

Language and Empire: Elizabeth Kneipple's Colonial History of Puerto Rico

SOLSIREE DEL MORAL

ABSTRACT

In early-twentieth-century Puerto Rico, US colonial officials imposed English as the language of instruction in public schools. English and Americanization were at the heart of the colonial project. I examine the texts assigned to English-language public schools. In particular, I focus on the short stories Elizabeth Kneipple wrote for the Puerto Rican classroom in the late 1920s. During Kneipple's ten-year tenure in the colonial PR Department of Education, she wrote four collections of short stories. The commissioner of education, Juan B. Huyke, assigned each to English-language classrooms. Kneipple's stories demonstrate that by the late 1920s, school administrators were no longer promoting an abstract colonial subjectivity through the teaching of English. Rather, they promoted a clear and distinct vision of the US colonial project in Puerto Rico. English-language texts taught children a particular version of their history and heritage that served the colonial project. They learned that whiteness, assimilation, and submission to colonialism were fundamental aspects of island history. Meanwhile, the texts also taught that indigenous heritage was cultural, not biological, while black heritage was minimal and irrelevant. Kneipple's short stories demonstrate how, through a careful collaboration between Puerto Rican and US colonial administrators, history and heritage can be appropriated and adapted in service to the colonial state. [Key words: Puerto Rico; education; colonialism; race; English; history]

The author (sdelmoral@amherst.edu) is an Associate Professor of American Studies and Black Studies at Amherst College. A historian of Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and Latin America, her book, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), explores the history of teachers and colonial education in Puerto Rico under U.S. rule. She has also published articles in the *Radical History Review*, *Caribbean Studies*, and the *New West Indian Guide*.

Introduction

School language policies expose colonial intentions.¹ In the early-twentieth-century, US officials imagined that legislating English as the language of instruction would be an efficient way to promote the transformation of Puerto Ricans from Spanish-speaking colonial subjects into English-speaking supporters of US colonialism. Despite some minor exceptions for the lower grades, English became the language of instruction in public schools.² When commissioners of education supported policies that designated English as the language of instruction, they faced persistent and aggressive resistance from teachers, parents, and students. Puerto Rican teachers, intellectuals, and some politicians identified English-language policies as proof that Americans intended to “massacre the mentality” of Puerto Rican children (Mendoza 2004, 16), that the goal of colonial schools was to “destroy our national identity” (Negrón de Montilla 1990, *Prólogo a la segunda edición*). The misguided colonial impositions and resultant fervent local resistance are well-documented in the scholarship. This history of education is a story about how US school officials assumed that the cultural genocide of colonial peoples was possible and necessary.³ It is also a history that highlights how teachers resisted and rejected colonial visions at every turn.⁴

The study of English-language policies is one of the dominant lenses through which scholars have examined the early twentieth-century history of education and empire in Puerto Rico. Building on this extensive scholarship, I examine the history through a different, yet complementary, lens. Instead of revisiting policy debates, I propose an analysis of the short stories assigned to the English-language classroom in the early twentieth century. In particular, I focus on the short stories Elizabeth Kneipple wrote in the 1920s. Kneipple was one of many young, single, white, college-educated Americans who sought teaching opportunities in Puerto Rico “for the adventure of travel,” “experience,” and “opportunity.”⁵ Kneipple, however, was different from most visiting teachers. During her seven-year tenure in the Department of Education (1923-1930), she wrote four collections of short stories (Kneipple 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929).⁶ Kneipple’s collections became part of the first generation of English-language colonial textbooks written and published specifically for the Puerto Rican classroom.⁷ The commissioner of education approved her publications and assigned them to the curriculum. Kneipple’s short stories became required reading in junior high school and high school English classes.

In this essay, I explore the particular version of Puerto Rican history in Kneipple’s stories. What did Kneipple’s English-language short stories teach Puerto Rican youth about their history, heritage and culture? Beyond the mechanics of English grammar, what were children learning in the English-language classroom?

Kneipple’s historical fiction served two purposes. First, her short stories represented the colonial state-approved historical narrative about the island and its people. She reproduced a racial and cultural history already recorded by Puerto Rican historians and intellectuals since the nineteenth century (1860s).⁸ Kneipple’s stories cultivated the idea that Puerto Ricans were a unique people with a distinct

culture. Fundamentally, they were a Hispanic people. Spaniards colonized the island 400 years ago and remained the foundational group. Islanders were simply descendants of centuries of Spanish immigrants. Kneipple also recognized that the island's original inhabitants had been indigenous peoples; however, her stories reminded the reader that they were "long dead" (1929, 170). While the vanquished *indios* passed down their knowledge about island geography to the Spanish colonizers and their children, they did not pass down their blood. Kneipple's stories did not document racial mixture. Instead, they asserted a history of racial purity. African-descended peoples were marginal to her historical narrative. Their presence, according to Kneipple, was minimal and located outside of "the community." Latin whiteness was the default heritage that emerged in Kneipple's stories.

Unlike Cubans and Filipinos, Puerto Ricans were often located closer to Hawaiians on the spectrum of colonial assimilability. They were represented as more malleable and teachable.

Kneipple's short stories served a second purpose. They cultivated a political vision— support for US colonialism. Kneipple's version of Puerto Rican history taught school children a specific lesson about colonialism in general. The children learned that they had inherited a personality and set of cultural characteristics that were deeply rooted in a 400-year history of colonial submission to the Spanish empire. Kneipple produced a historical narrative that supported the trope of colonial assimilation through the careful construction of whiteness. The stories of colonial submission and whiteness, therefore, also confirmed Puerto Ricans' potential assimilation into US Empire. In turn-of-the-century travel and war literature and in government documents and reports, Americans constructed Puerto Ricans as a colonial group that was particularly docile, submissive, and welcoming to the new US colonial authority (Duany 2002; Thompson 1995, 2010). This was a very different characterization than the one American authors offered for Cubans and Filipinos. They were imagined as more problematic colonial subjects, often depicted as black and rebellious Cubans and black, Asian, and rebellious Filipinos. Unlike Cubans and Filipinos, Puerto Ricans were often located closer to Hawaiians on the spectrum of colonial assimilability. They were represented as more malleable and teachable. This trait—a predisposition to colonial assimilation—emerged from Kneipple's short stories through the emphasis on Spanish colonialism and heritage.

While Kneipple's stories were colonial texts that intended to teach colonial obedience and loyalty to the empire, there was, nevertheless, something different about her stories. The historical context, audience, and the politics of production behind Kneipple's texts were specific to the US colonial project in Puerto Rico. By the time Kneipple composed her stories in the 1920s, the colonial context had changed since

Americans first invaded and occupied the island in 1898. With the 1917 Jones Act, the US Congress granted island-born Puerto Ricans US citizenship. Kneipple wrote stories, therefore, for new US citizens, not simply generic colonial subjects. Kneipple's stories also differed from other typical turn-of-the-century empire-building literature. Britain's imperial children's literature, for example, was written for a metropolitan audience (Hunt 1994). Kneipple's short stories, by contrast, were written for a local audience. Kneipple's stories were not English-language texts imported or transplanted from the US mainland for use in Puerto Rican schools, as had been the tradition in the early twentieth century.⁹ Instead, Kneipple's short stories narrated local descriptions of island geography, customs, tradition, and history. Beyond simple translations, traditional stories were reframed or adapted to reflect the new US colonial ideology. In addition, many of her stories were original. It is significant that Kneipple's stories were approved by the colonial state. Commissioner of education Juan B. Huyke assigned them to the classroom because they confirmed his vision for Americanization. Kneipple's stories, therefore, did not represent metropolitan visions blindly imposed on a generic colony. Rather, they reflected careful and intentional collaboration between high-ranking Puerto Rican and US colonial educators. They demonstrate how history and heritage can be appropriated and adapted in service of the colonial state.

I begin the essay with a brief history of English-language policies in Puerto Rico in the early twentieth century. After revisiting that contentious history, I introduce the colonial institution of the Department of Education and its top administrator, Juan B. Huyke. Commissioner Huyke aggressively promoted the English language and Americanization. In particular, he supported Kneipple's production of English-language materials for colonial public schools. I then introduce Kneipple in more detail before analyzing her historical fiction. Although the problematic history of colonial English-language policy in Puerto Rico is well known, we still know very little about *what* children were learning in English classes beyond the mechanics of language. The intention of Kneipple's short stories was to teach Puerto Rican children an acceptable version of their history, heritage, and culture, while generating support for US colonialism.

