white
love
and Other
Events in
Filipino
History

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Introduction

*Episodic Histories*

Few countries give the observer a deeper feeling of historical vertigo than the Philippines. Seen from Asia, the armed uprising against Spanish rule of 1896, which triumphed temporarily with the establishment of an independent republic in 1898, makes it the visionary forerunner of all other anti-colonial movements in the region. Seen from Latin America, it is, with Cuba, the last of the Spanish imperial possessions to have thrown off the yoke, seventy-five years after the rest. Profoundly marked, after three and a half centuries of Spanish rule, by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, it was the only colony in the Empire where the Spanish language never became widely understood. But it was also the only colony in Asia to have had a university in the nineteenth century. In the 1890s barely 3 per cent of the population knew “Castilian,” but it was Spanish readers and writers who managed to turn movements of resistance to colonial rule from hopeless peasant uprisings into a revolution. Today, thanks to American imperialism, and the Philippines’ new self-identification as “Asian,” almost no one other than a few scholars understands the language in which the revolutionary heroes communicated among themselves and with the outside world—to say nothing of the written archive of pre-twentieth century Philippine history. A virtual lobotomy has been performed.—*Benedict Anderson, “The First Filipino”*

The chapters that form this book were composed during the last decade of the twentieth century. They are as much the products of the “virtual lobotomy” that Anderson writes about as they are belated attempts to come to terms with its operations. Written from the place of forgetting,
the United States of America, these essays relate events in the cultural and political history of the Philippines and Filipinos from roughly 1898 till the middle of the 1990s. They do not tell a complete and unified story about the nation and its fragments but instead offer versions of what could be told based on archival remains and the wealth of official, scholarly, and popular interpretations of certain events. And although they deal with historical topics, they are indebted to the critical vocabularies of anthropology and literary studies as well. At bottom, what holds them together is an interest in understanding the languages of rule, resistance, and collaboration as these are conjugated by the technologies of imagery in the production of colonial and national histories. In engaging the related legacies of colonial interventions and nationalist responses, however, I have also pursued the emergence of other historical possibilities that either exceeded or fell short of these narratives. Precisely those moments, in other words, that somewhere cannot be neatly mapped onto either discourse, that seem incidental or peripheral to the grand moral (and moralizing) narratives of both. These concerns, inescapably overdetermined, are enmeshed in a number of contexts, two of which are worth citing.

To begin with, this book explores the fractious history of a nation-state at a time when both the nation form itself and the scholarly genre for addressing it—area studies—are undergoing intense scrutiny and face uncertain futures in the United States. The end of the cold war; the intensification of capitalist penetration across national borders; the emergence of new nationalisms within older ones coinciding with the rise of ethnic conflicts, of postcolonial neoliberal regimes alongside religious fundamentalisms and growing economic disparities in the so-called third world: such a history, as is well known, has characterized the fin de siècle. One of the developments arising from this history has been particularly important to the writing of this book: the mass migration beginning in the mid-1960s to the present of Filipinos in search of alternatives—economic, political, cultural—to the pressures of uneven developments and unrealized desires that they face in the Philippines. Such movements have, in turn, given rise to a new generation of hyphenated and racialized Filipinos, especially in North America, increasingly curious about their origins. Uneasily affiliated with while doubly alienated from the land of their birth and places of their work, residence, and/or citizenship, these migrant, immigrant, and second-generation Filipino-Americans have become crucial sources of financial aid by virtue of the remittances they send to the Philippines. By the same token, they have also become significant interlocutors in the political debates and formation of knowledge about Filipinos in the Philippines and elsewhere. This all takes place as area studies, the dominant post–World War II social science genre for coming to terms with the “alien” and modes of alienation among peoples outside the United States, has come under considerable pressure to justify its institutional existence to funding agencies, private and public alike. While area studies has historically been used to extend and refine U.S. hegemony in the world as part of the cold war, it has also provided channels of communication and exchange between scholars, resulting in an extensive body of work critical of the very agencies and figures that have sought to instrumentalize knowledge of the other. These two facts—the emergence of what, for want of a better term, might be referred to as a diasporic Filipino culture on the one hand, and the crisis in the culture of area studies in the United States on the other—have in part shaped the shifting textures and tonalities of this book. The chapters that follow can thus be read as tokens in an ongoing engagement with these recent, far from clearly demarcated developments.

