse, it also *rearticulates* it, thus disrupting colonial authority. It "reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze" (Ibid.: 87, 88). Furthermore, there is a thin line dividing mimicry and mockery, wherein the mimicry becomes a threatening caricature, "a flawed mimesis" precisely because it is only "partial" or "incomplete," and mockery is, of course, subversive. Bhabha writes, "Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the form of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its 'otherness,' that which it disavows" (Ibid.: 91).

Much of what Bhabha refers to as a "flawed mimesis" is in fact evident in the native appropriation of colonial discourses. Indeed, examples of this subversive mimicry can be found everywhere in Philippine Catholicism. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that Filipinos were greatly attracted to dramatic enactments and festivities that were an important part of Christian proselytizing during the colonial period, and that, because of this, performance, as seen in the ritual enactments, also came to form a significant element of the native response. On a different level, the personal appropriation of the roles of the saints, Mary and Jesus Christ by the Filipinos also served another purpose: in acting out the lives of the saints or of Jesus Christ, the natives believed that they could also vest themselves with the qualities of those saints, imitative performance ("mimesis") becoming, in a way, an appropriation of colonial power as well as a modification of its rules of signification. The "hybrid object [the imitative performance] retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol [the lives of the saints] but re-values its presence by re-siting it as the signifier of *Entstellung* [or what Bhabha defines as "a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition"]."[2] In other words, on the surface, the performances seemed to diligently promote the same values that the dominant authority placed upon them, but less visible to the authoritarian eye was the actual displacement of those values to make way for native ones to the extent that, even today, the Catholic church laments that Filipinos prize performance over

content and do not always vest these performances with the proper Christian spirituality. (See Chapter 5.)

If the priests were to be believed, such piety as demonstrated by the saints and even by exemplary priests in their own parishes led to the attainment of miraculous powers, given to them by an appreciative God. Furthermore, if emulating the lives of saints could bestow such blessings, what more if one should take upon oneself the sufferings of Christ, who was the Son of God? Thus we find in Philippine penitential performances an imitation that is almost a parody: in a sense, the penitent *becomes* even more Christlike than Christ for the more one suffers, the greater the rewards. Indeed, such reasoning seems to have formed the basis for much of the syncretic religion that the natives followed. In other words, the performances themselves were the result of the "displacement, distortion, dislocation, and repetition" that Bhabha mentions, because while they seemingly enacted Christian lives, beneath the surface they were actually transformations/translations of the original intentions behind the stories to suit local interpretations of them. This was true particularly when it came to Filipino notions of the *loób* or inner being and the externalization of this *loób*; as Ileto points out:

> At first glance, the pasyon seems to be about the salvation of men's souls. The poor, the meek, and humble of heart will attain a place in heaven. But also in the story itself, the state of people's *loób* [inner being] has an immediate effect in this world. Judas is treacherous because his loób is disoriented" and "hard as rock"; in the end, he hangs himself. On the other hand, those whose *loób* are pure, serene, and controlled have "special powers" granted to them by Christ. They can control the elements, cure the sick, speak in different tongues, interpret signs, and foretell the future. These are precisely some of the powers one hopes to obtain through anting-anting. (Ileto 1979: 26)

Apart from showing how the Christian has been appropriated to supplement and reinforce the pagan in the form of the *anting-anting*, the concept of *loób* that Ileto provides is interesting in that the qualities of serenity, purity and control are often seen as the results of a strong faith. Indeed, here it is said that those who have these qualities are rewarded by Christ with "special powers" such as those which pious priests possessed according to their biographies and which most modern Filipino visionaries claim to have, showing how Christian values have been re-contextualized into the native, non-Christian situation, or vice versa. Thus, it may very well have been because the natives interpreted the missionaries' behaviour as indicative of a "pure, serene and controlled *loób*", which meant they had recourse to powerful *anting-anting*, that they wanted to emulate them.

The use of native referents, therefore, had a profound effect on Spanish Catholicism in that it subverted the original intentions behind the Catholic traditions: external adherence to such traditions hid the negotiations that had in fact taken place between Catholicism and animism, in which the Christian notions of piety had given way to animistic notions of social relations.

Split-level Christianity: Anitismo and Philippine Folk Catholicism

The exact nature of Filipino folk Catholicism has been the focus of scholarly debate and theological concern from the earliest centuries of the Spanish colonial period, but the emergence of Filipino faith healers in the 1960s led to a new interest in the subject, particularly as these healers, who used folk healing techniques coupled with folk Catholicism, had by this time gained international fame.

Among the theories that emerged at this time, the most controversial was the notion of split-level Christianity proposed by the Jesuit psychologist, Fr. Jaime C. Bulatao, in which he argued that the Filipino Catholic had "two standards of morality: one which is abstract, juridical, often couched in the foreign terminology of the catechism; and the other which is "real," "down-to earth," "natural," often unverbalized, the norms of traditional culture" (Bulatao 1992: 18). His idea was that the forceful imposition of Christianity upon the Filipino natives resulted in a "repression" of their belief system to give way to the new:

> In the period of strongest repression, under the beneficent rule of *Pax* Hispánica, there was complete ritual and institutional adoption of the new religion. But in the dark, lower regions of the Filipino people, there still ruled the "aswang" and the pagan gods, the superstitious lore of the grandmother, the value system of the old, familiar barangays. Even certain Christian institutions, such as the cofradías, the compadrazgo, the veneration of statues, the wearing of medals were taken over in externals which, had they ever been put on paper, would have raised many a Roman theologian's eyebrow. (Bulatao 1992: 13)

To understand more fully the term "split-level" and the conditions that led Bulatao to term Philippine Catholicism thus, one must first consider the central assumption that Filipino religiosity exists in separate and distinct layers and view this vis à vis similar notions in Christianity, particularly those that deal with the relationship between "external", and

"internal", "body" and "soul".

Implicit in Christian doctrines is the idea that the carnal passions of the body must be controlled by a pure and disciplined soul, for only then can man truly be seen as the earthly reflection of God. Indeed, throughout the Holy Bible, the body is presented as the temple of God, the house of the Holy Spirit, and the pious Christian has to remember that, as St. Augustine of Hippo phrases it, "my body liveth by my soul; and my soul by Thee".[3] The implication of such a notion, then, is that the supremacy of the soul may be perceived in the outward behaviour of the body, thus a devout inner self is manifested by an outwardly pious appearance, or the reverse, an unpleasant exterior must therefore necessarily reflect an interior malignancy. Such a belief may in fact be found in Bakhtin's description of the medieval carnival, wherein elements of the grotesque (that is, of the carnal body) were thrown into garish display in a temporary reversal of the status quo (Bakhtin, Introduction, *Rabelais and His World* 1984 ed.), and it was certainly one that found its way into the Philippines via Spanish Catholicism.

It is for a perceived violation of this presumed congruence between external and internal that Filipinos have often been criticized as having a split-level kind of Christianity, as the preface to the published documents of the *Unang Kumperensyang Rehiyonal sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino* [First Regional Conference on Philippine Psychology] *(13-15 Enero 1977)* indicates:

> The ordinary Filipino Christian has been called a "folk Christian" or a veneer Christian, that is, only *externally* Christian, but *internally* not. He has been relegated to the stage of peasant society. Peasant religion is generally considered inferior to urbanized religion. He has also an allegedly magical mentality whereas a rational mentality is supposed to be superior in terms of religiosity. The ordinary Filipino's so-called utilitarianism, his externalism, and incompetence in intellectual distinctions make him religiously immature. In other words, the average Filipino Christian is allegedly split-level. (Mercado 1977: viii.)

The reason for the distinction between *external* and *internal* given above is the fact that Filipinos tend towards *concrete* and *public* manifestations of religiosity,[4] which has led to an emphasis on public celebrations (fiestas, pilgrimages, etc.) and on the veneration of icons (a saint-centered religiosity, as I shall show later in this chapter). Moreover, because there are similarities between this idea regarding appearances and the Filipino notion of *utang na loób* or "debt of the inside" wherein the inner gratitude must find external form (see pages

64 to 70 of this chapter), it is not surprising that the importance of appearances, and public performances rather than private devotions, should become a firmly entrenched part of Filipino religiosity. For example, others might see a person who does not go to church on Sundays as lacking in *utang na loób* to God, whereas a person who says that "I attend Mass every evening" (as many politicians and indeed some of the Marian visionaries have claimed) is seen to be very religious indeed. In a clear effort to boost his wife's popularity upon her ascension to the Philippine presidency on January 20, 2001, Juan Miguel Arroyo told the media that his wife was "*mabait* [kind]. *Palagi yan nagbabasa ng Biblia* [She is always reading the Bible.]"

The notion of a split-level religiosity, however, was hotly contested on the grounds that it presented the Filipino as schizophrenic and Bulatao eventually revised his hypothesis to instead refer to "altered states of consciousness" to which the Filipino was particularly susceptible (1977). This modification notwithstanding, the fact remained that the non-Christian elements in Filipino professions of faith often led to a condemnation of Filipino Catholicism as "hypocritical" or "superficial". But, the advocates of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* ask,

> are the above-mentioned claims true? ...Does the Filipino not have genuine religious experience in his popular devotions such as the *Atiatihan*, the *Panunuluyan* [at] Christmas, the *Salubong* [at] Easter, the Moriones celebrations in Marinduque, the Quiapo Black Nazarene devotions, and many others? Are the experiences in these devotions genuine or split-level? (Mercado 1977: viii.)

It was precisely to answer these questions that the conference on Philippine psychology was held, and their conclusion may be summed up in Bulatao's expressed opinion in the course of the conference:

> I did have the experience of having my handkerchief wiped on the Black Nazarene and I put the handkerchief on my forehead. And then I asked a question: Who is the better Christian – the one who uses handkerchiefs in order to contact Christ or the one who uses concepts in order to contact Christ? I think neither one because it is faith that contacts Christ and faith can be shown either with handkerchiefs or with concepts. (Mercado 1977: 100.)

Given Bulatao's own example above, it is clear that "split-level" is not an appropriate term, for what is shown therein is obviously the transculturation of Christian and animistic elements. Indeed, Zialcita is more accurate in his summation of Filipino religiosity when he

refers to it as a "synthesis", for "The truth is that any new religion cannot possibly thrive in a vacuum; it necessarily interacts with previous preexisting religious traditions within a culture" (Zialcita, in Reyes, 1991: 82). Such an interaction, it is assumed, occurs in order to establish harmony between the old and the new, and, in the Philippines, this meant modifying animistic traditions of worship to suit Christian traditions and vice versa. The "concrete" manifestation of faith and the "magical mentality" of Filipinos are in fact examples of such adaptations.

It is usually assumed that such a "magical mentality" must be found only in "peasant" or "rural" Filipino Christians, while the opposite, "rational mentality", is identified with those who are "sophisticated" and "urbanized". However, such stereotyping is somewhat misleading in the present Philippine situation: the mass migration of many Filipinos from rural to urban centers has resulted in urban areas being just as permeated with "magical mentality" as the provinces. In fact, many of the popular Christian devotions actually take place in large cities, like the Feast of the Black Nazarene of Quiapo. Moreover, it must be made clear that while the nature of this sort of religiosity has been problematized by academics, it is something which a majority of Filipinos themselves take for granted. While many profess to be devout Catholics, these same people firmly believe in supernatural beings they call "those who are not like us" or "the people we cannot see", who live in a world parallel to their own – beliefs that may be traced back to Philippine *anitismo*.

Pre-Hispanic Filipino *anitismo* was basically Malay in nature, with perhaps some influences from the Indian and the Arabic, and involved the worship of natural and personal spiritual forces. From the Spanish accounts, it is clear that, while each region possessed a different lower hierarchy of deities, there was nevertheless a general similarity among them. The natives believed in a Supreme Being called *Bathala* by the Tagalogs and *Laon* by the Visayans, whom the Spaniards identified as being closest to the Christian God. Like the Christian God, Bathala was largely inaccessible, and he could only be appealed to through the mediation of lesser spirits called *anitos*. The Jesuit Juan Delgado writes that

> when I asked [the natives] why they made the sacrifice to the *anito* and not to Batula, they said that Batula was a great lord to whom no one can speak, that he is in heaven, and the *anito* was of such nature as to come down here to speak to them as minister of Batula and to intercede for them.[5]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the natives should place more importance on these lesser spirits, as it was they who largely controlled the forces that influenced daily life.

The term *anito* has come to refer to several kinds of spirits. Stephen K. Hislop points out that "in the usage of the word, it may be seen that it originally meant the spirit of the ancestors, then all spirits, then the images which were constructed to represent the household spirits" (1971: 147-148). It refers, therefore, not only to nature spirits, but also to "ancestral" spirits, for the pre-Hispanic Filipinos believed that dead relatives could become household or guardian spirits after death, particularly if the deaths were heroic in nature.[6]

The fact that relatives could be so powerful in death indicate the importance with which they were regarded in life. Moreover, such a belief in the power of dead relatives to influence the world of the living was natural to a people who had no clear concept of the afterlife and who assumed that life after death was merely a continuation of the present, the only difference being that the dead were now a part of the people "who could not be seen" or "those who are not like us". The main role of these ancestral spirits was to safeguard the family, and they were invoked for their blessings and protection. However, they too could cause sickness and death if negligent living relatives failed to fulfill their familial obligations. Thus, the dead became a part of the world populated by the anitos and assumed a power over the living that was similar to the power held by these spirits.

Anitos were generally perceived as benevolent, and, if angered, could in fact be propitiated with sacrifices. Indeed, it was common practice among pre-Hispanic Filipinos to make offerings to the *anitos*, who controlled different forces of nature and thus different spheres of activity. A fisherman, therefore, would worship an *anito* that had control over forces of the sea, whereas a farmer would worship an *anito* that could promise a good harvest.

The material representation of these spirits took the form of carved wooden statues, like the *bulol* (or *bulul*) of the Ifugaos (see pictures page 58). The *bulol* and the idol were one and the same, as the spirit was believed to actually enter the idol itself. The *bulol* was the rice god of the Ifugaos, and because rice was the most important staple of the native diet, it was considered the supreme god among the different tribes. The image was used in many rituals, one statue for unmarried individuals, and a pair composed of male and female images for married couples. It was also used to attract good fortune and to intercede for the living so that the latter could maintain a harmonious relationship with the dead. Because, as mentioned previously, it was believed that the spirits of dead relatives could directly affect the lives of the living in both benevolent and malevolent ways, it was of great importance that the living

Picture 1: 19th Century Ifugao *bulol* or Rice God

Clockwise from top: Male Rice God; Female Rice God; a pair of male and female rice deities.

maintain the goodwill of the *bulol* by offering it propitiatory gifts, usually in the form of animal sacrifices and the letting of blood.

Apart from the benevolent anitos, the natives also believed in a hierarchy of lower mythological creatures. In "*Les Philippines: histoire, géographie, moeurs, agriculture, industrie et commerce des colonies dans l'Océanie*", his account of his sojourns in the Philippines in the mid-1800s, the noted French traveller Jean Mallat commented that "One should not be surprised if the Indios, in spite of their conversion to Christianity, have preserved several of their ancient superstitious beliefs, especially in separated districts where they have less contact with Europeans", and mentions the fact that Filipinos were prone to believe in stories about "ghosts, phantoms, nocturnal visions, monsters, sorceries".[7] Rafael provides a concise description of these spirits based on various Spanish historical accounts:

> These spirits included, among others, *asuang*, *patianac*, and *tigbalang*. Each was believed to possess horrifying attributes underneath a variety of disguises. The *asuang*, for example, was a vampire-like creature that lured its male victims by putting on the appearance of a beautiful woman. At other times it took on the shape of an unusually proportioned domestic animal, such as a dog, cat, or pig. The *patianac* was said to resemble a large birdlike creature called *tictic*. It was believed to hover about the house of pregnant women, using its elongated tongue to snatch their fetuses. Finally, the *tigbalang*, encountered on deserted roads, caused one to lose one's way and fall ill. They assumed the form of either an old black dwarf or a monstrous horse. (Rafael 1987: 189)

There are many others which he fails to mention, like the *manananggal*, which is said to appear just like an ordinary woman by day but which by night had the facility to detach its upper torso from the lower and which went about seeking new lower torsos to possess, and the *kapre*, which is said to be a cigar-smoking giant who lives in the *balete* tree. Many of these creatures are of Malay origin, but there are also spirits which, if their names are any guide, may have resulted from the fusion of Western and Philippine folklore, like the *engkanto* (see Chapter 4) and the *duwende*, enchanted beings strikingly similar to the Western fairy and dwarf, respectively.[8]

Some of these spirits often took strange material forms and were capable of taking physical possession of the natives. The Spanish missionaries saw these spirits as the "devil": the Dominican priest Diego Aduarte wrote that "Visions of demons are frequent among the Indians", and that the *aniteras* [priestesses] often "dreamed they saw their anitos in the form

of carabaos, or buffaloes, and of black men; and that they likewise suffered greatly at such times, because the devil was so much their owner that he used to enter them visibly – one of them, who was the mistress of the others, saying that he entered her in the form of a shadow, and in that way gave his oracles"(Aduarte in BR 31:34, 31:35) .

Belief in the spirits is deeply entrenched in Filipino society even today and may be found in equal measure among both the rich and the poor, in far-flung provincial municipalities as well as in the urban areas. Hornedo recounts, for example, the story of how "a highly educated multimillionaire family in Forbes Park [the subdivision of the very rich of Metro Manila] sells its house all of a sudden. The explanation: strange things have been happening lately, and the children report sightings of *duwende*".[9]

Many such stories are circulated by Filipinos who otherwise consider themselves God-fearing Christians. Some of these stories have even found their way into the news: several years ago, the Philippine tabloid press reported the supposed sighting of a *mananaggal* in the old sector of Manila, quoting various witnesses who were absolutely convinced that they had seen the creature. More recently, on November 25, 2000, squatter residents in the district of San Juan in Metro Manila claimed that an *aswang* was terrorizing the squatter community that had sprung up around an obsolete water reservoir called *El Deposito*. The residents described the malevolent spirit variously as a "big, black cat, its eyes red and piercing" and as "a black and hairy humanoid creature", and said they saw the creature retreating to the house of a 70-year old woman whom they "suspected [to be] the *aswang*". According to the news article that covered the story, "The residents stressed that they have been preparing themselves against the *aswang* to protect the pregnant women and the newly born babies in their neighborhood." Interestingly, "the residents said they even showed a crucifix to test its effect on the suspected *aswang*".[10]

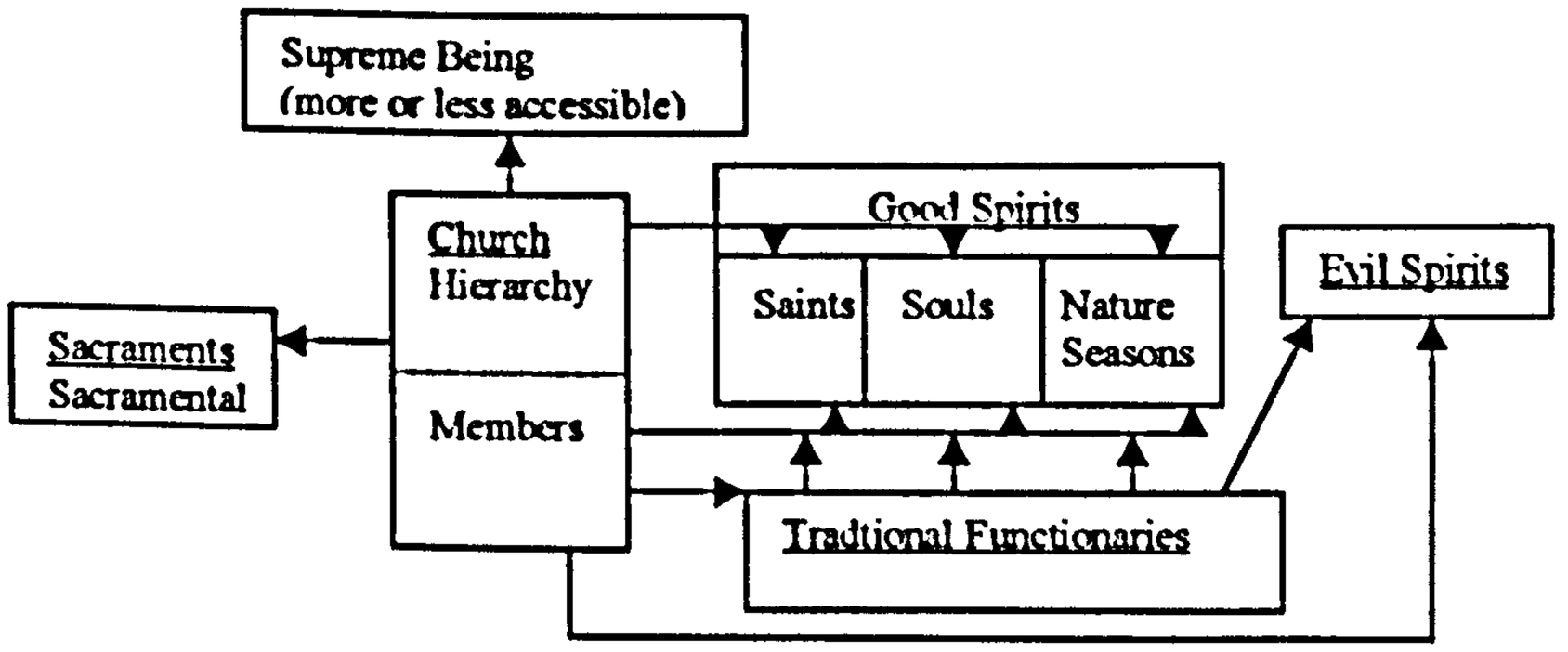
It is not known whether the crucifix was ultimately effective in driving away the evil spirit. But the use of Christian elements forms an important part of the Filipino response to illnesses or curses attributed to such beings. Fenella Cannell writes that, "the search for healing involves not only mediums but also Catholic shrines and devotional practices. Bicolano healing practices, although highly variegated, all involve Catholic syncretic elements" (1999: 80). While Cannell's research was located in the Bicol province, this observation is also true for the rest of lowland Christian Philippines.

Indeed, such a fusion of *anitismo* and Christianity occurred very early in the colonial period. Despite the demonization of the native spirits by Spanish missionary priests that resulted in the systematic destruction of physical evidence of the native religion, the natives found a way to incorporate their own beliefs into the new faith. In his essay, "Learning to be a Filipino," (1981) anthropologist Donn V. Hart recounts a folktale he heard in one of the Filipino villages he lived in for a considerable period, which clearly shows how Catholic and animistic elements were creatively combined in order to ensure the survival of the traditional Filipino (as opposed to the foreign Catholic) beliefs:

> One day God was absent from heaven. St. Peter found His book for creating humans and used this knowledge to populate the heaven with new people. When God returned to heaven he found it inhabited by these new people who had magical powers not possessed by regular mortals. He decided they could stay in heaven if they were baptized.
>
> ...The newly-created people rejected baptism. They reasoned that the pinch of salt put on their tongues during christening would deprive them of their magical powers. Their supernatural abilities would vanish during baptism when the salt melted on their tongues – as salt quickly disappears when put in water.
>
> So an angry God took a broom and for 40 days and nights swept heaven clean of these uncooperative ingrates who fell to earth, landing in trees, springs, and caves.

"As a result," Hart concludes, "these spirits are now included as a category of Christian demons described in their folk Catholicism. The people now face no theological conflict, in their minds, in retaining their belief in these "people not like us". They are an integral part of their folk Catholicism traditions." (1981: 72)

The relatively facile inclusion of such spirits within the Catholic hierarchy may be explained by the following diagram, taken from John A. Rich's essay, "(1970: 204):



Even from this brief representation, it is clear that there were already some similarities between it and the new religion brought by the Spaniards, which facilitated the process of transculturation. These similarities shaped early Filipino Catholicism, and continue to shape much of popular religion today.

First of all, from the native perspective, certain Christian saints would seem to have the same type of power over natural forces as the *anitos*. Called "specialist saints" by William Christian, sixteenth century Spaniards invoked these saints in particular circumstances: Saint Sebastian against pestilence, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Gregory the Pope, and Saint Pantaleon against insect infestations of grape vines, etc. Mary, originally petitioned mainly for rain in the early modern period, soon came to be an all-around helper saint as her cult grew in prominence (Christian 1981: 42-46).

Second, there was a clear congruence of intercessory functions between the saints and the local medicine man.

Lynch's analysis of the Filipino values that shaped social acceptance shows that the "Use of go-betweens is...a common means of preserving or restoring smooth interpersonal relations. This also has a long history in the Philippines and even today enters into many facets of daily living. Here it is not agreement, oblique speech, or remedial friendliness, but a third party who is used to assuage a bruise, heal a wound, or prevent injury" (1979: 12). Furthermore, "Go-betweens are utilized not only to avoid possible embarrassment or bad feeling, but also to *remedy* an existing state of conflict or tension" (Ibid.: 13). This is supported by the findings of a preliminary survey conducted by the Philippine Folklife and Folkloric Center (Demetrio and Gray 1980). The aim of the survey was to determine the diversity of Filipino religious values among Christian Filipinos. While it was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City, and while the researchers emphatically pointed out that the results must not be seen as conclusive due to certain lacks in variables, I believe that it presents a fairly accurate picture of the Christian Filipino value system. One of the conclusions that the researchers came up with was that, in a situation wherein the individual was set against the community, the most common opinion (39.6%) was that the individual use an intermediary to settle the issue (Ibid.).

In the specific context of religion, Antoine Vergote suggests that there are three elements which may be seen in the Filipino's "attachment to human mediators":

1. One is looking for a link with a person who belongs to the divine world but who is nearer and more familiar than God himself;
2. The link between these half-divine figures [saints] is also personal because of their special allegedly historical intervention or because they arose from a special devotion; and
3. One also looks for protection, help, and comfort from a mediator whom one does not fear to approach. (Vergote 1982: 17-18)

These points are as applicable to *anitismo* as they are to the folk Catholicism that Vergote describes in his essay. The *anitos* were intermediaries between Bathala/Laon and man, much in the same way that the Christian saints mediated between man and God. But a*nitos*, whether good or bad, were essentially fickle creatures, and because they were "people we cannot see", one often offended them without realizing it. Because of this, it was necessary to use the services of one who *could* see them, who could, therefore, explain the circumstances behind misfortunes caused by them, and who could, moreover, provide *concrete* ways to placate them,[11] someone like the local shamans.

These priests and priestesses were capable of healing the sick and guiding lost spirits back to their bodies. The Catholic priest did not quite fulfil this mediatory function as one could pray directly to the Christian saint, or even to the Virgin Mary without the presence of the Christian priest. However, the stories of the lives of Catholic saints indicated that they too could perform the intercessory functions performed by such local shamans, and because of this, they were easily absorbed into the local belief system. According to Arens,

> The Tambalan, or medicine man had, according to the Filipino, supernatural powers and he was esteemed and respected for these powers. The saint is believed to have similar powers. It is easier today for the ordinary Filipino to approach God through his saints who are, in the first place, not as abstract to them and at the same time are God's special friends with great powers bestowed on them by Him. This way to God conforms more to centuries old pagan tradition. (Arens 1958: 16)

However, this situation led to what has been called a "saint-centered" kind of worship that must, as Arens cautions, be differentiated from "idolatry". While it is "more appealing to [Filipinos] to approach God through his saints, especially through the Blessed Virgin Mary", this does not mean that they do not have "a clear idea of God as the Supreme Being, the creator of heaven and earth, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer and Saviour"

(Arens 1958: 26). It simply means that the Filipinos prefer to approach Christianity on their own terms, and this is through the concrete representation of faith.

Certainly, the idea of mutual obligation found in the offering of prayers to these saints in return for certain favors would not have seemed strange to the Filipinos, for this was in fact what they were doing when they offered sacrifices to their *anitos*, and the concept of reciprocity was one that permeated every aspect of Filipino social life. Indeed, because of the negotiations that formed the central aspect of such a relationship, the relationship itself became a very personal matter determined by rules that were essentially set in place by the petitioner rather than the divinity. The concrete and personalized manifestation of faith to be found in Philippine Catholicism owes a great deal, therefore, to the Filipino notion of mutual reciprocity which characterizes Filipino relationships with the divine to a tremendous degree and which gives Philippine religiosity a uniquely Filipino slant.

Philippine Catholicism and the Notion of Utang na Loób

Initially, the assimilation of Spanish Christianity into the local culture might have become just another addition to what had already proven to be an extremely flexible and tolerant hybrid in which differing cultural elements co-existed in relative harmony. The Spanish colonial objective, however, did not allow for equivalence; rather, it aggressively sought to impose Western hierarchical standards of power (with the white colonizer at the top) within native societies in which power relations were actually constantly in flux.

Early sixteenth century Spanish accounts tried to interpret local society in terms of a Western type of feudalism based on fixed social relationships among three classes – the ruling class, the commoners or freemen ("neither lords nor slaves"), and the slaves. The natives of the Visayas identified these classes as the *datu,* the *timawa* and the *oripun* classes (among the Tagalogs, these were the *datus* of an upper class called the *maginoo,* the *maharlika* or *timawa*, and the *alipin*). However, these local class divisions did not fit easily into Spanish notions of social relationships: the gradations of power between the *datu* and the *timawa/maharlika* were so slight as to be nearly indistinguishable, and the *oripun/alipin* seemed to be "hardly slaves at all" or "slaves in name only".

Scott's brilliant re-reading of pre-Hispanic social relations explained this confusion in terms of the Filipino concept of reciprocity: rather than being inflexible, as the Spaniards

supposed, pre-Hispanic native society was based on a complex set of debt relations that allowed both upward and downward mobility. A *datu* was in a position of power simply because he was indebted to no one but was owed in various degrees by those who served him. But debts could be repaid, and members of the lowest class that the Spaniards identified as "slaves", could, upon repayment through service, become free men and eventually rise to the status of chieftain (for example, through valorous acts in battle). Likewise, a *datu* might himself unexpectedly become a debtor. It was therefore in his best interest to keep others in a constant debt relationship to him if he wanted to retain power (Scott 1992:84-103).

In recent years, the Filipino notion of reciprocity has come to be seen as particularly important in the analysis of lowland Christian Philippine culture. Mary Hollnsteiner writes for example that "In the Philippines, where people are so concerned about getting along with others, reciprocity is a constant consideration, and some knowledge of its operation is essential for an understanding of Philippine society" (in Lynch 1979: 69).

Hollnsteiner's explanation of the nature of the Philippine concept of reciprocity as based mainly on vertical patron-client types of relationships is now generally considered as too functionalist and perhaps too rigid in its classification of Philippine society as being mainly divided along patron-client (e.g. landlord/tenant) lines. Moreover, behavioral scientists like Frank Lynch and Mary Hollnsteiner were criticized by Philippine academics for their "Western" reading of Philippine society in which Philippine society was neatly classified according to Western perspectives. These proponents of "sikolohiyang Pilipino [Philippine psychology]" argued strongly that the Filipino must be studied "from his own psychological viewpoint" (Mercado 1977: vii). More recent writers have tried to do just this: Reynaldo Ileto (1979), Vicente Rafael (1988), and Fenella Cannell (1999) have proposed more viable alternatives, which I shall discuss presently. However, Hollnsteiner's definitions of the different types of reciprocity to be found in Philippine social relationships remain a useful foundation upon which to start any discussion of reciprocity in the Philippines.

The Filipino notion of reciprocity revolves around the concepts of *utang na loób* (literally "debt of the inside"), which may be defined as a debt of gratitude for a favor bestowed that can never be completely repaid. This must be differentiated from *utang*, debt, which refers to a contractual relationship involving two or more persons wherein the conditions of the debt are clearly defined and the terms of payment are clearly delineated so that repayment is unmistakable (Hollnsteiner 1979: 70). Failure to discharge either type of

debt for any reason results in *hiyâ* (shame), which thus serves as a kind of controlling mechanism in the ordering of social relationships.

Traditional scholarship (e.g., the Lynch-Hollnsteiner school) has generally perceived the contractual relationship of *utang na loób* as being between two unequal parties in a vertical social relationship. An example of this is the landlord-tenant relationship, wherein the subordinate party is indebted to the superordinate party well beyond his means to pay, therefore any payments made are usually only token gestures to acknowledge the debt. These token gestures of repayment reinforce the *utang na loób* and in fact position the debtor favorably as the further recipient of similar largesse. Another example is the lifelong gratitude one must feel towards one's mother for giving him or her life. As Vicente Rafael puts it, "The child thus accumulates a burden of indebtedness, and even after one enters adulthood one never stops owing one's parents one's *loób*" (Rafael 1988: 128). The only way a child could pay a mother back for such a great gift given (and, in the Filipino point of view, at great risk to oneself) was to assume responsibilities for caring for the mother in her old age. (This notion of the debt relationship between mother and child is important in the context of the Filipino perception of Mary as mother, as I shall discuss later on.)

Reynaldo Ileto, however, showed that this traditional view of Filipino reciprocity was too limiting and did not take into consideration aberrations in history. In his work on nineteenth century peasant millenarian movements in the Philippines (1979), he argued that reciprocity often worked on a horizontal basis as well and that the debtor was often the one who was in position of power, for

> The presence of the word *loób* points to something other than the simple economic relationship between lender and debtor, giver and receiver. ...Begging and the acceptance of food, shelter, and protective care create, not a superordinate-subordinate relationship, but a horizontal one akin to love. (Ileto 1979: 230)

This kind of reciprocity that Ileto addresses may be seen in the relationship between the Philippine visionaries and their followers, who engage in mutually beneficial interdependency wherein the "patron" (the visionary) is often greatly dependent on the goodwill and supportive care of the "debtor" (the follower), as for example, in the Agoo visionary Rufino Bautista's absolute dependence on loyal followers who have for years provided him with all his basic necessities, including housing and sustenance. In fact, one may see Bautista's relationship with his followers as an example of the *inversion* of the patron-client

relationship, for, ever since he was ousted from his role as visionary by Judiel Nieva, he has become more of debtor than patron, his claim to the power of patron (that is, the enjoyment of Virgin Mary's particular attention) having been usurped by Nieva.

Rafael, on the other hand, felt that the notion of *loób* and its place in reciprocal relationships had to be analyzed further in terms of the earlier colonial situation, and showed that it was because of this notion that Filipinos willingly "contracted colonialism". Rafael (1988) pointed out that the Spanish missionaries seized upon these central Filipino concepts of reciprocity as a vehicle for communicating Christian ideas and facilitating the conversion process. They were particularly concerned with defining the notion of the *loób*. To this Filipino word they gave the Christian meaning of "soul", "will" or "conscience", thus constraining it to refer to the Western notion of the totality of the individual. Yet to the Filipinos, or in this case, the Tagalogs, the word *loób* meant something entirely different. Rafael argues that "Where Tagalog notions of indebtedness are concerned, *loób* does not exist apart from the mechanism of debt transactions; it can only be known and realized in the process of indebtedness" (Rafael 1988: 125). The implication of this idea is that, while *loób* literally means "inside", the *loób* has both an inner and outer aspect, the inner being the space wherein outside elements (for example, gratitude for a favor or a gift bestowed) could be accumulated and later reissued outwardly in the payment of a debt (the favor or gift) – hence the importance to Filipinos even today of a concrete manifestation of faith. The repercussion of the missionaries' utilization of the concept, therefore, was that they unknowingly translated the Christian concept of reciprocity (that is, God's gift of grace must be repaid in terms of the sacraments and by attending Masses, etc.), into the native concept of debt transactions. Rafael writes:

> To the extent that Christianity was phrased in the idiom of *hiya* and *utang na loób*, Tagalogs felt constrained to attend to it. Caught up in what seemed like an unending stream of undecipherable words put forth in terms of reciprocal obligations, the natives "converted," that is, availed themselves of the sacraments, as a way of entering into a debt transaction with the Spaniards and their God. (1988: 127)

Indeed, notions of reciprocity and obligation permeated all interpersonal relationships in Filipino society, including one's relationship with the gods. Although the Spanish colonizers sought to assert the superiority of their religion over the native one (i.e. *anitismo*), these notions also came to characterize the Filipinos' relationship with the Christian divine hierarchy. This and the method by which conversion took place gave rise to the peculiar kind

of folk Catholicism that exists in the country today.

Bhabha writes that, "Cultural difference marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification, through processes of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the difference of itself. The signs of cultural difference cannot then be unitary or individual forms of identity because their continual implication in other symbolic systems always leaves them 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation" (1990: 313). Thus, the Filipinos' relationship with God, Jesus Christ, Mary and the hierarchy of saints became one based on a concept of reciprocity that involved a debt transaction between the petitioner and the petitioned that was, moreover, open to negotiation of terms. In this connection, one should not be surprised that the Philippine Holy Week penitents seldom see their acts of penitence as corresponding to the Christian notion of sin, but rather to a "bargain" that they have made with the divine in the form of the vow or *panata* (see Zialcita 1986; Barker 1998; Cannell 1999).

These bargains or vows are usually made in times of crisis, and are in fact "a kind of conditional or proposed exchange" with the divine, which characterize it as a form of *utang*. Cannell says that the *promesa* is usually not undertaken by Bicolano petitioners until *after* the divine figure has fulfilled his or her part of the contract (Ibid.: 194), although I am more inclined to agree with Barker in that such vows are usually fulfilled *whether or not* the favor has been bestowed (Barker 1998: 6) except perhaps in cases wherein petitions are coursed through a third party like the shaman or someone in an equivalent position. This is because relationships with the divine, not only in the Philippines but in many other societies as well, are *also* essentially unequal and subject to a vertical kind of patron-client relationship in which the notion of the "gift" plays an important role.

A distinction must be made at this point between the kind of debt that a person incurs knowingly (*utang*), and one that has been imposed upon him without his or her asking for it. In the latter case, the debtor is the recipient of a "gift". Because it is a gift, it is unasked for, and oftentimes 'undeserved'. Moreover, the notion of the gift imposes an obligation on the recipient to return the gift in some similar manner, and, in the Philippines, the more unexpected and unasked for the gift, the more people feel compelled by *utang na loób* to return it in kind. On the one hand, because this may eventually take on the aspect of an unwanted burden, people are careful not to place themselves in situations wherein this type of reciprocal relationship might occur. On the other hand, one does not offer a gift unless it is

clear that the gift will be accepted because the refusal of the gift results in *hiyâ*.

Rafael has shown that the missionary priest, Fray Francisco Blancas de San Jose, constantly used the idiom of the gift in his sermons, "repeatedly refer[ring] to himself as poor, ignorant, and undeserving of the gift he is seeking". The gift in question is the gift of languages that Blancas claimed God gave him to enable him to communicate God's doctrines to the Filipino natives: "Thus, when a missionary speaks Tagalog, he is regarded as one who has been endowed with a gift from above" (Rafael 1988: 31-32). But, as Marcel Mauss has shown (1954: 10-11), the gift obligates its recipient to make some kind of return. In Blancas's case,

> It is the act of oral dissemination that simultaneously signifies the priest's repayment of his debt to God and his listeners' assumptions of their own debts and obligations to the Spanish father and the divine Father. Within the context of conversion, speaking and listening to God's words are distinct but continuous acts that constitute the believers' participation in the divine commerce. They are offerings that the faithful give up in response to the gift of language they receive. (Rafael 1988: 32)

This brings us to the second type of reciprocal relationship between the divine figure and the Filipino that I mentioned previously: the inherently unequal nature of the relationship between divine entity and human petitioner makes the petitioner feel obliged to perform his or her part of the agreement regardless of whether or not the favor is bestowed. This is because, over and above the *utang* the petitioner owes, there is also an *utang na loób* that is occasioned by the "undeserved" gift of God's grace that all Filipino Catholics have received and which can never be repaid. This is the thesis of Revelation Enriquez Velunta's analysis of the Filipino sense of indebtedness within the context of Christian faith. He writes that his mother, who may be seen as an example of the Christian Filipino in general, "saw the Christian life as a life lived in a state of perpetual indebtedness, that is, also a state of perpetual gratitude...Thus she lived not trying to cancel her debt to God, which, of course she could never have done. What she did was try to 'repay' God by 'owing' people love" (Velunta 1998).

Like God, Mary is seen by both the rich and the poor as a bestower of "gifts". Apart from the traditional Christian notion that Mary is the source (the giver) of all graces by virtue of being the mother of Christ (for which Filipinos already owe her an unpayable debt of gratitude or *utang na loób*), she is generally considered not only a provider of maternal

comfort but also of material necessities, particularly in times of crisis. It is the latter sort of gift which is actively sought by the thousands of devotees who go to the Virgin of Perpetual Help at Baclaran Church every Wednesday (Baclaran Day). But, because they are specifically sought, such favors or gifts require an exchange (in other words, they are *utang*). In return for them, the petitioners are obliged to perform certain acts in order to prove themselves worthy, either before the attainment of the favor or after it has been granted.

Notions of reciprocity and obligation, then, greatly shape Filipino relationships with the divine, and within these processes, the mediation of the saints and the native shamans are often significant factors. But the most important Filipino relationships, in which mediation and reciprocal obligations are paramount elements, have always been those that exist within the family.

I mentioned earlier that relatives came to assume powers similar to those of the *anitos* after death, and themselves demanded the fulfilment of certain obligations by the living. Moreover, to the Filipino, the spirit and his or her representative statue were often seen as one and the same. The importance of such beliefs to the Filipino is such that they came to characterize, not only the Filipino relationship with the divine Catholic figures, but also with the physical representation of these figures. Indeed, one of the most concrete manifestations of the Spanish colonial legacy in the country is the wealth of religious iconography that the Spaniards left, and if pre-colonization Filipinos had a "penchant for religious images", this was an inclination that was assiduously cultivated in them by the Spanish religious. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that Philippine Catholicism revolves around the many religious images that abound in the country, and that these images are viewed by their devotees as actual entities in their own right. This fact, tied to the pre-Hispanic belief in ancestral spirits and the emphasis on family ties that it implies, has led to relationships with the Christian figures that have a very strong familial emphasis.

A Penchant for Images: Catholic Iconography and the Importance of Family Relationships

In 1958, Richard Arens pointed out that the way to what he referred to as religious acculturation and accommodation in the present was for the Catholic Church to make wise use of already existing native inclinations, much as the early Spanish missionaries did. Missionaries should, for example, take into consideration native value systems and turn these

to the advantage of Christianity. Why, he asked, did certain foreign devotions (like the family rosary) take root in the Philippines so quickly even without active priestly assistance, whereas others died away despite all missionary efforts? The answer, he said, lay in the nature of the devotion being introduced:

> The sociologist points to the close Filipino family ties – all devotions and organizations which are based on family participation and embedded in the family are a success; those that are not often turn out to be failures. ...to know this, to face the fact, to build organizations around the family and to foster family devotions, might mean success or failure in the parish. (Arens 1958: 17)

The family is in fact the most important institution in Philippine society, and social anthropologists have noted that the Filipino has a tendency to interpret all kinds of social relationships within the terms of familial relationships. This includes the relationship with the Catholic divine hierarchy. Thus the Holy Family is seen in terms of stereotyped Filipino views of family members: God the Father as the distant but loving Filipino father, Mary as the loving, sacrificing Filipino mother (Mama Mary), and Jesus Christ as the older brother who takes care of all his younger siblings (many Filipino school children are taught to refer to him as *Kuya* Jess – *kuya* meaning "older brother") (Mulder 1997: 18).

