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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Dance and romance across racial boundaries: partnering with Filipino migrants in Seattle and Alaska in the early 20th century

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ABSTRACT

The article follows the migration patterns of Filipino students and workers to Seattle and Alaska and spaces where interracial intimacy thrived in the 1920s and 1930s. Against a backdrop of racial violence, gender hierarchies and cultural constraints, Filipino men and white women, European and Asian immigrants, Indigenous peoples and Filipino men socialized in Seattle dance halls, university social clubs, and Alaska salmon canneries. Migrant networks, labor infrastructures and the emergence of profit-driven leisure shaped both the formal and informal spaces and opportunities for interracial intimacy. Based on archival research of federal labor commission records, personal letters, Catholic social welfare archives, Filipino newspaper columns, and photography, the article explores how romantic and sexual relationships and friendship are appraised by both critics and by participants. Most striking are the different strategies employed to express masculinity and femininity, to dress and dance, and to explore affection, sexual attraction and romantic partnership. This article explores how and where does the visibility of the heterosexual romantic couple dominate and speculates on the eruption of transgender and queer intimate relations, through countervailing interpretations of complex arrays of attraction that resists pre-determining pairs.

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In 1924, 21-year-old Victorio Velasco landed in Seattle. He was a college graduate who taught at public schools in Manila and aspired to be a journalist and poet.[1] Filipino migrants like Velasco were often students, who paid tuition and expenses by cleaning houses, canning salmon, editing newspapers and recruiting fellow Filipino laborers in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. In Seattle, Velasco befriended Victor Edades, who had arrived from Manila in 1919 with six high school friends. Edades

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helped Velasco find work and opportunities to socialize. A bachelor for decades, Velasco courted white women students at university club teas, danced with native American women in Alaskan canneries, and patronized commercial dance halls in Seattle's Chinatown (Brown 2007; Kalaw-Ledesma and María Guerrero 1979). Velasco's and Edade's nightlife ventures and their relationships with women serve as a starting point to explore intimacy in different cross-cultural, cross-racial spaces.

Seattle was a nexus for labor recruitment and a transportation hub connecting workers to the Pacific North American extraction industries of timber, mining, fishing and agriculture connected by trade routes. The city grew exponentially as trans-pacific trade exploded after the conquest of the Philippines and annexation of Hawaii in 1898. Rail networks and shipping companies connected Seattle to Alaska, California and across the continent. In the 1920s, researchers estimated that Seattle had among the highest transient worker populations in the United States, as seasonal migrant laborers – migrants from Asia, Europe, indigenous Native peoples – and white settlers, sojourned in the city after short-term labor stints in lumber processing, fishing, salmon canning, coal mining and agriculture across the hinterlands of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska (Asaka 2022; Friday 1994; Fujita-Rony 2003).

In the first four decades of the twentieth century, 100,000 Filipino men and women migrated to Hawaii and the continental United States. Their mobility was facilitated by their liminal political status as subjects of U.S. Empire; Filipinos were neither immigrants nor citizens. In the wake of the 1898 U.S. conquest and pacification of the Philippines and their incorporation as an overseas territory, Filipinos were U.S colonial subjects – called U.S. nationals. When they travelled from Manila to the U.S. and to other imperial territories in Hawaii and Alaska, Filipinos avoided the jurisdiction of immigration restrictions and exclusions that curtailed entry for migrant workers from China, Japan, and India. They were also not subjected to the immigration quotas imposed on Southern and Eastern Europeans and Middle East immigrants by legislation in 1921 and 1924. However as colonized peoples with a liminal legal status, Filipinos were exploited as subservient workers. They confronted the racial hostility of white men who saw them as undercutting wages and appraised them sexual threats to white women. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, white men harassed, beat, and drove out Filipino workers in agricultural towns across the Pacific Coast. In 1934 their special legal status was rescinded by the Tydings McDuffie Act, which came at the price of establishing the Philippines as a commonwealth with a ten-year

path to independence. This change transformed the status of Filipinos in the United States as Asian alien immigrants, ended free immigration, and imposed an annual immigration quota of only fifty (Baldoz 2011; España-Maram 2006; Fujita-Rony 2003; Ngai 2002).

Edades and Velasco aspired to college education. They arrived in Seattle because the University of Washington readily accepted high school graduates from the Philippines and advertised a surplus of service positions to enable students to pay their tuition and expenses. After World War I, more than 14,000 Filipino students migrated to the U.S. to pursue higher education, and in the 1920s University of Washington counted Filipino students as its largest contingent of foreign students. This colonial educational migration was inspired by the five hundred pensionados who received U.S. government scholarships in the immediate aftermath of U.S. conquest, but subsequent self-sponsored students paid their own expenses, taking jobs in restaurants and domestic service and in seasonal stints harvesting crops and in salmon canneries (Fujita-Rony 2003).

In Seattle they found spaces of refuge from racial violence and rest between jobs in the hinterlands. Filipino worker-students' mobility looped through Seattle's transient districts. Velasco lived in cheap hotels and boardinghouses in Seattle's Chinatown between stints working and studying across the Washington State and the territory of Alaska. Like other Filipino men he was drawn to the bustling activity on King Street especially the cafés and dancehalls that were beacons of commercial entertainment (Fujita-Rony 2003). By both necessity and opportunity, Filipino student-workers moved easily between each of these spaces. In addition to accessing leisure spots in Seattle's Chinatown streets, they could access different social spaces in the University of Washington affiliated institutions, and during the summer in the Alaska trawling ships, canneries, and barracks. This essay follows Velasco and Edades through each of these social spaces in the 1920s and 1930s, where Filipino men discovered different ways of comporting their bodies, communicating emotions and finessing different modes of expressing masculinity through experiences at dance halls, social clubs and organized social gatherings.

White, Asian and Indigenous women and Filipino men experimented with romance, sexual autonomy, and intimacy. Many of the Filipino men came from smaller villages with tighter family controls on courtship. Similar to the experiences of all rural migrants to U.S. cities, Filipino men experienced greater expressive liberty with a loosening of traditional

family and religious controls. Even as migrants sustained connections with their natal families and overseas communities and expected to return eventually to them, they experimented with new social behaviors while away (Clement 2006; España-Maram 2006; Shah 2012). Their experiences with interracial romance were appraised by white women students and workers they met, Filipino/a and white elites and fellow workers.

