

The Impact of United States Colonization on the Rizalian Tradition in Cinema and Literature: A View of the Popular Arts as Postcolonial Historiography

Joyce L. Arriola

The essay analyzes the ideological impact of United States (US) colonization on artistic productions on Jose Rizal, specifically in literature and film and how these works contribute to the discourse of the popular arts as postcolonial historiography. US cultural impact could be gleaned from how US cultural policies influenced Rizalian biographies and how these inspired literary and cinematic productions on the hero. The Rizalian texts cited are films and novels produced from the time of US colonization to the Centennial celebration in 1988, published biographies and postmodern fictional takes on Rizalian biography. It discusses semiotic/linguistic constructions of Rizal attributed to US influences, artistic/literary forms, models and movements. It also analyzes the issues of spectatorship influenced by the Filipino reception of US culture. Rizalian filmmaking and literary productions are theoretically linked to the Hollywood narrative tradition and the models of literary education brought by the Thomasites. Contemporary historiography and Rizalian cinema are therefore offered as sites of analysis for more open and liberal forms of aesthetic inquiry and theoretical discourses on the subject. This is a revised version of the paper read at the Sangandaan 2003: An International Conference on Arts and Media in Philippine-American Relations, 1899-2002 held on July 7-11, 2003 at the Philippine Social Science Council in Quezon City.

United States (US)-Philippine cultural relations are one long history of racial perception contradicting colonial political aims. The cultural policy of the US descended from the racial and political nature of the beginnings of conquest of the Philippines from 1889 to 1903. The overall agenda of the pacification of the

Filipinos came in a package where the colonizer used the weapon of the colonized (i.e. local symbols) in order to project an image of benevolence.

This essay presents the historical and cultural impact of the American occupation on Jose Rizal-inspired artistic productions, firstly, as an instrument of assimilation and secondly, as a venue for the native response of the Filipino artists in the imaging of Rizal as national symbol.

First, how did the US discover Rizal, a hero of the Reform Movement of the 19th century who was martyred for his writings that supposedly fueled the fires of the revolution?

The politics of US-Philippine relations began, in the words of Lucilla Hosillos as an “effect, not a cause” of US interests (1969: 26) . The Philippines was strategic for US business interests in the Orient, for the planned naval and military stations, and the religious work of the Protestant missionaries. The fact was that US colonialism was justified, in the words of a US Senator: “to protect the Filipinos from European predators waiting in the wings for a US withdrawal and to tutor them in US-style democracy” (Miller, 1982: 2). After the series of heated debates in the US Senate between the colonialists and the anticolonialists and the participation of the US press, McKinley allegedly fell on his knees and announced the “benevolent assimilation” of the Philippines on December 21, 1898.

The US side of the story was punctuated by the “desire” to civilize the nation, but the reality of the Filipinos in the islands was another matter. The continuance of the hostilities among the natives led to negotiations with the US – a bitter episode in Filipino-US historical relations in which President Emilio Aguinaldo was perceived to have been duped. It was, so to speak, an unequal alliance. Here was the US reneging on her earlier intentions “to civilize Filipinos,” and the natives misreading the murky details of these alleged intentions. The Filipino euphoria and nostalgia over 1896 and 1898 had to be quelled and the US authorities found themselves looking to another pressing matter – something beyond

political control and economic interests. Most scholars point to subjugation of a different kind – something not overt and openly declared, in which consciousness could be used as the broader reference where meanings and their symbolic manifestations are cited and contested.

To do research on the Filipino mind, the Taft Commission was sent to the Philippines on April 7, 1900 and side by side with political training, the Thomasites introduced US education and letters to the Filipinos; “(the) English language, local color, imitations, adaptations and other literary manifestations” (Hosillos, 1969: 29). The Filipinos were to be lured to a foreign way of looking at native reality and the business of “educating” the natives led to the US discovery of Rizal.

Reports of the Taft Commission as well as other expatriates extolled Filipino admiration for Rizal. As the US became drawn to Rizal, they realized how his reformist beliefs complemented US democratic ideals. As Hosillos says: “Rizal’s stalwart figure dominated the scene, and his progressive thinking, liberalism, and modernism paved the way to US discovery of his novels” (1969: 33).

