***Lolas' House: Filipino Women Living with War*, by M. Evelina Galang. Evanston, Illinois: Curbstone Books/ Northwestern University Press, 2017. 267 pp. $18.95 paper. ISBN: 978-0-8101-3586-4.**

M. Evelina Galang's *Lolas' House: Filipino Women Living with War* is a work that places the consent of the Filipino "comfort women" and accountability of the Japanese for their collective experiences at its very core. As the Japanese Imperial Army waged war during World War II, the term "comfort women" became a euphemism for the sex slaves throughout the Pacific Rim. From its onset, Galang minces no words in directly referring to the "comfort stations" as "military rape camps." Belonging to the genre of creative nonfiction, Galang weaves the sixteen testimonies of Filipino women, the lolas ("grannies" in English), with their individual stories as she entwines her own role as a storyteller within their narratives in order to engage with an otherwise little-known history of the "comfort women" of World War II (8). Quoting Lola Catalina, Galang notes that the Pacific front became a battlefield between Japan's imperialist war throughout Asia and the aftermath of United States' colonialism in the Philippines: "She says the war was between the Japanese and the Americans. The foreigners came and disrupted their lives, destroyed their city and all the Philippines" (18). Broadly, this work redresses an imposed silence on this history and endeavors to not only engender the empathy of the reader but also issue a call for justice—"LABAN MGA LOLA!"—on behalf of these "Filipino women living with war" (45).

What extant information that is known of the "comfort women" resides with the justice movement in South Korea. Studies of the "comfort women," particularly in South Korea and China, typically situate this work in the academic disciplines of history and sociology. Galang attempts to shift the focus onto the "comfort women" of the Philippines and enacts a timely, and time-sensitive, intervention in Asian Diasporic Studies through the field of literature. Its time-sensitive nature poignantly shows itself in the temporal nature of the lives of the lolas themselves—as they age and as they pass on. Galang herself gives a nod to Maria Rosa Henson who, in March of 1992, answered the call of the Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women (TFFCW), and called

upon other Filipinas to come forward … which they did only for their cases to be dismissed by the Japanese courts. Galang's work confronts this disputation of history, this coercion of the Japanese, and what was not provable nor evidential regarding their abductions and rapes, with a periodization of what is known and communicable through the testimonies themselves of the lolas, which, as she tells the reader, remain intact, verified by existing information offered by witness accounts. Galang's acts as a proto-ethnographer cum journalist who justifies her approach in rendering their stories as such because "The words cannot stand on their own. They must sit in a nest of context. They must be explained in action. In story. In cultures we enter only through character" (125).

To focus on the primacy of the testimonies themselves, Galang frames their stories with her approach as an academician of the humanities, combining ethnographic research with storytelling: "I made a promise to the lolas. I told them I would write their stories. I told them I would document their experiences so that the world would have a record of what happened, so that we would have an understanding of what happens to women in war" (11). Originally begun in 1999 as a Fulbright-funded research project, T*he Dalaga Project*, Galang initially paired a lola with a dalaga, defining dalaga as "that in-between moment when a girl is no longer a girl and not quite a woman," because she wanted to know what the lola could teach the dalaga about being a woman" (8). In so doing, Galang positions herself as a feminist/peminist Filipina American scholar and writer with her mission for the lolas outlined in the following: 1. A formal apology 2. Compensation for their suffering 3. Documentation in official histories (7). In light of the bilateral agreement between Japan and Korea in 2015, which nullified the basic human rights of former "comfort women" of different Asian nationalities, Galang relegates the key historical resolutions and political statements for the end of this work, most notably, in her direct address, "An Invitation to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe," and a reference to the House of Representatives' resolution for Japan "to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery," shepherded by Congressman Mike Honda (from Pyong Gap Min's Korean "Comfort Women: Military Brothers, Brutality, and the Redress Movement," 2019). As

an amplification of the historical challenges and legal struggles at the end of the novel, after the testimonies of the sixteen Filipino "comfort women," Galang's framing through trauma attests to the many challenges she faced as a writer: drawing upon the creative arts as healing practices to draw out their testimonies, confirming the veracity of their stories, confronting the problems of translation, and being questioned by the lolas themselves.

However, through Galang's rendering, the words of the lolas speak for themselves, thus allowing the reader to meet each lola and her, the writer, on their own terms because history has not done as much. And, this is where the limitations of *Lolas' House* betray themselves: it follows a kind of traumatic loop depicting episodes of coercion and, at times, the collaboration of family members with the Japanese, and the cultural stigma of the lolas by their compatriots. It does not present itself as an academic study analyzing why the experiences of the lolas were distinct from other Asian "comfort women" and why they were specifically targeted. As a work of creative nonfiction, Lolas' House does not claim to be historiography even though the testimonies themselves act as exemplars of historiography. Through Galang, each lola becomes a storyteller in her own right. Thus, its limitations bespeak to their possibilities for the reader, and a wider audience, to confront their own ignorance of this history—for the reader to, in fact, gauge how they read and listen to trauma and how each reader can deploy empathy rather than judgment in this call for justice. Despite the ephemerality of each lola's life, the impressions of each testimony grants them an authority that is lasting. We bear witness to not only one hero, one battle, one journey, but a diffusion of experiences from one awful phenomenon of "Filipino women living with war."

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