Queer Space in the Ruins of Dictatorship Architecture

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> Objects that have decayed into fragments and traces draw together a transient past with the very desire to remember. Concrete and embodying absence, they are confined to a context of strict immanence, limited to the presentation of ghostly apparitions. Yet they haunt. They become not a symbol of loss but the embodiment of the process of remembering itself, the ruined place itself remembers and grows lonely.
> —Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road*

The Manila Film Center is located on the southwest end of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), a seaside complex built on sixty-two hectares of reclaimed land and made up, primarily, of megalithic concrete structures erected from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Like the other national buildings that comprise the CCP, the Film Center stands testament to the modernist drive of the Marcos dictatorship and, especially, of the former first lady, Imelda Marcos, whose vision of turning Manila into the "City of Man" served as the animating force behind the architectural transformation of the capital during the Marcos years.[1] Set atop an artificial hill and against the backdrop of the Manila Bay, the Film Center's form—the straight lines of its columns, its mathematical exactitude, its use of bare concrete—serves as a reminder of the dictatorship's promise of "truth, beauty, and goodness," and of the violences that accompanied its monumentalist attempts to materialize claims of order and progress.[2]

The Film Center also appears as a sign of the ideological contradictions that defined the Marcos regime. The building's uncanny resemblance to the Parthenon evokes the Marcosian attachment to classical hallmarks of greatness, but the transformation of that form, its translation into

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rectilinear geometry, speaks to the desire of the regime to re-present the city in a manner visible and legible to a world still captivated by Brutalist forms and the legacies of the International Style. The Film Center's reference to both antiquity and modernity also recalls the tensions that marked the dictatorship's temporal imagination—how it engendered a sense of both nostalgia and futurism by positioning itself as a force that could, at once, transport the city back to the glories of a protonational past and propel it toward advanced states of economic development.[3] Moreover, the structure's departure from and adherence to the tenets of architectural modernism mirror the precarious position occupied by the Marcos regime as a postcolonial dictatorship. Its architecture abides by central "international" principles such as the rejection of adornment and frivolity, but it also affects spectacular excess through scale, height, and the starkness of its contrast with the "thirdworldness" of metropolitan Manila. The Film Center, in other words, can be described as a structure charged with the contradictory forces that underpinned past state ambitions. It can be understood chronotopically, as a point in the geography of the city marked by memory or a space where "the supposedly over and done with remains."[4] Indeed, the Film Center has not only survived the death of the Marcos regime; it has, more crucially, given the dictatorship a life beyond death by serving as a physical remainder of Marcos-era dreams of recognition and of a fabulousness and worldliness to come.

Figure 1. The Manila Film Center. Photograph courtesy of Neil Laygo

If the Film Center can be described as a place where the past remains present, it is also because the structure is said to be the site of a "real" haunting. Built in preparation for the 1982 Manila International Film Festival—an event Imelda believed would turn Manila into the "Cannes of Asia"—the fifty-eight-thousand-square-meter structure was completed in under four hundred days.[5] Rather, however, than serving as an example of the dictatorship's ability to meet impossible standards of efficiency, the Film Center is remembered mainly for the tragedy that took place during its rushed construction, when part of the structure collapsed and some 160 workers were allegedly buried or trapped in quick-drying

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cement. There is no authoritative account of what happened that day, but story has it that Imelda gave compensation to the families of the buried workers and then ordered construction to proceed, forcing workers to hastily drill out corpses, cut off limbs from trapped bodies, and pour fresh concrete over the remains of the victims.[6] After the accident, rumors quickly spread about the building being cursed. Stories were retailed about projection screens clattering to the floor, security guards dying mysteriously, electrical equipment suddenly malfunctioning, and construction sounds and voices being heard in the middle of the night. The film festival itself lasted only two years, suffering under such debilitating financial losses that Imelda was forced to screen semipornographic films in the hopes of generating greater revenue.[7]

Talk of the Film Center's status as an oversized crypt continued after the Marcoses went into exile in 1986 and throughout the building's unglamorous career as the passport-issuing office of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Then, when an earthquake struck Manila in 1990, the Film Center was believed to suffer structural damage, deemed unsafe, and finally abandoned. For an entire decade, it was left unoccupied. It grew famous, not as a part of the infrastructure of national and global cinema, but as a modern ruin and as a destination for ghost hunters, paranormal researchers, and television crews filming Halloween specials for local news programs. It was only in 2001, after structural restoration, that the building was again opened to the public.[8] This time, however, the Film Center was not promoted as a means of showcasing Manila as a cultural hub, but leased, with little fanfare, to the Amazing Philippine Theater, a Korean-owned company that aims to produce the "largest transvestite show in Asia."[9]

Though the *Amazing Show* has been in operation for over ten years, only a small number of Manila's residents seem aware of its existence and of the fact that the Film Center is currently in use.[10] Indeed, I learned of the show long after it had opened, when it was casually mentioned in 2010 by an acquaintance who lived near the CCP and who knew of my interest in both the architecture of the Marcos years and in Manila's queer cityscape.[11] These were interests that, until then, I had considered largely unrelated but that I would see come into contact when I found myself in the company of the tourists who came to see the *Amazing Show* in February 2011. This essay is an attempt to make sense, if partially, of this unexpected convergence; to relay the sense of unsettlement generated by the odd juxtaposition of revival and decay; and to bring the poetics of abandonment into conversation with an ethnographic account of transformation, reincarnation, and queer place-making. Drawing on field notes and on forms of speculative writing, my aim in this essay is not to provide a detailed rendering of either the current state of the Film Center or of the performances that comprise the *Amazing Show*

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but to evoke resonances that cut through time and that point to the shared dreams, desires, and logics that bind concurrent processes of ruination and queering. What I draw attention to here, in other words, is not the difference between what the Film Center once was and what it has become. Rather, my interest lies in "the memory trace(s) of an abandoned set of futures" or the lines of continuity and complicity that link a practice of renewal easily written of, or celebrated, as part of a postmodern arsenal of parodic and ironic interventions, to a modernist project remembered in the nightmarish terms of horror and failure.[12]

In the accounts that follow, the Film Center appears as a spectral scene, a built environment that bears "the signature of lost time" and that elicits a lost sense of progress, optimism, and globalism, while inducing feelings of terror and dread by serving as a reminder of what lies in store for those who subscribe to the dictatorship's promise of modernity.[13] In this way, this essay contributes to ongoing efforts to rethink the legacies of the Marcos regime more than twenty years after its ouster in 1986 and, especially, of its impact on accounts, images, and lived experiences of the capital city.[14] Here, however, I am interested less in the direct aftereffects of authoritarian rule than in the affective environment left in its place—the forward- and outward-looking trajectory to which alternative forms of place-making remain bound in relations of attachment. Ensconced in this environment, the ostensibly queer space of the Amazing Philippine Theater can be reimagined, not only as a defamiliarizing challenge to (the heterosexism of) official ideology but also as a space emergent in the ruins of modern dreams and a space that enables the reproduction of the global aspirations and ideological contradictions embodied by dictatorship architecture.

