

ABSTRACT

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CHARACTERS IN ASIAN AMERICAN
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This dissertation's examination of Asianness and impurity through a close reading of Asian American literary works has illuminated a trajectory of what I see as a "Yellow Peril" discourse that registers in and shapes U.S.-based health and hygiene discourses. Understanding the racialization of public health in light of minor character analysis has facilitated my reflection on the ideologies and practices of progress and marginalization here. I have intended each chapter to take seriously the function of profoundly abject figures, as symbolized by their narrative minority and dirtiness, in animating class and plot advancement. Thus, the identification of "dirty bodies" and the study of both their historical significance and narratological functions constitute crucial threads that stitch together the chapters of the dissertation.

Analyzing impurity and minor characters vis-à-vis Asian American literature offers more than an opportunity for historical commentary and exegeses of plot dynamics. Indeed, a close reading of dirty bodies invites a reassessment of civil rights-based ideologies of success. This represents a second connective thread that weaves my

chapters together. Though I question such success when it allows for the subjugation of others, I recognize its practical value, particularly in my last chapter. The aim throughout this project has been not to nominate one formula of ethical responsibility over another but instead has been to consider various attempts at ethical recognition of marginal subjects. Literary, or idealized, attempts at such recognition remind us that no single mode of resistance is adequate to the task of redressing material inequities, and that perhaps the only ethical approach to which we ought hold fast is one that insists on critical acknowledgement of such imperfections.

By situating the principal literary texts of the dissertation within Asian American studies' debates, I mean also to contribute to the field's current interests in understanding its pasts, presents, and the possibilities for its futures. Specifically, my chapters build on and analyze efforts: to incorporate the field's peripheral groups into the dominant field imaginary; to contend with the under-examined enthusiasm for "resistance"; to forge historical and theoretical grounds for field coherence; and to engage critique of modern plot dynamics.

DIRTY BODIES:
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By

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Preface:

An Intellectual Biography

While developing ideas to write a dissertation “about” Asian American literature during the summer of 2002, a process that took me through the spring of 2003, two experiences shaped the direction my project would take. The first was observing the SARS epidemic unfold, and the second was immersing myself in the oeuvre of Asian American literature.

Officials traced the first reported case of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) to China’s Guangdong Province during February 2003, and it spread throughout Asia, North America, South America, and Europe over the following months.¹ In the U.S., the widespread panic surrounding the virus targeted Asians and Asian Americans as the matrix of contagion, and this demanded not only my concern but also my critical interest. At the time, I was posting on a message board and engaged in conversation about the public’s response to SARS. A respected member of the message board and someone with whom I have maintained friendly exchanges wrote, to paraphrase: “My mom is not a racist, but she’s not surprised that Chinese people are getting SARS. She thinks they’re dirty people.” My experience has been that such sentiments are not uncommon, as affirmed by a *Washington Post* survey published in April 2003. The article reported that 14 percent of respondents were “shunning Asian restaurants and stores” as a response to SARS (Stein A12).² Such evidence alerted me to

¹ For retrospective overview of SARS and scientific explication for its transmission, see “Basic Information about SARS,” published by the CDC. For review of the epidemic contemporaneous with its outbreak, see Altman.

the equations between Asianness and contagion that were in play in the opening years of the twenty-first century.

Reading Asian American literary works provided me with textual material helpful in responding to these discourses. While reading the literature, I was overwhelmed by the myriad of characters who were sick in terms of either their mental or physical health. There also were scores of characters who were dirty as a result of inhabiting and embodying filth. Over the course of reading this literature, my interest focalized on Pedro, the janitor figure of Jessica Hagedorn's novel *Dogeaters* (1990) and her script edition of *Dogeaters* (2003), which consequently inspired me to concentrate on minor characters identified with excrement and filthy toilets.

To understand the representational significance of Pedro and characters like him, I drew on initially and consistently the historical scholarship of Nayan Shah and Warwick Anderson, as my chapter that analyzes Hagedorn's work shows more fully. Shah and Anderson are scholars whose work I cite not only for historical reference throughout the project, but also because their efforts have suggested to me that Asian American literary representations of impurity might fruitfully be read as commentaries on public health as a modern discourse and practice. While Shah and Anderson concentrate on the ways U.S. officials deployed public health discourses domestically and across the Pacific to regulate

² See Munro for a primary example of describing SARS as a "cunning" and "virulent" virus, and see Goldstein for an explicit attempt to address and diffuse the racialization of the epidemic.

It is worthwhile to note that the first official patient of SARS was a Chinese businessman and that a Chinese doctor treating SARS patients in the Guangdong Province was identified as the source of outbreaks in Vietnam, Singapore, and Canada as travelers sharing the doctor's hotel in Hong Kong were infected. Moreover, the first patient in Vietnam was an American businessman (Sakboon). Thus, rather than register SARS as racialized virus, one might consider it as an epidemic spread by the elite: doctors, travelers, and businessmen. The possibility of alternative readings of the chain of contagion suggests that the reasons for linking Asianness to SARS were not merely scientific but functioned to instill a form of fear and disgust, a concept that might be articulated as "Yellow Peril" discourse, which I discuss further in the introduction.

Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and Filipinos in colonial Philippines, respectively, I extend Shah's and Anderson's efforts by focusing on the way public health discourses have been used *within* marginal groups, through the creation of marginal marginals.

To understand Pedro's function as a minor character, again as my second chapter demonstrates, I have drawn on literary critic Alex Woloch's exemplary minor character analysis. Most importantly, however, Woloch's study was fundamental in suggesting to me that the study of minor characters is significant scholarly work and that my project could be—and perhaps *should be*—devoted to their examination. Representative of minor character studies, Woloch's efforts register, in part, the presence of minor characters as a commentary on the development of British capitalism in the nineteenth century. Drawing on his iteration of Marxist literary analysis, I read the history of the transnationalization of production in the twentieth century as informing Asian American literary setting, plot, and characterization. Moreover, I offer to minor character studies an explicit discussion of how race and ethnicity complicate representations of literary minorness.

The work of this dissertation is in many ways to show how literary analysis can help us make sense of equations between Asianness and impurity, which racist applications of public health discourses and practices have justified. This foundation has enabled me to engage discourses on functional and representative figurations of impurity, the politics of ethics, and critical conversations within Asian American studies. In addition to the cultural and historical stimuli of this work, I have been driven by the conviction that inequity must be addressed, especially in cases where it might be overlooked.

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Introduction

The Significance of Insignificance in Asian American Studies

Dirty and diseased bodies surface throughout the pages of Asian American literature with varying degrees of intensity, and though some of these unhygienic and/or unhealthy figures have greater narrative prominence than others, their impurities convey, across those differences, profound deprivation.¹ Carlos Bulosan's memoir *America Is in the Heart* (1943), a foundational text of Asian American literary studies, makes this point clear. Tuberculosis looms large as Allos, the author's self-styled narrative representation, experiences TB first as a cough and then as a full-blown diagnosed disease while living in unsanitary and crowded conditions that only exacerbate his illness in both the Philippines and the U.S.² In addition, by having Allos pick through the "gutter" for his meals during one early scene, Bulosan heightens Allos's characterization as a profoundly

¹ It is worth noting that, as Chiu observes, U.S.-based discourses on being dirty and diseased are not the same but began to overlap in the nineteenth century when discourses on hygiene and health became linked (6). See Shah for further discussion on the differences between nineteenth and twentieth century U.S. health discourses (6-7). As I see them, the stigmas of being dirty and diseased are distinct in that dirtiness has referred to poor hygiene while being diseased relates more directly to poor health. However, as my study shows, notions of hygiene and health have been deployed interchangeably to stress the inferiority of various figures.

² For further reading on the way living conditions exacerbate TB, see Dubos.

impoverished figure. Finally, when Allos is hospitalized and confined to bed rest at the end of the text, he has the opportunity to reflect on and record his experiences, a process that allows him to write the memoir in question.

Maxine Hong Kingston represents impurity with different emphasis in “No Name Woman,” a widely anthologized chapter of the author’s memoir *Woman Warrior* (1975). In this chapter, the titular nameless character—a Chinese woman renounced by her family and community for indulging in extramarital sex, consensual or otherwise—garners violent condemnation from her community by becoming pregnant in her husband’s absence. When she gives birth, the No Name Woman climbs into a pigsty and kneels promptly into the dirt. Pigsties, of course, epitomize dirty spaces. And pigs themselves have been characterized as filthy animals because they have been used historically to consume and eliminate human waste.³ Here then, a condemned nameless woman becomes materially dirty at the moment her sordid socially unsanctioned act results in the birth of a living, breathing consequence of her indiscretion.

Garnering more recent critical attention, Chang-rae Lee’s novel *A Gesture Life* (1999) tethers figurations of dirt and disease to the medical industrial complex. The protagonist and narrator, Franklin “Doc” Hata, is not only proprietor of a New York suburban medical supply store but also was once a medical assistant for the Japanese military during World War II. Field trained as a medical assistant, Doc Hata served to oversee the health and hygiene of five Korean sex slaves in Burma. The events of the narrative radiate out from those memories, and Doc Hata recognizes that the military represented the women as the matrix of venereal disease despite the fact that the patrons

³ See Stallybrass and White and *Municipal Refuse Disposal* for details on the use of using pigs as garbage disposals in, respectively, European cities and the U.S. agricultural industry. I also address the association between marginal characters and pigs in chapters one, two, and three.

were oftentimes themselves the vectors of contagion. His role as a health provider evokes contemporary critiques that have shown how health discourses and practices have been deployed as a device of regulation and exploitation.

As these brief synopses indicate, authors central to Asian American literature and literary studies have enfigured dirt and disease to accent critical narrative moments in each of these texts. In this dissertation, I track such literary uses of impurity as operating in Asian American literature. By doing so, I show that impurity has been tangled up with character and narrative developments in a variety of literary forms and representations of history, geography, and culture in the oeuvre of Asian American literature. Across those differences, a steady fact remains: figurations of dirt and disease have stood as a mark of character “lowness.” As in the case of Bulosan’s, Kingston’s, and Lee’s respective work, it is obvious that dominant power structures oppress such putatively inferior characters. The narrative prominence of dirty characters—Bulosan’s Allos, Kingston’s No Name Woman, and Lee’s sex slaves, for example—makes this vulnerability impossible to miss.

I take as my point of departure the fact that while figurations of dirt, disease, and public health practices abound in Asian American literature, their presence and representational significance have been understudied. While historians and anthropologists have led the way in examining public health ideology as it has been deployed to justify colonizing missions in Asia and the exploitation of immigrant Asian laborers in the U.S., critics have been less attentive to the way Asian American literature represents such regulative technologies of health.⁴ I maintain that no study has yet focused on a myriad of characters who, by their association with impurity, represent the

⁴ Shah identifies nineteenth and early-twentieth century public health institutions as part of modernity’s contradictory project of promoting universality and objectifying difference (2001, 5-6).

“lowest” of society. This dissertation fills this gap in scholarship by assembling several manifestations of dirty minor figures and offering them as a subject of inquiry that illuminates the limits *and* potential of progress.

The prominence of impurity in canonical Asian American literature makes their critical neglect striking, and throughout the dissertation, I attend to those major but understudied manifestations of dirtiness and disease. At the same time, I also am interested in minor flashes of pollution and contagion that have been easier to overlook due to their understated presence. For example, it is common practice for authors to convey the subjugated status of dirty and diseased characters by de-emphasizing their narrative presence. Such figures have been easier to ignore because they are doubly peripheral with respect to narrative and community, as imagined in the text. Neglecting their presence is more understandable, but I show it is no less limiting in terms of unpacking the historical, thematic, and theoretical significance of studying Asian American literature.

In my first and second chapters, I draw attention to those doubly marginal figures and assess their representational significance. In Milton Murayama’s novella *All I Asking for Is My Body* (1975), a cohort of Filipino plantation laborers function to characterize the most socially inferior of settler Hawai‘i, which I address in the first chapter. The second chapter is organized around individual minor characters—an exploited janitor and a nameless sex worker—of a postcolonial Manila as imagined by Jessica Hagedorn in her stage edition of *Dogeaters* (2003). In the context of reading Murayama’s and Hagedorn’s work, I show that narrative marginalization enhances the oppressed status of exploited laborer characters. That is, such minor characters are yoked to a one-dimensional life of

subsistence, one presented as somehow impervious to change: without a past, present and future—without, in a word, narrative. Moreover, their living and/or work conditions place them in such close proximity to excrement (i.e., feces, urine, semen, etc.) that they come to represent abject subjectivity. I call these minor characters “dirty bodies,” and the first two chapters of this project pay close attention to how they operate narratologically.

As I investigate the representation of the most marginalized and exploited characters in Asian American literature as dirty bodies, this approach makes clear the importance of subjugation, seemingly contradictory to the narratives of resistance and acculturation so long central to Asian American literature. I am not implying that Asian American literature represents a smooth arc toward conclusion and resolution. Rather, drawing on David Lloyd’s reading of an “inverted bildungsroman,” I contend that Asian American literary texts are not merely straightforward versions of development but have also been characterized by fragmented narrative storylines.⁵ By understanding how subjugation shadows both straightforward and disjointed arcs of development, my work here questions the celebration of stories characterized by the achievement of normative, middle-class existence or the putative resistance to such normalcy. Critical examination of this underbelly of development illuminates the limitations of materially oriented ideologies of success. Such ideologies of achievement have been indexed by legal, economic, educational, and material achievements that have been corralled under the banner of middle and upper class ascendancy. My reading of dirty bodies is ultimately a critique of the incorporative technologies of acculturation that offer the trappings or promises of such modern citizenship. Building on this point, my analysis of dirty bodies

⁵ See chapters one and two for further discussion of the bildungsroman as deployed in Murayama’s and Hagedorn’s work, respectively.

also shows how even an arc of resisting modern citizenship requires and reinforces the oppression of the abject. Thus, my first two chapters focus on socially marginal characters who represent the most poor, vulnerable, exploited, and disgraceful of their immediate communities in order to examine subjugation as it is embedded in Asian American literary plot and theme. My study of impurity's prominence in Murayama's and Hagedorn's work makes this objective obvious.

In chapter three, I concentrate on more apparent operations of subjugation. Specifically, my reading of *Arranged Marriage* (1995), a collection of short stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, focuses on a section in the text that transitions from stories about Bengali and Indian American working-class families to ones about upper-class Bengali and Indian American women. I analyze two of those transitional stories, "A Perfect Life" and "The Maid Servant's Story," for the way they introduce lower-class figures into the lives of upper-class women protagonists. Notably, Divakaruni's subaltern characters emerge more prominently than in Murayama's and Hagedorn's work, but they are still cast as minor characters. Understanding this, I contend that the presence of these more visible minor characters suggests that Divakaruni's collection—despite its emphasis on upper-class women's narratives—is indeed invested in examining subalternity. More precisely, in "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant," encounters between upper-class women characters and abused marginal figures offer insight into the limitations of elite Bengali and Indian American women's advancements. In effect, this chapter considers how Divakaruni registers the significance of focusing on society's forgotten figures.

While the first three chapters of my dissertation might be read as critical narratives that lead readers toward a conclusion about subjugation coexisting with

various renderings of progress, my reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) disrupts this telos by taking the conclusion as the point of departure in chapter four. I begin the chapter with a reading of Yamashita's annihilation of Arcangel, a protagonist who symbolizes an abject undocumented Mexican immigrant. By introducing my reading of the novel with Arcangel, I suggest that oppression, as it underlines the achievements of the other six protagonists who have previously reached various plateaus of middle-class advancement, is an assumed condition of the novel. In other words, acknowledging Arcangel's representational function and his ultimate destruction enables us to recognize the "dirty" underside of middle-class achievement and its resistance from the chapter's outset. Hence, I recognize from start that Yamashita's other six protagonists benefit from a system that oppresses "others." While Yamashita's story concedes this point, her characters' established, developing, and recuperated activism suggest that it is possible to counter those repressive consequences with a sense of social responsibility. In this way, Yamashita re-conceptualizes progress as one that follows familiar paths of modern achievement but that also involves the development and practice of ethics.

Ethics, as Michel Foucault observes, describes a pattern of behavior that is not necessarily codified by law and other official institutions but can be generated by rigorous self-reflection as its Classic iterations dictate.⁶ Such self-reflection consists of questioning the premises that base one's beliefs and actions. This ontological basis should enable us, as Foucault contends, to disrupt the tyrannical aspects of power and

⁶ For a description of this self-generated form of ethics, see Foucault's etymology as derived from the Greek *ethos* (1997, 286-8). In depth exploration of the myriad formulas for ethics is beyond the scope of my current project. I limit my engagement of ethics to Foucault and Spivak (chapter three), for they offer the most immediate points of departure for my discussion.

domination. While I agree with this anti-authoritarian objective and the point that ethics is never fully domesticated by the political, I am more skeptical of mounting ethics upon knowing oneself. In a U.S. capitalistic culture of individualism, I question whether concern for the self might be appropriated to reinforce the habits of this already self-interested culture. Notably, Foucault adds that concern for others is an indelible part of this ontology. This is the point that I stress in my negotiation of ethics, arguing that we might address the abuses of power and domination by placing the interests of the subjugated at the forefront of discourse. In reading Yamashita's novel, for example, I show that ethics consists of not only taking the interests of the marginal into consideration but also prioritizing the condition of the oppressed rather than the development of fierce individualism and maximum material accumulation. Yamashita avoids, however, positing a static paradigm but instead offers a moral code that they must be continually revised.

In this introduction and throughout the dissertation, then, I consider the significance of insignificance in Asian American studies by focusing on understudied literary manifestations of impurity and marginal characters, both of which have been noted but have yet to elicit an explicit methodology of study. Analysis of subordinate minor characters grounds and guides each chapter of the dissertation, and as part of this study, I look at the way an association with excrement and filthy toilets plays a significant part in animating Asian American literature's abject. I attend to the narratological function of these minor figures by showing how they motivate, justify, and unsettle the resolution of literary plot. Aligned with this study of minor characters' narratological significance, my dissertation offers what may be understood as different

attempts at the ethical recognition of marginal figures. I not only introduce the category of dirty bodies but also engage discourses on literary minority, subalternity, and abjection to offer different approaches to account for such “others.”

I situate these discussions as part of ongoing debates within Asian American studies. My first, second, and third chapters examine and sharpen the terms by which the field has integrated the minor interests of Filipino American studies and South Asian American studies into its fold. In response to additive practices of field formation, chapter three attends specifically to engaging and interrogating the historical and theoretical grounds of Asian American studies. And in chapter four, I complicate the civil rights-based telos of the field’s incorporative processes, which I recognize as underlying many of the privileged discourses of resistance in Asian American studies. My fourth chapter expands on this critique and shows how, at least literarily, it is possible to begin articulating—as Yamashita does in *Tropic of Orange*, the novel that anchors that chapter—ways of conceiving minor subjects, or otherness, that challenge the ideologies of assimilation and resistance against and through which Asian American studies has grown.

In certain respects, then, focusing on the peripheries of discourse might be interpreted as affirming critical efforts to recognize, incorporate, and privilege all marginal interests in a major field of inquiry. I obviously participate in this effort to an extent, but at the same time, my study of impurity and marginal characters aims primarily to interrogate the oppressive consequences that underpin incorporative models of transforming the formerly dispossessed into the middle-class and resisters of dominant

culture. With this in mind, my reading of dirty bodies prompts us to consider the malleability of ethics that involve disrupting this hegemony of progress and subjugation.

The Dirt on Asian America

Despite what my dissertation establishes as the pervasive presence of dirty bodies in Asian American literature, there is a striking absence of critical attention on its evocation of impurity. This, as I explain in the sections below, stems from what may be described as a civil rights-oriented focus in Asian American studies, and contemporary Asian American scholarship has interrogated the inadequacy of rendering social justice in this way.⁷ My efforts are similarly aligned but are also thematically invested in addressing this point by examining the dirt of Asian American literature.

Here, I review my approach to analyzing literary figurations of impurity, and in the following sections, I address these manifestations of dirt in light of Asian American studies' rights-based discourses. Like Monica Chiu's *Filthy Fictions: Asian American Literature by Women*, my dissertation offers impurity as a central subject of inquiry for Asian American literary analysis.⁸ Drawing on contemporary and foundational studies on impurity, Chiu presents a focused reading of transgressive literary women characters who are associated with filth. Her definition of impurity "encompasses the key terms filth, pollution, pathology, sexuality, toxins, and abjection" (1). She defines impurity broadly, an approach that enables her to consider how various forms of transgression register the

⁷ For examples of critique on civil rights-orientation of Asian American studies, see Nguyen and Chuh.

⁸ Notably, Chiu herself does not draw on this absence of criticism as her point of departure. In addition to Chiu's work, Mendoza's reading of HIV/AIDS in Hagedorn's novel edition of *Dogeaters* focuses on representations of impurity. However, he too does not frame his retroactive HIV/AIDS diagnosis of Logan Whitman (Rio Gonzaga's "American" grandfather) as a response to the understudy of health and hygiene in Asian American literary discourses.

challenges of resisting and assimilating to dominant culture. As a departure from what Chiu calls her “loose” definition of dirt, I define impurity more narrowly, concentrating on the material substance of excrement as authors attach it to various “low” characters. Like Chiu, I turn to critical discourses on impurity to trace the provenance of this definition of filth and to shore up my analysis of its resulting representational functions.

I begin with Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger*. In this seminal work, Douglas argues that impurities are not so much a singular, universally repulsive substance but a disruptive force to the smooth operation of normative organizational structures. She abbreviates this definition as “matter out of place,” a definition of dirt that hinges on its functional purpose rather than its material particularities. In her succinct words, “pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view about social order” (4). Responding to this foundational definition of impurity, William Ian Miller agrees that impurity plays a central role in classifying systems, a point I return to below, but at the same time, he does not discount that fact that there has been widespread consensus on identifying certain material substances with impurity (e.g., menstrual blood). Thus, he offers a definition of dirt that takes certain material substances into consideration, a point affirmed by William A. Cohen in his instructive introduction to theories on impurity and nineteenth century representations of filth. That is, Cohen observes that filth has been associated with material substances that our bodies excrete and we jettison away from us (e.g., feces, blood, pus, and vomit) (xi-xii). Following such material definitions impurity, I put Asian American literary studies in direct conversation with this ongoing broad critical interest in the operations of filth. Enabling this conversation allows us to understand that excrement has had resonance for various marginal groups. Thus,

associating vulnerable figures with excrement has a long history, and I focus on an iteration of this signifying process.

I draw further on Miller's contention that dirt's offensiveness and desirability are a part of regulating structures where binary opposites define each other. He explains, "It is not things don't fit; it is that they fit right at the bottom of the conceptual grid" (45). This opposes Douglas's claim that impurity functions as a disruptive external force to organizing schemas. Thus, while Douglas defines impurity as "matter out of place," Miller indicates that impurities are relegated to their proper "low" place. Though Douglas and Miller disagree over such specifics, they agree on the central point that impurity has an important part in regulating social order.⁹ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White affirm this point through their analysis of bourgeois European subjects who, as they point out, identified themselves as clean and associated being dirty with marginal and subjugated "inferiors." Categorizing humanity in this way served to reinforce a hierarchy of insiders and outsiders in which the insiders justified their claims to social privileges over and above those putative outsiders. By reading Asian American literature through this analytic frame, I locate it within a genealogy of historical practices that created and sustained hierarchy.

However, an affiliation with "good" or "bad" hygiene stands for more than an individual's generic class position in cases when dirt and disease have been associated with Asianness. "Yellow Peril" is the concept that grounds discourses that have charged Asians with foul habits and contagious diseases. Specifically, it has been a catchall term for U.S. and European fears of putative "Oriental" conquest, a looming threat that has justified not only the West's colonization of locations throughout Asia but also anti-Asian

⁹ I draw this comparative reading of Douglas and Miller from Cohen.

immigration policies in the metropole. Gary Y. Okihiro and others have attributed the first usage of the term Yellow Peril to Kaiser Wilhelm II who, in 1895, sketched an image depicting the looming threat of Asiatic forces. He then commissioned Hermann Knackfuss to translate the sketch into a more substantial etching. (See Figure 1.)¹⁰ Indeed, Knackfuss's edition is more elaborate, capturing the subtle tension of European might and vulnerability. More specifically, Knackfuss's more detailed version is dominated by a group of standing military garbed women who represent the European nation-states of Austria, England, France, Germany, Italy, France, and others. They stand from the left to the center of the frame on a rocky outcropping as Archangel Michael, poised before them, gestures to a distant landscape of a bucolic riverside town far below them. While their presence is formidable, even haloed by a glowing cross, these women crowd together and look anxiously outward as a threat of Asian forces, represented by a Buddha figure and a "Chinese dragon," float amid stormy skies opposite them, on the far right side of the frame above the town now vulnerable to attack. Wilhelm II disseminated this final edition to fellow European leaders and U.S. President William McKinley, providing an official illustrative stamp on popular nineteenth century prejudices against putatively threatening "Orientals."¹¹

While Okihiro and others have addressed various late nineteenth and early twentieth century iterations of Yellow Peril discourse, for the purposes of this project, I am particularly interested in Yellow Peril's iteration as a U.S. public health discourse. I

¹⁰ Wilhelm II's original sketch can be found in Röhl (754).

¹¹ Okihiro traces the concept of the Yellow Peril as far back as the fifth century B.C.E., but he focuses Knackfuss's painting as a central site through which Yellow Peril discourse were disseminated. For further discussion of the painting, see Okihiro (118-147). For Wilhelm II's and his contemporaries' conceptualization of Asia as a Yellow Peril, see Röhl (753-6).

ground this interest by drawing on the exemplary work of Nayan Shah and Warwick Anderson who have shown that discourses on the health and hygiene of Asians, Asian immigrants, and Asian Americans have been deployed to shore up U.S. nation building endeavors at home and colonizing missions abroad.¹² Learning from their efforts, I approach public health discourses and practices as an evocation of Yellow Peril ideology. In brief, Yellow Peril ideology has enabled modern officials to ascribe danger and inferiority to Asianness and thus justify U.S. endeavors to monitor, regulate, and exploit Asian labor and material resources.



Figure 1. Europe and the Yellow Peril, the detailed sketch by Hermann Knackfuss from John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II . . .* (Cambridge, 2004), 755. The original caption of the sketch reads: “Nations of Europe, protect your holiest possessions! Wilhelm I.R.”

¹² See Palumbo-Liu for a discussion of the various threats that have been ascribed to different Asian and Asian American groups (35-41).

In situating his book *Contagious Divides*, Shah differentiates between nineteenth century public health discourses that worked to exclude certain groups from citizenship and twentieth century discourses that sought to “sanitize and accommodate difference,” reconciling non-normative subjects with normative culture. Despite such differences, Shah concludes that during both periods, health discourses were deployed to reinforce a prevailing racist hierarchy (6-7). Taking San Francisco’s Chinatown as a specific example, Shah’s reports on the purposes and consequences of characterizing Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans as unclean and unhealthy between the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. By characterizing Chinese as unhygienic and diseased, public health officials suggested that Chinese immigrants were unfit for U.S. citizenship, and this argument rationalized the ghettoization and disenfranchisement of Chinatown’s residents, worsening their already crowded, disease-prone, and substandard living conditions. In his succinct words, “These were grounds on which to count them out of the American polity and indeed out of American civil society” (8). In short, Shah’s work is essential for illuminating the history of associating Asianness with impurity and also for showing how technologies of health and hygiene have functioned to define modern subjectivity.¹³

Anderson’s research on the institutionalization of modern standards of public health in the Philippines from the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth century is another touchstone for my project. In one of his chapters from *Excremental Colonialism*,

¹³ For discussion of public health discourses as they were deployed in Southern California with respect to Asian and Mexican laborers, see Molina. Also see Kraut’s and Hoy’s respective work on the more general ways immigrants and migratory populations in U.S. have been subject to heightened levels of medical and health scrutiny helped that have shored up U.S. nation building projects. However, it is important to add that among all the groups that Kraut and Hoy spotlight, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans were the only ones among those associated with high-risk contagious diseases and were compelled into quarantine.

Anderson contends that implementing closed, contained, and fixed toilet structures operated to justify U.S. modernization efforts in the Philippines. By assessing Filipinos as socially disorganized—signified by the lack of common and contained areas in which to urinate and defecate—U.S. reformers could argue, according to the ideology of benevolent assimilation, that the implementation of infrastructure in the form of a modern toilet system was necessary. Modern sanitation technology would, as U.S. reformers claimed, curtail the transmission of disease, facilitate the “improvement” of infrastructure, and protect whites whose health was putatively at risk from Filipinos’ lack of hygienic practices. In short, the institutionalization of a sanitation system, symbolized by toilets, became a key signifier of primitiveness and an inferior form of modernity.¹⁴ By characterizing Filipinos as unhygienic and diseased in this way and by claiming confidence in their ability to teach Filipinos “civilized” habits through modern toilet use, U.S. representatives suggested that Filipinos were unfit to rule and modernize themselves, thereby justifying U.S. colonization of the Philippines.¹⁵

These historical and political dimensions of dirt reviewed briefly here compound the importance of studying the operations of dirt in Asian American literature. I anchor my close reading of literary texts firmly to this history and politics of public health. My project in this sense aims to bridge literary analysis to historical scholarship and thus show how literature illuminates a long history of associating Asianness with impurity. At the same time, however, I also consider how literary analysis helps adjust the focus of the

¹⁴ The campaign for the use of modern toilets can be seen as precursors to “development” discourses that emerged after World War II (W. Anderson 2006, 183-4).

¹⁵ For further discussion on the deployment of public health discourses as part of colonial projects in the Philippines, also see Ileteo (1995) and McElhinny. With respect to India, see Arnold and Prashad (1994). For studies of public health discourse with respect to settler populations in Hawai‘i, see J. Kim.

field's current approach to examining impurity. That is, as Anderson and Shah focus their attention on illuminating the way public health discourses and practices were generally applied in the Philippines and U.S., respectively, my literary intervention sharpens the purview of their analysis by emphasizing how, for example, an *inconsistent* implementation of public health discourses has been deployed as a colonial and domestic technology. Murayama's representation of Asian laborers' unequal access to indoor plumbing in *All I Asking* helps to emphasize this point, for it intimates that discrepancies in the construction of sanitation structures re-entrenched the divide between the privileged and poor of colonial Hawai'i. My reading of *All I Asking* also considers how public health discourses have not only been deployed to separate Asians from whites but also Asians and Asian Americans from each other. In other words, I urge recognition of the ways that notions of impurity have been deployed to maintain social hierarchy *within* Asian America. Shah's and Anderson's work, in contrast, focus on how a dominant group, white Americans, marginalized a putatively inferior group of Asians and Asian immigrants.

To clarify, I turn to Karen Shimakawa's reading of abjection. Translating Julia Kristeva's definition of the abject and abjection in terms more familiar to Asian American studies, Shimakawa identifies abjection as a simultaneous acceptance into and rejection from the U.S. nation-state. An example of abjection includes the recruitment of Filipino American and Japanese American men into the U.S. military during WWII and their subsequent denial of full veteran compensation and, as in the case of Japanese American soldiers, dispossession of property through internment. Thus, abjection with respect to Asian Americans describes a process of receiving but also disowning those

who are necessary but undesirable to the nation-state. In the context of my project, I focus on the way ideologies of modern health and hygiene have been utilized to create objects *within* Asian America. To put it differently, my study of profoundly “dirty” figures in Asian American literature addresses the way national objects subordinate their own “others,” creating a cohort that can be described as the object’s object. In this way, my efforts build on Shah’s and Anderson’s purview, enabling us to focus on the most marginal of marginal communities.

Character Studies and Literary Minority

While Asian American studies has been committed to addressing issues of socio-economic marginalization, I want to add that, despite its frequent articulation through literary discourse, this conversation has yet to happen through an explicit engagement with minor character studies. Not only does this neglect produce underdeveloped readings of the literature, but it also misses an opportunity to introduce a general methodology for analyzing minor characterization in Asian American literature. Drawing on minor character studies, I fill this gap in scholarship by offering Asian American studies an explicit reading practice for parsing out minor figures’ narrative and thematic functions.

It has been common in Asian American studies to herald social justice and equality while condemning exploitation and material dispossession as it exists among Asian Americans and other groups who have experienced systemic subjugation. No doubt, uplifting formerly impoverished people and helping them access material decency in the form of legal rights, political representation, improved housing, educational

opportunities, and health care is a commendable endeavor. The benefits of achieving equity in such material terms cannot be underestimated, especially for those who have struggled, suffered, and sacrificed tremendously to secure them. My aim here is not to diminish those accomplishments. However, I am interested in interrogating the ways the road to acquiring material decency has normalized a bourgeois lifestyle that privileges maximum accumulation for oneself and one's family at the expense of minimizing one's ethical responsibilities. One's ethical responsibilities ought to consist of examining the way others get "left behind" in the process of middle-class advancement. In other words, by claiming an interest in justice and equality, it is vital to understand what sort of justice and equality one wants. Material equity on par with the middle-class? Legal justice the elite reserves for itself? What are the consequences of such equality and justice?

Debates over Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Blu's Hanging* (1997) represents one of the most notable examples of an Asian Americanist debate about literary minor characters that was, at its heart, a conversation about the political, economic, social, and cultural marginalization of local (i.e., Asian immigrant to Hawai'i) Filipino interests in Hawai'i and in the academic discourse of Asian American studies. I contribute to this discussion by drawing attention to the subjugation of peripheral "others" as a clear consequence of securing equality and justice on par with the middle and upper classes. By establishing this, I aim to help sharpen what it means when Asian American studies appeals to social justice and equality for the oppressed. I assume that as advocates of a politicized minority discourse, Asian Americanists should aim to question any process, even if it benefits select individuals among us, that forms familiar systems of exploitation. Lest it appear that middle and upper class acculturation are the sole culprits of reifying schemas of

domination and subordination, I consider that even in cases where marginalized subjects journey toward anti-fascist guerilla activism, an antithesis of middle-class nationalist advancement, certain minor figures are “left behind” in the dust of resistant politics. My point, of course, is not to reject all forms of resistance but to be aware of the limitations of seemingly transgressive politics because to ignore them would undermine the spirit of the field’s political orientation.

To ground my literary intervention in such debates on marginality, I turn to key texts of character studies. According to E.M. Forster’s comparison of “flat” and “round” characters in *Aspects of the Novel*, flat figures possess a single attribute and are best described as caricatures, whereas the possession of several features imparts roundness and complexity, a depth of characterization more common to major characters (67, 78). Elaborating on Forster’s definitions, David Galef identifies rounded major characters by their irreplaceable presence in plot or theme. He recognizes, however, that other major characters may be more flat in character but are given significance by their omnipresence and contribution to motivating events of the story (11). In Galef’s estimation, then, minor characters lack such presence, and though they draw the reader’s attention, they are limited to a few isolated references, brief descriptions, and a minimal but significant role in plot or representing theme (12). Drawing on these criteria of flatness and minorhood, I define minor characters as figures who are flat, fleeting, and monotonous in their actions. Further, their narratives are limited to the present, and references to their past and future are truncated if not nonexistent.

In addition to these characteristic-driven definitions of minority, critics have attributed Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* with offering foundational readings of minor

characters' narrative functions. In his study of the *Odyssey*, Auerbach argues that Euryclea, Odysseus's "old housekeeper," reflects her master's thoughts and intentions, helping to articulate the consciousness of the ruling class. Elaborating on Auerbach's interpretation of Euryclea, Bruce Robbins's efforts have offered a more extensive study of minor servant figures. He contends that such figures have functioned to convey the arbitrariness of hierarchies between the privileged and poor. Like Auerbach and Robbins, I, too, focus on exploited manual laborers to show that in certain cases, these figures bring insight into actions of their employers.

Alex Woloch's exemplary book *The One vs. the Many* widens this analytic lens of narrative minority by addressing the representational function of entire supporting casts of minor characters in several modern European literary texts. Specifically, Woloch argues that such supporting casts have important narrative purpose and critical significance in that they illuminate certain historical conditions that frame the narrative. For example, his reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* shows how comparisons between the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and her one-dimensional "inferior" counterparts allow the former to appear more dynamic, balanced, and thus superior to her deficient minor supporting cast (68-77). Woloch argues that such character inequalities stand for and comment on the competitive marriage market as it emerged out of the development of capitalism (56-62).

Aligned especially with his efforts, I contend that contrasting protagonists against ephemeral, one-dimensional, and dirty figures allows protagonists to appear "cleaner," dynamic, and superior in Asian American literature. In themselves, however, Woloch's study and others focused on minor characters have not concentrated on the way race,

ethnicity, and sexuality deepen the significance of literary marginalization. By engaging Asian American literary debates, I bring that perspective explicitly to minor character studies. While I also build on Woloch's efforts to read the presence of minor figures as describing the economic and political conditions that underwrite narrative subjugation, I put this argument and postcolonial criticism in conversation with each other to address how Asian America's dirty bodies illuminate and comment on modernization efforts as they emerged through politically charged discourses of public health.

Clearly, I am invested in the analysis of impurity and narrative minority, but to be precise, my central interest lies with socially marginal figures rather than any and all dirty and/or minor characters as suggested by my last chapter's perusal of the metropole's overlooked but not necessarily dirty protagonists. I concentrate on dirty bodies not because they are merely unclean or minor with respect to narrative but because their study intervenes in Asian American discourses, sharpening understanding of narrative and social marginalization, middle-class acculturation, transgressive nationalism, and the field's civil rights-based critique. This motivates no less than a historical, literary, and theoretical analysis of modern technologies that have been deployed to reinforce a hierarchy of domination and subordination. In brief, my reading of profoundly abject literary figures results in clarifying the critical grounds on which Asian American studies stands.

Asian American Studies, a Case for Minority Discourse

As suggested above, Asian American studies has characterized itself as a politicized minority discourse by advocating for material and representational equality

among marginal and dominant groups. It shares similar objectives with postcolonial studies and its sub-genre Subaltern Studies. Thus, while I concentrate on sharpening the critical grounds of Asian American studies, the steps I take here might be read in light of and applied to other discourses where critical inquiry is focused on how marginal subjects have been incorporated into a dominant community.

With respect to Asian American studies, as Susan Koshy points out, it has been characteristic for critics to reassess and expand the corpus of Asian American literature by raising overlooked writers of past generations and authors whose ethnic group has become a “new” critical mass in the U.S. to a prominent status in the field. Indeed, the basis of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean identity has held together the rubric of Asian American studies previously as in early studies of Asian American literature.¹⁶ Such ethnic-based claims of Asian American unity have motivated critics like Koshy to raise objections, arguing that such claims of commonality have not been able to accommodate the heterogeneity of Asian America’s post-1965 immigration.¹⁷ In response, South Asian Americanists have been at the forefront of injecting historical and critical bases for retaining this additive methodology of Asian American studies’ field formation. For example, Sucheta Mazumdar’s foundational historical analysis of Indian American immigration, Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth’s co-edited South Asian American studies reader *A Part, yet Apart*, and Vijay Prashad and Biju Matthew’s guest edited volume on political culture in *Amerasia* (one of two leading journals of the

¹⁶ For example of studies that draw on ethnic based models of field coherence, see Chan et al.’s *Aiiiiiiii!* and E. Kim’s *Asian American Literature*.

¹⁷ 1965 marks the passing of an important U.S. immigration act that accommodated mass waves of migration from Asian to the U.S. For specific “push” and “pull” factors for the implementation of this act with respect to, for example, South Asian American immigration, see chapter three.

field), have not only facilitated these debates but have shaped the conceptualization of Asian American studies as a field of comparative historical study and theoretical practice rather than one that coheres around superficial claims to a common culture or point of origin. Following their lead, Viet Thanh Nguyen, by contextualizing the emergence of Asian American studies during the civil rights era, argues that the field's politico-historical inheritance has indelibly "bureaucratized" its conception. In other words, Nguyen contends that Asian American studies' additive model of field formation functions to afford equality according to the distribution of civil rights and affirmative action, state sponsored media of citizenship.

As Shilpa Davé et al. observe, this incorporative stance bowed under pressure in 1998-1999 when underrepresented ethnic and regional groups assembled as a heterogeneous critical mass that debated vociferously the various exclusions from the field. In disparate ways, these discourses reached a tipping point that compelled Asian Americanists to clarify the terms under which the field incorporated formerly marginal groups into its disciplinary body.¹⁸ While the terms of those debates have been mixed (some groups claiming a more ambivalent space within Asian American studies than others), they have in large part resulted in the recognition and ultimate integration of minor groups into the major one. For example, my first two chapters contribute to conversations on the marginalization and inclusion of Filipino American interests in Asian American studies by adding critical insight into the representational significance of literary local Filipino minority as well as the neglected history of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. In a similar vein, my third chapter's analysis of Divakaruni's collection of

¹⁸ These debates reached a head when Filipino Americanists, East of California critics, and South Asian American studies called for greater consideration from Asian American studies.

short stories attends to the marginalization of South Asian American studies by showing how Indian American literature “fits” in with and also expands the larger oeuvre of Asian American literature. My dissertation no doubt affirms additive approaches to field formation by contributing to the incorporation of Filipino American and South Asian American studies into Asian American studies.

However, I also consider the limitations of this approach to field coherence in two broad ways. First, each of my chapters suggests that discursive and social incorporative efforts afford select subjects with certain improvements at the expense of exploiting and subjugating “others.” My interest in the stubborn presence of abject figures takes direct inspiration from the Subaltern Studies group’s effort to excavate histories that have been marginalized in the homogenization of representing Indian nationalist history.¹⁹ In an effort to translate their efforts to Asian American studies, I read Divakaruni’s, Gayatri Spivak’s, and Antonio Gramsci’s intersecting descriptions of subalternity to show that certain conventional methods of democratizing narrative and political representation do not cultivate the sort of ideological changes needed to disrupt prevailing hegemonies of domination.

Second, my last two chapters’ reclamation of California as a heterogeneous site of inquiry approaches the enthusiasm for minority discourse as one that has the potential to simplify critical issues in an attempt to assert minority interests. Part of the aforementioned 1998-1999 minor studies movement in Asian American studies, the “East of California” contingent of the field argued that scholars from the West Coast, particularly those from California, had unchecked dominance over the discipline’s governing institutions, from its leading professional organization, the Association for

¹⁹ See Prakash and Spivak (1987) for brief review of the Subaltern Studies group’s objectives.

Asian American Studies (AAAS), to *Amerasia*, the formative journal of the discourse.²⁰ This emphasis played out, of course, via scholarly production and the way the history of Asian American studies has been imagined, from its inception at San Francisco State University in 1969 to emphasis on the history and cultural production that originate from the West Coast. As East of California studies has gained momentum, historical particularities of Asian Americans' presence in the East Coast, South, and Midwest as well as the cultural production that attest to those nuanced experiences have gained greater attention. The discipline at large has undoubtedly benefited from those efforts, fulfilling its claim to national representation of Asian American history, politics, and culture.

At the same time, however, justifications for the East of California group's claims have the potential to suggest that the history and culture of California is a homogeneous and insular monolith against which East of California studies emerges as a central way through which the field secures regional and thematic heterogeneity. Through my reading of Divakaruni's and Yamashita's respective narratives, I show how grounding Asian American studies to California offers the very opposite of such a solipsistic discourse. That is, Divakaruni's "Perfect Life" and Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* are set in California but in distinct regions of the state, San Francisco's East Bay and various locations of Los Angeles, respectively. Yamashita's evocation of Southern California's orange cultivation is especially worth mentioning here, for it conveys major historical, economic, and cultural differences between Southern and Northern California. With

²⁰ "East of California" is a label that draws attention to the paradigmatic role the West Coast has played in shaping the concerns of Asian American studies, and today East of California also functions as an arm of AAAS, motivating discourse on issues that are geographically and thematically east of California. See Sumida (1998) for assessment of East of California's emergence as a field of study.

respect to Southern California, for example, Yamashita suggests that the history of Los Angeles is embedded in orange cultivation, an industry that emerged as a result of post-bellum industrialization in the East Coast and South, colonization and industrialization across the Pacific, and the mass migration of laborers through Northern México. Such conditions aligned with but were also distinct from the development of Northern California's gold mining industry. A return to California as a subject of inquiry through a reading of Yamashita's work, then, shows that California is not a monolithic space and that its historical development and literary figuration is contingent on various linked but distinct domestic and transnational geopolitics.

