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Filipina.com: Wives, Workers, and Whores on the Cyberfrontier

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Three different images of Asia and the Internet frame this introduction. The first is of two young, hip, androgynous Asians who grace the cover of the July-September 2000 special edition of *Newsweek International.* They boast a cyborg aesthetic, complete with red-streaked hair, futuristic microfiber clothing, and metallic makeup. These representatives of the "New Asia" stand against a traditional dragon backdrop like modern technocrats emerging from an oriental chrysalis. The accompanying articles boost the idea of this new modern, liberal subject. As leaders of the "quiet revolution", their technology of "liberation" is the Internet.[1] In the "New Economy" section, several articles raise the prospects of "liberat[ion] by the internet,"[2] and the Internet's "revolutionary" potential to create a "commercial democracy."[3] One particular writer suggests that, "Out there in cyberspace the old Asia of paternalism, cozy insider deals and murky transactions is fading. Meritocracy rules."[4] This *Newsweek* issue celebrates the cultural and economic revolution that the Internet promises, implying that technology will succeed where communism failed to deliver. Finally, democracy (and the logic of capitalism) has broken down the last bastion of the East. For the "New Asian Woman" in particular, the Internet heralds a "new world of possibilities" in information technology-led economies, signifying progress from Oriental patriarchies and traditional, circumscribed, gender roles.[5] The profiles of several Asian women prominent in their fields testify to the role that the Internet has had in their success. The celebrated androgyny on the front cover testifies to how gender is both ostensibly unmarked and unremarkable, the playing field is leveled in cyberspace.

Ironically, on the inside page of the special edition, a Singapore Airlines ad—the second image—contradicts the notion of a departure from old patriarchies. Two Asian female flight attendants, dressed in exotic native costume, smile while serving a white businessman in a suit and hover around his luxuriously appointed first-class seat, evoking long-established logics of colonial service. The color scheme is "old world," with rich but muted colors suggesting tradition, old money, and the comforts of wealth. This ad calls attention to an important dissonance in the celebratory discourses of cyberspace, epitomized

by the triumphalist *Newsweek* issue. Against and alongside an emerging vision of a rejuvenated, modernized, and competitive Asia, a different reality exists—one cut by class, race, and gender lines in ways that echo old colonialisms and that bring to mind emergent imperialisms in the age of globalization.

However, while Asian women in general continue to function as markers of sexualized difference in virtual and material realities, we argue that the bodies of Filipinas haunt this dawning Asian "cyberdemocracy" in a historically specific way.[6] Typing *Filipina* on virtually any Internet search engine yields the third image—the following sites at a "100% match": "Filipina 4 Love"; "Filipina Ladies" (an Internet introduction service); "A Filipina Bride: Mail Order Brides Dating Personals" (which offers a low-priced, professional service); "FILIPINA LADY—Who is She?" (a pen-pal service); and "Erotic explicit filipina pussy pictures" (which speaks for itself). Following these choices are a grouping of sites from "Hearts of Asia" (another mail-order bride/introduction-service site) conveniently arranged by age group. While occasionally a search like this can yield a personal website by or about a Filipina that is not about mail-order brides, pornographic representations, or questionable pen-pal services, the overwhelming character of the results center around the "1st Lady-FREE" introductions to "pre-screened Filipinas" model. This is a particularly gendered phenomenon: typing *Filipino* yields links on culture, the Philippines as a nation, food, and entertainment of the more innocuous type. Filipino men are not a hypervisible commodity to be traded on the Internet (even as they, too, make up a significant number of the labor exported by the Philippine state). *Filipina,* in this case, becomes a marker of sexual difference that has historical roots.

It is clear that *Newsweek*'s construction of the "New Asian Woman" does not take into account the thousands of websites that depend on the continuing availability of the "backward" Filipina woman as both the antithesis *and* enabler of this very modern, financially independent and technologically savvy Asian capitalist.[7] Information and communications technologies exacerbate intra-Asian and imperialist histories of exploitation in the present, creating a specificity of experience that begs for a critical rethinking of the Internet as a revolutionary technology. The exotic and serviceable bodies advertised in the Singapore Airlines ad as well as numerous websites provide material and discursive counterpoints to the *Newsweek* cover, complicating the Internet's claim as the harbinger of the ultimate "quiet revolution" and the emergent tool for "first world" and "third world" feminists.

Without a doubt, the lightning-fast information superhighway is becoming *the* critical source of global information today. This democratic informationalism claims to transcend and obliterate all borders—embodied, national, and global. For its users, the Internet is a vast repository of knowledge and truth, democratizing information, and, ultimately, political and economic power. Its newest members, such as the New Asian capitalists featured in the *Newsweek* special issue, extol the new economic and political enfranchisement that the

and a sense of individualism. It may even help bridge the rich-poor divide."[8] However, the dissonance between *Newsweek*'s "New Asian Woman" and Filipina realities (virtual or otherwise) raises critical questions about this touted "new world of possibilities" as well as the rhetoric of liberation and neoliberalism that cloaks it. We are forced to ask, whose and which revolutions are enabled by the Internet, and which Asian women do neoliberal discourses celebrate? More important, how does the Internet embody a rhetoric of triumphant individualism and equal opportunity even as it heightens the locally felt unevenness of globalization? What are the continuities and discontinuities between the ideologies and technologies of American monopoly capitalism and American imperialism from the turn of the twentieth century and the rise of the "New Asia" at the turn of the twenty-first? In a medium celebrated for transcending difference and borders in the ether of cyberspace, how is it that instead difference both enables and is exacerbated through the exoticized visualizations of third world bodies?[9]

In order to trouble the supposed democratic and liberatory narratives of information and technology, we look specifically at how humans develop and use technology. The ways in which search engines participate in creating and reinforcing racial and sexual logics has serious ramifications for meaning-making for particular bodies on the Internet. We analyze websites that circulate Filipinas in ways reminiscent of colonial and global histories in order to further understand how signifying practices in cyberspace flesh out the set of logics by which Filipinas are constrained. The specific sites/sights of Filipina bodies track a counterdiscourse that problematizes the "innocent" notions of a cyberdemocracy and questions Information and Communications Technology's (ICTs') claims to transparency. Trafficking in women has intensified globally with the advent of telecommunications technology,[10] and while Filipinas are not the sole commodity in this traffic, they represent unique sites where histories of U.S. and Asian imperialisms, militarisms, and capitalisms coalesce.

