Filipino Women's Magazines 1909-1940: Resistance, Cultural Subversion, and Compromise

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A reading of magazines written by women for women during the American period provides an interesting locus for discourse in cultural politics, given the advent of a colonial power bearing images of modernity, democracy, and liberalism. This paper argues that these women's magazines display significant tendencies and shifts in women's cultural-political outlook. The emerging paradigms affirm the complexity of the task of accurately imaging the Filipino woman within this time frame, and interrogate the simplistic mainstream configuration that the "Filipino woman spent three hundred years in a convent and fifty years in Holywood".

> In the opinion of the author, there is no country in the world in which woman suffrage is more desirable than in the Philippines. In intellect, the Filipino woman is on level with her men folk. In responsibility, sensitiveness to the social needs of her community, and in practical common sense, she is, on the average, above them . (Hayden 1955: 203)

The American colonial period is a showcase of the growing visibility and dynamism of the Filipino woman in the public realm in her pursuit of personal and professional development; the efficient and effective management of housework, parenting and social projects; and the assertion of her rights as an empowered citizen (Camacho 1994). Existing sources proliferate with narratives of her accomplishments and achievements, specifically, in the foundation of women's organizations for social amelioration and the pursuit of legislation for the recognition of women's rights (Arriola 1989; Azarcon 1987; Camacho 1994; Mananzan 1987). The trail of literary and journalistic outputs and printed speeches found in women's magazines shows that women's writing was an important instrument in the realization of her goals (Aguilar 1988; Azarcon 1987; Mananzan 1987).

Success in women's struggles, particularly in the political realm, is moored in women's articulations in written form and in the publication of speeches and personal narratives (Castrence 1998; Hidalgo 1994) complemented, in many instances, by appropriate forms of strategic and tactical activism in the tradition of Mary

Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan Anthony (Schneir 1972; Showalter 1982). While the impact of writing in popular forms in terms of successfully pursuing women's causes is evident, historical data also confirm the upsurge of public antipathy and the divisiveness that the campaign for suffrage generated among women. Showalter (1982) discusses the negative backlash of aggressive journalism and "cat and mouse" activism on other women, particularly among women in literature during Pankhurst's time. She further asserts that "...the strategy of public anti-feminism came partly from women writers' reluctance to take on the extra burden of this huge battle and partly from their own sense of being superior and exceptional" (1982: 216). This problematic antagonism might be rooted in a sense in *possessive exclusivism* which privileges "...the insider by virtue of experience (only women can write for and about women and only literature that treats women or Orientals well is good literature)..." (Said 2002: 215). Schneir (1972) also observes that the "quest for the vote" was a bone of contention among women and, in profound ways, subsumed other concerns of women: marriage as bondage and a primary instrument of oppression, the economic dependence of women, and the struggle for selfhood rooted in the dominance of the male paradigm. Aguilar (1988), on the other hand, in her discourse on Filipino women during the American period in this country, laments the absence of a feminist critical nationalist consciousness of the looming and inherent hegemonic character of American colonization.

This paper is a series of reflections on the goals of women's magazines spanning three decades of American rule, and the character of female discourse found in this genre. Most importantly, this paper discusses how the women's texts were informed by the conditions of political subjugation during the American period.

The study is based on information retrieved from available issues of ***Filipinas, Revista Semanal Ilustrada*** (1909-1910), ***The Woman's Outlook*** (1922-23/1928-30), ***La Mujer*** (1925-1926), ***Woman's Home Journal*** (1929-1938), and ***The Woman's World*** (1935) found in archival and special collections. However, the gaps in the issues of these women's publications impede the completion of a more conclusive study on this subject.

Women's magazines produced during that period depict a waning resistance to American colonial rule. The shift from resistance during the first decade to almost total collaboration by the associations

and/or aggrupations these women represent as the colony approached the period of the commonwealth is evident. What Aguilar (1988) finds disturbing about women's articulations during this period is the Filipino woman's naivete and lack of discernment – despite or precisely because of her education and social status — of imperialist motives and processes couched in the colonial power's democratic claims. Moreover, these magazines, published through the initiative of Filipino women with the active support of Filipino males as writers and publishers, display the increasing marginalization of nationalist and counter-ideological social movements and the growing "unpopularity" of political resistance against the American colonial establishment and its entrenched democratic imaging in the public mind, rationalized and mediated by a historiography with a distinct pro-American bias (Ileto 1998).

