I

"Civilize 'em with a Krag": Errand to the Boondocks[1]

No uprising fails. Each one is a step in the right direction.
—*Salud Algabre, 1966*

The bourgeois revolution has not been completed and left the feudal landlord system almost untouched. . . . On our part we are doing everything to arouse the class consciousness and revolutionary spirit of the masses, especially the peasants.
—*Jose Abad Santos, 1937*

The revolution is inevitable. . . . If an armed conflict does arise, we will fight alongside with the men. . . .
—*Maria Lorena Barros, circa 1975*

Reconnaissance

In E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, during the expedition to the North Pole, Father tended to agree with explorer Peary who, although he had "adopted the Esquimo way of life" in pursuit of the conquest of Nature by Science and Will, treated the Eskimos "like children." This "suggested a consensus. He recalled an observation made in the Philippines ten years before where he had fought under General Leonard F. Wood against the Moro guerrillas. Our little brown brothers have to be taught a lesson, a staff officer had said, sticking a campaign pin in a map" (83).

Several chapters later, the Black protagonist Coalhouse Walker blows up the Emerald Isle Engine Station House. Father registers his misrecognition of this "tragedy," and a nostalgic reflex unfolds the source of his disintegrating patriarchal control: "He had taken from his bureau

drawer his old army pistol from the Philippine campaign" (241). We return to the theme of the historicity of the imagination—both the conqueror's and the conquered's—caught in the dialectics of the well-nigh untotalizable encounter.

Almost a century now after Admiral George Dewey defeated the Spanish flotilla in Manila Bay, and about ninety since Father's castration trauma, the "Fathers" in Washington today (circa 1986) were haunted by an incipient nightmare. They twisted in their sleep at the possible "loss" of those islands in the western Pacific—more specifically, the "loss" of several strategic military bases and installations (for background, see Garcia and Nemenzo 1988). They bewailed President Corazon Aquino's lack of will to mount a massive counterinsurgency campaign against the revolutionary forces that, for over thirteen years, had prepared the February 1986 uprising that toppled the U.S.-backed Marcos dictatorship.[2] Today, the Pentagon is maneuvering to obtain an "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement" to replace the bases lost in 1991. From all accounts, scholarly and journalistic, over half a century of U.S. cultural hegemony over this erstwhile U.S. colony has not completely eradicated the virus of the desire and drive for popular self-determination. The dogma of laissez-faire business and corporate liberalism is on the defensive.

With the emergence of revolutionary nationalism in the Philippines in the last three decades, the fate of élite-controlled democracy introduced by the United States has hung precariously in the balance. Very few progressive American scholars have preoccupied themselves with a study of the genealogy and vicissitudes of this crisis. It is somewhat of a minor scandal that no American intellectual of stature has expended energy to investigate exactly how "humane letters" were used for over half a century to "Americanize" and pacify the only U.S. colony in Asia. (William Dean Howells, Twain's contemporary, probably was the first and last to take notice of a major Filipino writer.)

In the last two decades, I have proposed numerous research projects—often turned down by foundations and other funding agencies—to inquire into what role U.S. literary practice performed in assisting and enforcing U.S. colonial domination of the Philippines in the first three decades, up to the Philippine Commonwealth and the eve of World War II: which writers? which texts? Before an inventory of the "usable past" can be drawn up, a process of interrogation needs to be charted along this line:

- How did U.S. canonical texts propagate certain beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions that reconciled Filipinos to their subordination?
- How did Filipinos respond to subjectifying modes of U.S. ideological apparatuses, particularly schooling, and various instrumentalities that affected family life, sexuality, religious practices, and so on?
- How and why did U.S. literary values and ideals continue to exert a powerful influence on the Filipino intelligentsia throughout half a century, producing in some an acquiescent or adaptive response, yet in others a critical reaction?
- After the grant of formal independence in 1946, what elements in U.S. cultural theory and practice continued to extract consent (backed by coercive suasion such as jobs, public recognition, and so forth) and collaboration from Filipino intellectual circles?

These key questions target the crucial themes and problematics of intercultural analysis, in particular the nexus and liaison between history and the modern sensibility, which is mortgaged to the absolute centrality of the utilitarian marketplace. Given the historical context outlined earlier, I foreground the dialectical exchange of sensibilities and intellectual horizons crystallized in "diachronic structures" of interhistoricity / intertextuality, which Claudio Guillen privileges as the real object of inquiry for comparatists. Consequently, my research program intends to approximate the paradox of *Weltliteratur* as a plurality of distinct cultural practices characterized by fruitful tensions, disparities, and contradictions (more on this in the concluding chapter).

Given the crisis of a deformed liberal-democratic order and the persistence of an authoritarian ethos that pervades civil society, the fate of U.S. "humane letters" is now being decided in the political arena. Are the writings of Emerson, Faulkner, Hemingway, as well as popularly sanctioned culture-heroes (Elvis Presley, Madonna) a force of repression or a catalyst for liberation?

In the massive sociopolitical upheaval that is overtaking Filipinos, it has become clear that the condition of possibility for U.S. hegemony is the erasure of its imperial history, even as this history continues to erode and undermine the life-chances of people of color everywhere. For example: should Filipino writing in English continue to be judged by Euro-American criteria? Moreover, the intransigent nationalism of the last three decades, though temporarily attenuated, has jeopardized the status and future of English as a literary medium of expression for Filipinos. The crisis of American literature and its influence in this tropic

"borderland" is irreversible. Today, when the autotelic text has been displaced by the authorless practice of postmodern *écriture*, this argument is no longer extravagant nor disturbing to the connoisseurs of the multiculturalist and ecletic supermall of ideas.

