



# Reading Rizal as an Alien: Sexual Anxiety and Gender Trouble in the Once and Future Nation

**Thomas David Chaves**

## **ABSTRACT**

THIS PAPER EXPLORES the Jose Rizal trope as an emerging Science Fiction megatext in five recent short stories in the speculative mode. These are: (1) “The Flight” by Adel Gabot; (2) “The Pepe Report” by Ian Rosales Casocot; (3) “Turtle Season” by Timothy Montes; (4) “Rizal” by Eliza Victoria; and (5) “Totems” by Catherine Torres. Because these stories depict anxieties related to gender and sexuality, a cultural studies lens has been employed to analyze them, weaving strands from postcolonial SF criticism together with feminist and queer theory. While the stories do not differ topically from cultural discourses on “Rizal mythology” such as those collected by Alfredo Santos in *Rizal Miracle Tales* (1961), or of other Filipino popular culture texts that contribute to Rizal’s “canonization” and “hagiography,” the stories advance an informed position in questioning entrenched social disparities that emerge from the imbrication of nation, social class, sexuality, and gender. By using speculative fiction, the stories deploy science fictional estrangement as a productive device to defamiliarize the commonplace in order to draw attention to, and question, the very social inequities that Rizal himself had fought against in the first place.





*“To us, he is not unreachable, for he is among us. We feel him, breathe with him, live with him.”*

—Jose Garcia Villa, “The Son of Rizal” (1932)<sup>1</sup>

“The high priests who have canonized him,” starts fictionist Gregorio C. Brillantes’s 1983 travel essay on a visit to Spain, “will probably throw a solemn fit when they hear this, but we ordinary Filipinos do have many things in common with Jose Rizal.”

Whether this was tongue-in-cheek understatement on the one hand, or hyperbole on the other, is difficult to tell, but it is a prescient, if roundabout way to begin this essay. Brillantes, who accidentally meets exiled Sister Mary John Mananzan (and becomes his informal tour guide to Madrid), traces Jose Rizal’s footsteps a hundred and one years earlier. Agreeing to explore the possible rooming houses or apartments where Rizal had stayed, they come upon No. 15 Baño, where, before knocking, Brillantes asks Sister Mary John, “Suppose, somebody looking like Rizal, his reincarnated self or his great grandson maybe, came down those stairs now, wouldn’t that make for a nice Ray Bradbury kind of story?” (Brillantes 2004, 70).

He is, of course, met by the good Sister’s expected frown. Rizal, indeed, since he was executed in Bagumbayan Field on that warm fateful December morning of 1896, would loom large in the Filipino imaginary like no other person ever has.

On that day, Jose Rizal became a myth. Dead, he became spectral. Revenant, he turned phantasmal.

## THE FANTASTIC, THE MARVELOUS, AND THE UNCANNY

Strewn helter-skelter onto seven thousand places on the western edge of the Pacific, the Philippines invites landscapes and texts of the other-worldly. Perhaps this has something to do with its volcanic origin—smoky, crag-encrusted, elementally mysterious. Then too its convoluted history may account for imagining *not* what was then and now, but soon and perhaps, or the very pregnancy of possibility. Perhaps reality is much too fraught, or even worked up in these islands, and escape, therefore, offering a ripeness to the mind—a ripeness of imagined other places, of lush, fecund other spaces. Who would refuse, after almost a year of terror and uncertainty, say, in the high seas, being offered wine, food, and come nightfall four naked female musicians regaling you, as Magellan and his crew were in Cebu in 1521?

1 “The Son of Rizal” first appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, 6, 1 (Winter 1932): 1-9, accessible from JSTOR. My copy, however, was taken from Alberto Manguel’s anthology *Father & Sons*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997.



As early as 1610, Tomás Pinpin imagined another world, where Tagalogs could speak Castilian so that they would at least *survive* in the now Spanish-dominated world. So in his *Librong pagaaralan nang manga Tagalog nang uicang Castila*, Pinpin outlines his curious pedagogy mixing religious chant and children's rhyme so that his fellow Tagalogs could not only mimic Spanish clothing, or of their bearing arms, but also when spoken to in that language, they would not "merely gape like fools" (Woods 2011, 89).<sup>2</sup> It comes as no surprise then that Francisco Baltazar would set *Florante at Laura* in faraway Albania, or that the *awit* or *corrido* would mix up time, place, and custom in a higgledy-piggledy world of make-believe. Life, and literature in these landscapes, is sheer illusion—a magnificent *moro-moro*.

Or are they? At around Rizal's time, folklore as a scholarly discipline also began. This was part of the wider Euro-American project in the scientific production of knowledge, which was, in many ways, a masterly self-defense on behalf of colony and empire. Colonials had to be measured, mapped, and mastered over in one way or another, in order to rationalize their own increasingly questionable imperial practices. On the Philippine side, which had been Hispanized longer than anyone cared to remember, the project of cultural "recovery" or of retrieving the lost nation, this Project Eden, was felt no more keenly as by the local scholars, Rizal himself included.

This was the whole point of his professional and personal relationship with Ferdinand Blumentritt, who, after all, had encouraged him to study the local folkways, among other things, in the cause of digging for *what once was*. No other scholar, however, was more passionate in this project than the Ilocano folklorist Isabelo de los Reyes (1864–1938), who was convinced that local superstitions were, in part, insidious friar introductions. Writing a long piece called "The Devils in the Philippines, As Stated in Our Chronicles" (Thomas 2012, 114), de los Reyes prefaces his diabolical treatise in what might as well be our first written "speculative fiction."

The plot is eerie, uncanny. Two men meet at a friend's funeral wake and look for a book at the dead man's library. When one of them becomes uncomfortable, saying that the dead man's ghost might be watching them, the other man accuses him of being willfully superstitious. A debate ensues. Do ghosts exist in the Philippines? Yes, no. They find evidence from the books in the man's library. To develop the exposition, de los Reyes juxtaposes varied chronicles from the Spanish friars, what they found out, with what they had as local counterparts. This "intertextuality"

2. Pinpin's inimitable phrasing is "*totongong tongog na sa hahangal.*" See Vicente Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (1988), 58.





instead produces a panoply of mythological creatures, indigenous and Hispanic, that would eventually become part of the Filipino underworld. Sitting side by side with *pugots* were *cafres*, *asuangs* with *brujas*, *mangkukulams* with *hechiceras*, *pusos* with *duendes*—or in effect, a richer, wider world for imaginative pickings to, name it, strike fear or terror, cast a spell, or provide moral or spiritual instruction, or malaise, as the case may be.

Eclecticism, pastiche, hybridity—all these characterize our culture, which is just as well, for therein lies the secret store of our text and story. In reviewing Miguel Bernad's 1968 collection of essays on our literature, *History Against the Landscape*, Leonard Casper summons up the idea of the "mindscape" of the Philippine imagination, that "can be expanded, if we admit that perception always provides simultaneous planes of reality, so that time appears as extended space rather than as motion" (Casper 1983, 87). If we have access to "visionary projections," it is because we do not dematerialize our stories, but rather we transubstantiate them, or so Casper says when he analyzes the magical tales of Nick Joaquin and Gilda-Cordero Fernando. Joaquin's fiction, therefore,

best illustrates how fiction as mindscape presents the largest possible view, a timeless but not quite eternal view, a preternatural but not quite supernatural view—an overview that is, therefore, cautious and conscientious, at once bold and humble. It only seems to seem; and ultimately, it does only seem. Fiction is speculative, because man, in transit, is experimental. (Casper 1989, 90)

When Casper moves on to Cordero-Fernando's collection *A Wilderness of Sweets* (1973), tales of inchoate yearning even after completion, he posits that, "rarely do we admit the possibility (probability?) that what is considered substantial is only ephemeral, partial, preliminary, peripheral"—that brings us directly to the nature of Philippine speculative fiction. Defining what speculative fiction is, however, quite tricky since no one is in agreement what it entails precisely. For the purposes of this essay, we can provisionally employ Nikki Alfar's proposal in the Preface to 2013's *The Best of Philippine Speculative Fiction, 2005–2010*:

In essence, speculative fiction is a type of story that deals with observations of the human condition, but offers the experience through a different lens. Sometimes, it is through a crystal ball, glowing with eldritch glamour. Sometimes, it is through a





cascade of information, riding tachyons in the cold void of space. Sometimes, it is via half-gibbered mutterings, from a man dying of horrific causes in a house of shadows. (2013, xii)

Alfar's "different lens" (or lenses) makes us review here Tzvetan Todorov's idea in *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970/1975), where he classifies "the fantastic" as standing between two other states, the uncanny and the marvelous. The uncanny obtains when one experiences what is both at once strange and familiar, while the marvelous, in contrast, is what we experience in traditional fantasy. Todorov argues that the uncanny is characterized by a character's response, often fear, when faced with the inexplicable, or the impossible. The marvelous does not require such a response from a character, only that the fantastic event arises.