The second context for these essays has to do with the history of nationalism in the Philippines. They appear against the backdrop of various Filipino centennial celebrations of the anticolonial revolution of 1896 and anti-imperialist war against the United States of 1899–1902. Both of these momentous events were punctuated and eventually overcome by counterrevolution, beginning with the Tejeros Convention of 1897, and followed by the Malolos republic of 1898–1899 and the colonial Philippine Assembly of 1907. Centennial festivities in the Philippines as well as among most Filipino overseas and immigrant communities have tended to portray all these events as part of a smooth continuum—the story of the struggle against colonial bondage leading to national sovereignty—rather than events that exist in dialectical tension with one another. Such a view grows out of and serves to consolidate the triumphalist official nationalism that has emerged in the wake of the 1986 People Power Revolt (another stunted revolution) under the Aquino, Ramos, and Estrada regimes of the late 1980s and 1990s. It has
coincided with the stultification of revolutionary nationalism within the Communist Party of the Philippines, whose leaders as of this writing remain in obdurate exile in the Netherlands, at odds with their increasingly factionalized cadres back home. This book is partially a response to these fluid and disparate conditions in a country where a certain conservative nationalism has become ascendant, and populist expressions of nationhood seem so readily taken up and contained by varieties of Christianity, the forces of the state, and the lures of the marketplace.\footnote{The form that this response has taken is something not unfamiliar to the tradition of Filipino critical and historical writing: the essay. I follow in the wake of those writers who have sought to render an episodic rather than epic account of the Philippines. Where a major tendency of nationalist historiography has been the epic recollection of the “passion”—the suffering, death, and resurrection—of the Filipino nation, there has existed as well a “minor” style of episodic narrative, which treats in a more condensed and concise manner clusters of historical details and reflections that do not easily fit into a larger whole. The usefulness of such a form of writing lies in its ability to attend to the play of contradictions and moments of nonheroic hesitation, thereby dwelling on the tenuous, or we might say ironic, constitution of Philippine history. Where the epic, with its concern for the heroic, seeks to form the very consciousness of the people whom it speaks to and about, the episodic digresses, circling around recurring motifs and recalcitrant obsessions. For this reason, the latter necessarily assumes an ironic relation to the former. Irony forestalls and interrupts the establishment of a single, overarching narrative about the nation.\footnote{Rather than relay the event of nationhood, episodic histories linger on the thresholds of meanings. Dwelling in the shadow of details, they convey the eventhood of events, that is, the conditions of possibility and impossibility for the historical emergence of the nation and its various states.}}

The Philippines. Like Columbus confronting the islands of the New World, Villalobos took conceptual possession of these, naming them las islas Filipinas. The boundaries of this Spanish invention, however, were far from settled. Originally, it referred to those two islands where Villalobos’s men were able to secure provisions. By 1566, with the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and the establishment of the first permanent colonial settlement on the island of Cebu, the term encompassed those parts of the archipelago that had come under Spanish control, including most of the lowlands of Luzon.\footnote{Through the two centuries of Spanish rule, the limits of Filipinas kept shifting. At one point, it would have included parts of Borneo and the Moluccas in the south and Formosa and Macao in the north, both of which had served as Spanish outposts only to eventually be abandoned in the seventeenth century. Spanish expeditions during this period were also sent to conquer Malacca, parts of present-day Cambodia along with what in the nineteenth century would be known as Indochina, and the Marianas and Caroline Islands. Only the Marianas expeditions were a success, resulting in the incorporation into the Spanish realm of the island of Guam, which in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would be used as a site to incarcerate Filipino nationalists. By the same token, had the Dutch defeated the Spaniards in the protracted wars of the seventeenth century, the archipelago would have been part of the East Indies and present-day Indonesia. For a brief period in the mid-eighteenth century, 1762–1764, Manila was part of the British Empire as a consequence of the Spanish defeat in the Seven Years’ War. The colony was eventually returned to Spain in the peace settlement that followed. However, British, and to a lesser extent German and North American, merchant capital came to dominate the economic realities of the colony by the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Thus was Filipinas doubly colonized, belonging to Spain (and until 1821, administered as a Mexican province through the trade connection between Manila and Acapulco) but also to the expansive geography of a world capitalist system that stretched across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. From sugar mills to railroads, British, German, and North American merchant houses financed what amounted to an agricultural revolution that linked the colony to overseas markets and created a mestizo middle class from which the leaders of the nationalist movement would emerge.\footnote{5 Introduction}}

