

**CONNECTING THE FORGOTTEN/ANONYMOUS WITH
THE REMEMBERED/FAMOUS: GERMAN WOMEN
TYPESETTERS AND DR. JOSE RIZAL**

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For sure the anonymous German women who midwived the birth of the first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, of the Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal were history makers: their work as typesetters in a Berlin shop can be considered important moments in three liberation movements, namely, the women's movement which aimed to liberate women from disempowering ideas and social practices; the national movement aimed to overthrow Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines; and the literary movement that sought to usher moribund Philippine letters into the Age of Realism. But due to the practice of detaching the 'great man' and his 'great deeds' from the 'ordinary deeds' of 'ordinary people' or isolating particular moments from the rest in a continuum, these women got so overshadowed by the man they helped to become famous that to retrieve them from the dustbin of history is almost next to impossible. Even Rizal himself, who was a passionate recorder of his encounters with people, as very well illustrated by his diaries and letters he sent to family members, friends, and acquaintances, did not bother to find out their names. In this regard he was just like the average person who appropriates for himself/herself the product of another's labor, and takes for granted from whom s/he takes it from.

I first came across the anonymous women in Rafael Palma's *Pride of the Malay Race* (1949), a biography of Rizal which won for its author the first prize in a nationwide contest

sponsored by the Philippine Government in 1936. I was intrigued by this passage:

The printing of the novel was not free from difficulties. He had to finance it alone, but did not have the necessary means. He looked for and found the cheapest printing press in Berlin, which accepted an edition of 2,000 copies for 300 pesos — an insignificant amount. The press belonged to a society dedicated to giving work to women, and for that reason it was called *Lette*¹ (Palma 1966:68).

At that time I was just starting my career in teaching at the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature of the College of Arts and Letters of the University of the Philippines, after over two decades as a professional full-time (more appropriately, overtime, considering the volume of domestic work I had to do practically at all hours of the day and night) homemaker to a lawyer-husband and mother to five children. My entry in academe was my way of validating myself. By then my wedding ring was awfully eroded by washing too many pots and pans and countless dishes, not to mention laundering clothes which if hanged all at once on a clothesline would stretch, in the calculation only a housewife can come up with, from Aparri* to Jolo**, if not from the earth to the moon. In my department I carried the identity of an elderly with the most junior academic rank, and the most likely to succeed as the first ever emeritus instructor in the Republic of the Philippines' premier state university. The subject assigned to me was Philippine Institution 100 (The Life and Works of Dr. Jose Rizal), a compulsory subject to be taken by all students as a requirement of Republic Act No. 1425.²

Knowing very well the predicament of women living in a world where men are really more equal to women, no matter

*Northernmost part of the Philippines

**Southernmost part of the Philippines

how you look at the gender relation, and therefore able to claim 'his story' as history, I felt it was my duty to make my students know that behind the much heralded *Noli* of Rizal were a handful of women, and that the heralded history making of men is standing on the unheralded herstory making of women. Moreover, I wanted my students to realize the power of historians. By the work that they do, historians manage to play god by deciding on who is to live and who is to die. Those they chose to write about, regardless of what those did or failed to do, are resurrected and bestowed immortality while those they ignore remain forever buried in oblivion.

I tried to locate printed materials that would lead me to the women who were missed by the gods. Rushing up my housework so I could have time to go to the library, I went about my research as thoroughly as possible. To my dismay I found only two accounts of the *Noli's* printing. One is told by Dr. Maximo Viola in *My Travels with Doctor Rizal* (1913). Like Palma, he had no interest in the women as can be seen in this passage:

As soon as he (Rizal) had finished correction of the *Noli me tangere*, he went immediately to a photographer to have his picture taken, in spite of his sickly look,³ in order to adorn the cover of his book. . . inasmuch as in those times that was already a current custom among some writers. But after hesitating and reconsidering for some time, modesty prevailed over vanity; and thus the *Noli me tangere* appeared such as it was printed by the printing firm of Berliner Buchdruckerei-Actien-Gessellschaft, Setzerinnen-Schule des Lette-Vereins and therefore without the author's photograph (*Reminiscences and Travels of Jose Rizal*, 1961:320).

Another reference is Professor Ferdinand Blumentritt's letter to a friend dated May 20, 1911, and published in *La Vanguardia* on July 1, 1911. Like Palma and Viola,

Blumentritt had no interest in the women as evidenced in his letter, a portion of which I quote:

Rizal had that novel (*Noli*) printed in the Lette Press, Lette being the name of a society or association whose purpose was to give bread to women,⁴ so that its compositors were not men but women (*Ibid.*:325).

