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Children of Empire:  
Postcolonial Agency, Sexuality, and Filipino/American Contact Zones

By

Gladys-Pamela Miranda Nubla

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Colleen Lye, Co-Chair  
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Fall 2014



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by

Gladys-Pamela Miranda Nubla

## ABSTRACT

Children of Empire: Postcolonial Agency, Sexuality, and Filipino/American Contact Zones

by

Gladys-Pamela Miranda Nubla

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Colleen Lye (Co-Chair), Professor Catherine Ceniza Choy (Co-Chair)

Although colonial discourse about Filipinas/os is marked by images of the childish and childlike native and of the hypersexual native, there has been no sustained study of the *simultaneity* of infantilization and sexualization in the process of racializing and minoritizing Filipinas/os. My dissertation, "Children of Empire: Postcolonial Agency, Sexuality, and Filipino/American Contact Zones," traces the historical development of these two figures—the Filipina/o-as-child and the hypersexual native—in American colonial texts and images, and argues that the collusion of these figures has significant implications for the agency of the postcolonial Filipina/o subject as seen in cultural productions and social justice movements.

The first two chapters of the dissertation focus on how Filipina/os were portrayed as a people in a state of dependency and in need of tutelage in colonial-era materials that circulated widely, such as travelogues, political cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, and photographs produced by American colonials from the late 1880s through the first half of the twentieth century. I argue that the Filipina/o-as-child and the hypersexual native were two important modalities through which Filipina/os were racialized. I detail the links between the racialization of Filipinos and the respective racializations of African Americans and Native Americans in order to illuminate the contours of a larger pattern of domination. Significant themes that collect around the image of the "Other" child are education, child labor, sexual precocity, and nationalist competence and agency.

The last two chapters focus on the postcolonial responses to the legacy of infantilization and sexualization. I argue that portrayals of child sexual agency and child sexual victimization in contemporary Filipina/o and Filipina/o American novels, memoir, and film bespeak certain critiques of the powerful legacy of this colonial figuration of the hypersexual, childlike native. In particular, the tropes of childhood innocence and child's play are used to explore the relationship between the post/colonial subject and social justice movements that organize around child welfare, the abolition of sex-trafficking, and reparations for past sexual enslavement. Ultimately, through an intensive, systematic examination of figurations of the child in the Philippine colonial and postcolonial context, my dissertation project contributes to a larger interrogation of minority subject-formation and reconceptualizes how we think about the boundaries of agency and

personhood. By studying childhood at the intersection of sexuality, racial theories, and colonial contact zones, my project offers a specific historical understanding of the cultural construction of personhood still prevalent in our contemporary globalized cultures.

To those children who have faced, are facing, and will face violence  
and abuse in any of their forms

To the survivors  
and to the dead

To my family,  
especially my son and my late father

I think about you everyday

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Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat.



## INTRODUCTION

### Children of Empire

Colonial discourse about Filipinos is marked by competing and coexisting images of the childish and childlike native and of the amorally hypersexual native. That Filipinos, as the native "other," have historically been considered "children" in colonial discourse is not a new observation (Healy; Rafael); nor have scholars failed to note the sexualization of native Filipino bodies, specifically female bodies, in turn-of-the-twentieth-century travel guides produced by American colonials (Balce). However, there has been no study of the simultaneity of the sexualization and infantilization of Filipinos. This dissertation argues for the significance of the collusion of these two types of figurations in Filipino nationalist and postcolonial literary and social justice movements. My project asks: What are the larger implications of this sexualized infantilization in relation to the postcolonial condition of the Filipino subject and the contradictions and difficulties thereof? To what extent has the sexualized infantilization of colonized Filipino bodies been *constitutive* of Filipino postcolonial agency?<sup>1</sup>

In contemporary Filipino American novels, there has been an increasing focus on tropes of both sexually agentic and sexually victimized children and adolescents in pedophilic<sup>2</sup> situations. Most recently, Han Ong's novel *The Disinherited* (2004) features a child sex worker in the Philippines whom the narrator, a displaced Filipino American touring his homeland, struggles to "save" from the clutches of the global sex tourism industry. R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995) and Bino Realuyo's *Umbrella Country* (1999) feature pre-teens coming to terms with their queer sexualities and engaging in sexual relations, both consensual and coercive, with adults. One of the main characters in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990) has been a sex worker in the Philippine sex tourism industry since he was a child; and in Hagedorn's 2003 novel, *Dream Jungle*, an impoverished girl flees the sexual attentions of her pedophilic employer and consequently becomes a prostitute. A recent, internationally-acclaimed Philippine film directed by Auraeus Solito, *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* [*The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*] (2005), seriously explores the possibilities of a potentially pedophilic friendship between a preteen boy and a young police officer whose integrity and righteous naïveté are tested both by the corruption endemic to his profession and by his attraction to the young Maxi.

Why use children in these novels and film? What are the contexts of these narratives? As someone who has studied Philippine and Filipino American history for many years, I instinctively turn to the colonial past, but an embattled globalized present is significant, too,

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms "the child," "child figure," "childhood," and "Filipino-as-child" in the same way that Jo-Ann Wallace does, borrowing from feminist theory's distinction between the discursive objects of study and "real historical beings":

I distinguish between "the child" or "childhood" and *children* much as feminism has taught us to distinguish between "woman" or "femininity" as discursive constructs, and *women* as what Teresa de Lauretis has called "real historical beings who cannot as yet be defined outside of those discursive formations." ("De-Scribing" 173)

<sup>2</sup> Another note on terms: in the dissertation, I use "pedophilia" differently from "cross-generational desire" (or "cross-generational sex"), even though they both refer to sex or desire between adult and child. For situations in which the adult is the desiring subject, I use the term "pedophilia." For situations in which the child is the desiring subject, I use "cross-generational" as the adjective.

particularly in relation to the sex industry and sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines. My dissertation project is an attempt to parse the relationship between this past and present through an examination of historical constructions of the Filipino-as-child, to explore how Filipina/o and Filipino American artists have responded to the combination of infantilization and sexualization of Filipino bodies throughout the history of Philippine-Spanish and Philippine-American (neo/post)colonial relations,<sup>3</sup> and to assess the extent and form of the connection between these artists' cultural productions and contemporary social justice movements for child welfare, the abolition of sex-trafficking, and reparations for past sexual enslavement.

While my readings of the various Filipino American literary texts in the dissertation highlight the use of the child character and/or perspective to critique institutionalized norms like poverty and the prevalence of the sex tourism industry in underdeveloped countries like the Philippines, my project is not that invested in explicating the technical aspects of narrative strategy in my primary texts, nor is my ultimate aim the codification of a particular subgenre of literary writing, for example, Asian American writing about pedophilia. Rather, my objective is to explore my primary texts' engagement with history and, more properly, historiography, specifically with regard to Philippine colonial and neocolonial relations with various imperial powers and to the contemporary phenomena surrounding feminized and objectified Filipino/a bodies: the mail-order bride industry, pornography, sex work in the Philippines, and sexualized migrant labor in the diaspora. If one considers the Filipino American novelists and their cultural productions as a formation of postcolonial literary agency, what is their precise relationship to the social justice movements that organize around children's welfare, the abolition of sex-trafficking, and reparations for past sexual enslavement?

I see my project as aligned with scholarship that foregrounds the transnational dynamics of Asian American cultural, social, and intellectual productions, particularly those works produced in the last decade.<sup>4</sup> These works have helped shape and inform my scholarly interests not only in their methodological attention to transnational perspectives of Asian American formations, but also in their critical-theoretical interrogation of the processes and technologies of minoritization and racialized, gendered, and class exploitation in the context of American empire both within and outside the U.S. state. Through an intensive, systematic examination of figurations of the child in the Philippine (neo/post)colonial context, my dissertation contributes to this larger interrogation of minority subject-formation and reconceptualizes how we think about the boundaries of agency and personhood.

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<sup>3</sup> I understand the dynamic between the neocolonial and postcolonial as per Kuan-Hsing Chen and other scholars of Asia who argue that the "post" in postcolonialism is premature or at least misleading, and that the colonial relationship between various Asian countries and their former colonizers is not really over (172–86). In the post-independence Philippines, neocolonialism makes more sense than postcolonialism in that the former encompasses the cultural, economic, and political imperialism in the Philippine-American relationship that has the Philippines in a stranglehold, especially as it relates to the military and economic situation of the global "War on Terror," the current neo-fascist culture of extrajudicial killings, tourist culture, and the phenomenal outmigration of Filipinos as global migrant laborers, etc. At the same time, however, I also use the term "postcolonial" because I am consciously referring to postcolonial theory/studies as a field, and to a state of immigrant Filipino or Filipino American exile; see Oscar V. Campomanes, "Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile" and "New Formations of Asian American Studies and the Question of U. S. Imperialism."

<sup>4</sup> See Victor Bascara, Oscar V. Campomanes (especially "New Formations"), Catherine Ceniza Choy, David Eng, Augusto Fauni Espiritu, Allan Isaac, Laura Hyun Yi Kang, Susan Koshy, Rachel C. Lee, Lisa Lowe, Colleen Lye, Martin F. Manalansan, and David Palumbo-Liu.

With an interdisciplinary focus on race, gender, sexuality, and class, this dissertation draws from theoretical developments in several fields including colonial and postcolonial studies, particularly in relation to American imperialism, and the field of child studies within American studies. Many of the scholarly works that inform my project already lie at the intersection of the abovementioned fields of study. Within the field of colonial and postcolonial studies of Asia, there have been studies of the child most notably in the context of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia (Stoler) and, more briefly, in the context of British colonialism in India and elsewhere (Wallace). In the context of American studies, according to Anna Mae Duane, while there have been studies of the child as "national metaphor" for the early republic and beyond, much of this scholarship has "overlook[ed] the ways in which the rhetoric of the child shapes the experiences and identities of those [...] who were cast as the nation's children," namely Native Americans, black slaves, and women (11). Like Duane's study of representations of childhood in early America, my dissertation is interested in "the ways in which figural connections to childhood affect both actual children and various populations categorized as children" (11). In the context of American colonial and postcolonial studies, there has not been a cultural history of the child specifically in Philippine-American colonial and neo/postcolonial relations. My dissertation is an opening contribution to such a project, with a focus on the construction of sexual agency, civility, and personhood in Filipino and Filipino American cultures, as well as on how infantilization is foundational to the processes of "othering" and minoritization in imperial cultures—as foundational as the roles of racial and class differentiation, gendering, and sexual abnormalization.

Moreover, I pay serious attention to comparative racialization and sexualization in the context of American imperialism, particularly in relation to education and intellectual development in the African American and Native American cases. For Jo-Ann Wallace, following Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish*, the school serves as "a primary site of the kind of 'technology of power' that calls 'the child' into being":

Just as "the criminal" is produced by the prison and "the madman" is produced by the insane asylum, so "the child" is produced by the school. This is true, of course, not only for children but for the production of colonized others as child-subjects through their schooling in the oppressor's culture. ("Technologies" 291)

This focus on the school and education in the service of "civilizing" the colonized other is critical to the history of African American, Native American, and Philippine colonial relations with the United States.

According to Claudia Castañeda's reading of the "often marginal appearances" of the child in scientific discourse, such discourse was marked by distinctly evolutionary or developmental progress narratives, with the purpose of understanding "how figurations of the child are used to establish hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality as 'facts' of the natural human body" (9). Particularly in ethnographic studies where African American children appear, the black child is similar to the "Caucasian" child until puberty, whereupon the sexual development of the black adolescent overtakes his or her intellectual development. Meanwhile, the white child exhibits "normative" development into adulthood, with the proper balance between intellectual and sexual development (36). In terms of my dissertation, while it may be possible to see this trope of stunted growth in puberty in representations of Filipinos, there is also a different trajectory of educating (or "raising") the little brown Filipino brother to become self-

governing under American tutelage, a trajectory that is more similar to the Native American case.

Here, David Wallace Adams argues that one important component of the ideological ethos behind the establishment of Indian boarding schools was the notion of the cultural inferiority of Indians and the necessity and inevitability of civilizing them:

The word was civilization. European and American societies were civilized; Indians, on the other hand, were savages. The idea functioned at several levels, or rather, served several purposes. On one level it operated as assumption; philanthropists simply assumed that because Indian ways differed from white ways, they must be less civilized. On another level, it served as a legitimizing rationale for the hegemonic relationship that had come to characterize Indian-white relations. In this connection, it served as a compelling justification for dispossessing Indians of their land. Finally, it was prescriptive. It told philanthropists what Indians must become [i.e. civilized...and] to what end they should be educated. (12–13)

In the famous words of Richard Henry Pratt, an army officer who established the first off-reservation Indian boarding school, the only way that the Indian would survive the confrontation with American "civilization" was to "[k]ill the Indian in him and save the man" (52).

While the trope of the Filipino-as-child has been mentioned in studies of American empire in the Philippines (see Hoganson, Vergara, and Wexler), no scholar has yet undertaken an intensive study on the history of such a representation in the American colonial period, nor followed the theoretical implications of such a representation further than its role in the rhetorical figuration of American racism against Filipinos and in a Filipino nationalist ethos in the early twentieth century. Moreover, if the discourse of manhood in debates about U.S. expansion at the turn of the twentieth century was in contradistinction not only to womanhood, but also necessarily to childhood (see especially Hoganson and Kaplan), what are the specific dynamics of this triangulated relationship, particularly with respect to sexuality?

In his study of American colonial representations of native Filipinos, Vicente Rafael (1995) argues that there was a simultaneous infantilization and feminization of Filipino bodies during this period. In doing so, he verges on the triangulation most relevant to this project, namely, that of childhood, womanhood, and manhood in the colonial setting. According to Rafael, white American women writing about their time in the Philippines desexualized Filipino men, feminizing and infantilizing them in turn. He posits the "domestic, which is to say heterosexual, matrix" as the final limit of "gender and racial categories of colonial discourse" – an imposed limit that needs to be interrogated. Rafael shies away from the queer implications of the double bind faced by the adult Filipino men in his reading. In other words, "the only subject position left for Filipino men" is *not* simply that of a child, but also that of a queer nationalist subject as well as that of a specifically queer child.

In her study of American colonial travel guides on the Philippines, Nerissa Balce argues that "the naked images of brown women—in this case Filipinas and Pacific Islander women—are representations of American imperial power and visual icons of 'sexualized savages'" (91). She maintains that this colonial representation of the hypersexual savage "continues to haunt the term *Filipina* in the early twenty-first century" (104), particularly through the phenomena of the mail-order bride industry, pornography specializing in Filipina bodies, the feminization of migrant labor, and sex work around (former) American military bases in the Philippines. In other words,

the contemporary constructions of Filipina women as sexual bodies and as laboring bodies have their origin in (American) imperial discourse including "technologies of vision" such as photography and writing (105). However, despite noting that children are among the 500,000 who labor as sex workers in the Philippines, Balce makes no argument about the possible origins of the construction of Filipino children as themselves sexual and laboring bodies. My dissertation intervenes in this critical absence surrounding the difficult question of Filipino children's sexuality and the relationship between the colonial past and the neo/postcolonial present vis-à-vis the role of children in transnational capital through the sex tourism industry.

With respect to child sexuality and the sexuality of the colonized-other-as-child, Patty O'Brien's readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial travelogues and ethnologies in the Pacific show that the stereotype of the hypersexual native did indeed focus on young girls. Going back to Aristotle's ideas, Enlightenment thinkers revived the notion that warm climates advanced the sexual maturity of females (not males), applying the maxim mainly to native girls of Asia, Africa, and the Americas; generally, girls from colonized regions, including the islands in the Pacific. This supposed biological imperative made native girls sexually "ripe" before their counterparts in Europe, even as it arrested their intellectual capacities. Girls as young as eight and nine were thought to be subject to this maxim (54–55).

Theoretical discourse of the sexual child is probably most notable in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and particularly helpful here is the convergence of the child and the "savage" in Freud's work. For example, drawing on anthropological examples of the incest taboo in *Totem and Taboo*, he judges the energetic enforcement of the incest taboo in various "savage" societies as a consequence of primitive peoples' susceptibility to incestuous behavior. For Freud, this sheds light on the importance of the Oedipus complex, in which love objects have an incestuous nature. In other words, the *infantile* nature of these savages and their horror of incest illuminate the psychology of *children* in the modern, civilized societies in which Freud lives. As David Eng compellingly argues, Freud "hypersexualizes the primitive, racial body. What emerges most clearly from this linking of the sexually voracious primitive with the failure of the incest taboo, then, is the inseparability of racial from sexual identity" (8).<sup>5</sup>

Ann Laura Stoler cites the central place of discourse on children's sexuality in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, specifically the "pedagogization of children's sex" in which children's sexuality was increasingly policed by "parents, families, educators, and eventually psychologists" (qtd. in Stoler, *Race* 137, 139). Yet she takes Foucault's treatment of the discourse on "children's sexual precocities" further by turning her attention to the colonial discourses of children's sexuality, arguing that such discourses were critical to "race-making and nation-making" (*Race* 137). For discourses of European and "Other" sexualities were produced as much in the social laboratories of European colonies as they were in the European metropolis. As in Freudian theory, white children's sexuality was also deemed similar to the sexuality of the adult "savage" native and therefore "must be protected against exposure to the dangerous sexuality of the racial and class Other" (represented by the colonized subject and the domestic servant, respectively):

This discursive connection between the "savage child" and the "child as savage" is not one that Foucault makes, but it will be crucial to us. Both representations were constructions of a civilizing, custodial mission and a theory of degeneracy

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<sup>5</sup> Sexualization can also be a form of racialization. See Sau-ling Wong's "Ethnicizing Gender."

whose bourgeois prescriptions would turn on the contrast and equation between the two. (*Race* 141)

Moreover, the mixed unions of colonial soldiers and native women in Indonesia provoked intense debates and moral crises about the proper national Dutch subject (*Carnal Knowledge* 79–111); and white and mixed children raised in the colonies became the subject of panics about the "pollution," racial (read: non-Dutch) taint, or "cultural contagion" passed onto them by their native mothers and nannies (*Carnal Knowledge* 114–39).

The issue that comes up when thinking about children and sexuality is that of consent. Writing on the age of consent and pedophilia as circumscribed by American law, Gillian Harkins argues that legal constructions of consent are problematic. In terms of the law, "the child" is constructed as the outside boundary of legal (adult) consensuality since children are by legal definition unable to give legal consent. They function as "the negative form of political rights" (251) and so "provide the ground of sexual normativity [for adults]"

precisely because "age of consent" marks the limit to the visibility of state constructivism on sex. Thus "children" are excluded from definitional articulations of sexual relations precisely through the language of consent, that which naturalizes their orientation toward governance and the normalization of their "nature." (213)

This problematic legal (state) definition of sexual normativity that Harkins describes underpins the theory that all adult-child sexual relations inherently perpetrate violence upon the child. At the same time, Harkins's critique of sexual normativity under the law is in tension with child "survivors'" reconstructions of their experiences with adult-child sexual relations, who view these relations retrospectively, albeit often as adults, as painful and harmful (see Alcoff).

Given this social construction of the child and, indeed, the limited or denied agency of children, I am interested in the conditions that make agency possible: How can agency come from a place of victimhood, of objectification, of the very definitional outside of agency? What is the meaning of child sexual agency? When thinking about postcolonial agency in the case of Filipinos who have been infantilized and sexualized without their consent, to what extent is agency possible and what type of agency is possible? Does "writing back" in novels, memoirs, exposés, and other cultural productions that expose and critique historical and contemporary conditions of exploitation constitute 'sufficient' agency?

The dissertation has a two-part structure, divided between colonial discourses and postcolonial responses. Part I, "Colonial States of Dependency," focuses on the colonial representations of Filipinas/os as children in a state of dependency and in need of tutelage. I detail the links between the racialization of Filipinas/os and the respective racializations of African Americans and Native Americans in order to illuminate the contours of a larger pattern of domination. I also trace the ways in which Filipinas/os were sexualized through the stereotype of the primitive or savage. Significant themes that collect around the image of the "Other" child are education, child labor, sexual precocity, and nationalist competence and agency.

Chapter One, "Historical Tropes of the Filipino-as-Child: Savagery, Sexuality, and Mestizaje," compiles and codifies the different types of infantilization and sexualization at work in the colonial Philippines and argues that the collusion of infantilization with hypersexualization of Filipinas/os casts an unintended pedophilic shadow on colonial discourse that remains unresolved. Through a survey of various colonial-era materials that circulated widely such as travelogues, political cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, and photographs produced by

American colonials from the late 1880s through the first half of the twentieth century, I argue that the Filipina/o-as-child and the hypersexual native were two important modalities through which Filipina/os were racialized. I consider the case of an American-established charity in the colonial Philippines that took in and educated orphans of mixed race—most often of native mothers and American fathers—who became a concern for American social welfare advocates during the American colonial period. The significance of the mixed-race or mestizo child figure in colonial discourse is that they represent the promise of a future Philippines ruled by offspring whose American or Caucasian blood supposedly lends them "imagination and initiative wholly lacking in the native" ("Asks Fund to Help Mestizo Children" 1925) as well as ensures that they will lead the Philippines with American interests in mind. Moreover, the mixed race child as the product of an interracial sexual union is often considered a result of the hypersexuality of the native woman and her easy accessibility to colonial men. What is striking about some of the descriptions of the mestizo children is the urgent concern that attends the sexual vulnerability of the abandoned children, particularly the girls. While this can provoke protective feelings towards the child, the notion that her mother was excessively sexual to begin with haunts the child's representation.

Part II, "The Child Talks Back," shifts focus from American colonial discourse to describe the postcolonial responses to the legacy of infantilization and hypersexualization collectively described by the chapters in Part I. I argue that this collusion of infantilization and hypersexualization has resulted in a postcolonial preoccupation with sexualized child figures in Philippine and diasporic twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature and film, with an increasing focus on tropes of both sexually agentive and sexually victimized children and adolescents in pedophilic situations. I suggest that the authors I examine here are using the trope of pedophilia to make a point about Philippine colonialism and neocolonialism, thereby speaking to yet not fully taking up more popular forms of pedophilic discourse in the United States (such as Catholic priests and child abuse or the statistical prevalence of child abusers). Rather, the nexus of issues that the texts at hand deploy in their narratives illuminates the peculiar relationship between the Philippines and the West, including, prominently, Australia as well as Japan. The fact that there is a plethora of sex tours for sale in Third World/less-developed countries but not in the United States or Britain or Australia or Japan (whence the sex tourists usually hail) is telling. Less-developed countries (LDCs) are often pushed to welcome the tourist industry by institutions like the World Bank and IMF, which are controlled by the G8, the former colonizers. Formerly-colonized countries are most often Third World or LDCs. Child sex tourism would seem to be the logical conclusion to the infantilization and sexualization of colonized people, particularly colonized Filipinos.

Chapter Three, "Innocence Lost: Agency, Consent, and Filipina/o Postcoloniality," compares/contrasts a memoir by "comfort woman" Maria Rosa Henson, titled *Comfort Woman: A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military*, and Han Ong's novel *The Disinherited*. These narratives not only critique the colonial legacies of economic impoverishment and racial hierarchization in the Philippines, but also suggest the role of colonial discourses, labor practices, and globalization in the contemporary (and historical) sexualization of Filipino children. In the context of the increasing prevalence of child sex tourism in the Philippines and how-to manuals on finding submissive and sexually-amenable young Filipina women produced by white American expatriates, the diasporic Filipina/o texts deploy the trope of children's "natural" sexual innocence. In Henson's 1999 memoir, this trope of sexual

innocence is integral to a critique of the history of the imperial Japanese military's coercion of females as young as 13 and 14 to serve as sexual slaves in "comfort women" stations throughout Asia during World War II. The trope of child sexual innocence thus turns on issues of consent and agency, which I further explore in a reading of Ong's novel about a 1.5-generation Filipino American's interaction with a male child sex worker who falls in love with him. I argue that the child sex worker's demand for love within the context of the sex tourism industry can be seen as a form of postcolonial agency. Thinking about children in relation to adult sexuality is uncomfortable precisely because it extricates the idea of children from their definition as pre-adults or non-adults.

Finally, Chapter Four, "The Play of Imperial Power: Beauty Pageants and Cross-Generational Desire," is a study of beauty pageants and the significance of child's play in the Filipino context. Aureus Solito's film, *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*, and Bino A. Realuyo's novel, *The Umbrella Country*, feature strikingly similar scenes of neighborhood beauty contests in which the queer child characters are clearly the most savvy and deserving contestants. I argue that the role of beauty pageants as child's play for youth living with poverty and heteropatriarchal violence serves to critique the powerful legacy of a colonial history that structures the contemporary neocolonial predicaments—unequal relations between the First World and less-developed countries—of Filipino "postcolonial" subjects. I also focus on the cross-generational desires of queer male child protagonists in both works. It is specifically through the performance and play of marginal(ized) sexual identity and desire that alternative sociopolitical possibilities are imagined and potentially enabled in these texts.

In this dissertation, I wanted to explore my primary texts' engagement with the Philippines' past and present relations with various imperial powers and to the contemporary phenomena surrounding feminized and objectified Filipina/o bodies: the mail-order bride industry, pornography, sex work in the Philippines, and sexualized migrant labor in the diaspora. Ultimately, through a systematic examination of figurations of the child in the Philippine colonial and postcolonial context, my project also hopes to contribute to a larger interrogation of minority subject-formation and to reconceptualize how we think about the boundaries of agency and personhood. I hope that studying childhood at the intersection of gender and sexuality, racial theories, and colonial contact zones<sup>6</sup> will offer a specific historical understanding of the cultural construction of personhood still prevalent in our contemporary globalized cultures, as seen, for example, in the discourse of human rights, which has had to explicitly articulate the rights of women and children, but not the rights of men.

One of the difficulties of working on this project was the necessity to consider children as not-quite persons, thinking of the way their lives are structured outside the ability to consent. But what is also a goal of this project is to argue that the colonial legacy of the ways in which we think of children, and how we use children as a metaphor for whole groups of people that include adults, needs to be interrogated and should lead us to imagine a society that sees children as full human beings in their own right, not as not-yet-adults. While the project asks a series of questions about the construction of the Filipino child and the Filipino-as-child, the project aims at a larger theoretical understanding of personhood. In some ways, this cultural history of the

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, I get the term "contact zones" from Mary Louise Pratt, who defines it as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4).



child in Philippine colonial and neocolonial relations with Spain, the United States, and Japan could serve as a test case for the claim that constructions of the child mark the borders of personhood.

**PART I: Colonial States of Dependency**

## CHAPTER ONE

### Historical Tropes of the Filipino-as-Child: Savagery, Sexuality, and Mestizaje

I had gone through such a series of rapid changes, and, during a comparatively short period of time, had seen so many unusual sights, that I believe my senses were partly dulled or partly paralyzed. The women sat weaving, throwing the shuttle back and forth through the warp; and, though their skirts were pulled up to their knees, exposing their brown nether limbs, finished off with brown-toed feet, it never once occurred to me that there was anything out of the way, or that modesty was being outraged. Although the weavers stopped occasionally to rest and to take a fresh bunch of betel-nut and lime, yanking up, at the same time, the single skirt just a little higher, it never once entered my head to think that these brown women were overstepping any rule of deportment. They were doing all right, of course; for they were brown children of the tropics. They were not overstepping any rules, and they would not have known modesty had they come face to face with her beneath a glaring noonday sun; so they could not very well do anything out of the way. Only the wonder is that I took it all so as a matter of course.

—Ralph Kent Buckland, *In the Land of the Filipino* (1912)<sup>7</sup>

American schoolteacher Ralph Kent Buckland arrived in the Philippines in 1903, sailing on a vessel that stopped in China and Japan before heading into Manila Bay.<sup>8</sup> He spent the better part of a decade in the Philippines. After returning to the United States, he published *In the Land of the Filipino*, the 1912 memoir about his experiences there. The epigraph above is his description of one of his first sights after arriving in the Visayas where he was to have his assignment teaching native students and training some of the more promising ones for eventual teaching positions.

The passage is striking for its series of contradictions and reversals that reveal the conflicted ways in which he encountered Filipinas upon his arrival. First, he starts out with a caveat: his senses were "partly paralyzed" due to the long travel through unfamiliar terrain, with unfamiliar faces surrounding him. Then he describes, in almost loving detail, the unconscious sexuality of the Filipina weavers—hiking up their skirts and exposing their legs and feet—thus evincing a sexual fascination with the women. Yet he generously (in his own mind, perhaps) refuses to judge the women's behavior as immodest, given that they are mere "children." At this point, we realize that his caveat also includes the paralysis of his judgment, and this leads to an instance of confusion: does he mean that he was wrong to not judge them negatively for their

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<sup>7</sup> Pp. 78–79.

<sup>8</sup> Though not part of the first batch of American schoolteachers sent to the Philippines to teach in the public school system established by the American colonial government in the Islands, Buckland would still be called a Thomasite, a label derived from the ship, *USS Thomas*, that transported the first large wave of about five hundred thirty American schoolteachers to the Philippines in 1901.

behavior? Or perhaps he was wrong to be sexually attracted to those who he sees are ultimately children?<sup>9</sup>

Let's further unpack the assumptions embedded in Buckland's observations. When he calls these women children, he implicitly calls himself an adult. The racialized and gendered aspect of this distinction is indicated by his attention to their skin color and the way he suggests that the climate of their homeland determines their character and intelligence (rather than simply their behavior): "They were doing all right, of course; for they were brown children of the tropics. They were not overstepping any rules, and they would not have known modesty had they come face to face with her beneath a glaring noonday sun; so they could not very well do anything out of the way." Being brown, they are not white like him; being of the tropics, their remoteness from the United States is obvious; being both, they cannot possibly be in full possession of mature intelligence as are true adults, to be held to the rules of proper (Western) womanhood, specifically "modesty."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the last sentence of the epigraph—"Only the wonder is that I took it all so as a matter of course"—evinces an ambiguity about how he should have perceived the women at all. He spends time detailing why they were not overstepping their bounds ("they were children"), almost as if to convince us that his failure to rebuke them for their dishabille and behavior was not a lapse of judgment on his part after all. I would say that the oscillation of judgment in this passage is inevitable when a group of people are infantilized and hypersexualized at the same time.

A paragraph later, when he describes a group of actual children who also wear fewer clothes than American propriety demands, there are no oscillations, no caveats. He notes the transgression, then dismisses it using similar language: "There were a number of children running up and down in the street, playing a game. They were very small and they had on little pineapple-cloth shirts; but there was not a stitch of underclothing on any of them. The gauzy shirt was all that protected each little child of nature from the sunshine and the rain" (79). As in the passage about the weavers, he focuses on the clothing and highlights the bared skin as a transgression: "*but* there was not a stitch of underclothing on any of them" (my emphasis). However, he does not belabor the point. In this case, the phrase "little child of nature" functions more as a straightforward observation, that they indeed are children but have the capacity to learn and change as they grow. Or perhaps the phrase functions as a kind of physical shrug, as if to say, he cannot expect too much in this (backward) country.

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, he pushes away this fascination by saying that they are mere "children" who do not know the meaning of "modesty" and propriety ("rules" of comportment and civility), suggesting that because of this they *cannot* be objects of sexual fascination for him. Yet we know, from nineteenth-century portrayals of (white) middle-class femininity in the United States, that the female child in particular proved to be an erotic representation of innocent womanhood with an alluring sexual potential (Mitchell 79).

<sup>10</sup> Buckland's suggestion that the warm climate was a cause of the women's immodest sexuality has a long history in imperial travel to various locations in the Pacific, and goes as far back as Aristotle (see Patty O'Brien, discussed later in this chapter). His descriptions also evoke the history of the hypersexualization of female weavers, seamstresses, and domestic workers. The case of Hannah Cullwick, for instance, is brilliantly parsed by Anne McClintock, who argues that the laboring woman is the double of motherhood in the domestic space of middle-class households—the nursemaid or nanny who, unlike the mother, was paid for her domestic labor. Since the fetish (whether or not it has anything to do with the phallus) is the embodiment of unresolvable conflicts and contradictions, McClintock makes an argument about how certain forms of fetishism during the Victorian era were an attempt to make sense of the contradiction of female labor in imperial capitalism. Class, gender, and race are all imbricated in the cultural iterations that try to make sense of colonial relations (see Chapters 2 and 3 of *Imperial Leather*).

The depiction of Filipinos as children is not unique to Buckland and is in fact quite pervasive in American colonial discourse, comprising travel literature, photography, official government-sponsored reports, ethnological studies, as well as political cartoons produced by American colonials from the late 1880s through the first half of the twentieth century. For the most part, the primary motivation in colonial discourse is clear: Filipinas/os were portrayed as a childlike people in a state of dependency and in need of tutelage in order to justify colonial conquest. Even when "the child" or "childhood" is not mentioned in various colonial discourses about the Philippines, the image of the child is implicit in any consideration of the capacity of Filipinos for self-government, of their education and "progress," and of America's paternal "duty" towards the Philippines.

However, concurrent with the representation of Filipinas/os as children was the representation of them as hypersexual natives, particularly the women and girls. While this second stereotype also worked to justify the need for American colonialism to manage the development of the Philippines, it introduced the dangerous sexuality of the child that problematized the claims of virtuous intent of America's stated mission of "benevolent assimilation." Looking at three cultural sites—the representations of savagery from an evolutionary perspective, the colonial hypersexualization of the native (especially native women), and the anxieties surrounding mestizaje or race-mixing—the rest of this chapter is interested in how the trope of the Filipino-as-child circulated in colonial Philippines and turn-of-the-twentieth-century America and how the child figure then came to be sexualized.

I argue that the Filipino-as-child and the hypersexual native were two important modalities through which Filipinas/os were racialized during American colonial conquest of the Philippines. The sexually-precocious native child was an image common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnography. From the Victorian Era to the Progressive Era, there seems to have been a shift in thinking about the child so that a sexualized child, particularly the girl child, is a scandal for middle-class American values. By tracing the figure of the Filipino-as-child and representations of Filipino children in colonial-era materials, we find that the hypersexualization of native colonized bodies intersects with their infantilization, producing a particular kind of trope of the Filipino-as-child that proved vexing for the U.S. imperialist mission. The mestiza child is an important figure in this sense, for at the same time that her beauty provided sexual titillation for American colonizers, she was also used to portray the dangers of sexual predation upon the precious American blood in the Philippines, thus providing the perfect icon to call for the continued colonial "protection" and education of the Philippines and its people.

### **Modalities of Racialization: the Filipino-as-Child and the Hypersexualized Filipina/o**

[Emilio] Aguinaldo and the Filipinos [...] were bothering me. I was very busy getting my squadron ready for battle, and these little men were coming on board my ship at Hong Kong and taking a good deal of my time, and I did not attach the slightest importance to anything that they could do, and they did nothing.

—Admiral George Dewey, testimony to U.S. Senate (1902)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Laura Wexler 43.

The utter dismissiveness of Admiral Dewey's description of Aguinaldo, the head of the not-insignificant Filipino revolutionary movement, and his lieutenants relies heavily on the phrase "little men," the use of which brings to mind children, pestering ones in this case, who distract the important American officer from preparing for a war. In addition, the whole description rather smacks of a self-fulfilling prophecy: "I did not attach the slightest importance to anything that they could do, and [indeed] they did nothing." In other words, his expectations of their doing anything of significance were so low that he did not bother to look for any such thing. This specific comparison between Filipinos and children was a political move, for it evacuated the force of any verbal or written covenant he may have made with Aguinaldo, pledging American support for the Filipinos' nationalist revolution in return for the Filipinos' support of America's war with Spain. In Dewey's testimony to the Senate, which was trying to make sense of the bloodshed of the Philippine-American War, "Dewey's point is that any military alliance that might have been mistakenly arranged between the 'irresponsible' General [E. Spencer] Pratt, and these 'little men' would obviously have been no consequence, just as one cannot make a contract with a minor" (Wexler 44).

In the early years of American colonial occupation of the Philippines, non-white "savages" were culturally linked to children and vice-versa,<sup>12</sup> and American views of Filipinos were firmly that the latter were childlike both in mental and moral faculties as well as in the grand scheme of world civilizations. Americans' prevailing attitudes towards Filipinos during this historical period were that Filipinos—despite comprising a very diverse population across the islands of the Philippine archipelago—were not yet civilized enough for self-rule, and there was a question that they ever would be.

From high-ranking officials like Dewey and Philippine Governor General and future American president William Howard Taft, to political and cultural critics like Aldice Gould Eames, the representation of the Filipino-as-child was prevalent. Taft once described his colonial subjects as "nothing but grown up children" (qtd. in May 10). And here is Eames's commentary on Philippine theater in 1906:

If the English-speaking resident of Manila suffers from a drama famine, his little brown brother does not. The unfettered child of nature has his emotional needs as abundantly catered to by the native playwrights as his bodily necessities are by bounteous nature. (349)

The phrase "child of nature" echoes Buckland's "brown children of the tropics" and is here associated with lack of restraint or perhaps lack of rules ("unfettered"). Filipinos' emotional needs for cultural productions such as theatrical dramas—the creation and broad consumption of which might be considered an indication of a thriving civil society—are here described as on a par with bodily needs such as, presumably, eating, drinking, and excreting. Eames claims that "the drama is the form of literary effort that appeals to the least civilized mind most forcibly, because it can be seen, heard and understood with the minimum of mental exertion" (349). However, he seems to regard the Filipino plays as lowbrow "clap-trap" in part because every "muchacho" (house servant), "cochero" (driver), and "lavandera" (washerwoman) insists on

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<sup>12</sup> A sample of scholarly texts that point out this historical linkage between the child and the savage include Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*; Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other*; Ann Laura Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*; and James R. Kincaid's *Erotic Innocence*. For the savage-as-child in the Philippine case, see Benito M. Vergara, Jr.'s *Displaying Filipinos*; Kristin L. Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood*; Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence*; and Nerissa Balce-Cortes's dissertation, "Savagery and Docility."

seeing them constantly, and will even, as Eames accuses, steal from their American masters to pay for the tickets if the money cannot be borrowed (349).

