

José Rizal and the Spanish Novel

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
the Department of  
Romance Studies in the Graduate School  
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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a preliminary attempt to define and theorize Spanish literature of the late nineteenth century from the perspective of the colonized. I take as my starting point the novels of the Filipino writer José Rizal: *Noli me tângere* and *El filibusterismo*. Although these novels are considered to be the foundational texts of the Philippine nation, I will instead focus on their relationship to Spain and the literature produced there around the same period. This analysis will be contrasted with a reading of Benito Pérez Galdós's novel *Doña Perfecta*, which, as many critics have claimed, bears a resemblance to Rizal's first novel. I will show how Galdós's novel demonstrates a colonizing mentality despite being nominally about an internal Spanish conflict. In conclusion, I will argue for the necessity of an understanding of Rizal's novels in order to better grasp the total context in which peninsular Spanish novels were produced.

## Contents

Abstract.....	4
Introduction:.....	1
1. <i>Noli me tângere</i> , Polyphony and Colonialism.....	9
Towards a Political Reading of the <i>Noli</i> .....	94
2. Rizal and Spain in <i>El filibusterismo</i> .....	97
The Critics: Retana and Sarkisyanz on Rizal's	
Relationship to Spain.....	99
Rizal and the "Two Spains".....	114
The "Two Spains" in <i>El filibusterismo</i> .....	121
Rizal's Idea of History.....	148
Simoun and Isagani: The Circuits of History ....	151
Reflections on Rizal and Anti-Colonial literature	176
3. Colonialism in <i>Doña Perfecta</i> .....	181
Conclusion: Rizal as Reader of Galdós.....	219
Works Cited.....	226
Biography.....	233

**Introduction:**  
**José Rizal and the Spanish Novel**

This dissertation will attempt to reformulate the relationship between colonial and metropolitan space during Spain's late imperial period. My focus will be primarily on the works of José Rizal, a Filipino polymath and national hero, whose novels *Noli me tángere* (1887) and *El filibusterismo* (1891) are considered to be the foundational texts of the Philippine national consciousness. However, my reading of them departs from a different assumption: instead of looking at them as 'generative' texts (which they are, arguably, in the Philippine context) I will look at them as novels that represent the 'dead-end' of colonialism. In other words, I will argue that Rizal's novels, perhaps even more than representing the birth of the Philippine nation, are also as much about the death of the Spanish empire.

This kind of interpretation will place Rizal back into dialogue with the aesthetic context of his era. Thus, this study attempts to demonstrate the necessity of understanding Rizal's novels in the context of other Spanish novels of the same period. Moreover, perhaps more

importantly, this study will also show how an understanding of Rizal's novels is indispensable to a proper contextualization of those very same Spanish novels.

Instead of insisting upon the metropole's influence on the colony, I will instead consider the colony's influence on the metropole. This means that if we place Rizal's voice amongst those of his Peninsular contemporaries, we see that his peculiar use of the novelistic form (informed by his own status as a colonized subject, amongst other reasons) exposes a fundamental problem in the Spanish novel. That problem is colonialism, and we will see here how colonialism itself was so deeply embedded in the Spanish *zeitgeist* that it absolutely permeated throughout its various expressions. It is tempting to draw the conclusion that whatever emancipatory project contained within the Peninsular novel was already stained by this 'foundational sin' without even being aware of it. Rizal's own interventions into the world of the Spanish novel seem to expose this contradiction.

This reconfiguration is what separates my project from other studies of José Rizal as well as peninsular literature at large. In doing so, I follow the trajectory

established by Rizal's first biographer, Wenceslao Retana, whose book *Vida y escritos del dr. José Rizal* is the pre-eminent attempt at examining Rizal's particular relationship to Spain and her empire. However, Retana, being a contemporary of both Rizal and Galdós, suffered from the same defects as his Spanish countrymen: namely, the colonizing consciousness that we will examine with regards to Galdós.

Jumping ahead to more recent criticism, Manuel Sarkisyanz also relies heavily on Retana and continues this examination of Rizal in his book *Rizal and Republican Spain*. Here he ties together Rizal and the *Ilustrados* with the struggles of the Spanish republicans. However, he focuses mostly on historical, rather than literary, analysis.

By and large, there is no shortage of studies on Rizal. For more than half a century, his texts have been mandatory reading for every Filipino student, a situation that has supported the culture apparatus surrounding Rizal, for better and for worse. The bureaucratization of Rizal studies has also insured the production of texts that merely tow the party line, studies that will probably help

high school students studying for their exams on Rizal, yet lack any real critical insight. But there are also some great exceptions to this.

In recent years, arguably the most influential book on Rizal has been Benedict Anderson's *Under Three Flags*. Anderson unites the ilustrados, the Filipino revolutionaries, the Cuban insurrectionists, and the European far-left through their relationship to Anarchism. He sees anarchism as the overriding historical centrifuge that pulled them all together. Thus we see how the Filipinos played an important role in the history of national liberation, a theme that is also taken up in part of Rebecca Karl's book *Staging the Nation*.

There are several more critics of note, whose writings we will see throughout this dissertation: The historian Vicente Rafael has also used Rizal in fascinating ways in order to examine Philippine nationalism. Megan Thomas has looked at the appropriation of Orientalism by the Filipino Ilustrados as an anti-colonial response to imperialism. John Blanco has written compellingly on the relationship between Rizal and José Martí, as has Adam Lifshey and Koichi Hagimoto. The list goes on: Eugenio Matibag,

Courtney Blaine Johnson, Joan Torres-Pou, Joyce Tolliver, and others.

My project shares many elements with other critics, yet reassembles them in different ways: first, while the historical context plays an absolutely crucial role in my readings, my focus is almost exclusively on literary texts. My aim is to examine the aesthetic procedures employed by Rizal and Galdós within this imperial context. The idea is to show precisely how Rizal's novels appropriate and re-deploy the techniques of imperial literature. This implies a second crucial difference, namely a deeper concern with form, rather than the content, of the novels. It is the form that reveals the otherwise hidden literary connections between colony and metropole. It is in this way that my project attempts a dialectical view of this particular literary situation: looking at Rizal from Spain and Galdós from the Philippines. The final result of this is a theorization of Peninsular Spanish literature rather than Philippine literature, a fact that definitively separates my project from the others.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters which examine some particular aspect of this problematic. Chapter one centers on Rizal's first novel, *Noli me tángere*, relying on Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of *polyphony*. The multiplicity of voices contained within the *Noli* lends it a 'dialogic' quality that allows the novel to attempt to capture the totality of Philippine society. But as Franco Moretti has pointed out<sup>1</sup>, the European nineteenth century novel in general actually works against the concept of polyphony: nation building was rather a *monologic* project that attempted to create a singular voice instead of the confluence of autonomous voices. We can then think of polyphony in the *Noli* as the technical resolution to the problem of colonialism itself, the aesthetic response of multiplicity against the monologue of colonialism.

The second chapter covers Rizal's second novel, *El filibusterismo*. Here, the primary elements of the plot are transplanted from Europe and do not correspond to Philippine reality, despite the novel being set in Manila. I argue, therefore, that the novel really speaks to a European (specifically Spanish) problematic: the novel

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<sup>1</sup> See his book *The Modern Epic*. Verso: London, 1996

speaks to the notion of "las dos españas." It is the age old conflict over the supposed 'true' nature of Spain: whether the liberal or conservative projects, respectively, can lay claim over Spanish identity.

I show how Rizal was used by his early Spanish critics in order to champion the liberal cause. However, the truth was much more complex: I show in the *Fili* that Rizal's depiction of the Spanish liberals actually shows a much more problematic relationship. We begin to see more precisely how Rizal was critiquing the colonial enterprise: even the supposedly good intentions of the liberals could not transcend their implicit belief in the colonial project, which leads us to the third chapter.

In the final chapter, we leave behind Rizal's novels in order to examine a text written by a liberal Peninsular Spaniard: *Doña Perfecta* by Benito Pérez Galdós. Although it is not a novel about colonialism, I argue that colonialism exists in the form of the novel itself. In other words, the underlying foundation of the novel is based on colonialism, despite the fact that colonialism itself is nowhere mentioned in the text. This brings us back to Rizal's critique in the *Fili*: as we will see, Galdós is arguing

against this colonizing attitude, without recognizing that it is in fact 'colonial.' Thus his critique misses the point because it too is based on a colonial logic.

The conclusion recapitulates how Rizal understood this problem, and his novels expose the failures of both the liberal and conservative projects with regards to colonialism. In the end, his novels attempt to correct the underlying intrinsic formal problem of colonialism by reversing those same techniques on their origins.

## **1. *Noli me tángere*, Polyphony and Colonialism**

At the most basic level, Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere* is the story of the downfall of Juan Crisostomo Ibarra. After having spent seven years in Europe, Ibarra, immersed in the concepts of European modernity, returns to the colonial Philippines where his life is dismantled piece by piece until he is utterly destroyed through the machinations of the colonial system. Although the reader is sympathetic to Ibarra, he is a deeply flawed protagonist: he is intelligent but painfully naïve. Despite his worldly knowledge, he is unable to fundamentally grasp the concrete realities of the colonial system, which leads not only to his own destruction, but that of nearly everyone around him. By the end of the novel, all of his closest friends and associates are either dead, ruined, or driven completely insane.

In this chapter I will explore how Ibarra's character develops throughout the novel as defined by his relationships with several key players: the Narrator, Elías, María Clara, and Padre Dámaso. I will show how these relations demonstrate Ibarra's complicated connection to

the Philippines by highlighting the simultaneous necessity and contingency of his presence in the colony in the imaginary of its inhabitants (as shown by the narrator, Elías, and María Clara). However the inclusion of Padre Dámaso complicates this reading: in this case, it will be shown how the race relations in the colony, as practiced by the friars, define an untranscendable barrier for Ibarra. Each of these characters represents a particular *prise de position* through which Ibarra must navigate, thus producing the very action of the novel.

Thinking through the *Noli* in this web of character relations will also be informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*<sup>1</sup>. We will see that the *Noli* can be viewed as a kind of colonial 'polyphonic' novel; Rizal shares with Dostoevsky a stylistic tendency towards a multi-voiced narrative space where the distinct characters are allowed to exist apart from the author's consciousness<sup>2</sup>. The problematic relationships between Ibarra and the other

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<sup>1</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> It is unclear whether Rizal read Dostoevsky as the latter's name does not appear in Esteban de Ocampo's catalogue of Rizal's personal library (*Rizal as Bibliophile*. Manila: Unesco, 1960). Nonetheless, in a letter to Rizal, José Cecilio characterized the *Noli* as being "in the style of the Russian novels" thus demonstrating at the very least some tenuous connection to the Russian writer (*Correspondencias* pg. 140).

characters represents the "unfinalized dialogue"<sup>3</sup> that is characteristic of Dostoevsky, according to Bakhtin. Ibarra never comes to represent the author's full ideological convictions: on the contrary, instead of conviction he represents ideological doubt. Though the several voices of the *Noli* never become a "unity of consciousness"<sup>4</sup>, the reason behind this diverges from Dostoevsky: despite any surface similarities, Rizal's polyphony is derived from the reality of colonial system itself. Dialogue, the coexistence of opposing positions, occurs insomuch that the nature of colonialism had forced the situation: native and colonizer (in body and mind) were required to inhabit the same space, which lends itself to the almost gothic multiplicity found in the *Noli*. In a manner of speaking, Rizal did not have the luxury of the monologic novel; the very 'idea'<sup>5</sup> that defines Dostoevsky's heroes, the force that possesses them, is in Rizal political. The 'polyphony' is inflected with the colonial, and it is a dialogic response to the monologic *telos* of colonialism, which we will see in the contradictory relationships of Ibarra.

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<sup>3</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* pg. 32

<sup>4</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* pg. 80

<sup>5</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* pg. 22

Several critics<sup>6</sup> have mentioned the dialogic polyphony of the *Noli*, but have not looked at it critically. Franco Moretti points out "the novel has not stimulated social polyphony (as Bakhtin would have it), but rather reduced it<sup>7</sup>." The novel, taken as a symbolic representation of the nation, "requires streamlining (...) of physical barriers, and of the many jargons and dialects that are irreversibly reduced to a single national language<sup>8</sup>." Polyphony is not conducive to the creation of a singular national consciousness. This seems then to problematize the *Noli* as the foundational text of Philippine national consciousness, as it is commonly seen. If the *Noli* is a polyphonic and national text, then must we discard the monologic notion of the nation at least in the Philippine case<sup>9</sup>? I will try to

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<sup>6</sup> The short list: Juan de Castro, "Spanish, Tagalog, and Identity;" Adam Lifshey, "Literary Alterities of Philippine Nationalism;" Eugenio Matibag, "El verbo del filibusterismo;" Joan Torres-Pou, "La narrativa anticolonial hispano-filipina." The exception is Jonathan Culler's "Anderson and the Novel;" he references Moretti's exception to Bakhtin, but he does not offer a critique.

<sup>7</sup> Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*. London: Verso, 1998. P. 45n

<sup>8</sup> Moretti *Atlas* p. 45

<sup>9</sup> The question is perhaps unanswerable. In a country of over 6 000 islands and nearly 200 languages, a 'monologic' conception of the Philippines is perhaps impossible. Also, Rizal himself seemed to allude to the polyphonic nature of his texts. In his response to a scathing attack on his novel in the Spanish press, he writes that one must understand the particularities of the each character "las ideas expresadas por los personajes(...) en atención a sus circunstancias, creencias, hábitos, instrucción, y pasiones" Later he goes on to say

show how Rizal balances these ideas, creating (or describing, as he would have it) a world of multiplicity while simultaneously attempting to create the "deep, horizontal comradeship" that defines the national "imagined community"<sup>10</sup>."

Moreover, polyphony, the very heterogeneity of consciousnesses, creates a space for the idea of divided consciousnesses, for the characters and Rizal himself. This paper will at least make a preliminary attempt at looking at the underlying mechanics that connect those seeming ruptures of consciousness, something that, to my perhaps incomplete knowledge, has also never been attempted with the *Noli* at the textual nor formal level.

## I.

One of the most peculiar facets of the *Noli* is the narrator. Seen from the Spanish literary tradition, the narrator seems to follow the romantic and *costumbrista* traditions of Mariano Jose de Larra, who was indeed one of

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"Me contentaré con que me digan si mis personajes no tienen vida y carácter propios, so no obran y hablan según sus circunstancias y sus diferentes maneras de pensar, y que dejen aparte mis propias convicciones. "Al Excmo. Sr. Don Vicente Barrantes." *La Solidaridad* II: 13 (Jan 1890). P. 170.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 2003. P. 7.

Rizal's greatest influences<sup>11</sup>. The narrator's discourse is a "discourse of the character" as Bakhtin calls it, a discourse which possesses "a displaced or altered accent (mocking, polemical, ironic)<sup>12</sup>." This narrator calls attention to himself; he makes his presence evident throughout the novel through asides, comments addressed to other characters, and comments addressed to the reader, "quite uncharacteristic," Anderson says, "of most serious nineteenth-century European fiction<sup>13</sup>." He relies on the

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<sup>11</sup> See Renato de Guzman's article "Larra y Galdos en Rizal." *Romance Languages Annual* 1:1, 1989. Pp. 424-429. Also see Rizal's *Correspondance with Fellow Reformers*, particularly the correspondance between him and Mariano Ponce from 30 April 1888 to 16 June 1888 regarding the latter sending him an edition of the complete works of Larra. In them, Rizal says he will read Larra because "the writings of great men are worthy of study" (p. 163) and also "in order to catch up with the language" (p. 157). Interestingly, many scholars have emphasized the Larra-Rizal connection, though these letters, the only ones where he mentions Larra, are dated long after the writing and publication of his novel. Also, one must not forget the influence of Cervantes on both writers. See Jose M. Cecilio's 23 May 1887 letter to Rizal comparing the *Noli* to *Don Quijote*. With regards to the narrator, Cervantes' influence can most visibly be seen at the end of the chapter "En la iglesia" (p. 168).

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* p. 250

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Under Three Flags*. Verso: London, 2005. Pg. 50. He also points out the similarities of Rizal's narrator and the narrator of Machado de Assis' *Memórias Póstumas de Bras Cubas*, suggesting a similarity between burgeoning colonized literary traditions. Moreover, this narrator seems very much at home if we consider the *Noli* as a part of the *menippean* satiric tradition as seen in Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 114-120. The *menippean*, according to Bakhtin, was formed when "national legend was already in decay" (p.119) thus continuing the idea of the polyphonic yet national text that was stated earlier. Philippine nationalism pivots on the idea of the polyphonic; born out of the decadence of Spanish rule in the colony, the polyphonic acts as 'the negation of the

characters themselves to provide himself and the reader with sensorial descriptions. We see this during the first episode of the novel at a dinner party reintroducing Ibarra to the Philippines. The narrator provides us with a description of Ibarra, told from the perspective of a Spanish lieutenant whose sole purpose at this point is to serve as the narrator's eyes<sup>14</sup>:

No parecía presentar otra cosa de particular que su traje negro en medio de aquella sala. Su aventajada estatura, sus facciones, sus movimientos respiraban, no obstante, ese perfume de una sana juventud en que tanto el cuerpo como el alma se han cultivado á la par. Leíanse en su rostro, franco y alegre, algunas ligeras huellas de la sangre española al traves de un hermoso color moreno, algo rosado en las mejillas, efecto tal vez de su permanencia en los países fríos<sup>15</sup>.

The narrator is able to inhabit the lieutenant's thoughts if only for this brief moment. The effect is one of a multilayered 'gaze:' a look that both objectifies and identifies Ibarra<sup>16</sup>. This gaze takes on several layers of

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negation,' canceling the colonial monologue. I may be misreading, but I do see a dialectical potential at the formal level of the dialogic.

<sup>14</sup> We see this kind of perspective throughout the *Noli*; the narrator offers his own description, though it is nominally through the eyes of someone else, who basically serves only to embody the narrator, or provide him with the sensory capacity to perceive.

<sup>15</sup> Rizal, José. *Noli me tângere*. Manila: Instituto Nacional de Historia, 1995. P. 11. As this edition is a facsimile of the original 1887, the reader will note throughout the several orthographic and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the edition and, of course, of the time period.

<sup>16</sup> See the famous section on "The Look," Chapter 3 Part 1 of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* for my understanding of this gaze.

mediation: the lieutenant, the narrator, and the reader; the polyphony is already implied as each perspective is pulled into Ibarra's orbit. Each level of mediation entails its own implications. Concrete relations with the "Other," Sartre says, are "wholly governed by the attitudes with respect to the object that one is for the Other<sup>17</sup>." Ibarra enters the novel as an alien presence, a presence that requires a 'working through.' Put differently, Ibarra's presence implies an existential project on the part of the 'viewer;' Ibarra "holds the secret" of "being<sup>18</sup>" for each of these perspectives. This secret of course depends on the relation of the subject to Ibarra as object. Crudely put, the lieutenant can be seen to represent the European gaze with all its implications. The reader, though ambiguously situated in space and time, is still forced to see Ibarra for the first time through European eyes, regardless of his or her own subject position. The narrator is manipulating the perspective. In a sense, what we are seeing is what Stephanie Sieburth calls the narrator's "creation of an

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<sup>17</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1984. P. 473

<sup>18</sup> Sartre *Being and Nothingness* p. 473.

implied reader<sup>19</sup>." The narrator is attempting to limit the subjective difference that defines the individual reading experience resulting in kind of collective reading experience<sup>20</sup>. One can see how Rizal is forced to straddle between the dialogic and the monologic for his purposes: he wants to endow his characters with an autonomous consciousness (see note 8), but his authorial voice must on occasion intervene in order to achieve the unity he seeks in writing the "novela tagala<sup>21</sup>."

Going from form to content, we will return to the textual description of Ibarra. At first glance his suit sets him apart from the natives. As we see later in the chapter, Capitan Tinong approaches him "vestido como los naturales del país, con botones de brillantes en la pechera<sup>22</sup>". Tinong is out of place at this dinner party; his native style of dress differentiates him from the other guests, almost all Europeans. Also, the reader finds out later that among the many alleged crimes of Crisóstomo's

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<sup>19</sup> Sieburth, Stephanie. *Reading La Regenta: Duplicitous Discourse and the Entropy of Structure*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1990. P. 46

<sup>20</sup> Again, see Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. However, I do not believe that a collective reading experience is necessarily 'national.'

Jonathan Culler shares this concern; see his article "Anderson and the Novel." *Diacritics*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), pp. 19-39.

<sup>21</sup> Rizal *Noli* preface

<sup>22</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 13

father Rafael, was the "uso de la camisa siendo descendiente de peninsulares<sup>23</sup>," that is, for wearing the *barong tagalog*, again a native style of dress. Dress and race are linked to the point that merely adopting the dress of the other constitutes a racial transgression, which in turn destabilizes the colonial order. Rafael's use of native dress, despite his Spanish origins, can be seen to represent a kind of solidarity with the Natives. For the younger Ibarra, who obviously shares his father's Spanish origins, his suit can also be seen as a racial transgression, visually aligning him with the Europeans despite his native blood. Writing about late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs from the Philippines, Vicente Rafael remarks that the European dress the *Ilustrados* adopted in these photos makes them "tendentiously out of context," but that it takes "visible exception to Spanish racial stereotypes" that "amounted to the infantilization of native Filipinos<sup>24</sup>." This is ingrained in the lieutenant: would Ibarra's "traje negro," which he immediately calls attention to, have even been mentioned if Ibarra were a

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<sup>23</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 21

<sup>24</sup> Rafael, Vicente. "Nationalism, Imagery, and the Filipino Intelligentsia in the Nineteenth Century." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No.3 (Spring, 1990), pp. 591-611. P. 605

European? Nonetheless, may it suffice to say that there is a visual dialogue occurring at the sartorial level.

Yet the suit does signify another peculiarity: Ibarra's 'black' suit signals that he is in a period of mourning. Paraphrasing Freud, Vicente Rafael links mourning to the concept of the nation.

The love one feels for the *patria* is conveyed by what we might call a rhetoric of mourning. Mourning implies a process of working through, then setting apart one's memories of a lost object or person from one's experience of them while still alive. In doing so, one is able to reconcile oneself to the fact of loss. Such a reconciliation is accomplished through the idealization of the person or object. Put another way, mourning succeeds when what one remembers is an image of what was lost, no longer the lost object itself. Mourning thus entails the reproduction of stereotypical images of the lost object. In such a context, memory attaches itself not to direct experience but to its mediated versions<sup>25</sup>.

Thus mourning is the category that characterizes Ibarra's return to the Philippines; he seeks his lost father and his lost *patria*. As we will see throughout the novel, his relationship to his homeland will be identified through the idealizations Vicente Rafael mentions, not the concrete realities that face him, which the narrator points

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<sup>25</sup> Rafael "Nationalism" P. 600. His source text is Freud's "Mourning and Melancholy," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London, 1953-74), 14:239-60.

out for the reader. It is in searching for this lost father that the realities of colonial Philippines will slowly be revealed to him. Moreover, it is only in repressing the memory of that lost father and in turn suppressing the concrete reality of the *patria*<sup>26</sup> that he can function normally in society, until he is finally pushed to his limit.

Returning to the lieutenant's description, as a mestizo Ibarra contains within himself the racial contradictions of the oppressor as well as the oppressed, but his body is also marked by something else: "los países fríos" or, northern Europe. Later we see that he did in fact spend the last few years before his return in England, Germany, and Russian Poland, and in each of those countries got by using the local languages<sup>27</sup>. Each space represents a specific relationship to the Spanish Imperial system of period, representing what Anderson calls a "new geography of imperialism<sup>28</sup>." England, Spain's old Protestant rival, occupies the center of the modern world, literally marking

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<sup>26</sup> It may be worth stating that Ibarra's concept of *patria* is at times ambiguous; it can often times be seen as a reference to the Philippines as well as Spain.

<sup>27</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 15

<sup>28</sup> Anderson *Under Three Flags* p. 65

the time of modernity: Greenwich Mean Time was established as 'universal time' only three years before the publication of the *Noli*. Moreover, England had also recently acquired the nearby Marshall Islands<sup>29</sup>. Germany was also gaining ground as Spain's imperial rival in Asia: two years before the *Noli*'s publication Spain and Germany nearly went to war over the *Islas Carolinas*<sup>30</sup>. Russian Poland<sup>31</sup> demonstrates his experience in other dominated spaces: the Poles too had resorted to guerrilla warfare in their struggle, as the Filipinos soon would. Ibarra has experienced the diversity of Europe first-hand which in turn will inform his experience in the Philippines, an experience defined by a geographical dialogue whose confluence is the colony.

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<sup>29</sup> Remember too the brief period of British control in Manila during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>30</sup> Native Filipinos were routinely drafted into military service in the Carolinas which plays a small role in Rizal's second novel. Concerning Germany, given Rizal's relationship to the country and its people, he was accused of being an "agent of Bismarck" by the Spanish authorities. Rizal published the *Noli* in Berlin ostensibly for economic reasons, but could there have been ulterior political motives?

<sup>31</sup> Although Rizal lived in England and Germany, he never set foot in Russian Poland. It is in the *Fili* where he goes to greater lengths to make international connections that he himself never experienced. Perhaps he is gesturing towards the greater internationalism of his second novel? Anderson again points out in *Under Three Flags* the relationship between Rizal's good friend Pardo de Tavera and a small group of Russian nihilists in Paris who probably met Rizal at the very least. Perhaps then the inclusion of Russian Poland speaks of this possible relation to these 'Russian nihilists' (p. 80).

When asked which European country was his favorite, he replies "Despues de España, mi segunda patria, cualquier país de la Europa libre<sup>32</sup>". It is the second part of the quote, "any country in free Europe," that is important to us<sup>33</sup>. It is simultaneously ambiguous and specific: ambiguous in that it refers to no specific national space, specific in that the unifying element is 'freedom.' Concerning this freedom, he goes on to say "la prosperidad ó la miseria de los pueblos están en razon directa de sus libertades ó preocupaciones<sup>34</sup>". Freedom and prosperity go hand in hand for Ibarra, as do misery and worry. It is very tempting to relate the language he is using to economics seeing as how the opposition to 'misery' is 'prosperity' and not 'happiness.' Perhaps then one can begin to see Ibarra as a capitalist intrusion into a feudal space<sup>35</sup>. It certainly does nothing to contradict the idea of Ibarra as a

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<sup>32</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 16

<sup>33</sup> In his book *Under Three Flags*, Benedict Anderson points out that thinking about Europe in this borderless sense was quite common amongst Filipino intellectuals (as well as other intellectuals from other colonized spaces) but was highly uncommon in Europe itself.

<sup>34</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 16

<sup>35</sup> This is a overly crude reading that does no justice to the Filipino Marxist critic Epifanio San Juan Jr.'s "Towards Rizal: An Interpretation of *Noli me tângere* and *El filibusterismo*." *Solidarity* 5(12), 1970. Pp. 8-28.

cosmopolitan and modernizing figure in the midst of the colonial Philippines<sup>36</sup>.

After having been offended by Padre Dámaso, Ibarra leaves the dinner party just before María Clara's arrival and returns to his room. The narrator contrasts the events in an interesting way. He says:

Si el joven hubiera estado menos preocupado, y más curioso, hubiese querido ver con la ayuda de unos gemelos lo que pasaba en aquella atmósfera de luz, habría admirado una de esas fantásticas visiones, una de esas apariciones mágicas que á veces se ven los grandes teatros de Europa [...] Ibarra habría visto una joven hermosísima, esbelta, vestido con el pintoresco traje de las hijas de Filipinas [...] Pero Ibarra no veía nada de esto: sus ojos veían otra cosa. Cuatro desnudos y sucios muros encerraban un pequeño espacio [...] Esto era lo que veía el desgraciado delante de sí. Se apagaron las luces en la casa de enfrente, cesó la música y el ruido, pero Ibarra oía aún el angustiado grito de su padre, buscando un hijo en su última hora [...] todo parecía descansar, sí, el mismo Ibarra dormía ya también, cansado quizás de sus tristes pensamientos ó del viaje<sup>37</sup>.

The narrator immediately characterizes Ibarra as preoccupied and lacking curiosity, a small list of Ibarra's flaws. Moreover, given that his love for María

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<sup>36</sup> There is a very telling episode towards the end where Ibarra speaks to Sinang. He does not want to tell her that he has been meeting with the shadowy Elías, so he lies and tells her that he has been in another town speculating in opening a coconut-processing factory. She is disappointed by the inanity of the revelation, responding with the voice of a "usurero estafado" (*Noli* p. 284). The fact that this elicits no surprise is indicative of the class consciousness not only of Ibarra, but Sinang (María Clara's cousin) as well.

<sup>37</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 24

Clara is the major guiding force for his actions throughout the novel, one would think his interest in the event should be much greater. Still, the reader does not know the full significance of the role she will play in the novel as of yet, so those flaws are forgivable for the moment.

The narrator goes on to describe the party and María Clara herself from an intriguing point of view: it is told from Ibarra's missing perspective. His perspective is what Ibarra *would* have seen if it were not for those preoccupations or lack of curiosity. The narrator's descriptions of María Clara's party are told in the conditional; by using this verbal mood he cannot outright affirm the events of the party. He switches back to the past tense, the primary tense of the novel, when he describes what Ibarra can know: the description of the Ibarra's room for example, the dirty walls and small space. He describes the end of the party, but this time from Ibarra's actual perspective (that is, from across the street), and still in the past tense: "se apagaron las luces" and "cesó la música." The two actions, emanating from the party, are told in the past tense to show what Ibarra actually sensed, as opposed to the events in the

conditional, where the verb shift denotes what he could have sensed if certain conditions had been met.

Moreover, the hallucinatory presence of Ibarra's father, known to the narrator and described by him, gives the reader a glimpse into Ibarra's thoughts, again a kind of limited omniscience, but that perspective is directly undercut by the last sentence: Ibarra sleeps but we supposedly do not know why, "cansado quizás de sus tristes pensamientos ó del viaje." The narrator here shows both intimacy and distance; likely his sad thoughts, known to the narrator and therefore to the reader, are the cause of his sleep. Yet, the narrator casts doubt on this: perhaps it is simply because the voyage. The narrator seems to undermine his own knowledge in an attempt to create a distance between himself from Ibarra. He knows a great deal about the inner workings of Ibarra, but either does not want to trust that knowledge despite the semblance of overwhelming truth, or he seems to doubt it. Of course, he may just be stating the obvious; Ibarra, after all, has just returned from a long voyage, so it is not an altogether unlikely possibility. Still, it seems as if the narrator wants to maintain some distance from Ibarra

despite his seeming proximity. The passage in its entirety in some sense represents the narrator's struggle with Ibarra: the narrator gets closer only to pull away again. This constant pushing and pulling characterizes the narrator's ambiguous relationship with Ibarra: the narrator is certainly sympathetic to Ibarra but not overly so; there is always a sense of guardedness towards the protagonist. Still, when it comes to Ibarra, the narrator does not directly undermine him<sup>38</sup>. His critique towards Ibarra is always attenuated: there always seems to be an extenuating circumstance that forgives or justifies Ibarra's actions, even (or perhaps especially) when those actions are negative. For example, as we have seen, in the instance cited above, the narrator criticizes Ibarra's lack of curiosity and his preoccupied state. Yet, those flaws do not seem so egregious given the fact that the preoccupations clouding his mind concern his father's mistreatment and death.

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<sup>38</sup> This undermining by the narrator is usually done through sarcasm for the other characters. As Anderson correctly observes in *Under Three Flags*, neither Ibarra nor María Clara are ever given this treatment from the narrator. Anderson believes that this is what limits the two and makes them mere melodramatic figures. Nonetheless, as I am arguing here, the narrator does critique Ibarra as much as the other characters, but his relationship is much more ambiguous, and the critique must be much more nuanced.

From a dialogic perspective, the entire episode is quite interesting. Presence and absence define the motion of the episode: Rafael Ibarra is present to his son through hallucination or daydream; María Clara is present to an idealized version of Ibarra (that is, she would have been corporeally present if he were not a flawed character). Finally of course, the whole scene is present to the absent reader through the narrator's mediation. What we have then is a series of suppressed voices; it never approaches the monologic category because it is as if the respective speakers are left waiting for a response that never comes. Seeing as how the only actual speech in the episode is between the narrator and the silent reader, we are being taught to rely on his voice and defer to his authority<sup>39</sup>. This, on the other hand, seems quite monologic, but at this early stage of the novel, what is really occurring is that the narrator is establishing the autonomy of his consciousness for the reader, so that we may appreciate him as a significant and unique voice in the novel, as if he were another character.

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<sup>39</sup> See Sieburth's *La Regenta*, in particular "The Narrator's Discourse: Seduction and Ambivalence" and "Narrator and Protagonist: The Struggle for Authority."

In another episode, Ibarra, María Clara, and the other notables of his hometown, San Diego, are enjoying a day on the lake. At one point he engages in a chess match with one of his father's nemeses, Captain Basilio, in order to decide the fate of a lawsuit the two men had against each other. At the outset, Ibarra receives a telegram informing him that his plans to build a school in the town have been approved. Ibarra plays very well; almost immediately Captain Basilio is nearly defeated and asks for a pause, during which Ibarra excitedly announces his good news.