Understood this way, the term "queer space," as it appears in this essay, must always be read as though set in quotation marks, for while the occupation of the degraded and discarded space of the Manila Film Center by a sexual minority marks the perversion (the queering) of the fantasy desires of a once-ruling order, it also participates in their preservation (their revivification) in the face of death and ruin. More broadly, this use of "queer space" as an uneasy means of naming that which is simultaneously apart from and yet a part of a prior order also speaks to the queer condition of the postcolonial city, that is, its status as a site of failure that troubles notions of linear time—of world history as the global reproduction of the same—while remaining invested in the possibility of acquiring the trappings of modernity through the transformation of the urban landscape. Put differently, queer space functions here as a tenuous designation for sites where frayed desires are brought back into circulation and where worn-out dreams are re-membered as part of the immaterial architecture of new worlds fashioned out of the leavings of economic modernization.[15]

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The Film Center is not the only place haunted by (and haunting the city with) the ghost of the Marcos dictatorship. The CCP Theater of Performing Arts (1969), the most famous modernist structure in the city, looms large in the urban imagination. Its imposing rectangular form seems to hover along the Manila Bay, intimating both forms of brutality many wish to forget and aspirations for modernity and globalness few are willing to forego. The other landmark buildings of the CCP perform the same function, if unintentionally. There is the Folk Arts Theater, a covered amphitheater characterized by floating slabs built for the 1974 Miss Universe Pageant; the Philippine Center for International Trade and Expositions, a concrete abstraction of a house on stilts built in 1976 as a pavilion for commercial and industrial displays; and the Philippine International Convention Center, the so-called magnum opus of the CCP's architectural mastermind, Leandro Locsin, a Mondrianesque structure of overlapping geometric masses made in anticipation of the 1976 joint meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). There are also the other public structures built in and around Manila that were designed to present the capital as a technologically and culturally developed city, including, most notably, the Philippine Heart Center for Asia (1975), the National Arts Center (1976), and the Manila International Airport (1981).[16]

As with most urban landmarks, the architectural value of these buildings is often lost to all but those who have a special interest in the history of the city and its built environment. In fact, many of the Marcos-era buildings are poorly maintained: they smell of age; dust gathers in their corners; their floors are cracked; graffiti stains mar their exterior walls; and improvised repairs and add-ons, like plywood board-ups and hand-painted signs, have become their standard features. More than mere eyesores, these signs of decay are layers of "accumulated time" that mark the buildings as places that remember.[17] Beneath, among, and around them, there are traces and presences, both visible and invisible, of years past and of a future that never came to be. Artifacts such as the airport's flipboard timetable and the obsolete computers still in use at the various medical centers tell the story of the city's stalled march down the straight line of progress. Architectural and interior touches such as tarnished stone floors, cantilevered balconies and ledges, ceilings with concrete coves, and paintings and sculptures by national artists hearken back to the glamorous world the Marcoses tried to bring into being and that was bought with debts that have left the country impoverished.

There are also the invisible and ineffable resonances accumulated in these spaces: the echoes, affinities, imaginations, and frequencies of memory and history that are, at times, elicited as feelings by ruined buildings and the objects that occupy them.[18] Standing in the main lobby of the

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Film Center, for instance, one can look around and begin involuntarily peeling away at layers of history in order to see spectral images of the dignitaries, socialites, and Hollywood celebrities who had been there before; in their presence, one feels underdressed and unwelcome, like a figure out of place and out of time. The same feelings are triggered in the main theater of the CCP when one is sitting idly, waiting for a show to start. During those moments, the stage curtains appear like the dressings of a window through time, ready to open to a long-forgotten performance, and the imaginary talk of a long-dead crowd begins to sound like the opening lines of what Justin Armstrong called "ghost texts": the accumulation of cultural leavings or the "polyvocal manifestations of the passage of people through time and space."[19] Indeed, there are unnamed yet powerfully present absences encrypted in the structures inherited from the Marcos regime.[20] They provoke collective memories that are strangely familiar and conjure up half-recognizable worlds through empathetic contact with apparitions summoned by signs of the past.[21]

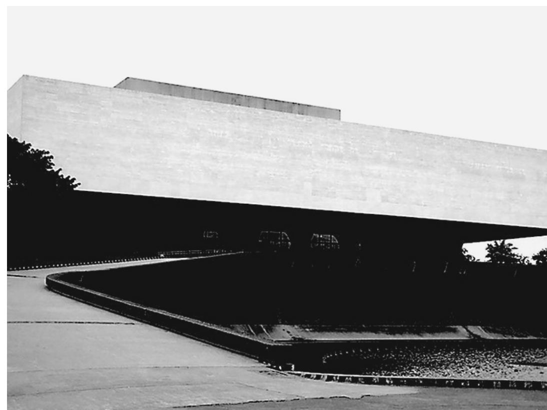

Figure 2. The Main Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Photograph courtesy of Jun Acullador

For Walter Benjamin, it is in "the process of decay, and in it alone, [where] the events of history shrivel up"; it is in the ruin where "history merges into the setting."[22] Strictly speaking, the structures left behind by the Marcos dictatorship are not ruins. They have not been abandoned or, as in the case of the Manila Film Center, have merely vacillated between states of use and disuse, repair and disrepair, occupation and desertion. These buildings, however, are akin to ruins, for they are sites where the rejected have not been fully effaced and are caught in states of "unfinished disposal."[23] As Tim Edensor once suggested, ruins are ruins because they are in a "state of indeterminacy"; they are places where "the attempted erasure of the past is incomplete" and where ghosts have not been swept away and recontextualized.[24] Put differently, the pieces of dictatorship architecture that remain in Manila are "matter with memory"; they represent brokenness and transience and bear the physical traces of time on their surfaces as a kind of historical palimpsest.[25] To enter these sites is to experience asynchrony as a material environment. It is to gain access to

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official aspirations that have been scripted into stone, while simultaneously being attuned to Manila's present and the failure it represents when set against the Apollonian desires of an authoritarian regime.

