

***JOSE RIZAL : RE-DISCOVERING THE
REVOLUTIONARY FILIPINO HERO IN THE AGE OF
TERRORISM***

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*Yo la tengo, y yo espero que ha de brillar un dia
en que venza la Idea a la fuerza brutal,
que despues de la lucha y la lenta agonía,
otra vzx mas sonora, mas feliz que la mi
sabra cantar entonces el cantico triunfal.*

*[I have the hope that the day will dawn/when the Idea will conquer brutal force;
that after the struggle and the lingering travail,/another voice, more sonorous,
happier than mine shall know then how to sing the triumphant hymn.]*

-- Jose Rizal, "Mi Retiro" (22 October 1895)

On June 19, 2011, we are celebrating 150 years of Rizal's achievement and its enduring significance in this new millennium. It seems fortuitous that Rizal's date of birth would fall just six days after the celebration of Philippine Independence Day - the proclamation of independence from Spanish rule by General Emilio Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite, in 1898. In 1962 then President Diosdado Macapagal decreed the change of date from July 4 to June 12 to reaffirm the primacy of the Filipinos' right to national self-determination. After more than three generations, we are a people still in quest of the right, instruments, and opportunity to determine ourselves as an autonomous, sovereign and singular nation-state.

Either ironical or prescient, Aguinaldo's proclamation (read in the context of US Special Forces engaged today in fighting Filipino socialists and other progressive elements) contains the kernel of the contradictions that have plagued the ruling elite's claim to political legitimacy: he invoked the mythical benevolence of the occupying power. Aguinaldo unwittingly mortgaged his leadership to the "protection of the Mighty and Humane North American Nation." Mighty, yes, but "humane"? The U.S. genocide of 1.4 million Filipinos is, despite incontrovertible

evidence, still disputed by apologists of “Manifest Destiny.” But there is no doubt that Aguinaldo’s gratitude to the Americans who brought him back from exile after the Pact of Biak-na-Bato spelled the doom of the *ilustrado* oligarchy which, despite the demagogic ruses of Marcos and his successors, has proved utterly bankrupt in its incorrigible corruption, electoral cynicism, and para-military gangster violence. Obedient to US dictates, the current regime appears to follow its predecessors along the path of neocolonial decadence and barbarism, further opening the country’s dwindling resources to predatory transnational corporations and their mercenaries. And so, *sotto voce*: “Long live Filipino Independence Day!”

The 150th anniversary of Rizal’s birth affords us the occasion to reassess his work, particularly in the context of ongoing fierce class war between the exploited, impoverished majority and the few privileged landlords, bureaucrats and business moguls patronized by global capital. This is taking place at a time when the Philippines is being re-colonized by the United States, the world’s moribund hegemon, under the cover of the global war on terrorism, also labeled Islamic “extremism.” The Abu Sayyaf and the New People’s Army serve as pretexts for perennial US military intervention. Would Rizal want the country partitioned by greedy corporate speculators and their agents in the ongoing genocidal war against peoples of color?

Numerous biographies celebrate Rizal as “the first Filipino” (Guerrero) “the pride of the Malay Race” (Palma), even the antithetical American-made hero (Constantino)—the canonical icon of the patriot-liberator (Bonoan 1996) worshipped every June and December. Unless we want to be pharisaical acolytes and hagiographers, we need to renew our commitment to Rizal’s ideas, not his image. The commentaries in my previous book *Rizal In Our Time* (1977), as well as my reflections on Rizal’s travels in the US (included in *Balikbayang Sinta: An E. San Juan Reader* (2008), seek to provoke a re-thinking of what it means to be a Filipino particularly at a time when the country is undergoing dire, almost perpetual crisis. My essays use Rizal as a catalyzing point of departure, especially in the light of its citizens becoming an embattled diaspora—more than ten million overseas Filipinos (migrants, expatriates) labor as exploited domestics and contract workers scattered around the planet, while their homeland’s natural endowments, cultures and traditions are wasted by foreign profiteers supported by comprador parasites who claim to be the elected stewards of the land. While visiting Cuba in the 1980s, I found millions of Cubans spellbound by Rizal’s two novels—read in the original Spanish by

more people in Cuba than in the Philippines, or elsewhere. While Rizal did not reach Cuba as a volunteer doctor in 1896, his novels arrived there a hundred years after, thanks to Fidel Castro's and Che Guevara's anti-imperialist revolution (Martinez Ramirez 1961). Rizal as an exile within his own country and as a scholar/traveler in the US and Europe may provide lessons for us in our postmodern but neocolonial deracination. It may yield clues and signposts useful for re-discovering our rich historical tradition of resistance against colonial domination, and our untapped resources for renewing the revolutionary legacy and internationalist solidarity that Rizal embodied in his life and works.

Prologue to an Inquest

Ever since the Renaissance and the rise of the European bourgeoisie, the focus of critical attention has shifted from the cosmic totality to the individual. This individualist metaphysic acquired logical form in Descartes' abolition of doubt by the ego-centered consciousness. The solitary individual, Robinson Crusoe as master-narrative hero, occupied center-stage in mapping the heterogeneous process of worldwide social development. Its culmination in Locke's empiricism and Hegel's idealism reinforced the triumph of the property-owner, the profit-obsessed slave-trader and manufacturer, and eventually the broker-financier of empire. All events and changes in society were ascribed to individual thoughts and private decisions, marginalizing its larger context in the changes in social relations locally and globally, triggered by profound alterations in the mode of production and reproduction of material life.

Historians followed suit in analyzing the turn of events in their surroundings. By describing heroes and their lives, thinkers believed that they have explained and charted the vicissitudes of whole social domains—until Marx (in "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State" and *The German Ideology*) restored balance by re-locating individual protagonists in the political economy they inhabit. In the "Theses on Feuerbach," Marx posited that the "human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (1975, 423). In the ultimate analysis, the individual subject may be viewed as a microcosm of the whole social fabric that generates his potential and his actuality, without which this monadic figure has no meaning or consequence. Reciprocally, the opaque density of the

social background is illumined and concretely defined by individual acts of intervention, such as Rizal's novels, without which society and the physical world remain indifferent. We need this dialectical approach to comprehend in a more all-encompassing way Rizal's vexed and vexing situation, together with his painstakingly calculated responses—all cunning ruses of Reason in history (for Hegel). Such ruses actually register the contradictions of social forces in real life, reflected in the crises of lives in each generation.

The substantial biographies of Rizal—from Austin Craig to Rafael Palma, Leon Maria Guerrero to Austin Coates—all attempted to triangulate the ideas of the hero with his varying positions in his family, in the circle of his friends and colleagues in Europe, and in relation to the colonial Establishment. Their main concern is to find out the origin of the hero's thoughts and their impact on the local environment. But the twin errors of contemplative objectivism and individualist bias persisted in vitiating their accounts. They ignored the historical-materialist axiom that the changing of circumstances and of personal sensibility/minds, as Marx advised, “can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice”—that is, sensuous collective praxis in material life. In Palma's biography, for example, the novelty of Rizal's project of the *Liga Filipina* became simply “a means to defray the expenses of the colonization of Borneo” (1949, 202; see Zaide and Zaide 1984). In reality, the *Liga* is the chief emblematic index of that transformative praxis fusing personal experience and objective circumstances. It is the crucible marking the failure of *La Solidaridad* reformism and the transition to the stage of popular mobilization mediated by the rising organic intellectuals of the dispossessed, in particular Andres Bonifacio, Jacinto, and others. Rizal's radicalizing agenda was already distilled in his bold testimony of communicative action, the eloquent “Letter to the Women of Malolos” (more later), and articulated in the two letters dated June 20, 1892, letters whose resonance and value can perhaps be compared only to St. Paul's epistles to the early converts of the faith.

By all accounts, the formation of the *Liga* is the key event marking Rizal's leap from intellectual gradualism to collective separatism. Before his exile to Dapitan in 1892, Rizal met with members of the Masonic Balagtas Lodge in the home of Doroteo Onjungco, including Ambrosio Salvador, Timoteo Paez, Pedro Serrano, Domingo Franco, and, last but not least, Andres Bonifacio, who was then not distinguishable from the crowd of about thirty individuals. After Governor Despujol decreed Rizal's banishment, the *Liga* members met secretly in the Azcarraga apartment of Deodato Arellano, among them Andres Bonifacio and Gregorio Del

Pilar, who later died fighting American troops pursuing the fleeing Aguinaldo headed for Palanan (Palma 1949, 225). That historic gathering of seven persons signaled the launching of the *Katipunan*, the organization of “sons of the people” committed to overthrowing Spanish colonial tyranny.

