

## FORUM KRITIKA

### PHILIPPINE STUDIES AND THE END OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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#### Abstract

The current struggles over US military bases and territorial sovereignty in the Pacific, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the phenomenon of globalization, alongside what is being called the “end of the American Century,” have pushed interdisciplinary scholars to develop new frameworks for engaging US Empire. The paper attempts to draw out the various figurations of “Philippine Studies” and “US empire” in the papers, which may include analyses of comparative colonialisms, class and participation in social justice movements, as well as the intersections between globalization and imperial conquest. By considering the papers’ insights on disciplinary formation and knowledge practices, the present analysis will also attend to their entanglements with contemporary articulations of exceptionalism and containment. The paper is especially interested in how recent incarnations and positionings of Philippine Studies generate insight on notions of the unique, particular, special, and relational that have intellectually and institutionally structured colonial discourse and critique.

#### Keywords

decline narratives, overseas Filipino workers (OFW), transnational Americanness

#### About the author

Cynthia Tolentino is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Oregon where she teaches courses on cultures of US empire and Asian Pacific American literature and film. She received her PhD from the Department of American Civilization at Brown University. Her book *America's Experts: Race and the Fictions of Sociology* was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2009. As a study of US ethnic literature in the mid-twentieth century, the book argues that writers such as Richard Wright, Carlos Bulosan, and Jade Snow Wong were the subjects of the US state's sociological interest in narrating problems of racial identity and assimilation as well as the narrators of such problems themselves. Tolentino's articles appear in journals that include *American Literature and Novel: A Forum on Fiction* and also in edited collections. She is now at work on a book-length study of US legal categories for the Philippines and Puerto Rico, a project that examines representations of the unincorporated territory, the commonwealth, and the special economic zone in twentieth and twenty first century Filipino and Puerto Rican fiction, film, and visual art. It has received support from the Oregon Humanities Center and the Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences at National Sun-Yat Sen University in Taiwan. She lives in Eugene, Oregon in the United States and also in Paris, France.

Following the US bombing of Afghanistan that also launched the “War on Terror” in October 2001, a cottage industry of United States decline books has expanded and flourished. Written primarily by historians and political scientists, these books chart the global rise and fall

of United States hegemony. To list just a few examples, this genre includes titles such as Charles A. Kupchan's *The End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century*, Emmanuel Todd's *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order*, and Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Decline of the American Power: The US in a Chaotic World*. Whereas earlier books such as Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* may have served as templates for an outpouring of decline narratives that asked whether the United States would repeat the fate of empires such as France, the Ottomans, and Britain, these recent works are preoccupied with questions such as "Since when has the United States been fading as a global superpower?" and "What superpower(s) will take America's place at the top?"

Yet a significant feature in United States decline narratives over the past decade is the use of Henry Luce's influential notion of "The American Century," an idealized vision of the twentieth century as an era of United States leadership and world dominance. In his famous 1941 editorial, Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazine, emphasized the significance of Asia in his model of post-World War II United States ascendancy. Situating Asia as the stage for the unfolding of "The American Century," Luce outlined a process by which the United States could adopt a broad economic perspective that he deemed necessary to expand its reach into Asian markets and manifest its destiny as a postwar global leader.<sup>1</sup> Inscribing Asia as the key to United States's shift from a provincial nation to world power, Luce writes, "Our thinking today on world trade today is on ridiculously small terms. For example, we think of Asia as being worth only a few hundred millions a year to us. Actually, in the decades to come Asia will be worth to us exactly zero – or it will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year. And the latter are the terms we must think in, or else confess a pitiful impotence" (171). As he suggests, conceptualizing Asia as an exploitable resource was a prerequisite to developing the proper and necessary perspective for realizing the US's grander role in the emerging world order.

