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10

SPA

Special Program in the Arts

Creative Writing

“Pasan Ko ang Daigdig”
Colonialism, Post-Colonialism,
and Contemporary Globalization

Quarter 1
Module 1



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“Pasan Ko ang Daigdig”
Colonialism, Post-Colonialism,
and Contemporary Globalization

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Writer

Title:

Creative Writing and the Literary Continuum

Change occurs on a continuum and does not move in a straight line.

—Sharon Weil, writer, director, producer

Topic:

“Pasan Ko ang Daigdig”/Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, and Contemporary Globalization

Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan, hindi makakarating sa paroroonan.

—an old Pinoy folk saying

Introduction and Objectives

feature-type illustration

Here's hoping you are safe and healthy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected our lives in more ways than one. We must cope in a world that no one had anticipated to change so much and so quickly. How we are now conducting school is one way to live up to this reality, and rise to the challenge.

This module for Creative Writing (Grade 10, Special Program for the Arts/SPA), the first of four parts, is intended to assist you to succeed in this course.

Please keep a journal of your writings. More than a requirement in this course, you need to keep track of your works as a student aspiring to become a writer. You will assuredly find it valuable in due time.

In your past SPA courses, you studied the various forms or genres of literary works which make up the general course called creative writing. Among these are the essay, short story, poetry, drama, and creative nonfiction. You have also learned their characteristics, elements, and development.

For the first quarter of your present SPA course, academic year 2020-2021, you must be able to:

1. write (a) literary critiques and (b) literary works in light of the Western colonial and post-colonial development of the Philippines and in the context of contemporary globalization; and
2. enrich the discoveries and learning points in this module by conducting research on specific problem areas and crucial issues of Philippine literature, particularly in the era of post-colonialism and contemporary globalization.

Content and Activities

Part 1: “Ganito Kami Noon”/Notes on Colonialism

Writers do not write in a vacuum. All artists, for that matter, create within and under the circumstances of their time and space. The past, too, has a great impact on the imaginative power of an artist and the unravelling of a narrative; it is what we call backstory in creative writing. This literary continuum we must understand is the development of Philippine literature. To best do it, we need to have a firm grasp of the history of the Philippines. It shall enable us to become not only good artists and writers, but good citizens in the same breath.

historical photos/supporting images

historical photos/supporting images

Western colonial development. In the Philippine context, Western colonial development refers to two specific periods in our history: Spanish colonialism, 1565-1898 —333 years; and US colonialism, 1898-1946 —48 years (inclusive of almost four years of the Japanese occupation, 8 December 1941-3 September 1945, during World War II).

Colonialism occurs when a foreign country invades another country or territory to dominate it physically and impose its rule against the will of the people being colonized. Colonizers employ violence and deception like what had been the curse that our forebears fought against. Over time, this is a fact that has been hidden by vested interests through historical revisionism.

Colonialism is the antithesis of self-development, independence, sovereignty, and the natural and human rights of a people forced to live under it.

Spanish colonialism crushed the seed of our indigenous development and supplanted it by a foreign civilization. The native inhabitants of our islands became subjects of the king of Spain but without the rights of its citizens.

Under US colonialism, we were compelled to abide by a policy called “benevolent

assimilation.” Filipinos were “tutored” by the Americans in the “the art of democracy and self-governance.” While all this may sound good and beneficial, everything came together with laws that severely punished dissent and opposition to US governance and the advocacy of independence or separation from colonial rule. The mere act of displaying the Philippine flag or symbols of the Katipunan, for instance, became punishable by a fine of five hundred to five thousand pesos (a huge amount in those days), or by imprisonment for three months to five years. In fact, by the end of the Filipino-American War, about 600,000 Filipinos lay dead, in Luzon alone, to America’s 4,234.

Postcolonial development and the contemporary times (1946-2020). By the end of WW II, or less than a year after the US recaptured the Philippines from Japan, it formally recognized Philippine independence on July 4, 1946. (The US Congress ratified the American Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.) In a grand ceremony suffused with drama, high officials of the two countries gathered at the Luneta (now Rizal Park) in Manila to witness the raising of the Philippine flag and the lowering of the US flag, with the two emblems meeting at half-mast. The event ushered in the turbulent post-colonial development of the Philippines, so turbulent that in 1962, or just 16 years past, the Philippine version of America’s 4th of July was changed to June 12, which was when Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo declared the independence of the Philippines from Spain—which was brutally quashed by the US. Henceforth, Philippine independence came to be celebrated not as decreed by the US but as proclaimed by the Filipinos in 1898.

historical photos/supporting images

historical photos/supporting images

Progressive historians like Teodoro Agoncillo, Renato Constantino, and Hernando Abaya were one in their critical presentation of the so-called US grant of independence to the Philippines. It was not exactly genuine. They didn’t call it fake news even if they explained it that way because in those days, the term had not yet been coined. But while the Philippine flag was allowed to fly alone, it was empty symbolism. (In a sense, artists must realize the impact of the technique on people’s consciousness.)

This was because the laws and agreements that were signed by the Philippines as preconditions to “independence” guaranteed that the country remained dependent on the US politically, militarily, and economically: then a direct colony, now a semicolony.

The Bell Trade Act provided for unhampered flow of US goods into the Philippine market, making the country a dumping ground for US products and a source of raw

materials such as sugar, coconut, abaca, and lumber for its production. Tied to the trade act was the Philippine Rehabilitation Act, which provided that the US pay for the damages incurred by the Philippines and its citizens in the war, but only if US citizens were allowed to enjoy the same rights as Filipinos in exploiting the country's natural resources, a sovereign right that was reserved only for Filipinos. The Military Bases Agreement decreed that the US could establish at least 23 bases of the US armed forces in the Philippines. The Military Assistance Pact assured that the US would have control of the Armed Forces of the Philippines through military "aid."

historical photos/supporting images

historical photos/supporting images

Philippine school curricula in all levels of education were patterned after the US model or otherwise guided by American advisers. It produced generations of Filipinos who grew susceptible to American goods and ideas, philosophy and taste, and hankering for the great American dream. Until the 1950s, Filipino school children were required to study US history, memorize the 50 states of America and their capital, and to sing the Star-Spangled Banner.

On the other hand, the situation also engendered a deep rethinking among progressive Filipinos in search of a national identity amid the deluge of Americanization. It eventually evolved into a counterculture that, by 1970, would erupt into a mass movement of protest and civil disobedience against a "semicolonial and semifudal" system.

Ferdinand Marcos, then already president for six years, declared martial law in 1972 and had a new constitution written that allowed him to stay in power for as long as he wanted. Philippine democracy, nurtured by the US, had become a military dictatorship. Through the years, the Philippines slid down from being Southeast Asia's second top economy to being the worst. The human rights situation was also at its worst. In 1986, Marcos was ousted in a massive outpouring of discontent called the EDSA Uprising. Far from being "a golden age," the martial law regime abetted massive human rights violations and the unprecedented plunder of the economy by Marcos and his cronies.

Corazon "Cory" Aquino, the widow of the martyred Sen. Benigno Aquino became the first woman president of the Philippines. She took on the daunting task of dismantling the infrastructure of the Marcos dictatorship and restoring the previous system.

The country has had 15 presidents, excluding Rodrigo Duterte. Each presidency

proclaimed a blueprint for change aimed at ending the cycle of mass poverty and corruption, among others. Each one, however, seemed one presidential term too far from the goal.

The age-old economic and sociopolitical problems have not only persisted, they have been topped by the Covid-19 pandemic that is now not only a public health crisis but also an economic crisis as Filipinos go hungry, unemployed, and desperate to survive. The new pandemic has exposed the old pandemics of Philippine society.

Anyway, granting 1946 as the year when the Philippines became a republic, the period amounts to a mere 74 years, as of 2020—74 years of post-colonial history versus 381 years of colonialism. What a long way to go. Today, the question still begs for an answer: Which way to go? This is a hard one, but it can be rendered less difficult, if we sincerely learn the lessons of history. Then we may become better writers, and in becoming so, better citizens.

As George Santayana (1863-1952), a Spanish-American essayist, poet, and novelist, said in his famous aphorism, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Part 1: Five Activities

To stress the continuum in the Filipino literary tradition, let us see how well you keep past lessons in mind.

1. Here is the Author’s Dedication in *Noli Me Tangere* (written 1886).

To My Fatherland:

Recorded in the history of human sufferings is a cancer of so malignant a character that the least touch irritates it and awakens in it the sharpest pains. Thus, how many times, when in the midst of modern civilizations I have wished to call thee before me, now to accompany me in memories, now to compare thee with other countries, hath thy dear image presented itself showing a social cancer like to that other!

Desiring thy welfare, which is our own, and seeking the best treatment, I will do with thee what the ancients did with their sick, exposing them on the steps of the temple so that everyone who came to invoke the Divinity might offer them a remedy.

And to this end, I will strive to reproduce thy condition faithfully, without discriminations; I will raise a part of the veil that covers the evil, sacrificing to truth everything, even vanity itself, since, as thy son, I am conscious that I also suffer from thy defects and weaknesses.

In the dedication, Rizal underscores his role as a writer in society. Is that role still valid or important today? In an essay, explain your answer. Use your journal.