Coincidentally, then, the banishment of Rizal to the southern outpost of Dapitan occurred with the implementation of decisions to liberate the country from the stranglehold of the “mother country,” Spain. That sequence of events at this juncture of Rizal’s life, as Floro Quibuyen (1999) and others have shown, epitomizes the translation of ideas into organized mass activism, a description of the political shift that is less problematic than the reappropriation of the *pasyon* by popular consciousness (Ileto 1998). Spontaneous mass strikes and actions are blind, ineffectual and self-defeating without the mediation of organic intellectuals and organized leadership, as Rizal’s contemporaries Bakunin and Kropotkin (Laqueur 1978; Guerin 1970) have argued. *Rizal’s Fili* is a cogent demonstration of that truth.

Critique of the Orthodox Canon

So far we have sketched in this book a historical-materialist approach to Rizal’s thought and career. Its foundational premise is that Rizal is a social and historical product of his time, actor and acted upon in specific historical circumstances. We know that Rizal blamed fate on the eve of his execution, but he did not disavow responsibility for acts that led to that denouement. He was not a tragic hero, simply a combatant spokesman of all the subjugated in the anti-colonial war. He incarnated the critical universality of the Philippine revolution. While Rizal was formed by his sociopolitical milieu, he interacted with specific actors/players and tried to synthesize the disparate forces and convergent tendencies in his unique situation. To separate the psyche from the historical situation would result in the flamboyant psychologizing of Ante Radaic and other postmodernist gurus; conversely, to ignore Rizal’s concrete life-situation is to simplify and reify the pressures of his dynamic milieu.

One would expect Leon Maria Guerrero to be more nuanced and circumspect. In his magisterial biography, however, the endeavor to explain Rizal as a phenomenon of his time dissolves into untenable speculations. Following Cesar Majul’s reading of Rizal’s concept of a Filipino national community supplanting the traditional assemblage of creoles and subaltern

natives under the Spanish Crown and the Roman Catholic Church, Guerrero jumps to the conclusion that the *Liga* presumed the unity of all classes, entirely unlike Bonifacio's Katipunan. Consequently, opposed to Rizal's dialectical synthesis of thought and action in oppositional praxis, Guerrero continues the mechanical disjunction of unity, and then prosperity for all natives first before independence, a proposition he attributes to Rizal (1969, 429). Guerrero reads the exchanges between Ibarra and Elias in the *Noli* with the same moralizing drive, while the dialogue between Simoun and Basilio in the *Fili* is interpreted as a symptom of Rizal's disillusionment with Spain. But Simoun's plan of exacerbating abuses, sowing mayhem, inciting crowds to revolt—the telltale anarchist syndrome—is rejected in Father Florentino's sermon. The priest avers that “the sword no longer wields much influence on the destinies of our age” and that “our sufferings are our own fault.” Guerrero congeals the tension of clashing beliefs, making Rizal a partisan of the evolutionist party rather than grasping the dynamic realism (immanent in the Ibarra/Simoun double) of calculating ends and means in accordance with the volatile, ceaselessly mutating level of the spontaneous political impulse of the masses and the initiatives of their organic leaders. The Rizal *problematique* escapes such a paralyzing maneuver.

Arguing the thesis that Rizal is a reluctant revolutionary, Guerrero cannot avoid a dualistic, either/or viewpoint which privileges selected episodes/ideas of the hero's career. He contends that the *Liga* was designed only for recruiting rich progressives and liberal intellectuals—we saw Bonifacio and other plebeian activists present during its inaugural moments--while the Katipunan was intended mainly to attract the proletarian horde. Guerrero's static and economistic prejudice infects his whole biography, as obvious in the prolix sophistry of his discourse so reminiscent of Cold War polemics in the aftermath of World War II. Here is a specimen of Guerrero's pontifications:

But any difference in their social objectives was undefined and unspoken; Rizal read Voltaire and Bonifacio read Carlyle and the “Lives of the American Presidents”; neither seems to have read Marx or Bakunin or Proudhon. Both the *Liga* and the Katipunan, therefore, were based on the comfortable theory of the social compact: unity, mutual protection and mutual help. But neither was aware of the issue that was already tearing western civilization apart: the choice between liberty and equality (1969, 431).

Can anyone take seriously this tendentious disjunction between liberty and equality as anything but a disguised re-statement of the ideological conflict between the pseudo-liberty of capitalist business society and the postulated equality of atheistic communism? Liberty of an exclusive few without equality is what Rizal condemned and struggled against, precisely that ruthless autocratic behemoth (Spain's decadent empire) to which Elias' ancestors, Sisa's children, and Cablesang Tales' family were sacrificed. In a world of widespread poverty, official criminality, and imperial wars in the 1950s and 1960s, especially the brutal campaign against the Huks, liberty for whom? Liberty for what?

Of course, one cannot fault Guerrero for being a product of his own milieu. Just as one cannot criticize Nick Joaquin for being a diehard apologist for the *ilustrado* generation of surviving creoles (from Fr. Jose Burgos to Trinidad Pardo de Tavera) and their descendants whose passing he laments. Joaquin's total oeuvre is a melodramatic elegy to its demise. In his two essays on Rizal in *A Question of Heroes*, Joaquin compares and contrasts Guerrero and Radaic's portraits of Rizal. He praises Guerrero's crafted narrative of Rizal's career as a kind of "anti-hero." Guerrero argues that the 1896 revolution was hatched in Spain by the propertied bourgeoisie to which Rizal and the *propagandistas* belonged. Guerrero believes that Rizal's retraction (his disavowal of Masonic and rationalist errors) was authentic; that Rizal's apostolate did not give him real social consciousness and so he remained a member of the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia. Rizal's nationalism was "essentially rationalist," anti-clerical and anti-racist, political rather than social or economic. In short, Rizal was the typical Victorian sage who believed in the dogma of reason, inevitable progress through science and commerce, and the efficacy of parliamentary representation, even up to the last moments of his life. Rizal was an evolutionist or eventualist politician, not a revolutionary intellectual.

Lest he be accused of partiality, Guerrero acknowledges the ambivalences in Rizal's writings, if not in his varying standpoints at different stages of his life. Cognizant of his privileged background, Rizal sympathized with the oppressed and exploited, with Sisa's family and Cablesang Tales' clan. We recall how his family and relatives suffered enormously when they were ejected from their homes by the Dominican friars in October-November 1981. But, according to Guerrero, Rizal was afraid of the "bloody apparitions" of violence, the excesses of "premature conspiracies," especially those committed by the mobs of yesterday's slaves become

today's tyrants—to echo Father Florentino's glib dismissal of *filibusteros*. Guerrero could not disregard this, so he begrudgingly calls Rizal a “reluctant revolutionary” who condemned the means used by Bonifacio but not the aim of overthrowing the colonial power. Rizal suffered from a Hamlet-like schizophrenia, his will to act paralyzed by scruples and reservations—a trait acutely observed by Miguel de Unamuno, but blown to disproportionate importance by Radaic in his psychoanalytic diagnosis of Rizal as a “delicate human problem.” Rizal may have united both subversive and progressive elements, but he did not create the idea of the nation on his own and so became the “first Filipino,” as Joaquin notes in his chronicling of the irreconcilable hostility between the creoles and the peninsulares.

Purging the Sins of the Fathers

Both Guerrero and Joaquin seem to share the notion that before Spain's arrival, the Philippines was comprised of separate, disjoined, non-communicating primitive tribes. At best, the numerous revolts of Dagohoy, Malong, Almazen, Hermano Pule, and others later called “cultural minorities” signified mere ethnic group demands, parochial and detached from each other. For Joaquin, it was Spain and Christianity that molded the diverse tribes into one. Joaquin declares that Spanish colonial rule served as the matrix or womb that enabled Rizal and other creole ilustrados to envision a compact and homogeneous society based on common interests and mutual protection rather than allegiance to Spain and the Catholic Church. At the same time, however, it could not escape the notice of our two apologists that all those revolts, removed from each other in time and space, in one degree or another share an origin in common grievances and fate: the abuses of the institutional power of Church and State. It was this oppressive feudal/tributary relation of production, founded on the monopoly of productive means by the colonizing power, which generated collective protests and insurrections periodically, throughout the islands. Meanwhile, the Igorots, Moros and other pagan communities resisted and could not be subdued by Spanish might, utilizing various native groups conscripted into the military apparatus. They are lumped together with bandits, outlaws, and pariahs as inhuman “others” close to the animal kingdom and so could be destroyed any time with impunity.

Owing to various changes in the mode of production from Legaspi's time to the eighteenth century, a small merchant-farming class of creoles arose in the nineteenth century

from which Rizal and other *ilustrados* emerged. It was not a bourgeoisie according to the European model, but a petty bourgeoisie of creoles/mestizos (Spanish, Chinese, Indios intermarrying) composed of small farmers, merchants, artisans, and their educated children that sprang from the interstices of the colonial structure. Through the institutions of highly regulated schools, printing press, and secular business, this group flourished intermittently until it came into direct conflict with Spanish civil and religious authority that then gradually lost its legitimacy in failing to take into account the growing material wealth and power of this new group of *principales*. In time, the ideology and principles of this emergent sector constituted a counterhegemonic bloc that Rizal allied himself with.