Of course, I posit this critical reinvestment in California through a study of subaltern characters. Doing so has alerted me against hoisting up a formerly minoritized group (East of California) as substitute for a once dominant but now marginal figure (California). This would only redeploy a binary of superiors and inferiors, the very binary that my dissertation challenges. Thus, though recuperation of California as a central site of Asian American critical inquiry might appear to undermine a commitment to those who have been marginalized, my contributions re-center as much as they de-center California, offering one way to disrupt the process of subjugating one entity for the dominance of another.

Conclusion

Incorporative methods of minority discourses are not categorically problematic. In fact, as my dissertation shows, I affirm additive approaches to field formation when they put up those efforts for critique and draw attention to dynamics of domination and

subjugation. As a political minority discourse that has pledged a commitment to equality and justice, Asian American studies must ask whether its current course of incorporating the dispossessed into the middle-class actually meets those broad objectives. The last two chapters of my dissertation approach this matter directly, showing that additive methodologies espoused by the field, while advocating an admirable democratic policy of inclusion, are not sacrosanct and require critical investigation, for appeals to recognition and inclusion have had the potential to reverse but nevertheless maintain technologies of domination. As my last chapter shows, a malleable form of ethics that accommodates incorporative models of group coherence has the potential to disrupt this hegemony of progress and oppression.

Chapter 1

Filthy Figures in the Local Japanese Bildungsroman:

A Reading of Milton Murayama's *All I Asking for Is My Body*

Milton Murayama's novella *All I Asking for Is My Body* (1975) begins in the 1930s and introduces us to the Oyamas, a poor immigrant Japanese family living in Pepelau, a small but diverse fictional town in Hawai'i.¹ By virtue of its idyllic location, close to the ocean and far from the plantation fields, Pepelau symbolizes the Oyamas' relative autonomy from plantation labor. The father fishes, the mother sews, and the children attend school and have copious recreational time. The parents' adolescent second son Kiyoshi is the family's representative third generation "local" (Asian immigrant to Hawai'i),² and his youth accounts for Kiyoshi's naïve perspective, a

¹ *All I Asking* (1975) is the first published part of a planned tetralogy. The prequel and sequel are, respectively, *Five Years on a Rock* (1994) and *Plantation Boy* (1998). Though these subsequent installments (the fourth has yet to be published) elaborate on the past and future of Kiyoshi's narrative, I approach *All I Asking* as a text that functions as a coherent and self-contained work that delimits the vast majority of my analysis.

² Trask argues that that "local" has been deployed as a substitute term for Asian immigrant, an innocuous label that elides the fact that Asians have come to Hawai'i as part of colonial settlement. In her words, it "tells a familiar, and false, tale of success: Asians came as poor plantation workers and triumphed decades later as the new, democratically-elected ruling class. Not coincidentally, the responsibility for continued Hawaiian dispossession falls to imperialist *haole* [a white person or formerly, a foreigner] and

perspective that functions as the story's first person narrative voice. Though Kiyo romanticizes the carefree vitality of Pepelau, his childhood is not as ideal as he imagines it. Subtle references to the family's meager diet, rotting teeth, debt, and spare housing suggest that the Oyamas are materially poor despite their idyllic surroundings and having escaped the rigors of field labor. More obviously, the vagaries of the father's fishing business, an illness preventing the mother from sewing, and the birth of additional children make it difficult for the parents to support their family on their own. These conditions force the Oyamas to move from Pepelau to the family's original point of settlement, Kahana—a rugged, remote, and dismal plantation village—where the parents and sons work within the sugar plantation industry. This geographic move, one that hastens Kiyo's maturation and leads to the family's social ascendancy, suggests that the novella is not a narrative of mere childhood idyll but one more akin to a *bildungsroman*.³

A *bildungsroman* is, of course, a classic coming of age story, a paradigmatic narrative of progress that may seem structurally neutral but unfolds and resolves in a way that re-deploys modern notions of development. As a teleological narrative, this storyline is completed when certain experiences compel a protagonist to reconcile with and become part of a public sphere.⁴ Though the *bildungsroman* is a narrative form of the

incapacitated Natives, that is, not to Asians. Thus do these settlers deny their ascendancy was made possible by the continued national oppression of Hawaiians, particularly the theft of our lands and the crushing of our independence" (Trask 2000, 4). In light of Trask's critique, it is tempting to substitute "local" for "settler," but for my purposes it would not be an appropriate label because Murayama's work suggests that amongst Asians in Hawai'i, certain groups were deemed more fit for settlement and acculturation than others. With an awareness of Task's critique, I use "local" because it a common term for referring to Asians in Hawai'i and because it is flexible term. That is, unlike the term settler, local can be applied to Asians who have and have not been deemed fit for settlement.

³ With respect to *All I Asking*, see Sumida for an instructive discussion of the way the novella transitions from a childhood idyll to a *bildungsroman* (1991, 112-137). I parse out a discussion of Asian American literary *bildungsromans* in chapter two. For a discussion of additional Asian American renditions of the *bildungsroman*, see Lowe (1996, 98-100).

novel, its general plot structure has been translated to other narrative forms such as the novella as in the case of *All I Asking*.⁵ With this in mind, I approach *All I Asking* as a novelistic novella.⁶ Indeed, Murayama's narrative does not read precisely as a novel because of its relative brevity (the slim volume weighs in only at one hundred and three pages) and sparseness with respect to details of setting, action, and characters. This is not to say that Murayama neglects various narrative subtleties. Rather, he does not luxuriate in all their glorious details, and such narrative aestheticism limits Kiyoo from musing on all the fine points of the day, underscoring the point that he and his family are hard workers with little or no time for extravagant contemplation.

At the same time, *All I Asking* follows novelistic form by plotting gradual steps toward Kiyoo's maturation. More precisely, Murayama approximates the structure of a

⁴ I draw this reading of the bildungsroman from Lloyd whose analysis of the bildungsroman I engage more directly in chapter two.

⁵ In chapter two, I also consider how Jessica Hagedorn translates the bildungsroman into script form.

⁶ Recent definitions of the novella, including the one found in the Oxford English Dictionary, emphasize the genre's length—longer than a short story and shorter than a novel—as its main identifying feature. While it is possible to whittle down the vagueness of this definition with the precision of specific word count (novellas being between 15,000 and 50,000 words by certain estimates), I prefer to draw on OED's indeterminate and comparative definition of novellas, for it emphasizes the point that genre rubrics are arbitrary and malleable. (See Springer's discussion of word counts with respect to defining novellas as comparative to short stories and novels). For example, in his own "Remarks" on *All I Asking*, Murayama refers to each of the three sections of the *All I Asking* as stories rather than chapters, suggesting that the text might be read as a collection of short stories rather than chapters of a novel. In contrast, Sumida, in his foundational reading of *All I Asking*, refers to the text as a novel constituted by three "parts." I, of course, read the text as a novella. By underscoring the imprecision of definitional boundaries between short stories, novellas, and novels at the outset, I recognize that *All I Asking* can be defined as a novella, collection of three interrelated short stories, and novel.

Notably, Clements and Gibaldi trace the etymology of novellas back to the middle ages and root their definition of novellas to Renaissance literary theory and practices, the "novella in its original manifestation" (3). According to this provenance, novellas have not been determined solely by length but by other features such as its function to entertain and teach in oral or written forms. While this is no doubt vital work, particularly for analysis of Renaissance and European novellas, Clements and Gibaldi are less successful in tracing how the definition of novellas has changed over time. In fact their discussion of modern texts indicates that they limit the categorization of novellas to Renaissance texts, suggesting popular definitions of novella such as the one I offer are incorrect. However, deploying the label of novella, as opposed to a more generic badge of short fiction, is productive for reading *All I Asking* as I show above.

bildungsroman by describing the vicissitudes of material life and resolving them with the narrator's and his family's expected escape from debt and poverty. As with Murayama's representation of progress, literary critic Alex Woloch points out, citing Franco Moretti, that the development of a young hero in the nineteenth century novel "is a way to imaginatively comprehend and mediate the dynamics and tensions of social mobility" (29). While the length, breadth, and historicity of nineteenth century novels stand in stark contrast to the brevity and context of Murayama's novella, the sort of plot development and characterizations described in nineteenth century novels are deployed, albeit at a different scale and under different socio-economic pressures, in Murayama's novella. To borrow Woloch's words, I aim to show in this chapter that Kiyō's maturation is one way to "comprehend and mediate the dynamics and tensions of social mobility" among Murayama's imagined local plantation laborers of the early-twentieth century.

Notably, however, as David Lloyd and Lisa Lowe observe, certain authors have evoked the form of the bildungsroman only to disrupt it in order to convey the material and psychological hardships of acculturating fully to a dominant public sphere. In the case of *All I Asking*, for example, the storyline is not told in a strict linear crescendo of events as Murayama characterizes the family's settlement by its vicissitudes, noting how hardships and successes have seesawed over the course of three-generations and then "sink" to a point from which Kiyō emerges to stabilize his family's solvency. Murayama places the seeds of his protagonist's mobility in the beginning of the third and last section of the novella, disproportionately the longest of the three and the one I focus on here. At this moment of the narrative, Kiyō experiences personal "low" points that eventually motivate him to secure his family's solvency. Thus, the first two sections of the novella

decrecendo into this third section out of which Kiyo climbs, gaining gradual insight into the detrimental consequences of family and plantation obligations. With this realization, he resolves to improve his own and family's quality of life by enlisting in the military. In this way, Kiyo develops a certain degree of individuality (at least, apart from family and the plantation) and becomes a patriot of the U.S. nation-state. While the structure of Kiyo's story conveys that local Japanese ascendancy has been an interrupted forward moving process, I show in this chapter that even in cases of fragmented narrative and class progression, minor figures are marginalized to animate development. In other words, structural disruptions with respect to plot do not guarantee a departure from the sort of character binaries exhibited in certain nineteenth century novels whose linear progression and character developments require the subjugation of supporting casts of minor characters.

The consequences of narrative and social progression have also been debated with respect to Lois-Ann Yamanaka's novel *Blu's Hanging* (1997), a better-known local Japanese bildungsroman. Like *All I Asking*, *Blu's Hanging* chronicles various events that lead to the brink of a local Japanese daughter's educational opportunity, and this opportunity foreshadows the family's expected socio-economic advancement. Set in 1970s Hawai'i, *Blu's Hanging* introduces us to the Ogatas, a poor local Japanese family who suffers from various forms of grief and degradation. Ivah, the eldest daughter of the family, is the novel's leading narrator. Though Ivah is only thirteen years old, her narrative dominance and keen insights suggest that she is proficient, up to a certain point, in supervising the day-to-day care of her two younger siblings, Blu and Maisie. Her father's physical and emotional distance from his family, as a result of mourning the

recent death of his wife and children's mother, compels Ivah to take on this guardianship role. In registering these and other adversities, Yamanaka builds the story up to Ivah's departure for private school, an event that is precipitated by, as Candace Fujikane argues, a local Filipino's rape of her brother Blu. Though this educational opportunity takes Ivah away from helping to raise Blu and Maisie, it offers her a stable building block for securing the family's future mobility.

Citing Blu's rape and other examples of Yamanaka's uses of local Filipino stereotypes, locals in Hawai'i charged the author with affirming local Japanese dominance through her literature. A contingent of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS), the leading organization of the academic field, took up this cause and achieved official censure of *Blu's Hanging* by rescinding the novel's 1997 AAAS Fiction Award.⁷ In response to these events, I submit a reading of *All I Asking* as an intervention, one that addresses critical points of literary analysis that were raised but not fully fleshed out during this debate. My efforts do not aim to rehash old arguments but to draw on lessons learned, offering a different critical response to questions raised about the functionality of mapping stereotypes onto minor characters in the local bildungsroman.

⁷ In 1994, concerns over Lois-Ann Yamanaka's representation of local Filipinos surfaced publicly when a local Japanese newspaper reprinted poems from Yamanaka's *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*. More precisely, Yamanaka's critics took issue with the author's putative affirmation of stereotypes of local Filipino sexual depravity. When the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS), the leading association of the field, granted *Saturday Night* its Literature Award, concerns over and objections to Yamanaka's figuration of Filipino-ness were reiterated. Though AAAS proceeded with the award, it recognized these objections by promising to address the marginalization of Filipino American interests within the Association. Subsequent AAAS Literature Award Committees shelved those promises when they nominated Yamanaka's novels *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* and *Blu's Hanging* for awards without addressing ongoing criticism of the author's uses of local Filipino stereotypes. In response to such repeated disregard, certain advocates of Filipino American interests refused to accept the final decision to present *Blu's Hanging* with the AAAS 1997 Fiction Award. As a result of fierce public debates and an anonymous ballot vote cast during an annual AAAS meeting, the Association eventually withdrew the Award in 1998.

For a detailed timeline of the events that led to the withdrawal of the award, see Fujikane (187-9). For an additional reading of these events, see Chuh (2-3) and Nguyen (8-9).

Specifically, rather than approach Yamanaka's deployment of local Filipino stereotypes as a sign of her putative racism as other critics have concluded,⁸ I read her use of stereotypes as a description of the way minor ethnicized/racialized/sexualized figures are subjugated to facilitate the development of a bildungsroman protagonist. Thus, my reading of Murayama's juxtaposition of the Oyamas and their minor local Filipino counterparts enables us to return to *Blu's Hanging* debates and sharpen interpretation of Asian American literary marginality. Put another way, review of *Blu's Hanging* and its critique offers a critical context for approaching analysis of *All I Asking*.

While Yamanaka's critics have addressed relevant questions about local Japanese figurations of minor characters, especially with respect to their racialization, they have not utilized the reading practices of minor character studies directly. Not only does that neglect produce underdeveloped readings of Yamanaka's work, but it also misses an opportunity to introduce a general methodology for analyzing minor characterization in Asian American literature.⁹ More to the point, minor character critique presents us with an explicit reading practice that functions as a guide to parsing out minor figures' narrative and thematic functions. In themselves, however, minor character studies have not focused on the way race, ethnicity, and sexuality shape a minor figure's subjugation.¹⁰ By drawing on criticism of Yamanaka's literature, I bring that perspective to minor character studies. Translating both minor character criticism and contemporary Asian Americanist debates to my study of *All I Asking*, I interpret Murayama's minor

⁸ For specific charges made against Yamanaka's representation of local Filipinos, see Fujikane, Rodrigues, Revilla, and Okamura.

⁹ To my knowledge, an explicit Asian American minor character analysis does not yet exist. My introduction makes note of certain efforts that address the racialization and gendering of minor figures in Asian American Studies, but those efforts do not explicitly engage minor character studies.

¹⁰ See my introduction for a more detailed review of studies on minor characters.

local Filipino characters as racialized figures who prompt plot progression and punctuate the novella's conclusion.

My objective, of course, is not to catalogue the various types of minor figures in *All I Asking* or, for that matter, Asian American literature. Rather, I aim to analyze the representational significance of select minor figures whose association with filth symbolizes their inferior status. This chapter considers the particular way Murayama's representation of local Filipinos, figured as "dirty bodies," helps to convey a process through which certain local Japanese transform into citizens. As I explained in my introduction, dirty bodies are minor characters who hover on the periphery of Asian American literature. Their presences are fleeting, and their own stories are limited to the repetition of mundane tasks that yoke them to a one-dimensional life of subsistence rather than a full fledged narrative of past, present, and future. Additionally, their living and/or work conditions place them in close proximity to excrement, and this association with refuse is a badge of their abject status.

Juxtaposition of dirty bodies and the Oyamas suggests that local Japanese progress is a process that not only requires the marginalization of "inferiors" but that it also hinges on the racialization and ethnicization of local hierarchy. In short, hard work and the accumulation of dutifully earned and saved wages do not necessarily ensure class mobility. Rather, race and ethnicity have as much or more to do with such advancement. Differences in domestic status, material living conditions, and the performance of certain modern habits only reinforce this hierarchy. In fact the performance of modern citizenship in these various ways help mask the fact that race and ethnicity have more to do with a group's advancement than with their individual willingness to acculturate to the

demands of dominant culture. Thus, in addition to describing certain attributes that identify desirable and undesirable candidates for settlement, *All I Asking* suggests that placing emphasis on ostensible acts of citizenship draws attention away from the fact that ethnicity has been a foremost factor in determining progress and marginalization among Hawaiian locals.

Because dirty bodies are conditioned by the sanitation structures that surround them, a study of the public health discourses and institutions that produce dirty bodies becomes inextricably intertwined with my analysis of these minor figures. To understand the representational significance of modern health technology in *All I Asking*, I draw on foundational theories of impurity and Asian American studies on public health. For example, scholars such as Nayan Shah and Warwick Anderson have shed light on the ways nineteenth and early-twentieth century missionaries, capitalists, lawmakers, health reformers, and health observers linked Asianness with impurity to justify U.S. colonization abroad and the exploitation of vulnerable immigrants at “home.”¹¹ As both a colony and a future state, Hawai‘i’s development was subject to overlapping colonial and domestic public health initiatives, and those overlapping policies reinforced Hawai‘i’s local hierarchy. This manifests in Murayama’s representation of unequal access to indoor plumbing as his description of discrepancies in the construction of sanitation structures re-entrench the divide between the privileged and poor. Simply put, my efforts here add literary analysis to Asian American studies of public health discourses. Doing so emphasizes how an *uneven* implementation of sanitation structures has helped to normalize inequalities into the fabric of Hawai‘i’s modern society. It is precisely these

¹¹ See my introduction for a detailed summary of these studies and my contribution to this discourse.

inequalities that then frame a bildungsroman as it represents the upward social mobility of certain characters against the marginalization of filthy “others.”

Attending to the historical, critical, and narrative significance of literary sanitation structures is a direct attempt to fill a gap in Asian American literary scholarship where figurations of impurity have been noted but not focused on as a primary object of analysis.¹² While this recognition suggests that figurations of filth exist in the literature, my efforts show that they demand closer inspection because they have a prominent place in narrative. In Murayama’s work, for instance, the degradation of moving to Kahana’s dreary plantation town is marked not only by its geography but also by its squalid sanitation structures. Specifically, Kahana is situated on a hill where the density, height, and pervasiveness of the sugarcane obscure views of the landscape that lie beyond, a limitation that contrasts with Pepelau’s open, ocean-side vistas. Kahana’s landscape thus signifies the family’s entrapment within the plantation system, and in addition to this symbolically charged topography, the camp’s dirty living quarters signal to Kiyō, upon first impression, that his “childhood was chopped off *clean*” (28, my emphasis). The use of the word “clean” I argue is a clue to understanding the significance that hygiene and health take on in the novel. Its opposite filth is what designates the laborers’ living quarters, punctuating the beginning of the end of Kiyō’s childhood.

As a bookend to this introduction, Murayama concludes the novella by representing Kahana’s filthiness as a motivating factor in Kiyō’s departure from the family and the plantation to enter military service. Expressing his displeasure with the life he is about to leave, Kiyō declares: “Freedom was freedom from other people’s shit, and

¹² For example, Sumida (1991, 134-5) and E. Kim (1982, 143) both mention Murayama’s references to Kahana’s notorious filthiness.

shit was shit no matter how lovingly it was dished, how high or low it came from. Shit was the glue which held a group together, and I was going to have no part of any shit or any group” (96). As a metaphor for stultifying group allegiances, “shit” is the very substance from which Kiyō seeks to cleanse himself. Shit describes materially filthy work conditions, the impoverishment of plantation life, and the family’s social inferiority. I read such literal and figurative shit as interconnected, for Kiyō’s introduction into the material muck of plantation labor is yoked to his disgust for his family’s miserable living conditions. By anchoring the third section of the novella with introductory and concluding remarks of Kiyō’s disgust with material and symbolic squalor, Murayama indicates impurity’s importance in the story.

Drawing on Murayama’s cues, this chapter focuses on two of the novella’s metonyms for abject filthiness, dirty minor characters and the sanitation structures that produce them. I evaluate such minor characters as a narrative device of plot progression and as a presence that illuminates certain mechanics of modern subject formation. I read Murayama’s figuration of sanitation structures as a description of public health concepts and practices as they have been inculcated in formerly “primitive” societies. The filthy manifestation of those structures (in the guise of sewage ditches and outhouses) also is vital to animating the local Japanese bildungsroman because they help symbolize the nadir from which the Oyamas progress. For the local Japanese bildungsroman, then, figurations of impurity facilitate and complicate the literary resolution of local class mobility.

Minor Characters and the “Low” Point of Local Japanese Literature

As Asian American critics have noted, Murayama’s novella describes the challenges of living inside and not quite outside the reach of the Hawaiian plantation system. They have commended Murayama’s deftness in portraying accurately the material difficulties of plantation life, local vernacular, and cultural binaries between “old” and “new” worlds.¹³ While such discourses are relevant to establishing the novella’s verisimilitude,¹⁴ I focus on the way his efforts intervene in those descriptions of Hawaiian modernity.¹⁵ Specifically, I evaluate Murayama’s figuration of minor local

¹³ For such criticism on *All I Asking*, see Wilson and Hiura. Early criticism of *All I Asking* is characterized by its interest in the novella’s verisimilitude, naïve narrative perspective, aesthetics of understatement, and its mixed use of pidgin, Standard English, and Japanese languages. For Murayama’s own approach to reading and writing the novella, see “Letter” and “Problems of Writing in Dialect and Mixed Languages.”

¹⁴ For example, in *Pau Hana*, a foundational history of Hawaiian plantation laborers, Takaki juxtaposes primary sources and details from *All I Asking* to illuminate plantation living conditions (92-6), labor unrest (151-2), and efforts to cultivate community among laborers (96-8). Sumida’s literary analysis of *All I Asking* affirms Takaki’s assessment and continues to note, along with E. Kim, the empathy that the novella has elicited in its readers. See Sumida (115) and E. Kim (314).

¹⁵ I pause here to acknowledge how historical conditions underpin Murayama’s figuration of the Hawaiian plantation system by reviewing the transnationalization of trade, agri-business, and the trafficking of labor with respect to development efforts in Hawai‘i and Asia.

The transformation of Hawai‘i into a global outpost, colony, and U.S. state dates back to Captain James Cook’s arrival on the Islands in 1778 through which Hawai‘i became a global trading center and part a producer of raw goods for, primarily, U.S. markets. The development of a lucrative sugar industry compelled industrialists to petition for greater control, in the form of land claims, over their assets. The allowance of such land was restricted at first but industrialists forced its claims, leading eventually to the dethroning of the reigning Queen of Hawai‘i and official annexation as part of the U.S. Haole land-grabbing was virtually complete by 1936 as only six percent of lands distributed originally to commoners remained in the possession of Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians (Fuchs 16 and Kent 30-2). Finalizing this take over, Hawai‘i’s status changed from a colony to a U.S. state in 1959. For further analysis on Cook’s arrival and the modernization of Hawai‘i, see Kent. For the development of Hawai‘i into a U.S. colony, see Beechert, Merry, Lind, Fuchs, and Takagi.

In addition to establishing a sustainable industry and legal control over the land, sugar planters required a large and cheap labor source to maximize their profits. Recruitment began with Native Hawaiians, and they constituted the bulk of the work force until the Reciprocity Treaty accelerated production. Such expansion led planters to view the Native Hawaiian population as no longer sufficient to meet their labor demands, especially because the population of Native Hawaiians had dwindled drastically since contact with haoles.

European and U.S. American expansion into Asia had a significant part in shaping the Hawaiian sugar economy. Namely, Western influences in China, Japan, and the Philippines accelerated industrialization in such a way that workers could not be absorbed into the new modern economy.

Filipino characters as a catalyst for plot progression and as a presence that amplifies the Oyamas' exceptional achievement of earning an escape from hard plantation labor.

As indicated above, I situate this discussion as a response to debates about Lois-Ann Yamanaka's novel *Blu's Hanging*. To review, Yamanaka's figuration of Uncle Paulo, the nefarious local Filipino rapist, was at center of those debates, and while certain critics underscored how that minor character evidenced Yamanaka's racism, I offer a different conclusion through a reading of local Filipino minor characterization in *All I Asking*. I argue that Murayama's deployment of different Filipino stereotypes functions to describe the way race, ethnicity, domestic life, health, and even notions of leisure time have intersected to nominate local Japanese and Filipinos as, respectively, "good" and "bad" candidates for citizenship, facilitating the forward moving teleology of the local Japanese bildungsroman.

It was not only Yamanaka's representation of Uncle Paulo but also past AAAS failures to take up a critical reading of Yamanaka's uses of local Filipino stereotypes that ignited vociferous criticism against awarding *Blu's Hanging* with the 1997 AAAS Fiction Award. As critics argued, in light of a long history of demonizing local Filipinos as sexual predators, Uncle Paulo's figuration reinforced equations of Filipino-ness and

Subsequent dispossession and insolvency in those sites availed the unemployed for labor recruitment to far destinations such as Hawai'i where the development of mass export-based production required a large and cheap labor pool. Chinese workers made up the first large-scale group of imported laborers to Hawai'i, while large-scale Japanese and Filipino labor importation followed. Details of Chinese emigration to Hawai'i can be found in Mei, Beechert (62-5), Fuchs (86-90), and Glick. See Moriyama and Okahata for "push" and "pull" factors of Japanese immigration. For factors leading to Filipino immigration, see Sharma.

In addition to recruiting workers from China, Japan, and the Philippines, laborers from the South Pacific Islands, the contiguous U.S., Norway, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Puerto Rico, and Korea also were contracted for plantation work. For an overview of those recruitment efforts and their plantation experiences, see Beechert (86-8, 128-131) and Takagi (22-56). A series of exclusions led to these shifts in labor pools. See Bonacich for an instructive review of those exclusions (1984b, 74-6).

sexual depravity.¹⁶ Soon after the withdrawal of the award Fujikane published “Sweeping Racism under the Rug of ‘Censorship’: The Controversy over Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Blu's Hanging*” (2000) in *Amerasia Journal*, a leading journal of the field. As part of the official response to the award's immediate aftermath, Fujikane's essay stands out as one of the most detailed and extensive critical literary readings of Yamanaka's work and the debates surrounding it. Thus, it has emerged as an authoritative response to the novel. More precisely, Fujikane argues that Uncle Paulo's abuse of Blu inverts historical power relations between local Japanese and Filipinos in such a way that Uncle Paulo and his family become the oppressors of the Ogas. In effect, Uncle Paulo's presence obscures the fact that by and large, local Japanese have had more power and privilege than local Filipinos. Elaborating on this point, Fujikane asserts that Uncle Paulo's rape of Blu “serves as the pivotal moment in the novel that reaffirms Ivah's decision to leave home with the conviction that she is providing a way out of their oppressive situation for Blu and Maisie” (175). In short, as Fujikane sees it, Uncle Paulo motivates Ivah's journey and draws attention away from the fact that by virtue of their ethnicity, local Japanese have had greater access to opportunities for social advancement than their Filipino counterparts.

Objections to Yamanaka's portrayal of local Filipinos were not isolated events, for they represented a continuation of efforts to make Filipino American history more visible to Asian American studies. These efforts included, for example, excavating the overlooked history of U.S. colonization in the Philippines.¹⁷ While the final decision to

¹⁶ For criticism on literary deployments of local Filipino stereotypes, see Fujikane, Rodrigues, Revilla, and Okamura.

rescind the AAAS Award and Fujikane's article, an official stamp of approval of this decision, represent one resolution to debates on Asian American discourses of local Filipino marginalization, my intervention via an analysis of *All I Asking* builds on that conclusion by offering a different critical approach to reading racialized stereotypes in Asian American literature. To that end, I draw on Asian American critique *and* minor character analysis, a composite critical reference point to facilitate assessment of local Filipino stereotypes, reading them as a strategy for illuminating, rather than concealing, the subjugation of marginal figures and their important place in telling stories of social advancement.

Simply put, Fujikane's analysis grounds my study of minor characterization. Though she does not explicitly situate her critique within minor character studies,¹⁸ Fujikane's methods and argument echo similar ones found in Alex Woloch's exemplary work and his argument is worth mentioning briefly here. With respect to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Woloch argues that comparison between the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and her one-dimensional "inferior" counterparts operate to make Elizabeth appear more dynamic, balanced, and thus superior to her deficient minor supporting cast. Such superiority ultimately justifies Elizabeth's status as Darcy's most desirable and deserving bride. Woloch registers these character inequalities between Elizabeth and her supporting cast as standing for and commenting on the competitive marriage market as it emerged out of the development of English capitalism. Though Fujikane and Woloch focus on

¹⁷ See Campomanes, B. Anderson (1988) and Rafael (2000) for their respective work in facilitating this recovery effort.

¹⁸ In addition to Fujikane, scholars such as critics such as Rachel Lee have taken up a study of racialized and gendered representations of minor characters in Asian American literature, but they have not drawn on ongoing discourses on minor characterization. R. Lee, for example, examines how the feminization of minor characters in Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* generates and divides Filipino brotherhood. However, she does not conceive her work explicitly as a case of minor character analysis.

vastly different genres of literature and history, they attend similarly to the roles minor characters have in advancing the narrative resolution of ascendancy via education and marriage, respectively. Moreover, each critic's study of protagonists and marginal figures recognizes the way literature absorbs and re-imagines the historical conditions that surround its production.

Building especially on Woloch's examination of Elizabeth and her "inferior" supporting cast, I interpret Murayama's representation of local Filipinos as a presence that motivates and highlights local Japanese candidacy for permanent settlement and citizenship. I also show that an Asian Americanist intervention in minor character study enables us to approach narrative marginalization in light of racial, ethnic, and sexual identity.¹⁹ Finally, in later sections of this chapter, I translate Woloch's argument into one that is particular to Asian American literary analysis, approaching Murayama's figuration of local Filipinos as a narrative device that comments on inequalities—shaped by the transnationalization of production, trade, and consumption throughout the Pacific Rim—that have been integral to narrative progression and character development.

Assembling several local Filipinos into a community, Murayama has this group function as a minor character who plays an important part in motivating the novella's conclusion.²⁰ The novella ends when Kiyō sends his gambling winnings back home, thus affording his family with the means to secure solvency and a basis for their class

¹⁹ For example, Galef's and Robbins's respective scholarship, as with Woloch's, do not focus on the ways race, ethnicity, and sexuality inform the marginalization of minor characters.

²⁰ To clarify what I mean by this minor character group, I draw on Woloch's definition of a "character-space." According to Woloch, "character-space marks the *intersection* of an implied human personality [...] with the definitively circumscribed form of a narrative" (13). In *All I Asking*, local Filipinos stand for the intersection of implied human personalities that are limited by their representation in the novella.

advancement.²¹ Local Filipinos facilitate this chain of events by being identified with Kiyō and marking the start of Kiyō's life in plantation work and its harsh physical realities. More specifically, while in the eighth grade, Murayama's young protagonist comes to work alongside a local Filipino crew that shoulders the "dirtiest" off-seasonal work of the plantation, and during this moment, he realizes that he has become an anonymous and filthy manual laborer. Symbolic of Kiyō's indoctrination into this group experience, Kiyō and the crew are immersed in saturating dust and sweat. Attempts to ward off this grime are futile: "The dust hangs in reddish clouds around us. We are drenched, our denim pants cling to our wet legs, sweat trickles down faces and necks and moistens palms and backs of our hands. We wipe continually, hands on pants, shirt sleeves over eyebrows, blue handkerchief around neck" (39). Murayama's use of the pronoun "we" in this passage emphasizes his protagonist's inclusion with the other workers, and a shift to the pronoun "you" in the following passage reiterates this group identification.

According to Kiyō, "[y]ou wear a broad straw hat against the sun, you hold your breath and try to breathe the less dusty air in gasps, you tie the bottom of your pants legs to keep the dust and centipedes out, you stop and clean your nostrils of chocolate dust with the blue handkerchief wet from wiping your neck" (39). Underscoring the futility of warding off plantation labor's grime, this passage echoes the previous excerpt except for its replacement of "we" with "you." I interpret Murayama's invocation of "you" in two ways. First, the deployment of "you" reaches out to readers, placing us alongside Kiyō in the heat and muck of plantation work, inviting us to identify with the protagonist.

²¹ While the novella ends before we learn about the consequences of Kiyō's win, their escape from plantation life is suggested through the family's ability to repay its debts.

Furthermore, “you,” as a form of address, also avoids the use of the “I.” Thus, rather than isolating Kiyoo from the group by describing his narrator’s efforts as individual, Murayama’s deployment of “you” allows Kiyoo to ascribe what might be seen as individual actions to an indeterminate collective “you.” Lest his sentiments appear one-sided, the group reciprocates by treating Kiyoo as its “kid brother.” In this way, identification with local Filipinos, exemplified by shifts in pronouns, operates to present the protagonist’s initiation into the working class and to fortify the reader’s identification with Kiyoo. Clearly, the group is filthy, and Kiyoo, though not Filipino, is very much part of this cohort and thus steeped in the muck of fieldwork with them. This entry into manual labor, then, symbolizes a “low” point in Kiyoo’s life that, as I show below, precipitates his escape into military service.

While Kiyoo thinks his childhood is over upon first moving to Kahana (“It was like my childhood was chopped off clean”), it is his indoctrination into this anonymous working class experience of arduous field labor that finalizes the end of his youth and innocence. As Kiyoo becomes part of this collective mass of laborers who toil through the plantation’s filthiest work, he also is forced to drop out of school, and together, these experiences represent a final break from his childhood. Thus, working alongside local Filipinos dovetails with the termination of his formal education and the suppression of his individualism, and in this way, local Filipinos are linked to the very “shit” that Kiyoo seeks to escape when he decides to leave Kahana for good. In no uncertain terms, he declares: “Shit was the glue which held a group together, and I was going to have no part of any shit or any group” (96). While it is debatable whether entry into the military frees

him from subsuming his individuality to a group identity, it nonetheless allows him to elude past constraints of familial and occupational obligations.

To clarify the function of juxtaposing a young local Japanese protagonist with local Filipino minor characters, it is worthwhile to return briefly to Fujikane's reading of *Blu's Hanging*. As Fujikane argues, a lascivious local Filipino functions as the immediate catalyst in compelling Ivah to take her first steps toward securing long-term material improvement for her family. In contrast, Murayama's figuration of dirty work conditions motivates a similar journey of advancement for Kiyoo and his family. Part of this motivation, of course, stems from Kiyoo's experiences of working with a local Filipino crew that shoulders the filthiest work on the plantation. While the conditions themselves are miserable, I also read them as the symbolic "shit" of group identity that Kiyoo yearns to escape. Understanding this, I nominate the local Filipinos of *All I Asking* as part of the material and symbolic "shit" that drives Kiyoo to leave Kahana and secure his family's long-term solvency.

However, even as local Filipinos help bring about the plot progression of Kiyoo's story, they are absent at the end of the novella. Such an absence intimates that they are left behind in the dust of the Oyamas' expected class ascendancy. To put it differently, being "stuck" behind in Kahana suggests that these local Filipino emphasize the exceptional nature of the Oyamas' advancements. Indeed, the Oyamas' journey is uncommon because they have risen from an abject labor status to accomplish what similar counterparts cannot. In *All I Asking*, local Filipinos represent the most socially "low," an important distinction that animates Kiyoo's journey forward and punctuates the exceptional nature of the Oyamas' expected achievements.

Regulative Technologies of Modernity: Sewage Ditches, Privies, and Bathhouses

I want to pause here to note the historical significance of associating local Filipinos with dirty plantation labor and Murayama's other evocations of racialized impurity discourses. This effort addresses a critical lapse not only in the scholarship of *All I Asking* but also in Asian American literary studies generally. As I note in my introduction, representations of impurity have been understudied despite their recurrence throughout Asian American literature and despite the fact that such racialized figurations of impurity have profound historical and critical significance. In explicit terms, my examination of the historical significance of impurity in *All I Asking* allows us to address the history of deploying public health discourses to maintain *haole* (white Europeans and U.S. Americans outsiders) power in Hawai'i.²² Additionally, attending to Murayama's figuration of sanitation structures aligns with the way images of impurity punctuate local hierarchy and stand for the structural challenges of local Japanese class mobility. In a way, then, the present historical interlude functions to deepen our appreciation for the plot mechanics of the local Japanese bildungsroman and sharpen Asian American studies on public health.

There is extensive history of associating Asianness with impurity,²³ and in U.S. colonies those discourses were affirmed through public health discourses. More specifically, by representing Asian inferiority through public health discourse in colonies

²² While some view "haole" as a pejorative label that has wrongly brought animosity toward whites in Hawai'i, as Trask points out, it is one of the few Hawaiian words in common use that is not itself a cause of Native hostility toward whites. Rather, a long history of haole violence against Native peoples underpins such responses (Trask 2000, 170-1). Thus, the term itself is not the critical point of contention for Trask.

²³ See my introduction for a review of this history.

such as the Philippines and Hawai‘i, U.S. officials justified their colonial presence and their exploitation of human and environmental resources.²⁴ For example, at the conclusion of the nineteenth century in Honolulu, a local Chinese bookkeeper and four of his local Chinese neighbors were diagnosed with the bubonic plague. While previous evidence had attributed the spread of the plague to rats, Public Health Services focused their efforts on regulating Chinese and even Japanese locals by quarantining and fumigating Honolulu’s Chinatown, resorting in the end to burning several of its buildings. When the fires burned out of control, they lasted for seventeen days and led to loss of four thousand homes (Shah 127-8). In this scenario, the equation of Asianness and disease led to destructive regulative actions against local Asians. Unlike haoles who were linked directly to introducing venereal diseases and small pox to Native Hawaiians but were absolved of responsibility,²⁵ local Chinese and Japanese were not primarily

²⁴ For further analysis on the deployment of colonial public health discourses in the Philippines and Hawai‘i, see W. Anderson and J. Kim, respectively.

²⁵ Initially, when haoles made contact with Natives, they touted Native Hawaiians’ health and vigor, but the contraction of haole diseases soon led to a dramatic deterioration of this once notably robust population. Though reasons for depopulation are complex, both haole and Native historians have agreed that the introduction of diseases by Europeans was a major contributing factor to this decline. Even Cook himself recognized early on that venereal diseases carried by his own crew infected and killed Native Hawaiians (Lind 95). In terms of numbers, just prior to initial contact with Cook, the indigenous population has been estimated between 300,000 and 800,000 and the numbers fell dramatically to 57,000 by 1866. See, Haas (23), Fuchs (12-3), Takagi (22-3), Lind (94-9), and Beechert (20) for statistics and commentary on the native population during this early contact period and the factors leading to its decline. For specific descriptions of Hawaiian health, see Fuchs (8), Lind (89-103), and Trask (1999, 116).

Rather than view haoles as contagious to Native Hawaiians, however, public health officials and certain historians have absolved haoles of responsibility by holding the indigenous population’s “ignorance” and lack of immunities responsible for the contraction of deadly diseases. For example, a nineteenth century public health commissioner responded to an 1853 epidemic of smallpox that took 2,485 Hawaiian lives by assessing the situation thusly: “The disease spread like wild fire, and the natives were panic stricken.... As they were ignorant of the malady and did not know how to take care of themselves, they died like sheep” (qtd. in Lind 98). In such a context, Natives are seen as unorganized, unknowledgeable, unable to care for themselves, and animalistic. Affirming this discourse, haole doctors also found that infant vulnerability to common ailments such as diarrhea, teething, and colds resulted from Natives’ lack of exposure to proper childrearing methods and an understanding of basic hygiene habits (Fuchs 13). From a historian’s perspective, Andrew W. Lind agrees that the lack of Native immunities and a failure to follow “ordinary sanitary precautions” were at the root of contagion (98-9). Thus, by faulting Hawaiians for their lack of exposure to diseases and knowledge of certain health practices, historians and

accountable for the spread of the plague but were nonetheless presented as its matrix. To put it differently, local Asians were not granted the privilege of faulting others' lack of immunities and sanitary precautions for the spread of diseases. Therefore, the disparate handling of these two parallel health "risks"—haoles and local Asians—highlights the fact that health discourses were utilized to justify and uphold the superiority of those who determine the discourse.

The response to bubonic plague in Honolulu's Chinatown typifies a nineteenth century approach to regulating the local population, whereas in early-twentieth-century Hawai'i, health officers exhibited a more accommodating response toward the local population. Broadly speaking, Shah observes that while in the nineteenth century, U.S. discourses sought to exclude undesirable groups from citizenship, in the twentieth century, they aimed to "sanitize and accommodate difference," reconciling non-normative subjects with dominant culture. In short, in the twentieth century, health norms with respect to U.S. domestic practices "became recalibrated as the minimum standards for the emerging system of social welfare and entitlements" (Shah 6). This twentieth century approach to sanitation manifested throughout settler Hawai'i as public health observers called for the building outhouses, digging sewer lines, and cleaning drainage ditches to mitigate health risks on plantations. There also were regular official visits to document the conditions and location of outhouses, cesspools, and washhouses (J. Kim 83-5).

public health officials have obscured haole responsibility for introducing new diseases to Hawaiians. In other words, by controlling discourses of public health, haoles have evaded an association with pestilence and contagion even though bacteria they carried were a threat to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Hawaiians.

Differences between nineteenth and twentieth century responses to public health initiatives might also be read in another light as examples taken from Hawai‘i attest. I read the violent responses to the bubonic plague in Honolulu as an expression of the way locals who lived in the city might have been less acceptable to haoles for stepping out of their prescribed role as contracted plantation laborers. Thus, by exceeding their proper place, these locals might have been subject to greater scrutiny and regulative efforts, explaining the extreme measures of burning their homes in response to a health risk. In contrast, those who worked on the plantations were subjected to varying degrees of sanitation improvements rather than destructive forms of quarantine and fumigation. Aligned with Shah’s efforts, my reading suggests that differences between nineteenth and twentieth century public health responses were shaped by how well local Asians met haole needs.

The history of accommodating local Asian plantation laborers with improved sanitation registers literarily in *All I Asking* as Kiyō’s older brother Toshio works as a garbage collector and as both Kiyō and his father irrigate the plantation’s sewage ditch. With respect to the sewage ditch, Kiyō observes that “[t]here were half a dozen rows of outhouses and the ditches under them were flushed downhill to a big concrete irrigation ditch which ran around the lower boundary of the camp, and sooner or later shit, newspaper, and all ended up in the furrows of the fields below” (29). Ironically, despite such outhouses, sewer lines, and efforts to clean camp quarters, Murayama conveys that the laborers’ living conditions are quite unsanitary. While the plantation’s sewage ditches remove waste from the laborers’ living quarters, those quarters nonetheless reek of raw sewage. In fact, the odors from the sewage as well as nearby livestock are overpowering.

As Kiyo remembers it, “The house we moved into, No. 173, was the last house on ‘Pig Pen Avenue’ and next to the pigpens and ditch, and when the wind stopped blowing or when the warm Kona wind blew from the south, our house smelled like both an outhouse and a pigpen” (29). Making matters worse, even the laborers’ bathhouses, a site where one presumably becomes clean, smell of “piss” though signs forbid urinating in them. As for the laborers’ outdoor privies, “[t]he rough one-by-sixteen planks used for the partitions did not go up to the rafters, and you could hear all the farts and everything going on in the other toilets. A three-foot-deep concrete ditch ran underneath all the toilets, and you sat back to back against a common partition with one of the other toilets. You were so close in fact you could touch the other guy’s ass if you lifted the big square toilet seat” (29).

I read the conditions of the laborers’ camp as dirty not just because the odor and presence of excrement and animals infuse it²⁶ but also because boundaries between inside and outside, clean and dirty, and human and animal are not maintained. Such intrusions evoke Mary Douglas’s definition of impurity as “matter out of place.”²⁷ Accordingly, I read the Oyamas’ displeasure with their living conditions as discontent for inhabiting a space where modern paradigms of organization have been transgressed.

