

Tagalog Journalism in *Renacimiento Filipino* (1910-1913): Sowing the Seeds of the Nationalist Essay in Philippine Literature

Eulalio R. Guieb III

Translated by Philip Y. Kimpo, Jr.

Tagalog journalism in the publication *Renacimiento Filipino* (1910-1913) can be deemed as one of the initial sowing of seeds of nationalist essay in Philippine literature. The twenty-eight essays by Francisco Laksamana, Faustino Aguilar, Carlos Ronquillo, Precioso Palma, Julian C. Balmaseda, Iñigo Ed. Regalado, Dionisio S. Agustin and others examined for this study embodied the Filipinos' sentiments on tearing down the bastion of dubious knowledge installed by both the outgoing Spanish colonizers and the intruding Americans.

This study identifies four views that were criticized by the essays in *Renacimiento Filipino*. The first pertains to things or events that were purportedly prescribed by God. The second is the supposed natural state of inequality among the people. The third is the alleged inherent indolence of the Filipinos which is one of the reasons for the people's poverty. The fourth is the Filipinos' acceptance of the United States as the savior of the Philippines.

Keywords: *Renacimiento Filipino*, essay, Tagalog journalism, colonial history

Plucking the Strings of a History Muzzled by Illusions

This study argues that the Tagalog journalism in *Renacimiento Filipino* is one of the initial sowings of seeds of nationalist essays in Philippine literature, which is under the same category that literary scholars have classified similar works. (e.g., Abadilla, 1950; Cruz-Lucero, 1994; Lumbea, 1984, 2000; Mojares, 1994).¹

Renacimiento Filipino was a weekly publication from 1910 to 1913. It had two sections: the first half had articles written in Spanish, while the second was in Tagalog. It became an independent publication after 1913, and was called *Muling Pagsilang* (Agoncillo, 1953), which was changed that same year to *Taliba* (Tiongson, 1994).

Renacimiento Filipino was the product of a controversial issue in the history of Philippine journalism. On 30 October 1908, *El Renacimiento* published its editorial titled, "Aves de rapiña," written by Fidel Reyes. *El Renacimiento* was a weekly publication founded by Rafael Palma in 1901. Its articles were written in Spanish, although there was a section in Tagalog, called *Muling Pagsilang*.

The then Secretary of the Interior, Dean Worcester, did not take kindly to the editorial's attacks on the policies of the United States. He filed a libel case against Reyes and included the newspaper's editor, Teodoro M. Kalaw, its owner Martin Ocampo, and even *Muling Pagsilang's* editorial board, with Lope K. Santos as the director and Faustino Aguilar as editor. *El Renacimiento* lost its case in 1910. Reyes, Kalaw, and Ocampo were sentenced to prison and penalized with hefty fines (United States v. Martin Ocampo, et al., 1910). The publication closed that same year. In 1914, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed the libel case. The journalists were never imprisoned after they were pardoned by Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison (Agoncillo, 1990; Cruz-Lucero, 1994; Palma, 1994; Schirmer & Shalom, 1987). Despite this, the journalists were never fazed: Ocampo founded *Renacimiento Filipino* in 1910, Reyes started *Revista Economica* in 1912 (Tiamson, 1994), Kalaw became a member of the Philippine Assembly in 1909-1912 and its secretary in 1912-1916 (Tiamson & Tiongson, 1994), Aguilar continued with *Muling Pagsilang* which he called *Taliba* starting 1910 (Tiongson, 1994), and Santos continued to be active in labor issues and continued to pen radical and pro-laborer works (Tiongson & Picart 1994).

Back then, the term *sanaysay* (Filipino for "essay") did not exist in the Philippines to refer to such works in Tagalog, but I will use this label to advance the argument that these were examples of the incipient essays in Tagalog during the era of American colonialism. In fact, the term 'essay' was already applied to works in Spanish and English that were written in this form.² According to Abadilla (1950), the term *sanaysay* can be said to have been coined in 1938 for works in Tagalog and other Philippine languages aside from Spanish and English "when the first two and the last issues of the magazine *Panitikan* were published" ("nang malathala ang dalawang una at huling bilang ng rebistang *Panitikan*;" p. ix). The 'sanaysay,' he said in Filipino, "is a narration of a *sanáy*, or is the written experience of one who is *sanáy* in narration" ("pagsasalaysay ng isang *sanáy*, o nakasulat na karanasan ng isang *sanáy* sa pagsasalaysay;" p. ix), with *sanáy* pertaining to a person who is skilled or is an expert.

Many scholars have traced the roots of the Tagalog essay to the works of Jose Rizal ("Sa mga Kababayang Dalaga ng Malolos," 1889), Marcelo H. del Pilar ("Katungkulang Gagawin ng mga Anak ng Bayan," 1893), Emilio Jacinto (*Kartilya ng Katipunan*, 1894, and *Liwanag at Dilim*, 1896), Apolinario Mabini ("Ang Tunay na Sampung Utos," 1898), and Andres Bonifacio ("Katungkulang Gagawin ng mga Z. LL. B," 1893, and "Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog," 1896) (Lumbera, 1984, 2000; Lumbera & Lumbera, 1982; Majul, 1964; Quirino & Hilario, 1924; Tiongson & Cruz-Lucero, 1994). Also, according to scholars,

the first essay in Tagalog is Tomas Pinpin's introduction to his own book in 1610, the *Librong Pagaaralan nang mga Tagalog nang Ulicang Castila*, which is recognized as the first published work by a Tagalog ladino (Cruz-Lucero, 1994; de los Santos, 1913; Lumbera, 1986; Rafael, 1988). There is also Padre Pedro de Herrera's *Meditaciones: cun manga mahal na pagninilay na sadia sa Santong pageexercisios* (1645), which is about the author's evoking the conscience of Christians (Lumbera, 2000). Earning mention is the work written by the native priest Modesto de Castro in 1864, the *Pagsusulatan ng Dalauang Binibini na si Urbana at ni Feliza*; the work is not only an attempt in initiating the form of the novel but is also a collection of essays in Tagalog (Cruz-Lucero, 1994; Lumbera, 2000; Lumbera & Lumbera, 1982). The nationalist tradition in Tagalog essays was strengthened in works that appeared in the newspaper *Muling Pagsilang* from 1901 to 1910 (Zafra, 1993), which was continued by *Renacimiento Filipino*.

It cannot be denied that the prolonged era of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines wreaked havoc on the Filipinos' consciousness. The wounds inflicted on the identity, soul, and consciousness of the people were seemingly and fleetingly cured by the Katipunan's revolution. This healing of wounds was never fully realized even as the wings of neocolonialism, along with the Filipino ilustrados' desertion of the Katipunan's principles, took flight as the 19th century gave way to the 20th. *Renacimiento Filipino* came to life in this historical context.

