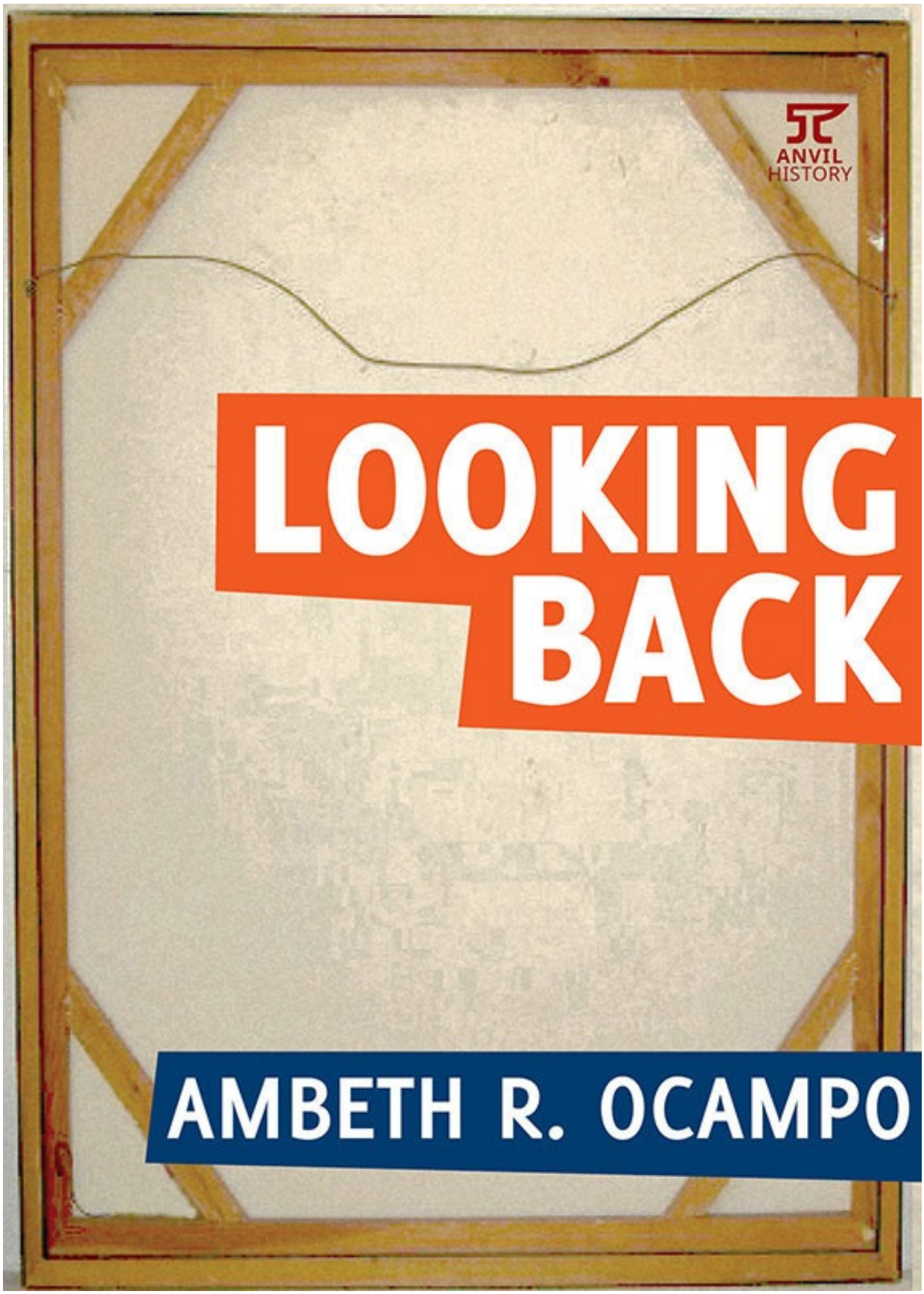
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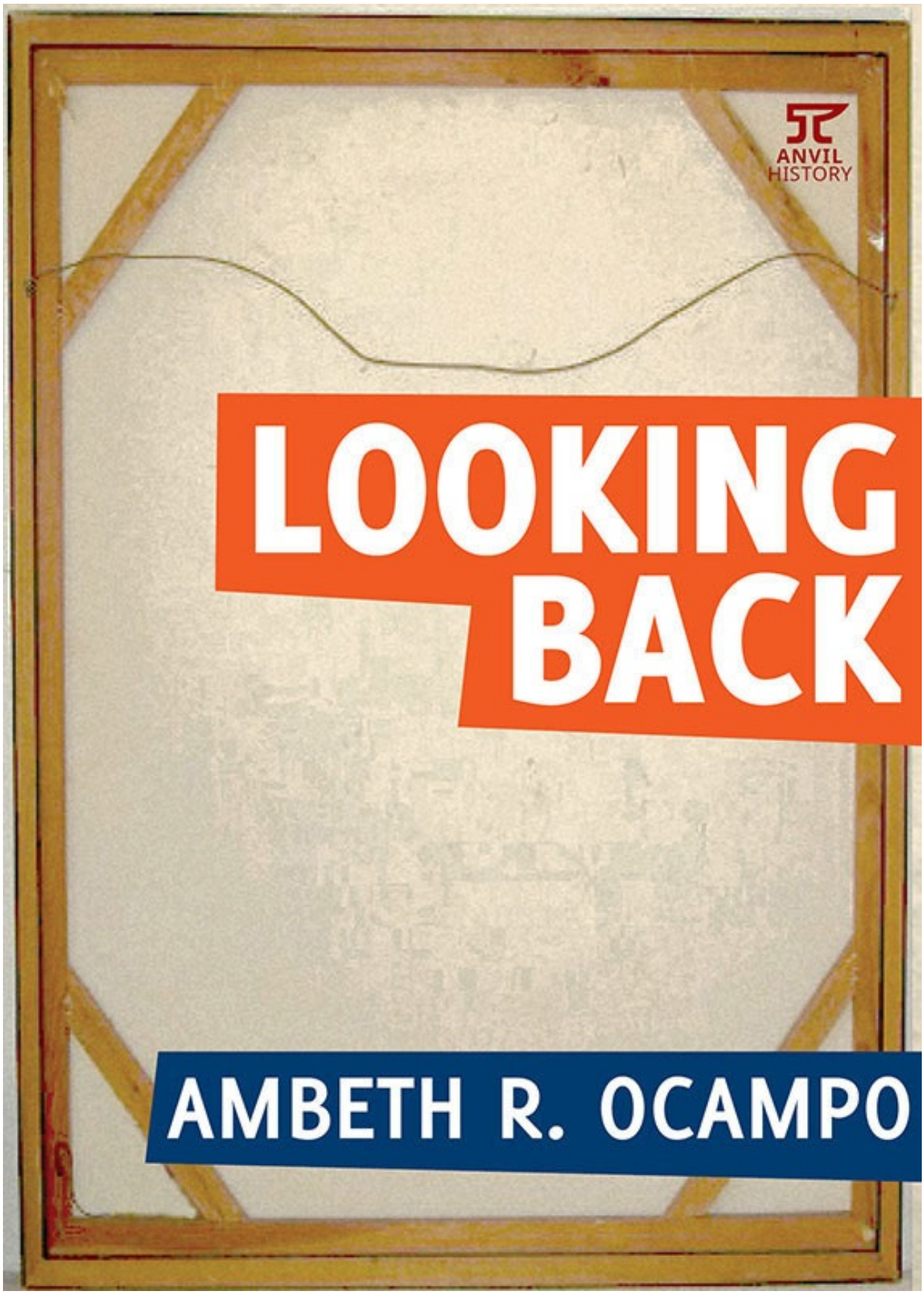
ANVIL
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BACK
AMBETH R. OCAMPO

AMBETH R. OCAMPO has, for over three decades, brought history down from academia and returned it to the public where it also belongs. Drawing from extensive archival research, at home and abroad, he has written on Philippine history focusing on its art, culture, and the heroes who figure in the birth of the nation.

Dr. Ocampo is an associate professor and former chair, Department of History, Ateneo de Manila University. He writes a widely read editorial page column for the Philippine Daily Inquirer, moderates a growing Facebook fan page, and also connects on Instagram. An independent curator, he sits on the advisory boards of the Ateneo Art Gallery, Ayala Museum, BenCab Museum, Lopez Museum, and the President Elpidio Quirino Foundation.

In other lives and other times, he was a Benedictine monk; president of the City College of Manila; chairman, National Historical Commission of the Philippines and the National Commission on Culture and the Arts; chairman, Incoming State Visits, Office of Presidential Protocol, Malacañang Palace; and adviser, Numismatic Committee, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. After an eventful professional and personal life, he looks forward to the perks of a senior citizen card.

Other books by AMBETH R. OCAMPO:

The Paintings of E. Aguilar Cruz (1986)

Rizal Without the Overcoat rev. ed. (2011)

Makamisa: The Search for Rizal's Third Novel rev. ed. (2009)

A Calendar of Rizaliana in the Vault of the Philippine National Library rev. ed. (2011)

Aguinaldo's Breakfast (1993)

Bonifacio's Bolo (1995)

Mabini's Ghost (1995)

Teodora Alonso (1995)

Talking History: Conversations with Teodoro A. Agoncillo rev. ed. (2011)

Luna's Moustache (1997)

The Centennial Countdown (1998)

Bones of Contention rev. ed. (2014)

Meaning and History: The Rizal Lectures rev. ed. (2013)

Bones of Contention: The Andres Bonifacio Lectures rev. ed. (2014)

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101 Stories of the Philippine Revolution (2009)

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Looking Back 14: Dirty Ice Cream (2019)

Looking Back 15: Martial Law (2020)

Rizal Without The Overcoat new ed. (2018)

Looking Back

Ambeth R. Ocampo

Anvil Publishing

Looking Back

Published and exlusively distributed by

Anvil Publishing, Inc.

7/F Quad Alpha Centrum

125 Pioneer Street

Mandaluyong City, 1550 Philippines

Trunk lines: (+632) 8477-4752, 8477-4755 to 57

Fax: (+632) 8747-1622

sales@anvilpublishing.com

onlinesales@anvilpublishing.com

marketing@anvilpublishing.com

www.anvilpublishing.com

First Printing, February 2010

Second Printing, August 2010

Third Printing, 2015

Fourth Printing, 2016

Fifth Printing, 2017

Sixth Printing, 2018

Cover design by Ariel Dalisay

Copy editing by Renán S. Prado

Covert art from Scribner's Montly an Illustrated Magazine for the People (New York: Scribner & Company, 1874) VIII:585

eBook conversion by JP Meneses

eISBN: 978-971-27-3608-7

Contents

Introduction

While I have always liked history I did not like the way it was taught. Often it is presented as a parade of obscure names, forgettable dates, and events irrelevant to our life and times. Like many students, I learned to hate history as much as I did Algebra. Fortunately, all this changed when I met the late Teodoro A. Agoncillo, E. Aguilar Cruz, and Doreen G. Fernandez who showed me that history could be timely and engaging as the tabloids and gossip columns I relished reading. This book is dedicated to their memory for without them I would not have become a historian.

The essays compiled in this volume were originally written for the back page Lifestyle section of the Philippine Daily Globe in the late 1980s and were compiled in my first book Looking Back that had remained unchanged in form and content since 1990. After almost two decades in print I have decided to reissue these essays, updated and in a new format, the first in a series that will draw from my recent work and others from Aguinaldo's Breakfast, Mabini's Ghost, and Luna's Moustache that are currently out of print.

History has a longer shelf life than other writings and it is hoped that these essays, despite their age, continue to delight and inform.

AMBETH R. OCAMPO

Feast of Teresa de Avila, 2009.

Gregorio del Pilar was a Playboy

Cultural researcher Eddie Alegre made the astute observation that the Marcos regime had this habit of warping the meanings of words. For example, KKK which stood for Bonifacio's Katipunan became Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran. Pag-ibig, which formerly meant love, was trivialized to mean housing loans!

Schoolchildren get confused about the "Hero of Tirad Pass," the revolutionary General Gregorio del Pilar and the "Hero of Bessang Pass"—Ferdinand Marcos. The Revolutions of 1896 and 1898 were made to fade, such that it was easily overshadowed by the EDSA "Revolution" of 1986.

The few who remember Tirad Pass can imagine how Gregorio del Pilar, or Heneral Goyo as he was called, tried his best to delay the Americans in pursuit of Emilio Aguinaldo. Through schoolbook illustrations and "historical" paintings, children are told he was astride his white horse doing battle with the Americans when he was shot on the neck. All this suddenly changed when The Military Journals of Telesforo Carrasco y Perez, a Spaniard in Aguinaldo's army, was translated from the original Spanish by Nick Joaquin and published in 1986. Carrasco y Perez, who claims to be a participant in the Battle of Tirad Pass, describes how Heneral Goyo died on that fateful December day in 1899.

Carrasco says the general was standing amid cogon grass and was warned to keep his head down to avoid getting shot. He probably wasn't listening, because he was shot. It doesn't really matter whether the general died on his horse or on the ground. The main point is the general died in battle.

When American troops moved in to survey the dead, it was easy to identify the general because he was wearing a new khaki uniform complete with glittering battle trimming: gold buttons, silver spurs, a gold-plated revolver and other souvenirs in his pockets which yielded a gold locket with a strand of hair, love letters from his girlfriends and a hanky embroided with the name of the woman who gave it to him. Like vultures, the Americans stripped the general's body down to his underwear, taking everything they could get as souvenirs and left the

body in the field to rot. The body was buried later, but to this day, people don't know where.

