



Aesthetics and Empire: The Sense of Feminine Beauty in the Making of the US Imperial Archipelago

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Submitted: 23 July 2013; Accepted: 9 September 2013

ABSTRACT: This article examines the “sense of beauty” in the United States imperial archipelago, composed of the island territories of Cuba, Hawai’i, Philippines, and Puerto Rico, all acquired in 1898. The theoretical connection among these two elements –aesthetics and empire– is provided by a revision of the concepts “economy of colonial desire” and “complex of visibility.” This paper analyzes the most advanced visual technology of the late nineteenth century: the mass-produced, printed photograph. In particular, it focuses upon the representations of feminine beauty as found in the illustrated “new-possession” books which described recent island acquisitions of the United States. The connections between aesthetics and the forms of governance in each territory will also be elucidated.

KEYWORDS: visibility; colonial desire; photography; Archipelagic studies; Cuba; Hawai’i; Philippines; Puerto Rico

Citation / Cómo citar este artículo: Thompson, Lanny (2013) “Aesthetics and Empire: The Sense of Feminine Beauty in the Making of the US Imperial Archipelago”. *Culture & History Digital Journal* 2(2): e027. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2013.027>

RESUMEN: *Estética e Imperio. El sentido de belleza femenina en la construcción del archipiélago imperial estadounidense.*.- Este artículo examina el “sentido de belleza” en el archipiélago imperial estadounidense, compuesto de los territorios isleños de Cuba, Hawai’i, Filipinas y Puerto Rico, todos adquiridos en 1898. La conexión teórica entre estos dos elementos –estética e imperio– se establece mediante una revisión de los conceptos de “economía de deseo colonial” y el “complejo de visibilidad”. Este artículo analiza la tecnología visual más avanzada del siglo diecinueve tardío: la fotografía impresa. En particular, se enfoca en las representaciones de belleza femenina en los libros ilustrados de las “nuevas posesiones” los cuales describían las adquisiciones recientes de los Estados Unidos. También, se dilucidarán las conexiones entre estética y las formas de gobernanza en cada territorio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Visibilidad; Deseo colonial; Fotografía; Estudios archipelágicos; Cuba; Hawái; Filipinas; Puerto Rico

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“Civilized women are very much alike the world over in their refining and elevating influence. They are poetic by instinct and are always looking for the beautiful and the good.” (Olivares, in Bryan, 1899: 589)

INTRODUCTION

What do aesthetics have to do with empire? We are concerned here, not with abstract philosophical

aesthetics, rather with a more mundane sense of feminine beauty as a means of making the US island empire in the wake of the Spanish-American War of 1898. The theoretical connection among these two elements –aesthetics and empire– will be provided, in the present exposition, by the concepts “economy of colonial desire” and “complex of visibility.” This terminology –sense of beauty, colonial desire, and visibility– links three theoretical perspectives of different origin. First, George Santayana, a turn-of-the-century philosopher, provides us with a practical approach to aesthetics –a sense of beauty– that is contemporary with the historical period of US imperial expansion. Second, Revathi Krishnaswamy, writing in the late twentieth century, sheds light upon the connections between beauty and colonial desire by showing how the will to possess territories was expressed in terms of gendered narrative tropes. Finally, Nicholas Mirzoeff, a professor of media studies and the most recent of our theoretical resources, helps us to understand images, not merely as visual culture, but rather as a hegemonic complex that combines observation, representations, and the imaginary to produce authority as a crucial support to material dominion. This study will turn its attention to the most advanced visual technology of the late nineteenth century: the mass-produced, printed photograph. In particular, I will focus upon the considerations of feminine beauty as found in the illustrated books that described recent island acquisitions of the United States: Cuba, Hawai‘i, Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

SENSE OF BEAUTY, COLONIAL DESIRE, VISUALITY

A Harvard professor of Spanish parentage and Boston upbringing, George Santayana was a respected philosopher who published, in 1896, the highly regarded *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. For Santayana, beauty was understood as pleasure objectified: “Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing” (Santayana, 1896: 49). The sense of beauty did not reside in the thing itself, it was not objective, rather it was objectified: the result of a mental process through which sensation was understood as a quality of the object. Furthermore, a sense of beauty was a part of all endeavors of human existence and not only related to the formal aesthetics of the fine arts of painting and sculpture. According to Danto (1988: xxv–xxvi), Santayana’s notion of an aesthetic “sense” referred to a “disposition to respond to rather than a more passive disposition to receive sensations.” It was unlike the five natural senses in that it referred to an active engagement with and appreciation of the world. The use of the term “sense” was somewhat ironic since aesthetics was not a natural capacity, rather a willful activity

related to morals. In Santayana’s (1896: 49) terms, beauty was “volitional and appreciative” and aesthetics was an everyday practice.

For Santayana (1896: 25, 49), aesthetics and ethics were both concerned with “value,” albeit differently. On the one hand, beauty was a “positive value” connected to the appreciation of what was right and good in the world. On the other hand, ethics was concerned more specifically with negative values, principally the avoidance or denouncement of bad or evil deeds. Although he distinguished between aesthetics, with its emphasis on beauty, and the normative concerns of ethics, both were closely related. Indeed, Santayana would later argue that there was “little room for a special discipline called ‘aesthetics’” in moral philosophy (cited in Danto, 1988: xviii). Regarding the “volitional and appreciative nature of beauty,” Santayana had little to say about will and desire, except to repeat in agreement with Spinoza that “we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it” (Santayana, 1896: 25). Danto (1988: xxvi) observed that since Santayana’s sense of beauty referred to a “disposition to respond” it was “more like sexual than a merely perceptual way of relating to the world.” This observation will have a particular relevance when, in a later section of this article, I shall analyze a highly erotized poem written by Santayana in support of US imperial expansion.

Santayana’s aesthetics differed from both the classical philosophical perspective of Immanuel Kant and the historical perspective of Umberto Eco, whose *History of Beauty* has served as an inspiration for this special journal issue. According to Eco (2004: 294), Kant understood beauty as “disinterested pleasure, universality without concept, and regularity without law.” Beauty was unlinked from desire and related to the perception of a perfect “rule unto itself” that might be universally recognized. In contrast, Eco (2004: 10–12) focused his own inquiry upon those art objects which particular cultures in distinct historical epochs have recognized as “pleasing to contemplate,” as evidenced by what artists, poets, and novelists created, commented, and elucidated. Thus, Santayana’s “sense of beauty” was doubly distant from the aesthetics of Umberto Eco. Whereas Eco traced the shifting standards of aesthetics and artistic style in Western history, Santayana distanced his inquiry from the cultural and historical dimensions of beauty in favor of mental processes. Whereas Eco studied only fine art, Santayana situated beauty in the realm of everyday, practical appreciation of any object or idea, from starry skies to democracy. Santayana’s domain of aesthetics, then, lay between the transcendently universal and the historical, between the disinterested and the culturally subjective, somewhere between Kant and Eco.

Thus, for Santayana, the sense of beauty is quotidian and objectifying, it is an active engagement

with the world and reflects volition and desire. Beauty provokes, not so much passive, disinterested admiration, but rather an interpolation to respond. His book was published two years before the Spanish-American War and it did not directly bear upon issues of civilization and empire. However illuminating his aesthetics may be, the question we have posed—the connection between aesthetics and empire—cannot be answered directly by Santayana because his perspective is explicitly psychological and individual, neither historical nor cultural. Instead, we turn now to Krishnaswamy who argued that the “economy of colonial desire” was based upon the idea that feminine beauty was a marker of civilization and the virtuous, elegant woman was its most widely diffused symbol. However, her interest was not aesthetics, rather “effeminism,” defined as the “racialized construction of ‘femininity-in-masculinity’ as a pathological condition” (Krishnaswamy, 1998: 19). In particular, she argued that British colonizers attributed effeminate and unmanly qualities to Indian men as a means to implement and justify colonial rule. A part of this “economy” was to suggest that the miserable treatment of Indian women (e.g. *sati*, child brides) was indicative of the poor state of Indian manhood and culture. In contrast, dignified and virtuous British women were the embodiment of the advanced civilization of the colonizing power. In this way, women became central signifiers of cultural superiority of the British and of the inferiority of native men. A series of narrative tropes justified the civilizing mission. The trope of chivalry was central to the idea that British men could uplift the Indian population, in part, through the betterment of the condition of women (cf. Spivak, 1988). The trope of maternal, domestic virtue empowered British women to educate Indian women and serve as example. The trope of native rapists justified violent colonial reprisals in the case of native insurgency.

In this “economy” of gendered colonial relations, “women are the circuitry through which colonial desire flows, the conduit through which collusions and collisions between colonizing and colonized men are conducted” (Krishnaswamy, 1998: 47). In other words, the economy of colonial desire expressed the dynamic political transactions between colonizing and colonized men. Narrative tropes about women were but surrogates for the description of the relative attributes of these men. Indeed, Krishnaswamy suggested, but did not explicitly state, a general equation: the more degraded the women, the more savage the men; and likewise, the more exalted the women, the more civilized the men. The realm of colonial desire occupied all of those spaces where civilized men were obligated to both protect civilized women and uplift or save degraded colonized women. The inferiority of colonized men was marked either by their oppression of their own women or, in the worst

scenario, by their sexual assaults on civilized women. Krishnaswamy’s general point was that the portrayal of the condition of women was a way of building the unequal political relationships among men. Moreover, she suggested, but did not elucidate, that these portrayals of women expressed an imperial sense of beauty.

