Colonialism is all about power but, as we know so well from Foucault, power always already is ambivalent in its effects—coercing and subjugating the selfsame entities it hauls into being and invests with motilities of every kind. American colonialism in the Philippines (1898-1946) was no exception, twinning, as it did, surprising resistances, ironic reversals, dissident subject-positions with the irreducible particularities of its brute imperialist domination. Take the subject-position, "homosexual," as a case in point. "Implanted" in the local population from the early 1900s on by means of the "modern" institutions the American colonists had transported over—in education, governance, mass communications, but most especially in western biomedicine—ostensibly to drive home the point pertaining to the "naturalness" and "inevitability" of a sexual logic grounded in the *homosexual/normal* distinction, it paved the way instead for the

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1 A draft of this paper was delivered by the author at the Sangandaan Filipino-American Studies Conference, 9 July 2003, Philippine Social Science Center, Diliman, Quezon City. An early and different (because incomplete) version of this paper came out in Asiapacifiqueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities, edited by Fran Martin et al. (University of Illinois Press, 2008), pp. 163-180.

2 For one of the most eloquent theoretical deployments of Foucauldian discourse, especially as it relates to the question of ambivalent power, see Judith Butler, *Theories in Subjection: The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997).

3 Under the Treaty of Paris signed on December 10, 1898, the Philippines (together

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launch, by those for whom the label had been made salient, of counter-offensives against its abjection of them that, quite the reverse of locking them in place, would ameliorate their discontents, and harness their energies to “liberationist” ends.

Such “misadventures” on the part of colonialism and postcolonialism give me opportunity to re-think, and re-evaluate, my previous efforts to cobble together a history of homosexuality in the Philippines. I am aware, of course, that reframing the matter within discussions—in the idiom of Foucault (on power), and of Homi K. Bhabha (on “hybridity”)—of transculturation (colonial and neocolonial traffic between the Philippines and the United States), exposes me to old criticisms of my supposedly “colonial-minded” penchant for indulging “foreign-derived” theory. The issue, however, is, can the principal stakeholders of nativist-nationalist positions not understand that all positions, such as the ones they hold, are never simply possible to lock

with Puerto Rico and Guam) was ceded by Spain to the United States of America for a sum of 820 million. According to the Filipino nationalist historian, Renato Constantino, this colonization, which began in 1899 and ended (at least nominally) in 1946, was propelled by American capitalist expansionism and its search for new markets in Asia, to which the Philippines could serve as a springboard or a base. It was rationalized by the Americans to themselves as either “manifest destiny” or “social Darwinism,” and in order to more smoothly carry out its objectives, it “Americanized” Filipinos through an efficient system of public miseducation in English, which placated future resistance and naturalized American rule. This conquest was interrupted only by a brief Japanese occupation of the Philippines, from 1941 to 1944. According to Benedict Anderson, throughout its incumbency, the American colonial regime effectively smashed all Filipino opposition “with great brutality.” See: Renato Constantino, The Philippines: A Past Revisited (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), p. 281; and Benedict Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines,” Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures, ed. Vicente L. Rafael (Pasig: Anvil Publishing Inc., 1995), pp. 3-47.

As is the norm in Philippine academic discourse, this dismissiveness has typically expressed itself as overheard snatches of mean and catty conversation, but I suppose that one compelling proof is the fact that in a recent anthology edited by a group of nativist Filipino lesbian and gay critics, not one of my four published books on Philippine gay culture and criticism is mentioned, let alone referenced. What’s amusing is that this nativism isn’t what it seems, since a closer examination of the book reveals that the essays included in it merely translate certain precepts of American lesbian and gay theories into Tagalog, without the slightest attempt on the translators’ part to critically engage with or indeed “qualify” them. See Tabi-tabi sa Pagsasabantab: Kritikal na mga Tala ng mga Lesbian at Bakla sa Sining, Kultura, at Wika, eds. Eugene Y. Evasco, Roselle V. Pineda, Rommel B. Rodriguez (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2003).
down with airy suggestions concerning their "essentialist" nature.5 Failing to understand this they miss opportunities to productively engage alternative, more sophisticated (if more complicated), reconceptualizations of colonial/postcolonial power and agency.

Just such a reconceptualization is contained in Bhabha's account of the ambivalent, negotiable, fetishistic apparatuses of hybridity, and of mimicry, in relations between colonizer and colonized—clarifying Foucault's assertions about power becoming most productive when caught up in vise-like apparatuses, such as those of colonialism. I will argue these points in relation to homosexuality, because despite the preponderance of erotophobic knowledges that routinely play down, ignore, gloss over, the observable effects of homosexuality upon people, far from being epiphenomenal, homosexuality, and sex and gender more generally, are centrally important to projects of a national or imperial kind.6

As Bhabha sees it, colonialism is a discursive or representational project brought to bear down upon the colonized to produce specific effects, such as identities they are made to carry, but only upon being assigned values lower than the colonizers' own. Within the frame of their lopsided relationality, colonizer and colonized anxiously assume positions of tutelage and amelioration, of fantasy and desire. What sense they have of themselves exists within the "differentiating order of otherness." The Other against whom they define themselves lives inside them as their founding repudiation.7 They hate it, but at the same they crave it. Their uneasy ambivalence towards it is partially assuaged by their fetishistic attachment to it. The colonizer outwardly fears, and

5Unfortunately, nativist essentialism—proposed as a heroic "remembering" of a pristine and purely indigenous past—is the dominant historiographic paradigm in the Philippines today. For an overview and critique of the three most important Filipino historians of the last three decades, whose works evince varying affinities with nativism, see Caroline Sy Hau, "The 'Cultural' and 'Linguistic' Turns in Philippine Scholarship," Corazon D. Villareal et al., eds. Ruptures and Departures: Language and Culture in Southeast Asia (Quezon City: Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines, Diliman, 2002), pp. 36-70.

6This is, in fact, the argument of many postcolonial feminists. In the case of the Philippines, see: Elizabeth Uy Eviota, "Gender subordination: historical and contemporary configurations," The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Philippines (London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1992), pp. 167-75.

therefore reviles, the colonized native, but quietly acknowledges and actively desire him. A mimicry ("a difference that is almost the same, but not quite"), predicated on the colonized subject's necessary but qualified resemblance to the colonizer, underscores this ambivalence. Colonialism, as a civilizing project, expects and coerces its subjects to imitate its norms, but this imitation effectively produces nothing but a mockery of the new order of things—a caricature of colonial authority, being "unnatural" and inauthentic. The mimic who performs her colonial identity remains distinct from the identity she mimics. She is the Other that is almost the Self. She embodies the disfiguring and partial presence of colonialism, and questions its originality and self-identity.

The non-convergence between colonial power's intentions and its real effects upon its targets produces what Bhabha calls hybridity. Colonial authority asserts itself by underscoring its distinctiveness, its difference, from the culture it subjugates, but by so doing it undermines, dilutes, compromises, hybridizes its claims to possess a natural and singular originality. As Bhabha eloquently puts it: "In the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid," because it produces neither the one thing nor the other. All colonial impositions, therefore, including those pertaining to gender, sexual identity, and desire, are resignified by the other culture, split between their claims and their performances, recontextualized and syncretized, from the moment of their contact with the colonized. Colonial power, then, is not a monolithic and absolute system. It is fractured and transformed, rather, by its relationality to its subjects, in relation to whom it produces effects both empowering and coercive. To the extent that it illustrates the imperfect workings of a dominant discourse that transforms as much as it is transformed in the very fact of its incumbency, Bhabha's theory particularizes, in the colonial situation, Foucault's notion of an internally incoherent, appropriable, ambivalent power.

Almost as soon as the transcultural dynamics of colonial life lock into place, hybridity becomes inevitable, since no colonial imposition, no imported concept, no foreign knowledge or cultural practice,

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8Ibid., p. 75.
9Ibid., p. 86.
10Ibid., p. 33.
ever remains self-identical or absolute. Without being intended, or programmed into existence by anyone at all, hybridity simply occurs. In this connection, following a summary of the precolonial and colonial histories of gender-crossing and (male) homosexuality in the Philippines, I will take the works of three nationally renowned Filipino gay writers and subject them to a postcolonial reading, in which the "gay content" of their respective works can be seen in terms of their hybrid, postcolonial representations of the Filipino.

It should be mentioned at this point that Bhabha's theory, not unlike much of postcolonial discourse, has been criticized for overemphasizing colonial discourse analysis at the expense of paying closer attention to important social and historical events—particularly the various acts of native, anticolonial resistance. Moreover, while Bhabha offers a theory of postcolonial resistance through the psychic and representational workings of ambivalence, there is no "real" (in the positivist sense) agency that may be said to operate in it. Because Bhabha contends that all discourse in colonialism is hybridized and imitative, his critics mistakenly insist that he, in virtue of that contention, is saying that there can be no discourse of resistance, per se.

This is a gross misreading, of course, for nowhere in his essays does Bhabha foreclose upon this possibility, although being a

11"Double-dealing" because even as Euro-American imperialism typically appeals to universal humanist ideals—for example, a common humanity, that allows and obligates the imperialist to identify and come to the assistance of the non-Western native—it nevertheless promotes particularist ideas of civilizational, religious, economic, and political difference, which preserve the imperial social hierarchy, precisely. Thus, in the words of President William McKinley, who spoke before a delegation of Methodist Churchmen in 1898, the American annexation of the Philippines proved necessary if only because: "[t]here was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them... as our fellow men for whom Christ also died." See M. Evelina Galang, ed., Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2003), p. 124.

