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Self · *ish*: Examining and Reshaping Filipino & Filipinx Identities within the Continental United States and Hawai'i Via Post-Colonial Literature

Kiana Anderson

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelors of Arts in English
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Approved by

Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt Date 2020-08-03
Advisor

_____ Date _____
Reader

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Abstract

This thesis explores a conversation between the “self” and Filipino culture to examine the ways the Filipino diaspora exists in literature amongst colonization and trauma. Through literary texts spanning across time and geographical locations, like Elaine Castillo’s *America Is Not the Heart* and Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*, I interrogate the cultural and psychic meanings associated with the concept of home within the context of these hybrid histories. By examining the neo-canonical literature of some of these authors, I interrogate their sense of self, voices and visions via the languages, symbols, cultural frameworks and emotions that are prevalent within the literary texts and my own auto-ethnographic explorations.

Within the auto-ethnographic representation, I examine what it means to be Local Filipino—a Filipino identity emerging from the dual colonization of Hawai’i during the plantation era. By looking at these trajectories and cultural landscapes within these literary and creative spaces, this thesis explores a discourse that aims to speak about hybrid Filipino identity, home, place, and history within a postcolonial context.

I am six. My great-grandparents' house in Mountain view, Hawai'i smells like time. My great-grandma greets me with a hug, accompanied by a deep inhale. Nose pressed up to my head. It lasts for what seems like generations. She searches for something beyond me— inhaling a legacy that extends itself across the islands, the Pacific Ocean, to the Philippines. Inhaling something I will not remember until much later.

I am eleven. When I see my great-grandma again, she reminds me how hard she worked, how hard my grandma worked, how hard my father worked, to be here. She hands me a wad of dollar bills to save. She inhales goodbye. I remember the scent.

I am eighteen. Away from my great-grandma's house. A girl tells me to go back to where I came from. My roommate asks if I live in a hut. I get asked where I'm really from. As if that question can be answered with an exact geographical location. As if I have an answer. I search for the ocean.

I am nineteen. I come back for winter break. My great-grandma has remained strong, unchanged. Her eyes glisten at the stories I tell. She reminds me to work hard. Our ancestors listen.

I begin to understand.

...

Introduction

In an interview with Homi Bhabha conducted by Klaus Stierstorfer in 2017, Bhabha states

I think what is interesting about culture itself is that it is often in its most interesting manifestations in a state of the “misfit”; to fit the different bits or parts of a particular cultural apparatus or experience together always creates a problem because the parts do not necessarily form a whole. And people regret that (e pluribus unum). Wouldn't it be great if everybody, whatever cultures, all fit together in one big whole. But it seems to me that the most interesting and most important ethical and political problems have emerged precisely because cultures are not a seamless whole. There are discordant elements; there are divisive elements; there are divergent elements (Kläger).

Bhabha uses the term “misfit” to denote minority; much of his work has to do with how these misfits fit (or don't fit) into cultures, and the ways in which they cause ruptures in identity and within politics: “[s]o, this whole process of minoritization as part of the very nature of cultural ethics, cultural politics, and cultural semiosis is the ill-fitting nature of the cultural, if you like, the culture as a misfitting apparatus” (Kläger). With Filipino culture specifically, this

minoritization can be traced across locations and time, suggesting that our geo-political identities are constantly being shaped and reshaped by our histories of colonization and migration. How then, does this minoritization affect Filipinos living in the Continental United States vs. Filipinos living in Hawai'i which has its own isolated set of identities that has been informed by a history of colonization and the plantation era?

In *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, Roderick Labrador states that Hawai'i

is an ideal site for interrogating issues related to race, ethnicity, culture, place, and immigration” because its location poses itself as the “Hawai'i Multicultural Model”... and its endorsement of Local¹, a racialized identity category that indexes a sociopolitically constructed pan-ethnic formation, as the unmarked normative order...and the mainstream principle for collective identification” (Labrador 4-5).

It was only natural that for me, living in Hawai'i allowed me to embrace my identity as Local rather than one specific ethnicity, leaving me in a liminal space between cultures, further questioning my identity. The term Local is used to describe the multiculturalism that exists to create and shape Hawai'i's identity; instead of identifying with one culture/ethnicity, the embracement of Local in relation to place is what many people use to identify themselves as. Hawai'i's multicultural history is rooted in its plantation society where an influx of immigrants came to the islands to work on the sugar plantations in the 18-1900s. Along with Portuguese, Japanese, Okinawan, Chinese, Korean, and other immigrants coming in, Hawai'i's culture has also been shaped by the “plantation society and... the arrival of the 1946 sakadas, the last and largest group of Filipino laborers imported by the HSPA to work on the plantations” (Labrador 10). Because of this upbringing—the simultaneous colonization of Hawaii by America, paired with the arriving immigrants, and mixed with Hawai'i's indigenous culture, the term Local

¹ For the purpose of this paper, I will be using Local with a capital “L” in this framework, to suggest a “pan-ethnic” category with roots in plantation society” (Labrador 5).

becomes complex due to its unique location and Local culture compared to say, Homi Bhabbah's original understanding of identity in *Location of Cultures* where he investigates the implications of cultural hybridity within cultures. For Labrador, he states that "Local" [is] a relational identity category that marks loyalty and attachment to the peoples, cultures, and lands of Hawai'i; it is the popular designation of choice of those residents who claim a natural and rightful belonging to Hawai'i" (Labrador 9). Here, place is what distinguishes, defines, and complicates a Local identity: "Local is the label for those who are usually classified as "Asian American" or "Asian Pacific American" in the Continental United States. For many Hawai'i residents, particularly those of Asian ancestry, Local is the most salient category or political and cultural identification" (Labrador 53). With this definition in mind, I began to question the implications of identifying as Local if so much of my culture was Filipino. Was I doing my culture a disservice by grouping it into this Local ideal?

When I finally took a DNA test in my adulthood, it revealed that I was what we call in Hawai'i, *hapa*, or multi-ethnic: with Filipino, Samoan, Chinese, Spanish, Scottish, and French roots. I stared at the screen which broke down my identity into a pie chart: 57% Filipino. Flashbacks of this culture flowed through me as I began to realize how much of it I carried and *didn't* carry within me— memories of my Apo (my great-grandfather), stories from him during the plantation days as a cane-cutter and crane operator, my great-grandmother who I thought always strangely smelt me, the food, the missing "F" sound in their voices, the stereotypes, the colors— a world that I had been blind to.

With this, I also remembered how ashamed I was for being Filipino. I wanted to be Japanese like the majority of my friends, the respected Asian. According to the Library of Congress, for Japanese immigrants, they were "members of a majority ethnic group, and held a

substantial, if often subordinate, position in the workforce.” This meant that “[p]lantation life was...rigidly stratified by national origin, with Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino laborers paid at different rates for the same work, while all positions of authority were reserved for European Americans. Plantation owners often pitted one nationality against the other in labor disputes, and riots broke out” (Library of Congress). Based on this history, it is evident that the hierarchy of cultures has been passed down from the plantation era, still existing today. The identities of these cultures are rooted in an unequal Local ideal. This becomes problematic and detrimental to building a Filipino identity if its very creation is rooted in inequity. I remember being told I wasn’t even really Asian when I was younger—the dirty Asian. Thus, this plantation history helped to create a Local that is layered in stereotypes—ones that I grew up to believe and in turn, reject my culture.

Labrador emphasizes what I felt when he states that “Hawai’i-born Filipinos [do] not have a positive image or definition of “Filipino” and, as a result, they [are] disregarding or denying their cultural roots and not self-identifying as Filipino. Instead, Hawai’i-born Filipinos [identify] themselves as “Local.” (Labrador 5). This. This is exactly how I lived my life, embracing the Local version of Filipino by living in a Hawai’i that has been shaped by the influx of immigrants that came during the plantation era in the 1800s. I began to ask questions: *Am I Filipino? Where do I fit in the context of this ethnicity, and within Hawai’i?* And most importantly, *what is Filipino?*

It wasn’t until I came to college that I realized I was facing a much larger question concerning identity— one that is layered within an intersection of nation, colonization, location, and hybridity. Meeting a few Filipinos on campus, I realized that they had a much different upbringing than I did (one that wasn’t rooted in the Local), with differing views of their

identities. Labrador states that “[w]e often use place and the accompanying histories of these locations as points of differentiation...language and class shape the contours of immigrant imaginations of “home” and “homeland” (Labrador 3). Thus, I realized that location largely shapes identity, and within the context of the Filipino diaspora, there are different conversations being held within the Continental United States² compared to those in Hawai’i that interrogate and reshape *what does it mean to be Filipino* for those living in Hawai’i.

In this thesis, I plan to stage a conversation between the “self” (personal) and the literary (the representations via text) to examine the ways that the Filipino diaspora exists in literature amongst colonization, trauma. One of my primary goals is to interrogate what the concept of home means in the context of hybrid histories, particularly through a gendered female (Filipina) lens. Looking at the neo-canonical literature of some of these Filipina authors, I aim to examine their voices and what is important to them— what languages, symbols and emotions are prevalent; in essence: what stories did Filipina writers tell to speak about their sense of self and identity?

I will first compare two novels: *Dogeaters* by Jessica Hagedorn, and *America is Not in the Heart* by Elaine Castillo. These novels were written approximately thirty years apart that encompass conversations occurring in the mainland (California) and in the Philippines. These comparative readings will expose the conversations being held (or not held) by Filipina authors across this time period and compare them to those with literature and history depicting a Local

² I hesitate to use the term “mainland” to describe the Hawai’i compared to the other states. By stating that the other states as the “mainland” compared to Hawai’i, I am utilizing the colonizer’s language by acknowledging Hawai’i as the other. For the purposes of this paper, I will use “Continental United States” with the understanding of Hawai’i’s place as both an illegally annexed state, and its own geographically isolated land, making it unique and necessary to examine.

identity which will allow me to build a working and every-changing definition of Filipino and to unearth whether or not Local changes the scope of what it means to be Filipino. In essence, I will explore whether or not the geography of these writers differs from how people are viewing Filipino-ness in Hawai'i. My hope is to showcase how place affects the meaning of "home," and to perhaps reclaim and reshape an identity that has been muddled by the Local ideal. Maybe then, as Labrador puts it, it will allow Filipinos to "take stock of the past, examine the present, and create a vision for their collective future," a future that begins to acknowledge culture, heal, and be embraced.

This thesis will also incorporate chapters that combine theory and memoir to make space for my own experiences as a writer to take root in, and add to the language of reckoning with the legacies of colonization, displacement, and generational trauma via my ancestry and struggle to find a definition of how to be Filipino. By examining these trajectories and cultural landscapes within literature, I hope to illuminate my own identity as a fourth generation Filipina hybrid—Hapa subject — a woman struggling to find the language to speak about identity and home within a postcolonial context.

I am twenty. I call on my ancestors to give me courage to pursue this path. My great-grandma inhales: she breathes in my life— my energy— that has allowed us to remain connected to our past. An energy that has allowed us to remain grounded within the world.

I close my eyes.

Inhale.

I hear the ocean, roaring with the voices of my past, pleading to be heard.

Exhale.

They will be heard.

...