This brings Todorov to describe the fantastic as a moment of hesitation between belief and disbelief of the supernatural, which makes it as a literary form quite slippery and fragile, easily swinging from one side to another. In effect, what Todorov is saying is that the uncanny is the supernatural explained, the marvelous accepted for what it is as supernatural, and the fantastic nearly reaching "the point of believing." When he writes that "Total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life" (1975, 31), Todorov is qualifying that fragility and specificity are the primary markers of the fantastic.

Where does speculative fiction stand in all this? Can we consider all works that depart from the realistic mode, including science fiction, to fall under the rubric of speculative fiction? The jury is still out in this regard, and as we can see from the critical scholarship both here and elsewhere, the question of definition and classification remains unresolved. Much of the criticism, however, still focuses on the usual generic parameters: info-dumping, unclear language, shop-worn scientific novelty, and the like. In the last two decades, things have begun to change, and speculative fiction criticism has now responded to the currents initially impelled by realist literature. Thus, we are now beginning to see different approaches applied to speculative fiction, including postcolonial theory, feminism, and cultural studies.

Because speculative fiction as we know it is a relatively recent addition to our literature, it is time to consider its merits in our literary system. It is not merely marginal nor paraliterary. Judging from how the sales of local SF anthologies have skyrocketed in the last ten years or so, speculative fiction has assumed a certain pride of place. Writers, readers, and publishers know this, and yet, informed criticism has lagged behind. Speculative fiction can position itself as an equally valid approach





to understanding *much* of the rest our literature. It is for this reason that this essay begins to look at the Jose Rizal trope in some recent works.

To answer Brillantes's atmospheric question to Sister Mary John, we propose a cultural studies reading of five speculative stories that have deployed Jose Rizal. What more appropriate answer can there be to Brillantes, often considered by some as "the father of modern Philippine science fiction" himself for his signature "Apollo Centennial" (1972)?<sup>3</sup> The stories we gather here, all trenchantly illustrative of speculation, are: (1) "The Pepe Report" (2005) by Ian Rosales Casocot; (2) "The Turtle Season" (2006) by Timothy Montes; (3) "The Field" (2000) by Adel Gabot; (4) "Rizal" (2013) by Eliza Victoria; and (5) "Totems" (2016) by Catherine Torres.

In this paper, we will be advisedly using the term *Speculative Fiction/speculative fiction*, but will employ *Science Fiction/science fiction* (sometimes SF or sf) or *Future Fiction/future fiction* alternatively when other works are cited because they have done so. This will be explained further in the next section.

### SOME CRITICAL VIEWS

While Alfar's description above may work for the stories analyzed here, it still doesn't define what speculative fiction is in the first place. As Anna Felicia Sanchez puts it, Alfar's qualification may sound wonderful, but it remains "very vague" and "problematic" (2013, 39). We therefore bring in the directness of Orson Scott Card's formulation. A science fictionist and scholar himself, Card proposes in *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy* that "Speculative fiction includes all stories that take place in a setting contrary to known reality (1990, 17)." Card then lists five general story types that are subsumed under this definition. These are: (1) All stories set in the future, because the future can't be known; (2) All stories set in the historical past that contradict known facts of history; (3) All stories set on other worlds, because we've never gone there; (4) All stories supposedly set on Earth, but before recorded history and contradicting the known archaeological record, and (5) All stories that contradict some known or supposed law of nature (1990, 17-18). It appears then that in Card's formulation, speculative fiction is a broader term, encompassing SF and fantasy.

Much-respected SF writer and theorist Samuel Delaney (1984) argues that a distinctive feature of SF texts is the capacity for readers to invent new worlds and laws pertinent to the text at hand in a much freer way, and not based on any previous

---

3 Because the history of Philippine science fiction remains understudied, several proposals have been made as to who should be considered its "father." An interesting argument has been made by Miguel Paolo P. Reyes in "El Filibusterismo and Jose Rizal as 'Science Fictionist'" (2013).



SF text (1984, 50). Readers, however, come to SF with particular expectations using conventional operations of its elements and how they work together, such as the novum, or the novelty item usually of technological or scientific salience, and the mega-text. The mega-text is a kind of code which forms “the huge body of established moves or reading protocols” (*SFE: The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*) that establish the nature of the genre, and are normally acquired by readers after long immersion. It operates as a “shared subcultural thesaurus” (Csicsery-Ronay 1992, \_\_\_), and embedded in interpenetrating ways of new words, syntax and tropes. The latter is what Damien Broderick (1995) calls the “contorting habits of grammar and lexicon with unexpected words strung together in strange ways (1995, 15).”

In discussing the Jose Rizal trope as emerging megatext for the stories here, it is helpful to review the criticism generated thus far by Filipino scholars. In envisioning a new or revitalized Philippine science fiction, Baryon Tensor Posadas (2001) laments how many Filipino writers have continuously drawn upon Anglo-American science fiction sources, thereby missing out on the development of an indigenous body of mega-texts. “The resulting science fiction we produce,” Posadas writes, “becomes merely a form of mimicry (2001, 25), where “the wholesale appropriation of American science tropes is apparent (Posadas 26).” However, merely placing token Filipiniana items, such as names, places or significant events, does not address the hollow imitation; one must, in Posadas’ view: cultivate a Filipino consciousness by allowing writers “to form our own science fiction mega-text drawn from our own estranged experience (2001, 29).” He affirms this with a telling insight:

the solution to widening the horizons of Philippine literature through innovative genres and approaches is not to attack the alienation of potential new writers, but to let them explore this alienation and find that alien in our already science-fictional society. (2001, 30)

Emil M. Flores (2014) has proposed that many Filipino writers of the speculative mode today have begun to explore the tropes and themes that Posadas had seen lacking from a decade earlier. Issues such as class, gender, and nation, the tensions of which are rooted in the visible disparities that obtain in Filipino society, have become involving to young Filipino speculative writers. Visions of the future, whether utopian or dystopic, are projections of our aspirations as a people and nation, but are ultimately rooted in past anxieties. That these writers are more conscious of forging historical themes or events into their stories may be attributed to the idea







that the search for identity “is probably why the past is so important to the writers of futuristic SF” (2008, 21).” As Anna Felicia Sanchez has summarized, it may be through “the intermingling of the past, mythic, geographical, and historical with present and future concerns” (2013, 45) that offers the direction and potential of speculative writing in the Philippines.