Afterwards the game continues:

Ibarra estuvo tan contento que empezó á jugar sin reflexionar ni entretenerse examinando con cuidado el estado de las piezas. De esto resultó que, aunque Cpn. Basilio se defendía ya sólo á duras penas, la partida llegó á igualarse gracias á muchas faltas que el joven cometió despues<sup>40</sup>.

He loses the game and hence the lawsuit, a result of his tendency towards distraction, and still there is a justification, though in this case the cause is rather more felicitous than in the previously cited passage.

Nonetheless, this passage can be seen as a microcosm of Ibarra's downfall: he acts without reflection and without

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<sup>40</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 132

carefully considering the (figurative) pieces in play. This carelessness forces errors on his part, and his opponents, though not as skilled as he, are able to overcome him. Despite it being a short passage and deceptively unimportant seeming at first glance, it serves to describe in general terms how the rest of the novel will play out.

But again, while the narrator has no problem bringing his critical weight to bear on the flaws of the other characters (Padre Dámaso, Doña Victorina, and Captain Tiago immediately come to mind), his criticisms of Ibarra are buried in narrative code: he can only speak of them analogously or metaphorically, not with the sarcasm he reserves for the others. The narrator shows much deference towards Ibarra and restrains himself from the same biting criticisms that he accords the others.

He has a peculiar sympathy for Ibarra, and one cannot help but be struck by how similar the two come across in at least a superficial way<sup>41</sup>. One of the elements that sets Ibarra apart from the majority of the other characters is

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<sup>41</sup> See Roberto Fuertes-Manjón's chapter "Modernism, Cultural Confrontation, and Liberal Project in José Rizal's Novels" in *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond*. Ed. Ignacio López Calvo. Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2007. Pp. 238-250. He notes the similarity in passing, but is perhaps over hasty in combining the narrator, Ibarra, and Rizal himself.

his level of erudition. The narrator shares this characteristic. Like Ibarra, he has a high degree of linguistic skill: besides Castilian, he speaks Tagalog (and is familiar with several regional accents as well as the pidgin varieties spoken by the friars and the Chinese), has a high degree of Latin (to the extent that the narrator can correct the errors of the friars, to humorous effect in Padre Dámaso's sermon), and understands at least some French (at least more so than the friars<sup>42</sup>). He is comfortable with classical and biblical allusions, European literature (quoting from Shakespeare, Dante, Schiller and Voltaire, as well as German folklore), Spanish literature (quoting from Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer), and Tagalog literature (quoting extensively from Francisco Baltasar, as well as Philippine legends, and folklore<sup>43</sup>). It would hardly be a stretch to say that had the narrator and Ibarra had existed beyond the fictional world of the *Noli*, they would have likely known each other, sharing educational experiences and class

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<sup>42</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 190

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly however, whenever Ibarra makes a reference to Tagalog literature it is always quoting someone else's use of it (i.e. his father's letter or Tasio's advice to him). He is obviously familiar enough with it, but it is certainly not at his fingertips as it is for the narrator and others.

origins. And again, we see the astounding heteroglossia of the *Noli* and the control both men exert over it.

Though they share a similar corpus of knowledge, their main difference lies in an epistemological perspective. In the chapter "Todos los santos", the narrator assumes a kind of anthropological tone comparing the attitudes towards death and the afterlife of several cultures with that of the Philippines. It is worth quoting in full:

Lo único acaso que sin disputa distingue al hombre de los animales, es el culto que rinden á los que dejaron de ser. Y ¡cosa estraña! esta costumbre aparece tanto más profundamente arraigada cuanto menos civilizados son los pueblos.

Escriben los historiadores que los antiguos habitantes de Filipinas veneraban y deificaban á sus antepasados; ahora sucede lo contrario: los muertos tienen que encomendarse á los vivos. Cuentan tambien que los de Nueva Guinea guardan en cajas los huesos de sus muertos y mantienen con ellos conversacion; la mayor parte de los pueblos de Asia, Africa y América les ofrecen los platos más esquisitos de sus cocinas ó los que fueron en vida su comida favorita, y dan banquetes á que suponen que asisten. Los egipcios les levantaban palacios, los musulmanes capillitas etc., pero el pueblo maestro en esta materia y que ha conocido mejor el corazon humano es el de Dahomey. Estos negros saben que el hombre es vengativo; pues, dicen, para contentar al muerto no hay mejor que sacrificarle sobre la tumba á todos sus enemigos; y como el hombre es curioso y no sabrá cómo distraerse en la otra vida, le envian cada año un correo bajo la piel de un esclavo decapitado. *Nostros*<sup>44</sup> *nos diferenciamos de todos*. Pese á las inscripciones de

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<sup>44</sup> *sic*

las tumbas, casi ninguno cree en que descansan los muertos y menos, en paz. El más optimista se imagina á sus bisabuelos tostándose aún en el Purgatorio, y, si no sale condenado, todavía podrá acompañarlos por muchos años. Y quien nos quiere contradecir, que visite las iglesias y los cementerios del país durante este día, observe, y verá<sup>45</sup>.

The narrator's takes the pseudo-scientific and pseudo-anthropological case studies of 'uncivilized' cultures' of the time and satirizes them (so well, or poorly as the case may be, that it could be said that he too is guilty of the racism he attempts to satirize). The satire functions on the exaggeration of facts, which in itself is evidence for the narrator's prodigious knowledge (i.e. he knows these facts in the first place in order to exaggerate them). Where he really differentiates himself from Ibarra is in the "Nosotros nos diferenciamos de todos."

Upon first arriving at the sentence, the reader does not know to whom the "we" refers. That confusion is not really cleared up immediately; the narrator is criticizing the inherent hypocrisy related to the concept of Purgatory, but that concept is supposedly shared by all Catholics. Therefore, the "we" could refer to Catholics everywhere. It is not until the narrator invites any naysayer to visit the

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<sup>45</sup> Rizal *Noli* pp. 55-56. Italics are mine

churches "del pais" that we see he is talking about the Philippines. This is crucial; at once he is demonstrating knowledge of the foreign and the native, but more importantly, this knowledge is used to identify unique characteristics of the country. He is concerned with what makes the Philippines unique, for better or for worse. Although he is characterizing the Philippines as 'uncivilized'<sup>46</sup> for its relationship with the dead, at the very least his extensive knowledge has been brought to bear on a salient point of Philippine identity. Moreover, this aspect of Philippine culture is the result of Spanish colonization and the imposition of foreign religion over the traditional beliefs of the millennial native societies. So, even with his sophisticated level of culture, he is able to see Philippine reality on its own terms. This is very much unlike Ibarra.

For Ibarra there is no sense of we (at least not until the end novel, and even then it is potentially flawed as we

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<sup>46</sup> Not difficult to imagine how lines like this were misinterpreted and misappropriated by the Spanish experts on the Philippines. In one particularly vitriolic attack on the *Noli*, Vicente Barrantes writes: "Pero venga V. acá, novelista de mis pecados, almacén de contradicciones, espíritu torcido por una educación alemana que no tuvo en cuenta sus fuerzas digestivas; sí así piensa V. de sus paisanos y amigos..., sin tan bajos de nivel los encuentra" (*La España moderna*, II: 13, Jan 1890, pg. 179).

will see later in this essay). Ibarra seems to discount his connections to the country, and differentiates himself from the 'pueblo.' Conversely, the narrator, while demonstrating at least a comparable level of knowledge, still sees himself as a member of society. Again, it is not a question of knowledge; it is rather a question of the approach to it.

Skipping backwards towards the beginning of the novel, we see Ibarra as he walks alone through Manila and is haunted by the "demonio de las comparaciones:" Manila, Madrid, and other European locales meld together in his walking reverie. Rafael's conception of mourning comes back in the "stereotypical images" of Manila; Ibarra cannot see the city for what it really is on its own terms. The sensory experience of Manila is distorted by the mental presence of the "beyond," and he cannot disentangle the "here" from the "there.' He looks to the sea and says:

¡A la otra ribera está Europa![...]con sus hermosos naciones agitándose continuamente, buscando la felicidad, soñando todas las mañanas y desengañándose al ocultarse el sol...feliz in medio de sus catástrofes! Sí, á la otra orilla del infinito mar están las naciones espirituales, sin embargo de que no condenan

la materia, más espirituales aún que las que se precian de adorar el espíritu...!<sup>47</sup>

Though he is physically in the Philippines, his thoughts are in Europe. Those recollections offer him an interesting bit of solace: Europe, as defined by Ibarra, is characterized by struggle. Yet, it is a struggle he can understand, disembodied and detached as it is from any specific national space. He understands them because of their abstract nature. They are 'spiritual nations<sup>48</sup>,' not concrete ones, and he is not concerned with any individual country as much as his own conception of their shared struggle. He again is lost in the abstract cosmopolitan space of 'Europa libre.'

Interestingly, when I first read this passage in translation, I misinterpreted "naciones espirituales" to refer to the Philippines, thinking that his musings were based more on the idea of the ocean acting as the barrier between the two spaces. Upon referencing the Spanish original it seemed abundantly clear that he is referring to Europe. Moreover, it reveals an interesting interpretive possibility. Could Ibarra be playing with the notion of

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<sup>47</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 43

<sup>48</sup> See G.W.F Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. London: Oxford U, 1977.

*geist*<sup>49</sup> (Keep in mind that Rizal wrote most of the novel while in Germany and his fluency in that language): 'mind,' 'spirit,' 'ghost?' He could then be seen to be contrasting the European *geist* (read mind) with the Spanish/Philippine *geist* (spirit, in the religious sense). There are those nations that adore the spirit (religion, also ghosts of the past, etc.) and there are those that are even more spiritual (united by ideas, the mind, etc.) despite their refusal to condemn the 'la materia.' This refusal separates Ibarra from them however. The 'spiritual nations' do not condemn 'la materia,' (the concrete, matter, material, etc.) whereas that is precisely what Ibarra cannot comprehend in the Philippines. He cannot find the solace of the 'absolute spirit' in the polyphony of the colony.

The narrator reminds the reader of that concrete reality. A few pages earlier in his walk through Manila, Ibarra takes pleasure in the fact that almost nothing has changed in his absence. "¡Es maravilloso!" he exclaims.

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<sup>49</sup>'Demonio' (translated as demon, spectre, and devilry) also fits into the semantic field of 'spirit' and in turn 'geist'. The convergence between the Philippines and Europe, represented by the unrelenting 'demonio de las comparaciones,' can be seen as a metaphor for Ibarra's consciousness, and the novel represents the development thereof. Moreover, as *geist* it also represents the national consciousness. See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

"Diríase que esta noche he soñado en siete años por Europa (...) continúa aún desarreglada la piedra como cuando la dejé<sup>50</sup>." The narrator then speaks up to confirm Ibarra's observation, locating it in concrete terms: "En efecto estaba aún desprendida la piedra de la acera, que forma la esquina de la calle de S. Jacinto con la de la Sacristia<sup>51</sup>." Ibarra is pleased to be home and that everything is how he left it, the irony of course being that in seven years no one has bothered to repair the broken pavement stone. That irony, however, is lost on Ibarra. The narrator again chimes in, this time sarcastically, calling the scene a "maravilla de la estabilidad urbana en el país de lo inestable<sup>52</sup>." He is correcting Ibarra for the reader's sake; it is not stability that he is witnessing but instability, decrepitude, and decay. Although it is right there before his eyes, he cannot see it.

The Philippines and Europe converge in Ibarra's thoughts; he insists on their synthesis. In an instant his thoughts change. Immediately after Ibarra's speech on the 'spiritual nations' of Europe, the novel continues:

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<sup>50</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 18

<sup>51</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 18

<sup>52</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 18

Pero estos pensamientos huyen de su imaginacion á la vista de la pequeña colina en el campo de Bagumbayan. El montecillo, aislado, al lado del paseo de la Luneta, llamaba ahora su atencion y le ponía meditabundo<sup>53</sup>.

At once the reverie ends as soon as Bagumbayan<sup>54</sup> enters his field of vision. It is at this moment that the Philippines becomes real for Ibarra; it is no longer a disembodied concept but the location of actual struggle. Bagumbayan concretizes that struggle in a specific time and place, and Ibarra has no choice but to confront the image.

Upon seeing the execution field of Bagumbayan, he can sense the struggle, but it exists in the realm of the ineffable. Despite his eloquence and education, his only response is silence. Colonialism, as a signifying system, becomes embedded in the thoughts of its subjects. Ibarra cannot bring himself to break the symbolic order<sup>55</sup>. A few

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<sup>53</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 43

<sup>54</sup> Today known as Rizal park or La Luneta, Bagumbayan was the staging ground for executions during the Spanish period (Rizal himself was later executed there). It is also the place where one creole and two mestizo priests ("Gomburza: Frs. Gómez, Burgos, and Zamora) were wrongly executed for alleged complicity with the Cavite naval yard mutiny in 1872. By Rizal's own admission, witnessing such a grave injustice set the course of his life; he would dedicate his second novel *El filibusterismo* to their memory.

<sup>55</sup>I am abusing Lacan's term for lack of a better shorthand to say that colonialism for Ibarra "is no longer the violent negation which leads to *praxis*; it has passed into physical generality as *exis*, as an inert, generalized lacuna to which the whole organism tries to adapt by degrading itself, by idling so as to curtail its exigencies." Jean-Paul

sentences later, after further reminiscing about his father's ignominious end and his own European education, Ibarra's only response is: "¡No, apesar de todo, primero la Patria, primero Filipinas, hija de España, primero la patria española! No, eso que es fatalidad no empaña á la Patria, no!"<sup>56</sup>

This can be read as a further conflation of Spain and the Philippines, united in a kind of Catholic, holy trinity, logic of them being the same but different (like the father, son, and holy spirit). But, I believe it can also be seen as that interiorized voice of authority; it is almost as if he catches himself. He says "first the Philippines" but then corrects himself and says "first the Spanish homeland." The *patria* is the Philippines, but it is practically a Freudian slip. The true *patria* is the "patria española." The third mention of *patria* is unmarked, leaving ambiguous exactly which one of the two is not besmirched by misfortune<sup>57</sup>. Bagumbayan disrupts his internal speech, and

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Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Vol. 1. Trans. A. Sheridan-Smith. London: Verso, 2004. P. 95

<sup>56</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 44

<sup>57</sup> It is perhaps here appropriate to mention the interesting connection to the etymology of the word *patria*. Originally from the Greek *patrída* meaning 'fatherland' and sharing the same root as *padre* or *pater*, it is nonetheless given the feminine gender. As I mentioned previously, Ibarra's presence in the Philippines is predicated by the mourning of

for the rest of the episode he is silent. The narrator, distracted by the sights and sounds of Hermita and Malate<sup>58</sup> leaves Ibarra in peace, to meditate and sleep<sup>59</sup>.

It is tempting to draw some connections to Rizal himself here. Regarding the "demonio de las comparaciones" Anderson writes:

Rizal used the phrase to describe the young Ibarra's eerie experience on seeing again the seedy Jardín botánico de Manila, and perversely finding himself helplessly imagining in his mind's eye the grand botanical gardens he often visited in Europe. It is as if he can no longer see what is in front of him simply as a familiar object. But the *demonio* also works on the author himself, who is writing in Paris and Berlin about a young man *allá* ("yonder, yes yonder, yonder, yonder") in Manila, who is thinking about...*allá*, that is, Berlin and Paris<sup>60</sup>.

There does seem to be a particular relationship between Rizal, the narrator, and Ibarra. In a letter to his friend Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal admits to his own

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his lost father and the symbolic search for the fatherland. However, the ambiguous *patria* replaces his father (a Spanish mestizo) just as much as it replaces his deceased mother (a native) who never factors into the novel. The ambiguous *patria* then, can be seen as synthesis between those missing parental figures. In its ambiguity, the *patria* too partakes in the polyphony: they are autonomous (even if not politically) yet in their dialogue (colonialism) they insert themselves into the other's imaginary.

<sup>58</sup> Sections of Manila, just beyond the city walls to the south.

<sup>59</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 44

<sup>60</sup> Anderson *Under Three Flags* p. 32

"wanderungslust"<sup>61</sup> which immediately brings Ibarra to mind.

In another, perhaps more telling letter, he writes

Here you have your friend far from his beloved Europe! Tomorrow we shall leave the Mediterranean and we shall pass through the Canal. Adieu, Europe! When I embarked at Marseille and the ship left the port, I had such sad thoughts that I felt tears welling in my eyes! (...) I saw the coasts slowly disappearing and the beautiful country of my liberty moved away as if enveloped by mist. When I wanted to look through my field glasses to shorten the distance from the land, I discovered that they have been stolen. (...) You see how a pecuniary loss can relegate to second place a sentimental pain! I'm sure that if at the time of her departure from France, Mary Stuart's most beautiful dress had been burnt, at that moment she would have forgotten beautiful France<sup>62</sup>.

The text immediately reminds us Ibarra's walk through Manila, of the "demonio de las comparaciones" as he looks to the sea. Very interestingly, the letter is from June of 1887, after the publication of the *Noli*: he writes it from ship that is taking him to the Philippines, his first trip back since he had left five years prior.

The passage in the *Noli* is not autobiographical; it is a kind of fantasy or fear. Is it too hasty to conclude that Ibarra is Rizal's own dialogic partner, his own

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<sup>61</sup> *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondance*. Vol. 1 (1886-1890). Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992. P. 53. Though it is not explained, I presume the 'Mary Stuart' he refers to is Mary, Queen of Scots. If so, he was probably familiar with her through Schiller's play *Maria Stuart*.

<sup>62</sup> *Rizal-Blumentritt* p. 115

intermediary between himself and the imagined Philippines? The *Noli* is a political novel, but the problematic relationship between the narrator and Ibarra symbolizes Rizal's own internal struggle; it is a dialogue between those two parts of his consciousness. Ibarra is the culmination of Rizal's worst fears: that he may return to the Philippines and be so utterly different that he is rendered useless to his homeland and his family<sup>63</sup>. Will he too be lost and naïve among the very people he claimed to love? Rizal, himself surrounded by the trappings of European modernity, tries to purge himself of the negativity that accompanies it<sup>64</sup>. As he comes to realize the impossibility thereof, he transforms the idealist Ibarra into the nihilist Simoun.

Moreover, we must remember that the narrator cannot (or does not) communicate with the characters. The dialogic aspect of the narrator is with the reader. He bears for us the "penetrated word;" his intervention is projected

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<sup>63</sup> Evidence exists in Rizal's other writings; we see that he too had very mixed feelings about nationalism, modernity, and cosmopolitanism. The first thing would be to compare his speech commemorating Luna and Hidalgo in Madrid with "The Philippines a Century Hence." Both can be found in *José Rizal's Political and Historical Writings*. Manila: NHI, 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Can we then think of Rizal as a proto-decolonial thinker? He seems to intuitively understand the relationship between modernity and coloniality.

outward beyond the text and interrupts our consciousnesses. But this intervention is strictly dialogic (i.e. it is 'an' intervention, not 'the' intervention). In his preface to the *Noli*, Rizal writes to the *patria*: "haré contigo lo que con sus enfermos los antiguos: exponíanlos en las gradas del templo para que cada persona que fuese a invocar a la Divinidad les propusiese un remedio<sup>65</sup>." He does not propose a cure; he proposes a method, moreover a method that involves the multiplicity of opinions. It is through the narrator that the heterogeneity of the textual world and the heterogeneity of the 'real' world meet.

## II.

Despite his seeming familiarity with native and foreign knowledge, Ibarra privileges the foreign. It is clear that he idolizes the Philippines, but he cannot understand the place or the struggle of the people. He tells of his love of the place countless times throughout the novel, but any expression thereof, anything that leads to action, is limited when concrete reality forces its way into his field of vision, and he can only distance himself.

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<sup>65</sup> Rizal *Noli* preface

In the *Noli*, Ibarra's double is Elías, the mysterious boatman whose life he saves early in the novel<sup>66</sup>. He is a native: educated but impoverished. Elías too is in mourning; he is also working through the problem of the *patria* as we have seen in Ibarra's case, though he is in contact with the revolutionaries unlike Ibarra. However, Elías inhabits mourning's dark twin: revenge. He seeks revenge for his family's ruin at the hands of a Spanish businessman, which later he finds out is Ibarra's basque grandfather in a plot twist that could have easily been taken from a serial novel. As his relationship to Ibarra develops, he too undergoes a shift: he gives up revenge for the sake of the Philippines by placing his hope in Ibarra. Their several dialogues can also be characterized by this 'dialogic monologue' for lack of a better word, as the two men can be seen to represent separate parts of Rizal's consciousness. They are absolutely identical to the authorial consciousness, but that consciousness is divided

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<sup>66</sup> Ibarra saves his life during an extremely interesting scene. As Elías fights an alligator, he refuses to accept Ibarra's offer of a Spanish-made knife. As the struggle continues, Ibarra jumps in and dispatches the beast with his Toledo blade. In many ways, it can be interpreted as the refusal and the necessity of 'Spanish-ness' in the Philippines. It also brings to mind the end of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* where the eponymous vampire is killed with a Kukri and a Bowie knife.

and compartmentalized into seemingly autonomous parts. In one telling exchange they discuss Ibarra's role in the reform of the country. Elias seeks radical reform but Ibarra, despite the tribulations he has experienced at the hands of the colonizers, is still content with the status quo. When asked to participate, he says:

¿Qué quereis? No me ha educado en medio del pueblo, cuyas necesidades desconozco tal vez; he pasado mi niñez en el colegio de los jesuitas, he crecido en Europa, me he formado en los libros y he leído sólo lo que los hombres han podido traer á la luz: lo que permanece entre las sombras, lo que no dicen los escritores, eso lo ignoro. Con todo, amo como vos nuestra patria, no sólo porque es deber de todo hombre amar el país á quien debe el sér y á quien deberá acaso el último asilo; no sólo porque mi padre me lo ha enseñado así, porque mi madre era India, y porque todos mis más hermosos recuerdos viven en él, le amo además porque le debo y le deberé mi felicidad!  
- Y yo porque le debo mi desgracia, murmuró  
Eliás<sup>67</sup>

In this moment of exasperation, Ibarra openly contradicts himself. In this short passage, he admits both his ignorance of the country as well as his love for it. He excuses his inaction by privileging his European intellectual development, knowledge gleaned from books, not any oral (read native) tradition. In other words, he is emphasizing his foreignness. In *Search for a Method*, Sartre

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<sup>67</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 275

writes "the unique person is found conditioned by his *human relations* (...) The person lives and knows his condition more or less clearly through the groups he belongs to<sup>68</sup>." But Ibarra does not fully belong to any real group; he only belongs to the imaginary (as in "imagined community") group of European liberalism. The reader gets a sense of Ibarra's alienation as a 'foreigner' in the Philippines. And yet, he insists on his patriotism; his love of country is the love of an ideal and does not wholly stem from any sense of duty or family. He loves it instead for it being the source of his happiness, strange to say given the realities of his situation: his father's ignoble death and his own excommunication just to name a couple. His own justification for this: "¡Ah, yo me olvido a mí y olvido<sup>69</sup> mis propios males ante la seguridad de Filipinas, ante los intereses de España<sup>70</sup>!" He sees his patriotism (which incidentally includes Spain, again the ambiguous *patria*) as a selfless act, the security of the Philippines and Spain's

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<sup>68</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Search for a Method*. Trans. H. Barnes. New York: Random House, 1963. P. 66. Italics in the original.

<sup>69</sup> His forgetfulness brings to mind Ernest Renan's quote: "It is of the essence of a nation that all individuals should have much in common, and further that they should have forgotten much." "What is a Nation." *The Nationalism Reader*. Eds. Omar Dahbour and M. Ishay. New York: Humanity, 1995. p. 145

<sup>70</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 274

interests trump his own misfortune. But he admittedly has no idea what the security of the Philippines really entails, and his own inability to see what Spain's interests truly are (exploitation, self-interest, etc.) is truly shocking. He may claim ignorance, but this ignorance is inexplicable given his seeming intelligence and more importantly the fact that he has been given every opportunity to see through the obfuscations that apparently cloud his perception. Given the evidence provided by Ibarra's character (his intelligence, his perceptive openness to other cultures, etc.), the reader cannot believe him: Ibarra is not as blind as he (or the narrator for that matter) would have us think. Instead, it seems that he has repressed that reality that he claims not to know and replaced it with its idealization. His outburst and his subsequent actions are explained only if we compare them to his reverie in Manila, in the episode mentioned in the previous section. Elías replaces the image of Bagumbayan: Ibarra is forced to confront the reality of colonialism. Elías disrupts Ibarra's mourning which "succeeds when what one remembers is an image of what was

lost, no longer the object itself<sup>71</sup>." The terror of colonialism keeps insisting on its presence in Ibarra's mind through the mediation of Elías and the other characters. Elías is the "carrier of the *penetrated word*, (...) a word capable of actively and confidently interfering in the interior dialogue of the other person, helping that person to find his own voice<sup>72</sup>." Theirs is a dialogue that begs for a resolution, which of course will never come.

Returning to the passage, Ibarra claims to owe his happiness to the country in equal proportion to Elías' unhappiness. As Freud remarks: "the development of the individual seems to us to be a product of the interaction between two urges, the urge towards happiness, which we call 'egoistic,' and the urge towards union with others in the community, which we call 'altruistic'<sup>73</sup>.' First, if we perhaps ignore the implicit Hegelianism of 'union with others,' then we see that polyphony and the coming together (but not totality) of the multiplicity of consciousnesses is directly related to unhappiness. At this point Ibarra is still happy. He still has not made the passage from the

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<sup>71</sup> Rafael "Nationalism" p. 600

<sup>72</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* p. 242

<sup>73</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York: Norton, 1989. P. 105

individual to the communal; his patriotism, his service to the people, is 'egoistic'<sup>74</sup>.' We will see how his union with others relates to unhappiness.

By the end of the novel, Ibarra is finally and completely ruined: his engagement to Maria Clara has been called off, he has been arrested, his house burned to the ground, and the townsfolk and civil authorities have turned against him. It is only then that he can take action against the system. In his last meeting with Elias they revisit their previous conversation:

Ahora la desgracia me ha arrancado la venda; la soledad y la miseria de mi prision me ha enseñado; ahora veo el horrible cancer que roe á esta sociedad, que se agarra á sus carnes y que pide una violenta extirpacion. ¡Ellos me han abierto los ojos. Me han hecho ver la llaga y me fuerzan á ser criminal! Y pues que lo han querido, seré filibustero, pero verdadero filibustero; llamaré á todos los desgraciados, á esos que os enviaban á mi...;No seré criminal, nunca lo es el que lucha por su patria, al contrario! Nosotros, durante tres siglos, les tendemos la mano, les pedimos amor, ansiamos llamarlos nuestros hermanos, ¿cómo nos contestan? Con el insulto y la burla, negándonos hasta la cualidad de seres humanos. ¡No hay Dios, no hay esperanzas, no hay humanidad; no hay más que el derecho de la fuerza<sup>75</sup>!

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<sup>74</sup> Recall too that when his school is approved earlier in the novel he gives the telegram to María Clara symbolizing the libidinal motives of his actions.

<sup>75</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 336

Ibarra finally can see that the ills of the society are in fact systemic; his misfortune has indeed opened his eyes, and his prior deference towards the colonial system is no more. The change is seemingly drastic: not only does his perception change, but his actions as well. He will be a true *filibustero*, calling upon the downtrodden to take up arms against their oppressors. Forced into a corner by the authorities, he lashes out, and his rhetoric takes a nihilistic turn: force is his only alternative.

But Elías disagrees with him. He responds:

Mirad bien lo que vais á hacer, vais á encender la Guerra, pues teneis dinero, cabeza y encontrareis pronto muchos brazos, fatalmente hay muchos descontentos. Mas, en esta lucha que vais á emprender, los que más sufrirán son los indefensos é inocentes [...] Yo mismo no os seguiria; jamas acudiré á esos remedios extremos mientras vea esperanza en los hombres<sup>76</sup>.

Elías is now opposed to Ibarra's plan because it is too radical. Ibarra's revenge against the colonial system is easily within the realm of possibility, but it will only hurt the people who have already suffered the most under the system. Elías will have no part in it. It is a seemingly dramatic shift from their prior conversation.

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<sup>76</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 338

That however is deceptive; despite the appearance of contradiction from their previous positions, there has been no real qualitative shift. Elías position has not really changed in that his actions are informed by the 'people;' they are the ultimate arbiters for his actions, and he can take no position that transgresses this initial truth. It is exactly the same for Ibarra; though on the surface he seems to have made a complete turnaround, his rhetoric rings hollow, informed more by European forms of social struggle ("feliz en medio de sus catástrofes<sup>77</sup>"), than by the needs of the Filipino people. Despite being a Filipino and a supposed patriot to boot, he sees the Philippines through Europe and not the other way around.

There is however one important way that he has changed though. As he begins his speech to Elías, his actions are still individual ('prison has taught *me*,' 'now *I* see.' etc.). However by the end, he shifts pronouns into the 'nosotros.' He finally speaks of the colonial experience in the plural first person ('we extended our hand,' 'we asked for love,' 'denying *us* even the status of human beings.' etc.). Although he is not 'of' the people (as he has stated

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<sup>77</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 43

before), his misfortune has apparently linked him to them, and he sees himself in their midst. Yet, as he goes on he denies 'God,' 'hope,' and even 'humanity.' He is now profoundly unhappy; he has supposedly gone from the 'egoistic' to the 'altruistic,' but in the same breath he denies humanity. Somehow from 'I' to 'we' humanity itself has been suppressed.

Interestingly, his downfall is accompanied by a shift in race perception. As I have noted before, Ibarra's status as a mestizo implies a racial ambiguity. His body marks the confluence of Spain, the Philippines, and to a certain extent Northern Europe (recall the phrase "los países fríos"). It sets him apart from the other characters, in fact, as far as the main characters are concerned, the only Spanish mestizos<sup>78</sup> in the novel are Ibarra and María Clara, and she is not really recognized as such<sup>79</sup>. Given this ambiguity, his status in society can be linked to the

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<sup>78</sup> It must be noted that miscegenation in the Philippines was much less common than in the other Spanish colonies. Also, the word 'mestizo' in the Philippines could also refer to the offspring of Malay (native) and Chinese, or Spanish and Chinese. In that case, there are probably many more mestizos in the *Noli* (likely any wealthy non-Spaniard), but they are not referred to as such.

<sup>79</sup> Capitán Tiago and Doña Pía, her parents, are both natives, though of course we know Padre Dámaso was her real father. Her family explains away her European features through "planetary influences" or her mother's "pre-natal moods."

racial category in which he is perceived. In a sense, Ibarra's body is also part of the visual and racialized dialogic polyphony.

Soon after his arrival in San Diego he goes to visit his father's grave. He finds out that the gravedigger, a native, disinterred his father's remains on orders from Padre Dámaso, and Ibarra grabs him, then walks away, furious. The gravedigger responds:

El Padre Grande me pegó de bastonazos por haberlo dejado enterrado estando yo enfermo; ahora éste á poco me rompe el brazo por haberlo desenterrado. ¡Lo que son estos españoles! Todavía voy á perder mi oficio.<sup>80</sup>

The gravedigger sees Ibarra as a Spaniard. Handled roughly by both men, he attributes the actions of Ibarra and Padre Dámaso to a conflict amongst fellow countrymen. From his perspective they are foreigners with strange and inconsistent customs, and he cannot begin to fathom 'these Spaniards.'

Like *Hamlet's* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the gravedigger scene is one of the many bits of black humor interjected into the *Noli*. It provokes "carnival laughter." Bakhtin writes "the entire world is seen in its droll

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<sup>80</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 60

aspect, in its gay relativity<sup>81</sup>." He continues, "This laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives<sup>82</sup>." Thus, the humor here emphasizes the ambiguity. Ibarra's mistaken race is not an 'elevation' by the gravedigger; it is an absurdity but a potentially subversive one. The carnivalesque highlights the overturning of the categories of colonial hierarchy, racial and otherwise. The reader's dangerous Laughter then takes the place of language. Laughter replaces Ibarra's silence, a silence which again masks his inner turmoil as he is presented with yet more evidence of the concrete horrors of colonial reality<sup>83</sup>.

From the Spanish perspective, Ibarra is always an outsider, though to varying degrees. In one early episode, the Manila newspaper refers to Ibarra as

Digno descendiente de los Pelayos y Elcanos, (porque segun he sabido uno de sus abuelos paternos es de nuestras heroicas y nobles provincias del Norte, acaso uno de los primeros compañeros de Magallanes ó Legaspi) [...] Su nombre corre de boca en boca y sólo lo pronuncian con alabanzas que no pueden menos de

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<sup>81</sup> Bakhtin *Rabelais* p. 11

<sup>82</sup> Bakhtin *Rabelais* p. 12

<sup>83</sup> The juxtaposition of the serious and the comic is brought together in the *spoudogeloios* ("serious-smiling") which itself shares a deep bond with carnivalistic folklore (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* pp. 106-107).

redundar en gloria de España y de los legítimos españoles como nosotros, que no desmentimos jamás nuestra sangre por mezclada que pudiese ser.<sup>84</sup>

Ibarra is lauded in terms of his Spanish blood, and praise for him simultaneously honors his Spanish lineage. However he is not a 'legitimate' Spaniard (like the implied readers of the journal supposedly are). Despite his proximity to the Spanish, he is still distant. The inclusion of the journalistic genre, another characteristic of the Menippean satire according to Bakhtin, implies a certain parodying of the Spanish perspective. The narrator defers to the original source material in order to show the peculiar inflections that the Spanish afford Ibarra in their characterization of him, which again is highly racialized<sup>85</sup>.