I also found a short feature article published in a weekly magazine. It focused more on the place where the *Noli* was printed rather than the women typesetters (Ingles 1960).

It was the paucity of materials on the German women which made me look forward to visits to the then German Democratic Republic. In 1987, I visited Berlin after attending the Third International Congress of Women in Moscow. By that time the desire to know more about the women typesetters could hardly be contained, considering the many times I heard delegates in the congress bring up the issue of women's invisibility in history. The reason I joined the Philippine delegation's trip to this German city was primarily to visit the Lette and find out more about the women typesetters. Berlin was then a divided city. I did not know on which side was the Lette. Neither did I know for sure if a request to be taken to the site would not constitute an inconvenience to our host, the International Friendship Society. And so I went along with the rest of the group, who after being taken to the house along Jaegerstrasse (No. 71) where Rizal stayed, and where a marker was placed in 1986,⁵ upon the request of Lourdes Casas Quezon, President of the Philippine-GDR Friendship Society, agreed to the plan to visit Dresden. To see the Old Masters' Gallery with its famous woman, the *Sistine Madonna* of Raphael, the *Porcelain Collection*, and the *Zwinger* was most seductive. Besides, in Dresden we could visit the Museum of Ethnology where the specimens and artifacts sent by Rizal to Dr. A.B. Meyer, a scholar Rizal met

and whose friendship he cultivated through letters sent while in exile in Dapitan, were kept.

Not long after that German visit the Berlin Wall fell. Then it occurred to me that I could now invite a German who was likely to be interested in helping me locate the lost women in history. This is where Dr. Hans Romeyke whom I met in Berlin in 1981, comes in. Aware of his interest in the Philippines,⁶ I invited him to present a paper on the Lette in the International Conference on the Centennial of the Philippine Revolution of 1896. It is his paper where data on the Lette are taken.

During the abovementioned conference he read the letter of Dr. Lutz Goebel, the acting director of the Lette, a part of which runs thus: "When in 1887 the apprentices of the School for Female Typesetters set the book *Noli Me Tangere* by Dr. Jose Rizal nobody of them could anticipate the revolutionary consequences the publication of that book would have." Encouraged by the positive tone of the letter and interpreting its content as an indication of the Lette leadership's appreciation of the printing apprentices' role in Philippine history, I wrote Dr. Goebel in my capacity as National President of KAGUNARI (*Kapisanan ng mga Gurong Nagmamahal kay Rizal*), an association of teachers who teach the Rizal course, and as Program Director of the National Centennial Commission-Women Sector. In my letter I asked him if it were possible for KAGUNARI to place a commemorative plaque anywhere in the Lette building, and to connect me with organized German women who would be interested to join Filipino organized women in celebrating the collaboration of the unknown apprentices with a literary production of Dr. Jose Rizal. I informed him that the NCC-WS aimed to locate the 'lost women' in history. It took him months to answer my letter. Probably because I wrote to him

in English and that put the good director in a situation where he was linguistically challenged. Moreover, my request needed much work on his part. He would have to validate the claims of my article and this would require research (I sent him a copy of an article I wrote about the women of Lette which was published on the backpage of the December 30, 1996, edition of the *Daily Inquirer*), and he would have to look for German women's organizations likely to support my agenda, certainly a tall order for any German man. Furthermore, he would have to verify the claims I told him about myself. What could add further to the list is an awareness of how bureaucracy works. Seen by the German sociologist Max Weber as a tool for efficiency, the bureaucracy has its other side. It can complicate the simple and delay decision making. Dr. Lutz probably saw only too well what would be in store for him should he grant my request. Besides, in fairness to him, I gave him very little time. To make herstory short, Dr. Goebel said in his letter that he could not grant my request. First of all, he said, he had doubts about the propriety of putting a commemorative plaque in the Lette building located at Viktoria-Luise-Platz 6, D-10777 Berlin. This is no longer the original building where the *Noli* was printed. The original was razed to the ground when Berlin was blitzkrieged during World War II. In Germany, he also emphasized in his letter, there are no officially proclaimed national heroes.

In my article, "Rizal on Women and Children in the Struggle for Nationhood" (1990–1991. *Review of Women's Studies*. Vol. I, No. 1), I made the assertion that the Lette was a feminist organization. After reading Dr. Romeyke's paper I realized that I made a mistake. If only to justify why I committed the mistake, I reviewed what I could about the women's movement and came out with this revised assertion: The Lette may not have been organized as a feminist organi-

zation but its objective to give vocational training to women so they could be engaged in gainful employment jibed with the feminist agenda of that time.

