

**Forum Kritika:** Reflections on Carlos Bulosan and  
Becoming Filipino

## **EXCAVATING THE BULOSAN RUINS: WHAT IS AT STAKE IN RE-DISCOVERING THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST WRITER IN THE AGE OF US GLOBAL TERRORISM?**

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### **Abstract**

Based on research in the unpublished papers of Sanora Babb at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, this essay uncovers new information about Bulosan's relations with Sanora and her sister Dorothy Babb, the two American women who virtually "made" him into a writer. Given his intimacy with both women, active in leftwing and Communist Party activities in Los Angeles during the formative years of Bulosan's life, as well as his association with leftist union leaders in Seattle, Bulosan's radical affiliations are no longer in doubt, even without FBI documentation. Apocryphal Bulosan manuscripts such as *All the Conspirators* are bound to emerge since the whole colonial and neocolonial contexts of Bulosan's genealogy are usually ignored by those applying an immigrant-success-story framework (practically all would-be Bulosan experts). Hence the need to revalidate the focus on his full-length novel *The Cry and the Dedication* and his links with Amado V. Hernandez and the progressive national-popular movement (Huks) in the Philippines as a US colony and neocolony.

### **Keywords**

Framework of intelligibility for Bulosan's ethico-political project, Immigrant assimilationist paradigm in Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies, Sanora Babb archive – Harry Ransom Center Library at the University of Texas, US-Philippine colonial and neocolonial relations

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**NUMEROUS FILIPINO-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS IN CALIFORNIA** celebrated the signing of Assembly Bill 123 by Governor Jerry Brown on October 2, 2013. Sponsored by Rep. Rob Bonta, the bill required the State curriculum to include the contributions of Filipino-Americans to the labor movement. Without legislative action, the role of Filipino farmworkers in social change would languish in oblivion. Rep. Bonta's gesture is one sign of the attempt to remedy the historical amnesia suffered by the whole community since the demise of the anti-US-Marcos dictatorship movement (1972-1986) and, coeval with the civil-rights crusade, the triumph of white-supremacist neoconservatism and authoritarian neoliberalism.

Few survivors of that epoch can recall the unswerving itinerary of racial and national awakening. One decisive event resurrected the "forgotten" Manongs. Led by Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz, the 1965 Delano Grape Strike sparked the radicalization of young Filipino-Americans first mobilized by the civil-rights and anti-Vietnam war struggles. By the early seventies, the second generation of Filipinos born before and after World War II had discovered the writings of Carlos Bulosan. In turn Bulosan led them to Andres Bonifacio, Rizal and the 1896 revolution against Spain up to Macario Sakay, the Colorums and Sakdalistas, Luis Taruc and the Huk rebellion. In the process they encountered the essays of Renato Constantino and Jose Maria Sison, and the works of Amado V. Hernandez and other "subversive" artists.

In due course, Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, long out of print since 1946, was reprinted in 1973 with a memorable introduction by Carey McWilliams, a friend of Bulosan and a well-known labor historian. It has since become a canonical "required reading" in literature courses. The first substantial collection of Bulosan's writings appeared as a special issue of *Amerasia Journal* (Vol. 6, No. 1) in May 1979, followed in 1995 by my edition of the writings in *On Becoming Filipino* and the major novel *The Cry and the Dedication*, both published by Temple University Press. A collection of hitherto unpublished stories by Bulosan which I edited, entitled *The Philippines Is in the Heart*, was published by New Day, Quezon City, in 1978 (soon to be reissued by University of San Agustin Press, Iloilo, Philippines).

Over 41 years now have passed since my book *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle* was published in 1972 by the University of the Philippines Press, a few weeks before Marcos declared martial law. It escaped the dictator's censorship, blessed by the patronage of Dr. Salvador P. Lopez, then president of the University of the Philippines. Lopez is by consensus the major progressive critic of the Philippine Commonwealth and the prime moving spirit behind the Philippine Writers League. Since then, the major scholarly commentary on Bulosan that helped substantiate the generic legitimacy and ethico-political cogency of Bulosan's achievement is Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front* (1997). Denning's intervention relocated Bulosan from the limited, claustrophobic precinct of ethnic testimony into the site of popular-democratic/socialist culture with profound global, cross-cultural implications.