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Driving to the CCP, I am suddenly overcome by a sense of dread, when all the cars ahead of me turn at the first intersection after Roxas Boulevard and I find myself alone on the poorly lit road that leads to the Manila Film Center. The road is short, but there is nothing visible on either side of it apart from the faint outlines of trees and rustling bushes. My mind begins to wander and, though I tell myself to keep my imagination in check, I start remembering tales passed down through the years about cold spots around the building, construction noises with no apparent origin, and vengeful spirits wailing for justice. I drive faster and feel relieved when the building comes into view. It is larger than I had pictured it, more imposing when cast against the barrenness of the surrounding landscape. Heading to the CCP, I expected the hulking form of the Film Center to multiply the fear induced by my knowledge of its tragic history. Whatever feelings of awe and danger I anticipated, however, diminish quickly upon sight of the bright red and blue sign that reads "AMAZING SHOW," which has been mounted on top of the structure's graying columns.

Even from inside my car, I can sense how the sign works its magic, how it drags the gaze away from the aesthetics of the ruin and opens a gap in the story of this structure by overwriting the texts written by time, the ones that become visible only at close range: grass growing out of the cracks of concrete steps, soot-stained exterior walls, a graffiti painting of indecipherable shapes behind one of the columns, the unmistakable patina of age. These are the sights I notice as I walk around the building—the imprints of the past that appear, in my mind's eye, as fragments of a mnemonic picture of abandonment and neglect. I am too early for the show and the only company I have is the security guard stationed near the entrance, who shoots furtive glances in my direction as I take photographs and notes, but who seems too indifferent to question my purpose for being at the Film Center and to stop me from walking into its still-unoccupied lobby. There, I am confronted by other objects and sensations that draw out involuntary memories that are not my own. The dim orange glow of capiz *chandeliers recalls the arrival of celebrities such as Jeremy Irons, Robert Duvall, and George Hamilton, who were greeted by flares and fireworks and by the portraits of Imelda that were mounted around the Film Center. Arched staircases remember the commotion during the opening night, the sound of chairs still being bolted to theater floors while guests posed for cameras outside. A set of escalators, either broken or switched off, stands unguarded at one corner, inviting visitors to what might be the very mezzanine from where the workers fell to what would become their shared grave.*

The mezzanine itself is empty, or at least I am unable to see any objects

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under the faint glow of the lights from the lobby. The empty space, however, still gives the impression of a place of memory.[26] *Ghosts come rushing to the space of absence, which begins to appear more and more like a space in which an observer, an ethnographer or ghost hunter, might dwell in time, petrified.*[27] *Indeed, it is the darkest parts of the mezzanine that provoke my attention; they are the ones most open to projection and that convince me that if I come closer, if I let my eyes adjust, I would be able to see that which I know does not exist: a shadow in a corner or a footprint etched in the dust. Though I do not see anything out of the ordinary, no actual trace of the horrors of the past, a sense of dread overcomes me, and I turn away, fearful that my vision might reveal something sinister lurking in the dark. Back in the safety of the lobby, I laugh at my own cowardice, though I also realize that I did not have to see anything in the mezzanine in order to gain access to its narrative of loss, for the presence of the past in the present takes form affectively, as the terror that emerges in the space between my imagination and the site of ruination.*[28]

Figure 3. The Manila Film Center with the sign for the *Amazing Show*. Photograph courtesy of Ton Gallardo

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At the lobby of the Film Center, vestiges of scenes long past, whether material or immaterial, do not convey a perfect reenactment of what had taken place decades ago; rather, they index unfulfilled possibilities and serve as allegorical representations of remembered desires and of the tragedies that follow in their wake. The status of the Film Center as a site of memory, however, remains unfixed, for the absent presences that occupy it possess a mnemonic function only for those whose senses are filtered through collective remembrances of urban legends and of the real horrors they reference. It is, in other words, the beholder who defines the ruin.[29] Whatever ghost texts it contains are authored by the ruin gazer during that moment of standstill when he or she is confronted by historical objects, including spaces of absence, and is caught in a "charged force field of past and present, tragedy and utopic desire."[30] In that moment, the myth of progressive temporality breaks down, is undermined by the emblems of its failure and of the impossibility of unremembering and

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moving on, and what is lost, be it the dream of modernity or its casualties, becomes illuminated and potentially redeemed.[31]

Since the very fact of ruination exposes the myth of history as progress, the reoccupation of a previously abandoned place often appears as a lateral move, a step away from the linear trajectory that the postcolonial metropolis has failed to follow. Thus, for critics such as Edensor, ruins can also represent the fecund. "The becomings of new forms, orderings, and aesthetics can emerge," he suggests, from void sites and spaces of dereliction. "Dead zones" can become spaces of adventure, art, play, plunder, homemaking, and other modes of inhabitation and making do that cannot be foreseen.[32] The modern ruins of dictatorship architecture, however, are not as malleable as the anonymous industrial mills, yards, and factories of which Edensor writes. Places such as the Film Center, which are always already set against the backdrop of a city in a state of permanent crisis, do not resemble ruins that appear anachronistic because they have witnessed a transition between an industrial and putatively postindustrial age. Rather, they are openings to a future that did not but *might still* come to pass. They represent a paradoxical vision of modernity as a fantasy that produces its own accidents and as an unfinished *task* inherited from a regime that desired too much too soon and which thus caused the dream of making the future present to collapse.

Put differently, the modern ruins of dictatorship architecture function as an imperative. The spirit of the Marcosian attachment to the possibility of global modernity lingers; it directs and orients modes of appropriation even as the ghosts of improperly buried workers sound a warning against the progressive vision of the state. The specters of the dictatorship and its victims continue to participate in setting the patterns of living. As Jacques Derrida once put it, "The one who has disappeared appears still to be *there*, and his apparition is not nothing. It does not do nothing . . . the dead must be able to work."[33] In Manila, the work of specters pulls the present in opposite directions. Restorative nostalgia for the aspirations of the Marcoses persists alongside a steadfast rejection of their brutality, and the material evidence of their ruin simultaneously undercuts and stimulates a utopian and putatively global imagination.[34]

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An hour before the show and the repurposing of the Film Center suddenly becomes apparent. Cheap cardboard stands featuring images from the Amazing Show *have been placed near the entrance, ready to welcome guests with the frozen smiles of transgender performers dressed in "native" Filipino attire and in the national costumes of foreign cultures. The lights have been switched on in the medium-sized room near the doors of the main theater. The room, which had once, presumably, served as the Film Center's main bar, has been con-*

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verted to the Amazing Café, an establishment that resembles a rundown airport waiting lounge and that is sparsely decorated with a few tables and chairs and a shelf stocked with Korean-language books and magazines. I cannot read any of the texts, but they nonetheless convey a recognizable message. They remind me that this spectacle, like the building that houses it, was not made for me, but for the outsiders whom we hope will enter the city.