In each of these spaces, all the participants and observers tested and challenged new ways of expressing their bodies and genders in the pursuit of friendship, leisure, and romance in the migratory interracial public social worlds. Marshalling fashionable attire and American dance styles, Filipino men communicated their attraction, desire and enthusiasm for interracial socializing. Filipino migrant men participated in romantic dating, independent of family controls and traditional structures. Across the settings of dance halls, canneries and university clubs, they found different possibilities for romance and sexual exploration. Some critics pejoratively characterized these relationships as 'prostitution' or 'immoral', however even in the instances of observable sex work – the exchange for sex for money or gifts – the exchanges were appraised and attained through a repertoire of romantic behavior and practices. These settings were shaped by migrant networks, labor infrastructures and the emergence of profit-driven leisure. The intimacies they formed revealed much about migrants' aspirations and the cultural anxieties that erupted over interracial socializing. By spotlighting the localities where Filipino workers and students converged with white, European and Asian immigrants and Indigenous peoples in the 1920s and 1930s, we can examine their experiences with interracial intimacy and understand the vitality of their strategies to express their genders, affection, sexual attraction and romance.

Erotic possibilities in the Alaskan canneries

Summer work opportunities in Alaska pulled Edades, Velasco and many Filipino men to work in the summer salmon cannery migration. Soon after his arrival in Seattle and desperate to earn more than his job assembling cardboard boxes, Edades and his friends joined a salmon cannery crew in Port Athorp, Alaska (Kalaw-Ledesma and María Guerrero 1979) During the summer months, Japanese and Chinese labor contractors in Seattle recruited Filipino men for seasonal salmon catch and processing in Alaska. U.S. investors dominated the lucrative

salmon fishing and cannery industry. As the industry grew rapidly in the early 1900s and dominated the global export market, canneries hired thousands of European, Asian and Mexican immigrants, and white and black workers to work the Southeast Alaskan canneries alongside Tlingit and Haida Native Alaskan women. During the summer, the cannery sites became instant multi-ethnic cosmopolitan social spaces. Industrial salmon fishing intruded on traditional native fishing grounds. Both salmon fishing and cannery labor practices came under increased federal scrutiny during the Roosevelt administration (Arnold and Cronon 2009; Purvis 2021). Contractors paid workers through chips that they could cash in at the end of the summer when they returned to Seattle, after deducting all the necessities they bought on credit. US Federal Labor Commissioner branded the working and housing conditions in Alaska as 'disreputable' and 'deplorable'. The chip-payment system encouraged gambling and drinking, which were promoted by and profited from the contractors (Friday 1994).

Seattle was the conduit between two imperial possessions – the Philippines and Alaska – both dispossessed indigenous peoples of their land and exploited by American businessmen who extracted natural resources and exploited racialized laborers. Japanese and Chinese contractors monopolized worker recruitment, however, Filipino educated men, like Edades, were given supervisory duties over small groups of workers. After three summers at Port Althorp, Edades was promoted to foreman over all cannery workers. Edades recruited Velasco to join him during the summer of 1924. For several decades, Velasco informally recruited and supervised Filipino workers and served as a foreman of cannery operations (Brown 2007; Kalaw-Ledesma and María Guerrero 1979).

In contrast to the swirl of commercial entertainment in Seattle, social opportunities were isolated in the periphery. The experiences of intimacy and companionship in Alaska was structured by the industry practices and scrutinized by local, territorial, and federal government. The workers' livelihoods and social lives were tightly circumscribed on both ships and in the Alaska canneries. Yet these homosocial work environments facilitated different experiences of intimacy.

Many observers of the salmon cannery industry anticipated widespread female 'prostitution'.[2] However, in a twist of expectations, federal government hearings on the work practices of Depression-era salmon canneries revealed how some contractors and foremen sent male sex workers onto the boats and took a percentage of the money they earned.

White men testified that contractors smuggled men who cross-dressed in women's clothes onto the ships that trawled the salmon-rich waterways that feed into the Bering Sea. At the1934 hearings in San Francisco, William Umry, Deputy Labor Commissioner of California testified that amidst the corrupt labor practices, he was puzzled over the 'moral perverts' 'dressed in women's clothes' who boarded ships and 'preyed on the men that are shipped to Alaska' (NIRA 1934, 247). When Umry requested that Eduardo Morris, a cannery worker, testify to the impact on teenaged workers, Morris described the arrangement as 'graft' between the cross-dressed sex workers and the foreman to coax the Filipino 'fellows to spend their money buying them candy and tobacco and anything they want from the Alaska packers store' (Friday 1994; Masson and Guimary 1981; NIRA 1934, 252–253).

These brief descriptions of a queer sex trade aimed at parting Filipino men from their scant earnings revealed a sexual political economy that was laced with cultural meanings of gender. Under questioning from government officials, however, the observations of sex work blossomed into relationships that Frank Filippi, a lawyer for the California Labor Commission, characterized as 'marriage ceremonies' performed on the fishing boats. Eduardo Morris shared his first-hand observations that Filipino 'fellows', besotted with the possibilities of companionship on board, launched bidding wars of gifts for the sex workers, who selected 'their husbands' from among the suitors whose behavior and generosity was tartly appraised (NIRA 1934, 253–254). Even though the foreman did not directly manage the 'wives', he drew profit from the exclusive sale of merchandise sold by the company store. Another cannery worker, Carl Jaime, corroborated that 'the price demanded by lady' was booked by the contractors as 'merchandise' which along with gambling debts, marijuana, and liquor were deducted from the workers earnings at the end of the season. In the accounting systems, 'merchandise' cloaked prostitution, gambling losses and illicit consumption, a ledger of the exploitative debt-peonage system that buried migrant cannery workers into debt (259–261).

Historians of labor, Asian American history and sexuality have all picked up on these elusive clues as glimmers of evidence of Filipino participation in homosexual subculture during the summer salmon cannery season. This speculation is sourced by federal hearings into worker conditions and exploitation. The cannery workers, Morris and Jaime, who testified insisted that they only observed the sex trade and did not participate. However, their observations appeared informed by and

conversant with the subculture's cues and signals and aimed an interpretive lens for outsiders to appraise gestures and transactions that formalized erotic encounters into short-term marriages. The laborers acted as ethnographers and informants for government officials' investigation of exploitative working conditions, which also harbored an erotic and gendered subculture on board the ship and in the canneries that was classified as immoral and 'perverted'. California labor commission regulators and lawyers had pre-selected informants and framed their titillating findings at hearing to leverage federal intervention to clamp down on vice and demolish contractor monopoly/domination over worker pay and conditions, opening the door for the unionization of cannery workers. Labor historians found the opening to unionization most significant at first and later historians of Asian America and sexuality in the 1990s and 2000s picked up on the implications of a nascent multi-racial homosexual subculture and sex trade enmeshed in contractors' exploitation of workers' needs (Boag 2003; Friday 1994; Fujita-Rony 2003; Masson and Guimary 1981; Wilde Casadary 1937; Yoneda 1983).