2. Here, too, is the author’s dedication in *El Filibusterismo* (written 1891).

To the memory of the priests Don Mariano Gomez (85 years old), Don Jose Burgos (30 years old), and Don Jacinto Zamora (35 years old). Executed in Bagumbayan Field on the 28th of February, 1872.

The Church, by refusing to degrade you, has placed in doubt the crime that has been imputed to you; the Government, by surrounding your trials with mystery and shadows, causes the belief that there was some error, committed in fatal moments; and all the Philippines, by worshiping your memory and calling you martyrs, in no sense recognizes your culpability. In so far, therefore, as your complicity in the Cavite mutiny is not clearly proved, as you may or may not have been patriots, and as you may or may not have cherished sentiments for justice and for liberty, I have the right to dedicate my work to you as victims of the evil which I undertake to combat. And while we await expectantly upon Spain someday to restore your good name and cease to be answerable for your death, let these pages serve as a tardy wreath of dried leaves over your unknown tombs, and let it be understood that everyone who without clear proofs attacks your memory stains his hands in your blood!

Write a poem in any style about “the evil which (Rizal) undertake(s) to combat” and relate it to the present times. Use your journal.

Hernandez

3. Amado V. Hernandez (1903-1970) was a poet, short story writer, novelist, and journalist. On top of all that, he was also a labor leader. He was Red-tagged and arrested for being “a leader of the communist conspiracy that attempted to overthrow the government.” Charged with “rebellion complexed with murder, arson, and robbery,” he was imprisoned for five years and was eventually allowed to post bail. After 13 years of trial, the court decided that Hernandez was innocent: There was no such crime called “rebellion complex” of which he was being accused, in the first place. In 1973, irony of ironies, Hernandez was posthumously honored with the National Artist for Literature award by a government that was charging its citizens of rebellion right and left.

His best works, critics believe, had been written in prison.

In your journal, write a critique of the following poem, specifically relating it to the US occupation of the Philippines and to a writer’s nationalist fervor.

Kung Tuyo na ang Luha Mo, Aking Bayan

Amado V. Hernandez

Lumuha ka, aking Bayan; buong lungkot mong iluha
 Ang kawawang kapalaran ng lupain mong kawawa:
 Ang bandilang sagisag mo’y lukob ng dayong bandila,
 Pati wikang minana mo’y busabos ng ibang wika,
 Ganito ring araw nang agawan ka ng laya,
 Labintatlo ng Agosto nang saklutin ang Maynila.

Lumuha ka, habang sila ay palalong nagdiriwang,
 Sa libingan ng maliit, ang malaki’y may libingan;
 Katulad mo ay si Huli, naaliping bayad-utang,
 Katulad mo ay si Sisa, binaliw ng kahirapan;
 Walang lakas na magtanggol, walang tapang na lumaban,
 Tumataghoy, kung paslangin; tumatangis, kung nakawan!

Iluha mo ang sambuntong kasawiang nagtalakop
 Na sa iyo’y pampahirap, sa banyaga’y pampalusog:
 Ang lahat mong kayamana’y kamal-kamal na naubos,
 Ang lahat mong kalayaa’y sabay-sabay na natapos;
 Masdan mo ang iyong lupa, dayong hukbo’y nakatanod,
 Masdan mo ang iyong dagat, dayong bapor, nasa laot!

Lumuha ka kung sa puso ay nagmaliw na ang layon,
 Kung ang araw sa langit mo ay lagi nang dapithapon,
 Kung ang alon sa dagat mo ay ayaw nang magdaluyong,
 Kung ang bulkan sa dibdib mo ay hindi man umuungol,
 Kung wala nang maglalamay sa gabi ng pagbabangon,
 Lumuha ka nang lumuha’t ang laya mo’y nakaburol.

May araw ding ang luha mo’y masasaid, matutuyo,
 May araw ding di na luha sa mata mong namumugto
 Ang dadaloy, kundi apoy, at apoy na kulay dugo,
 Samantalang ang dugo mo ay aserong kumukulo;
 Sisigaw kang buong giting sa liyab ng libong sulo
 At ang lumang tanikala’y lalagutin mo ng punglo!

4. There's a story—and a history—behind every work of art. Here's a good example. Read the following piece and write your reaction in your journal.

The Marcos-era resistance poem that smuggled a hidden message into state media

The story of Pete Lacaba's "Prometheus Unbound," a poem in which the first letters of each line, when read downwards, spelled out a secret message for the resistance movement against the dictator.

By Paulo Enrico Melendez

The story takes place during one of the most tumultuous periods in our national history—it is therefore a complex one, with a degree of subjectivity to its beginning and end. Today it is the stuff of literary lore—cunning trumps censure—and like many legendary accounts, it is polished now from all the reverent handling.

One version of this story has us begin in 1973, a year after Proclamation 1081 was announced, placing the entire country under martial law, to the relief of citizens desperate for discipline. Crime was on the wane; peace was prime. Manila mornings were bright under Ferdinand Marcos' *Bagong Lipunan*, the reverent, mannerly new order keeping at bay the country's negative elements: hippies and pinkoes looking to make trouble, godless and lawless and just plain gross. At night, the city curled up under curfew with a justified willingness; if you were out late at night, after all, weren't you up to no good?

There was no opposition party to rock the boat, no independent judicial body to hamper the now free wheels of justice. Even the media muckrakers were in the sewers with the filth. Proper writers wrote for the government now, in proper consultancy positions, with the Army Office of Civil Relations making sure their work aligned with the Bagong Lipunan vision, from title to final full stop.

Which was exactly how state-allied editors found the poem "Prometheus Unbound". Written by one Ruben Cuevas and published by Focus Magazine, it was the myth of Prometheus picked up where Percy Bysshe Shelley left off. His avian tormentors about him, the titan finally escapes from the chains that bind him. Prometheus the populist, triumphant in the freedom previously denied him as the patron of craftsmen, the giver of fire to mortals.

With a classic motif, a politically moderate subject, elaborate rhyming couplets, and iambs as martial as goose steps in the grandstand, "Prometheus Unbound" represented all that was estimable under Marcosian poetics, the literary equivalent of crew cut hair and home by 21:00.

Sometime later, however, Focus staff were alerted to an alarming thing: "Prometheus Unbound" turned out to be an acrostic, in which the first letters of each line, when read downwards, spelled out a message different from that of the rest of the poem. The magazine's editor-in-chief was summoned for a reprimand by the press secretary himself as some sources recall; the literary editor was promptly sacked. The identity of Ruben Cuevas was investigated. And men in uniform rushed from newsstand to newsstand, pulling any remaining copies of Focus, that Marcos-allied publication which now carried the opposition's favorite slogan, chanted and printed alike at lighting rallies and on contraband manifestos, "*Marcos Hitler Diktador Tuta*".

The Switch

Our story's other version has us begin on January, 1970. Students and activists in Manila and the country's other urban areas were protesting a myriad of issues, from rights civil and human to women and worker. They decried the encroachment of the United States on the Philippines as a colonial influence, the continuing manipulation by a small oligarchy of the country's political and economic affairs.

Lacaba

Tensions rose, and in what is now known as the First Quarter Storm, clashes between protesters and the constabulary began in earnest.

At the front lines was a journalist named Jose Maria Flores Lacaba, known simply as Pete. The eldest of six children, Lacaba is Cagayan de Oro-born and Pateros-raised. A fan of local radio, Tagalog komiks, and the weekly *Balagtas*, Lacaba's class consciousness was tempered at an early age as a disadvantaged scholar surrounded by the rich students of Ateneo de Manila—a school he was forced to drop out of when his finances finally gave. "I was just 19 when I started writing for the *Free Press*, handling culture and the arts," he recounts to *Esquire*. It was the only job available to someone without

a college degree. The brutal dispersals he witnessed in the skirmishes of January 26 and 30 edged Lacaba ever closer to a critical stance against the regime and the system it perpetuated. A younger brother, Emmanuel, known to friends and family as Eman, would share with the elder Lacaba this political coming of age.

"In 1971, I began to take an active role in union organizing. When we lost our union's certification election, the whole *Free Press* staff resigned en masse." Lacaba, along with *Free Press* veterans Nick Joaquin and Gregorio Brillantes, started a new magazine, the *Asia Philippines Reader*. "We did our best to be balanced, but becoming politicized was unavoidable, especially after the Plaza Miranda incident," in which a Liberal Party campaign rally was bombed, killing nine and injuring 95 others.

Shortly after martial law was declared, Lacaba heard from relatives that a military unit had been looking for him at their family home in Pateros, a lucky break brought about by outdated intelligence, for Lacaba had since moved to Quezon City. Knowing that he was now a hunted man, Lacaba joined the underground press.

"Our publication was called *Taliba ng Bayan*," he says. It began as a monthly, mimeographed publication before the staff eventually found a sympathetic printing press. As a wanted man, Lacaba's movements were limited to the *Taliba*'s various underground houses—his younger colleagues, mostly members of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines, served as stringers. At length, one of these stringers told Lacaba that *The Varsitarian*, the student paper of the University of Santo Tomas, was interested in publishing his work, as long as it wasn't too radical.