This is not to say that Bulosan's discovery as an ethnic "minority" author was cooptative or even reactionary. Its historical context preserved the dialectical-materialist vitality of its national/local roots. Aside from the strategic use of Bulosan made by political groups and cultural activists such as the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP), Revolutionary Union, West End Press, and others, the dissemination of his writings by academics (via the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, among other channels) raised the civic and political consciousness of the larger community. For example, the anthology *Letters in Exile* (1976), edited by Jesse Quinsaat, Henry Empeno, Vince Nafarrete, Lourdes Pammit, Jaime Geaga and Casimiro Tolentino, connected scholarly inquiries with ongoing communal projects such as the cooperative building of Agbayani Village for retired "Manongs" and the emerging controversy surrounding the International Hotel in San Francisco, California.

Directly inspired by the Bulosan rediscovery, *Letters in Exile* rectified the recurrent "post-colonial" *tabula rasa*. Its inclusion of the path-breaking essay on "The First Vietnam: The Philippine-American War of 1899-1902" by Luzviminda Francisco was an index of the deeper understanding that the Philippines was for a long time a violently subjugated colony of the United States, and then a genuine neocolony since nominal independence in 1946. Celebrated "Filipino" fugitives from the Spanish galleon trade who settled in French Louisiana were colonized Indios, not migrant Filipinos, contrary to Fil-Am nativists.

Filipinos from 1899 up to 1946 were colonial subjects or wards, not citizens, and even though, in 1934, the physical transplanting of these colonized subalterns was restricted to fifty bodies per year, the Philippine Commonwealth remained a full-fledged US colony with US troops stationed in numerous military bases (Clark and Subic bases were closed only in 1992). Nonetheless, neocolonialism survived and is thriving well in the islands (thanks to the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement recently signed between the US and the Aquino regime) that Bulosan fled from in 1930 and tried to return to via prophecy and remembrance.

## Subjugation Unspeakable and Invisible

Generations of scholars have labored to convert the colonized subjects into immigrants resembling the conventional type of Irish, Swedish, Italian, German, Russian, and other European groups. Scholars such as H. Brett Melendy, Emory S. Bogardus, Bruno Lasker, up to Antonio Pido, Ronald Takaki, Elaine Kim, Barbara Posadas, Yen Le Espiritu and others, have foisted the idea that Filipinos were immigrants from the time they were recruited to the Hawaii plantations up to the granting of nominal independence to the Philippines in 1946 (this framework vitiates such books as *The Filipino Americans* edited by Maria P. Root; and publications by the Filipino American National Historical Society). Such formulaic

distortions remain the staple themes of Filipino-American celebrations to reaffirm the virtue of their 200% Americanization.

The obsessive fix on pacified Filipino “wards” as bonafide immigrants persists, perhaps in the hope that we might be given “preferential treatment.” After all, we’ve been here before other Asians (such as the Chinese coolies recruited by antebellum Southern plantation slave-owners). What’s more ridiculous is that some argue that Filipinos who escaped from the Spanish galleons and settled in Louisiana between 1565 and 1811 were the first Filipino immigrants to the US (see De la Cruz and Baluyut 33; on Lafcadio Hearn’s account of Filipinos in Louisiana, see San Juan, “Internationalizing the US Ethnic Canon” 322-24). It may be instructive to remind them that Louisiana was not part of the United States until that territory to which it belonged was purchased in 1803; and Louisiana was not admitted to the Union until 1812. If Filipinos were indeed bonafide immigrants, then they would have suffered the immigration restrictions such as the one imposed on the Japanese by the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1908 and the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 (Reimers 6-7). But they were not. In truth, they were subjugated indigenes of the annexed territory of the Philippine islands formerly “owned” by Spain but sold to the United States for twenty million dollars in 1898.