The secularization movement among the clergy initially spearheaded by creoles (witness the martyred priests Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez, and Jacinto Zamora) was the culmination of the upheaval in the economic and political infrastructures. Its impact can be discerned both in the *ilustrado* demand for reforms and in the hardening reactionary defensiveness of the religious orders and the weak or indifferent Spanish officials representing the Madrid government. Obscurantist dogmatism and feudal authoritarian practices, from 1972 to the outbreak of the 1896 insurrection, could no longer plausibly claim to represent the talent, money, aspirations and other interests of the creoles. Joaquin argues that from the 1820 Novales revolt to the 1840 Palmares conspiracy, up to the secularizing agitation led by Father Pelaez in the 1850-60s, this creole movement paralleled the mobilization of its Latin American counterparts Bolivar, San Martin, and others, which eventually liberated the continent from Spanish control. This is the reason Rizal's hero, Juan Crisostomo Ibarra, was a creole descended from Basque ancestors, gentlemen landowners, who had become naturalized, as it were, in the colony. Like Rizal (though more Chinese than Spanish), Ibarra was thus a "translated Filipino," not a primordial Indio or Malay indigene.

From this historical vantage point, Joaquin belabors his argument to dovetail with Guerrero's opinion that Rizal was "the first Filipino." He was "first" only in the sense that Rizal vigorously articulated in his essays, particularly in his annotations on Morga's chronicle and in "The Philippines A Century Hence," the imperative of solidarity among the aboriginal ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting the islands in the face of an illegitimate occupying power. It is not clear if Rizal would include the Moros and other Lumads into this assemblage of rational literate constituencies. In any case, it goes against the grain of facts and public consensus to

insist that Hispanization in the 19th century was proceeding well after the victories against competing European powers that finally broke the siege mentality of Intramuros. And it is rather special pleading to argue that despite the abuses of the friars and corrupt officials, the centuries-long resistance to Dutch and British invaders (with their schismatic Protestantism) involving creoles and native soldiers from Pampanga, Ilocos and the Tagalog regions who allegedly were not mercenaries, can be considered the narrative of the making of the Filipino nation. Whatever the subtle discriminations in their discourse, for Joaquin and Guerrero, the Spanish-descended creoles and their Indio subalterns constituted the Filipino nation long before the rise of the Katipunan and the establishment of the short-lived Malolos Republic. And so the millions of Indios who were forced to work in the mines, build the galleons, and sacrifice their lives in the military campaigns to suppress the local revolts were all complicit in the genesis of the Filipino as a distinct national formation. Would Rizal's eventualism and even self-righteous horror at the "highly absurd" Katipunan uprising support such a genealogical hypothesis? Could this lesson in nation-making be part of the Malolos women's curriculum and self-administered tutelage?

Joaquin finally argues that the Rizal phenomenon encapsulates the vicissitudes of the creole anti-Spanish insurrection from the 1870s (the Cavite Mutiny and execution of the three priests) to the 1890s (the termination of *La Solidaridad* and the abortive founding of the *Liga Filipina*). As Rizal himself said, he became a radical because of the failure of Pelaez-Burgos' peaceful secularization campaign. This is the logic behind the transition from the naïve reformism of the *Noli* to the proto-anarchist, more precisely adventurist, play of ideas and character dispositions in the *Fili*. While the *Noli*'s outlook is assimilationist in the mode of the liberalizing (not yet libertarian) creoles Rizal admired, the *Fili*'s stance is separatist, following the anti-obscurantist Marcelo del Pilar and the Americanizing T. H. Pardo de Tavera. Rizal's trajectory also mirrors the transition from preoccupation with Morga's records of the past and with "On the Indolence of Filipinos," to the prophetic deliberations of "The Philippines a Century Hence." Time conquers space; history overcomes the fetish of the transcendent. And Aguinaldo trumps Bonifacio, Luna and Mabini.

Anatomy of the Hero's Soul

Readers generally want happy endings. The scholastic prejudice is that Rizal summarized

his whole life in the sermon of Padre Florentino at the end of the *Fili*, particularly in the now worn-out slogan: “To suffer and to work!” But this is precisely what Cablesang Tales, Basilio, Isagani, and others did, all to no avail. Evil was not diminished, much less extinguished; God remained hidden, eclipsed, “disappeared,” and finally neutralized, with the victims dismissed as “collateral damage” (to use the Pentagon parlance). Justice delays, procrastinates, malingers somewhere. On the other hand, we should not ignore the ambiguity of the priest’s counsel, which implies that work—collective praxis engaged by the bondsmen and colonized subalterns—transforms character and collective destiny. After alleging that force no longer plays a role in the shaping of modern polities, Padre Florentino continues: “...yes, but we must win it [freedom], deserving it, raising the intelligence and the dignity of the individual, loving the just, the good, the great, even dying for it, and when a people reach that height, God provides the weapon, and the idols fall, the tyrants fall like a house of cards and liberty shines with the first dawn” (2004, 410).

From Rizal’s deistic optic, “God” here is a shorthand term for “history” epitomized in the eschatological turn of events. God’s presence is ascertainable from the classic saying: “*vox populi vox dei*.” Padre Florentino does not hedge his bets in the agnostic, millenarian wager: both passive empiricism (suffer) and active engagement (work) constitute the unfolding of human capabilities in the development of human knowledge and scientific control and manipulation of nature’s forces. Rizal’s faith in rational self-regulation and technological progress may be perceived even in Padre Florentino’s belief that time and nature are on the side of the just; after throwing Simoun’s wealth to the ocean, he exclaims: “May Nature guard you in her deep abysses among the corals and pearls of her eternal seas!...When for a holy and sublime end men should need you, God will draw you from the breast of the waves...” (2004, 413). Human necessity becomes God’s accomplice; fatalism is thus circumvented. But we know that it is merely a token gesture, for the social wealth that unequally circulates in the world continues to distort right and foment avarice, contrary to the cleric’s fanciful wish-fulfillment. Subjective will power cannot transcend by its own efforts the limitations of objective social reality.

This is the ambition of psychologically-oriented critics such as Ante Radaic (1999) and other biographers concentrating on idiosyncratic aspects of Rizal’s personality. From the Victorian anti-hero of Guerrero, we move to the psychoanalytic case study of Radaic, the modern man afflicted with existential anguish. Radaic’s theory of Rizal’s character is simple: Rizal’s

physical inadequacies—short height, frail or puny body, etc.—produced an inferiority complex that drove him to compensate by cultivating his intellectual resources and sharpening his skills in artistic endeavors (writing, musical and theatrical performances, amorous games, etc.). Rizal's physical defects, heightened by an introjected ideal image of the body, the ideal "I" or ego, generated a discordance or imbalance that needed correction. According to Radaic, the symptom for this unresolved predicament may be seen in a spiritual excess that manifested itself in extreme scrupulosity, indecisiveness, melancholy, and terror of certain unknown forces outside the tranquility of home in Calamba and the protection of his mother and father. In other words, the diminutive size of Rizal's body explains both positive and negative aspects of his life: his omnivorous capacity in learning languages, his inexhaustible intellectual curiosity, his prolific writing, restless amorous engagements, and so on. But did Rizal's activities resolve the contradiction between appearance and reality, reason and irrationality?

So we confront a "deep and delicate human problem" personified by Rizal. His exile and travels symbolize this problem of discrepancy between the interior and exterior, between his ideals and his constrained situation. The result is recorded in a nostalgia-laden confession found in *Memorias de Un Estudiante* to which we have already alluded in previous chapters: "At the critical moments of my life I have always acted against my will, obeying other ends and powerful duties." Unamuno, Retana and others have commented on this typical dilemma: the bold dreamer with a weak will, irresolute in action, withdrawing and delaying ("filibustering" may be the appropriate epithet, though the Spanish "filibusterismo" has more subversive, sinister connotations), terrified by the "bloody apparitions" of political turbulence. This has also engendered the thought of a "multitudinous" Rizal, a character with miraculous protean qualities, easily switching positions—from reformist to revolutionary, and back—difficult to pin down. He also tended to view sexual love as a "yoke" that can imprison, a constricting burden. Radaic thinks this is a symptom of sexual inadequacy, whether real or imagined, as shown in his attitude toward Segunda Katigbak. Rizal's pathogenic and neurotic personality harbors wounds that refuse to heal, driving him to compensate by channeling frustrated energies to other activities, sublimating libidinal impulses by other means. In other words, his whole life may be seen as an attempt to ascend from his self-perceived physical deformity to superior heights.

