Introduction

Educated Subjects: Literary Production, Colonial Expansion, and the Pedagogical Public Sphere

In an impassioned speech delivered to Congress on January 9, 1900, Albert J. Beveridge, a Republican senator from Indiana, argued for the manifold advantages of U.S. dominion over the Philippine Islands. Addressing his remarks specifically to the anti-imperialist critics among his fellow senators, Beveridge outlined an expansionist doctrine based on the moral, material, and religious import of the territory:

The Philippines are ours forever. . . . And just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling at regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as His chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world.¹

Mixing financial gain with religious righteousness, Beveridge’s appeal was meant to inspire both fear and desire among his colleagues. The speech begins by calling to mind the prosperity to be gained in extraterritorial expansion, both in the labor and resources of the Philippines and in the islands’ strategic placement in Pacific trade routes. Lest such financial concerns be taken for imperialistic greed, however, Beveridge links this material wealth to an imagined divine “duty” for Americans as a “chosen
people.” Admonishing his critics as cowards who would “retreat” from expansion and “renounce” that duty, he glorifies the project in racialized terms, marking the “forward movement” of empire as the privilege of Anglo-American freedom by characterizing anti-imperialists as “slaves” who replace gratitude with regret. Dismissing his critics as unworthy of this “mission of [the] race,” Beveridge dismisses, too, the violence of this imperialistic advancement as a historically inevitable conflict and triumph, part of the “regeneration of the world” through the necessary supremacy of Anglo-Saxon “civilization.”

Beveridge’s comments on the Senate floor were notable but not unusual in their succinct interweaving of the religious, racial, and historical within a logic of imperial expansion. Rather, Beveridge offered an exemplary model of imperialist excitement at the turn of the century, one that melded racialized fears about the erosion of white dominance in the face of Asian immigration and African American enfranchisement with opportunistic dreams of new markets and U.S. global naval power, all articulated through the religious and moral discourse of the divine supremacy of “Anglo-Saxon civilization.” In this respect, he simply offered a more vitriolic version of the paternalistic terms President William McKinley himself had used in 1898 when he announced that God had appeared to him in a dream and counseled him to “educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.” Importantly, in this formulation McKinley chose to disregard several crucial points about Philippine history and its entanglements with Spanish colonialism, including the fact that many of the islands’ inhabitants were Christian and had experienced long, though uneven, access to formalized education on the islands, both in local schools run by Spanish friars, and, after the Education Reform Law of 1863, in a system of compulsory primary education in Spanish. Nevertheless, McKinley’s appeal to the discourse of uplift through religious missionary work and education echoed the logic Beveridge propounded so forcefully in Congress, a logic that proved to be a crucial part of rallying support for the imperialist cause.

Against these views, those opposed to the imperialist project lamented the continuing U.S. involvement in the Philippines. Some saw in it the degradation of the very “American” ideals of democracy and independence that expansionists championed, while others expressed alarm at the possibility that Filipino incorporation into the national body would threaten the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon culture. Such are the concerns voiced at the outset of an 1898 article by Andrew Carnegie urging against
the “inconvenience” of empire, where he posed the questions: “Is the Republic, the apostle of Triumphant Democracy, of the rule of the people, to abandon her political creed and endeavor to establish in other lands the rule of the foreigner over the people, Triumphant Despotism? Is the Republic to remain one homogeneous whole, one united people, or to become a scattered and disjointed aggregate of widely separated and alien races?” In voicing his fear of “triumphant despotism,” Carnegie echoed a number of critics who feared that the U.S. involvement in territories outside of the continent would irretrievably degrade the Constitution and weaken the republic, rendering it indistinguishable from the European monarchical system. William Dean Howells, the foremost literary critic of the period, concurred by confessing his shame at the deception implicit in the government and media coverage of the Spanish-American War as a liberation struggle, offering, “Our war for humanity has unmasked itself as a war for coaling stations.” Where material interest was masquerading as liberation struggle, such critics saw the duplicitous nature of the imperial program not as a logical outcome of the nationalist project but as a violation of its founding principles.

This book takes up the competing logics of imperialism, as espoused by expansionists like McKinley and Beveridge and anti-imperialists like Carnegie and Howells, in order to gauge the effects of such logics in the consolidation of another turn-of-the-century enterprise—the consolidation of the academic discipline of English. For, while Beveridge’s racialized rhetoric, resounding in the halls of Congress, may seem far from the literary inquiries in progress in the towers of academe, they were united by a particular, and particularly timely, logic of cultural transmission, a pragmatic notion of culture as an ameliorative and powerful force in the formation of citizens and the submission of colonial subjects. As importantly, they drew upon a conceptualization of education as the moral imperative of American citizens, and the most effective means of managing or “rehabilitating” racialized subjects—immigrants, African Americans, Native Americans, and Filipinos alike—within the framework of middle-class Protestant Americanism. Within the new phase of extracontinental U.S. expansion, it was the power of education that was called upon to manage the contradiction between colonial despotism and national independence by framing the violent intervention of the United States in the Philippines through the paradigm of tutelage, in which Filipinos were regarded as the beneficiaries of the civilizing effects of American political and cultural tradition. Indeed, so powerful was the “romance of the common school”
that the actual schoolhouse itself became the signifier of Americanism. “Model school buildings thoroughly equipped with books, pictures, maps, globes, etc., . . . will have an influence not securable by force of arms,” one American officer asserted; “the school buildings should be models, both interior and exterior—the stamp of Americanism on each town.”

With the defeat of the Spanish flotilla in Manila Bay by U.S. Admiral George Dewey in August 1898, the U.S. military occupation of Philippines began. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, ratified in February 1899, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam, and for an additional $20 million, sold the Philippines to the United States; with the annexation of Hawai‘i that same year, this marked the first steps in the United States’ extracontinental expansion, a new phase beyond the geographical limits of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny that called into question the status of the United States as a global imperial power on the one hand, and an exceptionalist nation committed to the principles of freedom and democracy on the other. Before the Treaty of Paris had even been ratified by the U.S. Senate, McKinley issued his plan for continued rule in the Philippines via his Proclamation of Benevolent Assimilation, in which he declared U.S. sovereignty over the islands and assured Filipinos that the Americans came “not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.” Almost immediately, American teachers were thrust into the foreground as agents of the project, mobilizing a discourse of education for self-government meant to justify a prolonged colonial occupation and to mask the violent resistance to U.S. intervention. Influenced by progressive theories of educational reform as well as the history of Protestant missionary zeal in Asia, U.S. government officials emphasized the role of education in the moral and practical maintenance of the colony.

Such policies had immediate practical as well as ideological implications. The report issued in 1900 by the First Philippine Commission, a five-member group sent by McKinley to evaluate the conditions in the Philippines, asserted, “Undoubtedly a well-directed system of education will prove one of the most forceful agencies for elevating Filipinos, materially, socially, and morally, and preparing them for a large participation in the affairs of government.” The provision for universal public education was established by the Philippine Commission in January 1901, and there was much fanfare around the democratic impulse reflected in such schools; American journalists at home, in particular, were quick to remind readers that three centuries of Spanish colonial rule in the islands had failed to
establish universal, free public education, and that the masses of Filipino subjects were but “poor, illiterate savages.” One journalist opined that: “At no very distant date, I hope, when the suspicious nature of these people is satisfied, the work being done in the schools here will have its effect. It will then be one of the most potent forces in bringing about a reconciliation, and go far toward convincing the natives that American sovereignty means enlightenment, progress, civilization, and the fullest measure of independence consistent with their safety and well-being.” Juxtaposed with the images of decadent Spanish rulers and reticent Filipino subjects, American teachers were portrayed as an efficient army of democratizing and civilizing agents, armed with the scientific and moral superiority to uplift their new charges. This indicates a more powerful intent beyond the efficacy of U.S. schoolhouses themselves, however. Exceeding the actual material impact of this new system of education was the ideological force of the educational apparatus as a disciplinary regime; teacher, schoolhouse, and textbook were each paraded as signifiers of the exceptionalism of the American occupation.