Chapter One:

Reclaiming and Remembering Filipino/a Narratives in the Continental U.S.³

Sino ka, Ano ka?
(*Who are you, What are you?*)

The title “Sino ka, Ano ka?” has been adapted from the original 1998 “landmark exhibit featuring the work of eight Bay Area Filipina American artists,” entitled *Sino ka? Ano ka?* which was used to give Filipina artists space to showcase their identities and culture (de Jesús 1). The phrase questions in Tagalog language, *who* we are, and *what* we are— the basis for understanding identity and belonging. These questions have been dismantled however, by the legacy of colonialism, scarring the Philippines' history as its people continue their attempts at remembering a dismembered history. Jessica Hagedorn, a notable Filipina scholar, includes a segment in her novel, *Dogeaters*, of President McKinley in 1898 addressing United States’ colonization of the Philippines:

we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable... that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died, (Hagedorn 71)

showcasing the harm and exploitative nature brought onto Filipinos that caused an identity crisis, the impact of which are still felt today. Homi Bhabba’s essay, “Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative,” states that in terms of analyzing identity through history, “[r]emembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the

³ This chapter will serve as a representative sample of the Filipina diaspora that exists outside of Hawai’i. While I recognize that there will be differing conversations held across America on what it means to be Filipino, I chose these seminal novels to highlight similarities and differences that can be examined next to Hawai’i— an isolated island bound by the illegal annexation into the United States in 1898.

present” (qtd. in de Jesús 23). Consequently, the Philippines further provides an interesting intersection point for conversations about memory, especially when examining the duality of its painfully colonized origins by the Western world — first by Spain, and then by the United States. Where then, do Filipinos find themselves in the context of their trauma? How are they re-membering or putting together a dismembered past to piece together their own identities? Additionally, how will the frameworks of distinguished theorists help to illuminate Filipino narratives that have been traditionally excluded from many of their conversations? (these are great framing questions)

Specifically, for Filipina⁴/Americans, these questions have been raised and carried throughout generations in a search for their home and identity; this becomes difficult because they are in a way, doubly marginality as women *and* as Filipinas in a colonized society. Utilizing two Filipina/American contemporary authors— Jessica Hagedorn, and Elaine Castillo— and their respective novels, *Dogeaters* and *America is Not the Heart*, this paper seeks to add to the narratives of the diaspora— contextualizing the Filipina/American experience via the lives within these novels while also reflecting on the authors’ fragmented experiences of being Filipina/American, showcasing the intersections of gender, sex, class, community, and colonization both on the pages and in reality. By searching for these answers through literature, I hope to increase the visibility of Filipino studies within postcolonial, feminist, queer, and diaspora studies and contribute to them via this analysis.

Dogeaters, published in 1990, is regarded as a canonical Filipino work and Hagedorn identifies as a Filipina/American author, born in the Philippines, who later moved to America in her teens. The novel is set in Manila, Philippines around the time of the Marcos era (1965-1986),

⁴ Filipina refers to a Filipino girl or woman.

which was a politically fraught climate under Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship, with Leftists challenging his authority through pressure and physical violence. Hagedorn, in her novel, traces the lives of the wealthy upper class, all the way to the poor, impoverished peoples (those, who some might say, have no class at all), intertwining their narratives to showcase American colonial presence and resulting trauma in the Philippines, while exploring gender, sexuality, and hyper-masculine power, which is further intensified by colonization.

Elaine Castillo identifies as a bisexual Filipina/American writer, born and raised in California. Her novel *America is Not the Heart* is published in 2018, set in Milpitas, California, yet similarly explores the violent history of the Philippines during the time of Martial Law and political upheaval of the New People's Army⁵ (NPA) through the daily reckoning and piecing together of history via the main character, Hero. Castillo reflects on relatively the same period that Hagedorn's novel takes place in, but from a more recent perspective within America. In addition to this, there is something to be said about how these conversations change over time; I have thus chosen *America is Not in the Heart*, published in 2018 as a new immigration response to Carlos Bulosan's seminal novel, *America is in the Heart*. Castillo's novel showcases the new immigration debate going on that includes not only assimilation, but an attempt to maintain and preserve a culture that is being erased. It is worthy to analyze how time has affected the amount of agency one has to speak about these narratives and locate where those changes are when remembering history.

Taken together, the works of Hagedorn and Castillo are chosen to juxtapose the geographical and chronological distance of the Filipino/American experience. Specifically, an

⁵ "The Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (CPP-NPA) seeks to overthrow the Philippine government in favor of a new state led by the working class and to expel U.S. influence from the Philippines" (Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army).

analysis of the texts seek to: 1) examine the language and conversations in *Dogeaters* being used to speak about colonization in the 1990's, when distinctly "Filipino/American" literature was situated at the very margins of the U.S. literary scene, and offer a comparison to contemporary literature— written thirty years later by Castillo, *America is Not the Heart* in order to distinguish the similarities and differences in how these works are reckoning and speaking about trauma; 2) shed light on, and reexamine, seminal Filipino works; and 3) insert a new narrative into postcolonial conversations, in the hopes of adding to the canon of diasporic discourse. Thus, by putting these novels into conversation with one another, an examination which addresses both the similarities and differences in the events that they're writing about emerges— each with distinct vantage points: one in which Hagedorn immerses the reader in the traumatic events in the Philippines during the Marcos dictatorship, and one in which Castillo distances the reader, through time and geography. In turning to these novels as a means of dissecting and reflecting on the lasting and generational effects of the Philippines' colonization, this paper transcends its analysis; it is instead, a means of reclaiming, re-membering, and metabolizing trauma— and thus redefining what it means to be Filipina/American through literature written about the Continental United States and Philippines within a postcolonial context.

In this chapter, the term Filipino/American and Filipina/American will be written using the forward slash character, denoted by: “/,” dividing the Filipino/a from the American. Melinda de Jesús, in her book *Pinay Power: Theorizing the Filipina American Experience* uses the term Filipino/Americans to

indicate both the presence of Filipinos in the United States and the imperial presence of the United States in the Philippines. This term encompasses minority racial status, colonial status, and the postcolonial legacy of invisibility produced by the amnesia that distinguishes U.S. history in relation to empire. Conceiving of the term Filipino/ American solely as a destination of racial minority status risks repeating the erasure of a history of

colonization, a massive omission the too typically characterizes many historical treatments of U.S. imperialism at the turn of the century (de Jesús 16).

In the same way that de Jesús utilizes the “/” to showcase the physical and mental carnage brought by colonization and the traumatic relationship and tension between the United States and the Philippines (that still exists today), this paper will utilize this same denotation to be mindful of the historical amnesia that many subjects of colonization tend to have— a history in which they erase from their own identities. In Kimberly Alidio’s article “When I Get Home, I Want to Forget,” she states that “[t]he representations of Filipinos took center stage in how the United States understood the extent of its power to transform individuals and "races." The racialization of the Filipino subject against variant standards of civilization was a cornerstone of progressive ideology,” suggesting that The United States took advantage of the Philippines, by “transforming” it to their advantage (Alidio 105). However, Alidio goes on to speak about the traumas created by colonization onto the Philippines. Despite this, by the end of it all, the Philippines agreed to a ““special partnership” forged by Americans and Filipinos during the trials of colonization and nation building” which forced Filipinos to “forgive” by forgetting (Alidio 120). This is a prime example that showcases how a colonial identity is forced onto its subjects by motives of the government, as well as the language used to speak (or not speak) about its history.

Thus it is important to acknowledge and note the ways in which the English language can be manipulated to resist colonization by, for example, speaking about Filipino identity to make space for a definition that is not rooted in its colonization. Instead, this very resistance of colonial language can be used as a way to provide agency in reclaiming one’s identity.

De Jesús goes on to apply theories of hybridity and fragmented identity to speak about Filipina/Americans, suggesting that for Filipino women specifically, they are, in a way, doubly

marginalized— as Filipinos *and* as women, silenced and subdued, deliberately taken out of the narrative of Filipinos and Americans:

[f]or Filipina Americans, the legacy of imperialism, colonization, and alienation is further complicated by the patriarchal bias of both Asian American and Filipino American studies, which has dictated the marginalization of Filipina voices and concerns and ignored our attempts to transform these disciplines through incorporating feminist and/or queer theory (De Jesús 3).

She notes that colonization further convolutes those wishing to speak and write about feminist and queer theory within a Filipino/American context. This same ignorance is tested in Hagedorn's characters as her novel while exploring the lives of Filipinos, also incorporates feminism and queer characters into the narrative as they navigate the postcolonial society they find themselves lost in.

Specifically, the character Joey in *Dogeaters* is suggestive of the ways that Hagedorn utilizes themes of feminism and queer characters as metaphors to display the trauma inflicted by colonization, and to disrupt the Filipino narrative that has often left out feminist and queer theory. Joey, the son of a “whore” and a now gay prostitute and addict in his adulthood, navigates this precarious life in attempts to just survive. He speaks about his sexuality openly and dreams about one day being able to leave Manila, via prostitution:

Everyone else has a place of their own. To tell you the truth, I'm the only one who hasn't left...I'll have it all worked out, soon. I know I will. I have to. I'll hit the jackpot with one of these guys. Leave town. I'll get lucky...Some foreign woman will sponsor me and take me to the States...I'll get my green card. Wouldn't that be something? (Hagedorn 40)

Here, Hagedorn speaks through Joey on behalf of many Filipinos during this time, showcasing the goal of the American Dream for many minorities: escaping economic and social poverty to have a better life within the United States via the word “soon.” It is both an interesting and deliberate choice to have Joey portrayed as a male prostitute within this novel, perhaps to call attention to and resist the strict gendered norms of Catholicism present in Filipino culture as a

result of Spanish colonization. Although Joey is openly gay, he is represented as the lowest class, further marginalizing him from the heteronormative community that exists in the Philippines during this time. Hagedorn displays this colonization via Joey's queerness — resisting the racial, sexual, gendered, and economic trauma that the hetero emits.

In the article “Queer Nationality,” Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman explore the term “queer,” stating that it “produces images in response to the massive violence against racial, sexual, gendered, and impoverished populations within the U.S. borders,” suggesting that to be queer, is to go against, and resist an entire heteronormative community (Berlant, Freeman 155).

Further examining queerness within a postcolonial lens, Joey's queerness is controlled by Uncle, a pimp, who takes him in from his youth: “Uncle's no peasant— he's a city man, born and bred in Manila. Busy with schemes and hustles, his various transactions with the Chinese and the cops...Don't make a mistake and underestimate the old men. You'll be in for an unpleasant surprise” (Hagedorn 39). This attitude suggests that Joey lives a life in servitude to Uncle— giving him portions of the money he earns, and always remaining loyal to him despite his unethical actions. This relationship mirrors colonization and is explored in the article “Masquerade, Hysteria, and Neocolonial Femininity in Jessica Hagedorn's “Dogeaters,” where Juliana Chang proposes that “[i]f Joey represents the nation of the Philippines as prostitute, then Uncle represents the state as pimp. In its role as pimp-businessman, the state must manage its excess and remainders, so as to attract its powerful international clients to fresher sources of labor and pleasure (Cheng 655). Here, Hagedorn also cleverly reflects on the effects of colonization and relationship between the Philippines and the United States, via the relationship between Joey and Uncle; this also suggests the limitations of being queer itself; Joey is never truly free, constantly catering to the hetero (Uncle) via money and bodily transactions.

This postcolonial relationship is ultimately fractured when Joey seeks Uncle's help after becoming a target for witnessing the assassination of human rights activist, Senator Avila. Joey realizes that Uncle makes a deal to incriminate him, but is able to escape to a rebel camp in the mountains after fleeing Uncle's shack and killing his beloved dog, the latter of which was meant to leave a message of power. In "Beyond a Postmodern Denial of Reference: Forms of Resistance in Jessica Hagedorn's "Dog eaters,"" Kirsten Twelbeck critiques Joey's story as a reflection of this relationship via colonization: in the "Joey"-episode, Hagedorn attempts to distinguish between "American" and "native" perspectives on the social and political realities in the Philippines. The changes in narrative voice signal clearly both the author's acknowledgement of her own cultural limitations and the narrative's refusal to "colonize" the possibilities of Filipino resistance" (Twelbeck 425). Hagedorn's shifts in narration between all of the characters supports Joey's character as a metaphor for the relationship between "American" and the "native;" she thus alludes to this severed relationship between the United States and the Philippines while also unearthing the reality of living in poverty within the Philippines where the community is at odds with one another, with everyone fending for themselves.

