Footnotes to Empire: Imaginary Borders and Colonial Ambivalence

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Footnotes to Empire:
Imaginary Borders and Colonial Ambivalence

A dissertation presented
by
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to
The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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Footnotes to Empire:
Imaginary Borders and Colonial Ambivalence

Abstract

While other regions colonized by Spain achieved independence in the first half of the 19th century, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines remained under Spanish imperial rule until 1898. Nearly all research about Latin American literature of this era focuses on writers who embraced their freedom by articulating new communities through novels and essays that openly elected and erected national patrimonies and mythologies. 19th-century writers from Spain’s late colonies, however, had to reflect on their communities and prospects of nationhood through texts rife with subterfuge and dangerous supplements. They had to install their voices, both literally and figuratively, into the history of nationhood through the footnotes.

“Footnotes to Empire” examines late 19th-century Philippine, Puerto Rican and Cuban literature, sketching a constellation of strategies for evading censorship, undermining authority, and constructing innovative notions of community. These strategies become apparent through experiments in historiography, travel writing, and the novel. This dissertation engages in the fields of border studies, postcolonial theory, gender studies, and the study of nationalism, addressing the following problems. How to trace the borders of a country that does not exist yet? Do colonized intellectuals strive for freedom or for power? Does their undermining of authority push for reform or revolution? Do they derive an advantage from their knowledge or their doubt? How does the tricky form of these writings compound or contradict the writers’ projects of national imagining?

After a thorough analysis of writings from José Rizal, Antonio Luna, José Martí, Eugenio María de Hostos, and José Julián Acosta, “Footnotes to Empire” concludes that the ambivalence
that underlines these texts proves to be both a source of discursive advantage and perpetuated exclusions of popular classes, slaves, queer people, and women. Within the logic of these “enlightened” writings, education forms the hinge that vacillates between the emancipation and further exclusion of the disenfranchised classes. In these works, social and geopolitical borders are both an obstacle that these authors seek to transgress and overcome, as well as the breakwalls that hold back the masses, whose mobilization and capacity to execute revolution threatened the writers’ social standing.

In the end, the lasting legacy of Caribbean and Philippine anti-colonial literature of this era is the transformation of discourses of colonialism, like the “encomienda” or other assertions of colonized peoples’ inevitable inferiority, from declarations into debates.
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Ultimately, my wife Natalie, you are my north. You challenged me to be a better scholar. You taught me everything. You trusted and you understood me through the murk and muck of this dissertation’s most trying moments. Without you, this doesn’t happen.
To my mom, who said not to hide our light under a bushel basket.
Among the Naturals of these islands there are three states of people in which its republic is divided; principals, about whom much has been said; and Timaguas which is the same as plebeians; and slaves of the principals and of the Timaguas (2).

These slaves were diverse; some do all types of service and subjugation, like the ones we have, and these are called Saguiguilires (3), that serve indoors and the same for their children.

(2) This is the eternal division that is found and will be found in all parts in all the kingdoms and republics; dominant class, productive class and servile class; head, body and feet.

(3) It is impossible to find the etymology of this word, that in its Tagalog form must have been Sagigilid. The root gilid means in Tagalog, border, riverside, bank; the reproduction of the first syllable, if it is tonic, means an active action in the future tense, and if not and one adds the suffix an, it denotes the place where the action of the verb often is executed: the preposition sa indicates place, time, reference. The unstressed reduplication could mean plurality also, and in this case the noun in singular would be sagilid; that is, on the border, the last one, that is, the slave...

Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas
by Dr. Antonio Morga (1609)
with annotations by José Rizal (1889)
(my translation)
If you put me in a jail cell, all I need is a piece of chalk to be free.
I will trace a line just within the limits of the cell’s walls,
a border that I will refuse to cross.
The prison has no power over me
if I make and follow
my own walls or constraints.

-Antanas Mockus
Bogotá Mayor/Artist
Introduction:

Borders, Imagination, and Ambivalence

Why should we resent being called Indios by the Spaniards?
Look at the American Indians. They were not ashamed of their race.
Let us be like them. Let us be proud of the name Indio
and make the Spaniards revise their conception of the term.
We shall become Indios Bravos!

-José Rizal

In 1868, Puerto Rican writer José Julián Acosta republishes an imperial history from 1788
by Friar Íñigo Abbad, Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la Isla de Puerto Rico. Acosta’s endnotes
corroborate, contradict and complicate the claims put forth in the original text. One of the issues
he disputes is the accuracy of the details provided by the history about the cartography and
coordinates of Puerto Rico. In this nine-page endnote, he enumerates a wide array of divergent
maps and coordinates of the border between the island and the waters that surround it, citing
Spanish, French, German, and Puerto Rican explorers, historians, and cartographers. These
elaborate annotations cause several questions to arise.

Why the fascination with coordinates and maps? What is the importance of the location of
these borders between land and water? Why not write directly about the wide array of other
problems Puerto Rico faces: under-representation in the Spanish cortes, numerous obstacles to the
prospect of educating and preparing the Puerto Rican people for autonomy or independence, a
fiscal structure fully dependent on slavery and the strong-armed economics of imperial trade
protectionism? Why republish an imperial history? Why limit ones’ voice to the space of the
endnotes, a gesture that seems to undercut the annotator’s authority that the same notes clearly try
to fortify?
Acosta is not alone. Colonial intellectuals of Spain’s late island empire proposed new geopolitical, cultural, and social borders through a number of literary forms to interrupt imperial power and promote their own authority. These writings in which colonial intellectuals cipher their imaginary borders show intense ambivalence toward social change. While they write these refashioned frontiers, utilizing discursive dexterity to undermine the authority of the empire and sketch new notions of community, they also perpetuate forms of discursive violence to avoid losing their own social status, similar to the forms of discursive violence frequently employed by the empire. If we can recuperate through their writings the hypothetical borders the writers imagine, we can begin to sketch notions of the complex countries and communities envisaged and desired by these colonial intellectuals.

The following chapters examine how intellectuals from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines invoke borders in explicit and implicit ways, and how these invocations cast light on shared and divergent dynamics between the distant colonies of Spain’s late empire. What do these writers want for their nascent countries? How do they express those desires? And, who is left out from their national designs? Understanding these writers’ reinterpretations of the border helps us understand the intricacies of the countries they envision and hope to make real through their combinations of literary and political interventions. Additionally, these chapters tease out the relationship between the space of the border and the state of ambivalence in late 19th-century anti-colonial writings.

Footnotes to Empire: Imaginary Borders and Colonial Ambivalence follows a sidetrack in Benedict Anderson’s concept of the “imagined community.” Put schematically, Anderson asserts that the modern nation represents a grouping of heterogeneous peoples who look past their
differences through a process of communication and sharing spurred by the development of print technologies. “Imagined” in Anderson’s formulation of nationhood is not synonymous with “false,” but with a specific process of creation – the construction of comradeship despite inequality – that realizes itself in distinct, yet related ways in all modern nations (2006, 6-8). “Imaginary,” as in imaginary borders, diverges from “imagined” in that it unfolds the largely frustrated and unrealized desires of colonial intellectuals as opposed to describing already existing and “imagined” nations. I focus, rather, on frustrated desires, and on writings that imagine alternative borders, diverging systems of inclusion and exclusion. This allows the careful reader to stay true to the texts, which construct community while also preserving certain definitions, divisions, and exclusions. It allows us to interrogate the moments of ambivalence in these texts, seeking out a more nuanced understanding of anti-colonial writing between the desires for reform and revolution in Spain’s late empire.

Furthermore, the connection between ambivalence and the border is not a novel insight on its own. Scholars of the border as a space of hybridity and the politics of the “in-between,” including Homi Bhabha and Gloria Anzaldúa, frequently characterize border dwellers’ ambivalence as the ability to see from multiple viewpoints, a capacity that allows them a privileged perspective of modernity. They assert that border dwellers navigate with ease the multiple codes of the border zone, and therefore can identify the contradictions implicit in hegemonic discourses promoted on both sides of the border. Footnotes to Empire is a critical catalog of these moments. It examines the multiple and often-contradictory functions of ambivalence in anti-colonial writing through close reading, historical analysis, and theoretical reflection.
This study diverges importantly from previous explorations of the “in between” or the “third space.” Footnotes to Empire confirms that ambivalence promotes a form of discursive dexterity, while complicating the reductive identification of border hybridity with radical and inclusive politics. These “hybrid” writers, often reflecting the violence of writers with “purer” pedigrees, also perpetuate notions that exclude certain groups from their aesthetic and political projects, frequently in texts that protest the writers’ own exclusion from political representation and the inner circles of European literary and intellectual production.

Footnotes to Empire, furthermore, dialogues with a tendency in Latin American literature to overlook the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, or to lump them into categories that go against the particularity of their political and cultural histories, their being stuck between empires. The field of 19th-century literature and the discipline of border studies are two central currents in the study of Latin American literature that overlook Spain’s late colonies.

On the one hand, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines continued under Spanish rule until 1898, as opposed to the Latin American countries which gained independence in the first half of the 19th century. On the other hand, the most important projects in 19th-century Latin American literary studies, like Julio Ramos’s Desencuentros de la modernidad and Doris Sommer’s Foundational Fictions, take independence and the ensuing project of nation building as a given backdrop for the cultural production of the era. Consequently, the literature from these pre-independence island regions cannot form full part of the cannon articulated by these masters of the 19th century; they always demand caveats or clarifications.1 How to think about problems

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1 Additionally, Puerto Rico and especially the Philippines are not popular subjects of 19th-century Latin American literary studies. Cuba is, however, ubiquitous in 19th-century reading lists and critical projects. Both Ramos (with his focus on José Martí’s chronicles and poems) and Sommer (Sab and Cecilia Valdés) include Cuba in their examinations of 19th-century literature. However, within their projects, the still-colonial status of Cuba does not differentiate the
associated with the articulation of national borders, communities, aesthetics, and patrimonies within still-colonized regions?

Border studies frequently addresses these kinds of questions that focus on the contradictions and complications of people who inhabit the interstices of national, cultural, linguistic, and epochal categories. However, this division of Latin American studies that mainly centers on the politics, economics, and cultures of the regions into which the U.S. encroached during the 19th century curiously looks past the islands which form a nonlinear, yet historically linked continuation of the borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico. In the late 20th- and early 21st-century, border studies has vertiginously expanded from a field centered on the U.S.-Mexico border to one that considers the pesky permanence of walls and divisions in a post-Berlin Wall world, which once was envisioned to become peaceful and undivided (Wilson 13). The stages of border studies now rightfully include Israel and Palestine, the countries of the European Union, North and South Korea, Uganda and South Sudan, to name a few (Sidaway 218).

Despite the appropriate nature of this expansion in border studies, the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico represent an understudied intermittent logical step between the specific, exemplary case of the United States-Mexico borderlands and the incorporation of all borders in border studies. These island colonies represent a continuation of the U.S.-Mexico border dynamics, namely the political, economic, and cultural conflict between imperial forces that both ignore the will of colonized peoples, who nonetheless struggle to express themselves by searching function of its literary production, as opposed to that of already independent nations. Take note of this parenthesized pre-independence status in the following phrase from Sommer: “More modern novels, sometimes called romances, came at midcentury, after independence had been won (everywhere but Cuba and Puerto Rico), civil wars had raged for a generation and newspapers had become the medium for serialized European and American fiction” (12). The permanence of the Spanish empire in Cuba takes the form of a clarification and an exception, not as a focus or complication of their readings and conclusions.
for autochthonous and autonomous roots, while reinterpreting codes and languages of both empires. The same island colonies also represent an opening to new conceptualizations of borders that draw connections with the work of borders on distant world stages, including borders and islands, borders as peripheries, borders at work in metropolitan contact zones.

Recent scholars from a number of fields have increasingly endeavored to unwrite the multiple exclusions of these island regions from academic inquiry. The Catalan historian Josep Fradera probes the contradictions and false starts of Spanish overseas policy from the viewpoint of the “post-imperial colonies.” Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, an intellectual historian, asserts that 19th-century colonial intellectuals from these regions sought to strengthen their anti-colonial positions by reinterpreting and conquering the historiography of their islands, using textual materials furnished by imperial archives. The literary critic, Koichi Hagimoto traces explicit and implicit connections between Cuban and Philippine anti-colonial writers, specifically José Martí and José Rizal. This effort asserts the importance of an “Other-Other” dialogue not mediated by colonial authorities, thus challenging Hegelian thought that “there is no possibility for an interaction between Latin America and Asia because any cultural and historical ties are defined in terms of their relation to Europe” (9). Irma Rivera Nieves, a scholar of philosophy, analyzes the process of subjectification in the writings of Eugenio María de Hostos and Rizal, a process which implied constructing an alternative world to that of the colony, with its own laws of society and science.

This dissertation builds off of and differs from recent historical, literary, philosophical, and intellectual comparisons of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines in that it reframes what many scholars represent as a network of anti-colonial resistance through the related prisms of the border
and ambivalence. Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Philippine colonial intellectuals’ commentaries about borders and writing techniques repeatedly underline, fortify, and transgress a range of different border structures, a fascination that stems from the itinerant place of the border on these islands and in imperial politics. These intellectuals struggle with imperial authorities, apologists and even some supposedly like minded reform-inclined Spaniards, to define 1) geopolitical borders, the outline of their islands and the distribution of power within them, 2) cultural borders, the limits and lineages of colonial intellectuals’ cultural patrimonies, and 3) social borders, the artificial and violent divisions between an “us” and a “them.” The colonial intellectuals’ writings about the border are marked by multiple forms of ambivalence, simultaneous attraction to and rejection of various issues, among others the prospect of revolution, the promise of reform, affiliation with European patrimonies, the education of women, and the empowerment of the masses of illiterate and/or enslaved peoples.

Crossed Paths of Island Histories

Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines are the islands that form the ellipses at the tail end of Spain’s overseas empire. Ellipses are the graphic traces of phrases that trail off ... and likewise, these islands exist in a state of incomplete punctuation during the late 19th century. They inhabit a tension between separation and connectivity, between conclusion and continuation, between expiration and remainder. This potential energy, charged with restless uncertainty and the anxiety-inducing prospect of transformation is an invisible current that runs through and across the borders of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Philippine literature of the era.
In Anglo-modernist literature, like that of Virginia Wolfe or Scott Fitzgerald, ellipses enact a lapse or leap in the narration of a plot, a purposeful and often misleading omission. Similarly, the writers of the Caribbean and Philippine islands decry their being “left out” — the Greek etymological root of “ellipsis” — from political participation in the colony and from the modernizing world. They were similarly excluded from the denouement of the wars of 1898 on both diplomatic and historiographical levels. No Filipino, Puerto Rican, or Cuban was allowed to attend the Treaty of Paris negotiations of 1898 in which Spain ceded the islands to the United States; the will of the island peoples went unrepresented (Díaz Quiñones 197-8). When the event was written down, the historiographical nomenclature for these wars similarly excluded those same colonized peoples: “The Spanish-American War” from the U.S. viewpoint and “El Desastre del ’98,” a melodramatic take from the perspective of Spain. What about the Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos who fought in these wars and on whose turf the battles took place?

This compounded the colonies’ already palpable omission from the group of modernizing and independent former Spanish colonies of the Americas. While countries from Mexico to Argentina, including the Haiti and the Dominican Republic, won hard-fought liberty in the opening years of the 19th century, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines stayed under the rule of Spain. This phenomenon led the empire to enact its “enlightened” Bourbon reforms in its remaining colonies. Spain promised a) representation for its remaining colonies in the Cortes de Cádiz, b) equality between Spaniards and the residents of these colonies, and c) more relaxed censorship of journalism and literature (Fradera 77). But soon Spain abandoned the plan of realizing such policies, choosing instead to enforce “stricter regulations in Cuba and the Philippines than in previous decades... [in a] desperate attempt to defend its imperial power — a
project of regeneration” (Hagimoto 11). The uptick in censorship is a direct influence of Acosta’s decision to write “the first history of Boricua authorship” through the annotations; he was smuggling critical and creative content to the colony from a text about his island that he discovered in Europe through what appeared to be demure endnotes (García 9).

Such a reversal in policy, in combination with repressive politics and disproportionate taxation, inspired not only these subversive commentaries, but also the subsequent transoceanic colonial unrest and near simultaneous uprisings. Cuba’s “Grito de Yara” and Puerto Rico’s “Grito de Lares” both occurred in Fall 1868, while the Philippines’ “Cavite Mutiny” happened in 1872 (Fradera 627). Spanish forces eventually suppressed all three. The Cavite Mutiny and the Grito de Lares were suppressed in a matter of days. In Cuba, on the other hand, the struggle that began with the Grito de Yara — where Carlos Manuel de Céspedes published the Manifiesto de la Junta Revolucionaria de la Isla de Cuba, revolted and soon after freed his slaves — lasted about 10 years, a duration which since has been used to classify the war (Ferrer 34). Additionally, the struggles contained the seeds of the revolutions to come in Cuba and the Philippines, while the Spanish suppression of the Grito de Lares is seen as central to Puerto Rico’s eventual refusal to revolt against their colonizers. Eventually, the revolutionary wars of the years leading up to 1898 “liberated” all three regions from Spanish rule, eventually passing the countries and their people — at varying degrees of formality — into the realm of U.S. neo-imperial power (Díaz Quiñones 197-8).

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2 All translations—this one included—are mine, unless otherwise noted.

3 This revolutionary reluctance is due to several contradictory repercussions of the Grito de Lares. For one, Spain granted Puerto Rico certain liberties, like the formation of political parties (with the notable exception of the independentista party) and elections of representatives to the Cortes. Spain also began to allow more publication and newsprint, of course with the oversight of censors. These reforms addressed many of the demands of Puerto Rican revolutionaries. But also, Spain exiled most of the revolutionary leaders, who ended up in Santo Domingo, Haiti, Cuba and the United States. Many of these exiles, Betances among them, joined the fight for Cuban independence, forming notions of pan-Antillean liberty and identity, but not directly seeking intervention in Puerto Rico (Moscoso, “La Revolución del Grito de Lares” 1).
Given these similarities, the historical circumstances and local responses leading up to 1898 are also quite complex and diverse. Spain had exploited Cuba and Puerto Rico agriculturally to a dramatically greater degree than they had the Philippines. This led to slavery and the economy dominating the debates over the terms of colonialism, reform and revolution in the Caribbean (Ferrer 3-7). Meanwhile in the Philippines, the most hotly debated issues were friar corruption, miseducation and racism against Philippine “Indios,” or peoples native to the Philippine islands with little or no Spanish or Chinese blood (Rafael, 22-26, 165).

The word “Indio” was used in very different historical contexts between the Philippines and the Caribbean. A Caribbean or Antillean Indio is a figure of history of Taíno, Arawak, Lucayo or Carib origin. The cultural and geographical distinctions and overlaps between these groups were the central issues at stake in 19th-century prehistorical Caribbean research (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 104-7). According to official discourse, the Antillean Indio’s extinction at the hands of exploitative Spaniards led to the explosion of slavery in the region. In the Philippines, Indio is a vague, yet commonly used term, designating someone of Malay, Aeta, or other indigenous origins, as opposed to Spaniards, “mestizos,” or “chinos.” Unlike in the Caribbean, Indios in the Philippines continued to be a dominant demographic during Rizal’s time.

The differences in their histories continue: while Cuba and Puerto Rico were the last of Spain’s American colonies to break from the empire, the Philippines was scene to the first nationalist, anti-colonial insurrection against European empires in Asia (Anderson 2005, 2). On top of that, Cuba and the Philippines took up arms against the Spanish in the 1890’s, as opposed to the Puerto Ricans, many of whom fought on the side of the Spanish. Puerto Rico, consequently, received in 1897 a letter from Spain declaring the island’s “autonomy,” which was short-lived, to
This led to a great divide in Caribbean historiography about 1898: in Puerto Rican historiography, the “Carta autonómica” is mythicized and the war in Cuba minimized, while in Cuban historiography, Puerto Rico — which has yet to become a nation-state — is used mostly disparagingly as an inverse allegory of Cuba’s national epic journey (Díaz Quiñones 200).

Finally, while the Philippines and Puerto Rico became official U.S. territories in logical continuation of the United States’ 1840’s conquest of the Mexican borderlands, Cuba could become its own country. However, there was one major caveat; Cubans must allow the U.S. to draft their constitution including the Platt Amendment, granting the U.S. unique powers to sustain a military presence on the island and dictate the terms of Cuba's economy and international trade.

Within this project, “colonial intellectuals” refers in general to Caribbean and Philippine groups of writers, whose families had the means to supplement, largely through travel, the generally faulty education that Spain provided its late colonial subjects. The “colonial” aspect of these intellectuals is the nucleus of their ambivalence; their fight against the colonial status quo takes the shape of a number of different schools of thought: reformism, liberalism, anti-clericalism, annexationism, nationalism, secessionism, among others. Many of the colonial intellectuals’ impulses are furthermore rife with contradictory impulses like the desire for a nation, the fear of revolution, abolitionism, the fear of slave revolts like those of Haiti, the identification of education as a tool of progress and as a weapon of division.

In the Philippines, there were the “Ilustrados” who from their “colony” in Europe led the “propaganda movement” of anticolonial literature and journalism (Schumacher 23). In Puerto Rico, the “Sociedad recolectora de documentos históricos” was an example of a group of young
educated travelers. These youths, like Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, Julio Vizcarrondo and Acosta, gathered official colonial documents in Spain in order to initiate a national archive upon which they could found the base of local knowledge and authority (García 13). These “recolectores” collaborated with Cuban Domingo del Monte, in whose library Acosta discovered his Historia. Del Monte was a wealthy literary patron who traveled widely, kept a large library and held literary “tertulias” at his home, where he mentored young authors, like the enslaved poet Francisco Manzano, and introduced local authors to the work of Balzac, Hugo, Scott and Goethe (Bueno 16).

The education of these colonial intellectuals represents a tool of both social agreement and division, a nucleus of the colonial intellectuals’ ambivalence. The agreement lies in the importance of education and the role its lack plays in the perpetuation of colonial violence. However, as cultural theorist Angel Rama points out, “the principal explanation for the ascendency of the letrados, then, lay in their ability to manipulate writing in largely illiterate societies” (24). This leads to lasting questions about the colonial intellectuals’ “perseverance and true solidarity with those who stand outside the lettered city” and popular suspicions of colonial intellectuals’ “treachery” (Rama 125). This lack of solidarity and mutual distrust between the colonial intellectuals and the less literate masses becomes apparent in many of these writings. Acosta’s annotations compare Caribbean literacies, where he claimed that the higher percentage of whites in Cuba pointed to a higher literacy rate. Similarly, José Rizal refuses to endorse the revolution he

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4 Acosta writes that Puerto Rico lacks “ciertos instrumentos de matemáticas, un Gabinete de Física, un Laboratorio de Química y varios objetos de Historia natural que sólo en Europa... es posible hallar” (Acosta Quintero 76). Rafael María de Labra of Cuba demands that education be free “de todo compromiso religioso, político o de escuela” (quoted in Hernández 98) and values education over violence, saying “¡Sólo por la educación se podrán reducir los antagonismos y llegar a términos de armonía y equidad!” (99). Rizal identifies miseducation with oppression in the context of the Philippines (Osias 133). Education should be for all people and when it is, freedom and modernity can be achieved.
was killed for supposedly leading, because he believes that Filipinos of his time are not ready for revolution because they don’t yet have the education required to be independent. They haven’t “learned to value social good above personal advantage” making them “unworthy of [independence]” (Guerrero 300), unfit for freedom. While colonial intellectuals blame the empire for providing insufficient means of education, they nonetheless express frustration with the masses for not being educated enough.

The language politics of the Philippines further complicates this question of education for colonial intellectuals. While Puerto Rican and Cuban colonized peoples spoke Spanish fluently, less than 10% of the Philippine population even understood the language in the years leading up to 1898\(^5\) (Rafael 1992, 56). This led the Ilustrados to demand Spanish-language instruction and literacy training from the colonial structures of education. The Ilustrados aimed to supplement the monopoly on translation held by power-hungry friars who they claimed purposefully kept the masses illiterate (Rafael 2005, 24-5). But, they nonetheless wrote their anticolonial literature in the language of the colonizer, making their messages largely indecipherable for most of their compatriots.

It also behooves us to unpack the term “imperial authorities,” employed here frequently in contrast to the colonial intellectuals. Curiously, various officials worked in both island regions, linking the regions not only in banner alone. For example, Captain General Valeriano Weyler earned his stripes in both the Philippines and Cuba (Anderson 2005, 59n). Therefore, the regions were connected by their oppressive regimes and by the vocabulary they brought from one place to the other. For example, “ filibustero” which comes from Dutch and speaks literally about pirates,

\(^5\) Currently, in the Philippines and in the surrounding areas, linked by linguistic tradition, including “northern Sulawesi (Indonesia), Sabah and northern Sarawak (Malaysia), and Brunei” more than 200 languages and speech varieties are spoken, many of which maintain some elements of Spanish vocabulary (Lobel 1).
becomes the word used in the Philippines for subversives, given Caribbean officials’ tendency to conflate the economics of piracy with political actions that subvert the status quo. Rizal even adapts the word as title of his novel that chronicles disenchantment with reformism and flirtation with both revolution and anarchy, *El Filibusterismo*. Benedict Anderson affirms that the word filibustero “traveled to Manila in the baggage of high-ranking military officers who had served in the Caribbean before being assigned to the Philippines. Four of the last five captains-general in the archipelago, Valeriano Weyler (1888-91)...Eulogio Despujol (1891-93), Ramón Blanco (1893-96), and Camilo Polavieja (1896-1897) had all won their repressive spurs in the Caribbean” (2005, 59n-60n). This can be most clearly seen in Weyler’s 1891 text that he gave to Despujol upon transferring his duties to the next Capitan General. In this text, Weyler asserts that the friars should be maintained in their positions of power in the Philippines because they facilitate Spanish rule in a way that requires less military presence than in the case of Cuba and Puerto Rico. He states “the filibusteros... desire the independence of the country, for whom the religious orders are a powerful obstacle” *(Los frailes filipinos* 131-3). This points to the protagonism, or antagonism, depending on one’s perspective, of the friars in the Philippines.

In addition to the appointed government officials, anti-colonial writers engage contentiously with two separate groups: friars and imperial apologists. The friars gained an

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6 “The word filibustero is very little known in the Philippines. The masses do not know it yet. I learned it for the first time in 1872 when the tragic executions took place. I still remember the panic that this word caused. Our father forbade us to say it... The Manila newspapers and the Spaniards use this word to describe those whom they want to render suspect of revolutionary activities. The educated Filipinos fear its scope. It does not have the meaning of “pirate;” it means rather a dangerous patriot who will soon be on the gallows, or else a conceited fellow,” Rizal in German in a letter to Ferdinand Blumentritt, 29 March 1887 (Anderson 2005, 59).

7 “…que los que otra cosa pidan son filibusteros, que desean la independencia del país, para la que son un poderoso obstáculo los religiosos.” Curiously, Weyler also admits that the more civilized a country is, the less influence a friar can have, while also asserting the necessity for the spread of Spanish literacy instruction in the Philippines, a central Ilustrado cause *(Los frailes filipinos* 132-3).
inordinate amount of power in the Philippines due to the decision on behalf of the empire not to exploit the archipelago economically as much as it had the Caribbean and other colonies. The empire also sent relatively few officials to the Philippines, concentrating them mainly in Manila. The friars spread throughout the archipelago, learning local languages, and thus gained a disproportionate amount of political and educational power that rivaled that of the colonial officials (Rafael 2005, 7). Dramas of power struggles between friars and imperial officials litter Rizal’s novels.

Lastly, there are the reform-minded Spanish politicians and intellectuals. Caribbean and Filipino authors who travel to Spain in the late 19th century engaged extensively with these supposed supporters including Emilio Castelar, Wenceslao Emilio Retana, and Emilia Pardo Bazán, at first seeking to forge alliances, then contentiously. Eugenio María de Hostos, for example, supported the rise of the reform-minded “República Española” in the 1860s, before becoming disenchanted by their lack of support for Puerto Rican autonomy. In 1868, he declared himself against the Spanish colonial regime and soon, in favor of a pan-Antilles revolution (Hostos 26-7). In the 1880s, Filipino Ilustrados courted official Spanish support by contributing to the Revista del Círculo Hispano-Filipino, a group publication that brought together ideas of expatriate Filipinos and liberal Spaniards (Schumacher 1997, 32-34). However, most Ilustrados began progressively to identify themselves as more than “mere vassals of Spain” and to distance themselves from supposed Spanish allies, who continuously wrote scathing reviews of their work, as well as racist, pseudoscientific accounts of life in the Philippines (Schumacher 1997, 39). These liberal Spaniards became the principal enemies addressed in the Philippine anti-colonial fortnightly magazine printed out of Barcelona and Madrid, La Solidaridad.
Borders as Zone of Struggle

These rivalries between colonial intellectuals and imperial apologists frame the contentious nature of both Acosta’s annotations and late 19th-century Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Philippine writing about the border, in general. Talking about the border as a zone of struggle builds off of and breaks free from original myths of border studies. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner, for example, asserted that the U.S. and its particular form of democracy were centrally informed by the expansion of its frontier into a culturally vacuous space: the wild west (221-2). Turner’s “frontier thesis” proposes that rugged individualism, a core tenet of U.S. democracy, was the product of the event when men ventured out and confronted wild nature and were rendered more savage as they tamed and civilized the land (201). Turner’s student, Herbert Eugene Bolton, asserted in 1921 that such a frontier was not empty, as Turner implies, because the Spaniards had conquered much of it; the complex heritage of these “Spanish Borderlands” is encoded in the dissonance between U.S. and Spanish forms of colonization (24-5). Through his archival work in Spain and Mexico, Bolton contributed to studies of the Caribbean and the Philippines, but never considered them an integral part of his borderlands project (17, 62).

Bolton’s student, John Francis Bannon, proceeded in turn to illustrate how both of his predecessors largely ignored the dynamic presence of “Indians” in these borderlands; they fetishize conquest and oversimplify the back-and-forth struggles it implied (5). An impactful distinction played out in border interactions is ciphered in the different approaches Spaniards and Anglo-Americans had when confronting Indians in the “wild west.” Spaniards tended to arrange more
alliances with different native nations against other groups, while also procreating with them more and therefore producing more racial, linguistic, and cultural mixing. The United States borderlands, which of course converged and overlapped with the Spanish borderlands, were inclined to be more ethnographically homogenous, split more cleanly along the lines of violently acquisitive Anglo-Americans and fiercely defensive Indians (6-7).

Gloria Anzaldúa took this one step forward from Bannon’s important acknowledgement; she narrated the pains of these continuous struggles from the perspective of border dwellers, whose land, language and identity are to this day arbitrarily divided by unnatural, historical borderlines. Furthermore, she references islands, as opposed to bridges, as a metaphor for being completely cut off from Caucasian communities and other hegemonic groups; islands represent both the desire of many radical border dwellers and an unsustainable and politically unproductive model (2009, 147-9). Anzaldúa paves the way for the intellectual projects of Caribbean studies: Gustavo Pérez Firmat, who wrote *Life on the Hyphen: the Cuban-American Way*, and Luis Rafael Sánchez, author of *La guagua aérea* about the back and forth travels and identity condition of Puerto Ricans. These writers explore the uncertainty of identity in the context of Caribbean-American cultures, a constant tension between the pain of the border and the linguistic and cultural advantage it affords those with divided identities.

Lorgia García Peña asserts that conceptualizing the borders of islands, a task she undertakes with regards to the Dominican Republic’s visible and invisible borders with Haiti and the United States, demands more than the identification of in-between identities. She says, “While highlighting the inherent discomfort of their particular liminalities, Anzaldúa, Sánchez, and Pérez Firmat hinted at an advantage awarded to the border-immigrant-transnational subject: they can
serve as a bridge between two geographical, historical, and linguistic borders” (4). García Peña insists that the border is more than an advantage or a bridge; it is a violence that inscribes itself in the body, prohibiting entry to a nation, access to full citizenship as well as “public, cultural, historical, and political representation” (4). Additionally, speaking about the border principally in terms of identity is risky in two main ways, the risk of framing border dwellers as chiefly victims, and the risk of identifying hybridity as an end in itself. Reframing hybridity through the prism of ambivalence breathes life into the often-trite term. But, before we analyze the function of ambivalence in Acosta’s annotations, it behooves us to delay our gaze on theories of ambivalence in writings in border studies from the late 20th century.

As stated above, Anzaldúa conceives of the borderlands as a scene of repeated identity, linguistic, and corporeal violence: “The U.S.-Mexican Border es una herida abierta where Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them” (25). The wound-like space of the border indicates both division and proximity between these imagined communities of “us” and “them,” similarly mirrored in Anzaldúa’s narrative language which oscillates between English, Spanish, and hybrid forms between the two (“Chicano Spanish,” “Tex-Mex,” “Pachuco,” etc. [77]).

Because of this, Anzaldúa asserts that the border-crosser has the privileged perspective required to critique communities and identities on both sides of the border, showing how such a division represents both historical and ongoing violences. Anzaldúa represents “crossing over” a border as a snake shedding its old skin. She claims that crossing over is “kicking a hole out of the old boundaries of the self and slipping under or over, dragging the old skin along, stumbling over
it... dragging the ghost of the past with her... only when she is on the other side and the shell cracks open and the lid from her eyes lifts that she sees things in a different perspective” (71). She continues, “Don’t give me your tenets and your laws... your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face...” (44). The borderlands thus represent a process of pain, of loss, of change and of a new capacity, rooted in ambivalence, to critique both identities and systems of difference that exclude her.

Homi Bhabha, on the other hand, talks about “borderline engagements of cultural difference” as spaces that destabilize conventional “definitions of tradition and modernity... the private and the public, high and low... [challenging] normative expectations of development and progress” (2). This borderline is an inherently ambivalent space, according to Bhabha, where the colonial “other” becomes “almost, but not quite” civilized, or in the context of India, “Anglicized [but] emphatically not... English” (1994, 87). For the empire, that space of difference is also an imperial space of “reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (1994, 86). The border is this space of multi-directional, chaotic, and incomplete misappropriations.

With regards to anticolonial writing and postcolonial theory, Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence points to an ability to construct “counter-knowledges in medias res, in the very act of agonism, within the terms of a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements” (1986, 8). This last point connects Bhabha’s notion of the borderline with Anzaldúa’s enlightening struggle of the borderlands, which allows the border crosser to critique hegemonic identity constructions on both sides of the border. It roots ambivalence in the
following paradox, which Acosta’s annotations cast light on: how can a knowledge be “counter” if it negotiates with and incorporates as opposed to negating, “oppositional and antagonistic elements”?

Cuban, Philippine, and Puerto Rican writings about the border promote an even more contradictory and problematic understanding of ambivalence. They show the border to be a space of constant, tense negotiation and confrontation, a zone where different groups — on the spectrum from imperial apologists to anti-imperial detractors — grapple over the definition of culture and the distribution of power in the colony, mutually contributing to discursive and concrete cultures of violence.