Heneral Goyo emerges as the pabling in Philippine history, next to Rizal. Compared with Rizal who was a cold fish despite his alleged string of girlfriends, it seems the youthful Heneral Goyo had a sweetheart in every town he passed.

Only 24 at the time of his death, Rafael Palma described him as having "agreeable and genial features. He was above average in height, with clear pinkish brown skin, with somewhat brown eyes, straight nose, thin lips, slender body—he may be considered a handsome fellow…" All these, plus the glamour of being the youngest general in Aguinaldo's army, made the women swoon.

Gregorio del Pilar, a.k.a. Heneral Goyo on whose person were found numerous love letters and perfumed hankies from different women.

His correspondence was mixed with “mysterious and perfumed letter” and he spent time composing love letters. Drafts of letters to a certain “Poleng” are preserved in the National Library. Written in Tagalog, the faded pencil scribblings are a bit difficult to read, but they reveal a different Heneral Goyo.

Too bad, military historian John R.M. Taylor put some order into the maze of historical documents called the Philippine Insurgents Records (PIR). On the cover of a small letter holder, he wrote, “withdrawn from PA. 84 drafts of love letters of Gen. Gregorio del Pilar—no interest here. JRM Taylor.” What was of little interest to him is very interesting for Filipinos.

In one letter, Heneral Goyo notifies his mother that he had found her a prospective daughter-in-law. He requests her to send him the following: “ysang traje lana, corbata, alfiler, chaleco-blanca, borceguies na bago, traje na malapad, dalawang panyo bordado, zapatos charol de liston.” If there was anyone ma-porma during the Fil-American War, it was Heneral Goyo.

A Song for Quezon's Girlfriend

When I came across a photograph showing the late National Artist Amado V. Hernandez in a huddle with the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, I thought they were discussing something of great historical value. But library research yielded nothing, except a small item that showed Hernandez had attended a conference in Paris where he met Sartre.

Following a lead which could very well become a subject for a column, I asked his widow, Atang de la Rama (herself a National Artist) for more information. She said, "I will tell you the same thing I told the military when my husband was in jail. I know nothing! As soon as Ka Amado goes out of our gate, wala akong pakialam, and when he comes home, he is still my husband! That's why we don't quarrel."

Spoken like Simone de Beauvoir, I told Ka Atang, and she laughed. She wondered aloud why I spent most of my youth researching about the past and people like her who are part of the past.

"You are like a garbage man, what will you do with my life story? Para kang nangangalakal ng basura!"

I replied that rummaging through historical "garbage" is my life, but this wasn't enough to wheedle an interview from her. So in the course of our regular telephone chats where she discussed art, nationalism and the Americanization of the Filipino, she would reminisce. One story can still make a fitting post-Valentine column to go with an article on singing telegrams.

"One day while I was rehearsing for a zarzuela, I was told to get ready and go with a man called 'Kastila.' He would be wearing a khaki ensemble, riding breeches and a riding whip. Someone else would take my place at that night's zarzuela.

“‘Kastila’ came on horseback, and since I was small, he placed me in one of the kaing on one side of the horse to balance the load of fruits and vegetables on the other side. The trip was long and the man didn’t talk much. He knew I was a singer and he asked me to sing as we went along. I did as I was told, pero naiinis ako, kasi mainit!

“Then we came to a river where a waiting casco took us to Baler, Quezon. This part of the trip was more agreeable, because there was shade and I enjoyed watching the fish. The men caught fish which they broiled along with some chickens on board the casco. Later, they served one palanggana of rice and tomatoes to go with the freshly cooked fish. As I was very hungry, lamon ako nang lamon. Water from the river was not good, matabang ang tubig, so I was given fresh buco.

Honorata ‘Atang’ de la Rama at the height of her career. Seen here also as Dalagang Bukid.

“After a day’s journey, we arrived at our destination—a big house in Baler. I was asked if I knew how to play the piano. I was not in the mood, so even if I could play the piano, I told my hosts I only knew how to sing. A guitarist was called in and he asked me what I wanted to sing. I said I will sing all the songs you can play. You see, this was not a problem, since I was very good with oido and I could easily pick up a tune. If I don’t know the lyrics, I’d invent them! (laughs) I didn’t write stories and zarzuela scripts for nothing, you know. You have a lot to learn from your Lola Atang.

“And you know what? My host turned out to be Aurora! I was brought all the way there as part of Quezon’s courtship! All that way to sing for his sweetheart! I slept in the Aragon house overnight and the next day, it was the same route back to the zarzuela company.

“Quezon never brought this up when we met later on. He had married Doña Aurora and was already President when I was invited to sing in Malacañang. You know, I was even present when Quezon signed the law making Tagalog the national language. I was not paid for singing for Doña Aurora, but how was I to know who this ‘Kastila’ was? How was I to know he would become President?”

The Governor and the Feminist

Designed to be permanent structures, only two things can change the face of monuments: mother nature and politics. Marcos' stone face was blasted away years ago. The beautiful bronze statue of Isabel II, which stands in front of Puerta Isabel II along Magallanes Drive, Intramuros, was both honored and hated in history. It is the most traveled statue in Manila.

Unveiled in 1860, it stood in Plaza Arroceros (now Liwasang Bonifacio) and was ordered removed when the Queen of Spain was deposed following the Carlist Wars in 1868. The statue gathered dust in a bodega at the Ayuntamiento. The next time it was allowed to see the light of day was in 1896, when it was installed in front of Malate Church. In 1970, Typhoon Yoling toppled the statue, and she was moved to Intramuros.

The Carlist Governor-General, Carlos María de la Torre, had wanted Isabel's statue melted so the bronze could be put to better use. But the timely intercession of the City Council of Manila declared it municipal property and saved it for the future. This act, along with the abolition of flogging, relaxing the hold on censorship and spearheading moves for a limited secularization of education, had endeared De la Torre to the liberals in the Philippines and enraged the conservatives, especially the friars.

What really incensed the friars was that the Governor was single and his party hostess happened to be a poetess married to one of the artillery colonels. The clergy despised Doña María del Rosario Gil de Montes de Sanchiz because she published a book, El Hombre de Dios, criticized simply because it was written by a woman! Sra. de Sanchiz was one of the first feminists in the country at a time when this was even unheard of. Her special relationship with De la Torre shielded her from the web of intrigues spun by her enemies.

The Diario de Manila, reporting on the festivities of the first political "rally" in Manila (12 July 1869), mentions that there were few or no peninsulares (Spaniards born in Spain) in attendance, the majority being "Filipinos" (Spaniards born in the Philippines; native Filipinos were called indios). At a

banquet in the Palacio del Gobernador, Sra. de Sanchiz shocked Manila society by appearing with ribbons in her hair which said, Viva la Libertad! (“Long live liberty”) and Viva el Pueblo Soberano (“Long live the sovereign nation”). If the governor had not been a liberal, such an act could have led to a cell in Fort Santiago. But no one could do anything about Sra. de Sanchiz because she arrived with the Governor! She then proceeded to serve sweets and refreshments to the guests, paying special attention to members of the Comisión de Filipinos, which included lawyer Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, businessman Jacobo Zobel, artist Lorenzo Rocha and Fr. José Burgos of the Manila Cathedral, who was later executed when the conservatives regained power.

Unfortunately, we do not have the text of Sra. de Sanchiz’s famous brindis, or toasting speech at that banquet, which was the only thing worth mentioning, the newspaper says, since it was a beautifully composed poem which contained “dangerous ideas.” Reactionaries in Manila feared that given the freedom to ventilate liberal ideas, Filipinos would later ask for separation from Spain, or worse, wage a revolution like the Latin American colonies.

Sra. de Sanchiz not only wrote poems and articles for El Porvenir, but she was also said to have exerted extra-legal power on the government because of her influence with the Governor. She was called Madre de los Filipinos, since her sympathies were for the Filipinos, as manifested by her interest in social work (she opened an orphanage) and by tempering the hand of justice. She had gained, through the Governor, the pardon of “bandits” whose only crime was to call for reforms.

María del Rosario Gil de Montes de Sanchiz is an intriguing figure not mentioned in our textbooks, but someday, her influence in the development of feminism in the Philippines will be known.

MacArthur and Dimples

Very few people remember a star of the Savoy Theater named Isabel Rosario Cooper. More popularly known as “Dimples,” this beautiful mestiza appeared in the movie, Ang Tatlong Hambog, where she was at the receiving end (from Luis Tuason) of the first kissing scene in Philippine cinema. In a retrospective, the said scene would produce cat-calls and yawns from an audience used to “bold” and “penetration” movies, so why a piece of entertainment trivia?

Well, Dimples lived a life which could still be worth a steamy movie because her paramour happened to be General Douglas MacArthur, the man whose famous line “I shall return” had made him part of Philippine history and as much an icon for Filipinos as Uncle Sam.

William Manchester writes in American Caesar that shortly before MacArthur left the Philippines in 1930, he made arrangements for Dimples to follow him to the United States. When she didn’t, MacArthur cabled her to do so and signed the telegram “Daddy.” Upon arrival in the U.S., Dimples discovered that “Daddy” could not take her home because his mother was living there, so he housed her in a Washington hotel before finding her a suitable apartment.


Wishing you
a Merry Christmas
also a joyous and
Happy New Year
1926
Sincerely
Bimpler

Isabel Rosario Cooper, a.k.a. ‘Dimples’ whose claim to fame aside from being Gen. MacArthur’s mistress was that she received the first screen kiss in Philippine Cinema.

MacArthur purchased everything for Dimples, including her wardrobe, which reveals his jealous and chauvinistic nature. He supplied her with tea lingerie, but gowns, kimonos and even black lace lingerie were not supplied with much street clothes, since she was not expected to go out and was to be on call every time MacArthur was in town.

After a while, Dimples grew tired of her love nest, since MacArtur was away most of the time and her only companion was a pet poodle and, of course, MacArthur’s postcards and letters. Before long, the difficulties of a long-distance relationship began to show. With the chauffeur-driven limousine supplied by MacArthur, his mistress cruised the city and ended up having affairs with prominent Washington men!

Once, Dimples asked her lover to find a job for her brother in Washington. An irate MacArthur responded by sending a help wanted page torn out of a newspaper.

In 1934, MacArthur ended the relationship with a note, plus train tickets to the West Coast and passage on an ocean liner back to Manila. In the same year, he sued Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen for $1.75 million over an item which appeared in their gossip column, “Washington Merry-go-Round.” The suit would have pushed through, but the resourceful journalists found Dimples before MacArthur did and bought all of his love letters to his mistress, so at the pretrial hearing the defendants said they would take testimony from Dimples. Upon hearing this, MacArthur dropped the case, simply because he didn’t want his mother to find out about his affair with Dimples.

What became of Dimples is quite pathetic. With the $15,000 given by MacArthur through a Pearson agent, she moved to the Midwest where she bought a hairdressing shop. Later, she moved to Los Angeles, California, where she committed suicide with an overdose of drugs in 1960.

The Dimples-MacArthur correspondence would reveal an unknown side to General MacArthur, but unfortunately these are in an academic library in the U.S. They can be consulted by scholars but cannot be reproduced, excerpted or cited from.

The Sad Hidalgo-Yrritia Affair

Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo is acknowledged as one of the great nineteenth-century Philippine painters and yet he has the unfortunate luck of living under the shadow of the more volatile Juan Luna, whose turbulent life showed as much bravura as his paintings. Hidalgo won a silver medal to complement Luna's gold medal in the Madrid Exposition of 1884 with his allegorical Las Vírgenes Cristianas Expuestas al Populacho (Christian Virgins exposed to the mob).

Like Luna, Hidalgo was not influenced by the Impressionist school of Paris, which was pushing historical and allegorical paintings into the back rooms of galleries and private collections. His art, compared with Luna's, is soft, quiet and sometimes referred to as binabae, or effeminate, leading some revisionist wise guys to speculate that Hidalgo was gay.

Hidalgo returned to the Philippines in 1912 after 30 years of life in Europe. The man and his art had become more European than Filipino. He stayed in Manila for six months and rushed back to Paris through steamer and the Trans-Siberian route. His ailing mother pleaded that he stay in Manila, at least to accompany her in her "last days," but Hidalgo said staying in the Philippines was just like taking his eyes out of their sockets.

Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo taken in his Paris studio.

One of many portraits of Maria Yrritia by Hidalgo.

This remark can be interpreted in two ways. First, a person used to the subdued lighting and misty atmosphere of Europe cannot but be blinded by the intense tropical sunlight. Second, Paris obviously has a lot more to offer than a cultural desert like Manila. Hidalgo died in Spain in 1913 and his remains were brought back to Manila and interred in the Cementerio del Norte.

Hidalgo's "partner," Maria Yrritia, was immortalized in his paintings from her youth to her old age, since she was his model for 40 years! The Lopez Memorial Museum, which has the largest collection of Hidalgos in the country, has some paintings which Maria Yrritia posed for. The two were never married. One wonders if the relationship was platonic, but this does squelch rumors that Hidalgo was gay.

Maria visited the Philippines in 1909, but stayed in her suite in La Palma de Mallorca in Intramuros most of the time, simply because she did not find the people friendly. This is a strange attitude for Filipinos, but this can be explained in the same way that the Rizal family was indifferent to Josephine Bracken: the "live-in" relationship was not yet acceptable and, as devout Catholics, they blamed these loose foreign women for making their sons "live in sin."

When Maria brought home Hidalgo's remains in 1913, his family invited her to stay with them as part of the family. Still smarting from the reception she got a few years earlier, she declined and returned to Paris. In 1917, loneliness made her change her mind and she decided to settle and die in the land of her dear Felix.