Floro Quibuyen (1999), in his book on the historical processes involved in the US appropriation of Rizal, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism*, laments the loss of the Filipino connection to the spirit of the 1896 revolution as a result of the US colonial regime and the co-optation of the local elite and politicians. Quibuyen agrees with the ideological orthodoxy of Rizalian discourse, which pertains to a selective view of the hero as pacifist, as an anti-cleric, and as a romanticized victim of the Spanish imperial past. He ascribes these orthodoxies of the Rizalian discourse to traditional historiography (linear, essentialist, officializing) and the reception of Filipino scholars to the 19th century reform movement and the Katipunan uprising (an evolutionary and foundational idea of the 19th century as the quintessence of native revolt against an

abusive empire) that was evasive of the underpinnings of colonial revolts that bear so many contradictions.

Quibuyen welcomes Reynado Iletó's contrary views on historiography, the "revolution from below" that he articulates in *Pasyon and Revolution* - where liminal voices of peasants and their narratives in a supposedly "religious" text as the *pasyon*, could bring out another view (albeit secular) of the struggle. He also agrees with John Schumacher's thesis that the Americans lured the Filipinos from a "sense of gratitude to Spain" (1999: 296). Quibuyen complements the aspects the two authors emphasized but makes his own assertion that the Filipinos have been systematically duped to acquiesce to US colonial policies through the appropriation of Rizal as symbol. Quibuyen's central method of argument comes down from thorough historical inquiry. Beginning with the massive research by the Schurman Commission until the implementation phase by the Taft Commission, he says that the US adopted Rizal. The US encouraged the folk-passion rituals associated with his image and the almost obsessive public adulation by sponsoring ceremonies, holidays, erecting monuments, producing stamps, busts, naming streets, curricular integration and other official actions to promote Rizal among both the Filipino masses and the elite. As Quibuyen says: "It was a stroke of genius, therefore, on the part of the US regime to have seized the symbol of Rizal to further their own cultural agenda. However, during the early years of the new regime, the US appropriation of Rizal was resisted" (1999: 277-278). This resistance could have descended from the nationalist and folk movements, which discerned early how Janus-faced US intentions were. Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr. cites in his research on the early years of cinema that this discernment could have been translated into another realm - in terms of appropriation and response (or should I say "reconstruction"): "Surely, the colonizer's culture penetrated all aspects of life in the colony, but things did not happen without some native resistance. Cultural practice was a struggle to resist being alienated from one's own identity" (1998: 24).

Quibuyen's use of archival records, history books, first-hand accounts and documentary sources is impressive but he fails to include a critique of historiography through alternative sources to complement his argument. I am referring to literary and cinematic sources. In view of this perceived research gap, the paper proposes a review of the cultural productions, specifically the literary and cinematic arenas, to analyze the US appropriation of Rizal as national symbol during the Commonwealth and its complex aftermath. The essay will later shed light on how US-educated intellectuals continued the romantic evolution of Rizal that began in the first decade of US rule (and whose exposure and familiarity with Spanish literary forms enabled them to meld these into new genres and influences) and partly enshrined by local artists who followed such an artistic path with a curious blend of orthodoxy and quiet resistance through a variety of modes.

Why does Rizal persist as an academic question, a theoretical problematique? A line of argument goes that for as long as the "original" Rizal has not been reclaimed to enlighten current discourse, the colonial frame will inform consciousness, a malaise Quibuyen calls "a nation aborted" (1999). This observation is nothing new. Even Japanese administrators (who were coming from a different, imperial context) during the Pacific War noticed how the US idiom had come to dominate the Filipino mind. Victor Gosiengfiao cites the Official Journal of the Japanese Military Administration of the Philippines: "The Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Army in the Philippines, proposing to 'speak frankly' in his much publicized warning to the nation said: 'So long as you are unable to free yourself from the obsession for that Americanism which has undermined your life and vitality, you will continue to deteriorate spiritually and will finally be led to the very brink of racial extinction'" (1983: 239).

Another problem is: What links Rizal to the US? What has imperial track record to do with US-Hispanic tension?

Perhaps there is also the more deeply-rooted US dislike of any Spanish legacy that necessitated a review of Rizal's image as symbol. To Spanish scholars, this is called the "Spanish Black Legend." This legend deals with a framework of "historical stereotyping" of the Spaniards. To quote Joseph Sanchez, the black legend states the "the widespread Spanish colonialism became a source of gossip for the propagandists who despised Spain's grip on the New World" (1990: 3). This enmity against the Spaniards seems to have its roots back to the time when Christopher Columbus crossed to the Americas in the name of Spain.

