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Isabel Pefianco Martin

On 13 August 1898, a few months before American forces officially occupied Manila, American soldiers had already begun to teach in Corregidor (Estioko 1994, 186). It is assumed that their first lesson was English. Less than a month later, on 1 September 1898, Fr. William D. McKinnon, the chaplain of American military forces, opened seven schools in Manila (Martin 1980, 117).

It was no accident that the first teachers of English in the Philippines were American soldiers. Public education was introduced by the Americans as an essential component of military strategy. General Arthur MacArthur himself declared the following about public education:

The matter [public education] is so closely allied to the exercise of military force in these islands that in my annual report I treated the matter as a military subject and suggested a rapid extension of educational facilities as an exclusively military measure (UNESCO 1953, 74).

Throughout American colonial rule, English was systematically promoted as the language that would "civilize" the Filipinos. It was the language that the colonizer introduced to the colonized so that the latter would be able to participate in a society determined by colonialism.

It was educational policy to systematically confine the native languages outside the territories of formal schooling. Such a policy was institutionalized through the heavy use of instructional materials of Anglo-American origin for language instruction. Throughout four decades of American public education, Filipino students were exposed to a canon of literature which included the works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as

those of Shakespeare, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, and the romantic poets. Meanwhile, Filipinos were using their own language outside the schools.

A Flourishing Literary Life

When the Americans arrived in the Philippines, the Filipinos already had a flourishing literature. In the first decade of American colonialism, with memories of the revolution against Spain still fresh, secular values spread rapidly as a rejection of 300 years of religious domination. Spanish declined but English had not yet gained a foothold. Thus, the floodgates of literature in the native languages were flung wide open. With a newfound freedom of expression under the American colonizers, Philippine poetry, fiction, and journalism flourished.

However, in spite of the existence of a wealth of writing by Filipinos, Philippine literature was never recognized inside the colonial classroom. It was only during the latter half of American colonialism, perhaps with the introduction of the readers of Camilo Osias and the textbook of Francisco Benitez and Paz Marquez Benitez, that the canon in the classroom opened up to Filipino writers. It should be noted, however, that these textbooks were written in English.

It is easy to understand why Philippine literature was not recognized in the colonial classroom. First of all, the Philippine literature that flourished at the beginning of American colonial rule was not in English. As it had been the policy from the start that native languages were not to be used in schools, Philippine literature certainly had no place in the colonial classroom. The native language (Pilipino) was not allowed to be taught in the public schools until 1940.

In 1925, a comprehensive study of the educational system of the Philippines (also known as the 1925 Monroe Report) reported that Filipino students had no opportunity to study in their native language. The report recommended that the native language be used as an auxiliary medium of instruction in courses such as character education, and good manners and right conduct (Board 1925, 40). In spite of this, American education officials insisted on the exclusive use of English in the public schools until 1940. Such policy propelled the English language towards becoming, in the words of Renato Constantino (1982), a "wedge that separated the Filipinos from their past."

The Canon of the Colonial Classroom

Other than language, a more compelling reason for barring Philippine literature from inclusion in the canon of the classroom was that Anglo-American literature best served the interests of the colonizers. In this canon, the following titles were included:

Titles	Authors
<i>The Song of Hiawatha, Evangeline, and The Courtship of Miles Standish</i>	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
<i>The Alhambra</i>	Washington Irving
"Gettysburg Address"	Abraham Lincoln
"Self-Reliance"	Ralph Waldo Emerson
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	Daniel Defoe
<i>The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Macbeth, and Julius Caesar</i>	William Shakespeare
<i>Lady of the Lake</i>	Walter Scott
<i>Sohrab and Rustum</i>	Matthew Arnold
<i>The Life of Samuel Johnson</i>	James Boswell
<i>Silas Marner</i>	George Eliot

A detailed analysis of these texts, as well as the way they were taught to Filipino children, reveals the combined power of curriculum, canon, and pedagogy in promoting myths about colonial realities. These texts made natural and legitimate the illusion that colonialism existed for the sake of the colonials and not the colonizers.

One would wonder, for example, why the works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were included in this canon when in the United States during the early part of the 1900s, Longfellow was regarded by critics as one whose poetry was shallow and too didactic (Snyder 1953, 583-84). But beginning 1904, *Evangeline* was read by all Filipino high school students. In 1911, *The Song of Hiawatha* was read in all public elementary schools in the country.

In 1904, Filipino elementary school students also began to read Washington Irving's *The Alhambra*, a collection of stories set in the historical palace in Spain. The Alhambra was built and inhabited by Moslem kings during the thirteenth century. One would wonder why,

among all the works of Irving, was this particular one included in the colonial canon.