Fate was not kind, though. The ship she took to the Philippines was wrecked off the African coast on 26 May 1917. The sad Hidalgo-Yrritia affair sounds just like the plot of a movie, proving that history could be interesting if teachers told us more stories like these, instead of forcing students to memorize distant dates, names and places.

Manuel L. Quezon The Way He Was

Most Philippine biographies are boring because the subjects are presented in a one-dimensional way.

A person's private life, no matter how colorful, is almost always deleted from history. One such person is Manuel Luis Quezon, a very colorful figure in our history, especially if one hears all the anecdotes regarding his amorous exploits. There is enough here for a lively movie or a libelous biography.

Quezon once summoned a Justice of the Peace, who was being investigated for immorality, and asked him:

"I am told you brought a young girl to a secluded field one night and abused her. Is this true?"

"Ye. . . ye. . . yes, Sir," the judge stammered.

"Did the girl willfully go with you?" Quezon asked again. The judge, trying to impress the President with his innocence, said, "Yes, Sir."

The President's face lit up.

"Now, judge," he said, "when you were with the girl under the tree, were you able to consummate your desires?"

The judge saw a chance to get out of the accusation. In a firm voice he answered, "No, sir."

"What?" the President thundered. "Stupid man! You are dismissed from the service."

Juan F. Rivera collected, edited and published Quezon: Thoughts and Anecdotes about Him and His Fights to commemorate Quezon's 110th birth anniversary. It's a hefty volume filled with anecdotes like the above, and here are some more:

Manuel Quezon adjusting his radio while posing for the camera.

Carlos Quirino remembers: “During the Hare-Hawes-Cutting controversy, Quezon visited the town of Tanauan, Batangas, the bailiwick of Jose P. Laurel, one of the Osmeña-Roxas (Osrox) stalwarts. The crowd that gathered at the town plaza was fairly large, but decidedly lukewarm in its reception for the Senate President. Just before he got on the platform, Quezon saw a cross-eyed man approaching the stand.

“Hoy, putangina mong duling,” he greeted the newcomer. “What are you doing here?”

“Quezon placed his arm around the shoulders of the cross-eyed man, who smiled broadly in return. This touch of friendliness thawed out the crowd. Good-natured laughter rose, then cheers, followed by loud applause. The political meeting was a success.

“‘Who was that cross-eyed man, Señor Presidente?” asked one of his henchmen after the meeting.

“I’ll be damned if I know his name,” replied Quezon. “This is the first time I’ve ever seen him in my life!”

Jorge Bocobo recalled two funny incidents when he was with Quezon during the Independence missions to the United States. During a stopover in Tokyo en route to Washington, they attended a luncheon for the mission. Quezon sat in front of a Japanese gentleman slurping his soup, this being the Oriental way of showing one’s appreciation of the food. But Quezon, a Kastila, raised on European etiquette and its rigid rules on silent eating, stared at the man and remarked to Bocobo, “Matakaw ito!” The man heard and asked, “What did you say, Mr. Quezon?” To which he replied, “The soup is good, isn’t it?”

Then, of course, there is the much-quoted story about Quezon during a lunch in Washington, D.C., when he saw one of the Filipinos staring at the finger bowl in which a slice of lemon floated. The guy, probably mistaking the preparation for kalamansi juice, lifted the bowl to his lips. Quezon shouted: “Puñeta! Hindi ‘yan

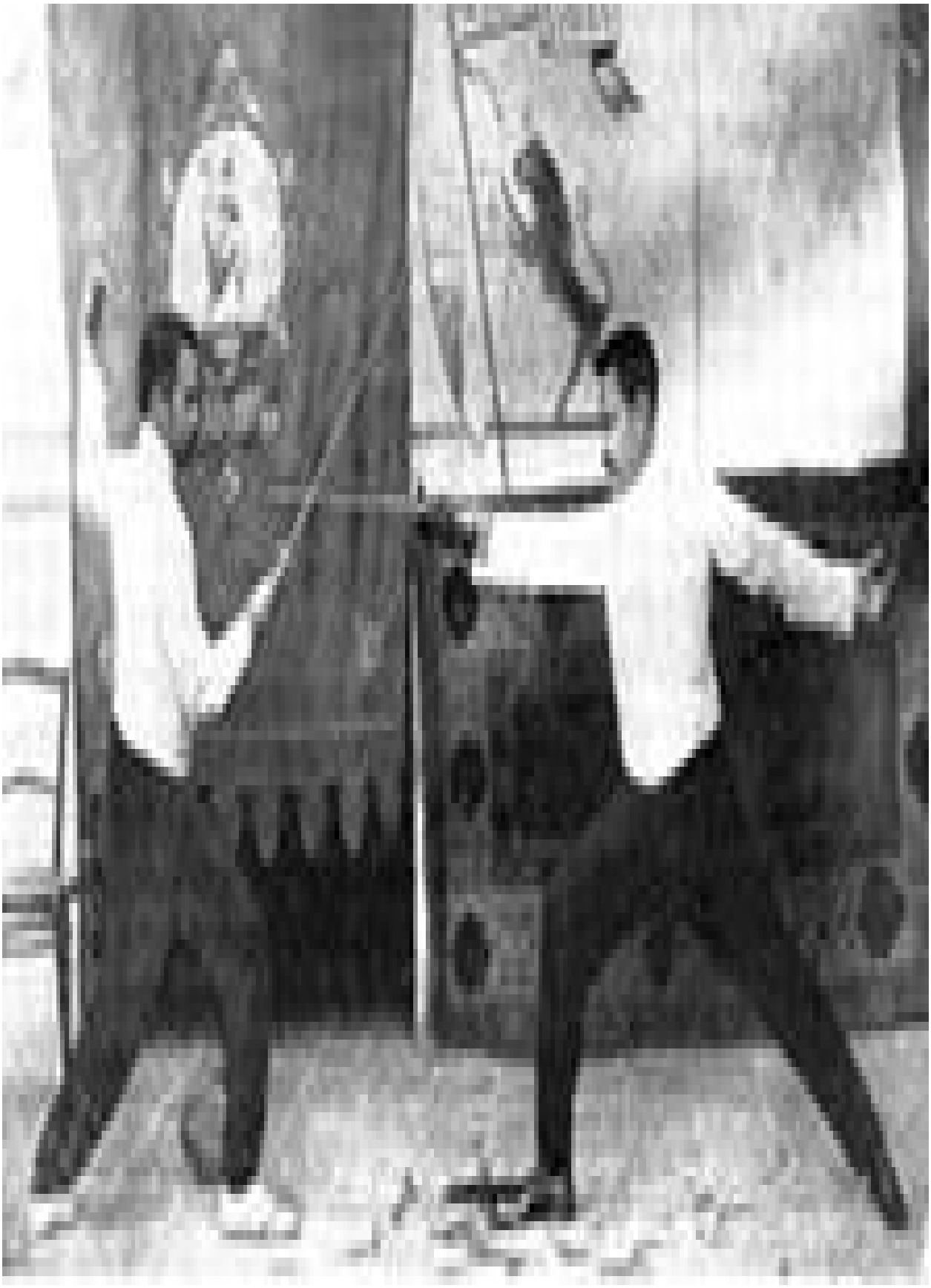
iniinom, hugasan ‘yan!”

Of course, the startled man dropped the bowl. I wonder how Quezon got out of that situation.

The Hot-blooded Antonio Luna

The late historian Teodoro A. Agoncillo related one of the meetings he had with then President Marcos in Malacañang where the latter asked, “Professor, what do you think of Antonio Luna?” to which Agoncillo replied, “Luna was a great general who didn’t win any battles!” Unfazed, Marcos added, “You see, I’m a descendant of Luna.” Agoncillo kept his tongue, though he wanted to say, “Well, that’s your misfortune!”

No great fan of General Luna, Agoncillo engaged a “word war” with Luna’s biographer, Vivencio Jose, in the journal Solidarity, resulting in one of the classic debates in Philippine historiography. Antonio Luna, alive or dead, was a respected but not very likable person due to his bad temper.



Juan and Antonio Luna practicing in their fencing school in Sampaloc, Manila.

Luna, a chemist by profession, was also a good guitar player, swordsman and writer before he joined Aguinaldo's army. Luna used to write for La Solidaridad under the pseudonym Taga-ilog because he was an Ilocano born in Binondo close to the banks of the Pasig River. Later, he was editor of the revolutionary paper La Independencia.

Luna once replied to an anti-Filipino journalist, Mir Deas, by referring to him as Mier Das which, translated, means "shit." Think twice, next time you say "mag la mierda tayo." Luna's friends knew that when his face was contorted into that which gave him the nickname Cafre, there would be trouble. They tried to cheer him up and even took turns accompanying him to prevent a violent incident.

Luna stalked his enemy in Barcelona when he was unaccompanied by friends bound to keep him out of trouble and when he found his prey in a café, Luna walked straight to Mir Deas' table, spat in his face, called him names, and as final flourish to the public insult, threw his calling card at the man, challenging him to a duel. Reputed to be one of the best swordsmen in the Filipino community, Luna was a favorite "second" at duels because those who literally crossed swords with him were dead ducks. Mir Deas must have known about this and refused to duel with Luna, reasoning it was beneath his dignity to duel with an indio, a savage whose race was inferior to that of a Spaniard. Luna must have calmed down because there were no more stories about this affair. At least, Luna had proven to the cowardly Spaniard that Filipinos had a pride which they were willing to kill or die for.

Years later, people Luna had slapped and insulted would assassinate him in Cabanatuan. To this day, the blame for Luna's death is almost always laid at Aguinaldo's door. But whether Aguinaldo consented does not explain why there was no investigation of the Luna assassination. None of the murderers (who were identified) were punished.

Perhaps, the tragedy of Antonio Luna was his temper.

Rumors Distort History

Are gossip and rumor ever constructive? During the Revolution of 1896, Andres Bonifacio used the rumor mill to “neutralize” the enemies of the Katipunan.

According to Jose Rizal, who was consulted by Bonifacio’s emissary, Pio Valenzuela, it was important for the Katipunan to enlist the support of the rich Filipinos because without money, the Katipunan and the revolution would fail.

Rizal stressed that rich Filipinos had the most to lose in a revolution, so they would do everything they could to keep the status quo: “These Filipinos will be your worst enemies if you commit the imprudence of attacking the Spaniards without the necessary preparation. When they see you without arms, they will go over to the Spanish side to persecute you, and being Filipinos, and rich ones at that, they will win your soldier over with their money... See to it that these persons are neutral. At the very least, they must not be in a position to help neither the Spaniards nor the Filipinos.”

Watching movies on organized crime, we have acquired a different idea of the order “Neutralize them!” I guess Rizal meant the same thing. But when Valenzuela asked exactly what he meant, he answered: “The means are born of circumstances and events.”

When Valenzuela returned to Manila in July 1896, he briefed Bonifacio on Rizal’s views and they picked Benedicto Mijaga, a katipunero, to talk to millionaire Francisco Roxas into funding the Katipunan. Just as Rizal predicted, the rich refused to compromise their comfortable lives. To make matters worse, Roxas even threatened to denounce the Katipunan, saying he would not support a revolt against Spain led by a few disgruntled Filipinos.

Disappointed with his unpatriotic attitude, Bonifacio decided to implicate the rich with the movement so that once arrested and perhaps tortured, they would hate the Spaniards enough to help the Katipunan. This was a way of “neutralizing” these men, short of killing them, right?

Emilio Jacinto prepared the list of uncooperative Filipinos, had their movements monitored and their signatures forged on Katipunan papers, which stated that they were not only Katipunan sympathizers but also heavy contributors to the Katipunan fund!

Bonifacio and Valenzuela started leaving these incriminating “subversive” documents in Katipunan hideouts and safehouses, so the slightest search by the Spanish authorities would lead to their discovery. A wave of arrests followed, but the implicated men simply denied their involvement with the Katipunan. Unfortunately, the Spaniards didn’t believe them and even used this as a way of extorting money from the rich “suspects.”

Francisco Roxas was executed while many others were tortured. Fort Santiago was filled with hundreds of suspected Katipunan sympathizers; others were exiled to the Caroline or Marianas Islands and some, like Luis Yangco, slipped out of the Philippines after bribing Spanish officials.

What is difficult for historians today is how to tell the real sympathizers of the Katipunan from those Bonifacio merely implicated. Worse, Pio Valenzuela is one of the most unreliable primary sources on the revolution, giving conflicting versions of the same story, further complicating our history.

Lopez Jaena, the Forgotten Hero

If we are to believe rabidly nationalist historians, the Americans came at the turn of the century to become our new colonial masters, and they laid the foundations for the “colonial mentality” and cultural imperialism through the public school system. Filipinos were taught English instead of Spanish or the Philippine languages, thus making us one of the largest English-speaking peoples in the world. The same way that Spaniards allegedly destroyed pre-Hispanic Philippine culture, the Americans destroyed almost four centuries of European influence. English is spoken everywhere and perhaps, we should be happy that we speak it better than our Asian neighbors.

The writings of Jose Rizal, Mariano Ponce, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Apolinario Mabini and so many others are unread and forgotten, simply because we are also separated from them by language. Spanish as badly taught in college is useless. Instead of giving students an appreciation for Spanish literature, they are forced to memorize verbs and conjugations, which leave them more confused than when they started.

One of the forgotten figures of the Propaganda Movement is Graciano Lopez Jaena, whose writings and rousing speeches gave the Filipinos in Madrid something to be proud of. One has heard of him in history class, but few have read what he has written.

Graciano Lopez Jaena in what appears to be his grimy, sardine oil-stained coat. Photo taken when he was sober.