While the issue of borders doesn’t automatically stand out as a central debate in Caribbean and Philippine cultural production of the era, a closer examination shows how borders, in their many iterations, are a point of dispute throughout the late 19th century. Not only Acosta, but Rizal also contests geopolitical borders in a centuries-old history of conquest he republishes with annotations that challenge and correct still-active imperial biases of the official historians of yesteryear. He questions imperial entitlement in the tone of the relation of conquest, which speaks of Spanish efforts to expand the colonial frontiers from the Philippine archipelago into Japan, Thailand and other parts of East Asia. Rizal further identifies the border as a space of inferior social position, tracing the root of a Tagalog word for “slave” cited by the Spanish historian, Antonio de Morga, to the root word “border.” To be a slave, Rizal infers, is to live on the border.

Meanwhile at World Expositions in Europe, traveling colonized intellectuals disgruntledly witness Spanish representations of life on the border. These expositions staged scenes supposedly recreating the customs and spaces of their home colonies, represented as the frontiers between
civilized and savage cultures. These spectacles include a recreation of a Philippine Igorot village complete with “natives” in loincloths, two carabaos, nipa huts, and transplanted khasi pine trees alongside the pond at Madrid’s Parque del Retiro. They justify Spain’s colonial permanence by dramatically representing its civilizing mission in the savage fringes between modern and pre-modern worlds (Sánchez Gómez 59). Philippine writer Antonio Luna critiques the 1887 Madrid Exhibition for perpetuating a view of Filipinos as “poor, savage and stupid” (La Solidaridad I, 314). Comparing the Spaniards’ representation of their colonies with the supposedly education-centered French exhibition of their East Asian territories, Luna laments that literacy was neglected both in the Spanish representation of the colony and in its concrete administration of the colony (La Solidaridad I. 358).

Luna’s intercolonial jealousy echoes Puerto Rican Román Baldorioty de Castro’s complaint about the 1867 World Exposition of Paris. Baldorioty sees the display of Puerto Rico as a synecdoche of his native island which “drags itself pitifully as though it were in perpetual agony, between being and not being...” especially in comparison to the insufferably elaborate and developed Cuban display adjacent to it (76-7). The exposition, a microcosm of imperial and intercolonial dynamics of privilege, neglect, and envy, allows Baldorioty to gaze virtually across borders and conceptualize the isolated and excluded place of Puerto Rico within the map of the modernizing world.

In 1904, the U.S. repeated the Spanish theatrical display of imperial power by importing Igorots and nipa huts to the St. Louis World’s Fair, where school teachers taught these “little...
natives” how to dance Western steps (Sánchez Gómez 319). The spectacles of uncivilized life did not start with the Spain ceding the island regions to the U.S. in 1898, however. Two decades before, William F. Cody, also known as “Buffalo Bill” and “King of the Border Men,” began a traveling “Wild West Show” along the U.S. Atlantic coast and in Europe, included thrilling hunts, orchestrated battle scenes, and other nostalgic fictions of “authentic” frontier life (Kasson 4-6). Among these fictions were “rough riders,” “American Indians in feathers,” “Mexicans in round hats,” and “exotic animals” (Kasson 41). The “Wild West” shows channeled nostalgia for the frontier experience and fostered U.S. public support for further excursions into the more distant lands of wilderness. These shows often involved Cubans and Mexicans who demonstrated their dexterity at riding and roping. Furthermore, military cavalries from Cuba and the Philippines were presented as “Genuine Insurgents” and “Battle Scarred Heroes,” promoting thus anti-Spanish sentiments in discursive preparation for the wars of 1898 (Kassan 241).

Such frontier dramas worked in concert with the two-volume 1899 photographic monograph called Our Islands and Their People, which contained about 1200 images of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii. These photos mechanically reproduce information and discourses about the island peoples at the far reaches of the United States’ expanding imperial borders for spectators in the living rooms of the U.S. heartland. This use of the new technology of photography justifies the United States’ expansion by signaling the Spaniards’ cruelty, the colonized peoples’ exotic and uncivilized nature, and the potential for economic exploitation of the fertile and still wild regions.

Like their Spanish counterparts, the U.S. border spectacles were preemptively and reactively contested and reframed by colonized intellectuals. Cuban writer and revolutionary José
Martí admires the Wild West show, while deviating from Anglo-American-centric interpretations of the spectacle. Martí saw it in New York in 1886 and claims it staged the true, heartless, frontier battle between the “natural owners of the country” and the “conquerors of the wilderness” (2011, 42). The “magnificent spectacle” helps Martí begin to define the categories upon which he structures his writings about the epistemological, cultural, economic, and geopolitical clash of North American and Latin American civilizations, which he would later develop into his concept of “Nuestra América.”

Rizal saw another representation of the “Wild West” show in 1889 in Paris and exclaimed in response, “Why should we resent being called Indios by the Spaniards. Look at the American Indians. They were not ashamed of their race. Let us be like them. Let us be proud of the name Indio and make the Spaniards revise their conception of the term. We shall become Indios Bravos” (Zaide 127). The Filipino patriot admires the wild, honorable, and resistant Indians of the American frontier. Rizal repeats and redefines the epithet Spaniards used against Filipinos, infusing it with difference and divisiveness. The logic of the “Wild West” show assigned Indians a place of radical otherness in the project of U.S. westward expansion, just like the Spaniards had done when calling Filipinos “Indios,” thus refusing them the rights of full Spanish citizens. Rizal erects social borders — an exclusive division of “us” and “them” — by appropriating the dangerous otherness assigned to him and his people. These social borders are at work across oceans, in the

9 The original is “los dueños naturales del país” and “los conquistadores de la selva.”

10 Original quote unknown. This quote appears in a number of historical and literary examinations of Rizal, but always referencing Gregorio Zaide’s José Rizal: Life, Works and Writings, in which it is not attributed, beyond the fact that this was “told [to] his friends.” An extensive survey of Rizal’s letters and diaries proved insufficient to find the source of this quote. While it could be apocryphal, it is consistent with other acts of redefinition and appropriation of disparaging terms in Rizal’s work. Among other cases, there is “el filibusterismo,” the title of Rizal’s second novel which refers to the Spanish authorities’ term for insubordination, punishable by death, which Rizal transforms into a political and aesthetic project in his novel.
Philippines, in Europe and even in the Americas; Rizal turns the Spaniards’ famous geo-linguistic mistake — calling all conquered native peoples “Indians” in the pattern formed by Columbus’s disoriented voyage to the Indies — into the framework of a potential, transcontinental network of anti-imperial resistance.

Fittingly, intellectuals of Spain’s late colonies experiment with the political capacity of photography even before the efforts of North American photographic imperialism made evident in Our Islands and Their Peoples. Vicente Rafael states, “Photography, like print technology, not only allowed ilustrados to view the world up close and compare it to the colony, it also furnished the means for projecting ilustrado thinking and appearances beyond the local confines of colonial society... [having] a certain telecommunicative capacity” (2011, 70). A central aspect of this projection of Ilustrado thinking involved an overacted performance of familiarity with European codes of etiquette, style, and scientific knowledge. Philippine Ilustrados took fancy to photographing themselves in ultra-European poses in the late 1880’s. They practiced fencing and photographed themselves in “advance lunge” posture, before challenging Spanish critics to duels. They wore ceremonial three-piece suits and tall top hats, taking portraits and group pictures in prominent Madrid public spaces, refuting through their wardrobe and familiarity with technology the visual claims that all Filipinos were savages dressed in loincloths. These residents of the supposedly pre-modern fringes of the world use these photographs to insert themselves in style, medium, and geography into the center of empire, destabilizing the established cartographies of power.

Rizal, Antonio Luna’s brother, Juan, a prize-winning painter, and two other friends even staged a photo tableau in which they reenacted the death of Cleopatra, with Juan dressing in drag
as the deceased queen. In so doing, these three Ilustrados instigate a chronologically complex endeavor; they use a new technology to write themselves into a history of non-European, non-male sovereignty that predates the Spanish and Catholic structures of power. The Filipinos, represented by the empire as contemporary, effeminate remainders of pre-historical, savage societies, attempt to show themselves through the same gesture to be older and newer than their colonizers, while playfully challenging the imperial apologists’ gendered claims; their roots are deeper and their grasp of modernity more advanced.

These colonized intellectuals’ photographic projects preemptively subvert the symbolic work the U.S. would realize years later in their photographic monograph Our Islands and Their Peoples, which also inserted itself into power structure of the colonial islands by force. This force is evident not only in exoticized photos of island peoples in rudimentary living conditions that echo the perspective of the World’s Fair representations of the Philippines. Even photos of urban, apparently non-exotic settings tend to justify U.S. intervention, as seen in a photo of women piling out of the front door of Havana’s Recojidas prison. This prison was a stage of North American “yellow journalism” and William Randolph Hearst’s profiles of Evangelina Cisneros, one of the prisoners wrongfully kept there by “cruel” Spaniards and liberated by the U.S.

In this photo, a boy in the foreground holds a stick, upon which the photographer has doctored the image of a U.S. flag. This superimposed image of a flag upon a structure that had been represented as a symbol of Spanish cruelty realizes on the space of the photograph the same ritual of marking territory on expanding imperial frontiers – sticking a flag in recently “discovered” ground – made famous earlier by the conquistadores and later by moon-landers. The fact that the photographer alters the photo by staking the flag in the hand of a Cuban boy, instead of in the
earth, not only shows the Cuban people to be willing, passive, and happily colonized. It aligns the Cuban people by metonymy with the land, and more specifically, the lands that were stage to first arrival: the shorelines or borders of colonies established through such flag staking.

The polemics realized on page and stage capture the contentious nature of the border in the context of the islands most affected by the wars of 1898. It would not be responsible, however, to equate this contentiousness with radical divisions. Borders, on the level of language, culture, geopolitics, and economics, represent a reactionary desire for decisive division of two or more regions or peoples, a desire confronted by the reality of complex, asymmetrical fluidity between those groups.

These moments of fluidity and contamination are what make borders so fascinating and difficult to nail down. For one, anti-colonial discursive strategies sometimes infiltrate the writings of imperial apologists; to counter Rizal’s anti-Spanish republishing of a 1609 history of conquest, chief Hispanist Wenceslao E. Retana republishes Rizal’s republication. Retana limply praises the Filipino scholar while combating some of Rizal’s more combative comments through Retana’s own footnotes, and erasing other annotations all together. While he works to undo Rizal’s contribution to the historical debate, Retana unwittingly pays homage to his adversary’s page-level rhetorical innovation of decorous, yet argumentative annotations. A main aspect of the ambivalence analyzed in the following chapters is the reverse of this process, namely the remainder of colonial logic and exclusive discourse within anti-colonial writings.

These scenes illustrate how the border is a polemical space, a stage of disagreement, struggle, and tense negotiation. This recalls the concept of the “contact zone” theorized by Mary Louise Pratt. The contact zone is an urban “space of colonial encounters... in which peoples
geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). These spaces, like borders, are characterized by struggle, negotiation, and improvisation, cultural gestures that reveal implicit structures of power both when these structures are reinforced and when they are challenged. Studying the ambivalence central to these border writings underlines the fact that these texts represent not only struggles between peoples of different cultures, lineages, languages, and epistemologies. Perhaps more compellingly, the moments of ambivalence render perceptible certain disagreements between the distinctly oriented urges that wrestle against each other within the colonial intellectuals’ subjectivity, among others, the drive for freedom and the drive for power. Each writer is a contact zone, within them lie cultural and ideological borders that are crisscrossedly traversed through the enunciation of these texts and reflections on geopolitical borders.

**Patrolling the Borders of Page and Island**

The history of these island regions, the writings of various, late 19th-century intellectuals who directly and indirectly intervened in debates on the border, and various theoretical approaches to the border help frame the case of border writing we set out to analyze first in this introduction: José Julián Acosta’s cartographically critical annotations. In a nut shell, Acosta’s annotation is a synecdoche for the issue of border struggle throughout Philippine, Cuban, and Puerto Rican literature as analyzed in this dissertation. The border of his island gives Acosta an inconspicuous platform from which he can destabilize outdated modes of organizing the colony, critique issues of slavery as well as the structures of the colonial economy, and promote reforms
grounded in science. It also becomes a space where he can express his ambivalence toward both revolution and the empowerment of formerly enslaved peoples.

Let’s go through with this analysis step by step. In continuity with Anzaldúa and Bhabha’s theories of ambivalence as a border dweller’s privileged perspective on modernity, Acosta’s annotations to Abbad’s history of Puerto Rico show discursive dexterity. With them, Acosta sketches a border across the space of the page, illustrates the methods of deftly moving to and fro across that border, and in so doing legitimates his multiple critiques of the colonial status quo. However, his annotations reveal a breach forming between the concepts of hybridity and ambivalence. They suggest a complex procedure of ambivalence throughout Acosta’s writing, and throughout most Caribbean and Philippine anti-colonial writing, a procedure rooted in issues of island borders: definition and repetition.

Acosta begins by critiquing the map of Puerto Rico. “How can you have progress if you don’t have a good map?” he wonders. First of all, in the process of showing his expertise in cartography, citing several non-Spanish European scientists, Acosta angles to position himself as more erudite than both the Spanish friar historian and the Spaniards Abbad represents. This is not uncommon in Spain’s late colonies. Studying 19th-century Philippine excursions into social sciences, Megan Thomas notes that Filipino intellectuals’ search for morphological connections between Tagalog and Sanskrit intertwinesses various strains of these patrimonial inscriptions. On the one hand, the Filipino scholars contest Spanish claims that culture came with conquest by linking themselves to pre-Hispanic language families already approved as sophisticated by German, English, and French “orientalists.” On the other, the Filipino intellectuals demonstrate more

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11 “Aún están por determinar con la precision necesaria y de un modo incontestable tan preciosos datos. Ya en otros escritos (Programa para la enseñanza de la Geografía en Puerto Rico, 1853) nos hemos lamento de la falta de una buena carta corográfica, por reclamarla vivamente los progresos intelectuales y materiales del país” (50).
familiarity with non-Spanish scientific movements than the Spaniards have. In a sense, the Filipinos try to prove that they are more European than the Spaniards by aligning themselves linguistically with South Asians (Thomas 52).

Furthermore, Acosta’s demand for cartographical rigor is a metonym for many of his critiques of the colony; Puerto Rico and Spain must modernize themselves through non-Spanish European sciences, a process that will involve the transformation of the colony’s economic apparatus, the abolition of slavery and political autonomy for Puerto Ricans. The border of his island, seemingly disconnected from the issues of slavery and autonomy, gives Acosta an indirect path to commenting on colonial politics and economics, and to proposing specific potential reforms.

Acosta’s annotations represent a complex intersection of island studies and border studies in that he implicitly identifies as problematic the endeavor of defining an island’s borders. Islands, as Marc Shell points out, represent a constant crisis of definition, the necessity to define the borders of the island confronted by the impossibility of such definition. The border between land and water must be defined to determine if the land mass is circumnavigable and thus an island (13, 17-8). However, many islands turn into peninsulas at low tide and some even disappear at high tide. Is “island” a temporary or transient category?

Additionally, in the case of archipelagoes, the borders of ethnic and linguistic communities of island dwellers frequently work with little regard for the shoreline. As illustrated by the island of Negros, in the Visayas region of the Philippines, mountain ranges within the same island can separate two language communities, while water, the preferred locale of Philippine locomotion,
frequently connects geographically separated linguistic groups. Likewise, Shell asserts that islands exist in a constant “see-saw” between the strict differentiation at the border between land and water — the island as land completely surrounded by a radically different substance, water — and a flowing identity of water and land, as a marshy, clay-like “water-land” (18).

Acosta’s republished history and annotations represent a project of definition and radical separation. Acosta’s cartographical correction is pedagogical, hoping to straighten askew teachings at the base of Puerto Rican continued struggles. The correction is a synecdoche for his political project, which identifies education as the launch pad for colonial reform. Within this project, Acosta identifies slaves and freed black peoples as being fundamentally incapable of literacy due to their race. They are just as much a hindrance to the educational well being of the island as are the educationally negligent colonizers. As Acosta draws the line on the page to separate the main text and his innovative annotations, he also, in this note and others, sketches a social border that excludes those who hinder the path of education and progress. With these imaginary borders, Acosta defines who belongs in the country he envisions and who does not. Consequently, Acosta’s critique of the map of Puerto Rico, in part, is connected to his abolitionist project that while it would free enslaved peoples, it would also exclude them from participation in a Puerto Rican identity and future, assigning them a role of radical difference, and proposing their “peaceful” elimination through a project of whitening miscegenation.

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12 The language of Negros Oriental is Cebuano, the same language of Cebu, the island this region faces across the Tañon Straight. The people of Negros Occidental, situated on the other side of the Kanlaon Volcano from Negros Oriental, speak Hiligaynon, the same language spoken across the Guimaras Straight on the island of Panay. See ethnic/linguistic map of the Philippines on page ## for a visual representation of this spatial dynamic. Researchers of pre-Hispanic Caribbean ethnic and linguistic communities have found similar geo-cultural distributions across land and seas at work in the Antillean archipelago between Guanahatabey, Taino, and Carib groups (Deagan 193-5).
The same annotations also are structured upon repetition; they reproduce the text that puts forth an erroneous map of Puerto Rico’s borders. They replicate imperial and Eurocentric discourses present in that text. They duplicate various cartographical representations, or iterations of the same island, as though it were repeating and constantly differing. Cuban author Antonio Benítez Rojo conceptualizes the work of repetition in the context of Caribbean islands in opposition to theories of cultural diffusion through which all cultural accomplishments of colonized regions reflect the greatness of empire. His concept, the “repeating island,” promotes a reading of inter-island cultural circulation, further complicating the dynamic set out by Shell between identity and difference. Benítez Rojo argues that the Caribbean islands are junctures in a process of constant repetition, a repetition linked to an archetypical and imaginary original Caribbean island. Each iteration in this chain of repetition implies a subtle yet definitive move in the direction of difference and nothingness (iv). Acosta’s annotations pose several questions: can these islands repeat European dynamics while repeating themselves, that is, without ceasing to be Caribbean islands? What is the border between European and Caribbean ways of organizing the world?

By repeating the original 1788 text written by a Spanish friar, Acosta not only repeats Eurocentric discourses. Through repetition, Acosta also challenges the narrative of Caribbean passivity and insufficiency put forth in Abbad’s history. He produces a textual structure within which he is active and Europe is passive; he has the power not only to retrace the map, but also to speak about Europe and choose between European scientific patrimonies. In addition to defining and radically separating Caribbean communities, this repetition also chaotically works against Europe-Caribbean barriers in the process of authorizing the voice of the annotator. He seeks to
establish new parameters for a colonial knowledge that incorporates and manipulates Europe, as opposed to a European knowledge that incorporates and subjugates the colony.

There remains the generic question: why use endnotes to tell this history, to establish these borders, and to examine these new forms of colonial knowledge? The previous sections on the history of these regions, their literary production, and theoretical approaches to the border suggest that a complex network of factors motivates this literary gesture. First, the pervasiveness of censorship inspires Acosta to smuggle divisive material across the borders of imperial history. These little commentaries, invoking the postcolonial Comentarios Reales of el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, destabilize in a big way the logics and structures of empire. They unleash a flood of non-hegemonic knowledge within the text that contributed to the establishment of such hegemonies. Finally, maintaining the notes in their subservient position can be interpreted in two ways: as an unsuspicious vehicle for this destabilizing commentary, or as a form of preservation of colonial order, or vertical hierarchies, within the text that aims to undercut such order. That is the ambivalent aspect of these annotations; within the anti-colonial project, there remains a residue of colonial thinking. This ambivalence frames a central aspect of both Acosta’s intellectual project and those of the above-mentioned anti-colonial writings on borders: disagreement with themselves.

This disagreement with themselves renders their writings frustrated; they contradict themselves and undermine their own objections. These texts represent dramas of indecision, enactments of frustration, belaboring the contradictory impulses playing out within the protagonists’ internal struggle, as seen in novels like Hostos’s Peregrinación de Bayoán or Rizal’s Noli me tangere. At the same time, these scenes are as frustrating as they are dynamic. As dramas of indecision, they highlight the existence of multiple paths; rather than a pamphlet that promotes a
fixed political project, the internal contradictions within these texts provide the community of readers a spectrum of directions for interpretation and action. As opposed to “hybridity,” which has been represented as an end in itself, this ambivalence of these writers manifests itself as a perpetually frustrated, yet potentially impactful energy that forms an invisible nervous system connecting the writings and evasive borders of these distant regions.

Securing the Border?

Footnotes to Empire does not centrally focus on physical border spaces, walls, or lines, crossed or inhabited by literal border dwellers. The borders here explored are distinct from the ones most debated in academic circles of border studies, or in political debates about different strategies for “securing the border.” They are imaginary, textual, dramatic, and social borders that represent frustrated and never-to-exist nations. It does not make sense to talk about physical spaces within countries that exist principally in colonial intellectuals’ imaginaries. However, the tools furnished by border studies – including certain sensitivities to asymmetrical fluidity of language, culture, power, and currency – prove useful when reading these texts. These texts creatively reinterpret border divisions, languages, and struggles, and in the process they record perhaps the only traces of these fleeting and never to be realized nations, obliquely proposed in the ambivalent writings of colonial intellectuals.

Thinking about these imaginary borders challenges monolithic accounts of writers who are frequently assigned a posteriori the classification of “nationalist” or “revolutionary,” when they are read through the prism of the events that happened after they wrote, as opposed to being understood through the specific uncertainty that reigned in their moment of writing. Thinking
about them as ambivalent doesn’t take away from their literary accomplishments; it pays attention to the specifics of their literary and political projects and the contradictions therein, maybe even enriching their legacy, without turning it into hagiography. This approach also gives the reader room to think about the unique visions of these colonies and their intellectuals. Paradoxically, exploring this similarity between distant colonial writings of the Caribbean and the Philippines, the fascination with and reinterpretation of borders, allows one to identify the differences between the political and literary positions assumed by colonial intellectuals; they are not a homogenous block of colonized people, predetermined by the fatality of their being shifted between Spanish and U.S. imperial regimes.

Not only is the Spanish used by Filipinos differently inflected from the Spanish used by Caribbean anti-colonial intellectuals; the politics of language appropriation is different between Philippine texts written in Spanish is also different from Cuban texts which playfully adopt English as their language of expression. Acosta’s engagement with a “friar history” is dramatically different from Rizal’s engagement with friar histories, the main sources of anti-Filipino discourse and “unenlightened” thought which Rizal debates through his annotations of the more favorable secular historian, Morga. Martí’s take on race and the role of former slaves in the revolution, that there is no black and white, only a “Cuban race,” diverges radically from the beliefs of Acosta, and his compatriot Julio Vizcarondo, who propose policies of whitening miscegenation. Filipino intellectuals, on the other hand, curiously choose the word “race” to organize their formation of a national identity; both race and nation are concepts that the colonial intellectuals adopted from the colonizers, seeing that neither notion was important for pre-Hispanic epistemologies of the archipelago.
Each chapter approaches a genre utilized by writers of two or more of these colonies to reinterpret the border and sketch notions of future communities: historical annotations, travel chronicles, and novels. By paying close attention to the articulation of borders and the moments of ambivalence, each chapter traces new maps of the imaginary countries obliquely proposed in these texts, faint iterations of the repeating islands. The questions that organize these chapters are the following: Do these texts reinterpret established borders of the colony or do they invent new borders? How do colonial intellectuals frame their relationship with Spain? With their compatriots? Does the concept of “compatriot” precede these writings or do the writings invent the compatriots they address? What colonial urges underline these texts’ anti-colonial claims? Can imaginary borders generate concrete violence?

The following chapters aim to interrogate and complicate traditional forms of understanding anti-colonial writing in the context of the Philippines and the Caribbean, as well as sketching a framework for understanding the tension between these writers’ drive for freedom and their drive for power. Each chapter addresses one genre of writing into which colonial intellectuals from both ends of Spain’s late empire smuggled anti-imperial messages.

Chapter One, “Footnotes to Empire: The Borders of Prehistory,” explores the space of borders on the page in the case of the lines that separate imperial histories and the demure and divisive footnotes 19th-century colonial intellectuals append to them. These page divisions help recuperate a sense of definition of nations frustrated under the persistent yolk of Spanish colonialism. They provide colonial intellectuals an avenue through which they can recuperate their voice, censored and effaced within the history and their present moment of the empire. These borders – between the main text and the paratext, between forms of scientific enlightenment
sharpened in Europe and local, “native” knowledges – also highlight a series of implicit exclusions in the reformist and revolutionary projects, as well as divergent takes on the interaction between “race war” and the ethics of history. On which side of the border do the less literate masses and enslaved peoples find themselves?

The act of reading across page borders reflects and refracts the experience of travel common to colonial intellectuals of Spain’s late empire. Chapter Two, “Fresh Impressions: Performing Language and Gender Borders,” probes how chronicles of travel underline the formation of a complex anti-colonial message through the dramatic reflection and repackaging of experiences abroad. The clever transgression of language borders highlights innovative exercises in cultural politics, while panicked zeal in defending gender divisions, challenged through travel, points to a conflict in allegiances. This brings up a sticky question: does colonial intellectuals’ loyalty to their masculinity inform or contradict, support or erode at their designs of a national community?

The novels explored in Chapter Three, “Dangerous Differences: The Stakes of Interpretation in Novels of Return,” address the ensuing problem: the possibility of crossing back over the borders of the colony. These novels are Rizal’s 1887 Noli me tangere and Eugenio María de Hostos’s 1863 Peregrinación de Bayoán. What happens when the traveler returns to the island from his travels? How does the genre of the novel interpret and dramatize the conflicts of these returns and repetitions, the confusion of periphery and center? How does this specific experience of disorientation orient the imagining of a national community, free from the constraints of imperial rule? The structures of gossip and interpretation in these novels show how the volatility of these novels’ messages represent a form of helplessness, a constant disagreement and a potential for
power that transgresses social divisions. This reaffirms the most impactful aspect of anti-colonial literature in Spain’s late empire: these texts consistently turn discourses of colonialism, like the “encomienda” or other assertions of colonized peoples’ inevitable inferiority, from declarations into debates.
Chapter One:

**Footnotes to Empire**¹

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¹The Borders of Prehistory

...acaso el verbo pacificar significase entonces meter la guerra.
   - Rizal

...nada podemos añadir a lo que fr. Íñigo ha expuesto.
   - Acosta

Footnotes and Prehistory

If you skip or skim the annotations of two republished Spanish colonial histories, you may miss the best story. Perhaps even more compelling than the accounts of conquest of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, these annotated histories stage late 19th-century colonial power struggles through the dissonance between the main text and the annotators’ notes. The colonial annotators, José Julián Acosta of Puerto Rico and José Rizal of the Philippines, do not yet have countries; their homelands would continue under Spanish rule until 1898, before being shuffled into the United States’ growing sphere of influence. Despite not having a country, they stake a claim to history, carving out room for their voices in the same texts that registered the subjugation and silencing of pre-conquest island peoples.

In 1866, Acosta republishes and annotates Spanish friar Íñigo Abbad’s 1788 Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de Puerto Rico. In 1889, Rizal reprints and comments Spanish official Antonio Morga’s 1609 Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas. They annotate antiquated, empire-endorsed histories in order to use contemporary sciences to adjust and amend errors in the originals’ measurements and analyses. Acosta and Rizal also identify moments of imperial

¹ “Perhaps the verb ‘pacify’ in fact means enter into war.”
² “Nothing can we add to what Friar Íñigo has exposed.”
entitlement in the official histories and underline continuities of colonial corruption between the moment of conquest and the late 19th century. They extrapolate upon the places in the original texts where untold histories are indicated, overlooked, or effaced, while preparing a manual for anti-colonial literacy for future generations.

Acosta's and Rizal’s annotations branch off from a long history of footnotes. Footnotes, according to Robert Hauptman, “evolved from the abuses of the medieval gloss and extreme marginal annotation, [and] solved the documentation problem for the printed book” (112). Since medieval gloss often took the shape of multi-vocal, disordering commentary, neat footnotes are the printer’s boring domestication of gloss. In turn, Acosta and Rizal’s textual interventions restore in the printed note a certain glossy chaos. Like the gloss, their interventions also “follow a path designed by the annotator, one that furthers his interest regardless of relevancy” (Hauptman 81). This links their comments to the tradition of anti-colonial, destabilizing commentaries, like those of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, who infused imperial history in Peru with multiple languages and voices, shaking official tales of conquest to the core with alternative narrations and perspectives. Mikhail Bakhtin’s “hetero-gloss-ia” takes on an etymological valence here, linking the genres of novel and history. Acosta’s and Rizal’s notes inject “differing individual voices” (Bakhtin 263) into history, dialogizing the texts and unsettling their implicit power dynamics. The annotations novelize the histories; they transform them even more explicitly into “literary artifacts,” in Hayden

3 A typical gloss: “a text with interlinear notes in a smaller, less ornate hand running down the center of the page... surrounded by commentary in a variety of hands” (Hauptman 81).

4 As Noel Coward said, footnotes are like “having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love” (Grafton 70). In informal correspondence with me, Vicente Rafael — historian of the Philippines — responded to the quote: “but with the chance that you end up meeting a far more passionate lover downstairs than the one you left upstairs.”

5 According to the glossary of Bakhtin’s terms put together by Michael Holquist, the editor of The Dialogic Imagination, heteroglossia is “the set of conditions—social, historical...—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions” (428).
White’s terms. In so doing, Acosta and Rizal empower themselves in tense dialogue with colonial historians.

Many of the voices that Acosta and Rizal tease out of history belong to “Indios.” The annotators piece together notions of what the colony might have been like before conquest, reading the text against the grain in search of traces of “Indio” civilization and consciousness, which colonization had stymied, according to their argument. The term “Indio” is used both in the Philippines and the Caribbean, despite these populations belonging to radically distinct ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, groups that received dramatically different colonial treatments on these distant tips of Spain’s imperial wingspan.6

This fascination with pre-conquest Indios inscribes these annotated histories in the field of prehistory, an important intellectual project prevalent among colonial scholars of Spain’s late empire. Late 19th-century intellectuals of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines scour the fields of anthropology, linguistics, folklore, and historiography in search of scraps of information about pre-conquest Indio societies. Among these prehistorians are Cubans José Antonio Saco, Juan Ignacio de Armas, and Manuel Sanguily, Puerto Ricans Acosta, Agustín Stahl, and Salvador Brau, Filipinos Rizal, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, and Isabelo de los Reyes.7 Through the turf of

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6 Indios of the Caribbean were subjected to forced labor and largely died out, leading to the expansion of the African slave trade in the Americas. The same condition through which Indios of the Philippines were not forced to work like their Caribbean counterparts, that is lack of imperially promoted economic development in the archipelago, also led to their being left to the will of friars they portrayed as power-hungry and corrupt.

In this chapter, I maintain the use of the word “Indio,” as opposed to Indians, natives, or indigenous peoples, because this form maintains a central issue debated in the following pages, the inaccuracy and strangeness of the word, emphasized by the gesture of keeping it in Spanish but using the Anglo form of proper noun capitalization.

7 In Puerto Rico, Agustín Stahl combines naturalism with archaeology, studying the flora and fauna, while exploring how Indio artifacts like bones and cemíes "symbolized local peculiarities differentiating Puerto Rico from Spain" (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 129). His countryman, Salvador Brau explores the work of transculturation in Puerto Rico, defending the "thesis that Puerto Rican civilization and the Puerto Rican 'race' were the product of the intermixture of the Americas, Africa, and Europe" (2006, 126). In the Philippines, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera publishes El sanscrito en la lengua tagala in 1887, tracing words from the language of Manila and its surrounding regions, Tagalog, back to
prehistory, these scholars make demands for reform within colonial administration, sketch forms of heritage that bind the communities of colonized peoples, and struggle for intellectual independence.

How can a colonized subject establish intellectual independence? “Step away from Spain” is the main response of both scholars of that time and contemporary academics who study these prehistorical intellectual projects. Through his annotations, Rizal pledges allegiance not to Spain, but to the “free sphere of scientific facts” (Rizal, quoted in Thomas 4). Meghan Thomas, intellectual historian of Philippine anti-colonial forays into the social sciences, asserts that Rizal claims to be a citizen of the “world that recognized no political boundaries or authority, but only the authority of reason and evidence” (Thomas 4). While Thomas argues that this step away from Spain is a step toward a universal community of science, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, scholar of abolitionism and liberalism in the Caribbean and the Philippines, frames this move as more particularist than universalist. That is, Schmidt-Nowara asserts that prehistory allows colonial scholars of these regions to “[craft] their own national histories that emphasized local peculiarities and symbols that separated their countries from Spain and Spanish history” (2006, 96). Whether this move be toward a universal community or toward a particularized national group, whether the prehistorians fixate on pre-Hispanic Indio cultures or recur to non-Hispanic European scientific

Sanskrit (Thomas 66). His compatriot, Isabelo de los Reyes publishes El folklore filipino in 1890, executing complex fieldwork in dialogue with German and English models of ethnography, furthermore tracing the path of how Philippine superstitions really come from Spain (Anderson 2005, 12). In Cuba, José Antonio Saco develops his monumental Historia de la esclavitud over the course of his whole life, finally publishing it well after the process of abolition was underway. Saco traces the history of slavery from the time of Classical Greece to the 19th century, glossing the chronicles and histories of Bartolomé de las Casas, Pedro Martyr, and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo in his sections on Indio and African slavery in the Americas. His fellow Cubans, Juan Ignacio de Armas and Manuel Sanguily write treatises on Indio cultural legacy in which they debate about the presence or absence of Indio words in their contemporary Spanish language.
traditions including French naturalism, English folklore, and German anthropology, the chief ingredient to intellectual independence through prehistory is a break from Spain.

And this assertion about the separation or decisive break from Spain is true... in part. Acosta’s and Rizal’s republished histories illuminate how just like with the annotations, the best story is in the nuance. Rather than radically separating themselves from the Spaniards, the prehistorians erect borders between these categories, borders mirrored by the lines that they draw, defend, and transgress between the main text and the footnotes. Like geographical borders, these intellectual borders are porous and imply a series of contradictory processes: separation and connection, enclosure and division, inclusion and exclusion, transgression and protection, permanence and mobility.

The work of this chapter is to understand how borders function within these prehistorical projects, by analyzing the divisions, proximities, transgressions, and demarcations through which Acosta and Rizal structure their paratextual historical interventions. Through these projects, they establish permeable and shifting divisions between themselves and the Spanish, as well as between themselves and different subjugated groups of their islands: Indios, enslaved peoples and the masses. This provides a privileged perspective of the rich complexities and confounding contradictions of late 19th-century political thought and literary production of the Caribbean and the Philippines.

Acosta and Rizal’s annotations also offer insights on the connection between the work of borders and the liberal politics of reform. The annotators use page divisions to visibilize and challenge their own exclusion from political power, economic modernity, and intellectual maturity; the page becomes a space of perpetual ambivalence and peaceful disagreement. Rizal and
Acosta also use borders to conceal and perpetuate certain exclusions, and in so doing they naturalize the logic of exclusion, upon which many forms of liberalism rest.

