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The Fantasies of Filipino Identities: The Ironies of Racial Discourse in the 19th Century Philippines[1]

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Abstract

This paper argues that the genealogical deconstruction of the 19th-century idea of "Filipino identity" within the works of notable historical figures such as Luis Rodriguez Varela, Jose Burgos, and the Filipino ilustrados, led by Jose Rizal, reveals its ground on the racial discourse of Eurocentric Hispanophilia. Contrary to the assumption that they were fighting for the emancipation of a colonized people against an unjust Spanish colonial regime, their works are more properly contextualized as political attempts to secure their own parochial privileges. "Filipinoness" and its attendant concept of the nation were, ultimately, not aimed at the destruction of the Empire, but an ideology that desired its perpetuation. Simply put, Filipino identity construction in the 19th century was another instrument in the arsenal of Western colonial thinking, a mask for a deeply instituted neocolonial complicity.

Keywords: *Filipino identity, 19th century nationalism, Luis Rodriguez Varela, Jose Burgos, Filipino Ilustrados*

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual history of nationalism in the 19th-century Spanish Philippines has often been interpreted as an anti-colonial enterprise. The recent showing of the film Gomburza (2023), directed by Pepe Diokno, testifies to this dominant understanding of nationalist struggles by subsequent scholars as championed by the mainstream tradition of Teodoro Agoncillo, Renato

1 Disclosure: A slightly different translated copy into Tagalog of this paper was presented during the ADHIKA Conference last November 28, 2023, held at the Ateneo de Naga University. The translated version is also under consideration for publication in Tagalog language.

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Constantino, and most historians in the Philippines.[2] However, an analysis of this discourse within the historical contexts of the origins of proto-nationalist consciousness in the 19th century would reveal that this traditional understanding is subject to a contradictory hermeneutic of colonial power. In this context, this paper argues that the genealogical deconstruction of the 19th-century idea of "Filipino identity" within the works of notable historical figures such as Luis Rodriguez Varela, Jose Burgos, and the Filipino ilustrados, led by Jose Rizal, reveals its ground on the racial discourse of Eurocentric Hispanophilia. Contrary to the assumption that they were fighting for the emancipation of a colonized people against an unjust Spanish colonial regime, their works are more properly contextualized as political attempts to secure their own parochial privileges. "Filipinoness" and its attendant concept of the nation were, ultimately, not aimed at the *destruction* of the Empire, but an ideology[3] that desired its perpetuation. Simply put, Filipino identity construction in the 19th century was another instrument in the arsenal of Western colonial thinking, a mask for a deeply instituted neocolonial complicity.

To support this thesis, I will: 1) delve into the specific contexts provided by Varela, Burgos, and the Rizal-led ilustrados, where they expounded on the conceptual elements within their respective ideas of Filipino identity; 2) additionally, I will aim to demonstrate that these notions of Filipinoness and the corresponding concept of the nation are fundamentally rooted in Hispanophilia, initially of Catholic origin. And 3) finally, I will contend that their discursive strategy unveils that their proto-nationalist thinking was revolutionary solely from the standpoint of their own interests, rather than serving the greater good of those most oppressed within the Spanish colonial system.

2 For a very informative discussion of the meaning of nationalist historiography, see Francisco Jayme Paolo A. Guiang, "Nationalism in History Writing: Revisiting Teodoro A. Agoncillo and the Nationalists After Him," *Pingkian: Journal for Emancipatory and Anti-Imperialist Education* 6, no. 1 (2021): 32–45. In this essay, he mentions Teodoro Agoncillo, Renato Constantino, Joma Sison, and many others as instances of historians who worked upon the nationalist interpretation and conduct of history.

3 This paper takes the notion of ideology as a product of "truth-distorting social forces." Richard W. Miller, "Ideology," in *Political Philosophies and Ideologies,* ed. H.B. McCullough (Toronto: Wall and Thompson, 1989), 14-16. Miller also writes that for Marx, an ideology "is a system of beliefs and attitudes that distort reality and that result from social forces, characteristic of class societies, having no tendency to bring ideas in line with reality" (ibid.). See also Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968).

Genealogical Deconstruction

In order to appreciate the discourse that I am attempting to accomplish in this work, an elaboration of its methodological presuppositions is in order. First, the study grounds itself upon Jacques Derrida's thinking on deconstruction as *something that takes place within the text.*[4] A genealogical deconstruction is a form of reading that takes place within that space between what a writer or an author "commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses."[5] It is a critical reading that should *produce* "a signifying structure," i.e., a certain relationship between the element of authorial intent and what the writer fails to control within language. What takes place in deconstruction, thus, is a highly determinate form of reading that interlaces two motifs or layers: first, a respectful commentary that recognizes the author's "conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship" instituted in his exchanges with the element of language; and second, a legitimate transgression which, although it remains within and intrinsic to the text,[6] opens up the reading to the manifold richness of meanings that are possible within language.

Now, if deconstruction is something that takes place in a text, what characteristically takes place in deconstruction is *double reading.*[7] The first moment in this double reading "is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism."[8] It is an indispensable requirement within Derrida's whole deconstructive enterprise, without which any critical production "would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything."[9] This insistence on the faithfulness to the text means that the text cannot be transgressed with reference to something outside of it, like a transcendental signified (e.g., a metaphysical or historical reality like God, *Logos*, Absolute, etc.). For Derrida, "[*there*] *is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text;

4 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 2.

5 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*¸ trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158. See in particular the section "The Exorbitant: Question of Method."

6 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*¸ 159.

7 As a heuristic device, we follow here Simon Critchley's account of deconstruction as a textual practice of double reading in his *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 23ff.

