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Of Pinoy Pride and American Dreams: A Historical Criticism of Air Castles by Juan F. Salazar

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Abstract

Imagine perching by the windowsill, gazing into the sky, and constructing elaborate castles in your mind—beautiful structures that exist only in the realm of imagination. Dreams, ambitions, and goals are synonymous, often rooted in make-believe and reality. Despite their abstract nature, dreams provide direction, motivation, and purpose in life. They inspire us to set goals, overcome obstacles, and pursue our passions, fostering creativity, innovation, and personal growth for a fulfilling life. Amidst adversity during an era of blood and bombings, Juan F. Salazar wrote "Air Castles," a piece resonating with Filipinos who dared to dream despite the challenges of their time. "Air Castles" reflects the aspirations of a Filipino writer and serves as a voice for those seeking to discover their identity, guided by the legacies of past writers. This paper, through the historical lens of literary criticism, unveils the influence of time on literature. It examines how "Air Castles" mirrors the socio-political context of its creation and explores the interplay between colonialism and literature in the Philippine setting. This study highlights the enduring power of dreams and their significant role in shaping literature and history.

Keywords: Historical Approach, socio-political context, Pinoy Pride, American dreams, literary criticism

INTRODUCTION

In the field of literature, it has always been fascinating to discover the connotative and denotative meaning of each piece, making it a source of inspiration of relatability and rediscovery of oneself. Even in literature classes, students and teachers often see the beauty of a piece by seeing how it was constructed, how it gives meaning to the situation that we can somehow relate to, and how

the meaning adds color to the perspective of each reader. However, one must note that a piece is created not only through what a writer thinks of, but also how they would write a piece despite factors that will affect their focus to make it more appealing and universal. Thus, allowing to see what the situation of the writer could be a factor why a certain literary piece has resulted into such.

More than the intellect and writing prowess, a literary piece is not only isolated in the paper and pen but also goes on a wider area of factors. This includes what was happening in the area when the piece was created, what was the situation of the language used, and what was the exact situation of literature on that day. These factors are areas also to be considered when analyzing a literary piece in order for the reader to realize that a piece is not solely about aesthetics and meanings, but has a historical significance not only in the life of the writer but also in the piece.

Writing may be significantly impacted by an author's life experiences in a number of ways. First of all, topics, locations, and characters in their writing might be influenced by personal experiences. For instance, a writer who has done a lot of traveling may use what they have seen of other cultures as inspiration for their work. Second, a writer's life experiences may mold their viewpoint and voice, affecting how they tell stories and express feelings. Personal setbacks or victories can also influence the themes of love, grief, resiliency, and other topics in their literature. In general, a writer's personal experiences may infuse their writing with sincerity and richness, connecting with readers on a deeper level. According to Bapa (2023), certain factors are important in understanding societies and literature. These factors include language, economy, law, education, emerging trends, technology, culture, religion, entertainment, politics, and relationships. Additionally, any shift in the social construct of people could be reflected in their literature. Thus, we will see how various social factors have influenced literature.

Social factors are greatly an influence on literature as this not only affects the mental consciousness of a writer but also, creates an in depth perspective on what the writer intends to tell on his piece during his time.

A piece Air Castle by Juan F. Salazar is a poem that not only deals with one's introspective analysis about dreams and aspirations but also a way of showcasing how the English literature has brought Salazar in his popularity today because of this piece. This also sparked readers' perspective as how this became an inspiration for them to keep going and dreaming. However, looking at Salazar's social factors should also need to be assessed to further the understanding of the author's intention.

To address these concerns, this historical analysis focuses on the date when it was written, situation or events during its creation, literature's situation during it was made, and the different social factors that affect the author's intention in creating this literary piece. Therefore, assessing these will lead readers to a more profound understanding of the text.

The Historical Criticism

Historical criticism, literary criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author's life and the historical and social circumstances of the time. This is in contrast to other types of criticism, such as textual and formal, in which emphasis is placed on examining the text itself while outside influences on the text are disregarded. (Britannica, 2021)

According to Fajardo (2018), literary criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author's life and the historical and social circumstances of the time. also known as the historical-critical method or higher criticism, is a branch of criticism that

investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand "the world behind the text".