Similarly, Gayatri Spivak, reacting to Macaulay's infamous essay, asserts the systematic reconstruction of Indian education by the British, resulting in the emergence of the subaltern character of "third world" discourse (Leitch 2001). In a separate essay, Bipin Chandra Pal in 1932 castigates Macaulay and the traumatic alienation of the British educated Indian magistrate from the mainstream of Indian life (Anderson 1991). He illustrates the problematics of "understanding" the "conspiratorial" and pliant disposition of colonized peoples and their naivete regarding the fundamental self-aggrandizing nature of colonization. Truly, among colonized peoples, a segment of the populace suffers a critical sensitivity to deliberate "social engineering" (May 1984) or, more precisely, the systematic restructuring of society to suit colonial purposes and facilitate domination. From a multidisciplinary perspective, Edward Said (1979: 14) reflects on some problematic nuances of Orientalism:

> It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts: it is an *elaboration* not only of basic geographical distinction...but also of a whole series of "interests" which by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction...it not only creates but also maintains; it *is,* rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding

> relationship with power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual..., power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of tastes, texts, and values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do).

Franz Fanon, on the other hand, focuses on the violence that results out of the subjugation of indigenous societies and obliteration of cultural practices for political ends by a colonial process guided by the forcible and systematic alteration of the consciousness of a colonized people (Leitch 2000). Truly, while violence normatively characterizes all but a few nationalist liberation struggles, the enigma of the congenial acceptance of colonization by colonized people needs to be rationalized.

What emerges, thus, in the totality of colonial domination, in the context of this paper, is the gender question and how an agenda of hegemony inevitably includes the oppression, subjugation, and subordination of women and the alteration of women's consciousness. Ashcroft and his collaborators (1989: 7), for instance, trace the emergence of the process of a cultural production increasingly informed by a male-dominated Western canon: "This cultural hegemony has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity, and through attitudes...which identify them as isolated national off-shoots of English literature, and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions". This facilitates the woman's acceptance of her inferiority as a producer of literature, a creative writer, and a reader for whom "...reading is a *learned activity* which, like many other learned interpretative strategies in our society, is inevitably sex-coded and gender-inflected..." (Culler 1982: 51).

In the Philippine context, colonization was increasingly viewed by a significant number of colonial subjects, among others, by the women who wrote articles and edited and managed the magazines during the American colonial period, as a manifestation of America's benevolence and egalitarian innovations: the introduction of democracy, a system of public education, hygiene and sanitation, etc. Indeed, most impressive in the colonial repertoire are the "liberative" claims in the realm of culture which interrogate indigenous practices

normatively perceived as most violative of women: foot-binding, sati, concubinage, and slavery (Said 1993). In the Philippines, this "liberative" experience was epitomized by the granting of suffrage, paraphernal rights, the right to hold public office, etc. This situation was juxtaposed with the mainstream discourse of a colonial domination that intensified racism, class struggle, and women's oppression, and resulted in post-colonial dependency (Harrison and Huntington eds. 2000). At worst, it derailed the formation of a critical nationalist consciousness. Thus, in the process of re-contextualizing Agnes Smedley's 1931 essay on women's position vis-à-vis colonization and class discourse in India, Aguilar (1998: 34-35) comments on the difficulties of "...disentangling conceptualizations of Filipino womanhood from the ideologies of colonial domination..." specifically for educated upper-class Filipino women of this period.

Notes on Publications during the American Period

Information drawn from the censuses of 1903, 1918, and 1939 conducted at the initiative of the American colonial establishment show that the number of publications increased during these census periods, in contrast to the volume and number that could be accounted for during the Spanish colonial period. According to Señor M. de Yriarte, Chief of the Bureau of Archives at Manila in 1903, the latter was the result of rigid governmental rules and close censorship established by the Royal Order for the Regulation of Newspapers of October 27, 1837, which resulted in the closure of numerous publications that could not sustain financially viable circulation (Census 1903 vol. 4).

There was a marked increase in the number of publications between the census of 1903 and 1918, from a total of 41 in 1903 to a total of 114 in 1918. English-language publications increased from 12 in 1903 to 28 in 1918, while publications in "Dialects" increased from four in 1903 to 24 in 1918. In contrast, there was only a slight increase in Spanish-language publications, from 24 to 27 (Census 1918 vol. 4). By 1937, English-language publications accounted for one-half of the total number of publications in circulation. Hayden (1955) reports the following publication figures for the said year: 133 English language publications; 47, single native language; 23, Spanish; 33, English-Spanish; and 21, trilingual.