From the perspective of the participants in the gendered erotic system, we can see how workers' survival practices negotiated exploitative conditions and created opportunities for male sex workers to flee the insecurity of the ports and streets to secure the relative safety of male protection on the confines of the ship even amidst workers' rivalries. The cannery workers' performances of masculine protection and support corresponded to the feminine performances of the sex workers. The gendered dynamic remade the romantic couple through transgressive expressions of erotic bodies. Filipino men were drawn to the gender expressions and embodiment of sex workers that resembled *bakla*, which in Tagalog means a man who acts like a woman and, more precisely, possesses a 'female heart'. Feminine dress, hairstyle and comportment attracted Filipino suitors who competed to demonstrate their desire, masculinity, and devotion. By orienting their gender appearance and behavior to the perception of *bakla*, the sex workers enhanced their appeal and interest in a seasonal partnership. These interactions also solidified the Filipino men's self-perception of masculine prowess and skill in proving to their lovers and to their peers their ability to provide gifts and protection. The Filipinos saw themselves as *asawa* or husbands whose own masculine status was affirmed by the affection and commitment of *bakla* they courted (Manalansan 2003; Rodriguez 1996; Tan 2021). In Tagalog *asawa* is gender neutral term for spouse, that is recognized as husbands in relationship to married

women or transfeminine *bakla*. What is striking is how in the U.S. context, the working-class observers and sex workers on the boats and canneries who were white, European immigrants and black men could perceive and adapt to a recognizable Filipino gender system. This understanding undoubtedly aligned with prevailing gender systems among young transient working class men who also found attractive the flamboyant feminine persona and manner of 'fairy', a dynamic that prevailed at Pacific northwest ports, according to court records and news coverage, In Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, the police noted the appeal to Greek and South Asian immigrant men of solicitation by fairies and male youth. In historical interpretations of immigrant men's court testimony, queer sociability thrived in myriad transient settings within a prism of gendered expression that governed sexual and romantic appeal over sexual orientation (Boag 2003; Masson and Guimary 1981; Shah 2012). While the motivation and sense of embodiment of the sex workers is not known, these gender expressions can be interpreted through analytical lens of trans* that as historian Susan Stryker argues emphasizes 'the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place, rather than any particular destination or mode of transition' (Stryker 2017, 2). This flexibility consciously evades re-compartmentalization into a neatly separated gender binary.

The system of *bakla* and *asawa* gendered attraction also sustained relationships between Filipinos in Alaskan cannery camp. In a striking photograph of ten Filipino men, entitled "Pinoy 'he-men' at a social gathering on a cannery off-day depicts a bakla playfully posing in a dress, flanked by two bare-chested men in grass skirts, with hula dance pose, as shown in Figure 1. The other seven men are bare-chested in khaki pants and only one in jeans is puffing up his chest to demonstrate masculine vigor. The jumble of cultural styles blends the men's Hawaiian Hulu grass skirts referencing Filipino migration histories on Hawaiian sugar plantations, with U.S. cities, centered by the bakla figure's stylish sophisticated urban dress, scarf and fashionable hat, all adornments of modernity and migration (Imada 2012). The pose is performative and depicts intimate techniques of the body in a gendered fashion. The photograph was published along with many posed shots from Alaska in community historian Fred Cordova's *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (1983, 69). The photographer is unknown, however, like many of the photographs of the era, Filipinos participated in the staging and were often the photographers themselves. In photo studios and in



Figure 1. Filipino workers at an Alaska cannery (courtesy of the Filipino American National Historical Society).

snapshot photography, Filipino subjects themselves constructed the images they yearned to communicate (De Leon 2022; Pegues 2021).

Some historians referenced this singular photograph as evidence of homosexuality and queer sexual relations, focusing on the performative expression and attraction of the central transfeminine figure and the bare-chested men. Historian Dorothy Fujita Rony argues the photograph offers visual evidence for the 'fluidity of roles' and 'range of sexual expression' among Filipino males because few Filipino women migrated, and community surveillance was diminished in the Alaskan periphery rather than in their home communities in rural Philippines (2003, 102–103). It is entirely possible that sexual attraction could be read in multiple, fluid ways, making the bare-chested masculine figures attractive to each other, attractive to *bakla* figure and the camera as well, opening up the possibility of attractions that are muted in a textual archive that celebrates the persistence of heterosexual-appearing couplings. The photo hyped the performance of traditional heterosexual gender roles, recast playfully through the experiences and expression of Filipino migrant laborers. The world created by the Filipino workers reshaped gender expression and behavior to keep loneliness at bay, smash alienation, and provide comfort. Dancing poses and dress customs, drawn variously from Hawaii, mainland U.S. and the Philippines, all mobilized gender expression to create the grounds for joy, amusement, and pleasure. The irreverent

humor in the singular feminine and multiple masculine poses also echoed the gender imbalance in Filipino migrant lives, and infused it with hilarity, not gloom. The photograph, like so many staged and studio portraits, was printed as postcards, mailed, and circulated, probably to Filipino friends in Seattle, to other cities on the Pacific Coast or Hawaii and to Philippines, spreading a sensibility of jest, social conviviality, and ease for migrant men, despite dislocation and harsh working conditions (De Leon 2022; De Leon 2023).

In the heterotopic spaces of the boats and the canneries, gender transgression and interracial relationship were two of many techniques that cannery workers used to both challenge and experiment with heterosexual coupling. Interracial relationships also proliferated in the canneries and towns where Filipino men worked alongside native Alaskan and white women. Over time, some Filipinos stayed on in Alaska beyond the season. Many of these men met native Alaskan women and European immigrant women at the canneries or dances. Several married Tlingit and Tsimshian native women and settled in Ketchikan and Metalakata in the southernmost part of Alaska at the British Columbia border (Buchholdt 1996; Friday 1994; Pegues 2013).

White elites, however, were suspicious and claimed the relationships as predatory and abusive. In the 1920s as cannery supervision moved from to white men and to Japanese, Chinese and Filipino foremen men, white politicians scrutinized the relationships between Filipino men and white and native workers. White politicians spread rumors that Filipino men harassed, and entrapped white and Native female teens aged 14 to 16 who worked in the canneries, propelling more sensational accusations of abduction, assault, and rape. An Alaska legislative representative, Carl Drager vented fears that Filipino men, as foreman, abused their authority and extracted 'favors' from white and Native girls. Fears of heterosexual and interracial sexual abuse resulted in white men demanding the abolition of racially and gender mixed workplaces and limits to the promotion of Asian men in supervisory roles. Drager claimed that 'Orientals should not be in a position to supervise any of our women' (NIRA 1934, 242–243).