After the uprising occurs, the Spanish opinion of Ibarra undergoes a metamorphosis, again with racial implications. The reader is given a glimpse of a very interesting exchange that occurs in another scene of dark humor during a dinner party in the Spanish enclave of Intramuros:

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<sup>84</sup> Rizal *Noli* pp. 157-158

<sup>85</sup> Also, it harks back to Rizal and *La solidaridad's* public battles with racist Spanish ethnologists, as has been mentioned here elsewhere.

-Solo un indio es capaz de tener tan cobardes pensamientos, exclamaba la gorda. [...]

-¡Pues se dice que el filibusterillo ese es hijo de españoles! observó el manco sin mirar á nadie.

-¡Ah ya! exclama impertérrita la gorda; ¡Siempre iban á ser los criollos! ¡ningun indio entiende de revolucion! ¡Cría cuervos...cría cuervos...!

-¿Saben Vs. lo que he oido decir? pregunta una criolla que así corta la conversacion (...) <sup>86</sup>

The first impression of Ibarra is that of 'indio;' he has lost all claims to Spanish origin. When the woman is corrected, interestingly she skips a step: if not 'indio' then he is a Creole (there is no mention of mestizo as a possibility). If his positive traits were attributed to his Spanish blood, it is also the cause of his notoriety. Spain occupies an ambiguous role, even amongst the Spaniards themselves (which we will see much more so in the section on Padre Dámaso). The 'Spanish character,' imparted by blood, contains within itself that contradiction.

Moreover, this is the first and only mention in the novel of a Creole presence. Although it is only a passing mention, it is highly suggestive. It is again tempting to link the social unrest in the Philippines with the revolutionary movements in the other Spanish colonies, which had their origins by and large in the Creole

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<sup>86</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 325

communities<sup>87</sup> of those respective nations. Thus another term is added to the mix: besides the Philippines, Spain, and 'los países frios' (Europe), we can add America<sup>88</sup>. So, Ibarra as a Creole, despite the erroneous application of the term, is also marked by the American response to colonialism. America then signals his perception as a subversive, just as Europe represented his perception as the harbinger of modernity<sup>89</sup>.

So, one can see the possibility of another reading of Ibarra's use of the plural first person in his discourse to Elías: the *we* he is using is not necessarily referring to the Filipinos, but to the tradition of revolution, born in France and continued in the American colonies. He assumes the role of the American Creoles despite not racially

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<sup>87</sup> See Adam Lifshey "The Literary Alterities of Philippine Nationalism in José Rizal's *El filibusterismo*." Lifshey, following Nick Joaquin's interpretation, claims that Ibarra/Simoun is a *Filipino*, the colonial nomenclature to identify Philippine born Spaniards (i.e. Creoles). We see here that this is not the case. Rizal used the term to refer to natives according to Leon M<sup>a</sup> Guerrero's biography of Rizal *The First Filipino*. There can really be no doubt as to Ibarra's status as a Spanish mestizo.

<sup>88</sup> I refer to the Spanish American colonies, not the United States.

<sup>89</sup> We will see this fully develop in Rizal's second novel *El filibusterismo*. For now, I will claim that the *Noli* is about Ibarra's connection to European modernity, while the *Fili* is about his connection with the revolutionary traditions of America.

belonging to the group<sup>90</sup>. This does explain why, despite his change of heart and his presumed proximity to the people, he is still painfully, almost maliciously, oblivious to the needs of the people. His perspective seems to have shifted not from European to Filipino, but from European to American. His unhappiness has moved him from the 'egoistic' to the 'altruistic,' but the Philippines itself is still the repressed element.

It is an interesting possibility; however, there is no textual evidence for this in the *Noli*: Ibarra himself never mentions America, and he never crosses paths with the woman from Intramuros who uses the term. Still, Rizal's second novel, *El filibusterismo*, does in fact make these connections to America explicit, thus making it at least more likely that these scenes are gesturing towards that interpretation.

Moreover, at the very least, the creole presence in the *Noli* demonstrates yet again the colonial polyphony. She

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<sup>90</sup> This was essentially the case during the Philippine Revolution. Given the relative paucity of Creoles in the Philippines, it was in fact the *ilustrado* class who were catalysts of the Revolution. Of the members of the Philippine congress, there were some Creoles, but mostly mestizos (Spanish and Chinese) and natives.

too is Filipina,<sup>91</sup> but her discourse cannot be assimilated by the author or the others given its radical 'Otherness' in comparison with the natives, the mestizos, and the Spaniards. Thus polyphony lends itself to the overwhelming heterogeneity contained within the novel.

To conclude this section, it is through Ibarra's relationship to Elías that the reader sees the shifts in the former's characterization. The relationship itself is transformative for the two. Bakhtin writes "someone else's words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced<sup>92</sup>." Elías and Ibarra appropriate each other's language and refashion it in keeping with their particular perspectives. But we also see the danger; what was emancipatory language for one becomes a violent nihilism for the other. The 'double-voicedness' of the dialogue underlines the ambiguity of Rizal's political project in the *Noli*.

### III.

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<sup>91</sup> In the literal sense. See note 86

<sup>92</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* p. 195

María Clara offers another perspective on Ibarra. In a sense she serves as his antithesis: while he has been wandering Europe, she has been locked in a convent, almost completely shut off from the outside world. Ibarra's world is one of possibility; his travels and education inform this perspective. His weakness, his naivety, is the result of his own inability to come to terms with the limits set by the colonial system. Conversely, María Clara's world has been indelibly marked by a sense of limitation; she lacks the cosmopolitan air of Ibarra. She knows nothing of Europe, and even her knowledge of the Philippines is limited. However, the convent has also served as a kind of exile, just like Europe for Ibarra. Thus she too has been separated from the first hand experience of Philippine reality.

As we saw before, her introduction into the *Noli* occurs through the missing perspective of Ibarra, the narrator telling us what Ibarra *would have seen*. In a way, this presence in absence has characterized their relationship during their years of separation. When they finally see each other for the first time in the novel, they reminisce. Ibarra tells her: "tu recuerdo ha

neutralizado el efecto del loto de Europa, que borra de la memoria de muchos paisanos las esperanzas y la desgracia de la Patria<sup>93</sup>." He differentiates himself from other Filipinos who have gone to Europe only to leave the Philippines completely behind, mentally and physically. The factor in this differentiation has been María Clara. Despite his Europeanized perspective, he does at least return to the Philippines. He intends to be useful and to help out in some way, even if his efforts are not necessarily based on a real understanding of Philippine colonial reality. For Ibarra, María Clara and the Philippines are closely linked, almost to the point of logical identity. She is for him the "encarnacion poética de mi Patria." He tells her, "tu amor y el que profeso á mi Patria se funden en uno solo<sup>94</sup>."

Yet for the rest of his discourse to her in this initial scene, she is compared to other things and places: Germany, Italy, Andalusia, the Orient, the Rhine, and the rocks of Lorelei. Again the *geist*, the 'demonio de las comparaciones,' returns. Europe and the Philippines again converge in Ibarra's thoughts. He has felt her presence and

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<sup>93</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 37

<sup>94</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 37

recalled her memory in her absence from these other places. His vision of her is a disembodied idealization just as his idea of the Philippines<sup>95</sup>, which we have seen in the episode recounting his reverie through Manila.

Conversely, María Clara's response tells of a much different experience. She is embarrassed by her lack of worldly experience: "yo no he viajado como tú, no conozco más que tu pueblo, Manila y Antipolo<sup>96</sup>." She cannot rely on vivid and fanciful comparisons to Europe to describe her love of Ibarra; her only recourse then is to their shared experience: she responds by recounting their childhood memories, memories that have accompanied her during her time in the convent. So, while he thinks of her in idealistic terms through the lens of Europe, she thinks of him through the concrete reality of their shared past (interestingly, many of the memories she recounts are of him scolding her or quarreling with her!).

Moreover, this past, at least from her perspective, is also imprinted with the native. Though we know that both María Clara and Ibarra can speak Tagalog, we do not know in

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<sup>95</sup> In a way, she is like the French *Marianne*

<sup>96</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 38

which language they are speaking in this instance. Nonetheless, Castilian, whether for the characters, the narrator, or even Rizal himself as the writer, is not sufficient to tell of her memories, and Tagalog must be used. She recalls their childhood games:

Me acordaba de nuestros juegos, de nuestras riñas cuando éramos niños. Escogías los más hermosos *sigüeyes* para jugar al *siklot*; buscabas en el río las más redondas y finas piedrecitas de diferentes colores para que jugásemos al *sintak*; tú eras muy torpe, perdías siempre y por castigo te daba el *bantil* con la palma de mi mano, pero procuraba no pegarte fuerte pues te tenía compasion. En el juego de *chonka*<sup>97</sup> eras muy tramposo, más aún que yo, y solíamos acabar á arrebatías<sup>98</sup>.

The recollections of their shared childhood go beyond Castilian. It is an interesting contrast with Ibarra's European-inflected discourse; his virtual presence to her in during his absence is defined by the native. At the same time, this idea of the native also serves as a kind of baseline, and María Clara's discourse also serves to show

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<sup>97</sup> Harold Augenbraum's footnote: "Sigüeyes are shells once used as currency but now as counters in children's games. Siklot is a children's game in which one tosses the sigüeyes up and catches them on the back of the hand. Sintak is a shell-or-pebble-based children's game. *Bantil* is an affectionate reproach by flicking one's fingers on the back of another person's hand. Chonka is a pebble-based game using a board with a "home" on either end and seven depressions on either side. Whoever accumulates the most pebbles in the "home" wins. A modern version is called mancala" (435). Though previous versions in both English and Spanish did translate here as Augenbraum did, the original 1887 edition did not.

<sup>98</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 38. Italics in the original.

much Ibarra has changed during his time away, from playing *chonka* to navigating the Rhine. Nonetheless, this shared language, which goes beyond the primary language of the text, is part of the dialogic polyphony. The *Noli* must account for the very real heterogeneity and heteroglossia of Philippine society; the monologic, even in the service of national consciousness as Moretti<sup>99</sup> states, is impossible. The unity of the Philippine nation is defined by its diversity, and the coexistence of languages furthers this notion. This is important; the use of Tagalog is not simply a narrative ruse to add local color and authenticity to the text to 'Other' it in some way. On the contrary, it is used to familiarize it for his Filipino readers. In that case, Castilian itself is the alien language intruding in the text<sup>100</sup>.

But even in their youth, Ibarra's perspective is quite different from her own. She reminds him: "en las orillas crecían muchas flores y plantas cuyos estraños nombres me

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<sup>99</sup> Remember his quote from page 3 that the nation must speak a "single national language," obviously not the case in the Philippines of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was not until 1959 that a somewhat academicized version of Tagalog, 'Pilipino' was made the national language, co-official with English, of course.

<sup>100</sup> For more on the role of Tagalog in Rizal, see Juan E. de Castro's "*En qué idioma escribe Ud.?: Spanish, Tagalog, and Identity in José Rizal's Noli me tangere.*" *MLN* 126 (2011): 303-321.

decías en latin y en castellano, pues entonces ya estudiabas en el Ateneo<sup>101</sup>." Also, she recalls the time when he made her a wreath of orange leaves and blossoms and called her "Cloé," referencing ancient mythology, European mythology, even in their childhood games. When his mother destroyed the crown to make soap for the children's hair, he cried, exclaiming that his mother "no entendía de mitologia<sup>102</sup>." His time at the Ateneo<sup>103</sup>, a Jesuit school in Manila, had already begun this process of alienation for Ibarra. His education, even at that early age, had already marked his difference from her and even his family. The idea of Europe and European knowledge had already taken root, and his return to the Philippines and the subsequent action of the novel is the logical conclusion of this educative process<sup>104</sup>.

The contrasting experiences of Ibarra and María Clara seem to complement each other however. At the end of her

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<sup>101</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 38

<sup>102</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 39

<sup>103</sup> Regarding the Ateneo, John Schumacher S.J. quotes one of Rizal's letters stating that it was in the Ateneo where his "patriotic sentiments greatly developed" as a result of its humanistic and (relatively) liberal program. *The Making of a Nation*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1993. P. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Of course there is the issue of gender at play as well. María Clara's experience is also a result of the gender roles in this society. This aspect itself certainly merits its own close investigation.

discourse, they reveal to each other the objects they have carried as reminders of their shared childhood. Ibarra has carried the sage leaves that María Clara picked for him to cure his headache on their way home from that day by the river, and she has carried his goodbye letter explaining his departure<sup>105</sup>. Although we have seen how they characterize themselves and the other rhetorically, these objects represent the opposing discourse: he carries the native (oral tradition, nature, innocence, folklore, etc.) and she carries the European (the written word, civilization, experience, science, etc.). In a sense these objects represent the transcendence of a fundamental lack: though the opposing discourse no longer has a means of expression in the imaginary of the other, these totems make up for it.

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<sup>105</sup> It is an interesting document: while it is written by Ibarra, nearly all the text is a quote from his father, urging him to leave in order to "aprender la ciencia de la vida, lo que tu patria no puede darte, para serle un día útil" (Noli 39). By the end of the novel, Ibarra's goodbye letter will be used against him. It is revealed during the last conversation that María Clara and Ibarra will ever have; she has given up the letter in order to prevent the spreading of the news that her true father is Padre Dámaso, thus protecting her putative father, Capitán Tiago. The letter itself, in turn, was used by Salví in order to falsify evidence against Ibarra, thus ensuring his destruction. The loss of the letter represents the end of their relationship: after this scene, María Clara will believe that Ibarra is dead for the rest of her life. Ibarra, who will return to the Philippines disguised as the jeweler Simoun, will start an insurrection just to free her from the convent, only to find out that he is too late.

Like the "people" for Elías, María Clara signifies an untranscendable limit for Ibarra. He is quite honest when he says that his love for her is the same as his love for the country; all of his actions, while cloaked in patriotism, have María Clara as their inspiration. When he receives a telegram informing him that the plans for the school have been approved, he gives it to her as a kind of symbolic gesture signifying the true, or at least libidinal, motives behind his efforts. In the Freud quote in the previous section we saw how Ibarra's relationship with Elías was instrumental in his development as an individual. His relationship to María Clara has a different implication. "The process of civilization," Freud writes,

is a modification which the vital process experiences under the influence of a task that is set it by Eros and instigated by Ananke - by the exigencies of reality; and that this task is one of uniting separate individuals into a community bound together by libidinal ties<sup>106</sup>.

Thus, his relationship to María Clara, who for him symbolizes the nation, is the passage from the individual to civilization itself. Therefore, the question is how exactly that civilization will be characterized. On the

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<sup>106</sup> Freud *Civilization* p. 104

level of expression, it is polyphony; neither discourse dominates the other. Their consciousnesses are autonomous and complementary rather than merely collapsing into each other or overcoming one another. It is an interesting contrast with Moretti's rejoinder to Bakhtin: the 'nation' may speak with one voice, but 'civilization' is a community. Ibarra's gesture of presenting María Clara with the telegram indicates the libidinal community that he is trying to build. Ibarra is oriented towards civilization, modern civilization, achieved with the benefit of the nation in mind. His patriotism then can be seen as another kind of libidinal investment, but again its ultimate aim is civilization: heterogeneous and cosmopolitan. In a very telling move, as he presents María Clara with the telegram she is moved by his excitement, but she admits to herself that she does not understand what it means. There is still a great distance between Ibarra and the nation.

Indeed, the conflation between María Clara and the nation is at times problematic for Ibarra<sup>107</sup>, seen in the

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<sup>107</sup> It may be worth pointing out the symbolic function of María Clara in the novel. Many critics have seen her as Rizal's ideal Filipina, others have seen her as a caricature (See Salvador P. Lopez's "María Clara - Paragon or Caricature"). I respectfully disagree and take Ibarra at his word: María Clara represents the nation itself, for better and for

fact that Rizal gives María Clara some of the most outright nationalist lines of the novel. In one episode, Ibarra, María Clara, and some of the other youths of San Diego are enjoying a light-hearted fishing trip. At one point, someone takes out a harp ("el instrumento que más se toca en aquella provincia<sup>108</sup>"), and María Clara is asked to play; She sings the following:

¡Dulces las horas en la propia patria  
Donde es amigo cuanto alumbra el sol,  
Vida es la brisa que en sus campos vuela,  
Grata la muerte y más tierno el amor!

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Ardientes besos en los labios juegan,  
De una madre en el seno al despertar,  
Buscan los brazos á ceñir el cuello,  
Y los ojos sonríense al mirar.

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Dulce es la muerte por la propia patria,  
Donde es amigo cuanto alumbra el sol  
¡Muerte es la brisa para quien no tiene  
Una patria, una madre, un amor!

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Estinguióse la voz, cesó el cauto, enmudeció el arpa y aún seguían escuchando: ninguno aplaudió. Las jóvenes sentían sus ojos llenarse de lágrimas. Ibarra parecía contrariado y el joven piloto miraba inmóvil á lo lejos<sup>109</sup>.

It is a moving scene that stands in contrast with the whimsical tone that predominates in this episode. After her

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worse, just as Ibarra represents the possibility of modernity, also for better and for worse. I do not think it is too much a stretch.

<sup>108</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 118

<sup>109</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 119

song there is stillness, sadness, and silence. The others contemplate her words: although they are unexpected, they are not unknown. All that are present seem to inherently understand the message, but its expression catches them off guard. Music is the means to express the inexpressible; it is an alternative discursive vehicle for a message that no one dare speak. At no other point does María Clara speak of the nation or even anything vaguely political, but at this moment she has forced her audience to think about the "patria" (again, the 'penetrated word'). The women cry, the boatman (the still unknown Elías) looks off contemplatively in the distance, but it is Ibarra who is "contrariado:" upset, annoyed, put-out. It is never explained in the text.

His strange state makes sense in context and functions in a way like we saw in "Recuerdos." As he looked upon the ocean and contemplated Europe, Bagumbayan made its way into his field of vision thus forcing him to confront the concrete reality of the colonial situation. Here it is the same: María Clara exists as an idealization; he is able to inscribe upon her whatever meaning he chooses (nation, home, the native, the foreign, love, etc.). Ibarra's thoughts converge in her image. Yet at this moment he is

confronted with a different discourse insisting on its own singularity, forcing those converged elements to separate. In the prior conversation that we saw with María Clara, their discourses, though different, were complementary to each other, and here is no different. She is able to say with total ease what Ibarra has gone to great lengths to repress. Like Elías, she too carries the “penetrated word<sup>110</sup>” for Ibarra, and her discourse challenges him. In the *Noli’s* sequel, *El filibusterismo*, we see the transformation that Ibarra experiences as he tries to reconstruct this lost libidinal object (to rescue María Clara and re-build the nation). In its absence, there is no civilization, and Rizal is showing us his idea that the nation without civilization becomes nihilism.

Civilization, the libidinal union that propagates its own future, is very much a part of the idea of building a national consciousness. As we will see in the next section, their union is prohibited by Padre Dámaso. Doris Sommer points out:

Erotic interest in these novels owes its intensity to the very prohibitions against the lovers’ union across racial or regional lines. And political conciliations,

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<sup>110</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* p. 242

or deals, are transparently urgent because the lovers "naturally" desire the kind of state that would unite them<sup>111</sup>.

Thus the relationship between Ibarra and María Clara is almost Edenic, and the prohibition thereof opens up the space in which to imagine a 'natural' reconfiguration of the national concept. The libidinal and the political come together in a profound way. But, although Ibarra does in fact "desire the kind of state that would unite them," he never does come around to figuring out what that state would look like. Again, he wants civilization (their union), but he does not know how to contend with the national<sup>112</sup>.

#### IV.

In many ways, no reading of the *Noli* would be complete without some attempt to address the role of the friars. Ibarra's flaws lead to his downfall only through their constant scheming and plotting. These flaws become dangerous only in the context that the friars have created.

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<sup>111</sup> Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: U California, 1991. P. 47

<sup>112</sup> By this I mean both the literal nation (Philippines) and the figurative (María Clara). As Padre Salví's blackmail causes her to go into a depression, Ibarra thinks she has taken another lover and her coldness towards him is because of a lack of love. Despite his feelings for her, neither he, nor anyone else in the novel for that matter, truly understand her.

Most importantly for our purposes here is how they characterize Ibarra. The answer to that question seems simple, but that apparent simplicity is deceiving. In the episode "Cosas del país," Padre Sibyla, a young, Manila-based Dominican acquaintance of Padre Dámaso speaks to the head of his order about the unpleasantness between Ibarra and Dámaso, as well as Ibarra's plans to marry Maria Clara. The older man responds, "Le tendremos en cuerpo y alma. Y si no, tanto mejor que se declarase enemigo nuestro<sup>113</sup>." He continues:

Prefiero los ataques á las tontas alabanzas y adulaciones de los amigos (...) Necesitamos que nos ataquen, que nos despierten: esto nos descubre nuestras flacos y nos mejora. Las exageradas alabanzas nos engañan, nos adormecen, pero fuera nos ponen en ridículo, y el día en que estemos en ridículo, caeremos como caímos en Europa. El dinero ya no entrará en nuestras iglesias, nadie comprará escapularios ni correas ni nada, y cuando dejemos de ser ricos, no podremos ya más convencer á las conciencias<sup>114</sup>.

In other words, Ibarra as an enemy of the friars, represents more than the introduction of modernity to the Islands. He also represents an opportunity for them to renew their hold on power, both spiritual and temporal, through their own economic gain. Also, by creating an enemy

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<sup>113</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 46

<sup>114</sup> Rizal *Noli* pp. 46-47

in Ibarra, they invent a scenario that allows them to identify their own weaknesses and purge their own ranks, thus creating a more powerful entity; it is a kind of 'stress test.' Ibarra is the weak dialectical moment to be overcome, a mediator to be discarded resulting in an even tighter stranglehold on their power.

Perhaps the most interesting line is the remark "como caimos en Europa." It is repeated again in the episode; Sibyla tells the older man "siempre tendremos nuestras haciendas, nuestras fincas," to which he replies "Todas se perderán como las perdimos en Europa<sup>115</sup>." One of the most fascinating aspects of the friars in the *Noli* is that they hardly ever speak of Spain; although they do have a racial solidarity with their compatriots, they do not seem to share any national sentiment or patriotism. When they do talk about Spain, it is nearly always to criticize it<sup>116</sup>. The remark about Europe is indicative of their mindset: their concern is not Spanish colonialism, but their own hold on power, which in the Philippines was both spiritual and temporal. To say that they lost Europe is to admit to a

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<sup>115</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 47

<sup>116</sup> For example, Padre Dámaso's open support of *Carlismo*

kind of cosmopolitanism as well; their primary loyalty is to their version of the Catholic (i.e. 'universal') faith and not to any nation or homeland. Although all the men are Spanish, Europe is no longer their homeland; their true 'patria' is the colony, the last place they can operate with near impunity. The Philippines is their feudal utopia.

Spain holds a very interesting role in their imaginary. The relationship between the friars and the civil authorities is characterized by conflict, given that the civil authorities are more inclined towards the liberal notions of modernity. For the friars, just as for Ibarra, the modern idea of Spain, is a kind of platonic *pharmakon*<sup>117</sup>; it is both the poison and the cure. They rely on the military strength of the state, but resent its intrusion into their feudal kingdom. The chapter "Patria e intereses," which occurs after the uprisings have taken place, demonstrates this vividly. As the news of the uprisings is circulated by telegraph (another intrusion of modernity), the friars band together.

En los conventos reinaba la mayor agitación.  
Enganchábanse coches, los provinciales se visitaban,

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<sup>117</sup> As seen in Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination*. Chicago: U Chicago, 1981. Pg. 95

tenían secretas conferencias. Presentábanse en los palacios para ofrecer su apoyo al *Gobierno que corría gravísimo peligro* (...) ¡Un Te Deum, un Te Deum! Decía un fraile en un convento; ¡Esta vez que nadie falte en el coro! No es poca bondad de Dios hacer ver ahora, precisamente en tiempos tan perdidos, cuanto valemós nosotros!<sup>118</sup>

The passage reveals several elements. First is there reliance on the government: the provincial priests, living in isolation from the centers of military power are particularly vulnerable to any attacks, must at least grudgingly show support for the civil authorities. Later on, one priest goes on to say: "Cuando el gobierno es un tonto...dime cómo tienes la cabeza y te diré cómo es tu pata!<sup>119</sup>" It suggest then an intrinsic connection between the civil authorities and the native uprisings, either blaming the state for the people's discontent, or showing how the state's policies have opened up a space in which the natives can even begin to think about and consider rebellion. However, very importantly, the 'head-paw' analogy does seem to reiterate that intimate connection to the Philippines, revealing that Spain and the Philippines belong to the same 'body,' so to speak.

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<sup>118</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 319

<sup>119</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 319

The friars' response also signals their impotence. Their only weapon is prayer, but it is a false prayer. First, the unnamed friar who calls for the *te deum* must insist that everyone show up to begin with, thus suggesting yet again the friars' inherent religious hypocrisy. They too seem to realize the uselessness of the prayer itself. The friars' 'worth' is actually worthless, and their attempt to demonstrate power through this mediation with God and thus justify their societal privilege. Prayer may be useless, but its true use is not to invoke celestial solace and the deity's grace, it is to reinforce their power. Their prayer will be answered, not by God, but by the Spanish army.

This is the friars' own Spanish crisis. The army will bring order to the colony, but this presence of the state, as an intervention into their utopic space, threatens the very nature of what the friars' are wanting defended. In a fascinating anecdote Arsenio Bautista<sup>120</sup> tells how in 1897 as the revolution was in full swing, Antonio Ramos, an Aragonese infantryman assigned to the Philippines, brought

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<sup>120</sup> [www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?igm=1&i=115](http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?igm=1&i=115)

with him the first *Lumière cinematograph* as well as 30 movies. He screened these movies to enormous crowds in the *Salón de Pertierra* in the Escolta section of Manila, the very first movie theater in Asia. It has nothing to do with the *Noli*, but it is highly suggestive of the dynamic of modernity that existed there in the Islands at the end of the Empire.

Another important element to note about the friars is their epistemological position. Their position is informed by a profound familiarity with the colonial system, a system essentially of their making. Unlike Ibarra's painful naivety, they operate from a position of seemingly real knowledge. This is most obviously seen in Ibarra's principle antagonist, the aforementioned Padre Dámaso.

Predisposed against Ibarra even before the beginning of the narration, he is Ibarra's opposite. He is bold, aggressive, and rude. Even within the community of friars he is an almost rogue figure: the reader later learns that he too has been excommunicated for an altercation with a fellow priest.

Padre Dámaso is a seemingly exaggerated character, in the tradition of the serial-novel, or even *carnavalesque* to

use Bakhtin's terminology<sup>121</sup>. Yet again, this is part of the 'colonial polyphony;' as Antonio Regidor points out in a letter to Rizal:

Who does not know 'Fr. Dámaso?' Ah, I have met him; and though in your brilliant characterization in your novel he wears the habit of the dirty Franciscan, always rude, always tyrannical, and invariably corrupt, I have met him and studied him in real life in the Philippines. Sometimes he wears the white habit of the Augustinian, other times that of the Franciscan, as you describe him, and other times the tunic of the Recollect and with barefeet, pretending to be wise<sup>122</sup>.

It seems to ask for a reconfiguration of the concept of mimesis in Rizal: instead of being simply a question of influence by 'low' forms of European culture on Rizal, here the exaggeration is taken as 'real.' One could argue that Regidor, being one of Rizal's colleagues, is not being objective in his assertion. While this is perhaps true, I believe it is immaterial. Instead, it seems that the exaggeration is an aperture into a different way of thinking, an alternative epistemology, if you will. To be clear, I am not saying that Philippine reality is exaggerated; that would seem to imply a kind of Philippine

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<sup>121</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Indiana U: Bloomington, 1984. See page 8.

<sup>122</sup> In *Rizal's Correspondance with Fellow Reformers*. National Historical Institute: Manila, 1992. Pg. 110

'Otherness' that would only support the colonial rhetoric of domination. Instead, I am saying that for Rizal this exaggeration does not seem to offend the mimetic prescriptions emanating from the European novel of this period. Rizal's project, as he writes in his preface, was to "reproducir fielmente<sup>123</sup>" the state of Philippine reality, a statement seemingly in harmony with the aesthetic of Realism and Naturalism. Yet, the place of exaggeration seems to go against this; it suggests then that these exaggerated descriptions are part of the narrative enterprise. It is a mediated reality, not merely a reflection à la Lukacs. In other words, there is no contradiction between exaggeration and the 'faithful reproduction' of society; thus, the very nature of 'reality' from the Philippine perspective must be rethought and recontextualized in order to understand the non-coincidence of the term from its European counterpart.

The fact that this exaggerated, carnivalesque characterization is used for Padre Dámaso also implies a politicized version of reality. As Krystyna Pomorska points out in her foreward to Bakthin's book on Rabelais, Carnival

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<sup>123</sup> Rizal *Noli* preface

"is opposed to official culture<sup>124</sup>;" it is a critical space, here used both by Rizal and Regidor in opposition of the *frailocracy*. It does not stand apart from the 'faithful reproduction' of the Philippines; instead, it confronts the official 'realism' of the colonizers, seen in the various articles by the leading Spanish *filipinólogos* of the day<sup>125</sup>.

In the *Noli*, Padre Dámaso is the prime example of that official colonial realism. As the first person in the novel to speak, his discourse gives us a glimpse of his familiarity with the Philippines. In the very first

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<sup>124</sup> Bakhtin *Rabelais* pg. x. The role of *carnival* in Rizal must be explored farther. Keep in mind that Ibarra returns to San Diego just in time for the feast of the town's patron saint. As this period of exception ends, so too begins the complete unraveling of his life. Quite literally then, his presence was only tolerated during what Bakhtin calls the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and (...) the established order" (*Rabelais* p. 10).

<sup>125</sup> For examples see Vicente Barrantes's article "Su excelencia" in *La España moderna*. II: 13 (January 1890). P. 175. Also, see his other articles in *La ilustración*, compiled in *El teatro tagalo*. M.G. Hernandez: Madrid, 1889. Pardo Bazán chimes in on behalf of Spanish filipinólogos in "La España remota" in *Nuevo teatro crítico*. I:3. (Marzo 1891): pp. 75-81. See also Courtney Blaine Johnson's *(Re)writing the Empire: the Philippines and Filipinos in the Hispanic Cultural Field, 1888-1898*. PhD Dissertation (Austin: UT, 2004). His dissertation accounts for the open debates between these Spanish filipinólogos and the Filipino writers at *La Solidaridad* (Rizal included) during the 1880s and 90s. Johnson does not make the connection, but the *Noli* can, in many ways, be seen as a response to these writers, who were considered at the time to be the leading experts on the Philippines. Tellingly, with the exception of Pardo Bazán, they too have been understudied, just like Rizal. Pardo Bazán's connection to the Philippines has also been largely glossed over. A very good exception is Joyce Tolliver's "Over her bloodless body: Gender, Race, and the Spanish Colonial Fetish in Pardo Bazán," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*. 34:2 (Invierno 2010) pp. 285-301.

dialogue of the *Noli* he tells a recently arrived Spaniard: "Ya lo verá (...) como cuente en el país algunos meses, se va á convencer de lo que le digo: una cosa es gobernar en Madrid y otra es estar en Filipinas<sup>126</sup>." Unlike Ibarra, he is able to differentiate between Europe and the Philippines. Whereas Ibarra, through his thought and his body, represents convergence, Dámaso represents divergence: he is able to clearly delineate the boundaries between the two places. He is not haunted by the same "demonio de las comparaciones" like Ibarra, and is rather unsentimental about Europe in general or Spain in particular. He continues his speech to his compatriot:

Yo que cuento ya veintitres años de plátano y morisqueta, yo puedo hablar con autoridad sobre ello. No me salga V. con teorías ni retóricas, yo conozco al indio. Haga cuenta que desde que llegué al país, fui destinado á un pueblo, pequeño es verdad, pero muy dedicado á la agricultura. Todavía no entendía yo muy bien el tagalo, pero ya confesaba á las mujeres, y nos entendíamos (...) <sup>127</sup>.

It is a story of learning and controlling signs. He came to the Philippines without knowing the language, yet here he is using a native word, 'morisqueta,' without hesitation. That sign system has become so ingrained in him

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<sup>126</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 5

<sup>127</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 5

that he does not consider the fact that his listener, the recently arrived Spaniard, surely does not understand it. The word belongs to Padre Dámaso now. He possesses concrete, practical knowledge; he does not need the 'theories' and 'rhetoric' of others. He adds:

Veinte años, no me lo podrá negar nadie, son más que suficientes para conocer un pueblo. San Diego tenía seis mil almas, y conocía á cada habitante como si yo le hubiese parido y amamantado: sabía de que pié cojeaba éste, donde le apretaba el zapato á aquel, quién hacía el amor á aquella dalaga, qué deslices había tenido ésta con quién, cuál era el verdadero padre del chico etc. como que confesaba á todo bicho<sup>128</sup>.

