Das heißt, eine von den Spuren der Moderne und ihren Kunstauffassungen gänzlich freie Ästhetik ist allenfalls im Rückgriff auf vor- oder außermoderne Praktiken des Bildes aufzufinden, nicht aber in den multiplen Modernen einer *anders*, mithin jenseits jeder Zentrum/Peripherie-Topologie zu verhandelnden Globalität. Ähnliches gilt für das Verhältnis zwischen westlichen und nichtwestlichen Rationalitäten und Wissensformen. Wie soll eine Befreiung vom Joch der westlich-modernen Rationalität aussehen, eine Befreiung, für die in diskursiven Formen und Formaten gekämpft wird, die entscheidend von ebendieser Rationalität geprägt sind, auch wenn sich diese zugleich Manövern des Angriffs, der Einklammerung, der Suspendierung ausgesetzt sieht? Trifft der Befund zu, dass die Legitimität von Kunst und die von Wissen zunehmend als in einem Wechselverhältnis stehend verhandelt werden, dass sich also künstlerische und epistemologische – und hier eben vor allem: wissens*politische* – Fragen zunehmend verschränken, dann folgt daraus eine Verkomplizierung der Möglichkeiten, überhaupt von Kunst (und vom Standpunkt ‚der Kunst' aus) zu sprechen. Das Sprechen ist auch für diesen Text alles andere als unproblematisch. Darauf verweist schon der Umstand, dass ein Großteil der in ihm zitierten und diskutierten Texte von männlichen Autoren stammt. Selbst eine standortpolitische und damit eigentlich feministische Perspektive garantiert also nicht die erfolgreiche Abkoppelung von blinden Flecken und lenkenden Prädispositionen. Das betrifft auch die Schreibweise, die Rückversicherung über akademische Gepflogenheiten, die Routinen der Diskursprozessierung. Die daher notwendige Verkomplizierung allerdings ist kein zu lösendes, auf Finalität und Schließung hin zu steuerndes Problem, sondern eine Chance zur Proliferation, zur Verzweigung und zur Neuverknüpfung – auch und gerade für die Diskussion um situierte Wissen, epistemische Privilegien und Sprechpositionen im Kunstfeld.

Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho
The Angry Christ

The Angry Christ sits behind the altar of a modernist church founded, like the Philippine nation that is its setting, in the aftermath of war. The figure's arms reach straight outwards, shaping his body into a large, graphic sign – of unconditional love, or something else. Implanted in the very center of the scene is the Sacred Heart, wrapped in thorns, fringed in flames, and set atop Christ's red and blue robe, which appears less like clothing and more like a webbed expanse of vein, muscle, and sinew, not covering Christ's body but flaying it open, turning it inside out. This is supposed to be a depiction of the Last Judgement, but there is also something kinky happening here, some indulgent pleasure in the way iconography as codified communication can be

read, misread, or simply received. Scanning across the mural for meaning, our eyes linger over the wounds on Christ's palms and feet, the unmistakable markers of divine suffering. They are swollen, puckered, like anuses.

This text is an attempt to consolidate some of our recent research on and around this unusual church mural, created by the Filipino-American modernist painter Alfonso Ossorio in 1950. Commonly referred to as *The Angry Christ*, the mural was commissioned for a chapel built to service the workers of an industrial sugar refinery on the Philippine island of Negros. Both the refinery and the chapel are still in use today.

Negros is known for being the prime sugar-producing region of the country. Driving along the main highway that encircles the entire periphery of the island like a choker chain, one sees field after field of cane. These fields possess no lush beauty. They're like blown-up versions of suburban American grass lawns. Sugarcane can be planted on almost any soil, but now requires massive amounts of chemical fertilizer, since the land here no longer has enough nutrients left in it. Each season's crop seems to further leach the richness out of the earth, pushing incrementally towards a barren future. Sugar is an industry that tends towards entropy.