8 See Simon Critchley, "A Dedication to Jacques Derrida-Memoirs," *German Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2005): 26-27.

9 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

il n'y a pas de hors texte]"[10] and for this reason, his deconstructive project is not a literary license to say anything irresponsibly.[11] On the contrary, deconstruction demands the patient, meticulous, scrupulous, open, and questioning engagement with texts in order to effect a "rupture" that is sanctioned from within the text itself rather than imposed from the outside. It is this opening up from within the text itself which characterizes deconstructive reading as parasitic: "the reader must both draw their sustenance from the host text and lay their critical eggs within its flesh."[12] In a succinct manner, Derrida describes this parasitism thus:

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.[13]

Within Derrida's intention, therefore, a deconstructive reading remains an ambiguous gesture since while it must necessarily carve itself out of a *structuralist problematic*, it nevertheless remains, more importantly, as an anti-structuralist gesture. As an anti-structuralist however, deconstruction rules out any negative sense of Nietzschean demolition. On the contrary, deconstruction represents Derrida's attempt to appropriate both senses of "Heidegger's *Destruktion* (de-struction, or non-negative de-structuring) and *Abbau* (demolition or better, dismantling)"[14] which are terms that positively indicate the attempt for a

10 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

11 Contrary to those who would claim that Derrida's deconstruction is a license to say anything, Derrida "never accepted saying, or being encouraged to say, just anything at all." Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.,* trans. S. Weber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 144-145.

12 Critchley, "A Dedication to Jacques Derrida-Memoirs," 27.

13 Derrida, Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 24.

14 Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction,* 27. In Heidegger's 1962 lecture *Time and Being* [trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), Critchley notes that *Abbau* is presented as a synonym for *Destruktion*, understood as "the progressive removal of the concealing layers that have covered over the first Greek sending of Being as presence (*Anwesenheit*)" (ibid.).

transformational recovery [*Verwindung*] of metaphysics.[15] Deconstruction is therefore never merely negative; rather, within the text considered as an object of interpretation, deconstruction takes place as a kind of auto-reconstruction of "ensembles," or when applied to ideas, a "genealogical restoration" and not negative demolition.[16]

Such auto-reconstruction or genealogical restoration becomes possible only insofar as the first moment of reading reaches the height of a certain *logocentric* totality which captures it within the meanings sanctioned by authorial intent and achieves recognition of its incapacity to account for all the other various meanings opened up by language itself. This way, the text becomes confronted by its own "blind spots" and opens itself up to the *supplement* provided by interpretation, understood here as the second moment of reading.[17] Such deconstructive interpretation inscribes textuality *within* the text by apparently contradicting its intended meaning [or *vouloir-dire*] with that which has been hitherto "unthought" by the text itself. Thus confronted by what it cannot control, the "unthought" becomes a "point of exteriority" through which a certain deconstruction of the totality can be broached.[18] This way, deconstruction can then be conceived as a subject-less process in the sense that "the text deconstructs itself rather than being deconstructed."[19] Deconstruction, therefore, takes place in a text as in a text that *loses its own "construction,"* from within, so as to open itself to a multiplicity of meanings.[20]

The above-mentioned *implosion* of meanings from within the text, within the logic of Derrida's thinking of the *supplement* as a kind of surplus,[21] is what inaugurates the deconstructive project as one of "intertextuality." To deconstruct is therefore "[to] take apart, to produce a reading, to open the textuality of the

15 See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, *Destruktion* "has no other intent than to reattain (retrieve, *zurückgewinnen*) the originary experiences of belonging to metaphysics by deconstructing (*Abbau*) representations that have become commonplace and empty (Martin Heidegger, "On the Question of Being" (*Zur Seinsfrage*), in *Pathmarks* (*Wegmarken*)(Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 417; see also Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 84-86.

16 Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 2.

17 Cf. the section titled "From/Of Blindness to the Supplement" in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144 –152.

18 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 161-62.

19 Critchley, "A Dedication to Jacques Derrida-Memoirs," 27.

20 Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 2.

21 See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144ff.

text"[22] so that different texts can be interwoven "in an act of criticism that refuses to think of "influence" or "interrelationship" as simple historical phenomena."[23] The text's inscription in intertextuality renders it decentered and dislocated within the chain of possible substitutions provided by the rules of the language-as-system [*langue*]. Thus deconstructed, the text can no longer content itself with the interpretation imposed on it by the dominant tradition. Instead, to inscribe a certain text within intertextuality is to render it susceptible to the richness of meanings in the possibilities given by language and ultimately to the possibility of having no stable identity, origin, or end.[24]

Thus presented, deconstruction becomes a question of a strategy that should not be reduced to ordinary analysis, critique, or method.[25] Specifically, it is not a method because it cannot be transformed or reduced "to some methodological instrumentality or to a set of rules and transposable procedures."[26] Neither can it be conceived as "act or operation" that can be applied by a conscious subject to a passive text, object, or theme. Rather, deconstruction is [something that takes place] as an event that goes beyond the distinction between a subject's activity and object's passivity, acquiring significance only when it inscribes itself within a chain of possible substitutions.[27]

In the context of this study, Derrida's deconstructive strategy is deliberately construed as "a conceptual tool"[28] and not as a master method in the usual sense of the pre-established rules followed in the conduct of science. Rather, we understand deconstruction as a way of reading that aims to open and inscribe the text within the *ellipses* or the *blind spots* to which it has, hitherto, always protected and closed itself against. Such methodological appropriation is justified by the need to interpret traditional historiography using novel

22 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in *Of Grammatology*, xlix.