"I thought about writing an acrostic, as I had written some of those before, for girls," he laughs. "A lot of anti-government acrostics were being published at the time too, in Tagalog. So I decided to do the same." Still on the move from one underground house to another, Lacaba composed "Prometheus Unbound".

Game With High Stakes

The poem makes multiple references, primarily the plays of Greek tragedian Aeschylus and English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. "I also wanted to refer to the famous painting by [Flemish artist] Peter Paul Rubens, hence my choice of pen name." Cuevas, on the other hand, was Lacaba's nod to the Philippine folk hero Bernardo Carpio, himself a titan, cursed by a shaman to be wedged under the mountains of Montalban, whose mere shrug of his mighty shoulders caused the earth to shake, and whose freedom will coincide with the liberation of the Filipino race.

"*Laro lang*," Lacaba says of the poem's composition. "The first line is a pun on 'Martial Law tonight'. And Mars isn't even a Greek god," he laughs.

Lacaba understood the risks that came with publishing the poem, however. Martial Law, after all, was just a little over a year old, and fear hung heavy in the air like a firearm's report in the small of dawn. When Lacaba sent the poem to *The Varsitarian*, he told the stringer to make the acrostic clear to the publication's editors. "The editors backed out," Lacaba says. "That's when I thought to send it to *Focus*. If memory serves, they were the only government-sanctioned magazine publishing literary works at the time. *At nakalusot naman*."

At What Price, Freedom

In April of 1974, Lacaba was finally captured, and was held at Camp Crame where he was routinely tortured. When his childhood pulmonary tuberculosis recurred, he was confined under heavy guard. He joined many other writers imprisoned by the state in camps all over the country, political captives whose biggest crime was to assume the responsibility of check and balance in a subdued society, who had absolutely no recourse for release while the writ of habeas corpus was suspended. They included Bienvenido Lumbera, Jose Y. Dalisay Jr., Ricardo Lee, Lilia Quindoza, Ed Maranan, Luis Teodoro, and Ninotchka Rosca, among many others. The list is long—and shameful.

That same year, Pete was visited by his younger brother, Eman, by then a celebrated poet himself. “*Hindi na ako makakadalaw*,” Eman said to Pete, who understood at once that his younger brother was about to go underground as well.

Lacaba was set free in 1976, after the intercession of Nick Joaquin, who had made the release a condition following his acceptance of the National Artist award. “As Nick told it, he approached [Juan Ponce] Enrile during the awards ceremony. While they were talking, Marcos overheard them, and assured them of my release. Sure enough, two days after, I was summoned by the head of the constabulary, Fidel Ramos,” Lacaba says. Lacaba was given a conditional release; he was required to report weekly to Camp Crame as proof that he was still above ground and in Manila. “And if I wanted to write, it had to be apolitical.”

It was during the meeting with Ramos that Lacaba was asked if he was related to a certain Manuel Lacaba, who was currently missing in Davao. “I told Ramos that there are many Lacabas in Mindanao. *Pero alam ko nang si Eman iyon.*” Eman was later found with three others in a shallow grave, his dead body bound and bearing signs of both summary execution and post-mortem mistreatment. His face was so disfigured that his mother would not have recognized him if not for his unique cluster of moles. One of Pete’s first acts as a free man, therefore, was to wait for the corpse of his murdered brother.

Fetters Over Servility

There are a number of ways to end this story as well. One is to recount that Lacaba moved on to write one master-crafted movie after another, most sounding off on social injustice at varying volumes. His screenwriting credits include *Jaguar*, *Boatman*, and *Sister Stella L*. Lacaba has written other seminal poems, as well, such as the seriously droll “*Ang Pagkain ng Paksiw na Ayungin*,” which walks the reader through a serving of sour broth fish.

Lacaba finally admitted to having written “*Prometheus Unbound*,” but well after Marcos was overthrown and Corazon Aquino took over. In that new, just, and free space, celebrated globally as the triumph of democratic will over ruthless suppression, Lacaba teamed with the formidable Lino Brocka to make *Orapronobis*. It is an emotional cauldron of a film, depicting a post-Marcos life in which change is slow to come for those on the fringes of Philippine society. *Orapronobis* was promptly censored. It was never commercially screened while Aquino was president. And Lacaba will never write another English poem.

Another way to end this story is to note that “*Prometheus Unbound*” is one of the earliest, and in the context of legal media, among the most resounding, psychological defeats ever handed to Ferdinand Marcos and his regime under Martial Law. Ruben Cuevas/Pete Lacaba and “*Prometheus Unbound*” prove that the dictator is fallible, his goons myopic, their strength and balance wanting on the uneven ground upon which a propaganda war is always waged.

“*Prometheus Unbound*” is a proud part of a century-old tradition of Philippine protest writing, which critics call the literature of circumvention. The practice goes back to the Propaganda Movement during the latter part of Spanish rule in the late 19th century, through the American Commonwealth era, and directly

leads to the late Sixties and the early Seventies with the rise of activism, up to the present. It is a tradition of wit and irony, allusion and allegory, satire and spoof: the go-to weapons in the arsenal of the unarmed.

“Prometheus Unbound” joins Bonifacio’s *“Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa”* and Mabini’s *“Perlas Kong Mahal,”* Claro M. Recto’s scorching nationalist polemics. The poem is in great recent company, too, from Linda Ty Casper’s novel *“Wings of Stone”*, which recounts the events that follow Ninoy Aquino’s Assassination; Jose Dalisay’s *“Killing Time in a Warm Place”*, a fictionalized account of activism during the Martial Law years; to F. Sionil Jose’s *“Viajero”*, an allegory of a society in crisis. Great company that forms one unbroken line, from Jess Santiago in 1970s, Bobby Balingit of *The Wuds* in 1990s, to the more recent firebrands of Einstein Chakras. The list is long, and, in the vibrant colloquial in which protest literature is spoken, *agit*.

This article was originally published in the September 2015 issue of *Esquire Philippines*. Minor edits have been made by the *Esquiremag.ph* editors.

5. Here now is the poem:

Prometheus Unbound

By Ruben Cuevas (Jose F. Lacaba)

*I shall never exchange my fetters for slavish servility.
‘Tis better to be chained to the rock than be bound to the service of Zeus.*

—Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

Mars shall glow tonight,
Artemis is out of sight.
Rust in the twilight sky
Colors a bloodshot eye,
Or shall I say that dust
Sunders the sleep of the just?

Hold fast to the gift of fire!
I am rage! I am wrath! I am ire!
The vulture sits on my rock,
Licks at the chains that mock
Emancipation’s breath,
Reeks of death, death, death.

Death shall not unclench me.
I am earth, wind, and sea!
Kisses bestow on the brave
That defy the damp of the grave
And strike the chill hand of
Death with the flaming sword of love.
Orion stirs. The vulture
Retreats from the hard, pure

Thrust of the spark that burns,
Unbounds, departs, returns
To pluck out of death’s fist
A god who dared to resist.

The poem is called an acrostic. Do you think you can make your own? Try it. Compose one using the name of your special someone.

Part 2: “Magsulat ay Di-biro”/Writing and Consciousness

After the bloodbath that was the Filipino-American War, the liberal environment fostered by the new colonizers worked to their advantage. It persuaded Filipinos to identify with their colonial design in the Philippines. It encouraged an increasing number of native intellectuals to pursue education as the path for personal advancement in society, economically and politically. Soon, Filipinos were eagerly learning how to write in English, and to be good at it.

Being good at writing—and at anything—is a process. As it turned out, the early Filipino writers in English “could not escape being imitative of American models... especially during (their) period of apprenticeship,” so observed Dr. Lilia Quindoza-Santiago. Works by early poets appeared as “imitations,” or “studied attempts at versification.” An example is an untitled poem written by Juan F. Salazar (published in the Philippines Free Press, May 9, 1909):

Vacation days at last are here,
And we have time for fun so dear,
All boys and girls do gladly cheer,
This welcomed season of the year.
In early June in school we'll meet;
A harder task shall we complete
And if we fail we must repeat
That self same task without retreat.
We simply rest to come again
To school where boys and girls obtain
The Creator's gift to men
Whose sanguine hopes in us remain.
Vacation means a time for play
For young and old in night and day
My wish for all is to be gay,
And evil none lead you astray.

Salazar

In fiction, “the period of apprenticeship in literary writing in English (was also) marked by imitation of the style of storytelling and strict adherence to the craft of the short story as practiced by popular American fictionists. Early short story writers in English were often dubbed as the Andersons or Saroyans or the Hemingways of Philippine letters.”

historical photos/supporting image

The rest in the cultural realm were not to be left behind. For instance, there were the Elvis Presleys and Paul Ankas and Frank Sinatras—all extremely popular American singers of the time—of Philippine music. And Filipinos really exerted their best to sound like the real McCoy. The mindset became so pervasive in the Filipino culture that a label had to be coined for it: colonial mentality.

But no matter. Filipinos writing in English came up to the standard. They became respected for their poetry and fiction that manifested “both skilled use of the language and a keen Filipino sensibility,” apart from challenging traditional literary norms and exploring literary forms. Major works took up serious themes on cultural identity and nationhood.

An unintended, but welcome, offshoot of the whole development was the flowering of creative writing in the native languages, such as *Tagalog*, *Iloko*, *Hiligaynon*, and *Sugbuanon*, among others. The more daring literary outputs, written in these languages, defied the safety of academic and philosophical inquiries and harked back to the patriotic ideals of the revolution.

