

# **Reading and Colonial Legacy:** Texts, Subtexts, and Countertexts in a Contemporary High School Language Arts Textbook

*Florianne Jimenez*

Florianne Jimenez is an MA/PhD student in English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She was an Instructor with the DECL from 2011–2013. Her current research interests include rhetoric and advertising, 20th and 21st century American literature, travel studies, and the sociology of literature.

## **Introduction**

Given that English has only been in the country for about a hundred years, it is remarkable that it holds the status of a national language in the Philippines. Considering that Spanish had been in the Philippines for three hundred years, it is intriguing to note how the relatively short duration of English's presence in the country has had little impact on its proliferation. This disparity speaks of how extensive and effective American colonial strategy was, such that its influence has left a seemingly permanent mark on the Philippines.

The American colonial administration used many strategies to conquer the Philippines in virtually all aspects of life—military, political, cultural, economic. Of all these strategies, perhaps none was as affective as the system of

universal public instruction that they handed down to us. Education was a key component in the entrenchment of American ideology. Soldiers used military power to get Filipinos to submit to American demands, while teachers used schoolbooks to ideologically reinforce the regime. As Antonio Gramsci puts it, "There can and indeed must be hegemonic activity even before the rise to power, and... one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise an effective leadership" (qtd. in Viswanathan 1-2).

The thrust of colonial education was the preparation of Filipinos for self-governance. According to historian Douglas Foley, universal public instruction was created with the goal of "liberating" the working masses. The American government wanted to create an independent peasantry who, armed with basic literacy skills, could have "a new spirit of self-respect, a new consciousness of personal dignity and civil rights" (75). A crucial step in this goal was linguistically enabling their subjects by teaching them the language of the colonizer: thus, education in English was introduced. American schoolteachers bore emphasis on the study of English in public schools, spending a significant amount of class hours on the subject. English, in fact, counted for one-half of the weight of a student's grade point average, with geography and mathematics making up only a quarter each (Veric 186). In contrast, the regional languages and cultures were excluded from the American colonial curriculum.

English education as administered by the Americans was largely tied to literature. According to Isabel Martin's "Colonial Pedagogy: Teaching Practices of American Colonial Educators in the Philippines", a prescribed set of texts chosen by the colonial authorities was distributed to various public schools and taught in English classes. These texts were analyzed—dissected, really—for their linguistic value. In her paper, she

quotes an American schoolteacher's journal as he describes a literature class in the Philippines:

The course in literature was a misnomer. It should have been called "The Comparative Anatomy of our Best Works." We skinned participles and hung the pelts on the blackboard to dry. We split infinitives, in much the same manner as a husky Midwestern youth splits a stick of wood. We hammered the stuffing out of the compound and complex sentences, leaving the mere shells of their selves. We took our probes and dug into the vitals of literary masterpieces, bringing their very souls to the light of day...we analyzed sentences and defined words—in short, we completed the course, as outlined, including the most important thing: the correct manner of passing the final examinations. ("Experiences of a Maestro" qtd. in Martin 168-69)

This method, which used a canon of works as samples of language use, was hinged on the subjective judgment that these works are models of excellent English. Combined with the American schoolteachers' pedagogical methods, the reading lists of the colonial era had a palpable effect on students and their English. Even if students weren't directly coerced into imitating these authors' vocabulary and style, they chose to follow these models as they strove to express their sentiments in writing. Further on, Martin cites a piece of student work which clearly borrowed its vocabulary and syntax from authors in the syllabus:

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 a oblong face on which was a rare and sporadic pimples.

She is not so white as plate nor as black as Negro, but between the two, so that when the sun shine on her face a blood running thru the arteries can be plainly seen. ("High School Grads Knew Many Englishes" qtd. in Martin 169)

As outlined by Martin in "Longfellow's Legacy: Education and the Shaping of Philippine Writing", this influence continued even after these Filipino students left the school and produced literature on their own. Thus, as Martin argues in that essay, Filipino writers in English were caught between the need to avoid the imitation of American writers and the need to distinguish themselves from the "emotional, sentimental, and moralistic literature" being published in Tagalog during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (136-38).