Colonialism’s profound impact involves not only those directly interpellated by its ideological state apparatus, but also those intending to interrogate and challenge it. Even the skeptics ironically reinforce the stereotype. This failure to understand why the Filipino is not an immigrant to the US national territory until 1946 explains the habitual reflex of putting Bulosan in the same category as John Okada, Hisaye Yamamoto, Theresa Cha, Ronyoung Kim, Maxine Hong Kingston – archetypal models of immigrant success. The chief culprit might be the popular anthology, *Aiiieeee!* (first published in 1974 and reprinted several times), which lumped Bulosan together with icons of successful assimilation or adaptation.

Even a sympathetic critic such as Sam Solberg fell into this trap, although he discerned already the problematic resolution of contradictions (between democratic ideals and racist reality) in Manuel Buaken’s *I Have Lived with the American People* published two years after Bulosan’s allegorized testimonial chronicle of Filipino lives. Solberg’s hope of Filipino writers (such as Jose Garcia Villa, Bienvenido Santos, N.V.M. Gonzales, etc.) joining others in weaving the “heroic epic” of the search for Filipino in Filipino-American experience virtually privileged the American scene over the colonial experience as foundational and definitive for the colonized/neocolonized artist (58).

Examples of the immigrant paradigm’s disabling impact may be cited here. The American critic Leonard Casper opined that Bulosan “is more likely to be remembered exclusively as a teller of comic tales” (68), if not as an alleged plagiarist or leftist sympathizer. Even the aspiring Bulosan expert Licerio Lagda (1990), who had been coaxed into becoming the purveyor of dubious manuscripts, could not hide his sense of superiority over Bulosan’s messy life. And when Lagda endorsed

P.C. Morante's philistine scorn for pedantic Marxists presumably belaboring the humor in *The Laughter of My Father*, we know the enemy can sport friendly masks. In contrast to those patronizing attitudes, Leigh Bristol-Kagan is exceptional. She hopes that Bulosan's project of empowering Filipinos to learn from their singular colonial ordeal of suffering and resistance can engage Americans themselves to understand "what might be needed to change the course of our own history" (10-11).

We confront the revenge of the rejected metanarrative even before postmodernism has fully taken over. The immigrant-assimilationist paradigm becomes the Procrustean bed into which Bulosan's texts are forced, thus producing symptoms of incoherence, dissonance, and duplicity. The equivocating narrative voice or shifting point of view in *America Is in the Heart* attracts the most complaint, as repeated by Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Hirabayashi in their 2014 introduction to a reprinting of the book. Such aberrations could have been resolved beforehand by learning from the lesson of Denning's critical strategy of foregrounding the generic latitude of "popular-front" discourse which allows for such dialogism, as already anticipated by W.E.B. Du Bois's famous trope of double-voiced personas in *The Souls of Black Folk* and other slave narratives of education and collective identity-transformation. Dialogism entails a dynamic interface among authorial voice, narrative focalizer, and ironic ventriloquist.

## Unravelling the Contradictions

The existence of ambiguities, sudden mutations of focalizers and registers, and paradoxical mix of subversion and affirmation of "Americanism" pervade Bulosan's texts. Some have tried to elucidate these discordant traits (including Bulosan's uneasy attitude to women) as due to feudal practices of clientelism, reciprocity, the influence of the *pasyon* and other historic legacies. There is partial validity to these claims. On the whole, the colonized psyche (as Fanon, Memmi and others have noted) manifests symptoms of the schizoid, disintegrated psyche. Those features have been noticed long ago by Petronilo Daroy who judged that Bulosan's work "lacks formal coherence" and confidence because of the "social conflict of which Bulosan was a participant" (206). But if Bulosan's texts simply mirrored their empirical conditions of possibility, they would all be perfectly understandable on first reading and would require no additional gloss or metacommentary.

