

THE SPIRIT OF NÍNAY: Pedro Paterno and the First Philippine Novel

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ABSTRACT

This study of Pedro Paterno's *Nínay* (1885) examines the first novel to be published by a Filipino author, setting the work against the background of the author's activities in Madrid and his work as a writer, host and diplomat. Considering the novel's status to be that of a fictional-historical archive and literary ethnography, this essay elaborates its foundational discourse on the developing national culture, conceived as intrinsically hybrid, fundamentally an amalgam of Spanish and Asiatic elements. As foregrounded in this reading, the novel makes reference to particular and idiosyncratic aspects of Philippine tradition, explicating its relationship to the Spanish colonial bond that constituted the Philippines as a national territory and overseas possession. Availing itself of the devices of *costumbrismo*, the narrative of *Nínay* is staged as an extended act of mourning: that is, its internal structure follows the protocol of the *pasiám*, the nine-day prayer for the welfare of the soul of the departed loved one. It is this structure that frames the treatment of *Nínay*'s significance as a ghostly figure that haunts the text, one around whose phantasmatic presence a community of mourners is created and a new kind of discourse is generated: what could be called a spectral allegory of *la filipinidad*. Against the

critical orthodoxy that judges Nínay to be a flawed and superficial work, the present study maps the narrative's recodification of available elements of an emergent national culture in a narrative as an affair of Tagalog- and Castillian-speaking Filipino characters. Indeed, Paterno, by his authorship of Nínay, subsequent works of ethnography and the libretto for *The Dreamed Alliance*, the opera that debuted in 1902, offers us the portrait of the author not only as an initiator of discourse in search of a unique Filipino national identity, but also as a medium of his own country's "spectral nationalism" as an overseas possession of changing empires.

One must, then, gather up the words of the dead – not in order to bring the dead back to life, but so that they may rest in peace, lest they become spectres haunting the present, or the helpless victims of the victors' opprobrium [....] The question of repetition thus proves inseparable from that of mourning, memory and spectrality.

---Stathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution from Kant to Marx* 70

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Primus inter pares, he was illustrious among the *ilustrados*, one who regaled in his *hispanidad*, but one who collaborated on the production of biweekly *La Solidaridad* as one of the "propagandistas." A problematic figure for Filipino history, too, Pedro Alejandro Paterno (1857-1911) stands in the popular memory as the "betrayed" of the Philippine revolution for independence. A self-promoting self-style cultural authority and guide to the Filipino colony in Madrid, Paterno was a *pater* of his country, yet living much of the time outside his country: both titan of leadership and *Miles Gloriosus*, a mover and shaker. He played the part of a Spanish *hidalgo* but furnished his home in Madrid with Philippine artifacts. And in that home he hosted gatherings of politicians and literati, artists and musicians, Spanish and Filipino alike. Courtney Johnson notes that Paterno "cultivated ties to Sagasta's Liberal-fusionist infrastructure as well as to a network of influential journalists and publishers" that included representatives of *El Liberal* and *La Ilustración Española y Americana* (Johnson 2004: 113). A polymath, Paterno wrote numerous books in the disciplines of history, literature, theology, and ethnography. Portia Reyes says of him, "He typified the picture of the ilustrado of the late nineteenth century, who became enmeshed in the

politics of war during the Philippine Revolution, and then in the formal politics of the American colonial system at the turn of the century" (Reyes 2002: 269).

Paterno will be remembered for, among other accomplishments, taking the lead in brokering the Pact of Biak-na-Bato and for taking on the presidency of the Malolos Congress, both activities ensuring the *ilustrado* hegemony over the islands in the twentieth century. He would later on replace Apolinario Mabini as head of Aguinaldo's cabinet, and, under the American regime, become vice president of the Nacionalista Party and, in 1907, representative of a district in Laguna in the Philippine Assembly. Noteworthy, too, are his extensive literary accomplishments, which include the authorship of the first collection of poetry written by a Filipino and published in Europe, *Sampaguitas y poesías varias* (1880), and the first novel to be written and published by a Filipino author, *Nínay*. This novel, published when the author was twenty-three, constituted an eccentric beginning, not a wholly auspicious one, for the Philippine novel in the minds of some readers, for whom its appearance in 1885 in effect stole the thunder from José Rizal's nationally consecrated first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, published two years later. How are we to assess the contribution of this literary innovator who has been called *scoundrel*, *collaborator*, and *turncoat*? How, through his writings, or in spite of them, did he play his part, or parts, in the process of Philippine nation-building under three flags?

This essay on Pedro Paterno aims to modify the stereotypical image that the national imagination has formed of this principal *ilustrado* by offering a close reading of parts of *Nínay (costumbres filipinas)* (1885), with brief references to Paterno's other works. Focusing on those texts allows us to understand how Paterno availed himself of the devices of *costumbrismo* to produce a foundational discourse of an emergent national culture. Yet this pioneering endeavor was one that reached out automatically, as I hope to demonstrate, to an audience of Hispanophone addressees who could be drawn into a now textualized codification of an Hispanized Philippine culture: it established a relationship especially important to consider in light of the fact that relatively few Filipinos had access to such literature, let alone spoke Castillian toward the end of the nineteenth century, if the 1903 census count of ten percent of the population is any indication (de la Peña 2001: 80).

As for *Nínay*, one reader characterizes Paterno's novel as "of less than mediocre worth, being little more than a framework into which were inserted various scenes and customs of Philippine life" (Schumacher 1997: 54). Lumbera and Lumbera assert that in the same work, "the locales and the characters were Philippine but have been so romanticized that they might as well have been foreign" (1997: 43). Considering the circumstances in which *Nínay* was written and published, Resil Mojares states that the novel was a work of a "distinctively Filipino" literature, and that it may have been written in response to Rizal's proposal to his expatriate fellows that they all work together to produce a collection that would represent the Philippines to the wider world (1998: 132). We can better understand the character of that representation and this address when we consider the novel's textual specificity and the context of its putatively intended readership.