This view of the Holy Family, as Mulder notes, "hints at nearness, intimacy, accessibility" (1997: 26). The distance between divine and human becomes negligible, and Filipinos are free to treat the Holy Family the way they would treat members of their own family, and these intimate and personal relationships are carried over to the statues that represent them. The Señor Santo Niño de Jesus (the Child Jesus) of Cebu is a good example of this. In the legends, he is playful, even naughty, and in his role as the Christ Child, Jesus is treated exactly the way a Filipino child is treated: loved, cared for, indulged, and at times, even "threatened" with punishment should he misbehave.[12] Fenella Cannell's description of the relationship between the Bicol statue of the dead Christ known as the *Amang Hinulid* and its devotees shows that it reflects the real life Filipino relationship among family members, and the procession of the *Ama* takes on the characteristics of a typical funerary procession for a dead relative (Cannell 1999: 137-199). In both instances, the statues are treated as if they were living people involved in a meaningful familial relationship with those entrusted with their care.

Both the Santo Niño and the Amang Hinulid are typical Filipino portrayals of Jesus Christ. It is worth noting, in fact, that in Filipino iconography Jesus is most often depicted either as a child or as the suffering or dead Christ,[13] leading one writer to comment, "It seems, if you go by the tale of the statuary, he goes from happy childhood straight to the horrors of crucifixion".[14] But noteworthy in both instances is the fact that Mary, as Mother, plays an important role, first as the guiding principle for the small child, then as the suffering mother who must lose her only son to circumstances beyond her control. Indeed, in the latter situation, Mary's role as mother is given more emphasis in Philippine society than elsewhere: Ileto points out that she is given a larger and more dramatic part in the Filipino *pasyon* than in the Spanish original. Because of this, though he is the Son of God, the only mediator between God and man and thus a more powerful religious figure than Mary according to orthodox Catholic belief, Mary nevertheless holds more authority and potency for Filipinos, particularly in the role of intercessor. Certainly, contrary to the Vatican II proclamation that Jesus Christ must be seen as the *only* true intercessor, in the Philippines, she tends to be seen as "the only hope and salvation, when the wrath of God is unleashed to cleanse his sinful world, the key, the gate and the stairway to the Kingdom of God".[15] Furthermore, while there have been reported apparitions (usually in the form of body possession) connected to the Sto. Niño, church records show that there are many times more recorded apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

The reason for Mary's greater popularity is undoubtedly due to what Mulder has referred to as the "cult of the mother" that pre-dates the coming of the Virgin (and, with her, the concept of virginity itself), because, while there were, of course, carved images of female gods (there are female rice goddesses as well as male ones), the signification of the images differed too greatly and Mary could not and did not take the place of the native goddesses. Mary as Mother of God became Mary, mother of Christian Filipinos, for, as I mentioned in the context of Campbell's "helpful crone or fairy godmother" (see Chapter 1), the only equivalence to be found between this foreign concept of the Virgin Mother and native concepts lay in the native understanding of the role of the mother in Philippine society. Because Marian images had no real predecessors before the introduction of her images into the country, Philippine Marian statues invariably look "foreign", i.e. Hispanic, but they must also look "motherly", that is, caring, loving and benevolent (see Chapter 3).

The intimate relationship between devotee and statue is also evident in the Philippine apparition statues of the Virgin and their followers. In fact, the director of the Archdiocesan

Office and Resource Center on Visions and Phenomena, Fr. Legaspi, has criticized the Filipino fascination with these images as being too material-oriented: "These events [miraculous manifestations of Marian statues] should be message-giving. Without us being aware of it, material things are given human qualities, like statues. People refer to [the statue] as 'he' or 'she', as if the statue were alive. We cannot become materialistic."[16] Yet, in this case, "become" is the wrong word, for history shows that the Filipino approach to religion has always been strongly materialistic in nature.

But apart from partaking in such contractual relationships with the divine, there is another way by which divine blessings can also be attained. While this method retains the element of reciprocity and intercession, it invokes the divine through a different form of mediation, that of the use of charms and talismans.

Contagious Magic and the Healing Power of Holy Water

In *anitismo*, as in many other "primitive" religions elsewhere in the world, the Filipinos believed in what anthropologists refer to as imitative or contagious magic, in which there is an appropriation of the abstract and the *re*-presention of it in concrete terms which could be more easily understood by everyone. Implicit in the notion of contagious magic the belief that "whatever is done to a material object will affect the person who was once in contact with it".[17] In the account from Hart that I cited previously, imitative magic (that the supernatural abilities of the new people would vanish during baptism because salt disappears quickly in water) played a large role. But contagious magic was also evident in every aspect of native life. This manner of thinking is perfectly exemplified in the way Filipinos came to regard holy water: they believed that holy water could give whoever came into contact with it a certain control over nature, in this case over illness. Holy water became medicine simply because drinking it or placing it on the ailing part of the body seemingly "cured" the patient of his illness.

In some extreme cases, holy water, or rather, baptism, even seemed to catapult the native into life eternal – a most desirable state of grace according to missionary accounts, for the humble human cannot but be blessed by this reunion with God – but to the natives no doubt a fearful manifestation of a particularly potent power. It is no wonder that, when a Spanish Dominican priest baptized all the boys and girls of Bataan by force in the early days of the colonial period, they all rushed to the nearest river to cleanse themselves of the "curse"

placed upon them afterwards (Aduarte, in Schumacher 1976: 40). It was only after several years that holy water came to be seen in a more positive light, and this mainly because of the Filipinos' identification of it with their own native cures. Even today, the various native healers use holy water as an important part of their healing rituals. Similarly, the *anting-anting* or magical talisman is often dipped into the holy water font to give it extra potency.

The fact that Spanish Catholicism was also already a hybrid of Iberian folk traditions and Christianity further encouraged the fusion of the two traditions. In fact, despite their denigration of what they viewed as a native "superstitious" (i.e. pagan) belief in the power of talismans and other physical objects, this was a belief that was shared ironically by the Spaniards themselves, although they explained these in "Christian" terms. Many of the Spanish religious themselves believed in the curative powers of holy water and attributed many 'miraculous' healings to its power. Rich points out that "some of the Spanish officials in an effort to help with the Christianization of the people said that baptism was also a cure for the ailments of the body" (1970: 202). In one instance recorded by Chirino, a priest asked a dying woman if she believed in the power of the holy water to cure. When she answered yes, he gave her some holy water to drink, whereupon she recovered almost immediately. In another instance, another priest applied the holy water directly to the spot where a young girl was experiencing pain, and showed no surprise that it proved efficacious in healing her. By such uses, it is not surprising that the *Indios* came to see the holy water as a kind of holy "medicine" similar to those used by the local shamans.

The transculturated religion that emerged from such beliefs was thus not a consequence only of the native "concrete" and "magical" mentality, but also of similar beliefs by the Spaniards. Despite a belated missionary attempt to point out that it was not the water itself that should be considered as the main curative element, but the power of God which manifested itself through the water, the association of holy water with a native-type of healing soon crossed over to other Christian symbols: for example, the sign of the cross or the cross itself eventually came to be seen as "some kind of magical object, such as their ancient religion had used in attempting to sure sickness" (Schumacher 1979: 78).

The strategy of imposing Christian significance over native rituals and traditions, therefore, backfired on the Spaniards to some extent, particularly as missionaries, in their zeal to convert the Filipinos, often did so without ensuring that the natives were psychologically and mentally prepared for it. Although their Mexican experience had led them to formulate

"an ideal definition of the content of prebaptismal instruction",[18] this process was often neglected. A perfect example is the forced baptism of children in Bataan referred to earlier, which led to a rather paradoxical situation: many baptized natives continued to act like pagans, while many pagans pretended to be baptized in order not to have to undergo the ritual at all. This continued for some time, as the Dominicans, not knowing the native languages very well at this early date, were easy to deceive. By the time they found out and remedied the situation, it was obvious that the natives had been choosing which of the Christian practices they felt was best suited to illustrate their idea of Christian life, even using Spanish names to convince the religious that they had indeed been baptised Christians, while secretly going about with their native religious practices. Over time, the two traditions became so intermingled that they in effect produced an entirely new one that was a hybrid of both.

The *Anting-anting* and the Magical Efficacy of Christian Words

A good example of the hybridization of Catholicism and *anitismo* is the *anting-anting*, a native talismanic object which was used, in pre-Hispanic times, to ward off all kinds of malevolent spirits and illnesses, and also to attract the attention of benevolent beings and all kinds of good fortune, and which, after conversion to Christianity, could only be "activated" by the recitation of *oraciones*, or prayers (see pictures page 76).

We find Chirino, writing in the late 1800s, mentioning the use of the Agnus Dei by the natives as a form of *anting-anting*, although Fr. Schumacher is careful to mention that, while the average Spanish Christian missionary himself generally believed in the effectiveness of the amulet, he saw it more not as "kind of Christian *anting-anting*, but rather as a symbol of the wearer's earnestness in his petition for God's help".[19] Nevertheless, in Chirino's account of a native who could only ward off the devil by wearing it constantly around his neck one can see the same belief system that gives the *anting-anting* its power: the *anting-anting* was the external manifestation of an inner strength shaped by the purity and serenity of the disciplined soul (see pages 54 to 55; Ileto 1979:26).

This being the case, Ileto's discussion of the almost cult-like status of the charismatic revolutionary leader, Andres Bonifacio, makes perfect sense. Bonifacio was the leader of the Filipino revolutionary group, the Katipunan, which effectively began the Philippine revolution against Spain. According to Ileto, Bonifacio's leadership was largely determined by the popular belief that he had access to the power of the *anting-anting*, which, by the time

Picture 2: COMMON *ANTING ANTING* IN THE PHILIPPINES

of the revolution in 1896, had absorbed many Christian characteristics. But we must remember that the assimilation of the Christian merely reinforced the native notions of the *loób* that was reflected in the potency (or lack thereof) of the *anting-anting* (Ileto 1979: 25-26).

The mix of pre-Christian and Christian in the *anting-anting* is further emphasized by the belief that it is only during Good Friday, when Jesus died on the cross, that folk healers can renew the potency of their talismans and amulets in sacred mountains or caves. It is believed that it is only on this one day of the year, "when God isn't looking", that they can commune with ancestral spirits and native deities, although "their chants have long incorporated the concept of the Holy Trinity".[20] Indeed, the *anting-anting* soon came to take the outward form of the religious relic or medallion, like the Agnus Dei, and was usually inscribed with prayers. During the Cavite Revolution, in fact, "The belief in the anting-anting spread very widely among the revolutionaries so that all tried to provide themselves with some booklet with prayers written in an unintelligible language, with some paper, some piece of the clothing of some saint, with some medal or object from the church, or other object which would serve as anting-anting. To these objects they attributed a supernatural virtue to keep them from dying a violent death or being pierced by the bullets of the enemy..."[21] Such beliefs in the efficacy of *anting-anting* continue to the present. The violent *tadtad*, or chop-chop, vigilante cults of Mindanao, for example, are known to wear tee-shirts upon which have been inscribed what seem to be "Latin" prayers in the belief that this would protect them from harm.

Clearly, baptism and conversion to Christianity were no guarantee that the natives would thereafter live Christian lives. Apart from the necessity of providing adequate pre-baptismal instruction (which, as I mentioned earlier, was often not done), the religious orders also had to ensure that the Filipinos remained Christians by providing them with constant and vigilant instruction in the Christian doctrines, something made difficult by the scarcity of priests and the distances that these few priests needed to travel to reach the more isolated villages. In the absence of proper and constant religious guidance, therefore, the folk Catholicism that mixed animistic and Christian beliefs became all the more deeply rooted. Thus the natives were able to continue believing in the concrete manifestations of magical powers, while using the Christian frame of reference, the *language* of the missionaries, to validate their ancient beliefs.[22]

In fact, words or the uttering of certain phrases was and continues to be an important aspect of Philippine folk religion in general, and they could be used to heal as well as to destroy. The *mangkukulam*, or malevolent witchdoctor, could, for example, place a curse on an individual by inscribing powerful "Christian" words on a piece of paper, while a *manghihilot*, or healer, could do likewise but with more benevolent intentions. Ralph Toliver, a Protestant missionary in the Philippines, recounts (with great disapproval) the story of a visit he made to the house of a young Filipino woman named Cora, who was the daughter of Mrs. Sumulong, a new convert to Christianity. Upon entering the house, he discovered that Cora was suffering from a sudden paralysis in her left side and that her sickbed was strangely covered with little bits of paper. "Picking up one," he says, "I saw the word *Jesus* written across the top. But below this one intelligible word were row after row of initials and numbers, in seemingly meaningless array. Upon being asked, Mrs. Sumulong admitted that these slips of paper, plus a number of others, had been written by an *albularyo* (medicine man) and had been pasted to Cora's ailing side by using the juice of an unripe *chico* fruit. These are 'secret words,' known only to the initiated, and are supposed to bring magical healing to the sick..." (1970: 210-211). These pieces of paper clearly functioned in the same way that the *anting-anting* does, and the idea of contagious magic is here reinforced. The power of words, *Christian* words in particular, is seen to be very great.

This is particularly true in connection with Filipino religious organizations as anthropologist Prospero Covar shows. In most of these organizations, the recitation of divine formulae plays a significant role. According to Covar, one particular sect believed that "when God created the universe, or when Jesus Christ exercised his healing powers, divine words were uttered and accompanied by certain gestures. The association of words and gestures is functional. The efficacy of the formula depends on how faithfully it replicates its initial use".[23] This example, with its reference to the use of words and gestures, in short, to *performance*, reinforces the idea that performance plays an important role in Philippine Catholicism, and, in its allusion to imitation, it also has significant implications for the Philippine apparition phenomenon (see Chapter 5) in which the use of the Virgin's messages indicate the importance that the spoken and written word had, and continues to have, for many Filipinos.

Today, many native religious traditions coexist harmoniously with Catholic practices, as may be seen in the way such elements are usually physically juxtaposed. In Quiapo, Manila, every Friday, which is Quiapo Day, the outside of the church becomes a bustling

marketplace, where vendors of fish, vegetables and even airline surplus goods jostle for position with vendors of herbal remedies, "moonstones" to bring luck to homes, and all kinds of *anting-anting*. Quiapo Church itself, though people from all sectors of society patronize it, is mainly a sanctuary for the poor, located as it is in a poorer sector of old Manila. It is most famous for its statue of the Black Nazarene, which was brought to the Philippines from Mexico in the eighteenth century, and whose feast is celebrated every January 9. Another life-size statue of the dead Christ, carved and painted black, lies in a glass case near the church doors. But in deference to the needs of the faithful, a slot has been cut in the glass by the statue's feet, for the pious believe that touching a holy statue, or wiping handkerchiefs or any piece of cloth on any of its parts, will transfer to themselves some of its blessings. Some people even place written requests and paper money into the slot before rubbing or kissing the Nazarene's feet while praying to it. The casual observer might say, in fact, that the statue of the Black Nazarene is the biggest *anting-anting* of them all, for there are distinct similarities between the two popular traditions.

The mix of Christianity and pre-Christian is also manifested in other ways, as in the "Jericho March" that the anti-Estrada (and mainly Catholic) groups staged at the Senate on December 7, 2000, the first day of the impeachment trial of President Estrada. A University of the Philippines anthropology professor, Michael Tan, wrote in his column for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* that, "An announcement from the organizers says '250,000 marchers in groups of 20,000 will walk in cadence 25 abreast around the Senate in complete silence,' to be interrupted by the marchers crying out and tambuli [ram] horns blaring for five minutes '*to drive away evil spirits*' [italics mine]".[24] This practice of driving away evil spirits (a constant theme in the street plays of the anti-Estrada rallies wherein actors depict "exorcisms" of Estrada) has Chinese antecedents, as do many other Filipino practices, but it also reflects the pre-Hispanic *anitismo*, the belief in an unseen world composed of *anitos* who can be both benevolent and malevolent depending on one's relationship with them.

Animistic Elements in Philippine Marian Devotion

Popular Marian rituals, especially those practiced by the poor, show that many elements of *anitismo* have actually found their way into the Marian tradition. In this section, I shall use comparisons between Filipino shamanism and the Philippine Marian apparition to bring into focus the ways in which *anitismo* and Marian devotion have become transculturated. The presence of these elements show how a foreign devotion has been re-

codified to assume meaning on a different level, one that is more comfortably in keeping with a worldview that, given that the poor's participation in the dominant institutions are severely limited (see Chapter 4), has been passed on largely by oral means and common practice amongst the poor.

Because Philippine Catholicism has been greatly shaped by Filipino animistic beliefs as I have shown in the preceding chapters, it is therefore a Catholicism in which concrete manifestations supersede abstract concepts. In the Bicol community that Fenella Cannell describes in her study (1999), the spirit world, for all that it was an unseen world populated by the "people we cannot see", is nevertheless a very real one. The spirit world overlaps the material world, and the worlds open into each other at particular points – at an earthen mound, or a tree favored by the spirits, for example – and a human has to be careful to ask the spirit's permission (*"tabi tabi, po"* – loosely translated as "Please step aside" or "Please let me pass"*)* before passing by such places or risk being cursed with illness or death. In fact Cannell's study shows that the poor ("those who have nothing") generally believe that illnesses are caused by inadvertently offending a spirit, or even by a spirit taking a liking to one and taking that person's spirit away with it to the spirit world. It is necessary to consult a healer or spirit medium to find out how one must atone for the offence (i.e. what particular offerings must be made to propitiate the offended spirit). There are therefore a great number of healers and mediums to be found in a typical Filipino community, and while they are more commonly consulted by the poor who cannot afford any other kind of treatment (a Filipino healer asks only for a "donation" as payment, the amount or goods to be given therefore dependent on the patient's resources and ability to pay), people from higher income brackets also come to them when Western medicine has failed to provide a cure.

What is most interesting about these cures, however, is that they almost always refer to Catholicism in some manner: as part of the cure, the sick person must recite a Catholic prayer, visit a Catholic shrine, etc. Tiston provides us with an account that clearly shows such a fusion of Catholicism and *anitismo*:

> When Aurora's mother died she failed to have prayers said in behalf of the diseased. She became aware that friends began to shun her. In her town it was customary to have the required prayers said. She became conscience-stricken and began to feel a strange sickness in her. She did not attend mass anymore. A *tambalan* advised her to see a certain *Mana* Mary who is [sic] an *espiritista*. Just by looking at the patient, *Mana* Mary announced her diagnosis. "*Inday* (Lady), your loved ones who have gone ahead of you are causing you discomfort," she said. Aurora was made to offer food and prayers

> in the house, in the church, and at night, after curfew hours. After the ritual, Aurora's sickness disappeared. (Tiston 1977: 26)

Apart from the use of Christian rituals to effect a cure within the animistic context, Tiston's example also shows us other elements of animistic belief that have come to characterize Philippine Catholicism: dead relatives do not go on to a Christian afterlife but linger in the material world and can cause distress to one who does not show them the proper respect. However, Aurora's fault lay in not observing the Catholic ritual of saying masses for the dead, and to propitiate the angry dead relatives who were causing her illness, she had to offer food (a common offering to *anitos*) and prayers. Unstated (but nevertheless a transgression that would be perfectly clear to most Filipinos) is the fact that, by not offering prayers, Aurora was not showing proper *utang na loób* to her diseased mother – reason enough to explain why she was shunned by her friends and why she felt "conscience-stricken". In this case, the *espiritista*'s cure simply involved assuaging Aurora's guilty conscience by making her perform her duties as a proper and obedient daughter and thus reasserting the necessary *utang na loób*.

However, the example above still predominantly takes the form of marginalized practice. In some interesting cases, the fusion has reached the point wherein the dominant framework for the effecting of such cures ceases to be animistic but takes on a more socially "acceptable" form, such as the Marian apparition.

I pointed out early in this chapter that the overlapping of the spirit and material worlds necessitates an intercessor, someone who could straddle both worlds. In *anitismo*, this function is performed by the shaman/spirit medium on the immediate human level, while in Philippine Catholicism, it is often performed by the visionary (or by a Christian icon who is perceived in the same way that the *animistic* idols were perceived – that is, as *being* the Christian divine personage itself). In both instances, the human mediator is only the first in the link of mediation: the shaman links man to the *anito*, but the *anito* links the shaman to the principal god; the visionary provides human access to Mary, the divine figure (because the Virgin herself is a divine figure, one of those, in fact, whom "we cannot see", a human mediator is necessary) who in turn provides access to God the Father. Because of these perceived similarities in the functions of the shaman/spirit medium and the visionary, the two forms of divine encounters have become fused in interesting ways.

One of the most obvious similarities between shamanism and the Philippine apparition phenomenon is their association with trees. It is common folk knowledge that the shaman often goes to certain trees, like the *balete* tree, in order to be initiated by the spirits. Likewise, shaman candidates often disappear for days, only to be found on top of a tree or on the rooftop of a house. Demetrio suggests that

> The ideology behind this ritual of climbing seems to be the ascension motif. The ascension motif in turn seems to be linked with the belief in the World Tree which serves as the Axis Mundi, the Center of the World, for it is at the Center of the World that a breakthrough is possible between the 3-tiers [sic] of the cosmos: to the upper as well as to the lower world. (1973: 135)

The tree motif is an ancient once, and may very well have found its way into the Marian apparition phenomenon, for the tree as a motif of Marian apparitions is not at all unusual (the Lady of Fatima appeared atop a tree). But trees figure more prominently in the Philippine apparitions than in apparitions elsewhere in the world.

Many Philippine Marian statues from the past centuries are associated with trees, notably that of the Virgin of Antipolo (see Wendt 1998) who kept disappearing from her altar only to be found amongst the branches of a *tipolo* tree (from which Antipolo derives its name). Trees are also prominent sites of apparitions. It is worth noting that almost all of the best known apparitions took place above or near a tree, if not right from the beginning then at least at some point in the series of events (see Table below). Judiel Nieva's Queen of Heaven and Earth appeared to him above a guava tree before he relocated the apparition site (see page 83), while Allan Rudio says he first saw the Virgin above a tree in his schoolyard before she began to appear to him in the family apartment. Both the Cabra and Aguirre apparitions were atop trees (an *alamag* tree and a *pitogo* palm respectively), while Castillo's Mediatrix of All Grace, chose a jasmine vine. (Interestingly, the Cortez case is the only exception, but the nature of the apparition events connected with him differs in many other ways as well.)

APPARITIONS	TREES
Lipa	Jasmine vine
Cabra	*Alamag* tree
Quezon Boulevard	*Pitogo* palm
Agoo	Guava tree
Murphy	Tree (type not specified)
San Francisco del Monte	None

Table 2: The tree motif in Marian apparitions

Picture 3: The guava tree on Apparition Hill atop which the Queen of Heaven and Earth was said to have appeared at Agoo.

Even in the absence of actual apparitions and visionaries, miraculous images have almost always been reported as occurring on or near a tree: the image of Christ on the banana tree trunk in Misamis Oriental and the silhouette of the Virgin on the leaves of the coconut tree in Lipa (1990) are just two examples out of many. But the link between the Marian apparition phenomenon and shamanism in this context is clearly seen in the fact that, in the Cabra apparitions, the headteacher Mrs. Torreliza had first to be convinced that what the children had seen was not one of the "fairies" or *engkantos*, who were known to live in trees.

Another similarity may be found in the way both shaman and visionary is "called" to become a divine agent. The shaman often went through a period of illness, or temporary insanity, during which he disappeared for a period of two to three days or even longer. In the course of this illness, "the candidate [for shamanism] is carried out of himself; his body may be present, but his spirit is away communing with the spirits who have invited him and who have made him undergo the first steps of his training" (Demetrio 1973: 134-135). But the important aspect of this illness is the fact that the cure that is effected is possible only through the shaman's special relationship with a god or spirit. This is also the case with spirit mediums. According to Tiston,

> Healing power from spirits is bestowed upon an individual in keeping with a covenant. Usually the individual gets seriously ill. The spirit speaks to the sick individual and makes a covenant with him. The sick person is made to keep a promise. If he is healed he will have to help any patient who comes to him for help without asking for payment. By the power of a friendly spirit the aspirant is cured. He then becomes a *tambalan* but must keep his promise. (1977: 23-24)

Tiston refers to the *tambalan* of Leyte, but Bicolano healers undergo a similar experience, which Cannell describes as having strong elements of Christianity:

> As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, a period of suffering triggers and signals the start of a healing career, but in Bicol it takes a specific form. Healers experience a period of loss of consciousness when they appear to "die" for three days, and this explicitly or implicitly associates them with Christ's passage from death to resurrection. (Cannell 1999: 89)

In the case of the Philippine Marian apparition, Judiel Nieva was said to have been a sickly boy. When he was in Grade 6, he began to have body pains which intensified during Lent, the causes of which the doctors could not discover. A relative then thought of bringing him to a priest who said that it was "God's will" and "Probably he is destined for a certain mission". It was only when his parents finally accepted Judiel's "fate" that the pains went

away (Panes 1994: viii). Because Judiel was "healed" when he (or rather his parents) finally accepted the illness as the sign of a divine calling, he was generally considered to be a "genuine" visionary, particularly when compared to his predecessor, Rufino Bautista.

Bautista had quite a large following himself until a severe stroke paralyzed both his legs and seriously impaired his speech. To this day, he claims that the Virgin was responsible for his infirmity, bestowing his sufferings upon him to test the strength of his faith. He also claims that she continues to appear to him regularly. But the fact that he became physically incapacitated was greatly instrumental in the loss of faith of many of his followers: how could he heal them if he could not heal himself? If he was a genuine visionary, why then did the Virgin not perform a miracle on him, her own instrument? Moreover, if what he claimed was true, that the Virgin had imposed this suffering on him herself (a not unknown occurrence in the Marian apparition phenomenon), surely she should heal him once his faith had proved strong? If we follow this line of reasoning, Bautista clearly comes up wanting.

We can assume from this that healing is an important aspect of Philippine religiosity. Indeed, the relationship between folk healing and syncretic Catholicism is undeniably complex. Christian elements almost always form part of the cure prescribed by the healer, perhaps because, as in the case of the Bicolano healers Cannell studied, most of the healers considered themselves Catholic. Inversely, many visionaries end up as healers long after the apparitions are said to have ceased.

The shamans could heal using a variety of methods.[25] They could call upon the saints to aid them in their healing (see discussion on mediation below). The water used to wash the statue of a saint is said to be effective in healing. Likewise, amulets or *anting-anting* (inscribed with Latin-sounding words) were most effective when made on Good Friday. The use of medicinal plants and herbs in healing is fairly common, but the knowledge of which plants to use is believed to come from the spirits – spirits who "called" upon individuals to become healers through dreams, for example, or through the spirits of dead relatives who were once healers and wished to pass their powers on to their successor. In the latter case, the newly called healer knew "instinctively" which plants could heal particular illnesses because "the spirit of the departed ancestor will always be around to guide the *tambalan nga guinbilinan* (successor)" (Tiston 1977: 24). All these elements have found their way into the Marian apparition in one form or another.

"Healing" plants often appear in the Philippine Marian apparitions, although the plants in themselves are not generally medicinal. Rather, their healing properties come with their association with Mary, an example of the primitive notion of sympathetic or mimetic magic wherein like is believed to produce like.

In the Lipa apparitions, for example, Sister Melania Sunga claimed to be healed by drinking water that had been placed near the statue of the Mediatrix of All Grace. Indeed, June Keithley reports that when the demand for the miraculous rose petals of Lipa became so high towards the end of the apparitions and there was not enough to go around, the Carmelite nuns came up with the notion of placing the rose petals in water then distributing the "miraculous" water to the public through a lottery system (Keithley 1992: 81). Those who were fortunate enough to acquire the miraculous petals used them in the same manner that folk healers used their medicinal plants: they placed the petal over the afflicted area and were immediately cured.[26]

A similar method of healing took place during the Cabra and Agoo apparitions. While the Cabra visionaries themselves did not perform any cures, devotees nevertheless found a way in which cures could be effected: it was discovered that, when the leaves of the *alamag* tree were placed on afflicted areas, the affliction went away. Likewise, in Agoo, the guava tree came dangerously close to being denuded of its leaves, for the same reason.

Interestingly, the visionaries did not themselves proclaim the leaves (or petals) as having healing properties – this fact was assumed by the devotees themselves. In the beginning of the Lipa apparitions, the petals were in fact miraculous only in the sense that the petal showers seemed to occur inexplicably (they fell in a straight vertical line from above) and were etched with religious images. The rose petals in the Cortez case were miraculous because they also had religious images on them and sometimes inexplicably turned into hosts. But the people, who were familiar with folk healing practices and who assumed that the leaves and petals would work in much the same way that the medicinal plants used by the folk healers did, used them thus – and by doing so, miraculously cured themselves

The Spanish accounts of the colonial period often describe the possession of local priestesses or *babaylanes* by the *anitos* that they worshipped. Today, body possession is an important characteristic of Philippine seers from marginal religious cults and among the healers consulted primarily by the poor, in which the fusion of Christian and non-Christian

elements is more strongly marked. In fact, *espiritistas* regularly enter into trances wherein they become possessed by a succession of spirits, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Amor Velez, who studied Cebuano faith healers, noted that

> At the outset, it can already be pointed out that the healers of the group [the Divine Study Students] believe they heal not only because of their own power but through a high spirit who is behind their treatment of the patient. All they have to do is to contact the spirit-world through prayers of incantations. Thus the contact may be St. Thomas Aquinas, or St. Sebastian or even Jesus himself. When the spirit is no longer present, they still believe they can cure by virtue of that affinity which they have established between the spirits and themselves through some of these prayer formulae. (Velez 1977: 42)

These spirits also often bless the "water, oil, salt and other things which the healers have prepared and which they will use later in their treatment of the sick" (Ibid.: 43) – the use of which items (except salt, which is used in *anitismo* to drive away evil spirits) is not unfamiliar in the Marian apparitions (Cortez's miraculous oil might be seen as being blessed by the Virgin Mary in a similar fashion, for example).

In shamanism, however, mediation was often made possible only by *actual* physical possession of the shaman by the guiding spirits. The shaman was entered into by the tutelary spirit in a condition of possession, though the nature of this possession was benevolent, for the shaman and the spirit shared a strong bond of friendship. The shaman, in effect, was both active and passive in the ritual of possession: possession was only possible because he or she *allowed* himself or herself to be possessed (in a reversal of the relationship of patronage), but during the possession itself, he or she came fully under the spirit's control and indeed took on the spirit's identity in what Cannell refers to as a kind of "exploitation".

Mediation and body possession are interlinked in shamanism: one is often not possible without the other. In the Philippines, there is a significant enough number of cases wherein the Virgin is said to have taken over the body of an individual instead of making an apparition to indicate a link between *anitismo* and the apparition phenomenon. Although, strictly speaking, body possession by the Virgin (wherein the Virgin speaks through the medium in her own voice) is *not* an apparition and must not be mistaken for what is called *inner locutions* (wherein the visionary hears the Virgin's voice only in his or her mind), there are cases, too, in which both possession and apparition have occurred. Nevertheless, in either case, the individual was the mediator through whom access was provided to both Mary and devotee.

In Philippine apparitions, there are frequent cases of the bodily possession of the individual by the Virgin Mary. This was the case of Shirlee Olazo, a salesgirl who claimed to be suddenly possessed by the Virgin. Likewise, in one of the Church-investigated apparitions, a woman named Heddy Villegas (1985) said that the Virgin Mary was giving messages through her, and in fact a tape-recording of the event was sent to the Bishop's Commission on Apparitions and Phenomena by one Hector Reyes.[27] In 1979, the Church conducted an extensive investigation into the case of a woman called Lourdes Paredes, who claimed to have had visions of the Virgin. Some of the messages that this apparition had for the Filipino people were transmitted through a medium, Sofie Guerrero, to support Paredes' claim. Ka Doring, whom the Church described as "impersonating" the Virgin, claimed that the Virgen de Guia was speaking through her in 1982. But whereas the spirits first sought permission to possess the healer, in the cases of Marian possession, the individual is seemingly *forced* (that is, the individual's permission does not appear to be sought beforehand) to become a medium. Such possessions are often only of short duration, however. In this light, Maurice Bloch's observation about the Marian cult and spirit possession in Antananarivo adds an interesting insight: "The cult of Mary, at its most intense," he writes, "is very close to the experience of spirit possession. It is the experience of being chosen and penetrated 'out of the blue'"(1996: 143).

But physical possession by the Virgin does not seem to be mutually "exploitative" in the same way that Cannell has described the relationship between a medium and the spirit companion. In the minor cases wherein possession does take place, the assumption seems to be that, given the fact it is the Virgin Mary who is entering one's body (in much the same way that the Holy Spirit entered Mary's own body), the body possession is actually a divine gift and thus welcome. Certainly, the possession is often of so brief a duration as to preclude any kind of relationship from actually forming. Moreover, the use of mediums tends to be a characteristic of minor apparitions, which attract the attention of the immediate community only; certainly none of the major visionaries claim to have been used thus by the Virgin. Nena Aguirre, for example, while she seemingly entered into a trance before the apparition, never claimed to be possessed by the Virgin when she had her visions along Quezon Boulevard. Yet, as the head of the Divine Endeavors Organization (DEO), she served basically as a conduit for the messages of the divine. Moreover, after her death, her successor as head of the DEO himself claims to be possessed at times by Aguirre's spirit. It seems, therefore, that while the Virgin can and does take physical possession of certain individuals, bodily possession is more popularly associated with the non-Christian or the heavily

Christianized hybrid, and does not play any role whatsoever in the *major* apparitions.

Willy Apollon's observation about Haitian vodou possession (1999) provides us with an additional insight on the use of the medium in Philippine Marian apparitions and folk religious seances. Writing, he asserts, "condemns us to interpretation", and this reduces the "voices" in possession to the sign: "the multiplicity of the 'voices' [is stifled] by imposing upon them a single meaning: that which is upheld by the dominant classes and social groups".[28] In the use of the medium as an instrument of Mary or any other figure from the Catholic divine hierarchy, we see the reverse: there is an attempt by the marginalized native to appropriate the dominant discourse, not to stifle these voices, but rather to give them a form of expression.

Zimdars-Swartz writes that, "Skeptics have suggested that cultural malaise and anxiety of the particular difficulties to which Catholics in certain countries are subjected have prompted an epidemic of 'imitative experiences'", and this may very well be the case in the Philippine Marian apparitions. But, as in the Holy Week enactments and penitential practices, the imitation that can be seen in the apparition phenomenon is almost extreme: the appropriation of the phenomena occurs on a gigantic scale. Moreover, these events are not only imitative, they often contain characteristics which recall those of pre-Hispanic animistic religion.

The fact that the Philippine Marian visionary shares similar traits with the faith healer or the shaman is perhaps one of the reasons why the apparition is a fairly common event in the Philippines. The similarities in function reinforce the notion that the Philippine Marian apparition, while using the guise of an approved Church genre, actually contains many pre-Hispanic animistic elements that are more directly manifested by many marginalized religious cults. The proliferation of Marian miracles and apparitions in the Philippines shows an exaggerated and aggressive appropriation of the Marian phenomenon. However, it is interesting that in appropriating the apparition genre, one thing remains constant: even if the seer or visionary may exhibit the qualities of the native shaman and the contexts are modified to allow for the Philippine cultural and social environment, the visions and the utterances themselves remain essentially foreign, as if the Filipinos are only too aware that while some boundaries may be crossed with impunity, others remain inviolate. Thus, with very few exceptions, the Virgin Mary retains her Caucasian features, her traditional robes, her traditional attendants and her customary messages. For it to be otherwise would be

a violation of the genre itself and lessen its credibility. This is so because the apparition audience comes to the apparition event with certain preconceptions and expectations that they have received through traditional avenues (i.e. the images in churches) and through media coverage of Church sanctioned (and therefore authentic) visions elsewhere in the world.

Yet the public also comes to the apparition with other forms of knowledge – those found in the marginalized native forms which, despite the enforcement of the "authoritarian word" of the colonizer, has managed to survive in hybridized form through the centuries. What Bakhtin has referred to as *stylization*, or the appropriation and re-presentation (and thus, the weakening) of the original discourse, becomes at the point of hybridization, the *parodistic word*, wherein, while the original discourse continues to be utilized, the intention behind it is changed beyond recognition.

But, as I stated in the Introduction, the negative perception of popular religion relegates it to a marginalized position in society. Officially, it carries no weight; it is a "distortion" of what Catholicism "should really be". The appropriation of the Marian symbol, therefore, may be seen as a way to legitimize what might otherwise be called fringe religion, and the Marian visionary's appropriation of the powerful symbol of the mainstream religion may in fact be seen as a form of subversion or resistance to the mainstream.

However, while such practices as those described above are predominantly participated in by the poor, it must be mentioned that many of them have also moved socially upward and are indeed also performed by members of the middle class and the rich. One reason for this is the fact that even before the Filipino rich came to assume their privileged social status, they were members of the colonized and themselves practiced the same traditions that the poor continue to practice today. Another is the fact that, even in the most rigorously Catholic of households today, folk beliefs prevail because household helpers, particularly those who care for the children of the house, are from the poorer classes. [29]

In the next chapter, I will describe and discuss the popular Marian stereotypes that have emerged as a result of the transculturated religion practiced by a majority of Filipino Catholics and show how the appropriation of these stereotypes differ across socio-economic levels.

[1]See Eric Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion, An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1979), 112-115.

[2] Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders", in Francis Barker, ed., *Europe and its Others: proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1984* (Essex: University of Essex, 1984) 99, 91.

[3] St. Augustine, "The Confessions of St. Augustine", trans. by Edward B. Pusey, Charles W. Eliot, ed. *The Harvard Classics*, Millennium ed. (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1993), 183. The idea that the body is God's temple stems from the idea that the body houses the soul, and the soul is that part of man closest to God. Some examples from the Holy Bible are: Ephesians 2:22 "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"; 1 Corinthians 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" and 1 Corinthians 20 "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's".

[4] Fernando N. Zialcita's essay, "Visions of the Afterworld" (1991) perfectly illustrates the difficulty Filipinos tend to have with abstract religious concepts. In this study of an Ilocano village, he points out that even today, the inhabitants of the village have trouble with the concepts of heaven and hell although they have tried to adjust these concepts to the way that they themselves perceive the world.

Interestingly enough, Zialcita has discovered that scepticism about the existence of heaven and hell is more pronounced among those who are poor or illiterate, and believes that the explanation may lie in the fact that unlike those who have been better educated and who come from a higher social background, such people live on a subsistence level. Because of this they necessarily have a limited view of time: they cannot conceive of a long term future, their lives being guided by the natural cycles of the seasons, which determine when to sow and when to harvest. Thus, when questioned about their ideas on eschatology, they would hesitantly preface their answers with statements like, "Well, according to the priests..." while, in practice, they followed a different belief system altogether.

Zialcita's explanation for the difficulties the Ilocanos had in interpreting Christian eschatology echoes Rafael's thesis on "(mis)translation": according to him, one main reason is linguistic. For one thing, the Ilocano concept of sin differs from that of the Christian, their word for it, *basol* covering a multitude of offences that range from "mistake" to "crime". There are no strict definitions for determining the seriousness of such offences either, nor is there a proper system by which these offences could be punished. There being no justice system to punish offenders, villagers tend to believe that the offence is a matter to be dealt with only by the parties concerned. This being so, Zialcita notes, the concept of punishment in hell serves no purpose whatsoever.

Certainly this difficulty with the concept of punishment based on morality can be seen most clearly during Lent: studies have consistently shown that the concept of sin has very little to do with Holy Week penitential practices. This is because to many Filipinos, particularly those who are poor, the spirit world is palpable and decentralized: spirits are omnipresent in this world, and because they are "people we cannot see", one could and often did offend them unwittingly.

[5] Delgado, in Schumacher 1979: 53.

[6] For example, if they died in battle, or were killed by a crocodile; animals and inanimate objects (like icons) were also believed to possess spirits, and of the animals, the most venerated, perhaps because most feared, was the crocodile - see Rich 1970: 199. It must also be clarified at this point that this "ancestral" worship is not quite the same as that of the Chinese which implies a direct line of descent from ancestor to descendant: while the terms "ancestral" and "ancestors" are often used by scholars, it is more appropriate to say rather that Filipinos worshipped spirits of the "dead relatives", for the spirit of a distant dead relative could just as easily influence the lives of people as a dead father or grandfather.

[7] J. Mallat (Paris, 1846); in Schumacher 1979: 236.

[8] The word *engkanto* is derived from the Spanish *encantado* meaning "enchanted" and was presumably used by the Spanish to refer to the nature spirits or *anitos* worshipped by the Filipinos. Though there are many native names for the *engkanto* (*tumao, tiaw, meno, panulay*, etc.; Demetrio 1968: 137), this is the term that many Filipinos use. However, while the Spanish verb *encantar*, or, "to enchant", and its different forms (*encantmiento, encanto, encantadora*, etc.) are generally seen as

referring to a positive condition (the malevolent aspect of enchantment being denoted by the terms *maldecir, maldito,* or *tener maldición*), the Filipino *engkanto* is regarded as simultaneously benevolent and malevolent. The Filipino word *duwende,* or dwarf, however, tends to be similar in meaning to the Spanish.

[9] Hornedo, in Reyes, 76.

[10] Manny Aun, " 'Aswang' Attacks San Juan Folks," *People's Tonight,* 25 November 2000, 1-2.

[11] Belief in these spirits continue in many parts of the Philippines today, and this perhaps explains the reason why the local folk-healer/shaman/spirit medium continues to play a prominent role in Philippine society, in both urban and rural areas. The Philippine visionary assumes a similar mediatory role in the apparitions. Although Catholics can and do pray directly to Mary, Jesus and the saints for intercession, given the widespread belief in the abilities of spirit mediums, folk healers and the like, to the Filipino mind it would seem that a human mediator who could directly access the Christian saints on their behalf would be so much more effective than any prayer directed to what remains after all an abstract entity (this also helps to explain why, in the absence of such mediators or visionaries, Filipinos tend to regard the statues of saints themselves as if they were living entities).

[12] Sally Ann Ness describes the Cebuanos' relationship with the Sto. Niño of Cebu, said to be the earliest image of the Child Christ in the country, in wonderful detail *in Body, Movement, and Culture,* 58-85. See also F. Landa Jocano, "Filipino Catholicism: A Case Study in Religious Change," *Asian Studies* (V) (1) (April 1967): 53.

[13] See Fernando N. Zialcita, "Popular Interpretations of the Passion of Christ," *Philippine Sociological Review* 34 (1-4) (January to December 1986): 59, wherein he says that the most popular images of Christ are those that show him "bleeding and torn, yet powerful." This is also true in most Hispanic countries, according to Eric Wolf: "In Mexican artistic tradition, as in Hispanic artistic tradition," he writes, "Christ is never depicted as an adult man but always either as a helpless child, or more often, as a figure beaten, tortured, defeated and killed." In "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds. *Reader in Comparative Religion, An Anthropological Approach,* 4th. ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1979), 114

[14] Dean Jorge Bocobo, "Rizal and the idolatry of the Filipinos," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* 2 January 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[15] "Profession of Faith to Mary", supposedly given "by an Angel through a Seer during the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8, 1992 in the Philippines" – a prayer pamphlet given to devotees of the Immaculate Queen of Heaven and Earth, Agoo, La Union.