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Unlike the Manila Film Festival, the *Amazing Show* was not dreamt up by the state. Indeed, for years, the Philippine government had let opportunities to breathe life back into the Manila Film Center come and pass, as though it could not will itself to recover (and thus remember) the ill-fated, half-realized ambitions of the Marcos regime. In a way, it is fitting, if not predictable, that the will to appropriate has come from someone else, from those who stand outside the bounds of collective memory. It is, after all, those who are free of the constraints of remembrances who are able to see spaces as something other than what they once were. As the man who first introduced me to the *Amazing Show* suggested, the reason the Amazing Philippines Theater ended up taking residence at the Film Center was because Koreans, unlike "us," "don't actually believe in ghosts."

Such a statement may be an example of how popular misconceptions about "foreign" cultures circulate in the wake of new migrations.[35] However, it also points to how memories harden into legend and how the task of turning the city into a destination, of becoming global, is imperiled, not only by the material limits faced by the state but by anxieties engendered by signs of the past. At the Film Center, the state's inability to "invest" in the infrastructure of modernity, that is, the material terror of its ongoing battles with and participation in the immiseration of the city, works alongside the fantastic terror of coming face to face with the specter of past failures. Together, they produce a paralyzing atmosphere of fear, in which the dreamwork of modernity might continue, but only if it is outsourced to those who are unable to remember. Here, the movement toward modernity proceeds, not as the grand, sped-up process demanded by the Marcos dictatorship, but as a slow march toward a diminished objective. The sign of the *Amazing Show* on top of the Film Center, the image of smiling performers on cardboard stands, the narrow bookshelf in the Amazing Café—these signs simultaneously resume the work of welcoming the outside world into the city and serve as reminders of something now gone. They have been rushed in to inhabit a place that has lost its romantic dimension, like the tourists whom I would later see being bused in from a nearby budget hotel in order to fill the vacuum left by the celebrities and dignitaries for whom the structure was originally built.

In a way, one could say that the transformation of the Manila Film

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Center, its appropriation and arguably parodic reinvention, is but another step in the concealment of the economic relations of dependence that we have given names such as "neoliberalism," "global capitalism," and "empire." A subtle dramatization of opaque processes such as the spiraling of debt, the sale of national resources, and privatization writ large, it is a manifestation of the outward search for money and recognition that animates the "race to the bottom." Like the very structure of the Manila Film Center, which rose out of the loan-funded artificial landscape of the CCP, the *Amazing Show* is a spectacle created for the gaze of the outsider and made possible by "his" generosity. Here, "locals" appear, not as guests, but as entertainers, as the descendants of the construction workers who perished while performing the labor of materializing modern dreams.

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I do not notice them arrive, but when I look back at the entrance of the Film Center, I see three transwomen standing majestically in sequined evening gowns—one red, one blue, one gold. There is no crowd yet, but they are already striking poses: hands on hips, chests out, hair flipping from side to side. They look, from afar, like well-practiced beauty pageant contestants.[36]

I introduce myself and they are surprised to learn that I am Filipino, not Korean. They seem to relax at this revelation—at the realization that I am "one of them"—and even more so when I tell them that I am researching "gay culture" in the city. I ask them questions about the show, casual inquiries about how long they have been working for the theater (since the beginning, ten years); whether they enjoyed their work (it's okay); how large the crowds got (near capacity on weekends). I wanted to ask them why they thought Koreans were so interested in a "transvestite" show, but there was no proper way to raise this question. I knew, even before I arrived, that "transvestite" was an inadequate, even wholly incorrect way of naming those who would be performing at the Amazing Show.[37] *Instead I ask them, more generically, what people were coming to see. The one in red, N., says, in Tagalog, that people come to see something different—a different kind of beauty. The other two nod in agreement, and I find myself recalling how the man who told me about the* Amazing Show *described it using the language of similitude, as a "poor copy of something out of Vegas."*

"Are there really ghosts here?" I ask. They laugh a little and I wonder if they are laughing at me or out of nervousness.

"We've heard the stories," says N. People say they hear things, noises. She says that she herself has never seen or heard anything, that she doesn't believe in ghosts, and that the place would go to waste if everyone ran away, frightened.

"But don't you get scared?" I continue, turning to the others.

"Yes, of course," one of them replies. "But we're so used to it now. This job, it can be scary. But the show must go on, right? And besides, here, we don't just perform. We are also promoting our country."[38]

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Once I am seated in the theater, I count some one hundred fifty people in the audience. I am, from what I can tell, the only Filipino present. Everyone else is Korean and middle-aged, dressed casually in thin cotton shirts, pants, sneakers, and visors—the uniform of the prototypical tourist. I try to speak to the women sitting next to me, but they speak neither English nor Filipino and I am forced to read their faces instead. They seem, to me, more bored than expectant, as though they had no choice but to follow the itinerary of their tour program.[39]

(Waiting for the show to begin, my mind starts to drift and I find myself imagining what Imelda might think if she saw the crowd sitting in the theater she had built for VIPs. There are no accounts of her ever returning to the Manila Film Center since she returned from exile in 1991, though there is one story about how she was invited by a group of "spirit questors" to participate in an attempt to communicate with and exorcise the ghosts that reside in the building.[40] *According to the story, she had agreed to take part in the séance but then backed out at the last minute for reasons that remain unknown. Some say that she was frightened off by the prospect of encountering the vengeful spirits of those she had entombed, though—having now seen the Film Center in its present state—I imagine she might have been just as deterred by the possibility of seeing her dreamspace collecting dust, making palpable the passing of time and mirroring her fall from grace.)*

When the lights dim, the women next to me and the rest of the crowd applaud politely. A voice-over announces that the show is about to begin. "Welcome to the Amazing Show,*" it says, in perfect American English. A spotlight reveals three transwomen at the center of the stage, in front of the still-drawn curtains. They are the same performers whom I met earlier that night and they are standing in the same beauty-pageant poses they adopted at the entrance of the Film Center.*

Music comes on and I laugh quietly the moment I recognize the theme from Dreamgirls. *Standing in the middle, N. raises her arms and begins to mime the song's opening lines: "Every man has his own special dream | And that dream's just about to come true." When the chorus starts, the others join her. "We're your dreamgirls," they say, mouthing the words in perfect synchronicity. "Dreamgirls will never leave you | All you got to do is dream." Their expert performance leads me to believe that they have been lip-synching the song together for years.*

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Abandoned places are not empty places, but the practice of abandonment creates a *terrain vague*. It provides room to maneuver—an opening, a gap in which new arrivals might create something unexpected, where new dreams might be crafted out of the remnants of ones that have been or might be forgotten. Indeed, ruins have traditionally drawn those who are compelled—by an inner voice or the outside world or both—to fabulate their own place, to take fragments of the past and re-member them into