Names and Naming We can begin with the ironies encysted in the names Filipinas and Filipinos. The archipelago was named after the heir to the Hapsburg throne, Felipe II, by the Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos most likely in 1543. In search of the spice islands, his crew inadvertently landed on the shores of Samar and Leyte, the easternmost region of what is now called the Visayan Islands in the central
Nonetheless, until the end of the Spanish era in 1898, parts of the colony’s territories—the upland regions of the Cordilleras and the mountainous terrains of the southern Tagalog and eastern and western Visayas, as well as the Muslim-populated areas of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago—clearly stood on the periphery of colonial control, offering refuge to those seeking to escape and undo its hold. These were areas interior to Filipinas yet exterior to its hegemony. As the great writer Nick Joaquin observed, “The might-have-beens of Philippine geography are staggering... It could have been less or even non-existent as a separate entity. There could have been no ‘Filipinas’ at all. The labor of the Spanish period was not only to create a geography but to preserve what had been created.” Even American colonial officials in 1898 chose to maintain this Spanish geography after some short-lived discussions of partitioning the colony. The outlines of the cartographic image of Filipinas that is familiar to every Filipino schoolchild today was, in fact, first sketched in 1734 by the Jesuit Pedro Murillo Velarde and engraved by Francisco Suarez and Nicolas de la Cruz, both of whom referred to themselves as indio tagalo en Manila. It was this colonial geography, instigated by the hallucinations and contingencies of voyages and conquest, that came to be taken as naturally fated and organically whole by the leaders of the Philippine Revolution and all other nationalists who have come in their wake. But unlike the eighteenth-century engravers Suarez and de la Cruz, late-nineteenth-century nationalists referred to themselves as Filipinos rather than indios. How did this shift come about?

The Spaniards, like Columbus, tendentiously misnamed the native inhabitants of las islas Filipinas indios, placing them in the same racial pot as the inhabitants of the New World. The term Filipino likewise had curious beginnings. As late as the end of the nineteenth century, it referred to the sons and daughters of Spanish parents born in Filipinas. Like the Americano, the Filipino was thought to be racially distinct and consequently inferior to the Spaniard who hailed from the peninsula regardless of his or her educational attainment or class background. At the same time, he or she enjoyed a more privileged social position in a plural society compared to the lowly indio, the untrusted but economically essential Sangley, or Chinese, and the equally educated and Hispanicized mestizos, both Spanish and Chinese. Indeed, the very term Filipino emerges in the first place as a way of accounting for the existence of those who, looking like Spaniards, were in actuality born outside of Spain, in the colonies where the climate and civilization were seen to be so radically different from that of the motherland. We could thus think of Filipino as that which initially referred to a liminal group, to individuals who were native neither to the place of their parents nor to that of their birth. Indeed, it was not until the spread of nationalist consciousness in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that the term began to take on another meaning: those who would claim a fatal attachment to the patria regardless of their juridically defined identity. Such a condition has led Benedict Anderson to remark that by the end of the Spanish colonial regime in 1898, there existed a territorially demarcated country—las islas Filipinas—with a centralized state apparatus and an economy tied to global capitalist markets, but whose population was only beginning to refer to itself self-consciously as Filipinos, thanks to more than two decades of nationalist stirrings climaxd by a revolution that was then quickly followed by counterrevolutionary actions sealed by American imperialist intervention.

Las islas Filipinas, in short, existed for more than three centuries before there were any Filipinos who would lay claim to its reality and proclaim loyalty to its existence. It is this ambivalent fit between the name of a place and the name of a people that has long haunted nationalisms, both official and popular. And given the prevailing ethnolinguistic and religious diversity of the archipelagic nation, an ongoing civil war between the republic and the Communist Party of the Philippines that dates back to the 1960s, separatist wars with Muslim groups in the south from the 1970s, the steady migration since the mid-1960s of its middle-class population to work or live in virtually every part of the world, and the recent resurgence of fundamentalist Christian sects across a wide array of social classes since the 1980s, attempts at establishing a clear and undisputed fit between the Philippines and Filipinos is far from complete, and in fact, may never be realized. Hence, when nationalist scholars, area studies specialists, or second-generation Filipino-Americans refer to Filipinos as the “native” inhabitants of the Philippines whose existence begins with the prehistoric Tabon Caves and remains essentially unchanged through the centuries and comes to include such disparate practices as Igorot crafts
and tattoos, locally produced rock music, and late-nineteenth-century Tagalog peasant movements—they simultaneously acknowledge and erase the historicity of the term. These and other anachronistic usages of Filipino indicate the term’s ironic origins, even as that irony is set aside.