However, the Krishnaswamy’s description of the economy of colonial desire overlooked two very important elements in the dynamic and varied connection between aesthetics and empire. First, her notion of colonial desire, surprisingly, did not explicitly include the aesthetics of eroticizing colonized women, although Alloula (1986) had previously analyzed the process in detail and demonstrated its importance in colonial photography. Likewise, in the US imperial archipelago it was evident that eroticization was a fundamental, distinctive element, as we shall see. Second, Krishnaswamy completely ignored the element of ugliness in the economy of colonial desire. Again, Umberto Eco (2007) is instructive; he argued that ugliness is relative, like beauty, to various historical periods and cultures and, likewise, has occupied an important place within fine arts of the West. Unlike beauty, however, ugliness does not lend itself to Kantian disinterested contemplation; rather it provokes reaction. Eco (2007: 8–19) concluded that ugliness could be conceptualized in three dimensions. First, “ugliness in itself” was a visceral reaction of disgust and contempt. Second, “formal ugliness” referred to the more analytical reaction to a lack of balance, proportion, or organic relationship. Finally, Eco defined the object of his study as the “artistic portrayal” of the first and second dimensions. Likewise, we shall show that the imperial sense of beauty was often offended by its opposite, ugliness, which provoked visceral reactions of disgust, often explained in more analytical terms, and was also subject to textual or photographic portrayal. This dynamic of reaction-analysis-portrayal, as we shall see, was crucial to domination of the Philippines.

In the juncture of aesthetics and empire, visual representations came into play. Visuality, as conceptualized by Mirzoeff, is a “complex” composed of the intersections of information and imagination in the creation of space, both physical and psychic. Visuality is not simply visual culture, rather a discourse in the Foucauldian sense; a series of operations that creates material effects. In the imperial complex of visuality, civilization was counterposed to the primitive and, as we have seen above, this contrast was often expressed in gendered terms. The authority of the empire was based upon a notion of progress; it “understood history to be arranged within and across time, meaning that the ‘civilized’ were at the leading edge of time, while their ‘primitive’ counterparts, although alive in the same moment, were understood as living in the past” (Mirzoeff, 2011: 196).

Mirzoeff's concept of visuality was a reworking of Foucault's (1973) concept of the "gaze" which the latter first introduced in his early work on the clinic. For Foucault, a gaze was a way of seeing objects and a way of speaking about them; it established a field of visibility and a mode of enunciation. The medical gaze was a way of looking and acting upon bodies. A gaze was, to use a later term, a *dispositif*, a social apparatus which created knowledge, established relationships of power, and defined subjects (Deleuze, 1991). Here we are interested specifically in imperial visuality, the ways in which its gaze identified and described objects, thereby creating power and subjects which were subsequently interpolated. Mirzoeff (2011: 1–10) described imperial visuality as the combination of three basic operations: classifying (categorization), separating (hierarchical segregation), and aestheticizing (normalization). The basic idea was that visuality produced an order of things as right and aesthetic, as normal and natural. However, an explicit discussion of the sense of beauty in the process of as normalization of empire is notably absent in the formulation of imperial visuality. This is problematic precisely because it is hard to even imagine civilization as normal and right without a corresponding sense of beauty. And yet, Mirzoeff did not explicitly connect a sense of beauty with civilization, in spite of his frequent references to aesthetics. Moreover, he missed entirely the importance of gendered aesthetics as fundamental to the elaboration of the hierarchies of civilization. This is problematic precisely because, as we have seen, feminine beauty was a criterion of civilization. In addition, as we shall see, its counterpart, ugliness or degradation, was associated with uncivilized peoples, which were racialized and subjected to moral reprobation.

In sum, aesthetics was related to empire precisely because the economy of colonial desire and the complex of visuality deployed a sense of beauty in the depiction, justification, and implementation of concrete forms of colonial rule. A sense of ugliness was sometimes a necessary counterpoint. The sense of beauty, as Santayana defined it, expressed values, articulated volition, and resulted in the objectification of pleasure. Although Santayana stayed consistently within the mental realm of the individual's consciousness, these same elements –values, volition, objectification– were also constituted at the level of collective consciousness, or more precisely, at the level of discourses which produced effects of imperial rule, including political ones. In the following sections I will show that imperial aesthetics (including both beauty and ugliness) classified, ordered, and normalized the colonies. Ultimately these aesthetics had historical effects and were not merely valuative or attitudinal epiphenomena. The economy of colonial desire was, in a very concrete sense, a political transaction among men and

visuality produced real effects of domination. Let us turn, first, to the new-possession books, which were elaborately illustrated with photographs and replete with observations regarding feminine beauty, civilization, and the emerging US island empire. Second, we shall undertake a comparative analysis of the deployment of aesthetics in these illustrated travelogues describing the inhabitants of Cuba, Hawai'i, Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Finally, we shall return to Santayana who, although he did not address empire in his aesthetics, later wrote a poem in support of the US colonial adventure.

BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

Beginning in 1898, dozens of popular travelogue books began to construct a new visual geography that grouped together the disparate islands of Cuba, Hawai'i, Philippines, and Puerto Rico, which had suddenly become "our new possessions" (Halstead, 1898; White, 1898) or "our islands" (Bryan, 1899) in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. The new-possession books used the most recent advances in photography and publishing. First, the mobility of photographic equipment had increased during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. By 1898, most photographers were using dry-plate negatives in large eight-by-ten-inch box cameras mounted on tripods. The dry-plate negative, which George Eastman had marketed in the United States since 1880, eliminated the obstacle of portable field darkrooms, which were necessary with wet-plate negatives. However, the cameras still were unwieldy and did not permit action shots, so newspapers continued to rely on artists and engravers for illustrations of war scenes. The smaller Kodak box camera, equipped with roll film, had been available since 1898. It was much more manageable than the larger dry-plate box camera, but it produced lower-quality prints and its design required that the whole camera be sent in to develop the exposed film (Lewinski, 1978: 46–52).

Second, the mass reproduction of photographs in newspapers and books became possible in the 1890s with the invention of the half-tone screen, which broke up the photograph into a grid of tiny dots that allowed for a gradation of tone on the printing plate (Lenman, 2005: 267). By 1900, photographs were a regular feature of the period's books, newspapers, magazines, and official reports. As soon as the Spanish-American war was over, commercial and official photographers turned their attention to the new imperial possessions, their inhabitants, and the activities of imperial administrators. Dozens of travelogue books, lavishly illustrated with photographs, were produced for public consumption. These books were, to a large extent, vehicles of compilation and divulgation of official information, although most also included original

material, especially photographs and reportage. Photographs were also included in many official reports concerning the new possessions. The population censuses, undertaken in Puerto Rico and Cuba in 1899 and in the Philippines in 1902, were all illustrated extensively with photographs. The reports of the commissioners to Puerto Rico and the Philippines also included photographs. Despite a difference of style, the popular publications and the official reports exhibited a discursive continuity. On the one hand, popular publications often utilized official publications, while, on the other hand, imperial officials contributed articles and chapters to the popular publications.

Among the most impressive new-possession publications was a pair of elaborately produced multivolume works that are still of special interest today due to their exceptional quality, comprehensive scope, and authoritative perspective. The first of these was the enormously popular *Our Islands and Their People*, edited by William S. Bryan, begun in 1899 and reprinted in two oversized volumes in 1902. The first edition sold four hundred thousand copies and, in 1905, the publisher issued another reprint. It comprised more than twelve hundred black-and-white photographs, nineteen hand-colored photographs, and color maps of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, and the Philippines. The famous Civil War veteran General Joseph Wheeler, who had seen active service in both Cuba and the Philippines, wrote the preface. José de Olivares, a war correspondent from California, wrote the text. Both the text and the photographs attest that Olivares traveled widely with photographer Walter Townsend throughout the islands, although the exact itinerary of the pair is unknown. As a result, the textual descriptions and the photographs were closely connected, and the volumes included long explanatory captions for the photographs. During his travels, Olivares interviewed journalists, soldiers and officers, imperial administrators, and local elites. In addition, he consulted and cited principal published works, official reports, and recent congressional legislation.

The second of these, issued in 1901 and reprinted in 1907, was the multivolume *The New America and the Far East*, edited by George Waldo Browne, which included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, and the Philippines, as well as Japan and China. The volumes contained around twelve hundred photogravures, colored plates, engravings, and maps. The authors of these volumes were among the most influential men in overseas policy and imperial administration: Leonard Wood (military governor of Cuba, 1899–1902); Joseph Wheeler (major general, US Army, who served in Cuba and the Philippines); Henry Cabot Lodge (US senator, 1893–1924); Charles Allen (civil governor of Puerto Rico, 1900–1902); and John D. Long (secretary of the navy, 1897–1902).

These new-possession books presented an evaluation of the advantages of the various islands for the United States, emphasizing their economic opportunities and their geopolitical importance. At first glance, the observations regarding the inhabitants of the islands might seem almost secondary, superficial, inaccurate, and even extravagant. It would seem as if the publishers went out of their way to portray the peoples in the most exotic way imaginable. However, these representations were not merely ideological distortions or misrepresentations of a fundamental reality. They were part of the imperial discourse that sought to define the inhabitants of Cuba, Hawai'i, Philippines, and Puerto Rico as subject peoples and to establish new political, economic, and cultural relations with the United States. The photographic images and textual descriptions often focused upon the women of the islands. Indeed, the portrayal of women, in particular their relative attractiveness, was a principal metaphor for describing the islands. Women became photographic objects which stood for the islands and their comparative features. When these metaphorical images were inserted into narratives of the past, present, and future of the islands they served to devise and justify particular strategies of government (Thompson, 2010: 31–37). Let us turn now to the deployment of visibility—classification, hierarchical segregation, and naturalization—in the portrayal of feminine beauty of the islands.

