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Gerald T. Burns

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## The Repatriate Theme in Philippine Second-Language Fiction

Gerald T. Burns



Filipinos are famous for leaving home, and the expatriate experience is a familiar subject of Philippine letters. Less well appreciated in these respects has been the experience of returning home, in particular returning home from what have also been the favored venues of expatriates: Spain, Europe, the United States, the imperial metropolis, the "developed" world. From Jose Rizal to Ninoy Aquino, and between them, successive legions of *pensionados*, ex-Pinoys, Fulbrighters, and *balikbayan* coming back to the Philippines to stay after an extended sojourn in that other world, the repatriate has played a notable role in the country's history. That role has left its imprint in literature, as well, especially in literature by Filipino writers who have figuratively if not literally followed the repatriate's path, immersing themselves in a foreign medium of expression before turning to address a native audience. What may be designated the "repatriate theme" recurs in Philippine second-language fiction from the Spanish colonial period to the present.<sup>1</sup> The theme figures with special centrality in a number of individual texts, and defines a distinct genre within this body of writing. It also gives expression to certain tensions and aspirations deeply rooted in Philippine culture.

This article analyzes a succession of novels, written in Spanish and English, which explore directly the imaginative possibilities of the repatriate theme: Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1886; 1926) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891; 1927), Juan C. Laya's *His Native Soil* (1940), Carlos Bulosan's *The Power of the People* (c. 1955), and F. Sionil Jose's *The Pretenders* (1962).<sup>2</sup> A subsequent note will address narratives of this type, mainly short stories, published since 1970.<sup>3</sup> Each text (or, in the case of Rizal's novels, pair of texts) is the subject of a separate section in the body of the essay; a conclusion attempts to identify patterns and address implications common to them all.

My aims here are in the first instance literary. I want to piece together from this series of novels constituent elements of the over-

all theme—elements which include, in addition to a repatriate protagonist and the basic narrative situation implicit in his or her return, a number of recognizable structural and symbolic features—and at the same time to interpret each work in terms of the emerging thematic construct. Further, by showing the general continuity of the theme over time and the specific linkages among the different texts of these narrative and structural-symbolic elements, I hope to establish the existence of a repatriate “genre,” and to offer a preliminary reconstruction of its history. Secondly, in addition to these textual and intertextual objectives, the treatment that follows also adopts a contextual, that is, historical and cultural, approach to its subject. For one thing, specific connections will be drawn between the circumstances depicted in the various narratives and the actual course of Filipino migration and repatriation, and an effort will eventually be made to deepen the more general correlation already suggested between fictional and historical repatriate stories. For another, certain large-scale “tensions and aspirations” characteristic of Philippine cultural experience will be identified and brought to bear in interpreting the texts of the genre.<sup>4</sup> As a corollary it should be possible, although this purpose will come to the fore only in the essay’s concluding section, to achieve some reciprocal insight from the analysis of repatriate narrative into the larger cultural milieu.

Before taking up the repatriate theme from these perspectives, however, certain limitations on its significance need to be acknowledged. For example, while one of the few previous commentators on the phenomenon, Soviet critic Igor Podberezsky, has declared the “subject [of] the person with European education among his compatriots [to be] traditional in Philippine literature,”<sup>5</sup> in fact that subject is the special province of the country’s second-language fiction (Podberezsky 1989, 50; Kintanar 1990, 84). At least, it is only within this single province—recent critics have judged it a minor one—of the national literary tradition that this essay is equipped to pursue it (Lumbera 1984, 6; Fernandez 1989, 32). Moreover, it seems reasonable to presume that the “tensions and aspirations” reflected in the repatriate stories under consideration here are first and foremost those of the rather narrow class audience for this type of writing (Lumbera 1984, 6). What is more, if the significance of the theme appears restricted in this respect, in another sense it is not restricted enough. For there is nothing unique to the Philippines about the repatriate experience or its representation. Schoolchildren are taught the story of Russia’s Peter the Great, returning from his incognito

tour of Western Europe to introduce his countrymen to new ways in everything from dress to shipbuilding (Sumner 1962). Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* suggests the broad literary appeal of the repatriate's situation, and such recent works as Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* demonstrate its special relevance to the emerging field of "postcolonial" writing (Hardy 1964; Achebe 1961; Rushdie 1982).<sup>6</sup> Further, stripped to its elements the narrative arc of repatriate experience turns out to be genuinely universal. It conforms to the archetypal pattern, set forth by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, of the "monomyth": separation from the community and/or ordinary world of reality, penetration of a previously unknown realm and initiation into the secrets of its power, and finally (this being the focus of the repatriate narrative *per se*) return, bearing a "boon" of special wisdom or potency to the community originally left behind (Campbell 1949, 30, 193).

Yet notwithstanding these limitations, the repatriate theme is worthy of attention. If only a "province," second-language writing has nonetheless occupied a highly visible and strategic region on the national literary map.<sup>7</sup> Likewise with the cultural experience of the middle and upper classes, it is experience which has been neither uninformed by nor unimportant to the broader currents of national life. Indeed, I hope eventually to show that the repatriate theme itself bears witness to at least one profound continuity between the country's elite and popular vernacular literary and cultural traditions. Finally, if the theme cannot be said to be exclusive to the Philippines, it has nonetheless had a marked resonance and even urgency here. This is so for two reasons, which, since they also represent principal factors in the extra-literary context of repatriate narrative, deserve to be examined in some detail.

First, as the critic Armando Manalo has written, the "problem of Philippine identity" has repeatedly arisen in connection with a "collision of cultures" and a "consequent disorganization of standards and . . . search for new values" (Galdon 1972, xiii). Clearly the generality of this statement needs to be tempered by the considerations of class that have now been introduced. Yet Manalo's remark will go some way toward explaining the attraction of the repatriate theme for Filipino writers and readers. The repatriate is a walking cultural collision: having been directly exposed to, and in greater or lesser degree having internalized foreign ways, and yet at the same time having presumably felt the pull of Philippine life enough to return

to it. His or her choices with respect to cultural values and cultural identity at once dramatize and personalize the ongoing collective struggles around these issues.

Second, this type of story dramatizes no less effectively what historian Milagros Guerrero (personal interview, 4 April 1990) defines as a perennially critical problem in Philippine social thought and praxis: by what (or whose) standards is the condition of the society to be judged, and from what source is the impetus to social (including economic and political) change to come? The Filipino repatriate of the kind featured in this study typically arrives no more empty-handed in the way of social ideas than of cultural values. Instead s/he, as Luis Teodoro has sardonically pointed out of the most recent of the breed, tends to have "taken the lessons of American [or] European [or] Japanese development to heart" and to want nothing more than to apply these lessons to the "salvation and eventual flowering of Philippine society. . . ." (Teodoro 1990). In other words, the "boon" which the repatriate-as-hero carries back from the mysterious region of the "developed" world (in earlier times the imperial metropolis), takes the form of a broad vision, sometimes a specific plan, for the betterment of the home community. However, and as Teodoro's tone suggests, those who have remained behind do not necessarily stand ready to receive this gift with open arms and fawning gratitude. Thus the repatriate's return triggers, in terms of the opposition "developed" versus "underdeveloped," metropolitan versus colonial, foreign versus indigenous—and usually also in terms of one or the other of the desired scenarios for change, reformist and revolutionary, that appear to constitute another regular opposition in this setting—the conflict of which Guerrero speaks over the nature and direction of Philippine social process.

Now, in emphasizing these considerations, of cultural values and identity, on the one hand, and social change, on the other, there is no intention of putting into eclipse the more purely literary aims stated earlier. Indeed, the two sets of interpretive objectives are complementary. Dilemmas of cultural allegiance and social action are as a rule embedded in precisely those textual features said to be definitive of the theme in a more formal sense. Nor do I wish to preclude the possibility of other contextual dimensions of significance. In fact, the individual readings that follow will repeatedly focus upon, in addition to the concerns just highlighted, matters pertaining to the character, fate, and legacy of the repatriate protagonists themselves. As it happens, these figures turn out to be no less dis-

tinctive than the sociocultural issues that inform their stories. The career of the typical fictional Filipino repatriate stands in significant contrast to those of history's Tsar Peter and myth's archetypal returning hero, to that of Hardy's Clym Yeobright, and even to those of comparable protagonists from other "postcolonial" literatures. Moreover, that distinctiveness, as well as the more direct meanings of the figure for the Philippine audience, need to be understood against a specific background of national cultural and historical traditions. But the task of outlining such a context and of integrating the repatriate into it will be reserved for the concluding section, in order to proceed now to the texts of the genre.