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something *other*. Artists, scavengers, squatters, junkies, and thrill-seekers find haven in sites that have been left to their own devices. Animals nest under the shelter of forgotten roofs in order to reclaim a part of the land from which they have been excluded. Weeds crawl out of crevices to inaugurate an entropic process in which what is man-made returns, though never fully, to a prior state. Ruins are, in other words, places that remember, but they are also "space(s) of contingency and desire" in which the leavings of modernity live and roam.[41]

Queers too are known to occupy spaces that were meant for something or someone else. Public toilets, parks in the dead of night, untrafficked alleyways, and rundown districts have often provided refuge to those who practice and embody nonnormative genders and sexualities.[42] By occupying sites of dereliction and abandonment, temporarily or otherwise, queers have been able to produce their own time and place, to craft new worlds out of what is already present. What would it mean to consider the ruins of dictatorship, as I have, as a site for queer world-making? To see the ironic and arguably parodic transformation of Brutalist architecture into a site for queer performance while acknowledging how that very performance might be imbued with the spirit of aspiration, longing, and progressive temporality that refuses to be exorcised from the Marcoses' buildings? What can be gleaned from the dreamwork undertaken by the performers of the *Amazing Show*, whose very presence announces that the Film Center has become something other than what it was, but who also perform the task of inheritance by serving as the new agents of the nation's search for recognition?[43]

In a way, the present of the *Amazing Show* can be imagined as the uncharted future of a futurist project that was always already doomed to failure. It is, however, also a resumption of that project, a disavowal of failure in the face of failure.[44] To consider dictatorship architecture then as a site for queer world-making demands recognition of the variegated and ambivalent relationship that queer subjects might have with dominant orders. It is to rethink officially sanctioned postcolonial fantasy-desires for "progress" and modernity as a kind of atmosphere, "a force field in which people find themselves," a lived affect or "a capacity to affect and be affected that pushes a present into a composition."[45] It is to pay attention to the multiple and often contradictory ways queers grapple and sympathize with the lifeways endorsed by the state, and are compelled and constrained by the environs in which they find themselves.

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In Manila, Imelda Marcos herself can be seen as the primary figure through which the complicated relationship of queers to the ideology of the Philippine state has been dramatized. On one hand, she was one half

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of the so-called conjugal dictatorship, a marital rule legitimated through heterosexist iconography and myth making, most notably through the portrayal of Ferdinand and Imelda in stories and artworks as Malakas (Strong) and Maganda (Beautiful), figures who, akin to Adam and Eve, are represented as the original Filipinos and who serve as the foundation of the cultural reproduction of the nation. As the archetypal figure of womanliness, Imelda was made to appear as the timeless overseer of the nation; her heterosexual romance with and deference to the dictator was, in turn, portrayed as a "natural" model of desire and depicted as a necessary part of the nation's passage through time.[46] On the other hand, Imelda, who was well known for maintaining a coterie of "gay" hairdressers, make-up artists, and fashion and interior designers, is also remembered as the "queen of the Philippine faggots."[47] As Rolando Tolentino once suggested, the work of queer artists "legitimized Imelda's appearance, being, and use of beauty" and validated the "apotheoses of the conjugal dictatorship."[48] Queers, in other words, were placed directly in the service of national power; they functioned as agents in Imelda's war of beautification, as a sign of the regime's "modern" values, and as part of its seductive vision of excess.

At once included and excluded from the narrative of the nation, queers thus occupied contradictory positions in the radically asymmetrical urban environment fostered by a dictatorship that sustained and troubled regimes of normative gender and sexuality. Indeed, while queers had unprecedented presence in the corridors of power during the Marcos years, those same years were also known for the rise of working-class queer subcultures in the destitute districts that emerged as a direct effect of the uneven development engendered by modernization. One can point, for instance, to the consolidation of the figure of the *parlorista*—the poor transvestite working in one of the city's many low-end beauty salons—as an urban caricature, or the appearance of subterranean male sex work economies in the heart of Manila's major commercial districts.[49] More poignantly, the position of queers as both inside and outside the modern world imagineered by the state is demonstrated, almost literally, in the uses of dictatorship architecture. The CCP, for instance, was not only a site where favored queers could participate in the lavish fetes and "global" events hosted by Imelda. Late at night, after the guards had fallen asleep, queers could also be found roaming the grounds, cruising in the shadows of landmark buildings.

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I remember the historian of architecture Gerard Lico once describing the CCP as "an architectural dream factory," as "the ultimate manifestation of the first lady's edifice complex."[50] *Driving around the CCP, it occurs to me that*

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the complex might be described, more accurately, as the product of the labor of dreaming or as the site for the ongoing reproduction of the dictatorship's dreams. I imagine it rising out of the depths of the ocean as if by magic—as if it were simply conjured by Imelda's fabled wand, the same instrument of disappearance that caused squatters to vanish overnight and white walls to suddenly emerge around the shantytowns scattered throughout the city.

Here, unlike in most of Manila, there are still large swaths of land that have not been occupied. There are empty spaces that evoke the history of the CCP as a tabula rasa and that appear to be lying in wait for the fulfillment of Imelda's desire to see the fusion of modern aesthetic forms and a palingenetic recovery of tradition. Even in the architectural projects that were completed at the CCP, however, this fusion seems, to me, to only be subtly detectable. Looking at the Theater of Performing Arts, for instance, I know that without my knowledge of the history of its construction, I would be unable to see the crushed seashells in its floating rectangular block or recognize how the vernacular house on stilts inspired its suspended volumetry.[51] *Here, notions of an authentic Manila seem present but half-hidden. They appear to form a foundation, to serve as materials or starting points for a project that intimates knowledge of the International Style and that suggests movement toward an end that was always already known in advance.*

• • •

Surveying the various structures scattered throughout the CCP, I wonder if, in a way, the fascination with dressing the third world city in "first-world drag"—itself a marker of the queerness of Philippine modernity—is but the logical outcome of Imelda's imaging of Filipino distinctiveness as a trace, an "accent" that inflects a "common human language" or a peculiar "spirit . . . formed and shaped by (the) sun and the sea . . . wind and rain . . . culture and history."[52] Here, the fusion of nostalgia and newness, of spirit and matter, becomes apparent only when one enters a building and bears witness to local dances, plays, festivals, and other cultural rituals performed against a backdrop of distinct outlines and spatial purity and of a supermodern play of voids and geometric solids. Such putatively ironic juxtapositions, however, do not strike me as contradictions. Rather, they appear to me as partial realizations of Imelda's fantastic vision of the city, of her dream of erecting a space that might serve, simultaneously, as a global stage and a "sanctuary for the Filipino soul"—that is, a place where that soul might be put to work in the hopes of establishing "Manila as another important landmark in the world map" or of "showing the world that, see, we have a pretty face."[53]