These borders as frameworks of exclusion have paradoxical implications about these texts, and Acosta and Rizal provide the careful reader with the tools to explore these paradoxes and interrogate this work of borders in their own historical annotations. The annotators comb through imperial histories in search of Indio voices ciphered, erased, and overlooked therein, voices that offer alternative, valid narratives of colonialism. Likewise, reading their annotations in search of still more effaced voices highlights the alternative, valid narratives obscured by the political projects Acosta and Rizal promote. Paradoxically, as the excluded people – Indios, enslaved peoples, and the masses – becomes less and less visible, they gain a shadowy importance within Rizal’s and Acosta’s aesthetic and political projects. The responsible reader, through the encouragement of Rizal and Acosta, can rescue effaced voices from Rizal and Acosta’s notes, and thereby retrace the imaginary borders they patrol through these writings, in other words, the contours of the countries these writers imagined but never were able to make real.

Roadmap

Borders are a space of disagreement, not only between the intellectuals and those they oppose, ignore, or challenge, but also between the intellectuals and themselves. Acosta’s and Rizal’s annotations display numerous moments of internal disagreement and ambivalence. They perpetuate similar exclusions to the ones they protest. They challenge hierarchies that the format of the annotations in part fortifies. They exhibit indecision and self-contradiction with regards to
the unresolved internal debates that permeate these prehistories: reform v. revolution, inclusion v. exclusion of the masses, European v. Indio national heritages.

Even the genre “prehistory” underlines a bias: that “history” in the Americas and other conquered territories began when Europeans “discovered” them and started to write about them. On the one hand, colonial intellectuals’ prehistorical investigations challenge this bias, by examining the complexity of precontact Indio civilizations in the Caribbean and the Philippines. On the other hand, they perpetuate a Eurocentric emphasis on the importance of writing, science, and history. This can be seen when they critique Europeans on European terms, such as the moment in which Rizal underlines European superstitions. This gesture simultaneously refutes Spanish claims that Filipinos were unscientific and superstitious, and challenges the hegemony of friars in the Philippines, whom he and his countryman Isabelo de los Reyes identify as the sources of Philippine superstitions and irrationalities. What it does not do, however, is challenge the Eurocentric logic that equates scientific knowledge with progress and cultural value.

These forays into prehistory fulfill contradictory tasks: the intellectuals search for a history that emphasizes their difference from Europe, but they also seek to accentuate their distinction within the Eurocentric field of history. Within their projects, the divisions between European and non-European lineages becomes similarly hard to decipher; these porous borders render the prehistorians’ intellectual projects somewhat schizophrenic. The colonial intellectuals construct a framework to consider themselves, at the same time, not European and more European than their colonizers.

The questions that structure the chapter are the following: How do Rizal and Acosta creatively refashion the layout of the history page as to make it include their own voices? Does the
counterpoint between the main text and the annotations represent a radical break or a perpetual and tense negotiation? How do these annotations lead to reimagined contours, laws, and communities of their colonies? To what degree do these “new” notions break free from or renew dynamics of marginalization prevalent in the colony? Who is included and excluded from those countries? The Puerto Rican and Philippine parallel, prehistorical annotations also illustrate conflicting intellectual traditions. What should be fostered through prehistory and education in general, a firmer grasp of the truth or the power to doubt and thus destabilize hegemonic narratives?

Succinctly, both Acosta and Rizal use often demure annotations to carve creatively a space for their voices within the imperial histories of their islands. Furthermore, both draw battle lines through their communities along the borders of race, invoking Michel Foucault’s concept of “race war.” Additionally, the similar strategies employed by Acosta and Rizal, and more generally Caribbean and Philippine writers, promote diverging visions for the future of their peoples, perched on the opposite ends of Spain’s dwindling empire. Acosta and Rizal most dramatically diverge with regards to how race functions within their annotations and political projects.

Borders and Counterpoints

The overlap of prehistory and borders is more than circumstantial. This can be seen in the parallel projects contested by colonial intellectuals and their investigations in prehistory: the project of imperial bolstering by the Spanish and their defenders, and the project of U.S. frontier expansion and its notion of manifest destiny. As scholars of prehistory, Acosta and Rizal struggle to assert a form of national knowledge against the will of imperial forces that represent the
Caribbean and the Philippines as culturally empty frontiers into which the Spaniards decanted their civilization. Schmidt-Nowara affirms that prehistorians either work largely in “opposition to metropolitan efforts [either] to articulate a national identity and history that encompassed the colonies,” that is reframe any cultural accomplishment of the colonies as a trophy of Spanish civilization, or to represent the colonies directly as a culturally vacuous space (96).

These efforts can be seen in the writing of Emilio Castelar, who denies the colonized people not only freedom and reforms, but also their right to have their own history. In the 1892 Historia del descubrimiento de América, the centrist Republican politician and one time president of the short lived “Primera República Española” writes:

Si nosotros reconocemos que América señala un punto de partida capital en el desarrollo de la Humanidad, nuestros hermanos de América están en el caso de reconocer que toda la cultura moderna y todo el espíritu vivificador de tal cultura les provino de la gente y de la tierra española, quienes hicieron los esfuerzos mayores de voluntad conocidos para descubrir la en bien de la especie nuestra toda entera, y emplearon el siglo de su mayor poderio y exuberancia iniciándolos en los principios de la civilización cristiana, cuyo aquitamiento nos había costado edades y edades incalculables...

If we recognize that America signals an important departure point in the development of Humanity, our American brothers are up to date in recognizing that all modern culture and all the vivifying spirit of that culture came from the Spanish people and country, who underwent famous, great efforts of will to discover America for the good of the entire species, and they employed their most powerful and exuberant century initiating them in the principles of Christian civilization, whose victorious acquisition had cost us countless ages and ages...

(Castelar 7)

Castelar represents America as an empty space to be filled with Spanish notions of civilization and progress, a laboratory perfect for experiments of modernity given its emptiness and lack of competing cultures (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 120-1).

This is not a gesture unique to the Spanish empire. Castelar’s cultural emptying of the Americas coincides with the genesis of border studies with Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 Frontier Thesis. Turner asserted that the U.S. and its particular form of democracy were chiefly informed by the expansion of its frontier into a cultural void: the Wild West (221-2). Castelar and
Turner put forth imperial theories of the frontier, asserting that colonization brings a form of culture that discursively and potentially concretely erases any trace of cultures and civilizations that preceded or coincided with the era of conquest and colonization. Through this conceptualization of the imperial frontier, a Spaniard defends Spanish permanence in the Caribbean and a U.S. historian conceptually endorses U.S. imperial growth and notions of manifest destiny.

Acosta and Rizal’s excursions into prehistory put forth diverging reflections on the border. Borders appear in many explicit forms in Rizal’s and Acosta’s writings: reflections on island cartography, metaphors of the border to speak about social marginalization, and, even within page layout, the border lines separating the main text from the annotations. By drawing lines across the page that divide the main text from their notes, these two annotators reenact and reinterpret the political and cultural counterpoints of the Spain’s moribund empire.

These page divisions, like geopolitical borders, separate and connect populations, worldviews, and languages. The reader, who must redirect her or his attention back and forth across the page divisions, witnesses the transformation of hegemonic accounts of conquest into tense, textual disputes. This introduces an uncomfortable and unprecedented amount of voices and contrary information into the historical conversation.

In so doing, Rizal and Acosta shift the discourse from speaking about a frontier to exploring a border, from a culturally empty space into which colonizers decant their culture to a “contact zone” of contestation and heteroglossia. A contact zone, according to Mary Louise Pratt, is a “space of colonial encounters... in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). While Pratt speaks mainly about
metropolitan centers as contact zones, Acosta’s and Rizal’s annotations illustrate how borders can be erected both at the center and the periphery of colonial spaces and texts. The borders they foster with their peripheral perspective, transported to the center of the empire (both Acosta and Rizal publish out of Spain and other parts of Europe), are marked by a constellation of gestures: creative reinterpretation, prolonged disagreement, tense negotiation, vigilant patrol, cunning transgression, subterranean connections, and violent exclusions.

Fernando Ortiz provides a vocabulary for discussing these kinds of cultural dynamics that frequently occur in border regions. Ortiz’s “contrapunteo” speaks about Cuban culture as a product of “transculturation” of Spanish cultural patrimony and of Afro-Cuban practices. Contrapunteo refers simultaneously to theatrical back-and-forth debates in one of the most famous works of Spain’s medieval literature, El libro de buen amor, and to the tradition of Afro-Cuban musical dialogues which tensely and poetically dramatize the dialectics of life (Ortiz 2). Likewise, transculturation, as opposed to acculturation or deculturation, indicates that colonization brought forth a “hurricane of culture;” the Taíno word “huracán,” naturalized in Spanish, shows how culture is exchanged in multiple directions, not just from the colonizer to the colonized, in a process that includes violence and the loss of culture. Ortiz opposes sugar and tobacco as cultural forces in constant opposition and dialogue since the introduction of European political and economic intervention in the Americas, a perpetual and inconclusive struggle of local and foreign

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8 “...siempre fue muy propio de las ingenuas musas del pueblo, en poesía, música, danza, canción y teatro, ese género dialogístico que lleva hasta el arte la dramática dialéctica de la vida. Recordemos en Cuba sus manifestaciones más floridas en las preces antifonarias de las liturgias así de blancos como de negros, en la controversia erótica y danzaría de la rumba y en los contrapunteos versificados de la guajirada montuna y de la currería afrocubana.” (Ortiz 2)
energies. Contrapunteo here points to the practice of transforming the negotiation of irresolvable oppositions into the formative structures of a Cuban identity, always in formation.

Schmidt-Nowara interprets Ortiz’s concept in a slightly different way. He asserts that Indios work as a “counterpoint” for Acosta and his Caribbean contemporaries. Acosta represents the Indios, now extinct as he asserts, as peaceful members of idyllic communities, in direct opposition both to inherently vicious Spaniards and to irrationally violent slaves and freed men. Counterpoint arrests and reverses contrapunteo; less fascinated by the conversation of irresolvable opposites, Schmidt-Nowara speaks to rigid and violent oppositions that “underpin... the idea of the nation... the counterpoint between the alien and the native” (2006, 102). Instead of dialoguing antagonisms, or a process of tense and incomplete incorporation of the “alien” into the identity of the “native” through contrapunteo, Schmidt-Nowara represents counterpoint as a project of exclusion. Just as Caribbean abolitionists latch onto the idea of a noble Indio to fight both the institution of slavery and the possibility of slave rebellion, a nativist invents the concept of the “native” in order to expel an “alien” who isn’t really an alien, but rather a complex part of colonial society, an unsettling obstacle to the nativist’s totalizing designs.

Acosta’s and Rizal’s forms of historical contrapunteo, put forth in their annotations’ tense interaction with the original text, refute the culturally eviscerating discourses of Castelar and Turner. They creatively rework Abbad’s and Morga’s texts through the annotations, as opposed to writing their own histories that eviscerate opposing ideas. Meanwhile, they also establish a series of rigid counterpoints, which lead to moments of violence. They hone in on idealized native subjects

9 “Desde su germen en la entraña de la tierra hasta su muerte por el consumo humano, tabaco y azúcar se conducen casi siempre de modo antitético. La caña de azúcar y el tabaco son todo contraste diriase que una rivalidad los anima y separa desde sus cunas...Blanca es la una, moreno el otro. Dulce y sin olor es el azúcar; amargo y con aroma es el tabaco. ¡Contraste siempre! Alimento y veneno, despertar y dormir, energía y ensueño, placer de la carne y deleite del espíritu, sensualidad e ideación, apetito que se satisface e ilusión que se esfuma...” (Ortiz 3-4)
of prehistory to exclude a series of pesky “aliens”: Spaniards, slaves, freed peoples, and “Indios nuevos.” Acosta and Rizal embody contrapunteo as they transgressively insert their voices into the history texts and authorize themselves through debates in which they previously had no voice. At the same time, they illustrate counterpoint by instrumentalizing and silencing the voices of other subjugated communities in the process of asserting their own voice, a silencing that nearly always revolves around race. The ambivalent representations of race within Acosta and Rizal’s commentaries thus highlight two possible directions of prehistory. This begins with the structural centrality of “race wars” in their annotations.

“Race war” radicalizes Ortiz’s concept of contrapunteo. In Michel Foucault’s terms, “race war” implies that “the social body is basically articulated around... [a] clash between two races [that] runs through society from top to bottom... and... forms the matrix for all the forms beneath which we can find the face and mechanisms of social warfare” (2003, 60). The clash of races is omnipresent, affects all aspects of society, and engraves itself into all objects, documents, and events of history. Such a concept unites and divides Rizal and Acosta’s writings. On the one hand, both use historical annotations to address “race wars.” On the other hand, these are different “race wars” – reflecting the historical particularities of the island colonies – and Acosta and Rizal’s responses are also contrary, revealing dramatically divergent stances on the politics of knowledge in both the practice of historiography and in the pursuit of liberal reforms for their colonized peoples.

This brings us to “counterhistory,” which according to Foucault, interrupts and disrupts the ceremonial “discourse of the historian,” such a discourse producing “both a justification of power and a reinforcement of that power” (2003, 66). Counterhistory teases out the heretofore
silenced voices of race war from history, which is neither objective nor complete. Counterhistory reveals the light of power and truth to be “in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness” (70). Race war inscribes itself into the history of the colony both in recorded events and in the shadows of history. Rizal and Acosta explore these shadows and uncover colonization’s dirty secrets. Furthermore, their histories underline a constant tension and unresolved in anti-colonial writing of the time: should anti-colonial writing defend the colonized peoples’ claim to have a privileged perspective on truth, or should they locate the colonized peoples’ advantage in the shadows of history, where doubt reigns over certainty? These shifting divisions between light and darkness, the lines between truth and doubt in the writing and interpretation of history, illuminate further divergences in Acosta’s and Rizal’s intellectual projects.

Acosta and Abbad

In 1846, Acosta left Puerto Rico, which had no university and little print infrastructure, to study the sciences in Spain (Vásquez 259-60). Confronting censorship for expressing his ideas about the colony and his consistent support of abolitionism, Acosta sought refuge in the less conspicuous field of history. Together with Alejandro Tapia y Rivera and other expatriate Puerto Rican students in Spain, Acosta formed the Sociedad Recolectora de Documentos Históricos and compiled the Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico, which Acosta often cites in his notes to Abbad’s history. Acosta’s return to Puerto Rico in 1853 offered mixed results (Acosta Quintero 81). On the one hand, he slowly gained traction as a renowned political thinker, culminating in 1866, when he was elected to be a representative at the “Junta Informativa de Reformas” (García 17).
Despite this political success, Acosta’s appointment and fame inspired suspicion among the colonial authorities. The Governor Rafael Echagüe denounced Acosta for his distrust of government, desire of independence and youthful propensity to democratic thought, for thinking too much like a “Yankee” (Acosta Quintero 110-1). Finally, an atmosphere of protest—inspired by Spain’s usurpation of Puerto Rican taxes to fund wars in Morocco (1859-1860) and Santo Domingo (1860-1865)—led to the 1868 “Grito de Lares” revolt, steered largely by proponents of Puerto Rican independence (García 29). Despite not forming a part of the insurrection and not supporting independence, Acosta was imprisoned for four months following the revolt. From then until his death in 1891, he continued to fight for abolition and other liberal causes, critiquing Spain and its policies towards Puerto Rico.

Acosta republishes Abbad’s *Historia geográfica* in 1866, just before the “Grito de Lares” and his subsequent imprisonment.¹⁰ This casts light upon his demure tone; caution, as opposed to confrontation, is central to his craft. Acosta establishes his policy of deference in the prologue:

...su criterio generalmente adelantado y no muy común en un hombre de su estado y época, y un estilo fácil y sencillo han conquistado á la obra de Fray Iñigo Abbad un puesto distinguido entre nosotros... No obstante sus vacíos, creemos que el texto de Fray Iñigo con sus comentarios ofrecerá

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¹⁰José Julián Acosta’s annotations are not completely unique in Caribbean historiography. Before him, his colleague Julio Vizcarondo translated the 1797 journal of the French naturalist André Pierre Ledru about his voyage to Puerto Rico in 1863. Moments of his loose translation plant the seed of a national Puerto Rican identity in the French scientists’ notes, while his explanatory footnotes labeled “Nota del traductor” take jabs at French interventions in the Spanish colonies. Many of these either ridicule the French naturalist, (“Mr. Ledru manifiesta poco conocimiento del país que describe”) or highlight the progress achieved between the voyage and the time of translation (“Indudablemente nuestra ciudad ha ganado mucho en ornato, y Mr. Ledru apenas conocerá el lugar que describe”) (56-7). Cuban historian José Antonio Saco also “turned to the archive of colonial documents written by Spaniards in order to rewrite the history of colonization” in his *Historia de la esclavitud* (Schmidt-Nowara 5). Saco narrates a universal history of slavery, including extensive sections on “Slavery in the New World.” He sees history, in Manuel Moreno Fraginals words, as pragmatic and pedagogical (“eminentemente pragmático... una colección de hechos pedagógicamente aprovechables”) (Fraginals 17). What was frustrating was that he worked on this history—aiming to use it as a weapon against the institution of slavery in Cuba—starting in the 1830’s, but by the time he published it, between 1875 and 1892, slavery had already been abolished (15). This rendered his work, doubly historical: about the past and being outdated (“simplemente Historia en el doble sentido de la palabra. Historia como obra intelectual e Historia como algo que pertenece al pasado”) (15). An excellent study that touches on the work of all three abolitionist historians is Schmidt-Nowara’s *Empire and Antislavery*, but a literary comparison of their historiographical strategies would be a necessary addition to the field.
Not only does Acosta praise the text’s style and judgment; he also refers meekly to his own contribution. By praising “Fray Íñigo’s text and its comments,” Acosta unassumingly links the notes not to himself, “my comments,” but rather to the original text and author.

But, what is really going on between Acosta and Abbad? How can we think about this textual relationship condensed within the border that divides the main text and the annotations? How does this border between the supposed categories of “colonized” and “colonizer” interact with other implicit borders in these annotations, namely the border between Acosta and the Indios whose artifacts and history he studies? What about the border between Acosta and the slaves he seeks to free in his lifelong project of abolition? Are these interactions of contrapunteo or counterpoint, or both? These problems structure the paragraphs that follow, beginning with the border between the Spanish historian and his Puerto Rican annotator, who initially assumes such a sweet, decorous tone.

This original history’s author, Friar Íñigo Abbad, is an Aragonese friar and scholar. Abbad’s 1788 history weaves together histories and primary texts, principally Oviedo and Herrera, into 40 chapters. The first 19 describe tales of conquest and the settling of Puerto Rico. The last 21 include statistical and painterly descriptions of the island’s geography, economy and politics. Abbad’s work is useful to Acosta in that it is relatively critical of empire and aims to be all-encompassing, per Gervasio García (10). Acosta’s endnotes interact in ambivalent contrapunteo
with Abbad’s text, seeing the Spanish friar, who opposed slaves branding and military politicians (García 25), occasionally as an ally and occasionally as a hindrance on the path to truth. Acosta does not assert radical separation from Abbad’s text, but rather erects permeable borders between the main text and the paratext, which illustrate and destabilize the established hierarchies of knowledge in the colony.

Acosta’s recourse to borders can even be perceived in his comments on the location of the coastline, the seemingly shifting border between the island of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean sea. Abbad begins his history of Puerto Rico with a two and a half page chapter entitled “Descripción geográfica de la isla de San Juan de Puerto Rico,” which describes the contour of the island, the location and demographics of its cities, its mountain ranges and bodies of water. One sentence of the first paragraph of this initial chapter focuses on measurement with a dry tone, “Tiene de circunferencia 120 leguas, y de superficie 720, ó 25,920 millones de varas cuadradas (1).” Abbad’s following sentence blurrs the line between science and poetry, personifying the image of the island and praising its beauty,

Su figura es de un tablón cuadrilongo, dividido por el medio á lo largo de una cordillera de altas montañas, de las cuales se extienden algunos brazos que bajan hasta el mar y corren la isla á lo ancho formando entre unos y otros hermoso valles, regados por más de 30 ríos que descienden de las alturas, siendo algunos navegables hasta dos leguas de su embocadura.

Its shape is of a rectangular plank, completely divided in the middle by a range of tall mountains, from which their arms stretch out and descend to the sea, running all the way across the island, forming between them beautiful valleys, watered by more than 30 rivers that descend from the highlands, some of which are navigable even two leagues up from the mouth of the river. (47)

Abbad’s prose combines a painterly sensitivity with the pretense of scientific precision. With regards to this poetic tone, Abbad’s embodied descriptions of Puerto Rico mirror the descriptions Bartolomé de las Casas’s writes about the “vega real” in the Apologética Sumaria, which compare the “royal meadow” of Hispaniola with a drawing table or the palm of a hand. This reinforces a claim
made by Pratt that the European naturalist sciences of the 18th century are linked inextricably with the chronicles of conquest. These chronologically distant moments in which “imperial eyes” enact political and intellectual entitlement to the Americas — conquest and the rise of 18th-century European naturalists — represent the two main embassies of overseas European power (Pratt 27-8, Rivera Nieves 37).

Acosta’s long annotation following this brief chapter — nine pages of notes versus two and a half pages of original text — takes issue not with the verse or symbols Abbad uses, but with his measurements of outline of the island. Without directly critiquing Abbad’s outline, Acosta suggests that Abbad’s facts are “imprecise” and “contestable,” through contorted and vague critiques: “Aún están por determinar con la precisión necesaria y de un modo incontestable tan preciosos datos,” or “These precious facts still remain to be determined with necessary precision and in an incontestable way” (50). He laments the lack of a “good” map Puerto Rico, which impedes the material and intellectual progress of his country. “Sabido es que un pueblo debe conocer su territorio como un particular su heredad,” Acosta says, or “It is known that a people must know its territory like a man must know his estate” (50-1). So he gathers in the following nine pages all the news and facts about the diverging claims about the coordinates of his island’s borders, from Puerto Rican and foreign scholars. Acosta doesn’t fully contradict Abbad, but rather infuses the Aragonese friar’s map with a plurality of diverging geographical accounts. These disagreeing coordinates illustrate both the shifting and multiplying nature of the island’s borders, as well as the fruitful contradiction at the core of Acosta’s project: we know ourselves and our territory best when we wield sciences learned from Europe with more responsibility and acumen than the Europeans.
The outline of the island and the division between Abbad’s main text and Acosta’s critical endnotes represent spaces of ambivalence, borders which make it difficult to determine if Abbad and Acosta are allies or adversaries. This contradictory relationship plays out in Acosta’s annotation of Abbad’s explanation of the “encomienda,” another subject which represents geopolitically, economically, and symbolically contested territory. Abbad uses the word – defined as the right to appropriate the Indios’ land and labor, granted by the Spanish crown (“Encomienda”) – in his third chapter about the 1508 settling of San Juan. The cacique Agueynaba receives Ponce de León peacefully before realizing that the Spaniard threatened the Indios’ liberty:

...se mantuvieron los indios tranquilos, viviendo con los Españoles y ayudándolos en sus poblaciones, minas y granjerías pero el Gobernador... resolvió repartir una encomienda á los indios de Puerto-Rico entre los Españoles. Esta providencia hizo tal sensación en los ánimos de los isleños que viendo perdida su libertad... acordaron tomar las armas para extinguirlos, si era posible, pues los miraban como seres superiores á la naturaleza humana y dudaban de su mortalidad.

... the Indios stayed calm, living with the Spanish and helping them in their towns, mines and farms, but the Governor... decided to share an encomienda of the Indios of Puerto Rico among the Spaniards. This providence caused such a stir in the souls of the islanders that, having witnessed the loss of their liberty... decided to take up arms to extinguish them, if it was possible, because they saw the Spaniards as beings superior to human nature and they doubted their mortality. (Abbad 70)

In his endnote to this paragraph, Acosta does not take a stand against the encomienda, rather simply stating that they had an “immense impact” on the history of the Americas and the Indios. Despite this watered down take, Acosta proceeds to quote at length passages of Spanish historian Manuel Quintana that critique the “encomienda.” Why does he quote a Spaniard to critique a Spaniard?

Acosta gives us a clue when he comments on Abbad’s critique of the slowness of progress in the colonial administration. Acosta says, “we cannot add anything to what Fr. Íñigo has revealed” (“nada podemos añadir a lo que fr. Íñigo ha expuesto”) (338). In so doing, he cautiously,
yet clearly points to the still-relevant nature of such a critique. He repeats the words of a Spaniard allowing their implication to slip into the present, investing in them more potential to critique the woes of the Spanish colonies of the late 19th century. He explores the possibility of a Spaniards’ words carrying more weight in the project of critiquing Spain than those of a person colonized by Spain. Additionally, he exerts a form of power over the Spaniard, wielding Abbad’s voice in his own favor.

Let’s return to the quote on the “encomienda.” In the text Acosta cites in the endnotes, Quintana traces the roots of the term “encomienda,” which comes from a verbal formula Columbus frequently used: "A vos, Fulano, se os encomiendan tantos indios en tal cacique, y enseñadles las cosas de nuestra santa fé católica,” or “To you, whatever your name is, so many Indios from such a group are entrusted; teach them about our holy Catholic faith” (79). Quintana continues, “De aquí vino darse el nombre de encomiendas á los repartimientos, y el de encomendadores á los agraciados; los cuales, como quiera que su objeto principal era enriquecerse, cuidaban poco de la doctrina, y menos del buen tratamiento,” or “From here came the act of calling distributions ‘entrustments,’ and the lucky recipients ‘entrusters;’ these latter people, seeing that their principle objective was to get rich, cared little for the doctrine and less for kind treatment of the Indios” (79). Here, the line between deference and critique becomes almost indistinguishable.

Through Quintana’s voice, Acosta defers to a Spanish historical authority and in so doing challenges Spanish authority in history. He indirectly, yet clearly asserts that the “encomienda” settles colonial relationships through disingenuous and uneven terms. Furthermore, he links these original deceits to contemporary debates. Acosta chooses a Quintana quote that asserts that the
conquerors’ economic interests trumped their humane and holy motivations, referencing the early iterations of forced, deadly labor. Quintana states “...pero por más sagrados que fuesen los motivos... la contradicción entre apremiar á un hombre para que trabaje en provecho de otro, y asegurar que está libre, es demasiado palpable, y la consecuencia natural de semejantes arreglos era que el indio fuese en realidad esclavo,” or “but no matter how sacred the motives were... the contradiction between awarding a person so that he works for another, and assuring that he is free, is excessively palpable, and the natural consequence of such arrangements was that the Indio was in reality a slave” (79). This passage aligns Quintana’s words with a vocabulary of abolitionism: “freedom,” “work,” “contradiction,” and “slave.”

This illustrates Acosta’s key literary device, according to Carmen Vásquez: smuggling his voice through the phrases and judgments expressed by somewhat likeminded Spanish historians (267). He does so in order to, according to Gervasio García, “put the censor to sleep” (“dormir al censor” 22). Acosta repeatedly lets Spanish historians, central among them Abbad, do the critiquing for him and thus avoids censorship and undermines official imperial history and authority. This casts a new light on his above-cited prologue, revealing its deference to be not just formulaic, but actively disingenuous. In what appeared to be declarations of submissiveness to Abbad’s authority, Acosta cryptically asserts that despite some hollow spots, Acosta’s endnotes with their extensive, scientifically-advanced and multi-vocal bibliography, make the faulty and lacking original text worthwhile and whole.

In the process, Acosta reveals his philosophy of literature. Texts, especially antiquated imperial texts, are never whole on their own. Rather, they become whole when a careful and critical reader infuses them with diverging forms of contemporary knowledge. Acosta’s annotations
render visible and literal the process through which texts can become real through the tense dance author and reader engage in between collusion and disagreement. While Acosta praises Abbad, he goes on to show that he believes the original text is merely a chronological framework for the endnotes, the history but a pretext for the paratext.

Acosta fills these hollow spots with references to a number of Spanish and non-Spanish scholars. This occurs as early as the introduction, where Acosta once again contests prior affirmations about Antillean borders. Acosta quotes Guillaume Raynal (in French) and Moreau de Jonnès (paraphrasing), to disprove Abbad’s assertion that the Antilles were once a solid island that broke apart due to violent waves (43). Later on, Acosta refers to the German naturalist Humboldt, the French ethnologist D’Orbigny and Scottish historian Robertson to problematize Abbad’s emasculating claim that the “new world Indians” couldn’t grow a beard (95).

His citation of Spanish scholars works dramatically differently from his quotes of non-Spanish Europeans. When Acosta quotes non-Spanish Europeans, he generally is asserting his encyclopedic and cutting edge knowledge, in opposition to Spanish scholars who, as he implies, lag behind in many fields including anthropology and geology. Non-Spanish European knowledge adds to his cultural capital and contributes to his push for intellectual independence from Spain. When Acosta quotes Spaniards, it’s a slightly more complicated process. As with Abbad and Quintana, Acosta aims to turn Spain against itself. He situates himself as ally and adversary of the Spanish; he wants to cure them – and himself in the process – of their ills, by confronting them with their own words.

In one particularly impactful moment, Acosta once again turns Spanish historians against each other. In an endnote to Abbad’s Chapter 8, which details the “pacificación” of the “furia de
los Caribes,” Acosta quotes the Spanish historian from the 16th century, Oviedo. Oviedo attributes bellicosity not to the Indios, but to the Spanish, stating that “in our Spanish Nation it doesn’t but seem that commonly all of her men were born principally and specially dedicated to weapons and their brandishing... that everything else is secondary” (en nuestra nación española no parece sino que comúnmente todos los hombres della nasçieron principal y especialmente dedicados á las armas y á su ejercicio... que todo lo demas les es açessorio...” 118). Acosta, through Oviedo’s voice, reattributes the claim of violence (and in a later description, laziness) — often directed at Indios in colonial history through pseudo-scientific racial determinism — to the same Spaniards who legitimate their authority through such claims.11

Acosta contests Spanish claims on a content level, Oviedo contradicts Abbad, as well as on a discursive level. The Puerto Rican annotator exercises discursive power over the Spanish historians by arranging the text to promote an almost comical struggle between their ideas; he treats them like puppets in the playhouse of history. Acosta frames himself as the real genius by, just like the puppetmaster, situating himself offstage, contorting his subjects, the historians, and having them bicker and undermine each other.

These literary devices point to and flesh out Homi Bhabha’s concept of “mimicry,” a tactic of colonial indoctrination that slips into discursive undermining. Acosta’s repetition of colonial language causes the meaning of the original text to “slip.” This significant “difference... is itself a process of disavowal” (126). In Acosta’s case, the disavowal in not complete. By repeating the text,

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11 Acosta then quotes an unnamed Italian historian, who says that even though Spaniards are lazy, when it comes to war, they work hard; it brings out the most motivation in them. In this caricaturistic representation of the Spanish national character, the Puerto Rican not only calls the Spaniards warmongers, but also slips in an indirect and comical jab about their laziness, a common observation Abbad makes of Puerto Ricans (118).
Acosta enters into contrapunteo with it. Paradoxically, he agrees with many of the text’s points, and still undermines it, turning the text against itself.

The textual relationship between Acosta and Abbad hinges on this paradox. This is the nature of their anachronistic textual dialogue, a contrapunteo of proximities and divergences. Acosta needs Abbad’s text to hide behind, slipping past the censor in the process, but he also proudly and repeatedly demonstrates contempt towards the same historian, asserting his own heroic place in the center of history. However, through this dynamic, creative, and shifting relationship, Acosta also perpetuates a series of exclusions, using history as counterpoint.

That is to say, Acosta also incorporates into his own voice some of the discourses and exclusions his annotations disavow. This subtly complicates Bhabha’s concept of “mimicry.” Beyond the fact that Acosta divisively and disavowingly inject difference into the official account of conquest and colonization, his voice is also affected by this slippage of signification. There remains a residue of colonial discourse in his anti-colonial dialogized history text; as opposed to radical separation, we see a blurred border. In order to understand fully the border between Acosta and Abbad, one must explore this colonial residue in his anti-colonial discourse. In order to understand the colonial residue, one has to examine two other interrelated borders which also vacillate between the mechanisms of radical separation and fluid connection: the borders between Acosta and the Indios of the epochs that preceded Acosta, and between Acosta and the enslaved and freed Afro-Puerto Ricans of his own era.
Acosta and the Indios

In addition to aiming to prove that he is a better scholar than Abbad, as seen in his use of German and French scientists to disprove the Spanish friar’s claims, allowing Acosta to monopolize truth, Acosta also directly inserts himself into history in the context of Indio relics. In Abbad’s fourth chapter, Acosta speaks about himself in the third person in a comment about “statues representing the deities of the prehistoric Puerto Rican Indians” called “cemíes” (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 113). He says, “Por una feliz casualidad el editor posee un ejemplar de estos retratos o representaciones del Cemi...” or “by a happy happenstance, the editor possesses an example of these Cemí portraits or representations (95). Acosta then continues to brag about how many of these idols he has collected (96).

This boasting is important to remember when analyzing a previous passage in which Acosta says, “desgraciadamente aquel pueblo que... se hallaba en la edad de piedra, no pudo legar su testimonio á las generaciones futuras,” or “unfortunately that people that found itself in the stone age, could not bequeath its testimony to the future generations” (66). Acosta also says, “Todos estos objetos, reliquias de aquella raza desventurada, son páginas de un libro que está por escribirse,” or “All of those objects, relics of that unlucky race, are pages of a yet-to-be-written book” (97). Acosta’s assignment of the Indios to the second stage of the stone age is a complex gesture.

On the one hand, he counters Spaniards like Castelar’s claims of the cultural emptiness of the Indios, asserting that they belong to a second period of the stone age, which “was indicated by the ornate nature of the zemíes and other carved stone” (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 113). The Indios are

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12 Rizal has a similar lament with regards to songs the Indios would sing accompanying the rowers in local rivers. Rizal says, “Es de lamentar que estos cantares no se hubiesen conservado; por ellos tal vez se hubiera podido saber mucho del pasado de los Filipinos y quizás de la historia de muchas islas adyacentes” (266).
did not belong to the most advanced stage of civilization, like Europeans, but they had advanced notably and were not savages. On the other hand, he notes that this status in the stone age prohibited them from writing their history, simultaneously demonstrating their primitive aspect and authorizing him to tell their story.

Paradoxically, by telling their stories, Acosta ends up silencing Indio voices through the same commentaries which lament such a silence, as well as in moments when he refuses to comment. This form of prehistory, as asserted by Schmidt-Nowara, is more concerned with establishing violent divisions, counterpoints with Spanish oppressors and slave uprisings, than with sincerely recuperating lost Indio societies and subjectivities.

Curiously, the original history could inversely illuminate Acosta’s silencing act. In Chapter 4, Abbad examines the historical character of the traditional Borinquen songs: “Los cantares eran graves y materiales... eran sus historias que referían los sucesos más serios é importantes de su país, la serie y la genealogía de sus Caciques, la época de sus muertes, sus hazañas... todo se refería y contenía en estos cánticos,” that is, “their songs were severe and concrete... they were the histories that recounted the most serious and important events of their country, the series and genealogy of the Caciques, the era of their dead, and their discoveries, everything was recounted and contained in those little songs” (92-93). This observation, conspicuously un-annotated by Acosta, identifies forms of Indio historical consciousness.

