

SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS OF MALE PROSTITUTION IN MANILA

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Although it would be desirable to locate various sexual phenomenon within a wider discussion of Philippine society, this paper can only attempt to outline the features of male prostitution and related gender identity. Given the limited anthropological research into sexual deviance of some Southeast Asian cultures, even this mainly descriptive paper is of some—if only heuristic—significance. It is hoped this overview will demonstrate the social construction of sexual and gender identities, and discount as idiosyncratic Western views of deviance. In particular, the boys' self-image as normal and righteous is considered in terms of pragmatics and linguistics. This leads to a view that male adolescent sexuality is precocious, and questions the notion held by Western ideologies that all male prostitutes are homosexual, that boys are exploited by men, and that homosexual activity can only be willingly undertaken by adults.

My first visit to the Philippines had been in July 1981 for a period of four weeks, during which time I gathered sufficient information to form the basis of this study. In December 1981 I returned to Manila for three months, and again in 1986 for five months, affording me opportunity to test and confirm previous observations; collect new data; conduct new interviews with both new and previously known informants; observe the reactions of others not associated with prostitution; and use various methodological techniques.

During these studies it was found that males willing to engage in homoerotic activities for a material consideration, i.e. "prostitutes"¹, were readily available in many parts of the Philippines, particularly the larger cities. But in this paper I shall focus on Manila, and its redlight area, Ermita. Apparent in this area is the fact that the client, particularly the Caucasian tourist-client, does not *acquire* a prostitute, but rather in many cases is openly solicited by the prostitute or an intermediary.

This is one of the fundamental differences between male prostitution in the Philippines and that of Australia, the United States and Britain (cf. Mathews 1983; Perkins and Bennett 1985; Connell 1971; Reiss 1967, 1967a; U.R.S.A. 1982; and Harris 1973). Whereas in these latter countries a client often performs a furtive and sometimes frustrating search for a boy, there occurs in Manila, a seemingly larger number of boys who, in a reversal of the situation, seek the tourist-client in bars, discos, and blatantly on the street.

A second fundamental difference exists in the attitude toward homosexuality—generally,

male prostitution—and the payment for sexual services. In many developed countries, although there is a general conceded acceptance of the existence and rights of homosexuals, there is still an accompanying sniggering about homosexuality. In the Philippines, male prostitution, often as a misconstrued aspect of homosexuality, is more openly tolerated or given social sympathy, perhaps because of economic and social factors, although it may still be considered deviant and its practitioners sanctioned by various forms of discrimination from time to time.

As an example of the attitude toward homosexuality, Sechrist and Flores (1969:3-9), in a comparative study with the United States, found:

... a low level of concern about homosexuality in that (Philippine) culture. The existence of homosexuality there is apparent, but conflict (i.e., concern about homosexuality) appeared to be slight.... Certainly transvestitism is frequently observable in the Philippines, but reports of overt homosexuality are not inordinately frequent.

Here, then, I will describe some of the salient aspects of male prostitution evident in the streets, beats and discos of Ermita. Unlike their mostly western tourist-clients,² the boy prostitutes are young—12-20 years. I will suggest various reasons for this age category, as well as their need to be prostitutes; and show how much boys not only reconcile their activities with church and societal morality, but also how they construct their sexual identity. Implicitly at least, I indicate that boys are willing and able to accommodate a divergent sexual behavior

that does not conflict with their own self-image or the eventual expectations of society: clearly the western ideological notion that such boys are unwillingly or unwittingly exploited, corrupted and psycho-sexually scarred into becoming adult homosexuals or sex fiends is suggested as idiosyncratically Western.

Venues and Contacts

Solicitation in the main cities of the Philippines is either directly by the boy prostitute, or by an intermediary, on the street, on beats, or in cinemas or discos. Additionally, there are a few shopping centers where boys congregate to solicit (mainly tourists). It is to such shops that the affluent and the tourist often go for general shopping, and at which the boys take the opportunity to meet new clients. These shopping centers are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., with the number of boys soliciting there varying from place to place and hour to hour.

The degree to which prostitution occurs also varies from city to city. Boys are readily available in many of these cities, and are discreetly available in others. They are also available in many areas of the city including popular tourist spots and at various beaches. In some districts, Ermita included, a redlight area has evolved where boys are readily available, with a number of particular places—cafes, discos, cinemas, streets and beats—being predominant.³

It is to such places that boys come from all over the Philippines. How they become acquainted with these venues and activities requires further investigation; but indications to date are that many boys come to the cities to escape rural life and are subsequently introduced to prostitution and venues by friends or their first client.

Even so, it is also possible to obtain boys in the rural provinces who claim to be virgins in respect to any sexual practice; their procurement is often with the full condonement of their parents.

Intermediaries may be miscellaneous professional hustlers, taxi drivers, bellboys, or virtually anyone that one may become acquainted with. Readily available contact with male prostitution, either directly or through intermediaries, seems to reflect both the extent of and social tolerance to homoerotic behavior.

Clients

Clients of *billyboys*⁴ consist mainly of tourist from various industrialized countries, in which homosexuality is illegal or boys are not readily available; or where in fact homosexuality and prostitution is available (e.g. some Middle-East cultures), and thus the client-tourist are doing what is for them customary and experiencing the difference.

The clients of the *billyboys* are not necessarily wealthy in absolute terms, although to travel to the Philippines one must have sufficient funds. In my encounters it became evident that there were few Filipino clients: this may be accounted for by the discretion such Filipino clients may use, or the lack of relatively wealthy Filipino homosexuals or boy-lovers who may be able to engage in such activities. Alternatively, because homosexuality is less censured in the Philippines than in Australia, for example, the opportunity for *sugar daddy*⁵ type relationships among Filipinos may be greater, or the need for prostitutes less.

The boys tend to stay with a tourist-client for some time. But it is clear that during such time, or immediately after, the boy will discreetly go with another client; the boy is thus labelled by his peers as a *butterfly*.⁶

This compares with western countries: if a western boy is living with a client (i.e., a *sugar daddy*) he is expected to be explicitly loyal; the consequences of disloyalty can be severe. Again the contrast in this factor between cultures can be related, at one level, to supply and demand; that is, because of the shortage of boys in Australia, for example, the client becomes possessive. In the Philippines, the opposite is true: the boy becomes possessive, especially so when, as my examples indicate, many boys attempt to solicit the client and take him away from one another. Perhaps one would think that with such a supply and demand situation in Manila the *billyboys* are foolish to take risks in *butterflying*, risking alienation from a good client because of disloyalty. To think this is to underestimate the boys: they play one client off against another, establish emotional bonds with clients, thereby making it difficult for a client to be wrathful; and they plead to any client upon discovery of their *butterflying* that necessity overrules sentiment; the obvious rejoinder is that the *butterfly-ed* client is not paying enough.

The Boys

I would like to present briefly a number of case histories and events—some of which were directly observed by me, while others were reported on good authority—to exemplify and better understand the conditions in which the boy prostitutes may work or live. Also to be noted is that some boy-informants visited me in my hotel, to which the hotel staff never objected.

Daniel: Daniel was 16 years old⁷, and worked in the restaurant of the Ermita hotel in which I was staying, and by which means I met him. This also served as Daniel's home: he worked in the kitchen and slept on the floor.

Daniel indicated that his parents lived in a rural province and that he worked in Manila, where work was available for him. He was most eager to advance his education, and intimated that he had had no homo- or heterosexual experiences, but for \$17 was willing to sleep with a tourist-client.

Andres: Andres was 13 years old, lived in slums in Ermita, and had slept with tourists for a number of months, for which he received \$5 or more. His family was aware of his activities and tacitly condoned them. He attended school, and all money he received he gave to his parents. Late in 1981, Andres and his family had moved to a rural province to live.

Karl: Nineteen years old, Karl solicited me in the streets, offering anything I wanted: a girl, a boy, drugs, a good time, etc. During my following research I found Karl to be a persistent hustler of all things except himself. Nevertheless, he did introduce me to a number of boy prostitutes, one of whom was Paulo.