The problem of such misconstruals stems from the complex articulation of aesthetics and politics in literary practice. Assuming then that the textual ideology attempts to resolve real contradictions in an imaginary way (Balibar and Macherey 1996), this intent is due to the peculiar mode in which Bulosan's language and its formal models interpellate the individual readers/audience into popular-front (not socialist or purely Marxist) subjects. In short, Bulosan's textual praxis cannot but produce the effects traceable to the dynamic convergence of multidimensional contradictions at every conjuncture of the class struggle (Lecerle 2009). What

we discover in both formal structure of the texts and the variable reader-response or reception experience cannot be accounted for simply by psychological or sociological speculation, but by an elucidation of the dialectical manner in which the text, ultimately the entire Bulosan corpus of texts, registers the sociopolitical contradictions and endeavors to resolve them successfully or not in the formal architectonics of his art. This mode of dialectical analysis might help mediate the usual ambiguities into intelligible patterns of conduct, the goal of hermeneutic inquiry.

## Framing the Ethico-Political Project

To be sure, Bulosan was not trying to mystify his readers. He provided a glimpse of his writerly strategy in the essay “How My Stories Were Written” (included as an appendix to my 1972 book). He fabricated composite characters and mixed happenings so as to produce a kind of pastiche, an orchestration of heterogeneous voices: “. . . I humanized my legendary and folktale characters, so that reading them, it would be impossible to determine which is fact and which is the flight of imagination” (“Carlos Bulosan” 139). We can also detect the style of simply recording events serially, capturing discordant impulses and incompatible moods and tonalities, as witness the phantasmagoric scenes in “The Time of Our Lives” (1979, 127-32) and “To a God of Stone” (1979, 61-68); and in the kaleidoscopic sequence in “Life and Death of a Filipino in America” (1982, 50-54). The gallery of acquaintances named in his correspondence, as well as the topics addressed in the letters (in Dolores Feria’s collection, “The Sound of Falling Light”) provide an idea of Bulosan’s horizon of experience (both actual and vicarious) that might help disabuse us of the imputed peasant naivete and the hypothesized decline of his powers in the decade before his death on September 11, 1956.

A foretaste of this quandary may be found in the rich, densely textured history of Filipino transplantation into the West Coast and Hawaii by Carey McWilliams in his 1942 book *Brothers Under the Skin*. McWilliams describes the convulsive reshaping of the Filipino collective psyche under American colonial rule, a recasting whose depth and scale practically all the elite scholars are unable to fathom. Even though gestures acknowledging colonial and imperialist “brainwashing” abound in Takaki’s or Sucheng Chan’s history, or in Yen Le Espiritu’s recent study of Filipino identity formation, the blind-spot of the immigrant paradigm remains. For example, Le Espiritu’s concluding observations confirm my suspicion that US imperial domination of the neocolony has been erased by the sly shift to privileging “relations *within* racially-defined groups,” so that even the proliferation of organizations in the Filipino community serve to promote “multiple levels of solidarity” (43). This shift sidetracks the fact of Filipino national subordination to the imperial metanarrative and its white-supremacist imposition of structures and mentalities on the colonized life-world.

What's more reprehensible is the hegemonic erasure of power inequality and ethical disjunction. At the expense of subjection by nationality, race or ethnicity, the elements of class (narrowly defined in an economic sense) and diasporic status serve not only to disguise the asymmetric relation between US hegemony and Philippine neocolonial position, but also assert their equality or parity. In short, the Philippines is a sovereign nation-state with rights or powers equal to those of the United States, or to Japan, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and so on (for examples, see Lowe 1991; Okamura 2003). By this technique of deconstructive heterogenizing of the group, the ethnic/national subject becomes metaphysical, close to Maria Root's stunning performative decolonizing of the Filipino-American as "a state of mind rather than of legality or geography" (xiv). Wild psychological speculation finally trumps historical inventory and empirical fallibilist discrimination.