### **The Repatriate as "Curer" and "Liberator": The *Noli* and the *Fili***

The most famous historical Filipino repatriate of course is Rizal, who departed, in common with many other young men of the *ilustrado* class of his time, for Spain and Europe, and who returned to the more singular fate of national martyrdom.<sup>8</sup> Fittingly, his two published novels constitute the first major expressions of the repatriate theme in Philippine second-language literature. *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, or the *Noli* and the *Fili* as they are popularly known, stand as touchstones for subsequent fiction in this genre. The *Noli* in particular exhibits—it would probably not go too far to say that it establishes—a number of structural-symbolic features that would recur, in varying configurations, in later narratives.<sup>9</sup> Further, the two novels respectively may be taken as paradigms for two ideologically distinct types of repatriate protagonist and enterprise. And together they illustrate a common outcome for that enterprise, and a fate for the protagonist, that would likewise cast a lengthy shadow forward.

As it happens, an approach to the *Noli* from something akin to the repatriate perspective has already been made by the writer N.V.M. Gonzalez, whose analysis illuminates several of the features of literary design to which reference has just been made. Most fundamentally, Gonzalez establishes the initial conformity of protagonist Crisostomo Ibarra's career (as well as that of Rizal himself) to the pattern of Campbell's monomyth: separation, initiation (into the cosmopolitan world of Europe), and return (Gonzalez 1961: 25-27). He then extends the parallel to the notion of the "boon" brought

back by the hero to the home community, here the provincial town of Ibarra's birth, San Diego, as well as the Philippines more generally. The boon in this case is the protagonist's idea for a new type of school, which we know from the text to be based in part on German models (p. 169) and from other sources to be reflective of educational ferment in Spain in the late nineteenth century (Daroy 1965: 125),<sup>10</sup> Gonzalez further suggests that the school project may be seen as an attempt to heal a "sick society" (Gonzalez 1961, 27). Of course the governing metaphor of the *Noli* is that of a "social cancer," and Ibarra's plan, understood in a synecdochical sense as implying an entire educational system, does indeed appear intended as an antidote to the disease. The protagonist himself adopts the role, defined by another commentator, Reynaldo Ileto, of "the magical curer . . . returning from overseas" (Ileto 1985, 8). It is a role—the repatriate attempting to use the gifts of his metropolitan/foreign experience to "cure" a dysfunction imaged as an "illness" in the life of the society—that would often be replayed in narratives of this type.

Further, there exists in the *Noli* a kind of secondary metaphor, technically a personification, of the state of Philippine society. An additional observation of Gonzalez points toward this. According to him, in traditional versions of the myth of heroic return the figure of the sick father-king holds roughly the place of the sick society in Rizal's narrative (Gonzalez 1961). What he stops short of noting, however, is that such a figure does appear in the novel, in the person of Don Rafael Ibarra, the father of Crisostomo. Although already dead at the time the action opens—having been subjected to an unjust imprisonment by plotters among the Spanish clergy who personify the "cancer" eating at the vitals of the "Fatherland" (p. vii)—Don Rafael has not been properly buried, and rectifying this dishonor becomes a goal of the son's efforts along with the founding of the school. In later narratives, too, parental infirmity and/or vulnerability becomes emblematic of the larger conditions the repatriate protagonist would heal or transform.

In addition to the ailing father, and of course the returning "hero" himself, there are other roles here with symbolic strings attached to them, roles not specifically addressed by Gonzalez, but which are important to the structure of the *Noli* and subsequent contributions to the repatriate genre. One of these roles is played by Ibarra's love interest, Maria Clara. She is presented as "the poetic incarnation of [the] fatherland, beautiful, unaffected, lovable, frank, a true daugh-

ter of the Philippines . . ." (p. 43). What we have here is another personification of collective Filipino existence, but one obviously very different in quality from the image of a cancerous body or of the unburied corpse and unquiet spirit of the elder Ibarra. The difference may perhaps be accounted for by observing the traits ascribed to Maria Clara: moral (and aesthetic) virtues, which suggest that the dimension of collective existence the young woman personifies might be understood as that of Philippine *culture* rather than the more concrete and problem-ridden domain of Philippine society, the economic and political order. In this reading, Ibarra's preference for Maria Clara's charms over those of the more sophisticated beauties of Europe with whom he had been acquainted testifies to his loyalty to Filipino values and a Filipino sense of identity. While he affirms this allegiance in other ways, as well, for Ibarra as for his successors in the genre the crux of the "collision of cultures" comes down to a choice of a love and marriage partner. This localization of cultural values, foreign as well as Filipino, in the person of such a potential partner, represents the single most consistent structural-symbolic feature in this body of narratives.

But if Ibarra's cultural loyalty is unambiguous, in the realm of social action he experiences considerable inner conflict. This is occasioned by the presence of yet another role-character, Elias. For Elias, though native-born and native-bred, also has a vision, a "cure" for the society.<sup>11</sup> His remedy is more far-reaching than Ibarra's. It calls for national independence from Spain. Although he does not subscribe to the idea of armed struggle, Elias fits—or, again, perhaps it could be said that with him Rizal created—the mold of the indigenous revolutionary, a figure of consequence in a number of repatriate narratives in addition to this one. Ibarra, for his part, flinches before Elias' vision. Possibly, as he himself concedes, he has been blinded to the realities in the Philippine situation that would make such a drastic response necessary, by reason of the very experience abroad that has enabled him to conceive of the school project:

... I grew up in Europe, I have been molded by books, learning only what men have been able to bring to light. What remains among the shadows, what the writers do not tell, that I am ignorant of (p. 319).

While he agrees to be instructed about what lies in the "shadows" by the starkly different life experience of Elias, and possibly to take up the latter's cause, eventually Ibarra renounces direct popular



struggle in favor of the "progressive advancement" (p. 325) that he believes his educational project will bring. The first of a number of missed connections between repatriates and homebred activists has occurred.

The moderate nature of his goals, however, does not ensure Ibarra success. Heedless of the warning issued by the local sage, Tasio, against provoking resistance by proceeding too fast with the scheme, he pushes ahead and in fact rallies considerable initial support for his model school. But eventually he falls victim to the determined, devious resistance of the Spanish clergy, who ironically discredit his cause by making him appear a revolutionary. In the end, he loses all he had hoped to achieve. Not only does the school plan come to nothing; in matters of allegorical import, his father's body goes unrecovered and Ibarra is prevented from uniting with Maria Clara. Far from fulfilling the role of the Campbellian returning hero, welcomed by the community for the boon he has traveled far and sacrificed much to bring to it, he has rather fulfilled Tasio's characterization of him—a characterization with relevance for future figures of this type—as a "stranger in [his] own country" (p. 159).

Thus Ibarra's repatriate project ends in failure. But that is not the end of Ibarra. From amidst the wreckage of his hopes he reexamines the cancer consuming Philippine society and angrily concludes that only violent means, which he had heretofore rejected, can root it out. And in *El Filibusterismo*, the sequel to *Noli Me Tangere* and a significant reprise of the repatriate theme, he attempts to do just that. Simoun, as Ibarra in his new incarnation is known, arrives in the Philippines after thirteen years spent in various places abroad not to found a school but to foment a revolution. The "curer" is succeeded, in Iletto's terms, by the "Liberator" (Iletto 1985), likewise a figure with successors in the genre. Moreover, with the repatriate here assuming a revolutionary stance, the role of the indigenous radical seems to recede. Elias has not survived the *Noli* and no figure comparable to him emerges in this text to contest Simoun's leadership of a revolt conceived along European anarchist lines, with elements of purely personal vengeance blended in Maria Clara is kept to the background, as well, her liberation a distant goal of the protagonist's actions but her warmth and goodness no longer a palpable inspiration for him and locus of value within the novel.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Simoun, who operates out of the Europeanized colonial metropolis of Manila rather than the rural homebase of San Diego, may be said to possess little in the way of local cultural attachments

or even of specifically Filipino identity: he is truly a "stranger" in the country to which he has returned.