12See, for example, Benita Parry’s critique of the “exorbitation of discourse” to be found, she argues, in much of postcolonial theory, as it has been propounded by its "unholy trinity": Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha: Benita Parry, “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,” Oxford Literary Review, 9 (1987) nos. 1-2. For a fairly good summary of Bhabha’s key concepts and of the various criticisms they have spawned, see Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory (Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 122-156.
poststructuralist, his notion of agency is far from naïve and, quite the reverse, is complicated, culturally structured, and dialectical. And while Bhabha’s notion of the colonial stereotype-as-fetish does borrow from a seemingly universalist psychoanalytic narrative, this comprises only one aspect of his theory, the purpose of which is to exemplify, rather than to explain. We must remember that while Bhabha’s discussion of hybridity is related to his discussion of the fetish, and of mimicry, it is neither the one nor the other, and certainly not both. Of course, all three may be seen as dimensions or “phases” of ambivalence within the colonial scene, which is not difficult to understand, as any Self/Other dynamic—including what the colonizer/colonized distinction necessarily is—will admittedly be characterized by mutual identifications and misidentifications, a constitutive process of subject-formation that is, in the main, discursive or representational.

That said, I would concede the point that Bhabha’s discussion of the stereotype as fetish and of mimicry does borrow heavily (although in its avoidance of the question of sexuality, neither consistently nor even credibly) from Lacanian or perhaps even Freudian psychoanalysis. It can, of course, be argued, as Marxist critics have done, that if the Oedipus complex is the central psychic narrative—more properly, neurosis—of capitalism, then capitalism’s incursions into other parts of the world can be taken to mean that such a complex has been “implanted” in places outside Europe as well. Drawing upon this logic, psychoanalysis should be “applicable” transculturally, although I do not see any need for Bhabha’s notion of hybridity to be viewed in psychoanalytic terms alone. Cultural syncretism and/or mixedness is pretty commonsensical. All over the world, global imports are misunderstood, taken apart, tinkered with, rehashed, yet these processes’ resultant products become neither the one nor the other, but instead composites of both the one and the other—hybrids, precisely. Let me say as well that the sexual and/or gender hybridities that concern me are intentional because, precisely, hybridity requires them to be both. The transcultural process of sexualization in the Philippines explicated here offers helpful insights into sexuality’s workings locally. The Philippines would be remiss not to take into account the cultural and historical fact of “Americanization,” which looms large still in Filipino lives. But what constitutes Americanization is a variety of discursive, “representational” forms, not simply brutish, military,
hegemony-imposing ones. It is neither absolute nor monolithic and, wittingly or unwittingly, it is susceptible to being translated and/or resignified by the local cultures it might have sought to subsume or domesticate.

It is time now to critically engage the works of Jose Garcia Villa, Severino Montano, and Tony Perez—nationally significant Philippine literary figures who have been linked without question, to the discourse and “experience” of America. As exceptionally good students, Villa and Montano had gone from the Philippine colony to the America to study. There they discovered homoeroticism. Perez, on the other hand, harks back to the more recent Stonewall-driven “gay liberation movement”—Philippine equivalents of which have occurred across the nation in urban settings from the 1970s onward—as the title to the work by him that I will take up boldly announces. By means of their brave and compelling texts—Villa’s short stories, specifically the trilogy, “Wings and Blue Flame,” and “Song I Did Not Hear”; Montano’s novel, The Lion and the Faun; and Perez’s Cubao 1980 at Ibang Pang Mga Katha: Ang Unang Sigaw ng Gay Liberation sa Pilipinas—I hope to be able to locate, in order to describe provisionally, and by means of the concept of hybridity, the ambivalent effects of American colonial power upon certain elements of Filipino gender and sexuality.

The Perverse Implantation, Philippine Version

To historicize homosexuality in the Philippines, we begin by recognizing the fundamental difference between gender and sexuality. But to be more specific, we need to disarticulate the presentist and commonsensical connection between the gender-transitive behaviors and identities of the bakla, bayot, agi, bantut, etc., from the discourse and reality of homosexuality as a typically “gay” or “lesbian” question of

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13For a survey of the history of gay liberationist activism in the Philippines from the 1970s through the 90s, see chapters two, four, and five of my Philippine Gay Culture: The Last Thirty Years; Binabae to Bakla, Silahis to M2M (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), pp. 69-124, and pp, 163-200.

14For a longer and more “scholarly” accounting of this history, see Part One of my Philippine Gay Culture.

15These are all culturally comparable words for “effeminate homosexual” among the Philippines’s Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilongo and Tausug ethnic communities, respectively.
same-sex orientation and/or identity.

From the available evidence, it would appear that the history of the former stretches indeterminately into the oral past not only of the Philippines but of Southeast Asia, while the latter is obviously a more recent development, a performative instance and discursive effect of the largely American-sponsored biomedicalization of local Filipino cultures. Going over the available Spanish accounts, we know that from the earliest encounters between the conquistadores and the indios, gender-crossing and transvestism were unmistakable cultural features of a number of early colonial—and thus, presumably, precolonial—communities located across the archipelago. Depending on the region, local men who dressed up in women's apparel and acted like women were called, among others, bayoguin, bayok, agi-ngin, asog, bido and binabae. They were significant not only because they crossed the lines between the male and female genders, but to the Spanish, they were downright astonishing—not to mention, threatening—as they also happened to be highly respected leaders and figures of authority in the societies in which

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they lived. They were *babaylan* or *catalonan* to their native communities, religious functionaries to whom even the local ruler or *datu* deferred, inasmuch as they performed the duties of intermediaries between the visible and invisible worlds. Their claim was that they possessed the power to placate angry spirits, foretell the future, heal infirmities, conciliate between warring couples and tribes. If they took on raiment of women, it was because it signified a bigger transformation in which their gender could be deemed transformed from male to female. They were, as such, “gender-crossers,” rather than cross-dressers, for they assumed not only the outward appearance and demeanor of women, but also a status according to which they were granted by the local culture social and symbolic recognition as “somewhat-women.” They became the equivalent of women in every respect, except that they could not bear children. In any case, pertinent *cronicas y relaciones* (“chronicles and relations” from the *Islas de Filipinas* to Mother Spain) inform us that they were “married” to men, their “husbands” (*marido*), with whom they indulged in regular sexual congress. These men, for their part, retained their effeminate partners much as they did concubines, having other wives by whom they could have their obligatory children. The gender-crooser in precolonial Philippine society, however, was greatly “esteemed,” principally because women, generally, were similarly exalted. Women were the priestesses and matriarchs, who divorced their husbands if they felt like it, decided their children’s names, owned property, and accumulated wealth—all on their own.

While it is likely there were exceptions to these gender-specific

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20 Contemporary Filipino feminists have eagerly pointed this out in their studies. For the most forceful of these, see Sister Mary John Mananzan, O.S.B., “The Filipino Woman: Before and After the Spanish Conquest of the Philippines,” *Essays on Women*, ed. by Sister Mary John Mananzan, O.S.B. (Manila: Institute for Women’s Studies, 1991), pp. 6–35.
rules, what existed in the Philippines when the Spanish arrived were customary and complementary protocols—that were rather rigid and hierarchizing—relating to men's, women's, and gender-crossers' social roles. We can only assume that, with the passage of the centuries, as the status of native women progressively deteriorated, gender-crossing in the traditional sense became more and more difficult to perform, with the gender-crosser becoming the target of the ridicule and scorn forthcoming from medieval Spanish-Mediterranean machismo. From their earlier flattering, if symbolic, association with a naturally occurring and much appreciated species of bamboo called bayog, the native effeminate man (bayoguin)\(^{21}\) in the Tagalog-speaking regions of Luzon slowly but surely transmogrified into the bakla, someone both “confused” and “cowardly.”\(^{22}\) Hitherto conceived of in terms of a “destiny,” kabaklaan (“bakla-ness”), was now understood as temporary, a condition from which the bakla presumably could be wrested.

Despite countervailing pressures from Catholicism (which, ironically, is no stranger to cross-dressing when you consider the fabulously ornamented frocks habitually worn by its “men of the cloth”\(^{22}\)), and from three-hundred-something years of Spanish colonial rule, cross-dressing, effeminacy, and gender-transitive behavior did not quite disappear from the Philippines. They instead ended up syncretized, transformed by their encounter with the foreign into a variety of similar, although finally distinct, colonial and postcolonial practices. It is known, for example, that fighting against Spain and then America, Filipino revolutionaries sometimes dressed up as women to elude detection, confirming thereby

\(^{21}\)We find the word for a diminutive species of bamboo, (bayog), and the word for “womanish man,” hombre afeminado (bayoguin), already in one of the earliest vocabularies printed during the Spanish colonial period. See Pedro de San Buenaventura, Vocabulario de Lengua Tagala. Con licencia infersso en la noble Villa del Pila (Manila), por Tomas Pinpin y Domingo Laog, 1613.

\(^{22}\)The more popular Spanish-Tagalog dictionaries where non-sexual, ungendered definitions of the word bakla may be found are: Juan de Noceda and Pedro Sanlucar, Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala (Reimpreso en Manila: Imprenta de Ramirez y Giraudier, 1860), p. 49; and Pedro Serrano-Laktaw, Diccionario Tagalo-Hispano (Manila: Imprenta v. Lit. de Santos y Bernal, 1914), p. 131.

\(^{23}\)Evidence of the existence of this perception may be gleaned from Filipino folk literature. See, for instance, a certain class of riddles coming from a number of Philippine languages that connects the personage of the fully garbed colonial priest with feminine cross-dressing. See Damiana L. Eugenio, ed., Philippine Folk Literature: the Riddles (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1994), pp. 567-68.
that draping oneself in the accouterments of the opposite gender was a common if not the politically strategic thing to do. Some of these courageous catipuneros y bandidos ("revolutionaries and bandits") who dressed up as women in the name of the Motherland or Inang Bayan might actually have enjoyed, even felt at home, in the “act.”\(^{24}\) More fancifully perhaps, we might surmise that, in sartorial deference to the fabulously coutured Motherland, some might actually have persisted in the practice long after it might have made sense to do so.