While the annoyance expressed by Dewey and Eames in their respective derogations of Filipinos takes on the tone of irritation with a pestering child, the cause for the annoyance is actually far more serious than they make it out to be. Aguinaldo was negotiating with the Americans for outright Philippine independence; and the natives of Manila were voraciously watching seditious plays. Eames writes:

"*Independencia*" is the keynote of these dramas, these bombastic phenomena that are so irresistible to the native Filipino [...]. Seditious is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try – in the Philippines. If the population of the planet consisted of three Filipinos, two of them would plot an insurrection against the government, and their revolution would come to naught because of the leaders conspiring against each other. Thus the native mind is a rich culture bed for the propagation of seditious germs, which are scattered broadcast from the stage of the Tagalog theatre. (349)

This undercurrent of anxiety over Filipino seditious, insurrection, and revolution powered the uneven yet assiduous effort on the part of Americans to depict Filipinos as children during the late 1800s and early 1900s, an attempt to rhetorically defang the prospect and hope of Filipino self-determination both to the Filipinos themselves and to the rest of the world watching America's first steps in extraterritorial imperialism.

Historians have noted many similar instances of colonial Americans' attitude towards Filipinos' moral character.<sup>13</sup> This attitude often denoted a belief in Filipinos' intellectual inferiority as well. According to Kenton J. Clymer in his historiography on Protestant American colonials in the Philippines:

To many missionaries the most congenial way of expressing a belief in Filipino inferiority was to refer to the people as children. This was an extremely common motif, present in the correspondence of virtually all Protestant groups. Harry Farmer, for example, justified making a legal settlement out of court without consulting the Filipinos most directly affected in the case, despite their protests, because of their "child like character." (73–74)

It was unclear to Clymer whether "the missionaries' references to Filipino inferiority mean[t] that the people were more or less permanent children, incapable of further development" or if they, "given the right stimulus, [...] would mature into adulthood" (74).

Colonial-era descriptions of Filipino natives as childlike were not limited in reference to their character, personalities, or intellect. There were also many instances conflating Filipino child-*bodies* with adult-*bodies*. One searing example is the controversial ordering of General Jacob Hurd Smith to make the island of Samar "a howling wilderness" during the Philippine-American War:

On 9 April 1902 the American public was shocked to learn of the bizarre verbal instructions of an American general in the Philippines to his subordinates. In a court-martial in Manila the orders of Brigadier General Jacob Hurd Smith came to light. Smith had allegedly told his officers, "I want no prisoners.... I wish you to kill and burn. The more you kill and burn, the better you will please me... the

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<sup>13</sup> See May, Healy, and Vergara, among others.

interior of Samar must be made a howling wilderness." Smith further ordered everyone killed who was capable of bearing arms, and when asked to designate the age limit of the victims, replied: "Ten years of age." (Fritz 186)

Such a response to the military failures of the United States in the Philippines seemed excessive, indiscriminate, and "shocking" to an American public that saw ten-year-old children as innocently incapable of violence. Smith's orders, however, hint at the full-scale resistance of Philippine natives to American colonial occupation. While apparently there is no conclusive proof that his orders were actually carried out, the genocidal implications of his "apocalyptic diatribe" have everything to do with his singling out "young boys" as a significant portion of the enemy Philippine resisters during his court-martial (186).

In his 1915 article, "The Philippine Islands," in *The Mentor*, Worcester shares a photograph of himself standing next to a Negrito male (see Figure 1). The caption in the magazine reads "A TYPICAL NEGRITO." He was photographed standing by the author [Worcester] to show relative size" (3). It's unclear how old the Negrito male is and Worcester seems to be standing a few inches higher due to an incline, but the top of the "typical" Negrito's head comes up to Worcester's chest. Daniel R. Williams, in a 1913 book about the Philippine Commission's journey throughout the Philippines, describes in visual terms the "childlike" figures of Filipinos, their contrast with American heft and height, and how this physical difference translates into a metaphorical justification for the American colonial "mission":

Another feature which undoubtedly lends force to our mission and aids greatly in impressing the public, is the size and avoirdupois of the [American] Commissioners [to the Philippines]. The aggregate weight of the five Commissioners and their secretary is thirteen hundred and sixty-two pounds, or an average of two hundred and twenty-seven pounds per. When all are lined up behind a table they came near filling the space allotted them, not only in fact but in the imagination of the people. To a race small in stature, with a childlike reverence for those in power, the dominating influence of this mere physical bigness is an important item. (qtd. in Vergara 101–102)

What comes through in both the photograph and in this passage is a sense that American colonials felt no real need to distinguish between Filipino adults and children. Here, the physical bodies of adults are not only conflated with children's bodies—underscored by accompanying photographs and by political cartoons that focus on the height difference between Filipinos and Americans—but adult Filipinos are also ascribed "childlike" dispositions, particularly in their "reverence for those in power." Such a conflation of physical with mental characteristics recalls the recapitulation argument of child development in scientific discourse at the time, in which the development of the infant into adult was thought to echo or recapitulate the development of the human species from barbarism to civilization.





Figure 1.1: "Negrito man, type 1, and myself [Dean Worcester], to show relative size" (1901)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The caption was written by Dean C. Worcester. Photo reproduced here courtesy of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology.

American studies and child studies scholar Karen Sánchez-Eppler argues that a shift in thinking about the child in the United States came along with the emergence of child labor laws in the nineteenth century:

The histories that we do have of American childhood tell of the gradual and uneven transformation of cultural attitudes toward children, which increasingly cast children as distinct from adults, their specialness valued in emotional rather than economic terms. Thus at the beginning of the nineteenth century almost all children participated in some version of family-supporting labor, while by the beginning of the twentieth, states had begun to pass child-labor laws and to view children working not as normative but as abusive. Gradually losing their economic importance, children came to be understood as primarily engaged in emotional work: requiring and expressing the family's idealized capacity for love and joy. Thus as the family came to be recognized as the principal moral and social organizing unit of the nation, these claims largely rested on the shifting status of childhood. (xvii–xviii).

How does this thinking about the child intersect with thinking about the Filipino child and the Filipino-as-child during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as this shift roughly coincided with the installation of formal American empire in the Philippines?

Philosopher and child studies scholar David Archard usefully summarizes the modern conception<sup>15</sup> of childhood, which began with the first serious psychological studies of children in the West during the second half of the nineteenth century. He cites Darwin's publication of "A Biographical Sketch of the Infant" in 1877 as one of the most influential texts in child theory; in placing the child in "a broader evolutionary context," this work led others like Ernst Haeckel to formulate the theory of recapitulation, where the development of the species is reflected in the individual's development (41). The idea of *development*, therefore, became one of the primary scientific theoretical models by which children were understood and treated (and by which evolutionary theory itself was understood). In the developmental model, childhood is merely a stage that leads to adulthood, and so it is teleological. The model also assumes that development is necessary for all humans irrespective of cultural variance, development comprising several connected stages each of which is a "necessary precondition of progress to the next" (43). Finally, it assumes that development is a function of genetic inheritance and is thus "biologically fixed" (43). Moreover, according to Archard, "the modern Western conception of adulthood [is] as a state of being, and childhood is correspondingly clearly defined against, and set apart from and below, adulthood" (45). This contrasts with some non-Western conceptions of adulthood as a "process" or "continual becoming, a never-completed becoming"; this means that childhood is not necessarily a state to be left behind once one gets older, but a "metaphorical immaturity which can be present to some extent throughout a lifetime" (45).

Most salient for our discussion here are the specifics of the Western argument for the teleological character of the child's development in view of how it reflects humanity's social development, because it is this view that informs the American colonial representations of Filipinos at the turn of the twentieth century. As Archard succinctly puts it, "[c]hildhood in relation to adulthood mirrors the primitive in relation to the civilised and the modern, the primate

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<sup>15</sup> Archard makes a distinction between the terms *concept* and *conception*, where *concept* denotes a general idea that "has an uncontroversial and commonly agreed sense," while *conception* refers to a "set of rules or principles" which defines the concept more specifically (27).

in relation to the properly human" (44). By constantly referring to Filipinos as children, American colonials were using a kind of shorthand to claim that Filipinos and their culture were uncivilized in comparison to the Western (white) world. Furthermore, when Americans called Filipinos "monkeys" or portrayed them as such in caricatures—many instances of which have been documented in various historiographies of Philippine-American relations<sup>16</sup>—they were also obliquely calling them children since primates represented the childhood of humanity in the recapitulative view of human evolution. Thus, when we study the meanings of "the child," we confront the troubling ways in which personhood is not seen to be an inalienable characteristic of human beings. At what point would the United States decide that Filipinos had finally come into their metaphorical adulthood as a civilization? When colonizers get to decide, how is it not an arbitrary decision? And is personhood something we can truly confer through mechanisms of the law?

Taking on the genial relationship between imperial ideology and the scientific concepts of childhood and evolutionary development, historian David Healy, in his 1970 work on U.S. expansionism, discusses the role of Spencerian social evolutionary theory and Social Darwinism in discourses of racial hierarchies and empire in Europe and the importation of such discourses to the United States in the late nineteenth century. Alongside Archard among many other scholars, Healy notes that a significant aspect of such evolutionary theories was the image of the child:

The evolutionary approach had multiple advantages: it not only established and explained the workings of progress, but it allowed for both the perfectibility and the inequality of man. The various human sub-groups, it developed, were at different stages in the universal process of evolution; some peoples were far ahead of the others. [...] The images of childhood and maturity came to symbolize the relation of the advanced to the backward peoples, and immediately suggested the operative function of the relationship: parental tutelage. As the parent raised the child, so the superior peoples – the white Europeans – should lead their inferiors toward civilization. Like children, these backward peoples needed constraint and authority, lest they do damage to themselves and to others; like children, they could be bright, charming, and precocious, but seldom "steady," responsible, or of really sound judgment. Yet they bore within themselves the deeds of future manhood, for good or for evil, depending on the rearing. The conclusion was inescapable: it was not only possible for the civilized to lead the backward toward the light, it was actually their moral duty to do so. (15)

Through the language of evolutionary progress, Healy claims, the discourse of American colonialism has as its central trope the figure of the native-as-child, vis-à-vis the concepts of precocious but morally- and intellectually-unsteady child-figures, parent-child relationships, tutelage and education, and the white man's "duty" to bring (raise) "backward" peoples into manhood. The image of the child is implicit, whether or not the words "the child" or "childhood" are mentioned, in any consideration of the capacity of Filipinos for self-government, of their education and "progress," and of America's paternal "duty" towards the Philippines.

Compounding this representation of Filipinos-as-children is the concurrence of the racialized stereotype of the hypersexual native. I argue that the infantilization of Filipinos made them more easily hypersexualized via the stereotype of the female primitive or savage. While it

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<sup>16</sup> See *The Forbidden Book* for a plethora of these caricatures.

is common to see colonialism and imperialism as reconfiguring and solidifying racial or ethnic hierarchies, with the colonizers at the top of the heap, imperialism is as imbricated in ideologies of gender and sexuality as it is in racism. Indeed, the language of gender and sexuality, cross-hatched by class, was often the means by which the racial difference of colonized peoples was produced and secured, expressly in the moments of imperial discourses that link savagery and sexuality.<sup>17</sup> In particular, in her short but tour-de-force essay, "The Filipina's Breast," postcolonial and Filipina/o American studies scholar Nerissa Balce argues that the trope of the Filipina-as-savage was one of the icons of what she calls an "erotics of American Empire," defined as "the play of earlier racialized and gendered discourses that constructed the Filipina as a new nonwhite other whose alterity incorporated the ideas, images, and vocabularies of the conquests of the New World, the frontier, and the legacies of slavery" (92). Balce calls for an intersectional approach to the study of Philippine colonization by the United States through its intersection with histories of Native American and African American subjugation, claiming that the photographing and circulation of images of the naked breasts of Filipina natives were indexical acts of American conquest. Borrowing from Anne McClintock's term "porno-tropics" of colonialism to describe the discursive and visual "relationship between pornographic fantasies of the tropics and the brutal, often violent facts of conquest," she moreover draws a parallel between the European colonial tradition of representing "lubricious" black women in Africa and American representations of "breast-baring brown women from indigenous cultures" in Hawai'i and mainland United States as well as of equally-"lubricious" black female slaves (95). For Balce, then, the hypersexualization of the female "savage" in imperial discourses is an act of colonial conquest.

As Balce has observed in "The Filipina's Breast," America did not treat Cuba the same way that it did the Philippines. Could it have been partly because of the photographs of naked female breasts, circulated in the United States via postcards? There was something about the Philippines that made it easier to represent them as more backward, as Balce argues, having to do with the photos of the indigenous, naked and topless, that made them seem more like savages and children needing to be educated, to be brought up into civilization and both literal and metaphorical adulthood. She writes: "The Filipina's naked body, like other native women's bodies, ritualistically feminized the colonized land. [...]The ambivalent position of the Filipina body—as savage, as divine creature, as surly and 'unlovely'—was a stark contrast to the image of the properly dressed and attractive 'Spanish maidens' of Cuba and Puerto Rico" (99).

According to Jonathan Best, who curates a sample of colonial-era Philippine postcards in his book *Philippine Picture Postcards*, "[t]hese images of what Americans thought exotic or sensational were sometimes quite offensive and deliberate distortions of Filipino culture and values" (5). Imbricated in these distortions was also an "over abundance of pictures of bare chested Ifugao girls or datu with their several wives." Best claims they "were snickered at in 'civilized' parlors a century ago" (5), yet such postcards of bare-chested girls and presumed-to-be-submissive women likely weren't so much "snickered at" as used to fuel the sexual fantasies of their viewers half a world away, thus also confirming for Americans the uncivilized, unrestrained savagery of Filipinos. These distortions bore political valence, in that they portrayed

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<sup>17</sup> See Stoler; McClintock; Bhabha; Fanon; Young; Brody; Koshy; Hoganson; Kaplan; Rafael; Whissel; Briggs; Kolodny; Smith; Sharpley-Whiting; and Wong, among others.

a country "in dire need of America's 'beneficent' administration and technological progress" so as to justify American colonization of the Philippines (5).

Indeed, Best and Balce gloss over the implications of the representation of girls (as distinct from women) in such photographs. In much of the critical literature, an understanding of hypersexualized girls is subsumed into the hypersexualization of women. This almost-automatic critical move is what my project attempts to tease apart. Unlike the Filipino children whom Buckland described as improperly dressed (lacking undershirts) while playing, the naked girls in the photographs were not simply understood as indexes of savagery that proved the need for colonial management. They were part and parcel of a discursive colonial system that conflated adult- and child-bodies, alongside and distinct from the conflation of the intellectual and moral capacities of Filipino adults and those of Filipino children. (As we will see later on in Chapter Three, one legacy of this physical conflation is the sexual exploitation of young girls and boys in the Philippines.)

Other examples of such physical conflation abound in colonial-era photographs taken by Americans of Filipino natives, particularly those in outlying, non-Christian areas. Dean C. Worcester, an American zoologist who became the Secretary of the Interior of the Philippine Islands from 1901–1913, wrote several ethnological studies on Philippine populations, which were widely circulated and read. He also kept a collection of photographs that he organized and annotated himself. Historian Christopher Capozzola reproduces many of these photographs in his online essay on Worcester's ethnographic images of Filipinos. In particular, there is a series of eroticized images of Filipino women and girls, "paired photographs of women that juxtaposed them with and without blouses" (Capozzola). Although Capozzola makes the conflation himself when he writes only "women," Worcester captioned a set of paired photographs of the Benguet "types" as "Three *girls* from Kapangan" (a municipality in the province of Benguet; my italics) (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3 below).



Figure 1.2: "Three girls from Kapangan, types 5, 6, and 7. Full length front views" (1907)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The caption was written by Dean C. Worcester. Photo reproduced here courtesy of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology.





Figure 1.3: "Three girls from Kapangan" (1907)<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The caption was written by Dean C. Worcester. Photo reproduced here courtesy of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology.

Let's recall Ralph Kent Buckland's description of the weaving women as "brown children of the tropics" at the beginning of this chapter. As it turns out, that phrase is quite loaded with a long history of linking warm climates with excessive female sexuality, which fed the stereotype of female primitivism. According to colonial historian Patty O'Brien in her study of the stereotype of exotic native women in the Pacific, hotter climates were thought to advance the sexual maturity of females, to the point where pubescent and pre-pubescent girls, as young as eight and nine, were believed to be already sexually mature (54). O'Brien writes:

Hot climates were the determining factor of the racialized (as opposed to the classed) version of female primitivism. The provenance of this belief that tropical climates magnified women's sexual potency extends back to antiquity. Hot climates and weather, according to Aristotle, increased the wetness of women, thereby invigorating women's sexual desire, while hot weather had the opposite effect on men, rendering them sexually incapacitated. [...] Hot weather was viewed as having a similar effect on women as on plants and animals: it caused them to thrive. Consistently warm weather had the effect of 'ripening' girls like fruit. Menarche was accelerated and libido heightened. Hot weather, Aristotle argued, increased the animality of women, and once initiated in sex, these women reveled in it and did not possess the capacity of reason to stop. In this classical construction of women's sexuality are the seeds for the later theories of black and indigenous women's hypersexuality, as well as the justification of the ill treatment of non-Occidental women by their men, particularly in the practice of polygamy.

These age-old ideas about gender, sexuality, and the environment were highly influential in the eighteenth-century era of colonization. The environment was believed to determine the moral as well as physical behavior of people, according to Enlightenment thinkers. [...] Heat arrested mental development thereby justifying rigid gradations of society and the exploitation of people [putatively] lower down on the human scale.

Built into this idea was the justification of sexual exploitation of youthful girls and boys of the empire and the lower classes. (54–55)

Buckland's and Worcester's observations of native women have a genealogical link to the discourses that O'Brien discusses above. Indeed, Worcester also had a set of photographs that staged Filipinas in the same striking, highly-eroticized manner as the Primitivist artist Gauguin did to Tahitian women, lying on their side while nude and posing for the painter or photographer. The fact that Worcester staged the photos, as Capozzola argues, rather than catching the women and girls in their natural element, as it were, suggests that a primitive hypersexuality was projected onto the bodies of Filipina native women. Capozzola notes that "[i]n contrast to his photographs of axe-wielding male warriors, Worcester's images of women often feature an exoticism and danger of a different sort. For many American men, travel in the Philippines prompted fantasies of escape from the dictates of Victorian society." The sexualized "exoticism and danger" that these men expected in the Philippines were staged for the camera. But if we look closely at the subjects themselves, we can see fissures in the staged scenes, which challenge the broad depiction of native girls' precocious sexuality. For instance, in the topless version of the erotic paired photographs of the "Three girls of Kapangan" (see Figure 1.3), the girls look more uncomfortable without their blouses—note the hunched shoulders. But it's especially



noticeable that one of the girls has rearranged her hair to cover her nipples and as much of her chest as possible.

Yet the photographic and discursive representations of Filipinas relied not only on bare breasts; and nude or partially-nude photos weren't the only types of postcards that pictured Filipino women and girls.<sup>20</sup> There was a wide range of representations of the Philippines and its people in twentieth-century postcards that circulated in the United States via American colonials. Best argues that the postcards "reflected the naive curiosity and the cultural and racial prejudices the Americans brought with them. Along with the many excellent images of traditional Philippine life, there were dozens of pictures of carabao, coconut trees, native 'savages,' and women and children smoking foot-long cigars" (5). There were images of girls and young women with naked breasts, yes, but there were also images of "elegantly dressed mestizo matrons" and girls as well as simple "market vendors":

Foreigners were quite taken by the beauty of Filipino women and innumerable cards were made portraying them, from the most elegantly dressed mestizo matrons to the simplest market vendors. Cards picturing pretty Filipinas were used as early advertisements for sewing machines, shampoo, and many other items. (43)

Far from portraying the Philippines as a land of civility, however, such images of "pretty Filipinas" had a precursor both in other colonial contexts, as described by Balce and O'Brien, and within the United States in the form of mid-nineteenth-century abolitionist *cartes-de-visite* portraying African American enslaved children. Young pale-skinned African American girls were particularly featured in these cards. Mary Niall Mitchell argues that these cards had pornographic associations as well, despite the abolitionist impetus:

These photographs presented a female body that existed for the viewer somewhere between the real and the imagined, in this respect much like pornographic photography of the nineteenth century. With the invention of the photograph, pornographers could use the bodies and the direct gazes of *real* women returning the stares of the male spectator rather than fictionalized or painted ones. Like pornographic photographs, images of white-looking slave girls did not replace fantasies of beautiful mulatto and octoroon women enslaved and violated but, rather, further encouraged them. Seeing the portrait of Rebecca [a pale-skinned slave girl] kneeling in prayer, for instance, a white northern audience read in her white skin a history of "miscegenation," generations of it, resulting from the sexual interaction of white masters with their female slaves [...]. And Rebecca's girlish form raised the possibility of future violations (whereas the image of a woman might have represented virtue already lost) and further invited the exercise of viewers' imaginations as they looked at her photograph. (64)

Furthermore, Mitchell maintains that the youth portrayed in cards that featured white American girls reinforced the hypersexual character of the images.

Within the context of white, middle-class Victorian culture, white little girls (perhaps even more so than white women) embodied the "Victorian ideal" of femininity—childlike, dependent, and sexually pure. Yet they nevertheless

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<sup>20</sup> See also Choy and Cruz on the varying representations of Filipina women during American occupation, particularly with regards to educated Filipinas.

exuded, in the eyes of mostly male artists and photographers, a budding sexuality. The association of white girls with innocence and purity gave their images the allure of the forbidden, thus making them all the more enticing and seemingly sexually vulnerable. The eroticism inherent in pictures of "innocent" white girls—pure yet alluring—seems to have contributed to the appeal of white girlhood as the subject of paintings and mass-reproduced prints that sold by the thousands in the middle and late nineteenth century. (79)

The "allure of the forbidden" recalls the lure of "exoticism and danger" noted by Capozzola in the Philippine case, although Mitchell names the "forbidden" allure as a form of pedophilia. The chronological proximity of the Philippine postcards to the American *cartes-de-visite* in terms of their circulation within the U.S. makes the argument for reading the postcards in a similar light.

These photographs of pretty Filipino women and girls circulated alongside other photographs that evidenced the dark side of America's presence in the Philippines.

For each sensitive study of an Ifugao woman dressed in handwoven fabrics and beautifully designed jewelry or a Kalinga [Igorot] man in his elegant attire, there are numerous postcards which make disparaging cracks about the "uncivilized" habits of these "savages" and "headhunters." In the case of the Muslims, pictures of dead and mutilated *juramentados* [suicidal Moro assassins] and datus with numerous wives appealed to those looking for the sensational. Even snapshots of American soldiers, posing with human skulls or inspecting the carnage after the massacre of Mount Bud-Dajo on Jolo, found their way onto postcards. (Best 93–94)

Thus, at the same time, an interest in the physical beauty and cultural arts of the Philippine people was underlaid by a disturbing and violent racism. The juxtaposition of images of beautiful native women and of the violent deaths of native men indicates that they were two sides of the same coin.

The large range of representations—depicting industriousness, technical and artistic skill, a civilized vanity, but also sexual excess ("numerous wives") and sensationalized death—also had to do with the fact that many different groups of people comprise the native population of the Philippines: Igorots, Negritos, Tagalogs, Visayans, Moros, and so on. Indeed, much of the imperial discourse produced in the late 1800s and early 1900s were ethnologies, or anthropological typologies of Filipino "tribes." In the context of such ethnologies, the bodies of native males were not immune from erotic scrutiny, either.

A 1909 magazine article by Joseph N. Patterson in celebration of William Howard Taft's election to the U.S. presidency attributes Taft's rise to national power to his role as Governor-General of the Philippines from 1901–1904, making a point to enlighten America on the importance of the Philippines to the United States in general. In order to highlight how politically dexterous Taft was in administering to the different groups of Filipino natives, the author takes the reader on an ethnological tour of sorts, echoing much of the anthropological texts available at the time. He begins with reciting a familiar account of stereotypes about Filipinos in general: "one of the lesser peoples of the world" and "the emotional nature of the little brown man" (echoing Aldice Gould Eames) (519). He then begins the tour with a perfunctory but overall positive description of the Tagalogs and Visayans, moves on to a briefer set of very harsh remarks about the Negritos, and then spends several pages on the Igorots, whom Patterson

obviously admires. His text furnishes a rich example of the way the bodies of Filipino men were also fetishized.

The Igorot is depicted here as a beautiful, noble savage: "while a primitive, savage and war-like race, [the Igorot] is one of the most interesting of peoples to the student. He is known to the world at large, through his exhibition at the Philippine Exposition in St. Louis [i.e., the Philippine Exhibit at the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904], as a head-hunter and a dog-eater, and the possessor of one of the most beautiful copper-colored physiques that has ever delighted the artist or the admirer of muscular manhood" (526). Patterson recounts how "the [nearly-nude] display of this rich bronze-colored body of the Igorot warrior" (526) raised a fuss from people who asked that the Igorots be clothed in more than just loincloths. Several paragraphs later, Patterson goes on again more poetically about the Igorot's beautiful body: "In the simplicity and honesty of his trusting nature, the Igorot as met by the white man is as brightly attractive as are the beautiful copper hues of his wonderful physique when viewed in the burnishing rays of sun" (530–531). "In short," Patterson concludes, "except for the shocking offenses of taking heads in battle and partaking of the flesh of the dog, the beautiful bronze-hued Igorot, who was gazed at in the righteous but interested awe at the Philippine Exposition, could give lessons in the essential traits of real character to many of the unthinking, frivolous exponents of civilization [i.e., (white) Americans] who gazed upon him" (534).

The assiduous attention to the beauty of the Igorot male's body and his inherent nobility of character—despite the flaws of head-hunting, dog-eating, and not being Christian—is so striking that, by comparison, the author seems dismissive of the Visayan and Tagalog "tribes." He reports the many accomplishments of the Visayans and Tagalogs:

The representative Filipino, if there must be one, would be selected from the Visayan or Tagalog races, who inhabit the Island of Luzon and largely compose the population of Manila. These two races, which have been more or less affected by the Spanish blood and have accepted the Catholic religion of the master race, contribute the politicians, the artists, the writers, the thinkers and the leaders of revolution.

Their civilization boasts a university which existed before the walls of Harvard were laid, and some of their painters, educated abroad, have won recognition in the world of art.

They have furnished men to the legal and medical professions and to business life who would compare favorably with those of races ranked far higher in the national scale. (523)

He goes on to mention their talents as musicians and skill as artisans and orators. Yet he intersperses these with stereotypes about character: "They are temperamentally quick, excitable, emotional and impulsive. [...] The masses are apt to be crafty and scheming, and none too trustworthy in business dealings. [...] Taft] was a distinct success at pleasing the sensitive and none-too-well-satisfied native" (523–524). However, the sum of these comments pales in comparison to the adoration he expresses for the half-naked Igorots.<sup>21</sup> Patterson's words are

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<sup>21</sup> Perhaps skin color is literally an indicator here, as Patterson claims that "[a]s a rule, their accomplishments are in proportion to the amount of Spanish blood in their veins" (523) – their mestizeness perhaps indicates too much meddling, so to speak, by the Spanish, America's wartime enemy. So the Visayan and Tagalog mestizos are too pale, the Negritos are too dark (and too much of a mystery ethnologically), but the Igorots—with their copper skin and savage, head-hunting ways – have the right combination to attract an eroticized macho admiration.

particularly helpful as captions for the photographs of Filipinas/os that accompany the article. Specifically, the photographs do not simply present images of Filipina/o savagery, but also evince a sexualized fascination with Filipina/o bodies. Such a fascination with the colonized has a broad history in different imperial and colonial contexts.<sup>22</sup>

Lest his readers lose sight of the rightness and righteousness of American colonial rule in the Philippines, however, Patterson ends the tour with descriptions of the Moros, the Muslim groups in the southern islands of the country, a subgroup of which (the Lanao-Moros) is so violent that "it is particularly necessary to exterminate" them (536)! "It is to be hoped," he writes in conclusion, "that the Taft administration will realize at least some of the expectations of these children of Uncle Sam's kindergarten" (537), thus reinvoking the trope of the Filipino-as-child in need of American tutelage. Coexisting within the same text and working in tandem to justify colonial conquest and America's imperial role, then, are the tropes of the child, the sexual native, and the murderous subaltern.

As a point of comparison, the memoirs of colonial American schoolteacher Mary Fee, published in 1910, make a study of Filipino men and masculinity, but this time from the perspective of a white American woman sojourning in the Philippines. Philippine studies scholar Vicente Rafael argues that Fee's text desexualized native men, in contradistinction to the tradition of hypersexualizing African American men in the United States. This is an important comparison given the metaphorical conflation of Filipinos with African Americans at the time, particularly by American soldiers.<sup>23</sup> According to Rafael, Fee's text desexualizes native men by simultaneously infantilizing and feminizing them:

Fee's account is [...] produced by and reproductive of the racialization of gender and the gendering of racial difference. It does not, however, lead to the emergence of a hypermasculinized image of the native male in the manner of the African-American, but instead to "his" radical desexualization. Her account of the native character points to some of the ways by which the ideology of benevolent assimilation functioned to localize, or domesticate, as it were, a white supremacist logic within a particular imperialist context. In the United States mainland, white society was haunted, and so set apart, by the specter of an excessive and undomesticated black manhood endangering white womanhood, the very reservoir of white masculine privilege. In the Philippine colony, by contrast, the discourse of colonial domesticity rendered native men simultaneously feminine and infantile. As such, they were multiply distanced from the white masculine norm and conceptually subordinated to the domesticating intervention of a white

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<sup>22</sup> For example, besides Balce and Brody on American imperialism in the Philippines, see O'Brien on different imperialisms in the Pacific; Stoler on Dutch imperialism in Indonesia; McClintock and Young on British imperialism; and Sharpley-Whiting on French imperialism in Africa.

<sup>23</sup> See Slotkin and Bederman. Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* notes the application of the epithet "nigger" to Filipino natives in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Philippines. Ethnological accounts also noted the physical similarities between African Americans and a particular tribe in the Philippines, who were given the name "Negritos" by, presumably, colonial ethnologists (Montano 6). Also, Patterson's article on the different "races" of the Philippines, for instance, compares the Negrito population negatively with the Christianized (and implicitly more civilized) population of Manila and Visayas; not primarily because the Negritos did not practice any form of Christianity, but because they were "one of the most primitive races in the world," more akin in physical characteristics to African Americans than their fellow Philippine tribes (524–526).

feminine presence, whether in the form of a benevolent colonial administration or the disciplinary guidance of a school teacher. (140)

Here is how Rafael reads the triangulation of manhood, womanhood, and childhood in Fee's text: So while Filipinos may be feminized men, they are neither feminine nor masculine enough because they are not white. Given the domestic, which is to say heterosexist, matrix of gender and racial categories of colonial discourse, the only subject position left for Filipino men is, of course, that of a child; but this child is one who can, as we saw, stand only in a negative relationship to American children. Whatever similarities Filipinos may have to American women and children turn out to be merely the product of mimicry and narcissism and so only prove the fundamental and unbridgeable difference of one from the other. (139–140)

In his reading, then, if we follow through Fee's logic of subject positions, the emasculated Filipino man is collapsed with the white American woman, is then further collapsed with the white American child, and is further degraded in status to an even more abject position, the Filipino child. What happens to Filipina women? Well, rather than also being desexualized, the "burden of sexual signification [is shifted] onto the bodies of native females in white women's texts" because of the "overdetermined construction of native males" (141). Upper-class Filipinas are considered "excessively feminine," while lower-class Filipinas are "strangely masculine" (145). In the end, actual Filipino children are left out in Rafael's reading of subject positions in Fee's text, except perhaps as younger doubles of desexualized native men. While Rafael's argumentation is otherwise impeccable, it is this remainder—the Filipino child—that interests me.

For despite the distance Rafael reads between African American men and native Filipino men, African American men were not immune from infantilization, either, even as they were hypersexualized.<sup>24</sup> One need only look at the many early-twentieth-century political cartoons that depict Filipinos and African Americans simultaneously as babies or children.<sup>25</sup> Also, as the colonial Philippine postcards and various anthropological discourses attest, certain Filipino male bodies were eroticized as hypermasculine. Igorot men, for example, were almost-lovingly described as having beautiful, muscular bodies that evinced both skill and strength that would attract sexual attention, as Patterson's article demonstrates. Muslim datus with multiple wives—suggesting an excessive sexuality—were also fetishized in the postcards and ethnological texts.

Moreover, it may be productive to consider the limits of propriety in a white middle-class American woman writing about male Filipinos and their physical attractiveness. It is probably no surprise that these limits were more stringent for her than for the white middle-class American man doing the same, as Joseph Patterson did. While it's fair to consider Rafael's argument that the net effect for some of the American purveyors of Mary Fee's account was a view of (certain) Filipino men as desexualized, feminized children, I would also suggest the possibility that there could have been a sublimated sexual admiration for at least some of the Filipino men whom the white American female writers encountered on their sojourn in the Philippines, an admiration that perhaps could not be so openly expressed given the source of such accounts—the middle-

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<sup>24</sup> See Castañeda.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Forbidden Book*.

class white American woman with all of the rules of propriety attending her station in society. Meanwhile, male writers at the time could write openly about their admiration for Filipino male beauty without being accused of sexual impropriety, given the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early twentieth-century America. Newspapers also published accounts about how much the presence of the Philippine Scouts (Filipinos in the U.S. Army) and Philippine Constabulary Band—the members of whom were almost all Tagalog or Visayan male musicians—turned the heads of the American female spectators during the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, and the subsequent discontent that the socializing between the white women and Filipino men sowed among the American soldiers who failed to compare as favorably with the ladies.<sup>26</sup> It is fascinating that having Filipinos physically within the United States metropole caused a different response to them than when they were encountered in the colony. I posit then that infantilization and hypersexualization can and did co-occur in both the African American and Filipino cases.

Even more, infantilization could *lead to* hypersexualization in certain cases, as demonstrated by Mitchell's example of the *cartes-de-visite* and O'Brien's discussion of the stereotype of primitive sexuality. In this vein, also consider the work of child studies scholar Claudia Castañeda, who, in tracing the marginal appearances of the child in American scientific discourse, found that racialized children were significant liminal as well as non-normative figures, imagined to be the outside limit of true maturity and adulthood with regards to intelligence and sexuality. In a conception similar to that found by Patty O'Brien in the context of Pacific colonialism, some of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century texts that Castañeda studied, for instance, argued that during adolescent development of the "Negro child," there was a struggle between intellectual and sexual development, with the sexual winning in the racialized body:

According to one account [...] the developing body also exhibited a Malthusian struggle for existence within itself between intellectual and sexual development. In keeping with a more general hypersexualization of blackness that continues today, this struggle, in the "Negro" child, was won by the sexual (defined in terms of passion as well as reproductive purpose), as the intellect succumbed to its own developmental limit. (36)

This view was put forth by Eugene S. Talbot, a medical doctor who wrote a medical text, entitled *Degeneracy*, on abnormalities and hereditary disorders in 1898. Talbot further wrote: "'The conflict for existence between brain growth and reproductive organ growth at puberty [led to] the triumph of the reproductive'" for "full" and mixed-race black children (quoted in John S. Haller, re-quoted in Castaneda 36). If such conceptions about black children and adults' abnormal (hyper)sexuality were circulating around the same time as American colonial presence in the Philippines, it is more than possible that similar views were applied to Filipinos' "savage" sexuality as well given the many comparisons made between Filipinos and African Americans at the time—existing simultaneously with American representations of Filipino men as feminine and infantile.

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 2 of Talusan's manuscript.

### **Protecting (White) American Blood: Mestiza/o Children**

As the Talbot example suggests, and as Castañeda's work demonstrates, racialized children and their sexuality were of crucial interest in modern studies of the child as they played contrastive and liminal roles for early theorists and researchers looking to understand normative (white) childhood. The mixed-race child, in particular, was also an important figure in early twentieth-century scientific studies of miscegenation in a race- and bloodline-obsessed America.<sup>27</sup> Racial mixing or mestizaje in the Philippines was already quite common by the time Americans arrived because of previous Spanish colonization as well as the presence of a significant population of Chinese on the Islands, but it became a significant concern for the American colonial administration during the approximately-forty years of its occupation. Not only were American colonial ethnologists determined to document and quantify the "blood"/racial admixture of the various Filipino populations of the archipelago that they were photographing and writing about, but there was also the fact that many children were born of American men and native Filipina women. Called mestizas and mestizos, these children came to be among the concerns of social welfare advocates both within the Philippines and the United States.