Curiously, the author's writings exhibiting the uniqueness of Filipino culture, as well as its antiquity, combined with a stress on the productivity of the islands and their people, will bolster an argument for recognition by readers in the metropole, the political center in whose "imperial cultural field" it seeks to vindicate claim of national belonging by participating in the "cultural politics of *españolismo*" (Johnson 2004: ix, 14); but these writings will also support, in a subsequent period, demands for political autonomy that will be championed by the Katipunan and the Malolos Congress. The project to collect and codify a national culture in a text entailed the production of the book-as-archive, leaving wide open the question as to what form the nation-as-process was going to take under the constraints and restrictions imposed on the political participation of the nation's colonial subjects (Johnson 2004: 14).¹

No revolutionist, Paterno; far from it. He praised Fernando Primo de Rivera for what Paterno referred to as his "enlightened rule" over the archipelago (1880-1883). The same eulogy of nearly 170 pages had positive things to say of the Spaniards he called "*inteligentes e ilustrados*" who, he said, were responsible for raising the Philippines to a "state of prosperity." For his own aggrandizement, he assembled a long string of names by which to call himself, placing before them either the Tagalog title of *Maginoo* in the fashion of royalty or the Iberian *Duque y Grande de Castilla*. At a time when 28,000 Spanish soldiers stood between the Filipinos and their independence, Paterno pressed for his envisioned solution to the ills afflicting Philippine

society: "*asimilación con la Madre Patria.*" Assimilation would entail representation in the Spanish Cortes. It would also require amnesty for the insurgents. Assimilationist and Hispanophile of aristocratic mannerisms that carried over even in the days of negotiations for independence from Spain, Paterno would have himself carried in hammock to Aguinaldo's stronghold (Ortiz Armenggol 1999: 213).

The writings of this literary-political actor offer us a way of coming to terms with the ambivalence inherent in the position and activity of the ilustrado in Spain. Rizal and Paterno have been identified as "writers who employed Spanish" in service of "a changing concept of 'Filipino'" (Lumbera and Lumbera 1996: 42). That the concept of *Filipino* was already changing was evident in the way the word once used to designate Spanish peninsulares and *criollos* in the archipelago until the nineteenth century had converted into a self-assumed name for the natives and *mestizos* of *las Islas Filipinas*. This change itself suggests how from a transnational perspective we gain a clearer view of the Filipinos' place and position in the world of the late nineteenth century.

The Complex Ghost of the Beloved Country

By viewing the last three decades of the Spanish colonial system inclusive of the Philippines from a systemic perspective, we can appreciate the complexity of the forces in dynamic confrontation, interaction and non-linear incidence across the "imperial archipelago." Dolores Elizalde's synoptic analysis astutely maps the developments within this broader frame of intercrossing flows in noting that two irreconcilable processes were at work: the process of increasing peninsular interest in the archipelago, as manifested diversely in reformist currents and conservative regressivism and immobilism in favor of the colonial status quo; and the process of a Filipino movement that strove variously for the consolidation of a national identity, the vindication of the right to self-determination of the colonized, and even, in some cases, outright separation from the metropole. Exerting provocative pressure on the mix from the outside was the growing interest of foreign non-Spanish nations in what the Philippines could offer their manufactures, markets and militaries (Elizalde 2002: 123). These processes, it should be noted, were unfolding at a time when the Spanish state was striving to make readjustments in an empire that had lost its American colonies some sixty years before, and when liberal forces were attempting to restore

the republic based on civil authority. Projects to reform administration in the Antillean and Asian colonies were well underway, especially after the creation of the Overseas Ministry in 1863. On the level of the workings of the *imperio insular* analyzed by Josep Fradera, the system was not simply decadent and decrepit, but rather, as Morillo-Alicea observes, “vibrant, vast, and, yes, modern” with respect to the ties that connected the metropole with its Asian colony and the Hispanic Antilles (Morillo-Alicea 27, 36; 49n.7).

On the other hand, nationalist sentiment and ideas guided the anti-colonial strivings of the Filipino *ilustrados*. The nation as they conceived it had its autochthonous foundations, but for them it was also a structure that had been modeled elsewhere. As Benedict Anderson argues with the Philippines in mind in his *Imagined Communities* (1989), the phenomena of nation and “nation-ness” had emerged from the confluence of historical forces by the end of the eighteenth century in the form of “artifacts” that took on a “modular” manner of being, susceptible of being transplanted and reworked within a “wide variety of political and ideological constellations,” to be elaborated and consolidated through the agency of the press in the era of “print capitalism,” especially through the vehicles of periodicals and the novel (Anderson 1991: 4).

Arguably guided by this artifact of the modular nation, Filipino *ilustrados* seeking representation and reforms were encouraged by the signs of transition in the peninsular political mood during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The liberal State had replaced the monarchy of Fernando VII, under the regencies of María Cristina and Espartero, leading to the Sexenio Democrático (1868-1874) under Amadeo of Savoy but ceding to the Canovist system and the restoration of the monarchy, with its alternation of liberal and conservative parties. That is, the Revolution of 1868 made possible not only the founding of the First Spanish Republic (1873-1874) but the signing of a manifesto by leaders of the Gobierno Provisional promising extension of the revolution’s gains to the overseas possessions, including the right to elect deputies to the Cortes. These promises notwithstanding, the Constitution of 1869 denied Filipinos the right to political representation that it recognized in the cases of Puerto Rico and Cuba (Elizalde 2002: 125). The work of the *ilustrados* to gain representation began coextensively with the first armed struggle for independence to unfold in Cuba, from 1868 to 1878 (la Guerra de Diez Años), which would come to a conclusion with the Peace of Zanjón, which granted some degree of autonomy to the island. The

unequal treatment of the Asian colony chafed at the ilustrados's sense of self-worth, and the conservative reaction during the first five years of the Restauración (1875-1902) would put a further damper on the Filipinos' hopes for reforms and representation.