In a rigorous accounting, Filipinos were not immigrants (in the strict sense of citizens from genuinely sovereign nation-states) when they worked in the Hawaiian plantations as recruits, or joined the U.S. Navy. Nor were they immigrants servicing the Alaskan canneries or West Coast agribusiness. Strictly speaking, they became colonial migrants in 1934, and then later as neocolonialized migrants in 1946. To circumvent the racializing irony of extolling Bulosan as an ethnic and even diasporic author of recalcitrant texts, we can call him an exile or expatriate. This is Oscar Campomanes's (and other scholars') mode of compromise, enabling them to connect Bulosan with refugees from the Marcos dictatorship such as N.V.M. Gonzales, Bienvenido Santos, Ninotchka Rosca, and others (curiously, Jessica Hagedorn is not included in their list). But there is the implied belief that colonizer and colonized can mutually aid each other in a transnational exchange, assuming a symbiotic relationship that can grasp fully "the whole spectacle of their transhistorical movements and displacements" (72). No need to question the supremacy of English or the literary/artistic canons of the profit-centered marketplace. The Filipinos in the United States are flourishing with their exilic sensibility and horizontal comradeships, as Benedict Anderson suggests, profiting from the blessings of the pluralist neoliberal marketplace.

This twist in academic prejudice revives the metaphysics of cultural pluralism as an apology for empire. It may explain the popularity of the theatrical staging of Bulosan's story, "The Romance of Magno Rubio" as I noted in my 2008 re-appraisal of the Bulosan canon and critical responses so far in the post-9/11, post-Cold War atmosphere. Indeed, racial and ethnic misunderstandings have become pretexts for delightful reclamation of cultural pluralism, the good old slogans of the Popular Front. At least, however, this may remedy the sidetracking of Bulosan for the recent voguish appeals of Hagedorn, Apostol, and other mass-media celebrities hawking commodified spectacles.

## From Exile to Transmigrants and Planetary Citizens?

At this juncture, we may be past the threshold of postmodernist theories of transnational migrants, cosmopolitan cyborgs, and other weird disguises of the postcolonial subaltern released from metanarratives, totality, identity politics, national liberation struggles, and antiglobal capitalism *tout court*. Indeed, we have entered the millennium of total surveillance, the shock doctrine of torture, drone killings, and other technocratic digitalized folkways. We have entered the stage of nascent barbarism and ecological meltdown.

Meanwhile, we owe it to our colleagues Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Hirabayashi that we now have a new Carlos Bulosan to spend long academic conversations: the FBI suspect, the would-be communist fellow-traveler or Oriental terrorist. The FBI files sent to our colleagues were heavily censored and blacked out. However, a few facts are clear: the FBI spied on Bulosan during the last five years of his life, from 1951 to 1956, during the height of McCarthy witchhunting against suspected members of the Communist Party USA, their fronts and sympathizers.

Based on doubtful inferences, Alquizola and Hirabayashi conclude that Bulosan became an FBI informant, in other words, he voluntarily gave information about himself because “given that Bulosan knew the FBI was looking into the matter, and given that as a Filipino national he could be deported back to the Islands if it was determined that he was a bona fide Party member, Bulosan himself wanted to be on the record denying that he had ever been a member of the Party” (45). This is an inference worth pondering, symptomatic less about Bulosan than about our academic anxieties and idiosyncrasies.

It is doubtful that Bulosan did what he was alleged to have done, in my view, for the following reasons. We all know that Bulosan expressed several times in writing that he was not afraid of being accused as a Marxist, subversive or radical writer. He worked closely with left-wing friends of Sanora Babb in Los Angeles in the thirties up to the end of his life. In a letter dated December 7, 1935 to Sanora, he wrote: “I have become a communist” (Babb 1928-2005), a statement which, however, does not prove that he enlisted in any communist party.