Apart from a linguistic and technical value placed upon these texts, there was also an indefinable, almost mystical, awe built around them. These texts were read in a colonial setting, where the American teachers and the knowledge they brought from abroad were highly admired by the students because of their hierarchical position. This attitude is echoed in the journal of American schoolteacher William C. Freer, where he quotes a ten year-old Filipino student's address honoring an American schoolmaster:

Yes, we are very much indebted to you for the labor which you have undergone for all the teachers, and these are they whose duty it is to open our eyes. *Our eyes used to be shut, but now they are open, and we can see with them.* Oh, I am sure that our dear Supervisor never sleeps and never rests. Every day he travels from town to town to see all the teachers and how they teach the children. *He is the manager who sends us all the things we need.*

Oh, when I think about his labor, my heart feels grief because he has left his country and his dear parents and relatives to educate us and to open our eyes to the light.

Tell me, my dear school-fellows, what is the thing that we can give him to-day? Oh, let us show him our studies which we have learned during this year, because they are the fruits of his labor and they are the things that can please him.

*Our dear Supervisor, if you have heard me make some mistakes in my speech and in my pronunciation, please excuse me. You know very well that English is not my native language. (111; emphases mine)*

Clearly, the American teachers were viewed as saviors who benevolently agreed to teach an unenlightened race. With this manner of reverence in the classroom, it is easy to see how teachers shored up admiration for the knowledge that they brought to Filipino students. In a portion discussing the teaching of lyric poetry, the 1933 Course of Study in Literature encouraged teachers to help students find “the spirit ... and sensuous appeal of the poem” (Bureau of Education qtd. in Martin, “Colonial Pedagogy” 171). This mythic status was assumed by students even before they had read the text; thus, it was inevitable that they would consider these texts a standard for their own writing.

The reverence for texts didn’t just function to impose technical standards: it also promoted the moral standards that the American regime was trying to implant. According to high school teacher Ella Barron, the English courses were also aimed at transforming students’ behavior, in other words, to create “a *desired* and clearly defined change” (qtd. in McMahon 180, emphasis mine). As to whose desires these English courses

catered, one only has to look at who was deciding upon educational policy at that time.

Previous critical studies have established that texts in the American colonial canon reflected American colonial ideology. What has yet to be discussed, however, is the influence of the past upon the present, and whether reforms that have been done to English education have been sufficient to rid it of colonial bias. As the present is a product of history, it seems necessary to find the links to the past and interrogate how ideologies in the past are present in contemporary times. Thus, this essay examines colonial ideology as expressed in a contemporary textbook of Anglo-American literature: *GEMS in English and American Literature 3*. By searching in the textbook for points of congruence with the ideas of the colonial canon, I argue that literary education in the Philippines still contains traces of the colonial past that are reinforced and also subverted by the texts.

This essay is also meant to be a demonstration of how reading selections can be read as texts by interrogating how they fit into present social and political contexts. With factors such as authors' individual subjectivity and politics, resource constraints, and the minimum requirements of the Department of Education (DepEd), it is undeniable that reading lists are texts in themselves, expressions of their present milieu as well as of history.

### **The Reproduction and Subversion of Colonial Ideas**

*GEMS in English and American Literature 3* is the third book in the GEMS Series, edited by Julio F. Mercado, Ralston Joel G. Jover, and Minerva G. Fernandez. The book is published by Anvil Publishing, Inc., who took over the series from

National Bookstore, Inc., and it has had several editions since it was first published. As the third volume, *GEMS in English and American Literature 3* is geared towards third year high school students, who, as prescribed by the DepEd curriculum, are to read literature from a different area of the world each school year (Department of Education 10-11).

The book is divided into six units, with each unit themed under “a particular experience that we go through in our search of identity and meaning in a world of increasing complexity” (GEMS v). It is assumed that students and teachers are to go through the book according to these chapters, or perhaps by genre, as suggested by another version of the Table of Contents (GEMS xvii-xx). This encourages compliance with DepEd’s framework for studying English, which assigns each of the four genres (poetry, essay, drama and short story) to a school quarter (Department of Education 12-24).