It should also be remembered that the newspapers' attempts to provide a critical study of Philippine events and developments under the aegis of the United States came at a time when the country was shrouded by unjust laws. Several such laws were: the Sedition Law (1901) which meted a penalty of death or lengthy imprisonment for anyone who desired to separate the Philippines from the United States; the 'Ley de Bandolerismo' or Brigandage Act (1902) which meted a penalty of death or lengthy imprisonment for anyone who took up arms against the Americans or aid armed Filipinos, which were labeled by the same law as bandits; and the Reconcentration Act (1903) which limited the people's freedom to move in their own communities (Constantino, 1975; Kalaw, 1926, 1939).

The independence won by the Katipuneros from the Spanish were taken away by the American imperialists, who during that time were expanding their sphere of influence in Asia, the Pacific, and Latin American countries (Constantino, 1970). The wound inflicted by the dagger of Spanish colonialism became a scar which was sliced open once again by the blade of subjugation of the United States' modern colonialism.

In truth, even this view of this part of our history teems with contradictions which have been gradually illuminated by some historians with the passing of the years, historians whose studies diverge from the outline of studies bequeathed to us by the colonialists themselves (Constantino, 1986). Agoncillo (1990), Constantino (1970, 1975, 1977), Covar (1993), Iletto (1979), Salazar (1983, 1997, 1999a), Scott (1982), and Veneracion (1983-84) are one in saying that our history needs to have a nationalist point of view. While their historiographies may not agree with one another, they are one in saying that the standpoint of those deemed to be on the fringes of power is often neglected. These marginalized views are what Constantino calls as the history of the inarticulate (Scott, 1982).³

Events and developments in the Philippine during the turn of the 19th century to the 20th are what I can call a chapter marked by betrayals and false beliefs. One of these beliefs is the view that the United States saved us from Spain, a view which was assailed by Constantino (1970):

The revolution against Spain and the war against America are not two separate epochs. They constitute one and the same historical phase of our anti-colonial struggle. Our war against the Americans was merely a continuation of our fight for freedom. Whereas in the first phase, in our struggle against Spain, we were in the process of fighting for independence, in the war against America we were defending an independence already won (p. 70).

In other words, *Renacimiento Filipino* began in an era when the off-key strings of the Filipino consciousness were being played and at the same time being rectified.

Weaving Off-Key Strings

Revolution is a tradition. This terse line probably illustrates the Filipino soul that has traversed the long historical continuum of national transformation. The history of the Philippines is a history of defiance, resistance, and warfare. Despite the regional or national triumphs of the uprisings spearheaded by the indios, the history of the Philippines is also a history of pretension and desertion (Agoncillo, 1990).

In this context, how was the shadow covered? How was the truth hidden? Constantino (1970, 1975, 1977) said that social realities during the Spanish

era was enfolded in the mirth of religion, while social truths in the American period was shrouded in the caress of education.

This was the age of the birth and death (or murder) of nationalist newspapers, such as the *La Solidaridad*, *Kalayaan*, *Republica Filipina*, *El Heraldo de la Revolucion*, *La Independencia*, *El Nuevo Dia*, *El Renacimiento* including *Muling Pagsilang*, and *Renacimiento Filipino* (Kalaw, 1926, 1939; Tiongson & Cruz-Lucero, 1994; Zafra, 1993).⁴ The time of *La Solidaridad* saw the publication of pamphlets similar in form to librettos of masses in Spanish, which can also be considered essays. One example is *Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog* by Andres Bonifacio, which is categorized by scholars as a lament (*hibik*). Other examples of lamentations include his poem *Ang Katapusang Hibik ng Pilipinas*, which is part of the trilogy of laments: the first two are *Ang Hibik ng Filipinas sa Inang España* by Hermenegildo Flores and *Ang Sagot ng España sa Hibik ng Filipinas* by Marcelo H. del Pilar (Agoncillo, 1963; Almario, 1993; Corpuz, 1989).

With the end of Spanish colonialism and the arrival of the Americans in the Philippines, Filipino journalists writing in Spanish and Tagalog played an important role. This study does not cover a thorough listing of these significant works. One thing is certain, however: these essays opposed the numerous erroneous policies, customs, and beliefs imposed by the imperialists of those times. This became my standard for using the word “critical” to describe this type of essay: the opposition to suppressive mindsets being advanced by the subjugators.

This present study is focused on *Renacimiento Filipino*. Its ranks of writers included novelists covered by this study: Faustino Aguilar, Francisco Laksamana, Precioso Palma, Iñigo Ed. Regalado, Carlos Ronquillo; the poet Julian Cruz Balmaceda; the critic Dionisio San Agustin; and other writers such as S. Gala and others who are only known by their *noms de plume*, such as Leonidas, Sinaganis, and Hercules.

I reiterate, this present study treats these articles not as mere journalistic works. I am endorsing the idea that these articles are the foundation of the nationalist essay in Tagalog in Philippine literature. This journalism—which can be treated as literature—possesses the robust deliberations on the contradictions in Philippine society during those times.

Methods of compiling data

I combed through all the issues of the Tagalog section of *Renacimiento Filipino* found in the Lopez Museum from June to September 1993. I was not able to keep count of all the articles I read in order to come up with an initial evaluation

of the articles. Once I had laid out my selection, I manually transcribed each article in longhand. I was careful not to alter any letter or word.

I chose twenty-eight (28) works from eleven (11) writers from 1910 to 1913. I did not attempt to have a representation from every year. I followed a simple standard for the selection: the writers' critical discussion of the country's current events. As mentioned earlier in this study, by "critical" I mean the works that disputed the off-key knowledge that were inherited from the Spanish or the inhuman standpoints being promulgated by the Americans.

	Author	Noms de Plume	Essay	Page and date published
1	Francisco Laksamana	Fidel	Larawan ng Buhay: Gutom at Pananalat	1(1): 22-27, 28 August 1910
2	Francisco Laksamana	Fidel	Noon at Ngayon (unang bahagi)	1(12): 27-28, 28 September 1910
3	Francisco Laksamana	Fidel	Noon at Ngayon (ikalawang bahagi)	1(13):22-23, 7 October 1910
4	Francisco Laksamana		Pangarap daw ang Pagkakaisa	1(18): 24-25, 14 November 1910
5	Francisco Laksamana		Lamig at Init (Dili-dili)	1(19): 28, 21 November 1910
6	Francisco Laksamana		Mga Aral na Tutupdin	1(21): 26, 7 December 1910
7	Francisco Laksamana		Ginugunitang Nagdaan: Sa Pagbabangong Puri	1(22): 26-27, 14 December 1910
8	Francisco Laksamana		Kristong-Dios at Kristong-Tao	1(23): 23-24, 21 December 1910
9	Francisco Laksamana		Pag-asa at Pananalig	1(26):32-33, 14 January 1911
10	Francisco Laksamana		Ang tunay na paglilingapan	1(28): 27-28, 28 January 1911
11	Francisco Laksamana		Dios at Katalagahan	1(32):30, 28 February 1911
12	Francisco Laksamana	Diego Bantil	Ang panahon ay ginto	3(78): 1063-1064, 14 February 1912
13	Faustino Aguilar		Ako ay ano?	1(1): 23, 7 Hulyo 1910
14	Faustino Aguilar		Lakas ng Damdamin: Ang Katiyagaa'y Bunga ng Pagkapalulong	1(2): 23-24, 14 July 1910