Furthermore, Hagedorn explores this colonization, along with issues of gender and identity within the Filipino diaspora through many of the female lives in the novel. Specifically, Rio and Pucha, upper class cousins, further showcase the effects of American colonization as the novel opens up with the two watching *All that Heaven Allows* (1955), fantasizing over American actresses such as Gloria Talbott: "we gasp at Gloria's cool indifference, the offhand way she treats her grieving mother. Her casual arrogance seems inherently American, modern, and enviable" (Hagedorn 4). The two cousins are very young and born into the upper class. As a result, they have more access and are close to, the colonization of the Philippines. By fantasizing

over American actresses, they are further rejecting their own culture, and feeding into the romanticized, historical amnesia that America uses to mask the violence of its colonization.

Twelbeck, in her article, agrees about this colonization via assimilation:

while the author's mocking criticism of Americanization echoes throughout the book, her main point is the acceptance of American values by consumers. Hagedorn's Filipinos have integrated and appropriated the colonizers' culture(s) into their own...In this way, the readiness to endure, a concept originally derived from Spanish Catholicism, becomes a "natural" part of Filipino culture with the help of Hollywood's movie industry (Twelbeck 427).

This concept of "integrat[ing] and appropriat[ing] the colonizers' culture(s) into their own" (Twelbeck 427) is what Homi Bhaba coins as "mimicry" in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," where the colonized imitate the colonizers via their culture and language to consciously or subconsciously attempt to gain access to their power: "[u]nder cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history...Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its "otherness," that which it disavows" (Bhaba 131). For the cousins, they "mimic" the idealized America via the famous actress; by their fascination and longing to become her, they imitate the colonizer in attempts to gain its power through the integration of American culture.

The emphasis on American presence within *Dogeaters*, specifically within the Hollywood industry attempts to glorify, yet also poke fun of the awareness that American-ness has been accepted and internalized for many Filipinos. Here, what is often neglected are layers of trauma and erasure of the Filipino culture brought by colonization. In an interview with the First Lady in the novel, she questions "[w]hat would life be without movies? Unendurable, *di ba*⁶?

⁶ *Di ba* translates to "right?" or "isn't it?"

We Filipinos, we know how to endure, and we embrace the movies. With movies, everything is okay...” (Hagedorn 224). Here, Rio, Pucha and the Philippines (as a metaphorical representation of the First Lady) ingest these American actors and in turn, American values, traits, characteristics, and culture. The First lady states that the movies are what allows Filipinos to “endure” and survive; to a larger extent, by relying on American commodities such as the movies, they are also relying on America to survive in the aftermath of its exploitation. Hollywood becomes a metaphor and mechanism of and for assimilation; it reproduces colonial histories that Filipinos are then able to latch on to because of the refusal to acknowledge its history.

Chang notes that “thus even at “maturity: and independence, the Philippines *will always owe* the United States symbolically for this gift of itself, a debt that is liberalized by transnational finance capitalism,” which is evident in Hagedorn’s novel through her implementation of American commodities (Chang 655). Hagedorn even goes on to plainly state in the novel that the Philippines is “a complex nation of cynics, descendants of warring tribes which were baptized and colonized to death by Spaniards and Americans, as a nation betrayed and then united only by our hunger for glamour and our Hollywood dreams,” (Hagedorn 101) directly addressing the pain of colonization that has caused the colonized to live a life in service to the colonizer, in this case, through the glorification of American cinema.

Further into the novel, the intersections of colonization collide with the female characters as they navigate abuse, agency, and the colonization of their own bodies. Hagedorn includes subtle details that showcase the adversity faced as women within the novel. For example, Baby Alacran, daughter of a wealthy businessman, states in reference to her fiancé, that “[s]he isn’t sure she wants to marry [him], but she will,” suggesting the lack of agency women had during

this period (Hagedorn 27). Like Baby, many of the women in this novel are forced to marry for the sake of marrying, with little to no equality, while also enduring verbal and physical abuse from men. Religious pressure is also placed on the female characters; for example, when Trinidad Gamboa, a Filipina sales associate has sex with her boyfriend, she goes to church and is told that she is “committing mortal sin” and “will definitely burn in hell if [she doesn’t] put a stop to [her] impure relationship” (Hagedorn 54). Here, Hagedorn demonstrates the harm of American colonialization—which is a product of colonization and patriarchy--brings to the female ideal, suggesting that the Western, Catholic ideal of having sex before marriage is a “mortal sin” that warrants going to hell. Not only does Hagedorn display the effects of colonization here, but also the harm and reality of the experiences of Filipino women as an added trauma.

Additionally, other forms of rebellion against the normative, colonized community can be seen in the ways in which second-generation Filipina’s in the novel utilize their bodies to reshape the notion of the ideal woman, as well as the narrative of the nation. For example, Rio’s mother is obsessed with taking care of her skin: “[s]he stays out of the sun. She thinks it’s bad for the skin, that she will age much too fast and have crow’s feet and freckles like the American consul’s wife, Joyce Goldenberg” (Hagedorn 82). Rio sees this and decides not to follow: “I decide to take my chances and disobey her. I love the feel of the sun toasting my skin...,” suggesting perhaps, an awareness of colonization and resistance to its effects. In going out in the sun and presumably getting darker, Rio is distancing herself from the Westernized ideal of a woman, including being light-skinned (Hagedorn 83).

Rio and her mother serve as examples of the subjugation and trauma of assimilation to a new nation (America) where one’s worth is measured by youth and beauty – (as Rio’s mother has gleaned from Joyce Goldenberg). There is much fear that America will reject immigrant subjects

if they do not adhere to particular standards of whiteness which is portrayed by her mother.

However, Rio rejects these notions of whiteness and chooses to get darker. In doing so, she is not just distancing herself from the ideals of being a westernized woman – but also reclaiming her identity as being brown – and rewriting herself into the formation of the “browning of America” vs. the “honorary white” which her mother attempts to be.

Trauma and Violence on Filipina Bodies

Along with issues of colonization, it is also necessary to analyze the physical and moral traumas inflicted onto these Filipina bodies during this time period. This violence aids to further suppress these women from acting out or resisting the effects of colonization of both their country, and their own bodies. These instances are woven throughout the novel in an almost normalized way—with many of the female characters showcasing no agency, powerlessness, and emotional injury. For example, Lolita, a female movie star who dreams of being free, is reliant on an abusive general in the military: “He never lets her forget she is a kept woman...She means no when she says yes...She wonders how it will all end, and when” (Hagedorn 96). Here, there is a longing to transcend her colonial prison, yet she is constantly reminded that she is trapped, wondering when the “end” will be. This is the sad reality for many of the women during this time, regardless of class. To search for an “end” showcases that the trauma leads many of these women to think about freedom in their own death as one of the only ways to heal.

In attempt to subdue the reality of her body, Lolita remains constantly on drugs. Her internal thoughts while high allow for the reader to reflect on the way trauma poses itself to be both physical and emotional:

When she is high on her drugs...Lolita Luna entertains her delusions more openly. She is convinced the General will help her fix her papers and pay for her passage out of Manila...some place she can start all over again. She dreams of Los Angeles and New York... (Hagedorn 171).

Lolita dreams of leaving the place of her torment, believing that if she lets the general use her body enough, he will eventually give in and give her freedom. This is yet another false reality for Lolita, and for Filipinas during this time—they have no choice but to be exploited, often with nothing given to them in return. Lolita's very state of hallucination allows for Lolita to escape (for some time) this colonial paralysis that she is in. Drugs in this case, like death, serve as ways to cope with this trauma.

Even when these women are aware and attempt to utilize their voice to stand up for their bodies, it seems to fail. For example, Daisy, after winning the Young Miss Philippines Beauty Pageant, “seizes the opportunity to publicly denounce the beauty pageant as a farce, a giant step backward for all women...She accuses the First Lady of furthering the cause of female delusions in the Philippines” (Hagedorn 109). Despite these accusations and publicly going against the very notion of what Filipina beauty is, she fails and is tortured for acting out. Daisy's torture is an example of the effects of colonization on the government, all the way to her own body:

He assaults her for so long and with such force, Daisy prays silently to pass out...When he is finished, the baby-faced Colonel licks Daisy's neck and Face...The room starts to stink of sperm and sweat. The President's aide is next...While the burly man thrusts into her, the General leans over to whisper into Daisy's ear. He describes the special equipment set up in another room... “We can finally be alone,” the General says (Hagedorn 216).

This scene is both grotesque and graphic, serving to show how violence is reproduced onto the bodies of its colonial subjects. The government suffers from the effects of colonization and utilizes violence as a coping mechanism for its own trauma, thereby becoming corrupt. This trauma is then doubly placed onto Daisy, as she then intakes, literally, and physically, this violence onto her body. This is a prime example of the multiplicity of violence that Filipinas undertook during this time; Hagedorn implements violence and trauma onto these female bodies, which reinforces the normative society of the domesticated woman, where she is to remain

submissive and silenced. There is fear, uncertainty, helplessness, attempt at resistance, and colonization of the body evident within the voices in these passages. All of these women dream of a better life, but are trapped within the confines of their own community; their voices aren't strong enough to transcend across the borders of this society into a new life. This type of trauma is exactly what de Jesús warns about when theorizing the Filipina/American experience:

the gendered analysis of imperial trauma— the Philippines' dual colonizations by Spain and the United States— and the articulation of Pinay resistance to imperialism's lingering effects: colonial mentality, deracination, and self-alienation...compel[s] us to recognize rather than reject this history, for to acknowledge and theorize its violence and its exponential repercussions is to take the first steps toward decolonization and empowerment, (6)

suggesting that colonization, along with the violence deriving from being both colonized *and* female, adds another layer of difficulty for those seeking to find a home both geographically, and within their own bodies.

Hagedorn's novel is a testament to the colonized experiences of Filipinos by America. Although set in the Philippines, Hagedorn is writing as a Filipina/American, placing her own internalized fears, trauma, and experiences into the novel: "[e]ighty dialects and languages are spoken; we are a fragmented nation of loyal believers, divided by blood feuds and controlled by the Church," further showcasing the intersections of language, culture, and resulting fragmentation placed onto individuals like Hagedorn who was alive during this turmoil (Hagedorn 100). Her novel reflects both the generational, and lasting trauma that comes with being Filipino, as well as the physical harm being done to many of the marginalized characters— especially queer and female—within the novel, suggesting that colonization only amplifies the difficulties of healing and locating identity.

Analogous Intersections in *America Is Not The Heart*

Similarly, Elaine Castillo's *America Is Not The Heart* showcases analogous intersections of what it means to be Filipino/American through her own exploration of gender, immigration, colonization, and generational trauma. However, Castillo makes both geographical and chronological space as a way to address this trauma, compared to Hagedorn who situates the reader directly into the trauma. For example, Castillo speaks about the same colonization through a third-generation Filipina in California vs. in the Philippines. In addition to this, she is writing thirty years later about the same subject as Hagedorn so there has been some time between the narratives to think about the impacts of these traumas. As opposed to providing many different narratives to showcase and resist the effects of colonization like Hagedorn, Castillo tells a similar story via the main perspective of Geronima, later named Hero, in America— showcasing her traumatic experiences of being in the NPA and her difficulty in assimilating into American society while navigating through her own sexuality and desires.