Despite this new consciousness of looking at particular Filipino social issues, many problems remain. Some problems lie in the representation; some appear as unwarranted ideological positions, but then again, some are plain craft issues, too, as Posadas has cited in many instances. Sanchez believes that the failure to harness the transgressive potential that inheres in speculative writing is a concerning development (2013, 46) that must be addressed. She cites the examples of Vincent Michael Simbulan’s “What You See in Not What You Get” and Joshua So’s “Feasting.” In the Simbulan story, she explains that “by transferring the soul of the homosexual man into the body of a woman,” the plot maintains a questionable heteronormative position, instead of challenging it. In the So story, the representation of the mother as lacking agency, perpetuates “female dichotomy” because the woman is either “weak or demonic,” and therefore misses out on the story’s transgressive potential.

In a master’s thesis submitted to Cardiff University, Carlos M. Piosos III (2011) has proposed that Filipino future fiction, using an alternative term for SF, projects utopian visions for a country continually beset by socioeconomic underdevelopment.<sup>4</sup> Foregrounding his analysis of the winning short fiction of the Palanca Awards from 2000 to 2006 (discontinued from 2007) on Rizal’s prophetic vision in the famous “*Filipinas dentro a cien años*” (“The Philippines: A Century Hence”) essay, Piosos argues that these writers seem to extend the possible vision of a future Philippines wrought from anticolonial struggles and the very possibility of an independent nation. Rizal’s future nation was not along the lines of Thomas More’s impossible and idealized society, but of Utopia as “a concrete political imagination of the nation in the future (2011, 3).” For a nation deprived of the Western modernist project of technological and scientific advancement, a future Philippines inscribed in these writings would impart Carolyn Hau’s (2004) “unfinishability of the nation” (2005, 145) that haunts and continues to haunt the Filipino writer today.

Future, specific, or Filipino SF writing therefore is characterized by spectral expressions, haunted by the ghosts of the nation’s past and its insistent reappearance in the present to influence the future. This Utopian impulse of imagining a “better” Philippines instead of its horrendous past *and* present reflects a desire to create an

4 The Palanca Awards used the term “Future Fiction” for the new category of science or speculative fiction, which ran from 2000 to 2006, and was discontinued thereafter.







alternative world “far from the limits of our present imagination” (Piocos 2011, 8). This could lead to the political project of Utopia through, in Ian Buchanan’s words, “a cognitive procedure [that determines] what it is about our present world that must be changed to release us from its many known and unknown unfreedoms” (1998, 118).

If the figure of Jose Rizal is employed by the selected writers here, it is because he remains a relevant possibility in a futuristic world in his position of “the hero’s return,” Joseph Campbell’s mythic archetype, or the Monomyth in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This concept was initially proposed by NVM Gonzales (1961/1965), analyzing what he calls “the poetic myth in our literature” (1965, 157). In that article, he adumbrates Rizal’s life with *Noli Me Tangere* and *Ibong Adarna* in the hero’s “separation—initiation—return” complex, borrowing Campbell’s formulation. Rizal’s life and works lend such a potency that he has become a “constant Filipino theme” (1961, 24).

## RIZAL AS MYTH

Jose Garcia Villa’s story “The Son of Rizal,” while far from being speculative, is a fine example of how this potency works. The story tells of how the narrator, on a business trip to Lucena, meets a nondescript person at the train station. It is the 30th of December. The stranger and the narrator have just come from the Luneta for the festivities earlier that day. The stranger will drop off at Calamba, where he lives. He introduces himself as Juan Rizal, the son of the hero. The narrator plays along, but must ask a few questions given the curious circumstances. He remarks offhandedly that he didn’t look like Jose Rizal at all, but the stranger, obviously offended, recovers in time to say that he didn’t take after him, but his mother, “Josefina Bracken.” Obviously now distraught after all the polite inquisition from the narrator, he tapers off to a silence. They have reached Calamba, and Juan Rizal must now get off.

Several months later, the narrator must make another business trip, this time to Calamba. So he calls on an old business friend who happens to reside nearby. This friend fills in the details for Juan Rizal. The narrator learns that “Juan Rizal” is Juan Kola in real life, and is a struggling shoemaker. Children also call him Juan Sirá behind his back. What happened was, as a boy, he was abused physically by his own father, and so when he died suddenly, Juan’s joy was boundless. But being fatherless now, he had to create a new father figure, and picked Jose Rizal conveniently. Both are Calambeños, after all. His delusion is so intense that Juan Kola builds his life around this myth, much to the consternation of his neighbors. However, they have





learned to play along as well. Toward the end of the story, the narrator's business friend relates:

Rizal was born here, you know, and that makes him closer to us than you who live elsewhere. Rizal to us is a reality, a magnificent, potent reality, but to you he is only a myth, a golden legend. He is to you a star, faraway, bright, unreachable. (1997, 97)

What Villa offers then here is a reading of how Jose Rizal, who led a life so noble and ideal, so detached from the everyday reality of the common man, could easily emerge as a folk hero, indeed a myth, precisely because he personified whom we are *not*, and could *not* become.

Certainly, "The Son of Rizal" had precedents even during Rizal's time, or immediately thereafter. For example, Alfonso P. Santos, who taught at the University of the Philippines' English department from 1946, collected what he called "Rizal Miracle Tales" (1973). In this slim volume of fifty miracle tales, Santos *writes* what had been previously oral lore surrounding Rizal and his life, all incredibly told by "people who had known him personally in life" (1973, vii). In other words, the stories were elicited from live informants in and around the Calamba area and other places associated with the hero, such as Dapitan or Malolos. These were people, Santos says, "whose imagination had been captured and inspired by the telling and retelling of his great deeds." In this collection, we read such tales as "The Healing Look," "Rizal's Magic Cigarettes," "Rizal in Two Places," "The Miracle Lechon," and "The Enchanted Batya." Santos adds, "Not a god or an angel did they hold him, but they looked at him as a hero and more-than-a-hero, a superman maybe."

Whence arise these tales of wonder and awe? In "The Enchanted Batya," which recounts how some neighbors, in a race towards the top of Mt. Makiling, Rizal reaches there first despite his having come late. He had taken an enchanted batya! Likewise, on returning, the group took leave earlier. Rizal had asked to stay behind awhile. The tale then recounts what happens toward the end:

When the afternoon was cooler and they were able to see Calamba in the distance, they saw a batya floating in the sky and they recognized in it Rizal waving to them. In a few minutes, he was far ahead of them, then he started descending slowly until he was hidden by the tall trees on his way down. (1973, 42)





Rizal in a “spaceship”? At that time? Such tales of wonder on Jose Rizal are equally mirrored in folklore appropriating spiritual themes, those cultivating the myth of Rizal as redeemer, or the New Christ.<sup>5</sup> This is, of course, extends “the hero’s return” theme as has been argued by Resil Mojares in “The Myth of the Sleeping Hero: Three Philippine Cases” (1974, 156) and by Gerald Burns in “The Repatriate Theme in Philippine Second Language Fiction” (1992, 5-7). Likewise, Michael Manuel Gonzales says that, because Rizal himself “cultivated the metaphor of sacrifice” (1980, 64), thereby creating a Christ-like aura, the theme of redemption would only be a natural extension among those who revere him. Gonzales has mapped out what he calls “a motific index” of the myths surrounding the Christian redemptive casting of Rizal. This includes his mysterious death, his travels abroad, the return to the native land (and as consequence, is hounded by his enemies), his “non-death” at the Luneta, and a continuing “life” meant to redeem Filipinos of today. This, again, mirrors the “initiation-separation-return” complex that NVM Gonzales touched upon earlier.

## THE STORIES

While Rizal is treated variously in the SF stories here, they share the common feature of projecting an identifiable “nation» of the future or some other ahistorical time. This contrasts with much Western-oriented SF where the notion of a ‘nation’ is no longer conceived as proposed, for example, by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. In “Dis-Imagined Communities: Science Fiction and the Future of Nations” (2002), Ronay remarks that “the concept of nation, with its implication of some historical homogeneity through time, has been made obsolete by the dramatic heterogeneity of human, primarily urban society” (2002, 225). Instead the future SF “nation” is overcome by multinational conglomerates, an amorphous terrain of online realms, and urban sprawls, all of which effectively erase the nation-state as a viable body.