Building on William Ian Miller’s revision of Douglas’s definition of impurity, I also interpret Murayama’s reproduction of sanitation structures as a description of the

²⁶ Douglas suggests that excrement is not innately filthy, while Miller recuperates this material definition of filth by noting the ways that excrement has elicited repulsion across different cultures. We see that the response to human refuse is no different in Murayama’s Hawai‘i, and in this way, *All I Asking* conveys that the toilets and bathhouses are materially dirty. Additionally, animals such as pigs have been identified as dirty animals because they have been used to consume and eliminate waste. See Stallybrass and White and *Municipal Refuse Disposal* for details on the use of using pigs as garbage disposals in, respectively, European cities and U.S. agricultural industry.

²⁷ See my introduction for further review of Douglas’s definition of impurity.

unevenness that permeates Hawaiian modernity. Miller argues that dirtiness is attributed to that which is in its proper “low” position. As he puts it: “It is not that things don’t fit; it is that they fit right at the bottom of the conceptual grid” (45). In other words, putting the socially “low” alongside the materially “low” has been a normative aspect of social organization. Exhibiting this point, Murayama has overseers and *lunas* (strawbosses or supervisors) live further away from the symbolic and literal nether regions of the slope, while laborers inhabit the low-lying, “bottom” regions of the plantation living quarters. In addition to such geographic privileges, the overseer and lunas have indoor toilets, a modern convenience that provides privacy and also ejects filth immediately from their living space, whereas laborers have access only to embarrassing outdoor privies where excrement falls into a nearby ditch.

In light of Shah’s distinctions between nineteenth and twentieth century public health discourses, we might read Kahana’s sanitation disparities as conveying that while twentieth century health *rhetoric* might have championed the democratization of sanitary reforms, colonial health *practices* ensured that while managerial classes were “clean,” laborers remained “dirty.” The mark of modern health in Hawai‘i, then, is not democratic sanitary reform but an unequal one. Thus while Asian American criticism of Hawaiian health discourses has illuminated the general way health reforms affected the lives of local Asians and facilitated the development of U.S. colonies,²⁸ my literary intervention emphasizes that installing those policies unevenly was a defining act of Hawaiian colonial modernity.²⁹

²⁸ For example, see Shah (127-8) for references to Hawaiian public health discourses and practices, and for an in-depth analysis of this topic, see J. Kim.

Furthermore, I read the Oyamas' discontent with their filthy living quarters as a sign of an acceptance of and desire for a "civilized" life where cleanliness, privacy, and convenience are priorities. For example, while still living in Pepelau, Kiyō visited *Obaban* (Great Aunt) in Kahana, and even then, he "hated" the communal and dirty condition of the toilets and bathhouses. Years later, upon his departure for military service, he articulates a similar aversion to the plantation's dirty living conditions, but this time, he expresses this sentiment on behalf of others. As he puts it, "Everybody in Kahana was dying to get out of this icky shit-hole" (98). Here, Kiyō does not merely "hate" the pervasive material squalor of the plantation but is displeased because he recognizes, even as a child, that the primitive unclean conditions of his family's living quarters signify their social marginalization and impoverishment. In a conversation related to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and possible Japanese take-over, his mother echoes these sentiments when she quips: "Don't be silly, nobody wants a smelly place like Kahana" (79). While it is questionable whether Kiyō and his mother actually represent the sentiments of everyone on the plantation, both are at least confident that they are speaking on behalf of others. This confidence indicates that there is a certain degree of shared disgust for Kahana's dirtiness, a collective sentiment that is integral to representing something or someone as being dirty.³⁰ In the context of Hawai'i's colonial

²⁹ Prashad (1994) makes a similar point with respect to the implementation of British colonial health practices in India. He writes, "the colonial sanitation policy institutionalized an unequal treatment of the colonial and the native sections of the towns; while the colonial regime developed the neighborhoods of the Europeans (White Town), they neglected the most basic facilities of the native localities (Black Town)" (253). However, British colonists did not pledge democratic public health reform in the way that twentieth century U.S. colonial and domestic policies did. Thus, while unevenness has been a characteristic mark of U.S. and British public health reforms, such inconsistency has different resonance in their disparate contexts. In short, this contradiction becomes most keen in settings where democratic reform is promised but then undercut systematically by ruling policy.

³⁰ See Miller who argues that sentiments of disgust help to identify that which is foul.

health discourses, these sentiments of repulsion suggest that the Oyamas and others like them accept a certain standard of hygiene, and by accepting it, they help normalize modern ideologies of health. Thus, like Murayama's description of holiday celebrations, tidy households, and heteronormative domestic life, which I address in the next section, the acceptance of hygiene norms represents another way that local Japanese have distinguished themselves as "clean" modern subjects over and above local Filipinos. This emphasizes how dirty characters get cast as Filipino to plot the ascendancy of the Japanese in Hawai'i.

However, though the Oyamas accept modern rules of cleanliness, they themselves exacerbate those conditions by, for example, urinating in the backyard to avoid trekking to the outhouse at night. While this may be read as a brazen act of resistance to modern sanitary practices, the Oyamas' disgust for their living conditions and affirmation of other modern norms indicate that this is not an intentional act of resisting normative hygiene standards. Rather, this gap between belief and practice conveys that executing proper health habits depends on the implementation of superstructures such as the placement of toilets inside the home. In short, without indoor toilets, it is easiest to urinate in the backyard. Thus, by representing institutional barriers to "good" hygiene practices, the inconsistencies of plantation sanitation (outhouses for laborers and indoor toilets for the overseer) emphasize that class mobility is not solely an individualistic endeavor but one determined by those who implemented the ditches and outhouses in the first place. Simply put, the Oyamas accept concepts about sanitary practices and are willing to abide by them, but putting such beliefs into practice is difficult if not impossible without structural support. The adoption of public health *habits*, then, exhibits one's ability to put

modern beliefs into practice, whereas the Oyamas' adoption of public health *concepts* sans supporting practices conveys their ready but unfulfilled willingness to adopt a lifestyle suited for modern citizenship. In this way, the Oyamas' disgust for squalor but their contribution to it animates their in-between status as subjects who have taken individual steps to achieve ascendancy but who have yet to finalize them as a result of certain institutional barriers.

The Oyamas' in-between-ness not only stands for their ambivalent status, but metaphorically, it also parallels Hawai'i's not quite primitive, not quite modern condition. The unevenness with which sanitation structures are deployed in Murayama's Hawai'i emphasizes the representation of Hawai'i as imperfectly modern, a representation that functions to figure Hawai'i as lagging behind modern nation-states and thereby requiring a helping hand from a colonial benefactor. I take up this issue more directly in the next chapter where I consider how public health concepts have enabled the ambivalent development of the Philippines.³¹

The Production of Modern Subjects: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Domestic Life

Comparisons between local Japanese and Filipinos like the ones we have seen above have prompted me to reflect on the narrative purposes of deploying local Filipino stereotypes in local Japanese literature. As a description of local Asian inequalities, these character comparisons also allow us to analyze certain mechanics of modern socialization. In particular, I look at how disparities in holiday celebrations and housing conditions suggest that the Oyamas have assimilated to modern standards of living and

³¹ In the next chapter, my reading of Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* re-introduces dirty bodies and sanitation structures as a two-pronged subject of inquiry that illuminates the inequalities that have been entangled in narrative plot progression, the formation of certain resistant subjects, and development of a formerly "primitive" civilization.

thus are more suited for socio-economic advancement than their local Filipino counterparts. At the same time, Murayama's representation of domestic living arrangements, leisure habits, and wage disparities suggests that race and ethnicity are at the heart of shaping colonial Hawaiian hierarchy.

Though mentioned only in passing, references to local Japanese and Filipino holiday celebrations convey an important message about the disparate degree to which local Asians have acculturated to colonial Hawai'i. For example, the Kahana Young People's Association commemorates New Year's Eve with a dance, whereas the "Filipinos' big day was December 30, Rizal Day" (39). Here, with local Japanese celebration of the New Year, one of Japan's most important holidays, Murayama indicates that this group has adapted traditions of celebrating the new year to their life in the new world. Historically speaking, in the nineteenth century when Japan adopted a Gregorian calendar, the most widely used calendar in the world, and held its New Year celebration on January first, it broke with the tradition of commemorating the day according to the lunar calendar as is still the case in Vietnam, Korea, and China. Thus in *All I Asking*, celebration of a January first New Year suggests that the local Japanese are predisposed to modern culture.

In a different vein, the Philippine national holiday of Rizal Day commemorates the anniversary of the execution of José Rizal whose life, work, and death inspired resistance against Spanish colonial rule. With this detail, Murayama intimates that local Filipinos are not only less interested in New Year's Day than Rizal Day but that they also have a long history of priding themselves on resisting Philippine colonialism. The celebration of Rizal Day in Hawai'i, therefore, does not validate their status as

acculturated settlers who affirm modernizing efforts in Hawai‘i and elsewhere. However, I would not go so far as to say that the commemoration of Rizal Day stands for an implicit resistance of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, for the very presence of local Filipino plantation workers on the Islands promotes such development. Thus, while local Filipinos are not resisters of Hawai‘i’s colonization in *All I Asking*, their celebration of Rizal Day differentiates local Asians from each other, characterizing local Japanese over their Filipino counterparts as the group that has been more ready to affirm Hawai‘i’s modernization.

Murayama’s description of disparate living quarters underscores this dualism of Filipino intransigence to and Japanese adoption of dominant culture. According to Kiyō, the plantation “was a company town with identical company houses and outhouses, and it was set up like a pyramid. At the tip was Mr. Nelson [the overseer], then the Portuguese, Spanish, and nisei *lunas* in their nicer looking homes, then the identical wooden frame houses of Japanese Camp, then the more run-down Filipino Camp” (28).³² According to Kiyō’s estimate, “Kahana had about one hundred Japanese families, about two hundred Filipino men, about seven Portuguese and Spanish families, and only two *haoles*” (28). Clearly, Kahana is organized along racial, ethnic, and national lines, and Kahana’s topography offers a convenient way to funnel the populace into a hierarchal pyramid where the few who have managerial positions (i.e., haole, European, and certain second generation Japanese) live comfortably at the spacious top, while hundreds of local Japanese and Filipinos laborers inhabit the more crowded bottom levels.

Kiyō’s overview of plantation demographics also attests to each group’s disparate claims to settlement. For example, the “nice looking” homes at the top denote that their

³² *Nisei* is a Japanese word for second-generation Japanese immigrant.

inhabitants possess the privileges and resources to manicure their houses into attractive “homes.” Home, of course, is a word that evokes comfort, stability, and belonging. In contrast to those stable and comfortable homes, the “identical wood frame houses” of the Japanese Camp are utilitarian and monotonous, bereft of details that make a house a home. This exhibits the fact that the local Japanese workforce lacks the resources to add “nice” touches to their living spaces, suggesting that they do not have the same degree of material wealth and settlement as those who live literally above them. Neither homes nor houses, “the more run-down Filipino Camp” tells us that local Filipino living conditions are the most shabby, bare, and impermanent on the plantation. In comparison to local Japanese laborers, then, local Filipinos lack even ostensible appearances of houses. That is, the word “camp,” as opposed to houses or homes, evokes an image of temporary and minimalist dwellings that, in the case of Kahana’s Filipino living quarters, are not just Spartan but also unkempt.³³ In addition to these living quarters, holiday festivities stress the point that local Filipinos are ill equipped to acculturate to modern living standards and that local Japanese, even prior to emigrating to Hawai‘i, have been amenable to adapting to this dominant culture.

Kiyo’s estimation of the plantation population bears repeating here, for it returns us to and complicates the above binary of local Filipino intransigence and local Japanese modernity. Once again: “Kahana had about one hundred Japanese families, about two hundred Filipino men, about seven Portuguese and Spanish families, and only two

³³ Notably, these housing conditions are a close approximation of historical descriptions of plantation living quarters as articulated by visitors, inspectors, and inhabitants of Hawaiian sugar plantations. Specifically, the Hawaiian Board of Health, visiting representatives from Japan and the Philippines, and the laborers themselves all criticized laborer living conditions on the plantation. I offer a detailed review of historical conditions of Filipino “camps” below. For a general description of turn-of-the-century conditions, see Beechert (103-5) and Takaki (92-8).

haoles.” Kiyō’s use of domestic living arrangements as demographic counting units (bachelors versus families) is striking because the domestic life of haoles is overlooked entirely while it is central to separating local Filipinos from all the others: local Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. In other words, possible lapses in nuclear domestic life are a privilege of only the white ruling class, but not for others.

Review of Shah’s analysis of public health and Asian American bachelorhood is useful for helping us to unpack how domestic status was deployed to reinforce class structure in colonial Hawai‘i. With respect to San Francisco’s Chinatown, Shah argues “[p]ublic health rhetoric about the contagion of Chinatown bachelor society provided both white middle-class female missionaries and white male labor leaders the necessary foil against which they could elaborate the vision and norms of nuclear-family domestic life and a sanitary social order” (12). Finding evidence for this deviance, physicians and politicians singled out “prostitute cribs, concubine apartments, bachelor bunkhouses, and opium dens” to suggest that Chinatown promoted “perverse intimate relationships and bred contagion” (13). Chinese bachelor societies were deemed an inappropriate lifestyle because they were antithetical to the familial living arrangements of white citizens. This discourse, as Shah demonstrates, stigmatized Chinese immigrants and thus enabled their exploitation and disenfranchisement. Translating this argument to my reading of *All I Asking*, I interpret Murayama’s representation of Filipino bachelorhood as a form of, to put it in Shah’s words, “queer domesticity.” I read Murayama’s emphasis on local Filipino “perverse intimate relationships” as way of animating their deviance, illuminating the role domestic status has played in determining local hierarchy.

Following Shah's efforts further, I evaluate how the patronage of sex workers as represented in *All I Asking* serves to comment on the way local Filipinos have been cast as deviants and unfit for citizenship. In the novella, local Filipinos' patronage of prostitution is an extension of the group's bachelorhood, emphasizing the way deviant domesticity articulates the inferiority of local Filipinos to local Japanese. For example, while the Oyamas work long hours for solvency, Kiyo observes that local Filipinos do not struggle in the same way as his family does. More to the point, while local Filipinos shoulder the "dirtiest" work on the plantation and earn even more money than local Japanese, Kiyo leads us to believe that local Filipinos spend an excess amount of their earnings on sex workers. According to his estimate, patronizing a nearby "whorehouse" costs at least a day's pay, an excess that the Oyamas can ill afford.³⁴ Notably, even in the first section of the novella, Murayama places a sex worker's house in the local Filipino section of Pepelau where waiting customers, assumed to be Filipino, have the luxury of wearing shoes, pressed pants, and pomade (10).³⁵ Such expenditures suggest that local Filipinos do not soberly save money as the Oyamas but spend it on the luxuries of pleasure and appearance. This lifestyle is, of course, an implicit affront to those who abide by the practice of prudent saving, material sacrifice, and heteronormative sexual activity in order to prove that they deserve a better life on the Islands.

³⁴ The Filipinos with whom Kiyo works make between \$1.50 and \$3 a day, and hiring a sex worker requires transportation and \$3 for payment, totaling at least a full day's wage for those who earn the most (40, 64).

³⁵ While the customers portrayed in this instance are not identified as local Filipino, Kiyo's description of their appearance suggests that they are local Filipinos, for local Filipinos were stereotyped as ostentatious dressers (Volpp 812). Characterizing local Filipinos in this way suggests that their spending habits relate only to clothing and the consumption of sex work. Such habits convey not only their difference from local Japanese who appear to soberly save their hard earning for their families, but they also suggest that local Filipinos have not assumed a proper work ethic and thus do not deserve the rights of citizens.

As local Filipinos fail to adopt these habits, then, Murayama suggests that such failures are their own “fault,” as Kiyō offers no other reason for their extravagance but their own lack of restraint. There are no mitigating references to disparate recruitment policies that allowed local Japanese bachelors to sponsor wives and thus establish heteronormative families. For that matter, there is not mention of local Filipino remittances to their families in the Philippines.³⁶ Thus, the aim of Murayama’s work is not to represent history accurately but to deploy local Filipino stereotypes as a symbol of non-white male sexual permissiveness. As such, Murayama’s figuration of local Filipino-ness offers us an opportunity to consider how discourses about immigrant bachelorhood have served to demonize a non-white and non-citizen workforce and thus justify their labor exploitation. In my estimation, presenting local Japanese as more deserving of class mobility over local Filipinos who are relegated to the status of an immobile and exploitable workforce, comments on the way discourses of race, ethnicity, and sexuality have intersected to demonize an immigrant bachelor workforce and thus justify their disenfranchisement.

Notably, there are inconsistencies in Murayama’s figuration of local Asian bachelorhood and nuclear family life, suggesting that race and ethnicity have been foundational to forging plantation hierarchy. For instance, while Kiyō’s limited perspective suggests that the consumption of sex work is primarily a local Filipino endeavor, local Japanese bachelors also make use of it.³⁷ That is, at least one of Kiyō’s

³⁶ In Volpp’s succinct words, “United States capital interests wanted Asian male workers but not their families, because detaching the male worker from a heterosexual family structure meant he would be cheaper labor” (805). For discussion of the disproportionate numbers of men and their intention to return home with savings, see Fuchs (140-1). For review on the disparities between Asian immigrant labor among men and women, see Espiritu (1997).

Japanese peers joins a Filipino caravan to a “whorehouse,” and Kiyō himself admits to considering the same excursion, demonstrating that local Japanese not only empathize with the use of sex workers but also do not abstain from taking advantage of it. Additionally, the line of men waiting outside the sex worker’s house in the first section of the novella is never explicitly identified as an entirely Filipino; such vagueness suggests that Japanese men might be in their midst. Despite such explicit and implicit instances of local Japanese patronage of and desire for sex workers, Murayama represents the consumption of sex work as a most popular local Filipino pastime. I read this curious and inconsistent detail as accenting the point that sexual permissiveness of non-white “foreigners” becomes a reason to stigmatize them. To put it differently, local Japanese engage in the same behaviors as local Filipinos, but the emphasis on local Filipinos’ patronage of sex work intimates that local Japanese are absolved from being categorized as sexually depraved, deviant, and dangerous.

There are other inconsistencies that disrupt generalizations of Filipino bachelorhood and Japanese nuclear family life, and they indicate further that ethnicity has functioned as a type of trump card in separating the socially mobile from the socially stagnant. For example, Murayama notes that a half dozen Filipinas and at least two Filipino boys live in Kahana. Moreover, despite emphasis on local Filipino bachelorhood, a local Japanese bachelor society exists in Kahana. The “Citizens Quarters,” a distinct area on the plantation reserved only for local Japanese single men, is not accounted for in Kiyō’s initial overviews of living quarters and plantation demographics. Such an omission functions at first to emphasize local Filipino bachelorhood, and the Citizens

³⁷ In *All I Asking*, local Japanese not only employ sex workers but they also work in the industry. In Part I of the novella, we learn that a local Japanese woman is a sex worker.

Quarters' introduction to the story toward the end of the novella emerges when Kiyo's older brother Tosh moves there. However, even with its eventual prominence in the story, Murayama's naming of it reassures us that local Japanese bachelorhood does not transgress heteronormative life but is instead a non-threatening temporary status, a step in the eventual attainment of heterosexual family life.

Tosh's relocation there assures us of this. Bachelorhood for Tosh is not an impediment to class advancement because it is a temporary status that, once put aside for marriage, is a step in the path toward heteronormative citizenship. Thus, Murayama's figuration of bachelorhood suggests that it has been a distinction with shifting meaning, changing according to the racial and ethnic group with which it becomes associated and marking the possibility of eventual citizenship. Bachelorhood for local Japanese, as represented by Tosh, is a step in the right direction, whereas bachelorhood for local Filipinos, as exhibited by local Filipino laborers, is a mark of inferiority. On the other hand, the possible attainment of nuclear family life among local Filipinos does not, as far as Murayama imagines it, give them advantages over local Japanese bachelors. In other words, even when local Filipinos might meet certain benchmarks of modern citizenship, their efforts do not advance their standing because domestic status is not the central determining factor in one's access to privilege and power in *All I Asking*. Rather, Murayama suggests that race and ethnicity have been principal tools of reinforcing divisions among the privileged, the socially mobile, and the socially stagnant.

This is not to imply that race and ethnicity are precursors to class division. As Emmanuel Wallerstein argues, the production of race and ethnicity is a consequence of capitalistic imperatives that demand class divisions for the purposes of enabling and

justifying the material accumulation for some at the expense of exploiting others. That said, I concentrate on the central role that race and ethnicity have had in promoting the accumulation of profits for local Japanese out of the exploitation and dispossession of local Filipinos.

Murayama makes this point by referencing discrepancies in wages and living conditions. As Kiyo's initiation into the working class suggests, certain local Filipinos are compensated with higher wages than the average Japanese worker. However, all local Filipinos inhabit the bottom of the slope in a "run-down" area of the camp, a symbol of their abject status on the plantation. To my mind, this can be interpreted as the way ethnicity trumps other factors such as wages in determining social status on the plantation. Historically speaking, local Filipinos were in fact deemed the least desirable and most exploitable laboring class on Hawaiian plantations. As early as the first arrival of Filipino laborers in 1906, recruiters represented them as an inferior workforce to most other groups.³⁸ This reputation went hand in hand with the dubious distinction of being relegated to the lowest status on the plantation (Alcantara 55). Even into the war years, Filipinos felt that they were passed over for more skilled plantation employment despite being just as or more qualified than candidates from other ethnic groups (Alcantara 26). As with *All I Asking*, historical records show that the consequence of local Filipino social standing was borne out in substandard living accommodations.³⁹ Even a local Filipino

³⁸ Returning from the Philippines with fifteen recruits during this mission, Albert F. Judd announced that Filipinos were "possibly not as good as the Chinaman or the Jap, but steady, faithful and willing to do his best for any boss for whom he has a liking" (qtd. in Takaki 27). Following Judd's proclamation, planters relegated most Filipinos to a "common laborer" status, a status of manual labor that putatively required less skill than other tasks.

³⁹ That is, reports by the Hawaiian Board of Health, visiting representatives from Japan and the Philippines, and laborers themselves all criticized laborer living conditions on the plantation. More specifically, a Filipino official inspecting 25 camps in Hawaii in 1919 reported that housing and living

who had reached luna status reported being denied improved housing while those from other ethnic groups who applied after him had their requests fulfilled (Alcantara 27).⁴⁰ Thus, despite having the jobs and wages to advance up the plantation hierarchy, local Filipinos have been consigned to the bottom of the plantation social structure as their housing conditions attest. I read *All I Asking* in concert with this history to argue that Murayama's deployment of local Filipino minor characters operates to show that race and ethnicity were the defining factors that shaped colonial power structure. At the same time, of course, the racialization and ethnicization of plantation hierarchy was a byproduct of economic imperatives.

Thus, by virtue of economic imperatives for class division and the reigning force of ethnic privileges, local Japanese were already at an advantage. I read Murayama's efforts as suggesting that various factors such as the commemoration of U.S. national holidays, establishment of homes, assumption of a heteronormative lifestyle, and abnegation from certain material pleasures helped differentiate locals from each other and justify the class mobility of local Japanese over the stagnancy of local Filipinos. However, even when local Japanese fail to meet these criteria or local Filipinos fulfill them, the social disparity between these two groups remains constant. In Murayama's imagined Hawai'i, then, factors such as domestic life are not central to determining local hierarchy. Understanding this, we might read Murayama's representation of Filipino-ness as an effort to show how certain stereotypes of local Filipino sexuality and social

conditions were inferior to other ethnic groups (Alcantara 25). In the same period, a Hawaii Sugar Plantation Association [HSPA] official visiting the McBryde Plantation on Kauai verified described the Filipino camp as filthy (Takaki 93).

⁴⁰ For a general description of turn-of-the-century conditions, see Beechert (103-5) and Takaki (92-8).

inferiority function to highlight their putative perversions and thereby divert attention from the fact that ethnic prejudice is at the heart of local Asian hierarchy.

Conclusion

Read together, this and the next chapter introduce dirty bodies and sanitation structures as related categories of analysis that illuminate the dirty underbelly of narrative and national development. Here, I focus on how local Filipinos get cast as dirty bodies in the local Japanese bildungsroman. I argue that despite their peripheral presence in narrative, their subjugation plays an important part in facilitating narrative progression and class mobility for a local Japanese protagonist. Additionally, the presence of literary local Filipino minor characters suggests that race and ethnicity intersect with and supersede other factors like hard work, wages, domestic status, nationalism, and ostensible acts of settlement in shaping class structures among locals in Hawai'i. Because sanitation structures are central to regulating Murayama's imagined Hawai'i, their study is important to my examination of local class relations. Most important, the presence of public health infrastructure emphasizes that larger structures are at work in determining local power dynamics in colonial Hawai'i. My next chapter adds to this argument by showing how certain structures of oppression and subjugation persist even in cases where schemas of progress are deployed to resist the trappings of the Oyamas' expected middle-class advancement.

Chapter 2

The Heart of Resistance and Ambivalent Modernity in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*

Set in 1982, Jessica Hagedorn's novel *Dogeaters* (1990) takes certain figures out of the margins of official Philippine history and presents them as the novel's major characters. Imagining how they might have responded to and participated in turbulent events that led to the demise of the infamous Marcos regime, Hagedorn offers protagonists such as Rio Gonzaga and Daisy Avila who are, at first glance, unassuming and unimportant daughters of elite Philippine families. However, as Hagedorn's story suggests, their responses to the turbulence of post-martial-era Manila are important to representing this period in Philippine history. Unlike Rio and Daisy, other central characters of the novel lack prestigious lineage, and accordingly, they stand for the named and unnamed laborers of Manila's urban and postcolonial landscape. These characters include various sex workers, an aspiring actor, more established actors, a movie ticket seller, a drag queen disco owner, and many others. On par with Rio's and Daisy's narrative prominence, Joey Sands is representative of these socially marginal and neglected figures. Though only a teenager, he participates full-time in Manila's

entertainment industry, assuming work as both a sex laborer and D.J. Other than a predatory pimp who nominates himself as Joey's guardian, Joey is on his own, being orphaned by both his mother, a Filipina sex worker who died when Joey was a child, and father, an African American G.I. whom he has never met.

While Rio, Daisy, and Joey command the narrative's spotlights, characters who stand for national figureheads like First Lady Imelda Marcos, the Marcos's leading henchmen General Nicasio Ledesma, and the regime's principal opponent Senator Domingo Avila have less prominent presence in the story. Though they all wield significant power over other characters' lives, their personal stories are not the main concern of the narrative. Rather, the novel focuses on the way Rio, Daisy, and Joey respond to Marcos fascism and Senator Avila's assassination, the climactic event of the novel.

Translated for the literal stage, Hagedorn's published script *Dogeaters: A Play About the Philippines* (2003) reintroduces many of the novel's characters and replicates its overarching narrative trajectory. That is, Domingo's assassination functions as the pivotal moment of the play, precipitating Joey's and Daisy's parallel and intersecting journeys from Manila to the Cordillera Mountains, a remote region twelve to fifteen hours north of Manila. As in the novel, this geographic move takes them out of the modern city and into a rugged, uncharted terrain where they begin to unlearn their previous political apathy. While the "spirit" of this story remains unmodified from novel to script,¹ other elements have been altered. For example, Hagedorn replaces Rio, the

¹ With respect to viewing the first dramatic production of *Dogeaters* in 1998, Lowe writes "*Dogeaters*, the stage play, is a reworking that captures the 'spirit,' rather than rendering the 'letter' of the original; in the process, characters and social spheres that were marginal or continguously linked in the novel emerge dramatically as 'central' to the memories of colonialism and the performance of alternatives"

novel's earnest narrative voice, with Barbara Villanueva and Nestor Noralez, two exuberant, amusing, and observant soap opera stars. With "joking-joking" mirth, Nestor and Barbara help lighten the mood of the story and narrate the events that transpire on and off stage. Their presence not only changes the narrative's tone but also minimizes Rio's significance to the story. Following Victor Mendoza's reading of Rio, I read her representation in the novel as underscoring the novel's disruption of developmental storytelling. (Mendoza 822-4). Building on this point, I interpret Hagedorn's marginalization of Rio in the script as a decision that puts greater emphasis on the telos of Joey's and Daisy's intersecting journeys toward guerrilla citizenship. In this regard, the script functions differently from the novel, and examining that function represents one of my primary reasons for focusing on the script over the novel. More precisely, I read Hagedorn's dramatic emphasis on narrative progression and resolution as giving us greater insight into the way advancement and oppression underwrite the emergence of protagonists who are unlikely but eventual resisters of Manila's reigning political and social landscape.

To address this issue, I take as my point of departure Viet Thanh Nguyen's identification of Joey as an "ideal postcolonial subject who demonstrates the ways by which legacies of the colonial era can be critiqued and overthrown" (126). Though both Joey and Daisy may be "ideal" in registering the limitations of and alternatives to conventional political activism, I contend that their juxtaposition with minor characters suggests that the development of guerrilla activism reinforces a narrative and social structure of inequity. Specifically, while Joey and Daisy begin journeys toward resisting

(162). Though a published version of this first La Jolla Playhouse production does not exist, the script for the second production for The Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival was published in 2003. This is the published script that I cite throughout the chapter.

Manila's corrupt politics, the presence of a janitor and a sex worker suggests that Joey's and Daisy's development as subversive postcolonial subjects relies on and even requires socially marginal figures to remain static and oppressed.

Key to this study are those minor counterparts who materialize briefly in the play to perform a monotonous routine and who are associated with the material filth of abject work and/or living conditions. I read such proximity to filth as a sign of their "low" social status, and I call these filthy and socially marginal minor characters "dirty bodies."² In this chapter, I elaborate on the narrative and thematic functions of dirty bodies by attending to Pedro and a "Young Woman," the aforementioned janitor and sex worker, respectively. Both characters have minimal material presence and their subjugation and poverty are symbolized by their labor. Specifically, Pedro's affiliation with filthy toilets represents the inequalities that are reified by Joey's narrative and Andres "Perlita" Alacran's defiance of modern culture. Transitioning to Hagedorn's comparison of Daisy and the Young Woman who is characterized by a public sex that defiles her and not her partner, I end the chapter with a discussion of the gendering of Philippine postcolonial modernity.

I ground such readings of impure minor characters to studies on public health discourses and practices. Historian Warwick Anderson and anthropologist Bonnie McElhinny have shown that U.S. colonial discourses of "good" and "bad" hygiene have been invoked to organize Filipinos according to modern hierarchies of power. Their findings resonate with Hagedorn's dramatic portrayal of hygiene habits as they function

² See my Introduction for further details on the characteristics that constitute dirty bodies and the theories I have drawn on to analyze their representational significance. Additionally, I recognize that not all minor characters are socially marginal. For example, minor characters such as Hagedorn's Imelda Marcos and Severo Alacran are representative of the privileged and wealthy, but for my present purposes, I account primarily for the representational significance of socially marginal minor figures.

to differentiate characters from each other.³ More to the point, drawing on Anderson's and McElhinny's work, I argue that Hagedorn's representation of hygiene disparities suggests that health discourses and structures are a vestige of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. Furthermore, I read Hagedorn's representation of impurity as helping to convey that the subjugation of the socially oppressed is a consequence of producing resistant citizens.

While I treat the script as a work that conveys these points independently from the novel, I attend to certain disparities between the script and novel to sharpen analysis of Hagedorn's description of narrative development, political and sexual resistance, nation building, and Philippine modernity. Criticism on the novel functions as my main critical point of departure for reading the script. With respect to the novel, academics have championed Hagedorn's efforts to challenge the verisimilitude of documented events and statements that have comprised "official" Philippine historiography.⁴ In addition, scholars

³ It is important to note that certain iterations of hygiene are dramatically translated from the novel to script but some are not. As I suggest throughout the chapter, images of purity and impurity in the dramatic text relate largely to the unsanitary conditions of a queer men's disco, Pedro, and women's bodies. In the novel, Hagedorn also refers to the anxieties of adolescent body odor (26), the unsanitariness of other local businesses (48), a porn star's spotless bathroom (176), a sex worker's dirty bathroom (227), and many other references to filth and purity. One of the most striking images of filth—the entwinement of Joey's mother's dead body in bits and pieces of raw sewage (42)—is not even noted in the script. See Chang for an analysis of Joey's mother and her representational significance as "the fallen woman whose labor is disavowed—abandoned by the U.S., buried by the Philippine state, forgotten by the Philippine nation" (659). While comparison of the novel's and script's representation of health and hygiene are worth mentioning, it is not the objective of this chapter to compare those texts exhaustively. Rather, my aim is to focus on the script's distinctive representations of hygiene while briefly comparing the script to the novel and a performance of the play as it pertains to analyzing the script.

⁴ Balce-Cortes (103) and Lowe (1996, 113-120) argue respectively that statements and events comprise official historiography only when they have been recorded in textual sources such as books and newspapers, whereas information passed orally such as *tsismis* (a Tagalog word for rumor or gossip) has been identified as an "unofficial" form of history and information. More pertinently, Balce-Cortes and Lowe hail *Dogeaters* as a text that succeeds in blurring the boundary between official and unofficial histories.

have focused on Hagedorn's "queering" of gender and sex roles.⁵ In my estimation, this scholarship has, at times, overenthusiastically celebrated Hagedorn's representation of resistance. Building on this criticism, I contend that resistance, as it appears in the script, is not a simple or essential subversive process but a process that simultaneously empowers *and* oppresses.

I also offer personal observations of the Douglas Theatre's 2007 production of *Dogeaters*, comparing the director's and actors' interpretations of the script with my own expectations of the play's material actualization.⁶ This comparison not only underscores the fact that the play is subject to variation each time it is read, performed, and produced, but it also enables me to consider how performance gives different meaning than reading the text on its own. Furthermore, I place my interpretation of the script in conversation with performance studies to explain how certain tools of dramatization invite critical spectatorship.

While literary scholarship on the novel and performance studies offer immediate analytic reference points for my project, the idiosyncratic formal elements of scripts demand a mode of inquiry that is parallel to but not entirely overlapping with criticism on the novel and dramatic performance. Consisting of formal elements such as stage directions, costuming notes, and photographs from the play's 2001 Public Theater

⁵ For criticism on Hagedorn's representation of queer subjects, see Lowe (1996), R. Lee, Nguyen, and Mendoza. Following Nguyen's and Manalansan's work, I identify queer characters by their engagement in non-heterosexual sex acts, resistance of monogamy and marriage, and unconventional performance of femininity and masculinity. Queering, as I see it, refers to the process of enacting and espousing these behaviors.

⁶ Commentary on the play, limited to reviews of its performance, offer brief, usually no longer than a page in length, assessments of acting, set design, and the story's pathos. For reviews of the 2007 production, see Verini and Mitchell. For reviews of its 2001 production, see Gammerman, Weber, and Bacalzo. For reviews of the 1998 production, see Lowe (1998), Shah (1999), and Mermelstein. For critical insight into certain aspects of staging the play and disparities between the script and novel, see Lowe.

production, Hagedorn's script demands a reading practice that is distinct from conventional literary analysis or performance studies. Following script studies, then, I take those distinctive elements of dramatic text into consideration and acknowledge that scripts are subject to change each time they are performed on stage. However, while formal script analysis facilitates an assessment of a playwright's idiosyncratic tools of direction, its primary function has been to prepare the crew and actors for the material realization of the play. Such emphasis on performance suggests that the script is an incomplete text, fulfilled only through its production. Understanding this, I nonetheless read Hagedorn's script as a work of its own merit. In other words, I approach the script of *Dogeaters* as a narrative of resistance and modernity that is distinct from the novel or any one performance of the play.⁷ Unlike other iterations of *Dogeaters*, the text of its dramatic edition especially suggests that the Philippines's postcolonial condition is ambivalently modern.

I draw this notion of "ambivalent modernity" from Aihwa Ong who, in addressing a "Chinese" diaspora in the late-twentieth century, argues that an "alternative modernity" is not antithetical to modernity but borrows "Western" knowledge and recasts it as a local "Asian" ideology.⁸ In the case of the late-twentieth century Philippines, I observe through my reading of *Dogeaters* that this practice of borrowing and recasting modern paradigms

⁷ All my references to the production of *Dogeaters* refer to its performance on January 17, 2007 at the Douglas Theatre.

See Thomas, Waxberg, and Grote for script analyses that privilege the performance over the script. I draw on Barranger's introduction to reading plays as a way of weighing the script and performance equally.

⁸ While Nonini and Ong introduce and refer to the concept of alternative modernity in their introduction to *Underground Empires*, they do not explicitly define it. See Ong's *Flexible Citizenship* for an elaboration on defining and analyzing alternative modernity as it relates to a Chinese diaspora. For an etymology of modernity and its development into alternative modernity, see Gaonkar. Gaonkar contends that alternative modernities vary according to geographic and temporal contexts and that they bear certain resemblances across those differences.

has been expressed in an ambivalent, rather than alternative, fashion. As I understand it, an alternative concept is a departure from or modification of something that precedes it. In contrast, an ambivalent concept intimates suspension within the gravitational pull of two or more forces, rather than conveying movement past or through primary sources. In light of this distinction, I exchange Ong's terminology of "alternative" for "ambivalent" to gloss my reading of *Dogeaters*, approaching *Dogeaters* as a representation of the Philippines's assimilation to and resistance of modern paradigms.

Historical Introductions

I begin with Joey's and Daisy's parallel and intersecting journeys toward guerilla political activism, and this requires a review of the historical conditions that underpin and motivate their stories. To that end, I offer a sketch of Ferdinand E. Marcos's reign as President and dictator of the Philippines, making sure to pinpoint the historical figures and conditions that manifest in Hagedorn's story. For example, the turbulence and violence of Marcos's post-martial law force Joey and Daisy to the remote Cordillera Mountains, a region where they inhabit a camp of the New People Army's (NPA), the military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).⁹ In this way, Hagedorn suggests that historically based conditions and organizations help produce and resolve the development of her protagonists' narratives. While certain historical events and groups contextualize the story, Hagedorn's script does not reinscribe dominant Marcos history as

⁹ The CPP grew out of the anti-Japanese Hukbalahap movement, a guerrilla effort to resist Japanese occupation during World War II, and the NPA emerged decades later in 1969 to help oppressed peasants forge a communist movement, freeing them from U.S. imperialism and domestic feudalism. As an outgrowth of the Hukbalahap movement, the NPA was popular amongst the poor because it offered landless peasantry crude and sometimes brutal but helpful agrarian reform, health care, and law enforcement. Though basic, they were vast improvements over government services (Jones 12). For further reading on the anti-Japanese Hukbalahap movement, see Kessler (29-35). See Kerkvliet for a more thorough examination of the Hukbalahap resistance. For further reading on the NPA, see Jones.

much as it cuts against the grain of official narratives. That is, her protagonists' stories offer an imagined alternative to the telos of conventional Marcos history, and they also gesture to the limitations of subversive political activism.

Here, I detail historical conditions that underpin the narrative, and this requires, of course, a synopsis of Marcos's tenure as President and dictator. Prior to becoming President, Ferdinand had made a career of being a shrewd politician and a compelling orator, and when he won his first presidential election in 1965, the public welcomed him enthusiastically. The First Lady played a vital role in winning the public's support during this first presidential bid, and she continued to exert influence throughout her husband's reign. In fact, her name and image have become the most popular metonyms for her husband's presidency, a point I return to in later sections of the chapter. For present purposes, it suffices to point out that over time, enthusiasm for the Marcos administration eroded as it failed to uphold promises of alleviating pre-existing conditions of profound socio-economic inequity. At the same time, the President and First Lady garnered a reputation for making economic choices based on aggrandizing their own and their allies' power and wealth rather than on preserving the nation-state's fiscal and social integrity.¹⁰

As the administration's corruption increased, economic conditions deteriorated and this led to violent oppositional unrest.¹¹ Withstanding the backlash, Ferdinand won re-election in 1969, and despite legal term limits and unpopularity, Ferdinand had no plans of relinquishing power after this second and last legal term was complete. Thus, he bypassed the electoral process altogether and declared martial law in 1972, justifying this

¹⁰ For example, the regime's embezzlement of public funds has been estimated between \$1 and \$5 billion. See Pomeroy (272), Hawes (76-82, 95), and M. Thompson (53) for discussion on Marcos cronyism.

¹¹ For discussion of opposition, see Celozza (29-30) and Ellison (63).

measure by claiming that it would contain and eliminate communist and Muslim threats to Philippine stability.

The regime certainly exaggerated the communist menace, the more pertinent of these two putative national threats with respect to the script, justifying its call for martial law. However, support for communists was not negligible.¹² Evoking this threat, then, allowed the dictatorship to convince certain members of the Western press that martial law functioned to quell this formidable enemy, but in practice the reach of martial law was not limited to addressing communist insurgency and violence (Pedrosa 1987, 137). Specifically, under the banner of public safety, the regime subjugated the military, legislature, and judiciary to its interests. Additionally, Ferdinand and his allies took control of key agricultural industries, silenced newspapers and the radio, limited international travel, and jailed its opponents. Though martial law ended officially in 1981, it remained as the de facto rule of order as the regime continued to limit the court's power, order arrests without charges, and rule by decree. It even retained the right to dissolve the assembly if it saw fit.¹³ As William J. Pomeroy assesses the situation: "The martial law step was, in essence, a decisive strategic move by a sector of the Filipino national bourgeoisie aimed at transforming the backward semi-feudal features of the economy and at advancing capitalist industrialization" (1992, 266). By approaching Hagedorn's representation of the historical moment following martial law in light of Pomeroy's critique, I read the characters as not just responding to corruption of

¹² An estimated 100,000 Filipinos sympathized with the communists when martial law was declared (Jones 106-7).

¹³ For a description of martial law and what became de facto martial law, see Rosenberg, M. Thompson 54-5, Pomeroy (1992, 263-281), Celozza (39-73), Shalom (161-182), and Ellison (201).

Philippine politics but also to yet another attempt to force modernization upon Filipinos after previous Spanish and U.S. colonization.

Singling out a chief rival to this corrupt regime has streamlined the narration of Marcos era history, and Senator Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino, Jr. has been that convenient representative opponent. This is not to say that the attention drawn to him has been unwarranted. The regime affirmed his status as a principal threat by jailing him for his unflagging criticism of the President and the First Lady and by forcing him into a three-year exile as his presence was thought to pose too great of a threat to the regime's stability. Notwithstanding warnings of assassination for breaking the terms of his exile, Benigno scheduled a homecoming in 1983 and was, as forewarned, shot and killed while exiting the plane at Manila International Airport. According to certain reports, Imelda and General Fabian Ver, the regime's leading military advisor, were responsible for ordering the shooting (M. Thompson 114-5). Had he lived long enough, Benigno's return would have coincided with widespread anti-Marcos activities. Instead, it was his assassination that helped unify the regime's opposition, a diverse group that consisted of elites, industrialists, followers of the Roman Catholic Church, students, laborers, and communist activists. Together, they protested fervently against the regime and appealed for democratic elections.¹⁴

Bowing to this unrelenting pressure, the regime held elections in 1986 with Benigno's widow Corazón Aquino emerging as its main challenger. While both parties claimed victory, Corazón won widespread moral victory, discrediting her opponent on the obvious basis that the regime manipulated the poll results in its favor. Overseeing these events, the Reagan administration, once a supporter of Marcos, recognized that the

¹⁴ See M. Thompson for an overview of groups that opposed the Marcos regime.

tide had turned against the illegitimate regime and encouraged Marcos to relinquish power.¹⁵ With the loss of U.S. support and under pressure from multilateral domestic opposition, the regime left office and the country in 1986. By the time Marcos abdicated rule, at least a billion dollars had been funneled into the personal bank accounts of family and friends, and it was no surprise that this exacerbated the already wide economic gap between the privileged and poor.