A closer inspection of *Evangeline*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and *The Alhambra*, reveals themes that directly promote American colonialism. In these texts one can almost find prescriptions for the good behavior in a colonized society. *Evangeline*, for example, is the story of how Evangeline and Gabriel were separated during the time when the Acadians were ejected from their home by the English colonizers. However, the story tends to attract more attention to the romantic and sentimental portrayal of Evangeline's ill-fated love, rather than to the anger of the Acadians at the English. In *The Song of Hiawatha*, the protagonist Hiawatha regards the English colonizers as messengers of God. In the end, Hiawatha accepts his fate, leaves his home, and entrusts to the English his fellow native Americans. Irving's *The Alhambra* depicts colonizers as savages who destroy lives and cultures. However, it is interesting to note that these colonizers are the very same Spanish colonizers who subjected the Filipinos to 300 years of suffering. It is, thus, easy to see why the text is invaluable tool of American colonialism.

The literary texts which make up the canon are presented in the colonial classroom as examples of great literature. Exposure to such a canon in the colonial classroom would certainly exact a toll on Philippine writing, as well on standards for Philippine literature. From the compositions of Filipino students alone, one can already see the effects of American colonial education on writing. In 1928, one English teacher observed that in writing compositions, students tended to mimic the Anglo-American writers they read in class. An example of such follows:

Amongst my female sectionmates there is one who will make my heart stop throbbing whenever I will gaze upon her. She is not pure Filipina but are what we call in the Philippines Mestiza. She have a golden kinky hair and an oblong face on which was a rare and sporadic pimples. She is not so white as plate nor so black as Negro, but between the two, so that when the sun will shine on her face a blood running thru the arteries can be plainly seen. (*Graphic* 1928)

According to the student-writer's English teacher, the student directly lifted the words "throbbing" and "oblong" from Edgar Allan Poe, although Poe did not use the term "oblong" to refer to the face

of a person, but to a box. The term "sporadic," which the student used to describe pimples, might have been taken from a biology text, or could have been a confusion with the word "dangling." If it was an error, then the source of the word was most likely Washington Irving. The lofty tone of the paragraph, furthermore, might be traced to Matthew Arnold. The teacher added:

A vast army of literary knights—Chaucer, Poe, Irving, Kipling, Arnold, Stevenson, Tennyson, Longfellow, Johnson, Noah Webster, Shakespeare and countless others crop up continually in the written work, perhaps somewhat mangled, but recognizable nevertheless.

This observation was confirmed by the General Office Supervisors of the Bureau of Education. In March 1928, they published the following statement:

The topics chosen for composition should encourage originality in thought and expression rather than reproduction of literary works. There should, of course, be nice correlations of work in literature and composition. But such a large majority of the composition topics should not be drawn from the course on literature and when the composition topic is correlated with literature, it should be so worded as to call for original thought rather than reproduction. (*Philippine Schools* 1928)

Writing in Philippine schools tended to imitate the language of the texts taught to students. Such an observation is not very different from that made about Philippine literature in English produced during the second decade of American colonial rule.

Local Color in Philippine Literature in English

In 1928, Dr. George Pope Shannon (1928, 6), head of the English Department of the University of the Philippines and adviser of the UP Writers' Club, warned writers about four tendencies of Philippine literature in English: (1) slavish imitation, or the tendency of Philippine literature to imitate Anglo-American texts; (2) provincialism, or the tendency of Philippine literature to be confined to narrow issues such as patriotism; (3) self-complacency, or the tendency of Philippine writing in English to reject issues that interest the general reader; and (4) discouragement, or the tendency of Filipino writers to lose confidence in their own writing because of the low quality of their work.

These observations from an American educator who had a wide influence on Filipino writers might have defined standards of excellence for Philippine literature in English. It is clear from Shannon's statements that originality was demanded. But what exactly did it mean to be original?

In 1928, in the essay "On Story Settings," Filipino writer and critic Casiano Calalang (1928) offered the following advice to fellow writers:

It will profit us to pay particular attention to our surroundings, to the peculiarities that make them different from others, to the atmosphere of our villages which can not be confounded with the metropolitanism of the city. And when in our mind the differences are clear, let us start with enthusiasm and vigor to write stories that will breathe the heat and passion of the tropics, and bear the distinctive stamp FILIPINO.

With this statement, Calalang laid bare the contradictions Filipino writers of English were facing during the period of American colonialism. On the one hand, Filipinos were expected to produce writings that were acceptable to the general reader, that is, the American reader, or more precisely, the Filipino reader with the literary taste of an American. Such taste, of course, was developed in the colonial classroom with the Filipinos' exposure to Anglo-American texts. On the other hand, it was also demanded that Philippine writing in English be original. And to be original meant to infuse Philippine literature with local color, a quality certainly not consistent with the nature of Anglo-American texts Filipinos were expected to read and imitate.

Ten years after the success of the first Philippine short story in English ("Dead Stars" by Paz Marquez Benitez), another Filipino writer and critic, Arturo Rotor (1937) lamented the fact that Philippine writing in English was still in the experimental stage. He noted the abuse of local color in most short stories. Many years later, Casiano Calalang decided to write in Tagalog, explaining that "it was better in Tagalog. English was very simple, very direct" (Alegre and Fernandez 1984, 22).