AMERICAN CHIVALRY, CUBAN VIRTUES

Several authors have argued that the trope of chivalry was an important motivator in the call to war against Spain in the United States, ostensibly in support of Cuban independence. In this scenario, the chivalrous Uncle Sam was obliged to defend Cuba, the damsel in stress, from Spain, the decrepit old man of Europe (Kaplan, 2002; Hoganson, 1998; Bederman, 1995). After the war, however, a very popular image (both textual and photographic) was the Cuban woman ensconced in her home, often standing in a window covered by bars. Townsend, the photographer for *Our Islands and Their People*, elaborated upon this idea and produced the unique composition in Figure 1. In his photograph, a Cuban patriot who lost an arm in battle with the Spanish on the outskirts of Cardenas protected the honor of his sister, secluded behind the casement bars of her window. The caption (in Bryan, 1899: 155) read: “The young Cuban leaning against the barred casement of his sister’s apartment was formerly a Lieutenant in the patriot army, and lost his arm in one of the battles in the outskirts of his native town.” This caption signaled various elements of discursive importance. The young man was an officer in a patriot army. This suggested his elite social status and his dedicated participation in a legitimate army of



FIGURE 1. "A Pretty Cardenas Senorita and her Battle-Scarred Brother". Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 155.

national liberation. He had made sacrifices for the cause of Cuban liberty. Finally, he was no longer in the army, so he was ready to serve, perhaps, in civilian capacity in the provisional government. He had earned the right to govern.

This combination of brave men and virtuous women marked many descriptions of Cuba. A concise example was provided by the geologist Robert Hill, who published a description of Cuba in the May 1898 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. In his discussion of Cubans, he wrote the following:

Under the influence of their surroundings, they have developed into a gentle, industrious, and normally peaceable race, not to be judged by the combativeness which they have developed under a tyranny such as had never been imposed upon any other people. The better class . . . are certainly the finest, the most valiant, and most independent men of the island, while the women have the highest type of beauty. It is their boast that no Cuban woman has ever become a prostitute, and crime is certainly unknown to them. (Hill, 1898: 229)

In this article, Hill (1898: 229–230) was emphatic in his criticism of "Spanish misrule" and sympathetic in his support for the struggle for "Cuba

Libre." His description of Cubans emphasized that although they were of "Spanish blood," they were an entirely "different class" of people, possessing "strong traits of civilized character." They were learned professionals in Cuba and in the various countries to which they had been forced to migrate, including the United States. The women were beautiful, virtuous, and they had supported their men in the cause for Cuban independence. These men and women formed the white elite of the country and were deemed capable of self-government.

The "black and colored population," who had also fought for independence, was "manly" and constituted a "superior class of mulattoes." Nevertheless, the mere use of racial terminology such as "Negro," "black," and "mulatto" sowed doubt regarding their ability to govern. Indeed, the editors of the *National Geographic Magazine* (1900) were relieved to report the "gratifying" results of the Cuban census of 1899: the native-born white population was much larger than expected. This guaranteed that Cuba would not become a "second Haiti" (Hill, 1898: 229–230). The white elite was destined to lead Cuba, albeit with the necessary guidance from the United States, precisely because the racial composition of Cuba raised some doubts regarding self-government.

These short pieces in the *National Geographic Magazine* (1900; Hill, 1898) articulated the basic elements of the narrative: the men, especially those of the white elite, were heroic in their struggle against Spanish misrule and oppression and their women were virtuous companions. Even Murat Halstead, one of the most vocal expansionists and supporters of the military adventures in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, granted the role of protagonist to the Cuban leadership. He included in his book, *A History of American Expansion* (1898), a composite portrait of the "Last Revolutionists of Spanish-America": Antonio Maceo, José Martí, Máximo Gómez, and Calixto García (Figure 2). This portrait was adorned with the Cuban flag, machetes, and palm fronds, which symbolized the nation, its poorly equipped armed revolt, and its tropical geography, respectively. The composite portrait was of the same style and size used to portray the Spanish and US protagonists of the imperial wars, including portraits of naval and army heroes, military governors and leaders. In contrast, the author included only a small inset photograph of Emilio Aguinaldo in his volume and completely excluded any photographs of Puerto Rican political leaders or the Hawaiian royalty (Halstead, 1898: 362, 469, 487, 703). For Halstead, the important protagonists in this overseas expansion were the Cubans, who needed help in their valiant struggle; the Spanish, who were oppressing them; the victorious armed forces (army and navy) of the United States; and the dedicated imperial administrators who subsequently followed.

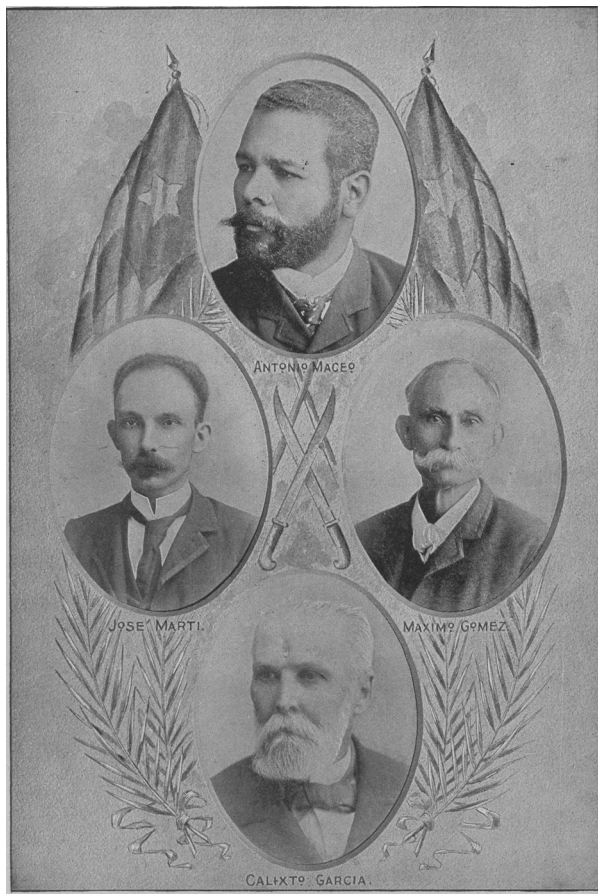


FIGURE 2. "Last Revolutionists of Spanish-America". Halstead, Murat (1898) *Our New Possessions: Natural Riches, Industrial Resources of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, the Ladrones, and the Philippine Islands*. The Dominion Company, Chicago, p. 362.

The narrative that justified the intervention of the United States in the Cuban revolution against Spain had been the damsel in distress. Immediately following the end of the war, Cuban women were found to be not only beautiful, but also virtuous and patriotic. They stood alongside their brave, protective menfolk, who had fought honorably for their independence against the Spanish and earned the right to rule. Upon the conclusion of the war, the virtuous women of Cuba retired to the domestic sphere under the authority of their menfolk. The political transaction, here expressed as gendered, rhetorical figures, was clear: the men of Cuba would be left in charge of their women, but would not be left entirely to their own devices. The United States recognized the legitimacy of the nationalist elite but had only limited confidence in its capacity. The United States would help set up a formally independent government but would establish the legal right of direct intervention in Cuban affairs. For all practical purposes, it treated the country as a protectorate (Thompson, 2010).

PRETTY PUERTO RICO

The beautiful, aristocratic women of Puerto Rico, according to Olivares (in Bryan, 1899: 384), represented the best of Spanish civilization as it was a century ago: "The women of the aristocratic class of Porto Rico represent the higher and better civilization of Spain as it existed a hundred years ago. Born and reared in their secluded isle, they have neither receded nor advanced, but remain today just what their mothers were three generations ago. We can imagine the unique sensation that these beautiful exotics will produce when they visit their practical and matter-of-fact sisters of the great modern Republic." In these few sentences, the author contrasted two competing civilizations, both represented by women. On the one hand, Spanish civilization, in its island seclusion, had not progressed, but neither had it degenerated. It was an aristocratic civilization; its symbol was the beautiful, elegant, and refined woman. In the following photograph (Figure 3), the



FIGURE 3. "Pretty Spanish Girl of Mayaguez, Porto Rico". Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 322.

signs of civilization are evident: the studio portrait, the Roman column, the book, the elegant dress and jewelry. The caption of the photograph identified this woman as “a pretty Spanish girl.” On the other hand, American women represented the civilization of a great industrial republic. They were practical, straightforward, and modern. For Olivares, these “sisters,” the Spanish and the American, could not have been much more different.

