

WHITE CITIZENSHIP

A Category of Identification and Route of US Immigrant Constitution in Selected GUMIL Hawaii Short Fiction

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Abstract

The “desire to be white” observed amongst Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrants is not a mere personal resolve nor a sole act of individual decision. It is an aspiration driven by the ideology of “white ideal,” the discourse of middle class success, and deepened/straited by the historical junctures such as the colonial and neocolonial relationships between the US and the Philippines, immigration policies, and the sugar plantation labor history in Hawaii. The control and discipline of Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrants are installed through the iteration of normative rules involving identification categories of race, ethnicity, and class. The identification of white ideal however may get deflected in the crisscrossing and reception at the level of social praxis, as the attempt to embody a norm is never complete (Rottenberg). Such area of ambivalence may produce fissures that present critical space for the re-encodation of Ilocano-Hawaiian representation and agency. Of note is the seamless intrication between the history and the story, between texts and contexts, or conversely, between contexts and texts in selected GUMIL Hawaii short fiction. The play of “mirroring” of white ideals and the “disidentification” of the same is precisely recuperated in the study.

Keywords

“desire to be white,” disidentification, ethnicity, performativity, Ilocano-Hawaiian diasporic identity

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The “desire to be white” by Filipinos, particularly the Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrants, is not just a determination rising from private, personal resolve but a contingency prompted by the pressures of US hegemonic discourses and their ensuing consequences. But while Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian diasporic identity and subjectivity are constituted by US’s hegemonic norms, the performance and carrying out of diasporic identity/identities in the host state opens it up to alternative, fractal spaces which have the potential for re-encodation and recuperation that may run counter to hegemonic forces. The chasing of the “desire to be white” and/or “middle class” status (read as American dream) is contingent on a US citizenship, the award of which is underpinned by adherence to US’s regulatory norms. But while the compelled character of “regulatory ideals” that subjects are forced to take and identify with ensures the “American dream,” subjects are never totally constituted and that resistance against these norms and standards is possible. This “ambivalent” status, for one, can be recuperated to serve as driver in the re-encodation of space and agency. This play of dynamics is recuperated in selected short fiction of GUMIL Hawaii (Gunglo Dagiti Mannurat iti Ilocano ti Hawaii), a community-based association of writers in Hawaii.

The complicated measures in the attainment of the elusive green card necessitate looking into the trajectory and shifts of Asian American immigration and laws to bring some perspective in understanding how the struggle for naturalization and self-representation amongst Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrants is not a decision solely determined by their personal settlement trajectories but is very much informed by US immigration policies, pressures and specificities of diaspora, and vagaries of broad historical, political junctures, among which is the sugar plantation labor industry and its consequences on recent Ilocano immigrants. Such historical and political events will be outlined in the study, elucidating the processes by which the latter may come to configure in the representation of Filipino/Ilocano Hawaiian immigrants.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXTS AND “WHITE” DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK

The organization of the global labor market by country of origin during Hawaii’s sugar plantation era from the 1840s to the late 1950s by white sugar plantation owners (through the Hawaii Sugar Plantation Agency (HSPA)) had engendered not only a hierarchical stratification between White and Asian labor but a ranking by degree among Asian laborers of different ethnicities, with Filipino labor¹ occupying the base in the job stratification order. In the line up of Asian labor ethnicities, the Japanese occupied the highest rank, followed by the Chinese, and the Koreans as third in the line (Takaki 36). The highest rank in the overall stratification order was

assigned to the white labor, also called “haole.” The haole included the Americans, Portuguese, some Spanish and a smattering of other Caucasians. They were given managerial positions despite their lack of experience in the administrative and management areas (Labrador 37). Such stratification assumed a set of codified social distinctions that defined races and ethnicities, the latter of which were ranked by degree. While the different labor recruits were classified according to job specifications, the various Asian labor ethnicities were further ranked by degrees. The transnational labor market organized by country of origin worked most ideally for the plantation owners as it encouraged competition among the different groups, nullifying, in turn, the potential formation of alliances among the different labor ethnicities that may morph into militant labor unions and organizations. The classification of labor by country of origin was further reinforced by the lodging arrangement, whereby workers of the same country of origin were quartered in one roof. Thus, Filipino plantation laborers, regardless of the region in the Philippines they come from, were quartered in one lodging. Such a labor set-up encouraged the maximization of global capital flow bringing in huge profits to White plantation owners.

The stratification of the labor market during the plantation era is informed by “white supremacist” discourse. Such discourse deploys a binary between the whites and the non-whites—the latter of which includes Asian countries. The taxonomy of labor in the plantations had, in turn, engendered further stratification among Asian minorities. It must be noted that the position that Asian labor was relegated to was in reference to what Susan Koshy terms the “white-black dichotomy.” The white-black binary was the underlying framework from which the positioning of races was organized. The nations that did not fall under the white or black race were lumped in the middle, which Susan Koshy and Catherine Rottenberg call “in between.” These ethnicities fall under the “minority” status. Because they were neither “Black” nor “White,” they had ambivalent status (Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 163). As the bid for US naturalization was appealed through White or Black poles, and no in-between classifications, the Asian ethnicities faced a blank wall. This ambivalent status of Asian minorities, however, was redressed sometime in the 1960s as a consequence of the fermentation of momentous historical junctures like the Civil Rights Movement and the 1965 US Immigration Rights, among others. The Asian minorities pushed for immigration rights and for the improvement in their status, ensuing in the recuperation of “ethnicity” as a crucial and critical category of Asian immigrant representation and subjectivity. Moreover, “Asian American” saw its emergence as an important category of discourse from which naturalization and immigration concerns were fielded from.