We reconsider the limitations and possibilities of the Internet for a postcolonial third-world feminist politics in light of the violence committed against Filipina women (and others) in its circuits. Representations of Filipinas like those that proliferate in cyberspace reveal the linkages between technologies and ideologies of "progress" and "development" and different forms of imperialism and "scattered hegemonies";[11] the complex politics of representation and commodification in the age of flexible accumulation;[12] and the limits of concepts like "democracy" and "individualism" when one is marked as Filipina in cyberspace. What alternative questions and theoretical frameworks need to be imagined in this less than revolutionary landscape?

Filipina Bodies on the Cyberfrontier

We turn to the site of Filipinas on the cyberfrontier because they embody the difference that enables and haunts capitalist circuits. Filipinas, as they circulate on the Internet, unravel capitalism's democratic myth. Our critique of neoliberal cyberdemocracy rests on the Filipina body for several reasons.

First, the Philippines continues to function under de facto if not de jure, American imperialism. The history of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines established the "rest and recreation" industry on a large scale for its military troops stationed there. In its present anti-terrorist reincarnation, U.S. militarization of the Philippines slips comfortably into long-established infrastructures and cultures of imperialism. As Cynthia Enloe argues, the masculinity and morale of the "martial races" must be supported by domestic feminine troops.[13]

Framing the discourses of cyberspace through the manifest destiny of the American frontier is nothing new. Ziauddin Sardar's provocative and sometimes problematic analysis of the colonial roots of technological modernity argues that the frontiers of cyberspace are "set to follow the patterns of the old West."[14] Similarly, as Jeff Ow notes, early scholarship on the liberating potential of community on the Internet, such as Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier,* deployed romantic views of pioneering on the American West that once again reify the emptiness of the territories to be occupied.[15] In the case of the Philippines as a U.S. colony, however, an analysis of frontier discourse must include a discussion of its sexual and racial politics.[16] The liminal space of the frontier was the threshold upon which a European man, perhaps overcivilized (and thus effeminate) could regain his manhood and claim his American cultural identity by taming the savage lands (and people) of the New World and beyond.

For Filipinas, American militarization in the Asia Pacific (to "protect" its territories) has meant efficient interpellation into the military industrial and ideological apparatus as sex workers. The specificity of the Philippines as an American frontier—one that had and has tragic consequences for Filipinas living in that border zone—must be tied to the ways in which the Philippines functions as an outpost of difference on the cyberfrontier. As U.S. "wards," Filipinas have served and continue to serve as bodies of pleasure and labor.[17] For Filipinas who circulate as global domestics, entertainers, wives, and otherwise, this has meant an ongoing national and cultural marking and marketing as historically circulated consumer items. Following Rolando Tolentino, we suggest that the ways in which Filipinas circulate in cyberspace is symptomatic of U.S.-Philippine neocolonial relations.[18] The circuits of cyberspace disseminate a concealed politics of power and desire that underpins what Renato Rosaldo calls "imperialist nostalgia."[19]

Circuits of multinationalism, militarism, and transnationalism, symptomatic of U.S.-Philippine colonial and neocolonial relations, continue to enmesh representations and realities of Filipina bodies in global capitalism's networks of desire and consumption. Filipinas circulate as particular commodities—of labor and pleasure—within Asian networks, marking historical and emerging intra-Asian national hierarchies. *Newsweek*'s "New Asia" elides the ways in which communications technologies like the Internet discursively and materially discipline Filipina bodies in multiple, historically familiar ways. This regulation of

Filipina bodies is perpetuated for the flexible accumulation of the Philippine state and global capital, and for the pleasure of and consumption by prospective husbands (in Europe and the United States) and middle class women (in Asia's Tiger economies, as well as in the Philippines itself).

Second, as Neferti Tadiar argues, Filipina bodies "become sites for the construction of and contestation over the nation abroad."[20] With technology that can virtually tour the ends of the earth in a matter of seconds, one can explore and shape the contours of the Filipina body and the Philippine state. On the Internet, representations of Filipinas become synonymous with the Philippines as a nation-state. Searching the Internet for *Philippines* and specific Philippine localities, for instance, obtains mail-order bride and domestic-worker agencies as well as sex sites. Using the search engine Infoseek we searched for *Cebu* and found (with an 84 percent match) mail-order bride agencies like "A Cebu Bride" specializing in women from a particular locality. Even on mail-order bride sites that do not explicitly focus on Filipina women from particular regions, one can, as in www.holton.com/filipina, pick a woman by city. Boundaries are necessarily staked on the Internet, and Filipina women's bodies act as markers for national and regional borders. Particular localities are evoked on the Internet to elicit specific kinds of consumption and desire that are predicated on reified difference.

Third, the Philippines' foreign capital-dependent economic program, which promotes the expansion of export production and the tourism industry, requires the production of difference and the disciplining (both "violently" and "benevolently") of Filipinas as "cheap" and "docile" workers on the one hand, and "beautiful" and "generous" embodiments of the nation on the other. While the Philippine state must regulate its national borders in order to discipline Filipina labor (its most profitable export) as it moves in and out of these borders, these very same borders continue to be salient in the ether of cyberspace. Neoliberal development in the Philippines means that "modes of labor regulation extend beyond the capitalist workplace per se to domestic units and to capitalist nation-states—the latter engaging in discursive inscription and control."[21] The Philippine state, in order to promote tourism, celebrates Filipina women's beauty by hosting Miss Universe pageants in order to establish itself as an exotic destination and a land of beautiful women.[22] As labor export has outpaced tourism and export production as the country's top source of foreign exchange, the Philippine state has deployed nationalist narratives as a means of containing Filipina migrant workers while simultaneously requiring their mobility.

Last, representations of Filipinas in cyberspace have real, material consequences. While constructed and imaginary, they no less constitute and are constituted by lived social relations. In cyberspace, the ideologies and technologies of racialization and sexualization materialize on the Filipina body. Donna Haraway argues that "communications technolog[ies] . . . are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women worldwide."[23] Following Haraway, we argue that the Internet is a

crucial tool of globalization, sedimenting and enforcing particular and familiar meanings on Filipina bodies. What "Filipina" signifies, and how Filipina bodies circulate on the Internet problematizes the ways in which capital functions and represents itself. Filipinas signify "outposts" of difference on the cyberfrontier, embodying the very difference that neoliberal democratic discourses reject or nominally accept. At the same time that Filipinas stand for the "other" on the cyberfrontier, representations of Filipinas that litter the Internet rely on prefigured, already constituted notions of Filipinas that erase important differences among them. Filipinas embody continuing histories of violent imperialisms. Images of Filipinas on the Internet sustain old imperial fictions, fantasies, and imaginaries that shape desires for relaxation, wives, prostitutes and ultimately domestics and low-wage workers.[24] As Lisa Nakamura states, in this modality, cyberspace "reinforces a post-body ideology which reproduces the assumption of the old one."[25] Filipina bodies functioned—then and now—as repositories of difference. We insist on calling attention to difference in order to reveal how individualism and democracy on the Internet are in fact ideologies of power that conceal the unevenness of "real" life. The "si(gh)ting" of Filipinas has real-life impacts, discursively legitimizing, normalizing, and naturalizing the diasporic Filipina body as domestic, prostitute, whore, for sale.

Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre's work on the creation of "abstract space" is a useful detour here because he reiterates that "capital and capitalism 'influence' practical matters relating to space."[26] We draw from Lefebvre's method, which aims to find a syntax of space that would "expose the actual production of space."[27] Because "(social) space is a (social) product," Lefebvre claims that there must be a process of abstraction that conceals the social relations embedded in space.[28] He argues that capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the "world of commodities," its "logic" and its worldwide strategies.[29] From Lefebvre we argue that the ways Filipinas are "searched" on Internet search engines are particularly problematic as the images that circulate in cyberspace are passed off as "information" and "knowledge"—abstracted from uneven social relations. Andrew Herman and John H. Sloop likewise argue that "utopian dreams of bodily transcendence" must be rewritten and reworked in order to expose the networks of corporate capitalism as well as the histories of colonialism and imperialism that underwrite the development of technology.[30] Indeed, the ways search engines function are neither objective nor transparent. The information that is at the fingertips of the user has already been filtered through several layers of inequity.

Technologics

Cyberspace, created by new and expanding communications technologies, cannot be abstracted from the social and material relations in which it is embedded. The Internet is still the domain of the first world. The basic technological infrastructure that enables the creation of search engines and the enormous databases

they must support are owned and located mainly in the United States and a very few European nations. With the American deregulation of ICTs in 1996, the concentration of ownership in this industry has increased. Even now, with the rest of the world supposedly becoming wired, the United States and Europe still control how information is delivered on a simple search like "Filipina." Meaning making is not a democratic process.[31]

Ironically, the origins of information and communications technologies—the rational tools of progress and capitalism—are mired in the anxieties of the Cold War. The offspring of ARPANET, a communications network first developed by the U.S. Department of Defense, the Internet today is still an American-dominated medium, even as it is a "World Wide Web."[32] As the progeny of Cold War paranoia and surveillance ideologies, it is implicated in the spread of capitalist democracy against the encroachments of communism. *Newsweek*'s "New Asia" illustrates how ICTs are imbricated in a self-consciously "progressive" colonizing project that looks to the third world as a frontier. "Technologic" has made the "less-developed" countries of the third world objects of various interventions "by uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people."[33]

While technologic is used as a means of justifying intervention, technology itself is an intervention. Development experts promote the expansion of new technologies (production, communication, etc.) that also serve as a kind of "moral force" enabling the spread of modernist ideals.[34] The easy access to information furthers the aims of neoliberalism, as rational economic actors are enabled to make (more) rational economic choices. Information technology unleashes the liberating forces of the (more perfect) market. What difference may have threatened, informationalism can overcome. The "free trade" of commodities that developmentalism sought to secure, enforced by institutions like the World Trade Organization in partnership with global capital and third world states, has become more efficiently facilitated with the Internet.

Ultimately, then, information technology is about the surveillance of new subjects and the creation of new markets. Coco Fusco points out that "the political and economic implications of its centrality to globalization are elided by the repeated fetishization of new technologies as the primary agent of democracy."[35] Following Fusco, we argue that information and communication technology is not merely about knowledge and democratizing information exchange but also about the consolidation of a cash nexus for globalizing capital. Scholars such as Fusco and Olu Oguibe have long argued that the digital divide breaks down on familiar global lines. As Fusco notes, "The digital revolution has provided the technology that has reorganized what used to be known as the third world, making those territories into low end markets and low wage labor pools for multinational corporations."[36] New technologies, imbricated in capitalism, thrive on difference.

While the Internet's exponential growth in the past ten years has made information technology a priority in developed and developing countries' economies, what has resulted instead of technological progress is a second "brain drain." The Philippines today provides a large bulk of the global information technology (IT) workforce, and technology-driven degree programs are multiplying at a rapid rate, creating a new batch of exportable workers to ease the nation's perennial financial straits. Their English proficiency, a colonial legacy, is seen as a "comparative advantage" in the global information technology (IT) market. In August 2001, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared in her State of the Nation address that information technology is the "foundation of the Philippines' future economic development." However, the fact that Filipinos might be making a mark in the IT workforce has not made an impact on the meanings attached to Filipina bodies on the Internet for the simple reason that the IT workers are cyberspace's wage laborers and not its owners.

"Information" on the Internet is never objective or exhaustive. The creation of a world of information to be searched is predicated on critical exclusions and inequities. For those of us who have access to the Net, the immediacy of information retrieved allows us to believe that *all* the information "out there" is at *our* fingertips. However, "even the largest of the search engines, Inktomi, has indexed only about half the web."[37] Also, and most important, this indexed information is always already mediated on several levels.

The process of creating "objective " information is deeply subjective. Several kinds of search-engine companies exist to index the information available on the web. These companies first create "universes" of webpages that their search engines "crawl" and from which they retrieve particular kinds of search requests. The "directory style" search engine utilizes a clearly subjective process for reviewing, registering, and indexing websites to include in its "universe." This is dependent on human editors, who hand-index information.