However, in the Rizal trope that underlies these stories, the imaginative Filipino nation remains very much alive, albeit with varying degrees of dissimulation, disrepair, or displacement. All are sourced from an overall feeling of alienation in that future nation as well as among the characters who populate that nation, as we will see.

In “Turtle Season” by Timothy Montes, Jose Rizal is a mere backdrop to this story, but a critical one in understanding how Capt. Raul Daza’s anxiety (resulting

---

5 Marcelino Foronda’s *Cults Honoring Rizal* (1961) offers an extensive treatment of the “doctrinal texts” of various Rizalista groups, all of whom revolve around the belief of Rizal as the New Christ. Related commentary in Filipino can be found in Renato Constantino’s *Bulag na Pagkadakila* (1987) and Nilo Ocampo’s *Kristong Pilipino: Pananampalataya Kay Jose Rizal* (2011).





from his being unable to perform sexually) coheres into an insightful plot. The story is set in a southern island of tropical lushness, and therefore, a tourist draw but must, because of the continuing insurgency two hundred years into the future, remain to be tightened and secured. This is precisely the captain's remit while on assignment to Gaia, the future allegorical Philippines. Among the rebels of this island whom the military must flush out are cultists, one whose beliefs are not clearly spelled out, but hints of their clinging to old-fashioned pre-Gaia ways. One of these is the slavish veneration to history, or a version of such, which among the Gaians, is anathema. In the beginning of the story, the captain views an ancient film captured from the cultists:

Horses galloping across the screen; the violins swelling to a melodramatic coda; a man wielding a bolo shouting at the top of his lungs; a crazy woman with a full head of thick, unkempt hair staring operatically at the camera; three black-frocked priests being garroted; a man, in slow-mo, arching his back while behind him a cloud of smoke spreads from the muskets of a firing squad; and then a black hat lying on the ground. (Montes 2001, \_\_\_)

Immediately, the banned film, a "pornography from the past," recalls four signature icons of Philippine history: Andres Bonifacio (the bolo wielder), Sisa (Rizal's fictional madwoman from *Noli Me Tangere*), Jose Rizal himself at the point of death (specifically his arching his body after the bullets have hit him to face the executioners, and his well-known flying derby), and the three martyrs of Cavite (Fathers Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora). However, Capt. Daza considers the film innocuous, and even a bore, especially because on that day, something else has begun to bother his mind. He has discovered that his wife of long-standing, Daisy, has been unfaithful and is carrying on an affair with a much younger man.

Undecided as to what to do with the film ("Burn it?" an assistant says), Daza keeps his options open by entertaining the thought that he must first talk to the rebels before deciding on any course of action. This doesn't actually happen, or is not told, but in the middle of the story, Capt. Daza's curiosity is piqued. He must find out more about the banned film, especially of the main actor, Hosea Rysal, from Criminal Intelligence, to which office he proceeds and digs for more information in the computer terminal where "flashed a Malayan face with a thin mustache . . . Age of Political Superstition. National Hero of Archipelago III. Died a martyr for nationalism". (Montes 2001, \_\_\_)





These scenes foreground the story as it develops to a climax where Capt. Daza confronts his wife over an impending divorce. But before it proceeds there, he meets up with an old classmate, now professor of psychiatry Dr. Erwin Hernandez. The professor, vacationing in Daza's island, Mundano, gives his frank views on the problems that beset Gaia, including the "insurgency" of the cultists. As Daza is tasked to censor or delete questionable historical records, the professor's remark catches him by surprise: "That's another problem with the Reign of the Ahistorians. Anything ancient is relegated to mumbo-jumbo." (2000, \_\_\_\_). This, of course, accuses Daza (and what he represents) of not believing history, giving credence only to an objective and scientific future.

The irony of all this is the fact that Capt. Daza cannot do anything more than his resources will allow, not now, not in the future, and that the political problems of Gaia will remain, even as he confronts his own personal problems with Daisy, his impotence, and their divorce, all of which lie futile and intractable. His "final solution"? He asks Daisy at the end of the story,

"Please, Daisy, suck my cock like you used to do?"

The montage began to play again, the pornography from the past merging with the figures on the bed, the violins and the horse and the crazy woman and the bolo and a hero falling to his death.

Adel Gabot's "The Field," on the other hand, revisits the hero's execution in an eerie way. In a school experiment gone terribly wrong, Paolo must deal with a live, although dying, flesh-and-blood Jose Rizal that materializes out of his fiber optic sensor ball which could peer into the past, and act out particular episodes in history as "live" dioramas. The execution occurred two hundred fifty years before. With the blood-spattered hero in his midst, his first instinct is to help, to lay the dying man softly on the ground. He wipes the blood from his body and clothes, and dusts off the hat that has flown a short distance. The technical error is sourced from a third sensor ball, which should not have been there, since only two were needed to project an episode.

The story recounts nearly faithfully the events of that morning, including the priest's final abluion, the conversation between Lt. de Andrade, Rizal's lawyer, and the chief executioner, the firing of the shots, and finally of Rizal, who "facing history, turned his back on death . . . and faced the ocean." The curious Paolo wants to find out if Rizal was supposed to be shot in the back and then turn around as a sign of valor, as all books write, or if this was some "*nacionalista* fiction dreamt up by his compatriots to make his martyrdom a little more dramatic." Indeed, Paolo gets the



most dramatic turn in his own life that when the hero falls on his back, Rizal staring at him directly, muttering, “What is this? It hurts. Ah, the pain, the pain.” (\_\_\_\_\_) Paolo strokes Rizal’s “mussed, pomaded hair, shushing him, trying not to cry at the same time.” (\_\_\_\_\_) Paolo looks at his own bloody hands, the shock registering instantly. Finally, he says to Rizal, “God go with you,” after fixing the hero’s “coat and lapels as best as he could.”

Meanwhile, Catherine Torres’s “Totems” is an OFW story set in Singapore. The narrator, an amateur filmmaker, is named JR, after Jose Rizal, whom he meets one day (a ghost? an alien? a double? We are not sure) in the city’s riverfront where a plaque of him is commemorated. The story centers on JR’s father’s body, having been shipped home, and to JR’s horror and shame, discovers a sex videotape of his father who was an OFW himself. His father is also named Jose Rizal, that is why, he is also named JR. Inspired by the discovery in the video showing his father’s penis incised with ball bearings, JR rewrites his film thesis proposal from the original *Mga Bagong Bayani: Unsung Heroes at Sea* to *Bolitas: The Hidden Life of Filipino Seafarers*. The project, while winning a minor school award, not only alienates him from his family (his mother never forgives him), but also from himself who, as a lonely and sexually-unfulfilled expatriate, must come to terms with his own sexuality.

JR appears to hold a repressed homoerotic desire for his roommate, another Filipino OFW, with whom he makes a deal so that each time his roommate brings a female partner for sex, he goes out for a while, and that the roommate must bring in a fresh bedsheet. At the end of the story, his repression gets the better of him; he digs his face in the used sheet, “breathing in deeply to plunder its store of smells.” (\_\_\_\_\_) He then masturbates, and after coming, rolls off the bed looking for his totem, a special one-peso coin showing Jose Rizal’s image. The totem is, of course, his own pole, his penis.

It is a closed, self-cloned society of homosocial men<sup>6</sup> (there are no women) in Ian Rosales Casocot’s “The Pepe Report.” The center of the story is Dr. Domingo Lamco, once nicknamed Pepe, now the chief historical scientist who has been commissioned by the Parliament of Elders to find out once and for all if the national hero Jose Rizal from the Old Period of Chaos a few centuries earlier, was homosexual.<sup>7</sup> To do this,

6 In sociology, ‘homosociality’ refers to same-sex relationships outside of a romantic or sexual motive, such as in male friendships, or in our concept of *barkada*, for example. A cogent literary treatment is found in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985).