In any event, he turns out to be no more successful in his drastic enterprise than Ibarra had been in his seemingly more prudent one. Maria Clara dies, causing him to abort one elaborately planned insurrection. Another misfires when a former subordinate, acting to protect his own beloved, foils a critical bombing attempt. In short, in the *Fili* it is not a conspiracy but chance and circumstance (or God's will, as a sage-like Filipino priest counsels) that place another repatriate failure, this of a second, revolutionary-style project, on the books. And the failure in this case appears to be more final. At the end of the novel Simoun, asking with "bitter complaint" why God has forsaken him (p. 297), takes his own life. The only possible consolation to be found for him comes from Padre Florentino's cryptic reply to his "complaint": "The vessel must be shaken or broken to release the perfume, the stone must be struck to raise a spark" (Rizal 1965, 296). If the meaning of these words for Simoun remains opaque, they hover prophetically, as we shall see, over the fate of subsequent Filipino repatriates.

### The "Mer'cano": *His Native Soil*

While Simoun may be effectively a man without a country, it is interesting to note that over the course of his travels abroad one particular national style more than others seems to have rubbed off on him. "How typically Yankee!" another character exclaims in response to one of his remarks. At a later point the mysterious conspirator is actually mistaken for an American (Rizal 1965, 6). By the time he composed his second novel, then, Rizal seems to have foreseen some closer involvement of Philippine fortunes with those of the newly emerging Western power, the United States. When the actual convergence between the two nations took the form of colonial conquests, it provided, among many other consequences, a new imperial metropolis to which Filipinos might venture and from which they might return, and a new second language in which to write about the experience. Indeed, the text that Bienvenido Lumbera has called the "first important Filipino novel in English" (Lumbera 1984, 49) takes for its protagonist a fictional returnee from the first great wave of Filipino migration to the U.S., and concentrates sustained attention on the dynamics of his repatriate experience. What is more,

Juan Laya's *His Native Soil*, its title taken from a phrase found in *Noli Me Tangere*, serves to confirm the status of Rizal's fiction as a "touchstone" for the repatriate genre (Lumbera 1984, 53).

True to this title derivation, *His Native Soil* manifests primary kinship with the *Noli* rather than the *Fili*. In every respect save his itinerary abroad, Laya's protagonist Martin Romero is, as Carlos P. Romulo has put it, the "spiritual cousin" of Ibarra (Romulo 1964).<sup>13</sup> For one thing, unlike the vast majority of "Pinoy" emigrants to the West Coast of the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, he manages to receive an advanced education during the course of his ten years in the "land of the 'Mer'canos" (p. 52). Like Ibarra, too, Martin returns to his provincial hometown, here named Flores, possessed of a meliorative rather than a revolutionary vision of change. Only in the specific nature of their repatriate projects do the two differ. Martin plans to start not a school but, his degree having been earned in business administration, a company: a wholesale firm/retail store utilizing the latest American methods and "tricks" (p. 153) of commercial success while drawing its personnel from the Romero kin network and its capital from the sale of family lands.

In another echo of the *Noli*, Martin returns to a sick father, determined to restore him to health by substituting a sound nutritional regimen and professional medical care for Don Venancio Romero's *basi*-enriched traditional diet and reliance on faith healing. On the other hand, no express metaphor of social illness is developed for the microcosm of Philippine provincial life represented by Flores. But if it isn't exactly sick, like his father, this society could be better, in Martin's eyes. And his diagnosis of its condition and prescriptions for its betterment follow along lines roughly parallel to those adopted in the old man's case. Among the deficiencies to which the young repatriate attributes the general poverty and backwardness of the community are residues of barbarism and superstition, the stranglehold exercised by custom, and a want of egalitarianism, individualism, and general get-up-and-go. Against these he proposes strong doses of rationalism, science, technology, and democratic principles, as well as, expressly for the newly formed Romero Mercantile Company, the business virtues of efficiency, opportunism, impersonal management, and the spirit of "American high-pressure salesman-ship" (p. 276), epitomized in advertising.

But this is Martin's view of the world to which he has returned. It is not necessarily the novel's (although certain of the protagonist's dissatisfactions do appear to carry authorial weight). It soon becomes

evident to a reader, for example, that the aging patriarch Don Venancio is considerably wiser in his ways than his impetuous eldest son suspects. In addition, a still more unambiguously positive symbol of traditional Philippine life exists in the person of Soledad, a distant female cousin of Martin. Edad, as she is known, is the Maria Clara of *His Native Soil*. Chaste, self-effacing, "stubbornly loyal" (p. 55) to the family, her quiet competence and moral instincts equal to any situation, this character defines the locus of female virtue, and Filipino cultural values, in the novel. (In fact, while Edad by her gender and leading traits would seem to represent "culture," as Don Venancio does "society," the two characters prove much too fully rounded—the old man embodies a cultural identity, the young woman engages in socially consequential action—to allow for any strict distinction between the two categories here.)

Martin cannot or will not recognize these qualities in Edad, however, for his attention is distracted by a flashier woman, the American mestiza Virginia Fe. "Virgie" embodies the "movie-made smartness" (p. 57) and sexual forwardness that Martin professes, on the basis of his U.S. experience, to have contempt for. But by courting her and ignoring Edad he betrays a continuing primary loyalty to the culture of the foreign metropolis, and earns the epithet bestowed upon him by the townspeople: the "Mer'cano" (pp. 47, 180). Outside the metaphorical context of romantic attachment, too, Martin similarly pays lip service to cultural nationalism but acts counter to it. For example, at one point he harangues Edad concerning his determination, as chairman of the town fiesta committee, to make all entertainment and decoration "truly native," a "representation of our own culture" (p. 275), all the while indicating that the event will be run as a profit-making venture and a promotional vehicle for a soon-to-open retail store. It is in the course of this little speech that Martin delivers his paean to "American high-pressure salesmanship"; and he goes on to explain to Edad how Virginia Fe will make a far better queen than she of a fiesta conceived along these lines (pp. 277-78).

The existence of these tensions between Martin and the residents of Flores, and within himself, takes away any surprise we might feel upon watching his repatriate project go the way of Ibarra's, and for that matter Simoun's. The reasons for the failure of Romero Mercantile are somewhat complex and in the end rather different from those that operate in the earlier two narratives. Martin does, like Ibarra, face a conspiracy against his interests, on the part of a rival family

and political faction in the town. And as in the *Fili*, events and circumstances beyond human control (in this text figured more under the classical sign of fate than the Christian one of God's will) play an important role. The protagonist's cold, overbearing personality is also a factor. In the final analysis, though, what stops Martin in his tracks is the resistance his imported vision encounters from deep-seated indigenous ways and attitudes. That resistance proves the more significant in that it is tacit and comes not so much from those conspiratorially opposed to or personally alienated from the young businessman but from those who work most closely with him in the company—or simply those, at a greater remove, whose patronage is needed to make the enterprise go.

The resistance does not appear to be absolute. In fact, Martin's novel enterprise and the imported methods and styles he brings to it elicit some initial enthusiasm, and the company gets off to a start promising enough to draw out the *hubris* in his character. But the gap between "American conditions" (p. 158) and the way things work in Flores proves too profound in the long run. At any rate, Martin, who is ever "confusing" (p. 158) the two in his calculations, is not the man to bridge the chasm. Only too late does he come to appreciate that the structure of a traditional Filipino family cannot easily be molded to the needs of a modern business organization, or that people who have no money to spend are proof against the most sophisticated advertising appeals. Only when the company lies in financial ruin, having taken the Romero family's most precious resources with it, and only when his father is dead, having been put in his grave, according to the popular view of the matter, by Martin's refusal to countenance a *santiguar* or faith healing ritual, is this "stranger in his own country" led to conclude:

This place has beaten me. It has beaten America and me. Coca-Cola and swing may come to tickle the young, but these only tickle, Edad. Deep below this frivolous crust is the mysterious obstinacy of the race. America will never get at it (p. 399).