The story opens with Castillo placing the reader directly into Paz, Hero's aunt, by narrating how she followed the "American Dream" by coming to America through the use of "you" to indicate Paz: "[y]ou already know that the first thing that makes you foreign to a place is to be born poor in it; you don't need to emigrate to America to feel what you already felt when you were ten...When you finally leave, all you're hoping for is a more bearable kind of foreignness," already suggesting the alienation and trauma placed onto Filipino/Americans as a result of a type of forced immigration stemming from a need for a better life (Castillo 18). Here, Castillo suggests that there is a distance felt even when Paz was in the Philippines in her youth—a sense of otherness in her own nation of birth due to her lack of class privilege and inability to assimilate into either Filipino or American culture, further mirroring the fractured identities of

many individuals brought onto them by colonization; these subjects lie neither here nor there, trapped between two places that both seem to reject them. After Paz worked to bring her husband, Pol (a former doctor), over from the Philippines, the couple had their Filipina/American daughter, Roni, who exhibits the epitome of hybridity, and is curiously aware of the world around her. Roni serves as a symbol of hope for all characters, helping the adults, especially Hero, a poor, undocumented immigrant and former field doctor and upper class woman in the Philippines, to navigate the difficulties of colonization, assimilation, and family.

After Hero worked as a field doctor for the NPA and had been taken hostage and tortured— resulting in two broken thumbs and lasting trauma— Paz and Pol bring her to America where she faces difficulties with class, sexuality, and finding home. Here, Hero is subjected to cleaning the house every day and picking Roni up from school while Paz and Pol work. This is a difficult transition for Hero in comparison to her upper class life in the Philippines; by coming to America, Hero is stripped of any tie/citizenship to the Philippines or America with no paperwork or identity, suffering the effects of emigration and displacement. Hero has to start all over again and adjust to her loss of status as a privileged Filipino subject – a status akin to many refugees that have had to emigrate to America. Hero then, becomes a byproduct of the upheaval in the Philippines as a result of resistance to American colonization; she ironically leaves to America after risking her life resisting American intervention in the NPA for so long. This irony further serves as a role in her feeling “out of place” due to her exilic conditions in America. This is something Hero learns to recognize and later accept as she navigates her life in America and begins to meet a community of Filipinos there.

Hero’s job and name lends an important irony that exists throughout the novel. The name “Hero” is literally the embodiment of that which is aspired to be. Perhaps Castillo gives Hero

her name to suggest an irony and reality in coming to America, where she physically cannot become the hero via her profession, or claim her own identity through the name “Hero” due to her precarious life of being a marginalized, undocumented, Filipina woman. This irony serves to amplify the fact that for characters like Hero, they are trapped and are existing between multiple cultures—struggling to balance different values, customs, and beliefs within a society that rejects their very attempts at assimilating.

This bitter realization that Hero experiences is one that many subjects of colonization learn to understand: “Hero knew then, with a wry, bleak, doubtless humor, that life was long, that this third or fourth life she was on was long, long, long, not even all the way started up yet, not even close. She’d fallen down another slope; now she was being carried back up the mountain” (Castillo 182). Hero recognizes the generational struggle—one that is rooted in the struggle that to fit within a neocolonial capitalist framework or belief that hard work will reward one into an upward class mobility and be accepted as American. She sees this in Pol and Paz when they work long shifts just to make ends meet, within herself due to the fact that she is unable to work and be free in America, and in Roni, who gets into fights in school as another metaphor for resistance of America. Like Hagedorn, Castillo implements the generational effects of colonization that is passed down through her characters into her novel.

In *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity* Maria P.R Root states that “the traumas associated with colonization that lasted almost 400 years scarred us all, regardless of our nativity, language, class, or gender. Trauma fragments and fractures the essence of our being and self-knowledge; it disconnects us from each other,” affirming the fact that trauma does not disappear, but is rather carried and internalized, further fragmenting and isolating attempts at

ever healing/reckoning with trauma (qtd. in de Jesús 32). Root mirrors the ways that Pol, Paz, Hero, and Roni all carry this suffering, stating that when born into this trauma,

you must work diligently just to explain your own life—to recognize and name your scars, to educate yourself about our specific cultural history and uncover its connections to your subjectivity. The ideologies of your family are colonized, and even your own thoughts and actions are colonized, despite your initial unawareness of the systematic forces at work in the simple procedures of your daily life (qtd. in de Jesús 32).

This only reaffirms the fact that the long “third or fourth life” that Hero is on is in direct relation to the trauma that requires her to “work diligently” against a history of colonization, *and* against the colonization of her own thoughts and life. This is problematic to individuals like those in Castillo’s novel because of the difficulty and insanity of escaping this system of colonization; where then do these people lie, and how can they combat this trauma that is so deeply ingrained into their own identities?

In addition to the trauma of colonization, like Hagedorn, Castillo utilizes queer characters to further display the added marginalization faced by colonized individuals. Hero’s queerness is introduced early on in her youth when she wanted to wear Pol’s cologne: “[n]ot long after she began wearing Tabac, Concepcion complained to Pol about the smell; not only that she smelled like a man, but a particular type of man, a babaero⁷. An adolescent girl, smelling like a playboy, it was unthinkable,” suggesting that Hero is already rebelling and facing against the “ideal” heteronormative community, like Hagedorn’s Joey (Castillo 55). In the article “Gender Trouble,” gender theorist and queer scholar Judith Butler states that “gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real,” suggesting that all actions aid in the performance of gender—constantly being replicated to produce one’s desired embodiment (2489). This process suggests that there is no point in anyone’s lives where his/her/their body isn’t being shaped by a

⁷ Womanizer

culture. This is seen through Hero, who's body is being constructed by a colonial Filipino culture rooted in Catholicism, is able to subvert the normal ideal to then perform her own gender—blurring the lines between male and female and gaining a sense of her true self.

The reader goes on to find out that Hero pursued becoming a surgeon in the Philippines, to which she faced further discrimination: “Concepcion was unequivocally against the idea, found the profession unbecoming of a woman...choosing the punishing hours of the surgeon's life, entering into its traditionally, and appropriately, masculine world— absurd” (Castillo 55-56). Not only does this add to the trauma felt by the colonization of the Philippines, but it further isolates Hero, as it did Joey, from the Filipino narrative because of the ways they don't fit into a set category, and are instead othered as others. As de Jesús asks, “[w]hy have we Filipinas silenced ourselves? And what/whom does our silence, our self-erasure, serve?” (de Jesús 4). The same questions are being reckoned with for both authors through these characters and their attempts at resisting that silence and claiming an identity for their own through their aspirations and occupations.

To display this, Castillo utilizes Hero's occupation and medical terminology as a unique lens to further explore this trauma:

Every traumatic injury is different, because every body is different: every fracture, every strained muscle. One patient will be able to walk on a leg that another patient will die with. These instances are not miracles, but the order of the day. The diagnosis is not a life sentence but an aphorism: a starting position, a jumping-off point. Once we accept that, the rest is elementary, dear Watsons— the rest is just our job (Castillo 165).

Although describing traumatic injury in the medical sense, this can be applied directly to issues of colonization and identity that Castillo is alluding to. Traumatic injury, in terms of colonization, may suggest a moral injury brought onto bodies, resulting in a type of double harm, both on the body, and spirit. In this case, “every fracture, every strained muscle,” becomes a

metaphor for the fractured identity, culture, and home for many Filipinos, where the “strained muscle” becomes the hard labor, endurance, and survival for these people. By stating that “[o]ne patient will be able to walk on a leg that another patient will die with” is a normal occurrence, the characters, the author, and the novel all become a “patient,” that exists in a liminal space where they are all just trying to survive in the aftermath of colonization— never fully healed or given the space to begin to heal.

Despite this, Hero is able to weave between these margins at times, serving as a resistance to both the trauma of colonization and the heteronormative model when the reader finds out that Hero is bisexual and dismantles the notion of the “ideal Filipino woman” by not only by having a masculine job, but by being forthright with her sexuality: “[s]he had sex with a girl for the first time at college...If anything, it made her realize that she wasn’t looking for an answer; that sex hadn’t been a question at all, but a sentence, lone and complete,” suggesting that Hero’s sexuality grounds and affirms her own identity, within a male-dominated, patriarchal, colonized society (Castillo 93). Sex for Hero, is simply sex— a way to distance herself from the trauma of her past, and the coming to terms with it in the present. Maybe then, sex becomes a way to reckon with and resist the “systematic forces” that Root describes. For Hero, sex is a way to transcend the context of her trauma and in turn liberate her by allowing her to choose who she has sex with, and stating that it was not to serve religion or a colonized ideal: it is simply sex for the sake of her own pleasure and desire. This act of sex being simply for pleasure allows Hero to be liberated from the confines of colonialism, further giving her a sense of control and agency within her life. It is important to acknowledge the fact that Hero came from an upper class, wealthy family which may have given her more access to be freer with her sexuality due to her privilege. Hero grew up in a colonized Philippines, where Catholicism was the main religion

most people followed. Because she was of upper class, the ability to go against these religious ideals releases her from that responsibility. Hero observes that “most of the girls...had grown up as devout Catholics: girls determined to wait for marriage, who only spoke about sex when it happened between people who’d been dating for years and were about to get married,” suggesting that she is aware of the discrimination held for homosexual, Catholic people, and the ways they are punished for deviating from it like Hagedorn’s Trini (Castillo 211). Because of this, Hero is able to tread between the ideal and the other because of her class status, as opposed to Trini, who is a lower class sales worker. Hero’s privilege thus allows her to be absolved of some of the consequences that come with going against the heteronormative community she is surrounded in; she herself does not state she is Catholic which further adds to the fact that she is aware of the colonial shackles she is bound by, yet chooses not to be oppressed by it.

Hero’s desire is complicated however, after coming to America and meeting Rosalyn, another bisexual woman. She begins to have a relationship with her— slowly becoming vulnerable and finding grounding within her ruptured identity in America. Hero quickly learns that discrimination persists, even in the land of the free: “[w]ay back in Vigan, back in Manila, Hero had always waited for the apocalypse of sexual maturity to come down on her, the promise of retribution sewn deep into her bones: she was a ho...and she knew what happened to hos. But slowly she was learning that the fear was just something she’d been taught” (Castillo 210). Here, despite the discrimination of her friends and community for having a lesbian relationship, Castillo gives Hero agency to rediscover her own sexuality, and understand that in a colonized society, this may be one of the few ways of reclaiming her identity for the sake of her own pleasure. de Jesús notes that much of the stigma of queer in a Filipino context stems from “the prevailing Catholicism of much of Filipina/American culture [and] renders expression and

discussion of female sexuality— particularly sexuality outside prescribed Catholic, heterosexist, homophobic norms— taboo, resulting in guilt, confusion, and fear for many Pinays,” which is suggestive of the feelings both Hero and Rosalyn undergo when their relationship becomes public due to both of their religious beliefs and lack of ability to express their sexualities (De Jesús 9).

This mirrors Castillo’s own attempt at claiming her identity; by identifying as a bisexual Filipina/American, her intentions were not “to blot over the harsher realities of a queer woman of color’s life. It’s only that [her] approach is one in which sexuality is, again, a formative but not definite part of someone’s career. Treating LGBTQ characters like their sexuality is inherently something to be deciphered is a part of heteronormativity, right?” (Castillo 8). In giving Hero agency over her sexuality while unearthing the realities of being a queer woman of color, Castillo places her own identity into the novel. By giving Hero this power, Castillo not only affirms her own voice, but lends it to other marginalized individuals through Hero’s, and simultaneously, her own narrative. In doing so, her novel becomes a means of telling her own story as well— sharing her own trauma and struggles of being Filipina/American as a means to combat the silence that de Jesús questions.