In general, women's magazines somehow reflected the national publication trends based on language use. The earliest, ***Filipinas, Revista Semanal Ilustrada*** (henceforth, ***Filipinas***), launched in 1909, was published in Tagalog and Spanish. By the decade of the 1920s, three magazines, ***La Mujer, The Woman's Outlook***, and ***Woman's Home Journal***, started publishing in English and Spanish. Towards the second half of the 1930s, reflecting the growing popularity of the colonizer's language, ***The Woman's World*** opened as an English publication.

Women's Magazines during the American Period: A Discussion of Publication Goals

Marked pluralities of concerns characterized women's magazines during the American period. ***Filipinas*** (1909) and ***La Mujer*** (1925) articulated a clear consciousness of the unequal status of women and men, and advocated for women's rights and interests. In its first editorial, ***La Mujer*** also sought to give visibility to women's works and accomplishments.

All magazines, except ***Filipinas***, affirmed that the larger national context of the publication was the democratic and benevolent American colonial regime to which the publications owed allegiance. The radical orientation of ***Filipinas***, published in Tagalog and Spanish, was manifested in its marked hostility towards the American regime, its extensive reportage and frequent detailed discussion of instances of gender-racial discrimination and sexual harassment by establishment-associated figures, and its constant allusions to independence and freedom from colonial bondage.

Consistent with the discourse of promoting the "interests of women" and providing information on women's activities, both official publications of the National Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC), ***The Woman's Outlook*** (1922) and its successor, ***Woman's Home Journal*** (1926), focused on service to the community for the common good and the welfare of the home which, in the Federation's view, women represent. ***The Woman's Outlook*** continued to publish issues with Trinidad Fernandez Legarda, Maria Valdes Ventura, Isabel Artacho Ocampo, and Consuelo Valdes Fonacier in its editorial board. Despite the launching of a new NFWC magazine in 1926, ***The Woman's Outlook*** featured the "antiseptic" character of American colonization,

which focused on health issues and the raging campaign against leprosy, values (chaperon system, respect for parents), women's organizations (CWL, PAUW, etc.), "women who do things", accomplished artists, etc. In the 1930s, in the aftermath of an internal struggle among factions within the NFWC, on the fifth anniversary of ***Woman's Home Journal***, the editorial reminded the readers of the goals of the organization and in 1938, on the eve of the magazine's 12th anniversary, the editorial affirmed that the magazine seeks to link the national office with its provincial member clubs.

One of the interesting sustained "claims" of the editorials of the ***Woman's Home Journal*** (1933 and 1939) was the magazine's identity as "mouthpiece for the good of women" and "a literary magazine that specializes in presenting to the average mind the claims of the Filipino women, in interpreting from her viewpoint significant events of the day" (May 1930 issue). This statement resonated Governor-General Leonard Wood's greetings for ***The Woman's Outlook*** (***Woman's Home Journal***'s predecessor) on the publication of its first issue (October 1922): "...I look upon these organizations as one of the most powerful instrumentalities for good which we have, I find everywhere that they are a strong influence for good government, improved conditions of public health and public morality, and that they represent a force on which I feel I can always count for support of measures looking to good government".

The Woman's World (formerly ***The Dawn***), a publication in English of the Philippine Association of University Women, carried an impressive roster of women configured within their areas of expertise (Arts, Applied Sciences, Education, Fashion, Health Clinic, Home Economics, Legal Clinic, Literature, Social Clinic, and Nursing) and who completed academic degrees during this period. This magazine featured their professional and social activities. In its first issue launched on the eve of the campaign for women's suffrage, ***The Woman's World*** declared that it sought "...to bring about rapid enlightenment to womanhood...commenting upon and recording exclusively activities and interests of Philippine women...making accessible to them also the progress of their sisters in other countries and such other developments in other lands which would be interesting to Filipino women" (January 1935 Editorial). The magazine's women writers drew battle lines and found a likely target in Jorge Bocobo, President of the University of the Philippines:

> So far we have considered President Bocobo as enemy number 1 of the feminists of this country on account of his strong opposition to woman suffrage. However, his recent defense of women's civil rights and the way he is treating the women under him shows that he is fair and well-balanced, and of an intelligence of no small caliber. Were not for his strong opposition to woman's suffrage, his reasons for which we respect, we would like to change our opinion of him, and call him friend number 1 of the Filipino feminists. (January 1935 Editorial)