The Women's Movement

I am convinced that the reason why the Lette Association was training women in a trade that was traditionally a male preserve was its response to the 'Woman Question', the heart of the women's movement.

The women's movement was fueled by the effects of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. The first produced constitutional governments that guaranteed the rights of the governed to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not to mention, the right to be protected against government abuse. The second developed the means of production that made possible industrialization which necessitated the performance of production work in factories outside the home. These two revolutions put women in a quandary. The 'Rights of Men' enshrined in liberal constitutions were literally for men only. Production work outside the home meant that women who cannot leave home because of young children or an elderly to take care of meant the loss of gainful employment and the independence it brought to women. For those who could leave home to engage in paid work the realities of unemployment, work discrimination, low wages, and sexual harassment were very real. Additionally, there was also the problem of the double burden of having to do production work in the factory and reproduction work in the home at the same time.

Historians of the women's movement refer to a 'First Wave' and a 'Second Wave'. The First Wave is traced to the work of women like Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges who took advantage of the libertarian discourses of

the French Revolution. Recognizing that women are different but equal to men, it has for its objective the granting of the 'Rights of Men' to women so that women could escape the underworld of slaves and the oppressed, and enter the upper world of free men. For this purpose, the advocacy was for women to fight for equal rights, such as the granting of the franchise, to be given the education given to men, and to have training and access to gainful employment. Thus in 1848,⁷ during the first international convention of women held in Seneca Falls, New York, women came out with the Seneca Falls Declaration, which reads in part:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government. . . .

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The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her (Reprinted in O'Neill [1969] 1971. From the *History of Women Suffrage*. Vol. I:109).

To prove their assertion the women submitted the following facts: the denial of the right to vote to women; the submission of women to laws they had no hand in making; the denial of rights which are granted to the most ignorant and degraded men who enjoy the right of suffrage; taxation without representation; the application of laws that made married women civilly dead; divorce laws that favor men; discrimination in the work place; etc. (*Ibid.*:109–111).

The Second Wave, on the other hand, was an offshoot of the First Wave. While “nineteenth-century feminism began with women’s difference from men and culminated in the struggle for equality with men over the right to vote,” notes Chilla Bulbeck citing Liz Gross, “postwar feminism began with demands for equality and is now entering a phase demanding ‘autonomy’: ‘a space where women write, read, and think as women’” (Bulbeck 1988:8). Also, postwar feminists saw that getting women into the upper world of men would not and could not liberate women. For as long as sexist culture exists, women will always be unequal to men, hence the need to destroy this kind of culture by replacing it with one that no longer socially constructs men as masculine and women as feminine, but constructs both of them as persons who can be the best they want to be without being hampered by constricting gender roles. Furthermore, it became clearer and clearer that women’s oppression is not only the consequence of the unequal application of laws and the lack of equal opportunities as the liberal feminists asserted. What truly oppressed women are the intersecting forms of oppression: gender, class, ethnic, and national oppression.

Dividing the women’s movement into a First Wave and a Second Wave has its problems. For one, if we examined the so-called First Wavers of the 19th century, we can very well encounter those who already saw the problematics of the notion of equality in difference, and were in fact already pointing toward autonomy as the basis for women’s liberation. For that matter, not all postwar Second Wavers have gone beyond the struggle for equal rights. As a matter of fact, there are presently those who consider themselves Second Wave feminists yet hold on to ideas that are clearly contrary to the attainment of liberation through autonomy. Among them are those, who because of religious beliefs/

prescriptions, cannot support the demand for state recognition of women's reproductive rights as one of their basic human rights. They choose to ignore the fact that unless a woman has control over her fertility, autonomy gets very much infringed upon, for no matter how you look at it, in a patriarchal society, giving birth to unplanned babies takes its toll on women in search of a viable self.

Since it is my task to lay the foundation for connecting the women of Lette to the women's movement and show the interconnectedness of events in history, I now bring into the picture the feminist political spectrum of the 19th century.

As earlier mentioned, the 19th century saw the negative effects of capitalism on societies of varying stages of development. Regardless of the stage of development, there was the growing perception of the need to transform society into a better one. If women were to be tapped as active participants in the transformation process what was to be done? Thus the surfacing of the 'Woman Question'.