When I was first told of the Amazing Philippine Theater, it was described to me as a "drag" company. Watching the show, however, it became clear that "drag" is both an inaccurate descriptor and the only word that might capture the spirit of what was taking place. The *Amaz-*

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ing Show bore little, if any, resemblance to the drag shows I had become familiar with in gay clubs and queer clubs, in Manila and elsewhere. It had no sense of humor, no self-aware sense of parody, no exaggerated play of femininity against an ostensibly male body.[54] At the *Amazing Show*, sex and gender could almost be forgotten, not because the performers seemed fully dedicated to "realness" and "passing" (though they were), but because the performance of gender seemed less like the main attraction then an initial lure—a hook designed to draw viewers to the performance of national cultures. The numbers proceeded like a trip around the world and back and forth through time. There was a Korean fan dance, a Moulin Rouge–style cancan chorus line, Hawaiian hula, cabaret, a Japanese ballad, a reenactment of scenes from *Phantom of the Opera*, a Muslim marriage ritual, and several traditional Filipino folkdances. (In the past there were also numbers based on ancient Egypt, American-style cheerleading, Bollywood, and Latin American pop, among others.) There did not appear to be any logic to the sequence, no larger narrative that bound the different performances together. What linked them all were the performers themselves—the "pretty faces" who appeared and reappeared in different guises, often paired with male-bodied dancers in sanitized displays of heterosexual desire and romance.[55] Like Imelda's, the womanliness of the performers seemed archetypal, a blank slate (a *terrain vague*) onto which tradition and cosmopolitanism could be alternately projected and through which Filipinoness could be made to take its place in a pantheon of iconic cultural displays.

My thoughts kept returning to Imelda as I watched the crowd of tourists applaud what I found to be dragging, mediocre performances. I wondered if they were clapping out of genuine appreciation or out of politeness, or if the reasons were more complex. I wondered if they, like me, were indifferent to the content of the show but awed by the ability of the performers to make them—us—forget about the "truth" of gender and sex by weaving, haphazardly, through time and place. Watching the crowd, I remembered Imelda because her ability to elicit applause was also bound to her mastery over truth, beauty, and memory. Her story was—and remains—clouded in mystery, muddled by multiple biographies that point in different ways to a humble origin, to a girl born on the wrong side of an otherwise respectable family and whose beauty would be her ticket out of an unremarkable life in the province.[56] When I see footage or images of her climbing up on a stage and being greeted with cheers, whether from years past or from the more recent events where she is still treated as an honored guest, I wonder if the applause is fueled, at least in part, by a perverse appreciation for how her origins have been rendered almost invisible by her successful transition and made irrelevant by the recognition bestowed upon her by the foreign gaze of kings and queens, celebrities and heads of state. Indeed, the "truth" of Imelda's past seems to vanish under spotlights; in

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front of adoring crowds, it appears as an open secret that marks her—and thus the nation's—transformation, progress, and arrival in the world.[57]

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Throughout most of the twentieth century, homosexuality and transgenderism (and transvestism especially) remained indistinct categories in Manila and in the Philippines as a whole. In recent years, however, an emerging commercial gay male culture in the capital has broadened the gap between these categories. Homosexual desire, increasingly framed within a pink economy populated by hypermasculine bodies, has been distanced from the taint of femininity and from "lower-class" occupations in the beauty industry.[58] In the popular, upmarket gay dance clubs and bars that now stand as the most visible queer spaces in the city, there is little room for the form of queerness embodied by the performers of the *Amazing Show*.[59] On occasion, they, or figures like them, might appear in the clubs to entertain the crowds with drag performances of club anthems or of recent hits from the pop divas that have been embraced by the "gay community." Their appearance, however, only serves as a prelude to the real show, which begins only when the trans figures have stepped down from the stage and the men in the crowd are able to turn their gaze upon one another and form a closed circuit of desire. These spaces, these circuits, are the sites being held up as emblems of global gay modernity. In glossy magazines, websites, and casual conversations, they have been likened to similar sites in cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Sydney, and other metropolitan sites imagined as centers of a gay globe. In these spaces, as I have detailed elsewhere, the living labor of trans performers is disappeared, reduced to a ghostly presence, a specter that represents a "premodern" sexual order and that must be exorcised in order to sustain nascent claims to newness and globalness. This process of exorcism, of erasure, however, is never ending, for the specter of the trans figure must be recalled in order for it to be chased away. It must serve as a reminder of what queerness once was, a sign of the past that legitimates faith in the progress gay men in Manila have ostensibly made.

At the *Amazing Show*, the trans figure takes center stage. She becomes the main attraction, a revitalized part of the dream of globalness inaugurated by the Marcoses and materialized through the labor of the workers who died for its sake. In a way, the Manila Film Center provides the most apt setting for this reassertion of the presence of a figure threatened with erasure, since the structure stands as a metaphor for the impossibility of death, an allegory for the ruin of authoritarian rule and the persistence of its promise of a modernity to come. The role the production plays in the afterlife of the dream of modernity seems, in fact, to be recognized in the closing number of the *Amazing Show*, when a large image of the building's

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facade is projected onto the background of the stage and all the performers return dressed in the various costumes used in the other numbers to dance to the show's lone original song, a triumphant tune that simply repeats the line "It's amazing/It's amazing." In that moment, the *Amazing Show* becomes a living snapshot of the cultures of the world, but its transnationalism is tethered to a local image of "what was once the future projection of (the city's) present."[60]

In the closing number of the *Amazing Show*, the Film Center becomes hypervisible, if only as a projection, and it becomes apparent that the Amazing Philippine Theater and its performers are not simply taking advantage of an abandoned site but asserting its value and taking their place in the history it represents. In this scene, the age of the Film Center is not lost. The graying planes of its concrete facade remain noticeable, unmissable even. Against the choreographed spectacle that has been set before it, however, the decrepitude of the Film Center does not appear as an invalidation of the trajectory laid out by the dictatorship or a negation of its ideals but as a sign of the endurance of the lost future of the past. It stands as a reminder of the never-to-be-completed task of becoming modern, a charge that can be felt and transmitted by those who have been left out of global modernity and who may have once been figured as agents of its realization.

Postscript: On 19 February 2013, the Manila Film Center was damaged by a large fire, causing the *Amazing Show* to cease operations and reigniting talk of the building as haunted and cursed. This essay was written prior to the fire.

Notes

Excerpt from *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* by Kathleen Stewart, © 1996, reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

1. See Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003); Neferti X. M. Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 77–112; and Neferti X. M. Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 143–82.