Surely there were millions suffering from those defects in the nineteenth century, but none of them approximates the historical figure of Rizal. Sartre once said that Paul Valéry is a

bourgeois poet, but not all members of the bourgeois class can be considered Valery. In short, determining the class identity and clan/racial lineage of an individual, much less his physical dimensions, does not provide any clue toward adequately explaining the historically specific social phenomenon called “Rizal.” The same applies to Radaic’s version of the Rizal complex: not only is it reductive and distorting, it also endorses a toxic ideology of individualism that Rizal himself repudiated at various crises of his life. His monumental sacrifices to complete his novels, as well as his efforts to rescue his family from privations, and other acts of sympathy and solidarity with others, are incontestable proofs. Moreover, the putative “individualism” of colonial subjects in 19th-century Philippines is a peculiar morbidity that cannot be mistaken for the neurotic individualism of modern industrial society. Alienation in an obsolescent Spanish colony cannot be equated to anomie and reification in twentieth-century Europe or North America. Since others have spent time and energy demonstrating the limits of the doctrinaire psychoanalytic treatment applied to Rizal, I would suggest to adventurous inquirers to re-appraise Rizal’s life from a historical-materialist standpoint. They should foreground those writings in which he disavowed this fallacy of self-serving, mendacious individualism as a method of understanding the complexity of the human condition traversed and contoured by diverse historical contingencies.

Either/Or: Hermeneutics of Suspects

The debate on Rizal’s contemporary significance pivots around the issue of whether Rizal was an authentic revolutionary, or a mere American idol foisted on naïve subalterns. To put it in Renato Constantino’s dichotomizing option, the choice is whether we should follow Rizal or Bonifacio as the modern national hero (1970, 125-46; see Ocampo 1998). It’s a wager for high stakes. On occasion, Rizal himself entertained a moralistic dualism when he asserts in “Cuento Tendencioso,” for instance: “*Ang sagot sa dahas ay dahas, kapag bingi sa katuwiran*” {The response to force is force, if the other is deaf to reason}. To be sure, Rizal parodied the moralizing opportunism of his contemporaries in satires such as “By Telephone,” “The Vision of Fr. Rodriguez,” and “Reflections of a Filipino” (1974). Antinomies of thought cannot be solved by abstract casuistry, divorced from the concrete historical specificities, the determinant limits and possibilities of each situation.

No doubt Rizal wanted a total reconstruction of society, a wide-ranging and thoroughgoing transformation. But how? By whom? With what? While the genealogy of Rizal's concept of the nation—the core of Rizal's moral realism that postcolonial critics reject as monistic, totalizing, linear, homogenizing, etc.—in Enlightenment humanism and universal altruism is no longer a point of controversy, the question of Rizal's praxis remains highly contentious. That praxis, based on popular education and the exercise of civic virtues, is premised on the self-development of an inborn potential, the species being of *homo sapiens* (for the American canonization of Rizal, see Kramer 2006; one anti-imperialist eulogy is exemplified by Bigelow 1899). Nonetheless, the bureaucrats continue to sanctify the conventional iconic Rizal, ignoring the Rizal of the 1892 letters, the letter to the Malolos women, among other writings, and the aborted project of the *Liga* and its call to Filipinos to assume responsibility—that is, to exercise their freedom by criticizing and subverting the oppressive, irrational order.

Rizal is the prophet of an Enlightenment philosophy founded on the imperative of humans overthrowing the gods and claiming their worldly freedom. This Promethean vocation is still formulated in scholastic terms. Four years before his death, he wrote to Father Pastells while in exile in Dapitan: "...but I rejoice more when I contemplate humanity in its immortal march, always progressing in spite of its declines and falls, in spite of its aberrations, because that demonstrates to me its glorious end and tells me that it has been created for a better purpose than to be consumed by flames; it fills me with trust in God, who will not let His work be ruined, in spite of the devil and of all our follies" (dated Nov. 11, 1892). But this evolutionist creed was counterpointed by chiliastic interruptions and millenarian impulses, as evinced not only in the novels but also in his letters and essays. However, the metaphysical disposition of idealizing thought separate from social practice persists. Skeptical individualism intrudes in the guise of a salvific messiah. This is why we choose to highlight and valorize aspects of Rizal's highly adaptive, versatile, conjunctural thinking relative to our own purposes regardless of their determinant contexts and their entanglement in particular circumstances. In short, we fashion the Rizal we want to revere, disregarding the totality of his life and the milieu that circumscribe the serviceability and pragmatic import of his ideas. We invent our own Rizal, afraid to confront the challenge of self-contradictory reality and act on it.

But before this program of re-invention becomes exorbitant and self-serving, let us for a moment reflect on what inspires it. In the light of Benedict Anderson's fascinating book *Under*

Three Flags (2005), which deals more with the influence of anarchism in Europe, Asia and Latin America rather than with Rizal or Filipino nationalism *per se*, it would be timely to re-open the issue of Rizal's equivocations. I fully agree with Jim Richardson's (2006) shrewd and incisive comments on Anderson's errors and limitations. One notable failure of intelligence is Anderson's judgment that Rizal was really not "a political thinker," but merely a moralist and novelist. Anderson set out to chart the gravitational force of selected anarchist ideas—not so much the classic versions of Proudhon and Bakunin but of the propagandist of deeds (bomb throwing, assassinations, terror) extolled by Errico Malatesta, Sergey Nechayev, Fernando Tarrida del Marmol, and others. In the process of deploying montage, serialized and episodic narration spiced with a gratuitous sprinkling of Eurocentric hauteur, Anderson only achieves what Richardson calls an "illusion of interconnectedness." Anderson's "political astronomy" could not identify correctly the shifting valence and the gravitational force of the myriad constellations in the galaxy of traveling anarchism. For example, Anderson considers the *Fili* incoherent, acerbic toward liberals but lax toward the lecherous friars, "largely oblivious or indifferent to the social misery in Europe itself" (2005, 108), and its hero Simoun nothing but a "cynical nihilist conspirator." Simoun's malady is traced to "an unscrupulous and cruel Basque grandfather" and the failed conspiracy a poor imitation of European ones, such as the 1892 Jerez uprising and those of the assassins Ravachol and Auguste Vaillant.

Anderson's treatise strives to delineate the *anarchisant*, not anarchist, temper of Rizal's *Fili*. The presumably cynical, nihilist Simoun had no solid plan after the success of his revenge, only a dream of a formless, utopian liberty, hence its failure. Anderson's conclusion recapitulates his thematic intent of classifying Rizal as a minor constellation in the galaxy of global anarchism:

It is exactly here that Rizal marked the crisscrossing of anticolonial nationalism and "propaganda by the deed," with its planless utopianism and its taste for self-immolation. From my deed and death something will come which will be better than the unlivable present.... [Simoun] is a sort of *espectro mundial* come to haunt the Philippines, mirroring what Izquierdo had once fantasized as the invisible machiavellian network of the International. Not there yet in reality, but, since already imagined, just like his nation, on the way.... Europe itself,

Rizal thought, was menaced by a vast conflagration among its warring powers, but also by violent movement from below (2005, 121).

Overall, the *Fili* then is not so much a realistic depiction of events in the Philippines but a premonitory if not prophetic unfolding of what's to come. It functions as a seismograph of the tremulous, convulsive, phantasmagoric future looming on the horizon—the revolt of the Katipunan's unwashed masses, and soon after the invasion of the Yankee troops complete with their sophisticated “water cure,” scorched-earth hamletting, and summary executions of village folk. Gramsci's insight fits nicely this anticipated in-between, transitional phase: “The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great variety of morbid symptoms.” Isagani's enigmatic smile and regret at having averted the cataclysm may be diagnosed as one of these multifarious symptoms, and Padre Florentino's work-and-suffer nostrum as another.

An Inventory of Symptoms

There seems to be no clear proof that Rizal sympathized with or held anarchist convictions. But it is impossible to believe that throughout his sojourn in Europe he was insulated from the ideas of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others. It was part of the cultural climate, the atmosphere of intellectual conversations. He was probably acquainted with the socialist inclination of his contemporaries Juan Luna, Mariano Ponce, Teodoro Sandiko, and others. Rizal might not have conversed with the two Russian nihilists in the drawing room of his friend Pardo de Tavera in Paris in the 1880s, he was probably aware of reports about Russian scientific and cultural developments. As a revealing clue to Rizal's wide internationalist contacts in Madrid alone, not to mention during his travels, note the roster of distinguished guests at the 1884 banquet in honor of Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo at which Rizal was the main speaker (Baron-Fernandez 1980, 74-76)—a landmark even for the *propagandistas*.