One of the modern American sisters, Margherita Hamm (1899), also wrote an account of Puerto Rico. Her book was unique in its focus upon Puerto Rican women, their domestic life, and social activities. Like Olivares, she concluded that the modernization of Puerto Rico must include the transformation of feminine roles in accordance with the ideas of equality and progress. Puerto Rican women, she wrote, were not equal to men and were limited by their poor education, lack of professions, and exclusion from public life. Unlike Olivares, she did not describe upper-class women as “Spanish.” Instead, she described the women according to daily activities, class, and color. Her descriptions betrayed a fascination with the beauty of the complex palette of skin color among the women. She described upper-class women as slightly darker than the Spanish, but extremely beautiful:

Owing partly to nationality and partly to the climate the complexion of the Porto Ricans is a trifle darker than that of the Spaniard, Portuguese or Italian. Probably the admixture of red and black blood has something to do with it; but the fact remains that they show greater varieties of brunette skin than any other people in the New World. Beside the orange-yellow of the mulatto there is a curious red-orange which is very striking. When this is combined with the reddish hair of Spain it makes a color scheme which is picturesque and novel if not beautiful. Young girls of this red-orange tint present a startling appearance when attired in low-cut evening dress of white silk or of black silk and velvet. The coloring is so intense that an ordinary brunette seems a sallow gray by contrast, and a northern blonde to be suffering from anemia. Another type which is very beautiful has an oval face and Spanish features in the outline, but Carib in the delicacy; soft brown eyes, a warm olive skin, and Spanish red hair. The natives claim that this was the complexion of the celebrated beauty, Queen Isabella, and judging from the portraits which have come down of that great sovereign the comparison is borne out by the fact. The Moorish type is quite common, especially where there is a dash of African blood. This serves to make the eye darker, to give the corner a bluish tinge, and to change the pearly Spanish teeth into the whiter ivories of the Ethiop. To an outsider this Moorish type is lovelier than the so-called Spanish blonde, but the natives themselves seem to prefer the latter. (Hamm, 1899: 66–67)

Hamm’s shorter description of the popular classes in the market was similar in its detailed attention to the wide variations and “weird combinations” of skin and hair color: bronze, yellow, olive, black, copper, red, and white (Hamm, 1899: 117). Throughout these descriptions, the beauty of the women was linked, by means of the deployment of color, to the mixing of the races in two senses. First, pleasing combinations of color were found in the eyes, hair, and skin of individuals. Second, persons of different colors socialized in high society as well as in the common street markets. For Hamm, Puerto Rico was a place where white was not quite white, black was not entirely black, and strict segregation was unknown. Indeed, she was quick to point out that although many Puerto Ricans might “pass muster as whites,” if “all the mulattoes, quadroons, octo-rooms, quinteros and other mestizos were included with the blacks instead of the whites, the proportions would be changed and the blacks would have a handsome majority upon the island.” (Hamm, 1899: 65–66) Here, she referred to the dichotomous categories of black and white, which, from her point of view, were both deceiving and unappreciative given the vibrant colors of the women.

Other authors also signaled the beauty of the mixed-race Puerto Rican women. In 1898, White published a photograph of a “coloured [*sic*] belle of Puerto Rico” (Figure 4). She posed in the street, a sign that she was not from the elite, yet her dress and demeanor were strikingly elegant. The caption stressed the limits of race mixing and suggested some social segregation by color, but only within the upper class. However, the photographer focused upon this “higher type” of colored woman as the object of desire: “The mixture of African with Spanish blood is not found in all people of this island. The higher classes of white people hold themselves as strictly in their own society as in any other country. This attractive colored girl is of the higher type of that [colored] race.” (White, 1898: 357)

Puerto Rican women of the working classes frequently caught the attention of the authors, who emphasized both their mixed race and their industriousness. In the photograph in Figure 5, published in *Our Islands and Their People*, the “cigarette girl” was dark skinned and a wage worker. She was photographed on a common sidewalk, not in a studio or even the town square. The street scene and her occupation in the tobacco industry signaled her working-class background.

Other pictures in the same volume also focused on the occupations of women. A common theme was the washerwomen who did washing on the riverbank and dried their clothes on nearby fences, bushes, or grass. Figure 6 shows women coffee sorters in a small establishment in a town of the interior mountain range. The author went into considerable detail regarding the women’s attitude and



FIGURE 4. “A Coloured Belle of Puerto Rico”. White, Trumbull (1898) *Our New Possessions*. Adams, Boston, p. 357.

appearance, the labor process, wages, and the cost of living:

The sorting is done by women and girls, who receive less than 25 cents a day, but they appear to be satisfied with their lot and are happy and light-hearted. Bananas are cheap, and the cost of women’s clothing in this mild climate is a small matter. In fact, many of them are satisfied with a wardrobe but little more elaborate than the traditional costume worn by Eve. In every large Porto Rican factory you find women picking over the coffee grains and separating the good from the bad. In the smaller factories the picking is done sitting on the floor before a long box covered with cloth. In the larger ones, there are long tables cut up into little boxes by many partitions, and before each box a Porto Rican girl sits with a pile of green coffee from sunrise until sunset. Some of these brown-skinned maidens are quite pretty, with large, languishing black eyes and teeth of pearly whiteness. They laugh and sing as they work, and no doubt get as much enjoyment out of life as many of their fashionable and more fortunate sisters. (in Bryan, 1899: 325)

In spite of the alleged happiness and lightheartedness of these women workers, their facial expressions

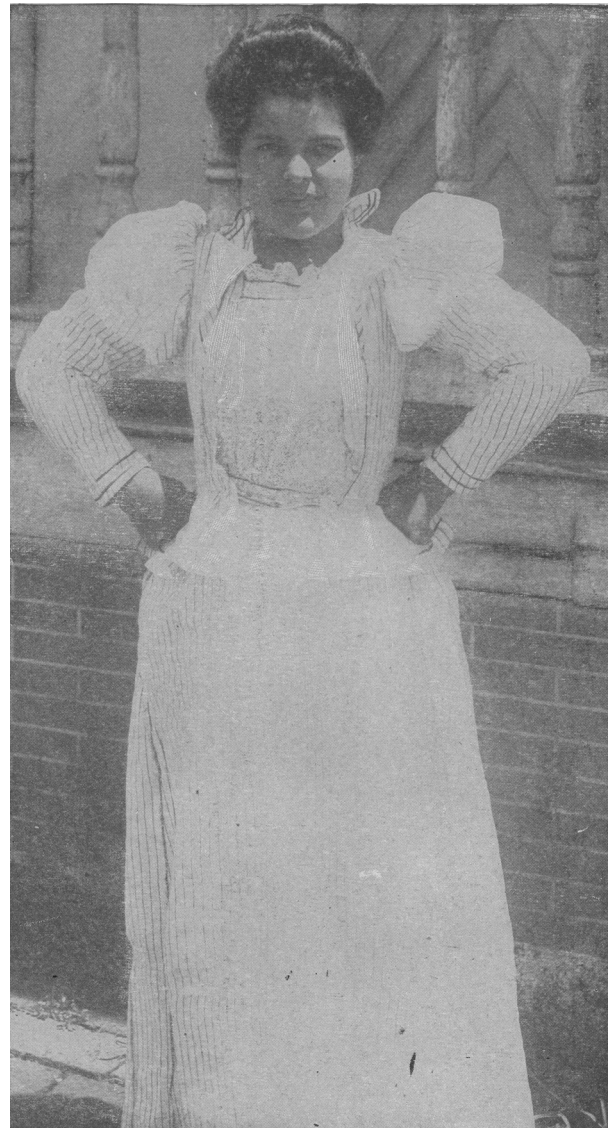


FIGURE 5. “A Porto Rican Cigarette Girl”. Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 316.

were serious and pensive. Given the somber tone of the photograph, it would have required considerable effort to imagine these women laughing and singing as they worked. The text offered a brief description of the process of coffee sorting that the photograph corroborates. It should be noted, however, that the book included this photograph of smaller, rather than one of the larger workshops. In the smaller workshops, as shown, the women sat on the floor, while in the larger ones they stood or sat before long tables. Sitting or squatting on the ground gave the impression of inefficient, pre-industrial procedures and suggested backward culture in general. The text also assured the reader that the sorters



FIGURE 6. "Girls Assorting Coffee at Yauco, Porto Rico". Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 362.

were quite diligent in their labor and accepted very low remuneration for a full day's work. The interaction between the text and the photograph had a

promising if somewhat unstable affect: these women were happy, attractive, and sensual; had few needs; and yet were accustomed to the rigors of wage labor!

These authors were captivated by the Puerto Rican women; however, they were not favorably impressed by Puerto Rican men. In striking contrast to the photographic and textual presence of women, men—even those of property, commerce, and government—were noticeably absent. It is impossible to find an individual or group portrait of the men of the elite in any of the popular books. This absence symbolically evoked the necessity of a masculine presence, that of the US government and its functionaries. The dominant class, in the guise of aristocratic women, was cultured but not fit to lead or govern. In an era when women neither voted nor held public office, the profusion of feminine representations, along with the absence of masculine ones, supported the more general conclusions that the people of Puerto Rico were unfit for self-government.

When the popular books did describe the men of Puerto Rico, it was only in unfavorable terms. Olivares found the aristocracy of San Juan to live in a state of continuous indolence:

The average denizen of San Juan is a silent, but most eloquent, exponent of habitual somnambulism. He appears to be perpetually wrapped in slumber. I have sometimes thought his ambulatory hours, if anything, the more restful, because therein he need never so



FIGURE 7. "Supervisors of the Puerto Rican Census". *Census of Porto Rico, 1899*, frontispiece.

much as dream of having to work. In the course of my visit I took occasion to inquire of a certain scion of this insouciant aristocracy what he considered the most violent tax on his exertions, whereupon, with a touch of genuine pathos in his tones, he replied: *Acostarme en la noche y levantarme en la mañana* – climbing into bed at night and crawling out in the morning. (Bryan, 1899: 257)

Just as Olivares found the men to be without vigor, Hamm (1899: 68) did not find them very manly: “Muscular types of either manhood or womanhood are extremely rare; the arm of the average man being no better than of an American girl’s of fourteen, and the leg being no larger or stronger than the arm of an average New York man. In social gatherings a Porto Rican gentleman seems a slender youth alongside of his colleague from England or America.”