An analysis of the 'Woman Question' was undertaken by the Left, the Center, and the Right of the existing political spectrum at that time. The Left saw the 'Woman Question' in the context of class society and theorized that the emancipation of women rested on the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the capitalist class, hence the advocacy for women to get engaged in the class struggle which will inevitably culminate in the Proletarian Revolution, the harbinger of the classless society. The Center, on the other hand, saw the 'Woman Question' in the context of the bourgeois state which has been found to be biased in favor of men, hence the advocacy to struggle for gender equity by working for the granting to women the rights of men. The Right was quite put out by the unmooring of women from their traditional roles of dutiful daughter, devoted wife and

mother, domestic worker, and assistant to men. Those in the Right advocated the return of women to their traditional roles lest the hands that for so long have rocked the cradle will now rock the Establishment.

The Lette Association should now be examined in the context of the wide-ranging feminist spectrum of the 19th century. At this point I rely on the information given by Dr. Romeyke's paper.

The Lette

Rizal probably got introduced to the Lette by Prof. Rudolf Virchow⁸ through Dr. Ferdinand Blumentritt. The organization was founded by the Prussian lawyer Wilhelm Adolf Lette (1799–1868) in reaction to the effects of developing capitalism and the germination of the libertarian seeds sowed by the French Revolution on Prussian soil. As an impact of the French Revolution, Prussia abolished serfdom in 1807, and liberal ideas flourished among the middle class and intellectuals like Lette. He saw the need to engage in social work that would improve the condition of people made poor and oppressed by developing capitalism. As early as 1841, he already started setting up organizations for the socially disadvantaged, who were on the increase as a result of the functioning of capitalism, a system where the free market favored the property-owning class over the non-owning class. Years later he became the chairperson of the *Central Association of Prussia for the Welfare of the Working Class*, an organization dedicated to discover and ease the misery of the working class. While working for this organization he came face-to-face with the particularly bad situation of women, which made him say, "It is. . . necessary and a social duty to find new professions for women" (Quoted in Romeyke 1996:2–3).

Among the organizations he founded was the *Berlin Association for the Promotion of Gainful Activities for Women*, established on February 27, 1866. During the first phase of the *Lette Association* (1866–1872) the activities were primarily oriented to enable unmarried women to have gainful occupations. For this purpose, the organization offered vocational training to women who were not expected to deviate from traditional roles as wives and mothers when they got married. While Lette was for the entry of women in production work as espoused by socialists like August Bebel⁹ and Clara Zetkin,¹⁰ he was not for women's entry in politics. He was reported to have said, "What we don't want, and never, even in remote centuries, is political emancipation and equality of rights for women" (Quoted in *Ibid.*: 3). Lette, like most men of his time and clime, could not imagine a world where women had a say in politics. I can very well imagine how he would turn in his grave if this passage from the writings of the grandmother of Katia Mann, wife of the famous Thomas Mann and mother of historian Golo Mann¹¹ was read to him by no less than Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit from whose book, *Sexism*, I lift it from:

Women don't need the vote. That is to say: men have from time immemorial been so just, so good, so noble that the destiny of half the human race can be placed in their hands. Women don't need the vote . . . it's an idea innate in men, a divine impulse, which drives them — whether their world is barbaric or civilized — to protect women, their rights and their happiness And the meaning of history? The history of women is solely a history of their persecution and lack of rights, and this history says: men have oppressed women

How do you get power? Only provisionally and only by the concentration of female strength, prepared to stand up for the political rights of women, through organization and energetic leadership (Quoted in Janssen-Jurreit 1982:6–7).

In 1872, the chairmanship of the Lette Association fell into the capable hands of Herr Lette's daughter, Anna (fig. 1). She enlarged her father's vision for women. Not content with just placing women in paid jobs so that they could accumulate wealth and have dowries to offer men,¹² Anna thought it wise to give women solid education and vocational training to make them more independent and self-reliant. She was also aware of the discrimination of women in production work. For example, typesetting was typecast as men's work. Women in printing presses were generally relegated to jobs as assistants to male typesetters. Why could they not be the typesetters?

On April 15, 1875, Anna founded a school for female typesetters. The first enrollees were 25 women. To make the school functional Anna had to find skilled people to form the teaching staff, find a location for the school, and access the necessary capital to purchase machines. For these purposes the *Berliner Buchdruckerei-Aktiengesellschaft* (Berlin Printing-Office Stock Corporation) was founded. This organization was identical with the school for female typesetters (*Ibid.*:4).

Anna was right about women entering a male preserve. They proved to be as capable as men, given competent training. The average performance was 1,300 letters per hour on an 8-hour workday. The average earning per woman was around 20 Marks per week. Because worker morale was good, business was also good. Job orders were plentiful. These included the printing of books for big publishing houses and materials for banks. There was also the section called 'Novels from Abroad'. It must have been here that Rizal's *Noli* was printed (*Ibid.*:4-5).