But never mind, Richardson counsels us, the rhizomal network of anarchism might have penetrated into the interstices of Rizal's psyche, as suggested by certain leitmotifs caught in discourse, grammatology, and the ambiguities of language. While Rizal affirmed the dignity of the autonomous individual, this did not imply a glorification of self-serving deeds nor an unqualified endorsement of the authority of abstract principles, contrary to what Anderson says of Rizal's intention in founding the *Liga*. The Constitution of the *Liga* by itself is not a self-evident performative text detached from the field-force of collective action and institutional practice.

One example of the postmodernist *hubris* of textualizing everything may be found in the reading of the *Fili* as a parable of the *filibustero* as epitome of Otherness, the phantom alien body that discombobulates all static, definitive meanings. This anti-authoritarian figure unsettles hierarchy, all fixed and stable identities. It signifies a power of translation or transmission that crosses boundaries and mixes everything. Vicente Rafael postulates that the slippery role of this outsider/foreigner may be taken as the key to grasping the edgy, nervous, embryonic kind of nationalism being hatched in the womb of the text:

We can think of the *Fili* as the site within which [Rizal] rehearsed this ambivalence at the foundation of nationalist sentiments. The novel is a record of the hesitations and anxieties raised by the failure of assimilation, giving rise to the specters of separation. The figure of the *filibustero* was its medium for tracking and trafficking in the emergence, spread, and containment of such anxieties. It is this fundamentally unsettling nature of the *filibustero* as both medium and message that infests, as it were, both the author and his characters (2003, 170-71).

In a letter to the Austrian scientist Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal confessed that he heard the word “filibustero” for the first time in 1872 when the “tragic executions” of Burgos, Gomez and Zamora occurred: “It does not have the meaning of ‘pirate’; it means rather *a dangerous patriot who will soon be on the gallows, or else a conceited fellow*” (Guerrero 1969, 271). But the novel focuses on the activity or movement of “filibusterism,” not on single dissidents such as Simoun or Cablesang Tales. Protagonists are meaningfully removed from the constituting narrative structure. Further, the failure of Macaraig and other reformers (assimilationists) does not automatically give rise to Simoun’s apocalyptic vision of a whole society’s death and renewal. The task of deconstructing an elite-sponsored nationalism, however treacherous and tyrannical, cannot be assigned to the trope of the *filibustero* precisely because the nascent elite then was suppressed before it could flourish; hence Padre Florentino’s extreme unction/consoling speech falls on the defunct ears of the dying subversive.

The *Fili* was dedicated to the memory of the three priests-martyrs who were implicated, without admissible evidence, with the 1872 Cavite Mutiny. Rizal accused the government of shrouding the martyrs’ cause “with mystery and obscurities.” Accordingly, his aim in writing the novel is to demystify and expose, as elaborated in his address “to the Filipino People and their Government”: “Setting aside, therefore, the old custom of respecting myths in order not to encounter the dreaded reality, we look at it face to face instead of fleeing, and with assertive though inexperienced hand, we raise the shroud in order to uncover before the multitude the structure of the skeleton.” More exactly, Rizal wanted to display to the multitude the rotting cadaver of colonial society, the repulsive decay of the corporeal scaffold of its skeleton.

Unlike the magician Dr. Leeds, Rizal the novelist seeks to dissolve magical secrets, hypocrisies, abusive practices using sacred trappings and taboos. In the *Noli* likewise, Rizal

aimed to expose the social cancer “on the steps of the temple“ (that is, by publication of his truth-bearing testimony) so that each one who would come to invoke the Divine, would propose a cure, implicating himself in this therapeutic scheme: “I will lift part of the shroud that conceals your illness, sacrificing to the truth everything, even my own self-respect, for, as your son, I also suffer in your defects and failings.” In exploring the variegated worldviews and mentalities of his characters mapped in varying situations, Rizal engaged in the project of radical social critique.

Indicting Maledictions

The power of Rizal’s critique cannot be over-emphasized. One of its basic dimensions consists of exploding the illusion of the inevitability of events by showing that the aura of fatality surrounding them is due to how we conceive them, due to our own frame of mind, attitudes, dispositions (to paraphrase Buck-Morris [2003, 42]. Rizal’s critique of colonial ideology via mimesis and symbolism involves the act of disrupting the colonial-theocratic apparatus of mystification that surrounds the “moment of truth” found in every effort of understanding life and social experience; in turn, this moment of discovery is then subsumed or superseded within a more comprehensive theory of explaining the contradictions between belief and reality, truth and appearance, that bedevils all interpellated subjects in society (for dialectical theory, see Howard 1977).

Inscribed within the general contradiction between colonized exploited native bodies and universal religion preaching the transcendent community of all souls, we find the particular contradiction between the social classes, genders, ethnicities and nationalities in the colony. For Rizal, the species-being, what is potentially human but repressed in Filipinos, is in conflict with the prevailing institutional structures and norms. In this light, Simoun (as well as Tasio and Padre Florentino) refract in themselves not only as individuals but also as members of a community (potential or real), the particular plight of the *filibustero*, which is a pivotal moment in the dynamic unfolding of self-contradictory social processes in which everyone is embedded. *Filibusterismo* is the name of this interlinked acts of refraction, suturing and demystification.

Rizal’s position then cannot be reduced to that of one character’s conduct and pronouncements. His project is exploratory, heuristic, and experimental. An illustration of his heteroglotic or carnivalesque (to borrow Bakhtin’s terms) mode of critique—the negative-

positive movement of supersession performed by articulating the voices of his characters with their intersecting fates--may be found in the confrontation between Ibarra and Tasio in the *Noli*. We know that Tasio prefigures many other characters in the novel whose ambitions are foiled and hopes thwarted; he remains unreconciled to what exists, on the level of thought and behavior. What is striking is not his nonconformist attitudes but his rebellious prophetic stance. He anticipates Simoun when he responds to Ibarra's declaration of trust in religion and state authority. He also foreshadows Ibarra's fall as he proceeds to acquire and disseminate knowledge of the truth of what's going on:

The people do not complain because they have no voice, do not move because they are lethargic, and you say that they do not suffer, because you have not seen their hearts bleed. But one day you will see and you will hear, and ah! woe unto them that build their strength on ignorance or in fanaticism; woe unto them who are engaged in deception and work in darkness, believing that all are asleep! When the light of day illuminates the monster of the shadows, the terrible reaction will come: so much strength bottled up over centuries; so much venom distilled drop by drop; so much lament suppressed will come out and explode... Who then will square those accounts which the peoples of the world present from time to time and which history preserves for us, etched on bloody pages? (*Noli* 2004, 226).

Note the thematic synapse comprised of the imagery and rhetoric of concealment, unveiling, the shift from darkness to light, discovery as an explosion, release, and the shock of recognition in receiving the message written on "bloody pages." All these presage the itinerary of events in both novels, particularly Simoun's machination in stirring up the monsters in the shadows, with the bottled wrath boiling over and blasting that scene of reconciliation: the wedding of Paulita Gomez and Juanito Pelaez in Chapter 14 of the *Fili*. The otherwise radical Isagani, with his ideals projected onto the beloved, refuses to abandon the siren of dreams and thus aborts Simoun's plot: the unleashing of reality's contradictions—the positive submerged in the negative—only to succumb to the narcotic inertia of the status quo. In the dialectical spin of events, unmasking fails and succeeds at the same time.

The theme of curing a diseased body politic leads to some surprising twists. If knowledge of truth cannot remedy the split between the universal (God) and the local (suffering, injustice, evil), what can? In my gloss on Rizal's novels, I applied a structuralist frame of analysis revolving around the syntagmatic axis of history articulated with the paradigmatic vector of nature. Somehow, a fatality approximating the natural (Sisa's misfortunes) deflects the trajectory of linear progress. Rizal/Ibarra, our Enlightenment hero, still clings to the hope that God's eclipse, his hidden presence, would end, and that divine intervention would bring back the golden age of justice, equality, the happy reunion of loved ones, prosperity, peace. Like his literary analogue, Alexandre Dumas' Count of Monte Cristo, Simoun, evoking Karamazov's and Job's existential anguish, seeks to resurrect the dead God (before Nietzsche's proclamation) and fulfill the promise of redemption. Critique, pedagogical reconstruction, is Ibarra's way of satisfying that promise. Critique may also be discerned in Tasio's universalist thinking, which is supplanted in the *Fili* by Padre Florentino's exorcism of Simoun, an attempt to heal the rupture between the profane and sacred by converting Nature/Culture to become the servant of the divine will. All schemes of exchange, transmission and circulation of signs—the signifiers of the past, customs, blood kinship—are displaced by the characteristic move in Rizal to remind us that his allegory speaks to the real and addresses living bodies in the hope of generating changes in actuality. The ripeness of *filibusterismo* is all: resistance, dissidence, revolution

Rizal's moral realism understands the limits and shortcomings of fallible human agency. But it does not give up the vocation of changing society because it is founded on the gap between what exists and what is desired. We have seen the ethico-political motivation of allegorical realism dramatized at the end of Chapter 10 of the *Fili*. After Cablesang Tales stole Simoun's revolver and killed his oppressors, leaving his name "Tales" beside the mutilated body of the usurper's wife, Rizal launches into the famous cry for revenge, for Spain to render justice to the victims: "Do not be alarmed, peaceful citizens of Calamba. Not one of you is called Tales, not one of you has committed the crime.... You have served Spain and the King and when in their names you asked for justice and you were exiled without due process of law, you were snatched away from the arms of your spouses, from the kisses of your children...." (*Fili* 97). His appeal is still directed to the authorities, not to the toilers and pariahs. Lest we forget about Sisa's sufferings, Rizal replicates her misfortune in Juli's plight. Meanwhile, we know that

Simoun/Ibarra, like the magician/deity operating behind the scenes, no longer believes that “generous Spain” will heed the prayer of the novelist, nor heed the conscience of Padre Florentino. In a world without god (the colonizing leviathan), it is necessary for humans to assume responsibility and decide collectively, in solidarity, their common fate. The theory and practice of freedom by the insurgent people is the essence of moral realism.