[16] De Vera, "Miracle Hunter." *The Sunday Inquirer,* 17 December 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net/mags/dec2000wk3/mag_2.htm>

[17] Hart, 70.

[18] According to this formula, the natives had first of all to "repudiate" their native beliefs (which, as shown earlier, was a choice that was already made for them); reaffirm their belief in the sacrament of baptism; maintain monogamous marriages; show an ability to recite key Christian prayers like the *Pater Noster,* the *Credo,* the *Ave Maria,* as well as the Ten Commandments; and have an awareness of the meaning of the other sacraments and of the principal duties of being a Catholic, like going to mass on Sundays and feast days, and going to confession at least once a year (Phelan 1967: 55).

[19] Schumacher, 76; Pedro Chirino, 132, in Schumacher, 76.

[20] Arnold Molina Azurin, "The Rites of Lent," *Philippines Free Press,* 10 April 1993, 25.

[21] Telesforo Canseco, "Historia de la insurrección filipina en Cavite," in Schumacher 274.

[22] A good example of this is the way Christian prayers were eventually inscribed on the native *anting-anting,* or magical talisman, which will be discussed more thoroughly at a later point.

[23] Prospero R. Covar, "General Characterization of Contemporary Religious Movements in the Philippines", *Asian Studies* (Vol. XIII) (2) (August 1975): 85.

[24] Michael Tan, "Jericho's Walls," [Opinion column], *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* 7 December 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[25] Tiston in fact differentiates the different kinds of *tambalan* by the way they healed: the psychic healer, who dealt with the psychological aspect of the patient; the faith healer, who appealed to divine intervention in the course of the healing; the folk-medicine practitioner, who used medicinal trees and herbs (elsewhere known as the *herbolaryo* or the *albularyo*); the *espiritista,* who dealt with evil spirits, the *anitos,* or "the weird, the bizarre and the mysterious"; and the fake healer or pretender (Tiston 1977: 23).

[26] The Commission on Apparitions and Phenomena's official compilation of documents on the Lipa apparitions contains the sworn testimonies of various individuals claimed to be cured in just this way. (Documents courtesy of Fr. M.)

[27] Documents supplied by the Bishop's Commission on Apparitions.

[28] Willy Apollon, "Vodou: The Crisis of Possession", trans. by Peter Canning and Tracy McNulty, *Jouvert* <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v3i12/apollo.htm>

[29] The poor have access to the households of the more affluent in their capacities as domestic helpers and nannies, which place them in the position to influence the imagination and sensibilities of the children under their care. According to Fe Susan Go, "Long before children receive any religious instruction in Christianity they have already been introduced to the supernatural world that will surround them for most of their lives. It all begins with fear, and it is mainly fear that continues to sustain the belief". The importance of this statement becomes clear when she accurately points out that "The major responsibility for child-rearing, specially for children under the age of ten, rests with the mother who is frequently assisted by a *yaya* (a nursemaid or maid with child-care duties)". Go, "Mothers, Maids and the Creatures of the Night: the Persistence of Philippine Folk Religion", *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 7(1979): 1192-193.

Chapter 4
STEREOTYPING MARY – APPROPRIATION AND RESISTANCE IN PHILIPPINE MARIAN DEVOTION

In this chapter, using both the common and Homi Bhabha's definitions of the term "stereotype", I identify some common stereotypes of Mary in the Philippines and show how these are both appropriations and subversions of stereotypes that were introduced to the country during the Spanish and American periods. It is necessary, therefore, to begin by identifying the stereotypes that have shaped the way Mary is perceived in the country today.

According to Bhabha, stereotyping was one way in which Said's concept of Orientalism worked, although, contrary to the usual implications of the word, in this instance such stereotyping was actually a complex method by which the colonized tried to contain the 'Other' within familiar terms and simultaneously assert "difference". Bhabha equates the notion of the stereotype in colonial discourse with Freud's concept of the dream or fantasy: in racial stereotyping, Bhabha argues, "The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it" (cited in Young 1990: 143). The stereotype, therefore, was to the colonizer an object of both desire and derision.

But the Philippine stereotypes that have resulted from an appropriation of the Western also show how the foreign has been contained within the familiar and, at the same time, repudiated *by the natives themselves* in an inverse of the Western process of stereotyping; to use Bhabha's words, the Philippine stereotypes show "recognition of difference and disavowal of " the Western stereotypes themselves. In other words, while Bhabha, and indeed, Said, refer to the colonial stereotype as an activity of the colonizer, in this study I use it also in the reverse, in the notion of Occidentalism: the colonizer and his culture is turned into a stereotype created by the colonized in which the self's identity becomes more clearly delineated by comparison.[1] After all, as Holquist pointed out using Bakhtin's theories, stereotyping is a " 'global activity', a mode of perception that is not akin to a pathological 'festishism' but to 'normal' behaviour'".[2]

It was of course important for the Spanish colonizer (and Europeans in general) to make a clear assertion of their "difference" (i.e. their supremacy) from the native from the

earliest point of contact. The imposition of the Western association of white with good and dark (or black) with evil in the kind of racial stereotyping condemned by Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and questioned by Bhabha in his discussion of racial and sexual stereotypes (1994), preferred the white over the colored in such a way that the colonizer was projected as superior and thus "naturally" in a position of power. While much of the same sort of stereotyping that took place in Latin America also took place in the Philippines, in the latter, this stereotyping, at its best, took the form of the paternalistic condescension that characterizes the following description of the Filipino by the Dominican Fr. Domingo Fernández Navarrete:

> I have always liked the Indians [i.e. the Filipinos]; they are not surly and stern, like those we saw in Mexico, but civil and tractable; they have wit enough and are very dexterous at anything. There are among them, excellent penmen, painters, carvers. They are apt to learn from and are very submissive to priests. As for their understanding in what concerns our Holy Faith, they may vie with many of our countrymen and outdo some of them... (cited in Boxer 1978: 59)

From this excerpt, it was clearly the amiability of the Filipinos (that is, their willingness to be in the *subordinate* position) that Navarrete found desirable. On the other hand, much of the denigration of the Filipino character by the Spaniards was caused by what was perceived to be the Filipinos' *insubordination.* That this was so is obvious in the Augustinian, Fray Gaspar de San Agustin's vehement opposition to the suggested formation of a local clergy, an idea he found tantamount to an "abomination":

> Their [the Indios'] pride will be aggravated with their elevation to so sublime a state; their avarice, with the increased opportunity of preying on others; their sloth, with their no longer having to work for a living; and their vanity, with the adulation that they must needs seek, desiring to be served by those whom in another state of life they would have had to respect and obey....Imagine the airs with which such a one will extend his hand to be kissed! What an incubus upon the people shall his father be, and his mother, his sisters and his female cousins, when they shall have become great ladies overnight, while their betters are still pounding rice for their supper! For if the Indio is insolent and insufferable with little or no excuse, what will he be when elevated to so high a station?...What reverence will Indios themselves have for such a priest, when they see that he is of their color and race? Especially when they realize that they are the equals or betters, perhaps, of one who managed to get himself ordained, when his proper station in life should have been that of a constable [*bilango*][3] or a servant? (in Schumacher 1979: 198-199)

Such an opinion was by no means exclusive to San Agustin. Indeed, as Boxer notes, "not a few Europeans and Creoles argued that the Filipinos were inherently unfitted for any

sacredotal [sic], even as humble secular priests, being congenitally idle, vain, stupid, and above all, unchaste" (Boxer 1978: 62). It was in fact generally understood that the Indios' "evil customs, their vices, and their preconceived ideas...made it necessary to treat them as children, even when they were fifty or sixty years old" and "on account of the sloth produced by the climate, and of effeminacy and levity of disposition, it was evident that if they were ordained priests and made ministers to the Indios when they were not sufficiently qualified for this, through the necessity there was for them, they did not again open a book, and with their vicious habits set a very bad example to their parishioners" (Ventura de Arco, in Schumacher 1979:195-6).

Yet there was a concentrated attempt to "better" the natives by making them Hispanized (that is, Christianized) often through the use of forceful and fearful methods. The following excerpts from Aduarte show how a refusal to conform to the expectations of authority could have extremely tragic consequences:

> The Lord showed His kindness to one woman by striking her with blindness when she purposed to run away from the baptism which she had promised to receive, and by thus bringing her back to the salvation of her soul' (BR 31: 140).
>
> ...The Lord wrought miracles in defense of the new converts [the Chinese], punishing with death a heathen who had insulted a Chinaman that had given up his litigious habits after his baptism" (BR 32: 85).

The attribution of such harsh punishments to the wrath of the Christian God and the destruction of local idols without incurring similar punishments from the native gods were clearly an effective means by which to convince the natives to acknowledge the superiority of the "authoritarian word". The religious stereotypes that were introduced to the new converts through such methods soon became deeply rooted in the native psyche, and the religious stereotypes that can be seen in Philippine society today reveal the extent to which such foreign elements have been assimilated, or, perhaps more accurately, to use Ortiz's term, transculturated, and thence, manipulated (see discussion on manipulation of the Marian stereotype later in this chapter).

The legacy of inferiority inherited by brown-skinned Filipinos today may most clearly be seen in the way foreigners, or even those with mixed blood, hold an elevated status in Philippine society. As in other former Spanish colonies, the use of the word "mestizo" in the Philippines refers to people (Chinese or Filipino) who are half Caucasian. However, in the

Philippines, the word is generally used to refer to those whose features are predominantly Caucasian rather than Asian, with the emphasis on the lighter skin produced by the Western bloodline, and it is in this sense that the term will be used throughout this study. In other words, being half Spanish was to be preferred over being fully Filipino or fully Chinese. Indeed, in the social stratification of the early nineteenth century, Chinese and Filipino mestizos occupied a social position just beneath those of full Spanish blood but well above full-blooded Chinese and Filipinos. Thus, even today, it is generally assumed that a mestizo must be from the elite social class or at least connected to it in some way.[4]

The enforcement of the notion of the superiority of the white colonizers and of their privileged place in the social hierarchy must indeed have produced a reaction in the native population that was constituted by both fear and desire, a reaction that was displaced (for fear of reprisal, perhaps) towards the more fantastic beings of Philippine lower mythology in the previous chapter ("those who are not like us" or "those we cannot see"). These spirits included ones that were known as the *engkantos*. While the term may have originally been used to refer to such nature spirits as the *diwata*, it is interesting that the *engkanto* is almost always described as Caucasian in appearance, while the *diwata* retains a Filipino appearance. Demetrio describes the *engkantos* as follows:

> They are fair of complexion, golden haired, blue-eyed; they have clean-cut features and perfectly chiselled faces. They exemplify the best of the Spaniards (in the past) and of the Americans (in the present). ...Men and women are allured by their beauty, their riches, and their power. They bring wealth and power to people for whom they have a special affection. And they are generous. ...Though people are afraid of *engkantos,* they still feel a certain deep fascination for these creatures. The demonic character of the *engkantos,* their whimsicalness and capriciousness, their unpredictability, while injecting fear and awe, at the same time attracts mortals who secretly wish they enjoyed the special attention of these strange and dreadful but fascinating beings. (Demetrio 1968: 138)

The origins of the *engkanto* belief are unclear, but from both the term itself and the description of the *engkantos* given above, it is clear that transculturation must have taken place sometime during the Spanish colonial period, for the term indicates a sense of "difference" founded on notions of a hierarchy of privilege and power in which the *engkanto* came to be identified with the colonizer and resided at the top of the hierarchy of power, while the (colonized) Filipino remained rooted at the bottom. Thus, while undoubtedly originating in pre-Hispanic *anitismo*, the *engkantos*, from Demetrio's description, also came to "exemplify the best of the Spaniards...and the Americans" and indeed wield much the

same sort of power ("glittering and inaccessible wealth and power beyond the local community" (Landy 1977: 472)) that the Spanish had. Moreover, the same ambivalent relationship of simultaneous desire and fear characterize the Filipinos' attitude to both.

It is interesting, therefore, that, in the Cabra apparitions, the school principal to whom the girl visionaries told of their vision of Mary wanted to first determine that the girls had not just seen a "fairy" (an *engkanto*). Certainly there are clear physical similarities between the *engkantos* and the Virgin Mary. Both are generally described as Caucasian, both are in indisputable positions of power, and both are presumed to dwell on a plane of existence totally inaccessible to the ordinary Filipino. It would not be too far-fetched to suppose other parallelisms: could Filipinos not also "secretly wish they enjoyed the special attention" of the Virgin? And, on a deeper level, could they not also be "afraid" of her? On the surface, it would seem ridiculous to fear the Virgin Mary, who, by virtue of her very identity as the *Mother* of God, could never be considered demonic. Yet there is, nevertheless, the same sort of ambivalence towards the "Virgin as Caucasian" (and thus from a privileged class), on the part of Filipinos that is apparent in their attitude towards the *engkantos*, as I shall show later.

Conversion to Catholicism and the kind of piety it insisted upon was particularly unkind to the social and moral status of Filipino women, whose sexuality was "demonized" throughout the Spanish colonial period. We find, in Spanish accounts from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, value judgements based on cultural preferences influenced by centuries of Augustinian inspired morality, resulting in an inevitable clash with the local ideology, largely to the disadvantage of the latter. Such judgements were particularly strong with regards to sexual practices in the islands, and, in most such accounts, women were often indicated as the perpetuators of sexual lewdness, a role inevitably frowned upon by missionaries who believed, as Augustine did, that "woman is a creature neither decisive or constant" (and hence, more susceptible to sins of the flesh?).[5] Indeed, the description of Filipino women by Miguel de Loarca that follows, written in the late sixteenth century, is a fairly typical example of the Spanish attitude:

> *Las mugeres son hermosas aunqe deshonestas no se les da nada de cometer adulterio porqe nunca las Castigan ellos...son ellas grandissimas alcaguetas y de sus proprias hijas y ansi ninguna cosa se les da de ser Ruynès delante de las madres proqe* [sic] *por esto no se les da ningun castigo aunqe los varones...*[6]

His observations reflect those of Antonio Pigafetta, Ferdinand Magellan's Italian chronicler, who was startled to find that Filipino men indulged in particular sexual customs because "the women wish it so, and ...if they did otherwise they would have no communication with them".[7] Later, in the seventeenth century, Fr. Francisco Ignacio Alzina, a Jesuit priest famous for his comprehensive manuscript on the islands and people of the Visayas[8] entitled ***Historia de Visayas*** (1668), reiterated this impression. He observed that women of the Visayas Islands were particularly subject to lust, more so than the men, and were often the initiators of sexual activity. Yet another Spaniard, Juan de Medina, attributed the practice of penis piercing among the natives to an "inordinate sexual appetite", presumably among the women more than the men:

> women considered it a compliment and were proud of it, and in their songs during their drunken feasts were wont to man a *karakoa* [warship] with those who had been their lovers; and as further evidence of this, they would not let a man approach them who did not have a *sakra*, which is a little spiked wheel like a Catherine Wheel, with the point blunted, which was fastened with a bronze pin through it, for since childhood they had their male organs pierced through, with which they did it with women like dogs. (In Scott 1994: 25)

Indeed, this reputation for sexual proclivity that Filipino women had was so well documented that in the late nineteenth century Dr. Jose Rizal found it necessary, in his annotations on Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Mexico, 1606), to defend the chastity of the Filipina. He wrote that "This weakness of Indio women that historians relate, it seems, can be attributed not only to the sincerity with which they obey nature and their own instincts but also to a religious belief that Fr. Chirino tells us about". He was also quick to refer to other accounts which, contrary to popular belief, gave "numerous examples of the chastity of young women who resisted and preferred death to surrendering to the violence and threats of the soldiers and *encomenderos*",[9] pointing out that it was only when Christianity was imposed on local culture that the sexual act became a mortal sin, "because (perhaps agreeing with the agnostics) it [Christianity] saw everything carnal as corrupt, bad, like something from the devil, giving sire [sic] to that horror of the flesh that dominated the Cenobites, hermits, etc., etc."[10]

But such a sexuality was, of course, denigrated by good Catholics, who believed that women should encompass the Marian ideal, with the consequence that, as Scott points out, "Subjugated Filipinos responded to military and moral suasion by abandoning customs which were offensive to their foreign conqueror" (Scott 1995: 276). By the nineteenth century, such changes were in place, and, to perpetuate Marian femininity, mothers were being told that

> the purity of your daughter is only comparable to a limpid mirror which can be clouded by the slightest breath. When a young woman starts a conversation alone with a young man, to what else do we compare her but to an innocent hind pursued by a ferocious dog which will not leave her alone until it has bitten her, even killed her? If you tell me that the girl is sensible, that she is upright, I shall answer that it still remains the duty of her parents not to expose her to the risk of ruin...[11]

There is, in this passage, an implicit reference to Mary, who was the *specula sine macula*, the unblemished mirror of God (Wisdom of Solomon 7: 26; see also Warner 1990:248). Moreover, it can be seen here that sexual aggression had effectively been transferred from female (now the "innocent hind") to male (the "ferocious dog"). What is interesting about this particular passage, from the feminist perspective, is that there is a suggestion here that women have become victims of male sexuality, that is, they can be "ruined" by male sexual attention. It is apparent, moreover, that the female role had become defined as one of passivity, with an emphasis on Christian purity and reticence.

One significant consequence of this privileging of the Marian ideal was the parallel elevation of the standards of beauty that it promoted and which were most closely reflected in the white female or the fair-skinned mestiza. Thus to be white (or at least fair-skinned) was (and is) to be beautiful – to the detriment of the majority of dark skinned people in the archipelago. This stereotype of the ideal beauty has been particularly harmful to Filipino women who, from the earliest days of the conquest, were often unfavorably compared to Spanish or European women. Pigafetta, for example, displays just such preferential value judgements when he wrote of some young native girls who played musical instruments for them at the house of the king of Zubu [Cebu] that "those girls were very beautiful and *almost as white* [italics mine] as our girls and as large" (in BR 33:151).

The perpetuation of the white/mestizo ideal, in fact, occurred throughout the Spanish colonial period, was augmented even further by similar American notions of feminine beauty, and continues well into the present. Nicanor Tiongson has pointed out, for example, that throughout the colonial period, the girls chosen to play the role of the Virgin in the Holy Week street Passion plays or *senakulo*, were chosen for their resemblance to the statues of the Virgin, and, as these statues were mostly Caucasian in feature, the mestiza obviously had an edge over her brown-skinned counterparts. Tiongson writes, "It is not surprising that the term "*parang Birhen*" [like the Virgin] became a stock metaphor among native poets in describing the idealized beauty of a woman" (Tiongson, in C. Lumbera and Maceda 1982: 318).[12] It is

in just such a way that the mestiza character, Maria Clara, the epitome of Filipino womanhood, is described in the novel *Noli Me Tangere* (1887), written by the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal. In short, the standard of beauty established by the foreign or the foreign-looking mestizo came to be intricately intertwined with Filipino perceptions of the Virgin, whose statues and images soon became the norm by which female beauty must be judged, for this iconography was of course based on Spanish ideals of feminine perfection.

A similar perspective of the mestiza is evident in contemporary Philippine movies: like Maria Clara, the leading stars of these movies are almost always mestiza. Similarly, in Philippine provincial beauty pageants the winners are invariably those who are fair-skinned (see Chapter 5). In other words, in Philippine society, often all it takes to achieve superstardom (that is, fame and fortune) was simply to be of mixed blood.

However, there is also a clear ambivalence in the general (that is, brown skinned) Filipino attitude towards the mestiza or the white foreigner. In the nineteenth century, as in the case of Maria Clara, and even in the twentieth, such Christian passivity attracted sexual violence: the mestiza is greatly desired, yet debased, in the most sexual ways. Maria Clara's importance as a social symbol is thus interesting in more ways than one when taken within the context of Philippine society in its entirety. The *Noli* was a scathing commentary on the abuses of the 19th century Spanish frailocracy, and Maria Clara was the result of an adulterous affair between her mother and a Spanish friar. At the end of the novel, when Maria Clara retires to a convent, there is a strong indication that she is sexually abused there by a Spanish priest.

There is, in this situation, an interesting process of reversal: the violation of the untouchable ideal occurs not only within the texts in which it appears, but also (at least in the imaginations of the readers/audiences) in the most physical and carnal sense. Such violations occur frequently in the Philippine movies mentioned above. In these movies, the mestiza, in the form of the lead actress, is projected as a clear and *available* object of male desire. In this instance, the inaccessible becomes accessible to the average Filipino male through the fantasy world of the movie, and the elite status associated with the mestizo social class is subverted and debased. This analysis is substantiated by Pennie S. Azarcon dela Cruz's survey of Philippine magazines, TV shows, films, newspapers, tabloids and advertisements entitled ...*From Virgin to Vamp: Images of Women in Philippine Media* (1988), which reveals that women today are largely portrayed in terms of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Not only that,

but good, chaste women were and are almost always represented in media not only as victims of social or moral injustices in general, but also specifically as victims of sexual abuse – as victims in male rape fantasies, for instance.

Ironically, in another instance of reversal, the stereotype of the promiscuous native woman has boomeranged back to Western culture with a vengeance, with the Filipino (and indeed, other Asians) looking upon the white, Western female in the same way that the West once looked upon the Asian woman. Indeed, American notions of female sexuality have to a great extent perpetuated the Filipino denigration of the white/mestizo female. In a country where morality is dictated by conservative religious norms and female sexuality is more often repressed rather than expressed, the white woman or mestiza is identified with overt sexuality, a consequence of a more recent perception of the West (especially America) as a place where women are often represented as sex objects. The Filipino assumption behind such portrayals is that these women are *willing* to be portrayed as such, are therefore themselves sexually liberated, and thus more readily available for sexual exploitation.

Here, in fact, is an example of Occidentalism, wherein the self is recreated by turning the Western Other into a kind of fetish, as in the way that Western women are sexually portrayed, for example, in Japanese advertisements wherein "images of [white] foreigners are fantasy depictions, attention-getters, flights of fancy which help construct Japanese identity by portraying what Japanese are not, and thus perpetuate a discourse of otherness" (Creighton, in Carrier 1995:156). Indeed, in most of Asia, the West, or the white Other, is seen in a dualistic manner "both as the bearers of highly valued innovation and style, and as a moral threat" (Ibid: 141), and if, in Japan, there is a tendency to "control" the threat of the exotic Other by presenting what are actually general representations or stereotypes of this Other, in the Philippines, this assumption of moral superiority involves the debasement of the Other. While the white-skinned mestiza is accorded social and financial status in "real" life by her promotion as beauty queen or movie star, within the beauty pageant or within the frames of the film, she assumes a position as a representation of male sexual fantasy and is thus reduced to mere sexual object.

The Filipino preference for the white Other, when carried too far, was in fact often looked down upon by Filipinos themselves, even during colonial times. The standard example of this excess is Doña Victorina, another character in the *Noli*, who is presented as a parody on the colonial mentality of certain Filipinos at the end of the Spanish period. In the novel,

she tries to *become* more Spanish than the Spanish, going to the extent of marrying the first Spaniard that offered (who, unfortunately, came quite late in her life), layering her face with white rice powder, and throwing about Spanish words – but this only turns her into a figure of fun because everyone (Spanish and Filipino) knows her efforts are futile: she is and always will be an *indio*. Because she is not a figure that can be taken seriously, she was not considered a real threat to colonial authority. In fact, in this instance, the ridicule was directed, not at the colonizer but at the members of the colonized who subscribed to the white ideal. Similar ridicule towards such a colonial mentality is to be found in many Philippine television commercials today, where the slogan "be true to yourself" is invariably made to mean "accept that you are Filipino" (see Chapter 6). Though the eminence of the white-skinned foreigner or the mestizo in Philippine society is something which cannot be ignored, it is nevertheless largely seen by many social critics as something to be abhorred.

This ambivalence in the attitude towards the foreign/mestizo which is characterized by both desire and derision is reflected in attitudes towards the Virgin and provides us with the necessary background in which to situate any discussion on modern Marian stereotypes in the country. In the following sections, it is useful to keep in mind the fact that the Marian ideal which was perpetuated by colonial discourse and which influences the modern stereotype today discriminated against the Filipino on two counts: first, Catholic Marian discourse praised femininity as "shrinking, retiring acquiescence" and thus reinforced the "myth of female inferiority and dependence" (Warner 1990: 191) by indicating that women's importance lay *primarily* in the nature of their relationship to men (i.e. as mothers, sisters, or daughters); second, Filipino women were subjected to colonial standards of beauty wherein to be white was to be beautiful. The only point at which Western and Philippine concepts of womanliness intersected was in the idealization of motherhood, but even here, the Western Marian ideal insisted that a woman's *only* power lay in her role "as the origin of the heir's life" (Ibid.: 288), whereas, as I shall point out later, the notions of virginity and primogeniture (and its absolute insistence on virginity, at least during the Western Middle Ages when land had come to be seen as a prime commodity) were relatively unimportant in Philippine pre-Hispanic society and motherhood was constructed upon an entirely different system of values that placed it in a privileged position that transcended most other social roles, even that of fatherhood.

Given the Philippines's strong Catholic tradition, reflected in its pride in being the only dominantly Christian nation in Asia, remnants of this imposed ideology may still be seen

in the country's popular culture today, yet, despite what many have noted as the "misogyny" inherent in the figure of the Virgin,[13] the Virgin remains the most popular Catholic figure in the country. Much of this popularity is due to the particular ways in which her image has been re-codified in the local context. The most persuasive of the Spanish Marian stereotypes is careful to suppress all references to Mary's sexuality (the inevitable counterpoint to the notion of virginity) by presenting her as "Mother", and as such, also attempts to transcend the element of her "foreignness". Needless to say, however, this stereotype is promoted mainly by the dominant social classes who have inherited the Spanish colonial elite's sensibilities (indeed the Virgin is also often known in the Philippines as "Nuestra Señora" which itself indicates membership in a privileged social class) and who have the most to gain from such an appropriation; the poor, on the other hand, while generally accepting of this dominant Marian stereotype, nevertheless have found other ways to make "Mary as Mother" meaningful in a more genuinely Filipino manner.

In the following discussion, I identify the ways in which "Mary as Mother" was appropriated, first in the context of pre-Hispanic traditions, and later, in the context of the popular movement that eventually resulted in the Philippine revolution against Spain. The stereotypes that emerged from these appropriations of Mary are in active currency in Philippine society today.

Appropriation: Mary as an Untranslatable Concept

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Catholicism was introduced into the various Spanish colonies as a way of legitimizing the Spanish colonial presence in these different localities. The syncretic Catholicism that developed in these places as a result of inevitable transculturation in turn produced a Marian devotion that was itself heavily hybridized. While this dissertation focuses on Philippine Marian devotion, a comparison of this devotion with those that emerged in Latin America is useful in order to identify the unique elements of the Philippine devotion. The comparison emerges as particularly interesting with regards to Mexico, with which the Philippines had the most contact and from which the Philippines directly received elements of an already transculturated Marianism because of the galleon trade between Acapulco and Mexico, for, despite the Mexican influences and the similarities in the colonial situation, the Philippine devotion nevertheless took a different path towards transculturation.

One reason for the development of a hybridized Marian worship in the colonies was the way in which the Spanish missionaries took advantage of the presence of a native goddess to facilitate the native reception to and acceptance of the devotion. "The early Christian church," Boxer writes, "often took care to found its sanctuaries in sites which had formerly been dedicated to heathen deities, this facilitating conversion and continuity at the same time. The cult of the Virgin in Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, which is particularly popular with the indigenous inhabitants, certainly owed something in its early stages to the fact that the Virgin's miraculous appearance (in December 1531) occurred, and her church was subsequently built, at a place which had been sacred to the Aztec corn (maize) goddess" (Boxer 1975: 105). This is the idea taken up by Eric Wolf in his essay, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol"(1979), wherein he shows how the Virgin is actually a syncretic object, a hybrid composed of the Virgin Mary brought into Mexico by the Spaniards and the native goddess, Tonantzin, and by Benítez-Rojo in his discussion of *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* (see Chapter 3, page 49).

In his essay on the Cebuano Virgin of Guadalupe, Resil Mojares argues, unconvincingly, that the story of the Philippine Virgin "is clearly an instance of the myth in which a pre-Christian goddess is displaced by, or fused into, the figure of the Virgin Mary" in a manner similar to that which occurred in Mexico.[14] But his basis for this argument, the assumption that there was indeed such a pre-Christian goddess figure in the Philippines, is somewhat erroneous. The two deities he specifically mentions, Mariang Makiling and Maria Cacao, were originally nature spirits or *diwatas*, and such spirits were of a more or less generic type, much like the dryads and nymphs of Greek mythology. Certainly, in pre-Hispanic Philippines, each lake, river, waterfall, mountain or even cave boasted of a resident *diwata* whose main functions were to provide a origin narrative for the location and to ensure that the location would be treated with the proper respect due to nature. By their very names, too, it is clear that these figures assumed their specific identities *after* the arrival of the Spaniards, in which case perhaps the Spanish or converted locals *tried*, in these places at least, to superimpose Marian worship over the local veneration.

But, tied to specific locations as they were (Makiling is the name of a Philippine mountain, for instance), these minor deities very rarely crossed geographical boundaries and thus no one figure ever achieved widespread veneration on the same scale as that of Tonantzin or Atabey, as a survey of Philippine mythology will reveal. Certainly, there was no female deity who could be said to resemble the Virgin Mary enough to be absorbed by her.

Indeed, the pre-Hispanic religion and mythology which the Spaniards encountered in the country often varied considerably from one location to another, the only exception being a common belief in one main god figure who was known by various names in various places (i.e. Bathala/Laon).[15] Thus the cult of Mary, while falling on fertile ground in the Philippines, cannot be said to be influenced by any pre-Hispanic devotion to a goddess figure.

The Western concept of virginity was also problematic and difficult for the natives of the archipelago to understand. While Damiana Eugenio's extensive compilation of Philippine myths enumerates 287 stories from all over the Philippines, and while some of these myths show signs of the assimilation of Christian elements, only one refers to the virgin birth of a hero who is half man half god, and the virgin in question shows no other similarities to the Virgin beyond this fact (Eugenio 1993: 18-32). As for helper goddesses, only one has a somewhat similar function to that of the Virgin, but the story is more important as an origin myth and it is found only in Bohol. In the story, Sappia, the goddess of mercy, alleviates a famine that has gripped Bohol by turning weeds into rice:

> Her heart welling with compassion, Sappia bared her bosom and squeezed a drop of milk into each barren ear of the weeds. She emptied one breast, and then the other, but alas! there were still a few more weeds with empty ears. She implored heaven to give her more milk, but when she pressed her breast again, blood and not milk dropped into the remaining sterile ears. Having given her all to the plants, she bent low and whispered: "Oh, plants! Bear thou in abundance and feed my hungry people." (Eugenio 1993: 436)

In a similar rice legend from the Tagalog peoples, the milk does not even come from a goddess but from ordinary women, and the helper deity in the story is the principal god Bathala, who sends down a lesser god, Lakambui, to solve the crisis. The use of a male deity is, in fact, more common in the origin myths than the use of female ones, and this is the case in the legends of the origin of rice among the Nabaloi and Ibaloi peoples.

The myths show that the theme of virginity is not a common one in Philippine mythology and the concept of chastity was, in fact, a Spanish introduction into the country, a social prescription perhaps imperative back in medieval Europe, where feudal landowners wanted to ensure that the land remained within the family (hence the law on primogeniture), but essentially useless in the Philippines, where a different concept of land ownership (that is, land was perceived as communal property) prevailed.[16] The Filipino word for "virgin" is "birhen" – in fact just a respelling of the Spanish word "virgen" – and while devotion to Mary

in the Philippines was adapted to suit native beliefs as I showed earlier in this chapter, because there was no precedent in Philippine pre-Hispanic religion by which the Filipinos could understand and appropriate the Virgin for themselves, the Virgin *herself* has retained her "foreignness" in much the same way that untranslatable Latin and Castilian words in Christian discourse were retained in the vernacular:

> Within the colonial context, Tagalog infused with untranslatable Latin and Castilian words now seemed not alien, exactly, yet not quite one's own language, either. The untranslated Latin and Castilian terms were the traces of an outside force breaking into the fabric of the convert's language. They made it necessary to translate within one's own language, that is, to distinguish between terms that had indigenous referents and terms whose meaning lay outside of what could be said in Tagalog. Thus the presence of Latin and Castilian terms in Tagalog opened up for the natives the possibility of finding in their language something that resisted translation. (Rafael 1988, 111)

The concept of the Virgin Mary, like the Latin and Castilian terms, was 'alien' to the Filipinos, and, though there was an effort to assimilate it into the native paradigm by focusing on the image of Mary as mother, it nevertheless retained a degree of "untranslatability". While linguistic critics have acknowledged the issue of the inherent "untranslatability" of certain concepts, (in fact, Rafael owes much of his notions on translation to Walter Benjamin in particular), it is apparent that, even today, the totality of Mary's Christian symbolism has seemingly failed to take root in the local psyche, as I shall show in the following section.

The Mother Cult: Appropriation of Mary as Mother

The Virgin is indeed a ubiquitous presence in Philippine daily life. But the Church has yet to find a way to convince Filipino Catholics to see her in what it considers the proper way, for we must remember that Mary's role in Christianity is, after all, intercessory. As Theotokos, her primary function is to mediate between God and man. In this sense, she resembles the female principle and the mediatrix of which Jung speaks, the "fairy godmother" to whom Campbell refers (see Introduction). Certainly, like those two figures, she is a constant source of reassurance, a well-known and well-loved source of comfort from the troubles of the world. In the whole notion of the mother lies the feeling that "all will be well". It is in this connection that I now propose that Mary's sovereignty in the Philippines lies mainly in the fact, that among Filipinos, there is a strong emphasis on the value of the mother. She is, apart from her universal maternal traits, also seen as intercessor, martyr, and moral example to her children.

But, in many ways, Marian devotees all around the world suppose Mary to be extremely powerful in her own right, as evident in the international signature campaign launched early in the 1990s asking the Vatican to proclaim her as "Co-Redemptrix" alongside Jesus Christ. This is certainly the case in the Philippines. As I stated in the Introduction, in the Philippines, Mary is generally seen as even more powerful than her Son because the mother holds a special place in Philippine society. As Mulder pointed out, in the Philippines as in other Southeast Asian countries

> If there is sinful behavior, it is located in concrete interpersonal bonds, with the relationship to the mother as the exemplary center. To go against her, to betray her expectations, is hideous indeed and an instance in which Filipinos, Javanese, and Thais all agree that supernatural retribution will be inescapable. Not to know gratitude and obligation is to place oneself beyond the pale of civilized life. (Mulder 1997: 18)

Indeed, the importance of Mary's maternal aspect may be clearly seen in her most common appellation in the country: Mama Mary or, in Tagalog, *Ang Mahal na Ina* (Beloved Mother). Rene B. Javellana analyzes this incisively in an essay entitled, "Ntra. Sra de La _____, To Mama Mary" (1991).[17] The essay examines the way Filipinos view the Virgin Mary, particularly as seen in Filipino portrayals of her in religious iconography.

Javellana finds that, largely due to the moral reorientation of native society by the Spanish missionaries in the past, Philippine Madonnas are never shown as nurturing the infant Jesus with bared breasts, as in Renaissance art, for example, although her role as mother has been emphasized. He writes, "If our own religious iconography has suppressed the character of Mary as Venus, it is her role as Mother that we have so finely and creatively delineated. For the loving son or daughter, mothers are hardly sexual Aphrodites or Eves. Motherhood also emphasizes other feminine qualities: sensitivity, concern, care, delicacy, protectiveness, and self-sacrifice" (1991: 153).

He further points out that the Filipino *pasyon* of the past centuries fostered this view. In the *Pasyong Genesis*, for example, "though the *pasyon* calls her virgin and alludes to her femininity, these qualities do not count when the poet begins to present Mary as a pasyon character. Instead, we find her adept at such domestic skills as weaving and sewing, thoughtful to the point of setting aside food for her son's disciples, and ever protective of her son." Also, "the figure of the mother as a tear-filled martyr (not just Mary but other mothers as well), as self-sacrificing for her children, is a well-worn theme of popular

literature. In fact, it is in self-sacrifice that mothers prove themselves worthy of the name." (That this theme of the *mater dolorosa* has found its way into countless television shows and soap operas, not to mention movies, shows its popularity and prevalence.) Javellana ends his essay with a comment, "Mama Mary, this latest of Marian titles, summarizes how Mary is seen in the popular mind. There are no hints about her sexuality; her queenship has been reduced to queenship at home. Mama Mary, how quaint!" (Javellana 1991:155)

Zimdars-Swartz notes that Mary's maternal qualities have been stressed in many modern apparitions, usually in connection with an apocalyptic theme, "suggesting that it is a mother who is best able to rescue her children from impending disaster" (1991: 250). Such a maternal image, with all its associated characteristics, carries within itself a benevolent authority: no mother wants to hurt her child, in fact, a mother often goes to the extent of sacrificing herself for the sake of her children. In the Philippine value system, a woman is highly valued as mother and housekeeper. She is the one who keeps the family close together, and is prepared to sacrifice herself to this end. She is the intermediary between her children and her husband, who is stereotyped as loving, but distant and stern. In this role, she is seen as the benevolent and guiding authority within the family.

These characteristics of the woman's role in society are reinforced through the media. Soledad S. Reyes's analysis of women in Philippine television indicates that the most preponderant image of women in television dramas was that of the suffering mother, while in public service programs, women "fulfill the role of the caring mother/aunt/older sister; she is the non-threatening authority figure who will try her best to extend help to Manila's urban poor" (Reyes 1991). Such traits have also come to be ascribed to Mary, Mother of God. The Agoo visionary, for example, ascribes characteristics to the Virgin that mirror his perception of his own mother: when asked to compare his mother and the Virgin Mary, he responded, "Both are motherly, humble, tenderly [sic]" (Cruz 1995: 138). Mary, as Mother of God and of all Christian Filipinos, is also projected as the ultimate provider of solutions to dissent and strife, as the righter of wrongs, whether on the personal or on the national level, yet she remains relatively passive and non-threatening; after all, how can one fear a mother who is only interested in the wellbeing of her children? To this end, Filipinos always refer to the Virgin Mary as "Mama Mary". It is as if there is a need to emphasize her role as Mother, not only of Christ, but also of all Filipinos.

The use of the media has been a particularly effective tool in the perpetuation of the Virgin's image as "Mama Mary". In the late '80s, a family-oriented religious movement called the Family Rosary Crusade's used the broadcast media to effectively advertise what was called the "3 o'clock habit". The advertisements successfully raised public consciousness on praying the Holy Rosary. In these advertisements, families were urged to pray the rosary together everyday at 3 p.m., as "A family that prays together, stays together". As a colleague commented, "Though I was born a Catholic, my family were not active practitioners, and I was never really very aware of religion until I started seeing these ads. Now Mary is everywhere." In the face of such a rigorous promotion of the Virgin Mary, Fr. Catalino G. Arevalo's exclamation in the foreword of Bacani's book, *Mary and the Filipino* (1986), comes across as somewhat facetious. He writes: "Is it not remarkable that after a decade or more of seeming 'eclipse' the figure of the Blessed Mother is returning once again with power to the Catholic consciousness?" (1986: v-vi)[18] I suggest that it is in fact mainly because of the Church's promotion of Marian worship that most apparitions in the Philippines are Marian apparitions, and that the continued portrayal of "Mary as Mother" is an attempt to offset the indelible concept of her "foreignness" which will be discussed later.

Inang Bayan and the Appropriation of Mary as Militant Symbol

If the early Spanish legends showing that the Virgin appears to save the faithful in times of crisis continue to be popular today (see Chapter 1), the notion of Mary as the leader of the army of the righteous, the "woman clothed in the sun" mentioned in the Book of Revelations, is equally pervasive. This unnamed woman, described as crushing a serpent beneath her heel, is usually taken to refer to Mary and is symbolic of the triumph of good over evil.

This militant image has been used time and again to justify actual military confrontations, by both the Spanish conquistadors and the conquered. As Zimdars-Swartz points out, "On a social level... Mary is presented as the leader of a mighty army of spiritual warriors ready to do battle with the forces of evil. These two images of Mary, set in the context of the last times, have frequently led to a militant Marian ideology united with conservative political forces" (1991:19).

While, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, one type of crises that constantly affects the Philippines is political, and at least two groups have claimed to have received messages from the Virgin that were political in nature, in the past, Filipinos have not generally considered

militancy as a characteristic of the Virgin. That role has fallen largely to the suffering Christ, as Ileto and others have clearly shown. The importance the suffering Christ held for the masses in the past centuries is quite understandable in the Philippine historical context, and this is a topic that has already been much discussed because of its clear political symbolism. But in the few instances wherein Mary was used as an obvious signifier for political rebellions against Spanish authorities, retribution was immediate and often violent.

In one extreme instance that occurred in 1646, several natives took it upon themselves to organize a popular movement wherein, in an act of grotesque parody of the Christian religion and possibly even to show contempt of it, they named themselves after the Holy Trinity, their leader, a man called Cabati, going as far as to claim for himself the title of the "Eternal Father", and a woman called Yga referring to herself as "Holy Mary". They drew enough of a following to attract Spanish retribution, with the consequence that many of the members of the movement were killed, including Cabati and the woman, Yga.[19] Not much seems to be known about the movement apart from this report, and rather than being a new religious movement with a coherent set of religious beliefs, it appears to have been solely reactionary to the imposition of Christianity.

Some clarification must be made at this point. By parody, I mean the word in the sense of "deliberate mockery", which can only be threatening to the object being parodied. In this sense, the actions of the native leaders described above were a form of "mimicry" that posed a clear and obvious threat to the Spaniards, though not in the sense in which Bhabha means the term. By "mimicry", Bhabha refers to the desire of the colonial authority to "recreate" the colonial subject in its own image, but which ultimately becomes threatening to the colonial authority precisely because it is only a "partial presence" (Bhabha 1994). The threat of mimicry actually exists only as a perception on the part of the colonial authority rather than as the result of actual behaviour on the part of the colonial subject. The appropriation of the colonial instrument in this case was a real and not an imagined threat to the colonial authority. Such an appropriation by the natives of a particularly important colonial signifier was clearly subversive and it was a threat that had to be quickly eliminated in order to reassert the uniaccentuality of the sign (in this case, the Holy Family).

Another effort to appropriate Mary as a militant symbol occurred during the Philippine revolution against Spain, and this was in the attempt to correlate the idea of Mother Country (a title that originally referred to Spain but which was transferred to the Philippine

during the Philippine revolution) with the idea of the Virgin. Ileto notes that "The very notion of Mother Country rode on popular images of the Virgin Mary, who appears in the *pasyon* as the ideal Filipino mother, behaving in the traditional fashion as the son persists in his untraditional mission" (Ileto 1979: 105). The identification of Mother Country (or *Inang Bayan*) with the Virgin took place in a dream that one of the Filipino revolutionaries had. Ileto gives the account as follows:

> There is a story told by Aurelio Tolentino that one night, as Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, himself and others were asleep in Tandang Sora's house in Balintawak, one of them dreamt of a beautiful woman leading by the hand a handsome child. The woman looked exactly like the Virgin Mary in Church statues, except that she wore a native costume, the *balintawak*. The child was dressed in peasant garb, armed with a glittering bolo, and shouting '*kalayaan* [freedom]! The woman approached the dreamer to warn him about something. Roused from his sleep, he narrated his dream to his companions, who all concluded that the Virgin was warning them against proceeding to Manila that morning. They all decided to tarry a while longer in Balintawak. Later the news arrived that the Katipunan-infiltrated printing shop of the *Diario de Manila* had been raided by the guardia civil. Without the Virgin's warning, alleged Tolentino, Bonifacio would have been captured along with the others and executed, and the revolution delayed indefinitely. (Ibid.)