Nonetheless, the numbers of Filipino-Native marriages increased, and many settled in cannery communities year-round, so too did Filipino Mason organizations establish and grow. Led by Filipino men in relationships with native and European immigrant women, the Masons organized parties, dinners, pageants, and dances as they did in Seattle and Stockton. These social activities made the interracial families ever more

visible and supported by Filipino communities (Alvarez 1926b, 36–37; Buchholdt 1996; Cordova 1983; Purvis 2021).

Interracial sexual relations and rumors of vice and immorality were part of a larger struggle over the salmon cannery industry employment practices. The salmon industry management and their Alaskan politician allies used the testimony of gambling, queer 'prostitution' and interracial relationships to fuel U.S Federal investigations on the graft of labor contractors, who by the 1930s included Italian, Greek, Japanese and Chinese labor brokers. Filipino workers and European immigrant and Filipino labor organizers publicized their grievances of unsanitary and dangerous working conditions and exploitative debt peonage systems. However, Filipino community tensions rose between union organizers and those men who rose to become foreman and contractors, like Velasco, resulting in bitter rivalries, debates, and the notorious assassination of union leader Virgil Duyungaan in a Seattle restaurant in December 1936 (Friday 1994). The contentious unionization and contractor battles diverted public attention from the salacious sexual spaces and relationships that, even when fleeting, were memorable for the workers.

Competing for the affections of Filipino university students

When some of the Filipino cannery workers and foreman returned to Seattle after the cannery season, several harbored ambitions to advance their education. After their first season in Alaska, Edades and his friends registered at the University of Washington. After checking job listings at the YMCA, Edades found work waiting tables at a fraternity house. After the fraternity house discriminated against Filipino workers by prohibiting their use of the house's toilets, Edades quit and found work at a sorority house, washing dishes and tending the furnace. Edades began classes in architecture, but over time gravitated to painting. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts and had exhibitions of his painting in Seattle (Kalaw-Ledesma and María Guerrero 1979). Velasco also had ambitions to advance his education beyond his bachelor's degree at the University of Manila. Over the course of a decade, Velasco attended five colleges in Washington State before earning his B.A., M.A., and fulfilling some of the requirements for a Ph.D. at the University of Washington (Brown 2007).

Many Filipino migrants practiced Catholicism, but they discovered sharp limits to socializing across racial lines in Catholic organized

social activities. Commissioned by the U.S. Catholic Social Welfare Council's Immigration Department, Felicidad Silva Alvarez reported that Filipino students found campus Catholic Newman Club events less inviting because Catholic 'girls do not want to dance with them'. Alvarez, an elite Filipina who studied for a master's degree in social work at Catholic University in Washington DC, surveyed the moral and social conditions of Filipino men on the Pacific Coast and concluded that Filipino men were corrupted by gambling, taxi-dance halls and the seductions of Protestant women. Instead of developing relationships with Catholic working-class and middle-class women, Filipino men were recruited into Methodist Christian Fellowship Association, which sponsored bible classes alongside socials and dance parties, hosted by 'nice American girls'. Felicidad Alvarez feared that these heterosocial opportunities with white Protestant women would result into 'perverting' Filipinos from their Catholic faith and lead to their Protestant conversion. The survey and recommendations for more Catholic heterosocial opportunities were distributed to Catholic leaders and priests in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Stockton. A University of Washington Filipino student quipped that '90% of the Filipinos that come to this country come as Catholics, but they returned to their country 80% Protestants . . . '. The exaggeration demonstrated how competitive American Catholics and evangelical Protestants were in claiming Filipino men's allegiance (Alvarez 1926a, 7–8, 18–19; 50–51; 1926b).

As much as Velasco and Edades attempted to integrate into campus life, racial and class segregation pervaded campus social life. While Filipino students could cook and clean at fraternities, membership was limited to white students. However, Velasco and Edades found opportunities to socialize through university clubs. At the University of Washington, Filipinos participated in social gatherings, picnic and dances sponsored by the University of Washington's Cosmopolitan Club, and the Filipino Student Club house, which was established and maintained by dues-paying Filipino students. Interracial socializing, specifically between white women and Filipino men was possible at both. At other colleges in the state, Filipino students reported that they were allowed to attend school sponsored dances, but white women refused to dance with them. Racial segregation, however, denied the Filipino Club's permanent establishment when in 1928, plans to buy a house near the university was scuttled over white homeowners' anti-Filipino objections. White anxieties over physical proximity and interracial socializing with

Filipino men was both implicit and explicit in Seattle and other communities across the Northwest and California (The Filipino Forum 1928).

Despite these constraints, the university-based YMCA, Cosmopolitan Club and the Filipino club house hosted events to model middle class hosting and respectable heterosocial leisure by inviting Filipino students to afternoon tea and coffee, picnics, games and dances with white students and their friends. Joining other Filipino students. Edades and Velasco visited frequently on Saturday afternoons hosted by older white women, such as Mother Lincoln, the housemother of the YMCA and Jane Garrott, the housemother at Filipino Club House. The hosted afternoons hosted by older white women enabled Filipino students to socialize with younger white women as well. They engaged in convivial conservation, displaying respectable manners. At one of these teas, Edades met Jean Garrot, an undergraduate student who frequently helped her mother with parties and programs at the Filipino club house (Brown 2007).

In 1926, Velasco met fellow student Eleanor Mattmeuller at the University of Washington's Cosmopolitan Club. He corresponded with her while away from Seattle studying at another university. Eleanor's letters are very chatty and flirtatious, trying out her Spanish and expressing the desire that they would become good, sincere friends: 'pero nada mas o menos' (nothing more but nothing less) (Victorio Velasco Papers, Box 1, Folder 18). In the 1920s and 1930s, Velasco wrote and collected letters to several women correspondents, offering unique insight into interracial romantic dynamics. Velasco courted several white women and invited them to dance that were sponsored by the clubs and held at hotels. In 1927, Annie, a telephone switchboard operator, expressed her gratitude for the invitation and his recognition of her 'weakness for dancing!' (Victorio Velasco Papers, Box 1, Folder 14). The dances were chaperoned by older white women and structured heterosocial dancing and courtship through the lens of middle-class respectable manners, sexual restraint and propriety.

In her letters, Eleanor shared with Velasco news of the dances and the games played at the Filipino Club House and the Cosmopolitan club. She recounted games of tennis and picnics where they swam in 50-degree waters, remarking that two 'Filipino boys were almost sick with shivers' (Victorio Velasco Papers, Box 1, Folder 18). Her friend Jean Garott taught Victorio Edades how to play tennis and frequent matches advanced their developing affection. The picnics, with their sports, games, swims, and with sharing food and lying down on picnic blankets created improvised moments of physical intimacy that exceeded the

propriety and mannered rapport of indoor teas, with potential for romantic walks, holding hands, and furtive kisses.