7 Back on historically-grounded earth, J. Neil Garcia (“Was Rizal Gay?” 1997) disagrees with Isagani Cruz (“Bakla Ba Si Rizal?” 1996) on the speculative question. Both articles are readily accessible from the Web. Ambeth Ocampo in *Rizal Without the Overcoat* plays coy or is noncommittal.



junior scientists had gotten hold of Rizal's hair, and cloned or reproduced his likeness through genetic metonymy.

This is a society that takes pride in their manhood, and the Rizal project is envisioned "to re-body the ultimate paragon of our malehood" and will be their "crowning glory." (2005, \_\_\_) Women, on the other hand, have been willfully and totally decimated because they are "mythological creatures" and were once called "sisters, wives, mothers." On the day of reckoning, a fearful Dr. Lamco must deliver his final report to the Elders at the Hall of Man. Although his laboratory analysis shows that Rizal was not definitely homosexual, the audience cannot contain their shock and surprise: the hero turns out to be an anatomical woman, with "two mounds" for breasts and "a delta" of pubic hair beneath it.

The final story, Eliza Victoria's "Rizal" is not so much about the hero or his life, but of the recently-minted superlocality of Rizal, which might as well be the future Philippine city, if not the nation itself. The chief protagonist, Ilyena Romero Santos, a BA History major, all of nineteen, is a visitor to this megalopolis, a physical remnant of the destruction of Manila and Quezon cities from the Great Quake that destroyed 70 percent of the original metropolis. That city after the quake was pure dystopia: people copulated in the streets like dogs, the rate of suicide was alarmingly high, residents ran amok without provocation, women and children were eviscerated and raped right before everyone's eyes, sexbots worked the streets smelling of spunk. That makes Ilyena, the story's narrator, start with the line, "Let me tell you about madness."

Madness is also juxtaposed in Ilyena's search for her own mother, Lakampati, the old Tagalog goddess of the harvest, whose future avatar appears to be Sophie. Lakampati/Sophie has figured in an air-car traffic accident, and found nearly dead or dying. It is Ilyena's task to look for this air-car through the help of the nearly-human android Zee, a young police guide, with whom she cultivates an undefined sexual attraction (but doesn't quite pull through in the end). In her time, Lakampati was a hardline activist, fighting against a host of social ills that included the proliferation of drugs, corporate rule which had dominated the old landscape (especially of the pharmaceuticals who had no qualms producing illicit drugs), and eco-terrorists, who willfully multiplied the city's pollution in the water, land, and air. Lakampati also spawned a cult-like following who believed in her cause, but after the quake, dissipated like it never existed but are found now only as electronic historical records to which Ilyena and Zee have access.

In their search for her missing mother, an air-car drops precipitously from nowhere, producing a deafening explosion that jolts both of them. Ilyena's hunch is that her mother is in the car, alive, but that when the supervising police officer







inspects her city pass for meddling in the scene, she is found out to be an “overstaying alien.” The traffic accident victim is quickly whisked away and put in an ambulance, but for a single moment, Ilyena has unmistakably identified the woman there to be her own mother, Lakampati. Ilyena manages a few words to her, “Hello? I need to talk to you,” but she speeds away just as quickly. Ilyena must now race after her in her own hover cycle, but in the ensuing time, the city, as if by an extraordinary phenomenon, begins to shut down. There has been a powerful detonation. Ilyena comes to the old LRT North Avenue station, now derelict, where a bronze plaque reads: FROM THE RUINS SHALL RISE RIZAL.

At that moment, the youngish woman in the other car (Sophie) points a gun at Ilyena, whom she has accused of stalking her. At that instant, however, the Captain materializes and bids Sophie to put it down. It seems they have known each other for some time. Ilyena, momentarily confused about the whole scene, passes out and finds herself in a hospital room. When she comes to, Sophie has come visiting, together with Zee and the Captain. They sort things out, although it seems it has been a case of mistaken identity. The bomb had been the Captain and Sophie’s task, flushing out the drug laboratory that had begun to destroy Rizal anew. In her dream, however, she knew that she would meet her mother one day, one who died as a drug addict trying to find a cure for her disease. At the end of the story, Ilyena, finding a graffiti marked “LAKAMPATI” on a city wall, picks up a can of paint spray herself and adds, “L.I.V.E.S.”

## THE ALIENATED SUBJECT

Looming large as a mythic and prophetic hero of the Philippine speculative imagination, Jose Rizal has been appropriated in the stories to ground historical “reality” or consciousness as they project visions of the country’s imaginable, but *uncertain* near-future. The subjects—Captain Daza, Ilyena Romero Santos, Dr. Lamco, JR, and Paolo—are torn by the forces of a gendered and capitalist economy at a time of rapid social change; they are caught in the vortex of a society that expects them to behave in traditional ways as men or women, normatively, that is, yet find themselves lured into possible alternatives that other worlds may offer.

Trapped into traditional Filipino values, say of *pagkatalaki* or hypermasculinity in the case of Capt. Daza with his problem of impotence, or of Dr. Lamco’s fear of being outed (he is, after all, Rizal’s double, and whose sexuality has been questioned), both male subjects exhibit a neurotic anxiety because their performance as gendered beings is being held suspect. In the case of JR, his immigration to Singapore lends his loneliness an eerie quality, especially because he must repress his sexuality, and therefore express it only through sublimation; he refuses to accept that he might





be sexually drawn to his attractive, personable roommate. His predilection for the sexually unusual, such as his morbid fascination for his father's penile *bolitas*, or getting a thrill through smelling the after-sex scents of his friend's bedsheet, is transformed as artistic flair in the pornographic film he produces for a class project.

JR cultivates no friends abroad and feels estranged from the expatriate experience. Meeting a witty Filipina who is incredulous about his being named JR after the national hero, she retorts, after introducing herself as Silka or SK, that that meant *Silahis ng Kalayaan*, a double entendre for "Rays of Freedom" and "Bisexual Liberty." Indeed, JR's only friend in Singapore is the specter of Jose Rizal whom he meets once or twice in an exchange of masculine confidences. Rizal asks for leads on sexy local girls, but JR confesses, "I'm not the best person to ask in that department." Several bystanders nearby, curious about this exchange (Rizal as a ghost is invisible to them), follow him through suspicious eyes until he gives them the dirty finger.

In the case of the teenaged Paolo, whose quest for an extraordinary school research project on the national hero turns awry, sexual subjecthood appears ambiguous or neutral at the outset. But looking closely, we get an intimation of his masculinity—getting ahead of everyone whatever the cost, tinkering with the latest machinery or advances in science, cultivating a close homosocial relationship with his sidekick Bannor as manifestation of *kabarkadahan* (hypermasculine camaraderie)—all is betrayed by the tenderness he shows for the dying Rizal. He cries, which is a departure from the traditional cultural script of young manhood. He musses the hero's undone hair, arranges his lapel, wipes the dirt off his flown hat. This is unusual tenderness, especially coming from a teenaged boy of his class and background.