Evoking these turbulent and controversial historical conditions, Hagedorn introduces us to characters like Imelda, General Ledesma, Senator Avila, and NPA soldiers who all have a resemblance to the regime's most renowned leaders and opponents. Reference to such characters and conditions they shaped provide a historically based context in which unexpected and overlooked heroes emerge. At the same time, Hagedorn's inexact representation of such history also discourages the audience from becoming "seduced" into the narrative. Jill Dolan's feminist reading of Bertholt Brecht's theories on the dramatization of history holds that by refashioning a commonly known past, plays impede the audience from becoming immersed in the guessing game of how a narrative will be resolved. Simply put, drawing on familiar historical events takes away the surprise of otherwise shocking events like the assassination of a beloved political leader, the climactic event of Hagedorn's play. In this way, plays like *Dogeaters* redirect the audience's energies from anticipating "what happens next" to asking critical

¹⁵ During martial law, the Nixon administration had supported the regime while it was embroiled with the Vietnam War and Watergate. Receiving confirmation that the U.S. could house large military bases in the Philippines, the administration not only overlooked the un-democratic implementation of martial law but also increased its assistance to the Philippines. Official estimates of U.S. assistance increased from \$18.2 million to \$43 million in 1976 (M. Thompson 65). While the official term of U.S. occupation extended from 1898-1946, U.S. support of the Marcos regime suggests that U.S. and the Philippine interests were still enmeshed throughout the late-twentieth century, suggesting the U.S. and Philippines were entangled in a web of postcolonial relations.

questions about the inexact figuration of historical “facts” and the representational significance of character, action, and prop.¹⁶

Translating this critique to my reading of *Dogeaters*, I argue that Hagedorn’s inexact description of history invites the audience to consider how representing Marcos era conditions conveys imperfectly her version of alternative citizenship. For example, while the character of Imelda has a clear historical counterpart, Hagedorn’s dates (1982) and names (Senator Avila and General Ledesma) match inexactly against “real” dates (1983) and names (Senator Aquino and General Ver). Furthermore, historians of the Marcos era have evaluated the regime according to its fascist state practices, fiscal policy, relations with the U.S., manipulation of patronage ideology, and conflict with anti-dictatorial movements.¹⁷ In contrast, Hagedorn focuses on the stories of neglected citizens of the Marcos era. Furthermore, the political, economic, and social conditions that have been foreground in official histories serve as background in *Dogeaters*. As another point of comparison, historians have concluded narratives of Marcos history with Corazón’s election, an official albeit imperfect resolution to Marcos’s corrupt reign. Conversely, Hagedorn offers Joey and Daisy, rather than a character fashioned after Corazón, as the regime’s potential successors. Though Daisy, as Domingo’s representative female family member, might be said to resemble Corazón, her journey into the Cordilleras in lieu of a conventional political career disrupts a reading of Daisy as a conventional female successor. I read these various deviations from official history

¹⁶ In the case of Dolan’s work, the re-deployment of historical events provides the audience with a critical distance to assess sex and gender roles (111-3).

¹⁷ For a sample of references, see Hawes, Shalom, Rafael (2000), and M. Thompson. With respect to Marcos rule, Celozza addresses the Philippines’s political economy, Hawes focuses on agri-business, Shalom concentrates on the relationship between the Philippines and the U.S., Rafael (2000) analyzes the representation of Ferdinand and Imelda through the concept of patronage, and M. Thompson sketches a history of anti-dictatorial movements.

as suggesting that the script's purpose is not to faithfully replicate late Marcos rule but to offer a unique story of succession in leadership, one that offers an alternative to conventional politics.

This effort is not isolated. By representing the development of insurgents with Joey and Daisy, Hagedorn echoes the work of Benedict Kerkvliet and Gregg Jones. Both have drawn attention to the foot soldiers in Philippine guerrilla movements, thus illuminating an alternative trajectory to normative activism.¹⁸ To put it differently, I read Hagedorn's figuration of Joey and Daisy as an attempt to imagine the personal stories of Kerkvliet's and Jones's history. Joey, as an eyewitness to Domingo's murder, must transition from a hedonistic junkie hustler to a sober fledgling student while living under the NPA's ascetic code of conduct.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Daisy is Domingo's sheltered daughter and the reigning Miss Philippines beauty pageant queen. Domingo's assassination and her own rape shatter this life of literal entitlement and compel this once elite daughter of the Philippines to transform into a hardened NPA militant. Hagedorn stages these metamorphoses by idealizing the NPA as a solution to the Philippines's political and social ills. By eliminating reference to the Communist Army's shortcomings,²⁰ Hagedorn suggests that historical alternatives to normative political activism like guerilla warfare

¹⁸ See Kerkvliet for discussion on Hukbalahap movement from the perspective of soldiers rather than leaders. See Jones for insight into the opinions and experiences of NPA soldiers and locals inhabiting NPA ruled regions.

¹⁹ Following a Maoist principle of "iron discipline," José María Sison, the founder and first ideological leader of the CPP, ordered NPA soldiers to follow a strict code of conduct. They were instructed to study CPP ideology and refrain from self-indulgent activities and misuses of power. Some soldiers obeyed these rules; others did not (Jones 32-4). Commander Dante (born Bernabe Buscayno) led the army, and the NPA grew rapidly in the late 1970s through the 1980s (the approximate period in which the play takes place) (Jones 6).

²⁰ As an example of NPA limitations, Jones's interviews with soldiers and his own observations of NPA activity reveal that the NPA was prone to using coercion to ensure a loyal following in late-1980s (10-11).

have been imperfect and, for the purposes of narrating a telos of resistance, require re-imagining.

A Bildungsroman of Resistance

As the beginning, climax, and resolution of Joey's and Daisy's stories are motivated by Hagedorn's version of Marcos corruption and then resolved by their exposure to the NPA, these sequence of events align with the literary schema of the bildungsroman.²¹ To understand how their stories not only "fit" within but also shift the parameters of the bildungsroman, I turn to David Lloyd's notion of the "inverted bildungsroman." That is, in an inverted bildungsroman, characters attempt to but cannot fully assimilate into the public sphere of a racist national body. According to Lloyd, this experience produces a "national consciousness that revolts," and "it reveals the insistence of splitting rather than the fulfillment of a developed Subject" (85). Modifying Lloyd's argument, I maintain that as characters respond to the contradictions of a postcolonial nation-state by searching for, joining, and creating alternative public spheres, they not only undergo a process of subject formation—one that "revolts"—but also become part of a resistant public sphere. This process occurs when young characters like Joey and Daisy grow out of apathy, ignorance, or obsequiousness to evolve into guerilla citizenship. Such narratives exemplify what I call a "bildungsroman of resistance."²²

Notably, Lisa Lowe's reading of the novel edition of *Dogeaters* offers a different assessment. In her succinct words, "[r]evolutionary activity in *Dogeaters* is not

²¹ A bildungsroman is, of course, a classic coming of age story, a paradigmatic narrative of progress that may seem structurally neutral but unfolds and resolves in a way that re-deploys modern notions of advancement. See chapter one for additional discussion of the bildungsroman.

²² Similarly, R. Lee identifies Joey's and Rio's stories in the novel edition of *Dogeaters* as "narratives of liberation" (103).

teleologically narrated; it does not privilege heroes, martyrs, or the development of the revolutionary subject” (1996, 119). These comments, while aimed at the novel, are applicable to the analysis of the script because, as I see it, the narrative structure of both the novel and script with respect to Joey’s and Daisy’s stories crescendo similarly. As a departure from Lowe’s argument, then, I maintain that Hagedorn’s representation of Joey and Daisy does indeed privilege the development of revolutionary subjects. Moreover, I nominate Lowe’s reading as representative of criticism that has overemphasized the empowering aspects of Joey’s and Daisy’s advancement as resistant subjects such that the continued oppression of “others” is neglected, which I discuss further below. Building on Lowe’s criticism, then, I read *Dogeaters* as a text that represents the empowering *and* oppressive consequences of developing subversive heroes.

To clarify this point, I begin with a brief summary of Joey’s and Daisy’s stories to show that their narratives conform to a bildungsroman structure. Joey’s story begins with parental abandonment and shoeless poverty, and he survives those circumstances by selling his body, dee-jaying at a disco, and numbing himself with drugs. This hustler lifestyle isolates Joey from the deteriorating social and political conditions in Manila, and exhibiting his ignorance of the volatile political dissent of the early 1980s, The Douglas Theatre’s production of the play positions Joey at the forefront of a scene in which Domingo (Alberto Isaac) delivers a rousing speech on the brutality of Marcos rule. During this scene, the crowd punctuates Domingo’s speech with cheering and clapping, performing not only its enthusiastic agreement with Domingo but also its frustration with the regime. Though Joey (Ramón de Ocampo) stands with the crowd, he does not participate in the call and response action of the scene. Rather, he looks confused,

surprised, and even scared by the crowd's fervent participation, a performance that conveys Joey's limited understanding of Marcos corruption and his uninformed fear of the ongoing struggles against the regime. Such unfamiliarity and isolation comes to an abrupt end when Domingo's and his "Uncle's" violent deaths usher Joey to a precipice of revolutionary transformation.

Daisy's bildungsroman advances with different but parallel intensity. Like Joey during the first half of the play, Daisy is unmoved to take action against the Marcos regime despite the fact that her father's politics and lover's activism (as an NPA soldier) put her in close proximity to conventional and underground efforts to resist the dictatorship. Rather, Daisy's actions are limited to showcasing herself as Miss Philippines and having a clandestine affair, suggesting that venues for women to perform their nationalism are limited to their objectification as passive receptacles of male heteronormative desire. The Douglas Theatre production makes this point through Daisy's wardrobe of a beauty pageant dress and nightgown. Appearing as Miss Philippines in the beginning of the play, Daisy (Esperanza Catubig) sings popular romantic songs while appearing in a glittering red beauty pageant dress that skims close to her body down to the floor. The sheerness and delicacy of this nightgown, much like her beauty pageant attire, not only exposes Daisy's flesh, but the context in which she wears the nightgown—during two scenes with her father and lover—conveys both her innocence and sexuality. Building on Daisy's political naiveté, both the script and the Douglas Theatre production represent Daisy's political innocence and obliviousness by having Daisy sleep in a deep slumber—dressed in the nightgown—as her father attempts unsuccessfully to wake and feed her. She is awakened literally and figuratively only by

more drastic measures: her father and lover are murdered, the Marcos military gang rapes her, and a miscarriage results from the rape. Collectively, these experiences literally strip Daisy of her former symbolic costuming and compel her to finally take an active part in resisting the ruling dictatorship.

Hagedorn, however, does not offer a wholesale celebration of Joey's and Daisy's narratives, for the play suggests that their resistance reinforces and even hinges on the oppression of minor figures.²³ Minor character criticism demonstrates that projecting simplistic, superficial, and inferior qualities onto minor figures has been a common literary strategy for establishing multi-dimensional, dynamic, and transformed protagonists.²⁴ Drawing on this criticism, I evaluate comparisons between protagonists (Joey and Daisy) and minor figures (Pedro and the Young Woman) as a description of the way resistance can be a contradictory process in which the empowerment and resistance of major characters coexists with and even reifies the oppression of socially marginal figures.

Joey's juxtaposition with Pedro, whom I identify as a dirty body, best exemplifies how being unclean and minor illuminates such contradictions of resistance. In other words, Pedro's unmitigated marginalization and oppression, represented by his association with filth and life of drudgery, is necessary to make Joey's eventual transformation from poverty and apathy to political activism seem like an immense achievement. As theories on impurity show, an association with dirt has commonly

²³ While the structure of the bildungsroman may not inherently require the oppression of minor characters, Joey's bildungsroman of resistance allows for and even requires Pedro's subjugation. I draw this point from Richardson who warns against equating a narrative form with a political objective.

²⁴ See Woloch, Galef, and Forster. I draw especially on Woloch's theories on minor characters, and I detail my debt to his work in the introduction and chapter one.

signified an individual's poverty, inferiority, and primitiveness, while purity has been a metaphor for power, privilege, modernity, and superiority.²⁵ Understanding this symbolism, I read *Dogeaters* as suggesting that Joey becomes "clean" by identifying with and jettisoning his association with Pedro who must remain "stuck" in the past, associated with toilets, and subordinated to Perlita, Pedro's sexually transgressive and abusive employer. In this way, I argue that Joey's journey toward resistance hinges on Pedro's marginalization and subjugation.

An affiliation between impurity and minor figures does not stand for just a generically conceived "low" social position and for the contradictions of resistance. The context of the Philippines's colonization and modernization also informs the representation of "good" and "bad" hygiene in *Dogeaters*. Following Warwick Anderson's study of the Philippines's colonial sanitation system, I read Hagedorn's representation of Pedro and his connection to filthy toilets as a gesture toward a legacy of U.S. colonization. Furthermore, in light of Anderson's criticism, I approach Hagedorn's figuration to public health structures as a commentary on a lexicon and ontology of modernity. I extend this discussion through the last section of the chapter where I compare major and minor Filipina characters to flesh out an analysis of narrative structure, character comparison, resistance, and postcoloniality. As Bonnie McElhinny has shown, Filipinas were targeted in colonial health discourses to index the primitiveness of the Philippines during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

²⁵ For a foundational analysis on the representational function of impurity and purity, see Douglas, Miller, Ileo, and Shah. I draw on Douglas for her foundational definition of impurity as "matter out of place" and on Miller for his interrogation of disgust and his response to Douglas. See Ileo and Shah for a reading of impurity as it has been attached to Filipinos, Chinese immigrants in the U.S., and Asian Americans generally. Ileo and Shah contend respectively that discourses on Asian, U.S. Asian immigrant, and Asian American health have legitimated colonial endeavors abroad and the exploitation of Asian immigrant labor in the U.S. I parse out this criticism in the Introduction.

Drawing on her scholarship, I maintain that Hagedorn's representation of women's disparate hygiene practices describe the Philippines as neither wholly adopting nor rejecting U.S. standards of progress. With this discussion, I offer dirty bodies and literary representations of public health practices as related analytic categories of inquiry that serve to illuminate the ambivalences of Philippine modernity.

The Heart of Resistance

Critical interest in *Dogeaters* has concentrated around Hagedorn's representation of resistance, particularly with respect to her figuration of non-heteronormative and politically subversive characters.²⁶ As it has become accepted practice to commend Hagedorn's disruption of normative gender and sex roles, critics have overlooked the fact that certain subversive queer characters in *Dogeaters* benefit from and enable the marginalization of those who are socially inferior to them. Admittedly, scholars have noted the presence of these marginal and disadvantaged minor characters, but they have done so only to focus on and praise Hagedorn's figurations of resistance. For example, while Nerissa Balce-Cortes notes Perlita's abuse of Pedro in the novel edition of *Dogeaters*, she concentrates on ways "the Filipino and the Filipino American writer creates a space of resistance where the forgotten wars, violence, and other ills are re-discovered and re-examined" (114). Similarly, Juliana Chang makes notes of the minor character of Joey's mother Zenaida only to argue that Zenaida's presence functions "to make visible the obscene underside of the neocolonial family romance" (659). As with Balce-Cortes's gesture to Pedro, this reference to Zenaida operates to stress the fact that Hagedorn's women characters are resistant subjects who help illuminate the gaps and

²⁶ See Lowe (1996), R. Lee, Nguyen, and Mendoza.

fissures of official Philippine historiography. I do not disagree with these arguments, and I recognize the historical and critical importance of highlighting resistance in Asian American literature.²⁷ That said, my central objective in this chapter relates to illuminating certain forms of resistance as a contradictory process that empowers as much as it oppresses.

To make this case, I offer a reading of Joey's bildungsroman of resistance as it coexists with and even requires Pedro's static subjugation. When Joey's story begins, we learn that he is only sixteen or seventeen years old and that his parental lineage is less than ideal. In the Philippines, his mother's sex work and his father's racial blackness carry a stigma and thus impart Joey with a disreputable genealogy upon birth.²⁸ Joey is not only born with such a disadvantage but as a young boy, he is abandoned after his mother's death, and as Perlita reminds him, "*Hoy*, don't forget—when I first met you, you didn't even own a pair of shoes" (38). Such symbolic shoelessness intimates that from early on, Joey has lived a life of poverty and neglect.

By paying for his mother's funeral, an unrelated guardian named "Uncle" assumed custody over Joey and eventually became Joey's pimp. Over the course of the play, the audience watches Joey succumb to Uncle's authority as he scrambles for his next hustle and high. In fact, in Uncle and Joey's first scene together, the former reminds the latter that he must work to repay the mother's funeral costs. Uncle punctuates this reminder by declaring that Joey is nothing more than a "*puta*" like his deceased mother,

²⁷ See my Introduction for review on the historical and critical importance of representing Asian American resistance efforts.

²⁸ For the stigma attached to prostitutions, see Law and Sturdevant and Stoltzfus. For discussion on racial hierarchy in the Philippines, see Rafael (2000, 36-7). Though Rafael does not address the racialization of African American and Filipino mestizos, he makes note of the pejorative representation of blackness as it relates to Filipino Natives. I read the stigmatization of Joey's black racialization in light of this index of race.

and as the scene closes, Joey tries to retaliate physically but Uncle subdues Joey easily with a knife. During the Douglas Theatre production of this scene, the actors playing Joey and Uncle emphasize this master-servant dynamic by also having Joey cower in response to a move by Uncle to hit him.

In order to build up to Joey's eventual transformation from an orphaned child and cowering pimped boy into a potential communist guerrilla soldier, Joey's story requires a starting point of a humble past. Joey's orphanage and shoeless mark that past, and Pedro is closely associated with that period of his life. This connection helps to establish the chronological beginning of Joey's narrative, the "low point" from which Joey's bildungsroman of resistance advances.²⁹ More specifically, as Joey interacts with and exhibits empathy for Pedro, his identification with the impoverished and subjugated janitor helps call attention to Joey's humble beginnings as a poor orphaned child. From that starting point, we see Joey's life has improved materially with the help of Uncle and Perlita, but as noted previously, subservience to Uncle helps to indicate that there still is room for Joey to grow into a resistant and empowered subject.

Joey's second dramatic appearance, set in the space of Studio 54, animates this by bringing Joey and Pedro on stage simultaneously. Bearing the same name as the infamous New York City disco, Hagedorn's Studio is a popular Manila queer men's bar and disco, maintaining its New York counterpart's reputation for hedonism and exhibitionism.³⁰ In

²⁹ For a discussion on the types and significance of literary beginnings, see Romagnolo. For further analysis on the concept of beginnings, see Said.

³⁰ New York City's Studio 54 opened in 1977 and emerged quickly as an international symbol of a hedonistic and exclusive New York City nightlife. It was renowned for bringing together celebrities and anonymous partiers under one roof for late-night disco music, dancing, outlandish performances, rampant cocaine use, and casual sex among the gay and heterosexual clientele. Studio's popularity diminished in 1980 when its co-owners started a three-year sentence for tax evasion. For additional details about Studio, see Haden-Guest and Kummer.

her iteration of this space, Hagedorn introduces us to Pedro, the disco's janitor, and Perlita, Studio's owner and marquee drag queen performer. Upon Pedro's initial entrance into the play, the stage directions note, "*Pedro, dressed in rags, enters limping*" (38). Wearing rags and walking with a limp are immediate clues of his material poverty and poor physical health. After making this pitiable entrance, Pedro starts polishing the dance floor with a coconut husk. Correcting him, Perlita orders Pedro to mop the floor first and then polish it. This, of course, establishes Perlita's and Pedro's master-servant relationship, and in displaying this, Hagedorn associates Pedro with labor intensive work that involves cleaning the dirt of others' social and leisure activities, activities from which he is excluded.³¹

While this initial appearance and labor suggests that Pedro is generally poor, dirty, and subservient, his direct association with Studio 54's toilets positions him as one of the most disadvantaged figures of the play. When Perlita summons Pedro on stage for the first time, he shouts: "Hurry up, Pedro! It's almost five o'clock. What do you think I'm paying you for? The toilets aren't fit for pigs or men" (35). In one of the last scenes of the play, Perlita repeats this command almost verbatim, yelling: "Pedro! Hurry up and finish cleaning! It's almost five o'clock. What do you think I'm paying you for! The toilets aren't fit for pigs or—" (99). The repetition of the command, cut off at a point that emphasizes the animalistic squalor of the toilets, accentuates the fact that the toilets are extremely unsanitary. That is, by their association with pigs, animals that have a historic

³¹ Though Hagedorn notes that Pedro reenters the scene carrying a mop, a bucket, and Lysol in the script, the Douglas Theatre's production does not follow those stage directions. Instead in the Douglas production, Pedro uses a rag and scrubs the floors on his knees, suggesting that Pedro's work is even dirtier and more laborious than it would be with tools that would keep him upright. The performance, then, underscores Pedro's physical and figurative nearness to the club's dirty floors.

reputation of living in and around squalor,³² the toilets signify profound foulness, and Pedro's subjectivity is connected twice to cleaning this symbol of abject filth. Even though his job is to clean, the extremely unclean state of the toilets and his imperfect approach to cleaning the floors intimate that Pedro's insufficiencies play a key part in conveying Studio's intractable filthiness.

The characters in the play do not speak explicitly of Pedro's social status, but this repeated contact with the disco's toilets and other people's detritus suggest that his social position is lower than theirs. In this way, Hagedorn's efforts align with the work of scholars who have shown that by associating filth with vulnerable peoples, dominant groups have been able to marginalize and oppress them. In her seminal study of impurity, Mary Douglas makes this argument across "primitive" and "advanced" societies, arguing that classifications of impurity have been employed as a fundamental organizing principle in forging social hierarchy. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's collaborative work affirm this classic thesis by demonstrating that bourgeois European subjects have identified themselves as clean and associated filth with marginal and subjugated inferiors.

In addition to drawing on this criticism, I read Pedro's association with unkempt toilets in light studies on U.S. public discourses and practices in the Philippines. Over the course of U.S. occupation of the Philippines (1898-1946), violent and exploitative means of conquest were effaced with rhetoric of "benevolent assimilation," an altruistic logic that yoked the U.S. with the responsibility of helping putatively inferior and primitive

³² See Stallybrass and White and *Municipal Refuse Disposal* for further information about the history of using pigs to eat and eliminate garbage in, respectively, European cities and U.S. agricultural industries.

“others” to modernize.³³ Contributing to the critical body of this scholarship, Warwick Anderson’s research demonstrates that the implementation of closed, contained, and fixed toilet structures served to justify the Philippines’s assimilation to U.S. modernity.³⁴ In other words, by assessing Filipinos as socially disorganized—signified by a lack of common and contained areas in which to urinate and defecate—U.S. reformers could argue, according to the ideology of benevolent assimilation, that the implementation of infrastructure in the form of a modern toilet system was necessary. According to U.S. reformers, these measures were crucial because modern sanitation technology would protect white colonialists whose health was putatively at risk from Filipinos’ lack of hygienic practices and facilitate the overall “improvement” of a “primitive” society. Thus, by characterizing Filipinos as unhygienic and diseased and by claiming confidence in their ability to teach Filipinos “civilized” habits through modern toilet use, U.S. representatives suggested that Filipinos were unfit to rule themselves. Thus, the institutionalization of a sanitation system, symbolized by the implementation of a modern sewage system, emerged as one way to justify U.S. colonization of the Philippines.

³³ For a brief overview on the project of benevolent assimilation in the Philippines, see Rafael (2000) 19-25. Interestingly, Love argues that while lawmakers at the turn of the nineteenth century U.S. held racist beliefs about improving primitive inferiors in the Philippines, Hawai‘i, and elsewhere, he insists that the rhetoric of benevolent assimilation was received unfavorably and was subsequently subsumed under discourses of national safety and backroom deals to facilitate colonial enterprises. In his words, “The success of the imperialists in 1898 [with respect to the Philippines] came about through tough partisan politics, the keeping of strict party discipline through controversy, and no small amount of mischief, bribery, backroom bargaining, and corruption” (194-5). While public admission of racist beliefs and the mission of benevolent assimilation may have been subjugated publicly to appeals of national safety and backroom motivations, others such as Rafael have shown that notions of racial superiority and efforts to improve the lives of putative primitives played an important part in motivating decisions to extend the U.S.’s presence across the Pacific.

³⁴ See Iletto whose study was foundational in arguing that U.S.-based public health discourses and practices facilitated the colonization of the Philippines. Accordingly, Iletto announces that his examination of health discourses is a departure from criticism that has represented U.S. sanitary order as a “chapter in the saga of scientific progress” (52). That is, Iletto’s work shows that colonial health discourses and practices not only failed (i.e., it exacerbated the spread of cholera in certain instances) but also functioned to control Filipinos according to U.S. ideology by characterizing Filipinos as diseased, unsanitary, and stubborn to medical progress.

Notably, while colonial health reformers argued that Philippine civilization could be developed under proper direction, during the same approximate period, Filipinos who migrated to the U.S. were seen as harbingers of disease and social decay. For example, Filipino emigrants were associated with venereal diseases and blamed for a 1929 U.S. meningitis epidemic.³⁵ I bring up this discrepancy between discourses on Filipino and Filipino immigrant health to suggest that modern public health discourses and institutions were deployed inconsistently to rationalize the colonization of “primitive” peoples abroad and the exploitation of “alien” labor at home. At the same time, however, they have remained consistent in reinforcing the power of those who determine the discourse.³⁶

In light of this history, I contend that Hagedorn’s representation of unsanitary toilets is a historically significant metonym of Pedro’s primitiveness and inferiority. Ascribing the janitor with “primitive” subjectivity, Perlita’s derision of Pedro further corroborates this social positioning. For example, when Perlita complains that Pedro “failed” to take advantage of missionary schooling,³⁷ which Perlita provided out of his own generosity, he also uses the opportunity to deride Pedro’s lack of intelligence. Perlita refers to him as a “*gago*” (fool) and “*tarantado*” (idiot). Added to this, when Perlita is in a particularly bad mood, he goes so far as to call his janitor “Pedro the Pagan Dogeater with the Prick of a Monkey and the Brain of a Flea” (40). This telling invective reiterates the point that Pedro, as a “pagan,” has failed to accede to the civilizing process of Spanish colonization and that, as a “dogeater,” Pedro’s eating habits are uncouth to those

³⁵ Feldman 100 and Lasker 106-116.

³⁶ See chapter one for more thorough analysis of these inconsistencies in public health discourses.

³⁷ See B. Anderson (1988) and Rafael (1988) who discuss the role that the Church and Christian conversion played in Spanish colonization of the Philippines.

who have adopted a modern, western palate.³⁸ Trusting Perlita's judgment, we might read Pedro as a primitive fool, but because Perlita's criticisms are a legacy of Spanish colonization, Pedro's "failures" might also be read as resistance to modern authority. However, in my estimation, such an account would inadequately account for the poverty and subjugation that is an essential part of Pedro's figuration.

To unpack the representational function of Pedro's primitiveness and degradation, it is worth mentioning that the novel identifies Pedro as an Igorot. Igorot is a general term for tribal people who have inhabited the northern mountainous provinces of Luzon (the largest island of the Philippines) where the group has historically lived. Igorots have garnered the reputation of resisting modern law and culture, and accordingly, under Spanish, U.S. American, and Filipino elite rule, Igorot interests have been marginalized (*Indigenous Peoples* 9-11). According to Joel Slotkin's reading of Carlos Bulosan's representation of Igorots, "[t]he Igorot presence emphasizes the relativity of the colonial dichotomy between savage and civilized. While the American characters typically refer to all Filipinos, regardless of class, as savages, to the Filipino upper class, only the peasants and the Igorots are savages; to the peasants, however, the Igorots are the savages. By serving as the savage's savage, the Igorots deepen the irony of Bulosan's satire and enrich his investigation of what it means to call oneself civilized" (844-5). Translating Slotkin's reading of Bulosan's work to my analysis of *Dogeaters*, I maintain that if Pedro were represented as an Igorot in the play, this detail would reinforce Hagedorn's figuration of Pedro's resistance to Spanish modernization. However,

³⁸ According to Hagedorn's etymology, U.S. soldiers called Filipinos dogeaters during the Philippine-American war to debase them (2003, vii and 40). Rather than address the ways U.S. soldiers identified Filipinos as dogeaters, Slotkin emphasizes the ways Filipinos in Carlos Bulosan's novels have used the term against each other, associating dogs and dog eating with the most "primitive" among Filipinos (854-6).

Hagedorn does not identify Pedro as an Igorot in the script, and I read this omission as a sign that Pedro's dramatic importance does not hinge on his identity as an Igorot per se but on his representation as a more general figure of the oppressed, one who does not negotiate late-twentieth-century modernity with ease.³⁹

Pedro is more than just a generic primitive and poor figure, however. No other character comes into direct contact with filth as Pedro does, and this unmatched proximity to profoundly foul objects and space signifies his extreme subjugation, a position that affords him with little or no agency. More precisely, while it is true that Perlita may be responsible for managing the filthiness of the club's bathrooms and that the patrons of the club contribute to the disco's material squalor, they do not repeatedly touch the filth or clean up after everyone else as Pedro does. Additionally, although women characters become dirty through sex work and sexual violence, which I address in an ensuing section of this chapter, they too are not required to clean up other people's filth. In fact, they are able to wash themselves and access varying degrees of purification unlike Pedro. Thus, while characters become dirty or exacerbate spatial dirtiness in the play, none—not even the most transgressive ones—desires to touch or clean up other people's filth. Their relative distance from other people's filth helps emphasize that none are as dirty and "low" as Pedro. In this way, Pedro emerges as a representative figure of the most socially marginal of society, the play's exemplary dirty body.

Even though certain details exist about Pedro, his characterization is limited and this highlights his subordination to Perlita. Specifically, Pedro appears briefly on stage only twice, entering when Perlita summons him, performing a menial task, and existing shortly thereafter. He lacks the sort of literary animation that would explain how he

³⁹ For alternative descriptions that categorize Igorots as noble but primitive people, see Jenks.

arrived at Studio 54, what he does apart from serving Perlita, and whether he will ever leave his job at the disco. We are only privy to a past in which Pedro “failed” at missionary school, a narrative detail that emphasizes Pedro’s putative inferiority.⁴⁰ Such paucity of a past and future operates to stress the characteristic to which we are privy: his abject subservience.

As Joey links himself to this representative abject figure, Pedro’s profoundly “low” presence helps to animate the contradictions of plot progression and resistance. Specifically, when Perlita orders Pedro to clean the bathroom, Pedro does not move toward the bathroom but motions to something with his lips. Perlita does not understand this gesture, and Joey steps-in to translate, interpreting Pedro’s motion as a request for cleaning supplies. When Pedro receives those supplies, he exits and by exiting, he indicates that Joey’s translation was correct. During Pedro’s absence, Rainer Werner Fassbinder,⁴¹ a filmmaker and guest of the Marcos supported international film festival,

⁴⁰ We could try to flesh out Pedro’s narrative from the scant details about him, but rather than representing a multi-dimensional subject, it is more useful to read Pedro as a symbol for the unclean, subservient, and unchanged as I suggest throughout the chapter. I draw this point from Robbins who argues that in analyzing literary servants, it is important to focus on the information that is available rather than using our own imagination to fill-in the “blanks” of their narrative.

⁴¹ Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1946-1982) was an actual German director, screenwriter, producer, and actor who was actively at work from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, a period when the German nation-state funded its cinema and when the local market for German cinema had not yet been unified. Though he died at the early age of thirty-seven, Fassbinder created a large body of work, consisting of theatrical productions, movies (approximately forty), and television programs. Internationally, his work became known as art films, but he strove personally to create films about “the people” as they existed within overarching power structures. Fassbinder also was one of the first internationally recognized filmmakers who acknowledged his gay identity publicly. For further readings on Fassbinder and his work, see Kardish, Rayns, and Iden et al.

In the Douglas Theatre’s production, actor Nick Salamone portrays Fassbinder as a drunken and sloppy European tourist who literally throws money around while pursuing Joey for sex and companionship, and critics such as Balce-Cortes have affirmed with this interpretation of Fassbinder. In Balce-Cortes’s words, “[t]he character of Rainer becomes the metonymic representation of the totalizing White/racist gaze which eroticizes and dehumanizes the Other, represented here as Joey” (107). While I agree that Fassbinder functions as a pleasure-seeking spectator, I contend that Hagedorn offers Fassbinder as more than a sloppy European sex tourist. By drawing on Fassbinder’s historical reputation and films such as *Fox and His Friends*, I read Hagedorn’s representation of the filmmaker as an empathetic observer

enters the disco and joins Joey and Perlita for a drink. According to Hagedorn's stage directions, when Pedro reenters the scene with a mop, bucket, and a can of Lysol, Rainer observes Pedro and looks at the janitor with pity. Joey registers Rainer's sympathy and comments, "Don't worry about Pedro. He's just another fine *gago*, like me" (40).⁴² While Joey's ability to read Fassbinder's gaze suggests that his skill for interpreting body language extends to both Pedro and Rainer, reading Pedro's lips *and* likening himself to the janitor indicates that Joey identifies with Pedro. Thus, such familiarity with the play's representative dirty body establishes Joey's conception of his own inferiority.

However, Joey and Pedro's second and last scene together complicates and disrupts that sense of equivalence. More to the point, Joey's ambivalent association with Pedro is established and then jettisoned to facilitate his character and narrative development toward political transgression. In the space between their two scenes, Joey witnesses Domingo's murder, and the assassins target Joey, the only witness to the murder, for elimination. In desperation, Joey seeks protection from Uncle, and though Uncle promises to help Joey, he conspires to turn Joey over to the killers. Realizing Uncle's duplicity, Joey stabs Uncle to death, and murdering his cruel, treacherous, but benevolent "Uncle" leads to newfound freedom. Covered with Uncle's blood, as

of Joey and Pedro rather than a metonymic uninformed and careless tourist. If Hagedorn wanted to represent such a stock character, she could have given this character a lineage with less distinction, but I propose that the "real" Fassbinder's proclivities as a filmmaker and the "fictional" Fassbinder's recognition of Pedro's presence suggest that he cannot be reduced to just an ignorant observer. Thus, I read Fassbinder as yet another example of a character contradiction, somewhat similar to Perlita.

⁴² During a scene at an upscale restaurant, Joey assures Fassbinder that the waiter is "[j]ust another *gago* like me. Don't worry about him" (65). Here, as with the scene under discussion, Joey identifies with a servant-like character with virtually the same catchphrase. However, unlike Joey's juxtaposition with Pedro, Hagedorn does not have the waiter shadow Joey at the end of the script, and for this reason, I have focused on Joey's identification with Pedro rather than this waiter.

Hagedorn's stage notes indicate, Joey's stained embodiment emphasizes that killing Uncle will enable a rebirth that will free him from former subjugation.

This motif of rebirth continues through the threshold of Studio. When Joey seeks refuge in Studio after killing Uncle, Perlita stumbles upon Joey and moves quickly to help, beckoning Pedro to watch him while making arrangements on Joey's behalf.⁴³ As Pedro watches Joey, their apparent trivial exchange of words emphasizes Joey's and Pedro's estrangement. That is, while waiting for Perlita, Joey invites Pedro to sit down but Pedro declines and also refuses to join Joey for a drink. Responding to Joey's questions regarding Perlita's arrangements, Pedro also denies knowledge of those plans, and to that denial, Joey responds: "Bullshit. I bet you know more than I do" (79). To sum up this exchange briefly: Joey waits and Pedro watches, Joey drinks and Pedro does not, and Joey is ignorant while Pedro may know more than him. Though understated, these differences nonetheless intimate that Joey cannot decipher Pedro's actions or liken himself to the janitor as before. Indeed, Joey has had life-altering experiences that have freed him from a domineering master and put him on the brink of radical change, circumstances that no longer resonate with Pedro's status as a dirty body.

Pedro's brief reappearance here reminds us that his position has not changed, suggesting that, unlike Joey, Pedro is still subservient to Perlita, his own cruel master. Additionally, when Perlita makes a second impatient request for cleaning the filthy toilets in one of the last scenes of the play, Hagedorn finalizes Pedro's association with the

⁴³ While the trajectory of this part of the story is similar in the novel, certain details are different. In the novel, after witnessing Domingo's assassination, Joey seeks help from a friend called Boy-Boy rather than Perlita. Boy-Boy hides Joey and provides for him until NPA "friends" arrive. Hagedorn's decision to shift this NPA sympathizer from Boy-Boy to Perlita puts Pedro in contact with Joey for a second time, a final juxtaposition that does not occur in the novel. This second scene heightens Pedro's prominence in the narrative and represents a major reason for my decision to focus on the script over the novel.

script's key symbol of filth. Thus, Pedro's submission to Perlita and his continued association with Studio's material filth during the second half of the script convey that Pedro, despite his likeness to Joey, does not follow Joey on his journey of rebirth and resistance.

Hagedorn hints at these differences even earlier during their first scene together. Though Joey identifies initially with Pedro's impoverishment and servitude, he is never directly associated with the material dirtiness of the club's floors and toilets. In fact, Joey's congenial banter with Perlita and his "hip" reputation as a D.J. suggest that he is one of Studio's main attractions, far from the disco's filthy janitor. Though working for Uncle certainly humiliates and debases Joey, we learn that Joey is desirable and exotic (being black, American, and Filipino) to a variety of customers. His desirability, social cachet, and separation from Pedro's abject social status thereby suggest that over the course of the play Joey's material life is different from and arguably less difficult than Pedro's. These differences indicate that while Joey may have been as "low" as Pedro when he was a shoeless orphan, the degrees of their present degradation are not the same. Thus, initial identification with Pedro reinforces Joey's perception of himself as a subordinated and exploited laborer. It also helps mark that at one point, Joey was as deprived as Pedro but has advanced, relatively speaking, from that point to the moment the play represents him.

To put it simply, by linking Joey to Pedro, Hagedorn offers Pedro as a symbolic "low" point from which Joey must journey, and in this way, she establishes a starting point for Joey's journey toward change. Their differences intimate that Joey has indeed progressed from those origins of abject impoverishment, and I review Perlita's treatment

of Joey and Pedro to clarify how their differences animate Joey's final steps forward toward guerrilla citizenship. Even though Perlita's benevolence is extended to his resident janitor and D.J., he offers Pedro a missionary education but places Joey under the protective aegis of the NPA. According to Perlita, Pedro did not take advantage of the missionary educational opportunity because, as he claims, Pedro is not intelligent. In his words, "My blood is boiling from shouting so much at that idiot. To think that I sent him to that missionary school—out of the goodness of my heart, mind you" (38). Indeed, Pedro's current service and submission to Perlita shows that past formal education did not enable social progress. This missed opportunity might also be read as an act of resistance, but reading Pedro as an empowered subject would not fit with his figuration as an extremely poor character. Thus, I approach his "failure" as a sign that he was unable to take advantage of the educational opportunity of missionary schooling, an institutional symbol of modern civilization and colonization. As a result, Pedro remains "stuck" within the confines of Manila's exploited urban working-class. Meanwhile, with Perlita's help, NPA soldiers move Joey away from Manila to the Cordillera Mountains,⁴⁴ and in that "primitive" terrain, Joey's access to drugs is cut off and he is forced to become sober. In addition to his sobriety, soldiers offer Joey lessons in literacy and reading materials by Fanon, Mao, and Marx. Supplementing this proposed education, Daisy, who has become an NPA soldier herself, offers him a lesson in shooting a gun. While Joey declines taking advantage of these opportunities in the space of the script, his sobriety and access to these

⁴⁴ The Cordillera administrative district encompasses Abra, the province that Joey assigns to Pedro in the novel. If Abra were associated with Pedro in the script, I would acknowledge that while Joey must jettison Pedro in order to transform into a guerrilla activist, his journey to the Cordillera Mountains signifies a reconnection with Pedro. This simultaneous leaving of and returning to Pedro would further illuminate Hagedorn's reluctant embrace with modernity. However, the script does not associate Pedro with Abra, and Joey's journey to that approximate locations helps to finalize his separation from Pedro.

educational opportunities anticipate that steps toward mental and physical purification will occur.

In her reading of the novel, Rachel Lee notes that the novel's ending is more inconclusive than I have estimated here because, as she argues, it is uncertain whether Joey will join NPA ranks or return to Manila and his former lifestyle. The same could be said about the play, but in the dramatic edition of *Dogeaters*, the NPA soldiers inform Joey that Domingo's murderers will not stop searching for him until his capture. This leaves Joey with virtually no other option but to rely on the NPA's protection for his livelihood. In light of this ominous warning and Joey's sobriety, I assume that he will extend his residence with the NPA and as a result, eventually transform into, borrowing Nguyen's phrase, an "ideal postcolonial subject." As suggested earlier, Nguyen argues that Joey is a representative queer body who, by being placed within an anti-Marcos political movement, transforms that movement into "a sexual revolution that displaces the importance of heterosexual identity and marriage found in many constructions of nationalist revolution" (126). Queering the postcolonial project in this way suggests that Joey is *not* an ideal subject in the vein of elite subjects who have retooled colonial order to their benefit after de jure decolonization. Furthermore, the rugged conditions of NPA existence indicate that Joey is not meant to embody an imminent bourgeois postcolonial subject. His proposed reading list especially suggests that he is, following Neil Lazarus's reading of Fanon, on the threshold of becoming part of an ideal *nationalist* project. As Lazarus puts it, "for Fanon the *national* project also has the capacity to become the vehicle – the means of articulation – of a *social(ist)* demand which extends beyond decolonization in the merely technical sense, and which calls for fundamental

transformation rather than a mere restructuring of the prevailing social order” (78). While Joey might become an ideal queer nationalist subject in this way, it has been my goal to emphasize that such subjects are implicated in a system of resistance that normalizes and perpetuates the oppression of the abject.

That is, Pedro’s presence is not just a contrivance that animates Joey’s narrative, but it also functions as an implicit reminder that someone remains dirty and left behind in the hustle toward change, resistance, and radical nationalism. Joey may disrupt the heteronormative impulses of guerilla movements and represent the possibility of an alternative nationalism, but Pedro’s presence suggests that such potential subversive warriors must climb on the backs of “others” in order to reach the goal of such alternative nation building. Thus, it is Pedro who helps us understand that certain forms of narrating anti-dictatorial and anti-elite movements are not separate from but are crucial to normalizing structures of inequality.

The Dirty Underbelly of Benevolence: Uncle (Sam) and Perlita (Pearl of the Orient)

In this section, I contribute to criticism on the contradictions of U.S. benevolent assimilation and transgressive nationalism by focusing on the contradictoriness of postcolonial resistance as represented by Uncle and Perlita. First, it is important to recognize that, as Nguyen argues, Asian American literary characters are more likely to adapt to *and* challenge dominant culture than to choose between either of those responses to negotiate their difficult living conditions. Following Nguyen, I interpret Hagedorn’s representation of Uncle and Perlita as examples of this ambivalence. Moreover, I read their benevolence and cruelty as a description of the Philippines’s ambivalent modernity.

Obviously, Uncle is not a heroic or even sympathetic character, but by facilitating queer encounters and assuming guardianship over those who have been literally abandoned by family and society, Uncle destabilizes heteronormative family structures and provides for those who have been overlooked by their immediate communities. While Uncle cultivates queer intimacy and offers his benevolence to marginal figures, he also profits from and exploits those whom he helps. Preying on orphaned children—a group representing the most vulnerable—makes Uncle’s generosity and nefariousness especially clear. However, Uncle stands for more than just a singular contradictory figure, for his titular name evokes the moniker of “Uncle Sam.” This correlation allows us to view Joey’s murder of Uncle as a symbol of efforts to oust vestiges of U.S. colonial and postcolonial power from the Philippines. While removal of U.S. forces from the Philippines has benefited certain figures, Pedro is representative of those who remain unaffected by such a change. This is not to diminish the importance of challenging U.S. paradigms of domination, but Pedro’s presence reminds us, on different levels, that even radical changes of decolonization might not redress core hegemonies of inequity in former colonies.

In fact, as I read it, critical emphasis on Hagedorn’s figuration of resistance has helped gloss over and normalize this culture of inequity. Exposing Perlita’s nefariousness is trickier because his alluring subversiveness might allow him to elude critique. That is, his entertaining flamboyance, contacts with the NPA, and defiance of U.S. colonial based health codes make Perlita appealing to dominant Filipino culture and a field such as Asian American studies, for both privilege the forms of resistance that Perlita enacts.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ With respect to the Philippines, for example, Rizal Day is a national holiday, commemorating José Rizal whose life, work, and death inspired resistance against Spanish rule. For the representational

Perlita, however, is not only resistant in productive ways. As we saw earlier, he is exploitative and redeploys principles of Spanish modernization that justify his abuse of Pedro. Furthermore, his show name “Miss Pearl of the Orient” helps to make this point, suggesting that he is treasure of the “Orient,” a treasure that has transgressed modern paradigms. At the same time, of course, this pearl has been burnished by Eurocentric conventions of progress as his evocation of Spanish missionary education indicates. Thus, Perlita embodies an “orient” that has in certain respects developed a national identity out of its affirmation of and resistance to Spanish colonization.

