

# Linguistic resistance and counter-colonization in the narratives of Philippine short stories in English

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## Abstract

In this paper, I will try to establish that linguistic resistance can be a form of counter-colonialism, and, at the same time, a form of colonizing the colonizers through their own language. Counter-colonialism is seen in how English was utilized for the advantage of both and, most of all, in the dramatic turn of events in colonizing the colonizers. In the case of the Philippines, it came into contact with American colonization, which is now evident in the use of the English language particularly in education and in the way many Filipinos speak and write. This appropriation and use of the English language is seen in the writing of the short story, the most established form of writing in English, just shortly after the beginning of the American colonization in the country. Influenced by foundational works on postcolonial criticism, I used close reading and textual analysis of the narratives of selected Philippine short stories in English: Rosario de Guzman Lingat's "The Locked Door," F. Sionil Jose's "The God Stealer," and Loreto Paras-Sulit's "The Bolo." The critical reading of these short stories shows that counter-colonial linguistic resistance is embedded in their narratives, and, at the same time, provides insights as regards the postcoloniality of Philippine short stories in English.

**Keywords:** Linguistic resistance, counter-colonialism, English Language, postcolonial criticism, Philippine short stories in English

## 1. Introduction

The onslaught of colonization left a deep mark that forever changed the world. Colonization's impact rests on the infringement of the colonial hegemon of the very heart of the culture and society of the colonized (Said, 1994). This can be further heightened by the fact that the colonized inherited one of the most important realities in the process of colonization: the colonizer's language (Phillipson, 1992). The English language, for instance, is the widely used language of today. As expected, almost all of the British and American colonies have access to English, and to ensure that English is embraced, it was enforced through education when it was promoted as a medium of instruction starting from the primary year levels (Abad, 2004). As a result, formerly colonized countries such as those in Latin America and those in Asia, particularly the Philippines, exhibit a relatively good grasp or mastery of their colonizer's

language. This language was further utilized to create a new politico-linguistic system that will bring about revolution against their colonizers in hopes of liberation (Daniels, 2001).

In their 1989 monumental work on postcolonialism, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin strongly hold that the effect of colonization is perfected through the use of language. The English language, for instance, seems to have directed the fate of cultures and literatures. Ashcroft et al. said that:

[t]he appropriation of the English language is the first of a range of appropriations which establish a discourse announcing its difference from Europe. These include the adaptation or evolution of metropolitan practices: for example, genres such as 'the ballad' or 'the novel' or even epistemologies, ideological systems, or institutions such as literary theory. But the appropriation which has had the most profound significance in post-colonial discourse is that of writing itself. It is through an appropriation of the power invested in writing that this discourse can take hold of the marginality imposed on it and make hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural redefinition. In writing out of the condition of 'Otherness' postcolonial texts assert the complex of intersecting 'peripheries' as the actual substance of experience. But the struggle which this assertion entails – the 're-placement' of the post-colonial text – is focused in their attempt to control the processes of writing (p. 77).

At the start of the postcolonial movement, formerly colonized countries started to search for an avenue to voice out their sentiments, and the best way was through writing. Their way of writing had semblance with the inherited colonial language. The adaptability could have been done out of purpose, and looking at it from a more political perspective, it may appear that it rests on the resistance against the colonizers. The most distinct characteristic it possesses is that it is through the utilization of language against those from whom it originated. Moving from the periphery to the cultural center is indeed so daunting and ambitious of a task, but the success of postcolonial language and texts cannot be emphasized enough. Postcolonial writings manifested and echoed through time that may be revolutionary and, at the same time, emancipatory in nature.

In the case of the Philippines, the effect of the clash between colonization and decolonization is obvious enough. A leading literary critic, Gemino Abad (2004), asserted that:

Over the past century, our writers have in turn colonized English because its use in our poetry has been chiefly toward native clearing within the adopted language where its words are found again to establish and affirm a Filipino sense of their own world. If at first our writers wrote *in* English, later they wrought *from* it (p. 170).

This linguistic inheritance from the colonizers in turn became a new system of language apart from its origin. The variety of English adapted, developed, and owned by

the Filipinos is distinct, and it became their way of counter-colonizing the colonizer. This would then lead to the glorification of the success of colonization on one hand and the loss on the other. This success can be seen particularly in the development of fiction writing in the country and how the English language was utilized by the authors, most especially at the beginning of the 1920s. At the height of the American occupation in the Philippines, their major contribution in the field of education cannot be shrugged off. After the teaching of the English language, the next that they did was to incorporate in the English curriculum the Western-American standards of literary studies. Before the arrival of the Americans, the Philippines was already enjoying a certain amount of literature handed down during the Spanish period, and much of these were written in the local vernaculars (Martin, 2008). But as the method of the Americans varied, the teaching of literature was later on barred and changed into something that would best serve their colonial intentions. Also, to make it more enticing, what they did was to make it possible for the Filipinos to freely express themselves so as to make them comfortable with the hospitality they did not enjoy from their former colonizer. But one of the criticisms which may be drawn from this is the sequestering of literatures produced in the local languages in schools. That could be the reason why the Filipinos easily adapted and used the English language that fast and utilized it in their writings.

