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Writing 39B

3 May 2021

Colonialism and the Pastoral: The Philippines from the 16th to the 20th Century

“Filipinos look at their own country as a waiting station for their final destination to America” (Rodriguez, 318). Colonization disturbed the wellbeing of the Philippines, and its ravaging long-term effects are put succinctly by Felix Rodriguez; Colonization’s influence on the development of the Philippines destroyed its ability to uplift itself. Through a western oriented schooling system in the Philippines from colonialism and the portrayal of the United States as a highly sophisticated society due to the standard of living it presented, the Filipino people wanted in on the American Dream (Rodriguez, 318). Due to Spain’s colonization in the 16th century and then the United States’ colonization at the very end of the 19th century, the cultural, economic, and social sectors of the Philippines had deteriorated tremendously. The stripping of natural resources and the positive portrayal of the United States as a utopian or ideal society caused a chain reaction of disaster for the people living in the Philippines; we observe loss of culture, economic disaster, and what we know as the economic ‘brain drain’ theory or when a large amount of educated people leave their native land for better opportunities, leading to loss of tax revenue and money flow. An additional observation within the negative effects of colonialism is the changing relationship between nature and humans. As we know from Terry Gifford, a professor in Spain, the pastoral is defined as the idealization of the relationship between nature and humans. Gifford equates this idea of the pastoral to “Seeing nature through ‘rose-tinted spectacles’” (Gifford, 8). Conversely, the anti-pastoral is essentially the antithesis of a pastoral

idealization of thinking, where rural living is considered less ideal, and the relationship between humans and nature is unimportant. In her essay *Invoking the Ancestors*, Aileen Suzara writes about the negative effects of colonialism in the development of the Philippines, switching between specific pastoral and anti-pastoral genre conventions to illustrate her message. As a child of nomadic immigrants that moved to America from the Philippines, Suzara's concurrent use of pastoral and anti-pastoral genre conventions such as vivid imagery, hyperbole, simile, comparison, and an appeal to logic communicates how her identity and culture has been changed due to colonialism, as well as demonstrating how colonialism has heavily and negatively impacted the Philippines.

Suzara uses hyperbole and an appeal to logic as pastoral conventions to send the message that the relationship between human and nature is inseparable. Suzara writes, "I am a piece in a continually regenerating culture, one whose survival has and remains dependent on the earth. I cannot separate history and the environment because the environment has been inscribed into my genes." (Suzara, 72). As we understand by Gifford as a nature writer, the idea of the pastoral genre aligns with Suzara use of a hyperbole in this passage. Although the environment cannot be physically inscribed into her genes, Suzara correctly demonstrates the inseparability of humans and nature through her exaggeration, and the power that nature holds over humans. The idea that Suzara presents connects to the idea of the pastoral, where the connection between humans and nature is idealized. Additionally, Suzara also uses an appeal to logic to strengthen her argument through her expression of cyclic historical patterns that are built into nature, describing human dependence and its "regenerative" behavior. Through this appeal, Suzara clarifies her characterization of the dynamic between nature and humans.

Suzara utilizes metaphors as a pastoral convention to highlight the negative effects that colonialism has had upon her identity, her culture, and Filipino society. Suzara states, “I write in resistance to the Spanish conquistadors who disrupted a sovereign people, to the colonizers who burned a trail of greed through the Philippine archipelago for four hundred years” (Suzara, 66). Suzara’s use of burning of the Philippine islands as a metaphor concisely summarizes the effects of colonialism on the Philippines as well as on Suzara. In this passage, “greed” is tied to the colonizers, and burning is used to symbolize the fast rate of damage and exhaustion inflicted upon the Philippines, both from a physical or environmental standpoint and from a social standpoint. As we understand from Rodriguez, colonization directly expunged the natural resources of the land, polluting waterways and hurting native species. So, while colonization held physical consequences, there were also negative social, cultural and economic consequences that “the trail of greed” burned through the Philippines as well. While Suzara often describes her deep connection to the Philippines through her ancestors, her persistent reiteration of the loss of the Filipino language and culture demonstrates her rejection or condemnation of the Americanization of Filipino people due to colonialism (Suzara, 72-73). Suzara utilizes the pastoral in this passage mainly to exhibit the negative effects of abusing the relationship between humans and nature. Trail of greed as a metaphor demonstrates the parasitic relationship between colonizers and nature. This passage ties into the main idea that Suzara is making, how mankind takes advantage of natural resources to advance their power, ignoring the consequences that may result in harm and pain for a community or country of people.