Lopez Jaena was not the model of the typical hero in the sense of a clean and orderly Jose Rizal. He had sloppy manners (others would say “Bohemian”) and would eat sardines from the can with his fingers, later wiping the oil off on his coat sleeves! One day, his friends pitched in and bought him a new coat so he could get rid of the stinking “rag” he was wearing. Lopez Jaena thanked his friends for their generosity and the next day, he was seen with his old coat again. He had pawned his new coat and treated himself to an afternoon of drinks at his favorite bar!

An undisciplined writer, he was coaxed into writing his articles and editorials with a round of drinks at a bar. Thus “trapped,” sheet after sheet was filled with the strong patriotic prose which made him one of the pillars of the Propaganda Movement. This lasted as long as the drinks kept on coming.

Lopez Jaena was most popular for his speeches and was often invited to give talks to different gatherings. He always accepted the invitations to speak even if he didn’t know a thing about the topic he was invited to speak on. Since he never prepared or studied his speeches beforehand, his companions were always quite tense. At the Ateneo de Barcelona, the great bolero gave a speech quoting imaginary facts with a confidence that kept his listeners breathless. One of his friends tugged at his sleeve and reminded him that he could be found out, to which he replied, “No one in this hall will dare question me because on this topic, all of them are as ignorant as I am!” If only we were not separated from our past by language, we would appreciate our history and heroes more.

Recuerdos de Patay

One of the odd canvasses at an exhibition of nineteenth-century Philippine paintings a few years back was that of a “sleeping child dressed in formal clothes lying on a couch.”

Somehow the child did not have the appearance of sleep; it turned out to be a dead child lying on a bier! Painted by the hand of the nineteenth-century master, Simon Flores, this “morbid” canvas was part of living in an age before the advent of photography.

Rich people commissioned portraits which looked liked the sitter in his Sunday best to reflect his wealth. Loved ones who passed away also had to be remembered, so they commissioned these artists to paint what was called “recuerdos de patay.”

Vintage photos cost an arm and a leg at antique shops, but one can get free photos by telling the shopkeeper that he has a recuerdo de patay in stock. There are so many of these, especially in the magazine El Renacimiento Filipino, or “Philippine Re-birth,” whose editors were particularly fond of recuerdos de patay. Whole pages were devoted to cadavers, especially if they happened to be people associated with the Revolution against Spain or the Fil-American War.

Emilio Jacinto lying in state with his rifle. The pregnant woman is on the second row, the second from the left with the saddest expression on her face. Everyone seems to be posing for the camera except her—she is contemplating his face.

Paciano Rizal, Jose's elder brother, refused to be photographed when he was alive. The only photograph we have of him alive is a photo taken without his knowledge, and the other photo is a recuerdo de patay taken when he could no longer refuse! Teodora Alonso's funeral was given full treatment in El Renacimiento Filipino. First, you have a photo of her, en enfermedad, seated, old and shriveled in her sickroom. Turn the page and you have a full body shot showing her stiff in the coffin! Mariano Ponce, another patriot, graced the pages of this magazine, shown in life and death–"a few moments after he expired," so says the caption.

Emilio Jacinto, the "Brains of the Katipunan," (not to be confused with "Brains of the Revolution," a.k.a. Apolinario Mabini) and Bonifacio's most trusted man was wounded in a battle in Laguna. His recuerdo de patay is reminiscent of a ritual done in some parts of Nueva Ecija, where the cadaver is made to sit up in the coffin for one last photograph with his loved ones. Jacinto, lying on the bier with his rifle in hand, is seen surrounded by friends and relatives, including a sad woman, who is obviously pregnant. The joke used to be, "Naiwan siguro ni Jacintong buntis iyan," which is not so funny because it's true.

Jacinto is widely believed to have died a bachelor at 23, but the photograph speaks the proverbial thousand words which leads to more research. The woman thought to be his girlfriend, Catalina de Jesus from Pampanga, was actually married to Jacinto in Katipunan rites.

The little we know reveals that she met Jacinto in her uncle's house where the Supremo and other Katipunan members met regularly and that she later joined the Katipunan as a courier. Too bad that's as far as our data goes for now, but Catalina de Jesus and her child are enough to humanize Emilio Jacinto, whose writings and military exploits overshadow the love life that our history books leave out.

There’s this Woman Named Circuncisión

Christmas is the season when one spends the year’s savings to splurge on gifts, but for me Christmas is a time to think about Philippine names.

Frances Arrespacochaga of the Bangko Sentral Museum told me that once, on a jeep to Baguio, a friend of hers seated beside two children quarreling over a candy bar heard the mother say, “Christmas! Bigyan mo si Valentine!”

Very likely, Christmas was born on 25 December and Valentine on 14 February.

There was a time when those born on 30 December or 19 June were named Rizal or Rizalina. Some people born after the war were called Filamer—short for Filipino-American. My nephew was nicknamed “Jumbo” because he was born when Boeing 747 jets were new. During the Manila visit of the future King of Spain, many boys were named Juan Carlos and during the visit of the Pope, many boys were christened John Paul or Juan Paulo. One nephew with such a name has been nicknamed “Pope!”

In days when we did not have so many VIP visitors and times were simpler, parents got their children’s names from the calendar. This explains why “names” Filipinos have are not names but actually ecclesiastical celebrations like Natividad (Christmas), Epifanio (Epiphany), Asunción (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) and would you believe, Circuncisión (Circumcision of Jesus in the Temple)?

During my grandfather’s wake, my aunts nearly fell off their seats when they received a Mass card from a certain Circuncision Garcia. Later, I was told her nickname was “Apung Tuli!” Columnist E.A. Cruz says he knew a person named Difunto (literally dead or deceased) who was born on 1 November!

Dozens of Marias are born every day and yet many names are actually the Virgin Mary’s feasts or titles: Rosario (Our Lady of the Holy Rosary), Carmen (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel), Concepción (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception), Milagros (Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal), Lourdes (Our Lady of Lourdes),

Nieves (Our Lady of the Snows), Pilar (Our Lady of the Pillar) and Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows).

Our surnames came from another source, the Catálogo de Apellidos, which accompanied a decree by Governor-General Narciso Clavería y Zaldúa in 1849, giving surnames to “the natives.” Taken from the Madrid directory and the dictionaries on Philippine languages compiled by the friars, this fascinating list explains why we have many Spanish surnames like Fernández, Pérez, Guerrero and “native” names like Baboy, Baca, Balimbing, Unggoy, Dilangbutiqui, Surot, Alboroto, Alalay, Bayag and Utot! The Spaniards must have had a great time laughing at the surnames imposed on the poor indios!

Narciso Clavería y Zaldúa who gave Filipinos surnames in 1849.

Chinese who already had indicated their surnames were allowed to keep them. Thus, we have Cojuangco, Ongpin, Sin and Teehankee, or even Tua Son and Loc Sin. Pre-hispanic royalty were allowed to keep their names like Tupas and Soliman. Kapampangan surnames like Macapagal, Macaspac, and Catacutan indicated that some ancestor must have been a warrior. Macapagal was someone who exhausted the enemy, Macaspac was someone who could break things, and Catacutan was someone who was feared.

During times when people were not mobile, the town of your birth could be determined by your surname because lazy administrators would tear off a whole page from the catálogo and send it to a certain town where people would pick their surnames from the list posted on the church or municipio door. Albay was a case in point. From the capital where everyone's surname started with "A," towns all over the province had people whose surnames started with the same letter! In Mindoro, some islands have surnames that begin with "P", "R" or "M."

The study of Philippine names and surnames is fascinating in the light of many numerologers or people who go to court in order to change names like Pecpec, Ducut, Dimautot, or Bagonggahasa. So, what is in a Pinoy name? A lot.

Ay, Monai!

There are over a hundred bundles in the National Archives marked Bienes de Difuntos which contain the wills of many rich people. Too bad not much research is done on this material since these detailed inventories of a person's property can help historians piece together the lifestyles of people who lived centuries ago. Busy at work on these forgotten bundles is former Intramuros Administration consultant Martin Tinio, whose latest "discovery" was a Spanish governor-general's will and its long list of jewelry and silver accumulated in the few years the governor was in office. Tinio laughs, "Talo pa nito si Imelda Marcos!"

As soon as he saw me, Tinio lamented the fact that many of today's bakeries do not make monai like they used to. Of course, he was referring to the shape and form of this obscene bread sometimes called pan de pekpek or if it is marked with a red dot pan de regla. He mentioned an old bakery near San Sebastian Church where they sold three sizes of monai. The smallest was called monai, medium size was called Abanaku (Aba, naku!), and large size was called Susmariosep! Don't you wonder where our bakers got the inspiration for monai?

The origin of monai is one of the intriguing questions in our culinary history that remains unsolved because prospective researchers are so health-and-figure conscious they are perpetually on diets that ban delicious cholesterol-rich food. Few have the patience to travel around the country in search of Filipino food, much less the cast-iron stomach to sample regional food that you are not used to. Sometimes, the names of the dishes are so graphic they can instantly turn you off.

Almost everyone who comes down from Baguio nowadays brings home a pasalubong of peanut brittle and other products of the Good Shepherd sisters. Twenty years ago people bought pasalubong in Mines View Park (often Mexican-looking Baguio-woven ponchos and the famous "man in the barrel"). In the Baguio market, I would always hear someone ask for the price of walis and kulangot. Well, food research has made me swallow more than pride on many occasions, but kulangot in the coconut balls with red tape? These look too

real for comfort.

I wonder what squeamish Americans would think? Calvin W. Schwabe has written Unmentionable Cuisine, a delightful recipe book which attempts to show how the strong food prejudices of Americans keep them from exploring the wealth of food at their fingertips.

Scanning the regional index, I was surprised to find many “unmentionables” from the Philippines. This included lengua, adobo/tapang aso, pinoy (sic), kaldereta, bagoong, pancit luglug, pesang dalag, fritada, dinuguan and, of course, balut. The choices are disappointing because we have more unmentionables like kamaru or mole crickets from Pampanga, turtle steak from the South, field rats, snake, bats and other assorted “unmentionables”, which were not mentioned in the book.

Dalag was “unmentionable” because it was a “mudfish”; bagoong because it was done by a “controlled spoilage” process. Actually, if you go to Balayan, Batangas, and see how bagoong is fermented in vats that look like pig sties, with flies, amag and all, I assure you, you will never take bagoong again. It is so revolting you would think a few drops of bagoong is so lethal that one drop can kill an elephant—yet we survive!

Pancit luglug was included simply because it was garnished with chicharon. Some foreigners think we are so wasteful because instead of using pork skin to make wallets, we fry them into chicharon. I guess Filipinos would rather have chicharon than wallets. Perhaps Mr. Schwabe was given the test of courage and coaxed into trying balut. He writes:

“Filipinos, Chinese, and a number of other peoples like to keep fertilized eggs a while, to wait ‘until there is something in them to eat.’ In the Philippines, their production is a $10-million-a-year industry.

“Chip a hole in [sic] the top of a 15-18 day-old fertilized duck egg and suck out the liquid. Then break the shell and eat the embryo. They can be coddled first.”

During an official visit to China, the squeamish head of the Philippine delegation could not take the snake soup. As the youngest in the party, I had to drink it to distract our hosts. Aside from this, we were served what appeared to be sago as dessert. When I asked the interpreter what it was, she said, “These are sweetened ovaries of snow frog.” By that time, I had taken to lying to the head of the

delegation about the food we were eating. What you don’t know can’t hurt you, right?

Had the author of Unmentionable Cuisine talked to me, I would have asked my mother to serve bayag ng baka. You can mistake them for sausages, but I have never tried them. Another thing he would have missed was bingka ng baboy, which our old cook swears will make a tongue-tied infant speak straight. Roasted rabbit, snake stew or broiled bat would have been too much for the American readers. Right now, I am 400 pesos poorer with a book on Unmentionable Cuisine which is so ordinary. If Schwabe watched how the Ilocanos cook a goat into assorted dishes, he will discover that the only thing they don’t eat are the hooves and the horns. Americans throw too many things away. Though Filipinos in the U.S. and Europe now say that what you could get for free in the market—pig’s blood for dinuguan, chicken feet, fish heads and other throwaways—are now being sold. It seems the West is now catching up with the East in terms of unmentionable cuisine.

Filipino Cuss Words

Picture the Madrid elite, including a few titled personages, watching the end of a fashion show by the Filipino designer José Moreno. As he takes the customary walk down the runway, kissed left and right by the models, the announcer says: “And now, ladies and gentlemen, Pitoy Moreno and his models!” The usual response should be loud applause, but this time, everyone was falling off their chairs in laughter. Pitoy is shocked. He probably asks himself, “What’s wrong? Is my zipper open or something?” Unfazed, the announcer continues by reading out the names of the models. When he says Teta Agustin, the Madrileños burst into laughter again. Only later do they realize that in colloquial Spanish “teta” means “boobs,” while “pito” or “pitoy” is the vulgar word for penis!

Pitoy Moreno is a familiar name to Filipinos but to Spaniards, it means a totally different thing because loosely translated it means “dark penis.” I heard this story from a friend and it may well be apocryphal. I asked Pitoy about it but he merely smiled and refused to confirm or deny the story.

This clearly illustrates one of the problems of translation: certain words are normal in one culture and vulgar in another. Take the Pampanga town Sexmoan, pronounced “Sis-muan.” I’m sure American GIs who see this on a map or road sign read it differently as “Sex. . . moan” and imagine of kinky things.