According to Koshy, the study of the history of Asian American struggle for US naturalization should be informed by the history of its shifts. She says, the “bid for

[US] citizenship should be read within the racialized framework of naturalization laws” (Koshy, “Historicizing Racial Identity”). She argues that failure of the study to situate the analysis within the racialized naturalization framework runs the risk of coming up with a reading that is skewed and open to the risk of interpreting the bid for citizenship among Asian Americans as solely a “volunteerist” act. For example, the 1790 Congressional Statute states that naturalization was only restricted to an alien who was a “free white person.” After the American Civil War in 1870,² a fierce congressional debate pushed for the dropping of naturalization “racial requirements” for all applicants. However, the Lower House was divided. Many were opposed to the extension of naturalization privileges to the Native Americans and the Asians. During such an historical juncture, the privilege of naturalization was awarded only to persons of “African nativity or African descent” (Koshy, “Historicizing Racial Identity”). The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Law in 1882, which barred the Chinese from naturalization is a case in point.³ For the rest of the minority groups, the application for citizenship was done in “terms of their ability to meet the racial prerequisites to naturalization, which was to prove ‘whiteness’” (Koshy, “Historicizing Racial Identity”). In the Ozawa case, for example, which reached the Supreme Court in 1922, Ozawa appealed his white naturalization case on three grounds: that he was light skinned, educated, and that he had assimilated “white ways.” Thus, he argued that such reasons were enough grounds for him to be awarded a US citizenship. His appeal, however, was disapproved on the grounds that he belonged to the Mongolian race and could not be conflated with the Caucasian race.

Between 1878-1952, the State and Federal courts received 52 cases for naturalization bid. The cases for naturalization (all by men) tried to prove whiteness.⁴ The petitioners came with diverse nationalities, such as Syrian, Hawaiian, Filipino, Indian, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese. The diverse ethnicities and races of applicant-immigrants bidding for white naturalization and not for black naturalization, illustrate that at this particular historical juncture, whiteness is “primarily defined in opposition to black and Native American identities and still lacked geographical specificity or clarity. According to Koshy, the bid for citizenship by various nationalities could not be classified neatly under the Black or White categorization. The preponderance of white naturalization claims is illustrated in the “geographical indeterminacy of the legal category of white person as compared to the clarity of the definition of a black person as one of ‘African nativity or African descent’” (qtd. in Koshy, “Historicizing Racial Identity”). However, despite the ambiguity of the “white” category and the great number of Asian petitioners applying for white citizenship, most of the Asian petitioners for naturalization were disapproved on the grounds that they were classified as Mongolians and not as Caucasians. The notion of “white race” given this example, is conflated with the

Caucasians, and that “white race” is in fact, the Caucasian race. Such view works on the assumption that races are fixed, transnational categories.

It must be noted that the arrival of Asians in the US had transformed the definition of “whiteness,” whose problematic definition had been compelled, among other things, by naturalization and immigration issues that Asian American minorities had brought to the table. The capacity of Asian American minorities, Latinos, and Blacks to renegotiate the meaning of “whiteness” in order to push for naturalization and representation issues demonstrates the ambivalence of “whiteness” as a classificatory of race, as opposed to the hegemonic understanding of it as a fixed transnational category, equated with skin color. It shows that boundaries and identity markers can be contested, after all. Moreover, the contestation of the meaning of “whiteness” was ushered in by the configuration of political events of the 1960s, among others, the Civil Rights Movement, causing the emergence of anti-racial coalition movements, which, in turn, had paved the spirit and the space, albeit liminal, in the renegotiation of racial meanings.

Corroborating Koshy’s study, Michael Omi and Howard Winant assert that the contestation of racial meanings is a continuous process which is ultimately informed by the State’s regulations and interests. They argue that the “racial order is equilibrated by the state—encoded in law, organized through policy-making, and enforced by a repressive apparatus.” Moreover, they point out that the equilibrium that is attempted is unstable as the “great variety of conflicting interests encapsulated in racial meanings and identities can be no more than pacified- at best- by the state” (qtd.in Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 159).

In conjunction with Omi and Winant’s assertion above of the state’s ultimate role in the construction of racial meaning and identity, Koshy points out that the notion of “whiteness” therefore, is a constitutive category of “national belonging.” Thus, the prerequisites for naturalization have “created the field within which the direction in which the desire for national belonging would be impelled.” Therefore, in the bid for citizenship application or naturalization, one’s ethnicity is subsumed over the target nationality. In other words, the US nationality is transcendent over one’s ethnicity, or is given preference over the ethnicity of the applicant-immigrant. However, in the complex process of reconceiving its form, a crucial consequence is the “morphing of race into ethnicity in public discourses [such as areas of] national belonging, social differences, economic inequality, and global competitiveness” (Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 157).

As pointed out earlier, the arrival of Asians in the US had caused the reconfiguration of notions of “whiteness” and “national identity.” Thus, provisions for US immigration and citizenship have been legislated which appear to serve the

interests of US. For instance, immigration laws are passed to serve as “mechanism[s] for excluding most people of Asian origin from the nation, whether by denying them entry or by denying them citizenship status” (Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 165). The US hegemonic discourse of “whiteness and “national belonging” has in turn, produced among other things, the emergence of the “desire to be white” (Rottenberg 9) amongst the immigrants. In other words, the bid for US citizenship has produced assimilationist aspirations from subjects that US had excluded, from the get go through its immigration legislations. An example of this assimilationist aspiration among the immigrant subjects will be illustrated in the reading of a selected short story.