At the time, the dream of Mary wearing a native costume suggested to the Filipino mind that she and *Inang Bayan* were one and the same, and that Mary was in fact on their side in the revolution. However, one will note that, the *balintawak* notwithstanding, Mary nevertheless retained her own identity in that she "looked exactly like the Virgin Mary in Church statues", which is to say, she must have looked Spanish. It is very likely for this reason that Mary and *Inang Bayan* ceased at some point to be one and the same. If, in later references to *Inang Bayan*, it seems that *Inang Bayan* eventually took on a unique identity separate from the Virgin as a symbolic representation of the Philippines, this was undoubtedly because it was difficult to reconcile a figure so obviously foreign with the nationalist agenda. (The symbolic representation of the Philippines as a woman dressed in the national colors, it must be noted here, is a fairly common one to be found in modern, nativistic religious groups).

In the case of the revolutionaries, it is precisely because of Mary's Caucasian appearance that she could never truly be claimed as a symbol of the brown-skinned Filipino. She had to be transmogrified into a more credible and certainly more suitable representation as *Inang Bayan*. It is interesting, therefore, that Mary (in her Caucasian guise) has been re-appropriated as a clear symbol of militancy and for avowedly nationalistic purposes in very recent years.

In Tolentino's dream, as in the early legends and indeed in many modern appropriations of Mary, the suggestion is that to have the Virgin on one's side is to say that one is on the side of the good, of truth and of justice, a common perception among Filipinos today that is played up by an increasingly politicized and militant Philippine Church.

In the Church's identification of its various causes with Mary, it is in fact appropriating the age-old stereotype of Mary as the leader of the righteous, and by doing do, it implies that its opponents, by default, must be on the side of evil. This was certainly the case in the 1986 People Power Revolution against then president Ferdinand E. Marcos, wherein the devoutly religious Corazon Aquino called upon the masses to join her in praying the rosary to save the country from the evil dictator and wherein the Catholic Church used all its considerable resources in calling people from all over the country to converge along Edsa, where the revolution was taking place. The Virgin of Edsa is known both as Our Lady of the Revolution and as Our Lady of Peace. As Bacani notes,

> The victory [at Edsa] would not be complete without Mary, our blessed Mother. Everywhere people were, Mary was. A thousand soldiers in combat gear...stopped by some hundreds praying the rosary, singing 'Immaculate Mother' in the night. ...People Power was Mary's power. The revolution for peace was the revolution. And its victory was Mary's victory. (1986: 69)

If Mary is to be considered a militant political symbol today, therefore, this is mainly due to the active use of her as the ultimate signifier for righteousness and justice by both religious groups and individuals. The stereotype presented here, that of a militant Mary as the leader of a righteous army, gives us an idea of just how powerful Mary can be as an instrument of justification and authority, and as such, anyone blessed with her particular attention is, by association, generally perceived to be just as pure and trustworthy. Because one instinctively reacts to such a stereotype in a positive way, it is often appropriated and manipulated to assert the right to power (or to sympathy) of certain individuals. (See pictures, page 115.)

From the preceding discussion, we can see that the identification of Mary as mother remains constant whether she is perceived as Mother Country" or as "Mary, Mother of God", and indicates the paramount importance of the mother in Philippine society.[20] But the appropriation also works in the reverse: if the motivation behind such manipulations is less than pure, the stereotype itself becomes likewise tainted.

Manipulating Mary – The Appropriated Marian Stereotype in Everyday Philippine Marian Devotion

The appropriations of the stereotype of "Mary as Mother", imbued as it is with all the positive values ascribed to the maternal by Filipinos, and indeed, of the stereotype of her as a symbol of justice and righteousness, have lent themselves quite easily to manipulation, particularly by the particular levels of society which identified with her the most: the middle and upper classes. In a 1984 meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, a question was raised: "Why is it that despite the fact that the Philippines is a Christian country, there is so much poverty around us?" According to Bishop Teodoro Bacani, D.D., the answer from one group of bishops was that "religion has been instrumentalized to promote the interests of a few." (1986: 60) Bacani saw this as a matter for worry:

> We must ask ourselves whether to take seriously enough these scriptural and magisterial indications regarding the way Marian devotion should be practiced today. When our images of the Blessed Virgin Mary are so lavishly dressed and paraded, when Marian devotions are so secularized and held for touristic or show purposes, or, when, for all practical purposes, she is shown to be identified with the rich and thus serves as another legitimation of the *status quo*, do we really promote genuine devotion to her who is the Virgin of the Poor (a title given her a long time ago by the parishioners in what is now Our Lady of Peñafrancia Parish, Paco, Manila)?" (Ibid.: 64-65)

He ends the essay with "a very important final point":

> ...the very manner in which we visually present the Virgin may lead to the perpetuation in power of people who, because they are beautiful and richly adorned (and in this way resemble the Virgin), can do what they wish without being questioned. Is it not possible that consciously or unconsciously, some oppressors may foster this identification of the Virgin with the richer class so as to keep in subjection an oppressed people? I think this is worth investigating. (Ibid.: 75)

Bacani's concern about the appropriation of the Marian symbol by unscrupulous members of society is in fact justified in several instances. Filipino politicians in particular have been known to try to manipulate such stereotypes both by claiming to have spiritual advisers and by showing off various religious paraphernalia. As newspaper columnist Ma. Ceres Doyo has commented,

Picture 4: Images of People Power II (clockwise from top): Edsa Shrine; Cardinal Sin; the crowds at the Edsa overpass.

For a while it looked like having a spiritual adviser/crowd drawer/public anointer gave legitimacy to many a politician's actions. Estrada needed to say he had one, especially because of the moral issues raised against him. Very much like those government officials who broadcast their piety by decking their offices with fake votive candles and garishly dressed images of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Is this to announce that they are as pure as distilled water?[21]

This religious stereotype or appearance of piety has also been used to cover up the excesses of the flesh, and often emerges as a grotesque gesture. One of the most notorious examples is that of Calauan, Laguna Mayor Alfredo Sanchez, who, along with his henchmen, was accused of raping a pretty university student and killing her and her boyfriend in 1995. Sanchez tried to gain the pity of the masses by having himself televised in situations strongly indicative of extreme piety: walking into a church on his knees, clutching a rosary, praying piously before a home altar heavily laden with statues of the Virgin and of the saints, and claiming that it was impossible that he, such a devout Catholic who prayed everyday, could possibly be guilty of so heinous a crime. In this elaborate show of religiosity, Sanchez obviously tried to manipulate public perception of himself by adopting the prevailing stereotype of piety – to imply that good, prayerful people who perform such acts as a matter of habit (he claimed) could never be guilty of such heinous crimes. When uncovered, such a manipulative use of the stereotype results in exactly the opposite of what was originally intended and the public response, the insulted awareness of being manipulated, is immediate condemnation. In this case, the appropriated stereotype could not override the realities of the case, and in what is generally perceived to be a landmark case for the Philippine judiciary system (petty "warlords" like Sanchez who have their own small personal armies and a wide network of connections in high places do not, as a rule, get convicted in the country), Sanchez was proven guilty beyond doubt after a 16-month trial.

For his part, Estrada likewise tried to appropriate the same stereotype of Mary to bolster his own image. During the impeachment trial against him, he made it a point to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Piat, announcing to the media that his purpose was to pay back his *utang na loób* to the Virgin. Yet his visit to the shrine was also a politically motivated act: in the course of the visit, he implied to the media that he had won the presidency *because* he had prayed to the Virgin for victory prior to the elections, said that he was there again to thank her, and clearly stated that he had asked her for help in his present crisis. The suggestion here, at least to the popular mind, is that because the Virgin had favored him once, she would probably do so again. What Estrada was clearly trying to fix in the minds of the people was

that he had attained political ascendancy as a result of a divine, Marian sanction, and, being thus favored, could not be the evil and corrupt politician his enemies were making him out to be.

In a similar move, Macapagal-Arroyo herself made sure to attend a "thanksgiving" Mass at the shrine of the centuries-old Lady of Manaoag in Pangasinan on January 27, 2001, exactly a week after she took her oath as the fourteenth president of the Philippine Republic. Given the fame of the Manaoag Virgin all over the Philippines, Arroyo's act in effect served to associate herself to an important social and religious symbol of morality and righteousness, and, by doing so, to legitimize her ascension to power by default, rather than by the popular mandate, after Estrada had been forced to step down.

But the manipulation of the stereotype is by no means limited to the middle and upper classes. Such representations of piety as seen in the saints' lives and in the biographies of ecclesiastics, influential as they were, generated a particular stereotype of Catholic piety closely associated with the Marian image that is often manipulated in Philippine society today even by those in the lower levels of society. This stereotype characterizes the pious Catholic as a prayerful individual who leads an exemplary life, all of which is *assumed* to reflect a *loób* or inner being that remains pure and serene (for the concept of the *loób* assumes an *outside* as well as an inside) despite any hardships he or she must undergo, because of a particular affiliation or affinity with the divine (see Chapter 3). This stereotype tends to be performance-based (meaning that a pious person must *show* his religiosity in a concrete manner – through his or her appearance, in deeds or interactions with others, or even through the possession of religious paraphernalia) and is thus easily manipulable: one merely has to perform the common rituals of religiosity as publicly as possible and everyone assumes one is truly religious.

Most Filipinos show their religiosity by diligently going to Mass every Sunday, or by making the sign of the cross should they pass by a church or before they embark on a journey. They also believe that piety is demonstrated by surrounding oneself with concrete manifestations of one's religiosity – thus public utility vehicles are commonly adorned with images of the Holy Family; statues of the Virgin and of Jesus Christ can be found inside shopping malls (even in the midst of the jostling crowds of shoppers, the pious Filipino often pauses before these statues and wipes the feet and hands of the images with a handkerchief to gather to him- or herself some of their divine blessings); many houses have an image of the

Virgin beside the front door; and at the entrance halls, it is usual to find an altar with statues of the Virgin and of the Señor Santo Niño de Jesus – the more statues, the more pious the household is.

An anthropologist who was doing fieldwork in Davao, in the island of Mindanao, recounts a situation wherein this popular notion of religion and piety plays a role. In the course of her fieldwork, she interviewed a woman, a garlic merchant, who had gone to Manila to sell her garlic. She eventually found a buyer and was asked to go to the woman's house to finalize the transaction. In return for her merchandise, she was given a cheque for two thousand pesos rather than cash, because the buyer claimed that she did not like keeping too much money in the house. When the cheque bounced, the garlic merchant returned to the address to confront the buyer, only to be told that there was no such person there. When the anthropologist asked why she had trusted the woman in the first place, she was told that the transaction had taken place in a room where there was an altar full of religious figures, and she had believed the woman to be honest because "someone with so many religious statues had to be honest and good."[22] In this particular case, the buyer had successfully exploited the garlic vendor's instinct to trust the presented stereotype of religiosity.

If Catholic piety (and the stereotypes associated with it) is very effectively used in matters that are not perceived to be Catholic (as when the piety is manipulated for material rather than spiritual gain), it is because it readily gives one a veneer of respectability and conventionality, especially in a country with a population that is overwhelmingly Catholic. On the one hand, there is a rational manipulation of religious stereotypes to promote selfish interests; on the other, there is an instinctive, deeply rooted general impulse to affirm the stereotypes. Furthermore, they expose a certain naiveté on the part of the public when it comes to Catholicism: there is a willingness to believe in the good faith of those who openly show their piety. However, an awareness of the duplicity can and must result in deterioration in the stereotype itself, for both user and object become necessarily interrelated in the public view.

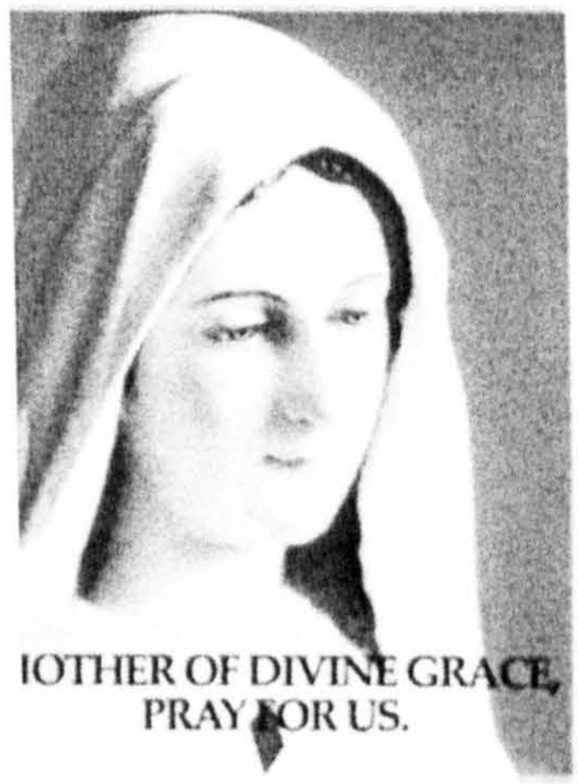
RESISTANCE: Mary as the Perpetual Foreigner

The general appropriation of Mary as "mother" notwithstanding, there was also a simultaneous, but mainly unspoken, disavowal of her as being truly Filipino, particularly among the lower classes, and in the following section, I identify the ways in which this resistance to Mary has been manifested in Philippine society.

Mary and the Legacy of Spanish Iconography

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary to the Indian Juan Diego in Guadalupe, Mexico is the fact that the Virgin appeared to him in the guise of a local woman. However, in many cases, the visions of Mary described by Philippine visionaries are, with relatively few exceptions, that of a Caucasian woman, and this is certainly an influence of the largely Spanish iconography that exists in the country (See pictures, pages 220 to 221). In accounts of the Cabra apparitions, for example, Mary was described as having either golden or chestnut hair, while the Lipa visionary, Teresita Castillo, describes the Virgin as having "silvery hair". In the accounts of the other apparitions, while no clear verbal description of the Virgin was given, the statuary that have resulted from the apparitions clearly show a woman with foreign features.

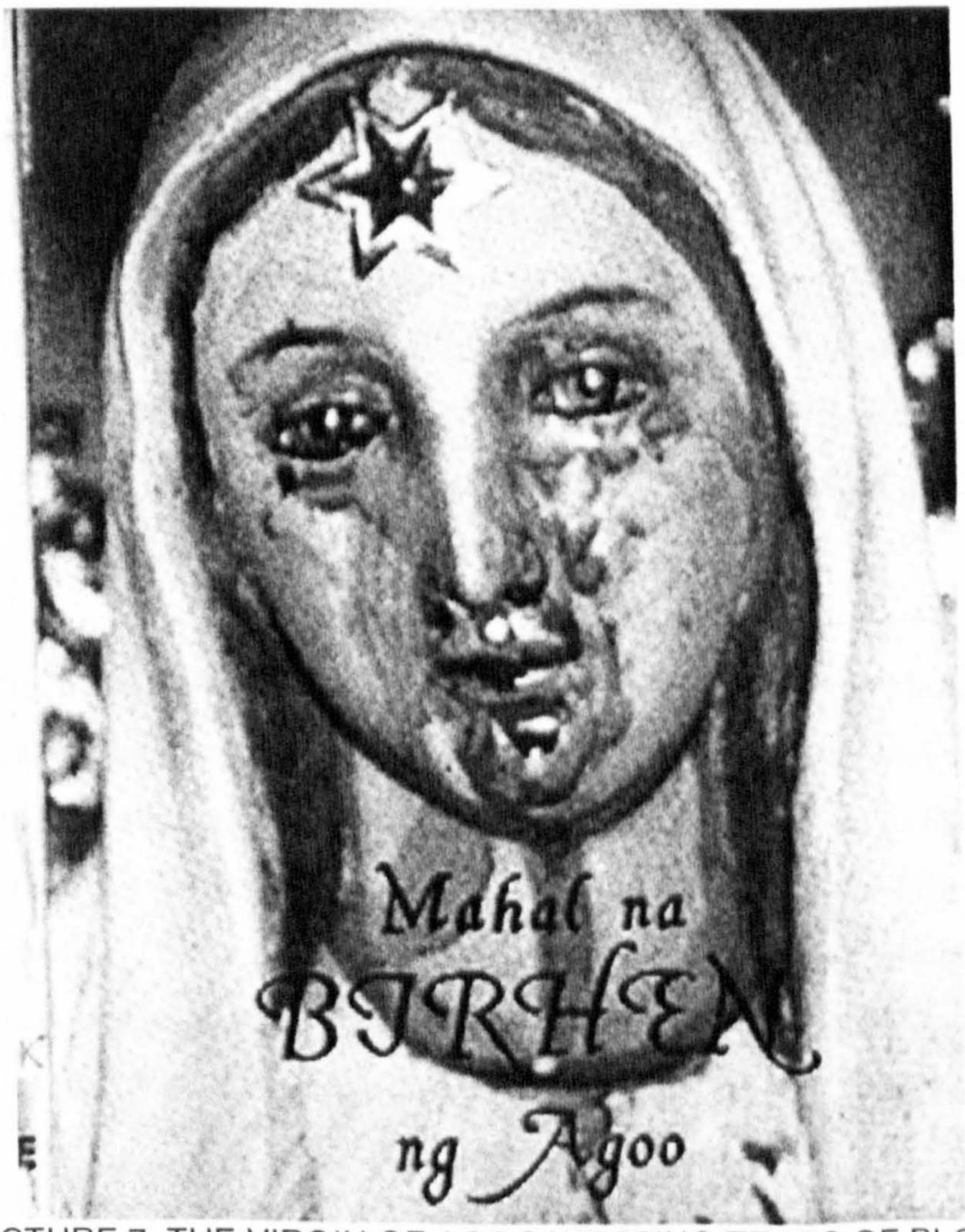
In other words, as a general rule, the Virgin has not been physically "nativized", implying an awareness that Mary is still a "foreigner", despite the fact that most Filipinos claim a special relationship with her. An anecdote helps to illustrate this point. A visiting professor of Spanish Studies from Nottingham-Trent University who was in Manila in September 2000 mentioned to me an amusing experience that she had while riding in a Manila taxicab. The driver looked at her long, wavy brown hair and her very Spanish features, and informed her that she looked like "a virgin". She said she was quite surprised and, being a feminist, not entirely pleased to be told so in such a casual manner. Upon questioning the driver about his pronouncement, it eventually became clear that he did not mean so much "a virgin" as "the Virgin", that is to say, the Virgin Mary, whose images she greatly resembled.



PICTURE 5: COMMON IMAGES OF THE VIRGIN IN THE PHILIPPINES

PICTURE 6: MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE, LIPA

There are, of course, dark-skinned Virgins in the Philippines: the Virgin of Guadalupe that was transplanted in Cebu is modelled after the Mexican Virgin, including her dark coloring, while the dark-skinned statue of the Virgin of Antipolo is often called "The Brown Virgin".[23] However, in these two instances, the reason for the "nativization" of the Virgin had less to do with representing the Virgin as Filipino and more with the fact that these images originated in Mexico. This is not to say that there has been no attempts whatsoever to present the Virgin as Filipino. However, in the instances wherein the Virgin has been explicity described or represented as such, the images have not proven as popular as the Caucasian Virgins. For instance, Rufino Bautista, one of the several Marian visionaries of Agoo, La Union, claims that the Virgin who appeared to him called herself "Our Lady of Kayumanggi, patroness of the Philippines and the whole of Asia" (Cruz 1995:175) but he was not able to foster the same kind of intense and widespread veneration that his successor, Judiel Nieva, managed to inspire with his own fair-skinned apparition (see picture page below).[24]



PICTURE 7: THE VIRGIN OF AGOO WEEPING TEARS OF BLOOD

Indeed, the idea of a nativized Virgin does not seem to be particularly appealing to Filipinos. It was only in 1938 that a local artist, Galo B. Ocampo, actually tried to "decolonize" the Virgin's image by presenting the Virgin as a Filipina:

> Not content with skin tone, Ocampo pushed nationalism further by having the Virgin Mary wear a tapis and a baro instead of the flowing blue and white garments usually used on Western madonas. The background of the Brown Madonna has Philippine plants like the anahaw adding its rays to the Virgin's halo. A nipa hut and rice fields are suggested in the foreground.[25]

It is not clear what the public reception to Ocampo's recreation of the Virgin as Filipino was, but more recently, an attempt to make the Virgin appear Asian resulted in a public outcry. When the artist Virginia Ty-Navarro was commissioned to sculpt the statue of the Virgin of EDSA that now graces the EDSA shrine, she made sure to give the Virgin a Filipino face: "When I made the Lady of Peace," she wrote, "I had meant it to be for *all* Filipinos regardless of creed." Thus the face she gave the Virgin had slanted eyes, a flat, broad nose, full lips, and a wide face. But the statue drew sharp criticism, not only from non-Christian groups who felt "excluded when the Marian symbol was used to commemorate the historic event", but also from Catholics who "can't seem to understand why Mary the Mother should look the way the statue does – so Oriental and unlike the images usually seen in *estampitas*".[26] The statue's "Asian" eyes were so controversial, in fact, that Ty-Navarro was led to "wonder why, since her original design had already been approved, she was being asked to make the Queen of Edsa look less Asian, more like a popular mestiza movie star".[27] After Ty-Navarro's death in 1996, when the Church decided to give the statue a "general cleaning", they went one step further: they modified the Virgin's face. The Virgin of Edsa now wears a more "familiar" face – with high cheekbones and a high-bridged nose (see page 125).

More recently, on September 7, 2000, an image depicting the Virgin Mary of [the] Magnificat as a pregnant Muslim girl in tribal costume was enshrined at the Malate Church in Manila. According to its sculptor, Rey Paz Contreras, this unusual depiction of the Virgin is "very Filipino. It shows that Mama Mary is not a foreigner. She is for every Filipino – Christian and Muslim alike". Most significantly, he adds that "The Virgin Mary of Magnificat does not have too many images because the priests of old were wary that these might encourage the people, especially the peasants, to revolt".[28]

The three attempts to "nativize" the Virgin cited above indicate an awareness (at least, on the part of the artist or sculptor, as the case may be) that there is a genuine need to portray the Virgin as Filipino and by doing so to lessen if not eradicate Mary's colonial and upper class connotations. Indeed, such a need is urgent, if the lower classes are to be drawn back into the Marian fold, for, as very recent events have shown, the poorest of the poor do not necessarily share the same sensibilities towards Mary and Marian images as the middle and upper classes (see discussion on pages 131 to 142 of this chapter). The solution to this dilemma might well be to turn Mary from being a relatively passive foreign figure, into a brown-skinned Madonna the poverty-stricken masses can identify with and who will truly be deserving of the title "Mother of the Filipino people", for, as Wolf shows was the case in Mexican context (Wolf 1979), it is only when she truly begins to signify the Filipinos' social, political, and personal aspirations that she can help liberate them from the colonial conditions that haunt them to this day.

Speaking in a Foreign Tongue: Mary and the Language of Apparition Messages

The language used in the Philippine apparitions also implies that Mary is primarily perceived as a foreign divinity. The fact that the Virgin spoke to Juan Diego in the native vernacular is an important feature of the Guadalupe apparitions. While English is in fact officially the second language of the Philippines and Filipinos are generally functional, though not necessarily fluent, in it, one would suppose that the language most commonly used in the apparitions would be either Filipino, the national language based on Tagalog, the language spoken by a significant majority, or the vernacular of the site where the apparition is said to occur. It is striking therefore that, while there are only three clear instances wherein Tagalog was used, English is more often the chosen language of the apparition phenomenon in the Philippines, particularly in the major apparitions (see Table 3, page 126).

The common association of English with the Marian apparition again suggests that there is a widespread perception that Marian devotion in the Philippines is a "foreign" devotion, that is, it is not native to the Philippines, or that Mary belongs to a "privileged class" to whom speaking English comes naturally.

PICTURE 8 : OUR LADY OF EDSA

Visionary	Educational Level Attained at Time of Apparition	Occupation at Time of Apparition	Socio-economic Background	Language of Messages
*Teresita Castillo	College	Carmelite Postulant	Upper-middle class	English
*Belinda Villas	Elementary School	Student	No data; possibly lower-middle class	Tagalog
*Nena Aguirre	Unknown	Sect Leader	No data	English & Tagalog
*Judiel Nieva	Elementary School	Student	Lower-middle class	English
*Allan Rudio	Elementary School	Student	Lower-middle class	English
*Carmelo Cortez	High School	Carpenter	Lower-middle class	Unclear
Lourdes Paredes	Elementary School	Real-estate Broker	Middle Class	English
Dianne Pelias	No data	Housewife	Middle class	Tagalog
Esther	No data	No data	No data	English
Heddy Villegas	No data	No data	No data	No data
Ka Doring	No data	No data	No data	No data
Sherrylee Olazo	No data	Salesgirl	Lower-middle class	No data
Romy Pabustan	No data	Janitor	Poor	Spanish, English, Latin & Pampangueño

Table 3: Socio-Economic Background of Visionaries and the Language Used in Apparition Messages (* indicates the major apparitions)

This raises an interesting point: why should Mary give her messages in English rather than Spanish, particularly when the country was under Spanish rule for more than three centuries and the country practices a Catholicism derived from the Spanish? The answer perhaps lies in the fact, despite more than three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, very few people are actually fluent in Spanish in the Philippines today, and these people are mostly members of the old colonial elite. Such a situation was the result of the Spanish decision that the local languages were to be used from the earliest moments of contact with the local cultures so as to present Christianity in as familiar a form as possible to the natives, for "Nothing can be done in the ministry if the religious do not learn the language of the natives".[29] While a decree by Charles II in 1685 stipulated that Spanish should be taught in government schools, such attempts resulted largely in failure because, according to the Jesuit Fr. Miguel de Pareja at least,[30]

> it will be a very difficult proposition to teach Spanish to the children, because it is a rare schoolmaster who can teach in our language, no matter how capable he is in other respects. Many have tried to compose grammars by which foreigners may learn our language, but without success; which only proves how excellent our language is.

Moreover, he argued,

> In this town, because of the presence of Spaniards with whom they are in daily contact, many are able to speak a rough kind of Spanish, but no one in any

> town will ever have such a command of the language as to acquire a good grasp of the mysteries of our holy faith, if instructed in Spanish.

It was only in the 19th century in fact that the Spanish government made any real attempt to make Spanish the medium of instruction in the primary levels of education. Thus, during the colonial period, only members of the upper class, which served as mediators between the colonizer and the colonized, actually knew how to speak Spanish.

During the American period and afterwards, knowledge of Spanish was reduced even further. It was relegated to compulsory classes in schools and universities, with a focus on memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules rather than on actual conversational ability, and even this required subject was eventually removed altogether from school curricula in the 1980s. Spanish therefore has become only a part of the Filipino language in so far as Filipino has many borrowed words from it, but by no means can it be said that the average Filipino has a functional knowledge of the language.

On the other hand, during the American period, English came to be the Filipinos' second language, and they used this language in important spheres of daily life. The result was that

> for many Filipinos, there are areas of experience where English is more natural to him than his own language ...English is a 'part of him,' so to speak, rather than a technique which he uses on occasion as is the case with the Thai or the Japanese speaker of English... (Hemphill 1962: 28)

Moreover, taken in the context of class divisions, today English holds a privileged position in that it is usually associated with foreigners and members of the higher classes rather than the poor and with those educated in private rather than public schools, in much the same way Spanish was associated with Spanish administrators and their upper class Filipino representatives rather than the Filipino masses. English is the language of the government: the Philippine Constitution is written in English. It is officially the language of Philippine courts, thus placing the poorer, less fluent petitioners of justice immediately to a great disadvantage. English is the language of media, of business, and of education in most if not all Philippine universities.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that Filipinos use English in ways that a native speaker would use it, grammatically or phonetically. While Filipinos were relatively more fluent in English in the years before World War II, the war and events subsequent to it severely disrupted English language teaching in schools, leading to "a serious decline ('deterioration' is the usual term) in the quality of English spoken by young Filipinos today" (Hemphill 1962: 30).

All this notwithstanding, English is more widely spoken and understood in the Philippines today than Spanish, which has come to be associated mainly with the historical past. Moreover, given the fact that the Philippines has about 168 languages, many Filipinos are not fluent in Filipino, the official language based mainly on Tagalog, which is only spoken by about only 23.8% of the population (*Ethnologue* 1996, s.v. Philippines. This condition is exascerbated by the fact that the speakers of other Philippine languages, like the Cebuanos, often refuse to acknowledge Filipino's privileged position on the grounds that Cebuano (the language of Cebu) has more speakers (24.4%; *Ethnologue* 1996).

Another important consideration with regard to the use of English in apparition messages is the fact that, unlike the pilgrimages, fiestas and other traditional celebrations associated with the Virgin in the Philippines which were participated in by all classes of society, "actual" apparitions (as distinguished from the *legends* of apparitions which have been localized and nativized as Wendt has shown) are identified mainly as a Western phenomenon and one that is of a relatively new type in the country.

Filipino exposure to the Western world only began in earnest in the nineteenth century, when Manila became an open port and the scions of newly wealthy Filipino families could be sent to Europe for their education for the first time. Exposure to the West was limited to the upper classes of society therefore when the revolution against Spain broke out in 1896. However, as I shall discuss further in the later part of this dissertation, under the American commonwealth period that followed, Filipinos suddenly had access to the West in ways they had previously not thought possible.

Apart from the fact that due to free public education, more Filipinos became more fluent in English than they ever were in Spanish, American forms of entertainment soon became entrenched in Filipino homes, the most popular avenue for which was the media, which ensured that the Philippines' link to the outside world was primarily through the

medium of American English. A majority of the shows on Philippine television are American. Watching Hollywood movies at the malls is a hugely popular pastime; none of these movies are subtitled in the vernacular. Newspapers and radio programs tend to be conducted in English, or a mixture of English and Filipino. We must keep in mind too that all news items not originally in English are nevertheless translated into English to allow for international dissemination and news items presented in English are often not translated into the vernacular in the Philippines.

It should not be surprising that media coverage of apparitions in other parts of the world should find a receptive audience in the Philippines. June Keithley said, for example, that the reason why she decided to make a documentary of the Lipa apparitions was the popular reception to her documentaries on apparitions worldwide. It should also not be a surprise that apparitions in the Philippines only began in earnest after apparitions were announced elsewhere in the world. There are no (if any at all) Philippine apparitions reported prior to the Lipa apparitions in 1948, but a significant number from the 1960s to the 1990s, when the fame of apparitions in Garabandal, Medjugorje and other places began to be known in the Philippines.

However, because the visionary is the necessary conduit for the Virgin's messages, and because the visionary has a working knowledge of but is not necessarily fluent in English, the English used in the messages themselves tends to suffer. Why then does the Virgin not facilitate matters for the visionary and simply use a language in which the latter is more at ease? Certainly, though there has been at least one claim that the Virgin first spoke to the visionary in Spanish, English, and Latin (in an attempt, perhaps, to determine what language the visionary was most fluent in?) before settling on Pampangueño (the language spoken in the province of Pampanga), it is clearly not the norm (see Table 2). Certainly, given the lack of documentation on the case, this particular visionary did not prosper for very long. The answer, therefore, is that the use of a language not commonly identified with the Marian apparition phenomenon would reduce the effectivity of the message considerably. It would not have the appropriate appearance of authority to be convincingly authentic.

If the language of Philippine apparition messages is English, therefore, it is clear that this is because the apparition phenomenon is seen to be a *modern Western* phenomenon and, as English is the lingua franca of the modern world and the language by which information about apparitions is received in Filipino homes, English is the language the Virgin must use.

In other words, English is the language of "authority" as far as apparitions of the Virgin are concerned. However, because of the Philippine visionary's lack of fluency in the language, the use of this signifier of power is lessened: in the Philippine apparitions, the messages seem to be mere reproductions of those elsewhere, and indeed, in the final outcome, the messages often become inconsequential next to the spectacular "miracles" the apparitions promise.

These then are the general stereotypes of Mary that have emerged during the Spanish and American periods of Philippine history, and they have become rather fixed images in Philippine society today. Mary has been appropriated both as devoted, sacrificing, benevolent, loving mother, characteristics that also belong to the Filipino mother, *and* as foreign – this despite the fact that the Philippines was exploited under two foreign regimes.

The resistance to Mary, the insistence on the fact that she looks Caucasian and the identification of her with English, appears more acute among the lower middle and the poor classes. I pointed out earlier that the foreigner and mestizo classes had a privileged position in society. Mary, by virtue of her physical features in Philippine iconography, is also thus privileged. But the mestiza was regarded in an ambivalent way that both upheld her superiority and debased her sexuality, particularly by the non-mestizo, and non-foreign lower classes. Are perceptions of Mary thus also subject to this sort of duality? I would suggest that the answer to this is yes: on the one hand, Mary has clearly been assimilated into Filipino culture as "mother" but because her image remains a "foreign" one, the assimilation must always be incomplete and subject to Filipino notions of the foreign. If there is both appropriation of and resistance to the foreign in Philippine society, this attitude must perforce also apply to the Virgin Mary. However, this is not a completely accurate statement for we must acknowledge the fact that, as Javellana showed, Mary, like all Filipino mothers, is not considered in sexual terms the way the stereotype of the mestiza appears to be. The resistance, particularly among the poor, must therefore be found in other locations.

The Virgin of the Poor

Mary's role as mother can transcend the notions of class division and social hierarchies of power only up to a certain point: the continuing perception of her as a foreigner implies that the country is still caught up in the dilemma of the colonized. Even more than half a century after independence and despite its proud claim to being the only true democracy in Southeast Asia, the Philippines still subscribes to the belief that power can only

emanate from the elite minority that emerged from the Spanish and American periods, and that the mostly Westernized values promoted by this powerful minority are those that must be subscribed to. Indeed, the present situation differs from the country's colonial past mainly in that the colonizer has been replaced by the Westernized dominant classes, the colonized by the poor.

When we speak of the poor in Philippine society, to whom exactly are we referring? Although exact figures are not available, it is generally believed that the rich and middle classes compose 20% of society, while the rest of the population is composed of the poor and the very poor. A non-profit social survey group, the Social Weather Station, provides the following breakdown of percentages using a system of stratification wherein A represents the highest social class and E the lowest: of the total population, Classes A (composed of the rich), B (the well-to-do), and C (the middle class) comprise 20%; Class D (the poor) makes up 65%; and Class E (the very poor) represents 15%.[31]

This system of classification, unique to the Philippine situation, is used mainly in social surveys and consumer profiles. The percentages given here are those of 1999. But, in 1999, the government estimates on poverty indicated that 32.1% of the population lived below the poverty line given an annual per capita threshold of Php11, 388. – a figure seen as unrealistically low by non-government organizations.[32] In the year 2001, this estimate rose to 40% out of a population of 77 million, or 30.6 million people,[33] while more than 59% of the population rated *themselves* as poor.[34] In short, we must understand that the actual percentages per social category are constantly in flux and dependent on the source of the data, that the ratios of rich to poor are perhaps the only figures that remain relatively stable – and that the ratios indicate that the Philippines is composed of a very small dominant group governing over an overwhelmingly poor population.

But the poor and the very poor are hardly the acquiescent powerless masses they are often taken to be by those in positions of power. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Franz Fanon writes that

> It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the *lumpenproletariat*, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the *lumpenproletariat*, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people. (1968 ed.: 129)

The poor that Fanon describes here are similar to the abused and dispossessed peasantry who instigated the many small-scale localized revolts ("fragmented struggles characterized by a spontaneity devoid of ideology...the instinctual reactions of a people that could not as yet articulate its thoughts and its goals on a national scale" (Constantino 1975: 167) that took place in various parts of colonial Philippines, and that eventually led to the widespread Philippine revolution against Spain in 1896. The Philippine revolution, many historians have noted, was the result of the development of a rudimentary national consciousness that served to articulate the discontentment of the Philippine masses, and its leader, Andres Bonifacio, was himself from the lower middle class.

Fanon's description of the poor is also relevant within the context of the events that took place at the Edsa Shrine to the Virgin Mary towards the end of April 2001, an event which is important to the present discussion for the way it provides us with a provisional notion of how an important symbol for the dominant institutions of society are regarded by the poor.

From April 26 to 30, prior to their storming of Malacañang palace on May 1, 2001, a pro-Estrada crowd disparagingly described in the press as "lumpen proletariats" (or those who belong to the most marginalized, most dispossessed and degraded sectors of society) gathered at the Our Lady of Edsa shrine by the millions in a successful take-over (for such was their avowed intention) of territory specifically associated with the People Power protests of 1986 and February 2001. This immense rally was organized to protest the arraignment of former president Joseph Estrada, whose impeachment trial had been cut short by his ouster as a result of People Power II.

The term "Edsa *Tres*", given by the press to this third gathering at Edsa, deliberately circumvents any associations with the idea of "People Power" – despite the fact that the crowd referred to may be seen as the most representative of the "people" for the majority of its participants belong to 80% of the population (or, the poor), and the fact that the crowd itself referred to the gathering as the "Poor People Power". The opinion columnists who rushed to dissect the reasons why this third protest movement cannot and *must* not be seen as

"genuine" People Power cited the fact that the pro-Estrada factions were unruly and violent compared to the peaceful and organized crowds that had gathered on the previous occasions. The *Inquirer* columnist and University of the Philippine professor, Randy David, phrases this stance quite eloquently:

> This is not people power; this is its parody, its farcical version. People power is moved by hope; the so-called "Edsa III" is burdened by despair. People power imagines what life can be if people placed their destiny in their hands. This one imagines what life would have been if their patron [Joseph Estrada] had not been overthrown. People power desires to move on and remake the world; people resentment desires to dwell in the past and display its wounds.[35]

Yet despair and resentment are powerful instigators of change and often serve as catalysts for the articulation of discontentment. While later criticism Edsa *Tres* insists that the poor who expressed their discontentment at the Edsa Shrine were merely manipulated by unscrupulous politicians (who were themselves from the upper classes) for their own ends, it cannot be said that the poor had no agenda of their own. Once the threat of civil war along class divisions had abated, the administration, the media, and the forces that made up civil society willingly conceded that the poor were not just the manipulable, star-struck and unthinking mob they had initially been portrayed to be by the dominant institutions but were expressing legitimate concerns in the only way they could, using the opportunity presented to them by Estrada's followers. Being on the whole uneducated and disorganized, they seemingly permitted those spearheading the movement to articulate their "concerns" for them, even if this led to a negative perception of them as the "dumb *masa*" moved to indignation only by the perceived injustice in the government's treatment of their "idol", Joseph Estrada.[36] However, subsequent events showed that the pro-Estrada coalition that attempted to channel the energies of the crowd towards this direction had no real control over it, that the crowd was not united in their purpose for protesting, and that many of the poor were there merely to seize the opportunity presented to them by Edsa *Tres* to appropriate for themselves, even if only temporarily, the basic necessities of life and even a few luxuries: for the five days that they were at Edsa, they had food, shelter and money, and pro-Estrada show business personalities providing them with free entertainment.[37]

Despair, too, facilitates identification with symbols of suffering. Social historians have pointed out that the Katipunan and subsequent similar revolutionary movements were greatly folk religious in character, often rallying around a charismatic messianic figure patterned after Jesus Christ. As Kessler remarks, "The Catholic church allowed the peasantry

the means of channeling discontent through charismatic Christ-like leaders who promised salvation through allegiance to them and gave their adherents a sense of identity and status" (Kessler 1989: 23; see also Ileto 1979).

Such an appropriation of a Christ-figure was the main catalyst for the first People Power Revolution to oust Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, with the assassinated Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino providing the symbolic messianic figure around which the crowds rallied.[38]

There was a similar attempt to appropriate this militant symbol of Christ at Edsa *Tres*. One newspaper reported that "Estrada supporters are comparing the former president to Jesus Christ and Ilocos Sur Governor Luis "Chavit" Singson to Judas Iscariot".[39] This was not the first attempt to identify Estrada as a Christ-figure. After an anti-Estrada prayer rally at the Edsa Shrine in November 2000, a pro-Estrada senator commented to the press that the rallyists were like "the bloodthirsty mob that cried for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago", and that, like Jesus, Estrada was "being denied due process and had been convicted without trial".[40]

The analogy could not be effectively sustained: being behind bars, Estrada's movements were curtailed and he himself was not actively present, weakening the force of the comparison. Moreover, as mentioned previously, not all of those who participated in Edsa *Tres* were there because of Estrada. It is interesting to see, however, that Jesus Christ nevertheless remains an active militant symbol for the poor in ways that the Virgin cannot be. Even as those at Edsa *Tres* invoked the religious codification of the Christ symbol, they deliberately lowered the Vatican flag that flew above the Shrine to show their disdain for the Catholic Church, replacing it with a pro-Estrada banner. But the greatest "crime" committed by the pro-Erap poor, according to the middle and upper classes (if these columnists and the letters to the various newspapers written by these sectors are to be taken as representative), was their "desecration" of the shrine to the Virgin (the mother of the very figure they were attempting to appropriate), which the Philippine Church had been quick to point out and condemn. The following news report appeared in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) online news bulletin on April 27, the day after the Edsa *Tres* crowd began to amass at the Shrine:

> In a press briefing at the Media Office yesterday, Msgr. Hernando M. Coronel, CBCP spokesperson, said the EDSA shrine is holy ground, and as such it has been desecrated by the acts of the rallyists. It had earlier been

> reported that the historical Church marker of People Power II had been defaced and covered with garbage, the Church premises vandalized and the Vatican flag outside the Church removed and replaced with Estrada posters. Curses, foul language and obscenities have also been used during the rallies.[41]

Ironically, however, these same forces that condemned the "desecration" of the Shrine, also insisted that "This is a holy place. This is the place of God. This is the place of the *people* [italics mine]".[42] Belatedly recognizing the anti-poor discrimination inherent in such a stance (and mainly because the Church's rabid denunciation of the poor at Edsa was in turn vehemently protested by labor unions and NGOs around the country), the Church was quick to apologize. Two weeks after Edsa *Tres*, Monsignor Soc Villegas, spokesperson for Cardinal Sin and rector of the Shrine, announced to the press that "Church leaders have recognized their failure to fully address the problems of the poor even as some of them continue to lead extravagant lifestyles". In fact, during a ceremony to "reconsecrate" the Shrine on May 14, 2001, the following activities were to be included in the program:

> ...a representative from the Church will say a prayer, asking for forgiveness "for neglecting the poor and failing to live simply".
>
> A representative from the business sector will also say a prayer to ask forgiveness for the elite's excessive lifestyle and failure to successfully fulfill its duties "as stewards of God's material blessings".
>
> Finally, an urban poor representative will say a prayer on behalf of the masses that went to Edsa in support of Estrada, asking forgiveness for the desecration of the shrine.[43]

These admissions of guilt and requests for forgiveness by all parties concerned notwithstanding, Mary, as represented by her shrine at Edsa, clearly does not hold the same significance for the poor that she does for the more affluent social sectors. David continues his analysis of Edsa *Tres* as follows:

> The Edsa Shrine holds no meaning for the participants of "Edsa III". They cannot clothe their resentment with the venerable symbolism of the Edsa Shrine and expect to derive any strength from it.[44]

Indeed, what kind of symbolism could Mary, with her foreign face and upper class connotations, hold for the poorest of the poor? It was not so much to "derive strength" from the Marian figure that the poor converged at Edsa as David suggests, but precisely to debase it because it represented the social forces (that is, the Church, the government, and the more affluent classes) that had not only ousted Joseph Estrada, whom the poor popularly perceived as being their stalwart champion, but that had also neglected and marginalized them. The

poor, in fact, claimed that Edsa *Tres* was in fact "the revenge of the poor" against these institutions. Those that resorted to violence did so because, unlike the middle and upper classes who could oust a president simply by threatening to walk out of their jobs, they had no jobs, no houses, and indeed, nothing but themselves.

