

# Articulations of Capital in a Globalized Culture

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*This essay analyzes popular culture in the era of global monopoly capital. Through symbolic capitals, the violence of globalization is misrecognized as emergent global cultures in and through which popular culture functions as a field of struggle and as a way to attain cultural legitimacy. This tendency for empire to articulate and legitimize its stakes in popular culture through the use of various capitals is demonstrated in the **Global Pinay** beauty pageant segment featured in the now-defunct noontime television show **Magandang Tanghali Bayan** (ABS-CBN). However, the articulation is not directly experienced since it is mediated by the discourse of a globalized culture. This essay affirms the mediatedness of cultural products and hence their non-reducibility to their economic conditions of possibility through an exposition of the operations of various capitals in the **Global Pinay** pageant. The economic field is not reducible to the functions of a symbolic system by historically locating the discourse of globalized culture that frames the **Global Pinay** pageant.*

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I have often warned against the prophetic temptation and the pretension of social scientists to announce, so as to denounce them, present and future ills. But I find myself led by the logic of my work to exceed the limits I had set for myself in the name of a conception of objectivity that has gradually appeared to me as a form of censorship. So, today, in the face of the impending threats to culture that are overlooked by most, including writers, artists, and scientists themselves, even as they are the ones primarily concerned, I believe it is necessary to make known as widely as possible what seems to me to be the standpoint of the most advanced research on the effects that so-called globalization process may have on matters cultural. (Bourdieu 2003: 66)

**W**ith the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, the intellectual field witnessed a seminal work on culture and economy that can only be understood fully if one takes into account its conditions of possibility — i.e., the considerable changes in Scotland at the time.<sup>1</sup> In this seminal work, Smith celebrates the invisible hand as the supreme arbiter of competition that regulates production and which, in turn, creates the wealth of nations. Explicit in Smith's discourse is the

revolutionary defense of free trade against mercantilism, “which restricts man’s ‘natural freedom,’ the freedom to buy and sell, rent and hire, produce and consume” (Anikin 1979: 192).

Almost a century later, however, Karl Marx condemned free trade or what classical economists called “universal brotherhood” as the “freedom of capital to crush the worker” in the realm of social relations of capitalist production; and as a “cosmopolitan exploitation that could only be engendered in the brain of the bourgeoisie” (1955: 193).<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary times, Bourdieu, among others in the Marxist tradition, politicizes and demystifies the doxa of the invisible hand of the market as the “invisible hand of the powerful”.<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu’s discourse on capital, as David Swartz argues, is both based on and critically distanced from Marxism. But his critical distance from Marxism is less a total rejection of its fundamentals than an extension of Marx’s theory of capital and labor in a much broader range that includes the social, cultural, political, religious, familial etc. His extension of Marx’s theory of capital, while “not linked to a theory of exploitation in the sense of extracting surplus value of a dynamic of primitive accumulation” (1997:75) focuses on class based-variations of cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital (Swartz 1997: 85). This contribution allows for a critique of cultural products that participate in the reproduction of symbolic capital and symbolic violence in the era of globalization without necessarily reducing the cultural as the means of the bourgeoisie (or the owners of the culture industry) to legitimize capitalist accumulation. Instead, Bourdieu constitutes symbolic violence

as the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms. Symbolic systems exercise symbolic power “only through the complicity of those who do not want to know they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.” In using the term “symbolic violence,” Bourdieu stresses how the dominated accept their own condition. But symbolic power is a legitimating power that elicits the consent of both the dominant and the dominated. (Swartz 1997: 89)

In what follows, I am concerned with the globalizing directions in the field of popular culture. How does popular culture respond to the globalizing mechanisms of global capitalism? What are some of the

consequences for culture of the catch-phrase ‘world class’ deployed to consecrate popular symbolic goods? How does symbolic violence operate in the globalization of culture? As an exploratory attempt to answer these questions, I employ the concepts of symbolic capital, symbolic violence, popular culture, and globalization with which the cultural and economic contradictions of Empire may be articulated.

## Empire and the Popular

The relationship between empire and popular culture is argued here to be an articulation of hegemony or what is best understood as the organization of consent within a dominant structure. Popular culture is considered, in this context, as a field of popular-democratic appearances — a culture produced for and consumed by everyone. In any hegemonic formation, Gramsci asserts that “the terrains of the *people* and *culture* are of key strategic importance and are foregrounded” (Barett 1994: 242). It is precisely “in these circumstances that ‘political questions are disguised as cultural ones’” (Gramsci in Barett 1994: 243). Thus, an assertion of the political-economic dimension of the relationship between empire and the popular is in order.