The trainees were in general from the middle class — daughters of Protestant clergymen, public officials, teachers, and merchants (*Ibid.*:5).¹³



Figure 1: Anna Lette, Photo taken from Doris Obschernitzki, 1984. *Der Lette-Verein*. Berlin, p.15.

Why Rizal chose the women printers for his maiden publication as a novelist could be partly due to his good impression of German women. In a letter dated March 11, 1886, from Berlin, he told his sister, Trinidad:

The German woman is serious, studious, diligent and (They) do not pay much attention to their clothes nor their jewels . . . they are active and somewhat masculine. They are not afraid of men. They are more concerned with substance than with appearances (*Letters Between Rizal and Family Members*, 1961:223).

Rizal's good impression of the German woman whom he advised his sister to emulate was, of course, not the sole reason for choosing the printer of his first novel, which he said in his letter to Pastells, was written on European soil: half of the novel in Madrid, a fourth in Paris, and the rest and the final editing in Germany (Guerrero 1963:121). The women printing shop also quoted a very competitive price — P300 for an edition of 2,000 copies. In a letter to his brother Paciano, dated October 12, 1886, Rizal said that printing throughout Europe was cheapest in Leipzig. They "ask only P12 a sheet, while in Madrid it costs P20 or P25" (*Ibid*:244). Cheap as he found the cost in Leipzig he could not have it printed there for during that time, he lacked the necessary funds. His only solution was to depend on chance, on the lottery— "and see if I win" (*Ibid*:245).

In the same letter, he wrote:

It is very painful for me to give up publishing this work on which I have worked day and night for a period of many months and on which I have pinned great hopes. With this I wish to make myself known, for I suppose that it would not pass unnoticed; on the contrary, it will be the object of much discussion. If I can't publish it, if luck doesn't favor me, I leave Germany (*Ibid*:245).

Rizal did not have to leave Germany even if he did not win in the lottery. Luck came in the person of Dr. Maximo Viola, a physician, then vacationing in Berlin, the city where Rizal relocated after a brief sojourn in Leipzig. He offered to lend Rizal the money needed for publishing *Noli*. At first Rizal refused the offer, perhaps as an act to save his face — for to admit impecuniousness to him meant disgrace — but later agreed to be lent the sum of P300.

The efficiency of the German women did not escape the notice and appreciation of Rizal. He wrote that the manuscript he personally delivered in the morning were already typeset, and galley proofs were available by late afternoon. Rizal's estimated printing time of five months was proven wrong by the German women typesetters (fig. 2). By March 21, 1887, the *Noli's* printing was completed, ahead by two months as he gave the job to the women only in December of 1886.

The Literary Liberation Movement

Even if Rizal were to be denied the role of revolutionary in the nationalist movement on the ground that he advocated assimilation with Spain and turned his back on Bonifacio's call to lead the Revolution of 1896 (Constantino 1869), Rizal would still be considered a revolutionary. This is in the realm of literature. Before the *Noli*, Philippine letters was tied down to a tradition not quite capable of mirroring the true conditions of the Philippines and its people. The frailocracy imposed stiff censorship rules on the ground that the *indios* must be safeguarded against ideas that would erode and destroy their Catholic faith. It was not easy for writers to get the Church's *nihil obstat imprimatur*. For those who wrote, the tendency was to write about safe subjects like lives of saints, *novenas*, and the like and to pattern their literary production after Spanish literary genres. In the 19th century the



Figure 2: Women at Work in the Lette Printing Shop. Photo taken from Doris Obschernitzki, 1987. *Der Frau ihre Arbeit, Lette-Verein, Zur Geschichte einer Berliner Institution 1866 bis 1986*. Berlin: Hentrich, p. 53.

metrical romance was the popular model. Writers patterned their writings after the genre. Instead of writing about the Philippines and its people, writers of the *awit* and the *corrido* wrote about kings and queens, princes and princesses in far-away lands. Francisco Baltazar or Balagtas, while able to use to advantage the literary genre, was not close enough to provide the mirror his compatriots needed for objectifying their conditions as colonials of Spain. Even Padre Jose Burgos' *La Loba Negra*¹⁴ and Pedro Paterno's *Ninay*, noteworthy predecessors of the *Noli*, were not close enough, according to Leon Ma. Guerrero in his prize-winning biography of Rizal, *The First Filipino* (1963):

. . . Burgos had a profound influence on Rizal, and several echoes of the "Loba" in thought and in language have been pointed out in Rizal's novels. But the priest's melodramatic tale of a mysterious widow riding through the night in quest of vengeance is much too fantastic, and much too far removed from the "realities" of life in the Philippines.