Moreover, the hegemonic discourse of “white citizenship” looks at “Asian immigrants as cultural aliens, establishing a taxonomy of various Asian identities in terms of their relative distance from whiteness, prompting competitive self-differentiation among Asian groups, and adumbrating hierarchical distinctions between Asians and Blacks in terms of their fitness for citizenship” (Rottenberg 10). In the case of Asian countries which were colonies of the US like Hawaii and the Philippines, their exclusion from naturalization took such elaborate explanations. The 1906 Naturalization Act was supposed to grant citizenship to aliens and to “all persons not citizens who owe permanent allegiance to the US.”⁵ Since the Filipinos, by virtue of their status as a colony of the US were categorized and considered as non-citizen nationals, the 1906 Naturalization Act supposedly qualified the Filipinos for the application for citizenship. However, the Courts did not see fit to grant many of the Filipino petitioners for naturalization simply because they are not “white” or of African descent—a provision which they still referred to from the repealed 1870 statute. In the few cases where the bid for naturalization was deemed legal, the Court, however, disapproved such petitions on mere technicality. For example, the bid for citizenship by Francisco Mallari, a Filipino was disapproved for failing to follow naturalization procedures. According to Koshy, most Filipinos’ petitions were rejected because they did not answer to the requisite of whiteness or blackness (“Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 171), referring to the 1870 naturalization statute which was supposed to have been rescinded by the 1906 Naturalization Act. Moreover, recruited as sugar plantation laborers, the Filipinos were classified as “colonized nationals”—neither citizens nor aliens. Another example of the US Courts’ arbitrary decisions was their rejection of Kanaka Nian, a Native Hawaiian, on the ground that “he did not appear to be possessed of sufficient intelligence to become a citizen; that his intellect and conscience were not sufficiently enlightened.”⁶

The arbitrary awarding of US citizenship only demonstrates the incoherence of Immigration and Naturalization Law. Moreover, it shows the prejudicial treatment of the US Courts towards Asians, in this case, towards the Filipinos, by their interpretation of the “naturalization statutes specifically enacted to enable Filipino

naturalization (the act of 1906) in such a way as to disqualify these applicants, and the courts admitted of no ambiguity in the matter of Filipino naturalization” (Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity” 171). Moreover, such decisions of the Court show not only their highhandedness but their arbitrary treatment of minority petitioners.

One notes that the history of Asian American struggle for US naturalization is informed by a racialized framework of naturalization laws. The contours of diasporic identification and representation for Filipino/Ilocano Hawaiian Immigrants is a recognition of their invisibility and pressures of diasporic condition. Given such immigration dynamics, one reads the protectionist interests of America, whereby racial identification is constantly policed by US immigration laws and policy-emendations. The naturalized American citizen simultaneously minoritizes or subsumes her racial identity and is “reborn” as an ethnic minority American citizen.

THE ITERATION OF “WHITE IDEAL” THROUGH IDENTIFICATION CATEGORIES

On this note, one asks: how is the naturalized American citizen constituted, such that adherence to US regulatory norms is enabled or mirrored back? Following Koshy, the discourse of “whiteness” is reconstituted and reworked as an ideal that the immigrants aspire for, and in turn, such consummation of whiteness and its associated images is equated with “national belonging.” The ideological discourse of whiteness and national belonging is bolstered by the iteration of identification categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender around what Rottenberg calls the “overarching mythos” of what is it to be American.

Since ethnicity is a category of identity which has evolved out of the discourse of race and class, and which has itself revolved around the poles of whiteness and blackness, Judith Butler’s notion of “performativity” is recuperated by Catherine Rottenberg in analyzing identification categories such as race, ethnicity, and class. According to Rottenberg, “performativity” should be understood as a discourse that is constitutive of identity (6). She asserts that performativity is not “conceived as the ‘subject’s freedom to choose or ‘play at’ a variety of identities, but rather as both constitutive of identity and a constraining manifestation of dominant norms.” According to Judith Butler on gender and identity, “it is the very act of performing gender that constitutes who we are” (“Bodies that Matter”). It is the reiterativeness of the act that constitutes the identity. Thus, identity, itself, is an “illusion that is retroactively created by our performances.” The belief in ‘stable identities’ and ‘gender differences’ is an illusion that is “compelled by social sanction and taboo.” Identity and gender, therefore, are not “natural” acts but an “act of sorts, a performance, one that is imposed upon us by normative heterosexuality.” The

categories, “identity” and “gender” are not biographical and essential categories but are socially constituted, which through the act of reiterative performance take on an illusion of the real, which, in turn, are kept and maintained by those “punitive rules (social, familial, and legal) that force us to conform to heteronormative, heterosexual standards for identity.” Performativity is not “willed” nor “arbitrary,” but its intelligibility is “bound with effects, that ‘historicity of discourse’ and ‘historicity of norms’ . . . constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names.” Butler, further points out that identity categories can be difficult to establish; their materiality is contingent on both reiteration and exclusion (“Bodies that Matter”). According to Sara Salih, the ‘subject effect’ is “not a self-evident entity, but is retroactively installed by and in discourse.” In other words, the subject is a result of “its deeds rather than the initiator of them” (Salih 6). Through reiteration and “exclusion,” the material is normalized.

To illustrate the process of identity “ethnicization,” Butler deploys Althusser’s notion of “interpellation” to illustrate how the subject is retroactively, performatively “hailed” into gender. Althusser explains that when a subject or a “man on the street” is “hailed” or “called” by the policeman, he responds to the call, turns around, and assumes his subject position in response to the policeman’s call. For Butler, she substitutes the policeman’s “hey, you there!” with the statement, “it’s a girl!” that is uttered as an infant comes out from the womb. According to Butler, the statement, “‘it’s a girl/boy,’ does not yet describe the gender of the infant, but they constitute the subject in the act of naming it.” Butler points out that in naming the girl, “it is ‘girlled,’ brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender.” It must be noted that the “‘girling’ of the girl is not just a one-time call, but is repeated or iterated so that the ‘naturalized effect’ of sex and gender is reinforced and /or contested; the naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm” (Salih 7). The subject then assumes the “social comportment” according to the way he/she is hailed. And if a subject were to exist and survive in a society, his/her intelligibility is dependent on the dominant norms followed. As Rottenberg explains, “to remain viable within a given society, the subject must cite and mime the very norms that created his/her intelligibility in the first place” (6). In the process of positioning ethnicities, for example, this act of hailing through the classification and labeling of the Filipino immigrant as belonging to a Filipino ethnicity, with a particular US colonial history, and class ranking, in reference to other races and Asian labor ethnicities in the plantations, compels the immigrant to comport themselves in a certain way. The Filipino immigrant’s intelligibility is dependent on his allegiance to this installed ethnic hailing.