The term empire is appropriated by contemporary left-wing theorists belonging to competing schools of radical thought. One of the more celebrated definition of which is Negri and Hardt’s *Empire* published in 2000. Empire is contraposed to imperialism in that it

establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow. (xii-xiii)

This characterizing of the global capitalist (dis)order derives its theory of social relations from the Foucauldian theory of power that tends to emphasize its diffused operations as it undermines an assessment of forms of resistance. While Foucault recognized that agents do not necessarily hold equal amounts of power owing to their relative positions in social space, his theory of power dilutes the force of habitus<sup>4</sup> on

agents as they carry out interested social action. Furthermore, to presuppose that power is “everywhere and nowhere” is to obfuscate “the structure of the social setting in which habitus operates,” which in turn is defined by the field (Swartz 1997: 117). In Bourdieu, the field is “a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Locating power in this manner concedes that a theory of power necessarily enjoins heuristic tools in and through which the consequences of its operations may be evaluated as whether practices of resistance pose considerable counter-hegemony or accommodate the status quo by simply stretching the limits of our manufactured consent for liberal democratic ruse. Thus, the marked potential of the Foucauldian theory of power has been abused to celebrate all sorts of social action that challenge governmentality as radical agency embodied in everyday tactics of resistance as in de Certeau or in the more fashionable spaces of contestation and negotiation in Stuart Hall and the adventures of liminality in Bhabha.

Stuart Hall’s view of popular culture or culture in general as a space of negotiation and contestation empowers each social encounter with a utopian space of possibles. It tends to assume a space where one is contesting and negotiating degree zero and while fully conscious of the stakes of each social encounter. While it is clearly a theory of empowerment, Hall does not provide a nuanced discussion of how spaces of negotiation and contestation within existing hegemonic systems depart from spaces of passivity wherein negotiations and contestations are reduced to mere logics of capital especially when dealing with pre-given cultural forms. De Certeau’s critique of totalizing discourses and his taste for the small-time tactical practice asserts that “in the agent’s preoccupation with everyday tasks, s/he in fact is intent on going beyond the present arrangement by transforming his/her daily practices into tactical maneuvers (Pilario 2005: 83). “This tendency is even more prominent in his view of ‘trickery, ruses and deception’ as a moral response to subvert the all-extensive control of any ‘surveillance’ society” (Pilario 2005: 83). Similarly, Bhabha negotiates the hierarchy in culture by introducing the

liminal space as crucial to the post-colonial identity. The liminal space marks the construction of cultural hybridity that resists the containment strategies of cultural diversity and pluralism while affirming cultural difference. While Bhabha asserts that liminality is the affirmation of ambivalence and not the simple celebration of multiculturalism, it is not quite clear how liminal spaces can challenge the strategies of neo-colonialism/U.S. imperialism. This impasse is a consequence of Bhabha's culturalist take on resistance which requires a reading of cultural artifacts with various levels of abstractions in order to realize their subversive character. What is common between Bhabha and de Certeau is the propensity towards foreclosure of any possibility of organized resistance in the realm of the political economic as their forms of subversion resides either within the practices of individuals or the confines of cultural texts.

It must be noted, though, that these thinkers are not the foremost abusers of the various "posts" in theory. The works of Nicole Constable on migrant women which make psychological dispositions pass for agency (as when domestic helpers in Hong Kong demand more catsup and napkins at McDonalds) or Filomeno Aguilar's romanticized picture of the OFWs as "sojourners," or Lisa Law's deployment of "third space" wherein prostituted women and GROs maneuver their way to power are just but a few minor tragedies of the currency of probing the transnational. This slight digression leads to Bourdieu's significant reproach against a method of inquiry that is supposed to

explain and understand the behaviour of individuals without relying on the reasons given by the individuals themselves, [but]... one ends up supplying nothing but a disparate enumeration of the reasons or rationalizations that any subject can invoke, by an effort of the imagination, in order to justify his activity or abstention. This 'vulgate,' a discourse half-way between everyday talk and scientific statement, fulfils its function perfectly: it can give the illusion of revealing truths by referring to commonplaces and expressing them in a scientific-sounding language. But insofar as it provides at least a description of the meanings and values which [agents] believe that they secrete in their activities, this psychology which, while promising an exploration of the depths, leads no further than the surface of things, is less unsettling than the psychology which, anxious to fulfil its brief, dives into the Freudian abysses of voyeurism, narcissism and exhibitionism. (1990:15)

Indeed, the fever that comes with the prefix post is vulnerable to subjectivist permutations and rationalist imputations.

In this light, an important stake in confronting the prevailing discourse on empire and its particular articulations in the field of popular culture is an assertion that to focus on the circulation of the multitude as it “reappropriates space and constitutes itself as an active subject” against empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 397) is to catapult to the logic of capital. I argue this for two reasons. First, a focus on the agentic potential of the multitude, one that presupposes endless paths to global citizenships and, therefore, access to cultural resources for a more democratized struggle for cultural recognition, is closer to a fantasy production based on the dreamworks of capital<sup>5</sup> than a thoughtful consideration of agency that is both tactical and strategic with due consideration for the operations of the habitus and the field. Second, the events that followed 9/11, especially the U.S. war on Iraq, its work of naming as “terrorist” certain states, political movements and individuals, the heightened U.S. military presence in its semi-colonies and the reign of the dollar as the universal currency against which the value of other currencies is measured are nothing short of an indication that the empire still has a territorial center, and thus U.S. imperialism’s role in global capitalism and direct involvement in complex political, cultural and economic matters in other countries may be reexamined so as to inform praxiologies of resistance.<sup>6</sup>