In spite of the considerable energy expended in the disparagement and symbolic exclusion of Puerto Rican men, it was necessary to deal with the local leaders, even if only as subordinates. Accordingly, their presence was more readily apparent in documents of a more practical, administrative nature. The census of 1899 (US War Department, Director Census of Porto Rico, 1900), for example, included several group photographs of the local census takers, whom the military government had recruited from the cities and towns of Puerto Rico. Figure 7, which was the frontispiece to the census volume, showed the supervisors from the island’s seven census districts. The photograph displayed all the signs of civilization. It was taken in a studio with a backdrop and a rug. The composition was a standard, symmetrical arrangement of four men standing and three seated in chairs. The men were all dressed in tailored, three-piece suits with ties. Three had visible watch chains and one wore spectacles. All are of light complexion and had well-groomed hair and beards or moustaches. By all appearances, they might be the prominent men of any American, European, or Latin American city. However, the underlying message was one of limited leadership and subordination.

The report made clear that the War Department had undertaken the census with the cooperation of the prominent men and women of the principal towns. According to the census instructions, each of these supervisors and enumerators was required to be sworn “to the faithful performance of duties” according to the “form and manner prescribed by the Secretary of War” (US War Department, Director Census of Porto Rico, 1900: 361). As the experience in the Philippines more explicitly demonstrated, the ability to undertake a census was a sign of the peaceful state of affairs and civil order throughout the country. The Puerto Rican census demonstrated that the educated population was willing and able to

work under the supervision of colonial administrators and that this collaboration worked. In addition, the ability to carry out a complete and accurate census of the island was an important prerequisite for the transition to civil government. The participation of the leading citizens and the educated men and women legitimized the work of the census and the War Department. These kind of photographs were particular to the census of Puerto Rico and Cuba, but were absent in the census of the Philippines (Dominguez, 2007).

The Puerto Rican elite shared considerable values with the officials of the new regime. Indeed, one could argue that there was a meeting of the minds regarding the political and economic modernization of the country (García, 2000; Dominguez, 2007). The elite, however, expected that “autonomy” would be politics as usual on the island and their exercise of patronage, at least at the municipal level, would be held intact or even expanded. Recently granted



FIGURE 8. “A Hawaiian Hula Dancer”. Browne, George Waldo (editor), (1907 [1901]) *The New America and the Far East: A Picturesque and Historic Description of These Lands and Peoples*. 8 vols. Marshall Jones Company, Boston, vol. 1, p. 64.

an autonomous government by the Spanish, they hoped for a US-style territorial government with even more political power. Instead, they were disappointed when colonial administrators established firm central control over the government and regularly admonished or removed municipal leaders for corruption, inefficiency, and party politics. It was as if the elites and colonial administrators were speaking a common political language but with different meanings. Conflicts and resistance to the new regime arose primarily over the meanings, practices, and extent of autonomy and democratic participation (Go, 2008).

In sum, the refined, educated, beautiful women of Puerto Rico represented the grand contribution of Spanish civilization to the island. This appraisal symbolically cleared the way for the bold, aggressive entrance of the United States. It defined the existing accomplishments of civilization as a result of “Spanish” civilization which had become antiquated and unproductive; even the male elite were portrayed as effeminate and passive. These gender representations managed to both displace the Spanish influence and suggest the necessity of a masculine presence, symbolized by the United States, which

would introduce a modern, dynamic civilization in Puerto Rico. In this narrative of backwardness yielding to progress, the Puerto Rican woman offered a very special interest: she was pretty, pleasant, and hardworking. Hers was not necessary a refined beauty, but it provoked sympathy and desire. Practically speaking, this imagery suggested the possibilities of cultural and economic assimilation but circumvented any discussion of independence; it was right to assist these women, but they were not proper political subjects. The male elite were recognized as subordinate collaborators, especially in the documents of a more administrative nature, such as the census. This paradox of uplift and assimilation without political equality would result in the creation of a new kind of governance: a colonial tutorial state in a territory that belonged to, but was not a part of, the United States (Thompson, 2010).

HAWAIIAN EVE

The textual descriptions of Hawaiian women all concurred that they were beautiful, passionate, uninhibited, happy, hospitable, and kind. The authors usually focused upon the exotic characteristics



FIGURE 9. “Hula Girls”. Browne, George Waldo (editor), (1907 [1901]) *The New America and the Far East: A Picturesque and Historic Description of These Lands and Peoples*. 8 vols. Marshall Jones Company, Boston, vol. 1, p. 64.

of the women, especially the hula, luau, and their sexual hospitality. Regarding their beauty, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, in his contribution to *The New America and the Far East* (Browne, 1907 [1901], vol. 1: 163), wrote: “With her profusion of raven hair, tied with a gay bandelet of feathers and ohia blossoms, softly expressive dark eyes, pleasant countenance, erect figure, graceful and steady carriage, she commands the admiration of the beholder.” The hula dancer appeared as the most common representation of the exotic nature of the Hawaiian women; Lodge included a full-page color photograph (Figure 8). The dancer was dressed in a ti-leaf skirt and was adorned with a lei of flowers and leaves. She was barefoot with anklets. Her torso was covered with a camisole, suggesting a modicum of modesty that barely contained an excess of sensuality. Rather than dancing, however, she struck a rather defiant pose, suggesting the boldness and directness described by Lodge: “she startles the stranger by her boldness of address, her voluptuous breast rounding in graceful curves, her undaunted head bound with a brilliant bandeau” (Browne, 1907 [1901], vol. 1: 163). Olivares included photographs of dancers in similar dress—a grass skirt with a camisole—in

Our Islands and Their People. He noted, however, that “The Hula is the national dance, but it is not so much indulged in now as formerly; it has also been modified in many respects, both as to the dress of the participants and the character of the dance. [The] photograph represents the Hula girls in their native costume, which is not now worn except on very rare occasions.” (In Bryan, 1899: caption, 455)

In other words, the exotic hula dancer in her ti-leaf skirt was a thing of the past, even though authors focused upon her as the principal representation of Hawaiian women. Indeed, one of the photographs supplied by Lodge showed some of the recent changes in the costume of the hula dancer (Figure 9). In it, the dancers were dressed in mid-length, full cloth skirts with long-sleeved, high-necked blouses. They were barefoot with anklets. Lodge included another photograph of dancers wearing stockings and shoes.

Other photographs showed the custom of the luau, an outdoor feast. Figure 10 appeared originally in *Our Islands*, but it was reprinted in several later books (Boyce, 1914), an indicator of its popularity. The photograph showed a group of women and children outdoors. The group is seated on the



FIGURE 10. “Luau or native feast”. Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 427.

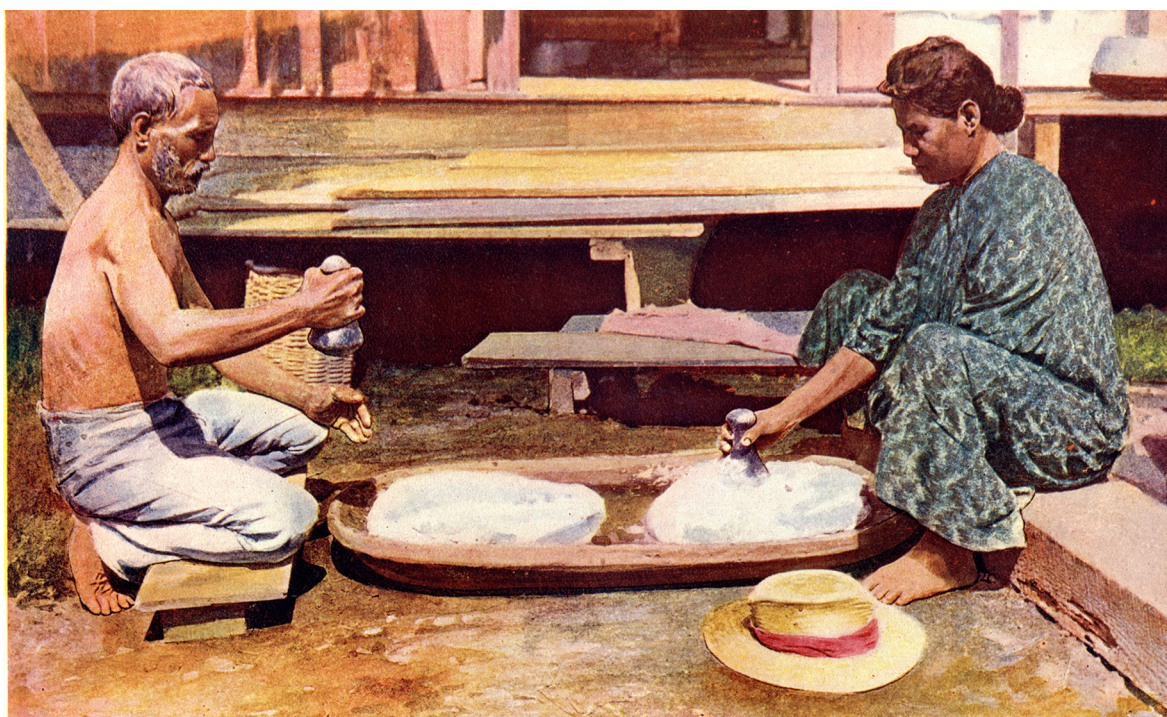


FIGURE 11. "Natives Preparing Poi". Browne, George Waldo (editor), (1907 [1901]) *The New America and the Far East: A Picturesque and Historic Description of These Lands and Peoples*. 8 vols. Marshall Jones Company, Boston, vol. 1, p. 1.