The selections from the textbook analyzed for this study were chosen according to a close reading that kept in mind values—individualism, industry, and education—that were introduced in colonial education in English, and how these were tackled in the textbook. Given that the study would be extremely one-sided and limited if texts that countered colonialism were excluded, texts that were critical of certain Western ideals were also selected for analysis.

### **“Eveline” and American individualism**

The inclusion of James Joyce’s short story, “Eveline”, is unusual due to the ambiguous actions of its main character (155-59). In terms of appropriateness for adolescent reading and for providing a preview of the greats of the Western canon, “Araby” and its focus on young love and the shattering of illusions might have been a better choice. “Eveline”, on the

other hand, has a strange choice of role model for a book for adolescents. The story takes as its protagonist a young, unmarried nineteen-year-old girl who is torn between obeying her family's wishes to stay in Ireland, or to join her older lover as he sails abroad. Bound by a promise to keep her rigid Irish family together, Eveline agonizes over whether she should stay with their harsh but familiar ways, or take a risk and move with Frank to an exotic, unknown land. As Eveline decides, she recalls moments of both misery and of joy with her family, and compares them with the exciting yet uncertain prospect of life with Frank in Argentina. The story ends with a moment of paralysis, with Eveline at the dock, torn between staying and leaving. As Frank boards the ship, she seeks divine intervention to tell her what her duty is. The final scene is Eveline remaining behind the barrier at the North Wall while her lover Frank shouts at her to follow him onto the vessel. The decision on whether Eveline is staying or leaving has been made, but not happily nor solidly.

A story about deceiving one's family and the didactic ambiguity at the end of the story makes it seem ill suited to a book tasked to impart positive moral values. However, if we examine the short story as an echo of colonial literature, its inclusion makes sense, as it displays the same strain of reflection upon individualism that was in works introduced by the colonial regime. In her analysis of American literature and Benevolent Assimilation, McMahon identifies several texts which depict American values that shored up the colonial project. She describes Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Essay on Self-Reliance" as a work that initially, seems to be a strange choice for colonial readers: why would a colonial power that suppressed Filipinos' first declaration of independence encourage individuals to be self-sufficient? (184) McMahon argued that while it seemed antithetical to America's goal of subjugating the Philippines, its place in the classroom made

sense, considering the large-scale ideological project that Americans were pursuing (184). Filipino society was composed of strong community and family ties—networks that excluded the foreign educators and their government. An essay that encouraged individualism and independent thought—considering oneself as apart from the group—would enable young Filipino students to criticize these networks. “Essay on Self-Reliance” distanced students from pre-American Filipino social values and simultaneously aligned them with an American ideology, thereby creating a support base for the colonial regime. The American teachers—the authoritative voices that delivered these messages—would serve as sympathetic, critical voices. (184-85)

At its core, “Eveline” is about the search for what one truly wants to do in the face of pressure from family and loved ones. As a protagonist, Eveline possesses some ambivalence towards leaving home. Despite her father’s harshness and her employers’ animosity, a promise to her dead mother to keep the family together weighs upon her mind. The burden placed upon Eveline is rooted in a highly family-oriented mentality, while Eveline is beginning to consider a life outside of that group. At the same time, she also displays some ambivalence towards her lover, being unsure of their future together. To Eveline, Frank represents a wider world of exoticism and happiness, which is exciting yet unknown to a sheltered girl like her.

Eveline’s reverie in isolation represents her necessary contemplation by herself in order to decide what she—as an individual—truly desires. The characters in her life (her father and brothers, her mother, Frank) are projected according to her subjectivity: Joyce depicts these characters through her memories and her vision. The reader’s privileged view of the internal workings of her mind invites the reader into a shared

individualistic contemplation of Eveline's position in relation to others.

While Eveline does consider what her leaving will do to those she will leave behind, in the end, her feelings become the primary consideration. As she prepares to leave, she suddenly realizes that staying with her family would only bring her misery: "She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness" (*GEMS* 157). With regard to Frank, her impasse between leaving and staying is driven not by a desire to be with him, but by a need to escape the oppression at home.