The norms are further reconsolidated through the deployment of ideology and discourse. Foregrounded as “regulatory ideals,” dissimulating in turn, their

repressive character, ideals such as heteronormativity and white supremacy “circulate and operate in the service of particular power relations” (Rottenberg 7). Dominant norms shape who we are and crucially define our desires. And if a subject has to be positioned within the nonmarginal existence, he is compelled to identify with these dominant norms. According to Rottenberg, these compulsions have real “effects” on the body and the psyche of the subject due to the iterative act or performativity, which enacts what it names. The “effects” are products of the retroactivity of performativity in the subject’s striving to “embody certain attributes associated with the categories of gender, race, class, and ethnicity.” Rottenberg asserts that if the ‘taking up’ of regulatory ideals or norms is compelled, then, the “constitution and simultaneously compelled identification with regulatory ideals is an inescapable part of subject formation” (7). While the norms are powerful ways of shaping and regulating a subject who we are and what we desire, these regulatory ideals supposedly ensure the subject a “nonmarginal” existence. While the promise of a nonmarginal existence compels the subject to identify or to emulate with the regulatory ideals, these same regulatory ideals encourage the subject to “desire,” to dream of upward mobility. US class norms discourage identification with the lower class but encourage instead, the desire to attain material success that urge subjects to emulate these regulatory ideals linked to the middle class (Rottenberg 12). Therefore, the “initial identification with a particular class is necessary as part of the functioning of class societies—otherwise the upward mobility and American dream discourse would cease to be meaningful.” In turn, such US ideological discourse does not only reinforce social stratification but has “helped produce, justify, and excuse class inequalities by linking them to individual effort.” Thus, “failure is more likely to be attributed to some flaw in the *individual* subject rather than to iniquitous social and economic structures” (Rottenberg 8).

These categories (race, class, ethnicity), in turn, are reworked by the US dominant discourses to constitute the immigrant minorities. Thus for this study, I will attempt to demonstrate how the processes of identification and the “desire to be white” are deployed to understand how the Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrant subject is classed, raced, and “ethnicized” in the United States. The study interrogates how these categories are intricately with, and around hegemonic notions of “Americanness”—crucial axes along which social stratifications have emerged (7). Through selected GUMIL Hawaii short fiction, the study shows the operationalization of identification categories of race, ethnicity, and class, with American norms and regulatory ideals.

FISSURES IN REGULATORY NORMS AS POTENTIAL SITES OF RECONSTITUTION

Rottenberg points out though, that while the compelled character of regulatory ideals that subjects cite, mime, and enact ensures an intelligibility and “recognizable and enduring social existence,” she emphasizes that subjects are never totally coopted by these norms and that resistance against these standards is possible. While performativity constitutes identities, more importantly, though liminally, the process of performativity can potentially “open the signifiers to new meanings and new possibilities and political resignification.” Moreover, “performativity allows us not only to envision a futurity, but also locate that which challenges new possibilities” (Salih 6). Butler has always argued that “rupture and resignification are means of agency” (Salih 4). It is along such breaks and gaps that issues of class, race, ethnicity and even gender can be questioned and contested.

While Rottenberg explains the reiterative power of identity formation of each category in reference to the “overarching mythos” read as American, she argues that the normative values can be subverted. Though Asian Americans, Latinos, and Blacks are primed to identify with the white ideals, *not* all desire to be White or to be American. An important assertion that Rottenberg makes is that knowing how the discourse of “privilege” operates and not just identifying its consequences is crucial in the project of subversion. While the norms have the power to shape and to regulate the subject, the subject’s identification with the regulatory ideals may not be completely internalized. The subject may “disidentify” with the norms or yet “twist” the norms. Since the different categories of identity are each informed by distinctive regulatory norms, the subject’s simultaneous play of identification or disidentification with the categories crisscross or get interwoven in the process within the social praxis level and can produce fissures and ruptures which, in turn, the subject may recuperate to negotiate an agency. Rottenberg points out that on the “level of social practices, gender, race, class, and ethnic norms operate simultaneously, contaminating one another as well as producing multiple-cross identifications that are often conflictual (11). In other words, on the level of everyday practice, the regulatory norms for these categories of identity may exceed themselves and would even be in opposition to each other, in turn, allowing the introduction of fissure/s which can, in turn, be recuperated to negotiate an alternative politics. Such fissures and gaps have potential recuperative power and agencies and can be re-encoded as a form of resistance or subversion. It must be noted that forms of resistance may not necessarily be overt, that has the power to supplant altogether the US monolith and hegemonic norms. Resistance can be nuanced and subtle but may be invested with certain critical productivity. A case in point to illustrate this particular formulation on the matter of subversion is the example of Asian immigrants and their classificatory status of ambiguity, ambivalence, or “in betweenness.” Their ethnicity was reworked as source for agency—re-encodation. In fact, it is precisely

this “in-between” status that Asian immigrants refunctioned to bring to the table their ambivalent situation in America. The category of ethnicity was brought into the equation, altering in turn, the Black/White dichotomy in US citizenship.

THE “DESIRE TO BE WHITE” IN GUMIL HAWAII SHORT FICTION

The discourse of racialized US immigration policies and compounded by the hierarchical classification of labor ethnicities in the sugar plantations, with the Filipino/Ilocano labor relegated to the lowest strata of the classification order, is a powerful act of “naming” and “definition.” Their recruitment as US colonial subject and their corresponding classification as indentured Filipino ethnic plantation labor marked their interpellation in Hawaii. Both their ethnicity as Filipinos and their classed signification had constrained them to assume their subject position in accordance to the discourse of sugar plantation hailing. The sugar plantation laborer is brought into the domain of the sugar plantation discourse, thus the naming is at once the “setting of a boundary and the repeated inculcation of a norm” (Salih 7). In the act of interpellation, the Filipino plantation laborer- subject assumes the “social comportment” expected of this interpellation. And if the former were to exist and survive in Hawaii society, his/her intelligibility is dependent on his allegiance to the dominant norms. In other words, intelligibility in the sugar plantations, in Hawaii, and US as a broader culture, rests on the miming and citation of the very norms that create the Filipino plantation labor subject’s intelligibility in the first place.