In the American period—in which you could say the Philippines persists, this late into the postcolonial day—more than 200,000 Filipinos lost their lives in the bitterly fought three-year Filipino-American war.\(^{25}\) Following that war, America delayed not in establishing its cultural hegemony—first of all among the mestizos and creoles, the Philippines’ traditional elites, and then in the population at large—by Americanizing government and the mass media, secularizing public education, and promulgating and regulating Western (specifically, American) notions of gender and sexuality. In other words, this discursive regulation in and through the imposition of American culture inaugurated a specific sexological consciousness in the colony, one that rested upon a psychological style of reasoning that hitherto had been unheard of. Indeed, if we go by acclaimed Filipino psychologist, Alfredo V. Lagmay’s account of how Western psychology established itself on these shores,\(^{26}\) the “sexualization” of local modes of mentality, behavior, and personality, ought to be possible to date to the early twentieth century, to the time of America’s operations, throughout its newly acquired colony,

\(^{24}\) A rather wonderful, imaginative retelling, in the form of dramatic monologue, of the life of one such effectively cross-dressed and fully feminized revolutionary, is the Tagalog poet Eugene Evasco’s poem, “Ang Banyuhay ni Baldomero de Leon.” A news article in the 16 August 1899 issue of the Manila Times mentions de Leon as having been apprehended by the American forces as he was trying to smuggle guns to his fellow rebels, and presently his jailers are “having fun with him at his expense.” See Eugene Y. Evasco, Kilometro Zero: Tula (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2001), pp. 186-194.

\(^{25}\) This is a conservative figure, as the American General Franklin Bell himself estimated that around a sixth of the population of Luzon (600,000 or thereabouts) had died as a consequence of the American colonial government’s unrelenting military campaigns against the Filipino revolutionaries. See Constantino, pp. 244-45.

of an English-based system of education. The power and scope of
the said imported "psychosexual logic" in relation to my own generation of
Filipinos is such that levels of sexual indoctrination that did not exist in
even my parents' and grandparents' times, complexify life today, but also
make it dangerously exciting. Under the impact of American colonialism
and neocolonialism, which have ushered in the interlocking discourses
of public hygiene, psychosexual development, juvenile delinquency,
guidance and counseling, health and physical education, family
planning, civics, feminist empowerment, gay and lesbian advocacy and,
yes, the corporally paranoid discourse on HIV/AIDS, Filipinos today
play out modes of gender and sexual identity formation whose original
home was the West. The "implantation" of sexuality into the local soil
occurred in this fashion and, with it, the adoption of the "homo/hetero"
distinction as key in managing the now-heavily-freighted sexual lives of
Filipinos, but especially of those who live in the country's large urban
centers in which Westernized knowledges hold sway.

Observing ourselves today, it ought to occur to us, with some
horror and regret, that the effeminate bakla is undeniably now the
"homosexual"—a genitally male man in whom an identity operates
determined by his sexual desire for other men.27 Certainly, this
homosexualization could only have been premised upon a corresponding
and equally foundational heterosexualization, a process that would
require its own painstaking historicizing in relation to the Philippines.
Taking our cue, however, from Judith Butler's enlightening analytics of
the "heterosexual matrix" in the modern West,28 we could speak of it as
developing from the splitting of the gendered body into anatomically
immutable, and mutually exclusive, male and female normative
"types"—a kind of binarization or dimorphism. As I argued in my
previous study of Spanish colonial documents from the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries, early colonial, but also presumably precolonial,

27For comparable studies on how the bakla, as a contemporary Filipino term, has
come to denote feminized (male) homosexuality, see: Michael L. Tan, "From Bakla to
Gay: Shifting Gender Identities and Sexual Behaviors in the Philippines," Conceiving
Sexuality: Approach to Sex Research in a Postmodern World, ed. R. Parker and J. Gagnon
(New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-96; and Martin F. Manalansan IV, "Tolerance or

28See Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New
Philippine cultures, recognized the existence of "mixed," "liminal," and/or "alternative" bodies, indicating that the male/female dualism did not exhaust every possible somatization of the gendered self as far as the indios were concerned.29

This ought to make us think of the fact that as much as his observable effeminicity and transvestism place him at the head (closest to us) of a long line of out-of-the-ordinary, "gender-anomalous," personages in the motley patchwork of Philippine colonial history, the bakla is unlike his predecessors in at least one respect—he is burdened not only by his gender self-presentation, but also, and more tragically, by his "sexual orientation," that supposedly defines who he is as a matter of deep psychological being, and as an innermost question of self.30 Even as a religious discourse relating to "unnatural acts,"31 loosely grouped under the rubric of sodomy, had throughout the Spanish period been disseminated by means of the confessional, the "acts" referred to were regarded as temporary and surmountable, as instantiations of a transient weakness to which. Moreover, everyone was susceptible. Sodomy was not a discourse of identity, but of acts—that is, of non-procreative, non-conjugal, non-missionary acts committed by men with men, women with women, men with women, men and women with animals.32 The gender-crossover's sexual predilections for, and activities with, indio men,

29For a discussion of this point, see my Philippine Gay Culture, specifically the chapter on precolonial gender crossing and the babaylan chronicles, pp. 125-162.

30My thesis is that, among other things, what facilitated this process of sexualization was the existence, among the Tagalog-Filipinos especially, of a psychospiritual discourse of gendered interiority and exteriority: namely, loob and labas. For a cogent explanation of this concept of the sexually defined inner self, see Albert Alejo, S.J., Tao Po! Tuloy! (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990). For my own analysis of the loob/labas dynamic, especially as it figures in the history of homosexuality in the Philippines, see my Philippine Gay Culture, pp. 99-109.

31It is interesting to note, in this respect, that most if not all the accounts that allude to sodomy during the Spanish colonial period blame its existence in the colony on the Sangleyes or the merchant Chinese. For an interesting "theory" for why this was so, see John Leddy Phelan, The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses (1565-1700) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), pp. 186-87.

simply attended, but did not determine, his status as “woman-like.” This status denoted what was more properly a gendered rather than a sexualized form of social being. In any case, the various confession manuals brought to print at the time, and applied with great zeal across the islands by Spanish friars and priests, indicate that while effeminacy figured in their accounts of same-sex behavior (genitally speaking) between “men,” effeminacy by itself did not seem to adequately explain the behavior. In colonial times, as now, male same-sex behavior probably extended over a difficult and dissimulated continuum of intra-male bonds. The varying degrees, qualities, and “embodiments” of effeminacy that surface in the different periods of Philippine history may or may not be taken as constituting a portion—understandably much reviled and disavowed in more recent times—of this same continuum.

As though coping with his swishy ways in a decidedly macho culture was not enough, the bakla must now, needless to say, contend with the private demons of pathological self-loathing—primarily on account of his intrinsically “pathological” desire. Nonetheless, there are many encouraging narratives that the pathologization of the bakla into and as a homosexual has made available, and these are the narratives of hybridity, appropriation, and/or postcolonial resistance to which I shall now attend. I am hoping the selection of works by Villa, Montano, and Perez to follow, will succeed in demonstrating that despite (although more likely because of) the sexualizing “modernization” of local gender relations, whoever were pathologized or stigmatized by the American colonial era’s sexological regime, have also been the ones most “enabled” to engage in counter-projects connected to more self-affirming ends. But since these Filipino writers’ articulations of their identities and desires do not in any simple, unproblematic sense, replicate a colonially inflicted stigma, but are also vitally informed by, “mixed in with,” earlier, more

33 Three of the more famous confession manuals that were used by the Spanish colonial church in the Tagalog-speaking regions of Luzon are: Gaspar de San Agustin (1713), Confesionario Copioso en Lengua Española y Tagala, Para Direccion de los Confesores, y Instruccion de los Penitentes (Sampaloc: Convento de Nuestra Señora de Loreto, 1787), pp. 148-49; Francisco Blancas de San Jose, Librong Pinagpapalamnan yto nang Aasalin ng Tauong Christiano sa Pagcoconfesar at Pagcoomulgar; nang capoua paquinabangan niya ang aua nang P. Dios (Sancto Tomas, 1792), 160; and Sebastian de Totanes, Arte de la Lengua Tagala y Manual Tagalog (Sancto Tomas, 1745), Segundo, pp. 143-46.
local realities, they constitute sites, not of self-indulgent activity, but of postcolonial difference, discursive subversion, the practices of hybridity. As the following readings will attempt to illustrate, "gay identity," "gay desire," and "gay liberation," as gay Filipino have understood, lived, and championed them, are as much the ascriptions of these histories of cross-gender behavior and homosexuality, as the expressions of the various syncretic freedoms and desires these selfsame histories have paradoxically conferred.

Villa's Unheard Songs

Few Filipinos realize that a collection of short stories, *Footnote to Youth*, had been published in the United States by the late legendary exile, shrewish poet, and National Artist, Jose Garcia Villa, before his first book of poems came out. Owing to the fact that inexplicable deletions hobble the locally published edition of this book, even fewer people

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35Jose Garcia Villa (1908-1997), National Artist for Literature, is known as the Father of Filipino Literary Modernism. A medical student in the American-founded University of the Philippines, he was suspended in 1929 because of the explicit sexual content of his poetry that appeared in the school paper which he edited. After winning in a national literary competition, he left for the United States, where he ended up residing for the rest of his life. He did manage to visit the Philippines for a few times after that, usually to teach for short periods or to receive some award or other. The foremost champion of the "art for art's sake" cause, Villa continued to exert tremendous influence over the development of Philippine poetry in English up until the early 1960s. His poetry has been described as Blakean and avant-garde, and it was accorded the American Academy of Arts and Letters Poetry Award and the Shelley Memorial Award in the 1950s. Villa was also the recipient of the Guggenheim, Bollingen, and Rockefeller Fellowships.