Colonial Tracings  The imperfect alignment between the name of the nation and the name of the people, who since the last nineteenth century have laid claim to this nation as their homeland, is precisely the trace of the colonial conditions within which both came about. It is well worth reiterating the extent to which Spanish colonialism introduced profound disjunctions into the native societies that it conquered. We can see this, for example, on the level of language. As I have argued elsewhere, the very possibility of writing the names of the nation and the different vernaculars of its inhabitants depends on a technological complex introduced by the Spanish missionaries: that of the Latin alphabet and phonetic script that replaced the Sanskrit-derived syllabic scripts so widespread on the islands at the point of contact. The ease with which these local scripts were replaced had, in part, to do with the fact that they were connected neither to royal literary traditions nor to elaborate cosmologies such as Hinduism and Islam, both of which had only the most superficial influences on precolonial societies. The exigencies of Christian conversion so essential to the consolidation of Spanish rule required that the Spanish missionaries learn native languages and thereby encode their grammar and publish dictionaries, religious sermons, and devotional literature in these various languages rather than in Spanish or Latin. What emerged at the end of Spanish rule was a Catholicized lowland majority speaking a variety of mutually unintelligible languages and made dependent on the linguistic and political mediation of the Spanish clergy to make their desires known to those at the top of the socioreligious hierarchy. The cultural reality of las islas Filipinas cohered, then, in a linguistic hierarchy—of local languages conceived as derivatives of the language of the colonizer, and both considered to be derivatives of the language of God; and of local signifying conventions (from modes of writing to animist forms of spirit beliefs and rituals) as inferior, and thus, subject to those of the colonizer.

Harnessing primarily to the needs of evangelization (which in turn was the legitimating basis of colonial conquest), the technologies of Spanish signification—Latin characters, grammar books, dictionaries, religious literature, laws, and decrees, all of which were reproduced and disseminated mechanically via print and backed by the machineries of the colonial military and state bureaucracy—effected the consolidation and regularization of the colony’s linguistic diversity. To this day, such a diversity flourishes at the expense of a national language. Unlike other Southeast Asian and Latin American countries, the Philippines does not have a national language. Instead, it has a history of state and elite attempts to institute a national language based on Tagalog in the face of the persistence of a linguistic hierarchy, where the last colonial language, English, continues to be hegemonic. As I will argue in chapters 4, 6, and 7, the persistence of this linguistic hierarchy has been coterminous with, if not constitutive of, the persistence of socioeconomic divisions in the country.

The Filipinos and Filipinas are thus permeated with foreign origins, their historical realities haunted by the ghosts of colonialism. Nationalist revolution and counterrevolution have sought to lay these ghosts to rest with uneven success and unsettling effects. From its beginnings, nationalism in the Philippines has been divided and conflictual. Loving the nation has never been a simple matter. Historically, it has taken on various tendencies that defy synthesis. In its inception in the 1880s and 1890s, nationalist sentiments veered between assimilationist aspirations and separatist ambitions vis-à-vis the mother country, Spain. It was not, in fact, uncommon for the two sentiments to coexist in the writings of individual nationalist figures. A brief review of the history of the revolution reveals as much.

Cross-class coalitions and ethnolinguistic alliances in the face of an increasingly reactionary Spanish regime (which, it is important to note, counted on the collaboration of many “natives” in its military and bureaucratic apparatus) made possible the geographically limited successes of an anticolonial revolution in the latter half of 1896. But these successes were brought about by a leadership made up of low-level bureaucrats and provincial elites led by Emilio Aguinaldo that quickly sought to contain the more radical social aspirations of the revolution. To this end, Aguinaldo and his followers installed a revolutionary government through which were likely fraudulent elections, then carried out the execution of the so-called father of the revolution, Andres Bonifacio,
when he protested the results and conspired to launch a coup. Shortly thereafter, confronted with Spanish reinforcements, Aguinaldo and his generals retreated from their provincial base, eventually striking a deal with Spanish authorities brokered by the wealthier and more Hispanicized members of the Manila elite. By the end of 1897, they agreed to lay down their arms and go into exile to Hong Kong in exchange for large sums of money.\textsuperscript{16} Aguinaldo, on the eve of their departure, readily professed to a Spanish journalist in his halting and heavily accented Castilian his continuing loyalty to the colonial government and desire for assimilation despite the fight that he had led against Spain.\textsuperscript{17} But once in Hong Kong, Aguinaldo and his junta lost no time in seeking ways to purchase guns and solicit foreign aid to revive the struggle even as revolutionary fighters in the Philippines continued to engage in local battles against colonial troops.\textsuperscript{18}

By May 1898, war broke out between Spain and the United States. Returned to the Philippines by U.S. naval forces, Aguinaldo was enlisted by George Dewey to aid in the fight against Spanish troops until the arrival of ground reinforcements. As U.S. ships aimed their guns at the colonial capital, Aguinaldo resumed the revolutionary struggle, quickly routing the demoralized Spaniards and declaring independence in June. In August, the Spaniards in Manila consented to what amounted to a mock battle with American troops in order to save face and keep Filipino forces from entering the capital city. The Filipino revolutionaries, prevented from claiming victory, had to establish their capital to the north, in Malolos, where they formed a republican-style, elite-dominated government. Unable to gain recognition of their sovereignty from the United States, however, the republic was driven to war with the new colonizers in February 1899.