In general, there seems to have been a consensus that mixing the blood of Filipinos with that of the Spanish, (white) American, or Chinese could only improve the Filipino "stock." In the 1900 *Report of the Philippine Commission*, produced by American colonial officials studying the various laws and customs of the Philippines and making recommendations on changes to various policies based on their observations, the section on marriage laws remarks that the marriages of the Chinese in the Philippines were relatively less regulated by the Catholic Church than those of Filipinos because Chinese mestizos were deemed the most industrious race—a remark that goes unchallenged in the report (138). Indeed, the report recommends that new civil policies be enacted immediately to encompass non-Catholic intermarriage between Americans and natives (presumably white Protestant American men and Filipino women) (139). Moreover, the ethnological descriptions of Negritos evinced a eugenicist belief in the improvement of certain races through miscegenation with other, more evolutionarily-developed races. Despite being compared to African Americans in physical characteristics, Negritos were portrayed more like Native Americans—as a vanishing race that would most likely die out within the next generation. Ethnologists studying the Philippines even earlier than the Americans, like the Frenchman Joseph Montano, claimed that "their blood has been kept pure" because they are weak and are prey, contrasting them with racially-mixed Filipinos: "They [Negritos] are fatally destined to disappear. The half breeds, on the contrary, are very widely scattered, and there is no people in the Archipelago that does not reveal a mixture of their blood" (1). During the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, the anthropologists organizing the Philippine Exhibit echoed this belief and "told fairgoers to see [the Negritos] quickly because the 'savage but timid' group was destined to die out. [...] Worcester thus portrayed Negritos as akin to 'anthropoid apes ... a link which is not missing but soon will be'" (Roediger and Esch 127). Meanwhile, the racially-mixed members of the Philippine Scouts and Constabulary Band, smartly (and fully) dressed in their military uniforms, were presented as the epitome of high Filipino culture (see Talusan).

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<sup>27</sup> See Anderson's "Racial Hybridity, Physical Anthropology, and Human Biology in the Colonial Laboratories of the United States," which details the intellectual history of the science of racial hybridity beginning in the 1920s, a science loaded with eugenicist overtones.



Photo by Diamond.  
PLATE X. SHOWING RELATIVE HEIGHT OF AMERICAN, MIXED BLOOD, AND PURE NEGRITO.

Figure 1.4: "Showing Relative Height of American, Mixed Blood, and Pure Negrito" (1904)  
A photograph in William Allan Reed's official report on Negritos for the Department of Interior (which was headed by Dean Worcester) shows the height differences among a white American man, a "mixed" Negrito man, and a "pure" Negrito man.

In Clymer's historiography on Protestant American colonials in the Philippines, he notes that, despite the ambivalent feelings of the ministers on racial intermixing, which provoked some



racist disgust in some missionaries, they still indicated a belief in the intellectual and physical superiority of "half-breeds" to non-mestizas/os:

Missionary views of the sizeable Spanish and Chinese mestizo population in the islands may also indicate a belief in permanent Filipino inferiority. Generally speaking, missionaries thought that mestizos were "gifted with stronger bodies and greater intellectual powers than the pure native." When Gregorio Araneta became attorney general in 1907, for example, Bishop Brent was pleased, for Araneta, he thought, was "one of the best men...among Filipinos." But he was quick to point out that this was "due to a very generous mixture of foreign blood—Spanish, I think." (74)

Indeed, many in the colonial administration felt the same way about mestiza/o Filipinas/os, including Taft and Worcester who still also felt that the mestizo upper class could be detrimental to the development of democracy in the Philippines.<sup>28</sup>

However, there was concern over what would happen to the mixed-race children born of interracial unions if the American father left the native mother (or died). By the 1920s, a shift seemed to have taken place in thinking about Philippine children, from Worcester's pornotropic photographs of anthropological specimens (see the 1907 Kapangan girls example above) to their portrayal as the political and civilizational future of the Islands. So many American/Filipina/o mestiza/o children were born then subsequently abandoned that in late 1921, several affluent American colonials and military officials, including then-Governor-General Leonard Wood, formed a charity organization called the American Guardian Association<sup>29</sup> in order to "guard and care for children wholly or partly of American blood in the Philippines who are without proper protectors" (Lieut.-Col. Gordon Johnston 9). By 1925, there were an estimated 18,000 American/Filipino mestizo children in the Philippines, with about 4,000 in need of the organization's help.

Even in the early 1900s, there was definitely anxiety over American soldiers' abandonment of their Filipino wives. Looking at American imperialism in the Philippines in the broader context of American Orientalism, visual studies scholar David Brody argues that "at the core of racially motivated discourse is often the cultural fear of miscegenation made visible through sexuality. Thus, one of the themes often repeated in the popular press was that the American soldier could catch the bug of infidelity in the Philippines" (74). He analyzes a remarkable 1903 cover article entitled "A 'Madame Butterfly' of the Philippines" from the popular newspaper *World*, which "reports on a number of American officers who 'have deserted their Filipino wives'" (74). The article is accompanied by an illustration on the cover, of an American soldier and native Filipina kissing passionately. Brody argues: "Sex, and the possibility of more sex, is blatant. On the next page of the article is a Japanese geisha who strums on a stringed instrument as she gazes at the reader. [...] The imagery bolsters the turn-of-the-century notion of the Orient as exotic, visually rendering an overt form of sexuality that is so alluring that the typical American soldier may be unable to avoid its magnetism" (75). The article itself was written by John Luther Long, the author of the 1887 short story, "Madame Butterfly" (on which the famous Puccini opera is based). In the article, he writes that "'in the Philippines and in Japan morality is not essential to good repute. [...].' The Filipino 'girl' knows

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<sup>28</sup> See Hutchcroft (294–95) and Roediger and Esch (126–27).

<sup>29</sup> It was originally called the American Mestizo Protective Association.

that her American soldier will be lost forever once his ship sets sail and she is not ashamed or morally condemned because of her decision to enter into a spurious marriage. [...S]een 'from the moral standards the Occident, this scheme of life is atrocious, barbaric, vile. The Oriental sees nothing but good in it'" (qtd. in Brody 74).

The notion of "benevolent assimilation" was the predominant paradigm for understanding the U.S.–Philippine colonial relationship for much of the twentieth century. The so-called proof for American benevolence lay in the establishment of nominally-free public schooling, the building of schools, roads and other infrastructure, and the training of native and mestizo Filipinos in democratic self-government. By 1921, the outgoing U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, told Congress that the Filipino-led government was stable and thus met the primary condition set for Philippine independence from the United States. Yet the Republican-controlled Congress ignored this recommendation. Also, with the incoming Republican President came a new appointment for the post of Governor General of the Philippines, Leonard Wood.

All of this is to explain in part the political ideology of the American Guardian Association, of which General Wood was the major figurehead. Helping to form the Association was one of the first things General Wood did in the Philippines. Although the Filipino-led legislature of the Philippines showed every sign of stable government and a burning desire for independence, for members of the Association, American mestiza/o children represented the promise of a future Philippines ruled by biracial (and, it was hoped, bicultural) Filipinos whose American, specifically Caucasian, blood supposedly afforded them "imagination and initiative wholly lacking in the native" and who would thus most assuredly lead the Philippines with American interests in mind. The boys, in particular, were expected to become the next generation of leaders for the Filipino people. The girls, on the other hand, were to be raised to become "wives of ambitious and self-respecting men" (Mary Frances Kern qtd. in "Asks Fund" 27).

In 1925, the Association held a fund drive to get \$2 million in charitable donations in order to put the money in a trust and use the annual interest for the day-to-day management of the Association. Several newspaper notices about the drive were published in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* between September and November of 1925. The notion of "American blood" is prominent in the accounts of the children in these notices. Blood is at once a figurative (synecdochic) reference to the fact that the children were fathered by Americans and a broader reference to U.S. interest in the Philippines and America's imperial aims. According to General Wood, "Rather than a charity, this will be an investment in good American citizenship. We cannot as a people afford to have American blood on a lower social level than the blood of other nations. But such will be the inevitable result if we fail in this humanitarian and social obligation. Wherefore we shall not fail" (Wood qtd. in "Asks Fund" 27). The casting of the charity as an "investment" of both "humanitarian" and "social" dimension indicates a competition with "other nations." Thus, rather than disowning the mixed-race offspring, American colonial leaders urged their uplift, in part for appearance's sake—i.e., the social dimension. The fact that the call for donations was issued by the head of the American colonial government (General Wood)—and backed by other current and former American colonial top-ranking officials, such as former Governor General Cameron Forbes—propped up the Association's work as a government mandate that only needed the moral and monetary support of the American people to succeed.

The humanitarian nature of the Association was a given, during a period in American history marked by the rise of social welfare, which saw missionary zeal and charity towards the

poor in foreign countries.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, one of the newspaper articles asking for funds for the Association reminds its readers that the American mestiza/o children "have a nearer and a stronger claim upon us than the children whom we have so liberally aided, belonging to wholly alien races and to nations [referring to China and African countries] for whom we have no governmental responsibility" ("The American Mestizo" A9). Indeed, in these newspaper notices, the children are described as more America's children than not. Perhaps this had something to do with a sense of ownership that Americans felt towards the Philippines in 1925. What the articles emphasize, however, are the Caucasian features of the children. Several phrases recur, such as "light hair and blue eyes," "high-spirited," and "unusually bright," probably indicating that the newspapers were given a set of talking points. Here are a couple of example passages:

As a class they are unusually bright, the Malay characteristics being subordinate to the American in them. Physically they are more American than Malay, with light hair and blue eyes. The girls are nearly all good looking, and both they and the boys are nearly all energetic and high-spirited. Educated and protected to maturity they promise a new and useful element in Filipino leadership.

("Homeless Philippine Children" S2)

And, in an article titled "The American Mestizo," we have this:

To the varied mixture of races in the Philippines, American occupation has added a new blend, not without promise of social and political value. [...] Qualified observers report that, like the Eurasians of India, they are "unusually bright." In the life of the islands, Japanese and Chinese mestizos have taken a leading part—not always, as yet, a beneficial part. In the American mestizos, Caucasian predominate over Malay traits—light hair and blue eyes, comeliness among the girls and high-spirited energy among the boys. Governor Wood and former Governor Cameron Forbes are of the opinion that, when properly protected and educated, they are destined to form a stabilizing element in the native population, a means of introducing salutary ideas of self-rule and administrative efficiency. So long as our responsibilities continue, they will be an invaluable means of commending progress to the other natives. When it ceases, they will greatly increase the likelihood of carrying on effectively. (A9)

According to the articles, then, the children's Caucasian looks indicate Caucasian personalities and character traits that show the potential of "stabilizing" the Philippines with "self-rule" and "administrative efficiency" so long as the children are "properly protected and educated." The articles, not surprisingly, divide Filipinos and Americans along civilizational lines, with Filipinos falling on the wrong side. This was common in many American texts during the turn of the twentieth century. (Filipinas/os are described in many derogatory ways, including "indolent," "lazy," and unable to govern themselves.) Although the American Guardian Association actually did take in non-mestiza/o orphans at times, the charity is represented in these articles as the steward of white American children in need in a foreign country.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Sánchez-Eppler and Clymer.

<sup>31</sup> The focus on supposedly "American" features like "light hair and blue eyes" ignores the existence of mestiza/o children born from Filipina women and African American soldiers—children who, if they needed help, ought to be under the purview of the Association as well.

The dismissive treatment of the Japanese<sup>32</sup> and Chinese mestizas/os, "full" native Filipinos, and the Spanish mestizas/os—among whom numbered many of the current Filipino leadership in government—strongly suggests that the Association was against the granting of independence to the Philippines, at least, not until their American mestiza/o charges were grown enough to take leadership positions in government. In 1927, Carmi A. Thompson, Special Representative of President Coolidge, wrote of his three-month visit to the Philippines to determine the readiness of the Philippines for independence. His findings would support the assertion that the Association—as an organization co-founded by Governor General Wood—did not believe that native Filipinos were capable of running the country on their own and that the organization may have had strong racial prejudice against them. He mentions the friction between Wood and the Filipino legislative branch who accuse Wood of instituting military dictatorship with his cabinet all consisting of members of the military. That Wood was able to push through policies despite the dysfunction between the legislative and executive branch suggests that the Filipinos' political participation in the Commonwealth government was nominal at best. Carmi concludes that the Philippines is not ready for independence given their economic and military dependence on the United States and the possibility of civil war between Christian and Muslim Filipinos, but recommends that the "obstacles to Philippine development that have been raised by misunderstanding and prejudice" (i.e., Wood's ill-treatment of Filipino politicians) be remedied (6–8).

Eugenics, or the science of producing offspring with "desirable" qualities through sexual reproduction, particularly in humans, was first developed in 1883 by Francis Galton in order to improve the human race (Hawkins 217). This quasi-scientific, white-supremacist discourse undergirds much of the rhetoric in the texts I am reading here. Although the science of genetics initiated by the work of Gregor Mendel, for instance the notion of dominant and recessive genes, was a crucial part of eugenics, the newspapers don't describe in detail the mechanics of this process in the discussion of the mestiza/o children. Rather, the focus is on the social implications of the children's inherited physical, mental, and psychological qualities, as well as on their ability to pass on these same qualities into the coming generations of Filipinos.

Related to this fascination with genetics was the late-nineteenth-century fascination and obsession with race and racial difference. Social scientists drew on the work of Charles Darwin, ranking racial and ethnic groups according to, as Kenton Clymer puts it, "intelligence, culture, and possibilities for advancement" (65). The notion of white American blood, via genetic material, infusing the native population of the Philippines was meant to be a seductive lure for the readers of the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*; seductive enough to get them to open their purses and wallets to fill the coffers of the Association.

Thus, the discussion of these children focused not only on the importance of their education and upbringing but also on their "protection." In the attempt to garner donations for the charity, the newspaper notices inevitably tie discussion of the children's needs to sex and the sexuality of the children, particularly the sexual vulnerability of the girls. Over and over, in the newspaper notices, letters to the editor, journal articles, and other Association publications, mention is made of the dire circumstances of the children. If the native mothers, left by the fathers because of death or simple abandonment, are poor in the first place, they are represented as almost-automatically incapable of caring for their children alone:

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<sup>32</sup> I don't believe that Japanese mestizas/os make up a significant part of mestizaje in the Philippines.

Unable, by the hardest kind of drudgery, to earn more than 50 cents a day many of these abandoned or widowed women have taken other partners or, as is often the case, have drifted into immorality. In such cases, the boys are soon kicked out to shift for themselves, while the girls are farmed out or lent to friends or relatives. This latter has often been the first step toward immoral exploitation. ("Asks Fund" 27)

So the mothers either "drift into immorality" or they "take other partners" who presumably do not want to care for the children. Left to fend for themselves, it is warned, the children fall into exploitative hands, the girls particularly to being pimped out: "2,500 of the cases are urgent. In the case of the girls it is necessary to shield them from prostitution or sale into marriage not far removed from slavery" ("Homeless Philippine Children" S2). Even when they end up in the care of relatives—presumably the Filipino relatives of the mother as the American fathers were usually in the Philippines on their own—the children are still vulnerable to exploitation: "Many stories have been brought back to [the U.S.] about native guardians bartering for mestizo children, and in numerous cases young children have been rescued from degrading surroundings by members of the association" ("Our Mestizos Ask Help" XX4). This accusation against the "native guardians" of exploitation, even incestuous assault, suggests that Filipinos do not have appropriate notions of family, blood ties, national loyalty, or civilized society.

Although the U.S. attempted to distance itself from previous, supposedly-corrupt European colonial powers, American colonial leaders and professional elites in the Philippines nevertheless displayed similar views about the intermingling of Americans and Filipinos and the children resulting from such sexual unions. According to Ann Laura Stoler, Dutch colonial representatives in Indonesia also cited child neglect by impoverished native mothers as the cause of the children's turn to immorality and crime. They even singled out the mixed-race girls, claiming that they were "no longer 'safe' in their parental homes," particularly if their fathers were deceased. They were then more vulnerable to being "'exploited for unfit practices' by their mothers and native or Indo stepfathers at an early age" (118).

The similar insinuation in the American colonial case that native Filipinas' and Filipinos' exploitation of the half-white American mestiza/o children stems from their lack of desire or, worse, genetic inability, to properly care for them is meant to raise the specter of unnameable horrors done to the children. Although a couple of the newspaper notices mention that the majority of mestiza/o children are being raised properly, many of the derogatory statements about native mothers and relatives are generalized to the whole native population. The specter of horrible actions perpetrated on the children may indeed have proved particularly useful in convincing the American people to donate to the Association, reminding them not only of the "white slavery" panic a generation earlier that culminated in the passage of the White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910 but also of the more recent action by the League of Nations which took up the issue of "white slavery"—or the forced prostitution and trafficking of white women—as an international problem in 1921.

The "nurture" argument that poor mothering and neglect were the cause of mixed-race children turning to immorality, however, was problematized by the "nature" argument of eugenics and the focus on "blood" within the same newspaper notices about the American Guardian Association and their charges. The figure of the American mestiza girl, despite being infused with American blood, was haunted by the stereotype of the hypersexual native (girl). Given that the mestiza child's Filipino "blood" comes from the mother, the stereotype of

hypersexual primitive woman comes into play. Not only does the mestiza child's beauty 'invite' a sexualized gaze, but the native blood running through her might cause her to bloom early, so to speak. Yet given the specter of slavery, we again come face to face with the figure of the "tragic mulatto." Mitchell's study of the white northerners who were the recipients of the *cartes-de-visite* featuring African American slave children might provide more insight into the possible reception of these newspaper notices on the American Guardian Association:

The idea of the woman within the child [...] was even more easily projected onto the bodies of white-looking slave girls from the South, since their sexuality, or at the very least their anticipated fertility, would have been part of their purchase price. Because they looked white, but had been slaves, and because they were female, their portraits no doubt summoned the familiar figure of the "tragic mulatto," a woman noted for her beauty, her near whiteness, and her unspeakable violation by the white men of the South. From the mid-nineteenth century, in fact, abolitionist propaganda and rhetoric reflected an increasing preoccupation among middle-class white northerners, with sexuality and the unrestrained sexuality of southern slaveholders in particular. (80–81)

These slave girls—"tragic mulatto" figures on whom an adult sexuality was projected—that white middle-class readers of the *Times* and the *Post* may have already been familiar with, provided a sort of analogue for the blue-eyed, light-haired mestiza girls of the 1920s. Mitchell further argues that the sentimentalization of white childhood in nineteenth-century America (also described by Sánchez-Eppler), led to children becoming a "'priceless' members of the middle-class family: innocent, unproductive, and the focus of nurture and attention," cordoned off from "both the world of adults and the world of work" (66). The form of the *carte-de-visite* was an affordable way for the middle class to fill their domestic spaces with portraits of their precious children, perhaps because the children needed an eye on them at all times for their protection.

While the mestiza/o children were not sentimentalized to the point of being cordoned off from "the world of work," the protection of white American blood against sexual predation was the sensational hook of the fund notices. Around the same time, in the early 1900s, there was a "white slavery" panic—dovetailing with early feminist concerns over prostitution—that equated all sex work with slavery. According to Kamala Kempadoo, white slavery was about the social anxiety over the notion of the "entrapment and enslavement of, particularly, white, Western European, and North American women in prostitution" (x). Indeed, recurring mentions of the specific plight of mestiza girls in the news notices encompass both prostitution and slavery: "In the case of the girls it is necessary to shield them from prostitution or sale into marriage not far removed from slavery" ("Homeless Philippine Children" S2); "It is urgently needful to shield the girls from a life of debasement or from sale into marriage not far removed from slavery" ("The American Mestizo" A9).

Going beyond the sensationalism, the focus on the children's sexual innocence and safety indicates the importance of making sure that white American blood doesn't go to waste. The eugenicist tenor of the texts is very clear. One article in particular goes further than the others by calling both on teachers who have worked in the Philippines for firsthand accounts and, more interestingly, on scientific discourse regarding racial mixing. Furthermore, the article argues for the crucial importance of the Association's work by emphasizing that, while the children have the genetic capacity for greatness, such a capacity can also be turned to "evil": "There is in this tendency, say teachers, power for both good and evil. The alertness of mind and spirit of

adventure found in the mestizo, unless intelligently handled during immature years by those who understand the child, does not always produce good results. If properly brought up, the mestizos or mixed-blood children of the Philippines, develop into faithful workers and industrious scholars" ("Our Mestizos Ask Help" XX4).

The same article then quotes at length the Reverend Frank C. Laubach, a white American missionary and scholar who first came to the Philippines to convert Muslims to Christianity in 1915 and who wrote a book called *The People of the Philippines* in 1925. He told the *New York Times*:

"I believe that one of the great contributions America is making to the Philippine Islands is the mingling of blood of the two peoples. The mestizo children have tremendous possibilities. Unhappily, a large percentage of them are not properly cared for, and in a good many instances they are going into evil ways.

[...]

"This is even more true of the girls than of the boys. It is important that these children be cared for in a proper way: They are bound to have a great influence in the future of the Philippines. It may be an influence for limitless good, or it may be an influence that will make us ashamed of our part in these islands. Which it will be depends on us.

"There is much discussion from the scientific point of view about the intermingling of blood of different races. The testimony of a specialist in sociology may be helpful. The mingling of some races does seem to prove detrimental to both. The mingling of other races results in an improvement. Which result will follow can be determined only by experimentation.

"My own observation of the Philippine Islands convinces me that the mingling of Malay and white blood, as well as Malay and Chinese blood, has been beneficial. Many of the leaders of the Philippine Islands have been, and undoubtedly many will be, mestizos. In helping these children we are not only doing our duty as Americans, but we are also performing a needed service to the Philippines Islands." ("Our Mestizos Ask Help" XX4)

Though not a social scientist himself, Laubach's statements are passed off as 'expert opinion' in the article. The same can be said for the unnamed "teachers" paraphrased in the article. Laubach and the teachers' observations were firsthand accounts of a group of people most of the newspaper's readers knew little about, despite the fact that the United States had occupied the Philippines for over twenty-five years by that point. As such, their words about the political present and future of the Philippines were weighted heavily by the writer and likely by the readers as well. As Stoler astutely observes, "Colonial civil servants, lawyers, doctors, and other professional elites were psychologically attuned observers who imagined domestic sensibilities as the breeding ground of political ones" (118). In this particular case, Laubach and the teachers' conclusions not only justify American presence in the Islands—for who can "properly" care for these children, after all?—but also the eugenicist, genetic infusion of white American blood into the larger Filipino population.

I would argue that the 1925 fund drive for the American Guardian Association amounted to a minor campaign against Philippine independence, one that focused on social and cultural milieus rather than a specifically politically one. It raised the specter of unfit mothers, weak and

immoral native Filipinos, and ineffective Filipino mestizo politicians of Spanish and Chinese blood. In their place, the rhetoric of the charity put forth the idea of strong, intelligent, active white American blood infusing through the whole of the Philippines, eventually raising a crop of American mestizo leaders who would take charge of the newly-independent country in a partnership with the United States that nevertheless would still be like a little brother willing to be guided by the wiser and more mature Uncle Sam. A Philippines ruled by American mestizos was a version of frontier hardiness with which many Americans liked to represent themselves, and it was a cynical vision of an ultimate American colonial conquest.

This vision, however, was vexed by the very same figure that was deployed to justify it: the figure of the American mestiza girl. With "light hair and blue eyes" inherited from her American father, she was also haunted by the stereotype of the hypersexual native on her mother's side. The Association made three claims: 1) motherly neglect and immorality caused the children to turn to immorality themselves, 2) the mestiza girl's beauty induced immoral Filipinas/os to take advantage of her, and 3) the American blood infusing the children needed the influence of American culture in order to win out, so to speak, over the Filipino blood. The underlying implication here is that there is a war within the mixed-race child, suggesting that there is an immoral, hypersexual side of the child that must be restrained by American influence. The eroticized notion of the child in sexual danger—the sensational hook—attracted donors to the Association, but such a notion could provoke not only feelings of protectiveness but also prurient interest and illicit desire, especially when the 'innocence' of the child is called into question by her assumed biological nature. We come back to the strange oscillation of judgment we found in Buckland's eroticized description of native weavers, an oscillation that I argue is inevitable in the collusion of infantilization and hypersexualization.

### **Conclusion: The Sexualized Filipino-as-Child**

The American Guardian Association's vision of a nation ruled by American mestizas/os did not quite come true, although the legacy of mestiza/o elites remains today in the de facto oligarchic rule of the Philippines. Still, the rhetoric of their fundraising efforts is another example of how the figure of the child was a salutary trope for American representation of Filipinas/os. Given that the American colonial project in the Philippines was based on a model of development, we find the notion of the child in any discourses about the capacity of Filipinos for self-government, about education and progress, and about America's paternal "duty" towards the Philippines—all premised on McKinley's larger discourse of "benevolent assimilation" for its extraterritorial holdings.

What problematizes the virtuous discourse of benevolent assimilation, however, is the concurrent representation of Filipinas/os as hypersexual natives, particularly the women and girls. This stereotype depicted Filipinas/os as primitive savages and thus also worked to justify the need for American colonialism to manage the development of the Philippines, but it introduced the dangerous sexuality of the child. Among some American colonials, there was a fear of leaving the Philippines in better hands than those of "full-blooded" natives. The mestiza/o child was to be the safeguard of American ideals in the country. But alongside this discourse was the anxiety over her precocious sexuality, which haunted the edges of the mestiza girl's portrayal as an innocent in need of America's protection, troubling the narrative of America's ability to properly manage the Philippines in the first place.



The violence of actual war was not merely documented and aestheticized in photographs, but it was also brought into the middle-class American home via picture postcards. In studying the role of Philippine colonial postcards in disseminating and domesticating representations of Filipinas/os, we find that the focus on beauty is underlaid by racist colonial violence; the two are different sides of the same coin, depicting the savage primitivism of the colonized native. The depiction of children, particularly girls, in such postcards and in photographs taken by American colonials like Dean Worcester were rooted in a longer and broader history of imperial fascination with so-called primitive sexuality. The focus on the body and body parts—for example, breasts in females, muscles in males—is a sign of an Orientalist and imperialist sexual intrigue on the part of the colonial ethnologist, journalist, or simple traveler (see Balce, Brody, and O'Brien).

It is in the context of the history of the trope of the Filipino-as-child that I argue that the sexualized Filipino child is also an important trope in the discourse of colonial conquest. One enduring legacy of this colonial collusion between the hypersexual native and the Filipino-as-child is the sexual predation of Filipino children up to the contemporary moment. At the same time, the conflation between Filipino adult bodies and Filipino child bodies and the ascription of mature sexuality to the child work in an unexpected way to lead us to consider the rights of the child. The colonial legacy of the ways in which we think of children—expressly how children are used as a derogatory metaphor for whole groups of people that include adults because we think of children as not-yet-adults—needs to be interrogated and should lead us to imagine how we can see children as full human beings in their own right. We need to confront the troubling ways in which personhood (and its attendant rights of self-determination) is not seen to be an inalienable characteristic of all human beings. Thinking about children in relation to mature or adult sexuality is uncomfortable precisely because it collides with the idea of children as pre-adults or non-adults and therefore not-quite-persons. I deal with these issues further in Chapters Three and Four, when I consider the postcolonial Filipino and Filipino American responses to the legacy of the sexualized Filipino child.

In this chapter, I have tried to show the importance of an intersectional approach to understanding Philippine-American relations or contact zones. The colonization of the Philippines by the United States occurred in the context of the emancipation of black slaves in America and its violent aftermath as well as of America's subjugation of Native Americans. An intersectional approach is important to understand the complicated history of child tropes in technologies of racialization, for many of the technologies used to manage Filipino populations were tested first on America's territorial subjects. I discuss more of this contextualization in the next chapter on colonial education, another important trope regarding Filipino children, who provided a focus for American ideas about the Filipino-as-child.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Education for Subjection: Race Wars and the Context of Filipino Legibility during the American Colonial Period**

One of the significant themes that collect around the image of the "Other" child is the question of educability and assimilability. Continuing from the previous chapter the discussion of colonial discourses that depict the Filipina/o-as-child, the comparison of Filipina/os to other "Others" within the contiguous American borders, and the sexualization of the Filipina/o, this chapter focuses on the education of the child as both "a trope and an apparatus of colonization" (Wallace, "De-scribing" 183). For Jo-Ann Wallace, following Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish*, the school serves as "a primary site of the kind of 'technology of power' that calls 'the child' into being":

Just as "the criminal" is produced by the prison and "the madman" is produced by the insane asylum, so "the child" is produced by the school. This is true, of course, not only for children but for the production of colonized others as child-subjects through their schooling in the oppressor's culture. ("Technologies" 291)

This focus on the school and education is critical to Philippine-American relations because the education of Filipinos was the capstone of America's colonial mission of "benevolent assimilation" of the Philippines. By focusing on education, I outline some of the links between the racialization of Filipinos in the United States and the respective racializations of African Americans and Native Americans in order to illuminate the contours of a larger pattern of domination, while also taking into account the specificities of the different racial discourses surrounding each population. The chapter also deals more briefly with the role of bodily and sexual discipline and surveillance in educating "Other" children. These themes, which become concentrated in discussions of schooling and education for children of color (and their parents), ultimately lead to the question of non-white (and non-Protestant) people's propensity for nationalist competence and agency.

Although the history of Philippine-American contact is unique, as Oscar Campomanes claims, in that the Philippines is "the only Asian country of origin to have been subjected to a sustained and systematic American experiment in extraterritorial colonial rule (1898–1941)" ("New Empire" 147) and that "the height of the Philippine-American War [is] a moment which clarifies and elaborates the imperial modernity and national novelty ('exceptionalism') of the United States" ("New Empire" 161), the encounter between the United States and the Philippines was also conditioned and certainly informed by the history of U.S. oppression and genocide of African Americans and Native Americans. Walter L. Williams strongly argues for the "evidence of similarities in the ways in which Americans thought of Native Americans and Filipinos" (822), citing both imperialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric in the debates over Philippine annexation. In his essay, "United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism," he maintains that the American imperialist sentiment of 1898 was not a departure from American tradition and that in fact the United States had an oft-ignored history of "holding alien peoples as colonial subjects before 1898" (810), namely Native Americans. Not only was similar language used to refer to Native Americans and Filipinos—"wild and ignorant," "savages" (825), as well as children—but

the very same policies were advised for and applied to Filipinos as were applied to Native Americans, such as the ascription of "ward" and "national" status rather than "citizen" or "alien" (813, 825). Moreover, the unquestioned "rightness of expansion over Native Americans" was used for the justification of "atrocities" committed against Filipinos during the war, including torture, concentration camps, and outright massacre (825).<sup>33</sup> Since similar atrocities were committed against Native Americans in the past and these expansionist acts were implicitly and explicitly sanctioned by leaders on *both* sides of the debate over Philippine annexation, the imperialists had a decided advantage over the anti-imperialists with this analogy between Native Americans and Filipinos.<sup>34</sup>

While Williams claims that linking Filipinos with African Americans and the Chinese was not as useful to the imperialists, Richard Slotkin argues that the U.S. military posed Filipinos in a "dual identification" with Indians and Blacks during the Philippine-American War: "The parallel between the logic of massacre in the Philippines and the lynching of Blacks in the South and Midwest was a fact of contemporary life and rhetoric. If 'Indian' was the racial epithet for Filipinos preferred by the high command, the second most popular—and the one preferred by the rank and file—was 'nigger'" (114). Slotkin further argues that these two identifications had specifically different meanings: while the association with Indians represented Filipinos as a threat, "an armed enemy capable of 'exterminating' the American army as Sitting Bull had exterminated Custer's men," the association with Blacks "identified the Filipinos as more contemptible than the Red Man, a member of a servile race well suited for subjugation, whose presence is *polluting* as much as menacing" (italics in original). In either case, however, Americans felt justified in using extreme violence against Filipinos; in fact, the violence against Filipinos in the Philippines coincided with violence against African Americans in the United States: "While Black troops were still serving with the army in Cuba and Manila, there were bloody race riots in Illinois, South Carolina, and Wilmington, N.C. These incidents reflected not only the racial prejudice that divided the poor of both races, competing for a limited number of economic opportunities, but a systemic campaign to disenfranchise southern Blacks, stripping them of rights they had clung to since Reconstruction" (114).

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<sup>33</sup> The Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indians, which constituted a very influential advisory group on Indian policy, considered both Native Americans and "insulars" (the native peoples of the U.S. island possessions) in their 1901 platform: "The experience of the past [with Indians] indicates the errors which we should avoid...and the ends which we should seek in our relations with all dependent races under American sovereignty. Capacity for self-government in dependent and inexperienced races, is a result to be achieved by patient and persistent endeavor; it is not to be assumed that they already possess it" (qtd. in W. Williams 815; ellipsis in text). In this vein, the group advised that the government "hold lands in trust for the natives, appoint officials by qualification rather than by political patronage, and promote education and 'Christian civilization.' It recommended these guidelines equally for Indians and insular territories" (815).

<sup>34</sup> See also Richard Drinnon's *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (1992, orig. 1980), which makes a larger claim for the parallels between the history of Indian conflict with whites in early modern America and the race wars that constituted U.S. national modernity, including the Philippine-American War, arguing that the "metaphysics of Indian-hating" was what propelled the rise of the United States as an empire. Specifically regarding the Philippine-American War, Drinnon does a bit more thorough job than Williams of analyzing the debates between the imperialists and anti-imperialists, suggesting that the precarious argumentation on both sides reveals that the anti-imperialists "were really liberal imperialists who could not bring themselves to recognize they lamented the passing of a country that never was" (312). (And for this reason, Drinnon calls U.S. Senator Albert Beveridge's "frankness" about his American forefathers' seizure of Indian land "refreshing"!)

John D. Blanco similarly proposes that the failure of Reconstruction and the upsurge of racial conflict in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century provide the necessary backdrop for understanding the Spanish-American War and the conflicts in the Philippines and Cuba. For Blanco, the "race war" in the Philippines was inextricably related to the conflict between whites and African Americans in the United States. He suggests that the American wars of aggression of the twentieth century, especially in Asia, ultimately have their roots in the Civil War, but, like historians Richard Slotkin and Paul Kramer,<sup>35</sup> he argues that the atrocities committed against Filipinos in the Philippines also fueled the raw violence against African Americans in the United States, in a kind of positive feedback loop. In his reading of *The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons* (2004), a remarkable compilation of American political cartoons from the turn of the twentieth century depicting Filipinos and the Philippines during the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, Blanco notes that the American pretension of law-preservation outside the United States during the Philippine-American War was betrayed by the recognition of U.S. racial conflict within its borders.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, *The Forbidden Book* visually testifies to the unmistakable relationship between newly colonized Filipinos and Native Americans and African Americans in the American cultural imagination during the war. As this ground-breaking collection of political cartoons indicates, Filipinos were racialized in multiple ways from the very start of American contact with the Philippines, following the path of but also adding to the seemingly indiscriminate mixture of Indian, Black, and Asiatic racialization of the time.<sup>37</sup> The collection also makes visually clear the great extent to which Americans used infantilization as a preferred mode of representing Filipinos, Native Americans, and African Americans in political culture. This chapter analyzes several such political cartoons included in *The Forbidden Book*—in particular those that feature the trope of education—alongside memoirs of an American schoolteacher and an American soldier who lived and worked in the Philippines during the early American colonial period.

### **Educability and Assimilability**

During the almost-three-and-a-half centuries before Americans arrived in the Philippines, Spanish colonizers had set up an educational system in which universities and colleges in Manila mostly taught Spaniards who were entering the clergy, while rural schools throughout the Islands were taught by priests in the local languages (Litton 86). The curricula of such rural schools differed from priest to priest but often focused on Catholic doctrine and catechism (Suzuki 26). Learning and using the indigenous languages made it easier for the priests to proselytize to the natives (Galang 100). While some scholars suggest that rural Filipinos were not taught in Spanish so as to prevent their becoming "uppity and arrogant" (Stanley Karnow qtd. in Litton

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<sup>35</sup> Kramer "emphasizes the contingency and indeterminacy of the process by which the United States' racial-imperial ideologies took shape. Rather than featuring the 'projection' or 'export' of preexisting formations, the war prompted, and was in turn fundamentally structured by, a process of racialization in which race-making and war-making were intimately connected" (89).

<sup>36</sup> John D. Blanco, presentation given at the Association for Asian American Studies Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 22 April 2005. See also Bascara and Coloma on the comparative racialization of Filipinas/os and African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century.

<sup>37</sup> Blanco suggests that this multiplicity of representation has to do with the Americans' still-developing, "inchoate understanding" of the racial identity of the "new subjects" of the United States.

86), others make the point that the friars also "wanted to stop the ideas of the Reformation from coming into the Philippines, which would not be possible, they thought, if the *Indios* did not learn Spanish" (Suzuki 27).

In Manila, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, several gender-segregated secondary schools, called *colegios*, were opened for boys and girls with means. The curricula of these schools differed by gender, with the girls' secondary schools offering some Spanish-language teaching, the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), music, deportment, needlework, and catechism. For the boys, the schools offered Spanish grammar and rhetoric, Latin, Greek, mostly Spanish history, character education, music, as well as science and mathematics. With this type of education, the boys could develop into artists and professionals. The girls, on the other hand, were prepared only "for marriage and family, or for the religious life of the convent" (29).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Spanish attempted to institute reforms in the educational system to address the lack of standardized curricula and teaching methods and the disorganized administration of the schools. After the educational decree of 1863, a teacher-training school was established for men and Spanish learning was available to more people, though the local vernaculars remained the languages of instruction. Parish priests yet remained the authority in the local rural schools (31).