The impotent Capt. Daza, on the other hand, betrayed by his wife, his best friend, the cultists or rebels, and the whole community around him (including the turtles that have come very late for the mating and egg-laying season), must get on sexually again by asking his estranged wife Daisy to suck him once more. This is all for naught, however. Could it be that after all these years (he is fifty), having born no offspring, that he has repressed his homosexual longings all along? "You are sick, Raul. You are sick," says Daisy at the end. His only meaningful relation in Mundano is with his young assistant, Lt. Alan Salazar, with whom he deals in silent contempt, but who invades his waking hours just the same for some reason or another. Whether Salazar is merely sucking up to his superior, or willfully acts as slave to a master (being solicitous all the time), Capt. Daza cannot seem to get his eyes off of him. Their relationship, in fact, exhibits all the signs of classical Greek love, or paederasty,





a man-boy love predicated upon unequal power relations precisely because they “feed” on each other.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Ilyena’s object of love is her own missing mother, Lakampati, the old goddess who stands in for fertility, fecundity, and female fulfillment. The maternal attachment between Ilyena and Lakampati is unmistakable. Lakampati, however, is a he/she figure, a godhead that exhibits androgyny. In this sense, she is like the Greek goddess Pomona, who was courted by many fertility gods, yet consented only to the one who appeared in the form of an older woman, or of the Hindu avatar of Shiva and Shakti who appears as Ardhanarisnvara, an “intersex” deity, a synthesis of male and female energies. It might be that manifestations of androgyny among these mythic godheads render them with special sacred powers, as attested in many cultural traditions. Note that in “Rizal” the cultists who formed the rebellious Lakampati group deliberately chose the female identity because only woman could “sustain life with her own body” and men needed external materials to make food and create shelter.

As a female human character, Ilyena has a difficult time expressing her sexuality with her nearly-human android cohorts, with Zee, for instance, although she is attracted to him. Instead, even these cohorts, such as the Captain and Sophie, continually silence her. She is not given her turn to speak, and when she does, she is interrupted or cut short. She, therefore, retreats further into her shell, leaving her alone to deal with her predicament, and seemingly unable to carry out her quest in search for her own mother Lakampati. And because she is a human merely on a temporary pass to Rizal (that turns out to have expired), the androids must boot her out. In effect, the human female becomes an “alien,” an Other, precisely because she is not understood, and with whom little or no conversation is possible.

It is with Dr. Domingo Lamco in “The Pepe Report,” however, that takes sexual anxiety at its tautest (or at its edgiest) in that in living exclusively as men, Gaians must perform the reproductive function alone. Since there are no more women in this “ideal” world or so the story intimates, the perpetuation of the species becomes the mechanical replication of DNA material, or cloning. This implies that Gaians, in having won dominance (over women) once and for all, not only turn inward emotionally and sexually, but that in this curious case of inversion, they have become genderless as well. Or have they?

Since all Gaian relations convert to the homosocial and become narcissistic, the expression of alternative sexualities or genders, in turn, becomes highly suspect. In

<sup>8</sup> A good treatment of paederasty can be found in David Halperin’s *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (1990).





such a case, it comes as no surprise that the project of determining Jose Rizal's "true" sexuality becomes an obsession among the Gaians, but that paradoxically along the way, it pushes Lamco's repressed homosexuality deeper into oblivion. Lamco thus produces in himself a paranoia that makes him masturbate each morning before breakfast readying himself before the world. A disturbing question, however, remains: wasn't Dr. Lamco himself a transgenerational clone of Dr. Jose Rizal, or so the story hints? And if Rizal turns out to be a woman, what makes this of Dr. Lamco?

In Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), an unparalleled science fictional examination of androgyny, Gethenians possess, as ambisexual human beings, the capacity to choose their reproductive sexuality at a given time of the year, the *somer*, when they become fertile, a phase known as the *kemmer*. In kemmer, the Gethenians are always described as "he" or "him" or "his," but that every individual shares the "burden and privilege" of raising their children. In this world, no fixed gender identities are ascribed, there is no sexuality, and by extension, no cases of rape or war because these are putatively masculine or heteronormative endeavors. By way of contrast, the Gaians of "The Pepe Report" flaunt their masculinity, a superordinate sexuality that results not only in the usual Alpha male spectrum (of the pecking order—one apparently based on age and/or wisdom), but intergenerationally as well.

The new generation, as they age, competes with the previous one, bettering themselves in one way or another. This is an interesting fictional proposal. If energies are expended in such a manner, then "passing on" becomes a crucial project among the Gaians. Education, training, or some similar mechanism then becomes a *raison d'être* of their existence, similar to the way that shamans, in many traditions, do not die until they locate someone whom they train and bequeath the torch, so to speak. In fact, this is what exactly happens to Uncle Santi, 165 years old, who, upon tutoring all he could the twelve-year old Domingo, including truths about women as myths or monsters or never existed (creatures of "wile and violation"), dies soon thereafter. It is this childhood recollection that Lamco summons up in his mind, apprehensive over facing the Parliament of Elders in their inquest on Rizal's sexuality.

## ALIENATION IN THE POSTCOLONIAL ORDER

We can now synthesize, in the form of a diagram, the representations of Jose Rizal as an emerging mega-text in the stories (see table 1). It must be noted that all the writers here were born after 1965, or a few years past the Rizal centennial, the majority being what popular discourse describes as belonging to the "millennial" generation, or facetiously, what Philippine media discourses call "martial law babies,"



or if not, just a little bit after. It is a generation who grew up with the Internet and social media, a generation where access to ready information is a given, including that of advances in science and technology. Because of this, it is also a generation where reading speculative literature (or watching and interacting with it, in the case of SF trans-medial configurations, sourced locally or elsewhere), is nearly an implied presumption, judging from the fan-base following of many of these writers. Their representations might be what we would call “Jose Rizal of our time,” borrowing E. San Juan Jr.’s memorable phrase, although in the literary sense, not in the civico-historical consciousness that San Juan envisioned it.

**TABLE 1: SYNTHESIS OF THE SPECULATIVE STORIES**

	THE FIELD	TURTLE SEASON	TOTEMS	RIZAL	PEPE REPORT
<b>CHARACTER CONFLICT</b>	dematerialize dying hero and put back in original state	suppress Rizal ‘porn’ as vestige of old ways	seek Rizal’s ghost for counsel in immigrant OFW setting	maternal quest to help & resolve the state’s dystopia	reveal or repress damning lab findings on Rizal’s sex
<b>THEMATIC OBJECT</b>	express respect toward dying hero	deal with impotence & divorce amid repressed sexuality	seek acceptance in disreputable film project & express sexuality freely	determine personal past & future through maternal and feminine bonding	deal with ‘woman’ in Rizal and express one’s own true sexuality
<b>SF NOVUM</b>	optic sensor balls reify historic events	archival film remains extant 200 years hence	Rizal ‘teleports’ to the future or is bilocated	intergalactic configuration in human & android mix	all-man society & reproduce via cloning
<b>USE OF RIZAL TROPE</b>	as revered historical figure	false hero worship as idolatry/ superstition	Rizal is fashioned or appropriated as one wishes	Rizal as space once- dystopic but can be turned around	Rizal as mystery/ his gender may not matter after all
<b>MYTHIC ARCHETYPE OF RIZAL AS HERO</b>	true mythic hero	the shadow	the trickster or mentor	shapeshifter (i.e. bet. ally & enemy) as spatial entity	the shadow
<b>POSITION ADVANCED OF HERO</b>	genuine heroism to be acknowledged	hero worship must be qualified	heroes have self-protective function to worshipper	heroism is a function of historical continuity	heroes are defined by people’s expectations or aspirations



Just the same, the table illustrates that the appropriation of Rizal in these speculative-fictional stories does not differ much in configuration from Alfredo Santos's collection of "Rizal miracle tales," nor do they depart from the mythic-marvelous aura of Rizal as a returning hero enshrined in popular culture. What differs is the treatment of the texts in that the stories are sprung from an *informed* ideological position, not merely extending Rizalian hagiography anymore, or of his life's wonders and marvels, but wresting away the social inequities engendered by colonialism, social class, age, or gender disparities—in short, the very things that Rizal had fought against in the first place. The speculative medium might be very different, say, from realist fiction, but it proffers an imaginatively more creative way of re-envisioning a national future through some other means precisely because the traditional paradigms have not worked. The nature of the social concerns of the nation have not changed, but have become even more markedly so.