Food as Mechanisms for Trauma

Both novels also seem to address food as a mechanism for dealing with colonization’s trauma. In *Dogeaters*, Filipino food is both consumed and used as a way to be in community with one another: “[w]e eat in happy silence, our insides swimming in sugar, grease, and vinegar” (Hagedorn 62). Here, Hagedorn “utilizes the sugar, grease, and vinegar” to exemplify modes of traditional Filipino cooking, with scenes of people eating throughout the novel: lechon, pork, balut, and pancit to name some Filipino staples. This is similarly showcased in *America Is*

Not The Heart, where food is a major symbol for reckoning with trauma. In America, Hero notices that “the Filipinos in the Bay ate on a daily basis the things Hero remembered eating only during fiestas and special occasions: pancit, lechon kawali, bibingka,” suggesting that assimilating/reckoning with one’s culture and history may mean exhibiting the “tourist” foods to maintain part of their ethnicity/identity (Castillo 166).

Hero later goes on to state that

this could be the actual condition of the world— a world in which there was still corny music, lechon kawali, heavy but passing rain, televised sports, yearly holidays, caring families, requited love— [it] seemed to Hero a joke of such surreal proportions the only conclusion she could make of it in the end was that it wasn’t a joke at all; and if it wasn’t a joke, and it wasn’t a dream, that meant it was just. Real. life. Ordinary life (Castillo 229).

Here, Hero questions whether or not exemplifying these symbolic foods is a beneficial means of displaying and perpetuating Filipino culture, suggesting instead, that this “joke” is actually a side effect of colonization itself, where parts of Filipino culture have been glorified within an American context as a means/attempt at preservation while simultaneously erasing the painful history that America brought onto the Philippines. Hero’s understanding of food as an attempt at ingesting trauma mirrors de Jesús’ warning that “[i]n the collective consciousness of Filipinos, dislocation is assumed to be a natural state. We have learned not to take our identity crisis seriously. We have learned instead to laugh, and sing, and dance, for it seems that these are the only permissible ways of asserting an identity,” suggesting that the food and cultural bits displayed in both of these novels may be a product of colonization; it is an attempt at asserting Filipino culture and identity in a digestible way for the Western audience (De Jesús 25). Castillo seems to make Hero aware of this identity crisis, stating that Hero “knew about separating parts of her life out, too; about being one person in one place, and another person in another place,” further showcasing her conformity and fragmented identity— split between two places and

catering to the colonial gaze, with the novel then, becoming a form of resistance through this awareness (Castillo 209).

It can be argued that the complex narratives offered in Hagedorn and Castillo's novels are fictive and limited within the novel itself; it cannot truly hold all of the trauma/pain of an entire history. However, these novels are more than just pages and stories; their authors and experiences— both fictive and real— are a part of the diaspora, which “seeks to reconstruct the disparate parts in order to revise, though refusing to forget, the old narrative that was inscribed upon the minds, scattered and, yes, scarred minds” (de Jesús 11). These novels serve as disruptions to colonial discourse and instead, are being replaced by a “decolonized discourse,” which serves subjects of colonization by giving them voice and space to read and tell their own narratives (de Jesús 27). Leny Mendoza Stobes, in *Coming Full Circle*, states that “[t]o decolonize is to tell and write one's own story, that in telling and writing others may be encouraged to tell their own,” which is vital to developing a narrative of trauma that can be digested, reckoned with, and re-understood (Mendoza 66).

Hero exhibits what scholar Frantz Fanon states as the nervous condition, where the colonized subject remains in a state of nervousness. It is only through certain forms of rebellion, rage, and violence (in Hero's case, rejecting assimilation), it allows the colonized subject to “cure [herself] of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms” (Fanon 21). Hero thus seems to have more agency to decolonize vs. Hagedorn's characters, who seem to have similar ideas, yet aren't given the abilities to utilize rebellion and violence to create change. Perhaps for Castillo, who is writing thirty years apart, feels as though she had the ability to re-write a narrative that has been flooded with violence and trauma onto women. Instead, she

includes these traumas, yet allows her characters to gain some type of agency and awareness to then begin to heal.

Conclusion

Both Hagedorn and Castillo are Filipina/American authors whose work contributes to the experiences of Filipino/Americans; many of their themes of class, race, gender, sexuality, and colonization remain similar. However, this thirty-year gap in publication presents differences as well. Hagedorn seems to place the reader directly into the trauma of colonization, while Castillo seems to be writing at a distance. Perhaps this is because there is geographical distance in Castillo's novel and in her own personal life— writing about the Philippines in America from the perspective of an American born citizen. Castillo's novel was also published in 2018 compared to Hagedorn whose novel was published shortly after the Marcos dictatorship. Hagedorn then, may have more agency, proximity, and awareness over how she is able to address and construct trauma, with her novel being set in the Philippines in the middle of the turmoil, whereas Castillo reflects on past events from the present. Additionally, Hagedorn identifies as a heterosexual Filipina/American vs. Castillo, who identifies as queer. These differences in identities both serve to add to the canon, while also making a claim for female authors within a male-dominated, patriarchal field: both are seeking voice and belonging within the diaspora.

Despite this distance and different identities of the authors, they, along with all of the characters in both novels serve as symbols to represent the diaspora— all of which attempt to navigate, rewrite, and reclaim the ramifications of colonization, while also including the further marginalized individuals (women and queer characters) that have often been left out of the narrative. What then, can be done with these stories to aid in this process of healing? de Jesús suggests that

[i]n the Philippines (in a postcolonial context), where the displacement of colonizers' narratives is a fairly recent development, new narratives formulated by Filipinos for ourselves must be allowed to sink and take root in the collective consciousness of the people without losing track of how the postmodern dialogue is trying to erase notions of rootedness and transcendence,”

meaning that these novels serve as ways for marginalized people with little to no voice to “take root” in these stories as a means of healing, and re-membering a history that has sought to silence and continually colonize Filipino culture. It is imperative to analyze Filipino/a studies within postcolonial literary criticism via the silenced voices of the diaspora to take say, Homi Bhabha's influential frameworks such of memory, identity, and cultural hybridity and reconstruct their concepts to directly address and include all Filipinos into the conversation. The telling of stories and literature then, becomes a powerful tool to craft new narratives of what it means to be Filipino/American — one that can represent all marginalized individuals and those who have previously not been given the space to tell those stories.

...

Chapter Two:

Remembering Apo: Decolonizing Filipino Culture via Batok

*No saan nga makaammó nga nangtaliáw ti naggapuánna, saán a makadánon ti papanánna.
(He who does not look back to his origins will not reach his destination.)*

On December 22, 2019, my great-grandfather, Agaton Pasalo passed away, triggering a need to discover a history of ancestry and a forgotten world. This is a eulogy written by my father, Clint Anderson that combines layers of history and ancestry to showcase the generations of narratives we all carry within us.

As it does on this day,
All stories begin and end in the quiet, in the essence of creation – before words leave lips
Whispering of awakening
And sleep
Before they were the sounds of wind

And waves sent from across lands

Before a man who would take two names—Agaton. Bernardo.—
 To board a ship that birthed our gathering
 Before Ilokos, two names – Lalaki and Baba'e⁸
 Shored their love
 And LuMauig lifted life from the bangka⁹

Emerging from the quiet space
 Of affection
 That links our lineage
 And brings us together, again
 The place where our ancestry arose

The quiet space between Agaton and Felicidad: Pasalo¹⁰

In Ilokano¹¹

There is a story that begins like this: With the first man. A god, Angalo
 Who raised the Now Time
 And created the world as we know it
 The islands where
 My grandfather raised cane with cranes¹²

Flying with devotion to Anito¹³
 Operating life with the same precision
 Ensuring vision for his kin
 When hardships dictated times

When plantations grew promises of better lives

My grandfather carried Sakada dreams on his back
 And cut stalks, bundling hopes of his future, tied tight
 Securing his family's success
 Through hard work
 And laughter

⁸ God and Goddess of creation

⁹ Canoe

¹⁰ My great grand-father and grand-mother on my father's side

¹¹ Austronesian language spoken in Philippines; often used to signify class

¹² Agaton Pasalo was a cane-cutter and crane operator during the plantation era; he was a Sakada: "the regional construction of the Local/non-Local binary has its roots in plantation society and in the arrival of the 1946 Sakadas, the last and largest group of Filipino laborers imported by the HSPA to work on the plantations" (Labrador 10)

¹³ Ancestors in spirit form, often animals or plants in nature

Showing how smiles can melt any semblance of struggle

We will never forget
Your sacrifices

As you sail back to before, aboard the bangka, in the quiet space between waking
Where our ancestors whisper in the sounds of waves washing on shores
Voices joining yours

Telling of times and lives
When we honor, Apo

When we are asked
Where we began

From the quiet of Now
Through our lips
You live
Our stories emerge
And the answer will be: You

I.

*I am my ancestors.
My ancestors are me.
I am creation. I am a beginning and an end.
It is up to me to fill the space in between.*

In the very beginning, there was darkness. There was nothing. And then there was something.

All at once. A beginning and an end. A circle of continuity connecting past, present, and future.

A means of creation.

The creator fashions the land, plants, and lastly, from its spit, man and woman. The creator then places them into a bamboo casing and casts them into the world. The land disappears, however.

All there is, is a bird—a kite—flying. Flying. Searching for land. Growing weary, the kite decides to tell the ocean and sky that the other is plotting to rage war. The ocean defends itself and rages against the sky, crashing its waves upwards. The sky retreats higher into the heavens in

response and fights back by raining large rocks into the ocean. The islands are formed. The kite can land.

Finally resting on the island, the kite is hit by the bamboo casing which has floated in the ocean and found its way to land. The kite is hit repeatedly by this casing despite its attempts to ignore it, until finally it grows irritated of being hit and knocked over. It pecks the bamboo out of frustration, opening the casing. Man and woman are birthed out of the darkness. This is the creation story.

II.

The Oral Tradition

In Filipino culture, these myths and legends are not just stories. I have grown to understand that when these cultures did not yet have a written language, all they had to hold on to their histories were these palatable stories. This knowledge was here since the beginning of time, travelling as an oral tradition across the Pacific Ocean with its roots among all the islands. This culture existed before colonization.

The creation story of the Philippines is just one of the many stories that has enabled our history to remain intact and in conversation with the past. It wasn't until I met with Lane Wilcken, traditional Filipino tattoo (batok) artist and cultural practitioner, that I began to understand how oral tradition works. That the legends and myths that I grew up learning came with layers and layers of culture and history. That there is remembering to do that extends itself beyond just what trauma has caused, that there is a collective responsibility to continue to share and spread these stories as an act of resistance to the colonizer. That we have not forgotten these stories. That

there is space within the depths of our colonized minds to still remember. That this remembrance is also a form of healing from the past to create a better present.

What happens when a culture is forgotten? We as people, begin to lose our way, latching on to the last things we *can* remember, which often starts from the point of colonization. When I used to talk about the Philippines, I'd often start with something like "The history of the Philippines' is deeply rooted in colonization and trauma, when the Spanish first colonized it in..." and then I'd move forward in time from the point of colonization. By telling this Western history, I am doing my ancestors a disservice by forgetting what existed before. Lane reminded me of this creation story—that a culture existed prior to colonization. It has been buried by amnesia. It has retreated back into the land from which it came from. Waiting patiently for the day it will be uncovered again.

Lane and I met in Wainae, Oahu at a host house right by the beach. Sunny, slight breeze, crisp air. Perfect day. My dad and I were led into a small patio outside with screen doors for walls so that we would still be surrounded by nature.

Lane was silent. Stoic. He looked as though his body was elsewhere—in another time. He wore casual clothes—a black shirt and black shorts. Bare feet to be better grounded with the Earth. His hair was slicked back into a bun. His hands rested peacefully at his sides.