The Protestant Reformation aggravated this anti-Hispanic sentiment and this spread to countries like England, France, Germany, the Dutch Lowlands and other nations which were affected by the religious schism caused by issues pertaining to Catholic doctrine and the papacy. The Spanish Inquisition, its harsh "religious orthodoxy," (4) and the publication of *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Dominican friar Bartolome de las Casas, which he submitted in 1542 to Charles I of Spain, complicated the matter. Since then La Leyenda Negra or The Black Legend has informed US relations with Mexico and other Hispanic countries. The same spirit was present in McKinley's concern not to let the Philippines go in 1899 – at least not yet.

McKinley's pronouncement that the US could not leave the Philippines to Spain reflects the anti-Hispanic nature of the US invasion. The recovery of Rizal's works is therefore linked to the US's favor given to the work of the Protestant missionaries, Rizal being known for his anti-clerical stance and his Masonic associations. Also, the pacifist nature of Rizal could direct the Filipino mind away from ideas that fuel local unrest and brewing resistance by peasant groups. Vincent Rafael calls this politics of cultural relations "white love." He says:

Conjoining love and discipline, benevolent assimilation was meant to enable the colonizer as it liberated the colonized. What secured this link between an ideology

of benevolence and the repressive-productive institutions of discipline? How was it possible to sustain the fiction, fostered by U.S. official discourse and eventually accepted with varying degrees of alacrity by Filipino collaborators, that colonial rule amounted to democratic tutelage? How did white love and native subjugation become mutually reinforcing? (2000: 23)

The “mythmaking” built around Rizal can be considered the work both of the fictionist and of an unconscious literary artist known as the historian. Hayden White (2001), in his discourse on *The Historical Text as Literary Artifact*, decodes history as a text, which consists of elements found in traditional literary works. The historian has at his disposal historical facts, but he reworks the narrative through some elements of emplotment that the reader recognizes and eventually participates in. Drawing from Northrop Frye’s notions of archetypes, he draws the emplotments of the tragic, the comic, the romantic and the ironic, which influence a reader’s reception of a set of events in a historical account. White also draws from the work of structuralists like Claude Levi-Strauss and Roman Jakobson in analyzing the role of language in shaping a sense of a plot. He avers that history is “but also a complex set of symbols which gives us directions for finding an icon of the structure of those events in our literary tradition” (1718).

The point here is not only to “save” Rizal from the solitary grip of official history but to present the alternative texts where he appears as part of the people’s cultural life. It is possible to present these texts as “alternative historiography”. It is assumed that the historian, being himself or herself a chronicler and interpreter like the journalist, is predisposed to use literary writing.

The role of narrative tropes is crucial in understanding historiography or the production of a historical text – a construction that can be mediated by intersubjectivity. History is in essence metahistory for it provides signification of the processes involved in the production of a historical text or event given the

contextual discourse that surrounds linguistic construction. As White avers:

This is what metahistory seeks to do. It addresses itself to such questions as, What is the structure of a peculiarly historical consciousness? What is the epistemological status of historical explanations, as compared with other kinds of explanations that might be offered to account for the materials with which historians ordinarily deal? What are the possible forms of historical representation and what are their bases? What authority can historical representation and what are their bases? What authority can historical accounts claim as contributions to a secured knowledge of reality in general and to the human sciences in particular?." (2001: 1712)

At this point, it is imperative to cite selected literary and cinematic Rizalian productions and the possible influence of the literary styles and movements that the early US teachers brought with them.

The early Filipino writers in English were introduced to the Romantic school through the literary models used by US teachers, not to mention the natives' earlier introduction to medieval melodrama through the Spaniards. They brought the writings of Longfellow, Poe, Irving, Hawthorne, Bryant, Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Coleridge, Lamb, Tennyson, Macaulay, Thackeray as well as the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer. This literary discipleship led to what Hosillos termed the Filipino writers' response of "imitation, selection, and optation" (1969: 42). It could also account for the "formalist" training of most literary students until the 1960s, which emphasized form over content, aesthetics over critique. And since local cinema has borrowed much from literary training in the early decades of film education in the Philippines, the Romantic (and later the Realist school) strain has made an impact on the reading fare and predisposition of the early filmmakers and literati.

I.P. Soliongco notes the willingness of the Filipino writers in English to ape their masters and the willing cooperation of their audience. He said:” Finally, in their colonial-mindedness, the American audience of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth, could not forsake the admittedly intoxicating excellence of English literature for the virile originality of their own” (1983: 215). It will be noted later in this paper that many of the Rizalian productions until the 1950s were written in English.