He does seem to possess a very real familiarity with the people, but this knowledge is obtained through his role as priest. He has received this knowledge through "confessional dialogue:" the people cannot "manage without his judgment and forgiveness," yet they simultaneously harbor "a hostility toward him and resistance to his judgment and forgiveness<sup>129</sup>." In other words, his familiarity is born from an antagonism that he also has internalized, shown by his quickness to defend himself against an imagined criticism: "no me lo podrá negar nadie." He anticipates this criticism and interrupts

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<sup>128</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 5

<sup>129</sup> Bakhtin *Dostoevsky* p. 262

himself to answer it. He announces his expertise out loud, while attempting to silence the imaginary voice that suspects his ignorance. The interesting question is to whom does that missing voice belong?

Padre Dámaso knows he has received this knowledge through false pretenses; religion is useful to him only inasmuch as it grants him authority over the people. He is the epitome of religious hypocrisy: he has been excommunicated and he has fathered an illegitimate child, María Clara, to boot. Conversely, the people, true believers, must defer to him because he controls the means of their salvation; they have no choice but to make him privy to their most private thoughts. Padre Dámaso and the other friars lack Ibarra's naivety because they control the very devices that give the colonial system meaning. They are not naïve because their position in the colonial system allows them to determine what that naivety actually is.

In the cited passage, he is also establishing the authority of the church over the official colonial government. He tells his interlocutor "una cosa es gobernar en Madrid y otra es estar en Filipinas." It is a subtle difference: the others 'govern' in Madrid but in the

Philippines that governing is reduced to 'being' (estar), impermanent as the verb implies. As has been pointed out by many historians<sup>130</sup>, the friars, being the only Spanish presence in many villages in the Philippines, were the sole means of communication between the metropole to the colony. The governor-general admits as much to Ibarra in the episode "Su excelencia;" they must rely on the friars because they are the only permanent Spanish presence there. The newly arrived official is reduced to the role of spectator, who can merely watch the unfolding colonial drama.

Moreover, it seems that Ibarra's own callow approach to the Philippines is actually his over-reliance on civil law, even imperial law, above the unwritten code operated by the friars and inconsistently applied to their enemies. It is for that reason that he sees no inherent contradiction when he states his love for Spain and the Philippines. His love of Spain is love for the law, the

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<sup>130</sup> For only one example, see Horacio de la Costa's *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1961. Although the *Noli* falls beyond the chronology established by de la Costa's book, he does point out the friars continued to be the sole Spanish presence in many villages until the end of the Imperial period. Interestingly, many of those same friars would continue in that role even during the American occupation.

written code, and his love of the Philippines is his love of home and libidinal union. Yet despite his education he cannot decipher the code of the friars.

Padre Dámaso's opinion of Ibarra is consistent throughout the novel. From the very instant they meet, Dámaso makes no effort to conceal his contempt for Ibarra. In public, he makes thinly veiled allusions to the latter; in his sermon he refers to Ibarra as a "mesticillo," a "sabihondo" a "filosofillo ó pilosopillo<sup>131</sup>," etc. The animosity the priest feels toward him is an extension of the priest's enmity towards his father, Rafael. Everyone knows of the acrimonious relationship that exists between them, but no one can speak of it out loud. Ibarra's presence calls attention to this unspoken rule. During the dinner party celebrating Ibarra's return, Dámaso, who has been rude to the guest of honor, horrifies the other guests. Ibarra exclaims:

Señores, no se estrañen Vs. de la familiaridad con que me trata nuestro antiguo cura: así me trataba cuando niño, pues para Su Reverencia en vano pasan los años; se lo agradezco porque me recuerda al vivo aquellos dias, cuando S.R. visitaba frecuentemente nuestra casa y honraba la mesa de mi padre<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 174

<sup>132</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 16

Ibarra reminds everyone of the fact that the two men, Dámaso and Rafael, had indeed been friends. Although everyone knows this, the act of saying it out loud is seen as a transgression. Again, Ibarra serves as the site of convergence; his presence links Dámaso to his late father.

As Elías and María Clara have done for him, Ibarra's presence is now the "penetrated word" for Padre Dámaso. He disrupts Dámaso's interior dialogue.

The last appearance of Padre Dámaso in the novel is quite revealing. In the chapter "El P. Dámaso se explica" he speaks with María Clara about her defunct relationship to Ibarra, explaining why he could not allow their union.

Yo pensaba en tu porvenir, queria tu felicidad. ¿Cómo podía permitir yo que te casases con uno del pais, para verte esposa infeliz y madre desgraciada? (...) Si hubieses sido su esposa, llorarías despues, por la condicion de tu marido, espuesto á todas las vegaciones sin medio de defensa; madre llorarías por la suerte de tus hijos: si los educas, les preparas un triste porvenir; se hacen enemigos de la Religion, y los verás ahorcados ó espatriados, si los dejas ignorantes, los verás tiranizados y degradados! ;No lo podía consentir! Por esto buscaba para tí un marido que te pudiese hacer madre feliz de hijos que manden y no obedezcan, que castiguen y no sufran<sup>133</sup>

Again we must contrast Padre Dámaso's perspective with that of Ibarra. Dámaso is speaking from the position of

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<sup>133</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 342

experience; the passage shows the stark realities of the system and Dámaso's own almost Machiavellian talent in manipulating it towards his own ends. What he does not recognize is his own role in the propagation of that system; he blames Ibarra for causing María Clara's unhappiness, but the truth is that it is the racist machinations of the system itself that make his statements true. Moreover, it is the concrete actions that he has taken against Ibarra that have played in his downfall. That is very important to note: in a general way, Padre Dámaso is not wrong in his assessment; María Clara's union with Ibarra would in fact have compromised her own position as well as that of her children in the colonial order. Moreover, as María Clara's true father, he is insuring the fortune of his own lineage, symbolically preserving his own position within the system. Padre Dámaso takes it as a principle: the colonial system is immutable, and any effort to change it defies natural order. The novel is a testimony to the extent he will go to safeguard it.

He continues his speech: "Sabía que tu amigo de la infancia era bueno, le quería á él como á su padre, pero

los odié desde que ví que iban á causar tu infelicidad, porque te quiero<sup>134</sup>.”

Ibarra, as a modernizing force, chafes the colonial system, but it is not a sufficient cause of his ruin. He is his father's son, and Rafael's alleged 'sins' contaminate Crisóstomo, but that too is not enough to insure his calamitous end. It is his race that makes him unworthy of María Clara, and their reciprocal undying love seals his fate. The reader finally understands why Dámaso turned on Rafael (previously his friend, as we have seen) and Crisóstomo: he hated them both because the union between Ibarra and María Clara would put her in an impossible situation; she would be descending in social status given the colonial realities: Padre Dámaso cannot allow her to marry a native. As we have addressed elsewhere, Ibarra's racial ambiguity vacillates, but for Padre Dámaso it has remained unchanged: Ibarra is a native plain and simple, and his offspring with María Clara would be inferior.

In this, Dámaso reveals his true characterization of Ibarra: he believes Ibarra is 'good;' he 'loved him' before he knew of his relationship with María Clara. He does not

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<sup>134</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 342

seem to care about Ibarra's European education or his progressive ideas. For Dámaso, Ibarra is simply "uno del país." None of the other factors that have been mentioned before seem to bear any weight with Padre Dámaso; he does not seem to be fixated on any other aspect of Ibarra's being other than race.

This sets up an interesting contrast with the other character's opinion of Ibarra. For Elías, María Clara, and even the narrator, Ibarra's flaw is that inability to bridge the gap between the foreign and the native. From their perspective, a native perspective, Ibarra cannot reconcile his belief, his tireless faith, in European modernity with the realities of colonial Philippines. For Padre Dámaso, a Spaniard, Ibarra's only flaw is his race. It seems he could have been pardoned for any of his other iniquities, but his love for a woman who is supposedly beyond his racial category is the only flaw that actually leads to his undoing.

Yet, race too must be questioned. Padre Dámaso says that he believes Ibarra is good, but it is because of his race that he has prevented their union. However, why should the reader trust Padre Dámaso? A more productive way of

looking at him would be to think of what is being obfuscated by his racializing tendencies. What mechanism, if you will, is behind that insistence? Looking at it another way, what is the "interior dialogue" that Ibarra is disrupting, and is it at all related to the unknown voice Dámaso responds to in his dialogue with the newly arrived official.

To conclude this section, we will move away briefly from Dámaso and the friars. In the chapter "En casa del Filósofo," Tasio, the madman philosopher lays out reality for Ibarra to see, telling him very explicitly what must be done in order for him to accomplish his dream of building a secular school. Without the good graces of the friars he will fail. He tells Ibarra:

Así terminaría V., planta transplantada de Europa á este suelo pedregoso<sup>135</sup>, si no busca apoyo y se empequeñece. V. está en malas condiciones, solo, elevado: el terreno vacila, el cielo anuncia tempestad y la copa de los árboles de su familia se ha probado que atrae al rayo. No es valor, es temeridad combatir solo contra todo lo existente (...) <sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> Sounds interestingly like Clarín's *La regenta*. Again, there is no evidence that Rizal read the book as its title does not appear in the catalogue of his personal library. He was living in Europe when it came out, so it is at least very likely that he would have been familiar with it. There are many similarities between Clarín's protagonist, Ana Ozores, and Ibarra: like her, he cannot abide the symbolic order that continually oppresses him. That, combined with a certain essentialism (gender for her, race for him) leads to their downfall.

<sup>136</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 142

Ibarra agrees to curry the favor of the clergy in order to carry out his plan. The onus for change is placed squarely on Ibarra. The friars are an immovable force, and the native (or mestizo in this case) is the one who must adjust. John Schumacher makes a very interesting claim:

In his *Noli* he does seek reforms, demands them even, but from Filipinos rather than Spaniards. Spain of course has an obligation to grant reforms in the Philippines, but in a sense, whether she does or not is irrelevant; the Filipinos must bring about reform themselves (...) the novel is not primarily an attack on the abuses of Spain and the friars. It contains that, to be sure, but it is more than that. It is a charter of nationalism for Filipinos. It calls on the Filipino to regain his self-confidence, to appreciate his worth, to return to the heritage of his ancestors, to assert himself as the equal of the Spaniards<sup>137</sup>.

The problem of the *Noli* is an existential one. Whether one is a native or a European-educated mestizo, Philippine essence must be the creation of the Filipino, the singularity of the nation is created out of the heterogeneity. Yet Ibarra is seemingly doomed; Tasio is highlighting one of the narrative themes that consistently reappears: "el cielo anuncia tempestad y la copa de los árboles de su familia se ha probado que atrae al rayo." There is a sense that Ibarra is held responsible for his

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<sup>137</sup> Schumacher *Making of a Nation* pp. 93-94

being, yet that is accompanied by the sense of a destiny that is seemingly inescapable, whether it is because of his family or his race. It is important to note exactly what Tasio says: "no es valor, es temeridad combatir *solo* contra todo lo existente" (italics mine). In other words, it is not the struggle itself that is the problem it is an individual<sup>138</sup> character of that struggle against 'lo existente' that assures his demise. Only through collective action will this combat bear fruit; no one can fight existence alone. In all, the result of Ibarra's relationship to the friars is a call for unification and action. To be clear, action does not mean immediate and bloody revolution; instead, what it means is a creation of the concrete conditions that could permit the success of that future society. The friars and Ibarra are, to borrow a phrase from Jameson, the "loci of history<sup>139</sup>;" they are immovable representations of the interaction of global forces. The dialogic seems to end here; these contradictory

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<sup>138</sup> See Joan Torres-Pou's "La narrativa anticolonial hispano-filipina: el caso de *Noli me tângere* y *El filibusterismo*." *Iberoamericana*, 1:2001 pp. 7-14. He interestingly postulates "la imposibilidad de la existencia de una burguesía autóctona en un país colonizado" (13) using Fanon as a guide.

<sup>139</sup> From *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1981. The original quote is "the locus of *history*" (italics in the original), p. 128.

forces cannot coexist. But the object to be overcome is not the friars; The Filipinos must overcome themselves. These friars could not exist in a world where their symbolic power is not recognized, and they are fully aware of it and fear its near certainty (as we saw in "Cosas del país").

### **Towards a New Political Reading of the *Noli***

To be sure, there is no shortage of political readings of the *Noli*; Rizal's own propagandistic impulses privileged (quite purposefully) a political interpretation of the text, evidenced by the impact it had on the burgeoning resistance movement, the *Katipunan* (who even used the author's name as a password for entrance into their secret meetings).

However, what this anecdote shows is also a tendency towards a political *misinterpretation* of the novel. All too often the interpretations collapse into a kind of biographical critique and attempt to find the 'real' Rizal in the novel, piecing together textual bits to determine once and for all whether he was a revolutionary or a reformist. Indeed, the passage of Rizal from man to myth has suppressed his very humanity, so much so that we are now much more impressed by the very prosaic details of his

life (his large head, his favorite breakfast (tuyo), or his skills as a lover, just to name a few). What is lost in that equation is of course the suppressed socio-political reality that provided for that in the first place<sup>140</sup>.

What this paper has attempted to do is reframe a political reading of the text. Through Bakhtin, we can recognize the text as a multiplicity of independent consciousnesses. Recognizing these consciousnesses allows us to probe into the novel's psyche through the dialogic relationships of the characters. Moreover, as we have seen, it is through the dialogic that those distinct moments of contradiction are rendered visible. Those contradictions however are explained through a deeper textual logic showing the reader the very crux of the problem that Rizal is trying to work through. On some level he intuits the connection between coloniality and modernity. Herein lies the 'history' in the text. Ibarra, the friars, all of the characters are working through the problematic of being in a semi-feudal colonial space in a world that was modernizing at a devastating speed. We get the sense that

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<sup>140</sup> An interesting exception would seem to be Teodoro Agoncillo's *Revolt of the Masses*. But, his 'anti-Rizal' stance too is just a code word for his opposition to American presence in the Philippines.

Rizal wants to disengage from this modernity. But, he had already imbibed from that fountain.

## 2. Rizal and Spain in *El filibusterismo*

It is difficult to place Rizal's second novel, *El filibusterismo*, in the narrative of his political development: it seems much too violent and full of nihilistic pessimism for those who harbor the now orthodox image of the author as an idealistic pacifist reformer. Yet this violence is inconclusive, and it never quite reaches the necessary pitch in order to satisfy any want to see Rizal unambiguously disposed to separatism and revolution; on the contrary, the spark of popular uprising fizzles out, and the novel ends with a dissatisfying moral sermon. No small wonder then, than when compared to its predecessor *Noli me tângere*, it has historically been considered an inferior product. As Rizal's first biographer, Wenceslao Retana states in an underwhelming review, the *Noli* "es una obra sentida. Mientras *El Filibusterismo* es una obra pensada. Y en literature hay que reconocer que se prefiere lo sentido á lo pensado."<sup>1</sup> Instead of shedding any light, the *Fili* obscures any straightforward assumptions about

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<sup>1</sup> Retana, Wenceslao. *Vida y escritos del Dr. José Rizal*. Madrid: Suarez, 1907. P. 201. It should be noted that Retana's lack of enthusiasm for the novel is based on aesthetic principles: the *Fili* is, in his opinion, not 'mimetic.'

Rizal, which in turn complicates the very basis of Philippine nationalism. As Benedict Anderson has pointed out, "if the Father of the Philippine Nation had not written it, the book would have had few readers in the Philippines, let alone elsewhere, up till today."<sup>2</sup>

It seems that in recent years the *Fili* has received much more scholarly attention, while critics have dealt with several different themes present in the novel, one constant they note is the overriding enigmatic quality that characterizes the novel. Adam Lifshey says that Rizal's "voice is pro- and anti- colonial, hegemonic and subaltern."<sup>3</sup> Vicente Rafael has called Rizal's position "split and unstable (...) eccentric to any particular identity and at a remove from any one position."<sup>4</sup> John Blanco claims "Rizal was burdened with the 'double-consciousness' of an educated member belonging to a marginalized and historically oppressed caste - the

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Under Three Flags*. London: Verso, 2006. Pp. 53-54. The "Rizal law" (Republic act 1425) of 1956 mandates the reading of Rizal's novels in Philippine High Schools and Universities. Even after independence, the Catholic Church in the Philippines fought aggressively to defeat the bill.

<sup>3</sup> Lifshey, Adam. "Literary Alterities of Philippine Nationalism in José Rizal's *El filibusterismo*." *PMLA*. P. 1438

<sup>4</sup> Rafael, Vicente. *Promise of the Foreign*. Durham: Duke, 2003. P. 54. Cited in Lifshey (see note 54) pg. 1444

*indios*.<sup>5</sup> Eugenio Matibag says that the *Fili* "maintains a violent dualism in its own polemical structure" and that it "is both an incitement to revolution and a dire warning against it."<sup>6</sup>

It is one of the major paradoxes in the life of Rizal that he became the spiritual gravity for the Philippine nation (both during and after his life) while at the same time claiming to be a patriotic Spanish subject. However, some writers have been able to explain away this apparent inconsistency by appealing to the very nature of a divided Spanish national consciousness: Rizal can still claim loyalty to Spain, but what precisely did 'Spain' as a concept mean for him?

### **The Critics: Retana and Sarkisyanz on Rizal's Relationship to Spain**

Undoubtedly, the most important text written about Rizal's connection to Spain is Wenceslao Retana's<sup>7</sup> *Vida y*

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<sup>5</sup> Blanco, John D. "Bastards of the Unfinished Revolution: Bolívar's Ismael and Rizal's Martí at the turn of the Twentieth Century." *Radical History Review*. 89: 2004. Pp. 92-114. P. 101

<sup>6</sup> Matibag, Eugenio. "El Verbo del Filibusterismo: Narrative Ruses in the Novels of José Rizal." *Revista Hispánica Moderna*. Año 48, no. 2 (Dec. 1995), pp. 250-264. P. 260.

<sup>7</sup> Retana's biography would be the only one published by a non-Filipino until the publication of Austin Coates' *Rizal: Philippine Nationalist and Martyr* in 1968. While it continues to be widely referenced in criticism of Rizal, the fact that it remains untranslated into English

*escritos del dr. José Rizal*. Retana, who at one time had been one of Rizal's most vehement critics (Rizal challenged him to a duel at one point!), had a change of heart after the Filipino writer's execution. Retana published Rizal's biography in 1907, which included a prologue and epilogue from Javier Gómez de la Serna (father of poet Ramón Gómez de la Serna) as well as Miguel de Unamuno. De la Serna best sums up the reasoning behind Retana's impulse to write down the story of Rizal's life.

¡Hay dos Españas! Una grande, generosa, con cualidades legendarias ensalzadas en todo el planeta, con sus legiones de caballeros, héroes en el hogar, en el mundo, sacrificando serenos la vida por un amor, por una idea, por una disciplina militar ó científica: la España que amó Rizal hasta la muerte, por la que pidió ir á Cuba para asistir en los hospitales á nuestros heridos, y hacia donde se dirigía oficialmente cuando le apresaron...Y otra España, negra, la que le apresó en esa hora gloriosa de su vida; España cada vez más reducida, que forman malos é ineptos, crueles y fanáticos, cabezas sin honra y honras sin cabeza, con la que no hay que tener ni la complicidad del silencio<sup>8</sup>

Rizal represents a classical idea of Spanish honor and belongs to an unbroken tradition united by noble ideals.

The real 'radicals' are of a more recent variety, a class that consists of those who have broken with that tradition.

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or the Philippine vernaculars has by and large limited an in depth understanding of what the text really entails

<sup>8</sup> De la Serna, Javier Gómez. "Prólogo," in Retana's *Vida y escritos* p. vii

Retana will go to great lengths throughout his book to show that Rizal's so-called subversion was nothing more than his absolute fidelity to 'true' Spanish principles. Rizal was the true iteration of that 'Spanish-ness,' his apparently 'radical' identity was, on the contrary, very much traditional.

Retana, being an almost exact contemporary of Rizal (he was one year younger), was in a privileged position to be able to definitively capture the historical context of Rizal's time. His time in the Philippines and his familiarity with local languages and customs, which had one time served him in his former capacity as an imperial functionary, also allowed him a greater depth in his research (as well as a greater access to official documents, seen in his transcription of Rizal's trial). Had he waited much later to work on this biography, I would hazard to say that it would have been impossible: by the end of the decade the guerilla war in the Philippines had definitively turned against the Filipino guerrillas (Aguinaldo's armies having surrendered long before then), and the United States was firmly entrenched in the Archipelago. More importantly, Spain ceased to be the

center of attention for the Philippine population. In the following decades American colonial policy would nearly eliminate any trace of the centuries of Spanish presence, the *coup de grâce* being the complete destruction of Intramuros (the Spanish walled city) during the battle of Manila in 1945. Moreover, as we will see later in our discussion of Sarkisyanz, the very foundational idea of Spain changed during the Franco era thus further limiting the capacity to understand Rizal's Spain, which in turn limited the understanding of his Philippine colonial context.

Nonetheless, it is problematic that his interpretation does not problematize Rizal's ambiguous attitudes towards Spain or the independence movement. Rizal's contradictory nature is, for Retana, simply an interpretive error: the Spaniards who put him to death misunderstood Rizal. These representatives of the 'España negra' were too ignorant or malicious to see Rizal as belonging to the true Spain. This explanation is too facile: Rizal's name was already being used by the revolutionary *Katipunan* as a kind of shibboleth. Rizal himself, as we will see later, did not shy away from overt subversion, and the court proceedings

(compiled by Retana himself) show that the officials shared the *Katipunan's* assertion that Rizal's writings contained the kernel for a Philippine national consciousness. He was, in their words, "el verbo del filibusterismo."<sup>9</sup>

Retana's insistence on Rizal's Spanish patriotism, is critiqued by Floro Quibuyen who states: "It was Retana who fully explicated the now taken for granted interpretation that Rizal was an anti-revolutionary reformist and that, in the final analysis, he was a deeply loyal subject of Spain."<sup>10</sup>

This danger of this perspective, according to Quibuyen, is that it influenced the American interpretation of Rizal during the North American colonial period in the Philippines, assuring that Rizal would be known as a "peace-loving reformist," a view that has "since become orthodoxy on Rizal."<sup>11</sup> Thus the Rizal that has been presented to generations of Filipinos as a model of Philippine citizenship is based on a distortion of the

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<sup>9</sup> De la Costa, H. *The Trial of Rizal: W. E. Retana's Transcription of the Official Spanish Documents*. Manila: Ateneo, 1961. p. 63. Also see Eugenio Matibag's use of the phrase for the title of his article (see note 6).

<sup>10</sup> Quibuyen, Floro. "Rizal and the Revolution." *Philippine Studies*. 45:2:1997. Pp. 225-257. P. 228

<sup>11</sup> Quibuyen "Rizal and the Revolution." P. 228

author as a figure of passive resistance<sup>12</sup> at best; at worst, it has been argued, he was effectively a traitor to the revolution<sup>13</sup>.

In the end, Retana's defense of Rizal can be seen as a defense of the tenuous position of liberals in Spain. His execution created a proverbial 'slippery slope:' if Rizal, as a passport holding citizen of the Spanish empire, could be executed for political expediency for activities that were legal in the metropole, what assurances could be made to prevent the very same from occurring in the Peninsula? Of course throughout Spanish history that assurance was never really guaranteed. In the same year Retana's book was published, the conservative party won overwhelmingly in the general elections, and Antonio Maura was again made Prime Minister. Just two years later during the "Semana trágica," Maura sent the army into Barcelona to crush a popular revolt inspired by anarchists, republicans, and

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed objection to Quibuyen, see John Schumacher's "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: A New Approach." *Philippine Studies*. 48:4:2000 pp. 549-571. While he agrees more or less with Quibuyen's overall premise (i.e. Rizal as 'separatist'), as a historian his more serious objections have to do with the veracity of some of the texts Quibuyen uses.

<sup>13</sup> See Francisco Caudet's "Noli me tângere y la Filipinas colonial." *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos*. June 1983 pp 581-599. And Renato Constantino's "Veneration without Understanding" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1:4 (1971) p. 3. Both articles negatively problematize Rizal's relationship to the Philippine Revolution.

socialists<sup>14</sup>. It was neither the first nor the last time that the interior of Spain itself would suffer the same kind of military repression that had become the status quo in the colonies.

Miguel de Unamuno's shares Retana's sentiment in his epilogue. He seems to prefigure Deleuze and Guattari's idea of 'minor literature' with regards to Rizal<sup>15</sup>. Rizal is not an autonomous writer; instead his presence within Hispanic letters both subverts and affirms this tradition. He praises Rizal's 'innovative' use of Castilian (while Retana claims it 'leaves much to be desired'). As a Basque (unlike the *madrileño* Retana), Unamuno was in a peripheral position not unlike Rizal, a position that allowed him to at least intuit a real connection and equality on a cultural or 'corporal' level<sup>16</sup>. It is this 'sub-altern' position of Rizal that interests Unamuno the most; like in Retana's case, one can be tempted to think that his praise of Rizal

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<sup>14</sup> Marín, Dolores. "Barcelona en llamas: La Semana Trágica," *La aventura de la historia*. Año 11, no. 129 p. 47

<sup>15</sup> Besides their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota, 1986, see in particular pages 104-107 in *A Thousand Plateaus*. New York: Continuum, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> It could be argued that because he was a liberal, Retana also belonged to a 'persecuted' class. While true, it reminds me of Ben Anderson's skepticism towards the idea of a "Tomb of the Unknown Marxist or a Cenotaph for fallen Liberals." *Imagined Communities* p. 10. Also, interestingly enough, though Unamuno and Rizal did not know each other, they did roughly coincide at the Universidad Central de Madrid.

is in a sense prosthetic, standing in for a defense of himself against that same oppressive Spain that killed Rizal (even his praise of Rizal could just as easily be applied to the Basque if stripped of their local qualifiers like 'oriental,' etc.). The connection though is very real, thus prompting critics like Alda Blanco to call for a reexamination of Unamuno's work in light of this epilogue, which has been, like Rizal himself, much overlooked despite Unamuno's relatively high profile in Spanish literature. She claims: "aún hoy la crítica literaria y cultural descuida y, por lo tanto, niega la inscripción de la problemática del Imperio en un autor de la generación que escribió bajo el signo del 'desastre' del 98.<sup>17</sup>"

The other important text is Manuel Sarkisyanz's *Rizal and Republican Spain*. Although much more recent (published in 1994), Sarkisyanz takes Retana's views and examines Rizal's relationship to a specifically Republican (not simply 'liberal') Spain, seen through Rizal's friendships with leading Republican figures such as Pi y Margall and Miguel Morayta. For Retana, Rizal was the heir to the

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<sup>17</sup> Alda Blanco "Miguel de Unamuno y José Rizal: una lectura desde la periferia." *Revista de occidente*. 210: nov 1998. Pp. 65-74.

'mainstream' Spanish tradition, while for Sarkisyanz Rizal belongs to the tradition of Radical Spain. He follows the central premise of another one of Rizal's biographers, León Ma. Guerrero, that the Philippine revolution was a specifically Spanish product. He writes:

The Filipino struggles for emancipation started - and continued for more than eight decades - as part of Spain's internal emancipation struggles, including Spain's civil wars (interrupted by truces into one of which falls Rizal's activity and judicial murder) (...) In no other European colony in Asia has an independence movement ever been so closely connected with the emancipation struggles inside the European metropolis itself as it has been in the Spanish Philippines<sup>18</sup>.

He takes as his starting point the Constitution of Cádiz, which begins the liberal tradition in Spain that will eventually lead to Republicanism. He goes on to show, rather dialectically, the intertwined histories of Spain and the Philippines.

To paint it in broad strokes, during the moments of liberal triumph, the Philippines became the space of exile for the conservative elements. Thousands of Carlists were exiled to the Philippines in the 1830s<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the

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<sup>18</sup> Sarkisyanz, Manuel. *Rizal and Republican Spain, and other essays*. Manila: NHI, 1994. p. 2

<sup>19</sup> Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo. *Filipinas: La gran desconocida (1565-1898)*. P. 270. A literary example of Carlismo in the Philippines is in the

clerical violence that had occurred in Spain up to that point was also transplanted to the Archipelago<sup>20</sup>. This resulted in a general oppression that was perhaps most pointedly felt by the middle class who in turn sent their sons (I know of no female exception) to Spain for their education. There they were inculcated with the 'enlightened' ideas that prevailed in the universities of the time (like the classes taught by the Masonic leader Miguel Morayta). Upon their return to the Philippines they were of course labeled subversives for their adherence to those ideas. If this sounds familiar, that is of course because it is essentially the story of Rizal himself, not to mention that of Ibarra, the protagonist of the *Noli*.

By inadvertently making the Philippines the last bastion of conservatism, the liberal government had created a predicament for Spanish imperialism. The racial hierarchy that privileged Spanish blood above all else allowed power to slip into reactionary hands and was consolidated to such

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*Noli*: in the first chapter Padre Dámaso exclaims "para nosotros no hay más rey que el legítimo..." at which point he is cut off by a lieutenant (p. 8)

<sup>20</sup> Luckily for the Filipinos, the inquisition had been banned a few years before the implementation of 'special laws' that gave the religious orders free reign in the Philippines. Given the distance between Manila and Mexico (Nueva España), the Inquisition never had a strong presence in the Archipelago, which served as a kind of refuge (or exile depending on perspective) for Jews fleeing the *Santo oficio*.

a point that the Madrid government was no longer able to control the actions of the Philippine civil government or the friars. Yet, no moves could be made to change the real governing institutions in the colony (i.e. the friars) due to Madrid's fear of losing the colony altogether. Although the friars had essentially created the space for subversive thought through their oppression of the natives, they were also seen as the only Spanish institution in the islands that wielded any real power over the population. Thus all the subsequent central governments (liberal, conservative, or even republican) continued to permit the 'frailocracy.' Laws were passed in Madrid to allow the Philippines to be governed by 'special laws' making it exceptional amongst all of the remaining colonies<sup>21</sup>. This of course led to further frustrations among the reform-minded *ilustrados*, pushing them closer to embracing separatism.

Moreover, the Philippines was trapped in the paradox of the racial politics of the time: native 'inferiority' (as depicted in the pseudo-scientific literature of the time<sup>22</sup>) was used to justify the monastic privilege in the

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<sup>21</sup> Díaz-Trechuelo p. 269

<sup>22</sup> See Megan Thomas' *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism*. Minneapolis, U

Archipelago. Their charge was to educate the Filipinos and bring them up to the level of the other colonies. This only prevented the friars from carrying out their task, as they knew by successfully educating the Filipinos, they would essentially be setting the foundation for their own loss of power. As an aged priest states in the *Noli*: "caeremos como caimos en Europa<sup>23</sup>."

The suppression of the Filipino *ilustrados* was, according to Sarkisyanz, a proxy war against 'enlightened' Spain. It was an extension of their long struggle with the progressive traditions in Spain. Cuba was economically speaking a much more important colony, but the fight for the Philippines represented the struggle for the very identity of the Spanish nation (even without its empire); for it was here that Spain, the 'two Spains,' had to confront themselves in the mirror. Each central government was forced to confront its own paradoxes.

Despite Sarkisyanz's occasional excessive adulation of this mythical radical Spain, his real axe to grind is with Franco's Spain. According to him, Rizal's relationship to

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Minnesota, 2012 p. 23-24. Of course, the name for this 'science' is Orientalism (and eventually Anthropology); see Immanuel Wallerstein's *World Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 47

the radical Spanish tradition was suppressed in the Philippines as a result of several problems: first of all was the fact that among the Spaniards, creoles, and mestizos that remained in the Philippines after the war of 1898, many became Franco sympathizers when he came to power. He points out: "unlike in practically every other country with resident Spaniards, in the Philippines most of them sympathized with Franco's 'crusade'<sup>24</sup>." Before the tide turned against the Axis during the Second World War he estimates the number of *falangistas* in the Philippines to be around 10,000 which included several members of the upper and middle classes like Enrique Zobel<sup>25</sup>. Others were sympathetic to Franco's cause, like native President Elpidio Quirino, who Sarkisyanz quotes as saying "Spain, presided by Generalissimo Franco, has a heart of gold<sup>26</sup>." The overwhelming religious faith of the people (a 'gift'

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<sup>24</sup> Sarkisyanz p. 159

<sup>25</sup> The Zobel family (descended, ironically, from German Jews!) continues to be one of the most important Creole families in the Philippines as well as being one of the wealthiest families in the world according to Forbes magazine. The Zobel Prize, perhaps the highest literary award in the country, is still awarded every year to Filipino authors and scholars who write in Spanish or work to preserve Hispanic culture in the Philippines. Other members of the family include Fernando Zobel, the modernist painter.