Methodology

This study employed thematic analysis to investigate the connections, similarities, and differences among various studies on "Air Castles," focusing specifically on its historical context. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data, including research studies and analyses from different scholars. Given the poem's historical context, a historical approach is the most appropriate literary lens for this study. According to Deervivi18 (2019), historical criticism is not about disapproval or fault-finding but rather about understanding a text by examining its historical and social contexts. This approach seeks to uncover the "authorial intent" by exploring what the author intended the text to mean in their specific time and place. Historical criticism also provides insights into how the text reflects and responds to the conditions of its creation.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources. The primary source was the original text of "Air Castles," while secondary sources included various research studies and analyses from different researchers. The researcher followed a systematic process for thematic analysis as outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017). This process involved familiarization through reading and taking initial notes to become deeply acquainted with the content, coding to categorize content into meaningful groups, generating themes by identifying patterns and grouping codes into overarching themes, and analyzing these themes to draw meaningful conclusions about the text.

Despite the numerous similarities and differences among the various research papers and analyses, the historical lens still requires thorough scrutiny. A deeper examination through this lens will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the poem "Air Castles." The study's findings are manifested in several arguments regarding the historical perspective of the poem, including the analysis of specific historical events and societal conditions during the time of the poem's creation, the investigation of Juan F. Salazar's authorial intent within his historical and cultural milieu, and the exploration of how the poem reflects the cultural and social dynamics of the period. Through this methodological approach, the study aims to enhance the understanding of "Air Castles" by situating it within its historical and cultural framework.

DATE WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN

The publication date of a literary work is crucial for contextualizing and understanding its themes, cultural influences, and authorial intentions. It helps in assessing the work's relevance to the time it was written, influencing interpretations and highlighting societal or historical factors that may have shaped the author's perspective.

Starting from where it all started: the Spanish-American War began in April 1898 as a result of Spain's violent put down of a Cuban uprising. The first of many significant American triumphs came on May 1, 1898, when the U.S. Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron destroyed the Spanish Pacific force during the Battle of Manila Bay in the Philippines. Aguinaldo, now in exile, arranged with American officials to return to the Philippines and support America's military effort against Spain. After rallying his revolutionaries upon his arrival on May 19, he started liberating

towns south of Manila. After a long 333 years of shedding blood and losing lives in the hands of the Spanish colonizers, Emilio Aguinaldo declared the Philippines' independence on June 12, 1898. However, this independence was short-lived after another western country took over which was America (HISTORY, 2010).

The Spanish colonization of the Philippines was officially ended by the Treaty of Paris, which gave the United States control of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Cuba. It also mandated that the US reimburse the Spanish government for \$20 million USD. It heralded the end of Spanish colonization on a worldwide scale, the emergence of American imperialism in the Pacific theater, and the country's ascent to prominence in the world economy.

American Occupation in the Philippines lasted for more than 40 years leaving a remarkable legacy in the country's history; affecting every single aspect of our political system, our culture, our education, and our literature, shaping our identity and mirroring the reality that we once have into a piece of art that transcends over time.

Air Castles by Juan F. Salazar is one of the many testaments that the influence of the West is tremendously embedded in our literature. The poem was written in 1909, a year of turmoil in the country's historical angle. It was the year of American colonization, and so, this could bring a subtle hint of the poem's overall meaning. The poem highlights the themes of dreams, mastering one's own craft, and the value of perseverance and resilience - themes that are highly relevant and timely in a country facing challenges not just politically but also socially and psychologically.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings explores the intricate relationship between "Air Castles" and its historical context, shedding light on how the poem reflects and responds to the socio-political conditions of its time. By examining the authorial intent, cultural dynamics, and historical events, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of the poem's significance and impact.