The nationalist rhetoric of decolonization that emerged in this shifting political climate took the form of a Philippine *nativismo* that followed the conventions of *el costumbrismo*, as manifested in the writings of Paterno and Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938). This nativism constituted a re-discovery of pre-colonial and indigenous lifeways, many of which continued to be practiced in the writers' present. Yet the way of nativism and nostalgia could offer no simple return to the origins, for it had to contend with the fact of cultural intermixings intrinsic to the colonization process and the very creation of las Filipinas as a nation under the aegis of Spanish rule. Paterno's *costumbrista* treatment of a romanticized Philippines, with descriptions replete with local detail that strike the European reader as "exotic," sends out the message to the Spanish people: the culture of the Philippines is ancient and robust, presenting a mixed or hybrid culture of elements identifiable as Malay, aboriginal, Chinese, Spanish, and Indian (see de la Peña 2000: 14).

In "The Ideology of Costumbrismo" (1978), Susan Kirkpatrick traces the genealogy of a peninsular genre that emerged in a periodical press that spoke to the progressivism of an emergent bourgeois society in the periods when it was allowed to develop especially during the breakdowns of absolutist power. The mainly urban and middle-class readership avid to learn of the latest political and economic advances in this time of transition was drawn to the *cuadros de costumbres*, which offered an objectively focused image of their changing society and of themselves. Importantly for our theme, it was through the political concept of "nation" by which the *costumbrista* writer could construct a sense of unity and coherence in a diverse subject matter, the Spanish nation, that reduced in effect its intransigent multiplicity and class difference according to the schema of a nationalist ideology. For Mesonero Romanos, writes Kirkpatrick, the "point of intersection" between nation and class is the bourgeoisie: a paradoxical solution insofar as it defined a national identity in terms of the perspectives and experiences of only one of its classes (Kirkpatrick 1978: 30-35). The *costumbrista* depictions of life and customs in Madrid and Andalucía set the example for writers interested in describing the Philippines for a Spanish audience. John D. Blanco has analyzed the way in which the autochthonous

is "produced" in costumbrista articles published contemporaneously in Spain in such journals as the *Ilustración Filipina*, noting that this activity on the part of the Filipino author in Spain goes along with the journalistic vogue for the *cuadro de costumbres*, exemplified in portraits of native "types," collected into literary "albums," that Ricardo de Puga penned for the periodical *Ilustración Filipina* (Blanco 2009: 161-163). The liberal ideology motivating the creation of such social portraits of Philippine life, however, collides with the contradictory message that the subject matter of such representations is a society whose development has been retarded and stunted by the strictures of colonialism. The *novela de costumbres* about the Philippines faces its own "impasse" in belonging to a genre tied to the values of the enlightenment yet referring to the types and contradictions of an as of yet "unenlightened" and premodern colonial society. This contradiction haunts the construction of Paterno's *novela de costumbres*. Whereas Nínay draws an image of the nation as transcending social class and cultural differences in the Philippines as it appeals to the curiosity of a mainly Spanish middle-class reading public, this literary representation of the Philippines faces its own "impasse" in belonging to a genre tied to the progressive values of the enlightenment yet referring to the types and figures of an as of yet "unenlightened" and premodern colonial society (Blanco 2009: 210, 221).

For this novel of customs appears at a time when the Spanish government is making an unprecedented effort to collect and disseminate information about its last colonial possessions. Overseas Minister Víctor Balaguer remarked on the "profound ignorance" among the Spanish with regard to the Asian archipelago, seeing in it great promise and potential he sought to correct this lacuna in the writing of his memoirs that would be published under the title *Islas Filipinas* (1895). For Balaguer, the Philippine Exposition that he was organizing was to be a sort of signature achievement of his ministry, a "pet project," as Morillo-Alicea writes, taken on with enthusiasm. Its mission would be to showcase the islands' economic production, especially agricultural; but also with the intent, in the view of his ilustrado critics, to exhibit the "exotic" aspects of Spain's empire in Asia. The exposition was considered by its creator nonetheless as a kind of "modern" project; it indeed belonged to the increasingly globalized genre of colonial and neocolonial representation. So near and dear was this project to Balaguer that he had made contingent his acceptance of the Overseas Ministry office if he was granted the authority to assemble the exposition. The exposition's

inaugural ceremony was presided over by the Queen Regent María Cristina in June 1887 (the year of the *Noli*'s publication). The means by which the Philippines would be represented would be by the construction of a sort of simulacrum of "native villages" (Morillo-Alicea 2005: 38).

Noting the contrast between the social criticism of Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and the exhibit of traditions in an Hispanized Philippines that is Paterno's *novela de costumbres*, Portia Reyes infers that the latter set a propitious literary precedent for the former. The two novels viewed stereoscopically, as it were, bring into relief the "impasse" of a Philippine *costumbrismo*:

Noli brought to bear the fact that Spain had failed to recreate a humanist society out of its colony; in contrast, *Ninay* valorized a synergetic union of Filipino and Spanish cultures in the colonial order. What Paterno sought through it was the recognition of equality (in peoples' genius, quality of life) between Spain and the Philippines from his audience. Rizal, on the other hand, informed his public of a damned Spain as a result of making the colonial Philippines the obverse of what European civilization stood for. Despite these differences, *Ninay*, nonetheless, paved the way for *Noli* by initiating the novel as a safe literary medium for providing a window on a colonial society. (Reyes 2006: 103)

To achieve this reconciliation, Paterno created a compendium of the ingredients of a Hispanized Philippine culture and served them up, in *Nínay*, for European consumption. After *Nínay*, Paterno's writings of a more explicitly ethnographic focus continued the project of reconstructing the cultural bases of an autochthonous Philippine civilization worthy of the respect of Filipinos and Europeans alike. In works of anthropological-philosophical stamp such as *El Cristianismo en la Antigua Civilización Tagálog* (1892), by compiling what could be called, after Foucault, an archive.² Schumacher sees in such writings a sign of a "growing awareness among the Filipinos" that they did possess their own creative drive and native culture to which they could point with pride as they made their presence known in Spanish society (Schumacher 1997: 54). In Paterno's

ethnographies and histories, the native culture is blithely re-Hispanized, made a picturesque object of knowledge by an artifact that moreover took part in the “constitution” of a colonial population living in a civil society under colonial rule. Their hybrid quality supports Blanco’s thesis on the function of aesthetics in reconciling the patriotic-nationalist contestation of colonial hegemony, with an elicitation and bolstering of “the colonial subject’s desire for national belonging” and thus continuing allegiance to the Spanish empire (Blanco 2009: 158).