Filipinos trying to speak Spanish should consult the bad word guide of the Adrienne “Gimmick” book to see how harmless words in a Filipino vocabulary can get you into trouble in Spain:

“Pelota” was a game which became a fad in the 1970s. Everyone was playing it, then nawala sa uso. In Spain “pelotas” or “bolas” are vulgar words for “balls.” Someone who is “en pelotas” doesn’t mean he’s in a pelota outfit, this means he or she is bare-assed.

For those who listen to the popular “Radyo Bombo,” “bombo” means lesbian. All the Maria Concepcions in the Philippines who are nicknamed “Maricon” will be shocked to know that “maricón” is colloquial for homosexual.

Around 1983, when I first got interested in the etymology of Filipino curse words, puñeta was not in the dictionaries. But the latest Collins Spanish-English dictionary defines puñeta as “masturbate.” If you say “que puñeta” it means “hell!” Telling someone to “puñeta” is telling him “to go to hell.”

Now to the popular leche. The dictionary gives five different meanings of the word, aside from the literal milk, or to make milk. One definition of leche says it is the vulgar word for semen and to “tener mala leche,” literally “to have bad milk,” means to be vindictive or nasty. I thought this would be the last word on this word but Dyaryo Filipino editor D.L. Mariano has an interesting theory that based on Spanish and also Filipino machismo, uncircumcised males are laughed at. Thus, leche does not pertain to semen but to “smegma,” which is the white substance that rings the penis of the unwashed uncircumcised male.

The etymology of Filipino curse words is a fascinating area unexplored by our linguists and lexicographers. If they take it up, we may yet see the day international Spanish dictionaries will carry the Filipino meanings of Spanish words.

How Much for the Mamon?

Many Europeans cannot imagine why Filipinos who were under Spanish rule for almost four centuries cannot speak Spanish. In a Greek restaurant in Paris, two waiters made a bet on our nationality. One guy said we were Filipinos; the other said we were Chinese. The first guy asked me, “vous-etes chinois?”

“No,” I replied, “je suis Philippin.”

The waiter then went to the head waiter and tried to claim his ten francs, but the other fellow refused. He went straight up to me and asked me the same question. I stressed, yes, I am really Filipino. He looked at me from head to foot and asked, how come you don’t speak Spanish? Then, I had to explain in two minutes the Americanizations of the Philippines, etc. The poor guy lost ten francs on our being Filipino.

In Spain, the Filipino tourist has an edge over other foreigners because whenever we deal with small change, we don’t use Tagalog but Spanish: cinco, diez, veinticinco, cincuenta. The only thing we get confused about is cien for a hundred and quinientos for 500, because we use Tagalog terms for large denominations: sandaan, dalawang daan. I wonder why.

The Filipino tourist in Spain often gets into trouble from day one of his journey when he applies what he thinks is correct Spanish, or worse, when he translates from English to Spanish.

Scanning the mouth-watering vitrine of a posh Madrid pastry shop, I saw some mamon and became instantly homesick. Pointing to these, I asked how much for the mamon? To my surprise, the saleslady glared at me and talked to another customer. Did I say or do anything wrong? My conscience clear, I asked again and was scolded on the spot. I was to find out later that mamon was a “bad word” which referred to a woman’s large breasts; the cakes I wanted were called magdalenas. Looking at the papayas on her chest, I realized what she was upset about, so I apologized, explaining that in the Philippines, magdalenas are called mamon.

Come to think of it, we do have an obscene-looking piece of bread in our bakeries called monai. I only realized what it resembled when I heard some relatives in Pampanga enter a store and order pan de pekpek. Bastos, I thought, until I heard more graphic descriptions of food. Tagalog ampao, which is a hollow sweetie with linga, is taklang pusa [cat shit] in Kapampangan.

Going back to Spain, I was so thrilled to find chocolate biscuits called Filipinos; I bought two packs. Ang pangit ng lasa! I wonder if the color and taste of those biscuits had anything to do with us as a people? In that same grocery, I overheard a Filipino shocking the daylights out of a teenaged clerk by asking where he could buy de lata, or canned goods. In Spain, canned food are called conservas. But of course, with his college Spanish, he couldn't have known that, so he explained further, saying he wanted to buy preserved fruit and jam, calling them preservativas. Well, in Spain, preservativas mean condoms!

There used to be a strong anti-American sentiment in Spain such that some friends actually rejoice each month when vandals broke the windows of McDonald's on the Puerta del Sol. Today, American fast food dots the Madrid landscape.

One Filipina showed her anti-American sentiments in a clothes shop by simply asking for a clothes hanger. The Spanish word for clothes hanger is percha or colgador. Of course, she didn't know that, so she tried sign language. When that didn't work, she used her Spanish and said, "Deseo la cosa para colgar americanas," which in Tagalog is "Gusto ko'y 'yung gamit na pinagsasabitan ng amerikana." Now to the bewildered Spanish clerk, the Filipina was saying, "I want the thing with which to hang Americans!"

At least we console ourselves with the fact that the bad words that were never taught us in school—puta, leche, puñeta—will get an immediate response in Spain. Of course, with the exception of puta which, in both Tagalog and Spanish, means prostitute or slut. The other Spanish invectives we know are not Spanish at all, but Mexican in origin.

As you know, the Philippines during the early part of the Spanish colonial period was ruled not from Madrid but from Mexico, which explains why a Filipino-speaking Spanish is often mistaken for a Sudamericano. When you ask for matches and say posporo, you will be told that the correct Spanish word is cerillas and that fósforo is Mexican.

I learned all my “bad” Spanish words in Pampanga, one evening when my uncle asked a Spanish priest who had just said Mass for my grandmother why a word like leche which simply means “milk” is thought to be a bad word. The Spaniard had no answer. My uncle asked what about puñeta, to which he replied there is no such word in Spanish.

Consulting the Tagalog-Spanish/Spanish-Tagalog dictionaries compiled by the Spanish friars from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, I realized they kept us in the dark about anatomical parts or sexual functions because the words for “shameful parts” in Philippine languages did not have the equivalent Spanish translations. These words were so offensive the translations were in Latin! See, the colonizers never taught us Spanish.

I did see that leche meant milk and the closest I could get to puñeta was puño which means “fist.” I was to find out later that puñeta was obscene, because the complete Mexican phrase goes: “Vas a puñetar!” literally meaning “Go, masturbate!” Leche, on the other hand, is colloquial for semen.

One day when we have a Filipino dictionary similar to the Oxford English Dictionary, we will truly understand the language we speak and see the hispanismos that remain in Filipino.

Did Japan Offer to Buy the Philippines?

With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the Spanish Empire, or what was left of it, was dissolved and the United States of America emerged as a colonial master and a new international power. Few Filipinos know how hard Spain stalled and bargained to keep the Philippines, but losers can't be choosers, so they surrendered the Pearl of the Orient to the U.S. for 20 million dollars. Doing research on both sides of the negotiations, I came across the memoirs of Francisco Reynoso, one of the members of the Spanish delegation, that narrates two things which I still have to verify.

First, he claims to have been a friend of the then unknown, struggling, pre-Spoliarium Juan Luna whom he knew when he was assigned to the Spanish Embassy in Rome. Reynoso says he was one of the character witnesses during Luna's trial in Paris for the murder of his wife and mother-in-law. Well, his book's frontispiece is a portrait Luna gave him as a souvenir when he was transferred to Japan. This unlocated painting is not on the list of Luna's known works.

More intriguing was his reaction to Spain's humiliating defeat in Manila Bay, where Reynoso wished that Spain had sold the Philippines to Japan long before the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution and the Spanish-American War:

"It would have been better for Spain to have accepted the offer of Marshal Yamagata, the Japanese victor of the Chinese War, made tentatively in Moscow during the coronation of Czar Nicholas II in 1894, to sell the Philippines to Japan for forty million pounds. The Japanese were then disposed to give this sum for the Archipelago because of its geographical location, strategic for their purposes, and because it would have given them new territory for the diversion of their ever-increasing population—one of their most serious problems."

Accurate or not, the point I am getting at is that Japan, long before she occupied the islands in World War II, has always been interested in the archipelago and this interest was played upon by no less than Andres Bonifacio.

It is not well known that in 1896, Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, Pio Valenzuela and other Katipuneros met with a Japanese admiral visiting Manila to solicit aid for the revolution.

Pio Valenzuela wrote about this meeting in his memoirs. The Katipuneros met the admiral on the second floor of the Japanese Bazaar in Manila, where they were introduced by Valenzuela's friend, a Japanese named Tagawa, who also acted as their interpreter. They presented a written message of the Katipunan drafted by Jacinto, who also made the verbal welcome speech in Tagalog. The Admiral replied with a talk on Japan and the freedom of other Oriental nations, that antedated the war time Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Jacinto stated his belief that Japan could help the Philippines gain her independence the way France helped the United States win her liberty from Britain. On the whole, the meeting was short and formal, and no promises were made.

That afternoon, the Katipuneros sent the Japanese admiral some gifts: a wooden bas-relief sculpture, a basket of ripe mangoes and some melons. But that was the end of the episode. Sad to say, Bonifacio did not really know who he talked to or what the admiral's official capacity or influence was, because neither arms or aid ever arrived. Thus, one of the charges leveled against Bonifacio at his trial was that he inspired his countrymen to revolution on false promises of Japanese aid.

We Could Have Been a German Colony

It is interesting that when one mentions the Ayalas or the Zobels one instantly thinks of wealthy Spanish-speaking ilustrados. It might come as a surprise to know that the Zobel-Ayala family descended from German Protestants originally from Hamburg, and that the family patriarch, Jacobo Zobel Zangroniz, was imprisoned in Manila as a German spy in the 1870s.

Jacobo Zobel was the youngest of three children born to Jacobo Zobel Hinsch and Maria Zangroniz y Arrieta, who owned and managed the Botica Zobel on Calle Real 13 in Intramuros. The young Zobel studied in Madrid from 1848-64 and returned to Manila to take over the pharmaceutical business from his father. Later, he would marry Trinidad Ayala y Roxas, thus making him, by marriage, one of the richest men in the Philippines.

Jacobo Zobel is, among other things, credited with establishing Manila's first tramcar service (actually, a carriage for 12 persons drawn by a horse) when he organized the Compañía de las Tranvías de Filipinas with Adolfo Bayo in 1880.

He was also a progressive man who advocated Philippine representation in the Spanish Cortes; the limitation of the absolute powers of the governor-general; and batted for civil, religious and educational reforms. Worst of all, in the eyes of the Church, he was a Mason.


NOTICE
DON'T MONKEY
WITH THE
BUZZ-SAW
PHILIPPINES
U.S.

Editorial cartoon from an American newspaper showing the German Kaiser trying to get his hands on Uncle Sam's new acquisition—the Philippines.

With all these "sins," Zobel was swept into jail with the wave of mass arrests following the aborted Cavite mutiny of 1872. The witch hunt did not end with the execution of the Filipino priests—Mariano Gómez, José Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora. Many prominent Filipinos were imprisoned, executed or exiled to Hong Kong or the Marianas for their complicity, real or imagined, in the Cavite Mutiny.

Being a German citizen, the case of Jacobo Zobel was different. If the number of documents found in the archives of the Spanish Foreign Ministry in Madrid is any indication of the importance of the case, it is well worth looking into. One bundle contains documents pertaining to the arrest and detention of Jacobo Zobel without charges. When the German ambassador in Madrid asked for an explanation, he was told that Zobel was not only a sympathizer of the Cavite Mutiny, but he was also a German spy! Secret documents were then produced to prove there was a German group based in Hong Kong which was funding the Filipino revolt against Spain in order to take over the country. Doesn't this sound familiar today?

Despite his detention, Zobel, being a German Citizen, was given the right to an investigation at the prodding of the German ambassador in Madrid, who supplied a list of Zobel's archaeological and numismatic writings to prove he was harmless, together with a list of people who could vouch for his character. Much later, it is said, Prince Bismarck himself petitioned the Spanish government to release Zobel, thus saving him from execution.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent the Imperial German Navy to Manila "to protect German interests and her citizens." This fleet, larger and stronger than that of the American fleet under then Commodore George Dewey, threatened the Americans no end. Having designs to take the Philippines despite official denials from Washington, they saw the German maneuvers as an attempt by Germany to take the Philippines by force. Contemporary newspaper reports and dispatches in America were screaming

about German interest in the Philippines, which was thwarted only when the United States, by the Treaty of Paris, refused to recognize the independence of the Philippines Emilio Aguinaldo had declared on 12 June, 1898, and decided to annex the Islands after purchasing them from Spain for $20 million.

It is useless to speculate on what would have happened if Dewey left Manila Bay, or if the U.S. decided not to take the Philippines. But the thought that we could have become a German colony is a ticklish “what-if” question that will plague historians for years to come.

The case of Jacobo Zobel illustrates that if there was a real group of anti-Spanish plotters in Hong Kong, then the Germans had been interested in the Philippines prior to 1898. More research will shed light on the still-unread chapters of German involvement in our history.

King of Belgium Failed to Buy the Philippines

In the heart of Brussels, on royal land close to the King's Palace sits, of all things, a Chinese pavilion.

Now a museum for Sino-Japanese art of the late nineteenth century, it was built by the Belgian King, Leopold II, who had an avid fascination for the East. He even tried to purchase the Philippines from Spain!

Upon his accession to the throne in 1865, Leopold II tried to expand his country's influence to the East, and he wanted to start with the Philippines. In his view, the islands had very good commercial possibilities. Aside from this, the location was strategic, being the gateway to China and Japan. The problem was his government, much less his Parliament, was not too fascinated with the idea of colonization, as this entails naval vessels and an army to protect interests halfway across the world.