One of the more popular search engines, Yahoo!, is not really a search engine at all, but rather "a team of editors [who] index the Internet." Yahoo! creates its universe from individually submitted forms that contain information about the site.[38] The second kind of search engine (that of Google, Alta Vista, or Excite) uses computer-generated algorithms. These function according to the "personality" of the particular search-engine company, which decides how to organize searches and create a hierarchy of information. For instance, Google's link-based search algorithm prioritizes websites according to the number of sites to which it is linked. Others are linguistically based, with search results depending on the number of search words on particular sites. In either case, a certain kind of cultural capital is necessary in order to create a website that will appear at the top of a search result: "Some people will do almost anything to receive a top ranking from a heavily used search engine . . . [because] the first response in a search will bring more viewers, more business."[39] These techniques include pages that repeat a key word many times in "invisible type" (that is, using the same color as the color of the page) so that the search engine ranks a certain website as more relevant, and therefore, higher on the search results list.[40]

The complex algorithms that enable the completion of a particular search are created by human programmers who are shaped by the social relations in which they live. The recent spate in hiring of linguists, psychologists and sociologists by Silicon Valley is no accident.[41] Technology is becoming more and more aware that it needs language and behavioral analysts in order to predict market behavior and consumer choices. One particular website consulting company, Cyber Eyes, advertises: "Convert Your Website Into An Energized Matrix Of Keyword Power Phrases Which Search Engines Will LOVE!" One of its consultants advertises the fact that he is a "wordsmith, with a B.A. in Classical English literature . . . a published writer, poet and fiction author" who has the requisite skill "when it comes to squeezing keywords into short sentences to maximize keyword density."[42]

Ultimately, "information" is not free. While each search engine is run differently, website applicants who wish to be registered on a particular search engine database must pay. As Michael Specter writes, "The most direct way to get your Website to the top of a search—and the most pernicious—is to pay for it."[43] In fact, companies can bid on certain key words, such as "travel" or "sex" paying a search engine like GoTo a certain amount for every person who clicks on their sites. For profit-based popular sites, this is a bargain. For others, such as nonprofit websites like Gabriela (a Philippine-based alliance of progressive women's organizations), this means that it must compete with Gabriella (a popular porn site). Deadlock Design, a website promotion/consulting company affiliated with Cyber Eyes boasts that it can "handle everything for you . . . build your site . . . promote it . . . and add sophisticated interactive systems if that's your pleasure" all for the low price of $499 for preparation and submission (to search engine companies) and $125 per month for maintenance.[44] Market forces come into play when websites that can afford to pay for promotions services (such as for-profit mail-order sites) appear near the top of a search list for "Filipina," as opposed to a young New York–based lesbian Pinay writer such as Bamboo Girl.

The linking of *Filipina* to *sex, mail-order bride,* or *domestic* is no accident. It is shaped by those who have the capital to hire or buy them, as key words can be purchased. In businesses that concentrate on analyzing keyword power and strategy, keyword reports are sold to interested companies who want to maximize their market value.[45] As Deadlock Designs states, "With zillions of people and sites coming online, the engines and directories simply want to cull out the Lightweights, to make room for Heavyweights. This is all very simple: Survival of the Fittest."[46] Thus, while Filipinos are presently becoming a visible presence in the lower and middle rungs of the global IT industry, Filipinas continue to travel the circuits of the web as flesh for sale.

Wives, Workers, and Whores

Search engines change the Filipina into cyberscript, change and conflating her body into "sex/worker"—rendering her into a universal code. The results of a search using *Filipina* illustrate the ways in which cyberspace erases and conflates difference. Examining websites of Filipina mail-order bride companies and domestic-helper agencies demonstrates the interchangeability of Filipina identities on the Internet. On these websites, Filipinas are commodities displayed, processed, and sold (sometimes returned) to particular kinds of consumers. Specific visualizations render Asian women, and, we argue, Filipinas in particular, as "the most immediately conjurable" embodiment of "garment worker," "factory girl," or "G.I. prostitute." This Asian working body is simultaneously erased of historical and material specificities, then exported and circulated as a specular signifier of broader socioeconomic formations such as "the global assembly line," the "export processing zone," "military prostitution," and/or "sex/tourism."[47] Filipinas in cyberspace are the site at which these various identities are conflated. In websites for pen pals, brides, and domestics, we note a significant similarity in the ways Filipinas are represented.

The "Filipina Penpal" site invites the "browser" to "meet beautiful women from the Philippines, Manila and Cebu."[48] On the main menu, "Filipina Penpal" offers the user the opportunity to view "sincere and marriage minded" women by age group: 18-22, 23-25, 26-34, and 35 and up. Further, it offers information on and services for immigration and visas, including a direct link to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, as well as detailed information on INS regulations pertaining to "mail order brides." It also provides travel tips, links to the best airfares, and a dollar converter to make the consumer's transaction efficient and easy. When one clicks on an age group to see the women, head shots of women are arranged catalog style and are identified by name. One can choose a woman's picture that lists further details about her, such as her age, height, and weight and a short description. Women are variously described as "loyal," "sincere," and "quiet." To purchase the pen-pal service, checks or money orders are sent, appropriately enough, to a postal address at "Colonial Station" in Massachusetts. Note once again that this site is purportedly for "pen pals."

At "A Filipina Bride," (www.afilipinabride.com), one can order online with Visa, MasterCard and even American Express (never having to leave home). On this site, pages of women can be browsed by age group.[49] In this case, however, women are identified by first name and last initial only and are assigned an identification number. Addresses are ordered by inputting a particular identification number on the online order form. As in "Filipina Penpal," a woman's vital statistics are available: age, height, and weight. Here, at least, women can describe themselves in a brief sentence. While it is arguable just how much room for self-statement a prospective bride has on this site, we suggest that whatever self-statement, allowed is highly circumscribed by market forces. "A Filipina Bride," however, is not exclusively focused on Filipinas. It also features women from throughout Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, encouraging the user to "Click Here Now! Do It!" (fast, while supplies last). What is significant, though, is the way that this particular site stands for the traffic of other women, and not just Filipinas, while using "Filipina" as its signifier for spouses that can be purchased. In this way, "Filipina" becomes a universal icon for the mail-order bride industry.

Like "A Filipina Bride" and "Filipina Penpal," potential domestic helpers can be browsed by age group with the added feature of browsing by body build (e.g., small, medium, large or tall). In "Maids on Line," selecting "on-line services" from the main menu leads to a site that depicts a map of the Philippines and Indonesia.[50] Women's faces color the map. One can click on these faces to get detailed information on the women themselves, or click onto the designated icons to view video presentations about the countries. The women's photographs are arranged onscreen almost exactly like the online catalogs for mail-order brides. Head shots, and sometimes full body shots, are shown. The women are identified by ID number, sometimes by name. Their age, height, and weight follow. In addition to those basic statistics, information on their religion and educational background is included.