<sup>26</sup> Sarkisyanz p. 161. Then Vice-President Nixon said the same thing about Franco: the United States became an ally of Franco in 1953. Ironically, the U.S. was one of only two nations (the other being Switzerland) that recognized the First Spanish Republic in 1871.

from the centuries of 'frailocracy') coupled with the fact that the descendants of almost exclusively conservative Spaniards controlled vast amounts of Philippine wealth, ensured the repression of Rizal's connection to the Spanish radical tradition.

The other important factor was Franco's Spain itself. According to Sarkisyanz, Franco's decades long stranglehold on power effectively suppressed any talk of republican Spain. Its defeat ended the notion of the 'two Spains;' under Franco, Spain was "Una, Grande y Libre." National diversity was reduced to a conservative mythology of 'Spanish-ness,' expressed in the worn stereotypes of bullfighting, flamenco, and football. While the memory of Republican Spain was preserved by the tens of thousands of exiles who fled the regime (as well as in private by many of those who stayed behind), they were cut off from the Philippines by the United States, the Franco's Filipino allies, and of course by Imperial Japan. If Rizal represented the Spanish republican iteration of the construction of national consciousness, Franco's version, Retana's "España negra," the embodiment of Unamuno's fears, was the one that won out in the peninsula.

Sarkisyanz's assessment suffers from many of the same problems as Retana's: Rizal's relationship to Spain is trapped in an effectively mythologized notion of a 'liberal' Spain as separate from the 'españa negra.' By failing to problematize this concept of 'enlightened' Spain he misses the racial politics deployed by the liberals and republicans as well. In other words, racial equality was, with few exceptions, simply not the lived political reality of the time. The fact is that many of Rizal's other contemporary critics (specifically Vicente Barrantes and Pablo Feced, and even Retana himself) were also partisans of Spanish progress and liberalism<sup>27</sup>.

While many historians, such as Henry Kamen, go to great lengths to show the myth of the Spanish 'historic nation'<sup>28</sup> (i.e. that it was never a 'real' unified entity) it cannot be denied that the construction of the Spanish empire itself seemed to forge at least the semblance of unity for the Iberian Spaniards. It was an historical inevitability: the presence of the 'other' created the necessity to invent an imperial 'self.' Even if Spaniards

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<sup>27</sup> Their vitriolic critiques of Rizal were published in the journal *La España moderna* and other nominally liberal reviews.

<sup>28</sup> Kamen, Henry. *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity*. New Haven: Yale, 2008.

could not positively define themselves as a unity because of their internal differences, they could identify themselves negatively in the sense that they are not that colonized 'other.'

### **Rizal and the "Two Spains"**

Their theses seem to hold up to scrutiny based on several of Rizal's own writings: throughout his life he invoked the name of this 'enlightened' Spain several times in a positive way. We see this in his 1884 speech at the Hotel Inglés celebrating the Filipino painters Juan Luna and Félix Resurrección Hidalgo who had won important prizes in Madrid for their work. He says:

I believe I see two luminous arches that, starting from both regions (i.e. Spain and the Philippines), are going to be entwined there above, impelled by the feeling of common origin, and from that height unite two peoples with eternal bonds, two peoples that sea and space separate in vain, two peoples in which the seeds of disunion that men and their despotism blindly sow do not germinate. Luna and Hidalgo are Spanish as well as Philippine glories. They were born in the Philippines but they could have been born in Spain, because genius knows no country, genius sprouts everywhere, genius is like light, air, the patrimony of everybody, cosmopolitan like space, like life, like God.<sup>29</sup>

Later he continues:

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<sup>29</sup> Rizal *Political and Historical Writings* p. 18

The boundaries of Spain are neither the Atlantic nor the Cantabrian nor the Mediterranean - it would be ignominious for the water to place a dam to her grandeur, to her idea - Spain is there, there where her beneficent influence is felt, and though her flag might disappear, there would remain her memory, eternal, imperishable. What does a piece of red and yellow cloth matter, what do rifles and cannon matter, there where a feeling of love, of tenderness, does not sprout, there where no fusion of ideas, unity of principles, harmony of opinions exist.<sup>30</sup>

'Eternal bonds' unite Spain and the Philippines for Rizal; there is an inextricable link between the two. This link, is based on 'love.' But this is not the fraternal love of equals, which (as in Martí's "Nuestra América") define the relationship between the American republics (or for that matter the ideal relationship between, say, Catalonia and Castile). Instead it is a maternal love; it is the love of 'mother' Spain for her 'daughter' the Philippines. Rizal, it would seem, recognizes the imbalance of this colonial relationship but does accept it as natural. But he is not simply supporting colonialism, this love is also a hypothetical; Rizal is not asserting its existence as much as he is issuing a warning, a warning that the very notion of Spain will not matter if she withholds her maternal love. This relationship, though

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<sup>30</sup> Rizal *Political and Historical Writings*. Manila: NHI, p. 21

unequal, still requires different responsibilities for the involved constituents. But, perhaps more importantly, this idea of Spain (or the Philippines, for that matter) is a utopian one. Neither exists as an national space in the usual sense of the word: they are purely idealistic constructions. However, we should be cautioned not think that Rizal's apparent idealism did not find its analogue in reality. In his famous essay "The Philippines a Century Hence" he wrote:

Some may criticize us for being utopians, but what's utopia? Utopia was a country imagined by Thomas Moore where there were universal suffrage, religious tolerance, an almost complete abolition of the death penalty, etc. When the little novel was published, these things were considered impossible dreams, that is *utopian*. Nonetheless, civilization has left far behind us the land of Utopia; human will and conscience have realized miracles, have abolished slavery and the death penalty for adultery - impossible things even in that very same Utopia!<sup>31</sup>

If we consider his utopian idea of Spain in this way, this passage from his speech is a direct challenge to the very national consciousness of Spain.

Although his political ideas continued to evolve over the years, the 'enlightened' Spain still appears in his

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<sup>31</sup> Rizal, *Political and Historical Writings* p. 152 (see note 30)

writings: in 1896, during his trial for sedition, Rizal wrote the document "Data for my Defense." He states:

I have never believed, nor can I believe, that these aspirations of mine are criminal in the eyes of the Government. They are the aspirations that my eminently Spanish education, and as such patriotic, has evolved in me. Since childhood I have been educated among Spaniards, I have been nurtured with the great examples in the history of Spain, Greece, and Rome; later in Spain, my professors have all been great patriots. Books, magazines, examples, reason - all made me love the welfare of my native land, as the Catalan loves the welfare of Cataluña, the Vascongado, the Galician, the Andalucian, Vizcaya, Galicia, Andalucía, respectively, etc. So remote it was for me to believe that I was doing wrong, that never did I like to accept the protection of another nation. Twice I was offered German nationality and once English, and I never accepted either.<sup>32</sup>

Rizal himself expresses quite forcefully what has already been mentioned in Retana et al.: Rizal's 'crime' was nothing more than a real fidelity to Spain. To be 'Filipino' for Rizal was the same as being Basque, Catalan, etc. The Philippines was an intrinsic part of Spain, even for Rizal, and whatever separatist ideas that he may have possessed can (and should) be seen in the same way as the historic (and current) separatist movements in the Peninsula itself.

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<sup>32</sup> Rizal *Political and Historical Writings* p. 345 (see note 30)

John Schumacher claims that Rizal evolved from being an assimilationist (i.e. a supporter of the further integration of the Philippines into the Spanish empire) to being a separatist (who supported the eventual independence of the colony) around the time of the publication of the *Noli*<sup>33</sup>. Rizal had given up any hope in Spanish reforms, and Philippine freedoms would have to be won by the Filipinos themselves working beyond the imperial system. Schumacher believes that Rizal

did not condemn revolution, but *this* revolution at *this* time, for which the country was not yet prepared. It neither possessed the logistical resources to fight successfully, nor, more important to Rizal, was it yet formed into one *nation*, the object of his efforts from 1885, when he began the *Noli* until the Liga Filipina in 1892.<sup>34</sup>

Documents, such as the "Data for my Defense" were written under duress. Moreover, Eugenio Matibag describes these ambiguous moments as "narrative ruses," or

devices by which an author strives to protect his meaning, and/or himself, from the violence of or a consequence to interpretation. In a colonial situation, artifice allows what the author says and means to make its way past the censors of the regime and to reach, empower and redirect, by indirection, its intended readership.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Schumacher, John. "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: A New Approach." *Philippine Studies*. 48:4, 2000. Pp. 549-571. P. 550

<sup>34</sup> Schumacher "Rizal and Filipino Nationalism" p. 551

<sup>35</sup> Matibag p. 254

The name for these 'misdirections' is *irony*<sup>36</sup>: we are to take Rizal's ambiguity as ironic interventions. However, Matibag's explanation does not take into account that Rizal never seemed to shy away from any confrontation with the authorities either in Spain or the Philippines. He knew that his writings were going to ruffle feathers, and that his novels were likely to be banned in the colony, so what need did he have of a 'ruse?' Schumacher's claim of duress makes more sense; Rizal publicly denounced the revolution at the last moment, but privately he harbored separatist ambitions. However, this seems to miss the very real irony that the writings of Rizal contained: in the *Fili*, for example we will see a passage, presumably not written under duress, that still looks to 'enlightened' Spain. Thus, we must think between Schumacher and Matibag.

In an early scene, *Cabesang Tales*, a peasant farmer, renounces his former life and takes up arms to become a *tulisán* and murders his immediate oppressors. The narrator breaks character, so to speak, and Rizal reveals himself do directly address his actual townspeople:

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<sup>36</sup> For my understanding of irony see Wayne Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: U Chicago, 1975

¡Tranquilizaos, pacíficos vecinos de Kalamba! Ninguno de vosotros se llama Tales, ninguno de vosotros ha cometido el crimen! Vosotros os llamais Luis Habana, Matías Belarmino, Nicasio Eigasani, Cayetano de Jesús, Mateo Elejorde, Leandro Lopez, Antonino Lopez, Silvestre Ubaldo, Manuel Hidalgo, Paciano Mercado, os llamais el pueblo de Kalamba!... Habéis limpiado vuestros campos, habéis empleado en ellos el trabajo de toda vuestra vida, economías, insomnios, privaciones, y os han despojado de ellos, lanzado de vuestros hogares y han prohibido á los demás os diesen hospitalidad! No se contentaron con violar la justicia, hollaron las sagradas tradiciones de vuestro pais... Vosotros habeis servido á España y al rey, y cuando en nombre de ellos pedisteis justicia, y se os desterró sin proceso, se os arrancó de los brazos de vuestras esposas, de los besos de vuestros hijos... Cualquiera de vosotros ha sufrido más que Cabesang Tales y sin embargo ninguno, ninguno se ha hecho justicia... No hubo piedad ni humanidad para vosotros y se os ha perseguido hasta más allá de la tumba como á Mariano Herbosa... ¡Llorad ó reid en las islas solitarias donde vagais ociosos, inciertos del porvenir! La España, la generosa España vela sobre vosotros y tarde ó temprano obtendreis justicia.<sup>37</sup>

The passage references an event which had occurred during the interim between the *Noli* and the *Fili* (and, according to Schumacher, was well after becoming a separatist). In his hometown of Calamba, land that had been leased to Rizal's family and to some of their neighbors had been confiscated by their Spanish owners, the Dominican

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<sup>37</sup> Rizal *El filibusterismo*. Manila: NHI, 1996 (originally published in 1891) p. 68

order<sup>38</sup>. Here he breaks down the division between reality and fiction and names names (even those of his own family: Paciano Mercado was his brother). What is important is that the "two Spains" are evident there in the passage: one that denies justice and the other that will provide it, if not now then in the future. If this is a 'ruse,' then what does it mean? To be sure, Rizal is being ironic, but probably not in the way Matibag would say, I will argue.

### **The "Two Spains" in *El filibusterismo***

In the *Fili* we also see the idea of 'enlightened' Spain undone by Rizal. This is seen through the depiction of the Spanish liberals in the Philippines. Though they should represent this noble Spain, in the end they disappoint.

Although Rizal claims to love this "españa generosa" the Spanish liberals in the novel, the supposed partisans of 'enlightened' Spain, do not represent this idea. First there is Sandoval, a peninsular Spaniard and student who joins with the other native and mestizo students in their movement for the construction of an academy for the

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<sup>38</sup> It was Retana's comments in *La época* concerning the eviction that prompted Rizal to challenge his then rival to a duel.

instruction of the Castilian language. Then there is Don Custodio, a bumbling official in the civil government who joined the liberal party for strategic reasons of personal gain during a brief stay in Madrid. Third is the 'alto empleado,' the governor general's chief of staff, who defends native rights, in particular those of Basilio, a poor native student. Lastly there is Padre Fernández, a Jesuit priest who is seemingly amenable to the demands of the native students against the will of the other conservative clergymen. Despite their seemingly positive efforts, the narrator does not let them off the hook for their negative role in the colonial drama.

### Sandoval

We first see Sandoval in the chapter "Casa de estudiantes." We learn that he "vino de empleado á Manila y concluía sus estudios, completamente identificado con las aspiraciones de los estudiantes." The narrator continues, telling us that "las barreras que la política establece entre las razas, desaparecen en las aulas como derretidas al calor de la ciencia y de la juventud.<sup>39</sup>"

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<sup>39</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 102. Also, Vicente Rafael writes about this passage in his book *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of*

However, we must see the statement as ironic: in the prior chapter, we learn that the Physics professor, Padre Millón, "conservaba ciertas dudas acerca de la redondez de la tierra y se sonreía con malicia al hablar de los movimientos de rotación y revolución en torno del sol.<sup>40</sup>" The narrator gives us a description of the Physics class there at the university:

La clase era un gran espacio rectangular con grandes ventanas enrejadas que daban paso abundante al aire y á la luz. A lo largo de los muros se veían tres anchas gradas de piedra cubiertas de madera, llenas de alumnos colocados en orden alfabético. Hacia el extremo opuesto á la entrada, debajo de una estampa de Sto Tomás de Aquino, se levantaba la cátedra del profesor, elevada, con dos escaleritas á ambos costados. Esceptuando un hermoso tablero con marco de narra sin usar casi, pues en él continuaba aun escrito el *viva!* que apareció desde el primer día, no se veía allí ningun mueble util ó inútil. Las paredes, pintadas de blanco y protegidas en parte por azulejos para evitar roces, estaban enteramente desnudas: ni un trazado, ni un grabado, ni un esquema siquiera de un instrumento de Física! Los alumnos no tenían necesidad de más, nadie echaba de menos la enseñanza práctica de una ciencia eminentemente experimental; por años y años se ha enseñado así y Filipinas no se ha trastornado, al contrario continúa como siempre. Alguna que otra vez bajaba del cielo un instrumentillo que se enseñaba de lejos á la clase, como el Santísimo á los fieles prosternados, mírame y no me toques. De época en época, cuando venía algun profesor complaciente, se señalaba un día del año para visitar el misterioso Gabinete y admirar desde fuera los

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*Translation in the Spanish Philippines.* Durham: Duke, 2005. However, he misses the irony in the statement.

<sup>40</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 91

enigmáticos aparatos, colocados dentro de los armarios; nadie se podía quejar; aquel día se veía mucho latón, mucho crystal, muchos tubos, discos, ruedas, campanas, etc.; y la feria no pasaba de allí ni Filipinas transtornaba. Por lo demás, los alumnos estan convencidos de que aquellos instrumentos no se han comprado para ellos; buenos tontos serían los frailes! El Gabinete se ha hecho para enseñárselo á los estrangeros y á los grandes empleados que venían de la Peninsula, para que al verlo muevan la cabeza con satisfaccion mientras que el que les guía sonríe diciendo:

- Eh? ustedes se han creido que se iban á encontrar con unos monjes atrasados? Pues estamos á la altura del siglo; tenemos un gabinete!<sup>41</sup>

The classroom, this supposedly emancipatory space, is an image of stasis and boredom; we can imagine that this is the exact opposite of the classrooms Rizal himself must have experienced in Madrid, Paris, or the Heidelberg. Here in the Philippines 'science' is reduced to a mere show for foreigners that shares its form with the catholic mass. While it may be true for the narrator that 'science' could reduce the barriers between races, it is certainly not the same 'science' that Sandoval and the other students experience in their classrooms.

On the contrary, this classroom is the space of oppression. In this same chapter we see the conflict between the student Plácido Penitente and the same Padre

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<sup>41</sup> Rizal *Fili* pp. 89-90

Millón who "no solo tuteaba á todos los estudiantes como buen fraile, sino les hablaba ademas en lengua de tienda."<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless he favors the students with Spanish blood despite their ignorance (or perhaps because of their ignorance), like Pelaez the dimwitted mestizo. On the other hand Plácido, a native, is treated with great contempt. Despite his intelligence he becomes the friar-professor's object of derision until he snaps: "¡Bastante; Padre, bastante! V.R. me puede poner las faltas que quiera, pero no tiene derecho á insultarme. Quédese V. R. con su clase, que yo no aguanto más."<sup>43</sup> He leaves, and Padre Millón begins a long-winded discourse lamenting native presumptuousness and false pride. As the class ends, the rest of the students "salieron tan ignorantes como cuando entraron, pero respirando como si se hubiesen quitado un inmenso peso de encima. Cada joven había perdido una hora más de vida, y con ella una parte de su dignidad."<sup>44</sup> The narrator continues, linking his perspective of Philippine reality with the fictive scene:

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<sup>42</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 92

<sup>43</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 98

<sup>44</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 99

Y como los doscientos treinta y cuatro, pasaron sus horas de clase los miles y miles de alumnos que les precedieron, y, si las cosas no se arreglan, pasarán todavía los que han de venir y se embrutecerán, y la dignidad herida y el entusiasmo de la juventud viciado se convertirán en odio y en pereza, como las olas que, volviéndose fangosas en cierta parte de la playa, se suceden unas á otras dejando cada vez mayor sedimento de basura.<sup>45</sup>

It is a definitive statement: those 'barriers' that have allegedly 'disappeared' are not only plainly visible, they have also been there since the beginning (recall that the first 'University' in Asia is the still extant *Universidad de Santo Tomás* founded in Manila in 1611) and will remain there unless something drastic occurs. When the narrator says in the next chapter that the barriers of race are overcome in the classroom, the reader has no choice but to see that he is being facetious.

This will affect our understanding of Sandoval as a young idealistic liberal. Although Sandoval is supposedly aligned 'completamente' with the native students, this alignment is problematic. Pecson, a native student<sup>46</sup>,

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<sup>45</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 99

<sup>46</sup> Anderson problematizes the idea that the students are actually native. The friar's mocking pidgin speech "makes little sense if the youngsters are solidly Spanish and Indio, but only if many of them are Chinese mestizos. Such of course was the historical reality." See his article "Form of Consciousness in *El Filibusterismo*." *Philippine Studies*, 54:3, 2006 p. 322

criticizes the Governor General for kowtowing to the friars regarding the student proposal for the Castilian academy, Sandoval responds:

-Pero, p--! Decía; eso es tener mala opinion de S. E.! Ya sé que es muy frailuno, pero en cuestión semejante no se deja influir de los frailes! Me querrá usted decir, Pecson, en qué se funda para creer que el General no tiene propio criterio?<sup>47</sup>

He goes further, saying:

Seamos enemigos de las discusiones huecas, de las frases vacias y vayamos al terreno de los hechos, añadía gesticulando elegantemente. Hechos, señores, hechos, lo demás es preocupación que no quiero llamar filibustera.<sup>48</sup>

He joins in the chorus of Peninsular voices accusing the natives of *filibusterismo*: only this time it is coming from an allegedly liberal perspective. 'Filibusterismo' for Sandoval is argumentation based on hearsay and anecdotes; contrary to the friars' use of the word against any individual who defies their power, such as Padre Camorra's claim that "son filibusteros los que no pagan entierros pomposos.<sup>49</sup>" Still, what we see are the competing ideas of the 'two Spains,' and although their definition of 'filibusterismo' may differ they are united by form in that

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<sup>47</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 102

<sup>48</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 103

<sup>49</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 22

they define their inside and outside through the very concept of subversion. Conservative Spain has its 'filibusteros' but so does liberal Spain.

Moreover, in the Philippine case either 'filibustero' is exclusively a native, as Pecson later points out: "Bien, está muy bien, Sandoval; yo tambien podría decir lo mismo si fuese peninsular, pero, no siéndolo, si dijese la mitad de lo que usted, usted mismo me tomaría por filibustero.<sup>50</sup>"

What this shows then is that there really is no exceptional, 'liberal' definition of 'filibusterismo.' On final analysis this subversion is exactly the same. As Sandoval points out:

El gobierno español, decía entre otras frases, os ha dado todo, no os ha negado nada! Tuvimos en España el absolutismo, y absolutismo tuvísteis, los frailes cubrieron nuestro suelo con sus conventos y conventos ocupan la tercera parte de Manila; en España rige el garrote, y el garrote aquí es la última pena; somos católicos y os hicimos católicos; fuimos escolásticos y el escolasticismo brilla en vuestras aulas, en fin señores, lloramos cuando llorais, sufrimos cuando sufrís, tenemos las mismas altares, el mismo tribunal, los mismos castigos, y justo será que os demos tambien nuestros mismos derechos y nuestras mismas alegrías.<sup>51</sup>

The Governor General gives a strikingly similar though much more succinct version of the same speech earlier in

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<sup>50</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 106

<sup>51</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 104

the novel. When a schoolteacher petitions for the construction of a new schoolhouse to better accommodate his students, the Governor General rejects with little reflection: "los maestros de aquí hacen mal en pedir edificios cuando los de la Península se mueren de hambre. Mucha presunción es querer estar mejor que en la misma Madre Patria! - Filibusterismo...<sup>52</sup>".

As Sarkisyanz points out,

When clericalism and absolutism reigned in Madrid, Spain could not have been expected to give its overseas provinces the freedoms that it did not have itself. However 'now that there rule (in Madrid) the men of the Glorious (September Revolution), it can be said that they want to snatch ample fortunes for themselves and tighten the ones for overseas.'<sup>53</sup>

Yet in the above passages, both the liberal Sandoval as well as the nominally conservative Governor General are both defending the very same Spain. The liberal Spain and the conservative Spain both set the limit for Philippine aspirations, and to ask for anything more is subversive.

The 'filibustero' has, in a sense, escaped Spanish control, yet Sandoval's discourse does nothing but return the Filipinos back into it. The students cheer him on: "Se hablaba de patria, de union, de fraternidad, de fidelidad;

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<sup>52</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 76

<sup>53</sup> Sarkisyanz p. 105

los Filipinos decían que si no hubiese más que Sandoval en España, todos serían Sandoval en Filipinas.<sup>54</sup>” In this sense, the narrator’s comment that Sandoval was ‘completamente’ aligned with the students is actually correct in a way: they are completely aligned because the students have already internalized that sense of limitation that accompanies their innate regard of Spanish superiority.

The Filipino students’ enthusiasm belies the fact of racial difference that underlies the panorama of possibilities in the colony. As we see in Sandoval’s speech, the one difference is that of equality: though the Filipinos cannot ask for more than the metropole, they are permitted to ask for *as much as* their colonizers according to Sandoval. But this equality is also illusory: despite their enthusiasm Sandoval believes himself to be the answer to their problems. He states:

Si ninguno de los filipinos se atreve á contestar el reto, entonces yo, Sandoval, en nombre de España recojo el guante porque tal política sería un mentis á las buenas intenciones que ella ha abrigado siempre en favor de sus provincias, y porque quien de tal manera prostituye el cargo que se le confía y abusa de sus

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<sup>54</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 106

omnímodas facultades no merece la protección de la patria ni el amparo de ningun ciudadano español!<sup>55</sup>

Pecson, as we have already seen, is the only one who is willing to state the obvious, that if any Filipino said the same, then he would be a 'filibustero.' The problem is conservative Spain, and the only remedy according to Sandoval is liberal Spain, and the natives are reduced to spectators in this fight for they do not truly 'belong' to this idea of 'enlightened' Spain. There can be equality, but it can only be given away by Spaniards. The natives can only trust in the good intentions of their overlords, which as we have and will see, did not amount to much, at least in the novel.

#### El Alto Empleado

The idea that this conflict exists between Spaniards at a level above the natives is also seen in the 'Alto empleado,' the governor general's chief of staff. The narrator gives him a much more positive gloss, but the result is still the same. In the *Fili* he acts as the Governor General's 'good conscience;' he attempts to intervene on behalf of the students, first for the

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<sup>55</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 106

construction of the Castilian academy then to free them from prison and suspicion after the fictitious revolt in which they are implicated. While the rich students (i.e. Makaraig, Isagani, Peláez, etc.) are freed because of their ties to wealthy patrons, Basilio is left to languish in his cell, but "la intervención del alto empleado en favor de Basilio, en vez de hacerle bien, le perjudicó.<sup>56</sup>" The Governor General will use him as an example; despite his innocence, Basilio's punishment "resulta más saludable y ejemplar como que infunde más terror.<sup>57</sup>" The alto empleado's good intentions only result in more oppression from the colonial apparatus.

In the eponymous chapter the alto empleado finally responds in disgust to the Governor General.

Yo no quiero que España pierda este hermoso imperio, esos ocho millones de súbditos sumisos y pacientes que viven de desengaños y esperanzas; pero tampoco quiero manchar mis manos en su explotación inhumana, no quiero que se diga jamás que, destruida la trata, España la ha continuado en grande cubriéndola con su pabellon y perfeccionándola bajo un lujo de aparatosas institucioines. No, España para ser grande no tiene necesidad de ser tirana.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 237

<sup>57</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 237

<sup>58</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 239

As a liberal Peninsular he suffers from the same problem as Sandoval in that the preservation of the empire is paramount, yet he is willing to risk that empire if its maintenance costs Spain its very soul: "El español debe perderlo todo, imperio, poderío, riquezas, todo, todos antes que el honor!<sup>59</sup>" Like de la Serna's prologue, the 'alto empleado' invokes this traditional Spain. This 'enlightened' Spain is very similar, in many ways, to a conservative idea of Spain - his actions are performed under the aegis of "el honor." Yet for his statements to be true, the natives are necessarily excluded from this Spain; the Spaniard can lose all but honor, and one of the means to preserve this honor can be the relinquishing of the colony. The natives, then, are superfluous to Spanish identity. It is then a recognition of the fact that although the Filipinos<sup>60</sup> carry a Spanish passport, they are not really 'Spanish,' in the strictest sense. It is in these 'interstitial' spaces, so to speak, that the

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<sup>59</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 239

<sup>60</sup> Thomas p. 16 (see note 23). The word 'filipino' historically only referred to the pure blooded children of Spaniards who were born in the islands (equivalent of the *criollos* of the Americas). However, by the time of Rizal's novels the word also began to be used in reference to the *malayos* (i.e. the 'indigenous' islanders) as well.

beginnings of a Philippine national consciousness is made possible to imagine.

The alto empleado continues:

Yo no quiero que en las edades venideras sea acusada de madrastra de naciones, vampiro de pueblos, tirana de pequeñas islas, porque sería horrible escarnio á los nobles propósitos de nuestros antiguos reyes! Cómo cumplimos con su sagrado testamento?<sup>61</sup>

As we saw in Rizal's speech at the Hotel Inglés, the 'alto empleado' sees the proper relationship between Spain and the Philippines as one of Mother-Child; his fear is that Spain will become rather the 'step-mother' as a result of her inability to fulfill the 'noble ends' of their forefathers. The Philippines again becomes the space in which to defend the 'enlightened' tradition of Spain against la 'negra España,' and his intervention on behalf of the natives has arguably more to do with a defense of this Spain against the encroaching forces of reaction, just as we saw in Retana's *Vida y escritos*.

The Governor General sends him back to Spain, but before he leaves he addresses his coachman who takes him from the Governor General's residence.

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<sup>61</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 239

Cuando un día os declareis independientes, dijo algo ensimismado al lacayo indio que le abría la portezuela, acordaos de que en España no han faltado corazones que han latido por vosotros y han luchado por vuestros derechos!<sup>62</sup>

But his speech has been useless: "Dónde, señor?

Contestó el lacayo que no le había comprendido y preguntaba á donde tenían que ir.<sup>63</sup>" The scene shows the complete failure of colonialism as a 'civilizing' mission: after more than three hundred years of Spanish occupation, even the grandest expression of solidarity with the natives has fallen onto deaf ears as a result of the backwardness of Spanish colonialism.

Despite the alto empleado's defense of the natives, he too has failed in his duty. His claim that many Spaniards have defended the interests of the Philippines is said with complete earnestness, and the historical situation holds this to be true as we saw earlier (Pi y Margall, Miguel Morayta, even Emilio Castelar before the 1890 all defended native rights in the colony<sup>64</sup>). Yet this claim falls flat when confronted with the hard reality that despite their

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<sup>62</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 240

<sup>63</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 240

<sup>64</sup> This according to Sarkisyanz. Also, in his retraction, Rizal also states, referring explicitly to Pi y Margall and Morayta, that he does not "reach the knees of these great minds" (*Political and Historical Writings*, see note 30).

defense no real changes were effected on the ground, so to speak. Ironically, the 'virtue' of Spain does leave with the alto empleado, as the epigram says<sup>65</sup>, but his presence was not beneficial to the natives in the first place. On the contrary, the 'virtue' of Spain has had a corrosive effect as it has put the powers that be at odds with the very people he has tried to defend.

#### Don Custodio

The narrator's treatment of the Peninsular Don Custodio shows an even greater disappointment in the Spanish liberals in the Philippines. Custodio is an ersatz liberal and is one of the most influential people in the colonial apparatus. He typically finds himself in opposition to Simoun as we see early in the novel when Simoun proposes to build a canal using forced native labor in order to facilitate the passage from Manila to the outlying provinces. Custodio opposes Simoun's plan not for the preservation of liberal Spanish ideals but for fear that it would cause an uprising amongst the natives and

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<sup>65</sup> "L'Espagne et sa vertu, l'Espagne et sa grandeur, tout s'en va" quoted in the *Fili*, originally in Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*.

threaten the colonial order. After the debate he vents his frustrations:

Todo el mal aquí está en que no se consulta á las personas que tienen larga residencia. Un proyecto con grandes palabras y sobre todo con un gran presupuesto en cantidades redondas, alucina y se acepta en seguida.<sup>66</sup>

He laments a new turn in the colony that words and money carry so much weight. Simoun, whose racial and national background is ambiguous (he is referred to as "un mulatto americano" and an "indio inglés" by the Spaniards<sup>67</sup>), is able to influence the power structure as a result of his immense wealth. Simoun's presence undermines the racial hierarchy that normally benefits Custodio. In a sense, Custodio is also linked to tradition, but this is not the 'enlightened' Spain; instead what is shown is a 'new' tradition, an alternative social structure based on race instead of class, noble blood, etc.

Don Custodio comes to be defined by his powerlessness despite the illusion of power granted by his position in the colonial order, a position of course awarded because of his race. As the narrator points out: "D. Custodio, con no haber visto nunca un tratado de Higiene, llegó á ser hasta

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<sup>66</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 8

vice presidente de la Junta de Sanidad de Manila.<sup>68</sup> His Spanish birth alone, rather than any other factor has ensured his high position. Custodio, known as "Buena Tinta,"

pertenecía á esa clase de la sociedad manilense que no da un paso sin que los periódicos de cuelguen por delante y por detras mil apelativos llamándole *infatigable, distinguido, celoso, activo, profundo, inteligente, conecedor, acaudalado*, etc. etc. como si temiesen se confundiese con otro del mismo nombre y apellidos, haragan é ignorante.<sup>69</sup>

His efforts however seem useless, and the narrator is quick to remind the reader of that. He satirizes Custodio's efforts there, his "necesidad de conocer el país, porque las condiciones del indio, porque el prestigio del nombre español, porque primero eran españoles, porque la religion, etc. etc."<sup>70</sup> By adding the 'etc. etc.' the narrator is alerting us to the fact that these things have all been said before; he shows us a glimpse of Custodio's reasoning, but then undercuts it by showing its meaninglessness. It is not worth adding more because they consist of trite phrases that the reader has heard before. Custodio is engaged with the same reasoning that has come to define 'lo de siempre'

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<sup>68</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 149

<sup>69</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 148 italics in original

<sup>70</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 149

in the colony; it is repetitive, just as we saw in the classroom scene from before. His speech changes nothing; on the contrary, everything will continue just as before. His alleged liberalism is not based on a progressive project; his concern is strictly the preservation of the *status quo* in the Philippines. His liberalism is purely pragmatic.

We read that his conversion to the liberal party occurred during his return to Spain to be treated for an illness.