23 Spivak, "Translator's Preface," lxxxiv.

24 Spivak, "Translator's Preface," xii.

25 Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 1. With regard to the word *deconstruction*, Derrida has always expressed his own reservations about its possible utility and vulnerability to misuse. In fact, in an instance of replying to Richard Rorty's discontent about the emptiness of the word "deconstruction," Derrida admits: "I have often said I do not need to use this word and I often wondered why it should have interested so many people. . . ." See Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1996), 85.

26 Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 4.

27 See Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 4-5.

28 See Jacques Derrida, *Points... Interviews, 1974-1994,* ed. Elizabeth Weber and Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 211.

categories of thinking that lead us to a re-interpretation of historical events. In this way, it is possible for us to avoid the insipid conclusions by traditional historians and reach a critical standpoint where the logocentric view of history (as based on the metaphysics of presence) can be breached so as to open itself to its "other" or to what history has always neglected or failed to articulate. In this case, Derrida's insistence on deconstruction as a kind of "genealogical restoration" when applied to the examination of structures (linguistic, cultural, economic, socio-political, philosophical, etc.) demands a *transformational interpretation* of history into a philosophical discourse. This means that the deconstructive crossing into history must concern itself with the genealogy of concepts, i.e., with those conditions that give rise to the questions that history poses. Deconstruction, in theory and in practice, has always been genealogical through and through with its concern with the history of metaphysics.[29]

It is important to note here that Derrida's genealogical deconstruction owes a lot to the suspicions presented by Friedrich Nietzsche about the values of truth, meaning, and being and his radicalizations of the concepts of *interpretation*, *perspective*, *evaluation,* and *difference*.[30] For Nietzsche, the conception of knowledge as perspective confines the idea of subject and truth as mere results of the activity of interpretation. Applied to historical phenomena, this means that no certitude of knowledge about ourselves and the world is possible in the absolute sense. A genealogical deconstruction, therefore, does not seek secure origins or some stable referent to which meaning can be traced. Instead, it tries to articulate history as the unique intersection of the various socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that lead to the construction of various truths that are established and made operative only insofar as they embody a particular epoch's will to power.[31]

This point can also be made clearer if we realize that Derrida's deconstruction shares similar interpretative or textual ends with that of Foucault's genealogical critique. Both Derrida and Foucault utilized Nietzschean genealogy

29 Derrida, *Points*, 102.

30 Derrida, *Points*, 19.

31 Care must be given at this point, however, against the overtly simplistic reduction of Derrida's methodological framework to Nietzsche's conception of genealogy. In his *Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche conceives of genealogy not in terms of one's conscious intellectual forebear but in terms of those great unknown, cultural events which shape our conception of morality—until now. See Joseph Ward, *Genealogy and its Shadows: Reading Nietzsche with Deleuze, Foucault and Derrida* (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 2007), 161-62. Derrida's Nietzsche seems wrested from the Heideggerian image (see Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles,* trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

as an instrument by which they could carry out their respective philosophical projects.[32] Sharing the Nietzschean inspiration, Foucault's poststructuralist project conceives genealogy as a critique of ourselves as historical constructs "profoundly influenced by the falsifying grammatical structure of our language."[33] In his monumental essay "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*," Foucault clarifies this conception of genealogy as a method to search for origins without the assumption of a substratum already lying there at the origin. This "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary"[34] practice of genealogy as critique not only unmasks essences and foregoes the search for an original identity but also "cultivates the disparate details, events, and accidents found at any beginning."[35] It therefore views events, persons, and things with an eye on how they were historically, socially, and culturally constructed. This involves a critical historical examination of the role of linguistic and cultural practices in the establishment of discourse. Foucault particularly articulates the relationship between the body and history as the main intersection where the genealogical critique is carried upon.[36] For him, the task of genealogy is to "expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body."[37] Genealogy thus rejects history in its traditional form and distances itself from it by rejecting metaphysical and over-arching perspectives of the past. By doing so, genealogy becomes an "effective history" inasmuch as it tries to reveal the contingent historical conditions of existence and avoids the positing of any absolutes.

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32 This study makes no attempt to compare Derrida's and Foucault's respective philosophies. Nor does it attempt to integrate them as complimentary. However, the fact that both of them participated in the post-structuralist critique of Enlightenment reason and eventually crossed each other's paths on the common reassessment of power and ethics is a secure ground for claiming that they share similar deconstructive or interpretative ends. See Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 2-3, 53-89.

33 Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 2.

34 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76-100, at 76.

35 Ibid., 110.

36 Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 153; see also Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy*, 112.

37 Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 148.

a. Early 19th century Criollismo

Given the above arduous theoretical preparation, it would now be possible to carry out the analysis promised by this essay. Recalling the Spanish colonial schema, the *peninsulares* were considered the only real ruling class due to the fact that they were born in Spain and were thus considered superior Spanish citizens. As such, they enjoyed rights and privileges attendant only to the fact of birthplace and due this, to a certain idea of racial and ethnic superiority over the Filipino creoles, i.e., Spaniards born in the Philippines (*hijos del pais*). While there was certainly no essential distinction between these two social classes in terms of putative racial or ethnic stock, the colonial system relegated the creoles under the *peninsulares* simply on the presumption that they had less loyalty to the Spanish Crown and to the Empire and suspected them of being more faithful to the colony where they were born. This was, of course, unfounded since an examination of abundant historical material would repeatedly confirm that these creoles have always thought themselves to be loyal subjects of the Crown[38] and as extensions of Spain's power over the colony, even as they feel a certain special attachment to the land where they were born. Filipino creoles have always seen themselves as *Spanish citizens too* and never advocated independence for the Philippine colony. Their main political struggles would mostly consist of soliciting equal rights with the *peninsulares* and securing their privileged position within the colonial bureaucracy.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries and specifically during the two constitutional periods (1813-15 and 1820-23), this struggle took the form of soliciting from the Spanish Crown the singular right to govern and lord it over the islands in the name of Spain because Filipinos themselves (i.e., creoles), as *hijos del pais*, are—in the words of Luis Rodriguez Valera— ". . . descendants of Spaniards." As such, they saw themselves fit to be the "legal, moral and political authority of the islands and the legitimate representatives of the King,"[39] who are entitled to these privileges simply by the fact that they were Spaniards born in the Philippines and are the best conduits for perpetuating Spanish imperial power. Clearly then, Filipinization, taken in this case as the initial socio-political assertion of Filipino identity, was a *creolism* [*criollismo*]: an insistence on

38 See, for instance, Ruth de Llobet, *Orphans of Empire: Bourbon Reforms, Constitutional Impasse, and the Rise of Filipino Creole Consciousness in an Age of Revolution* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012).