But these are the same poor go to the various shrines of the Virgin Mary on her feast days to ask her for favors, and who, like the other social classes, claim her as their own Mama Mary. What can explain this dichotomous and ambivalent attitude of the *poor*, in particular, towards the Virgin?

The poor, by their very poverty, are generally excluded from participating in the dominant institutions. Nevertheless, they are aware of them and either repudiate these institutions in some (often violent) way (as in Edsa *Tres* and its aftermath, the attempted siege of Malacañang Palace) *or* aspire to the common social goals and the moral values prescribed by society as a whole even as they are unable to actively partake in them:

> There is an awareness of middle-class values. People talk about them and even claim some of them as their own. On the whole, however, they do not live by them. They will declare that marriage by law, by the church or by both is the ideal form of marriage, but few will marry. (Lewis 1966: 23)

Moreover,

> Along with disengagement from the larger society, there is a hostility to the basic institutions of what are regarded as the dominant classes. There is hatred of the police, mistrust of government and of those in high positions and a cynicism that extends to the church. The culture of poverty thus holds a certain potential for protest and entrainment in political movements aimed against the existing order. (Ibid.)

While Edsa *Tres* exemplifies one of the ways by which the poor repudiate the dominant institutions and their symbols (in this particular instance, the Virgin and her shrine), this is an aberration from the norm and the more common practice has been to appropriate (and subvert) the Marian stereotype in ways by which Mary becomes vested with codes of signification that the poor can more easily relate to and identify with. As I shall show in the following discussion on what I consider to be the most representative of the Marian devotional practices of the poor, this re-definition of the signification of the Virgin is a result of the transculturation of her image, in the integration of the dominant into the marginalized discourses in the form of a hybrid that could accommodate both yet retain a guise accepted by

the dominant forces in society. In this discussion, when I refer to the poor, I am referring to the 80% of the population who are poor and who may be seen as participating in the "culture of poverty".

Negotiating with Mary: Utang and Utang na Loób

Cannell found during a twenty-month fieldwork in Bicol that "Mary was never put forward as a model to follow by Bicol women in the way that some authors have suggested occurs in European Catholicism. The emphasis, as in the case of funerals, was more on what was shared between Mary's experience and their own" (1999: 190). This sense of "shared suffering" caused them not only to identify strongly with Mary's suffering at Jesus Christ's crucifixion and death especially if they were mothers themselves, but also led them to feel a certain intimacy with Mary so that they became in a sense "equals". This sense of intimacy is, according to Cannell, exemplified by the nature of the *promesas* or vows that were made to Mary (and to other divine Christian figures), wherein the promise to perform a particular devotion or undergo a "sacrifice" was in effect the "[conversion] of this suffering into a form in which the help [of these figures] was actively solicited" (1999: 191). These vows are somewhat similar to the vows that were made by Spanish communities to helper saints in the sixteenth century, yet they are also quite different because of the concepts of reciprocity and *utang na loób* that are unique to Philippine culture.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the notions of *utang* and *utang na loób* as a general characteristic of Philippine Catholicism. When it comes to the Marian devotions of the poor, however, this aspect forms the most important aspect of their relationship with the Virgin. In previous chapters, I referred to that fact that Philippine Lenten penitential rituals reveal that many of those from the lower classes follow religious rituals that are Catholic in origin and seemingly Catholic in appearance. However, these rituals are not motivated by Catholic piety but by notions that predate the arrival of the Spaniards in the country. The offering of the self is a form of sacrifice, and the *panata* an aspect of a contract that has been, or is still being, negotiated, between the divine figure and the individual. The fulfilment of this contract by both parties results in both *utang* that must be paid back, and *utang na loób*, which can only be repaid in token instalments because complete repayment is impossible. Such forms of reciprocity may be seen to characterize the poor's relationship with the Virgin Mary, in which the poor have nothing else to offer but themselves – and the offer of self, it must be mentioned, is something that can never be refused by the recipient, if only out of pity for

those who have nothing else to give.[45] Moreover, the perception of the Virgin as an entity with whom it is possible to enter into a relationship of *utang* or debt implies that she has been reduced to a level of equality with the devotee.

Many of the vows made to the Virgin, like those made to the other Christian figures, show that the petitioner enters into a form of "contract" with the divine entity in which he or she often stipulates that he or she will undergo penance for a *certain number* of years or perform a particular novena a *specific* number of times, after which he or she might consider the "immediate" debt (*utang*) fully paid. This was the case, in fact, in one of the miracles connected with the Lipa apparitions: the mother of a child born with a brain tumor sought the help of the Mediatrix of All Grace by making a pilgrimage to the apparition site and promising to recite a novena in the Virgin's honor.[46] This kind of debt relationship occurs more often among social equals, and the fact that Filipinos feel they can enter into such a contract with Mary or Jesus indicates that they see the divine figure as simultaneously above and on par with them.

The following letter, written to the Virgin of Perpetual Help by a thankful devotee (Mangulabnan 1977: 75), epitomizes just such a relationship:

> My dearest Mother of Perpetual Help,
>
> You are indeed merciful and miraculous. Thank you very much, dearest Mother. It was only last week that I dropped my petition letter dated August 24. Although it is about six months that I have been visiting your shrine every Wednesday with my earnest request for help for my children and myself, it was only last week when I decided to write my letter of petition, dear Mother.
>
> You are certainly aware of how grievously I have sinned. I have caused great pain to you and to my family by my serious sins. I have never ceased to pray for forgiveness and to do my utmost to be ideal to my children. And God is love and he is forgiving.
>
> Through your intercession, dearest Mother of Perpetual Help, it was only last Friday that my plea and petition was finally answered. I, a poor sinner and beyond words for expressing my gratefulness, am hopeful of your kindness and love and with utmost care will ever be devoted to you. Thank you again.
>
> Your devoted child,
> (Signed)

This letter, one of the hundreds that are dropped in the prayer boxes in Baclaran Church, shows a clear emphasis on the concrete rather than the abstract: the devotee implies that it was *the act of writing a letter of petition* that proved effective where simple prayers did not ("Although it is about six months that I have been visiting your shrine every Wednesday with my earnest request for help...it was only last week when I decided to write my petition..."). Given the fact that the letter writer indicates that Wednesday (the Virgin of Perpetual Help's feast day at Baclaran Church) was the day on which she often went to the church, the letter was most likely placed in the petition box on that day, and by Friday of that same week (a mere *three days* after compared to the *six months* of prayers) the petition was answered.

The letter also shows an interesting blend of familiarity and reverence: the grateful devotee clearly sees herself in a position of *utang na loób* to Mary for answering her petition. Yet there is, in the wording of her letter, a hint of reproof that the answer took some time in coming: "it was *only* [italics mine] last Friday that my plea and petition was finally answered". The concrete aspect of the mother-child relationship is strongly emphasized in the letter: there is a repeated reference to the Virgin as "dearest Mother" and the devotee signs herself as the Virgin's "devoted child". But the devotee's references to her own children also imply that, as *both* she and the Virgin are mothers, the Virgin must "certainly [be] aware of how grievously I have sinned". Furthermore, while Mary is clearly recognized as "intercessor", she remains the solid focus of the devotee's thanks – in fact, the sole direct reference to God is brief and appears to be an afterthought.

This type of debt relationship to Mary is further reinforced by the *utang na loób* that one has to one's mother because, as I have said before, Filipinos see the Virgin as not only the mother of Jesus Christ, but also the mother of all Filipino Christians. We must remember that to Filipinos, a mother's gift of life to her child can never be fully repaid. Furthermore, in the relationship with the mother, *utang na loób* is uni-directional: one owes one's mother a lifelong debt of gratitude, but one's mother does not have an *utang na loób* to her child. Because Mary is perceived as mother, this sense of obligation is transferred to her. In fact, as Mangulabnan points out, "Mary's intercession and help and motherhood is acknowledged as a big *utang na loób*" (1977: 73).

Rafael's thesis, which I discussed in the Introduction, showed that the Spanish missionaries appropriated the Filipino concept of *utang na loób* to impress upon the new Filipino converts just how gracious was God's gift to man and how vastly *above* mankind the divine family was, but it also showed that Filipinos saw their relationship to the Catholic divine hierarchy in a completely different manner. In simultaneously having *utang na loób* to Mary and being able to enter into an *utang* relationship with her (or any other saint), the Filipinos were able to satisfy both the Spanish and their own view of how man's relationship with the divine should be. In their minds there is no conflict in the two types of reciprocal relationships existing side by side, for it is natural for Filipinos to enter simultaneously into different types of debt relationship with the same person. For example, a man can hire his mother to redecorate his house and pay her a salary for it, thus entering into the contractual relationship of *utang* with her, but at the same time, since she is his mother, he is also in a relationship of *utang na loób.*

Using Jonathan Parry's reassessment of Mauss (1986), wherein he shows that Christian salvationist discourse vigorously promotes the ideology of the "pure gift" and denounces the opposing category of commerce, Cannell points out that

> Christian missionaries and priests criticise spirit-beliefs... because, as well as being 'idolatrous', they are viewed as forms of bargain, and Christianity posits a single deity with a monopoly of power who sets his own terms for interactions with mortals. Bargaining with God is not encouraged by the Church, which considers it strictly speaking pointless, and certainly vulgar. (1999: 100)

However, she also states that Bicolono healers, while familiar with this discourse and indeed often use it themselves to emphasize the divine nature of their calling, they are nevertheless more concerned with reconciling it with the commercial transactions inherent in the notions of *utang* and *utang na loób.* What is said about these Bicol healers may be seen as applicable as well to the common practitioner, who understands the pragmatic value inherent in the contract: the divine favors do not come for free; something must always be given in exchange. In the case of the poor, often the only thing they have to offer is themselves, as can be seen in the flagellation rituals or in the making and fulfilment of the *panata.*

In summary, then, the specific instances I have described above indicate the way that the poor view Mary and perform devotions to her stems from what the dominant classes identify as "folk Catholicism" or the kind of Catholicism that has been strongly infused with

folk beliefs. This is often the only kind of religion that is available to the poor and that is more meaningful to them.

As I showed using the example of Edsa *Tres*, the kind of Marian devotion that the Church prescribes often excludes the poor. However, the strength of Mary's position as a religious symbol is such that even the poor seek to partake in her devotions and indeed attempt to shape their own versions of these devotions along the dominantly prescribed manner. But because the poor cannot identify with Mary in the same way that the educated and affluent classes do, they have in effect re-codified her along lines in keeping with their worldview. Indeed, any redemptive value that Mary has for the poor may be seen to lie mainly in the native signification of her motherhood, for it is only in this way that she can be seen to have meaning. As Caucasian virginal symbol, she epitomizes and perpetuates the values of the upper classes. But as the Mother of Filipinos, she bestows her blessings on everyone. She can be approached without fear, and she can be negotiated with and cajoled. For people who have nothing, this last aspect is perhaps the most important one of all.

It must be emphasized, however, that as I have said earlier in this chapter and shown in previous chapters, such perceptions of Mary have proven to be socially mobile and have indeed moved up the social ladder: even if such forms of religiosity are practiced mostly by the poor majority, the middle classes and even the Church itself have come to accommodate them. Furthermore, Marian devotions tend to be community-oriented, participated in by all sectors and social levels, which facilitates the upward mobility of such practices.

These "folk" practices came to underlie many communal Marian celebrations even throughout the Spanish period. If there is a tendency towards a subversion of Marianism in such practices even among the more affluent classes, one of the reasons for this, as I have suggested, is the fact that Mary has remained essentially a foreign entity, and one moreover that has been identified as a tool of social oppression and pacification.

Marginalized Religion and Elements of Marianism: the Ciudad Mistica de Dios

The prevalence among the poor of many religious sects which fuse Catholicism and *anitismo* indicates another way in which the poor perceive Mary. A look at these marginal religious organizations shows that the manner of devotion (which is basically animistic in orientation) practiced by these organizations are similar in many ways to the Marian devotion

shown in the context of the Philippine Marian apparition. Though these organizations contain strong elements of Catholicism, they are nevertheless so far removed from the accepted official norms of the Church that they can no longer be defined as popular *Catholicism*. Many of these sects are strongly animistic in nature and, like the group, *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*, do in fact claim to be a continuation of the old Filipino religious tradition, but interesting to this study is the fact that the Virgin Mary often holds a revered place in their own hierarchy of saints. These sects are all good examples of Philippine religious syncretism. The fact that they are generally "nationalistic" in nature shows their inclination towards subversion of the mainstream religion (that is, Catholicism), and strongly suggests that they have continued to perceive Catholicism as a foreign religion.

These cults first emerged during the later part of the Spanish colonial period, and a significant number of them were created only after the Second World War (perhaps as a possible reaction to American colonization?). They are, according to Covar, indigenizations of American Protestantism and Catholicism (1975: 79) and form only about 2% of the religious groups in the country, whereas the Roman Catholic population numbers to about 80%.[47] It can be seen from these figures that Roman Catholicism is clearly the dominant religion, and the Philippine visionaries clearly acknowledge this by appropriating the Church-sanctioned form rather than follow the divergent path taken by these sects. By doing so, they avoid being marginalized as esoteric and nativistic. I would like to suggest in fact that the Philippine Marian visionary fulfils much of the same functions as the leaders of these groups, but that the Philippine Marian visionary, because he or she works within a religious context acceptable to the majority, manages to attain a degree of power that the others cannot.

In the following discussion on one such sect, I will show how Mary has in effect been displaced by a more nativistic Mother figure in the belief that Mary (and indeed Jesus Christ as well) has "failed to save" the world.

Guillermo Pesigan's study of how rituals and mythmaking have allowed charismatic leaders to maintain power in Ciudad Mistica, one of the largest and most organized sects on Mt. Banahaw today, makes no mention of Apolinario at all, but presents how the relatively new myth that has replaced it uses both Christian and pagan images. Pesigan focuses on three charismatic leaders of the Ciudad Mistica de Dios sect, Maria Bernarda Balitaan, the foundress of the sect, Amador Suarez, also known as Mamay, and his daughter, Isabel Suarez, the Suprema, who is presently the head of the sect.

The myth of Maria Bernarda Balitaan is interesting in the way it fuses archetypal mythic themes and Christian doctrine, and subverts the traditional view of the Holy Trinity, for, in this myth, there is the Father God (*Lumang Tipan*), the Son (*Bagong Tipan)* who was born of the Virgin Mary, and God, the Mother (*Ikatlong Tipan).* This idea of a "Holy Family" is similar to Zialcita's findings that the Ilocanos viewed God, Christ and the Virgin Mary in terms of their own kinship structures. Curiously, however, here God the Mother has to a great extent usurped Mary's "role" in heaven, although Mary does appear in the myth as the mother of Christ. Furthermore, Pesigan's account fails to clarify whether God the Son is in fact Jesus Christ, leading one to wonder whether, in this myth, Christ has indeed been born twice, to two different mothers. What does seem clear is that there has been a separation that emphasizes the "motherhood" of one, and the "virginity" of the other, as I shall soon show.

It is interesting to see that it is God the Mother who forms the basis for the Ciudad Mistica myth. According to Pesigan, the myth of Maria Bernarda Balitaan begins after the coming of Christ and the Virgin Mary has failed to save people from their sinful ways. Because there was still a need to reform people, God, the Mother, was sent down to earth in the form of Maria Bernarda Balitaan, heralding "the beginning of the Third Testament, the testament of God, the Mother (*Ikatlong Tipan*) or *Huling Kapanahunan*". Like the Virgin Mary before her, Maria Bernarda Balitaan was born of a virgin birth, but fairly typical of Philippine pre-Hispanic folk epics, she was born in strange circumstances: she came out in a ball of flesh that was first considered to be a "malignant growth". Efforts to get rid of the ball by throwing it into Lake Taal were prevented by "a mystical force", and, strongly suggestive of the three days that Jesus Christ spent in hell before re-emerging as the Saviour of mankind, on the third day after it emerged from the womb, a midwife eventually decided to split it open, thereby releasing Maria Bernarda Balitaan into the world to fulfil her destiny.

Maria Bernarda Balitaan grows up with an affinity towards nature, a curiosity about creation, and qualities that are both mythic and mystic. And "when she came of age, she was brought to the seventh planet beyond the moon and stars, and discovered she was part of God and of creation." She also discovered that she could communicate with the Father and the Son, and control the four elements.

The powers that Maria Bernarda Balitaan had were also to be seen in the people who succeeded her. The story that surrounds Mamay, however, incorporates realities of actual

historical experience and mythologizes them. Like a mythic hero, he is said to be the first to have bathed in the spring of Jordan (*Santong Jacob*), which is considered to have healing properties and to have survived without food for thirteen years. Likewise, he is said to have certain powers, like the ability to talk with the recently dead, to be able to communicate with Maria Bernarda Balitaan (now deceased) who also sometimes possesses his body, and to prophecy the future (according to the sources Pesigan consulted, Mamay was said to have foreseen as early as the 1960s that a woman would eventually become president of the country). But his mythic qualities are often tied to historical events. For example, he is said to have survived "the hanging, burning and other forms of torture the Japanese inflicted on him during World War II" and "his influence and charismatic leadership was acknowledged by Ferdinand Marcos".

His daughter, Isabel Suarez, is said to have absorbed into herself his mythic qualities. Like Maria Bernarda Balitaan before her, her birth too is considered mythological: she remained in her mother's womb for twenty-one months. According to the oral lore cited by Pesigan,

> The choice of Isabel Suarez as Suprema was a matter of divine will. She was afflicted with headaches and fever; she also vomited blood. Mamay and the Ciudad elders (*mga magulang*) had visions explaining Isabel's illness: She was destined (*nakatadhana*) to be the next Suprema. She agreed to become the next Suprema but also requested Mamay that she be spared the traditional marriage by matchmaking, which was customary in their Batangas-oriented culture. Her choice to become celibate stayed in the order, preventing the priestesses in the convent (*kampamento*) from marrying or leaving the priestly life. Her virginal image complements her other mystical and mythical qualities, like clairvoyance and the gift of prophecy (*Itaga mo sa bato).* And so it came to pass that Isabel Suarez, who was 23 when the ruling Suprema died, was installed as the new Suprema on December 16, 1963. (Pesigan 1991: 208)

The appropriation and re-contextualizing of the Christian elements in the Ciudad Mistica myths is evident: Maria Bernarda Balitaan is born after three days, recalling Christ's return on the third day after his death; her birth, like the Virgin Mary's, is a virgin birth; Isabel Suarez's insistence on celibacy invites comparison with the Virgin Mary, although we must point out that the account emphasizes that this was her personal *choice* and not a decision imposed upon her; and the prophetic qualities are similar to those mentioned in connection with pious people, as seen in Aduarte's accounts. Given the similarities here to the Virgin Mary, and in the light of my previous comments regarding Mary and God the Mother, it is curious that Maria Bernarda Balitaan is not represented as the Virgin reborn,

which might seem more logical. Yet the myth itself rests on the fact that Christ and the Virgin have both failed in their duties to turn man away from sin, and it is the Mother who must step in and mend matters. The emphasis on the Mother here is in fact suggestive of the importance placed on this role, and this may have been one way of focusing on Mary's "motherhood": the myth separates the two roles she plays, and privileges the "mother" over the "virgin", reflecting the belief that it is the mother who imposes harmony in the household. In a sense, the new "Mother" figure is necessary mainly because those traditionally perceived to be the saviours of society (that is, those imposed upon people by the dominant religious discourses) have failed dismally in their mission. God the Mother (in the form of Maria Bernarda Balitaan and her heirs), therefore, is the more "viable" alternative provided by the sect to address the needs of its adherents.

The pagan elements thrown in with the Christian in the myth are also quite obvious: Maria Bernarda Balitaan's ability to control the elements, the body possession by spirits shown by the leaders, the ability to talk, not only with the Father and the Son, but also with the spirits of the dead, and even the mythic qualities of the stories all come from pre-Hispanic animistic religion. These qualities also reflect the powers of a good *loób*: the mystical leaders of Ciudad Mistica, like many of those vested with a strong faith in the divine, exhibit the same qualities associated with the *loób* that Ileto has discussed. Indeed, Covar has observed that the "harmony of *loób*" is in fact the organizing principle of most if not all of the Philippine religious movements (Covar 1975: 87).

Ritual is emphasized in the Ciudad Mistica de Dios sect. In fact, Pesigan points out that it is "a highly dramatized and ritualized society", with the most number of rituals among the various religious groups at Banahaw, and that "These rituals, officiated by [the] Suprema and the priestesses, are the embodiment of their belief system as dramatized in oral forms" (Pesigan, in Reyes 1991:203-4). The performance of these rituals allows the Suprema full scope for her oral prowess:

> Speaking for an average length of three hours every Saturday in beautiful rhetorical Tagalog, she lectures on the theology of Ciudad Mistica, illustrating her points with metaphors for salvation. The structural aesthetics of the lectures and the mysticism of the gestures illustrate and strengthen the charismatic leadership of the Suprema. (Ibid.: 205)

In short, a great deal of the Suprema's charisma derives from dramatic performance, an aspect of religiosity that may also be found in Catholic rituals. Such performances in fact added

considerably to the appeal of Catholicism for the Filipinos during the colonial period and continues to shape the way religion is invariably presented to adherents today.

In the following chapters I shall examine ways by which adherence to the dominant and expected forms of devotion have resulted in an emphasis on religious "performance" and how community events that revolve around the Virgin Mary may in fact be seen as undermining the oppressive discourses and values of socially dominant institutions like the Church and the government even as they seemingly adhere to these discourses and values.

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[1] See, for example, James Carrier, ed. *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). Carrier defines Occidentalism as "stylized images of the West", "the silent partner" of Orientalism. Carrier argues that when Said says that Orientalists "promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "they")," he is in fact introducing "the complements of the Orient and Orientalism, the Occident and Occidentalism". In Carrier, 2.

[2] Michael Holquist, cited in Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London, New York, Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1997), 144.

[3] In Schumacher's text, the word *bilango* is defined as "constable"; the actual definition of the word, however, is "convict" or "prisoner".

[4] For a good discussion on the place of the mestizo class in Philippine society, see Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Philippine History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000). The privileged position of the fair-skinned mestizo/Caucasian in the Philippines even today helps explain Bishop Teodoro Bacani's statement that "the very manner in which we visually present the Virgin may lead to the perpetuation in power of people who, because they are beautiful and richly adorned (and in this way resemble the Virgin), can do what they wish without being questioned". Apart from the appropriation of the Virgin's physical appearance implicated in the sentence, there is also the appropriation of her implied social class.

[5]Augustine's views on how life was to be lived in the light of the faith persisted until the medieval period and well into the renaissance, and continued to shape the philosophies of others, including the great medieval thinker St. Thomas Aquinas himself. Augustine's description of Adam and Eve's relationship in the Garden of Eden validated a patriarchal world-view; in his interpretation of the ideal life, a strong hierarchy existed wherein woman was subordinate to man: "For they who care for the rest rule - the husband the wife, the parents the children, the masters the servants; and they who are cared for obey - the women their husbands, the children their parents, the servants their masters" (*The City of God*, Book XIX, Ch. 14, in *Great Books of the Western World*, 520); and his emphasis on chastity and celibacy, his portrayal of lust as a 'disease' of the will ("Thus doth the soul commit fornication when she turns from Thee, seeking, without thee, what she findeth not pure and untainted till she returns to thee" ; *The Confessions*, Book II, Par 14, trans. by Edward Bouverie Pusey, in *The Great Books of the Western World, No. 18*, Robert Maynard Hutchkins, ed. in chief (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney and Tokyo: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 12.), even the fact that he considered all unbaptised children who die eternally condemned to damnation, all had far reaching consequences. Interpretations of these may be found in the sermons and actions of the missionaries who came to the Philippines in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as in the comments made by the *conquistadores* in their accounts of the native inhabitants of the Philippine Islands

[6] Miguel de Loarca, "*Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas*," in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493-1803*, Vol. V (Manila: A.H. Clark 1903), 119. "The women were beautiful, but unchaste. They do not hesitate to commit adultery, because they

receive no punishment for it...The women are extremely lewd, and they even encourage their own daughters to a life of unchastity; so that there is nothing so vile for the latter that they cannot do it before their mothers, since they incur no punishment."

[7] Pigafetta, "*Primo viaggio intorno al mondo*" (Italian text with English trans.), in Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXXIII (Manila: A.H. Clark, 1905), 151.

[8] The Visayas are made up of the central group of islands of the Philippine archipelago composed of Negros, Cebu, Leyte, Samar and Panay. These islands were the first to be reached by the Spanish in the sixteenth century.

[9] *The Writings of Jose Rizal, Vol. VI: Historical Events of the Philippine Islands by Antonio de Morga* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1990), 247

[10] Jose Rizal, *The Writings of Jose Rizal, Vol. VI: Historical Events of the Philippine Islands by Antonio de Morga* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1990), n., 289.

[11] Modesto de Castro, "On Chastity", trans. into English by Maria Kalaw Katigbak, and excerpted in Asuncion David-Maramba, ed., *Early Philippine Literature from Ancient Times to 1940*, 2nd. ed. (Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1971), 145.

[12] Nicanor Tiongson provides a good discussion of the Filipino preference for the mestizo/foreign in his essay, "Four Values in Filipino Drama and Film", wherein he points out that in past centuries, women chosen to play the role of the Virgin during the passion plays (*pasyon*) of Easter had to resemble the images of the Virgin, that is, they had to be fair-skinned, with straight noses and small, dainty mouths. Tiongson, "Four Values in Filipino Drama and Film," in Cynthia Nograles Lumbera and Teresita Jimenez Maceda, eds., *Rediscovery* (Quezon City, Philippines: National Book Store Inc., 1982), 317-40.

[13] See for example, C.R. Boxer, *Mary and Misogyny. Women in Iberian Expansion Overseas 1415-1815.Some facts, fancies and personalities* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company Limited, 1975); also Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex. The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1985/1990).

[14] Resil B. Mojares, "The Woman in the Cave Genealogy of the Cebuano Virgin of Guadalupe", in Iwao Ushijima and Cynthia Neri Zayas, eds. , *Bisayan knowledge, movement and identity*, Visayas Maritime Anthropological Studies III 1996-1999 (Diliman, Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 2000), 7-30.

[15] The differences among the native religious practices were really a reflection of the fragmented geography of the islands themselves (the Philippines has more than 7,000 islands), and thus of the different peoples who lived there. It was in fact the Spanish colonizers who succeeded in uniting the archipelago into one nation, and in creating a central religion common to all the Filipino peoples.

[16] Renato Constantino writes, "In the pre-conquest barangays, land was communally owned and was not regarded as a source or a measure of wealth. While Spanish laws initially recognized the communal system of land ownership, the fact that the colonizers introduced the concept of individual land ownership and regarded the land itself, not merely its use, as a source of wealth, was bound to change native ideas on this point". Indeed, by the seventeenth century, more and more local chieftains were following the landlord-tenant structures introduced by the Spaniards. Constantino 1994: 63-64.

[17] The ellipse in the title is intentional. It may be assumed that Fr. Javellana deliberately left the name of the Virgin blank to indicate it could refer to any or all of the different titles of the Virgin Mary in the Philippines. Rene B. Javellana, S.J., "Ntra. Sra de La _____, To Mama Mary", in Reyes, *Reading Popular Culture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991), 147-156.

[18] Historical developments from 1898 to 1946 disrupted church structures and considerably lessened the Church's powers in the country. Disillusionment with the abusive Spanish frailocracy of the late nineteenth century which was the catalyst for the Philippine War of Independence against Spain, the introduction of Protestantism during the American period, and finally the onset of the Second World War, reduced the number of Catholic priests substantially, and while many Catholic practices, including devotions to Mary, continued largely unabated throughout the archipelago, it was only with the investiture of Jaime, Cardinal Sin, as Archbishop of Manila in 1974 that Philippine Catholicism was once again rigorously promoted as a Marian Catholicism.

[19] Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Philipinas* (Madrid, 1698), 256-57, in Schumacher 1979: 72-73.

[20] It is certainly worth considering that the popular perception of Mary as white is a consequence of the Spanish promotion of Marian devotion as a means of legitimizing their authority

(Wendt 1998: 3-23), and thus a consequence of the identification of Mary as "mother" in the same way that Spain was perceived to be "motherland". The metaphor suggested that the mother (Spain) wanted only what was best for her child (the Philippines). It was for this reason that the idea of Mother Nation was transferred from Spain to the Philippines during the Philippine Revolution in 1898: to the Filipino revolutionaries, the mother had become incapable of caring for her child, and they were quick to appropriate for themselves the role of Jesus Christ in the popular *pasyon*, in which his leavetaking of Mary was highly dramatized. In the *pasyon*, the justification presented for not fulfilling one's *utang na loób* to one's mother was that one had to answer a higher call, in this case, independence (Ileto 1979).

[21] Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, "Presidents and 'Spiritual Advisers'", Human Face [opinion column], *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 February 2001, A5.

[22] This account was told to me by Maria Mangahas, Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

[23] The statue of the Virgin of Antipolo is one of the few images that has dark skin and is, in fact, is often called "The Brown Virgin". This is because of the dark wood, typical of Mexican sculptures, from which it was carved. The statue was sculpted and blessed in Mexico and brought to the Philippines on March 25, 1626, by one Don Juan Niño de Tabora, the new Governor General of Manila. Lutgarda A. Aviado, *Madonnas of the Philippines* (Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Co., 1975), 23-28. The statue of the Black Nazarene of Quiapo Church is made from a similar dark wood and also originated in Mexico.

[24] *Kayumanggi* refers to the brown skin color of the Filipinos, and Cortez described the Virgin as beautiful and brown-complexioned.

[25] Ambeth Ocampo, "Brown Madonna Decolonizes Religious Art," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 December 1999, <http: www.inquirer.net>

[26] "EDSA's Lady of Peace is All-Filipino", *Woman's Home Companion*, 29 March 1989, 21.

[27] Doris G. Nuyda, "After Edsa II, It's Time to Pay Tribute to Edsa Virgin Sculptress," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 February 2001, H2.

[28] Christian V. Esguerra, "Image of Virgin Depicts Pregnant Muslim", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 24 September 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net> . The Magnificat, believed by many to be one of the most beautiful hymns to Mary and found in Luke 1:46-55, has obvious significance for the poor and downtrodden as seen in the following lines:

> He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
> and exalted those of low degree;
> He has filled the hungry with good things,
> and the rich he has sent empty away.

These lines depict religious retribution for the poor against the injustices of the rich, and such a powerful representation of Mary as the champion of the poor at the expense of the rich has important repercussions on the way Mary is perceived today, particularly as it cuts through religious and ethnic divisions.

[29] "Entrada de las Seráphica Religión de Nuestro P.S. Francisco en las Islas Filipinas," in Retana, cited in Schumacher 1979: 75.

[30] Letter of 15 April 1689 to Francisco Atienza y Vañes, CPM, in response to the royal decree, in Schumacher 1979: 153.

[31]Mahar Mangahas, " Class Statistics, Made in RP", [Social Climate], *Social Weather Station*, 1 May 1999, <http://www.sws.org.ph/may00.htm>

[32] "Preliminary Results of 1999 Poverty Indicators Survey Far From Reality – Ibon", [Press Release No. 2001-06], 12 January 2001, *Ibon Foundation, Inc.* <http://www.ibon.org/pr01-06.htm>

[33] "15 M Filipinos Start Day with No Breakfast", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 25 July 2001 <http://inq.7.net>

[34] "Survey Says More *Pinoys* are Hungry", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 6 July 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>

[35] Randy David, "The Third Time as a Farce", Public Lives [opinion column], *The Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 29 April 2001 <http://www.inq7.net>

[36] Even the poor must have seen the great irony in the way affluent politicians blatantly tried to win the sympathy of the poor through inflammatory rhetoric in which they identified themselves as

one of the poor. The ludicrousness of the image of Estrada's former Press Secretary and senatorial candidate, Ricardo "Dong" Puno, known for his fastidiousness and penchant for Armani suits, trying to rouse the crowd by saying, "*Nagdudumi daw tayo, ang babaho daw natin. Siguro nga mababaho tayo dito. Pero yung baho na yan, maalis pagligo natin. Pero yung baho nila hindi na maalis* (They say we make a mess, that we smell. Maybe we do smell, but we can wash away the stink with a bath. But their smell will not go away," (" 'Long Live the Stinky,' Says Senatorial Bet", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 1 May 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>),

[37]A report from the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* provides the following extended description of the physical condition of the Shrine and its immediate environment during Edsa *Tres*:

> Humans – and human waste – are scattered on the pavement. The air is vivid with the stench and spill of urine and phlegm. Mats and folding beds abound. Litter is everywhere. The Edsa Shrine, site of two historic uprisings and declare holy ground by the Vatican, has literally become home and stomping ground for Joseph Estrada's loyalists. Security personnel of the Edsa Shrine closed the chapel door nearest to the stage after loyalists massed outside the chapel and rocked to the entertainment provided on stage by sexy performers such as Alma Concepcion and Criselda Vox. Since thousands of loyalists started keeping vigil at the shrine Wednesday night, garbage has piled up. Passerbys [sic] who checked out the protest action had to fight from throwing up at the sight of the trash and the human waste, which were already drying up in the heat.

"Sea of Humanity Yields Five Trucks of Trash", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 28 April 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>

Indeed, the newspapers were rife with reports of how the rallyists had "used the area as an outdoor toilet", "vandalized" the image of the Virgin herself, and turned the Shrine into "a huge garbage depot". According to Monsignor Soc Villegas, the Shrine's head prelate, "they heaped mounds of garbage, sang and danced lustfully over the Edsa shrine marker, rammed a truck into the landscape, and directed huge loudspeakers to the shrine door" ("Edsa reclaimed by Edsa II forces", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2 May 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>). Moreover, it seemed that the pro-Estrada rallyists "did not secure a permit to use the Catholic Church-owned property" and thus had no right to be there ("Estrada followers not permitted to use EDSA shrine: Villegas", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 27 April 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>). News reports also claimed that entire families erected makeshift tents at the Shrine and beneath the nearby flyovers, and that scuffles often arose amongst those queuing for the free food being dispensed by the more affluent participants. Moreover, those arrested for looting and vandalism during the Mendiola riots on May 1 claim that they had been paid or promised certain amounts for their participation.

[38] If the People Power I movement had not been largely orchestrated by the Philippine Catholic Church, and if the movement had not been so mainstream, it is not too farfetched to assume that Ninoy might well have become a god-figure in the same way that certain popular religious sects have deified Jose Rizal as an incarnation of Christ (as for example, in what has come to be known as the Rizalista cults of Mt. Banahaw).

[39] "Edsa Shrine Crowd Growing Once More", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 29 April 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>

[40] Isagani A. Cruz, "Joseph and Jesus", Separate Opinion [newspaper column], *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 12 November 2000, <http://www.inq7.net> The rally was being held in connection with fears that the Congress and the Senate would not push through with the impeachment of the president.

[41] "Church Condemns Desecration of Edsa Shrine", *CBCP News*, 27 April 2001 <http://www.cbcp.net/news/archives(2001/apr_2001/news2-apr27_01.html

[42] "Edsa Reclaimed by Edsa II Forces", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 2 May 2001, <http://www.inq7.net>

[43] "Church Asks Poor's Forgiveness", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 11 May 2001 <http://www.inq7.net>

[44] David, "The Third Time as Farce", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 29 April 2001, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[45]Cannell provides an interesting discussion on this topic in her study of Bicol communities. (1999: 227)

[46] Written statement submitted to the Church commission investigating the Lipa apparitions by Dr. Ronaldo Asuncion and Mrs. Rosario Cosme Mendoza, no date, courtesy of Fr. M.

[47] Figures taken from Pedro S. Achútegui, "Churches and Sects of in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 16 (1) (July 1968): 581, a review of Douglas J. Elwood, *Churches and Sects in the Philippines. A Descriptive Study of Contemporary Religious Groups Movements* (Dumaguete City: Silliman University, 1967).

Chapter 5
RELIGION AS PERFORMANCE

According to Schieffelin, all performances are subject to conditions such as "the variable competencies of the major performers, the competing agendas and ongoing evaluations of all the participants" (1996: 80). Performances are conducted for the benefit of an audience who comes to the performance with certain expectations. Because the re-enactment has to be exact, its success or failure depends on not only *how* the performance is conducted but also *how* it is received by its intended audience. In other words, the performer of the ritual must, in the course of the performance, consider its reception by his or her audience, and in doing so, manipulate the performance accordingly. Viewed in this light, performance is, therefore, inherently dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense.

In this chapter, I use Goffman, Schieffelin and Bakhtin to show how certain practices associated with Marian devotion and religion in general may in effect be seen as performances in which the use of the popular religious stereotypes plays an important role and in which elements of transculturation are clearly evident.

The Apparition as Performance

Of all the visionaries, Judiel Nieva is the best (although not a unique) example of how the behavior of the visionary can be seen as a performance, and how this performance influences the audience and vice versa. The importance of performance in this and other Philippine apparitions, particularly as none of these apparitions have been found to be authentic, cannot be underestimated. The performances of the visionaries have been so compelling, in fact, that a significant number of Filipinos continue to believe in their veracity, and it is mainly because of this that I have referred to these events as "apparitions" rather than hoaxes.

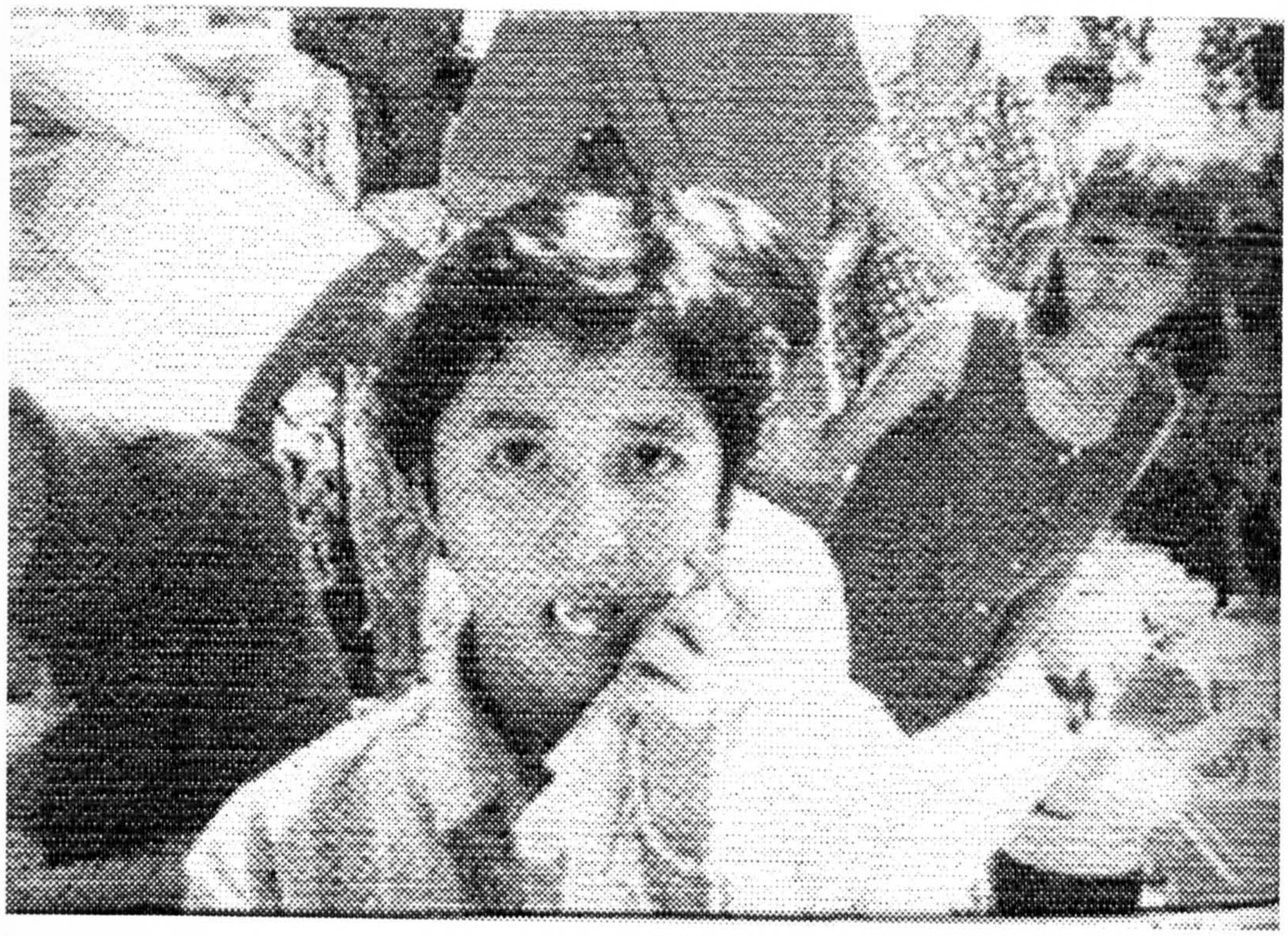
The Agoo apparitions first began in March 1989. A 12-year old visionary named Judiel Nieva claimed that the Virgin Mary was appearing to him atop a guava tree on a small hill just outside the town proper. News of the apparition began to leak out of Agoo by word of mouth, and in a few short weeks, the apparition site had become the object of pilgrimage and devotion for thousands of Filipinos from all over the country. The hill was dubbed

Apparition Hill, and the events at Agoo became headline news all throughout the Philippines. (See pictures page 153.)

From the end of March 1989 to the second week of September 1993, there were a total of 57 apparitions, most of which were public in nature. On September 8, 1989, the Virgin identified herself as the Queen of Heaven and Earth (an ancient title of the Virgin), and requested that a chapel be built for her at the site. Nieva also had a statue of the Virgin made (see picture 123) and placed within the chapel. The last public apparition took place on September 8, 1993, but Nieva insists that the Virgin continues to appear to him up to the present and pilgrimages are made to the apparition site by the most devoted of followers every first Saturday of the month.

Judiel Nieva was born in Agoo on October 29, 1976, to Pedro and Julieta Nieva, the seventh of eight siblings. The Nieva family is a good representation of the average lower middle class Filipino family. The family owns the house they live in and, typical of the extended family set up common in the country, eleven members of the family live in the house: Judiel's parents, a sister and her two children, another sister and her husband, a third sister and her baby, the visionary himself, and a younger brother. One brother works in a hotel and lives elsewhere; a sister works as a nurse in Tarlac, a nearby province. Pedro Nieva owns and operates two small groceries, but, according to the profile compiled by Garcia, the family also receives financial support from a brother who works in New York City and a brother-in-law who works in London. There is also, of course, the income from Nieva's followers.

