

## ***El Filibusterismo* and Jose Rizal as “Science Fictionist”<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* famously depicts the difficulties faced by adherents of scientific thought in the Philippines during the late nineteenth century. It also contains descriptions of various implements that were uncommon for the time, from a “time bomb” within a lamp to a “specter summoner” that apparently projects hologram-like images—the products of reasonable extrapolations from the known science of the age. These features are common among the forerunners of the modern Anglo-American genre of science fiction, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to a number of works by Edgar Allan Poe. It is far from the objective of this paper to push for Rizal's canonization as the Father of Filipino Science Fiction, however. Instead, this paper seeks to surface the particular ways Rizal chose to depict the conflicts between knowledge borne of materialist investigation and knowledge from the earthly emissaries of the divine. It argues that in *El Filibusterismo*, these conflicts are somewhat helpful but at the same time dismissible as irrelevant in the context of a campaign against injustice—helpful in intimidating enemy oppressors, irrelevant among advocates of the downtrodden. In this way, Rizal's novel implicitly contemplates a way to craft “science fiction” that strays from the imperialistic “science conquers” formula predominant in the West.

*Keywords:* Jose Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, science fiction, Philippines

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hardly anyone writes about science fiction from the Philippines. Among the few scholarly commentaries on science fiction from our country are critical typological or historical overviews. Among these are essays by Roberto Añonuevo and Timothy Montes. Añonuevo asserts that the first work of science fiction written by a Filipino is Mateo Cruz Cornelio's *Dr. Satan* (first published 1945), a novel about a doctor of medicine who discovers, by means of experimenting on people, an elixir with varying effects on individuals. Montes, meanwhile, considers “The Apollo Centennial” by Gregorio Brillantes (first published in 1972)—a story set in 2069, wherein the

Magellan Space Station rises nightly in a sky where “helidiscs” fly about—as “the first successful science fiction story written by a Filipino.” No studies on these preliminary determinations—competing claims, they seem—are known to yours truly.

Other critics, such as Baryon Posadas, have written what can be referred to as “problems and prospects of Philippine science fiction” pieces. Posadas’ 2001 essay, “Rethinking Philippine Science Fiction,” which deals partly with possible shifts in Philippine science fiction signalled by and following the creation of the (short-lived) Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards category “future fiction” in 2000, is implicitly deemed seminal by at least one other academic (Sanchez 2010). Posadas says that there can be a Philippine science fiction if Filipino writers can “form [their] own science fiction mega-text<sup>2</sup> drawn from [Filipinos’] own estranged experiences” (“Rethinking Philippine” 30). He offers similar advice on how to strategize the further development of Philippine science fiction in his introduction to the “Writing the Future” issue of the online journal *Literatura*, wherein he says:

Perhaps within Philippine science fiction lie the tools to perceive the various invisibilities of the Philippine context. In the act of rendering the encounter with the yet absent experiences, perhaps the science fiction writer can simultaneously deploy his tools to render our own aliens, our own Others. (“Standing on” n.p.)

Identifying antecedents of Philippine science fiction does not seem to be a main concern of his based on the works mentioned, seeing as he leaves out Cornelio and/or Brillantes from his diagnoses and prognostications. Also, his more recent work has been on Japanese science fiction.<sup>3</sup>

What accounts for this dearth of inquiry? One possibility is that over half a century after the influential literary critic Raymond Williams stated that critics are narrow-minded if they are dismissive of works of science fiction simply because such works are “fanciful” or go beyond the bounds of reality (356), science fiction is still largely seen by the Philippine literati as a vehicle for escapism (Tan; Flores). Additionally, there are apparently hardly any well-published science fictionists in the Philippines who refer to themselves exclusively as science fictionists or science fiction writers. Take for example the case of writer-critic Emil Flores. While he is known for writing about science fiction as a singular genre, and has categorized some of his work science fiction<sup>4</sup>, he has unblinkingly discussed the local iteration of the genre as a subcategory of speculative fiction, “a blanket term used by writers and scholars for the genres popularly known as ‘science fiction’ and ‘fantasy’” (Flores)—a term attributed to American science fictionist Robert Heinlein, which

has been appropriated by writers like Dean Francis Alfar to refer to fiction with Martians and/or *manananggals* (Patke and Holden 211). It seems unavoidable to discuss current Philippine science fiction without mentioning that it is classifiable as a subgenre of Philippine speculative fiction because so many Filipino writers of what can be called science fiction, as well as literary critics, have been using that umbrella appellation for or in their work.<sup>5</sup>

Charles Tan also links the disparagement of science fiction from the Philippines to the fact that “many modern works haven’t really strayed from the formula of one of our first novels, [Jose Rizal’s] *Noli Me Tangere* [or the *Noli*, published in 1887],” a statement that echoes Resil Mojares’s claim that the novels written by Rizal “[determined literary] standards no Filipino writer can ignore” (141).

The likes of Tan are, intentionally or unintentionally, segregating “fanciful” science fiction from “realistic” and “socially relevant” strain of fiction traced back to the works of Jose Rizal. By science fiction, this paper refers to fiction with a characteristic “cognitive estrangement” effect that results from placing a fantastic although scientifically conceivable object or objects in a milieu reflective of our objective reality, or in an alternative universe where the same laws of nature (or hypothetical extrapolations from them) apply.<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I argue that Rizal implicitly calls for the disavowal of this mutual exclusivity of literary categories, as his novel *El Filibusterismo* (or the *Fili*, published in 1891), while hardly a work of science fiction, properly speaking, contains elements that show how advances in science and technology, even the fictive variety, can play a vital role in writings that are often heralded as “literary” by our cultural elite—or, more importantly, how “new” science, existing or imaginary, can figure in literary works that have or can have transformative effects on our society. Moreover, this paper shows what, if anything, the *Fili*’s representations of scientists or science adherents and their relationships with their ideological Others can contribute to the formulation of a distinctly Philippine science fiction tradition.

## THE SCIENTIFICALLY SUPERIOR ALIEN

It remains a mystery to me why most visual depictions of Simoun, the *Fili*’s anti-hero, share a number of glaring errors. From covers of recent editions of the *Fili* to the 1962 film adaptation starring Pancho Magalona, Simoun either resembles a nineteenth century Anglo-Hispanic with a stovepipe hat, bathed in mystique; a stereotypical bearded *ilustrado* with short black hair; or a *mestizo* version of the titular character of the Francis Ford Coppola-directed *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (released in 1992) as he appears some forty minutes into that film. I have yet to come across

an accurate graphic illustration of the *Fili*'s main character, which is strange because his outer attributes are vividly described in the first few pages of the novel.

I gripe about this because, as both Ante Radaić (56) and Vicente Rafael (55) understand, Rizal painstakingly made sure that Simoun, at the very least when he first appears, makes his mark on readers as an uncanny character. He is a foreign oddity—a tall, sinewy, white-maned, and raven-bearded chimerical creature sporting enormous blue-tinted eyeglasses (keeping even parts of his cheeks hidden), a tinsin helmet, a strange accent, and an air of indomitable superiority (see Rizal 5-6; ch. 1 or Lacson-Locsin 6; ch. 1).<sup>7</sup> Is he, as the influential members of Rizal's fictive Manila wonder, an American Mulatto or a British Indian? Simoun confides the answer to only a few of the *Fili*'s characters; to most, for the majority of the novel, the man who goes by only one name, the obscenely wealthy jeweler, the confidante of the country's governor-general, is an alien of indeterminate nationality, a purveyor of foreign beliefs.