Americanization, Language Policy, and Colonial Politics

The United States acquired Puerto Rico as war booty during the Treaty of Paris negotiations, the peace treaty that brought the 1898 war between Spain and the United States to an end. With the acquisition of several overseas territories that year, the United States emerged as a formal empire. US commercial pursuits in the Caribbean and the Pacific, US political entanglements in both regions, US interest in a future Isthmian canal, and the growth of US naval power combined to support the birth of the "new empire" in the late 1890s (LaFeber 1963; McCoy and Scarano 2009). The United States developed related yet distinctive forms of colonial government and legislation for each of the new territories—Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam (Thompson 2002). US foreign policy and commercial leaders identified Puerto Rico as a potential permanent possession of the United States. US capitalists advo-

cated for access to land for sugar plantations, while others identified the strategic military value of the island in the Caribbean basin. With the 1900 Foraker Act, the two-year US military occupation came to an end, and the US Congress created a new civil government for Puerto Rico.¹⁰

Founding secular public schools was part of colonial governance. As a permanent territory, one of the first challenges was the creation of, in José Manuel Navarro's (2002) words, "tropical Yankees." Americanization through schooling was a long-standing practice in the United States (Ngai 2004). The definition and goals of Americanization varied by region, time period, and targeted group. Broadly, Americanization cultivated a limited form of cultural assimilation and limited political incorporation in the US nation and empire (Smith 1997; Daniels 2004). The Americanization experiment was foundational to schools in Hawaii since the 1820s (Silva 2004).¹¹ US missionaries attempted to abolish traditional aspects of native Hawaiian culture and replace them with Anglo-Saxon values, including Protestantism, private property, and the English language. On the mainland, racial uplift ideologies shaped African-American vocational and industrial schools and Native-American boarding schools (Adams 1995; Childs 1998; Moody-Turner 2013). Meanwhile, Mexican and Mexican-American communities in the southwest and the "new" European immigrants in the northeast and Midwest also suffered through misguided Americanization school policies.¹² Americanization experiments in the Pacific, the Caribbean, and the US mainland emerged concurrently and were mutually constitutive. Local experiments in one region informed those in the others.

US school language policies were intended to Americanize Puerto Ricans.¹³ This colonial vision sharpened and became more urgent around 1917, during Paul G. Miller's tenure as commissioner of education (1915-1921). The Jones Act in 1917 granted US citizenship to all residents born on the island, intensifying the urgency for English-language instruction and the creation of American citizens.¹⁴ According to Commissioner Miller, Puerto Rican schools were now "American public schools" and their primary goal was to form US citizens (1921, 14). It was pivotal, therefore, that English be *the* language of instruction in Puerto Rican schools—not just to teach English fluency, but to teach *in* English, not Spanish. Although there were some modifications in school language policy between 1900 and 1942, schools consistently emphasized the preference for English as the language of instruction.

However, despite the experts' recommendation and a reflection of the language politics, the pro-American commissioners refused to support Spanish-language instruction in elementary schools.

Public schools were divided into elementary schools (first through eighth grade) and high schools (ninth through twelfth grade). Language policy in elementary schools went through three phases.¹⁵ From 1900 to 1903 and again from 1934 to 1937, Spanish

was the language of instruction in all elementary grades. From 1903 to 1916, English was the language of instruction in all elementary grades. From 1916 to 1934 and from 1937 to 1942, Spanish was the language of instruction only in grades one through four. Despite short-lived reforms that tried to accommodate demands for Spanish in elementary schools, English remained the dominant language of instruction.

The English-language emphasis was unmistakable at the high school level. From 1900 to 1942, English was the sole language of instruction in all high school grades. This policy never wavered. Such persistence highlights the overarching goal of colonial schools: despite reforms and changes in elementary school language policies, entering freshmen and graduating seniors learned that the language of schools (science and humanities), government (colonial Puerto Rico and the US federal system), private business, and the future of Puerto Rico would be English.

Teachers, students, and legislators resisted, demanding reform of the English-language policy. One reason was the awareness that the majority of students who attended schools did so for only one to three years (Columbia University 1926). Attending elementary school was a hardship for many working families, who relied on children's labor and wages. School was a financial expense that many could ill afford. Sending a child to school required that parents provide clothing, shoes (if possible), transportation, books, and food (or money for breakfast or lunch) (Del Moral 2013). A 1925 Columbia University study concluded that since the majority of children only attended school a few years, the priority should be on teaching literacy, civics, and practical agriculture and home economics, rather than English.¹⁶ However, despite the experts' recommendation and a reflection of the language politics, the pro-American commissioners refused to support Spanish-language instruction in elementary schools. Instead, they reproduced the political goals of the colonial state (Americanization and English-language instruction).

Public school teachers fought these policies relentlessly from the beginning. Teachers saw the privileging of English-language instruction as a professional challenge (Cebollero 1945; Muñiz Souffront 1950; Negrón de Montilla 1990). The language policy created a preference for English-language speakers, especially American teachers, during job appointments and promotion. In the early years, US teachers were promoted to supervisory positions, such as principals, inspectors, and supervisors, more frequently and at a higher concentration than native teachers. English-language policies also posed a challenge to teacher's tenure by requiring that teachers be certified to teach in English. Regular testing of English-language skills became a requirement for reappointment. In addition, by 1922 language policies required high school students pass an oral exam in English to demonstrate their conversational skills (Negrón de Montilla 1990, 204). The oral exams reminded high school graduates that English-language proficiency was expected of new public school teachers.

Politicians, intellectuals, and university students also questioned the prominence of English in island schools. In the same way that English came to exemplify the Americanization goals of the United States over the island and its people, resistance to

English became an anti-colonial, nationalist, and pro-Hispanic act. Support for English was linked to an assimilationist political position, while support for Spanish was considered separatist and nationalist (Rodríguez-Bou 1966, 116; López Laguerre 1997, 16; Muñiz Souffront 1950, 130). The 1930s marked the rise of the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos; the emerging relationship between Albizu Campos, striking sugar cane workers, and radicalized university students; and colonial police repression and violence against all nationalist sympathizers, exemplified in the 1937 Ponce massacre (Ferrao 1990). Nationalists proposed to defend the Spanish-language and, Hispanic heritage more broadly, from Americanization. In addition, the 1930s generation of creole intellectuals proposed cultural resistance to the imposition of English and Anglo-Saxon culture (López-Baralt 2004). In 1933, education students at the Universidad de Puerto Rico and the teachers' union, the Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (AMPR), vocally registered their opposition to English-language policy (Negrón de Montilla 1990; Muñiz Souffront 1950; Picó 1974).

Commissioner Huyke and Special Supervisor Kneipple

The commissioner of education was a powerful administrator in the colonial government. As a member of the executive committee, the commissioner was a member of both the executive and legislative branch. In the legislature, the commissioner supported or rejected education bills submitted by the lower house. As the top administrator of the Department of Education, the commissioner approved teaching appointments, shaped classroom curricula, and assigned textbooks. Historian Negrón de Montilla correctly identified commissioners as the gatekeepers of Americanization and English-language policy in public schools (Negrón de Montilla 1990).

One of the most adamant supporters of Americanization was Juan B. Huyke, the first Puerto Rican appointed to the position. Born in 1880 to a family of educators in the southeastern town of Arroyo, Huyke spent his early career as a teacher in colonial schools before rising to supervisory and administrative positions in the Department of Education. While Huyke's political party affiliations changed over time, he never wavered on the question of Americanization and English-language instruction in colonial schools.¹⁷ President Warren G. Harding appointed Huyke commissioner in 1920, as teachers and various politicians were seeking reforms in colonial schools. Huyke asserted that President Harding chose him to serve as the first Puerto Rican commissioner for two reasons. First, Huyke above all others had proven his commitment to the goals of Americanization. He believed colonial schools were meant to prepare Puerto Rico to assume its rightful location in its new relationship with the United States. Second, Huyke was committed to education, and under his direction, the department prioritized the English language above all else (Huyke 1921a, 1921b).¹⁸

One of the most effective ways for the commissioner to reach teachers throughout the island was through the education journal, the *Puerto Rico School Review (PRSR)*. Huyke used the journal to promote his administration's ideologies and policies among all employees of the Department of Education, including staff, teachers, and adminis-

trators. Huyke declared his militant support of pro-Americanization ideology when he published his first *PRSR* editorial (1921a, 1921b). In it, he defined his version of Americanization, declared it the department's guiding policy, and warned all employees that he expected their loyalty and commitment to the policy as well. Huyke may have viewed Elizabeth Kneipple as his partner in the struggle to create an English-speaking student body. While Huyke assigned his own writings to the Spanish-language classroom, he assigned Kneipple's writings to the English-language ones.

Commissioner Huyke introduced Kneipple to Puerto Rican teachers through a brief *PRSR* editorial in the October 1925 issue (New members 1925, 9). By that time, Kneipple had been an English teacher at Central High School in Santurce for two years. Kneipple majored in English and minored in Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. In June 1923, she earned a four-year degree (Ph.B.) and applied for a teaching post on the island. Kneipple learned about teaching opportunities for English-speaking Americans from Elsie Mae Willsey, a 1913 University of Chicago alumna and Supervisor of Home Economics in the island's Department of Education.¹⁹ Kneipple secured the job, sailed from New York to San Juan on August 9, 1923, and started her teaching post at Central High School that fall.²⁰ In addition to teaching English, in the fall of 1925 Kneipple would also serve on the *PRSR* editorial board and contribute "poems, short stories, educational news, research and miscellaneous work" (New members 1925, 9). That fall, Huyke began to publish Kneipple's short stories in the monthly "English Section" of the journal. Each would serve as material for teachers to use in English classes. Huyke soon promoted Kneipple to the position of Special Supervisor of English in the Department of Education. Over the next four years, between 1926 and 1929, she published one collection of short stories annually. All four collections were assigned to the English-language curriculum for use in upper grades six through twelve.