However, Martin's fate, which begins to take on the dimensions of tragedy with the display of *hubris* before the fall, the overtones of fate, and the Cassandra-like wailings of a mysterious insane woman (who also echoes the character of Sisa from the *Noli*), is not so stark as it appears at the moment he makes this concession of defeat. For one thing he has managed a reconciliation with his father in the latter's final moments. Too, the crisis of the business has

broken his relationship with Virginia Fe, and he is at last able to recognize Soledad's superior merits. His sudden proposal of marriage to her, as he prepares to leave Flores, crestfallen and broke, for Manila, surprises him more than anyone, but delights the entire Romero clan. Thus the novel ends in a technical sense comically rather than tragically, in a socially appropriate and prospectively happy union.

From the point of view of the repatriate theme one aspect of the significance of Martin's reconciliation with his father, and his impending marriage to Edad—both outcomes, it will be noted, denied to Ibarra/Simoun—lies in the possibility they suggest after all of a reconciliation, a union of Filipino and American ways of being. That possibility has been floated earlier in the text, in the tone of authority given to certain of Martin's criticisms of his countrymen, in their initial responsiveness to his foreign-acquired dreams, and of course in the fact that Edad, the ultimate Filipina, has from the first chosen to love the "Mer'cano." Indeed, at the moment of truth she acts with uncharacteristic, even American-style forwardness, to provoke the proposal from him. As if to confirm these hints, when news of the engagement gets out, the formerly disaffected family members/employees offer to reorganize Romero Mercantile, under Martin's management. This proposition he declines, no doubt wisely. Yet the retreat to Manila, the domestic metropolis, will carry him metaphorically only half the distance back to the imperial metropolis. It is less than that, since Soledad will be with him. What's more, Martin holds out the prospect of the couple's return to Flores one day. And with that prospect the novel, once again, holds out the possibility of some sort of synthesis being achieved between Filipino and American, traditional and modern ways: achieved in the indefinite future and in different proportions, to be sure, than Martin had originally attempted, but achieved presumably at a level deeper than the "crust" of superficial fads. Out of a failure in every way real and very nearly tragic, then—and this is the second aspect of the significance of the final union—there comes in this narrative a glimmering of hope for the ultimate realization of the repatriate project.

### **Son of Simoun: *The Power of the People***

In all likelihood the Pinoy emigrant to the Depression-era United States, best known nowadays to readers of Philippine fiction in English, would be not Laya's Martin Romero but "Allos" or "Carlos"

or "Carl," the quasi-autobiographical protagonist of Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1946). Unlike Martin, however, "Carlos" does not return to the Philippines. (Neither, for that matter, did the real Carlos.) But, in a recapitulation of a pattern evident in Rizal's work, an updated version of that protagonist does repatriate himself in Bulosan's subsequent novel, the posthumously published *The Power of the People* (1977; written c. 1955) (Bulosan 1946).<sup>14</sup>

Conrado Bustamante, or "Dante" as he is known to his comrades, returns to his homeland after fifteen years in the U.S., possessed of "a crystal clear vision of awakening his people and showing them the true nature of the world in which they lived" (p. 468). That vision, which indirect evidence in the text suggests was originally "awakened" in him by books received from "well-meaning" Americans (pp. 78-79), is a radical one. If Martin Romero is "spiritual cousin" to Ibarra, Dante is the son of Simoun. *The Power of the People* clearly participates in a distinct tradition of revolutionary repatriate narrative initiated by the *Fili*. Bulosan's novel takes for its background the Hukbalahap insurgency of the 1940s and 1950s (E. San Juan, Jr. 1946). Dante, a writer and historian, is the propagandist for a Huk-like movement, temporarily assigned to a guerrilla unit attempting to rendezvous with another Filipino arriving from the States, a man only he can identify.

It needs to be acknowledged here that while Dante is thus indispensable to the mission he is not its leader. That role falls to Hassim, a figure of long service and almost legendary stature within the movement, who is perhaps more than Dante the main character in the novel. Hassim may be understood as the native revolutionary, the fictional descendant of Elias, following of course a more openly insurrectionary course than Rizal permitted to his forebear. However, in *The Power of the People*, unlike the *Noli*, no conflict between native and repatriate social visions develops. Not only do Dante and Hassim appear to see more or less eye to eye on the desirability of overthrowing the existing order; perhaps more importantly, for much of the novel they have almost no essential contact with one another. To all intents and purposes they function as protagonists of independent narratives within Bulosan's loosely structured overall fiction. The remainder of this discussion, then, focuses on the one, the repatriate narrative, centered around the character and actions of Dante.

As in the *Fili*, no sick father appears in this narrative. Presumably, though, something must be gravely amiss with a society that needs the purgative of violent revolution, and in fact the related

mythic metaphor of a barren land is made to stand for the Philippines at several points.<sup>15</sup> There does exist, however, an unmistakable "poetic incarnation" of the Filipino spirit, in the form of the female peasant guerrilla, Mameng. Mameng receives favorable comparison with the women of America, pictured mainly as prostitutes or as unfaithful wives and negligent mothers. Predictably, she also receives Dante's attentions as a lover, although under somewhat less than romantic circumstances. Early in the course of the mission, the propagandist is ordered, for reasons that appear compelling to his superiors, to initiate the virginal Mameng into sexual experience.<sup>16</sup>

Dante approaches his task with dutiful zeal, and the narrator makes the following reflection on it:

Because it was Dante who had seen other lands and years, it was through him that the expression of the resolution would be realized, then to be poured warmly upon Mameng who was the denuded landscape on a prudish island. It would be through him that the sweet currents of experience would be siphoned into the very depths of her, to make her reach the stars with her hands and feel the world move under her body, now that the time had come for them to act (p. 101).

Note in this passage the linkage of the Filipino woman's body, as "denuded landscape," with the motif of barrenness. Note also the echo of the famous "Did the earth move?" query regarding the lovemaking between Robert Jordan and Maria in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Most noteworthy here, though, is the superiority accorded to Dante in this encounter. It is "through him," through the presumably vaster perspectives acquired in his wanderings abroad, that Mameng is to be put in touch with the transforming "currents of experience." Dante figures here as the returning hero of Campbell's myth, bearing from a far away, mysterious, and dangerous region a life-enhancing boon to the community from which he had set forth. At the very least the passage reveals in something like its pure form the repatriate's fantasy of acquired cultural power exercised to uplift a benighted and grateful homeland. The ease with which the fantasy is realized may have something to do with the author Bulosan's having never actually returned to the Philippines himself. In any event, *The Power of the People* would seem to have achieved, in an early chapter, the symbolically fruitful union of disparate cultures that takes the entire length of *His Native Soil* even to suggest as a possibility.



Yet this later novel does not really make the repatriate's road as smooth as that. For one thing, the union between Dante and Mameng turns out to be not a complete one, he being emotionally incapable of giving her love. Furthermore, on other than the symbolic level, that is with respect to his concrete revolutionary project, this protagonist fares less like the hero of monomyth and more like his immediate fictional predecessors. Enroute to the rendezvous with the shadowy Filipino-American contact, Dante is treacherously shot by his own brother (a Catholic priest whose claims about the power of the church in Philippine politics would seem to resurrect Rizal's diagnosis of the "social cancer"). Lying bleeding to death, Dante realizes that without himself to identify the contact man the mission cannot succeed. In an echo of the "bitter complaint" uttered by Simoun on his deathbed, he reflects that the "passionate dream" that had led him back to the Philippines had "turned against him . . . it had all come to this bitter end" (p. 468).

But the bitterness of this ending is alleviated in two ways. First, there occurs this further, and final reflection on Dante's part, summing up a great personal and cultural achievement:

. . . he had succeeded in building a bridge, at long last, spanning the chasm between the two lives which he had lived, joined the land that he could not forget with his native land, fusing the two personalities in him at last, and complete, the American and the Filipino (p. 472).