The revelation of who Simoun really is should hardly come as a surprise to those who know their *Noli*. Simoun is Crisostomo Ibarra, the idealistic hero of the *Noli*, now in villainous costume, Edmond Dantes turned into the Count of Monte Cristo, albeit with a taste for the anarchic. He sees himself as a sower of discord for a cause; he seeks to return the favor to those who wanted him dead for “subversion,” who believe that their wish was fulfilled; he desires death for those who greatly diminished the chances that he would live happily ever after with Maria Clara, his intended, who is cloistered in a convent when he starts his campaign to foment chaos. His mission, in brief: 1) cause a revolt fatal to the country's predominantly foreign and authoritarian elite; 2) resume relations with Maria Clara after liberating her from the nunnery.

Vicente Rafael is correct in emphasizing the role of money in Simoun's mission; Simoun's wealth is “an instrument of his will,” necessary to “sow crime and incite popular uprisings” (57). Money is a means for Simoun to be Mephistopheles in human form. What Rafael does not mention is that Simoun's mastery of science also plays a crucial role in his plans to realize his revenge. “Science” in this paper refers to the common understanding word, e.g., the Merriam-Webster definition: “knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through scientific method, [particularly] such knowledge or such a system of knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena.” I believe that Rizal consistently used the word “science” to mean the same thing in the *Fili*.

An early manifestation of Simoun's scientific superiority can be found in the first chapter of the novel. The *Filí's* narrator tells us that Simoun wears enormous tinted eyeglasses to shield his eyes from the light of the sun (“[para] evitar la luz del sol” [Rizal 6; ch. 1]). The narrator further tells us that Simoun's eyewear gives him the “aspect [aspecto (Rizal 6; ch. 1)] of a blind man or one of defective eyesight” (Lacson-Locsin 6; ch. 1), implying that Simoun does not wear glasses to address any particular vision problem. Rizal, who was well-known as an ophthalmologist, may be in this instance prescribing an alternative use for eyewear with colored lenses, which during his time were typically of the corrective variety; it was only in the early twentieth century when tinted eyeglasses made specifically to shield the eyes from the negative effects of bright lights were invented.<sup>8</sup>

Another display of Simoun's technological superiority (at least relative to the majority of his countrymen) can be found in chapter 10, “Wealth and Misery.” In this chapter, Simoun converses with Cablesang Tales about the bandits (*tulisanes*) that abound in the barrios. Tales tells Simoun that these bandits have firearms that shoot far (“Tienen fusiles que alcanzan mucho!” [Rizal 59; ch. 10]). Simoun then shows Tales that his Smith & Wesson revolver can also shoot far; he targets, thereafter accurately hits the nuts of a *palmera de bonga* some 200 *pasos* away (Rizal 59; ch. 10). Allegedly an excellent marksman—and displaying an extensive knowledge of firearms in chapter 11 of the *Filí*<sup>9</sup>—Rizal likely knew the maximum effective reach of known ammunition fired from any revolver produced in his age, and that 200 *pasos*—if by the italicized term the novel's narrator means the Spanish unit of measurement corresponding to approximately 1.4 meters<sup>10</sup>—is remarkable for a handgun in the Philippines during his time.<sup>11</sup> There is, however, a possibility that “pasos” in the novel refers to the commonplace definition of “paces” (as in the paces taken by duelists before they turn to fire at each other—200 of those is still a considerable distance). Consider, however, that in any case, Rizal clearly wanted Simoun's revolver (or the ammunition it uses) to elicit amazement among the characters in the *Filí's* diegesis, particularly from the likes of Tales.

Simoun's sunglasses and revolver are some of the novel's lesser scientific wonders,<sup>12</sup> decidedly minor achievements when considered alongside the more remarkable devices described in the novel: the time bomb (of sorts) in the pomegranate lamp (described in chapter 33, “The Final Argument”) and the prestidigitator's “spirit summoning” apparatus (which makes its sole appearance in chapter 18, “Deceptions”).

Let us first consider the former. Simoun's schemes culminate in a bomb-plot, a mass assassination of the elite. Mass murder by means of exploding devices was by

no means unheard of in the late nineteenth century, as will be shown in the succeeding paragraphs.<sup>13</sup> Simoun’s bomb, however, was quite a curiosity. It was made up of a vessel that resembles a pomegranate that is “large as the head of a man, cut slightly to show the inner grains,” which were shaped by “huge carnelians”; it even featured rinds that “perfectly imitated the corrugations of the fruit” (Lacson-Loecin 272; ch. 33). Of more interest than the lighting device’s aesthetic properties is what can be found inside it:

[Below the burner was a vessel] of steel, some two centimeters thick and capable of holding more than a liter [of what is revealed to be nitroglycerine]. [Also inside the lamp is] an odd and complicated apparatus [as well as a] tube of crystal [and what Rizal refers to as] the bomb. (Lacson-Loecin 272-273; ch. 33)

As previously stated, the device is, in a way, a time bomb. It is to be a primary source of light in a house where there is a large gathering of the city’s elite. When it dims after twenty minutes, someone will (or should) raise the lamp’s wick to relight the lamp, an act that will cause “a capsule of fulminate of mercury will detonate, [causing] the pomegranate [to] explode” (Lacson-Loecin 274; ch. 33). The bomb was made by a primary school teacher (a character from the *Noli*) who Simoun made into (taught to become?) a pyrotechnist (“le he hecho pirotécnico” [Rizal 144; ch. 19])—yet another showing of Simoun’s scientific prowess.

Benedict Anderson says that “Simoun’s bomb-plot is partly based on the terrorist group Narodnya Volya’s spectacular bomb-assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the year before Rizal arrived in Europe for the first time” (“In the World-Shadow” 334). He also says that “imagined in 1890–91, [Simoun’s bomb-plot] precedes rather than follows the spectacular wave of bomb outrages that rocked Spain and France in 1892–94” (“In the World-Shadow” 120). Most importantly, Anderson states that none of the bombs in the aforementioned events were anything like Simoun’s pomegranate (“In the World-Shadow” 123). Rizal’s ability to mentally conjure such a potentially efficient terrorist device ought to earn him a place among those who dreamt up realistic devices of mass annihilation in twentieth century science fiction.

Indeed, the *Fili* shows how Rizal was considerably talented at imagining grounded-in-reality frights; besides the bomb, there is the “spirit summoning” device, which is what Epifanio San Juan Jr. is likely alluding to when he says that

[the novel’s Unconscious or Symbolic/ideological center] foregoes the language dominated by the exploiters [to dialogue with colonial oppressors,

i.e., to discuss progressive reform] resorting to the uncanny, magic, gothic paraphernalia, the grotesque, hallucinations—the technique of a de-reifying purpose. (25)

The device is the property of a certain Mr. Leeds, described as an American friend of Simoun. Mr. Leeds is an illusionist—he overtly makes the audience believe that his ability to summon the dead is genuine, though there is a tacit understanding that what he does is simple trickery. However, because of how complicated the trick is, many believe that he is indeed skilled in necromancy.