What does Acosta’s silence mean? Acosta’s silence with regards to Indio voices illustrates how in these annotated history, a lack of comment may be a commentary in itself. Raquel Reyes affirms as much with regards to Rizal’s annotated edition of Morga’s history, saying, “Rizal’s silences in the Morga are rare occasions but important ones. They indicate an opinion” (216).
What is Acosta’s opinion, then, about Indio voices? In a similar vein, one of Acosta’s students, Julio Vizcarrondo translates and comments French naturalist scientist André Pierre Ledru’s 18th-century travel chronicle to Puerto Rico, in which Vizcarrondo inversely asserts that an annotator’s silence reveals his agreement with the original text. Vizcarrondo takes issue with Ledru’s claim that the people of Puerto Rico are lazy, pointing the blame for any of the island’s productivity problems on unenlightened and unenlightening, protracted Spanish imperialism. He says that if he were not to speak up to this claim of laziness, the translator would act as an accomplice to such discursive violence (109). Does Acosta’s silence merely imply that he “agrees” with the fact that Indios’ voices existed?

Perhaps the biggest clue to this mystery lies in the following fact: despite Abbad’s text being published just 78 years prior to Acosta’s republication, the friar proclaims that much can be learned about pre-Hispanic Indios from their descendants, even though racial mixing has rendered these contemporary Indios quite different from their ancestors (94). On the contrary, Acosta performs a silencing gesture common during his time; he declares all Indios extinct and laments their not having left any written record. 13

Despite this lament, his silences in response to Abbad’s fascination with Indio songs seem to suggest the opinion that Indio forms of historical consciousness are not central to his political and intellectual project. Acosta’s silences seem to perpetuate an exclusionary gesture similar to the one he protests through his historical notes; he attempts to monopolize the telling of history. This

13 The Indios as a category were also scientifically buried in the early 19th century when the term was effaced from the national census in favor of the term “pardo libre.” While the original justification for the switch was that there were no more “pure” Indios, such logic seems marked more by social Darwinism than by a desire to register the demographic breakdown of Puerto Rico more subtly. By eliminating the category, government officials paved the way to speak of Indio extinction, as opposed to considering different forms of “mixing” or other more complex racial breakdowns, common when considering African descendants (Castanha 94).
also raises doubts about his interest in these forms of Indio thought, as well as the practice of prehistory in general; what, if not Indio consciousness, motivates these prehistorical extrapolations and digressions? Furthermore, how does Acosta’s appropriation/disregard of Indio voices compare to his textual treatment of Spanish historians? What do these appropriations have to do with the borders Acosta erects through his creative and divisive endnotes?

Perhaps this form of prehistory is more concerned with establishing violent divisions, counterpoints with Spanish oppressors and slave uprisings, than with recuperating lost Indio societies and subjectivities. That is to say, Acosta uses contrapunteo, or tense negotiation with the Spaniards, to construct a counterpoint through the form of the Indio. The Indios he studies are peaceful, cautious, timid, and, perhaps most importantly, silent. Acosta establishes this counterpoint by allegorizing the Indios’ plight using the same terms he uses in his economic critiques of underdeveloped Puerto Rico. He says “¡Desgraciados de los pueblos que no saben poner á su servicio todas las producciones y fuerzas del mundo físico!” or “Unfortunate are the peoples who do not know how to put to their service all the productions and forces of the physical world!” (97). In so doing, he compares the backwardness of the Indios with that of his island’s economy, held back from the potential of technological and societal progress by the imperially supported institution of slavery. By allegorizing the Indios, Acosta casts light on his interest in Indio cultures and cemíes. They are more powerful as political symbols that reflect the counterpoint of foreign and native that underpins Puerto Rican social and economic problems, than as historical agents with a voice and story of their own.

Acosta uses the contrapunteo to structure more than one political counterpoint, as seen in the following anecdotal commentary to Abbad’s mention of cemíes:
Some slaves were planting sugar cane one day in the fertile plains of Ponce (the hacienda of Don Juan de Dios Conde) when by means of a poor black slaves’ swing of a hoe, a remarkable worked stone leapt from the earth. What a singular image, of course, the Indio fetish in the hands of an African savage, transported to America! (95)

While Acosta silences the Indios through his own silence in response to Abbad’s exploration of their songs and voice, in this quoted passage, he separates them from, and privileges them over the slaves, the other group of marginalized peoples of the Caribbean.

Acosta’s reaction to the “singular” juxtaposition of Indios and slaves was fascinated and panicked, because, in his recounting of history, the extinction of the Indios led to the importation of African enslaved peoples. Acosta uses three adjectives to further emphasize the counterpoint. He calls black slaves “poor” and “savage,” furthermore appending the participle “transportado” to his description of them. This latter adjective emphasizes their passivity and lack of agency. The triad of adjectives works in counterpoint to the Indios’ artisanal sophistication, upon which Acosta proceeds to elaborate in the following paragraphs of his comment, suggesting even that the Indios’ work suggests an impossible link between their sculptures and those of the classical traditions. This counterpoint reveals a connection between Acosta’s fascination with Indio handicrafts and his stance on race relations and the economy in late 19th-century Puerto Rico.

Acosta and the Afro-Puerto Ricans

Abolition is Acosta’s concrete stance on contemporary race relations, but this does not necessarily imply that he is an advocate for human rights. Why terminate slavery, if not to improve
the living conditions of the slaves? Perhaps because the blacks as Acosta perceives them are passive, poor, and savage peoples who stand in the way of three central issues in his plan of reform: economic modernization, education, and preventing race war in light of the Haitian revolution. While Acosta explicitly demands the liberation of the slaves as a key step in the modernization of the colonial economic apparatus, his construction of the sophistication and tranquility of the already extinct Indio race serves as a counterpoint to promote the exclusion of those same slaves he wants to be freed.

In his annotations to Abbad, Acosta repeatedly frames his exclusion of blacks in terms of literacy and an inter-Antilles rivalry between Puerto Rico and Cuba. Following Chapter 26 on the “Estado actual de la población,” Acosta elaborates 21 pages of Puerto Rican and Cuban demographics, which contrast the percentages of “blancos,” “esclavos” and “libres de color” against the literacy rates of the colonies. Acosta uses these numbers as evidence in support of his racial politics:

Como la inteligencia tiene por ley indeclinable de la naturaleza que contribuir al fomento de los pueblos, una de las causas de que la isla de Cuba haya importado y disfruta hoy en mayor número que la de Puerto-Rico de las creaciones industriales y económicas, debidas al genio de los pueblos extranjeros, como los caminos de hierro, los telégrafos... consiste, aparte de haberla precedido en las vías del comercio libre, en el exceso de población blanca que hemos señalado y en la mayor cultura intelectual de ésta... Doloroso es consignarlo, pero estas cifras nos están diciendo que la población blanca de Cuba que sabe leer es próximamente dos veces mayor que la de nuestra isla... la población, como todos los hechos físicos y morales, está sometida á leyes indeclinables.

Given that the intelligence has by inherent natural law to contribute to the development of the nations, one of the reasons that Cuba has imported and enjoys today, in greater number than Puerto Rico, economic and industrial creations, stemming from the genius of the foreign peoples, such as railroads and telegraphs... consists, apart from having preceded Puerto Rico in the paths of free trade, in the excess of its white population that we have noted above and in the greater intellectual culture that this white population has... It is painful to record this, but these numbers are telling us that the literate white population of Cuba is approximately twice the size of that of our island... the population, like all physical and moral facts, is governed by inherent laws (389-390).

Acosta advocates for literacy and education as the key to intellectual and concrete emancipation and the structure upon which one could build a more economically sound Puerto Rico. Instead of
making room for the slaves who would be freed through this plan, Acosta uses rhetoric and statistics to dress up exclusionary racial views. Intellectual emancipation leads indeed to abolition of slaves, but those slaves — according to Acosta’s logic — still inhibit the country’s capacity to modernize itself.

This political strategy is structured centrally on exclusion, the erection of borders that keep slaves and freed black Puerto Ricans out of the process of political, intellectual, and economic modernization. The question remains, after abolishing slavery, what should Puerto Rico do with its black population? Can there be black Puerto Ricans? Acosta never addresses this question head on, but leaves clues to his position throughout his writings. For example, Acosta betrays Eurocentric notions of progress that exclude non-white races, ways of thinking about race that cast light on the question about black Puerto Ricans:

Por fortuna, no conocemos, cual sucede en Cuba y en otras Antillas, ni á los hijos degradados de la India oriental ni á los viciosos súbditos del celeste imperio. En 1853, se intentó introducirlos; pero el que esto escribe mirará siempre como un honor el haber levantado su humilde voz contra una inmigración tan funesta.

Fortunately, we are not familiar with, as it so happens in Cuba and other Antillean islands, neither the degraded sons of Oriental India, nor the vicious subjects of the celestial empire. In 1853, there was an effort to bring them into Puerto Rico; but he who writes this will always see it as an honor to have raised his humble voice against such a disastrous immigration (386).

Once again, Acosta “humbly” brags, seeing himself as protagonist of history, a defender of geopolitical borders from the penetration of immoral and vice-ridden immigrants. Thus, he renders visible his conception of race struggle within a liberal state and his role in such a struggle. This points to Gervasio García’s theory that, with regards to the question of blacks, Acosta opposed the “confused endeavor of Africanizing America” (26). This would suggest that Acosta would conceptualize white and black races as radically opposed and irreconcilable.
Acosta shies away from making clear statements about his concrete positions on black peoples in Puerto Rico, beyond the abolition of their slavery. The closest we get to a comment in this vein happens when Acosta transforms Abbad’s note on the richness of Haitian agriculture into a lesson on the dangers of enslaved peoples. This passage illustrates the place of race struggle the core of Acosta’s liberalist discourse. Acosta concludes Abbad’s table of Haitian agricultural statistics from 1776 with an indirect reference to the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804): “Pocos años después tantas riquezas, tanta prosperidad quedaron convertidas en cenizas. ¡Espantosa lección!” (368). This logical leap refuses even to mention the Haitian Revolution, as though it were taboo. Such a pregnant omission reminds the reader that during this era in Puerto Rico, “fear of Haiti and pan-Caribbean race war persisted” (Schmidt-Nowara 1999, 41). This fear of “race war” and revolution infiltrates Acosta’s interpretation of all political struggles and motivates his complex conception of the racial divide in society.

This suggests the possibility of Acosta indirectly defending a sense of racial “purity” (which is to say, “whiteness”) in Puerto Rico. He does so not only by discursively extinguishing Indios, but also by promoting the immigration of “white people of quality” (“gente blanca de calidad,” García 27) through statistics and political activism. He is not alone in this project; as Christopher Schmidt-Nowara says, through the mid 19th century, “critics of slavery and the slave trade among the Cuban and Puerto Rican elite converged in demanding abolition of the trade and advocating white immigration and miscegenation. In short, they shared a commitment to ‘whitening’ as the solution to the social instability and political marginalization of the two colonies” (1999, 37). While Acosta never describes in detail any program of miscegenation, annotations like this one on

14 “Just a few years later, so many riches, such prosperity turned into ashes. ¡A scary lesson!”
Haitian agriculture and the discursive dismissal of slaves vis à vis the Indios and their cemíes suggest the presence of such a biopolitical project on Acosta’s horizon of racial thought.

How does miscegenation engage with the conception of white and black races being radically opposed and irreconcilable? Acosta’s disciple, Julio Vizcarrondo helps to understand this complication. In Vizcarrondo’s 1863 annotated translation of André Pierre Ledru’s Viaje a la Isla de Puerto Rico, a text Acosta had discovered among the boquinistes along the Seine, Vizcarrondo provides a glimpse of how miscegenation works. Throughout the text, Vizcarrondo’s loose translation and footnotes reveal an effort to articulate a Puerto Rican identity by emphasizing Puerto Rican difference from Spain and Europe, correcting scientific and philosophical errors in the original text, combatting prejudice, and discursively downplaying the impact France had in Spanish Caribbean colonies.14 As with Rizal and Acosta, the moments Vizcarrondo leaves unannotated are eloquent, too. For example, Vizcarrondo leaves uncommented the passages in which Ledru downplays the violence of slavery and affirms the whitening project of miscegenation, the Puerto Rican translator acts as accomplice to these structures of thought.

Ledru asserts that slaves in Puerto Rico were treated much better than in other places, making them almost not slaves.15 His original text also tracks racial nomenclature through the whitening project of miscegenation, which Vizcarrondo deems undeserving of correction:

14 On the one hand, his translation suggests notions of a unified Puerto Rican identity, repeatedly translating “of Puerto Rico” as “Puerto Rican” and “borinqueno,” thus transforming the island from a place into an incipient marker of identity. Vizcarrondo also embellishes through translation the descriptions of the island with flowery adjectives not present in Ledru’s original text. On the other hand, there are the footnotes. One footnote corrects Ledru’s erroneous claims about snow-capped peaks in Puerto Rico (99). Another footnote, mentioned above, takes issue with Ledru’s claim that the people of Puerto Rico are lazy, pointing the blame for any of the island’s productivity problems toward Spanish imperialism (109).

15 For example, “Aquí, estos africanos sólo tienen el nombre de esclavos: no cargan las cadenas, están bien vestidos, bien alimentados y con una robusta salud; trabajan con afán para un colonio bienhechor que duplica sus ganancias tratándolos con consideración” or “Here, these Africans only have the name of slaves: they don’t bear chains, they are
This chart illustrates the mechanisms of miscegenation, a normative fiction about white descendants that can be manufactured through a black person or community.¹⁶ This biopolitical program promotes white copulation with people of increasingly “diluted” black racial make up, implicitly opposing procreation between blacks and mixed-race peoples. This would only be possible if a program like the ones Acosta promoted were to be carried out: the immigration of “gente blanca de calidad.”

According to this logic, the border between whites and blacks is not as rigid as it might have seemed. Two levels of “race war” are at play here: 1) literal race war, manifested through fear of slave rebellions and revolutions as exemplified by the Haitian example, and 2) structural “race war,” or the Foucaultian term that considers how societies are articulated through the perpetual clash of hegemonic and subaltern races. In Acosta’s text, the moments which sidestep a literal race well dressed, well fed, and have robust health; they work with eagerness for a do-gooder colonist who doubles his earnings treating them with consideration” (81).

¹⁶ This term, “normative fiction,” comes from Gabriel Giorgi’s Sueños de exterminio. He claims that the category of “gay” and “lesbian” were initially defined as diagnoses in the 19th century, “identities called to existence in order to name and incarnate that which should not exist... a paradoxical ontological destiny” or “identidades llamadas a la existencia para nombrar y encarnar lo que no debería existir... un destino ontológico paradójico” (Giorgi 1). Similarly, Ledru’s taxonomical focus on black racial mixing intervenes in the sexual life of the people with the implied purpose of eliminating the black race.
war are steeped in the terms through which the structural race war is perpetuated, a process that involves both counterpoint and contrapunteo. For example, the chart of miscegenation illustrates how a conceptualization of black and white races as a counterpoint — fundamentally opposed and irreconcilable — as was common in the mid 19th century in the Caribbean which had just witnessed Haiti’s revolution of former slaves, can use logical formations that promote the coming together of the races. In order to achieve racial separation or even elimination, Puerto Rico must first utilize a primordial form of connection: sex.

This formulation is nefarious in countless ways, two of which are the following. It literalizes the French euphemism for orgasms, “la petite mort,” by asserting that one could eliminate the black race from Puerto Rico by repeatedly and systematically procreating with blacks. Furthermore, the miscegenous formulation links racial hierarchies with gendered ones; the white contributor to these sexual encounters is always male and the racially mixed participant, whose race problem will be cured through the generations, is always female. This highlights how Acosta tacitly accepts the ways in which the politics of racial domination are gendered, a point Acosta underlines and opposes when he contests the Spanish historian’s emasculating claim that Indio men could not grow beards. Therefore, while midcentury Puerto Rican politics promotes a form of racial divisions based on a complex contrapunteo between racial separation and sexual connection, the underlying structures of these dynamics never infringe on the counterpoints upon which educated, white males express their hegemony.

Acosta’s prologue implies that his place in history affords him a clearer view of scientific truth than Abbad or any other scholar to come before him. He uses this claim to truth to promote abolition while excluding the same peoples who would most benefit from it. This embodies one of
the key contradictions of liberalist politics of the moment. Acosta opposes imperial absolutism in favor of liberalist practices, such as the welcoming of foreign capital that will bolster the Puerto Rican economy, invite an era of political modernization that will benefit the country through the prosperity of its elites and render the institution of slavery unnecessary (Garcia 19). However, he never mentions the role former slaves would play in his reformed society, suggesting they are not citizens, but obstacles to his projects of literacy and modernization.

Acosta’s annotations enact a series of unresolved dramas of power relations, allowing the reader a privileged perspective of 19th-century intellectual and political discourse. These contrapunteos between Acosta and Abbad, invoke counterpoints with Spanish authority, silenced Indios, and enslaved peoples. While Acosta preserves Abbad’s voice, even while supplementing it through the endnotes, he does nothing of the sort for the Indios or the enslaved peoples. The disagreement between main text and paratext is therefore selective; it excludes disagreement with non-European voices, and can be understood as an enactment of contradictions implicit within liberalist political economies.

On the one hand, there exists a central aspect of liberalism, according to Michel Foucault, a tolerance of “heterogeneity [which] does not mean contradiction, but tensions, frictions, mutual incompatibilities, successful or failed adjustments, unstable mixtures, and so on. It also means a constantly resumed because never completed task of establishing either a coincidence or at least a common regime” (2008, 21). On the other hand, by recurring to statistics and European sciences to exclude slaves from his plan of literacy, silence Indio subjectivities and avoid “race war,” Acosta creates a binary: liberalist reason and things left out of that category, like slave rebellions or even bourgeois uprisings, which Foucault calls “irrationalities” (2008, 322). This violent gesture
illustrates an aporia central to Acosta’s literary interpretation of late colonial politics in the history; science and reason form the hinge between emancipation and exclusion in liberalist politics of the era. In transforming contrapunteo into counterpoints, Acosta uses science to break his anticolonial ideas into the fortress of history, and then he uses it to close the door behind him.

The borders in Acosta’s annotations are numerous. He debates the location of the border between land and water. He traces a line across the page to simultaneously contest and perpetuate colonial hierarchies. He proclaims himself hero of his history when righteously defending the geopolitical borders of his island from Asian immigration, while also promoting the importation of “quality,” white populations. Similarly, Acosta defines his separation from and connection to Spain implicitly through the racial borders he establishes between himself and the Indios and slaves he writes about.

“Race war,” or the porous racial border that runs the length of his country’s history, functions in Acosta’s writing as a political platform and a source of fear. He supports abolition, less because he opposes the inhumane treatment of slaves and more because slavery prevents his island from modernizing its economic and political structures (García 19). Acosta also fears that his island and its people would suffer the fate of Haiti — violent upheaval and black rule — if revolution were to break out. This leads Acosta to use statistical analysis and European sciences both to promote his abolitionist agenda and to exclude slaves from political integration. His pursuit of statistical, scientific truths affirms his own superior intellectual capacity — his status as the hero of his history — while erecting and patrolling textual boundaries that exclude other voices from the debates of history. Indios and slaves, like good counterpoints, are simultaneously excluded from the national future Acosta imagines for Puerto Rico, while also being inextricably
linked to the foundations upon which such a country would be built. This tension between exclusion and centrality takes center stage in José Rizal’s 1889 annotations of Antonio Morga’s 1609 *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*.

**Rizal: Recasting the Border**

In the process of chronicling the Spanish “discovery,” conquest, and rule of the Philippines, Morga registers details and insights on the life of native peoples of the Philippines before 1521, the year Magellan arrived, declared the Philippines to be Spanish territory, and was promptly killed by a Mactan chieftan, Lapu-Lapu (4-8). One of the details Morga provides has to do with pre-Hispanic hierarchies; there were “principals,” “plebeians,” and the slaves of the former two categories. Morga explains that one particular group of slaves, called “Sanguiguilires,” were comparable to the slaves held by Spaniards in the Philippines, working indoors, performing all sorts of tasks, and bound by hereditary laws of enslaved status.17

Rizal, who republished and annotated Morga’s history, responds to this passage in two footnotes. The first performs a task of sociological analysis, comparing the Philippines’ particular system of socioeconomic hierarchy with the human body and inscribing it within a universal lens of class division and struggle. Rizal says, “(2) Esta es la división eterna que se encuentra y se encontrará en todas partes, en todos los reinos y repúblicas: clase dominadora, clase productora y clase servil: cabeza, cuerpo y pies,” or “(2) This is the eternal division that is found and will be

17 Morga says, “Tres estados de personas hay entre los Naturales de estas islas, en que se divide su república; principales, de quien ya se dicho; y Timaguas que es lo mismo que plebeyos; y esclavos así de principales como de Timaguas (2). Estos esclavos eran en muchas maneras; unos son de todo servicio y esclavonía, como los que nosotros tenemos, y estos se llaman Sanguiguilires (3), que servían de las puertas adentro, y lo mismo los hijos que dellos procedían” (297). The English version of this quote can be found in the epigraph of this dissertation.
found in all parts in all the kingdoms and republics; dominant class, productive class and servile class; head, body and feet” (297). Rizal then proceeds to examine and extrapolate upon the mysterious word Morga provides, “Saguiguilires.”

He begins by proclaiming the etymology of such a word impossible for “us” to find (297). Rizal never explains who this “us” pertains to; is it contemporary Filipinos, or European educated peoples, or the reader and annotator? Rizal then proceeds to make evident that the etymology is not necessarily impossible to fine. He immediately examines the etymological branches of the word, while judging them through the lens of anthropology, to infer its meaning. The root of word — “gilid” — means “border, riverside, bank.” “Sa” implies place. And the repetition of the root’s first syllable could indicate “active action in the future tense” or “the place where the action of the verb is executed” depending on if such a syllable is accented or not. Rizal concludes, “The unstressed reduplication could mean plurality also, and in this case the noun in singular would be sagílid; that is, on the border, the last one, that is, the slave...” (297). In so doing, he makes two subtle yet important paradoxical claims.

On the one hand, Rizal acknowledges the universal nature of subjugation, identifying it as not just the Filipinos’ problem, but a system that has always existed across the globe, a plague against humanity. This inscribes Rizal’s project in a late 19th-century tradition of studying the history of global subjugation alongside Cuban Antonio Saco. Saco worked on his monumental La

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18 “(3) Nos es imposible encontrar la etimología de esta palabra, que en su forma tagala debió ser Sagigilid. La raíz gílid significa en tagalo borde, ribera, orilla; la reduplicación de la primera sílaba si es tónica, significa acción activa en futuro, y sino lo es y se añade a la raíz la sufija an, denota el lugar donde a menudo se ejecuta la acción del verbo: la preposición sa indica lugar, tiempo, referencia. La reduplicación átona puede significar también pluralidad, y en este caso el nombre en singular sería sagílid; esto es, al borde, lo último, esto es, el esclavo...” (297).
historia de la esclavitud between the 1830’s and the 1890’s, tracing the path of slavery from pre-classical times to the discovery and Spanish rule of the “New World.”

On the other hand, Rizal asserts that slavery is a process, as opposed to a condition; nobody is essentially a slave, but is made so by a series of processes. He describes slavery as the “border” in its active verb form, the “bordering” or “marginalization” of people. This is a complex process, because the borders do not occur only at the margins of a country or a society, as happens with slums and other forms of precarious outward urban growth that arose after the industrial revolution. Slavery as a bordering process occurs indoors or “de las puertas adentro;” it creates margins in unexpected and unexpectedly central places. This illuminates the ethics behind Rizal’s project of historical rearticulation through annotation. By drawing a line across the page and inserting his perhaps unwelcome voice in the history of conquest, he draws an unexpected border in history and highlights the centrality of marginalization in the Philippine iteration of the Spanish colonial project. By doing so, Rizal hopes to initiate a reversal of such a process.

Rizal’s recasting of slavery through the figure of the border underlines the problems that organize the paragraphs that follow. It illuminates Rizal’s interest in mining details from the “original history” of empire in order to rearticulate a rich understanding of pre-conquest Philippine life. Through its display of simultaneous mastery of local knowledge and European sciences, the passage establishes Rizal’s dual perspective as a privileged viewpoint from which to understand history, politics, and aesthetics. Rizal intervenes in power dynamics and structures of subjugation, commenting on issues of inclusion and exclusion, as well as socioeconomic and racial hierarchies. Additionally, the contrast and interplay between lightness and darkness, knowledge
and doubt, takes center stage, especially when Rizal claims the etymology he is about to explain in detail is in reality impossible for an “us” that he does not explicitly define in that passage.

Acosta’s annotations, analyzed in the previous section, implicitly promote a series of questions: What happens to the Indio voices he downplays and overlooked? Is “race war” always to be avoided? Can it promote other forms of history? Do historical annotations always enlighten? What happens to history in the shadows of these border walls? The following paragraphs address these questions by interrogating Rizal’s project of recuperating obscured Indio voices, his take on “race war,” his reflections on the politics of knowledge, and the manners in which he traces the contours of a future Philippine community through nostalgic and creative readings of the past.

Similar to Acosta, Rizal’s literary and intellectual project took off abroad. In 1882, he left the colony to study medicine in Spain. The Philippines was in a volatile moment, where anti-liberal government and educationally disempowering friars created a hostile environment for university students and other intellectuals (Rafael 27). In Spain, Rizal contributed to the “Círculo Hispano-Filipino,” a group publication that brought together ideas of expatriate Filipinos and liberal Spaniards (Schumacher 32-4). During his travels throughout Europe, Rizal wrote poetry and novels, conversed with Filipinologists and fiercely debated with Spanish critics. His writings in La Solidaridad, a Barcelona biweekly he founded with other Filipinos, illustrate ambivalence toward the two alternatives his country faced when moving forward: reform or revolution (Rafael 101).

Upon his early 1890s return to the Philippines—agitated by protest, scattered revolts and heavy government oppression—Rizal’s life descended into a whirlwind of insecurity and change. He lived in Hong Kong where he avoided persecution and planned a Filipino colony in Borneo (Anderson 2005, 128). He then returned to Manila to found the short-lived “Liga Filipina”
(Richardson 403). He was put on trial for being a “subversive” and was exiled to Dapitan, Mindanao (Bernad 62), where he opened a medical practice, a school for boys and worked on collections and investigations of local flora and fauna, in correspondence with German naturalists (Anderson 2005, 148 and National Archive). From Dapitan, in 1896, Rizal was granted his request to serve the Spanish army as a doctor in Cuba, potentially serving in the opposite army of his “ghostly parallel” Cuban intellectual, José Martí (Anderson 2005, 148 and Blanco 93). But, during his trip there, war broke out in the Philippines and Rizal was redirected back to the Philippines, where governor Camilo Polavieja sentenced him to death for spearheading the revolution he never fully supported (Schmidt-Nowara 162).

Rizal stumbled upon the manuscript for Morga’s history while researching in the British Museum in preparation for a historical novel that Rizal never wrote (Schumacher 1991, 95). Morga, originally from Sevilla, served as Philippine lieutenant governor and judge in the Audiencia de Manila from 1595-1603 (Rizal v). The first seven chapters cover the Spanish conquest throughout Southeast Asia. Describing the Southeast Asian kingdoms and the Spanish establishment of the region, and including correspondence that related events like the crucifixion of Jesuit priests and their followers in Japan, Morga underlines the general disconnect between colonial authorities and the soldiers and priests executing their orders. The eighth chapter explores the culture, language and customs of the Indios from different islands of the Philippines. Rizal has “mixed feelings for the Morga,” Ambeth Ocampo asserts (184-5). Like Abbad is for Acosta, Morga is useful and irritating for Rizal; Rizal’s footnotes return the favor with pesky contrapunteo, incessantly interrupting the reading with explanations, translations, challenges and extrapolations.
Rizal’s annotations can be divided in two main categories: notes that chronicle how Indio subjectivity was silenced in the colony, and notes sketch notions about the Indio race and their forms of civilization which the Spaniards stymied. Rizal moves back and forth between these registers, the former focusing on the imperial forms of violence, and the latter reading the moments of violence against the grain in order to extrapolate from that moment of stymying what exactly had been stymied. At times, it seems as though Rizal pores over moments that display Spanish discursive and concrete violence in order to pursue a sincere goal of learning about pre-Hispanic Filipino people. At other times, the construction of pre-Hispanic Philippine greatness seems to be no more than a discursive structure that allows Rizal to critique in clever and impactful ways the outdated modes of Spanish coercion that persist in the colony of his era; in this latter interpretation, history is centrally a “weapon,” in Ambeth Ocampo’s words, to refashion and use in the intellectual and political struggle against contemporary colonizers, friars, and imperial apologists. This poses the following question: for Rizal, is history a register of documents which palely reflect insight on prehistorical civilizations or a weapon to wield during contemporary political battles? Let us examine a few scenes to understand this dilemma with more subtlety.

When the word “encomienda” came up in Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Rizal, like Acosta, couldn’t help but comment. The term appears in Morga’s first chapter about the Spanish “discovery” of the Philippines and Manuel López de Legazpi’s settling of the colonial government through pacts and battles with the local Indios: “Encomendóse la tierra á los que la han pacificado y poblado,” or “The land was entrusted to those who had pacified and populated it.” Rizal replies in the footnote, “Esto es, repartióse. Esta palabra encomendar como la de pacificar, tuvo después una significación irónica: encomendar una provincia, era como decir: entregarla al saqueo, á la
crueldad y a la codicia de alguien,” or “That is to say, distributed. This word to entrust like to pacify, later had a ironic meaning: entrusting a province, was like saying: submitting it to sacking, to cruelty, to someone’s selfishness” (12). While Acosta smuggles his critique of imperial entitlement through the voices of other Spanish historians, Rizal directly declares the colonial pact to be disingenuous, as well as discursively and concretely violent.

The reference to the verb “pacify” points to a previous note: “…acaso el verbo pacificar significase entonces meter la guerra,” or in other words, “…perhaps the verb pacificar therefore meant, enter into war” (xxxiv). Here Rizal displays two levels of irony: 1) the doublespeak through which the colonial authorities hollow language in order to legitimate pillage, and 2) identifying the first level of irony not directly, but through mimicking, feigned credulity. Rizal coyly illustrates both recognition of the colonial code and mastery over it. He challenges his exclusion from the practice of history, by showing himself to be an excellent reader, a master of historical codes, and a suggestive, seductive writer.

Rizal suggests that this literacy comes not from the Spaniards, who he claimed were guilty of miseducating Filipinos. His literacy comes from the pre-Hispanic Philippine races whose methods of writing were incorporated into and then quashed by colonial forms. Morga writes that the natives of his contemporary times wrote well, and Rizal responds, “Ahora no se puede decir lo mismo. El gobierno, en impresos y en palabras, procura la instrucción de los Filipinos, pero en el hecho y en el fondo fomenta la ignorancia,” or “Today, one cannot say the same thing. The government, in writing and speech, seeks the instruction of Filipios, but in fact and at the bottom they foster ignorance” (290). This gesture is also related to Acosta’s mimicry; by revisiting Morga’s praise of Indio literacy through the footnotes, Rizal causes its meaning to slip. The praise becomes
a complaint pointing the blame of contemporary illiteracy to the Spanish government, which did not check the corrupt practices of the friars. This footnote asserts, like many others in this text, that the Spaniards’ civilizing colonial mission “retarded, rather than brought civilization to, the Philippine people” (Ocampo 185). The empire didn’t introduce writing to the Philippines as much as they violently replaced one form of writing with another. Then, in years contemporary to Rizal, Spanish friars logically continued this project of promoting the decadence of Philippine forms of literacy. Rizal asserts that one of the friars’ methods of preserving their own power was to foster ignorance among the people of the Philippines, specifically impeding their literacy and fluency in Spanish. This reinforces the friars’ role as prejudiced, self-interested messengers between the people and the government (Rafael 23-6).

Instead of simply protesting, Rizal transforms the Spanish text into an inverse register of lost Philippine culture, reading it in search of traces of autochthonous, autonomous Philippine literacies and cultures. For instance, Rizal corrects Morga, who claims the Indios wrote from right to left. Rizal quotes a local linguist, saying they wrote from the top of the page to the bottom, later adapting the horizontal style, still with the inverse direction, after contact with the Spaniards (291). In this way, Rizal asserts that culture is not imported through colonialism, but at times quashed by it and at times, as seen with the adapted writing direction, tensely integrated. This footnote points to the link between contrapunteo and transculturation in Ortiz’s *Contrapunteo cubano*, a connection not explored by Schmidt-Nowara. This textual contrapunteo with Morga – this tense dialogue perpetuated by the Philippine annotator’s corrections and extrapolations – points to a cultural contrapunteo with regards to writing direction.

19 “...escribían de arriba abajo... la dirección horizontal se adaptó después de la llegada de los Españoles” (291).
These footnotes are similar to Acosta’s notes in their sharp criticism of colonial practices and the recognition of the roots of contemporary ills in the record of history. Like Acosta, Rizal also defends “his right to speak for the nation’s past,” but he departs from Acosta when he uses this platform to transform “Morga’s chronicle into a battleground where he defended the superiority of preconquest civilization,” (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 5). Acosta mostly uses Indios as a symbolic counterpoint to Spanish corruption and African violence, recognizing but not focusing on the complexity of their society. Rizal, on the other hand, zealously seeks (and sometimes invents) traces of pre-Hispanic Philippine greatness through the same texts that supposedly recorded their devastation. Rizal searches for and constructs a strong “Philippine race,” around which he can structure a counterpoint against Spanish intervention in the Philippines.

These notions of cultural and racial unity among the people of the Philippine archipelago are novel, both in that they are unprecedented and they tell a story that diverges from that of the prehistorical Indios. They are unprecedented because the people of the Philippines are linguistically, culturally and racially diverse and no previous category of a “Philippine race” existed before Rizal’s lifetime. Rather, before the latter half of the 19th century, “Filipino” had meant “creoles [or] Spaniards born in the Philippines” (Constantino 147). The Ilustrados, the “enlightened” wave of Castilian-speaking and reform-minded travelers, renovated this definition. They “first shared, then wrested the term Filipino from the creoles and infused it with national meaning which later included the entire people” (148). Rizal’s annotations are a historiographical manifestation of this struggle to name and define a Filipino race.

These notions of Philippine racial unity also tell a story about Rizal’s political desires and frustrations, including his ambivalent relationship with the masses of his country. Rizal’s
commentaries, which engage in contrapunteo with the assertions and authority of Morga, generate similar counterpoints to those of Acosta, lines in the sand that exclude Spanish oppressors as well as certain unenlightened Indio groups from the designing and realizing of future Philippine independence. Paradoxically, it’s a narrative of unity that reveals implicit structures of exclusion, the borders of the community Rizal aims to will into existence through his writings.

Rizal constructs notions of Philippine racial unity and advancements in culture and civilization based on not only literacy, but also industriousness in fields such as boat making or metallurgy. For example, when Morga speaks about Philippine successes in boat making, Rizal ups the ante. Morga says: “Todos los Naturales los saben bogar, y los gobernaban. Hay algunos tan grandes, que llevan cien remeros por banda, y treinta soldados encima de pelea, y los comunes son barangayes y vireyes, de menos esquifazón y gente,” or “All of the Natives know how to row [these boat] and they command them. Some of these boats are so big, that they bear a hundred rowers on each side, and thirty soldiers above, and the common ones are barangays and viceroyals, with fewer crewmembers and people” (267). Rizal responds, saying:

...Los Filipinos... célebres y diestros en la navegación, lejos de progresar, se han atrasado, pues si bien se construyen en las Islas barcos, podemos decir que son casi todos de modelo europeo. Desaparecieron los navíos que contenían cien remeros por banda y treinta soldados de combate; el país que un tiempo con medios primitivos fabricaba naos cerca de 2,000 toneladas, hoy tiene que acudir a puertos extraños, como Hong Kong, para dar el oro arrancado a los pobres en cambio de inservibles cruceros... y de toda aquella arquitectura naval apenas queda alguno que otro nombre en la memoria, muerta sin que modernos adelantos hayan venido a reemplazarla en la proporción de los siglos transcurridos.