Here would seem to be a solution of the "problem of Philippine identity" that takes the form of an internal psychic integration rather than an external union with a personal embodiment of the native culture. Admittedly, it is difficult to locate the specific fictional action or experience that anchors the "bridge" Dante has supposedly thrown across the "chasm" in his own life. The reader may wish to agree with E. San Juan, Jr. that the claim put forward in this passage amounts to little more than a "rhetorical utopian gesture" on the author's part (Bulosan 1946, 10). Even should that be so, however, it remains true that the gesture itself—as in *His Native Soil*, toward some kind of reconciliation, a synthesis of cultural values and potential sources of sociopolitical change—constitutes part of the expression of the repatriate theme, and part of the amelioration of this repatriate's fate, in the novel.

A second factor in that amelioration has to do with the project. If without Dante the rendezvous mission cannot succeed, the larger

mission, the revolution itself, is not necessarily lost. In fact, the text allows the inference that the tragic circumstances of his death may somehow serve to further, even to spur the cause. The shooting episode itself brings together for one of the few times in the novel Dante and Hassim. It is Hassim who avenges the killing and escorts his comrade's body back to camp, and from a series of reflections on the commitment that had led Dante to this end the guerrilla leader appears to draw fresh inspiration for his own willingness to "die for an idea" (p. 496). So, too, with the other members of the group, much affected by a silent funeral ceremony where nature itself seems to provide the last rites and the eulogy. An external correlative for this inspiring effect comes into the picture, as well, in the form of a mysterious band of allies—the first friendly forces to be encountered in the narrative and an indication of the revolution's widening base—who come to the rescue of Hassim's group in the firefight that follows immediately after Dante's interment. Thus in *The Power of the People*, too, out of a seemingly "bitter end" comes the suggestion of some greater or surer beginning, even though in this case, in contrast to the situation at the close of Laya's novel, it is not a beginning that the repatriate himself will be able to make good on.

### **"Failure" and "Sinner" or Victim and Savior? *The Pretenders***

After the Second World War and the achievement of independence, a "second wave" of Filipino migration to the U.S. occurred, involving persons of a generally higher socioeconomic status than the original "Pinóys," a good number of them traveling for the express purpose of receiving the kind of advanced education that Martin Romero appears to have scrambled himself into by dint of hard work and luck (Balein 1974, 16). Having spent some six years earning his Ph.D. in history from Harvard, Antonio Samson of F. Sionil Jose's 1962 novel *The Pretenders* fits this profile. He also fits the profile of the vision-bearing Filipino repatriate. For Tony, the time in America has been the "beginning of wisdom" (p. 28) and he returns seemingly intent on applying what he has learned. As his one-time faculty dean at the University of the Philippines observes of him and others similarly experienced and trained, "They have ideas. . . . They think they can change the world in one sweep" (p. 196).

Like certain of his predecessors in the genre Tony returns home to a father in distress. Indeed, in a striking echo of the *Noli*, the elder Samson is languishing in prison and fearful of the desecration to which his body will be subjected after death, unless his son intervenes to prevent prison authorities from turning it over as a medical cadaver. The novel provides no explicit metaphor of social illness to complement the figure of the sick and vulnerable father (a motif of barrenness, similar to that found in *The Power of the People*, is introduced at one point [p. 101]). However, its analysis of the Philippine condition is strikingly congruent with the one arrived at by the leading physician Jesus V. Tamesis (1964) in a series of articles entitled "A Clinical Study of the Filipino People," published shortly after *The Pretenders*. Seeking to update for the postwar, postindependence period Rizal's diagnosis of the "social cancer," Dr. Tamesis found the nation's "disease" to consist in the materialism and political corruption of its upper classes. The "dark force" of "greed and folly" (p. 178) is the way Tony Samson expresses essentially the same perception, and his knowledge comes from first-hand observation of the elite family that could well be taken as a laboratory specimen of Tamesis' national pathology: the Villas, owners of a powerful corporation, cynical manipulators of politicians and the national interest, exploiters of the peasant masses and of small landowners such as Tony's own forebears had been.

Just what kind of therapy the young Ph.D. fresh from the States would apply to this condition is never fully clear. There exists little doubt, though, about what in his mind is *not* the remedy. While his Harvard roommate, Lawrence Bitfogel, had believed in revolution as a possible solution to poverty and injustice in a country like the Philippines, Tony emphatically rejects the idea of armed opposition. He cites as an object lesson the disastrous experience of his father—a participant in the "Colorum" uprisings of the 1930s who doubles in this text as the native revolutionary figure—imprisoned for conducting a rampage against the hacendero who had cheated him out of the title to the family land. He also points to the fate of the Huk movement, model for Bulosan's fictional revolutionary enterprise, crushed two decades later.

Without appearing to renounce the cause of fundamental social transformation, Tony insists that "the weapons have changed" (pp. 40, 131). Again, the nature of these new weapons is far from specific. But it seems possible to discern in his aspirations the outlines of something resembling the "mobilization . . . [of] the intelli-

gentsia" called for by Dr. Tamesis in order to counteract the "devitalizing virus" of upper-class rapaciousness and corruption (Tamesis 1967, 21). Tony Samson's particular contribution to this broadly intellectual task, given his academic specialty, would seem to be captured in the words of his U.P. dean: to redeem the "debased . . . spirit" of the Philippine present by "properly exorcis[ing] our colonial past" (p. 27). His Harvard dissertation, in fact, a "quotation" from which serves as the novel's epigraph, appears to be a study highly critical of the elitist and self-seeking tendencies of the original ilustrados, and by extension of the contemporary oligarchy.

One reason for the vagueness that exists about this repatriate's project is that he hardly gets a fair start on it. For Tony Samson not only studies in America but meets and becomes engaged there to Carmen, the beautiful mestiza daughter of industrialist Don Manuel Villa. From marrying into the Villa family it proves but a short step, aided by an obstacle that crops up in the way of his intended academic career, to working for the Villa corporation. In this employ the would-be idealistic historian turns his talents to some highly unidealistic purposes. In one especially glaring instance, he skews his scholarly findings on the ilustrados in order to put forward a sophisticated but specious brand of nationalism as an argument for government subsidization of a steel mill, a facility which, though nominally owned by the Villas, is in actuality controlled by the U.S. and other foreign investors. Far from "exorcising" the colonial past, then, his efforts help to perpetuate its hold over the present.

All the while Tony is selling out his principles he is neglecting his father. Fearful that knowledge of the imprisonment and the circumstances behind it might put him in bad odor with the Villas, he never repeats his first visit, and when the old man dies he does nothing to prevent the body from being turned over to the medical laboratories. Just as significantly, in both literal and symbolic terms, he also neglects Emy, the cousin with whom he had a liaison, and unknowingly left with child, before departing for the States. Emy is of course the 100 percent Filipina maiden in this narrative. Aptly residing in the Samson family's provincial hometown of Rosales, self-sacrificing (she had never told Tony about her pregnancy for fear of disrupting his studies abroad), fertile (she gives birth while Tony's wife Carmen resorts to an abortion), and dignified in the poverty that has resulted from her choices, she is the locus of much that is culturally and morally genuine in Philippine life. But Tony cannot, or will not, reestablish contact with this genuineness. Even when he

at last visits Emy in Rosales, no real reconciliation between them occurs. Nor can he bring himself to acknowledge the offspring of their union, a boy, as his son; in turn, Emy withholds Tony's true identity from the youngster.