Although the war came to an official end in 1902, sporadic resistance from peasant armies in other parts of the archipelago continued until 1912. Nevertheless, within the first five years of U.S. rule, the overwhelming majority of revolutionary leaders had surrendered to the occasionally genocidal ferocity of the conquering force.\textsuperscript{19} Elites, in time, saw their own survival as entirely dependent on their collaboration with the new colonial state. Through U.S. colonialism, nationalistic elites consolidated their prominence, finding in the new regime the economic, military, and political means with which to ward off the demands for radical change from below and secure their privileged positions to speak for and of the nation through the patronage of those above.

How can we understand these events? Revolution had stirred the populace—first in the Tagalog regions and then in places that had come under Spanish rule. Ironically, word of the revolution traveled along the same communicative routes established by the colonizers—initially in the Castilian language and eventually in the vernaculars that had been conserved by the missionary orders. It spread among students at colonial universities, was incubated in secret societies styled after Masonic lodges, was inveigled from church pulpits, and appeared in newspapers published in Spain and the Philippines. Social hierarchies threatened to collapse as indios, mestizos, and Filipinos demanded recognition from Spaniards as equals. And when their appeal was construed as either ingratitude or intimations of criminal intentions by the colonial state and church—both already paranoid about their losses in Latin America and the revolution in Cuba—these groups found themselves linked under a common name as “filibusteros,” or subversives, enemies of the state, subject to surveillance, deportation, torture, and execution.\textsuperscript{20}

The expectations of freedom that swept through many parts of the archipelago in the wake of the revolution were not uniform; indeed, the meaning of freedom was never clear-cut. As the historian Reynaldo Ileto has shown, it ranged from the Enlightenment notion of political independence and representative government familiar to the nationalist bourgeoisie, whereby they would figure as the natural rulers of the land, to the more vernacularized, Catholic-inflected notions that saw the revolution in millenarian terms as the redemptive leveling of all social distinctions.\textsuperscript{21} What so revolutionary about the revolution was precisely that it placed different social groups and classes into unprecedented contact and communication. Revolutionary nationalism came to be infused with the agency of an irresistible newness, suggesting the emergence of possibilities yet unthought and a history that could not be foreclosed. In the language of some of its more radical participants, the revolution promised not only freedom from colonial domination but also release from unequal relations of all sorts.\textsuperscript{22}

As we have seen, however, the possibility of a social revolution was quickly overtaken by the forces of counterrevolution by 1897 and increasingly after 1899. Elite attempts to contain revolutionary impulses
by organizing a revolutionary state, then formalizing it into a republican form of government wholly dominated by Spanish-speaking elites, amounted to the resurrection of the social hierarchy. While war against the United States revived revolutionary hopes, military defeat and political collaboration consolidated social differences. Throughout the years of U.S. rule, there emerged a remarkably resilient oligarchy. With a rural base in a plantation economy; it enjoyed tariff-free access to markets in the United States and dominated national politics under U.S. sponsorship. Many (though not all) of these elites collaborated with the Japanese regime during World War II, and then repudiated it with the return of the Allies in 1945; survived not only the Hukbalahap peasant rebellion that followed in the late 1940s and 1950s but also the Marcos dictatorship of the 1970s through early 1980s; and have continued to dominate Philippine political and cultural life in the aftermath of the People Power uprising in 1986.24

The tragic—and therefore ironic—relationship between revolution and counterrevolution forms one of the most enduring motifs in Philippine history. Conservative impulses have conflicted with but also complemented more radical views. The desire for social leveling has alternated with the desire for hierarchy, often within the same nationalist figures and the same class formations. Even peasant-instigated movements critical of colonial and elite domination were waged in a language of devotion and submission, taken from the colonial idiom of Catholicism and fused with the residues of animistic, precolonial beliefs. Utopic longings for freedom also betrayed a generalized wish for an order of perfect reciprocity ruled over by a benevolent patron.