From the beginning, the opening of the public school system thus established education as the governing metaphor for the colonial state-building project. The school was invested with an ideological weight far more profound than its practical aspects suggested. In the much-lauded transition through which, “almost overnight, soldiers became teachers,” the architects of the U.S. occupation envisioned the colonial project as a pedagogical mission, in which Filipinos were not a subject population but pupils who would benefit from the care of American teachers as representatives of the moral, cultural, and political superiority of the United States. By rehearsing, time and again, the continued U.S. authority over the islands as an educational imperative, supporters of the occupation could offer self-congratulatory summaries of the imperial project as “an altruistic experiment” whose beneficiaries were Filipinos themselves, not the American business interests who saw the islands as the necessary gateway to new markets in China. Thus the opening of a public school system and the imposition of English were deemed “eloquent proof of the good wishes of America toward the Philippines,” and, in the words of one editorialist, taken as evidence that “the march of civilization is making steady progress.”
Resituating the Field of American Letters

This book tells the story of the simultaneous emergence of the U.S. overseas empire and the emergence of the field of American literature. Its argument links these two events in order to consider how the literary object functioned, in the context of overseas empire, as a kind of proxy: a substitute or stand-in for the colonizing subject, who remained a numerical minority in the Philippines, and for a whole ensemble of cultural values, assumptions, and ideals that, in the late nineteenth century, came to be consolidated in the literary object. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter 2, a crucial part of this process was the constellation of reading, writing, and publishing practices through which, by the late nineteenth century, the book became invested with the specific cultural values of white, middle-class Americans while effectively erasing its own partisan affiliations. Thus was the American literary object poised to serve as the exemplar of Americanism, even as the version of “American” it represented was, of course, quite historically specific and marked by domestic hierarchies of race, gender, and class.

In examining the coincident histories of imperial expansion in the Philippines and literary humanism in the United States, Empire’s Proxy thus investigates the contingent relationship between the fields of American literature in the United States and the study of American literature in the context of colonial rule in the Philippines. Literature, I argue, served two functions as an apparatus of imperial rule. First, American literature was held up as evidence of the cultural and moral superiority of America’s Anglo-Saxon civilization, thus providing the ideological justification through which the United States’ imperial interventions were recast as “civilizing” missions. Just as important, however, the literary text itself was understood to function as an ameliorative force, offering the promise of moral uplift and mental discipline that became crucial to the project of colonial rule in the U.S.-occupied Philippines. These developments indicate that the initial formations of the field of American literature as it became institutionalized in schools across the United States in the last years of the nineteenth century were shaped in part in response to the ideological, political, and material practices of the United States’ extraterritorial expansion after the Spanish-American War.

The esteemed literary and cultural critic E. San Juan Jr. has lamented that that “no American intellectual of any stature has expended the energy to investigate exactly how ‘humane letters’ were used for over half a
century to ‘Americanize’ and pacify the only U. S. colony in Asia.” In fact, *Empire’s Proxy* aims to consider just that history. It does so, however, in a complementary fashion; that is, its purpose is both to trace the efficacy of American letters to the colonial project in the Philippines, and to consider how the demand for a body of American literary texts to serve such a purpose was generative both of the field of American literary study and a canon of American letters. That is, the materialist, historical approach of my study also traces how the project of “pacification” both helped define the purpose of American literary study as an ennobling, transformative effort with both intellectual rigor and moral value, and contributed to the consolidation of an archive of “classic” American literary texts that were understood to embody those values. Decisions regarding what constituted the “American canon,” at least at this initial period around 1900, were not affected only by admissions standards for Harvard and Yale, though those were essential sources of authority. By tracing the mutual implications between field-formation of American literature at home and its instruction in the newly acquired territories, I suggest that it became crystallized as well through the daily, seemingly mundane choices made by administrators, teachers, and colonial functionaries, along with textbook publishers, soldiers, and collaborating Filipino elites. This ensemble of actors on the stage of colonial development came to produce a collective discourse about the meaning of American letters and what sort of training, guidance, and legitimacy they could provide. That this “canon” was produced by colonial administrators, textbook manufacturers, and other functionaries in the educational apparatus of the colonies, before the project of American literature had fully acquired such value in the United States, is demonstrated by the way in which American literature was called upon to embody qualities that, in schools across the United States, were still attributed to classical languages. David Barrows, the American appointed to serve as superintendent of schools in the Philippines, made this hierarchy clear when he specified that: “While in the United States we depend, in our training of the youth, upon Latin and Greek for giving breadth of mind and depth of intellectual and moral insight, here in the Philippines we must depend upon English literature for these same purposes. It is believed that English is adequate to impart these essentials of education, both in disciplinary and spiritual aspects.”

*Empire’s Proxy* thus serves as a complement to work like San Juan Jr.’s, which richly explores the effect of the U. S. colonial education system on later Philippine–U. S. literary and political relations, but has less to say
about the specific contours of that system as it took shape after 1898. I intend that the archive presented here will contribute to the understanding of the complicity between empire and American letters that his readings suggest. Likewise, this study brings to the field of American literature a set of questions like those posed by Gauri Viswanathan, who has so compellingly demonstrated how the field of English literature was established in India in advance of its installation in the schools of Britain. To no small degree, the function of the literary in India was replicated in the use of American literature in the Philippines, and many of the humanist functions associated with the literary in that moment of colonial rule: “the shaping of character,” for example, and “the disciplines of ethical thinking,” were drawn upon as an example for U.S. administrators in the Philippines. That said, there were significant differences between the two systems. While I explore this relation in more detail in chapter 1, let me chart this distinction with two brief examples here. For one thing, the U.S. educational model in the Philippines also had a quite different precedent in schools like the Hampton Institute, the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, and the Carlisle Indian Industrial Training School, which aimed to “rehabilitate” African American and Native American students not through literature but through labor. Another important distinction is that the priority given to American literature in the Philippines was symptomatic of the desire among U.S. officials to distance themselves from the example of British colonial rule, which they deemed openly exploitative. American literature was understood to be emblematic of the core values of the republic, as distinct from the excesses of European imperialism. The American literary object thus stood at an ideological crossroads, both drawing upon the achievements of Anglo-Saxon tradition as justification for Anglo-American rule, and marking the exceptionalism through which U.S. sovereignty in the islands would be recast as an extension of U.S. republicanism.

Focusing on the imperial composition of American letters serves also to diversify and reframe the traditional historical scholarship on the field history of English and American literature. Extant histories of these fields, such as Gerald Graff’s institutional history of literary study, Arthur Applebee’s account of the evolution of English instruction, Michael Warner’s history of American letters, and Kermit Vanderbilt’s study of the profession of American literature, have provided painstaking and persuasive narratives of the origins of the discipline of English in the contemporary academy, and of American literary study at all levels of the curriculum in the United States. For the most part, however, this work has taken as its
focus the curricular developments and literary tastes of New England; as such, this archive has had little to say about the extranational motivations for, or implications of, such developments. *Empire’s Proxy* tells a different story, one that locates the institutional origins of American literary study not only in the common schools of Massachusetts and the late nineteenth-century curricular reforms at Harvard and Yale, but also in the maintenance of the new American empire, in schoolrooms in Manila and on teacher-transports across the Pacific. In so doing, it draws upon the critical work by scholars of American studies whose interventions have provided a critical paradigm for the conceptual undoing of American exceptionalism, while insisting upon the historical and institutional specificity of American literary study as distinct from the more recent interdisciplinary field of American studies. Such extranational connections are crucial to understanding the politics of literary study and are particularly timely in our contemporary climate in which the necessity, utility, and possibilities of the humanities are increasingly called into question.

*Imperial Culture and the Making of Educated Subjects*

As part of the ideological justification for the expansionist project, the literary object was invested with a pedagogical, transformative power to create a population of educated subjects in myriad ways. In one sense, “educated subjects” refers to the notion that the United States’ “benevolent” colonial rule would serve to make Filipinos into modern, “civilized” subjects through their institutional and cultural education. In this process, literary instruction played a central role in the educational system in the occupied Philippines. I examine this history in order to consider why the literary was imagined to serve as a privileged site for the molding of colonial subjects, particularly at a time when the consolidation of the field of English was itself very new in public schools across the United States. Despite the beginnings of field-consolidation in New England in the 1890s, by 1901 literature continued to be unevenly taught across regions and school districts in the United States, with only 32 percent of secondary students in New York enrolled in literature courses, for example, as opposed to 73 percent in Massachusetts. Latin continued to be a more important subject than English in American high schools for several years. In the Philippines, however, the introduction of the study of English and American literature accompanied the imposition of the English language
as the lingua franca of democracy. Within a few years of the reopening of public schools in the Philippines, courses in American and English literature were required of all advanced students. Primary and intermediate instruction similarly focused on the dissemination of the English language as a colonial idiom through the use of American spellers and primers whose format relied upon heavy excerpting from American authors. The goals of such study were stated explicitly in the literary anthologies printed for use in the Philippines, which asserted that “the greatest benefit to be derived from the study of poetry is the Inculcation of High Ideals—Love of Country, Self-Sacrifice, Devotion to Truth and Duty, and the Appreciation of the Beautiful.” Such work, it was presumed, could more efficiently be performed by the instruction of literary texts than by any other means.