Throughout the story, Eveline's real desire is obscured by her constraints, and this is magnified in the story's ending. As Frank boards the ship, Eveline intuits danger in the possibility of joining Frank. Thus, Eveline is left behind in the crowd of people, refusing to move as Frank turns back and calls for her, to no avail. The passivity and helplessness in her expression imply that her staying behind is motivated by a sense of obligation and not something of her own agency.

Much like "Essay on Self-Reliance", "Eveline" calls into question the intimate networks that surround an individual. The story encourages scrutiny of the reader's place among others: a new concept in literature when the Thomasites entered the picture. To today's readers, however, the same value might resonate differently. A quick introduction from the editors preceding the story suggests that readers consider the story in this light: "In this particular story, draw up the comparison between a Filipino adolescent and the Western adolescent. How do close family ties influence the behavior of the adolescent?" (*GEMS* 155) The implied reading denies that the protagonist in

the text has a universal appeal to readers, and instead draws a line between a “Western adolescent” and the “Filipino adolescent.” At this point, the textbook has already pointed out that Philippine and Western cultures have vastly different takes on close family ties. In contrast, the first American reading lists made no such attempt to discuss the cultural difference between the Philippines and America: the project of colonization demanded that Filipinos understand and aspire to the culture of the colonizer, instead of reflecting upon their own native culture. Despite this new emphasis on Filipino native values, establishing the difference between a “Western adolescent” and a “Filipino adolescent” still speaks of totalizing narratives—for, after all, what does it mean to be “Western” and to be “Filipino”, and why are they different? Does the reader adhere to these categories? It is at this juncture that the short story as mediated through the textbook contradicts itself, with no resolution in sight.

The short story has potential to resonate with readers today when we consider the materially rewarding future that emigration holds for young Filipinos—specifically female laborers. While plenty has been said about the ill effects of relying on sending our laborers abroad, the fact remains that our economy is propped up by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who send remittances back home. As such, the government has an incentive to let this activity prosper by promoting this activity through education. “Eveline” depicts a conflict that many young Filipinos face: should they stray from the comforts of home and seek their niche abroad, or should they remain here? While the story’s ambiguous ending offers no guidance on this dilemma, the story’s uncanny mirroring of it provides space for discourse on family ties, emigration, and the self.

### **The Marks of a (Colonially) Educated (Civilized) Man**

In her paper, McMahon also explains how Booker T. Washington's essay "Up From Slavery" was particularly apt for the colonial project. The essay's messages of the dignity of physical labour and the implied encouragement of the oppressed to improve themselves were appropriate for Filipino subjects under colonial America. Furthermore, the essay presented a rosy picture of America as a land of opportunity for the common man, and held up a racially oppressed man pulling himself up by his bootstraps as an example. Most crucially, the essay portrayed education as the key to progress for individuals, which encouraged students to honor the colonial institution that the Americans had put up. (182-85)

One work in *GEMS3* that continues in this vein is "The Marks of an Educated Man" by Nicholas Murray Butler. In his essay, Butler comments on the goal of education and enumerates five benchmarks against which students should be measured (270-71). He states that an educated man should have "correctness and precision in the use of the mother tongue", the language in question being English. Second is the possession of "fine and gentle manners", which must be genuine and intuitive to the educated man. Third is the "habit of reflection", meaning educated men should look beyond the surface of problems. Fourth is the ability to grow, and lastly, efficiency, or the ability to translate ideas into reality.

Immediately, one concept that is strikingly aligned with colonial ideology is the value placed on proficiency in English. In Butler's essay, his words place a moral judgment upon the improper use of English. "The quite shockings (sic) slovenliness and vulgarity of much of the spoken English, as well as not a little of the written English, which one hears and sees proves beyond peradventure that years of attendance upon schools

and colleges that are thought to be respectable have produced no impression" (270). This judgment upon the lack of facility in the language recalls how the first American teachers associated this lack of facility in English with the weakness of the Filipino race. During the colonial era, an inability to use English was a racial marker, and one manner by which the first American teachers exerted superiority over Filipino students. For example, McMahon quotes Harry Cole as he describes the task of teaching: "I find this work very monotonous trying to teach these monkeys to talk. They will chatter and grin about just like monkeys, and when the children get to catching lice on each other's heads in school, I think all the more that I am just trying to train wild animals" (178). The attitude espoused in Butler's essay is a near-perfect echo of the superior attitude attached to English during the colonial era.