Los periódicos hablaron de él como de un Anteo que necesitaba poner el pié en la Madre Patria para recobrar nuevas fuerzas; mas el Anteo manileño se encontró en medio de la Corte, tamañito é insignificante. Allí él no era nadie y echaba de menos sus queridos adjetivos. No alternaba con las primeras fortunas, su carencia de instrucción no le daba mucha importancia en los centros científicos y academias, y por su atraso y su política de convento, salía alelado de los círculos, disgustado, contrariado, no sacando nada en claro sino que allí se pegan sablazos y se juega fuerte. Echaba de menos los sumisos criados de Manila que le sufrían todas las impertinencias, y entonces le parecían preferibles; como el invierno de Manila en que le bastaba una sencilla bufanda; en el verano le faltaba la silla perezosa y el *batà* para abanicarle, en suma, en Madrid era él uno de tantos y, apesar de sus brillantes, le tomaron una vez por un paleta que no sabe andar, y otra por un *indiano*, se burlaron de sus aprensiones y le tomaron el pelo descaradamente unos sablacistas por él desairados. Disgustado de los conservadores que no hacían gran caso de sus consejos, como de los gorristas que le chupaban los bolsillos, declaróse del partido liberal

volviéndose antes del año á Filipinas, si no curado del hígado, trastornado por completo en sus ideas<sup>71</sup>.

This version of 'Spain' rejects Custodio's pretensions, and he flees the metropole and returns to the colony. The Madrid *Corte* rejects Custodio because he carries absolutely no weight in the peninsular social structure. Custodio himself joins the liberal party as a means to reject this peninsular social hierarchy. Yet, we must question what this means: as we see, he is rejected by *madrileño* society because of his lack of wealth (but note, although wealth is mentioned it is not tied to the aristocracy), his lack of education, and his naïve and backwards politics ("política de convento"). However, it would seem that these elements are part of the liberal project: all of his shortcomings are based on what would have, or perhaps *should* have been considered within the reach of the Spanish citizenry. Instead, he is essentially treated in Madrid *as if* he were a native Filipino. What that means is that Custodio, who came to Manila when he was very young, suffers from the same underdevelopment as the rest of the Philippine population. Like the native

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<sup>71</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 150 italics in original

Filipinos who came to Europe, Custodio is also able to see how the backwardness of the colony has impeded him.

However, unlike the natives, he embraces the liberal project only as a pragmatic way to situate himself in the metropole. Upon returning to the colony he falls back to his old ways.

Aunque en Madrid había hablado mal de las órdenes religiosas para no desentonar del medio en que vivía, considerándolas como anacronismos, echando pestes contra la Inquisición y contando tal ó cual cuento verde ó chusco donde bailaban los hábitos ó, mejor, frailes sin hábitos, sin embargo al hablar de Filipinas que deben regirse por leyes especiales, tosía, lanzaba una Mirada de inteligencia, volvía á estender la mano á la altura misteriosa.

- Los frailes son necesarios, son un mal necesario.<sup>72</sup>

Liberalism is devoid of any real meaning, and becomes merely rhetorical when put into the Philippine context. His supposed liberal values are part of his process of adaptation: "supo utilizar bien la sociedad en que se encontraba<sup>73</sup>." Ultimately he is anti-native for they are for him "aptos para trabajos mecánicos y *artes imitativas*.<sup>74</sup>"

"Sin embargo," the narrator continues,

si oía de que alguno sobresalía en algo que no sea trabajo mecánico ó *arte imitativa*, en química, medicina ó filosofía por ejemplo, decia: Psh!

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<sup>72</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 148

<sup>73</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 148

<sup>74</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 152 italics in original

Promeete...no es tonto! Y estaba él seguro de que mucho sangre española debía correr por las venas del tal *indio*, y si no lo podía encontrar apesar de toda su buena voluntad, buscaba entonces origen japonés: empezaba á la sazón la moda de atribuir á japoneses y á árabes cuanto de bueno los filipinos podían tener. Para D. Custodio el *kundiman*, el *balitaw*, el *kumingtang* eran músicas árabes como el alfabeto de los antiguos Filipinos y de ello estaba seguro aunque no conocía ni el árabe ni había visto aquel alfabeto.<sup>75</sup>

He attributes any sign of native intelligence to a more respected tradition: the Arabic, Spain's historical nemesis, or the Japanese, the romantically orientalized yet unconquerable other<sup>76</sup>. Although he claims that he loves "con delirio á los indios" he also becomes their "padre y defensor" thus mimicking the friars' rhetoric concerning the natives. In other words, there is no real difference between the liberals and the friars there in the Philippines.

If Sandoval represents a liberal hubris and the alto empleado a well-intentioned but ultimately ineffectual liberalism, then Custodio represents a liberalism that is nothing short of unabashedly self-serving and anti-native.

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<sup>75</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 152 italics in original

<sup>76</sup> See James Bradley's *Imperial Cruise* for an interesting account of Japan's relationship to the West (particularly the United States) during the American colonial period in the Philippines. According to Bradley, the Japanese were considered "honorary Aryans" by no less than president Theodore Roosevelt, who in turn aided their imperial ambitions in Korea. Of course, these imperial ambitions eventually ran afoul of the Americans again, precisely in the Philippines in 1941.

However, it is important to note that in the above passages, Don Custodio himself hardly speaks. It is the narrator who is providing us with all this information. This narrator is omniscient, but he is certainly not impartial (which in turn brings into question his reliability). We see then that although no project is proposed in the *Fili*, there is a definitive political commitment contained within.

#### Padre Fernández

Padre Fernández, a rare liberal Spanish friar, comes to represent the voice of reason within the friars' community. In one scene he defends the student's right to create the Castilian Academy against the wishes of the other friars (as well as the Governor General, Simoun, and others of the civil authorities). He debates with Padre Sibyla (a holdover from the *Noli*).

es raro destino el mío de estar casi siempre en contradicción con mis hermanos. Digo pues que no debemos ser tan pesimistas. La enseñanza del castellano se puede conceder, sin peligro ninguno y para que no aparezca como una derrota de la Universidad, debíamos los dominicanos hacer un esfuerzo y ser los primeros en celebrarla: allí está la política. ¿Para qué vamos á estar en continúa tirantez con el pueblo, si despues de todo somos los pocos ellos los más, si nosotros necesitamos de ellos y no ellos de nosotros? (...) Pase que por ahora el

pueblo sea debil y no tenga tantos conocimientos, yo tambien creo así, pero no será mañana, ni pasado. Mañana ó pasado serán los más fuertes, sabrán lo que le convendrá y no lo podemos impedir, como no se puede impedir que los niños, llegados á cierta edad, se enteren de muchas cosas... Digo pues, por qué no aprovechamos este estado de ignorancia para cambiar por completo de política, para fundarla sobre una base sólida, imperecedera, la justicia por ejemplo en vez de la base ignorancia? Porque no hay como ser justos, esto se lo he dicho siempre á mis hermanos y no me quieren creer. El indio, como todo pueblo joven, es idólatra de la justicia; pide el castigo cuando ha faltado, así como le espera cuando no lo ha merecido. ¿Es justo lo que desean? Pues á concederlo, démosles todas las escuelas que quieran, ya se cansarán: la juventud el holgazana y lo que la pone en actividad es nuestra oposicion. Nuestro lazo prestigio, P. Sibyla, está ya muy gastado, preparemos otro, el lazo gratitud por ejemplo.<sup>77</sup>

He apprehends the growth of society like the growth of the individual, a national *bildung* so to speak<sup>78</sup>. The natives are 'child-like' in their current form, but this will soon change. Although the narrator is a bit more sympathetic to Padre Fernández (than, say, Don Custodio), like the other liberals, he is concerned with the preservation of the empire, and his defense of native rights is based on a sense of Spanish superiority insomuch

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<sup>77</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 81

<sup>78</sup> See Pheng Cheah's *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*. New York: Columbia, 2003. Of particular importance is the chapter "The Comparative Gaze and the Desire for National *Bildung*" pp. 273-306. Cheah discusses Rizal's *Noli* on pages 240-244.

that the natives still need Spanish guidance. In some ways, his proposition is also radical in that it contains the idea for a kind of revolution in the actual governance of the colony: justice should replace ignorance. Yet for that supposed radicality, he very clearly sees how education can also be used to control the population, something of which Ibarra was unaware in the *Noli*. Youth is 'holgazana;' it is lazy, and giving in to the students' demands is not based on any notion of actually improving their lot so much as it is based on keeping them quiet and in line. He sees the friars' opposition as their primary impulse, not any (perhaps idealistic) notion of self-betterment or improvement.

In the chapter "El fraile y el filipino," he debates Isagani, the idealistic native student who assumes Ibarra's role in the novel, over this particular vision of Philippine education. After Isagani's arrest, the friar invites his former pupil to his office to give him some advice. Isagani turns the conversation into a debate on the contract between the colonizers and the colonized. Father Fernández blames the lack of character and morality in the Filipinos on "defectos que se maman con la leche, que se

respiran en el seno de las familias.<sup>79</sup>” Father Fernández, despite his relative liberalism, again falls back on the tired excuse of race. Isagani responds:

Usted no ha querido profundizar el tema, usted no ha querido mirar al abismo por temor de encontrarse allí con la sombra de sus hermanos. Lo que somos, ustedes lo han hecho. Al pueblo que se tiraniza, se le obliga á ser hipócrita; á aquel á quien se le niega la verdad, se le da la mentira; el que se hace tirano, engendra esclavos (...) ¿Quién tiene la culpa de ello? O ustedes que hace tres siglos y medio tienen en sus manos nuestra educación ó nosotros que nos plegamos á todo? Si despues de tres siglos y medio, el escultor no ha podido sacar más que una caricatura, bien torpe debe ser.<sup>80</sup>

Like in the scene with the alto empleado and the coachman, we see again the failure of three and a half centuries of Spanish colonialism. As the alto empleado speaks and is not understood, the guilt does not fall on the native, but on the Spanish colonial structure, based on a willful attempt to keep the native population ignorant of the language as well as any other intellectual pursuit. Rizal’s real-life nemeses Pablo Feced (*Quiquiap*) and Vicente Barrantes (both “liberals”) justified that process by explaining the benefits of native ignorance by linking it to the idea of low-cost labor for Spanish use.

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<sup>79</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 210

<sup>80</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 210

However, it is crucial to note that Isagani's demand that Padre Fernández 'look deeper' reveals what is really being discussed. Race is not the issue: according to Isagani it merely obfuscates a different social relation. The name for this relation is, of course, colonialism. While race has been invoked by several characters (including natives like Pecson), what is being covered up is the colonial relationship that exists between the natives and the *peninsulares*. Race itself is then a 'misdirection.' It is used to explain away the exploitation of the native population for economic gain.

This is unpalatable for Padre Fernández who insists: "O bien mala la masa de que se sirve." Yet Isagani continues:

Más torpe entonces aun, porque, sabiendo que es mala, no renuncia á la masa y continúa perdiendo tiempo...y no solo es torpe, defrauda y roba, porque conociendo lo inutil de su obra, la continúa para percibir el salario... y no solo es torpe y ladron, es infame, por que se opone á que todo otro escultor ensaye su habilidad y vea se puede producir algo que valga la pena! Celos funestos de la incapacidad!<sup>81</sup>

Padre Fernández is trapped in a contradiction, and he is forced to admit flaws in the Spanish character: "la

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<sup>81</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 211

picardía y la listura se consideran grandes cualidades en el pueblo español cuando no hay otro como él tan noble, tan altivo y tan hidalgo<sup>82</sup>." Isagani has turned the tables on Fernández; he has used the concept of race against the Spanish themselves. If Filipino defects were really passed down through 'mother's milk' as he claimed, then what would be the explanation for these Spanish flaws? Recall, nonetheless, Rizal's speech at the Hotel Inglés: the relationship between Spain and the Philippines is defined there through the mother-child analogy. That being the case, Padre Fernández would not be incorrect in asserting this transmission of character flaws. The Philippines has acquired these defects precisely in the way Fernández has stated, but the 'mother' here is Spain and the child the Philippines. If this shows how Padre Fernández's mother-child analogy is correct, then it also answers the question regarding the origin of the 'picardía' and 'listura' in the noble history of Spain: they were in fact never opposed; Rizal's Spain contains this contradiction.

### **Rizal's Idea of History**

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<sup>82</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 212

In his book *Under Three Flags*, Benedict Anderson claims that the *Fili* represents a "prolepsis" that is "mostly engineered by a massive, ingenious transfer of real events, experiences, and sentiments from Spain to the Philippines, which then appears as shadows of an imminent future<sup>83</sup>." This is based on the fact that the events depicted in the novel do not correspond to any Philippine lived reality at that point, that the events are actually based on occurrences in Madrid that Rizal saw first hand, like the student protests, etc.

Moreover, not only do these events not occur in the correct space, but they do not occur at the correct time, representing a Spanish past or present and a Philippine future. Spain and the Philippines then, exists in a spatio-temporal flux in the novel. Anderson writes that these

Space-time shifts are visible as the novel moves towards its climax. After the campaign for a Spanish-language academy has failed, mysterious subversive posters (*pasquinades*) appear all over the university one night, leading the regime to indiscriminate arrests - a clear replication of Cánova's raids on the Central University of Madrid at the start of Rizal's senior year. The mysterious posters quickly cause a general panic, fed by wild rumors of insurrection and invasions of ferocious bandits, which recall the Mano Negra panic in Andalusia in 1883, and foreshadow the

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<sup>83</sup> Anderson *Under Three Flags* p. 121

so-called "revolutionary" peasant attack on Jerez early in 1892.<sup>84</sup>

However, Anderson bases this presumption on the idea that the Spanish future and the Philippine future do not coincide. Anderson is not alone; other critics have also taken the *Fili* as gesturing towards the Philippine future<sup>85</sup>. But is this necessarily how Rizal himself would have seen it? Regardless of whether Rizal was a separatist or reformist at this moment, he obviously did not foresee that the revolution would take place at the moment that it did, nor did he foresee the aftermath: war with Spain, the intervention of the United States and the subsequent guerrilla war, and eventual independence after Japanese occupation. In other words, if the *Fili* is a warning for the future of the Philippines, it is also a warning for the future of Spain. In the novel, the Spanish past becomes the Philippine present, but the Philippine future is also the Spanish future, and vice versa.

While Anderson correctly emphasizes the futurity of the events, Rizal is pointing in more than one direction. The temporal flux is also indicative of the circularity of

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<sup>84</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 112

<sup>85</sup> Of particular note, John Schumacher S.J. *The Making of a Nation*. Manila: Ateneo, 1991. P. 96.

history for Rizal. History is a possibly infinite circuit of repetitions: Simoun is the logical conclusion of the historical processes that have marginalized Ibarra. Ibarra in turn is replaced by Isagani, whose own failed love story with the *arriviste* mestiza Paulita Gómez is similar to Ibarra's in the *Noli*. By the end of the *Fili*, Isagani's own enigmatic role in the unfolding of Simoun's plot also raises the possibility that he too will follow the same trajectory, perhaps himself becoming a 'filibustero.' History then becomes a self-renewing loop contingent upon the stasis of the colonial apparatus. In other words, without some sort of drastic change the same problems (both for the Spaniards as well as the Filipinos) would continue to arise.

#### Simoun and Isagani: The Circuits of History

Early in the novel, Simoun reveals himself to be the disguised Ibarra to Basilio, another holdover from the *Noli*. Ibarra helped the boy bury his mother (Sisa the 'madwoman') in the final scene of the first novel. Now Basilio is a university student and a colleague of Isagani, Sandoval, and the other young liberal students. Simoun's much commented upon speech, while full of vitriol for the

colonial apparatus, is much more concerned with the student movement for the Castilian academy. Simoun is privy to the details and has been following their story for a while. He tells Basilio:

Yo he visto iniciarse ese movimiento y he pasado noches enteras de angustia porque comprendía que entre esa juventud había inteligencias y corazones excepcionales sacrificándose por una causa que creían buena, cuando en realidad trabajaban contra su país...Cuantas veces he querido dirigirme á vosotros, desenmascararse y desengañaros, pero en vista de la fama que disfruto, mis palabras se habrían interpretado mal y acaso habrían tenido efecto contraproducente...Cuantas veces he querido acercarme á vuestro Makaraig, á vuestro Isagani; á veces pensé en su muerte, quise destruirlos...<sup>86</sup>

Of course for the reader it is obvious that the students bear much resemblance to Ibarra himself, and Simoun's own ire towards them is directed as much to his former self. Simoun rejects his previous attempts at working within the system (though he still does albeit in a different capacity). The students are a great danger because they have not yet transcended the logic of colonialism. They are the best minds of the country, yet they still have a 'slave consciousness'<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 48

<sup>87</sup> See Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in particular the section on "Lordship and Bondage"

¡Ah, la juventud siempre inexperta y soñadora, siempre corriendo tras las mariposas y las flores! Os ligais para con vuestros esfuerzos unir vuestra patria á la España con guirnaldas de rosas cuando en realidad forjais cadenas más duras que el diamante! Pedís igualdad de derechos, españolización de vuestras costumbres y no veis que lo que pedís es la muerte, la destrucción de vuestra nacionalidad, la aniquilación de vuestra patria, la consagración de la tiranía! ¿Qué seréis en lo futuro? Pueblo sin caracter, nacion sin libertad; todo en vosotros será prestado hasta los mismos defectos<sup>88</sup>.

Simoun has seemingly escaped from the logic of assimilation<sup>89</sup>. But, if we think dialectically we can see that this apparent rejection is built into the initial logic. This is one of the many internal contradictions of colonialism in the Philippines: the violence meant to subjugate the colony instead drives it away. The mere fact that Rizal rejects Simoun's position should be indicative of his own troubled position; it is tempting to draw the conclusion that Rizal then did not want this outright rejection of Spanish culture even at this time. Perhaps he

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<sup>88</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 47

<sup>89</sup> This figure who escapes this logic resembles Deleuze and Guattari's "Schizo:" "He is somewhere else, beyond or behind or below these problems, rather than immersed in them. And wherever he is, there are problems, insurmountable sufferings, unbearable needs. But why try to bring him back to what he has escaped from, why set him back down amid problems that are no longer problems to him, why mock his truth by believing that we have paid it its due by merely figuratively taking our hats off to it?" see their *Anti-Oedipus*. New York: Penguin, 2009. p. 23

was a separatist, but that did not mean that he rejected the influence of Spanish culture.

In the fictive world, ten years have passed between the *Noli* and the *Fili*, and those years have only served to reinforce the position Ibarra assumes at the end of the first novel. Marginalized by the colonial apparatus, the liberal Ibarra exclaims:

Ahora veo el horrible cancer que roe á esta sociedad, que se agarra á sus carnes y que pide una violenta extirpación (...) Y pues que lo han querido, seré filibustero, pero verdadero filibustero; llamaré á todos los desgraciados, á todos los que dentro del pecho sienten latir un corazón (...) ¡No hay Dios, no hay esperanzas, no hay humanidad; no hay más que el derecho de la fuerza!<sup>90</sup>

Simoun is the violent negation of Ibarra's liberalism, and the *Fili* itself is the negation of the *Noli*. Ibarra 'will be' a filibustero, and the *Fili* will be a discussion of the very definition of *filibusterismo*. Instead of the unifying element being the marginalization of Ibarra, it is the re-integration of Simoun into Philippine society, or rather, the story of what happens after his re-integration.

This process begins outside the novel. In his 'confession' to Padre Florentino at the end of the novel,

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<sup>90</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 337

the narrator recounts the beginning of Simoun's contact with the colonial *nomenklatura*.

Con las riquezas de su familia, enterradas en un bosque, escapóse, se fué al extranjero y se dedicó al comercio. Tomó parte en la guerra de Cuba, ayudando ya á un partido ya á otro, pero ganando siempre. Allí conoció al General, entonces comandante, cuya voluntad se captó primero por medio de adelantos de dinero y haciéndose su amigo despues gracias á crímenes cuyo secreto el joyero poseía. Él, á fuerza de dinero le consiguió el destino y una vez en Filipinas se sirvió de él como de ciego instrumento y le impulsó á cometer toda clase de injusticias valiéndose de su inextinguible sed del oro<sup>91</sup>.

Simoun's wealth is the sole basis of his influence, and as a result the General is reduced to becoming merely a vessel (a "blind instrument") for Simoun's plans. Yet, what is perhaps more important is that the seemingly mysterious wealth that Simoun possess has in its basis an inheritance passed down through generations (which, as we know from the *Noli* is based on his Basque great-grandfather's exploitation of the natives, resulting in the ruin of Elías' family<sup>92</sup>). In this way, Ibarra's transformation to Simoun has annulled his connections to humanity. Simoun is not so much a character anymore, a *person*, as much as he is the blind force of capital, heedless to any master other

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<sup>91</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 281

<sup>92</sup> See the chapter 50 of the *Noli* "La familia de Elías." Pp. 276-281.

than its own self-perpetuating 'Id' so to speak. Simoun as the force of capital<sup>93</sup>, is perhaps the generative social contradiction of the novel. It is his wealth that puts everything into action even an expedition to the Caroline Islands and the Mindanao Campaign<sup>94</sup>. While Simoun is fictive, these campaigns were not. They too reveal the circularity of history: it was here in the Philippines that Spain fought her most ancient nemesis (Islam) while simultaneously fighting the forces of 'modern' imperialism (Germany in the Carolines).

Moreover, Simoun enters the novel after having befriended the Governor General in Cuba. One of the greatest ironies of the Philippine and Cuban wars for independence was the fact that the partisans for both sides hardly ever spoke of or to each other<sup>95</sup>. Yet here Cuba shows up in a Philippine novel. It should not be surprising given those 'space-time shifts' mentioned by Anderson in

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<sup>93</sup> Vicente Rafael points out, however, that Simoun is not precisely a capitalist because of the origins and use of his wealth in *Promise of the Foreign*

<sup>94</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 9

<sup>95</sup> This would change after Rizal's death and the subsequent revolution. The Filipino revolutionary Mariano Ponce corresponded with several Cuban revolutionaries such as Ramón Betances and José Izquierdo (as well as the leading Chinese nationalists). See Ponce's *Cartas sobre la revolución filipina*.

conjunction with thinking of Rizal in dialogue with Spain: again, Rizal is warning Spain. The Spanish 'present' is at war with the Cuban colony, while conditions in the 'future' Philippines threaten to re-enact the Cuban struggle. He mentions Cuba because it is a Spanish problem, not because of its proximity to the Philippine struggle.

Simoun's mysterious fortune is the root cause of evil in the novel, so much so that during the last scene the native Padre Florentino tosses Simoun's jewels into the sea saying:

¡Que la naturaleza te guarde en los profundos abismos, entre los corales y perlas de sus eternos mares! (...) Cuando para un fin santo y sublime los hombres te necesitan, Dios sabrá sacarte del seno de las olas... Mientras tanto, allí no harás el mal, no torcerás el derecho, no fomentarás avaricias!...<sup>96</sup>

It is another instance of Rizal as a radical in a certain sense. Though he is not revolutionary he does see the corrosive elements of wealth, though perhaps not properly capitalist, still leads to the same end. Thus Rizal identifies the dangers of "le capitalisme aveugle et

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<sup>96</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 286

egoiste<sup>97</sup>" which is the phrase used by Jean Jaurès to describe the forces responsible for Rizal's execution.

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Corruption and corrosion are the elements that come to define Simoun, yet we cannot lose sight of the fact that there is an emancipatory project being forwarded by Simoun. He is not attempting to salvage some notion of liberty out of the tradition of an exploitative regime. Instead, as we saw in his rejection of the student's Castilian academy, he rejects any idea of solidarity with this (or any) tradition. Spain, in any iteration, is no longer an option for Simoun. Rizal cannot embrace Simoun's nihilistic project, nor can he embrace the liberal Spain while knowing of its own corrosive effects. Neither position can guarantee the real 'enlightened' Philippine freedom that he seems to envision.

By the end of the novel, Simoun is unmasked as the instigator of the plot and he flees Manila and ends up in the home of a native priest, Isagani's uncle, Padre Florentino's. There he confesses his crimes, and Padre Florentino condemns his actions pointing out that "se

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<sup>97</sup> Jean Jaurès "Préface" in Henri Turot's *Aguinaldo et les philippins*. Paris: Librairie Léopold Cerf, 1900. P. xi.

derramaban más líquidos corrompidos que otra cosa.<sup>98</sup>” Padre Florentino’s voice has sometimes been considered to be Rizal’s own<sup>99</sup>. At the very least, Padre Florentino is seen to represent a vision of the Philippine future that competes with Simoun’s. As Schumacher points out, Rizal

shows two possible courses remaining: the solution of Simoun and that of Padre Florentino - that of armed violence and that of active nonviolent resistance, to put them in terms familiar today. Rizal explores the way of Simoun-Ibarra in detail and rejects it; he has Padre Florentino give only the outlines of the second course, just enough to show that it is the only way to follow. Because the implementation of Padre Florentino’s vision lies in the future, Rizal cannot give detailed instructions. Rather he gives the vision and makes his act of faith in the Filipino and in the God of history; action in accord with that vision will prove its genuinity and open the paths to its fulfillment<sup>100</sup>.

However, as Benedict Anderson points out, to do so is to miss several important factors: “First, Simoun says nothing during or after the homily, and he may not even be listening. He makes no proper confession and nor does he ask for forgiveness. Moments later he is dead.<sup>101</sup>”

The alleged confession is non-sacramental. Simoun does not ask for absolution: he merely reveals to Padre

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<sup>98</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 282

<sup>99</sup> See Bernad’s “Three Faces of Evil in *El filibusterismo*” *Kinaadman. Wisdom*. 14: 2, 1992. Pp. 141-152

<sup>100</sup> Schumacher. *Making of the Nation* p. 96

<sup>101</sup> Anderson. *Under Three Flags* p. 120

Florentino his "secreto," which, we must recall, was already divulged for the most part to Basilio much earlier in the novel. One cannot discount the fact that Simoun has chosen a priest, a native one at that, to hear his final words.

Nonetheless, the confession seems to lack 'contrition:' Simoun does not seem to feel any remorse for his actions. By absolving Simoun and stating that his suffering is sufficient penance, Padre Florentino seems to miss the fact that Simoun is not engaging in a 'real' confession. Instead Simoun is re-enacting the form of Catholic confession without its nominally redemptive content. Still, only Padre Florentino and the narrator use the language of confession: it is the narrator who calls the exchange a "confesión" and refers to Florentino as the "confesor," and Florentino who offers absolution without being asked! In this 'ruse' only the narrator, Padre Florentino, and the reader are privy to this language of confession: Simoun, notably, never even says the word, only referring to his story as his "secreto." Moreover Simoun

does not seem to take it seriously, referring to God only as "vuestro [Florentino's] Dios<sup>102</sup>."

What we are left with then is the *parody* of a confession. Despite being correct in his assertions Anderson, by too easily dismissing the form of the confession, misses this element. It is a confession without a confession. It must be noted that what is at stake is a neutralization of religion. In this last dialogue between the "anarchist" and the priest, the ersatz confession is a purely secular act.

Anderson's other critiques of the common reading of the passage, Simoun's silence or potential inattentiveness, only seem to be half-true. As we see in the cited passage, he is answering Padre Florentino's charges quite lucidly (perhaps even too lucid for a dying man, but realism aside), and it is only in that final paragraph that he allows Padre Florentino to go on without any interruption whatsoever. By this point however, he has been able to respond to Padre Florentino's discourse with some very important questions that Anderson too picks up (inexplicably he cites the questions but then goes on to

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<sup>102</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 283

make the charge that Simoun has not been attentive to his interlocutor).

As we see in the cited passage, Padre Florentino makes the case that Simoun's plans for revolution have backfired because he has chosen "un medio que Él (God) no podía aprobar<sup>103</sup>." He goes on to say "Usted fomentaba la podredumbre social sin sembrar una idea<sup>104</sup>." Padre Florentino offers the alternative that he believes Simoun should have opted for: "Sufrir y trabajar<sup>105</sup>."

Simoun finds this alternative unpalatable and he responds, uttering his last words: "Qué Dios es ése?<sup>106</sup>"

Padre Florentino answers this with the platitudes that have long bothered radically minded critics of Rizal<sup>107</sup>: the Philippines is not ready for independence and certainly not through revolutionary means. He even goes as to repeat the rhetoric of the oppressors saying

Nuestro mal lo debimos á nosotros mismos, no echemos la culpa á nadie" and "Si España nos viese menos complacientes con la tiranía, y más dispuestos á

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<sup>103</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 282

<sup>104</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 282

<sup>105</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 283

<sup>106</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 283

<sup>107</sup> In particular see Renato Constantino's "Veneration without Understanding" (see note 12)

luchar y sufrir por nuestros derechos, España sería la primera en darnos la libertad<sup>108</sup>.

According to Padre Florentino, God wants Philippine liberty as well, he is

El Dios de libertad, Señor Simoun, que nos obliga á amarla haciendo que nos sea pesado el yugo; un Dios de misericordia, de equidad, que al par que nos castiga nos mejora, y solo concede el bienestar al que se lo ha merecido por sus esfuerzos: la escuela de sufrimiento templa, la arena del combate vigoriza las almas.<sup>109</sup>

One notes in this citation and throughout passage as a whole the dialectical flourishes that Padre Florentino uses to dispel Simoun's doubt. God punishes 'us' so that we may learn a true appreciation of freedom. He is 'just' in his seeming injustice because true redemption is found through that suffering.

We must recall an earlier passage where Simoun speaks to Basilio and reveals his secret for the first time. He says:

He fomentado el crimen, los actos de crueldad, para que el pueblo se acostumbrase á la idea de la muerte; he mantenido la zozobra para que huyendo de ella se buscara una solución cualquiera; he puesto trabas al comercio para que empobrecido el país y reducido á la miseria ya nada pudiese temer; he instigado ambiciones para empobrecer el tesoro, y no bastándome esto para despertar un levantamiento popular, he herido al

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<sup>108</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 284

<sup>109</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 283

pueblo en su fibra más sensible (...) Yo soy el juez que quiero castigar á un sistema valiéndome de sus propios crímenes, hacerle la guerra halagándola (...) Hé aquí por qué quiero que usted viva!<sup>110</sup>

The parallels between the two passages are unmistakable. Simoun uses the same paradoxical reasoning to speak of the redemptive power of his seemingly 'evil' actions. Moreover, is he not fulfilling almost to the letter precisely what Padre Florentino says is God's will? If Florentino is correct, Simoun and God are of the same mind and engage in the same logic: both are willing to destroy and make suffer a society for a greater end. Florentino wants to differentiate their actions by saying that Simoun did not "sembrar una idea<sup>111</sup>". Yet we must note that this is also the very same question Simoun poses to Basilio during their discussion: "no sabe usted que es inútil la vida que no se consagra á una idea grande<sup>112</sup>."

Could Simoun be the instrument of divine violence? If so he stays true to his namesake: 'Simoun' is a variation of both 'Simon' and 'Simoom,' the former meaning "he who has heard god" and the later meaning "poisonous wind."

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<sup>110</sup> Rizal *Fili* pp. 47, 49

<sup>111</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 283

<sup>112</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 50

Florentino, I believe, should not be considered as a real alternative to Simoun's project and thus offers us no solution for escaping this loop of history. The *Fili* in general is a purely negative act; it can show us the flawed logic contained within each of these emancipatory projects, but it cannot assert a preference for any specific one. Schumacher's assertions seem to belie the overwhelming pessimism in the novel, a pessimism that has infected even the author.

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As I mentioned before, Isagani replaces Ibarra in the novel. Although not as 'worldly' as the protagonist of the *Noli*, his optimism and naivety rival that of Ibarra.

In the chapter "Sueños" he contemplates the connections between Spain and the Philippines very reminiscent of Ibarra's 'demonio de las comparaciones' in the *Noli*, as the subject matter as well as the location (near *Bagumbayan*) roughly coincide. That chapter of the *Noli*, appropriately titled "Recuerdos," is a counterpoint to Isagani's "Sueños." Isagani is awaiting his rich mestiza

girlfriend Paulita Gómez<sup>113</sup>, whom he last saw accompanied by Juanito Peláez, a hunchbacked mestizo student (who she will later marry), during the performance of *Les Cloches de Corneville*, performed by the French operatic troupe visiting Manila. Heartbroken, he contemplates a happier time in their relationship. While for Ibarra it is the execution field of *Bagumbayan* that shakes his mental reverie, for Isagani it is the port: "el Puerto de Manila, bastardo que, desde se concibe, hace llorar á todos de humillación y vergüenza! Si al menos despues de tantas lágrimas no saliese el feto hecho un inmundo aborto!"<sup>114</sup>

The editors, citing Retana, point out in a footnote "Hacia no pocos años que venían ejecutándose las obras del puerto; llevábanse gastados varios millones, ¡Y no había puerto!"<sup>115</sup> For Isagani it is this wasteful government project that disrupts his reverie. While Ibarra could idealize a mythic 'here' (the Philippines) and 'there' (the European 'spiritual nations') because of his travels, Isagani's only experience with the world beyond the

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<sup>113</sup> Rizal biographer and translator Leon María Guerrero calls Paulita, Doña Victorina's (from the *Noli*) niece, a "more opportunistic" version of María Clara. See his *The First Filipino* p. 117

<sup>114</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 186

<sup>115</sup> Rizal *Fili* "Apendices" p. 36n (note: page numeration restarts at the beginning of the section)

Philippines is its incursion into the islands. His thoughts lack the overtly politicized nature of Ibarra's as he thinks of the past and its bearings on the present. Isagani instead looks to the present and its possible weight upon the future. The port is the connection to the outside world, and its poor shape will limit the country's economic prospects.