Part 2: Activity

“Wanted: A Chaperon” is a popular one-act play written in 1940 by Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero (1911-1995). It was directed by the author when it was first performed on November 21, 1940.

Guerrero was the most prolific playwright of his generation writing in English, having written more than 100 plays. In 1997, he was posthumously conferred the National Artist for Literature award.

Read Guerrero’s “Wanted: A Chaperon.” Based on your impression of the play, write a skit on the clash of cultures and values between you and, say, your grandparents or parents. Use your journal.

Wanted: A Chaperon

By Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero

To the memory of Amalia B. Reyes

Characters

Don Francisco (the father)

Doña Petra (the mother)

Nena (their daughter)

Roberting (their son)

Doña Dolores

Fred (her son)

Francisco (the servant)

Pablo (the mayordomo)

Guerrero

Time: One Sunday morning, at about eleven

Scene: The living room, simply furnished; a window on the right; at the rear, a corridor; a door on the left, sofa, chairs, etc., at the discretion of the director

When the curtain rises, Don Francisco, about sixty, is seen sitting on the sofa, smoking a cigar. He wears a nice-looking lounging robe. Presently, Roberting, his twenty-year old son, good-looking, well-dressed, enters. He wants to ask something from his father, but before he gathers enough courage, he maneuvers about the stage and clears his throat several times before he finally approaches him.

Roberting. (*clearing his throat*) Ehem—ehem—ehem!

Francisco. (*looking up briefly*) Ehem.

Roberting. Father—

Francisco. (*without looking at him*) What?

Roberting. Father—

Francisco. Well?

Roberting. Father—

Francisco. Again?

Roberting. Well, you see it’s like this—

Francisco. Like what?

Roberting. It’s not easy to explain, Father.

Francisco. If it isn’t, then come back when I’m through with the paper.

Roberting. Better now, Father. It’s about—money.

Francisco. Money! What money?

Roberting. Well, you see—

Francisco. (*imitating his tone*) Well, you see—I'm busy!

Roberting. I need money.

Francisco. (*dropping the paper*) Need money! Aren't you working already?

Roberting. Yes, but—it isn't enough.

Francisco. How much are you earning?

Roberting. Eight hundred, Father.

Francisco. Eight hundred! Why, you're earning almost as much as your father!

Roberting. You don't understand, Father.

Francisco. Humph! I don't understand!

Roberting. Don't misunderstand me, Father.

Francisco. Aba! You just said I don't understand—that means I'm not capable of understanding. Now you say not to misunderstand you—meaning I'm capable of understanding pala. Make up your mind, Roberting!

Roberting. You see, Father, what I'm driving at—I—I want—er—I want—my old allowance.

Francisco (*jumping*) Diablos! You want your old allowance! You're working and earning eight hundred, you don't pay me a single centavo for your board and lodging in my house—and now you're asking for your old allowance!

Roberting. I have so many expenses, Father.

Francisco. How much have you got saved up in the bank?

Roberting. How can I save anything?

Francisco. So you have nothing in the bank! What kind of gifts do you give your girlfriend?

Roberting. (*embarrassed*) I—I—

Francisco. Flowers? (*Roberting nods.*) Twenty-or thirty-peso flowers? (*Roberting nods again.*) *Que hombre este!* When I was courting your mother, I used to give her only mani or balut.

Doña Petra, about fifty-five, enters and catches his last words.

Petra. Yes, I remember quite well, If you only knew what my mother used to say after you gave me *mani* or *balut*. "*Ka-kuriput naman!*" she'd say.

Francisco. Pero, Petra, this son of ours is earning eight hundred. He doesn't give us a centavo for house expenses, and on top of that he's asking for his old allowance. Where in the world have you heard such a thing?

Petra. I know a place where the children work and don't give their parents any money and still ask for their allowance.

Francisco. Where?

Petra. In the Philippines.

Francisco. Aba! How ilustrada you are, Petra!

Petra. (*To Roberting.*) You're not going to get a centavo.

Roberting. But, Mother—

Petra. If you've no money to ride in a taxi, take a jeepney.

Roberting. Jeepney to visit a girl! Ay!

Petra. (*imitating him*) Ay what?

Roberting goes out mumbling.

Petra. (*calling*) Francisco!

Francisco. Ha?

Petra. I'm calling the servant!

Francisco. Demontres with that servant! Having the same name as the owner of the house!

Petra. I'm going to kick him out soon. He broke your plate again.

Francisco. Again! I don't know why he always breaks my plates. He never breaks your plates, or Roberting's, or Nena's. No, he breaks only my plates?

Francisco the servant, enters. He is a dark, tall, thin boy. He looks foolish and is. He has his mouth open all the time.

Servant. Opo, *señora*.

Petra. Did you make that sign I told you?

Servant. The one you told me to make?

Petra. (*emphatically*) Of course!

Servant. The one you told me to write: "Wanted: a Muchacho?"

Petra. (*irritated*) Yes, Don Francisco!

Francisco. Ha?

Petra. I'm talking to the servant. Well, did you do it?

Servant. No, *señora*. I didn't make it yet.

Petra. And why not?

Servant. I forgot how it should be worded. I suddenly remember now.

Petra. *Que estúpido! Hala*, go out and make it immediately!

Servant goes out.

Francisco. Where's Nena?

Petra. Asleep in her room.

Francisco. At this time? It's eleven o'clock.

Petra. Anyhow it's Sunday.

Francisco. Has she heard Mass?

Petra. I suppose she did at four.

Francisco. And so Nena went to the party last night without a chaperon?

Petra. It was the first time.

Francisco. I hope nothing happened.

Petra. What could have happened? We discussed this already yesterday.

Francisco. Yes, I know, but imagine a Filipino girl going to a party without a chaperon.

Petra. After all, she didn't go out with Fred alone. She went with her friends, Lolita and Luding.

Francisco. Yes, those two girls, since they arrived from abroad, they've been trying to teach our daughter all the wrong things they learned from those places.

Petra. Wrong things? Ay, you exaggerate, Francisco!

Francisco, the servant enters with a sign in his hands.

Petra. Are you through with that? So soon?

Servant. I finished it last night, *señora*.

Petra. Last night!

Servant. *Opo, señora*, but I forgot where I placed it.

Petra. *Estúpido itong taong ito!* Let me see it. (*She takes hold of the sign, reads aloud.*)
Wanted: A Muchacho. All right, hang it out there at the window.

The Servant hangs it outside the window sill but with the sign facing inside.

Petra. I said outside—not inside!

Francisco. Ay, Francisco, he had to be my namesake!

The Servant, after placing the sign, stays by the window, making signs and faces to somebody outside.

Petra. As I was saying. Francisco—

Francisco. Were you talking to me, Petra, or to the servant?

Petra. *(addressing the Servant)* Francisco! What are you still doing here? Go back to the kitchen!

Servant goes out.

Francisco. You were saying, Petra—

Petra. As I was saying, I think you're being very unfair to Nena. After all, she's grown up.

Francisco. Petra, my dear, virtue is ageless.

Petra. I know that, Francisco, but chaperoning is rather old-fashioned.

Francisco. Old-fashioned, maybe, in some other civilized countries.

Petra. But isn't the Philippines civilized?

Francisco. In many ways, yes, but in some ways it's uncivilized.

Petra. Ay, Francisco, if Saturnino Balagtas, our great patriot, should hear you now!

Francisco. Where did you get the idea that Balagtas' first name is Saturnino? You mean Francisco.

Petra. Saturnino, Francisco, both end in o.

Francisco. Yes, that's why when you call out my name, Francisco the *muchacho* rushes in.

Petra. Anyhow our women can take care of themselves.,

Francisco. Are you sure?

Petra. Especially if they've received an education. For instance, our Nena is in her senior year in education at the University of Santo Tomas. She's even taking some courses in home economics.

Francisco. I suppose that makes her immune from any moral falls.

Petra. Moral falls, Francisco! Ay, *que exagerada naman tu!* No, what I mean is that Nena is better educated and more enlightened to take care of herself.

Francisco. *(annoyed)* This Petra *naman!* You don't see the point. Education, even a university education, with all the letters of the alphabet after a graduate's name—AB BSE, LLB, PhD, is not moral education. Training the mind is not training the heart.

Petra. But if the mind is trained, why, the heart will be ruled by the mind.

Francisco. No, Petra, if a person is intellectual, it doesn't *ipso facto* make him moral.

Petra. *Ipsa facto.* That's very deep for me *naman*, Francisco.

Francisco. Very deep! Our daughter Nena will fall in deep water if you don't watch out!

Petra. *(exaggeratedly, just like a woman)* Ay, you're so apprehensive, Francisco.

Servant. *(rushes in)* Did you call me, señora?

Francisco. *Hoy* you!

Servant. Yes, *señorito*.

Francisco. I'm married to the *señora*, therefore I'm not the *señorito* anymore, bu the *señor*, understand?

Servant. Opo, *señorito*.

Francisco. I'm going to change your name. From now on you'll be called Francis.

Servant. Francis, *po*?

Francisco. Yes, Francis, understand?

Servant. Why not Paquito, *señor*? Or Paco or Francisquito?