In contrast, the Philippine revolutionary government, which was formed when 50 revolutionary leaders signed the Biak-na-bato Constitution in November 1897, aimed to separate the schools from the church. The Constitution declared "freedom of religion, freedom of education, freedom of the press, and freedom to exercise any profession" (34). It was copied from the constitution devised by Cuban revolutionaries who were also revolting from Spanish colonial control (Constantino 197). Ironically, it was this "Cuban Revolution against Spanish tyranny [...that] gave the United States its opportunity to impose its own rule both on Cuba and the Philippines" (204). Once the Americans intervened in the Philippines in 1898, the Philippine Revolution was over and the Philippine-American War began.

Americans established a public educational system in the Philippines in January 1901, even before the end of the Philippine-American War.<sup>38</sup> This public school system was established as part of President William McKinley's 1898 "benevolent assimilation" doctrine towards the Islands, which proclaimed that the Americans came to the Philippines "not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights" (qtd. in Maniago 279). Furthermore, the "paramount aim" of the United States in the Islands was to "win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring to them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule" (ibid. 280). However, it turns out that the only way to accomplish these tokens of affectionate "friendship" was to "sedulously maintain[] the strong arm of authority to repress disturbance and to overcome all obstacles to the bestowal of the blessings of good and stable government upon the Philippine Islands under the free flag of the United States" (ibid. 280). Indeed, such friendship as McKinley supposedly desired was belied

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<sup>38</sup> The United States claimed victory in 1902, even though there was still fighting in some regions for about a decade longer.

by the gruesome violence with which the United States carried out war of conquest (1898–1902) against the people of the Philippines. Nevertheless, by "linking education with uplift, McKinley's project set the stage for a highly developed system of government control that relied upon 'free' public education as the institution that would win the minds of the Philippine people and, more importantly, assure their ideological interpellation in the colonial regime" (Wesling 64).

The Second Philippine Commission, headed by McKinley-appointee William Howard Taft, proposed a public school system as one of the three principal components to achieve the goal of preparing Filipinos for self-government (May 15). The Taft Commission enacted Act 74, establishing the Department of Public Education and making provisions for the opening of a normal (teacher training) and trade school in Manila and an agricultural school in the island of Negros. Under the Act, schools would be established in all parts of the Philippines, including reorganizing existing schools. All primary instruction would be free. English would be the language of instruction as soon as the Filipinos learned it, with American soldiers "detailed as instructors until such time as they may be replaced by trained teachers" (qtd. in Maniago 289). Moreover, "[n]o teacher or other person shall teach or criticise the doctrines of any church, religious sect or denomination or, shall attempt to influence the pupils for or against any church or religious sect in any public schools established under this act" (ibid.); priests or ministers could teach religion during designated times of the day at the school to schoolchildren whose parents or guardians wished for it, as long as they did not foment anti-American sentiment while conducting such lessons. Textbooks and curricula would be standardized across schools.

That Filipinos were educable and assimilable seemed to be taken for granted, according to McKinley's doctrine. This doctrine was in contrast to the Spanish colonial attitude towards Filipinos, most of whom the colonial administration did not adequately educate to enter professions or to participate politically. Yet McKinley's assumptions were still based on his preconceived notions of Filipino inferiority, that indeed they were children who needed to be educated in self-government by the United States, as evidenced in a famous speech he gave to clergymen justifying his decision to annex the Philippines despite the controversy over the United States becoming an imperialist nation:

I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight, and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) that we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos [sic], and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and to sleep, and slept soundly.... (qtd. in Denny 74–75; ellipsis in text)

McKinley couches his decision in terms of 1) honor, 2) good business, 3) mercy, and 4) inexorable duty connected with religious responsibility to "uplift and civilize and Christianize" through education.

Indeed, from the words of high-ranking officials to soldiers and schoolteachers, the representation of the Filipino-as-child was prevalent from the early years of American colonial occupation of the Philippines. William Howard Taft, the head of the Second Philippine Commission and the first U.S. civilian governor of the Philippines (and later President of the United States), was recorded describing Filipinos as "nothing but grown up children" (qtd. in May 10). According to Charles Hawley:

Although Taft referred to the bond between Filipinos and U.S. Americans as fraternal, the reality of the relationship was understood by U.S. Americans to be strictly paternal. Taft's discourse of fraternalism only thinly masked a paternalism that was a far cry from brotherly equality. This paternalistic race thinking, which had its roots in the debates over slavery and over African American and Native American incorporation into white U.S. society after the Civil War, emphasized the primitive, effeminate, and child-like nature of Filipino colonial subjects. It also stressed the importance of developing programs of practical and moral instruction in order to situate them appropriately in U.S. society. (393)

Taft's paternalism—indicated by his words about Filipinos—was closely related to that in McKinley's "benevolent assimilation" speech. Like McKinley, Taft saw Filipinos as inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race, but also believed that Filipinos were educable: "While there is today a palpable unfitness for self-government among them [...], there is in them a capacity for future development" (qtd. in May 12).<sup>39</sup>

The memoirs of Ralph Kent Buckland, an American schoolteacher ('Thomasite') who arrived in the Philippines in 1903, and of Jacob Isselhard, an American soldier during the Philippine-American War, further elucidate the way in which white American racial feeling about the people of the Philippines (as well as other brown people) at the turn of the twentieth century manifested through infantilizing representations of Filipinos. Indeed, Isselhard and Buckland were even less sanguine about the capabilities and character of Filipino people than McKinley or Taft. In his memoir, for instance, Buckland decries what he sees as an overly-generous view of Filipino qualities that lead to American officials giving power to "common, very common" people (216). Indicating his racism against non-white (non-Anglo-Saxon) people, he believes that if American officials had been from the American South and used to dealing with African Americans, they would not be so generous in their estimations of Filipinos' character and would not bestow power so easily (215). However, he writes, "Not one American occupying a high official position ever has the chance of seeing a Filipino town as it really is, or of seeing the native officials in their routine work, or of seeing the average native under the influence of his ordinary temperament" because the Filipino towns/native officials find out in advance about inspectors' arrivals and shape up their books and homes as well as hide evidence of embezzlement and other corruption (216). What is interesting here is that Buckland ascribes to the native officials a knowledge of what the Americans want to see, and the natives are able to provide them that image all the while continuing to do what they want to do. Clearly the natives are not stupid, nor does Buckland seem to believe so, but in his estimation they cannot be trusted. Thus it is not because of stupidity or ignorance but because of their waywardness and low morals that they must be treated and taught like children.

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<sup>39</sup> However, Taft believed pessimistically that it would take fifty to a hundred years for Filipinos' full development towards Anglo-Saxon ideals (May 10).

Yet Buckland's feelings toward Filipino children themselves are quite different from his feelings toward their parents. The young children in the *barrios* where he works as a supervising teacher are "children only in stature" (187); they are better models of industry than their parents and other adults (189–90); and they even dress like adults (190). Their parents, on the other hand,

are a pretty shiftless set. The father will sit by the hour hanging out of a window of his shack, a package of cigarettes within easy reach, and a lighted one constantly in his mouth. He will sit there and smoke and spit, and spit and smoke. Perhaps he will get up enough energy to twang his guitar a little; but, more likely, he will not grow musical until later in the evening, after the *tuba* has been passed around a few times.

The mother of the household, while away from home, is a valuable member of the community. She works very hard during the rice-planting and during the harvesting. Many times these mothers trudge miles to the village markets to make a few cents by trade. But just as soon as the mother comes home, she is about as "doles" as her lord and master. She lolls on the floor with a cud of betel-nut oozing red saliva from her mouth, until *tuba* time. After a glass or two, she is ready to chime in with the guitar in a shrill, unmusical treble. (189)

His decision to emphasize the laziness of the parents in contradistinction to the industry of the children is belied by other sections of the book where he describes the men and women doing labor both at home and abroad, such as women at the loom and men who built their own nipa hut homes. How is his metaphoric infantilization of adult Filipinos related to the valorization of Filipino children?

There is something strange in the different ways he values the children and the parents/adults. Here is one of his descriptions of Filipinos in which he complains about the undeserved power given to native officials, who are really only "very common" people:

The Filipinos have the happy faculty of always putting the best foot foremost; they have the knack of seeming always to know more than they do know; and they are of too crude a nature ever to be the least bit sensitive. They are brazen and not easily disconcerted or embarrassed. *They have perfect self-confidence, the very essence of self-esteem, and a [sic] I'll-pretend-that-I-know-all-about-it-whether-I-do-or-not trait in their make-up, which makes them perfectly sure of themselves on all occasions.* These characteristics [...] have caused the Filipinos to be greatly overestimated. (215–16; my emphasis)

Yet one could argue that part of this description is rather similar to the description he gives for the children:

Filipino children—I refer to the children of the poor, to the *barrio* children; for it was this class with which I came in contact in my work as a supervising teacher—generally impress one as being children only in stature. They all have very old heads on their shoulders. *Seemingly whatever they do, is done with as much confidence and assurance as though a more mature intellect were directing their movements. They comport themselves as do any of the grown-ups of the barrio. They are mentally equal to any task that their arms and legs are strong enough to perform.* The mind, in fact, seems always to be nagging the muscles for not being able to accomplish the work planned for them to do. (187; my emphasis)



Although "[i]t is not natural for children to have so much self-possession"—which he suggests is due to the lack of "stability of character among the older people" since the children have to learn early to take care of themselves—it is still "a pity they have to grow up and lose their engaging, though unchildlike, characteristics!" (188). However, what he finds utterly charming in the children is the very same thing he finds repulsive in the adult. What does Buckland find so lamentable in the transition from childhood to adulthood? What is actually lost? I suggest that it is precisely that nothing is lost, which gives Buckland the sense of arrested development in the parents. If, as David Archard argues, the modern Western conception of childhood understands it as a teleological state of development, the similar cultural trait (of self-confidence, for example) that both the Filipino children and their parents possess might indicate to Buckland that the parents never grew up.

He later writes: "With so much thrust on [the children], they naturally develop mannerisms that seem to us precocious. But, as the years roll on, they themselves grow up to laze and smoke, and, in their turn, to bring into the world grave little grandfathers and grandmothers" (190). On first glance, it seems that Buckland believes that the young children, so adult-like and serious, grow to become childlike/childish adults in a trajectory opposite to normative social and psychological development. However, what may actually have been the case, but which didn't occur to Buckland, is that the children and their parents displayed similar characteristics that stemmed from cultural commonality.<sup>40</sup>

For the American soldier Jacob Isselhard, in contrast, native children (specifically boys) are bright but lazy, much the way Buckland sees some Filipino adults. They are educable only insofar as they can overcome their laziness, and when they do they prove "their intellectual powers by becoming skillful lawyers, artists and writers, some of whom have attained to international fame in their respective professions" (67). Isselhard also seems to believe that assimilation is possible for Filipinos particularly through the vehicle of language. He comments favorably on the plan to teach English to all schoolchildren: "In sending to the Islands a thousand American teachers, our government has made a good but small beginning only toward the introduction of the English language. It is a step in the right direction, for nothing will tend more to accelerate assimilation than sameness of speech" (66). It is unclear, however, whether he means that they can be assimilated into the United States and ever become Americans.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> It's also possible that his disdain for these parents' treatment of their children may have to do with negative feelings about child labor. As part of the Progressive movement in the United States in the early twentieth century, the concept of the child and childhood was undergoing a transformation in relation to labor. As Sarah Chinn maintains, "the definition of 'American child' was set in opposition to 'child worker'" by anti-child labor movements that helped to push laws through Congress as well as to make child labor culturally unpopular (64).

<sup>41</sup> John Higham offers some context on the notion of assimilation in the nineteenth century:

To speak of assimilation as a problem in nineteenth-century America is, in an important sense, to indulge in anachronism. That is because nineteenth-century Americans seemed for the most part curiously undaunted by, and generally insensitive to, the numerous and sometimes tragic divisions in their society along racial and ethnic lines. Leaving aside some significant exceptions, the boundaries between groups with different origins and distinct cultures caused little concern. Assimilation was either taken for granted or viewed as inconceivable. For European peoples it was thought to be the natural, almost inevitable outcome of life in America. For other races assimilation was believed to be largely unattainable and therefore not a source of concern. Only at the end of the century did ethnic mixing arouse a sustained and urgent sense of danger. Only then did large numbers of white Americans come to fear that assimilation was not occurring among

Rather more pessimistic than Taft, Isselhard reckons that it will take generations upon generations—"300 to 400" years (108)—to civilize Filipinos. "Although in close contact with the whites for over three hundred years," he writes, "the Filipinos are as yet a very primitive people and, at best, but semi-civilized" (10). If Buckland has negative feelings about child labor, Isselhard has negative feelings about women doing heavy labor. Although Isselhard thinks relatively well of the "average Filipino" man vis-à-vis his *capability* to do good work, the fact that women do much of the work particularly in farming is one of the signs of Filipinos' "semi-civilized" state and thus one reason for the rightness of American occupation and tutelage of the Philippines:

It may also be stated that the average Filipino is his own tradesman, a sort of "jack of all trades but master of none." He builds and keeps in repair his dwelling and in many cases even manufactures the tools he requires. It must be remembered, however, that in all occupations thus far mentioned [farmers, carpenters, fisherman, cigar and cigarette makers, weavers and jewelers], excepting those of fishing and jewelrying [sic], the female comes in for a goodly, yes I dare say the biggest portion of the work, including also the cultivation of fields. This is one of the few privileges women are granted in their marriage contract, namely, to do all the work required of them by their lords and masters. (34)

The sarcastic last sentence leads to the topic of the general lack of productivity, and even cowardice, of native men, especially the unmarried ones. Using the same words as Buckland, Isselhard calls them "a lazy, shiftless and unambitious lot" (35). "Imperative need and the application of iron-ruled measures on the part of the recognized authorities," he claims, "are the only means that will stimulate the unmarried native buck to temporary activity (35). While the concern over Filipina women's labor and the simultaneous criticism of the men's work ethic may seem to amount to a critique of the women's subordinate role in marriage, in fact Isselhard both negatively feminizes Filipino men and puts women on a pedestal when he decries how much harder the women work, which is to say they seem to work harder than men. (This also recalls Vicente Rafael's observation about the masculinity of working-class Filipina women in the previous chapter.)

As in the case with Buckland, Isselhard's claims may say more about his own background as a twenty-four-year-old U.S. soldier from the Midwest at the turn of the twentieth century than they do about the inherent qualities of Filipinos or their need to be educated. Indeed, the rhetoric is ideologically in line with conservative Victorian-American notions of proper womanhood and manhood. These notions of propriety and morality—about one's work ethic, industriousness, and proper gendered and age-segregated "sphere" of labor among other things—were also touted by colonial officials and the American (Protestant) missionaries in the Philippines; and Filipino men, women, and children's noncompliance with said notions served to justify American occupation. The contemporaneous culture of Progressive reform in the United States provided the paternalistic language with which Buckland, Isselhard, and others described Filipinos' failure to measure up to American standards of civilization. In this language, the figure of the child in need of education was the perfect trope to justify building a presumably benevolent colonial

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major European groups and that it was going too far among other minorities, notably blacks, Orientals, and Jews. (7)

apparatus (such as a public school system) that provided cover for American economic and military aims in the Philippines and attempted to erase the brutal violence of the War.

The paternalistic desire to uplift, civilize, and Christianize subject peoples through education was also prevalent in American political and social attitudes towards African American and Native American communities in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, fin-de-siècle Americans comprehended this parallel among Filipinos, African Americans, and Native Americans, as indicated by the political cartoons produced at the time. One such political cartoon compellingly depicts Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the anti-Spanish then anti-American revolutionary struggles, and Uncle Sam as the characters Topsy and Miss Ophelia, respectively, from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The political cartoon, drawn by artist Victor Gillam, was first published in February 1899 in *Judge Magazine* at the height of debates in the United States regarding the colonial annexation of the Philippines. (See Figure 1 below.)



"OUR NEW TOPSY. TOPSY (Aguinaldo)—'T's so awful wicked there cain't nobody do nothin' with me. I keeps Miss Feeley (Uncle Sam) a-swearin' at me half de time, 'cause I's might wicked, I is.' —*Uncle Tom's Cabin.*"

*Judge*, Arkell Publishing Company, New York, February 11, 1899 [artist: Victor Gillam]

Figure 2.1: "OUR NEW TOPSY."

"TOPSY (Aguinaldo)—'T's so awful wicked there cain't nobody do nothin' with me. I keeps Miss Feeley (Uncle Sam) a-swearin' at me half de time, 'cause I's might wicked, I is.' —*Uncle Tom's Cabin.*"<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Reprinted in *The Forbidden Book* (127). Reproduced here courtesy of Abe Ignacio.



This Aguinaldo/Topsy cartoon suggests the strength of racialized images of African Americans in thinking about Filipinos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But how is it that an antebellum novel that was credited with humanizing African American slaves and pushing the cause of abolition could be used in such a way almost fifty years later during the Philippine-American War? What does the cartoon mean by this reference?

In the novel, Topsy is the quintessential 'savage' African American slave girl whom the Northern white female character Miss Ophelia (Miss Feely) struggles to 'tame' and educate. Our first 'picture' of Topsy in the novel is as a sly, smart-mouthed, unkempt creature whose greatest feature is her almost unnatural talent for mimicry and break-dancing. St. Clare, the sometimes sympathetic New Orleans slave owner who is aware of the moral wrong of slavery but feels powerless to change the institution, decides to engineer a social experiment in order to force his Northern cousin, Ophelia, who is visiting him in Louisiana, to set action to words and 'civilize' the slaves she says are indeed civilizable. For this purpose, St. Clare buys the notoriously wayward and badly behaved nine-year-old Topsy:

She was one of the blackest of her race; and her round shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room. Her mouth, half open with astonishment at the wonders of the new Mas'r's parlor, displayed a white and brilliant set of teeth. Her woolly hair was braided in sundry little tails, which stuck out in every direction. The express of her face was an odd mixture of shrewdness and cunning, over which was oddly drawn, like a kind of veil, an expression of the most doleful gravity and solemnity. She was dressed in a single filthy, ragged garment, made of bagging; and stood with her hands demurely folded before her. Altogether, there was something odd and goblin-like about her appearance, – something, as Miss Ophelia afterwards said, "so heathenish," as to inspire that good lady with utter dismay... (351–52)

St. Clare then urges Topsy to perform, treating her like an animal: "I thought she was rather a funny specimen in the Jim Crow line. Here, Topsy," he added, giving a whistle, as a man would to call the attention of a dog, 'give us a song, now, and show us some of your dancing':

The black, glassy eyes glittered with a kind of wicked drollery, and the thing struck up, in a clear shrill voice, an odd negro melody, to which she kept time with her hands and feet, spinning around, clapping her hands, knocking her knees together, in a wild, fantastic sort of time, and producing in her throat all those odd guttural sounds which distinguish the native music of her race; and finally, turning a summerset or two, and giving a prolonged closing note, as odd and unearthly as that of a steam-whistle, she came suddenly down on the carpet, and stood with her hands folded, and a most sanctimonious expression of meekness and solemnity over her face, only broken by the cunning glances which she shot askance from the corners of her eyes. (352)

Introduced to this grotesque picture of Topsy, Ophelia at first balks at the thought of taking the child under her wing, but when St. Clare points out that it would be a missionary's duty to educate a "heathen" like Topsy, Ophelia realizes her hypocrisy and "evidently soften[s]. 'Well, it might be a real missionary work,' said she, looking rather more favorably on the child" (353). She soon after begins to teach Topsy her letters, sewing, and other domestic duties such as cleaning her (Ophelia's) bedchamber.

The caption on the Aguinaldo/Topsy cartoon reads: "OUR NEW TOPSY. TOPSY (Aguinaldo)—'T's so awful wicked there cain't nobody do nothin' with me. I keeps Miss Feeley (Uncle Sam) a-swearin' at me half de time, 'cause I's might [sic] wicked, I is.'—*Uncle Tom's Cabin*." The wording in the caption is a reworking of a famous line in Stowe's novel, at which point Ophelia is scolding Topsy for stealing and destroying the things she stole (though it turns out that Topsy only says she burned up the items because she really hadn't stolen them and therefore could not produce them at Ophelia's demand): "'What did you burn 'em for?' said Miss Ophelia. [Topsy replies,] 'Cause I 's wicked,—I is. I 's mighty wicked, any how. I can't help it'" (360).

Although Topsy as a 'savage' is prominently featured for a few chapters in the second half of the novel, she does undergo a transformation. Near the end of the novel there is a glowing but brief paragraph of how well she turned out:

[S]o thoroughly efficient was Miss Ophelia in her conscientious endeavor to do her duty by her élève, that the child grew rapidly in grace and in favor with the family and neighborhood. At the age of womanhood, she was, by her own request, baptized, and became a member of the Christian church in the place; and showed so much intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world, that she was at last recommended, and approved as a missionary to one of the stations in Africa; and we have heard that the same activity and ingenuity which, when a child, made her so multiform and restless in her development, is now employed, in a safer and wholesomer manner, in teaching the children of her own country. (612)

This vision of a transformed Topsy as an upright citizen—at least what Stowe and her contemporaries would have considered as such, a schoolteacher and missionary—is completely ignored, even obfuscated, by the political cartoon.

I think that it is significant that American cultural memory would have retained the figure of Topsy as she is before her reformation, which begins once she learns that she is loved by the angel of the novel, St. Clare's young daughter Eva, who is of an age with Topsy but who is a substitute mother for the slave girl. The Topsy/Aguinaldo political cartoon is only one instance of the proliferation of staged plays, translations, and illustrations adapting Stowe's immensely popular novel in the latter half of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century. The prominence of Topsy representations in these cultural productions that focus only on her pre-reformation characteristics suggests the lasting rhetorical power of Stowe's characterizations of black stereotypes as "heathens" as well as of the depiction of white missionaries' frustrations and anxieties over the educability and civilizable capacity of the heathen.

Since, through its depiction of Topsy, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stages the debate over whether African Americans, particularly the formerly enslaved (non-mulatto) children, were in fact educable, it makes sense that the Topsy/Aguinaldo cartoon depicts the relationship between the Philippines and the United States as that between Topsy and Ophelia, with Ophelia in the frustrated missionary's role. The folds of Ophelia's clothes and the twisted umbrella in her hand suggest disarray, and she wears a dismayed look on her face as she looks on at the dancing/jumping figure of Topsy, who is wearing the white gloves of the minstrel and grinning with a mischievous look in her eyes. The minstrel elements in Topsy's character in the novel

entail the trope of the "wild child"<sup>43</sup> and anxiety about the poor (O'Loughlin 581). The societal distress over both figures as well as the African American child resolved itself through programs designed to reform them partly through education:

The wild child, separated from her mother and mistreated, was a familiar trope in sentimental fiction. In fact, Stowe's solution for the problem of a wild child, the love of a substitute mother, was by no means unusual. What was unique was Stowe's conflation of the wild child with the slave child. This act of articulation made a particular political use of the wild child trope by literally making slavery responsible for an ongoing concern of white, middle-class America, the motherless child in an economically uncertain world. As Christine Stansell has shown, shifts in employment practices as well as population increases in the 1850s led to a growth in the phenomenon of children separated from their parents and often on their own on the streets: "[L]arge numbers of children, who two decades earlier would have worked under close supervision as apprentices or servants, spent their days away from adult discipline." Stowe's *Topsy* made a particular kind of sense under these conditions.

In fact, Stowe was to later argue in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* that the "problem" of *Topsy* was not specific to slavery. In *A Key*, she refers to the English working class and New York City prostitutes for whom educational and reform efforts were designed to "encourage self-respect, and hope, and sense of character." (581–2)

Thus the trope of education, which has a clear imperialist tenor in the context of the debates over Philippine annexation, was applied as well to those whom Stowe considered marginal or troublesome to its constitutional body of American society almost fifty years before the Philippine-American War. In the depiction of the United States as Ophelia, the *Topsy/Aguinaldo* political cartoon supports the idea of the 'duty' of the United States to educate the Philippines until it is able to govern itself as a democracy.

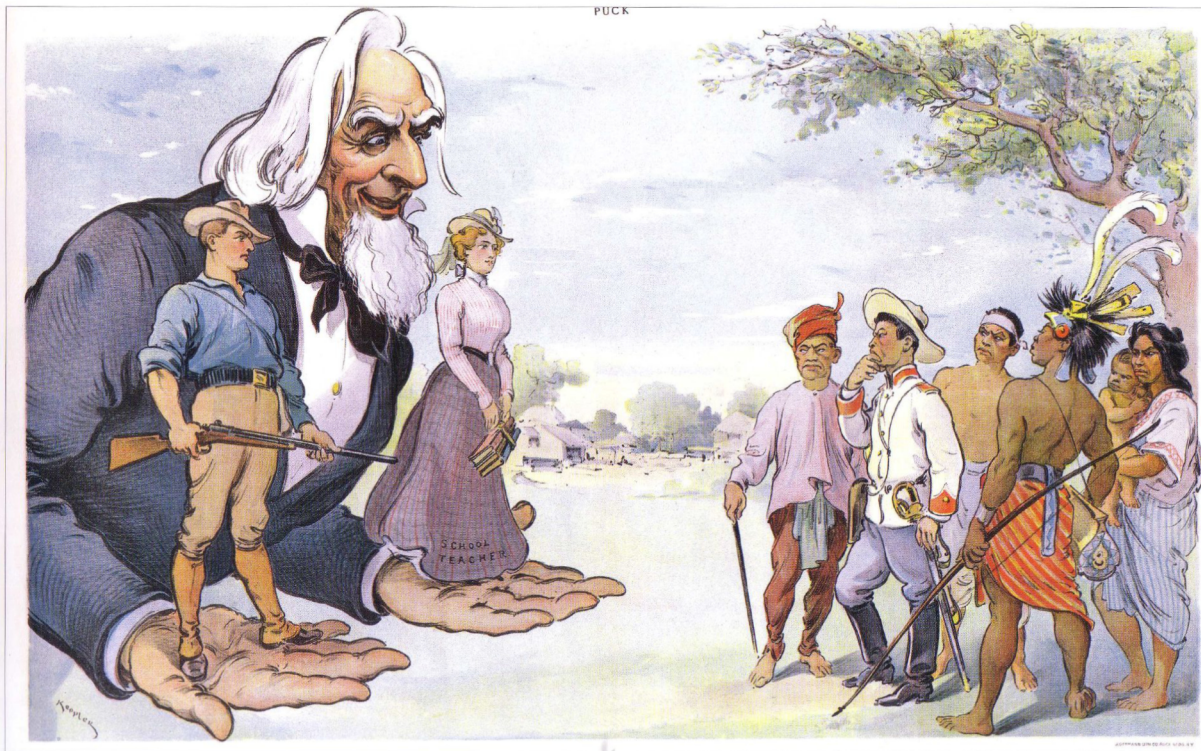
To complicate matters further, what do we make of the gender fluidity in the representation of Aguinaldo as *Topsy* and Uncle Sam as Ophelia? While gendered representations seem to have multiple meanings in the political cartoons assembled in *The Forbidden Book*, let me suggest here that in one of these significations, the feminine aspect of colonizing the Philippines takes the path of educating the natives while the masculine aspect takes the path of brutal subjugation (with the gun). The political cartoon that demonstrates this gendered distinction was published in *Puck* in 1901, titled "IT'S 'UP TO' THEM" (67). The caption continues: "Uncle Sam (to Filipinos)—You can take your choice;—I have plenty of both!" In each of the palms of his hands, an overlarge Uncle Sam holds a white man wearing a Stetson hat and carrying a long rifle and a white woman holding books with the label "SCHOOL TEACHER" at the hem of her dress.<sup>44</sup> (See Figure 2 below.) Given the context of this cartoon, the feminization of Uncle Sam in the *Topsy/Aguinaldo* cartoon underscores the theme of

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<sup>43</sup> The figure of the "wild child" is probably the same as the nineteenth-century figure of the "ragged child" (Mitchell 104–05).

<sup>44</sup> This cartoon interestingly depicts the Filipinos in a more 'realistic' way than most of the other political cartoons in *The Forbidden Book*. There are four different Filipinos of varying skin color wearing different clothes to represent different regions of the Philippines; the cartoon even includes a woman carrying a child.

'educating the natives' that the relationship between Topsy and Ophelia already represents. The infantilization of Aguinaldo in this way also lends substance to the colonial trope of education.



"IT'S 'UP TO' THEM."  
 "Uncle Sam (to Filipinos)—You can take your choice;—I have plenty of both!"  
 Puck, Keppler & Schwarzmann, New York, November 20, 1901 [artist: Joseph Keppler, Jr.]

Figure 2.2: "IT'S 'UP TO' THEM."

"Uncle Sam (to Filipinos)—You can take your choice;—I have plenty of both!"<sup>45</sup>

The feminization of *Aguinaldo*, however, also harks to another strain of political cartoons on the "Philippine Question," i.e., the debates over Philippine annexation between the imperialists and anti-imperialists. The anti-imperialists in particular seem to be a favorite target in the political cartoons in *The Forbidden Book*. Dubbed the "Antis" or the "Aunties" (this latter suggesting more strongly the feminization of their political position), they are often drawn as cross-dressing figures. In relation to them, *Aguinaldo* and the Philippines are depicted as either female or male, but never fully masculine. Sometimes they are represented as children who are being mothered by the "Aunties." In one such political cartoon, *Aguinaldo* is portrayed as a child holding on to the skirts of one of the "Aunties" (144). There is oftentimes a sexualized suggestion of "strange bedfellows," with *Aguinaldo* in bed with the Aunties (133), but this sexual relationship always seems unnatural. For one thing, neither the Aunties nor *Aguinaldo* is represented as sexually attractive. For another, the simultaneous and oscillating representation of

<sup>45</sup> Reprinted in *The Forbidden Book* (67). Reproduced here courtesy of Abe Ignacio.



Aguinaldo as man and child makes for an uncanny amplification of child sexuality as well as homoeroticism since the Aunties are men in drag.

In one cartoon, an all-male cast of anti-imperialists are dressed variously in men's clothes or women's dresses and dancing with one another indiscriminately (134). In this cartoon, William Jennings Bryan, the foremost Anti who ran for President of the United States against William McKinley, is dressed as a joker or clown while he dances with a tall, lanky Aguinaldo, dressed in a long sleeveless dress with a flower and a feather in his short hair (the feather likely alluding to Native Americans). (See Figure 3 below.) None of the men here is depicted as a tall, powerfully masculine figure the way Teddy Roosevelt would have been, for instance. The gender-bending in these anti-Aunties cartoons suggest that the Anti-Imperialists are 'womanish' or weak because they do not have the manly courage to take on Filipinos in war.



"'JUDGE' FORSEES THE DEMOCRATIC INAUGURATION BALL IF BRYAN SHOULD BE ELECTED."<sup>7</sup>

Judge, Judge Company, New York, 1900 [artist: 'Zim' Eugene Zimmerman]

Figure 2.3: "'JUDGE' FORSEES THE DEMOCRATIC INAUGURATION BALL IF BRYAN SHOULD BE ELECTED."<sup>46</sup>

To revisit the Topsy/Aguinaldo cartoon with regard to gender drag, a brief look at Gillian Brown's discussion of Stowe's so-called "radical" feminist politics might help clarify the (disingenuous) rhetoric of parental love that attends both master-slave relations and colonial relations. Brown writes, "Stowe replaces the master-slave relation with the benign proprietorship

<sup>46</sup> Reprinted in *The Forbidden Book* (134). Reproduced here courtesy of Abe Ignacio.

of mother-child, transferring the ownership of slaves to the mothers of America. Women prefer familial ties to market relations, caring for the welfare of their dependents—children and slaves—rather than for the profits wrought from them" (32). This passage suggests that, for Stowe, it was all right that maternal women owned slaves since they would take the best care of them. This sounds a lot like the colonial paternalism of missionizing and education, only with the father replaced by the mother-figure. Brown herself points out that Stowe's "utopian female dominion seems uncannily familiar" (38) because indeed the normatively paternal figuration of Christian benevolence is simply replaced by a maternal figuration while the structure of parental love, patronage, and discipline remains the same. (Indeed, as slave narratives like that of Harriet Jacobs attests, the female mistress can be just as brutal and cruel.)

Once Ophelia learns to love Topsy (via her love for the maternal Eva), all of this maternal love propels Topsy's progress. Yet the very violence of disciplining Topsy gets effaced or obscured by this rhetoric of maternal love, just as the violence of subjugating Filipino insurgents during the Philippine-American War gets obscured by President McKinley's rhetoric of friendship and uplift. Indeed, there seems to be a strong connection between the nature of mother-love and civilizing education in Stowe's novel about slavery, on the one hand, and the dually masculine and feminine structure of colonial "benevolence," as visually rendered in the schoolteacher/soldier political cartoon above (Figure 2), on the other. This dually masculine and feminine structure of colonialism is also evidenced by the fact that the cartoonist put Uncle Sam in drag rather than, say, using the female figure of Columbia to represent the United States. I would argue here that, because men are imagined to be the disciplinarians of the family, Uncle Sam dressed badly as a woman more easily evokes the threat of violent discipline, and that Filipinos were seen as savage children who needed a hard hand.

If the debate staged in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was over whether African Americans were ultimately educable and thus civilizable, the debate over the education of Native Americans centered mostly on whether educating them could make them ultimately assimilable.<sup>47</sup> Their educational histories were not so different: the goal of civilizing the children through "discipline and industry—the very fundamentals of Anglo-Saxon civilization"—was the same for freedchildren and Native Americans, and moreover the "rhetorical and visual similarities between efforts to reform freedchildren and assimilate Native American children [...] are striking. [...] The reformers' visions of freedom for the South [can thus be seen] as part of a longer and wider story of 'savagery' and 'civilization' in the nineteenth century" (Mitchell 94, 142). However, Native American educational reform in the late 1800s, after the successful military pacification of all Indian tribes, had its source in one man, Richard Henry Pratt, an army officer who established the first off-reservation Indian boarding school, and who from the first planned Native American education for full assimilation into mainstream America.

David Wallace Adams argues that one important component of the ideological ethos behind the establishment of Indian boarding schools was the notion of the cultural inferiority of Indians and the necessity and inevitability of civilizing them:

The word was civilization. European and American societies were civilized; Indians, on the other hand, were savages. The idea functioned at several levels, or rather, served several purposes. On one level it operated as assumption;

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<sup>47</sup> One should note that, once Topsy has reformed at the end of the novel, she is not assimilated into mainstream America but instead she leaves the country in order to proselytize to non-Christians in Africa.

philanthropists simply assumed that because Indian ways differed from white ways, they must be less civilized. On another level, it served as a legitimizing rationale for the hegemonic relationship that had come to characterize Indian-white relations. In this connection, it served as a compelling justification for dispossessing Indians of their land. Finally, it was prescriptive. It told philanthropists what Indians must become [i.e. civilized...and] to what end they should be educated. (*Extinction* 12–13)

In the famous words of Pratt, the only way that the Indian would survive the confrontation with American "civilization" was to "[k]ill the Indian in him and save the man" (52). Thus assimilation could only occur if Native American culture and tradition, and indeed their Native American *identity*, could be erased, with violence if necessary. Yet Pratt's philosophy on assimilating Native Americans was itself progressive and broke away from theories of social Darwinism that were so popular in the United States at the time. To his mind, "savagery was a product of cultural learning, not a condition natural to Native Americans as a race, and that the habits of industry and discipline could be taught to Indian children, just as to white children" (Mitchell 142).

Shari Huhndorf dates the start of the federal campaign to assimilate Native Americans to the 1880s, when "the military conquest of Native America was complete" (60). Along with the General Allotment Act (or Dawes Act) of 1887, which divided reservation land into parcels to be allotted to individuals and thus transformed the communal nature of Native land use, the boarding school policy framed by Pratt and other policymakers attempted to disrupt the traditional cultural and familial relations among Native communities in order to make such assimilation and Westernization easier. In contrast to American educational policy in the Philippines in the early twentieth century, the American government's approach to the education of Native Americans just a generation earlier entailed an attempt at wholesale destruction of cultural values and traditions, indeed of whole communities or tribes. Off-reservation boarding schools were meant to speed up the process of assimilation by taking children away from the influence of their parents and tribal elders who could have passed down their tribe's traditions and values. Although these assimilationist policies never fully destroyed Native American societies, the "aggressive attempts to assimilate Native peoples certainly diminished the ideological challenge Native American posed to the dominant culture by undermining the cohesiveness of communities and traditions" (Huhndorf 61).

In the 1880s and 1890s, many children, with some as young as three years old, were sent away to boarding school against the wishes of their parents and subjected to a "strict, military-like routine":

For many children the boarding school experience was traumatic, and even though some students emerged from the boarding schools as eminent Indian spokespeople, many others could not find their way in either culture and became a "lost people." For many graduates, going back to the reservation was no real option. They had lost their ability to speak their native languages and had become alienated from life in a communal society. On the other hand, Anglo society provided very few opportunities for Indian youth. (Vukovic 13)

Unlike many of the students who went through the Indian boarding schools, Filipinos who studied in the American-established public school system did not lose their native languages in favor of English (Bonzo 90). What made the difference was probably the fact that Filipino

students were not taken away from their families and communities, and thus they were not *completely* prohibited from speaking their native languages in addition to English. Native students were punished in the boarding schools for doing so.

