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### **metroimperial intimacies: fantasy, racial-sexual governance, and the Philippines in U.S. Imperialism, 1899–1913**

Victor Román Mendoza, Duke University Press, Durham, 2015, 312pp., ISBN: 978-0-8223-6019-3, \$99.95 (Hbk)/ ISBN: 978-0-8223-6034-6, \$25.95 (Pbk)

Victor Román Mendoza argues in *Metroimperial Intimacies* that Philippine 'intimate and perverse relations are constitutive of the hetero-masculinizing and genocidal project of U.S. imperialism' (p. 2). Intimacies are the zones of close social or sexual connections between individuals that are usually considered private and personal events of friendship, love, erotic contact or sexual desire conditioned out of real or imagined constraints (p. 11). The real or imagined constraints comprise the 'fantasies' that Mendoza unpacks in the book, revealing contestations of what is deemed or imagined as true or essential about the Filipino subject. Mendoza examines fantasies, because they reveal the desires and fears that inhabit the most personal and private zones of the individual. Studying the ways in which the US state and its agents managed, imagined and fantasised about Filipino subjects exposes attempts to organise human difference racially and sexually.

Using a 'methodologically queer-of-color historicist study' (p. 10) of discourse, Mendoza excavates a wide-ranging archive of legal, material, ideological, cultural and social exchanges that invented the racialised and sexualised Philippine subject during the Philippine-American War. A queer-of-colour critique approaches race, gender and sexuality as tools through which to theorise and culturally produce alternatives to heteropatriarchy, and here Mendoza rewrites the conditions of heteropatriarchal intimacy, specifically the intimacies marked as 'private' for the individual. Through a critical analysis of imperial discourses that circulated between the metropole (the US) and the colonial archipelago (the Philippines) between 1899 and 1913, Mendoza reveals that individual fantasies are never devoid of the social and shows how fantasies are group-made and can protect and conceal an imagined ordering system. The archive includes laws, institutions, a court-martial scandal, local and major newspapers, political cartoons, a Broadway musical comedy and journals by US-sponsored Philippine students. In each of the book's five chapters, Mendoza unravels how the US state managed and imagined Philippine bodies in its post-war construction of US empire.

Mendoza's interdisciplinary work is an intervention in the fields of gender studies, critical race studies, US imperial studies and critical ethnic studies, because he disrupts the ways in which we imagine subjectivity for Filipinos, foregrounding US imperial history as a necessary analytic to the study of the Philippines and 'Filipinos'. Switching between the subject terms of 'Filipino', 'Filipino American' and the 'Philippine subject', Mendoza purposely makes these often disavowed distinctions in Filipino Studies in order to remain specific to the historical moments and tensions of post-war empire that attempted to create social identities contingent with nation-building

projects of the US and the Philippines. Mendoza's work brilliantly displaces the notion that the United States invented ideas about disciplining racialised and sexualised subjects. Mendoza disrupts conventional studies on race, nation and empire by decentering the US and instead shows how the Philippines and its 'little brown brothers' became primary sites to deploy a colonising project to uphold and construct ideals about appropriate heterosexuality and white male citizenship.

Mendoza examines 'events' throughout the book, and defines events to be the state-sanctioning racialising policies that produced socially acceptable sex and sexuality constructed against and with the construction of 'the homosexual'. These events sharpened US racial ordering to craft biopolitical techniques in aims of regulating intimacy and managing empire in the Philippines and within the metropole itself. During the first decade of US occupation in the Philippines, Mendoza finds that there were no clear regulatory measures of same-sex erotic acts. Instead, loosely defining and informally policing acts of 'sodomy' was a way to regulate acts rendered 'deviant' and 'criminal' that were considered threatening to the US social order and also constitutively helped produced the figure of 'the vagrant' in the Philippines.

The US State defined deviant acts that 'needed' to be controlled, policed, regulated and disciplined as non-normative sexualised behaviours and described such behaviours as vagrancy, indecency, drunkenness and what was publicly assumed as 'corruption of youth'. Actors involved in so-called deviant acts became figured as vagrants, moulded and embodied as any individual involved in public unsafe, immoral or abnormal activity. For example, the US State charged Philippine citizen Pablo Trinidad with 'sodomy', but Mendoza's close reading of Trinidad's charges reveals that the term 'sodomy' was interchanged with the word 'vagrancy' to punish Trinidad. Withstanding the convolution of terms and what behaviours were punishable by US law, the figure of the vagrant emerged to criminalise acts of sodomy and the Philippine body. US colonial military administrators' collective fantasies about Philippine natives deemed Philippine natives' behaviours as 'abnormal' and 'immoral' and became the justifying measure to regulate, discipline and civilise the 'unruly' Philippine subject and the Philippines itself. The US reasoned that the Philippines needed US tutelage to establish national orderliness in the archipelago and in the 'uncivilised' Pacific.