2. Borrowing from Greek ideals, Imelda Marcos and an ad hoc committee of artists established *Katotohanan* (truth), *Kagandahan* (beauty), and *Kabaitan* (goodness) as the philosophical tenets of the CCP. Notions of "truth" are especially apparent in the work of the CCP's chief architect, Leandro Locsin, who designed the majority of the CCP structures and served as a key adviser to Froilan Hong, the architect of the Film Center. Locsin subscribed to standard modernist tenets, particularly the idea of "truth to materials," which is evident in his Brutalist interest in the plastic qualities of bare concrete. Further, in a manner reminiscent of older forms

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of modernist architecture—particularly Le Corbusier's search for transhistorical, mathematical models for architectural proportion—Locsin also insisted on extracting a pure geometric logic out of older forms, most notably the "native" *nipa* hut, or house on stilts. This desire to produce recognizably modern buildings that were grounded in autochthonous models can be linked to Imelda's redefinition of Filipino architecture as the "rational rediscovery of traditional shapes." It should be noted, however, that Locsin's work, and the CCP as a whole, is more clearly inspired by the sweeping curves of Eero Saarinen and the Brutalism of Paul Rudolph; the influence of the latter may account for the stark, totalitarian atmosphere produced by Locsin's public buildings and that resonated strongly with the sense of awe and order desired by the Marcos regime. On the architectural philosophy of Locsin and the CCP, see Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 70; Maria Teresa Manuel, *TAO: Humanism at Work in Filipino Society* (Manila: National Media Production Center, 1979), 199; Nicholas Polites, *The Architecture of Leandro V. Locsin* (New York: Weatherhill, 1977); and Caryn Paredes-Santillan, "A Study on Bipolarity in the Architecture of Leandro V. Locsin," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 8, no. 1 (2009): 1–8. On Le Corbusier's geometry, see Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 273–320.

3. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 39–43.

4. Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23 (2005): 829.

5. Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, *Imelda Marcos: The Rise and Fall of One of the World's Most Powerful Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 176.

6. According to Beth Day Romulo, a former *Reader's Digest* reporter who married Marcos's foreign minister, Carlos P. Romulo, the number of deaths involved in the accident was rumored to be as high as 168, though the Marcos-controlled press reported only 28 deaths. Beth Day Romulo, *Inside the Palace: The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (New York: Putnam, 1987), 167–68. *Film Comment*, the journal published by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, reported that more than two hundred people were killed in the accident and that "orders were given to slice in half those caught unconscious in the quick-drying porous cement." Elliott Stein, "Manila's Angels," *Film Comment* 19, no. 5 (1983): 48–55.

7. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 124.

8. During the planning of the rehabilitation of the Film Center in 2001, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), working with the Film Center's original architect, Froilan Hong, announced that the building was actually structurally sound and "positively repairable." Hong corrected the impression that the building was sinking by pointing out that the gaps in its front steps and ramps had appeared because the reclaimed land on which the structure was built was still settling. Repairs to the Film Center were then limited to the strengthening and upgrading of piles, the replacement of the hollow block parapets with new materials, and the enlargement of columns and beams. This rehabilitation was initially undertaken with plans of restoring the site as a center for film screenings that also contained laboratory and archive facilities, as well as an academy for performing arts. Plans for a revitalized film center were shelved, presumably due to budgetary constraints. See Eric Catipon, "Manila Film Center to Shine Again," *Newsflash*, 26 February 2001, www.newsflash.org/2001/02/sb/sb001587.htm.

9. See www.amazing-show.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=34.

10. The Philippine Senate itself seemed unaware of the *Amazing Show* and of

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the fact that the Film Center was operational. In 2009, the Senate considered moving to the Film Center, and then–minority leader Aquilino Pimentel argued that the building was unusable because of the damage caused by the earthquake—a myth already debunked in 2001 by the DPWH and Froilan Hong. Former majority leader Juan Miguel Zubiri reportedly said, in Filipino, that "the ghosts [at the Film Center] will be frightened of the senators." See Hannah L. Torregoza, "Senate Transfer to Film Center Bucked," *Manila Bulletin*, 5 October 2009.

11. I conducted research on Manila's commercial gay scene between 2006 and 2010, focusing on the city's upmarket club and party circuit. During this entire period, which included dozens of extensive interviews with club promoters, magazine editors, and patrons of Manila's gay spaces, as well as innumerable conversations with middle- and upper-class gay men, the *Amazing Show* was never mentioned. See Bobby Benedicto, "The Haunting of Gay Manila: Global Space-time and the Specter of *Kabaklaan*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2008): 317–38, and Benedicto, *Bright Lights, Gay Globality: Mobility and Gay Life in Twenty-First-Century Manila* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

12. Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 44.

13. Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), 95.

14. In addition to Tadiar's *Things Fall Away* and Lico's *Edifice Complex*, see Lisandro E. Claudio, "Memories of the Anti-Marcos Movement: The Left and the Mnemonic Dynamics of the Post-Authoritarian Philippines," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 1 (2010): 33–66; Roderick G. Galam, "(En)Countering Martial Law: Rhythmanalysis, Urban Experience in Metro Manila, and Ilokano Literature (1980–1984)," *Philippine Studies* 58, no. 4 (2010): 481–522; Talitha Espiritu, "Native Subjects on Display: Reviving the Colonial Exposition in Marcos' Philippines," *Social Identities* 18, no. 6 (2012): 729–44; and Gavin Shatkin, "Colonial Capital, Modernist Capital, Global Capital: The Changing Political Symbolism of Urban Space in Metro Manila, the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2005/2006): 577–600.

15. For a recent revisiting of the literature on "queer space," see David Bell, "Fucking Geography, Again," in *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices, and Politics*, ed. Kath Browne, Jason Lim, and Gavin Brown (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 81–88.

16. For a discussion of Manila's international airport, see Bobby Benedicto, "Shared Spaces of Transnational Transit: Filipino Gay Tourists, Labor Migrants, and the Borders of Class Difference," *Asian Studies Review* 33 (2009): 289–301.

17. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 82.

18. Justin Armstrong, "On the Possibility of Spectral Ethnography," *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 10, no. 3 (2010): 243–50.

19. Ibid., 246.

20. On unnamed yet felt absences, see Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9.

21. Edensor, "Ghosts of Industrial Ruins," 835.

22. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998), 179, 92.

23. Monica Degen and Kevin Hetherington, "Guest Editorial: Hauntings,"

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Space and Culture 11/12 (2001): 5. On new and modern ruins, see Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

24. Edensor, "Ghosts of Industrial Ruins," 836.

25. On matter with memory, see Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 78.

26. On places of memory, see Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995), 78–79; see also Till, *New Berlin*, 10–12.