In assembling his archive, the author of *Nínay* takes pains not to allow his novel of national customs be taken as criticism of Don Fernando Primo de Rivera, former governor general of the Philippines from 1880 to 1883, during a time of relative peace and some commercial-industrial development. In the note where he makes this disclaimer, he also acknowledges his debt of gratitude to a string of counts, *señores*, and the economist Don Lope Gisbert, of the Dirección de la Compañía Tabacalera (Paterno 1885: 212-213n.). Such acknowledgment constitutes one sign of the opening up of what Blanco calls a “zone of contact” between indio and peninsular readers and the identification of interests they share (Blanco 2005: 54).

A Spectral Allegory

Paterno is recognized for setting the example of history as *historia* to the Filipino “colony” of *ilustrados* and, like his colleague Gregorio Sancianco, author of *El Progreso de Filipinas* (1881), Paterno sought through historical research and history-based fictions a way in which to reconcile Philippine national identity with belonging to the Spanish colonial empire, now engaged in a belated program of modernizing its rule in the colonies (Reyes 2002: 245). Although *Nínay* may fall short of canonical standards due to its over-idealization of Filipino life and the obtrusiveness of its documentary armature, the novel does constitute a first in the nation’s letters. It furthermore succeeds in initiating a tradition that complements Paterno’s work in what he called “*historia crítica*.” As explained by Reyes, this critical history, a mode of writing based largely on historical documentation, constituted an extension of Spanish historiography in the hands of Paterno; in writing it, he moreover attempted to substantiate the Filipinos’ claim to a civilized status that existed prior to the arrival of the Spanish—and thus to vindicate their essential similarity to other peoples and, the universality of their cultures (Reyes 2002: 272, 278).³ Important to note too is the way

in which Paterno's focalization of perspectives "naturalizes" in the novel, the intellectual and economic leadership of the native elites to which he maintained a close filiation throughout his career. "Here," writes Mojares, "the *ilustrado* author romanticizes native mores to claim recognition and rights not so much for his people as for his own class" (Mojares 1998: 134). Such ideological romanticization at the same time proposes the look and feel of a national identity.

The novel constructs *la filipinidad* as an intermingling of indios and peninsulares: in this case, a mestizo community that valorizes then lowland Tagalog element and its hybrid culture, which is conceived in terms of a Hispanized national culture speaking for all the Philippines and all Filipinos. In other words, the novel as artifact delivers up the Philippines textualized as a book, but one that has reduced the complex heterogeneity of the cultures of the islands down to the lowland Tagalog version focused on the cultural history of the region surrounding Manila and a provisional "floating homeland" that awaits its full incorporation into the *madre patria*. The subject figured as the visiting listener to Nínay's story, a Filipino returning to his native land after an extended absence, stands in as the double of the implied reader of Paterno's narrative, and the perspective of this implied reader, unlike that of the novel's principal narratee, enjoys access to the multitudinous footnotes that interrupt and illuminate as they encumber the diegesis proper. The particularity of the footnotes serves a purpose: as a *costumbrista* simulacrum of the objectivity that confronts the subject in the process of its education in things Filipino, they together stand as a many-sided metaphor of the nation, of the Philippines as textualized in a book. And insofar as their rationalist elaboration forms a counterpoint to the melodramatic story of Nínay, Carlos and their ill-fated love, it offers an image of the concrete universality of the nation conceived as *patria*.

Footnotes and lengthy appendices that supplement the narrative reinforce the notion that Paterno wrote his *Nínay* for a non-Filipino readership. Although the annotations and "authorial asides" detract from the feeling of verisimilitude that the narrative could otherwise achieve, it is important again to keep in mind their function in the education of non-Filipino addressees in the uniqueness of customs originating in the archipelago. The long quotations from the missionary chroniclers in these footnotes, which include Padre Blanco's *Flora y fauna de Filipinas* (1878), provide the non-native reader a whole catalogue of plants, animals, and folkways of

the native land. The catalogue, moreover, introduces the Tagalog names for the practices, artifacts, and other facts of the Philippine culture. Additional information on the crops for local consumption and export, along with the compendium of lore on customs and handicrafts, provides a nice survey on “the Philippines today,” a sort of “country study” useful to anyone who wants to travel as tourist and/or potential investor in the islands.

In this way, Paterno sought to disseminate knowledge on the national-popular in the beliefs and rituals of Philippine folk religion and its reinterpretations of Catholic practices, as well as to present a portrait of the Philippines as a region with a rich and vibrant Hispanic-Asiatic culture (see San Juan 1994: 124). Significantly, the original novel’s dedication is written first in *baybayin*—characters of the syllabary in wide use throughout the archipelago during pre-Magellanic times—whose meaning is immediately translated beneath as “A mi querido padre” (To my beloved father).⁴

Curiously, it is on the motif of Nínay’s death that the novel builds its claim to rights and recognition of Filipinos. The whole of *Nínay* is an extended act of mourning: its internal structure follows the protocol of the *pasiám*, the Filipino version of the Catholic *novena*, or nine-day prayer for the welfare of the soul of the departed loved one. Its narrative organization thus mirrors the Spanish version of the *novena*, but here the custom has been grafted upon pre-Hispanic belief and practice.⁵ Crucial for the present argument is the attention the first narrator draws to the remembrance of Nínay: he marks her absence in noting not only the fact of the empty place-setting left for her during the *pasiám* meals at the family’s dinner table, but also, by recording a peculiar and intriguing detail: by the illumination that shines from the leaves left on Nínay’s dinner plates, another sign of her return (Paterno 1885: 314).⁶ The apparition of Nínay in the novel implies a curious play of presences and absences in the narrative text: a ghostly image of Filipino national identity is embodied in the evocation of Nínay but contextualized by the reminder of her death and her survivors’ remembrance, such that the disembodied Nínay figures forth the spirit of a nation suspended between worlds, and allegorically between the colonial despair and the nationalist hope.