Both novels employ the method of allegorical realism to test the hypothesis of human freedom born from insurgent practice, replacing a transcendent power/demiurge as the shaper and arbiter of history. Realism, the style and technique of reproducing the thickness of quotidian life, is harnessed for the purpose of critique. But critique has a double function: to negate but also to salvage what is valuable and reappropriate it into a new enlarged, richer frame of rationality. This integration in Rizal often takes the form of a fantasy sequence that, as soon as summoned and allowed to dance, is mocked. One sequence evaporates only to be immediately supplemented by a new massing of events, raw sensory materials. This process leads to another accumulation of grotesque shapes, excessive rites, contrivances and commodities become fetish confounding the sacred with the profane, magical paraphernalia (as in Dr. Leeds’ show in the Quiapo Fair reinforced by other indices such as the crocodile in the lake; the ghost in the roof of the Santa Clara Convent, Simoun’s jewelry, and so on). Juxtaposed to the fantastic sequence is the utopian segment often accompanied by the melodramatic atmosphere of scenes and settings haunted by intersecting characters: *filibusteros*, bandits, the dislocated and ostracized, and other stigmatized groups hovering at the margins of the decaying body politic.

We witness the staging of the classic existential predicament. If god or sovereign authority is absent, what indeed will transpire as the human will begins to control the affairs of daily life? An obsession to take charge of both negative and positive forces in his narrative, of both what’s required and what’s accidental, the necessary and the contingent, preoccupies the author. We see this combination of the utopian and the infernal first in the panorama of chaos envisioned by Simoun as he gazed at Intramuros from his surveillance outpost across the Pasig, the river symbolizing motion versus the immobility of the petrified urban surrounding:

“Within a few days,” he murmured, “when from her four sides flames burn that wicked city, den of presumptuous nothingness and the impious exploitation of the ignorant and the unfortunate; when tumult breaks out in the

suburbs and there rush into the terrorized streets my avenging hordes, engendered by rapacity and wrongdoing, then I will shatter the walls of your prison; I will snatch you from the clutches of fanaticism; white dove, you will be the phoenix that will be reborn from the glowing ashes....! A revolution plotted by men in obscurity tore me from your side. Another revolution will bring me to your arms, will revive me and that moon, before reaching the apogee of its splendor, will light the Philippines, cleaned of her repugnant refuse!" (*Fili* 207).

This hope of retribution (the body cure) through the amalgamation of terror, punishment of evil, restoration of justice, purification of the polluted body, and catharsis, is rendered poignantly in the images of the burning of Sodom, destruction of prisons, and the rebirth of the phoenix-like corpus of the community. In a world bereft of gods or any transcendent cosmic power, healing ensues after purgation of the toxic element and the salvation of the body through the collective sacrifice of humans making their own history. Such is the passage of the avenging angels of "the wretched of the earth" (to use Fanon's epithet for the colonized masses during the Cold War), the peasants and proletariat of "the third world," the majority of the planet's residents.

Paradigm Metamorphosis

At this juncture, I propose a decentering of Rizal's two novels by shifting our attention from Padre Florentino's sermon to Rizal's prayer and apostrophe to his country at the end of Chapter 23, "A Corpse." Chased and shot by the *guardia civil*, Ibarra's body disappears in the lake; but here, the *corpus delicti* surfaces to disturb the peace. Several chapters later, just before the planned "apocalypse" at the wedding feast takes place, news of Maria Clara's death is conveyed to Simoun by Basilio, the youthful student who represents the victims of the guilt-stricken system and the hope of the salvation of the motherland. Reminiscent of the vision of a liberated, prosperous homeland at the end of "The Philippines a Century Hence," Rizal takes hold of the floating signifier of Ibarra/Simoun, the duplicitous mediator of past and present, to interrupt the flow of the narrative. Here Rizal, through the critical musings of young Basilio, expresses with disarming intensity the task of the organic intellectual of the colonized, the mission of the critical intelligence: to remember the ordeals and sacrifices of the past generations

in order to heal the break between nature and culture, the wound disjoining psyche and history. This moving farewell to Rizal's youthful past, to Leonor Rivera, all the victims of Calamba and other places. incorporating the fantasized advent of a paradisaical future, calls for meditation with reference to the ultimate agenda of socialist revolution in the decades to come:

And forgetting his studies, with his look wandering in space, he thought of the fate of those two beings: he, young, rich, lettered, free, master of his destiny, with a brilliant future ahead of him, and she, beautiful like a dream, pure, full of faith and innocence, cradled among loves and smiles, destined for a happy life, to be adored in the family and respected in the world, and yet, nevertheless, those two beings, full of love, of dreams and hopes; by a fatal destiny, he wandered around the world, dragged without respite by a whirlpool of blood and tears, sowing bad instead of doing good, dismantling virtue and fomenting vice, while she was dying in the mysterious shadows of the cloister where she had sought peace and may perhaps have encountered sufferings, where she had entered pure and without stain and expired like a crushed flower!

Sleep in peace, unhappy child of my unfortunate motherland! Bury in your grave the enchantments of your childhood, withered in their vitality! When a people cannot offer its virgins a peaceful home, the shelter of sacred liberty; when a man can only bequeath dubious words to his widow, tears to his mother and slavery to his children, you do well to condemn yourselves to perpetual chastity, choking within your breasts the seed of a cursed future generation!

Ah, you have done well, not to have to tremble in your grave hearing the cries of those who agonize in the shadows, of those who feel themselves with wings and yet are fettered, of those who choke themselves for lack of liberty! Go, go with the dreams of the poet to the region of the infinite, vestige of woman glimpsed in a beam of moonlight, whispered by the supple stalks of the cane-breaks.... Happy she who dies wept for, she who leaves in the heart of those who love her, a pure vision, a sacred memory, not stained by common passions which ferment with the years!

Go, we will remember you! In the pristine air of our motherland, under

her blue sky, over the waves of the lake which imprison mountains of sapphire and shores of emerald, in her crystalline streams which the bamboo-canes overshadow, the flowers border, and dragonflies and butterflies enliven with their uncertain and capricious flight as if playing with the wind, in the silence of our forests, in the singing of our creeks, in the diamond cascades of our waterfalls, in the resplendent light of our moon, in the sighs of our evening breeze, and all that in the end evoke the image of the beloved, we will see you eternally as we have dreamed about you: lovely, beautiful, smiling like hope, pure like the light and, nevertheless, sad and melancholy contemplating our miseries! (*Fili* 261-63).

Incarnated in the lost object of the beloved, the vision of a redeemed future blends with the image of antediluvian nature, the landscape of Rizal's youth in Laguna, the scene of his sensuous joy absorbing the fetishized jewelry (history and alienated labor congealed in commodities) peddled by Simoun, the spontaneous impulses of a childhood seeking to resuscitate the corpse of Maria Clara, embodiment of virtue, purity and *jouissance*. Allegorical realism, critique, and dialectical reason coalesce here in Rizal's aesthetic-political project of bringing out the submerged possibilities immanent in the self-contradictory reality of his society, of showing what the force-field of conflict harbors by way of transformative resources and hitherto undiscovered species reserves.

At the heart of this critique of colonial reality, Rizal wrestled with the question of justice, punishment, retribution. The moral predicament of how to restore order and harmony in his life by way of superseding *ressentiment*, revenge and remorse, obsessed him. There is no question about the goal, but the means and method are uncertain, contingent on unpredictable circumstances. How can the natural virtues of pre-Spanish society (inferred from his gloss on Morga) be restored? How can the suffering of innocent children, women, and other victims of theocratic greed and irrational authority be prevented? In the context of the novels and Rizal's life, how can the honor of Ibarra's family (condensed in the humiliation and torture of his father), the eviction of his family and other Calambans from their homes, and the ravishing of all that the clan holds sacred (Maria Clara, Juli, Sisa, women in general), be redeemed? After critique, judgment awaits the guilty in the name of all the innocent victims.