39 Ruth de Llobet, "Luis Rodríguez Varela: Literatura Panfletaria Criollista en los Albores del Liberalismo en Filipinas, 1790-1824," *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, Año XLIV, no. 88, Lima-Boston (2do semestre de 2018): 131-153, 145. Translation supplied. See also Ruth de Llobet, "El poeta, el regidor y la amante: Manila y la emergencia de la identidad criolla Filipina," *ISTOR* 49, no. 2 (2009): 64-91.

"being Filipino" both as a political-cum-racial identity intent at securing very specific parochial rights primarily for their own social and economic class and not necessarily for the good of all the subjects (native *indios* and mestizos) of Spanish colonial *Filipinas*.

Obviously, such identity politics as that of Luis Rodriguez Varela and other creoles during this time was neither liberal nor revolutionary. They were never set against the power of the Spanish Empire, its state rule, and the conduct of colonial affairs. On the contrary, it was a kind of "political opportunism"[40] where exaltation and full support for the Spanish King, the monarchial system, and the perpetuation of imperial sovereignty are expressed with utmost loyalty so that their desired legal and political rights may be given to them. Even their adherence to the supposedly egalitarian principles of Spain's 1812 Constitution, which mandated the legal equality of all subjects of the Spanish empire, was a mere token of submission to State power and its institutions and not as a true sign of liberalism.[41]

In this specific historical period, thus, we see that the affirmation of a specific "Filipino creole identity" was a process set at defining a social "inside" that is ultimately based on race and opposed to an "outside" composed not only of the *peninsulares,* but also of *indios naturales* and mestizos. The idea of what constitutes Filipino identity, clearly, does not apply to everyone within a loosely held geographic colonial *Filipinas* but is rather conceived as a very stringent category applicable *only* to privileged creoles, conceived at par with the dignity of Spanish *peninsulares*. Given their putative racial affinity with the latter and loyalty to the Spanish crown, it would be possible for Filipinos to claim themselves as Spanish citizens too—a privilege accorded *only* to them as *hijos del pais.*

b. Padre José Burgos and Catholic Hispanophilia

The *criollismo* of Luis Varela, Gregorio Sanciangco, and other writers during the early decades and the first half of the 19th century clearly reveals that their identity politics limited the application of what is called Filipino identity only to those who constitute the creole class. In this specific historical time frame, the term "Filipino" was never applied to the native *indios* and to other social and ethnic groups within Spanish colonial *Filipinas.* Instead, it has come to designate a very specific racial and political identity intent at: 1) asserting social, economic, and legal equality with the *peninsulares* and 2) consolidating

40 de Llobet, "Luis Rodriguez Varela," 147.

41 de Llobet, "Luis Rodriguez Varela," 147.

the benefits of their legal and political power against other social groups within the Empire. Securing their very own parochial interests, however, hardly constitutes a liberatory social enterprise. If we mean by liberation a radical movement aimed at combatting social injustice and oppression for the good of the marginalized classes, then there is nothing revolutionary or emancipatory about the *criollismo* of Varela and his fellow creoles. Instead, what we see is a parochialization of socio-political class struggle that has become increasingly detrimental to the less privileged groups within Spanish colonial *Filipinas.*

This kind of parochial mentality is what will be taken up by Padre José Burgos and by later nationalist writers such as Wenceslao Retana and Nick Joaquin,[42] as a proto-nationalist inspiration for the social and political struggles that antedate the emergence of *ilustrado* nationalism and the conduct of the 1896 Philippine Revolution. In his 1864 *Manifiesto* written in the context of the secularization controversy (circa 1826-1870), Burgos cites the life and work of Luis Rodriguez Varela as evidence of the talent, character, and excellence of the Filipino creole,[43] whose political destiny is intertwined with the secular clergy's reformist struggle[44] against the imperial forces that reversed Governor Simon de Anda's (1774) policy of secularization and the religious friars set to take their parishes away from them.

Accordingly, Burgos takes Varela's work and ideas as representative of the general political thought of Manila's elite at that time,[45] which can be used as a plausible starting point for the Filipino secular clergy's own ecclesiastical reformist agenda. By doing so, Burgos engages himself with the continuation of an identity politics that takes "Filipino" as a class concept but with one important difference: it was no longer limited by the idea of race and considered as the sole patrimony of the creoles but one that is already multi-ethnic and inclusive of mestizos and upper-class *indios*.

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42 See ibid., 133ff. Retana's works on Luis Varela include "El precursor de la política redentorista" and "Noticia de dos escritores filipinos: Manuel de Zumalde y Luis Rodríguez Varela," while Nick Joaquin's essay on Varela can be found in his *A Question of Heroes.*

43 See John Schumacher, *Father Jose Burgos: A Documentary History* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 1999), 68-72.