Her first book, *Stories of Porto Rico*, was published in 1926 and immediately adopted as a textbook for the seventh and eighth grades (Huyke 1926, vi). In the preface to the book, Huyke exuberantly praised Kneipple's short stories as "written in exquisitely clear English, admirably simple and suited to the child's comprehension" (1926, v). The book collected poems and short stories "written expressly for the children of Porto Rico" (Huyke 1926, v). Kneipple's stories were "suffused with local color, and their characters, young and old, have for the most part been sympathetically observed" (Huyke 1926, v). That description of Kneipple's "sympathy" for Puerto Rican boys and girls became the dominant characterization of her work. Three more editions of *Stories of Porto Rico* were issued in 1927 and 1928.

While his description of her writing was intended to demonstrate support, he was careful to note that she was not native to the island; that her native language, and therefore culture, was different from "ours"; and that while she might almost be mistaken for a daughter of Puerto Rico, she was not.

Cayetano Coll y Toste, official “Historian of Porto Rico,” wrote the foreword to Kneipple’s second book, *Picturesque Porto Rico* (1927). His assessment of Kneipple’s writing was more guarded than Huyke’s, however. Coll y Toste seemed a bit uneasy about the representations in her stories. He began by celebrating the “picturesque” quality of the stories as snapshots of a rapidly changing and evolving society. The short stories were neither theoretical nor abstract. Rather, they presented “accurate” and authentic descriptions of everyday characters with “every statement of fact carefully verified, and every custom faithfully interpreted” (Coll y Toste 1927, v). He continued, “This new book is a colorful record of many of those daily happenings which, although they constitute a great part of the fundamental life of a people, seldom find a place in history among events of greater magnitude” (1927, v). However, Coll y Toste appreciated these snapshots precisely because he imagined the descriptions and practices they provided would soon disappear. For Coll y Toste, Kneipple’s stories “preserve, through the ever-changing future, the present epoch of our existence which, even before the ink dries on this page, becomes the elusive past” (1927, v). He was, therefore, cautious about Kneipple’s representations of everyday life.

Coll y Toste was wary of the everyday practices described in the stories and a bit suspicious of their author. Kneipple was, after all, a foreigner. While Coll y Toste seemed to embrace her for the most part, his choice of words located her outside the everyday practices she described in her stories. “The author’s style of expression is *almost* Porto Rican in its poetic terminology and its sympathetic presentation of *our* thoughts, *our* occupations, *our* ideals—in a word, *our* personality” (Coll y Toste 1927, v—emphasis added). Kneipple was “born to another tongue,” yet could capture much about “*our* island.” So much so that, Coll y Toste believed, some readers “might easily believe her to be a true daughter of Porto Rico” (1927, v). While his description of her writing was intended to demonstrate support, he was careful to note that she was not native to the island; that her native language, and therefore culture, was different from “ours”; and that while she might almost be mistaken for a daughter of Puerto Rico, she was not. She was an American. In the foreword, he marked a clear difference between “hers” and “ours.” What was not lost on Coll y Toste was that Kneipple’s short stories were, first, a young American’s interpretation of Puerto Rican life. They were a foreigner’s account. They were colonial literature. While Huyke celebrated her American interpretation of Puerto Rican life, Coll y Toste cautioned that these were stories written by a young foreigner just recently arrived on the island.

But Huyke, not Coll y Toste, was the commissioner of education and Kneipple’s third book, *Tales of Borinquen*, was published in 1928. Francisco Vizcarrondo, the Assistant Commissioner of Education, introduced it as “a versatile collection of advanced stories in which a fascinating study of local characters plays a gratifyingly prominent part” (Vizcarrondo 1928, v). Written for advanced readers, it was assigned for use in the “ninth grade and in junior high-school classes” (Vizcarrondo 1928, v). Her fourth book, *Tropical Tales* (1929), hailed for its “admirable and authentic picture of Porto Rico of today,” was assigned to the sixth and seventh grades (Huyke 1929, vi).

Kneipple's influence on English-language instruction was greater than might be expected, given her youth and short tenure on the island. Although a woman in her twenties, recently arrived, and a foreigner, Huyke appointed her to an important post in the Department of Education, and she became responsible for the production of four volumes of English-language short stories for use in colonial classrooms. When young children were learning English in colonial schools in the 1920s and '30s—when they were building their vocabulary and comprehension, reading aloud for pronunciation, and dissecting plots, characters, and scenes— they were likely reading one of Kneipple's 71 short stories.

The length and complexity of the stories varied, as they were intended to serve children at different skill levels from the sixth grade through high school. Recognized by Huyke and others for her "authentic" descriptions, Kneipple located children in their local surroundings. The primary protagonists were often, although not always, children. Many of her stories were set in the countryside and described rural homes, school conditions, and circles of friends and families. Others highlighted typical occupations and schools in urban areas. As a way of describing the particularities of local context and building English-language vocabulary, her stories were highly descriptive of local manners, forms of speech, occupations, and community relationships. The organizing topics of the stories varied. Some focused on civics, ethics, or history; others narrated stories from the perspective of and in the voice of her informants, as if she were an ethnographer collecting and transcribing local folklore. Whether the stories were based on traditional folktales or were new fiction, as classroom literature, they conveyed a larger lesson or moral.

Huyke was Kneipple's biggest fan and tirelessly promoted her writings. Kneipple became part of his Americanization agenda. In addition, Huyke was addressing one of the teachers' complaints against him—his selection of school textbooks. In the 1920s, teachers rejected English-language texts for use in the classroom because they were completely divorced from local settings. Instead, teachers called for textbooks that were relevant to the children's surroundings. English-language books imported from the United States described scenes and settings that were foreign and incomprehensible to Puerto Rican students. Kneipple's stories addressed some of those concerns. When Huyke announced that Kneipple's stories would be published monthly in the *PRSR*, he acknowledged these criticisms. "It has been said that the students do not entirely understand some of the school readers, because they have no experience" (Editorials 1926, 9). Kneipple's stories, however, promised to be "written in simple English on a Puerto Rican theme, full of local color, and we wish to invite the attention of teachers to the fact that these stories are framed for actual classroom work, and will serve as excellent collateral reading for our pupils" (Editorials 1926, 9). Some of Kneipple's historical short stories, in fact, were translations and interpretations of historical figures and events based on Puerto Rican histories and collections available in the 1920s: Fray Íñigo Abbad y Lasierra's *Historia geográfica, civil, y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico* (1866); Salvador Brau's *Historia de Puerto Rico* (1904) and *La colonización de Puerto Rico* (1907); and Cayetano Coll y Toste's *Boletín histórico de Puerto*

Rico (1914-1927). Huyke celebrated that this was what teachers had been asking for—teaching materials produced specifically for Puerto Rican schools. Kneipple's stories provided relatable English-language material, "endeared the English language to our children," and gave it "intimate significance" (Vizcarrondo 1928, v).

Kneipple's Colonial History of Puerto Rico

The question remains: what did Puerto Rican children learn about their history, heritage, and culture in Kneipple's short stories? How did Kneipple describe the local context and its people? As they read Kneipple, schoolchildren consumed a colonial literature that taught them a specific perspective of their island's history and geography. Her stories described their alleged cultural and biological heritage. In the mid-1920s, the young foreign author wrote stories about Puerto Rican people, their personalities, and their ancestry. How did the American Midwesterner interpret the cultural heritage and racial characteristics of this Caribbean population in the 1920s?

Kneipple's stories taught children about the wonders of the island's geography, their Spanish heritage, and the "long-dead Indians." Students learned that geography rooted the island in the Americas and the Caribbean, as did its history of Spanish colonialism and indigenous genocide. Schoolchildren learned that they descended from Spaniards, a traditional people whose practices and ideologies belonged in the past. Kneipple's short stories celebrated whiteness, although of a Latin, rather than Anglo, variety. Children also learned about the original native inhabitants of the island. Contemporary Puerto Rican children could lay claim to a unique personality that was deeply informed by the indigenous population—submissiveness before the colonizing Spanish, with local knowledge of geography and nature. In addition to foregrounding the Spanish and incorporating the history of the indigenous within the dominant Iberian framework, Kneipple erased black heritage, history, and community. Africans and African-descended people fell outside the boundaries of the community of Spanish-Indian heritage that she asserted to be foundationally Puerto Rican.

Spaniards appear in three forms in Kneipple's stories: as early colonizers, recently arrived nineteenth-century immigrants, and their contemporary descendants. Kneipple's stories relate a proud history of the early Spanish colonizers who arrived in the sixteenth century. She characterized Spanish conquistadors, travelers, and military officials as daring, brave, and courageous men. They brought with them the spirit and inquisitiveness of adventurers. She celebrated the heroic efforts of Spanish military men and colonial officials who protected the island from "the enemies of the mother country," particularly the British and the Dutch (for example, in "Captain Correa"—1929, 135). "The [European] aggressors were to bring forth a new bravery and a new type of hero among the islands," according to Kneipple (1929, 135). One of the schoolchildren's first lessons, then, was that Puerto Rico had a long and heroic history of Spanish colonialism. They could take pride in the history of those early colonial conquerors.