We face the central problem of our time. Can we still invoke "divine violence" or the

intervention of providence and its surrogates in history in the form of explosions of popular resentment, as in the recent terrorism of extremists and the equally violent reaction of NATO and the U.S. quasi-fascist state? The recent phenomenon of flag-waving crowds cheering the execution of Osama Bin Laden by US military troops violating Pakistan's sovereignty stands as an exemplum. Observers have noted how the trauma of September 11, 2001, demands this sequence of happenings. We return to an archaic regime of original sin, inquisition, exorcism, penitence, self-flagellation, catharsis.

Slavoj Žižek tries to rehabilitate the notion of resentment by quoting W.G. Sebald: "Resentment...[according to Jean Amery] 'nails everyone of us unto the cross of his ruined past.' Absurdly, it demands that the irreversible be turned around, that the event [Nazi Holocaust] be undone.' The issue then is not to resolve but to reveal the conflict" (2008, 189). Precisely what Rizal did by exposing the social cancer corrupting everyone, the evils of Spanish colonialism. Thus he affirms the right to resentment in a programmatic strategy of sensitizing the conscience of the multitude (*ilustrados* as well as plebeians, workers, peasants) and its future-oriented will to remember and settle accounts with their oppressors.

Following a counterhegemonic intuition, Žižek stresses the need to carry out the logic of justice by not usurping the role of God to forgive and forget. Revenge has a function in the political economy of humans exercising their freedom to reorganize a world gone awry and arrange things in a more humane and caring ecumene. He calls for revaluing a form of heroic resentment that refuses to compromise and accede to the conciliatory blandishments of any official "Truth Commission." Žižek elaborates:

When a subject is hurt in such a devastating way that the very idea of revenge according to *jus talionis* is no less ridiculous than the promise of the reconciliation with the perpetrator after the perpetrator's atonement, the only thing that remains is to persist in the "unremitting denunciation of injustice." ... Resentment has nothing to do with the slave morality [Nietzsche condemned]....It stands rather for a refusal to 'normalize' the crime, to make it part of the ordinary/explicable/accountable flow of things, to integrate it into a consistent and meaningful life-narrative; after all possible explanations, it returns with its question: "Yes, I got all this, but nevertheless, *how could you have done it?* Your

story about it doesn't make sense!" (2008, 189-90).

Paradoxically, the enigmatic figure of Simoun doesn't make sense—in general, he is mysterious, sinister, the *filibuster* with a thousand disguises (like the Edmond Dantes in Dumas' novel) who disrupts routine by mere circulation, surprising us with the multiple, alternating masks of disingenuous personae. But for Basilio and others, Simoun as the metamorphosed/transvalued Ibarra makes uncanny sense. His cunning subterfuge, his calculus of revenge, is foiled not by its betrayal and accidental discovery (like the Katipunan), but by the report of the death of Maria Clara, the symbol of the purity, honor, and communal joy of the past. That vanished ideal can no longer be recovered, as Rizal intimates when he eliminates the selfless protagonist Elias in the *Noli*, frustrates both Ibarra's and the students' liberal schemes, depicts the tragic killing of Tandang Selo by his grandson Carolino (Cabesang Tales' son), and finally leads Simoun to submit to Padre Florentino's ministry before committing suicide. Such astute contrivance of narrative twists and the manipulation of coincidences may not all be happenstance. After all, they triggered the rise of the Katipunan and the 1896 insurrection, discharging the animus of vengeance into an organized collective effort, even though punctuated and threaded through with spontaneous anarchic outbursts replete with other adventurist, putschist gestures. That whole landscape of the interregnum crisis reflects the vacillations and opportunism of the ilustrado and other elements of the middle stratum caught in multilayered antagonisms. Rizal's plot of settling accounts succeeds as critique, prying open the bowels of self-contradictory reality, and unleashing those dammed-up forces that will renew life and the inexhaustible potentiality of the human species at the turn of the century.

In Quest of Maria Makiling

We cannot pursue here the theme of emancipatory violence and its legitimation (as Žižek does in his treatise) within the complex problematic of means and ends, ethics and teleology, immanence and transcendence. The universal issues of justice, revenge, retribution and social harmony require a protracted investigation due to historical

contingencies and human errors. Suffice it to conclude by moving the discourse to the terrain of the unsaid or unspeakable in contemporary exchanges, “the woman question.”

Earlier we noted that Anderson, either ignorant or wrongheaded, stated that Rizal’s main source of motivation and background for his novels derived from European incidents and intellectual debates. This is entirely false, as Richardson has shown with respect to the militant nationalism of the *movimiento insurreccional* led by Adriano Novicio in Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija in 1884 twelve years before Bonifacio’s uprising. Between the Cavite mutiny and the Katipunan insurrection, at least one important sequence of incidents should be given priority.

On December 12, 1988, twenty young women of Malolos petitioned Governor General Weyler—the notorious terror of Calamba, later Cuba’s “butcher”—for permission to establish a “night school” so that they might study Spanish under Teodoro Sandiko whose socialist background has been mentioned earlier. When a Spanish priest objected, Weyler junked the petition. But the women defied the friar’s prohibition and mounted a courageous agitation, something completely new in the Philippine scene. Eventually they obtained government approval on condition that instead of Sandiko, their teacher would be Señorita Guadalupe Reyes. This incident stirred up local passions that reverberated up to Spain. Writing from Barcelona on Feb. 17, 1889, Marcelo del Pilar, the editor of *La Solidaridad*, asked Rizal to send a letter supporting the fearless women of Malolos. Although busy with annotating Morga’s book in the British Museum in London, Rizal agreed and composed his famous letter in Tagalog, sending it to Del Pilar on Feb. 22, 1889. Apart from the proleptic “el ultimo adios” poem, this letter sums up the itinerary of Rizal’s intellectual adventure. This *filibustero* did not delay or filibuster, as it were, converting this occasion as another mode of “revenge.” It can be construed as an act of demystifying *ressentiment* by a critique of hypocrisy, idolatry, and religious bigotry, in defense of critical reason and militant humanism which recalls Spinoza and Erasmus, even Bartolome de las Casas.

Written three years before Rizal’s return home and the founding of the *Liga*, this letter may be considered a benchmark document of the Filipino revolutionary archive. It distills the entire labor of his studies since his arrival in Spain in 1882, occurring two years after the printing of the *Noli* and two years before the completion of the *Fili*. In this

act of communication, Rizal plays the spiritual mentor, fraternal counselor, and tribal sage all at once. It recapitulates ideas expressed in the Morga annotations, in the *Noli* and “The Indolence of the Filipinos,” and presages the clash between the standpoints of Simoun and Basilio/Padre Florentino and their surrogates.

Central to the letter is the call to bravely assert collective autonomy and rational judgment, and use rational judgment and good will. Rizal advises them to follow what is reasonable and just, and carry out the prime duties of teaching honor to their children, loving one’s fellow citizens and the native land. In that way, rid of ignorance and abject fear, one asserts one’s dignity, courage, responsibility and honor. Tyranny and servitude are thereby prevented by the prudent cultivation of “the light of reason which God has mercifully endowed us.” Sandwiched between the precepts specifically addressed to the maternal role of women and the maxim of neighborly love is Rizal’s biting comments on avaricious friars and malicious Spaniards who mock native women who have shown hospitality and deference. It is this traduced and vilified honor of Filipina women that Rizal cannot let go, not because he aspires to be the model defender of women, a proto-feminist vanguard-party spokesman, but because he identifies the honor of Filipinas with the substance of the nascent *patria*, including that of the Malay race (Zaide 1984, 157). It is an identification enabled by the sensibility of the romantic idealist shaped by folk Catholicism, the archaic *babaylan* tradition, the deism of Voltaire and Rousseau, and the democratic-populist trends drawn from the Protestant Reformation and the Jacobin revolution in France.

What precipitated Rizal’s exaltation of Spartan women as his paragon for his compatriots? In his letters and in the *Memorias*, we saw overwhelming proof of Rizal’s passionate attachment to his mother. Such unusually intense mother-love engenders the negative: his recognition that women are victimized by the patriarchal order, in particular by the mercenary, hypocritical frailocracy. He himself was aware of his chauvinism, his occupying a problematic position, as shown in his over-scrupulous conduct toward a series of paramours up to Josephine Bracken (for the latter as Rizal’s *alter ego*, see the intriguing essay of Dolores Feria [1968]). In several letters to his brother Paciano in 1883, Rizal displayed a more than superficial knowledge of prostitution and women’s subordination in Spain and other European countries: “Women abound even more (here

in Madrid) and it is, indeed, shocking that in many places they intercept men and they are not the ugly ones either” (1993, 89). Experience served as the great teacher of metropolitan truth for the erstwhile benighted colonial subject.