PLACE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN

The setting where a literary piece is written holds significant importance as it often influences the themes, characters, and the overall atmosphere of the work. It can provide insights into cultural, historical, and social contexts, shaping the narrative's authenticity and depth. Additionally, the geographical features and climate of the setting can impact the underlying themes of the literary piece, adding layers to its overall meaning. Furthermore, the setting can evoke emotions and establish a sense of place for readers, immersing them more deeply into the narrative world.

Juan F. Salazar's poem 'Air Castles' was written in his home country, which is the Philippines. The Philippines is an island nation in Southeast Asia's western Pacific Ocean, according to Britannica. It is an archipelago 500 miles (800 km) off the coast of Vietnam made up of more than 7,000 islands and islets. It is divided into three main geographical regions: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. It is known for its stunning beaches, diverse marine life, and rich biodiversity. The country experiences a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. Major geographical features include the Cordillera Central mountain range, the Sierra Madre mountain range, and the Philippine Fault Zone. The capital city, Manila, is located on Luzon, the largest island of the country.

Mindanao, the second-largest island, is known for its Muslim-majority population and diverse indigenous cultures.

Indeed, the Philippines is a home of diversity - be it in terms of culture, traditions, and geographical features. Consequently, Salazar made use of these unique geographical features in his poem. With the mention of the words: mountains, sea, hills, dells, and highland in Lines 2, 3, and 7, it clearly emphasized the subtle influence of the country's archipelagic aspect to the piece of literature written. These geographical features, which are evidently found in the country, allows the writer to contextualize his piece making the Filipino readers have a hint of visualization of the poem itself and a sense of relatability in the overall meaning of the text, since Philippines is known for having these mountains, highland, seas, hills, and dells all at once.

Culturally speaking, the Filipino people are known for their resilience - a positive trait that refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity, challenges, or setbacks. It involves adapting to difficult situations, maintaining a positive outlook, and effectively coping with stress or trauma. Resilience is not about avoiding difficulties, but rather about facing them, learning from them, and growing stronger as a result. It encompasses emotional, mental, and psychological toughness, as well as the capacity to persevere and thrive in the face of adversity. Consequently, Air Castles' main theme is about being resilient, simply proving that the place where a piece is written is inevitably entwined with its culture, traditions and geographical influences.

SITUATIONS AND EVENTS THAT OCCUR (Years before and after the creation of the piece)

More than the letters and words that we read in every piece from the olden times, are the societal factors that became the thread of a piece, making it beautiful like an intricate textile. Such as the piece Air Castles, it is crafted beautifully despite the situations around the time that it was made. What was happening during the years of American Colonization, including the year when Air Castles was written (1909), according to Go and Foster (2003) U.S. imperialism in the Philippines took a colonial form did not only mean that the United States became an overseas colonial empire. It also meant that the U.S. government had to construct a special apparatus of rule in the Philippines.

During more than four decades of American colonial administration, the Philippines experienced a long period of relatively uninterrupted economic growth and social development. There were fluctuations due to conditions unique to the US and the world economy, but by and large, there was a continuous consolidation of economic and social gains. (Sicart 2019).

Despite economic progress, introduction of American law and manners, despite nominating an increasingly growing number of local clerks to government offices, the call for freedom and independence never died, as the social equality of the Filipinos in comparison to the Americans frequently was not worth more than the paper on which it was written. The revolutionary leaders got good paid jobs, and collaborated now with the Americans (Constantino, 1975, p. 240-241).

According also to the Association of Asian Studies, Americans quickly recognized a number of social and environmental problems existed. These included poor quality housing, polluted waterways,

widespread poverty, and the lack of a national education system. Likewise, the Americans viewed the cultural condition of the local population as being an issue of grave concern. Filipinos were perceived to be lacking in moral fiber and trustworthiness. It was also noticed that they had no grasp of nationhood, but rather had an identity derived from the variegated assemblage of different ethnic groups to whom individuals had loyalty. In other words, because Americans saw the Philippines as a country in dire need of "improvement," a plan was developed to distance Filipinos from their history and present the country as "uncivilized" by forging a new identity, culture, and environment.