Furthermore, in his essay, English is declared *the* mother tongue, not *one's* mother tongue or *a* mother tongue. The demand for English and the subsequent emphasis on the subject in schools were colonial legacies, unseen before the arrival of the Thomasites. Including this point in an essay for Filipino students, in the midst of debates on the mother tongue versus Filipino versus English, gives the English language considerable power.

Also, the second standard of awareness of proper manners and behavior seems to respond to colonial observations on Filipino behavior. Many letters and journals of American colonial educators show that they thought Filipinos were lazy and indolent, and wanted to mold them into dignified and honest hard workers. Thus, the educational mission was not just about the imparting of technical skills and language, but also about altering behavior that the colonizer considered undesirable. According to colonial diaries and memoirs of American schoolteachers in the Philippines, some

of them held the view that the land was full of savages. For example, in another excerpt from Harry Cole's letters:

**February 16, 1902**

...The more I see of this lazy, dirty, indolent people, the more I come to despise them. *I came here with the desire to help them, to enter their homes, and to try to uplift them.* But it seems to me a useless task.

**November 17, 1902**

Anglo-Saxons have, with the greater capacity, struggled for hundreds of years to attain the present imperfect standard of government. How can we expect a colonial race, with the *baser natures and the natural tendencies to evil*, to attain without years and years, or even generations of training, even to a crude imitation of a good form of government? (qtd. in McMahon 178-79; emphases mine)

Both Washington's and Butler's essays describe the ideal product of education that the colonial educators aimed to create, and as such provide models for both teachers and students. The authors place similar focus on education's power to shape and mould students, instead of one's individual agency, as expressed by Butler's description of the interaction between the individual and the institution of education: "An education will make its mark and find its evidences in certain traits, characteristics, and capacities which have to be acquired by patient endeavor, by following good example, and by receiving wise discipline and sound instruction" (*GEMS* 270). Butler's words encourage learners to submit rather than resist, and to trust in the soundness of one's education rather than transform the institution. Like Washington, there is no questioning of the experience of education, only admiration.

McMahon further argued that Washington's essay was effective for the colonial regime because it obscured the fact of systemic oppression through fixating upon the author's individual ordeal. Thus, the essay portrays how Washington alone "beat the odds", but never offers a critical appraisal of those odds and who benefited from them—the white slave-owners. Furthermore, the text as mediated by the Thomasites drew parallels between Filipinos and blacks; in McMahon's words, "Both were dark and racially inferior" (182). Inherent in the enforced reading of Washington is a universalist view of education and the oppressed subject: that all oppressed people, no matter their race or creed, can improve their condition if they work hard. Butler's essay seems to have the same decontextualized, universalizing view of the subject of education—that any type of learning is good for any type of person, and that thus these culturally constructed and defined values fit all. Thus, both of these works share the same totalizing narrative of "development" and "civilization" that comprised the American colonial strategy.

The questions at the end of the selection provide space to disagree with the ideas in the essay, which leaves the text and its assumptions open to contention. For example, the last question in the quizzer asks students to evaluate their own experience in light of the essay:

You have gone through your period of education from nursery to third year high school. What is your concept of the education you have received so far? Many of our parents work so hard to provide their children with a good education. What is generally their concept of a good education? What is your idea of a good education?  
(GEMS 272)

By questioning different views of education, the exercise may yield a critical discussion on the power relations in education, who benefits from it, and its ideal form. However, the potential for critical discourse here rests largely upon the person in charge in the classroom—the teacher, as well as upon engagement by students. Caroline Hau’s point on the open-ended nature of the liberal classroom is also pertinent here: now, students must offer their opinions on education to an educator, who is part and parcel of the system they are being asked to critique. Nonetheless, the pressure exerted by the text—an authoritative, analytical voice—on teachers and students alike must be taken into account.

**“You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse.”<sup>xxv</sup>**

As *GEMS* holds potential to replicate American colonial values, it also has the potential to subvert the ideologies of the empire. If we consider the entirety of the book and the course of study reliant on that book as texts in themselves, we will see points of resistance to, and sometimes, self-contradiction of, American colonialism and itself.