Another stake that is raised by the aforementioned problematization is a reiteration of Bourdieu’s position in theorizing the popular. The cultural turn in theory, which Jameson ascribes to the cultural logic of late capitalism that is postmodernism, has paved the way for seriously considering popular culture as a legitimate field of scholarship owing to postmodernism’s decentering project. But against what seems to have become an ‘inverted snobbery’ that is produced in certain naïve forms of utopianism and moralism and popular aestheticism apparent in some theories of popular culture, Bourdieu avers that “[t]o act as if one had only to reject in discourse the dichotomy of high culture and popular culture that exists in reality to make it vanish is to believe in magic. Irrespective of what I think of this dichotomy, it exists in reality in the form of hierarchies inscribed in the objectivity of social mechanisms (such as the sanctions of the academic market) as well as in the subjectivity of schemata of classifications, systems of preferences, and tastes, which everybody knows (in practice) to be themselves hierarchized” (1992: 84). Bourdieu counts this disposition as the most unexpected scholastic illusion

due to its omission of the conditions of possibility that cements existing hierarchies. In *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu elaborates on his discourse of reflexivity to counter forms of scholastic illusions. Any attempt to study popular culture should rid itself of the fallacy that erases the political and economic conditions (conditions of possibility) of popular culture, otherwise, “[j]ust as some celebrations of femininity simply reinforce male domination, so this ultimately very comfortable way of respecting the ‘people,’ which, under the guise of exalting the working class, helps to enclose it in what it is by converting provocation into a choice or an elective accomplishment, provides all profits of a show of subversive, paradoxical generosity, while leaving things as they are, with one side in possession of its truly cultivated culture (or language), which is capable of absorbing its own distinguished subversion, and the other with its culture or language devoid of any social value and subject to abrupt devaluations...which are fictitiously rehabilitated by a simple operation of false accounting [would frame such an analysis]” (1997: 76).

To avoid this, Bourdieu provides a cogent polemic against the prophets of the neoliberal gospel who profess “that in cultural matters as elsewhere, the logic of the market can bring nothing but boons” since it leads to an “explosion of media choice” (2003: 67-68). Against the neoliberal credo, which posits that “the law of profit would, as elsewhere, be democratic since it sanctions those products with greatest popular appeal,” Bourdieu avers that the “pursuit of audience ratings leads producers to look for omnibus products that can be consumed by *audiences of all backgrounds in all countries* because they are weakly differentiated and differentiating: Hollywood films, *telenovelas*, TV serials, soap operas, police series, commercial music, boulevard or Broadway theater, all-purpose magazines, and best-sellers produced directly for the world market” (Bourdieu 2000: 68). Clearly, this critique points to the orientation of cultural production towards profit and its subordination to the judgement of the owners of mass media productions. These conditions of possibility for popular culture, while constitutive of the legitimate mode of distribution and appropriation, do not entirely operate as such due to the force of economic capital. For it is precisely the transmutation of economic capital to a cultural resource<sup>7</sup> that shapes the exercise of power for which some form of justification is needed. This exercise of power is what creates misrecognition, which “denotes ‘denial’ of the economic and political interests present in a set of practices” (Swartz 1997: 89). To

call attention to this misrecognition or the symbolic violence that occurs as a result of which is arduous as Bourdieu warns. For this battle in the cultural field “assume[s] antidemocratic appearances” [since popular culture has], “in a sense,... the backing of the general public” (Bourdieu 2000: 70). He adds that the widespread preference for popular culture is due to the distribution of capital among agents that define their relationship to the field of culture. And since popular culture demands less cultural capital from its audience, it gains support and fandom from those who are located in a definite social space. Here, Bourdieu refers to a process of distinction that is based on class. But he veers away from the Marxist realist conception of class when he relates that such exposition on classes “gives you the impression that you know whether there are two classes or more than two, and leads you to think how many petty bourgeois there are...My work consists in saying that people are located in a social space, that they aren’t just anywhere, in other words interchangeable, as those people claim who deny the existence of ‘social classes’, and according to the position they occupy in this highly complex space, you can understand the logic of their practices and determine, *inter alia*, how they will classify themselves and others and, should the case arise, think of themselves as members of a class” (1990:50).<sup>8</sup> It may be argued then that the popularity of the popular does not obtain from an innate disposition of the disadvantaged classes. It is rather a disposition that is shaped by their exclusion from the ‘official culture’ to which the dominant classes are cultivated. Thus, Bourdieu’s critique of the free market stretches from the economic field to the cultural field and back to the latter’s conditions of possibility.