Paradoxically, the Philippines does not figure in Luce's narrative, even though it is clearly part of the Asian stage upon which Luce's "American Century" will unfold and also a US territory undergoing a ten year transition period mandated by the 1935 Tydings McDuffie Act that was intended to result in Philippine independence. It is, on the other hand, implicitly present in Luce's figuration of the United States as a training site for workers who will eventually be exported globally. "Closely tied to this model for United States economic expansion," he explains, "is a US-trained technocracy, a set of globally oriented experts that could convey a 'picture of an America' and produce the conditions that would enable the United States to accept its destined role of global leadership." Envisioning the United States as the "training center of the skillful servants of mankind," Luce suggested that an American-dominated world order—and by extension, postwar democracy and liberty for all nations — could be secured through the development, reproduction,

and dissemination of American expertise (171). By framing the flow of skilled workers as a “humanitarian army of Americans,” Luce cast the United States as “the Good Samaritan” and defined its central task in the postwar world as the dissemination of US trained experts and knowledge practices (170). He thus identified knowledge production as the quintessential American activity of the post World War II era in a way that inadvertently gave Filipinos, as US colonial subjects, a purchase on United States identity. If American-style education was to be the distinguishing feature of the “American Century,” then Luce’s model opened up a way to recognize benevolent assimilation, the US colonial policy of tutelage for Filipinos, and to view Filipinos as ideal subjects of the American Century.<sup>2</sup>

Ho Wi-Ding’s 2010 road movie *Pinoy Sunday* thematizes the “End of the American Century” by jointly situating Filipino migration and Taiwan within a discourse of American empire. More specifically, the film registers the trace of American influence in the Pacific by presenting the dreams of Filipino migrant workers as intersecting a discourse of Taiwan’s modernity. Through its focus on Filipino migration in Taiwan, the film engages Luce’s conception of Asia as a key site for the “American Century” while also exploring its less visible possibilities for theorizing the Philippines.

*Pinoy Sunday* is the story of Manuel (Epy Quizon) and Dado (Bayani Agbayani), two Filipino migrant workers who find a discarded sofa on a Taipei sidewalk on their day off. Propelled by their dream of having a comfortable seat for lounging, drinking beer, and gazing at the stars after long days on the bicycle factory assembly line and lacking enough money for car transport, they attempt to carry the sofa to their dormitory on the city’s outskirts before the evening curfew. The film is inspired by Roman Polanski’s absurdist short film *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (*Dwaj ludzie z szafa*), the story of two men who emerge from the sea carrying an enormous wardrobe. Whereas Polanski’s 1958 film focuses on how the two men are shunned and physically attacked by locals on their way into town, *Pinoy Sunday* frames the journey of Filipino migrant workers through the city of Taipei as one that is defined by hostile interactions to their status as foreign workers.

If cultural and political ties with the United States shape the superstructure of Filipino migration in Taiwan, then the economic dependence of the Philippines and Taiwan might be seen as defining their base. *Pinoy Sunday* contains numerous references to American slang, Hollywood movies, advertising slogans, and commodities, but it also figures “America” as more than the consumption of American culture and goods. By presenting “America” as a location that structures both Taiwan and the Philippines, *Pinoy Sunday* reveals an Americanness that is articulated in Taiwan through Filipino migration.

According to Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, Americanness is more than a conception of America as a country or a place; it is also an idea that generates an image of

modernity that is been disseminated throughout the world (549-56). If “America” signifies a utopian dream, Quijano and Wallerstein argue that it is also a racialized nation and modern empire that is founded on a history of conquest. This racialized and imperialist America, they contend, is the underside of the American dream that is built on capitalist accumulation and uneven development (Wang 138). Integrated into discourses of the American dream and Taiwan’s economic development, Filipino migration in Taiwan emerges through capitalist accumulation and uneven development (Quijano and Wallerstein 549-56).

As a story about Taiwan’s economic development and modernity, *Pinoy Sunday* is, I believe, is especially concerned with what Quijano and Wallerstein identify as Americanness’s forward-looking orientation. As they point out, the Americas were not incorporated into the existing capitalist world economy; rather, the creation of the idea of the Americas was also the originary moment of the modern world system. On the other hand, they also explain that the Americas gave rise to a mode of cultural resistance to oppressive conditions that took its definition from the flight forward to modernity than its claims of historicity. The Americas were the New World, a badge and burden assumed from the outset (549).