One selection that seems out of place among the other readings is an essay by John Horne Burns entitled “An American in Naples: 1944” (*GEMS* 116-19). The essay describes the shattering of Burns’ faith in the American nation due to the exploitative behavior of American soldiers in Italy after the fall of Mussolini. The essay stands out in the book due to its direct, harsh criticism, not just of American soldiers, but of America as a nation. Burns says it himself: “I saw that we could mouth democratic catchwords and yet give the Neapolitans a huge black market. I saw that we could prate of the evils of fascism,

yet be just as ruthless as Fascists with people who'd already been pushed into the ground" (118).

All the incidents to which Burns refers have to do with money and profit, specifically, the exploitation of townsfolk in a war-torn region. Burns' view places America's economic and military superiority at the forefront of its behavior abroad, which represents a commentary on the materialistic basis of America's dealings with other nations. The questions at the end of the text extend this idea further, even directing the reader towards an assessment of the dynamics of colonization. The activity asks the reader, "Burns' essay discusses a very common situation between colonizer and colonized. *Our country for one had experienced such cruelty*. Trace the history of the Philippines. Do you find any similarities between the things this essay describes and the conditions of Filipinos then?" (*GEMS* 118, emphasis mine). While historically inaccurate — America's presence in Italy was not borne out of a desire to colonize resources, but instead part of America's war against fascism in Europe — the question clearly recognizes the unequal power relations between the US and the Philippines in our history and even enforces a reading based upon this on the text. The misrepresentation of the historical event in Italy can be read as a manifestation of the editors' desire to make a statement on colonialism in the book.

The inclusion of an American voice questioning his own nation's values is significant for Filipino readers. For one, the fact of the speaker being an American reflects a fractured American identity and calls into question the infallibility of the former colonizer's values. More crucially, this dissenting voice in a Filipino classroom lends authority to critical, anti-colonial voices from our own country. Thus, *GEMS* also includes the case of a foreign voice being used to shore up and resist colonial ideology.

The act of recognizing atrocities of the American regime expresses a partial resistance to what Bourdieu coined and what Tupas contextualized in the Philippines as “historical forgetting”: the denial of links between the past, and present oppressive conditions (Tupas, “Bourdieu and Historical Forgetting” 53-54). The required activity of recalling history asks students to recount the shared history of the US and the Philippines and examine the dynamic of inequality between the two nations. However, I characterize this recollection of history as a partial one, due to the explicit divide between “then” and “now” in the activity. The question phrases colonization in the past tense, and thus limits itself to the era of the “colonial” while failing to consider the “postcolonial” or “neo-colonial”. The resistance to history exists in the text, but not a resistance to the present manifestations of colonialism.

## **Conclusion**

What I have demonstrated in this essay is only a small portion of the emerging discourse on education and colonialism in the Philippines by focusing on several points of congruence between textual choices in the present and those from the colonial past in one textbook. This congruence implies that colonial ideology, having been mediated by education, is still palpable in choices for content of reading lists for British and American literature. This congruence does not mean that British and American literature should be rejected because they make students into little colonials nostalgic for the old days, or because we run the risk of permitting colonial powers to take over again. Rather, it indicates that when literature is read in the morally didactic setting of the classroom, there is a need to historicize the choices.

It has also been demonstrated that there are several points of resistance to colonial ideology, which signal the ideological distance which Philippine education has gained since the colonial era. Our formal independence from America, which came in the form of independent self-government, and in the realm of education, the relinquishing of American supervision over the Board of Education, have enabled this critical stance. The path of Philippine educational history—specifically the post-EDSA revolution phase—reflected the call for progressive, liberationist instruction in English, and signaled a return to nationalist roots in the creation and study of literature (Lumbera 8).

However, the denouncement of American values in texts is only one component of the project of liberating our schools from colonialism. There is a need to theoretically re-situate the schools themselves as tools of ideology and as legacies of the colonial era, and formulate policies that liberate them from the past. This can be done simultaneously in schools and textbooks themselves, as well as in the work of scholars in the fields of critical pedagogy, literature, and education.