ground at a banquet in a lush tropical setting. They are eating with their hands from traditional gourd bowls. The women are naked to the waist and are partially covered by leis or palm fronds. Two women hold guitars. Their nudity suggests their sensuality and sexuality, even though the leaves and ferns connote a certain modesty and the tropical naturalness of the setting suggests innocence. Olivares (In Bryan, 1899: 427) penned the following caption: "While nominally Christian, the natives still adhere to many of their old pagan superstitions, some of which resemble the ancient Druidical worship of the early Britons. The feast represented in this photograph partakes of that character, and is at the same time a social picnic enlivened by music and singing." Olivares thus suggested that although they were Christians, the natives were never far removed from their ancient customs. Still, their pagan ways were almost European. Their love of nature was almost religious. Their hospitality was legendary: "It was their custom while in a state of paganism to surrender their grass huts, and even their wives and daughters, to the full and free gratification of strangers who visited them." The Hawaiians were portrayed as natural, sensual beings, "gentle in heart and pure in life," only once removed from the state of nature. Their love of nature was linked to their sexual hospitality. Of course, the pagan and promiscuous customs of old had been modified under the influence

of Christianity, but they still expressed themselves in the pleasant sociability and hospitality of the inhabitants. The current manifestations of the old customs, especially the luau, were a throwback but not a drawback. Indeed, the luau was adapted by haoles as well, who turned it into a luxurious picnic with china and crystal (In Browne, vol. 1: 154).

The descriptions of the Hawaiians did not distinguish between the activities of men and women. Both were equally fond of idle pleasures and entertainments such as the luau, swimming, surfing on longboards, fishing, gathering flowers, and tending their taro patches. Photographs of these pastimes were frequent. On the first page of his *New America* volume, Lodge showed a full-page color photograph of a man and woman working together pounding taro to make poi (Figure 11) (cf. White, 1898: 648). They are sitting on low benches and using simple instruments. Lodge also included a full-page color photograph of a shrimp fisherman using a simple net as he sits on a rock along the shore (Figure 12). Olivares explained that Hawaiians scarcely regarded these activities as work; rather they were part of their simple subsistence lifestyle:

The Kanaka [native Hawaiians] despise labor. Indeed, it is not usual to see a native work even around his own home except to care for his taro patch, and in this he is as affectionate to his lily plants as he is with



FIGURE 12. "Shrimp Fisherman, Hawaii". Browne, George Waldo (editor), (1907 [1901]) *The New America and the Far East: A Picturesque and Historic Description of These Lands and Peoples*. 8 vols. Marshall Jones Company, Boston, vol. 1, p. 160.

wife and children. The taro furnishes the starchy *poe* [*sic*], as necessary to him as water to drink or the sea in which to bathe. The Hawaiian women will wade waist deep in the water and mud banks for clams and shrimps, or scramble among the rocks at low tide to gather the sea weeds and mollusks and the cuttlefish, and seine the small fry that remain in the little wells and lakelets left among the rocks when the tide goes out. They will gather the leaves and the succulent roots and the tubers of the artichokes and *ti*, and wild potato ferns and other native vegetation, for food; and they will gather the tube roses and the myriads of wild flowers and string them upon the fibers of the plantain, thus creating the famous leis and wreaths with which to bedeck their lovers or friends, or to sell. Of all this, however, the Hawaiian makes light, declaring it a diversion most enjoyable. If it were demanded of them, they would likely refuse (in Bryan, 1899: 454–55).

Olivares's description, amply documented by photographs, portrayed the Hawaiians as natives very close to a state of nature with a veneer of civilization. They lived off the land and sea and were not inclined to labor except to meet their simple needs, so they would not meet the demand for labor on the plantations. Many of the photographs portrayed customs that by the end of the nineteenth century had been modified under the influence of the settlers and missionaries from the United States, known as *haoles*. They represented a style of life that scarcely survived but that still defined their character. Figure 13 showed the adoption of Western clothing: the women appear in dresses with long sleeves and high collars. Their hair is carefully arranged, pulled up and back rather than long and flowing. They adorn themselves with traditional leis of flowers and leaves both in their hair and around their necks. This was a studio photograph with a symmetrical arrangement in front of a tropical tapestry. Three women in the back were seated, yet the chairs were not visible. In front, two women recline on the floor. The photograph presented a juxtaposition of Victorian style (the style of dress and the studio portrait) with the exotic charms of Hawai'i (reclining women adorned with leis). Such descriptions and photographs suggested that the Hawaiian woman, most beautiful and desirable, could be educated and civilized without losing her enchanting and exotic charms. She was a native of paradise who could be possessed by the civilized man. Hawaiian women frequently married settlers from the US, who, by teaching them Christian norms, had eliminated little by little their nudity and sexual customs, which were understood as promiscuous. Yet as these descriptions suggest, they were never far from their exotic ways.

Furthermore, the rather passive, childlike Hawaiian men were hospitable and had welcomed their foreign visitors, who in turn had taken over the island. The travelogues were clear about who ruled Hawai'i: the foreign settlers, *haoles*, who had migrated from the United States during the nineteenth century and had established economic, political, and cultural hegemony. By the end of the nineteenth century, in the words of White (1898: 668), "the Hawaiian islands in every part are as orderly and well defined in their organized society as our own American communities." Likewise, Olivares (in Bryan, 1899: 431–432) wrote that "the ruling and influential class in Hawai'i is of course American and will remain so." The Hawai'ian royalty had recently been deposed and the constitutional monarchy replaced with a republic under the control of the "American-European element, consisting of white men." He included the following photograph (Figure 14) which illustrated the curious contrast of a New England style frame house among tropical vegetation. This caption indicated that the man in the picture was a "citizen of Hawai'i" who had settled there with his family, who was sitting on the



FIGURE 13. "Hawaiian Girls' Style of Dressing". Browne, George Waldo (editor), (1907 [1901]) *The New America and the Far East: A Picturesque and Historic Description of These Lands and Peoples*. 8 vols. Marshall Jones Company, Boston, vol. 1, p. 112.

porch. Upon the creation of the territorial government in 1900, these white, male citizens of Hawai'i would be citizens of the United States as well.

The rhetoric of desire reached its culmination in the descriptions of Hawai'i. The Hawaiian woman was incomparable: an Eve in paradise under the missionary influence. While many photographs presented partially nude Hawaiian women in outdoor scenes, other photographs showed their adoption of European dress together with the traditional adornments of flowers and leaves. The Hawaiian woman, beautiful and desirable, could be educated and civilized without losing her exotic charms. When located within a narrative of white settlement, hegemony, and democratic evolution, this portrayal of women suggested a close, intimate political relationship with the United States: the full annexation of a self-governing territory. The small republic was to become a territory of the great republic (Thompson, 2010).

DISILLUSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Writers were frequently perplexed by the women of the Philippines. On the one hand, they often

found the upper-class women of Manila, especially those *mestizas* of Spanish and Tagalog blood, to be very attractive. On the other hand, the very same observers were disappointed with the appearance and demeanor of the lower-class women. For example, Olivares (in Bryan 1899: 570) found a profound difference between the refined urban, upper-class women of and those of the lower classes. The former possessed the "culture and refinement of manner equal to that of the best American and European Society." In contrast, he attributed a very low level of civilization to the latter: "There are many grades and classes of women in the Philippine Islands. Some are as highly cultivated and perhaps almost as beautiful as the divine creatures who impart so great a charm to American society; but a majority of the women of this archipelago belong to a low grade of civilization, and some are but little above the condition of beast of field and forest." (in Bryan, 1899: 589) While he found the women of Manila to be "divine creatures," the common women were almost uncivilized "beasts." In this context, low civilization translated as ugliness and racial deprecation. Other authors also found the Malay girls, in contrast to the



FIGURE 14. "A Citizen of Hawaii and His Home". Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 513.

Spanish women, to be dark skinned, homely, poorly dressed, and possessing of revolting habits. White (1898: 167–68) offered up a striking comparison: "Pretty [Spanish] women, bareheaded, and dressed in cool, refreshing white, look enchanting to one who has seen nothing but yellow and brown Malay girls all summer and whose experiences in society have been confined to young, barefooted Philippine ladies who smoke cigars and wear gauze waists with rags reefed around them."

Moreover, White's text directed the reader away from the possible conclusion, based upon popular photographs of women in native costumes, that the Filipinas were attractive. His own book included a high-class woman of Manila with an "admixture of Chinese blood" (Figure 15). In the caption, he described women like her as "delicate in form and feature." Nevertheless, in order to avoid any misreading, he was compelled to refute published photographs of attractive women, including his own, by means of a rather surprising tactic. The photographs, he argued, were deceiving and did not correspond to his everyday experience in the Philippines: "The women in their costumes may look very pretty in the selected costumes we see printed [in photographs], but as we saw them every day about Manila they are, as a rule, the most unattractive women to be found anywhere. It is true that their novel dress

and appearance may make them interesting for a time, but their filthy tobacco and other repulsive habits make them anything but attractive" (White, 1898: 177–78).

Like many others writers, White incorporated the themes of misreading and disillusion into the discussion of the Filipinas. The narrative structure was fairly simple. At first sight, as the story went, the women seemed attractive due to their novel dress and appearance. Studio photographs served only to further mislead. This first impression, however, was a gross misrepresentation since upon closer contact, the women were found to be unattractive if not outright ugly. The initial misreading, followed by a rude awakening, led to a singular deprecation and disgust. Somewhat later, Brigadier General William Aumen (in Powers and Phillips, 1909: 106) provided one of the shortest versions of this trope: "Going along the streets one would notice a woman of good figure and apparently very fine looking, but when one came alongside of her, and looked into her face, he would see she was smoking a cigar and was marked with smallpox."