Beside the highway, six-wheeler trucks are being loaded with harvested cane. The harvesters are wrapped head to toe in garments to protect them from the razor-sharp cane leaves and burning sunlight. They hoist bundles of cane onto their shoulders then climb up to the cargo area by balancing on a thin wooden plank propped at an angle against the truck's body. The trucks are filled to capacity – sometimes beyond, in an attempt to squeeze more profit from the margins – and then they drive off towards one of the island's dozen or so sugar mills. They dominate the road like alien creatures. They lurch and swerve, spewing exhaust, dirt, and stray canes in their haste, creating a constant risk of harm to everyone else sharing the road: puttering tricycles piled with families, SUVs with tinted windows, air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned buses. These other vehicles are constantly trying to overtake the sugarcane trucks, often dangerously swerving around them into oncoming traffic. Sharp bends are labelled as "death curves." Accidents happen frequently. It is not so uncommon to see one of these trucks flipped onto its side on the highway, spilled cane looking like splattered guts and splintered bones.

Negros used to be covered in forest, almost all of which is now gone. Until the last few decades of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the island had been more or less overlooked by the colonial administration, which meant that it was "untapped" and "available." Settlers began arriving in the mid-1800s, including waves of mestizo merchants from the neighboring island of Panay who had been edged out of the textile trade of Iloilo City by the recent flooding of the local market with cheap British cotton. They came to Negros and began to assemble large tracts of land by clearing trees and displacing or exterminating pre-existing indigenous communities and subsistence farmers. Due largely to high demand in the newly industrialized countries of Great Britain and the United States, sugar quickly became the crop of choice, with British, American, Spanish, and other foreign firms stepping in to provide

financial credit and to take control of exports. As this frontier economy developed, more migrants came in search of work at the new plantation estates, or haciendas. Sugar output in Negros jumped from less than 200 metric tons in 1850 to over 66,000 metric tons in 1908, while the population grew from less than 30,000 to over 450,000 in that same period of time.[1]

Dispossession and extraction: as it turns out, these have remained timeless features of a once fertile landscape that now sits like a speck of outlying data in the neglected fringe zone of what is thought to constitute the global, contemporary economy – or contemporary culture. We shouldn't have to argue once again for the importance of attending to peripheralized modes of existence, but it is worth repeating that "left behind" spaces such as this bear the heaviest share of global capitalism's contradictions. These contradictions weigh down on bodies and minds.

Imagine a massive diabetic body at the family dinner table. A hacendero is speaking to us dejectedly about the declining profits of the local sugar industry when a question suddenly triggers a frothy outpouring of rage against the urban Manila business elite, *who rake in billions upon billions while refusing to regularize their workforce.* He is one of the most prominent sugar barons on the island, yet on this issue he seems to echo the party line of the country's left wing. *At least we take care of our workers here,* he claims. *They depend on us.* We have already spoken to some of these workers and know that most of them are barely subsisting, that they struggle to buy food, struggle to pay for their children's commute to school, or for their brother's funeral. The lucky ones receive a half-sack of rice every month to supplement their paltry income. The luckiest ones might have their cataract surgery paid for by the eminent grace of their employer, but it takes a level of desperation coupled with a deep sense of security in one's relative ranking on the worker food chain to even begin to find the courage to ask. You need to be one of his "favorites."

Feudalism is a set of bodily scripts. On our last visit to Negros, an activist and theater practitioner told us that one of the most frustrating and painful aspects of trying to organize resistance on the island is seeing a farm worker's body crumple upon entering the Master's house. *No matter how much you have educated them on their rights, how much you have tried to impress on them that they are part of a people's movement that is larger and stronger than they are as individuals, as soon as they enter the Master's house, it is like watching a candle being blown out in one tiny breath.*

How do you train a body to resonate with a sustained intensity?

1 See Kreuzer, Peter, *Domination in Negros Occidental: Variants on a Ruling Oligarchy*, Frankfurt 2011; Larkin, John, *Sugar and the Origin of Modern Philippine Society*, Berkeley 1993; Oabel, Patrick Vince, *Workers of the Mill: Local Labour Market Change and Restructuring of the Sugar Industry in Northern Negros Occidental, Philippines 1946–2008*, Vancouver 2011.