Bienvenido Lumbera in his essay “From Colonizer to Liberator: How U.S. Colonialism Succeeded in Re-inventing Itself after the Pacific War,” underscores the political maneuvering of the US during the Commonwealth years through the Manuel Roxas presidency up to Ramon Magsaysay’s ascent to power and how she transformed herself from “colonizer” to “liberator” (2000: 19). After helping quell the communist insurgency and conquering popular entertainment through music and film, the US encouraged educational reforms which in the long run would induce bias and prejudice against one’s own identity through a deep feeling of colonial inferiority.

It is important to underscore the quality of existing Rizalian biographies and their crucial role in understanding the imaging of the hero to link biography with artistic productions, and fact with hagiography. Rizalian scholar Ambeth Ocampo proposes a return to primary sources to understand Rizal’s humanity as well as his seeming complexity as a historical figure. Ocampo notes that pre-war and post-war Filipinos have been molded by a view of Rizal via secondary works on which more recent biographies are based. These secondary works include: Wenceslao Emilio Retana’s *Vida y Escritos del Dr. Jose Rizal* (1907); Austin Craig’s *Life, Lineage and Labors of Jose Rizal* (1913); Rafael Palma’s *Biografía de Rizal* (1938); Leon Ma. Guerrero’s *The First Filipino* (1963); and Austin Coates’ *Rizal: Philippine Nationalist and Martyr* (1968) (2001: 7).

A look into these biographies will yield two pictures of Rizal: as anti-Spanish and, in the words of Renato Constantino, “an American-sponsored hero” (Ocampo, 2001:8). Retana’s 1907 biography pictures Rizal as pro-Spanish but misunderstood by the colonizers. Craig, himself compelled by his US sympathies, attacked Retana’s work and published his own book on Rizal, which pictured the Spanish colonial administration as evil and implies the goodness of the US option. Ocampo quips: “These two different men are important because their books reflect the reconstruction of Rizal for specific uses. Retana made Rizal pro-Spanish, while Craig painted him anti-Spanish” (2001: 9). Carlos Quirino’s introduction to Leon Ma. Guerrero’s *The First Filipino* (1974) reflects the evolving historiography pertaining to Rizal:

Guerrero has an advantage over previous biographers of Rizal: over Wenceslao E. Retana, the prolific Spanish biographer who suffered from the defect of trying to depict his erstwhile adversary as ever loyal to Spain; over Austin Craig, the American history professor who began the hagiographical trend, and over Rafael Palma, the first to interpret correctly the feelings and aspirations of Rizal, but whose Masonic convictions prevented him from rendering an impartial judgment on the religious aspects of the hero’s life. (xiv)

It might be instructive to analyze the milieu in question. In the early years of the US occupation, not only was the Philippines at the receiving end of “political benevolence,” she was also subjected to cultural influences which include, among others, the English language, education through the Thomasites, and Hollywood films. Under the sponsorship of the US authorities, several Filipinos were sent to the US to be educated. Some went to New York film studios (Pareja, 1990) and came back to the Philippines to influence prewar filmmaking. The first cinema houses were built in Manila in the first decade of the 1900s. These included

Anda, Paz, Cabildo, Empire, Majestic, Comedia, Apollo, Ideal, Lux, and Gaiety (Pareja, 1990).

It was not long after that US entrepreneurs found prospects for producing local films. The most likely project: a film on Jose Rizal. In 1912, two companies and three US producers were to make the first Filipino movie. Harry Brown collaborated with Dr. Edward Meyer Gross on the latter's hit stage play to make the film *La Vida de Rizal*. Upon hearing this, Albert Yearsley rushed his own script for the *Life of Doctor Jose Rizal* with the Spanish subtitle *El Fusilamiento de Dr. Jose Rizal*. Yearsley's film was even shown a day ahead of the Gross-Brown film. *La Vida de Rizal* was premiered at the Grand Opera House on August 23, 1912 (Pareja, 1990). The only difference between the two films was the less featurized aspect of the Yearsley movie, a 20-minute documentary centering on Rizal's execution. Also, Julian Manansala did *Dimasalang* (1930), which is "about Rizal and his role as writer for *La Solidaridad* in molding the consciousness of his countrymen" (Lumbera, 2000: 76).

Although the Philippines was released from direct foreign control by the end of the second World War in 1946, US cultural imperialism persisted until the 1950s when cinema became the staple entertainment in downtown Manila theaters. However, it is possible that the dominant symbol has been met by native resistance, in whatever form, especially when local producers used the very same medium of the cinema to strike back at their former colonizers. Clodualdo Del Mundo, Jr. says that even during the US regime, "resistance was expressed in various popular cultural media, among them the Filipino cinema" (1998: 25). Del Mundo's claim was based on the ability of local producers to combine Spanish influences of the *zarzuela* and *comedia* in the storyline while using the plot-driven and character-driven examples of Hollywood and while experimenting with Thomas Edison's interesting contraption otherwise called the film camera. Del Mundo assumed this is *Filipino cinema*, at least at its most nascent stage.