...Filipinos... famous and skilled in navigation, far from progressing, have fallen behind, since if boats are still constructed in the Islands, we can say that almost all of them follow the European model. The boats that contained one hundred rowers per side and thirty combat soldiers disappeared; the country that at one time with primitive means fabricated ships close to 2,000 tons, today has to resort to foreign ports, like Hong Kong, in order to give the gold that was seized from the poor in exchange for defective cruise ships... and of all that naval architecture, there hardly remains any doubt that there remain some name or another in the memory, dead without modern advances having come to replace it in the proportion of the passed centuries. (267)
Rizal describes the boats as much larger than the ones Morga depicts, and the process of colonization as a distinct and dramatic fall from grace, incited by European influence and violence. Rizal even turns this moment into an opportunity to dramatize this fall vis-à-vis the landscape of the islands, showing himself to be a precocious environmentalist. He indicates nostalgically that the Philippines once was “covered by shadows, because of the trees” (268). However, with the shift to principally European modes of boat building, which were not as sustainable as previous Philippine practices, many tree species began to become endangered and extinct, and the islands, bare and bright.

With regards to metallurgy, Morga explains that Governor Santiago de Vera had “built the stone fortress of Our Lady of the Way, inside the city of Manila on the land side, and for its defense, he had set up a foundry for the making of artillery under the hands of an old Indio called Pandapira, a native of the province of Pampanga” (translation by Ambeth Ocampo 197, of Morga 23). Rizal’s footnote reads a complex story into the adjective “antiguo,” which could be translated as “old-world.” He says, “Esto es, un Indio que ya sabría fundir cañones aun antes de la llegada de los Españoles, por eso el epíteto antiguo. En este difícil ramo de la metalurgia, como en otros, se han atrasado los actuales Filipinos o los Indios nuevos” (22-3), or “this is an Indio who already knew how to found cannons even before the arrival of the Spaniards, hence the epithet old. In this difficult branch of metallurgy, as in others, the present-day Filipinos or the New Indios are very much behind the old Indios” (translation by Ambeth Ocampo 197, of Morga 23). Innate and compromised industriousness and literacy of the Philippine people are the pillars upon which

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20 “...edificó de piedra la fortaleza de Nuestra Señora de Guía, dentro de la Ciudad de Manila, a la parte de tierra, y hizo (sic) fundir alguna artillería para su guarnición, por mano de un Indio antiguo, llamado Pandapira, natural de la provincia de la Pampanga” (23).
Rizal constructs a Filipino race and, thus, builds his rebuttal of the accusation that Philippine inutility critics like Castelar and Wenceslao Emilio Retana use to defend Spain’s civilizing mission.

Rizal does not arbitrarily identify “race” as the organizing structure of this struggle. Spanish attitudes at the time against Filipinos are almost uniquely structured around race. For example, Rizal’s biggest critic, who after his death curiously became his biggest fan, Retana, makes a claim common among Spanish apologists of the time: “Why should it cause offense that I conceive of the Malay race as inferior to the European races? This is a purely scientific opinion…” (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 176). Spanish writer and politician Emilio Castelar proclaims that Filipinos were “human species that reveal to us prehistoric times and examples of monosyllabic languages” (Schmidt-Nowara 2006, 169). In similar fashion, Spanish anthropologist Manuel Antón suspiciously has to assure his readers that there remains “between these negros (of the central Philippines)... and what we know as the most intelligent simians, a considerable physical distance as well as an unbridgeable intellectual one” (2006, 169). Imperial apologists repeatedly return to arguments about the racial inferiority of colonized peoples to justify their project of colonization as a civilizing and redemptory mission.

These kinds of racial claims motivate Rizal’s annotations, as pointed out by his friend, Bohemian Filipinologist Ferdinand Blumentritt, who says in the prologue: “Tú les has mostrado quién sabe cumplir con los deberes de un patriota, o el sabio filipino que renueva los laureles de un gran autor, estadista y campeador de España y llama la atención del gobierno sobre los males de la patria, o ellos que siembran el odio de raza en el pecho de los Filipinos,” or “You have shown someone who knows how to fulfill the duties of a patriot, or the wise Filipino who renews the laurels of a great author, statist, and champion of Spain, and calls the government’s attention
toward the ills of the fatherland, or those who plant racial hate in the chest of the Filipinos” (Blumentritt in Prologue to Morga ix). These conflicts lead “race” to be inextricably linked to “race war” in Rizal’s formulation.

The connection between “race” and “race war” plays out throughout Rizal’s written work. In his essay published the same year as his annotations to Morga’s history “Filipinas dentro de cien años,” Rizal says, “...the Philippine races, like all the Malays, do not succumb before the foreigner like the Australians, the Polynesians and the Indians of the New World” (“The Philippines a Century Hence” 59-60).21 Here, he posits the superiority of the Philippine “race,” through a novel global comparison of subjugated races, in regards to their ability to resist foreign influence.

Curiously, Rizal offers the opposite opinion when reflecting in a letter to a friend on the Indios in a performance of “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” at the Paris Exposition of 1889 (also the same year as the annotations and “Filipinas dentro...”). Rizal says, “Why should we resent being called Indios by the Spaniards. Look at the American Indians. They were not ashamed of their race. Let us be like them. Let us be proud of the name Indio and make the Spaniards revise their conception of the term. We shall become Indios Bravos!” (Zaide 127). In this letter, Rizal moves away from his insistence on the Filipino race’s superior capacity of resistance, asserting, rather, that the Indios of the Philippines should adopt tactics of resistance and the subversive moniker from the “Indios Bravos,” their “parallel race” of the U.S.’s “wild west,”

This blurs the above-mentioned distance between typical uses of the word “Indio,” which in Caribbean and Philippine contexts, signifies dramatically different things. Despite Rizal’s contradictory claims about which “race” of Indios is the most resistant, there is a consistent

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21 “…las razas filipinas, como todas las malayas, no sucumben ante el extranjero, como las razas australianas, las polinésicas, y las razas indias del Nuevo Continente” (“Filipinas dentro de cien años”).
gesture; Rizal still articulates “race” only in terms of struggle, resistance, and “race war.” Rizal’s racial construct points to a proximity and divergence between Foucault’s notion of “race war” and Schmidt-Nowara’s description of “prehistory” and “counterpoint.” By inverting the logic of civilizing colonialism, Rizal sets up a binary of native civilization and foreign corruption that resembles Caribbean counterpoints that structure prehistorical rebuttals of Spanish claims of Indio cultural emptiness.

Despite these similar structures, there remain impactful differences. In the Caribbean, prehistorians idealized an extinct or nearly extinct group to serve as a symbolic counterpoint to two existing sources of foreign corruption, erecting discursive borders to exclude Spaniards and Africans they saw as oppressive and savage, respectively. Rizal’s race war engages with a tension between Spaniards and a race that was alive, yet decadent in comparison with its former glory, according to Rizal’s logic. Caribbean prehistory uses Indios as symbols through which colonial intellectuals can reflect on bourgeoning notions of national identity. Rizal’s conjuring of race war speaks about nationality in the past tense, underlining a series of divisions that serve as obstacles to the rearticulation of that nationality. Among these are the borders between Spaniards and Indios, between “new” and “old” Indios, borders disrupted by the destabilizing presence of the Chinese in the Philippines, and issues of miscegenation and the identity conflicts it raises.

Rizal, a mestizo of Indio, Chinese and Spanish heritage, assumes a complicated position within this race war. What race does he belong to? What is the relationship between the Filipino race he supports through his writing and the diverse racial construction of his compatriots? Even among the Ilustrados, there were almost full Spaniards such as Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, mestizos including Rizal, and people of nearly fully native Malay blood, like Juan and Antonio Luna.
One certainty is that, according to Rizal, the Nuevos Indios can’t hold a candle to their old-world counterparts. Illustrating such a phenomenon, Rizal repeats a phrase about modern day Filipino Indios in his annotations about both boat building and metallurgy, “they have fallen behind.” This highlights a central function of Rizal’s rebuilding of a pre-Spanish Philippine society. The orientalist trope of a society’s “fall from grace” is in play here and the guilt for this fall does not belong uniquely to the Spaniards. Yes, their arrival precipitated the ancient Filipinos’ fall, but Rizal’s prose reveals some condescending and discriminatory tones with regards to his contemporaries, too, especially with his repeated claims that the ironically nicknamed “Indios nuevos” have “fallen behind.” This is not his only moment of discursive violence, either.

Like Acosta, in certain un-annotated sections of the Morga, Rizal’s silences betray his often exclusive opinions, as Raquel Reyes asserts. For example, Rizal does not include the aetas “as part of his imagined Filipino national community” (Reyes 216). While Indios entered into Acosta’s Puerto Rican liberalist discourse mainly in the form of allegory, marginal Indio groups are left out of Rizal’s notes and idealized conception of a resistant race.

Other exclusions permeate Rizal’s racial reconstruction. Gender and sexuality prove problematic for Rizal when he tries to use Morga’s comment that the groom pays the dowry in Philippine marriages to illustrate a sort of enlightened gender consciousness in pre-colonial Philippines. His notion of pre-Hispanic Philippine greatness leaves no room for groups that pose a complication to his views of society. He says:

22 “Rizal's silences in the Morga are rare occasions but important ones. They indicate an opinion. For example, noticing Rizal's silence in relation to Morga's characterizations of the Negritos as savages, the historian Filomeno Aguilar correctly interprets the silence as an expression of Rizal's view of Negritos. Aguilar takes the silence to mean that since Rizal did not consider the Negritos as part of his imagined Filipino national community, they were therefore undeserving of his defence” (Reyes 216).
La mujer Filipina no siendo jamás carga para nadie, ni para sus padres ni para su marido, sino todo lo contrario representa un valor cuya pérdida para el poseedor hay que sustituir... tampoco hay venta o compra en esta costumbre: la esposa tagala es libre y considerada, trata y contrata, casi siempre con la aprobación del marido, quien la consulta en todos sus actos...

The Filipina woman never being the burden of anyone, neither her parents nor her husband, rather completely the opposite, represents a value whose loss for the possessor must be substituted... there also is no sale or purchase in this custom: the Tagalog wife is free and considered; she treats and contracts, almost always with the approval of her husband, who always consults her in all of his acts... (302)

Rizal struggles to differentiate European and Philippine wedding practices in order to emphasize the enlightened nature of pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization. However, in both customs, money and women are exchanged, her body judged for its worth. Through recoiled and contradictory rhetoric, rooted in social science discourses like economics and anthropology, Rizal attempts to project feminist redemption upon a Philippine behavior that varies little from the European practice he portrays inversely as backward.

This resonates with Morga’s Chapter Eight observation that the Indios were not ashamed of homosexual behavior – or in Morga’s euphemistic terms, “el pecado nefando contra natura” “the heinous, unnatural sin” – Rizal proclaims, “Se ha observado que los hombres caen en el nefando crimen de la sodomía, cuando les viene el hastío que la prostitución produce... ó cuando el exceso de privación fuerza á la naturaleza a falsearse errando por sendas equivocadas como se experimenta en ciertos conventos y colegios universales” or “It has been observed that men fall in the heinous crime of sodomy when the weariness of prostitution comes to them, or when the excess of privation forces nature to falsify, erring for confused paths, as is experienced in certain convents and universal colleges” (308). While Rizal uses social science to explain away the phenomenon of homosexuality among the pre-colonial Filipinos, he concurs with the 17\textsuperscript{th} century historian on the immorality of homosexuality.
Rizal recycles intolerant jabs such as “heinous crime of sodomy,” and homophobic euphemisms such as “confused paths,” using them cleverly against the friars, drawn in at the end of the note so Rizal could slyly defame them. In the end, these groups — Aetas, women and queer people — do not represent for Rizal an opportunity for rhetorical advantage in his textual contrapunteo with friars and Spanish apologists, and furthermore do not align with his idealized notions of a great pre-contact Philippine civilization. Rizal considers these “outliers” with disregard and condescension similar to the manners he critiques in which Spaniards respond to educated Indios and other Ilustrados.

Thus, through these footnotes, Rizal distances himself from both the Spaniards and many of his compatriots, taking refuge in a community he works to resuscitate and/or imagine through colonial history. Certainly, this community is structured, as Ambeth Ocampo says, “sometimes... on imagination more than evidence” (199). The imaginative nature of this pre-Hispanic community shines through the cracks in Rizal’s story. The archeological work of Eusebio Dizón suggests, according to Ocampo, that “the Indios were a metal using people, but did not possess the metallurgical knowledge attributed to them by Rizal... it is possible that the Indios were capable of forging the small cannons, or lantakas... although they are not used for warfare, but as ornaments for interior decoration” (199). Nonetheless, Panday Pira, the “old” Indio metallurgist, is now taught in grade-school history classes and enshrined in museums (he has a whole station at the Ayala Museum’s dioramas of Philippine history) as a sophisticated metal crafter, “despite historical and archeological evidence to the contrary” (198). Furthermore, “recent archeological excavations... have enlarged our understanding of pre-Hispanic boats. Some remains are as large as Morga describes, but nothing comes close to the massive 2000 ton boats of which Rizal boasts”
Rizal repeatedly exaggerates pre-Hispanic Philippine greatness, often offering a clearer picture of the political climate of his time, as well as his personal political positions, than of any concrete pre-Hispanic civilization.

Rizal imagines a unified community, through nostalgia and contempt, upon which he could build a country free of both colonial oppression and the contradictions the Philippine masses embody. This points to an insightful, yet not comprehensive analysis of Rizal’s comments: “Scholarly annotations to a sixteenth-century chronicle were used as propaganda: history was utilized as a weapon against Spain,” says Ocampo (199). History was employed as a political weapon, but not solely in a monolithic project against Spain, promoting the “Black legend.” Spain was the main villain, especially the friars who Rizal portrayed as not only violent and corrupt, but more superstitious than the Indio shaman-figures they critiqued.

Furthermore, “los Indios nuevos,” rendered brutish by colonial oppression, are also potential dangers — according to liberalist strains in Rizal’s thought — in that they might create revolution that the Philippines was not ready for and perpetuate violent forms of governing, especially given their general lack of education and of “anything to lose” (“Philippines a Hundred Years Hence” 9). Rizal’s idealized Philippine community, which blurs the lines between history and fiction, also blurs the lines between what people of the Philippines are — a not perfectly coherent body of racially, linguistically, culturally and ideologically diverse peoples — and what he wants them to be: a unified, literate and industrious group, capable of fashioning a productive nation. The discursive borders we trace out of his writings, his porous and contentious exclusions of colonizers and overly colonized people provide a privileged perspective of the imaginary country Rizal hoped to resuscitate from the depths of history. Thus, his narration of his people’s fall from
grace is both propaganda against Spain, and also a nostalgic reconstruction of a past that never was – recoverable only through literature – in the hope of constructing a future that looked every day more improbable.

**Rizal and the Politics of Doubt**

Rizal’s tendency to exaggerate and flippancy toward accuracy have inspired the ire of critics of his time and today. Wenceslao Retana, a Hispanist critic turned fan of Rizal, claims Rizal fails in reconstituting historical truth by not addressing a sufficient quantity of original, unpublished archival material (422). Historian of the Philippine “Propaganda Movement,” John N. Schumacher critiques Rizal’s history in that he is not trained in historiography and the immensity of the task before him “proves too much” (22). Ambeth Ocampo says, “In its time, Rizal's Morga was already considered too historical, that is too academic and scholarly to be digested and used by patriots and propagandists; but historians and scholars believe the Morga to be too biased for their purposes” (211). However, these critics fail to identify that one of Rizal’s central critiques takes issue with the inherent violence of the truth-making apparatuses of empire and historiography. This takes root in his reflections on race in Philippine history.

Rizal’s invention of an idealized Philippine people affirms that Philippine history is a “race war,” that is, its center of gravity is the divisive clash of hegemonic and subaltern races, a clash that inscribes itself into all documents, discourses, and events of history. Acosta, too, articulated the history of his country through the terms of race, but in a way that was largely uncritical of the uneven distribution of political agency along racial lines, despite being a staunch supporter of the abolition of slavery. Acosta aimed to avoid a literal race war, like that of Haiti, by perpetuating the
structures of race war through his abolitionist discourse. Rizal, on the other hand, channels an aspect of Foucault’s theory of race war that Acosta does not tap into: the art of “counterhistory.”

Counterhistory works from the presupposition of race war forming the backbone, or central border, of a community’s history. The concept of race war reframes history as a perpetual and constantly renewing clash of races, one of which repeatedly exerting its will over another. This opens the path for counterhistory, or “speaking from the side that is darkness, from within the shadows... a disruptive speech... [or] prophetic rupture” (2003, 71-2). Rizal’s transformative footnotes strive to interrupt an official history to underline the narratives obscured within this darkness. With these footnotes, a colonial history, which was designed to “produce both a justification of power and a reinforcement of that power” (66), is filtered through the perspective of the subjugated peoples, producing a destabilizing counterhistory.

The commentaries are destabilizing in that they reveal that “the light — the famous dazzling effect of power — is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness” (2003, 70). Part of this project is planting doubt at the ground level of history, such as when Rizal identifies the “irony” of “encomendóse la tierra.” This underlines the chief difference between the politics of knowledge implicit in Acosta and Rizal’s projects.

Like Acosta’s, Rizal’s annotations also reenact a drama of colonial power relations through the contrapunteo of the disagreeing main text and footnotes. However, while Acosta asserts his privileged access to a notion of truth that his colonizers cannot see, Rizal plants the seed of doubt as gesture to secure political empowerment. Doubt enters into Acosta’s annotations, but not as
“counterhistory,” but rather in the context and service of science. Acosta explains the value of such doubt when discussing prehistoric transcontinental migrations of Indios from Asia. He says “es preciso convenir en que reinan acerca de tan importante asunto sombras y misterios que la ciencia no ha logrado disipar y que aconsejan á la historia ser circunspecto en sus afirmaciones, porque la incertidumbre es preferible al error” (369). Inversely, Rizal uses science in the service of doubt and to undermine claims of Filipino superstition, especially when attacking friar histories.

While imperial apologist Wenceslao Retana claims that “the friars... have always been lovers of true scientific progress” (Schmidt-Nowara 175), Rizal shows them to be purveyors of unenlightened thought, opponents of science, liberty and progress. This is linked to Isabelo de los Reyes’ project of registering Philippine folklore to show that the root of Indio superstition comes from Europe, not from an innate cognitive inferiority of the Indios, as proposed by many Hispanists and imperial apologists. Rizal questions friar rationality by repeatedly explicating through science miracles chronicled by Morga, and more so by histories written by friars that he cites in the footnotes. He, thus, casts doubt both on the miracles’ credibility and on that of the friars of history and his contemporary era. Humor and incredulity mix in Rizal’s scientific explanation of each miracle associated with relics of missionaries martyred in Japan, briefly mentioned by Morga. Asking things such as “¿Cuántos mártires y santos habrá en el Calendario que deben su nombre á un desconocimiento de la Fisiología humana?” or “How many martyrs and saints would there be in the Calendar who owe their famous names to an ignorance of human Physiology?” (84), Rizal use of science to promote doubt on the Catholic notion of the
“communion of saints,” also undercuts friar authority and undermines any Spanish apologist’s accusation of Philippine Indios’ superstition.²³

At many moments, Rizal simply adds extra, doubtful information to destabilize the supposed truthfulness of history. In so doing, he attacks friar histories directly, while indirectly using doubt to destabilize the more general field of history and the implicit authority of certain people over others. In Chapter Five, Rizal does not demystify, but rather supplements, with doubtful anecdotes, furnished by friar histories. He, thus, intervenes in Morga’s dry report on Philippine governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas’s excursion to conquer the sultanate of Ternate in the Moluccas Islands, which ended in mutiny. Rizal remarks that with regards to this event, and history of this era in general, “lo maravilloso [era] más creíble que lo natural, tratándose sobre todo de las cosas de la fe,” or “the marvelous thing [was] more believable than the natural one, with special regards to issues of faith” (31); he defends this point by proceeding to enumerate a seemingly endless list of inexplicable events. Jesuit Padre Colín proclaimed a miraculous gash appeared on a portrait of Dasmariñas in Manila the same night the governor was struck in the same spot, on his way to Ternate. Another priest claims a soldier was transported by witches that same night from Manila to Mexico to inform the colonial government of the events (31). By choosing when to insert doubt, using it both to entertain and compel the reader, Rizal asserts his historiographical authority, especially over the friars and their apologists.

²³ In Chapter Eight, Rizal responds to claims of Indio superstitions by pointing out that contemporary priests repeatedly commit the same crimes committed by Indio religious three centuries before. He subsequently enumerates Catholic superstitions that go against science while lining friars’ pockets: “¿Qué se diría ahora de los que mueren, á pesar de todas las misas á las diferentes virgenes, á pesar de las figuras de cera, de plata y otros ofrecimientos más llamativos y tentadores?” (313). This is related to the gesture of Isabelo de los Reyes, a compatriot of Rizal’s who published El Folklore Filipino. Through this project, Reyes affirms his authority of Spanish critics in an emerging field, while also inverting stereotypes about Philippine superstitions. The hypothesis of his chapter called “Ilocano Superstitions Found in Europe,” is that superstition was not an innate quality of Filipinos, but one learned through interaction with the same Europeans who accused them of being superstitious. For more information, see Benedict Arnold’s prologue study of Reyes in Under Three Flags.
Perhaps the most exemplary moment of the destabilizing, “counterhistory” effect of doubt in the footnote is the shortest. Rizal concisely exercises “counterhistory” in the briefest comment on Morga’s same report of Dasmariñas’s mutiny. Morga recalls, “Tripolola de buenas bogas Chinas al sueldo, que por mas acariciarlos no los consentio a herrojar,” that is “He furnished the ship with good, paid Chinese rowers, who no matter how much they were pampered, did not agree to be handcuffed during the trip” (30), lamenting that Dasmariñas was not able to shackle a group of hired Chinese rowers who eventually would mutiny against him.

With a terse, three-word footnote, “¿Con qué derecho?” or “With what right?” (30), Rizal writes himself into the company of great cultivators of doubt, like el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. This subversive and destabilizing strategy dates back in Latin America to el Inca’s 17th-century writings. Doris Sommer affirms with regards to his Comentarios reales that the “genre is not history; it is ‘Commentaries’... instead of flattering his readers with affirmations of what we know, this mestizo informant offers the kind of dangerous, supplementary information that destabilizes the epistemological framework we had taken for granted” (75). Likewise, in three words, Rizal recognizes and questions imperial entitlement and irresponsible anachronistic historiography, supplementing and destabilizing conventional forms of knowledge through his paratextual commentary.

The imperial entitlement is apparent when Morga implicitly condones inhumane measures, handcuffing rowers, in defense of the empire. The irresponsible anachronistic historiography is evident through the implicit assertion that contemporary knowledge that the paid rowers would mutiny should retroactively justify their previously unwarranted shackling. Rizal illustrates how these two practices, imperial entitlement and biased historiography, are linked in
that both set out to give order to messy and incoherent events, encounters and groups. This can be understood, in a sense, as the violent practice of truth-making at the core of both the imperial project and its historiographical apparatus, what Foucault calls the “light.”

With his three-word supplement to history, Rizal succinctly captures the core of his project of annotation, writing doubt into history’s content and form. While Acosta uses the “light” of reason to establish his superiority over Spanish authorities, Rizal draws his advantage from the cultivation of doubt in the part of the history page that, like his pre-contact Philippines, was “covered by shadows, because of the trees.”

Rizal lays the groundwork for these shadows in his justification for the format of his history. Rizal says in the preface:

Nacido y criado en el desconocimiento de nuestro Ayer, como casi todos vosotros; sin voz ni autoridad para hablar de lo que no vimos ni estudiamos, consideré necesario invocar el testimonio de un ilustre Español que rigió los destinos de Filipinas en los principios de su nueva era y presenció los últimos momentos de nuestra antigua nacionalidad.

Born and raised in the ignorance of our Yesterday, as with almost all of you; without either the voice or the authority to speak about that which we did not see even as students, I considered it necessary to invoke the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who directed the future of the Philippines in the early years of its new era and was present for the last moments of our ancient nationality.

The commentary comes from a space of unknowing, intervening in the “light” of history, as indicated with the adjective “ilustre.” While the logic of this phrase represents the “light” as an escape from darkness, Rizal’s constant recurrence to questions and doubt illustrate that the “desconocimiento” is the space of the commenter’s advantage at the same time as it is the obstacle the commenter wants to overcome.

Curiously, this passage registers Rizal’s only usage of the word “nacionalidad” with regards to the Philippines in the whole book, and he does so using the preterit. Nationality isn’t an inherent quality of any person, nor is it a community he looks to build. Rather it is what he hopes,
 perhaps in vain, to rescue from the abyss of lost memories. In the process of rescuing it, ignorance
is what Rizal fights, and unlike Acosta, doubt is his main weapon against it. He continues in the
preface, unfolding the convoluted temporal ethics of his project:

Si el libro logra despertar en vosotros la conciencia de nuestro pasado, borrado de la memoria, y
rectificar lo que se ha falseado y calumniado, entonces no habré trabajado en balde, y con esta
base, por pequeña que fuese, podremos todos dedicarnos a estudiar el porvenir (v).

If the book is able to wake in you the consciousness of our past, erased from memory, and
rectify that which has been falsified and slandered, then I won’t have worked in vain, and with
this base, no matter how small it is, we could all dedicate ourselves to study the future (v).

This passage recalls Foucault’s claim that “counterhistory” is a “prophetic rupture;” it provides the
consciousness needed to study the future.24 Rizal affirms the role of doubt in this equation.

Doubt both identifies and sidesteps the violent task of truth-making, constantly renewing
and translating history with every rereading. Here, translation implies, in Vicente Rafael’s terms, “a
sense of futurity harbored and kept in reserve, of the radical otherness of language surviving and
producing effects beyond the moment of its articulation... [It] gives rise to the possibility of
historical thought as the opening to that which is new and therefore always yet to come” (15).
Rizal’s articulation of an idealized pre-Hispanic Philippine race is a byproduct of doubt, which
liberates history from the grasp of any individual or tradition. Doubt makes space for this potential
to translate, which underlines the already volatile nature of language and knowledge. Therefore,
Rizal’s brave, new “race” is but one translation of history in an endless chain of translations.

In 1909, Retana continues this chain of translations, once again republishing Morga’s
Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas (with even more annotations) and, thereby, attempting to bring
“counterhistory” back into the fold of an irretrievable empire. Retana switches the footnotes to

24 This recalls, avant la lettre, Walter Benjamin’s “Angel of History,” as well as Edouard Glissant’s famous definition of
history from Caribbean Discourse. Glissant says that history is “related neither to a schematic chronology nor to a
nostalgic lament. It leads to the identification of a painful notion of time and its full projection forward into the
future... a prophetic vision of the past” (quoted in Hagimoto 164).
endnotes, preserving some of Rizal’s annotations, correcting others and deleting some all together. On the same passage in which Rizal had questioned “¿Con qué derecho?” and thus undermined imperial entitlement and irresponsible historiography, Retana removes the question. In its place, he blames Filipino sailors abducted in the mutiny, for not fighting back, quoting Bartolomé Leandro de Argén’sola’s text — contemporary to Morga’s — entitled Conquista de las Islas Malucas. In the comment just above it, Retana takes issue with Rizal’s claim that religious orders had impeded Spanish trade with Japan and Cambodia. Retana says,

En este asunto… no se puede pedir a Rizal un tino muy seguro, porque sus investigaciones fueron deficientes, y, sobre serlo, rarísima vez las verificó sobre las fuentes originales. En las notas de Rizal a Morga no se cita, ni por casualidad, un solo documento inédito. Y hay que estudiarlos, a centenares, si se quiere reconstituir a conciencia la verdad histórica.

In this issue… one cannot expect an assured subtlety of Rizal, because his investigations were deficient, and, above that, he very rarely verified them with the original sources. In Rizal’s notes on Morga, he doesn’t cite, not even by chance, a single unpublished document. And one must study them, hundreds of them, if he or she wants to reconstitute historical truth conscientiously. (422)

Retana’s gesture marks a clear case of re-correcting “counterhistory” and resubmitting it to the logic of empire, embodied by what he calls “la verdad histórica,” as opposed to Rizal’s doubt-based historical approach.

The only problem is that Spain had lost its last overseas colonies some eleven years prior. This leads Retana to pay unwitting homage to Rizal’s historiographical legacy. He nostalgically exaggerates the greatness of a lost empire. He renews rivalries with dead foes. He looks to the past to decode the indecipherable and anxiety-inducing future. He plants doubt as part of a historical power play. He recommences history as a perpetual discursive battleground, a stage for contrapunteos, a palimpsest of political jousting and frustrations.
Borders that Converge and Diverge

These strategies and struggles have led national scholars to claim for these annotations a space of primacy in their islands’ historiographical traditions. Acosta’s annotations deceptively form, according to Gervasio García, “the first history of Boricua authorship” (9). Rizal’s annotations, according to Ambeth Ocampo, consist of “the first Philippine history from the viewpoint of a Filipino” (186). However, the elusive annotations also challenge nearly every term of these accolades. The annotations call into question the categories of “history,” being “first,” “Boricua” and “Filipino,” while also unsettling the ideas of “authorship” and “viewpoint.” Acosta and Rizal’s “histories” blur the line between inventory and invention. History is rather a palimpsest of slights and exclusions that both annotators decode and perpetuate. Therefore, their being “first” is an arbitrary emplotment that goes against the logic of the annotations: coming “after” allows them their historical advantage, because they supplement previous histories with dangerous and destabilizing information. Perhaps, they are “first,” “national” “histories” only because they rework their definitions of “Boricua” and “Filipino,” revealing such categories to be fluid, polemical and sometimes violent in Spain’s late colonies. Finally, they undermine the primacy of “authorship” in history, revealing the genre to be less an objective material or unified register from the point of view of an authorized official, and more a tense border, a constantly-renewing dispute, a contact zone in which various voices struggle to assert the authority of their “viewpoints,” effacing other voices and viewpoints in the process.

This brings up a series of provisional conclusions and continued questions about borders in late 19th-century writings of Spain’s late colonies. In both Acosta and Rizal’s annotations, the spaces between the main texts and the sly, yet assertive paratexts – in other words, the textual
borders — are suggestive of the borders of the countries Acosta and Rizal imagine and hope to make real. Both textual and geopolitical systems of borders rely on structures of inclusion, that is the articulation of community, that emphatically, yet not completely exclude certain groups. Furthermore, both Acosta and Rizal undertake a seemingly contradictory endeavor: erecting these borders while illustrating the ease with which their voice flits across page divisions and between identities, languages, and places of enunciation. The preceding paragraphs permit a vision of the similarities and differences between Acosta’s textual borders and national imaginings and those of Rizal.

The similarities are important. Both annotators undercut imperial histories to carve space for their voices within official debates over sovereignty, property, humanity, and other issues of political, cultural, and economic import. Through such prehistorical contrapunteo, both writers perpetuate similar exclusions to the ones they protest. They do not push for radical separation or a permanent break through their annotations, but rather erect borders that promote the exclusion of certain groups — Indios, enslaved peoples, corrupt Spaniards — that serve as counterpoints to the foundations of nationhood. Nonetheless, as counterpoints, the phantasmagoric presences of these excluded groups permeate the writers’ conceptualizations of the nation. The borders are therefore porous and contradictory divisions that the writers patrol through their creative and renovative, yet still exclusive and violent writings. In sum, both forms of textual borders suggest the possibility of a nationalist project of restoring, through exclusion of some communities, societies imagined as previously great: Acosta’s literate white society, and Rizal’s old-world Indio society rooted in industriousness, self-rule, and autochthonous epistemologies.
The differences between their approaches are impactful. These nostalgic projects of reconstructing societies of fallen greatness are structured upon opposing logical configurations. For Acosta, borders are the framework upon which truth can be established and recuperated; he relies on borders to promote clarity by differentiating one word, concept, island, or nation from another. Acosta articulates exclusion through scientific reasoning and statistical analysis, repeatedly illustrating his regimented view of the world through the logic upon which his tables and investigations are structured. Through these borders, he defines his regulated notions of progress and asserts his privileged access to truth, an access not shared with Spaniards and Afro-Puerto Ricans, whom he considers — to varying degrees — biased, intellectually disadvantaged, and inherently violent. Indios cannot access this truth either, because they are, according to Acosta, extinct. Only their relics can serve as signposts for a future truth seeker.

Rizal, on the other hand, mines the implicit racial borders of history as a source of doubt. These borders reveal the history of empire to be composed of triumphant assertions that inversely execute racial effacements; Rizal underlines how conquest erases the story of the conquered. Then, he aims to unwrite these erasures by searching for clues about pre-Hispanic Indio cultures and extrapolating upon them with equal parts of critical and creative thinking. While these extrapolations about the character and culture of pre-Hispanic Indio populations are exaggerated and imprecise, they succinctly, cleverly, and correctly identify history as always a register of racial struggle, even in moments that don’t explicitly engage with the subject. Critics, such as Ocampo and Schumacher, take issue with Rizal’s flippancy toward truth and tendency to embellish history with nostalgic recreations. However, they fail to explicitly capture Rizal’s important identification of truth-building as one of the central violent practices of history and empire.
Alternatively, Acosta’s reverence of borders interacts in a complex way with his political and intellectual projects in Puerto Rico. Acosta assumes a submissive position on the page, always below and behind the main text, reflecting a repeated hesitance to take a clear and programmatic stand against Abbad. In this way, he evades censorship and shows reluctance to disrupt societal order. It takes effort to get past Acosta’s layers of veneration and access the text’s transformative message. Even then, the annotations’ clearest moments are stained with pettiness and discursive violence. Acosta’s subjectivity is most directly clear when speaking about his extensive cemí collection and when boasting about defending the Puerto Rican borders from Asian immigration. In these moments, Acosta illustrates a vision of history as triumphant and transparent; when he asserts that his privileged access to truth shows that he is the real hero of history, he differs little from the pomp and egocentrism of the historiographical project he slyly critiques.

Contrarily, some of Acosta’s most poignant moments are his least direct ones. When discussing the encomienda, he cedes his voice to Quintana, backs out of the scene, and yet proceeds to turn Spanish historians against each other. Acosta delicately orchestrates an implosion within the historical branch of the Spanish imperial project. In the wake of this implosion, Acosta’s voice gains importance and gravity.

Rizal’s location on and below the borders of the history page is less submissive than supplementary. In these notes, he does not shy away from harsh critiques of Spaniards and the original history. Rather, he consistently provides extra information that unleashes floods of destabilizing knowledge across page borders within the field of imperial history. On the one hand, the textual borders Rizal erects reveal his frustrations with and prejudices against many of his contemporary compatriots, frequently excluding them from the future country he imagines. In
fact, the futurity of this country is a direct representation of Rizal’s dissatisfaction with his contemporaries; we are not ready for independence, he claims. On the other hand, those same textual divisions provide the reader with an exercise in thinking across borders, in dominating European sciences without losing touch with local sensibilities and forms of knowledge. Rizal uses these borders to tell his contemporaries that they are not ready for revolution and, palely, to show them a path to the achievement of what he sees to be a prerequisite for nationhood: intellectual autonomy.