We can see this irony, for example, in Ileto's highly suggestive excavation of the meanings of the Tagalog word for freedom, kalayaan. It is derived from the root word layaw, the carefree state associated with childhood when all of one's needs are taken care of by one's parents. As such, kalayaan could be used as a vernacular token in the moral critique of oppressive conditions caused by the neglect of those below by those on top of the social hierarchy. Yet it also indicates a state of sublime dependency that assumes unending access to an inexhaustibly generous patron/parent prepared to grant every desire. Freedom here simultaneously undermines and idealizes hierarchy, posing not an end to dependency but the possibility of its perfection. In this sense, the notion of kalayaan echoes the Christian one of salvation, which puts forth a transcendent realm that would relieve one from daily sufferings by granting him or her a place of perfect subordination to God.25 Freedom as sublime dependency is reflected not only in lower-class discourses but in a wide range of nationalist imaginings as well. These include the middle-class projects of campaigning for assimilation into Spain, exploring protectorate status from Japan on the eve of the revolution, invoking the patronage of the "great North American nation" right in the declaration of independence of 1898, or submitting to devotional practices and prophetic figures acting in the name of a higher power, whether they be peasant leaders in the mountains of the Visayas or ilustrado (enlightened) leaders in Manila.

The double connotations of freedom are, of course, directly related to the complexities of nationalism's history. As the chief means for undoing colonialism's effects, nationalism is inextricably linked to that which it seeks to repudiate. Attempting to exorcise the ghosts of colonialism, nationalism also marks the point where colonialism returns, particularly in the forms of the modern state apparatus and socioeconomic inequalities registered in the persistence of a linguistic hierarchy. The coherence and appeal of Filipino nationalism comes, in part, from its continuing relationship to colonialism's power—whether Spanish, North American, or to a lesser extent, Japanese. This is not to say, however, that it is a derivative discourse, to use a current term. That would clearly be a mistake. Rather, the history of Filipino nationalism shows it to be inhabited and strangely enabled by the very forces it has sought to distinguish and expel from itself. Seeking to repossess and expropriate colonialism's legacies, nationalism also finds itself possessed by its spectral returns. Thus the fundamental irony of Filipino nationalism. It has engendered militant resistance and remarkable acts of sacrifice and courage, just as it has provided an alibi for self-serving collaboration with new regimes and the systematic repression of those opposed to them. In an era marked by diaspora, nationalism has provided a language for organizing and mobilizing overseas and immigrant communities in response to racial and sexual discrimination and often in alliance with other similarly marginalized groups, both in the host country and the Philippines. Still (as we shall see in chapter 8), it has also functioned to reify identities, freeze the past, and encourage the com-
modification of ethnicity that situates Filipinos abroad in a touristic—that is to say, neocolonial—relationship with the Filipinos at home.

Interruptions The chapters that follow delineate some of the ways in which the tracings of colonialism continue to embroil, and thus ironize, Filipino nationalism; but they also reveal how the ironies of nationalism have acted on and problematized colonial attempts at institutionalizing social order. Although arranged in rough chronological fashion, each chapter proceeds by way of juxtaposing and dispensing certain figures and motifs. In Chapter 1, I examine the colonial census of 1903–1905—a hybrid text made up of statistics, ethnological reports, and photographs—in relation to the “sedious” Tagalog nationalist melodramas whose performances evoked a revolutionary nationalism at odds with the racialized imperial order imposed by the United States. At stake in both was the casting of a certain Philippines as an object of supervision and attachment at a time of uncertainty and violence. Chapter 2 considers the writings of women from the United States during the first decade of U.S. rule, probing into the contradictory construction of Anglo-American notions of domesticity in an irreducibly foreign setting. By focusing on the crisis of embodiment experienced by white women within a vastly different racial order in the colony, this chapter calls attention to the mimetic relationship between these women and the native and Chinese servants working in their homes. Such a relationship will resonate, as we shall see with the predicaments of mestizo and mestiza nationalism in the period during and after the Second World War.

In both chapters, a consideration of the racial and gender aspects of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines reveals it to be far from an exception to, and in some ways continuous with, the European colonialisms of the early twentieth century. We can also sense how the nature and place of the colonized could never be definitively circumscribed. Collaborations and resistances characterized Filipino responses to the technologies of the U.S. rule. We see this not only in the form of the nationalist theater but also in the use of photographic portraiture, the subject of Chapter 3, to elicit alternative identifications and modes of identification among the living and, even more significantly, those who come after the dead. It is precisely this play of identifications, the contrasting and contradictory vectors of “Filipino-ness,” that is the subject of Chapter 4. Here, it is the juxtaposition of the rhetoric of collaboration with the circulation of rumor during the Japanese occupation of Manila that indicates how recurring moments of misidentification, already at work among the first generation of nationalists in the late nineteenth century, make up the pleasurable, but also anxious, basis of nationalist identity held in an anticipatory mode as that which is always yet to come.