Paulo: Paulo, alias "Victoria"⁸, was supposedly aged 13. Unlike most Filipinos, who have straight, short, black hair, Paulo had dyed his brown and styled it into that of western fashion. He wore clothes which were considered in the Philippines as "gay", and which may be considered in Australia as "effeminate".

He claimed to have always been predisposed toward homosexuality, although he was never fully aware of it until 1981. Initially it was difficult to ascertain accurately his true sexual disposition. He certainly had what many Westerners would perceive to be the characteristics of homosexuality and effeminacy, such as clothing, attitude, voice, abilities, and desires.

Subsequently enquiries disclosed that Paulo was in fact 16, and that he had been a prostitute for some 6 months. He further confessed that he was only "a little bit" homosexual and did not particularly like going with tourists, although much of the time he had to because of economic necessity. This necessity he saw as having to support himself and his grandparents, with whom he lived for some time, and most importantly to Paulo, with whom his younger siblings still lived. (Paulo's father was deceased, and his mother had gone to Germany with a German tourist whom she had married.)

Paulo's first encounter with homosexual prostitution occurred when he was walking through a park in Manila and he was solicited by a tourist. He stayed the night with that tourist, and the following night was introduced into the gay-bar scene, which he began frequenting. Henceforth he became a prostitute, and was often in big demand because of his Spanish-Caucasian rather than Malay characteristics.

Upon a return visit to Paulo in 1982 I found him living and working as a houseboy at his aunt's luxurious house in Pasig (Manila). He frequented the gay scene less, but when he did attend he was very effeminately dressed and often appeared as a performer in disco stage shows. He had acquired a desire to be a female model or cabaret performer.

Leni: Paulo subsequently introduced me to his friend, Leni, who was also a prostitute. Leni claimed to be almost 16 years old, and was living with Paulo for the time being. Leni had lived in the province with his parents until age 13. He ran away from home to see if he could survive of his own accord. Faced with difficulties he stayed at various houses of his sisters in Manila.

His introduction into homosexuality and prostitution was by means of a friend, who introduced him to a tourist-client. Over the following 4 years, Leni lived with sisters and friends (including Paulo), and worked as a regular *billyboy*. He claimed that his motivation for prostitution was money, which enabled him to have a good time at the discos, buy clothes, and survive.

Leni claimed that he was "gay", but also stated that he would like to get married and be a father in order to be "remembered". Of course this desire for "remembrance" is not incompatible with being "gay"; nor is marriage, if marriage is seen as the socially sanctioned means of begetting children. However, what becomes obvious to the researcher from these apparent confusions is the different definitions of "gay".

Donnie: Little is known of Donnie, and I can only estimate his age to be in the late teens. He was

introduced to me by Paulo and Leni, who at times lived with Donnie and his family in some Manila slums. Upon my visit to their house I noted some 7 to 10 other persons living in that dwelling; and I was accosted by Donnie's mother asking me to allow Paulo to live with me, for which *she* would receive some money.

Nigel: Nigel, age 16, had been a *billyboy* for some time, during which he had acquired a young and handsome Swiss boyfriend, who lived and worked in Manila as a male model. Although Nigel visited him a number of times each week and received remuneration, Nigel also frequented gay discos and other places, soliciting tourists—at which he was very successful. In a 3 week period (during this study) Nigel was known to have 6 separate clients—a *butterfly* par excellence!

Originally from an eastern province, he now lived with his family in the slums of Manila. His father was a carpenter, and drank excessively.

Since a young age Nigel had been dressed and treated as a girl; at age 7 he was homosexually molested by his uncle (and possibly other men) a number of times; at age 12 Nigel's father reacted violently to Nigel's effeminacy.

Subsequent to his upbringing, Nigel displayed very effeminate characteristics and a strong homosexual orientation. His dress, gait and manners were very effeminate; he became emotionally involved with older men-clients; and adopted a female name—Joanne. In short, Nigel expressed the desire to be like and treated as a girl.

Willy: Although Willy at age 18 had been a *billyboy* for about 2 years, his number of clients had been limited. This was not because Willy was unattractive, but because, in addition to his poor English, he himself was not an aggressive seeker of clients, and he felt guilty about taking, or at least asking for, money.

Willy was shy and seemingly immature for his age. He lived with his aged parents, 2 sisters, and an adopted sister; an older sister, living elsewhere in Manila, was a successful entertainer, but she gave no support to the family.

Living in slums of Sta. Cruz (Manila), Willy was unhappy about his family's condition and strongly expressed the urge to help his family. He was a very sensitive boy, often crying; and very jealous and possessive of any tourist he may acquire. A number of times he would attempt to drown his sorrows in alcohol.

Sandy and Roberto: These two boys were "lovers". Sandy was a 15 year old American-Filipino mestizo, of no fixed address. He was very handsome, with Caucasian features; and was

always in big demand by many tourist. He was outgoing, and had a juvenile criminal record for assault and/or robbery.

Sandy refused many offers from tourists, maintaining some respectability in his selection, but at the same time tending toward "commercialism". That is, he did not always actively establish emotional relationships with his clients, but tended to stay with them almost purely on the basis of sex for money. His prices were often high, but he seldom asked clients for clothes or food.

While he was thus engaged he maintained a longterm relationship with a Swiss businessman living in Hong Kong.

Sandy was also emotionally and sexually involved with Roberto, who claimed to be 16.

Roberto appeared to be one of the more mature and intelligent *billyboys* I met. He was currently attending first year university in Economics, and worked for a Government agency. He had left his provincial home at age 13 to make his fortune in Manila.

Roberto frequented the gay discos a few nights each week, particularly when he needed money for schooling. Having once been a fulltime *billyboy*, he now classified himself as only "part-time", but never "commercial": that is, he must have some emotional bond with a client.

He had strong feelings for Sandy, although he did not object to Sandy seeking clients. However, Sandy objected to Roberto having clients. Both helped one another with money, clothes, food or shelter whenever they could.

Follow-up enquiries of these particular boys in 1986 yielded almost no information. With the closure of some main gay bars, the congregation of boy prostitute dispersed and to some extent, taken over by much younger prostitutes in a new locale of Ermita.

Of previously known boys, only Roberto was contacted. He had been to Australia for 2 years as an illegal immigrant; deported; and had then settled down in Manila to a routine clerical-sales job, living with a female friend, but with whom there was no sexual intimacy.

He had not seen any of his former friends, apart from Sandy, and did not want to make contact with them in any case. Roberto told me that Sandy, after a number of arrests, and being taken around the world by his *sugar daddy*, had joined the army.

Roberto did not express any determined desire to return to Australia, but would often sentimentally reminisce about his previous

prostitute days; then he would suddenly dismiss such thoughts with the adage that he has been young and carefree and had subsequently changed for the better. But he also maintained an interest in homoerotic activities.

In conjunction with the above changes. I observed in 1986 the continued open existence of "child prostitution" in Ermita despite public and international condemnation. This was now primarily located at a fast-food bar; and although one had to be discreet, one could procure boys or girls from age 10 to 20. In one instance I was offered a boy and a girl together, both aged 13, for less than \$17. This solicitation was made by the boy, not an intermediary. As most hotels and lodging houses will no longer permit such youngsters on their premises, the children suggested to me a motel nearby. Subsequently enquiries showed that this motel—only one of many—would charge \$8 for 3 hours and provide security from police harassment. This incident and further enquiries also indicated that many people, particularly taxi drivers, were aware of such places and possibilities.

Prior to these changes noted in 1986, my descriptive examples of 1981-82 above were quite representative of the situation in Manila. The various factors within these examples indicate a contrast to western prostitutes, their activities, attitudes and backgrounds. For example, whereas Filipino prostitutes almost always come from poor backgrounds (many of those I encountered lived in slums or squatter areas; or had no permanent address, living where they worked if lucky), in western countries the boys may come from working, middle or upper classes (see Mathews 1983).

Western boys tend to be furtive, dishonest, and unappreciative; and in common with Filipinos, are wrought with psychological and social problems. One would perhaps expect that living in squalid conditions, Filipino boys would be able to cope adequately with what affluent nations might for themselves consider social problems. But it is in fact these conditions that help create problems for the *billyboys*; and perhaps we overlook the cultural significance of those conditions and the effects in creating social, family and personal problems.

