

THREE GENERATIONS

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At the surface level, my piece takes a look inside the parent-child dynamic of THREE GENERATIONS of a Southeast Asian family, specifically, a Filipino family. The First one takes place in a remote village in the islands around the early-mid 1900s, the second is in the US around the 1980s, and the third is present day, United States.

At the core however, I wanted to portray:

How the international occupation by the Spanish and the United States— contribute to the erosion of the Malay/Austronesian indigenous roots of the Filipino people (Mulder, 2013)

And due to this extensive history as a nation and people group, I decided to use language as a way of applying the Postcolonial lens.

STORY ONE

In STORY ONE, the parent and child speak in the local dialect, however the content of their conversation ultimately bring up lineage as well as education.

After about 50 years of Filipino resistance, the Spanish, with their more advanced weapons and military strategies, eventually divided and conquered the indigenous tribes. These tribes then develop colonial mentality and eventually form a sense of debt towards the Spanish colonizers.

The Golden Legend – is a belief popularised by the Spanish that pre-Hispanic Filipinos were uncivilized savages who were nobly civilized by Spain through the gifts of the Spanish culture and Catholicism (David, 2013). The Golden Legend (spread by the Catholic Church) caused the indigenous tribes to feel ashamed of their culture, beliefs, language, writing system, and way of life. I highlight this shame in GENERATION ONE through the parents explanation of diluting their bloodline and how they eventually became a ‘more accepted, respected people.

In the late 1800s the Americans occupied the Philippines and worked laboriously to remove over 300 years of Spanish influence as a means to further ‘civilize’ the Filipinos. The Americans started with language. They discouraged writing and removed all literature in the native tongue; they littered classrooms all over the country with classical English literature (like Shakespeare, Chaucer, Kipling, Irving, Poe). This created students who were able to read English text but because they could not relate to the context of what they were reading, their way of writing often

sounded mechanical. Here's an example to illustrate the point further: I'll read the first sentence: ... a very indirect way of saying "I have a crush on the girl in my class."

Amongst my female section mates 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 so black as Negro, but between the two, so that when the sun will shine on her face a blood running thru the arteries can be plainly seen. (Annex Teacher, 1928b: 17//as referenced in Bautista and Bolton 2008).

To reflect this in my piece, I also decided to translate most of the language in STORY ONE into what Bautista and Bolton (2008) would describe as an "antiquated Victorian style of English".

STORY TWO

In STORY TWO, the parent mostly speaks English but notice the strong accent and phrases of Tagalog, essentially speaking what Filipinos refer to as 'TAGLISH'—a mix of Tagalog and English. Tagalog itself is significant because essentially it is a 'watered down' version of the original Austronesian language mixed with Spanish influence... The accented voice of the parent also signifies migration into a Western country, in this case, the United States.

EDUCATION and the ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The child in my piece is desperate for education because education is usually an opportunity for progression. However I use this as a reflection of the American aim to educate the Philippines which was rooted in colonizing their psychology. Espiritu (2003) cited in David (2013) notes that education would be a more effective way to pacify the Filipinos. This resulted in scholarships for foreign exchange programs between the US and the Philippines, the curriculum became American in all Filipino public schools and English took priority as the primary teaching language. The long term effect of this as identified by David (2013) is the continued use of English as the main language for government proceedings, businesses, and other formal communications such as those in court and the media thus confirming that English is the language of civilized people, and that it is far superior to any indigenous Filipino languages.

In STORY TWO I also bring attention to one of the largest exports of the Philippines which is human labor, specifically those in the Nursing profession. Because of colonial ties and their influence on the Philippines education system, the United States began establishing a labor niche within the health care sector in order to meet the demands of hospitals in the United States, thus causing the Philippines to educate for export (Ortiga 2018).

Although this has provided opportunities and progression for countless Filipino families, it also has negative effects as employment opportunities in their native homes continue to become unattractive due to lower monetary conversions and hospitals continue to be poorly managed. Education and opportunity also become skewed as those who endure the vetting process for migration into the US usually come from higher educated families with more capital (Ortiga 2018).

STORY THREE

In STORY THREE, the relationship between the parent and child is distant. My aim is to show that this is often the case for Second Generation immigrants:

South Asians become “othered” by a dominant culture which categorizes them as “visible minorities,” “ethnics,” immigrants, or foreigners. These categories are considered not having a common standard of measurement with being a “real” Canadian or American despite the promises of multiculturalism. The second generations often feel that they are never quite Asian enough nor are they quite white enough; they are just ambiguous (Shariff 2008)

To stress further, the parent does not speak at all in STORY THREE. This is to show that the mother tongue no longer exists and that the ethnicity has been severed.

The name of the child’s partner is MATT and is my representation of being whitewashed. Whitewashing is an embedded psychological reaction by the Filipinos regarding their multinational colonisers (Strobel 2004) further recognises that the current Philippine cultural practices from books, religion, images, and stories were all created by a white body of knowledge to make the country more universally human, because a white experience is the only HUMAN experience.

All three of the stories also hint at the **Feminist theory** of equality. The child in ONE and TWO both want to seek advancement through higher education but the parent in both stories quash these desires somehow. There’s also the idea of ‘Elder Respect’ that’s afforded to the male parents in Story One and Two and Female gender roles such as helping in the kitchen and staying at home to raise children. However, the roles of women and men were more egalitarian during pre-colonial times.

“The women of the pre-Hispanic era were given importance and were treated equally with men” (Saldua 2012) **Titgemeyer (1998) identifies** that women could be warriors, hold leadership positions, were able to be spiritual guides or tribe healers, shared equal work in the fields, could inherit property equally to a man, and even managed the household responsibilities with the husband equally instead of having it as a sole responsibility.

Spanish rule placed men on a pedestal thus enforcing patriarchy on the Filipino woman. This denied women the importance, relevance, and roles

which they previously held in their respective communities and would later create forms of enslavement, exploitation, and a sense of confusion for the Filipino women's identity (Rosca 1998).

In STORY THREE, the parent has successfully broken into the Medical Profession and the child has ended her career. I reflect a **submission** to the patriarchy through the child's desire to 'stay at home' but also show a **resistance** to the patriarchy through the quiet, disappointed reservation of the parent as she listens to her child.

Filipinos are known to be hospitable, adaptable, and able to assimilate into the cultures of the countries they live in. Thankfully, they are slowly becoming aware of the fact that they suffer from an identity crisis due to the many years of colonialist ideology that still continue to pervade their culture today and will continue to reclaim some of their severed roots.

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