According to accounts gathered by the media, the name Judiel, incidentally the name of one of the lesser known archangels, popped into his father's mind when he was born. According to various people in Agoo (this at the time of the height of his media popularity – some of them were less charitable later on), there were already some indications that Judiel was different from other children. Sililio Ofiaso, the postmaster, said his first impression of Nieva was that he was a beautiful child – a girl, moreover, rather than a boy (this reference to Nieva's sexual ambivalence was a common feature in all the accounts of the apparitions). According to Lourdes Estonacto, the principal of St. Mary's Academy where Nieva was a student, he looked "*mahinhin, mabait* [timid, sweet-natured]", and moved in a "refined" way. He was said to be shy and humble. He was also said to become prone to sudden, inexplicable illnesses when he was five years old.[1]



PICTURE 9: JUDIEL NIEVA WITH BLOODIED HOST IN HIS MOUTH

Nieva was brought up as a Roman Catholic, and served as a sacristan for some time. At one point, he had a desire to enter the seminary after finishing elementary school. However, according to the report of a social worker, Vivian de Venecia Garcia, his highest level of education was the fifth grade, as a severe asthmatic condition prevented him from pursuing further studies. Furthermore, he failed the entrance exam to the seminary.

Nevertheless, by all accounts, he was quite an artistically talented child, and he himself volunteers the information that he began to learn folk dancing in nursery school, influenced largely by the fact that his mother had been a folk dancer before her marriage (she was "*sikat sa pagsasayaw* [famous for her dancing]", he says; Cruz 1995: 134). Furthermore, as a child and during his early teens, he sang in the church choir as a soloist boy soprano. Indeed, his singing talent was such that he was chosen to represent Region 1 (La Union Province) in a singing contest at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila. From the age of six, moreover, he began to compose his own songs (in this light, his choice of opening a karaoke bar later on is perhaps not so surprising).

According to a devoted follower, Francis L. Panes, who published a book on the Agoo phenomenon (1994) using his own resources, Nieva was a talkative child, but given to keeping to himself rather than playing with other children. During one of his solitary games, his mother came upon him apparently having a conversation with someone else. When asked who he was talking to, Nieva supposedly replied, "Sto. Niño" (the Holy Infant Jesus). Local gossip has it that even when he was very young, instead of a doll he would ask for an image of the Sto. Niño, which he would keep with him as he slept. Even before this, however, when Nieva was only two years old, he claimed to have seen the crucified Christ who told him, "Don't be afraid, one day I will get you and give you a mission" (Panes 1994: vii). Some years after this, he fell inexplicably ill and continued to experience strange pains which only went away after these were identified as a necessary pre-condition in the fulfilment of his destiny as visionary (Panes 1994: viii; see also Chapter 3).

The foregoing information shows an interesting blend of religious belief and folklore. The fact that Nieva served as a sacristan at some point in his life is important in that the experience must have vested him with an awareness of religious obligations that was more precise than that of most people. The religious rituals he participated in, even the role he played in these rituals, would have prepared him for his later role as visionary in the Christian tradition, and provided him with the language necessary for that role. Isolation from other

children is almost a mythic theme in the apparition event, and draws on apparition experiences throughout the centuries. The unexplained body pains, which go away only upon the recognition that he had a religious "mission" to fulfill, is fairly common in Philippine shamanistic folklore (see Chapter 3). Moreover, many people in the Philippines believe that such pains may also be caused by offending *duwendes* (dwarves) or other creatures of Philippine lower mythology. They believe the pains can be made to go simply by acknowleding one's culpability and apologizing to the creature concerned. In this case, the recognition came from his family, who realized that they had to give in to what was predestined for Nieva, itself a kind of propitiation.

The apparitions themselves have all the important characteristics of the more famous Marian apparitions around the world. If the Angel of Portugal heralded the apparitions of the Virgin at Fatima, angels appeared to Nieva the evening of March 25, 1989 to announce the coming apparitions of the Blessed Mother. If the visionaries at Fatima and elsewhere were shown visions of eternal damnation, Judiel was shown a vision of sinners moving towards hell. Miracles proliferated: the sweet fragrance of flowers would precede the apparitions; the statue that Nieva had commissioned began to shed tears of blood; the sun danced; the visionary would receive mystical communion in which the Host would mysteriously turn into a piece of bloody flesh. Many people claimed to be inexplicably healed – a six-year old boy, blind since birth, regained his vision; a paralyzed man was able to walk again; and people plucked the leaves of the guava tree to make healing poultices so often that those in charge of the apparition site decided to fence the tree in and put up a sign asking them not to do so.

The messages from Mary were plentiful and dire in theme: pray and repent or the apocalypse would come upon us. The visionary would bring to the apparition site a notebook and a pen in which he would scribble down the messages as they were given to him. According to some news reports, some of these messages were in Latin and had to be translated by Nieva's spiritual adviser, Fr. Rogelio Cortez. However, the Commission on Visions and Phenomena's records and the verbatim account published by Panes contradict this: all the Virgin's messages are in English despite the fact that Nieva was believed to lack proficiency in the language and in fact often addressed the Virgin in Tagalog. Unfortunately, the messages echoed messages of the Virgin elsewhere much too closely: the church committee investigating the Agoo phenomenon found Nieva's messages to be almost exact replicas of those purportedly given to certain Western visionaries. While the bulk of his messages seem to have been taken mostly from the Marian messages to the Irish visionary

Christina Gallagher (1988 to the present), many were also taken from the Scottsdale, Arizona apparitions and from those that were given to Fr. Gobi and the Medjugorje visionaries. Judiel himself explained that the messages were "always the same" when compared to those received by visionaries at Fatima, Lourdes and Medjugorje (Cruz 1995: 139), for, after all, there was "only one Virgin Mary".

Needless to say, the investigating committee turned in a negative verdict on the Agoo apparitions. Today, the Agoo apparitions are considered by most to be a very cleverly contrived hoax engineered by the visionary's mother, the owner of the lot upon which the apparitions took place, and other members of the Agoo community, for material profit (and later participated in willingly by Nieva himself for the same reasons). Apart from clear evidence of plagiarization, the Agoo messages often seemed "incoherent" and "inconsistent in style and manner of expression.[2] They contained grammatical errors which seemed to indicate that the visionary had "merely committed [them] to his memory", though he had purportedly written them down in his notebook even as he received them from the Virgin during the apparitions. Suspicious too was the fact that the visionary and his spiritual advisers later omitted and denied knowledge of certain controversial (because they were contradictory to church doctrines) messages, though they clearly appeared in the said notebooks. Finally, the messages seemed merely to be a repetition and continuation of the messages allegedly received by Rufino Bautista, a man from Agoo who claimed to have had visions of "Our Lady of Kayumanggi" until Nieva ousted him as the local visionary.

Apart from the messages, there was also "the doubtful and questionable state of the image of the Blessed Virgin".[3] According to the Commission's report, the statue was subjected to a close examination by experts, who discovered that it had "canals in the inner side of the eyes and a hole with a copper tube on the crown of the head" through which blood could seep at appropriate times. Furthermore, the blood specimen from the statue was not preserved and therefore could not be examined (Cruz 1995: 158), although Panes claims he was able to do otherwise (1994: 70).

Finally, there was "the disappointing outcome and unedifying effects of the preceding events on the community." The Commission pointed to the fact that instead of promoting peace and harmony among the people, they promoted strife. Not only was there rivalry between Bautista and his followers and Nieva and his, but sometime in the middle of it all, the events were marred by an ugly feud between Judiel and the owner of the apparition site,

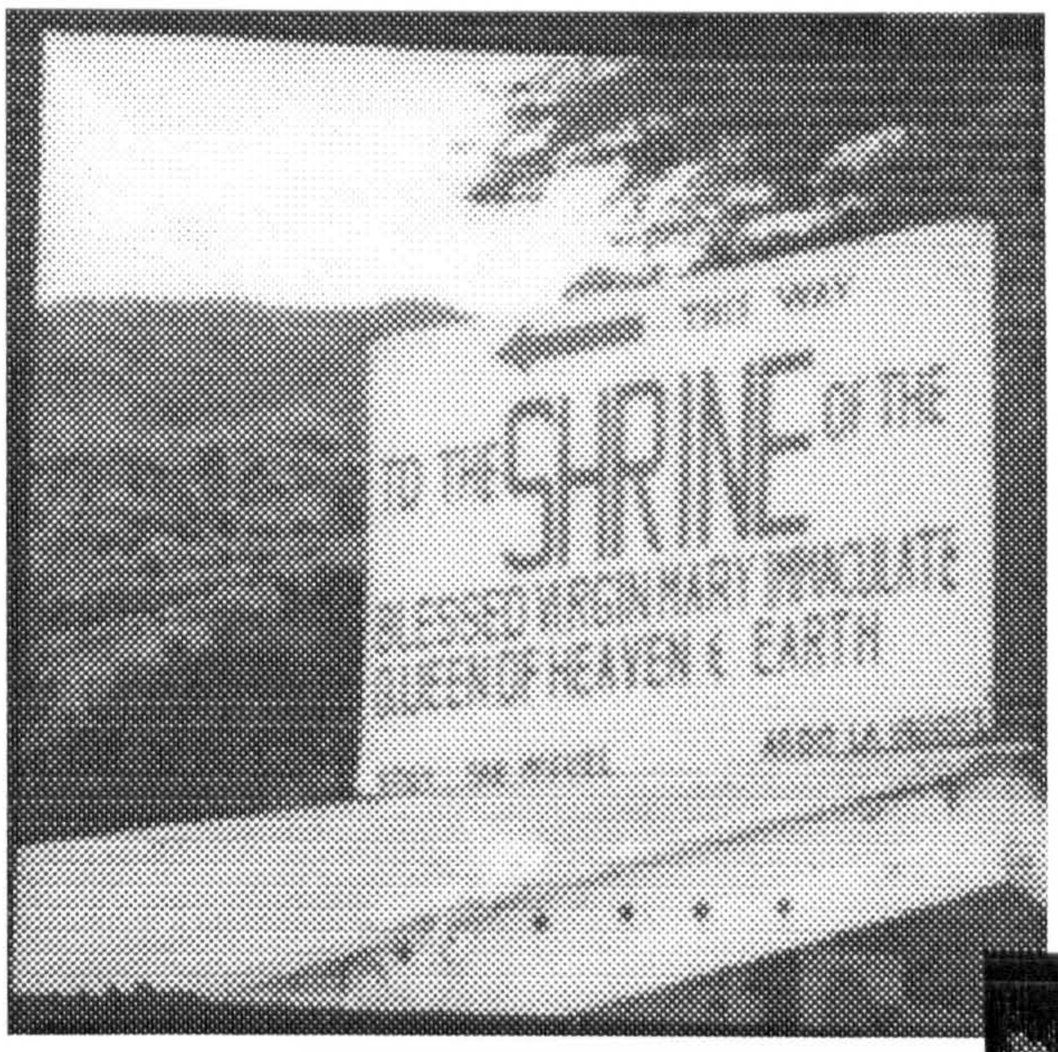
supposedly due to the fact that Nieva refused to give the latter a share of the "profits". The consequence of this feud was that Nieva simply transferred the apparition site to a lot in Barangay San Miguel, which "elicited negative remarks and criticisms from the people of Agoo as well as from visitors".[4] Furthermore, the apparition events, instead of encouraging the people to draw closer to the Church, encouraged them to turn away from the Church's advice: when the church banned the holding of mass on Apparition Hill during the course of the investigation, a group of devotees, including a priest, continued to celebrate mass there (though this, in itself, is not usual: Zimdars-Swartz has noted that popular feeling often bypasses what the Church has ordained). Finally, Nieva and his followers "proceeded with the construction of a massive, concrete building, expressly going against the explicit will of the bishop. The building runs to millions in cost."[5] (See pictures, pages 158 to 159.)

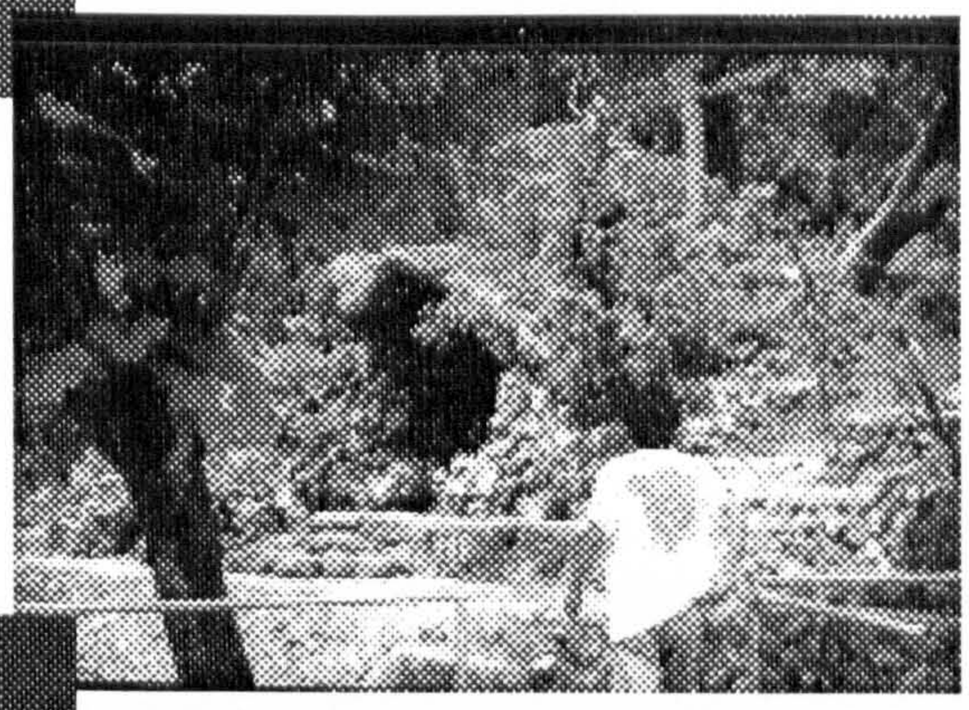
Taken together, the preceding points provided damning evidence, for given the criteria that the investigating commission follows in order to verify authenticity, the Agoo apparitions failed in most counts.

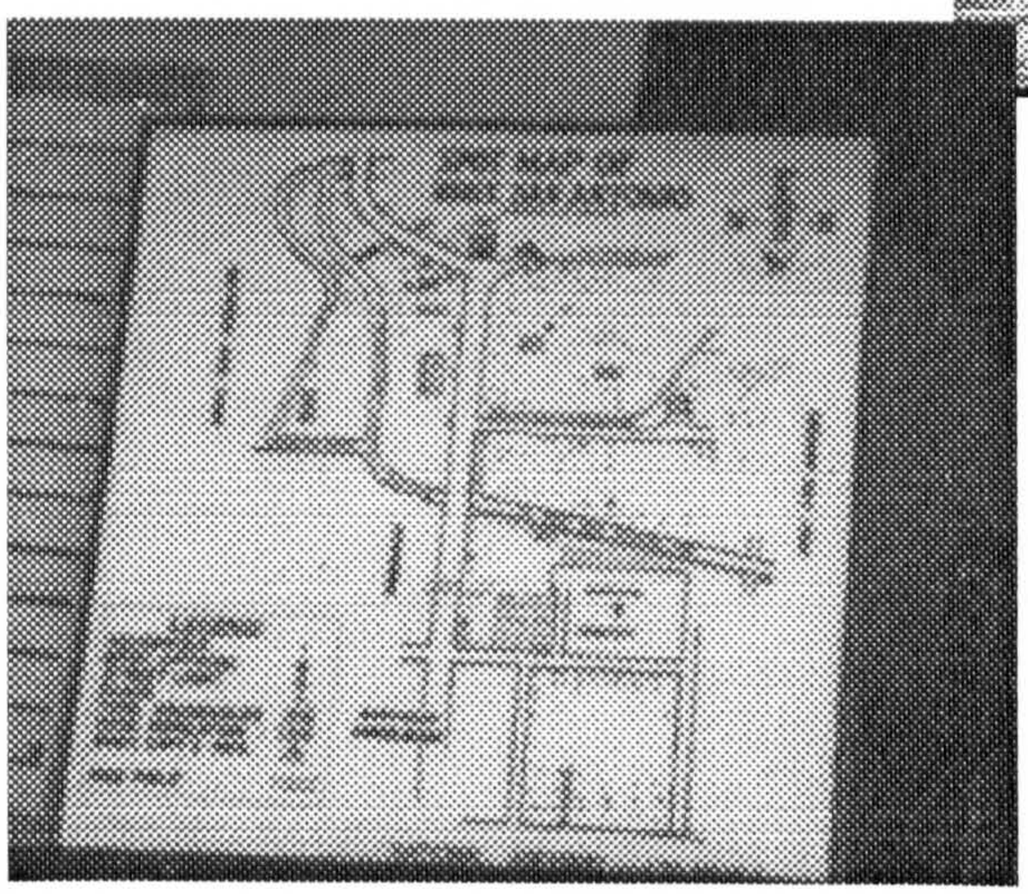
The public apparitions at Agoo took place over a period of four years – the longest time frame for any single apparition phenomenon in the country[6] – and, if the visionary and his followers are to be believed, private apparitions continue until the present. If the apparitions were indeed a hoax, as the Church finally concluded, how was Nieva able to convince his audience of the "authenticity" of his vision for such a prolonged period of time? How was he able to sustain the deception? The answer to these questions lies in the way he was able to effectively play his role as religious visionary by anticipating the expectations of the public and shaping his performance to suit these expectations.

Both Cruz and Vivian Garcia, a clinical social worker who interviewed Judiel, found that Judiel always underwent a transformation in attitude when he spoke of his apparition experiences. Garcia writes that

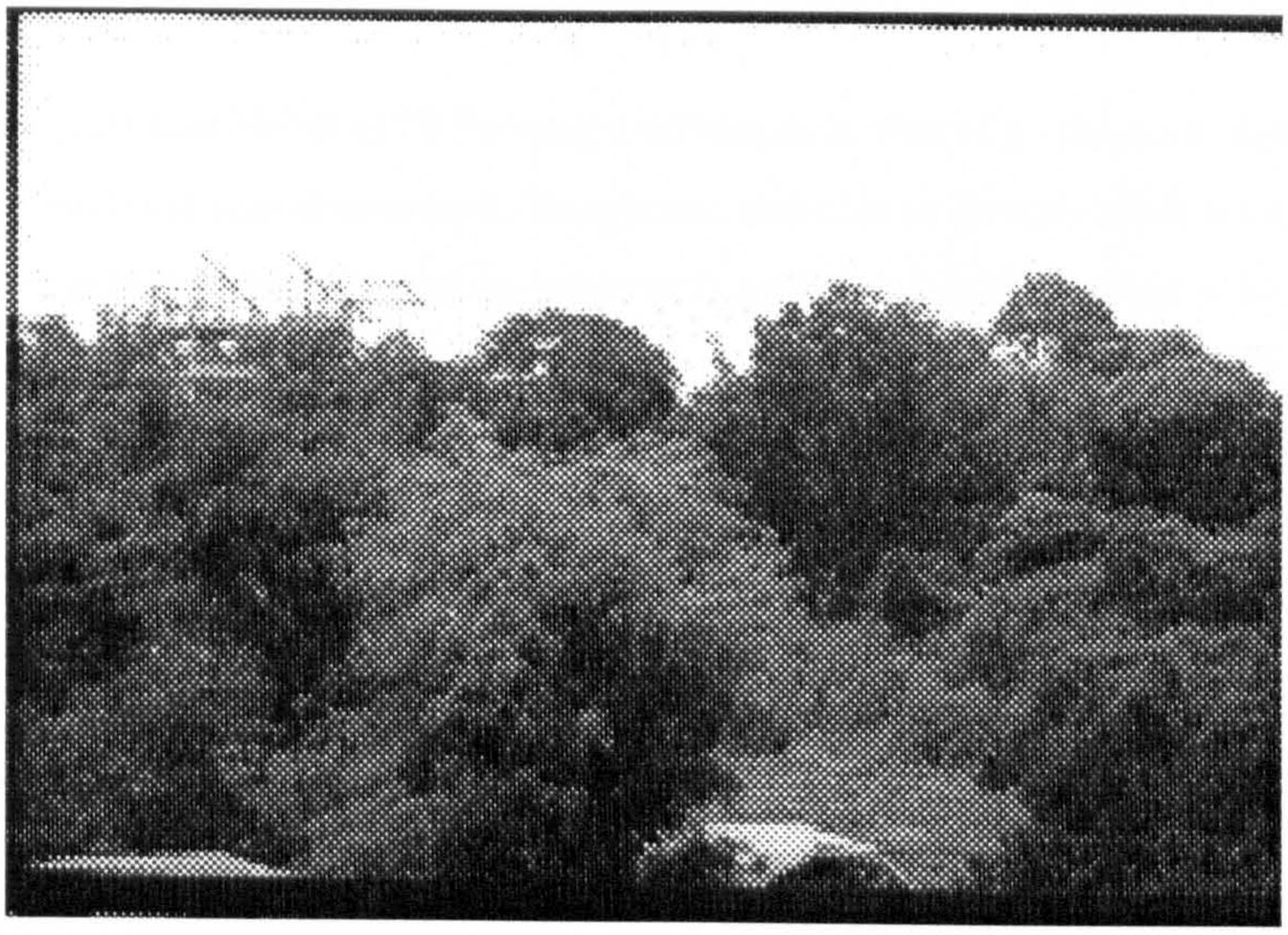
> When recounting his conversations of the Virgin Mary which [sic] he calls "the Lady," he appears fixated on what he is saying. His manner became [sic] almost stiff and he spoke continuously, almost without pausing. He spoke [sic] in a soft montone voice and prefaced most of his statements with "And the Lady said." During this segment of the interview, his speech was unclear and [garbled]. This narration was spoken entirely in English which was not the Tagalog language he spoke for most of the interview. This speedy manner of speaking was unusual since he appeared disconnected from the interview and not at all relating to the



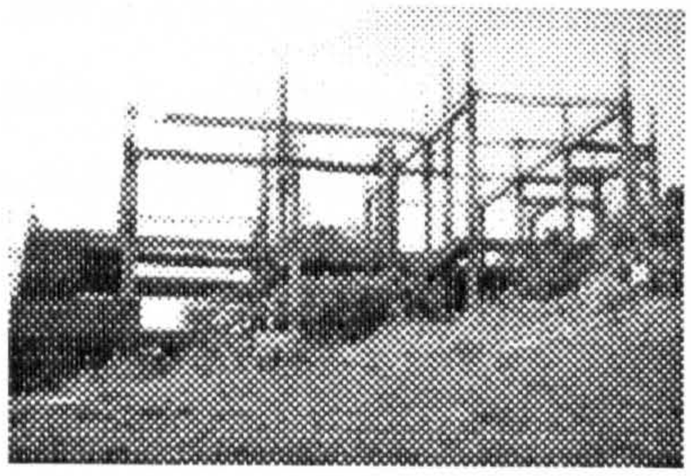


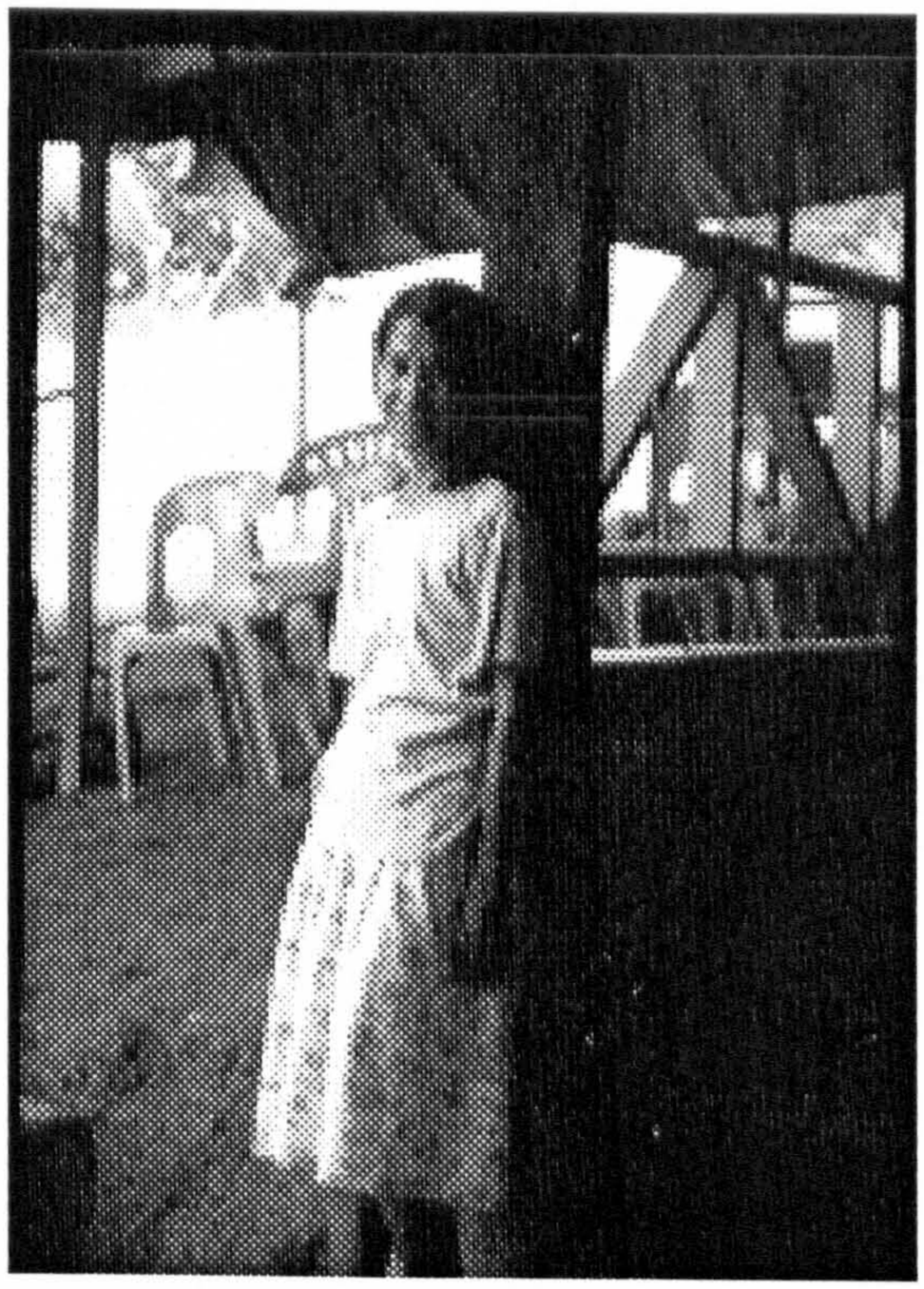


PICTURE 10: THE ORIGINAL APPARITION SITE AT AGOO. (Clockwise from top) The road sign pointing towards Apparition Hill; my Agoo tricycle driver and guide looking at the Agoo grotto where miraculous water could be drawn from the nearby stream; a site map of the apparition site.



PICTURE 11: THE SECOND AGOO SITE STILL UNDERGOING CONSTRUCTION (1998) (Clockwise from top) The concrete structure as seen from below; the caretaker of the Shrine inside the temporary chapel in which the image of the Heavenly Queen of Heaven and Earth is kept; closeup of the metal frame that will eventually become the final chapel.





> interviewer in his previously suspicious tentative manner. (Cruz 1995: 137)

Cruz suggests that Nieva is "following a certain role, that of a religious visionary, which he has internalized and dramatized. Everytime that role is directly dealt with, he immediately goes into the state of mind he believes is proper to his role" (Ibid.: 58). Performance, in this case, is determined by the visionary's consciousness of him- or herself in relation to others – in other words, what we see here is evidence of Bakhtin's *dialogic word:* the visionary has contemplated beforehand the possible responses to his or her utterances or actions, and they have determined the nature of these.

It is a testament to the skill of the visionary that the apparitions proved "real" enough to convince thousands of Filipinos that the Virgin was indeed appearing at Agoo, Cabra and Murphy, particularly considering that the visionaries in these events were little more than children. But the relative youth of the visionaries is perhaps one of the most compelling reasons for credulity: Filipinos associate innocence, purity and goodness with children and cannot conceive of them as capable of such gross deception.

This is not so much the result of a Victorian attitude towards children and innocence (and certainly, most Filipinos are not aware that elsewhere in the world, post Freudian societies do not necessarily see children as innocent), but of the Filipino cultural and social emphasis on the family in which children play a specific role. Despite the fact that rampant poverty has resulted in the explosive growth in child labor and in the sordid participation (often instigated by the parents themselves) of children in exploitative realities, there is a persistent inclination in the Filipino mind to view children as objects of indulgence: a University of the Philippines study of Filipino kinship relations states that "Parents are loving, caring, and protective. Out of genuine love and as a moral obligation, parents work hard and even plunge into debt to provide for their children" (Medina 1995: 16). Within the *ideal* Filipino family, therefore, children are loved and protected, and in families above the subsistence level, children are treated as such even well beyond their attainment of majority. This perception of children, in fact, helps explain the popularity of the statue of the Señor Santo Niño, or the Christ child, in the country.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact to Filipinos that some of the most famous visionaries worldwide have been children. The visionaries at Fatima, La Salette and Lourdes, for example, were all young, as were the visionaries at Medjugorje when the apparitions there first began. Since these are the stories which fill the pages of newspapers and magazines during Holy Week, and since many of the more affluent Marian devotees in the country have been on pilgrimages to these sacred locations, Filipinos cannot help but be cognizant of the fact that children hold a special place in Mary's heart. Given the common Filipino perception of children, this is something they can easily identify with.

Thus, despite the indisputable fact that none of the Filipino child visionaries have ever been found by the Catholic Church to be genuine, many Filipinos find it hard to believe that a child could possibly negotiate what is, after all, the extremely complex performance necessary to the perpetuation of a hoax.

With belief in the visionary comes belief in the performance, particularly when it is enhanced by what Goffman calls the "dramatic realization" (1956: 40) or the way the performer enhances his performance with the use of confirmatory signs. Hence the visionary's production, with shamanistic sleight-of-hand, of certain concrete "signs" of authenticity: miraculous petals, healing oils, messages, and trances. These seem to be enough to *suggest* the existence of other signs which the *audience itself* produces: dancing suns, miraculous petals, healing, the beautiful floral fragrance always associated with Mary. Here are some reports of what people say they saw at Agoo, for example:

> Two ladies standing next to each other were relating what they saw: "a cloud that was very white, and it looked like the Virgin Mary with her hands outstretched." Asked where exactly this cloud appeared, as this writer did not see it (nor anything extraordinary, for that matter), the two ladies simultaneously pointed to opposite directions upwards!
> *Philippine Graphic*, 22 March 1993 (Agoo)
>
> "I went out," relates Msgr. Ramon C. Arguelles of the Pontificio Colegio Filipino in Rome, describing his vision of the dancing sun in Lipa, "and saw the sun spinning fast, giving off different brilliant colors as it did so. Then it seemed to lurch forward, then sway back. This lasted for 30 minutes. The thing was, I could see the sun with my naked eye without having any eyestrain." *Philippines Free Press*, 10 April 1993 (Lipa)
>
> Eyes squinting in the afternoon haze, I saw what looked like a white silhouette of Our Lady of Lourdes, hands clasped in prayer, floating over the dark green foliage of the trees. A scent of flowers wafted in the air.
> *Philippine Panorama*, 14 March 1993 (Agoo)

> Most of those who were on Cabra when dawn broke on March 25, however, agree on this: the rising sun appeared to revolve, and seemed to approach its watchers. It was a benign sun; you could stare at it without blinking. *Philippine Graphic*, 22 March 1993 (Cabra)

Did people see what they wanted to see? Or, as Lacaba puts it, "were the visions...products of overwrought imaginations?" In an attempt to answer this question, Lacaba continues:

> True, they expected to see the Virgin, not the dance of the sun, and therefore it cannot be said that they saw what they wanted to see. But then, maybe they had seen *The Song of Bernadette.* Maybe some hazy recollections from that old movie had lodged in their subconscioous and, in the charged atmosphere...the recollections suddenly leaped out before their eyes" (Lacaba 1993: 45)

Yet, Lacaba is wrong on one count: it is doubtful, given the nature of Marian apparitions worldwide, that the audience actually expected to see the Virgin even if they hoped they would – very few famous apparitions, many of them merely legends associated with shrines (see W. Christian 1981a and 1981b), actually relate of a Marian vision that involved the entire community – but we can be quite certain that they did expect to see manifestations of the Virgin's presence. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, none of the approved apparitions were seen by anyone other than the visionary/ies. What people said they saw, however, were *manifestations* of Mary's presence. In the Philippines, where people believe in "those we cannot see" and where mediation is an important part of culture, the visionary/medium/ shaman's role is precisely to see *for* them. However, the idea of "seeing for oneself" in the context of the Philippine apparition must be viewed in another way, that of direct participation in the ritual, the importance of which I shall discuss later on. But Lacaba is also right: the people who come to see for themselves come to the apparition with certain expectations which must be met or the performance would be deemed a failure.

One of these expectations concerns the messages that the Virgin gives. Such messages are easily available to the masses, either in the form of pamphlets, or news reports. Everyone already "knows" what the Virgin will say as we can see from the various news accounts:

> "such general messages are *run-of-the-mill* from the Virgin to her devotees, through her earthbound medium" Philippines Free Press
>
> "On the whole, the messages purportedly given by the Virgin Mary to a chosen few are simple and *uniform* in substance. With only a few digressions, the Virgin, revered by Catholics as the Mother of God, asks the

> faithful to pray, and the sinners to quit and return to the fold. On a few other occasions she has asked that a shrine or a church be built on the site where she has chosen to appear. Invariably, she tells "her children" to keep faith and to count on her help." *Philippines Free Press*
>
> "Mary's message was *the same as* in her other apparitions: She asked people to love one another; to go back to Christ whom many had already forgotten; to pray the rosary; and to wear a scapular based on a drawing that she relayed..." *Philippine Graphic*

The words which I have italicized reveal the popular Filipino perception of the Marian message. Mary is so consistent in her messages that they have become a kind of monologia, invested with their own authority. Thus, when asked why Mary's messages seem to resemble more famous messages, Philippine visionaries simply reply, "There is only one Mary".

Indeed, Nieva's appropriation of the apparition utterances of other visionaries as his own imbued his own speech with more authority. Yet, as in the manner of all utterances, and much like an actor who vests the script with his own interpretation, he gave the messages a unique slant, selecting only those which would have relevance to his Filipino audience (*stylization*). But because the words were not his, that is, he was using/manipulating the discourse of another, his performance/appropriation was subject to risk. Goffman, for example, points out that the competency of the major performer is a factor that can determine the success or failure of any undertaking. By using a language he was not fluent in, Nieva's competency as a visionary was somewhat constrained. For example, the incoherence and grammatical errors cited by the Church were due mainly to Nieva's own lack of mastery of the English language. Yet, by using English instead of the language he normally used when speaking of his religious experiences, Nieva seems to indicate that, for him, the apparition phenomenon is essentially a foreign phenomenon, and in order to verbalize the phenomenon, to make it available to others, he necessarily had to use the language it was generally associated with in his mind and in those of others. In other words, it was necessary to use the speech genre associated with the particular social context of the apparition event. As the theoretician David Lodge points out in his discussion of Bakhtin, "Context is, of course, the key. The fact that the meaning of an utterance is always determined by a context that is partly non-verbal is the reason why semantics is the most difficult area of linguistic research. Meaning in actual speech can never be analysed in purely linguistic terms, because the relations between addresser, addressee and topic are not contained within the linguistic data" (Lodge 1990: 78).

Failure also comes as a result of "unforeseen contingency and blind luck" (Schiefellin 1996: 80). One of the most compelling aspects of the Agoo visionary's performance was the inexplicable appearance of a Host on his tongue (which he claimed had been placed there by an angel), and the even more inexplicable transformation of this Host into a piece of bloody meat in an almost gruesome literal rendition of the words of the Holy Mass, "This is my body, eat from it". It was one of the most awaited spectacles of the apparition event. But unfortunately for the visionary, blind luck caused the collapse of this most potent sign of the divine presence. It was blind luck, after all, that made June Keithley look up at the precise moment that Nieva slipped a piece of meat into his mouth under the pretence of wiping his mouth with a handkerchief. Her public denunciation of the visionary produced a sharp disillusionment with the Philippine apparitions in general. When the Church's verdict was released, affirming Keithley's position, one might suppose that the disillusionment would be complete. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, there were still those who refused to accept Agoo as a hoax. When a television news program conducted a poll among viewers right after the verdict, it found that "three times as many still believed in the Agoo 'miracle' as didn't, and 35 per cent did not know what to think" (Nuguid 1995: 10).

A year after the verdict, the pilgrims to Agoo had indeed dwindled to a trickle – but the few that remained were convinced beyond doubt that the apparitions at Agoo were real and that Nieva was an authentic visionary. When I went to Nieva's karaoke bar, the Wishing Bamboo, in 1997, Judiel was away on vacation, but one of his followers, a woman named Oming, agreed to talk to me after I had convinced her I was not a reporter. She continued to believe in Nieva, she said, because he was "different": "There's something about him. It's the way he looks at you – as if he knows what's going on inside of you." The apparitions were real, she was convinced, because she herself regularly went on the monthly pilgrimages to the apparition site, and while she herself never saw the Virgin, she knew the Virgin was there because "you could suddenly smell flowers. It was so beautiful. At first, we thought it was someone's perfume, but no one had perfume that smelled like that".[7] Since there were in reality no flowers, it is clear that Oming was making, consciously or unconsciously, the natural connection between Mary and the scent of flowers that has become a staple in the Philippine apparitions – hence, to her way of thinking, the sensual presence of invisible flowers became the authoritative proof of the Marian presence, and such proof, which *she herself* could smell, was also proof of the visionary's authenticity.

Those who have turned away in disgust over what they perceived to be Nieva's manipulation of the public likewise use the same Western stereotype of the visionary as the basis of their arguments: when people looked at Nieva with more critical eyes towards the end of the Agoo events, pilgrims to Agoo began to note that

> Judiel does not *act like a true visionary* [italics mine]. "Visionaries in other parts of the world and those who have been verified by the Church always kneel in rapt attention whenever Mary is present and speaking to them. Judiel does not act that way." (Paras 1993: 13)

However, appropriation necessarily involves transformation, the creation of the hybrid, because in a sense, the apparition event becomes an interstitial space (Bhabha 1984) wherein can be found a multiplicity of meanings (i.e. "heteroglossia", Bakhtin 1990 ed.: 263). The Philippine visionaries, while trying to look, act, and speak like the Western visionaries, cannot be exactly like them. Because they are aware of this, yet are also aware of the need to live up to the stereotype if they are to be credible, the transformation often includes exaggeration, if not parody, of the original: the Filipinos are more devout, more Spanish, more American, more *everything*, if they can help it, than those who were formerly their colonial masters – and the visionaries adhere so closely to the stereotype that they often seem like caricatures. But because the Philippine visionaries act according to their own interpretation of the stereotype, the final result is clearly not an exact replication, but a "flawed mimesis".

That this sort of imitation/parodization is actually a *performance* of sorts may be seen when compared with another situation wherein such an imitation likewise occurs. Cannell observes that, in singing contests in Bicol, contestants fall into gestures and stances totally different from their normal behaviour when singing foreign songs, imitating the styles of singers they have seen on television. She writes,

> They do not seem to sing as themselves. Rather, they become, as well as their (sometimes considerable) individual talents allow them, a singer, a star, the *artista* to which the emsee [sic] has just incongruously compared them. Gestures from Western pop performers and the Tagalog singers they influence are choreographed into the performance; careful expressions of emotional excruciation very different from the normal Filipino facial repertoire, and set-piece, conscious singers' movements, spreading the hand with a crescendo or raising and lowering the microphone. (Cannell 1999:211)

This act of imitation is, in Cannell's view, a way by which the poor could appropriate, even if only temporarily, a share of the Westernized culture that is usually only available to those who could afford it financially, that is, the middle and upper classes of Filipino society. However, she also views it as an example of how performance is "an attempt to perform the cultural context of the piece, and some parts of that context remain a long way off" (1999: 212).

Judiel Nieva's performance of the role of Marian visionary shows distinct similarities to Cannell's singing contestants. In the same way that they seemed to shift personalities, to transform and recontextualize themselves within their performances of Western songs, whenever Nieva spoke about the apparition or even about Mary herself, "there was this abrupt change of [sic] his facial expression, mood, and language" (Cruz 1995: 40). In other words, I suggest that a similar kind of appropriation of power and attempt at contextualization can be seen in Nieva's behavior (and indeed, in the rest of the Philippine Marian visionaries whom he represents). In a sense, the identification by both singer and visionary with the objects of their emulation becomes so *real*, that the line between reality and fantasy becomes blurred (see chapter 6). But like Cannell's contestants who are after all *not* Western pop stars, Judiel Nieva is likewise neither a Western visionary nor (at least according to the Church) even a genuine one, it is inevitable that his performance cannot be an exact replication. If "some parts of that context remain a long way off" it is because, like the Bicolano contestants, Nieva and the other visionaries did not have a personal experience of the *actual* context - thus, their interpretations of that context remain just that, *interpretations*, shaped, moreover, by stereotyped Filipino notions of the West.

In fact, the Philippine apparitions generally reinforce Western stereotypes of the apparition phenomenon, from the behaviour of the visionaries, the descriptions and titles of the Virgin, the miracles that occur, and even in the language in which the messages are given. The stereotype is so clearly an appropriation that the argument that all approved apparitions show essential similarities cannot hold: the similarities in these approved apparitions are in aspects that go well beyond the surface, and in any case, in these approved cases, the Virgin adapted her apparitions to suit each specific locality to the extent that she looked like the natives and even spoke to the visionaries in the vernacular (thus she spoke in French to Bernadette, Spanish to Patricia Talbot in Ecuador, and in English to the English-speaking visionaries). In the Philippines, there are only a very few cases of such adaptations and these cases did not prosper. In the six most popular apparitions that occurred within the past 50

years, there were no attempts whatsoever to nativize the Virgin. On the surface, therefore, it is clear that most Philippine Marian apparitions are actually just replications of those in the West.

The Philippine apparitions also influenced each other in significant ways. Indeed, there seems to be a sense of "continuity" from one apparition to another. Judiel Nieva was not the first visionary to emerge in Agoo. Before him there were two others, a man named Rufino Bautista and an unnamed woman. But even before the visionaries starting emerging, Agoo had already been known in past centuries for the miraculous statue of the Virgin kept in the Agoo basilica. At the end of the Agoo apparitions, the Allan Rudio apparitions began to take place, and Rudio himself claimed that the Virgin had told him she was the same virgin who had appeared at Agoo. Furthermore, the two visionaries, Nieva and Rudio, had the same habit of writing down the Virgin's messages as they were given, and the two events share similar characteristics, most notably the giving of a mystical communion. In a similar manner, Nena Aguirre was strongly influenced by the Cabra apparitions, and her messages purportedly contain the same themes as those of the Cabra apparitions.