The borders on the page of history prove to be a fecund space of national thinking. By moving to and fro across these borders, Rizal’s and Acosta’s annotations sketch notions of the nation that the annotators imagine, elaborating on who should be included and excluded from these communities. These borders provide a structure for national thought, while also promoting pesky remainders of colonial mindsets within anti-colonial writings. The authors, after all, came from socioeconomic positions of privilege that would be jeopardized by hasty and violent revolutions. The border of the history page provided a stage on which to rehearse forms of revolution that they considered their colonies not yet ready to enact.

Before articulating conclusions about borders in anti-colonial writings, one must consider the fact that Acosta and Rizal discovered these texts while traveling abroad in Europe. These forms of local knowledge were unavailable in the colony and required the colonial intellectuals to go abroad and repackage the local knowledge, made foreign, for their compatriots’ consumption. In a sense, these histories and their annotations take the shape of an indirect sort of travel chronicle, palely registering shades of estrangement, struggle, and innovation associated with the annotators’ experiences abroad where they discovered the histories they would comment. This process of
traveling across borders impacts the intellectuals' political positions, in addition to their concepts of historical and imaginary borders. What happens, then, when the authors travel to the capitals of rising and falling empires? What is the relationship between travel, borders, and anti-colonial thought? Do these structures of national thought become hazier or more concrete? Does the language of colonial intellectuals entrench itself in bellicose divisions of us and them, of the colonizer and the colonized, of intellectuals and the masses, or does this tongue get twisted, further intertwining imperial codes and anti-imperial messages?

Years before finding Ledru’s travel guide about Puerto Rico and republishing and annotating Abbad’s Historia Geográfica, Civil y Natural de la Isla de Puerto Rico, Acosta set sail for the first time to Europe. The year was 1846. Briefly after Puerto Rico’s tallest mountain, El Yunque, disappeared from the horizon, Acosta turned to the bow and reflected on the land that awaited him. He reflects in his memoirs on his thoughts in that moment:

Me encendía el ánimo la idea de que la Europa, cuna de la civilización Americana, se iba á presentar á mi vista ávida de saber. Cuadro extraordinario que sin duda en su majestuoso conjunto debía contrastar con el de las jóvenes sociedades del nuevo mundo. Nacido en una pobre isla sin pasado, iba á habitar pueblos poderosos y cuya larga historia los enlaza con las primeras edades de la humanidad.

My spirit burned with the idea that Europe, cradle of American civilization, was going to present itself to my view, rapacious of knowledge. An extraordinary image that without a doubt, in its majestic ensemble, must have contrasted with that of the young societies of the new world. Born in a poor island without a past, I was going to inhabit powerful countries, whose long history intertwined them with the early ages of humanity. (Acosta Quintero 22)

Curiously, his thoughts at that moment reflected the theories of Hispanists such as Emilio Castelar, that Puerto Rico and America were empty of culture and history. Culture and History came to the “New World” with the advent of Spanish imperialism in the Americas, according to
these theories that Acosta would combat in his endnoted commentaries to Abbad’s history some 20 years later.

Something happened to Acosta when crossing the fluid border that is the Atlantic. Perhaps, like Filipino Antonio Luna, his high expectations melted on contact with reality; Luna states in a travel chronicle about his first trip to Madrid, “Nos hablan tanto de [España], nos ponderan tanto su belleza y hermosura... la ponen tan alto, tan alto... que derretidas las alas de la imagen formada por el calor del realismo, la caída es mortal” or “They talk to us so much about [Spain], they ponder at length to us about its beauty and loveliness... they put it so high, so high... that melted the wings of the image by the heat of realism, the fall is mortal” (9). Perhaps, as with Cuban José Martí, his experience in foreign cities was filled with an intolerable ambivalence, equal parts fascination and disgust. Travel, as I explore in the following chapter, is the act in which these writers gain a vocabulary and toolbox to speak about and from the borders of their colony and the margins of modernity.
Chapter Two:

Fresh Impressions

Performing Language and Gender Borders

It is curious to observe that I can always understand
an Englishman when he speaks to me;
but among the Americans a word is a whisper;
a sentence is an electric commotion.
And if somebody asks me how can I know
if a language that I so badly write, is badly spoken,
I will tell frankly that it is very frequent
that critics speak about what they absolutely ignore...

-José Martí

"Impressions of America by a Very Fresh Spaniard" (1880)

...si a través de estas páginas
vislumbres al indígena de Filipinas,
puedes cerrar el libro;
si al contrario ves al ciudadano español
con sus libertades para criticar escenas del propio suelo
que, según la opinión general debieran desaparecer,
te suplico tengas la paciencia suficiente para leerme;
soy novato.

-Antonio Luna y Novicio
Prologue to Impresiones (1891)

Borders and Their Signposts

Cases of migration, immigration, and exile invite travelers and locals alike to call the
borders into question. Should borders separate or connect? Do they foster a sense of community —
a notion of connectivity or belonging — or do they fracture linguistic, cultural, and national
communities along seemingly arbitrary lines? The primordial case of border studies and issues of
migration, the frontier between the U.S. and Mexico, has an unexpected analogue with the other

1 "...if through these pages you perceive the indigenous man of the Philippines, you can close the book; if on the contrary, you see the Spanish citizen with his liberties to critique scenes of his own soil that, according to general opinion should disappear, I ask you to have enough patience to read me; I’m a novice."
regions captured in the struggle between rising and falling empires: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. What do writers from these latter regions have to offer with regards to comprehending and challenging traditional understandings of the work of power, language, and culture along and through geopolitical borders? Do island borders, that is to say the water that surrounds an island, cut islands off from other land, or do they connect islands to the world?

Maritime travel led 19th-century colonial intellectuals of the Caribbean and the Philippines to Europe, crossing a series of geopolitical, cultural, and social borders, while traveling to Spain and the United States. Through their writings these travelers and exiles, including José Martí of Cuba and Antonio Luna of the Philippines, offer treatises on immigration and evasive tutorials on culture from the point of view of the supposedly “wild” immigrant.

They write about their travels as isolating endeavors, while leaving clues of the communities they begin to form despite or through this process of isolation. Martí walks alone through the streets of New York, critiquing North American lack of culture and being wary of the transformation of immigrants into cogs within the U.S. industrial apparatus. He further grumbles that in all the countries of the world he’d fallen in love with a woman, but not here. On top of that, Martí tries to help a fallen elderly woman and she rebukes him for trying to touch her “by the hand! No!” A few years later, Spaniards constantly berate Luna in the street for his unfamiliar physical appearance, while the Madrileñas he courts question his virility. All the while, he incessantly longs for (and occasionally forgets!) his girlfriend back home, he navigates tense interactions with gentrified and self-hating Filipinos in Madrid, and he stares dumbfounded at the Filipinos in loincloths put on display in Madrid’s Parque del Retiro, in the 1887 zoo-like exhibition of Spain’s Asian colony. Such forms of rejection lead travelers to live out the hierarchies
and separations of the colony in visceral, concrete ways. Crossing over geopolitical borders does not necessarily undermine the borders and other restrictive social structures of the colony; it often makes them more palpable, if not more insurmountable.

That said, travel also often affords Caribbean and Philippine writers creative paths to transcend such divisive realities. For example, Rizal and Acosta’s annotated histories, the texts that chronicle “New World discovery” once again “discovered” in “Old World” libraries, represent both a distressing experience of colonial hierarchy and an indirect trajectory to its transcendence. Likewise, through his chronicles of travel and isolation, Martí begins to sketch notions of continental unity in militant opposition to the ways of life he observes in New York. Similarly, Luna pledges allegiance to and performs the rites of a different Philippine colony, the nearly all-male colony of Filipino expatriates in Spain. He challenges Spanish naysayers and Filipino rivals (including Rizal) to ritualistic and never realized fencing duels.

This performance of masculinity highlights the importance of theater in these chronicles. In fact, the space and function of the stage are central to Luna’s and Martí’s writing. The relation between travel, the border, and theatrical representation is long and rich. In fact, the Caribbean and Filipino intellectuals of the 19th century were not the first or only peoples conquered by Spain to travel to Europe. At the dawn of the Spanish empire in the Americas in the late 15th century, Christopher Columbus forcibly transported between 10 and 25 natives from the Caribbean to Spain, putting them on stage before an audience of the Spanish King and Queen in Barcelona (Loewen 54). With a certain degree of poetical parallelism, on the eve of the Spanish empire’s downfall, Madrid hosted the 1887 “Exposición filipina,” where forty-three Filipinos were
transported to Madrid to live in “traditional huts” staged in a simulated “natural habitat” (Sánchez Gómez 59).

In general, the stage is a fragmentary space, created for a public’s consumption and meant to represent a self-contained world, with its own history, logic, and economy. This self-contained world is made intelligible to the audience through the means of representing the theatrical argument. The theater therefore represents a form of communication between the alternative world represented and the lived experience of the audience. The forces of desire, fascination, condescension, and domination govern the means of communication in these imperial stages.

Similarly, in the late 1880’s, military cavalries from Cuba and the Philippines were imported and presented as honorable “Genuine Insurgents” and “Battle Scarred Heroes” in traveling Buffalo Bill shows throughout the U.S. and Europe. Such theatrical presentations of insurgency served the needs of the United States’ growing empire by promoting anti-Spanish sentiments in discursive preparation for the wars of 1898 (Kassan 241). Despite this representation of honorable insurgents, shortly after the advent of its transoceanic neo-empire, the United States returned to techniques used by the Spaniards to infantilize its new colonial subjects. St. Louis hosted a 1904 exposition of Filipinos, strikingly similar to the one in Madrid (Sánchez Gómez 319). There was also the coffee table book from 1899 entitled “Our Islands and Their Peoples.” This book took to photography to mechanically reproduce staged scenes from the borders of imperial expansion. It distributed photographs of peoples from Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii in their towns and native habitats. These photos use caricature to deny the colonized subjects agency and to provide heartland Americans with simplistic discourses about their new role as colonizers and their fascinating imperial possessions.
In a sense, these scenes represent a gamut of approaches to staging the border, most often representations of peripheral cultural difference, of what lies beyond the confines of the metropolis. The scenes were represented within these centers in order to fortify the spectators’ notions of identity, propriety, and nationhood. Such scenes entail dramatic demonstrations of contact that discursively promote and disseminate the logic of separation, thus establishing and maintaining hierarchies. These are stagings — in other words, the deliberate and often contrived actions of arranging, decorating, and populating dramatic scenes — that recreate for metropolitan audiences the experience of the border: the fascination of the “frontier,” the disorientation of “discovery,” and both desire and fear of the “other.” They initiate, disseminate and aim to universalize the logic of empire, often with regards to the civilizing mission of colonialism. This mission, in the context of these imperial displays, is predicated on an assumed and theatrically represented lack of culture on the part of the colonized people. In other words, within these border stagings, the imperial gaze distorts and invents the colonized subject, and in the process, the imperial metropolitanists define themselves in opposition to this artificial other.

Martí and Luna both observe and disrupt these theatrical representations in their chronicles written in the language of the countries they visit. Martí writes “Impressions of America by a Very Fresh Spaniard” (1880) about his first months in New York, and Luna publishes “Impresiones madrileñas de un filipino” (1889-91) about his stay in Madrid. They promote alternative stages through their chronicles, which also are brief, fragmentary, and representative of larger dynamics.

At first, it appears that Luna’s and Martí’s status as foreigners principally allows them a privileged lens through which to articulate critique and satire; their contribution seems limited to
taking issue with the culture of the cities they visit. Marta Inés Waldegaray succinctly calls Martí a “foreign critical observer” of New York cultures and economies; his “freshness” speaks both to his having arrived recently and his impertinent critiques (104). Vicente Rafael renders this claim more nuanced when asserting that by “talking back” in the Spaniard’s tongue, but directing his message to Filipinos in the Philippines, Luna infuses his foreignness with more than critical acumen. The foreignness becomes “a constitutive element of his message,” estranging both notions of Philippine and Spanish culture. Likewise, both these sets of chronicles are stage-like by functioning as synecdoches of alternative, potential worlds, designed and desired by the chroniclers, with their own set of cultural and economical logics. Martí’s and Luna’s chronicles promote both separation from the colonial status quo and the potential connectivity of radically new, destabilized, yet still exclusive communities.

Two important signposts of Martí’s and Luna’s chronicles of complex border experiences and the alternative communities they implicitly promote are their use of language and representation of gender. With regards to language, Luna chronicles his 1889 travels in Madrid in Spanish, while Martí registers his 1880 travels in New York in English. Doing so allows Martí and Luna to express messages that critique rising and falling empires in both content and form. Similar to Acosta’s and Rizal’s paratextual insurgencies, Martí and Luna smuggle anticolonial forms into imperial languages, in addition to being critical of Spanish racism and entitlement, in Luna’s case, and North American cult of economy, in Martí’s case. By using imperial languages and publishing in the Imperial capitals, these chronicles put the imperial metropolitans on stage for the metropolitans themselves. Their prose refashions the border between audience and actor, between foreigner and native, as a defiant ethnographic mirror through which residents of Madrid and
New York can gaze upon themselves and their environs, made foreign and unfamiliar by strangers shrewdly wielding their own tongue.

That said, Luna and Martí’s methods for using imperial languages differ importantly, illustrating contradictions in their approaches to anticolonial code switching. Luna inverts certain tools of missionary linguistics once used to convert Filipinos to Catholicism. This transforms the border into a twisted pedagogical space, where ultimately a form of encounter — connection as opposed to separation — is in doubt, yet still possible. Martí, on the other hand, infuses the “unsophisticated” U.S. English tongue with poetic structures. This is not a project of redeeming the English language or seeking geopolitical harmony or reconciliation through poetry. Rather, Martí transforms English into a weapon that can be used by Latin Americans against forms of encroaching North American culture, politics and economics. This is an early step for Martí in his eventual project of permanently, discursively divorcing North America from his famed concept of Nuestra América.

On the one hand, these two anticolonial travelers illustrate dexterity by crossing from one language code to another, empowering their voices by using language to make their identity difficult to decipher. On the other, Martí and Luna show less readiness to be flexible with gender borders. Rather, they patrol gender borders with zeal. While in his novel Amistad Funesta, or alternatively Lucía Jerez (two titles for the same novel), Martí shows “flexibility and ambiguity on the limits of gender polarities” (Hagimoto 23), his chronicles of travel repeatedly identify and correct sexual deviance. Through correction, Martí illustrates his perception of vulnerability with regards to the values of his cultural community (Our America), through which his own sexuality and masculinity are implicated. Luna overacts his masculinity in response to critics and love
interests who question his virility. These enactments of masculinity underline the centrality of panic and performance in the formation of the homosocial bonds upon which anticolonial communities were constructed. What is the connection between the language politics and the forms of masculine connectivity, omnipresent in anticolonial circles?

These fortification of gender borders points to the centrality of panic in late 19th-century anti-colonial writing, several concrete and discursive exclusions of women from questions of political and cultural import, as well as the formation of two different kinds of affective, aesthetic communities. While Martí fosters a tense and coercive aesthetic interaction with Anglo-American cultural authorities, Luna engages in performative, etiquette-informed rituals of violence with fellow expatriates. Through these performative articulations of community, Martí and Luna struggle with and renovate conventional notions of national identity and cultural patrimony.

Luna’s and Martí’s use of language and management of gender illustrate how the dynamics of border spaces – the tension of separation versus connectivity, the overlapping categories of foreign and native, intermixed identities and modes of expression, relationships determined by conflict, coercion, and inequality – play out in spaces far from geographic borders, like imperial metropolises. Furthermore, these scenes underline the colonized peoples’ experience of modernity, their creative responses to perpetuated subjugation despite the rise and fall of empires. Language and gender in the travel chronicles of Martí and Luna show how colonial intellectuals in the era were willing transgressors, or criss-crossers, of some borders, while vehemently guarding others. This helps us complicate the narrative of 1898 as a moment of transparent transfer of imperial power, asserting not only that colonized people were ignored in the realization and historical register of this moment in which continental power shifted. Furthermore, the voices of these
ignored peoples are rich and contradictory, highlighting the illiberal politics that frequently underscored liberal calls to reform and revolution, as well as their imaginings of postcolonial communities.

In the end, while such anticolonial writings perpetuate some colonial hierarchies and exclusions, these texts nonetheless unsettle norms. Even through the perpetuation of imperial exclusion, the chronicles reframe once-familiar material for the consumption of metropolitan audiences and foreign readers alike. In fact, they repeatedly work as decentralized stages, where it unclear who is the actor and who is the audience, who is the victim and who is the victimizer, who is the local and who is the foreign. Through these stages turned upside down, multiple gazes multiply meaning and hegemonic notions of modernity slowly turn into debates as opposed to foregone conclusions.

**Corresponding Chronicles**

Parallel circumstances drove these authors to travel abroad and to write. José Martí was born in Havana in 1853, the son of humble Spanish parents. He studied under Rafael María de Mendive who fostered in Martí a nationalist spirit. In 1868, Martí joined the popular Yara rebellion and in 1870 he was imprisoned for anti-Spanish activities. Falling ill after six months of hard labor in prison, Martí was exiled to Spain, as commutation of his prison sentence. He studied law and literature at the Universidad Central de Madrid\(^2\) (Kirk 276). His path to the U.S. led through Mexico, Venezuela, and Guatemala, among other countries of Latin America. In Mexico, Martí began to appreciate the heterogeneous nature of what would be “Nuestra América,” placing

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\(^2\) Curiously, Martí studied some of the same subjects at the same university as José Rizal and Luna, La Universidad Central de Madrid. Martí studied law and literature from 1871-74; Rizal studied medicine and literature from 1882-1885, Luna after 1886 (Hagimoto 157).
a special value on the role of indigenous peoples in that community (Schnirmajer 27). In the U.S., he faced situations that simultaneously attracted him and repulsed him. Among other phenomena, Martí admired the work ethic of the people he observed in the United States, while recognizing in it fearful symptoms of U.S. expansionist economics and culture (Kirk 278). Beyond writing, he worked to organize the Cuban independence movement from abroad, eventually leaving the U.S. in 1895 in the hopes of liberating Cuba (Schnirmajer 27). Just four months later in Dos Ríos, he charged Spanish troops that had established position around his group of Cuban rebels, engaging in combat for the first time in his life, and was killed (Hagimoto 152).

During his years abroad, Martí reflected on culture, politics, style and the U.S. through more than five hundred travel narratives, literary portraits and essays. In these texts, published between 1880 and 1892, he portrayed scenes and prominent figures from Latin America, Europe and the U.S. catering and translating news and culture for readers of newspapers like La Nación of Buenos Aires, La Opinión Nacional of Caracas, La Opinión Pública of Tegucigalpa, El Partido Liberal of México, Las Américas of New York (Rotker 13). And while Martí’s poetry historically received more critical attention than his travel narratives and essays, more recently critics such as Susana Rotker and Julio Ramos have made formidable efforts to study the role of his prose in the formation of the “modernista” aesthetic.

In the Philippines, Antonio Luna was also imprisoned in connection with an armed rebellion in the provinces of Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija, just a year before leaving for Europe in 1886. In Manila, Luna studied chemistry and literature at the Ateneo Municipal and at the Universidad de Santo Tomás. At the Universidad de Barcelona, he acquired his “licenciatura” in pharmacology and then his doctorate at the Universidad Central de Madrid, where Martí had
studied a decade before (Reyes 85). While Luna’s brother Juan’s prize-winning paintings have received more critical praise than the former’s aesthetic contributions, Antonio’s travel chronicles illustrate in content and form the development of a Philippine anticolonial intellectual project. They were published in the Philippine expat fortnightly newspaper out of Barcelona (and later out of Madrid) *La Solidaridad*. These texts dialogued largely with Spanish imperial apologists like Feced, Cañamaque and Retana, who “repeatedly provoked the ‘ilustrados’ in Spain with racist articles” (Reyes 85).

Like Marti, Luna also died in military circumstances. He had returned to the Philippines in 1894, seeking to become the chief chemist of the Municipal Laboratory of Manila, when he was exiled to Spain again for purportedly participating in the Katipunan uprising. He then returned to the Philippines in 1897, dedicated to prepare himself in earnest for battle, abandoning his previous apprehension before the possibility of revolution, studying fortifications and military strategies. He soon became a general in the resistance to the Spanish and subsequently, the U.S. forces. However, it was neither the Spanish nor the U.S. who killed Luna in the end, but rather he was assassinated in 1899 by fellow Filipino soldiers, as a result of a complex power struggle with rival military leaders\(^3\) (Constantino 223).  

\(^3\)Shortly before his death, General Luna received two telegrams, one that called him “to help in a planned counterattack to be made against the Americans at San Fernando; the latter, purportedly signed by Aguinaldo, ordered Luna to come over to Cabanatuan to head a new Cabinet” (José 377). Luna, enthused by his appointment and the formation of a new cabinet that signaled a triumph of the Republic over the autonomists, delayed his trip to San Fernando. He went instead to Cabanatuan, where Aguinaldo—the general turned president of the Philippines in the short lived Malalos Republic, the local government established between Spanish and US occupations—had already left and Luna’s rivals, Captain Janolino and Secretary Buencamino, awaited him with swords and guns drawn (Constantino 223, and José 377).
Language Lessons

As seen in the prize-winning 2015 film, “Heneral Luna,” Luna remains more celebrated as a war hero than as a writer. However, his writing uses language as a weapon long before he wielded weapons of other kinds in the wars against Spain and the United States. Vicente Rafael argues that the discursive weapons used by Luna in Spain entrench him in a position of radical foreignness, despite his initial desire to be included within a broader definition of Spanishness (2005, 32-4). This is central to Luna’s travel chronicles’ project of renovating and distorting imperial stagings of the border. Through pithy scenes, rife with comical, theatrical dialogues, Luna illustrates how the Madrileños are themselves foreign, comparing them to border-dwelling savages. Thus, he authorizes himself to gaze at them, and have them gaze at themselves, as they had gazed at the Filipinos displayed in the “Exposición filipina” in the Parque del Retiro.

Luna critiques the “Exposición filipina” both directly and indirectly. Directly, he claims the 1887 exhibition perpetuates a view of Filipinos as “poor, savage and stupid” (La Solidaridad I 314). He then proceeds to compare the Spanish exhibition with the French exhibition of their Asian colonies, which focus on the literacy programs of Paul Bert. Luna laments that literacy was neglected both in the Spanish representation of the colony and in its concrete administration of the colony (La Solidaridad I 358). He shows jealousy toward the colonized subjects of the French empire, in a form of colonial envy not unlike Puerto Ricans contempt of Cuban preferential treatment within the Spanish colonial apparatus.

4 “Heneral Luna,” directed by Jerrold Tarog and led by actor John Arcilla, was produced by Artikulo Uno and released in the Philippines on September 9, 2015. It won ten Luna Awards including “Best Picture” and five Gawad Urian Awards, including “Best Director” (“Full List”).
Indirectly, Luna perpetuates discursive structures put forth in the “Exposición filipina,” wielding them against the Spaniards and thus questioning the cultural superiority upon which they repeatedly base their claim and duty to power over the Philippines. In “Impresiones madrileñas de un filipino,” published on October 31, 1889 in La Solidaridad, a Philippine magazine out of Barcelona, Luna says:

Mi tipo, pronunciadamente malayo... excita de una manera notoria la curiosidad de los hijos de Madrid. Hay chula, señorita o modista que vuelve dos y tres veces la cara para mirarme y pronunciar con voz suficiente para ser oída:
—Jesús, ¿qué horroroso!
—¡Es un chino!
—¡Es un igorrote!
Para estos, chinos, igorrotes y filipinos son lo mismo.

Mi figura, pronunciadamente malay... notorious excites the curiosity of the sons of Madrid. There are dandies, young ladies and fashion designers who turn their head two or three times to look at me and utter, with enough voice to be heard:
—Jesus, how horrible!
—It’s a Chinaman!
—It’s an Igorot!

For these people, Chinamen, Igorots and Filipinos are all the same.
Young and old, hip and not hip, not happy with this, they begin to shout like savages:
—Chinaman!
—Little chinamaan!!
—Igorot!!

...Many times, thinking about these spontaneous manifestations, I ask myself if I’m in Morocco, in the dangerous regions of the Rif, and I even doubt that I live in the capital of a European Nation.

In this passage, Luna responds to prejudice by displacing the streets of Madrid to the “peligrosas comarcas” of the Rif. The Rif is the region of Northern Morocco, in which Spain’s two “autonomous cities” of Ceuta and Melilla are situated, cities occupied by Spain since the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1889, this region was stage to frequent struggles between the Spanish Army and
local Berber groups. It was also considered to be a potential departure point for late 19th-century Spanish colonial expansion into Africa (Chandler 301).

By asserting the savage nature of these Madrileños and discursively relocating them to the borders of empire in Northern Africa, Luna authorizes himself to stare back. As Mary Louise Pratt says, this gaze is in itself subversive: “For colonies to lay claim to their mother countries, however, even a purely verbal claim, implies a reciprocity not in keeping with colonial hierarchies” (190). Likewise, Luna reflects on the Spaniards’ language, customs, and beliefs, mirroring the ethnographic gaze by which Spaniards had justified their imperial permanence through the “Exposición filipina de Madrid.”

This points to an interchangeability of place of enunciation and identity, emphasized through the dramatic aspect of the dialogue, printed in the style of a script to a play. The positions of colonizing and colonized peoples are represented graphically as theatrical roles, able to be represented by a variety of actors. By publishing this piece in La Solidaridad, a newspaper out of Spain, but destined to be exported to the Philippines, Luna invites readers from the metropolis and the colonies to assume the position the chronicler takes in these scenes, both receiver of orientalist bias and perpetuator of such thinking. The readers involuntarily adapt multiple viewpoints, both discriminator and discriminated, through the act of reading and recreating these dialogues and scenes.

Through this dramatic process, Luna identifies, repeats, dislodges, and disorients a form of logic that imperial apologists of the time still used against Filipinos. Wenceslao Retana, for example, says “Why should it cause offense that I conceive of the Malay race as inferior to the European races? This is a purely scientific opinion...” (Schmidt-Nowara 176). According to such
pseudoscientific logic, the category “European” implies “ilustrado” or “enlightened,” thus justifying European incursions and permanence in un-enlightened colonized regions, such as the Caribbean and the Philippines. These scenes, however, promote the trope of questioning how “European” or enlightened Madrid and its people are. In fact, Luna as a traveler from South East Asia shows himself to be both more “European,” in that he is more “ilustrado” and in that he is the one who dictates power distributions through his gaze, and still not “European,” as his discriminatory interlocutors constantly remind him through racist jabs.

Language is central both to imperial apologist logic and to Luna’s response to it. For example, the president of the short-lived República Española, Emilio Castelar, proclaims that Filipinos of the late 19th century are “human species that reveal to us prehistoric times and examples of monosyllabic languages” (Schmidt-Nowara 169). Castelar’s quote makes evident the language politics of the border, where language has always been a chief determinant of exclusion.5

Against Castelar’s expert opinion, not only are none of the Philippine languages monosyllabic, but also Luna shows that he is a polyglot, who uses language dexterity as a tool of anticolonial resistance. That said, Luna’s dominance of Spanish is notable given that less than 10% of the people of the Philippines at the time fully understood Spanish (Rafael 1988, 56). Luna was part of a group that appropriately called themselves “los ilustrados.” They were the educated and well-traveled Filipino youths of the late 19th century. The Ilustrados wrote extensively in Spanish, using it as a lingua franca due to the fact that they came from a variety of Philippine language groups. In Spanish, they demanded reforms and critiqued the corruption of Spanish

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5 Two examples of language-based border exclusions follow: Gloria Anzaldúa explores language exclusions at the border in the chapter of her Borderlands/La Frontera entitled “How to tame a wild tongue.” Cuban revolutionary poet Nicolás Guillén and Spanish singer and politician Rosa León perform condemnation of U.S. cultural imperialism and Puerto Rican linguistic and cultural mixing through his playful and inorganic use of English in their poem “Canción Puertorriqueña.”
friars, who mis-educated the Filipino people. This left the Filipinos largely incapable of speaking Spanish and the Ilustrados claimed they were subsequently ill-prepared for demanding reform, realizing revolution by communicating with each other, or forging a future independence (Hau 8-9).

Therefore, Luna’s intervention begins with the language he writes in and speaks. Take note of Spanish women’s reactions to his speech, as seen in “Sangre torera,” a chronicle published in La Solidaridad on December 15, 1889. Luna finds Spanish women enchanting and frustrating, calling them “Castelar’s disciples” and saying:

Estas niñas a veces nos creen chinos; ellas también ignoran qué es Filipinas y qué son los filipinos... Por eso se inician diálogos como éste:
—Pero qué bien habla usted el español.
—El castellano dirá usted, señorita.
—Sí, señor. Me extraña que usted lo posea tanto como yo.
—Es nuestro idioma oficial en Filipinas, y por eso lo conocemos.
—Pero, ¡por Dios! ¿en su país de usted se habla el español?
—Sí, señorita.
—¡¡¡Ahhh!!!
Y en aquel ¡ahhh! tan largo, dudoso o expresivo, iba envuelta toda la opinión formada por aquella madrileña de catorce o quince años.
Tal vez nos creía poco menos que salvajes o igorrotes; tal vez ignoraba que podíamos comunicarnos en el mismo idioma, que éramos también españoles, que debíamos tener los mismos privilegios y los mismos derechos, ya que teníamos los mismos deberes.

These girls sometimes believe us to be Chinese; they also ignore what the Philippines is and what Filipinos are... Because of this they begin dialogues like this one:
—But my, how well you speak Spanish, sir.
—Castilian you might say, miss.
—Yes, sir. I find it strange that you possess it as much as me.
—Its the official language of the Philippines, and because of this we know it.
—But, my god! In your country, Spanish is spoken!
—Yes, miss.
—Ahhh!!!
And in that drawn out ahhh! filled with doubt and expression, was wrapped up all of the opinion that such a fourteen or fifteen-year-old Madrileña’s had formed. Perhaps she believed us to be no more than savages or Igorots; perhaps she ignored that we could communicate in the same tongue, that we were also Spanish, that we deserved the same privileges and the same rights, especially because we had the same duties. (22)
The young woman expresses shock at the Filipino’s command of Spanish, illustrating her ignorance and her position of privilege, which allows her the right not to know much at all about the people her country has colonized. In turn, Luna corrects and instructs her, recasting her “Spanish” as a more precise “Castilian,” and initiating with her a brief history lesson on Spanish overseas imperialism.

In this staging of the border, Luna illustrates the Madrileña’s ignorance to the Madrileña herself, in a gesture that points to the sexual politics of border dynamics. In Luna’s chronicle, the dynamic shifts when the Madrileña repeatedly questions Luna’s manliness and the virility of all Filipinos. Luna responds by asserting his dominance over her and condescension towards her. He asserts his sense of etiquette is more refined, his wielding of the Castilian tongue, more rigorous and precise. He regains a position of power in the sexual dynamic of the border by asserting that she needs him to educate her.

Education is central to the Ilustrados’ critiques of the Spanish friars in the Philippines. The friars purposefully kept the Filipinos ignorant of Spanish, allowing the friars to function as translators between the people and the empire, having a privileged position within the colonial circulation of power (Rafael, 2005, 22-6). Luna dramatizes the tradition of mis-education in an interaction in “Impresiones madrileñas.” A presbyter asks him where he is from, and Luna responds:

—De Filipinas, cerca de China, provincia de Japón, al Norte de la Siberia.
—Ajá. Yo tengo un hermano allá por... Mindanajao o Mindanajo. ¿Está eso por Luzón?

Borders are frequently sites of sex workers and other economically motivated sexual relationships, where men from the metropolis have their way with colonized women, a tradition that continues in the Philippines, the Caribbean and Mexico. For studies in borders and sex work see the fascinating research in “Bodies, Borders, and Sex Tourism in a Globalized World: A Tale of Two Cities—Amsterdam and Havana” by Nancy A. Wonders and Raymond Michalowski in Social Problems, Vol. 48, No. 4 (November 2001). There is also “Sex Work in Mexico: Vulnerability of Male, Travesti, Transgender and Transsexual Sex Workers” by Cesar Infante, Sandra G. Sosa-Rubi and Silvia Magali Cuadra in Culture, Health & Sexuality, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Feb., 2009).
—Ya lo creo— continuamos seriamente; —de Manila, en dos horas en coche, y por el río Pasig, en seis horas en banca, llega usted a Mindanaw.

—From the Philippines, close to China, province of Japan, to the north of Siberia.
—Ah ha! I have a brother there around... Mindanahow or Mindanaho. Is that near Luzon?
—Indeed, yes— we continued seriously; —from Manila, two hours in a carriage, and on the Pasig river, six hours in a banca, you’ll arrive to Mindanao. (*Impresiones por Tagalog*, 5-6)

Here, Luna returns the gesture of mis-education to its source, to a Spanish ordained minister. He purposefully disorients the minister, twice rearranging the map of East Asia. In the process, he reveals both the minister’s ignorance and his own discursive dexterity.

The scene relies on a healthy dose of dramatic irony, the humor or suspense that arise when the audience knows something that a character does not. Luna dryly toys with the presbyter through jokes that only one versed in Philippine geography and language would get. Furthermore, this instance of dramatic irony draws a separating boundary between two factions of the readership: those who get the joke and those who do not. This divisive and often violent function of figurative language is what Karen Hutcheon calls “irony’s edge” (12). On the one hand, Luna’s discursive dexterity, which dictates this moment of divisive dramatic irony, lies in the gesture of placing the Philippines in a fanciful geography. He claims that in eight short hours you could traverse the geographical distance that would take maybe a week in the late 19th century, 608 miles as the crow flies.

In addition to the geography lesson, Luna leads the minister in a two-part, concrete language lesson. Firstly, Luna corrects his pronunciation of Mindanao, asserting in Spanish his superior knowledge of Tagalog. Secondly, Luna also provides him with particular Tagalog vocabulary, “banca,” a word which has since been incorporated in to Spanish, defined by the Real Academia as an “embarcación pequeña usada en Filipinas” (“Banca”).
By not translating “banca” to Spanish “bote” or “lancha,” Luna doesn’t teach vocabulary as much as he underlines its inaccessibility. This resonates with the fact that Luna signs all his chronicles with the pen name “Taga-Ilog,” a pun off the language Tagalog made in Tagalog, meaning “from the” (taga-) “river” (-ilog). The hybridity of his language allows him to display both his mastery of Spanish and his Spanish readers’ ignorance of his tongue, a power play common to the bilingual aesthetics of border stages. This residue of a language Luna dominates and the Spaniard doesn’t marks a “slap of refused intimacy,” in Doris Sommer’s terms, “slowing readers down, detaining them at the boundary between contact and conquest” (1999, ix). Sommer’s summoning of the logic of conquest underlines the connection between Luna’s language lesson and the linguistics of conversion in the Philippines. By maintaining a Tagalog word in his text, Luna further inverts what Rafael calls the “missionary logic of translation based on untranslatability” (2005, 105). The missionaries converted Filipinos to Catholicism using the local tongues, keeping key words in Spanish and Latin and thus infusing them with primacy, sanctity and power. In turn, Luna inverts this strategy once used to convert and conquer Filipinos. He assigns untranslatability and thus importance to Tagalog by maintaining vestiges of it in his Spanish text.