### The Symbolic Violence of Globality

Proceeding from these premises are preliminary analyses of the beauty pageant entitled *Global Pinay* showcased in a popular noontime television show *Magandang Tanghali Bayan (MTB)*. *MTB* is under the ABS-CBN network (channel 2), a large media conglomerate owned by the Lopezes. The Lopezes are known for their strong political and economic stakes as they also own Meralco and have supplied the ruling elite faction in government with a successful vice presidential candidate and endorsers for the recently concluded national elections. As a network, it has horizontalized production by venturing into businesses such as rest and recreation (shops, spas, restaurants), print media, and a talent center.



This network targets the low- middle- and high-brow audience by using differing formats for shows in the more popular channel 2 and the relatively discriminating channel 23. It is the only network in the Philippines that is plugged into the global network through the TFC channel. The targets for this channel are Filipino-born citizens of other states like the United States of America, Australia and Canada and Filipino migrant workers all over the world.

Given this target audience, the discourse of the free market is what shapes the formula of the types of production to be shown. First, the think-tanks of ABS-CBN must strike a balance between its sought-after popular appeal and its global fantasies. Such an equilibrium is achieved in the beauty pageant *Global Pinay*, which is not to say that the pageant itself is free from the contradictions that plague fantasy production. On the contrary, *Global Pinay* is a symptom of the most fundamental conflicts that configure globalized culture in the context of empire.

*Global Pinay* is packaged as an innovation in the typical beauty pageants held in noon time shows. Although pageants of this kind have less symbolic capital than those that happen once a year with contestants representing various regions of the country. Beauty contests like *Binibining Pilipinas*, *Supermodel*, *Miss World* and *Mutya ng Pilipinas* are organized by socialites in cooperation with fashion establishments and multi-national corporations. Its once-a-year presentation and considerable months of screening and training among the contestants add to the prestige that is commonsensically attributed to beauty contests. The rarity of these spectacles breeds anticipation, which transforms its practice of temporalization into an accumulation of symbolic capital. This kind of temporalization constructs a particular habitus that is rare, distinctive and desirable regardless of the actual habitus of the contestants. Extrapolating from Bourdieu's discourse on time, it may be gleaned that the rarity imputed to these beauty pageants is anchored on the work of time that constructs a sense of the forthcoming. Hence, the audience and the wanna-be's are left waiting until the actual pageant while bearing within themselves the *illusio*<sup>9</sup> of the game. For Bourdieu, "[w]aiting implies submission: the interested aiming at something greatly desired durably – that is to say, for the whole duration of expectancy – modifies the behaviour of the person who 'hangs,' as we say on the awaited decision." It follows that the art of 'taking one's time,' of 'letting time take its time,' as Cervantes puts it, of making people wait, of delaying without destroying hope, of adjourning without totally disappointing, which would

have the effect of killing the waiting itself, is an integral part of the exercise of power — especially in the case of powers which, like academic power, depend significantly on the belief of the “‘patient’ and which work on and through aspirations, on and through time, by controlling time and the rate of fulfillment of expectations...: an art of ‘turning down’ without ‘turning off,’ of keeping people ‘motivated’ without driving them to despair” (2000: 228). *Global Pinay* does not have the advantage of this kind of temporalization as it is produced for mass consumption on a weekly basis. Instead, it derives much of its symbolic capital in a kind of spatialization that plugs the local to the global network of “world class” citizens. And so to qualify for this pageant one must be: 1) half-Filipino and half-foreigner, and 2) telegenic. Consequently, the contestants of the *Global Pinay* pageant fit into the dominant construction of beauty: tall, long-haired, slim and with a flawless complexion. These attributes are the taken-for-granted constants that qualify oriental and western variants of beauty as worthy of a beauty title. While feminists never wavered in asserting that all talk of beauty is essentially sexist and classist, symbolic forms such as this prevail because they serve to legitimize existing power relations in society. But the *Global Pinay* pageant is a complex symbolic form since it precisely talks of beauty that is a product of penetration that is both sexual and economic. Thus it goes far beyond the discourse of beauty to deploy discourses of nationhood, citizenship and identity in a presumed global culture. The girls who join this noontime contest are deemed to be special relative to the other girls who join the pageant of its rival show or even those girls who joined MTB’s past beauty contests on account of their hybrid identity. It is often mentioned that while these ladies are half-foreigner they are “*Pinay na Pinay pa rin.*” Yet, the contest constructs hyphenated identities as more prestigious owing to the other half of the Filipino half. This was pointed out, though perhaps unwittingly, when host Mickey Ferriols, who is herself half-American, states that “In fairness, *talaga ang Pinay pag nabaluan ng ibang lahi kay gagandang lumalabas.*” To which Arnel Ignacio responds, “*Eh yung puro?*” Not to be outwitted, Ferriols replies “*Oo naman!*” and laughter follows.

This slippage betrays the excess that accompanies the globalization of culture. As many critics of globalization argue, there is no such thing as a global culture, only its globalization. *Global Pinay* fulfills the dreamwork of capital by producing fantasies of unfettered crossing: boundary crossing, cross-fertilization and cross-multiplication of capitals.