Likewise, Olivares (in Bryan 1899: caption 550) refuted previous descriptions and elicited the correct interpretation: "A native author declares that, as a rule, 'the Mestizo girls are often of wonderful beauty,' but his imagination appears to be more



FIGURE 15. "Type of High-Class Woman of Manila". White, Trumbull (1898) *Our New Possessions*. Adams, Boston, p. 194.

vivid than the facts warrant." Here Olivares quoted Ramon Reyes Lala, the Manila-born author of *The Philippines Islands*, which was published in 1899. Lala and Olivares printed many of the exact same photographs, but their respective descriptions varied considerably. Lala (1899: 93) described these native women in the most favorable terms (Figure 16). Of the upper-class women, he wrote the following: "Many of the women are pretty, and all are good-natured and smiling. Their complexion, of light brown, is usually clear and smooth; their eyes are large and lustrous, full of the sleeping passion of the Orient. The figures of the women are usually erect and stately, and many are models of grace and beauty."

Olivares had mixed feelings regarding the high-class women. He published the same photograph as that shown in Figure 16 with a caption that emphasized their elegant dress and their ability to "converse as fluently as the women of civilized countries." (Olivares, in Bryan 1899: caption 645) However, in another caption he stated that the "cast



FIGURE 16. "Native Women". Lala, Ramon Reyes (1899) *The Philippine Islands*. Continental Publishing, New York, p. 306.

of countenance" of the Malay women (in contrast to the Spanish-influenced mestizas) "shows plainly in the rather unpleasant scowl of their faces." (Olivares, in Bryan 1899: caption 551) Olivares also incorporated various versions of the above-mentioned trope of expectation, misreading, disillusion, and deprecation. One of the most elaborate accounts came from Will Levington Comfort, a correspondent from St. Louis who provided Olivares with the following narrative. Comfort's story began with great expectations upon his arrival in Manila after very favorable impressions of the women in both Puerto Rico and Cuba. In the following section, he related his disappointment with the Filipinas, explained his inability to understand or communicate with them, and finally described their characteristics in the most unflattering terms:

After seeing Porto Rican and Cuban maidens, a man entering Manila will expect to be thrilled again by great, lustrous, dark eyes; but the glance of the Filipino woman will never thrill you. Her eyes are not large, but they are black and beady and unreadable. Very often hunger looks out at you; often hatred, but it is not passionate hatred. It is a stare which neither revolts nor appeals. It seems to be the result of instinct, rather than an action of the brain. Vaguely

the thought sinks into your mind as you peer into her dull, unsmiling face—the thought that her gaze has been fixed so long upon the tragedy of living that she regards it stolidly now. Her nose is flat and thick-skinned. The cavities are haplessly visible, and a play of the nostrils is wholly impossible. Hence the fine charm of sensitiveness is denied her. The nose of the Filipino woman is for breathing purposes only, and it is the most ugly of her uncomely features. Her brow is insignificant and hair grows low upon it. Her lips and teeth are of a hue best expressed by bronze-vermillion, such is the combined stain of tobacco and the betel nut. Her hair is dead black. The lack-luster effect is probably caused by continued exposure to the sun. Frequently it falls down to her waist and is never braided. When freshly combed it presents a drippy appearance, because it is soaked [with coconut oil] to make it shine. (in Bryan, 1899: 590-91)

Comfort's unflattering details of the features of the Filipina seemed excessive, if not obsessive. He was not satisfied to say simply that she was unattractive, but rather took the time to thoroughly consider her particular features: the nose and nostrils, the eyes, the brow, the lips and teeth, the facial expressions, the color and texture of the hair, the color and complexion of the skin. He also considered her habits of smoking tobacco, chewing betel nut, and combing her hair with coconut oil. Finally, he speculated on her mental state, which for him was unreadable and incomprehensible, "as hard to fathom as a sheet of Chinese correspondence." There was little doubt, however, of her dislike for the "white man." Finally, the correspondent concluded: "From the white man's standpoint she is least like a woman of any feminine creature" (in Bryan, 1899: 590).

Central to this trope was the shift from descriptions of women of the upper class to those of the lower and then to racialize them. Olivares (in Bryan, 1899: 663) pictured a native fruit seller (Figure 17) and wrote in the caption that the women of the "lower orders have an unpleasant cast of countenance, which indicates a surly disposition." He found that none of the women who sold fruits and flowers on the street were good looking, and their "dispositions are not, as a rule, of the most loveable character." The final degradation of the Filipinas was the following simile, penned by Comfort (in Bryan, 1899: 590): "Her presence is needful, like that of the *carabao* [water buffalo]." Despite any virtues they might have—loyalty to the family, love of children, hard work—the authors reduced these women to a beast of burden, the water buffalo. It should suffice at this point to say that these hateful, scowling, ugly women were the counterparts of their rebellious menfolk, who were portrayed as unruly children who dared rise up in armed resistance when their claim to an independent country was denied. Indeed, Will Comfort (in Bryan, 1899, 591)



FIGURE 17. "Native Fruit Seller". Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 663.

suggested the underlying cause of the animosity and discordance of the Filipina was the war that the United States was waging against the Filipino revolutionaries: "[The Filipina] cannot understand why these white men with guns intrude upon her ancient customs. She doesn't like the white man anyway. Her eyes tell him so, and she wishes he were back in his own land."

The *carabao* also appeared as a metaphor for men and the "Filipino character." Hamm (1899: 153) wrote even though the water buffalo might be domesticated and controlled, it was never far from its primitive nature. The "terrible wild beast" threatened to break away from the veneer of civilization at any time. This characterization of the Filipino national character went hand in hand with the project of classifying the diverse ethnicities of the islands, which ranged from the most primitive non-Christian to the civilized Christian "tribes." Indeed, the principal trope was that of evolution of a multitude of tribes, from the most primitive to the more or less civilized. The first two Philippine Commissions (from 1898–1901), the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (established 1901), and the census of 1902 all developed elaborate tables,



FIGURE 18. “Natives of the Island of Luzon”. Bryan, William S. (editor), (1899) *Our Islands and their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*. Thompson Publishing Company, St. Louis, p. 552.

statistics, and photographic representations of the dozens of supposedly distinct ethnicities that inhabited the islands. In these official reports the conclusion was unanimous: an “aggregate of tribes,” all in various levels of civilization and some clearly hostile, did not constitute a modern nation and could not govern themselves. In the following photograph (Figure 18) we can see an example of the “natives” from the island of Luzon. Although the caption did not identify the “tribe” to which this group belonged, their scarce clothing, rudimentary implements, and generally unfriendly demeanor underlined the conclusion reached by the colonial officials (Thompson, 2010: 118–131).

The narrative of disillusion regarding the women of the Philippines suggested the initial goodwill and high expectations of the United States, as well as the unjustified and ungrateful reaction of the Filipinas and, by extension, their menfolk. This negative image, linked in tone and substance to the pejorative racial stereotypes of savagery, was sharpened by the war. It articulated both the depths of Filipino resistance to the colonial regime and the lack of sympathy and understanding toward them on the part of US observers. It also suggested that although pacification had been achieved and civil government established, eventual independence, not

assimilation, would be the long-term goal. In the meantime, colonial rule would provide the necessary political control over a population that was not, at least at first, cooperative. Collaboration would require new strategies, both practical and discursive (Kramer, 2006: chaps. 2–3).

The new-possession books used a negative portrayal of women to paint the local peoples of the Philippines in the most unfavorable light. In this case, the feminine metaphor served to express just the opposite of sympathy and desire. In contrast to the women of other islands, the Filipina turned out to be a great disillusion: somewhat attractive at first glance, she was, upon closer inspection, most undesirable under the imperial gaze. The authors narrated their disillusion and deception in considerable detail, analyzing each physical aspect of her ugliness. They were shocked at her hatred for the white man. Thus, the figure of the Filipina became an object of rhetorical deprecation: her ugliness was but one of the signs of the savagery of her people. These hateful women, along with their unruly and uncivilized men, could not presently govern themselves, could not survive in the international context, and so must be controlled absolutely and ruled directly. These gendered representations suggested that the period of tutelage might be indefinite, but the Philippines would never

be assimilated. It is no coincidence that it was precisely in the Philippines that the United States found the most tenacious armed resistance to the colonial regime. Consequently, the United States projected, first, pacification, and then civil government firmly under the control of colonial administrators. The most civilized and cooperative of the elite were both necessary and proved to be open to cooptation. Again, political tutelage would become the order of the new regime. A colonial state was established, but no hope of assimilation to the United States would be possible; only the long, unsure road of nation-building under guidance of the colonial administrators (Kramer, 2006: chaps. 3, 5).

THE CREOLE COUNTY FAIR: SANTAYANA'S IMPERIAL ETHICS

As we have seen, Santayana's aesthetics adopted an everyday, engaged perspective and established a close connection between aesthetics and ethics. Interestingly, Santayana was also a poet who supported the imperial adventures of the United States. In 1900, he recited his new poem, "Young Sammy's First Wild Oats," to the Harvard literary club in support of McKinley's imperialist re-election platform. Published just before the presidential elections (and later reprinted), a verse urged its male readers to "be as lenient as you're able" (Santayana 1901: 215) and to cast their votes for the incumbent who had already embarked upon a program of war and territorial acquisition. It is serendipitous for our analysis that its expression of colonial desire illustrates the connections between a sense of beauty, ethics, and the building of the US overseas empire. My aim here is twofold: first, to examine the idea of objectified beauty, not merely as a psychological phenomenon, rather a discursive one; and second, to analyze some of the particular ethical expressions that justified empire. Let us turn now to the issue of desire, ethics, and the imperial adventure as narrated in Santayana's verse.