The emotional fallout from this episode, plus mounting guilt over his role in the firm, and finally dramatic evidence of his wife's infidelity, combine to force the troubled young man to a reckoning. He breaks with Carmen and the Villas, and, tearing up the manuscript of his unpublished dissertation, appears to break as well with the vision he had carried with him back to the Philippines. Shortly thereafter, he ends his life under the wheels of an oncoming train. Thus for Tony Samson, unlike his predecessors Martin Romero and "Dante" Bustamente, but like Ibarra/Simoun, there is no reprieve from what several commentators have seen as a "tragic" end—an interpretation reinforced by the addition of a classically-inspired opening "Chorus" and a concluding "Chorus" to a revised version of the novel, and of course by the character's last name, linking him with one of the foremost Christian tragic heroes.<sup>17</sup>

However, to characterize his demise as tragic does not answer all the questions that need to be asked of Jose's Tony Samson as a repatriate protagonist: questions of sociocultural allegiance and identity, first of all, then of the nature, success or failure, and ultimate implications of his repatriate project. Moreover, since *The Pretenders* is unusually, perhaps wilfully ambiguous on precisely these points, some substantial additional analysis will be required in order to make these assessments.

As to allegiance and identity, the choices Tony makes are clear, and before he dies he comes just as clearly to regret them. He recognizes "that it was [Emy] whom he really loved, it was Emy after all who was a part of him that really mattered"; and he takes consolation from the prospect that "the boy would be different, rooted in the land, unlike him[self] who had severed his roots" (p. 191). But a further, more difficult issue, and one having to do not only with cultural loyalty but with the role this repatriate plays in his society, is suggested by the terms of these recognitions. In what did this "sever[ance of] his roots," this alienation from the culture, class, and "land" of his birth, even from an original "part of him[self]," consist, and how and when did it take place? Did it occur only with the decision to marry Carmen and the subsequent casting of his lot with the Villas? Or did the process perhaps begin earlier, with Tony's decision to go to the States and the lifestyle, influences, and ideas

he encountered there? Might the expatriate experience in America, so far from providing him with the "beginning of wisdom" and "new weapons" to fight the ills of greed, corruption, and injustice in his native land, have actually blunted his moral sensitivity to these conditions? Might that experience have constituted the first stage of his capitulation to, contamination by the "dark force" he had ostensibly set out to conquer or cure?

This second possibility, which is of course the one raised in the *Noli*, where Elias's challenges make it apparent that Ibarra's European education has blinded him to the urgency of fundamental reform at home, is the subject of conflicting testimony within the text. On the one hand, several indications tend to confirm this view of the matter. There is first of all Tony's historical assessment of the foreign-trained ilustrados, *a la* Ibarra and Rizal, as unsympathetic to structural social change: an assessment which, as one critic has noted, can equally well be applied to the historian himself (Kintanar 1989, 19). Tony does so apply it, and seems to locate his defection even earlier than the actual decision to go abroad, perhaps in his initial enthusiasm for formal schooling, as he reflects that "he . . . had been corrupt from the start, when he did not believe what his father and even his grandfather had believed in" (p. 180). That reflection receives reinforcement, just as Tony's conviction that his son will not be "severed [from] his roots" draws assurance, from the fact Emy has turned down his offer to send the boy "to the best schools—even to the United States afterwards" (p. 148). On the other hand, a strongly opposing viewpoint is expressed, in the epilogue to the novel, by Tony's former graduate school roommate, the American Lawrence Bitfogel. Visiting Manila some time after the suicide, Bitfogel upholds the "promise" (p. 195) of the ideals with which his friend had returned to the Philippines. Lamenting the fate of Tony and others like him, he broods:

And where were the young people . . . who had gone to the United States and to its fountainhead of wisdom if not of courage? . . . because they were destroyed the country and the beneficent change that could come over it were lost, lost, and the future which once seemed so evocative and real, when it was but an academic subject to be tossed around . . . had been aborted in the dank bowels of the earth (pp. 212-13).

Now there is a good deal Bitfogel does not know about his friend's life after graduate school, and at least one additional ironic

possibility (i.e., that he works for an unspecified U.S. government "Agency") shadows his defense of Tony's motives and the purity of the American "fountainhead." But the fact that his is the last word, together with the obvious sincerity and passion with which he speaks, make it impossible to dismiss his views.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it is probably best to read *The Pretenders* as deeply ambivalent on the question of the proper sociocultural sources for what this visitor calls "beneficent change" in the Philippines. Ambivalent and perhaps at the same time dialectical: like other repatriate narratives before it this novel would seem to hold out the possibility, although certainly not the actuality, of equally genuine foreign and Filipino impulses contributing to the transformation of national life. Allowance for such a synthesis may even be made in the seemingly most arrogant of the American character's judgments: if the "wisdom" Tony Samson and those like him are presumed to draw from their experience and training in the U.S. is necessary to the progressive restructuring of Philippine society, "courage," Bitfogel indicates, may also be required; and he implies that it is a virtue not attainable in this same way. Indeed, the novel as a whole strongly suggests that this quality, and the perhaps equally indispensable one of goodness, may be best derived from indigenous sources—from, metaphorically speaking, the figures of the elder Samson and Emy, respectively.

Lastly, there is the matter of evaluating this repatriate's achievement or lack of it. At one point before he walks to the railroad tracks Tony feels himself confronted by "the smallness and the terrifying finality of his failure" (p. 180). Certainly at this moment his original hopes lie literally in shreds (of manuscript). But should this self-judgment be accepted, accorded "finality"? Conflicting testimony comes, once again, from the protagonist and his posthumous apologist, Lawrence Bitfogel. Tony confesses at one point to a sense of having "sinned" (p. 178) and "defeated himself" (p. 180), while the American thinks of his friend as a man more sinned against than sinning, the victim of a conspiracy. "All of you," Bitfogel charges, in an outburst that might have found a place in *Noli Me Tangere* had it been directed at the Spanish clergy rather than the representatives of the moneyed elite gathered for a party at the Villas, "you conspired, you killed Antonio Samson. Why the poor guy didn't have a chance! You had snuffed out his life before he could fling himself on the tracks" (pp. 213–14).) Not surprisingly, critics of the novel have been divided on this point as well.<sup>19</sup> But without attempting to enter into the controversy, which would involve us in complex

issues of character and moral responsibility, it may be suggested that, solely on the level of practical results, Tony's feelings of "failure" and "defeat" with respect to his repatriate project prove premature, and his friend's subsequent lament that all has been "lost, lost," appears overly apocalyptic.

This is so because the young intellectual's suicide has an impact upon two key personages within the novel. Don Manuel Villa, obviously shaken by the depth of disaffection implied in his son-in-law's act, takes to making bitter criticisms of the behavior of his own class, along the lines Tony would have articulated had he been able to muster the nerve to speak out. Carmen Villa Samson's response is even more dramatic, and of potentially greater impact over the long run. Before losing her mind to grief and guilt, she painstakingly pieces together her husband's damaged manuscripts and sees to the publication of his dissertation, even selling her trademark imported Thunderbird to finance the printing costs. Thus in suicide, whether we wish to accept or not the view that Tony himself eventually adopts of it as a personally redemptive gesture, his "only act of strength and courage and, perhaps, faith" (p. 192), this repatriate does find his only effective "new weapon," his means of initiating a larger redemption. Through his death Tony Samson succeeds in posing, on a personal (but also, by means of the newly-published "*The Ilustrados*," possibly on a public) scale, the Tamesis-style ethically therapeutic challenge to the Filipino oligarchy that he had failed to pose in life. Through this ending, too, *The Pretenders* repeats the pattern, evident in earlier narratives, in which success—or, more modestly, a glimmer of future possibility—emerges from the apparent ruin of repatriate intentions.

### Roots of the Theme in Philippine Culture

While the foregoing treatment has not surveyed the entire range of repatriate narratives, enough has been said, I hope, to establish the textual and intertextual claims stated at the outset of the article: that a repatriate theme exists in Philippine second-language fiction; that it consists at the narrative level in the situation of a protagonist returning to the homeland in search of a whole personal and cultural identity and intent on bettering in some way the lives of his or her countrymen; that it consists also in, or is commonly expressed through a regular if not absolutely fixed configuration of



structural-symbolic elements (the lover as embodiment of one set or another of cultural values, the parental figure in distress as personification of Philippine society, the motif of illness or barrenness as additional social trope, the native activist as counterweight to the repatriate's foreign-inspired vision of betterment); finally that, as such, the theme deeply informs a number of individual works and defines a distinct literary genre. In this concluding section I want to move on to explore more directly the contextual significance of the theme and genre. What features or patterns discernible in repatriate narrative, viewed now more or less as a whole, have roots and/or resonance in the larger reaches of Philippine literature, culture, and historical experience?