An ideological work ethic that serves as a stronghold in the sugar plantations and in broader Hawaii and US society are hard work, industry, perseverance, earnestness, and seriousness for the job. Such work ethic, in turn, holds the promise of “middle class” success and “white citizenship” given the necessary comportment and behavior as expected of an immigrant and Filipino Hawaiian immigrant, for that matter. The ideology and corresponding discourse of “middle class success” and white citizenship breed this assimilationist aspiration in the Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian immigrant and plantation labor worker.

Such dynamic is illustrated in the short fiction, “Another of Life’s Challenges” (“Maysa Pay a Pannubok iti Biagna”) by Amado Yoro. The story dramatizes the difficult life in the plantation fields and the protagonist’s feelings about his job as a plantation laborer. Rino, the protagonist in the story is plagued by two main problems which slightly affected the performance of his job: nostalgia for home, particularly this longing for his beloved; and his dissatisfaction of his job as a field hand. This dissatisfaction springs from the fact that he has a college diploma from back home but is not able to use it in Hawaii. As a plantation laborer, he experiences a reversal of status. This dissatisfaction is compounded by nostalgia for home and for his fiancée, preventing him from giving full attention to the job. Though Rino

is assigned to command the team of seven men of different ethnicities, tasked with pest control of the sugar plantation, he is quite unhappy in his job. Mainly tasked to do plantation field work which exposes him to the harsh elements, this job mismatch eats him. In the months of preparing for his trip and migration to Hawaii, it never occurred to Rino that he would end up as a plantation worker. The thought of quitting plagued him countless of times, but the desire for a better life in Hawaii with his beloved who will eventually join him pushed him into plodding on. In the end, Rino rationalizes this reversal of social status by looking at it as all part of life's many challenges, chiding himself, in turn, for his weakness.

Eventually, Rino's sacrifice pays off. He is summoned by his supervisor to his office and is told that he is promoted to a desk job at the Warehouse Office and Supply Office Department. His new job removes him from the fields. His promotion, according to his supervisor, is based on three reasons: First, Rino was able to lead his team (two Ilocanos, two Japanese, one "Negro," one Puerto Rican, and himself) despite the difficulty of the job. Second, he carried himself "accordingly" despite the lack of field hand and resources needed for the particular job they were assigned to do; and third, despite the challenges of the job, Rino and his team were able to deliver, earning for him the new respect and trust of the management.

Hailed or interpellated as cheap plantation labor, the Filipinos occupied the lowest rank in the occupation ladder. As expendable labor and constantly faced with the threat of getting fired, the Filipino laborers were helpless against racialized plantation practices, especially during the early period of Filipino labor recruitment. One attempt at negotiating such oppressive plantation practices was rationalizing that working in Hawaii and earning in dollars was infinitely better than remaining in the Philippines, where life was difficult. Despite their meager salary (75 cents per day), many were able to regularly remit cash to their families back home. The thought of going back to their homeland after their work contract and the dream of buying their own lot from hard-earned savings, which many did, motivated and compelled them to work hard, notwithstanding having to endure homesickness and discriminatory practices in the plantations.

Despite Rino's nagging feelings of ambivalence for his job, his future plans motivate him to plod on. He is shown aspiring for upward mobility. He is aware that this desire to make it in the US bristles with promise for three reasons: first, he is in Hawaii as an immigrant; second, he has a job; and thirdly, he remains optimistic that his college diploma could serve as a ticket to land a better job and a career someday. He is resentful of the lowly plantation job. Coming from a family of farmers back home, he dreams of doing better in Hawaii.

In the story, Rino gets the promotion not because he has a college diploma but because he embodies the qualities deemed important to US regulatory norms. The three reasons are outlined to him by his supervisor. First, he has proven that he can command a team despite the difficulties presented by the job and the challenge of unifying six men of different ethnicities. All six men in the team had also been threatening to “walk out.” They were expected to do the work that was supposed to be covered by more men. But whenever, the men threatened to quit, Rino would find himself giving them words of encouragement, pontificating on the importance of job delivery. Moreover, he would tell his men to be thankful at the opportunity of coming to Hawaii and finding a stable job, especially given the difficulty of finding work in Hawaii.

Another challenge that Rino encounters in the job is dealing with and managing a “Negro” worker. The “Negro” worker gives Rino a difficult time, often scoffing at the latter’s pep talks (“work like in hell... shit!”) (144). The rest of the men are less combative. Once, Rino caught the Black worker sleeping on the job, leading to an ugly altercation between them. He is forced to report to the management the Black worker’s show of defiance. Despite the challenging task and the few hands to do the job, Rino and his team manage to complete the job. The management notes such leadership and awards Rino’s good performance, particularly his show of perseverance.

The second reason that brings his promotion is this sense of composure (“talengengen”) in the conduct of self, which trickles down to the comportment of self in the job. The task of controlling the disease that threatens to destroy the sugar cane plantation is a sensitive job. Strategy and speed are imperative. But despite Rino’s repeated request for additional field hands given the volume of the work and the vastness of the area, what he asked for was not heeded. Rino, however, does not complain nor threaten to “walk out.” This in turn, is noted by the management. Instead of griping, he talks to his men to redouble their efforts. During Rino’s interview with his supervisor, the latter expresses his appreciation in the way he carries the job-assignment. The sense of composure is noted by the supervisor. A short-tempered one as shown in the actuations of the “Negro” worker, for example, would probably have instigated resistance or a strike, jeopardizing, in turn, the work in the plantations. But none of these happens under the watch of Rino. The third reason that brings about his promotion is this seriousness towards his job. He is assigned a task and delivers despite the challenges of the job. He completes the task with little or no complaints. Complaints are kept to himself and the management observes this work ethic.