In her heroic and commanding interpretation of the Spanish conquest, Kneipple told stories that cultivated young boys' pride in the island's colonial history. In "The

Two Statues,” Kneipple explored the histories of the “illustrious” Christopher Columbus (1926, 108) and the “intrepid soldier and colonizer” Juan Ponce de León (1926, 110) through a description of their statues in Old San Juan. Ponce de León’s statue, in particular, demonstrated the “bravery, the tireless energy, the steadfastness, the adventurous spirit of the true conquistador” (1926, 110). In the short story, the ghosts of “those admirable men” appeared before two young boys and inspired their ambition. “The days of these two men, thus immortalized in bronze and marble, have long since passed into well-known history. But so great were their lives, so remarkable their personalities, and so inspiring their deeds, that it is doubtful if their influence will ever die. Down the centuries they have served as a strong example for weaker men” (1926, 110). The “Two Statues” introduced children to the history of Spanish colonization of Puerto Rico through a description of the bravery, “fearlessness,” “resolution,” and “courage” of these “admirable men” (1926, 110, 114–5).

The story assigned an adventurous Spanish heritage to the early highland residents. The creole elites and jíbaros (rural peasants) of the highlands, therefore, descended from the Spanish.

The Spanish heritage was further characterized as heroic, masculine, adventurous, and romantic. One particularly handsome and attractive “adventurer, soldier, and trader” was Diego Vargas de Guzmán (1926, 239). A native of Granada, Vargas de Guzmán was of “that cavalier type, the *conquistadores*, who at that time were roaming over nearly half the world” (1926, 239). In the short story “Fresas,” Kneipple recounts how a particularly “tempting” berry “of a crimson color unmatched in brilliance” and not found on any of the other “islands of the West Indies” arrived in Puerto Rico (1926, 238). She described the history of the well-travelled Granadian who had collected the dried berries on an earlier trip to Kabul in Afghanistan. Like other adventurous Spaniards of the late sixteenth century, Vargas de Guzmán “cast his lot with those who went to seek their fortunes in unknown and dangerous places” and departed for the “alluring land of Porto Rico” (1926, 242–3). In San Juan, he gained recognition. “The gallant prowess of Diego Vargas de Guzmán won him commendation and admiration on all sides. He swaggered about the narrow streets of San Juan, where men showed him respect and boys followed him.” The governor of Puerto Rico, Colonel Pedro Suárez (1593-1597), “admired him immensely and declared that more of his [“swashbuckling soldier-of-fortune”] type should come out from Spain” (1926, 245). In the end, a young lady conquered the soldier’s heart with her “two sparkling black eyes [and] a coquettishly flirted fan” (1926, 243). They married and moved to the highlands where they founded a plantation. It was there that his wife spread the dried strawberries which took root and grew wild in the region. “Fresas” is also, however, a short story that taught young boys and girls to value the masculinity, beauty, and attractiveness that

was at the core of their Spanish heritage. The story assigned an adventurous Spanish heritage to the early highland residents. The creole elites and *jibaros* (rural peasants) of the highlands, therefore, descended from the Spanish. In addition, Diego and the young lady's interactions introduced students to heterosexual romantic love and the organization of proper family relations.

The stories of sixteenth-century Spaniards also provided opportunities for Kneipple to introduce students to her interpretation of the history of the indigenous people of Puerto Rico. First, her stories located the indigenous in the distant past, in the "olden days before the New World was discovered" (1928, 178). The Spanish feared that they were "treacherous savages. Hence, for the most part, the harmless, peace-loving Borinqueños ... were often enslaved and overworked" (1927, 24). Her stories erased the indigenous as historical actors in the modern era, for they were a "long-dead" people (1927, 70). Second, although schoolchildren were not descended from natives, she nevertheless was careful to document the contemporary cultural influences and practices that were inherited from the Borinqueños. For example, two short stories, "Princess Tatagua of Boriquen" (1928) and "The Pioneer Planter" (1927), provided vocabulary lessons. In these stories, Kneipple highlighted and defined a series of terms that were part of everyday language, including: *caney* (palm-thatched house); *zemis* (idols); *bohiques* (medicine men); *aldea* (village); *bohíos* (small huts); and many others (1928, 178–93; 1927, 248–89). The white man "straightaway ... adopted all these words into his Spanish vocabulary, spelling them as they sounded to him, and thus he handed them down to his descendants" ("The Pioneer Planter"—1927, 261). Kneipple also highlighted the local lessons about the land (including plants, trees, flowers, fruits) that Spaniards (reluctantly) learned from indigenous people. In "The Pioneer Planter," Kneipple tells the story of a Spanish military man-turned-planter after his experience living in an indigenous community. Unlike the other white men who abused Indians and destroyed the land in their greedy search for gold, this particular Spaniard chose to learn from the natives. He resigned from the military, obtained land for farming, and became an early Puerto Rican planter. This planter, unlike other Spaniards, understood that the "true riches of this island" were indigenous knowledge about the land (1927, 264).²¹ The "pioneer planter" tried to foster pride in farming and agricultural work.

Significantly, Kneipple also linked the "personality" of the indigenous to contemporary Puerto Ricans, specifically in her descriptions of how indigenous peoples accommodated Spanish colonialism. Through her short stories, schoolchildren learned that the island natives were a "harmless, peace-loving" people; nevertheless they were "brave" warriors against their "constant enemies," "the fierce and hostile Caribs." Although they had defended their island from the Caribs, the peaceful Borinqueños submitted to Spanish colonizers. In the short story, "Yacoa," Kneipple portrayed the indigenous as a subservient people, servants of the Spaniards, and noble savages. "Yacoa was an Indian boy—a Borinqueño. One day, when trying to cross a flooded stream, he was caught in the swift current. Just as he was about to be carried away and drowned, he

was rescued by a kind young Spaniard called Don Renaldo. The Indian was so grateful that he fell on his face before his rescuers, vowing lifelong allegiance to him" (1927, 24).

The young Indian boy grew up serving Don Renaldo. The Spaniard accepted the boy's "unselfish offer of fidelity"; Yacoa became "his most trusted servant" and "lived but to serve him"; he was "entirely trustworthy" and demonstrated "remarkable devotion" (1927, 24–5). Yacoa and Don Renaldo became "like brothers in spirit" and developed "an admirable harmony" (1927, 24). In addition, the master had a young daughter, Alicia, whom Yacoa cared for as a child and whom he secretly loved as an adult. "He worshiped her" and would "watch her with eyes like those of a faithful dog" (1927, 25). Their relationship (male nanny and child) was shaped by a voluntary enslavement, a benevolent master, and the intimacy of childcare. In this tale of indigent submission, Kneipple softened the history of Spanish enslavement and presented it as a foundational practice on the island. The indigenous Yacoa was grateful for the opportunity to serve a Spanish master, while Don Renaldo, a benevolent Spaniard, had the obligation to accept Yacoa's devotion and service.

One Christmas holiday, the family travelled to San Juan to await the arrival of a fleet of Spanish ships and to welcome Alicia's fiancée, who was on board. The visit to San Juan revealed the exceptional relations between Don Renaldo and Yacoa, one that could flourish in the less regulated lifestyle of the countryside, but not the city. Urban elites were particularly mindful of reproducing race, class, and caste distinctions. In San Juan, other Spaniards mocked Don Renaldo's relationship with Yacoa. "I see, Don Renaldo, you still accord that Indian of yours most of the privileges of a white man" (1927, 31). The San Juan whites thought he was "foolish to place so much confidence in an Indian" (1927, 31). In the face of these criticisms, Don Renaldo defended Yacoa as the "most faithful servant" he had ever known (1927, 31).

However, he came to regret his defense of Yacoa, for that day the Indian left San Juan without his permission. Don Renaldo feared he had run away. The truth was that the fleet was days behind schedule, and Spaniards in San Juan were anxious and helpless as they waited. Seeing this, Yacoa stole away to the rainforest, where with the help of his friends, he lit a fire "upon the top of El Yunque" (1927, 34). The sailors had been caught in a storm and set off course, but they were "guided aright by that blessed column of flame"; and "the Spaniards thought this such a useful practice that they decided to adopt it" (1927, 34, 37). In this story, the Indian pledged his life to serve a white man, suppressed his love for a white woman, and risked punishment in order to rescue a Spanish fleet lost at sea. White men had a lot to learn from Indians, despite their disdain for the gentle natives. In fact, in Kneipple's stories, Spanish survival on the Caribbean island depended on the faithful support of the Borinqueños.

This was a heritage that the Puerto Rican child might want to claim as his/her own—the noble and selfless Indian with valuable local knowledge who suffered maltreatment and misunderstanding at the hands of Spanish colonizers. Kneipple's stories taught children about the dominant framework of colonialism; the unequal re-

lationship between the noble indigenous people; and the prideful and unreasonable colonial Spaniards who did not value local knowledge. She suggested that there were exceptions, however—moments when the Spanish came to appreciate and receive the knowledge that the indigenous offered. At the same time, children learned that Borinqueños were long dead. Puerto Rican children did not inherit Indian blood, for there was no interracial relationship or racial mixing in the stories. However, they did inherit knowledge of the land and, perhaps, the welcoming and submissive aspects of indigenous cultures.