Villa was the first writer of Asian descent to have been given such distinctions in the United States. On the other side of the Pacific, among numerous recognitions, he received the Commonwealth Literary Award in 1940, the Republic Cultural Heritage Award in 1962, and an honorary doctorate from the University of the Philippines in 1973, which was the same year he was named a National Artist in Literature. See the *Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia of Philippine Arts, Volume 4: Literature*, ed. Nicanor Tiongson (Manila: the Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1995), pp. 772-73.

36In 1973, a "slimmer" version of this book by Villa, *Footnote to Youth*, was published in the Philippines under Alberto S. Florentino's *Storymasters* series. It excluded, predictably enough, the original collection's three most revealing, "autobiographical" stories. See Jose Garcia Villa, *Footnote to Youth* (Manila: Alberto S. Florentino, 1973).
are aware that a number of these stories, classified as "autobiographical" by Edward J. O'Brien, the book's American champion, in his Preface, convey to the reader the young Villa's experiences as a university student in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The "juvenile" locales, tenor, and characterizations present in these early works are predictable and unremarkable enough, yet what makes them scandalously interesting is that they convey to us an account of Villa's affections and erotic desires for two American boys, a certain David from Santa Fe, and the boorish and emotionally unavailable Swedish jock, Jack Wicken. In a separate story, Villa talks about a homely Jewish boy, Joe Lieberman, whose heroic and selfless love he spurns in favor of an unrequited longing for the boorish red-neck, Jack\footnote{"Jack" is, of course, a sexually loaded term in American slang: for example, "jack off" (to masturbate) and "one-eyed Jack" (the penis).} — a name intended, by Villa at least, to incite endless provocation.

Reading these stories from \emph{Footnote to Youth}, we are immediately struck by their quaint, rhapsodic quality—a lyricism effected, in part, by the short, numbered paragraphs that comprise them and therefore make them read like verse—and by the haunting resonances in their imagery and themes. Any student of Filipino or Filipino-American poetry in English who has read Villa's poetry would be pleased, and probably shocked, to learn that in so many instances these stories already contain the basic repertoire of archetypal images and themes, as well as befuddling symbols, that later would characterize his poetic \emph{oeuvre} as a whole—such as the bright and deathless flower, the wings of the Bird that's God (or that's the angel of God), the stars, the shapely carnal tree, the Blakean flame-eyed feline, the elemental and immutable in Nature, the religiosity imparted to him by his dearest mother, the arrogance of the poetic genius exemplified by none other than Villa himself. Permit me to summarize the stories I consider to be the most emblematic of Villa's erotic persona.

"A Walk at Midnight," the last part of this trilogy of painfully personal stories, transports the reader to the scene of Villa's childhood, where he thinks often about God and about His Love which, while it brought him into this world, now also beats in him "like wings against blue flame." As a boy, Villa knew "no playmates... swam no river... climbed no trees... was alone." His mother, though, was close to him, and taught him his
prayers. In return, he remained faithful to her. In New Mexico, Villa discovers just how selfish Jack is, in contrast to Johnny, his other friend, who cleans Villa's room each time it gets messy. Jack never would be caught doing such a thing, unless it was for a dollar. Still, Villa likes Jack better than Johnny, although he has a slight pang of guilt over it. Jack, however, changes a little, after Villa gives him sandwiches when he runs out of food money. He discovers he "like[s] Jack... a lot," determines to "love him" and "be good to him." His prayer becomes: "God, let him love me, even as I love him." But the thing is, Jack likes a boy called Dick\(^{38}\) better than Villa, with whom he horses around more. This pains Villa immensely. He does his best nonetheless to win Jack's affections, by treating him out to the movies, all because "Jack mean[s] so much to [me]." One time, Jack does something out of the ordinary: he buys popcorn for them both. This makes Villa so happy that he "cannot trace [his] thoughts." One day, Johnny, Jack, and Villa go out to the mesa upon which the University is situated, where the wind tousles their hair. It dawns on Villa that Johnny is lovely after all, flinging his head against the wind, which is "flowers blown from the fingers of God." But he loves Jack more. A while back, Villa had asked Jack to walk with him, but Jack had refused. This time, Dick asks him, and he readily agrees. Villa feels the beating of wings in him rise confusingly, and then fall silent. In bed that night, "tears stand in [his] eyes." He can't sleep, and so he goes to Johnny's room to have a good cry. Johnny leads him by the hand out into the night. They walk on the wind-scoured mesa, where the "sky [is] deep... stars [are like] metal dandelions against the field of the sky." Villa picks up flowers that stain his palms and "drip gorgeously to earth." He lies on the ground, "flowing with flowers, filling them with love, draining [him]self with love." Softly at first, wings beat and turn into "a music of silver and of flames of blue." He asks Johnny whether he sees the Bird making the music, but Johnny says he doesn't. Villa is hungry for the Bird, which is his name for God, and tells both himself and Johnny: "It's enough to know the Bird is there." Listening on to the "rain of music," he forgets his feeling of woundedness over what Jack has done—or has not done—to him. Lying on the cool grass, the "sky wet with stars above him," he ends up "taking Jack out of [himself], and giving him to the earth and to the sky, and the white flowers in [his] hands [are] the gifts

\(^{38}\) "Dick" is American slang for penis, as well.
of [his] forgiveness.”

The other story might as well have been included in this trilogy. Its title is, “Song I did not Hear,” and it follows up on a character only briefly mentioned in the first story, Joe (Joseph) Lieberman. Joe is Jewish and doesn’t like girls, mainly because they want their men to be like horses—and he isn’t like that at all. Joe’s lips are similar to Villa’s Father’s, but he laughs a “crying, yet laughing laughter,” which his father certainly didn’t do. Despite this, Villa doesn’t particularly like Joe, and even drives him out of his room one time. Following this incident, Joe moves into a less expensive dormitory, and Jack moves into the room opposite to Villa’s. Jack and Villa pal around, and Joe doesn’t like it a bit. One time, with the two of them drunk and hung-over, Joe comes over to visit, with milk and pies. Villa knows he should learn to like Joe better, but he can’t help it: he loves Jack a lot. He discovers Jack isn’t capable of loving anyone, so at night he cries himself to sleep. No matter how hard he tries to get Jack out of his system, he just can’t. One night, out on the mesa, he asks God to take Jack out of him, but “God cannot kill love”; he discovers he still loves and will always love Jack. At the end of the semester, Jack leaves for home. Villa wants Jack “always to be in [his] life... even if it hurts. [He is] ready to be hurt.” Joe visits Villa one day, but is promptly spurned by Villa with the announcement that he likes Jack better than any of his other friends. Joe mocks Villa: “Jack, Jack... Will he ever see into you? Will they ever see into you, your friends? Can they see? Can they see? And there is so much light to be seen... It’s like feeding honey to swine.” Joe then bids his unrequited love good-bye. Later, Joe sends Villa a letter: “I saw light and beauty in you—I laid myself at your feet waiting for your door to open. I knocked with prayer and madness and love. But now I am tired... I am low. But now I have to run away from you.” It occurs to Villa that Love is a difficult lesson, both for himself and Joe Lieberman. He ends the “song he did not hear” with this line: “The tiredness of my wings is love: I will be winged again!”

Not only do these stories provide us, finally, with the proper biographical and cultural context within which to read Villa’s famously beguiling, “modernist” images; taken together, they plot the admittedly “young” life of Villa as a man who loved other men, who possessed feelings of an undeniably same-sexual nature, and who—to his undying credit, which very few in the literary community of the Philippines have been willing to give him—bravely wrote out these feelings in as honest
and artistic an expression as he could manage. Insofar as they can be read as autobiographical, they provide us a textualized glimpse into Villa's otherwise oral and thus largely irrecoverable sexual biography.\textsuperscript{39} As narratives, they are plainly about Villa's love for two boys, David and Jack, and the love of two boys, Johnny and Joe, for him, which it seems he never quite reciprocated. In a manner of speaking, in these rather intriguing examples of creative non-fiction, we find that Villa harbored a tragic view of male-to-male love, in which the beloved is never really in love with the lover. It's almost like a daisy chain of males in which everybody is looking the other way, never at one another. In "Song I did not Hear," Villa contemplates this out loud: "Would I have known why I could not enter Jack's life... even as Joe Lieberman could not enter mine?"

Needless to say, these stories are crucial to a recovery of what may well be the most historically relevant thing about this stubbornly quizzical figure in Philippine arts and letters; Villa may have been a lot of things, but he certainly was not only a catty and foppishly conceived aesthete-advocate of the ascendancy, in what concerned everything, of decontextualized art.\textsuperscript{40} As his stories indicate, in the astonishingly "early" period of the 1930s, Villa already was carrying on as a socially conscious writer, as an artist prepared to meet head on the social stigma attendant upon his desire, who wrote it out with courage precisely so he could celebrate it despite everything. It may have helped that by that time he no longer simply was the mother-loving, father-hating, brooding littleissy boy that he had been back home,\textsuperscript{41} but had already established himself in

\textsuperscript{39}Not all that irrecoverable, of course. Many of Villa's former students in the Philippines, with whom I have spoken across the years, while candid about their memories regarding Villa's shrill and flaming faggotry, will otherwise never put such candidness down in writing. The opposite is conceivably the case with the Americans. For mention of a particularly mordant and homophobic critique leveled at Villa by one of his former students, the American poet, Stephen Dunn—who actually declared in writing that his much-hated teacher was nothing but "a third-rate Filipino homosexual poet"—see Mario Eric Gamalinda's column, \textit{The Evening Paper} (16 February 1997), p. 16.

\textsuperscript{40}In his introduction to a volume of Villa's critical essays, Jonathan Chua summarizes the loud and largely acrimonious debate between Villa's "art for art's sake" school, and the "socially conscious" position of the famous Filipino Marxist critic, Salvador P. Lopez. See Jose Garcia Villa, \textit{The Critical Villa: Essays in Literary Criticism}, ed. Jonathan Chua (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), pp. 1-34.