Women's Perception of American Colonization

Journalism, in Philippine history, has always been an effective instrument of resistance against hegemony and domination. Publication in this popular genre, both in its mainstream and alternative forms, has always been effectively utilized as a medium for political change since the time of the Propaganda Movement with the ascendancy of ***La Solidaridad*** (Schumacher 1973). This tradition of popularizing political struggle is evident in the articles of ***Filipinas*** published within a few years after the end of the Philippine-American War:

> ...iulat ang mga katungkulan at mga karapatan ng mamamayan alinsunod sa mga kautusan at malilinis na kaugalian; ipagsangalang ang mga katwiran at kalayaan ng Inang Bayan: ...bakahin ng boong kabayanihan ang mga kataksilan, kapaslangan at kalupitan ng may maruruming budhi...(*Ang Aming Hangad* 1:1 8 April 1909). (...report on the duties and rights of citizens in accordance with regulations and upright practices; defend rights and the country's freedom...resolutely fight the treachery, perversity and cruelty of those with evil conscience...)

One of the most incisive journalistic assaults against the colonizers appeared in both Tagalog and Spanish in the magazine's editorial on 22 May 1909:

> Nakikinabang ang mga amerikano't mga castila sa kanikanilang lupain at sa mga hanap-buhay sa kanilang lupain, at ang mga filipino baga'y siyang tunay na nakikinabang sa mga pagsasaka, sa mga pangangalakal,

> sa mga ferrocarril, sa mga tranvia, sa mga Banco, sa mga mina, sa mga sasakyang-dagat, sa mga gawaang malaki ang mga sangkap ng tao sa buhay?...Hindi! (*Bakahin Natin ang Kaalipinan*) (The Spaniards and the Americans profit from their lands and businesses. Do the Filipinos truly profit from farming, trading, railroads, trains, banks, mines, ships, factories?....No!)
>
> Tayo'y may kaunting mga kalayaan na ngayon, salamat sa dugong ibinuhos sa pagbabagong-buhay...datapowa't mawawalang bisa ang madlang kalayaang iyan, at kung minsan pa'y naguiguing mabisang lason, dahil pamamaninoon ng maraming filipino sa makapanyarihang dollar o' conant (*Bakahin Natin ang Kaalipinan*). (We are enjoying a little freedom now, thanks to the blood spilled for the sake of a better life...however, this freedom will be for naught, and might even be a poison, because many Filipinos become beholden to the dollar o' conant).

On January 22, 1910, the front cover of the magazine underwent radical transformation as a culmination of its consistently progressive stance. Accompanying its conventional cover illustration was a strongly-worded text in the tradition of previous decades of anticolonial struggle:

> Ipatalastas nating sa ating mga anak na ang pagluha ay aring sarili ng mga walang magagawa. Ang Bayan kung nagbabangon sa kaniyang pagkalugami, ang Bayan kung naghihiganti, namamayani at humaharap ng buong bangis sa sumisiil ng kaniyang mga dakilang katwiran ay hindi lumuluha. (Let us tell our children that tears are only for the helpless. A Country that rises from its oppression, a Country that avenges, rises to the challenge and fiercely confronts those who repress its rights does not weep.)

While ***Filipinas*** sustained nuances of anti-American discourse in its issues, it also sought to educate women towards consciousness, understanding, and political action to improve their status and to secure the freedom of the nation. Adjunct to these admonitions were essays focused on women's role within the family and society. An article that appeared in the April 1909 issue, *Ang Aming Hangad*, expressed a clear bias in favor of women:

> ...nakikita pa rin natin sa ating bayan, na ang babae ay isang taong hamak lamang, wala sa kaniyang dapat kalagyang luklukan, hubad sa kaniyang mga karapatan sa politica at sa harap ng mga kapisanan; isang taong walang kalayaan kundi sa kasamaan, isang taong nasasadlak...isang lubos na aliping matatawag. (we can still see that in our society, a woman is a lowly individual, not in her rightful place, stripped of her political and societal rights; a person without freedom, trapped in wickedness...someone no better than an utter slave.)

In a succeeding article titled *Kahabaghabag!* in the same issue of this weekly Tagalog-Spanish publication, Patria V. Poblete wrote:

> Kasama ang babae sa paghihirap, sa kapighatian, sa mga sakuna, sa kaalipinan...ngunit inihihiwalay ang babae pagka nauukol sa pagtamo ng kalayaan ng pamamahalang bayan. (Women are called upon in times of difficulties, sorrows, accidents, subjugation...but women are excluded from efforts aimed at gaining freedom in governance.)