Our point in reviewing the websites above is to highlight the strikingly similar ways in which Filipina women are sited/sighted on websites devoted to providing different services. A search for *foreign domestic helper, Filipina domestic* or *domestic helper* also pulled up mail-order bride sites. Under *Filipina domestic,* websites like the ones described above were found, but some also featured specific women, drawn from "pen pal" or "introductory" services, who identified themselves as domestic workers, in countries outside of the Philippines. What these websites and searches actually suggest is that Filipina bodies are si(gh)ted as simultaneously bodies of pleasure and consumption, as well as bodies for labor. Filipina women's bodies are important for their corporeality (age, height, weight) and the desires their corporeal bodies can fulfill—as good wives and diligent domestic-helpers. Search engines and webmasters, as well as the services themselves, often conflate these categories. Filipinas are closely inspected and ultimately processed for their desirability in a way analogous to American slave auctions. Mail-order bride and domestic-helper sites ultimately promise deliverance for Filipinas while guaranteeing "love" for prospective husbands and help to middle-class women. The benevolence of love or a job belies the commodification of Filipina women's bodies and the ways in which these visualizations rob Filipinas of subjectivity. While some of these sites offer space for women to speak for themselves, it is rarely outside of the parameters set by businesses catering to their customers' desires.[51]

Further, in the course of studying different websites, we found instances not only where Filipina bodies are interchangeable, but, indeed, where *Filipina* becomes a kind of universal signifier for other women's bodies. On the "Filipina Bride" webpage, for example, *Filipina* becomes the signifier for multinational

women. At the same time, however, Filipinas remain distinct. At this site, catalogs of "beautiful Filipina women" and "beautiful women of all nations" are separate. In another example, a sex site entitled "Filipina Fantasies," Filipina bodies are noticeably absent.[52] Only one picture of a Filipina in a bikini is pictured while pornographic pictures of white women crowd the page. While the site boasts of "uncensored Filipina sex action" including photo galleries, chat rooms, sex stories, and movie clips—they cannot be accessed by a nonpaying surfer. What is accessible are film clips of Japanese pornography, or nude pictures of Pamela Anderson—not Filipinas. This was also true of "Filipina Hardcore," a site linked to "Filipina Fantasies."[53]

As the Philippines continue to export thousands of Filipinas to work as domestics, entertainers, and low-wage service workers throughout Asia, it becomes clear that Filipinas render specific purposes in the bodies they occupy. The circulation of Filipina workers' bodies is not innocent or natural. They are disciplined as "sincere," "loyal," and "quiet," which invariably translates into "docile" and "cheap"—a boon to the struggling Philippine state and the profit-seeking multinational corporation. Filipina women are fixed in cyberspace to be sighted and known by ostensibly first-world or "modern" users for their pleasure and consumption. A Filipina in cyberspace "speaks" to the desires, fantasies and imaginations her viewer is thought to have; her self-narrations are prescreened for her consumer.

Parting Words: Agency and Its Discontents

The question with which we struggle now is, given the ways in which Filipina women are circulated as icons and offspring of an unholy alliance between militarism and capitalism on the Internet, how can this same technology offer subversive potentials to undo histories of exploitation today?

Many scholars have written about the ways in which ICTs have failed to live up to their liberatory promise, particularly for the subaltern body politic. Some argue that the Internet's claims to leave the body behind are specious, particularly for women and people of color who have access to these technologies.[54] Critiques also point out the ways in which the Internet is run in the interests of capital.[55] Others look to the ways that "different" unruly bodies are absorbed and commodified by capitalism in ways that render them benign and yet irreducibly "other." Lisa Nakamura argues that Internet corporate discourses of a "postethnic America" claim to eradicate race and "the rest of it," even as difference itself is used to boost a product's marketability.[56] Jennifer González similarly argues that a different kind of tourism occurs where Internet consumers of avatar sites surf racial and gendered identities unlike their own, reinforcing already accepted racial and sexual stereotypes through an interpellative process of "cyberpassing."[57]

On the other hand, we must also seriously contend with research that has found its way into a cautious but optimistic view of these same technologies.

Many scholars have written about the potential that ICTs have for reframing and rearticulating a more complex and self-reflexive subaltern feminist politics. Marisa Belausteguigotia Rius, Kekula P. Bray Crawford, and Alloo Fatma have noted the effects and potentials of the Internet for third- and fourth-world feminist struggles.[58] Mimi Nguyen chooses to forgo visibility in her website altogether, rejecting cyberspace's "offer of abstraction," which insinuates that "it's [her Asian female] body—and not the cultural logic that organizes and disciplines [her] body—which checks [her] access into allegedly democratic publics."[59]

Arturo Escobar argues that linked with a critical concept of local place, a "political ecology of cyberculture" can be a useful tool for "a defence of places out of which gender and ecological relations might emerge transformed."[60] Donna Haraway's now classic essay on cyborgs, as well as her responses to critics of that essay, attempt to find modalities of agency through the "monstrous self" created by the hybridity of women and technology.[61] For Haraway, cyborg politics provide a way to disrupt the universal code that commodifies certain bodies more readily than others. In Haraway and Escobar's views of the subversive potential of IC technologies, technology and science itself are not demonized, but rather reclaimed from the site of virtuality where "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism" reside.[62] In this sense, Filipina cyberbodies can both reproduce as well as haunt reality. To the extent that these visual bodies haunt flickering screens (and hence, global imaginaries), they illustrate the violence of reification as wives, workers, and whores. However, we must note that the potential heteroglossia that their bodies signify is rarely enunciated—it is more often than not concealed, transformed, and disarmed in the service of capital. Their potentially transformative heteroglossia is abstracted in the process of production and consumption. For Filipinas, the fictions that litter the Internet are representations crafted by discursive strategies perfected by global capital and the Philippine state in "real life"—rarely from Filipinas themselves. The Filipina self-representations that we have found are highly circumscribed by the constructions of particular websites, but, more important, by the webs of power in which they are enmeshed.

There's no denying that Filipina women exercise agency in a variety of different forms and forums such as Gabriela, the New People's Army, various nongovernmental organizations and cooperatives, and so on. Isis International, an Asian-based women's group, suggests that the lack of access and training for women in impoverished nations continues to pose a big hurdle for notions of democracy through connectivity, even as there are slow gains being made.[63] Gabriela, an alliance of progressive Filipina women's organizations that targets, among other issues, the global trafficking of women, has established itself online but is also highly aware of the ways in which the technology it is using to disseminate information is the same one that eases the trafficking of women.