Why is there such an interdependence among the different apparitions? Surely an apparition that can stand on its own, and offers originality and freshness better guarantees authenticity and true faith? The most obvious answer, of course, as I mentioned at an earlier point, is that such an interdependence reinforces authenticity: the apparition *must be real* because it happened elsewhere, and in just such a way. Furthermore, as Bacani pointed out, there is some justification for the statement that identification with Mary, either through the possession of her image or the appropriation of her appearance, gives a person legitimacy or status in the eyes of others. All too often, however, the appropriation of a "successful" apparition symbol is done too enthusiastically: the repetition and replication, instead of becoming signs of authenticity, suggest the exact opposite.

It is clear, in fact, that the dialogic word comes into play in Philippine Marian apparitions, and with both its intentions. In an apparition event like Lipa, where the novitiate Teresita Castillo claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary, stylization was clearly used: her discourse was greatly permeated by previous Marian discourses and in no way contradicted the original ones, though her intentions differed from them. One of the priests who investigated the phenomenon believes that she was sincere, but had difficulty in differentiating between internal and external realities. On the other hand, Judiel Nieva, the

boy visionary of Agoo, La Union, clearly appropriated the discourses of other world reknowned visionaries for purposes of his own, in obvious opposition to their intentions. It is generally believed that his reasons were material, rather than spiritual.

A good example of such repetition and replication is provided by a relatively recent news account of a supposed miracle in the Misamis Oriental town of Balingasag, an hour's ride out of Manila. The report states that, shortly after the likeness of Christ mysterious appeared on the trunk of a banana tree, "Other Misamis Oriental towns thereafter boasted similar banana trunk images, and devotees (tourist arrivals, in business parlance,) made pilgrimages accordingly." The banana trunk image also made an appearance in Cagayan de Oro, of all places near the airport: "I saw the image," the writer says, "an elementary charcoal rendition of a face. Anybody could have done it. And dry bark is a texture-terrific indigenous canvas." In a cynical side comment, he adds, "no one played the role of visionary... [so] the profit motive has to be discounted. A good laugh, perhaps?" At the end of the article, he cannot resist adding an irreverent and irrepressible quip: "one can snicker at the sheer poetry of it all: falling down on banana plantations, with the hanging fruit above in sinful repose!"[8] Once a place had established itself as a "center" for miracles, it seems, miracles just do not stop occurring: "miracles" occurred in Lipa on a fairly regular basis until the early 1990s, and no doubt, will continue to do so in the future; even before Judiel Nieva's apparitions, Agoo's sole claim to fame in the past centuries was the miraculous image of the Virgin in the Agoo basilica that was placed there by the Spanish religious.

The foregoing accounts shows that there is in fact a subversive element to this repetition or replication of the supposedly miraculous. The repetition and replication are no doubt seen as justifications of the supposed "sanctity" of a particular location. However, they only achieve the opposite results, because too much replication and repetition only serves to demean and weaken the Philippine apparition phenomenon as a whole. Clearly, in the accounts presented above, the duplication becomes excessive to the point of parody. It can no longer be called mimesis by Bhabha's definition, because the events have become caricatures.

In summary, it is precisely because the visionary is a mimic, using accepted formulas and modes of behavior, that he or she is simultaneously convincing and threatening – convincing because his or her performance as visionary is patterned after what people expect to see, and threatening because, in the appropriation of the stereotype, the stereotype itself undergoes a transformation. Indeed, if the apparition phenomenon is nativized at all, it is on

this unconscious level: while both visionaries and pilgrims approach the apparition phenomenon with certain expectations, their reactions to the phenomenon are nevertheless prescribed by their culture. In their responses to the apparition stereotypes, therefore, both visionary and pilgrim are actually manipulating the stereotype to suit their own purposes, and the stereotypes become important only in so far as they serve as a way by which otherwise unacceptable religious practices become acceptable. By using a guise more acceptable to the dominant authority, traditional practices and rituals manage to survive. Thus we can see the Philippine Marian apparition as a subtle form of resistance to the dominant power and to the dominant religion.

How does the Catholic Church, the institution most threatened by the imitative and repetitive nature of the Philippine apparitions, respond to this sort of subversion? For, when all is said and done, most Philippine apparitions are simply a vehicle for instant fame and fortune and the use of the Marian symbol ensures that the visionary has a ready-made fan club. Indeed, a closer look at the apparitions will show that there is also an element of ambivalence on the part of both the visionary and the follower that challenges the authority of the Church: the Marian symbol is appropriated, yes, but in many cases, Church-sanctioned Marian devotion is not. The Philippine apparitions mirror apparitions of Mary elsewhere, yes, but there are distortions in the reflected image. Moreover, there is something suspicious in the great number of reported apparitions (in 1991 alone, there were six reported apparitions of the Virgin) – yet "Nobody... it seems, [has ever] questioned why the Virgin should find the country a favorite place to appear in" (Nuguid 1995: 10).

In the Philippines, church response to apparitions has been generally reserved, often taking the stance of non-involvement and non-commitment until the events play themselves out. This was the case in the Rudio apparitions. The Church's response, according to a Jesuit priest who was personally involved in the investigations, was simply to tell the boy's parents "to let the boy have a normal childhood". No official church verdict was announced, but the Church's withdrawal of interest in the case was enough to convince the media, at least, that the events were not worthy of devotion.

In the case of Rogelio Cortez, the investigative committee that interrogated him did so obviously with the intent of intimidating him into confessing that he was perpetrating a hoax. The visionary became so riled that he was moved to retort, "But you're needling me with questions that confuse. *Kanya-kanya tayong paniniwala.* [Each to our own beliefs.]

Besides, I know my claims will not be approved by the Church because of so many objections."[9] The committee turned in an inconclusive report, saying that further questioning would be necessary, though this became moot when the apparitions ended and the public lost interest.

In the event that the Church does become publicly involved, the weight of its judgement is such that it is usually enough to sway public opinion. Certainly, the Church's conclusions about the inauthenticity of the Agoo apparitions contributed strongly to public disillusionment with the visionary, Judiel Nieva, leading to the desertion of most of his followers. In fact, since the media was instrumental in popularizing the Agoo apparitions on a nation-wide scale, the Church did not hesitate to use the press itself to discredit Nieva: in an unprecedented move, it held a press conference to announce its negative conclusions, leading one Jesuit to protest the unnecessary humiliation it brought upon the Nieva family.

However, if the Church's reactions to the Agoo apparitions were considered by some to be extreme, they were directly propotional to the amount of interest that the apparitions had generated among the public: the only other apparition to have drawn tens of thousands of devotees was the apparition of the Virgin to Teresita Castillo in Lipa in 1948, which itself was immediately and ruthlessly suppressed by the Church. In other words, it was precisely because of the large scope of influence that these two apparitions had over the public that the Church was moved to announce their verdict quickly and publicly.

Despite the fact that Church response to the apparitions has been generally influential in swaying public opinion, we must nevertheless keep in mind that public perception of the Church itself is also somewhat ambivalent because of its associations with Spanish colonial oppression and with the abuses of the Spanish clergy that eventually led to the outbreak of the Philippine revolution against Spain. Many Filipinos today, particularly those who belong to the poor, are well aware that a priest is just as prone to human failings as anybody else and is, perhaps, even more subject to sexual and material temptation, not just because of many examples of this provided by history but also because of the behavior of certain members of the clergy today.

The Spanish friar of the colonial period was well known to have succumbed to both temptations. In 1593, an episcopal inquest found that some Augustinians were guilty of both repeatedly violating clerical celibacy and engaging in mercantile operations at the expense of

parishioners, while an Augustinian provincial superior, Fr. Lorenzo de León, was "accused of acting like a 'public merchant' and failing to take disciplinary action against some of his subordinates' misdeeds [i.e. amorous adventures to wholesale theft of church property]" (Phelan 1967:35-36). The Spanish friars were also infamous for their greed for material goods and desire for political power; they were the largest landowners in the Philippines and the worst abusers of power towards the end of the colonial period. It is not surprising, therefore, that the native propaganda movement prior to and during the Philippine revolution against Spain sought primarily to sow distrust of the frailocracy, often using parodies of religious books, common prayers and divine commandments (important instruments in the imposition of colonial authority) that directed attention to priestly lasciviousness and greed.[10]

In more recent days, a well-known newspaper columnist Ramon Tulfo came out with an article entitled "The hypocritical clergy" which accused a certain bishop of "being immoral and of being a thief". The said bishop, claimed Tulfo, "plundered" a Catholic radio station and "had a secretary with whom he carried on an affair. The liaison was known to members of the radio staff who were scandalized. The woman now has a child by this bishop".[11]

The actions of certain priests involved in past Marian apparitions have compounded the negative view of the Catholic clergy: Fr. Rogelio Cortez, who was deeply involved in both the Agoo and Cubao apparitions, was accused implicitly by Nieva of lining his own pockets with donations from devotees – this was, in fact, the reason Nieva gave for replacing him as spiritual adviser; the papal nuncio, Monsignor Vagnozzi , was accused by a group of Lipa devotees of forcing, through the use of internal Church politics, the Lipa investigative committee to turn in a negative verdict.

The behaviour of "spiritual advisers" to people in power has not improved this perception of the Church. When Cardinal Sin (formerly President Corazon Aquino's spiritual adviser) and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines threw their combined weight against the Estrada government, this was seen as evidence of their "lusting for political influence".[12] When Fr. Robert Reyes, the chaplain of the University of the Philippines, aggressively pushed for the resignation of Estrada by appearing on television and staging one-man rallies in front of the Senate, he was accused by pro-Erap factions as using the issue for his own personal aggrandizement. Brother Mike Velarde, spiritual adviser to Joseph Estrada and the head of the El Shaddai movement, is popularly believed to have benefitted by millions of pesos through his association with the deposed president: in June 1996, a group of former

members of the religious movements accused him of using donations from followers to fund shady business deals, which resulted in Velarde having to pay a $2,350 fine.[13] Furthermore, when it became public that several Catholic charities had received millions in donations from illegal gambling payoffs coursed through the government-owned Philippine Gaming and Amusement Corporation (PAGCOR), Cardinal Sin merely brushed the allegations off by saying, "I would accept money for the poor even if it came from Satan himself" – thereby consolidating the perception of the Church as a Machiavellian institution that would stop at nothing to gain its own ends.

Such an image of the Church helps explain why new religious movements that promise immediate material benefits are now dangerously close to superseding Catholicism, particularly among the poor and the lower middle class. The Catholic Church denounces such groups for emphasizing earthly rewards ("'Do you want to have a refrigerator?' [Velarde] asks a cheering crowd. 'If you believe, you will have a refrigerator!'"[14]), but the tremendous appeal of these groups point to a people tired of being poor and who want to be able to do something about it. Participating in the rituals of these charismatic groups gives them a sense of control over their own destiny – which the Catholic church does not provide. The Filipino novelist F. Sionil Jose, a long-time observer of the El Shaddai movement, believes that Velarde offers hope for "health and wealth, which are what all Filipinos want and what the Catholic Church does not offer".[15] The Iglesia ni Cristo uses even plainer language: "[it] is a demonstration of the spiritual poverty of the Catholic Church, a poverty so serious that...Church leaders have to look the other way as Velarde dishes out unorthodox and bizarre teachings".[16]

In the following section, I describe and analyze the El Shaddai, the most popular of these religious new movements, and show how such an organization fulfils both the needs and the expectations of the people, particularly those from the lower classes.

The El-Shaddai: Religion as Performance

Like the Philippine Marian visionary, other Filipino religious personalities have also appropriated the common religious stereotypes. In fact, we can see that the many of these personalities gained popularity particularly by re-siting such traditional signifiers within a context of signification more easily assimilated by their followers – that of performance.

The use of dramatic performance in religion is by no means new, and, as I said in the Introduction, many anthropologists have now come to see the importance of analyzing the performances of shamans and other religious figures in terms of performance theory. But Catholicism (and, subsequently, Protestantism) is quite famous for its utilization of dramatic rituals and ceremonies that may also be seen as performances themselves, particularly if we consider the suggestion of entertainment that the term "performance" contains.

In the past, Catholic rituals provided a versatile platform for all sorts of entertainment. Indeed, the Spanish Catholic priest who delivered the Sunday sermons during the colonial period often must have upstaged the local shaman in terms of dramatic performance. As Javellana writes, seventeenth-century Europe enjoyed a particularly lively rhetorical tradition that found its most effective medium in the sermon:

> The sermon was an event. To borrow a term from the sixties, it was a "happening" or, to follow the Renaissance scholar John W. O'Malley (1989), a "speech-act." Preachers moved audiences to tears, to compassion and repentance, or to fear because of the impending end-time. They modulated their voices, gesticulated according to a tradition of stage movement, and were not above using props like crucifixes to accentuate divine compassion, or a skull to underscore mortality. (Javellana 1994, 238)

The theatrical nature of the European sermon inevitably made its way into the colonies, where it was particularly useful in the conversion of the natives, actions perhaps succeeding where mere words (and often incomprehensible words at that) could not. Javellana gives an account of how a sixteenth century Jesuit used dramatic performance to metaphorically illustrate the missionary goal:

> In 1596, the Jesuit Juan de Torres was said to have preached to the inhabitants of Talibon, a gold-producing town along the littoral of Bohol, and to have convinced the Boholanos of his lofty intentions by the use of their gold. Taking a handful of gold dust, he let a rivulet of glistening particles ooze from his hand, then crushed the gold with his heel while declaring he had no intention of separating them from their gold because he had come from far-off lands to teach about something more precious. (Ibid.)

In the nineteenth century, bombastic rhetoric and dramatic gesticulations continued to characterize religious performance and had come to be taken as the norm. Rafael's opening paragraphs in *Contracting Colonialism* provide us with an example of just such a sermon from Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1886), "a long-winded and bombastic sermon – 'a kind that everyone always gives'" that is delivered by Father Damaso (Rafael 1988: 1-2).[17] In the

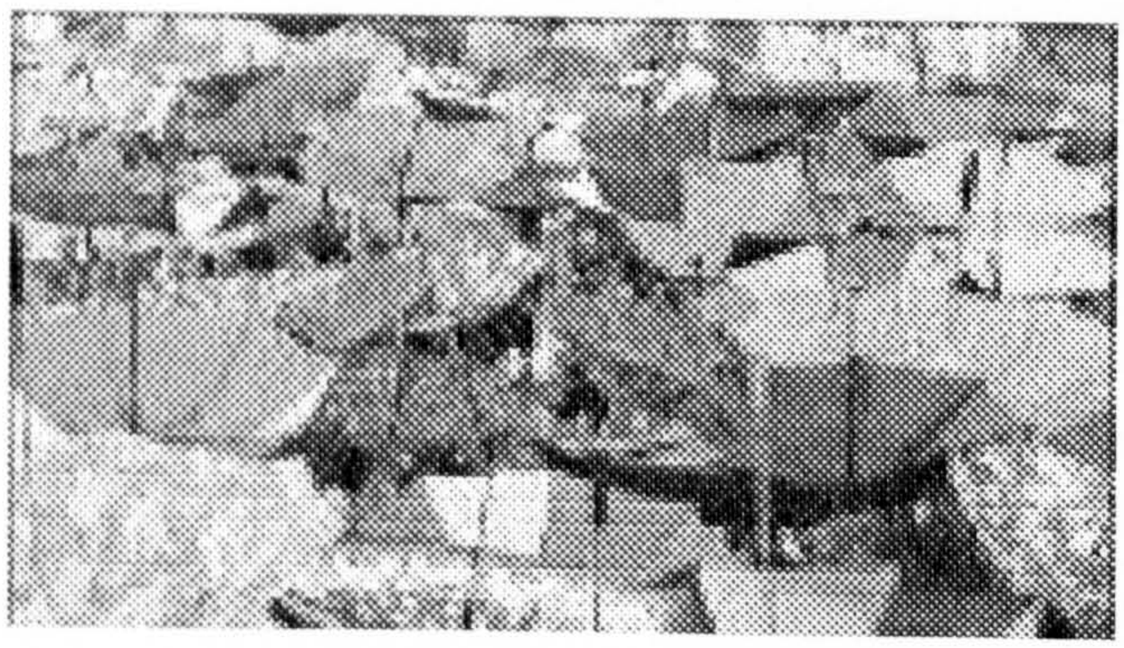
twentieth century, however, the tradition is carried on mostly by the proponents of new religious groups that take their cue from the American Protestant type of evangelism that was popularized by televangelists like Billy Graham and others. The most flamboyant of these modern Filipino preachers is undoubtedly Brother Mike Velarde, the head of the El Shaddai religious movement.

Velarde founded the El Shaddai movement in 1984. By 1989, his congregation had grown to number millions. Today, the El Shaddai foundation is not only extremely rich, but also politically powerful, and Velarde has been courted not only by ex-President Joseph Estrada (to whom he became spiritual adviser) but also by earlier Philippine presidents like Fidel V. Ramos. By the year 2000, the Bishops Conference of the Philippines had been sufficiently alarmed by his success that Archbishop Orlando Quevado was moved to warn the public "that a personality cult was steadily growing in El Shaddai".[18] (See pictures, page 175.)

That Velarde is an extremely charismatic figure is indisputable. But he may also be described as the consummate performer who understands that appearance and actions are just as important as bombastic rhetoric. His religious rhetoric is constantly punctuated by the narrative of how he lost and regained his personal fortune of millions in the pursuit of his religious calling, the reason why followers are persuaded to voluntarily donate about a tenth of their earnings to the foundation. Velarde has convinced them that, like him, they too can amass a personal fortune just by devoting their lives, not to mention, their money, to the religious cause he espouses. Like a talk show host (in fact he has his own television program and owns his own radio station), he wears colorful costumes – *Asiaweek* magazine, which described him in 1996 as a "rising prophet", provides several notable examples: "a midnight-blue jacket and polka-dot bow tie"; "a gaudy print shirt"; and "dozens of jackets in such shocking shades as cherry red, fuschia, supernova yellow and va-va-va-voom violet".[19] There are myths of "his magical healing powers". In fact, under his direction, "the practice of religious healing becomes public theatre" (Pesigan 2000: 32).

Pesigan points out that Velarde's drawing power comes from his awareness of his public: "He knows the topics that would appeal to the people: solutions to domestic and financial problems. He preaches reconciliation with the members of the family. He strengthens the belief that if one's faith is strong, then *El Shaddai* will grant the faithful those much coveted jobs here or abroad, a car, a house. All of these topics he intersperses with

PICTURE 12: EL SHADDAI (Clockwise from top) Brother Mike Velarde; "prayer" boxes; followers invert their umbrellas to catch God's blessings



Biblical passages, punctuated with 'Amen'" (Ibid.) In other words, Velarde is drawing upon an inherent preoccupation with the material and the dramatic that has always characterized Filipino religiosity (see Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3).

But what perhaps makes Velarde such a compelling figure for the masses is the fact he epitomizes the perfect blending of show business, Catholicism, and shamanism and perfectly illustrates just how religion has become performance, and performance, religion – the hybridized product of the "Hollywoodization" of Philippine society and its approach to religion.

The fact that groups like the El Shaddai seem to be on the rise in the Philippines today show that there is a widespread attraction (particularly among the poor and lower middle classes) to these forms of hybridized religions, all of which emphasize the aspect of performance and the use of the media. As Pesigan has commented, "Saturdays and Sundays on TV are battlegrounds for religious-oriented programs playing side by side with Chinese movies" (Pesigan 2000: 30). Among the main competitors are Velarde, Wilde Almeda of the Jesus Miracle Crusade, and Brother Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus Is Lord movement. All three are head of multi-million peso ministries, and have vast numbers of followers. According to a Christian website (<http://www.awcf.org/almeda.htm>), the Jesus Miracle Crusade Church in Manila has "a weekly attendance of 40,000". Moreover, "[Almeda] is on nationwide T.V. two hours a day, [and] over a million Filipinos claim to be [his] followers. His is one of the world's largest Apostolic ministries, if not the largest!" The Jesus is Lord webpage (<http://members.aol.com/wmaporg/ROP.html>) likewise presents huge numbers: "There are 83 JIL churchs with over 100,000 members in Manila alone, the largest having over 5,000 members in its meetings".

These numbers are staggering, and they show that active performance and participation in religion is extremely important to a great many Filipinos, particularly the poor, who already feel excluded from the traditional and conservative rituals of the Catholic Church. In these evangelical gatherings, however, the feeling of belonging to a community and of actively participating in it is emphasized. Followers do not only listen to the choral groups performing on stage, they are asked to sing and dance along. In turning their umbrellas upside down, singing along, waving their handkerchiefs, or giving a percentage of their salaries to these groups, followers are given an opportunity to feel that they are actively participating in religion, that they are doing this because *they* want to.

The noise, the non-stop activity both on and off the stage, is certainly far removed from the structured and ritualistic environment of the church. Such gatherings are held on Sunday, God's day, and the day-off for those who work as domestic helpers, nannies, and factory workers. They also take place in huge, open air locations, like the Luneta Park in Manila. Religion in a sense becomes leisure and entertainment, a part of Sunday evening relaxation, and provides a sense of liberation from the oppression of everyday life. Paying the required tithe becomes like paying for a ticket at the movies. Best of all, the preacher on stage makes them feel needed and gives them hope because, once, he too was exactly like them.

These Christian sects practice under the auspices of the Church and the spiritual advisers of their leaders are often Catholic priests (Bishop Teodoro Bacani is the spiritual adviser of Brother Mike Velarde, for example) who ensure that the ministries properly follow the Church's edicts. But next to the conservative rituals and traditions of the Church and the necessity of having to travel to the church for mass, these new movements promise weekly excitement and entertainment in a less confined environment.

The Church, instead of applauding the success of these groups in launching a wide-spread awareness of a Jesus-oriented religiosity, feels threatened and regards such groups with suspicion. In fact, prior to the recent two-million strong popular uprising that toppled Estrada (now referred to as People Power II), the political situation in the Philippines became an absurd battleground of religious groups, the main contenders clearly being the Catholic Church and the El Shaddai . Using the medieval premise of *vox populi, vox Dei* (the voice of the people is the voice of God),[20] the fight for political supremacy came to be seen as a contest of numbers drawn from church memberships. When the anti-Estrada factions led by the Church held the November 4 prayer rally, it drew a crowd of at least 80,000 people. In retaliation, Estrada proclaimed November 11 a holiday, a "National Day of Prayer and Fasting for National Strength and Unity Against All Adversities", and held what he claimed was simply a Mass (but which many perceived to be a counter-prayer rally) at Luneta Park in Manila. The Mass attracted about a million people (or 10% of the entire population of Metro Manila), most of whom were from the three most influential Christian sects, the El Shaddai movement, the Jesus Miracle Crusade, and the Iglesia ni Cristo.

It is commonly believed that it was Velarde's considerable sway over his large congregation that catapulted Estrada into power in 1998. In a bid to harness that power, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and Cardinal Sin insisted that

Velarde join the Catholic Church's call for the resignation of the President. The request was actually a test of allegiance, for the El Shaddai is still a Christian sect and thus under the control of the CBCP. Should Velarde not heed the Archbishop's call, it was strongly implied, he was going against the Christian faith itself, which, in the popular perception, would be tantamount to saying that he was not a true man of God and hence not worthy to be spiritual leader to millions.

The precariousness of the Church's hold on the people soon became quite clear during People Power II itself. Despite the great statue of the Virgin that dominates the Edsa Shrine, and despite Cardinal Sin's constant references to Mary's intervention at EDSA in 1986, People Power II was not so much a Marian revolution as a Jesus one. The reason for this was simple: most of the religious groups that gathered there were largely Jesus-oriented Christian sects, like the 5-million strong Jesus is Lord (JIL) movement which set up its own stage at the People Power Monument a few kilometers down the road from the EDSA shrine. The day after the Philippine Vice President, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, took her oath as president of the Philippines, a thanksgiving mass officiated by Cardinal Sin was held at the EDSA Shrine. But it is a testament to the growing power of movements such as the JIL that, immediately after the Catholic Mass was said at the Shrine, Macapagal Arroyo proceeded to the stage at the Monument to be "anointed" as the rightful leader of the country by the head of the JIL.

In more recent times, in an attempt to bring the church to the people if people would not go to the church (and perhaps to address the challenges posed by the new movements), the Church began the practice of offering Sunday masses in shopping malls. The practice has proven effective – many people use the mass as a reason to stop and rest after their shopping – and most major malls now offer Sunday services at least twice during the day. Apart from this, the Church went even so far as to propose that, in lieu of parishioners having to pay exorbitant fees for the different sacraments so necessary to the Catholic life, they might perhaps consider offering a monthly tithe to their neighborhood parish which would then be used for these purposes. This did not prove a popular suggestion, however: many middle class Catholics do not always attend the neighborhood parish church but go to the larger churches and cathedrals in other districts. As for the poor, it was not clear exactly what their reaction to the suggestion was, but it is perhaps understandable why it would not have found favor with them either – if they are not already a member of one of the Jesus sects and already

contributing a portion of their salaries to these movements, the suspicion with which they have always regarded the Church would have rendered the suggestion futile anyway.

The Church is also disadvantaged by its strong association with the colonial past: the Spaniards used Catholic fiestas and pilgrimages to further the colonial agenda. In his essay on the Philippine fiesta during the colonial period, Wendt states that

> Feasts of patron saints and major religious festivals were not just used as a means to win hearts and minds for Christian teaching and values. One issue they always embraced was the safeguarding of the temporal colonial power's legitimacy...The greatness of Spanish power and the superiority of Iberian civilization were topics which were constantly raised during fiestas. (1998: 6)

Filipinos did not always respond to this kind of indoctrination in passive ways. For example, Wendt points out that, in the instance of the Antipolo Virgin, "the Filipinos, or at least the inhabitants of the Tagalog provinces...did not adopt the view of the social order that the pilgrimage and fiesta were designed to promote, but incorporated the Madonna into their own world of beliefs" (Ibid.:11). In the next chapter, I suggest that the Filipinos also responded to the homogenizing discourses inherent in these celebrations in much the same way that the Philippine visionary has subverted the Western apparition phenomenon and the popular Filipino televangelist has turned religion into a form of showbusiness – by turning these discourses back upon themselves through an exaggerated and almost parodic appropriation of them.

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[1] *Mahal na Birhen ng Agoo.* [Audiotape.] Booktape Inc., 1993.

[2] *Report of the Diocesan Commission on Inquiry on the Agoo Phenomena,* 15 August 1995, 5.

[3] Ibid.,3.

[4] Ibid., 4

[5] Ibid.

[6] Many of the apparitions and miracles recounted in the media often last only a few days, or they might extend to about a year, depending on how many devotees are attracted to the event. Those that have lasted a year or more are the following: the Lipa apparitions (1948-1949); the Cabra Island apparitions (1966-1972); the Quezon Boulevard apparitions (1987-1988); the Agoo apparitions (1989-1993); and the Murphy, Cubao apparitions (1993-1994).

[7] "Salome" [Conversation], May 1997, Agoo, La Union.

[8] Mozart A.T. Pastrano, "Going Bananas over 'Religious Art,' *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 12 March 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[9] Transcript of the interview of Rogelio Cortez by the Church's fact-finding committee, marked as "Exhibit A", Commission on Apparitions and Phenomena, 16 September 1992. Documents courtesy of Fr. M

[10] For example, the Ten Commandments thus became "*Ang manga utos nang Fraile ay sampo* [The Commandments of the Friars are ten]":

Ang nauna: Sambahin mo ang Fraile na lalo sa lahat.
Ang ikalawa: Huag kang mag papahamak manubá nang ngalang deretsos.
Ang ikatlo: Mangilin ka sa Fraile lingo man at fiesta.
Ang ikaapat: Isangla mo ang catauan mo sa pagpapalibeng.
Ang ikalima: Huag kang mamamatay kung wala pang salaping pang palibing.
Ang ikaanim: Huag kang makiapid sa kaniyang asawa.
Ang ikapito: Huag kang makinakaw.
Ang ikawalo: Huag mo silang pagbibintagan, kahit ka masinungalingan.
Ang ikasiam: Huag mo ipagkait ang iyong asawa.
Ang ikasampu: Huag mong itangui ang iyong ari. (Schumacher 1979:263)

"1. Worship the Friar above all things. 2. Do not be so rash as to cheat him of what are called his fees. 3. Celebrate a feast to the friar on Sundays and Holydays. 4. Give your body as security for the costs of burial of your father and mother. 5. Do not die if you do not have enough money to pay for the funeral. 6. Do not commit adultery with his wife. 7. Do not share in his stealing. 8. Do not accuse them even if you are made out to be a liar. 9. Do not refuse him your wife. 10. Do not refuse him your goods." Translation from Schumacher, Appendix C, 1979: 404.

[11] Ramon Tulfo, "The Hypocritical Clergy," *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 15 February 2001, <http://www.inquirer.com>

[12] Philip Bowring, "You Can't Impeach Everyone: Asian Politicians Should Let Their (Flawed) Elected Leaders Complete Their Terms", *Time Magazine*, 27 November 2000 <http://www.time.com> time/asia/magazine/2000/1127/viewpoint.html>.

[13] Jose Manuel Tesoro, "Rising Prophet," *Asiaweek*, 20 September 1996, <http:// www.asiaweek.com>

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Rafael uses Father Damaso's sermon to illustrate what he calls "listening-as-fishing" (wherein, due to the incomprehensibility the Spanish words had for the Tagalog listeners, they could only follow threads of the sermon which they tried to link together into some semblance of meaning), and interprets Rizal's passage as pointing to the "travesty" that both the Spanish priests and the native converts had made of the Catholic faith.

[18] *Filipino Balita Briefs*, 31 January 2000, <http://www.yimby.com/v2v02/news.htm>

[19] Jose Manuel Tesoro, "Rising Prophet," *Asiaweek*, 20 September 1996, <http://www.asiaweek.com>

[20] This was an underlying premise in a video documentary entitled "Halal ng Masa" that was aired on television over the government owned Channel 4 and ABS-CBN Channel 2 (owned by the Lopez family which has strong ties with Joseph Estrada) last December 2, 2000. The video documentary, which opposition groups lambasted as "black propaganda", glorified the achievements of the Estrada administration over the past two years and denigrated the achievements of the past administrations of Corazon Aquino (1986 to 1992) and Fidel Ramos (1992-1998), both staunch oppositionists. A *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist comments: "'Vox populi, vox Dei' is the theme of Estrada's propaganda flick, 'Halal ng Masa.' ("Elected by the Masses") The "documentary" even gives a new twist--I would say a blasphemous one if I were religious--to the phrase. At the flick's closing, there is a panoramic aerial shot of the November 'Prayer Rally' of the El Shaddai and the Iglesia ni Cristo, showing the million people and more who attended it. Then that 'vox populi, vox Dei' phrase is superimposed on the scene. The obvious message: both the masses and God support Estrada." Rigoberto Tiglao, "Vox Populi, Vox Dei", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 6 December 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

Chapter 6
RELIGION AS CARNIVAL

It is perhaps in Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque (*Rabelais and His World*, 1985 ed.) that Philippine religiosity finds its most powerful and redemptive form of expression. I do not use the word "redemptive" here in the Catholic sense of the atonement of sins and salvation from hell, but as a way by which the Filipinos free themselves from what would otherwise be an unbearable situation of social and economic oppression. If, in the previous chapter, I pointed out that the aspect of performance is important in the way religious individuals perform their roles, another kind of "performance" takes place in the larger context of Marian devotion, one that has been influenced by what I call "Hollywoodization" or the "glamorization" of materiality that emerged during the American commonwealth period of Philippine history.

In this chapter, I analyze how people participate in religiosity and how this religiosity appears to the critical eye, first by showing how the "Hollywoodization" of Philippine culture and society during the American period has resulted in the glamorization of the Marian image and the solidification of what was already a materialistic culture, and then by providing instances in which subversion and redemption may be seen in terms of the "carnivalesque" elements of Marian devotion.

"Hollywoodization"

The American period in Philippine history produced certain changes in the Filipino worldview that also impacted on religion. The most noticeable change, perhaps, is in the way religious processions and other festivities absorbed a certain "glamor", a "Hollywoodization" that diverted attention from the religious and towards the "show" or the "spectacle". This was quite easily done: in the previous chapters, I emphasized the fact that Filipino Catholicism is focused on the material and concrete (see Chapter 3), that there was a rather "unseemly" emphasis on performance rather than theology, and the American cultural forms (particularly those that dealt with mass entertainment) that entered the Philippines during the American Commonwealth period merely threw these characteristics into more prominence.

During the American period in Philippine history, the availability of education to the masses came alongside accessibility to American cultural forms. Indeed, the American

occupation of the Philippines also saw the domination of American popular culture in Philippine society, particularly in the realm of entertainment.

If American textbooks provided the Filipinos with a set of new values by which to perceive the world, Hollywood gave Filipinos new dreams to reach for. They embraced the American lifestyle with a great passion and an unmatched enthusiasm, particularly when it came to popular forms of entertainment like television and the movies. Hollywood glamorization of superstars and their lives, the wonderful fantasy world of the movies, where anything could and did happen, appealed to the Filipinos, as evident in the quick growth of a movie industry in the country. It is a fascination that has lasted long after the devastating effects of the Japanese occupation of the islands during World War II.

Today, the visual media is widely accessible to all sectors of society, and even the poorest houses have a television (even if not, access to one is freely provided by the window displays of appliance stores, which air popular shows throughout the day in order to attract customers). In provincial movie houses, cheap double features that allow the viewer to see two movies for the price of one are very common, and while the price of admission to movie houses in Metro Manila has escalated in recent years to an average of Php80.00, pirated CD versions of these movies are available on the streets for the same price or even lower. Likewise, pirated VCD players and television sets are sold at very low prices in flea markets and bargain centers. Even the very poor are given access to popular forms of entertainment for free, particularly prior to the national elections, when it has become common campaign practice for aspiring candidates on all levels to set up movie screens in town squares for free marathon "film fests" (if the candidates are show business personalities), or stages upon which the show business friends of the candidate perform for free.

The influence that the different forms of entertainment has over the great majority of the Filipinos is so great, in fact, that they can make an important difference in the political power structure. If the masses are indeed controlled by the ruling elite through entertainment, the masses, empowered by the democracy introduced by the Americans, have in turn taken control in ways that that elite had perhaps not anticipated: the beliefs and expectations fostered by the movies have found concrete expression in the election of movie stars into key government positions, choosing candidates not for their political platforms but for their perceived characters. The Senate is full of ex-movie stars, and, despite the vehement opposition of the intelligentsia and upper class, ex-President Joseph Estrada himself was

elected by the masses on the basis of popular belief that he, like the roles he played, would protect the underdogs, the poor, his greatest fans.[1]

In short, the emergent Philippine movie industry suddenly provided new idols which the people generally found more worthy of emulation than the "passive" saints of the Church, even though many continued to fulfill their duties as good Catholics by going to mass and celebrating the Church's holidays. Priorities had changed: the temporal, material world of entertainment provided better opportunities for a better life than the spiritual world in the afterlife promised by the Church, and much more immediately as well through more enjoyable avenues. If common narratives of entertainment were to be believed, anybody could make the quick leap from obscurity to fame and fortune.

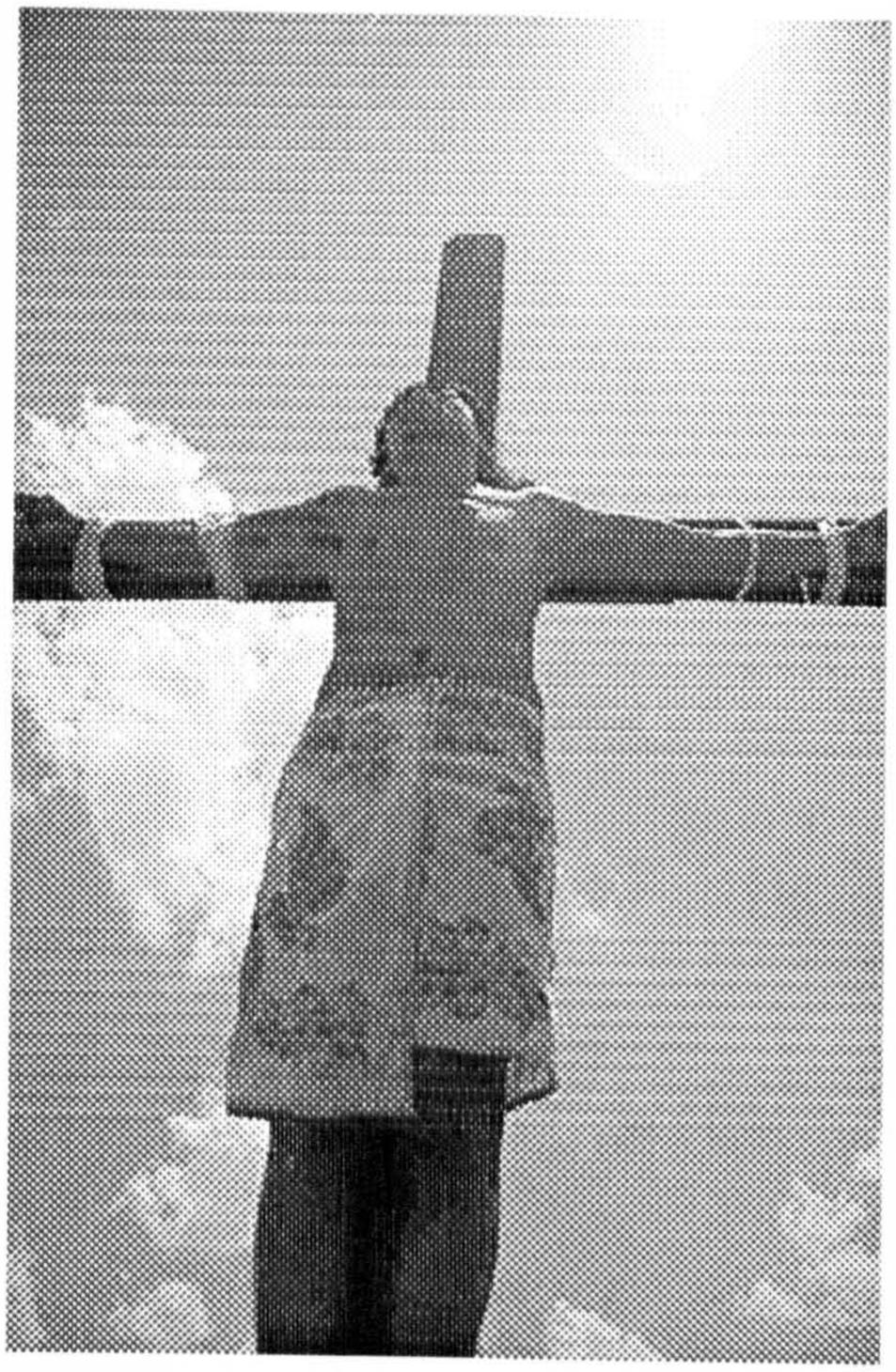
Indeed, it can be argued that the Filipino masses have become a nation of fans, the lives of actresses/singers like Sharon Cuneta and actors like Robin Padilla more interesting than their own, and providing models on which their own lives could be patterned. The reason for this sense of identification is the fact that the private lives of movie personalities often reflect their on-screen roles: poor people becoming instantly famous, instantly rich, often through such talents as musical ability. Famous "megastar" and singer Sharon Cuneta, for example, the love child of a prominent and powerful city mayor, came into the limelight when she was twelve years old. In a sense, the public has grown up with her, sharing vicariously in her successes and her failures, both professional and private, which the media documents with relentless fervor. Her transition from unknown by-blow to instantly famous show business personality strikes a wistful chord in many. Likewise, Robin Padilla, known to his fans as "Bad Boy", came from a very poor family and made it big in the movies as an action star. His personal life echoes his on-screen persona: he was imprisoned for the illegal possession of firearms several years ago. But this has not diminished his popularity. To the contrary, it merely enhanced his "Bad Boy" image, and he continued to shoot movies while incarcerated.

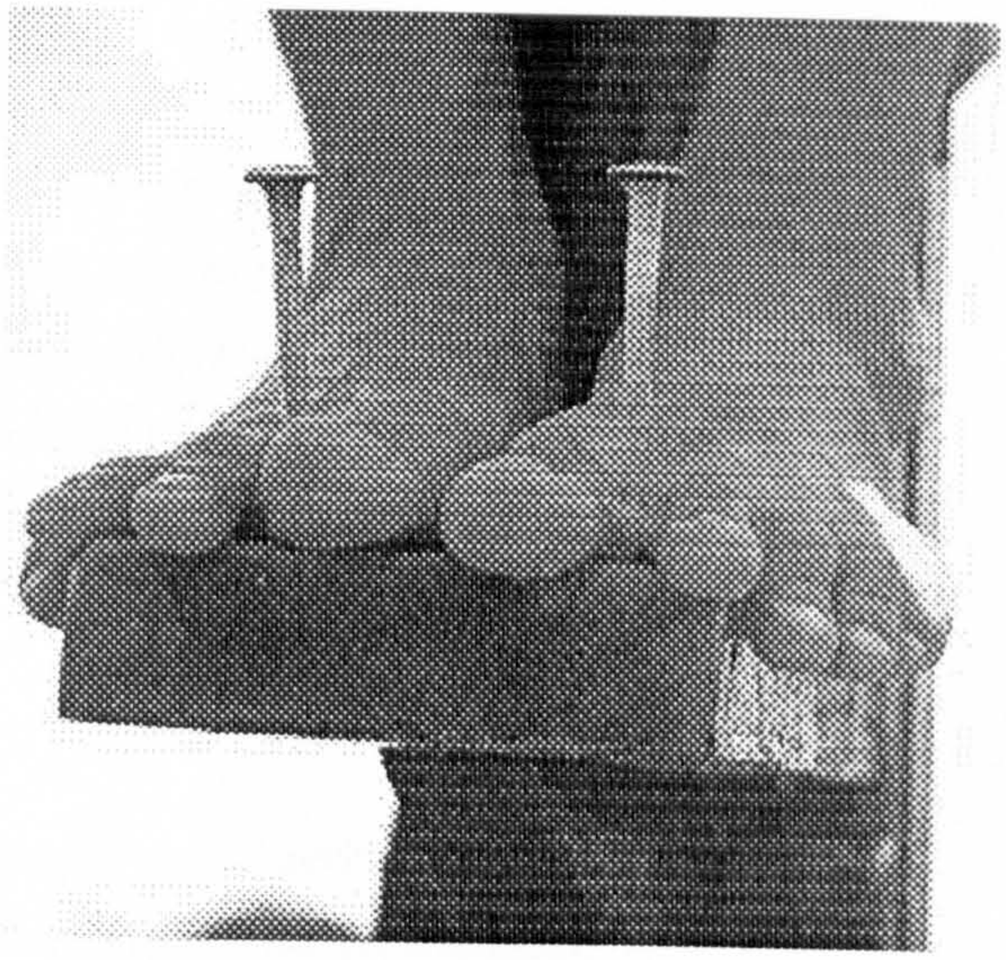
The private lives of both show business personalities are played out in the media like soap operas, and through them and others like them, their fans can dream that they too could become instantly rich. It is not surprising, therefore, if the public should become confused as to what is real and what is merely play-acting: the lines between private and public lives of such matinee idols become increasingly blurred, and scriptwriters often manipulate the former to provide publicity for the latter. For example, when Cuneta and estranged ex-

husband, actor Gabby Concepcion, reconciled in private, a movie was scripted to show this reconciliation on screen. Ironically, sometimes the movie stars themselves cross the line between fantasy and reality: Fernando Poe, Jr., known as the Filipino action king, and today the best friend and personal advisor of ex-President Estrada, was reported by the press to have started several melees in public venues.