The nature of Rino’s promotion is based on a set of work ethics that is approved by the dominant order, by the US regulatory ideals. For example, he has shown

earnestness or dedication to his job. More crucially, Rino has shown hard work and control and moderation emotions and behavior. The job assignment is approached with efficiency at a minimal cost. These work ideals are the unquestioned and encouraged work ethics. The workers' identification with these so-called work ideals receives compensation in the form of recognition, job promotion, approval of employers, and more crucially, the promise of upward mobility.

Rino's initial success which is demonstrated in his job promotion is held up in contrast to the behavior of the lazy "Negro worker." This incident illustrates two things: first, it valorizes the work ideals, upheld by the US regulatory norms, and embodied in Rino's work ethics and absent in the "Negro worker"; second, it implicitly shows racial differentiation—the "white" as the normative race held up for emulation, and the Black race is foisted against the white to illustrate the "not so desirable" race. Moreover, the portrayal of the "Negro" as a lazy worker is held in contrast to "white" work norms as the ideal work ethics to identify with. This binary between white and black, where the white takes on the positive valuation, and the Black, positioned as the negative valuation, becomes a model for the emulation by non-whites or Asian ethnic minorities. As Rottenberg explains, such mechanism is one way by which the subject comes to be raced or interpellated in the US ideology.

The initial interpellation of Rino as a plantation worker classifies him with the working or the lower class, and as an "ethnic" Filipino plantation laborer that occupies the lowest rung in the job stratification ladder. His desire to improve his lot and this aspiration to move up necessitates a "disidentification" with his class. When Rino's father urges him to remain in his job as a field worker and to forget ambitions of moving up, which Rino believes is possible given his educational attainment, his father reminds him of his place in Hawaii. What underpins the Father's advice is the discourse of racial and ethnic differentiation in the plantations, with the Filipino ethnic group often relegated to the lowest stratification order. Reining in his anger over his father's piece of advice, Rino tells his father that his college diploma will allow him the promise of upward mobility. He tells his father that he plans to quit his current job and to explore other possibilities.

The US's ideological discourse of "hard work," "industry," and "self-comportment" amidst challenges is touted as "recipes" for success and upward mobility. This hegemonic "work ideal" has greatly influenced the imaginary of Filipino immigrants, in turn, compelling them to identify with these regulatory work ideals. They believe that the internalization of and allegiance to these work ethics promise upward mobility and the dream of making it in Hawaii and America. The cultivation of this work discourse and corresponding comportment are much entrenched in the immigrant imaginary, goading him/her in the pursuit of "white citizenship" and its conflation with success. Such US ideological discourse is linked to hardwork and

individual effort. Failure is often attributed to a flaw in the subject, veering away from the critique of a social or economic system or infrastructure that produces and reconsolidates class hierarchies. We see Rino as identifying with “white ideals,” one of which is teamwork, ultimately allowing for productivity. Moreover, these ideals should be followed according to hegemonic ideals. These “white ideals,” in turn, are conflated with “middle class, white values.” The “Negro” worker who is portrayed as Rino’s opposite, remains in his class and is not promoted.

As seen in the story, the US hegemonic discourses and immigration laws compel the Filipino immigrant in Hawaii to identify with this ethnicity—as an ethnic Filipino. The identification with one’s ethnicity, in turn, marks him/her, constituting or binding him to his/her history. This history and circumstances of arrival position the immigrant in the configuration and negotiation of identity. As Filipinos in Hawaii, the historical beginnings of Filipinos as plantation laborers in Hawaii that had occupied the lowest rank in the job ladder is inescapable. It is an initial identity marker that positions him/her to a particular class or race. Such history however, contaminates the identity and position of recent Filipino immigrants making the project of upward mobility more fraught with difficulty. In comparison to other Asian immigrants in Hawaii (Japanese, Koreans, Chinese), the Filipino ethnic group is not that socially mobile. Today, these Asian ethnicities own multinational corporations and properties in Hawaii.

Though the recent Filipino immigrants in Hawaii have reached a modicum of success through hard work, they generally occupy the service sector jobs. With the expansion of Hawaii’s tourism industry, a large number of local and newly-arrived immigrant Filipinos in Hawaii are employed in the service sector (janitor, busboy, chambermaid, cleaner, waiter, etc.) work, called Hawaii’s “new plantations.” The Filipinos in Hawaii are the least upwardly mobile group among other Asian ethnicities. Their plantation experience and their jobs in the service sector have produced them as a group that services the needs of industrial Hawaii. Thus, as Alegado points out, the “structural integration of Filipinos into wider sectors of the economy deepened the asymmetrical relationship between the Filipinos and US” (23). Although the immigrant subjects are both compelled and encouraged to emulate and mirror dominant US norms, subjects that have not been able to assume the “privilege” position in terms of the different categories of identity (gender, class, race, and ethnicity)—crucial components of being an American, they find themselves striving hard to emulate the hegemonic norms associated with these categories (Rottenberg 3).