The demand for local color was a compromise that American colonialism promoted so that Philippine literature in English would become acceptable by its standards. It was a concept that allowed Philippine literature in English an opening into the mainstream of literary life in the Philippines.

It was also a symptom of the contradictions in Philippine literary life as a result of American colonial education. On the one hand, Filipino writers were expected to be original in their writing, that is, to

avoid mimicking Anglo-American literature, and yet, the only literary texts they were exposed to in the colonial classroom were Anglo-American.

With the promotion of local color as a standard of excellence, American colonialism, through education as a potent instrument, successfully delimited the sphere of Philippine literature in English to that space where great literature does not belong. With the demand for local color, Philippine literature in English was effectively pushed to the margins of the mainstream and relegated it to the position of other.

Romantic Features of Philippine Literature

In contrast, local color was not an issue in Tagalog literature, precisely because Tagalog literature already lay at the margins of American colonial society. Filipinos schooled in the Anglo-American canon saw in Tagalog literature the so-called flaws of romantic form and content.

In 1935, Genaro Virtusio (1935, 2) wrote the following about the *Tagalista*, or Filipino writer of Tagalog:

The trouble with our Tagalistas, is that they are content to cater to the great bulk that is the unsuspecting ignorant mass yearning to be emotionally tickled and sentimentally pleased, disregarding all that is good and beautiful, and worth-having in literature.

The "great bulk" that Virtusio was referring to were the thousands of readers ("the unsuspecting ignorant mass") of the Tagalog magazine *Liwayway*. The wide readership of this magazine during the period of colonial rule suggests that emotional, sentimental, and moralistic literature was very popular. Virtusio's statement also reveals that at that time, emotionalism and sentimentalism were considered qualities of poor writing, as well as of poor taste in literature. Such qualities belonged to the opposite side of what were considered "good" and "beautiful."

It should be noted, however, that this penchant for romantic writing was also evident in Philippine literature in English. In 1928, Jose Garcia Villa (1928, 2) wrote:

Love has been the major ingredient all these years and because of its overuse, has spoiled the story. . . . While this passion for the love story may seem only the writer's fault, it is equally the reading public's. . . . Also, it must be known that the Filipino public has a weakness for flow-

ery language. A writer who does not use florid words is not appreciated.

Like Virtusio, Villa was referring to the popularity of romantic literature that was made available to the public through weekly magazines.

In 1929, Thomas Inglis Moore (1936, 1-16), professor of English at the University of the Philippines, wrote:

Sentimentalism is the worst weakness of all Filipino literature. It is caused by the emotional and idealistic nature of the people and by the fact that their literature is doubly adolescent-written with an adolescent knowledge of the English language and by adolescent minds. Turn to the pages of the Collegian or the Sunday Tribune or the Herald. Read the works of Mr. Galang—if you can do so. Take the St. Claire translation of the *FLORANTE AND LAURA*. Here, in general, we have a welter of emotion which has little relation to the facts of life, especially the hard ones. Everything is ideal, especially in the emotional sense of the terms. It is depressingly subjective. There is no substance of objective reality. It is sloppy, molluscan; it has no vertebrate of fact.

At a literary conference at the University of Sto. Tomas in 1932, Eufonio Alip (1932, 18) made the following distinction between Philippine short story in English and its counterpart in the native language:

whereas the latter is sickeningly sentimental, the former is real; one is grossly romantic, the other is realistic.

A few years later, in 1936, Jose M. Hernandez, head of the Department of English of the University of Sto. Tomas, attempted to rationalize and naturalize romanticism in Philippine literature. He wrote that:

in writing there are certain qualities of the English language which are difficult of assimilation in an Oriental country like ours; for, whereas the best English writing demands the crispness, sharpness, severity and economy of expression, the Oriental manner of speaking and writing calls always for wordiness, ornate language, a "fine writing"—all these being very suggestive of pleonasm and surplusage.

It is clear from the statements above that what was considered as a weakness of Philippine writing was also perceived as a weakness of the Filipino race. These observations from Filipino critics and educators, as well as from influential American educators, only perpetuated

the dichotomies between Occidental and Oriental languages, realistic and romantic literatures, high literature and low literature, good taste and poor taste, maturity and adolescence, intelligence and ignorance. Thus, in a hierarchy of literary standards imposed through education by American colonialism, Philippine romantic literature in English or Tagalog was consigned to the very bottom of the heap. Of course, on top of that heap was Philippine literature in English that was infused with realism and local color. At the highest point were Anglo-American literary texts, romantic or realistic, it did not matter, because these were not Filipino.

Conclusion

As material manifestation and ideological apparatus of American colonialism, education in the Philippines under the Americans only perpetuated the interests of American colonial ideology. The combined power of the canon, curriculum, and pedagogy constituted the ideological strategies resulting in rationalizing, naturalizing, and legitimizing myths about colonial relationships and realities. The Filipino experience of American colonial education must constantly remind us that education is never neutral. Education is power—the power to forge realities, the power to propel cultures, the power to interrupt life.

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