Paterno's "*Ninay*" . . . is more of an illustrated travelogue; more than half the text is composed of erudite footnotes on "Philippine customs" as they come up in turn in the contrived adventures of cardboard puppets. The resemblance between the *Noli* and "*Ninay*" is wholly superficial; the fundamental difference, as has already been remarked, is one of passion and courage. So careful is Paterno lest he offend that he makes Don Juan, the vicious landlord, a Portuguese! One might think, reading his novel, that there was not a single friar in the Philippines (Guerrero 1963:128, 134).

Ninay tells the story of the young woman, Ninay, who dies of heartbreak in the romantic tradition. The narration is concerned mainly with a "folkloristic tour of Philippine customs and traditions intended to bring out the exoticism of Spain's Asian colony," assert literary critics Cynthia and Bienvenido Lumbera (Lumbera & Lumbera 1982:36-37). In contrast, the *Noli* was intended by Rizal as literature

functioning as mimesis and manipulation. This was expressed by Rizal himself in his letter to the painter Resurreccion Hidalgo:

I have tried to do what nobody likes to do. I have endeavored to answer the calumnies which for centuries had been heaped on us and our country: I have described the social condition, the life, our beliefs, our hopes, our desires, our grievances, our griefs; I have unmasked hypocrisy which, under the guise of religion, came to impoverish and brutalize us I have raised the curtain to show what is behind the deceitful, glittering words of governments; I have told our countrymen our defects, our vices, our culpable and cowardly complaisances with our miseries The facts I narrate are all true I can prove them (Quoted in Palma *op. cit.*:69–70).

Indeed, without doubt, Rizal is a revolutionary in Philippine letters. His *Noli* ushered Philippine letters into the Age of Realism. Those reading it were invariably brought before their own presence. Some acted out their thoughts.

The Liberation Movement from Colonial Oppression

Rizal's *Noli* and its sequel, the *Fili*, provided the mirror Spain's colonials needed for looking at themselves so they could know what foreign domination had done to them. This self-knowledge was needed for their understanding of what they must do in order to hasten their progressive march toward their historic goal of freedom and the good life. Aware of the functionality of the novels to the colonials as guides to history making, the colonizers, in particular, the Archbishop of Manila who represented the more powerful in the union of Church and State, lost no time in convening a special committee of the faculties of the University of Sto. Tomas on August 24, 1887, for examining the *Noli*. The Dominican Pedro Payo found the novel "heretical, impious,

scandalous in its religious aspect, and unpatriotic, subversive of public order and harmful to the Spanish Government and its administration of these islands, in its political aspect." To Governor General Emilio Terrero he conveyed his finding, who in turn referred the matter to the Board of Censorship which recommended on December 29, 1887, that "the importation, reproduction and circulation of this pernicious book" be absolutely prohibited. By that time, however, copies of the *Noli* had reached a few of its targeted readers. One of them was Andres Bonifacio, the founder of the Katipunan. He claimed that it was Rizal's books that raised his bolo. The rest is history.

Conclusion

In conclusion we ask: Who were the anonymous German women who midwived the birth of the much heralded *Noli* of the most famous son of the Philippines? Except for Anna Lette whose picture is made available with this article, the women who were involved in the printing of Rizal's *Noli* are faceless. They will remain so until some assiduous herstorlographer will surface them from the graveyard of history where many a woman lies buried in anonymity.

ENDNOTES

1. Contrary to what Palma says, the Lette is named as such after its founder, Wilhelm Adolf Lette.
2. Republic Act No. 1425, enacted into law on June 12, 1956, by the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines on its Third Session, is entitled "An act to include in the curricula of all public and private schools, colleges and universities courses on the life, works and writings of Jose Rizal, particularly his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, authorizing the printing and distribution thereof, and for other purposes. The law was passed as a recognition of 'the need for a re-dedication to the ideals of freedom and nationalism for which our heroes lived and died; . . . it is meet that in honoring them, particularly our national hero and patriot, Jose Rizal,

we remember with special fondness and devotion their lives and works that have shaped our national character; . . . the life, works and writings of Jose Rizal . . . are a constant and inspiring source of patriotism with which the minds of the youth, especially during their formative and decisive years in school, should be suffused."