More than a decade after ***Filipinas*** came out, the National Federation of Women's Clubs, a virtual handiwork of American women in collaboration with their Filipino counterparts (Camacho 1994), published its official magazine, ***The Woman's Outlook***. The magazine, launched in October 1922, was written in English and Spanish, and exemplified a radical divergence from the anticolonial and nationalist attitude of ***Filipinas***. Greetings from Leonard Wood, the American governor-general, and Manuel Luis Quezon, Philippine Senate President, were prominently displayed on the front page of the publication, followed by a letter of felicitation from Sergio Osmeña, Speaker of the House, and an interview with Mrs. Leonard Wood, the first Lady of the Philippines. NFWC President Mrs. Francisco Delgado described this new publication in these words:

> An exclusive organ for the Philippine womanhood will not only make our women know themselves better, their wants and needs, their present shortcomings and the way to remedy them, but it will serve as a medium to perpetuate the assistance rendered by our women in the attainment of our sacred Ideal and in the development and progress of our country along modern lines. (Vol. 1:1:6)

The Editorial Section of the same issue added that "It has emphasized that its object is to give help to those that need it in the form in which it is needed". ***La Mujer***, a contemporaneous publication, expressed a similar sentiment in its first issue launched on May 1925:

> The prejudices which hold women intellectually superior having disappeared, now is the time to work for their social revindication and to give an impetus to the feminist movement in line with the new democratic tendencies without forgetting, of course, the worship of our Common Home, the Philippines.

In conclusion, J. Hernandez Gavira stated: "...this publication...sends out its affectionate greetings with this issue first to the women and second, to the constituted authorities of these islands, to the foreigners who fraternally live with us..." A "pro-establishment bias" was shared by subsequent publications, ***Woman's Home Journal*** (1926 NFWC) and ***The Woman's World*** (1934).

An examination of the women's publications during the first three decades of American colonial rule affirms the strategic importance of language as the metaphor for struggle and resistance against colonization. The deliberate use of Tagalog and Spanish by the women journalists (who were evidently part of the intellectual elite educated during the twilight of Spanish rule) of ***Filipinas*** asserts, to say the least, these women writers' discomfort and/or non-familiarity with the "new language" or, at worst, their refusal to be politically subjugated and identified with the colonizers. It is noteworthy that despite this critical posture, the feature articles of the bilingual ***Filipinas*** reveal a broad cosmopolitan outlook, viewing with interest women outside of the Philippines, ranging from the Dowager Empress of China and the women of the Manchu court to Princess Victoria of England and the emerging and pioneering women's organizations. In one of the rare discourses in the magazine focused on the issue of language (July 31, 1909) – specifically the decision of some schools to penalize the use of Tagalog in their premises – the editors of the publication passionately argued, "Ang wikang sarili, ang ginagamit na wika o salita ng isang bayan ay siyang pinakakaluluwa ng bayang iyan. Sa alin mang lupain, saan mang bayan at kailan mang panahon ay di nililimot at bagkos pinagpipilitang ang wikang sarili ay manatili at

lumago". (The native tongue is the embodiment of a country's soul. In any place and at any time, people endeavor to preserve it and let it grow.)

In contrast, the issue of language as an instrumentality of nationalism and political discourse hardly appeared in women's magazines in the 1920s and in the 1930s. Indeed, women's writing during these years was a reflection of the national trend in journalism evidenced by the 1903, 1918, and the 1939 censuses, where English had practically displaced all other languages and dialects in terms of subscription and readership. The shared view between women writers and the consumers of women's magazines seemed to affirm that the English language was perceived as the "jargon of national development" and, as such, embodied the "liberative" aspirations of Filipino women for suffrage and women's rights.

A survey of the contents and topics of adjunct and secondary discourses in these magazines also reveal that English was increasingly becoming the mediating element in the Filipino woman's cultural, political, social, and home life. It became the effective medium for modernity and modernization in the domestic life of the middle and upper classes during the 1920s and 1930s: construction of homes, diet, beauty and fashion, personal hygiene, kitchen technology, the care for husbands, nurturing of infants and children, etc. The transformation of the political and cultural life ways of Filipino women after two decades of education in the English language made the publication of ***The Woman's World*** in 1934 inevitable. The roster of women professionals and contributors to this magazine, who were educated in the American system with the support of the *pensionado* or colonial infrastructure of grants and scholarships for study in the United States, dramatized the acculturation of the Filipino woman writer and reader into American life ways.