In the 1920s, literature in English was already becoming an established field of creative and formal writing. The first novel in English, *A Child of Sorrow*, was written and self-published by Zoilo Galang. This was a groundbreaking work attesting to a Filipino's facility of the English language for there were no other US colonies that was able to use the English language in a very short period of time after its coming to the colony's local shores (Jurilla, 2016). As there is the looming issue on the absence of publishing houses in the Philippines during those times, the authors then started to make use of the local newspapers as an avenue for publishing their works (Marsella, 1969). This fast development could be attributed to the education sector that first promulgated the teaching of the English language. In two related articles by Lumbera (2006) and Tupas (2008), they both said that English was not only used in fiction writing but was "bent" in the appropriation of its users, adding into it the local Filipino flavor, which can be seen as the trademark of the variety of English produced in the process. However, the colonial relationship between the Filipino and the English language is still over-shadowed by the existing reality that English is only accessible to the elite few who have access to it (Martin, 2008). With that, what became the most developed form of writing in the country is the short story (Hidalgo, 2008; Marsella, 1969). Incidentally, the amount of study devoted to the development of the relationship between the English language and the short story in the Philippines was not given that much emphasis (Hidalgo, 2008; Manlapaz, 1991a; Manlapaz, 1991b).

These conglomerate of ideas about the issues on colonialism in a constant tug-of-war over domination and emancipation opens up new avenues where the entire colonization narrative as a fundamentally established literary and cultural reality can be reimagined. Focusing more on the native Filipino who has experienced the most of the ravage of colonialism from Spain and then from America, I would like to emphasize that there is another side of colonialism which may be considered as a counter-colonial act of the colonized. While there are numerous accounts claiming the "total" fall of countries like the

Philippines under absolute colonial imperialism, I tend to believe otherwise. The Filipinos have conquered and even colonized their colonizer by mastering the latter's language. This is apparent in the way Filipinos speak and write literature using the colonizer's language, and this is made more visible particularly in Philippine short stories in English. This work will not re-echo the long-term issue on linguistic and literary postcolonialism but will establish this in the Philippine context and reality and will attempt to propose a remedy for the scarcity of studies done on the postcoloniality of Philippine short stories in English.

## **2. Method**

A close reading and textual analysis of the following selected works in Philippine short stories in English that best exemplify decolonization and counter-colonial resistance was conducted: Rosario de Guzman-Lingat's *The Locked Door*, F. Sionil Jose's *The God Stealer*, and Loreto Paras-Sulit's *The Bolo*.

The boundary of this essay rests on surveying the foundation of postcolonialism in the Philippines by first tracing its roots, taking into account the perspectives of different critics from abroad and the Philippine local literary circles inspired by the postcolonial tradition. In showcasing Philippine postcolonial writing, I focused more on the narratives in English produced by Filipino fictionists that bear an image or symbol of protecting the native cultural heritage - a form of resistance against the imperialist movement by the colonizers - and, at the same time, writers who use the colonizer's language, i.e., English as a means of counter-colonization. This double resistance shows the relevance of the oppressed conquering and oppressing the oppressor in turn by using the latter's own language against them, which not only seeks recognition but also emancipation.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Literature, Colonization, and Resistance**

The age of colonization paved the way for the rise of imperialism that created a divide in the world labelling some as the "civilized" (imperial and colonizing power) and the other "uncivilized" (colonized), where the former is considered as the powerful and the latter as the weak (Ferguson, 2005; Iriye, 2005; Pagden, 2005). The relationship between the imperial colonizer and the colonized, politically and socially speaking, may vary. While abuses done by the colonizer cannot be denied, there are aspects where both the colonizer and the colonized agreed, for instance, in the carving of laws that promote equality and a promise of future liberation (Ferguson, 2005). As the colonies started to decry imperialistic dominance, intellectualism also grew among the colonized local communities. Access to Western ideas on liberation later on reached and went beyond the boundaries of the colonies.

One of the most effective ways of executing counter-domination is writing. Some well-known and influential writers from the United States believe that writing is a way of disenthraling humanity from the ravage and trauma during and after the Second World War

(Bennett, 2015). Literature is seen as a field used as a way of dealing with socio-cultural disintegration predicated by the war and now, by imperial colonization. Following that same ideology, it is possible to say that the effects of colonization have influenced postcolonial writers and their desire of liberating the society through the use of texts. There is a unique characteristic of fiction that links it to reality espoused in political and historical accounts, and it rests on the author's own understanding of the situation, contextualization of the period or setting in his novels or stories, made possible through the binding act of creative imagination (Darby, 1998). The products of fiction help in the process of looking into the very culture that created it, and reading it serves as a window to the characteristics and ideas that helped form the product of an author's creativity. It further leads to the realization that fiction focuses on humanity: their joys and sorrows, their productivity and idleness, their satisfactions and dissatisfactions, their being and becoming in a society. These narratives are the products of a community's identity considered as the most important element of reality greatly affected by colonization and imperialism.