15	Faustino Aguilar		Laban sa Kasabian ng Malalaki: Isang Kaparaanan sa Pagtatanggol	1(7): 23-24, 21 August 1910
16	Faustino Aguilar		Isa sa Libo Nating Katungkulan	4(10): 471-472, 14 September 1913
17	Carlos Ronquillo	Crispin	Tao	1(5): 23-24, 7 August 1910
18	Carlos Ronquillo	Crispin	Isang Pagtatapat	1(9): 23, 7 September 1910
19	Precioso Palma	Palaspas	Mga Haka't KuroKuro: Suliranin Nang Panahon	1(26): 23, 14 January 1911
20	Precioso Palma	Palaspas	Iwan ang "Kahapon": Patungkol sa 1 ng Mayo	1(40): 23, 28 April 1911
21	Precioso Palma		Ang buhay ng pahayagan	numero extraordinario: 127, 7 July 1913
22		Sinaganis	Tungkol sa Mga Kababalaghan	1(5): 28-29, 7 August 1910
23		Leonidas	Pagkamatay sa katutubong ugali?	1(15): 31-32, 21 October 1910
24		Hercules	Ang Kapalaran nang Manggagawa: Alay sa mga Kawal-Dalita	1(23): 33-34, 21 December 1910
25	Julian C. Balmaseda		Ang naitutulong ng kapisanan sa ikatututo ng Bayan	3(136): 1395-1396, 28 April 1913
26	S. Gala		Ang mga Paaralang Bayan: Dagdagan ang Gugol	1(5): 33, 7 August 1910
27	Iñigo Ed. Regalado		Ang ating banal na tungkulin	numero extraordinario: 128 7 July 1913
28	Dionisio S. Agustin		Katangian pa ñg manggagawang pilipino	numero extraordinario: 146-147 7 July 1913

In fact, there are many more essays that could have been included in this category, but the present study cannot accommodate such a scope. I am currently collating all the essays again to be published as one anthology.

The writers of *Renacimiento Filipino* often used pen-names. I consulted the *Tagalog Periodical Literature* by Teodoro A. Agoncillo (1953) to cross-check their true identities. I learned that the noms de plume Fidel and Diego Bantil in

Renacimiento Filipino belonged to Francisco Laksamana, Crispin Resurreccion to Carlos Ronquillo, and Palaspas to Precioso Palma. Agoncillo did not mention who Sinaganis, Leonidas, and Hercules were, and I did not come across them in my other references (e.g., Galang, 1936; Garcia, 1965; Tiongson & Cruz-Lucero, 1994).

Tearing Down the Bastion of Colonialism

I identified four primary themes across the 28 selected essays. The first pertains to things or events that were made to be associated with Divine Will, including mysteries and other things that were purportedly prescribed by God. The second is the then prevailing view that an egalitarian society is impossible to achieve. The third is the alleged inherent indolence of Filipinos which is one of the reasons for the people's poverty. The fourth is the supposed warm reception of Filipinos towards the United States' entry into the country, something that indicates a view of the U.S. as savior of the Philippines.

The aforementioned themes are all melodies emanating from the off-key strings of consciousness. I will go over these one by one in this part of the study.

1. Everything is God's Will. It is important to worship and respect the mysteries or anything that is preordained by God.

The kind of Catholicism by the Spanish was a whip that lashed the smallest fold of the brain or innermost fiber of the guts of Filipino identity. In truth, Roman Catholicism castrated the identity of the Filipino people of many of its aspects, even though it can be said, if we take after Covar (1974, 1991), Iletto (1979, 1991), Nofuente (1981, 1996), Rafael (1988) and Salazar (1997, 1999a, 1999b), that many Filipinos accepted the teachings of Roman Catholicism not without a doubt or a reading that deviates from the church's intention. Many of the articles in *Renacimiento Filipino* did not only portray the effects of blind faith in God but also criticized the wrongs of a religion that had been mistaken as the true religion.

The essay "Tungkol sa Mga Kababalaghan" by Sinaganis (1910) fleshed out the corrupt relationship between religion and business. Every unusual incident, such as a miraculous Santo Niño or a wooden pillar with the likeness of the Virgin, and even a newly born foal with the face of a monkey, are without delay postulated as God's dictation or miracle. While the citizenry is being mystified by these miracles, the agents of the Church are setting into motion the factory of prayers even as the gods of business run the factory of manipulation. Oftentimes, the agents of the Church and the gods of business are one and the

same. The article ends with the author posing a question: “What do we gain by worshipping or respecting these mysteries?” (“Ano ang mapapala natin sa pagsamba o paggalang sa mga kababalaghan;” p. 29).

Laksamana’s “Dios at Katalagahan” (1911b) discusses the same topic. The essay goes against statements of the *banal* (the holy) that the eruption of the Taal Volcano is the Will of God. According to the article, the imprisonment of the mind in an objectionable faith such as this “creates indolence, negligence, and indifference” (“naglilikha ng katamaran, ng kapabayaan at pagpapatay-patayan;” p. 30). The essay explicitly exposes the “belief that *everything* is God’s Will is wrong, and not only this, but is also a mockery of God” (“ang paniniwalang kalooban ng Dios ang *lahat* ay mali, at di ganito lamang, kundi pagtampalasan sa Dios;” p. 30, emphasis in the original). The essay gains a wider social dimension by linking the blind devotion to God to the struggle for national sovereignty.

Kung lahat ay kalooban ng Dios, ay maisisisi pala sa Dios, pati ng pagkapasa amerikano ng Pilipinas na di kanilang lupa, at kalooban pa rin ng Dios pati ng ilang palakad dito ngayon na di ibig, bagkus idinaraing ng bayan.

At kung kalooban ng Dios ang lahat, sa pakikibaka ay di na pala kailangang gumamit ng baril ni magkukubli sa himpilan, pagka’t hindi rin lamang maaano kung di kaibigan ng Dios. (p. 30)

(If everything is God’s will, then God can be blamed, even for the Americans’ subjugation of the Philippines which is not their land, and the many policies today that the nation dislikes and even protests are still God’s will.

And if everything is God’s will, then there is no need to wield guns or to hide in stations in the struggle, for one will not be harassed if not a friend of God.)

Instead of crossing one’s arms over the chest and consigning everything to fate, “Diyos at Katalagahan” (Laksamana, 1911b) stresses that this mentality “should be buried under the shade of man’s new knowledge to act, toil, and liberate one’s thinking” (“dapat nang ibaon sa lilim ng mga bagong dunong ng tao na kumilos, magsumikap, palayain ang pag-iisip;” p. 30).