To clarify, I return to Studio’s filthy toilets, but instead of reading them as a sign of Pedro’s “low” social status, I interpret them as a sign that helps illuminate Perlita’s partial compliance with modern norms. That is, Perlita orders Pedro to use the Lysol sparingly when cleaning the toilets and to stock the bathroom with only one roll of toilet paper for that evening’s business. The dirty state of the toilets and Perlita’s parsimony are obvious, but the reasons for his miserliness are debatable. In my estimation, by attempting to maintain a surface of cleanliness, he accedes to a minimal standard of modern hygiene, but at the same time he does not meet the most rigorous standards of public health. Toilets, of course, are not just toilets in the Philippines but have been an important part of conveying Filipino inferiority and implementing U.S. colonial rule. Because toilets have been tools of development and because Hagedorn features them as a metonym of Studio, I read their dirty condition in Perlita’s disco as a manifestation of his defiance of modern convention.

significance of Filipino resistance against U.S. benevolent assimilation, see Rafael (2000, 33-4). Asian American Studies has championed resistance since the inception of the field as marked by the first Asian American literary anthology *Aiiieeee!* and this criticism has continued to develop through scholarship such as Cheung’s *Articulate Silences* and especially through critical responses to *Dogeaters*.

Furthermore, these filthy toilets suggest that the disco does not predispose men to take medically sound precautions against contracting sexual infections and diseases. That is, the squalid state of the toilets—one of the only explicit descriptions of the disco—becomes a metonym for the whole space, suggesting that the culture of Studio is not one where modern standards of public health are kept. Added to this, Studio’s historical reputation as a sanctuary of carefree and immediate physical gratification reinforces a reading of Studio as a space that encourages sex without caution. The play’s periodization, on the cusp of the first official HIV/AIDS pandemic, indicates that discourses about safe sex were not yet popular among gay men as they would be in the near future.⁴⁶ Thus, the material dirtiness of the club, the historical reputation of Studio,

⁴⁶ The play is set two years before a Filipino national was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. That is, the first Filipino national, returning from overseas work in the Philippines, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1984. In that same year, eight prostitutes working near U.S. military bases were diagnosed as HIV positive (Law 83). In contrast, Filipino gay men in the U.S. were aware of the epidemic as early as 1981 (Manalansan 160). Like other gay men in the U.S., New York based Filipino immigrants were stigmatized in the Philippines and the U.S. for contracting HIV/AIDS. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, there were rumors that Filipinos holding U.S. passports were being deported from the Philippines for having AIDS. On the other hand, Filipinos in the U.S. who contracted HIV/AIDS were dissuaded from returning “home” because medical facilities for HIV/AIDS treatment in the Philippines were said to be inadequate in comparison to U.S. ones. In addition to feeling homeless in this sense, some Filipinos in the U.S. believed that contracting the disease symbolized failure to secure the American dream (Manalansan 168).

Because Hagedorn’s naming of the disco invites comparison between the U.S. and the Philippines, I read Studio as a space that evokes these emerging health discourses and crises. Thus, even though reference to HIV/AIDS is not explicit in the play, Hagedorn’s description of Studio 54 and multiple gestures to the Philippines’s sex industry present exacerbating factors for a HIV/AIDS epidemic. However, while an epidemic has been feared and expected in the Philippines, at this time, large segments of the adult population have not been infected. See *USAID Health and HIV and AIDS in the Philippines*. While HIV/AIDS has not infiltrated the Philippines, Filipino and Filipino American discourses on HIV/AIDS have nonetheless functioned in a similar way as discourses on filth; both serve to stigmatize vulnerable groups of people.

Also see Mendoza who makes a case for retroactively diagnosing Logan Whitman (Rio Gonzaga’s “American” grandfather) with HIV/AIDS. This diagnosis, as Mendoza contends, helps illuminate the repercussions of U.S. military imperialism in the Philippines. Specifically, the late 1950s and early 1960s—the time frame in which Whitman suffers from his vague illness—intersects with the rise of U.S.-military base towns in the Philippines (i.e., U.S. Clark Air Field and the Subic Bay Naval Base). I read photographs of and interviews with several sex workers in Olongapo by Sturdevant and Stoltzfus as evidence of Mendoza’s findings. That is, towns such as Olongapo City, located near Subic Naval Base, have catered to such military complexes as “rest and recreation” areas where sex for money is exchanged and becomes a vital industry to other workers who serve as the sex workers’ taxi drivers, cooks, and landlords. Mendoza concludes, “it is precisely in such an environment—of which militarization, commercial sex work, and changing medical practices are both symptoms and partial causes—that HIV emergence might be

and the play's periodization suggest that Studio functions as a space where patrons seek physical pleasures without taking diligent precautions against transmitting infections and diseases. Being the proprietor of Studio, Perlita is somewhat associated with promoting these unprotected sexual activities.

While enabling unwitting health risks and neglecting poor toilet sanitation begins to link Perlita to an opposition of modern ideas, these factors, in combination with his drag appearance and association with the NPA make Perlita's defiance of modern culture both more distinct and ambivalent. As public health officials and commentators in the Philippines have represented "primitive" toilet conditions and unprotected sex as polluting elements of society, homophobic rhetoric has compounded matters by identifying non-heterosexual sex and culture as metaphorically and physically dirty. In light of these discourses, we see that Studio is filthy on various levels. Perlita, as Studio's owner and overseer, facilitates such sexual "dirtiness" by providing men with a welcoming space where securing safe, long-lasting, and stable monogamous relationships are not primary objectives. Notably, Perlita also functions as the disco's marquee drag performer, and in this way he contributes to Studio's representation as a central site for queering gender and sex binaries. Hagedorn stage notes even mark out a space for him to perform a dance number, and The Douglas Theatre production takes full advantage of this opportunity by staging a carefully choreographed performance by Perlita and a large entourage of back-up dancers. More specifically, synchronized with backup dancers dressed in police regalia, Perlita (Ivan Dabila) dances and lip-syncs across the stage to

accelerated and AIDS might become pandemic" (833). Though Hagedorn erases reference to Whitman's illness from the script and even eliminates scenes from the 1950s and 1960s, Hagedorn's dramatic representation of Studio as a space where sex workers like Joey can meet customers animates certain conditions that have made the Philippines susceptible to an HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Donna Summer's "Bad Girls" all while wearing a glittering low-cut red dress that exposes his muscular chest and arms.⁴⁷ This costume is certainly reminiscent of Daisy's sparkling red beauty pageant attire, but in this iteration, femininity and masculinity are both on display, thus showcasing Perlita's *bakla* (sexually ambiguous) figuration.⁴⁸

Because Studio 54 is best known as an infamous New York City nightclub, its American-ness invites us to interpret Perlita's queerness within a Filipino American context. Taking up this reading, I draw on Martin F. Manalansan's study of Filipino immigrants and long time residents of New York City to address the representational significance of Perlita's *bakla* figuration. Addressing the particularities of *bakla* identity, Manalansan observes that deviation from a normative U.S. paradigm of "coming-out," a *telos* that Manalansan defines as "gay modernity," has been common practice among Filipino and Filipino American men. Instead, their self-formation consists of negotiating between "American/Western and Filipino/Southeast Asian sexual/gender identities" (16) wherein queerness is inferred by family members and friends rather than being recognized through an explicit coming-out process. In light of Manalansan's work, then, I read Perlita, a key player in Hagedorn's version of New York City hedonism, as an expression of a *bakla* identity that hovers between American/Western and Filipino/Southeast Asian expressions of gender/sexuality.

⁴⁷ I still confirmation that the song was "Bad Girls."

⁴⁸ See Manalansan's instructive negotiation of the nuances and etymology of *bakla*. In his words, "while *bakla* conflates categories of effeminacy, transvestism, and homosexuality and can mean one or all of these in different contexts, the main focus of the term is that of effeminate mannerism, feminine physical characteristics (i.e., small, frail bodies, delicate facial features, and son on), and cross-dressing" (25). While *bakla* connotes tackiness in certain instances, Manalansan notes that *bakla* subjects do not necessarily act accordingly. Nguyen defines *bakla* as a term that "is not necessarily associated with sexual activity, as 'gay' and 'homosexual' in Western societies usually are; rather, *bakla* as a category has room for transvestism, effeminacy, and homosexual object-choice. In that sense, it is closest to the term 'queer,' which describes a variety of sexual practices, behaviors, and identifications" (131).

Thus, while Perlita manages Studio so that it functions as a haven for bakla selfhood, a disruptive force to public health paradigms, and even a threshold to guerilla warfare, he does not reject these conventions of modern life categorically as suggested through his imperfect oversight of toilets and his ambivalence to gay modernity. To make this point clear, I return to Perlita's political opportunism as it leads him to subscribe to two of the Philippines's dueling political groups, the NPA and the Marcos leadership. While he has immediate access to the NPA and facilitates Joey's probable transformation into a communist guerrilla soldier, Perlita also pleads with Chiquiting Moreno, his friend and the First Lady's hairdresser, to have Imelda attend one of his drag performances. By vying for the attention and patronage of the First Lady, a symbol of a corrupt modern Manila, and by calling upon his NPA contacts to help resolve Joey's crisis, Perlita exhibits divided political loyalties that suggest guerilla subjects might also be agents of modernization.

Pedro's fleeting presence punctuates this contradictoriness. Perlita's reactions to Pedro—criticizing his intelligence and dehumanizing him by comparing his penis to an animal's—indicate that Perlita demeans Pedro by Spanish and U.S. American standards, redeploying modern discourses that he challenges through his own embodiment and management of the disco. Thus, even though Perlita represents and cultivates alternatives to a dominant culture, he also maintains a power dynamic that, in the words of Stallybrass and White, “abuses and demonizes *weaker*, not stronger, social groups” (19).

Articulating Perlita's characterization in such ways conveys what I call the contradictoriness of resistance, and I read Perlita's contradictoriness as a description of the way that subversive non-elites have demanded a certain degree of conformity to

western culture from other Filipinos. That said, Perlita is not without his own respectable pedigree—he is related to Severo Alacran, Hagedorn’s representative wealthy Manila business tycoon—but by Perlita’s own admission, he is “from the poor side of the family” (53). However, his own social inferiority and defiance of modernity do not absolve him of benefiting from dominant conventions of inequity. Perlita exploits and abuses Pedro in a way that affirms structures of domination and subordination that have underlined the Philippines’s development. While Joey acknowledges this aspect of Perlita’s characterization in the novel,⁴⁹ such recognition is absent in the script. With respect to Perlita, then, Pedro’s presence becomes the key to understanding how resistance of modern culture does not necessarily empower profoundly exploited figures and, in fact, might even re-invigorate certain conventions of inequity that shore up the Philippines’s development as a modern nation-state.

Ambivalent Modernity and Filipina Hygiene

Building on previous analysis of character comparison and resistance, I start this section by comparing Joey’s and Daisy’s narratives in order to clarify what I mean by the contradictoriness of resistance. This point of entry also enables me to expand on my reading of ambivalent modernity vis-à-vis figurations of women’s bodies and hygiene practices.

The narrative arc of Joey’s and Daisy’s stories are similar, for Hagedorn introduces both protagonists as comparable apathetic subjects who are improbable but eventual candidates for guerrilla warfare. Though Joey’s and Daisy’s stories resemble

⁴⁹ In the novel, wedged between Perlita’s abusive beckoning of Pedro and Pedro’s physical entrance into the story, Joey scorns Perlita’s abuse. In his words, “Andres’s ranting disgusts me, his shrill voice cuts through my James Brown and pisses me off” (33).

each other and even converge when they meet in the Cordilleras, their class, gender, and sexual differences situate them on parallel rather than overlapping paths toward alternative citizenship. Because Joey and Daisy have comparable narratives, it stands to reason that a minor character, a figure akin to Pedro, underpins Daisy's journey toward resistance. However, while the "low" and "high" points of Joey's narrative are highlighted by Pedro's stagnant figuration, there is no such dirty body who shadows Daisy at the beginning and end of the script. Rather than such a dirty body per se, Hagedorn's figuration of a sex worker known only as a Young Woman is linked to Daisy and Pedro. In my estimation, these character comparisons present the oppressive underside of Daisy's journey toward resistance.

Hagedorn does not explicitly link Daisy to the Young Woman, but a series of character equations connects them. To be specific, the actors who have played Daisy in the play's first three major theatrical productions—La Jolla Playhouse (1998), Public Theater (2001), and Douglas Theatre (2007)—have had the dual role of playing the Young Woman. This casting decision intimates that Daisy and the Young Woman have a similar appearance and indeed can be played by the same person. Thus, Daisy's appearance on stage evokes that of the Young Woman and vice versa. As such there is a doubling effect.

At the same time, Hagedorn connects the Young Woman to Pedro by associating them with toilet paper. In Pedro's case, handling toilet paper helps to represent Studio's insularness and his subjugation to Perlita. Similarly, the Young Woman's use of a roll of toilet paper suggests that she too becomes dirty during the play. Specifically, when the Young Woman enters her one and only scene, she carries a roll of toilet paper and a

bottle of rubbing alcohol in with her. Once settled on stage, she and her partner, identified only as “Young Man,” undress and engage in various sex acts for an audience of characters from the play. At the end of their “brief, business-like” presentation, the script’s narrators Barbara and Nestor tell us that the Young Woman tears off a sheet from the roll of toilet paper and uses it to dab herself with alcohol.

Such handling of toilet paper evokes the morally and physically “dirty” conditions that have been linked to Filipina sex workers, and interviews with working class Filipina sex laborers further account for those feelings of shame and being “dirty.” Notions of shame and modesty in response to sex stem in part from Spanish colonization and Roman Catholic belief systems, and according to Sandra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, Filipinas “choose” sex work only as a last resort to alleviate otherwise difficult financial burdens on themselves and their families. Though sex workers are relatively poor, Sturdevant and Stoltzfus are careful to point out that sex workers garner relatively higher wages than maids, for example.

We might read the stigmatization of female sex workers as displayed by the Young Woman as not only a manifestation of Philippine morality, but part of, drawing on William Ian Miller’s theory on impurity, a general sexist paradigm of mapping inferiorities onto the female body. In *The Anatomy of Disgust*, Miller argues that male dominated societies have identified women and their genitalia as especially dirty because their vaginas excrete urine, produce blood, function as a receptacle of semen, and are surrounded by hair. Though semen itself has been represented as a polluting substance, Miller contends that the vagina and anus are deemed fouler because they are receptacles of male ejaculation (102-3). Thus, Miller’s generalist and Sturdevant and Stoltzfus’s

culturally specific analyses show that women have been defined as the dirtier and inferior gender. Understanding this, it stands to reason that this characterization is even more severe for sex workers who are subject to the taint of multiple men's semen. Following this premise, I read the Young Woman as representative of an exceptionally poor and socially disreputable minor figure, much like Pedro.

While Hagedorn likens the Young Woman with Pedro through their shared association with toilet paper, an avatar—as it is in *Dogeaters*—of social inferiority, the Young Woman has the distinct ability to clean herself with alcohol. Such access to personal hygiene allows the Young Woman to take a step away from Pedro, suggesting that she is not quite as “low” as Pedro. However, the coarse and crude nature of toilet paper and alcohol convey that the Young Woman is relatively poor, especially in comparison to other Filipina characters who have access to finer implements of modern health and hygiene, a disparity I detail below.

By highlighting the Young Woman's simultaneous connection to Pedro and Daisy, representatives of, respectively, a dirty body and an ideal nationalist subject, it might seem that I am offering a possible alternative to my reading of Joey and Pedro. That is, the Young Woman's and Pedro's mutual figuration as social inferiors and Daisy's evocation of the Young Woman at the end of the play might intimate that the even the lowest of society have opportunity to participate in guerilla nationalism. However, the Young Woman is differentiated from Daisy in a significant way, and their imperfect comparison helps emphasize that in *Dogeaters* resistance efforts are not available to abject figures. More precisely, while Hagedorn has the Young Woman clean herself after sex, Hagedorn omits a similar gesture of cleaning after military soldiers gang

rape Daisy. In fact, Daisy is dirty on different levels as the script closes, which I return to later, and the Young Woman's act of dabbing herself with alcohol exhibits her compliance with certain conventions of dominant modernity that are antithetical to the rigors of guerilla nationalism. In other words, by cleaning herself, the Young Woman demonstrates that she is not as abjectly marginal as dirty bodies and that she is not hardened like guerrilla nationalists. Thus, the Young Woman and Pedro share similar narrative function in that they both serve to illuminate the way subordinate figures shadow protagonists as they journey toward resistance.

In addition to complicating Hagedorn's representation of resistance, the Young Woman's presence is important for allowing us to consider how in the late-twentieth century health discourses and practices regarding sex laborers have been vital to representing and regulating a modern Philippines. Rhetoric about sex workers is not unlike earlier discourses on Filipina parenting, for both discourses have held Filipinas accountable, on behalf of themselves and others, for representing the Philippines as sanitary and modern. Bonnie McElhinny's work accounts for U.S. studies on child rearing practices and infant mortality rates that found Filipinos endangered their children's development through indulgent and unhygienic infant care. According to U.S. reformers, practices of holding, playing with, and kissing infants exposed Filipino children to diseases such as tuberculosis and diphtheria and taught them habits of pleasure rather than self-denial (188). McElhinny concludes that by regulating and discouraging such putatively unhygienic and indulgent practices during the first three decades of the twentieth century, reformers sought to prepare and discipline future generations for participation in modern society.

Though an important part of McElhinny's project is to shift critical discourse from the feminization of the nation-state to notions of children and childhood in representing the Philippines, she concedes that colonial efforts to reform childcare and Filipinos was, indeed, a gendered discourse. For example, in the published proceedings of the Philippines's First National Conference on Infant Mortality (1921), high infant mortality rates were attributed to the "superstitious and faulty *maternity* practices based on the ignorance of the people" (qtd. in McElhinny 187, my emphasis). Here, women are yoked with the primary responsibility of caring for children and identified as the main conduit of promoting an "ignorant" and unhygienic Philippine culture. In other words, mothers and their parenting practices became a metonym for the Philippines and its putative primitiveness.

I read such discourses and regulative technologies as intersecting with public health responses to Filipina sex work, for both put the onus on women for protecting the population at large. For example, in the late-nineteenth century, public health reformers in the Philippines targeted working class sex workers, women already susceptible to social marginalization and scapegoated for the vices of society, as the primary matrices of disease transmission.⁵⁰ In contemporary cases, Lisa Law points out that Filipina prostitutes have been represented, over and above their customers, as the primary carriers

⁵⁰ For an overview of early U.S. colonial public health discourses on prostitution, see Pivar. Law picks up where Pivar leaves off, noting that ordinances have been in place to monitor prostitution since the 1930s. For the most part, however, Law focuses on public health initiatives of the 1980s to the 1990s in Cebu City, a city south of Manila. See Sturdevant and Stoltzfus for analysis on sex workers in Olongapo City from the mid to late 1980s. See Wi et al. for a discussion of scientifically based sexually transmitted infection (STI) studies on Filipina sex workers in 2001. This culture of prostitution has been so pervasive that Niu (1999) reads juxtaposition of Imelda's sexuality and Corazón's dowdiness as one way in which representations of national figureheads legitimated the Philippine sex industry. For a foundational examination of the representational significance of prostitutes in public health discourse, see Walkowitz who analyzes Victorian iterations of prostitution.

of sexually transmitted infections and diseases.⁵¹ Law argues that during the 1990s such an effort functioned to monitor and “fix” women’s bodies in order to manage and index the health and development of the nation-state.

As I see it, Hagedorn describes this situation through the Young Woman and her partner who is never obliged to use or even touch the symbolic cleaning tools of alcohol and toilet paper. Though both participate in the sex show, the onus of disinfecting the body is clearly relegated to the woman. I read this disparity as a gesture to the way modern health practices in the Philippines have held women responsible for representing a civilized nation-state.⁵²

Coupled with Hagedorn’s representation of the Young Woman, the script’s figuration of a famous pornography star, Lolita Luna, deepens Hagedorn’s commentary on female health as it has stood for the Philippines’s late-twentieth century modernity.⁵³ Historically, *bomba* (soft- and hard-core print and film pornography) has been a popular and lucrative industry in the Philippines.⁵⁴ When Lolita’s lover, business tycoon Severo Alacran, asks if she regrets starring in bomba films, Lolita retorts: “What do you think. I take five baths a day” (81). The matter-of-fact nature of her response suggests that despite popular acceptance of bomba, she is not immune to the shame and guilt for

⁵¹ New sex workers in Cebu City and Olongapo City were subject to an initial series of physical exams and STI testing in order to receive official working status during the 1980s. In both cities, women were required to return regularly for check-ups. See Law for an analysis on official and unofficial sex workers in Cebu City, and see Sturdevant and Stoltzfus for narrative interviews with sex workers in Olongapo City.

⁵² See W. Anderson (2006) for a different discussion public health and gender. He emphasizes the ways public health discourses expressed “the distressed and assertive colonial culture of bourgeois white males” (6).

⁵³ Law argues, “[t]he sex worker’s body becomes conflated with nation, invaded by foreign powers and infected with a fatal virus” (1).

⁵⁴ For a concise etymology and history on bomba, see Rafael (132-7).

transgressing paradigms of Filipina modesty. In contrast, Severo—like the Young Woman’s male partner—escapes bearing the same degree of ignominy as Lolita, though he participates in the sex industry as a consumer and spectator. Drawing on studies of Filipina sex workers and colonial health discourses, then, I read Hagedorn’s figuration of sex work and its social stigma as sign that discourses of health and gender developed during colonial times persisted into the late-twentieth century, so much so that it demanded women even of dubious distinction to observe its rules.

This is not to imply that elite women are immune to similar expectations of female hygiene. In fact, the First Lady’s rumored obsession with deodorization reiterates the point that the management of Filipina hygiene has helped represent the nation’s modernity. Of course, as a fictional character based on an infamous historical counterpart, Imelda’s reputation precedes her, and it is worth reviewing briefly here because this history informs the First Lady’s figuration as a woman obsessed with hygiene.

Imelda’s magnetism as displayed by her physical beauty, singing talents, spending habits, and savvy campaigning skills have been her most well-known and debated attributes. In fact, historians and biographers have credited her charismatic presence with helping to win the public’s support during her husband’s first presidential nomination and election.⁵⁵ When Imelda became First Lady, she gained international notoriety by representing the Philippines during official and unofficial state visits with glamorous fanfare. However, by Ferdinand’s second term in office, her penchant for lavish international shopping sprees, alleged ownership of luxury property, and self-indulgent public projects evoked widespread criticism and protest. Imelda was not just a passive

⁵⁵ See Polotan (93-7) and Pedrosa (1987, 200-20).

beneficiary of the regime's wealth and corruption, however. She planned infrastructure projects, directed cultural events, and helped to administer martial law.⁵⁶ She also became the mayor of Metro-Manila in 1975 and advised the regime's day-to-day decisions as Ferdinand's health deteriorated in the later stages of his presidency (M. Thompson 108). As I mentioned earlier, critics have even implicated her with the decision to assassinate Benigno Aquino. Accordingly, her name has become synonymous with the regime's political decadence and corruption, and her shoe collection has itself become a general symbol of excess and illegitimate appropriation of public funds.⁵⁷

In the two scenes in which Imelda is represented in *Dogeaters*, she emerges as the regime's leading figurehead, and reiterating historical caricatures of the First Lady, Hagedorn offers her up as a symbol of the corrupt forces that compel Joey and Daisy to move toward guerrilla resistance. In Imelda's first scene, Hagedorn transforms narrator Barbara Villanueva into a talk show host who interviews the First Lady about events surrounding the collapse of a highly anticipated and costly Film Center, slated to house the first Manila International Film Festival.⁵⁸ When Barbara inquires into this controversial topic, Imelda dismisses reports of one hundred workers being buried under

⁵⁶ See Bresnan (94), M. Thompson (52), and Shalom (174).

⁵⁷ For a description of Imelda's excessive shopping habits, shoe collection, ownership of foreign properties, status as an international ambassador of the Philippines, construction adventures, and public service projects, see Pedrosa (1969 and 1987) and Ellison.

In contrast to pejorative narratives about Imelda, see Pedrosa (1969 and 1987), Polotan, and Ellison who shine sympathetic light on her humble and impoverished childhood.

⁵⁸ Hagedorn's description of the controversy surrounding the Film Center replicates historical events almost verbatim. According to Pedrosa, author of one of Imelda's unauthorized biographies, the First Lady envisioned Manila's International Film Festival as a rival to the internationally esteemed Cannes International Film Festival. Manila's Film Center was a multimillion-dollar investment that was slated to house the event, and eight thousand workers labored under a demanding schedule to complete the Center for the Film Festival's opening. However, during construction a wall collapsed, and though the regime acknowledged the deaths of seven workers, human rights groups estimated thirty-five to one hundred-fifty dead and missing. The regime's decision to continue construction without properly accounting for the deaths served as further evidence of the regime's brutality and corruption (Pedrosa 1987, 175-77).

the collapsed portion of the building, and she goes on to estimate that “only eight” died. “Only,” of course, is a qualifying term that is meant to lighten the heft of a word or statement, conveying here that the lives of eight workers were insignificant in comparison to finishing the Film Center and advancing the cultural modernization of the Philippines. Through the course of the interview, we learn that the bodies of the workers were never excavated as construction continued to meet the Film Festival’s opening deadline. Barbara asks Imelda if she was responsible for this decision, and the First Lady answers the question unwittingly by asking another question: “I would never leave those poor dead men just lying there . . . Would I?” (42). Her earlier dismissal of “only” eight deaths suggests that Imelda is, indeed, cruel enough to put a construction deadline above recovery of the workers’ crushed bodies. Commenting further on the collapse, Imelda assures Barbara that “[t]hose men did not die in vain” because “my Film Center was built as a celebration of the beauty and spirit of our people” (42). However, though Imelda claims that the Center is a celebration of the “beauty and spirit” of Filipinos, the Film Center’s first event is slated as an international film festival, hardly an occasion to showcase local Filipino culture. Furthermore, the First Lady places ownership of the Film Center with herself and not the Filipino population at large, calling it “my Film Center” rather than “our Film Center.” Thus, this interview operates to affirm the First Lady’s reputation for coy but callous self-aggrandizement.

During her second interview, Bob Stone, a “distinguished” U.S. American reporter, questions Imelda about Domingo’s assassination and the events surrounding it. The First Lady responds to Bob by, in suspicious fashion, singing and directing the conversation to irrelevant matters such as her locally made shoes and dress. As with

Imelda's responses to Barbara's questions, the First Lady avoids answering Bob, only drawing attention to her guilt by her avoidance. Additionally, though she raises the issue of her wardrobe to draw discussion away from her accountability in the assassination, this tactic only places more question marks around her leadership as she draws attention to her ill-gotten wealth.⁵⁹

As a figurehead of a corrupt and brutal leadership, then, Imelda's obsessive habit of deodorizing her body must be read as an extension of her status as corrupt national leader. While talking with friends, Perlita quips, "Imelda is obsessed with personal hygiene" (53), and verifying Perlita's statement, Chiquiting adds suggestively with the help of stage directions, "Perfume here, there . . . and there (*Points to his crotch*)" (53). Such *tsismis* (gossip) has been a popular form of disseminating information that competes with and, at times, outshines the validity official news sources among Filipinos.⁶⁰ Though Imelda is not faced with these rumors and cannot confirm or deny them, this *tsismis* nonetheless produces information about Imelda's embodiment, exposing a putative anxiety that is not a passing fancy but an important, obsessive concern. Moreover, Chiquiting's gesture to Imelda's perfumed "crotch" directs our attention back to the feminization of public health discourses. Imelda, however, is not just any woman. Her status as First Lady emphasizes point that paradigms of modern health have dovetailed with discourses of gender to feminize the Philippines's modernity.

⁵⁹ For a reading on the representational significance of Imelda's attire, see Niu who argues that emphasis on Imelda's clothes and shoes have represented Imelda as a paradigm of Filipina sexuality and beauty.

⁶⁰ I draw this argument from Lowe (1996, 113-120). In response to Lowe, Mendoza agrees that *tsismis* is an important form of communication but argues that it has reinforced certain forms of dominant culture.

While Imelda, Lolita, and the young sex worker share the distinction of becoming dirty and clean in one form or another, they do not maintain their personal hygiene in the same way. In practical terms, Imelda's habit of obsessively deodorizing herself requires disposable income, Lolita's ritual of bathing takes a certain amount of leisure time and privacy, and the Young Woman's use of coarse toilet paper and stinging alcohol implies that she is poor but still attentive to modern norms. While these habits indicate that Imelda and Lolita are privileged in comparison to the Young Woman, Lolita is nevertheless de-linked from Imelda because while Imelda suffers from pesky body odor, Lolita and, for that matter, the Young Woman engage in a type of labor that besmirches their feminine virtue, zoning them outside of the respectable middle and upper classes. Thus, the manner in which these characters wash themselves helps to establish their class differences and convey that no matter their social status, "good" hygiene is expected of women characters. In contrast, heteronormative male and bakla characters are relieved of this same expectation, suggesting that there are particularly high stakes involved in ensuring that Filipinas embody a certain degree of purity.

It is worth mentioning here that despite such loaded expectations for female hygiene, neither the Young Woman nor Lolita is wholly "clean." That is, the absence of any condom use intimates that they are highly susceptible to sexually transmitted infections and diseases. Historically speaking, as Law observes, Filipina sex workers of the late-twentieth century refrained from requesting condoms because the pressures of the business prevented it. More specifically, Law notes that sex workers believed that requests for condom use diminished opportunity to establish romantic relationships, secure a husband, and ensure egress from the industry (53). Drawing on these findings, I

read the absence of explicit condom use with respect to the Young Woman and Lolita as suggesting that engaging in “unsafe” practices are linked to historic needs among sex workers to improve their social and economic condition.

In different context, Hagedorn’s representation of Filipina also presents us with the Philippines’s ambivalent modernity. Clarifying this point, I turn to Daisy’s journey from pristine beauty pageantry to violation and victimhood and finally to guerilla empowerment and militancy. Having exceptional pedigree and holding the crown of Miss Philippines, Daisy represents the height of Philippine privilege, beauty, and wholesomeness at the beginning of the play.

This excess of virtue sets Daisy up for a steep fall from grace. Indeed, Daisy is gang raped by the Marcos military, and Hagedorn has Daisy remember the rape by recalling the way the room “stank” of “[s]perm and sweat” (90). In addition to becoming a violated receptacle of multiple men’s semen, the room’s dirtiness helps to emphasize Daisy’s degradation, the “low” point from which her narrative progresses. A photograph from the script—taken from the Public Theater’s production—underscores this point. (See Figure 1.) The photograph exhibits Daisy in a state of physical and emotional disarray: her once coiffed appearance is mussed and a wrinkled bed sheet replaces her glittering dress.⁶¹ At the end of the scene, the stage directions note that Daisy hemorrhages and miscarries the child she is carrying as a result of the rape. Notably, Hagedorn offers no explicit indication that these impurities are ever washed away from Daisy’s body. The sustained stained nature of Daisy’s embodiment is a striking because the script gives other women of the play—the Young Woman, Lolita, and Imelda—specific tools with which to clean

⁶¹ See Trotter who analyzes visual and textual representations of “messes.” He argues that mess has symbolized contingency and abandonment, qualities that he associates with a modern aesthetic.

their soiled bodies. In this way, Hagedorn leaves us with the impression that the impurities of blood, sperm, and sweat have a lasting mark on this once wholesome daughter of the nation-state.

In certain ways Daisy only becomes dirtier when she emerges as a full-fledged NPA soldier. Situated in the Cordilleras, a rugged and vague northern location as Hagedorn describes it, Daisy is situated in a space that stands as Manila's opposite.



Figure 2. Daisy in Messy Sheets,
photograph by Michael Daniel from
Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (New
York, 2003) 91.

That is, the landscape of the Cordilleras resists urban infrastructure and the disciplinary process of exact mapping and naming that Hagedorn associates with Manila.⁶² Already dirty from her sexual violation, then, Daisy's location in the Cordilleras makes her doubly dirty. In this rugged environment, Daisy does not have easy access to the same

⁶² For a description of the rough mountainous terrain that accommodate NPA hideaways, see Jones (3-4).

modern conveniences that were available in Manila such as indoor showers and toilets. Thus, tracing Daisy's transformation through geographic locations illuminates the way privileged modern citizens are associated with being clean, while revolutionary guerrilla subjects are affiliated with filth.

Though Daisy's body has been besmirched on various levels, it is worth mentioning that there is a certain clean quality to her transformation into a guerilla soldier. Representing this, one of the last photographs from the script features Daisy dressed with her hair wrapped tightly in a bandanna and the upper-half of her body enveloped in an oversized utilitarian army-style coat. (See Figure 2.) Here, guerilla costuming conceals the bulk of her hair and breasts, attributes that previous costumes—the beauty pageant dress, nightgown, and even the messy bed sheet—had put on display.⁶³ To put it differently, the bandana and coat de-emphasize the physical aspects of her femininity and represent Daisy as a hardened guerrilla soldier who is androgynous and empowered rather than feminine and vulnerable. This physical transformation indicates that Daisy's femininity and violation have been cleaned up and covered over, and such purification is no doubt tied to her empowerment as a NPA militant. Thus, though Daisy has been traumatized physically and emotionally, living in the Cordilleras allows her to respond to that trauma by developing political agency and claiming a certain degree of freedom from gender and hygiene norms. In this way, we might read

⁶³ Like the Public Theatre production, the Douglas Theatre production costumes Daisy (Esperanza Catubig) with a bandana and military style garb, but the bandana allows her long hair to cascade down and around her shoulders instead of wrapping it away. Additionally, instead of an oversized coat, her body is more exposed as she wears only a large shirt with one sleeve rolled up and a military style vest. In this way, the Douglas Theatre production does not de-emphasize the exposure of Daisy's embodiment when she transforms into a guerilla soldier.

Daisy's embodiment as not only dirty and clean but also as gender ambiguous, linking guerrilla nationalism to gender/sex transgression.



Figure 3. Joey and Daisy Meet, photograph by Michael Daniel from Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (New York, 2003) 105. Daisy (Rona Figueroa), shown to the right, is dressed as a guerrilla soldier, her body covered with an oversized coat and bandana. In this scene she speaks to Joey (Hill Harper) who is shown to the left.

However, Daisy is not a just any anonymous ambivalent subject. She is Domingo's daughter, and as such, Daisy belongs to a family that has represented the reigning opposition to the Marcos regime. Transforming her into a guerrilla soldier rather than a respectable politician, Hagedorn conveys that Daisy becomes, to borrow Fanon's idea, a nationalist subject. Her juxtaposition with Imelda indicates further that the nation-state's postcolonial modernity is an ambivalent one. While Daisy stands for an unofficial

alternative successor to corrupt nation-state politics, Imelda functions as Hagedorn's official figurehead of the fascist regime. Representing Daisy and Imelda as competing representatives of the nation re-emphasizes the idea that the Philippines is an ambivalent postcolonial space where capitalism, fascism, communism, modernity, and guerrilla citizenship all converge.

Conclusion

I have focused on Hagedorn's figurations of impurity as they grant us insight into the contradictoriness of resistance and the ambivalence of postcolonial modernity. For example, while Daisy and Joey disrupt heteronormative impulses of alternative nation building, my reading demonstrates that Daisy's and Joey's parallel and intersecting paths to guerilla citizenship are paired with the oppression of socially marginal characters. Perlita's split loyalties and Daisy's juxtaposition with Imelda—as exhibited by their uneasy relationship to hygiene norms—indicate further that ambivalence imbues Philippine modernity. In the next section, I pick up where this chapter leaves us by exploring how figurations of elite women help a different author consider the limitations of nationalist projects in West Bengal and the U.S.

Chapter 3

Subalternity and Dirty Bodies:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Maid Servant's Story" and "A Perfect Life"

"The Maid Servant's Story" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents us with a curious scene of a young upper-class Bengali woman, known as "the wife," who lies in her own urine on a hospital cot in early 1960s Kolkata.¹ Confined to institutional bed rest after experiencing severe discomfort in the late stages of a second pregnancy, she waits out the delivery under the supervision of a Kolkata hospital staff. However, this is not the privilege it seems. During hospitalization, recommended by her doctor and encouraged by her husband, the wife sleeps on "a narrow military-green cot," and "in spite of the open windows her room had smelled faintly of urine (for she wasn't allowed to get up to go to the bathroom)" (143). For an upper-class woman accustomed to a well-staffed,

¹ Though specific dates are not mentioned in "Maid Servant," Divakaruni indicates with references to past British rule that the wife's story takes place after partition in 1947. References to the family's Studebaker and the wife's husband's death by cholera further approximate the story to the early 1960s. That is, Studebakers are luxurious American cars that were manufactured only until 1966, and from the 1960s to the 1970s, a virulent strain of cholera made its way globally, touching down officially on Kolkata in 1964. We learn early on in the story that cholera takes the life of the husband and the wife's newborn, and Divakaruni suggests that their deaths follow soon after the ending of the flashback section of the story. In short, these references intimate that the story takes place just prior to the 1964 cholera epidemic.

luxurious estate, the austere cot and inaccessibility to the toilet suggest that Kolkata's mid-century modern health facilities and reforms were deficient even with respect to the health care of the elite. Obviously, Divakaruni has the wife bear the consequences of these institutional inadequacies as a way of animating the wife's de-humanization, a process exhibited by her immersion in an ostensibly modern but nevertheless primitive and degrading space.

Succinctly put, the wife becomes temporarily a "dirty body," a figure introduced in earlier chapters whose defining association with excrement symbolizes social and narrative minority. Here, I rework this definition to show that the wife's temporary dirtiness marks her ethical "lowness." Steeped in urine, or at least the odor of it, the wife becomes dirty at the penultimate moment of giving birth, a supreme enactment of her heteronormative duty as a woman. In Divakaruni's version of this event, however, the wife must become dirty at the moment of giving birth because her impurity spotlights the very moment that her focus turns completely inward, eliminating her previous commitment to contesting a most faithful maid's return to forced sex work.

Divakaruni's short story "A Perfect Life" features filth and elaborates on ethical issues in a similar vein. This time, in the setting of late-twentieth century San Francisco's East Bay, an upper-class Indian American protagonist and narrator named Meera finds a homeless and obviously abused boy in her apartment's vestibule. Extending her sympathy, Meera invites him into her home, but rather than miss work to assess his needs, she leaves for the office. Upon her return, she is met with utter filth: "As soon as I opened the door I was struck by the smell. It was worse than ten baby-houses put together. I followed my nose to the bathroom. There was pee all over the floor, a big

yellow puddle, with blobs of brown floating in it” (79). The boy, whom Meera calls Krishna, is obviously untrained in or objects to proper toilet use. Over time and with effort, Meera succeeds in training this once “little savage” into becoming a “neat boy.” While Meera’s instruction enables their parent-child intimacy, that bond is broken when Meera turns Krishna over to foster care as a step toward official adoption. Specifically, while under the care of his foster mother, Krishna runs away, and by having Krishna run away at the moment Meera seeks to assimilate him formally into her life, Divakaruni indicates that official recognition and incorporation of subalterns into upper-class life is an inadequate way to address subaltern interests. Here, Divakaruni suggests that ensuring a formerly oppressed figure’s assimilation and acculturation into dominant culture does not fulfill Meera’s ethical responsibilities. Rather, by returning to “Maid Servant,” I read Divakaruni’s representation of a “mob” and its onlookers as suggesting that ethics must consist of shifting fundamental ideologies of oppression across class and caste differences. As I explained in my introduction, ethics constitute a set of beliefs that aim to address the abuses of power and domination, an endeavor that is not necessarily circumscribed by laws and other official institutions. The lapses of ethics in both “Maid Servant” and “Perfect Life” enable me to approximate a definition of it, one that heightens our awareness and critique of certain hegemonies of oppression.²

It is worth pausing at this point to note that “Maid Servant” and “Perfect Life” are not stand-alone stories but were first published and positioned along side each other in *Arranged Marriage* (1995), Divakaruni’s closely-knit collection of eleven short stories.³

² Also see chapter four for the other ways I elaborate on this approach to ethics.

³ As a departure from Brada-Williams’s reading of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* as a short story cycle, I read *Arranged Marriage*, similar in themes and scope to *Interpreter*, as a collection of

Divakaruni moors this collection to West Bengal, specifying Kolkata as the common geographic reference point for most of her stories. From Kolkata, characters travel near and far. There is a journey by train to Gopalpur and another by airplane to Chicago. More often than not, the details of these journeys are skimmed over as Divakaruni focuses on Indian American characters already settled in San Francisco's Bay Area. In this way, Kolkata and the Bay Area emerge as the collection's two dominant geographic reference points, and situated within this context, Divakaruni imagines how Bengali Hindu and U.S. American nationalisms surface and converge across those geographically bounded borders.

By situating "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" within this collection, I aim to show that their representations of impurity and comparison of upper-class and subaltern figures add distinct historical and critical dimension to the whole. At this point, I review the other stories of the collection to reinforce this point. *Arranged Marriage* begins with

closely related short stories. According to Forrest L. Ingram and others, short story cycles are different from a loosely bound anthology of short stories in that the latter does not invite comparative among the individual parts, whereas the short story cycle encourages this very reading practice. Moreover, critics have agreed that a common geographic reference point and recurrence of characters throughout the collection are significant identifying features of the genre. For example, scholars have nominated Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street*, and even Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* as short story cycles. See Kennedy, Kelley, and Nagel for a reading of *Winesburg*, *House on Mango Street*, and *Joy Luck*, respectively

To my mind, these examples stress the fact that representing a community of neighbors, relatives, or lifelong friends over the course of several short stories is a central characteristic of the genre. In her reading of *Interpreter*, Brada-Williams concedes that Lahiri's characters do not live immediately around each other or reference each other in direct ways as found in Anderson's and Cisneros's respective work. By Brada-Williams's account, however, the repetition and refraction of themes are most important to the genre, and her reading of *Interpreter* functions to solidify this point.

Thematic similarities between *Interpreter* and *Arranged Marriage* make reading Divakaruni's collection as a short story cycle appealing, but *Arranged Marriage* lacks the crucial presentation of a close community of characters who are cognizant of each other and reference each other throughout a series of stories, a characteristic that I find most important to defining the short story cycle. Thus, *Arranged Marriage*, in my estimation, is not a text that fits the criteria of this particular genre but is rather a collection that illuminates themes (e.g., marriage and immigration) from disparate and overlapping perspectives that encourage us to read the stories comparatively and collectively. For that reason, I read "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" in the context of entire collection. For analysis of the short stories as individual pieces, see Wong (2004) and Leach.

three successive, succinct, and disparate snapshots of traumatic violence as experienced by women and their families in West Bengal and the U.S. As I read them, these opening stories, “Bats,” “Clothes,” and “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs,” illuminate how economic and social challenges experienced by working-class characters manifest from India to the U.S.⁴ The next three stories, “The Word Love,” “Perfect Life,” and “Maid Servant,” shift the collection’s purview to middle-class and upper-class women.⁵ Though “Perfect Life” and “Maid Servant,” as part of this narrative set, are presented from the perspectives of socially privileged figures, they also offer extensive sidelong glances at subalterns, suggesting that even as the collection’s perspective shifts to privileged families, socially marginal figures are not forgotten in that transition. In the following two stories, “Disappearance” and “Doors,” there are no shocking wife beatings, murders, or racist trauma, which Divakaruni alerted us to in the opening volley of the collection. Rather, these two stories focus on ephemeral yet troubling forms of matrimonial disharmony between young middle-class Indian American couples.⁶ The collection’s concluding narratives, “The Ultrasound,” “Affair,” and “Meeting Mrinal,” offer

⁴ The first story of the collection, “The Bats,” presents a narrative about wife abuse. In this instance, a working-class woman secures an escape from a physically abusive husband but pressures against separation and divorce compel her return to him. The following two stories, “Clothes” and “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs,” suggest that immigration to California and Chicago, respectively, does not offer an antidote to such difficulties. For example, in “Clothes” a husband is murdered during the late shift at his own convenience store, leaving his wife widowed and alone albeit hopeful in the U.S., whereas in “Silver Pavements,” a niece and aunt are accosted by a group of teenagers who heckle them by calling them “nigger.” Thus, if “Clothes” affirms the opportunities of living in the U.S. even in the face of tragedy, “Silver Pavements” suggests that despite hope and hard work, the reality for working-class immigrants consists of economic hardship and racism.