\textsuperscript{41}In an intimate portrait of his friend and fellow-National Artist, Nick Joaquin
the United States—far enough away in fact from everything that might have preempted his overt acknowledgement of his own effeminacy or self-understanding as *bakla* (conveyed to us by his fascination with Georgia of the beautiful golden tresses, whom he had secretly identified with, and in a moment of levity given a boy’s nickname, “Georgie,” to). It may also have helped that Freudian psychoanalytic theory was in vogue in North America at the time since his copious references in his autobiographical stories to his feelings of alienation from his stern and cruel father as a child, which motivated his gravitation to the nurturing female presences around him (his mother, aunts, and sisters), read almost like endorsements of the explicatory importance of childhood in the adult male’s life. In what amounts to an application to his own experience of Freud’s Oedipal account, Villa appears to be saying that the young homosexual male’s “woman-heartedness,” which unperpins his slavish fascination for the “real man” (*tunay na lalake*), might be possible to correlate to his childhood encounters with dominant female figures.

In any event, these stories exemplify what well could have been the earliest textualization, by any Filipino writer, of the “inverted” homosexual consciousness, hybridizing, in Villa’s case, the homegrown *bakla* with the homosexual. Indeed, in one of his last interviews, National (under his favorite nom de plume, *Quijano de Manila*) reveals just how sad Villa’s boyhood was, and just how much he resented his cruel father, with whom he never made peace. Dr. Simeon Villa had been the personal physician of the Filipino revolutionary leader, Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, whose ill-fated republic never came to full fruition because even as Spain had left the country, another colonizer, America, had taken—more ruthlessly, it quickly became clear—its much reviled place. In any case, Joaquin’s piece bears out the details that may be found in Villa’s stories, from his affection for his mother and aunts, to his beloved dog “Sheba,” who died at the hands of the unfeeling old man, to his settling down in Albuquerque, New Mexico to finish his studies. See *Quijano de Manila “Viva Villa,”* reprinted in *The National Artists of the Philippines* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1998), pp. 347-372.

42 For a very good account of Freudianism’s “career” in American cultural life, especially as it relates to this particular issue, see Kenneth Lewes, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

Artist Francisco Arcellana, who had studied under Villa, and then gone on to become one of his close friends, characterized Villa's stories as the Philippines' first "homosexual" stories.\textsuperscript{44} The pathology-dealing discourse of homosexuality that had threatened to hold Villa down as much in the Philippines as in America had by that point also triggered in him a desire to become its poetic, if somewhat tragic, discursive subject. To be sure, not too many instances exist of stories better than Villa's that deploy, at least implicitly, the Freudian idiom of "psychosexual inversion" and combine it with the Philippine practice, outlined above, of gender-crossing.\textsuperscript{45} The traditional construction of the effeminate male was strong in Villa's time — even as today it persists among local psychiatrists and psychologists, and in the popular imaginary — but it was not until after he had migrated to the United States that he would be able to write with frankness on the subject. This conveys to us a picture, of course, of the America that had colonized his home and broken the spirit of his revolutionary, nationalistic, and intensely traditional father, but that also had provided him with the opportunity to put enough of a distance between himself and that rigid, faultfinding man so he could live, write, create, as he wished. Still, it must be said that his father's ghostly Oedipal-like presence, persists within the web and woof of his writings, if only as the silence on which they rest.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44}See Jonathan Chua, "In His Own Words: An Interview with Francisco Arcellana on Jose Garcia Villa," \textit{Kritika Kultura: An Electronic Journal of Literary, Cultural and Language Studies}, Ateneo de Manila, No. 2, December 2002, p. 100.

\textsuperscript{45}The comparability lies in the idea of gender transitivity implicit in both models, except that, as has been my contention in earlier commentaries, whereas the transition had been assumed as physical in the traditional gender system, colonial (especially late Spanish- and early-American) inversion was characterized by a figurative movement away from the body and toward the gendered "inner self" (kalooban). And so, while the early Spanish accounts register the popular belief that the native gender-crosser was genitally hermaphroditic or "mixed," the contemporary view of the \textit{bakla} as a "female soul trapped in a male body" clearly reveals a more "psychological" orientation—the very same orientation that has made the "problem" of transsexualism and its anatomical "solution" (sexual reassignment surgery) possible to begin with. For a comparison of precolonial gender crossing and colonial inversion in the Philippines, see my \textit{Philippine Gay Culture}, 150-161. For a related argument, see: J. Neil C. Garcia, "Redefining Masculinity," \textit{Slip/pages: Essays in Gay Cultural Criticism} (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1998), pp. 166-175.

\textsuperscript{46}This symbolic centrality of the father figure in Villa's poetic corpus is precisely what Nick Joaquin gestures toward in his biographical sketch. See Quijano de Manila, p. 358.
We turn now to the work of a writer contemporaneous to Villa, the playwright and sometime-fictionist, Severino Montano.

**Montano’s Woman-Hating Lion and Faun**

In 2001, Severino Montano was posthumously proclaimed a National Artist, in recognition of his achievements at extending the scale and “reach” of Philippine English theater through, among other devices, staging innovativeness.\(^{47}\) Less well known is the fact that before his death in 1980, he had also completed work on an unpublished novel, *The Lion and the Faun*, and that it contained homosexual characters,\(^ {48}\) abjected identities becoming empowered to speak of and for themselves in and through their absorption of the very terms of their abjection. It seems to all happen because, as with Villa, Montano had spent some time in America.

I had the good fortune some years ago of coming into possession of a photocopy, not of the novel in its entirety, but of roughly half of it—to be more exact, page one to about page five hundred of it. To go by the contents of this half, Montano, I would say, had intended for his novel to function as an autobiographical, if powerfully provocative, *roman à clef*.\(^ {49}\) For one thing, the analogies between its main protagonist’s,

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\(^{47}\)Severino Medina Montano (1915-1980) was the moving force in Philippine theater before the outbreak of the Second World War and for some time after that. After finishing his degree in the University of the Philippines, he left for the United States on a scholarship in 1940, receiving his MA in fine arts from Yale, and his MA in economics from the American University in Washington DC, where he also finished his PhD in public administration in 1949. During the War years, he did research and wrote for the Philippine government-in-exile in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, he traveled all around Europe on a number of Rockefeller grants to pursue his love of theater. Upon returning to the Philippines, he became dean of instruction at the Philippine Normal University, where he established the Arena Theater, “to bring drama to the masses.” He wrote, managed, acted, and directed for this theater company, which ended up staging almost 200 performances of four ensemble plays, all penned by him. Montano received the Presidential Award of Merit in 1961, and for his “nationalist endeavors,” he was posthumously accorded the Cultural Center of the Philippines Centennial Honor for the Arts in 1999. A year later he was named, by presidential decree, a National Artist for Literature. For a short biography, see *The Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia of Philippine Arts*, Vol. 7, pp. 355-56.

\(^{48}\)A more detailed analysis of this novel may be found in my *Philippine Gay Culture*, pp. 237-273.

\(^{49}\)Reading the existing biographical accounts of Montano’s life—such as the short
Dr. Diosdado Medalla's, life, and Montano's own, deftly invite a "biographical interpretation" of it. For another, few better parodies exist of Manila's shallow and hypocritical culturati than its account of numerous interesting distractions involving gossip-brokering socialites and celebrities—including a broad hint at a romantic dalliance between Medalla, nicknamed Dadong, and Ramon "Monching" Magsaysay, the Philippines' recently deceased President. And playing itself out beneath it all is the story of Dadong's relationship with the younger Amihan, an Army Major stationed at the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) Office at the University where Dadong teaches drama and directs a theater company he had founded. Indeed, if The Lion and the Faun is anything at all, it is a love story—a relentlessly syrupy, not too well written, love story, but one nevertheless.

As with author Montano, whose fictional stand-in Dadong is, we are told he had lived and studied in Washington D.C. for several years, before returning to Manila to take his place in theater, and to start a private practice in a kind of "vulgar" psychoanalysis. We are also told that while in the U.S., he had entered into a homosexual relationship with a German-born economist working at the State Department, and that they had even lived together. That candid revelation notwithstanding, Montano in the novel takes great pains to present Dadong as suavely intelligent, eminently eligible, masculine acting, and decidedly not homosexual, but bisexual. In fact, it opens to a lurid "rape" scene in which the family's mulatta maid takes advantage of a drunken Dadong, which proves he can bring himself to "like" women, too—but, the maid excepting, who are intelligent, sexy, talented, and attentive to his most

one above—and juxtaposing them against this novel, I must say the roman a clef angle does seem, rather intriguingly, to hold water.

Ramon Magsaysay (1907-1957) was the third President of the Philippine Republic after the Second World War. The year that he died in a plane crash somewhere on the central Philippine island of Cebu, the trustees of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund based in New York City, with the consent of the Philippine government, established the Ramon Magsaysay Award (RMA) in order "to commemorate the late President of the Philippines and to perpetuate his example of integrity in government, courageous service to the people, and pragmatic idealism within a democratic society." See the webpage of the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation (http://www.rmaf.org.ph/index.htm) for more information on the RMA. On the other hand, no account other than Montano's exists — that I know of, anyway — that imputes homosexuality to this famous former Philippine President.