Actually, any number of aspects of the novels just reviewed suggest themselves for consideration in this regard.<sup>20</sup> Two, however, stand out as major preoccupations of the individual readings, and may be taken to hold the most crucial import for the meaning of the genre. One of these of course is the tension between foreign and indigenous claims on cultural values/identity and plans for social action that so potently shapes the choices of the different repatriate protagonists. The resolution of this tension generally takes the form, as we have seen, of a dialectically envisioned (as opposed to actualized) balance between the competing claims. This is a pattern well worth investigating. But, since that balance appears to shift or to be otherwise markedly disrupted in texts written after 1970, I prefer to reserve comment on the entire matter for the projected follow-on study dealing with these more recent additions to the genre. The second recurrent problem encountered in the novel-by-novel analysis, and one regarding which less appreciable change seems to have taken place of late, has to do with the repatriate per se, the characteristic experience of this figure and the upshot of his or her actions. This will be the subject of the remaining discussion.

Probably the most obvious common feature in the lot of the fictional repatriates studied here, in addition to the alienation that makes all of them descendants of the first "stranger in [his] own country," Ibarra, and kin to the hero of Achebe's aptly titled *No Longer at Ease*, is failure. None of these characters achieve the vision or project or desire with which they return to their homeland. (A partial exception here, as to the statement regarding alienation, may be Dante Bustamante, with his putative internal integration of two cultural "personalities.") The factors that contribute to defeat them are various: conspiracy of powerful interests, tacit resistance on the

part of the entire community, chance, fate, the will of God, harshness or weakness of character.<sup>21</sup> The result, however, is invariably the same. One significance of that result, often remarked on, is that it represents a negation of the ostensibly archetypal pattern of triumphal, boon-bearing heroic return.<sup>22</sup>

A possible explanation for the deviation of Philippine repatriate narrative from the logic of the "monomyth" may be found in the account of the writer who has applied Campbell's ideas to Rizal and the *Noli*. N.V.M. Gonzalez argues that Ibarra's seemingly unheroic failure to provide an antidote to the "social cancer" is not only understandable but aesthetically proper, "as it should be":

... for only myth accepts the possibility of relief, of final cure. Life denies this end to the story of the adventurer- hero; after all, writers have a debt to life which must be paid in terms of conventional truth (Gonzalez 1961: 27).

The distinction between "myth" and "life" or "conventional truth" is undoubtedly a pertinent one, and insofar as the latter pair of terms together can be taken to invoke the standards of realistic fiction, the distinction may be applied to other texts in the genre, none of which is a directly mythopoeic work of romance or fantasy. However, as an explanation for Ibarra's or any other repatriate's failure this hypothesis is far too broad. For why should "life," reality, be so unalterably inimical to the possibility not only of "final cure," but even "relief," and with it a modest measure of success on the part of the returning hero? It did not prove so in the case of Peter the Great, to take one example direct from "life." Of course, Gonzalez' own historical example is Rizal, whose fate was in fact quite close to that of his own fictional creation and that creation's successors; so that perhaps if the formulation were modified to read, "*Philippine* life denies this end to the story . . .," it would approach closer to defining the true context for this aspect of the fictional Filipino repatriate's narrative profile.

But before venturing any further speculation on what C.P. Romulo once termed, in a similar attempt to background a literary phenomenon, the "national reality" (Romulo 1964, 10)—and offering the additional check to generalization that repatriate protagonists in other "postcolonial" literatures, at least, appear to fail with some regularity, also<sup>23</sup>—let us look to situate our problematic observation within what can be known of the national culture. The failure syn-

drome as encountered in these five Philippine novels finds its most proximate, local source and meaning not in the actuality of a historical or life situation but in an aesthetic, and a cultural predisposition: a predisposition, which Gonzalez' statement itself obliquely exemplifies, toward an "end to the story" other than the one suggested by the monomyth. Leon Ma. Guerrero best describes this predisposition when he writes of a "national fondness for tragedy," a propensity to respond most deeply to the spectacle of "tragic failure" (Guerrero 1963, 500). As a different commentator puts it, in other national traditions the hero is customarily allowed a measure of personal triumph, whereas the Filipino hero is "doomed to suffer and die" (Dahm 1988). While repatriate protagonists do not always meet fates so stark as that, their failures, and sometimes their suffering and their deaths, are "tragic" enough. Moreover, textual details such as the wailing woman in *His Native Soil*, nature's dirge for Dante Bustamente, and the "Choragus-Chorus" frame added by Jose to *The Pretenders*, suggest points of more or less conscious affinity between repatriate narrative and this generic predilection of the national taste.

But, as we have also seen, failure and doom do not toll the absolute "end of the story" in these novels. This in fact differentiates them from the limited number of other postcolonial repatriate narratives with which I am acquainted, where failure tends to be abject and final. In one after another of the Philippine texts, excepting perhaps the *Fili*, some hope of future achievement arises out of the ruin of the initial intentions. Indeed, even the bleakness of Rizal's second novel is relieved by Padre Florentino's oracular response to Simoun's complaint against his fate: "The vessel must be shaken or broken to release the perfume, the stone must be struck to raise the spark." While it is not clear what sort of "perfume" or "spark" might be given off by the destruction of Simoun, whose efforts appear to be thoroughly condemned in the text, the words do have relevance to the cases of other repatriate protagonists. Dante Bustamente and Tony Samson represent precisely such productively damaged vessels. It is through their "tragic" ends, that is, through the effects these have on others, that possibilities are created more far-reaching than any they could have initiated through their own deliberate efforts. True, the cause and effect relations between personal downfall and the chances for ultimate triumph are by no means so clear in the case of Martin Romero, who also survives to undertake those chances for himself. But the pattern itself stands out with some degree of

definition in this group of works, and in the genre as a whole. Moreover, it is by virtue of this pattern that the genre can be seen to answer to the other half, or what might rather be conceived as the whole, and distinctive significance of the national cultural "predisposition." For, again according to L. Guerrero, Filipinos do not value failure, or for that matter tragedy, for its own sake, but only insofar as these are subsumed into the larger end of sacrifice. "We save our highest homage and deepest love for the Christ-like victims whose mission is to consummate by their tragic 'failure' the redemption of our nation" (Guerrero 1963).

This religiously-charged connection is a crucial one, shedding light on a number of yet unanswered questions about the background and significance of the repatriate protagonist. For one thing, in the Christian sacrificial ideal this figure finds a warrant for his or her characteristic narrative fortune of dismal fate, hopeful legacy—a warrant no less archetypally mythic than the Campbellian scenario. The story of Christ's life, passion, death, and resurrection constitutes what historian Reynaldo Ileto has termed a "universally held reference myth" (Ileto 1985, 11). Furthermore, the same story also forms the substance of what Ileto has shown to be a specifically Filipino cultural myth, anchored in the popular poetic epic known as the *pasyon* (Ileto 1979, 11–22). Insofar as the repatriate displays an affinity with the hero of the *pasyon*, a more or less national form and one integral to the vernacular tradition of Philippine literature and culture, s/he can be said to transcend the boundaries of second-language fiction and find a context broadly and genuinely Filipino.