Palma's "Mga Haka't KuroKuro: Suliranin Nang Panahon" (1911) trumpets a similar call. After questioning God's partiality to the powerful because He has continuously allowed the weak to be oppressed, the sole remaining weapon of the weak is their defense of reason that will deliver them to the path of light.

Kaya't kapag ang katwiran ay binayaan at pinamalagi sa isang pagpapabaya ang lahat at iniaasa sa 'talaga' ng Diyos ay di mamamalas ni kailan man ang pamamanaag ng araw ng katubusan at pagkawagayway ng watawat sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng lahat.

Ang pagwawagi ng isang lahi, ang pananagumpay ng isang bayan, ang ikasusumpong ng isang hangad at ang pagkahango ng isang na sa hirap, ay na sa isang di pagpapabaya at pagtatanggol ng katwiran, buhay at karangalan. (p. 23)

(And so when reason is ignored and everything is left neglected and dependent on God's 'appointment,' the glimmer of the sun of redemption and the unfurling of the banner of equality will never be beheld.

The triumph of a race, the victory of a nation, the advent of a goal, and the deliverance from hardship lies in vigilance and the defense of reason, life, and honor.)

One concrete expression of an escapist mindset born of the teachings of the Catholic Church is dedicating the people to ecclesiastical activities until they fully forget their duties to the nation. This is the body of the essay titled "Lakas ng Damdamin: Ang Katiyagaa'y Bunga ng Pagkapalulong" by Aguilar (1910c). In truth, this is a study on how much an average citizen spends in complying with the church's affairs (for example, necklaces, scapularies, candles every day, Masses, and contributions to fiestas) which would have been better spent by a poor person on food. Aguilar suggests that this amount and perseverance would have a better purpose if offered not to the shrine of the Church but to the "shrine of the nation" ("dambana ng bayan;" p. 24). This perseverance will deliver the destitute Filipinos from the morass of ignorance and poverty:

Gunitain ninyong sandali kung ano ang nangyari sana sakaling ang tinurang damdamin ay napahilig halimbawa sa pagtatayo

ng mga pagawaan at makikitang sa lugal ng nagpapalaguan sa laking mga simbahan, ay mga pagawaang maaaliwalas ang natatayo ngayon, sa lugal ng mga bahay-pari ay mga bahay sana ng karunungan ang hinahangaan natin at sa lugal ng mga dambanang sagana sa yaman, ay mga tahanan sanang sagana sa kaligayahan. (p. 23)

Imagine for a moment what could be if such sentiments are devoted for example to the establishment of factories, and if in the places where big churches stand spacious factories were instead built, if in the places of priests' quarters we instead adore houses of knowledge, and if in the places of shrines teeming in riches there were instead homes abundant in happiness.)

Even as these essays criticize the deceit of blind faith, they reinforce the belief in reason and the fulfillment of the duty to defend it. This is most noticeable in "Kristong-Dios at Kristong-Tao," again by Laksamana (1910b). The essay is a didactic lesson on the rights of the weak and the oppressed. The article also castigates the affluent and society's little kings regarding their abuses on the frailty of the small.

Kinakailangang ituro rito, na di sapagkat ang tao'y mayaman at masalapi ay may katwiran nang kandilihin ng pinuno, iayo ng namamahala, umuyam sa mahihirap, umilit pati sa tumutulong pawis ng walang makain.

Kinakailangang ituro rito, na, hindi sapagkat maralita ay ipayurak na ang dangal at magpapakababang-asal sa harap ng kaniyang matwid na naalipusta. (p. 24)

(Here it is necessary to lecture that a person's riches do not justify his accommodation by the leader, his deliverance by the governor, his derision of the destitute, his seizure of even the drops of sweat of the hungry.

Here it is necessary to lecture that a person's poverty does not mean that his honor be besmirched and that he act without manners in front of the righteous that he offended).

Although the aforementioned essays state that the people are burdened with corrupt practices resulting from twisted mindsets, these do not fail to trace the root of the problem: that these are the fruits of the erroneous lessons of the Roman Catholic faith. By presenting new lessons, the definition of God is given a new dimension or moral.

Foremost among these new lessons, again from the essay “Lakas ng Damdamin: Ang Katiyagaa’y Bunga ng Pagkapalulong” by Aguilar (1910c) is recognizing that it is “always good to base any action on what is actually taking place” (“kailanma’y mabuting sa *nangyayari* hanguin ang mga batayan ng alin mang pagkilos;” p. 24). We can see here, and in the aforementioned works, the traces of a social materialist criticism that diverges from the viewpoint packaged by the Church and consumed by the people.

It can be surmised that the aforementioned essays take after Emilio Jacinto in his two Tagalog works, “Ang Maling Pagsampalataya” and “Ang Gumawa” that are both found in the *Liwanag at Dilim* (in Almario, 1993; Salazar, 1999b). Lope K. Santos will also echo these views the monograph *Hindi Talaga ng Diyos* that he published in 1912 (Cruz-Lucero, 1994).

2. The equality we aspire for is a mere figment of the imagination and will never become a reality, for there is a natural demarcation among the states of persons: there is a lord and there is a slave.

One of the methods a subjugator follows to further his ascendancy over the subjugated is to promulgate the unequal development of races, wherein his race stands far greater than the conquered nation. I suspect that this mindset has been drilled deep into the Filipino consciousness by way of the teachings of the Church during the Spanish era and the educational books propagated during the American period. This is to justify the utter dearth of reason behind their domination of the country. An example would be the series of articles published in *La Verdad*, a newspaper in Madrid (Burgos, 1864). While the article is about Church matters, it is clear that the writings disparage the Filipino race:

The Filipino by reason of his idiosyncrasies, his character, the influence of climate or race is not good in the discharge of high duties. It is a vulgar truism that the Tagalog is an excellent Soldier, a commonplace Corporal, a poor Sergeant, without any ability or capacity to perform the work of an Officer because of his unfitness for the position. (*La Verdad*, as mentioned by Burgos, 1864, p. 30)

The American occupation of our nation is also based on the belief that the Filipinos are a lesser race, a collection of untamed animals. This can be perceived from Blount's criticism of the United States' management of the Philippines: "Now the reason the [U.S.] nation blundered into taking the Philippines was that it believed the Filipinos to be not a people, but a jumble of savage tribes" (Blount, 1913, p. 625).

In truth, this view was present in statements made by then U.S. president, William McKinley, which first appeared in the *Christian Advocate*: "...(3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died" (as mentioned by Schirmer & Shalom 1987, pp. 22-23). For his part, William Howard Taft said that the Filipinos are not human: "they are not a people" (as cited by Blount, 1913, p. 630).