Besides the language policy of Indian boarding schools that forbade the students from speaking their tribal languages, religious conversion to Christianity became the official policy of the federal government by the 1870s (Vukovic 14). Policymakers for Native American education believed that Protestant ideology offered the ideal combination of values that represented Anglo-Saxon America: the Protestant work ethic, individualism, capitalism, and republicanism (Lomawaima 99; Vukovic 12). At Haskell Institute in Kansas, "religious instruction and on-campus chapel services were mandatory, and students were encouraged to attend a weekly church service in town" (Vukovic 129). Again, this differed from the careful separation of church and school codified in Act 74 enacted by the Taft Commission in the Philippines. Certainly, however, Native American spiritual practices survived the boarding school experiences as well as the repressive Code of Religious Offenses prohibiting any Native American ceremonial activities (14).

By the first decades of the twentieth century, the living conditions of the federal boarding schools gradually improved, particularly with the restriction of the schools to secondary education. While the military-style disciplinary structure remained in place, students who entered boarding schools in their teenage years found it easier to retain their sense of Indianness while also finding "niches in the school setting where they could express their individuality and creativity" (Lomawaima 123). Quite a few of the alumni who attended the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma from the 1920s on, for instance, remembered their time there fondly, or at least they appreciated the education they received that made them more self-sufficient and independent, even if it did not prepare them to enter professions after graduating; many made great friends at the school despite (or perhaps because of) their homesickness (Lomawaima, *passim*).

At the end of the nineteenth century, however, Pratt's goal of assimilating Native Americans into mainstream America had been adjusted to lower expectations. According to Myriam Vukovic:

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the original assimilationist ideas of many Christian reformers, based on the universalist assumption that American Indians could indeed become civilized and equal citizens, became increasingly contested. This shift in public attitudes, as well as federal Indian policy, resulted from several factors. On the one hand, the assimilation campaign had not worked as expected. As the new century approached, Native Americans were still largely poor, uneducated, and in many ways traditional. They had not assimilated into white America within one generation, as reformers such as Richard Henry Pratt had anticipated. On the other hand, the closing of the frontier, industrialization, imperialism, and the spread of scientific racism and social evolutionism led to a different sentiment toward Indians and minorities in general. [...]

In the field of Indian education, it led to the lowering of expectations and to a change in emphasis. After the turn of the century, many schools replaced their academic syllabi with curricula stressing vocational training. Estelle Reel, who became superintendent of Indian education in 1898, was a strong adherent of

social evolution and believed that indigenous children, just like African American and other nonwhite children, did not have the same intellectual capabilities as white children. She promoted an education focused on manual training. (14–15)

Assimilation, which was never really on the table for African Americans, thus became a bygone goal for Native Americans. Filipinos, meanwhile, were not originally considered assimilable the way that Native Americans were—the prospect of American statehood was never truly on the table for the Philippines, for example—but they were considered educable and civilizable to become leaders of their own nation by American colonial officials. In fact, the United States' colonial acquisition of the Philippines, along with other territories inhabited by brown people (such as Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and Guam), was one of the factors in shifting public opinion about the civilizable capacities of other nonwhite and indigenous peoples and also therefore in shifting the goal of assimilation for Native American education from one of assimilation to one of training indigenous people to "accept their proper place in society as a marginal class" (Lomawaima 99); in other words, they were to be trained only to become farm laborers or domestic servants for white households at a time when the United States was industrializing at a rapid pace, thus shutting them out of the stream of modernization. Moreover, such education "eschewed higher academic or professional training for Indians" altogether (66).

In the next section, I further address the new emphasis on vocational and industrial training, which was growing in popularity in the United States at the time, in the educational policies that were set for African Americans, Native Americans, and Filipinos.

### **Disciplining the Racialized Body**

Labor and the education of minorities during this time period went hand in hand. The shift in the Native American case from the goal of assimilation to the goal of training for subservience led to the aggressive promotion of industrial education in Indian boarding schools, which was also part of a larger American movement towards practical education. For Filipinos, the American colonial government as well as Protestant missionaries who opened schools and universities in the Philippines in the early twentieth century felt that industrial education would be the best way to combat the supposed indolent nature of Filipinos (Clymer 86). In both the Philippine and Native American cases, their models were the African American Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes (Adams, "Education" passim; Lomawaima 82; May 89; Suzuki 95–97).

Indeed, industrial education had already been the policy for educating African American students for many years before it was first considered for Native Americans and Filipinos at the turn of the twentieth century. The difference, certainly, had to do with the timing of the U.S. government's race wars against each respective group. Although schools had been set up for free black children in the early 1800s, most of these schools were established by African American communities themselves. Instead, Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, both established for African American schooling in the latter half of the nineteenth century, after the Civil War and emancipation, figure prominently in Native American and Filipino educational history. Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in Virginia in 1868 by General Samuel Armstrong; it began accepting Native American students in 1878 and thus became an Indian boarding school as well. Hampton Institute, with its military atmosphere that was likely the model for later Indian boarding schools, focused on industrial training and the task of 'civilizing' African Americans in the South. In Armstrong's "scale of civilization," African Americans



ranked above Native Americans due to the civilizing effect of slavery upon the former (Adams, "Education" 161–62). He believed that the "'severe discipline of slavery' had strengthened the race. Whereas the Negro was strong, the Indian was weak, 'because the one is trained to labor and the other is not'" (qtd. in *ibid.* 163).

Briefly, industrial education subsumes both "manual and vocational training. Manual training, offered mainly in the lower grades, taught basic motor skills. Children learned to make simple objects such as boxes, toy boats, and kites. In the later years of the elementary course they learned weaving, leatherwork, and other simple handicrafts. Vocational training, offered by secondary schools, taught specific skills and trades" like carpentry and so forth (May 89).

In her study of Chilocco Agricultural School, K. Tsianina Lomawaima states that "Educators with preconceived notions of the capabilities and needs of Native Americans have for centuries promoted a particular *type* of education variously called manual labor, industrial, agricultural, or vocational training. Indian school 'industrial' education did not mean training for urban, mass-production, factory-style industry, but small-scale, individual craftsmanship [...]. The conception of industrial education for Indians ran counter to developments in mainstream America" (65). Moreover, any drudge work that was necessary to maintain the school was passed off as "trades training" (68), even though such work had no educational value especially for the older children. This was the case for other Indian boarding schools as well (Vukovic 113).

Both Lomawaima and Myriam Vukovic, in their studies of Indian boarding schools, detail the very strict routine of each school, wherein every waking hour of every day, from early morning until late in the evening when it was time for sleep, was accounted for. A focus on the body and its discipline and surveillance was intimately tied to the aggressive promotion of industrial education for minority subjects. Although the military-like discipline employed at the Native American boarding schools (as well as Hampton) was due to the fact that the schools were envisioned and established by military men, the focus on bodily discipline dovetailed with racialized thinking of non-white bodies as inherently, genetically 'savage' and inferior to white bodies. The superintendent of Indian Schools at the turn of the twentieth century, Estelle Reel, believed that non-white children suffered from a disorganization and lack of bodily control due to the very shape and structure of the body and thus needed the physical discipline of manual labor.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, such manual training would also lead to moral development, for once the body was controlled, "instincts and modes of thought [which] are adjusted to this imperfect manual development" can be controlled, too:

Allowing for exceptional cases, the Indian child is of lower physical organization than the white child of corresponding age. His forearms are smaller and his fingers and hands less flexible; the very structure of his bones and muscles will not permit so wide a variety of manual movements as are customary among Caucasian children, and his very instincts and modes of thought are adjusted to this imperfect manual development.... In short, the Indian instincts and nerves and muscles and bones are adjusted one to another, and all to the habits of the race for uncounted generations, and his offspring cannot be taught like the children of the white man until they are taught to do like them. (qtd. in Lomawaima 93; emphasis in original)

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<sup>48</sup> Reel's interpretation of the body reminds us of Daniel R. Williams's stance in Chapter One, of how a Filipino's physical characteristic (i.e., lack of height) somehow indicates moral (and intellectual) inferiority. In Reel's case, however, the characteristic can be trained for improvement.

Booker T. Washington, meanwhile, who after graduating from Hampton became the "house father" for 75 Indian boys enrolled at Hampton that year and later became one of the country's most famous proponents of industrial education for African Americans, believed that Native Americans were particularly graceless when dressed in one of the most important accoutrements of civilization—Western-style shoes. He commented:

The untutored Indian is anything but a graceful walker. Take off his moccasins and put shoes on him, and he does not know how to use his feet. When the boys and girls are first brought here it is curious to see in what a bungling way they go up and down stairs, throwing their feet in all sorts of directions as if they had no control over them. (qtd. in Adams, "Education" 174; and in Lomawaima 82)

These detailed observations of the Native American child's body were symptoms of the culture of surveillance and discipline of the boarding schools. "Bodily discipline was the cornerstone of Indian education," Vukovic maintains, "controlling the children's productive labor as well as their sexuality and social relationships and practices. The school indoctrinated the students' minds with Western concepts of health, inspected their bodies frequently, and especially monitored the girls' bodily functions carefully" (181). The emphasis on disciplining the body was part of the Indian educators' mission to civilize the 'savage' races and betrayed a deep-seated racism against non-white people. From the requirement of uniforms to the cutting of hair to the constant washing, Native children's bodies were subject to what Vukovic calls an "educational assault":

Even though the power exercised over American Indian children appears less violent than that formerly exercised against their parents and grandparents on the battlefield, it was nonetheless corporal in a multitude of ways. Their bodies were the very targets of transformation: their hair, their clothes, their way of movement, their diet, their medical practices, their forms of personal hygiene—in short, all bodily practices were made part of the educational assault. The children were expected to change not just their appearance but also their demeanor. At boarding school they were required to stand at attention with eyes straight ahead. This was not simply a change in stance but also an indication of a forced change in attitude for Indian children who might have been taught at home that an indirect stance was an indication of respect. In the mind of Indian educators, the children's bodies had to be transformed, subjected, used, and improved, to make them "civilized," docile, and productive members of American society or, more specifically, the American working class. As one student recalled, "The supervisors were all non-Indian, and I suppose they felt that the Indian was dirty and filthy; and so they gave us brushes and we scrubbed the floors until there was no varnish or finishing on them." At the time, good health, neatness, politeness, self-confidence, and the ability to concentrate were all attributed to strict discipline, hard physical labor, and the military regimen. Indian educators believed that military training could teach Indian girls and boys everything from obedience to patriotism and the Protestant work ethic. (63)

Intimately linked to the culture of surveillance at the boarding schools, the students' sexuality was heavily policed as well. In her study of Haskell Institute, Vukovic found that, because they understood racial inferiority and "paganism" as manifesting in part through sexual promiscuity, "Indian educators believed that indigenous children lacked any inclinations toward

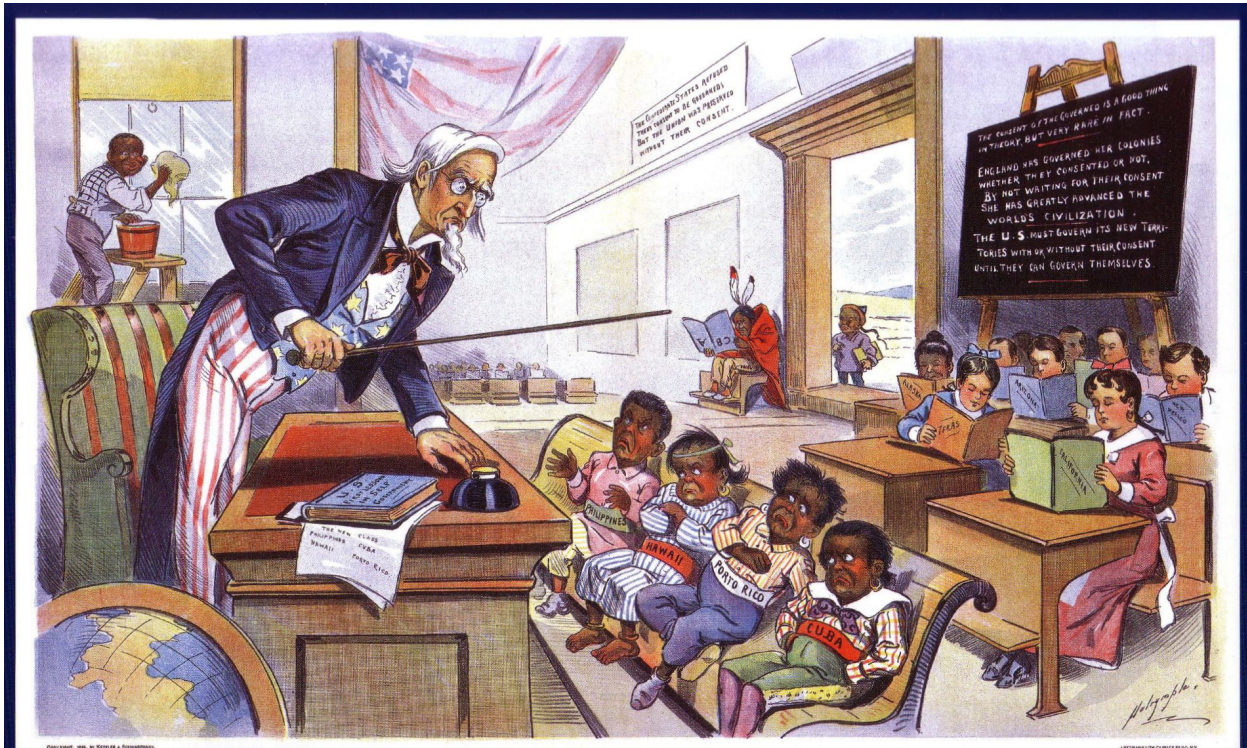
morality and chastity and saw constant surveillance as the key to regulating relations between the sexes" (144), even to the point of monitoring the girls' menstrual cycles (181). However, some girls did get pregnant, and rapes occurred as well though these were downplayed by the authorities (183).

African American children were also suspected of sexual license. According to Claudia Castañeda's reading of the "often marginal appearances" of the child in ethnographic studies where African American children appear, the black child is similar to the "Caucasian" child until puberty, whereupon the sexual development of the black adolescent overtakes his or her intellectual development. Meanwhile, the white child exhibits "normative" development into adulthood, with the proper balance between intellectual and sexual development (36).

The girls in particular were targeted by this policing because of the cult of true womanhood, an ideology that Jacob Isselhard probably subscribed to as well, in which the role of women was as the "cradle of civilization: pure, pious, clean, humble, and selfless" (Vukovic 115) and the bearers and nurturers of future generations. For the sake of assimilation and Americanization of indigenous peoples, African Americans, and, to some extent, Filipinos, the girls, the mothers of future generations, had to be "domesticated" to European-American standards (116).



## Conclusion: Education for Subjection



### "SCHOOL BEGINS."

"Uncle Sam (to his new class in Civilization)—Now, children, you've got to learn these lessons whether you want to or not! But just take a look at the class ahead of you, and remember that, in a little while, you will feel glad to be here as they are!"

*Puck*, Keppler & Schwarzmann, New York, January 25, 1899 [artist: Louis Dalrymple]

Figure 2.4: "SCHOOL BEGINS."

"Uncle Sam (to his new class in Civilization)—Now, children, you've got to learn these lessons whether you want to or not! But just take a look at the class ahead of you, and remember that, in a little while, you will feel glad to be here as they are!"<sup>49</sup>

This 1899 image of the American (colonial) classroom, while depicting peoples of color as uneducated, unkempt, and uncivilized children, also tells the story of America's history of imperial race wars and their effects. Note that while the Filipino child is sitting with the other new students in the classroom proper, the Native American child in traditional dress is sitting beside the door by himself, trying to read a primer on the alphabet upside down. Meanwhile, the African American child is not even a student but a servant cleaning the windows, though he is dressed in more proper clothes than the newcomers.<sup>50</sup> In several ways, my exploration of the various forms of colonial education experienced by Filipinos, African Americans, and Native

<sup>49</sup> Reprinted in *The Forbidden Book* (64). Reproduced here courtesy of Abe Ignacio.

<sup>50</sup> The Alaska native, interestingly enough, sits alongside the white children, hair dressed in the same fashion, and also reading a book.

Americans, respectively, bears out the relations in the cartoon classroom above. Despite the codification, in educational policies, of the belief that that they are capable of being civilized and eventually of governing themselves as a democracy, the education they received from the American government was premised on deeply-held notions of their racial inferiority, affecting the type of education and opportunities they were offered. As Vukovic eloquently puts it:

By the 1920s, the belief in the big "melting pot" had vanished. The meaning of the term *assimilation* had shifted from full integration to "knowing one's place and fulfilling one's role," in order to preserve a social order that granted minorities only a marginal place. Indigenous peoples, just like African Americans and many of the new immigrants, had found their place in American society, a place filled with poverty, hardship, and suffering. (16; emphasis in original)

The question of Filipinos' competency for national agency and self-government was at stake. In general, American representations of Filipinos as children served to justify, if not total colonial control of Philippine affairs, then an almost infinite deferral of sovereign independence. The Philippine newspaper *El Renacimiento*, published in the early years of the American occupation, ran a Filipino commentary critical of the colonial occupation in 1908:

In the hypocritical dictionary of Colonial Policy there exists a new phrase which is "sacred guardianship." This "sacred guardianship" may be claimed to be permanent, either because the ward had identified himself so completely with the national life of the guardian as to be perpetually tributary, or because the ward's interests are essentially dependent upon the guardian or because the guardian for humanity's sake feels impelled to undertake the sacrifice of an eternal trusteeship of those who are forever incapable. ("A Filipino View of 'Sacred Guardianship'" 615)

The first option, that the ward would "identif[y] himself so completely with the national life of the guardian as to be perpetually tributary," was actually what William Howard Taft had in mind at the beginning of the occupation, during his role as head of the Second Philippine Commission (May 12). Recall as well that Jacob Isselhard believes it will take several hundred years to civilize Filipinos to Anglo-Saxon standards (108). Such a time frame supports the anxiety expressed by the Filipino writer of the commentary above that the United States plans to stay in the Philippines forever.

Indeed, Isselhard's and Ralph Kent Buckland's memoirs contain numerous instances of infantilizing Filipinos. Chapter XXI of Buckland's text describes municipal elections in the Philippines as a "Kindergarten in Government" (213) and continues the analogy throughout the whole chapter. He goes on to describe some of the Filipinos as "disobedient students in the school of self-government" who need to be dealt with by the "papa-like" authorities (215).

Filipino officials arguing for the independence of the Philippines often had to deal with such infantilizing representations. In his speech at the 1908 Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples, the Resident Commissioner of the Philippines, Pablo Ocampo de Leon, implicitly addressed the image of the Filipino-as-child through a discourse of uneven rates of progress among different civilizations. In his speech, the child was, implicitly, the primary metaphor of national maturity and level of civilization. Seeming to serve notice that he was aware of the infantilization of Filipinos in the discourse of tutelage, Ocampo de Leon leveled the insult of childishness back at those American pro-imperialists who believed that, as long as Filipinos were kept under the colonial tutelage of the United States, they could catch up

to the United States' level of national maturity in 15 or 20 years. In effect, he exposed the illogic and contradictions in such reasoning for further American tutelage of Filipinos.

Many Filipinos, not just the elite, from the northern provinces demonstrated a willingness to learn English and *in* English, and many of those who were alive during the American colonial period and survived the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines during World War II remember Americans as the heroes who saved them from the cruelty of the Japanese Imperial Army. Many also remember American-established public schools as the capstone for a truly benevolent assimilation. And indeed, many Filipinos have taken the notion of assimilation into America to heart. There were also around eighty thousand Filipinos who signed up to fight on the American side during World War II because they were given the promise of American citizenship (Bonus 41–42). As of November 2013, the Philippines had the second-highest number of applications in the waiting list for a U.S. green card, following Mexico (U.S. Department of State [3]). An untold number have overstayed their visitors' and workers' visas in the hope that they may eventually be granted amnesty, a change of status, and eligibility for American citizenship.

Yet many scholars of Filipino American studies today agree that Filipino Americans are an "invisible" people to much of America. Why? Oscar Campomanes maintains that the United States' denial of its naked imperialist ambitions led to the suppression of the Philippine-American War from public memory, a suppression that not only buttressed the myth of American exceptionalism but also produced the instability of the category "Filipino American." Given that Filipinos' desire to migrate to the United States originated during the American colonial occupation of the Philippines, "Filipino Americanization," Campomanes claims, "can, in fact, be understood as a function of U.S. colonialism and its aftermath in the Philippines" ("New Empire" 147). Their invisibility in the United States is a function of that colonialism as well. And so are the current neocolonial conditions in the Philippines that handicaps the economy and leaves a huge majority of Filipinos below poverty level, necessitating both the export of Filipino labor to all parts of the globe and the primacy of the tourism industry which scholars argue do little to develop the Philippine economy.<sup>51</sup> The next chapter explores a particular slice of tourism in the Philippines: sex tourism.

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<sup>51</sup> See Robyn Magalit Rodriguez and Vernadette Gonzalez.

## **PART II: The Child Talks Back**

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Innocence Lost: Agency, Consent, and Filipina/o Postcoloniality**

You will need someone to take care of you as you grow older. If you pick well,—unhurriedly—there's hardly a better woman to take care of you than a Filipina.

By the way, the more highly educated Filipina's [sic] can be far more dangerous and deleterious to you than a simple girl. A "forest girl" as they're known as here [in the Philippines] can be the best. They live simply and are already well trained in obedience and submissiveness by their father and mother, relatives and neighbors.

Celine, for your edification, has a third grade education, has worked more or less steadily since she was eight years old. She's a forest girl. But, she is one of the smartest Filipina's [sic] I've met so far—certainly the most trustworthy, faithful, obedient, loyal and hard working. She's unassuming and satisfied with what I give her. City girls—college educated girls want MORE, and expect to get it. They know the ways of the Western world and want their piece of it. Forest girls are happy if they have electricity and a fan.

I would never let a city Filipina through my door. They preen and love to spend money and, worse, they love to show-off. They practice deception and dream always of more. They're never satisfied. They want you to take them to the States and live in the land of golden opportunities. Stick with simple; you'll be much happier.

They are far easier to train to do what you want.

—Rik, "Peter Gets A Lesson," Expatriates in the Philippines  
weblog, October 2005

The epigraph above represents a small sample of the blog posts of "Rik," a retired white American man living in the Philippines. Rik seems to be one of those middle-aged "First World" men who are the targeted audience of mail-order-bride websites and online services peddling sex tours of Asia and other nations in the global South. Rik started his blog in late 2004 describing his experiences as an expatriate in the Philippines, living with his much-younger Filipina girlfriend, Celine, while going through an annulment process from his earlier marriage with another Filipina. On the blog, which he sees as a resource manual for similar-minded men who are thinking of finding Filipina wives or girlfriends, he has put up several e-mail exchanges between himself and one of his readers, "Peter," another middle-aged white American man who is seriously looking for a Filipina wife and who is considering living in the Philippines while he looks for one. Distinctly related to a class of turn-of-the-twentieth-century American travelogues

on the Philippines and Puerto Rico<sup>52</sup>—then new colonial possessions of the United States—the blog is a manual on "forest girls" that comes with safety warnings, so to speak, against the "dangerous" Filipinas who want to take advantage of their American lovers.

Both the "forest girl" and the "city girl" are simultaneously infantilized and sexualized by Rik's text.<sup>53</sup> His girlfriend Celine, the epitome of the "forest girl" type, sounds like a well-trained child who has been educated, but not too much, sent to school only until the third grade (eight or nine years old) at which point she began her working life.<sup>54</sup> Thus she is "far easier to train to do what you want," presumably also in matters of sexual relations. Meanwhile, although the "city girl" likely also proves sexually amenable, she expects "more" as part of an exchange. Rik's depiction of this type of Filipina makes her seem like a spoiled, unruly child: she makes demands and always wants "MORE"; she "love[s] to show-off"; she "practice[s] deception and dream[s] always of more." Rik then criticizes "city girls" for wanting their American lovers to take them to the United States so that they can "live in the land of golden opportunities," yet unremarked in all of the blog is the history of colonial relations between the Philippines and the United States, and how this history may have conditioned the "city girls'" desire to live in America. He certainly does not mention colonialism (or neocolonialism) when he talks about how incredibly cheap it is for an American making U.S. dollars to live almost luxuriously in the Philippines.

Furthermore, underpinning the text are notions of innocence vis-à-vis the child. While Celine, dutiful daughter that she is, might have been a virgin when she met Rik, the lost innocence to be mourned (or deplored) here has little to do with sexual innocence; rather, what Rik mourns is the fact that a more worldly woman or girl, one who has been educated at the college level, is no longer willing to see her relationships with such foreign men as other than primarily business transactions. The "city girl," by eating from the tree of knowledge, has lost her innocence, or rather ignorance. The well-educated "city girl" is educated specifically in modernity, i.e. "the ways of the Western world," and wants the money that can provide her with the trappings of modernity, which is hard to come by in a country like the Philippines where nearly a full third of the population lives in poverty (Castro) and only the wealthy can live in "First World" conditions.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, the only element of modernity that the "forest girl" wants or needs is apparently electricity which, once obtained, does little to alter her behavior or the limited demands she places on men like Rik.

Innocence here denotes a premodern ideal. Rik desires a Filipina who seems to originate and live in the past, thus employing what Johannes Fabian called a "denial of coevalness" (Fabian 31)—allochronism both in the sense of the women living "*outside* of time and history, in the realm of the natural," and "*prior* to" the time of the American lover, "at an earlier stage of development" (Wallace 290, emphases in original). As the ultimate modern subject, an older white American man, Rik sees himself (and others like him) as the steward of the more primitive

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<sup>52</sup> See Nerissa Balce's "The Filipina's Breast" and Chapter One of this dissertation.

<sup>53</sup> As further evidence of the fetishization of youth among the targeted audience for Rik's manual, in an earlier cautionary tale, a 'bad' Filipina, Celine's cousin Claudine, is immediately vilified as a character even before he recounts what she did in part because she pretends to be 16, younger women being much more sought-after than women of her own relatively advanced age of 28 (Rik, "Meet Filipina's [sic] for Love and Romance!").

<sup>54</sup> Although the terms he uses to describe Celine—"trustworthy, faithful, obedient, loyal and hard working"—sound like he could be talking about a beloved pet dog; parental training and institutional education refer to human institutions.

<sup>55</sup> Again, Rik does not contextualize this fact in the history of unequal economic relations between the Philippines and the United States as fostered by neo/colonialism.



indigenous Filipina "forest girl." Indeed, since the child has often been discursively and culturally linked to the savage,<sup>56</sup> then the younger the Filipina, the stronger the link to a savage, untouched, and *innocent* past. In another piece of advice to Peter he writes: "I don't doubt that your Filipina is a simple woman. Again, standard stuff in a land of poor people. The question is: will she stay simple once she's under your care?" (Rik, "Peter Gets a Lesson"). Ironically, however, it is difficult to believe that Celine is as ignorant of the nature of her relationship with Rik as we are led to believe. The fact that he monetarily supports the rest of her family probably goes a long way towards ensuring the continuation of their relationship.

I begin this chapter with these excerpts from Rik's blog because they remind us of the kind of cultural assumptions about the Philippines and Filipinas/os that the postcolonial Filipina/o subject often encounters.<sup>57</sup> It is not a coincidence that so many cultural productions—novels and films, most notably—by Filipina/o Americans have focused on sexualized children within the context of (illicit) Philippine tourism. The Filipina/o child figures largely in such a context. For example, very recently, a children's aid organization, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, developed the computer-generated image of a very young Filipina girl, ten-year-old "Sweetie," as the bait to catch men who engage in webcam child sex tourism from around the world.<sup>58</sup> Of paramount interest in this chapter are notions that collect most often around the idea of the "child," those of innocence, education, and sexuality (or, rather, anxiety over children's sexuality), which Rik's text so immediately brings into view. Through an examination of the tropes of childhood "innocence," education, and child sex in Maria Rosa Henson's memoir, *Comfort Woman* (1999), and Han Ong's novel, *The Disinherited* (2004), the rest of this chapter reveals and interrogates the simultaneous infantilization and sexualization of Filipinas/os that have marked the history of the Philippines as a colony and that enable the sex tourism industry in the Philippines today.

As we saw in the first two chapters of the dissertation, the collusion of two types of racializations of Filipinas/os—as both childlike and hypersexual—has its historical origins in the Philippines' multilayered colonial past. The problem of child sex tourism, I argue, is one of the legacies of that collusion. Rather than simply interrogate the social conditions that enable child sex tourism, however, this chapter also focuses on the contradictions of postcolonial agency, how Filipinas/os and Filipina/o Americans—many of whom either are immigrants or otherwise still have strong familial, social, and cultural connections with the Philippines—have confronted and

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<sup>56</sup> Again, see Chapter One for a longer discussion of this conceptual linkage. For a sampling of other scholarly texts that point out this historical linkage between the child and the savage, see Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*; Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other*; Ann Laura Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*; and James R. Kincaid's *Erotic Innocence*. For the savage-as-child in the Philippine case, see Benito M. Vergara, Jr.'s *Displaying Filipinos*; Kristin L. Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood*; Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence*; Nerissa Balce-Cortes, "Savagery and Docility."

<sup>57</sup> As Rik demonstrates, such assumptions circulate with no sense of historicity, as if these characteristics explain the ontological nature of Filipinas/os across time. These characteristics include chronic poverty as well as child-likeness and hypersexuality, already discussed.

<sup>58</sup> The project was basically a publicity campaign to bring the problem of this particular form of child sex tourism to global attention. They focused on the Philippines because they were "overwhelmed by child victims in the Philippines." The agency's project showed how many of the men could be caught (without the need to hack into their computers), and they publicly handed over the names and addresses of the men to Interpol. See video at <http://vimeo.com/86895084>.

responded to the representation of Filipina/o bodies as both childlike and hypersexual, and to the question of their ethical responsibilities to exploited children.<sup>59</sup>

Henson and Ong, as representatives of Filipina/o human rights and diasporic literary movements, deploy the trope of childhood innocence in largely dissimilar ways: the rhetorical power of Henson's text revolves around stolen sexual innocence and sexual violation, whereas Ong's text almost obsessively complicates any notion of a corruptible childhood innocence. Yet the figurations of child sexual agency and child sexual victimization in both of these Filipino/American-produced narratives bespeak certain critiques of the powerful legacy of a colonial history that underlines the contradictions and predicaments of Filipino "postcolonial" subjects. Moreover, these texts, I would argue, directly counter the infantilization of Filipinas/os, not only because they represent the Filipina/o speaking back, entering and intervening into the cultural discourses about Filipina/o bodies and subjectivities, but also because they figure child characters talking back within their pages.<sup>60</sup>

Another link between the sexual relations at these two narrative sites is the way they are normalized as private acts. In the "comfort women" case in particular, the women's experiences of sexual enslavement by the Japanese imperial military during World War II have been insistently framed by the Japanese government—from the time of the war to today—as consensual prostitution (Y. Park 204; Mitsui 54). Both Filipino postcolonial texts attempt to counter this type of domestication by forging links to anti-sex trafficking activism and discourse, though in complex fashion. Henson's text circulates as a testimony to colonial violence that demands legal redress and therapeutics, even though Henson herself caused controversy among hard-line supporters of "comfort women" when she accepted money from the Asian Women's Fund, a Japanese organization that raised funds through private donations rather than the government, thus seeming to forego the demand that the Japanese government admit its legal culpability and responsibility (Soh 126; Mendoza 261). Meanwhile, Ong's text depicts Roger's, the main character's, clear discomfort with the trade that Pitik, the child sex worker, engages in; while adults who love children are depicted as something like villains in the text, the children who participate in such relationships are assumed to be doing it to improve their impoverished lives rather than out of desire or even love. Ultimately, despite the main character's attempts to save the children, Ong suggests that the problem of child sex tourism is too complicated to solve by simply "rescuing" them, as such practices do not engage the children as subjects in their own right. In Ong's narrative, the aftermath of rescue can prove disastrous.

These narratives not only critique the colonial legacies of economic impoverishment and racial hierarchization in the Philippines, but also furnish an opportunity to interrogate the discourse of human rights pertaining to the exploitation of women and children. The particular

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<sup>59</sup> The work of *Terre des Hommes* Netherlands in the Philippines also brings up the question of how the figure of the postcolonial child structures postcolonial nationalism. How does the (re)production of the developmental narrative around the child also function in relation to Third World development? Given how neatly the colonial trope of child development segues into postcolonial Third World development, postcolonial nationalisms of developing governments may be particularly sensitive to how the world views their treatment of children. Accusations of child labor and child sex work in particular are a black eye to the notion of "proper" development.

<sup>60</sup> In the first part of the dissertation, I argued for an intersectional approach to understanding this collusion. The figure of the sexualized child has a place in African American and Native American literature as well. For the sake of focusing on the specific cultural and social conditions of the type of postcolonial agency of Filipina/o subjects, a cross-racial comparison of contemporary work on the sexualized child is not within the scope of the dissertation. However, such a comparison is something that should be investigated in the future.



modality of human rights discourse that these two texts engage is anti-sex trafficking. While Ong's novel depicts a child sex worker and dips into the language of campaigns against child sex tourism, Henson's memoir details the "comfort women" movement which, with its strong human rights component, is closely linked to a larger anti-trafficking discourse that focuses mainly on the exploitation and abuse of women and children. The notion of lost innocence is a trope found in various discourses on the sex tourism, prostitution, and mail-order bride industries, particularly in anti-trafficking and human rights advocacy texts. This rhetoric is even more prevalent in exposés of the international child sex industry.<sup>61</sup> Both Henson and Ong engage this trope of lost innocence, yet an analysis of their texts reveals the contradictions that inhere in the idealization of childhood innocence.

For at stake in this discussion of the trope of the child's sexual innocence in the context of Philippine colonial history and the neocolonial present are issues of consent and agency. Agency, as produced through speech ('speaking out') and narrative (how one organizes one's story), is an ideal in human rights discourses. Sidonie Smith notes that, "in the pursuit of justice and human betterment, rights campaigns depend upon, search out, prompt, organize, and circulate victim stories (personal accounts of injury, loss, and suffering) to build a case, gain public attention, lodge claims before official bodies, bring perpetrators to account, and raise money for rights activism" (156). Because the personal story is most likely to resonate with and engage the reader (or listener or viewer), it "garners media attention and thus channels resources, activism, and outrage toward particular 'hot spots' around the globe" (156). At the same time, however, while the witness or survivor speaking out publicly is "a performative act of visibility and agency and, possibly, recovery," in a rights framework the witness steps into "a ready-made identity as victim" (156), a frozen subject position that is necessitated by the juridical and therapeutic nature of human rights campaigns. In the case of Ong and Henson's texts, this frozen subject position is made even more problematic because it is the child's subject position that must be frozen, especially given that consent and full rights are reserved only for adults. For this reason, it's imperative that we imagine alternative ways of thinking about child subjectivity, consent, and agency.

### **"Comfort Woman" and Structural Critique**

In Maria Rosa Henson's 1999 memoir, *Comfort Woman: A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military*, the trope of the child's sexual innocence is integral to a critique of the Japanese military's coercion of females as young as 10 to serve as sexual slaves in "comfort stations" throughout the Asia-Pacific during World War II (Tanaka xvi). As part of a larger campaign to demand recognition and justice from the Japanese government for the sexual enslavement of approximately 200,000 women—mostly from Korea but significant numbers from Taiwan, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines—Henson's text relates her childhood leading up to her abduction by Japanese soldiers at age 15 and her

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<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Louise Brown, *Sex Slaves*; June Kane, *Sold for Sex*; Ronald B. Flowers, *Prostitution of Women and Girls*; Judith Ennew, *Sexual Exploitation of Children*; Trudee Able-Peterson, *Children of the Evening*; Clifford L. Linedecker, *Children in Chains*; Vitit Muntarbhorn, *Sexual Exploitation of Children*; Hoàng Bá Thinh, *Sexual Exploitation of Children*; Siroj Sorajakool, *Child Prostitution in Thailand*.

experiences as a "comfort woman"<sup>62</sup> in the Philippines during the war, as well as her life of silence and further abuse afterwards. Following the wake of the first Korean women to publicly share their stories of wartime sexual enslavement by the Japanese military,<sup>63</sup> Henson was the first Filipina to come forward to testify about her experiences as a "comfort woman"; she responded to a call on the radio by the Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women in 1992, almost fifty years after the end of the war. She had kept her ordeal a secret from everyone but her mother, who died in 1963, and even Henson's three children knew nothing about what had happened to her until she decided to go public with her story. Encouraged by Yuki Shiga-Fujime, a history professor at Kyoto University, she started the process of writing her memoir in 1995, and the manuscript was translated in Japanese and published in Japan by Iwanami Shoten in early 1996. Henson showed the manuscript to Philippine journalist Sheila Coronel in late 1995, and it was published in the Philippines also in 1996 by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, with Henson's subtitle, "Slave of Destiny" (Coronel vii). The U.S. version of *Comfort Woman* appeared in 1999, two years after Henson's death from a heart attack. It was published by Rowman and Littlefield, with a different subtitle: "A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military." This latter is the version used here.