What we also found, however, is that technology is quick to adapt and circumscribe the ways in which information is sought out. As we mentioned earlier, looking up *Gabriella* instead of *Gabriela* on the Internet ironically brings up a site devoted to pornography rather than the website for the largest alliance of Filipina women's organizations globally. Even *Pinay,* a popular catchword for ostensibly politically conscious Filipinas in the United States, has been appropriated as a synonym for *Filipina* on the Internet. Typing in *Pinay* brings up, along with websites on Pinay music and personal websites, sites such "Sexiest Pinay Celebrities," "White Pinay Lover Messages," and "The Pinay Pleasures Webring."[64] Intriguingly juxtaposed to the *Pinay Webring,* which targets "aLL The PiNaY GiRLz oR GuYz WhO WaNNa ShOw THiEr PiNa(o)Y PriDe ThROuGh ThIer HomEPagEz," the Pinay *Pleasures* Webring promises "some of the finest Filipina ladies on the Net."[65] Even common misspellings of *Filipina* or *Philippines* are accounted for. While there is more space for Pinays in their personal web pages who are "RePrEsEnTiN' To ThA FuLLeSt" [*sic*], we are uneasy with the prospects of agency or subversion in this space.[66]

While we agree with Haraway and Escobar that the Internet's social space is at once the site of hegemony and counterhegemony, we continue to have reservations about the possibilities of "contradiction" in this space when it is clear that any eruptions of violence are usually aimed at Filipina women's bodies.[67] Instead, we find that the internet eases the processing of Filipina bodies into the circuits of capital.[68] With search results like these, do scholars located in the first world need to reassess our definitions of agency even as we must necessarily keep the slippery power relationships on the Internet in view? What are the possibilities and alternatives of representation in a medium that insists on abstract identities even as it reifies certain bodies as "specular delicacies" and commodities for the consumption of the first world?

Performativity of identities, a potentially powerful process, is unavailable to most Filipinas who are being reified as "visual treats." There is little heterogeneity regarding the kinds of identities preconstituted for Filipinas on the Net, which is not to say that it does not exist in other media and other spaces.[69] For example, Pinays on ostensibly non- mail-order, pen-pal, or domestic-worker sites identify themselves with similar markers of femininity, such as "lil" (little), "swyt" (sweet), "QT" (cutie), and "enchanting." While this could be read as self-affirming play with language, this self-infantilization reveals the tenuousness of agency when even scripts for self-representation are caught in capitalistic and neoliberal webs of power. Neoliberalism assures the opportunity for free, individual self-statement, even as capitalism curtails the language available for this statement. Upon entering the realm of cyberrepresentation, Filipinas are often inadequately represented and shuttled into pregiven representational categories constructed for them by an inadequate language. The key search words used to inscribe/describe Filipina identity on the Internet are more often that not, frozen in their meanings. Search engines, tools used to categorize, the Filipina, are more readily constructed to pull up certain definitions that center around her reified body.

We argue, that while representations of Filipinas in cyberspace leave room for incisive political critique, cyberspace as it exists in its first world–centered, class-biased incarnation is a limited space of agency for Filipinas and other women who are passed around in global capitalism's circuits of desire. It may in fact not be the critical space for the exercise of agency and resistance—at least on the part of Filipinas who are being trafficked in various ways. At best, it allows them a space for survival and out of the depressing economic situation in the Philippines—which is, in itself, a liberating move for many. On the other hand, it circulates and disciplines them as particular commodities. Thus, the cyberfrontier as "democratic" becomes important for us to critique especially when the Internet is being celebrated as the new space for transnational solidarity and struggle by some and "commercial democracy" by others. While it does provide the mechanism for the fast transfer of information, we must question how women's solidarities and alliances are forged in this space, which abstracts Filipinas from their historical and material specificities. On the other hand, dismissing its usefulness to scholars and activists alike would be foolish. For many Filipino/a activists and scholars, the Internet is a substantial resource for research, networking, and coalition building. Our objectives in this paper, however, have been to dismantle the celebration of this final, abstract frontier and to critique the interlinked aspects of race, gender, class and sexuality as they play out, and are lived through, particular disenfranchised bodies.

Further, as we enter the twenty-first century, we believe that the reemergence of colonizing discourses of progress that have cropped up with the expansion of internet technologies must force us to take pause. There is a danger in these discourses, particularly as scholars are swept up in their so-called liberatory promise. There are critical parallels, and we would argue, critical linkages between technologies of imperialism in the last century and today's technologies of globalization. Even while there are important differences between the colonialism of old and globalization today, we believe it is necessary to draw out the connections that continue to enable the logic of capitalism as it changes over time—if only to create responsive and responsible strategies of resistance. In order to be able to flesh out the nuances for a viable and informed critical politics of feminism on the Internet, feminists who have access to and enjoy its services need to take into account the place of Filipina and other "othered" bodies in this abstract and abstracting space.

Notes

1. Dorinda Elliot, "Asia's Big Bang," *Newsweek International,* July–September 2000, 8.
2. George Wehrfritz, "Liberated by the Internet," *Newsweek International,* July–September 2000, 14.