There are sectors among Filipinos that accepted this twisted belief. During the campaign for the immediate independence of the Philippines from the Americans, the Nationalist members of the *Comite de Intereses Filipinas* introduced a petition stating the division of the Filipinos into two: the directing class and the popular masses (Kalaw, 1926). This was the meat of the speeches made by Vicente Ilustre and Alberto Barretto to the members of the Congressional Party in August 1905 which was headed by Taft, who was then the Secretary of War. The petition was signed by the following: Simeon A. Villa, Justo Lukban, Galicano Apacible, Vicente Ilustre, Alberto Barretto, M. P. Leuterio, Macario Adriatico, Pascual Ledesma, Dominador Gomez, and Teodoro Sandiko (Kalaw, 1926). Despite its length, I endeavored to transcribe the said petition in its entirety:

- (a) It is an irrefutable fact that the Filipino people are governable... When a people such as the Filipinos give signal evidence of their capacity to obey during a period of over three hundred years... among other powers, they possess that of assimilation in a marked degree – an assimilativeness which distinguishes them from other people of the Far East...

- (c) ...If the Philippine Archipelago has a governable *popular mass* called upon to obey and a *directing class* charged with

the duty of governing, it is in condition to govern itself. These factors... are the only two by which to determine the political capacity of a country: an entity that knows how to govern, the *directing class*, and an entity that knows how to obey, the *popular masses*.” (pp. 293-294; emphasis in the original)

This is the mentality assailed by the essays in *Renacimiento Filipino* that I compiled. The essay “Tao,” written by Ronquillo (1910a) under the nom de plume Crispin Ressurreccion, portrays how the identity of those deemed as stupid Filipinos is ridiculed. It showed the complex exploitation by society’s little lords and how their condescension of the average citizen drags the latter deeper in his quagmire of subjugation. By overtly identifying the tentacles that siphon (“panghihithit”), the heads (“kauluan”) of various institutions (including the church, justice system, government, business, and science), and narrating the chronological flow of a person’s life from cradle to grave, Ronquillo’s essay bitterly renders the quaking anger of a person who has lost all hope in life, in a kind of life that is never graced by the glimmer of life’s true meaning.

The dehumanization of the Filipino people, particularly of the laborers, which is also due to the lowly view of the Filipino as a person, is the theme that permeates “Ako ay ano?” (Aguilar, 1910a). The article paints the huge gap between the lifestyle of an American master and of a Filipino worker, and how the latter was overwhelmed by the government with a “load of patents, income taxes, and other dues” (“patente, rentas internas at iba pang buwis;” p. 23). In a system supposedly kept afloat by civilization and knowledge, man ceases to be human but becomes a machine.

On the other hand, the “Ginugunitang Nagdaan: Sa Pagbabangong-Puri” (Laksamana, 1910a) tells the story of a specific chapter in history. The work points out that the time of the founding of the Katipunan was a period when “the bearers of light were regarded as evil persons” (“itinuturing na masasamang tao ang mga nagtataglay ng liwanag;” p. 26). Its depiction of the domination of master over slave is clear:

Ang takot, ang gitla sa mang-aapi, ay naging isa nang damdaming nag-ugat sa pagkatao ng mga alipin. Dahil sa kinagisnan, pinagkalakhan at pinagkatandaang pamamanginoon, ay waring namamatay na sa budhi pati kaliitliitang bugso ng galit, pati munting kapangahasang laban sa makapangyarihang dinidiyos. Ang pinuno ay kinikilalang di tablan ng pagkakasala,

at ang sa kanya'y pagsunod, ang sa kanya'y pagtatapat at pag-ibig, ay pinaniniwalaang isang kabanalang gawa. Sa isa namang dako'y isang taksil, salarin at salanggapang, ang sa manglulupig ay magtangkang sumuway at makibaka...

Waring ang gayong pagkasindak sa pinuno ay isang karapatang inaaring matamis upang mabuhay; waring ang gayong pamamanginoon ay itinuturing na katutubong karapatan ng mga gaya nilang may *mababang uri* at *pagkatao* sa sangsinukob, at sila'y maging tao lamang upang alipin, gawing busabos ng mga *mahal na dugo*." (p. 26)

(The fear, the fright of the oppressor has become a trait well-entrenched in the slaves' character. Because of the lordship to which they were born, raised, and grew old, even the tiniest spark of anger has seemingly been snuffed out of their spirits, even the smallest resistance to their powerful god. The leader is known to have no sin, and to him belongs their obedience, their sincerity and devotion, and is believed to be of divine mercy. On the other hand, the one who attempts to resist the oppressor and join the struggle is a traitor, criminal, and villain...

It seems that such terror of the leader is a fate made to taste sweet in order to live; it seems that such lordship is deemed as the native fate of them who are of *low stature* and *character* in all of creation, and they were made men in order to be enslaved, in the service of those of *noble blood*.)

But the nation's children would not allow themselves to become slaves for so long. The great mission to "sever the chains, never be enslaved, be free" ("lagutin ang tanikalang gapos, huwag paalipin, magpakalaya," Laksamana, 1910a, p. 26) impelled the people's disgust at "bowing to the master" ("pagyuko sa panginoon;" p. 26) and "honor trampled by the king" ("Kapurihang niyuyurakan ng hari;" p. 26). There would also be events that would goad the people to action, "to learn to hate, be angry, to kill" ("nangatutong mapoot, magalit, pumatay;" p. 26) and "to expend life and blood towards the redemption from slavery" ("mamuhunan ng buhay at dugo," "tungo sa pagtubos sa kaalipinan;" p. 26).

Nangatutong, sa pamamagitan ng dahas ay itindig ang lugmok na Kapurihang niyuyurakan ng hari, sa kislap ng patalim ay paningningin ang katauhang kinalong ng mahabang gabi, sa dugo ay diligi't papanariwain ang Katwirang nilanta ng mga tampalasang ang palagay sa sarili'y hindi malalabanang Diyos. (p. 26)

(To learn, by way of violence, to raise the destitute honor trampled by the king, to brighten the person cradled by the long night by the glint of the blade, to water and refresh with blood the Reason withered by villains who think of themselves as indomitable God.)

The other essays contain definite recommendations on how to demonstrate the Filipinos' ability to govern their own nation: the establishment of municipal schools such as that written by Gala in "Ang mga Paaralang Bayan: Dagdagan ang Gugol" (1910). Another is on vigilance on national sovereignty wherein writers and publications play an important role, as written in Aguilar's "Isa sa Libo Nating Katungkulan" (1913) and Palma's "Ang buhay ng pahayagan" (1913).

These journalists questioned the civilization flaunted by the United States. The journalists fought for the Filipino's ability to govern and run a nation with his own knowledge and strength. As a whole, the Tagalog essays of *Renacimiento Filipino* fiercely battled the ideology of domination and manipulation.

3. Indolence and ignorance are intrinsic in the Filipino. This is why the people are poor, why the economy is backwards, and why the Philippines is not progressing and will never progress.

The depiction of Filipinos as a race of ignorant people was employed by the conquerors in order for the tentacles of colonialism to thoroughly intrude upon every aspect of Filipino life. This emphasis on the supposed Filipino idiocy is corollary to the master-and-slave mentality.