⁵ The fourth story of the collection “The Word Love” describes a PhD student’s struggle to reconcile her decision to live with white boyfriend and her mother’s expectations of proper, chaste behavior from her daughter.

⁶ “Disappearance” illuminates the distastefulness of a husband’s autocratic control over his wife and family. In “Doors,” Divakaruni has a young newlywed wife who has grown up in the U.S. learn that tensions in her marriage stem from the couple’s disparate American and Indian upbringings.

comparative middle-class Bengali and Indian American characters, doppelgangers who have been close friends but who have made drastically different choices with respect to relationship and career.⁷

These synopses are meant to highlight how the various plots of the collection are tied to registering the difficulties, disappointments, and disintegration of marriage as experienced by women of humble and upper-class Bengali Hindu origins. More precisely, Divakaruni's titular reference to *arranged* marriage informs us of the fact that a particular construction of Hindu domestic life is most pertinent to shaping the collection. Offering a historical and anthropological review of this particular construction of marriage, Devika Chawla observes that arranged marriage—a Hindu sacrament and duty—has helped socialize male spiritual and economic empowerment at the cost of dispossessing and subjugating wives to the rules of the husband and his family.⁸ Indeed, certain women have settled into this domestic arrangement. In fact, an estimated ninety-five percent of all Hindu marriages in India are still arranged. However, as Chawla and others such as Radha S. Hegde have demonstrated, the acceptance of arranged marriage has not translated into unqualified oppression of women. Moreover, there are women who have rejected the role of submissive Hindu women and wives altogether.⁹

⁷ While marriage functions amicably for one character in "Ultrasound," her friend is forced to consider aborting her unborn female child. The narrators of "Affair" and "Meeting Mrinal" are on the brink of leaving a husband or already divorced with a grown, detached teenage son.

⁸ More precisely, Hindu marriage is traditionally divided into "righteous" and "non-righteous" forms. The former has evolved into arranged marriages in which brides have been disempowered economically and socially for the aggrandizement of the groom's side of the family, whereas the latter are arranged by bride and groom and enable brides to establish a certain degree of financial solvency.

⁹ Chawla observes that in the 1980s and 1990s, economic changes enabled a greater degree of financial independence among urban women and presumably a means to avoid arranged marriages, but Hindu women continued to accept and choose traditional matrimony over "love marriages." Through her study of Punjabi Hindu women, Chawla shows how they accepted the terms of arranged marriage while also redefining and resisting them. Affirming Chawla's work, Hegde's study of battered wives in South

In Divakaruni's hands, reference to arranged marriage operates to highlight such Hindu notions of domesticity as a main framework in which to read her collection of short stories. More precisely, in *Arranged Marriage*, there are stories about abused, distraught, and discontent mothers, daughters, single women, divorcées, and female friends. While the beliefs and practices that shore up marriage are at the root of these women's discontent for the majority of the stories, in other cases, there are challenges that stem from the violence of U.S. American racism. To put it differently, Divakaruni does not posit marriage as an end point of female development but suggests that gender conventions prescribed by arranged marriage permeate the lives of her poor and elite Bengali and Indian American characters, even if they resist tradition or experience economic, social, and individual personal difficulties unrelated directly to Hindu gender hierarchy.

As this current review presents *Arranged Marriage* as a commentary on traditional Hindu gender roles, my aim is to show how "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant"—unique to the collection in their representation of impurity and juxtaposition of subaltern and upper-class characters—function to expand the collection's purview of domestic life by situating the stories within a larger ethical conversation.¹⁰ "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" are structurally alike as they begin, transition, and end similarly. That is, Divakaruni sets up the central narratives of these two stories with brief

India also illuminates the way women have acquiesced and resisted notions of wifely duty prescribed by arranged marriages. Arranged marriage, then, represents a contradictory site through which women resist and help normalize submissiveness as a paradigm of womanly virtue.

¹⁰ It is possible to group "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" with the others and emphasize how, for example, "Perfect Life" comments on the way an ambitious and single Bengali woman establishes and adapts to a life in northern California without the tortured second-guessing of assimilation that Divakaruni exhibits in "The Word Love." In a different vein, "Maid Servant" might be read alongside "Doors" as warning against marrying men who appear different from Indian men with traditional Hindu patriarchal values but whose exposure to British and U.S. culture only make overruling their wives' more subtle.

descriptions of ideal upper-class homes in the East Bay and Kolkata, respectively. Breaking that pristine surface of upper-class life, however, socially marginal characters appear at the doorsteps of the elite and are invited inside. As they assimilate to the lifestyle of the upper-class with varying degrees of success, they disrupt the smooth operation their hosts' domestic order. As a result, they are extracted from these temporary accommodations, and Divakaruni concludes the stories by having her upper-class protagonists resume their former lifestyles, almost as if their contact with subaltern figures had never occurred. However, because the socially marginal figures of "Maid Servant" and "Perfect Life" emerge in different but related historical and geographic settings, the specifics of narrative and theme are similar but not quite the same.

For example, the wife of "Maid Servant" is a representative beneficiary of Indian nationalist gender reforms. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Indian nationalists advocated for the education of upper-class women, arguing that it would guarantee the development of robust, patriotic sons and a secondary, supporting cast of daughters.¹¹ While assessing the efficacy of various nationalist reforms in education, political representation, property ownership, and widow rights, postcolonial critics have pointed out that gender reforms have benefited upper-class women but have also been deployed to reinforce colonial, national, and postcolonial hierarchies of power. Building on this critique, my reading of Divakaruni's subaltern figures evaluates the way those marginal characters have operated to illuminate the limitations of "Indian women's" social uplift. More to the point, I interpret the eponymous maid's presence of "Maid Servant" as commenting on the way gender reforms have benefited upper-class women but have not "trickled down," as promised, to benefit the rest of society. Furthermore,

¹¹ See B. Ray's discussion of Chaudhurani.

Divakaruni's figuration of an undifferentiated "mob" during the crescendo of events in this story conveys that economic and cultural reforms among the working-class are needed to question the practice of heralding the preservation of tradition at the cost of devaluing women, not just upper-class women but their working-class counterparts as well. To put it succinctly, "Maid Servant" allows us to question the ethics of nationalist gender reforms.

Through my reading of "Perfect Life," I consider how a legacy of gendered public health discourse underpins Meera's claims to U.S. nationalism. Specifically, Krishna's "dirty" emergence in an upper-class Indian American woman's immaculate East Bay home evokes early-twentieth century debates on Chinese immigrant maternity and hygiene. This history enables us to understand how Krishna's disappearance at the end of the story interrupts Meera's linked claims to maternity and Americanness. Such an interruption functions to cast doubt on the process of recognizing and incorporating subalterns into the majority. As I assess it, this process is limited because it only acculturates subalterns into a dominant class rather than addressing core issues of oppression and domination. Though it might be tempting to interpret *Arranged Marriage* as a collection that focuses only on the way Bengali and Indian American women adopt and resist culturally prescribed roles of wife, daughter, mother, friend, and citizen, my reading of "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" suggests that the collection also operates as a commentary on ethics.

To ground this discussion of ethics and subalternity, I turn to debates regarding Asian American studies' critical and theoretical foundations. Quite simply, such debates are ultimately, like "Maid Servant" and "Perfect Life," a matter of ethical responses to

the marginalization and incorporation of “others” into a dominant body. Specifically, Susan Koshy and others have pointed out that Asian American studies’ interest in and, at times, inclusion of marginal groups as part of the field’s purview have been vital to the discipline’s self-formation.¹² The efforts of South Asian Americanists have not only helped to illuminate this as a defining feature of Asian American studies, but they also have consistently and deliberately sharpened the terms of the debate.¹³ Arguments for the incorporation of South Asian American studies into Asian American studies have been diverse and even in direct opposition to each other, and recent scholarship has been careful to make its case based on historical and theoretical issues rather than common or uncommon ethnic and geographic origins, a practice more typical of past critique.¹⁴ Specifically, Sucheta Mazumdar’s foundational historical analysis of Indian American immigration, Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth’s co-edited South Asian American studies reader *A Part, yet Apart*, and Vijay Prashad and Biju Matthew’s guest edited volume on political culture in *Amerasia*, one of two leading journals of the field,

¹² In addition to discourses on the incorporation of South Asian American studies in Asian American studies, Davé et al point out that AAAS’s debates on the marginalization of Filipino American interests—as represented by controversy over Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s novel *Blu’s Hanging*—and the minoritization of East Coast and Midwest contingents of the field represented immediate critical matters of the field in 1998-1999. See my introduction for further discussion of this critical mass of scholarship.

¹³ This is not to say that only South Asian Americanists have offered alternatives, apart from claims to common ethnicity and geography, to shaping the field. Lowe’s *Immigrant Acts* and Chuh’s *Imagine Otherwise* also engage this type of work.

¹⁴ As Koshy argues, it has been characteristic for Asian American literary criticism to reassess and expand the corpus of Asian American literature by incorporating overlooked writers of past generations and authors whose ethnic group have become a “new” critical mass in the U.S. While this additive approach is commendable in certain respects, Koshy argues that profound demographic changes since 1965 have made it urgent to reassess this ethnic-based approach to field formation. That is, while legitimate claims to a common Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean ethnicity have held together the rubric of Asian American studies previously as in early studies of Asian American literature (e.g., Chan et al’s *Aiiieeeee!* and E. Kim’s *Asian American Literature*), post-1965 patterns of immigrations introduced a vast array of Asian immigrant groups to the U.S., invalidating the premise of a common ethnicity that has held together Asian American studies in the past. Koshy adds that this practice of stressing ethnicity has resulted in an unproductive truncation of analysis in which common themes have surfaced across differences among Asian immigrant groups but have been understudied.

have not only facilitated these debates but have helped shape the conceptualization of Asian American studies as a field of theoretical practice and comparative historical study rather than one that coheres around superficial claims to a common culture or location.¹⁵ Notably, Ketu H. Katrak made this point early on by introducing the concept of “simultaneity of geography” to the field. This concept names “the possibility of living here in body and elsewhere in mind and imagination” (201). For Katrak, “simultaneity of geography” named not only a defining feature of South Asian diasporic literature but also a theme that might be read across Asian American literary production. More recently, Srikanth argues in her book *The World Next Door* that South Asian American literature might be read to help complicate the nationalist frameworks of U.S. American literature. In her words, “I see South Asian American literature as providing the means to pull back from a close-up view of the United States to reveal a wider landscape of other nations and other peoples” (2004, 4). Read together, then, Katrak’s and Srikanth’s respective efforts have contributed to an oeuvre of South Asian American literary criticism that has been committed to illuminating the literature’s transnational historical and theoretical contexts, contexts that dovetail with the interests of Asian American studies.

Certainly, one way to extend Katrak’s and Srikanth’s respective critique is to read Divakaruni’s stories as describing the way colonization, transnationalization of production and labor, and anti-immigration policies in the U.S. and Britain have

¹⁵ While I agree that common thematic and theoretical interests are imperative to field formation, it also is important to acknowledge that matters such as ethnicity and geography will continue influence the definition of Asian America. R. Shankar notes that in technical terms, generic notions of geography will—regardless of cultural differences—link peoples of South, Southeast, and East Asia together, even with respect to their diasporic populations. Others such as Davé et al have nominated Asian American studies as a site where South Asian American college students who seek recognition of their experiences in the university curricula might have their needs met. That said, even as R. Shankar, Davé et al, and others acknowledge these practical reasons for cohering Asian American studies around concepts of geography and ethnicity, they also offer thematic and theoretical reasons for incorporating and extracting South Asian American studies from Asian American studies.

influenced Indian immigration to the U.S.¹⁶ While Divakaruni's work is historically

significant in this way, I want to return our attention to the broad objectives of debates on

¹⁶ For example, while late-twentieth century U.S. Asian immigration is useful for understanding the particularities of recent waves of Indian immigration that addresses the immediate “push” and “pull” factors of Meera's immigration, understanding earlier Indian immigration shows how this period of history underpins Meera's story as well. Thus, Meera's social and material achievements must be read in light of the long history of Indian immigration to the U.S. More precisely, with a protagonist who takes advantage of the U.S.'s late-twentieth century emphasis on technologically trained immigration, “Perfect Life” lends itself as a point of entry for reviewing early and more recent Indian immigration to the U.S. For review of early-twentieth century Indian immigration, see Mazumdar, Leonard, and Chandrasekhar (1982b). For review of late-twentieth century patterns of Indian immigration, see Prashad (2000). I outline this history below to illuminate my understanding of that history with respect to Divakaruni's work.

Limited migration from India to North America stretches as far back as 1790 (Chandrasekhar 1982a, 12), and with British colonization, migration from India developed into an industry of official labor importation to the West Indies decades later, starting in 1842. While the first North American Indian migrant worked on a ship to New England, the West Indian contingent constituted a large-scale indentured labor force destined to work in colonial economies. The latter form of mass labor importation extended into Canada and the U.S. in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The vast majority of those laborers were Sikh Punjabis and they landed in North America's Pacific Coast (Leonard 42-64).

As Mazumdar shows, the concentration of emigrants from Punjab arose from British annexation of Punjab and subsequent introduction of capitalist agri-business and cheaper foreign items. The destabilization of existing economies and spikes in population growth availed large groups of men for employment abroad (Mazumdar 1984a, 321-8). Opportunities for emigration to the U.S.'s Pacific Northwest came by migrants' British military service in China (Mazumdar 1984a, 328-333 and Mazumdar 1984b, 551-2). This opened ports to Canada, and significant numbers of Punjabis (i.e., more than a hundred persons per year) began in 1904 as “spill-over” from Canadian immigration. When immigration to Canada from India terminated in 1909, Indians were directly routed to the U.S. 75 to 80 percent of those immigrants were unskilled and agricultural workers, whereas others came for professional and educational advancement (Mazumdar 1984b, 558-571).

Unskilled agricultural Indian workers offered an alternative labor source to undercut the market norm for employing Chinese and Japanese workers. The Immigration Act of 1917 stalled Indian immigration by introducing prohibitive criteria for immigration and, more significantly, setting up a “barred zone”—encompassing China, India, and other Asian countries—from which immigration was restricted. These measures had their greatest impact on Indian immigration but it did not eliminate it (Bonacich 1984b, 75). Rates of legal and illegal Indian immigration were sporadic until the mid-twentieth century (Mazumdar 1984b 554-5).

Prashad traces the development of post-1965 Indian immigration—the context most relevant to Meera's manifestation on the East Bay—to the Cold War space race and arms build up. That is, when the USSR exhibited long-range ballistic capability in 1957, the U.S. responded by advancing the study of science and technology domestically. As an immediate jumpstart to this industry, the U.S. relied on immigrant scientists. This represented only the beginning of an immigration trend. When the USSR's reached another milestone, orbiting a man around the earth, President Kennedy proposed overhauling the immigration system to further facilitate the development of a highly skilled workforce through less restrictive immigration policies. In 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act that, among other items, it cultivated a new breed of skilled immigrations such as scientists and medical personnel.

H-1B visas have been particularly important in enabling companies to hire foreign high-skilled workers, and almost half of H-1B holder came from India in the early 1990s. The benefits of hiring H-1B visa holders includes increasing profits by withholding basic benefits such as health care and social security as well as mining short-term labor (three years) in an industry where there is demand for cutting edge information and technology (Prashad 80-1). Though the class of workers is different, this use of labor recalls earlier efforts of importing Indian laborers for agribusiness in California. In the case of agricultural

field formation via South Asian Americanist efforts. As noted above, their efforts have been keen on offering historical and critical bases for incorporating formerly marginal subjects of Asian American studies into the dominant field. My reading of Divakaruni's stories builds on these efforts by questioning the ethics of the incorporative process itself.

As I read them, "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" describe certain complications of incorporating and assimilating marginal subjects into the world of the elite. Through these stories Divakaruni points to the limitations of upper-class women's agency in India and the U.S. despite their advances in social and material life. Thus, "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant" indicate that despite achievements gained by women through Indian nationalist gender reforms and U.S. immigration, foundational beliefs and practices that enable the exploitation and oppression of the working-class remain firmly in tact. "Maid Servant" is especially valuable for the way it points to the significant role that the working-class play in affirming and changing society's core gender values. Divakaruni's representation of these matters shows that mere recognition by the majority and allowance of assimilation does not adequately address issues of exploitation and oppression that are at the heart of subalternity.

This reading takes inspiration from the Subaltern Studies group's interest in and effort to excavate histories that have been marginalized in the homogenization of Indian

workers and H-1B visa holders, these short-term laborers enable businesses to cut their costs and maximize profits.

Meanwhile, in India, as Prashad notes, independence dovetailed with an investment in a technical workforce for domestic development, and the institutional investment in science and technology education during the first decades of independence raised the number of students with science and technological training. Additionally, limited emigration quotas were liberalized in 1965, and this, in combination with the fact that Britain restricted emigration from the subcontinent in 1962, led to mass migration to the U.S. of a technological workforce (Prashad 2000, 72-80). Due to U.S. restrictions, by the 1980s, the technical workforce diminished and family members began to immigrate under the family reunion provision of the 1965 Act. This diversified class demographics of Indian immigrants, increasing the numbers of working-class in the U.S.

nationalist narratives.¹⁷ While I am invested in drawing attention to neglected abject figures, I am uncertain whether the stories or history of subalterns can be adequately told. Drawing on Divakaruni's, Gayatri Spivak's, and Antonio Gramsci's intersecting descriptions of subalternity, I hold that certain conventional methods of democratizing narrative and political representation do not cultivate the sort of ideological changes needed to disrupt a hegemony of domination that oppresses the vulnerable. For example, I approach the figuration of the wife in "Maid Servant" as a beneficiary of India's nationalist gender reforms, but this elite woman's immersion in her own filth also represents an indictment against her. Giving birth and raising a healthy and intelligent son has been conceived of as an ultimate act of womanhood as prescribed by heteronormative patriarchy, but by mirroring the wife in her own filth at the penultimate moment of giving birth to a son, Divakaruni indicates that conception and maternity can be problematic when deployed to justify the neglect of the banished maid who stands for the oppressed generally. Krishna's elusiveness in "Perfect Life" suggests further that conforming subalterns to dominant methods of representation only relegates them to the standards of the elite, hardly an ethical form of equality.

The Bustee and Bhadrak

The Limits of Nationalist Gender Reform

By far the longest story of the collection (at fifty-nine pages), "The Maid Servant's Story" presents two narratives, one nested deftly inside the other. Divakaruni sets the opening story in the late-twentieth century from the perspective of Manisha, a woman in her mid to late twenties who has returned to Kolkata for a family visit after

¹⁷ See Prakash and Spivak (1987) for concise documentation of the Subaltern Studies group's objectives.

having settled in California with a university teaching position. To Manisha's clear disappointment, her absence and settlement into a successful professional life in the U.S. have not broken her mother's inexplicable shell of aloofness, but they have reaffirmed her closeness to Deepa, Manisha's aunt and her mother's sister. After discussion of the younger woman's California Bengali boyfriend, Manisha and Deepa transition to a conversation about wedding saris, and Deepa cautions her niece ominously against wearing the generally accepted color of saffron on her wedding day. Explaining the cause for her warning functions as the point of entry for Deepa's "bad-luck tale," one that flashes back to the early 1960s and takes up the main mid-section of the story.

As the dominant narrative of "Maid Servant," this "bad-luck tale" accrues around "the wife," an upper-class Bengali woman. Divakaruni's brief return to Manisha's narration at the conclusion of the short story serves to confirm that the tale is, indeed, about Manisha's own mother (the wife), Deepa (the sister), a maid whom Manisha remembers only vaguely, and herself as a child. Reference to Deepa's twenty-year marriage periodizes the contemporary bookend sections of the story, as narrated by Manisha, during the mid-1980s. As suggested earlier, the nested mid-section of the narrative begins with a description of the wife as an ideal nationalist "Indian woman" and her less-accomplished unmarried younger sister who is visiting to help during the last stages of the wife's second pregnancy. More specifically, as an exemplary "Indian woman," the wife is an upper-class Bengali Hindu woman who has converted her educational opportunities into the superior supervision of an organized and tidy household and hands-on care of her young daughter. Not just an excellent housekeeper and mother, however, she also is physically attractive and inspires the admiration of her

husband, a British loyalist banker who boasts of his wife's many achievements. At first, the employment of a new maid, named Sarala by the wife, facilitates her management of the household, but Sarala's dubious past surfaces and disrupts the household's appearance of calm.

I begin with Divakaruni's introductory description of the wife, for it suggests that she has benefited from Indian nationalist and postcolonial gender reforms. At the same time, Divakaruni conveys through the wife's figuration as an ideal "Indian woman" that those reforms have not shifted certain fundamental beliefs and practices that justify the devaluation and subjugation women. Not limited to the wife, my discussion here addresses how Divakaruni's cast of characters—the wife, the sister, Sarala, a putatively "enlightened" but nefarious husband, a rioting "mob," and an indifferent general public—stand for the way that despite legal process and progress on behalf of upper-class women, fundamental ideologies of gender subordination and widespread social inequity persist, unabated by upper-class women's empowerment. Divakaruni's figuration of the "mob" as it petitions for its right to access the labor of a working-class woman especially conveys that those shifts must happen across class and caste borders but have yet to do so.

As an exemplary "Indian woman," a rubric that nationalists have deployed to refer exclusively to middle-class and upper-class Hindu women,¹⁸ the wife exhibits how

¹⁸ Discourses about upper-class Hindu women have been deployed variously to reinforce the virtues of British colonialism, nationalism, and postcolonialism. For example, British colonialists enumerated the violence against "Indian women" as one of India's many unsavory practices in order to represent themselves as advocates of the oppressed and establish exigence behind their civilizing mission. On the other hand, nationalists acceded to the value of material advances introduced by colonial rule with respect to science, technology, and the economy, but they did so only to claim the superiority of India's unique spiritual traditions as embodied by "Indian women." Over time, nationalists also argued that modern values of thrift and cleanliness were important to the development of upper-class women. See Chatterjee (1993, 116-157), Sangari and Vaid, S. Ray (2000), and Rajan's edited volume for critical analysis on the

elite women have taken advantage of nationalist educational reforms to better serve their families and the nation-state. Historically, caste women have been held to a standard of *pativrata* (devoted and self-effacing wife), a standard that has in theory confined them to the domestic sphere and has restricted them from employment and property inheritance. Expanding their access to the public sphere in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, nationalist feminists such as Sarala Devi Chaudhurani (I address Divakaruni's evocation of her name below) championed the education of middle-class and upper-class women, arguing that the future of the nation's development depended on women, the primary caretakers of the nation's sons.¹⁹ In this way, articulating Indian modernity pivoted on women's bodies as Partha Chatterjee and others argue. More precisely, in the mid-nineteenth century, nationalists yoked the responsibility of educating the emerging middle-class in matters of disciplining the body and mind to women, representing maternity as a linchpin in the development of a modern and spiritually righteous nation-state. By envisioning mothers as key players in the proper spiritual but industrious development of children, family, and nation, then, certain nationalists argued that women required formal education to impart these lessons on the family and nation.²⁰

In "Maid Servant," Divakaruni describes how women have taken advantage of this legacy of nationalist reforms through her depiction of the wife. That is, the wife is

way women have figured in colonial, national, and postcolonial discourses. For further historical review on upper-class Hindu women's political, economic, and social advancements and setbacks, see Basu and Liddle and Joshi.

¹⁹ See B. Ray's biography of Chaudhurani.

²⁰ Scholars have shown how discourses about upper-class Hindu women have been deployed variously to reinforce the virtues of British colonialism, nationalism, and postcolonialism. See S. Ray (2000), Chatterjee (1993), and Rajan's edited volume for critical analysis on the way women have figured in colonial, national, and postcolonial discourses. For historical review on upper-class Hindu women's political, economic, and social advancements and setbacks, see S. Ray and Basu in addition to Liddle and Joshi.

college educated, an uncommon distinction for women of the mid-twentieth century as remarked by the narrator, and she remains intellectually active by reading books, learning music, and writing letters to her family. These pursuits, however, are not self-serving, for her devotion to the home has only been enhanced by such individual pursuits. The wife maintains the smooth operation of the husband's family's luxurious estate, located in an esteemed section of Kolkata, by supervising a cadre of domestics and caring for all the dependents in the household. For example, she feeds, bathes, and reads to her daughter rather than rely on an *ayah* (nanny) as her peers have, and though there is no mother-in-law with whom to contend, there is an ornery aunt of whom she nevertheless takes care without complaint.

While the wife stands for Divakaruni's portrait of a paradigmatic "Indian woman," the author also describes the subtle ways in which the wife disobeys her husband's implied authority. Notably, such agency and resistance are showcased in response to Sarala's invitation into the household. When Sarala first appears at the gates of the family's estate, the wife invites her inside despite the sister's attempt to intervene. The sister characterizes herself according to a habit of wariness, and this habit leads us to second-guess the other characters' actions. In this case, her concern over Sarala's invitation into the household stems from the husband's previous declarations against helping "ragged" tramps, trespassing street urchins, and aggressive beggar women who appear at their gates to ask for food. With Sarala, however, the wife makes an exception because, as suggested by Divakaruni's description of the maid, she is not like the unruly, dirty, and animalistic masses that have previously petitioned for alms.

There is no mistake that Sarala is an unemployed working-class “girl” when she first emerges in the story as her coarse sari and bony appearance suggest. However, a distinctive air of regality—Sarala reminds the narrator of a forest goddess—differentiates her from the wretched masses and this gains her entrance into the gated estate. More precisely, Sarala looks not only like a forest goddess but according to the narrator’s first impression, Sarala is attractive in a “primitive, *adivasi*” way. *Adivasis* are India’s indigenous inhabitants and known to share a strong connection to the land and forest, though they are a diverse group differentiated in terms of culture, language, location, occupation, and responsiveness to modernization.²¹ While certain *adivasis* have profited from modernization, Divakaruni’s identification of Sarala as an *adivasi* and forest goddess suggest that, in the case of “Maid Servant,” an evocation of *adivasis* is meant to emphasize Sarala’s unschooled potential. In other words, Sarala might be untrained in the ways of upper-class civility but despite her lack of edification, she assumes an air of rustic regality and decorum. She is acceptably primitive, a distinction that sets her apart from the vulgar working-class. More importantly, Sarala’s potential indicates that representation of working-class and indigenous people is difficult if not impossible, given the fact that the suppression of their “vulgarities” is intrinsic to Sarala’s recognition and representation. In this way, Divakaruni suggests that true equality cannot be achieved when one group is subjugated to the terms of the other for recognition.

Drawing on Chatterjee’s review of nationalist discourses on “Indian women,” I read Divakaruni’s descriptions of Sarala as representing a “common woman.” Though “common women” are typically characterized by immorality and crudeness, Divakaruni

²¹ See Collu for further details on *adivasis* and discussion on their representational significance in Mahasweta Devi’s “Douloti the Bountiful.”

presents Sarala as one who has the potential to assume middle-class habits and thus help normalize middle-class culture as national culture. To put it differently, beyond educating her family, the wife also helps develop the potential of a working-class counterpart. Of course, this says as much about Sarala's potential as it does about the wife. That is, while the sister's inclination is to reject Sarala's request for work, following her brother-in-law's established course of action, the wife's ability to differentiate Sarala from other desperate petitioners and to develop an independent decision based on her own observations suggest that the wife does not submit blindly to patriarchal directives. In this way, Sarala's presence complicates the laudatory introduction to the wife's educated obedience and domesticity.

However, Divakaruni indicates that hiring and educating Sarala, while at odds with the husband's initial opinions, would not proceed without his conditional approval. For example, when the husband learns about Sarala's hiring, he objects vehemently but relents after Sarala makes her appearance before him. Unlike the sister's and wife's initial impression of Sarala's quiet regal strength, the narrator, assessing Sarala's sexual potential from the husband's perspective, makes note of her "slim," "straight," "taut," and "sinuous" physique, adding specific mention of Sarala's "curve of breast and hip" (121). For the husband, Sarala is welcome for her sexual appeal. Once established in the household as the wife's faithful maid, the wife begins to teach Sarala how to read and write despite expected objections from the husband. When the husband learns of these lessons, he protests on the basis that literacy empowers the working-class and could shift the reigning power structure. The wife defends herself and Sarala by claiming the importance of helping exploited women and making the most of Sarala's individual

intelligence. She punctuates this line of argument by evoking her husband's grandfather's endorsement of similar social work. At this point, the husband finally relents. Indeed, in both cases, the husband agrees to the wife's decision to disobey his implicit authority, suggesting that the husband must actually sanction the wife's resistance of him. This ironic struggle over Sarala's hiring and education indicate that while on one hand the husband's concessions denote his wife's agency, on the other, they also suggest that on a certain level, she requires her husband's final approval.

Divakaruni complicates the wife's agency further through her hospitalization, emphasizing the point that her presence is important to maintaining domestic order. On one hand, the narrator recognizes that though the wife is credited with the smooth operation of the domestic workforce, it functions just as efficiently in her absence. On a more intimate level, more importantly, are the details of household that run amok when the wife is not present within the home. To refresh our memory, when the wife is close to giving birth to her second child, she experiences unusual discomfort and her doctor recommends hospitalization. During the wife's hospitalization, the sister witnesses the husband's sexual harassment of Sarala at the doorway of the maid's room. Rather than intervene or confront either the husband or Sarala, the sister remains silent, begging off responsibility by claiming ignorance in such matters, a need to protect her sister from dishonor, and knowledge that such indiscretions are normal for most families. The important point here is that with the wife gone, the husband seizes upon an opportunity for an extramarital affair within their home, and the sister is unable to prevent it.

A second case of domestic disturbance surfaces during Sarala's expulsion from the home. Just prior to the wife's hospitalization, Sarala's mother appears at the gates and

demands to take Sarala back to Biru, Sarala's "husband," but Sarala refuses, justifying this refusal on the basis that her mother and Biru have forced her into sex work. At this point, the conversation becomes heated as the mother calls Sarala's accusation a "stinking" lie and promises to return the following day with reinforcements from the *bustee* (the slum) to "[m]ake a stink like you won't believe" (139). Despite the potential threat of the bustee's "stink," a metaphorical stench of shame so vile that others will act in response to it, the wife exerts her authority and defends Sarala against exploitation. That is, she responds by forcefully dismissing the mother and by having the *darwan* (gatekeeper) escort her out of the property. These results change drastically when Sarala's mother returns with bustee in the wife's absence. The morning after Sarala rejects the husband's overtures, the mother returns with reinforcements from the bustee, and this time, the wife and darwan are not on premises to protect Sarala. Timid at first, the sister takes command of the situation with the cook and gardener beside her as they face off with the bustee.

While the sister in the wife's stead manages to fend off the crowd with the help of the gardener, cook, and the police who arrive just when the bustee breaks open the gates, she cannot secure Sarala's safety from the husband. When the husband comes home after the bustee's protest, he decides to ask Sarala to leave based on the shame and potential danger to the family, the "stink" that the mother promised to bring to the household. The sister protests, but the husband overrules her and commands Sarala's expulsion from the estate. At this point, the wife's absence makes a significant difference as her previous victories in debates with her husband suggest that she would have outmaneuvered him and secured Sarala's safety once again. Here then, the sister's "failure" helps to shine

light on the fact that Sarala's safety and edification have been dependent on the benevolence of one empowered upper-class woman.

Read alongside the sister's defeat, the crowd that gathers around Sarala's ousting demonstrates that the empowerment of upper-class women cannot, by itself, sustain the uplift of the masses at large. More specifically, during the bustee's protest, the contest over Sarala's future brings the "stinking" masses, and what I call "dirty bodies" elsewhere in the dissertation, into the frame of the narrative. I define dirty bodies as minor characters who have minimal narrative presence and bear a metonymic association with filth that represents profound social marginalization. As the bustee forces its way through the gates of the family's compound, a symbolic entry into the narrative, these dirty bodies claim recognition, not as Sarala who accedes to middle-class gentility, but as Kolkata's "lowest" common denominator who have no discernable potential for acculturating to a bourgeois lifestyle. Unable to individualize all their faces, the sister only sees flashes of rotting teeth, "flared nostrils," hateful frowns, and "wolfish grins." As a dirty, baleful, and animalistic "mob," the bustee represents the counterpoint to the wife's family, and this unhealthy and unhygienic "mob" has come to the steps of the *bhadralok* (people of good family, esteemed in class and caste) to reclaim one of its own.

While their presence helps to draw attention to the poverty that percolates under the calm surface of upper-class life, their purpose for rising to action is questionable. That is, they have assembled to return Sarala to a mother and "husband" who will exploit her. At the same time, I also interpret their presence as decrying the opportunities that one of their own has secured individually while they have been left out of a process of uplift to which the wife invites Sarala.

Surrounding this “mob,” an audience of local workers gathers to watch but not intervene in the protest. While the inaction of the onlookers—“street vendors and sweepers, passersby on their way to work, servants from some neighboring houses” (150)—convey that they take neither side in this power struggle, by doing so, they help to seal Sarala’s expulsion from a safe household and her return to forced sex work. In short, the assembly of bustee and working-class onlookers affirm collectively Sarala’s mother’s and “husband’s” right to make decisions on behalf of a daughter and wife, even if that means submitting Sarala to forced prostitution. By subjecting her to the will of the bustee, Divakaruni represents Sarala, despite her airs of regality, as the subaltern’s subaltern. Accounting for this doubly subjugated figure, Divakaruni takes the emphasis off of Sarala’s own individual development and turns our focus to the crowd, indicating that gender reforms are needed not only to advance elite’s women’s educational opportunities but also to shift the way women and men from the working-class reify gender hierarchy.

The husband’s indiscretions offer only further evidence that changes in gender hierarchy are needed from the bhadralok as well as the bustee. That is, he plays a likely role in the mother’s second and successful attempt to extract Sarala from his household. Though Divakaruni never explicitly implicates the husband in enabling the mother’s return when he, the darwan, and wife are not on premises, the mob’s manifestation at an all too convenient time, the morning after Sarala has refused his overtures, suggests that he is responsible for inviting them back to estate. To review, we witness Sarala repel the husband’s advances by scratching and pushing him the evening before her ousting, and at the end of this struggle, the husband shoves her back, cursing, “Bitch! You’ll be sorry” (146). The next day, the bustee arrives, weeks after the mother promised to return with

reinforcements. Though Sarala's return to prostitution is likely, the husband claims he has no other choice but to release Sarala from his wife's employment to maintain the family's safety and good name. Here then, the sister has little chance in opposing the collective will of a working-class "mob" and an upper-class British loyalist. The point here is to consider how the bustee and the bhadralok guarantee Sarala's abuse. Their mutual complicity shows us how perceptions of gender inequality must be challenged across class and caste differences, rather than focusing the energies of gender reform solely on fostering elite women's political and economic agency.

As noted earlier, nationalists argued that the edification of upper-class women would "trickle down" through society because as mothers, they would impart their knowledge and habits to the family who would then spread their enlightenment throughout society. While nationalist and postcolonial reforms have benefited middle-class and upper-class women by reforming certain laws (e.g., widow remarriage, child marriage, rights to property ownership, political representation, and educational opportunities), those reforms have not benefited the majority of women.²² In "Maid Servant," the wife's class and caste status enable her to take advantage of those reforms as she overrules and asserts authority over her husband, the husband's ornery aunt, and Sarala's mother. However, Divakaruni conveys that the "trickle down" effect has not functioned to disrupt prevailing, oppressive gender hierarchies.

The "Stink" of Progress

Assessing nineteenth century literary representations of public health discourses and practices in India, William Kupinse argues that though sanitation efforts have

²² See Liddle and Joshi (39).

functioned as an arm of colonization in India, the Philippines, and regions of Africa, the keenness of India's novelistic responses to public health commentary differentiates its hygienic discourse from the others. In my estimation, such commentary extends through the late-twentieth century with literature of the diaspora as in the case of *Arranged Marriage*. Though "Maid Servant" does not take place entirely in India and though it is not a novel,²³ references to an epidemic with long lineage and modern health care services clearly put it astride earlier responses to colonial institutions of health. More precisely, in "Maid Servant," references to the cholera epidemic of 1964, ineffective health clinics, and an unhygienic hospital help volley a critique against upper-class nationalist reforms.

Early on in the story, we learn that the wife's husband and newborn succumbed to a cholera epidemic after the maid servant was ousted from the household. Although cholera existed before the nineteenth century, virulent outbreaks starting in 1817 commanded heightened public attention and action from both British and Indian officials. More importantly, according to David Arnold, the 1817 outbreak dovetailed with the expansion of British rule in South Asia, linking onslaughts of cholera and colonialism. This was not a coincidental association as British military personnel inhabited unsanitary living conditions that facilitated the spread of cholera among their ranks. Moreover, trekking throughout India, they carried and spread cholera along with them (Arnold 168-9). While certain Indians recognized this connection between the spread of colonialism and cholera, Arnold argues that they were more likely to assess the spread of cholera as a

²³ I differentiate novels and short stories not only by their length but also by a narrative's breadth. That is, though "Maid Servant" is the longest story of the collection, it focuses on a particular episode, a turning point in a family's history, whereas novels, as I understand them, are more prone to elaborating on the events that lead up to and conclude transitional moments.

part of religious beliefs. Meanwhile, Europeans were more amenable to faulting their Indian counterparts for the epidemic, and in an iteration of this blame game, Hindu bathing rituals and pilgrimage were targeted as a vector of the disease. This discourse, as Arnold contends, helped justify colonialist claims of Indian inferiority, even though the British military were as culpable and thus as “inferior” as Hindu pilgrims for carrying and spreading cholera (183-9). In light of this history, I read Divakaruni’s representation of the husband’s death by cholera as helping to reactivate the link between the epidemic and British colonialism. Additionally, because cholera has been especially virulent among the rural poor, I interpret Divakaruni’s emphasis on an upper-class family’s submission to the epidemic as having less to do with historical facts and more to do with its literary significance.

To understand this significance, I turn to Arnold who observes that contracting cholera is a filthy pathway to death. In his words, the symptoms of cholera “spoke only of the vile pollution of diarrhea and vomit” (161). I read the husband’s contraction of cholera as highlighting his own moral “stink” and the faultiness of British claims to superiority. That is, the husband’s pathway to death, characterized by symptoms of diarrhea and vomit, help manifest his moral depravity, a different “stink” from the one associated with the socially marginal figures of the bustee. Here, the husband is not physically dirty or unkempt, but by attacking Sarala during an unreciprocated clandestine tryst and championing class inequity, he exhibits “low” ethical standards.

Having the husband, as a British loyalist, die from cholera allows Divakaruni to not only emphasize his depravity and but also gesture to the faultiness of British claims to superiority. More specifically, anticipating the approach of cholera in Europe during the

1820s, European officials believed that cholera would be kept at bay by their superior modern defenses, but they were proven wrong as cholera crossed into Europe as it had in other parts of the world (Prashad 1994, 247). Similarly, by the 1960s western trained scientists believed that cholera had been eliminated by improved modern sanitation systems, but a new strain resisted those improvements and re-emerged worldwide in the 1960s and 1970s (De 247). During this epidemic, cholera touched down officially in Kolkata in 1964, and as a literary device, Divakaruni's draws on this particular history to imagine a cause for the husband's death.

In light of this history, I read the husband's death by cholera as emphasizing the limitations of modern health reforms. References to the husband's grandfather's charitable works in health care and education punctuate this critique, particularly as it relates to the efficacy of modern reforms for the working-class. Introducing the husband to the narrative, Divakaruni does so by making note of his grandfather's sponsorship of free medical clinics and slum schools. By the bustee's and Sarala's presence, however, Divakaruni suggests that the grandfather's charity has not been effective. For example, the narrator's description of the bustee's "rotted" teeth and their body odor testify to their lack of interest in modern health and hygiene standards. Sarala's illiteracy also intimates that the grandfather's efforts have not been extended and/or taken up by those who appear willing to learn. While the shortcomings of these reforms might stem from the limited reach of the reforms themselves or from family's who are resistant to change, the point remains that for Divakaruni, educational and public health initiatives have had limited reach among the working-class. For Sarala, her mother's exploitation makes it clear that even if Sarala had the opportunity to attend school, her mother would have

denied her, conveying that without ideological changes among the working-class, the abject subjugation of poor women will persist.

Divakaruni's ironic naming of Sarala sharpens this point. As noted above, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani was an early nationalist feminist who advocated the education of upper-class women. Chaudhurani claimed that the education of elite women would serve the nation because mothers, according to Chaudhurani, represented the backbone of the family, and by enlightening the family, the nation would uplift its citizens. By naming an illiterate and exploited maid after this nationalist figure, Divakaruni indicates that Chaudhurani's claims have not functioned to uplift working-class women along with their elite counterparts. This also registers an implicit critique of formal education, questioning the weight put on educational institutions for uplifting the masses.

In line with this commentary on Kolkata's public health conditions, the threadbare and unpleasant conditions of the wife's hospital accommodations suggest further that modern health services were lacking in the early 1960s despite efforts to institutionalize them. One of the last scenes of Deepa's "bad-luck tale," set a year after Sarala's ejection from the household, clarifies this point. During this scene, the wife, husband, their two children, and the sister are being chauffeured to a party and, in order to avoid traffic, detour into a red light district. The wife claims one of the sex workers is Sarala, and disregarding her husband's angry warnings against it, the wife reaches out to the woman and calls Sarala's name. Responding to the wife, the sex worker spits a "bloodred wad of betel leaf" onto the wife's palm. This rejection, whether the woman is or is not Sarala, is so traumatic for the wife that it leaves a lasting impression on her, hardening her into a distant version of her former self. Read in light of this scene, the stench of urine and the

lasting stain of splattered betel leaf juice convey, as I interpret them, the wife's own ethical shortcomings. More precisely, when the wife returns to the estate after giving birth, celebrations preoccupy her, and though she mourns Sarala's disappearance, she does so briefly. That is, upon her return to the estate, the wife simplifies Sarala's dreadful situation, commenting "Poor Sarala," adding only, "Poor, poor girl" (157). While the wife is understandably focused on her newborn and not on a former employee, I contend that empathy for such solipsistic maternity only legitimates her social irresponsibility. I am not arguing that the wife should be responsible for the fate of every employee, but from the beginning, Sarala is not just any other maid. She outshines the service and loyalty among all of the workers, even calling the wife the familiar *Didi* (older sister). Taking matters one-step further, Sarala risks her safety by leaving the estate to procure a blessing for the wife when the wife is initially uncomfortable as a result of her pregnancy. Indeed, leaving the estate exposes Sarala to those who recognize her and force her back into sex work. While Sarala risks her own well-being in this way, the wife does not return the favor by searching for Sarala or even by objecting more vociferously to her husband's final expulsion of the maid. This expulsion, resulting in all likelihood with Sarala's return to forced prostitution, indicates that the wife's "Poor, poor girl" response to the situation is not only an underwhelming and inappropriate remark given the circumstance, but it also is an indictment against the wife's ideal Indian womanhood. Simply put, Sarala's unparalleled devotion to the wife and the wife's lack of reciprocation suggest that a nationalist paradigm of maternity has operated to reinforce the subjugation of working-class women.