To interrogate the global is to identify its conditions of possibility for boundary-crossing. Contestants of the *Global Pinay* pageant are introduced with a statement on the nationality of their parents. A survey of the two episodes that presented candidates who vied for the weekly and the semifinals showed that most participants derive their foreign blood from their fathers. Furthermore, boundary crossing is the always already present assumption, if not the rule of the game. As a symbolic form, *Global Pinay* erases the violence of free trade that gives rise to the practice of boundary crossing. This is precisely an instance when Empire is able to impose its mechanisms through the misrecognition of symbolic forms. Boundary-crossing is packaged as a desirable condition while extolling the local element that is unmistakably “Pinay.” This blots out all the history that foregrounded the free market in Philippine economy. I am referring to the consequences of the US-Philippine relations that resulted in unjust laws and treaties such as the Tydings-McDuffie Act, the Bell-Trade Act, the Parity Amendment, the Military Bases Agreement, SEATO, the open door policy and their more contemporary versions in GATT-WTO, VFA and the requisites stated in our membership in the Allied forces.

When glamorized versions of boundary-crossing dominate the popular imagination, the grim consequences of diaspora to the Filipino workers are set aside as the exception rather than the rule. Boundary crossing in *Global Pinay* is never presented for the way it is in the lives of Filipino migrants. The economic necessity of the export of labor is elided and instead, a sexualized and romanticized version of this is presented as symbolic capital in the hybridized identities of *Global Pinay* contestants.

The romance of empire that is created by *Global Pinay* also submits to the Philippine-American romance, which Tadiar renders as the fantasy in which “economies and political relations of nations are libidinally configured, that is, they are grasped and effected in normative terms of sexuality. This global and regional fantasy, is not, however, metaphorical but real insofar as it grasps a system of political and economic practices already at work among these nations” (Tadiar 2004: 38). My reference to the Philippine-American romance does not suggest that all participants in the pageant are half-American. Rather, it is supposed to emphasize my working definition of empire already explained above. My stake in this clarification is to demonstrate that, in a sexualized economic practice, the fucked-up economy of the country — because of its fixed

fucking with US imperialism — is the condition of possibility for the Philippine export of warm bodies all over the world. In this context, *Global Pinay* as a symbolic form is transformed into a trope that legitimizes all sorts of cross-fertilization as a result of the symbolic labor of migration including prostitution, mail-to-order brides and other transnational unions, which may not necessarily be borne out of literal prostitution but are, nonetheless, an outcome of a submission to the sexual division of labor that eroticizes masculine domination. In this context, women become upwardly mobile by sleeping with power. However, this is not to say that they do it with utmost calculation. Rather, a desire for a transnational union is a compensatory mechanism transposed into the logic of a habitus located in a polarized society like the Philippines. Therefore, the symbolic capital that is possessed by *Global Pinay* obtains from the successful operation of other capitals such as the symbolic labor of a transnational union that creates a promise of monetary benefits and, therefore, a better life.

To illustrate further, I will discuss some excerpts from the question and answer portion during the semifinals of the search for *Global Pinay*. This section situates the *Global Pinay* pageant within the structure of objective relations in order to “escape from the subjectivist illusion, which reduces social space to the conjunctural space of interactions, that is a discontinuous succession of abstract situations” (Bourdieu 1984: 244). The question and answer portion for this episode differed from the weekly competitions and even the grand finals where the contestants were asked predictable and commonsensical questions such as who do you think should be eliminated in this contest and why?; if there is a part of your body that you want be changed, what would it be?; If there is something about your life that could be a possible source of malicious rumor, what is it?, etc. The questions for the semifinals were designed in such a way that each contestant was shown an image from the screen that contains a caption. They were given fifteen seconds to comment on the topic. Interestingly, most of the topics would fall under what might be conceived as “global issues”.

The hosts for this segment were actor and chairperson of the Video Regulatory Board Edu Manzano and another actor, Ai-Ai delas Alas. Not only did they facilitate this segment, they also commented on the answers and provided comic relief.

One of the issues raised was “English campaign *sa* schools *ipapatupad na*.” Miss Global Pinay Australia comments on this by saying

“Well, agree *ako doon kasi ito yung time para matuto tayong mag-English nang mabuti. Para ma-enhance natin ang English natin.* Because it is important to communicate with foreigners. *Oo, sinabi nga ni Rizal na ang hindi magmahal sa sariling wika ay higit pa sa mabaho at malansang isda...*” Her answer was cut short because of the time limit. Manzano pursued her point by saying that “*Maganda yung sinabi nga niya para makibagay tayo sa buong mundo, sa mga negosyo.*” Delas Alas also affirms the answer by stating that “*Sa mga turista natin para hindi mabirapan pagpumunta dito, di ba?*”