Community is imagined here in the house, not only in the depicted action of the narrative, but in a shared act of reading. It is significant that the attendees of Nínay’s *novena* are also readers or reciters of some of the texts of a *pasiám*. Such texts were called *pagsasiyam* in Tagalog, and

collectively they constitute a quite developed genre in Philippine religious literature. One of the outstanding representatives of this genre was the one composed by Mariano Pilapil and published in 1835; its partial title is *Pagisisiyam, at maicling casaysayan, ocol sa larauang mapaghimala nang Mahal na Virgen ng capayappa't mabuting paglayag.....* [Novena and short account of the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin of Peace and Good Voyage.] Pilapil's book includes with its *pagsisiyam* a history of the image of Virgin of Antipolo, and so may have served as a source for Paterno's long appended discussions on the theme, which will be taken up further on. Paterno may have known as well that the *Novena, o Pagsisiam na arao cay Santa Filomena Virgen, at martir, na tinatauag na taumaturga sa icalabin siam na siglo, o daang taon...*(1841) [Novena for St. Filomena, Virgin and Martyr called thaumaturge in the 19th century], is suggestive of the saintly sufferings endured by the heroine *Nínay*. Published the year before *Nínay* was another novena devoted to the mother of Christ: Antonio Florentino Puansen's *Pagsisiam na arao sa Poong Virgen Maria inang natiguib nang lumbay at hapis sa mahal na pasion at pagcamatay sa Cruz nang anac niyang si Jesus* (1884).⁷ [Novena to the Blessed Mother filled with misery and sorrow on the passion and death of the son Jesus.]

Nínay's own story unfolds within the framed tale, since it is told primarily by a narrator, Taric, one of the attendees at *Nínay's* *pasiám*, to the fictive listener and first narrator, who is a "Europeanized" visitor who has returned to his native land. In analogous fashion, the entire novel constitutes an interpellation to a Spanish Peninsular reader. Just as the visitor finds himself caught up in the mystery of the rites, the charm of customs, and the response, alternating between "laughter and sobs," of the gathered mourners, the reader of this bereavement scene should find in the whole staging of the rite and the telling of the story something to "wound the tranquil imagination" (Paterno 1885: 316). Readers are meant to find something vital and soulful in this Philippine world: whether in Taric's framed tale or the implied author's narration, this wondrous something comes across, in plurilingual fashion, in a Philippinized Spanish.

Behind —literally, beneath— the text of the narration lies the "subtext" of the explanatory notes, and these help to validate the mystical aspects of the story. A discursus within the narration on the phantasmatic inhabitants of Doña Geronima's cave refers to an annotation on pre-Hispanic religious beliefs. Citing Fray Tomás Ortiz, author of *Práctica del Ministerio*, the subtext informs us that in past times the Visayans adored a supreme god

named Lauon, meaning “ancient,” and the Tagalogs prayed to Bathala Maycapal. The Tagalogs, we are told, also worshiped small gods, called *Anitos*, which, embodied in figures of stone, wood, gold and other materials, represented natural elements, the home, and the ancestors. The effigies themselves were called *lc-hà* or *larauan*, meaning “picture” or image.” At death, according to this doctrine, the deserving rise to heaven, *Langit*, by way of the rainbow, *Balañgao*. The wicked go to the place of torments, *Casanàan*. Worship, *simbà*, took place in the *Simbahan*, literally the place of sacrifices. *Simbà* was supervised by the officiants or priests: the *sonát* and the *catalonas* (Paterno 1885: 160-161n.).

Elaborating further on practices surrounding death and the afterlife, Appendix C of the novel details the burials and funeral customs of the Filipinos, reviewing a bit what was represented in the narrative account of the *pasiám* given to the memory of Nínay. Called in Tagalog a *tibao*, the enactment of rites of mourning confirms the native belief in the transmigration of souls after death (Paterno 1885: 338-342), requiring a ritual of “mourning,” *damayan*, which, as noted by Vicente Rafael, carries the connotation of collective work as well as “going through a common experience marked by deprivation and hardship” (Rafael 2005: 209n.15).⁸ The communal aspect of *damayan* pertains to its nature as a vernacular “literary” activity. Religious participation drew breath from the poetic impulse: in the tribal context, the chanting of prayers and the mimicry of natural-supernatural beings had a narrative basis. Presiding over the sacred rites were the priests, literally versed in the texts of liturgy, who presided over the rituals of Tagalogs, Ilongots, Igorots, Zabales, and the Muslims: the *catalonan*, the *manigput*, the *mungcolnon*, the *bayoo*, and the *pandita* (Medina 1974: 30).

There is much more that needs to be explained to the Europeanized returnee to the Philippines or to the implied reader “inscribed” in the narrative. Taric tells us that Carlos calls the ring with which he proposes to Nínay an *anteng-anteng*, the talismanic figure or object, such as an amulet, known by that name by “all” Filipinos (Paterno 1885: 184). The narration reinforces such interpellation in recounting the events of the second night of the *pasiám*, when the first narrator urges Taric to tell the story of Nínay for the newcomers to Manila and in the most detailed manner possible, “as if he were relating the story only to the Europeans” (Paterno 1885: 52). Taric’s story, so pitched and directed, sounds at times more like a travelogue than a tragic tale, for its descriptions of flora and fauna, history and geography, folkways and foodways.

We learn through the framed narration that the noble and heroic Carlos loved Nínay. Carlos proved his valor when he saved her life on two occasions: the first time, from a poisonous snake; the second time, from the vengeful bandits who have raided her family's house. The same story within the story goes on to provide background to the act of valor that wins for Carlos the promise of Nínay's hand in marriage. The Ilocano suitor, the narrator tells us, must shoot an arrow through a grapefruit "placed beneath the [beloved's] arm close to the heart"; the suitor from Pampanga must stop a galloping horse; the Visayan suitor must subdue a carabao. Otherwise, the suitor must perform service for his beloved's family—the so-called "bride price" or "bride labor." The remembrance of all such "heroic and ancient customs" reconstitutes the grounds for an autochthonous culture established before the advent of the European imposition (Paterno 1885: 107-108n). The culture so imagined is suspended between the archaic and the modern, capable of sustaining a collective process moving toward self-knowledge, and perhaps, eventually, toward the maturity of nationhood, as it posits, by aesthetic-literary means, a status beyond the "imperial difference" in power relations between Spain and the Philippines (Johnson 2004: 6). Again under the sign of costumbrismo and the narrative's interpellation of a Spanish reader, a nation makes its appearance as an ambiguous revenant and a spectral harbinger: it is a retention of past practices and a protention of a knowable community that seeks acknowledgment by a greater Spain.