### DECLINE, CIVILIZATION, NEOCOLONIALISM

In recent narratives of United States decline, the end of the American Century is invoked as a catalyst for global shift. Citing the Iraq War as a contributing factor to the steady erosion of the United States’s image and stature in the world community and domestic well being, these narratives envision the dynamic economies of India and China overtaking that of the United States and bringing about a critical transformation of the global landscape (Mason). Attempting to imagine what this transition will feel like for US citizens, historian Alfred McCoy remarks, “When Washington’s global dominion finally ends, there will be painful daily reminders of what such a loss of power means for Americans in every walk of life. As half dozen European nations have discovered, imperial decline tends to have a remarkably demoralizing impact on a society, regularly bringing at least a generation of economic privation. As the economy cools, political temperatures rise, often sparking serious domestic unrest.” Following McCoy’s formulation, the effects of the “end of the American Century” will primarily be felt in terms of the domestic economy and political stability, following the pattern of decline established by European imperial nations. Whereas Luce, writing in 1941, emphasized the significance of Asia as a purportedly “new” frontier for US economic expansion and the key to US prosperity and international ascendancy, McCoy, writing in 2010, pegs United States decline to that of European empires.

The parallel that McCoy draws between the United States and Europe is not confined to

economic explanations of decline, but also engages a discourse of civilization. The outpouring of United States decline books also intersects a broader literary category of the Decline of the West. Indeed, a comparable genre of writing is proliferating in Western Europe, composed of books that explain the decline of European nations, often through racist arguments of national mission and civilization. German economist Thilo Sarrazin's bestseller *Germany* does away with itself, which argues that Germany is being brought intellectually low by genetically inferior Muslim immigrants and their children, and Eric Zemmour's *French Melancholy*, a book that laments that France, under pressure from immigration and outside influences, has lost touch with its Roman roots, are cases in point ("Good Things Can Grow").

To consider how "the Philippines" appears in contemporary narratives that take up the "end of the American Century," it makes sense to note that narratives that link the Philippines with United States decline are hardly new. Indeed, turn of the century debates over United States annexation of the Philippines and other former Spanish colonies took the form of a battle over whether the Philippines would make or break the United States as a nation. Relating the idea of the Philippines to the definition and future of American civilization produced questions such as: Would annexing the Philippines enable the United States to rise from a provincial nation to a world power? Was becoming an empire in opposition to the essence of American political ideals?

Just as recent European decline narratives figured racialized immigrants as a cause of national decline, late nineteenth century United States debates over the annexation of the Philippines linked the "Negro problem" in the continental United States to the problem of the "little brown brothers" of the Philippines. The interpretation of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, also known as the First Lady of the Confederate States of America, exemplifies this position:

The President probably has cogent reasons for conquering and retaining the Philippines. For my own part, however, I cannot see why we should add several millions of Negroes to our population when we already have eight million of them in the United States. The problem of how best to govern these and promote their welfare we have not yet solved ... The question is, What are we going to do with these additional millions of Negroes? Civilize them? (qtd. in Newman 15)

Davies expresses anxiety over the difficulty of transporting racial policies yet unrealized in the continental United States to the foreign "jungle" of the Philippines; in so doing, she frames the nation's failure to properly assimilate African Americans as a statement of dis-confidence in the nation's ability to assimilate overseas "primitives."

As literary scholar Victor Bascara notes, "The 'American Century' would unfold not only

despite a lack of direct American control throughout virtually the rest of the world, but because of it" (30). Whereas direct colonization that involved the incorporation of subjects deemed unfit for self-government was viewed as a contradiction of American ideals, United States policy on commerce and trade in China and Asia could be described as neocolonial in contemporary contexts. Although McKinley saw the commercial opportunity as merely "incidental" in 1898, neocolonialism would become the answer to the US "Philippine problem" (Bascara 30). But how does the "end of the American century" exceed the territorial borders of formal US empire? Put another way, what is the transnational imaginary of contemporary United States decline narratives?

### AT THE EDGES OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

Located at the edges of the United States empire, Taiwan is not a US territory but has been deeply influenced by United States foreign policy and immigration history and by the idea of America. Most historical accounts of post World War II Taiwan remark on US influence in Taiwan through economic and military aid to Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist party and non-military aid through investments in infrastructure projects and especially in the textile industry from 1951 to 1964, towards the goal of developing an export economy. As Pei-Chia Lan points out, the increasing prosperity of East Asia and the Gulf countries has spurred a substantial international migration within the migratory route from Southeast Asia to Taiwan since the mid-1970s (2).