Sadly, with these significant sallies of Philippine colonial society into modernity and democracy during the second and third decades of American rule, the mainstream discourses that characterized ***Filipinas*** – i.e., the critical nationalist stance towards the colonial government, the deep concern over gender inequality and oppression, and the use of Tagalog as the medium for resistance against subjugation — all but disappeared from the pages of subsequent women's magazines.

The contextual logic of this drastic shift in the orientation of women's magazines launched between 1920 and 1940 was moored in the substantive alignment of women's texts to the mainstream colonial discourse and the gradual convergence of the concerns of the colonizer and colonized over the issues of political rights, domestic tranquility, the intrusive sanitation procedures ("cleanliness is next to godliness"), the elimination of vice and immorality, the institutionalization of leisure and recreation (i.e. the annual Manila Carnival, the Santa Ana Cabaret, etc.), the strengthening of the colonial economy, etc. All these were ostensibly designed to buttress the colonial infrastructure and its agenda.

Indeed, Bipin Chandra Pal's writing from the Indian context in the 1930s that spoke of the process of acculturation (Anderson 1991) finds resonance in the goals and aspirations of US colonization and its cultural accoutrements in the Philippine context. The paradigm that Pal alluded to was incarnated in the local setting by upper middle class Filipino women leaders and professionals who were recipients of the benefits of the democratic system as middle-level bureaucrats of the colony and/or as *pensionados* and grantees of American scholarships. Inevitably, thus, another emerging feature of Philippine-US relations during the 1920s and the 1930s in the context of organization-propelled women's magazines was the emerging patronage ritual of female social interaction not quite unlike the male *compadrazgo* (Owen 1971) between its officers of women's organizations and the endless cavalcade of short-term American pro-consuls who followed Leonard Wood, their consorts (First Ladies of the Philippines), and their children. This ritual was manifested in several issues of ***The Woman's Outlook***: the published interviews of Ms. Leonard Wood, greetings from Ms. Alison Davis (January 1930), a magazine cover of Ms. Cynthia Davis (May 1930), a feature article on Ms. Simpson's appearance in a Filipina dress, a definite "first" for a Governor-General's wife (November 1928), travelogues and media-covered luncheons for Mrs. Davis (October 1930).

The camaraderie and discourses of collaboration, fraternizing, and patronage among political stakeholders characterized Philippine-US relationship, obscuring the reality of American racism and male elitism personified by practices of exclusivity within the enclaves of power of the Manila Polo Club and the Army and Navy Club. The Filipino women, with ample encouragement from the colonial

government, pursued "physical well-being"; "social amelioration"; "domestic tranquility"; "moral regeneration"; and "political enfranchisement" through paraphernal rights and suffrage in the promised land of an independent Philippines (***The Woman's Outlook*** October 1930 headline: "US wants P.I. Free" attributed to Ms. Camilo Osias), oblivious of the formulation and implementation of insidious economic policies and the political repression of social movements in the countryside designed to ensure American hegemony beyond independence.

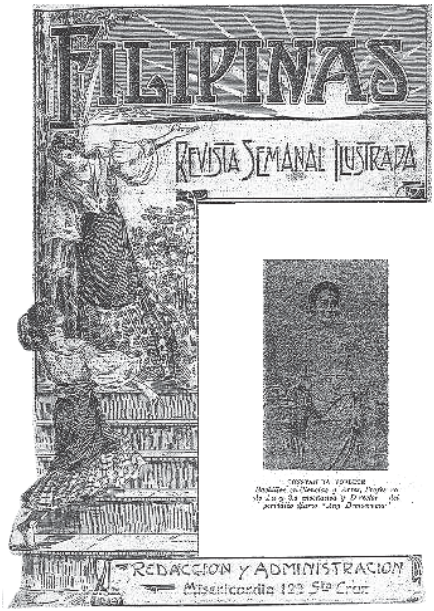
During the lifetime of ***Woman's Home Journal,*** which claimed national representation of women organized within clubs managed by their counterparts at local levels, only two editorials expressed disappointment and displeasure with the conduct of colonial policy. These are the May 1929 editorial about the end of the partnership between the Public Welfare Commission (then headed by Jose Fabella) and the NFWC over the management of the puericulture centers, and the acerbic editorial of June 1933 over the lack of single-mindedness and constancy in American colonial policy evidenced by the frequent change of governors-general. Following is an excerpt from the latter editorial:

> Of late the departure and arrival of Governors-General have proven veritable irritants upon the Filipino mind. Their reaction to the frequent and recurring changes of executives has repeatedly shown itself in expressions bordering close to disgust. Is the Philippines only a vacation spot or training camp for men destined for positions in the United States? It is a settled point that a government cannot function properly without a single policy, put in effect with a single end by a single administration.