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basic urges. He returns to the Philippines to find that the women who are interested in him and chase him around, are desperate, vicious, grotesquely big-breasted—in a word, total bores. Dadong, in contrast, is cultured and well-traveled, a Renaissance man who throws himself fully into building the Villa Bello, his magnificent “mansion of love,” one of whose many gardens, incidentally, he fills with bamboo, to memorialize his dearest of the dear friends, the late charismatic Philippine President Magsaysay, unexpectedly plucked form this life in a plane crash just outside Cebu City. And who should Dadong meet in the middle of all this, but Amihan, at a play the former was directing for the university, and which, as a university functionary, the latter had come to attend. In no time at all the two fall deeply in love, and even fancifully call out to each other by the appellations, “faun,” and “lion.” Dadong acts towards his beloved as a shrink and a mentor would and, Pygmalion-like, even compares Amihan to a block of marble he intends to carve down into his own marvelous sculpture of David. Amihan, for his part, is locked into a loveless and unhappy marriage with a conniving first cousin whose seduction of him had forced him into it. When they first meet, in fact, Amihan barely manages to stagger out from underneath the ruins of his wretched marriage and its denouement in terms of the numerous and malnourished bodies of his children. Psychoanalyzing his lover, Dadong discovers various things about him—about the perversities that had beset him throughout his tumultuous youth, including his incestuous attachment to his mother’s milk-giving breast; his long term homosexual liason with a colonel in the Philippine Army; multiple male to male sexual encounters in the anonymous darkness of movie theaters; sexual dalliances with his female cousins, etc. To save Amihan from himself, by the end of the five hundred pages in my possession, Dadong persuades Amihan’s wife to share her husband with him, to prevent, as he explains to her, the onset in him of total insanity, with a sure outcome in suicide—an arrangement Amihan’s wife is fine with, provided, she says, he stays “in the mood” when it is her turn with him. Unfettered from the exclusivity of his marital status, the lion makes love to his faun, in the elegance of the latter’s bedroom at the Villa Bello.

If I had to give an account of that part of the novel in my possession, I would call attention to its flaws: its lack of consistency, clichéd characterizations, excessive sentimentalism, belabored poeticism, and disorienting multiple shifts in point of view. What interest I sustain in
it is related solely to its investment in the theme of homosexual identity and/or consciousness. Montano is very likely to have put into the novel three or more decades worth of work, in between the unremitting succession of his other more important, projects. He, therefore, would not have found the time to remain apprised of developments in the increasingly sophisticated, nuanced, feminism-inspired, field of gay liberationist literature, which would explain the glaring misogyny in Montano's text. One finds it in, for instance, his description of Amihan’s grubby and tubercular wife’s genitalia as “loose” and “smelly,” and in his characterization of women in general as gold diggers—grasping, pathetic, and sex-deprived. My own sense is that Montano’s misogyny is prompted by a hyper-masculinist, although still homosexual, agenda involving the general put-down of the stereotypical, hyper-feminized bakla, of whom women, as Montano sees it, serve as an emblem. Uncannily, the bakla, and kabaklaan or effeminacy, are missing from Montano’s oeuvre, “evacuated” from it, you could even say. Which leads us to suspect that kabaklaan may actually function as the novel’s foundational “force.” Its multiple depictions of testosterone-powered, ambisexually potent macho men notwithstanding, by harping on the idea that women compete viciously with one another for the affection of men, what Montano is doing might actually be a very bakla thing. For to the degree that the bakla stands for a feminized identity whose acknowledged object of desire, no differently than the woman’s, is a lalake or a “man,” he also would stand as her rival for a man’s desire, as, indeed, Dadong does standing opposite to his partner’s “uncultured” and “wretched little wife.” It is, however, important to note that Dadong needs to put into Amihan a lot of extra work, and to provide him with significant financial assistance, because Amihan responds to both men and women as erotic objects. Only in this way is he able to viably compete with the woman who, through the sheer privilege of her anatomy, is Amihan’s factual, if sad and ignorant, wife.

Montano mentions the word “gay” in his text only once, although that is enough times to bring the reader into awareness of his political agenda. The Lion and the Faun, although less successful poetically than

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51This was told to me, sometime in the middle of 1993, by my professor in Comparative Literature, the late Angelito Santos, who introduced me to Montano’s unpublished novel—which had apparently been turned down for publication by several local presses in the 1970s—and allowed me to photocopy it.
Villa's self-indulgent short fiction, is a lot more forthright in parlaying a political awareness of the "homosexuality" and the "homosexual." Yet in his novel, as if they were somehow offensive, he mutes the voices of kabaklaan or effeminacy, and focuses instead on behavior that, although affectively homosexual, is behaviorally bisexual. Would this be possible to describe as "naive reactionism" on Montano's part? How, after all, could a full-length novel on male-to-male affection skirt the issue of effeminacy in local homosexual stylization? How could it dance circles around the bakla?

Filipino anthropologist Michael L. Tan directs our attention to the connaturalities between Filipino male bisexual speech and the speech of the bakla, because, glossed over or denied, they give the lie to the anxious rejection by the former of the latter's latency within itself. In Montano's case, the more decisively he tries to eliminate the figure of the bakla from the various local settings within his novel, the more ubiquitous it becomes, the more fantastical and sentimentally overwrought. He resorts to a kind of faux Greco-Roman mythologization which, while it originally entailed maligning women and reducing them to the status of second-class citizens, now in his plays involves, as a stand-in for the bakla he prefers to pass over in silence, women in the habit of sealing their own doom in terms of their unrequited love for certain men. We do not know whether the time (spanning nearly a decade) Montano spent in graduate studies in America exposed him to the homoerotic histories of ancient Greek and Roman civilizations—histories that proffered a distinctively masculine narrative for the kind of homosexual love story he subsequently set out to narrate. What we do know is that he became acquainted with Freudian psychoanalysis. Although his investment in it remained shallow and somewhat pretentious, it only went to indicate

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53 I am referring to the popular plays, "Sabina" and "The Love of Leonor Rivera" — centerpieces in Montano's theatrical oeuvre. In the former, after learning of her American boyfriend's infidelity, the main character commits suicide by shooting herself; in the latter, Leonor Rivera dies after giving birth to her first and last child by her British husband, but not before she professes, in a poetic soliloquy, her deathless devotion to her one and only love, the ill-fated national hero, Jose Rizal.
the extent to which American psychosexual discourse, and American erudition in general, fascinated him, and provided the contours to his understanding of his own homosexuality. Now, American gay culture, from the time of its earliest literary productions, arguably tended to substitute for the stereotypically shrill and flamboyant “queen,” the “healthier,” “more mature” figure of the hyper-masculine gay man. This very likely was also behind Montano’s rejection of bakla specific elements in his own social formation as a homosexual man in the Philippines.

Still, not unlike Villa's oeuvre, Montano's illustrates the simultaneously coercive and “enabling” effects of Americanization/Westernization which, as much as it can be shown to have “sexualized,” and then “abjected,” bakla identity, may also have established multiple discursive “positionalities” from which the homosexualized bakla now speaks out in order, ultimately, to challenge and face down the reasons for his subjection. As I’ve said, Montano’s text leaves plenty to be desired—what stands out is the displacement of the angst-riddled bakla in his account of abjection by the rapacious, if somewhat tragic and inutil, heterosexual woman—but it stands as a memorable initial step in the direction of the empowered self-consciousness of the homosexualized bakla.

_Perez’s Anguished Shout_

What perhaps constitutes a more politically grounded, better textured, account of the aforementioned self-consciousness is Tony Perez’s collection of poems, short stories, essays, eponymously titled,
"Cubao, 1980,"57 after an also-included novella set in Metropolitan Manila’s then infamous “armpit,” the still densely populated commercial district of Cubao, in Quezon City.58 The collection’s subtitle, *Ang Unang Sigaw ng Gay Liberation Movement sa Pilipinas* (“The Philippine Gay Liberation Movement’s First Shout”), makes Perez’s project appear a tad pretentious—as if he had beat everyone else, including Villa, Montano, the award-winning playwrights Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero and Orlando Nadres, of whom he could not have been aware,59 to the production of an honest-to-goodness Filipino gay text, that is, one that address the homosexual concern—and, indeed, notwithstanding the sophistication of his texts, they are not without inconsistencies and ambivalences, but what in fairness must be asserted about them is that they do convey an incisive understanding of the most important concerns facing the gay liberation movement and gay liberationist ideology which, while arguably “American” in provenance (in that what blew the lid off of them were the so-called “Stonewall riots” in New York City in the summer of 1969), had in the meantime expanded outward in terms of their global ramifications.60 As disturbing as the novella appears to be, on account

and theater therapist and has taught psychology at Manila’s best universities. He has been awarded many times over in major national literary competitions, and in its citation, the Cultural Center of the Philippines describes Perez as having successfully “depicted the Filipino soul and human condition,” and “explored the Filipino psyche in Philippine theater.” See *The Cultural Center of the Philippines Centennial Honors for the Arts* (Manila: CCP, 1999).


58In the late 1970s and early 80s, before the ascendancy of Makati and Pasig Cities, Cubao was the most popular shopping center in Metropolitan Manila. Its skyline of department stores, office buildings, public and private schools, and churches, is dominated by the silver-colored dome of the Araneta Coliseum, owned by the Araneta family, one of the Philippines’ richest Spanish-mestizo clans. After its heyday, Cubao fell into disrepute, its cinemas and sidewalks turning decrepit, its nooks and crannies becoming seedy and more and more identified as a haven for prostitutes and petty criminals.

59Wilfrido Maria Guerrero (1911–1995) wrote the first known Filipino gay play, “The Clash of Cymbals,” which was first staged in the University of the Philippines, in 1968. For a reference to Guerrero’s play and a critical reading of Nadres’s cultic play, “Hanggang Dito Na Lamang at Maraming Salamat,” see my *Philippine Gay Culture*, p.23; 275–296.

of its unflattering depiction of the bowels of gay subculture, and its opposition to notions of "gay liberation," the letters and essays convey powerful affirmations of different facets of gay life.