I need not go into particular problems such as alcohol abuse, domestic tension, overcrowding, personality clashes, entertainment avail-

able, welfare assistance, education and employment opportunities, sexual molestations, money, neighbors, peers, drug abuse, and the like. Basically Filipino adolescent problems are much the same as in western countries, and many manifest themselves similarly: in prostitution, drug taking, avoidance, escapism, alcohol, arguments or fights. For each boy his problems in the context of his culture are real for him, and his means and abilities to solve or cope with them vary as much as it does elsewhere.

Information does suggest that many *billyboys* take some form of drug—usually an "upper"—when "working" in order to be sexually and socially aggressive and responsive, and to dull the mind and emotions to their homoerotic-prostitution love-making.

The boys' consumption of alcohol—in the discos, for example—is not obvious because the boys usually take the "effeminate" drink such as Sangria or mango juice. Neither of these specific issues, along with the boys' possible social-sexual problems, were clearly evident or fully investigated by me *because they were not evident, and because of language difficulties*. However, I can tentatively propose that some of these *billyboys*, such as Leni, Nigel, Willy and Paulo, did have some problems with their family, personal relations, sex, drugs, or depression.

Conciliation and Rationalization

Background

In the Philippines, and unlike some developed countries, male prostitution is leniently tolerated by the authorities, and less heavily denied, obscured, or hidden from public view and comment. This attitude relates in part to the economic value of the activity arising from the social conditions from which most boy prostitutes come: at the family level, the income from prostitution helps sustain the family and provides a glimmer of hope for upward economic mobility (see Mathews 1987); at the national level, prostitution helps earn foreign currency. Prostitution has an economic value because of the social conditions which, in turn, are partly caused by the economic structure and conditions of the nation.

A word of caution, however: intolerance of deviance is more than manifest of direct oppres-

sion and harassment; homosexuality, transvestism, transsexualism and prostitution suffer under the oppression of the structure of the society. Although there may be only slight or occasional manifest denigration of sexual deviance in the Philippines, structurally and culturally there is the expectation *by society* that most deviants will form heterosexual, monogamous relationships with a view to marriage. This is hardly an unwarranted societal expectation in view of the fact, as I argue, that neither Philippine society nor the boy prostitutes themselves consider prostitutional or homoerotic activities as intrinsically deviant, but as temporary.

Even so, as I argue, homosexuality, prostitution and sexual deviance generally are in the Philippines *integrated* into normal life and thus tolerated more openly. Part of the cultural reason for this lies in the fact that physical expression of affection is condoned for same-sex partners more so than for opposite-sex partners—expressions such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, dancing, or shopping together; (see for example: Drew & Drake 1969:118-9; Liu et al. 1969:339; Lynch 1964; and Hollnsteiner 1963).

The broad categorizations of females into those who are possible sexual objects, such as prostitutes or "willing" girls, and those who are not, girls who are *mabait* (of good character) and probably virgins, and thereby prospective marriage partners, requires Filipino males to spend a lot of time socializing with the *mabait* females who, by social convention, can usually offer no sexual outlet to their suitors. And given the relatively late age at which a large percentage of Filipinos marry, it follows that, during the years of high sexual activity, a large number of males wanting sexual contacts must turn to alternative outlets. Since girl friends considered appropriate for sexual seduction may offer sexual and (heterosexual) social intercourse at little or no cost, they are probably first choice as sexual outlets. However, their numbers are limited, for most females seem unwilling to play such a role to the point of sexual intercourse because current *mores* about the important of virginity prior to marriage lead the females' families to stress the value of being *mabait*. Although the system of chaperonage may be losing its hold, it remains a principal factor in assuring virginity; and suggests the great weight of the value of virginity when females are assessed as prospec-

tive brides.

Females with "spoilt" reputations probably make up the largest group of premarital and extra-marital outlets for males. They play the role of prostitute, girl friend/lover, or common-law wife. However, certain monetary costs are generally associated with these possible sexual outlets, as they would also be associated with male prostitutes, (see Carrier 1976:118-9). At one level, social or economic prerequisites limit the available options of sexual outlets for many males who, by virtue of their age or income (in the Philippines), are unable to take up the above options.

Blocked in that direction, however and blocked from sexual promiscuity with *mabait* girls, Philippine culture provides males with an alternative, allowing for the relatively cost-free indulgence of homosocial and homoerotic experiences among males, (and, I might add, females). Whether or not such peer homoeroticism is rampant, however, is not my point. But I am suggesting that because of the structure of male-female and male-male relations within the paradigm of Philippine sexual ideology, there is a tolerance and integration of same-sex relations, and thus "prostitution", provided they are not seen as mercenary.

Guthrie (1971:71-72), using Filipino permissiveness toward transvestism as an example, also takes up this theme:

... men hold each others' hands and arms as gestures of friendship, and there are none of the erotic implications which that behavior may carry elsewhere.

...one encounters the *binabae*, young men who dress as women and take on female gestures and mannerisms. These people are more a source of amusement than of ostracism or contempt.... Although these males probably engage in a good deal of homosexual behavior, the society is not particularly concerned and does not call down fierce condemnation upon them. It is believed that sooner or later most of them form heterosexual relationships and marry. This phenomenon is all part of the larger picture of a different sexual patterns than that supported by Christian churches.... there is a sense of timing, a considerable tolerance of individual differences, and an attempt at enforcement of expectations by many forms of teasing.

In Philippine culture, in contrast to western societies, sexuality is given less priority as a

necessary and central element in pair-bonding, and so the forms of sexual expression are of less concern; and where there is concern, it is for the activity rather than a condemnation of the person (see Weeks 1980:18-7). This in part accounts for the acceptance of the *role* a person is perceived as playing, e.g. a prostitute or a transvestite, whilst there remains some condemnation of the act, as Hart (1968) intimates. But even this lenient condemnation is limited to the public sphere, for in the private sphere sexual deviance is not seen as a contagious disease but as an unfortunate though natural condition.

That various terms such as *bakla*, *bayot*, *lakin-on*, *gay*, *hostess*, and *querida*⁹ exist for socio-sexual roles, and that "abnormal" sexual activities and homosexuality are not dealt with in the Philippine Penal Code (Carale 1970) seem to support this view of less concern and greater tolerance for diverse sexual practices.

Simultaneously there is some pressure to conform; but such pressure is subtle or limited owing, in part, to the Philippine notions of *amor propio* (self-esteem, and hence an avoidance or dislike of criticism), and *pakikisama* (getting along together, smooth interpersonal relations).¹⁰ Likewise, homosexuals and prostitutes, by their acclaimed rationalization of their behavior, do not appear to the general Philippine society as threatening, and thus there is a mutual tolerance of them—a tolerance enhanced by the knowing expectation that structural pressures will bear upon deviants to conform eventually to the various modes of respectability. Deviance, then, is integrated into Philippine society in the sense that since it exists, it is recognized and accepted as a natural part of the whole culture.

This ideological and empirical background is necessary to understand the cultural location of male (and female) prostitution where age, poverty, or social prerequisites and sexual ideology limit available sexual opportunities for young males outside marriage. Recognizing this, Philippine society "provides" or allows alternative outlets for such needy men: masturbation, homoeroticism, and obtaining or being a prostitute. Society "provides" these outlets by tolerating them, more as a phase or means to an end than an end in itself. This background also allows us to understand how—and why—male (and female) prostitutes perceive payment for sexual services.

Payment as Exchange

The attitude toward payment for a male prostitute in western countries is one of supply and demand, where a rare commodity demands a high price, and payment is made explicitly for the sexual involvement.

Supply and demand, however, does not merely refer to a numerical ratio of boy prostitute to clients. But demand and supply are subject to the values of youth and beauty of boys—so heavily emphasized in western societies—and the requirement of boys to "forgo" their heterosexuality and commit an act of "impropriety"; (see Mathews 1983:39-40 and 64-65; Davis 1937; Millet 1973:57-58). These factors converge and culminate in the successful sexual act itself, and it is in this sense that payment is made for the sexual act: for the "re-sexualization" of socio-sexual values of the boys—their socially constructed youth, beauty and "impropriety"—enabling them to be available for supply.