Philippine education's shift from colonial to neo-colonial control has not gone undocumented, which means that there is a starting point for contemporary inquiry on schools and ideology. An examination of the history of Philippine education reveals that the educational system has been used to fulfill the labor demands of each era. In "The Politics of Philippine English", Tupas describes a radical shift in educational policy that took place in the late 1960's. During this era, the Philippine government under Ferdinand Marcos was restructuring the Philippine educational system towards serving foreign interests by creating labor for corporations and industries, usually coming from first world nations (Tupas qtd. in Tupas 51). To carry out this task, the Presidential Commission to Survey

Philippine Education was formed in 1969 with funding from the Ford Foundation and support from foreign consultants. The Commission strongly recommended that education be structured towards increasing the labor supply to meet the demands of multinational corporations (MNCs) who were beginning to build outposts in the Philippines (Lumbera 7). Thus, the World Bank provided loans for a ten-year educational plan, which included the creation of ten regional manpower training centers and three technical institutes outside the formal educational system. Aside from teaching vocational skills, these institutions also undertook the teaching of an ideologically loaded form of English: Andrew Gonzalez noted in a critical study of World Bank-funded textbooks that they “develop[ed] a colonial mentality that emphasizes the benefits of colonial rule, foster[ed] a favorable attitude toward foreign investments and an export-oriented economy, neglect[ed] to nurture a real sense of nationalism, and generally condition[ed] young minds to become fervent US allies” (qtd. in Lumbera 7-8).

The ideological preparation of young Filipinos for the service of MNCs has only intensified in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The growth in the country’s major economic resources—the direct export of manpower, and the Philippines-based business process outsourcing industry—has only intensified the demand for the teaching of English, along with an ideology that supports entry into these industries. This only creates a greater need to examine the position of English and American literature in our schools. The larger question of the relationship between our education at present and the colonial past remains unanswered, but several points of inquiry have surfaced.

One major query that I grappled with was the presence of a historical trend and their effect upon education, considering that much has happened since the American educational regime and the present. At this point in time, the Department of

Education requires that each year of high school English be devoted to literature from a different part of the globe: Philippine Literature, Afro-Asian Literature, British-American and Philippine Literature, and World Literature (Department of Education 10). An investigation into whether these changes coincide with particular historical events, such as the previously discussed nationalistic turn in education after the fall of Marcos, could yield insight into how education responds to political and economic changes. It is only with this firm historical grounding of facts that critics can launch an inquiry into who has held power in education in other eras, and what implications this holds for the future.

The assumption behind the new diversification of reading in Philippine schools is that a student's worldview is restricted when his or her cultural exposure is limited to one realm of the world. The goal seems to be a more metropolitan, multicultural literary experience rather than one with a colonial bias. It is assumed that this will create a more holistic subject, one that is not controlled and influenced by a single culture but is able to critically appraise many. However, diversity in literature does not negate the existence of an ideology still rooted in the past, and perhaps even more entrenched by this diversification. Therefore, it has yet to be answered how these different literatures are examined, and how each realm is related to each other considering the complex political and military relations that have occurred between nations. Take Indonesia's colonization by the Dutch, India's experience with Britain, or apartheid in formerly colonized South Africa. I have yet to see a synthesis that addresses the issue of international conflict and inequality, or the notion of cultural and linguistic influence between nations and the power relations that occur between them.

There is also the question of how these colonial ideas fit into our present political and economic context. Our present situation has transitioned from colonial to neo-colonial and even post-national, where the question of who holds power has become more complex. Aside from reading texts in the historical context in which they were written, these works can also be read against how they operate in a society where national borders are slowly being eroded, and where MNCs can hold as much (if not more) power than nation-states. It remains to be seen whether critique outside of the nation as an entity is possible in a literary educational framework highly ordered along national lines.

There is also the question of time. Textbooks are a medium that takes months or years to create, and the canon even longer. In the Philippines, textbooks are not replaced every year, due to the expensive nature of such a project. Thus, anything canonical in a textbook is doubly part of the past, not the student's immediate present. Case in point: many of the texts in *GEMS* are reprinted from older editions in the series, or from textbooks that were published over fifty years ago. Does the delayed nature of a textbook have a significant impact upon ideology presented in it, and if so, how can this be negated?