Historians, legal scholars, feminist critics, and others have written extensively about the U.S. colonial state in the Philippines and its legacies in U.S.–Philippine relations beyond Philippine independence. Their work has enlarged our understanding of the historical and material conditions that motivated the U.S. colonial state-building project. There is also admirable work that illuminates how the race and gender politics inscribed in late nineteenth-century notions of “savage” and “civilized” created the cultural conditions in which such an occupation could not only be attempted, but made to conform to the nationalist paradigm of American exceptionalism. This study draws upon such work, but complements it with a more focused understanding of how that dichotomy between savage and civilized was leveraged through the institutional form of the colonial school; it was through the paradigm of a humanist education that such schools aimed first to teach Filipinos that they were not civilized and then, under the guidance of American sovereignty, to “civilize” them as modern colonial subjects.

In this process, the imposition of English, both language and literature, was essential. The centrality of English was rationalized through reference to the linguistic multitude of the Philippines. Advisors to the educational system insisted that because the local languages were too dissimilar and were shared too infrequently among the population, a unified system of education in the native vernacular would be impossible. “The native dialects,” one officer concluded, “must therefore be abandoned as a basis of instruction.” As we shall see in chapter 1, this linguistic “chaos” was also used as a mark against Philippine sovereignty, since a nation of many languages, it was insisted, must be a divided nation. But such assertions of the
practicality and expediency of English belie the intense ideological force that the imposition of English would entail. Along with assertions of the practical value of English came a companion logic of English as the bearer of cultural value and moral authority, and it is in this sense that the literary became central to the ideological project of the U.S. occupation. With the acquisition of its territories in the Pacific and the Atlantic, the United States embarked upon a new phase of colonial expansion, one that would be characterized not by American settlement, as with westward expansion on the continent, but by market investment and military dominance. In the absence of a majority white American population, the literary came to serve as a powerful proxy for the American colonial authority, working as a mobile model of the Americanism to which Filipinos were expected to adapt. Unlike the minority African American and Native American populations in the United States, whose training was supervised by a vigilant, dominant white society and its legal and extralegal practices of exclusion and intimidation, in the Philippines there could be no integration into the American public, no absorption of its cultural norms through the living example of white, middle-class culture. Unable to be incorporated into white, middle-class American culture, Filipinos could not be influenced by their proximity to its power, or by the perceived persuasiveness of its example. Instead, American literature came to serve as both example and exemplar of the Americanism that McKinley and his pro-imperialist supporters believed to be necessary for Philippine sovereignty. In this sense, it presented an ideal Americanism, the perfection of national culture to which no singular colonial representative could aspire.

While the first concern of this book is to consider the importance of the American literary tradition to the project of colonial dominance in the Philippines, the second is to trace how the imperial origins of American literary study resonate with the field we know today. Here, I use the phrase “educated subjects” to consider the emergence of English and American literary study as a respectable academic subject whose origins are intertwined with the process of nation-building at home and colonial management abroad. Scholars of American studies have recently redirected our attention to the critical place of U.S. empire in the emergence of that field, thus laying the groundwork for the questions I ask here about the particular relations between U.S. colonialism, humanism, and literary study. Despite this important paradigm shift in American studies, however, histories of the field-formation of American literature in the United States, its institutionalization in secondary and university curricula, and
the selection and standardization of central “canonical” texts have largely remained limited to the framework of the nation.

As historians of the field have documented, the first courses in English and American literature emerged in college curricula in the late nineteenth century, with the turn of the century witnessing a proliferation of doctoral dissertations, college textbooks, and literary anthologies dedicated to defining the field of American literature. Such courses combined the “scientific” research methods of philology with older traditions of rhetoric, oratory, and belles lettres into a newly consolidated discipline of English, endowed with the twin values of mental rigor and moral uplift. Most accounts locate the origins of American literary study in the common schools of Massachusetts and the college entrance requirements of Harvard and Yale, in order to situate the development of the field within a regional contest between the literary centers of New York and Boston and a national context of increased standardization, both academic and professional. While these developments are a crucial part of the history of the field, by linking Massachusetts and Manila I seek to complement this narrative by telling a different story, one that complicates the linear narrative of origin by asking how the practical and ideological work of colonial dominance figured into the emergence of the discipline of English in the United States, and how the cultural and moral values associated with literary study gained their significant nationalist currency in relation to the imperial project. Understanding such connections is crucial, both for a more accurate assessment of the political, social, and intellectual stakes that animated the field’s consolidation and to better understand how those interests have driven the field in the long century of its growth. One of the principal aims of this book, then, will be to flesh out the generative nature of this synchronicity between field-formation “at home” and literary instruction abroad, in order to ask what difference it might make to our understanding of the field’s current form and functions when we locate the fact of empire at its center.

The third focus of this book is concerned with another sense of subject, looking beyond the academic subject of American literature to the paradigm of tutelage as a model for producing Filipinos as modern subjects who would comply with their subjection to the authority of the United States colonial apparatus. Here I explore what Louis Althusser has isolated as the “ambiguity” implicit in the multiple modern senses of the subject. It refers first to a “free” subject who is “author of and responsible for its actions”; at the same time, it also indicates “a subjected being, who submits to a higher
authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission.\textsuperscript{24} The apparent contradiction between these meanings is actually a necessary and constitutive paradox; for Althusser, the first meaning is in fact only the “reflection of the effect” of the second, as the “free” subject is not free at all, but interpellated as such “in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself.’ There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. That is why they ‘work all by themselves.’”\textsuperscript{25}

This understanding is particularly relevant in the history of the American colonial Philippines, where alongside the actual imposition of English education as an institutional force, the paradigm of tutelage functioned as a more generalized model, envisioning Filipinos as willing students under the guidance and direction of benevolent Americans. Vociferous debates about Filipinos’ readiness for self-government demonstrate the utility of the paradigm of colonial tutelage as a temporary measure through which the U.S. government could set the terms under which independence would finally be granted. William H. Taft held that the U.S. colonial government would instruct Filipinos in self-government, thereby assuring an eventual state of independence that, because it rested with American administrators and legislators to ascertain when Filipinos had successfully learned this most important lesson, could be continually and indefinitely postponed according to the convenience of the U.S. government. Though Taft, then governor-general of the Philippines, insisted publicly that the American civil government in the Philippines would be simply a short apprenticeship in independent government until a Filipino government could be established, he undermined these assurances in no uncertain terms, remarking in private that Filipinos would need “fifty or one hundred years” of close supervision to “develop anything resembling Anglo-Saxon political principles and skills.”\textsuperscript{26} Such discussions animate the very paradox Althusser describes, in which it would only be Filipinos’ ready assimilation to the codes of middle-class Protestant Americanism—that is, their willing submission to the authority of American rule—that would indicate their achievement of a sufficient level of civilization to be entrusted with independence. Quite literally, their independence, it was promised, would be granted when they could be trusted to submit “freely,” “all by themselves.” Such notions reiterate a founding mythology about the distinctions between Anglo-Saxon and Filipino capabilities, justifying the disenfranchisement of and rule over Filipino subjects through a logic of comparative developmental delay.
What should be clear by such testimony is that Filipinos’ actual “capacity” for self-government was able to be questioned only because the logic of racial progress was such that, within the United States, people of Asian descent were already understood to be further behind on the evolutionary scale toward civilization. The legal exclusion of Chinese workers and residents in the United States had been established in 1882, but harassment of and prejudice against Asian residents dated from much earlier. Indispensable to the steady growth of an expanding and industrializing U.S. nation, Asian workers were reviled as racial and cultural Others, as sources of contagion, vice, and crime, and the legal enforcement of discriminatory policies against Asian workers served the very instrumental purpose of keeping them “other” to the national body even as they contributed immeasurably to the expansion of its geographical terrain, resources, and wealth. Within such logic, the idea that Filipinos were a “backward” people, “savage,” “tribal,” and “uncivilized,” resonated with powerful racial and cultural stereotypes that had already formed the conditions for the legal and institutional discrimination against Asians.