The client, in payment for sex, is paying for youth, beauty and "impropriety", all of which have been socially constructed and of which boys are the physical manifestation. These values are held specifically by clients, and realized in homosexual copulation. Because of these values, boys, unlike females, are not merely copulating orifices.

In western, i.e. developed, countries most street boys display little pretense (to their close friends and to their clients), accepting payment directly for the sexual service per se, and almost always negotiated beforehand. There is usually no attachment or empathy, except that which is faked. Nor is western prostitution necessarily an essential activity because of possible alternatives available (cf. Bennet 1982), although poverty in developed countries may be sufficient condition for prostitution.

The removal of an economic justification for western prostitution suggests psycho-social and sexual reasons for boy prostitution, although some still place an economic value upon it in such terms as: "*It's a living*", "*It's easy, quick money*." In this sense prostitution could be considered an economic activity in western societies; but one may argue that it is an extra-economic activity, outside the socially accepted norm of economic employment.

In the Philippines, as examples indicate, payment is seen as a means of assisting the

boys' survival and their education (this equally applies to much female prostitution). In short, prostitution is an essential economic activity rather than just a sexual activity per se (see, e.g. Fiasche 1973).

Because of the supply and demand in the Philippines, the boys leave it to the discretion of the tourist-client as to what payment will be made. As the supply of Filipino boys outnumbers the available clients, the boys are very affectionate, superficially at least, to one particular client at a time, staying with that client for as long as possible, being fed, clothed and sheltered for that period, and receiving some small cash payment: about \$10 Aust. per 24 hours; this is comparable to \$40 for 30 minutes in Sydney.

Although one may think that the boys would be content to be with a client merely for the security of food and shelter, and forgo monetary payment, economic values necessitate monetary income for one's family and future existence. After all, food and shelter continue only as long as the client permits, and does not feed or shelter the boy's family or pay the rent, then and in the future. In addition, most boys are willing to return to the tourist's country of origin with him—with obvious implications.

Apart from food, clothing and money, some clients set boys up in a hotel room of their own for varying periods. This affords privacy for the client, although it certainly adds to the expenses of having a *billyboy*. Perhaps it is the married men or those requiring greater discretion who make such arrangements. Nevertheless, the *billyboys* enjoy the privilege, which is often seen by them to be the pinnacle of success.

As education and survival in the squalid conditions are of the paramount importance to the Philippine population, the boys often ask for money or goods in payment for their services in such a way as to perceive such payment from a tourist-client as if he were a friend helping the boy and his family. The sexual relationship is usually deemed to be an act of friendship for which the payment by the tourist is seen as an act of reciprocated friendship and is not considered for the sexual act itself (for a descriptive account, see *Penthouse*, June 1984).

This construct is not to say that the boys are not prostitutes, nor that they do not see themselves as such. But rather, it is the economic value—essential to survival in many cases—placed on their activities that justify (to them)

the sexual involvement. They do not deceive themselves, society or the tourist of their prostitution, but by means of their verbal insistence on friendship and justifying practicality¹, they create a veil of sympathy, attachment, and almost of respectability.

Caroll (1970:8) makes a note of this Filipino cultural factor of "alliances", as he refers to relationships:

... the alliance itself is developed by the continuing exchange of support and loyalty, an identification of the interests of the allies one with another, and friendship. Frequently the alliances are not among equals, but involve a client-patron relationship of dependence and service.

A relationship of friendship is often established, and payment for sex is seen as a "gift." The "sexual gift" given by a boy creates an *utang na loob* (debt, debt of gratitude, owned by the client), which the boy may call upon in the short or long term, or both. Cash payment by the client is then perceived as a return "gift".

A sample conversation between a boy (B) and a tourist-client (T) the morning after a night of sexual activity may serve to illustrate the above points:

- B: I will go now.
 T: O.K. I'll see you later? Tonight?
 B: I have this problem.
 T: What?
 B: My mother (etc.) is sick/I have to pay.../I need to go to the dentist/I have to pay school fees/ I have no money for transport/food/rent/ etc,etc...
 T: How much do you need?
 B: It's up to you. (*One of the billyboys' key phrases.*)
 T: Is ten dollars O.K.?
 B: Yes. But I have no transport for tonight. (*Note he said "transport" rather than "money".*)
 T: How much is that?
 B: It's a long way to X and back, tonight.
 T: Yes, but how much is it?
 B: It's according to you. (*This phrase, often joined with, "you are the president of your life", is another common usage.*)
 T: Is two dollars enough?
Silence. The boy still does not go, and will not physically accept the two dollars.
 T: I don't know where X is. How much is the transport?
 B: I will go now.
 T: What about the transport?

B: It's up to you.

T: Will five dollars cover it? (*giving it to the boy.*)

B: Thank you. I will go now. Goodbye. (*Kiss.*)

The boy leaves, with promises to return.

All this time the boy and client have negotiated or talked about money for a problem, or transport, and not for sex; there has been no direct or hard bargaining. The boy almost always place the onus of reciprocity on the client in such a way as to make the latter feel guilty, obliged, defensive or wanting to give help. The problem usually *are* real, but often exaggerated or never able to be substantiated by the tourist.

It will be noted that the boy accepted the \$10 explicitly for his major "problem"—and implicitly for the sexual act—and then indicated that he had a secondary "problem", and that if it was not dealt with the boy may be unable to see the tourist again. In this way the boy maneuvered the tourist into wanting to meet the boy again, and having to pay in advance to do so.

Also, it will be noted, the boy refuses to physically take possession of the \$2 offered; acceptance of it would mean that it was sufficient, and the boy would have lost much bargaining power, and no longer have reason to stay in the (hotel) room. Refusal to accept implies the money is insufficient to the boy in the exchange relationship.

Some boys often overstate the amount they require for their "problems". Other may reluctantly accept money offered and then leave, or they may try a new tact on the same theme or "problem".

It can be seen that the tourist offers, and the boy accepts, because they are friends, one in need of some money. The understanding is explicit, the payment implicit.

To further substantiate my contention that this relationship is one of friendship there is the fact, firstly, when such a relationship is terminated abruptly, and both parties independently still frequent the same places (e.g. discos), there is an intensity of *feeling* in each encounter—a reaction-formation—indicative of previous tender feelings, and indicative that there *was* a relationship; and thus the sexual/money exchange was within the framework of that relationship. Such feelings of disappointment-animosity are characteristic of relationships in which there is an *utang na loob*. Sometimes the intensity of this feeling on the part of the boy

manifests itself in his refusal to speak with his previous client, and to make derogative remarks about him. It may well be that, as one prostitute explained to me, the boy feels he has been used and discarded, and that in fact he is being treated as a prostitute which he considers himself not to be.¹² Additionally, large amounts of money offered by the tourist to his ex-boy often fails to woo him back, but kind words may succeed.

Secondly, in this relationship of boy-tourist, there is often a real jealousy and possessiveness, and seldom envy of another boy's client. Certainly the jealousy and possessiveness can be explained in economic terms, but not the intensity of the emotional content of that jealousy—where boys may fight one another verbally, socially and physically over a client. Nor can the lack of envy be accounted for in economic terms: in my observations, boys have sought clients of high status and wealth, but often the clients' physical appearance or personality overrides this, or a boy is contemptuous of a peer who infers that the former's client is inferior to that of the peer's—each boy will stoutly defend his client and justify each relationship. This, of course, can be explained in terms of the boy's pride, but pride must have an emotional element; and to defend his pride the boy must then justify his having that pride: this he does in terms of his emotional relationship with the client.

Categorical Rationalization

The boys themselves distinguish between those prostitutes who are *commercial*, *part-time*, and *full-time* or *regular*. Most boys fit the last category, and it is mainly they who form relationships.

The *commercial* boys, of which there are few, accept hirings for particular periods (e.g. 1 hour, 2 hours, 1 night, and so on) and at particular prices, both of which are negotiated beforehand. These boys may also form relationships with other clients from time to time, but are also willing to *butterfly*. With the *commercials*, there is no intensity of feeling and no later animosity; there is emotional and sexual fakery, but no prolonged post-sexual bargaining. Also their *butterflying* is not seen as such because of the mutually understood arrangement between the *commercial* boy and the client. Yet some boys do *butterfly* in the true sense

because they also have a regular relationship with a client, who may be overseas (from Manila) at the time (e.g. Sandy).