There are various frameworks forwarded by some literary and cultural critics when it comes to understanding issues about postcolonialism. While it cannot be doubted that anti-colonial movements from across the globe exhibit high postcolonial leaning, they exhibit resistance against those whom they inherited a foreign language from. This growing longing for the past - the untainted and unadulterated past - which might be a source of a formerly colonized true identity buried into oblivion by colonial cultural imperialism, becomes the very inspiration for what can be considered as a revolutionary response against the commonly accepted and unquestioned colonial heritage (Said, 1994). The most common form of resistance is the glorification of the colonized native spirit through nationalism. The origin of nationalism as an integral element of postcolonialism is rooted from nationalism's socio-political agenda. This can be seen in many nationalistic and patriotic demonstrations done by many advocates of anti-colonial rule. As foreign infiltration became rampant during the times of colonization, so was nationalism; it has started to show development in constant progression. The growing inclination towards the appreciation of what is native or local became a key and way in the decolonization process (Featherstone, 1995). There are various narratives formed out of nationalism which aim for a larger audience particularly its colonizers. That is why early anti-colonial works done in the colonizers' language like those by Jose Rizal from the Philippines, Jose Marti from Cuba, and Manuel Zeno Gandia from Puerto Rico target primarily the colonizers and not the local readers for one specific agenda: to show resistance. These narratives then must not only be classified as political but, moreover, a revolution against cultural hegemony imposed by the colonizers (Young, 2011). Still, despite the many narratives of nationalism formed and treasured by those who advocate for it, there are manifestations of cultural and racial hegemony and imperialism present today but in a different guise as influenced by the current movement of globalization (Miyoshi, 1993).

### **3.1.1 Narratives of Nationalism**

Nationalist literature could also be linked and partnered with the literature of protest. Nationalist literature possesses the spirit of resistance, and it aims for a shift to local or

native literary culture (Daniels, 2001; Tope, 2008). Literatures of protest are a direct response to the oppressive grip of colonialism that not only changed the colonized and its language but, at the same time, created a social movement that hierarchized languages and cultures. This echoing of the struggle in the decolonization process leaves a possibility for nationalist/protest literature to have a place not only within the boundaries of their own countries but also in world literature (Cheah, 2016). Perhaps it is a reason why many postcolonial novelists go beyond the boundaries of their own native literary circles and make their works recognized worldwide. That is why, part of the culture of resistance is the exaltation of race that seeks to see the country not as how colonization characterizes it as such but how its native people do by excavating their own distant past while not looking at foreign perspectives at the same time (Said, 1994). But this might also pose a double-edged sword dilemma that will be for the advantage of the colonizer as well in promoting recognition for themselves and the idea of the “exotic” (Innes, 2006). Perspectives about the “exotic” varied and have earned the interest of Westerners. What might the colonies be was always perceived as the “other” and has a different level of reality than that of the colonizer. That is why, internationally, narratives produced from former colonies became instant favorites by those looking for something new. Still, should that be the case, national literatures going outside the boundaries of their countries are still subject to colonial criticism and control. This exotic exploitation somehow contradicts as it delineates counter-resistance and subjects it to further oppression. Paradoxically, this then puts these narratives of nationalism in a situation that displaces their position from revolutionary texts to further subjugation under the same tyrant that they have been trying to be emancipated from (Eagleton, 1988).

Nationalism in postcolonial narratives is somehow challenged by globalization. The agenda of globalization do not promote nationalism (Chowdhury, 2002). While the aim of postcolonial nationalism is to bring out the identity of a former colony through the use of the colonial language, globalization is primarily focused on the production and marketing of goods, and that, in turn, has shaken the stand of written nationalist texts.

### **3.1.2 Syncretism and Hybridity**

One of the inevitable truths, if not, the darkest one of colonization is slavery. But what can be of particular interest as far as the field of linguistics is concerned is the intermingling of the local language with the colonial language, conceiving and giving birth to different varieties of creolized language (Hutnyk, 2005). This then has paved the way for another form of decolonization; that is, the ironic embracing of the colonizer’s language and culture. As there is no point rejecting the idea that colonization brings along with it a culture, the acceptance of the colonized of that culture also provides a hint that there is resistance. The very resistance lies on the intermingling of the two cultures and the production of a new one. Resisting could be assimilating at the same time. There are various texts and cultures emanating from formerly colonized countries that mirror a hybrid type of language utilized in communication (Lowe, 1991). This could be seen in migration regarded as a product of colonial industrialization. Literatures on diaspora have shown the use and mastery of a foreign language by the colonized especially in the case of Filipino migrant writers, and this has led to the birth of transnationalism/transculturalism (Helff, 2012). This highly syncretized culture

dominated by foreign intrusion was used as a form of dialogue resistance that became a new sociolinguistic framework which presents how diverse language and culture is (Phillipson, 1992). From here comes the advantage of resistance language as shown in the writings produced by diasporic writers (Yuson, 2008).

It seems that the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized coalesced to form unique hybridity. That uniqueness lies in historicity, in the constant power struggles, and racial resistance that tries to annex the dominant force that controls the society (Lowe, 1991). Latin America, for instance, experienced that same fate under the three centuries of control of the Spaniards. The assimilation of the colonizer's language tend to form a hybrid type of language that is apart from the Spanish language. This could be seen as well in the inter-racial marriage between the colonized natives and the colonizers, which is credited for forming a hybrid culture (Daniels, 2001). The assimilative process seeks to empower itself by not forgetting its native roots. That is why this form of linguistic and cultural resistance is somehow noticeable in the narratives of some works by Latin American and Indian authors who use the image of incest, like in the novels of Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdes*, Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, and Arudhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. It would then appear that the symbol for incest becomes the counter-resistance against the rape of culture due to colonization.