The novella’s plot revolves around its teen-age protagonist’s and narrator’s, the callboy Tom’s, harrowing initiation into the twilight underground of the commercial district of Cubao, inhabited by, among others, homosexual clients/predators. Through this curious boy’s eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, readers descend, throughout its twenty-eight chapters, into the world of the novella. Tom, together with his best friend Butch, cruises around the nooks and crannies of Cubao, which is also where they attend high school. It is Butch, in fact, who initiates Tom into the world of the bakla where, for the first time, he makes his own money as a prostitute. He has his first homosexual experience with a beautician, from whom he receives twenty pesos for a service rendered. Then he meets Hermie, Butch’s gay lover, who becomes another of his regular clients. He meets a number of other bakla clients, such as a store manager, a middle-aged American man, and members of a rock band. Butch and he one day find themselves at the Araneta Coliseum while a Christian “charismatic” renewal is ongoing. They join the service, experience something akin to a religious conversion, and from a spot on the Coliseum dome that gives them a bird’s eye view of Cubao, promise not to return to their work as prostitutes. Still in a haze wrought by his confusion over his attraction to Butch which their camaraderie as prostitutes had unleashed in him, while navigating a pedestrian overpass a short distance away, Hermie inexplicably points his gun at Butch and shoots him dead. The story ends with rain pouring, but is there ever enough of it to wash the grime off Cubao’s visage?

In light of its somewhat clichéd presentation of a boy prostitute’s narrative of innocence lost, reinforcing the stereotypical impression that gay men generally act towards the young as predators and exploiters, the novella not be described as "gay liberationist." The one line that serves as the novella’s entire twenty-fifth chapter perhaps says it all—could this be the “shout” promised his readers by Perez?—Paking ina nyo mga bakla kayo! Sons of bitches all, you faggots! Unique in local literature for its lurid and disturbing descriptions, bordering on pornography, of male-to-male sex, as much as you could say it is calculated to cast gay subculture in the worst possible light, as punishment for its sexual exploitation of vulnerable young boys, you could also speculate, on the
basis of its tantalizing and powerfully arousing characterizations of sexual practices which have rightly or wrongly come to be associated with this subculture, that it is designed to achieve the opposite, that is, the promotion of this lifestyle. The novella's sexually explicit expressivity appears to champion "liberation"—unloosing the normally reticent Tagalog tongue—after all.

Perez, significantly, was born and raised, and became a "writer of note" in the field of nationalist literature and theater at a time in the Philippines when the effects upon it of American cultural, economic, and military hegemony, would still have been quite decisive.61 Added to that were Perez's studies in the U.S., and frequent visits back to the U.S.,62 to account for his bakla "world-view," an amalgam of homegrown and global gay liberationist elements that nationalist historian and cultural critic Nicanor G. Tiongson sorts out for us.63 According to Tiongson, Perez believes that gays or baklas would do well not imagine themselves as "woman-hearted," since they are not women but men, or as people somehow under ban to act like "faggots," as local pop culture figure, Facifica Falayfay, does, in uproarious fashion, until s/he is "cured" of his identity-related confusion by the timely arrival of a proper (biologically female) wife.64 This implies he would meet with intense disapproval any

61The transformation of the Philippines from a colony to a neocolony must be seen in the context of American policy in Asia; thus, up until 1991, the U.S. maintained military and naval bases on Philippine soil that existed beyond the pale of Philippine laws. The economy of the Philippines remained dependent on American financial aid, and fifty years after it had supposedly been granted independence by its imperial master, it continued to serve as "a market for American goods, source of raw materials, and an open field for American investments." For an in-depth discussion of this painful and unfinished historical passage, see Renato Constantino and Letizia R. Constantino, The Philippines: the Continuing Past (Quezon City: the Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), pp. 193-268.

62This "American connection" is especially true of Tony Perez, who has long served as a "Cultural Specialist" in the Cultural Affairs Section of the American Embassy in Manila.


64Facifica Falayfay is the name of a popular filmic character of the extremely effeminate, often cross-dressed, and vulgarly comported bakla, whose original appearance in a couple of movies in the 1960s spawned, over the next four decades, a colorful ensemble of similarly flaming clones. In the beginning at least, this character bore the burden of the requisite "conversion motif" of early bakla — later gay — representations in local cinema. For a discussion of this motif, and of how it affected the gay culture of the 1970s and 80s, see my Philippine gay culture, pp. 113-123.
effort on their part to disguise the barefaced facts of their male biology—that, in one of his poems, he characterizes graphically as a kind of “pag-tiptip ng bayag,” a “tucking in of the testicles.” In his view, once a gay man owns up to the fact that, before anything else, he is a man, he would no longer be prey to the illusion that only with straight males can he establish meaningful relationships. Indeed, the bakla should look to hook up with another bakla—not for someone who regards himself as heterosexual. Only in relation to another gay man would a gay man be able to cultivate an “equal.” Perez also believes that a gay relationship is not the same as a heterosexual relationship, and therefore the sacrament of marriage is intended for heterosexual couples alone. To put their relationships on a better footing, gay men should resort instead to the practices of love and friendship. “Coming out,” moreover, is, for Perez, a deeply personal and private affair, that no one else than the person concerned has the right to hasten; that person bides his time, “comes out” when he is ready. Homosexuality, Perez believes, is as neutral a state of being as “being a woman, a man, heterosexual, beautiful, ugly, fat, thin, rich, poor, crippled, blind, etc.” God judges people not on their relative merits as gay or straight—no such distinction exists in heaven—but according to whether they were compassionate, or charitable, or just whilst they lived.

The countervailing rejoinders to Perez’s prescriptions are manifold. It cannot be left to Perez to decide how other people should view themselves, whom or how they should love. What is so wrong about the bakla thinking of himself as a woman? Should this entitle him to fewer rights? What is the matter with an excess or an exclusivity of attraction to straight men? Is having a particular sexual predilection a crime calling for harsh punishment? Instead of offering alternative and more liberating interpretations for the bakla identity—for instance, that it possibly brings into a crisis the violent dualism of gender, that it un masks and “denaturalizes” the ideology of gender and sexuality, that it is, in fact, indispensable to the maintenance of Filipino gender relations because it provides the contrast against which Filipino masculinity can define itself, and secure itself in its own protocols. Perez disavows that which is culturally Filipino in order to adopt a distinctively American perspective on the issue. Even his take on paglaladlad (the Filipino version of “coming out of the closet,” although literally meaning “unfurling one’s cape”) assumes the typically American perspective on
people in hiding from something, hiding from view. In the Philippines, homosexuals generally do not "come out" in dramatic fashion for, in a sense, a great many of them have already been "out." Filipino families tend, generally, to be less discursive or confrontational than their American counterparts; they take a quieter approach to dealing with the things they know.

In America, homosexuality is a matter of one's sexual orientation, not of gender—a question concerning whom one desires sexually, not what masculine, or feminine, or androgynous is. So if a man regularly has sex with other men, it would be curious if he did not understand himself to be homosexual. Hundreds of years of "sexualization" in America has seen so that. In the Philippines, on the other hand, residual indigenous valuations of gender modify, hybridize the more recently (just about a hundred years) "implanted" sexual order. An illustration of this is the fact that when the bakla and the lalake or "man" have sex, the activity homosexualizes only the former. This points to the fact that the sexualization of Filipinos under American sponsorship, while increasing in alacrity and perniciousness, has not been very thorough. By this process, in fact, has occurred the further minoritization of what already had been undesirable—the effeminate "native" identity or the bakla, precisely. As a partially homosexualized identity, the bakla signifies a hybrid notion, incorporating both local and trans-local conceptions of gender transitivity and homo or "same-sex" sexuality. Despite the modernizing ideologies of gender and sexuality, it continues to preserve, within itself, residual presences of its more gender-specific, "prehomosexual," past—including the idea that kabaklaan is a matter of "confusion" and "indecisiveness" which, in fact, are the oldest, strictly "genderless," denotations of the word bakla. From this emerges the popular belief that a child who is bakla can be un-confused, set aright, by inflicting upon his body the marks of parental, typically fatherly, cruelty, precisely proves the persistence of earlier, "presexological" meanings even in this day and age of the

65This shift away from gender toward sexuality, in relation to the issue of both male and female homosexuality, has otherwise been phrased as "inversion vs. homosexuality." See the related arguments of: George Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance," Salmagundi, no. 58-59 (Fall 1982-Winter 1983), pp. 114-15; and David Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 16.
homosexualized *bakla*.

If only Perez had taken a closer look at the local situation, he might have found that the *bakla* has nothing to do with his own abjection; it really is not his *kabaklaan* that is at fault, but the masculinist and heteronormative society that reviles and devalues it. Indeed, thinking of the pressing “gay question” in these terms, Perez would have to rethink his plan to “reprogram” the *bakla*, for that would amount not so much to a liberation as a fundamental cultural “revision,” and thus to the annihilation of the very person for whose sake he supposedly makes that famously pretentious, inaugural, “shout.” Redefining the *bakla* as a simplistically Filipino version of the Westernized gay man would be the equivalent of denying the *bakla* his cultural specificity. Suffice it to say that this would be tantamount to “destroying” a unique facet of Filipino culture, something the nationalist in Perez, if he could be brought to understand what he is doing, might develop second thoughts about doing.