Commercial boys are perhaps the closest thing to male brothel workers. That they are not organized into some form of "call-boy" service reflects the animosity to and disgust with commercial sex and exploitation; and reflects the Filipino concept of *amor propio*: to be a call-boy would entail recognition of oneself as a prostitute rather than a "lover". Even the term *commercial*, used by the boys, may be an affront to one's self concept and esteem.

The boys do not have a specific term for a regular prostitute. Those boys who visit known venues almost everyday, or have been involved in prostitution for a considerable time, are deemed to be *regulars*. It is predominantly they who form relationships, but who also *butterfly*—more often than one would think or hope. This behavior may indicate that such relationships are rather shallow, which is probably true in the sense that the relationship is more of an alliance—characteristic of Philippine culture—than a western style of relationship.

Such an alliance system and shallowness thus makes the *billyboys* appear hedonistic. This concept I use in the sense of the boys never seriously contemplating "real" work or their future; and lends support to my contention that the terminology (e.g. gay and homosexual) about sexuality and used by the boys differs from western usage, in that the Filipinos incorporate in their language concepts of gaiety and pleasure as opposed to mere sexual definition.

The fact that going *commercial* is viewed by most *regular* boy prostitutes as exploiting the tourist-client, making a profit for profit's sake or simply for oneself, is reflective of ordinary non-commercial prostitute as being seen as not exploitive; rather, the latter is perceived as a reciprocal friendly relationship—a necessary reciprocity between client and boy.¹³

Between the *regulars* and *commercials* lie the part-timers—a term suggested to me by one such boy. Paradoxically these boys dissociate themselves from the *commercials*, yet engage in prostitution only when they require the money. They justify this in terms of opportunity and practicality. They differ from the *regulars* in that their relationships are less frequent, and perhaps less intense, or that they are unable to

live with a client each and all day. But unlike the *commercials*, their engagements are emotionally charged relationships and last for a considerable time.

An example of such a *part-timer* is Roberto, who, because he worked and studied, was unable to frequent discos or hotels, and stay out late; or, if he went to a client's hotel, he had to arise at 7 a.m. to go to work.¹⁴

Divine Conciliation

It is not only difficult to separate religion from other influences on culture or morality, but even harder to gauge to what extent the *Spanish* form of Catholicism, as distinct from other aspects of Spanish civilization, had on Filipino culture. In the case of Filipino prostitution we must leave unanswered the degree of influence stemming from Filipino native culture, Catholicism, *Spanish* Catholicism, Spanish culture (excluding religion), and a mixture or distortion of any or all of the four, remembering that some of these factors may have little or no influence, and that the various elements of Spanish colonization were well inter-related.

An obscure and undeveloped note in Havlock Ellis' Volume Four (1906:305) gives some insight into the partial origin of the Spanish-Filipino attitude toward economic transactions; of which prostitution must be viewed as part:

'The contract of prostitution in the opinion of prostitutes themselves,' Bernaldo de Quiros and Llanas Aguilaniedo remark (in *La Mala Vida en Madrid*, p. 254), 'cannot be assimilated to a sale, nor to a contract of work, nor to any other form of barter recognized by the civil law. They consider that in these pacts there always enters an element which makes it much more like a gift in a matter in which no payment could be adequate. "A woman's body is without price" is an axiom of prostitution. The money placed in the hands of her who procures the satisfaction of sexual desire is not the price of the act, but an offering which the priestess of Venus applies to her maintenance.' To the Spaniard, it is true, every transaction which resembles trade is repugnant, but the principle underlying this feeling holds good of prostitution generally (my emphasis).

This is not to say that Spanish colonization was solely responsible in this matter, for it may be equally contended that the Filipino native culture may have resisted Spanish influence in

this sphere had not that culture already been predisposed in this direction.

But Catholicism, unlike Protestantism, has never taken kindly to trade and capitalism, especially usury—an attitude which has permeated the more devout Catholic nations down through the centuries. At the same time, *Spanish Catholicism and culture* (Drew and Drake 1969:47):

... have always paid little attention to such (sexual) practices, considering them the business of the participants.

Apparently this attitude fitted in well with native Filipino customs, for Drew and Drake (1969:117) go on to say:

... boy prostitution in the Philippine Islands has ancient roots. Malay people have always been tolerant of sexual variety... The Spanish brought their easy-going attitudes to the Philippines. They overlooked such activities, especially in their dealings with the natives.

Consequently, the Spanish influence cannot be ignored; it is a factor which again becomes pertinent in the words *amor propio* and the concept which the words denote, in the Filipino tolerance of sexual deviance, and the attitude of gift exchange in prostitution.

I do not want to suggest for even a moment that there is a causal link between religion and prostitution; but given that 85 percent of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, they boy prostitutes of the Philippines may need to reconcile their sexual activities with their Christian beliefs. This may be achieved in a number of ways:

1. They put Christianity aside for the time being, promising themselves (and God) to make amends in later life;
2. They may justify prostitution as "practical"—necessary for bodily survival, and religion relating to the soul or motivation;
3. Some boys see their prostitution as God's way of answering prayers, allowing the boys and their families to eat and survive: "It is God's will." It is perhaps ironic that Catholicism expounds the notion to accept one's position or fate as God's will.¹⁵

What may be surprising is the possibility of

a prostitute even being religious, a point taken up by Pomeroy (1965:179-180):

The public is not inclined to believe that prostitutes can be religious because of the strong disapproval of prostitution by religion. The fact that such a large percent of our sample of prostitutes were able to maintain at least some connection with the church demonstrates the capacity for humans to compartmentalize their lives or to assimilate divergent aspects of their lives into some meaningful whole.

This may well be so for some; but for others, or in addition to compartmentalization, various justifications and psycho-social reconciliations as previously noted are adopted.¹⁶

The Philippine form of Spanish Catholicism consists of an entrenched way of life, a firm conviction of its righteousness and a strong undercurrent of belief. Their religious-based morality is then expressed through cultural norms, one such norm being heterosexual courtship and marriage at an age comparatively late in relation to some western cultures. This norm, conflicting with sexual abstinence and adolescent desires helps force an acceptance—or at least a tolerance—of harmless alternatives, one of which is homoeroticism (or same-sex pair-bonding).

With such a tolerant attitude and social structure, the next step, into prostitution is easier.¹⁷ But not prostitution for money, but rather homoeroticism with an exchange of gifts or services—a reciprocation, such as seen or believed to occur in non-prostitutional homoeroticism; and hence the boys' need to create a veil of attachment and friendship as in reciprocal exchange.

Here one tends to sense that it is western values—negative in regard to prostitution—which are imposed upon Filipino activities and through which such activities are interpreted by foreign observers.

Problematics

That any of the *billyboys* I observed were "homosexual" or "gay" is open to question. For example, Willy liked girls; Sandy had a casual girlfriend; Roberto had had heterosexual relations; Paulo freely admitted he disliked going

with tourists; Leni showed no interest in girls but did say he wanted a child. Only Nigel expressed strong dislikes for heterosexual relations—for him it would be like coitus with his sister. Of course none of these facts and attitudes are incompatible with homoeroticism or being homosexual, for sexuality is not a fixed absolute; there are wide variations, fluctuations and personal idiosyncrasies.

Philippine language have various terms to denote homoerotic roles or behavior: *bakla*, *manay*, *ache*, *aching*, *badap*, *lakin-on*, *bayot*, for example, in addition to the English "homosexual" and "gay". Here I shall confine my comments to the terms—gay, homosexual and *bakla*—used by the street boys in Ermita. These were the three most common terms used also by lay informants when I enquired about public attitudes toward male prostitutes. Their comments ultimately reflect an ambivalent tolerance of the *bakla*, "the gay", the prostitute, but not the "homosexual".