At the same time, just as the labor of Asian workers was indispensable to the massive industrialization that had produced the nation’s tremendous wealth, the question of U.S. sovereignty in the Philippines in 1898 had little to do with Filipinos’ perceived inability to go it alone. Militarily, the islands were regarded as an opportunity for greater U.S. influence in the Pacific. Fears about European commercial and military influence in China made the prospect of U.S. naval bases in the Philippines an attractive possibility. More significantly, business interests in the Philippines were influential in making the case for continued, unfettered access to the resources of the island. The period of economic depression between 1893 and 1897 elevated anxieties about Americans’ ability to consume the products of an increasingly efficient productive capacity, and markets in China and Japan were seen as a solution for the problem of overproduction. As the historian Brooks Adams advised, “The expansion of any country must depend on the market for its surplus product; and China is the only region which now promises almost boundless possibilities of absorption, especially in the way of iron for its railroads.” Cotton, iron, and other goods were increasingly exported to China in the last decade of the century; the United States’ total exports to China grew from $4 million in 1890, to almost $12 million in 1897. Even Albert J. Beveridge, hyperbolic defender of U.S. empire, admitted that the imperial cause was one of both “opportunity and duty” and urged U.S. lawmakers to repeal all duties on
Philippine goods and open the Philippines to “all American markets.” Consequently, racialized understandings of Filipinos as unfit for independence were inextricably linked to the exploitation of both the human labor and the material resources that the islands would provide.

Within this context, the educational paradigm was a crucial lens through which the exploitative colonial relationship could be recast as a benevolent civilizing mission. When President McKinley denied the material benefits of laying claim to the islands by claiming that “we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government,” he was implicitly reshaping Euro-American cultural fears about Asian vice by depicting Filipinos as errant children who needed the paternalistic guidance of the white American authority. Within the new embrace of the Anglo-Americanism as an “imperial race,” the educational project expanded upon a more general model in which Filipinos were imagined as students and white Americans as teachers in the lessons of racial uplift, self-government, and Anglo-Protestant civilization. Through such programs, the school system was instrumental both as the “most effective solution” toward the “social transformation of the people” and as the signifier of benevolent dominance in the reinforcement of a racialized hierarchy, imagined as benevolent dominance, on the part of the U.S. civil government in the archipelago. Clearly, then, the utopian promise of public education was a defining one for U.S. colonial administrators. As Dean Worcester wrote in 1914, in his two-volume study of the Philippines, “No work accomplished since the American occupation is of more fundamental and far-reaching importance than that of the Bureau of Education.”

** Literary Histories of Philippine–U.S. Relations

At the same time that the United States was working to establish its public school system as an apparatus of colonial rule in the Philippines, it was opening schools in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Hawai‘i as well. As parts of the newly acquired island territories, each island was assigned a commission of American politicians and educators who reported back to President McKinley and who outlined the shared principles that guided the educational apparatus in the island territories: expansion of primary education, extensive lessons on hygiene, moral behavior, and civic duty, and the introduction of English as the language of business and commerce. In Puerto Rico and Hawai‘i, as in the Philippines, administrators of the
civil governments and the school system regarded the natives as members of “less fortunate races” and imagined that the role of the school was to provide a proper moral compass to its students, as well as to cultivate an appreciation for the achievements of Anglo-American civilization. In each case, too, school administrators insisted that the native populations were not simply willing, but “exceedingly anxious to learn to read, write, and speak the English language.”

To this end, American teachers were recruited to teach in the islands, enlisted in “great armies of instruction” to do work that was “in every respect pioneer work” and thus to serve as agents of Manifest Destiny beyond the continental borders of the United States.

Despite the apparent similarities, however, the status of each island in its differential relation to the United States meant that while their initial organizing structures were similar, the education systems and curricular impositions that evolved were quite different. One difference was the attitude toward instruction in English. While each of the school systems focused on English education, in Puerto Rico this instruction was bilingual for the first years of the colonial government, and the debates about, and contestations of, the primacy of English education continued well beyond the first superintendents’ efforts to foreground English as the primary language of instruction. Henry K. Carroll, special commissioner for the United States to Puerto Rico, argued that “the attachment to [Spanish] has long and strong roots. It will not do and it is not necessary to take any harsh measures against it. . . . Both Spanish and English may be used side by side for years to come.”

This policy was written into the curriculum by the head of Puerto Rico’s Bureau of Education in 1900, when he prepared the first set of teachers’ manuals outlining instruction in both Spanish and English; he offered that “the justification of the study of two languages lies in the fact that one is the mother tongue of the great majority of the pupils of the Island. . . . The other language is destined to be the business and political language of this Island, and should be taught in order that the rising generation may have the same advantages in a business, professional or political career as their compatriots of the mainland.”

To be sure, it was at every point made clear that the pedagogical priority was granted to English. Maj. Gen. Guy Henry, the military governor of Puerto Rico, authorized that all secondary and postsecondary graduates be examined in English, and that teachers who spoke English receive preferential treatment for promotion; teachers of English were paid higher wages than other instructors, and all Puerto Rican teachers were required
to learn English during separate training periods and summer teachers’ retreats. Moreover, the curricular substitution of U.S. history and geography for what had formerly been Spanish and insular history and geography courses made explicit the end goal of this instruction. However, the focus on bilingual education departed significantly from the program under way in the Philippines. As I explain in greater detail in chapter 1, in the Philippines the U.S. education system insisted on the absolute sovereignty of English; arguments asserting the racial and linguistic diversity of the islands were among those most often repeated as proof of the necessity of U.S. rule as a means toward eventual self-government. At no point was instruction authorized in Spanish, not to mention Tagalog or any other of the native languages. Rather, colonial administrators insisted that English would be the necessary “medium of transmission” of both “modern modes of thought” and “modern civilization.” It was in the Philippines that English came to bear a strong moral weight, and was imagined to be a civilizing agent in its own right. English, as I explain in chapter 1, was proposed as the “alchemy” by which recalcitrant and “backward” Filipino subjects would be transformed into willing modern political subjects.

Perhaps a more significant difference is visible at the level of curriculum design. In Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Hawai‘i, the educational programs that developed slanted heavily toward manual and industrial education. José-Manuel Navarro reports that in Puerto Rico, the administrators borrowed from the curricular models established at Hampton and Tuskegee; as early as 1900, Richard Henry Pratt, the head of the Carlisle School, sent a set of educational models to Gen. John Eaton, the first U.S. commissioner of education there. In addition, Booker T. Washington opened the doors of Tuskegee to cohorts of Cuban students in 1899, and Puerto Rican students in 1900, all as part of a plan for inculcating a love of industry, thrift, and modesty, with the goal of “instituting American culture and American educational ideals in Porto Rico.”

In Hawai‘i, too, the emphasis of the U.S.-run educational system was decidedly on vocational education. American missionaries had begun to establish schools in Hawai‘i as early as the 1820s, bringing with them new religious doctrine, educational ideals, and devastating disease. Upon the annexation of the islands in 1898, the enactment of a compulsory education law aimed to bring under more direct American influence the diversity of populations who had been recruited or compelled to the islands as cheap labor for the highly profitable system of agricultural export. Doubtless the great force of these business interests in the political affairs of the
islands had much to do with the vocational orientation of the educational system; this was spelled out quite clearly by Katherine M. Cook, chief of the Office of Education’s Division of Special Problems, in saying that the schools’ objective to provide “the ability to make good in some type of productive labor” was “responsive to the particular situation in Hawai‘i whose industrial system demands unskilled and low-cost workers, almost wholly of the agricultural variety.” “Academic programs,” Cook asserted, “have not proved successful in meeting the problem in Hawaii.”