The dynamic tension between friendship and romance fed both anticipation and drama. Unlike Jean's deepening romantic interest in Edades, Eleanor responded to Velasco's confession of his love for her with 'shock'. She remarked on her confusion at Velasco's earlier declarations which she attributed to the 'sentimentality of your race'. Despite the confusion, she frequently praised the language and eloquence in the editorials and poems he shared with her. However, she drew a line between romance and friendship, preferring a platonic friendship: 'I do not love you. I like you as a friend, admire and respect you but there is all the difference in the world between that love of a friend and real love'. She speculates that perhaps Velasco assumed their last picnic observing the carefree physical rapport between her friend Jean Garrott and fiancé Edades, fueled Velasco's romantic expectations. Curiously, Eleanor frequently wrote of being on the arm of Edades at the events Velasco missed. Eleanor, like many young women, negotiated romantic autonomy, experimenting with affections with the young men and limiting their access in ways that both anticipated and then sharply curtailed the fantasy of romantic companionship. Despite Eleanor's boundary-setting at platonic love, she was eager to be creative muse for Filipino artists. She was intoxicated with being the object of art in both in Velasco's poetry and prose and sitting for a portrait for Edades, as his fiancé Jean frequently did. She found the experience of modeling 'fun', compelling and the act of creation 'so queer', unsettling and miraculous to watch the act of sculpting a body out of clay or being seized by the 'wonder' of poetry (Victorio Velasco Papers, Box 1, Folder 18). The experience of being the object of desire and adoration and the muse of the Filipino artists offered different possibilities than the experiences of Eleanor and Jean may have had with white men, with whom they restrained their ambitions for independence and creative inspiration. Nevertheless, Eleanor and Jean's dating experiences with Filipino men led to different outcomes. In contrast with Eleanor who broke off communication with Velasco for his overt romantic declarations and later married a white Canadian and raised four children in Seattle, his friend Edades proposed and married Jean in 1928 following her graduation from the University of Washington. A week later they boarded a ship to Manila, where Edades thrived as a painter and professor and Jean

became an English teacher, drama director and a renowned anthologist of Philippine plays. They lived the rest of their lives as artistic leaders in the Philippines (Edades 1983; Kalaw-Ledesma and María Guerrero 1979).

Hub of Filipino life in Seattle's Chinatown

Like many Filipino students, Velasco and Edades travelled by streetcar from the rarefied and exclusively white residential University neighborhood to the interracial downtown districts where they could live and socialize. Over the decades, Seattle's Chinatown became a multi-racial meeting ground and emporium, accessible to consumers of diverse race, ethnic and class backgrounds. In the 1920s, Chinese owners and white proprietors gave way to Japanese merchants who operated and owned most of the hotels, groceries restaurants and labor and cannery contractor's offices. A few 'Chinese signs' persisted in 'chop suey houses' and well-disguised lottery 'stores'. By the 1930s Filipinos ran many of the poolhalls, dance halls, coffee shops and barber shops; Italian immigrants ran card rooms and Jewish immigrants operated thrift stores and groceries (Arroyo 1935; Asaka 2022; Laguerre 2000, 76–77).

Filipino workers and students saw Chinatown as a refuge where they could find inexpensive restaurants, hotels and entertainment. In the 1920s, street violence, brawls and harassment were common across the city and region. The concentration of Filipinos as well as Chinese and Japanese provided safety, but often attracted unwanted police harassment (Fujita-Rony 2003). Filipino men gravitated to Chinatown once the pool halls opened. While shooting pool and playing cards, they gossiped, shared labor union news, and reviewed and debated their crushes and dates (Torrin 1935). In the afternoon, Filipinos dominated the street corners 'basking in the sun, some cooling on the corner, talking, joking, content and happy' (Angelo 1935b).

During the mid-1930s Velasco edited the *Philippine Advocate*, a newspaper bankrolled by leading Filipino businessman and labor contractor Pio De Cano, who encouraged the distribution of the newspaper to Seattle region Filipino students, cannery workers, and naval sailors and stewards on shore leave (Brown 2007). Velasco cultivated a lively debate on the pages of the *Philippine Advocate* for the pleasures and perils of Chinatown nightlife that leaned heavily into promoting Chinatown businesses, especially since the much of the paper's advertising came from them. The columnists he hired wrote of the magnetic appeal of

Chinatown for those seek adventure and cosmopolitan entertainment on King Street, with its bright neon signs, 'lanterns, the chimes, and weird rhythm of oriental music' that beckoned to 'its mysteries, dark alleys',and enthralling diversions (Angelo 1935d)

Chinatown's cosmopolitan sensory atmosphere attracted diverse thrill-seekers and the mix of races and classes mingled in spaces that abounded with gendered and intimate experimentation. A Filipino journalist and poet, Siméon Doria Arroyo branded Seattle's Chinatown as 'nourish[ing] a cauldron of vice where Chinese, Negroes, Japanese, Italians, Swedes, Americans and Filipinos are united in bacchanal, mercenary feast' joined by elite white Americans slumming 'night after night … where they can be nasty dames and nasty men' (Arroyo 1934). Arroyo's disdain for frenetic nightlife contrasted with Filipino journalist Willy Torrin's enthusiasm for the ambition and energy of Filipino men in Seattle's nightlife. As the sun set, Chinatown barber shops were humming with Filipino men preparing for the night's entertainment. Men congregated at the gambling halls, betting on the lotteries and card games (Torrin 1935)

The climax of all the sartorial preparations was the Rizal Hall where the Filipino men sought female companionship. Victorio Velasco was a frequent visitor to the Filipino social club, Rizal Hall, which Demetrio Ente opened in 1933, on the corner of King Street and 6th Avenue, The Rizal operated a post-prohibition bar, restaurant and a taxi dance establishment that headlined an all-Filipino orchestra 'The Moonlight Serenaders'. [3]By 10 pm, 'the tantalizing music at Rizal … tickles the eardrum and makes the feet itchy' luring them in until 1 a.m. when the orchestra played 'good night'. The whirl of circulation, consumption, and desire persist when 'Filipino sheiks with blondes and brunettes and halfways come out still pleasure-bound', venturing to the all-night Atlas Theater on the next block and to chop suey houses that close at 3 am. Torrin observed that these late-night joints 'have seen dates made and remade, romances flourish and decline'. By 3:30 am the nightlife ends, most establishments close and only a few Filipino 'boys' loiter to the early dawn (Torrin 1935).