Benedict Anderson dedicates significant segments of his article “Nitroglycerine in the Pomegranate” to discuss a complex link between the statue of a sphinx in Joris-Karl Huysman’s *A Rebours*, a novel on decadence that the highly educated Rizal probably knew about, with the use of “sphinx” as the *logos* where the desired intersects with the undesired in the *Fili* (105-111). He notes how there are many thematic and tropic similarities in the two novels that he finds difficult to dismiss as mere coincidence (“Nitroglycerine in the Pomegranate” 106). However, Joe Nickell’s *Secrets of the Sideshows* yields the likeliest reason why Rizal referred to his undead entity as “Esfinge.” The following extract from Nickell’s book describes a real-life illusion known as the Sphinx, which debuted in 1865—only four years after Rizal’s birth—at London’s Egyptian Hall (276):

[The magician] entered carrying a small box, which he set on a three-legged table, the emptiness of the area underneath the table being plainly visible. Lowering the box’s front, the magician revealed a head of Egyptian appearance, whose eyes he commanded to open. The Sphinx complied and then, following other commands, smiled and proceeded to give a speech. Finally, the magician closed the box and explained that the magical charm, which had enabled him to revivify an ancient Egyptian’s ashes, lasted just fifteen minutes and had expired. When he opened the box again, the head had been replaced by a heap of ashes.

The clever illusion depended on the table, which appeared to be empty underneath but actually concealed a confederate. This was accomplished by the use of two mirrors. They filled the space between the table’s legs in such a way that they not only hid the accomplice but also reflected the carpeting on either side; thus, audience members thought that they were seeing the carpet beneath the table. The actor could insert his head into the box, withdraw it, and substitute a pile of ashes at the appropriate time. (Dawes and Hoffman, qtd. in Nickell 276)

Rizal describes the trick, from bluffs to prestige, in a similar fashion. As well-travelled and well-read as he was, Rizal likely heard or read about the Sphinx

illusion before or as he was writing the *Fili*. However, Mr. Leeds’s version of the Sphinx illusion has a number of innovations. In a footnote, Rizal explains that the mirrors in Mr. Leeds’s table are concealable; they can slide below the floor, automatically rising when the box is placed on top of the table (Rizal 137; ch. 18). Mr. Leeds also allows members of his audience to examine the box, oddly without worrying about the possibility that the box’s hidden hole will be discovered; either the hole is well-concealed, or there is no hole. Lastly, it appears that it is unnecessary for Mr. Leeds to close the box as the talking head disaggregates into a pile of ashes—indeed, Mr. Leeds only covers the apparatus *after* the head disintegrates (“[La] cabeza se habia reducido á polvo y Mr. Leeds colocaba otra vez el paño negro sobre la mesa” [Rizal 137; ch. 18]). From the way Rizal describes how the trick works, it seems as if an *image* of the head is somehow *projected* into the box, like today’s holograms. Nickell describes no similarly advanced version of the Sphinx illusion.

The Sphinx is only one variation of the classic “speaking skull” illusion; in his book, Nickell describes a number of similar tricks (cf. 295). Perhaps Rizal chose the Sphinx variety because it alludes to the Ancient Egyptians, who were ruled for centuries by theocrats, much like Rizal’s people. Indeed, the Sphinx’s monologue sends chills down the spine of one friar who notes the similarities between the ghost’s story with that of Crisostomo Ibarra; this friar faints (causing maidens in the room to follow suit). However, the Sphinx’s monologue contains a statement that differentiates the rulers of Ancient Egypt from the Castilian colonizers of the Philippines. The Sphinx describes the rulers of Ancient Egypt as “monopolizers of science” (“monopolizadores de la ciencia” [Rizal 135; ch. 18]). As will be shown in the next sections, in Rizal’s novel, science was hardly under the exclusive control of the Philippine elite.

### “THINKING MEN”

The men of science [“los hombres de ciencia” (Rizal 5; ch. 1)], do you know what they are? There you have in the province the Puente del Capricho, bridge of caprice, built by one of our brothers, and which was not finished because the men of science, citing their own theories, criticized it as frail and unsafe, and look, it is a bridge that has withstood all the floods and earthquakes! (Lacson-Locsin 5; ch. 1)

The word “science” first appears in the *Fili* in these declarations by the Franciscan friar Padre Salvi, in a conversation with the newspaperman Ben Zayb, while they are aboard the steamship *Tabo*. The above is a tirade against “the men of science” issued by a friar, a member of a community where men of the cloth wield the

authority of absolute monarchs in miniature. He condemns the men of science for their trust in theories that can, naturally, be falsified, a condemnation exemplary of decidedly unscientific (non-inductive) reasoning, i.e., making a sweeping generalization based on a singular, aberrant occurrence. Padre Salvi's comment is applauded by his fellow friars. Later, his belief in forces beyond human comprehension costs him his dignity; he is the friar who fainted during Mr. Leeds's séance.

Further along in the novel, the *Fili's* readers are introduced to another cleric who views science negatively, even though he is an instructor of physics and chemistry. Padre Millon has considerable scientific knowledge, at least in comparison to most of his colleagues at the *Fili's* Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas. Still, he was hardly convinced of the veracity of knowledge borne from scientific inquiry. "Despite being a professor of Geography, he still maintained certain doubts about the roundness of the earth"; also, like one of Galileo's condemners, "[he] would smile when speaking of [the earth's] rotary and revolutionary movements around the sun" (Lacson-Locsin 100; ch. 13). The novel's narrator gives the rationale for Padre Millon's lack of trust in science: none of his brethren have excelled in the field, while many from their rival orders have done so (Lacson-Locsin 101; ch. 13).

Thus, Padre Millon forces his students to memorize the contents of the textbooks he uses in class, though he makes little effort to ensure that they understand what they commit to memory. Students are not allowed to use the equipment in the university laboratory, as these are for display only; the laboratory exists solely for the sake of visitors from Spain, so that they can remark upon how the *indios* have an excellent laboratory, yet have yet to produce a local version of famed scientists Lavoisier, Secchi, or Tyndall, "even in miniature" (Lacson-Locsin 99; ch. 13).

These two friars resemble the Shahryar in Edgar Allan Poe's "meta-science fiction" story, "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" (1850), in that these characters are dismissive of new scientific discoveries, adherents as they are to what they have long been familiar with. Indeed, both Salvi and the Shahryar staunchly believe in longstanding textualized myths, while both Millon and the Shahryar consider the notion of a round earth ridiculous (Poe 689).<sup>14</sup>

Others who think of themselves as luminaries of their community seem to have some knowledge of natural laws, but appear to lack the capacity to think critically using such knowledge. The aforementioned Ben Zayb, who fancies himself the only thinking man in Manila, before the aforementioned séance conducted by Mr. Leeds, declares that he knows the mechanics behind the apparatus that will allow the

head of a dead man to appear and speak before them; it is a trick done with mirrors, he declares (Lacson-Locsin 142; ch. 18). However, when he examines Mr. Leeds’s table, he is unable to find any mirrors, for reasons previously discussed; Mr. Leeds will have to switch tables, Zayb insists (Lacson-Locsin 144; ch. 18). After the mayhem following the Sphinx’s manifestation, Don Custodio, one of the performances’ high society audience members, wishes the trick to be banned because of its “immorality” (“es altamente impio é inmoral!” [Rizal 137; ch. 18]). In response, the newspaperman declares that the trick must be banned mainly “because it does not use mirrors!” (Lacson-Locsin 50; ch. 7).