The editorial's final resolve was interesting: "But after reading about, and meeting and listening to him, we are ready to say that the justification for the present change can be perceived in the man himself. We have faith in Governor Murphy."

Further Insights on the Character of Women's Discourses

The *Table of Contents* of women's magazines during the first three decades of American rule exemplified the range of women's concerns: housekeeping, the role of the wife, motherhood, politics,



Vol 1:1 April 8, 1909
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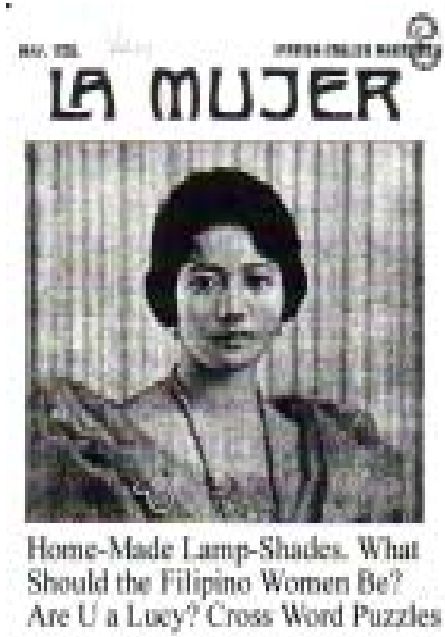

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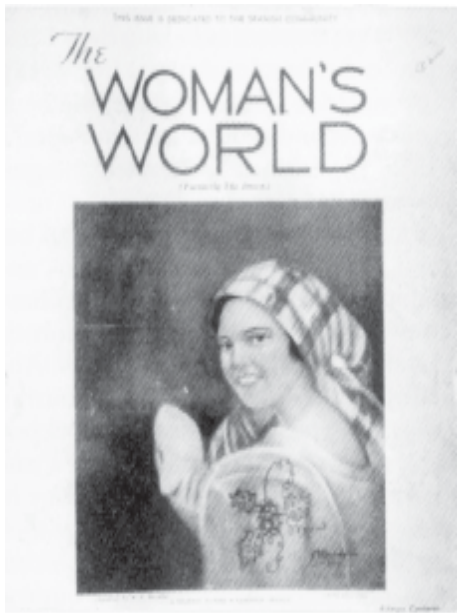

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women's organizations, the arts, travel, fashion, health, sanitation and hygiene, values formation, community service, suffrage, debates on whether the "bob cut" is the better hairstyle or why chaperones are necessary, etc. Art forms also accompanied the texts of these publications. Paintings by Amorsolo and de la Rosa; poetry by Trinidad Tarrosa-Subido; and essays by Horacio de la Costa, Encarnacion Alzona, Maria Kalaw Katigbak, and Ariston Estrada substantially enriched the "unpunctuated" narratives of club activities, annual reports, and altercations among the factions within the organization. Socialization with the American colonial establishment was given ample coverage, including the *de rigueur* write-ups about the wives and children of the constantly shifting occupants of Malacañang Palace. This evolving genre of non-confrontational and stress-free women's writing in the colonial context was a dramatic contrast to the concerns articulated by its genealogical ancestor of the first decade, the ***Filipinas,*** which espoused independence in no uncertain terms and called for colonial accountability for racism, the violation and oppression of women, unfair labor practices, and asymmetrical relations between the colonial and subjugated peoples.

Interestingly, the configuration of areas of discourse of women's magazines in the American period limited itself to domestic issues recast as national concerns and social problems aggravated by temporary palliatives applied through the initiatives of these politically naive women. The assemblage and composition of discourses and the choice of subject matter clearly exposed colonial control over intellectual production in this genre of women's writing, where the status quo of acquiescence and collaboration between the colonial power and the Filipino woman prevailed. The political bluster of the women, regardless of magnitude, was well within areas "figuratively defined" and ostensibly circumscribed by the colonial power and configured as peripheral, therefore, "harmless". Indeed, the colonial government nurtured and obviously considered the success in the women's struggles for paraphernal rights and suffrage as beneficial and productive for a positive democratic imaging of America as a colonial power benevolent and supportive of women's rights. Conspicuously absent in the women's agenda within these publications were "problematic" discourses in economics, social movements, the rise of the ideology of dissent, and labor conditions and how these inform, even, in superficial ways, issues that pertain to women.