The flourishing refuge of Seattle Chinatown dancehalls diverged from the violent history of the 1920s and early 1930s where interracial dance halls became flashpoints of violence and brawls instigated by enraged white men thwarting Filipino men from dancing with 'American girls', especially in rural towns in California. The brawls and riots over racial mixing made both white American and Philippine elites wary of the

visibility of Filipino men's intimacy with white women (España-Maram 2006; Mabalon 2013; Ngai 2002; Parrenas 1998; Volpp 2000). In 1927 in the nearby Yakima Valley rumors of Filipino men accosting white women on the streets of Toppenish, drove dozens of white men to storm the home of Ellis Peregrino a Filipino man married to a white woman. The following day 150 white men riding 30 cars rounded Filipino farmworkers, threatened their lives and forced them aboard trains bound for Seattle (Heuterman 1995; Myers 2017).

White working-class men feared Filipino men's sartorial splendor and seduction. After the 1930 Watsonville, California riot when white men hounding Filipinos for dancing with white women at a taxi-dance hall, Justice of the Peace, Rohrback decried Filipino men 'strutting about like a peacock and endeavoring to attract the eyes of the young American and Mexican girls' (Salinas Index Journal 1930). In 1930, the President of University of California system and former director of educational system in the Philippines, David P. Barrows, denounced Filipinos whose 'sexual passion' and vices expending 'the residue of his savings on brothels and dancehalls' explaining that 'intoxicated' by 'Everything in our rapid, pleasure-seeking life' and 'shameless exhibitionism which accompanies it, contributes to overwhelm the young men' who are accustomed to the 'placid life of a primitive, native barrio' (quoted in Committee on Immigration and Naturalization 1930, 322). Both white conservatives and Filipino elites foisted the blame on working-class Filipinos for their aspirations of social equality with white men and cultured Filipino elites. Blasting American racism as responsible for the Watsonville riots in 1930, Jorge Bacobo, dean of the law school at the University of the Philippines, blamed Filipino workers for 'fraternization with white women of doubtful character', which inflamed white men's rage and violence(Mabalon 2013, 142)

In the late 1920s and 30s, news media, state courts and politicians stoked fears of Filipino men and white women liaisons, marriages, and murderous love-triangles, singling out social unrest over permissive interracial sexual relationships. After state court cases ruled against applying anti-miscegenation laws to Filipinos marrying white women, California and other state legislatures imposed the racial category of 'Malay' on Filipinos as distinct from Chinese and Japanese but no less odious and 'nonwhite'. This racial specificity ensured the application of anti-interracial marriages laws to Filipino-white pairs (Volpp 2000; Ngai 2002). Filipino, African American and labor coalitions effectively lobbied to table anti-miscegenation bills in Washington State legislature in the

mid-1930s. Yet on a national level, interracial sexual fears and the sexualization of Filipino men heightened controversies over unfair labor competition and culminated in federal legislation in 1934 and 1935 that restricted Filipino entry into mainland U.S. and territories, financed repatriation of workers already in the United States, and planned for Philippine independence in 1944.

Seeking cultural belonging and access to consumer and entertainment culture pervaded American life in the 1920s and 1930s. Like many working-class Americans, Filipino men yearned to wear the latest fashions, take women out on romantic dates, and dance with attractive young white women in dance halls. Columnist Torrin noted how 'Filipino sheiks' attended to "'their sartorial prestige' The dress choices and hair styles evoked with the cinematic appeal of suave Rudolf Valentino and other Hollywood leading men (Studlar 1989; Torrin 1935). Racial ambiguity was part of the appeal – shared broadly by Italian, Greek, Latin American men too, but the objective was to use adornment to project aspirational class. The choice of dandified dress, historian Mina Roces argues, was an attempt to distinguish themselves from their ethnic working-class identity. Instead, she argues that they aspired to masculine ideals epitomized by 'Hollywood dandies' strutting in 'fastidious elegance: modern tuxedos, and smooth, slick modern suits, pressed pants, patent leather shoes, sometimes with canes, ascots, or formal hats' (Khor 2012; Roces 2016, 538). The competitive appeal was to catch the attention of the women entertainers and dancers – for 'men to outdo their competitors in appearance, deportment, manners, and dress. A well-dressed Filipino man in a tailor-made suit who transcended his lowly status of working-class laborer by appearing just as handsome and suave as a white American Hollywood star paid a heavy price for his sartorial choice' (Roces 2016, 560).

Experiencing the romance of coupled dancing at taxi dance halls

The dance halls, like Seattle's Rizal were jammed with Filipino men, dressed in their best tailored suits, polished shoes, eager for romance and pleasure, and willing to spend several days' wages on the dance tickets, the source of a popular saying that subtracted daily wages for the cost of entertainment: 'dollar a day, dime a dance' (Burns 2008; España-Maram 2006; Parrenas 1998; Roces 2016). Popular in immigrant districts across the United States as well as in Shanghai, Yokohama, Tokyo and Buenos Aires, taxi dance halls were at their peak of popularity

during the 1920s and 1930s (Field 2022; Törnqvist and Kate 2010; Nagai 1998). Patrons bought dance tickets and presented them to a specific dance hall employee for the pleasure of dancing with her for the duration of a single song. Typically, half the price of the ticket went to pay for the orchestra, dance hall, and operating expenses, while the other half would go to the taxi dancer, earning in one night two to three times the weekly salary of factory worker, waitress or domestic servant (Cressey 2008; España-Maram 2006; Freeland 2009; McBee 2000; Parrenas 1998).

The *Philippine Advocate* and their columnists promoted the Rizal's widespread appeal to Filipino businessman, students, workers and sailors on shore leave, but they sharply disputed the consequences of socializing. Taxi dancer Irene Hock, a young white woman from rural Kelso, Washington, took the pseudonym Emily Angelo to write columns, in the Filipino newspaper. Emily Angelo called the Rizal 'the mecca of pleasure seekers, romeos and gigolos, promoters, and finale hoppers. University students and tired businessmen'. She reveled in the diversity and bustle of the 'nightly crowds' which she described as 'gay and heavy, with the highbrows and the lowbrows, the rich and the poor, the well dressed and the opposite mingling happily' (Angelo 1935a). Arroyo condemned it as palace of 'Filipino pleasure' 'where one's money, health, and honor melt in a progress of social decay' (Arroyo 1935).

The dance halls attracted Filipino men eager for opportunities for romantic partnership. The prospects of interracial heterosexual courtship were controversial in white mainstream publications and scrutinized in the Filipino publications. White men projected fears of Filipino men's sexual seduction of white women that would inevitably result in illegitimate and abandoned offspring who would become the responsibilities of local charities and government. On the other hand, Filipino journalist Amado Dino worried that the dancers fleeced Filipino youth of their earnings, demoralized and disillusioned them, leading to despair, addiction and suffering from venereal disease (Burns 2008, 34). Filipino elites feared that white dancers were mercenary in extracting money and gifts from Filipino men leading to their endemic poverty and addiction.