It is clear in his letter to Florentino Valeros (dated January 17, 1955) that Bulosan was confident that the ILWU Local 37 and its lawyers would be able to successfully fight the Walter-McCarren Act. He already reported that “Filipinos are not deportable, no matter what crime they have committed, so long as they came to this country as permanent residents before the passage of the Philippine Independent Act” (1960, 271). In the ILWU Yearbook for 1952, Bulosan openly attacked the Philippine government for its repression of the left-wing poet Amado V. Hernandez and editorialized on the neocolonial State’s terrorist response to the Huk rebellion. He did not conceal his commitment to socialist, proletarian principles.

It is possible that Bulosan met Hernandez during Hernandez's visit to the United States in 1948 (Torres-Yu xxx) to confer with American trade union leaders. Bulosan might have discussed with Hernandez the release of Luis Taruc's book, *Born of the People* (published in 1953 by International Publishers, not Monthly Review Press). Together with W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson (who wrote the "Foreword") and other Communist Party members or affiliates, Bulosan signed a letter soliciting support for the publication of Taruc's book (later revealed as written by the American William Pomeroy, a key intellectual functionary of the Philippine Communist Party at that time). This and other facts too numerous to include here indicate that Bulosan was not so isolated or frightened that he had to mollify the FBI so as to function effectively and fulfill his union and civic responsibilities. He worked intimately with Ernesto Mangaong and Chris Mensalvas (an old friend since the thirties), the two union officials seriously threatened with imprisonment and deportation for their alleged communist leanings (de Vera 1-25). Bulosan never squealed nor renounced his socialist convictions and proletarian allegiance. If anything at all, the FBI files on Bulosan reveal the indiscriminate way the agency stigmatized and threatened ordinary civilians who were either active in the legal union struggles or supported movements to protect immigrants and the foreign-born.

## Fellow-Travelling and Other Journeys

Since about 1935, Bulosan was exposed to Communist Party activities in close association with the Babb sisters, Dorothy and Sanora. Last November 2013 I was able to access the files of the late Sanora Babb in the Harry Ransom Center Library, University of Texas, and found unpublished letters and writings of Carlos Bulosan as well as Sanora Babb's notes on Bulosan's life and works. They all attest to Bulosan's intellectual involvement with leftists and possibly communist party operatives in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

One letter of Bulosan to Sanora Babb, dated October 28, 1954, typed on the ILWU Local 37 stationery, expressed his disillusionment with some union leaders and officers who were "vicious, cruel, power mad people." But he remained hopeful amid the carnage of war and violence everywhere because "there will always be love, beauty, dignity, decency, compassion, pity among men and women and children." Since he resigned from the union and was awaiting his unemployment compensation checks, he asked Sanora to lend him \$40.00 which he promised to re-pay later by installment. He also repeated some of the facts about the Walter McCarran Act that he had already communicated to Valeros.

In a memorandum dated November 13, 1959, to Dolores Feria, who was then occupied with editing "The Sound of Falling Light," the major compilation of Bulosan letters, Sanora Babb dissuaded Feria from writing a full biography without necessary and lengthy research. She warned Feria not to lend legitimacy to rumors and hearsay about Bulosan's life. This includes the muddled plagiarism

case (publicized without legal documentation by the McCarthyist columnist I.P. Soliongco), alcoholism, vagrancy, communist fellow-travelling if not communist behavior, and other innuendoes cast by Filipino-American academics eager to put the icon down. Babb assured Feria that the violation of copyright suit was definitely won (as I've already reviewed in San Juan, *Balikbayang Sinta*). As for his relations with women (Carlos was really in love with Sanora, as demonstrated by dozens of his letters in the Babb files), Sanora states: "This idea of Carlos being parasitic on women as mother substitutes or otherwise is completely false . . . Easy psychological judgments won't hold up. . . . [Carlos] was a very complex man." Finally, Sanora also asserted that "No manuscripts were found in his room in Seattle after his death[.]"