**In/Conclusion: Hybrity and Bombs**

Now, if even the most determined colonialist appropriations end up becoming radically recontextualized, “contaminated” by the local situation, then Perez’s prescriptive vision for *bakla* life is ultimately inapplicable. But just because it is couched, not in English, but in Tagalog, a case could be made for its being intimately informed by local, arguably *bakla* “sentiments.” Indeed, Perez’s version of gay liberationism needs to be carefully picked apart; its unique articulation make it remarkably different from its American model, according to which gay identity is a revolutionary identity that quite the reverse of seeking to be admitted into the dominant order, challenges the authority of that order, and calls into question even such “naturalized” conventions as maleness, femaleness, marriage, propriety itself! Borrowing its teleology from Freudian psychoanalysis, gay liberationist philosophy begins and ends with an essentialism, with the certainty that a return to “polymorphous perversity” is the real and final objective of an ideal, mass-scale “sexual

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56 A hybrid Tagalog, certainly, as the book’s own subtitle - which contains the English noun-phrase, “Gay Liberation Movement” — vividly emblematizes.
revolution," of which gay liberation is merely a catalyst. 67

As a social movement, American gay liberation in the 1970s took contemporary civilization and its sex and gender roles to be the problem, and worked to liberate, not only the sector that called itself gay or lesbian, but rather the whole of society, from all oppressive norms. It was staunchly materialistic and secular, having emerged from the same "counter-cultural" environment as black militancy, student radicalism, and hippie, anti-war activism. These various advocacies had all done their bit debunking conservative values (including religious ones), raising the consciousness of all and sundry, and exposing the hypocrisy, and undermining the authority, of revered social institutions. The liberationists understood that gays and lesbians could only be free if everyone else was set free from the enslavement of patriarchy, racism, and capitalist exploitation. Perez's understanding of the issue—dualistic, Catholic, and rather socially conservative—veers away from these distinctive features of the American gay liberation movement, which he did his best to emulate in his political discourse, but only partially succeeded.

In the same way that Montano's decision to exile the bakla from the mythic world of his woman-hating, Greek-loving, "unevenly written" novel eventuated the reinstating of the bakla as his text's founding repudiation, Perez's adoption of American liberationist ideals seeking to make the gay man a "man," and thus the object of his own homoerotic desire, is at heart in-formed by kabaklaan. Like Villa's feminine-identified autobiographical persona, Perez merely repeats, in his anti-bakla performance, precisely the quintessential bakla text. No matter how energetically one tries to escape kabaklaan, in the Philippines it persists as an integral part of every "male homosexual's experience," of every attempt to think and "rethink" it. This leads to the conclusion that all cross-cultural encounters—including "postcolonial appropriations"—produce nothing either purely native or purely foreign, but only a hybrid of both. As these various texts suggest, the contemporary Filipino gay man, like contemporary Filipino gay discourse itself, is a syncretism of local and Western gender and sexual constructions. Rather than adopt

the nativist perspective that sees this hybridity as a symptom of weakness on the part of Filipino culture, and as a sign of the ultimate triumph of colonialism, we must instead argue, along with Bhabha that, contrary to how it is usually seen in dogmatic nationalist discourse, hybridity may well be the most potent "ground" of postcolonial resistance. Needless to say, we must do this because Filipinos already are, at this point in their country's "multi-layered" history, helplessly and unquestionably hybrid anyway. Indeed, the denial of this fact would amount to the denial of their very selves. But this should not pose a problem to the Philippines' many nativists and nationalists, whose dogmas, within the fields of Philippine arts and letters and of the social sciences, often succeed in suppressing the publication and concomitant celebration of politically conscious bakla or gay texts. Villa's short story collection was censored of its homosexual stories before it could be published in the Philippines four decades later; Montano's novel, which made the rounds of both major and minor publishing houses for a decade or more, was not published at all; and it took Tony Perez twelve years to put out his personal anthology, the homophobic novella included in it notwithstanding.

As Bhabha explains, hybridity is premised on the idea that from its earliest beginnings colonialist authority is never fully present or absolute; that as experienced by the colonized, it is always already different from its claims to a "natural" originality, truthfulness, and superiority; that there is, in the colonial setting, a radical ambivalence that lies at the heart of imperial power, which in its desire to be acknowledged as powerful has needed to be translated into the local languages and is therefore, precisely in its translatedness, irremediably bastardized, hybridized, transformed—subverted from within. We can say that the validity of Foucault's productive theory of power becomes only all-too-obvious

69Appropriately enough, Foucault never more clearly illustrates his idea that "where there is power, there is resistance" than when he discusses the pathologized category of homosexuality: soon after its normalization in psychiatric and sexual discourse, there emerged homosexual subjects who identified with and embraced this selfsame label, and spoke defiantly from the position it inaugurated. See "Truth and Power," in The Foucault Reader, edited by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books,
when the power in question is colonialism, for the discourse this power licenses, and through which it acts, is never more unstable and open to appropriation than when it is not even self-evident to begin with—when it needs to be translated and turn “hybrid” first, just to be recognizable. Hybridity is colonial power’s tenuous life, and its spectacular undoing. That it animates at the same time that it coerces is never clearer than in the person of the postcolonial subject herself. So when, invoking Filipino-ness, nativists elide the hybrid spaces in Filipino life as “colonial minded,” “contaminated,” or “complicit,” what they are turning a blind eye to are the facts that all cultures are hybrid from the very beginning, and that even as the local culture persists despite colonization, it does so, not as itself, but as an agonistic compromise between Self and Other, and that the terms for all subjectivity and agency in our case have already been set in place and defined by the colonialism to which Filipinos owe their very existence as a country. Thus, any post- or anti-colonial position that denies its own hybridity, and that refuses to recognize its own history of “contamination” by the colonial power, is at worst impracticable, and at best delusional.

In a surprising theoretical parallelism, we may think of Bhabha’s theory of hybridity as a gesture in the direction of a theory of the subject, comparable to Butler’s queer-identified theory of performativity: they both posit the self—be it a national or a gendered or sexual self—as the mimetic and repeatedly performed approximation of an unrealizable norm. Because national identity, as with maleness or femaleness, is a kind of compulsory “performativity,” we might say that being a Filipino is not what one is, but what one does. There is no simple and singular performance of Filipino-ness, for it is a norm that can never be fully inhabited, only cited repetitively in a lifelong process of actualization. There is no essentially Filipino subjectivity, only its performative production as the effect of acts and discourses that do not simply characterize but actually constitute it. Agency, or the possibility of subverting the Filipino norm, therefore lies not in a presocial realm of any purely experienced “synthetically unifying” Filipino freedom,


nativity, or selfhood, but in the *variance* rather between the ideal and its performance—in this case, between the essential fiction of Filipinoness itself, and its particular enactments by discursively *animated* Filipino subjects—and as forms of negotiation with normative "national" power. From the perspective of Butlerian theory, then, it is conceivable that the farther from the norm one's performance of Filipinoness goes—in Bhabha's terminology, the more "hybrid" one is—the stronger, paradoxically, one's exercise of negotiated agency becomes.

Looking at these texts, we realize that the exceptional "hybrid," who is the homosexualized *bakla* in Villa's, Montano's, and Perez's fictive worlds, owes his existence to the pathologizing discourse brought into the Philippines by American colonial rule, a discourse that obviously affected the lives of educated Filipinos like them in varied albeit comparable ways. But by this token exactly, these *bakla/homosexual* (I'd like to just say *gay*) authors have been animated as sexual subjects, and despite the stigmatizing effects of the American sexological discourse by and against which they are defined, they have accommodated to their own abjections and on that basis fluently "talked back." As I hope to have shown, a significant source of such fluency is the residual presence of a *kabaklaan* not completely superseded by the new sexological dispensation, but continuing to speak to us in and through the complex and transformational discourse and practice which make up hybridity.

As my brief and provisional readings of these texts by Villa, Montano, and Perez have attempted to describe, this hybridity, while obviously not intended to function as a polemic, nevertheless clears textual spaces for possible expressions and/or interpretations of postcolonial difference, as well as the resistance and opposition that this difference betokens. The Filipino homosexual as *bakla* is a trope that is irreducibly different from the homosexual in America or elsewhere in the restivelyglobalizing world. As a cultural and political figure, he interrogates the efficaciousness and self-presence of the imperial project, for he demonstrates the persistence of the "local" and the "old" despite, or precisely because of, the prevalence

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71Gay because as Filipinos use and understand it, it is becoming more and more inclusive of both the gender-transitive and the gender-intransitive "male, homosexual" identities in the current time. Thus, gay is proving to be an amicably appropriated term, one that more and more embraces both the *bakla* and his more masculine variants and/or familiaris.
of the "foreign" and the "new." Just now it strikes me that this particular rhetorical "intermeshing" of anticolonial and antihomophobic strands of interests may not be as cogent or as critically generative elsewhere in current-day Asia, where an American-style queer movement appears unproblematically to be afoot. Needless to say, one of the assumptions from which this paper proceeds is that the Philippines occupies a relatively unique position insofar as the histories of American global imperialism and sexual and gender transculturation are concerned. Indeed, as my paper hopes to have limned, in the Philippines at least, these otherwise unrelated histories transpired and continue to do so hand-in-hand. The effects of this convergence are not simply repressive, as we have seen. The discursive enforcement that is colonialism has itself spawned the possibilities of its essential undoing, simply because it can only pluralize and disperse itself at the same time that it vanquishes the countless peoples it alternately subjects and abjects.

Admittedly, the power to talk back provides eloquent proof of local resilience in the face of imperialist silencing, of courageous opposition to the breathtaking colonial project, of the unquestionable truth and beauty of postcolonial agency. The problem is, talking accomplishes very little when the smart bombs start to fall, and when embedded journalists, for the sake of the cable TV watching, warmongering world, do all of the talking for the Global American Empire's countless, finally wordless, graves.

And so, this critical engagement notwithstanding, in the end we can only take hybridity and other similarly intransitive, "discursive" models of resistance so far. Now that imperialism has turned global and has reverted to its old, brutish form\(^\text{72}\) upgraded in hardware and software, and televised live via satellite, theories of agency and resistance that presume a covertly hegemonic rather than an overtly "dominating" colonialism need precisely to be rethought, in order to register this latest, painfully familiar, turn of events.

\(^{72}\)Despite protests and condemnation from almost the entire world, the U.S.-led coalition decided to attack and occupy Iraq for the purpose of regime change — and for all the "good" it implies as far as the coalition's individual and collective interests in the Middle East are concerned — on 20 March 2003.