Perhaps the most pungent critic of the dance hall employees was journalist Arroyo who branded the women entertainers as 'Stray girls, destitute widows, and washed-up ladies of joy, [who] furnish their streamlined waistlines to the lascivious embraces of pleasure seekers' (Arroyo 1934). Arroyo's caustic ire was directed to the intoxicated and animalistic sensuality of the white, Japanese and Chinese women singers and dancers 'giggling like electric eels and laughing like laughing hyenas,

drunk with beer, drunk with spurious liquors, drunk with the spirit of the moment, drunk with the warmth of the hands that embrace them and drunk drowsily with an anticipation of an evening to be devoted freely for love!' (1935). He believed these expressions of 'love' was fake and fleeting. Arroyo defended his 'boldly, ruthlessly' opinionated warnings of the seduction of 'demimonde' taxi dancers to protect 'the social and economic well-being of my countrymen' (1935).

Alcohol lubricated the orchestra's musical frenzy, which in turn 'inspires a dozen or more paired bodies, undulating in a passionate embrace while they trip haphazardly at the even tenor of the music'. Arroyo disparaged the popular dancing styles as 'a savage interpretation of Argentine dancing that approaches the nature of a wrestling match' (1934). Arroyo's critique fastened onto how women lured men into a 'savage' physicality of intertwined bodies grappling in both an athletic and erotic display. His strident warnings were trounced by the overpowering alchemy of liquor, music, physical and sensual touch between women and men in a public display.

Taxi dance halls were perceived to foster loose sexual behavior and deception. Notwithstanding the observers' fears, the formal dancing dynamics in the halls were carefully regulated. The hall management prohibited lascivious displays and touch and policed any hint of sexual relations between dancers and their clients. Women dancers and entertainers boosted their amorous appeal, yet curtained the men's presumption of sexual access, and managed their reputations as entertainers in the dance hall not as sex workers (Burns 2008; Clement 2006).

For Filipino men, the dance fee was more than an isolated transaction; it was a promise for a mutual relationship, after the dance. Filipino men traded gossip about whether the dancers were available for romance or sex, as evident in the slang recorded by moral reformers and sociology students in dance halls. Filipino men used the coded language 'never miss yan' to describe a 'girl whose sexual cooperation was easily secured' and 'bata' meaning 'white sweetheart'. The Tagalog meanings were playful and ambiguous. For instance, 'never miss yan' fluctuated from a statement of availability – 'never missed it' – to emotional attachment – 'never misses you' or interest in long-term commitment – 'that one never marries'. Likewise, 'bata' literally means 'baby', or 'kid' heightening the 'youthfulness' of the prospective sweetheart. This multi-variant slang underscored the playfulness of the men's homosocial banter, their passion for female companionship, and the bravado in their gestures and cheers in the competition for the women's attention (Cressey 2008; as

quoted in; Irvine 2022, 89, 101). Performance studies scholar Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns recognizes that dance halls' promise of 'intimacy and mobility' were the perfect target for the 'fear of infection' and the 'collapse of sanctified distances of race and gender' (Burns 2008, 33–34). Dance halls were emblematic of 1920s and 1930s entertainment venues that promoted heterosexual pleasure and sexual experimentation that, at times, crossed class and racial boundaries (Clement 2006; España-Maram 2006).

For contemporaries and historians alike, the perspective of a taxi dancer and entertainer in the public debate and through a Filipino American publication was unusual (Angelo 1935d). Columnist Emily Angelo promoted the Rizal "as a popular, unique, safe and comfortable venue for Filipinos and other Asian patrons to 'relax, dine, and dance, and enjoy a wonderful evening of pleasure and entertainment'. Rather than viewing the women as seductresses she called them 'dancing instructress[es]' who are 'mighty willing, pleasing and accommodating'. Emily Angelo praised the physicality and grace of social dance as an invigorating and enjoyable physical release that liberated men from isolation, hard labor and misery in canneries, orchards, and the fields. She celebrated how dance movements contributed to 'relaxation of mind … exercise and poise' (1935b; Burns 2008). Angelo promoted dance in an atmosphere enlivened by music and a sense of joyful, exuberant partnering and community. The dance hall social dynamics offered a respite from the dislocation and anonymity of the modern and migratory world. As a Filipino owned and managed establishment, Rizal Hall cultivated an environment for freely experimenting with ephemeral intimate encounter, facilitating both the possibility and fantasy of heterosexual courtship and romance between the patrons and the entertainers. In the Filipino community, dancing and gambling were rival nightlife entertainment. The columnists in *The Philippine Advocate* took sides on which entertainment produced the least short-term thrill for the greatest long-term risk, with Angelo quipping that Filipino men 'can certainly lose more in fifteen minutes of gambling than in six hours of dancing' (Angelo 1935b). Yet, at the dance hall, the entertainment was monetized as well with funds siphoned to pay for liquor and dance tickets and requiring men to optimize their performances of both dance and attracting female attention.

As the men readied themselves for the competition for female attention, Angelo's column offered insight into the terrain of erotic rivalry at the dance hall. Angelo's column announced new popular singers,

dancers, and hostesses, featuring quips about their talents, physicality and musicality and playful gossip about romances, engagements, and marriages. She promoted new singers and dancers and ginned up their popularity and availability, coaxing Filipino men as 'Gentlemen' to demonstrate 'their reputations for gallant courtship' and not to disappoint new singers for lack of attention. She hailed individual women's performances for being the 'talk of the town' and 'making the hearts of these sophisticated men beat fast, furious and a-flutter' and being 'very much sought and dined by the Caballeros of leisure . . . '. Sometimes she called out her editor, Velasco, for his flirtatious behavior and amorous notes to his favorite singers. Other times she trafficked in rumors of the entertainers' courtship, dating and wedding engagements. These activities stoked the Rizal's Hall's reputation for heterosexual romance but also provided a record of gossip and news to navigate the competitive landscape of courtship. The engagement and wedding gossip of specific popular singers at the Rizal inflamed Filipino clients' fantasies that they too might become suitors. Her agenda was to stoke competition for romantic courtship and wooing contests, encouraging the men to be bold in expressing their romantic intentions and offering their gifts: 'How these boys are stepping! Best of luck to all. Who's Next? Step right up boys!' (Angelo 1935b). Angelo encouraged the men to spend time and money for an attractive romantic fantasy. The gossip she shared was self-interested, lifting the appeal and earnings of her fellow singers and dancers and boosting business and profits for Rizal's owner. When the music stopped, the men lost their earnings to a fantasy.