He was here, but his presence suggested to me that he carried much more knowledge that did not just exist in the present. He possessed what seemed like a key to the past, waiting to be

unlocked when I was ready. He stood when we entered, and we moved towards him and grabbed the back of my dad's neck with his right hand. My dad followed in response. They touched nose to nose. Forehead to forehead. Eyes closed. They both inhaled. I grew nervous. They then kissed and hugged in celebration of their meeting. I imagined their exchange spoke to each other, saying *I see you... I am here.*

He turned to me, and put the same hand on my neck. We pressed noses and foreheads, and inhaled. It took me back to when my great grandma always used to inhale my scent when she hugged me. With my eyes closed, I felt a transaction of energy pull me into a space I have never been to. I had just met this man, yet I could feel my soul tugging towards something that I could not explain. Something that was beyond me. Something that I felt a ravenous hunger for. Something that I felt once existed but had been taken away from me for far too long.

My body melted away until I felt naked. Melted into the warm air until I was nothing but an echo, a whisper of the past. I began to weep. I felt like for the first time in my life, I was going home.

Lane explained that there were the stories, and then they stopped. For generations, there was silence, a huge disconnect. And then suddenly, the revival has started again. I realized that we cannot get those lost generations back, we can work to connect that gap so that it may grow smaller the more we remember and actively practice our culture.

Growing up in Hawai'i, I had always felt ashamed of not being Hawaiian even though Hawaiian tradition was deeply rooted in the way that I grew up. This Local perception is how I claimed my identity; I practiced and learned Hawaiian culture, language, myths, and way of life yet I felt like it was not my own. However, Lane's linguistic and cultural connections that he made suggested that the Philippines was very much a part of Polynesian culture, and he argued that it is more a part of Polynesian culture than the Asian culture that we often classify the Philippines into.

This knowledge opened my eyes to see that the traditions that I have been practicing were not just tied to the location of my home, which I felt I could claim in Hawai'i *and* in the Philippines. I had cultural roots here. I felt satisfaction and belonging that this was my home too. He stated that we cannot compartmentalize when we study culture. The intersections of it must be looked at, with other cultures in conversation with one another. This is where we get the real truth. That *What is Filipino* exists in the intersections of location itself— that the very definition cannot be extracted from one culture, rather created and reclaimed out of the colonization that occurred both in Hawai'i and other states.

With this knowledge however, Lane explained that there is a lot of retaliation coming from people, especially Filipinos because a lot of them do not have the means to be educated in this way. They *like* to be colonized and ignorant to this “primitive” history. In my introduction, I noted how Labrador stated that with this Local ideal comes a rejection of Filipino culture. He states that

to succeed and achieve in Hawai'i, the logical choice was Localization, an assimilation and acculturation process grounded in the rejection, denial, or suppression of “Filipino heritage” and the making of Hawai'i as “home.” It is the assimilation process that

university and community leaders often find as the problematic source of an “identity crisis (Labrador 13).

What then, I thought, could I possibly do to put rest to my soul and heart, and use this lifetime to be alive to these multiple histories? How could I stay connected to my physical home, while also grounded in the roots that I came from?

III.

The Batok

Receiving batok, traditional Filipino tattoo, is one way to preserve my identity, ancestry, and culture prior to colonization. Lane spent time learning my family’s history so that he could understand our roots—where in the Philippines we were tied to specifically. Once he knew this information, he was able to tell us what placements we were allowed, what side of the body, and the meaning behind all of the motifs that would potentially go onto our bodies. The significance of having a history being marked onto one’s body comes with the serious responsibility of carrying a history that has been threatened into silence, and the responsibility of telling the truth of the culture in order to accurately remember it without a Western lens.

My dad had roots in Ilocos Norte, while I had those, as well as from La Union and Cebu, making me a canvas to be tattooed pretty much everywhere on my body, according to Lane. He felt that since we were receiving batok to honor my great-grandpa, it would be fitting to bestow the creation story onto our bodies to recognize the ancestors that came before us and continue to share that story as a reminder that a whole world existed prior to colonization.

Additionally, Lane also bestowed an ocean motif, as we are geographically and spiritually connected to the water, as well as a crocodile motif which serves as one of the sacred animal

protectors in Filipino culture. The motif could additionally represent the view of the mountain range from the sea, with smaller triangles within it to represent the islands. Marked on me, is literally the beginning of life, my identity, and the end—all leading back to the sea which surrounds my physical home. These motifs can be traced all the way back to the oral history of the Philippines; to have these marked onto my body would signify a connection to my ancestors and those who came before me.

In this tradition of batok, we are given meaning when the mambabatok (tattoo artist) bestows markings onto the body. This is because as receivers of batok, we do not get to choose. We have trust in the mambabatok because he will tattoo what he believes is important, it is his function in our culture. We do not question. We respect his knowledge, experience, expertise, and role as giver of a permanent history.

Lane suggested my dad get his on his calf so that the story is planted firmly, as well as being a nod to his first batok—the beginning of his journey. Just as the legs are the foundational support of the body, so are our ancestors who uphold our sense of cultural identity. This was fitting for my dad as he was still mourning the loss of our Apo who joined the ancestors.

I on the other hand, being a woman, was able to get it on my right arm. In Filipino culture, the body is divided into realms—the bottom half being the underworld, the middle being the present, and from the shoulders up, the heavens. As women, we possess the ability to create life, whereas men are only able to create with already existing material. Thus, the placement on the arms allow for me to physically and spiritually move between the realms, serving as a life-giver and creator.

The right side is the paternal side, therefore I was able to receive marks from only my dad's roots, which was Ilocano.

As Lane explained these designs, he also described the importance for why these marks are so sacred. There are thousands of years of history that has suffered colonial extermination. With his research, he was able to uncover many of the symbols, stories, and meanings from various areas of the Philippines. Each design that he bestows is unique and given careful thought; no batok is the same. It is disrespectful to copy or take another's design. A sacred marking only for the self. Many of these designs are repetitive, suggesting the generations that have come before, and will continue on after us.

To tattoo, he used the recently revived ancient tradition of bestowing batok, using his own handmade tools fashioned from bone. His tattoos are freehanded and hand tapped unlike the Western tattoo gun. This has become one of the ways Lane has been able to restore and preserve what was once part of our culture. Prior to colonization, Filipinos practiced the tradition of batok widely, so much so that the Spanish called it Las Islas de los Pintados, the island of the painted ones when they first arrived. Since colonization, the practice has lost its way, forgotten, and appropriated. Along with many stories, other practices, beliefs, and overall understanding of the past.

Before beginning, Lane and his apprentices all placed their hands on the area that was to be marked and did a second prayer to the ancestors. My eyes swelled up with tears. He asked if I was ready. I leaned into the voices of my ancestors as the tapping of the ink into my skin lulled

me into a trance. So naked, so vulnerable. The pain was not intense, but it reminded me of the echo that I felt I was—this pain, this echo, is a part of something much larger than myself. I felt honored. Relaxed. Peaceful. At home. I knew that my ancestors were watching, proud.

As I was receiving these markings, it did not hurt in the way where it brought me physical pain, per say. With each tap, each puncture into my skin, it was more of an emotional pain, an uncovering of the past, as my skin was pounded open with each tap. A beautifully brutal act. I closed my eyes during this process, dreaming about my Apo, and those who came before me. Mourning the distance lost between our generations. This was not for me. This was for them.

Acclimating without assimilating is the only way to survive without losing more of our traditions, and of ourselves. The only way to be at peace with our minds and bodies, knowing that we are moving forward with the past alongside us. We often look at our indigenous traditions through colonized eyes. But our wisdom was already there, long before the colonizer arrived. In our stories, in our metaphors, in us.

Now, I will walk around with the stories and motifs my ancestors shared, literally marked on my body as a fourth generation Filipina/American. I am only beginning to understand just how meaningful it is to have this history permanently marked on me, and the full weight of that meaning.

I write this with my tattoo still fresh. The pain is just there, reminding me of the sacrifices and trauma that my ancestors carried to allow me to be here today. As my skin heals, so does my

relationship with the past. The ink, along with the stories and history will set into my own skin both physically and spiritually. I will carry this on my body for my entire life. We have lost too much. Allowed too much time to pass.

It is now my responsibility, as a receiver of batok, to carry these stories and take the time to explain its meaning and history. But is this enough to remember? Is sharing stories and educating others enough in my lifetime to rediscover and recover this culture?

Perhaps I am still figuring this out.

But I know this much: When someone asks me what my marks mean, I am to ask: *Do you have the time to listen?* And if they don't, to simply state that *these are sacred marks*, and to thank them for asking.

They aren't quite ready to listen, and that's okay.

My ancestors are.

...

Chapter Three:

Locating Filipino Hawai'i

*Awán kas iti sursúro a sanikuá, ta daytá awán makatákaw kenká.
(Knowledge is wealth that can't be stolen.)*

Much of this paper has been focused on analyzing Hagedorn and Castillo's novels—both seminal works that speak about colonization through different scopes. Compared to Filipinos in

Hawai'i however, there is a different story that emerges. For example, for the entirety of my life, I grew up rejecting Filipino culture and my own identity until an agent of decolonization educated me. While my original intent for this chapter was to take works written by Filipinas living in Hawai'i and similarly analyze them like I did Hagedorn and Castillo's works, I found it difficult to locate these specific scholars within these parameters. The difficulty in locating these scholars also emphasized the marginality of the Filipino diaspora in terms of the representations I aimed to explore. While this diaspora is already not largely studied, for Filipinos in Hawaii, — women in particular—conversations about this unique culture is minimal.

Furthermore, there are very few stories detailing the Filipina/Hawaii experience. I wondered if this is because it's difficult to extract Filipino from the “melting pot” of multiculturalism that exists in Hawai'i? Or is it due to the lack of education and consequent need to share these narratives? In my introduction, I stated that there were different conversations being held within the Continental United States, compared to those in Hawai'i that complicate what it means to be Filipino for those living in Hawai'i. Yet, I have found that there are conversations *not* being held as well, which can lead to underrepresentations, misrepresentations and even erasures. What happens when the Filipinos of Hawai'i are reduced to their racial stereotypes, and even worse, what happens when there is a deep void in these conversations?

In this chapter, I utilize Roderick Labrador's *Building Filipino Hawai'i* as the main framework to interrogate these issues and come up with possible reasons for the lack of stories that exist within Hawai'i. I will first give an overview of Hawai'i's history; it is important to examine Filipino culture in Hawaii by examining the history of Hawai'i's labor and its own colonization to then begin to construct ideals of what it means to be Filipino within this context. I then will examine several racial stereotypes that derived from the inequity of immigrants during

the plantation era that aids to create false images that are being accepted by Filipinos living in Hawai'i. Lastly, I will explore the deeper implications of what it means to identify as Filipino in Hawai'i, and what that means in the context of the Continental United States.

It is vital to note the difference between Local, immigrant, and mainland Filipinos to understand that they are different identities with differing values and locations—all impacted by agents of colonization. For example, for Hagedorn and Castillo, they can be classified into both “immigrant” and “mainland” Filipinos, having their identities and stories rooted in the Philippines and within the United States. These stories differ in terms of their surrounding cultures compared to Filipinos in Hawai'i, which then creates a different field of questions concerning identity and assimilation. Through these sections, I aim to create a better understanding of the similarities and differences that geography brings to the definition of Filipinos, and further question the lack of access to these narratives and how that can be remedied/resurrected.

Hawai'i's History of Colonization and Immigration

Hawai'i's history can be looked at from a labor standpoint, since Filipinos in Hawai'i can be traced back to its “plantation labor history and is based on the formation of a working-class consciousness” (Labrador 36). Prior to the introduction of Western forces, ancient Hawai'i survived on a family structure, “determin[ing] a person's place in the class system of society, and religion sanctified and unified the cultural, social and economic order” (“History of Labor in Hawai'i”). Hawai'i's monarchy was ruptured with the arrival of Captain James Cook, who in 1778 ““discovered” Hawai'i” and “opened Hawai'i's ports to foreign traders and businesspeople, signaling the entry of external political and economic interests, the incorporation of Hawai'i into the world economy, and the emergence of settler colonial relations,” which is what later opened

the gates for Filipino immigrants to come to Hawai'i as a source of inexpensive labor (Labrador 38). Hawai'i's history is layered in this complex colonization where its people no longer worked in harmony to serve one another; rather, labor became a way of suppressing the Hawaiian population by forcing them to work and gain their worth through money, as well as by bringing in other peoples to occupy the land and work.