THE FRACTURING OF “WHITE IDEAL” IN GUMIL HAWAII SHORT FICTION

Though Rino gets the promotion and the promise of moving up in status, we get a glimpse of this resentment for not being able to find work that matches his college degree. Though we see the interpellation of Rino in Hawaii and his corresponding internalization of the regulatory norms and allegiance to the “white ideal,” the chafing or resentment due to the reversal of status is symptomatic of the incompleteness of performativity in the thorough identification of categories of race, class, and ethnicity. The norm is inflected. Though these compulsions have real “effects” on the body and the psyche of the subject due to the iterative act or performativity, which enacts what it names, there are unintended consequences. It must be noted that the actual practice or performance on the operational level in the communities is something else. In other words, in the “move from norm to social praxis, something has happened” (Rottenberg 100). One notes that norms can be “taken up” or “translated” in various ways, even in bizarre ways. Thus, if the norms can be re-interpreted and can be reconfigured to take up different shapes outside the proscribed ways, then US regulatory norms are not monolithic after all. Rottenberg points out that “in any given society nonhegemonic communities can and do propagate different and competing norms. Within the spaces that these communities occupy, attributes or norms that are valued negatively by the dominant society may even be affirmed as positive and desirable” (Rottenberg 101). Thus, it is at such juncture, for example, that spaces for renegotiation can be pursued. Rottenberg asserts that in the interstices of competing norms- where some norms are dominant, and some are peripheralized, this may open up spaces for negotiation (9). It is through these fissures that resistance may be deployed or negotiated. Rottenberg points out, however, the difficulty or even the impossibility of predicting when a subject begins to undermine such regulatory norms. Moreover, she points out that the effects of resistance may not be that radical or “straightforward or necessarily subversive (14). Rottenberg says that resistance can be nuanced or valenced and may not necessarily come to radically change the dominant norms or supplant hierarchies, but forms of resistance, nevertheless, may happen which may be reconstituted for bigger, more productive possibilities in the future. This kind of break from the “white ideal” and regulatory norm is illustrated in the story “Old Man Saulo, His Shack, and the Torrential Rain” (“Ni Lakay Saulo, ti Abong-abong, ken ti Sangasudo nga Arbis”) by Amado Yoro.

The story depicts the life of Saulo, an 86-year-old man who was one of the first *sakada* or sugar plantation worker who arrived in Hawaii on an SS Doric ship. He is the only living plantation laborer from the first batch of Filipino labor, majority of which were Ilocanos. In the story, Saulo has never ventured away from the plantation housing even after his retirement and after the closing of the plantation era in the late 1950s. He remains in the plantation barracks even after his wife and

kids leave him for a new life. The new company owners of the housing talks to him about moving out to give way to the construction of a new building. He, however, refuses to move. But in the end, he is forced to leave the camp. Saulo refuses to accept the little cash the owners are offering. Very much crushed, Old man Saulo leaves the housing and treads on aimlessly, as far as his feet can take him. The thought that consumes him is leaving much distance between him and the people, the city, and the crassness of modernization and progress. He arrives in an empty, undeveloped land. He calls this frontier the “Red Cliff,” for the copper color of the soil. Atop the Red Cliff, he is awarded a spectacular view of the city he abandons. In this virgin territory, he starts to build a shelter, hoping for a new quiet life.

Saulo’s flight away from the city is not just a literal flight from the seat of modern living but a symbolic disalignment from the reach of western values and culture. His flight away from modern, urban life also demonstrates his disapproval and disenchantment of people and excesses that modern living has engendered. The Red Cliff may be recuperated as a signifier of Saulo’s alternative, non-normative ideals. In Red Cliff, he does not owe allegiance to anyone, except to the law of the frontier. He slowly shapes the land based on his ideals—that is, the freedom from the trappings of modern and pretentious “middle class” values which he abhors. His only wish is to live simply and freely, and what better way to fulfill this aspiration if not a flight away from the city, away from modernization’s reach.

Saulo’s disidentification or a move away from US regulatory norms is also illustrated in his rejection of the invitation of the Filipino American Commission. The Commission has been constituted to organize the celebration of the 75th anniversary of Filipino migration to Hawaii. Saulo is informed by the Commission that they have been looking for his whereabouts for sometime. The representatives inform the old man that the Filipino American Commission will confer on him the “Most Outstanding Immigrant” award and that they are most honored to give the award to him. The Commission representatives persuade Saulo to return to the city and abandon his present lodgings. The old man, however, refuses the big offer of a comfortable apartment in the city and a badge of recognition that are dangled before him.

Saulo’s refusal to cooperate with the Filipino American Commission in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of Filipino migration to Hawaii is a powerful demonstration of a nuanced or valenced resistance to US regulatory norms. The “outstanding immigrant” that the Commission is scouting for should answer to the criteria of hard work, industry, and striving, which the commission believes are the very values that have forged Hawaii from a frontier into a modern megapolis. Saulo’s refusal to accept the award and the invitation to grace the ceremony and the celebration illustrate his disidentification and rejection of US’s hegemonic work

discourse of hard work, suffering, endurance and consequently success, which, in turn, are the very ideals that the Filipino plantation laborers are touted to have embodied in the building of Hawaii. Saulo's presence in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of Filipino immigration to Hawaii is meant to serve as a testimony of the crucial role of the Filipino plantation laborers in building Hawaii through their embrace of the said American discourse of hard work and the eventual promise of success, as illustrated in the transformation of Hawaii.

Saulo does not embody the subject that has achieved some middle class comfortability that immigrants aspire for to access the privilege of "Americanness." His "unsuccessful" lot in Hawaii would be interpreted as a path that he takes upon himself, his own doing, and should not be foisted on benevolent US. The ideological rhetoric of Hawaii as "land of opportunity" upholds the promise of upward mobility but only through the identification of the often touted US middle class values of hard work, earnestness, and striving. The disidentification of "white ideal" remains outside the ambit of middle class success, as illustrated in the example of Saulo. Note however, that Saulo's literal and figural settlement in the frontier is a choice. It is symptomatic of nuanced "resistance" from the ideal of "whiteness" and from the constitutive power and reach of the America's regulatory norms. By refusing to accept the award as an "Outstanding Immigrant" and taking lodging in the city, as dictated by the US Commission speak of his non-cooperation with the Discourse of US Commission—fruits of hardwork and industry. In a nuanced gesture he refuses to be part of the "white" discourse that he supposedly should emulate as a classed and ethnicized US naturalized *sakada* or plantation laborer. Later on in his life in Hawaii, Saulo realizes that happiness and success do not have to be hinged on material wealth but in one's discovery of personal freedom. Saulo's unacceptance of the US Immigration Commission's invitation, and his literal and figural distancing from the town or city is symptomatic of his disidentification of "whiteness." The white norms can be subverted after all. Saulo turns his back away from the discourse of this "desire to be white". He takes the alternative path, enfigured in the frontier—considered as the primal America, visa-a-vis the city—the destination of middle class success. Saulo's choice of frontier life is a radical critique of Americanness or what is deemed American.