In truth, this was already refuted by Rizal in his "Sobre la indolencia de los filipinos," which was serialized in *La Solidaridad* from July 15 to September 15, 1890 (Quirino & Hilario, 1924). The struggle against the unjust and unfounded claims of Filipino indolence and ignorance was continued by several writers of *Renacimiento Filipino*, as evidenced by the aforementioned articles in the earlier sections of this study. But many more articles discussed in particular issues related to laborers and the economy.

One of the essays that truthfully portrayed the ruination of laborers is Laksamana's "Larawan ng Buhay: Gutom at Pananalat" (1910d), under the pen-name of Fidel. Written like a short story, it follows the life of Rufo, a laborer who lost his job when he was laid off from the factory where he worked. He has been roaming the streets for three months in a vain search for work.

When Rufo gets drunk one time, he divulges the hopelessness that has been festering within him: "What else do I need to do? It's better for me to get drunk, get woozy, and go...crazy, so everything, everything will escape my memory" ("Ano pa ang gagawin ko? Mabuti ngang ako'y malango, mahilo at ma...ulol, upang sa aking alaala'y maalis ang...lahat at lahat;" p. 27).

Due to his intoxication and acute hunger, he fails to go home; he falls by the wayside where he is picked up by the police who imprisons him. Rufo continues to talk to himself behind bars, screaming the pains of life that he suffered: hunger, poverty, and other tragedies of life. Because of this, he is judged a lunatic.

While he is in jail, his wife and children wait in vain, "still destitute, without anything to eat in the midst of a wealthy and comfortable city" ("patuloy na dayukdok, walang makain sa gitna ng isang mayaman at maginhawang siyudad;" p. 27).

This essay not only depicts the state of laborers of the time; it is also a commentary on the nation's economic affairs. The people's condition is not due to their indolence but due to a larger economic distortion which wrongly divides the citizenry.

On the other hand, "Ang Kapalaran nang Manggagawa: Alay sa mga Kawal-Dalita" by the writer with the pen-name of Hercules (1910) mirrors the avarice of the capitalists, both Filipino and foreign, under a system that thrives on the slavery of the enfeebled majority. The essay gives weight to the power of the laborers: "No one else multiplies the money of the capitalists but the very workers they tyrannize" ("walang ibang nagpapakilos ng salapi ng mga mamumuhunan kundi ang inaalipusta nilang mga manggagawa;" p. 33). On the other hand, the essay also shows another form of workers' power, and this is rebellion, in any of its forms, against the violence of capital. This essay's argument is proof of the belief of writers of *Renacimiento Filipino* that the laborers are not simpletons, that they are cognizant of the reasons behind their penury, and that they know the method by which they can sever the chains shackling them.

One essay that openly disputes the alleged frailty, indolence, and idiocy of workers is Agustin's "Katangian pa ñg manggagawang pilipino" (1913). Being sedate, knowing how to adapt to the situation, and the diligent tolerance of hardship are traits that are at first glance signs of weakness, but these are the

same traits tapped by laborers in their struggle against the huge adversities they faced, especially during the period of the revolution.

In order to prove that the nation's poverty is not the result of so-called inherent Filipino traits, *Renacimiento Filipino* tackled the more expansive causes of the country's poverty. This is the meat of Aguilar's "Laban sa Kasabian ng Malalaki: Isang Kaparaanan sa Pagtatanggol" (1910b). It proclaims that "what commonly happens today are silent, mute, and clandestine battles, not in the field of murder but in the field of commerce" ("karaniwang nangyayari ngayon ay mga labanang tahimik, pipi at pailalim, hindi sa larangan ng pagpapatayan kundi sa larangan ng pangangalakal;" (p. 23). It states that one of the weapons at the disposal of the weak is boycott. But this boycott does not merely involve the rejection of foreign goods but a kind of boycott that "creates, enriches the self's capital, and returns a profit" ("lumilikha, nagpapayaman sa puhunang sarili at ikinatutubo pa;" p. 23). The emphasis on one's own strength to developing the economy is found in the idea of *tangkilikan* [patronizing our own goods] that is more fully explored in "Ang tunay na paglilingapan" (Laksamana, 1911a). According to this, it is important to run the economy under the concept of a cooperative which supports one's own products.

On the other hand, Laksamana's "Pag-asa at Pananalig" (1911c) rightfully stresses that the concerns regarding economic changes in the Philippines are the result of national policies: "The strong tentacles of *trust* have already spread; the lethal exchange of goods bereft of the 'seal of warranty' has borne fruit; we are already experiencing (albeit only recently) the unfit management of the current state" ("Lumaganap na rito ang malakas na galamay ng *trust*; nagbunga na ang pangpatay na pagpapalitan ng kalakal na inalisan ng 'sello de garantia'; dinaranasan na (gayong di pa gaanong natatagalan) ang di akmang pamalakad sa kasalukuyang tayo;" p. 32, emphasis in the original).

The essay "Ang panahon ay ginto" written by Laksamana (1912) under the nom de plume Diego Bantil, gives a frank assessment of the capitalist colonizer's commandeering of the nation's wealth. This anomaly has resulted in the Filipino people renting in their own lands, while the foreigners continued to savor the comforts that should have been due the Filipinos. Again, as with the other articles, the essay banners the strengthening and fortifying of traits already possessed by the people:

Ang kailangan lamang ay masuring pagsisiyasat, matalas na pangamoy at matalinong kaparaanan. Nguni't ang kailangang lalo ay di iba, kungdi ang kanilang nalalaman nang lubos:

lakas ng loob sa pakikitunggali, kapangahasang malaki sa pagpapagitna sa larangan ng buhay. (p. 1064)

(Keen inquiry, a sharp smell, and intelligent methods are what they only need. But what are more needed are not foreign, but are already known to them by heart: strength of heart in the struggle, great audacity to be in the midst of the field of life.)

In the midst of the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, it is important that “the dark shadow of yesterday should be rejected” (“ang maitim na anino ng kakahapunin ay dapat karimariman;” Palma, 1911, p. 23). This is the essence of Palma’s essay “Iwan ang ‘Kahapon’: Patungkol sa 1 ng Mayo,” under the pen-name Palaspas. It calls for vigilance against the oppressors’ cruelty and the “necessary demonstration of unity toward the achievement of redemption” (“nararapat ipagmalas ang pagkakaisa sa ikatutuklas ng katubusan;” p. 23). Palma adds:

Ngayon ay panahon na kung bato ang ipukol ay bato rin ang pangganti, wala na sa ngayon yaong kung bato ang ihagis ay tinapay ang ibalik, ano pa’t sa ngayon ang nararapat ay kagat sa kagat, at suntok sa suntok kapag ang katwiran ay naaapi at ang karapata’y nahahamak. (p. 23)

(These are times when a stone is thrown and a stone is thrown back in retaliation, now there are no pieces of bread to be thrown back when one is hit by a stone, these times require a bite for a bite, a fist for a fist when your rights are being suppressed and your person is being debased.)