### **RESOLUTE (?) BELIEVERS**

The (self-declared) intellectual elite are deficient in their appreciation of science, or are unable to solve a quandary scientifically; what about the common folk? One representative of the lower classes in the novel, Sinong, the *cochero* (coachman) in chapter 5, “A Cochero’s Christmas Eve,” asks Basilio, a university student, if the right foot of King Bernardo (of his countrymen, the Indios) has been freed from bondage; Sinong is among those who believe that “only [the folk hero’s] right foot remains chained (Lacson-Locsin 36; ch. 5). Sinong resolutely believes that King Bernardo will someday be completely freed from captivity in the cave of San Mateo to “deliver [the indios] from oppression” (Lacson-Locsin 36; ch. 5). The cochero has even made plans regarding how he can be of service to the mythical king. In answer to Sinong’s query regarding the state of Bernardo’s bonds, Basilio can only smile while shrugging his shoulders—the reaction of a man taught to consider such beliefs as nonsense.

Then there is Juli, the daughter of Cablesang Tales, initially a Marian devotee, who later decides to take her fate from the hands of Mother Mary’s son into her own. Juli allows herself to become the servant of the wealthy Hermana Penchang to earn money to ransom her father from bandits. Hermana Penchang is a woman who wholly believes that an infallible cure for stomach disorders is putting holy water on the navel while praying the *Sanctus Deus* (Lacson-Locsin 250; ch. 30). Hermana Penchang forces Juli to imbibe such beliefs. Juli gamely agrees to receive such an education from Hermana Penchang, possibly because she is already a believer in miracles—for example, Juli trusts that Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ will leave money underneath a statue of the Virgin Mother if she prays for this to happen.

Juli’s faith in miracles is gradually lost. The money she prays for fails to materialize. Her father is released by the bandits, but to repay the costs of his release, she must remain in the servitude of Hermana Penchang. Her father’s lands are “legally” stolen

by friars, which causes Cabesang Tales to become a *tulisan* (bandit), becoming the fearsome, murderous Matanglawin (who had stolen Simoun's remarkable revolver for his own use). Even Basilio, the man to whom she has betrothed herself, is later in the novel incarcerated for supposedly engaging in subversive activities. She is later released by Hermana PENCHANG, but becomes Hermana Bali's charge when her grandfather, Tata Selo, is thrown into prison to draw her father out of hiding. Tata Selo's release is in the hands of Padre Camorra, who, it is implied, wants carnal knowledge with the virginal Juli in exchange for such a favor. She yields to Padre Camorra's lust—gleefully escorted by Hermana Bali to the friar's abode—after she learns that Basilio's immediate release from prison is unlikely. With her belief in the possibility of divine intervention on her behalf shattered by such successive tragedies, she takes her own life.

### THE CULT OF SCIENCE

Basilio initially adheres to a faith distinct from that of Juli, though his devotion to his set of beliefs is just as fervent as that of his beloved's. What makes the belief system he adheres to atypical is the fact that it is without a godly center, as revealed in the first of many one-on-one conversations that Basilio has with Simoun:

Science is [the primary aim of the most cultured nations;] [within] a few centuries, when humanity shall have been redeemed and enlightened; when there shall no longer be races; when all peoples shall have become freed; when there are no longer tyrants nor slaves, colonies nor empires; when one justice reigns and man becomes a citizen of the world, only the cult of science ["el culto de la ciencia" (Rizal 50; ch. 7)] will remain; the word patriotism will sound as fanaticism, and whosoever will take pride in patriotic virtues will surely be locked up as a dangerous maniac, as a disturber of the social harmony. (Lacson-Locsin 55; ch. 7)

These words echo the affirmation of science's supremacy over older bodies of knowledge or methodologies in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). However, while one mentor of Victor Frankenstein readily admits that belief systems invalidated by science (i.e., alchemy) were nevertheless precursors of scientific thought,<sup>15</sup> Basilio seems to completely abhor the unscientific; for instance, Basilio describes the holy water in church fonts to be a source of diseases, contrary to the popular belief that such water is curative (Lacson-Locsin 250; ch. 30).

Simoun agrees that science, or rather scientism, seems to be an ideal dominant ideology; both he and Basilio would likely agree that it can invalidate any socially constructed differentiation of humans through the scientific method. However,

Simoun believes that there are necessary conditions to bring about the nationless utopian world-state that Basilio envisions—violent revolt, fueled by love of country, must first happen in countries victimized by oppressor nations; many must die “on the stakes” so as to horrify “the conscience of society,” forcing society to grant freedom to “the conscience of the individual” (Lacson-Locsin 55-56; ch. 7). Simoun is thus saying that nationalism can lead to transformative anarchy. He says this to convince Basilio that the only way for the younger man to achieve his aims is to become one of Simoun’s men. Basilio initially declines Simoun’s offer.

### **VOICES IN THE MARGINS**

Basilio eventually agrees to become one of Simoun’s lieutenants, another recruit in the anarchist’s cabal of intellectuals, joining the ranks of the teacher-pyrotechnist and Mr. Leeds. Basilio’s time behind bars, the death of Juli, and the failure of his efforts based on scientism to create nonviolent ways to make the colonial masters realize that their slaves must be liberated, have made him lust for the same chaos that Simoun ardently desires. Simoun assigns Basilio to lead a revolt by bandits—headed by Matanglawin—as soon as the bomb explodes.

With advanced armaments, an army of disgruntled bandits, and reserves of intellectual resources (a surplus of “brain power,” if you will), could Simoun’s nefarious campaigns fail?

As the novel shows, of course they can. In his first attempt to launch a revolt (without Basilio’s willing assistance) Simoun effectively calls the action off after he learns that Maria Clara is dead; the news plunges him into grieving inactivity. His bomb plot also fails because of a fortuitous event. The event which Simoun seeks to abruptly conclude with mass murder is the celebration of a wedding, happening in the house of Basilio’s recently deceased adoptive father. As the fiesta is proceeding, the former lover of the bride, Isagani, learns from Basilio that the luminous pomegranate will bring death when it loses luster. Before the bomb could be triggered, Isagani dashes into the house, throwing the pomegranate outside; the bomb sinks harmlessly to the bottom of a river. A university student who shares Basilio’s beliefs (though he is more willing to directly engage authorities to achieve his desires, as can be seen in chapter 27, “The Friar and the Filipino”), Isagani later learns about the revolt he halted, causing him to regret his rashness. In short, the failures of Simoun’s schemes are attributable to men’s desires to be with or protect their beloveds.