44 In the context of this work, ecclesiastical, social, and political "reformism" is not necessarily bad. What this work aims to argue in highlighting the reformist character of Filipino nationalism is that the same was never set against the abolition of Spanish colonial power but is rather, ironically, complicit with it.

45 See de Llobet, "Luis Rodriguez Varela," 133-34.

Applying the term to the local secular clergy, Burgos reveals a notion of the Filipino akin and almost identical with the notion of Filipino identity given in the early 19th century criollismo: 1) love for Filipinas because of the fact of birthplace; 2) upbringing in Spanish language, culture, and education; and 3) possession of wealth and social prestige; but 4) with a more emphasized love for the Catholic faith. Interestingly, these conceptual elements round up a definition that squares exactly with the elitist Hispanophilia essential to criollismo itself—which is a concept that eschews any notion of colonial emancipation, independence, or revolution. Similarly, in proper historical context thus, there was nothing liberal, emancipatory or revolutionary about Burgos' employment of the term "Filipino" and his instance of identity politics. His celebrated ecclesiastical reformist discourse was simply oriented towards a creative negotiation with the legal and political power of the Empire so that they can advance their own material and economic interests consequent to their possession of the parishes. It was never meant to be a springboard for any radical action that might compromise Spanish sovereignty over Filipinas. On the contrary, Burgos' reformist agenda served to assure the Empire that Filipinos, conceived both as a race and class, stand as faithful servants of the Crown. For Burgos, an authentic Filipino identity is one duly characterized by deep loyalty and eternal gratitude to Mother Spain: he is someone truly hispanized and Catholicized to the highest degree. To quote Burgos: "away from the Spanish name and from the flag that waves over us, we will be nothing, and perhaps worse than nothing. . . ."[46]

Looking closer at the above description, Burgos' inclusion of upper-class *indios* and mestizos into the "Filipino clergy" signifies a notion of Filipino identity that has a more expanded "inside" than the one given by the *criollismo* of the early 19th century. However, the construction of this identity was only possible inasmuch as it effectively discriminated against an "outside" composed of poor and lower-class *indio*s and everyone who did not belong to the Catholic religion. This act of discrimination renders Burgos' anti-friar counter-rhetoric as an ironic reproduction of the epistemic violence of the same racial exclusivism against which it has so eloquently set itself. As with the *criollismo* before him, Burgos' construction of Filipino identity must inevitably be a process complicit with the solidification and perpetuation of the Spanish colonial project.

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46 Jose Apolonio Burgos, "To the Nation," trans. John Schumacher, *Philippine Studies* 54, no. 2 [2006]: 168-209, 196.). This article is a translation of the original 1864 document that appeared in *La America,* VIII, 17 (12 Sept. 1864): 11-3. Fr. Schumacher has previously published the 1888 version of this article under the title "Manifesto which the Loyal Filipinos Address to the Noble Spanish Nation in Defense of Their Honor and Loyalty Gravely Wounded by the Newspaper *La Verdad* of Madrid" in *Father Jose Burgos: A Documentary History* [Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 1999], 56-105. See also Burgos, "To the Nation," 195.

Such discursive complicity implicit within the identity politics of the early 19th-century Filipino creoles and in Padre Burgos' ecclesiastical agenda reveal a deferential engagement with imperial power and its institutions. Both discourses were merely reformist in nature and challenged neither the violence of imperial state power nor the oppressive reality of the established social, economic and political hierarchy. Rather, what both preached was the exaltation of the ruling elite class and their desire to be part of it. Filipinization, in these instances, is the articulation of the desire to be elite, i.e., to be equal with—by being included into or even supplant—the ruling peninsular class so that the Filipinos can share in their elite privileges. It is a right, evidently, which cannot be extended to those lower-class *indios* and other marginalized groups subject to colonial rule (e.g., Chinese and other mountain tribes in the archipelago).

Given the cognitive failure of their identity politics, we realize that the mechanism involved in Burgos' reformist construction of what is called Filipino identity inescapably results in the creation of structures that merely replicate oppositions of social, economic, political, and cultural identities as underlined by the colonial discourse of power. In the years surrounding the Cavite Mutiny of 1872, the apparent liberatory aspect of Burgos' struggle for recognition and ecclesiastical reform would, in turn, be interpreted by subsequent propaganda thinkers such as José Rizal and his fellow *ilustrados* as the first historical starting point for the development of a uniquely Filipino collective subject-consciousness. This interpretation is what probably enabled Fr. John Schumacher to label Burgos as a "proto-nationalist" whose discursive relevance for the 19th-century *ilustrado* nationalist propaganda seemingly remains ambiguous.[47]

In what follows, we will look at the identity politics occasioned by *ilustrado* nationalism since as it takes on the putative liberatory aspect of Burgos' reformist discourse. As we will see, the *ilustrados* will build upon this emancipatory dimension without the recognition of the inescapable contamination of their nationalist discourse on Filipino identity by the negative violence of colonial power.[48]

c. Rizal's Nativism and Secularized Hispanophilia

If the proto-nationalism of Padre Burgos was the historical starting point for the subsequent conduct of Filipino *ilustrado* nationalism, as Fr. John Schumacher, the most eminent social historian today, has claimed, it is

47 See Fr. John Schumacher, "Historical Introduction" in *Father José Burgos*: *A Documentary History* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1972), 1.