Despite the grand rhetoric about education for moral uplift and participation in the upward mobility of American democracy, Cook reiterated her point in asserting that “the need then as now is for unskilled labor. . . . A school program limited to the usual academic subjects would ignore almost entirely the very heart of the life work of the Islands.” This was, in no uncertain terms, a curriculum designed for servitude and labor, and in that regard it differed little from those at the Hampton Institute and the Tuskegee Institute, which had established programs of reading, writing, and vocational training as the way to efficiently assimilate Native American and African American students.

Peter Schmidt has demonstrated that the educational institutions of the territories acquired in 1898 borrowed from the model of racial uplift in schools across the post-Reconstruction South, and in turn reinforced such practices as legitimate social policy. In describing what he calls “Jim Crow colonialism,” Schmidt argues compellingly that it was through the adaptation of those models in the colonial context that Jim Crow segregation became codified as national policy that then expanded beyond the South to inform the national discourse of Progressive educational reform. Thus was the expansion of Progressive education to the colonies inextricably linked to the revivification of Reconstruction’s policies of racial uplift, reanimating that “paradoxical mix of citizen-building and subjection at the heart of Progressivist discourse at home and abroad.” It is all the more striking, then, that the curriculum in the Philippines developed in quite a different direction. Fred Atkinson, the first superintendent of education, wrote to Booker T. Washington to solicit his advice about the project of Filipino education; before the commencement of his work in the islands, Atkinson visited Hampton, Tuskegee, and Carlisle to assess them as models of the potential for the education of “inferior races.” Likewise, his successor, David Barrows, toured several Native American reservation schools with the idea that these would prove to be useful models for the organization of schools in rural and mountainous areas of the islands.
Instead, he ended his tour convinced that the Native American reservation schools had been unsuccessful in winning the hearts and minds of the students. As I explore in more detail in chapters 1 and 2, Barrows set out quite deliberately to create a curriculum that would focus heavily on English-language acquisition and, for the more advanced students, American literature study as the mechanisms through which Filipinos would be persuaded about the benefits of continued U.S. rule and convinced of the superiority of American civilization.

Why, then, might administrators in the Philippines have decided upon a humanistic curriculum, particularly during a period when industrial education was deemed more advantageous for racialized populations in the United States and its other newly acquired territories? The crucial distinction was the question of eligibility for citizenship, which, combined with the factors of racial difference and geographical distance, presented the literary object as a practical and efficient tool of colonial rule. In theory, Hawai’ians became eligible for U.S. citizenship upon annexation in 1898; Puerto Ricans were made U.S. citizens only in 1917. However, from the first, school administrators advocated for Puerto Rican statehood quite explicitly and vociferously. In contrast, the administrators of the school system in the Philippines insisted that Filipinos were racially unassimilable and that the purpose of the colonial system in the Philippines was to secure the favorable conditions for U.S. “development” there, to establish a strategic military presence, and to prepare the islands for self-government. Nominal independence, at least, was the spoken intention for the Philippines, even if its timeline and structure were never formalized. Moreover, they argued that the departure of U.S. troops would leave the islands vulnerable to a despotic colonial rule by some other European power, and the departure of the civil government would constitute the “abandonment” of the natives, who were referred to as children in need of American parental protection.

Such paternalistic notions had everything to do with the racialized status of Filipinos and the context of late nineteenth-century fears of the “yellow peril” and restrictions on Asian immigration. Filipinos were considered “nationals” and could migrate to the United States freely after 1898 and were exempted from Asian exclusion laws. As such, they were aggressively targeted by labor recruiters in Hawai‘i and in the United States, with a dramatic period of migration in the first decades of the century, such that by 1930 there were 30,470 Filipinos in California alone. At the same time, Filipinos in the United States were subject to harassment, labor
intimidation, and unfair restrictions in housing, marriage, and other basic living conditions. It is in the context of these restrictions and the anxieties about racial mixing that underpinned them that the mobilization of the literary was deemed efficacious in providing a persuasive ideological basis for the asserted superiority of Anglo Americanism.

Rather than an anticipated statehood, the strategy in the Philippines was one of “Filipinization”: the “gradual substitution of Filipino personnel for American administrators and clerks in the colonial government.” Whereas tax and tariff laws in Puerto Rico contributed to an administrative and educational system in which political power was highly centralized, consolidated largely in the hands of American officials and a few Puerto Rican elites, when U.S. officials in the Philippines were unable to generate the income they desired through similar tariff laws, they were forced to develop a less-centralized model of colonial administration, giving nominal control to provincial governments led by Filipino elites. The result, according to Julian Go, was that the process of “Filipinization” depended upon a much more fluid, amorphous strategy of winning the collaboration of Filipino elites; this necessitated a decentralized and delicate organization of domination.

The moral mandate of a literary humanist education was thus a strategic part of the colonial apparatus that promised gradual independence and Filipino autonomy while assuring the ideological assimilation of Filipinos to the cultural values of Americanism. In literary education, Filipinos were supposed to absorb the cultural, political, and moral values of an emergent middle-class white Americanism, as well as learn submission to, if not gratitude for, the authority of the United States’ government. Through the strategy of Filipinization, the civil government attempted to assure Filipinos’ complicity with the American values taught through the educational system so urgently established under U.S. rule. As Renato Constantino has argued, “education became miseducation because it began to de-Filipinize the youth, taught them to regard American culture as superior to any other, and American society as the model par excellence for Philippine society.”

Imperialism and the Pedagogical Public Sphere

The conditions in which colonial tutelage in the Philippines could come to be so instrumental at the end of the nineteenth century were marked by a particular investment in the transformative, even rehabilitative
power of education. The idea that education was fundamentally linked to citizenship dates back to the founding of the republic, and the cultural weight assigned to the status of educated versus noneducated individuals overlaps with the class, race, and gender distinctions that have been at the center of negotiations about whose cultural traditions count, and which social groups would see their practices abstracted as the national culture. Education, in other words, was an issue both of cultural definition and of social control long before it became, in the late nineteenth century, the privileged tool of liberal white “progressive” reformers seeking to intervene in the political and cultural traditions of working-class, immigrant, and nonwhite peoples. Among the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson noted the nationalist significance of education both in the formation of a ruling class and in the establishment of democracy; attempting to implement a new system of education in Virginia, he proposed the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge in 1779, arguing that a free society depended upon public schools as the basis of a well-educated and thus autonomous citizenry.\(^5^2\) In a move indicative of significant opposition to the idea of public funding of mass education, Virginia failed to pass Jefferson’s bill, and it was only after the Civil War, nearly a century later, that it instituted the large-scale public education that Jefferson proposed. Benjamin Franklin, too, designed a system of pragmatic education in his 1750 proposal for an English School in Philadelphia, where reading in English would be primary, so as to “early acquaint [students] with the Meaning and Force of Words” and “the Understandings or Morals of the Youth, May at the same Time be improv’d.”\(^5^3\) Franklin emphasized a curriculum in English, rather than in classical languages, as a pragmatic measure, asserting that “tho’ unacquainted with any ancient or foreign Tongue, [students] will be Masters of their own, which is of more immediate and general Use.”\(^5^4\) The utility of mastery in reading and writing in English followed in later years by instruction in mathematics, geography, and drawing, would lay the foundation for an educated and therefore autonomous population who, despite little knowledge of classical languages, would have great success in the more practical skills necessary for civic participation.

While Jefferson and Franklin envisioned different paths toward the shaping of a citizenry of a limited participatory democracy, both saw education as essential to the selective cultivation of that citizenry, and looked to education as an institution that would promote the interests of the Anglo-American propertied class and safeguard those interests by defining
them not as particular interests at all, but rather as legitimately national ones. Against these elitist, philosophical affirmations of the importance of education to the democratic mission of the United States stands the history in which literacy was a criminal offense among captive African Americans, thus doubly enforcing the equation between citizenship and education by making illiteracy a condition used to justify and perpetuate the system of slavery. The enduring and strategic hypocrisy of this standard is highlighted in a formative moment of Frederick Douglass’s autobiographical Narrative, in which he performs his own mastery of writing by transcribing the words of Hugh Auld, “If you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave.” Mimicking the words of his captor, Douglass points to the entrenched logic of education and domination within a very different relationship, in which the withholding of certain forms of knowledge constituted a part of a broader program of repression.