Our interest in the *Angry Christ* mural has to do with a certain resonant quality that we and other artists have sensed in it. A well-known painter based in Bacolod, the largest city of Negros, once described to us the formative impact of encountering *The Angry Christ* for the first time in his youth. He spoke of this experience almost as though he were speaking of some kind of primal scene, or some instantaneous moment of spiritual conversion, and he said that many artists in Negros had had similar experiences with the mural.

Another artist of a slightly older generation, a former left-wing militant who spent time in prison during the Marcos dictatorship, said that he also visited the mural in his early days, when he was a student in Bacolod, and that he was influenced by its bold use of colors. This artist eventually became well known for his paintings of sugarcane harvesters, in which one can somehow feel the imprint of *The Angry Christ*. It's as though the mural's graphic lines and saturated tones have been radically reprogrammed, deployed again decades later to contour the veined and muscled bodies of farming laborers, along with the stalks of cane that bind these bodies to the land of Negros. There is anger coursing through these paintings too.

Another artist told us that he visits the mural in times of stress, when he needs inspiration or spiritual solace, like when he was under great pressure to finish his work for the Venice Biennale.

Another artist, younger and less established, expressed a more personal relation to the mural. She grew up going to the "Angry Christ" church every Sunday, because her father was an engineer at the sugar mill and her family lived within the company compound. She finds the mural extremely calming.

We heard from a PR representative of the milling company that there has been an ongoing attempt to rebrand the mural. She informed us that *The Angry Christ* is not in fact angry. *If you look closely at Christ's face,* she said, *you will see that the expression rendered on it is one of quiet strength and sympathy.* She told us that the label of "Angry Christ," which was never the title given to the mural by its creator but has since become its popular name, is simply incorrect. *This is a peace-loving Christ.*

But we feel this anger can't be explained away so easily. In our reading of the mural, Christ does not reside in a Face but in a body, not in a Subject but in a materiality: the robe-become-flesh that is stretched out across the chapel's rear wall and seems to energize the entire composition. All of the mural's other iconographic elements spread outwards from this central, constantly transfiguring body, like ripples. They wrap around the concrete ceiling beams above the altar to occupy multiple spatial planes. Visual reverberations occur within and across these planes: skull echoes face, Mary and Joseph echo John and John, outstretched wings echo outstretched arms, trumpet echoes staff echoes snake. Repetitions of form are accompanied by shifts in valence, which gives the mural a permanently unsettled quality. On the beam that marks the threshold between sanctuary and nave, the All-Seeing Eye gazes out at us, entangling us in the mural's reverberations. In fact, these bodies

of ours have already been formally assimilated into the composition itself: on the inner side of one of the ceiling beams, which is only viewable when one stands at the pulpit facing outwards, a swarm of ghoulish, mask-like faces, presumably depicting the souls of the dead rising to face judgment, echoes the living presence of the congregation below.

"Anger" is perhaps shorthand for the vibratory intensity that the mural sets in motion, activating the distance between Christ's body and our own. "The conversion of surface distance into intensity," says philosopher Brian Massumi, "is also the conversion of the materiality of the body into an *event*."[2] Massumi's own shorthand for this is "affect," a highly unstable term meant to denote a fundamental instability inherent to the body – that is, its immanent potential to be "otherwise than it is."[3] This is always a felt potential, a sensed indeterminacy that orients the body towards change rather than entropy, and one that, according to Massumi, can be conceptualized more broadly to refer to a virtual aspect inherent to all levels of reality, with the differentiation between these levels being only a question of degree. Within this charged material continuum, the thing that separates a personal emotion from the disruption of a political order is not a boundary but a "dynamic threshold."[4]

Across the threshold, the personal and the political resonate with each other in their shared affectivity, but Massumi warns against taking the fact of this resonance as an excuse for self-satisfied complacency. "Affect is proto-political," he says. "Its politics must be brought out."[5]