3. Rizal was suffering from a disease which he himself diagnosed as tuberculosis. Dr. Maximo Viola writes thus about his traveling companion's state of health and how this did not prevent the latter from carrying out the agenda of the day: ". . . my sick friend who the night before scarcely could sleep was knocking at the door of my room. I dressed quickly and together we went to his house at the Leipziger or Jaegerstrasse, number 71, 3rd floor, to analyze his ailment that he had already outlined to me the previous night. After expounding his family's antecedents, his individual mnemonics, and his physiology, he described the symptoms of his sickness which were afternoon fevers preceded by shiverings, coughing now and then, and fatigue. Examining his lungs by percussion and auscultation I found nothing appreciable that confirmed his opinion that he had incipient pulmonary tuberculosis." Dr. Viola attributes Rizal's poor health to the "vegetarian diet he had imposed upon himself on account of his pecuniary difficulties," his "fondness for physical exercises and the extraordinary exertion he imprudently made at a gymnasium where he had promised to equal the strongest gymnast there in lifting weights," and his fondness for study which robbed him of necessary rest (Viola:315).

4. The underscored portions of Blumentritt's letter reveal his lack of appreciation of women's work. Because of what women do, how can they be said to "be given bread" when in fact they earn the bread?

5. A casualty in the unification of the two Germanys in 1989 is the marker placed by the GDR-Philippine Friendship Society. The building has been taken over by its registered owner prior to the founding of the German Democratic Republic in 1949. The plaque has been removed.

6. For his doctoral dissertation at Humboldt University in Berlin, he wrote on the American military bases in the Philippines.

7. By 1848, the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution were felt all over the world. Alexis de Toqueville expressed before colleagues in the French Chamber of Deputies what most Europeans were then thinking about the developments: "We are sleeping on a volcano. . . . Do you not see that the earth trembles anew? A wind of revolution blows, the storm is in the horizon." At about the same time that the French thinker issued the warning, two Germans, Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, also did so in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published anonymously in London on February 24, 1848 (Hobsbawm 1979:3). The manifesto warned that "a spectre is haunting Europe" which

will spread the world over as a consequence of the privatization of the means of production. Private property divides people into two opposing classes which will fight to the death unless socialization of property takes place in a one world communist social order. It is the proletariat, through the Proletarian Revolution, who will midwife the birthing of a new society where the French Revolution's cry for 'Equality, Fraternity, and Liberty' will be realized. The warnings were validated by revolutions waged in the name of nationalism, not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world where European nations maintained colonies. Truly 1848 deserves to be remembered as the 'Springtime of the Peoples'.

8. Dr. Feodor Jagor was an eminent German scientist and traveler. He traveled to the Philippines and wrote the book, *Travels in the Philippines* (1873). It is for this reason that Rizal was thrilled to be introduced to him by Dr. Ferdinand Blumentritt. As he intimated to the latter, our national hero believed that Spaniards writing about the Philippines were biased. Other writings about the Philippines must be accessed if one were to know the truth. The obsession to know the truth drove Rizal to annotate Dr. Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1607) which was published in Paris in 1890.

Dr. Jagor, in turn, introduced Rizal to Dr. Rudolf Virchow, a famous German anthropologist, who in turn introduced Rizal to his son, Dr. Hans Virchow, a university professor of Descriptive Anatomy. Because of the introductions to these eminent men of science, Rizal was able to access space for his talents and become a member of the Anthropological Society and the Ethnological Society of Berlin.

Biographers of Rizal, notably Rafael Palma, Leon Ma. Guerrero, and Gregorio Zaide, were quite efficient when it came to identifying the German men Rizal got introduced to. Anna Lette was no ordinary German woman yet there is no mention of her at all by these gentlemen.

Considering Rizal's interest in women and the 'Woman Question' I am intrigued by Rizal's silence on Anna. There is a likely probability that he met her, since Anna was in charge of the Lette and business transactions like Rizal's printing job necessitated talking to her. If Rizal met Anna why did he not memorialize her in his diary considering his admiration of German women in general, and, in particular, intellectual women like the intelligent Mme. Bloch whom Rizal took pains to meet while on his way home to the Philippines aboard the SS Melbourne and immortalized in his diary or the articulate Miss Smith who impressed him so much with her knowledge about Chicago and equally immortalized in his published letters? Is it possible that Rizal did write about Anna but the document got lost? Also, if we are to believe Dr. Maximo Viola who claimed to have accompanied Rizal to the Lette, how come he failed to write about Anna and the women? Consider-

ing all these, is it merely feminist bile which makes me denigrate gender-blind historiography?

9. August Bebel author of *Women under Socialism* (1879) remarked: "The woman of the future (socialist) society is socially and economically independent She is no longer subject to even a vestige of domination and exploitation; she is free, the peer of man, mistress of her lot" (Quoted in Anderson and Zinsser 1988:374).

10. Clara Zetkin, one of two socialist theoreticians (the other being Rosa Luxemburg) of the German Socialist Party is the woman responsible for declaring March 8 as International Women's Day.