Padre Florentino, a Filipino clergyman whom Simoun turns to for refuge after he is forced to go on the run following his last failure, identifies another reason for

Simoun's lack of successes. According to the priest, Simoun did not have the support of the Inscrutable; "the [Heavenly Father will not give the] glory of saving a country [to] him who has contributed to cause its ruin" (Lacson-Locsin 311; ch. 39). Moreover, Padre Florentino believes that the Indio race is, at the time, unworthy of sovereignty:

Why independence if the slaves of today will be the tyrants of tomorrow? And they would be, without doubt, because he loves tyranny who submits to it. Señor Simoun, while our people may not be prepared, while they may go to battle beguiled or forced, without a clear understanding of what they have to do, the wisest attempts will fail and it is better that they fail, because why commit the wife to the husband if he does not sufficiently love her, if he is not ready to die for her? (Lacson-Locsin 314; ch. 39)

As translated from Spanish by Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin, Wenceslao Retana says that the above excerpt is evidence that Rizal was "truly a great nationalist but an enemy of separatism, and above all [an opponent] of obtaining independence by force" (in Lacson-Locsin 342). Such a reading is reflective of an erroneous belief that Simoun categorically failed, or that his forces were soundly defeated. Such a belief is usually tied to Rizal's statements to the effect that he is against inopportune revolution (as in Matibag 251). This conflation of Rizal's overt views on revolution and the mass of often contradictory statements that is the *Fili* can be seen in most readings of Simoun's inability to launch a revolt, such as the following from Eugenio Matibag:

For Simoun fails, everything fails, as everything must, Rizal believed, that is founded on hate. The novel thus achieves a dual purpose; it is both an incitement to revolution and a dire warning against it, an exact summing-up, in fact, of his views on revolution, which because they were completely realistic contained the element of ambivalence. He now saw no alternative to revolution; everything else had been tried. But he could not see how a revolution could succeed. (260)

and, more recently, from Jose Duke Bagulaya:

[as more astute literary critics have shown,] Simoun cannot stand for all revolutionary strategies but for the anarchist [solution, thus] Simoun's defeat does not necessarily mean the hopelessness of any radical or violent means of changing the *etat social* [only the impossibility of success for the variety of uprising directed by an anarchist]. (59)

All three readings are undone by the fact that the colonizers never really "won" over Simoun's forces, as a violent struggle for supremacy between them never took place. As previously detailed, it is the subordination of lofty aims to romantic love

(libidinous lust?) that kept Simoun’s revolution from succeeding; why would a dedicated extremist call off a well-planned destabilization plot to brood over the loss of his intended? Does the *Fili* therefore ultimately convey the lesson that even the most well-calculated schemes are susceptible to being outmaneuvered by a *deus ex machina*? This is a feasible way of interpreting Simoun’s failures. Of more interest than such a hermeneutic exercise is a counter(fictive)factual analysis concerning what Simoun might have done to better ensure the success of his schemes; when one considers the existence of other potentially revolutionary voices in the novel besides the anarchic, one realizes how Simoun could have significantly increased the probability of successfully overthrowing the fictionalized colonial master.<sup>16</sup>

One of these voices belongs to Sinong, the cochero. As earlier mentioned, Sinong is waiting for evidence that King Bernardo is ready to retake his kingdom. The cochero stated that he is willing to fight to assist in the reclamation of his mythical sovereign’s birthright. One can imagine that anyone who claims to be sent by King Bernardo (or be the monarch himself) to enlist Sinong’s services could have made the cochero—and other myth-believers like him—a fanatical foot soldier. Padre Florentino’s exhortations are also potential fomenters of violent revolt. One may justifiably reduce his parting words to Simoun to a rephrasing of the latter’s earlier declarations of genuine nationalism as a necessary tool for the success of any anti-colonial movement (minus the anarchic overtones). However, in his words to the dying Simoun, Padre Florentino is also implicitly saying that a violent revolution blessed by the Heavenly Father would prosper. Early twentieth century millenarian revolutionaries in the Philippines, as described in Reynaldo Ileto’s *Pasyon and Revolution*, adhered to similar beliefs.

These voices exist only in the margins, playing a barely audible second fiddle to Simoun’s dominant voice, which is that of a man who has substituted mass wine for nitroglycerine—that of a man who has forsaken praying for heavenly apparitions for employing a magician to simulate the undead. Simoun the anarchist-scientist “hogs the spotlight,” so to speak, in the *Fili*. The voices previously mentioned hardly interact with his or with each other (if at all). Sinong’s only detailed interaction with Simoun’s cohorts is his introductory conversation with Basilio. The cochero is later reduced to a plot device, as the narrator tells us that Sinong informs Basilio of Juli’s death while the young man is incarcerated (in chapter 32, “Consequences of the Posters”). Padre Florentino, meanwhile, only speaks to Simoun when the latter is near death; only in those closing events of the novel, when Simoun has determined that his losses are irredeemable, does the clergyman learn about the anarchist’s campaign. Though seemingly incapable of doing anything beyond their designated

supporting roles, these distinctive minor voices share in common one virtue that would have allowed them to stand in solidarity in the face of their colonial oppressors—an almost blind, religion or myth-informed nationalistic fervor. Simoun probably would have been able to entice these other voices to work with him against colonizers by presenting himself as primarily a nationalist instead of insisting on the correctness of his brand of revolutionary ideology.

## CONCLUSION

However, what should we make of the fact that the notion of nation, from which springs forth nationalism, is—like scientism—of Western origin?<sup>17</sup> What is the virtue in preferring a foreign ideology that has given rise to (at times violent) factionalism over another that overtly seeks to unite all under the common rule of our species' overtly non-sectarian knowledge of the physical world?

At about the same time that nationalism was on the rise, industrial revolutions in the West were beginning to make science a common facet of everyday life. In *The German Ideology* (published in 1845), Marx claimed that “the science of mechanics perfected by [Isaac] Newton was altogether the most popular science in France and England in the eighteenth century” (n. pag.; vol. 1, ch. 1). This “popular science” allowed England—soon thereafter, as a function of competition, all other countries “that wished to retain [their] historical role to protect [their] manufactures”—to become an industrial capitalist nation that utilized production-automating, small industry-destroying machinery to supply the demands of the world market (Marx n. pag.; vol. 1, ch. 1). Such an inextricable linkage of machinery and manufacture led to the creation of societies that will readily consume science fiction in the years to come. In the words of H. Bruce Franklin in an online essay called “Science Fiction: The Early History”:

Under industrial capitalism, vast numbers of people were soon spending their lives working for a handful of capitalists who owned everything the people produced, including the factories, coal mines, railroads, and ships. Not only were the workers thus alienated from the means of production and their own products, but they also found themselves increasingly alienated from nature, from each other, and from their own essence as creative beings. Human creativity now appeared in the form of monstrous alien forces exerting ever-growing power over the people who had created them.