2 Massumi, Brian, *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, NC 2002, p. 14.

3 Massumi 2002, p. 5.

With regards to *The Angry Christ*, the project of bringing its politics out is far from straightforward, particularly because the artist who painted the mural was very much entrenched in the ruling class. Alfonso Ossorio was born to a wealthy Spanish-Chinese-Filipino clan in 1916 in the city of Manila, but he would leave the Philippines as a young child, eventually becoming a naturalized citizen in the US. Beginning in the 40s, he became involved in the budding Abstract Expressionist scene in New York, exhibiting with – and collecting from – the gallerist Betty Parsons, who would also represent Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Clyfford Still. In relation to this muscular avant-garde painting scene, Ossorio must have been a particularly queer figure. Besides being exorbitantly rich, ethnically hybrid, and ambiguously religious, he was also, in fact, homosexual (or bisexual). After going through a failed marriage, he would meet the male ballet dancer Ted Dragon in the summer of 1947, and they would remain together until the end of Ossorio's life.[6]

When Ossorio returned to his birth country for the first time since childhood at the end of 1949 to paint his mural, it must have been an emotionally dense event. The commission came from the Victorias Milling Company, one of the largest sugar refining operations in the Philippines, and was essentially a nepotistic affair: Victorias Milling was administered at the time by the artist's brother, Federico Ossorio, and had been founded in 1919 by the artist's father, Miguel Ossorio. The familial net seems to have weighed heavily on Alfonso. On the first page of the diary that he kept during his ten months in the Philippines, he wrote in poetic verse, like an angsty adolescent, of a "childhood / as lonely as his was ... that had not know[n] / the touch of a happy family life ... of being / an Eurasian, deracinated / never at home in any / conventional category ... of being among / the insulted and injured." He also wrote of being "hs or bs"[7] – the abbreviations clearly indicating a lingering unease with his deviant sexual desires.

These desires were more boldly articulated in a vast series of AbEx-inflected works on paper using ink, watercolor, and wax, which Ossorio manically produced alongside his *Angry Christ*. Now known as the Victorias Drawings, a few of these works in fact functioned as studies or sketches for the mural and signal its emergence from an explicitly transgressive impulse. In one preparatory sketch, referred to as *Study for Victorias Mural*, a phallic cross is positioned precisely over Christ's groin, while an overturned skull is placed just below, resembling a large, dangling scrotum. In another drawing, entitled

4 Massumi 2002, pp. 34–39.

5 Massumi, Brian, *Politics of Affect*, Cambridge, UK 2015, p. ix.

6 See Friedman, B. H., *Alfonso Ossorio*, New York, no year [1973?]; Kosinski, Dorothy and Ottmann, Klaus, *Angels, Demons, and Savages: Pollock, Ossorio, Dubuffet*, New Haven 2013.

7 O'Connor, Francis V., "Alfonso Ossorio's Expresionist Paintings on Paper," in *Alfonso Ossorio: The Child Returns: 1950-Philippines, Expressionist Paintings on Paper*, exh. cat. (Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York), New York 1998, p. 5.

Mother Church, the outstretched figure of Christ is depicted with two enormous breasts spurting out milk. "That of course," noted Ossorio, "is an image that would have been completely unacceptable in a public church in the Philippines."[8]

The French artist Jean Dubuffet, a close friend of Ossorio's, wrote of these wildly gestural drawings as "the decoration of Ossorio's personal and private church."[9] As such, they embody a raw perversity and expressivity that clearly needed to be reformatted for the purposes of the mural commission. This reformatting was not solely a matter of religious propriety but also of physical capability, since the mural's execution was to be largely outsourced to nonartist hands: "I had assistants who were completely untrained and who were given to the art project sort of laughingly thinking that it was sort of a cushy job," Ossorio attested. "Well, they worked harder than most of the people in the factory."[10] As the son of the owner, Ossorio probably had no idea how hard people in the sugar factory worked, though his assistants must have had more of a clue, given that they were surely sourced from the local pool of mill employees and their families. The particular graphic qualities of the mural – its solid, traceable lines and flat blocks of color – could therefore be directly tied to the bodily capacities of the laborers who co-produced it; these same laborers would also constitute its audience. In a very fundamental way, the mural might therefore be conceptualized as a kind of fraught interface between an individual queer artist-subjectivity and a faithful congregation of sugar workers. We could alternatively think of it, with Massumi, as a "dynamic threshold."