Besides, there was this so-called Belgian Declaration of Neutrality, which set them apart from France, Germany and England, who were then competing for overseas possessions.

In 1866, Leopold instructed his ambassador in Madrid to speak to the Queen of Spain about ceding the Philippines to Belgium. Knowing that the Belgian Parliament would never approve such a plan and the Spanish Queen would only scoff at the idea, the diplomat did nothing.

Undaunted, Leopold transferred the ambassador to another post and assigned more sympathetic individuals to carry out his secret imperialistic plans. Working without the approval of his government and with only 150 million Belgian francs in his pocket (which was not enough to cover the operational expenses of the Philippines for a year), he tried to get personal loans from English banks. He failed to get any loans because the banks knew his attempt to acquire the Philippines was a personal whim, since his own government refused to back him up. In 1868, when Isabel II was deposed as Queen of Spain, Leopold wanted to exploit the situation and made overtures to the new government for the outright

sale of the Philippines. But without money, he didn’t get very far.

To skirt the issue of colonization, Leopold devised a scheme in which the Philippines would become independent under a Belgian monarch. An overseas business company would run the islands under a temporary concession of 90 years, while Belgium would handle the diplomatic and financial affairs. Later, this company would conveniently cede the Philippines to Belgium, which would make colonization or annexation moot. Ingenious as it sounds, this didn’t work either, so Leopold shifted his sights to Africa, where his imperialist dream became a reality in the Belgian Congo.

This interesting piece in our history is a gray area, since Leopold ordered all papers regarding the Philippine project destroyed. The little that we know comes from A La Recherche d’un Etat Independent: Leopold II et les Philippines 1869-1875, a scholarly book published in 1962, which still has to be translated into English. It contains the papers of Count Jules Greindl, who was chief negotiator for the king on this project. The papers do not go beyond 1875, the year Greindl was sent to manage the affairs of the Belgian Congo. However, recent findings add a bit of color to all that gray.

Leopold II King of Belgium, who almost acquired the Belgian Philippines before he went for the Belgian Congo.

A top-secret report from the Spanish ambassador in Berlin to the Minister of State turned up in the archives of the Spanish Foreign Ministry in Madrid. It revealed that in 1888, despite Greindl's resignation and belief that the Philippine project had been shelved, Leopold II was still trying to acquire the Philippines!

One wonders why Leopold had such an obsessive desire to own the Philippines, as he is quoted to have said, "L' affaire que je poursuis irrealisable aujourd-hui, peut-etre faisable une autre fois" (The project I am promoting is impossible today, but may be feasible at another time.)

History changes, depending on material unearthed from archives here and abroad. There is more to this episode than meets the eye, so when all the documents are found, we may one day have the complete picture of how Leopold of Belgium almost bought for himself the Philippine archipelago.

A Country that had Many Names

Europe's flea markets and librerías are crawling with Filipinos hoping to find a Luna or a Hidalgo for a few hundred dollars—or buying old books, maps and prints on the Philippines at bargain prices. Unfortunately, some of them are plain buy-and-sell pseudo-collectors who don't really understand the value of the things they find. All they think about is reselling at a profit, so they unwittingly raise prices by buying worthless junk. Spanish and French dealers, cognizant of this growing market for "Filipiniana," have upped their prices. Worse, I know of two Madrid antiquarians peddling fake Lunas to unsuspecting Filipinos who think they have hit the jackpot.

Expensive but cheaper than paintings by "name" painters or authentic santos are old maps of the Philippines, which have much snob value when hung in the den or the sala. Yet only in serious collectors' homes have I seen maps without the word "Philippines" prominently printed on them. Most of the earliest and interesting maps of the Philippines have the outlines of the archipelago clearly delineated on them but have a different name. Two seventeenth-century maps reproduced here make this clear. One shows China with the Philippines identified as Isles Barusses; the other labels the Philippines as the Archipel de Saint Lazare. These illustrate that our country was known under so many different names before it officially became the Philippines.


ISLES DES LARRONS
Deserta I.
Desierta I
Los dos
Hermanos
Malo Abrigo I
ARCHIPEL DE St LAZARE
Mane I
Guan I
Pagan I
Gan I
OCEAN ORIENTAL
I. de Bidmna

Magellan arrived on 16 March 1521, feast day of St. Lazarus. Thus, he called the place the Archipiélago de San Lázaro.

When the survivors of the Magellan expedition returned to Spain relating the "discovery" of Cebu, Leyte, Samar and Panay, the great sixteenth-century geographer and cartographer Gerard Mercator, indicated that these islands could be what the earlier cartographer Ptolemy (around second century A.D.) said was the Barussae.

Ptolemy gave the name Maniolas, Barusas, Baroussai, Taprobana, etc. to the islands in the Malay archipelago, so no one knew which was which. Later on, the Barusas was identified as the Visayas and Maniolas was thought to be Manila.

The Chinese, as early as the tenth century A.D., were trading with Filipinos and the islands were referred to in their maps and chronicles as Ma-ior Ma-yi. Sometimes the island of Luzon was taken for the entire archipelago, so in some maps the Philippines was called Lusong, Liu-sin, Luçon, Luçones, or Luçonia!

On 16 March 1521, the feast day of Saint Lazarus, Magellan named his "discovery" the Isles of Saint Lazarus or Archipiélago de San Lázaro. Some voyagers called the Philippines the Vall Seu Parigne or "Valley Without Peril" because of its friendly and hospitable inhabitants who were in sharp contrast to the "thieves" on the neighboring island they named the Islas de los Ladrones or "Isle of Thieves."

After Magellan's voyage, the Philippines was known in Spain as the Islas (Indias) del Poniente or "Isles of the West" or "West Indies" because Magellan traveled to those islands on the western route from Spain. The Portuguese, on the other hand, referred to the Philippines as the Islas de Oriente or "Isles of the East" because her voyagers traveled there on the eastern route from Portugal. Interesting, 'di ba?

Sometimes, the archipelago was named after the Celebes Sea which was south of Mindanao, so if you see an old map which describes the Archipiélago or Islas de Liquios Celebes, chances are it is actually the Philippines.

I used to imagine Magellan planting a Spanish flag on an island in the Philippines and claiming her for Spain and Philip II. This is all wrong. I found out it was not Magellan but a later voyager, Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, who in 1542 gave the Philippines its name. He renamed Magellan's Archipiélago de San Lázaro into Felipinas (sometimes Philipinas) for the Spanish Crown Prince Felipe, later Philip II. Some say that Villalobos named only one island Felipinas, so in 1561, Las islas Filipinas referred to the entire group of islands. So, anglicize Filipinas and you get the Philippines; translate that into Pilipino and you get Pilipinas.

Names, Places, and Some Changes

Would you believe that in some old maps, Leyte is called Ceylon, Cagayan de Sulu is Mauritius and Panay is Panama? If the archipelago was called by so many names before it officially became “Philippines,” what more of the thousands of islands, each with pre-Hispanic names changed by the colonizers due to differences in language and pronunciation?

Cavite, for example, is supposed to have come from Kawit, one of the towns in the province given that name because in maps it resembled a hook. Spaniards changed the orthography, Kawit became Cauit, then in some maps and documents where the U is interchanged into a V, it became Cavit and later Cavite. Bulakan, which means a place where cotton grows, became Bulacan. Bontoc originated from the Tagalog word for mountain, Bondoc, but the Spaniards pronounced the “d” as “t.” Binondo in Manila was once known as Binundok.

ANCIENNE
REGION DES
SINES
27
REGION SERIQUE
SEMATHENI
ou
SEMANTHINÆ
ACADRÆ
ASPITHRÆ
Le Grand Golfe
AMBASTÆ
MER
DE
L'INDE
I. Jabadij
Isles des Satyres
INDE AU DELA DU GANGE
REGION SERIQUE
DES
SINES
ACADRA
AMBASTA
ASPITHRA
Tropique
de
Cancer
INDE DE LA LE GANGE
Isles
BARUSSÆ
OCEAN
ORIENTAL

Note the form of the Philippines in this ancient map as well as the name given it.

The folk etymology of Kalamba is interesting. A Spaniard walked into that Laguna town one day and came across a woman peddling clay pots. He asks, in Castilian, for the name of the place and the woman, who doesn't understand a word, is supposed to have asked him if he wanted to buy a pot. "Kalan ba?" she asked, and the Spaniard named the place Calamba.

European cartographers drawing maps of the Philippines early in the sixteenth century used the work of Antonio Pigafetta as an authoritative source. What Pigafetta called Mattan was misspelled by others as Matan; it is actually Mactan. Cebu was called Subuth, Cabue, Zebu, Zubut, Zsubu, Cubiene, and Cubur. Bibalon is what we know today as the Balabac Straits. Pigafetta called Basilan Taghima, which the Europeans changed into Tanguima, Taglima, Tagimar, Tagema, and Tagyto until the Jesuit historian, Fr. Colin, called it Basilan, which is closest to its present name. Zolo became Solo, Sooloo, Xollo, Zulu, Socloeh, Solor, Zsolo: all these meant Jolo.

Insulæ Phi lippinae
Milliaria Hispanica
Oriens
INSULAE
PHILIPPINA
SINENSIS
OCEANUS
Occidens
Tagima
Solor
I. de S. Maria

The first separate map of the Philippines, drawn by Kaerius in 1598. Charmingly inaccurate, you have to turn this book around to place Luzon on its proper place on top, not to the left, of the archipelago.

Of course, Hispanic names replaced many Philippine names. Negros was Mamaylan to the Visayans, such that Loarca thought this a contraction of Himamaylan. Sometimes called Paniloungon, it was later called Isla de los Negros, or “Island of the Black People.” Shortened to Isla de Negros, it finally became Negros.

Magellan first landed on 17 March 1521 in the island of Homonhon, also known as Humunu or Malhon. In this uninhabited island, they found springs of clear water and the first signs of gold, so they called it Buena Señal or “good sign.” Speaking of gold, the island of Mindoro is said to be a contraction of Mina de Oro, meaning “goldmine.”

Samar has many names: Ibabao, Achan, Camlaya, Zamal, and Taridola. Loarca called the place Candaya, which probably meant Tandaya, which was not the name of the place but the name of a chieftain who ruled in Samar. Legend says when Miguel Lopez de Legaspi landed, he asked the chieftain’s nephew what the name of the place was and was given the name of his uncle, so Legaspi called the place Tandaya.

The Last Word on Maynila

Serendipity is defined as a natural talent to find something interesting or valuable by chance. I wonder if I can teach this in a Methods of Research class, because I often encounter many sources for this column by chance. Librarians Elvie and Mercy of the Lopez Memorial Museum know that when they see me, it means I have run out of material for my column. One day, I paced up and down the corridors. I rarely use their card catalogue and the librarians have grown tired of asking me, “Ano ho ba ang hinahanap nila?” simply because I don’t have anything in mind. I usually walk around the stacks, browsing until I see an interesting book, manuscript, or photograph.

This time I brought out the large boxes which contained the botanical prints in Fr. Manuel Blanco’s Flora de Filipinas printed in the nineteenth century. As I went through these beautifully done plates, I felt like someone who had lost in the stock market, because a set of Flora was offered to me a few years back at 25,000. Since I didn’t have the cash, I let it go. Last year, a dealer in Amsterdam offered me another set of Flora at the whopping amount of US$30,000! Perhaps, I’m in the wrong profession. Maybe, I’d earn more as a dealer in rare books, but this means using the other half of the brain which controls business sense.

Anyway, I went through the tedious process of looking at the hundreds of plates one by one, trying to piece together a column on the nineteenth-century Filipino artists who drew and painted the flowers for Blanco’s book. The gaps in Philippine art history, like that of political history, came about because history is often oversimplified as only the story of “great men.” Thus Rizal, Bonifacio and Aguinaldo dominate the historical landscape. In art, the painters—Lorenzo Guerrero, Miguel Zaragoza, Felix Martinez, C. Argüelles, G. Argüelles, Rosendo Garcia, Juan Garcia, a certain Llado and many others—remain in obscurity, overshadowed by the two great painters of the late nineteenth century, Juan Luna y Novicio and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo.

As far as I know, there are no Lunas in Blanco’s work because Luna was barred from entering the Flora de Filipinas contest when he left (or was expelled?) from the Academia de Dibujo after an argument with its director Agustin Saez, who

won first prize by competing against his students. The second prize went to Hidalgo. While listing down the names of these artists as they appeared in the botanical plates, serendipity came in to save me from the boredom of this task: I came across a plate showing a plant I had never seen before. It was labeled "Ixora Manila:—Blanco Scyphiphora Hydrophulacea:-rtn.—dc.—Mig." If the plant was new to me, the botanical jargon was unintelligible. Yet a strange thrill swept over me—I was looking at the plant from which the name Manila originated. This was the nila in May-nila.

There were two etymologies for Manila. The first was that Manila came from May-dila, referring to the "tongue of land" on which Sulayman built his fort. The second was that Manila came from maynilad or maynila, meaning the place where there was much indigo.

Maydila was believed to be a spot near the Pasig River where Fort Santiago now stands. When Miguel Lopez de Legaspi came and founded Manila, he built the city on the site where Sulayman's fortress once stood. Yet it was difficult to explain, linguistically, how the "d" in maydila became an "n" to become Manila, thus, this etymology was rejected.

Then came the term of Manila Mayor "Gat" Antonio Villegas who placed the word "Maharnilad" on the façade of the city hall and "Lagusnilad" on a nearby underpass. This led the Philippine Daily Globe columnist E.A. Cruz to cite the work of Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, proving that nila was Sanskrit for indigo and that "the word is Maynila." The pro-nilad camp did not give up that easily and countered Cruz with all the academic citations and scholarly footnotes they could muster.