Moreover, according to Britannica, American preparation of the Philippines for democratic self-government suffered from an inherent contradiction, perhaps not recognized at the time. Transferring governmental responsibility to those capable of undertaking it was not consistent with building a social and economic base for political democracy. Self-government meant, of necessity, assumption of power by those Filipinos who were already in positions of leadership in society. But those men came for the most part from the landed elite; preservation of their political and economic position was incompatible with equalizing opportunity. Even the expansion of an educated middle class did not necessarily result in a transformation of the pattern of power. Most middle-class aspirants for political leadership adjusted to the values and the practices of the existing power elite.

With the situations that happened during the American occupation, things were not on the good side for the Philippines as they were again colonized by another race. During the time where the Air Castles was in the process of being made, it is proven from the given situations presented from the aforementioned sources that it was indeed a challenge for Juan F. Salazar to write the poem, not because of how difficult a Filipino writer use the English language but how the societal factors affect one to write. Thus, these situations provide us with a glimpse that no matter how good of a writer you are, if societal influences are currently in the midst of their existence, for sure, one will have a hard time in making one. In Juan F. Salazar's case, it is assumed that during the time when this piece was made and was in the process of being made, for sure, he also had a hard time considering the situation in the Philippines. Thus, the scenarios during the time it was created have coincided with the poem since the poem talks about dreams and ambitions which the researchers think is about the dream to independence knowing that the Philippines at that time isn't yet free from Americans.

INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION DURING AMERICAN COLONIZATION

A writer's prowess is developed not solely on his own, however, through one's education. As Nelson Mandela stated, "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*" In the field of writing, one adheres to the belief that language is important in education, only then when that language is understood by many. In Juan F. Salazar's case, education has a big influence in his writings, most especially with Air Castles; as this does not evoke a sense of hardship before reaching one's dreams but therefore, shows emphasis to the usage of the English language as integrated in the curriculum in education of the Philippines during American Colonization. According to Martin (2008), when the Americans arrived in the Philippines in 1898, English was systematically promoted as the language that would "civilize" the

Filipinos. It was the language that the colonizer introduced to the colonized so that the latter would be able to participate in a society determined by colonialism.

In the context of Salazar's educational background, he left Manila High School for work which means that he studied under the American influence in education. The school where Salazar left was what the Americans established as their first school under their government on June 11, 1906 under the name "*Manila High School*" (I.G.V. Atajar 2009). Moreover, according to Nadie Lrd (2019), Manila High School was established during the early days of the American Colonial Period. This therefore shows that education under Americans had significantly impacted the skill of Juan F. Salazar when it came into his writing; as he learned not only by himself, however, with the help of Thomasites that served as teachers during the American Period. This is because they used the English language as a medium of instruction and integrated English related subjects in their education. According to a study conducted by Buglass (2021) under President McKinley's instructions to the Taft Commission, English-based instruction in the Philippine education system was given priority. Under Section 14 of Act No. 74, the commission mandated that "the English language shall, as soon as practicable, be made the basis of all public-school instruction."

In 1901, the U.S. colonial government in the Philippines established a free, secular school system with English as the only language of instruction. The Philippine Commission recruited several hundred American educators to teach in and administer the colonial school system (Harrington, 2015). Moreover, these teachers were the Thomasites but before their arrival, Filipino Volunteers served as teachers. To justify, the American government wanted to give everyone the chance to study so they built public schools for the Filipinos. Volunteer Filipino soldiers became the first teachers of the Filipinos. Part of their mission was to build classrooms in every place where they were assigned. The Filipino soldiers stopped teaching only when a group of teachers from the U.S. came to the Philippines in June 1901. They came aboard the ship "Sheridan." In August 1901, 1, 600 teachers called "Thomasites" arrived. Their name came from the ship they traveled on. This group became successful in their mission (Winx, 2011).

With all the sources and arguments presented, the influence of education under the American Occupation indeed contributed to the lives of Filipinos, specifically, in Juan F. Salazar's education. As he was a product of a school established by Americans, their influence when it comes into their curriculum which was its key feature was the integration of English as a medium of instruction; this reflects on Salazar's capability to write an English piece and such a remarkable piece is his iconic Air Castles.