The emerging elitism is a discernible character of women's writing in the popular realm during the American period. The widening of the class divide between existing categories of women – rural and urban, educated and uneducated, white collar and blue collar workers, etc. — was apparent in total absence of women "other" than the dominant interlocutors and articulators in the magazine texts. Also evident was the increasing dominance and hegemony of American-educated professional women from the upper class of society, as well as women who had access to the colonial bureaucracy or its appendages (*pensionados* or resident commissioners). These women shared a patronizing attitude towards women from other classes. Despite the national geographical (from Batanes to Jolo) magnitude of the women's clubs, many women remained invisible, faceless, and voiceless in the discourses within the publications. Ironically, indigenous and lower class women became "objects" of complex convoluted rituals and processes of social amelioration undertaken by upper class women. Nameless and faceless "other women" epitomized the "exotic" (or, perhaps, in the context of Said (1979), the "orientalized"), a marked character of the discourses of the magazines: the Muslim or Bontoc women and their alien and incomprehensible life ways, the leper woman who needed physical rehabilitation, the young social climbing actress of doubtful morals who had to be taught proper values, the beggar who because of laziness deserved her poverty, the erring daughter who had to be schooled in good manners and respect for elders, etc. Through these discourses, the elite women assumed "the role of the colonizer", not quite unlike those with whom they were conveniently and comfortably aligned, by marginalizing "other women" by not giving space for the latter's articulations and discourses.

Women's Texts as Adjunct to Mainstream Colonial Discourse

In its fifth anniversary issue (May 1930), the ***Woman's Home Journal*** asserted that "it is a literary magazine that specializes in presenting to the average mind the claims of the Filipino women, in interpreting from her point of view significant events of the day". Juxtaposed against these were idealized images of "women who are doing something", characterized by the powerful, socially well-placed, educated, well-married Filipino women who were clones of their Western counterparts. Thus, the women who inhabited these

magazines as subject were women who were a cut off the colonial mold, convenient articulators for the regime and a vital cog in the wheel supporting the infrastructure of colonization and its concerns, mistaking these as shared concerns beneficial for the long-term interests of a nation at the threshold of its independence.

An understanding of the nuances of the evolving construal of the term *feminism* as deployed in the texts of these magazines is strategic. In a sense, it clarifies why this "conspiracy" existed and why there was a virtual absence of viable anticolonial resistance in women's writing in the public realm, the arena of male power. Feminism, in the context of women's writings found in the ***Filipinas*****,** is organically understood as written interventions initiated by women mindful of the need to unceasingly struggle for social justice, gender and racial equality, and economic and political independence. In the subsequent publications, greater valorization was placed on liberal-democratic ideals associated with the colonial regime that was imperceptibly hegemonic in nature and bearing a "white and powerful male imaging". This regime entrenched the initial rootedness of women's concerns to their domestic roles as wives and mothers, and facilitated the expansion of these functions into the national context accompanied by the need for involvement in social service and the development of communal spirit, as well as the evolution of women's organizations as bearers of information for the enlightenment and enhancement of the undefined "interests" of women. With this, the colonial government patronizingly created a "partnership of unequals" with Filipino women and a "virtual public realm", a "corrupted version of political space" for giving visibility to women's concerns and causes, satisfying their desire for political empowerment, and, ultimately, aligning their initiatives with the effective realization of colonial goals.

Conclusion

A discussion of women's writing in a colonial context interrogates existing discourses on "woman as subversive". The examination of women's magazines during the American colonial period displays the vulnerability of educated women from the elite class to *cultural engineering* evidenced by their rose-colored and myopic view of the colonial phenomenon. These women's texts also show the deviation of the Filipino women from the historical use of journalistic

writing in this country as a form of political resistance against practices of authoritarianism and hegemony. Women's writing in this context is transformed into an instrument for strengthening and generating greater public acceptance of American colonization and its democratic posturing. Consumed by the urgency to pursue their political enfranchisement through the campaigns for suffrage and paraphernal rights and assert their moral ascendancy as Christian defenders of their homes and society, the Filipino women who inhabited these magazines inevitably marginalized other women who were not quite like themselves in social-economic status and cultural orientation. Thus, the most significant consequence of the prolific discourses of women in this genre is the collective failure of these articulators to substantially contribute to the formation of a critical nationalist consciousness which might have propelled this country to greater political autonomy and economic independence.

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