Aside from Rizal's seeming popularity as hero and icon, his towering image in folk culture and myth led to his veneration as local god in Laguna. After his body was exhumed in 1898, Rizal's deification as cult figure was fully entrenched. The truth about Rizal is that his image becomes more potent in the realm of legend rather than truth. Filipino writer NVM Gonzalez says: "In a voice that is imperious but wordless, myth promises nothing except to take us away from the logic of common day" (32).

It was then a matter of cultural exigency that Rizal would inspire such enthusiastic filmography. The Filipino people during the period of the Commonwealth was also in search of a hero in a period of transition and the US for its part needed a pacifist. The US took him as local hero and played up Rizal's pacifist ideas in order to counter the peasant uprising. A single, credible voice is what Rizal represented to the US so that with its patronage and influence, the next decades would see Rizal's novels filmed: Jose Nepomuceno's *Noli Me Tangere* (1930); Gerardo de Leon's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* (1961, 1962, restored by Harold Brandes of Germany Federal Archive and Goethe-Institut-Manila, 1990); Eddie Romero's CCP-produced 12-hour miniseries *Noli Me Tangere* (1992) and Celso Ad Castillo's *Sisa* (1998) to name only a few. With De Leon's and Nepomuceno's legacy, the Filipinos learned to look for the Rizal materials as source of "distinctive character types" (CCP Encyclopedia: 20) and reference on the Spanish colonial experience.

There were other biographical incursions: the romanticized Rizal in Ramon Estella's *Bubay at Pag-Ibig ni Jose Rizal*; and the documentary Bookmark-Ateneo production *Jose Rizal: Bubay ng Isang Bayani*. Other Rizalian productions include *Maria Clara* (1938); *Sisa* (1951); *Elias, Basilio, Sisa* (1972) (CCP Encyclopedia: 74).

During the Centennial of Philippine Independence in 1998, there was again this surge of interest in his life. The most recent feature films about his life include *Rizal sa Dapitan* (1997) by

Tikoy Aguiluz, *Jose Rizal* (1999) by Marilou Diaz-Abaya and *Bayaning Third World* (1999) by Mike de Leon.

After decades of unconscious mythmaking, Rizal's baptism as popular icon was inevitable.

Before I discuss the subsequent impact of the American years on Rizalian film productions, let me point to the literary origins of the Rizal biofilms and the source of the prevailing romantic tendency.

Zoilo Galang's *For Dreams Must Die: Historical Romance of Jose Rizal and Leonor Rivera or Mapaparam ang mga Pangarap* (1958) represents a romanticization of Rizal, which is rooted in the Anglo-US roots of the literary influence brought by early US teachers of literature. By transforming real life romance into a fictional take on the events and circumstances surrounding the tragic end of Rizal and Leonor's love, *Mapaparam ang mga Pangarap* succeeds in creating an image of Rizal as romantic lover and hero. As Rizal enters the realm of romance, the people are kept farther away from the ideological circumstance that led to the lovers' tragic end. The romanticized Rizal is the most profound evidence of the reconstruction of a national symbol through a US literary framework. Whether this idyllic view of Rizal bears some native protest is not the object of this study. As a study of impact, this exploration intends only to match works with historical critique.

The US regime was also the background in the transformation of Leonor Rivera and Josephine Bracken, two women in Rizal's private life but very public love, into literary constructs. As Dolores Feria says: "The one indubitable index to more than a half century of the systematic emasculation of Rizal and his whole tradition is the sales volume of the all-time best-seller of Rizaliana, *For Dreams Must Die*" (1968: 108).

Severino Montano's *The Love of Leonor Rivera: A Tragedy in 3 Acts* (1954) represents the height of the romanticization of Rizal's personal life by projecting Leonor as romantic heroine, loyal to Rizal to the bitter end. First performed

by the Arena Theatre of the then Philippine Normal College in 1953, the play was presented in different versions, but the lasting impression left by the performances is the depiction of a loyal and pained romance between the hero and heroine due to the former's nationalistic fervor and the latter's overwrought filial obedience. The image exacerbates the iconography most Filipino romance writers are guilty of and unabashedly departs from the conflicted and complex nature of Rizal's heroism.