Further evocation of a uniquely Filipino sense of spirituality sets the stage in anticipation of Nínay's uncanny reappearance toward the end of the story. Place names and archaic usages reinforce the biblical or Vedic undertones in the description of Manila and its environs. The boats called *bancas* make their way down the Pasig to a "picturesque village"; the narrator cites the *Guía oficial* in identifying it as the "entrada del paraíso," and reminds us that Nínay lives with her family in the town named after the mother of the Virgin Mary: Santa Ana (Paterno 1885: 61-62). Forms of hospitality express another aspect of the Hispanic Asian concept of the sacred: citing Swarga on the "laws of Manú" and the *Bhâgavata Purâna*, the annotation illuminates the nearly sacred attitude toward hospitality as practiced by the Filipino host. From Book IX of the latter comes the reference to the famished king who gives his food to unexpected visitors "'because he sees God in his guests'" (Bhâgavata Purâna IX, 21, 12; quoted in Paterno 1885: 44-45n.).

Such cross-references to Indian custom lend dignity to the Philippine portrait of customs. When the narrator evokes sight of the *dalagas* who swim and bathe, pouring water over their heads with the coconut dipper called *tabo*, the narration compares the spectacle to a Hindu vision, asking the reader, “Who does not remember [...] the Brahmanic creation of the *apsaras* [nymphs], celestial ballerinas, rising from the sea-foam, surrounded by *asuras* [demons] and *devas* [gods or genii], under the bamboos of the Ganges?” (Paterno 1885: 61). Appendix C expands on this theme, providing a complex account that includes descriptions of the Indian *mahl* or harem, excerpted from Bose, Baru de Saint-Pol-Lias, Jacquemont, Rousselet, and Ferrario (Paterno 1885: 338-342).⁹

Mindful of the *ut pictura poesis*, the extra-diegetical subtext of ritual and custom thus adds its part to a picture of a people imbued with spirit. The outward signs of faith would match an inwardness of pious devotion. In the narrative of the third *pasiám*, Don Evaristo’s family rides to Antipolo, on a pilgrimage to the shrine of the *Virgen de la Paz y Buen Viaje*. On their way, as they join the tumult of pilgrims, amidst the joyful solemnity of the occasion, all elements of the scene “invite them to look into the heavens, to search in the immensity of the azure heights a beloved being that draws our consciousness” (Paterno 1885: 102). Reiterating some of these ideas, Appendix A relates the story of the sacred image of the Virgin of Antipolo, how it was taken in the Sangley or Chinese uprising of 1639, retaken by the Spanish and brought to New Spain to be restored, then returned to her home in the Philippines, from where she went on to work innumerable miracles for the penitents and supplicants who journey to her shrine (Paterno 1885: 325-331). Honoring the Virgin of Antipolo in the month of May, the festival celebration gave occasion for pilgrimages to the sanctuary. Devotees wearing the scapular of the Virgin included Chinese Filipinos. The waters on the outskirts of the nearby town of Tanay were said to work health-giving wonders, as a fabled “tree of blood” was known to bear leaves that, when crushed and pounded, yielded a red liquid (Montero y Vidal 2004: 30-31). This veneration of the Virgin Mary—this hyperdulia—characterizes worship in both Latin America and the “Latin Asia” of the Philippine Islands. Exalted above the saints, even above her Son Himself, the Virgin Mother has come to symbolize the hope and nurturance too often found wanting in the earthly realm.

The nine days of festival the family spends in Antipolo will have anticipated the nine days of Nínay's *pasiám* in the narration's "present." The mainly Spanish middle-class readers of the novel, invited to join in both festivities and mourning, could feel drawn into narrative and nation, bearing out experientially the truth of Campoamor's insight about the spectacle and the spectator (Paterno 1885: 123): the reader imagines and observes as the spectator, but in so doing joins the imagined community of those who witness as they create the spectacle of their own self-realization.

Nostalgia as well as religious sentiment is expressed in the storytelling of the eighth *pasiám*, in the passages detailing Carlos' departure aboard the *María*. In tones that may recall Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's "Al partir" (On departing, 1836), the narrator reflects: How difficult it is to leave *el pueblo natal*; one has to shed a tear in saying *adios á la patria adorada*, for "if in that town there is an adored being, in that country there are sincere and loyal friends, one cannot say *adiós* without mixing some burning tears with the bitter waves that take you away from all that is loved" (Paterno 1885: 257). Carlos bids farewell to Nínay in his letter with the words, "I leave among the shadows of death, at the mercy of the whims of tyranny" (Paterno 1885: 258). In such declarations, beloved and country merge to become a sublime object of desire, humanized and spiritualized in the same breath.

The story continues with accounts of the journey an exiled Carlos makes to distant islands, his return to the Philippines, his succumbing to cholera and his dying in the arms of Nínay, who, Carlos discovers, has already taken the vows of saintly sisterhood. We already know of her death in the epidemic, but the *pasiám* anticipates her return by various signs, and these include the water glass set on the stairway and the ashes spread on the floor mat to record any footprint left by the returning spirit (Paterno 1885: 292). The novel's frame narrator ends his part of the story by relating how he intends to return home to write "everything I heard and saw at the *pasiám*" (Paterno 1885: 323). And the reader, in reading the novel, will have taken part in the *novena*.