Francisco. Because I don't want it! Now get out!

Servant goes out. Roberting comes in.

Roberting. Father, I couldn't get a taxi.

Francisco. Your mother told you to take a jeepney.

Roberting. But I'm visiting my girlfriend.

Francisco. Visiting girls at this time of the day? It's nearly lunch time.

Roberting. She called me up. She says I must see her, right away. It's very important.

Francisco. Roberting, you went to the party last night?

Roberting. Yes, Father, with Lia.

Francisco. You went to the party unchaperoned?

Petra. Does Roberting need a chaperon?

Francisco. I'm not talking about Roberting! I'm talking about the girl he took out!

Petra. Well, if you're going to lose your temper, I might as well be in the kitchen. (*She goes out.*)

Roberting. Yes, Father.

Francisco. Yes, what?

Roberting. I took Lia to the party alone.

Francisco. You young modern people. Do you realize that in my time when I was courting your mother, her father, her mother, her three sisters, her young brother, her grandmother, five first cousins and two distant relatives sat in the sala with us?

Roberting. But why so many, Father?

Francisco. Because in those days we were more careful about a woman's reputation.

Roberting. But in those days—

Francisco. Don't tell me those days were different. Outward things change, like the styles of women's dresses and men's ties, but the human heart remains the same.

Roberting. But in other countries, Father—

Francisco. There you go, in other countries. The Philippines is different, my son. Our climate, our traditions, our innate psychology—all these make our people different from foreigners.

Roberting. But my girlfriend has studied abroad—Columbia University *pa*. Filipino girls who have studied in other countries acquire the outward customs and mannerisms of people with traditions and temperament different from ours. But a Filipino girl can't easily change her temperament. It is inborn.

A knock is heard.

Francisco. Somebody's at the door, Francisc—er—Francis! Francis!

Roberting. Who's Francis?

Francisco. The servant. I gave him a new name. (*Calling again.*) Paquito! (*No answer*) Francisquito!

The Servant appears. Francisco stares at him.

Servant. Yes, *señorito*.

Francisco. No, no, my son Roberting here is the *señorito*, but I'm the *señor*! See who is knocking. Tell him to sit down.

Servant goes out. Roberting and Francisco go to their rooms. Presently Servant comes in, followed by Pablo. He is a fat, dark fellow. He is all dressed up—wears a tie and everything. He smokes a cigar. Pablo and the Servant stare at each other, the Servant open-mouthed as usual.

Servant. What do you want?

Pablo What do I want? Haven't you got any manners?

Servant. I said whom do you want to see?

Pablo. Why don't you speak more dearly?

Servant. What shall I tell the owner of the house?

Pablo. Who's the owner of the house?

Servant. The *señora*, of course.

Pablo. Why, is she a widow?

Servant. Not yet.

Pablo. Tell your *señora* I want to see her.

Servant. Which *señora*?

Pablo. How many señoras do you have In this house?

Servant. There's *Señora* Petra, *Señorita* Nena—

Pablo. *Gago!* Call *Señora* Petra then.

Servant. *Opo.* Sit down. Here are some cigars.

Servant goes out. Pablo, looking about, gets one cigar—then a second—when about to get a third, Petra comes in.

Petra. Yes?

Pablo. Good morning.

Petra. Good morning.

Pablo. I saw t hat sign at the window.

Petra. Yes?

Pablo. It says "Wanted: A Muchacho."

Petra. Why, yes. Are you by any chance a detective?

Pablo. (*giggling*) You flatter me, *señora!* A girl told me me that I am very good-looking.

Petra. Really? That is very interesting.

Pablo. Women sometimes tell the sweetest lies.

Petra. Do you mind if—

Pablo. Of course I don't mind. Go ahead and ask any questions.

Petra. Do you mind if I ask what I can do for you—

Pablo. (*blushing*) I'm applying—

Petra. Applying for what?

Pablo. (*after mustering enough courage*) I'm applying for the job!

Petra. What job?

Pablo. (*pointing at the sign outside, significantly*) That.

Petra. (*looking towards the sign and at Pablo; incredulous*) You mean—

Pablo. (*joyfully*) Yes, I'm offering my services!

Petra. You mean—you wish to be a *muchacho*?

Pablo. I wish you wouldn't be so insulting, *señora*, but I want to be what they call in Europe a *mayordomo*.

Petra. A what?

Pablo. A *mayordomo*. You know—

Petra. Oh. You mean—?

Pablo. Yes, that's what I mean.

Petra. (*after giving him a dirty look*) Well, for a minute I mistook you for an *hacendero* or a movie actor.

Pablo. That's right. I don't look like a *muchacho*—er—*mayordomo*. My mother always used to say I would amount to something. (*Cupping his hand towards Petra's ears.*) Confidentially, my mother wanted me to marry one of the president's daughters.

Petra. President's daughters? You mean the president of the Philippines?

Pablo. Yes, why not? Is there anything wrong in that?

Petra. And you wish to work here as a—er—as a *mayordomo*?

Pablo. That's it!

Petra. What can you do?

Pablo. I can watch the house when you're out, accompany the children, if you've any, to the movies or to parties.

Petra. What else?

Pablo. I can do many other things. I can even sing.

Petra. Never mind your social accomplishments. What's your name?

Pablo. I was baptized Marcelino, but my mother calls me Pablo because I remind her of her brother who spent two years in jail. But my friends that is, my intimate friends, call me Paul.

Petra. I'll pay you eighty pesos, including board and lodging.

Pablo. (*jumping*) I'll take the job!

Petra. (*standing up and looking at him frigidly*) Good. You can start by washing the dishes.

Pablo. The dishes! But it's time for lunch. Haven't the dishes you used for breakfast been washed yet?

Petra. No, because our servant Francisco always breaks the plates. So I told him this morning after breakfast not to wash them yet.

Pablo. I wish I had come after the dishes had been washed.

Petra. All right, ask Francisco for instructions.

Petra goes out. Pablo lights a cigar and throughout the following scene drops the ashes everywhere. Francisco enters.

Francisco. Oh, good morning. Have you been waiting long?

Pablo. (*staring at him insolently*) No, I just talked to the *señora*.

Francisco. Oh, yes. why don't you sit down?

Pablo. I will. (*and sprawls Cleopatra-like on the sofa*)

Francisco. Did you come on some business?

Pablo. Business? Oh, business of a sort.

Francisco. That's good.

Pablo. That's a nice lounging robe you're wearing.

Francisco. You like it?

Pablo. I certainly am going to buy one exactly like that.

Francisco. Thank you. Imitation, they say, is the subtlest form of flattery.

Pablo. Of course mine will be more expensive.

Francisco. Undoubtedly. You must be a man of means.

Pablo. Of means? Well, sort of—hmm, I wonder what's delaying Francisco.

Francisco. Francisco? I am Francisco.

Pablo. (*laughing*) You are Francisco?

Francisco. Yes.

Pablo. Well, if you're Francisco, the señora told me to ask you for the instructions.

Francisco. Instructions? What kind of instructions?

Pablo. I suppose she meant the instructions for washing the dishes and all that sort of thing.

Francisco. (*puzzled*) Dishes—all that sort of thing? What do you mean?

Pablo. Aren't you the servant here?

Francisco. (*flabbergasted*) Servant! I am the owner of the house!

Pablo. (*jumping*). Oh—the owner! Excuse me! (*gliding away*) I suppose this is the way to the kitchen! (*He runs out to the kitchen.*)

Francisco. Petra! Petra!

He exits. Petra enters and arranges the chairs. Nena comes in. Nena is about eighteen, and she's wearing a nice-looking pair of slacks. She obviously has just risen from bed for she keeps yawning atrociously.

Nena. Where's the Sunday paper?

Petra. Oh, so you're awake. How was the party last night?

Nena. (*sitting on sofa*) So-so. Mother, where's the movie page?

Petra. Probably your brother Roberting is looking at it.

Francisco enters.

Francisco. You're awake at last. Have you had breakfast?

Petra. Breakfast when it's nearly twelve?

Francisco. How was the party?

Nena. So-so.

Francisco. (*looking for cigars on the table*) Aba! Where are the cigars, Petra?

Petra. Why, I placed half a dozen there this morning!

Francisco. Half a dozen! I've smoked only one so far!

Petra. I wonder.

Francisco. Hmm—I'm wondering, too!

Nena. (*standing and yawning*) I'm still sleepy.

Francisco. Wait a minute, Nena. Sit down.

Nena. What is it, Father?

Francisco. So you went to the party alone last night?

Petra. This Francisco naman! I told you she was out with Fred.

Francisco. Anyhow I hope that's the first and last time you go to a party unchaperoned.

Nena. But there's nothing wrong, Father. After all I'm an educated girl. (Nena yawns so desperately that she looks like an acrobat.)

Petra and Francisco stare at each other.

Petra. Yes, Francisco. She can take care of herself. Can't you see she's educated?

Francisco gulps and wonders if his wife is crazy. Roberting enters.

Roberting. (*to Nena*) So you're awake! How was the party last night?

Nena. So-so.

Francisco. Why are you here?

Roberting. I couldn't hire a taxi. No money.

Petra. I told you to take a jeepney.