Arnold Molina-Azurin (1990) could not help but notice this: "The postwar years then saw the enthronement in the popular imagination of the saccharine and tearjerker version of Leonor Rivera through playwright-director Severino Montano's idealized dramatization" (8).

The major characters in this love drama include his childhood love Leonor Rivera and Josephine Bracken. As evidenced by the body of works glorifying the traits of Maria Clara, Rizal's young cousin is favored over the "estranjera" Josephine whose fatherless diasporic background turns her figure into soap opera.

Literary productions proved to be in favor of Leonor (as in the case of Galang's *For Dreams Must Die* and Montano's many versions of *The Love of Leonor Rivera*). Scholars like Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil, Salvador Lopez and Dolores Feria are in agreement that the Filipinos' satisfaction with the image of Leonor is part of the romantic strain that is found in early Rizalian productions. It must be understood that the Rizal who fell for Leonor was the young Pepe before his sojourn to Europe and his face-to-face contact with liberalism and enlightenment sweeping Madrid and Barcelona. The scholars I mentioned would have been in agreement that the latter Rizal would have found petty a love conditioned by society's expectations. The drifting away between Rizal and Leonor would have been derived from the intellectual schism dividing them. Leonor was the product of a narrow world of blind obedience in the name of filial piety, the constraints of the monastic duty of celibacy and immaculate womanhood, and a

short range of imagination inadequate to understand the universal concerns of a hero of the mind like Rizal.

To this, essayist Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil (1956) writes, “The greatest misfortune that has befallen Filipino woman in the last one hundred years is Maria Clara” (29).

In such a literary construction, a Josephine Bracken as heroine would fail to interest a romantically-indulged people. Although certain historical correspondences (from Ferdinand Blumentritt to Artemio Ricarte) reveal her connection to the post-Rizal revolutionary forces as an “insurrecta” (Feria, 1968: 108-125), she was not considered a Filipina paragon of virtue at the turn of the century. Although she would have been closely allied to the “women of Malolos” Rizal greeted in his famous essay, she was too complex and real for the romantic mold of Rizal’s readers during the US occupation.

The romantic mold of the Filipino imagination during the late prewar and early post-war was deeply entrenched through the enthusiastic cooperation of Filipino writers. In 1969, Alberto Florentino published Nick Joaquin’s English translations of Rizal’s poetry in *The Song of Maria Clara* and other poems of Jose Rizal and earlier, in 1960, Pura Santillan-Castrence’s long exposition *The Women in Rizal’s Novels*.

Even in the reading materials for the young published in the 1950s by Isidoro Panlasigui and his co-authors, Rizal is painted as an ideal boy from Calamba, whose values should be emulated by the Filipino youth. Through these books, the deification of Rizal was complete. Nobody could question the idealization of the boy hero and even the unruffled quest of the young man for justice and equality in the many bigoted encounters with the Spanish teachers were made romantic by the anecdotal and vignette-type narratives built around the cult of the young Rizal.

The US impact on Rizalian productions is manifested not only in the romantic tone of the writers but also in the somewhat awkward attitude of authors toward the retraction and other “Catholic issues” in the literary productions. The retraction issue

has hounded the heroism of Rizal for almost a century. Even in the more recent Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Jose Rizal*, the hero is seen holding a rosary and seeking spiritual solace through a Jesuit priest. Teodoro Locsin's 1978 treatment of Rizal's life in *The Heroic Confession* shows Rizal in the final chapter being persuaded by Jesuit priests to return to the church as a confessed sinner. Told in the first person point of view, Rizal struggled against his own conscience for meaning. "Take back what you wrote against her. You hurt yourself more than you did her with those books," (152) the Jesuit priest tells him. Out of pity for the homeless Josephine, he allegedly contemplated marrying her. To this day, this image of Josephine as "dulce extranjera" is more prominent than the more important detail of the woman allegedly joining the revolutionaries in Cavite, Quezon, and Manila.

Rizal's final scene in Locsin's rendering is a "heroic confession" – heroic in the way that he found himself returning to God for redemption. And this picture continues to baffle some historians and scholars who firmly believe to this day that Rizal did not retract.

Severino Montano's *Parting at Calamba* depicts an episode in Rizal's biography where his convictions clash with his family's wish for a more quiet existence. At the center of the conflict is also the suppression by the Dominican friars who dispossessed the family of its land. The anti-clerical stance of Rizal is given more enlightenment in *Parting in Calamba* and sounds more like a social treatise than the melodramatic historical romance *The Loves of Leonor Rivera*.