It seems this misunderstanding about the nilad came from a footnote in the 55-volume work, known by scholars as "Blair and Robertson," in which an American Augustinian scholar, Thomas Cooke Middleton, said that, "Manila is derived from the Tagal word, manilad, meaning a place overgrown with nilad." Middleton had never set foot in the Philippines and this added "d" to Manila complicated things.

I did check with Blanco and all the sources cited for Maynilad, only to find that the word was always Maynila without the "d." Laymen should never be overwhelmed by a battery of sources, footnotes, citations and the like. Sometimes these are smokescreens obscuring the truth. It was very clear in the

books cited that the word was “nila,” but when the citations appeared in the scholarly journals, the nila acquired a mysterious “d” to become nilad. Sometimes “scholars” add too much of their biases to their sources. In short, the word is really Maynila.

The Mala Caña in Malacañang

Hardly anyone visits the Philippine National Archives. Aside from a handful of researchers (mostly research assistants of busy academics), the bulk of the visitors are people who apply for land titles or birth certificates. In the reading room, young researchers discuss movies and fads while exchanging interesting bits of history they literally unearth from the mountain of documents requested every day.

During one of these mornings, a researcher of the National Historical Institute showed us the plans for the renovations of Malacañang during the nineteenth century, which included the detailed expenses and names of the laborers. The documents showed that Chinese artisans were paid at least twice more than the indio, or Filipino laborers. The list of workers included a certain Co Juang Co, an alleged ancestor of President Cory Aquino.

The Malacañang Foundation has published a coffee table book on the palace, and one of the things they must clear up is the etymology of the word “malacañang.” Legend says people who sailed along the Pasig river passed by the estate, which is now the Presidential Palace, and exclaimed, “May lakan diyan” or “Ma-lakan diyan” meaning, “There are nobles there.” This is the most popular and thus the most unreliable of the etymologies proposed. Another variant is that people used to say “malakan-iyan,” meaning that was the place where the chief or the head resided. The Spaniards had a difficult time pronouncing this, so it was “bastardized” into malacañang. The Americans at the turn of the century had a difficult time with their Castillian and dropped the “g,” thus referring to Malacañan Palace. So you see, there are two ways to spell it. But if one wishes to be official, it is interesting to know that President Magsaysay, in his wish to return to the Pilipino idiom, returned the dropped “g” and it became Malacañang once more.

Some historians say the estate actually got its name from the street where it is located. Being on the Calzada de Malacañang, the estate was called the Posesión de Malacañang. Eulogio Rodriguez wrote that in ancient times, the San Miguel District had many bamboo groves populated by birds and insects, which made

eerie sounds. Superstitious folk believed the sounds were made by evil spirits. Thus inhabited by aswang and tianak, the bamboo groves were referred to as “malacaña” or “bad cane.” Rodriguez claims this was the origin of the name Malacañang.

A check with the nineteenth-century Tagalog dictionary by Noceda and Sanlucar showed there is no entry for Malacañang or mala caña. The closest word found is malacauayan, which is a certain type of grass (“un género de zacate que tiene virtudes como la grama”). If botanists could determine what kind of a plant the malacauayan is and establish if it grew in abundance at the San Miguel District, then we shall have definite proof of the origin of Malacañang, just as Maynila was said to have originated from the plant nila (maynila), which grew in abundance in the area.

Malacañang at the turn of the 20th century.

It really is a long shot to suggest that the calzada de Malacañang could have been the street where the malacauayan was most abundant. One must also have to explain how a typographical error turned malacauayan into malacanyan.

These seemingly useless thoughts at idle times make the study of history as fascinating as a whodunit.

Who was Juan Luna's La Bulaqueña?

One of the most beautiful portraits painted by Juan Luna used to hang in the "music room" of Malacañang Palace. It is now in the National Museum.

Known as La Bulaqueña, this serene portrait of a Filipina from Bulacan is very popular because it is one of the few "Philippine" canvases that Luna painted and the identity of its sitter remains unknown. "Who is La Bulaqueña?"

One thing is sure, though: La Bulaqueña, sometimes referred to as "Maria Clara," was never a Malacañang occupant. Dated 1895 or a year before the outbreak of Andres Bonifacio's revolt against Spain, Luna, having killed his wife and mother-in-law, was very much a widower. He and his brother Antonio were what would be considered today a "prize catch," in spite of their bad temper. It is, therefore, not farfetched to think that this woman could be one of the women Luna courted. Philippine Daily Globe columnist E.A. Cruz, in his monograph on Luna, says: "One does not paint with such grace and affection an ordinary creature, and Luna's tender sentiments were, doubtless, at least partly reciprocated."

Who then is this unidentified "daughter to a prominent family who [Luna] missed marrying?" At least two books have pointed to a certain Dolores Sabas, daughter of Doña Mariquita Sabas in whose home at 2 Espeleta Street, Binondo, were held many tertulias frequented by the Luna brothers. Antonio Luna was said to have been one of the best guitar players in Manila in his time, so he would have been drawn to one of Doña Mariquita's daughters—either Francisca, nicknamed "Paquita," or Dolores, who was called "Loleng." It is the latter who is believed to be "La Bulaqueña." That is, if you believe what you read in books.

Oral history says something else. Manila Times columnist Rosalinda Orosa, whose family once owned another beautiful Luna canvas, Tampuhan, has her own candidate for La Bulaqueña.

Tampuhan depicts a couple, perhaps lovers, in the sala of a bahay-na-bato. The man is looking out of the window onto the street, while the woman has her eyes

on the shiny hardwood floor. They are not speaking nor looking at each other, thus the title Tampuhan.

The man, according to Ms. Orosa, is Luna's friend, Ariston Bautista, a Filipino who studied medicine in Europe. The woman is said to be Emiliana Trinidad, her ancestor who, she claims, posed for La Bulaqueña. Can this be true?

Luna's La Bulaqueña now in National Museum.

Dr. Asuncion N. Fernando has the most interesting candidate—Maria “Iyang” Rodrigo Fernando. Intrigued by the fact that she had never seen her grandmother and that her relatives never discussed lola while she was growing up, she did her own research. All she was told about her enigmatic Lola Iyang was that she brought food to katipuneros hiding in the fields outside her town, carried messages through enemy lines and that, in this life as courier, she was killed in an “encounter.”

Having exhausted all the accounts of her relatives, Dr. Fernando contacted Bulacan historian Antonio Valeriano, who gave her basically the same story about her grandmother “riding off into the sunset and never coming back.” Valeriano noted that Luna’s La Bulaqueña has the the same bushy eyebrows and sad eyes which characterize the face of a Rodrigo. To prove this, he challenges anyone to take a good look at Francisco “Soc” Rodrigo. Valeriano believes Maria Fernando is La Bulaqueña. Maria Fernando’s story is good enough for a movie but, despite the interesting background, the problem is that there are no photographs to validate this.

The same holds true of the two other candidates. Belen Ponferrada of the Malacañang Museum says their research on the identity of La Bulaqueña comes to about the same dead end. Nevertheless, a handful of visitors to the place have told guides that the woman in the painting is their relative or ancestor. Unfortunately, no one can say, “Will the real La Bulaqueña please stand up?”

Who did Luna Pass Off as His Wife?

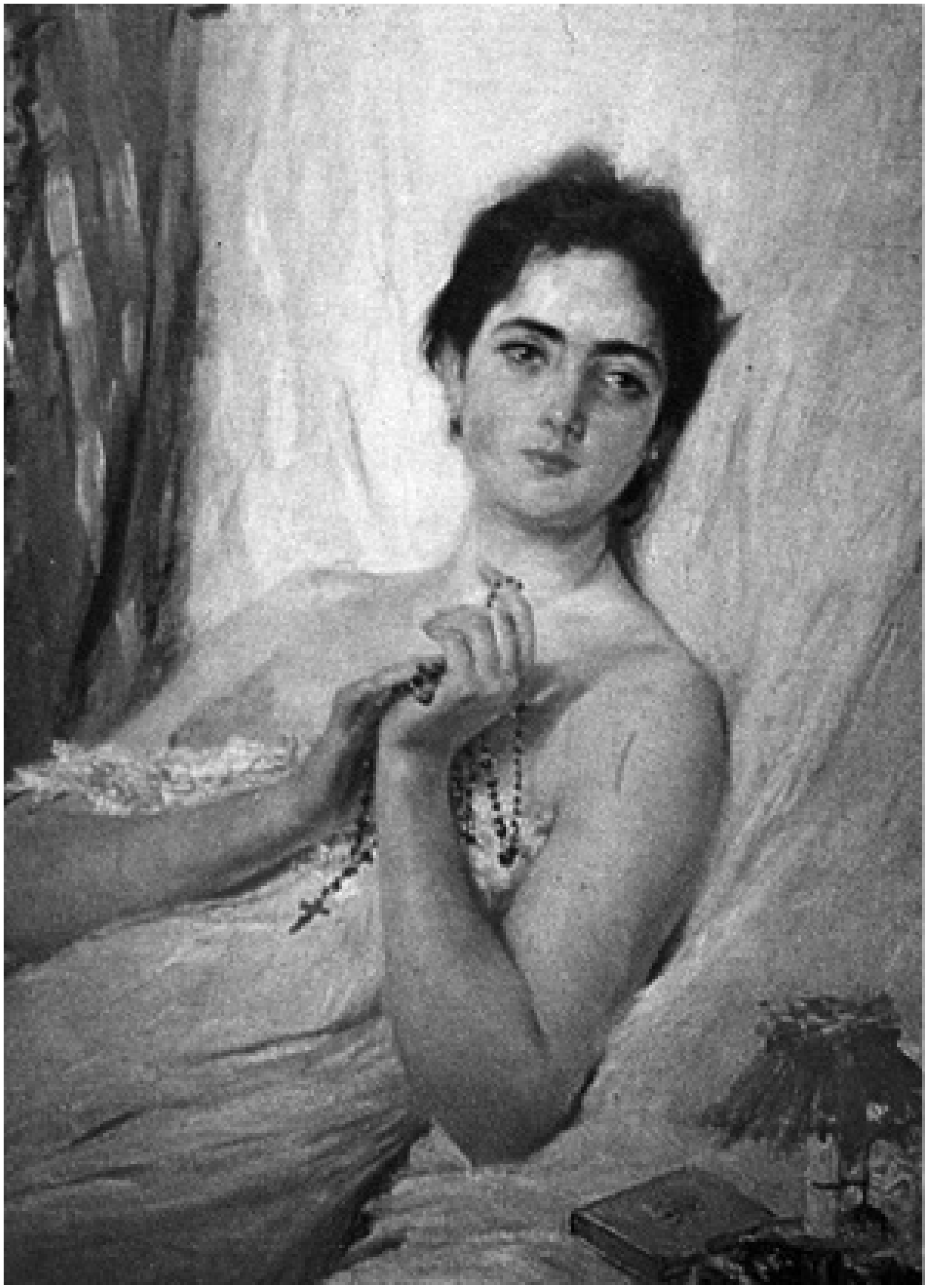
Juan Luna's "Portrait of Paz Pardo de Tavera," painted around 1890, depicts a woman reclining on a bed with one breast exposed. The eroticism of the painting is balanced by the fact that the sitter holds a rosary as if in prayer—and on her night table lies a prayer book. Interest in this painting is kept alive by history: Luna killed his wife and mother-in-law, so visitors to the National Museum gaze at this portrait to see what the unfortunate Paz looked like. Stronger attraction to this painting is the tsismis that the painting is cursed.

Inquiring into the provenance of this painting, I could not understand why it has survived to the present, when the Pardo de Taveras are said to have burned all their Lunas. In an interview, Mita Pardo de Tavera said she didn't know how this came about either, because everything that had to do with Luna had been destroyed, including photographs of the painter which were once in the family photo albums.

Tsismis says its first owner, Manuel Garcia, was forced to sell it because his business had gone bad. Betty Bantug Benitez bought it and met a tragic road accident in Tagaytay. The portrait then passed through the collection of Tony Nazareno, who also suffered bad luck and sudden illness, so he sold it to Imee Marcos Manotoc, who suffered a miscarriage. In the Luna-Hidalgo exhibition catalogue published by the Metropolitan Museum, the provenance given is not Imee Marcos, but Imelda Marcos, whose fate in 1986 we are all familiar with. She donated the painting to the National Museum.

Did the curse stop there? No, because as we all know, the National Museum became a squatter in its own building that has been taken over by the Senate and other government offices, thus pushing out many of its exhibits into the bodegas. The painting was loaned to the Metropolitan Museum for the Oro-Plata exhibition. By some strange coincidence, the roof above the painting leaked. Water streaming down the wall behind the painting formed a constant puddle in front of it. There were no other leaks in the museum, and up to the time the exhibit folded up, no one could fix the leak.

This may be pushing the curse a bit too far, but the organizers of the exhibition have been sued, or were threatened with a suit, as a result of the Spoliarium controversy between the art collector Eleuterio Pascual and Manila Councilor Susano Gonzales.



So-called portrait of “Paz Pardo de Tavera.” A painting with a great paradox; she seems to be seducing the viewer yet she clutches a rosary!

Aside from the leak in the roof, some visitors, probably by sheer suggestion, claimed that the eyes of “Paz Pardo de Tavera” would sometimes light up like hot coals, giving them a devilish look. Ho-hum. Perhaps, someone was embellishing the curse legend in an effort to bring down its seven-figure price tag (at current prices and without the jinx, it could easily fetch 20 million) and hope to buy it cheap from scared superstitious owners.