The pleasures and anxieties of nationalist identification in the postwar decades are taken up in Chapter 5 in the context of the Marcoses’ rise to power. This chapter looks at the ways in which the First Couple mythologized their romance and capitalized on the contradiction between the moral economy of patronage, on the one hand, and the amoral economy of commodity exchange, on the other, in order to project (but also frustrate) the desire for nationalist modernity and intimate the beginnings of an authoritarian aesthetic. It closes with a brief examination of the rise of youth politics and the ways it challenged the language of patronage espoused by the Marcoses. The linguistic dimension of nationalist modernity and its link to popular culture is the subject of Chapter 6. Where Chapter 5 deals with the political culture of nationalism during the formative Marcos years, this chapter explores the cultural politics of the era leading up to and past the martial law period. It focuses on the emergence of Taglish, itself the product of the juxtaposition of languages, and shows how it takes on varying historical significance, capable either of going against the grain of the prevailing hierarchy of languages (and the social hierarchy it implies) or reconfiguring and reinforcing both. Chapter 7, written as an introduction to the work of Ambeth Ocampo, one of the most widely read historians in the Philippines today, further reflects on the hazards of popular culture and the phantasmagoric existence of the lingua franca in the period after the EDSA uprising of 1986. Finally, in Chapter 8, I seek to bring together what otherwise might seem like a set of categorically distinct entities: overseas Filipinos, gossip, and ghosts. Their conjunction, made possible by the twinned legacies of colonialism and capitalist development, allows us to see the ways in which the emergence of overseas Filipino communities places new strains, but also new possibilities, on the articulation of official and popular nationalism in recent times.

True to their episodic quality, these essays were conceived with dif-
ferent audiences in mind and for different occasions, primarily in the United States and the Philippines. They could not have been written without close readings of and sustained contacts with vernacular languages and local sources of knowledge, which of course are the very practices associated with area studies. Yet they are also addressed to anonymous and accidental audiences who might be drawn to see the Philippines as a case that forms part of their larger wholes, or as an allegory about the specific materializations of modernity. In this sense, these pieces exist at a remove from any single public or place. It is tempting to say that this book is written from a place of exile, as if the possibility of return and resettlement had been taken away from the author. Yet exile seems so full of paths, so poignant a condition, that it would leave little room for considering the many pleasures and productive shocks of estrangement. Even more important, exile brings to mind the epic possibilities of heroism and the longing for redemption for oneself and one’s people. It dreams of a path to progress and liberation even if the exile him- or herself cannot, like the prophet, share in its realization. We might think of exile, then, as an ironic condition that sees itself as such yet also dreams of abolishing such irony.

But this book is so full of interruptions, so taken with and by the fragments and leftovers of texts, and so drawn to what escapes power rather than what fulfills or definitively overtakes it, that it cannot even pretend to be heroic in scope or in its aspirations. While it shares in the sense of the exilic as that which hopes for the return of justice (often seen to be coterminal with the return to the homeland), it remains skeptical about the possibilities of that return under the current conditions. It thus tacks its way back and forth between the place of its writing and the nation that it is writing about, moving between the debates on nationalism and contemporary studies of colonialism in the West, and the dense historical deposits of nationalism in the Philippines. Each chapter is the product of the aleatory conditions under which it was written as much as it is a signpost for future projects, the beginnings of which have only been sketched. As such, the chapters are full of gaps and hesitations, imperfect arguments that already anticipate their revisions. Such revisions, in fact, are already under way as another work is now in progress to address, in a more sustained fashion, the origins of national-

ism and relationship between revolution and counterrevolution that I have hastily sketched above.

Nonetheless, it is my hope that this book as a whole might provoke other connections and conjectures on the part of the reader and that its shortcomings might furnish the provisional points from which counterarguments, novel comparisons, and alternative interpretations may arise. Here, I am reminded once again of Nick Joaquin. In a gesture reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges, Joaquin responds to the nativizing tendencies in some nationalist writings by producing a list of what he considers to be the most important events in Philippine history. Beginning with the introduction of the wheel, he cites such milestones as the introduction of paper and printing, the Roman alphabet, the calendar and clock, and the guisado, characteristic of a wide variety of Filipino cooking. He ends with the example of the guava tree, which, like the items above, has a Spanish colonial provenance (by way of the New World) all-too-readily forgotten in the nationalist accounts of the Philippines. As Joaquin writes, “The Filipino boy washing the fresh wound of his circumcision in guava-leaf ointment seems so immemorially a part of our aboriginal culture that we are startled to discover that the guava tree came to us only with Spain.”