But these manifestations of resistance, from the fact that the imposed foreign language was treated with revolt over the condescension created due to a hierarchical system, has always been drenched and darkened by the ink of racial discrimination. This could be comprehended in the great works of postcolonialism as it is vividly captured, for example, in the classic *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. This could also then lead to the birth of different varieties of colonial language particularly the all-supreme English language (Cavagnoli, 2014). The presence of these varieties of English may be seen as both a praise for colonization and an anti-colonial pursuit. The difference lies on who is reading it from either context.

### 3.1.3 The Language of Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Though the period of exploration and colonization might have ended, their hold is still reigning supreme where it has wreaked havoc. French and English, for instance, are the widely used language in their former colonies, especially in establishing international relations. This linguistic domination, especially in the case of English, has so far proven that colonial influence is indeed inevitable and became so established that it was able to create a hierarchy of relevance affecting not only language but culture itself as a whole (Phillipson, 1992). This linguistic reality that is fundamentally applied transpired as the seemingly perfect ingredient for foreign control. Hence, it could be seen from the history of colonialism that the colonizers themselves perfectly understood the power of domination and empire-building through language. The importance of language lies in its flexibility and adaptability tested through translation. As part of colonization, the use of language came at the forefront and realized as the very moving agent in the success of what they think as their noble endeavor. During the period of Spanish colonization, they believed that the "language of empire" was due to its translatability into other languages, and this notion of

translatability in turn hinged on the possibility of subordinating the speaker's first language to the structural norms of the second" (Rafael, 1988, p. 27). As the foreign language was imposed in the colony, the natives slowly adapted it, which made the colonizer think that it would be for their own advantage. Colonization itself then is not only for or due to political and economic reasons but through the use of and imposition of the colonizer's language upon the prospective colony. Conquering through language could be the key in understanding the victory of colonization. The American colonizers might have learned that maneuver from their Spanish predecessors for both did the same, though the former has fully perfected it in their colonies especially in the Philippines. Linking it altogether, conquering and subjugation through the use of language cannot be more emphasized than this. That is why decolonization cannot be fully achieved through a strictly political method. There could be a more possible resistance-domination decolonization through where it all began: on the linguistic level.

As history has shown, postcolonialism is somehow linked with the Third World. The current status of the discourse is to create a field of communication where all other cultures under the influence of colonialism can meet at a center, and, in the process, giving voice to these marginalized communities (Dirlik, 1994).

### **3.2 Forming Philippine (Post)colonial Language and Literature**

As the colonizers have seen it opportune to take advantage of the colony's ignorance of their agenda, it became apparently easy for them to infiltrate the latter's society first by using the cross and then language, particularly during the Spanish era. During the American occupation, education became the avenue where this would be realized. This was mentioned in one of Dimalanta's (2004) work where she stated that:

With the influx of American influence into Philippine soil, primarily on account of the Spanish-American War and ceding of the Philippines to America in 1898, writers began to use English as their medium of expression, since it became the medium of instruction in all schools and was the preferred tongue among the intellectual elite, who were challenged into adopting a foreign tongue with the measure of adeptness. Understandably, Philippine literature, from the opening of the twentieth century until the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, was patterned after Anglo-American models, romantic readings of nineteenth-century vintage saturating the literary scene. English became the primary tool for communication, not only in education but also in literature (p. 17).

Looking at the highly colonial setting of the Philippines, the tenacity of the control of the colonizers flowed down from them to the elite who have been the major voices in the society. Since the time of the Spanish imperial rule, the dominance of the upper-class has been so apparent that they had access to the Spanish language. That practice still persisted until the American period where the *Ilustrados* of the previous colonial past were at the forefront of assimilation to the new foreign language. As the *Ilustrados* from the past did make it out of the country when the port of the West opened, so did the new breed of Filipinos

who had the chance to be educated in the US grabbed the opportunity to study there. They were able to produce the literatures that possess the kind of longing for the native which was long lost and awaiting recovery (Gonzalez & Campomanes, 1997).

### 3.2.1 Revolution and Domination in Philippine Writing

While it is indeed true that the colonizers governed the entire Philippine archipelago, there is one thing that they were not able to totally uproot from the native society. Early Spanish authorities tried to stamp out old traditions and religion, but their efforts were in vain. This resistance was traced from the language of the natives: the *Baybayin* (Rafael, 1988). As the issue on resistance was pointed at the complexity of the Filipino language, manifestations of the postcolonial spirit could be rooted at some Filipino terms and concepts that are not translatable for the colonizers at all. There are many native Filipino terms that even the early Spanish chroniclers and friars found to be of no value or direct translation in either Latin or Castilian, and this untranslatability of some native Filipino terms even went beyond during American occupation. As can be seen, much has been said about resistance as it was always pointed at the socio-political level and never at the linguistic form against colonialism. The art of translation tries to bridge in cultures. The act of translating the vernacular into a foreign colonial language does not only mean that it is to be subdued by the linguistic standards of the other just as it has been commonly perceived, but it also means the domination of the other language and culture. Where the colonizers failed to have total imperial hegemony over the native's local language, the colonized was successful. This became apparent with the *Ilustrados* and the early Filipino scholars in America when they used the inherited colonial language against their oppressors through their writings.