While many claim that all fiction depicting such forces is descended from English Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Aldiss 35; Rose 4), some claim that American Edgar Allan Poe is the father of science fiction, or at least the creator of the genre's foremost

progenitors (Asimov 8; Rose 4). Unsurprisingly, there is at least an almost worldwide consensus that science fiction first flourished in the industrialized European-Anglo-American or Western world.<sup>18</sup>

The scientist or science-minded hero at odds with the scientific-fantastic—from Ralph 124C 41+ (from Hugo Gernsback’s eponymous 1911 novel) to comic book scientist-superheroes such as Reed Richards/Mr. Fantastic and Tony Stark/Iron Man—is one of science fiction’s hallmarks. Works classifiable under this taxon invariably affirm, implicitly or explicitly, that giving such scientist-protagonists the right to dominate the scientifically inferior is not objectionable.<sup>19</sup> The French writer Jules Verne’s Captain Nemo puts the weaponry of his *Nautilus* (from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, published in 1870, and *The Mysterious Island*, published in 1874) to use in his campaign to make humanity what he wants it to be. Many works of Western science fiction concern self-appointed genius caretakers of the great unwashed. Two famous American works, Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation* series and Frank Herbert’s *Dune* saga, tell tales of people with superior scientific knowledge and/or access to technology arrogating unto themselves the task of keeping humanity from destroying itself. As can be gleaned from all of the examples thus far mentioned, on the level of individual characters, science fiction has a tendency to reify or naturalize the ascendancy of scientifically superior persons.

When the same scientific ascendancy is made to characterize particular nations—or, say, the entirety of humanity as represented by a largely Western group with token “diversifiers”—such characterizations echo the logic underlying the notions of “manifest destiny” and “benevolent assimilation.”<sup>20</sup> Since the genre’s birth, a large number of works of Western science fiction, such as the Robert Wise-directed film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (released in 1951), Arthur C. Clarke’s novel *Childhood’s End* (published in 1953), Alan Moore’s graphic novel *Watchmen* (collected in 1987), the Roland Emmerich-directed blockbuster *Independence Day* (released in 1996), and the Wachowski Brothers’ film *The Matrix* (released in 1999), have shown how scientifically advanced extraterrestrials or self-aware computing devices can unite humanity against a common enemy—if they are malevolent and/or bent on the extermination of the human race—or otherwise force humanity to unite, permitting us to disregard persisting causes of inequality among members of our species, or at least give us reason to temporarily ignore the categories we use for stratifying society. Such forces remain nonexistent (or undiscovered). Thus, works of fiction featuring such forces are often seen by literary critics as works casting enemy humans in nonhuman form.<sup>21</sup> The ideology that underlies such fiction is the same as the science-based humanism that Basilio initially adheres to. As explained previously, while such fiction ostensibly pushes for the genuine unification of the

human race, they implicitly reinforce the domination of those who can best harness science. In virtually all of the works of science fiction mentioned in this paper, one can locate beliefs that are overtly racially unifying in aim, but have the aforesaid “natural law”-based fascistic undercurrent.<sup>22</sup>

The *Fili* implicitly admonishes such beliefs. In looking closely at the interactions of the various revolutionary and potentially revolutionary factions in the *Fili*, nationalism—indigenized in various ways, devoid of scientific basis, even reveling in the ambiguity of what constitutes a nation—appears to be the one notion that the novel wanted Rizal’s contemporary countrymen to rally under, especially given the novel’s undercurrent of skepticism concerning the variety of humanism described above. Rizal knew that there were many believers in mythic monarchs or followers of earthly emissaries of Jesus Christ among his countrymen during his time.<sup>23</sup> Displacing such beliefs with scientism under a regime that stifles efforts to educate the masses would have been an insurmountable task. According to Warwick Anderson, most of the local scientists from the 1870s were “not in the religious orders (although many were *peninsulares* [Spanish residents of the colonies who were born in Spain])” (296); “the most impressive [scientific] research [during the late nineteenth century] took place at the Jesuit Observatory” (297), and it was only in the 1890s (perhaps after the publication of the *Fili*?) that the real Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas allowed students to use microscopes (296)—in other words, science had virtually no penetration across the local social strata in the Philippines when Rizal was writing the *Fili*, as is accurately depicted in the novel. Rizal made no attempt to impose upon the majority of the *Fili*’s fictive Philippine populace the same appreciation of science of industrial/industrializing societies.

However, if Rizal in the *Fili* disabuses those who excessively valorize science, he does so only after thoroughly demolishing the authority of the Spanish frailocracy to determine the fate of his countrymen in the *Noli*. Arguably, the novels in tandem seek to keep Rizal’s countrymen from dwelling on the subject of science versus religion, an aim that becomes particularly evident in the latter novel’s attempts to exhaustively portray—without showing any clear resolution—the manifestations of this conflict in the late nineteenth century Philippine setting vis-à-vis the same novel’s employment of cognitive estrangement to attach triggers of awe and wonder to the portrayal of (potential) technological advances of the time, which can be seen as evidence of a scheme to pragmatically isolate tool from theory. In short, in challenging scientism yet showing what effective advanced weapons local revolutionaries should seek or develop, the *Fili* is asking those who will fight the colonizer to think of a bomb as a device for achieving national sovereignty, not a

statement of allegiance to the power of science. While the *Fili* echoes the alchemy-science or myth-science dichotomies in *Frankenstein* and “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade,” unlike those two Anglo-American texts, no attempt is made in the *Fili* to consistently devalue the Others of science.

Furthermore, consider this: if Simoun ended up victorious, the *Fili* would likely be seen by critics as a mere wish-fulfillment fantasy, dismissed the same way that science fiction is often dismissed. It would be seen as a work of fiction that telegraphs the message that a man with advanced weaponry is the key to a nation’s salvation from foreign tyranny—that “superior science” alone can liberate Simoun’s countrymen from oppression. Thematically, it would be similar to the biblical story of the liberation of the Israelites under Moses’s leadership, with a key difference being the source of bond-breaking power.

By stopping short of producing what I think may have become the Philippines’ first science fiction novel, Rizal is inadvertently signaling his literary descendants to reflect on whether or not what they are writing amount to tools for the reification of the unquestionable dominance of those whose guns shoot the farthest, or if what they are producing are in support of the “natural” rule of those whose bombs kill the most. In reading the novel in the manner herein presented, echoing (if not completely agreeing with) Posadas’s search for the Philippine science fiction mega-text, at least one other matter for reflection arises: should the science fictionists of the Philippines focus on writing about some scientific marvel that benefits (or can potentially destroy) all of humanity—that is, exert effort in producing science fiction that readily has the potential to transcend national boundaries and find audiences worldwide—instead of describing extrapolations from existing science that have peculiarly local applications?<sup>24</sup>

“¿Donde esta la juventud ha de consagrar sus rosadas horas, sus ilusiones, y entusiasmo al bien de su patria?”<sup>25</sup> Padre Florentino thinks to himself as Simoun lays dying (Rizal 1990, 284). Within the final paragraphs of the *Fili* containing that sentence, the novel’s last speaking character delegates to the youth—descendants of Rizal’s generation, including both scientists and science fictionists—driven solely by love of country the task of achieving what a vengeful man with an almost fantastically well-armed force could not.