SITUATION OF LITERATURE WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN

Literature is a testament of permanence and universality, allowing readers to make it feel like it's brand new instead of seeing it as an old piece of paper. In the context of Air Castles, this was written during the period of imitation or during the early Philippine literature in English.

According to Santiago (1989), Philippine literary production during the American Period in the Philippines was spurred by two significant developments in education and culture. One is the introduction of free public instruction for all children of school age

and two, the use of English as medium of instruction in all levels of education in public schools. Moreover, Philippine literature in English, as a direct result of American colonization of the country, could not escape being imitative of American models of writing especially during its period of apprenticeship. When the University of the Philippines was founded in 1908, an elite group of writers in English began to exert influence among writers. The U.P. The Writers Club, founded in 1926, had stated that one of its aims was to enhance and propagate the “language of Shakespeare.” In 1925, Paz Marquez Benitez short story, “Dead Stars” was published and was made the landmark of the maturity of the Filipino writer in English. Soon after Benitez, short story writers began publishing stories no longer imitative of American models. Thus, story writers like Icasiano Calalang, A.E. Litiatco, Arturo Rotor, Lydia Villanueva, Paz Latorena, Manuel Arguilla began publishing stories manifesting both skilled use of the language and a keen Filipino sensibility.

According to Martin 2008, when the Americans arrived in the Philippines in 1898, English was systematically promoted as the language that would “civilize” the Filipinos. It was the language that the colonizer introduced to the colonized so that the latter would be able to participate in a society determined by colonialism. Throughout the four decades of American public education, Filipino students were exposed to the Anglo-American canon of literature. This chapter argues that this literary canon would not have been as potent without the powerful partner of colonial pedagogy. Together, canon and pedagogy produced a certain type of language and literature education that created standards for Philippine writing. Cumulatively, canon, pedagogy, and the power of American public education in the Philippines resulted in the relegation of Philippine writing in English, as well as writing in the native languages, to the margins of the Philippine cultural experience.

Therefore, the creation of the Air Castle was mainly influenced by American Literature, proving a point that during this period, this is when Philippine English Literature was starting to grow in order to be known across the country.

AMERICAN LITERATURE AND WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

American and English literature have had significant influence globally, shaping cultures, languages, and ideologies.

American literature, with its diverse range of voices and genre, reflects the country’s history, values, and social issues. Works by authors like Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Toni Morrison have not only entertained readers but also provided insights into American society, politics, and identity. American society, politics, and identity. American literature explores themes of individualism, freedom, and the American Dream, influencing not only other literary traditions but also popular culture worldwide.

English literature, with its rich literary heritage spanning centuries, has similarly left an indelible mark on global literature. From the works of William Shakespeare to the Bronte sisters, English literature encompasses a wide array of genres and themes, from romance and tragedy to social commentary and satire. English literature has influenced not only literature in other languages but also legal systems, politics, and cultural norms around the world.

Together, American and English literature have shaped the literary landscape, inspiring writers and readers alike to explore new ideas,

challenge conventions, and connect with the human experience across time and place. There is no denying that these countries were and are indeed the powerhouse when it comes to literary influences around the world for it successfully altered almost every country’s literature including Philippine literature in many ways - contributing to the overall identity of the Filipinos’ known writers today like Juan F. Salazar.

Historically speaking, 1900-1910 was the Period of Re-Orientation followed by the Period of Imitation (1910-1925), though despite its very definite timelines in some resources, these timelines could still possibly merge because of various factors like inconsistencies of accounts from either primary or secondary sources. In these periods, Filipino writers imitated heavily on American and British models which resulted in a stilted, artificial, and unnatural style, lacking vitality and spontaneity. This went on during the majority of American colonization in the country. In 1928, an American school teacher in the Philippines reported that many of his students’ compositions had incorporated the ‘indelible impression’ of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s romantic poem *Evangeline*. What this American teacher had observed was perhaps a rather early instance of the cultural cloning of the Filipinos, and after the Philippines’ independence from the United States in 1946, it has been claimed that many Filipinos continued to behave like so-called ‘brown Americans’. Because the Anglo-American canon was presented to Filipino students as examples of great literature, writing in Philippine schools tended to imitate the language of these texts. A similar observation was made about Philippine writing in English by George Pope Shannon, head of the University of the Philippines English Department, who, in 1928, declared that Filipino writers had tendency toward the ‘slavish imitation’ of Anglo-American texts (Martin, et. al, 2008).