48 By "negative violence," we mean the negative effects or evils created by colonialism itself.

imperative to see its consequent course in the nativist discourse propagated as the starting point for José Rizal's and his fellow *ilustrado*s' nationalism. This will give a fuller picture of how this Filipino identity has been valorized as claimed by the nationalist developmental thesis, i.e., the claim that traces a clear and unmistakable line of intellectual influence from Burgos to Rizal to Bonifacio, and from the Propagandists to the revolutionaries of the 1896 Philippine revolution.[49]

As we have already seen in the discussion of Filipino identity in terms of a negotiated Spanish citizenship, the *ilustrados* have effectively displaced their use of the term "Filipino" from its primary creole referent to a more expanded legal and political signification whereby the natives, especially the *principalia*, within colonial *Filipinas* can already identify themselves. But by the very same process whereby its social and cultural inside is specifically defined, the corollary process of social exclusion and marginalization is set against those who will never be able to achieve this *ilustrado* brand of Filipinoness. This can be seen in the way the *ilustrado*s themselves look down upon the *Aetas*, *Dumagats*, *Zambals*, *Kalingas,* and all the other various mountain tribes, and effectively excluded them from the nation by emphasizing access to Spanish education, language, and culture as hallmarks of the *ilustrado* conception of Filipinoness. Imbibing the Eurocentric discourse of superiority, the *ilustrado*s also revealed themselves as heirs to its racism.[50]

For his part, Rizal also espoused the general *ilustrado* conception of Filipinoness as a legal fiction within the general context of their fight for liberal reforms under their assimilationist agenda. But he went a step further in the construction of Filipino identity by positing the hypothesis that the "Filipinos" (loosely understood here as an imagined collective opposed to what is Spanish) originally possess a civilization expressive of an "ancient nationality" prior to the advent of the Spanish colonizers within a pristine past free from the destructive effects of colonial subjugation. This primordialist–nativist stance, which insists on "the necessity of making known the past in order . . . to judge better the

49 See John Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement 1880-1895* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997); and John Schumacher, *The Making of a Nation: Essays on Nineteenth Century Filipino Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991).

50 On several instances, the ilustrados were enraged at being called "chinos, chinitos, negros, igorrotes," that Graciano Lopez Jaena was reported to have remarked, "Why do these Spaniards not comprehend that 'Chinese, Chinks, blacks, and Igorots' are not Filipinos?" Graciano Lopez Jaena, *Diskursos y Articulos Varios (Selected Speeches and Articles)* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1951), 171, cited in Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr., "Tracing Origins: Ilustrado Nationalism and the Racial Science of Migration Waves," *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 3 (August 2005): 605–637.

present . . .,"[51] however, runs counter to Padre Burgos' construction of the Filipino as a negotiated pro-Hispanic and Catholic class identity. For Rizal, Filipinoness is no longer primarily defined by its Catholic heritage but by the common belonging of a group of people to a pre-colonial space and time that is totally outside the sphere of Spanish hegemony. Consistent with his fellow *ilustrados*, then, Rizal would advance a secularist conception of Filipinoness divorced from religious tutelage that seemingly represented another development in their project of political reformism.

Here, it is important to note how Rizal's nationalist discourse had utilized the concepts of "race," "culture," and "civilization" to justify their exclusive appropriation of the Eurocentric discourse of superiority. On one hand, his insistence on the myth of a "pure Malay race" revealed his desire for a purist nativism that can serve as a restrictive basis for determining the demographic material of the nation. On the other side, by emphasizing the capacity of these pure *indios* for Spanish culture and civilization, Rizal further strengthened the social and cultural exclusivism that can filter those who could share in this carefully constructed notion of Filipino identity. As a matter of fact, he would further solidify this racial exclusivism when, in a letter written to Ferdinand Blumentritt, he took recourse to a biologism that admits some races with "more developed" brains than others as a way to explain the racial element important for achieving scientific knowledge. This problematically implies that the "savage mountain tribes" and the *indio* in general are "intellectually inferior" in relation to the European and other white races.[52] While Rizal would eventually mitigate such racial and cultural exclusivism and argue for the "progressivist possibility" that these "other *indios*" can also be educated and henceforth be civilized, it was clear that his fundamental conception of *who or what Filipino identity is* was hinged on the cultural fantasy of Hispanophilia.[53] The scholar Ramon Guillermo insightfully notes this paradox in this puzzling change of heart as Rizal lifts the limit on the *indio's* "*poco capacidad*" (low capacity) or "*inteligencia limitada*" (limited intelligence):

51 Jose Rizal, "To the Filipinos," in *Events in the Philippine Islands,* trans. Encarnacion Alzona (Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 2011), xlvii.

52 See Ramon Guillermo, "The Problem of *Indio* Inferiority in Science: Rizal's Two Views," *Philippine Studies* 59, no. 4 (December 2011): 471-494, 483. The letter mentioned is dated July 4, 1896, and found in *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, vol. 2 (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 511-12.

53 In the present context, "cultural fantasy" refers to the image that the *ilustrados* have of themselves as a collective group in relation to the desire to be "Spanish too" that can never be materialized.

> While maintaining a particular notion of "equality" based on "potential" development of the Malay race, Rizal nevertheless believed in some form of "limited intelligence," and therefore of some kind of racial intellectual superiority (in a limited sense) as well. If he asserts the existence of "the intelligent races of today," it is but logical that there also should be "unintelligent" or "less intelligent" races contemporaneous with the former.[54]

In this context, the belief that those *indio*s who have limited intelligence can overcome their limits and develop their mental abilities through the educational cycle of "use-repetition-habituation," inevitably, only confirms Rizal's acquiescence to the discourse of European and Hispanic cultural and scientific superiority and implies his corollary belief in the "racial inferiority" of the *indio*s. Rizal's magnanimity cannot be more pronounced when he provided the possibility for overcoming the *indio*s' cultural backwardness through a better system of education. This way, those who can "surpass the limit," as evidenced by their education and exposition to the Spanish language and culture, can acquire resemblance with the Spaniards and therefore (together with their faithful performance of civic duties and willing sacrifice of blood and life) claim to "a right to the name of Spaniard."[55] In this way, Rizal's insistence on the myth of a "pure Malay race" and exaltation of a civilized and civilizable Filipinoness as naturally superior over those non-Christian and non-Hispanized native tribes would inevitably amount to the inescapable repetition[56] of the *epistemic violence*[57] of the Eurocentric discourse of superiority.