Isagani seeks a Philippines that has fully embraced modernity. Later he tells Paulita:

Ese puerto, de gestacion laboriosa, ese rio donde parece agonía el comercio, los veremos llenos de mástiles y nos darán una idea del invierno en los bosques de Europa...Este aire puro y estas piedras tan limpias se llenarán de carbon, de cajas y barriles, productos de la industria humana, pero, no importa! Iremos en rápido movimiento, en coches cómodos, á buscar en el interior otros aires, otros panoramas en otras playas, más frescas temperaturas en las faldas de los montes... Los acorazados de nuestra marina guardarán las costas; el español y el filipino rivalizarán en celo para rechazar toda invasion extranjera, para defender vuestros hogares y dejaros á vosotras reir y gozar en paz, amadas y respetadas. Libres del sistema de explotacion, sin despechos ni desconfianzas, el pueblo trabajará porque entonces el trabajo dejará de ser infamante, dejará de ser servil, como imposición al esclavo; entonces el español no agriará su carácter con ridiculas pretensiones despóticas y, franca la mirada, robusta el corazón, nos daremos la mano, y el comercio, la industria, la agricultura, las ciencias se desenvolverán al ampara

de la libertad y de leyes sabias y equitativas como en la próspera Inglaterra...<sup>116</sup>

Isagani does not see the irony contained within his own statements: bringing the vision of a European winter to the tropics by filling the harbors with ships, industrializing the coast and filling the air with carbon in order to be able to escape to the fresh air of the interior, building battleships in order to cooperate with the Spanish against 'foreigners,' and of course the emancipatory power of industrial labor as seen in the 'wise and equitable' labor laws of England. The Filipinos will free themselves from one system of exploitation and replace it with another: modern industrial capital. Given the narrator's treatment of Simoun and the toxic power of his wealth (recall, for example, his destructive plan to build a canal from Manila to La Laguna seen in the section on Don Custodio), we must see this as a case of irony, and through this irony, the reader is led to believe that this too is a dead end.

However, when he says that the Philippines will be 'libres del sistema de explotación,' to what is he

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<sup>116</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 192

referring? Returning to his reverie, he contemplates the fate of the poor soldiers returning from foreign expeditions (the Caroline Islands, instigated by Simoun's wealth, the reader will recall) which leads him to a romantic consideration of

la resistencia que oponían los insulares al yugo extranjero, pensó que, muerte por muerte, si la de los soldados era sublime porque cumplían con su deber, la muerte de los insulares era gloriosa porque defendían su hogar.<sup>117</sup>

The 'insulares' he is thinking of are not the native Filipinos but the residents of those neighboring islands who have resisted Spanish pacification, accomplished almost exclusively with native Filipino troops<sup>118</sup>. Although the deaths of his fellow countrymen is 'sublime' it is not the 'glorious' death of the *Carolinos*.

He continues, revealing his thoughts on colonialism:

¡Estraño destino, el de algunos pueblos! dijo. Porque un viajero arriba á sus playas, pierden su libertad y pasan á ser súbditos y esclavos, no solo del viajero, no solo de los herederos de éste, sino aun de todos su compatriotas, y no por una generacion sino para siempre! ¡Estraña concepcion de la justicia! Tal situacion da amplio derecho para esterminar á todo forastero como al más feróz mónstruo que puede arrojar el mar!<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 186

<sup>118</sup> Díaz-Trechuelo *Filipinas*. P. 210 (see note 19)

<sup>119</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 186

He is still thinking of the *Carolinos*; he has not made the connection between this foreign aggression against them and the centuries of colonial rule in the Philippines. He has had real experience with the negative aspects, yet he still represses this negativity.

Like for Ibarra, the 'patria' is, for Isagani, a slippery concept. Later on in the chapter he tells Paulita "España nos atiende; nuestros jovenes en Madrid trabajan noche y día y dedican á la patria toda su inteligencia.<sup>120</sup>" We should compare this use of invocation of Spain with the reference to "España generosa" made, not by the narrator, but by the author, earlier in the novel. Isagani, like the author invokes Spain, but these invocations are lodged between references to the destructive power of colonialism. We can begin to answer the question posed above: when Isagani speaks of throwing off the yoke of oppression, he is referring to the 'España negra.' His comments only make sense if he believes in the 'two Spains.' The 'jovenes' are working in Madrid to cultivate a relationship with the representatives of 'enlightened' Spain in order to secure a free (though not independent) Philippine future. However

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<sup>120</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 191

naïve the belief may be, it is still the underlying logic that makes his statement possible. But how should we rectify this with Rizal's use of 'España generosa' earlier in the novel? This is a much more difficult question.

Isagani continues in romantic melancholy:

Ah! Quisiera morir, reducirme á la nada, dejar á mi patria un nombre glorioso, morir por su causa, defendiéndola de la invasion estrangera y que el sol despues alumbre mi cadáver como sentinela inmóvil en las rocas del mar!<sup>121</sup>

He is willing to trade places with the *carolinos*; the Spanish-Filipino forces become then the 'invasion estrangera.' But this thought is also interrupted. The narrator says: "El conflicto con los alemanes se le venía á la memoria, y casi sentía que se hubiese allanado; él hubiera muerto con gusto por el pabellón español-filipino antes de someterse al estrangero.<sup>122</sup>" Foreignness too becomes a slippery concept: Filipinos, Carolinos, Spaniards, and Germans are all 'foreign' at one point or another. Isagani himself alternates between 'native' and 'foreigner' in his own thoughts. National identity is a constant series of being 'something other.' Still, he never correctly identifies the place of Spanish colonialism as

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<sup>121</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 187

<sup>122</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 187

the overarching structure that encompasses his discourse, for colonialism has placed him in the odd interstitial position of simultaneously being 'inside' and 'outside' of his actual lived subjectivity. He is a native Filipino, an *indio*, but because of colonialism this is an ironic identity. If we follow his logic to its conclusion we find the origins of the *filibustero*: the native is a 'foreigner' in his own land because that land is no longer his; it is the property of the metropole. Isagani's Philippines is sovereign *Spanish* soil, and he is a Spanish citizen. Yet the laws of Spain do not apply to him as the colony is governed by special laws that concretize the oppression against the natives. Thus the native exists in this constant flux of being foreign and autochthonous<sup>123</sup>. In the colonial Philippines of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *filibusterismo* names the recognition of this phenomenon. It does not matter that Isagani (at least at this point) is not a separatist; his preliminary understanding of this divided colonial identity is enough for him to be a *filibustero*.

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<sup>123</sup> It should be noted, the colonizer also exists in this same flux but with obviously different experiences. This will be taken up in the next chapter.

He continues his thoughts:

Despues de todo, pensaba, con España nos unen sólidos lazos, el pasado, la historia, la religion, el idioma...

El idioma, sí, el idioma! Una sonrisa sarcástica se dibujó en sus labios; aquella noche tenían ellos el banquete en la *pansitería* para celebrar la muerte de la Academia de Castellano

-Ay! Suspiró; como los liberales en España sean cual los tenemos aquí, dentro de poco la Madre Patria podrá contar el número de sus fieles!<sup>124</sup>

The failure of the Castilian Academy calls into question the supposed connections with Spain, whether 'enlightened' Spain or not. Yet again he interrupts himself to claim essentially that the problems lie with the Spanish liberals in the Philippines (he is referring specifically to Don Custodio, who quashed the idea for the Academy). Yet we know this is must be ironic because of the way Rizal has already shown that the liberal project even in Spain has been ineffectual. As the passage concludes, his constant interruptions never allow that repressed knowledge to come to the surface.

By the end, as Anderson points out, Isagani's position towards the liberatory possibilities offered by Spain remain ambiguous. Although he does anonymously save Paulita

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<sup>124</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 187 italics in original

and her now husband Peláez from Simoun's bomb, he seems to question his actions. He is with his family friends the Orendas when they learn of the plot:

-Siempre es malo apoderarse de lo que no es suyo, contestó Isagani con enigmática sonrisa; si ese ladron hubiese sabido de qué se trataba y hubiese podido reflexionar, de seguro que no lo habría hecho! Y añadió despues de una pausa:

-Por nada del mundo quisiera estar en su lugar!

Una hora despues, Isagani se despedia de la familia para retirarse para siempre al lado de su tío.<sup>125</sup>

This 'enigmatic smile' as Anderson points out leads the reader to question what Isagani's true position is at this point<sup>126</sup>. Regardless of what his attitudes toward Spain and revolution may be, what is clear is that an alternative logic has been put into place to question the already existing colonial logic. He may not have connected all the elements correctly, but he has at least identified the underlying themes that allow colonialism to work.

The question remains however, why did Rizal need to include Isagani? Unlike Ibarra who moves towards a specific direction (from liberal project to *filibusterismo*), Isagani is marked by ambiguity. Why does Rizal need this enigmatic

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<sup>125</sup> Rizal *Fili* p. 272

<sup>126</sup> Anderson *Under Three Flags* p. 120

element? The circularity of history is potentially opened up: if he follows Simoun-Ibarra's path then history repeats itself, but there is also the possibility that he does not, thus changing the direction of history. Isagani stands at the crossroads, and fiction can go no further. It is the world of the reader that has the power to direct the course of history.

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Then again, perhaps this is what real *filibusterismo* is: Ibarra claims that he will become a real *filibustero* at the end of the *Noli*, yet Simoun, quite oddly, that epitaph is curiously absent from any description of Simoun, even when it is discovered that he masterminded the attempted bombing of the wedding and the revolt. However, the rare times when the friars refer to Ibarra in the *Fili*, they do refer to him as a *filibustero*. Ibarra has failed at becoming that which he claimed to be. He was a *filibustero* when he was innocent of any wrongdoing; yet, when he actually commits the crimes that he had been accused of, the word does not even come up. As Rizal claimed in a letter to Ferdinand Blumentritt: "it rather means a *dangerous patriot who will soon be hanged* or well, a

*presumptuous man.*<sup>127</sup> Although he commits no action against the colonial system, because he now can think of it differently, he is a 'dangerous patriot.' This kind of thinking, for Rizal, is far more powerful weapon than Simoun's bomb.

### **Reflections on Rizal and Anti-Colonial literature**

If that is so, then we can begin to think of Rizal's real contribution to anti-colonial literature. It is difficult to read Rizal's novels, the *Fili* in particular, without getting drawn into the debates regarding Rizal's 'real' attitudes towards revolution, separatism, and reform<sup>128</sup>. But if we leave that debate aside we see then that what he has left us is really a *method*. While it is true that he never asserts a project for the Philippine future, he lays out method for thinking about it. His

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<sup>127</sup> *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondance: Vol. I 1886-1889*. Manila: NHI, 1997. P. 69 Italics in original

<sup>128</sup> To say that this is the overwhelming critical tendency would be an understatement. This is particularly true of the Philippine based critics and perhaps with good reason: a critical reading of Rizal stands in for a critical reading of the Philippine nation itself. A short list of readings regarding searching for the 'real Rizal' would include: John Schumacher's *The Propaganda Movement*, Renato Constantino's "Veneration Without Understanding," E. San Juan Jr's "Towards Rizal," Cesar Majul's *Rizal and the National Community*, Floro Quibuyen's "Rizal and the Revolution," and Francisco Caudet's "Jose Rizal: *Noli me tângere y la filipinas colonial*," and of course Retana and Sarkisyanz. It would probably be more accurate to say that nearly every book or article written about Rizal makes some attempt to explain his true intentions, my dissertation not being an exception.

negative critique does not lead to nihilism or, as Unamuno puts it in his epilogue, a kind of 'Hamlet-esque' indecision. Rather, it compels the reader to make a real existential investment in the anti-colonial project. The political reality of the time was such that Rizal knew that *something* was about to happen even if he did not know precisely what that was. He was intimately familiar with the several competing discourses that took Philippine freedom as their objective. By making visible the latent negativity in each of the various emancipatory projects he was not suggesting inaction; instead, he was forcing his generation to take responsibility for the conflicting elements contained therein, not just the positive but the negative as well.

Critics like Francisco Caudet emphasize the failure of Rizal's supposed bourgeois anti-revolutionary project, his reading of the *Noli* as "simplemente una novela mediocre en la que se denunciaron por vez primera en la Filipinas colonial una serie de lacras sociales<sup>129</sup>" misses the point.

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<sup>129</sup> Caudet "José Rizal: *Noli me tângere* y la filipinas colonial." P. 599 (see note 12). It is a particularly scathing review given Caudet's notable 'leftist credentials.' However, following Retana, he makes the fundamental error of mistaking Ibarra for Rizal.

Rizal very much understood the shortcomings of this bourgeois project, just as he understood the adverse effects that violent revolution would have on the people as well. In the end, perhaps the greatest irony regarding the contradictory academic critiques of Rizal is the fact that they stem from the very method that Rizal himself employed.

However, our understanding of Rizal changes drastically if we change his context. What we have seen in the *Fili* is a takedown of the Spanish liberal project: while Retana et al. want to collapse 'enlightened' Spain into liberal Spain, Rizal shows us that this was not the case. While Rizal is framed as either a bourgeois pacifist or a covert revolutionary in the Philippines, if we place him in the context of Peninsular writers of the time I think there can be no doubt that whichever the case, he was much more radical than his Spanish contemporaries: Galdós, Pardo Bazán, Valera, etc. It is a contentious statement, but (as I hope to show in the next chapter) colonialism is the repressed element in their writings; it is a central yet (usually) unspoken element that makes their very act of

writing possible<sup>130</sup>. Rizal's novels spell out very clearly what this colonialism entailed and what it meant for the colonized subjects. To borrow a phrase from Jameson, they reveal the "political unconscious<sup>131</sup>" of the Spanish novel.

Moreover, while Rizal has been criticized for not spelling out a program for Philippine emancipation, he does seem to make certain assertions regarding the future of Spain. It is here that *El filibusterismo* is quite clear: without Spanish reforms the Philippines will be lost. The 'space-time' shifts mentioned by Anderson make it quite evident that the circularity of history is not *really* about the Philippines, but about Spain. The intervention of 'enlightened' Spain can supposedly bring about the end of this repetition. But who or where is this Spain? Rizal, of course, gives us no answer. But as he stated in his speech at the Hotel Inglés: 'Spain' is a concept, not limited by any physical boundaries. Perhaps to find the 'enlightened' Spain, it is necessary to look beyond her borders. Perhaps 'enlightened' Spain is simply another name for the ideals

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<sup>130</sup> See of course Edward Said's *Orientalism* as well as *Culture and Imperialism*. His reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is particularly instructive and relevant here.

<sup>131</sup> The Phrase of course comes from the title of his book *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1982.

carried around by the Filipino ilustrados? Why should we stop there? As José Martí mentions in his essay "Nuestra América:"

Se probó el odio, y los países venían cada año a menos. Cansados del odio inútil, de la resistencia del libro contra la lanza, de la razón contra el cirial, de la ciudad contra el campo, del imperio imposible de las castas urbanas divididas sobre la nación natural, tempestuosa o inerte, se empieza, como sin saberlo, a probar el amor.<sup>132</sup>

"Probar el amor," "el amor, esa palabra...<sup>133</sup>" does this not name 'enlightened' Spain?

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<sup>132</sup> Martí, José "Nuestra América." *Ensayos y crónicas*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2004 p. 164

<sup>133</sup> Cortázar, Julio. "Capítulo 93" *Rayuela*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1984

### **3. Colonialism in *Doña Perfecta***

In this chapter, I will shift focus from Rizal's novels and examine Benito Pérez Galdós's *Doña Perfecta*. I will argue that this novel is in a fact a novel about colonialism. This will be seen in obliquely in the content of the novel, however it is in the novel's *form* that this becomes more evident. I will show that the history of Spanish colonialism is imbedded in the novel and seen by looking closely at the narrator's perspective. I will conclude by returning briefly to Rizal and showing how his appropriation of this form ends up transforming it.

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Many critics have noted the apparent connection between Rizal's *Noli* and Benito Pérez Galdós' novel *Doña Perfecta* (1876)<sup>1</sup>. However, hardly anyone has taken the time to critically analyze this apparent connection<sup>2</sup>. In many ways it is a critical dead-end: as Anderson points out, despite the volumes of Rizal's correspondence that has been

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<sup>1</sup> See Benedict Anderson *Under Three Flags*.

<sup>2</sup> A notable exception being Anacleto M. Encarnacion's article "Doña Perfecta and Noli Me Tangere: Coincidence, not influence." *Solidarity* Vol. 5, issue 12, 1970. Pp. 29-35. She claims that Rizal's novel is superior to Galdós because the former's more careful attempt to reflect reality "vibrates more with the fullness of living" (p. 35).

compiled and preserved, as well as the author's meticulous cataloging of his personal library, Rizal makes no mention of Galdós nor of the Spaniard's novels. This omission is made all the more strange given the latter's popularity: can we really believe that Rizal was so out of touch with the contemporary Spanish literature of his day? Anderson offers a hypothesis "Galdós, though a liberal, had nothing to say about Spanish imperialism. Hence, as a Filipino anticolonialist, Rizal, in turn, had nothing to say about Galdós."<sup>3</sup> Others have claimed that Rizal had no need to mention Galdós precisely because he was so popular and thus would not have had to explain a connection that would have been apparent to his interlocutors. Neither explanation seems very satisfactory. While they may possibly be correct, they are in the end speculations that will perhaps forever remain beyond the limits of the known.

Moreover, I will claim that Anderson's theory is in fact false (in a certain way). By looking more closely at the *Doña Perfecta*, I will argue that Galdós actually had

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson *Under Three Flags* p. 49

quite a bit to say about Spanish imperialism<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, Rizal too speaks to Galdós. Perhaps it is an overly clever way of wording it, but it is my conjecture that while Anderson's claim may be true as far as the *content* of the two novels, but is false on the level of *form*. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Rizal's *Fili* spoke directly to the notion of Spanish liberalism and its impotence in the Philippine colonial context. *Doña Perfecta*, on the other hand, while not mentioning colonialism *per se* is deeply implicated in the rhetoric of imperialism, without ever mentioning it by name. We will see, rather, how the logic of imperialism worked on and in the metropolis. The imperial epistemology actually creates the aesthetic formal categories employed by Galdós. Aesthetically speaking,

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps overlooked by Anderson is Galdós's journalistic output. He even wrote admiringly of the filipino Juan Luna's painting *Lepanto* which still hangs in the Spanish senate. Besides being one of Rizal's closest friends as well as the brother of the most important general of the revolution, Luna is considered to be one of the most important figures in Philippine history. The information on Galdós is from Eamonn Rodgers' article "Galdós, Europe and the Regeneration of Spain" (*Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 2005) and Eva María Copeland's article "Empire, Nation, and the *Indiano* in Galdós's *Tormento* and *La loca de la casa* (*Hispanic Review*, 2012). I argue that despite Galdós's apparent sympathies for the colonized he still participates in colonialism's logic.

Galdós' novel is impossible to imagine without imperialism<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, keeping in mind the (anti) colonial struggles depicted in Rizal, we will examine the ways in which these conflicts can also be seen as extensions of clashes that were occurring in Metropolitan Spain. In a sense, this is what Retana and Sarkisyanz mean when they speak of the Philippines and its relation to the "two Spains." We will see, however, that there is really much more to it: the logic of colonization was also being manifested in the Peninsula; Orbajosa, the fictional hometown of the novel's eponymous protagonist, is also a 'colonized' space. While race does not play the same deciding role here as in the colonies, we will see how class and culture replace it and intersect in order to establish the limits of this 'internal colonialism.' The central characters will now be defined by their relationship to modernity and tradition, which in turn serve to obfuscate what is at heart a question of social class.

On first glance, the novels share a striking similarity with regards to the plot. *Doña Perfecta* is the

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<sup>5</sup> This idea is essentially the same one that Edward Said makes in his *Culture and Imperialism*, in particular his reading of Austen's *Mansfield Park*.

story of Pepe Rey, a young cosmopolitan liberal who like Rizal's Ibarra has spent a long time abroad in Germany and England<sup>6</sup>. He arrives in Orbajosa, presented as a provincial backwater, in order to marry Perfecta's daughter Rosario. From the moment of his arrival, the townspeople seem intent on ridding themselves of his presence. The family priest, don Inocencio, seems particularly keen on disrupting the wedding by convincing the others (though they need little encouragement) that Pepe is a heretic who smokes in church and believes in the theories of Darwin. Their open hostility towards him is coupled with his also seemingly uncanny ability to do and say the absolute most inappropriate things at the given time. He unwittingly manages to offend nearly everyone he comes into contact with, including his beloved cousin. However, history is on the side of the young protagonist: just as the situation reaches its zenith, troops sent by the central government enter the town. Pepe's own story then becomes entangled in the story of the town itself. As Perfecta states, "mi sobrino no es mi sobrino: es la nación official."<sup>7</sup> Pepe then becomes the real symbol (even more so than the troops) of

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<sup>6</sup> Galdós. *Doña Perfecta* p. 30

<sup>7</sup> Galdós. *Doña Perfecta* p. 238

the struggle between the central government and the Carlist sympathizing province. Pepe himself embraces this connection by taking advantage of the army's presence in order to steal away Rosario. Nonetheless, he is eventually killed as he tries to sneak into Rosario's room one night. An all out open war eventually starts between the people of Orbajosa and the troops from Madrid; Rosario goes mad and is placed in an asylum, and life in the town is changed forever.

As we have seen, the backdrop of Galdós novel is the notion of the "two Spains" as we saw in the previous chapter. There is Pepe's Spain: cosmopolitan, urban, modern, etc. versus Perfecta's Spain: regional, rural, traditional, etc. This fracture in the national identity is made clear in doña Perfecta's words when she claims that Pepe represents

esa segunda nación, compuesta de los perdidos que gobiernan en Madrid, y que se ha hecho dueña de la fuerza material; de esa nación aparente, porque la real es la que calla, paga y sufre; de esa nación ficticia que firma al pie de los decretos, y pronuncia discursos, y hace una farsa de gobierno, y una farsa de autoridad, y una farsa de todo.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 238

Perfecta inserts this fight into the tradition of Spanish national identity; to take up arms against the troops (and Pepe) "es cuestión de moros y cristianos<sup>9</sup>" the townspeople of Orbajosa of course being the Christians, and the troops being the moors (this brings to mind of course the great irony in the fact that years later Franco relied heavily on Moroccan troops, particularly during the early stages of the Civil War).

If we hearken back to Retana and Sarkisyanz, Pepe's Spain is also Rizal's. But here is where the breakdown begins: Pepe's Spain is also colonial Spain.

Galdós seems to follow the Realist pattern seen in Said's reading of Austen's *Mansfield Park*<sup>10</sup>. There he demonstrates how the plot of Austen's novel relies on colonial wealth, in this case the sugar plantations of Jamaica. This wealth forms the basis for the lifestyle of the characters in the metropole. Thus colonialism itself becomes the suppressed element of the text; although it is barely mentioned in the novel, it is absolutely crucial to it.

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<sup>9</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 239

<sup>10</sup> Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994. See in particular pp. 80-97.

In Galdós's novels the same situation occurs: the colonies seem to lurk in the background of his novels. As with Austen, his mentions of the colonies are brief, and it seems as if their inclusion were merely an afterthought. This is seen as early as 1870 in Galdós's first novel *La fontana de oro*; here Fernando VII himself buys the loyalty of Elías by promising his nephew Lázaro, the novel's protagonist, with a position as "consejero de la Intendencia de Filipinas."<sup>11</sup> Luring political opponents to the colonies with lucrative government positions was an easy way to rid the Peninsula of political 'undesirables.'

In the 1881 novel *La desheredada* the character Joaquín Pez, looks to Cuba to solve his financial ruin,

Sí con un destino en la Aduana, un gran destino. Es el único remedio. Los españoles tenemos esa ventaja sobre los habitantes de otras naciones. ¿Qué país tiene una jauja tal, una isla de Cuba para remediar los desastres de sus hijos?<sup>12</sup>

The colony then is that 'other' space that affords the citizen of the metropole the opportunity to start anew and

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<sup>11</sup> Galdós, Benito Pérez. *La fontana de oro*. Madrid: Alianza, 1999. P. 404. The *Intendencia* was the original customs authority whose duties were collapsed into the *Capitanía General* in 1819. The reference to the *Intendencia de Filipinas* may also allude to Goya's painting *La junta de Filipinas* depicting Fernando VII's presence at the stockholder's meeting of the *Real Compañía de Filipinas*. See Albert Boime's *Art in the Age of Counterrevolution: 1815-1848*. Chicago: U Chicago, 2004. Pp. 100-102.

<sup>12</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós. *La desheredada*. Madrid: Alianza, 2001. P. 304

regain fortune and honor, which we find out is precisely what Joaquín Pez does.

This vague mention of Cuba is typical of the kind of comments on the colonies that one finds not only in Galdós, but in the nineteenth century novel in general (according to Said). The writer (or narrator) does not fill in the description with details because; perhaps it is assumed that the implied reader, contemporary with the author, already understood the details thus rendering it unnecessary for the author to do so. Even if that were the case, it is also apparent that any details describing exactly how one made a fortune in the colonies would probably be too lurid to include. This is what is meant by the colony being the 'suppressed' element of the text. In the case of *La desheredada*, whatever the specifics of Joaquín Pez's fortune may be, one has to come to terms with the absolute economic base of the Cuban colony: sugar, coffee, tobacco, all cultivated by slaves.

In the 1884 novel *Tormento*, one of the important plot elements revolves around a disgraced priest. For him too, the colony exists as a remedy for his dishonor. He wishes

to leave behind civilization for the edenic spaces of the colonies.

Hay tierras hermosas por allá; tierras que son paraísos, donde todo es inocencia de costumbres y verdadera igualdad: tierras sin historia, chica, donde a nadie se le pregunta lo que piensa; campos feraces, donde hay cada cosecha que tiembla el misterio; tierras patriarcales, sociedades que empiezan y que se parecen a las que nos pinta la Biblia.<sup>13</sup>

This vision of paradise is precisely what Rizal speaks to in his novels. The description here is not so much of actual colonial space, but of a preconceived fantasy of colonial space. This is the vision carried by the Spanish colonists, which runs up against the reality which we have seen depicted in Rizal's novels.

To further that point, it is in fact to the Philippines that this disgraced priest will go. His brother later mentions:

allá en tierras de salvajes mi hermano volverá en sí (...) ¿Sabe usted dónde está la isla de Zamboanga? (...) Pues allí, en aquella dichosa Zamboanga, desembarcará mi hermano dentro de dos meses, y allí tendrá ocasión de cristianar herejes y hacer grandes méritos.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Galdós *Tormento* p. 122

<sup>14</sup> Galdós *Tormento* p. 379

Unlike the example from the previous novel, here we are given more details, but these details are also part of the subterfuge. What is left out is more telling: this idea of 'converting heretics' is really a way of covering up the forced evictions of Muslim Filipinos as they were placed in some of the world's first 'concentration camps' and their lands seized by the church and given to Christian migrants from the northern islands. Again, this land was used for the cultivation of sugar, coffee, and tobacco. To this day, Zamboanga is notorious for the extreme violence that occurs there, and perhaps non-coincidentally, its capital, Zamboanga city, is also the place where Spanish creole is the lingua franca.

In his novel *Fortunata y Jacinta*, it is revealed early in the novel that the wealth that makes possible the actions of the protagonist, Juanito Santa Cruz, is based on the family's involvement in colonial trade, in this case "pañolería de la china", which, I believe, we must understand as having passed through the Philippines<sup>15</sup>. The narrator takes his time describing the ironic source of

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<sup>15</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós. *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Mexico: Porrúa, 1975. P. 10. The novel was first published in 1887, coincidentally the same year Rizal's *Noli* was published.

this wealth, the 'mantón de Manila.' We learn too that one of the objects that fascinated Jacinto's mother as a child was a portrait of man named Ayún. The narrator says:

A este ilustre chino deben las españolas el hermosísimo y característico chal que tanto favorece la belleza, el mantón de Manila, al mismo tiempo señoril y popular, pues lo han llevado en sus hombros la gran señora y la gitana<sup>16</sup>.

The narrator attributes the invention of the 'Mantón' to Ayún. Thus it is this misnamed<sup>17</sup> foreign garment that transcends class boundaries and becomes an object of national significance.

The narrator too sees the irony in this foreign procedence:

Pues esta prenda, esta nacional obra de arte, tan nuestra como las panderetas o los toros, no es nuestra en realidad más que por el uso; se la debemos a un artista nacido a la otra parte del mundo, a un tal Ayún, que consagró a nosotros su vida toda y sus talleres. Y tan agradecido era el buen hombre al comercio español, que enviaba a los de acá su retrato y los de sus catorce mujeres<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Galdós *Fortunata* p. 10

<sup>17</sup> Much has been written about the *Mantón*. It originally came from China, yet was referred to as being from 'Manila' as a result of that city's crucial role in facilitating trade between Spain (and for a while, all of Europe) and Asia.

<sup>18</sup> Galdós *Fortunata* p. 11. Thinking of Rizal as a reader of the novel, it would be difficult not to draw the connection between Ayún and 'el chino Quiroga' from the *Fili*. Quiroga, a Chinese merchant in Manila, is aligned with the Spanish against the Filipinos as a result of his economic interests.

Without explicitly mentioning the Philippines, the narrator, perhaps without even knowing it, has shown the absolutely crucial role of the colony in the formation of the Spanish national identity. The colony, like the 'mantón,' "no es nuestra en realidad más que por el uso."<sup>19</sup> It unites the people thus diverting attention away from class and regional (and perhaps even gender) differences towards a national consciousness, the visible (read: aesthetic) signs of national unity.

These are just a few of the mentions of the colonies in the novels of Galdós. There are of course many more, and if one were to extend the same search to other authors, one would find more of the same. This should not really surprise us, for what these mentions of colonial space are actually alluding to are the very modes of production upon

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<sup>19</sup> Galdós *Fortunata* p. 11

which this society is built<sup>20</sup>, which as Pierre Macherey points out, is "what the work *cannot say*<sup>21</sup>."

This silence becomes all the more important in *Doña Perfecta*. Though Galdós does not go on at length about colonialism in the previous examples, they at least rate mention. There is some recognition of the role of colonialism in the economic totality of the nation. In *Doña Perfecta*, however, there are no references whatsoever to the colonies. However, colonialism itself seems to be built into the actual form of the novel.

It is difficult to conceive of the realist novel without colonialism, for it is colonialism itself which furnishes the metropole with the epistemological categories necessary for this particular aesthetic response. To be more specific, Mary Louise Pratt points out the shift that occurred in the mid-eighteenth century marked by

The emergence of natural history as a structure of knowledge, and the momentum toward interior, as opposed maritime, exploration. These developments

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<sup>20</sup> Engels writes in his preface to the 1888 English edition of the *Communist Manifesto*: "In every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the politic and intellectual history of that epoch" (p. 65).

<sup>21</sup> Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. New York: Routledge, 2006. P. 97.

(...) register a shift in what can be called European "planetary consciousness," a shift that coincides with many others including the consolidation of bourgeois forms of subjectivity and power, the inauguration of a new territorial phase of capitalism propelled by searches for raw materials, the attempt to extend coastal trade inland, and national imperatives to seize overseas territory in order to prevent its being seized by rival European powers.<sup>22</sup>

New forms of knowledge (in this case "natural history") were needed in order to be able to account for the new needs of the European imperial metropolises. This notion is further developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in his *World Systems Analysis*. He demonstrates how the creation of the "social sciences" (which follows a tortuous path from the classical faculties of theology, medicine, law, and philosophy) was directly tied to economic expansion in the world at large. In particular, he shows how Anthropology and Orientalism carved out their respective academic niches by taking the non-European world as their object of study.

As we have seen, each shift in these economic relations also begets a shift in every other aspect of life as well. Pratt names one of the genres that comes out of this shift that of the "monarch of all I survey"<sup>23</sup>. By

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<sup>22</sup> Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992. P. 9

<sup>23</sup> Pratt p. 201

writing of their ersatz 'discoveries,' Victorian explorers took possession of the land by aesthetic means. Pratt writes that "the landscape is represented as extremely rich in material and semantic substance<sup>24</sup>," an evaluation that transmits a sense of "mastery" over the space.

This perspective is also shared in *Doña Perfecta*. Pepe Rey seems to fall quite easily into this category. We see him several times early in the novel exhibiting this kind of imperious attitude towards Orbajosa and its environs. He tells tío Licurgo, his guide:

El aspecto de su patria de usted- dijo el caballero, examinando el panorama que delante tenía - no puede ser más desagradable. La histórica ciudad de Orbajosa, cuyo nombre es, sin duda, corrupción de *Urbs augusta*, parece un gran muladar<sup>25</sup>

Here he seems to be parodying the "monarch of all I survey" perspective: his position reflects the "promontory description" mentioned by Pratt<sup>26</sup>, but instead of conveying the awe of the Victorians, he renders the landscape meaningful through its banality. After all, we are not actually in some exotic far off land; on the contrary, we are, as the name of the second chapter indicates, on a

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<sup>24</sup> Pratt p. 204

<sup>25</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 25

<sup>26</sup> Pratt p. 202

"viaje por el corazón de España<sup>27</sup>." Nonetheless, by copying the form of this colonizing gaze, he is emphasizing the 'otherness' of this part of Spain, yet he presumes the right to judge it ("parece un gran muladar") based on some notion of universal knowledge or reason. After all, he, not Licurgo, knows that the name Orbajosa is a corruption of its Latin name ("sin duda")<sup>28</sup>.