As other scholars of "comfort women" have noted, the emphasis on the notion of stolen childhood innocence in many "comfort women" narratives is a rhetorical strategy conditioned by the Japanese government's denials of, first, its involvement, and, second, its legal responsibility for the "unprecedented organized crime that was planned and committed by the Japanese Imperial Forces in cooperation with the Japanese government" (Tanaka xx). According to Youme Park, the Japanese government's response to the first internationally-publicized allegations of Korean women's sexual enslavement was evasive, even dishonest, and relied on patriarchal assumptions of nation and women's sexuality:

The Japanese Government's initial reaction [...] was to deny its involvement in conscripting the women and running the brothels. They argued that the brothels were established as private businesses and that the state was not involved [...]. By refusing to be responsible for "civilian ventures" during the Pacific War, and thus separating the nation and its people, the Japanese government shifted the boundaries of the "nation." This was an intriguing rhetorical and political strategy, considering that the same government, after its surrender, had asked the Japanese people to repent for the atrocities committed during the war while refusing to hold the Emperor responsible for them.

When Yoshimi Yoshiaki [a Japanese historian] "discovered" the documents detailing the extent of government involvement, the government modified its strategy and claimed that the Japanese military had not used force to conscript the women [...]. Even after more materials were introduced to prove

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<sup>62</sup> Despite the gruesome irony of the term "comfort women," this euphemism has become widely accepted and circulated to designate those who experienced sexual enslavement by the Japanese Imperial Forces during World War II. However, I leave the quotation marks around the term to avoid normalizing any notion that the experience of abuse was in any way "comforting."

<sup>63</sup> See Soyang Park for a history of the way Korean activist intellectuals were able to provide a forum and help create international interest for the theretofore unheard and "unintelligible" stories of former "comfort women"; "Silence, Subaltern Speech and the Intellectual in South Korea: The Politics of Emergent Speech in the Case of Former Sexual Slaves," *Journal for Cultural Research* 9.2 (Apr 2005), 169–206.

otherwise, then Prime Minister Nakasone argued that "they were actually all prostitutes" (the logic being that it would have been all right if the atrocities, as alleged by former comfort women, such as being forced to entertain twenty or thirty soldiers per day, and being raped, tortured, or murdered, had been committed on prostitutes). Various forms of by-now-familiar patriarchal logic seem to operate here: prostitutes cannot be raped, the nation is not responsible for fallen women who are depraved enough to sell their bodies, some women "ask for it." (Y. Park 204)

It was this type of resistance that the movement for "comfort women" had to overcome in its attempt to win justice for its constituents. However, instead of critiquing such patriarchal assumptions, activists for "comfort women" as well as the Korean government responded by framing former "comfort women" as young virgins who were forced into sexual servitude by their colonial masters. The depiction of some of the victims as children when they were pressed into service as "comfort women" strengthens the argument that there was no consent.<sup>64</sup> This rhetoric is structured/conditioned, even forced, by the challenge to the "comfort women's" truth-telling. As Park notes, the "metaphor of Korea as a virgin nation being raped by the Japanese colonial power has always been a prominent cultural trope during and after the Japanese occupation of Korea," and this "national script found a perfect metaphor and symbol in young, virgin Korean women being forced to serve Japanese soldiers" (205). Sexual innocence has been such an important component to the discourse of "comfort women" activism that, as a consequence of this strategy, 'fallen women,' i.e. those who had consensually contracted to be prostitutes for the Japanese military but were also raped and brutalized during their time in the "comfort stations," have decided not to identify themselves and be interpellated as "comfort women" (Kimura 16).

The Philippine government also at first denied the existence of "comfort women" in the Philippines, for fear of losing development aid from Japan (Mendoza 256; Mitsui 51). This prompted the heads of the Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women, Nelia Sancho and Indai Sajor, to begin "making announcements on television, radio, and in the print media asking former comfort women to come forward with their stories and join other Asian women in seeking reparations for their wartime ordeal" (Mendoza 256). Essentially hailed into the subject position of "comfort woman" by the movement—after all, the Task Force had been formed *before* any Filipina/o who had experienced wartime sexual enslavement went public—Maria Rosa Henson and her utterances were undoubtedly shaped by the reigning tropes in the movement's discourse. In turn, the fact that she had indeed been a young virgin when she was raped by Japanese soldiers made her a useful symbol for the movement, particularly in the Philippines, enabling the "strategic depiction of the survivors as paragons of virtuous Filipino womanhood" (Mendoza 258).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> I address the issue of children and consent in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>65</sup> However, it is possible that the movement rhetoric was not mere strategy for Henson, who expressed disbelief at the possibility of "comfort gays" during World War II when confronted by the testimony of Walter Dempster, Jr. (a.k.a. Walterina Markova), a queer, cross-dressing Filipino who claimed to have been sexually abused by Japanese soldiers in the same way that "comfort women" were. According to Dempster, during a joint television interview with Henson, she said, "'Oh, I don't believe these gays. If the Japanese soldiers found out that he was [a] man, they would kill him.' And I [Dempster] said, 'How do you know? Did you see what the Japanese did to us? You were not there. The Japanese just raped us.'" See Ronald D. Klein, "Markova: Wartime Comfort Gay in the Philippines: Interview with Walter Dempster, Jr."

In her text, Henson emphasizes her youth many times during the course of the chapters concerning the onset of war and her sexual enslavement (Henson 21–48). Henson was 15 years old when she became a "comfort woman," although she had lost her virginity a year earlier, when three Japanese soldiers came across her gathering firewood and took turns brutally raping her. Advised by her mother not to tell anyone about that earlier incident, she writes, "I was very sad. I could feel the pain inside me. I was fourteen, and had not begun to menstruate. I kept thinking, why did this happen to me?" (24–5). The fact that she had not begun to menstruate is added after the declaration of her age, as if to emphatically assert that 14 years of age (despite being likely pubescent) is too young. She mentions menstruation again later in the text, in the midst of her graphic descriptions of being held captive with six other women by a Japanese military unit. After miscarrying a child, she expresses disbelief: "When I learned that I had lost a child, I began wondering how that was possible, as I had not yet begun to menstruate" (45). Here she wonders how a child can beget a child; thinking that she is not yet physically mature, she believes she is too young to become pregnant.

In his introduction to the memoir, historian Yuki Tanaka notes that a "distinctive feature of 'comfort women' in the Philippines is that they became victims of military sexual violence at very young ages. The average age in the comfort stations for which we have information is 17.6 years. Many were younger than 15 years, and one was as young as 10 years. Naturally, the younger girls had not yet become to menstruate" (Tanaka xvi). Henson's text emphasizes her youth and the youth of other "comfort women" to the point where the term "comfort woman" becomes a jarring descriptor. Henson's attention to menstruation and her mention of the fact that she was laughed at by the Japanese soldiers for not having pubic hair (Henson 38) leave us with the image of a prepubescent child being forced into sexual precocity, and thus unnatural suffering. In short, she depicts her ordeal as a theft of her virginity and childhood—a theft of her "innocence." Having been rescued from the Japanese by Filipino guerrillas in January 1944, nine months after her abduction, she writes of her recovery:

For years, I was constantly haunted by nightmares. I envied other girls my age who were always smiling and looked very happy, innocently enjoying the songs and the dances and the company of their friends, while I was hiding at home.

For a year, my mouth was hanging open, and my saliva was dripping down the side of my face. I had difficulty speaking. Even my hair started falling. The mere sight of men made me run and hide. I thought all men were oppressive like the Japanese soldiers. I also felt unworthy because to my mind, I had become soiled and dirty from repeated rape. (50)

In this passage, Henson contrasts the happy-go-lucky lives of other girls her age, 16 years old, with signs of what can be construed as her premature aging—hair loss, drooling, and slurred speech. Moreover, the other girls' "innocent" enjoyment is contrasted with her feeling of being "soiled and dirty." While the other girls share open camaraderie and feel free to go out and partake of social activities, presumably with males as well, Henson's shame and fear force her to hide at home. Reading the painful nostalgia in this passage, one gets the sense that she was prevented from feeling like she ever had a 'proper' childhood to begin with, as it basically ended without her consent, through the rapes, and without any pubescent desire involved.

Her experience at the "comfort station" also seems to have stemmed physical desire afterwards, because of the way that her experience with the Japanese soldiers haunted her for the

rest of her life.<sup>66</sup> Her decision to marry a few years after her captivity, at age 18, is framed in the text not as a desire for her husband, but rather as a desire to have children, so that she will not be alone when she is older. Upon the advice of her mother to get married, Henson at first balks at the idea: "I told her I had no feelings toward men. I said I hated the idea of love. But my mother urged me, saying marriage could help me forget my ordeal. [...] Then I began to think and think. I realized my mother's advice was for my own good. I thought it might be good to have children who would be with me when I grew old" (59). A few pages later, she writes that her future husband, Doming, "was a persistent suitor, but I had no feelings of love for him. I did not want to marry him. I only wanted to have a child so that when I grew old, someone would care for me" (62). In fact, because she "thought of [herself] as the leavings of the Japanese," she refused to marry him and merely agreed to live with him, but she eventually married him only when his mother forced the issue by arranging a civil wedding service (62). Physical desire—or "feelings of love"—was impossible with her husband. Sex with Doming was never enjoyable because, "every time we had sex, the images of Japanese soldiers raping me would flash in my mind" (62).

Besides fear, shame, and mourning for her stolen childhood and the thwarted development of physical desire, anger at her fate also infuses Henson's text. Although she depicts her child-self as innocent, she was not ignorant. As much as Henson's own life's events, the life story of her mother, Julia, also belongs to the autobiography, producing palimpsestic echoes throughout the text. Not only does Julia's story provide the origins for Henson's narrative, but it also interweaves through Henson's depiction of her experiences and enables Henson to critique the conditions of her life, in particular her family's immiseration and the gendered inequalities of a patriarchal society. From her birth and childhood to her first (traumatic) sexual experiences, Julia's life story is foremost in Henson's thoughts as she writes the narrative of her own life. "This story," she writes, "comes from my mother's own lips. She told me all that happened to her before I was born. She told me not only once but many times. That is why this is written in the diary of my mind" (6).

Indeed, the similarities in their lives seem to defy the odds of mere coincidence and allow the reader to see the structural inequalities in which they live. When Henson describes her first traumatic experience of rape, the sentence "I was fourteen, and had not begun to menstruate" (25), cited above, recalls the depiction of Julia's own experience of sexual trauma earlier in the text. Indeed, Henson asks, "Did I inherit my mother's fate?" (25). When Julia was 15 years old, her first sexual experience also came about through rape. Working as a live-in maid for Don Pepe Henson, the man who owned the land that her father tenanted, Julia was easily accessible to the landlord, an ostensibly religious married man who already had grown children, the second youngest being Julia's age. Henson describes the scene thus:

One night, while Julia was fast asleep, she felt someone kiss her. She wanted to scream, but she heard a voice whispering in her ear, "Do not shout, nobody can hear you because only my wife and I are in the house. All the children are not here." Julia was scared, she could not fight back because Don Pepe was stronger than she was. He raped her. Julia felt great pain. When he was through, he told her

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<sup>66</sup> It is possible the conventions of the text as a testimony against sexual abuse, especially one from a 'good Catholic girl,' forced Henson to repress the notion that she was a sexually desiring subject in order to prevent allegations that she was 'asking for it.'

not to tell her parents about the incident. "Or else, I will kick out your father from my land," he said. Then he walked away from Julia's room.

My mother was then only fifteen years old and had just begun to have her period. (5)

Note how the wording of the last sentence follows the same syntactical structure of the sentence Henson uses to describe her own rape. The mention of an age, followed by a comment on menstruation (or the lack thereof), serves to underscore the youth of the rape victims and suggests that their childhoods were brutally interrupted, their paths to adulthood thus perverted. The focus on menstruation, however, also signals a concern with specifically female childhood and female disempowerment. Emphasizing Don Pepe's strength and the pain he inflicts—"Julia was scared, she could not fight back because Don Pepe was stronger than she was. [...] Julia felt great pain"—the narrative testifies against a patriarchal culture that employs force and pain as tools to control and victimize women and girls for men's gratification, whether sexual or otherwise.

In Julia's case, the critique is also class-based, as evidenced by the interdiction Don Pepe places upon her: if she tells her parents, then he will use his power as a rich landlord to take away their livelihood altogether. Despite the interdiction, however, Julia's anger at Don Pepe impelled her to tell her parents what happened. When her parents refused to believe her, Henson suggests that they simply did not want to believe, likely because they understood more clearly the consequences of defying Don Pepe's wishes. Julia's father, in particular, "knew in his heart that she was telling the truth. Julia did not know till later that her father was bitter and angry, too. This is happening to us because we are poor, he thought" (5–6). The helplessness suggested in this passage is one of the sources of Henson's anger in the memoir. Forced to go back to the landlord's house when her parents refused to take her back, Julia was raped again, but this time Don Pepe, unbeknownst to Julia, decided to come to her parents with a proposition, offering to support her whole family in exchange for "seeing" her (8). They agreed, and for two months Julia continued to live and work in the landlord's house, until he began to fear that "she would tell his wife about what he did to her" and sent her back home (8).

Again, we find a passage in the text that signals the palimpsestic relationship between Henson's and her mother's life stories. While at home again for the next four years, Julia spent a lot of time with her childhood friends. When the moon was full, they played hide and seek and sang songs until they were sleepy. On Saturday nights, Julia received men of her age who courted her. But she felt shame because she had lost her virginity. At that time, a woman considered her virginity the most valuable gift she could give her husband-to-be. (8)

Recall the above-cited passage detailing Henson's recovery after her captivity:

I envied other girls my age who were always smiling and looked very happy, innocently enjoying the songs and the dances and the company of their friends, while I was hiding at home.

For a year, my mouth was hanging open, and my saliva was dripping down the side of my face. I had difficulty speaking. Even my hair started falling. The mere sight of men made me run and hide. I thought all men were oppressive like the Japanese soldiers. I also felt unworthy because to my mind, I had become soiled and dirty from repeated rape. (50)

While there are significant differences between the two passages—Henson hides at home while Julia is among those happily innocent girls; Julia does not suffer outward symptoms of her trauma; Julia is not altogether afraid of men after her experience—nevertheless, both feel distanced from the other girls who have not experienced the same trauma, both express feelings of shame after having been raped, and both are leery of marriage after having lost their virginity when they were raped. Both passages also emphasize their young age by nostalgically offering examples of what girls their age *should* be enjoying, guilt- and shame-free games of hide-and-seek, songs and dances, and receiving men of their age as a custom of courtship. Instead, not only were they robbed of their virginity, but they were raped by men much older than was proper, i.e. adults (in Julia's case, Don Pepe was "older than [her] grandfather" (8)).

It is not just sexual innocence that encapsulates proper childhood in this text, however; Henson idealizes education and literacy, particularly in relation to her mother's experiences. Education, and by extension true childhood, is a privilege here, especially for the poor farmers from whom she and her mother descend. Julia was never allowed to go to school because she had to take care of her younger siblings, and then she was asked to work as a maid in the landlord's house where she was raped by the landlord. Thus Julia's lack of education is intimately linked to the conditions that led to her being raped and then eventually to becoming her rapist's mistress. When she was first raped by Don Pepe, she wanted to run away because she received no support from her parents, but she was scared to do so because she was illiterate: "She left [her parents'] house weeping, and desperate about her situation. She wanted to run away somewhere, anywhere. She did not want to go back to the big house [the landlord's house]. But she was afraid. She could neither read nor write. Her parents did not send her to school because she had to take care of her baby sister and brothers" (6). Later on, she became the primary provider for her parents and siblings by becoming the mistress of the man who had raped her: four years after he sent her home in fear that she would tell his wife about the rapes, he decided to coerce her into becoming his live-in mistress in another town in return for his continued monetary support of her family. This time, her mother, Carmen, had an explicit, active role in delivering her to Don Pepe, using violence and emotional blackmail against Julia in order to make her agree to become Don Pepe's mistress: "[Carmen] addressed her daughter in an angry tone. 'If you refuse what the landlord wants, then go and pay all our debts and give us the benefits that the landlord is giving us now. Otherwise, your father and I will despise you. You are not a good daughter. You are selfish'" (9). Because her illiteracy and inability to count prevent her from running away, and perhaps feeling that she would be unable to marry well because she was no longer a virgin, Julia decides to be a "good daughter" in the only way now available to her: "Tears gushed from her eyes. She did not want to hurt her mother. Julia was a very obedient daughter. So she followed her angry mother and spoke to her. 'I will not protest anymore, Mother,' she said, fighting back tears" (9). Soon after this, Julia became pregnant with her only child, Rosa Henson, around the same age that Henson herself had her first child (at 18 years old).

Indicating the paramount importance of education in Henson's understanding of proper childhood, passages describing the institutional-educational experiences (or lack thereof) of her mother, her aunts and uncles, and herself make up the bulk of the chapter titled "My Childhood." This chapter is set right before the chapters detailing the onset of the war and her experience as a "comfort woman," both events which derailed her institutional education. In "My Childhood," Henson imparts the sense of optimism and ambition she felt when she was going to school. "I was very bright in class," she writes; "my teachers were very good to me. I also had many

friends. I was very good in all my subjects. I learned fast and did well even in handicraft, embroidery, sewing and knitting" (12–13). Her ambition is to become a doctor, an ambition that is strengthened after a friend's father, himself a doctor, encourages her to pursue her dream because she is so intelligent (18–19). As a child, then, she received the most positive reinforcement in the area of her studies.

This is in contrast to her childhood as a whole. Even without accounting for her wartime experiences, her "childhood memories are painful" because of her poverty, her mother Julia's "situation" as the unwilling mistress of a rich man, and her "grandmother's greed" in controlling the purse strings in the family even though it was Julia who earned the money from the landlord.<sup>67</sup> Again, her mother's life affects the retelling of her own. For this was also when she received a different kind of education, finally learning about her origins from her mother, the fact that she was the illegitimate daughter of the landlord who raped her mother. "I pitied her very much," Henson writes of Julia, "especially because she could neither write nor read. She did not even know how to count. I worried about her. I studied hard because she was illiterate. My dream was to redeem her sad life" (13). Proper childhood is framed as the space and time for the development of self-worth and empowerment through education.

What I argue is that Henson's narrative of the subversion of proper childhood development is an implicit argument against the colonial sexualization of children we saw in the stereotype of the precocious primitive in Chapter One. Her text posits a particular construction of childhood development that is in contradistinction to not only the advanced sexual maturity of the native, especially girls, but also to the notion that such natives experience arrested development in their intellectual capacities. Not only was she not ready for sex at 14 and 15, but she was capable of succeeding in her studies. It wasn't her biology that prevented her from doing the latter, but rather the colonial conditions and poverty in which she was born and raised.

For the upshot of the palimpsestic structure of Henson's text is that it allows her testimony to bear witness not only to the historical specificity of her traumatic experience as a "comfort woman" for the Japanese Imperial Forces during World War II, but also to the structural inequalities of Philippine society existing even before the war, which led to her own mother's trauma and the destruction of her childhood ambitions: "From my childhood, my

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<sup>67</sup> While the text evinces a critique of the immiseration that compels Julia's parents to agree to sell their daughter, it also vilifies Carmen, Julia's mother, and represents her, basically, as Julia's pimp or madam. It was Carmen who forced 19-year-old Julia, through violence and emotional blackmail, to accede to Don Pepe's wish that Julia become his live-in mistress in another town in return for his continued monetary support of her family. As Julia's father, Alberto, had become ill and was unable to work on the land any longer, it became more critical to find an alternative livelihood. Even though Carmen, as a woman dealing with gender inequalities, displays agency in her drive to ensure that her family is fully provided for despite their poverty, she still plays a significant supporting role in maintaining the power structure of patriarchal culture. Julia "was under her mother's control. Carmen held the money that the landlord gave. Julia never learned how to count, so she was not entrusted with her own money. Carmen just gave her a few pesos and bought clothes for her and the baby. Carmen directed her life. Sometimes [Julia] worried, what would happen to her and her child if the landlord died?" (11–12).

Meanwhile, this almost-wholly-unmitigated vilification of Carmen contrasts with Henson's ambivalent feelings toward her father, who is both her mother's rapist and thus the original author of her misery (he is called "the landlord" at these moments in the text), as well as her beloved father: "I loved my father, too, because he gave me his name even though I was an illegitimate child" (17). He shows her kindness during their monthly visits and gives instructions to ensure her education and general welfare. In a family where her grandmother took advantage of her mother's illiteracy and tightly controlled her and her mother's money and lives, he must have seemed like an anchor ensuring her safety.



mother told me the story of her life. 'If I did not have you, Rosa,' she used to tell me, 'I would have gone mad, because my parents and the landlord ruined all my life's hopes'" (19). It was these structural inequalities—immiseration and patriarchal gender relations—that colluded with the invading Japanese military to enable the system of forced prostitution of impoverished girls in the first place (Smith 160).

### **Consent and the Child**

Yet Henson's text leaves us with questions about agency and consent vis-à-vis the child even as it posits both for the adult "comfort woman" subject. The text's approach to the issue of consent is to make it as clear and unequivocal as possible that there was no consent in the relationships between the "comfort women" and the Japanese military; hence, the emphasis on representations of the child, who is socially and culturally deemed incapable of giving informed consent,<sup>68</sup> an assumption which forms the basis of legal delimitations of child consent. On the one hand, the text deplores the child's powerlessness, her inability to say no and have that wish heeded. Yet on the other, her representation of the child is also that of a person who cannot have knowingly consented to her prostitution by the Japanese because of ignorance. Henson's text thus enacts the contradiction of individual agency for the child with regard to consent and rights holding in general, a contradiction that inheres in the legal definition of the child and of children's rights set forth by the United Nations in international law. As activists and scholars of trafficking have pointed out, "The issue of consent for children with regards to certain arenas of work, including prostitution, is deemed irrelevant. This is in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)" (Sanghera 13). In other words, ideally the child has the right to not be exploited—considered a right to protection under the CRC—but others have decided for her that she does not have the right to pursue work if it falls under the category of sex work, as it would mean, presumably, automatically consenting to her exploitation. (Remember as well that the legal definition of a child does not distinguish between a 17-year-old and a 5-year-old.)

As Kate Federle argues, there is an unchallenged assumption of "capacity as the prerequisite to having rights": "To be a rights holder is to be a fully autonomous/rational/competent/moral being with the ability to compel performance of some obligation; to be powerless to obligate others is to lack rights holder status" (Federle 343). Because children have been "unable to redefine themselves as competent beings," it is up to others to arbitrarily, possibly self-interestedly, "decide which, if any, of the claims made by children they will recognize" (344). Basically, children have rights, but they cannot exercise those rights except through the paternalistic condescension of others to "protect the weak and ignorant" (344), thus calling into question their status as rights holders in the first place. In other words, children have institutionalized protection, not rights.

While Henson's text deplores the child's easily violable rights, it also confirms the view that the child does not have the capacity for informed consent, particularly when it comes to sexuality. The legal definition of a child as one unable to give real consent relegates all sexual interactions with a child, regardless of whether or not there was use or threat of force or deception (coercion, in short), to statutory violations. David Archard summarizes the legal

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<sup>68</sup> To review, informed consent assumes that, when giving or withholding consent, the subject is able to weigh and consider probable outcomes of decisions regarding sexual practices and that the subject has access to knowledge to make such assessments.

double-bind of the child vis-à-vis consent: "It might seem an easy matter to characterise the sexual abuse of a child as violative and non-consensual, thus distinguishing it from any other kind of sexual interaction. However, a child is deemed incapable of offering real consent, and abuse is frequently defined in terms of an exploitation of that very fact" (qtd. in Harkins 222). This contradiction between the child's status as rights-bearer and her inability to give consent would seem to reduce Henson's affecting story of powerlessness and the disavowal of her status as a human being, as well as her claim for reparation, to a matter of status violation. Another way of thinking about this is that if, as a child, she has no right to consent, then the right to say *no* is evacuated of force as well. This is problematic when we think of the legality of two 16-year-olds having consensual sex, for instance.

The issue of consent for *adults* who sell their sexual labor is difficult enough. Prostitution and anti-trafficking have been intimately linked since the late-nineteenth-century emergence of an anxious, international public discourse on "white slavery"—the "entrapment and enslavement of, particularly, white, Western European, and North American women in prostitution" (Kempadoo x). In other words, international anti-trafficking discourse historically developed primarily around women's labor and sexual practices. Kamala Kempadoo summarizes this history:

Trafficking as synonymous to the White Slave Trade came to dominate international attention around the subject of women's international migration and mobility and led to a series of international debates and conventions in the early twentieth century, spearheaded by the League of Nations [replaced after World War II by the United Nations], about the "traffic in women and children." The international campaign, couched in terms of sexual morality, gave rise to a plethora of nationally defined law enforcement and policing efforts to eradicate prostitution. [...]

The early international definition of trafficking, as exclusively attached to activities in the global sex trade, [led] to the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffick [sic] in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others. However, between the two World Wars in the twentieth century, the moral panic over white slavery and trafficking subsided, and in the new surge of globalization in the post-World War II era, labor and immigration were regulated and organized under state supervision. Interest in the subject reemerged in the 1970s, highlighted in the first instance by feminists concerned with the social impacts of the reconstruction and development of the Southeast Asian region in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the continued stationing and servicing of US military troops in the region. Sex tourism, mail-order bride arrangements, militarized prostitution, and coercions and violence in the movement and employment of women from poorer to more affluent areas at home and abroad for work in leisure, relaxation, and sex industries were paramount in the early campaigns [...]. "Sexual slavery" was claimed, from a radical feminist perspective, to be central to this understanding of trafficking, and it was taken to epitomize the very worst of patriarchal oppression and the greatest injury to women. The patriarchal institution of prostitution – but also marriage and the family—was defined in this feminist approach as inherently violent and abusive

for women, and those who participated in such institutions were believed to be deceived victims of male power and privilege. (x–xi)

What does consent mean in a setting overdetermined by the structural inequalities of a patriarchal system? As the last sentence suggests, anyone, especially a woman, who consents to be a prostitute is considered by this particular feminist approach to be a dupe of the system, that she is in fact structurally coerced by the system because of a dearth of other options available to her. However, longtime anti-trafficking activist Lin Chew points out that prostitution is a patriarchal system as much as other institutions—marriage, for instance:

The specific fundamental character of the relationship between prostitute and customer—the rendering of sexual service in return for cash payment—also underlies any relationship where the exchange of sexual favor for any form of benefit (status, security, friendship, etc.) takes place. [...] The "institution of patriarchy," therefore, is insidiously integrated into more social and personal relationships than just prostitution. (Chew 67)

The focus of certain feminist activism, however, is primarily on prostitution, with those who engage in prostitution "being subjected to [...] extreme stigmatization and marginalization as the arch-collaborators with 'patriarchy'" (67).<sup>69</sup>

Human rights scholar and activist Melissa Ditmore codifies these two feminist perspectives as conflicting approaches to anti-trafficking activism: "The first view sees all sex work as a form of trafficking. The second holds that conditions of labor in all industries, including the sex industry, should be addressed" (Ditmore 109). The first approach defines prostitution as slavery/equivalent to trafficking and focuses on abolishing prostitution; meanwhile, the other approach focuses on establishing sex workers' rights, decriminalizing sex work, and erasing the stigma of sex work. In this debate over sex work, the issue of consent is contested as well. Describing her experience at the negotiating process for the Protocol, Ditmore relates the story of how one of the delegates to the negotiations argued, in order to further criminalize prostitution, to roll back the rights of adult women to the status of children, who do not have the right to give consent under international law. The delegate "made an intervention (spoken suggestion), the apparent intent of which was to redefine prostitutes as children" (116), so that basically others could overrule any woman's decision to engage in prostitution.<sup>70</sup> People like the delegate, Ditmore claims, assume that prostitution is "so inherently intolerable that no rational person could freely choose it for themselves; therefore if anyone appears to have chosen it for themselves, it can only indicate that they are either not rational, or they are victims of coercion or deception; that is to say, victims of trafficking. The perils of such an argument lie precisely in the way that it opens the door to a paternalistic interpretation of 'what is best for women'" (117); it also leads to the "sacrifice [of] many of women's hard-won gains, including independence, legal majority, and the ability to make enforceable contracts, solely in order to render prostitution more criminal" (116).

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<sup>69</sup> Although the "comfort women" movement has been critiqued for not questioning the patriarchal terms of its rhetoric (see Y. Park, Kimura, and Mendoza), because it has marginalized prostitutes, the movement seems to parallel this particular conservative strain of feminist anti-trafficking discourse.

<sup>70</sup> This delegate happened to be a member of the Philippine delegation, possibly indicating the heavy Catholic influence in the country. As Kamala Kempadoo observes, "The anti-prostitution feminist approach imparted a particular imperialist bourgeois logic to early anti-trafficking campaigns, which [...] has continued to intersect with conservative Christian political agendas and ideologies" (Kempadoo xi).

Yet Ditmore's argument against this retrenchment of women's rights does not question the propriety of children's inability to consent but rather seems to depend on the growing body of international law pertaining to children's rights that institutionalizes the contradiction of rights for children. While children supposedly have the right to make claims and to say no to being abused, they are still considered lacking the capacity for self-determination and thus, given the state of current rights theory which enforces a status quo of powerful elites maintaining power, children are not true rights-bearers (Federle 343–44). As Vanessa Pupavac argues, "the international children's rights regime [...] challenge[s] both the moral and political capacity of individuals and their right to self-determination" (Pupavac 96), including adults' rights.

Here is how the United Nations Protocol defines trafficking:

### Article 3

#### Use of terms

For the purposes of this Protocol:

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age. (UN General Assembly, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*)

According to the definition of trafficking implemented in the protocol, "consent is irrelevant" when "the threat or use of force or deception" has been used; thus, "a person can consent to work but not to slavery or servitude" (Ditmore 115). Moreover, anyone under 18 who has been recruited or transported for work is automatically considered trafficked, even if there was no force or deception involved (section (c)). Anyone under this age is thus defined by an inability to consent to enter in labor situations in which he or she would be exploited, compounding the CRC's stipulation that a child cannot consent to engage in prostitution.<sup>71</sup> These limits on the child in sexual labor, which stem from cultural assumptions about children's development and lack of capacity, form the backdrop to the encounters between Roger, the Filipino American visitor to his homeland, and Pitik, a child sex worker, in Han Ong's novel. While Ong's text, through the perspective of the lead character, Roger, expresses disgust at child prostitution, the

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<sup>71</sup> See Article 34 of UN General Assembly, *CRC*.

character of Pitik foregrounds the issue of children's sexual agency. It begs the question: if society started treating children as having the right to consent to sexual labor, what would it mean to regulate rather than abolish child prostitution? Philosopher Linda Alcoff's work on pedophilia, violence, and consent would be helpful here. She concludes:

[I]t is not transformative to posit a future where children have sex with adults: it is our uninterrupted past and present. A truly transformative future would be one in which children could be, for the first time, free from the economy of adult sexual desire and adult sexual demands. Only this future will be truly new and unknown, and the sexuality of children that emerges from it, and that we indeed have no way to predict, will be determined then and only then by children themselves. (132)

In other words, she argues against any pedophilic relationships for the sake of children's self-determination. The "economy of adult sexual desire and adult sexual demands" applies to Pitik's situation as a child sex worker, but Alcoff is also referring to how the relationship of children to adults and vice-versa are generally structured through economics, supply and demand. Materially, children are dependent on adults, and this makes their emotions easy to manipulate. Perhaps, once children no longer need to depend on others for material support and can make decisions without being coerced emotionally, the normalization of pedophilic relationships may make sense.

### **Child Sex Work and a Question of Agency**

In his 2005 novel, *The Disinherited*, Han Ong explores the question of postcolonial agency through the character of Pitik, a 15-year-old child sex worker who has been in the world of erotic dancing and prostitution since he was seven. Although only one of several important storylines in the novel, Pitik's storyline is the linchpin of the novel's critiques of religion and sex tourism as twin imperialist projects in the Philippines. The encounters between Pitik and the primary protagonist, Roger Caracera, allow the author to portray the inner workings of a particular underside of the tourism industry and the transformation of an oppressive religious moral education into a more palatable fairy-tale fantasy of an attainable good life; a fantasy that, while seeming to subscribe to the neocolonial-inflected notions of "love" and "romance" evinced by Rik's blog manual (for instance, the title of one of his posts is "Meet Filipina's [sic] for Love and Romance!"), also suggests that Roger,<sup>72</sup> along with the novel's readers, reconsider conventional meanings of agency and victimhood.

Roger himself is a deeply cynical man who has rebelled against his rich family and all they stand for. A 1.5-generation Filipino American, he has returned to the Philippines for the first time since he left as a teenager in order to attend to the funeral of his father, the head of the Caracera clan. Roger, being the black sheep of the family, is surprised to learn that his father left him the largest bequest, half a million dollars, to help bolster his unsuccessful life in America and finally make something of himself like his doctor and lawyer siblings, much to the dismay of the rest of the Caracera clan. Again in rebellion, Roger views the inheritance as blood money, siphoned from the poorest members of Philippine society, and decides to give the money back,

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<sup>72</sup> For the sake of clarity, I use the character's first name, "Roger," throughout the chapter, even though he is usually referred to as "Caracera" in the novel.

so to speak, by giving it away to the descendants of the workers exploited by his family's sugar company. When that proves to be impossible, he donates money to a boys' halfway home and funds the budding tennis career of a talented but impoverished teenage boy who works in the club partly owned by the Caracera family.

In the process of trying to find worthy causes to which to donate his inheritance, he comes across religious charities and missionaries intent on proselytizing the Filipino people. It occurs to him that these characters are on the same mission as the Australian sex tourists whom he first encountered on the plane ride into the country:

What he was picturing was this: two planes, each bearing an opposing party, each party with plans to use this country for its own ends. But he was neither of these parties. He was outside the story.

Soon these planes were discharging their passengers. Down one staircase: the brothers of the beery, big-bellied Australians who'd been on the same flight as he, clearly participants in a sex tour.

Down the other: [Catholic missionary worker] Frannie Prusso's reinforcements: stringy, self-abnegating women with a miniature bonfire inside each eye.

Each of these groups saw themselves as proselytizers, as saviors. The Australian men by offering money in exchange for the common commodity of sex. The Frannie Prussos saving the natives not in this life but in the other—the more lasting existence whose punishments, if successfully courted, were tenfold the duration, tenfold the magnitude of the degradation suffered in this life.

Imagine that, above them in the sky at any given moment waited saviors eager to land in this place with the strange, melodious, not-quite-real name: Philip-pines. Intent on the task of conversion: transforming the rowdy, mercurial population (*Fil-i-pi-nos*) into orderly rows, down which aisles the head Australian or the head Frannie would walk, extending a hand over each Filipino and by such an act imparting the virus of their belief. In a matter of seconds, each Filipino's face would reconstitute itself into an exact replica of the Australian's or of Frannie's (*Fil-i-pi-yeses*; "Yes, boss"): a whole acquiescent field stretching into infinity beyond the dip of the horizon, an entire nation adding the sum of their bodies to the force of a single belief: choosing either the salvation from sin, or the salvation *of* sin. (Ong 91–92)

The novel links tourism in the Philippines with processes of neocolonialism, concurring with tourism scholar Vernadette Gonzalez who observes that tourism "is a mechanism through which powerful nations manipulate and dominate the political economies of less powerful nations—dictating economic reforms, lending investment capital, and (re)framing exoticized cultures" (Gonzalez 13). In the above passage, the two poles of religion and sex tourism are framed as righteous, imperialist twins, morally, ethically, and even syntactically on the same level: one offers "salvation from sin" and the other the "salvation of sin," but both participate in the corruption of the Philippines, in an attempt to remake the country into their own image. Roger's deep and judgmental skepticism and even disgust about religion and sex tourism not only color the rest of his interactions in the country, but also stem from his religious childhood and subsequent disaffection from the Catholic Church (and his family). During his youth, sex replaced religion—"that font into which he'd poured his boyish ardor, following the example of

his family"—when "he'd discovered his country's [the Philippines'] fate to have been comprised of tissue upon tissue of lies—all engineered to correct human nature (that was to say, sexual nature)" (Ong 18). Yet even the intensity of his subsequent, twenty-year-long sexual promiscuity eventually died away, leaving him "wrung out" (20) and distinctly undesirous. The exhausted ennui that sets in at first seems to enable him to witness with implacability the poverty and misery he finds in the Philippines during his visit. Indeed, that he places himself "outside the story" likens him to the reader, witnessing events at a dispassionate distance. As we find out later, however, Roger is not as removed from the story as he would like to think. When he meets Pitik and must look on the spectacle of cross-generational desire performed for his benefit, he finds himself bothered by the scandal of such a sexual desire.