Maternity and Subalternity in “A Perfect Life”

In “Maid Servant,” the wife’s interests are split between obligations to a newborn and a devoted maid who is forced to return to sex work. The wife’s decision to privilege family over her maid’s security situates her firmly as an ideal “Indian woman” and devoted mother. Contrastingly, “Perfect Life” describes how such maternal and civic obligations might be stitched back together by introducing us to Meera, a twenty-eight year old recent but acculturated immigrant from Kolkata, who functions as the story’s narrator and protagonist. Meera lives an enviable existence by U.S. American standards, and for her, those standards consist of supporting herself with a fulfilling and lucrative job as a bank’s resident software expert. This affords her a chic apartment, designer clothes, and a content personal life with friends and a committed yet “free” relationship with a white boyfriend named Richard. Responsible primarily for her own happiness, then, Meera is out of her element when she stumbles across Krishna, a homeless and obviously abused child who requires her attention and care. Despite wishing the boy to disappear, she sympathizes with him and subsequently invites him into her home. There is a steep learning curve, but Meera surmounts it by assimilating this once “wild animal” into her life, even jeopardizing her relationship with Richard over caring for Krishna. Taking matters one step further, she tries to adopt Krishna, but he runs away after Meera, in order to process the adoption, has turned him temporarily over to foster care. Though his rejection aggrieves Meera, she returns to Richard with promises to marry him under the condition that they not have children, a likely outcome of his past objections to Krishna’s intrusion in their “perfect life.”

In this version of maternity and subalternity, a narrative parallel to the one found in “Maid Servant,” the author offers us an elite protagonist who extends her maternal care to a vulnerable subaltern. Unlike “Maid Servant,” however, “Perfect Life” suggests that maternity can be deployed for ethical purposes. That said, maternity is not a straightforward choice for Meera because in certain ways it disrupts and reinforces her claim to being an American. I read those claims in light of late-twentieth century debates on Indian American nationalism and early-twentieth century health discourses on Chinese immigrant maternity. This history presents a context in which to read Meera’s initial rejection and eventual acceptance of maternal “instincts.” As Divakaruni describes how mothering skills, such as the instruction of proper hygiene habits, might be deployed on behalf of helping a subaltern, the author indicates that Meera’s attempt to incorporate Krishna into her upper-class life is not an adequate means to addressing his needs. In other words, Meera’s actions illuminate how maternity has been used as a vector for acculturating subjects to a dominant culture, casting doubt on the ethics of assimilating the formerly oppressed to upper-class life. Thus, Krishna’s presence and subsequent disappearance articulates the failure of formal incorporative processes to offer the kind of ideological shifts needed to disrupt reigning hegemonies of domination and subjugation that perpetuate subalternity.

Nationalist Maternity

Unlike the ideal Indian woman projected as the wife of “Maid Servant,” Meera rejects the thought of subjecting her interests to motherhood and, by extension, “Indian” tradition. That is, at the beginning of her story, Meera objects to the indignities and

parochialisms of childcare to which her inferior cast of “Indian” counterparts have been assigned. As I read it, Meera’s contempt for maternity and India serves to address the Indian American community’s practice of yoking women with the responsibility of preserving “Indian” tradition. Furthermore, Divakaruni’s comparison of Meera and her undifferentiated cast of “Indian” counterparts functions as a commentary on the way discourses of health, gender, and nation have intersected to represent India as primitive and inferior in comparison to the West. Finally, I approach Divakaruni’s figuration of maternity as setting up Meera’s transformation from an affluent and independent American to a socially responsible citizen.

Divakaruni begins “Perfect Life” by introducing us to Meera whom the author characterizes in contrast to Meera’s “Indian” friends. That is, Divakaruni identifies Meera and these “Indian” counterparts in terms of their Americanness or Indianness, cultural reference points that are elaborated by their material living conditions, employment, personal appearance, and various relationships. Growing up in Kolkata as a teenager, Meera fantasized about life in the U.S., and by her late twenties, during which the narrative takes place, she achieves the dream of settling in the U.S. and feeling “like a true American” (73). More specifically, Divakaruni marks Meera’s Americanness with material and personal achievements: she lives in a desirable East Bay apartment, works a satisfying job at a bank, wears European and American designer clothes, and balances her professional life with good friends and a “[t]all and lean and sophisticated” boyfriend who respects Meera’s need for intimacy and independence. Additional multi-cultural reference points underscore her cosmopolitan American lifestyle. That is, rather than circumscribe her cultural interests to India and the U.S., Divakaruni notes that Meera

listens to Ravi Shankar as easily as she listens to Chopin and Dvorak and does so while relaxing in a blue silk kimono and posh European and American designer labels.

Dabbling in such globally recognizable and commercialized Indian, Polish-French, Czech, Japanese, and various brands of European and U.S. American culture, Meera differentiates herself from her parochial sari-clad “Indian” counterparts whose main interests focus narrowly around their families and motherhood.

Describing those inferior counterparts, Divakaruni has Meera make contemptuous note of their unkempt hair, stained saris, and bodies that sag ungracefully under the heft of post-baby weight. As Meera’s sums up their appearance, “They looked just like my cousins back home who were already on their second and third and sometimes fourth babies. They might as well have not come to America” (76). In Meera’s eyes, then, motherhood and Indianness are linked inferior states of being from which she differentiates herself. Indeed, her “Indian” friends are the opposite of the impeccably polished and un-attached Meera. As an extension of these “Indian” appearances, the houses of Meera’s friends are in disarray, resulting primarily from the responsibilities of raising children. Specifically, “[t]he households of friends who had babies seemed to me a constant flurry of crying and feeding and burping and throwing up” (74), and emphasizing this point, Meera adds that “over everything hung the oppressive stench (there was no other word for it) of baby wipes and Lysol spray and soiled diapers” (74-5). Here, babies are the matrix for disorganization and filth, a filth so oppressive that it overwhelms and eludes the mitigating efforts of disinfectant sprays.

The unkempt condition of these “Indian” homes resonates with Meera’s opening description of India as a “moist, sticky” space. Meera recalls that as a teenager she spent

her humid nights in a cinema house where a “rickety ceiling fan that revolved tiredly” offered little relief against the uncomfortable humidity but where films imported from the U.S. offered a different form of reprieve (73). Thus, while “moist, sticky” air is not quite on par with vomit and excrement, they all cause Meera’s discomfort and are aligned with an India that Meera—to her mind—has escaped, geographically and culturally with American exports and becoming American. Her vision of India—a land of tropical climates, primitive mechanisms, and dirty babies—echoes against certain historical representations of India as a filthy, diseased, and chaotic place, a charge made by Europeans and Indians alike.²⁴

Divakaruni builds on this long history of associating impurity with India by introducing “mother-love” into the equation. Meera describes this love as messy and instinctual: “Real and primitive and dangerous, lurking somewhere in the female genes—especially our Indian ones—waiting to attack. I was determined to watch out for it” (75). Here, my interest lies not in criticizing such an essentialist remark but on examining the significance of linking primitiveness, motherhood, and India in the contemporary moment.

These equations evoke historical discourses on Indian immigrant maternity in the late-twentieth century. Observers of late-twentieth century U.S. Indian immigrants have argued that the “community’s” preservation of “Indian” culture has been indexed against the extent to which women have become submissive wives and self-sacrificing mothers. Specifically, the self-proclaimed representatives of this community, whom Anannya

²⁴ For critical review of those discourses, see Chakrabarty (1991) who notes that such rhetoric, which sought to describe, decry, and rehabilitate India’s filthy conditions, stemmed from a modern ontology of humanity. At the same time, as Prashad points out (1994), European observers also identified Indians with a high level of personal hygiene.

Bhattacharjee identifies as the immigrant Indian bourgeoisie, have upheld patriarchal Hindu gender roles in the name of protecting the “community’s” connection to Indian culture. Though she recognizes that these self-appointed spokespeople are not homogenous, Bhattacharjee finds it characteristic for representatives of this cohort (e.g., the National Federation of Indian Associations) to speak on behalf of the “Indian community” by espousing the value of U.S.-based technology and economics while pledging a commitment to preserving the autonomy of Indian culture through, for example, discourses that standardize traditional Hindu gender roles.²⁵ Read alongside studies such as Chawla’s reading of gender expectations in late-twentieth century India, Bhattacharjee’s work conveys that traditional Hindu values have been stretched across to the U.S., functioning to affirm masculinist gender roles and to consolidate an Indian Hindu immigrant bourgeoisie as the gold standard of the Indian immigrant community. Bhattacharjee concludes, “any challenge to the family or the Indian community translates into a betrayal of national cultural values for the national bourgeoisie. For the woman (who is the mother, the wife, the bride, the daughter-in-law, or the daughter-to-be-married) to disown her roles is to betray not just the family, but also the nation” (10). Thus, the preservation of traditional Hindu family life through the control of women is bound up with the preservation of Indianness in the U.S.

In light of this context, Divakaruni deepens the meaning of Meera’s derision of India’s oppressive traditions and primitiveness by suggesting that her contempt stands for a rejection of “the” Indian community’s mores and her claim to the civilities of individualism, solvency, and materialism. Meera reflects on this issue when she states,

²⁵ Postcolonialists have made a similar claim with respect to women and their role in representing Indian nationalism. For an alternative reading of the feminist elements of Hindu gender beliefs, see John and Nair.

“for the first time in my life I felt free. It was an exhilarating sensation, once I got used to it. It made me giddy and weightless, like I could float away at any moment” (74). Simply put, for Meera, individualism (i.e., not being an “Indian woman”) is a treasured and definitive aspect of her American life.

However, Krishna’s introduction into Meera’s life brings the very disorder and responsibility that she abhors into her home, suggesting that at least initially his presence threatens to re-introduce Meera to being a proper Indian woman. However, I contend that Meera re-routes the representational significance of motherhood espoused in the Indian immigrant “community” to affirm her ethical responsibility as an American. When Meera first sees Krishna, he has backed into a small dark corner under the apartment’s vestibule stairwell, reminding Meera of a “wild animal,” an animal humanized only marginally by a “filthy shirt.” Despite certain reservations, Meera decides to extract Krishna from the corner and in doing so, Krishna scratches her and “ruins” her designer running suit. Meera’s spoiled clothes foreshadow not only the havoc that Krishna wreaks during that day but also in her future plans. That is, Meera’s professional and personal schedules are no less than meticulously kept, and the morning after finding Krishna, she has to forego her morning routine of working out. This sets the pace of her day as Meera’s usually punctual and fastidious performance at work falls into disarray: “I’d been late to work (a first). I’d run into the meeting room, out of breath, my unwashed hair falling into my eyes, my spreadsheets all out of order. My presentation had been second-rate at best (another first), and when Dan Luftner, Head of Loans, who’d been waiting for years to catch me out, asked me for an update on the monthly statements software the bank had purchased a while back, I’d been unable to give him an adequate answer” (78-9). This

summary of Meera's lateness, unwashed hair, and disorganized spreadsheets emphasizes in multiple registers that Krishna has disrupted the usual order of Meera's life. In fact, for Meera, the events of the day, punctuated by her chief rival's triumph over Meera's unpreparedness, represent a "low point" in her professional life.

After this atypical day at work, Meera arrives home to an unwelcoming surprise. While left alone in her apartment during the day, Krishna produces a foul mess as odors of excrement permeate her usually pristine apartment. Cited at the top of this chapter, this scene envelops Meera in an "oppressive stench" even worse than her friends' homes. Thus, the squalid condition of Meera's apartment indicates that Krishna's incorporation into Meera's world is disruptive enough to break the "cool, clean" shell of her formerly perfect life. Though Meera is tempted to scold Krishna for such "savagery," she succumbs to his obvious vulnerability and decides to take care of him.

At first glance, then, Meera's decision to incorporate Krishna and the dirty mess that accompanies him into her home suggests that she accedes to what Meera perceives to be an Indian part of her. That is, mothering Krishna—a disorderly and dirty child—likens her to those Indian friends whose houses are unkempt and in disarray as a result of having children. Because Meera associates maternity, disorganization, and dirtiness with India, Krishna would seem to represent Meera's idea of being properly Indian. Even more, when Meera realizes she must turn Krishna over to social services before she can adopt him legally, she wonders if she should have bypassed the process altogether and taken Krishna to India. As a space where unregulated adoption might have been overlooked, India, as Meera imagines it, is linked to a certain disorderliness that echoes the chaos that children reek in her friends' lives. It also is worth mentioning that Krishna, the name

Meera gives to him, is a Hindu deity whose adoption as an infant put him out of harm's way and saved his life. In these various ways, Divakaruni underscores the point that Meera associates Krishna with her idea of India, despite the fact that Meera's friend Sharmila points out that he does not look "Indian." Succinctly put, for Meera, being a mother to Krishna should make her more Indian.

This is not just a one-way affair as we have seen through Meera's first contact with Krishna: when he scratches her, he also soils her designer clothes. Reiterating this point, Meera spends the day at work with unwashed hair and soapy water soaks through her white Givenchy blouse during Krishna's first bath, suggesting that even while Meera teaches Krishna to be more like her, her meticulous appearance becomes dirty through their contact. Admittedly, a blouse soaked in warm soapy water is hardly filthy, but its whiteness and high-end nature stand for the garment's refined delicacy, a delicacy that is, in fact, easily susceptible to water damage. For Meera, then, a water-logged Givenchy blouse is much like Krishna's filthy shirt, and linking them in this way indicates that as much as Meera cleans Krishna, Krishna makes Meera dirty and thus more properly Indian.

While Krishna appears to re-introduce Meera to a maternal and Indian side of her as defined by certain spokespersons of Indian American culture, Meera adapts to the situation by developing a new routine that prioritizes assimilating Krishna to her lifestyle. This conveys that it is not Krishna who makes Meera properly Indian but Meera who makes Krishna and herself more properly American. Indeed, rather than scold Krishna after defiling her apartment by his improper use of the toilet, Divakaruni ends the scene by having Meera give Krishna a bath. Reluctant to get into the bath at first as a result of

past abuse, Krishna eventually relents to Meera's urgings. Assessing the outcome, Meera observes "he looked a lot better after his bath, with his hair all shiny and his face clean, and weren't the circles under his eyes a little lighter?" (82). This trend of cleaning, polishing, and lightening Krishna continues as he not only begins to smell of Meera's jasmine soap but also learns to tidy after himself and use the bathroom properly over time. In fact, Krishna's progress gives Meera such satisfaction that professional achievements and her relationship with Richard begin to take secondary importance to mothering Krishna. Though her domestic priorities have changed, her habit for order has not. Moreover, smelling like jasmine soap, making his own bed, and using the bathroom properly suggest that Krishna has endeared himself to Meera because he has assimilated to her lifestyle. Thus, Meera's brand of motherhood does not consist of an unruly household and a persistent stench of vomit and excrement; it consists of normalizing a subaltern to a structured routine and habits that characterize a civilized modern lifestyle. More precisely, Meera's efforts to teach Krishna proper hygiene habits and assimilate him to her upper-class lifestyle stand for a different way of asserting her socially responsible Americanness, rather than a "primitive" Indian selfhood of parochial mother-love.

Historically speaking, scholars such as Nayan Shah and Bonnie McElhinny have observed how discourses of maternity, nationality, and public health intersected in the context of early-twentieth century U.S. domestic and colonial settings, respectively. As they show, domestic and colonial health reformers argued that the development of physically and morally healthy subjects hinged on teaching mothers how to prevent

disease and facilitate healthy child development.²⁶ In this way, mothers became a key vector through which U.S. middle-class heterosexual domesticity was institutionalized as part of dominant culture. With respect to early twentieth century San Francisco—the most pertinent geographic context with respect to “Perfect Life”—Shah focuses on the efforts that extended childcare instruction to Chinese immigrant households, instruction that lagged behind programs for white citizens despite the fact that birthrates had been rising among Chinese immigrants. Advocating on behalf of this group, Chinese American social workers called for improved social services as they cited the growing presence of Chinese immigrant housewives and growing birthrates. For those social workers and others, then, the presence of wives and children symbolized the presence of heteronormative family life among Chinese immigrants, a direct challenge to reigning nineteenth century perceptions of Chinese immigrant bachelorhood and female prostitution. In other words, transforming notions of San Francisco’s Chinatown as a symbol of disease, dirtiness, and deviance into a site inhabited by candidates for citizenship pivoted on the bodies of women. These calls for the instruction of health and hygiene, especially with respect to mothers and children, operated to nominate Chinese immigrants for improved social services and housing. In fact, in certain respect, the work of Shah’s book *Contagious Divides* reads as a narrative of the way discourses of health, hygiene, and domestic life were deployed in demonizing an immigrant group and then revised to transform certain members of that marginal group into representatives of model middle-class citizenry.

²⁶ With respect to a U.S. national context, see Shah’s discussion of maternity (2001, 204-24). For a U.S. colonial context, see McElhinny’s analysis of public health responses to regulating Filipina maternity in the early-twentieth century.

Notably, Chinese and Indian immigrants were compared in early-twentieth century public health discourses. They were characterized as dirty and diseased in parallel and overlapping ways, and public health discourses drew on these dubious alignments to regulate their entry into the U.S.²⁷ Though Indian and Chinese were likened to each other as unsavory but necessary elements of California's economy, discourses on the rehabilitation of Indian immigrants did not follow the course that debates on Chinese immigrants in San Francisco were taking. For example, Chinese immigrants took advantage of various loopholes and exceptions to exclusion laws and secured the passage of official and unofficial wives and daughters to the U.S. This led to a veritable baby boom among Chinese immigrants in the 1920s and allowed reformers to claim that Chinese immigrants had adopted middle-class domesticity and thus deserved greater access to certain social services (Shah 2001, 205-7). Unlike Chinese immigrant women in the Bay Area, Indian women were simply not represented in significant enough numbers in the early-twentieth century to have been held accountable as wives and mothers for normalizing American middle-class domestic life for the Indian community at large.²⁸ Early immigrants from India to the U.S. were mostly Punjabi men and those who did marry, married Mexican women. Thus, early-twentieth century discourses that emphasized the duties of Chinese immigrant maternity in assimilating Chinese America did not pressure Indian immigrant women in the same way because in practical terms, a

²⁷ For example, Shah argues that by highlighting occurrences of hookworm among Indians living on the Pacific Coast, white labor advocates surmised that all Asian immigrants introduced epidemics and other dangers to American citizens. More specifically, labor activists compared Indian to Chinese immigrants whose collective putative reputation for dirtiness and disease made them unsavory candidates for citizenship. Those advocates drew on this evidence to bar immigration from India and other Asian ports (Shah 174, 190-1). As partial result of such discourses, Indian immigrants were barred from entry in 1917.

²⁸ For raw numbers and percentages of Indian women in California during the first half the twentieth century, see Leonard (51).

critical mass of Indian immigrant women did not exist to the same degree as their Chinese counterparts.

While dominant public health scrutiny of Indian immigrant women has not been as intensive as in the Chinese American case, Meera's oversight of Krishna and instruction on matters of hygiene nonetheless evoke the way Chinese immigrant women were held accountable for the development of a citizenry prepared to participate in modern society. Read in this light, Divakaruni's emphasis on Meera's instruction of Krishna's hygiene habits suggests that Meera continues to express her Americanness by being a hygiene-conscious guardian. Aligned with my earlier discussion of Indian immigrant maternity, this reading approaches Meera's instruction of Krishna as evoking discourses on motherhood that have been deployed to shore up parallel claims to preserving Indian immigrant tradition and the modernity of U.S. culture. Krishna is representationally significant because his presence invites us to consider how discourses on motherhood, childhood, health, and citizenship deployed in the early-twentieth century with respect to Chinese American history were reformulated to represent Indian immigrants' preservation of Hindu tradition *and* acculturation to U.S. culture in the late-twentieth century. In short, I interpret Divakaruni's figuration of Meera and Krishna as a description of how motherhood has been deployed to cast two different nationalisms.

Most pertinent to this chapter is my reading of maternity as an ethical expression. For Meera, relinquishing her beloved independence to take care of someone other than herself is an achievement against her fierce American individualism. Moreover, the fact that Meera extends her guardianship to someone who is not a biological child, family member, or even ethnic counterpart demonstrates that she has developed a conscience

that is not yoked to usual forms of forming social bonds. In this way, Divakaruni suggests that the skills of maternity can be deployed for the benefit of others. However, Meera's benevolence is extended only on her terms, as Krishna must assimilate to her modern lifestyle. To my mind, this smacks of "benevolent assimilation," a form of colonial altruism that justified the U.S.'s modernization of putatively inferior and primitive "others."²⁹ As critics have pointed out, such generosity functioned to implement modern beliefs and practices into "inferior" zones, normalizing the dominance of one ideology over indigenous ones. In the case of "Perfect Life," Meera's benevolence not only reinforces her claims to being an American, but more importantly, it also functions to perpetuate another generation of modern subjects in the form of Krishna. Krishna, however, rejects that very prospect.

Can Krishna Speak?

By the end of the story, Meera turns Krishna over to foster care to initiate the steps toward official adoption. However, he runs away while under the temporary supervision of a foster mother, and though Divakaruni refrains from articulating his own motives for choosing the unknown over a, by all accounts, compassionate foster mother, his departure amounts to a rejection of Meera's formal attempts to adopt and incorporate him into her life. That is, Krishna learns to clean and tidy after himself, following Meera's instructions, but his disappearance truncates Meera's effort to transform him into an officially recognized civilized subject. In my estimation, this exemplifies Gayatri Spivak's much-debated claim that the subaltern cannot speak. As I understand her

²⁹ For a brief overview on the project of benevolent assimilation in the Philippines, for example, see Rafael (2000, 19-25).

argument, subalterns cannot speak, not because they are literally speechless or vessels devoid of thought, but because their beliefs and practices are always mediated through official discourses, articulated by historians, cultural anthropologists, literary authors, and others, thus adulterating the representation of their voice.³⁰ While it is debatable whether this holds true in every instance of representing subalterns, for my purposes, it suffices to point out that Spivak's argument and Divakaruni's figuration of Krishna dovetail. In large part, Krishna is a mute character, communicating with Meera by way of gestures and facial expressions that convey fear and pleasure. For example, he expresses a non-verbal fascination with a story about a lost mouse who has been separated from his family, and Krishna even cries out "Mama!" five times through a stream of tears when separated from Meera during his initial transfer to foster care. Quite literally, then, Krishna speaks for himself and manifests a clear point of view on certain matters, albeit in limited way. The point here is not whether Krishna is literally speechless but whether he can be represented adequately by an official and dominant culture.³¹

Divakaruni's representation of Krishna and his ultimate rejection of foster home care suggest that the world of privileged immigrant Indian women cannot adequately represent subalterns. This holds true on three registers. For one, even though Krishna has significant presence in the narrative, his severely limited speech, unknown origins, and mysterious disappearance intimate recognition on Divakaruni's part that she cannot fully represent him. Here, the underdevelopment of Krishna's narrative animates the way a subaltern cannot "speak" in a text written by a privileged Indian American writer.

³⁰ For Spivak's own succinct take on her famous question, see Spivak (2002, 24). For alternative approaches to her argument, see Parry and Lazarus.

³¹ See Wong (2004) for an additional reading of Divakaruni's representation of Krishna as a subaltern who cannot speak.

Secondly, by running away from foster care, Krishna rejects Meera, indicating that the acculturation of subalterns into an upper-class woman's home is problematic. This also is exemplified in "Maid Servant" where assimilating subalterns into upper-class norms does not address the fundamental beliefs and practices that normalize inequity and social marginalization into dominant culture. In a third way, Divakaruni reiterates this point with Krishna's rejection of the state's official recognition of him; his disappearance during foster care articulates Divakaruni's recognition that the state has not and will not adequately represent or meet his needs. The issue here is not to lament Krishna's failed socialization as Meera's protégée but to address his rejection of formal adoption as an invitation to recognize the limitations of those who "speak" on his behalf.

Following Antonio Gramsci's discussion of subaltern history, I maintain that Krishna would no longer represent a subaltern if Divakaruni had represented the past, present, and future details of his story. According to Gramsci, historical representations of subalterns help signal the varying degrees to which they have been incorporated into a representative national body. That is, the history of the State and the ruling classes are one in the same because, as Gramsci argues, the ruling elite commands its history as national history. Clarity and coherence are characteristic attributes of such national narratives, whereas fragmentation is typical of subaltern history and symbolic of subalterns' lack of organization and unity or, rather, their marginality and yet-to-be-subject status in the State. It follows, then, that when subalterns are represented as a unified and cohesive front, they have already begun their development as a State power. Thus, coherent narratives of subalterns are already histories of an emergent ruling elite. Building on these premises, I read Krishna's narrative deficiencies as helping to convey

his subaltern subjectivity, and I approach his rejection of narrative and official state recognition (i.e., foster home care and adoption) as a critique of those assimilation and acculturation processes that incorporate subalterns into middle-class immigrant life. Specifically, though Krishna submits himself to Meera's routines, he refuses to take part in a more formal process that may or may not meet his needs. This presents a rejection of a system that only superficially attends to the needs of the vulnerable. This resistance also operates on a narrative level, as Krishna's limited presence in the story suggests that conventional efforts to represent subalternity cannot adequately represent him.

Drawing on Spivak's study of a subaltern who speaks in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, I am compelled to consider whether my reading of incorporative efforts is itself a way that Krishna speaks. In Spivak's words, "[i]t is precisely this limited perfect validity of the liberal white ex-colonizer's understanding that *Disgrace* questions through the invitation to focalize the enigma of Lucy [Coetzee's subaltern]" (2002, 24).

Following this point, I recognize that my efforts to, in Spivak's words, counterfocalize characters like Krishna and Sarala help expose the "limited perfect validity" of elite Bengali and Indian American women's understanding. I return to the remarkable of scenes of "Maid Servant" in which the wife lies in her own urine and betel juice stains her hand to consider this point further. That is, foregrounding analysis with Sarala allows us to read the wife's defilement as displaying the wife's own "disgracefulness." Pointing out this equality in "lowness," however, is not enough to constitute a subaltern's speech because recognition of the wife's ethical "lowness" is not accompanied with, as in the case of Spivak's reading of Coetzee, a recognition of a promising "nothing" or anecdotal encounter between a caste woman and subaltern, which follows Spivak's reading of

Coetzee. In other words, in *Arranged Marriage*, optimistic encounters between the privileged and subaltern are truncated. Only lasting impressions of rejection remain: a sex worker's spit on the outstretched hand of a Bengali elite woman and a boy running away from the embrace of an upper-class Indian American professional. In "Perfect Life" and "Maid Servant," then, the point remains that subalterns have not been represented adequately by the upper-class because the elite, as Divakaruni imagines them, are invested in preserving the power dynamics of inequity while extending such privilege only to the lucky few.

Conclusion

There is no doubt in the context of *Arranged Marriage* that Indian nationalist gender reforms have empowered upper-class women and that immigration to the U.S. has allowed formally educated Indian American women to pursue professional and personal goals apart from domestic obligations. By foregrounding the collection with "Maid Servant" and "Perfect Life," I suggest that those achievements are represented in light of ethical (under)development. That is, "Maid Servant" and "Perfect Life" articulate how maternity has been deployed to sanction social irresponsibility *and* an ethical obligation to assimilate subalterns into the majority. Either way, the point remains that a fundamental structure of oppression remains in tact. My next chapter responds to this skeptical reading of incorporative ethics by considering not only the inevitability of transforming former subalterns into normative citizens but also the possibility of injecting an ethics of anti-oppression into this process.

Chapter 4

Post-Progress Ethics in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

In the novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997), Karen Tei Yamashita draws our attention to various figures of a post-NAFTA Los Angeles who have been cast to the peripheries of the metropole. In large part, the main narratives of the novel gather around the site of a massive freeway pileup turned homeless enclave. Describing the absurdities and pragmatics of this impromptu settlement's development, Yamashita moves the novel toward a frenzied conclusion that encompasses the enclave's violent demise and an absurd but deadly Mexican wrestling match, billed as "the Greatest Fight of the Century," between larger than life characters, El Gran Mojado (The Big Wetback) and SUPERNAFTA. Stretching narrative verisimilitude even further, Yamashita presents a time-space warp that opens up as a result of a supernatural orange's movement from the Tropic of Cancer, located near Mazatlán, México, to Los Angeles. Accompanying one of Yamashita's protagonists on a crowded Los Angeles bound bus, this orange pulls the imaginary hemispheric border of the Tropic of Cancer northward, animating the way the

distance between South and North have been abridged by the people who traverse those borders.

Arcangel, an eccentric performance artist and journeyman, serves as the orange's primary escort northward as he transforms into the aforementioned wrestler El Gran Mojado.¹ Among other strange feats, this transformation makes it clear that Arcangel, one of seven major characters in the novel, is no ordinary protagonist but a metaphor for the waves of undocumented workers migrating northward. However, his life is cut short when, during the circus-like wrestling match, SUPERNAFTA uses a missile launched from his finger to kill Arcangel. Obviously, this stages hyperbolically anti-immigration policies at work, for SUPERNAFTA's role in killing an derogatorily named immigrant symbolizes the way U.S. policies can make journeying and settling in the north a difficult and even a fatal process.

Yamashita's six other protagonists—Rafaela Cortés, Bobby Ngu, Gabriel Balboa, Emi, Buzzworm, and Manzanar Murakami—counterbalance Arcangel's presence. They share in negotiating a more successful existence in which they have already achieved and/or rejected certain U.S. capitalistic standards of success, approximating what I identify as a "post-progress" existence. That is, Yamashita's protagonists, with the exception of Arcangel, have already secured and/or resisted various benchmarks of a post-progress citizenship: higher formal education, military service, home ownership, heteronormative family life, and creative, white-collar jobs. For example, Rafaela and her recently estranged husband Bobby are first generation immigrants from México and Singapore, respectively. Life in the U.S. enables them to escape different hardships,

¹ Arcangel is unmistakably styled after Guillermo Gómez-Peña. See Gómez-Peña's *The New World Border* (1996) from which Yamashita quotes at the start of her *Tropic*. Also see Quintana for analysis of Yamashita's evocation of Gómez-Peña in her work.

providing them with the opportunity to establish a nuclear family life and a self-employed janitorial business. However, all is not well as Rafaela leaves Bobby and returns to México with their son Sol. In contrast, Gabriel and Emi are young professionals who are dating and represent a third generation Mexican American and fifth generation Japanese American, respectively. They both hold jobs that are stable and creative; Gabriel's work is more pertinent to this discussion, however, as his journalistic endeavors draw attention to society's underbelly in a way that intersects with my reading of the novel. In contrast to these four figures, Buzzworm is not identified as a descendent of immigrants but characterized as an African American Vietnam War veteran who has taken up his own brand of advocacy for marginalized members of society. Notably, he claims one major privilege of owning a home, a benefit gained by his grandmother's diligent mortgage payments and his continuation of those efforts. A seventh and final protagonist, Manzanar Murakami, represents an atypical homeless man who is a third generation Japanese American who was once a surgeon and by all accounts a happy family man. Falling into homelessness despite the stability provided by a comfortable professional and family life suggests that his homelessness is a rejection of that former existence. And yet while homeless, Manzanar celebrates Los Angeles's web of human development, hailing the majesty of its urban infrastructure in an idiosyncratic fashion of conducting Los Angeles's freeway traffic as music. In this way, Yamashita indicates that the rejection of middle-class modern life is never far from embracing it in another way.

Though the novel's six post-progress figures dominate the narrative as well as my own analysis, I return briefly to Arcangel, the character whom I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, to emphasize the point that his "failure" and death are vital to

the novel and my own reading of it. More precisely, I take as my point of departure the premise that the six protagonists who are representative of marginal groups have earned various benchmarks of material and class advancement, while an “other” (Arcangel) is not only “left behind” but also left to die.² Approaching my chapter in this way establishes from the outset that in *Tropic*, certain immigrants “fail” at settling in the U.S while others succeed. If we accept the symbiosis of progress and subjugation, we might consider what a post-progress ethics would look like without denying or overlooking the presence of those who are trampled under the foot of development. Ethics, as I explained in my introduction, represent a set of beliefs that aim to disturb the abuses of power and domination, an endeavor that is not necessarily circumscribed by laws and other official institutions. They, however, might help guide the development of the political as I suggest here. More specifically, my readings offer an anti-authoritarian ethics that stems from continual awareness of and interest in the oppressed, and this de-emphasis of U.S. American individualism helps articulate ethics as a social responsibility.

In a novel where time, space, and narrative structure are distorted, the presentation of the ethical as a social responsibility is not a straightforward matter. For example, Yamashita uses the days of the week to chart the progression of her story, but then within the narrative itself, the Tropic of Cancer’s fantastic movement northward compresses those parameters of time and space. While these fantastic details have

² In this way, my readings here take the previous chapters’ analyses of narrative and social marginalization as its premise. As discussed in chapter one and two, respectively, Milton Murayama’s novella *All I Asking for Is My Body* (1975) and Jessica Hagedorn’s stage edition of *Dogeaters* (2003) describe the vicissitudes of establishing or rejecting such plateaus of modern citizenship, conveying what life is like while overlooked and marginal figures journey toward various a plateaus of advancement. In contrast, *Tropic* focuses on what life is like after protagonists have reached those benchmarks of success. Specifically, while one of Yamashita’s characters embraces the stability of material security, another rejects it and still others are committed to addressing the needs of those who are “left behind.”

prompted critics to describe *Tropic* as a magical realist text,³ it suffices for my purposes to mention these magic realist aspects in order to address Yamashita's simultaneous deployment and disruption of various conventions of structure. For example, she plots out the narrative retaining walls of her story into sections and chapters but does so only to show that those walls are permeable, failing to confine all characters in their properly designated spaces. As I see it, the characters of the novel embody such ambivalence as they act on behalf of the oppressed with various limitations. This ambivalence is vital to constituting an ethics that is malleable at its core, an instability that warns us against hoisting up a static paradigm that would only form a hierarchy of the political.

Though these structural and character ambivalences might invite us to identify *Tropic* as "non-linear,"⁴ I maintain that the novel displays an interrupted forward-moving sequence rather than a non-linear one. This is a departure from critics who have emphasized Yamashita's use of non-linearity to engage an oeuvre of critical resistance that is not in *Tropic* to the degree that they claim. Such critique has been particularly pronounced in scholarship on Theresa Hak-Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982), a text that has been held up as the paradigmatic experimental work of Asian American literature. Specifically, scholars have cited *Dictée* as a definitive example of the way Asian American literature presents non-linearity, fragmentation, and irresolution to resist

³ Rody (135), Wallace (148), and Itagaki (85-6) all identify *Tropic* as a magical realist narrative. See Zamora and Harris for a collection of foundational essays on magic realism.

⁴ For example, Ruth Y. Hsu concedes that conventional methods of reading might lead us to read the novel in linear fashion, but she counters this impulse by emphasizing the novel's gaps of narrative causality. That is, she focuses on the way characters who are ostensibly unrelated embark on individual journeys and then cross paths without obvious causality. Building on this point, she contends that those chance encounters produce small changes that lead to larger ones, producing a ripple-effect narrative schematic rather than a linear one. Johannes Hauser reiterates this point by directing our attention to the way one character in *Tropic* "evoke[s] a whole network of other codes, significations, and associations" (23).

modern plot and power dynamics. Thus, Cha's work has functioned as a touchstone for the field's discourse on modern subject formation and its transgressions.⁵

Brief overview of Cha's memoir will allow me clarify how I situate my reading of *Tropic* as a response to a trend of critical resistance that has coalesced around *Dictée*. In *Dictée*, a graphic memoir of uncertain verisimilitude, fragmented scenes of Korean colonization, resistance, and diaspora surface through a loosely bound narrative of a vaguely defined narrator and extended family. As others have pointed out, though *Dictée* might be read as Cha's personal archive of photographs, handwritten letters, family stories, and synopses of historical events, the author refuses to represent a reliable and exemplary ethnography or autobiography of an Asian American subject who accedes to the conventions of dominant Korean, French, and U.S. American culture. This refusal registers in Cha's disorienting experimentation with narrative fragmentation, fractured sentencings, and insertion of images without explicit context and captions. Briefly stated, *Dictée* refuses to narrate the development of a subject who "gets over" various forms of violence to become a productive member of modern society.

Following Lisa Lowe's introduction to *Dictée* in *Immigrant Acts*, I read interest in Cha's uses of fragmentation as an outgrowth of efforts by historiographers and literary scholars to address the ways in which writing history and literary narratives reinforced nation building endeavors in colonies like India, the Philippines, and Hawai'i. For example, Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra argue that the telos of European civilization has anchored schemas of progress that have manifested in development efforts reputed to transform the "primitive" into the "civilized." In LaCapra's words: "it

⁵ See Lowe (1996), Kim (1994), Kang (1994), S.S. Wong, and Cheng for their respective readings of *Dictée*.

is possible to view historical consciousness as a specifically Western prejudice by which the presumed superiority of modern, industrial society can be retroactively substantiated” (2). Postcolonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty phrases the argument thusly: “insofar as the academic discourse of history—that is, ‘history’ as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—is concerned, ‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called the ‘history of Europe’” (1992, 1). Such historiography makes the developmental schematics of national building transparent, linking historiography to the reification of a Eurocentric culture.

Postcolonial studies and Asian American studies have shown that formalistic elements of linearity, coherence, and resolution in historical and literary narratives are not simply matters of aesthetics. This has been part of the legacy of post-structuralist and post-modernist critique, an oeuvre of scholarship that has demonstrated how content (e.g., narratives about the development of modern subjects and nation-states) and form (e.g., linearity, coherence, and conclusion) have reified the superiority of Eurocentric reasoning. The Subaltern Studies group, a subset of postcolonial studies, argues that while colonialists and certain nationalists disagreed over the origins of a modern India, each privileged India’s evolution into a modern nation-state, a telos that normalized a Eurocentric standard of civilization.⁶ As an extension of this critique, Asian American literary critics have focused on the way the fragmentation of linear plot dynamics have exposed and resisted the power systems that have justified the colonization and

⁶ For a brief summary of those events, see Prakash (388-391).

exploitation of “primitives.” Returning to the example of *Dictée*, I read critical interest in Cha’s fragmentation of narrative as a productive extension of this scholarship.

In contrast, applying a similar reading to the non-linear aspects of *Tropic* has been less convincing. By skewing the plot dynamics of linearity and resolution, Yamashita certainly creates a narrative structure that underscores the novel’s distortion of history and geography. Her uneven arrangement of plot with respect to temporal, spatial, and narrative parameters dovetails with way she re-works the concept of character development for the marginalized. That is, her protagonists do not traverse easy, conclusive, or affirmative paths toward resolution, as Arcangel and Emi both die in violent ways before the close of the novel and as other characters like Gabriel and Manzanar face uncertain futures. Following Caroline Rody’s lead, I argue that this approach to narrative and character development does not dispense with linearity but interrupts it and offers an alternative ambivalent schema of progression. That is, Rody places less emphasis on Yamashita’s dissolution of linearity, causation, and closure and instead stresses the way Yamashita muddies spatial, racial, and ethnic conventions through her interruption of plot progression and closure. In other words, Rody treats Yamashita’s narrative organization as a device that underscores the disruption of conventional subject formation. Further, her reading of Yamashita’s redeployment of modern plot dynamics suggests that linearity and perhaps even telos can be disarticulated from the function of reifying Eurocentric systems of oppression. My reading of *Tropic* shows that though individualist ideologies of success have been firmly in place, it is possible to re-route materially oriented concepts of progress as a development of ethics rather than individualistic forms of acquisition and accumulation.

This evokes Lyotard definition of the postmodern, which he identifies as incredulity toward systems of knowing that legitimate themselves by circular means, justifying their claims according to their own internal standards. He goes on to add that challenging such metanarratives has reached a certain limit. Translating this conclusion to Asian American studies, I read the field's criticism of Eurocentric metanarratives (e.g., responses to *Dictée*) as reaching a certain critical mass. With such an achievement, I believe that the field might benefit from addressing such metanarratives from a different angle. To that end, I read *Tropic* as conceding the fact that minority groups have and will attain certain modern standards of success like higher education, heteronormative family life, and economic solvency. However, *Tropic* also addresses how we might rectify the deleterious consequences of becoming such modern consumers. That is, as Yamashita's protagonists attempt to salvage varying degrees of human intimacy, the author revises a conventional telos of immigration narratives by imagining narrative, character, and national advancement as a process that cultivates the recognition of the oppressed and critique of the processes that normalize their subjugation.

Ethical Imperfection: Buzzworm and Rafaela

The novel begins with Rafaela's quiet and unassuming scene of housekeeping in a house not far from Mazatlán, and even at this early point in the narrative, Yamashita alerts us to her interest in the social periphery by posing unexpected challenges to this otherwise simple and tranquil morning ritual of cleaning. "Every morning, a small pile of assorted insects and tiny animals—moths and spiders, lizards and beetles—collected, their brittle bodies tossed in waves along the floor, a cloudy hush of sandy soil, cobwebs,

and human hair [...] Every morning, she swept this mound of dead and wiggling things to the door and off the side of the veranda and into the dark green undergrowth with the same flourish” (3). Though vacuuming the debris was once an option, a broom has been more practical, reliable, and effective in the “salty humidity” of northern México. Indeed, in this setting, the ineffectual and eventually defunct vacuum conveys that “primitive” tools have an edge over modern ones. Despite Rafaela’s adjustment to these conditions, “[i]t made no difference if she closed the doors and shutters at the first sign of dusk or if she left the house unoccupied and tightly shut for several days. Every morning when the house was thrown open to the sunlight, she knew that she and the boy [her son] had not slept alone that night” (3-4). Undeterred by borders and immune to Rafaela’s diligence, those unwanted waves of pests and debris stream into the house with unstoppable persistence. Understanding that this process stands for more than the obstinate return of household rubbish, Rafaela observes, “[t]his wasn’t just dust; it was alive” (10).

Indeed, the dust is alive *and* determined to avoid permanent ejection to the veranda’s symbolic “dark green undergrowth.” Taking Yamashita’s cast of characters as a cue, I read this stubborn domestic debris as a metaphor for the neglected and marginalized figures whom Yamashita represents in the novel. Indeed, Yamashita’s characters are representative of various minoritized figures of Los Angeles, and though her characters have been cast to the margins of Los Angeles to varying degrees, they permeate the metropole and cannot be ignored. As I read it, Yamashita transforms janitors, housekeepers, homeless, and fantastical undocumented immigrants into protagonists to consider how we might conceive the political by attending to minor figures seriously. Moreover, Yamashita presents protagonists who, by their journalistic

efforts and street advocacy, show us how interest in subalternity can be turned into ethical practice. In effect, then, I offer *Tropic* as enacting the methodology of this dissertation.

To clarify, I turn to the characters of Buzzworm and Rafaela, for they both engage the type of work that the novel and my dissertation promote as socially responsible practices. Buzzworm, an imposing figure at seven-feet tall and adorned with an ever-present Walkman and two to three watches on each wrist, occupies his days by walking the streets of Los Angeles of his own volition to offer tangible assistance to anyone who reaches out to him for help. As a commitment to helping those without support, Buzzworm liberally distributes a calling card with his twenty-four hour pager number on it. For Buzzworm, the card is not an empty gesture: “Must be everyone on the street got his calling card with something jotted down on the back: rehab number, free clinic, legal services, shelter, soup kitchen, hot line. He was walking social services. Weren’t for him, been more dead people on the street. 24-hour service; he meant it. Some poor nobody in trouble at three A.M. paged him, and he was there long before anyone, especially the police” (26). Yamashita isolates various moments in the novel to affirm this activism. For example, she describes Buzzworm reaching out to a young person susceptible to crime, rushing to help someone in jail, helping street peddlers with necessary paperwork, and advocating on behalf of the freeway’s impromptu homeless enclave. Characterizing Buzzworm as such an indefatigable advocate helps us to read him as a type of character who inhabits a post-progress existence that takes the needs of the marginalized into serious consideration.

However, even as Yamashita hoists Buzzworm up as a model of the political, she is careful to show that he is not a perfect picture of activism, and various scenes and obsessive habits convey this. For example, unbeknownst to Buzzworm, he passes along poisonous oranges to a fledgling young gangster and a Mexican immigrant peddler. Both die as a result of his small token of generosity, suggesting that despite one's own intentions, helping others can cause unforeseen damage. As noted above, Buzzworm also has a collection of two hundred mostly mint condition watches, two to three of which he wears on each arm. In addition to the watches, radio also is his constant companion, energized by a Walkman that requires fiendish consumption of batteries. While the watches and radio help Buzzworm mark time and keep abreast of the news, his contact with Manzanar disrupts these obsessions, showing, as Lynne Mie Itagaki points out, that they have allowed him to plug out of the very world he engages through his self-fashioned brand of social services. By having Buzzworm relinquish these mechanical devices at the end of the novel, Yamashita shows that he frees himself to tune into the city in a more immediate way, enabling him to finally hear the elusive symphony of Manzanar's music. Hearing this music symbolizes the acquisition an intimate understanding of the metropole and those who live in it that eluded Buzzworm previously. This transformation, albeit less grand in scale in comparison to other characters, intimates that post-progress ethics require continual revision, even from those who embody a seemingly irreproachable standard of social responsibility.