Eddie Romero's 1992 *Noli Me Tangere* (produced by the Cultural Center of the Philippines) can be considered as the most faithful to the novel both as literature and as social commentary. Romero avoided making a film that would only gloss over the details and instead worked on a 13-episode miniseries. As a disciple of Gerry de Leon – whose seminal works on the *Noli* and *Fili* are often cited as superior works of modern Filipino filmmaking – Romero avoided De Leon's historical melodramas

and produced a TV series to approximate the continuing relevance of Rizal's novels to our nationhood. Not only were artists in the 1990s more concerned with accuracy, they also explored a postmodern Rizalian film (*Jose Rizal, Bayaning Third World*) to confront the subject as an agency of social construction and to interrogate claims made from traditional historiography.

Rizal also penetrated the most popular media forms like the comics, which further popularized his writings. Aimed at the young, the *Noli* and *Fili* are published in abridged versions to supplement the history and literature curricula. Because of the attributes of the comicbook as medium, combining dialogue and graphics, only the highlights and the major plot of the story are included. This somehow contributes to essentialist storymaking – of which Rizal's novels were not spared. The exercise resorts to iconographic styles in rendering dramatic scenes culled from novels and perpetuates already-known facts in favor of critical engagement.

Nick Joaquin argues that Rizal's novels must be seen in a variety of ways at different stages in our evolution as a nation. He argues that *Noli* could possibly be the “Great Filipino Novel,” while other scholars look at it as “an attempt at prophecy” (Joaquin, 1996: 231). It could be that to both social science scholars and cultural critics. The Filipino has come to regard the *Noli* as a permanent admonition, the Bible of the nation, and a repository of knowledge on what is best and worst about the race. For this reason, the novel has had a life beyond the literary. It is a collective symbol of the national consciousness, including its many pained contradictions. And the US authorities who saw this phenomenon recognized that this symbol is formidable but not really impermeable. To elevate it meant upholding the Filipino consciousness. The battle to subjugate the mind takes place in the realm of mythmaking, via popular arts and media.

The US discovery of Rizal led not only to the writing of Rizalian biographies in English but also to the translation of *Noli* and *Fili* from Spanish to English. The United States Information

Service took pride in this project of educating the whole country via a single medium. The pamphlet *The American Contribution to Philippine Education* reports that “one of the first and most far-reaching decisions made by American educational authorities in the Philippines was to give instruction in English. This was probably the greatest single unifying factor during the American period” (1998: 7).

Latter-day critics are not exactly happy with the US contact with Rizal because the narrative of the hero has had to recede into another realm, where his life becomes hagiography, a linguistic construct. I.P. Soliongco (1983) articulates this:

For when the Filipinos accepted the linguistic and intellectual ministrations of their conquerors, they helped in the raising of a barrier which broke the continuity of their history, sundered them from the world of their fathers and forebears, and made them the victims of what President Macapagal, in a rare apocalyptic moment, called the “unfinished revolution”. (212)

In another light, Epifanio San Juan (1996) believes that there are two ways of looking at the Philippines as neocolony. One is the US perspective that treats the Filipinos in an orientaling mode, “the other” whose consciousness is marginalized by the persistent presence of imitative and co-opting tendencies. Another is the nationalist mode, a critical framework for Filipinos whose view of the Philippines

springs from the propagandist reformers of the 1896 Revolution against Spain- exponents of Enlightenment ideals that were taken up, refined, and further developed by the vernacular writers of the first two decades, the left-oriented writers of the thirties, and the insurrectionary generation of the sixties and seventies. (39)

Another way of looking at the impact of US colonization on the imaging of Rizal is to regard the hero as text, as historicized and textualized subject. San Juan mentions that the usual trap a Filipino who reads history can fall into is to reduce Rizal's works and writings into a set of binary opposites between Rizal and Bonifacio, a lesson in class struggle that owes "its genealogy to the imprimatur of Taft and the US colonial co-optation" (27). San Juan believes that the Rizalian discourse should not be reduced to the binaries of "reforms from above" and "reforms from below" for he reserves this debate to serve a more enlightened view of Rizal's revolutionary stance. Several books and literature, he says, contribute to the imaging of Rizal, either as a reformist who issued the December 1896 manifesto to condemn the revolution, or the revolutionary who wrote fiery speeches for *La Solidaridad* and rallied his people for civic action in La Liga Filipina in 1892. For San Juan, the existentialist and psychological depiction of Rizal by Miguel de Unamuno and Ante Radaic could have also been influential in tracing the feeling of ambivalence towards Rizal's messages. Unamuno's picture of Rizal as Tagalog Hamlet and Radaic's psychology of Rizal's inferiority complex (35) focus more on his limitations rather than the "revolutionary potential of Rizal's praxis" (37).

