

2003

Findings of a Recent Inquiry into the Background and Causes of a Dissociative Identity Disorder in the Case of an American Subjust of Filipino Descent

Eugenio D. Matibag

Iowa State University, ematibag@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/language_pubs



Part of the [Asian American Studies Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/language_pubs/82. For information on how to cite this item, please visit <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html>.

This Creative Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in World Languages and Cultures Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Findings of a Recent Inquiry into the Background and Causes of a Dissociative Identity Disorder in the Case of an American Subject of Filipino Descent

Abstract

You who will be thrown one fine day into this kindergarten in Southern California You, the only child in your class with this brown skin Bat nose big ears slitted eyes wide feet and black black hair Who will ask why you feel so short and skinny dark and bony foreign strange and other, And later, your head on your mother's lap, asking--Why am I different, mom? You who will wear the clothespin on your nose and Scotch tape on your ears and keep out of the sun speaking only English watching Beaver and wondering whatever happened to the Cleavers' colored neighbors You who will become an insurgent native colonial subject little brown brother or science project or but always the childlike primitive in need of civilizing

Keywords

Asian American Studies

Disciplines

Asian American Studies | Poetry

Comments

This is a poem from *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images* (2003): 318. Posted with permission.

FINDINGS OF A RECENT INQUIRY INTO THE BACKGROUND AND CAUSES OF A DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER IN THE CASE OF AN AMERICAN SUBJECT OF FILIPINO DESCENT

"and in place of memory I substituted inquiry."

—George Lamming, *THE PLEASURES OF EXILE*

You who will be thrown one fine day into this kindergarten in Southern California

You, the only child in your class with this brown skin flat nose big ears slit-
ted eyes wide feet and black black hair

Who will ask why you feel so short and skinny dark and bony foreign strange
and other,

And later, your head on your mother's lap, asking—Why am I different,
mom?

You who will wear the clothespin on your nose and Scotch tape on your
ears and keep out of the sun speaking only English watching Beaver and
wondering whatever happened to the Cleavers' colored neighbors

You who will become an insurgent native colonial subject little brown brother
or science project or but always the childlike primitive in need of civilizing

(And so Mr. Gamboa in 7th grade woodshop tells you lead the class but the
boys all refuse call you chink say it over and over while teacher cuts boards on
the saw/the tv news shows painted jeepneys, Malacañang Palace, Imelda's
shoes/the immigration official says raise your right hand to solemnly swear
to defend the constitution and welcome to America.) And so one fine day
you inquire into the origins, the garrisons, the Counter-Reformation, the
clerics, caciques, cronies, unemployment, and all the other reasons your par-
ents left, why you hesitate to return

And you inquire into Magellan's discovery, Legaspi's conquest, the
Acapulco-Manila galleon carrying pearls silks spices damasks porcelains fans
spices and all the Chinoiserie making you Asian Hispanic American
(Nuestra Señora de Buena Esperanza, bless all the fishers and farmers of St.
Malo, all boat jumpers and claim jumpers of Manila Town, all the Pinoys of
Barataria Bay)

And remember 1898 / remember \$20 million buys an Asian archipelago/remember 250,000 Filipinos killed/memento mori/remember what the Philippines exports/nannies and nurses and oil riggers and cabin boys and croupiers/leave the islands see the world send back money and balikbayan boxes and even sing on Broadway!

And imagine the occupation, the prison camps, executions, comfort women, Hukbalahap, the Death March from Bataan and the American General who returned and the Parity Amendment opening wide the doors to U.S. bases nuclear arms investments rock and roll condensed milk movies and work for ten thousand prostitutes orbiting the naval bases like so many moons 'round the planet.

And denounce the military bases and multinationals and act real tough like a San Miguel-guzzling, cock-fighting, balut-eating/Katipunero or Moro insurgent/striking farmworker

(But a poor boy growing up in Tugtug took a bus ride to Manila where they're enlisting Filipinos and then it's bunks and mess halls and drills and it's yes sir and no sir and start in the kitchen and on to / a medical student from Santo Tomás postponed everything to fall in love with a navy man and emigrate to the U.S./and a young Fil-Am married an Italian girl and learned to alternate pasta and pancit on a weekly basis)

You who will bring two mestizo children into the world whose Asian American identity won't make it to the end of this generation You who will merge into the ten million or four percent category of Americans called Asian American

You who will seek your ethnic identity and make good some childhood promise, purchasing Tagalog tapes and dutifully repeating—

Ano sa palagay mo?

Ano ang pangalan mo?

Naiintindihan mo ba?

Nakapunta ka na ba sa Amerika ikaw?

—EUGENIO MATIBAG