When the industrial monopoly arrived around 1850-1900, "the development of the sugar industry and the emergence of the "industrial plantation" (Beechert 1985) coincided with Americans gaining military, political, and economic control of the islands and the dispossession and disfranchisement of Native Hawaiians," which created a need for more workers since the majority of Native Hawaiians refused to work on the plantations (Labrador 39). Slowly, Europeans began to gain control of Hawaiian land to create the plantations, leading to the Masters and Servants Act in 1850 which allowed for the import of workers to work under apprenticeships and indentured service ("History of Labor in Hawai'i"). Labrador notes that

because of Western imperial penetration into Asia, Asia's geographical proximity to Hawai'i (and thus, cheaper transportation costs), and Asian workers' experience with extensive cultivation and manufacture of cash crops, particularly sugar, Hawai'i sugar planters began to import Chinese contract labor... Thus began the steady stream of Asian contract workers formally recruited by the Hawai'i sugar industry, a movement of laborers that would last until 1946 (Labrador 41).

This need for cheap labor was essential for Westerners to gain monopolies over the sugar plantations after the demand for sugar increased after the American Civil War. In 1893, Hawai'i was illegally overthrown and quickly annexed into the United States in 1898. With Hawai'i in possession by the United States, it now "had the same tariff protection and privilege as sugar growers on the continent, which encouraged further capital investment and opened up more areas for production," thereby increasing the demand for workers on the islands (Labrador 41). Note here, that because of Native Hawaiian refusal to work on plantations, European forces needed

laborers from other sources. As a result, this need further served to suppress and erase Native Hawaiian people and culture which is a reason for such a low population rate that exists today.

As a result, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) sought out many immigrants, including those in the Philippines. However, many Filipinos found themselves in a very precarious position of being colonized subjects of the United States, yet not being granted citizenship by them. Despite this, many came to Hawai'i after being promised fortune and opportunity. This was not the case. Instead, the reason for the demand was simple:

The expense of transporting recruits from the Philippines was lesser...they represented an ideal source of cheap and stable labor. The Filipinos came from an agrarian background and had experience in sugar production; they were also perceived to be docile and willing workers. With the U.S. annexation of both Hawaii and the Philippines, the diplomatic and legal barriers to recruiting Filipinos were non-existent or greatly minimized, particularly the immigration hurdle...It was also cheap for the HSPA to bring in a new national group to counter its predominantly Japanese workforce...[and] offset the unionizing efforts by Japanese workers that began to take root in the early 1900s (Labrador 42).

Here, it can already be seen that the intent for Filipinos to come to the islands was solely for the purpose of cheap labor and for the benefit of the colonizer. The Filipino ideal of being “docile” and “willing workers” is what has shaped the definition of being Filipino in Hawai'i up until today. The other reason for importing them was as a way to maintain power over all of the immigrant groups—also a colonizing tactic that pits colonial subjects up against one another to suppress their unity and rebellion.

In the next section where I examine racial tensions and stereotypes of Filipinos, one can see that this racism often times stems from this racial hierarchy that existed during this plantation era. The import of the sakadas in 1946—the largest wave of Filipino plantation workers (one being my great-grandfather) allowed for Filipino presence to exist and be maintained in Hawai'i, serving as what Labrador calls a “stabilizing effect on the Filipino community” (Labrador 45). This allowed Filipinos to establish a community within the islands for generations to come. This

is not without repercussions, however. The same issues of identity, class, and assimilation exist today that many Filipinos in Hawai'i struggle with.

I offer this brief description of Hawai'i's colonization and labor as a way to begin to understand the reasoning behind why Filipinos came to Hawai'i in the first place, as well as point out and trace the tensions that were/still are occurring behind these corrupt, colonizing actions. Labrador notes that “[i]n other words, Filipino history in Hawai'i must account for two colonizations: U.S. colonialism in the Philippines and in Hawai'i,” which is something a lot of Local Filipinos (and other cultures as well) who grew up on the islands tend to neglect/forget (Labrador 37). For me, I neglected Filipino colonization and leaned more towards feeling pride and standing up against Hawai'i's colonization because that was what I was taught—we were given the values and history of the land we were born on, not the ones we came from. For myself along with other hybrid individuals who are a product of a history of double colonization, this can be difficult to digest and articulate. As a result, our experiences are a culmination of a double fracture that situates our hybridity. This comes with the responsibility of existing as both simultaneously—forced to navigate between these two colonizations while making sense of our selves.

Identifying as Local is thus born from this mindset in attempts to merge those two sides together; Labrador classes Filipinos into different types, “differentiated along lines of class, language, religion, nationality, period of immigration, region, and so forth (Labrador 132). Thus, we must see Filipino history in Hawai'i as part of Hawaiian history as well. Because of this, a strict, narrowed definition of Filipino cannot be extracted. In the next section, I will focus on Local Filipinos and the ways in which Hawaiian colonization and labor have shaped class and identity and what that means for the way they view themselves.

Local Filipinos

With ethnic and racial hierarchies stemming from the plantation era, there is no doubt that Filipinos in Hawai'i faced marginalization, racism, and mockery. As a result, as a way to cope with these inequities, they turned to Local as an identity and form of existence rather than standing up for their culture and subverting generations of injustices. For them, "the desired assimilation into the mainstream is a process of becoming "Local" and shedding the stereotypical and negative image of Filipinos," suggesting that to be accepted into this Local ideal means to be rid of the stereotype of being Filipino (Labrador 103). This is different compared to the "mainland" Filipino because there is no "Local" culture to assimilate into. For example, for Castillo's characters, they were forced to assimilate into American culture while existing in a predominantly Filipino community. This differs from Local Filipinos because of the ways they assimilate into the Local community which includes Asian, Pacific Islander, and European cultures.

In doing so, these Filipinos shed their Filipino-ness and embodies the Local ideal s vs. Castillo's characters who sought ways to showcase Filipino culture while adapting to America. It becomes problematic when Filipinos attempt to blend into Local as a way to rid them of Filipino identity vs. trying to find community within Filipino culture. The need to be considered as equal to the other Local Asians within Hawai'i is what simultaneously allows Filipinos to assimilate and erase their own culture by thinking that they need to be cleansed of their Filipino-ness. For some, this is a deliberate forgetting; it may seem easier to become Local vs. resisting this double colonization. For others, perhaps later generations such as myself, it seems to be an amnesia that has been passed down from generations as it becomes increasingly easier to adapt into the Local ideal because it is the majority.

Local humor derived from plantation era tension, utilizing Pidgin, Hawai'i's creole English has become a harmful and normalized way of assimilating into the Local. Local humor via Pidgin can be seen as embodying the multiculturalism of Hawai'i by mocking all of the cultures that exist on the islands to create its own blended language that mimics the assimilation of the immigrant cultures combined with indigenous Hawaii *and* the United States. It then becomes a way of mockery, while also creating and enforcing the definition of Local itself. Labrador warns that this Local ideal can be harmful as I have also noted, stating that “[t]he historical formulation and formation of Local involves a nested hierarchy of relational alterities, in which a dominant node indexes a working class background, the subordinate position of plantation workers in opposition to the dominant white planter and merchant oligarchy,” suggesting that this very Local identity that many Filipinos inhabit and make fun of, is actually detrimental to their own culture because of the ways it perpetuates racial hierarchies and serves the “white planter” (Labrador 55).

Yet why is this Local Filipino identity perpetuated? Why do so many, even Filipinos themselves, allow these stereotypes to occur? Research suggests that “the stereotypes used in Filipino jokes have been in circulation since at least the 1930s. The continuing prevalence of Filipino jokes is often understood as a source of “shame of being Filipino” ...and is a basis for local Filipino cultural disidentification and “defensive othering,” contributing to the negative image and rejection of Filipino in attempts to be Local instead (Labrador 56).

Many of these jokes are associated with food: many Filipinos in Hawai'i that I have spoken with have acknowledged times where they have been asked whether or not they eat dog, or if they eat adobo every day (a Filipino staple). As analyzed in Castillo's *America is Not in the Heart*, her characters also learned that there is more to being Filipino than the stereotypes that

they are reduced to. It is in fact, harmful to one's culture to exemplify it in that way. It is similar for Local Filipinos: by feeling shameful and allowing this Local humor to perpetuate stereotypes, it further erases Filipino culture and creates a racist, stereotyped, Local identity. There is also a dehumanizing, orientalist aspect that comes with this humor—a hierarchy in terms of food that aims to label some foods as “cultured,” versus native or wild. Taking foods such as pancit, dog, and balut (fertilized egg developing embryo), these stereotypes label these foods as primitive, forcing Filipinos further into a colonized state and a need to move into these “cultured spaces.”

Looking further into this humor, Labrador states that “Hawai’i ethnic humor depends on a shared set of assumptions and ideologies about linguistic practice, cultural identity, and Hawai’i society. These “ideologies of legitimacy” (Chun 2007) hinge on pluralist ideals of racial harmony and the notion that “we can laugh at ourselves,” yet he questions who is really laughing, and who is the subject being laughed at (Labrador 68). This type of humor that aids to create the Local, also destroys the cultures that are being made fun of by blurring their lines and erasing their characteristics. By being able to laugh at these stereotypes, it also alleviates blame from the colonizer who initially pitted these cultures against one another. Perhaps this is why so many Local Filipinos reject being Filipino because of the fact that their identity is so ingrained in these stereotypes; for many Filipinos born on the islands, without proper education of history and Filipino culture, this version is all they know.

Because of this, there have been ongoing debates on whether or not this Local humor is doing harm to these cultures. I cringe when I remember singing Local comedian Frank Delima’s “A Filipino Christmas” which went: “*Macadangdang saluyot billy goat ganga bala bod bod...*” My cousins and I used to run through our grandma’s house singing this thinking we were Filipino because we could sing these lines. I later found out that these lyrics weren’t even

Filipino words, rather, a mocking of the pronunciation and language of Filipinos. By being able to mock Filipino culture, it also reveals a certain privilege that I had, being able to mock my identity while also pass for other cultures as well. Labrador states that by being able to laugh at ourselves, it “also points to struggles over representation, in terms of which images, signs, and jokes are produced, consumed, and distributed...Jokes can effectively tell us who belongs, and in the process, they construct an order and hierarchy invariably linked to struggles for power” (Labrador 73). In doing so, I rejected my own self by remaining in this hierarchy that is linked to oppression and racism. Because I am Filipino, I thought I could pass as not being racist. Yet given my privilege and identification to ideologically white spaces, my mockery can also be read as internalized racism. This is problematic when we embody hybrid identities as we have certain agencies to laugh at our other half, when in reality, those that are the “other half” are the ones being harmed. Looking back on this, I become so angry at the fact that I would dare mock a culture that I now held so dearly in my heart. How could I wear the marks of my ancestors knowing I have tarnished the very culture they worked so hard to preserve? What can be done?

Conclusion: Renegotiating Local Filipino

Because of this cycle of stereotypes and combined rejection of Filipino culture, “[f]or many Filipino’s in Hawai’i, “making it” in Hawai’i is about achieving social, political, and economic parity with other racial/ethnic groups. It is a demand for full participation in Hawai’i society, for moving out of the margins and into the mainstream,” further affirming the need for many Local Filipinos to climb out of their low socioeconomic standing to succeed as a true Local (Labrador102). Although I stated that these views are very detrimental to Filipino culture, it is so difficult to separate Filipino identity from the rest of Hawai’i’s culture.