How, the film asks, is regional migration and culture part of Taiwan's history of economic development and discourse of modernity? Rather than figuring Filipino migrant workers as Pacific cousins to Taiwan's inhabitants, *Pinoy Sunday* suggests that the development of Taiwanese society is closely linked to the historic US presence in East Asian geopolitics. "Figuratively speaking," Chih-ming Wang contends, "Taiwan as a postcolonial nation is also in the passage to America, as it struggles to shake off the historical baggage of Japanese colonialism and KMT authoritarian rule." While Taiwan and the Philippines have been incorporated into United States Cold War and Post-Cold War systems, Taiwan has shifted in status from the recipient of economic aid from the United States from 1951-1965 to a major US trading partner following its rapid industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s. By constructing a Filipino narrative as a journey that passes through the United States by way of postcolonial Taiwan, the film makes it possible to apprehend the geopolitical discourse that links the United States with Taiwan and the Philippines in the last half of the twentieth century, or as what is known as the



American Century.

### FILIPINOS IN TAIWAN'S TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINARY

On the return journey to the factory dormitory, Manuel and Dado use the Taipei 101 tower as a landmark. In making their way through Taipei's unfamiliar streets, they become hopelessly lost in the desolate areas surrounding the city. Remarking that they are "far away from Taipei 101," Dado registers their physical distance from the landmark and symbolic remove from attaining their dream of prosperous modernity. More than a city icon, Taipei 101 symbolizes Taiwan's affluence and the international visibility of its economy. At 1,671 ft, Taipei 101 is was the tallest building in the world from 2004 until the opening of the Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai in January 2010 and is the city's most prominent skyscraper. To achieve their dream of transforming the makeshift dorm into a home, Manuel and Dado need to keep the tower as a navigational coordinate. While losing sight of the tower will mean missing their curfew and possibly being deported, it would also symbolically move them further away from Taiwan's successful model of economic development.

In his review of *Pinoy Sunday*, film scholar David Bordwell interprets the sofa as the "tangible emblem of not just material comfort but the men's aspiration for a more stable life." Although Bordwell treats sofa as an expression of class, he misses the way that it visually and discursively brings together Taiwan and the Philippines. In one scene, Manuel and Dado are drawn to a billboard advertisement featuring the image of a man reclining on plush sofa, his head resting in a beautiful woman's lap. This image reignites their fantasy of finding a sofa for their dorm: for Manuel, the sofa is a site of romance and seduction, as he imagines himself kissing a woman as if he were in a movie. For Dado, the sofa conjures an image of peaceful domesticity, as he imagines himself on the couch holding his wife and young daughter as they sleep. These fantasies appear in color, with the look and feel of scene from a movie. In contrast, dreams of Manuel and Dado that refer to the Philippines are presented as individual black/white still images of landscapes, suggesting the many years that they have spent away.<sup>3</sup>

The images of Filipino migrant workers gazing at the Taipei 101 Tower and the luxury furniture ad are not the only ones that link Filipino migrant labor to modern Taiwan in the film. Indeed, the film brings two other images of Taiwan's modernity into focus: in one, a handcuffed Filipino contract worker is flanked by immigration police, as he is escorted away for deportation to the Philippines; in the second, a Filipina domestic worker pushes the wheelchair of an elderly Taiwanese woman. While Taipei 101 is the celebrated icon of Taiwan's modernity, the film offers the spectacles of deportation and modernity to suggest how the American Century. The spectacle, as Debord writes, is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have

supplanted relations between people. Following his formulation, spectacle is not a collection of images, but rather a social relation mediated by images.

From the beginning of the film, *Pinoy Sunday* brings into focus the spectacular image of the deportation of Filipino workers to the Philippines. At the airport in Taipei, Dado meets another Filipino, who relates that he is “going home.” The camera follows Dado’s gaze as he takes in the handcuffs around the man’s wrists. The deportation of migrant workers as an established part of modern Taiwan’s economy is reinforced in another scene, as Dado witnesses a former co-worker being chased through the shopping mall by immigration police, who tackle him to the ground before attaching the handcuffs.

Parallel with the spectacle of Filipino deportation in the film is the less sensational, yet ubiquitous image of the Filipina domestic worker in Taiwan. By framing Filipino domestic labor as the subcontracting of filial duty in modern Taiwan, the film points to the negative consequences for individuals and families in Taiwan and Filipinos. While it gives voice to the feelings of anxiety, guilt, loneliness and frustration experienced by individual migrant workers and their families abroad, it also reveals the greater isolation and vulnerability of live-in domestic workers. Whereas the film’s title implicitly refers to Manuel’s and Dado’s six day work week at the bicycle factory, Anna (Meryll Soriano), a Filipina domestic worker living in a private household as a maid and caregiver for the elderly mother of her employers, complains about having worked for two months without a day off. As Anna pushes the old woman’s wheelchair around town and puts her to bed in their shared room, she closes the door to seal off the noise of her employers, who are arguing in another room of the dingy flat. Another Filipina domestic worker, Celia (Alessandra De Rossi), appears to be Manuel’s unattainable dream girl, but it is later revealed that she is having an affair with her wealthy, married employer.