According to Palma, it is vital to “smash the mind in pursuit of liberation, keeping in mind that you have an obligation and that no one is going to save you but yourself” (“durugin ang isip sa pagtuklas ng ikalalaya, alalahaning ikaw ay may tungkulin at liban sa iyo’y walang makapagliligtas kundi ikaw rin;” p. 23).

In general, the essays of *Renacimiento Filipino* lend a new dimension to the Filipinos’ identity even as they erase the lies that incarcerate the consciousness of the people.

4. The United States is the savior of the Philippines. Its entry into our nation was significant, as the Philippines cannot stand on its own just yet. And this is wholly accepted by the people for the flame of revolution has long been snuffed out from the soul of the Filipino.

To say that the United States rescued the Philippines from the clutches of Spain is a big paradox. But this belief was propagated by the new colonizer, a belief agreed to by several Filipino ilustrados. This even became the foundation of the so-called “special relations” between the Philippines and the United States. According to Constantino (1970):

Essentially, ‘special relations’ is based on the belief that the Americans took over control of our country in noble acceptance of a self-imposed obligation to educate us in order that we might later deserve independence. This belief in turn is based on the corollary conviction that, by and large, the Filipinos welcomed the American conquerors, that they wanted and needed American tutelage. The rationalization of American policy was therefore founded on two distinct but related premises:

- (1) that there was no substantial resistance to American rule, and
 - (2) that the Filipinos were then incapable of self-government.
- (p. 68)

This belief was planted in the minds of the supposed children of democracy:

In order to effect such a transformation and so win the support of the American public, the people had to be convinced of the following:

- 1) That the implantation of American sovereignty in the Philippines was in accord with the wishes and aspirations of the great mass of the Filipinos;
- 2) That the Filipinos were unprepared for self-government, thus making it a response to duty for the Americans to take the Filipinos under their wing.

How did the Republican administration try to prove these propositions? It had first, to belittle the resistance of the

Filipinos, second, to malign the leaders of the independence struggle, and third, to use for effect willing accomplices among the Filipinos, representing them to be the legitimate leaders of the people. (p. 78)

In this context did the essays that overturn the aforementioned dubious mind-set appear in *Renacimiento Filipino*.

Did the majority of the Filipino people undergo a meaningful transformation when the United States forced itself into our nation? This is what Laksamana (1910f, 1910g), under the pen-name Fidel, sought to answer in “Noon at Ngayon.”⁵ The article follows the return of Mamerto, “a soldier of modern times” (“kawal ng bagong panahon;” p. 27) to his roots. Mamerto silently observes his hometown: the farmlands; relatives, friends, and town mates; the attires, customs, and other physical manifestations of civilization. While riding the train, he realizes that “civilization is not found in the farmland, in the stream and gold mine; it is in the stately stone houses at the occasional stations by the railway; it is in the expert healers of sick farm animals” (“ang kabihasma’y wala sa bukid, wala sa halamang batis at mina ng ginto; na sa mga bahay na bato sa ilanilang nararaanang mga *estacion* na may magagarang tayo at yari; na sa mga *expertong* gumagamot sa mga maysakit na hayop na pangbaka;” Laksamana, 1910f, p. 27; emphasis in the original).⁶ Even the “relatives who receive him, like him, have not changed” (“waring ni siya’t ni sila’y hindi rin nagsisipagbago;” p. 28). After observing these sights, with a heavy heart he says that civilization “seemingly suppresses sadness and dresses anew the old customs of an olden identity” (“wari’y pangsupil lungkot at pagbihis sa mga lumang ugali ng katauhang matanda na;” Laksamana, 1910f, p. 27).

Mamerto also understands that the progress taking place in fact regresses the people’s character: new methods of gambling from the foreigner, sinking deeper in new debts, and the confiscation of lands and houses. The worst change that alarms him is the teaching of the English language that slowly kills the mother tongue. In the end, dread pervades his mind: “What shape would the will and feelings of tomorrow’s Filipino citizen take, he who is skilled in a foreign language, but cannot read in his own tongue?” (“Ano kayang hubog na damdamin at kalooban ang sa isang magiging mamamayang Pilipino bukas, na marunong ng wikang dayuhan, nguni’t hindi maalam bumasa sa sarili niyang wika?” Laksamana, 1910g, p. 23).

The same anxiety for the future impels the sighs of “Pagkamatay ng katutubong ugali?” which is penned by someone writing under the nom de

plume Leonidas (1910). In the essay he labels the *new king* of the era as a clan of *eagles* (p. 31, emphasis in the original):

Samantalang lumalago't bumubulas ang binhing dito'y inihahasik ng mga *sahon*, samantalang kumakapal ang mga sumasamba sa bagong uri ng kabihasnang mapaparam ang kaluluwa ng ating lahi, dahandahan namang malulunod sa dagat ng pagkapariwara ang dakila nating mithiin, ang dakilang hangad na maging bayang Malaya, may sariling tingkad at uri at makapangyarihan.

Samantalang ang *agila*, sa kaitaasan ng ating himpapawid ay mamamayagpag naman, tanda ng kanyang pagwawagi, ng kanyang paghahari sa lupaing ito ng Dulong Silangan. (p. 32)

(While the seeds sown here by the saxon grow tall and full, while the crowds worshipping the new form of civilization that will expunge the soul of our race thicken, our great dream will slowly drown in an ocean of defeat, so with our great desire to be a Free nation, with its own brilliance, excellence and power.

All the while the *eagle* will soar high in the apex of our skies, a sign of his triumph, of his reign over this land in the Far East.)

These essays underline the fact that the United States' intrusion was not to save the Philippines, but to drag the people deeper into the quagmire of ignorance of their mother culture. Any posturing of civilization is only for a privileged few and not for the true benefit of the nation. Hidden behind these innovations are the dark and selfish interests of the United States on the country, flying high, like the eagle that is the symbol of the reigning colonizer.

While *Renacimiento Filipino* deconstructed the colonialist spirit of the United States, the newspaper continued to defend the Filipinos' ability to run the nation with their own strength and intellect. In the process of looking back at the unity and heroism of the Filipino, the publication openly insisted that the flame of the revolution spearheaded by the Katipunan still burned fiercely in the people's hearts.

Although there were occasional outbreaks of internal disputes amongst Filipinos in their pursuit of change, due in part to several traitors, this never meant that the people lost their unity. According to Laksamana's "Pangarap daw ang pagkakaisa" (Laksamana, 1910h) victory is attained through harmony of will and that there is a need to become heroes for the united revolution.