The pastoral convention of simile is used to demonstrate the connection between Suzara and her identity as she contemplates how pressures such as colonialism have affected Filipino culture overall. Suzara writes, “The syllables flow like water through my fingers. And yet I am

drawn to their relentless energy” (Suzara, 65). Suzara effectively utilizes simile to strengthen her argument about negative pressures affecting Filipino culture and her own identity. In this passage, Suzara compares her inability to understand Tagalog to the way the Philippines were affected by colonization. Water is essential for humans, and Suzara connects that idea to the negative effects that a lack of water and resources does to the Philippines. The simile of syllables as water shows a social consequence of colonization which was shown in the text through Suzara’s description of her loss of native culture and language, to the physical consequences that colonization has on water such as pollution and deforestation. (Suzara, 65-67).

Suzara uses comparison as an anti-pastoral convention to send the message of how Filipino identity is generationally negatively impacted due to colonialism. “My Filipino relatives have been integrated into the American economy and lifestyle as nurses and farm laborers, and their children have grown up surrounded by pine trees or high rises instead of tropical rain forests. Many of us do not know where we came from, and for some it as if there has never been anything else.” In this passage, the crux of Suzara’s argument is solidified. Here, Suzara represents the message and her own internal struggles together, as she is an example of someone who lost the Filipino identity as a child of Filipino parents who moved to the United States from the Philippines. Suzara employs the use of comparison between first generation Filipino American children and their parents who grew up in the Philippines to draw attention to the lingering effects of colonialism in the present day. Suzara connects the loss of identity that first generation Filipino Americans face to the abrupt integration into American culture and the ‘anti-pastoral’ way of living, while connecting a traditional Filipino identity to a highly ‘pastoral’ way of life. Suzara’s mentioning of the loss of identity in the last sentence of this passage defines her

stance: The idea of anti-pastoralism directly connects to negative effects of colonialism specifically in the Philippines, while pastoralism represents the heart of Philippine culture.

Suzara's continued expression of both pastoral and anti-pastoral conventions solidifies her message throughout the essay, demonstrating the drastic effects of colonialism on the sovereignty of the Philippines and its development. Through practices that colonialism entails such as a degradation and depletion of natural resources, draining of the economy, and emigration to America caused by colonialist centric beliefs, the effects upon Filipino identity and culture are shown through Suzara's use of pastoral and anti-pastoral genre conventions. As a first generation Filipino American with parents who emigrated from the Philippines due to American colonialism, Suzara commands authority and a strong appeal to credibility and trustworthiness through her identity. Suzara tactically uses anecdotal evidence in the form of stories to relay her message, as well as logical propositions and reasoning to further her stance. From a historical context, Suzara's message is to inform the main audience, which is clearly Filipino Americans, how their culture and identity has been shifted and changed due to colonialism. As we have defined from Rodriguez, new generation Filipino Americans do not hold the same materialistic sentiments that their parents did, as they were born and raised in America. This essay by Suzara and her overall message about identity and colonization is directed towards that audience to give context and explanation behind how colonialism has changed their lives. Throughout the essay, Suzara utilizes an appeal to logic, metaphor, simile, and comparison as pastoral and anti-pastoral conventions to enrich the audience with her message, which is how colonialism has affected her identity, as well as the Filipino culture.

Works Cited

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