The film also suggests that widespread perceptions of foreign migrant workers as criminals have distracted locals from recognizing the domestic problems that have accompanied Taiwan’s financial prosperity. In another scene, Manuel and Dado save a Taiwanese boy who is threatening to jump from the roof of a modern housing project. Rather than presenting Manuel and Dado as traditional heroes, the visual spectacle of the two Filipinos carrying the bright red sofa serve as a distraction to the suicidal boy, which in turn creates an opening for rescue workers to pull him back to safety.

## ENGLISH IN THE LANDSCAPE OF DECLINE

In *Pinoy Sunday*, English is elevated in a way that devalues the United States as a geographic destination at the same time that it reinforces American cultural capital. Although the English



spoken by Manuel, Dado, and other Filipinos reference benevolent assimilation in the Philippines, the United States does not appear as a key destination or place in the film – an idea visually manifested in the factory dorm décor, where a miniature US flag appears as just one in a series from nations all over the world. To express his preferred effect in situations that are often bleak and disappointing, Manuel draws phrases from American pop culture. Using phrases and slogans such as “Chill...I’m The Man,” “For special occasions: steak dinner for two,” “See you when I see you”; and “Just do it,” he acts out cinematic scenarios in which he successfully embodies masculine American personas of the hero and lover, in ways that feel distant from his situation as a low-paid migrant worker living under a strict curfew and policy of deportation.

In an analysis of narratives of British decline, John Marx contends that modernist novelists such as Virginia Woolf and Joseph Conrad were more concerned with mapping a cosmopolitan and interconnected world defined by a shared English language, rather than mapping the decline of imperial Britain. What have largely been perceived as narratives of the decline of the British empire, he explains, in fact mark the advent of modern globalization by presenting different articulations of English. During their journey, Manuel and Dado rely on a combination of gestures, English phrases, and situational logic to communicate with bystanders. Speaking English enables Manuel and Dado to communicate in minimal ways, but does not necessarily constitute a shared language that confers fellowship and connection onto them, as outsiders in Taiwan. In addition, the film emphasizes the linguistic diversity amongst Filipino migrant workers. While Manuel and Dado alternate between Tagalog, the dominant language in the Philippines, and English when speaking to each other, Manuel speaks the regional language Ilonggo with a Filipina who stops to help them on the side of the road and later translates the essence of the conversation for Dado. By emphasizing regional alliances and language in the Philippines as a factor in the formation of Filipino migrant worker networks in Taiwan, the film complicates dualistic conceptions of Filipinos as either English-speaking US colonial subjects and Tagalog-speaking Filipinos.

Through language, the film registers the specificity of Taiwan as a location for Filipino migration, asking us to explore the racialization of contract workers and domestic workers in institutional and discursive contexts. How do Taiwanese view these darker-skinned foreigners? When a drunk driver rams into the couch as they are carrying it across a street, he curses at them in Hoklo (Taiwanese) and insists that they compensate him for the damage to his scooter. When the police arrive to break up the fight, he quickly switches to Mandarin in order to argue that the migrant workers hit him with the couch. Manuel and Dado use gestures and a few English words (Drink ... drive) to signal the driver’s drunkenness to the police in order to counter the distorted, yet detailed account of the accident that he delivers to them in Mandarin.

More than once, interactions between Filipino migrant workers and locals, including a

TV reporter, policewoman, and passersby, reveal the costs of not speaking Hoklo (Taiwanese) and Mandarin and also of the limited benefits and mobility that English can secure for them in their negotiations with factory security personnel and Taiwanese locals, such as the drunk driver mentioned above. In contrast to the way that English enables them to express their frustrations and dreams, Manuel and Dado have minimal knowledge of Mandarin, including “Please,” “Sorry,” “Thank you,” and “Goodbye,” or words and phrases that are also specifically learned and deployed to help them stay out of trouble with factory management and immigration and police officials while also performing a subordinate and subservient status for Taiwanese locals that affirms the First World – Third World hierarchal relationship between Taiwan and the Philippines in which Taiwan is on top.