Joaquin’s argument is that Filipinos qua Filipinos are descended not from precolonial natives but from a mixture of cultures and blood that began as recently as 1521. Hence the appropriateness of their name. They owe it to their great ancestor, whom they have now almost wholly forgotten, Don Felipe II. They live in the modern nation-state that not only bears his name but whose historical reality was initiated by that act of naming, however violent and bloody its consequences were at times. To which we might add, recalling the racial politics of the term itself, that if the Filipinos are related to Spaniards, they are so by virtue of a family romance gone awry. Looked on as bastards by the Spanish fathers, and accused of being parricides for having overthrown by force of arms los padres and La Madre España, Filipinos had rebelled against what they deemed to be the latter’s criminal neglect of los hijos y las hijas filipinas. Joaquin’s revisionary history thus recalls what has often been forgotten. And that recollection frequently comes as a surprise: for example, the recollection of the alien origins of the guava tree used for
supposedly traditional rites of circumcision, or of a revolution not only unfinished but unresolved, steeped in acts both courageous and criminal. They draw one to think of impure origins and foreign genealogies, of national selves inductably inhabited by foreign others.

Although I did not intend it, this book shares an affinity with at least this aspect of Joaquin’s project. Part of my father’s generation who came of age during and immediately after the Japanese occupation, Joaquin writes and lives in Manila, whereas I write across the very Pacific once traversed by the Spanish galleons. Yet we find ourselves sharing a familiar predicament. For him, it entails thinking of Filipino as “an identity in progress”; for me, it is the name of a history that, coming from the outside, continues to arrive from the future. The difference may not be so great. In either case, the task is one of historicizing the uncertainty of such names and namings, thereby momentarily interrupting the workings of colonial and national lobotomies. It should be clear, though, that the effects of such interruptions can never be fully determined. Standing on the threshold of a revolutionary epoch, the national hero Jose Rizal had sought to contemplate a cure for his diseased country by tearing away the veil that hid the “social cancer” of la patria in his novel Noli me Tangere. Our situation is of course different. For in these postcentennial (and arguably counterrevolutionary) times, we can hope at the very least to approach the sense of vertigo—epistemological and comparative—that comes with apprehending las islas Filipinas and Filipinos as they slip in and out of various attempts to master and comprehend them.

White Love

Census and Melodrama in the
U.S. Colonization of the Philippines

Arriving in Manila in March 1899, Dean C. Worcester, professor of zoology at the University of Michigan and member of the Schurman Commission appointed by President McKinley to investigate conditions in the Philippines, tells of witnessing the signs of war between the United States and the Filipino forces led by Emilio Aguinaldo. Worcester describes how he walked toward the Filipino trenches after one such battle, “counting the dead and wounded, as I had heard wild stories of tremendous slaughter and wanted to see just how much damage the fire of our troops had really done.” Wishing to discredit the claims made by anti-imperialists in the United States regarding the severity of the Filipino-American War, Worcester conceives of the dead bodies of “insurgents” as objects to be counted and data for official sources of information. To do so, he erases the particularity of those bodies, as the task of counting replaces the ritual of mourning. The extent of the erasure of the Filipino dead becomes even more stunning at the conclusion of Worcester’s story when he talks not about the dead at all but the wounded: “At the time we visited the Insurgent trenches, not all our own killed and wounded had been removed, yet every wounded Insurgent whom we found had a United States canteen of water at his side, obviously left by some kindly American soldiers. Not a few of the injured had been furnished hard tack as well. All were ultimately taken to Manila and there given the best care by surgeons” (ibid.).³
Note to Introduction

We have studied the common emotional experience and situation in our land. We have examined the case of children, their parents, and the community in which they are raised. The problem of child labor is widespread and affects many people in our society. The children are subjected to various forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The community is often unaware of the hardships faced by these children and fails to provide them with the necessary support and protection.

We have also studied the common emotional experience and situation of women in our land. Women face numerous challenges and barriers in their daily lives. The lack of opportunities and resources, coupled with gender discrimination, limits their potential and prevents them from realizing their full potential. The community is often oblivious to the struggles of women and fails to address the issues that affect them.

We have also examined the common emotional experience and situation of elderly people in our land. The elderly are often isolated and neglected by the community. Their needs are not adequately addressed, and they face various challenges such as health problems, financial difficulties, and loneliness. The community is often unaware of the hardships faced by the elderly and fails to provide them with the necessary support and care.

We have also studied the common emotional experience and situation of people with disabilities in our land. People with disabilities face numerous challenges and barriers in their daily lives. The lack of accessibility and accommodation limits their ability to participate in society and enjoy their rights. The community is often oblivious to the struggles of people with disabilities and fails to address the issues that affect them.

In conclusion, the common emotional experience and situation of various groups in our land are characterized by various challenges and barriers. The community is often unaware of the hardships faced by these groups and fails to provide them with the necessary support and protection. It is crucial to address these issues and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

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