8 Alfonso Ossorio, interviewed by Judith Wolfe, in *Alfonso Ossorio: 1940–1980*, exh. cat. (Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton), East Hampton 1980, p. 16.

After finishing the mural, Ossorio would return to the US for a couple of weeks before promptly flying to Paris, where he would live for two years. In the summer of 1952, he would move to a large estate in East Hampton, where he would live with his partner until his death in 1990. He would never again return to the Philippines.

What would become of the mill community that Ossorio left behind? Taking a visit to the Victorias Milling compound today is like entering a palimpsest, congealing the stretch of time from the optimistic beginnings of industrialized sugar manufacturing in the American colonial era to the recent decades of retrenchments and sinking profit margins in the contemporary era of global neoliberalism. Within this hundred-year timespan there was also war, independence, reconstruction, dictatorship, and crisis. The buildings today bear the signs of a crumbling utopia – clean, functional design under a patina of decay – suffused by some abstract collective memory of what is called "the golden age," when modernity still signified prosperity and promise. This atmospheric nostalgia is intensified by a dense, pungent aroma that clings to the air everywhere and makes you think constantly of steaming molasses, even as you are sitting for lunch at the company golf club. The smell radiates outwards from the beating heart of the community: the sugar mill itself, a giant machine with the aura of a living relic.

9 Dubuffet, Jean, "The Initiatory Paintings of Alfonso Ossorio," trans. Richard Howard, in *Angels, Demons, and Savages: Pollock, Ossorio, Dubuffet*, New Haven 2013, p. 121.

10 Alfonso Ossorio, interviewed by Forrest Selvig, New York, NY, November 19, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/ossori68.htm (last access: November 16, 2018).

Just down the road from the mill is the "Angry Christ" church. For a visitor, it can be a startling experience to spend an extended amount of time gazing at the mural, and then to step outside and almost immediately confront a view of the mill's steampunk chimney stacks exhaling more molasses vapors into the sky. We imagine that the transition from chapel to mill must be more mundane for someone who works there, part of an integrated system of living. Mass services at the chapel are held daily – 7:30 a.m. on Sundays, 5:45 a.m. on working days – as well as during special occasions, including the usual Catholic holidays, but also the company anniversary, Labor Day, the annual general assembly of workers, and the beginning of the new crop year.[11]
Clearly, there has been a relatively transparent company attempt to assimilate spiritual life into the smooth functioning of the industrial complex, but the mural seems to us like a glitch in this program: its swirling flames feel too volatile, as though, given the right conditions, they might encourage any disgruntled souls among the congregation to *burn it all down*. This volatility carries a distinctly libidinal charge. The already mentioned anus-like wounds and flesh-like robe of Christ are the most glaring indications of this, but these overt visual puns speak to a more general sensibility that suffuses the mural's overall treatment of form on a cellular level, with the proliferation of ambiguous shapes and lines simultaneously evoking, in the words of art critic Eric Torres, "flames, tears, waters, ovaries, sperms, lashes, mouths."[12] Clearly, we are not the only ones to have sensed the persistence of Ossorio's queerness – no longer chained to a private subjectivity but staged as a public provocation, a flamboyant incitement to transgress.

11 Oabel 2011, p. 171.
12 Torres, Eric, *St. Joseph the Worker Chapel Victorias*, Victorias 1967, p. 4.

It is difficult to know whether the artist would have approved of such a reading, but certainly his brother, Federico Ossorio, who commissioned both the chapel and the mural as part of a larger postwar reconstruction effort, was explicit about his intention to instrumentalize religion as a means of maintaining order. The Czech modernist architect whom he hired to design the chapel structure, Antonin Raymond, would later write of the project's ideological purpose: "It was the idea of young Frederic Ossorio that one way to prevent the spread of communism on the island of Negros ... would be to imbue the people with an ardent religious spirit by reviving their interest in Catholicism. I was only too glad to work on that problem."[13]