There is a close connection between language and attitudes toward homosexuality in the Philippines, which Sechrest and Flores (1969:9; also see Gamboa & Feenstra 1969:142) point out:

In the Philippines there is a word, *bakla*, which is widely understood and which is used to refer to persons who are homosexual in their behavior. But it is also used to refer to transvestites, to effeminate males, and even to boys who are simply less active than others in games and outdoor activity... But in the Philippines *bakla*, even in its sexually apparent forms, is a matter that can be and is taken lightly. The *bakla* is not the object of hostility or fear. Rather, he is thought funny, amusing, and a good butt for fairly coarse humor . . . in the Philippines many persons appear to think *bakla*, even when it takes the form of overt homosexuality, to be a temporary phase in the individual's life.

Other terms used to describe homosexuals are *binabae* and *parang babe*, both roughly translated as "like a woman" (Sechrist and Flores 1969:9)

These terms are commonly applied to transvestites and probably to other effeminate homosexuals. They appear to require effeminacy to justify their use; homosexual behavior is not sufficient. The term *mag-darling*, meaning 'like darling', may sometimes be used to refer to a girl who has a

crush on another girl. It is probably not often applied to males.

Bakla lacks condemnatory meaning; the term overlaps to mean the English equivalents of homosexual, lesbian, transvestite, sissy, tomboy (Hart 1968:216). It is in (western) cultures where there is grave concern for sexual deviant behavior that terms must define the various categories of deviance, such terms and definitions being unambiguous, non-overlapping, non-synonymous, and not interchangeable, such rigid classifications reflecting the social judgement of the extent to which a particular deviance deviates, on an acceptability/non-acceptability scale, from the ideal norm of monogamous heterosexuality.

Filipinos generally see *bakla* as hereditary, and cite as proof relatives of *baklas* who are *bakla*. This biological perspective of an unavoidable cause of sexual deviance may in fact help explain the greater tolerance of such deviance. Intolerance occurs not for *being gay*, or *bakla*, but for some of the more blatant or "crazy, indecent" behavior publicly exhibited and which might bring shame on one's family and society—behavior which, by *anyone* in Philippine society, would shame family, friends and countrymen/women (See Hart 1968:235-238).

Terms such as *bakla*—and I might add, "gay"—may require a certain degree of effeminacy in clothing, activities, behavioral mannerisms, and the like; so the emphasis is placed on the *social role* rather than a sexual disposition or act. "Homosexual", however, threatens or makes ambiguous a perceived heterosexual role—it is a *behavior* at odds with *role*.

When we translate these Filipino concepts and terms into Anglo-Saxon the problem seems to lie in the different definitions of "homosexual" and of "gay", the two terms adopted and seemingly differentiated by the Filipinos. These different definitions and usages may also help to explain the boys' ability to justify their sexuality in relation to their religion.

It seems Filipinos define a homosexual as one who has sex with a person of the same sex purely for sexual reasons. This may be considered as socially and/or economically unacceptable, such a relationship having no intrinsic value. "Gay", however, is defined as a range of activities—sexual and non-sexual such as outings, dancing, cultural assistance, and so on—

with a person of the same sex within a non-sexual framework. Rather, this framework is social, economic and emotional, and its sexual content, only a small part of it, is able to be justified by pointing to the non-sexual framework and elements of the relationship.

Hence Willy, Roberto and others see themselves in a social and socially accepted relationship of friendship with an older patron, of which the sexual element is but a small and normal exercise of private concern.

I must also add here that when Roberto told me prostitution was "practical", he may have also meant, apart from the economic practicality, that Filipino culture does not openly condone adolescent heterosexual relations, and hence boys divert their sexual energies into male-male relations; (see, for example, Liu et al. 1969:399; and Hart 1968:242-243).

These relations, whether male-male, female-female, or Filipino-tourist/client, emphasize the homosocial elements, whilst to an outside observer they appear to be predominantly sexual.

Definition and word usage may cause confusion in comprehending Filipino conversation and attitudes. Drew and Drake, (1969:118) for example, observe that:

Few of the *biniboy*s engaged in any sexual relations among themselves, although many considered themselves homosexual.

Here Drew and Drake concur with my information, except that my subjects did not consider themselves as homosexual, but rather as "gay". Drew and Drake, I would venture, have fallen into an easy trap of confused meanings.

This definition of "gay", then, may also explain the stigma attached to *butterfly* and "prostitute", for these latter terms threaten one's self and social image as "normally gay"; they imply that the boy's activities are disloyal to not only tourist but also the established order of behavior. *Butterflying* not only contravenes the code of subcultural ethics, but also the socially accepted relationships; it comes too near to commercial, profiteering, money-making sex-for-cash.

As I have indicated, "homosexual" tends to be derogative, whereas "gay" is openly tolerated because it encompasses more than just sexuality. "Homosexual", then, appears to be a term used to label generally sexual deviance of

a homoerotic nature, with the use of the vernacular or various subterms—*bakla*, gay, and the like—labelling and describing less censured degrees or types (see Hart 1968:215). In this sense "gay" in both western and Philippine cultures is perhaps used with greater precision than "homosexual". "Gay" tends to describe, more favorably and accurately, persons who are conscious of their erotic behavior or preference, making it a self-assigned and self-defining category.

If a boy refers to a tourist as "gay"—which is usually said as "A gay"—he can mean two things, each dependent on the context and voice tone: if, for example, the boy is "cruising" (i.e. looking for clients) "A gay" may refer to a potential client in an appraising happy way; but if the boy is discussing a homosexual tourist the term may be used in a mildly derogative fashion. Much the same applies to *billyboys* referring to one another. "Homosexual", however, is not only the formal term used in discrete or formal conversation, but also when used can—and often does—carry a tone of derogation.

An example of this attitude, and the differentiations Filipinos make, occurred when I was taken aside on one occasion and advised that associating with Nigel, known to be a prostitute, was possibly detrimental, because Nigel "might be homosexual". That my advisors disliked Nigel because he was a *prostitute* seems improbable in view of their acceptance of other known prostitutes I introduced to them. If my advisors disliked Nigel for purely personal reasons, then referring to him as a "homosexual" rather than a "prostitute" confirms the levels of derogation/acceptance I am here suggesting.¹⁰

Since the concept of "gay" does not necessarily include homosexuality where homocriticism does occur, it is empirically distinguished from a homosexual identity and attributed to the homo-social gay identity.

This is possible because in Filipino culture and the homo-social subculture of Manila prostitution, homoeroticism is seen as social (and economic) rather than sexual; without an emphasis on homosexuality there can be little or no development of a homosexual subculture, and thus it is difficult to label oneself or be labelled as homosexual (see Weinberg 1978).

This, of course, is tautological: gays are not homosexual because there is no homosexual

subculture; there is no homosexual subculture because gays do not identify as homosexual. To break this circle we must interpose other cultural factors, as outlined in previous pages, particularly the factor of transience.

Filipino culture tolerates homoeroticism partly because it is seen as a transitory phenomenon of adolescence, and partly because of the restrictions on young heterosexual relationships. Given this social tolerance of homoeroticism, and simultaneously covert pressure to eventually conform; and given the censure against post-adolescent homoeroticism, what could be more appropriate than to label oneself as homo-social, i.e. gay, which incorporates a sexual element? Why identify as homosexual and develop a homosexual subculture when the dominant culture *permits* homoeroticism and *its* subculture under the guise of sociability and pragmatics?

Of course many of these terms can be labelled as euphemistic for what we know really occurs. But we must not deny that the charade *billyboys* and the Filipino culture play enables a reasonably smooth functioning of social, personal and economic activities important in that society.

Why then, one may ask, do boys who are not homosexual seemingly readily take to western-defined homosexual relationships? Three reasons are offered:

1. Boys do not see the relationship as "just" homosexuality.
2. For Filipino teenagers the relationships are socially and sexually practical.
3. It is economically practical.

These three factors summarize the outcome of the social, sexual, economic and political structure of the Philippines, as outlined in previous pages.

But we are still left with the open question of the boys' individual sexuality, according to a western psychosocial definition. Because a Kinsey-type sexuality scale would perhaps be culturally biased, it may be that only the boys themselves, in conjunction with a diachronic study, can tell us.