But this 'other' Spain, moreover, belongs to him. We learn that his mother was originally from Orbajosa, and he has inherited her land there.

-¡Mis tierras! - exclamó, con júbilo, el caballero, tendiendo la vista por los tristes campos que alumbraban las primeras luces de la mañana -. Es la primera vez que veo el patrimonio que heredé de mi madre. La pobre hacía tales ponderaciones de este país y me contaba tantas maravillas de él, que yo, siendo niño, creía que estar aquí era estar en la gloria. Frutas, flores, caza mayor y menor, montes, lagos, ríos, poéticos arroyos, oteros pastoriles, todo lo había en los *Alamillos de Bustamante*, en esta tierra bendita, la mejor y más hermosa de todas las tierras...¡Qué demonio! La gente de este país vive con la imaginación. Si en mi niñez, y cuando vivía con las

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<sup>27</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 11

<sup>28</sup> Regarding Pepe's familiarity with classical language and knowledge, he (strangely) mistakes Licurgo's name for *Solón*, "un sabio legislador de la antigüedad" (11). A few pages later during a different conversation, the narrator tells us: "el sabio legislador espartano se rascó la oreja" (14). However, *Solón* was from Athens, not Sparta. It is unknown whether or not the mistake is the narrator's alone, Pepe's, or Galdós's. Either way, it informs the reader's attitude toward this 'superior' (read 'colonizing') knowledge. Moreover, during a conversation with the *canónigo* don Inocencio Pepe admits "entiendo muy poco el latín" (77).

ideas y con el entusiasmo de mi buena madre, me hubieran traído aquí, también me habrían parecido encantadores estos desnudos cerros, estos llanos polvorientos o encharcados, estas vetustas casas de labor, estas norias devencijadas, cuyos cangilones lagrimean lo bastante para regar media docena de coles; esta desolación miserable y perezosa que estoy mirando.

-Es la mejor tierra del país- dijo el señor Licurgo.<sup>29</sup>

Again from his promontory, he laments the fact that this land, indeed *his* land, is not that exotic and utopic space imagined in his childhood. Yet despite Pepe's disappointment, Licurgo, who here functions as our 'native informant,' assures him (and the reader) that his land is the best: "y para el garbanzo es de lo que no hay<sup>30</sup>." There opens up an unbridgeable distance between Pepe's expectations and the reality with which he is presented. On an allegorical level, this distancing shows the difference in the values between Pepe and the people of Orbajosa, which is nominally the source of tension in the novel (though we shall see later that this is in fact not the case).

Pepe names this contradiction 'irony':

-¿*El Cerillo de los Lirios*?- dijo el caballero, saliendo de su meditación-. ¡Cómo abundan los nombres poéticos en estos sitios tan feos! Desde que viajo por

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<sup>29</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 14

<sup>30</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 14

estas tierras me sorprende la horrible ironía de los nombres. Tal sitio que se distingue por su yermo aspecto y la desolada tristeza del negro paisaje se llama *Valleameno*. Tal villorio de adobes que miserablemente se extiende sobre un llano árido y que de diversos modos pregona su pobreza, tiene la insolencia de nombrarse *Villarica*; y hay un barranco pedregoso y polvoriento, donde ni los cardos encuentran jugo, y que, sin embargo, se llama *Valdeflores*. ¿Eso que tenemos delante es el *Cerrillo de los Lirios*? Pero ¿dónde están esos lirios, hombre de Dios? Yo no veo más que piedras y hierbas descoloridas. Llamen a eso el *Cerillo de la Desolación*, y hablarán a derechas. Exceptuando *Villahorrenda*, que parece ha recibido al mismo tiempo el nombre y la hechura, todo aquí es ironía. Palabras hermosas, realidad prosaica y miserable. Los ciegos serían felices en este país, que para la lengua es paraíso y para los ojos infierno. El señor Licurgo, o no entendió las palabras del caballero Rey, o no hizo caso de ellas.<sup>31</sup>

Almost like don Quixote in reverse, Pepe's gaze is constantly undoing the apparent fantasy that defines this space. Licurgo ignores the supposedly 'obvious' irony of the place names, thus the irony loses its function. Pre-dating Saussure's *Linguistics* by nearly a quarter century, Pepe discourse on the "horrible irony of names" identifies that distance between the word and its referent: he is critiquing what he perceives to be a failure of language to match the reality it describes. But the true irony is that between the text and the reader: unlike Licurgo, we do

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<sup>31</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 13

understand this irony, and as a result the reader's relationship to Pepe, although at times troubled, is nonetheless solidified through the novel's discursive practice.

Thus far we have seen how Pepe can be seen through Pratt's theoretical lens. Although it has never been characterized as such, I believe it is not too much of a stretch to conceive of *Doña Perfecta* as the kind of 'travel literature' of which Pratt speaks, the major difference of course being the destination<sup>32</sup>. Here, the ethnographic eye has been turned on the metropole itself. Though to put it that way does not quite describe what is really occurring: instead, what is really at stake is identifying and describing the internal 'other.' This begs the question of causation: was colonialism an extension of a metropolitan logic that was already in place, or did the metropole learn

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<sup>32</sup> I would note too that an argument could be made for Pepe as an *Indiano*. Although this term referred exclusively to the Europeans who made their fortune in the colonies and then returned to the metropole, Pepe follows much the same trajectory (though without leaving Spain). See Eva María Copeland's article "Empire, Nation, and the *Indiano* in Galdós's *Tormento* and *La loca de la casa*." Here she argues that 'indiano' "is intertwined with anxieties about empire and national identity in late nineteenth-century texts" (224). I agree wholeheartedly but would also add that since Pepe follows the same 'indiano' logic, then there too exists the possibility of an 'internal colonialism.' I would also include Rizal's *Ibarra* as an 'indiano' of sorts (though in reverse). It would seem that this logic extended past the colonial binaries that she identifies in her article.

a new logic through colonialism that could then thus be applied to its internal 'other?'

Either way, it cannot be denied that what occurs in Orbajosa is indeed nothing short of colonialism. In one telling exchange after the arrival of the troops, Jacinto (don Inocencio's nephew) naively claims that "Las autoridades del país (...) funcionan aún perfectamente<sup>33</sup>." Like Rizal's ambiguous 'patria,' Jacinto's 'patria' is not Spain but his native region. However, nothing could be further from the truth, the local government at every level has been taken apart: the mayor, the provincial governor, and even the judges have been replaced. Most interesting, however, is the rumor that a "corregidor" will be coming. In *Doña Perfecta* it is an anachronism: the 'corregidor,' a representative of royal power, was a position abolished in 1833. However, its historical development is extremely interesting: the 'corregidor' appeared anywhere where royal authority needed to be established. To read the history of the corregidor is to read the history of Castilian dominance in Spain: the corregidor appears whenever a region falls under Castilian authority (eventually reaching

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<sup>33</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 193

Aragón as well, despite being an historically different entity). This also extended to the colonies; the word 'corregidor' is probably most familiar for its association with the Philippine island of the same name, a fortified island in Manila bay that was the last holdout against the Japanese advance in World War Two, named, obviously, for the Spanish corregidor in the Philippines. We see then that what we are seeing in Orbajosa is an extension of a particular kind of dominance of which Spanish colonialism abroad is an extension. The narrator does not seem to condemn these actions: instead, the reader has become so disgusted with the townspeople that we instead believe that they are getting what they deserve. However, what is really going on is that the supposedly liberal authorities have turned into their opposite: they will suspend their own beliefs in order to bring the province under control.

However, we are still at the level of content. Thus it could be argued that Galdós himself is making a critical use of this connection: He is creating a situation where the reader is forced to identify with Pepe yet makes that identification uneasy. We are then to be critical of Pepe's imperious attitude.

There is, nonetheless, a kind of suppressed formal connection to this genre. Although it may or may not have been Galdós' intent to critique this particular facet of Pepe's identity, that critique would seem to undermine itself. Although Pepe is the 'monarch of all he surveys' so too is the narrator. At times the reader is unsure if the 'imperial gaze' is Pepe's or the narrator's. What this means then is that if part of the novel's intent is for us to take a critical view of this gaze, it is made more difficult by the fact that the gaze itself is built into the text.

After Pepe sees his properties for the first time, the narrator intervenes in order to move the action.

Tomaron de nuevo el camino real. Ya la luz del día, entrando en alegre irrupción por todas las ventanas y claraboyas del hispano horizonte, inundó de esplendorosa claridad los campos. El inmenso cielo sin nubes parecía agrandarse más y alejarse de la tierra para verla y en su contemplación recrearse desde más alto. La desolada tierra sin árboles, pajiza a trechos, a trechos de color gredoso, dividida toda en triángulos y cuadriláteros amarillos o negruzcos, pardos o ligeramente verdegueados, semejaban en cierto modo a la capa del harapiiento que se pone al sol. Sobre aquella capa miserable, el cristianismo y el islamismo habían trabado épicas batallas. Gloriosos campos, sí; pero los combates de antaño les habían dejado horribles.

-Me parece que hoy picará el sol, señor Licurgo-  
dijo el caballero.<sup>34</sup>

This is one of the moments where it is unclear whether the narrator speaks for himself or if he is describing Pepe's thoughts. If it is Pepe's, it is an interesting bit of almost 'proto' stream of consciousness, giving us his varied thoughts in quick succession. On one hand, the description of the sections of barren land as 'triangular' and 'cuadrilateral' seems to fit Pepe, given that he is an engineer. Moreover, the entire passage begins with a description of the sunrise, which connects with Pepe's banal observation (which in keeping with character is actually a forecast) of the days weather.

But that same link may only imply a connection between the narrator's observation of the sunrise and Pepe's. Pepe's mundane and haughty observation of the weather does not really match the almost poetic description of the sunrise and the landscape, nor the grandiose historical observation of the 'epic battles' fought there by Muslims and Christians. If it is the narrator's own voice, he shares at least some of Pepe's disdain for the barrenness

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<sup>34</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 16

of the land. Like the reader, he too is incapable of seeing what the people of Orbajosa see. Pepe, the narrator, and the reader all expect to see trees, but instead we are greeted by this seemingly barren soil. But, as don Inocencio later points out "no todas las tierras sirven para todos los árboles<sup>35</sup>." The 'tree in inadequate soil' allegory is commonplace in Realism<sup>36</sup>, but it also has a literal meaning here: 'we' are disappointed by the lack of trees and presume decay and infertility. However, Licurgo and the others see a fertile paradise that is beyond 'our' ability to grasp. The narrator and Pepe collude in order to make sure that the reader is firmly on their side.

This is evident too in how the 'epic battles' of the *reconquista* are almost intentionally misrecognized as the cause of this apparent desolation. This voice chooses to believe that a battle several centuries earlier has scorched the earth and prevented the land from ever returning to its prior fecundity. What that voice misses is the fact that the battle itself was fought *for something*. Muslims and Christians valued something there, even if we

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<sup>35</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 76

<sup>36</sup> Of the top of my head I can think of the expression being used in Clarín's *La regenta* as well as Rizal's *Noli* to name just two examples.

think about it on strictly an ideological level (i.e. religious difference, etc.). In other words, the voice precludes the possibility of an alternative value system that would thus render the land meaningful. It therefore participates in the logic of the 'civilizing' mission of imperialism.

Despite the occasional ambiguity between the narrator's and Pepe's perspectives, there are instances where it is clearly the narrator's voice. As Licurgo and Pepe arrive in Orbajosa, the narrator intervenes. It is worth quoting in its entirety.

Apareció a los ojos de entrambos apiñado y viejo caserío asentado en una loma, y del cual se destacaban algunas negras torres y la ruinosa fábrica de un despedazado castillo en lo más alto. Un amasijo de paredes deformes, de casuchas de tierra, pardas y polvorosas como el suelo que formaba la base, con algunos fragmentos de almenadas murallas, a cuyo amparo mil chozas humildes alzaban sus miserables frontispicios de adobes, semejantes a caras anémicas y hambrientas que pedían una limosna al pasajero. Pobrísimo río ceñía, como un cinturón de hojalata, el pueblo, refrescando al pasar algunas huertas, única frondosidad que alegraba la vista. Entraba y salía la gente en caballerías o a pie, y el movimiento humano, aunque pequeño, daba cierta apariencia vital a aquella gran morada, cuyo aspecto arquitectónico era más bien de ruina y muerte que de progreso y vida. Los innumerables y repugnantes mendigos que se arrastraban a un lado y otro del camino, pidiendo el óbolo del pasajero, ofrecían lastimoso espectáculo. No podían verse existencias que mejor encajaran en las grietas

de aquel sepulcro, donde una ciudad estaba no sólo enterrada, sino también podrida. Cuando nuestros viajeros se acercaban, algunas campanas, tocando desacordemente, indicaban con su expresivo son que aquella momia tenía todavía un alma.

Llamábase Orbajosa, ciudad que no en Geografía caldea o copta, sino la de España, figura con 7.324 habitantes, Ayuntamiento, sede episcopal, Juzgado, Seminario, Depósito de caballos sementales, Instituto de segunda enseñanza y otras prerrogativas oficiales<sup>37</sup>

The narrator distances himself here from both Pepe and Licurgo to establish the autonomy of his own voice.

However, the narrator, like Pepe is the 'master of all he surveys:' his description of Orbajosa is from the same promontory position that Pratt describes, though unlike Pepe this panorama is from an even higher up position, an omniscient 'god's eye' perspective. Through his descriptions we now see clearly that his autonomous voice is very much like Pepe's: its functions are based on the same set of assumptions. The influence of Mesonero Romanos and *Costumbrismo* on Galdós is well known, but we have certainly gone beyond this: the novel of 'costumbres' was really 'sociological' (which Wallerstein defines as studying internal 'otherness'). The people of Orbajosa are treated as 'anthropological' subjects (i.e. 'irredeemably primitive').

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<sup>37</sup> Galdós pp. 23-24

The narrator assures us that the city he is describing is not in the orient. No, Orbajosa, is in España. He is playing with the reader's expectations: we already know where Orbajosa is, but the way this description is arranged is meant to defy (or confirm) our imagination. Pepe and Licurgo's arrival is portrayed like explorers in the desert. To speak precisely, the narrator's reference to 'Chaldean' or 'Coptic' geography (Syrian or Egyptian, respectively) is meant as a kind of hyperbole: to emphasize the 'otherness' of the city, he compares it to these extreme examples.

However, at the same time, the reference to Chaldeans and the Copts is also telling because the terms specifically refer to Christian groups<sup>38</sup> living in the Middle East. Orbajosa being compared to a Chaldean or Coptic city then seems to imply that it is 'other,' but not so radically as if it were really a Muslim city. Still, the hyperbole only functions because of that notion of the mythic 'Orient.' It is yet another piece of textual

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<sup>38</sup> More than just generically Christian, the Chaldean and Coptic Churches are in full communion with Rome though they do not use the Latin rite. Very interestingly, the only country in the West that has a native non-Latin rite tradition is Spain, where the Mozarabic rite is still used in a few churches (especially in the cathedral of Toledo) on special occasions.

evidence showing how Orientalism crept into the novel form. Orbajosa is a city of the Orient; very tellingly, Galdós does not place the city in Spain's colonies. Instead he employs the oriental motif, a French transplant. The Spanish colonies still remain repressed in the text, and his reference to the Orient is in some sense a way to 'other' the city without having to address the colonial question.

Like Pepe and his presumption of expertise over local knowledge, the narrator can tell us the precise number of inhabitants (7.324) of Orbajosa; it is unlikely, if not impossible, for the locals to be able to rattle off the same number. But for the narrator, Orbajosa itself is a known quantity; besides the exact population he can also list the city's contents: a city hall, a bishopric, a court, a seminary, etc. Yet these are all trappings of 'civilization,' what he calls "prerrogativas oficiales." For all the narrator's expertise, he is incapable of actually 'seeing' the place on its own terms; in the end he can only 'recognize' that with which he is already familiar, in this case the expression of the power of the state. It is vaguely reminiscent of Columbus's references

to the "mezquitas" of the New World. He lacked the vocabulary to describe what was really before him, so he was forced to rely on this imperfect analogy. Yet, through force, this analogy becomes the truth (think of the word 'Indians').

This misrecognition is central to the novel itself. The two sentence last chapter neatly concludes the story: "Esto se acabó. Es cuanto por ahora podemos decir de las personas que parecen buenas y no lo son."<sup>39</sup> This line seems to refer to doña Perfecta herself, an indictment of her hypocrisy and really an indictment of the cruelty exhibited by the people of Orbajosa, which has resulted in Pepe's death. Anthony Zahareas writes:

The terse finale is a guide to what really happened in the novel, as if, perhaps, readers have not really gotten the point of the chain of events. Its impetus comes from the author's nagging concern that, as with all histories, an important, verifiable event may be misunderstood in the midst of sweeping verdicts and confusing interpretations.<sup>40</sup>

While I believe he is correct in identifying the problem as, in his words, "the well-known commonplace of

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<sup>39</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 300

<sup>40</sup> Anthony N. Zahareas. "Doña Perfecta and Galdós's Aesthetic Solutions of Historical Problems." *Anales Galdosianos*. Vol. 36, Jan. 2001. Pp. 319-330. Citation p. 319

'appearance v. reality'<sup>41</sup>" I think he too readily concedes truth to this narrative voice. Zahareas's article is concerned with the implicit cover-up of Pepe's murder by the people of Orbajosa and how the narrator deals with it. However, we must note that this finale also threatens to undo itself: although it may be Galdós's intent to (rightly) show the hypocrisy of Orbajosa, it is also demonstrates the impossibility of telling such a truth. The end attempts, as Zahareas says, to be a "guide to what really happened," but it can also be applied to the narrator himself. His omniscient voice presumes to be impartial; he is a neutral "historian," in Zahareas's assessment. But, as we have seen time and time again, this fails to account for those ideological presuppositions that underpin his perspective. Thus the narrator himself gets caught up in this game of appearances without even realizing it.

Later on in the novel, the narrator makes some very telling remarks to begin chapter 26. He says:

Nada más entretenido que buscar el origen de los sucesos interesantes que nos asombran o perturburan, ni nada más grato que encontrarlo. Cuando vemos

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<sup>41</sup> Zahareas p. 323

arrebatadas pasiones en lucha encubierta o manifiesta, y llevados del natural impulso inductivo que acompaña siempre a la observación humana, logramos descubrir la oculta fuente de donde aquel revuelto río ha traído sus aguas, sentimos un gozo muy parecido al de los geógrafos y buscadores de tierras.<sup>42</sup>

The narrator's task is to uncover what has been hidden in the story. It is a critical method, in a sense, but its end, according to the narrator, is 'entertainment.' The end result of this 'natural impulse' to inquire into the nature of things is our pleasure, a pleasure compared to that of the 'geographers' and explorers. The imperial gaze is no longer merely alluded to; it is in fact made explicit.

Brian Dendle mentions somewhat in passing that the readers of 1876 would have been able to identify both Pepe's and the narrator's connection to the explorers of Africa<sup>43</sup>. The point I have been trying to make is that this is not merely a rhetorical device; the narrator is not employing it ironically in order to achieve some effect. To be sure, he certainly does, but we really should understand it as the substratum of truth in the novel. Or, put

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<sup>42</sup> Galdós *Doña Perfecta* p. 245

<sup>43</sup> Dendle, Brian J. "Orbajosa Revisited, or, the Complexities of Interpretation." *Anales Galdosianos*. Vol. 28-29. Jan. 1992 pp. 51-67. P. 56

differently, it reveals the epistemological foundation upon which truth can be revealed.

As will see, the narrator also distances himself from Pepe. Although he is the protagonist of the story, there is very much an element of the 'anti-hero' as well. We may agree with Pepe's politics and be sympathetic towards his progressive and 'modern' leanings, but his flaws are quickly established in the novel. Unlike the generally politic and deferential Ibarra, Pepe manages to offend nearly everyone in Orbajosa (the only exception I can think of is aloof don Cayetano). As we saw in the passages cited above, Pepe speaks disparagingly of the land to Licurgo, who (as of yet) has not really done anything to offend Pepe other than simply be from this area. Even when consciously trying to be inoffensive, he imprudently allows himself almost without fail to be drawn out by the others (typically don Inocencio) and ends up offending even more people in a kind of crescendo. Dendle cites María Pilar Aparici Llanas's conclusion that Galdós (or perhaps the narrator) is only ironic towards Pepe as a 'person' while still agreeing with the ideological principles of Pepe as a

liberal cosmopolitan<sup>44</sup>. In that sense, the narrator's ambiguity can be read allegorically as a warning not against the actual beliefs Pepe held, but of the way in which they are presented to the 'other.' This, I imagine, is true, but again it does not problematize the presuppositions in these beliefs. If it is the case, Galdós seems to be arguing against a kind of 'colonization:' although ideologically sound, Pepe and the machinations of the 'nación oficial' are incorrect only on the level of technique. We distance ourselves even more from Pepe as he colludes with the troops in order to more firmly oppress the townsfolk and ransom Rosario. Yet, what goes unquestioned is how these events are based on the logic expressed by the narrator. Pepe, the troops, the Guardia Civil: all these things are made possible by this colonial gaze, and although the narrator may distance himself from their actions, he never disavows his own prejudice. Whatever the ambiguities of his position that several critics have pointed out, here he is very clear. Galdós too participates in the web of appearances by misrecognizing colonial logic.

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<sup>44</sup> Dendle p. 56

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Six years prior to the publication of *Doña Perfecta*, Galdós published his manifesto "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporanea española." He writes:

La clase media, la olvidada de nuestros novelistas es el gran modelo, la fuente inagotable, la base del orden social: ella asume por su iniciativa e inteligencia la soberanía de las naciones, y en ella está el hombre del XIX con sus virtudes y sus vicios, su noble e insaciable aspiración, su afán de reformas, su actividad pasmosa. La novela moderna de costumbres ha de ser la expresión de cuanto bueno y malo existe en el fondo de esa clase, de la incesante agitación que la elabora (...) La grande aspiración del arte literario en nuestro tiempo es dar forma a todo esto<sup>45</sup>.

It is not necessary to collapse the narrator's voice with that of Galdós to see how *Doña Perfecta* is this very attempt at giving form to this bourgeois ideology, which is also apparently Pepe's. It seems then that the narrator's perspective is not ironic or critical; instead, it is part and parcel of the novel's enterprise.

Moreover, in Galdós's attempt to make the middle class the foundation of the novel, something interesting happens. Up until now I have been arguing of the colonial presence in the form of the novel, but Galdós claims that the

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<sup>45</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós. "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporanea española". *Ensayos de crítica literaria*. Barcelona: Península, 1990. P. 112

perspective of the middle class is that implied 'third' term around which the novel revolves. Can they be the same thing? This too is of course no surprise: as the law of transitivity tells us, if  $a=b$  and  $b=c$  then  $a=c$ . The colonial project and social class relations are tied up in the same logical structures<sup>46</sup>. Colonial logic is the logic of capital.

Moreover, the conflict between Pepe and the townspeople of Orbajosa is defined by a difference of cultures (religion, customs, manners of speech, etc.) but in reality this misses a greater point. We find out that don Inocencio has actively opposed Pepe (even turning doña Perfecta against her nephew) as a result of the machinations of his niece, María Remedios who in turn has sought to unite Rosario with her son Jacinto in order to climb the social ladder of Orbajosa, where doña Perfecta reigns. Moreover, it is doña Perfecta herself that insists on the cultural difference between Pepe and Orbajosa. Yet, as we know (and this has been rarely mentioned by critics) she is not actually from Orbajosa. In fact, she is only there because of her late husband's financial ruin; she has

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<sup>46</sup> Marx makes a similar point in *Capital* vol. 1 chapter 32.

been supported subsequently by Pepe's father. She still claims to have good relations with her friends in Madrid (even using one of those connections to have Pepe fired from his job). By insisting on the cultural differences, she is misdirecting the people of Orbajosa in order to preserve her own status in the town. In other words, doña Perfecta, as a member (supposedly) of the 'colonized' is using the fight against Pepe and the central authority in order to in fact maintain colonial order. The real difference between doña Perfecta and Pepe is that she is able to understand and manipulate the motivations of the townspeople. In reality she too is a 'colonizer.' In the last chapter of *Capital*, Marx praises Wakefield for having revealed "not something new about the colonies, but, in the colonies, the truth about capitalist relations in the mother country."<sup>47</sup> Just as Rizal's Philippines is the site of ideological struggle between the 'two Spains,' Orbajosa is the battlefield between competing ideas that are really native to Madrid and not the provinces. As both doña Perfecta and Pepe are supported financially by the legal profession (Pepe through his own work, Perfecta through her

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<sup>47</sup> Karl Marx. *Capital*. Vol I. New York: Penguin, 1990. P. 932.

brother's support) it is not actually a class difference *per se*. Madrid (like capitalism itself) rewards the industrious and punishes the frivolous. Pepe comes to Orbajosa by choice while Perfecta came in failure. Their struggle is, in the end, the outward manifestation of this positive or negative relationship to the centers of economic and political power.

## **Conclusion: Rizal as Reader of Galdós**

Rizal must have understood this. As I pointed out in the last chapter, Rizal's relationship to the 'two Spains' was strained at best. His education and experience abroad obligated him to embrace the modernity of Northern Europe while 'backward' Spain was his cultural home. Of course, this was mediated by the fact of his Philippine birth, a colonial identity and perspective that allowed him to see past the supposedly emancipatory rhetoric contained within these discourses and perceive the dark core therein. This is the contradiction at the heart of Rizal's work. Perhaps more importantly than simply identifying what was already commonplace and banal by his time, his true and somewhat unacknowledged importance was to identify the contradictions of progress. That the reactionary friars were a menace, everyone knew. It is a motif that extends far beyond the Philippines and into European literature both before and after his time. This cliché is partly demonstrated by their caricature in his novels: Rizal treats them as being almost cartoonishly evil ('flat' characters). But the liberals are a different story. They are depicted with a subtle irony that seems to show an

admiration for their beliefs yet also reveals their oppressive role in the colonial project. This is precisely what Galdós misses: the liberal project can be just as oppressive depending on the space in which it is deployed. He has misrecognized the problem as one of method as opposed to actual belief. Thus he can get away with seeming to condemn at least a *kind* of colonialism, yet still participate in its structures.

The question then is whether or not Rizal himself is guilty of the very same. After all, he too is writing a nineteenth-century realist novel. If we look carefully something very interesting occurs: he in fact does appropriate colonial discourse, only to transform it into its opposite. Take for example the beginning of chapter 20 of the *Noli*, "La junta en el tribunal:"

Era una sala de doca á quince metros de larga por ocho á diez de ancha. Sus muros, blanqueados de cal, estaban cubiertos de dibujos al carbon, más ó menos feos más ó menos indecentes, con inscripciones que completaban su sentido. En un rincón y adosados ordenadamente al muro, se veían unos diez viejos fusiles de chispa entre sables roñosos, espadines y talibones: aquello era el armamento de los cuadrilleros.

En un estremo de la sala, que adorman sucias cortinas rojas, se escondía colgado de la pared el retrato de S. M.; debajo del retrato, sobre una tarima de madera, un viejo sillon abría sus destrozados

brazos; delante, una grande mesa de madera, manchada de tinta, picada y tallada de inscripciones y monogramas, como muchas mesas de las tabernas alemanas que frecuentan los estudiantes. Bancos y sillas desvencijadas completaban el mueblaje.

Esta es la sala de las sesiones, del tribunal, de la tortura etc. Aquí conversan ahora las autoridades del pueblo y de los barrios: el partido de los ancianos no se mezcla con el de los jóvenes, y unos y otros no se pueden sufrir: representan el partido conservador y el liberal, sólo que sus luchas adquieren en los pueblos un caracter estremado.<sup>1</sup>

The narrator here shares with the narrator of *Doña Perfecta* a sense of mastery over the viewed object: he knows the precise dimensions of this space just as the Orbajosa's population is converted into raw statistics in Galdós's novel. Moreover the description of the room shares many of the same characteristics of Orbajosa: it is a space of decay and violence. The narrator is also passing judgment on the objects he sees, and his language seems to have no pretense to neutrality; the drawings are 'ugly' and 'indecent,' and the graffiti-covered table resembles those found in German pubs.

Then he reveals the paradox: we are in fact in a place of imperial power. It is the place of law, which in turn is the place of torture, 'etc.': this 'etc.' being

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<sup>1</sup> Rizal *Noli* p. 95

particularly telling. The fact that the court is also the torture chamber (quite literally, as we shall see later when someone is actually tortured to death there) is presented as a banality; torture is just one of the various functions of the place. The rule of law is also, quite simply, the rule of violence.

What we are seeing is a critical re-appropriation of the form used by Galdós. Rizal takes and uses the imperial gaze to look back at its source. Despite Rizal's later protestation to the contrary<sup>2</sup>, his novel is formally subversive for it is his very technique which implies the a colonial subject's mastery over the very symbols of empire: on one hand the seat of legal authority, on the other the novel form itself.

Compare this with a footnote in Pedro Paterno's novel *Nínay* which preceded the *Noli* by two years. He writes the following:

No se refiere á la época en que gobernaba estas islas el general D. Fernando Primo de Rivera, marqués de Estella, en que el archipiélago filipino gozó de verdadera paz. El bizarro general, despreciando calumnias y alarmas con que suelen ser amedrentados los gobernadores, inspiró en los indios confianza y

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<sup>2</sup> See H. De la Costa's translation of Retana in *The Trial of Rizal*. Manila: Ateneo, 1961. It is discussed elsewhere in the dissertation.

tranquilidad, haciendo con esto prosperar el comercio y la industria, principal riqueza del país, de un modo inusitado<sup>3</sup>.

Paterno's supposed technical inferiority to Rizal as a writer aside, it is apparent that his use of narrative does not transform its European roots in the same way. When Paterno recognizes the possible threat that he poses, he pulls back; his apology we see here. Subsequently, Paterno's novel has been nearly forgotten.

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In his essay "Modernism and Imperialism" Fredric Jameson states the following:

Colonialism means that a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere; beyond the metropolis, outside of daily life and existential experience of the home country, in colonies over the water whose own life experiences and life world - very different from that of the imperial power - remain unknown and unimaginable for the subjects of the imperial power, whatever social class they may belong to.<sup>4</sup>

However, the Spanish colonial experience seems somewhat exceptional. If I have successfully argued for *Doña Perfecta* as a colonial novel, then it would seem that colonialism (or the logic thereof) was in fact part of the

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<sup>3</sup> Pedro Paterno. *Ninay*. Madrid: Fortunet, 1885. P. 212.

<sup>4</sup> Fredric Jameson. "Modernism and Imperialism." *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota, 1990. Pp. 50-51

everyday life of Spaniards, depending of course on where they were in the Peninsula. Nonetheless, I also do not want to equate the experience of a Catalanian or a Basque to that of a Filipino or Cuban. Their respective relationships to Madrid were obviously quite different, based on a myriad of factors (race not least of them). Still, the nearly identical *résumés* of the Philippine Governor Generals is highly suggestive: they were all veterans of the Carlist Wars (which is the setting of *Doña Perfecta*), Catalonia, Cuba, and then the Philippines.

As I claimed in a previous chapter, Rizal's *El filibusterismo* is really a novel about Spain. Here, we have seen that *Doña Perfecta* is a novel about the colonies. The fact that Rizal and Galdós were both considered to be the writers of a national *zeitgeist* is also quite telling. It seems then that we should reconfigure our understanding of what that 'nationalism' was and how it was written. As I hope I have shown, how can we really understand a novel like *Doña Perfecta* without also understanding the context of colonial logic? As Rizal himself said in his famous speech honoring Juan Luna and Félix Resurrección Hidalgo:

The boundaries of Spain are neither the Atlantic nor the Cantabrian nor the Mediterranean - It would be ignominious for the water to place a dam to her grandeur, to her idea - Spain is there, there where her beneficent influence is felt, and though her flag might disappear, there would remain her memory, eternal, imperishable. What does a piece of red and yellow cloth matter, what do rifles and cannon matter, there where a feeling of love, of tenderness, does not sprout, there where no fusion of ideas, unity of principles, harmony of opinion exist?<sup>5</sup>

As Jameson points out, the experience of colonialism by European powers after the 1885 Berlin conference changed the economic structure of these countries, as the 'nation' no longer contained its own totality. Spain's experience is the reverse, Spain only knew totality beyond its borders, and the loss of the colonies marked its entrance into that same modern period. Rizal is then, in a sense, giving us a theoretical tool to understand the Spanish novel: although the Spanish flag has disappeared from those lands, the memory of Spain is still there, a piece of the lost national consciousness and identity waiting to be recovered. The missing pieces of the Spanish novel are there, and its completeness can now only be accessed through those diverse spaces. Rizal's novels offer us a first step in that direction.

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<sup>5</sup> José Rizal. *Political and Historical Writings*. Manila: NHI, 2007. Pp. 20-21

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## **Biography**

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