Appealing to the spirit in order to discipline the body might seem like a clever strategy, but it comes with the risk of triggering an unpredictable affective surge that could short-circuit the entire machine. There have been concrete examples of this. Historian Reynaldo Ileto has argued that the ritual dramatization of the life of Christ, the *pasyon*, unintentionally gave shape and force to the revolutionary uprisings of the Filipino peasant masses during the Spanish colonial era. Like many of the Catholic rituals brought to these shores by the colonizers, the reading, singing, and theatrical staging of this sacred script during Holy Week and other important events was meant as a way to domesticate the *indios* by instilling in them a fear of God and an image of heaven, distracting them from their material conditions. But according to Ileto, "the most dramatic and memorable parts of the pasyon are those whose meanings overflow into the sociopolitical situation of the audience."[14] Through embodied performance, the story of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection was able to be transfigured into an aspirational narrative of liberation from colonial rule. This, says Ileto, prepared the Filipino body for outright insurrection.

Around a century later, religious and revolutionary passion would once again converge in the popular struggle against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. The Marcos years of the 60s, 70s, and 80s were traumatic for the entire nation, but especially so for Negros, where the effects of flagrant corruption, plunder, and mismanagement were exacerbated by the expiration of a long-standing sugar quota agreement with the US in 1974 and subsequent crashes in world sugar prices. The brunt of these upheavals was, of course, borne by the poor, as the panicked sugar elite dealt with the blows by slashing jobs, wages, and food rations, leading to widespread hunger on the island. Given these conditions, it is no surprise that social unrest would intensify.[15]

13 Raymond, Antonin, *Antonin Raymond: An Autobiography*, Rutland/Tokyo 1973, p. 256.

14 Ileto, Reynaldo Clemena, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*, Quezon City 1979, p. 18.

15 See Kreuzer 2011; Oabel 2011.

It is well known that the Marcos regime was eventually toppled in 1986 by a large-scale peaceful protest that gathered around the EDSA Shrine in Metro Manila, but it should be remembered that the years leading up to this protest were marked by violent conflict. Outside of the urban centers, the revolutionary Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, established in 1968 and 1969, respectively, had been gaining traction throughout the countryside, where their Maoist ideology found resonance with lived experience. In Negros, they battled openly against the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as well as the private armed forces of the hacendero class. Intertwined with this conflict were radical and progressive factions of the local Catholic Church, who were drawing inspiration from Latin American liberation theology and finding ways of practicing, within their own context, its central principle of "the preferential option for the poor." In 1971, a group of activist priests in Negros established the National Federation of Sugar Workers to organize the labor force of the island's plantations and mills. Throughout the 70s and 80s, they were able to mobilize protest activities with various levels of success, but much of the significant work was being done through what were called "conscientization" seminars led by priests, nuns, and Church layworkers, which borrowed heavily from the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire to try to dislodge the internalized scripts of feudalism among the systematically oppressed. Meanwhile, there were other priests and nuns who found these efforts insufficient given the overwhelming extremity of the situation. A few of them would decide to take up arms and join the ranks of the New People's Army.[16]

One artist we spoke to, an ex-seminarian who had gotten involved in the underground movement in Negros during the tail end of the Marcos dictatorship, described to us his feeling of uncertainty when the regime finally crumbled. He told us that while the protestors in the streets of Manila were victoriously celebrating the breaking news of Marcos' sudden departure to Hawaii, the mood in the countryside was more ambivalent. *We felt like we were on the verge of achieving a true revolution; when Marcos fled, there was a fear that it might be stolen from us.* This concern would turn out to be well justified. No longer able to harness broad anti-Marcos sentiment to their advantage, the Communist Party and the New People's Army would lose support and numbers over the following years. While they continue to wage one of the longest-running armed revolutionary struggles in the world today, their activity has been relatively contained since those volatile decades.

How do you train a body to resonate with a sustained intensity?

Not so far from the Victorias Milling compound, in the neighboring city of Silay, another industrial sugar mill was less successful in weathering the demands of late capitalism, and was eventually forced to shut down around two

16 See McCoy, Alfred W., *Priests on Trial*, Ringwood, Victoria 1984.

decades ago. The company's entire property was foreclosed and later sold to a mining corporation. In 2014, the new owners were issued a notice indicating that this 160-hectare plot of land was to be redistributed to landless peasants, as stipulated by the government's agrarian reform initiative – but since then, the process has been completely stalled. Over the past several months, this former mill site has been the setting for another transgressive glitch in the domineering program of sugar, this time sown into the earth itself.