For example, there arose during my enquiries in Manila an interesting and confusing phenomenon involving Paulo and Nigel and their respective gender identities. I had

assumed Paulo to be—on his own admission—homosexual, and to be effeminate, and had assumed Nigel to be likewise. However, following further enquiries and interviews in which Paulo said he was only "a little bit homosexual" and did not really like going with tourists, but that he was gay, and Nigel informed me of his upbringing and inclinations, I discerned that Paulo was not really homosexual; rather he was a transvestite, and this disposition was directed into homoeroticism and utilized in prostitution activities in accordance with the above three factors. Nigel, on the other hand, I do consider to be homosexual, induced by social learning or conditioning,¹⁹ that homosexuality being directed into transvestism. This is a reverse of Paulo.

One may think that Nigel's transvestism is socially induced, or one may think his homosexuality is so induced; but there is only evidence that his transvestism is induced; there is nothing to say; either way, that apart from this (assumed) socially induced transvestism, he would or would not be homosexual anyway. It may simply be that he is homosexual, and this disposition, faintly manifest in childhood, was influenced or directed by social factors: i.e., his transvestism is a separate psychopathological phenomenon, as may be witnessed in transvestites who are *not* homosexual, e.g. Paulo and homosexuals who are *not* transvestites.

Perhaps it is because a society has seen and identified the two phenomena together that a typical image of the homosexual-transvestite has been assigned to both homosexuals and transvestites. The society may have wrongly assigned the social or innate cause of one to another, just as we now label all homosexuals as "gay", which, as this Filipino study shows, is not necessarily correct. But, more profoundly, if a society has made, and perpetuates, such an "error", what does this tell us about that society?

Conclusion

In this lengthy sketch of male prostitution in Manila, I have attempted to posit a few salient features of both the boys and their behavior, in addition to their ambivalent acceptance by society, within a cultural setting. I make no pretence that my suggestions are final. But with

the paucity of previous literature on this and related areas for the Philippines, I would claim that I have set forth a mostly urban, socio-sexual phenomenon which, I hope, will continue to raise new questions.

Donn Hart (1968) has written, to the best of my knowledge, that best short ethnography on Philippine homosexuality and transvestism to date. And although his paper falls short of a rigid anthropological perspective, his succinct criticism (1968:211-212) of previous research—very poor and brief indeed—excuses his floundering.

This paucity of data for the Philippines is even the more remarkable, given that in Anglo-Saxon countries during the last 20 years, there has been a proliferation of sexual enquiries. So now one must not only explain sexuality and sexual deviance in the Philippines, but also why there has been an ethnocentric bias in this area. To suggest Western nations were not concerned with the internal values of former colonies whilst almost paranoid about rapid social

changes within each nation's own borders during the 1960s and 1970s is only half the story.

It is my suggestion that writers on the Philippines, still operating on a Margaret Mead type of thought, could only perceive the friendliness, the kin-orientated, cooperative, slow-paced harmony of a tropical exotic land, a picture of tranquility painted in a sea of Frazerian adjectives. And it has been this image, emanating from the Chicago School of functionalists, that has held sway until recently.

In presenting ambiguity, ambivalence, hostility and conflict into Philippine culture, this paper, by challenging the former serenity, is heuristic at least. By *suggesting* at one level how and why male prostitutes of the Philippines behave as they do, and how they identify themselves and reconcile those identities and roles with social values, which also allow the wider society to tolerate deviance, I have indicated a need for new or deeper perspectives on various aspects of Philippine life and culture, of which sexuality is only part.

Notes

¹I define a male (homosexual) prostitute as a male who makes himself available or is available for sexual relations of various kinds to another male for reward on a regular or repetitive basis; the reward may be money, goods or services, but not sexual satisfaction *per se*. In such a relationship the roles adopted are that of provider of a service and customer-client. These roles emphasize the instrumental and monetary aspects of the relationship, as against the affective dimension which has been eliminated or reduced (Mathews 1983:193).

Henriques (1962:17) defines prostitution as: *any sexual acts, including those which involve copulation, habitually performed by individuals with other individuals of their own or the opposite sex, for a consideration which is non-sexual*. Weeks (1980/1:123), however, objects that a definition as all-embracing as this is meaningless; terms like "habitually" and "non-sexual" are inappropriate where casual pickups might evolve into "companions", "private secretaries", or "personal assistants". To this point I can see no problem: a "companion"—as occurs in *sugar daddy* (see footnote 5) relationships—retains his prostitutional role for non-sexual considerations: security, employment, protection, material benefits, and the like.

However, this clear distinction in roles is blurred with the introduction of affection as an element into such a relationship—which does occur in *sugar daddy* type relationships. Subsequently, Weeks suggests an alternative definition, which, like my own definition, takes into account this new and problematic element: that activities be determined along a continuum between instrumentality and expressiveness, and only those transactions in which the "instrumental" (i.e., the sexual services for money) is greater than the "expressive" (i.e., the degree of affection generated—which leaves unsolved the question of measurement) be called prostitution (see also Brake and Plummer 1970). The crucial question then becomes: would the transaction go on if goods and services were not exchanged?—a question involving self-concepts and identity as well as affection.

In the Philippines, as I argue, the boys accept goods and money for sexual services, but they do not always or necessarily see themselves as prostitutes, and they "generate affection" in the relationships. Thus, because the Filipino boys of this paper do conform to the economic or exchange criterion of prostitution, and because there seems no other adequate word to describe their activities, I shall use the term "prostitute" as a shorthand way of designating the boys and their activities; but the issue remains

problematic. It is hoped this paper will be a step in resolving that issue.

²In dealing with young boy prostitutes primarily in Manila, and to which I refer as those working in or from discos, at beats and on the streets as opposed to any form of organized or brothel prostitution, it may be noted that the clients encountered, by both the boys and myself, were mainly tourists of western nations, i.e., Caucasians from industrialized countries such as Australia, United States, England, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, with some clients from Japan and the Middle East.

³One of the main gay venues, where on occasion I counted some 30-40 boys and 10 Caucasian clients, was the *Manila Compa* in Ermita. Opposite was an American-style cafe-hamburger establishment, *The Factory*, providing a suitable place for boys and/or clients to meet. By 1985 *Manila Compa* had closed. *The Factory* was still operating, but as a "straight" business, fully integrated with the Hotel of which it was part. Other places of known repute were in Malate and Quezon City.

⁴*Billyboy* is the Filipino-English term for male prostitute, used by both the boys and non-prostitutes. Drew and Drake (1969) and Shaw (1967) refer to boy prostitutes of the Philippines as *biniboyos*. Although I heard that term, virtually the only term in common use was *billyboy*.

⁵A *sugar daddy* is a client of a prostitute who, wealthy or not, develops a sexual relationship with the prostitute, and who attempts to introduce mutual affection into the relationship. In return for the prostitute's sexual services, the *sugar daddy* supports him/her with money, accommodation or goods, often buying him/her luxuries or taking her on holidays, rather than paying *directly* or *merely* for the sexual act. In return, the prostitute is to give preference to the *sugar daddy*, and in most cases refrain from sexual activity with other persons.

Although these relationships are developed with a view to long-term involvement, generally they do not last very long: more than 6 months would be unusual. Some such relationships are constituted by the mutual knowledge that (usually) the client will be returning to his own home within a few weeks or months, the client at the time of the relationship merely being on holiday. This is particularly the case in the Philippines, where both male and female prostitution is primarily constituted by such short-term affectionate relationships. (See also Mathews 1983:75-86).

⁶*Billyboys* perceive and call a *butterfly* a prostitute or a client who has more than one partner. For example, Nigel, a *billyboy*, whilst living with a client, frequented his permanent (Swiss) boyfriend, and visited other clients at various hotels. A client who *butterflies* may be living with a boy and yet brings home (to his hotel) another boy for perhaps one night—sometimes causing intense jealousy—or make excuses for not seeing his regular boy whilst taking the other boy to his hotel or on a trip.

⁷It was later discovered that Daniel was more likely to be 18 or 20 years old, for apart from some Filipino boys lying about their age to please clients, one is not permitted to work before age 18 in the Philippines. The need or desire to work, of course, only adds to the reasons for taking up prostitution.

Drew and Drake (1969:118-119) note that most *billyboys* are:

...employed during the day as dressmakers, models, beauty parlor attendants and other jobs of similar caliber. They all moonlighted as prostitutes in the evening. The younger, non-employed ones tended to stay at home during the day and keep house for their older buddies...