27. Ruined objects, writes Kathleen Stewart, "stand not as a specifiable meaning but as a landmark or sign in which life trembling in a scene appears petrified, spellbound. Through them, a setting speaks to people, haunts the imagination, whispers an audible lamentation, trembles in expectation." Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 93. Similarly, Jean Baudrillard notes, "It is impossible to recapture the tremor of terror. . . . Today, it is the circular flows that burn, those of the head, those of the sensorial and beloved machines that we ourselves are. It is no longer the buildings that go up in flames and the cities that collapse; it is the Hertzian relays of our memories that crackle." Jean Baudrillard, "Anorexic Ruins," in *Looking Back on the End of the World*, trans. David Antal, ed. Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989), 35.

28. Jacques Derrida makes a similar observation when he describes the ruin as "memory open like an eye, or like the hole in a bone socket that lets you see without showing you anything *at all*." Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 68–69. Writing on the ruins of postwar Germany, Helmut Puff likewise notes, "Palpable absences conjure up notions of loss." Helmut Puff, "Ruins as Models: Displaying Destruction in Postwar Germany," in *Ruins of Modernity*, 263.

29. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, "Introduction," in *Ruins of Modernity*, 7.

30. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*, 96.

31. See Svetlana Boym, "Ruins of the Avant-Garde: From Tatlin's Tower to Paper Architecture," in *Ruins of Modernity*, 59; Svetlana Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 35; and Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 219.

32. Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics, and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 15, 24–35.

33. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 97.

34. On nostalgia for the Marcos years, see Benedicto, "Shared Spaces of Transnational Transit"; James Hamilton-Paterson, *America's Boy: The Marcoses and the Philippines* (London: Granta Books, 1998), 303. On restorative nostalgia, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41–56.

35. Ghosts do in fact feature heavily in Korean popular culture, particularly in Korean cinema. See Kim So-Young and Chris Berry, "Suri Suri Masuri: The Magic of the Korean Horror Film: A Conversation," *Postcolonial Studies* 3, no. 1 (2000): 53–60. Note, further, that the recent explosion in Korean migration and tourism to and investment in the Philippines remains largely unstudied. The few published works on the topic attribute the rise of a Korean presence in the Philippines to the low cost of education (particularly English-language training) and of setting up

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small businesses. See, for example, Jet Damazo, "Korea Invades the Philippines," *Asia Sentinel*, 11 July 2007, www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=575&itemd=34; Virginia A. Miralao and Lorna P. Makil, eds., *Exploring Transnational Communities in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Philippine Migration Research Network, 2007).

36. I would learn later that the Amazing Philippine Theater also operates a "trans" beauty pageant.

37. Part of the difficulty in writing about queer subjectivity in the Philippines (and in other Asian and non-"Western" contexts) is the need to translate nonnormative gender and sexual formations into globally recognizable terms. In the Philippines, the term *bakla* is often used to designate homosexuality, transvestism, transsexuality, or various conflations thereof. See Benedicto, "The Haunting of Gay Manila"; Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and J. Neil C. Garcia, *Philippine Gay Culture: Binabae to Bakla, Silahis to MSM* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009). English-language terms such as *gay* are often used to name "trans" persons. In an article on the Amazing Philippine Theater in the major newspaper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the performers are referred to as "gay impersonators." The article also uses male pronouns to refer to the performers who have adopted female names. Cathy C. Yamsuan, "Stars Take Stage amid Phantoms of Manila Film Center," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 30 October 2011.

38. This exchange has been reconstructed from memory, translated, and modified to protect anonymity and with narrative license. For an insightful description of the process of remembering and retelling out of the gaps in field notes, see Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*, 7–8.

39. Later I would learn that the show was, in fact, part of a package deal and that the company that owned the Amazing Philippines Theater also operated a travel agency in Seoul.

40. See Bob3, "Manila Film Center Ghosts," EhPinoy Discussion List, 29 October 2004, ehpinoy.3.forumer.com/a/manila-film-center-ghosts_post802.html (accessed 10 April 2012; link inactive), and Ruel S. de Vera, *The Spirit Quest Chronicles, Volume 1* (Quezon City: Anvil, 1997).

41. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*, 90.

42. For a recent example, see Ramón H. Rivera-Servera, *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 91–93.

43. On the task of inheritance, see Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 108–9.

44. In this way, the condition I am discussing might be described, in Lauren Berlant's terms, as a form of "cruel optimism" or a sustained attachment to fraying fantasies. See Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1–4.

45. Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011): 452.

46. Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 122–61.

47. Jose B. Capino, "Soothsayers, Politicians, Lesbian Scribes: The Philippine Movie Talk Show," in *Planet TV: A Global Television Reader*, ed. Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 272.

48. Rolando B. Tolentino, "Transvestites and Transgressions: *Panggagaya* in Philippine Gay Cinema," *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, nos. 3–4 (2000): 327.

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49. See Garcia, *Philippine Gay Culture*, esp. 114–16; see also Tadiar, *Things Fall Away*, 228–32.

50. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 48.

51. Ibid., 99–103.

52. On Manila as a "third world place in first world drag," see Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production*, 2. Imelda Marcos, "Architecture: The Social Art," in *The Compassionate Society and Other Selected Speeches of Imelda Romualdez Marcos*, 2nd ed., ed. Ileana Maramag (Manila: National Media Production Center, 1975), 31–32.

53. Quoted in Leonidas V. Benesa, "The *Kulay Anyo*: Art for the Public," *Archipelago*, February 1980, 18; Katherine Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 139.

54. On drag variations, see, for example, José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 99–100.

55. Here, the inadequacy of foreign terms for nonnormative genders and sexualities once again becomes readily apparent (see also n. 37). It would be difficult, for instance, to ascribe the radicality typically associated with the category *queer* to the performers of the *Amazing Show*, not only because of what I have described as the show's connection to dominant fantasies of global modernity but because of the fidelity of the performances to normative models of femininity and heterosexual romance.

56. See Ellison, *Imelda*; Pedrosa, *Imelda Marcos*; and Beatriz Romualdez Francia, *Imelda and the Clans: A Story of the Philippines* (Manila: Solar, 1988).

57. For an insightful reading of Imelda's "performance of self," see Christine Bacareza Balance, "*Dahil Sa Iyo*: The Performative Power of Imelda's Song," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20, no. 2 (2010): 119–40.

58. See Benedicto, "Haunting of Gay Manila."

59. It should be noted that these sites can only be loosely described as "queer," for while they remain spaces for those who practice nonnormative sexuality, they are fully invested in the regimes of hegemonic masculinity and homonormativity authorized by the market. See Benedicto, *Bright Lights, Gay Globality*.

60. Beatriz Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins: National Narratives and Architectural Forms," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 298.

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