Such examples are merely grounding points meant to indicate the extent to which the function of education in the United States has been to absorb some subjects into the national body while excluding others; in particular, the cultivation or denial of literacy has been a primary apparatus for including or excluding select communities as citizens and as national subjects. But the origins of literary study and the nationalist implications of the field of English as it developed at the end of the nineteenth century involved much more than the expansion of literacy training; its emergence also depended upon the standardization of English as the primary language of that democracy, unofficial and yet violently enforced. Lastly, it required the widespread acceptance of the literary as a new organ of national culture, part of a corpus of shared cultural texts assumed to impart a common body of knowledge and, implicitly, provide a shared system of values among the nation’s disparate populations.

This fundamentally new place of education at the center of the social production of the citizen in the late nineteenth century marks the formation of what I will call the pedagogical public sphere. By this I mean to indicate several intertwined developments. The first was the unprecedented importance education held in the social imaginary at the end of the nineteenth century, as the institution that might address social discord and guarantee the smooth functioning of a representative democracy. Until the early nineteenth century, formal education was the privilege of the very few, and public schools, when they existed, were charged mainly to teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic at the primary
level. The great expansion of educational facilities in the nineteenth century, particularly after the disestablishment of the church in 1833, marked the growing importance of the school as the site for the formation of a working democracy. The most notable champion of this shift was Horace Mann, who, acting in the newly created post of secretary to the Massachusetts State Board of Education, regarded the public-school movement as “the great equalizer” that would eradicate poverty, sickness, and crime. With a critical eye toward the American class system, Mann reported that “[universal education] gives each man the independence and the means by which he can resist the selfishness of other men. It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich; it prevents being poor.” Mann thus conceived of the common school as a force of individualism and independence that would contribute to the vitality of American culture by teaching a common set of beliefs and knowledges. As importantly, the school would be a primary civic institution entrusted with the formation of new citizens and, simultaneously, new publics.

At issue for Mann and other supporters of the public education movement was both the extension of education to better fit the masses for citizenship and the standardization of training adapted to the newly expanding middle class. Of the reforms that Mann championed, most notable was the standardization he sought through the professionalizing of the school. The training of teachers in normal schools, the organization of the curriculum into progressive grades, and compulsory attendance were all part of Mann’s vision. In its new function as the sole place for the child’s early education, the school functioned, as Richard Brodhead has noted, as the “tutelary adjunct” of the middle-class home, reinforcing the school as an essential “training ground” for citizens of the republic, while expanding the standardization essential to the consolidation of a national culture compatible with, or indeed elaborated from, the norms of Anglo-American domesticity. Such a development points to the disciplinary power of the school, mobilized not in the name of religion but according to the disciplinary structures, habits, and values of an emergent middle-class culture. As the education historian Lawrence Cremin notes:

The school performed many functions: it provided youngsters with an opportunity to become literate in a standard American English via the Webster speller and the McGuffey readers; it offered youngsters a common belief system combining undenominational Protestantism and nonpartisan patriotism; it afforded youngsters an elementary familiarity with simple
arithmetic, bits and pieces of literature, history, geography, and some rules of life at the level of the maxim and proverb; it introduced youngsters to an organized subsociety other than the household and church that observed such norms as punctuality, achievement, competitiveness, fair play, merit, and respect for adult authority.62

Cremin’s description of the intellectual, moral, and physical discipline entrusted to the common school clearly marks its role as the training ground for the growing managerial class, and the formation of a dominant national culture aligned with the sensibilities of the expanding middle class. The school functioned as a primary institutional force in buttressing the “intellectual and moral leadership” that, as Antonio Gramsci has illustrated, is essential in assuring the supremacy of a particular social group. Gramsci argues that a social group may “dominate” antagonistic forces through violent means, but it must always also create institutions through which it “leads” as well, by educating the desires, sensibilities, and ideological values of its subjects.63 Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the school had solidified its role both as an arbiter of national culture and as the site for producing its citizens; in other words, it functioned as a site for the social formation of citizens as subjects, both by the inculcation of a common, standardized body of information as the condition of the subject’s legibility as a citizen, and by enforcing the state’s authority over its subjects as one of tutelage. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a common-sense belief in the essential role of the school and in the utility of the basic skills that could be learned there, a belief reflected in the fact that by 1900, primary enrollment reached 94 percent.64 Not only was literacy fundamental to citizenship, but the exercise of civil responsibilities, according to nineteenth-century reformers, depended upon skillful instruction of those responsibilities to the public—in other words, a pedagogical intervention into the public sphere in which educators would guide individuals into the duties of citizenship.

Accompanying the growing importance of the school was a shift in the content of such training, particularly as the school adapted to the role of managing the social and economic transformations of the second half of the century. Thus the second aspect of the citizen’s education that I mean to highlight in referencing the pedagogical public sphere is the new role of the literary that worked to extend the values of the white middle class as it differentiated those values from the cultural traditions of other populations that were selectively included or excluded from recognition within
the national body. Among the many social and material dislocations of the last quarter of the century—industrialization, labor unrest, new patterns of immigration from Europe and Asia, as well as urbanization, emancipation, and woman suffrage—the function of literature as part of a humanist education became increasingly important as a tool for defending the primacy of Anglo-American cultural traditions, and for initiating the nation’s racialized Others into those traditions. Christopher Newfield has written eloquently about this functioning by noting that “all humanisms have been, in some way, disciplinary humanism, constructing manageable subjects. All humanisms have been, in some way, supremacist humanisms, entangled in the user’s attempts to justify the superiority of a national status, an opposition to strangers, a way of life.” As Newfield has demonstrated, historically the liberal arts were regarded as the “expression of human freedom,” liberal referring to the arts that could occupy the leisure time of a class not obliged to work—that is, slave-owning and elite classes.

Building upon the legacy of Romantic humanists of the early nineteenth century, humanism posited the liberal arts as the artist’s freedom from commerce and industrialism, a meaning that, by the end of the century, contributed to the strong associative link between literature and cultural and moral value. But such values continued to advance the interests of another leisured class, striving to normalize the dominance of American middle-class identity in “its difference from—and superiority to—other classes.” In the expansion of the school as an apparatus of civil authority and cultural training and the extension of literary education as a part of the public school’s mission, the literary served both of these functions, extending the authority of the white, American middle class, its supremacy over other classes, and its authority to discipline and subject. Within the late nineteenth-century pedagogical formation of the state, the category of literature was invested with the power of cultural training, an assimilative force meant to keep at bay the frightening disjunctures signaled by the increasingly visible evidence of racial and cultural difference. Inasmuch as access to education was crucially linked to access to the privileges of citizenship and participation in the representative democracy, the function of the humanities in the newly invented public school serves as an adept and alarming barometer of the formation of a late nineteenth-century national culture.

In addition to the new importance of education in the social imaginary and the role of the literary in extending the values of the white middle
class as those of the nation more broadly, the third sense of the pedagogical public sphere that I mean to highlight here is the metaphoric and literal functioning of education as a strategy of containment. Despite the temptation to understand the history of education as one of progressively expanding opportunity for a widening number of people, it is important to acknowledge the ample evidence that this expansion was, at best, uneven and contradictory. The truth about the movement toward universal public education in the nineteenth century was that it was not universal at all, but limited by race and segregated by class and gender. Inasmuch as the culture of education that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century was part of a larger project of defining the nation in the midst of enormous changes among its citizenry and its landscape, one need not look far to see plainly that the main function of education for many populations was the imposition of the habits and norms of middle-class Anglo-American life, at the expense of their own cultural traditions, livelihoods, and sometimes even their lives.

Particularly after the Civil War, education became a primary mechanism for social containment and cultural assimilation, imagined as the institution poised for the “rehabilitation” of newly freed African Americans and the “pacification” of Native Americans. In these instances, the function of education as a medium of social control was rendered more apparent. Institutions such as the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, which was established in 1868 for the manual training of African Americans, were organized according to the logic of domestic tutelage, in which it was believed that African Americans would benefit morally from the labor exacted from them at the school, as well as from their emulation of the codes of middle-class, white domesticity. While operating as a normal school that trained teachers for black schools in the South, Hampton also stuck to a rigid curriculum of industrial and agricultural training. Despite the criticism of other community members, including one who insisted that it was the “height of foolishness” to think that former slaves needed training to work, Hampton’s founder and headmaster, Gen. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, insisted upon the efficacy of industrial training over an academic curriculum, saying that “it will pay in a moral way. It will make them men and women as nothing else will. It is the only way to make them Christians.” Such sinister visions formed the flip side to Mann’s ideals of education as the handmaiden of independence; these schools were crucial to the maintenance of unequal social and material relations between white Americans and African Americans,
fashioning programs in the “domestic arts” and agricultural labor while scripting this “progressive” education as the fulfillment of political independence for African Americans.