However, Angelo's column stoked renewed interest for subsequent night's entertainment and Filipino, Chinese, Japanese and white performers and musicians, as shown in Figure 2. She schooled readers in developing familiarity with new modern means of transmitting sound and listening – from recorded music to amplified sound systems for live performance – and promoting entertainers' musical repertoire and their signature popular songs. The musical performance was a communication medium for the anticipation and pangs of romance. Angelo coached readers to listen for the amorous messages in the musical performance listening for 'the murmuring of love's sweet message' and romantic signals between singers and orchestra players and invited the readers to take a "peek at his 'suppressed desire!' She identified and modeled the expressions of female interest and enthusiasm and playfully advised men on the kinds of gifts, words, and expressions that could win over women entertainers. She informed men of how to seek a woman's attention



Figure 2. Musicians and performers at the Rizal Café and social club, taken in May 1933. (courtesy of Filipino American national historical society).

respectfully and romantically. In her teasing advice, Angelo characterized the plucky performers as demure and shy in awaiting a man's bold expression of interest and pursuit. And although women were glamourous and flirtatious on stage, she reassured the potential suitors that the women aspired to monogamy, marriage, and a future as a contented housewife. In this romantic plot, dancers experimented with multiple heterosexual liaisons ultimately to find the one lifelong love that fulfilled the happy ending of traditional, monogamous coupledom (Angelo 1935c). Angelo's columns communicated both the fantasy and ease of the Rizal for Filipino men and for the white and Asian women performers.

Conclusion

There were limits to who could be where in these social and commercial spaces. Asian and white women in Seattle's taxi dance halls and white women in the campus Cosmopolitan Club likely never mingled. Different class aspiration, self-presentation and sexual mores kept them apart. Yet Filipino student-workers could traverse, mingle and engage intimately

across dissimilar spaces, governed by different spatial organization, customs and practices.

By taking an intersectional approach to intimacy and mobility, both transits and immobilization, absences and presences are possible to be perceived. White men circulated everywhere in streets, pool halls, saloons, dance halls, in fraternities and campus venues but were conspicuously absent in the spaces in which Filipino men and white women socialized. Their ethnicity, class, gender, education and religion shaped the experiential and spatial dimensions of intimacy. Between Filipino men and white women, their personal desires, problems, quandaries, misapprehensions were felt across a backdrop of racial violence, gender hierarchies and cultural constraints.

In spite of sharp policing and moral training by Christian religious and social elites who schooled the young men and women in propriety, rectitude and contained bodily expression, the young men and women experimented in spaces from parlors, dance halls, ships, and barracks with different and novel ways of expressing erotic feeling, romance, and companionship. In more formalized social orbits at and around the University of Washington, white women and Filipino men experimented with new gendered forms of heterosocial friendship and courtship. The dances were more formal and regulated bodily closeness and touch. The picnics and games they played invited flirtation, but propriety was maintained by the vigilance of chaperones.

On the Alaska-bound salmon industry ships and canneries, seasonal labor regimes forged a homosocial world that supported queer and trans* intimacies. Possibilities for companionship for Filipino men and youth multiplied with the presence and elaboration of feminine performance that could be recognized as *bakla*, or 'fairies' or gender play and that all bolstered performances of masculinity as well. Everyday intimate expression and physical proximity might be hastened by needs of economic survival, by expressions of pleasure, and by a thirst for companionship. Strangers, through public and semi-public encounter and socializing, could create grounds for conviviality, communication and experimentation with new codes of erotic and gendered sociability. Physical proximity also shaped the encounters and crossings that were under documented such as the meeting of white and Filipino men in ways that were not steeped in rivalry and brawls alone.

In Seattle, the adjacent districts of Chinatown, Skid Row and Pioneer Park, men of all races and classes, with varying erotic interests,

intermingled. Notably one can speculate that Filipino men might have traveled only blocks diagonally from the Café Rizal to the Casino, a café, pool hall and card room that fostered same-sex dancing (Atkins 2003; Lange 1999).

Intimate geometries toggled between making visible the eruption of the romantic couple relationship amidst the much more diffuse and varied 'glances, gestures, encounters, collaborations' that ricocheted across each of the spaces. As queer theorist Lauren Berlant recognized the presumed inevitability and visibility of the couple relationship could overshadow the 'desires for intimacy that bypass the couple or life narrative it generates'. Non coupled intimacies 'have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable space of culture in which to clarify and to cultivate them. What happens to the energy of attachment when it has no place?' (Berlant 1998, 284). 'The energy of attachment' flourishes in spaces because the infrastructures are porous and accommodating, making possible and visible all kinds of intimate expression. For instance, the vernacular photographs visualized complex arrays of attraction and resisted pre-determining pairs, even if the published gossip and the personal letters were cued to seeking and identifying a couple. The romantic couple sharpened the speculation about cannery marriages, the courtships at the Rizal, and student letters' that celebrated the engagement of Jean Garrot and Edades who married in 1928 and departed for Manila where they worked as teachers and artists for the rest of their lives. In contrast, Velasco courted and was repeatedly rebuffed by white women through the 1920s and 1930s, but in the process accumulated many paramours and friends. In the 1950s, he began to date Filipinas and eventually married Josephin Querebin. However, he continued to work summers in Alaska canneries with crews of Filipino migrants even as many other migrants married and settled in Alaska year-round. After Velasco died in a bunkhouse fire in Waterfall Alaska in 1968, his widow donated his personal papers replete with love letters, business correspondence, diaries, newspaper issues and poetry to the University of Washington (Brown 2007).

In much of the available sourcing and in historical interpretation, the visibility of heterosexual romantic couple accrues cultural recognition as the emblem of belonging and the marker of permanent settlement. However, when considering migrant intimacies across spatial scales, we would find it generative to explore the arenas where uncanny and queer intimate relations flourish (Shah 2012). The letters, columns, gossip, and rumor bring into relief what can be dynamic and open-ended despite the

political, economic and institutional constraints that policed interracial intimate relationships. In both Alaska and Seattle, different spaces (dance halls, parlors, ships, bunkhouses, and outdoors) afforded experimental opportunities for those who orbited and navigated the rules for acceptable social behavior in each social setting. One might be tempted to notice only contrasts between a heterosocial Seattle and a homosocial Alaska; however, it would be generative to value the ways in which gender performance and erotic dynamics reverberated in social settings for the participants as well as for observers. Although cultural codes and social norms shaped the contours, it is the experimental practices of bodily movement, sensorial apprehension and affective expression that release eruptions of unanticipated, uncanny and queer social phenomena.

Notes

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2. 'Prostitution'.
3. The Rizal was interchangeably referred to and advertised as a Hall, Club Room, or Café because of its' multifaceted operations. Ente opened Rizal in Seattle in 1933, closed it and moved it to Stockton in 1937. Charlie Beale reopened it as the Rizal Hall in 1943 by as a black jazz club. https://mcurrydesigns.wixsite.com/jacksonstreetjazz/rizal-hall.

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