CONCLUSION

The particularities of the Filipino/Ilocano-Hawaiian diaspora do not emanate from a vacuum, nor impelled in a free oscillating space. It is a reaction to the violence and vagaries of the US hegemon, a dialectics of positioning that is often determined by the US hegemonic norms of what it means to be an American. The

journey of Asian immigrants to America and their struggle for representation was wrought with discriminatory policies and practices but the convergence and junctures of historical and political events had ushered in a space and a venue for the renegotiation of ethnicity that is outside the poles of black-white dichotomy or binary. Nonetheless, even after provisions for US citizenship legislations have been passed and are now awarded to the immigrant-applicant, in this case, Asian-Americans or Filipino-American /Ilocano Hawaiians, the mode of disciplining of Asian Americans is not only made through stringent US immigration legislations and processes, but through the discourse of “whiteness,” particularly on three identification categories—race, ethnicity, and class, and the regulatory norms associated with each category. Even while the ultimate goal of the immigrant is to achieve the white ideal, the Filipino ethnicity, for example, is constrained to identify with his ethnicity but is encouraged to desire for upward mobility. Such condition necessitates the acceptance and embodiment of the white ideal.

Rottenberg, however, points out that such hegemonic norms that shape identity categories are constructs—culturally and temporally specific and that these norms in any given culture, locale or era compete with each other. Thus, the attempt to “embody a norm is never complete.” While the iterative performance of white identification regardless of race, ethnicity, class, and gender interpellates the individual into a certain actuation, the specificities of culture and daily praxis may pose distortion in carrying out the regulatory norms of identification categories. Thus, such ambivalence can be a source of resistance or subversion or a space for recuperation and of agency.

GUMIL Hawaii is an example of a recuperative space, an act of reterritorialization against the homogenizing and dehistoricizing tendencies of US hegemonic white ideal and norms. Embodied in the short fiction are the ambiguities and ambivalences (supposedly non-normative path of whiteness) that cannot be glossed over or elided in a diasporic experience, even within the systematic disciplinary discourses of US hegemonic forces. The yearning for white citizenship and corresponding miming of white ideal are recognized, cited and copied, but the call of history, one’s originary home, and the specificities of culture and diaspora bend the complete avowal of white norms and ideals. The US monolith cracks and disavowed in a multiplicity of myriad and creative ways.

The hegemonic order’s predisposition to buttress slippage or cracks that may provide a window to challenge the monolithic order speaks of the slippery characteristic of categories. Legislations are constantly passed and amended but the regulatory norms are vulnerable to infringement or breach opening. The crisscrossing of identification norms on the level of praxis opens the breach wider to all sort of counter hegemonic views and options, supplanting monolithic claims.

This play of dynamics can be recuperated by minority players and ethnicities, like the Filipino/Ilocano—Hawaiian community, to improve lives and their status and condition as people in diaspora.

Notes

1. The study uses the category “labor” to refer to an aggregate, and therefore as an aggregate the action ascribed to them is singular. On the other hand, the term “laborer/s” refers to individual workers.
2. “The South was ever alert to protect its ‘peculiar institution,’ even though many Southerners recognized slavery as an anachronism in a supposedly enlightened age. Passions aroused by arguments over the fugitive slave laws and over slavery in general were further excited by the activities of the Northern abolitionist John Brown and by the vigorous proslavery utterances of William L. Yancey, one of the leading Southern fire-eaters” (“US Civil War”).
3. An important consequence of the Chinese Exclusion Law was the cessation of sugar plantation labor recruitment to Hawaii. The Hawaiian planters had to bring in Japanese labor to replace Chinese labor.
4. “Women were not petitioners for naturalization as their status is derived from the status of their husbands” (Lopez, “White by Law” qtd. in Koshy).
5. This act also established the basic procedure for naturalization during the period 1906-52. The procedure began with the filing of a declaration of intention, which recorded the applicant’s oath to the clerk of the court that it was his or her bona fide intention to become a citizen of the United States, to reside permanently therein, and to renounce all allegiances to other nations. Within a period of 2 to 7 years after filing the declaration, the applicant could petition the court for citizenship. . . . The petition then became the subject of an investigation and hearing before a judge. Officials of the Bureau conducted preliminary examinations and submitted findings and recommendations to the court. The hearing before a judge was the last step in the procedure, provided the judge found the findings and recommendation of naturalization officials favorable and satisfactory. If so, the applicant would take an oath of allegiance to the U.S. Constitution and laws and renounce all foreign allegiances, and the judge would issue an order of admission to citizenship and grant the applicant a certificate of citizenship. However, a judge could also order a continuance of the investigation or deny the petition, listing the reasons for the denial. A major change in this procedure occurred in 1952, when the filing of the declaration of intention was eliminated (Bolger, “Background History of the United States Naturalization Process,” www.colorado.gov/dpadoit/archives/natinfo.htm).
6. “The doctrine of unincorporated territory was developed in a series of Supreme Court rulings whereby the governmental power of Congress over the newly annexed territories was subject to only those limitations of the Constitution as the Supreme Court deemed applicable. The annexation of the territories had generated fierce debates over whether annexation necessarily conferred U.S. citizenship upon the inhabitants of these territories. But as the doctrine of unincorporated territories developed, it allowed for differences in political status among the inhabitants of the various territories. Filipinos were designated

“noncitizen nationals” of the United States, but Hawaiians were granted citizenship in 1900, and Puerto Ricans in 1917” (Koshy quoting Jose A. Cabranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire*).

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