11. Janssen-Jurreit decries Katia Mann's silence on her grandmother who wrote on women's emancipation. Such silence validates the assertion that women have no memory of who their foremothers were because of man-centered historiography.

12. I requested Dr. Hans Romeyke to locate and translate sample advertisements of people in search of a mate or a paying post in 1887 issues of German newspapers. He sent the following:

(a) Who knows a wife for me? I am 43 years old, protestant, Berliner, have several good and globally known firms, house owner and owner of an equipage and a well-equipped high-class apartment, and a fortune of more than 200,000 Marks; besides I am of noble air and have a cheerful disposition, I fill several honorary offices. I am looking for a young lady or widow with fortune. Relatives of such a lady are most respectfully invited to send me more information and a photo (which will be returned immediately if wanted) to the following code number of this paper. Discretion is an affair of honour (*Berliner Tageblatt*, Vol. XVI [May 1, 1887], no page indication).

(b) For a 20 year-old Jewish girl of pretty appearance, economically minded, modest, with 8,000 Marks in cash (later essentially more) and rich dowry, the relatives are looking for an adequate marriage partner if possible in Berlin (*Ibid.*).

(c) Marriage! For several young and elder, very wealthy, ladies I am looking for gentlemen from the upper social circles. Due to our excellent links to upper classes I have been arranging very good marriages since years, strongly discreet, B. Busse, Berlin . . . (*Berliner Tageblatt*, Vol. XVI, 1 January 1887, p. 9).

(d) Rich marriages but only in upper class circles are arranged, honestly and discreetly by Adolf Wohlmann . . . (*Berliner Tageblatt*, Vol. XVI, 4 January 1887, viertes Beiblatt, unpagged).

From what Rizal wrote in his diary we know that he followed developments in the 'Woman Question'. Here is a sample: "In German newspapers it is usual to find announcements for housekeepers, companions, maids, servants, etc. The interested parties are requested to present themselves at

certain stations in Holland, France, or England. The Rotterdam Association, in order to abolish prostitution, warns women and girls to be very careful with such advertisements" (*Reminiscences*:121).

Here are sample advertisements from *Vossische Zeitung*, May 3, 1887, No. 204, unpagged:

(a) A well-educated young lady from an honorable and prosperous family, who attended for some time the Royal School of Music in Leipzig, being business-minded, well-versed in women's work, pretty in appearance is looking for a position as a lady companion or traveling companion for a countess or high-ranking family. Wishes to be treated like a member of the family. Salary is totally of secondary importance

(b) For managing a small household an educated lady is sought by a single gentleman (in his 40s)

(c) Girls for all kinds of work! Female cooks, kitchen maids, nursemaids are provided by the Central Hiring Agency

13. Like other middle-class women in the rest of the capitalist world, the bourgeois German women did not escape capitalist patriarchal practice: their being taken off from production work, especially manual work, to show their husbands' arrival in the social scene. Coupled with their idling was their husbands' use of them to show conspicuous consumption, hence the new imperative of dressing them up with expensive clothes and jewelry, and supplying them with housemaids to show social stature. Other than their use by men to show conspicuous consumption, such women were socially constructed to become perfect housewives — women who existed for men and the family and found no use for the First Wave feminist who demanded women's emancipation through the right to vote. I quote here Hedwig Dohm, who satirizes the intolerance of bourgeois women toward even the most modest efforts at emancipation:

I, Madame Schultz, with all my heart and my strength, believe in me and my kitchen, in my nursery and my laundry, in my drying room and my sewing machine. Everything else, alas is harmful. I believe that if the good Lord had a woman, she would have to be exactly like me. I think serving maids are a good-for-nothing race. However, any woman who dares to doubt my infallibility, who opposes my view, or who meddles with so-called ideas, I declare to be an immoral, contemptible emancipated woman, a heretic who by rights must be roasted on a spit, ah, the aroma will smell sweet. Since I have been, and am, and shall be . . . a German housewife" (Quoted in Janssen-Jurreit, 1962:5).

14. First published by Dr. Pio Brunn in *La Democracia* just after World War II, *La Loba Negra*, poses two problems: the problem of authorship and

dating. The socialist orientation of the novel casts doubts on its dating, considering that socialism started to make an impact only in the early part of the 20th century. What seems to be the case is the opposite of Guerrero's assertion: It is not the *Noli* which echoes *La Loba*, but the other way around. (Nora Jolipa, "The Impact of Spanish Colonialism on Philippine Literature in Spanish" in the *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*. Vols. 42-43, 1978-79:184).

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