There have been problems regarding the use of the colonizer's language in Philippine literary tradition. It led to the upheaval within the Filipino writers themselves who are divided when it comes to their views on the "Filipino content" of their writings. That then placed the literatures written in the colonizer's language (English in particular) under the shade of doubt and criticism. For some local nationalist writers, pure Filipino nationalism can only be exhibited with the use of the vernacular; thus, those written in English are not classified as truly Filipino (Dimalanta, 2004). This is no longer the case for it could be seen from the diasporic literatures that it possesses the same characteristic of being more Filipino, particularly the works of Carlos Bulosan, Jose Garcia Villa, Wilfrido Nollado, Francisco Arcellana, N. V. M. Gonzalez, and Bienvenido Santos (Yuson, 2008). This observation can also be read in Dimalanta (2004):

Philippine contemporary literature is moving on, aware of its inherited culture at the same time and holding on to what is ethnically or locally its own. While it considers the legitimacy of indigenous traditions, undeniably significant in the shaping of national identity, it does not ignore opportunities for cross-cultural encounters which could broaden exposure to literary materials, leading to values, meanings, sentiments previously muffled by extreme traditionalism (p. 20).

Philippine literary texts written in the language of the colonizer could be seen as a form of resistance and, at the same time, the “owning” of the dominant colonial language. This could be traced from the political policies by the United States during the Commonwealth (Allen, 2014). This period of socio-political development and upheaval in the country has given birth to the flourishing of Filipino writing by local writers and Filipino writers and scholars in the United States.

### **3.2.2 Recovering the “Lost” Filipino**

As there are issues hounding the writings in the Philippines especially by that of overseas Filipinos, the search for the Filipino identity lasted for a long time, and even leading critics say that there is almost an impossibility in locating this Filipino identity amidst the stay in the colonizer’s homeland (Campomanes, 1992). The question of whether it is valid to say that there is an Asian-American, moreover a Filipino-American literature, circulated especially during the last decade of the twentieth century (Yuson, 2008). The crossover of cultures that led to the creation of a hybridized identity within a literary movement possesses a strong link with the native spirit as exilic literatures show homesickness and search for recognition to be not as the “other” in the foreign land (Campomanes, 1992; Lowe, 1991).

Much has also been said regarding the identity of the Filipinos at the height of the literary revolution during the Commonwealth period. Undoubtedly, themes used by writers were patterned after the Western tradition, and appreciation of art and literary criticism came in the Philippines in the 1930’s (Tiempo, 1995; Chua, 2007). Also, the writers and artists’ use of scenes and ideologies exhibited by the characters in their works bear resemblance in the narratives and stories found in the Western canon. Some Philippine literary critics saw this as an improper way of dealing with the culture and traditions of the Philippines. By having such foreign influences in Philippine literature and art, they claim that the value of the Philippine culture was diminished, and, in some cases, removed from the anthology. Being a Filipino writer is not enough to say that a work contains Filipino touch in it thus “meaningful literature and criticism are viable only when rooted in the people’s traditions, way of life, and temperament” (Salangsang, 1977, p. 23). Also, it cannot be denied that what they claim is correct indeed but only up to a certain extent. What they miss out is the fact that written texts, even visual art, still possess local identity and do not totally become alien from it. Perhaps it would be too cynical for the exilic narratives written by Filipinos in the colonial language to claim that a true Philippine literature can be rooted in the pre-colonial times wherein these narratives serve as the basis of a legitimate Philippine art and literature. That indeed may be the case especially for the patriotic critics, but it also has to be credited that foreign literary techniques and criticism fill in the gap but does not remove the Filipino identity or spirit in these works (Lumbera, 1997). This filling in also sheds light on the idea on the counter-domination of the oppressed of the dominant colonial language through betrayal by using that very borrowed framework in exacting vengeance in revolution. That is why there is a need for the study of the arts in the Philippines not only because for the petty reason of having an audience of an artwork or reader of a short story, poem, or novel but, moreover, to have an educated one to preserve unique culture and traditions.

### 3.3 Resistance and Counter-colonization in Philippine Narratives

As it has always been perceived in postcolonialism, there is a strong sense of recovering what might have been lost in the identity of the native land. The manifestation of the desire for identity restoration can be actualized in the society as a whole by having a new cultural movement out of foreign and colonial intrusion and tyranny (Said, 1994). Also, what cannot be neglected from postcolonial texts as their unique character is the feeling or the sentiment or desire for freedom. According to Cavagnoli (2014):

Much postcolonial fiction contains stories of pain, of tormented detachment from one's native soil, of displacement and outright transportation. We read stories of exile, dislocation, and alienation from one's past due to colonization and to the imposition of another language and another culture. Even when the stories tell us about migration or indentured labor, the choice of leaving one's country—while voluntary in appearance—in fact forces on those who leave a painful separation from their childhood places and from their families of origin. Postcolonial fiction is written in a language that bears the mark of the torments and tribulations of history (p. 322).