The worst trait Puerto Ricans could carry forward was the Spanish disdain for honest labor, the refusal to work with their hands.

Kneipple located the stories of the Spanish conquistadors and the submissive Indians in the island's distant past. Significantly, it was the experiences of the more recent Spanish immigrants of the nineteenth century that became emblematic of a grave need for change towards modernity by the early twentieth century. Kneipple's stories taught young boys and girls that it was their generation that would have to affect this change. It was time to move forward, to leave behind outmoded ideologies and practices they inherited from the Spanish. The worst trait Puerto Ricans could carry forward was the Spanish disdain for honest labor, the refusal to work with their hands. This was the challenge that two brothers faced when their father died and left them "the inheritance" ("The Inheritance"—1926, 131–8). The story was set in Arecibo, on the northwest coast. When the boys' father passed away, his sons learned that they had inherited some property. They inherited a large *finca*, La Margarita, that had been left uncultivated due to their father's poor health, and "a small ruinous house perched on a cliff top above the caves and rocks of the seacoast near Quebradillas" (1926, 131). The brothers faced a dilemma—to reproduce the Spanish tradition of shunning labor or to earn their fortunes by working the land.

The sons, Julio and Luis, debated the options. When Luis suggested they work the land, the proud Julio "looked at his long white hands helplessly; perhaps half realizing how little fitted those hands actually were to do any real work" (1926, 132–3). Julio replied that he would "prefer to starve first" (1926, 134). When Luis suggested they economize the small amount of money they had left, Julio "sneered at ... his foolish brother" (1926, 134). Julio chose to reproduce his father's ideology, to carry forward the Spanish way: "I have told you I should never work! ... I could die to think of it. When have gentlemen used their hands? Did our father ever use his? No! Even when he realized the approaching failure of La Margarita, he did not use them.... I prefer to starve first" (1926, 134, 137). Rather than work the land, Julio chose to live at the house on the cliff above the seacoast and search for gold coins in the sand. There, he became a miser, was considered a "hopeless lunatic" by the country people, and died alone (1926, 137).

As a result, and in the tradition of “those intrepid conquistadores,” in the end, all he earned was a “tragic, penniless death” (1926, 134).

By contrast, when the practical brother Luis looked “down at his own white hands,” he saw “in them possibilities for honest labor” (1926, 133–4). Unafraid of work, Luis returned to La Margarita and became a sugar planter. Despite some difficulties, with “diligence and perseverance,” seven years later, Luis began to profit from his labor. Luis learned that “Porto Rico is a fertile, smiling land that cannot long withhold her bounty from her faithful sons” (1926, 138). Luis’s lesson, and the lesson for schoolchildren, was that the “days of treasure trove are past” (1926, 134). The Spanish disdain for labor was useless in modern times. The secret to “future fortunes” was a commitment to labor and land (1926, 134). “O pitiable strong men of the ages, whose eyes have been blinded by the glitter of gold! O wise men of the ages, who in calmer vision have foreseen wealth and happiness in the harvests to yield from the fruitful earth!” (1926, 138). Young schoolchildren, like Julio and Luis, had a decision to make. If, like Julio, they held on to a Spanish traditional disdain for labor, their future was in peril. Instead, they could learn from Luis’s choice. Luis represented the benefits of the practical option to shed Spanish tradition – Luis accepted labor, cultivated the land, and earned his fortune.

In “The Inheritance,” Kneipple targeted the children of the landowning elite.²² This story provided an American perspective: that traditional Spanish culture lacked entrepreneurship and held a disdain for labor. In the early twentieth century, US economic policies converted regions of the island into sugar plantations under the ownership of private US corporations. Alongside US capitalists, elite creoles also owned sugar fields and mills. Kneipple’s story asked the descendants of the landed elite to exploit the island’s fertile soil. The story did not address the experiences of the majority of landless sugar cane workers who received poverty wages; children of sugar workers were unlikely to attend the advanced grades.

Not all Spanish traditions boded disaster. Other practices, such as quality artisanal skills, could be valued and respected, as long as children recognized that those traditions, too, belonged in the past. In “The Clay Urn,” Kneipple linked Puerto Rico and Spain across four generations (1929, 135–50). Germán, a potter, lived in Andalusia with his wife and seven children. His youngest boy, Gervasio, yearned to become a potter like his father. When Gervasio was old enough, his father taught him the trade. But there was no need for two potters in their small Spanish village and Gervasio chose, despite his parents’ apprehension, to make his fortune in Puerto Rico. He knew he had made the right choice when he arrived in San Juan. First, he identified a river yielding good clay near the capital city; second, San Juan lacked potters; and third, he became engaged to a Puerto Rican-born woman whose father was from his same province in Andalusia. In Puerto Rico Gervasio “reached paradise on earth!” The best part was that, in addition to “the peace, the happiness, the kindness of the people,” in Puerto Rico Gervasio found “that atmosphere of Spain which instantly seemed familiar to the traveler from the homeland” (1929, 144).

Gervasio's original intention had been to make his fortune and return home to care for his parents. However, circumstances forced him to reconsider that goal. After he founded his potter's shop on the island, his father passed away back home. Gervasio began to regularly send money to support his mother. At the same time, he fathered many children, and in the end lived a modest life. His eldest son had a "flourishing dry-goods business in San Juan," his second son managed a shirt factory, the youngest son had a sugar plantation, and thankfully, his "daughters are all happily married" (1929, 148). In his potter's shop, Gervasio was often accompanied by his curly-haired grandchild. In this family story, Kneipple proposed that Puerto Rico was merely an extension of Spain. The professional classes and business elite of the turn of the century—store managers, factory owners, sugar planters, and their good wives—also represented an extension of Spain in the form of the descendants of recent Spanish immigrants.

The uniquely Spanish ideologies and characteristics (fortune-seeking, bravery, and adventurousness) were admirable in sixteenth and seventeenth-century conquistadors, military officials, and colonizers, but useless in the modern era.

Gervasio's life story illustrated that Puerto Ricans were extended family members from Andalusia, at the same time that it documented the passing of Spanish traditions and skills. One day, a collector of ceramics visited Gervasio's shop. First, the collector meditated on how the "graceful and delicate shapes of [Gervasio's] skillful molding have held a place in the lives of unnumbered people!" (1929, 149). His jars carried water for the thirsty; food for the hungry was cooked in his pots; flowers in his vases "delighted weaver's eyes"; and plants had grown and bloomed in his urns (1929, 149). But Gervasio declared, and the collector agreed, that "the day of the potter is passing. Modern life with its machine-made crockery has no place for the crude and slow methods" of his generation. In the end, Gervasio donated one of his pieces to be displayed "in a place of honor" in the collector's museum (1929, 150). Schoolchildren learned that they were living through a historical transformation in the modernization of production methods. They could take a moment, however, to reflect on some of the artisanal skills and everyday values that the Spanish had brought to the island and made up part of their daily lives, as long as they recognized that those practices and heritage belonged in a museum. The Spaniards' time had passed.

Kneipple's stories taught Puerto Rican children that the practices and ideologies of the recently arrived Spaniards, and those of their ancestors from three hundred years ago, were interesting and curious, but antiquated and out of place in modern Puerto Rico. Each of her stories, whether set in the sixteenth or the nineteenth century, drew a direct line between Spaniards and the contemporary residents of the island. Puerto Rican children learned that they were simply Spaniards relocated to a beautiful tropi-

cal isle. Several examples documented the lineage. In "Captain Correa," for example, when Toñito's father told the story of the brave, young lieutenant, Antonio de los Reyes Correa, and his exploits in the early eighteenth century, he noted: "You see, Toñito, you are his namesake!" (1929, 234). Captain Correa was Puerto Rican-born, recognized as a hero of Arecibo, but "Spanish." In the sixteenth century, Don Renaldo's daughter was married off to a fellow Spaniard recently arrived from the motherland ("Yacoa"), and "the pioneer planter" settled with his wife and children in Caparra. The Spanish-educated, but Puerto Rican-born, children (Julio and Luis), were forced to leave behind the gentlemen's life in Spain and work the land in Puerto Rico ("The Inheritance"). Gervasio's children settled into the professions in San Juan, where they raised the next generation ("The Clay Urn"). In addition, in "The Spanish Earrings," Kneipple introduced Mateo Simón, the foreman of an Utuado coffee plantation, called "El Hidalgo." Simón's family dated "almost as far back as that of the owners themselves"; the owners "were of an old and aristocratic family" who traveled back and forth between Puerto Rico and Spain, depending on "the rise and fall of their fortunes" ("Spanish Earrings"—1926, 212). The uniquely Spanish ideologies and characteristics (fortune-seeking, bravery, and adventurousness) were admirable in sixteenth and seventeenth-century conquistadors, military officials, and colonizers, but useless in the modern era. Disdain for hard labor and artisanal skills could also be left safely in the past. Spanish lineage was not restricted to the dominant classes. When Kneipple provided a phenotypical description of the poor children from the countryside, she remarked on their pale white skin, black eyes, and bountiful black hair.