Taiwan’s language politics became a controversial issue in the film’s distribution. The film received financial support through from a Subsidy for Film Production grant from Taiwan’s Government Information Office, but its use of English and Tagalog was viewed as violating the subsidy’s rules that Chinese dialects should be the dominant languages spoken in government-funded films, as the projects are intended to promote Taiwan language and culture. Such arguments about local language politics found expression in doubts over the film’s localness, as little local language is spoken in the film even though the story is set in Taipei. The filmmaker’s response was to release a version dubbed in Hoklo, a local language spoken by roughly 73 percent of the island’s population.

In addition to Taiwan’s language politics, the distribution of the film brought the racialized criminalization of foreign migrant workers to the surface. Though the film received positive reviews at the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, only two movie theaters in Taiwan initially agreed to screenings. In an interview with the *Taipei Times*, director Ho Wi-ding recounted that most movie theaters passed on the film after hearing that the story focused on OFWs (Overseas Foreign Workers) and that the staff at one venue went so far to say that they didn’t want foreign migrant workers hanging around in their lobbies and in front of the theater” (Ho Yi 16). It’s worth noting, however, that newspaper reports of the movie theater’s racist views towards migrant workers generated a burst in ticket sales for the film from outraged readers. In an interview, Ho Wi-ding expressed the desire to talk with the Government Information Office about how to make the regulations more flexible for movies about new immigrants.

## PHILIPPINE STUDIES AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

What is compelling about *Pinoy Sunday* is that it articulates critical linkages about the Philippines and Taiwan in ways that open up intersections of language and Americanness in a

transnational context. After losing sight of the Taipei 101 skyscraper, Manuel and Dado use the river as a new landmark. Trading the modern icon for a natural one does not lead them to their destination and dream of lounging on the sofa, but instead puts them on a new route. Although Dado's expression registers the gravity of missing the dormitory curfew, his verbal acknowledgement of this fact conveys ambivalence about the prospect of remaining in Taiwan.

My purpose in this essay is not to add another site—in this case, Taiwan/Taipei—to Philippine Studies. Rather, I have attempted to show how Luce's "American Century" and relatedly, narratives that identify the end of the American Century, provide a way of studying the transpacific imaginary of informal US imperialism. In this sense, I suggest that the histories of Taiwan and the Philippines are linked by immigration to the US, but also discursively linked by the American Dream and Taiwan's modernity. Taking an epistemological approach to Filipinos and the Philippines allows us to consider how they are constituted as objects by the discourse of the American Century, not only through the colonial policy of benevolent assimilation and the US history of colonialism in the Philippines, but also through the passage to Taiwan.

In the dreamlike closing scene, Manuel and Dado play music side-by-side on the couch as it glides across the sea and eventually, to the Philippines. The final scenes show them on a beach in the Philippines, confirming their resettlement. To understand the significance of the end of the film, we need to see these final moments not as a migrant's return to the home country, but rather as a transpacific passage that provides a new perspective on the Philippines and its relation to Taiwan and the United States. To study the Philippines is to apprehend the ideological linkages between Taiwan and the Philippines and to untie the contradictions of the discourse of the American Century that Taiwan and the Philippines are part of.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Henry Luce defines the measure of US “virility” in terms of the US’s ability to exploit Asia: “Our thinking today on world trade today is on ridiculously small terms. For example, we think of Asia as being worth only a few hundred millions a year to us. Actually, in the decades to come Asia will be worth to us exactly zero – or it will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year. And the latter are the terms we must think in, or else confess a pitiful impotence” (171).
- <sup>2</sup> I have analyzed the ways that Luce’s American Century references the US colonial policy of benevolent assimilation and addresses Filipinos in a previous piece. See Chapter 3 in Cynthia H. Tolentino’s *America’s Experts: Race and the Fictions of Sociology*.
- <sup>3</sup> These images operate almost like pillow shots, or images that do not contribute to the progress of the narrative, but instead linger on inanimate objects in ways that refer to a character by re-presenting it out of a narrative context. “The essence of the pillow shot,” Noel Burch observes, “lies in the tension between the suspension of human presence and its potential return” (161).

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