Interestingly, the themes most popular among the masses are those that deal with the situation of the underdog, whether as an outcast of society due to injustices perpetuated by an oppressive power system, or, strongly suggestive of the way Filipinos perceived the role of Jesus Christ in the *Pasyon* (see Ileto 1979), as a martyr who patiently suffers the abuses of fate but who triumphs in the end. During the colonial period, Jesus Christ was perceived as the victim of the powerful (the Jews), a situation which Filipinos could not help but empathize with given their oppression as a colonized people under the powerful and, to them, unjust administration of Spain. Jesus' eventual triumph over these powerful forces became the source of hope, particularly for the Filipino revolutionaries, for a similar kind of victory over the colonial oppressors. To this end, Jesus Christ became a symbol, not just of oppression, but also of *resistance* to that oppression, which helps explain why images of the suffering Christ are among the most popular representations of the Christ figure in the country. In other words, the imitation of Christ during the Holy Week penitential rites during the colonial period became a subtle form of resistance to the colonial regime. In today's penitential practices, that imitation is carried to extreme levels in the self-crucifixion of Filipino penitents, showing the extent to which Filipinos desire to be so much like Christ that, in effect, they *do* become him, even if only for a few moments (see page 185). In a sense, the Filipinos' wish " 'to help Christ and share in his ordeal'" (Zialcita 1986: 59), is both an inherited tradition from colonial times *and* an expression of the awareness that until now, they are being oppressed by a society in which the rich minority control the lives of the poor majority – for all of the penitents are members of the latter. This is the same consciousness of oppression that may be seen in the popular preference for the underdog hero who fights an evil society and wins.

Indeed, the Filipino often makes the unconscious shift from reality to fantasy, particularly when a situation is outside the realm of mundane, everyday experience, as during the singing contests in Bicol and Judiel Nieva's performance of his role that I discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, the more the situation is perceived as glamorous and Westernized, the more exaggeratedly the Filipino transforms him- or herself into what he or





PICTURE 13: IMAGES OF HOLY WEEK PENITENTIAL CRUCIFIXION

she perceives glamour or "Western" (i.e. American) to mean (in fact, in many instances, the two terms are synonymous, as in the beauty pageant, which I shall discuss later in this chapter).

The blurring of lines is particularly obvious even in dangerous situations. During the many attempts at coups d'etat during President Aquino's term of power, television news cameras captured the image of civilians watching from the sidelines, as if the events were part of a movie production. A few years ago, during a bank robbery in Megamall, the largest shopping complex in Metro Manila, instead of running away from the sound of gunfire, people instead ran towards it. "*Akala ko gumagawa sila ng pelikula* [I thought they were shooting a movie]," one woman said.[2]

The common explanation usually given for the power that such media entertainment exerted, and continues to exert, over the Filipino masses is their need for escapism. As Philippine dramatist Nicanor G. Tiongson points out, one of the predominant values promoted by Philippine drama and film is the idea that "*masaya ang may palabas*", or, freely translated into English, "we are happy when there's a show" (Tiongson 1982:318). This is echoed in popular television personality German Moreno's statement on behalf of the entertainment industry that, "*Marami na tayong mga problema. Kung hindi tayo makapagbigay ng entertainment, lalong lalala ang mga problema natin* [We already have many problems. If we cannot give entertainment, our problems will become even worse]."[3]

Critics argue that the Filipino enthusiasm for entertainment forms is also due to the manipulation of the masses by the American companies and their local counterparts who benefit from the situation, a claim that holds true for all aspects of popular culture as well. Filipino writer and critic Bienvenido Lumbera states that

> Contrary to the implications of the word 'popular,' popular culture is not created by the populace. Rather, it is a culture created by the ruling elite or by members of the intelligentsia in the employ of that elite for the consumption of the populace.[4]

Like Lumbera, many other intellectuals complain that the movie industry continues to "give the masses what they want" in order to reap profits at the box office, thereby also ensuring the endurance of the same old themes.

Moreover, while Abad points out that one of the recurring images in action films today is that of "individuals [who] are without relation to society, and the hero...fights forces of evil as an individual. It cannot be otherwise: the oppressed classes are fragmented, or at least unaware of their status, and the hero must take it upon himself to avenge the foul deed", he also notes that

> The recurring image is typical in Filipino films, but is not uniquely Filipino. Indeed, this image or vision underscores our dependence on First World mass media. As [Filipino historian Renato] Constantino suggests, this vision of the world is 'facilitated by the fact that Third World audiences have been reduced to passive recipients of information from information monopolies.' We have absorbed a Hollywood ethos and made it our own. (Abad :16-17)

Teresita Gimenez-Maceda provides an alternative explanation, arguing that "the soap opera and other television productions which have often been interpreted as too heavily influenced by the American pop culture industry...upon close scrutiny, have been sites of resistance". She concludes that "The persistence of the themes of oppression and retribution for the victims [in Philippine soap operas] reflects the mass audience's voice of resistance to an unjust status quo and, at the same time, hope for redemption from their poverty (1996: 36, 54).

Certainly, the *consciousness* of resistance is important, as the anthropologist James C. Scott points out,

> it is possible and common for human actors to conceive of a line of action that is, at the moment, either impractical or impossible. Thus a person may dream of a revenge or a millennial kingdom of justice that may never occur. On the other hand, as circumstances change, it may become possible to act on those dreams. The realm of consciousness gives us a kind of privileged access to lines of action that may – just may – become plausible at some future date. (Scott 1985: 38)

However, resistance cannot be considered as such unless there is an *active* move on the part of the oppressed to act upon such a consciousness and initiate a change in the status quo. While Gimenez-Maceda uses a comparison between the way underground resistance movements (the *Hukabalahap*, specifically) would sing the *kundiman* (a plaintive song) because "it is a wail, and our life is one long wail" (Gimenez-Maceda 1996: 41) and the way Filipino audiences clearly prefer soap operas with themes of oppression and suffering, it must be pointed out that such movements *actively* sought change by engaging in countryside warfare against government troops, while the audience of the soap operas are merely *passive*

viewers who, if they do not *act* on the spirit of resistance that Gimenez-Maceda suggests may be seen in the popular soap operas, may not be seen as truly resisting the status quo or making any significant attempts to subvert the dominant consciousness.

A passive response to exploitation, Scott states, may be explained in two ways: first, that the passivity is "a fatalistic acceptance of the existing social order and perhaps even an active complicity" (the Marxist notion of "false consciousness"); and second, as the result of coercive force which disallows any open expression of discontent, and thus indicates "the peace of repression (remembered and/or anticipated) rather than the peace of consent or complicity" (Scott 1985: 39-40).

That the Philippines takes great pride in its democracy allows for a great degree of latitude in the expression of discontentment, and the People Power revolutions have proved that such expressions can have significant power as catalysts for social and political change. However, these are movements that are outside what Scott refers to as "everyday forms of resistance" (see below), under which, if Gimenez-Maceda's thesis is to be accepted, the response of the masses to soap operas may be placed. Such passivity as these soap opera audiences demonstrate can only be interpreted as an acceptance of the status quo rather than as a means by which to subvert or resist it. It is worth noting, in fact, that in such soap operas as Gimenez-Maceda analyzes and, indeed, in movies that have similar themes, the dominant structures and institutions themselves never change, it is merely the hero or heroine's position in these structures that does. In other words, no revolutionary change occurs in the status quo except to place the suffering or oppressed central character in a position of power in the social and economic hierarchy, which allows him or her the opportunity to exact revenge for past abuses. Though these central characters are presented in a sympathetic light (as underdogs in an unjust society), in the final analysis, it may be argued that they themselves become oppressors within the same unjust society at the end of the series. In the end, the argument must revert back to the fact that such soap operas are conceived by and produced by a culture industry whose main objective is material profit, and who "give the masses what they want" for this purpose.

How then do such forms of entertainment and the worldview it perpetuates encourage or lead to an *active* subversion of the dominant institutions? The answer to this may be found in what Scott defines as "everyday forms of resistance", or the ways by which the weak manage to subvert the dominant institutions in small and subtle ways:

> There is rarely any dramatic confrontation, any moment that is particularly newsworthy. ...It is only rarely that the perpetrators of these petty acts seek to call attention to themselves. Their safety lies in their anonymity. It is also extremely rarely that the officials of the state wish to publicize the insubordination. To do so would be to admit that their policy is unpopular, and, above all, to expose the tenuousness of their authority...neither of which the sovereign state finds in its interest. The nature of the acts themselves and the self-interested muteness of the antagonists thus conspire to create a kind of complicitous silence that all but expunges everyday forms of resistance from the historical record. (Scott 1985: 36)

While modern commentators may insist that the "Hollywoodization" of Philippine society is the result of the glamorization of materialism perpetuated by the entertainment industry and by a capitalistic ruling elite, or of the pressing need of the poverty-stricken masses to escape from sordid realities, the propensity towards materialism, particularly in the context of religious celebration, was already evident during the colonial period. Indeed, such an exuberant acceptance of Western forms of entertainment is reminiscent of the way the Filipinos embraced Christian devotions like the Holy Week penitential rituals and Marian celebrations – a wholehearted, indeed, greatly exaggerated appropriation that borders on the parodic. Such celebrations, particularly as they involve crowds rather than individuals, are perfect sites for the expression of "everyday forms of resistance" wherein the accepted structures are seemingly upheld even while they are subtly, but actively, undermined, as I shall show in the following discussion.

Marian Devotion as Carnival

During the Spanish colonial period, ritual devotions to Mary were often carried out in grand style and accompanied by much ceremony, with festivals and the firing of arquebuses, processions and dances, "the dance being performed in token of the possession taken of this country by the queen of heaven, and of the conclusion of the devil's ancient control over it" (Aduarte in BR32: 174). Furthermore, miracles associated with images of the Virgin were often recounted and emphasized, as in Aduarte's accounts. In one instance, a Marian miracle "was made the subject of sermons, and was painted upon canvas, and thus the devotion of all to this sovereign lady was greatly increased" (Aduarte, in BR32: 111). Thus, while other saints also received commensurate patronage, it may be said that there was none that could rival the splendor attendant to these celebrations of Mary's queenship. Such fanfare could obviously not fail to fascinate the natives and induce them to believe that here indeed was a being that was worthy of worship.

Such festivities indulged the natives' love of singing and performing, a trait that Ribadeneira describes at length (see Chapter 2). However, alongside this glorification of her queenship was, as pointed out earlier, a native appropriation of her as an ordinary mother. The two views were not necessarily paradoxical: the splendid processions and festivities were an assertion of colonial power, while the more humble view of Mary was a native subversion of that authority, an appropriation of power manifested in the native way, and reveals the ambivalence with which Mary is popularly perceived.

As in previous centuries, Marian festivities today are celebrated with great fanfare, and the more popular the image, the more splendid the program of activities. For example, the Manila archdiocese gave a press release before September 8, 2000 that the celebration of Mary's "2025th birthday" was to be filled with "pomp and gala".[5] There was to be a canonical coronation of Our Lady of Buensuceso, patroness of Parañaque, in the St. Andrew Parish church in Parañaque, led by Archbishop Antonio Franco, followed by a mass celebrated by Cardinal Sin himself in the St. Andrew Parish church of Makati. Simultaneous processions were to take place around the Parañaque church and the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Pasig City This celebration, which encompassed three municipalities and was participated in by the highest level of Philippine ecclesiastics led by the Archbishop of Manila himself, most closely resembles the celebrations of the past, perhaps because it was rigorously organized by the archdiocese of Manila.

However, while the Church does try to enforce traditional notions of worship by prescribing the forms that religious celebrations must take, it clearly cannot control the *nature* of the people's response, particularly when it comes to participation in these events. Indeed, people's participation in these activities both *conform* to the Church's stipulations on the solemnity of the sacred – as in the Holy Week evening processions, the *senakulo* or street play that re-enacts the suffering of Christ, and even in the penitent's desire to crucify himself in imitation of Christ – and at the same time *negate* it by the sheer exuberance with which they embrace the events, an exuberance, moreover, that carried strong elements of hybridized Catholicism – like in the saying of vows to saints and following these saints closely in the course of processions, the holding of singing contests as part of the celebrations, the performance of dances – and in the transformation of the religious event into spectacle. In the following section, I focus on the way the presence of beauty pageants in Marian celebrations has influenced the nature of the religious celebration itself.

Marian festivals and the feast days of the patron saints are important celebrations for small communities (or *barangays*) all over the Philippines. The communal nature of such celebrations allows for the participation of all classes and they are planned as early as six months in advance.[6] While such events are religious in purpose, in more recent years, the entertainment provided as a part of the program has often dominated over the festivities, causing members of the church to complain that although many of these processions are "great witnesses of culture and folklore," "the religious spirit is sometimes lacking today". Indeed, some of these processions, like the *Santacruzan*, which was originally meant to honor the Holy Cross and Mary, have turned into mere public spectacles, "very helpful in fundraising or to entertain the people, but not to catechize them" (Raas 1992: 110). To further drive his point, Raas quotes Nicanor Tiongson, who wrote,

> In industrialized towns and cities the Santacruzan, in a final metamorphosis, has shed its religious character. In an orgy of crass commercialism it has donned the tinsel culture of beauty queens, fashion photographers, move starlets, muscled transvestites and aggressive mothers ambitious for their daughters.[7]

But Raas is only repeating what the Bishops' Conference of the Philippines had realized almost twenty years earlier, when they warned that Marian celebrations were losing the element of religiosity and turning into spectacles for the entertainment of the masses:

> Public and traditional Marian celebrations like the Flores de Mayo, often connected with the Santacruzan, must be prevented from becoming fashion shows that take away their spiritual meaning, with the danger of converting Marian devotions into beauty parades rather than religious manifestations of faith. Similarly the traditional forms of devotion must never be an ostentatious show to be displayed for guests or visitors. The real spirit of these devotions should be emphasized, and not merely the external practice.[8]

The specific references to "fashion shows" and "beauty queens" in these passages are testaments to the fact that the beauty pageant has come to be a central practice in the celebration of Marian events:

> Where once a town fiesta centered its energies on paying homage to the patron saint, today the patron saint's birthday has become a convenient justification to gather the local charmers in a procession of pulchritude. The young maidens find in this event a chance to fulfill their deep-seated

> Hollywood fantasies, an opportunity to park the *walis* [broom], and rest the *sandok* [rice scoop] to give vent to illusions of queenliness.[9]

The national preoccupation with beauty and with the beautification of the self predates even the coming of the Spaniards in the 16th century. During the colonial period, this preoccupation found an outlet in the tradition of holding beauty contest that dates back to the Spanish colonial period, although contestants did not necessarily win by virtue of beauty but by more materialistic concerns:

> The history of beauty-contests...is a long one, going back to the Spanish period in which wealthy families fought to have their daughter win a title as a way of promoting her chances of an exceptional marriage; in fact, the contest was one in competitive giving; the winner was determined according to the amount of sponsorship money she attracted from her backers, to be donated to the Church. (Cannell 1999: 204)

But whereas the colonial beauty contest was engaged in by already affluent families seeking ties with equally if not even more wealthy members of their own social strata, the beauty contests of today are mostly participated in by girls from poor families, who believe that beauty is their (and their family's) way out of the morass of poverty. In the provinces, a family often used much-needed income from harvests in order to sponsor a daughter's participation in the local beauty contest:

> Parents forsake a harvest's earnings to splurge on the gay neighborhood beautician, the video man and on a banquet for guests and admirers. They refuse to be caught lagging behind the neighbor's girl who is also enjoying a complete overhaul. The great expense is obscured by the possibility of Mother Lily or her scouts in attendance, by the prospect of a dashing young Manileño with a car or a *politico* in search of a secretary. What the girl lacks in education, after all, may be compensated by proper connections.[10]

The incorporation of the beauty pageant into the Marian celebration is thus not too unexpected: the reasons for which girls join beauty contests echo the themes that may be found in the Marian narrative, and Marian processions have come to take on aspects of the beauty pageant as well. While Marian parades have always had an element of the dramatic spectacle, the Philippine Marian procession and the image being celebrated have also come to attain a system of codification that originally only applied to the beauty pageant and vice versa. Thus it is often no longer clear whether it is the beauty contestant who imitates Mary's triumphant progression or Mary who imitates the triumphant beauty queen, for in the hybrid, the elements have become so fused they have become indistinguishable.

In what ways then can Mary and the Mary procession be seen in terms of the beauty pageant (or vice versa)? First of all, in both the Marian celebration and the beauty contest, there is clearly an appropriation of colonial (both Spanish and American) discourses about Mary and beauty that are based on materiality. It is the material manifestation of beauty (and the promise of equally materialistic rewards) that is celebrated both in the Marian festival and in the beauty pageant. Thus, to the Filipino mind, there is no conflict in using beauty pageants to supplement Marian celebrations or to transform Mary into a beauty queen – after all, Mary, in her glittering, bejewelled robes, is the very model of beauty, the ultimate Beauty Queen, whom Filipino women have sought to emulate for centuries.

Secondly, the nature of the sensibilities that come into play in the Marian parade is the same as that evident in the beauty pageant, particularly in terms of the glamorization and spectacularization of beauty and materiality.[11] Mary (the image is referred to as though it is Mary herself – an example which I shall follow in this discussion for the sake of convenience) is groomed, made-up (that is, her face is touched up with paint prior to the event), and clothed meticulously by gay beauty consultants. In fact, Mary's "outfits" are designed and created by well-known fashion designers with the objective of making her as "*mabongga*" (spectacular) as possible no matter the expense (for in no way must Mary be upstaged by the "lesser" saints that make up the rest of the procession),[12] and of eliciting admiration from the audience that follows alongside the procession or awaits her grand entrance in the Church proper. The audience is thrilled, and indeed reacts to the event as though it were a beauty contest: comments and discussions revolve around how beautiful the Virgin looks, how marvellous her clothes are, while speculations about the costs involved run rampant, even as the public announcement system (manned by famous disc jockeys) blares out her history and her list of "achievements" (that is, the miracles she is said to have performed) and announces her entrance into the Church with great fanfare. Indeed, if, as Cannell points out, "Local entertainments and celebrations have also been touched by a deference to 'American' standards and values thus understood" (Cannell 1999: 204), an American show business-type of sensibility has clearly come to characterize the Marian processions.

Finally, Marian celebrations, particularly those that are famous throughout the archipelago (like those of the Virgins of Peñafrancia, Manaog, etc.), draw many visitors from outside the immediate community wherein the celebration takes place. The participation of a local girl in the beauty contest serves to raise her above the anonymity of the crowd and situate her in a privileged position where she can show herself to best advantage before such

visitors and avail of the ever-present possibility of being plucked out of poverty and obscurity, a theme that is also found in Mary's narrative, for Mary was chosen "out of the blue" to become the mother of God. Indeed, while Filipinos are aware of the depth of Mary's suffering as the mother of the crucified Christ and most women empathize with her plight (see Cannell 1999: 188-191), the glorious dress and costly ornaments that are used to adorn her statues suggest an alternative role: that of the Queen of Heaven. Such queenship is available on the earthly plane to women as long as they have a measure of the Virgin's beauty and grace, and although it is necessary to spend extravagant sums to provide the appropriate costume for a queen (just as the statues of the Virgin herself had a special dress for ceremonial occasions), it was a necessary investment that would be returned with interest one way or another, for

> With beauty, a wealthy husband is easy to trap. Beauty queens with obscure family names suddenly brandish noble surnames as year after their reign. Those not too lucky to penetrate the country's elite circles through marriage find their fortune stripping before movie cameras.[13]

Thus the transformation of ordinary girl into beauty queen also parallels the transformation from a dreary life of servitude to one of wealth and influence, a theme also found in Hollywood-inspired Filipino movies and in the real-life stories of the actresses who play the lead roles in such movies. Like the poor and obscure heroines of these movies, the Virgin/beauty contestant undergoes a transformation (through beautification and glamorization) into Queen of Heaven/beauty queen.

In summary, the ubiquitous presence of the beauty contest in Marian celebrations has clearly transformed and subverted the Marian celebration by way of the expression of the popular sensibility – even as the Church castigates the general propensity "to convert Marian devotions into beauty parades", in the end, it has no choice but to follow the popular will. Indeed, the incorporation of the beauty pageant structure into the Marian procession may well be seen as a deliberate attempt by the Church itself to draw the focus of the celebration back to where it originally belonged, to the Virgin Mary, even if this means using a form of which it thoroughly disapproves, for, as Scott has pointed out, to do otherwise would mean an acknowledgement of the tenuousness of their hold over the people.

The subversion of the religious discourses of the Church can also be seen in the more general context of the Marian celebration itself. In the next section, I shall discuss the ways in which the Marian celebration as a whole has in effect been transformed into a spectacle or a carnival.

Laughter and Religiosity

To Bakhtin, the medieval carnival was an outlet for "folk laughter", an occasion wherein earthy humor took over from the rigid formalities of authoritarian structures. To this end, parody was an important element of the carnivalesque: serious rituals were overturned, social structures reversed, earthy matters replaced the spiritual. Centuries of Spanish colonial rule have taught Filipinos to regard religious devotion very seriously. Indeed, the average Filipino would be affronted at the very suggestion that he or she is not a serious Catholic. Where, then, can the "folk laughter" be found?

In paradoxical opposition to the solemnity of the religious intention, Marian festivals and Marian apparitions always seem to have an atmosphere of festivity which might, to the outsider, seem a little excessive – so excessive, in fact, that what are supposed to be serious ceremonies are often undermined by it. The *event* or *performance*, whether it is an apparition, a pilgrimage, or a parade of images, often dominates over the reason for which the celebration is being held. This situation suggests that, on the one hand, religious celebrations have become spectacles and as such, are immediately condemned as either absurd or empty manifestations of faith by the spectator looking on from the outside, and by the censuring gaze, and on the other, that there is an element of a kind of "laughter" in the celebration that emanates from the participants themselves.

That the apparition phenomenon has likewise to come be seen as a "show" is clearly evident in the way news writers have written up the events. Many of them consciously or subconsciously begin with a description of the carnival-like atmosphere that attends the apparition events, some even going as far as to make overt references to well-known forms of entertainment. For example, a *Philippine Panorama* features writer begins his article by comparing the Agoo apparitions to a famous rock concert and to what was at the time the best-selling movie at the box-office:

> It was a cross between the 1969 Woodstock Rock Festival and Steven Spielberg's sci-fi movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*", he writes, "While Woodstock attracted stoned rockers and *Close Encounters* summoned scientists who waited for the ET's mother ship, the announced apparition of the Blessed Virgin on a hill in Agoo, La Union, called one million faithful to bear witness. (Urlanda 1993: 12).

The rest of his article goes on to use words like "tableau" and "celestial stage" to describe the phenomenon.

A writer from the *Philippine Free Press* uses the same metaphor: "The greatest zarzuela ever told?" he asks, referring to the Agoo apparitions, and goes on to describe the way media manipulated the apparition as though it was a show:

> The Judiel Nieva "miracle" started two years ago by word of mouth, bolstered by the media, which realized how such a story, if kept running, could boost audience ratings and readership.
>
> ...Television cameras had registered a sun quivering behind the guava tree and shooting brilliant rays in all directions. Front page photographs also showed a sun gone haywire. Some experts in photography explained how it could be done in the laboratory to anyone who cared to listen, but believers preferred not to be disillusioned. A miracle had unfolded before their eyes. Why spoil the illusion (Nuguid 1995: 10)

In this instance, the writer was clearly critical of the phenomenon, particularly as his intention was to report on the Church commission's verdict that the apparitions were a hoax.

A similar kind of scepticism can be found in the account of the multiple miraculous events in Misamis Oriental that occurred after an image of Christ appeared on a banana tree trunk. The account clearly depicts how the event has been transformed into a spectacle (tourists, people taking Polaroid shots of the image, and so on), and the miracle does not end happily: when "the banana-watchers who [kept] guard had drowsed off despite themselves, someone dropped by and stealthily tore off the bark with the image and disappeared with it".[14]

But apart from the cynical laughter of the "detached" observer, who sees nothing but the absurd in the way the Filipinos celebrate these religious occasions, there is, in these accounts, an indication of another kind of "laughter". This laughter is joyous and irreverent towards the miraculous and springs irrepressibly from the participants themselves. The singing, dancing and dramatic presentations, particularly in connection with Holy Week

rituals, are celebrations, not so much of religion, but of life, and of the intimate participation in that celebration of life.

Writer Jose Lacaba pointed out that the media sensationalized the Cabra apparitions, and by doing so, transformed them into a spectacle:

> ...there are other stories coming out of Cabra – of a revolving sun, mysterious lights, a cross that sways sideways when there is no wind, fallen hair that continues to grow. What has made these strange happenings subject to ridicule is the spate of front-page true-experience accounts given by seemingly excitable people who have been to the island and come back with colorful descriptions straight out of hagiographical books about Lourdes and Fatima. And what finally seems to destroy credibility altogether is that report of a miraculous cure, a deaf-mute regaining her power of speech, that has turned out to be an imposture, a hoax. (Lacaba 1993: 15)

But what Lacaba himself is doing is denigrating the people's need to participate in the apparition ritual. If we look at the reports of the apparitions from another perspective, the spectacle seems absurd only from the eye of the outsider, the detached observer. But to the participant, the experience is "real", and immediate, it is reverent and irreverent, joyous and sorrowful. In other words, the experience has the ability to call forth a wide range of emotion, and this emotional participation is what creates laughter, even in the most solemn of occasions.

The Philippines has, in the last 15 years, become known around the world for the phenomenon known as People Power – the gathering of millions in peaceful protest against the injustices and abuses of those in power. One would suppose that the business of toppling a dictatorship or of a corrupt presidency would be a serious one. To the contrary, the protests were a carnival, a celebration. Take, for example, *Time* magazine's Anthony Spaeth's grudging admiration of what he called "the mob at EDSA": "They were the nicest mobs I have ever been in – they gave mobs a good name"[15]

Spaeth's commentary on People Power II aroused the ire of a great many Filipino journalists and academics. In fact I received an e-mail through an Ateneo de Manila University e-group for information dissemination wrathfully denouncing Spaeth and all other foreign journalists who referred to the event as "mob rule" and encouraging all recipients to bombard Spaeth with e-mail protests. Local editorials likewise had a field day bombastically routing the opinions of the foreign press, calling the foreign news releases the results of

"parachute journalism" and insisting that these foreign journalists (who were mostly American) had no understanding whatsoever of Philippine culture ("Do you have any idea how hard it is to convince a Filipino to take to the streets?" demanded one irate columnist), and that Americans were sour-graping because, unlike in the People Power I revolution, they played no role whatsoever in this second event (in other words, People Power II was a homegrown event, a truly Filipino phenomenon).[16] Thus, when the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate's Foundation decided to honor the country with "a special award for concluding a peaceful revolution" and the Foundation Chair, Pierre Marchand, gave a speech saying, "You have given a gift to the world that knows only force and violence – of effecting radical change without firing a shot, without creating new enemies, nay, by making friends of old enemies, by showing them the resoect that triggered a national shift, a paradigm of change that could not be denied. You were able to prove that a human being is above all systems and laws",[17] it gave the Filipinos the perfect opportunity to stick their tongues out (metaphorically speaking) at the foreign press.

The reason for the indignation against foreign criticism of the People Power II revolution is that the criticism was attacking aspects of Philippine society that Filipinos hold very dear: community spirit and the power of laughter. The sense of community is an important trait of the Filipino, and community gatherings are always celebratory gatherings – whether these events are religious, social or political. It was this trait that the Spanish missionaries exploited when they encouraged the celebrations of *fiestas.* It was also this trait which they found threatening to the authority of the Church: while early colonial accounts indicate a smug satisfaction with the way Filipinos threw themselves into the Catholic celebrations so wholeheartedly, later these accounts became indignant and suspicious. The reason for the sense of threat is that the solemnity of the occasion is diffused, and a carnival atmosphere prevails.

Reminiscing about the first People Power revolution in 1986, Rina Jimenez-David writes, "Three more days and you would have seen Ferris wheels in the middle of it all". Indeed, the carnival atmosphere was pronounced: the length of the highway was filled with stalls selling fishballs, ice cream, and souvenirs, stages and sound systems were put up, popular show business personalities came to entertain the crowds -- and although the defining image of People Power I will always be the picture of an unknown nun standing bravely before a lethal-looking tank full of armed soldiers, very few who were there actually witnessed this sight. Similarly, People Power II was an impromptu carnival: different sectors

of society paraded in front of the shrine, waving colorful banners; entire families came; students cut class to be there; a brass band, complete with uniform and baton twirlers, came all the way from Das Mariñas, Cavite, a full two hours by bus from Metro Manila.

This too was the case in all the apparition events: people came in droves, stalls sprung up, business flourished. To the jaundiced eye, the rampant commercialism destroyed the sanctity of the moment, demeaned the miraculous. But seen in the light of celebration, the same elements confirm something that Filipinos have always known: fight death with life, fight sorrow with laughter – or, in the words of a popular song, "*Tawanan mo ang iyong problema* [Laugh at your problems]."

It is this sense of celebration which has enabled the Filipino to survive almost four centuries of colonization and oppression. If there is appropriation, it results in such a wholehearted, almost brazen imitation that it becomes almost absurd. But the Filipino is aware of this absurdity, because if he laughs, he himself is the first object of his laughter.

This propensity of "inward" laughter, laughter that is directed at the self, is perhaps most obvious in the way television invariably depicts the Filipino who attempts to be something he is not. In variety shows, the English-speaking Filipino is always depicted as speaking a fragmented English, and the American accent is always exaggerated to the point of the absurd. Likewise, in a recent series of a local commercial for a popular American soft drink, the Filipino attempt to speak in English often results in disastrous situations. The character is placed in a situation wherein he or she wants to impress a member of the opposite sex, and so he or she resorts to English, in which he or she is not at all fluent. One particular scenario shows the character stuck in an elevator with a beautiful girl who is fanning herself, and, after mentally going through a series of pick-up lines he could possibly use, he nervously blurts out, "Are you in heat?" He gets a slap for his trouble, and the words, "*Magpakatoo ka*, brother! (Be true to yourself, brother!)" are flashed on the screen to reinforce the point: do not try to be what you are not. The humor has a wide appeal for the Filipino audience for two reasons: Filipinos laugh at the parody, and they laugh at the image of themselves caught in the act of mimicry. They understand that, though they may try to be American, they are not.

Indeed, it is within the guise of conformity and in vesting that conformity with laughter that Filipinos have paradoxically been able to put up the most active kind of resistance to oppression. As James C. Scott points out,

> For many forms of peasant resistance, we have every reason to expect that actors will remain mute about their intentions. Their safety may depend on silence and anonymity; the kind of resistance itself may depend for its effectiveness on the *appearance of conformity* [italics mine]. (Scott 1985: 301)

Despite the dramatic shifts in their historical condition, Filipinos have survived precisely because of the versatility to adapt to and negotiate these changing situations that laughter and community spirit has given them. The famous critic Northrop Frye wrote in the essay, "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" that "the first or most ironic phase of comedy is, naturally, the one in which a humorous society triumphs or remains undefeated" (Frye 1957: 177). In the end, the laughter, the parody or imitation, is a subtle form of resistance: it allows the Filipino a sense of having control over the forces of the world.

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[1] It is worth noting, in fact, that Estrada was among those whose campaign included the showing of his movies in all parts of the country. While these movies were mostly made in the 1960s, their showing just before the national elections helped "refresh" the memory the masses that he was "on their side", that is, on the side of the underdog.

[2] This is an event that I personally witnessed.

[3] Quoted in Ricardo G. Abad, "Sociological Perspectives in the Study of Philippine Popular Culture," in Reyes, *Reading Popular Culture*, 13.

[4] Quoted by Abad, ibid., 15.

[5] Norman Bordadora, "Sin Leads Bash for Mary's 2015th Birthday", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 8 September 2000, <http://www.inquirer.net>

[6] Florentino H. Hornedo, "Culture and Community in the Philippine Fiesta", in *Culture and Community in the Philippine Fiesta and Other Celebrations* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2000), 1-29.

[7] Tiongson, "Byzantine Happenings," in *Philippine Heritage. The making of a nation* (Manila, 1978), 1967, quoted in Bernard Raas, SVD, *Popular Devotions* (Quezon City: Divine Word Publications, 1992), 120.

[8] The Philippine Bishops' Conference, *Ang Mahal na Birhen* No. 81 (Manila, 1975).

[9] Mag Cruz Hatol, "A National Preoccupation with Beauty",.*Woman's Home Companion*, 13July 1988, 12.

[10] Ibid. Mother Lily Monteverde is the owner of a big movie studio, famous for plucking lucky young girls from obscurity and grooming them for fame and fortune in show business; *politico*: politician.

[11] Mark Johnson provides a good analysis of the gay beauty contest, which epitomizes the sensibilities that characterize most if not all of the beauty pageants in the country in varying degrees [Johnson, "Negotiating Style and Mediating Beauty. Transvestite (Gay/Bantut) Beauty Contests in the Southern Philippines", in Colleen Ballerino Cohen et al, eds., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage. Gender Contests and Power* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 89-104]. Cannell likewise discusses this in her study of Bicol communities (see Cannell, *Power and Intimacy in the Lowland Christian Philippines*, 203-222).

[12] Many of Mary's ceremonial dresses cost well over Php20, 000. The gold wire that is used in embossing her overdress is imported from either Spain or India, and the embroidery is often done in Spain where, unlike in the Philippines, the traditional craftsmanship is still practiced.

[13] Cruz Hatol, "A National Preoccupation with Beauty," 12.

[14]Mozart Pastrano, "Going Bananas over "Religious Art", *Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 12 March 2000 <http://www.inquirer.net>

[15] Anthony Spaeth, "Oops, We Did It Again," *Time*, 29 January 2001, 22.

[16] American participation in the People Power revolution that ousted Marcos in 1986 took the form of telling Marcos to retreat and making sure he did by flying him out of Malacañang Palace and to Hawaii, where he and his family were forced to live in exile for the next several years.

[17] Blanche Rivera, "RP Receives Award for Bloodless Revolt", *The Philippine Daily Inquirer Interactive*, 13 March 2001, <http://www.inquirer.net>

CONCLUSION

In the preceding discussions, I have argued, using concepts from Bhabha, Bakhtin and performance theory, that Philippine Marian devotion may be perceived as a site of appropriation and resistance, for, upon close analysis, one may see that Filipinos generally view Mary (and Catholicism in general) in an ambivalent manner that reveals both a desire to assimilate her into the Philippine culture and a disavowal of the aspects of her symbolism which are identified with colonial and social oppression. In relation to this, I have also suggested that an analysis of Marian devotion shows us that Philippine Catholicism is essentially a folk Catholicism despite the attempt by those in the Westernized dominant class (the *burgis*) to denigrate the latter as the product of the animism (*anitismo*) that lingers among the poor, for the hybridized form is practiced, not only by the poor, but also by the rich.

The Marian figure and the various devotions directed to her were introduced to the country by historical circumstances and subsequently shaped by interactions with two foreign colonial powers, the Spanish and the American. I began the study, therefore, by presenting a brief background on the history of Marian devotion in the Philippines and situating it within the larger context of the Western devotion from which it originated (Chapters 1 and 2). What emerges clearly from the historical discussion is the fact that Marian devotion is a transculturated devotion, with elements derived not only from Spanish Catholicism but also from Latin American transculturated Catholicism and pre-Hispanic animism (Chapter 3).

Furthermore, this transculturated devotion in turn produced common religious stereotypes (Chapter 4) that continue to exert considerable influence today and which are in fact manipulated by the more affluent classes in much the same way that they were used by the Spanish colonial administration. In a way, therefore, the insistence of the *burgis* class in enforcing a strict line of division between *true* Catholicism and *folk* Catholicism may be seen as a defensive mechanism to maintain control of religion. But there is also an indication of a certain ambivalence towards the Marian figure and within the devotions to her (and therefore towards the whole notion of Catholic piety), for Mary continues to be seen as a reminder of colonial oppression and discrimination.

However, we can see that, while the dominant classes have continued the tradition of using Marian symbolism as an instrument of legitimization and manipulate the Marian

stereotypes accordingly, the poorer classes have a very different perspective of Mary. That the poor have ambivalent feelings of "desire and disavowal" (to use Bhabha's phrase) towards the Virgin is evident in the way they have simultaneously appropriated and rejected her; indeed, the poor have re-codified Mary in ways that make her more accessible to them and by doing so, have incorporated her devotion into practices more compatible with the somewhat animistic nature of Philippine religiosity. Thus, even as the poor make the attempt to follow the outward structures of the dominant rituals prescribed by the Church, because their appropriation of Mary is vested with a value system different from that of the Church, there is, in effect, a subversion of the dominant structures – for, in the re-situation of these rituals into contexts which are not always approved by the Church as legitimate Christian practices, there is likewise a re-definition or re-codification of their meanings. Mary is thus rejected because of her upper class connotations (i.e., she is never "nativized" because she is too strongly associated with the upper classes that have replaced the Spanish colonizers in positions of authority), but appropriated as a benevolent maternal figure with whom the poor can enter into the negotiable contracts of mutual reciprocity, like *utang* and *utang na lóob*, and who is willing to accept them on their own terms, for very often they have nothing to offer but themselves (Chapter 5). The use of the dominant stereotypes of Mary by the poor, however, is a subtle way to denigrate the West and the Westernized Filipino classes in order to mitigate oppression.

As a whole, however, Filipinos tend to subscribe to the view that religion must be performance-based and thus essentially dialogic in nature, taking into account both the performance of the religious figure *and* the active participation of his or her followers in the religious event. In Chapter 5, for example, I used performance theory and Bakhtinian dialogism to show how Judiel Nieva, the Agoo visionary, and Brother Mike Velarde, the charismatic leader of the immensely popular El Shaddai movement, use performance and dialogism as ways to legitimize their roles as religious figures. Such performances necessarily involve the appropriation of popular religious stereotypes and the presentation of what people expect to see and experience as a part of the religious performance. There is, therefore, a tendency on the part of religious leaders towards the dramatic performance, in which may be seen an almost parodic mimicry of these stereotypes in order to satisfy the audience's expectations. Indeed, their performances tend towards parodization *precisely* because they are appropriations, and the utterances of these religious "performers", their actions and their gestures, follow the prescribed formulas (or, to use Bakhtin's term, *genres*), set by earlier models so closely as to be imitations. Yet, because they have clearly imbued the

formula with new intentions, there is, again, a subversion of the stereotype itself, or of the dominant discourse which the stereotype represents.

But subversion, and indeed, resistance to dominant religious discourses may also be seen on the part of the audiences or the participants themselves. In Chapter 6, I looked at the way the community views and participates in religious celebrations like the Marian feast days, and pointed out that even in the participation of communities in these religious events we can see elements of subversion in the way the dominant forms have been subtly transformed to reflect the preferences of the people rather than of the Church. In the incorporation of the beauty pageant into the Marian celebration, for example, we may see how Mary, though she is the main purpose for the celebration, is subtly upstaged by the very community that views her as the ultimate Beauty Queen. The transformation of the Marian processions into a form of beauty pageant invests them with a glamorization of beauty that somehow diminishes the religious aspects of these processions. Moreover, I showed how, in the transformation of the Marian celebration into spectacle or carnival, in the overwhelmingly exuberant participation of the people in the rituals of the church, laughter can in fact be subversive and indicative of resistance to dominant and oppressive discourses.

In summation, there are three main and interrelated strategies of appropriation and resistance that are evident in Philippine Marian devotion and in Philippine religiosity in general. The first of these responses and the earliest in which Filipinos tried to negotiate with colonial oppression, is the way they tend to use the guise of conformity through the appropriation of the dominant discourse and the manipulation of Western stereotypes. This is as obvious in the colonial accounts of the initial encounters between East and West as it is in present day Marian celebrations. The second strategy, which is contained within the first, involves the use of imitation, or the multiple replication, of these same stereotypes, which results in a weakening of the original, as can be seen in the way the proliferation of Marian apparitions in the country has led to cynicism about apparitions as a whole. And the third, which is actually a combination of the first two and is perhaps a later development in the history of Philippine Catholicism, involves the subversion of Catholicism through the use of the carnivalesque, specifically through the use of laughter – the irrepressible laughter of the people that comes through even in the most solemn and most tragic of situations – which weakens oppression whether it is in the form of unjust colonial administration, Western hegemonic control, or uneven power relations within the Filipino social hierarchy.

If these strategies inevitably resulted in a hybridized Marian devotion that has made Mary a symbol of the multiplicity of cultural voices to be found in the Philippines (thus, in her images, she is interchangeably Nuestra Señora, Mama Mary, and Beauty Queen), this is because Mary's hybridity is just a reflection of the Filipinos' own. The dilemma that emerges from such a devotion is that unless Mary manages to bridge the chasm between the way the different social classes appropriate and reject her signification, she can never truly be called Mama Mary, Mother of the Filipino people. Moreover, unless Filipinos confront and accept that what they are today is the hybrid result of all past colonial encounters, they will one day find themselves cast adrift in the sea of culture, neither Spanish nor American nor Filipino – much like Mary herself.

Cannell has pointed out "the centrality to poorer people of the notion that hierarchy can always be, if not eliminated, then at least mitigated, even by the apparently powerless" and shows how "submission can be turned into the beginning of a position of strength" (1999: 3). The understanding and acceptance of the fact of a national hybrid identity, long considered a national weakness, may well be the first step in throwing off the yoke of the memories of past oppressions and moving on towards the establishment of a clear, stable and *strong* sense of self. Indeed, the need to do so is today more urgent than ever before, particularly in the face of the homogenizing force of globalization. Paradoxically, the key to redemptive self-identity is provided by Marian devotion itself: what this study has also revealed is the fact that Filipinos gain their greatest strength as a community, and they rise up *as* a community when the usual method of resistance fails. The best examples of these are the two People Power revolutions, which were Marian revolutions in every sense: what might have been bloodbaths were instead turned into joyous community fiestas, with the festive atmosphere of the carnival wherein all social hierarchies were temporarily abolished in the common bond to overthrow oppressive institutions. This sense of community is also evident in all religious celebrations, particularly in Marian ones.

Mention of a new Marian apparition emerged last September 14, 2000 in a *Philippine Daily Inquirer* article by anthropologist Michael Tan. The writer gave the name of this new apparition as "La Virgen de Petron" to emphasize the very absurdity of the apparition event. The reason for the appellation becomes clear in the following paragraph:

> One night a few weeks ago, television news crews rushed into one of Metro Manila's neighborhoods to cover reports of the latest apparition of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin chose a rather odd place this time: a Petron gasoline depot tank.

The writer ascribed this apparition to "the hallucinogenic effects of runaway oil prices" about which "Someone should have asked la Virgen de Petron for advice". His suggestion was clearly ironic, a satirical thrust at the gullibility of many Marian believers. Yet, why not? The very absurdity of the site of apparition is typical of many Philippine apparitions: the Virgin of Cabra Island is said in fact to have tapped the main visionary, Belinda, on the shoulder as she rose from answering a call of nature in the bushes. Such an absurdity is itself tongue-in-cheek – and very typically *Filipino*.

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