Luna’s interventions use the imperial language of Spanish to translate structures of imperially-represented scenes of contact from the periphery (like the “Exposición filipina”) into destabilizing scenes of contact from the metropolis. The scenes he describes in sophisticated and jocular Spanish become events of mirrored and disconcerting gazes. Luna’s use of Spanish orientalizes and disorients his metropolitan readers, making them gaze upon themselves, question their assumptions and assumed superiority and perhaps realize that they, too, are in Julia Kristeva’s
terms “foreigners to themselves.” He is the Filipino who gazes back, and in so doing, he identifies, challenges and recycles the discursive tools of empire, using them against the same Spaniards who question his Spanishness, his manliness, and his humanity.

Luna’s readers in the Philippines receive a different challenge. They are provided with a text whose language most of them cannot understand, and whose content might have seemed fantastical to those who had not had the privilege of traveling to Europe. Perhaps, they could get some of the jokes, if and only if they understand both Spanish and Luna’s Tagalog, which was not overly likely given that over 100 languages are spoken in the Philippines. Therefore, many Filipino readers are also alienated by these chronicles, which seem wholly destined for readers who fit Luna’s mold: literate in Spanish; educated in non-Spanish European sciences; and possessing native knowledge of Philippine languages, cultures, history, and geography... basically, having the cosmopolitan view Luna shared with fellow expats in Europe, like Rizal, Pardo de Tavera, del Pilar, and others. This gesture can be interpreted correctly in three different, interrelated ways: as a form of elusive exclusion, as a message destined for future, more educated Filipinos, or a challenge for Filipinos to educate themselves despite imperial pedagogical negligence in order to join the movement to make Spain hospitable for the Philippines or to design an autonomous country, which these perpetual foreigners can call home.

These scenes underline the repeated pedagogical function Luna’s chronicles maintain, calling for the education and thus the blurring of the border between Spaniards in Spain and Spaniards/Filipinos in the Philippines. The self-reflection promoted by the theatrical representations of the struggles of the contact zone offers different forms of education. On the one hand, they call for educational reforms, promoting Spanish literacy among Filipinos. On the other,
they also educate his Spanish interlocutors about his country and about their own culture, history and language, which he argues are his, too. Luna uses education as a tool of humanization of both Spaniards and Filipinos.

Luna’s critique of the “Exposición filipina” is one of his key treatises on education. In this piece, Luna writes four consecutive paragraphs from the point of view of a different “us,” oscillating the place of enunciation between “nosotros los filipinos” and “nosotros los españoles.” Thus, Luna blurs the fixed boundary between these categories of “we the Filipinos” and “we the Spanish,” suggesting he belongs to a community that situates itself either between or beyond these categories. Vicente Rafael proposes that Luna’s particular articulation of a Filipino identity is rooted in foreignness; it’s a national identity articulated by disarticulating nationhood.

All the while, Luna inverts the logic of colonialism by suggesting that his claim to Spanish culture, history and language is more legitimate than the Spanish claim over Philippine land and laws. His claim to Spanish culture is perpetuated through education, while their claim is structured upon impeding education. His recourse to pedagogy points to a doubtful yet not impossible potential for connection or reconciliation through education between the Spaniards and the Filipinos.

How to wild a tame tongue

Marti’s “Impressions of America by a Very Fresh Spaniard,” is a series of three travel chronicles, published in The Hour of New York between July 10 and October 23, 1880. As Susana Rotker says about Marti’s chronicles in general, their objectives are both critique and entertainment (17). The content of Marti’s writings includes a number explorations of the cultural
and political borders between North America and la América nuestra. However, by writing in English and publishing in New York, Martí stages a different style of representation, which explores these borders not only in content, but also in language and form. Martí puts the North Americans’ faults and his own anxieties about them on display for North American audiences. This is in stark contrast to Martí’s Spanish-language writings, which are published in cities from Havana to Bogotá to Buenos Aires, staging a spectacle of the dangers of U.S. expansionism for Latin American audiences (Rotker 13).

Marta Inés Waldegaray, one of the few scholars to explore “Impressions of America,” insightfully points out that Martí’s English “transliterates the sociocultural displacement that Martí suffers as a migrant writer, revealing exile to be a complex experience of transcultural interactions” (104). She concludes that Martí’s task is to illuminate and correct U.S. English through his writing. However, Waldegaray studies these texts in their Spanish translation, paying no heed to the line-by-line function of Martí’s English within this project of illumination and correction (105). However, Martí’s specific use of English is central to this project. He infuses U.S. English, which he perceives to be unsophisticated, with grammatical liberties, paradoxical neologisms, and poetic structures, matching his content level critiques with formal level insurgencies.

Unlike his other chronicles’ style, where disembodied bird’s eye perspectives are dominant and first-person narrators are scarce, “Impressions of America” employs a hybrid structure where first-person narrations intervene in a structure of ethnographic critiques of North Americans. For example, the first paragraph bears first person confessional and generalized cultural critiques. Martí remarks, “...when I remarked that no one stood quietly in the corners, no door was shut an instant, no man was quiet, and I said goodbye for ever to that lazy life and poetical inutility of our
European countries.” He then proceeds to provoke judgment and reflection, when asking rhetorically,

When the days of poverty may arrive—what richness, if not that of spiritual strength and intellectual comfort, will help this people in its colossal misfortune? ...If this love of richness is not tempered and dignified by the ardent love of intellectual pleasures,—if kindness toward men, passion for all that is great, devotion to all what means sacrifice and glory, are not as developed as fervorous and absorbent passion for money, where shall they go? (1944, 128)

These are the scenes in which Martí’s initial fascination slowly shifts into critique and eventual disavowal. The narrator shows ambivalence before scenes that he sees as nobly industrious, yet lacking in spirituality and cultural sophistication. Martí says:

At a first glance what else can I tell? I have all my impressions vividly awaken. The crowds of Broadway; the quietness of the evenings; the character of men; the most curious and noteworthy character of women; the life in the hotel, that will never be understood for us; that young lady, physically and mentally stronger than the young man who courts her; that old gentleman, full of wisdom and capacity who writes in a sobrious language for a hundred newspapers; this feverish life; this astonishing movement; this splendid sick people, in one side wonderfully extended, in other side— that of intellectual pleasures—childish and poor; this colossal giant, candorous and credulous; these women, too richly dressed to be happy; these men, too devoted to business of pocket, with remarkable neglectness of the spiritual business, —all is, at the same time, coming to my lips, and begging to be prepared in this brief account of my impressions. (1944, 128-9)

These moments of ambivalence before the U.S. scenes of industrial progress are seminal in a more general move in Martí’s intellectual writings, in which he equates the economic and technological sophistication of the U.S. with a crisis of culture. He does so especially in comparison to what he represents as the industrially tardy, yet culturally rich cities of Latin America, a tradition continued in the writings of Rubén Dario and José Enrique Rodó. In this chronicle however, he speaks not of Latin America, but associates himself with the masses of European immigrants critiqued frequently in the newspapers he reads for being “wild” and “indolent.” Martí says, “I said goodbye for ever (sic) to that lazy life and poetical inutility of our European countries” (1944, 125).

The clipped pace and the accumulation of imagery through phrases linked by semi-colons graphically echo an anxiety before the rhythm of life and the crises of challenged social and
cultural hierarchies in North America. The reader from New York is confronted with a defamiliarized spectacle, turning what once was recognizable into foreign space. Invited to gaze upon his or her home through the eyes of the foreigner, the scene becomes saturated with anxiety and dominated by fragmentary and disconnected ideas. In the process, the border between the native and the foreign becomes diffuse and difficult to identify.

Martí’s attempt to intervene directly in the scenes which represent a crisis of culture is firmly rejected. After a minor-train accident, the narrator notices all the men abandon their duty of helping the “weaker sex.” He reaches out to help a fallen elderly woman. Martí proceeds:

...But as she touched the extreme of my fingers with their own, she told me, with expressive frightened grimaces:
‘By the hands, no! Go away! Go away!’
Was she an old Puritan? (1944, 130)

This disgust upon skin-to-skin contact renders literal the violence of the “contact zone,” where Mary Louise Pratt asserts that interactions between different cultures reveal the interworkings of colonial structures of power.

After a quick verbal jab at the “puritan” woman, Martí looks to intervene indirectly in the scenes of cultural lack, by experimenting irreverently with the English language. While Martí considers British English more refined, he associates U.S. English with this crisis of culture; it essentially lacks poetical value. He says,

I went down town by the elevated railroad. As I travelled by this perilous but seductive way, I lost all hope of understanding Americans when I heard the name of a street, ‘Chamber Street!’ always pronounced in an indistinct way by the conductors. Is it Cham, Chem, Chamber or Chember? Is it Houston, House or Hous? Is it Franklin, Frank or Frenk? It is curious to observe that I can always understand an Englishman when he speaks to me; but among the Americans a word is a whisper; a sentence is an electric commotion. And if somebody asks me how can I know if a language that I so badly write, is badly spoken, I will tell frankly that it is very frequent that critics speak about what they absolutely ignore...

All conversation is here in a single word: no breathe, no pause; not a distinct sound. We see that we are in the land of railroads. ‘That’s all’—‘did’nt’—‘won’t’—ain’t’—‘indeed’—‘Nice weather’—‘Very pleasant’—‘Coney Island’—‘Excursion.’ (1944, 148-9)
Martí establishes a connection here between “badly” writing and critiquing the language in which he “badly” writes. This is humorous connection is the key to understanding his linguistic intervention. Bad implies both erroneous and subversive. He takes full advantage of the difference he infuses in the English language — writing “breathe” instead of breath, confusing the location of an apostrophe in “did’nt,” dropping off indirect objects in phrases like “I will tell frankly...” — in order to turn language into a space of cultural resistance. His errors appear purposeful, in that they make space for his work of linguistic and cultural illumination and correction.

The key to Martí’s linguistic intervention is encrypted in the following passage. He says,

How great a nation must be, to conduct in a quiet way, these bands of wolves, hungry and thirsty, these excrescences of old poor countries, ferocious and unuseful there, —and here, under the influence of work, good, kind and tame! (1944, 130)

This phrase portrays a forced transformation of wild and threatening European subjects into productive and docile citizens. The language politics of this chronicle extrapolates upon the threat of European cultural intervention in the United States, inverting the logic of transformation of the quote. Martí associates Europe’s “wildness” with its “poetical inutility;” Europe’s “cultured” aspect is central to its “threatening nature.” Therefore, while the U.S. attempts to transform wild European immigrants into useful and tame citizens, Martí attempts to render “wild” and “cultured” the U.S. version of the English language.

7 A study of Martí’s writings would dialogue well with Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz’s concept of “bad modernisms,” explored extensively in the volume they edited of the same title, *Bad Modernisms*. Mao and Walkowitz link the erroneous with the impertinent in a similar way to Martí’s use of both the term “badly” in this quotation and his characterization of the narrator of this series “a Very Fresh Spaniard.” The translator of the chronicles insists that the word fresh be translated as “fresco” instead of “recién llegado,” given the former term’s connotation of impertinence. These early writings of Martí’s plant the seed for continental difference, which comes into full fruition in his pioneering of the Spanish American poetic movement of “modernismo.”
The function of this linguistic transformation occurs when Martí irreverently plays with the materiality of English. For example, with homophones ("too" and "to"), he creates internal rhythm.

...these women, too richly dressed to be happy; these men, too devoted to business out of pocket.

He coins new adjectives like "sobrious" and "candorous" to plant internal rhyme into a culturally devoid landscape. He explores paradoxes (like "spiritual business") and experiments with cultured neologisms ("neglectness") to graft poetic energy into spaces, like "business," where they previously weren’t.

with remarkable neglectness of the spiritual business

These poetic interjections point to an argument made by critic Julio Ramos, who says that other 19th-century Latin American travelers like Sarmiento go to the Metropolis in search of tools to use to order the chaos of nascent nations back home (Ramos 146 and Rivera Nieves 51). Martí, on the other hand, orders what he perceives to be confused in the Metropolis, with discursive tools from back home: namely the tools of poetry. Likewise, Martí composes obscured verses that not only critique compromised humanity at the hands of industriousness, they also aim to combat and correct such scenes of lack with indirect, alternative tones and rhythms, contaminating them with culture.  

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8 The following reading of “Impressions of America by a Very Fresh Spaniard” dialogues with the interpretive strategies of Julio Ramos’s critique of Martí’s “El puente de Brooklyn.” Martí’s prose assumes a rhythm and energy that does not mirror the content of the phrases. Ramos asserts that Martí’s versification is a complex commentary on modernity. Martí aims not only to represent the terms, tones and measurements of modernity through an exposition of the Brooklyn Bridge’s specs and construction. He also struggles with these forms of modernity by stylizing them, using the form of the writing to engage not passively with the content. Ramos deems Martí’s writing purposefully difficult—its referential imperative is almost “illegible”—but that this difficulty registers a clash between codes and languages, between epochs and cultures, between the "strong" signs of modernity and Martí’s defiant stylized response to them (Ramos 213).
Additionally, with “Material power, as that of Carthage, if it rapidly increases, rapidly falls down,” Martí illustrates the rise and fall of material power through parallel metered verses. If each comma indicated a versified pause, traditional Spanish scansion would reveal a hexasyllabic verse, followed by a pentasyllable, a heptasyllable and another hexasyllable. This bilingual poetics provides a certain solemnity to the aphorismic judgment, which compares the U.S. to a once great, now fallen civilization. Also, Martí contrasts the scenes of low culture with a verse that is almost Alexandrian in form. Alexandrian verse, in Spanish poetry, takes the form of two heptasyllabic hemistichs. It represents a style of high culture, “verso mayor,” that poets like Martí and Darío adapt from French poetry, one of the key meters of Latin American “modernismo” (Onís 165).

Ma-te-ri-al power
1 2 3 4 5 6
if it ra-pid-ly in-creases
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
as that of Car-thage,
1 2 3 4 5
ra-pid-ly falls down
1 2 3 4 5(+1) = 6

Rubén Darío:
La prin-ce-sa es-tá tris-te
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
¿Qué ten-drá la prin-ce-sa?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The fact that the versified prose is almost Alexandrian represents a breach that could be alternatively interpreted as a lack of culture or as the potential to acculturate. I interpret this potential to acculturate not as a desire to redeem the U.S. and save it through culture, but rather as a gesture that asserts cultural and political authority. Martí exercises his will, through language, over scenes that previously overwhelmed him. He orders and delineates the limits of the spectacles

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9 Two particular rules of Spanish poetic scansion come in play here. First the “hiato” forms one syllable out of two syllables when one word ends in a vowel and the following word, within the same verse, starts with a vowel. Such is the case in “rapidly increases.” The second rule is called the “law of the last syllable of the verse” which demands an extra syllable be added if the last syllable is accented, as is the case with “rapidly falls down,” but not with any of the other three “verses” which have the accent on the penultimate syllable. For more information on Spanish scansion, see the helpful blog “Sobre poética” and its entry “Análisis metric I. La sílaba”: http://peripoietikes.hypotheses.org/590.
his writings represent, enclosing them within the genre rules and language of his chronicles, as though they were within a cage in the curiosities section of an imperial exposition.

This points to the central paradox in Martí’s writing, an alliance between the concepts of the “wild” and the “culturally sophisticated,” against the forces of an encroaching U.S. modernity. By embellishing the American English language with “European culture,” Martí begins to sketch a proximity between high culture and destructive nature. In his spectacles of the border, Martí encloses and displays not wild savages, but rather tame and cultureless northerners. He authorizes himself to gaze at them through his wild, foreign eyes. Then, when he hijacks and transforms their language, Martí invites them to do the same, to gaze at themselves, but on his terms.

Curiously, while Gloria Anzaldúa speaks about the linguistic experience of the border as a futile endeavor to “tame a wild tongue,” Martí’s text can be understood as an alternative border language story, a manual for “wilding a tame tongue.” Taming a wild tongue speaks about reducing the identity contamination that defines the condition of the border-crosser by correcting hybrid languages and other linguistic dissonances of the border (75-8). On the other hand, Martí infuses U.S. English with “wild” and destabilizing cultural structures, poetic meters, borrowed words and hispanized grammar.

Like the Buffalo Bill shows, Martí stages a spectacle of wild border subjects within the metropolis, a drama of violent contact between civilization and barbarism. However, unlike the Wild West shows, Martí asserts that the U.S. outward imperialist expansion represents the diffusion of economically driven and culturally abject barbarism. Instead of importing Indians and insurgents, Martí’s protagonists are the European immigrants from countries with “poetical
These are the victims of and ontological counterparts to the U.S. industrial mechanism. Just as he associates with the Indians in his Spanish-language chronicle on Buffalo Bill, in his English-language “Impressions,” Martí assigns wildness a positive value, aligning it intriguingly with civilization and culture. The U.S. order and drive for profit, however, makes its citizens barbarians. Consequently, Martí assigns a radical lack of culture to economically inclined Anglo-Americans, not unlike the imperial spectacles at the World Expositions and the Wild West shows, which often pointed to the savage and cultureless nature of the Indios they presented. In the process, Martí begins to define himself and his people of “Nuestra América” in radical opposition to this artificial other. In these chronicles in English, Martí begins to sketch a framework that comes to fruition in later writings, using these border scenes as affirmations of radical separation, establishing thus his own discursive wall between their America and “la nuestra.”

Within Martí’s English-language chronicles, the drama of immigration and the city as a contact zone of foreigners and natives corresponds to a drama of contact at the textual and linguistic level. By infusing the English language with anti-North American messages, expressed through culturally enriched poetical forms, Martí stages divergent discourses and codes, often within the space of the same sentence. The text itself comes to embody an obscure “contact zone,” marked by difficulty and contradiction. His language is hostile; he writes in English in order to challenge and disengage the mechanism through which the North American industrial apparatus domesticates immigrants. He doesn’t court agreement with English-language readers as much as he

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10 Even last two letters of Martí’s adjective “poetical” are an adornment that serve the purposes of sonority and rhythm more than they perform a “useful” function in the phrase.
challenges them to see the world in a new way, a way that necessarily excludes them, as he cleverly undermines their language and culture in content and form.

Therefore, while Luna maintains a faint possibility of encounter through the work of education in his stagings of the border between Filipinos and Spaniards, Martí decisively plants the seed of radical break through his English-language chronicles. His use of English does not draw communities together, but rather traces the framework of a decisive division of “us” and “them,” those rich in culture and those rich in economy. Martí does not try to reconcile these categories, but rather asserts the strength of the former category by infiltrating and undermining the language of the latter category. In “Impressions of America,” Martí paves the path for English to be a weapon that can be used by Latin Americans against forms of encroaching North American culture, politics and economics, as seen in writings such as Nicolás Guillen’s and Rosa Leon’s poem “Canción puertorriqueña.”

This division continues to develop throughout Martí’s prose, most notably in the chronicle “Coney Island” and the essay “Nuestra América.” And just as he defiantly invites the New Yorkers to gaze upon themselves through his use of English in “Impressions of America,” he later demands a similar self-regard of his fellow “Americanos.” Martí ditches his association with Europe and demands that the people of “América” study the science, politics and ideas of “América,” because, as he says in “Nuestra América,” “our Greece is preferable to the Greece that is not ours.” Likewise, the mirroring effect of these theatrical scenes becomes a central facet of these later constructions, these later walls he erects between their America and “la América nuestra.”

11 Perhaps this is the same tradition that Fidel Castro inscribes himself into when he insists on speaking in English after a 1960 visit to the United Nations. For excellent footage of this fascinating interview, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_OQBEDgwOc
“Wilde” and Panicked

Martí’s idealization of the “wild” comes with a caveat; let’s not be “too Wilde,” he might say. Another project of restoration accompanies the Cuban author and revolutionary’s endeavors to reestablish cultural value within American English. He comments, corrects, and patrols gender norms, the division between social expectations of men and women. The first paragraph details the division that the rest of these English-language chronicles, and in fact most of Martí’s writings, flesh out. Martí praises U.S. men, a praise he will soon complicate, and questions U.S. women’s femininity:

Man, as a strong creature—made to support on his shoulders the burden of misfortune, never bent, never tired, never dismaying,—is unrivaled here. Are women, those beings that we, the Southern people, like,—feeble and supple, tender and voluptuous,—as perfect, in their way, as men are in theirs? (1944, 128)

Martí returns to the issue of gender norms countless times in “Impressions of America,” suggesting that gender plays a central role in his understanding of the U.S. impending imperialism, his esteem for classical and European forms of sociability, and his designs for a resistant Latin American community. The English language and translation underscore this project of the restoration of gender norms in the face of North American corruption of such borders between gendered behaviors, not only in his English-language writings but also when Martí translates and corrects moments he perceives to be sexually deviant in his literary portraits of the Anglo men he otherwise highly regards, Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde.

As seen in the above quote which praises men and questions women in the United States, Martí’s opinion of U.S. women is undeniably low. He judges them to be lacking in the abandon, languor, beauty, sweetness, and grace “of our Southern women” (emphasis mine 1944, 138), and that’s not even their worst transgression. Martí frames the North American economical fervor as a
problem in large part instigated by money-hungry women. Are North American men to be dismissed or disparaged, too? Or do they represent alternative forms of communion that Latin American intellectuals can learn from or convene with? These are the issues that dominate his English language writings on gender and his translations from English, texts that promote equal parts of panic, admiration, and scorn.

With regards to gender, the border is the key to social order; Martí esteems, above all, defined and divided gender roles. One advantage he repeatedly asserts of the “Southern” peoples of his America is that their reverence for the divisions of gender allows them a measure of cultural superiority over confused and compromised North American counterparts. In fact, Martí repeatedly endeavors, in both English- and Spanish-language chronicles including “Coney Island,” to reconstruct through symbolic and linguistic symmetry/asymmetry the moral and cultural order challenged by North American forms of unbridled modernity.

The geography of gender dynamics affiliates U.S. small town life with the values Martí asserts define his America, while the city — center of economic growth and maelstrom of value distortion — threatens to expand toward and impose its will over all bastions of decency.\footnote{“The great heart of America cannot be judged by the distorted, morbid passion, ardent desires and anguish of New York life. In this turbulent stream, natural currents of life cannot appear. All is darkened, unhinged, dusty; virtues and vices cannot be at first glance properly analyzed. They run away tumultuously mingled. Prejudice, vanity, ambition, every poison of the soul, effaces or stains the American nature. It is necessary to look for it—not in the crowded street, but in the sweet home quietness; not in the convulsive life of the city, but in the open-hearted existence of the country” (140).} The only problem is that in his defense of a border between virtuous masculinity and virtuous femininity, moments of panic alert the reader to places where this strict border breaks down, allowing for openings to dramas of male-male affiliations that Martí simultaneously lingers in and shuts down. Martí’s ambivalent admiration of certain male figures in the U.S. is governed by two interrelated,
oppositional drives. Principally, there is the desire to convene intellectually with them, a gesture that calls into question certain norms about the borders of gendered behavior. Subsequently, Martí’s reaction to such a desire is a hyper-awareness of perceived sexual deviance that leads him to enforce with vigor the divisions of gender norms that his same writings challenge.

The female wing of Martí’s gender norms takes shape in the following passage: “Young women in America are remarkable by their excessive gaiety or excessive seriousness. Their control over themselves, their surety of being respected, their calculated coldness, their contempt of passions, their dry, practical notions of life...” (1944, 139). Martí’s observations betray a measure of contempt, expressed through contradiction: how could someone noted for their “excessive gaiety,” also stand out for “their calculated coldness” and “their contempt of passions?” This confused critique comments on Martí’s more general confusion. “This is the only country, of all those I have visited, where I have remained a week without becoming particularly devoted and deeply attached to some woman” (137). What drives him to ignore the women of North America? What should he do now?

More often than not, Martí describes women he encounters in the U.S. always through comparison with his women, the Southern ones linked inextricably to classical notions of beauty and civil comportment. Martí cites, for comparison, a woman he encounters in Guatemala: “...like a Crown Venus, emerging from the spring of a clear river—a supple, slender but voluptuous Indian woman, showed herself to the thirsty traveler with all the majestic power of a new kind of impressive and suggestive beauty” (1944, 139). North American women, on the other hand, cannot quench his thirst; they lack in the “chaste abandon, savory languor, Haydée-like looks,
tender sweetness and gentle grace of our Southern women” (1944, 138). The greatest difference is their “peculiar frankness with men,” which Martí elaborates as:

The love of riches moves and generally guides feminine actions in this country. American women seem to have only one necessary thought when they see a new man: “how much is that man worth?” Such thoughts deform and harden the most handsome faces, made by the Almighty to be the consolation of misfortune, the home of grace, tenderness, nobleness. (1944, 139)

Even if they are physically attractive, women of North America can never be beautiful. Their prioritization of wealth deforms their potential to be beautiful, and therefore to fulfill women’s ontological condition: consoling men with their god-given “grace, tenderness, [and] nobleness.”

On the one hand, Martí attributes the North Americans’ devotion to economics to the women’s demand of a wealthy courter. This assigns women a measure of agency in the dictation of culture and behavior in North America. On the other hand, he aligns “Southern” women a form of symbolic alignment with classical beauty; they are the utmost expression of their culture’s richness and the link between native American and classical European civilizations. Likewise, North American women are the utmost expression of their new gods and the center of gravity of their country’s culture: money. In such a sense, they could never be desired in the same way. This latter interpretation, seeing women as passive, symbolic embodiments of cultural value, removes the agency that the former interpretation invested in women, rendering them pretexts of a different, more interesting conversation.

Something curious happens when Martí discusses women in North America. His gaze repeatedly shifts back to male faces, bodies, and behaviors. To conclude his second installment of “Impressions of America,” Martí critiques and corrects “arrogant New York ladies” who sneer at a family from the U.S.’s “wild west,” calling them unreasonable and forgetful of the fact that all in the U.S. are born “from the same mother—poverty; from the same father—work” (1944, 143).
Martí once again comes to the defense of supposedly “wild” peoples, affronted by arrogant and infringing New Yorkers. He cites a symbolic family structure that once again associates women with the problem, poverty and lack of reason in this case. Men, of course, represent the solution: work and the education of the ignorant.

Martí proceeds to shift his gaze to men, concluding his article on women in the U.S. with a paragraph that differentiates between men who know how to work and those who have forgotten how. He says, “For my own part, I like better the man who has just used the plough than another who has forgotten the manner of using it” (1944, 144). He implies that the latter group becomes part of the problem, doll-like, “amuñecado” and feminine. But in the congress of the former group, the men who still know how to work, progress and revolution can be attained. With Martí’s judgment of men, it’s difficult to differentiate between the universal and the particular, between establishing how men should be in general and explicating his personal preferences about the men he likes and those he doesn’t like.

Since Martí shifts his gaze and begins to express his preferences between different types of men in explicit response to a lack of sexual interest aroused by the women of the United States, a remainder of sensual images pervades his descriptions of men. These portrayals are fragmentary, fleeting, and corporeal, almost in the style of a medieval poem that describes the desired woman’s body in descending order: hair like straw, cheeks like roses, teeth like ivory, etc. Martí describes the working, sweating, moving male figure in the U.S. from the face down:

...the face of hasty business men are at the same moment fountains and volcanoes; when, bag in hand, the vest open, the neck tie detached, I saw the diligent New Yorkers running up and down, buying here, selling there, transpiring, working, going ahead; when I remarked that no one stood quietly in the corners, no door was shut an instant, no man was quiet, I stopped myself, I looked respectfully on this people, and I said goodbye for ever to that lazy life and poetical inutility of our European countries. (1944, 128)
Fascination and critique, which at times reveals itself as a desire to change or affect, structure Martí’s depictions of North American men. These enthralling drives, which invite (and perhaps even tempt) him to abandon his previous way of life, stand in stark opposition to the apathy and condescension Martí shows toward women of the United States.

Fascination and the desire to change link Martí’s approach to North American men and to their language. Martí engages playfully and yet controllingly with both. In fact, Martí’s engagement with the English language is not limited to the “Impressions of America” chronicles, but continues to play out throughout his Spanish language chronicles, many of which translate and transform journalism and literary texts for Latin American readers. And just as English in “Impressions of America” functions as a contact zone, where different codes and cultures enter into struggle, revealing different neocolonial power structures, Martí’s presentations of English-language literary greats to Latin American readers also represent dramas of opaque struggles, borders transgressed and reinforced. In fact, these scenes, especially his writings on Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde, cast light on the centrality of gender panic in Martí’s chronicles and language. They suggest that panic, or the paranoia felt by men of the nineteenth century that any comradeship or affiliation between men would be perceived as homosexual, is a central hinge in the moments during which Martí’s travel writings waver between patrolling and subverting the established divisions of the colony (Sedgwick 2).

Martí publishes “Walt Whitman,” a literary portrait of the North American poet, in 1887 in El Partido Liberal of Mexico. The text builds off of the tense orchestration of “wildness” and “culture;” it praises, Leaves of Grass, the 1855 poetry collection by Whitman, for being a truly “natural” book. Martí articulates this “natural” aspect as opposed to the passive intellectual work
of university graduates and other traditional academics. These latter thinkers let themselves be marked by tradition like livestock and flee at the sight of natural, naked, masculine beauty, omnipresent in the work of Whitman.

Whitman, on the other hand, is intrepid, embarking and free. This literary portrait, according to Koichi Hagimoto, further reveals the functioning of the “powerful symbol of nature—...‘hombre natural’— which [Martí uses] to define Latin America’s force of resistance” (92). Martí translates a series of quotes, which recast manly love and affiliation and infuse them with political significance, exactly as Whitman would have wanted him to, according to Sylvia Molloy.13

Manly love plays into a structure of “affiliation” that pervades the written work of Martí, masculine connections like those between poet and son in Martí’s poetry collection Ismaelillo, upon which a revolutionary identity can be articulated. Julio Ramos speaks about Edward Said’s term “affiliation” as a reconstruction of the family model in response to the exclusive apparatuses of modernity and empire, a key step in the construction of an “us” that is more united and morally superior to “them” (251-2). Molloy builds off this notion, affirming that Martí’s structure of affiliation is largely an “all male” model, a “revolutionary family of sons and fathers” that is both bolstered by Whitman’s representation of manly love, and challenged by the inherent sexual difference Martí reads into it. This is the core of Martí’s ambivalence toward Whitman, made evident in the imperfect and suggestive translation from English to Spanish.

In the process of translation, Martí overcorrects moments of ambiguous sexuality in Whitman’s verses, turning them into sites of sterilized manly affiliation. While in “Impressions of America,” Marti uses English as a discursive weapon to infiltrate, question, and disarm U.S.

13 “…he openly exalts male bonding in the spirit in which Whitman ostensively wished it to be read—that is, for its political significance, as posited in the 1876 preface to Leaves of Grass and in Democratic Vistas...” (Molloy 1996, 375).
notions of modernity, in “Walt Whitman,” Martí exerts the power of translation over Whitman’s English verses, transforming Whitman into a figurehead of Latin American modernity. In the process, Martí articulates both a framework of resistance and an “anxiety-ridden construction of gender and sexual differences that purportedly deviate from it” (Molloy 1996, 369). In front of the natural man, Martí shows fascination and panic, both revealed through his careful and corrective translation.

The function of Martí’s corrective translation becomes clear in two central gestures of his literary portrait of Whitman. He quotes Whitman’s poems without graphically indicating citation, weaving together the discursive projects of reference with renovation. Both central gestures of corrective translation occur with Whitman’s poem “Cities of orgies” from *Leaves of Grass*:

CITY of orgies, walks and joys!
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you—not your shifting tableaux, your spectacles, repay me;
Not the interminable rows of your houses—nor the ships at the wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows, with goods in them;
Nor to converse with learn’d persons, or bear my share in the soiree or feast;
Not those—but, as I pass, O Manhattan! your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own—these repay me;
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me. (Whitman)

First of all, Martí frontloads the negative polysyndeton utilized by Whitman in verses three through seven to negate the questionable presence of orgies in the city. While Whitman negatively describes the “cities of orgies” — saying what they aren’t before elaborating what they are — Martí negates the existence of the same orgies Whitman clearly perceives to exist, since he spends so many verses describing them, albeit negatively:

El lo dice en sus *Calamus*, el libro enormemente extraño en que canta el amor de los amigos: «Ni orgías, ni ostentosas paradas, ni la continua procesión de las calles, ni las ventanas atestadas de comercios, ni la conversación con los eruditos me satisface, sino que al pasar por mi Manhattan los ojos que encuentro me ofrezcan amor; amantes, continuos amantes es lo único que me satisface.» Es él como los ancianos que anuncia al fin su libro prohibido, sus *Hojas de yerba*: «Anuncio miríadas de mancebos gigantescos, hermosos y de fina sangre; anuncio una raza de ancianos salvajes y espléndidos.»
He says it in his *Calamus*, the enormously strange book in which he sings love of his friends:
«Neither orgies, nor ostentatious parades, neither the continuous procession of the streets, nor the stuffed windows of the businesses, not even conversation with erudite people satisfies me, rather passing by my Manhattan, the eyes that I encounter offer me love; lovers, continual lovers is the only thing that satisfies me. » It’s him, like the ancients, who announces at the end of his banned book, his *Leaves of Grass*: «I announce myriads of gigantic lads, beautiful and of fine blood; I announce a race of savage and splendid ancients. » (2010, 273)

Martí also alters the circulation of desire in the city, not effacing the masculine love the city offers, but eliminating curiously the poetic “I” of “offering response to my own” from this circulation. Martí changes the quote, framing the city’s lover’s gaze as an initiator of love as opposed to a response to the poetic voice’s initiating, desire-filled stare. While Martí preserves some “strangeness” of this love, he exerts control over the circulation of its desire, the mutually sexualized interaction between the city and the poetic “I” in Whitman’s poem. This is part of what Sylvia Molloy calls, the “cleansing” or “spiritualizing” gesture of Martí’s unfaithful translation, made evident most clearly forced insertion of the word “neither” before “orgies” (1996, 376).

This translation transforms a North American literary great into a symbol of natural Latin American aesthetic and political resistance, in large part toward the same signs of U.S. expansionism and modernity expounded upon in “Impressions of America.” Molloy calls such moments, “scenes of translation, in which Latin America encounters its influential cultural others

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14 The translation underlines a central tension in Martí’s representation of the politics of literature in Latin America. In his 1891, “Nuestra América,” Martí claims that Latin Americans should study and write about Latin America, that “Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra.” However, Martí’s earlier writings are rife with reflections on foreign authors. In his literary portrait of Oscar Wilde, published in January 1882 in the women’s magazine out of Havana, *El Almendares*, Martí even says something that could be considered the opposite of this statement from “Nuestra América.” Martí says, “Conocer diversas literaturas es el medio mejor de libertarse de la tiranía de algunas de ellas; así como no hay manera de salvarse del riesgo de obedecer ciegamente a un sistema filosófico, sino nutrirse de todos, y ver como en todos palpita un mismo espíritu, sujeto a semejantes accidentes” (2010, 287). Martí’s translation of Whitman offers one possible solution to this cosmopolitan/nationalist divide in Martí’s politics of literature. Mariano Siskind says that in this passage on Wilde’s invitation to study literatures of all patrimonies, “Martí called on Latin American intellectuals to turn to world literature as a force to break them out of the Hispanic tradition that prevented the modernization of their literary practices” (107). The “universality of literature” provides “possible emancipatory effects” for America, which is currently “isolated, belated, and in need of modernity to help it transcend the limits of Hispanic sameness and cultural particularity” (109).
and, depending on the sense attributed to the encounter, reads itself into, or reads itself away from, those others, for specific ideological reasons” (1996, 370). On top of that, this coercive continental poetics is structured upon smuggled meaning and violently appropriated cultural structures, reminiscent of Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 “Manifesto antropófago.” The translation, like Rizal’s and Acosta’s historical annotations, infuses a hegemonic text with a foreign and destabilizing excess of meaning. In the process, the translation writes Martí into a cannon to which he does not yet belong, all the while questioning the terms by which literary and cultural superiority and inferiority are determined.