3. Kiyoshi Nishikawa, "Power to the People," *Newsweek International,* July–September 2000, 20.
4. Elliot, "Asia's Big Bang," 11.
5. Barbara Koh, "Rise of the Asian Woman," *Newsweek International,* July–September 2000, 36.
6. In this paper we use the term *Filipina* to refer to women of Philippine descent in the diaspora.
7. See Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 1 (1992): 1–43; Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Laura Hyun Yi Kang, "Si(gh)ting Asian/American Women As Transnational Labor," *Positions* 5, no. 2 (1997): 403–38; Neferti Tadiar, "Domestic Bodies of the Philippines," *Sojourn* 12, no. 2 (1997): 153–91.
8. Wehrfritz, "Liberated by the Internet," 14.
9. We think in particular of the ad campaigns for companies like Hewlett-Packard, whose motto of "e-inclusion" is illustrated by a picture of unspecified, yet rural and "traditional" third-world women on its website who now, ostensible, have access and can be counted in modernity's census. Another example is the cover of the October 1999 *Silicon Valley Tech Week,* which depicts a crouched African man in a loincloth, holding a bow and arrow in one hand and a cellular phone in the other. The accompanying article discusses how wireless technology is enabling the entrance of the third world into cyberspace (although it does not discuss who exactly embodies the third-world party being celebrated). For a discussion on exoticized visualizations and "difference," see Judith Williamson, "Woman Is an Island: Femininity and Colonization," in *Studies in Entertainment,* ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles University of California Press, 1989); and Lisa Nakamura, "Where Do You Want to Go Today? Cybernetic Tourism, the Internet, and Transnationality," in *Race in Cyberspace,* ed. Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15–26.
10. Donna Hughes, "The Internet and the Global Prostitution Industry," in *CyberFeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity,* ed. Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1999), 157–84.
11. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). See also M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist Geneaologies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
12. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990); Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987); and Lowe, *Immigrant Acts.*
13. Cynthia Enloe, "Martial Races and Ladies' Drinks," paper presented at the Inaugural Lecture for the Center for the Study of Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley 2002.
14. Ziauddin Sardar, "alt.civilizations.faq: Cyberspace as the Darker Side of the West," in *Cyberfutures: Culture and Politics of the Information Superhighway,* ed. Ziauddin Sardar and Jerome R. Ravetz (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 22.
15. Jeff Ow, "The Revenge of the Yellowfaced Cyborg Terminator: The Rape of Digital Geishas and the Colonization of Cyber Coolies in 3d Realm's *Shadow Warrior,*" in *Race in Cyberspace,* ed. Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman (New York: Routledge, 2000), 51–68.
16. While pronouncing itself a democracy and offering itself up as a model of representative government for the rest of the world, the United States proceeded, in the War of 1898, to violently "acquire" the territories "ceded" by Spain. The Philippines, along with Cuba and Puerto Rico, were one of the first American colonies. On these foreign islands, fantasies of frontier manliness and a civilizing mission could take place, even as thousands of native bodies were raped, maimed, and killed during the course of "pacification" and "benevolent assimilation." See Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); and Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982). Not coincidentally, the same players who populate Frederick Jackson Turner's paean to the Western frontier appear in the American subjugation of the Philippines. Cowboys and the rugged Western pioneer remade their beleaguered identities on the "empty" islands across the Pacific Ocean. See Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood;* Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An American Mind,* ed. Mario R. DiNunzio (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994). The United States, in the Spanish- and Philippine-American wars, established itself as the emerging global enforcer of liberal democracy. Lisa Lowe argues that it is through these wars in Asia that the United States further attempted to resolve the constant contradictions that haunted democracy and capitalism (Lowe, *Immigrant Acts).* The Philippines provided a space for the vanishing American frontier, bringing opportunities for militarism, economic expansion, and, ultimately, domestic political stability in the United States. As Amy Kaplan points out, the colonial project galvanized American nation formation by exporting its domestic conflicts, bringing together the rugged individual and industrial capital in a unifying imperial adventure; (see Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism,* ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993). On Philippine shores, then, two seemingly contradictory ideologies are wedded through the creation of an "other" to be colonized.
17. See Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases;* Venny Villapando, "The Business of Selling Mail-Order Brides," in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women,* ed. Asian Women United of California (Boston: Beacon Press,1989), 318–26; Rebecca Villones, "Women in the Silicon Valley," in Asian Women United of California, eds., *Making Waves,* 172–76; Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Uy Eviota, *The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labor in the Philippines* (London: Zed Books, 1992); Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine, *Women of a Lesser Cost: Female Labor, Foreign Exchange, and Philippine Development* (London: Pluto Press, 1995); Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Filipina Women: Your Global Servants," in *Manuel Ocampo: Heridas de la Lengua,* ed. Pilar Perez (Santa Monica: Smart Art Press, 1997), 72–74; and Robyn Rodriguez, "Embodied Resistances, Contested Sexualities and Alternative Nationalisms: Perspectives on Philippines International Migration," unpublished paper, 1998.
18. Rolando Tolentino, "Bodies, Letters, Catalogs: Filipinas in Transnational Space," *Social Text* 14 (1996): 49–74.
19. Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
20. Neferti Tadiar, "Domestic Bodies of the Philippines," *Sojourn* 12, no. 2 (1997): 153–91. See also Emily Noelle Ignacio, "Ain't I a Filipino (Woman)? An Analysis of Authorship/Authority Through the Construction of 'Filipina' on the Net," *Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2000): 551–72.
21. Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, eds., *Ungrounded Empires* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 10.

22. See Linda Richter, *The Politics of Tourism in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); and Walden Bello and Robin Broad, "The International Monetary Fund in the Philippines," in *The Philippines Reader,* ed. David Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 261–67.
23. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 595.
24. See Kang, "Si(gh)ting Asian/American Women As Transnational Labor;" Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases;* and Ignacio, "Ain't I a Filipino (Woman)?"
25. Lisa Nakamura, "After-Images of Identity: Gender, Technology and Identity Politics," paper presented at The Discipline and Deviance: Gender, Technology and Machines Conference, Duke University, October 2–3, 1998.
26. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 9.
27. Ibid., 16.
28. Ibid., 26.
29. Ibid., 36, 53.
30. Andrew Herman and John H. Sloop, "'Red Alert!' Rhetorics of the World Wide Web and 'Friction Free' Capitalism," in *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory: Magic, Metaphor, Power,* ed. Andrew Herman and Thomas Swiss (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 86.
31. Discourses on Filipinas in the West circulating in circuits other than cyberspace are constituted by and constitutive of representations of Filipina bodies on the Internet. In the early 1990s, to cite a popular culture example, a *Frasier* episode on NBC featured a segment entitled, "Quick, get Manila on the Phone." Niles, Frasier's brother, enters the scene announcing that his wife had spent $20,000 on a facelift. His father retorts that with that kind of money, Niles "could have bought a brand-new wife from the Philippines." The *Frasier* episode epitomizes the dynamics of international power that contribute to popular notions and images of Filipinas that are exacerbated by the fact that the West literally owns the hardware of communications technologies.
32. Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, *Mapping Cyberspace* (New York: Routledge, 2000), and Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein, "Introduction: Cyberfeminism," in Hawthorne and Klein, eds., *Cyberfeminism.*
33. James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 256.
34. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
35. Coco Fusco, "At Your Service: Latinas in the Global Information Network." Keynote lecture for the 1998 conference of the Inter-Society for Electronic Arts, online at <htttp://www.hkw.de/forum/forum1/doc/text/fusco-isea98.html>.
36. Fusco, "At Your Service." See also Olu Oguibe, "Forsaken Geographies: Cyberspace and the New World," paper presented at the Fifth International Cyberspace Conference, Madrid, June 1996, online at <http://eng.hss.cmu.edu/internet/oguibe/>.
37. Michael Specter, "Search and Deploy: The Race to Build a Better Search Engine," *New Yorker,* May 29, 2000, 90.
38. Ibid., 90.
39. Ibid., 88, 90.
40. See Specter, "Search and Deploy," as well as the Cyber Eyes webpage, <http://www.meta-tags.com>, which gives advice regarding website promotion as well as offering professional services for a fee.
41. Thanks to Inderpal Grewal, who pointed this trend out to us.
42. See the Cyber Eyes webpage, <http://www.meta-tags.com>.
43. Specter, "Search and Deploy," 91.
44. See the Cyber Eyes webpage, <http://www.meta-tags.com>.