In the midst of touring the Philippines, Roger learns that an earlier inheritance that he had received from his outcast uncle, Eustacio, was in fact diverted from its true beneficiary, a boy named Pitik Sindit. Banished from the Caracera family because of his homosexuality, Eustacio, at first, represents for Roger a kindred rebellious spirit despite the fact that Roger is straight. When he learns that Eustacio was not just homosexual but a pederast, however, he is dismayed and a little sickened, particularly by how young Pitik was when Eustacio met him, around seven years old. When he first hears the biographical information on Pitik from the private detective he has hired for that purpose, he cannot grasp the possibility that Eustacio and Pitik were lovers:

[Roger] was seen fighting the detective's information. If the boy was sixteen now, and [Roger] had received his uncle's money, which was rightfully, painfully the boy's, four years ago, then the boy had been twelve when Uncle Eustacio had died. Subtract four years to get back to the time when the boy and Eustacio had first met—the boy had been eight!<sup>73</sup>

Being a homosexual was one thing, but a pederast... The vastness of the misery was like staggering from a blow, the surprise of which came from its having been dealt by a supposed friend, an ally against the awful Caraceras. Now it looked like the family might've been in the right, taking care to keep the lid on such a scandalous and tragic event, initiated by their greatest, ablest wrongdoer. (152–53)<sup>74</sup>

In some ways, this reaction of disgust and his arguments with one of Pitik's lovers about the unnaturalness of the man/boy relationship (277–82) point to, as in Henson's memoir, the notion of an innate childhood innocence that is easily corrupted and exploited through sexual relations. Allowed entry into the underground world in which Pitik performs his staged sexual acts, Roger begins to realize that maybe his assumptions are completely wrong, that in fact Pitik may not have been coerced into his job: "But to look [...] at this boy, the object of what [Roger] had imagined to be a tragic process of coercion, [Roger] was dumbstruck at the newfound possibility that it was his uncle who'd been corrupted and seduced. The boy, it was clear, was aware of his expert hold on the audience" (153).<sup>75</sup> Yet despite this observation of Pitik's "expertness," Roger

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<sup>73</sup> We find out later, through Pitik's own perspective, that Roger's detective was wrong about Pitik's age by one year; Pitik is actually a year younger than Roger first believes.

<sup>74</sup> The passage is italicized in the original, to indicate a flashback scene in the text.

<sup>75</sup> Roger observes that Pitik's sex show is akin to a religious service, thus combining the two institutions that to Roger's mind corrupt the Philippines:

The boy's body, it had occurred to him, had been used as a trash can, a dumping site, and he'd wanted to laugh as much for the boy's wordless, expressionless gameness as for the congregants'

still believes that Pitik was a victim, wrongly robbed of his innocence (a notion that we find out later, via Pitik's perspective, to be false; with the careful and even caring help of Madame Sonia, a *bakla*<sup>76</sup> character who becomes his pimp/madam, Pitik orchestrated his own deflowering, so to speak, by one of Madame Sonia's clients when he was only seven) (200–01). Given his hatred of his family, Roger of course blames them for Pitik's situation and for his, Roger's, own complicity in that situation: "A boy whore had been twice cheated by them: first, deprived of innocence by a pederast, and then deprived of rightful compensation by the pederast's protectors. He, Roger Caracera, stood among them as an unwitting collaborator, taking over the boy's inheritance of sixty thousand dollars" (163).

Roger's earliest reaction upon seeing Pitik on stage during his erotic show is one of guilt: "Caracera knew that he had, by depriving the boy of his rightful inheritance, condemned him to appear in this place" (150). Yet this guilt also comes from the nervous thrill of adventure he feels during his search to uncover Pitik's identity. During his stint undercover, trailing Pitik over several days to the dilapidated house where Pitik performs his erotic dances for paying customers—who are for the most part white, middle-aged foreign men who come to the Philippines specifically for sex with children like Pitik—Roger finds himself cast into the stereotyped role of the pederast foreign tourist (141–43), like one of the "disgusting" Australian tourists who disturb him so much on the plane ride to the Philippines (38–39).<sup>77</sup> The success of his undercover disguise is what makes Pitik assume that Roger is not only gay, but in love with him—for why would a gay foreign-looking man be following him? (Roger is a mestizo who apparently registers as white.) Bolstering the idea that Roger has become one of the tourists himself is the fact that, in order to pursue his goal to give away his inheritance, he pretends to leave the country and secretly moves into a Manila apartment, thereby extricating himself from the oversight of his extended Philippine family (141–42). Furthermore, as he travels to more and more places in the country, he comes to understand how he has become implicated as a tourist: "This was his vacation from reality. Whatever he did would have no impact. It would have no means by which to chase him back home to the States. Wasn't he perhaps beginning to think just a little like the Australian men, for whom the Philippines was a zone of no responsibility?" (131).

The text also depicts Roger as a highly privileged visitor, dictating the lives of much less privileged Filipinos, thus providing a critique of the role of the postcolonial exile in colluding with neocolonial ideologies. Just like the Australians and the Frannie Prussos that he judges so harshly earlier in the text, he attempts to remake the lives of those he has chosen to be beneficiaries of his inheritance, whether they want to be remade or not. Pitik's own initial response to him is telling; when he learns that Roger's reason for contacting him is not because

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seriousness, convened, it would seem, for church. He'd wanted to laugh at the entrepreneurial bravura of a *bakla* [Madame Sonia] paraphrasing churchly rites—the contribution basket, the call and-response, the "wine" spilling from the chalice into an open and ready "mouth"—for his profit and the entertainment of worldwide men. Men who jetted here like the Australian tourists. Landing in a playground where nobody knew them, where they could not be known except as facsimiles of one another, blurring into the faceless international patronage this country must be used to by now. (155)

<sup>76</sup> The "bakla," a figure integral to Philippine gay culture, is conceptually distinct from the Western "homosexual." The bakla is a male whose "internal subjectivity is inconsistent with his anatomic sex" (Garcia 42), who usually cross-dresses, engages in sexual relations with heterosexual or bisexual macho male partners, and often suffers social stigma and abuse.

<sup>77</sup> Roger's falling into this role might serve as a critique of those who try to investigate the lives of these children: they may be falling into the same trap of objectifying the children in their anthropological attempt to 'know' them.



he is in love with him, but because Roger wants to give him the inheritance from Uncle Eustacio that should have been his in the first place—but with stipulations—Pitik becomes angry:

The man [Roger] repeated that the boy should quit his job upon receipt of the money. And of course, he said, the boy would go to school.

I *am* going to school.

Judging by your English, you need a better school.

Fuck you, said the boy. How's my English now? he thought but didn't say.

The man chose to ignore the comment. And the boy and his mother would move to a better home. I've been to Bambang [the slums], said the man, shaking his head.

A sudden anger inflamed Pitik. Not only, he realized, was he not even remotely an object of desire to this man whom he had foolishly built up into a dashing figure of romance, but it was clear that he was no more than a case for whom the suitable emotion was disdainful charity. His life needed to be remade because it offended the man's sense of what was proper in the world. (216)

Indeed, the fact that Roger makes such stipulations upon Pitik's acceptance of the money is a hypocritical, and perhaps irrational, move on Roger's part. It seems that the disgust he feels towards Pitik's job has made him disregard his own history of profligacy and his relentless desire to be a failure to his father's and family's high expectations of him. Essentially, once he finds out that Pitik is not an adult man but a boy, he makes an unconscious decision to 'save' Pitik from what Roger believes is a coercive relationship with his pimp/madam, Madame Sonia. And by saving, he does not mean to simply extricate the boy from Madame Sonia's clutches and send him on his way, but to ensure that Pitik is surrounded by the trappings of normative, "proper" childhood—a "better school," a "better home"—as if these, along with the money, would automatically change Pitik's life for the better. He ends up allowing Pitik and his mother to stay with him at his apartment, setting up a farce in his home where he plays the patriarch in a (per)version of a proper nuclear family, with the child in love with his father, and a pathetic, helpless mother who has given up on making decisions for herself and her child. Even Pitik does not adjust well at his new school, though he is very bright, as he has no desire to make friends his own age, given his experiences and his sense of being set apart for greater things. Roger's implementation of his ideas of what proper childhood means—doing well in school, making friends one's own age, being guided by one's parents—becomes an experiment that simply does not take into account Pitik's individual needs and wishes.

Thus Roger's critique of neocolonial forces is tempered by Roger's own rather imperialistic attitudes towards Filipinos and by his hypocritical stance that he knows what is best for the child (these two are not unrelated). As another instance, he depicts Filipinos as childlike, arguing that it is religion and sex tourism that infantilize Filipinos, thereby disappearing any sort of agency they may have:

"Yes, boss." Yet again. "Yes, boss."

Could this be what the overflow of pride in the Filipino press regarding a new, strengthened amity between this country and the U.S. was about—exemplified by this fifth in what was hoped would be an ongoing series of movies? "Yes, boss."

Yet again the scene was replayed. The white soldiers conferring, and while they did, the Filipinos—were they actually Allies? could they be hotel staff?—waited. Waited for the one line.

"Yes, boss."

It had only taken him a few short days to be reacquainted with the overwhelming humility of the countrymen around him. Had they no pride? They evinced a palpable quality of Catholic prostration that he had long since surpassed.

Around him the Filipino journalists, preparing questions for the director, gave no sign of understanding.

"Yes, boss." Jungles of the Philippines.

Nobody but he seemed to see beyond the words, through them.

Here he sat, back in the land of infinite shadow, the land of arrested development, back in childhood. (53–54)

Here in particular he presents himself as an adult man in relation to the overly humble, child-like Filipinos around him, maybe because, having been a rich, privileged mestizo Filipino and subsequently become an American citizen, he does not understand what America and Americans symbolize for them. He plays the same role as Rik not only in infantilizing Filipinos but also in disparaging Filipinos' desire for America, when he should perhaps know better. Pitik himself cherishes the idea of America and has made it the center of his grand plans. He could take the money Roger offers and use it to go to America with his mother, but for him this is not a real option because in his fantasy life, America is only part of the plan: "He wanted to be loved. He wanted America as part of a package that would include, first and foremost, a beloved, a lover who, understanding what he deserved, gave it to him, gave him America, thereby broadcasting his specialness to the world: he had been singled out of an entire nation of hopefuls" (215). Yet Roger does not wish to acknowledge Pitik's desires (for love and otherwise) or even his reasons for them.

Demonstrating the same cynicism about poor Filipinos that Rik does about Filipina women, Roger assumes that Pitik will be grateful for the small fortune and finally leave Madame Sonia, who Roger believes has bamboozled Pitik into sex work. Roger is so convinced he is right about his assumptions of Pitik that he wrests Pitik away from the clutches of his American lover, Feingold, thus misleading Pitik into believing that Roger is a closeted gay man who can be 'turned' by his irresistible love for Pitik. But when Roger is faced with Pitik's demands for love, he is stymied and wishes Pitik were more like, say, Celine, Rik's dutiful forest child, or even the stereotypical "city" Filipina, who would take the money and run. For despite his grand plan to go to America with a lover who is overpowered by love for him, Pitik ends up falling in love with Roger anyway, the first time he has felt true sexual desire for someone else, "the first and entirely genuine crush of an adolescent boy finally demarcating a space within himself for normal, unmercenary human emotion" (255). While in some ways it is an impossible situation of unrequited love—for Roger does not love Pitik in the way Pitik wants—Roger's almost-appalled reaction sends Pitik running back to Feingold. Roger's relief at this is hypocritical because, throughout the novel, from his vantage point as an immigrant Filipino American, he rails against the hangdog, self-flagellating, overly humble attitude of Filipinos to foreigners, the same attitude that seems to justify all of the stereotypes of Filipinos as primitive, unworldly children who will bend over backwards to accommodate any foreigner's need. Yet when he is forced to deal with

Pitik as an individual with desires and unwieldy demands of him rather than as a child, Roger practically passes him back to the erstwhile lover, Feingold, who vowed undying love for the boy. Roger in some ways turns out to be as much a foreigner as the sex tourist who sees in Filipinos only what he wants to see.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, like the "city girl" from Rik's formulation, Pitik is a worldly subject. But he is a far more complicated character than any of Rik's representations of Filipinas. Pitik is not college-educated or even well-educated, but he cynically understands the ways of the Western world through the films and magazines he consumes, and he desires above all to be loved by an American man and taken to the United States to live the good life. In order to make this dream come true, he willingly participates in the sex industry and has done since he was very young, when he "said goodbye to childhood at the tender age of seven" (195). In contrast to Rik and Peter who look for Filipinas to take care of them and obey their every command, the foreign men who are obsessed with Pitik—or rather his persona, Blueboy—desire to pamper the boy. Pitik's plan is to become so irresistible that one of these men will decide to bring him to the United States in order to have Pitik by his side forever, as in a fairy tale. Meeting Roger derails that plan, even though he would probably have succeeded in his goals—given his "long list of admirers, a few of them more than willing to take him out of his situation to be absorbed into theirs" (199)—if Roger had not almost arbitrarily decided to completely interfere in his life.

While it may seem naïve of Pitik to desire a lover who is overpowered by love for him, by his reckoning it is the best way to realize his dream and to escape his immiseration (215). It is telling that he believes that without his childlike beauty, he will have no chance to attract the right type of man. However, it is more complicated than merely finding someone to fall in love with him:

Eight years going and he already had a long list of admirers, a few of them more than willing to take him out of his situation to be absorbed into theirs. But he would not allow himself to be taken away until he felt himself to be deserving, until he was beautiful not just in the eyes of the men but, most importantly, in his own eyes. That was what he was saving his money for. Because to be beautiful—every day he felt himself inching closer—he had to have things like creams and gels and shampoos. His skin had to be softer, whiter, his hair less kinky.

But an even more crucial reason for waiting was the promise he'd made to Madame Sonia that he wouldn't leave until he was eighteen, by which point he would be too old to suit her clients. By the application of his creams and by trying to avoid or minimize hard labor [...], he had managed to keep his boyish (girlish) figure, retarding the onset of roughness and musculature. (199–200)

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<sup>78</sup> This particular critique in the novel perhaps also applies to other Filipino Americans, other postcolonial subjects, similarly distanced from the Philippines. The figure of the Filipino diasporic subject that 'returns' to the Philippines and that of the white tourist might be two distinct forms of neocolonialism as they impact the economy of the Philippines. The former usually supports the Philippine economy via remittances, while the latter supports the tourist economy, including the illicit economy. That both figures in the novel represent themselves as savior to the Philippines begs the question, is there a difference between them if both seek to impose their own views and beliefs on Filipinas/os? One should also point out that Han Ong is himself a 1.5-generation Filipino American. Thus the novel may be enacting a self-critique as well.

His assiduous attempts to remain physically childlike, it's suggested here, are not just about attracting the Western man who can take him away, but also about becoming "deserving" and "beautiful [...] in his own eyes." He seems to want to look like a child forever, perhaps to more closely embody the fairy tale he dreams about. Also, given the mention of magazines and films, the text seems to indict Western beauty standards that have made the soft-skinned, white-skinned, straight-haired child the epitome of "deserving" beauty. I discuss beauty ideals in the Philippines further in the next chapter.

Finally, I would like to note that, judging by the cynical, paradoxical nature of Roger's interactions with Pitik, postcolonial agency is a complicated matter. While Roger is the primary protagonist of the novel with the history of emigration to America and the belief that most Filipinos have a colonized mentality via religious belief and fixation on money, I want to recognize Pitik as also a postcolonial agent, as few of the human rights exposés would do and international law would not; according to these, Pitik would not be an agent, postcolonial or otherwise, but an automatic victim because he is an impoverished child in the sex trade. Although we find that the reason for Pitik's participation in sex work is not as simple as immiseration, that in fact he agentively plans to use his clients as a stepping stone to his American fairy tale, there is no real forgiveness for the foreign tourists who travel to Third World countries for sex with children, nor for the corrupt and greedy forces in Philippine society—which include Roger's elite family, the Caracera clan—that make this unequal structure of relationships both possible and even inevitable through the continued exploitation and impoverishment of the poor. In the end, after all, through his, in retrospect, naïve and self-serving attempt to make things right through a redistribution of wealth, Roger sets up Pitik for intense personal disappointment and inadvertently causes the boy's demise when the rich Caracera relatives decide that they need to take drastic measures to end the scandal of Pitik's existence in their lives (i.e., they have him killed). Despite Roger's central role in the narrative, the narrative foregrounds Pitik as the true moral conscience of the novel through the sleight of hand that positions Roger not as savior of his homeland but as one of the foreign exploiters, thus calling attention to the complications of postcolonial agency. Is Roger not a postcolonial but a neocolonial figure when he is in the Philippines? What are the exile's ethical obligations to the homeland, if any? Indeed, after his death, Pitik becomes for Roger the hate-filled "gremlin" (369) that torments and impels Roger, rather like the monkey on one's back.

### **Conclusion: The Child of Postcoloniality**

As the prostitution industry in the Philippines booms—"a necessary consequence," according to Neferti Tadiar, "of the 'development' of a larger hospitality industry, that is, one that hosts the capital and arms of touring men and multinationals" (Tadiar 50)—child sex tourism follows. It is but a fraction of this larger sex tourism industry but a significant amount of discourse and action have collected around it since its emergence three decades ago, in part because it forces us to reflect on the idealized notion that children in our societies are the seeds of the future, and in part because examining the who-what-when-where-and-how of child sex tourism illuminates the history and current state of glaring inequalities between nations, particularly as a result of colonialism by the global North in the global South.

I began this chapter with Rik's manual on Filipinas in order to show how certain subject positions are hailed in such a context, with "forest girls" produced at the intersection of the

discourses of the hypersexual and the infantile Filipina, and particular kinds of Americans and other Western subjects produced as consumers and desirers of such "forest girls." In discourses on children and sexuality, the trope of innocence is prevalent and perhaps unavoidable. I trace the contingent uses of the trope of childhood innocence in three different genres. Rik's depictions of an ideal childlike innocence is used as an infantilizing mechanism that serves the purpose of the American expatriate, marking the inferiority of the "other." In Henson's memoir, the trope serves to critique Japanese imperialism/militarism's dehumanizing use of Filipino women, even as the trope is circumscribed by a self-awareness that it is a fictive ideal. In Ong's novel, a more nuanced use of the trope can be seen as the novel refuses to idealize the innocent child and shows the tragedy that ensues when Roger adopts the trope. This triangulated comparison suggests the complex implications of the historical and figural collusion of infantilization and sexualization for postcoloniality.

To different extents and intents, the three texts treated here enact a speaking-for the child: in Rik's case, the "forest girl," i.e. the poor, non-urban, uneducated young Filipina; in Henson's case, the girl that she had been as well as her mother as a child; and in Ong's case, the young male sex worker. Given the limits on children's legal rights, they are the true subalterns in these texts, and thus their agency—their ability to speak their narrative on their own behalf—is already problematized even before they are spoken-for. In depicting the child-in-need in their texts as a way to represent larger structural inequalities in the Philippines, both Ong and Henson risk freezing the figure of the Filipina/o not only in "a ready-made identity as victim" (Smith 156) but also in a frozen subject position as a child, a figure that legally has no rights except to a protection that is given, paternalistically, only at the discretion of the powerful. Thus the texts risk a double-victimization in their representations of the Filipina/o child in the sense that the deployment of the child figure as the primary figure deserving redress could either extend into the infantilization of all Filipinas/os or exclude adults in reparations.

For this reason, the way that Ong's novel opens up the possibility for the child's sexual self-determination—a form of agency—through the character of Pitik is seductive. While Henson's text and the character of Roger Caracera in Ong's novel subscribe to the notion of a childhood sexual innocence that is easily corruptible and, once corrupted, must be put right again through legal reparations or social remedies, the novel as a whole complicates this notion. Roger may believe that it is religion and sex tourism that corrupt the country, and that sex tourists like Feingold corrupt the innocence of children; but ultimately an easy equation between "child" and "innocence" is destabilized by the child himself. That Pitik bursts the bounds of Roger's assumptions of him does not undermine the critique of the imperialist influences of religion and sex tourism, which is mostly 'voiced' by Roger. Roger, flawed and hypocritical as he is, still illuminates the complexity of the postcolonial Philippines precisely at the moment when he realizes that he is not that different from the Australians who, for him, epitomize the foreigners who make up the demand-side of the sex tourism industry. Yet, despite my desire to recognize Pitik as an agent of his own cross-generational desires, the narrative itself forecloses this agency (along with its possibility of legalized child prostitution). The cutting short of his life literally freezes Pitik into a child within the diagetic world of the novel. Murdered by Roger's own family, Pitik after death becomes a "gremlin" whose memory disturbs and impels Roger, a postcolonial subject with neocolonial tendencies.

In the meantime, Henson's text is asking for reparations not so much for herself as for her and her mother Julia's child-selves, frozen in her text by their respective moments of trauma, not

allowed to grow into the adults they *could have* been—educated, professional, self-determining. Particularly in Henson's case, the constraints of the autobiographical testimony and the constant challenge to the "comfort women's" truth-telling by the Japanese state almost demand this rhetoric, despite the risks. Because of the trope of innocence adhering to the image of the child, such representations of the child prove to be powerful illustrations of the harm caused by the abuse of power stemming from unequal gender, sexual, racial, national, and economic relations, insofar as the child is immediately imagined in terms of development. Significantly, then, for the purpose of calling for redress, Henson's narrative of the subversion of proper childhood development re-deploys the colonial discourse of infantilization of Filipinas/os by extricating that discourse from the colonial sexualization of children. Her text posits a particular construction of childhood development that is in contradistinction not only to the notion of advanced sexual maturity of the native, especially the girl child, but also to the notion that such natives experience arrested development of their intellectual capacities.

Like Henson's text, Ong's novel furnishes a critique of immiseration that enables the sex tourism industry and that is underpinned by unequal socioeconomic and political relations between the First World and global South. Pitik's participation in prostitution is overdetermined by his poverty. Pitik, whose storyline in *The Disinherited* provides the fulcrum for the novel's critique of sex tourism and religion, increasingly comes to represent the problem of the Philippines for Roger, who in a sense (naïvely) tries to fix the problems of the Philippines by trying to fix Pitik's life. Like Henson's text, the novel also attempts to extricate the child figure from sexualization.

Moreover, when Henson's text enacts the double-bind of the child vis-à-vis consent and agency, it provides an opportunity to interrogate those legal and cultural discourses that paradoxically divest the child of rights and agency even as they provide a way to address injustice, namely the human rights "regime" (see Smith and Pupavac), "comfort women" activism, and anti-sex trafficking activism. Henson's text must reify her child-self in order to strengthen her case for legal reparations. Her text shows how such discourses in fact *demand* the child's (sexual) innocence in order for the child to be deemed deserving of protection.

But the fact that Pitik and Henson, as impoverished children, have limited choices should not automatically evacuate them of agency. Henson, as a child victim of sexual abuse and colonialism, was able to exercise agency by joining the Filipino resistance movement—the Hukbalahap (which stood for the "Nation's Army Against the Japanese")—after she was first raped by Japanese soldiers in the woods at age 14. In addition, the very production of the memoir is a powerful corrective to the silencing of "comfort women" by the Japanese state (as well as by the "lukewarm state support" from Philippine government (Mendoza 262).

While Henson's memoir has been mobilized as a firsthand testimony of a historical atrocity to demand social justice and reparations for former "comfort women" on the level of human rights advocacy, Ong's novel moves in decidedly different, less activist circuits. It is a fictional critique and philosophical prod on the ethics of relation for those who may read it. I see both as products of postcolonial agency insofar as they furnish important critiques that implicate the colonial legacies of economic impoverishment, racial hierarchization, and even religious stratification in the contemporary and historical hypersexualization of Filipinas/os, including children, in a globalized tourist economy.

For Henson, child sexuality is a trespass on the child's innocence. For Ong, children are sexual beings and can and do act on their sexual feelings. For both, however, the possibility of

intergenerational sex finds its ethical limits in colonial power differentials. And as both texts demonstrate, for subjecthood to come into being, it is not enough to speak but also to be heard and *recognized* as having the capacity for agency and self-determination. Ultimately, Henson and Ong represent child sexuality in different ways, but what they both as for is recognition of the child's wishes and desires—sexual or not—to be taken seriously as persons, not pre-adults or non-adults.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Play of Imperial Power: Beauty Pageants and Cross-Generational Desire

In 2006, the Philippine independent film *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* [*The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*] won a slew of awards when it made the round of international festivals and also became the Philippine entry for best foreign-language Oscar that year. I first watched this film in May 2006 when it was part of the VC Asian Pacific Film Festival in Los Angeles. Here is the blurb about *Maximo Oliveros* from the VC Filmfest:

An award-winning example of the new digital cinema revolution currently sweeping the Philippine movie industry, this neo-realist feature essays the story of a young boy who cheerfully fulfills the role of dalaga (young lady) in a motherless family composed of an outlaw father and two older brothers. Maxi cleans the house, cooks, washes clothes and repairs tattered jeans for his relatives, who are all petty thieves. He even supplies them with the odd alibi, when needed. Maxi's homosexuality is accepted by his nearest and dearest. Loved and protected by his relatives, Maxi has a calming influence on the family and is the one in charge of the day-to-day running of the household. Things work out fine until Maxi meets Victor, a respected, principled policeman who awakens Maxi's dreams of a better life-on the straight and narrow. This is a recipe for disaster as far as the family is concerned, and it is not long before the situation incurs the wrath of his father, his brothers and his sisters [*sic*, he has no sisters].<sup>79</sup>

Described as a "progressive gay film," the film was directed by Aureaus Solito (who was in the theater the night I watched) and written by Michiko Yamamoto, the screenwriter previously known for writing the 2003 *Magnifico*, another critically-acclaimed film featuring a child character growing up in a poverty-stricken area of Luzon.

In an interview with audience members after a screening at the University of Hawai'i in Manoa in 2008, producer Raymond Lee (who is also a screenwriter) describes the writing of the film. He says that Yamamoto wanted to write another film (after *Magnifico*) about a young boy, but this time a gay one. The film was not meant to be about gayness per se, but about "corruption and poverty" and the implications of children growing up in such an environment of corruption.<sup>80</sup> Despite the fact that the decision to focus on a gay child character as entry into the inner lives of an impoverished, underclass community was rather impulsive, audiences and film reviewers seemed almost uniformly to latch onto the way gayness is portrayed in the film. During the Q&A with the director after the VC Filmfest screening, someone asked about the film's reception in the Philippines, assuming that it had caused controversy because of the sympathetic portrayal of a queer child coming of age. Solito's response was that there was no controversy at all. The audience at the VC Filmfest screening were clearly and simply celebrating the very fact of a sympathetic portrayal of a transgendered subject. Along the same lines, during the 2008 screening in Hawai'i, Raymond Lee was asked if young gay boys like Maxi were treated this

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<sup>79</sup> VC Filmfest 2006. Saturday, May 6, 2006 Program 21. URL: [http://www.vconline.org/ff06/prog\\_21.html](http://www.vconline.org/ff06/prog_21.html)

<sup>80</sup> Raymond Lee, <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/7230>



sympathetically in real life, particularly in the lower-class areas depicted in the film. Lee responded by saying that the sympathetic portrayal was indeed based on first-hand observations.

The film reviews generally laud how happy the lead character Maxi is, how he is "blessed with a profoundly loving father [...] and equally loving older brothers"<sup>81</sup> who are "not only tolerant but touchingly protective."<sup>82</sup> Writes Nathan Lee of *The New York Times*, "'Maximo' has charmed film festival audiences from Sundance to Jerusalem with its refreshingly blasé handling of homosexuality, its amiable actors and its delicacy of milieu. Credit, above all, the talented Mr. Lopez [who plays Maxi], whose effortless charisma buoys the movie even when it goes heavy with contrivance."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the poverty of the Manila slums depicted in the film simply becomes backdrop, and the plot about local corruption and its relation to Maxi's family dismissed as "contrivance."

The conflict of the film centers around the choice Maxi is forced to make between his family of petty thieves and the young policeman, Victor, with whom he falls in love. The choice is also framed as one about his future as either a law-abiding citizen or a criminal like his father and brothers. The romance and the moral conflict, I argue, critique both the Philippine state and the legacy of American colonialism. The romance and moral conflict are closely intertwined. In order to foreground the problem of poverty and corruption, perhaps the filmmakers could have made Maxi a woman instead, thus making the romance plot more conventional and consequently moving it to the background. As it is, however, *Maximo Oliveros* provides a salutary opportunity to consider the colonial consequences of the figure of the hypersexualized child. In my reading, the tale of corruption is just as important as the tale of the child's sexual desires and sexual agency. If the previous chapter focused on the trope of childhood innocence, this chapter focuses on the trope of child's play and its relationship to postcolonial agency vis-à-vis sexual desire and identity.

One particular scene in *Maximo Oliveros* stood out when I first watched it in 2006, mostly because it reminded me so strongly of Bino A. Realuyo's 1999 novel, *The Umbrella Country*. The scene is of the mock beauty contest—the "Miss Universe" pageant—held by Maxi and several other gay children from the neighborhood. (The mostly college-educated, Los Angeles-based audience that night absolutely loved this part of the film and laughed with delight when it came on.) Similar scenes occur in *Umbrella Country* in a chapter titled, appropriately, "Miss Unibers." The scenes in both texts highlight the fun, excitement, and unexpected grandeur of the gender performances. The ones who keep their cool and stay in character most successfully as glamorous, indeed worldly, women have the best chance of winning. Although the novel is set in the 1970s Martial Law period while the film is set in the early 2000s, the use of the cross-dressing pageant scene points to their similar concern with the meanings of preteen queer sexual desire and agency in the context of the social and economic conditions in the Philippines that limit the ways in which their child protagonists can express their budding sexual identities as well as keep their families whole.

The scene of the beauty pageant is strikingly deployed to illuminate young gay male desires in lower-class neighborhoods. I argue that such scenes demonstrate how masculinity and femininity are not essential qualities attached to a person but are instead a series of cumulative

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<sup>81</sup> Kevin Thomas, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/sep/29/entertainment/et-maximo29>

<sup>82</sup> Dennis Lim, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2006-09-12/film/the-blossoming-of-maximo-oliveros/full/>

<sup>83</sup> Nathan Lee, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/22/movies/22blos.html>

*performances* à la Judith Butler.<sup>84</sup> More than this, Realuyo's novel, in particular, closely examines the ways in which "America is in the heart" for many postcolonial Filipinos and what America represents for those whom America has forcibly included and excluded from its borders, back and forth as well as "inside and outside" simultaneously, at different periods of their shared history. Philippine studies scholar Allan Isaac calls this back-and-forth and simultaneous inside-and-outside "enfolded borders" (xxvi).

I am interested in the ways that desire is not only educated (to borrow Laura Ann Stoler's phrasing) but also possibly productive and enabling of difference and political change. To reiterate a larger question of this dissertation project, to what extent has the sexualized infantilization of colonized Filipino bodies been *constitutive* of Filipino postcolonial agency? In exploring the relationship of infantilization and sexualization to notions and practices of beauty and play, I want to suggest that the child's play of repetition involved in these performances of cross-dressing is inextricably tied to the constitution of gender and sexual identity. And the space of play—specifically child's play—may be a site where we can find possible contestations of market forces, specifically globalized beauty culture and Hollywood imperialism, however delimited by such forces these contestations might be. If we understand these scenes of the beauty pageant as representative of child's play, the pageant can be read as a minor space of liberation despite the way personal and cultural desire is shaped by the political economy. In *Children and the Politics of Culture*, child studies scholar Sharon Stephens observes:

Play requires some measure of physical safety, or at least the possibility of dangers selectively and voluntarily undertaken. The imagined boundaries of play worlds should not be subject to sudden, violent disruptions from adult society. Play requires some measure of consistent adult guidelines and protection, increasingly difficult to maintain in the straitened circumstances of children in various sorts of "war zones" around the world. Play also requires a certain open-endedness and possibility of surprise—qualities that one might argue are in short supply in the solitary, efficient electronic play of some materially privileged children.

Much of the critical literature on late capitalism asks where notions of alternative futures and social difference are to come from, once the localized cultural assumptions and historical dynamic of capitalist society take on a global range and penetrate into other cultures and relatively noncapitalized domains within. Where is the horizon of difference, at least partially *outside* the restricted rationality of the market and market-driven politics?

[...]

We might see play as active exploration of imagined environments, built up in the spaces of existing social life. In this light, play is the ground of a notion of culture as living resource, rather than objectified product. (33–34)

It is in play, Stephens suggests, that "alternative futures and social difference" can be explored and devised.

This chapter also turns to the issue of adult-child relationships in an attempt to locate the child's agency in cross-generational sexual desire.<sup>85</sup> To go back to some of the larger questions

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<sup>84</sup> See *Gender Trouble*.

<sup>85</sup> To reiterate, I differentiate between "pedophilia" and "cross-generational" in order to specify whether the adult is the desiring subject ("pedophilia") or the child ("cross-generational desire"). It is a gesture toward being more

that animated this dissertation in the first place, why has there been an increasing focus on tropes of both sexually agentive and sexually victimized children and adolescents in pedophilic situations in contemporary Filipino and Filipino American fictional works? Why use children in the first place to explore colonial and neocolonial legacies? As in the previous chapter, here I consider the child's capacity for sexual self-determination within the dissertation's larger project of exploring the collusion between the infantilization and hypersexualization of Filipinas/os. Similar to Han Ong's *The Disinherited* and Maria Rosa Henson's *Comfort Woman*, the narratives of young children's sexual awakenings in *Umbrella Country* and *Maximo Oliveros*, I argue, are sublimated explorations of the colonial aftereffects of the figure of the hypersexualized child in the context of chronic impoverishment and state corruption. They prompt us to consider slightly-different issues than agency and consent, that is, the meaning of the pleasures to be found in play and in sexual desire and the possibilities contained therein.

### **American Beauty and Gender Mimicry**

In both Solito's film and Realuyo's novel, the pageant scenes stand in marked contrast to the heavy violence in the rest of the narratives; there is a sense of impending doom surrounding these moments of "girly" play. This violence is particularly gendered in *Umbrella Country*, suggesting that such moments must be stolen and hidden and are delimited by the violence of male heteronormativity. The beauty pageants, while occurring outside at a neighbor's verandah, are still hidden from the view of the heteronormative neighborhood boys who violently police queerness among the other boys; as the 10-year-old male protagonist Gringo says, they "would surely taunt us upon seeing us in costumes" (31).

There are two pageant scenes in the chapter "Miss Unibers." The first occurs right before a scene of the narrator's father beating his older brother Pipo, who has been caught preparing for the next iteration of the neighborhood pageant (which at this point he has already won three times). This is the first of several beatings that Pipo receives from Daddy Groovie throughout the novel for being so flamboyantly, defiantly gay. The second pageant scene in the chapter occurs after this beating, and it is one that Gringo wins because Pipo does not compete in it given the many bruises he has sustained and because Gringo has taken over the costumes and accoutrements that Pipo painstakingly prepared at great cost to himself. Gringo embellishes and uses the outfit in the pageant and causes awed silence among the other child contestants and audience members from the neighborhood:

Halfway down, I stopped, holding still. I thought of Pipo again, the way he looked through me when he won Miss Unibers last time, as if our blood was not connected. I thought of how he should have been here, how he could have easily won this, with his legs so long, skin so light, he would have beaten all the other[s]. Suddenly I saw squinty eyes of blood, heard sounds of whipping and loud banging of my head against the wall [by Pipo], a sound that has since stayed at the tips of my ears.

[...]

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specific about the forms and contexts of agency, particularly for the child, given that pedophilia is not an appropriate term for the child in an adult-child dyad. I also use "pedophilia" to refer to "adult-child" relationships more broadly. I want to distinguish a phrase that highlights the child's agency.

And I took one last step down, hands resting on my waist. I examined each and every one of them, realizing how much their silence meant to me, capturing them with one blank stare.

"My name is—Sonja Carolina Santa Cruz viuda de Amparo Munoz Pilipiniana...SMITH...I'm Miss Woodside—Miss Nuyork...I'm Miss USA." (50)

While three of the other contestants identify themselves as Miss Spain—the most recent winner of the official Miss Universe pageant—Gringo, in his moment of triumph, comes out as Miss USA and reenacts the history of Philippine colonialism, with its 300 years of Spanish rule and 100 years of formal and informal American colonialism. The scene also foreshadows the novel's end, when the brothers get on a plane to leave permanently for the United States. That this incredibly long name references the Spanish colonial history of the Philippines before ending with the very American surname SMITH is an interesting analogue of the colonial history of the Philippines.<sup>86</sup> America, or the idea of it, has formed an enormous part of their lives, given that going to America is their father's dream. Gringo describes the States as "the body of an imagined brother. Born in Daddy Groovie's mouth, he grew up in the mouths of our house. He was the youngest one, the boyish one with an enormous power over Pipo and me, occupying the empty space in Daddy Groovie's insides, one made especially for him" (194). Daddy Groovie finally leaves for the States when his sister, a long-time American resident, successfully petitions for his migration. He is then able to petition for the rest of his family to join him in New York.

America both represents an escape from the social and economic havoc wrought by Martial Law in the Philippines and is fundamentally connected to the boys' experience with Miss Unibers. The beauty pageant in the Philippines, as anthropologist Fenella Cannell observes, has special significance for gay male Filipino transvestites—the *bakla*<sup>87</sup>—as well as women. For the *bakla*, it offers one of the few public spaces where their difference and ability to transform themselves are celebrated in spectacular fashion (204). Filipina/o American studies scholar and anthropologist Martin Manalansan concurs: "beauty [is] a process where selves are made and remade in such public events as the beauty pageant. [... B]eauty is about appropriating American symbols of glamour, creating hybrid cultures, and gaining a level of intimacy with the powerful yet distant America" (ix). Cannell argues that such beauty contests are based on American institutions and codes of behavior, for instance "American-style meritocratic principles" that transformed Spanish-colonial-era beauty contests that were really about which contestant could raise the most money through sponsorship which would then be donated to the Church (204).