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54 Guillermo, "The Problem of *Indio* Inferiority in Science," 484.

55 Rizal, *Events*, 342. Footnote no. 260.

56 "Repetition" here is taken as a movement of regress into a previous and possibly worse condition of oppression. While it can also be taken here in an existential sense, the repetition of epistemic violence does not constitute an advancement of life at least from a Kierkegaardian sense. See John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 17.

57 From the perspective of the discourse advanced by this study, epistemic violence is the inevitable result of the Western colonizer's dominance over the colonized. This is necessarily seen in the attempt to produce a body of knowledge about the conquered "other," which essentially amounted to the invention of the colonized. Used to justify the colonial mandate, this perspective, which sees the conquered other as "barbaric" and "uncivilized," constitutes the irreducible epistemic violence that is not simply assumed but is experientially evident in the way colonialism has transpired in its manifold forms around the world. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's description of epistemic violence in her "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

To this extent, the *ilustrado* claim to Hispanicity was an internalization of the Spanish ideology of empire that valorizes the idea of a Filipino as a "race" that must be set against the inferiority of other savage races. Transmogrifying Filipino identity into a race so that it can be on par with the Spaniards, however, constitutes a mere inversion of the European racist ideology that Rizal and the *ilustrados* forcefully abhor. Their utilization of European racial theory to combat the racial insults hurled against them by the friars amounted to a theoretical re-inscription of the very same ethnocentric bias that they were intent on abolishing. The ideological grounding of Rizal's nationalist project was therefore compromised from the start: his mythologization resulted in an act of asserting an assumed and privileged superiority over the non-*indio* inhabitants located within the geo-territorial markers of a yet undefined and indeterminate, even amorphous *Filipinas*. Such mythologization of the Filipino as a race was eventually bound to perpetuate the inescapable cycle of colonial oppression concretized and re-instituted in the hegemonic binary between the Spanish colonizer and the colonized natives. Evidently, such unashamed elitism constitutes itself as another racist ideology that turns out to be a worse transformation of the theoretical violence latent in the imperialist project. Pronouncing the fundamental illegitimacy of the Spanish imperial project, the *ilustrados* set out to displace the colonizers by legitimizing themselves based on a mythical account of originary authority and authenticity. This way, they placed themselves at the upper-class of the colonial strata, expressly declaring themselves as the new conduits of Spanish imperialism and implicitly, as the aspiring new masters of a yet evolving Empire. The eventual perpetuation of the imperialist project was no longer a task for the Spaniards but for the newly emergent hegemon: the Filipino, as defined by the *ilustrados*.

Such argumentation, both ingenious and ingenuous, seems strange given the fact that the various indigenous *non-indio* groups, theoretically excluded as the non-essential elements of the nation, are in total ignorance about their Filipino-ness, and for this reason, would consciously desire to be part of that *ilustrado*-constructed nation. Here, the formation of the Filipino nation as a unified and coherent social group *effected* the unilateral and forcible inclusion of those marginalized indigenous groups located at the peripheries of the Spanish Empire into the homo-hegemony of the nation. Inhabiting the mountainous interiors of the archipelago, these independent indigenous communities left uncontrolled by Spanish colonialism were to be the "internal others" against which the *ilustrados* could measure up their ideal Filipino-ness. Indeed, by a twist of irony, it would be these savage bodies, together with the lowland Christianized [*indio*] natives, which were originally deemed *filipinizable*, which would constitute the necessary material demographic basis for the nation. They would be the ones to be "nationalized" and be subjected to the violence and power of the nation,

and thus, by implication, would remain as the unfortunate recipients of the same deplorable structures of socio-economic-political oppression. In other words, the discriminatory *ilustrado* politics of racial exclusion was to be complemented by the violence of national social inclusion.[58]

For Rizal, the decision to separate *what is Filipino* from *what it is not* was grounded on an imagined idyllic past that returns to a dream of purity uncontaminated by the dirt and dangers of the foreign invader. Such naïve, nativist stance, however, was an invention that readily offers itself as an easy target to philosophical criticism. His assertion that not all races within colonial *Filipinas* are equal in terms of capacity for acquiring European civilization[59] amounts to a repetition of the racism of the Spaniards. Consistent with the thinking of his fellow *ilustrados*, Rizal's re-inscription of racial bias within his liberalist project of achieving equality through legal and political means is betrayed by the arbitrariness with which he excluded the *Aetas* and those second-wave Malays who intermarried with the Negritos and eventually settled into the hinterlands (ancestors of Igorots, Ifugaos, Guiananons, Apayaos, etc.) from the imagined modern community of Filipinos. As we have seen in his *Annotations*, *only* those *indios* who settled in the lowlands, converted to the Catholic faith, and acquiesced to Spanish colonial rule can be considered as "pure *indios*" and thus, be labeled as real ancestors of Filipinos (i.e., Bikolanos, Tagalogs, Kapampangans, Bisaya, Ilokanos, and other lowland native groups). Only these lowland Catholicized "Malays" can ultimately gain acceptance into Rizal's imagined nation and enjoy the benefits of the liberal reforms that can accrue to them by virtue of being Spanish citizens too. To this extent, Rizal's and the other *ilustrados'* construction of Filipino identity reveals itself as a racial and nativist exclusivism that is ultimately worse than the Spanish racism that they wish to combat and abolish. This obstinate racism, shared by Marcelo del Pilar, Graciano Lopez-Jaena, and Antonio Luna, effectively extended its racial exclusion also to the *Moros* and the other native tribes (collectively designated as *lumads*) of the south in Mindanao, whose territories were never fully controlled by the Spanish empire and thus were never fully subjugated by colonial rule. These excluded non-Christian peoples enjoyed full sovereignty over their respective geographic domains and were relatively undisturbed by Spanish