Ambeth Ocampo may have been unjustly criticized for his demythologizing brief that Rizal was acquainted with brothels. He cites Rizal’s observation: “With respect to morality there are some who are models of virtue and innocence, and others who have nothing womanly about them except their dress or at most their sex. Rightly it has been said that the women in the South of Europe have fire in their veins. However, here prostitution is a little more concealed than at Barcelona, though no less unrestrained” (Rizal 1993, 89-90). When he traveled with his friend Dr. Maximo Viola, Rizal displayed eagerness to learn about the condition of these “*casas de palomas de bajo vuelo*” so as to combat the vice, “unnatural and anti-psychological” (to use the terms attributed to Rizal). Dr. Viola added that Rizal hinted to him that “he had never been in favor of obeying blindly the whims of nature when their call was not duly justified by a natural and spontaneous impulse.” When the two friends arrived in Vienna in the course of their six-month travels, two years before the Malolos epistle, Dr. Viola confessed the hero’s “slip”: Rizal “encountered the figure of a temptress in the form of a Viennese woman, of the family of the Camellias or hetaeras of extraordinary beauty and irresistible attraction” (Ocampo 1990).

Rizal’s concern is not so much with female virtue as with the maternal function/role and its incalculable effects. His stress on individual reason and autonomous will, equality and respect for each other, was needed to remove women from the influence of the religious orders; he invokes God’s gift of natural reason to ward off the despotic authority of the friars and correct servile habits. Rizal then concentrates on the function of the mother as progenitor and educator/nurturer: “What offspring will be that of a woman whose kindness of character is expressed by mumbled prayers... It is the mothers who are responsible for the present servitude of our compatriots, owing to the unlimited trustfulness of their loving hearts, to their ardent desire to elevate their sons.” Deploying throughout organic metaphors of growth and fruition, Rizal emphasizes the mother’s crucial role in shaping the infant: “The mother who can only teach her child how to kneel and kiss hands must not expect sons with blood other than that of vile

slaves.” Because mothers are “the first to influence the consciousness of man,” Rizal exhorts them to “awaken and prepare the will of our children towards all that is honorable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure; honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowmen and respect for God.” That is a *desideratum* because the whole community cannot expect honor and prosperity “so long as the woman who guides the child in his steps is slavish and ignorant.” Despite their strength and good judgment, however, the Filipina mother has become a slave, hoodwinked and tied, rendered pussilanimous. In a sudden leap, Rizal ventures a generalization: “The cause of the backwardness of Asia lies in the fact that there the woman are ignorant, are slaves; while Europe and America are powerful because there the women are free and well-educated and endowed with lucid intellect and a strong will.” This explains his subsequent invocation of Spartan women as the models to imitate, notwithstanding his knowledge that their position is underwritten by an iniquitous slave system prevailing in classical antiquity.

The Mother of All Insurgencies

A suspicion disturbs the epistolary self-assurance. Rizal feels that the Malolos women will not listen to him because of his youth, so he submits seven instructions for their evaluation, repeating what he has already stated about the need for dignity, knowledge, independence and altruism. His fifth and sixth advice, however, sounds an alarming note of a fear of betrayal, together with hostility to the superstitious machinations of a “grossly mercenary” priesthood. The fifth proposition seems a warning: “If the Filipina will not change her mode of being, let her rear no more children, let her merely give birth to them. She must cease to be the mistress of the home, otherwise she will unconsciously betray husband, child, native land, and all.” Apprehensively, however, Rizal withdraws his animus and insists on everyone’s equality in enjoying the divine gifts of intelligence and rational judgment.

Rizal’s final words may be interpreted as a cautionary reminder for those cast out of the aboriginal garden: “May your desire to educate yourself be crowned with success; may you in the garden of learning gather not bitter, but choice fruit, looking well before

you eat because on the surface of the globe all is deceit, and the enemy sows seeds in your seedling plot” (1984, 332). Didactic teleology here blends moral realism with satire, impugning the “fathers” and appealing to a future regime of stalwart mothers as the supreme tribunal of national vindication.

We pose here an impertinent question: If the mothers—Sisa, Maria Clara’s mother, and potential mothers like Juli, Salome, Paulita Gomez—fulfilled their role and the patriarchal order is reconfigured or entirely vanquished, would Ibarra/Simoun be conceivable in such a world? If not, then we return to the mirrored reality where the patriarchs exploited and oppressed everyone, making rational motherhood difficult if not dangerous and thus proscribed. But can justice, revenge as payment for debts incurred, an eye for an eye as the fit compensation, be achieved by reviving mother-right (as Bachofen and Briffault once speculated [Hays 1958])?

Let us turn to a classical template that Rizal surely studied. In Aeschylus’ trilogy, *The Oresteia*, the Erinyes or Furies that pursued Orestes for slaying his mother Clytemnestra represent the rule of tribal society; his matricide is settled by the Areopagus, the newly established court in the patriarchal city of Athens where Athena (sprung fully armed from Zeus’s head), frees Orestes of his guilt and terminates the curse. The mandate of heaven is realized. The avenging Furies are propitiated by being made the city’s protectors. Meanwhile, Zeus’ appointment of Athena and Apollo may be construed as the supremacy of justice (moral retribution) and compassion. But instead of reinstating mother-right or equality of men and women, what supervenes is the rule of the landed aristocracy which, as the historian George Thomson points out, occupies an intermediate position between the primitive tribe and the democratic city-state. The court was still dominated by the old patriarchal nobility exercising the duty of purification assigned by the Delphic oracle. However, the oath administered in the Areopagus invokes the Semnai, a trinity of female divinities, the presiding deities descended from the Erinyes (Thomson 1968, 272). These female spirits are subsumed in the figure of Spartan mothers whom Rizal summons and propitiates, not mother Spain, as muses of the project of national redemption (in 1896, Spanish women cheered Rizal’s death; see Craig 1913, 145).

This somewhat neglected masterpiece of communicative action in the Rizal

archive, if read contextually, can sharpen our appreciation of Rizal's materialist dialectics in practice. It demonstrates Rizal's sensitively calibrated merging of flexible tactics and principled strategy in liberating the colony from feudal barbarism and the trauma of religious servitude. It compels us to reorient our thinking so as to give priority to the agenda of gender equality, of combating sexism and female subordination, as the keystone of any emancipatory program of the progressive bloc. It combines Rizal's intransigent critical sensibility with the emancipatory drive that, in its allegorical dynamism, informs (among other projects) his recreation of the folkloric spirit of the nature goddess Maria Makiling (*La Solidaridad*, Dec. 31, 1890).

The goddess Maria Makiling personifies the once fabled harmony of humans and their natural habitat in a utopian golden age, the cooperative alliance of a still unspoiled nature and the tribal grassroot practices sketched by Rizal in his unfinished novel "The Ancient Tagalog Nobility." Spurned by a human lover escaping military conscription, this bountiful virgin of the mountain and forest disappears from sight; the alienation dividing nature and the world of the fathers afflicts everyone, rendering normal life arid, hollow, hopeless. Maria's Eden is lost, become mythical or utopian for the "unhappy consciousness" of modernity (for a contemporary report on the Rizal-Makiling connection, see Lahiri 1999). She bids farewell to her human lover: "Inasmuch as you have had no courage either to face a hard lot to defend your liberty and make yourself independent in the bosom of these mountains; inasmuch as you have had no trust in me, ...I deliver you to your fate, live and struggle alone; live as you can" (1962, 109). This curse/fate of abandonment by a mother-deity, evoking the image of Rizal's mother thrown in jail or his family driven out of their Calamba homes, is the object of Rizal's revenge, the pretext for Simoun's chiliastic fervor and eschatological musings.

Ultimately the dream of return to the legendary past of the mothers and the retribution for the crimes of the fathers may illuminate Apolinario Mabini's insight into the felicitous wedding of necessity and freedom, history and will, in our hero's incommensurable odyssey of exile and homecoming. Uncannily, death and eros converge in this suturing of *patria* and memory-fleshed place, as it did throughout the lover's elegiac call for embraces and kisses from Filipinas in his last farewell. Here is Mabini's tribute to Rizal: "In truth the merit of Rizal's sacrifice consists precisely in that it was

voluntary and conscious. From the day Rizal understood the misfortunes of his native land and decided to work to redress them, his vivid imagination never ceased to picture to him at every moment of his life the terrors of the death that awaited him” (quoted in Quibuyen 1999, 62-63). From his vantage point of exile in Guam because of refusing allegiance to the American colonizers, Mabini urged his countrymen to imitate Rizal’s virtues, just as Rizal, in his temporary refuge in Madrid, encouraged the women of Malolos to acquire those virtues of courage, rationality, compassion and perseverance without which a life of human dignity and freedom is not possible on earth.

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