45. See the Wordtracker website, <http://www.wordtracker.com>.
46. See the Cyber Eyes webpage, <http://www.meta-tags.com>.
47. Kang, "Si(gh)ting Asian/American Women As Transnational Labor," 202.
48. See the Filipina Penpal website, <http://www.filipinapenpal.com>.
49. See the Filipina Bride website, <http://www.afilipinabride.com>.
50. See Maids Online, <http://www.maids-online.com.sg>.
51. At "Filipina Penpal" for example, a woman can apply to have her picture (for free no less) on the website. Required to answer a questionnaire, she must sign an agreement that commits her to responding to all of her suitors even if she decides she does not want to write to them. Failure to do so would threaten her presence on the website and ultimately, her chances of meeting men. Only once she agrees to sign the agreement can she use the back of the application to describe herself in more detail.
52. See the Filipina Fantasies website, <http://www.filipinafantasies.com>.
53. See the Filipina Hardcore website, <http://www.filipinahardcore.com>.
54. Alecia Wolf, "Exposing the Great Equalizer: Demythologizing Internet Equity," in *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia? Race, Class and Gender on the Internet,* ed. Bosah Ebo (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 15–32; Meta G. Carstarphen and Jacqueline Johnson Lambaise, "Domination and Democracy in Cyberspace: Reports From the Majority Media and Ethnic/Gender Margins," in Ebo, ed., *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia?* 121–35; and Nina Wakeford, "Gender and the Landscapes of Computing in an Internet Café," *in The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader,* ed. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kath Woodward, and Fiona Hovenden (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 291–304.
55. Vivian Sobchack, "Democratic Franchise and the Electronic Frontier," in Sardar and Ravetz, eds. *Cyberfutures,* 77–89; Robert McChesney, "So Much for the Magic of Technology and the Free Market: The World Wide Web and the Corporate Media System," in Herman and Swiss, eds., *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory,* 5–35; Granville Williams, "Selling Off Cyberspace," in *Access Denied In the Information Age,* ed. Stephen Lax (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 178–98.
56. Lisa Nakamura, "'Where Do You Want to Go Today?' Cybernetic Tourism, the Internet, and Transnationality," in Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman, eds., *Race in Cyberspace,* 15–17.
57. Jennifer González, "The Appended Subject: Race and Identity As Digital Assemblage," in Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman, eds., *Race In Cyberspace,* 29.
58. Alloo Fatma, "Information Technology and Cyberculture," in *Women@Internet,* ed. Wendy Harcourt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 156–61; Marisa Belausteguigoitia Rius, "Crossing Borders: From Crystal Slippers to Tennis Shoes," in Harcourt, ed. *Women@Internet,* 23–30; and Kekula P. Bray-Crawford, "The Ho'okele Netwarriors in the Liquid Continent," in Harcourt, ed., *Women@Internet,* 162–73.
59. Mimi Nguyen, "Tales of an Asiatic Geek Girl: *Slant* from Paper to Pixels," in *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life,* ed. Alondra Nelson and Thuy Linh N. Tu with Alicia Headlam Hines (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 177–90.
60. Arturo Escobar, "Gender, Place and Networks: A Political Ecology of Cyberculture," in Harcourt, ed., *Women@Internet,* 53.
61. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 154; Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in *Cultural Studies,* ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1991), 295–337.
62. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 154.
63. Rhona Bautista, "Staking Their Claim: Women, Electronic Networking, and Training In Asia," in Harcourt, ed., *Women@Internet,* 173–83.
64. For these sites, see <http://pinaycelebs.fsn.net>, <http://www.egroups.com/list/white_pinay_lover>, and <http://lavendar.fortunecity.com/poiter/28/index.html>.

65. See <http://lavendar.fortunecity.com/poiter/28/index.html>.
66. See <http://come.to/lilpinay76>.
67. Because of the legal and material disadvantages that face them abroad, Filipina women are subject to multiply patriarchies: the execution of Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic, by the Singaporean government in 1995 is only one well-known example.
68. In searches for *foreign domestic helper* and *domestic helper,* sites operating in countries like Canada, Hong Kong, and Singapore offering placement services for Filipina domestic helpers were found. The Canadian site listed Canadian immigration regulations for domestic helpers with a special note on the specific educational requirements for Filipina, Chinese, and Hong Kong women. Meanwhile, a hospital website in Hong Kong advertises a "Domestic Helper Check" that includes a chest X-ray, pregnancy test, urine test, a stool test, an HIV test, and a doctor's consultation.
69. See for instance, Jane Margold's work on consumer narratives, which argues for Filipina domestics' construction of memory and identity as consumers even as they are exploited as workers in Hong Kong; Margold, "Pictured Selves: Photos and Videotapes by Domestic Workers in Hong Kong," paper delivered at the Sixth International Philippine Studies Conference, Manila, July 10–14, 2000.

10

Will the Real Indian Woman Log-On? Diaspora, Gender, and Comportment

LINTA VARGHESE

When I first encountered Meera, she was being charged as the following: "a foul-mouthed but temple-going woman, an openly bisexual/lesbian woman... a downright slutty woman." It was the first posting of a thread titled "Bring Back the Stigma," written by Anu, who felt compelled to post excerpts from an article by Donna Rice of the same title. The message was to serve as

> an antidote to some of the immodest trash Meera has posted in this newsgroup. If Meera's intelligent (if misguided) and powerfully persuasive writing style has skewed your sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not, and who is a slut and who is not, perhaps this will help deskew it.[1]

The excerpted article begins with an image of a teenage boy probing a *Penthouse* magazine. The author claims that looking at the pictures is "nothing more than a healthy curiosity about sex." However, "if he leafs through *Penthouse* without feeling furtive, something has gone wrong: his parents have failed to instill in him the values of modesty and self-restraint that are the bedrock of middle-class life." According to Rice, the best way to ensure the feeling of shame is through stigmatization, thus "while tolerating deviance, we can still stigmatize it." Anu's posting is not only an opprobrium against Meera and other Indian women who have "exploded on arrival in this more liberal society" but also of the other newsgroup members who tolerate or encourage them through their views and positions.

Although the bulk of the posting revolved around "immodest and trashy" behavior by newsgroup members, the questions in the closing paragraph provide the real source of Anu's concern. Ending his own words and introducing Rice's article, he writes,

> Makes you wonder what Indian culture and values are all about, anyways. Do these people really represent Indian women, or are they really Indian-born American women? Why do they lurk around these Indian