We visited the site earlier this year in order to connect with a small farming community that has occupied a few hectares of the property and has been cultivating food crops there since mid-2018. They grow bananas, sweet potatoes, yams, pigeon peas, and other foods, which they sell to vendors at the local market. This activity is not only an experiment in cooperative farming, but also an explicit gesture of political protest: the community in fact constitutes an association, organized with the help of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, whose members have been trying to apply to become legal beneficiaries of the still unaccomplished land redistribution; the act of occupying and farming that land is an attempt to exert pressure. In the Philippines, such an action is known as *bungkalan*. Essentially referring to the broader practice of tilling otherwise idle land, *bungkalan* has a long history in Negros, where for decades farmers have been using it as a way to grow food to eat during the off-season, known as *tiempo muerto*, when paid work on the sugar plantations dries up, leaving many without a source of income. It began as a means of survival. More recently, *bungkalan* has been recoded as a political call for genuine agrarian reform and has grown into a national movement.[17]

In 1988, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program was enacted under the Cory Aquino administration, supposedly to strike at the root of long-entrenched feudal relations by breaking up large landholdings and redistributing them to the millions of landless farmers in the country. But its promise has been largely impeded by built-in legal loopholes, feeble implementation, and the continued harassment and targeted killing of peasant activists by both private and state forces. The *bungkalan* movement grew as a response to these injustices, asserting a model of collective, organic farming geared towards food sovereignty and land reform. As protest and as cultivation, it is a movement that harbors both outrage and care.

On our overnight visit to the *bungkalan* site in Silay, we woke early in the morning to help the association members harvest crops until the midday heat made it unbearable. Our bodies were not as accustomed to this work as theirs were. Still, there was something enlivening about digging together into the ground, chasing threadlike rhizomes with hands and blades and occasionally hitting against a warm, round sweet potato. It is a significant act of defiance to cultivate root vegetables in the middle of sugar land. The

17 Mascasero, Ryan, "A Closer Look at 'Bungkalan,' the Supposedly Sinister Plot," in *Philstar.com*, October 29, 2018, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/10/29/1864216/closer-look-bungkalan-supposedly-sinister-plot (last access: August 7, 2019).

community recounted to us an incident last year when a large team of security men stormed through the farm site, hacking away at their crops. A shotgun was fired, though no one was injured. The association members seemed relatively unfazed, resolute. This was impressive, given that just a few months prior, on October 20, 2018, a *bungkalan* site in the nearby city of Sagay had been violently ambushed by several gunmen. Nine farmers were massacred, including three women and two minors.[18]

The way we understand it, *bungkalan* is an experimental attempt to use food cultivation as a way to reprogram the land and to retrain bodies and minds. There is a poetic intelligence in this that somehow brings us back to Ossorio's *Angry Christ* and what we see as its inherent potential to generate new lines of flight in the present. The further we have embedded ourselves in this research, the more we have felt that *The Angry Christ* is demanding something from us, demanding that we actively partake in its anger. In our efforts to try to understand this affective pull, it has become apparent that it is irreducible to any singular directive: the mural stimulates, while resisting dogmatism. It is a strange internal tension that we think speaks directly to the question of desires and how to rearrange them. What we sense in the mural, in its iconographic and formal delirium, is the creation of a space of frictional coexistence, one which conjures that infantile state of polymorphous perversity prior to the inscriptions of heteronormativity, but also an indigenous state of lush biodiversity prior to the hegemony of the monocrop. To look at the mural in this way is to read into it a demand to reassert and reactivate these queer states of being in both our bodies and our lands.

Images by Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho

18 Gomez, Carla P., Andrade, Jeannette I., and Ramos, Marlon, "9 Sugarcane Workers Gunned Down in Negros Occidental," in *Inquirer.net*, October 21, 2018, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1045245/9-sugarcane-workers-gunned-down-inside-hacienda (last access: August 7, 2019).