Yamashita solidifies this point by having Rafaela return to México during her separation from her husband Bobby. Prior to this separation, Rafaela had achieved a conventional immigrant's success story: she had established a heteronormative family

life, secured a family business, and obtained a post-secondary education in the U.S. These are immense achievements, especially when considered as a culmination of her maternal and paternal families' migration from depressed economies in the Yucatán and Ayacucho to Culiacán in northern México. Continuing her family's multi-generational movement northward, Rafaela eventually followed her brother to Tijuana at which point, like many others, she began the final leg of her journey to Los Angeles. In her version of this narrative, Rafaela met Bobby in Tijuana and they developed a romantic relationship that led to their settlement in Los Angeles. Within the span of eight years, Rafaela "married Bobby, helped start their janitorial business, conceived a child, and got a degree at the local community college" (6).

Rounding out these achievements, Yamashita has Rafaela adopt a sense of community advocacy, but unlike Buzzworm, she must balance her roles as wife and mother with such duties. Her marriage with Bobby, a character more invested in individualism and material accumulation than ethics, makes this point especially clear. Reflecting upon their estrangement, Bobby recognizes that as a result of a relentless work ethic, his relationship with Rafaela and younger brother have deteriorated to the point where Rafaela leaves him and he cannot communicate with his brother. Though the exact reasons for Rafaela's decision to separate are not explicit, Yamashita suggests that her disapproval of Bobby's apathy for the conditions of their co-workers is at the root of her dissatisfaction. Specifically, while Rafaela joins Justice for Janitors in solidarity with those who do not have benefits, which she and Bobby receive from his morning mail-sorting job, "Bobby got mad. This is his business. He's independent. All the money is his. What's she talking about? It's solidarity she said. Some work for companies. They need

to organize. For protection. Bobby don't understand this" (17). He also recollects Rafaela "saying we're not wanted here. Nobody respects our work. Say we cost money. Live on welfare. It's a lie. We pay taxes. Bobby knows he pays taxes. She said since Bobby smokes like a chimney, he probably pays more sales taxes than anyone else. That's it. He said he pays enough taxes. He'll quit. So what's the point?" (80).

The crucial matter is, of course, not escaping undue tax burdens or quitting smoking per se but rather Bobby's materialistic individualism and his misunderstanding of Rafaela's objections to their treatment as the metropole's abject workforce. Together, these scenes indicate that Bobby is content to shoulder arduous labor without proper acknowledgment and compensation because it grants him a stable heteronormative family life. For Rafaela, however, those rewards are not enough. By gesturing to the reasons for Rafaela's departure through Bobby's memories, Yamashita suggests that the issue of post-progress ethics is at the heart of their disharmony. In other words, Rafaela's dissatisfaction with the spoils of middle-class success helps to nominate a post-progress ethics that consists of taking the presence of marginal figures into consideration even when one has achieved a modicum of social and material ascendancy. Bobby's presence unsettles the easy adoption of such ethics, animating a resistance to and reckoning of Rafaela's and Buzzworm's fashioning of social responsibility.

Notably, Rafaela's struggle against oppression is not a static endeavor. When her disagreements with Bobby result in their separation and her return to México, she switches from an invisible janitorial worker to a domestic manager of Gabriel's Mexican vacation home. This aligns her with the neighboring matriarch, Doña Maria, an alignment that de-links her from the exploited and oppressed. The presence of Doña Maria and

Doña Maria's servant Lupe make Rafaela's shift in status clear, and a scene involving the exchange of chairs exemplifies this. Having received new chairs from her son Hernando, an "export/import" businessman, Doña Maria offers Rafaela her old but still "perfectly new" chairs, and before Rafaela has a chance to respond, Doña Maria promises to have Lupe send them over. Although Rafaela doubts whether Gabriel will approve of the style of the chairs, she thanks Doña Maria rather than offend the older woman by declining. Doña Maria responds, "Of course. Please, any time at all. We are neighbors. Well, it's a little far, but you are just across the highway" (9). Here, the replacement of "perfectly new" castoffs with even newer furniture stands for Doña Maria's or, rather, her son's wealth. In addition to possessing such material luxuries, the fact that Doña Maria is able to take full credit for this gift but shift the literal heavy lifting onto her servant and downplay the labor of transferring furniture from one house to the other conveys the hierarchy between a relatively affluent mistress and servant. The transference of labor onto Lupe or a cadre of helpers that Lupe might employ for this job also demonstrates the older woman perception of Rafaela as a peer and manager of Gabriel's property rather than as a servant who should help shoulder Lupe's work. Rafaela, like Doña Maria, is a beneficiary of Lupe's labor, and though there are indications of private exchanges between Rafaela and Lupe, those interactions are not animated explicitly in the text. In this way, Yamashita emphasizes Rafaela and Doña Maria's similitude over Rafaela and Lupe's. Thus, by re-crossing the Mexican-U.S. border from North to South, Rafaela is no longer at the "bottom" of her surrounding social hierarchy but somewhere closer to Doña Maria's status. However, at the same time, acquiescence to Doña Maria's generosity also

suggests that their equality is limited, as Rafaela must subsume her opinions to the older woman's.

As a result of Rafaela's shift in location and status, labor inequalities are no longer a pressing issue in her life, and subsequently, interest in the abuses of an exploited invisible workforce dissipates. At first, Rafaela is not critical or cognizant of her ethical decline, but after deferring work to Lupe repeatedly, Doña Maria's actions compel Rafaela to realize that her new social position has made it easier to take advantage of laborers without critical reflection. The passage that articulates this recognition is worth quoting at length:

Rafaela knew Lupe did everything on Doña Maria's place. Lupe cleaned, cooked, gardened, planted, and harvested. She fed the chickens, collected eggs, fattened the pigs, and slaughtered them when the time came. Rafaela thought about her argument with Bobby, about how she and Bobby did all the work without benefits, about exploitation. Now she had crossed the border and forgotten her anger. Lupe did all the work. Someone was always at the bottom. As long as she was not, did it matter?" (117)

Here then, Rafaela recognizes that once free from her own underpaid, under-appreciated, and hostile work conditions in Los Angeles, she had been privileged to ignore the way labor exploitation remains intact while benefiting from it. Acknowledgment of Lupe's presence, however, intervenes in such negligence. Thus, Yamashita suggests that the development of ethics is not a static endeavor but one that requires continual maintenance.

Notably, Rafaela's recognition of Lupe's labor also is the immediate precursor to a scene in which Rafaela stumbles upon Hernando having a conversation about an infant organ transplant ring that could be targeting Sol for the next organ seizure. Understanding her own child's vulnerability to this "export/import" business, she runs away with Sol. Yet before she does this, Rafaela intercepts Hernando's current infant heart shipment in order to mail the package to Gabriel who eventually takes up an investigation of this crime. This exhibits one way that maternity might be deployed to motivate actions to protect others, combining the conventional telos of interethnic heteronormative life with the development of post-progress ethics. In other words, Rafaela is moved to act on behalf of her son, but this impulse also leads her to take a step to expose this atrocity to the public. That is, once Hernando discovers that the heart is missing, he begins his chase after Rafaela who travels through the space and time warp back to Los Angeles. Over the course of this chase, Hernando catches up to Rafaela and they tangle in a battle of epic proportions that leaves Rafaela alive but bloody and badly beaten.⁷ Rafaela pays the brutal consequences of enacting her ethics. Here then, Rafaela's identification with Lupe vaults her into taking action on behalf of her son and the vulnerable, an act that revitalizes her commitment to the oppressed despite consequences to her own individual well-being. This is not to say that proving one's ethical responsibility requires personal injury, but to my mind, Yamashita is suggesting that ethical allegiances are not easy and require sacrifice of one's own individualistic needs.

Rafaela not only survives this battle, but Yamashita also reunites her with Bobby and Sol who had been separated from her during Hernando's chase. Notably, Yamashita

⁷ See Sadowski-Smith for an instructive interpretation of this battle as one that revises the struggle between Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés and the indigenous Mexicans.

juxtaposes Rafaela with Lupe to help initiate this journey and resolution, leaving the minor servant character behind in the literal dust of the bus's forward-moving trajectory. This echoes a process of progress and subordination presented in earlier chapters where minor characters, whom I call "dirty bodies," surface and then are jettisoned to present various forms of narrative and social advancement.⁸ However, in a certain light, Rafaela's return to Los Angeles represents a return to Lupe or, rather, a life in which she once identified with and advocated on behalf of the metropole's exploited workforce. Though Lupe is no doubt left behind, Rafaela's return to Los Angeles represents a reactivation of former ethical orientations.

With Rafaela as well as Buzzworm, then, Yamashita suggests that minority politics is not a static or faultless endeavor; for each character, it requires revision and constant maintenance. At the same time, while Buzzworm's and Rafaela's execution of social responsibility exemplify the type of ethics that I have been pursuing throughout this project, Yamashita also registers the shortcomings of their own activism, cautioning us from nominating them as exemplars of the political.

Respectably Sooty in Los Angeles

As an extension of Yamashita's ambivalent presentation of post-progress ethics, I read Manzanar's qualified rejection of the metropole as helping to illuminate the limitations of Buzzworm's and Rafaela's brand of civil-rights based ethics. To review, Manzanar is a homeless man who spends his days on a freeway overpass perch, surveying the city by literally conducting the noise of Los Angeles's infamous freeway

⁸ See my introduction and chapters one and two for an extended discussion of dirty bodies' narrative function.

traffic. He then culls the noise into a symphony that only he can hear. More important to my present discussion, Yamashita sums up Manzanar's appearance as a "sooty homeless man" (35), and this becomes the catchall description for his appearance throughout the novel. While the conditions of homelessness help provide the material reasons for Manzanar's sootiness, I focus on his unkempt appearance as a sign of his various representational functions, concentrating especially on the way his presence indicates that middle-class life is an inadequate compensation for institutionalized racism.

Clearly, reference to Manzanar's solitary makeshift encampment on the side of a freeway indicates that he does not have access to facilities such as sinks, showers, and toilets that allow for regular washing. However, Yamashita suggests that there is more to Manzanar's sootiness than these material reasons vis-à-vis Gabriel's journalistic observations. Interviewing Manzanar for a story on homelessness, Gabriel observes that Manzanar "had a blackened appearance like a chimney sweep. Like the underbelly of the overpass itself, it seemed rather permanent" (110). Chimney sweeps are, of course, laborers who, as a necessary consequence of performing their jobs, are saturated in soot. For my purposes, it is most productive to approach this comparison as a narrative device that presents Manzanar as a type of laborer. To make this point clear, I return to Gabriel's follow-up comparison of Manzanar and an overpass's underbelly. By its nature, the undersides of freeway overpasses are dirty because they allow cars to pass in a different direction below, and as a result, the bowels of the bridge trap car exhaust and become sooty. In other words, if overpasses function properly, their underbellies are supposed to be dirty, and comparing Manzanar's appearance to such properly functioning but filthy infrastructure conveys that his dirtiness is a necessary requisite of his own "labor."

Understanding that Manzanar has extracted himself from wage labor, I read Manzanar's observations of the city as a type of narrative "work" that helps frame the novel within larger landscapes. That is, achieving a certain bird's-eye perspective of the city places Manzanar outside the normative flow of life in the metropole, and as a result, his sootiness becomes an essential consequence of his narrative function: to observe the expanse of Los Angeles. More specifically, Manzanar observes and marvels at the complex crisscrossing web of geological landscapes and the synchronization of human technology by composing the immediate sounds of Los Angeles traffic into orchestral music.

By articulating his observations as a type of music, Yamashita allows herself to express the novel's complex historical and geographic contexts in a stream of consciousness fashion. This suggests that Los Angeles's development has been akin to the simultaneous layering of musical composition. For that matter, Yamashita contrasts Manzanar's narrative style with Gabriel's method of reporting events, a neutral, non-nonsense first person recitation of events. While such factual reporting might make Gabriel a good news reporter, Buzzworm and Manzanar both point out that Gabriel's factual approach to presenting events fails to humanize his subjects' narratives. The expansive and meandering narrative style that stands for Manzanar's perspective would seem to accommodate such empathy, but Yamashita refrains from presenting Manzanar's perspective in this way. In other words, his material and emotional experiences are truncated and surface only briefly throughout the novel. The point here, punctuated by Yamashita's evocation of music as a non-verbal form of expression, is not that one

narrative style is superior to the other but that words and narrative have limited capacity to convey complex context and sentiment.

In this way, Yamashita furnishes Manzanar with the responsibility of situating a printed story within the music-like geography of Los Angeles, a perspective that he achieves by observing it from the periphery. Moreover, Manzanar extends his gaze to the Pacific Rim, offering Los Angeles as part of its topography and history. Thus, his views remind us that the individual stories of the novel are not only part of the development of Southern California but also part of a larger geopolitical network of the Pacific Rim.

Taking cue from Manzanar's function of situating the novel within such complex, overlapping contexts, I want to pause to underscore those contexts. Specifically, Yamashita moors her novel to a particular moment in 1990s Los Angeles when NAFTA was at center of U.S. immigration debates and became, as Molly Wallace points out, synonymous with certain unsavory consequences of globalization: undocumented immigration, increased income disparities, trivial improvements in real wages, and growth in the trafficking of illegal drugs (Hufbauer and Schott 4).⁹ More precisely, NAFTA was implemented in 1994 and is still an active U.S., Mexican, and Canadian agreement that has facilitated tri-lateral trade and investment. With the passage of NAFTA, U.S. and Mexican officials aimed especially to create jobs in México and stem undocumented immigration to the U.S. Indeed, job growth has been secured in México, particularly in a sector of foreign-owned plants known as *maquiladoras*. Maquiladoras are border area factories that receive components, transported duty-free under NAFTA,

⁹ In her reading of *Tropic*, Wallace observes that rather than limiting assessments of NAFTA as a specific document, critics have affixed negative consequences of globalization onto NAFTA.

for assembly, and once assembled, the parts are then moved north (Martin 453).¹⁰ While maquiladora employment has secured one of NAFTA's objectives, maquiladoras have not been useful in stemming the tide of undocumented immigration. In fact, evidence shows that maquiladoras have served as a stepping-stone for undocumented immigrants from México and Central America to the U.S. According to one estimate, unauthorized immigration from México to the U.S. almost doubled the year after NAFTA's passage (Martin 449).¹¹ Thus, taking place in the shadow of NAFTA and its subsequent discourses, *Tropic* has an immediate geopolitical context in which certain major and minor characters represent those undesirable but necessary undocumented immigrants who migrated not only from Latin America but also from Asia to labor in the metropole.

At the same time, Yamashita's emphasis on oranges suggests that post-NAFTA politics have not developed in a vacuum. The title of the novel and the central role that oranges play in the story (oranges help pull along the Tropic of Cancer northward and are important to the illegal drug and infant organ transplant trafficking storylines) are key to indicating that the provenance of the sweet orange's cultivation is crucial to situating the novel's description of post-NAFTA conditions. That is, understanding the sweet orange's origins leads us to critical factors that ushered in early-twentieth century emigration from Asia and Latin America to Southern California, the roots of late-twentieth immigration that Yamashita imagines in her novel.

¹⁰ See Martin's definition of maquiladoras employ a majority of young women from the Mexican interior and Central America. See Fregoso for a reading of the violent means by which women workers are regulated in the maquiladora industry.

¹¹ For a brief summary of the events leading up to NAFTA authorization, see Mayer (1-6). See Hufbauer and Schott for a review of these objectives (18) and for each nation-state's specific goals for passing NAFTA (2-4).

In his study of Southern California's orange production, historian Douglas Cazaux Sackman locates the origins of California's Washington navel in the Malay-East Indian Archipelago and traces its cultivation through Europe, California, and Brazil.¹² These geographic origins echo against the general directions from which Yamashita's characters journey and settle. For example, during Bobby's childhood, his ethnically Chinese family settled in Singapore, a region included in the Malay-East Indian Archipelago. From the south, Rafaela's father's family came from Ayacucho in the Andes, a detail that suggests not only the great distances her family has migrated north but also the nearby direction from which the orange developed in Brazil. Finalizing this comparison, Rafaela and Bobby eventually settle in Southern California where the Washington navel was first cultivated on a large-scale. As Rafaela and Bobby's child, Sol, like the California orange, embodies the convergence of this history. Even the shape and color of the sun, Sol's namesake, reiterate his connection to the Washington navel and thus the history of Southern California's development.

Indeed, scholars have argued that Southern California's emergence into modernity was tied inextricably to the cultivation of oranges. The production of an orange industry was not an immediate self-sustained affair, however. Orange cultivation required modern invention such as costly systems of infrastructure (irrigation and transportation),

¹² From the Malay-East Indian Archipelago, a region between Southeastern Asia and Australia, oranges made their way to Europe, and Spanish and Portuguese colonial expansion into the Americas brought the fruit to the U.S. More precisely, while establishing missions in California, Franciscans brought oranges with them, and in 1804, missionaries, using indigenous labor, planted the region's first large-scale orange grove. Not long after in the 1820s, a grove in São Salvador de Bahia, Brazil generated a more luscious variety of the orange, and in 1870 at the request of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an American missionary shipped a sample of these Brazilian seedlings to Washington. In Washington, the plants were grafted onto different rootstocks, and seedlings were sent to Eliza Tibbets, a former neighbor of a U.S. Department of Agriculture official who had moved to Riverside, California (Sackman 17-8). The oranges, now dubbed the Washington navel, flourished in Riverside, and as a measure of the Washington navel's success, by 1910, over a million trees cultivated from the Tibbets's seedlings grew in Riverside alone (Sackman 22). Cultivated in Southern California during the early-twentieth century, the sweet orange out-shot the value of gold manufacture (McWilliams 1970, 209)

technological advancements in shipment (cooling and refrigeration), and marketing ploys to facilitate demand and create profits.¹³ Although the development of these subsidiary businesses is an important part of California's citrus cultivation, for the purposes of this chapter, I focus on the industry's need for human capital for that directly relates to Yamashita's imagination of the various figures who populate Los Angeles.

While boosters had a part in attracting farmers with promises of Southern California's fertile landscapes,¹⁴ industrialization in the northeast and southeast underpinned the very possibility of populating and developing Southern California. As Edna Bonacich shows, post-Civil War industrialization in the U.S.'s northeast and southeast concentrated capital and power in fewer and fewer hands, leading to the underemployment of farmers and workers, availing them to migrate long-distances for sustenance.¹⁵ Moreover, when farmers and workers responded to downturns in wages with formidable labor movements, they made it expensive to use white labor. Remarking on this situation, Bonacich concludes, "[t]hese developments led business and political leaders to push for expansion of overseas markets, both as a direct method of dealing with overproduction and as an effort to 'export' the social problems" (1984c, 106). Thus, the surplus that post-bellum industrialization generated in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century brought a mass-produced overflow of items to various locations like the

¹³ See Sackman and McWilliams (1970) for a discussion of these additional investments.

¹⁴ To attract farmers, promoters advertised Southern California as a balmy and fertile landscape that was prime for cultivation. Going one step further, "[o]range growers, having been assured that they were agents of national progress, felt that their handiwork was almost divine" (Cazaux 27). Such assumptions functioned not only to attract investment but also to justify the displacement of Native Californians and Mexicans from the land.

¹⁵ More precisely, Bonacich's analysis of California's development suggests that westward movement emerged as a result of northern economic depression, expanding southern and northern business, and the subsequent displacement of laborers from the northeast and southeast (Bonacich 1984c, 94-7).

Philippines, China, and Japan, disrupting local economies and leading to the unemployment and financial difficulty of thousands of people. As a result, the displaced and unemployed became a source of cheap labor for growing economies in California and Hawai'i.¹⁶ Here then, we see how “push” and “pull” factors developed throughout Asia and the U.S., merging to advance Southern California's settlement.

With respect to California's orange production, Chinese and Japanese labor pools dominated at first, but anti-Asian fervor and legislation concluded with a heavy preference for Mexican labor.¹⁷ In fact, Mexicans prevailed as “the exploited minority of choice” by the 1920s (García 3).¹⁸ Thus, if oranges are representative of the foundation of Southern California development, as they are commonly held, then the history of their

¹⁶ Bonacich observes that starting in the 1870s and continuing irregularly into the twentieth century, economic changes in the U.S. led to industrialization, overproduction, and a perceived decline in profits. To secure markets and profits for this surplus resulted not only in continental expansion but also in development across the Pacific and into the Caribbean. As discussed in my first chapter, the introduction of U.S. and other foreign products into Asia helped to displace laborers and free up an exploitable labor pool ready to migrate long distances for work. Though U.S. investment in Asia paled in comparison to investments in Europe, Canada, and Latin America prior to World War II (Bonacich 1984c, 107-8), U.S. and European political and economic interventions in Asia introduced cheaper products into those locales, and such acts of imperialism had a profound impact on Asian economies. This move toward industrialization left hundreds of thousands unemployed, for they were not reabsorbed back into the economy.

¹⁷ With respect to the cultivation of Southern California's ornamental and fruit bearing trees, laborers consisted of a diverse group of Native Californians, Californios, and immigrants from southern Europe, China, Japan, the Philippines, and México (Sackman 44). However, Chinese immigrants became the preferred choice of laborers at first, and Japanese workers supplanted them from 1900 to 1910 (McWilliams 1970, 218). This pathway of migration had been paved by U.S. investment in and familiarity with Chinese and Japanese markets. Moreover, in Bonacich's estimation, Chinese and Japanese laborers were favored over others also because by stigmatizing and denying them equality with other laborers, citrus developers could impose harsher restrictions on them than they could on Europeans and Native Californians who were protected with claims to citizenship and by fellow white labor advocates (1984a, 161 and 165-6).

For a concise review of that anti-Asian legislation that led to the curtailment of Chinese and Japanese labor, see Bonacich (1984b, 74-6). With respect to Filipino and Mexican labor pools, assessments of Filipino health and sexuality were deployed against them and assisted in the development of a predominant Mexican citrus labor pool. In fact, farmers went so far as to lobby Congress to loosen restrictions on immigration from México, and conditions in México such as extreme poverty, the nationalization of land ownership, and increased birth rates only further advanced migration northward (García 59-60).

¹⁸ By the 1940s, Mexicans made up nearly 100 percent of citrus pickers (García 60).

introduction to Southern California is suggestive of the ways Asians and Mexicans have been integral to Southern California's development. In this light, I posit that to know the history of oranges is to know Southern California's history as heterogeneous.

Though the immediate setting of *Tropic* does not coincide with this crucial period of Southern California's development,¹⁹ the prominence that Yamashita affords to oranges evokes this earlier history and suggests that those conditions resonate with the period during which NAFTA was first passed and implemented. Specifically, patterns of U.S. investment abroad, ensuing emigration from Asia and Latin America, and anti-immigration fervor not only shaped Southern California's early development but also have continued to influence late-twentieth century Los Angeles. In this way, to know the history of orange is to know a critical part of Los Angeles's history on which the novel draws.²⁰ In *Tropic*, Los Angeles is a space of with a long history of demographic and cultural convergence where NAFTA is linked to the origins of Southern California's development. Thus, transnational economics and migrations underpin not only Southern California's development but also the narrative of the *Tropic* itself.

¹⁹ While agricultural belts such as citrus production have been noted as an important factor in fueling Los Angeles's economic ascendancy prior to World War II, by the early 1980s, most physical signs of the citrus industry had disappeared (García 1-2). Today, large-scale orange cultivation exists almost entirely in São Paulo and Florida.

²⁰ As Sackman puts it, "oranges were at the center of the development of a number of communities stretching westward from Riverside and San Bernardino to Pomona, Pasadena, and Los Angeles, and, later, south into the towns of Orange County" (40).

This historical context also allows me to link *Tropic* to *All I Asking* and the transnational forces that influenced early waves of the Asian diaspora across the Pacific, which I discuss later in this chapter. Moreover, by addressing the transnational economic factors that lead to development efforts in Hawai'i, the Philippines, and California as well as the subsequent Asian diasporas across the Pacific, I suggest that the development of these locales, the central sites of *All I Asking*, *Dogeaters*, and *Tropic*, share a similar transnational history. In this way, I contend that a history of California is not just about California. I address this point in my introduction where I respond to East of California studies' potential homogenization of California studies.

Yamashita's figuration of Sol and gesture to Southern California's orange industry, are both representative of Los Angeles, a region where, as Edward Soja observed famously, "it all comes together." With respect to Yamashita's Los Angeles, "all" overreaches her own narrative scope, but it is a region where an array of differences such as ostensibly unrelated narratives and characters differentiated by race, ethnicity, gender, generation, and class not only coexist but all converge. In other words, Yamashita's evocation of the Washington navel's development underscores the way in which heterogeneity has been an important feature of the people and places she represents. To my mind, her allusions to the heterogeneities that constitute Los Angeles is reminiscent of critical debates in Subaltern Studies that have sought to illuminate and redress the sublimation of difference in representing India's development of citizens and the nation-state.²¹ In light of this critical discourse, I read Yamashita's reference to the orange's and Sol's intersecting origins as an attempt to exhibit the heterogeneities of people who have helped develop Southern California.

Within this historical and geographical context, however, Yamashita represents the implausible such as the aforementioned movement of the Tropic of Cancer to Los Angeles. Registering this movement, various characters witness a meticulously built fence on the Tropic of Cancer begin to distort in shape, bending and stretching as a result of the South's movement northward. By transporting the newly dubbed Tropic of Orange northward and having this movement create a time and space warp between Northern México and Southern California, Yamashita's novel defies the historicity that she

²¹ See Iletto (1988) for an excavation of the heterogeneous groups that contributed to and resisted the development of a Philippines nation-state. For similar discussion with respect to India, see Chatterjee (1986, 1993), Prakash, Chakrabarty (1992), Kaviraj, and Niranjana. For discussion of Asian America's heterogeneity, see Lowe.

establishes through her gestures to Los Angeles's development. In other words, while Yamashita relies on familiar spatial and temporal reference points to frame her novel, she also has those retaining walls shift, warp, and leak over the course of the narrative. Bearing signs of those distortions, the inexplicable curvature of the fence built on the Tropic of Orange matches the way Yamashita's own narrative structure begins to bend.

The organization of the novel into sections and chapters underscores this distortion of order, and Yamashita's juxtaposition of a Table of Contents and "HyperContexts" makes this ambivalent organizational schema explicit. The Table of Contents is no different from most: it lists each chapter in sequential order, and the chapters are corralled into seven sections, labeled by seven consecutive days of the week. She follows this usual formula of narrative mapping with a less typical itemization of narrative, what she calls a HyperContexts page. This idiosyncratic spreadsheet charts the narrative according to two major axes: major characters listed vertically and seven sequential days of the week lined horizontally. This illustrative page alerts readers to the fact that the novel might be read as a spreadsheet that highlights seven protagonists' distinct storylines as well as the days of the week during which those stories overlap.

While there are certain throughlines that propel the narrative forward as the horizontal axis of each protagonist's storyline suggests, Yamashita interrupts this trajectory by switching the order in which she presents characters in each section. By breaking their stories into pieces, scattering them across the narrative in inconsistent order, and then puzzling the stories back together in her Table of Contents and HyperContexts pages, Yamashita indicates that novel follows an interrupted linear schematic. Furthermore, as Itagaki observes, Yamashita's protagonists manifest

throughout the novel regardless of the character driven chapter headings. In fact, critical information about protagonists can be found in chapters that claim to highlight the presence of another as in the case of Gabriel's chapter on interviewing Manzanar. Certainly, the Contents and HyperContexts illuminate arrangement in a complex and even bewildering narrative that tempts us to account only for its chaotic elements. Failing to account for the various ways the storylines fall outside the bounds of chapter headings, the Contents and HyperContexts also impart implicitly the disorderliness that permeates the narrative.

There is no question that Yamashita disturbs her own organizational schemas, but as suggested above, she also stops short of distorting the parameters of narrative beyond recognition. This tension plays out through Yamashita's characters, most notably with Manzanar whose respectable sootiness is key to illuminating the dilemmas of a post-progress existence. Upon first contact with Manzanar, Gabriel discovers "a powerful body, broad chest and strong arms, as if the man worked out." In addition to physical strength, Gabriel recalls: "What struck me was that Manzanar was probably not crazy [...] He had a clarity of mind and speech; no glitches that I could notice." However, following these observations, Gabriel questions their validity: "Afterall, he lived on the street; he conducted an orchestra no one could see and music no one could hear" (110). As I see it, these suspicions do not diminish the fact that here and elsewhere, Yamashita emphasizes Manzanar's formidable physical presence and observational alertness. In terms of Gabriel's standards (clear speech and a robust body), Manzanar is not the lowly abject figure that his sootiness would appear to suggest. However, his unkempt

appearance nonetheless reminds us that despite an impressive outward demeanor, he is filthy, a sure sign that he is poor and lives a difficult material existence.

Given the way health and hygiene discourses have been deployed to regulate the disenfranchisement and acculturation of Asian immigrants in the U.S., Manzanar's chosen unclean, unwashed, unkempt body must also be read in light of those discourses. As Nayan Shah has shown, the acculturation to middle-class standards for certain Asian Americans was mediated through public health discourses and practices. That is, his study of San Francisco's Chinatown illuminates the way ideologies of health, hygiene, and domestic life were deployed to demonize Chinese immigrant groups and then re-routed to transform certain members of that group into a representative model of middle-class citizenry.

By drawing on Shah's work, it is possible to read Manzanar as resembling a "primitive" of the metropole. Historically, those wielding power have deployed terms such as "civilized" and "primitive" to represent two extremes in the modern spectrum of humanity.²² That is, the civilized have been demarcated as those who possess the privileges to participate in and take full advantage of modern institutions, whereas primitives have been those who "fail" to function successfully within those structures. In light of these distinctions, I read Yamashita's representation of Manzanar as suggesting that the unemployed homeless who live on the streets of Los Angeles function as the metropole's primitives. Specifically, Manzanar, by extracting himself from the routine of his past life, signifies one way in which subjects of the metropole might escape, question, and flout certain conventions of modernity.

²² Certain notions of primitiveness emerged out of European discourses of subjectivity and civilization, helping to identify and differentiate the "high" (Europe) from the "low" (the rest of the non-white world). For further discussion on this, see Lloyd and Chatterjee.

While it might be tempting to read Manzanar in this way, it must be noted that Manzanar's dirtiness does not stem from his inability to acculturate to modern society as in the case of putatively unhealthy and unhygienic immigrants in San Francisco's Chinatown. Manzanar was a surgeon before being homeless, and his expertise in modern medicine indicates that he is far from being an Asiatic figure of filth and disease.²³ Furthermore, Manzanar balanced this career with a content family life as his own memories remind him: "He remembered his youth, the woman he loved, the family he once had, a nine-year-old grandchild he was particularly fond of." (170). Thus, the circumstances for his homelessness do not stem from typical economic, social, and personal causes that lead to homelessness, suggesting that Yamashita's figuration of Manzanar does not operate primarily to shed light on the historical conditions that have led to homelessness in the U.S.

Rather, Manzanar's sootiness signifies a deliberate rejection of a comfortable and well-balanced middle-class existence that registers in *Tropic* as an inadequate compensation for internment. I draw this reading from the way Manzanar's sootiness stems from his birth in an internment camp during World War II. Though Manzanar was born under the dubious auspices of being the first *sansei* (i.e., third generation Japanese immigrant) born in a Japanese internment camp, he went on to reach various milestones of a successful U.S. American existence: university education, marriage, nuclear family life, and esteemed employment. An abrupt decision to abandon, by all normative modern standards, a well-adjusted and even content life for a solitary encampment on the side of a freeway suggests that the trauma of internment never left him despite the various achievements that represent a façade of "getting over" it. Indeed, his moniker—the

²³ I review the history of associating Asianness and impurity in my introduction.

eponymous name of a concentration camp in California—announces quite clearly that camp experiences have left an indelible mark on him. That mark, in certain ways, manifests as his sootiness and stands for his rejection of middle-class civility. However, because he was just an infant during internment, Manzanar's memories of that time are likely to be hazy at best. Thus, we are left to assume that his parents' memories have made it impossible for Manzanar to go through the motions of a conventional middle-class life. Or, for that matter, internment could also symbolize anti-Japanese and anti-Asian practices that have not dissipated after the technical termination of internment. Continuing to permeate the culture, then, internment—as a symbol of overarching institutional racism—troubles Manzanar to the point that he rejects the life that had compensated him for the past.

Here, I am suggesting that certain professional and personal accomplishments might be read as paltry compensation for profound trauma that Manzanar rejects by abandoning his former life. Reading Manzanar's story in this way evokes discourses on racial injury, which, as Anne Anlin Cheng points out, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) played a key role in developing. Cheng argues that *Brown* not only overturned de jure apartheid in the U.S. but also motivated the translation of racial grief into social and material claims. The fulfillment of such claims has stood for the conventional resolution to reparation debates in cotemporary times. In the case of Japanese American internment, for example, internees received official recognition and monetary compensation from the U.S. nation-state as recompense. Manzanar's former professional and domestic achievements also stand for the way Japanese Americans have afforded themselves with various opportunities despite the traumas of the past. By building on Cheng's discussion

of racial trauma, I approach Manzanar's narrative as an opportunity to reassess the trappings of social and material life that are meant to compensate for institutionalized racism.

I want to take this opportunity to note that by using the term compensation in reference to Manzanar, I do not mean to imply that his personal and professional achievements have been handed to him as a mere apology. Yamashita shows that Manzanar, by references to his education, earned his personal and professional rewards as a result of hard work. She underscores this point through another character, Bobby who, as the epitome of the relentless laborer, sacrifices intimacy with the ones he loves most to ensure their material security.

Bobby, among all of Yamashita's characters, is most representative of the metropole's invisible and exploited workforce. Summing up those efforts, Yamashita's narrator observes:

Ever since he's been here, never stopped working. Always working.
Washing dishes. Chopping vegetables. Cleaning floors. Cooking hamburgers. Painting walls. Laying brick. Cutting hedges. Mowing lawn. Digging ditches. Sweeping trash. Fixing pipes. Pumping toilets. Scrubbing urinals. Washing clothes. Pressing clothes. Sewing clothes. Planting trees. Changing tires. Changing oil and filters. Stocking shelves. Lifting sacks. Loading trucks. Smashing trash. Recycling plastics. Recycling aluminum. Recycling cans and glass. Drilling asphalt. Pouring cement. Building up. Tearing down. Fixing up. Cleaning up. Keeping up. (79)

Capturing this brisk, no-nonsense pace further, Yamashita writes: “Happier he is, harder he works. Can’t stop. Gotta make money. Provide for his family. Gotta buy his wife nice clothes. Gotta buy his kid the best” (17). There is no question that Bobby works hard for the life he has helped established for his family. Yoking Bobby with janitorial work especially emphasizes the degradations that Bobby will submit himself to support his family. That is, his self-employed nighttime janitorial business consists of the usual duties of collecting trash, dusting, vacuuming, and mopping. In addition, Bobby goes on emergency house calls that involve the clean up of filthy toilets: “Toilets get clogged good with paper towels and shit. Bobby seen ’em clogged with condoms and syringes. Bobby don’t ask questions. He just comes in twice if they give him a call” (158-9). The task of cleaning filthy public toilets is, of course, an undesirable labor t.²⁴ Part of the “low” laboring class, then, Bobby intimates that hard and even degrading work is at the root of material and social advancement for the some of the formerly poor and dispossessed.

Such undesirable labor does not consign Bobby to powerlessness. In fact, Bobby not only equips himself appropriately for this work but he also defends himself ably against assault. For example, Bobby equips himself with various tools from a cleaning supply store to facilitate his labor. Additionally, Bobby is self-employed and defends himself against an attacker, a man larger than himself who attempts to carjack Bobby while he is parked at the cleaning supply store. Before the assailant has a chance to strike, however, Bobby smashes his hand with his car door and then proceeds to beat up the carjacker with such precision and to such an extent that he bloodies his assailant while

²⁴ See chapter two for an elaboration on this point. Specifically, in that chapter I examine how the “lowness” of janitor for a Manila disco functions in Hagedorn’s stage edition of *Dogeaters*.

avoiding soiling himself with any of the blood. Such a display of physical strength and deftness indicates that Bobby is not a figure who has been cowed into subjugation. This echoes, drawing on Viet Than Nguyen's reading of authors Frank Chin and Gus Lee, the way in which authors have represented violence to reclaim the agency of Asian American masculinity during and after the 1960s racial empowerment movements. Similarly, in the case of Yamashita's work, violence becomes one way to establish post-progress agency, and perhaps in a world where carjackings are commonplace, such physical power is not only a matter of agency but of survival. Thus, Bobby's characterization as a janitor does not characterize him as a dispossessed, passive, or primitive figure of the metropole. In fact, he and Rafaela own their own home, two cars, and the latest electronics to outfit their house. Additionally, Bobby finances his younger brother's university education and sends remittances to his family in Singapore. That aside, Bobby's janitorial labor suggests nevertheless that he subjects himself to hard and degrading labor in order to earn a certain standard of living for his family.

While Bobby's presence helps to emphasize the way Asian immigrants have negotiated the metropole to their own advantage, I want to return to Manzanar's homelessness to emphasize the point that Yamashita presents Asianness as being indelibly cast as an abject of the nation-state. Translating Julia Kristeva's definition of the abject and abjection to Asian American studies, Karen Shimakawa identifies abjection as a simultaneous acceptance into and rejection from the U.S. nation-state, and she identifies Asian America as the U.S. nation-state's abject. Her examples of the abject and abjection include the recruitment of Japanese American and Filipino American men into the U.S. military during WWII, and their subsequent denial of full veteran compensation and

dispossession of property through, for example, the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans. Abjection with respect to Asian Americans describes an ambiguity of receiving but also disowning those who are necessary but also undesirable to the nation-state.

Reading Manzanar's decision to become homeless in light of Shimakawa's work, I interpret his homelessness as a response to the practices that have facilitated the assimilation of Asian Americans and, at the same time, have also violated their rights. This response to Asian America's abjection is not characterized only by bitterness but by an arm's-length celebration of Los Angeles's urban development. More precisely, Manzanar's rejection of modern life is not categorical, for he remains on the perimeter of the society he rejects, paying daily homage to its methodical and chaotic vastness. I read this double gesture of resisting and embracing Los Angeles as an ambivalent response to a Los Angeles, a space where technological advancement, millions of diverse people, and traumatic institutionalized racism "all come together." With Manzanar, then, Yamashita suggests that resisting modern culture by removing oneself from it is never far from re-engaging and even honoring the metropole.

That said, Yamashita does not allow Manzanar's long-distance embrace with Los Angeles to stand. At the end of the novel, he reunites with his fondly remembered granddaughter Emi who, as the novel's sardonic and politically unmotivated protagonist, does not survive the novel's turbulent concluding events. Thus, Yamashita pushes Manzanar out of isolation and to the brink of family reunion, albeit through the death of a granddaughter who had disassociated herself from the ethics practiced by characters like Buzzworm and Rafaela. With Manzanar's potential return to family and society,

Yamashita suggests that his ambivalent rejection of middle-class life will nonetheless return him to that world, compelling him to devise an alternative way, besides homelessness, to respond to the inadequacies of institutionalized racism's compensations.

Conclusion

As an alternative to individualistic and materialistic schemas of advancement, social responsibility surfaces as part of a post-progress existence in *Tropic of Orange*. Characters like Buzzworm and Rafaela help animate this revision of development through which materially oriented ideologies of success are reworked to cultivate not only recognition of the oppressed but also acquire various services on their behalf. In this way, I read the novel as describing how forward-moving yet fragmented linear schemas might be re-deployed to help motivate an ethics of development. Yamashita is careful to point out, however, that this is not a perfect panacea to the ills of modern culture. Manzanar's presence suggests that the traumas of institutional racism mark the limits to which racial injury can be redressed by middle-class standards of material equity and institutional justice. By refusing to offer an ethics of development that registers a paradigm of the political, Yamashita invites us to recognize how ethics is fundamentally imperfect at its core.

Postscript

Lines and Edges of Critique

This dissertation's examination of Asianness and impurity through a close reading of Asian American literary works has illuminated a trajectory of what I see as a "Yellow Peril" discourse that registers in and shapes U.S.-based health and hygiene discourses. Understanding the racialization of public health in light of minor character analysis has facilitated my reflection on the ideologies and practices of progress and marginalization here. I have intended each chapter to take seriously the function of profoundly abject figures, as symbolized by their narrative minority and dirtiness, in animating class and plot advancement. Thus, the identification of "dirty bodies" and the examination of both their historical significance and narratological functions constitute crucial threads that stitch together each chapter of the dissertation.

Analyzing impurity and minor characters vis-à-vis Asian American literature offers more than an opportunity for historical commentary and exegeses of plot dynamics. Indeed, a close reading of dirty bodies invites a reassessment of civil rights-based ideologies of success. This represents a second connective thread that weaves the

dissertation together. Though I question such success when it allows for and justifies the subjugation of others, I recognize its practical value, particularly in the last chapter of the dissertation. My aim throughout the dissertation has been not to nominate one formula of ethical responsibility over another but instead has been to consider various attempts at an ethical recognition of marginal subjects. Literary, or idealized, attempts at such recognition remind us that no single mode of resistance is adequate to the task of redressing material inequities, and that perhaps the only ethical approach to which we ought hold fast is one that insists on critical acknowledgement of such imperfections and that thus drives ongoing efforts at revision.

By situating the principal literary texts of the dissertation within Asian American studies' debates, I meant also to contribute to the field's current interests in understanding its pasts, presents, and the possibilities for its futures. Specifically, my chapters have built on and analyzed efforts: to incorporate the field's peripheral groups into the dominant field imaginary; to contend with the under-examined enthusiasm for "resistance"; to forge historical and theoretical grounds for field coherence; and to engage critique of modern plot dynamics.

Though these various threads of discussion help string together the chapters, they are by no means tied off neatly into knots by the end of the dissertation. In fact, at least two significant loose ends remain. First, the relationship between minor characters and minor literature, as articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, has yet to be addressed. Doing so in future iterations of this project will better situate my readings of racial, ethnic, and national minority as part of my overarching discussion of minoriness. (For example, I suspect that comparing what I read to be Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's

purposeful inadequate figuration of a subaltern homeless boy in “A Perfect Life” (1995) or other similar instances of minoriness will resonate productively against Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “deterritorialized noise” as exemplified by their discussion of Prague German influenced by Czech.)

And second, a search for characters who embrace their abject filthiness has haunted me throughout this project, especially after having read David Trotter’s inspiring reading of nineteenth century working-class literary figures who take humble comfort in (of all things) grease. Finding analogous moves in Asian American literature has not been easy, but Monique Truong’s novel *The Book of Salt* (2003) offers one possible source for thinking through the implications of this representational strategy. Though the main character and narrator is a Vietnamese cook living in Paris (he is a racialized subordinate figure like the minor characters highlighted throughout the dissertation), his attention to and even delight in the details of poverty recuperate the “low” in a way that bears critical consideration. Moreover, my long fascination with the installation art of Sarah Sze dovetails with this discussion, as her art makes use of materially small and disposable household items (e.g., Q-tips, toothpicks, and batteries), displaying them in profoundly intricate, interwoven architectural splendor. The grandeur of Truong’s representation of poverty and Sze’s celebration of disposable castoffs are, quite simply, startling after having immersed myself in a series of narratives that not only maintain a frugal approach to describing poverty and marginalization but that also disparage the indignities of them. This is, perhaps, a fruitful, disruptive intervention. This dissertation is, in these senses, perhaps best seen as a point of departure for the greater project that awaits. Whether the discussion of this literature and art finds its way inside or outside the bounds of future

versions of this project, I am already informed and challenged by the ways that they will no doubt expand on my study of the irrepressibility of filth and the ethics of reckoning with the putatively unimportant.

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