The most marginalized characters in Kneipple's short stories were Africans and African-descended peoples. In her four books of seventy-one short stories, Kneipple mentions black people four times. Of those four characters, three are black Puerto Ricans and the fourth is from a neighboring island. The only black character she develops fully is Maestro Rafael Cordero, a famous historical figure who emerged in Puerto Rican historiography and literature in the 1870s, 1890s, and 1920s, as an emblem of racial and class harmony (Del Moral 2013). In Kneipple's stories, Maestro Rafael appears as an example of selfless labor and service intended to help the main character of the story (a modern, rich white youth) appreciate his privilege. Maestro Rafael's story is the exception that proves the rule in Kneipple's colonial school literature. She marginalized black people in the reconstruction of Puerto Rican history and contemporary society. Blacks were not rooted in local communities on the island or elsewhere. They were isolated individuals who contributed nothing to her larger story of family, home, and community. Kneipple's black characters were strictly servile to whites, often selflessly and graciously subservient. In her description of these four black characters, she provided contemporary children with lessons about the appropriate place of black men and women in the island's history and heritage.

Only one of the four black characters was a woman: the "grinning" "negress" Doña Maruca ("The Fruit-Cart Venture"—1928, 15). She was a curiosity for the first-time traveler to San Juan from Juncos, Claudio the fruit vendor, who observed her carefully.

The black female body marked difference—the difference between the highlands and coast (she was from outside of Caguas); the countryside and the city; and the “normal” (read Spanish-descended) Puerto Ricans and “others” (blacks who also resided on the island). Claudio watched Doña Maruca’s body “with great interest.” “She was an old negress, enormously fat, her head tied up in a gay-colored bandanna.” She was “puffing and gasping as she climbed into the bus” (1928, 14). On the drive to San Juan, the “poor negress ... bounced and jolted around on the slippery leather seat” (1928, 15). The black woman represented both domestic work and “the street”—she cooked “the best guava paste in the country;” travelled alone in public cars, and sold her product in the streets of San Juan (1928, 15). Except for a passing reference to Celestina Cordero, Maestro Rafael’s sister, Doña Maruca was the only black female character to appear in Kneipple’s stories (“Rafael”—1928, 32–45). Doña Maruca’s appearance is brief but significant – the black woman is a worker, a domestic, a public person. Men had the right to objectify her body and her blackness by publicly “observing her body with great interest.”

In another story, “Tables Turn,” Kneipple mentions two black men, janitors in a public school (1928, 196–232). One of the main characters, the American home economics teacher Miss Stewart, had a frustrating encounter with the two unnamed janitors. She becomes frustrated because she finds the black men’s speech unintelligible. Miss Stewart is the authority and the janitors are her servants. And as public school janitors, they are in the service of the colonial state, represented by the American teacher. Although she needs them to carry a dining room table from a classroom to the lunchroom, Stewart barely speaks Spanish. At the same time, the “two old negro janitors, who did not know a word of English” cannot communicate with her (1928, 209). Stewart becomes increasingly flustered as she struggles to command them. When eventually they understand what she is asking for, the men are happy to oblige and anxious to please—“the old janitors agreed affably, anxious to be courteous” (1928, 210). The parties observe each other. The janitors watch Stewart—“the two old men stood some distance down the corridor, looking with undisguised interest at the Americana” (1928, 209). She listens to them—“they were muttering, occasionally breaking into desperate speech of which she did not understand a word” (1928, 211). At the end of the scene, after the men move the table, she “watched the two dusky janitors depart, still talking to each other, with emphatic gestures now that their hands were free” (1928, 211). Both actors (black Puerto Rican men and a white American woman) are left unaffected and untouched by the brief encounter, but the way it is described communicates much to readers.

In the forewords to her collections, elite Puerto Rican educators and scholars lauded Kneipple’s writing for its ability to describe everyday scenes in great detail and to “translate” local Spanish expressions into English (Vizcarrondo 1928). But in this example, Kneipple silenced the black men’s speech: they have no voice; they are incomprehensible; their language is somehow different than that of white Puerto Ricans. Kneipple fails to translate their speech into English. Black men remain unintelligible to the American teacher, the narrator of the story, and therefore, to the student readers.

The third black character in her stories was not Puerto Rican, but represented the other US territories in the Caribbean region (St. Thomas). St. Thomas became part of the US Virgin Islands in 1917, and its residents became US citizens in 1927. In the 1928 story “Good Will (A Christmas Story),” a young Puerto Rican boy of privilege, Manolín, travels to the United States to visit an aunt in Indiana (1928, 51–85). (The aunt had married an American military man and moved there from the island.) He arrived by ship in New York and then traveled to the Midwest by rail. Although anxious about traveling alone, Manolín was quickly comforted by the porter designated to his Pullman car, Oliver. “Lo and behold, when the porter appeared, he proved to be a big, smiling negro from the Island of St. Thomas, who said he had spent a year in Porto Rico before coming to the States! He smiled broadly at Manolín, simply delighted to see someone from so near his own native island, and he promised [Manolín’s father] to care for the boy as though he were his own” (1928, 69). The “big, smiling negro” was gentle and attentive to the needs of the young, inexperienced, anxious white Puerto Rican traveler. Oliver happily served the child. While the black Caribbean man seemed familiar to the Puerto Rican child, he was also different, marked by his race (“jolly negro”) and language (“queer English”) (1928, 70).²³ This was a familiar trope—Puerto Rico was geographically part of the Caribbean, but its people were different. The Puerto Rican child represented a different race and language (Spanish) and occupied a higher class position in the mainland (rich/white; worker/black) than black Virgin Islanders, despite sharing colonial forms of US citizenship.

Instead, Maestro Rafael’s story is framed within the more important story of a young, white, privileged Puerto Rican youth.

The fourth black character Kneipple developed was the historical figure of Maestro Rafael Cordero y Molina, the famous nineteenth-century teacher. She narrated the story of young Maestro Rafael, a free black child born during the late eighteenth century, when “the negroes...received no consideration at all, for slavery had not yet been abolished in Porto Rico” (“Rafael”—1928, 34). Although free blacks were not allowed to attend the single public school in San Juan, Maestro Rafael’s parents taught him to read and write at home. Maestro Rafael grew up to become a teacher and tobacco worker. His workshop also served as a small private school for children in San Juan. In the short story (“Rafael”), a grandfather shares the black teacher’s story with his own grandchild, also called Rafael. Unlike the black teacher, young Rafael was the child of rich white merchants, surrounded by privilege and luxury, from a family “extremely proud of their ancestry” (1928, 34). The grandfather feared young Rafael was unable to appreciate “the exceptional opportunities he enjoyed” and therefore shared Maestro Rafael’s story to illustrate the value of education (1928, 33). Kneipple did not allow the story of Maestro Rafael to stand alone as a history lesson on educa-

tion, freedmen, and race in Spanish colonial society. Instead, Maestro Rafael's story is framed within the more important story of a young, white, privileged Puerto Rican youth. The black teacher's story becomes merely a lesson to the young white child.

Another lesson for the contemporary schoolchild and reader was that there was *one* exceptional black man in Puerto Rico's history; that he existed in the past under conditions of slavery and discrimination; and that the new colonial state schools proved that version of history no longer relevant. Maestro Rafael was the lone example of a black man worthy of description in Kneipple's stories. There were no descriptions of black families or black communities anywhere in the detailed accounts of local practices and behaviors in her seventy-one short stories. Like the indigenous, Maestro Rafael was located in the past and played no valuable or substantive role in contemporary society. In addition, today's public schools, young Rafael noted, were fulfilling Maestro Rafael's nineteenth-century vision that all men are equal and that all children have the right to an education—"all men have equal rights and every girl and boy may go to school!" (1928, 45). The US colonial state, "our government[,] has made it possible for every boy in the whole land to go to school and learn as much as he wants to" (1928, 37).

Kneipple reproduced a racial version of Puerto Rican history that today we recognize as myth. Generations of social historians since have written a very different history of Puerto Rico's heritage than that promoted by Kneipple and the creole elites of the early twentieth century.²⁴ It was in the nineteenth-century, in particular, that Puerto Rico's population grew from a mere 163,192 (1802) to a bustling 953,243 (1899) (Scarano 2008). Significantly, many of the new arrivals were Africans and African-descended peoples from the surrounding Caribbean islands who came to meet the demands for skilled labor in the expanding sugar economy (China 2005). Slave-based economic production declined in neighboring French and British Caribbean islands with the abolition of slavery in those islands. Concurrently, Puerto Rico's (and Cuba's) colonial export-economies, based on slave and free labor, expanded. The 1815 *Cédula de Gracia*, a liberal Spanish colonial policy, created friendly incentives for slave owners to bring their slaves, capital, machinery, and skills to Puerto Rico. While many of the new immigrants were European, either slave owners from neighboring Caribbean islands or new arrivals from the continent, many others were free or enslaved Africans and African-descended peoples. Slavery was not abolished in Puerto Rico until 1873. This latter segment of the island population, however, found itself erased from early twentieth-century histories.