Finally, there is the question of what place texts can truly occupy in the classroom. Teachers may opt to rely heavily on the text, or not at all. Students may passively accept the contents of these texts, or may also choose to critique them. As Martin demonstrated, textbooks are only one component of education, and thus studies on education and colonial power must take into account the weight of pedagogy in the dynamic of the classroom. Without this accounting for the undocumented, uncipherable human factor, textual studies remain limited to texts and contexts, and thus cannot be

substitutes for generalizations upon the state of education today.

Be that as it may, there still exists a pressing need to critique these texts. As this and other studies have demonstrated, the study of English literature is inextricably tied to our history of colonization. This legacy may never be forgotten: even in an age of hyperportable electronic reading, textbooks in the Philippines will not be readily replaced. They act as mediators for notions of literature and reading through their textual selections, and shape the discourse on certain issues through their activities and questions. They hold tremendous authority over their readers: as reading lists prescribed by schools and not individual teachers, they impose limits upon teachers and students' textual choices in the classroom. As such, the scrutiny of textbooks as a site of colonial reinforcement and subversion can yield critical insight into education and its role in ideology.

---

<sup>xxv</sup> The three latter years of English at the high school level still include Philippine literature, but it is not explained why this is the case despite the Department of Education's own prescriptions for its curricula.

## Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. "The Rise of English." *Literary Theory*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 17-53. Print.
- Department of Education. *2010 Secondary Education Curriculum (Curriculum Guide in English)*. Pasig City: Bureau of Secondary Education, 2010. Print.
- Foley, Douglas. "Colonialism and Schooling in the Philippines from 1898 to 1970." *Education and Colonialism*. Ed. Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly. New York: Longman, 1978. 69-75. Print.
- Freer, William C. "The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher." *Bearers of Benevolence*. Ed. Mary Racelis and Judy Celine Ick. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2001. 104-113. Print.
- Hau, Caroline. "Literature, Nationalism, and the Problem of Consciousness." *The Filipiniana Reader*. Ed. Priscelina Legasto. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1998. 220-254. Print.
- Ick, Judy Celine. "Ilonggos, Igorrottes, Merchants, and Jews: Shakespeare and American Colonial Education in the Philippines." *Humanities Diliman* 1.1 (2000): 109-134. Print.
- Lumbera, Cynthia Nograles. "English and a Filipino Educational System." *Towards Relevant Education*. Quezon City: Education Forum - Alternative Instructional Materials Project. 1987: 3-14. Print.
- Martin, Isabel. "Colonial Pedagogy: Teaching Practices of American Colonial Educators in the Philippines." *Back to the Future: Perspectives on the Thomasite Legacy to Philippine*

- Education*. Manila: American Studies Association of the Philippines, 2003. 165-174.
- . "Longfellow's Legacy: Education and the Shaping of Philippine Writing." *World Englishes* 23.1 (2004): 129-139. Print.
- McMahon, Jennifer. "The American Dream: The Use (and Abuse) of American Literature in the Project of Benevolent Assimilation." *Ruptures and Departures: Language and Culture in Southeast Asia*. Ed. Corazon D. Villareal, Lily Rose R. Tope, and Patricia May B. Jurilla. Diliman: Department of English and Comparative Literature, 2002. 176-186. Print.
- Mercado, Julio F., Ralston Joel Jover, and Minerva G. Fernandez, eds. *GEMS 3 in English and American Literature*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2010. Print.
- Tupas, T. Ruanni. "Bourdieu, Historical Forgetting, and the Problem of English in the Philippines." *Philippine Studies* 56.1 (2008): 47-67. Print.
- . "The Politics of Philippine English: Neocolonialism, Global Politics and the Problem of Postcolonialism." *World Englishes*. 23.1 (2004): 47-58. Print.
- Veric, Charles Samuya. "Culture from Imperialism: American Colonial Education in the Philippines." *Back to the Future: Perspectives on the Thomasite Legacy to Philippine Education*. Ed. Corazon D. Villareal. Manila: American Studies Association of the Philippines, 2003: 176-192. Print.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. Introduction. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989. 1-25. Print.