Not only does Miss Australia echo the dominant paradigm on the language perspective but by alluding to Rizal’s anticolonial position on the language question, she also attempts to untie the knot that binds language to a national identity that is independent of colonial influence. Miss Australia affirms the neo-liberal agenda that restructures policies on education in semi-colonial countries like the Philippines. Her discourse emphasizes the “importance” of mastering the English language in order to “communicate with foreigners”. It is taken for granted not only by Miss Australia but by the defenders of the English language policy the ‘foreigners’ that we so try hard to communicate with are the English speaking foreigners who hardly comprise a quarter of the world’s total population. It becomes clear that the English language is peddled as a symbolic good by the market. In this case, the market no longer refers to a metaphysical entity that regulates the circulation of capital. The market is in fact located in all the products of the capitalist enterprise. Each commodity is effectively a product of and an advertisement for the sway of capital. Miss Australia’s identification as *Global Pinay* makes her a symbolic good that embodies the cosmopolitanism associated with late capital. Her aborted justification for her answer was rendered by Manzano and Delas Alas when they cited what they perceive as a preferable conformism to the language of global trade. English, in this context, is not only one of the signifiers of global competitiveness, but also a tool for the production and reproduction of legitimate language in pedagogical institutions where images and ideologemes of powerful political and economic forces may be reckoned not only as cultural derivatives (Ching 2000: 239). More appropriately, they are to be viewed as linguistic exchanges that are in themselves symbolic exchanges which are relations of symbolic power “in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized” (Bourdieu 1991: 37). The image projected and commented on by Miss Australia i.e., “English campaign sa schools *ipapatupad na*” is not only an image or a policy waiting

to be implemented but a tool for action and power mobilized for the hegemony of global capital.

Another *Global Pinay* aspirant, Miss Japan, was presented this problematique: “*Mga doktor, nagnu-nurse para makapunta sa Amerika.*” The following intimates the exchange among Miss Japan, Manzano and Delas Alas.

Miss Japan : Well, nowadays, most of our doctors prefer to become a nurse (sic) just to go to the States. Most of our doctors do not qualify to serve as doctors because of American standards. If to become a nurse is the only way out as long as they have brighter future, why not? (sic)

Ai-Ai : Correct! Why not Chocnut?

Edu : Lisa, *ikaw ba naniniwala na bago ka siguro tumungo sa ibang bayan para mag-render ng medical service, dapat dito muna sa iyong sariling bansa?*

Lisa : I believe that but the problem is that the only way for doctors to stay here in the Philippines is a good compensation (sic). And if they are not getting paid money or the right amount, there is no option - just to go to the States. (sic)

Miss Japan invokes the pragmatic discourse on migration and the attendant brain-drain in the country. While she expresses a very real issue confronted by professionals — i.e., the lack of opportunity to be given just compensation for practicing one’s profession — she reinforces the imperialist idea and practice that Filipino doctors are justified in working as nurses in the U.S. and forego the higher status granted to doctors by a society whose standards of esteem are based on the capital invested on a particular profession, since they do not qualify as doctors by American standards. The racism that is galvanized by imperialism is taken matter-of-factly in order to rationalize the American Dream and the symbolic violence that goes with it.

Meanwhile, Manzano cuffs her with an idealism that is equally perpetrating symbolic violence. His idea of citizenship includes a preferential option to serve one’s own country before all others. It might be true that some doctors leave the country not out of necessity but a

desire to maintain a particular lifestyle. In this case, they might be accused of, as Manzano implies, a lack of social awareness and responsibility. This line of argument, however, treats agents who behave with cold calculation of the costs and benefits of their action. These migrant workers' habitus are shaped by the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism which in turn influence the social space that agents occupy. No empty nationalist rhetoric could suddenly eradicate the dream work of global capital that shapes subjective desires. Manzano's discourse is in fact the discourse of the dominant economic class whose position in the field of the economic as well as the political field allows them to reap profits without having to work abroad. Therefore, the attempt to pose migration as an issue fails by the production of binarisms: the affirmation of the American Dream on the one hand and the idealist discourse on migration that blames the victim on the other.

### The Logic of Dispositions

As a site of symbolic struggle, the *Global Pinay* pageant is able to construct what Aihwa Ong refers to as the "modern pan-Asian subject at home anywhere in the continent". The modern pan-Asian subject is an expressed dream of satellite television companies whose goal is "to decrease cultural misunderstanding". Ong observes that this is done by "resynthesizing cultural identities and recasting them as something new" (1999:167).<sup>10</sup> The *Global Pinay* as the modern pan-Asian subject is not, however, a product of a conscious calculation by ABS-CBN or the contestants themselves. Rather, their dispositions obey the logic of the convergences of histories — namely, the history of the field of popular culture where they are situated, the history of the social space as a whole and the history of the production of the dispositions of its occupants. The first refers to the current trend in popular culture that deploys the global discourse of modern pan-Asianism evident in popular telenovelas. The second concerns the geopolitics of nations that produces various cultural logics with globalization as the current master trope. The third refers to the positionality of the Philippines in the global space as the condition of possibility for the production of global identities such as the *Global Pinay*.