Balmaseda's call is clearer in his "Ang naitutulung ng kapisanan sa ikatutulong ng Bayan" (Balmaseda, 1913): "These terrifying events can only be cured by a great remedy that will relieve the pain of injury, in order to finally let it heal after enduring for long the pitiful state of man: This remedy is 'revolution'" ("Ang mga ganitong kakilakilabot na pangyayari ay malulunasan lamang ng isang dakilang gamut na magiging tapal sa hapdi ng sugat upang makabahaw sa tagal ng pagtitiis ng kaawaawang lagay ng tao: ang lunas na ito ay ang 'paghihimagsik,'" p. 1395).

Remember that *Renacimiento Filipino* began in a chapter of our history when the American administration strictly banned the display of anything related to the Katipunan—especially the flags of the Katipunan and the Philippines as well as other insignias of the Philippine revolution. This ban was declared in Act No. 1696, more commonly known as the Flag Law (1907). The law states that anyone who is caught holding or displaying a flag and other things related to the revolution can be punished with imprisonment. This law lasted until 1919 (Constantino, 1975).

Constantino (1970) and Iletto (1979) said that the small citizens continued the Katipunan's fight for the aspired independence in accordance to a structure of struggle that completely deviated from a structure of struggle permitted by the Americans. Also remember that the period between 1906 and 1913 witnessed the murder of the Katipunan's children (Constantino, 1975; Iletto, 1979). Even the former followers of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo who were given power as governors in their respective provinces in 1907 served as instruments in the eradication of the remnants of Katipuneros who kept on fighting for independence (Antonio Abad, as mentioned by Iletto, 1979):

In Bilibid Prison, from 1906 to 1913, hundreds of prisoners most of whom were members of the Katipunan were executed without public knowledge. Certain ilustrado leaders were aware of this but did not raise their voices in protest. (p. 171)

Although already discussed in the earlier part of this study, it is still important to mention the essay "Ginugunitang Nagdaan: Sa Pagbabangong

Puri” (Laksamana, 1910a) just to prove that the lessons of the Katipunan revolution had not left the people’s hearts. In remembering the Katipunan’s triumph, the essay hints that the people still keep in their hearts the goals of the revolution and that these could burst out at any time, when the need to shed lives and blood arises once more.

Laksamana (1910e) adds fire to these sentiments in “Mga Aral na Tutupdin.” By following a common citizen who hears the speeches offered at the shrine to Bonifacio, the essay discusses point-by-point the significant lessons and heroism of the great plebeian. And these lessons leave their mark once more “like knives in his flesh” (“tila mga balaraw sa kanyang mga laman;” p. 26).

Nagsabi sa mang-aaliping ang pang-aalipin ay masama, kasamasamaang gawa; nagturo sa aliping ang pagpapaalipin ay masama, kasamasamaan sa isang taong may puri. Nagsabi sa mang-aaping ang pang-aapi ay di gawang Dios; nagturo sa inaaping, huwag paapi, matutong gumamit ng katungkulang tao, karapatang tao at matuwid tao: magdamdam, gumanti, lumaban, magpakamatay. (p. 26)

(Told the oppressor that oppression is evil, a very evil deed; taught the slave that enslavement is evil, very evil for a person with honor. Told the oppressor that oppression is an ungodly act; taught the oppressed not to consent to oppression, to learn how to employ humane duties, human rights, and righteous men: to feel, to hit back, to fight, to die.)

By reminding readers of their duty to the nation, Laksamana’s essay seemingly incites the people not to let the flame of revolution that continues to burn in everyone’s hearts be doused by the cold water of vacillation, and so as to fully “become honorable” (“maging marangal;” p. 26).

“Lamig at Init (Dili-Dili),” again by Laksamana (1910c), is an essay which has the elements of a short story and poetry. By using symbolism and parallelism, it effectively conveys the related but contradictory concepts and realities of heat and cold in the forging of reason. Even though the weather enveloped by the northeast wind is cool, even though the political happenings are heated, even though the people seem to reject the fire of colonization, the fury of the Filipinos against the corruption of the times has not dissipated: “The weather is cool. But the vigilant sentiments and spirits are seething, on the verge of eruption,

seething, searing” (“Malamig ang panahon. Ngunit ang mga kalooban, ang mga budhing nagmamatiyag ay nagbabaga, masimbuyo, mainit;” p. 28).

It cannot be denied that these essays stand up for the freedom that the Katipunan fought for and the freedom that the people kept struggling for. Above all, these essays proved that the independence being offered by the colonizers was false, and that the flame of the Katipunan’s revolution solely filled the hearts of Filipinos, and that keeping alive nationalism would be the key to bringing the nation to the light of redemption.

A Final Sob (and Song) of Strings being Severed

Under fire by old and modern colonialism, journalism—which I am advancing as one of the early examples of the nationalist essay in Tagalog—was employed by several journalists of *Renacimiento Filipino* as a weapon against the powerful industries of the subjugators’ consciousness. The journalistic works in *Renacimiento Filipino* that were analyzed in this study can be regarded as essays that tear down the bastions of colonialism embedded in the consciousness of Filipinos, who were blanketed with doubts and deception for the longest time. These are essays that demolish the lofty monuments erected by a convoluted history that was muzzled by illusions. These are essays that deconstruct an era that destroyed hoary beliefs running in the blood and soul of Filipinos. Above all, these essays establish new citadels of truths that will shed light on the nation’s events and on the process of building the Filipino nation.

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Notes

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²See for example Quirino & Hilario (1924).

³History of the inarticulate.

⁴*La Solidaridad* in 1889 edited by Graciano Lopez Jaena and Marcelo H. del Pilar; *Kalayaan* in 1896, edited by Emilio Jacinto; *Republica Filipina* in 1898, edited by Pedro A. Paterno; *El Heraldo de la*

Revolucion and *La Independencia* in 1898, edited by Antonio Luna; *El Nuevo Dia*, established in Cebu in 1901 by Sergio Osmeña; *El Renacimiento* with *Muling Pagsilang* in 1901-1910, written by Rafael Palma; and *Renacimiento Filipino* in 1910-1913, edited by Martin Ocampo (Kalaw, 1926, 1939; Tiongson & Cruz,-Lucero, 1994; Zafra, 1993).

⁵The first part was published on September 18 while the second part was published on October 7, 1910.

⁶The word *experto* was also used in the original.

EULALIO R. GUIEB III is an Associate Professor in the Department of Broadcast Communication of the University of the Philippines (UP) College of Mass Communication. He teaches criticism, ethnography, development, drama scriptwriting and qualitative research methods. His research interests include the politics of representation, history of the Filipino drama in Philippine television, political ecology, and ecological and legal anthropology (corresponding author: eulalio.guibiii@mail.mcgill.ca).

PHILIP Y. KIMPO, JR. is the president of Linangan ng Imahen, Retorika at Anyo (LIRA), the oldest group of poets in Filipino. He has co-authored and edited books for the Department of National Defense - PVAO. He has won fellowships for his poetry in Filipino and prose in English to the UP, Silliman, IYAS, Iligan, and UST national writers workshops (corresponding translator: pykimpo@gmail.com).