Finally, it is this element of context that allows us to bridge most surely from the national culture to the "national reality." As Ileto has also demonstrated, the *pasyon* myth has lived a profoundly double, dialectical life as both literary narrative and scenario of historical experience. Leaders or heroes of periodic mass movements in the Philippines have either acted out or been perceived to act out the leading role in this Filipinized Christian drama (Ileto 1975, 13). More to the point, historical repatriates have been among these figures. Guerrero's remarks about tragedy and Christ-like redemption, for example, are made with immediate reference to Rizal. They serve both to differentiate the career of this first Filipino repatriate from the success story of Peter the Great and to correct, with a fuller view of Philippine "reality," N.V.M. Gonzalez's implicit perception of nothing more than ("realistic") failure in that career. For while Rizal "died a 'failure' in the eyes of the world," according to Guer-

rero he nonetheless became—by virtue of a process similar to the one Iletto associates with *pasyon*, and similar to the one we have seen in certain works of repatriate fiction—a hero in the eyes of his countrymen and a catalyst for their collective action (Guerrero 1963). A similar pattern obtains in the case of the second legend-sized historical repatriate mentioned at the outset of the essay. Ninoy Aquino also failed to achieve in his own lifetime the vision of change that had animated him. But, according to a recent commentary by Iletto, his martyr-like death activated the mass cultural and political dynamics of the national myth in support of the ends he had sought (Iletto 1985, 10–13). Thus Aquino like Rizal—and like Dante Bustamente and Tony Samson and, more tenuously, like Ibarra/Simoun and Martin Romero—through his “failure” set in motion forces that could eventually, and perhaps more swiftly and surely than a conventional personal triumph, bring his vision to pass.

To position the repatriate protagonist within this particular literary-cultural and historical context is, of course, to position the larger theme and genre there as well. Moreover, the terms on which that positioning has been achieved suggest some final words with respect to the phenomenon as a whole. Philippine second-language repatriate fiction stands at the interface of a number of conceptually and practically important boundaries: between history and culture, first of all, or art and life; between elite and popular vernacular traditions of expression; universal and local sources of form; foreign and indigenous sources of inspiration. Most palpably, though, this body of texts defines the conjuncture of two meanings, two powerful “predispositions,” rooted dialectically in the “national reality” and the national culture. Repatriate fiction embodies in the career of its central figure and in the larger narrative outcome of that career, respectively, a deep current of tragic pessimism regarding the efficacy of individual human action, and an equally profound, uniquely Filipino style of hope in a collective, more than humanly guided destiny.

### Notes

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1. I employ the designation "second-language" in order to comprehend works written in both Spanish and English and to acknowledge the special position that these languages have occupied in the Philippines.

2. Subsequent references to these works will be by page number, in parentheses within the text of the article. One or two references to another English translation of *El Filibusterismo* will be noted separately.

3. To appear as a research note in a subsequent issue of *Philippine Studies*.

4. It might well be objected that, due to unusually pronounced differences of region, language, and class, no Philippine culture per se may be said to exist. Without wishing to enter into the debate on this matter, I have adopted what appears to be the working premise of historian Reynaldo C. Ileto, who in *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979, 9), does speak of a "lowland Philippine society" unified by certain cultural forms capable of transcending class divisions. It should of course be noted that Ileto's analysis focuses upon the Tagalog-speaking region only.

5. Thelma Kintanar (1990, 84) also notes the existence of a "motif" in Philippine fiction of "the young man who goes abroad to further his education and comes back home, fired by a scheme for improving his community/country. . . ."

6. Additional treatments of the repatriate situation in "postcolonial" literature in English include the Samoan writer Albert Wendt's "The Coming of the Whiteman," (1988) and three novels I have not been able to cite: Indian R.K. Narayan's, *The Vendor of Sweets*, West Indian Neil Bissoondath's *A Casual Brutality*, and Iranian Nahid Rachlin's *Foreigner*. For a survey and theoretical exposition of this emergent field of writing see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989).

7. A leading exponent of the importance of the second-language tradition has been Leonard Casper, who expressly takes issue with Lumbar's marginalization of English writing in *Firewalkers* (1987, 135).

8. For relevant treatments of Rizal's life see Leon Ma. Guerrero (1963) and Miguel Bernad (1986).

9. On the general point of the subsequent influence of the *Noli* and the *Fili* see Thelma B. Kintanar (1990).

10. On the general matter of the *Noli*'s sources in "the unique intellectual milieu of late nineteenth-century Europe" see Raul J. Bonoan (1987, 5).

11. Elias is not the only stay-at-home Filipino in the novel to exhibit wisdom. Ibarra's school project is partly inspired by a prior initiative on the part of a local schoolmaster, and reference will shortly be made to the character of a native philosopher. While a good deal of testimony exists to the effect that "Rizal conceived his task to be one of bringing the culture and progress of contemporary Europe to his countrymen" (John Schumacher, quoted in Bernad, [1986, 147]), others have pointed out that he was neither out of touch with nor lacking in respect for the achievements of Philippine culture. See for example Serafin D. Quison (1973: 57).

12. On the anarchist model, Daroy (1965, 153).

13. My reading of *His Native Soil* has been informed by Emmanuel Torres, "The Sense of Community in Juan Laya's Novels" (1979, 56-70).

14. For biographical treatments of Bulosan, E. San Juan, Jr., *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of Class Struggle* (1972); P.C. Morante, *Remembering Carlos Bulosan* (1984); Susan Evangelista, *Carlos Bulosan and His Poetry: A Biography and Anthology* (1985).

15. On the barren or "waste" land see Jessie L. Weston (1957).

16. My attention was drawn to this episode by Teodoro (1990) who comments that it "should be . . . particularly offensive to both feminists as well as nationalists."

17. On this point see, in Morales (1989), "Fiction as Tragedy" (p. 44); Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, "A Modern National Epic" (pp. 80, 82); Igor Podberezsky, "The Creative Work of F. Sionil Jose" (p. 51). The version of the novel containing the revisions referred to (and others) has since become standard, although I did not become aware of its existence until late in the process of completing this study, and have based my analysis principally on the initial text.

18. The text does not use the "Agency" affiliation in any overt way to discredit Bitfogel and in fact makes it plain that he stands morally head and shoulders above the members of the Filipino elite among whom he moves in this epilogue. In an interview author Jose confirms his own positive view of the character (Bresnahan 1990, 82).

19. The opposing opinions are epitomized in Miguel Bernad's verdict that Tony's suicide is an "easy way out," "not an act of bravery but of cowardice . . . an essentially selfish reaction to humiliation and defeat," and Elizabeth Yoder's evaluation of it as a "courageous act of rebellion against his enslavement by the oligarchy that he basically rejects." Bernad, "The Problem of Integrity" (1989, 4, 10); Yoder, "Under the Balete Tree" (1989, 69).

20. The list of such contextually significant common features could probably begin with the structural-symbolic configuration that appears throughout the genre. What relation might it have to what Ricardo Demetillo has termed the "mythopoeic tradition in Philippine literature"? Demetillo quoted in Rosella Moya, "Fictional Characters in the National Consciousness: The Past," National Conference on Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman Campus, 17 Oct 1989. Other examples would include the seemingly regular alternation between reform- and revolution-oriented repatriate narratives, together with specific, evidently deep and intricate opposition that surfaces within so many texts between education and revolution. While these patterns may be entirely familiar to Filipino readers they strike an outside observer as remarkable and worthy of inquiry. Further, whether they urge reform or revolution, the fictional repatriates surveyed here stand unanimous behind the conviction that change of some kind in the society needs to occur. This conviction, replete with metaphors of dysfunction and visions of therapeutic transformation, would seem to place the genre within the mainstream of a Philippine literature whose "pre-occupation," according to C. P. Romulo (1964, 10), has consisted in "research into the national pathology" and "raising alternative images to the condition of the national reality." At the same time, we see in repatriate fiction a tendency, perhaps in contradiction of this diagnosis, perhaps as an antidote to the "pathology" of the sociopolitical order, to idealize the values of traditional Philippine culture.

21. Kintanar too (1990, 4), notes the pattern of failure among fictional Filipino repatriates, observing that the figures are "foiled by circumstances, among them the corruption, the resistance to change and the narrowness and lack of vision in [the] society."

22. In actuality, the "monomyth" becomes somewhat fragmented in what Campbell acknowledges as the unusually problematic homecoming stage. "Many failures," he writes, "attest to the difficulties" of the hero's "ultimate task" of translating and teaching the wisdom acquired in the other realm (Campbell 1949, 218). However, the unanimity of failure on the part of Filipino repatriates is remarkable and invites the further investigation it will receive in the text.

23. In addition to the novels by Rushdie and Achebe, Wendt's story "The Coming of the Whiteman" provides another example of repatriate failure (and alienation).

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