The poem, written as a dialogue between a deacon and his pastor, expressed some concern with "Young Sammy," the son of the late Uncle Sam, in his recent escapades with three young women at the "Creole County fair." It was soon clear to any reader that the three women represented Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, in that order. At the outset, the deacon questioned Sammy's moral conduct with the women at the fair and gave the following account to the pastor.

He [Sammy] has picked up three young lasses.
Three mulattoes on the mart.
Who have offered him free passes
To their fortune and their heart.
One young woman he respected.
Vowed he only came to woo.

But his word may be neglected
Since he ravished the other two.
In the Porto Rican billing
And carousing, I allow
That the little minx was willing,
Though she may be sorry now.
But what came of those embraces
And that taint of nigger blood?
Now he looks on outraged faces
And can laugh, defying God:
He can stretch his hand, relieving.
And strike down a cheated slave.
Oh, if Uncle Sam were living,
This would bring him to his grave!
(Santayana, 1901: 206)

Replete with the language of sexual conquest and racial deprecation, the deacon referred to all three as "mulattoes" [sic], even though their respective relationships with Sammy were quite different. The poem suggested that he respected Cuba and came only to romance her; but he did not keep his word. In contrast, his relations with Puerto Rico and the Philippines were less than honorable from the start. The deacon narrated that Puerto Rico was a promiscuous and willing participant, at least at first. The Philippines, however, was quickly offended and outraged by Sammy's advances. He responded by striking her as if she were a slave. The degradation of the "*mulata*" was striking; in the poem the Filipina quickly became a "nigger" and a "slave" because she did not respond favorably to Sammy. This acrimonious racialization marked a transition in the portrayal of the Philippines from an attractive woman at a civic county fair to an indomitable savage subjected by violence.

At this point in the poem, the pastor took over and carefully explained to his friend that Sammy could not be blamed for being bored and stifled on the late Uncle Sam's farm. It was only natural for him, as a virile young man, to seek sexual adventure elsewhere. His answer to the deacon repeated the basic narrative, now amplified by an explicit justification of racial and sexual violence. Santayana writes:

As for Sam, the son, I wonder
If you know the fellow's heart:
There may yet be something under
Nobler than the outer part.
When he told that señorita
That he kissed and hugged her close
like a brother, did he cheat her?
Did he cheat himself? Who knows?
That he liked her, that is certain;
That he wronged her isn't true.
On his thoughts I draw the curtain:
I don't know them, nor do you.
In her maid, the docile Rica,
We have quite another case.

Hardly did he go to seek her.
 When she rushed to his embrace,
 I confess it was improper,
 But all flesh, alas! is flesh.
 Things had gone too far to drop her;
 Each was in the other's mesh.
 But with that poor Filipina,
 When she shrank from his caress,
 His contemptible demeanor
 Isn't easy to express.
 First he bought her, then he kicked her;
 But the truth is, he was drunk,
 For that day had crowned him victor.
 And a Spanish fleet was sunk.
 (Santayana, 1901: 211–12)

In the pastoral explanation, Santayana repeated the basic scenarios but now replaced the deacon's moral doubt with imperial justification. Regarding Cuba, the kissing and hugging were innocent and if any wrong was done, it seemed more of miscommunication than moral lack. Puerto Rico –again both docile and sexually available– was willing and the situation was now too complicated just to leave her. Indeed, the implication was that to abandon her now would be ethically dubious. Finally, the Filipina rejected Sammy's advances and he responded both by "buying" her –another reference to slavery or, possibly, prostitution– and with outright physical violence. The pastor excused Sammy, however, because he was drunk in the festivities that followed his victory in the war against Spain. Violence was justified as a form of moral exception; what was done in the spirited celebration of victory could be excused. Moreover, the pastor suggested that Sammy was essentially "nobler" than he appeared. Here Santayana alluded to the argument, known today as exceptionalism, that the US was not a typical exploitative imperial power, rather its overseas expansion was uniquely beneficent and just.

In this poem we can observe the symbolic creation of an imperial space, a "Creole County Fair" transited by attractive and sexually available *mullatas* whom Sammy solicited. Similar to the historical romance novels of the day, this poem offered a "cognitive and libidinal map for the geopolitical shift from continental expansion to overseas empire" (Kaplan, 2002: 94). First, the development of manhood was transposed from the continental arena to the Creole –read "overseas"– county fair. Second, this was the "militant manhood" characteristic of vigorous, highly sexual youth. Third, this poem articulated a "fantasy" (Scott, 2011): its narrative established a scenario of desire that reproduced basic psychic tensions. In this poem, Sammy sought to demonstrate his masculinity to the founding fathers, who had conquered a continent and had turned the frontier into a farm. Left with only a sedate farm occupied by old men, Sammy sought to

prove his manhood by conquering overseas islands, which were projected poetically as sexual conquests. These sexual encounters were at once forbidden and ethically justified. They were forbidden because they involved miscegenation and assault. Yet, they were morally excused as normal masculine behavior: the rite and right of "sowing wild oats."

The poem echoed the paradigmatic speech by Theodore Roosevelt (1899) regarding the "strenuous life" of the masculine citizen (Thompson, 2010; Kaplan, 2002). As Roosevelt, Santayana justified imperial expansion through an appeal to the demands of manhood. In addition, both distinguished the particular political relationships with Cuba, Philippines, and Puerto Rico by means of a gendered and racialized language. In Santayana's poem, these three women, representing three countries, established different romantic relationships with Sammy. Cuba was a respectable woman and she was properly romanced, although some misunderstanding might have soured the relation. Nevertheless, she still occupied a domain of civilization and beauty. Puerto Rico was a docile, willing woman and the entanglement that ensued was not easily undone. She was desired, but not entirely virtuous. Finally, the Filipina rejected the masculine advance and so she was bought, enslaved, and violently subjugated. Hers was a realm of savagery that must be subdued. In this imperial equation, both Cuba and Puerto Rico were beautiful objects of desire. In contrast, the ugliness and abjection of the feminine figure of the Filipina quickly led to racial deprecation and violent subdual. These poetic expressions matched quite closely the concrete political relationships established shortly after the poem was published.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the connection between aesthetics and empire can be demonstrated by a careful examination of the imperial sense of beauty, the economy of colonial desire, and the complex of visibility. First, imperial aesthetics objectified the women of the islands through photographs and textual descriptions which portrayed their perceived beauty or ugliness. The portrayals of lovely feminine figures painted sympathetic, although distinct, pictures of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Hawai'i. These islands of women had their own charms, their own story, their own future. In contrast, the representations of the ugly feminine figure of the Philippines were steeped with disillusion and racial deprecation. A sense of beauty was integral to these representations and provided important imaginaries for US political and cultural hegemony. More than a simple justification, however, the depictions of women suggested certain paradigms that paralleled the particular strategies of rule in each site. The deployment of a sense of beauty was an active engagement with the

world and expressed the will to possess and govern colonies, albeit in different ways.

Second, the economy of colonial desire expressed the dynamic political transactions between colonizing and colonized men by means of representations of women. The aesthetics of feminine beauty accompanied the evaluation of the relative attributes of colonized men and their capacity to govern. “Effeminism,” that discourse which discredited colonized men by stressing their lack of masculinity, was the strongest in the Philippines where the ugliness of the women signaled their degradation and the savagery of their menfolk. In sharp contrast, the virtuous and beautiful Cuban women were paired with brave and patriotic men of masculine valor and honor. In Puerto Rico, the women were deemed beautiful and desirable, whether from the elite or the working classes. The elite men, however, seemed plagued by an effeminate and antiquated civilization, and were neither vigorous nor masculine enough to govern themselves. In Hawai‘i, the representations of women were highly eroticized, emphasizing their exotic nature and sexual availability. Hawai‘ian men were creatures of nature and politically inconsequential; the men who ruled in Hawai‘i were settlers from the United States. The economy of colonial desire was not constant, rather continuously negotiated and expressed in variable gendered representations.

Finally, imperial visibility was a way of seeing accompanied by diverse, concrete engagements with the colonies. It classified and ordered peoples according to their level of civilization and capacity for self-government. It normalized the various forms of colonial dominion. In this process, aesthetics informed the strategies of rule. The photographs, reinforced with textual descriptions, expressed a sense of feminine beauty or ugliness that were related to the real governments established. In Cuba, brave, honorable men, accompanied by their virtuous women, were granted a formally independent state, reduced to a protectorate. In the Philippines, images of scowling women and naked or violent men suggested that they were savages to be brutally subdued; here colonial administrators would first pacify by force of arms and then rule with the intent to civilize and build a modern nation. In pretty Puerto Rico, weak men could only hope to collaborate while colonial administrators ruled an “unincorporated territory.” Finally, in Hawai‘i, hegemonic *haoles* realized their fantasy of dominion through the settlement of and hegemony over the first US overseas incorporated territory.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Manuel Martínez (UPR, Interlibrary Loans) for obtaining several key texts and for helping with the digitization of several photographs.

María del Carmen Baerga was a careful, patient, and critical reader of earlier drafts. This research was supported by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. This article includes photographs previously analyzed in my book, *Imperial Archipelago* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010). All are in the public domain. No known restrictions on their reproduction.

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