Given the convergences of histories, the *Global Pinay* pageant, its contestants and their views of "global questions" are not mere vessels for the expansionist project of global capitalism notwithstanding the

preceding discussion on the discourses deployed in the pageant based on the “global questions” and the expressed views and dispositions of the contestants and how these discourses often submit to the imperialist discourse of globalization when articulated in the cultural field. The practical logic that governs popular beauty contests such as the *Global Pinay* pageant owes its concurrence with the dominant discourse of imperialist globalization, not to the conditioning of the cultural by the economic but precisely to the process of autonomization of culture from the exigencies of the economic field.

It is through the process of autonomization that a particular field is able to assume the position of *disinterestedness*, a position that detaches itself from economic interest. This is the condition of possibility for the reproduction of symbolic capital which in turn produces misrecognition and hence, symbolic violence. By constantly reminding viewers that TV shows are produced for their entertainment — thereby reconstructing and/or reproducing particular tastes and judgments as to what constitutes entertainment — the autonomy of the cultural field is asserted from its economic condition of possibilities. Entertainment is the *illusio* or the “collective belief in the game and the sacred value of its stakes is simultaneously the precondition and the product of the very functioning of the game” (Bourdieu 1996: 230). The autonomization of the cultural field such as the field of entertainment allows it to construct its powers of consecration, institution and position-takings through the convergence of the specific history of the field of production and the history of the social space. The dispositions involved are a product of practical logics whose sense of direction is shaped by the game’s *illusio* in the sense that the players caught up in the game adjusts to the imminent future of the game, to what s/he foresees (Bourdieu 1984: 81). One of the significant stakes in the *Global Pinay* pageant is to provide entertainment attuned to the cosmopolitanism of global culture and the promise of global convergence. This *illusio* which may as well be the stake and the struggle within the game defines the game itself. The history of the social space shaped by capitalist dream work provides the *illusio* — or what Tadiar specifies as fantasy production in the context of the system of the “Free World” — that is globalization. This in turn functions as a condition of possibility for the reproduction of capital in the various fields of production. This is why the *illusio* of global entertainment which is translated into symbolic capital in the field of entertainment is a synthesis of the convergence of histories and not merely an outcome of the



determination of the economy “in the last instance.” However, the Althusserian concept of the *determination in the last instance* must be clarified against postmodern posturings that dismiss it as yet another form of economism. To appreciate the economic as the basis of other forms of capital (as in Althusser and Bourdieu) is to reject the idea, as Derrida did in his illumination of the Althusserian *last instance*, that “the economy is the last instance” and affirm instead that “every last instance is economic” (2002: 170). The former erases all instances of overdetermination while the latter posits the last instance of the economic as a boundary. The ‘last instance’ or the economic never lends itself to analysis in its pure state since it is “always contaminated by ...the *other levels and instances*: politics and ideology” (Sprinker of Derrida 2002:172).

In this sense, the symbolic capital of *Global Pinay* which lends itself to misrecognition through autonomization is a form of mediation that shapes the subjectivity of the contestants and the audience, a subjectivity that is plugged into the network of global capital. It is neither purely economic nor merely cultural but an ideological and political moment that constitutes and is constituted by the economic. It is a contamination that concretizes the economic dimension of the cultural that is plugged into our subjectivities.

### Against Culturalism

The popular practice that is *Global Pinay* is an exemplification of Bourdieu’s assertion of the non-reducibility of symbolic capital to economic capital. The symbolic violence created by the invisible hand of the free market or the economic field, may, in instances such as this, not be directly experienced since it is mediated by a globalized culture obtaining from the same economic conditions. At the same time, the economic cannot be reduced to a symbolic system of violence in the same way that globalization and its consequences are more than functions of a symbolic system. As Bourdieu himself affirms, “[globalization] could refer to the unification of the global economic field or to the expansion of that field to the entire world. In [a] second sense, globalization refers to an *economic policy* aimed at unifying the economic field by means of a whole set of juridical-political measures designed to tear down all the obstacles that are mostly linked to the nation-state. And this very precisely defines the neoliberal policy inseparable from the veritable economic propaganda that lends it part of its symbolic force by playing on the ambiguity of the notion” (2003: 84).

Bourdieu's intervention shows how symbolic violence imposed upon by the popular as in the case of *Global Pinay* is a result of the mediation of the symbolic system of various capitals at work. This means that symbolic violence does not rest solely on the logic imposed by capital on the cultural. Bourdieu's attempt to argue the autonomy of symbolic capital from economic capital is not to compartmentalize the two. This metaphysical position warrants fashionable forms of spiritualism in theory "which claims to demonstrate the necessity of supplying brand-new concepts to formulate a brand-new history" (Pinto 2000: 88). For if, indeed, one can separate culture from the conditions of its possibility, then it will be possible to transform culture independent of the latter. Bourdieu is far from recognizing such a miscalculation of the odds and an overestimation of the imagination. Instead, he offers a way for intellectuals to be reflexive of their craft. This reflexivity entails both epistemological vigilance and the consideration for the political and economic context of any study. To demystify the misrecognition of symbolic capital is, indeed, the task of the intellectual not by virtue of her *giftedness* but by her location in social space, which, in turn grants her the symbolic power of naming and interpretation. Reflexivity of this kind renders an apotheosis of popular culture as the culture of the masses not only unnecessary but also guilty of the scholastic gaze.