Although thousands of Filipinos migrate every year to the United States in quest of that fabled Hollywood "dream of success," nearly seventy million Filipinos remain, mostly peasants and workers. The plebeians are not reading *Reader's Digest* or the *New York Review of Books*; they seem innocent of Bellow's novels, of William Bennett's crusade for the return of the Great Books of the Western Tradition, and of the New Pragmatism of the fashionable academic circles, not to speak of the "politically correct" Establishment apologists of the "New World Order." Why has the putative experiment in U.S.-style democracy failed? More to the point, did it ever succeed in the first place? Can American-style deconstruction and new historicist pragmatism shore up the ruins of the Empire by refurbishing the racist and technocratic strategies tested in the Empire days of *Ragtime?* Is a transnational, postmodern version of Benevolent Assimilation being crafted in the guise of "low intensity warfare"?

Tracking the Fault Lines

When "contact" (to use the euphemism) was made with the inhabitants of the Philippines during the Spanish-American War of 1898, the *fin de siècle* protagonists of the metropole experienced a conjuncture of two antithetical trends. These are summed up in a confession by William Allen White in his *Autobiography:* he was bound to his "idols—Whitman, the great democrat, and Kipling, the imperialist." Historian Richard Hofstadter, in his provocative analysis of that milieu, points out the coalescence of the "rhetoric of Duty and Destiny," of *Realpolitik*, and of the Calvinistic sense of mission (Americans as "master organizers of the world") (158).

According to President McKinley, "Duty determines destiny"—that is, the moral imperative sanctioned by U.S. expansionist drive and this "national and 'racial' inheritance" was in turn justified by an invocation of historical necessity, of God (Vidal; see also Nearing and Freeman; Jones). Symptomatic of this metonymy of apocalypse and capital accumulation (an index of the Will to Power with a social-Darwinist inflection) is McKinley's address to a group of Protestant clergy in Au-

gust 1898. Listen to this portion of the inaugural discourse of Manichean liberalism:

> The truth is I didn't want the Philippines and when they came to us as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do about them. . . . I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) that we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and by God's grace do the very best that we could by them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and to sleep and slept soundly. (Zinn, *People's History* 305–06)

That "sleep of Reason" begot both dreams and nightmares. The quest for empire—for a subject race upon whom to impose civilization, and thus reaffirm one's self-identical rationality—finds an Archimedean point in McKinley's claim of receiving a charismatic assignment. This revelation occurs in the framework of a moral dilemma staged as spectacle and climaxed with a message-laden vision. It accords with the Puritan "errand into the wilderness"—conceived as a divinely mandated mission to redeem fallen, profane humankind.

Whatever vagaries and ambiguities surrounded subsequent U.S. negotiations with General Aguinaldo, then president of the embattled first Philippine Republic, U.S. policy required military force to destroy the Filipino revolutionary army and to suppress the subsequent guerilla insurgents that sustained the anticolonial resistance until the end of this century's first decade. In the same breath, promises of future independence after a period of tutelage were regularly offered (Miller; Sheridan). Violence was thus the midwife of Philippine dependency and underdevelopment.

In the first thirteen years of U.S. rule, the preeminent task was to build the administrative machinery of the colonial state over what was perceived, in the anthropological wisdom of that time, as the tribal and kinship particularisms of traditional society. For this purpose, the major instrument harnessed was the ideological apparatus of mass education. The colonial administration imposed compulsory public education and

sponsored a *pensionado* system to train natives for the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. U.S. tutelage also established a juridical system based on "free labor," procedural-judicial review of contracts, restricted civil service examinations, and an entrepreneurial ethos premised on the right of private ownership of the means of production. Exchange value began to displace use value, even while serfdom or tributary relations persisted throughout the islands.

But in the implementation of colonial policy, contradictory tendencies surfaced—symptoms of the overdetermined imperial formation. We encounter the Jeffersonian outlook of David Barrows, Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago, who served as Philippine Secretary of Education from 1903–09, juxtaposed with the vocational orientation of succeeding administrators who prevailed from 1910 forward. Barrows candidly espoused a premonopoly vision rooted in the agrarian past, a bias uncannily resurrecting itself in the programatic New Criticism of John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, theoreticians of the antebellum Southern legacy (more on this in the succeeding chapters). Barrows argues for a patrician authority exercised by a managerial élite:

> The [Filipino] race lends itself naturally and without protest to the blind leadership of aristocracy. . . . I believe we should . . . seek to develop in the Philippines, not a proletariat, but everywhere the peasant proprietor. . . . Wherever we find the Filipino the possessor of his own small holding there we find him industrious and contributing largely to the productive industry of the islands. (May 98; Veneracion 58–66)[3]

While this view allowed the works of the "Fireside Poets" (Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Bryant) to spread a diluted eighteenth-century rationalism mixed with romantic Puritanism, it fostered chiefly a literary curriculum that laid the foundation for liberal ideological practices in the Filipino élite sensibility. An individualistic ethos was deployed to counter the collective project of inventing the Filipino nation.

After seven years of this belletristic curriculum under Barrows, the colonial administration returned to a distinctly utilitarian pedagogy more directly synchronized with the need to produce skilled and semiskilled workers for the development of extractive industries and infrastructures, particularly means of communication and transportation. It was also necessary to staff the lower ranks of the bureaucracy with natives who would reproduce the *habitus* of hierarchical social relations. One commentator evaluates the effect of U.S. educational policy and program in this period: "The tragedy of the U.S. educational effort was