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and to the anonymous reviewers who helped improve this paper. All errors are my responsibility.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This is an expanded version of a paper presented by the author at the “Rizal in the 21st Century: Local and Global Perspectives” International Conference (22-24 June 2011, Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman).
- <sup>2</sup> Posadas, quoting Damien Broderick in “Rethinking Philippine Science Fiction,” defines mega-text as “an intertextual mass where contemporary science fiction draws its language from resulting in the absence of any need, for example, for writers in the present to explain every novum [novelty] introduced in their works to be understood by the well-versed science fiction reader”(25).
- <sup>3</sup> Before his *Humanities Diliman* essay, his article, “In the Spotlight of Misperception: Japanese Science Fiction vis-à-vis Western Science Fiction Set in Japan,” was published in 2000. The recent work I am referring to seems to be more in line with that earlier essay (cf. “The Sky Crawlers and the Transmediation of Science Fictional Worlds”(2012) and a 2012 conference paper entitled “Remakes and Retroactive Continuities: Intertextuality and Empire in Japanese Science Fiction Cinema.”)
- <sup>4</sup> In the Eighth International Conference on Philippine Studies in 2008, Flores presented a paper entitled “Future Visions and Past Anxieties: Science Fictions in the Philippines from the 1990s Onwards.” According to the paper’s abstract, as the title suggests, the paper focuses on how science fiction from the timeframe covered by Flores’s study has represented Philippine society. Flores is also a contributor to science fiction-only anthologies such as *Diaspora ad Astra: Science Fiction from the Philippines* (published online in 2010), which he co-edited with Joseph Nacino.
- <sup>5</sup> The long-running series of *Philippine Speculative Fiction* collections—a number of which were edited by Alfar (Patke and Holden 211)—features works that can be classified as science fiction, fantasy, horror, and the like. The previously mentioned article by Sanchez (2010), while heavily referencing Posadas’s 2001 essay, is concerned with the possibility of formulating a distinctly Philippine speculative fiction tradition.
- <sup>6</sup> This definition is based mostly on Darko Suvin’s definition— “[science fiction] is a literary genre or verbal construct whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (Positions and Presuppositions 37)—as well as Mark Rose’s description of the genre: “science-fiction stories either portray a world that is in some respect different from our own, as for instance in stories set in the future or on other planets, or, alternatively, they describe the impact of some strange element upon our world, as in alien-invasion stories or evolutionary fables. Science fiction stories, in other words, always contain an element of the fantastic” (2).
- <sup>7</sup> In this paper, I rely primarily on Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin’s 1996 translation, though I occasionally refer to the 1990 republication of the text in the original Spanish by the

National Historical Institute—notwithstanding my poor command of the language—particularly when Rizal’s exact wordings better bolster my statements.

<sup>8</sup> Eyewear company Foster Grant credits its founder, Sam Foster, with the “introduction” of “inexpensive, mass-produced sunglasses” in 1929, after their use became widespread among film actors who needed to protect their eyes from very bright film studio lighting (Foster Grant). As to the invention of sunglasses, Stephen Dain states that tinted glasses were first recommended to protect the eyes from sun glare by James Ayscough as early as 1752 (77), but the purpose of the glasses he was talking about was to correct vision problems (Ayscough), not specifically to shield the eyes from sunlight—Ayscough believed that regular “white glass” spectacles produced an “offensive [glaring] light, very prejudicial to the Eyes,” and that glasses tinged with blue “renders every Object so easy and pleasant, that the tenderest eye, may thro’ it view any thing intently, without pain” (13). An article by William H. Brock published in the Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London narrates how sunglasses as we now know them were developed between 1908-1915 by William Crookes, who was tasked by the Royal Society’s Glass Workers’ Cataract Committee to develop protective eyewear for glassworkers that needed to be opaque to the ultraviolet light from glass furnaces (which caused what was then known as “glassworker’s cataract” (Brock 304, 306)) but did not compromise “optical definition” (Brock 305, 306). In 1911, Crookes presented his findings before the Committee, which thereafter gave him funding for several years to continue refining what would later be known as “Crookes Lenses” (Brock 306), glasses that could be fashioned into spectacles that shielded the eyes from the glare of bright light but, in Crookes words, “did not appreciably alter the natural colours of objects” (Brock 306). Brock asserts that “[the work Crookes] published in 1914...led to the creation of the sunglasses industry after his death in 1919” (309).

<sup>9</sup> Erwin Castillo describes how both Rizal and his compatriots found Rizal’s skill to be excellent, of a duellist’s caliber. Rizal was also known for “[badgering] friends for original American Smith & Wesson catalogs” (Castillo).

<sup>10</sup> According to *Sizes.com* (which features well-documented content), the paso is “a unit of length, 1.39 meters (about 1.52 yards).”

<sup>11</sup> Castillo states that the gun Rizal most wanted to own—and likely (the basis of) Simoun’s revolver—is “the Smith & Wesson New Model No. 3 large-framed, single-action revolver, break-top, with automatic ejectors, in .44 Russian caliber,” a gun ordered specifically “for the Tsarist officer corps.” Also called New Model Russians, (Ezell 118), these guns were used by the belligerent factions of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War (Ezell 120) and were indeed the most advanced Smith & Wesson handguns during Rizal’s time (Ezell 124). Given that Rizal probably never used a pistol like this (Castillo), the range and power of ammunition fired from Simoun’s pistol were perhaps only extrapolated from Rizal’s knowledge of firearms—that, or he was purposely exaggerating his fictionalized/fictive weapon’s capabilities. Certainly, if 1 paso=1.39 meters, given that the muzzle velocity, or the velocity the projectile reaches to exit the gun’s barrel (WebPath Contributors), of an actual New Model Russian is 229 meters/second (Ezell 129), and that even most bullets from modern handguns lose a significant amount of kinetic energy at only 100 yards (or 91.4 meters) because of drag and air resistance (WebPath Contributors), the ability of Simoun’s gun to shoot a bullet almost 280 meters away and still knock off bunga/betel nuts hanging from a palm tree is unbelievable.

- <sup>12</sup> There is also the toxic substance Simoun takes towards the novel's conclusion, which, the jeweler asserts, none of the learned, wealthy Padre Florentino's antidotes could neutralize (Lacson-Locsin 310; ch. 39).
- <sup>13</sup> Nor were they unknown even centuries earlier (remember Guy Fawkes?).
- <sup>14</sup> According to the narrator of Poe's story, after consulting the *Tellmenow Isitsöornot* (an ancient Ripley's *Believe It or Not* perhaps?), the narrator found out that the Arabian Nights' protagonist-storyteller, Scheherazade, was not saved from execution by the Shahryar by her literally life-prolonging stories. According to the narrator, Scheherazade's previously unknown "thousand-and-second tale" is about a journey by Sinbad to the West, i.e., the United States, where he encountered all the natural peculiarities and technological innovations, such as trains (695) and the telegraph (696), known during Poe's time—i.e., anachronisms left and right, described in a fantastical manner by Scheherazade but clarified via the author's extensive footnotes. The Shahryar found almost the entire story preposterous—completely breaking his enchantment with and leading to the execution of his companion of a thousand-and-two nights—only remarking, "[that], now, I believe," when Scheherazade makes a reference to the claim that the earth is "upheld by a cow of a blue color, having horns four hundred in number" from Sale's Koran (694).
- <sup>15</sup> According to this "natural philosopher," M. Waldman, alchemists such as Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus were "men whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task to give new names, and arrange in connected classifications the facts which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." (Shelley 28)
- <sup>16</sup> The analysis that follows attempts to operationalize the method of analysis teased at by Suvin in his essay, "Can People be (Re)Presented in Fiction?: Toward a Theory of Narrative Agents and a Materialist Critique beyond Technocracy or Reductionism." In that essay, Suvin states that "people in the bourgeois individualist sense, cannot be represented in fiction; they necessarily become, on the one hand, exempla ([W.H.] Auden's paragons) and, on the other hand, shifting nodes of narration" ("Can People" 690). Furthermore, he says that "pertinent and crucial relationships among people—not atomic or pointlike but as a rule dyadic or differential—nonetheless can be represented in fiction; in fact, fiction consists in their representation and reformulation, which allows the reader to pleurably verify old and dream up new alternative relationships, to re-articulate (in both senses of the word) human relationships to the world of people and things" (Suvin, "Can People" 690). Here, I deemed it necessary to first examine the characters as one would individuals in the "bourgeois individualist sense" before the relational-typological analysis focusing on "narrative agents" (Suvin, "Can People" 686) that Suvin suggests.
- <sup>17</sup> Anderson says as much in his landmark *Imagined Communities*. According to Anderson, the conceptualization of truth being inscribed in particular written texts, the naturalization of social hierarchy of the divine monarchical variety, and the "conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable" had a "slow, uneven decline...first in Western Europe, later elsewhere" due to economic shifts and new discoveries and inventions that necessitated "a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully

together” (*Imagined Communities* 36), which eventually led to the development of nationalism in Europe during the nineteenth century (*Imagined Communities* 81, 86).

- <sup>18</sup> The following is a brief survey of science fiction commentaries by non-Western scholars to support this claim. Wu Dingbo and Koichi Yamano, from China and Japan, respectively, both agree that the precursors of their respective science fiction traditions are Western. “[Science fiction] emerged first of all in the West,” the first region in the world to industrialize, says Wu (xii); Anglo-American science fiction writers were the makers of the prefabricated houses that Japanese science fiction writers moved into, so to speak, says Yamano (70). Russians Evgeni Brandis and Vladimir Dmitrevsky think Jules Verne was the founding father of science fiction (4-5). Latin American science fiction scholar Rachel Haywood Ferreira says that “While the influence of Latin American writers is surely important [to works of early Latin American science fiction], that of Northern writers is at least as strong....[The] works of [Johannes] Kepler, [Louis-Sébastien] Mercier, Poe, and Verne, among others, likely influenced our writers in terms of the use of the fantastic voyage, of a specific future setting for utopia, of travel through time and space via medium or spiritist, of scientific detail and didacticism, of extrapolation from the present, and the combination of real and fictitious characters and events” (436-437).
- <sup>19</sup> Jameson describes aliens in the Western science fiction as generally “[manifesting] a characteristic and virtually omnipresent “paranoid” suspicion of the hostility, bellicosity, and imminent menace of the Alien in general (a topos [type] which largely transcends the limited years of the “official” Cold War period)” (199). Jameson also describes a Western motif of “the super-intelligence who will solve all of our problems” (199).
- <sup>20</sup> Warwick Anderson might agree, as he says that “[in the twentieth century, the laboratory functioned as both index and generator of civic responsibility. The more laboratory-like, or scientifically-minded, the Philippines became, the more elevated in civilization Filipinos might appear to Americans and the more modern and responsible Filipinos might appear to themselves. Conversely, Americans, in detecting a failure in local science, often affirmed a continuing need for colonial supervision and training” (311).
- <sup>21</sup> Examples: Cyndy Hendershot’s “From Trauma to Paranoia: Nuclear Weapons, Science Fiction, and History,” which explains that the aliens of the 1956 film *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers* are articulations of collective anxiety over nuclear weapons, as well as a means of transferring the Americans responsibility for the escalation of nuclear weapon development to “ancient forces beyond human control” (82); and Ingo Cornils’s “The Martians Are Coming! War, Peace, Love and Scientific Progress in H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* and Kurd Laßwitz’s *Auf zwei Planeten*,” which focuses on the allegorical function of aliens in science fiction, saying that the faction the alien Other signifies may be a specific nationality. Probably nowhere is this predilection for substituting nationalities and other socio/ethno-cultural labels with alien races more evident than in the first, Cold War-era *Star Trek* series (cf. H. Bruce Franklin’s “*Star Trek* in the Vietnam Era” and Daniel Bernardi’s “*Star Trek* in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race”).
- <sup>22</sup> Walter Benn Michaels’ essay “Political Science Fictions” argues that while post-Cold War “science fiction would seem to be almost generically committed to noncultural, in other words, physical difference” (650-651), science fiction that feature both alien life forms and a universalized human race are only “relatively uninterested” in the categories of

racial and cultural differences but “absolutely uninterested in the categories of ideological differences that dominated the cold war” (655)—in other words, such fiction is only highlighting one essentializing socially stratifying category over another. Arguably, when the alien/Other is a foreigner like Simoun, the category highlighted is nationality; ideology in dystopian science fiction; and so on. Certainly, a large study (more extensive than Michaels’s, even Rose’s) will be necessary to show that identity essentialization is a key function of science fiction as a genre the world over.

<sup>23</sup> Reynaldo Ileto retells an anecdote showing how Rizal dealt with the mythology about him that was growing within his lifetime: “On one occasion [after his return to the Philippines from abroad in 1892], a particularly excitable old man praised Rizal so much that the latter felt obliged to reveal himself, if only to put a stop to it. ‘When he did so,’ narrates [Austin] Coates, “the old man stared at him, unbelievably, then kissed his hand, calling him a hero and redeemer. Everywhere, too, he found his tricks of sleight-of-hand recalled, people averring that he had supernatural powers” (“Rizal and the Underside of Philippine History” 69). Thus, apparently, Rizal never made any attempt to vehemently deny the fantastic abilities many people believed he had.

<sup>24</sup> According to Posadas, “[by] emphasizing science fiction’s metaphorical rather than its futuristic nature, we might perhaps be able to form our own mega-text and produce credible, relevant science fiction (“Rethinking Science Fiction” 28).” Sanchez suggests that “one icon that is beginning to surface as part of a possible Philippine mega-text is water” because it recurs in one of Alfar’s *Philippine Speculative Fiction* anthologies (45). I am not thoroughly convinced of the value of pushing for greater emphasis on science fiction’s allegorical capabilities among Philippine science fiction writers, as this makes science fiction hardly any different from all other genres classified under “speculative fiction” (the aforescribed popularity of that umbrella genre seems to verify the widespread acceptance of Posadas’s view). I think we can learn from Rizal and emphasize the distinctly “futuristic nature” of science fiction, but without harboring any illusions of the Philippines having undergone any age of national industrialization and technological innovation. The advanced science and technology depicted can be foreign, but their utilizations should be localized. In any case, I think the juxtaposition of the observable current and the plausible future—another thing the *Noli* and the *Fili* do well together—can make science fiction more, for lack of a less clichéd term, socially relevant in the Philippine setting.

<sup>25</sup> “Where are the youth who will consecrate their golden hours, their illusions, and enthusiasm for the welfare of their country?” (Lacson-Locsin 314; ch. 39)

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