Similarly, these acts of imitation are highly observed in the poem of Salazar. In the poem, Salazar somehow attempted to imitate William Shakespeare’s notable style of writing or more likely William Shakespeare as a person himself.

William Shakespeare is known for his enormous contributions in the literary field. While William Shakespeare’s reputation is based primarily on his plays, he became famous first as a poet. With the partial exception of the *Sonnets* (1609), quarried since the early 19th century for autobiographical secrets allegedly encoded in them, the nondramatic writings have traditionally been pushed to the margins of the Shakespeare industry. Yet the study of his nondramatic poetry can illuminate Shakespeare’s activities as a poet emphatically of his own age, especially in the period of extraordinary literary ferment in the last ten or twelve years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (Poetry Foundation, 2019). Hence, Shakespearean sonnet is usually called Elizabethan sonnet.

In his sonnets, it usually goes with the following distinctive features: it consists 14 lines written in iambic pentameter, a rhythmic pattern where each line has ten syllables with alternating stresses; and the rhyme scheme is usually ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. This means that the first and third lines rhyme with each other, the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other, and so on, with the final two lines forming a rhymed couplet.

These particular distinctive features were slightly observed in Salazar’s poem, *Air Castles*. For instance, the poem’s rhyme scheme goes ABAB CDCE FGFG AHAH IJJI IKIK, a rhyme scheme that could possibly mirror Shakespeare’s way of putting his rhymes in his sonnet. Moreover, each stanza’s line has a

consistent eight (8) syllables in total, and so, each line could go with an iambic tetrameter. Hence, it could be concluded that these similarities in the poem's structural elements with that of Shakespeare's sonnets imply Salazar's attempt to imitate the latter writer's style, in which he may have drastically failed to do so or it could also possibly his way of altering his role model's style in order to establish his own style of writing. These inferences were also drawn from a line from the poem:

*I cannot write with Shakespeare's pen,
But I can love with Shakespeare's heart;
I love his skill his craft of men,
His mastery of poet's art.
I do not care for fame, as he,
Enthroned was like unto a god:
The depths he reached are dark to me.
But I will grope the ways he tried.*

Despite Shakespeare's effort to immortalize his plays through pieces of writings, only after his death was an effort made to publish a carefully edited volume of Shakespeare's collected plays. Two fellow actors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, joined with a group of publishers to produce a large and expensive edition, known today as the First Folio. This book, published in 1623, contains thirty-six of Shakespeare's plays, eighteen of which had not previously been published. After the publication of the First Folio, Shakespeare's artistic reputation and achievement were secured (Kastan & Kastan, 2000). Similarly, so to speak, Salazar interestingly took part in writing a folio as well. By 1919, the UP College Folio published the literary compositions of the first Filipino writers in English. They were the pioneers in short story writing. They were then groping their way into imitating American and British models which resulted in a stilted, artificial, and unnatural style, lacking vitality and spontaneity. Their models included Longfellow and Hawthorne, Emerson and Thoreau, Wordsworth and Tennyson, Thackeray and Macaulay, Longfellow, Allan Poe, Irving, and other American writers of the Romantic School. Writers of this folio also included Fernando Maramag (the best editorial writer of this period), Jose M. Hernandez, Vicente del Fierro, Francisco M. Africa, and Victoriano Yamzon. They pioneered in English poetry (Arambala, 2022).