Roberting. Anyhow I can see her this afternoon. Incidentally, I met Fred's mother a short while ago.

Nena. Fred's mother?

Roberting. She was near Martini's taxi station.

Petra. What were you doing at the taxi station?

Francisco. Trying to get a taxi on credit, I suppose.

Roberting. Anyhow Fred's mother—

Nena. What about her?

Roberting. She said she was coming today.

Petra. What for?

Roberting. She didn't tell me.

Francisco. Fred's mother? You mean the young fellow Nena went out with last night?

Roberting. Yes, Father.

Nena. Did she say why she was coming?

Roberting. No. But she seemed sore at me. In fact she seemed sort at you, too, Father.

Francisco. At me?

Roberting. (*imitating Dolores' voice*) She said, "Tell your father Kiko I'm going to see him!"

Francisco. She called me Kiko?

Roberting. Yes—

Francisco. Didn't she say Don Kiko at least?

Roberting. No. She simply said Kiko.

Francisco. Aba!

Pablo's head is seen sticking out by the door.

Pablo. (*shouting at the top of his lungs*) Dinner is served!

Francisco. Hay! Don't shout that loud!

Pablo exits.

Roberting. Who's he, Mother?

Petra. The new *mayordomo*.

Roberting. Mayor what?

Petra. He's the new servant!

They all go out. But Nena lingers for a while, and there's an expression of worry on her face. Then she exits. Pablo and the Servant come in.

Servant. *Hoy!*

Pablo. What do you mean hoy? My name is Pablo. You may call me Paul.

Servant. My name is Franciscão. The *señor* calls me Francis, but I prefer Paquito. I once had another amo who used to call me Frankie.

Pablo. What do you want?

Servant. The señora wants you in the dining room.

Pablo. What for?

Servant. To serve the dishes.

Pablo. That's your job. I'm not a *muchacho*! I'm a *mayordomo*!

Servant. Didn't you answer that sign over there at the window—"Wanted: A Muchacho"?

Pablo. Yes, why?

Servant. Then you're a *muchacho*, like me!

Pablo. (*threatening him with his fist*) I want you to understand that I am not a *muchacho*!

Servant. Hal You look like a common *muchacho* to me.

Pablo. (*threatening him with the cigar he holds*) Don't let me catch you using that word again!

Servant. *Soplado!*

Petra enters.

Petra. What are you two doing here? Don't you know we're already eating?

Pablo and Servant go out. Presently Nena comes in and goes to the window. She sees somebody coming, and runs out. Several knocks are heard. Pablo is seen crossing the corridor. Then Pablo enters first trying to cover his face, followed by Doña Dolores, a fat arrogant woman of forty, wearing the Filipina dress and sporting more jewels than a pawn shop. Her twenty-year-old son Fred follows her. Fred is so dumb and as dumb-looking nobody would believe it. Pablo is still trying to hide his face.

Dolores. (*fanning herself vigorously*). Where's Doña Petra?

Pablo. She's eating. Sit down.

Dolores. Call the señora—and mind your own business! (recognizing him) Che! So it's you! You—you! Working here! How much are you earning?

Pablo. (*insolently*) Why?

Dolores. After treating you so well at home as a *muchacho*, now you come to work here without even leaving me a farewell note. Che!

Pablo. (*with arms akimbo*) I'm not a *muchacho*! I am a *mayordomo*!

Dolores. *Mayordomo! Mayor tonto!* Che! I

Pablo, who is now all sprinkled with Dolores saliva, gets his handkerchief. Petra and Francisco enter.

Petra. You may go, Paul.

Dolores. Paul?

Pablo leaves.

Petra. Good morning.

Francisco. You wanted to see me?

Dolores. Yes! You and Petra!

Petra. Won't you sit down?

Dolores. I'd rather remain standing! Che?

Francisco. This—this is your son Fred, I imagine.

Dolores. Don't imagine—he is my son!

Petra. Ah! So he is your son!

Dolores. Supposing he is—what's that to you?

Francisco. I was just thinking he doesn't look a bit like you.

Dolores. Certainly not. He's the spitting image of my third husband!

Petra. Do sit down.

Dolores. Are you trying to insult me by implying I've no chairs at home? Che!

Francisco. What can we do for you?

Dolores. (*pointing to Fred*) Ask him!

Petra. What is it, Fred?

Fred. (*pointing to his mother*) Ask her!

Francisco. Speak up, my son!

Dolores. Your son!. Your son, eh? So you and your daughter Nena have designs on my son, eh? Well, you won't hook him!

Petra. What are you talking about?

Francisco. Call Nena! (*aloud*) Nena! Nena!

Roberting appears.

Francisco. Roberting, call Nena!

Roberting goes out.

Francisco. If you don't mind, I will sit down.

Petra. I will sit down, too. I'm tired.

Fred tries to sit down, too, but his mother yanks him out of the chair. Nena, wearing a sports dress, comes in, followed by Roberting.

Francisco. Nena, this lad wants to talk to you.

Dolores. (*nudging Fred*) Tell her!

Fred. Tell her what?

Petra. What is all the mystery about?

Dolores. (*ominously*) My son—and your daughter.

Francisco. They went to the party last night, didn't they?

Dolores. Of course they went to the party. But how did they go?

Francisco. Has your son a car? Maybe they went in his car.

Dolores. My son has a car, and it's all paid for. But that isn't the point!

Francisco. What's the point then?

Dolores. That's what I came to find out!

Petra. Nena, what happened?

Nena. Happened?

Dolores. Yes, last night!

Nena. What happened?

Dolores. I'm asking you!

Petra. What happened, Nena?

Nena. Why, nothing, Mother.

Petra. Nothing?

Nena. Nothing, Mother.

Dolores. Nothing, che! A girl going to a party unchaperoned and nothing happened!

Petra. What really happened, Nena?

Nena. (*approaching Dolores and practically screaming at her*) Nothing happened and you know it!

Dolores. Che! How dare you shout at me!

Fred. Don't talk to my mother like that, Nena!

Nena. (*approaching Fred*) Bobo! *Estupido!* Standing there like a statue!

Fred. Statue? What statue?

Nena. The statue of a dumb bell, dumb bell!

Fred. *Gaga!*

Roberting. (*approaching Fred and holding him by the neck*) Hey, you! Don't start calling my sister names!

Fred. She started it!

Petra. (*approaching Dolores*) Your son took my daughter out to the party last night.

Dolores. Why do you allow your daughter to go out alone?

Fred. Nena insisted there was nothing wrong! But my intuition told me it might be wrong.

Dolores. Shut up, Fred!

Fred. Why, mama?

Dolores. (*to Petra*) Why do you allow your daughter to go out alone with my respectable son?

Nena. What's respectable about him?

Dolores gives her a poisonous look.

Dolores. People saw them come and go unchaperoned. Yes, unchaperoned! Imagine—imagine a girl going to a party alone!

Francisco. (*advancing*) She was with your son, wasn't she?

Dolores. Unfortunately!

Francisco. Then if my daughter was with your son, what danger was there?

Dolores. People are talking about last night --

Petra. But what happened?

Dolores. (*to Fred*) What happened, Fred dear?

Fred. (*tearfully*) Nothing, mama!

Dolores. Try to think! Something must have happened!

Fred. Nothing. nothing!

Dolores notices that the group's hostile eyes are fastened on her.

Dolores. (*pinching Fred, but hard*) *Torpe!*

Fred. (*twisting in pain*) *Aruy!*

Dolores. You—you—you son of my third husband! Why didn't you tell me nothing happened?

Fred. I've been trying to tell you since this morning, but you gave me no chance.

Embarrassed, Dolores tries hard to regain her dignity.

Francisco. (*approaching Dolores*) You mean to tell me you came here and raised all this rumpus when nothing, absolutely nothing, happened?

Dolores. Well! I wouldn't be too sure about absolutely nothing! Besides, I have to be careful—yes, very careful—about my beloved son's upbringing.

Francisco. Your son! Your son is very stupid!

Fred. What!

Dolores. My son, stupid!?

Petra. (*shouting*) And definitely!

Francisco. As stupid as you are!

Dolores. As me?

Petra. And positively!

Fred. (*approaching Nena*). It's your fault!

Nena. What do you mean my fault, dumbbell!

Fred. I'd slap your face if I weren't a gentleman.

Roberting flies across the stage and faces Fred.

Roberting. I'll slap you even if Mother says I'm no gentleman at times!

Dolores. (to Roberting) Don't you dare touch my son! Che!

Nena. (to Dolores) You can have that human jellyfish! Coming here to say what might have happened! (Nena grunts so savagely that Dolores retreats in terror.)

Dolores. (to Francisco) You should advise your daughter to stop going to parties unchaperoned! People gossip and include my son!

Francisco. Mind your own business! (raising his fist to her head) Tell your son to stop looking dumb!

Dolores. Che! I never saw such people, che!

Francisco. Get out of here before I call the police!

Fred. The police! Mama, the police!

Dolores. We're going, che!

Petra. Paul! Paul!

Francisco. Who's Paul, Petra?

Pablo appears.

Pablo. Yes, Don Francisco?

Petra. Paul, kindly escort these—these people to the door!

Francisco. Roughly, Paul, roughly!