Qualitatively, such estrangement (in the *ostranenie*, or Shklovskian sense) works because it defamiliarizes the text in order to draw attention to it. This renders what would have appeared as merely fleeting or unremarkable productively disturbing. If the time and space dimensions in the stories are disrespected, or social roles inverted or transgressed, then the reader comes to grips with long-held assumptions being challenged, and in their stead, offered other possibilities that may prove insightful in the end. This is what the stories seem to do collectively. Take, for example, the use of the temporal dimension. While much of speculative fiction is a projection of present-day anxieties in the guise of an unknown future, the use of a specific historical time (Rizal and his era), the juxtaposition of events of the recent past or present (martial law, the drug epidemic, natural disasters, the OFW phenomenon, etc.), and then propelling those two hundred years into the future, provide a corrective to dispel SF as a merely fantastic narrative mode. Instead, it uses estrangement as a tool for social, or even political reflection. This is similar to what Darko Suvin proposes as balancing between "the posed and the presupposed," where the estrangement feeds back "into the reader's own presuppositions and cultural invariants, question them and giving him/her a possibility of critical examination (1988, 70)."

Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in the question of how Rizal should be treated in society today. The stories advance a range of views, but they all boil down to a qualified, critical, and informed position needed to make the hero's ideas applicable to today's realities. Whether this is espoused in Capt. Daza's views of Rizal as superstition or "pornography" or in JR's use of him as an amulet (totem) invoked in times of danger or uncertainty, the stories position Rizal as a form of social currency, that is, inherited with value, relevance, and a needed critical revision





or “updating” so that his heroism is not merely spectral or mythical, but relevant and current. This is true equally as well as in the varied mythic archetypes employed in the hero’s journey, considering Rizal in a multidimensional configuration, and not merely as that monolith in the overcoat.

Rizal’s “pornography” is a shadow, for example, rather than one who is simply above reproach, or that in making him laugh in “Totems” (exchanging views on girls with JR) plays a trickster archetypal figure. The hero can be an ally at times, an enemy in others, as in the attribution of Rizal as geographic space, making him a shapeshifter in Victoria’s tale “Rizal.” That Ilyena knew that Rizal was once dystopic, but was now convinced that in the quest for the mother figure, the potential for a turnaround was a real possibility. By doing so, the texts display a full embodiment of Rizal as a mythic hero, a Forsterian round character, so to speak, and not a flat one. That he had particular strengths—and limitations, speaks of how the stories hint that a “revision” of our Rizal story entails not only heroic feats, but also his weaknesses, warts and all, so that he becomes human for us once more.<sup>9</sup>

Estrangement once again allows the stories to elaborate on how the various characters experience forms of alienation in a new world order. Using the colonial past to depict the postcolonial present, the narratives deploy how the nation’s complex history continue to haunt them as they deal with alien surroundings and identities: RJ as a migrant worker in a strange land, Dr. Lamco’s discovery of Rizal as a woman in a male society, Paolo’s epiphanic discovery of a “live” Rizal that turns him solicitous, if not sentimental. In discussing themes of alienation, Michelle Reid’s (2005) conceptualization of postcolonial science fiction may be helpful here. Reid claims that postcolonial SF’s estranging capabilities allows it to debunk the history of the real world and create worlds unburdened by colonial oppression, or where real world power relations are reversed and reexamined.

The colonization of other planets, or the encounter of aliens in other imagined worlds, Reid argues, enables SF to examine identity politics—racial, cultural, national, and gender-related—in a fresh light, and “to examine prejudices and assumptions they (science fiction readers) might be reluctant to face head-on.” (2005, \_\_\_) Thus the five stories, by exploring vexatious or uncomfortable themes of sexual anxiety and gender relations, bring to the fore the individual’s disconnection from the larger society, as “aliens” in their own world. The continuing disempowerment of women, and the unexamined construction of hypermasculinity (that in the end destroy both men *and* women) are clearly put forward for discussion here. The homophobia in “The Pepe Report” or “Totems” is another case in point.

<sup>9</sup> This is, of course, Ambeth Ocampo’s main motivation in writing *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (2008).







While at the outset, the exclusive society of men in Casocot's story appears to rear patriarchy's ugly head anew, in fact, such estrangement argues for the case of women as equal partners in the nation precisely because Rizal as a female hero is equally valid a proposition towards an alternative nationalist discourse. It is merely our own anxieties that show, after all. Meanwhile, unable to perform sexually, Capt. Daza uses his wife to dominate her completely through *mere* cock-sucking, a stand-in for phallic worship and men's subjugation over women—one that he knows is a sham because it is society that compels him to perform hypermasculinely as a man. Even the androids who treat Ilyena and reject her into silence and immobility because she is a human female, recognize the latent power she wields, and that the only option remains, for them at least, her deportation. That the heteronormative standard still obtains even in these “culturally alien” worlds shows that such discourses can be subverted because, by precisely questioning them, we take stock of our own practices and explore other perspectives.

Michel Foucault's proposal of heterotopia, a new “other space,” (and not utopia, which is no real place), a vision of society that allows the presence of constant change and improvisation, a counter-site where all other real sites are “simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (1986, 24), offers an alternative possibility where Victoria's Rizal or Casocot's Gaia may be viewed. As public spaces of representation, such as in Foucault's examples—the library, the museum, the Oriental garden, cemeteries, simultaneously open and close at the same time—Rizal and Gaia create a cartography where both the mythic and the real exist side by side. Heterotopias are simultaneously sacred and profane, synchronous and asynchronous, and mono-spatial and multi-spatial. Their role is dual: “to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space” and “to create a space as perfect . . . as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled.” In effect, Gaia and Rizal are, as places, dynamic, accessible, habitable, and embody the ship, as a perfect example of heterotopia, a place without a place, exists by itself, and forms a great reserve of the imagination, in search for special treasures that for the moment are concealed before us.

As metaphors of heterotopia, the various places in which the speculative stories are set portray a contested Philippines where there now exists the possibility to replace long-held assumptions of heteronormativity, where misplaced conceptions of hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity can be challenged, and where alternative forms in the expression of gender and sexuality are not only welcome but also equally legitimate and valid. That Rizal figures in these heterotopias adds a poignancy and a certain distinction to the texts in recognition that these social disparities have long haunted the nation, and where, in the words of J. Neil Garcia, “sexual and gender questions” need an engagement with “the material reality of the nation-state” (2014, 111). When heroism is needed, or indeed questioned in these instances, the texture





of speculation becomes clearly a political position, a case where estrangement becomes not merely a distancing function as a climber sees keenly the mountain from the plain, but a re-familiarization, where the climber must observe in detail the route along the way once again even if he or she had been that way before.

Imagining a future Philippines where Foucault's special treasures may be momentarily hidden appears to be the prerogative of these five tales. While SF has always been "an oppositional literature" (Landon, 2002 109) in that it challenges prevailing wisdom and proposes a radical parallax to realist literature, it has not always been seen, up until recently, as an effective medium to interrogate social and political norms, such as the "immutability" of gender relations. Since SF has been associated largely with male writing (audiences included) and the project of science as a traditionally male endeavor, issues of gender did not figure significantly until the 1960s, when feminist and queer SF writing began to emerge. Not only were women SF characters associated with aliens and monsters, they had also been disguised as planets, spaceships, and robots (Landon 2002, 126). Reframing SF to allow women and other minorities to reflect the changing social realities at the end of the twentieth century became a growing concern, therefore, for both men and women SF writers.