One more set of references appearing in the ninth chapter indicates the intimate link that sustains beyond death between the extended family of the community and the beloved Nínay. There, the frame narrator describes

the novelties introduced into the house by Nínay's aunt, Margarita Buísan, at the behest of her spiritual counselor, a priestess or *catalona* of the mountains of Mapisong, from where they hail. Taric explains the arrangement: the increased number of visitors, the gifts of birds and other animals in bamboo boxes, the water in huge *taclovo* shells, the sprays of flowers—all these contribute to creating an environment to which the deceased may want to return to reunite with her family. It is for this reason that a layer of ashes is sprinkled on the floor mat: "so that the elect may know the footprints [*huellas*] of the glorified being." Here, in the wish to invite the soul of the deceased to return, as inferred by the visiting narrator, lies the origin of the *pasiám* (Paterno 1885: 292).

Haunted by that ghostly presence, whose manifestations frame the telling of Nínay's story, the novel invites the first implied readers to consider the dignity, nobility, beauty and depth of Philippine custom. The novel's ambivalent message, delivered in the idioms and conventions of *costumbrismo*, urged the Spanish reader to accept its proof of the Philippines belonging to a greater Spain as it vindicated the Filipinos' right to the respect and recognition as an equal member of this insular, archipelagic empire in the period of its halting transition toward modernity and who knows what else.

Proposing that "synergetic union" and seeking that "recognition of equality" to which Reyes refers with regard to Paterno's novel, the narrative of *Nínay* urged its Hispanophone readers to imagine a community that was, would be, in effect, colonial and postcolonial at the same time: one in which the rights and dignity of those in one corner of the periphery would be respected by those of an emergent and influential sector of the center. Not soon thereafter, however, the call to synergy and the plea for recognition would have to be redirected to another audience of readers. The message of *Nínay*, it turned out, was susceptible to being repackaged and received under the auspices of another colonial dispensation, that of "benevolent assimilationism." A telling indication of *Nínay's* "cooptability" by another colonial regime is Paterno's dedication of the 1907 English translation of *Nínay* "To Mrs. William H. Taft" on a page that faces a photo reproduction of the American first lady (Paterno 2004: vi-v of the *Nínay* portion of the book).

Epilogue: Memories of the Future

In his article on “spectral nationality,” Pheng Cheah discusses the “vitalist ontology” by which the ghostly figure of the *arrivant* is conceived as a harbinger of future life, in accord with an arcane logic by which the phantasm figures in the desire for life, and the work of haunting becomes a metaphor for the “nation-form” conceived as transcending mortality and living on. “The nation, in other words,” writes Cheah, “guarantees an eternal future” (Cheah 1999: 226-227). The diplomatic dealings of the first Filipino novelist bear out the notion of the nation in perpetuity, but at the moment suspended, in a holding pattern between worlds.

Back in the Philippines, Paterno assumed the directorship of the Biblioteca y Museo de Filipinas, set up his law practice and went on to write articles of a reformist-nationalist temper. On August 8, 1897, Paterno arrived at Biak-na-Bato, where the terms for Spanish-Philippine peace would be negotiated. Paterno had offered his services as a diplomatic go-between, acting as plenipotentiary mediator between Governor General Fernando Primo de Rivera and General Emilio Aguinaldo. He answered the call to duty and dispatched his assignment with panache. It was Paterno who arranged the retreat of Aguinaldo to Hong Kong. It was Paterno who would orchestrate the Pact of Biak-na-Bato (in December 1897), which put an official end to armed hostilities between Spaniards and Filipinos. Here, it was Paterno who secured not the promise for reform but rather a transfer of funds to be delivered by the Spanish government in exchange for a cessation of hostilities. The first draft of the pact between the two sides made explicit Aguinaldo’s demand: “The President and his council consider that this action on their part is worth 3,000,000 pesos.” For Paterno’s role in the negotiations, the Spanish government bestowed the Grand Cross of Isabel upon him. In the same draft, President Aguinaldo and his council asked that they be allowed to reside safely under Spanish protection in towns where either they had previously lived but held destroyed properties, or where they would establish themselves in the future. They also demanded what ilustrados before them had demanded: representation in the Spanish Cortes, the expulsion of the friars, freedom of press and of association, and equal treatment for Spanish and Filipinos in the justice system. Yet these demands did not survive revision into the second draft, which drew a Spanish counter-proposal offering only the laying down of arms, the schedule of payments, and provisions for Aguinaldo to make his exit to Hong Kong (Constantino 1975: 195).

The Philippines and Spain entered into the agreement, thus ending hostilities. When Aguinaldo called a constitutional congress in Malolos, Bulacan, he appointed Paterno president of the constitutional convention, recognizing and relying on his familiarity with parliamentary procedure. Paterno headed the congress, which produced the Malolos Constitution, which was drafted by Felipe Calderon and adopted on January 21, 1899. The constitution established the first Republic of the Philippines, and it provided for, among its articles, the separation of Church and State. Aguinaldo was inaugurated as president of the First Philippine Republic. The constitution remained in effect until 1901, when Aguinaldo was captured by the Americans. Aguinaldo despaired before the victories of General Lawton and saw collaboration with Americans as the only option. Obstructing their path was General Antonio Luna: the recalcitrant champion of national sovereignty had to be eliminated, and he was, probably with Paterno's blessing (see Joaquin 1976: 38; Guillermo, "Paterno, Pedro A. (1857-1911)" 301-302; "Malolos Constitution" 245).

Even as the North Americans were preparing their entry into Manila, Paterno issued on May 31, 1898 a flyer that he had authored and signed, declaring love for the compatriots and the motherland, ending with a "¡Viva España!" (Ortiz Armenggol 1999: 213). Yet Paterno's support would go to the winner of that conflict. When it had become apparent that the days of the Spanish colony were numbered, Madrid's representatives approved a new arrangement granting semi-autonomy to the Philippines. Paterno would have accepted the post of administrator effective June 21, 1898 under this last gasp measure. With the American troops waiting to enter the fray, Madrid decided on granting the Philippines its independence. With the same agility with which he accepted the status of republic for the Philippines, the mercurial Paterno welcomed the American regime with open arms (See Ortiz Armenggol 1999: 213). In 1907, with the Americans in charge, he gained election to the Philippine Assembly (Ocampo 2004: vi; Espino 1977: 15).