Dolores. (facing Pablo). *Canalla!* (to Petra) I suppose you enticed my *muchacho* to come here!

Pablo. (Touching Dolores on the shoulder). Hoy, I am no *muchacho*! I'm a *mayordomo*! Furthermore, Doña Petra gives me eighty pesos a month while you used to give me fifty pesos only!

Dolores. Eighty a month! Where will they get that much!

Petra. Doña Dolores! *Dolores de cabeza!*

Dolores. Eighty a month! Che! (Going to the door.) Che! (Turning again.) Che! (She comes back to recover her son who has remained like a statue.)

Petra. Can you imagine! The insolence! Che!

Everybody stares at her.

Francisco. That's what Nena got for going out unchaperoned. I was already telling you,

Petra—

Petra. How could I know this Dolores would make all that awful fuss?

Roberting. You want me to break Fred's neck?

Francisco. You should have done that when he was here. Your muscle reflexes are tardy in working, my son.

Roberting. (unconsciously) Che!.

They all look at him. Nena has sat on the sofa and begins to cry.

Petra. Don't cry, Nena. It's over.

Nena. (between sobs) Making all that fuss for nothing! The truth is that I quarreled with Fred during the party and left him.

Petra. Left him! Where did you go?

Nena. I came home with Luding and Lolita. Fred's mother had been trying to interest me in her son—that's why—he told his mother—and—

Francisco. *Ay, hija mia*, go in now and let this be a lesson to you.

Nena. (*as she's near the door—unconsciously*) Che!

They all stare at her and at each other.

Petra. Finish eating, Roberting.

Francisco. Incidentally, Roberting, I hope nothing happened with you last night.

Roberting. Last night?

Francisco. You went out with Lia, didn't you?

Roberting. Yes, but nothing happened—I think.

Petra. You think!

Pablo comes in, smoking a cigar.

Pablo. I escorted them out already, *señora*. What do I do now?

Petra. You may wash more dishes.

Pablo. Ha? (*He is about to go.*)

Francisco. Hoy! Where did you get that cigar?

Pablo. Ha? Er—why, somebody gave it to me.

Francisco. Who?

Pablo. Francis, *señor*.

Francisco. So! *Mayordomo* smokes owner's cigars. Owner kicks *mayordomo* out. (*He makes a gesture of kicking Pablo, but the latter runs outside into the street.*)

The Servant is seen coming in from the corridor. He disappears and comes back with a coat which he throws out of the window.

Servant. Hoy—your coat! *Mayordomo—mayor yabang!*

Petra. Get back to the kitchen, Francis!

Servant. Am I still the servant here, *señora*?

Petra. Yes, I suppose we'll have to bear with you for a while.

Servant. I won't have to put out the sign anymore—"Wanted: A Muchacho"?

Francisco. No! Make another and put "Wanted: A Chaperon"!

Petra. Wanted a Chaperon?

Francisco. Yes, for our daughter Nena.

Petra. *Que verguenza!* I, her mother, will chaperon Nena (*She stares out the window. She sees somebody coming.*) Roberting! Roberting!

Roberting appears.

Roberting. What is it, Mother?

Petra. (*pointing outside*) Isn't that your girlfriend, Lia?

Roberting. Why, yes?

Petra. And who is that old man along with her?

Roberting. (*swallowing*) That's—er—that's her father!

Petra. And he's carrying something!

Roberting. Yes—yes! He's carrying—a gun!! (*running outside*) Tell them I'm out!

Francisco. Ay, Petra! We need two chaperons! Che!

Petra stares at him.

Curtain

Part 3: “Paano Kayo Ngayon”/Contemporary Philippine Literature

Philippine literature today is the continuing response of creative writers to history and their times. In the book *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology* (Lumbera and Lumbera), the authors explain how the response became a turning point in our contemporary literature.

In the 1950s, cultural and philosophical trends in the US continued to influence Filipino intellectuals and writers through direct interaction, books and magazines, television, movies, and the like. Existentialism drifted across the seas and agitated Filipinos both writing in English and the native languages. Existentialism is a philosophical framework that says that an individual exists as a free and responsible agent and must, therefore, determine his or her own development through acts of his or her own free will. One's existence is not, and must not, be determined by anything and anybody.

Through their works, writers looked for answers about their existence, life and the meaning of it all. It was a search for identity and for their role in society. Some found answers that satisfied them. Some continued to grope in the nothingness of their being. And there were those who realized that the right question was not simply about a personal identity but about an identity for the nation of which they were a part.

By the 1970s, the question about our national identity and the role of art and literature had been fairly resolved: There is no “art for art's sake, art can never be neutral or apolitical, art must serve society and the people.”

Part 3: Activity

Bautista

The following poem is lifted from Amado V. Hernandez' “*Isang Dipang Langit*,” written in the Muntinlupa penitentiary in 1952. The translation is by Cirilo Bautista (1941-2018), poet, critic and writer of nonfiction. In 2014, Bautista also became a National Artist for Literature awardee.

Here's your activity: It has been said that so much of the original is inevitably lost in translation. In a two-page review, compare the original with the translation in terms of form and content.

Mula sa “Isang Dipang Langit”

Sa munting dungawan, tanging abot-malas
ay sandipang langit na puno ng luha,
maramot na birang ng pusong may sugat,
watawat ng aking pagkapariwara.

Sintalim ng kidlat ang mata ng tanod,
sa pintong may susi't walang makalapit;
sigaw ng bilanggo sa katabing moog,
anaki'y atungal ng hayop sa yungib.

Ang maghapo'y tila isang tanikala
na kala-kaladkad ng paang madugo
ang buong magdamag ay kulambong luksa
ng kabaong waring lungga ng bilanggo.

From “An Armstretch of Sky”

From the narrow window cell all I can see
is an armstretch of sky full of tears,
A meager cover to a wounded heart,
A ghastly emblem of my falls and fears.

Sharp as lightning are the eyes of the guard,
Nobody dares approach the padlocked door,
The prisoner’s cry in the nearby cell,
Sound like an animal’s desperate roar.

The whole day is like a heavy chain
Dragged by a pair of bloody feet,
The whole night is a mournful veil,
On the prisoner’s sepulchral retreat.

Part 4: In the Here and Now

What happens *when* and *where* we live, be it a neighborhood, *barangay*, town or city, province, region, and country, affects *how* we live. Some events could be big, and we are affected in a big way. But some big events might not affect us as much. In the same way, little events could have a big impact on us, or perhaps none at all, or so we might think.

Technology, literature, and the arts. Happenings far away and wide apart could affect us in many ways. This is especially true in the present times when a technological revolution in communications or information technology has supposedly torn down boundaries among the countries of the world and connected time lines. It ushered in the era of computerized globalization. With just a finger’s click, we are able to know what is happening in Japan, Syria, Nigeria, Italy, or in Washington, DC. Amazing. As Bob Dylan croons in an iconic song of old, “for the times, they are a-changin’.”

Bob Dylan who? What song, please, is that?

historical photos/supporting images

Fat chance you’d know Bob Dylan or his songs. But then again, because of that awesome revolution, you can simply google him—but sorry, that can only happen if you have the gadget and the internet connection.

So Bob Dylan is a complete alien to you and is past, while Google is everywhere and is present—again, sorry, it is not exactly always true in the Philippines where connectivity is a national malady.

Speaking of past and present, anyway, don’t we *Pinoys* have a nice *kasabihan* about it? “*Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan.*” Shades of George Santayana, right? Over time, however, generations of Filipinos have lost touch with it. Now it has even been transformed into “*Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan, may stiff neck.*”

We laugh upon hearing the “new” *kasabihan*, or feign a smirk if it sounded corny.

Either we find it funny or whatever. Now we’re talking of jokes. There are good jokes, corny jokes, bad jokes. Are you going to laugh at jokes done in bad taste?

Now we are talking of values.

History, culture, and values. Somewhere in your previous courses in creative writing, you learned about values in literature, or why, for instance, the legends and myths were important for the inhabitants of these islands still without a name. You studied literary works written about, and during, the war, or the peace. The cold facts in history books are made warm and alive in the poetry and stories and plays. We welcome history beyond the accounts. They are enriched by the creative values that keep us enlightened. This is how literature and the arts promote culture and advance our heritage to where we must be—*sa tamang paroroonan*.

Notice the word that has been inserted: *tama*, correct. So there is a right way and a wrong way to promote our culture and advance our heritage?

Again, in the book *Philippine Literature / A History and Anthology*, the authors say that Philippine literature “developed as an alternation of assertion and acquiescence by Filipino creative (writers).” Assertion means affirmation of the rights to be free from foreign rule and other hindrances to human development, while acquiescence means submission to them.

Underscoring the importance of history, the book further says, “To show the interplay between colonial strategy and Filipino response is to unlock Philippine literature so that it would yield insights into our history, our culture, and perhaps even our national psyche.”

Globalization. This is a buzzword in contemporary human development, even as historians insist that the word and the idea is as old as history itself. For our purposes, our immediate concern is globalization that is driven by great discoveries in the information technology, or simply put, computers “to store, retrieve, transmit, and manipulate data or information.” The term globalization became increasingly popular in the early 1990s.

It has been said time and again that there are no more boundaries separating the countries of the world due to interdependence of economies and cultures. The world has become one open human community where countries big and small can participate in commerce and trade, science and education, sports and entertainment.