In the Philippines, more women are writing speculative fiction. A cursory inspection of two recent anthologies reveals an almost even distribution between men and women. Dean Francis Alfar and Angelo Lacuesta's *Maximum Volume Best of Philippine Fiction 2* (2016) has seven male and seven female writers, while Emil Flores and Joseph Frederic Nacino's *Diaspora Ad Astra* (2013) has something similar, with eight men and seven women writers. While this equality may reflect editorial policy, nevertheless, it is an acknowledgment that there is a greater consciousness among SF writers and their texts to find social relevance in a genre long associated with escapism, marginality, and one where scientific or technological innovation has always been its main attraction, readership-wise. By tackling social issues such as those pertinent to sexuality and gender, speculative writing has staked a claim in its legitimacy as an important part of our literature, one that needs to be heard more, and read more, and by more readers.

The ancillary concerns portrayed in the various stories—environmental degradation, prostitution, the corporate takeover of the political state, terrorism, drug addiction, climate-induced natural disasters, epidemics, a problematic educational system, the breakdown of peace and order, and immigration as a state policy—all chillingly familiar in the Philippine context, contextualize the characters' anxieties not merely as personal or psychological problems, but structural ones that inhibit them from becoming full productive "citizens" of their respective localities. What all this goes to show is that the today's crop of young Filipino writers is critically aware of speculative





fiction's social responsibility toward the national formation, one that in the foreseeable future can become not only stronger, but also of finer, more nuanced quality.

Gregorio Brillantes need not have worried that a generation after him, Filipino SF writers would depart radically from Ray Bradbury's formulation, and instead, employ a unique historical consciousness to speculate about the future. Rizal's ghost or progeny, it turns out, has come not only as a spectral vision or mere revenant of him, but one who stands ready to face the nation's many social ills that he himself had begun to address.

### WORKS CITED

- Alfar, Nikki. "Preface." *The Best of Philippine Speculative Fiction 2005-2010*. Eds. Dean Francis and Nikki Alfar. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 2013. xi-xiv. Print.
- Brillantes, Gregorio. *Looking for Jose Rizal in Madrid: Journeys, Latitudes, Perspectives, Destinations*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 2004. Print.
- Brillantes, Gregorio. "The Apollo Centennial." *Upon Our Own Ground: Filipino Short Stories in English* Vol. 2 1965-1972. Ed. Gémino Abad. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 2008. 433-441. Print.
- Broderick, Damien. *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*. London: Routledge. 1995. Print.
- Buchanan, Ian. "Metacommentary on Utopia, or Jameson's Dialectic of Hope," *Utopian Studies* 9.2. 1998. 18-30. Print.
- Burns, Gerald. "The Repatriate Theme in Philippine Second-Language Fiction." *Philippine Studies* 40.1. 1992. 2-34. Print.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1949. Print.
- Card, Scott Orson. *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books. 1990. Print.
- Casocot, Ian Rosales. "The Pepe Report." *Philippine Speculative Fiction Volume 1*. Ed. Dean Francis Alfar. Pasig City: Kestrel IMC. 2005. 118-131. Print.
- Casper, Leonard. "Beyond the Mind's Mirage: Tales by Joaquin and Cordero-Fernando." *Philippine Studies* 1.1. 1983. 87-93. Print.
- Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan Jr. "Dis-Imagined Communities: Science Fiction and the Future of Nations." *Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation*. Eds. Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania. 2002. 124-141. Print.



- Delaney, Samuel. *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. Pleasantville, NY: Dragon Press. 1984. Print.
- Flores, Emil. "Future Visions and Past Anxieties: Science Fiction in the Philippines from the 1900s Onwards." Unpublished Paper delivered at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Philippine Studies, Philippine Social Science Center, 23-25 July 2008. 1-27. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Trans. Jay Miscowiec, "Des Espaces Autres". *Diacritics* 16.1. 1986. 22-27. Print.
- Gabot, Adel. "The Field." *Future Fiction, English: Third Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive*. Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Foundation. 2000.
- Garcia, J. Neil. 2014. *The Postcolonial Perverse: Critiques of Contemporary Philippines Culture* Vol. 1. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 2014. Print.
- Gonzales, Michael Manuel. "In the Mountain's Womb." *Asian Studies Journal* 18. 1980. 58-70. Print.
- Gonzales, NVM. "The Poetic Myth in Philippine Literature." *Diliman Review* 8.2. April 1965. 157-176. Print.
- Gonzales, NVM. "Rizal and the Monomyth: Hero's Life and Work Reflect Constant Filipino Theme." *Sunday Inquirer*. July 11, 1961. 25-27. Print.
- Hau, Carolyn. "Rethinking History and 'Nation-Building' in the Philippines." *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*. Ed. Wang Gungwu. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 39-68. Print.
- Ileto, Reynaldo. "Rizal and the Underside of Philippine History." *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asia*. Eds. D.K. Wyatt and A. Woods. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1982. 274-337. Print.
- Landon, Brooks. *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*. London: Routledge. 2002. Print.
- Le Guin, Ursula. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Penguin Classics. 2016. Originally published by Ace Books (NY), 1969. Print.
- Montes, Timothy. "Turtle Season." *Future Fiction, English: First Prize, Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards Archive*. Manila: Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Foundation. 2001.
- Mojares, Resil. "The Myth of the Sleeping Hero: Three Philippine Cases." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 2.3. 1974. 156-162. Print.
- Ocampo, Ambeth. *Rizal Without the Overcoat*. Manila: Anvil Publishing. 1990. Print.
- Piocos, Carlos III. "The Promise of the Future: Nation and Utopia in Philippine Future Fiction." MA Dissertation. Cardiff University, UK. 2011. Print.



- Posadas, Baryon. "Rethinking Philippine Science Fiction." *Diliman Review*. 2001. 22-30.
- Rafael, Vicente. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1988. Print.
- Reid, Michelle. "Postcolonial Science Fiction." Science Fiction Foundation 2005. 14 April 2017 <<http://www.sf-foundation.org/publicationsacademictrackindex.php>>. Web.
- Rizal, Jose. "The Philippines: A Century Hence". *Noli Me Tangere Quarter-Centennial Series*. Ed. Austin Craig. Manila: Philippine Educational Company. 1912. Print. *SFE: Science Fiction Encyclopedia Online*. 23 April 2017. < [http://www.sfenyclopedia.com/entry/sf\\_megatext](http://www.sfenyclopedia.com/entry/sf_megatext)>. Web.
- San Juan, Epifanio Jr. *Rizal in Our Time: Essays in Interpretation*. Revised Edition. Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2011. Revised Edition. Print.
- Sanchez, Anna Felicia. "Waiting for Victory: Toward a Philippine Speculative Fiction." *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*. 2103. 37-48. Print.
- Santos, Alfonso. *Rizal Miracle Tales*. Manila: National Bookstore. 1973. Print.
- Skhlovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique." *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. Ed. David Richter. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Boston, MA: Bedford Publications. 2007. 775-785. Print.
- Suvin, Darko. *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press. 1988. Print.
- Thomas, Megan. *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship at the End of Spanish Colonialism*. Manila: Anvil Publishing. 2012. Print.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. New York: Cornell University Press. 1975. Print.
- Torres, Catherine. "Totems." *Maximum Volume: Best New Philippine Fiction 2*. Eds. Dean Francis Alfar and Angelo Lacuesta. Manila: Anvil Publishing. 2016. 51-64. Print.
- Victoria, Eliza. "Rizal." *Diaspora Ad Astra: An Anthology of Science Fiction from the Philippines*. Eds. Emil Flores and Joseph Frederic Nacino. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. 2013. 113-128. Print.
- Villa, Jose Garcia. "The Son of Rizal." *Fathers & Sons: An Anthology*. Ed. Alberto Manguel. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. 1998. 88-97. Print.
- Woods, Damon. *Tomas Pinpin and Tagalog Early Survival in Early Spanish Philippines*. Manila: UST Publishing Housing. 2011. Print.