Paterno could accommodate a shift in allegiances while maintaining a pro-Philippine spirit: he penned a one-act opera—the first ever completed by a Filipino—titled *Sandugong Panaginip*, its libretto translated under the title of *La Alianza Soñada* or *The Dreamed Alliance*. Paterno's opera debuted at the Teatro Zorrilla in 1902. Governor General Taft attended one of its performances, which totaled perhaps eight in all (Mojares 2006: 38).

Pertaining to our thesis, the fourth scene of the *The Dreamed Alliance* joins the theme of pan-Philippine unity with that of American tutelage. The *datus* of various tribes, having united by a blood pact reminiscent of the one that bonded Sikatuna and Legazpi, have entered on stage after having routed the invading Moros. The fifth and final scene of the opera is both “Epilogue” and “Apotheosis.” The didascalia instructs that the character Lapu be awakened by Filipina goddesses “showing him the new constellation which is just appearing the sky.” Lapu is sent searching for both his people and “the grand nation of the United States.” The characters Tining, Uray, Tarik and Bundok ascend with torches in hand; they open the *Kalualhatian* (the “glory,” or heaven); allies all, they unite under or “with” Bathala; the new constellation displays the colors and shapes of the American flag (Paterno 1902: 21). The opera concludes with a scene in which the united tribes are seen hitching their destinies to the Stars and Stripes. Limbas declares, “A new people from across the sea stretch forth to us their hands in fraternal alliance”; on that note do all voices join in the transcendent finish:

Shine forever, our eternal alliance, with the Grand
Republic of the United States of America! Shine from
an untarnished sky, the great constellation of the
American stars! (Paterno 1902: 22)

The opera’s resounding conclusion announces the dawn of a new day and a new colonial regimen. *La hispanidad*, implicitly, will have to cede to a new dispensation, a new sort of national culture in sync with the American empire and the soon-to-be reigning *sajonismo* and *yanquimanía* as orchestrated by the Americans. The spirit of *Nínay* and the costumbrismo with which her tale was told must cede way to the kitschy fanfare and razzle-dazzle of the regime that will usher in some “fifty years in Hollywood.” In this way does Paterno sing a new concept of *patria* and process the sudden oncoming of a new regime. The artifact of the nation conforms now to the mold of the *alianza soñada*, virtually “eternal,” that Paterno had dreamed in his imaginings of a vindicated yet assimilated national community, only now with a change of names and languages and masters.

NOTES

¹Paterno's reference to a "Filipino nation" as designating all the Malay inhabitants of the archipelago can be considered "revolutionary" in that it boldly refunctioned a name that formerly had been given to Spanish creoles, those born in the islands of peninsular parents. Now, in Paterno's works, it was the former "Indios" who were to be considered the authentic "Filipinos" (Reyes 2002: 274).

²On this point, see Roberto González Echevarría's essay on "*One Hundred Years of Solitude as Archive*". González Echevarría refers to the model of discourses collected and ordered in the Archivos de Indias, housed in Simancas, Spain, and elaborates, in a Hispanic context, the concept of the archive developed by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) as not only a non-totalizable collection of knowledge but as a system of regularities and paradigms by which knowledge in a particular episteme is constructed.

³As Portia Reyes observes, it was Paterno and Isabelo de los Reyes who produced Philippine historiography as narrative *historia* (as opposed to a more vernacular-based *kasaysayan*) and initiated the scholarly discourse on ancient Filipino cultures and civilizations (Reyes 2002: 47).

⁴The *baybayin* is a Sanskrit-based alphabet or syllabary, with its three vowels and fourteen consonants (Medina 1974: 18).

⁵Composed, translated and disseminated throughout the archipelago, available in handwritten copies and printed form alike, the novena became a truly popular expression of folk religiosity. Its versions include the one composed in 1896 by Diego Mojica, Minister of Finance of the Magdiwang government. Mojica's intent as expressed in his novena was "to ask God for the triumph of the independence of the country"; among the *gozos* or "joys" that it requested was that of the "[Spaniards'] bullets turn[ing] into mud and their powder turn[ing] into water" (Schumacher 1991: 184-190; 192).

⁶In their 1964 study of Philippine literature, Teófilo del Castillo and Buenaventura S. Medina, Jr. judge that *Nínay*, "as a novel, is difficult to understand; it is full of detours and extraneous matters. The nine *pasiáms*, or nine days of devotion for the dead," the critics add, "serve as a vehicle to unfold the tragic romance of the lovers." They conclude, "Its artistic value is slight" (Del Castillo and Medina 172). Espino (1977) finds a "sentimental sensitivity" in *Nínay* and such short narratives by Paterno as *La Aurora Social*. Francisco Zaragoza y Carrillo sees value in *Nínay*'s notes and appendices for their collection of cultural information dating from the time in which Paterno wrote (Zaragoza y Carrillo, cited in Espino 1977: 14).

⁷Exemplars of these *pagsasiyam* texts are housed in the Eugenio López Museum of Pasig City, Metro Manila.

⁸We can relate the *pasiám* ritual to the self-abasement and obsessions that attend upon those who mourn the deaths of loved ones, explicated in the metapsychological terms of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia". Melancholy, in Freud's view, is occasioned by the loss of the loved "object" and the subsequent withdrawal of the "free libido" into the ego, a process experienced as a "great injustice" and feeling of

impoverishment. The loss of the object, registered narcissistically in the ego as a loss to the ego and a splitting-off of "critical agency" that comes to bear on the ego as "conscience," finds expression in self-exposure and "insistent communicativeness" (Freud 1995: 584-585).

⁹As borne out by Paterno's late-romantic prose, nostalgia itself, like exoticism, can convey values supportive of the colonial hegemony. At the same time, nativism, as Gayatri Spivak has argued, may form part of a movement of "strategic essentialism," its privileging of the pre-colonial and indigenous as constituting a counter to the colonial imposition along with its normalization of colonial transculturation or *mestizaje* (see Ashcroft et al. 2000: 159, 160-161).

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