58 See Aguilar, "Tracing Origins," 620ff.

59 Aguilar, "Tracing Origins," 612. In modern times, an example of this is the forcible inclusion of the Lumads around the country into the sovereignty of the Philippine state. See the excellent book by Arnold P. Alamon, *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad Struggle in Mindanao* (Iligan City: Rural Missionaries of the Philippines–Northern Mindanao Sub-Region, 2017).

colonial hegemony.[60] Because they cannot be filipinized, they can simply be reduced into quantitative insignificance. Rizal's unmistakable racism cannot be more pronounced: "The magnitude of the savage races does not matter because they constitute only a small number of souls, and the Filipinos do not demand the extension of the liberties of constitutional life over the savage tribes."[61]

At this juncture, it becomes clearly manifest that Rizal and the *ilustrados* have a very parochial view of reform as possible only for the elite and exclusive Filipino class. The nation-form, which consists of the sentimental love for *Filipinas* as *patria chica* and deep loyalty to Spain as *madre patria*, *effectively precludes* given social classes from being included in the Filipino nation. In other words, the nation is inclusive only of those social classes capable of reaching the required ideal of Filipinoness, and by a dialectical negation, is also designed to exclude those socio-cultural groups which cannot live up to the lofty standards of Filipinoness. The nation as a spiritual principle, to recall E. Renan's description,[62] implies that not all inhabitants within the then geographically indeterminate Spanish colonial Philippines can become members of the nation. This stringent concept of Filipinoness simply implied that belonging to the nation was not meant for all inhabitants within *Filipinas*.

Such an arbitrary act of "othering," however, reveals itself as paradoxical. The same Enlightenment discourse about the universal human equality of all peoples, whereby Rizal can assert Filipino equality with the Spaniards and other European nationalities, was ironically utilized as the same basis by which the *ilustrado*s can pronounce their superiority over those native *indios* who either resisted Spanish colonial rule and refused evangelization or did not encounter Spanish civilization and accepted the Catholic religion. By conflating race with the capacity for culture, Rizal had utilized racial theory to lay down

60 The foremost examples would be the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao, which have repeatedly emphasized their sovereign autonomy from colonial rule during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. For a detailed understanding of this history, see Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1908). It is interesting to note that in his outline of the population of Jolo circa 1903, he makes a quite clear distinction between Chinese, mixed Chinese, Filipinos, and mixed Filipinos as different from Moros. "The bulk of the inhabitants of the island is made up of Filipinos, Chinese, and Moros" (35). Saleeby intimates that these Filipinos "were originally 'camp followers' and still feel as strangers in the land" (36). After 1903, he infers that the "influx of Filipinos from Zamboanga and Kotabato" was due to the increase in the construction of military posts and garrisons (36).

61 Rizal, *Cartas Entre Rizal y el Professor Fernando Blumentritt*, xvii, cited in Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr., "Tracing Origins," 622.

62 See Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990): 8-22, 19.

the condition and demonstrate the possibility for legal equality with the elite Spanish class. But in doing so, he restricted civilization and Hispanization only to those *indios* who belonged to the "pure Malay" race. Rizal's nativist exclusivism amounted to an elitism which effectively created a spurious distinction between a carefully defined racial *inside* that must be set against those non-Hispanized and non-Christian tribes outside the sphere of Spanish colonial hegemony. This vacillation between the demands of universal human equality and the restoration of their colonial privileges put the *ilustrados* themselves within an obvious double bind; a paradox explained succinctly by Vicente Rafael in his commentary on Schumacher's Burgos *Manifiesto*: "Here then lies the other side of nationalism's Christian-colonial origins; it is infused as much by an originary cosmopolitanism—the sense of a certain foreignness at its foundation—as it is contaminated by an intractable racism."[63]

CONCLUSION

The clarification of the precise conceptual elements that constitute *who or what the Filipino is* leads to the fixation of Filipino identity within a process of social inclusion and exclusion that merely repeats the Eurocentric racism of the Spanish discourse of superiority. The emphasis on identifying and the achievement of "Filipino identity" or a certain "Filipino-ness" as the ground and project of *ilustrado* nationalist thinking reveals Filipinization itself as a social and historical process whereby a clearly defined social 'inside' is delineated from a carefully excluded social 'outside.' This happens precisely when the differential construction of Filipino identity: 1) takes the form of a claim to a collective subject position that has its basis on the fact of birthplace, putative racial stock, social status, and cultural specificity which serve as requisite conceptual elements (inside) for one to be accepted into the class of "Filipinos"; and then 2) proceeds to discriminate against those classes or group of people who do not share the same requisite conceptual elements (outside). From this inside/outside distinction, 3) a claim to a special affinity with the exalted identity of the ruling elite class is posited as a basis for soliciting their own privileged status and enjoyment of parochial interests against those who wield legal and political power. Historically, the above instances of this discourse in Varela, Burgos, and the Ilustrados contextualize and demonstrate how *ilustrado* identity politics have always operated within an inside/outside distinction that shows nationalist discourse as inescapably tied up and complicit with the totalizing violence of Spanish imperial and colonial power.

63 Vicente Rafael, "The Gift of Nationalism: Comments on John Schumacher's 'The Burgos Manifesto,'" *Philippine Studies* 64 (2016): 305-311,310.

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