But here’s the rub: It presupposes that the playing field is level where every player, be he a big capitalist country or a small underdeveloped country, has a fair and equal chance of making it. Obviously, this is not the case.

Globalization is a complex issue. It presents advantages and disadvantages for each country. Needless to say, the more we know about these, the better we can make it work for us and our people, since in the advent of computerized globalization, there is no turning back.

feature-type artwork

Part 4: Activity

Choose a world or local event within the contemporary times (starting in 1945) that had a big impact on the Philippines, for example, World War II or martial law in 1972. Then imagine an intimate story happening in the womb of that big event. In Filipino or any Philippine language of your choice (not English this time), write a few pages of a personal diary entry dramatizing that intimate story. Remember to stick to that intimate story utilizing the big event as context. Use the present tense.

As you well know, when writing a diary entry, you are talking to yourself or to a very close someone personified by the diary. Use your journal.

Part 5: Emotion, Language, and Counting

The activity in Part 4 seems difficult, weird even, for how can anyone write something personal about an event that happened half a century or decades before one was even born? The answer is by diligent research and the application of the creative imagination which creative writers—precisely because they are creative—must aim for.

In the words of National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin (describing what a journalist aka creative writer ought to accomplish), you must put your reader right on the scene: The reader must “feel the weather, smell the mood, see the clothes and faces, hear the talk.” It is called “(communicating) the emotion, even the meaning, of what’s happening, even without having to spell it out.”

This part of our module tackles two important items: emotion and language.

The senses and the emotion. There is a key word: emotion. Theater professor Alexander Dean says, “The purpose of all art is to arouse the emotions” (of the reader, or the audience). And also, “to make us think profoundly” or deeply. Dean is careful to explain that the feeling and the thinking must come hand in hand.

Before your art work can make that happen, however, you, the artist/writer, must first be aroused, excited, or otherwise deeply inspired by the idea of the art work in-the-making.

English and the Filipino. English was the key that unlocked the door for Filipinos to enter the world of Western civilization. As “pacification” took over the land and the last of the Filipino freedom fighters were disarmed and executed, a growing number of the Filipino intellectuals immersed in “the Anglo-American modes of thought, culture and life ways.” In the process, there came the inevitable clash of cultures in a transforming society. (Anglo-American means originating in England and the United States.)

On the strength of the US policy that widely encouraged the use of English by the colonial subjects, English defined one’s prospects for personal and professional advancement. It also became the language of government, sciences and the academe, and big business. Soon, English versus Filipino became a burning debate among Filipinos. It demonstrated the clash of cultures that also defined the development of art and literature in the Philippines.

But to many a Filipino, English was a blessing because in the global competition of empires and superpowers, it was the *lingua franca* of world commerce and trade, education, science and technology, politics and international relations, and art and literature.

Here’s your activity: Write an English version of your diary entry, which could be a translation of your original, or entirely different, but built on the same incident.

By now, you have already done some substantial writing and your journal should be a portfolio of pride.

That writing is not easy for many people is a fact. But that it can be made less difficult is also a fact. If writing by itself requires an extra effort, what more if you are doing it in a borrowed language?

For starters, you must have a good command of the language, whatever it is; then you strive to improve until you excel. It is one of the basic rules for aspiring writers. To have an excellent command of a language, you must develop an extensive vocabulary and master its grammar, idioms, and nuances.

Consider these, too:

1. Language is cultural. You are a Filipino and you speak and write best in a language in which you were born and raised. Whether *Tagalog* or *Binisaya* or *Bikolnon*, it is the one you are most at home with.
You may learn a second language. The degree of your familiarity with, and proficiency in, that language may or may not equal your ability to speak and write in your first language.
2. Language is social, meaning, people communicate with each other by following a set of language rules that they have socially or collectively agreed upon through their usage over time; it is not ordered by one or two authorities.
3. Language is dynamic. It changes, grows, evolves. The language of Shakespeare or our very own *Balagtas* is not the language that we easily understand today, yet in their times, it was not a problem.
Time was when sweetheart or a romantic other half was *kasintahan*; then it became *karelasyon*; now it is *jowa*. Is there a newer term?
4. Language is symbolic, and that is the beauty of it.

Part 5: Two Activities

1. Analyze your personal diary entry according to the emotion standard; or you may want to ask a friend/s: Has your work expressed a strong emotion? Write your assessment; and then, rewrite your personal diary entry. But keep the original, do not erase it.
2. Briefly, write about your experience in writing the two versions of your diary entry by comparing what you went through in the two instances.

Consider the following:

- content –you had no personal knowledge of the event that you wrote about about; how did you go about it
- Language –you had to write the diary entry in two language versions; was one version easier to do than the other; why

Part 6: “Pagdating sa Dulo”/Notes on Globalization

Following is an article taken from a four-part essay titled “When did globalization begin? The answer might surprise you” by Vanshika Kant. In the introduction, she says:

Globalization is as old as mankind itself. Since the beginning of recorded time, key actors such as rulers, adventurers, traders and preachers have travelled in a bid to expand their political power, enhance their quality of life, proselytize their faiths or simply quenching the human thirst for curiosity. Through myriad encounters, interactions and clashes, they exchanged four key ingredients: people, ideas, commodities and capital. Through the lens of four globalization stories, we will deconstruct and decode the link between these different stakeholders and factors.

Here is the last of the four globalization stories written by Vanshika Kant. It is subtitled “The sun never sets on the British Empire (1600-1950)”.

Last but not least, we come to capital. The age of empires can be divided into old and new imperialism. The former refers to early expeditions undertaken by western nations between 1450 and 1750, undertaken for “God, gold and glory”, and focusing mainly on systems of trade. New or high imperialism, which came afterwards, was the search for fresh lands to conquer in the late 19th century. Britain’s colonies in Africa, Asia and South America provided neverending supplies of men, money and raw material for fuelling their domestic industries, and ready-made markets for their manufactured goods. It was no coincidence then that Britain’s industrial revolution occurred during its imperial expansion; they were two sides of the same coin.

This “age of gadgets” was a result of myriad causes. Processes such as the Renaissance and scientific revolution provided the perfect setting domestically. Inventions by the Arabs and Chinese in the East—printing, gunpowder, porcelain, spinning machines, the compass, the stirrup and the blast furnace—were being perfected in the West. Nevertheless, there were three Cs—the discovery of coal, the creation of colonies and the production of cotton—that disproportionately tilted the geopolitical and economic balance towards the West. Rather than European exceptionalism, the events revolving around these three empowering Cs were pivotal for the British Empire’s primitive accumulation of capital.

historical photos/supporting images

Part 6: Activity

Here’s your activity: Determine the connection between the globalization of the present times and Western colonialism of the old times in the Philippines. Write a one-two page balagtas or rap about it. Use your journal.

Part 7: It’s a Wrap, for Now

1. Write either a poem or flash fiction with one of the two quotations below as your message or content.
 - a. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
 - b. “To show the interplay between colonial strategy and Filipino response is to unlock Philippine literature so that it would yield insights into our history, our culture, and perhaps even our national psyche.”
2. Have you been interviewed on camera? Have you been in a panel of resource persons replying to questions before an audience? In either situation, you cannot stammer or speaking endlessly. Time—and poise—is of the essence. Among your classmates, organize a panel of creative writers and conduct a brilliant webinar. You aim to prove that you are not among the writers who are better read than heard. The following are what you need to answer in two minutes per question.
 - a. Writers have a role in society. What is it?
 - b. Colonialism is the antithesis of self-development, independence, sovereignty, and the natural and human rights of a people. What does it mean?
 - c. Write down your thoughts on globalization.
 - d. What are your thoughts about language?

- e. Emotions are crucial for a work of art to communicate what it wants to share with an audience. In fact, theater professor Alexander Dean says, “The purpose of all art is to arouse the emotions” (of the reader, or the audience). And also, “to make us think profoundly” or deeply. Dean is careful to explain that the feeling and the thinking must come hand in hand.
- Of those that you have written for the first quarter, which do you think has been most effective, and least effective, in terms of emotions?
- f. Before your art work can make that happen, however, you, the artist/writer, must first be aroused, excited, or otherwise deeply inspired by the idea of the art work in-the-making. Agree or disagree? Why?

Notes to the Learner (And to the Teacher, As Well): By Way of an Assessment

Feynman

Richard Feynman (1918-1988) was an iconic American theoretical physicist who was widely regarded as the most brilliant and influential, and iconoclastic figure in his field in the post-World War II era. For his works in quantum electrodynamics, Feynman received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965, together with Julian Schwinger and Shin’ichiro Tomonaga.

His philosophy as a teacher is best captured in this quotation of his own which appeared as a meme in a Facebook account:

The goal of teaching should not be to help the students learn how to memorize and spit out information under academic pressure.

The purpose of teaching is to inspire the desire for learning in them and make them able to think, understand and question.

In view of our teaching-learning process so far, have you been inspired enough to want to learn, think, understand, and raise questions?

Now, what are your questions—about history, literature, creative writing, about anything that you think is related to our course? Don’t be shy, don’t be afraid. Say it straight. Enumerate as many and explain why you are raising the questions. Use your journal.

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