This postcolonial sentiment could be seen from the diasporic, revolutionary, nationalist texts of the Philippines. This yearning for detachment and the search for that distinct voice that is at liberty from the clutches of the colonial regime led to the creation of those narratives that enhance not only its political agenda but, moreover, puts it to the level not only of the domestic but of the global - from the peripheries to the cultural center (Featherstone, 1995). It could be deduced that the early Filipinos who went to Spain and the United States did not only study there, but, moreover, they used that opportunity to stand up against the colonizer by writing through the inherited language in their own land.

The glorification and lampooning of the colonial heritage of the country have been the themes of various literary works throughout the development of formerly colonized countries' literature like the Philippines. From among those many narratives, I have chosen three: Rosario De Guzman-Lingat's *The Locked Door*, F. Sionil Jose's *The God Stealer*, and Loreto Paras-Sulit's *The Bolo* to best reflect that revolutionary characteristic of dominating the colonizer through language and showing the great native spirit through the uplifting of the native culture as beheld in the narratives of the texts. From the images of the taken-for-advantage daughters, a stolen idol, and an endangered heirloom by foreign invaders, these stories emanate from a strong desire for decolonization.

#### 3.3.1 The Mystery Behind the Locked Door

The entire story, originally written in Tagalog, was later on translated into English. The story revolves around Benilda and Efren as they move in to the ancestral house of the latter in Sante Fe as a newly married couple. The story is rich in Filipino tradition and culture as exemplified by the house's appearance as an old mansion, a common symbol of power and affluence among Filipinos. Lingat (2017) goes on to describe the setting:

At first glance, the house showed age although it was made of stone. Centuries-old trees grew at the rear. Flowering plants filled the front of the house, and flowers in bloom swayed to the breeze on either side on the narrow path connecting the iron gate and the door to the house. Now that it was summer, the flower's profusion of colors stood out among the green plants spread around the yard, and the house's ancient visage, that imposed on it a roughness and ugliness, became more striking (p. 109).

Aside from the intimidating appearance of the house itself, further manifestations of power can be seen all throughout the story. This manifestation of power is embodied by the owner of the "big house," Efren's physically incapacitated grandfather, *Lolo* Aryong, who caught the attention and interest of Benilda upon their meeting. In another part of the narrative of the story:

Benilda found herself shaking uncontrollably when the old man turned to her once more with those fierce, unrelenting eyes. But he did not say a word. When they left the room, she was absolutely certain of one thing: that frail, old man, lying in bed and felled by sickness and old age, was still calling the shots in this house (p. 113).

Power inside the "big house" is associated with the most important thing in the entire story: the sealed room. Inside this room is the reason for the major turn of events: a secret awaiting to be discovered and a secret which affects not only the psyche and the belief of *Lolo* Aryong and his daughters, *Nana* Idad and *Nana* Orang, but also their whole lives.

Twenty years before, *Nana* Idad married an American, Jeffrey "Jeff" Haines, who escaped from the ire of the Japanese military from Bataan during the height of the Second World War. Weak and at the brink of death due to malaria, Jeff sought refuge in the "big house" where he was welcomed with utmost hospitality by *Lolo* Aryong. Not so long, *Nana* Idad and Jeff fell in love with each other and got married. The time came when they were advised by *Lolo* Aryong to leave because the Japanese were in the hunt for American fugitives. Urged by *Lolo* Aryong, Jeff stayed with him. *Nana* Idad and *Nana* Orang with the now infant Efren fled to Manila. Days later, *Lolo* Aryong followed them in Manila with the news of Jeff's untimely death under the hands of the imperial Japanese. Three years later, they went back to Santa Fe. The house was redesigned. The room of *Nana* Idad and Jeff was cemented, and the door was locked. After twenty years, the room was opened together with its dark secret because of Benilda's mischievous curiosity. As Benilda opened the door of the room of wonders, she discovered a dreadful sight, the corpse of Jeff kept there all these years without the suspicion of the other people living in the house, a big house that kept a secret that is worth and not worth digging. *Lolo* Aryong committed a murder for the sake of his beloved daughters. Jeff, whom he has accepted and taken care of in his own house, maligned both his daughters by letting them fall in love with him. Perhaps, to see his own children being emotionally played with is one of the most painful experiences a parent like him could have. Until the end, there was no remorse for the murder done by *Lolo* Aryong, and his daughters' acceptance of what he did was noticeable. "Behind the closed door was the newly discovered peace of mind and understanding between the father and his daughters" (Lingat, 2017, p. 125).

The power of the character of *Lolo* Aryong is exerted throughout the narrative of the story even with the presence of an American in their house. This image can be directly related to the primary agenda of nationalism and the anti-colonial sentiment where the native land, which could be linked to the “big house,” is and should only be under the control of its true and rightful owners (Said, 1994). *Nana* Idad and *Nana* Orang share the same fate in the story as the main victims of circumstances. *Nana* Idad falling in love with and marrying an American is a perfect exemplification of the death of the local culture while *Nana* Orang’s passivity prefigures the image of a typical Filipino enticed by a foreign invader. The act of killing the American inside the “big house” is symbolic of a striking victory over the colonizer; it could be read as the act of cutting the colonial invader’s ties. That counter-domination and Jeff being kept inside the locked room state the inevitable rampage colonization has created, and it would only be realized upon discovering it lying within the very core of the enclosed society.