Instead, what is offered in this analysis is the examination of totality to avoid constructions of false totalities. In her study of *Jackie*, a women's magazine, Angela McRobbie asserts that by presenting itself as a magazine for girls, it addresses girls as a monolithic grouping, thereby producing totalizing images of ideal girlhood (Grossberg 1997: 131). In the same way, the *Global Pinay* pageant creates a false totality by representing hybridity and boundary-crossing as representations of the real transnational experience. It creates a false totality around a particular identity such as the daughters of transnational unions while eliding the violence of global capital and transnationalism. Indeed, the *Global Pinay* pageant necessitates a reflexive critique of the cultural that goes beyond culturalism.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A.V. Anikin provides a lucid and comprehensive discussion of the Wealth of Nations in *A Science in its Youth: Pre-Marxian Political Economy*. 1979. New York: International Publishers.

- <sup>2</sup> Marx's critique of free trade which appears in his book *The Poverty of Philosophy* was originally a public speech entitled "On the Question of Free Trade" delivered by Marx himself before the Democratic Association of Brussels, January 9, 1848.
- <sup>3</sup> This is the title of a speech Bourdieu delivered in June 2000 before the students of Humboldt Universitat in Berlin. This appears in his book *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*.
- <sup>4</sup> Bourdieu defines habitus as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles that generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an expressed mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu, 1980:53).
- <sup>5</sup> Neferti Tadiar refers to fantasy production as regimes of desiring practices and their hegemonic forms of expressions conditioned by the expansionism of capital. It "denotes the imaginary of a regime of accumulation and representation of universal value, under the sway of which capitalist nations organize themselves individually and collectively in the 'system' of the Free World (5-6)." Thus, the notion of fantasy production constitutes the operations of subjectivity as a product and a structure of "international politics and economics emerging precisely out of dominant cultures of imperialism (12)."
- <sup>6</sup> Benita Parry in the essay "Narrating Imperialism" implies a crucial distinction between imperialism and empire. Based on her essay, Empire may be understood as the noble project of capitalism while imperialism is the process and mechanism in and through which expansionist projects necessary towards the accomplishment of empire are put at stake.
- <sup>7</sup> In extending Marx's concept of capital to other forms of power (cultural, social, symbolic) Bourdieu retains its essential definition as a social relation. As a social relation of power, these species of capital clash as significant resources.
- <sup>8</sup> Bourdieu's critique of classical class analysis may be further explained by the orientation of his work relative to others in the Marxist tradition. It must be emphasized that he did not aim at a programmatic political sociology, which prioritizes 'what is to be done.' In other words, Bourdieu did not find it useful to statistically and categorically label groups as comprising a particular class by virtue of their relationship to the means of production as this would be the concern of a

programmatically sociology that aims at defining a political strategy that will give way to class alliances. Furthermore, Bourdieu would not have been against the class analysis presented by Amado Guerrero (*Philippine Society and Revolution*) for its very definite objective of justifying the people's protracted war against imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism. This is what comes closest to a programmatic analysis of classes. Bourdieu's discourse of capital and symbolic violence may be characterized as symptomatic. One might accuse him of the same intellectualism that Marx attributed to Feurbach ("Philosophers have only interpreted the world in many ways. The point, however, is to change it."). However, it must also be considered that the material conditions in France may not have compelled intellectuals like Bourdieu to embrace the process of transformation that is in the realm of emancipatory pursuits and political representation of 'the people.' This kind of intellectual commitment finds its urgency in semi-feudal and semi-colonial societies like the Philippines owing to the dire situation of scholarship as a result of financial constraints and a fascist culture obtaining from neoliberal policies in education.

<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu equates the term *illusio* with investment or libido. He cites Huzinga who in his book *Homo Ludens* "says that through a false etymology, one can make *illusio*, a Latin word derived from the root *ludus* (game), mean the fact of being in the game, of being invested in the game, of taking the game seriously. *Illusio* is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is "worth the candle," or more simply, that playing is worth the effort" (1998:76-77). Bourdieu also clarifies that if the habitus of the person does not possess the structure of the game, a given *illusio* may sound futile or even ridiculous. "If, on the other hand, your mind is structured according to the structures of the world in which you play, everything will seem obvious and the question of knowing the game is "worth the candle" will not be asked. In other words, social games are games that are forgotten *qua* games, and the *illusio* is the enchanted relation to a game that is the product of a relation of ontological complicity between mental structures and the objective structures of social space" (Bourdieu, 1998:77).

<sup>10</sup> This view is expressed by Star TV CEO Richard Li whose goal, as Aihwa Ong mentions, is "to decrease cultural misunderstanding among 2.8 billion people reached by his satellite-TV system." For an in-depth discussion of popular media and globalization, see Aihwa Ong's chapter

on “A Better Tomorrow?”: The Struggle for Global Visibility in Flexible Citizenship : *The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. 1999. Durnham: Duke University Press pp.158-181.

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