It is not hard to see the staggering influence of colonial ideals of white Western/American beauty in the Philippines. As Manalansan and others argue, Philippine standards of beauty are very much influenced by the country's colonial history and neocolonial connections to America. One particular marker of this is the fetishization of light skin in the Philippines, what Manalansan calls the "mestizo complex" (116), where "the white hybrid [...] is the valorized body" (142). Cannell also cites the *mestizo/a* looks of the *santos* and *santas* (images and icons of Christian saints) and of popular film stars in conditioning Filipinos' notions of who is beautiful (206). Filipina/o American studies scholar Joanne Rondilla, in her study of skin-color hierarchy among Filipinas and Filipina Americans in the Philippines and United States, confirms this. Among her informants, she concludes, "the Filipino mixed race body is seen as desirable because

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<sup>86</sup> Note also that there's a "widow of" ("viuda de") in the middle of it, though I'm not quite sure what to make of it.

<sup>87</sup> According to Martin Manalansan, "*Bakla* is the Tagalog term that encompasses homosexuality, hermaphroditism, cross-dressing, and effeminacy" (ix).

it is closer to looking white or looking like an acceptable or progressed Filipino (e.g. this person does not have extreme features that are traditionally associated with Filipinos such as a broad nose, dark skin, and kinky hair)" (36). In one striking example, one of her informants, a television personality with "light skin, green eyes, and sharp features," explains the way her grandmother ranked her, her mestiza cousin, and her darker-skinned sister from when they were very young:

My grandma, my dad's mom, she was very into titles. And I don't know what it was. But she always called like, she called me Miss Universe. She called my cousin Erin who's older than me Miss Philippines. And then she called my sister [Anastasia] Miss Cebu. (Tyler Haro qtd. in Rondilla 61)

Rondilla clarifies that while Tyler looks white, Tyler's cousin Erin appears as a light-skinned mestiza and her sister Anastasia is described as "exotic looking" and "darker skinned," which is why Anastasia received the provincial title (61). Such ranking made Tyler feel uncomfortable, especially since she was being compared to close family members.

Because light skin bears upon (heterosexual) female beauty more than on (heterosexual) male beauty,<sup>88</sup> Miss Universe pageants and the like make an extra investment in whiteness. This type of skin-color hierarchy is why Gringo believes in the inevitability of Pipo winning their Miss Unibers pageants: "with his legs so long, skin so light, he would have beaten all the other Miss Spains" (50). It is also why he feels so inadequate in comparison to Pipo in terms of their respective abilities to successfully mimic femininity. Mostly because his skin is dark, Gringo believes himself to be ugly and thus unable to compete on equal footing with Pipo in the pageants. This adds further burden to his budding queer sexuality since being unable to mimic a beautiful femininity would make him anxious about his general attractiveness. As Philippine cultural critic Rolando Tolentino explains, "The dominant strain so far in Filipino gayness is the homosexual's desire to be in the place of woman. With or without cross-dressing, the underlying premise of Philippine homosexuality is female sexuality" (327).

Yet while Gringo seems to believe that Pipo is a natural at this gender mimicry because of his looks (long legs and light skin), it's also clear that Pipo makes obsessive study of the fashion, carriage, and demeanor of beauty queens, constructing clever imitations of outfits seen in the Miss Universe pageants on TV, by any means necessary, including stealing and skillfully altering his mother's favorite old dresses. What the novel illustrates quite neatly is Judith Butler's theory of how gender is performative rather than a set of attributes, and particularly that masculinity is as much a performance as is femininity.<sup>89</sup>

Juxtaposed against the pageants are the mini-scenes in the next chapter, "Hallowed Be Thy Name," where their father, Daddy Groovie, instructs Pipo in how to perform masculinity. Once adolescence makes its first appearance in Pipo, Daddy Groovie tries to teach him how to perform the ideal masculinity of Daddy Groovie's peers, whom Gringo describes as a bunch of frighteningly-violent "hang-around do-nothing men" (12). The contortions forced on Pipo by his father to conform to heteronormative masculinity are similar to the set of rules of femininity that Pipo studies for the neighborhood Miss Unibers pageants, but Daddy Groovie's tutelage in masculinity entails physical violence. Here are some excerpts of Daddy Groovie's instructions:

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<sup>88</sup> See Rondilla.

<sup>89</sup> See Butler 24-25.

*Oy, Pipo, straighten your back...like that, no, don't bend your back, your hands, don't swish, keep your blood flowing through your wrist, uh-huh, like that, no, don't bend your arm, keep it down, like this, see? that's the way men are, always ready to blow, and your head, don't move it too much, keep it up, chin up, up, Pipo, up, as if always looking at the sky waiting for the rain, yes, that's the way to walk, don't wiggle your behind, wait, wait, where are you going? what are you doing? come back here, start again, again, now, that behind, keep it tight all the time, girls like it tight like that, you see? they're looking better now, now don't forget your chin, your hands, think about all of them, they're part of your body, think of them as one, your chin, back behind, all one, that's it, you got it, that's the way, yes, yes, that is the way men are!* (51, italics in original)

[...]

*look at your father, lalaking-lalaki, real man, real man, look at these arms, see those, scars, scars, only a man would have those, look at you, you're growing up to be a girl, you know? Miss Unibers? Miss Unibers? that's for girls! boys don't dress up and become Miss Unibers! you idioto! nasisiraan ka na ba? tarantado? Are you out of your little mind? maybe that's what it is—your mind so little, it doesn't work right, you want to be sent to Boys Town? there they'll discipline you, huh? Bubugbugin ka 'don [you'll get beaten up there], maybe because you're not circumcised, that's what it is, chop that thing off [...]* (57–58, italics in original)

Here, not only does Daddy Groovie prohibit his boy from participating in Miss Unibers pageants, but threatens to have Pipo castrated as well. And finally, after coming home drunk one night:

*Listen to me...always all always listen to me, you're my firstborn, never ne-ne-never, ever look away when you listen to me, you g-g-g-goddam...only girls look look away....*

[Gringo's voice:] How I wanted to change Pipo myself, turn him into what Daddy Groovie wanted him to be, tell him how his backbone must always be straight, his chin, up, his wrists, firm, maybe this way Daddy Groovie would stop dragging him into the room to hide him from me. To make noises [as he beat him with a stick]. (62, italics in original)<sup>90</sup>

"Only girls look away"—Daddy Groovie's history of gendered violence<sup>91</sup> is hinted at in this particular line, driving home the point that the heteronormative process of becoming a "real man" entails misogynistic violence, attempting to literally beat the femininity out of Pipo.

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<sup>90</sup> Indeed, it seems that Gringo absorbs Daddy Groovie's lessons much better than Pipo. Just as queer as his brother, Gringo manages to escape their father's violence for several reasons. First, what Gringo calls his capacity for shame, which Pipo does not seem to have, prevents him from being as flamboyant. Second, though he is only a year younger than Pipo, Gringo is the younger brother and the baby of the family and thus sheltered by everyone, including his mother, who has given up trying to protect Pipo. Third, because Gringo has never been unfairly picked on by his father and thus never felt particularly betrayed by his mother, he is simply less angry and defiant, perhaps even less brave, than Pipo. What this means, though, is that he has never felt the amazing rush of feeling that compels Pipo to defy his father's interdiction from acting like a girl. However, even as he escapes his father's violence, he doesn't escape the violence Pipo enacts on him.

<sup>91</sup> Gringo learns from his godmother that Daddy Groovie date-raped their mother, Estrella, impregnating her and then forcing her to marry him. We also get hints in other parts of the novel that Daddy Groovie rapes Estrella as well as physically abuses her, leaving scars that Gringo can sometimes catch glimpses of.

Given the boys' fraught relationship with their father, the notion of escape to America is equally ambivalent. While there is the suggestion that the United States might be more open to their non-normative sexuality, or at the very least, that they can start anew where no one knows them, their departure is marked by pain and loss, both present and future. As their mother Estrella decides that she will not leave the only country where she feels she belongs in order to be with a husband she never loved who abuses her and their children for not loving him back, not only do they end up leaving their mother for good—a mother who, by the way, already emotionally abandoned them years ago—but they must also live with Daddy Groovie who polices non-normative sexuality with vicious violence.

In contrast, *Maximo Oliveros's* engagement with the U.S. is far more sublimated than in *Umbrella Country*. Maxi apparently finds pleasure in several things which mark his femininity: cooking, taking care of others including his family and the smaller children in the neighborhood, beauty pageant play, and watching melodramatic and romantic films at the local DVD shop. The latter two items are where we can find such an engagement, through the hierarchized, globalized beauty logics of the pageant genre that are based on white Western/American ideals and through the consumption of Philippine films that riff off of Hollywood (for example, *Gone with the Wind* becomes *Gone with the Macho*). Both of these genres—beauty pageants and Hollywood—reflect on the ethnic, racial, and national politics of the film itself. The lead character, Maxi, played by Nathan Lopez, and his love interest, Victor, played by J.R. Valentin, both look like light-skinned mestizos.<sup>92</sup> The rest of the actors in the film do not. It's unclear to what extent this is a function of Philippine film casting conventions. As Rondilla notes in her study of skin color hierarchies in the Philippines, darker-skinned actors barely exist onscreen, and when they do they are usually in comedic roles (90). Are skin-color conventions so strong that only lighter-skinned actors are believable as dramatic actors? Or is the casting of lighter-skinned actors in the lead an attempt for an independent film to gain an advantage among audiences of international film festivals and American institutions like the Academy Awards?<sup>93</sup>

Despite some superficial similarities, the pageant scene in *Maximo Oliveros* has different significations than the pageant scene in *Umbrella Country*. Whereas the pageant in *Umbrella Country* is a moderately large event with ten contestants that draws about a dozen audience members from neighborhood, the single beauty pageant scene depicted in *Maximo Oliveros* is small, with only Maxi and two other bakla children from the neighborhood participating (a girl "ally" is their show's host), and spontaneous.<sup>94</sup> Rather than spend days preparing for the pageant the way Pipo does, Maxi and his friends pick their costumes from an already-established collection of clothes and accessories at his friend's home. In sharp contrast to the violence visited on Pipo, one of the most touching elements of *Maximo Oliveros* is the loving relationship Maxi has with his immediate family, his very macho father and two brothers. As described above, Maxi's family and community are generally accepting of his non-normative gender presentation, and therefore there is no fear of being found out during the pageant; their pageant is merely a

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<sup>92</sup> Maxi thus approximates the coveted pageant-winner look that Pipo embodies in *Umbrella Country*.

<sup>93</sup> It seems significant to note that while her two friends playing in the beauty pageant represent Mexico and Venezuela, Maxi represents the Philippines, thereby lending the film a nationalist character as it circulated as the Philippine entrant in international film festivals.

<sup>94</sup> Right before the pageant scene, the three boys and the girl run into each other. Maxi is called "bakla," which is translated by the film in subtitles as "faggot." The epithet is not meanly spoken, however, and there isn't a sense that Maxi finds it offensive.

form of child's play that none of the adults care to regulate. Maxi's pageant scene occurs right before we meet his love interest Victor and, as a storytelling device, furnishes an expository interlude that reveals what Maxi is looking for in a possible lover. During his talent portion, Maxi dances to a catchy pop song performed by Ethel Booba, "Mr. Wow," with these lyrics (translated): "It's hard to trust a handsome man / He'll break your heart and leave you dry / I want a strong man who will protect me and never leave." The song both reflects and produces a specific form of sexual desire. It is, of course, a desire for a conventional monogamous relationship with a protective, loyal, trustworthy heterosexual man who ideally would break stereotype by being handsome as well.

The violence surrounding Maxi in the narrative doesn't stem from his community's pushback against his nonconformist gender presentation but from his family's run-ins with the law given their choice to be petty criminals in order to earn more than starvation wages.<sup>95</sup> However, there is one scene that shows how his cross-dressing makes him vulnerable to misogynistic harassment. Soon after he leaves the pageant play with the other children, a couple of older teenage boys accost him in an alleyway on his way home, pulling off his clothes while laughing and taunting him as he screams "Rape!" and ineffectually struggles to get away. This is when we meet Victor Perez, the new policeman in the neighborhood, who saves Maxi from the men's sexualized torment. Victor chases away the perpetrators and carries Maxi home on his back. Maxi promptly falls in love. Victor, as presaged by the song "Mr. Wow," is precisely what Maxi is looking for.

Ironically, while Victor allows Maxi's attackers to get away in order to take care of him, it is Maxi's brothers who mete out a type of vigilante justice. Having presumably learned from Maxi who they are—it's a small community—his two brothers, Boy and Bogs, corner the attackers, beat them until they pass out, and leave them naked in a trash heap in plain view of anyone who comes across them. Maxi's father and brothers are vulgar, fast-talking swindlers and thieves, making their family living as petty criminals, but their regard for and treatment of Maxi are indulgent, loving, and protective. Like Gringo, Maxi is the youngest child and thus sheltered. But he has also taken on the role of the dead mother as domestic laborer, and his father and brothers likely realize that they wouldn't have delicious food to eat at home together—they have dinner as a family regularly—or clean clothes without Maxi's labor. In short, Maxi's labor enables them to live together as a close-knit family. He is the heart of the home. Their treatment of Maxi can be seen as chauvinist, in which the female figure is set on a pedestal and protected from harm at all costs, yet there is a self-awareness that imbues their relationship, a kind of gratitude to Maxi for agreeing to take on the role of the woman.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> We find out late in the film that his father turned to petty crime after his wife, Maxi's mother, died, stating that his law-abiding factory job didn't give them enough money to help save his wife from a serious illness and that he made the decision so as not to lose another member of his family to poverty again.

<sup>96</sup> The nickname they use for him, Maxi, holds an element of self-awareness in the irony and play on words. The very masculine name Maximo, truncated into Maxi, calls to mind a "maxi pad" or sanitary napkin used by females on their periods. Indeed, his father teases him affectionately by giving him pocket money to buy himself some napkins (Maxi of course uses it to buy convenience foods and drinks for himself and his friends). And one of his older brothers makes a joke about Maxi being on his period when he (Maxi) is in a gloomy mood. It is as if the heterosexual men consider it a sacrifice to trans\* M-to-F, maybe recognizing a greater difficulty in women's roles. At the same time, this more-generous reading is undercut by his brother Bogs's repeated unkindness to a young woman who flirts with him and seems to want a relationship with him.



The Filipino transvestite or bakla is defined by taking on the role of the woman, as cited in Tolentino above. In Maxi's situation, the macho heterosexuality of his father and brothers remains intact. While Maxi does not have sexual relationships with any of his family members, Tolentino's description of the bakla's role in sexual relationships is still pertinent here:

Male heterosexuals accept gay encounters and relations in periods of their lives. Gay-heterosexual relations are common, and are sexually and economically motivated. The working class gay supports the needs of the often more economically marginal partner, who in turn, willfully exchanges sexual favors. On another level, gay relations actually support the macho culture of having women and gays fall for its sexual prowess. Like Imelda's gay entourage, the gay figure becomes a display that validates machismo culture. A gay to gay (*kauri*; of the same mold) relationship is considered *lesbiana* (lesbian) and incestuous, and therefore a taboo in the gay subculture. Thus the gay's relationship with male heterosexuals is always temporal, premised on the male partner's eventual return to the family narrative of marriage and having children. Marriage, however, does not preclude gay relationships; sometimes, gay support for the partner's household continues in the barter of sexual favors for economic goods. The gay's constant slippage of relationships hinges on the essential non-attainment of female sexuality. Though beyond the reach of most working class gays, transsexualism remains a fantasy option for this gay politics. Female sexuality becomes the impossible standard in which gayness is made to approximate. Gay pleasure is temporally constructed, in the in-between spaces of angst and pleasure in the performance of being a "complete" woman. (328, italics in original)

Maxi's labor in the household supports his father and brothers in exchange not for sexual favors but for their continued protection of him. In a set of different, more conventional family dynamics, the very fact of Maxi being a child would afford him the same type of protection anyway. But here, his taking on the stereotypical woman's labor of the household constitutes his contribution to his unconventional family's survival.<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps it is because Maxi is able to fulfill the definition of the bakla—taking on the woman's role—in his daily life so completely that the pageant scene in *Maximo Oliveros* doesn't carry the same weight as the pageant scenes in *Umbrella Country*. For Maxi, the scene is simply an extension of his daily practices, another chance among a multitude for a child to perfect the performance of feminine gender identity. For Pipo and for Gringo, who face a violent interdiction against homosexuality at the hands of their father and the neighborhood bullies, those hidden, stolen moments of playing/performing femininity become freighted with heightened significance as an escape from the violence, boredom, and drudgery of the rest of their daily lives. In both cases, however, the performance of femininity is coextensive with their exploration of their respective sexual identities.

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<sup>97</sup> However, because they enact a patriarchal family dynamic, when Maxi is faced with the choice between standing by her family and pleasing Victor, the situation takes on an Oedipal cast. Indeed, Maxi is doted upon by her father to the point where the term "daddy's girl" wouldn't be far off the mark.

### Cross-Generational Desire, Pleasure, and the Possibilities of Play

While *Umbrella Country* is ambivalent about the possibility of young "sexual dissidents" having "their initial sexual experiences with older men or women" without trauma (Bruhm and Hurley xxvi), *Maximo Olivares* can be interpreted as a sustained consideration of the queer child of color's cross-generational desire—Maxi's "puppy love" for Victor—without having that desire necessarily consummated. I would argue that this is another reason why audiences found so much pleasure in watching the film; the safety with which Maxi could follow his object of love around the neighborhood without facing consequences more horrible than the teasing of Victor's fellow police officers was indeed "refreshing" (Nathan Lee) for its unexpectedness. The conflict in the film is real, and interestingly enough, the conflict is not about the age difference. The film matter-of-factly takes Maxi's desire on its face. Neither her father, her brothers, nor the other members of the community make an issue of the age difference. It is only Victor who briefly questions it.

Victor: Aren't you too young to know about this stuff?

Maxi: I'm 12, old enough. My friends all have boyfriends already.

And while Victor rather condescendingly seems to regard Maxi's declaration as childish, he doesn't bring it up again until he must discourage Maxi from following him around later on in the film: "Find someone your own age. [...] I don't have time for this."

In the meantime, though, the gentleness between Victor and Maxi as they get to know each other, the longing looks Maxi gives Victor, and the obliquely-turned flirtations on Victor's part slowly build sexual tension during the first half of the film that intensifies the tension of the oncoming conflict between Maxi's family and Victor, the naïve but principled representative of the law. When the oldest brother Boy ends up murdering one of his marks, Maxi helps him hide and eventually destroy the evidence. Note that this is a real break for the family's moral code. It enrages their father, who, in tears, strikes out at Boy and even makes gestures toward kicking him out of the family. They're thieves but they're not vicious, as Maxi plaintively explains to Victor. But Victor suspects Maxi's family and attempts to use his hold over Maxi to get a confession—a breach of trust for which he apologizes later on, and which foreshadows the surrender of his morals and high principles over the law at the end of the film.

Thus the root cause of the violence in the film does not stem from their romantic relationship although the violence and the relationship are intimately intertwined. In fact, when Maxi's family accosts Victor and viciously beats him as a warning not to investigate the murder further, the incident furnishes an opportunity for Maxi and Victor to get even closer; Maxi, against the wishes of his father, goes out to find Victor, help him home, and tend to his wounds. Watching Nathan Lopez struggle to breathe as he cries over the prone and bloody body of J.R. Valentin is one of the most wrenching moments of the film. At the same time, the sexual tension ramps up as Maxi helps a nearly-unconscious Victor take off his ruined shirt. He spends all night on the bed with Victor, keeping vigil over him as he lies unconscious. The morning after, Maxi makes him breakfast and, unbeknownst to Victor, watches, mesmerized, as Victor bathes and dresses. They have a significant moment together as Victor comforts Maxi, who is upset by the fact that his family has hurt Victor and threatens more of the same. For the first time in the film, Victor touches Maxi openly, rubbing his back and face. The moment gains intensity until Maxi, in his innocent exuberance, kisses Victor on the cheek. Seemingly taken aback, Victor tells Maxi he should go, and smiling, Maxi leaves. Interestingly, after this point Victor rebuffs Maxi's every attempt to see him again, and it's unclear whether Victor is taking the death threat from the

Oliveros family to heart, whether he is trying to prevent Maxi from falling in love any further, or whether he is preventing the consummation of his own desire for Maxi.

What does Victor represent symbolically? He is at first a bulwark against the complacent corruption and petty crime that characterize neighborhood life. This is the life that provides Maxi with a roof over his head and food to eat, as his father deals in stolen cell phones, his eldest brother does the stealing, and the middle brother is a bookie. So despite his immediate attraction to Victor, they are at opposite sides of the law. (It is in some ways a Romeo and Juliet story of star-crossed lovers with feuding families.) It is when Maxi learns that Boy has committed murder that the real trouble begins, because murder means capital punishment. Thus the ostensible conflict of the narrative is this: Maxi must choose between his family and his new love. After he meets and befriends Victor, he becomes dissatisfied with his life, which is dependent on the fruits of criminal activity. This dissatisfaction causes a rift between him and his father, who up until now absolutely dotes on him. In fact, after Victor comes into their lives, Maxi's father asks him several times if he still loves his family. Maxi of course wants both lover and family, and wishes they wouldn't be in conflict. Things come to a head when his father seeks out Victor for a final, fatal confrontation. Maxi watches the new police chief, apparently his father's nemesis when they were younger, shoot his father dead at point-blank range, justifying the extrajudicial execution as the only way to truly root out the corruption and crime in the neighborhood. Maxi watches as his love object Victor stands there and does nothing. Victor, far from fighting crime and bringing murderers to justice, has become corrupt in a different, state-sanctioned way.

By the end of the film, Maxi's life has been upended by violence. His father has been murdered in cold blood by a police chief whose impressive track record for lowering crime rates is apparently based on corruption. This chief's worldview has managed to corrupt the innocence and provincial naïveté of rookie cop Victor. The film transitions into a montage after the murder, a series of scenes without any real dialogue: Maxi and his brothers mourning for their father; the brothers cleaning up their act for the sake of Maxi's future; Victor attempting to reach out to Maxi, seemingly in apology, by serenading him outside his window through whistling (this calls to mind an earlier happy time they had together, when Victor tried to teach Maxi how to whistle, and again the Romeo and Juliet narrative). Although the film does not show that the two end up together, there is a suggestion that Victor is perhaps wooing Maxi, following him around in his police jeep while he walks to school. Although this smacks of creepy surveillance, it recalls the way that an infatuated Maxi followed Victor around town soon after meeting him.<sup>98</sup>

In stark contrast to Maxi's relationship with Victor, Pipo's relationship with an adult, the neighborhood bakla, Boy Manicure, ends in his rape. We don't witness much of how the two interact; we can only guess what happens through what Gringo sees, which is Boy Manicure's nearly-successful attempt to lure Gringo himself into the beauty parlor (171–77) and the aftermath of seeing Pipo leave the parlor, dazed and bleeding at his buttocks (181–84). The rape happens soon after the most vicious beating Pipo has received from Daddy Groovie (who drunkenly beat their mother and drove away their godmother as well, causing Estrella to withdraw from everyone, including her children), and we are left to assume that Pipo, hurt and estranged from both of his parents and brother, fell for Boy Manicure's pleasing, "comforting,"

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<sup>98</sup> The fact that the tragedy of the film (the death of the father) is caused by the collision of different kinds of corruption rather than a personal conflict between Maxi and Victor—star-crossed lovers—substantiates the filmmakers' claims that they intended the film to focus primarily on the problems of poverty and corruption in the Philippines, not Filipino gay culture.

almost-hypnotic enticements. At one point, Gringo describes how Boy Manicure "started singing something we used to sing as little children" as one of his lures (175). Throughout the novel we are given hints that Boy Manicure's social isolation in the neighborhood may have a deeper reason, not merely the bigotry of the community: Gringo has nightmares about him; whispers from the other kids that "He's dangerous" (59). Although Gringo believes that "Nobody was really afraid of him," he understands that Boy Manicure is the repository of the community's fears of sexual deviance. Boy Manicure features as a rather scary figure in Pipo's dreams (34), and he is used as a bogey man by Daddy Groovie in an attempt to scare Pipo "straight" (57–58). (This latter is perhaps why Pipo turns to Boy Manicure, in perpetual defiance of Daddy Groovie.) Here is how Gringo understands all that he's heard about Boy manicure:

The woman trapped in a body of a man that all fathers warned their sons not to become. Daddy Groovie's biggest fear about Pipo. My biggest fear about Pipo. About myself. *Pintada bruja*. They only saw the beast in Boy Manicure: thick makeup, dyed brown hair. Lipstick redder than fresh chicken blood. I ran away from him, too, even if sometimes I felt I wanted to talk to him. [...] The children called him names. *Bakla*. A curse in every way. A word so permissible even a seven-year-old could use it. "*Bakla*," Pipo said once. I choked. My throat full of words I would never say. (59–60, italics in original)

Gringo is both attracted to and repelled by Boy Manicure and what he represents. His aversion stems from the shame that his community's bigotry heaps upon the bakla, but Gringo is attracted to Boy Manicure for that very identification: "My shame ran away from him. But it wasn't because I disliked him but because all the other children ran away from him, their fantasies of disgust and fear voiced in whispers" (59). The possibility that Boy Manicure might become a mentor, however, is foreclosed when we find out that Boy Manicure is a rapist, especially one who breaks the taboo of "gay to gay" relationships in Philippine gay culture.<sup>99</sup>

Instead, the model of sexual desire most favored by the novel is that between Gringo and Boy Spit, a boy much like Gringo and just a little bit older. Boy Spit is Gringo's first kiss, as the two say goodbye in anticipation of Gringo leaving for the United States. Filipina/o American studies and queer studies scholar Martin Joseph Ponce argues persuasively that the chapter in which this moment occurs, and which earlier features a triumphant orgy of queer boys in which Pipo willingly participates, furnishes the true climax of the novel (Ponce 174). This model of gay relationships is different from bakla culture, suggesting that Gringo's (and Pipo's) queer sexuality is more aligned to a Western version of gay sexuality.

Realuyo's bleak visions of adult-child sex and male-on-female sexual violence invite us to interrogate the notion of pleasure at both the site of child's play and cross-generational desire. Again, I turn to feminist philosopher Linda Alcoff's work on pedophilia. It is important here in its call to understand how "pleasure is ontologically constituted by discourse and exists in intrinsic and not only extrinsic relationship to structures such as patriarchy" (110):

Such a view [allows us] to consider the ways in which certain pleasures are not merely redistributed but produced, such as the pleasure of violating, the pleasure of harming, and the pleasure in vastly unequal and nonreciprocal sexual relations. And most important, it would also work against the possibility that pleasure, in all

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<sup>99</sup> Given Tolentino's description of gay-gay relationships, Boy Manicure's violation of Pipo could be seen as *even more* transgressive: "A gay to gay (*kauri*; of the same mold) relationship is considered *lesbiana* (lesbian) and incestuous, and therefore a taboo in the gay subculture" (Tolentino 328).

its various forms, could serve as the haven or bulwark against the mechanisms of dominant power/knowledges. If pleasure is itself the product of discursive constitution, it cannot play the role of innocent outsider. (110–11)

Far from uncritically celebrating the pleasure in desire to be found in both *Umbrella Country* and *Maximo Oliveros*, such a view asks us to take a step back from and question the pleasure we feel as readers and audience members. This questioning is why I began this chapter with a personal anecdote of seeing the film in a roomful of excited, delighted people. What did our pleasures mean?

As we can see, Realuyo's depiction of bakla culture is very different from that in *Maximo Oliveros*, which is more in line with Rolando Tolentino's study of 1970s transgressive gay films. Victor's sexual ambiguity in the film and Maxi's very feminine performance can be mapped onto Tolentino's description of bakla-heterosexual relations above (Victor barely has any money in the bank because he won't take bribes, and Maxi labors to support him the same way she supports her family, through cooking his lunches and caring for his domestic needs when possible). According to Tolentino, being bakla has no intrinsic value as political resistance, despite the celebration of the film in 2006 around the world. Since bakla-heterosexual relations can materially support and keep intact structures of heteropatriarchy, it's possible that that very attribute of the film has been celebrated on an international scale, having been misconstrued because we aren't immediately able to recognize our investment in the conventional heterosexual romance plot due to the cross-dressing spectacle of the bakla character. The treatment of the bakla in *Umbrella Country*—where Boy Manicure is depicted as an isolated individual who turns out to be a child rapist, and who is brutally murdered by an unknown assailant at the end of the novel—points to the still-scandalous character of homosexuality in many parts of the world and the way in which a celebrated bakla culture as found in *Maximo Oliveros* could be fetishized or co-opted in global equality movements.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the tragedies and the pessimism, however, both the novel and the film end with a possibly-hopeful uncertainty about the futures of the child protagonists. Pipo and Gringo get on a plane by themselves with one-way tickets to America, leaving their mother and birth country behind as well as Gringo's first love. As difficult as it is, they leave and don't look back; Gringo, at least, is determined to find his home wherever they end up, as implied by Realuyo himself in the author interview at the end of the Ballantine edition (n.p.). In the meantime, the last few minutes of *Maximo Oliveros* present an inversion of the rest of the film previous to this scene. We see Maxi in long dark pants and white button-down collared shirt; they are school clothes. It is jarring after seeing him in colorful tank tops and shorts for the bulk of the film.<sup>101</sup> There is also a striking contrast from the beginning of the film: here we see the two brothers ironing his blouse, making his lunch, and getting him ready for school, thus taking over the feminine labor that Maxi used to perform for them. Note that by this point they have given up petty crime and are presumably holding down lawful jobs somewhere. This scene of role-reversal has several possibly-contradictory significations I can think of: 1) it shows that this kind of work shouldn't be strictly coded feminine because we all "drag" at one point or another and gender is more fluid

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<sup>100</sup> What I find valuable about readings like Tolentino's is that they ask us to attend to the violence of heteronormativity and patriarchy in the texts at hand even as they caution against uncritical celebration of the opposite, homonormativity. See also Ponce for a similar caution with regards to *Umbrella Country* (194).

<sup>101</sup> By this point, I would say that the film has successfully destabilized my notions of gender and sex, because Maxi in long pants and looking more like a boy seems like "drag" to me.

than we think, 2) it is merely for laughs, although such humor is predicated of course on reversing rigid expectations of gender roles, and/or 3) this is the kind of family they always were, with someone taking on the role of caregiver, whoever it may be, i.e., this is how kinship ties are maintained. In any case, the brothers all seem at ease and hopeful in spite of their recent loss.

These outcomes are very different from those in Han Ong's novel and Maria Rosa Henson's memoir, discussed above in the previous chapter. Ong and Henson's protagonists become frozen subject positions with foreclosed possibilities—Pitik has been murdered by the end of the narrative; Maria has survived sexual enslavement but never gets to fulfill her childhood dreams and lives with the guilt of never loving her husband. Maxi, Pipo, and Gringo, in contrast, seem to be facing an unknown future with possibilities for their happiness. I want to suggest that this future full of possibilities is related to how play is represented in the film and particularly in *Umbrella Country*, in the form of the neighborhood children's pageants. If it is in play that "alternative futures and social difference" can be found or created (Stephens 33), it makes sense that the pageants in *Umbrella Country* provide a reshuffling and buffering of the violent social relations found elsewhere in the community, including the home. Through creating a safe space for the play, the participants, including the audience, block the heteropatriarchal bullies from beating the male contestants for their non-normative gender performances. Unsympathetic members of the community, like Daddy Groovie, are kept in the dark about when and where these events take place. Beaten and demoralized at home, Pipo emerges triumphant and awe-inspiring in the pageants, winning three in a row. Shy Gringo wins gloriously as well, coming out of his shell and overcoming the shame that his sexual/gender identity usually provokes. Even for Maxi, whose non-normative gender presentation is broadly accepted by his community, the pageant provides a safe space to explore his desire for a "Mr. Wow."

Yet there is a question of what "bakla" means in the film and novel, which present us with fragmentary performances of the bakla. As Realuyo's novel suggests, Gringo and Pipo are not quite or not-yet identified as bakla. Their father Daddy Groovie assiduously attempts to ensure such an identification never happens, through his violent lessons on masculinity to Pipo. The boys' desires don't line up perfectly with their father's expectations of what bakla is (hence, Gringo's ability to 'pass' as not bakla), nor do their sexual practices. What if childhood bakla-ness is not gay or even bakla at all? If the child is presumed un- or underdeveloped, could we understand the child as ever fully supporting any form of rigid gender and sexual (and racial) structure? In Maxi and Victor's case, could we disentangle Maxi's performance of bakla-ness from Tolentino's notion that bakla-heterosexual relationships support the structure of heteropatriarchy? I find the possibility for this in the fact that at the end of the movie, Victor follows Maxi around even after he has shed all feminine accoutrements. Their relationship blurs the boundaries of the bakla-heterosexual structure.

While the figure of the bakla is an imperfect analogue for the children in *Umbrella Country* and *Maximo Oliveros*, the children still perform gender mimicry of femininity. As Fenella Canell writes of transvestite beauty pageants in the Philippines, "imitation of content can constitute a self-transformative process" (226). If Stephens's "alternative futures and social difference" can be devised during play, the neighborhood pageants wherein the children invert, subvert, and mimic gender roles would be the place for it.

## **Conclusion: Filipina/o Child and American Empire**

My dissertation asks, to what extent has the sexualized infantilization of colonized Filipina/o bodies been *constitutive* of Filipina/o postcolonial agency? If the four Filipina/o and diasporic postcolonial texts that I examine in Chapters Three and Four are all responses to the colonial legacy of the hypersexualized child, they present different approaches to dealing with that legacy. In contrast to Ong and Henson's texts, Solito's film and Realuyo's novel explore in depth the child's sexual desire. Because the latter two feature cross-generational desire from the child's perspective rather than through an adult character as in Ong's novel, we have a better sense of the possibility of children's agency in these texts. They seem to take the figure of the hypersexual child—normally figured as a sexually-precocious girl child in colonial discourse—and tweak the figure for their own purposes: from girl child to boy child who mimics femininity; from a feral interest in sex to a desire for love, acceptance, and recognition from another person.

In *Children and the Politics of Culture*, Sharon Stephens asks, "What are the implications for society as a whole, if there are no longer social spaces conceived at least partially autonomous from the market and market-driven politics? Where are we to find the sites of difference, the terrain of social witness, critical leverage, and utopian vision, insofar as the domain of childhood—or of everyday life or of a semiautonomous realm of culture—is increasingly shot through with the values of the marketplace and the discursive politics of postmodern global culture? And what happens to the bodies and minds of children in the process?" (10–11). Here I would like to specify the "market" and "market-driven politics" as animated by American neoliberal globalization. The child characters' simultaneous identification with and desire for American institutions and codes of behavior, as seen in their beauty pageant play, hold an implicit critique of the history of colonial and neocolonial Philippine-American relations. The economic pressures placed on Philippine society due to the legacies of colonialism and contemporary neocolonial relations between the two countries have pushed many to seek to leave the Philippines for better lives, culturally investing themselves in the ideal of America, as we see in *Umbrella Country* and *The Disinherited*. This desire for America can be understood as having been produced by colonialism, along the lines of Michel Foucault's claim that desire is produced or constituted by the law (81). As colonial historian Ann Laura Stoler argues, building on Foucault and Frantz Fanon, "sexual desire in colonial and postcolonial contexts has been a crucial transfer point of power [...]. Such desires [...] may use sex as a vehicle to master a practical world (privileged schooling, well-paying jobs in the civil service, access to certain residential quarters) which was in part what being colonial and privileged was all about" (190). Nowhere is this clearer than in Pitik's desire for Roger, the privileged son of an elite Filipino family and a self-exile in the United States. And to some extent, Maxi's sexual desire for a man who embodies the (uncorrupted) law can be read as a desire for, perhaps, stability and a chance to go to school.

But what about Stephens's possibility of "utopian vision" within spaces that are "shot through with the values of the marketplace"? Not to lose sight of the colorist hierarchy at work in *Umbrella Country* and *Maximo Oliveros*, I would argue that these beauty pageant scenes open up the possibility of a queer future that reappropriates and flies in the face of the imperial forces of the market, as instanced by the standards of beauty that circulate globally through the Miss Universe pageants. Pipo, Gringo, and Maxi are not deploying child's play merely to grow into their own sense of their sexuality and identity; in the process, such children are also growing into

their positions vis-à-vis market forces, whether working within the licit economy, outside it, in the Philippines, or in the imperial metropole. We saw in Han Ong's *The Disinherited* one child's response to the imperial forces of the market, that is, Pitik decided to participate in the sex tourism industry (young as he was) and on his own terms: he got himself a pimp, he marketed himself, he had a hand in directing his 'first time,' who the customer would be, and he was the one who chose among his possible customers. Limited as his choices were, Pitik still managed to exert quite a bit of control over his career, which is a very different set of circumstances than we're used to hearing about children in sex work.

Far from imagining child sex work as a space for liberation of the child, however, I am much more interested in the ways that the desires produced by coercive forms of power, such as colonialism and its legacies, can also be productive and enabling of difference and political change. According to Jack Halberstam, it is important to "recognize that alternative forms of embodiment and desire are central to the [class] struggle against corporate domination. The queer is not represented as a singularity but as part of an assemblage of resistant technologies that include collectivity, imagination, and a kind of situationist commitment to surprise and shock" (29). Children's play, I would argue, exemplifies almost precisely a "resistant technolog[y] that include[s] collectivity, imagination, and a kind of situationist commitment to surprise and shock." In this vein, the beauty pageants in *Maximo Oliveros* and *Umbrella Country* can be read as minor spaces of liberation and resistance, invested with "alternative forms of embodiment and desire" and shot through with possibilities.



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