### 3.3.2 The Anger of the Gods

One of the most important and integral practices in a particular culture is religion and faith (Rafael, 1988). In F. Sionil Jose’s *The God Stealer*, he firmly stressed the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and the oppressor and the oppressed. The story revolves around the life of the best of friends, Philip Latak, a Filipino, and Sam Christie, an American. Both are workers in a travel agency, and coming to the Philippines is indeed a great experience for the American who is an avid collector of exotic materials from the places he has been. Philip Latak or *Ip-pig*, a native of Ifugao, would want his best friend to see his hometown before going back again to Boston. Eager and filled with excitement, they went to Ifugao where all events will be the major conflict in the story – events that will converge to form the anti-colonial revolution. There is one goal in the mind of Sam Christie all along: the Ifugao god. “‘A Grecian Urn, a Japanese sword, a Siamese mask—and now, an Ifugao god...’” (Jose, 1968, p. 125).

There is one problem which Philip Latak has been facing since he left his hometown in Ifugao. His grandfather, a staunch advocate of their culture, does not want his grandson to leave for he is eyeing Philip Latak to be his successor. Their place in the mountains, rich with their indigenous culture, was infiltrated by the Americans as it goes on with the story: “‘My brother dislikes me. All of them here dislike me. They think that by living in Manila for a few years I have forgotten what it is to be an Ifugao. I can’t help it, Sam. I like it down there..’” Those are the words of Philip, his very sentiments and what he feels. Philip’s words reflect the drudgery of a typical person from a province who would want to see the progressive city of Manila, commonly conceived as the place where the Philippines meets the West. The initial assumption of his life as a native Ifugao (*Ip-pig*) and as a new person (Philip Latak) shows the contrasting view of the Filipino who is in longing due to his cultural exile (Campomanes, 1992; Gonzalez & Campomanes, 1997). As Philip Latak gets to be blinded by the life presented to him by the colonial West, his true identity is put into a perilous state that creates a ripple within native and traditional practices.

Sam Christie wants to get hold of the Ifugao idol. But meeting an American missionary, Reverend Doone, somehow makes an impact not on the part of Sam Christie but of the postcolonial reading of the text. As their conversation goes on in the story:

You must understand their religion... and if you understand it, then you'll know why it is difficult to get this god. Then you'll know why the Ifugaos are so attached to it. It's a religion based on fear, retribution. Every calamity or every luck which happens to them is based on this belief. A good harvest means the gods are pleased. A bad one means they are angered (Jose, 1968, p. 132).

To read F. Sionil Jose under the lens of postcolonialism could perfectly bring out the nationalist anti-colonial ideas and ideals elucidated in the text. As religion and culture symbolized by the Ifugao idol is crucial for the life of the Ifugao, it is the pillar or the bastion of the dynamism and purity of their land, race, and identity. Yet, Sam Christie takes hold of the Ifugao god by using his friend, Philip Latak. "You'll have your god, Sam. There's a way. I can steal one for you." This builds towards the climax of the story. The act of stealing, betraying one's own land is dominant in the Philippine society. At the height of colonization, many Filipinos did choose the colonizer over their own, which inflicted great damage upon the motherland. As manifestations of revolution came in as a direct response to salvage lost identity, the next move was a revolution (Lazarus, 2011). This would also be the turning point in the story. As Philip Latak does the inevitable, it costs him a lot. Stealing the idol leads to the death of his grandfather, the character in the story who appears to be the image of an old and dying culture, language, and patrimony. Towards the end of the story, much is lost and will never be recovered as it is. Philip Latak decides to be the *Ip-pig* that he was as shown in the dramatic confrontation between him and Sam Christie. "Don't blame me, Phil... I didn't want you to steal it. Remember, I even wanted to return it? Besides, I could have gone on searching until I found one I could buy... 'That's it! You'll always find a way because you have all the money. You can buy everything, even gods'" (Jose, 1968, p. 143). As industrialization and innovation partnered with colonialism, it became the primary weapon for colonizing a land by showing the people that there was only one alternative in order to survive. And that, according to the Western colonial standard, led to migrations and dependence on monetary value, to the point of devaluation of one's own cultural identity and language (Allen, 2014; Campomanes, 1992). This dramatic ending of the story suggests revolutionary counter-colonialism. By choosing to remain in their land and to break away from the friendship with Sam Christie, Philip Latak, now the *Ip-pig* he was before his colonial baptism, finally regains his nationalistic consciousness and retaliates against the illusion between him and the American. Even the choice of names of the characters gives the idea about the delineation between the two characters and realities. "Latak" in Filipino literally means a residue, something that is of no importance, while "Christie", from Christ, suggests some sort of a messianic symbol, just as what is commonly perceived from the United States as the great Uncle Sam of the West.

Counter-domination rests on the use of the English language to show this kind of radicalism. The peace of mind, character, and identity produced in the narrative of the story perfected in the final act of *Ip-pig* show the victory that was never on Sam Christie's side.