Labrador uses the Putong ceremony as an example that stems from the Philippines and celebrated in Hawai'i. In Hawai'i, this ceremony combines cultures with “a nod to Native Hawaiian host culture (via the lei) and the children as the future of Americans of Filipino ancestry. The children and their costumes are an embodiment and a reminder of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines and U.S. colonialism in Hawai'i, which provided the conditions of Filipino immigration to the islands” (Labrador 115). This serves as a physical example for the ways that these cultures are intertwined to create Filipino Hawai'i identity—the fabric of the United States is worn literally by the immigrants, with the lei worn as the symbol of Hawai'i.

Now looking back at pictures of my great-grandparents, they embodied this as well. They often used to tell me how their family back home couldn't understand them because so much of their Filipino language was now combined with Pidgin. The clothes they wore were Local, with Filipino accents and colors. They ate traditional Filipino foods with Local sides. Their culture began to transform to Local from the minute they immigrated here. Thus, these stories are complicated and rooted in a double colonization; they cannot be separated, but they can be pointed out and re-evaluated so that both can be maintained. Labrador states that “the history of Filipino immigration and experience in the United States and in Hawai'i...must also be understood within the context of the development of United States capitalism and the absorption of Hawai'i and the Philippines into the world capitalist system,” suggesting that Hawai'i Filipino identity differs from the rest of the United States due to its isolation and simultaneous colonization of Hawai'i's culture (Labrador 37).

In attempts to navigate through these complex issues of identity within layers of colonialism, changing the name to Local/Filipino with a slash as opposed to just Local, or Filipino would serve to help reclaim Filipino culture, while also acknowledging the immigrant

history that has created a new type of Filipino that is uniquely located in Hawai'i. By separating Filipino from Hawai'i, they are distinctly their own entities; utilizing the slash—which is different from the hyphen due to its separation between the two words versus a hyphen which indicates a joining of the two words—to demarcate that there are intersections and overlap of these identities that is also necessary when acknowledging Filipino history within Hawai'i and Hawai'i history within Filipinos, much like *dé Jesus* uses a slash to speak about Filipino/Americans to be mindful of their colonization. Maybe then, we are able to pick and choose when we are able to identify as Local while also understanding when that identity is being used to erase Filipino culture.

Labrador also questions these identity politics when trying to develop what it means to be Filipino: “Is it then possible to relieve colonial amnesia and imagine cartographies of colonial violence against both natives and migrants that link Filipino struggles against marginalization in Hawai'i and the United States, Filipino decolonization and anti-imperialism in the Philippines to Native Hawaiian self-determination?,” perhaps the acknowledgment of these histories are what begins to open the gates towards emerging from this historical amnesia to reclaim and rewrite what it means to be Local/Filipino. This means that we can't understand these histories without acknowledging the other. We can't laugh at ourselves anymore. We must be respectful of Hawai'i's colonization while being mindful of our own. We must also reshape the way we understand multiculturalism in Hawai'i—that it is not a multicultural paradise full of Local people—rather, it is

rooted in U.S. colonialism and the exploitation of immigrant labor, with the conquest of Native Hawaiians (their displacement, dislocation, and population collapse) providing the conditions for the development of U.S. capitalism and the importation of Filipinos and other Asian immigrants as sources of cheap labor for Hawai'i agribusiness (and later, the tourism industry) (Labrador 133).

Maybe then, we are able to reclaim what Local means without eradicating characteristics of Filipino culture or assimilating fully into Local ideals. Maybe then, more people will have the courage and agency to share their stories and experiences by being able to acknowledge the difficulties of existing within Local *and* Filipino.

Looking at W.E.B DuBois' ideas on the double consciousness, it is "a concept in social philosophy referring, originally, to a source of inward "twoness" putatively experienced by African-Americans because of their racialized oppression and disvaluation in a white-dominated society" (Pittman). His idea of "twoness" can be applied to the hybridity of being Local and Filipino that many Local/Filipinos experience due to the double colonization they undergo.

DuBois goes on to state that

[i]t is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (qtd. In Pittman)

suggesting that the double that he feels results in having double of everything—having to survive doubly. In terms of Local/Filipinos, this is especially difficult to navigate when to exhibit Local, or when it is safe to be Filipino. They live by looking at themselves "through the eyes of others" by exhibiting certain characteristics to maintain safety and preserve the soul. These feelings grapple with one another, constantly fighting for life, which is why it is difficult to share stories and experiences because of the difficulty of pinpointing its origin. There is a doubling that exists between the native and the How can one exhibit Local/Filipino in a way liberates both sides?

My great-grandparents embody the Local/Filipino that I envision. Perhaps that is why I always felt so distant from them. Their heavy accents. Their sense of style. The way they still ate with their hands even when we had utensils. The way they shared stories and myths from the

past—all of which has been buried within me. The way they could speak Pidgin and Filipino. The way they could embrace Hawaiian tradition. The way they could speak about the past in the present and exist across times. They are Filipino immigrants that sought a better future for their family, who carried the Philippines with them on the boat and never forgot it. They are Local—understanding how to weave in and out of cultures, forging relationships with other immigrants, Native Hawaiians, and Europeans. They are what I envision for our future. They our proud Filipinos and proud Locals, never forgetting what either entails. They did not forget. They have passed this knowledge down to me with the hopes that I may discover and understand that one day too.

...

Chapter 4

Conclusion

*Dagiti gapuanantayo ita ti nakagupgopan Dagiti pampanunottayo idi Kalman.
(Our achievements are but the sum of our thoughts yesterday.)*

Why my grandpa left the Philippines

His palms: caked with mud. Soil nested
in the creases of his roots where nails
meet flesh. The pain of overworked, raw
hands prevent him from looking back,
from re-membering an old wound.

When I was younger, he'd fashion pig
traps out of bamboo, plant anthuriums
into the ground to later sell. He works
quickly because that's the way his father
taught him how to work. Because
that's the way his father's father
taught him how to work. He reminds
me to work hard too.

The humid Hawai'i air doesn't stop him.
He combs through the Philippines, searching
for a memory, digging through Earth
and unearthing a lifetime of freedom.
Trapped between two lands, two homes.

He reaches fertile soil, trying to remember
his parent's voices, the way his crooked house
stood, the street food he told himself
he'd come back to eat
when he returned.
He digs, finding memory
of gunshots, screams, silence.

*Are you tired grandpa? I ask.
Not as much as I used to be.*

I nod, as if I understand. A stolen land,
another life, a lifetime of labor.

A few dollars
in exchange,
silenced story.

I stand watching,
my palms clean.

The question of location is central and not peripheral to what it means to be Filipino. Examining narratives that exist in the Continental U.S. and the lack of narratives from Local/Filipinos has further complicated what it means to be Filipino. For Hagedorn and Castillo, much of their stories showcases the struggle of Filipinos dealing with their own colonization and attempts at assimilation while maintaining their own culture. The same is true for Local/Filipinos, except for the fact that they are dealing with a doubly colonized situation in which they attempt to locate Filipino within the Local ideal as a way to rid themselves of Filipino culture to take on a blended identity of Asian Pacific Islander, and American ideals. This indicates a less authentic culture based on a removed location from the historic origin; for Local/Filipinos, it is difficult to distinguish where one's loyalty lies in terms of allegiance to citizenship, making it much easier to assimilate into Hawai'i's Local culture. By using Local as a scapegoat to forget Filipino culture, perhaps this is why there is a certain shame that stems from this need which causes less Local/Filipinos to share and pass down their stories. This problem grows with generations as well—I find myself disconnected to my great-grandparents with the responsibility to *reconnect*, something that not many Local/Filipinos feel the need to do because they have been so established within Hawai'i's culture.

And then there is also the issue of perception—for “mainland” Filipinos since the amount of access they have differs greatly compared to Local/Filipinos. For example, Labrador compares Filipinos in New York to those in Hawai'i and notes stark differences in their access to education

as well as treatment in society. He states that in New York, Filipinos were seen as less of a minority in terms of how they are treated compared to Local/Filipinos who are among the lower ranks of society. This observation can be mirrored in Hagedorn and Castillo's novels as well, there is less internalized racism and more struggle with preserving a culture while assimilating. This differs in Hawai'i, where Local/Filipinos are dealing with assimilating into Local culture and enduring racism via structures such as Local humor that exist to erase and degrade their culture. As a result, education rates in Hawai'i compared to New York were very different due to the stereotypes and negative portrayal of Filipinos in Hawai'i:

[a]cross the United States, 12.6 percent of Filipinos twenty-five years or older had no high school diploma, 33.9 percent held a baccalaureate degree, and 7.8 percent had a graduate degree. In the Hawai'i region, Filipinos composed the highest percentage with no high school diploma (23.9 percent) and the lowest percentage with baccalaureate degrees (14.1 percent) and graduate degrees (2.8 percent) (Labrador 2).

These statistics suggest aid to showcase the difference in perception of Filipinos between the "mainland" and Hawai'i. The low education rates in Hawai'i only emphasize the hierarchies present throughout Hawai'i's history that aim to create false identities rooted in, and perpetuated by, colonization. These statistics also add to the reasoning of why Local/Filipinos are not sharing their stories—many of them do not have the access to do so.

Compared to my analysis of Castillo and Hagedorn's Filipino and Filipino/American characters, Local/Filipinos have another added complexity of existing as products of a double colonization. When I first developed this thesis, I aimed to locate texts written by Filipina/Americans and Local Filipina/Americans to compare what they had to say about colonization—the ways they were coping, existing, and finding what home means. Through this research, it is evident that these questions and answers are constantly changing. While there are similarities spanning across time, there are also disparities that exist due to location. Thus, what

it means to be Filipino is dependent on geography, and the history of that geography. While all Filipinos are navigating colonization in some way, it is also true that there are unspoken and unshared narratives of Local/Filipinos, and specifically for Local/Filipinas. In order for an authentic Local/Filipino culture to exist, these stories must be shared. These histories must be understood separately and then compared side by side. By shedding light on these narratives, maybe in the future more Local/Filipinos will create platforms to be able to share their experiences and begin to resist the negative characteristics that the Local that has created.

In the article “Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African Identity,” Fetson Kalua interrogates Bhabha’s concept of the third space in terms of identity, stating that “liminality, is a response to and a real moment of intervention in people's daily lives as they try to grapple with the cosmic eddies of change around them. Because of such change, the notion of culture is not defined holistically but as enunciation,” suggesting that this Third Space is one that allows people to transcend their cultures (Kalua 25). This idea of the Third Space is what would aid Local/Filipinos in achieving their goals of existing within a doubly colonized society; to exist in liminality which “gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.” In this “in-between” space, new cultural identities are formed, reformed, and constantly in a state of becoming” would be an ideal space to begin to interrogate what it means to be Filipino (“The Third Space: Cultural Identity Today”). With the idea of the Third Space in mind, perhaps identifying Filipinos will be able to reach this realm to create new definitions and meanings for their culture that are free from colonial shackles.

In the interview with Bhabha that I mentioned in the introduction, he reflects on Walter Benjamin’s essay, stating that “the pieces of a broken vessel fit together not because they are the

same as each other but they fit into each other in all their differences. It is that which gives the vessel its strength” (Kläger). Within this framework, Filipino culture exists as fragments of this “broken vessel” which comes together via its disparities. It is easy to become ambivalent to histories one has been displaced from. However, this displacement, like Bhabha notes, can be used to create a stronger vessel. Maybe in the future then one can begin to interrogate and renegotiate what it means to be Filipino. Maybe then, Local/Filipinos will be able to create a new type of Local—one that embraces and celebrates difference while acknowledging the past. One that can work to preserve Filipino culture in ways that can subvert its history of colonization and remain inclusive to the cultures that the Local embodies.

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