Among the many tragedies that accompanied Hampton’s strict adherence to a vocational curriculum was the fact that many of these skills, particularly the aspects of industrial training, were already anachronistic in the quickly industrializing economy. As Laura Wexler has demonstrated, “the individualized, small-scale, low-capital, unmechanized operations that Hampton taught . . . [were] in actuality outmoded most as soon as [they were] learned. It was training for a second-class career at best and more likely for domestic service or low-level, nonunion labor.” The point, however, was that the training itself, not the job it would later enable its owner to take up, revealed the moral imperative behind the curriculum and the school. Similarly, as the history of forced education for Native Americans bears witness, for example, the “democracy” promised by the common school was one of violent deracination and forced submission to white hegemony, at an extraordinary cost in human life. As at Hampton, industrial training was deemed necessary for Native Americans, whose pacification was attempted through the (often compulsory) attendance of Native children at residential schools where they were expected to adopt the dress, language, eating habits, and daily regimen of their white counterparts. In some cases, Native children were forced into hard labor at school, so as to provide for the material gain of the institution that held them captive. Other times, they were farmed out as domestics to white families. The proliferation of such examples demonstrates the power of education in a white cultural imaginary for envisioning the annihilation of cultural difference and the “assimilation” of nonwhite subjects in their roles in a highly racially segregated social formation. This pedagogical intervention underscores how, despite the curricular differences, by the end of the nineteenth century it was the book and not the sword that was understood to solve the “Native problem,” thus setting a strong precedent for the U.S. occupation of the Philippines, where a tutelary paradigm of “benevolent assimilation” insisted on the necessity of moral, intellectual, and political training for Filipinos as the condition of their eventual independence.

By referring to the pedagogical public sphere, I mean to highlight these multiple facets that characterized the expansion of education as an institutional force linked to the privileges of citizenship, cultural and political legibility, and bodily freedom. Contingent upon this conceptualization of
the educated citizen is the governing metaphor of education as tutelage, a force in the “rehabilitation” of the nation’s other publics. As should be clear, I do not refer to a utopian vision of public discourse where individuals debate the common good. I do not mean, to use Jürgen Habermas’s words, “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed [and where] access is guaranteed to all citizens.” Quite the contrary: I use the phrase precisely to isolate the contradictions most thoughtfully articulated by Nancy Fraser: the concept of the public sphere, as outlined by Habermas, is both essential as a analytic for “theorizing the limits of democracy,” and limited as an explanatory concept in that it refers only to an idealized version of democratic access while erasing the histories of multiple counterpublics.

Thus, my concerns echo George Eley’s critique of the concept of the public sphere as an idea through which the bourgeoisie marked their interests and their public institutions as universal. That is to say, the public sphere operates as a function of hegemony to mark as public, as “popular,” the interests of a specific class. Operating on both discursive and institutional levels, the “pedagogical public sphere” characterized a moment when the state’s hegemonic function was mobilized through the school (on the institutional level) as well as through a pedagogical discourse in which the interests of the middle class were extended, often violently, as a form of progressive tutelage. Including the history of U.S. expansion into the Pacific diversifies this frame, responding to the call of scholars like Anna Brickhouse, who urges that we “reenvision the nineteenth-century public sphere itself as a plurality of competing and often mutually antagonistic public spheres.”

This book hopes to broaden the scope of these competing public spheres to include one important part of this newly reframed story. This is one of transpacific contact and textual imposition—what I define in chapter 1 as the literary imperative—through which the meanings of American culture were redefined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In accounting for the extranational circulation of American literature and its use as an instrument of colonial dominance, I will demonstrate, our geographical and ideological understandings of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century American literatures become increasingly vexed.

By the 1890s, as I have argued, the question was not whether the state should take up the task of educating its citizenry but how it would do so. In this function it was crucial that the state seem to represent and speak to and for all of its citizens equally, even while it worked to maintain specific and uneven social relations. As Gramsci again reminds us:
In reality, the State must be conceived of as an “educator,” in as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation. Because one is acting essentially on economic forces, reorganising and developing the apparatus of economic production, creating a new structure, the conclusion must not be drawn that superstructural factors should be left to themselves, to develop spontaneously, to a haphazard and sporadic germination. The State, in this field, too, is an instrument of “rationalisation,” of acceleration, and of Taylorisation. It operates according to a plan, urges, incites, solicits, and “punishes.”

Here we see most clearly Gramsci’s delineation of the importance of the ideological—the superstructural—in the maintenance of power. Far from superfluous, it is the realm in which the state “educates,” which is to say, creates its subjects in the double sense: authorizing them as subjects while subjecting them to its authority. Put another way, Gramsci reminds us that the ideological cannot be relegated to the realm of “mere ideas” or understood as the superstructural effect of economic relations; rather, ideology is the field upon which the struggle for dominance is fought and won. While the expansionist interests of the state competed for domination through military struggle abroad, it competed on a different terrain altogether for what Gramsci calls “intellectual and moral leadership” both at home and in the newly acquired territories. The former struggle was located firmly on a group of islands that McKinley himself reported not to have been able to locate on a map, but the second took place not only in the archipelago but also across the United States, where the legitimation of the imperial project brought to the fore the instability of the proclaimed superiority of the U.S. republic and posed questions about the content of American national culture.

It is in this shift that the field of American letters took shape, emerging at the core of the new curriculum. I hope to demonstrate how the literary served as a crucial site for determining what counted as a legitimate national public by determining which texts would constitute the nation’s cultural traditions, becoming, ideally and ideologically if not practically, the basis for a shared national culture. In linking the formation of American literary culture, and the national identity it worked to consolidate, to the imperial project in the Philippines, this book illuminates the transpacific connections between the diverse publics in the United States and its colonial sites in the Philippines. The school, as an institution in the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, has been a primary site for that
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competition. Likewise, the notion of the pedagogical as a vector for social relations—that is, the notion that individuals were to be instructed in their proper place as national subjects—participates in the contestatory discourse between versions of the public sphere. It is this sense of the pedagogical public sphere—the rhetorical force of the pedagogical as a conceptual framework for producing the citizen’s lived relation to national culture—that provided the framework for the modern history of American letters.

My book connects these curricular developments in the United States with the imperial educational framework in the occupied Philippines in order to explore the transnational publics that emerged after 1898. One limitation of such a study is that there is a great deal of emphasis on the administrative and ideological designs of the colonial project in the Philippines and less emphasis on the process of reception and resistance to those designs. Indeed, it could be argued that the book’s focus on the perspectives and decisions of the colonizing power—the colonial functionaries, the political operatives, and the American teachers themselves—risks reenacting the violence of the colonial paradigm by effacing the paths of resistance that Filipinos invented and navigated in response to this imposition. I have tried to address the question of the varied responses to the imposition of English and of American literature in the Philippines by pointing to patterns of literary and literary-critical production among Filipino and Filipino American writers, particularly in chapters 4 and 5. But I have accorded much greater detail and emphasis to the language, mechanisms, and assumptions of the colonizers here for two distinct reasons. Tracing reception for determinations of resistance, while necessary, is also a theoretically compromised task. For the most part, collected responses of students of the American educational system have been eerily upbeat about the legacy of the “Thomasites,” as American teachers in the Philippines were called, and the curriculum of texts and ideals they designed for the colonial educational project. Such texts complicate any binary the critic might hope to map between an unequivocal U.S. dominance on the one hand and Filipino resistance on the other. That said, the question of resistance has been documented to useful ends elsewhere. In the context of the Philippines, Vicente Rafael’s study of the nationalist plays that emerged in response to the U.S. census project in the Philippines, and John D. Blanco’s exploration of the political and cultural forms that emerged to contest Spanish colonial rule at the end of the nineteenth century, are especially important contributions. In particular, Rafael’s focus
on the seditionist plays, written in the Tagalog vernacular and popular among working-class and nationalist elites, illuminates a specific mode in which Filipinos contested the epistemological and administrative paradigms of American colonial rule; Blanco’s analysis of the counterhistories of colonial rule illuminates how the crisis in colonial hegemony gave rise to political expressions that “revealed the exploration, experimentation, and transgression of meanings and values of colonial society.” On the broader subject of literature and colonialism, another important contribution is Priya Joshi’s study of the English novel’s reception in India, which studies the circulation of fiction in India with fine nuance to the historical and regional distinctions in what texts were read, in which languages, and by whom.