Millet Mananquil of the Philippine Star wrote about the “restless spirit” of the sitter in the painting, saying she was crying out for justice. This is a very interesting and romantic angle, but you know what I think? The restless spirit is not crying out for justice, but for recognition. The woman in the painting may not even be Paz Pardo de Tavera!

Compared with photographs of Paz, who had a square jaw, sharp eyes and a large masculine face, the woman in the painting has an oval face and beautiful dreamy eyes. I once explained this discrepancy with the thought that Luna painted an idealized version of Paz, but comparing the painting with photographs, I am convinced she may not be Paz Pardo de Tavera at all.

So, who is she? Judging from the painting, she was definitely very close to Luna; a lover, perhaps? Or a favorite model? Maybe the only way to end the “curse” of this “restless spirit” will be to finally give her back her identity.

A King Visited RP and Fell in Love

We were under Spain for almost four centuries and during all that time, the closest the poor indios had to seeing El Rey de España was through pictures. In the 1970s, we saw the future King of Spain, Juan Carlos de Borbon, when he was still the Príncipe de Asturias.

Visiting kings are rare in Manila. We've seen two Popes but not monarchs on State visits. Some Filipinos in 1872 had their first look at a real live king when King Norodom I of Cambodia arrived in Manila with his retinue, on board a French vessel for a two-week visit.

The King was given all the usual courtesies—21-gun salute, State dinner hosted by the Spanish governor-general and, of course, trips to the "tourist destinations" of late nineteenth-century Philippines (Taal Volcano and fiestas in Pampanga). Norodom I happens to be the grandfather of current Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who hogs the headlines every now and then. Prince Norodom Sihanouk visited Manila in 1969 and mentioned that in the time of his grandfather, there was a Filipino colony in Cambodia close to the Royal Palace. He claimed some Filipinos even served in the palace as cannoneers when his grandfather Norodom I sat on the throne in 1860.

On returning to his palace in August 1872, Norodom I had been so pleased with his stay in Manila that he accorded an extraordinary promotion to all sublieutenants and lieutenants serving with his Tagalog guards. Norodom I also brought back with him from this voyage Filipino musicians, who formed the nucleus of the Cambodian Royal Brass and Reed Band. One jewel which the King was not able to bring home, however, was a pretty lass from Bulacan named Josefa Roxas y Manio.

Sources are sketchy and the main story comes from the pen of Felix M. Roxas, former mayor of Manila (1905-1917), who wrote a historical column in the Spanish newspaper, El Debate, from 1926-36. Roxas mentions that Norodom I fell in love with a pretty Bulakeña from Calumpit, but that nothing came of this romantic affair.

Josefa Roxas y Manio, the woman who caught the king's fancy, was gifted with a solid gold jewel as big as a mangosteen, which her descendants used to refer to as the gintong granada. With this present, Norodom I proposed to her through an interpreter but, as we say today, basted siya! First, there was the problem of religion. "Pepita" Roxas would not give up Catholicism to marry a man who had the right to have more than one wife. She thus politely refused the King's proposition with the lame, but very Asian, excuse that she couldn't get married yet, as she had to take care of her aging parents. She died a spinster in 1883. The gintong granada was stolen years later and never recovered.

This would not have been the end of the story, but when Prince Norodom Sihanouk was here in 1969, he paid a visit to the Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City, not to pay homage to the Nuestra Señora del Santo Rosario, but rather to see one of the virgin's jewels, a medallion given by Norodom I to Señorita Ana Roxas y Manio, younger sister and constant chaperone of "Pepita" Roxas during the short and unsuccessful courtship.

Believed to be miraculous, this jewel was given to the Santo Rosario in October, 1892 by Ana Roxas as a panata, because one of her brothers was cured of sickness. Unlike the gintong granada, this jewel survived two thefts and a world war. A fence tried to sell it to the jewelry shop, Estrella del Norte, which promptly returned it to its owner after seeing the inscription on it which said, A la Srta. Da. Ana Roxas y Manio. Recuerdo de SM Norodom I Rey de Cambodja.

I have not seen this jewel, so I do not know if the inscription is accurate. Another source claims it says: "SM El Rey de Cambodia a la Srta. Ana Roxas." I asked writer Chita Gatbonton, who was doing research in the U.S.T. Archives, if she knew about the jewels of the Santo Rosario and who was in charge of them. By a stroke of luck, she had a catalogue of the Santo Rosario's jewels, which mentions that Ana Roxas had donated it to the Santo Rosario, but it has since been given or assigned to the Santo Niño.

Described as being (hold your breath) "a solid gold medallion in the shape of a shell, encrusted with eight diamantitos, twenty-nine chispas, eight pearls, and twenty-four emeralds," you know now why it is always kept in the vault. It is now missing.

This Diplomat Stood up His Fiancée

Along a noisy street named after M.H. del Pilar in Malate behind the Silahis Hotel lived Marcela Agoncillo, the only surviving daughter of her namesake, the woman who fashioned the first Philippine flag in Hong Kong in 1898.

Her father was Felipe Agoncillo, the man appointed by Emilio Aguinaldo to work for American recognition of Philippine independence. Given the runaround in Washington and denied an official audience with President McKinley, Agoncillo travelled to Paris only again to be denied the chance to state his case before the Peace Commission.

I've interviewed Miss Agoncillo about this twice. To save time, she gave me a copy of a privately printed book, Reminiscences of the Agoncillo Family, in which she gives her readers the human side of her parents, who were both historical figures.

There is not much to say about her father, except that early in life, he was far from diplomatic. When an uncle was being arrested by the guardia civil on charges of being a tobacco smuggler, the young Felipe rushed to his uncle's aid, complaining about the rough treatment the uncle was getting. Being a boy, Felipe was easily pushed aside.

Later, while studying in the Ateneo, he learned to fight back. Being a bright boy, he was exempted from the final examinations in one of his subjects. When the day of the examinations came, the rector told him he had to take them. The young Felipe protested, but was handed the paper where he wrote only one sentence: "El padre Rector es injusto!" In plain English: "The Father Rector is unjust."

Felipe Agoncillo’s first experience of diplomacy was wriggling his way out of marriage.

Next day, he was summoned to the Father Superior’s office, where he was given spanking. The young Felipe lunged at the Father Superior, bit him in the arm and refused to let go until help arrived. Felipe’s father was informed of the incident and was told that his son would not be expelled, provided he apologized. Being a true Batangueño, he realized this would be an admission of guilt and a loss of face for his son, so the elder Agoncillo pulled him out of the Ateneo, telling the Jesuits: “I will not allow my son to continue his studies in an institution in which he has lost his confidence.”

What is interesting is the story of how Felipe Agoncillo jilted a fiancée to marry Marcela Mariño. According to Aguinaldo’s second wife, María Agoncillo, her Uncle Felipe was formally engaged to be married to a Marella girl, but on the day of the marriage Agoncillo, who was already dressed for the occasion, threw off his shoes and coat and said he had changed his mind! He then lay in bed and claimed he was not feeling well and would have to skip the marriage. His brother tried to yank him out of bed by reminding him of his obligations and the embarrassment the girl would have to face if the wedding didn’t push through.

A more pragmatic relative calmed him down by saying: “Don’t force your brother to marry the girl. Why live with a mistake the rest of our life?” Lucky for Felipe, the girl’s relatives didn’t hunt him down or beat him up. The next day, Felipe Agoncillo traveled to Calaca and, later, to Manila to marry Marcela Mariño.

This is the same man who later became the first Filipino diplomat.

Who is Balagtas' Celia?

When the lights went off during the opening of the 16th U.P. Creative Writing Workshop, the writers who attended this and an earlier affair to commemorate the bicentennial of Francisco Balagtas in Bulacan wondered why Balagtas was plagued with blackouts. Some asked: "May balat ba si Balagtas?"

Aside from this, there is a lot to discuss about the poet's life which is not well documented. One of the interesting questions still happens to be, who in heaven's name is Celia mentioned in the dedication of Florante at Laura?

The clue are the initials M.A.R. at the end of the dedication, which has been accepted as María Asunción Rivera, a resident of Pandacan. She was the woman Balagtas was courting, according to Hermenigildo Cruz in his book, Sinong Kumatha ng Florante? His sources were Balagtas' children. Cruz's thorough research produced the names of other women in Balagtas' life, and it is funny that there is another woman with the initials M.A.R.—a certain Magdalena Ana Ramos who has been forgotten because the focus has always been on Rivera. Historians know that mistakes can happen if you interview relatives of a dead person. What if Ramos was the real Celia? Did Magdalena Ana Ramos live in Pandacan too?

The next problem is, why Celia? In Bulacan, we overhead a few theories: one was that Celia, or Selya, depending on which printed version of Florante at Laura you have, was the nickname of María Asunción Rivera. A more elaborate but apocryphal story was that M.A.R. was a good pianist who got her nickname because of a painting that hung on top of her piano which showed St. Cecilia, patroness of music, amusing some angels with her piano playing.

Then, we have an interview that columnist E.A. Cruz had 30 years ago with an octogenarian who claimed her grandmother, Celia Castañeda, was Balagtas' Celia!

Scholars have given up on all these controversies and on Balagtas as well. The bicentennial has started and the teaching of Florante at Laura will gain added

impetus this year but, sad to say, many of our teachers are not competent to teach Balagtas. Like Rizal, he is made a fountain of patriotic sayings. Balagtas and his work have been reduced to a few quotes, some of them not in tune with the times.

In both the U.P. and the Bulacan Balagtas programs held recently, these lines were read:

Pag-ibig anaki'y aking nakilala

Di dapat palakhin ang bata sa saya,

At sa katuwaa'y kapag namihasa,

Kung lumaki'y walang hihinting ginhawa (Stanza 197)

. . .

Sapagkat ang mundo'y bayan ng hinagpis

Mamamaya'y sukat tibayan ang dibdib

Lumaki sa tuwa'y walang pagtitiis

Anong ilalaban sa dahas ng sakit! (198)

. . .

Ang laki sa layaw karaniwa'y hubad,

Sa bait at muni't sa hatol ay salat;

Masaklap na bunga ng maling paglingap,

Habag ng magulang sa irog na anak. (202)

Florante at Laura, and Rizal's novels, have become more than works of

literature. For many Filipinos, they have become sacred texts to be used and abused—by teachers and politicians in need of something patriotic to say. Quoting from these two great writers is one thing, quoting them out of context is another.

If we follow Balagtas' advice on how to bring up our children, we would really contribute to creating a bayan ng hinagpis, so we are stuck in a vicious cycle—make your children unhappy so they can face the world, but then, what is a world without children's laughter?

Andres Bonifacio's Brave Widow

Aside from Gabriela Silang, who inspired the women's group GABRIELA, there are other women who fought in the struggle for an independent Philippines, like Melchora Aquino, a.k.a. Tandang Sora who, despite her age, risked her life to provide care and shelter to the revolutionists.

There were more aggressive women who fought in the battlefields, like Teresa Magbanua, General Isay of Iloilo, Generala Agueda Kahabangan of Laguna, Trinidad Tecson of Bulacan and, of course, Gregoria de Jesus, wife of Andres Bonifacio.

These women of the Revolution have to be written about and their ideals resurrected. But all we have until this day are a few scattered feature articles and a book for children, Heroines of the Revolution, published by Adarna House.

Gregoria de Jesus, born 9 May 1875, was 18 years old when she first laid eyes on Andres Bonifacio, according to an autobiography she wrote in 1928. Oriang, as she was called, did not mind the meeting Bonifacio held together with her cousin, Teodoro Plata, in their house to discuss Katipunan matters. Bonifacio had not told her of his love and, following the custom, approach Oriang's parents first to ask for her hand in marriage.

Her father did not approve of Bonifacio because he was a freemason but, to cut a long story short, they eventually got married in the Binondo Church in March 1893. However, since the Supremo and his men did not recognize the church wedding as valid, they were married again a week after in Katipunan rites. Oriang, thus inducted into the movement, took the name "Lakambini."

Oriang was the keeper of the Katipunan documents, seal, revolvers and other arms. She used to say that she was practically "clothed" with Katipunan documents which she carried around on her person, all the while knowing the torture she would face if she were caught.

Since there were no telephones or walkie-talkies, she was informed of the

searches and raids by a network of informers. Forewarned, she would hire a quiles (a carriage with shutters) and drive all around Tondo and Binondo for hours until she was told that it was safe to return to her home.

Her biggest problem was that people refused to help her or hide her in trying times because, then as now, giving shelter to the "enemy"—be it KKK, NPA, MNLF or a simple human-rights activist—can be deemed criminal. She writes:

"I had no fear of facing danger, not even death itself, whenever I accompanied the soldiers in battle, impelled as I was then by no other desire than to see unfurled the flag of an independent Philippines, and I was present in and witnessed many encounters. I was considered a soldier, and to be a true one, I learned how to ride, to shoot a rifle and to manipulate many other weapons, which I actually used on many occasions. I have known what it is to sleep on the ground without tasting food for the whole day, to drink dirty water from mudholes or the sap of vines which, though bitter, tasted delicious because of my intense thirst. When I came to think of my life in those days, considering my youth then, I am surprised how I stood it all, and how I was spared."

Gregoria de Jesus Nakpil, a.k.a. Aling Oriang, in a photograph taken after the Revolution but before the tragedies of the Japanese occupation.

She had a son by Bonifacio—Andres Jr.—but she says very little about him. She obviously blames Aguinaldo for the death of her husband, but this is another story. Andres Bonifacio's widow married Julio Nakpil, also a revolutionary in 1898 and after the revolt lived a quiet life with her husband and eight children, dreaming of the independent Philippines she never lived to see, since she died in 1943, during the Japanese Occupation.