As a writer, numerous adversities came on Salazar's way, especially, as a writer amidst the huge threat of authenticity and uniqueness during the nationwide influences of foreign writers in the country's literary scene. Salazar's effort to draw inspiration from an English writer like Shakespeare is not an act of impulsive imitation but a great way to find motivations to strive in his chosen field and to improve his craft. Consequently, he successfully showed the value of appreciation for other's work while uplifting his own - a value that every writer needs to uphold at all times. Moreover, Salazar's Air Castles is one great reminder that, although life is naturally full of uncertainties, one's effort to see things through with the help of a role model is already a courageous act to survive life with.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

The autobiographical background of an author is likened to that of a palette of colors an artist uses to paint a canvas. Just each color contributes to the overall composition of a painting, the unique experiences, memories, and emotions of an author form the backdrop against which their literary piece unfolds. This highlights how the author's personal history infuses their writing with depth, richness, and authenticity, creating a tapestry of storytelling that captivates readers' imaginations and resonates with their own loves. Writing can be a form of self-exploration for authors. By delving into their own memories and experiences, authors may gain insight into their own identities, beliefs, and values, which can be reflected in their literary works. Moreover, the author's autobiographical background can provide insight into the cultural and historical context of their work. Understanding the author's personal history can enrich readers' interpretation of the text and shed light on societal issues and norms depicted in the literature.

Juan F. Salazar's biography was the history of the beginning of Filipino-English literature, of the growth of English as the vehicle and its triumph over the criterion that English is too exotic to reflect the native mood, the mannerism, the idiosyncrasies of the Filipino mind. Salazar was born in 1889 in San Roque, Cavite. He left Manila High School for newspaper work. In 1913, at the age of 24, he joined the Philippine Republic, a Filipino weekly in Hong-Kong. The following year, he returned to the country as a reporter for La Democracia and El Renacimiento Filipino. He then left for America in 1915 as a mess boy on the transport Thomas - the same transport that brought the first American school teachers to the Philippines. Among his works are 'My Mother' and 'Air Castles' published in 1909. He worked in the salmon canneries in Alaska and later joined The Sacramento Union in California where he rose from reporter to copyreader to feature writer. But in the year 1919, he succumbed to pneumonia. (Quindoza-Santiago, 2015)

At such a young age, Salazar's passion for writing is indeed reflected from his earlier efforts to enter the literary scene. He spent his whole life writing and he was not joking when he said in his poem:

*If I be met by adverse fate,
And all my dreams but in vain;
Then, must I work the harder yet
With high resolve to try again.*

His experiences as a young writer were immortalized serving as a motivating factor for other Filipino writers to be a master of their craft and to not give up in pursuing your passion as a representative symbol of the country's literature.

His efforts to remain relevant in the industry is manifested through the fact that he did not just enclose himself to the limits of the country he started in but expanded his horizons in giving other shots of opportunity in other countries like Hong Kong and America.

Conclusion

The publication date of Juan F. Salazar's poem "Air Castles," written in 1909 during the American colonization of the Philippines, is essential for understanding its context, themes, and cultural influences. The poem's themes of dreams, mastery, perseverance, and resilience reflect the societal turmoil and challenges faced by Filipinos under American occupation. This work highlights the enduring impact of Western influence on

Philippine literature, illustrating how historical events shape artistic expression and reflect societal realities.

The poem's setting in the Philippines, with its diverse geographical features and cultural richness, enhances its thematic depth. The imagery of mountains, seas, hills, and highlands resonates with the archipelagic landscape, allowing readers to visualize and connect with the setting. The theme of resilience mirrors the cultural traits of the Filipino people, emphasizing the connection between geography, culture, and literature.

"Air Castles" also underscores the impact of American colonization on Filipino writers. The introduction of English as the language of instruction significantly influenced Salazar's writing style. This paper examines the broader influence of American and English literature on Filipino writers, highlighting the blend of imitation and personal expression that characterized early Philippine literature in English.

Salazar's autobiographical background deeply influenced his work, with his personal experiences and aspirations shaping the authenticity of his writing. Despite adversities, his dedication to writing inspired fellow Filipino writers, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and self-expression.

In conclusion, "Air Castles" exemplifies the intertwining of literature and history, reflecting the societal, cultural, and historical contexts of its time. It provides valuable insights into the era of American colonization in the Philippines and underscores the role of literature in shaping and reflecting historical events.

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