Reynaldo Ileto in his essay *Rizal and the Underside of Philippine History* (1998) says that the "textualization of Rizal" (62) and the mythmaking built around him cannot be easily dismissed from the consciousness of the masses. The heroism of Bernardo Carpio and the passion of Jesus Christ have become central rallying points in the lives of colonial and postcolonial Filipinos, so that Rizal has joined this pantheon of folk heroes without any difficulty. Ileto attributes this to the element of "absence" as a result of Rizal's sojourn to foreign countries and the many town legends built around him because of his distance from his people and the magnified impact of his writings.

Ileto claims that contemporary doubt of hagiography can be attributed to the 19th century positivist and rational methodology

that scorned meaningful possibilities that could be deduced from subjective interpretations of symbols and perceptions built around the cult of a hero. Instead, historians resort to “constructed” biographies based on speeches and writings. As a consequence, some literary and cinematic productions blindly adopt an “objective” picture of Rizal without the benefit of reflection or informed interpretation.

The Rizalian productions represent an alternative to traditional historiography, a critique of the Filipino condition. Franz Fanon, one of the stalwarts of postcolonial theory, was one of the first scholars to discuss the empire’s systematic way of projecting the “othering” of their dominion. Fanon says:

Every effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behavior to recognize the unreality of his “nation,” and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure. (1993: 1597)

Even if English greatly enriched the literature of the Filipinos and produced many biographies of Rizal in that language, the early “co-optation” led to a body of letters in a borrowed discourse. Fanon provides an articulation of this view:

A frequent mistake, and one which is moreover hardly justifiable, is to try to find cultural expressions for and to give new values to native culture within the framework of colonial domination. This is why we arrive at a proposition which at first sight seems paradoxical: the fact that in a colonized country, the most elementary, most savage, and the most undifferentiated nationalism is the most fervent and efficient means of defending national culture. (1993: 1591)

In another train of argument, it could be said the US cultural policy may have had this infantilizing effect on the Filipino mind in many ways elaborated by postcolonial scholars, but it could also be instructive in understanding how people respond to the colonial encounter and how they evolve a sense of nation under the rubric of a foreign idiom.

In understanding Rizal in our time, it is therefore more useful to accommodate a more complex Rizal than one who is limited to the Rizal-Bonifacio/Reform-Revolution binarisms that only perpetuate ideological divisions. Homi Bhabha in theorizing on postcolonial discourse not only proposes the dissolution of binarism and othering, but also offers negotiation in place of negation in interrogating cultural spaces of formerly colonized races in their relation to the Western colonizer. He believes not in finding a dichotomy between theory and politics or simply finding opposing elements between them. Rather, the irresolute negotiation will help understand, as in the case of Rizal, that a single picture of the man will not help the nation in seeking identification in his narrative – but rather a multiple Rizal. Bhabha’s “Third Space of enunciation” is where cultural historians provide the context of negotiation. As Bhabha states:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (2396)

Epifanio San Juan raises the same issue of traditionally misperceiving Rizal by finding a neat, unitary image of the man in any historical stage. It is hybridity, San Juan claims, that could fully accommodate the many faces of Rizal. He offers:

From this perspective, we can appreciate how Rizal's ordeal (intensely replicated in his novels) condenses all the symptoms of anxiety, uncertainties, self-doubt, and paranoia shared by all, subalterns and masters alike, generated by the oppressive and alienating circumstances of colonial society. (1994: xi)

In this connection, historical and literary productions on Rizal, although enough to contribute to his imaging, would be limited without an examination of how people collectively and contextually view the man as revolutionary or reformist, human or hero, conflicted or assured, symbolic or real. Most importantly, the "re-establishment of a nation" (Fanon, 1993: 1592) is the first agendum that should be in the list of a formerly-colonized people like the Filipinos in order to reclaim Rizal from his roots and bring him back to the people to whom he communicated with both candidness and ardor through his novels. The very essence of his own contradictions and the strength of his words and deeds should be recaptured through the people's own set of metaphors, without exclusion and prejudice to precepts made ambiguous by the hero himself. Through this, the many facets of the man and his words might possibly lead to comprehending the many facets of the nation that revere him.

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Joyce L. Arriola holds an MA in Communication (major in Journalism) degree and a Ph.D. in Literature degree. She is chair of the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. Her research interests include cultural and media studies and postmodern and postcolonial cinema and literature.