This book’s primary purpose, however, is to intervene in the historical field-formation of American literature, and to make the case for a new perspective on the ideological and geographical origins of the field. Given this necessarily limited scope, I have not been able to attend to the complexities of resistance with the detail that would otherwise have been possible. The point, however, is not to make U.S. hegemony appear seamless (which of course was not the case), but to locate the contradictions and constitutive tensions within the ideological outline of the program of literary humanism as a form of colonial tutelage itself. Humanism was formalized, as Lisa Lowe has demonstrated, in an “economy [that]文明izes and develops freedoms for ‘man’ in modern Europe, while relegating others to geographical and temporal spaces that are constituted as uncivilized and unfree.” Empire’s Proxy seeks to show how American literature was one such site of reproduction for what Lowe demonstrates as the liberal humanist “violence of forgetting” the conditions of unfreedom for others, both in the United States and outside of it. Further studies, informed by the principles of subaltern historiography and focused on how Filipinos exploited those contradictions, are undoubtedly still necessary.

Empire’s Proxy thus attempts to theorize the formation of American literary culture, and the national identity it worked to consolidate, as achieved in the global, transpacific articulation between the multiple publics in the United States and its colonial sites in the Philippines. Scholar C. J. Wan-ling Wee has reminded us that the lesson of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), published some thirty years ago, is that the material and discursive creation of the colonial Other is not without its effects upon the cultural formation of the colonizers themselves. With this in mind, the chapters that follow aim to show that the origins of American literature
are both nationalist and necessarily international, found in the curricular reforms of New England but also in the ideological and practical administration of its Philippine colony. Chapters 1 and 2 address these questions most explicitly. Chapter 1, “The Alchemy of English,” reads the archives of the U.S. civil government in the Philippines to trace the pedagogy of English in the islands. In particular, I detail how the English language was posited as the lingua franca of democracy in the Philippines precisely because of the symbolic capital attributed to American and English literature at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States, as the marker of education, taste, and elevated class status. Thus English was imposed upon the polyglot nation of the Philippines as a new language of dominance and a new signifying system, the language itself heralded as the “alchemy” that would transform resistant, racialized Filipino subjects into willing colonial subjects.

Chapter 2, “Empire’s Proxy,” turns to the instruction of American literature in both the United States and the Philippines. In the antebellum period, literature functioned as an agent in the extension and popularization of middle-class sentimentalism; I explore how, in the colonial context, it served as a privileged vehicle for the extension of that sensibility beyond the confines of the “domestic” and into the “foreign.” Its crucial function, in this context, was to model this sensibility and teach its forms of self-discipline by making such discipline seem internal to the colonized subject herself. Literature, in that sense, became an apt proxy in the service of empire. In the absence of a white majority to survey, discipline, and reward the compliance of its colonial subjects to the norms of middle-class, white culture, the book became a powerful surrogate for communicating those values, transporting and enacting them in classrooms across the islands.

The ideological framework of colonial tutelage functioned not just as an institutionalized model of formal instruction, but as the guiding logic for the colonial project itself. Chapter 3, “Agents of Assimilation,” explores the means through which the teacher-student relation provided a more general model for U.S.–Philippine relations, looking in particular at the gendered and racialized dynamics of tutelage as negotiated in the writings of American teachers recruited to work on the islands. To explore the representational and ideological nuances of this shift, this chapter focuses on the narratives of two teachers living and working in the Philippines: Mary Fee’s *A Woman’s Impressions of the Philippines* (1910) and William Freer’s *The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher* (1906). Within
the mundane accounts of household management in the islands, these narratives offered a crucial vision of bourgeois respectability as it aligned with the imperial project, carrying abroad the logic of progressive reform and enacting the fantasy of benevolent assimilation through the perfected ordering of household and schoolhouse. At the same time, each illuminates the constitutive contradictions at the heart of the colonial enterprise, challenging those same notions of bourgeois domesticity through unconventional arrangements of dominance and desire made possible by the elasticity of the tutelary as a model of familial intimacy.

In reading the history of the U.S. colonial occupation in the Philippines, the question of resistance to American hegemony remains critical. Chapter 4, “The Performance of Patriotism,” approaches the question of resistance through the prolific career of Carlos Bulosan, the Filipino American worker, activist, and poet whose collective autobiography, America Is in the Heart (1946), is considered a foundational text in Asian American literary studies. My interest in Bulosan stems from his own treatment as a “rediscovered” writer with a belated acceptance as a canonical author of American literature, and from his important role as a writer of the Philippine diaspora. Bulosan’s own movement between the Philippines and the United States foregrounds the centrality of English literacy to his explorations of his transforming identities and his shifting relationship to the ideological power of the American dream. Examining the complexities of the text’s regard for literary education and the utopian possibilities it holds for an inclusive public sphere, I argue that Bulosan’s text exposes the complex intimacies of education and uplift in a narrative that charts, time and again, the social, political, and emotional costs of the exclusion of colonial subjects from the apparatus of progressive education that was the promise of the colonial occupation. In its formal complexities, nonlinear narrative, and nonsynchronous development, Bulosan establishes an epistemological break in which his readers find the traces of an imperial education, that knowledge project whose effect can only be such contradictions and logical incommensurabilities. As such, Bulosan forcefully contests the premise of American exceptionalism, illuminating the racialized and gendered hierarchies that have historically functioned to preserve the place of white masculinity at the center of the American imaginary.

Finally, in a brief conclusion, I address the legacy of U.S. educational imperialism in the Philippines by way of the continued valorization of literature in English. The conclusion, “An Empire of Letters,” considers the
distinction, made in 1900 by William Dean Howells, between an empire of and a republic of letters. Howells’s view is that the republic of letters that is the publishing market of the United States guarantees, for a time at least, that the great power of the literary will have as much of a chance to do good as it will to do harm. As other critics have suggested, however, the enduring legacy of the U.S. educational system in the Philippines has been to enact a sort of empire of letters, a hierarchy of literary and cultural value that has historically privileged English and effaced the vibrant, revolutionary traditions of vernacular literatures. Such hierarchies of cultural value, I conclude, are not distinct from, but central to, the continued neocolonial exploitation of the Philippines for commercial and military purposes. This example points to the high stakes of educational “reconstruction” in Iraq. Despite more than $100 billion spent by U.S.-contracted private agencies to open schools and train teachers, there is little account of what has been accomplished. More pressing, those few reports that have been made available suggest a strong amount of U.S. censorship in the curriculum design and textbook writing. Such accounts serve as a reminder that the structures of educational imperialism continue to be mobilized in the interests of “rebuilding” occupied regions to make them hospitable for both U.S. military interests and multinational corporations with links to the U.S. government.

To be sure, instruction in American literature was only one part of the mechanism of U.S. rule in the Philippines. However, its importance as a model formation, as the embodiment of those values, morals, and ideals held to be particularly American, should not be underestimated. Similarly, the colonial use of American literature was only one part of the phase of the field’s institutionalization in the United States in the early twentieth century. Certainly other aspects, including the rise of a professional managerial class, the expansion of access to the academy for new populations of students, and the concurrent institutionalization of other humanistic disciplines make the full breadth of that history beyond the scope of this study.

That said, the role of the colonial project in animating the consolidation of an American literary “canon” deserves further attention. In particular, this history illuminates not only the expanded international stakes behind the ongoing debates about the constitution and current value of that canon, but also demonstrates the incredible power of the literary in forging, shaping, and naming a national identity it claimed only to describe. It thus created the very national culture that the colonial project
presupposed. Lastly, this history demonstrates how important the literary was in establishing the United States as a national player on the world imperial stage. Only through this evidence of its cultural achievements could the United States join Britain in exporting its brand of civilized Anglo-Saxonism and champion its culture as a gift to be bestowed upon those “persons sitting in darkness.” For those of us who currently teach, read, and write such literature, we ignore that history at our peril.