One particular event stands out in the regulation of appropriate intimacy. Mendoza reviews, in Chapter 2, the case of *United States v. Boss Reese* (1911) and exposes US refusal to acknowledge and admit that US high-ranking official Captain Boss Reese committed 'crime-worthy' sodomy in the colonial archipelago. US Captain Boss Reese denied engaging in acts of sodomy with Philippine soldiers. In the cultural context of the time, 'sodomy' was synonymous with rape because the US state ignored testimonies of Philippine soldiers, reducing Philippine soldiers to silence and dismissing enlisted colonial officials from the military for speaking about their intimate sexual encounters. Mendoza examines the private correspondence letters between high-level colonial officials and unfolds an 'impossible' truth: that such 'perverse' crimes were committed by US Captain Boss Reese against Philippine soldiers. The letters expose the 'hyper-masculine, misogynistic domain of the military imaginary' (p. 67) in US captains' refusal to believe that such a 'heinous' act could be committed by any of 'their own'. Mendoza traces how this kind of 'fantasmatic' refusal—the imagined impossibility of an elite US governmental official—worked to protect Reese from heavy punishment by the US State at the cost, dismissal, invalidation and silencing of Philippine soldiers. The US declared that it was necessary to avoid 'spoiling

the empire's self-image' and that the US must evade any contaminating idea or opinion that could demoralise or contest the US State's reputation and supremacy (p. 69).

In addition, Mendoza uncovers political cartoons as 'events' published in US and Philippine newspapers. The portrayed imagined savagery of the Philippine subject—usually naked or mostly unclothed, uncivilised, in blackface and inferior to US rule—exhibited the paternalistic ways of the US State with Philippine subjects. The dissemination and reach of these political cartoons produced a particular totalising knowledge about the Philippine subject, which in effect materialised in the social through regulative state policies.

In contrast to the political cartoons, Mendoza analyses the play *The Sultan of Sulu*, published in 1903, in which Midwestern author George Ade critiques US imperial racial-sexual governance. Ade uses humour to criticise the 'pathological proliferation' (p. 135) of what the US deemed 'normal'. Although Ade is critical of the United States' violent political programming in racialising the Philippine subject, Ade also haphazardly contributes to the imperial project by reproducing an excessively sexualised and racialised subject. It is within these knowledge-producing conventions that the inferior noncitizen US 'national' is invented and recreated in much the same way that the US metro state-form became real through knowledge-producing metroimperial projects.

Mendoza provides another way to examine closely the US nation-building project by studying Philippine subjects' sponsored study to the United States. 'Pensionados'—Philippine students supported by the US to study in the metropole—published political letters in university newspapers to respond to US fantasies about Philippine subjects. Pensionados undertook efforts to manage their own sexual and racial identities. Analysing university print culture, Mendoza shows how pensionados negotiated their racial-sexual governance in everyday life while simultaneously employing the technologies of race to prove their emergent 'civilised' status and the readiness of the Philippine 'nation' for sovereignty. Pensionados engaged in a politics of recognition and reproduced and reinforced regulatory gender and sexual norms, which in turn reinscribed their own raciality as 'Filipinos'.

Overall, *Metroimperial Intimacies* is a much-needed theorisation into the complex ways in which race, gender and sexuality constitutively configure through US empire transnationally. Mendoza not only boldly provides a radical reading into past cultural productions to offer us a theory of colonial normativity, but Mendoza also provides a historicist model of how other scholars can trace the biopolitical work of racial and sexual governance of non-white queer bodies. Connecting modes of knowledge production reveals how nation states and subjects govern bodies, identities, figures and reproduce empire today. Mendoza underscores the conditions and premises for persistent white supremacist, settler-colonial expansion in relation to racialised and sexualised subjects. Scholars, students, as well as 'Filipinos' who read, use and build upon Mendoza's examination will find, nuance and rewrite the contexts of intimacy and subjection that are in tension with each other as much as they constitute one another. From Mendoza we learn how

the imaginary provides blueprints for knowledge-producing technology and alternative lifeways that transcend temporal spaces and juridical moments through, across and between spaces of the intimate.

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