This description is, of course, merely outdated by subsequent political, economic and social changes. Roberto was the only *billyboy* whom I met with full-time employment; only a few others were so engaged casually or part-time. None of these occupations were of an "effeminate" nature.

⁸A number of *billyboys* adopted female names such as "Victoria" or "Joanne". This was often in keeping with their "effeminate" desires and dispositions. Such names were used in public by the boys and their peers interchangeably with their real names. No social reason could be given for the use of such names; it *appears* to be a personal whimsical phenomenon, merely assisting their effeminate image, or perhaps psycho-socially reconciling that image with their homoerotic behavior.

⁹*Querida* is a mistress condemned more for her threat to the economic stability of a family than her sexual activities (see Yu and Liu 1980).

¹⁰Guthrie (1971:61-62) writes:

The characteristic of amor proprio involves self-esteem but not necessarily of self-confidence. Although it resembles losing face in the Oriental sense, and social insecurity in the Western sense, it should not be equated with either. A central element of amor proprio is the need of the Filipino to be treated as a person.

¹¹The practical, justified aspect of prostitution is clear: the need to survive. But the rationalization of prostitution reminds me of Fegan's (1979:167:168) farmers and rats: farmers, who had supported the Huk rebellion, call their landlords, *mabait* (good, kind), although the latter may take the lion's share of a tenant-farmer's crop; in the same way, farmers call field rats, which may devastate a crop, *mabait*. The farmers reconcile this apparently contradictory behavior by blaming their condition on an instigator. Who that instigator might be—the client, an intermediary, poverty, society—in the case of prostitution requires further analysis.

But "practicality" operates in more than a purely economic sense; it relates to certain social values, where *preying selectively on strangers* (Fegan 1986:941) in the defense of one's family, within a cultural "survival ethic" (Szanton 1972; see also Kervliet 1986), may be equated with some notion of righteousness.

¹²The outright recognition of a boy as a prostitute, either by himself or by others, would be to objectify him. Therefore, a mitigating emotional relationship is developed between boy and client to safeguard against the labeling of the boy as a prostitute, and sustain avoidance of direct confrontation to his self-image. Happily, and more than coincidentally, the evolution of the emotional relationship also assists in mitigating any conflict prostitutional behavior may have with Filipino culture, particularly Filipino Catholicism.

Guthrie (1971:61-62) continues along this vein:

His fragile sense of personal worth leaves him especially vulnerable to negative remarks from others and leads him to be vigilant to the signs of status which will indicate how he stands in his group at the moment.

Being a prostitute no doubt creates problems in maintaining one's dignity, but the boys' creation of emotional relationships with clients maintains their dignity, being, as Guthrie (1971) points out, the main or a common element of *amor propio*.

¹³One may well sympathize with not only the *commercial* boys who exploit Westerners, but also with all boys as exploitive of those (clients) who set out to "exploit" the property of the boys. Exploitation, especially of sexuality or one's body, can be a highly charged subject; suffice to say here that one may perceive a "mutual exploitation" in these affairs, and in prostitution generally.

The arguments on exploitation are rather well-known: the naive child is taken advantage of by the experienced and often wealthy adult, versus free-will and mutual exploitation. This latter situation becomes particularly obvious in Manila.

However, it is my contention that, by the very fact that boys are independent or "deviant" limits their involvement in a long-term, prostitutional-homosexual, *sugar daddy* type relationship and minimizes the control of the boys and hence minimizes their exploitation.

One may counter, though, that even minimal exploitation is still exploitation, to which in answer one may resort to the tried and tested argument of the boys' free-will, choice and reciprocal exploitation.

And it may be stressed that my argument applies to Filipino prostitutes as much as to western prostitutes. Just because the boys may be in dire straits does not overrule their independence: if they believe they are to be exploited by any particular client they can turn to (some) security of their family, peers, hang-outs, or other clients.

If one defines exploitation as the "taking of unfair advantage", (which is a broader definition and more connotative than that of the Concise Macquarie Dictionary, 1982: "to use selfishly for one's own ends"), then we must realize prostitutes take unfair advantage of illegal homosexuality—a phenomenon of social structure—while the client takes advantage of economic circumstances, another phenomenon of social structure. It is thus social structures which, if not exploitive, create the conditions in which one is able or needs to exploit or take advantage (cf. Gouldner, 1973:223, 280).

And finally, one must ask: What is "fair"? Or, in Gouldner's (1973) terms, where exploitation occurs, when is there disproportionate return for something given, when and how is "disproportionate" subjectively perceived?

¹⁴One may wonder then why neither Leni nor Nigel are classified as *commercial* rather than *regular* prostitutes. Both types use the money from prostitution to have a good time and survive. But the *commercial* enters into an engagement more like the western-type male prostitute in that he does not become emotionally involved, even superficially, and usually negotiates terms beforehand. Also, usually, the timing of an encounter is negotiated beforehand, and often the *commercial* is not particular as to with whom he goes.

Leni, on the other hand, acted very much like and identified as a *regular*, so much so that he often became too emotionally involved. Similarly, Nigel, despite his *butterfly* activities, could not be classified as *commercial*, for with each client he did develop a real, if only superficial, emotional bond.

Perhaps the difference between the two types needs further investigation, which I was unable to carry out at the time as I met only a few *commercial* boys: perhaps this in itself is an indication that *commercial* male prostitutes are only a new—and growing—phenomenon?

¹⁵This rationalization of the boys' prostitution I have related to Christianity, particularly Catholicism, to which the majority of the Filipino population belong. However, there are a number of other religions in the Philippines, notably Islam. That I was unable to contact a non-Catholic boy prostitute (except Sandy, who claimed to be Moslem) may be accounted for by their rarity, by bad luck, and that Islam is predominant in the south islands, far from Manila's cosmopolitanism, and which I was unable to visit. If, however, boys of another religion are prostitutes, their rationale could be much the same as that of Catholic boys.

¹⁶Discussing "techniques of neutralization", Sykes and Matza (1957:669) note that internal and external social controls may be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of smaller social groups to which the person belongs such as the sibling pair, the family, the gang, or clique. The individual does not necessarily repudiate the imperatives of the dominant normative system, despite his/her failure to follow them. Rather, he/she may see him/her self as caught up in a dilemma that must be resolved, at the cost of violating laws and norms. Deviation thus occurs not because norms are rejected, but because other norms pressing or involving a higher immediate loyalty take precedence. The individual does not create anew an opposing ideology, but extends the patterns of thought prevalent in a society. Justifications for deviance will be more readily seized by segments of society for whom a discrepancy between social ideals and social practice is most apparent.

In the Philippines such a segment of society is readily discernable in the poor, particularly the poverty-ridden and unrestrained youths. For what have such youths to lose if they are able to justify their prostitutional behavior in terms of pragmatics, cultural tolerance, and the adoption of group values which do not necessarily conflict with those of the larger society?

¹⁷My aim here has been not so much as to point out how or why Filipino boys *become* prostitutes, nor suggest that because of *economic* conditions most boys are willing to take up various forms of homoeroticism—for obviously the vast majority of Filipino boys do *not* engage in prostitution. Nor do I suggest that it is easy—as easy as drinking a bottle of Coca-Cola—to engage in prostitution. But I am suggesting how certain boys, once having become prostitutes (and in the process of so becoming) are able to reconcile, *post hoc*, their self-identity with the values and judgements of their larger society, because that society is structured in such a way, different from western societies, that enable such reconciliation easier. By using prostitution as a prime, or extreme,

example, I hope I am able to merely bring to light some of the values and their workings with regard to Filipino sexual ideology. But it is clear that further questions and answers are needed in this field.

¹⁸If used explicitly and derogatively, "homosexual" is more charged with social disapproval than its counterpart "a gay" when it is used disparagingly.

¹⁹Contrary to my own personal belief that homosexuality is genetically caused, I must admit that Nigel gives every indication that his homosexual orientation is socio-culturally induced; i.e.; learnt behavior. Of course it still remains to prove that Nigel is homosexual. And should that proof be forthcoming, in view of our current scientific ignorance, we are still able to say that genetic and learnt behaviors are not necessarily incompatible.

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