But the world of fallible humans constantly offers surprises. We thus wonder why, aside from wrong-headed attacks on Bulosan's purported misogyny, alcoholism, decline, etc., we are gifted with recently discovered manuscripts of Bulosan such as the novel *All the Conspirators*. The title is borrowed from the first novel of Christopher Isherwood published in 1928, an antiheroic pastiche pivoting around a mother-son conflict. As noted earlier, Lagda served as the transmission belt for Josephine Patrick's bequeathal of unauthenticated Bulosan typescripts. We should be grateful to Caroline Hau and Benedict Anderson for stirring up troubled waters by providing this "photographic negative" of *The Cry and the Dedication* – if it is, indeed, by Bulosan. We have a pretext to conduct another reconnaissance of the Bulosan ruins.

Analysis of style, idiom, characterology, and narrative texture and plotting of the Lagda novel demonstrates its immense difference from Bulosan's characteristic signature. Bulosan's meditative mode of narration is clearly displayed in *America*, *The Laughter of My Father*, *The Cry and the Dedication*, the stories in *The Philippines Is in the Heart*, and in Lagda's edited volume, *The Power of Money*. The breathless and often colloquial narrative speed of *All the Conspirators* belies its imputed genealogy. Moreover, Hau and Anderson's ascription of psychological motives to Bulosan as an ambitious celebrity-seeker undermines their other more ideological polemics: "For Bulosan faced both racial and political discrimination in pursuit of his literary ambitions in America. If he initially made his name as a *Filipino* writer, his identity as such tended to ghettoize him. His leftwing politics made it necessary for him to write under an 'American' nom de plume, yet at the same time it gave him an opportunity to write as if he were a white man" (xvi). Are Filipinos to blame for ghettoizing themselves as Filipino writers? We are back to the question of power relations, hegemony, subalternity, and the whole problem of grasping what racism/racialism in the United States signifies since the invention of the "white race" or white supremacy in the early Puritan colonies. Once again, Bulosan has become a victim of the assimilationist paradigm of his putative benefactors.

## The Angel of History Beholds the Rubble

In the context of this inventory of the critical archive, more than literary or aesthetic questions are involved. No amount of arguing that Dunstan Peyton is really Bulosan, or his alter ego; and that this novel, the one mentioned in his letters (the main evidence is the letter to Valeros dated April 8, 1955), can justify a patronizing assignment of authorial responsibility. Biographers have noted numerous friends of Bulosan who helped revise and even rewrite many of his manuscripts, chief of whom was Dorothy Babb and Sanora Babb. But other women writers were accomplices or accessories, among them Ann Dionisio, Mary Gibson-Hatten, Jean Gundlach, Mary Allen, Marjorie Patton, Josephine Patrick, Grace F. Cunningham, together with their assistants or confidants. Perhaps two or more of these friends collaborated to fabricate the Lagda novel.

My suspicion is that “Dunstan Peyton” (only one of Bulosan’s many pseudonyms) or the author of *All the Conspirators* is Grace F. Cunningham, then residing in Iowa, who has already published stories set in the Philippines. (The name “Dunstan Peyton” appears in the Internet as the name of an African-American soldier in Virginia circa 1870-1879.). Two are still mentioned in the Internet under Cunningham’s pseudonym, Lysle Carveth: *Jungle Boy* (1945) and *Moro Boy* (1949), both published by Longmans, Green and Company. Bulosan’s many letters to Cunningham (in the Feria anthology) also evince their close working partnership and consultation on various matters that demonstrate Bulosan’s dependency on her opinions. Someday we will have enough materials to ascertain if Grace F. Cunningham deserves the honor of reclaiming her artifice, currently ascribed to her Filipino “co-conspirator.”

We leave this affair of attribution open for now. Until thorough research and inquiry into the authorship of the Bulosan papers in the University of Washington archive has been accomplished, we cannot in good conscience pronounce a verdict on this case. As a provisional conclusion, allow me to quote Sanora Babb’s parting advice to Feria: “Carlos is dead. All that remains of him is his work. That is more than most can leave. And some of that work is beautiful, some delightful, etc. and in this sense it adds to the reader. That is what art does, and when it does, the personality traits are not important except in a serious examination of life as related to art” (Babb 1928-2005).

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