Despite that historical erasure, the descendants of these nineteenth-century immigrants and enslaved and freed laborers were in the classroom and learning about their heritage via Kneipple's short stories. While the number of students by race per classroom in the main towns is not available, census records allow us to estimate the "racial" composition of urban populations.²⁵ This is important because school expansion in urban and rural areas was uneven in 1920s Puerto Rico. Junior high schools and high schools were concentrated in urban centers. Kneipple's short sto-

ries were assigned to those grades. According to the US census, 43 percent of the urban population of Puerto Rico in 1910 was enumerated as “colored”; 32.7 percent in 1920; and 30.4 percent in 1930.²⁶ In 1930, San Juan, the largest town, was 32 percent colored. Meanwhile, the second-largest, Ponce was 27 percent colored; Mayagüez was 32 percent colored, and Caguas, 37.²⁷ In addition, several medium-sized towns (2,500-10,000) had significant “colored” populations, including Yauco, 51 percent; San Lorenzo, 50; Carolina, 49; Vieques, 47; Sábana Grande, 41; San Germán, 40; and Aibonito, 39 (US Bureau of the Census 1931, 164–5—Table 21). Census enumeration and the definition of racial categories were deeply contested processes, especially in a colonial setting (Rodríguez-Silva 2012). Nevertheless, at the very least, census results help qualify elite creole interpretations of the islanders’ racial heritage. When intellectuals (and Kneipple, in particular) described a whitened Hispanic population, they were writing historical fiction. They chose not to include the large percentage of African-descended Puerto Ricans into their version of the island “community.”

Kneipple’s version of Puerto Rican history might have appeared alien or foreign to the many schoolchildren who resided in majority brown and black municipalities in early-twentieth-century Puerto Rico.²⁸ Her historical reconstructions, which denied the active and diverse presence of African-descended peoples at the center of local communities, directly contradicted the everyday reality of the children. As they acquired English, Puerto Rican children of African descent were also taught to interpret blackness in Puerto Rico as something either located in the distant past or a comical marker of difference in contemporary times. The English-language stories symbolized the everyday violence African-descended children experienced in the colonial classroom, where whiteness was naturalized and blackness denied. Through the assignment and teaching of these stories, black children were denied representations of themselves and their communities. The versions of black consciousness that emerged and evolved in early-twentieth-century Puerto Rico did so in spite of colonial education and English-language instruction.²⁹

Conclusion

The politics of English-language policies has been a dominant area of research in the history of Puerto Rican education. When Americans imposed English-language instruction in the classroom, when they aggressively promoted Americanization, they were also suppressing aspirations to Puerto Rican sovereignty and alternative interpretations of island history and culture. Local teachers, intellectuals, and some politicians opposed the English-language emphasis in schools. They defended the Spanish language as a cultural heritage and an everyday practice. They resisted American attempts to “massacre the mentality” of Puerto Rican children by replacing a native language with the foreign language of the colonial occupier (Mendoza 2004, 16). The tireless struggle against the imposition of English in the classroom bore scant results until the educational reforms of the 1940s. Yet, few studies have examined what children were learning about their history, heritage, and culture during those English lessons.

Kneipple's stories provide some answers. In English-language classrooms Puerto Rican youth learned a particular version of Puerto Rican history. Kneipple's stories taught them that the foundational heritage of Puerto Ricans was, above all, Hispanic. Kneipple established that Spanish heritage through stories of early Spanish *conquistadores*, military officers, and colonizers. Children learned about the unequal relationship between the island's indigenous peoples (iconic "noble savages") and the callous Spaniards (colonizers and slave owners), who did not always value the natives' local knowledge of island geography and land. In addition, they learned of the more recent history of the nineteenth-century Spanish immigrants whose traditional practices and ideologies were being challenged by early-twentieth-century modernity and progress. Finally, schoolchildren learned that they were themselves descendants of the Spanish. Kneipple consistently linked contemporary Puerto Ricans, from both the dominant and laboring classes, to a cultural and biological Spanish heritage.

Meanwhile, Kneipple marginalized Africans and African-descended peoples.

In addition to dominant representations of Spanish heritage in Puerto Rican history, Kneipple located indigenous peoples, the "harmless, peace-loving Borinqueños" (1927, 24), in the distant past. Although these peoples were "long-dead" (1929, 170), her stories traced indigenous heritage in contemporary use of Spanish terminology and local knowledge of the environment. She further suggested that contemporary Puerto Ricans reflected the uniquely pleasant, generous, submissive, and welcoming personality that she ascribed to the Borinqueños. Meanwhile, Kneipple marginalized Africans and African-descended peoples. In her stories, blacks had no history or origins on the island or anywhere else. They appeared as a couple of individuals, restricted to specific regions (the northern coast) and occupations. Blacks were not part of the Puerto Rican community. Rather, they were random individuals not linked to the larger family (with the exception of Maestro Rafael Cordero). In Kneipple's stories, blacks are insignificant in island history and excluded as constituent and contributing members to the island's future.

During their English lessons, then, students were learning more than the mechanics of language. They were learning their history, as distorted by a colonial lens. English-language literature taught them a lie. It only celebrated the cultural heritage of the dominant class. It glorified the contributions of Spanish immigration at the same time that it deliberately ignored the long and dynamic migration of other Caribbeans to Puerto Rico, particularly in the nineteenth century. Kneipple's version of Puerto Rican history aggressively erased the reality of racial diversity and inequality and the central role of African-descended peoples. Historical representations were filtered through the eyes of a colonial writer who, on the one hand, was considered sympathetic to locals, while, on the other, denigrated traditional heritage as a poor fit with a modern and progressive society.

Kneipple's short stories and Huyke's advocacy of English-language instruction and Americanization also suggest that colonial agents, as they cultivated public school policy, also appropriated local histories and stories. Kneipple's stories filtered topics and concepts dominant in the writings of Puerto Rican scholars from the 1890s and her 1930s contemporaries.³⁰ On questions of culture, race, and heritage, Kneipple's characterizations did not substantively differ from those of Puerto Rican creole intellectuals, authors, and writers of children's literature in the 1920s and 1930s. The tropes of insularity, isolation, and submissiveness, in fact, were defining characteristics of the Spanish-language literature produced by Antonio S. Pedreira and other contributors to the literary canon of the 1930s. Romantic reflections on the "noble savage" and the location of indigenous peoples in the distant past was the norm, not the exception in 1920s and 1930s Puerto Rico, as was ignoring or minimizing Africans and African-descended peoples in island history and silencing affirmations of blackness. The few authors of the 1930s generation who acknowledged historical and contemporary black people as members of the island community, such as Luis Palés Matos, often did so by caricaturing "black" speech, while exoticizing black bodies. Kneipple's English-language short stories reproduced and appropriated existing local tropes about race, heritage, and history, at the same time that they reflected US perceptions. Her stories were part of, not distinct from, early-twentieth-century discourses circulating on the island.

From today's vantage point, the 1920s representations of cultural heritage and history in Kneipple's short stories seem fundamentally racist and misrepresentative of island history. The racist, pro-Hispanic early history of Spanish colonization and the critique of recent Spanish immigrants she portrayed were not much different from those published by late nineteenth-century historians of Puerto Rico, such as Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, Salvador Brau, and Cayetano Coll y Toste. Kneipple also reproduced an interpretation of Puerto Rican cultural heritage that mimicked and appropriated stories that had already been embraced by the creole elites of the early twentieth century. The distinction was that Kneipple's stories – produced through an American's colonial gaze, narrated in the English language, part of the state's Americanization agenda, and intended to teach young students about their history and heritage—served the US imperial project in Puerto Rico. A racist, colonial literature, it linked Puerto Ricans' history to the promise of colonial submission. It also, however, produced cultural tropes that continued to inform Spanish-language literary production on the island until the rupture that came with Díaz Alfaro's short stories in the late 1940s (Díaz Alfaro 1947).

NOTES

¹ English-language instruction was a foundational aspect of Americanization efforts that targeted colonial peoples in overseas US territories (Hawaii, Philippines, and Puerto Rico) and non-white and immigrant groups in the United States mainland (see: Adams 1995; Silva 2004; Kramer 2006; Negrón de Montilla 1990; Tamura 1994; Blanton 2004).

² On the history of English-language policies in Puerto Rico, see: Cebollero 1945; Muñiz Souffront 1950; Osuna 1949; Negrón de Montilla 1990; Torres-González 2002).

³ See sources note #2.

⁴ On the historical challenges to English-language policy, see sources from footnote #2 and: Algren de Gutiérrez (1987); Delgado Cintrón (1990); Academia Puertorriqueña (1998); Barreto (2001); Mendoza (2004); Puerto Rico (2004); Walsh (2014).

⁵ Elizabeth Kneipple, Chicago, to Bureau of Insular Affairs, Washington, DC, May 15, 1923. Transcript in Archivo General de Puerto Rico, Fondo Departamento de Instrucción Pública, Serie Expedientes Inactivos de Maestros, Caja 157.