### 3.3.3 The Sharp Edge of the Bolo

Two sisters, Clara and Sita, have contrasting views of the value of tradition. How they treated their family's heirloom, the *bolo*, is a representation of two characteristics of many Filipinos (as far as postcolonialism is concerned): the patriotic and the colonial. The story all starts with Clara on the bed; sick, unable to do, and frustrated over her sister Sita's outlook regarding the *bolo*. "And the two sisters brooded on the strange tale of the bolo; the older with thoughts of love, the younger with contempt and perhaps with a little wonder" (Paras-Sulit, 2004, p. 59). Sita would like to have the *bolo* sold to the antique collector, Old Hison, for a good sum of money. This is to sustain the medication of Clara, and the living of the two sisters who are in poverty. Sita knows that the *bolo* would be sold at a good price, enough to support their needs. However, Clara is firm in her resolve not to have the *bolo* sold. The battle between these two ideologies can be rooted in the colonial mentality taking hold of the minds of the colonized. On the one hand, Sita can be seen as a representation of the "obedient" colonized native (Gonzalez & Campomanes, 1997; Lazarus, 2011). The *bolo* does not have any meaning for her but a material for profit. On the other hand, Clara can be seen as a representation of the native sentiment that treats tradition and culture as very important. As "Clara held on the *bolo* with all her feeble strength" (Paras-Sulit, 2004, p. 61), so tradition holds on with all its might in a society that is so engulfed in foreign and Western preferences. Blinded by overwhelming poverty, Sita cannot be moved, and she still insists her desire to have the *bolo* sold. As a businessman, Old Hison does not hesitate in taking the precious *bolo* and buying it for a price. The price given is way too low and undeserving not only of the *bolo* itself but of what it represents. Culture does not have any monetary value for it is the identity of the people and the land, and to sell it is like an act of betrayal and a rebellious act against one's motherland. Upon selling the *bolo* to Old Hison, the passive spectator of this scene, Mr. Oscar, makes his way into correcting a terrible mistake. He bought the *bolo* instead and returned it to the confused and regretful Sita. The history behind it, its glorious past, and its majestic importance cannot be removed just simply. As the story goes:

And Sita discovered that there are other things greater and more powerful than sensations of the flesh, and she understood how Clara could withstand hunger and why she clung to the *bolo*. And perhaps Clara's son, that slept beneath her sister's breast would grow as tall and fine as this man before her and carry out the golden legend of the *bolo* (p. 64).

Blinded as they are, they will never understand the value of their language and culture. Old Hison could be seen as an image of a typical greedy colonial-minded Filipino as he desires to sell the *bolo* to foreigners at a higher price. Mr. Oscar can be seen as a contrast as he stands as the conscience of the poor Sita. Hunger can be satisfied but will recur, while tradition and culture, once neglected and lost, will never be regained. The story sees the transition and emancipation of Sita.

The sharpness of the *bolo* can indeed wound and hurt all who will touch it and will leave a deep mark and pain upon those who shall wrongfully handle it. Still at the end, the constant battle against colonialism and anti-colonialism, poverty and comfort, and flesh and

spirit will always take a toll on reality as “she walked out of the store... walked out fast, fast... almost ran... because she was afraid. Hunger was tugging at the every tissue of her body again... tugging so cruelly... and commanding her to return” (Paras-Sulit, 2004, p. 65).

#### 4. Conclusion

The language of postcolonialism has been given life by the liberating authors of the movement who have produced much discourse over the past decades. As Dirlik (1994) said:

The current global condition appears in the discourse only as a projection of the subjectivities and epistemologies of First World intellectuals of Third World origin; the discourse constitutes the world in the self-image of these intellectuals which makes it an expression not of powerlessness but of newfound power (p. 344).

This newfound power of resistance materialized through its manifestations in the texts. This nationalistic-hybrid-postcolonial language has interfaced with the works of fiction by the authors who seek to be heard and be part of the inner circle. As the narratives of the short stories in English examined above share the same anti-colonial sentiment, they resist the colonial grip in various ways. The use of Spanish and English as a means for communicating these sentiments against the colonizers gave the colonizers a dose of their own medicine. The three short stories presented and critically read in this paper tackle the hegemony that was inflicted in the country and how the country has witnessed its ravage through the years. The effect of language domination cannot be denied, and the power it holds rests on the users and how it influences them. It is apparent that the Filipinos have complete control of their colonizer’s language, particularly of English. That in turn appears both as counter-colonialism and infiltration of the cultural center by the peripheries.

One problem which can still be seen in the modern-day Philippine society is that it lingers on silence, the silence of being unable to discover and explore its culture and tradition – culture and tradition endangered by a new form of colonialism: capitalist globalization. Capitalist globalization seeks the reverse of what it promises to give for it destroys and further creates division among peoples.

Literature is a work of imagination, but it can cause the downfall of a powerful institution. The wonderful work of fiction which possesses truth in it introduces man into a new realm where he encounters a lot that may seem to be elusive to him before but, in fact, are just there all along. Modern-day critics have said that language and the arts are constantly in touch with the society. Works of fiction will stand as a constant reminder of the product of people’s intellect, emotion, culture, anti-colonialism and nationalism combined into one.

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