The island's public school system expanded greatly in the early twentieth century. From 1910 to 1930, the number of classrooms increased from 522 to 3,273; the number of teachers grew from 1,623 to 4,451; and classroom enrollment went from 95,342 to 221,189. Twenty-six percent of school-age children attended schools in 1900. By 1930, 41 percent attended (Osuna 1949, 625, 628).

American teachers also worked in Puerto Rican classrooms. In San Juan in 1920, 76 out of 422 teachers were "foreign-born white." In Ponce in 1920, 21 out of 264 teachers were foreign-born. The US census classified those not born in Puerto Rico as foreign-born. Likely, these were US American teachers (US Bureau of the Census 1922, 1299, 1301).

⁶ In addition to the four collections, Kneipple published articles in US and Puerto Rican newspapers, including the *New York Herald Tribune*, *American Review of Reviews*, *Current History*, and *El Mundo*. Her dispatches were collected in *The Hurricane (El huracán de San Felipe)* and published by the Puerto Rico government press in 1929. Towards the end of her tenure on the island, she co-authored with her husband, *Porto Rico, a Caribbean Isle* (Van Deusen and Kneipple 1931), a text assigned to university classes at the University of Puerto Rico. In addition, between 1937 and 1950, Kneipple published nine novels under the pen name "Edith Roberts." She also "assisted" in the writing of Bailey K. Ashford's autobiography in 1934.

⁷ Textbooks written and published specifically for use in Puerto Rican classrooms in the 1920s include Miller (1922) and Vizcarrondo (1922).

⁸ More specifically, Kneipple reproduced the dominant tropes about race and heritage in the historical literature. See, for example, Abbad y Lasiera (1866), Brau (1904, 1907), and Coll y Toste (1914).

⁹ On the books imported for use in colonial schools in the first decade of the twentieth century, see Navarro (2002).

¹⁰ On the history of the United States in the Caribbean and Pacific in the early twentieth century, see: Trias Monge (19970); Pérez (1998); Cabán (1999); Rivera Ramos (2001); Thompson (2010); Kramer (2006); and Silva (2004).

¹¹ On the twentieth-century Americanization of second-generation Japanese schoolchildren in Hawaii, see Tamura (1994).

¹² On the history of Mexican-American students and English-language policies in Texas, see Blanton (2004) and San Miguel (1987).

¹³ My focus has been on Americanization and public schools. For a history of Americanization

in private schools, see Walsh (2008, 2014).

¹⁴ There was a parallel urgency behind Americanization in mainland schools during WWI.

¹⁵ The following description of English-language policies from 1900-1942 is based on Torres-González 2002, 106—Table #1).

¹⁶ On the history of English-only school language policy in the United States, see Blanton (2004, 56–76).

¹⁷ In 1911, Huyke changed career paths. He earned a law degree, became a lawyer, and entered public office. Under the Foraker Act, he served in the House of Delegates (Cámara de Delegados) as the representative for Humacao, 1913–1917. Under the Jones Act, he served in the House of Representatives (Cámara de Representantes) for the Humacao-Yabucoa district, 1917–1920. In those years, he also served as the president of the House of Representatives. At the time he was a member of the Unión Party and supported the “assimilationist camp.” When the Unión Party moved away from an annexationist position, Huyke left the party and declared his support for a permanent union with the United States (Negrón de Montilla 1990; Cebollero 1945).

¹⁸ The story behind Huyke’s appointment is a lot more controversial, however (Negrón de Montilla 1990).

¹⁹ Willsey was the Supervisor of Home Economics from 1920–1923 (Willsey 1921, 1922, 1925).

²⁰ Elizabeth Kneipple, Chicago, to Bureau of Insular Affairs, Washington, D.C., May 15, 1923. Transcript in Archivo General de Puerto Rico, Fondo Departamento de Instrucción Pública, Serie Expedientes Inactivos de Maestros, Caja 157.

²¹ This story also promoted appreciation for farming.

²² While Kneipple may have targeted the children of the landowning elite, those students were likely attending private, Catholic schools, not public ones. We might suggest, therefore, that Kneipple’s story served as an aspirational text for public school students. This important distinction was noted by one of the readers.

²³ Kneipple marked the porter’s blackness in his use of English, emphasizing his use of the subject-verb. “We is only in eastern Ohio now, because we was slowed up a little last night by the snow. In other words, we is late. But this train sure have been going the whole night, crossing mountains, rivers, towns. Where you think you is, Manolín? Porto Rico? This am not no Porto Rico. Takes a long time to reach that Indiana. Most of all the rest of this day, *I reckon*” (1928, 73—emphasis in original).

²⁴ On the social history of slavery in Puerto Rico, see: Díaz Soler (1981); Baralt (1982); Scarano (1984); Nistal-Moret (1984); and Figueroa (2005).

²⁵ Puerto Ricans and US Americans defined racial categories differently. Throughout the Americas, definitions of race have been specific to historical periods and national debates. While island and mainland perspectives vary, they fall across a spectrum and are not incompatible. On race in modern Latin America and the Caribbean, see: Graham (1990); Andrews (1991, 2004); Stepan (1991); Wade (1993); and Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt (2003)..

²⁶ The US census race categories varied by year. In 1910 and 1920, the US census used three racial categories for Puerto Rico: black, mulatto, and white. In 1930, the census collapsed black and mulatto into one category—“colored.” According to the censuses, the colored population of Puerto Rico in 1899 was 38 percent; in 1910, 34.5 percent; in 1920, 27 percent; and in 1930, 25.7 percent (US Bureau of the Census 1913, 594–607—Table 38; 1922, 1208–14—Table 20; 1931, 155–9—Table 18).

²⁷ In 1930, the total population of San Juan was 114,715; Ponce, 53,430; Mayagüez, 37,060; and Caguas, 19,791 (US Bureau of the Census 1931, 154—Table 17).

²⁸ In the 1920 census, at least seven municipalities were composed of fifty percent or larger

non-white populations (combined “black” and “mulatto”): Dorado, 73.5 percent nonwhite; Toa Baja, 64.5; Arroyo, 64.1; Carolina, 59.9; Loiza, 56.3; Vega Alta, 51; Culebra 50. Eight additional municipalities were composed of at least forty-percent or more non-white populations: Vieques, 47.2; Aguas Buenas, 44.6; Trujillo Alto, 44.5; Luquillo, 43.3; Río Piedras, 43.1; Santa Isabel, 41.6; Humacao, 41.6; Río Grande, 40.6. In another eight municipalities, the non-white population averaged from 41 to 47 percent (US Bureau of the Census 1922, 1208–14—Table 20; 164–5—Table 21).

²⁹ For an analysis of the history of blackness and silencing in Puerto Rico, see Rodríguez-Silva (2012) and Roy-Féquièrre (2004).

³⁰ As an introduction to the literature of the 1930s, see López-Baralt (2004).

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Puerto Rico as colonial palimpsest: A microhistory of translation and language policy. Article. Feb 2019. Target. Christopher Mellinger. Del Moral examines Kneipp's positive characterizations of the US military, representations of Puerto Rican childhoods, and revision of island history. Kneipp's short stories address the particularities of US empire in the late 1920s Caribbean, the value of colonial schools, the responsibility of US citizens in overseas territories, and the promise of English-language instruction. The stories proposed that the new generation of Puerto Rican children "was especially prepared to assume leadership on the island and the His history is sympathetic to the Indians and highly critical of Spanish colonial administration. Coming in the wake of American military occupation, the book sought to explain and justify control of the island by the United States." Van Middledyk's work was the first major historical study of Puerto Rico in English. Van Middledyk advanced Puerto Rican historiography by building on the works of Brau, Coll y Toste, and Acosta, and by consulting early Spanish chronicles. A librarian at the Free Public Library of San Juan, Van Middledyk possessed knowledge of and access to considerable primary source material. His history is sympathetic to the Indians and highly critical of Spanish colonial administration. Puerto Rico - Puerto Rico - History: The following discussion focuses on Puerto Rican history from the time of European settlement. For treatment of the island in its regional context, see Latin America, history of, and West Indies, history of. The first inhabitants of Puerto Rico were hunter-gatherers who reached the island more than 1,000 years before the arrival of the Spanish. Ethnic composition. Language and religion. Demographic trends. Puerto Ricans in the United States. The first inhabitants of Puerto Rico were hunter-gatherers who reached the island more than 1,000 years before the arrival of the Spanish. Arawak Indians, who developed the Taino culture, had also settled there by 1000 ce. The clan-based Taino lived in small villages led by a cacique, or chief. Of course, the Puerto Ricans already had municipal governments, established by the Spaniards during their three hundred year reign over the island. But General Order No. 160 was supposed to mark something entirely new in that it manned the municipal governments exclusively with elected Puerto Ricans. The idea was that the Puerto Ricans, "for the first time in their history," should be given an opportunity to manage their own affairs and acquire practical education in modern liberal governance. Go, Julian 2009. The "New" Sociology of Empire and Colonialism. Sociology Compass, Vol. 3, Issue. 5, p. 775. Under Spanish colonial rule, Puerto Rico experienced varying levels of economic and political autonomy over the centuries. By the mid-19th century, however, a wave of independence movements in Spain's South American colonies had reached Puerto Rico. In 1868, some 600 people attempted an uprising based in the mountain town of Lares.