This translation functions not just as a barometer of cultural proximity or distance, superiority or inferiority. Translation is a drama in which Martí confronts the other in himself, made most evident through the contradictory desires to convene with and to control naturally manly North American authors. The translation represents a stage of internal tensions between the competing languages, cultures, and behaviors that Martí, rendered cosmopolitan through his travels, has incorporated into his political and aesthetic repertoire.

Martí’s dynamic textual interactions with Whitman and Wilde represent an affective, aesthetic communion with the U.S. and British literary giants, a relationship dictated by desire, denial and eventually domination. His interaction with these literary models is affective in that it is rife with admiration and tension; it forces him to admit somewhat begrudgingly the existence of moments of his affinity to, as opposed to radical separation from, Anglo models.

This literary communion is aesthetic, as seen when Martí grammatically convenes with Oscar Wilde in the formation of an “us” that values aesthetics and its ability to break from colonialist and nationalist mindsets. Martí says, “A eso venimos los estetas,” or “this is what we
aesthetes are here for” (2010, 269). This instance of the term “aesthetics” resonates with Rancière’s use of the term, or making visible and subsequently disrupting the implicit inequalities in the distribution of perception, voice, and power in a given social group. Martí is not a passive recipient of culture from these literary greats, On the contrary, by brazenly inserting his voice into Anglo writers’ texts, Martí affirms his ability to perceive cultural stimuli, to interpret literary and political texts, and, thus, to engage contentiously and creatively with established figures of cultural authority. He performs all three interrelated tasks with more freedom than that allowed to him by either the moribund Spanish empire or the expanding, colonizing gaze of North America. He transforms the texts through his reading, reframing, and translating. He makes them more representative of Latin American cultural politics and artistic traditions than anything offered by Europe or North America. Through this form of translation, Martí engages in a “very complex reading, erasure, translation, and re-creation” (Molloy 1996, 370) of the authors that proves his own literary dexterity just as much as it asserts the greatness of the European and North American models.

On the other hand, this formulation of resistance is structured on a construction of gender that is exclusive of women, panicked toward sexual difference. This creative and forced translation

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15 Luna’s writings challenge what Jacques Rancière would call a specific “distribution of the sensible”, or rather, “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it” (The Politics of Aesthetics, 2011, 12). The distribution of the sensible is an a priori network of rules on how people are to perceive the world around them, usually articulated by means of a system of “oppositions – viewing/knowing, appearance/reality, activity/passivity” (The Emancipated Spectator, 2011, 12). Rancière argues that this established system of oppositions limits not only how people perceive, but also how they act in the world; politics and aesthetics are categories indivisible and inseparable from each other in that both revolve “around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time” (The Politics of Aesthetics 13). The oppositions are “embodied allegories of inequality” (The Emancipated Spectator 12). It is, therefore, the role of art not simply to “change the value of the terms, transform a ‘good’ term into a ‘bad’ one and vice versa” (12); this would reaffirm the logic of opposition instead of challenging it. Rather, the artist must seek what Rancière calls “emancipation”, which begins, in the context of theater and the spectator, “when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection” (13).
illustrates Marti’s notions of moral and cultural integrity, grounded in both a strict division of
gender roles and a fascination with different models of male-to-male affiliation. His translation
aims to make the text productive and palatable for Latin American tastes and literary and political
enrichment, but reveals an internal homosocial tension within Marti’s conception of literary
fraternity. The combination of fascination, rejection and correction points to a centrality of panic
in these chronicles, and a remainder of discursive violence and exclusion.

In “Walt Whitman,” Martí excludes women from his construction of political resistance,
associating them with a passive set of behaviors, typical of the doll-like traditional intellectuals
(“amuñecada”). Marti is fascinated by male-to-male love, calling his writings about his son “love
affairs” and writing in a letter “It is good to love a woman, but it might be better to love a man”
(Molloy, 1996, 370). However, that fascination coexists with panic made evident by the moments
in which Martí “translates away” sexual difference in Whitman, and even in the wardrobe critiques
in his literary portrait of Oscar Wilde.

In the 1882 chronicle on Wilde, Marti complains exaggeratedly and repeatedly about the
Irishman’s outfit and haircut, which represent a panic-inspiring temporal incoherence. Marti
praises Wilde’s culture, telling his readers to listen to him and learn from his emergence from a
colonial background and his devotion to art, especially in contraposition to the U.S.’s culturally
devoid forms of modernity. However, with regards to Wilde’s outfit, he demands that his readers
look at the Irish author, now with disgust instead of admiration:

¡Ved a Oscar Wilde! No viste como todos vestimos, sino de singular manera. Ya enuncia su
traje el defecto de su propaganda, que no es tanto crear lo nuevo, de lo que no se siente capaz,
como resucitar lo antiguo. El cabello le cuelga cual el de los caballeros de Elizabeth de
Inglaterra, sobre el cuello y los hombros; el abundoso cabello, partido por esmerada raya hacia
la mitad de la frente. Lleva frac negro, chaleco de seda blanco, calzón corto y holgado, medias
largas de seda negra y zapatos de hebilla. El cuello de su camisa es bajo, como el de Byron,
sujeto por caudalosa corbata de seda blanca, anudada con abandono. En la resplandeciente
pechera luce un botón de brillantes, y del chaleco le cuelga una artística leopoldina. Que es
preciso vestir bellamente, y él se da como ejemplo. Sólo que el arte exige en todas sus obras unidad de tiempo, y hieres los ojos ver a un galán gastar chupilla de esta época, y pantalones de la pasada, y cabello a lo Cromwell, y leontinas a lo petimetre de comienzos de este siglo.

Look at Oscar Wilde! He doesn’t dress like we all dress, rather in a singular way. His outfit already enunciates the defect of his propaganda, that it is not as much creating something new, which he does not feel capable of doing, but rather resuscitating the old. His hair hangs from his head in the style of Elizabethian knights of England, over the neck and shoulders; the abundant hair, parted on a careful line towards the middle of his forehead. He wears black tails, a vest of white silk, short and loose pants, long, black silk socks, and buckled shoes. The collar of his shirt is low, like Byron’s, subjected by a white silk tie, abundantly knotted. In his resplendent chest, a bejeweled button shines, and from his vest hangs an artistic Leopoldine helmet. It is necessary to dress beautifully, and he offers himself as an example. It’s just that art demands a temporal consistency in all of its works, and it hurts the eyes to see a gallant wear a little coat from this era, and pants from the past era, and hair in Cromwell’s style, and watch chains of a fashionista from the turn of the century. (2010, 290)

The wardrobe critique is inconsistent with Martí’s established poetics, made evident in texts like Ismaelillo, which value incoherent temporalities, deconstructive violence, and challenged hierarchies. Furthermore, there is a divide in the articulation of an “us” in Martí’s chronicle about Wilde. The “us” of “no viste como todos vestimos,” or “he doesn’t dress like we all dress,” diverges dramatically from the “us” mentioned earlier in the text, “a eso venimos los estetas,” or “this is what we aesthetes are here for” (2010, 269). The aesthetic “us” included both Martí and Wilde, while the fashion “us” separated them. The panic of the scene illustrates Martí’s ambivalence to Wilde, who represents a cultural model for Martí’s revolutionary community, a source of fascination with regards to Martí’s notion of productive, literary, fraternal love, and a potential crisis to the norms of gender and sexuality through which Martí repeatedly articulates cultural identity and the distinction of his people.

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16 Molloy reflects on this inconsistency on inconsistency, this incoherence about incoherence: “...within Martí’s system, lack of temporal unity is usually a positive, if violent, creative force... It is not really heterogeneity, then, that is at stake in Martí’s critique of Wilde’s costume.... Instead, the mixture that is Wilde defies Martí’s nomenclature: Wilde is unspeakable, with no place within Martí’s founding fiction. Martí then needs to fall back on classic criteria of temporal harmony, at odds with his habitual ideology of art, in order to critique Wilde's unresolvable, unsettling difference” (1992, 188-9).
In the end, Martí’s manipulation of English, the language of the empire-in-waiting that he perceived to be imminently encroaching, highlights the centrality of panic in the travels of colonized intellectuals’ to the metropolis. The panic caused by the potential for Latin America losing its cultural identity through the encroachment of North American forms of politics and economy is matched by the panic Martí shows before deviations from his notions of sexual norms, despite his clear intellectual affinity toward strong, natural, and wild men of North America. He wants to steer clear of North American influence which causes confusion with regards to gender divisions, radically separating himself and his people from their Northern neighbors. And yet, he remains fascinated by certain North American figures, whose texts he lets pass through the cultural borders between North America and Nuestra América only after a process of cultural filtration and sexual sterilization.

Panic, as a combination of ambivalence, paranoia, and over-performance, consistently underscores the travel writing of Spain’s late colonies, and the reflections therein on cultural identities. Panic illuminates a central characteristic of the consolidation of cultural identity, and specifically in Martí’s case, the articulation of a continental identity in opposition to North American expansionism. Political programs are shaped through affect-rich performances of pride, confusion, and fear. Inversely, sentimental interactions and missed connections gain geopolitical significance when played out on the stage of the emerging nations, whose emergence was not entirely obscured by the rise and fall of new and old empires. The centrality of panic and performance in the articulation of cultural difference is never more clear than in Martí’s Philippine correlate, Antonio Luna.
Missed Kisses and Fraternal Fencing

Luna’s experience of travel similarly revolves around the performative articulation of a tense masculine community. Like Martí, Luna’s writings present performances of masculinity that creatively stage the conflicts of colonized people before the transformations of modernity, while excluding women from this revolutionary process. Furthermore, Luna’s writings also underline two central, biopolitical issues in the articulation of the cultural superiority of colonized peoples. They emphasize the project of reinforcing the borders between gender roles, at the same time that they explore the importance of homosocial bonds between male, intellectual travelers in the forging of national identities. These issues of confused cultural patrimony, fleeting political freedoms, and projects of economic rebuilding, all are enacted through various forms of literary jousting.

On the other hand, unlike Martí, Luna’s textual performances of masculinity also realize themselves on lived stages in the form of potentially deathly duels between Filipinos and Spaniards, as well as between Filipinos, alongside all the etiquette-inspired accouterments: terms, seconds, referees, costumes, etc. Through these duels, the performances of gender, love, pride, and identity take on life-and-death proportions. That said, more often than not, the duels are just that: performances. They are not carried out to any fatal or fulfilling conclusion. The frustration of these duels points to a perpetuation, *ad infinitum*, of the performance. Are these enactments of resistance, renovation, and rejection merely exercises in futility or are they fruitfully iterative processes of continual self-definition through which one can transcend the limitations of the colony? Do frustrated performances promote or hinder the formation of affective, aesthetic communities?
Luna’s travel writing engages with a trope of Philippine and Caribbean literature at the
time: the male who must leave his female love back home in order to pursue intellectual growth in
Europe, a form of growth that will help bring his homeland into modernity. This trope, present in
sentimental/intellectual novels from Eugenio María de Hostos’s *Peregrinación de Bayoán* to Rizal’s
*Noli me tangere*, pins the young nationalist in a dilemma between the private and the public,
between personal desires and national needs. However, unlike Hostos and Rizal’s novels, which
narrate the dilemma of leaving the homeland and the problems that result after returning to the
homeland, Luna’s chronicles tell the story of the community of men abroad, who have left behind
the homeland and their female loves.

One chronicle included in *Impresiones de Taga-Ilog*, “Un beso en Filipinas,” captures the
coexistence of aggression and affection in masculine affiliation, similar to those of Martí. The
narrator receives a long awaited rose, a gift from a girlfriend back in the Philippines who had
preserved her decency by never allowing the narrator a kiss, promising one on their wedding day.
However, she decides to send a rose to her lover in the care of a mutual friend traveling to Europe,
a rose upon which she had left the forbidden kiss. The narrator proceeds to kiss the rose, only to
find out that the messenger had already intercepted the smooch, kissing the rose before leaving the
Philippines while the labial impressions were still wet on the petals. The narrator insults the friend
and contemplates attacking him:

Dirigi mi vista inyectada en sangre hacia unas espadas relucientes cruzadas en la pared, cuyas
cazoletas, brillando, parecían describir contras de cuarta... pero en un instante de noble lucidez, me
arrojé en brazos de Silverio, dándole las gracias por todo lo que había hecho por mí; el pobre trabajó
tanto, que bien merecía algo de lo hecho, siempre que fuera sobre una rosa. Él era mi amigo, bien lo
sabía...

I directed my gaze, injected with blood, toward shining swords, crossed on the wall, whose brilliant
guards seemed to describe a “contre parry”... but in an instant of noble lucidity, I threw myself in
Silverio’s arms, thanking him for everything he had done for me; the poor guy worked so hard, that
he well deserved something of what was done, so long as it was upon a rose. He was my friend, and I knew it... (84-5)

This scene illustrates Luna’s knowledge of fencing techniques, as well as the proximity of violence and affection within this scene of panic. This proximity is punctuated by not too opaque homosocial images: “crossed swords,” “injected with blood.” Additionally, Silverio’s interception of the kiss not only interrupts the directness of the original kiss, but also creates unanticipated contact between his lips and the narrator’s, in addition to the passionate and understanding embrace that displaces the violent urges that the narrator was able to suppress. Immediate friendship most certainly trumped long-distance love, albeit while maintaining a certain unrealized potential for violent explosion.

What motivates such an “instant of nobly lucidity?” The self-control and the scale of the severity of trespasses, as implied by the phrase “siempre que fuera sobre una rosa,” point to particular system of honor, a code that privileges the sanctity of masculine relationships, perhaps over the sanctity of the relationship between a man and a woman. Even in his description of the torture the narrator had to endure while leaving the country without even a kiss from his girlfriend, the masculine community was present, as seen in the following phrase, “Yo me volvía loco. Marcharme, dejarla allí, adorarla, sin darle siquiera un beso, uno solo, ¿qué dirían mis amigos si llegaban a saberlo?” or “I was going crazy. To leave, to leave her there, to adore her, without even giving her a kiss, just one, what would my buddies say if they came to know it?” (74). The love between man and woman is subordinated to a code of honor constructed by and respected between male subjects.

Luna’s articulation of love and connection with his homeland, embodied in the distant, promising, yet frequently forgotten girlfriend, is here made possible and also mitigated by an
affective bond with another male, Filipino traveler. Personifying both a connection and a separation, male-to-male bonds represent the borders that structure Filipino expats’ reflections on the homeland, national culture, and independence. Through such frustrated and yet potentially fruitful interactions, marked by equal parts of tension and affection, Filipino expats articulate a self-sufficient affective, aesthetic community. Unlike Martí’s disruptive readings of Whitman or Rizal’s nostalgic and irreverent footnotes to Morga, these performances represent circuits of cultural exchange that do not rely on metropolitan interlocutors, even through the events take place on a metropolitan stage.

Likewise, while Luna’s linguistic insurgency and recourse to pedagogy points to a doubtful yet not impossible potential for connection or reconciliation through education between the Spaniards and the Filipinos, his performances of masculine affiliation provide a conceivable path to cultural autonomy. This autonomy, versed in European arts, like fencing, and sciences, like orientalist ethnography, nonetheless does not require European people. In this way, forms of cultural autonomy can become rehearsals for political deliverance from the chains of empire.

These masculine allegiances are tested in Luna’s chronicles about trysts with Spanish women. In “Sangre torera,” the narrator does fall helplessly in love with a young Spanish woman, as opposed to the narrator of Marti’s chronicles. Curiously, the love represented in Luna’s chronicles and the deficiency of love represented in Marti’s lead to strikingly similar constructions of masculinity. When the narrator goes to a bullfight with a Spanish girlfriend in “Sangre torera,” he tries to persuade her that such a spectacle, which included insulting an impaled matador, was not for young women. She responds, “—Anda, chiquillo, cómo se conoce que no tienes sangre torera en las venas. En tu tierra no tenéis valor para estas cosas” or “Come on, little boy, how clear
is it that you don’t have bull-fighting blood in your veins. In your land, you all don’t have courage for these things” (23-4). The Spanish woman performs a shift in her judgment, from the second person singular (tú no tienes), to the second person plural (vosotros no tenéis), compelling Luna to answer not just in defense of his own masculinity, but that of all his compatriots.

His response is, “Es verdad que no, porque lo empleamos en otras,” or “Truly we don’t, because we use [our courage] in other things” (24). He continues,

Me quedé mudo de asombro al ver á mi linda compañera tomando parte con febril energía en aquella ruidosa protesta. Ella también vociferaba, ella también insultaba al picador herido; y aquella niña, todo sentimiento, todo amor, todo dulzura, que se hubiera desmayado con el pinchazo de un alfiler, vociferaba frenéticamente ante aquel cuadro tan sangriento.

I became mute with surprise in seeing my pretty companion taking part with feverish energy in that loud protest. She also yelled, she also insulted the wounded swordsman; and that girl, full of sentiment, love, sweetness, who would have fainted with the poke of a pin, yelled frenetically before such a bloody representation. (25)

Raquel Reyes judges this scene, confirming that while “the woman’s masculine lust for blood wreaks havoc on the boundaries of sexual difference recognized by Luna”, his “display of sensitivity” was not a feminizing act. It was, rather, a macho “struggle to restore order” through the fortification of borders based on “ideas of correctness in relation to sexual difference” (106-107). Luna finds gender in crisis in this bloody scene, a crisis which authorizes him to demonstrate more cultural refinement and masculinity than the Spaniards, many of whom considered the Filipinos not only to be little more than savages, but also not very manly. That said, Luna, who ran a fencing school in Manila and was frequently heckled in the streets of Madrid by hoards of cruel Spaniards, identifies with the wounded and jeered swordsman. Within the sanguine scene, the only sense of community remains between strong, wounded men, cast aside by the Madrid masses.

Luna’s emphatic gender construction dialogues with Spanish reports of Filipino gender structures, in which Spanish imperial apologists and other intellectuals maintained sexualizing,
emasculating and infantilizing discourses. Historian Francisco Cañamaque claimed that Filipinos acted only upon brutish and sensual instincts; author Emilia Pardo Bazán says that Mother Nature has complete dominion over the Filipino man, making him lazy and effeminate; journalist Pablo Feced y Temprado, known by his penname Quioquiap, claims that Filipinos are dominated by their infantile nature. The young Madrileña’s shift from “tú” to “vostoros,” as well as calling Luna a “chiquillo,” recognize emasculation and infantilization as conditions of those who do not have what it takes to enjoy a bullfight. And, in order to restore the stability of gender behavior, Luna returns the infantilizing gesture to his lover, calling her “girl,” before comparing her to a nostalgically fabricated image of the women of his homeland, much like Martí does in “Impressions of America.”

The strength of Filipina women, according to Luna, is their simplicity. In the chronicle, “¿Quién tiene la razón?” Luna compares his female compatriots with the metropolitan Spanish women he encounters, “nuestras filipinas, más morenas, más chatas, menos habladoras, no serían tan bachilleras; pero su sensibilidad exquisita, su carácter sin dobleces, la melancolía de todo su ser que respira la majestuosa debilidad de la mujer, su alma, que dice lo que siente y siente lo que dice, la filipina...” or “our Filipina women, darker, more flat-nosed, less talkative, may not be as

17 Cañamaque says “sin la más remota idea del honor, ignorant de todo menos de la ciega satisfacción de sus apetitos, sin remordimientos en la conciencia ni secretas voces en el corazón, ajenos a las leyes del pudor y de la honestidad, despiertos sólo a los brutales sentimientos de un sensualismo oriental, lógico es que los indios, en su inmensa mayoría, reciban de frailes y seglares el dictado de chongas” (La Solidaridad 536).

18 An example of emasculating logic comes from Pardo Bazán’s “La España remota”: “¡Qué lucha tan desigual la del hombre con la naturaleza de semejantes países! Ella le envuelve, le estrecha, se le infiltra, le roba toda acción y toda resolución; en vano el indígena busca el agua y menudea el baño, tratando de tonificarse; la relajación de la fibra y la secreción perpetua de la piel resisten á toda hidroterapia y a todas las fricciones imaginables; enervado y vencido, el hombre se entrega á una lasitud perezosa, languidez infinita, que para el infeliz bago, el recién llegado europeo, son preludio del aplatanamiento final” (80).

19 An example of infantilizing logic, comes from Pablo Feced y Temprado, known by the pen name “Quiaoquiap” among Ilustrado circles. He says, “No es el indio filipino capaz de grandes hurtos. No hay hombre para tanto. La naturaleza infantil se muestra en él en esto como en todo” (Estampas y cuentos 103).
studious, but their exquisite sensibility, their duplicity-free character, the melancholy of all their being that breathes the majestic weakness of the woman, her soul, who says what she feels and feels what she says, the Filipina woman” (118). Like with Martí, the use of the possessive adjective “our” or “nuestras” objectifies the women and casts doubt on whether they form part of the “we,” because they are possessions of the “we.” His defense of Filipina women also works to draw a division between them and the reform and revolutionary movements executed by their male compatriots, a division based in a prescribed exclusion of women from educational programs. Their strength, as opposed to complex, cunning Filipino men, is in their simplicity.

Furthermore, Luna makes evident a contradiction in his political perspective; his demand for educational reforms in the Philippines contradicts his construction of the gender norms and the ideal Philippine woman. Reyes says, “It is no surprise that the qualities of ‘sensitivity’, fidelity, demureness and feminine weakness that Luna highlighted readily bolstered male patriotic amor propio” (110). The ideal Filipinas are poorer and less educated than both Spanish women and bourgeois Filipinas, the latter group being composed of women who can decorate and play waltzes on the piano, but can’t fry an egg or speak Spanish.

Here’s the contradiction: in protest of being assigned to the category of savage or oddity by Spanish men and women, Luna overperforms his masculinity by articulating harsh, categorical gender separations that subsequently assign others, specifically women, to similar subservient positions. This underlines how women’s participation in the Filipino Ilustrado movement was noticeably negligible. Luna ends this paragraph with a contradictory statement about the bright prospects of the humble Filipina: “Será, tal vez, menos instruida; pero con el tiempo llegará á instruirse notablemente y á cultivar su talento,” or “She is, perhaps, less instructed, but with time,
she’ll eventually notably instruct herself and cultivate her talent” (118). His logic here displays a fascinating clash between the Ilustrado demand for education as a force of liberation and the general hesitance among Ilustrados to extend this liberation fully to women, who Luna dismissively admits might need, at some point down the road, to “educate themselves,” in order to participate in the modern world.20

Luna’s performance of masculinity extends beyond his attempts to discursively dominate women in Spain and the Philippines. Even in “Impresiones madrileñas de un filipino,” hints of a developing machismo shine through in his refashioning of orientalism to compare the streets of Madrid with the dangerous regions of Morocco. This leads, furthermore, to verbal and nearly physical jousting between Luna and a Spanish critic, Celso Mir Deas.

Luna, conscious of the discursive violence of his chronicle, frames his writings as iconoclastic and/or revolutionary in a letter to Rizal: “I believe that, though my book attacks no institution nor any official, it has the wicked presumption of hurling down the idol, smashing the pedestal into smithereens” (quoted in Reyes 84-85). The discursive violence was not lost on Spanish readers, either. For example, the director of the republican newspaper El Pueblo Soberano, Celso Mir Deas, ups the ante when he responds to Luna’s “Impresiones madrileñas de un filipino” with the inflammatory and racist “A Taga-lloc.”

20 In La Solidaridad, many Ilustrados write in favor of female literacy projects, in articles, letters and poems such as “A las dalagas de Malolos” (“To the Young Women of Malolos”) published on March 15, 1889, which reflected on a debate between the colonial authorities and the friars about whether or not a night school should be opened for young women in the town of Malolos, Bulacan (Reyes 138). However, the discourse implicit in many of the writings, including those of Luna, show a more complicated position toward women’s education, a policy paralyzed by contradiction.
In this text, republished in the supplement to La Solidaridad’s issue of December 15, 1889, Mir Deas quotes racist passages from Francisco Cañamaque’s Recuerdos de Filipinas, misspells Luna’s pen name, falsely attributes the text to Antonio Luna’s famous painter brother, Juan, and then critiques the original article almost line by line. Commenting Luna’s claim that being in Spain resembles Morocco, Mir Deas returns the recycled racist jab with another, “Estas y parecida consideraciones le sugerirán al estar delante de algún espejo, en el que verá reproducida su triste figura, a semejanza de la no menos jocosa que la de los rifeños y marruecos” or “These and other similar considerations would suggest that his being in front of some mirror, in which he sees his own sad figure reproduced in the image of the no less jocular faces of the people of the Rif and Morroco.” He continues, “solamente a la estupidez se pueden atribuir versiones tan faltas de sentido común,” or “only to stupidity can these senseless versions be attributed” (530). He asks a rhetorical question of Luna, “¿qué se ha propuesto usted con sus sandeces?”... “what do you proposed to do with these stupid lines.” Then Mir Deas replies on his own, “…indudablemente, luchar... pues luchemos en buena hora” or “undoubtedly to fight... well, let’s fight already” (530).

Luna responds with a letter of his own, saying, “No se comprende como, siendo el artículo meramente literario, lejos de ser en este sentido contestadas mis aseveraciones por el director de El Pueblo Soberano, se haya ocupado de injuriar y calumniar mi personalidad” or “It is not clear how, being the article merely literary, far from being in this sense contested any of my contentions by the director of El Pueblo Soberano, he has dedicated himself to defaming and slandering my personality” (532). Luna proves his own masculine virtuousness and literary shrewdness by calling Mir Deas’s behavior “poco decoroso” and “desairado”, while also calling the Spanish editor out for

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21 For example: “El indio de Filipinas es el primer misterio de aquellas hermosas islas, mezcla inarmónica de condiciones y cualidades varias y contradictorias, es difícil sino imposible conocerlos, penetrar en su interior y exponerlo á las miradas de la curiosidad y la filosofia. Interntarlo es inútil” (530).
being a defensive and simplistic reader. This asserts, of course, the opposite about Luna; his readings are subtle and sharp.

This “journalistic joust” (Reyes 92) escalated almost to the point of a physical duel shortly after Nov. 16, 1889 (José 73). Reyes recounts: “Luna was sent from Madrid as the representative of the Filipino community to Barcelona to demand a public retraction from Mir Deas, whom Luna took to calling Mier Das...” (emphasis mine, Reyes 92). By rearranging the order of Mir Deas’s name to make it signify excrement or “mierda,” Luna shows that even his errors are cleverer than Mir Deas’s errors, such as his misspelling of Luna’s penname, especially since “Taga-Iloc” doesn’t mean anything. Here, Luna’s linguistic dexterity proves useful in his defense of Filipinos’ honor and masculinity.

Luna continues on to prepare for the duel, as notes Vivencio José, “At Barcelona they were met by aggrieved though enthusiastic countrymen, who appointed on Nov. 18, 1889 Galiciano Apacible and José Álvarez de la Campa, a fiery Cuban separatist, as Luna’s representatives. Luna’s instruction to them... was that the duel should be unto death...” (José 74). After having difficulty finding the evasive Mir Deas, who “refused either to make a public retraction or to accept a duel” (José 76), they hunted the editor down, confronted him at a café, and, says Luna:

I told him he was infamous, a coward and a cur, I spat on his face... the series of insults he had directed to us, without answering our assertions and conclusions, demands no other cause. Be it to death, to luck, as he would like, I will accept the duel. In this way I believe I will show that we Filipinos have more dignity, more courage, more honor than this cringing insulter and coward who has come out in our way.
I believe that I have avenged in this manner our outraged dignity. (letter to Rizal quoted in José 76)

Mir Deas never accepted the duel, forcing Luna to consider the affair closed on Nov. 28, calling into question Mir’s status as a gentleman:

Hace constar además, que no habiendo encontrado dispuesto al Sr. D. Celso Mir y Deas, á zanjar caballerosamente nuestro asunto, forzado y obligado por las circunstancias, me he visto
In this account, Luna’s notions of dignity, courage, and honor bond the interconnectivity of the “I” and the “we.” Raquel Reyes frames this link as a “claim to heterosexual, virile masculinity”, saying “He duels for the sake of honor, not his own but of the Filipino Ilustrado community in Europe, thus orienting death in terms of the high purposeful duties of fraternal comradeship, its very fulfillment a manly pleasure” (92). Therefore, the public nature of this challenge transforms the “I” into an embodiment of the “we”, but a specific “we”, “the collective male honor of the Filipino community in Madrid.” This perpetuates, in Reyes’s terms, the notion of “a wholly male, heroic world” (93).

Similar to Luna’s refashioning of Spanish language and orientalist discourse against the Spaniards through his Moroccan comparison, here Luna follows “the Hispanic ideals of masculinity... putting on public display [his] manliness... a dramatic means of refuting the insulting civilization/barbarism dichotomy” (Reyes 93). Mir Deas’s failure to answer Luna’s gentlemanly challenge further illustrates the stakes of this gesture; Luna is more of a gentleman than the Spanish man from whose tradition Luna adopted such ideals of masculinity. Not accepting the challenge, in Luna’s view, is much more humiliating than potentially losing.

Reyes’s use of the term “dramatic means” is important here, given the performative nature of Luna’s travel commentaries and his overacting of gender. On the one hand, Luna’s orientalizing view of Spaniards inverts the direction of the gaze through which colonial power is articulated and
perpetuated. Pratt calls the late 18th and early 19th centuries the second embassies of conquest, in that European naturalist projects, from those realized by Humboldt to La Sagra to Ledru, rebranded and renovated imperial domination in the Americas through “imperial eyes” and their scientific projects of authority and control. Similarly, Spain and the U.S. used dramatic and visual imperial stagings of the border, like the “Wild West” shows and the World Expositions, to describe and exercise power over the colonized subjects.

Luna’s redirected gaze and judgment of gender propriety cast light on an insection of Pratt’s term “autoethnography” and Rancière’s “emancipation of the spectator,” turning performance into a power play, inverting the roles of actor and spectator, of viewer and viewed. Through this performance, Luna reflects what Pratt says about Sarmiento’s travel writings in Europe (186); by viewing the Spaniards, judging whether they were civilized, insulting them, engaging with them, challenging their masculinity, etiquette and bravado, Luna performs not just his equality with them, but that of his whole community, the Filipinos in Madrid. In fact, it is more than equality that he performs. Luna renders visible and critiques the structures of inequality within the colony, before perpetuating such structures through the act of declaring himself an authority over Spaniards with regards to their own ideals of gender and social etiquette.

That said, through this invitation to duel, Mir Deas is invited to engage with Luna’s affective, aesthetic community, an invitation Mir Deas proceeds to reject. Despite this rejection, it must be noted that Luna’s readiness to duel a Spanish man in order to defend Philippine honor marks diverging treatments of different peoples excluded from the borders of the community Luna articulates through these writings. Both Spanish men and women from the Philippines and Spain
are left out of Luna’s ideal community, but while Spanish men reject an invitation to participate in the rites of masculine unity, women of both locales do not receive any such invitation.

One note in Luna’s letters to Rizal sheds light on further struggles and performances of masculinity within the community of Filipinos in Madrid. In this letter, Luna describes his plans for confronting Mir Deas in Barcelona. He will take the express train. He has no other choice but to fight Mir Deas. He finishes the letter saying “I do not know if I am doing right but I do not feel in my conscience the remorse of the offender. I am the author of ‘Impresiones madrileñas’ and I am the only one responsible for it. Goodbye; if I should come to some misfortune, I ask you a favor to tell Nelly how much I have loved her” (quoted in Reyes 92). If pronouns tell the story, the “I” (as well as the “you”) is not effaced by the “we”, the individual not effaced by the community, as suggested by the fact that only the first-person singular is used in this passage. By expressing national ambition through sentimental terms, and as seen in the following paragraphs, sentimentally-motivated threats, the affect that binds these all-male communities also threatens to tear them apart.

Nelly Bousted was the half Filipina-half French highly educated woman courted simultaneously by... Luna and Rizal (Reyes 108). Luna cavalierly marks his sentimental territory, scaffolding such a claim upon his sacrifice for the Philippine community of Madrid. Upon his return from Barcelona, with the sensation of losing sentimental ground to Rizal vis-à-vis Nelly, Luna wrote Rizal again, this time with a certain degree of panic, “Your friend and compatriot is asking you this. Does she still love me?” (quoted in Reyes 109). Luna frames his and Rizal’s sentimental lives within the context of their community and political struggle, “your friend and
compatriot”, perhaps aiming to use the framework of the community to convince Rizal as an individual to cede the woman to Luna for the greater good of the group.

In addition to once again objectifying women, this convoluted struggle led to an argument and another proposal for a duel, now between Ilustrados Rizal and Luna, a duel still dictated by the rules of etiquette. However, the famous painter Juan Luna steps in and interrupts the duel. The painter seeks peace by explaining to Rizal that his brother Antonio “has a strong character and... is very sensitive. This is good if the cause is just” (109). Juan brings the discussion back to the cause, to the community of Filipinos in Madrid, which would be devastated if two of its leaders were to hurt or kill each other over a woman. Reyes interprets the “intended duel” to have:

...the sense of a performance, in which bourgeois formality and the demands of amor propio are ritualized. Nelly Boustead was the cause that drove a wedge between the two friends. But in the graver question of male honor, her role becomes peripheral or symbolic. She was simply the woman whom the Ilustrados deemed worthy enough to squabble over. (109)

These performances seem to be directed to an audience made up of Spaniards and members of the community themselves, the male Filipino expatriates in Spain. Notably, both Rizal and Luna accept the terms of the duel, while Mir Deas does not. Furthermore, accepting the honorable and peaceful resolution of the duel was just as important as accepting the duel. They couldn’t sustain a successful anti-colonial movement by killing each other. Among the Ilustrados in Spain, the threat of violence was key to consolidating their affective, aesthetic community, and to rendering it self-sufficient.

In so doing, Rizal and Luna reenact a border of fraternal intensity, a volatile, “ritualized” relationship governed by simultaneous separation and connectivity. This “extravagant declaration of male bonding” (Reyes 92) is structured upon panic, rivalry, tension and elegantly performed

22 Such etiquette is described by Reyes as follows: “The seconds appear immaculately dressed in frock coats, gloves and silk hats, and... the rules of the duel are spoken with grave formality” (109).
threats of violence. The same could be said about the tense denouement “Beso en Filipinas,” in which the narrator decides whether to kill Silverio or to embrace him. Panic blurs the line between amorous and violent passions in these performances of masculinity. These performances reveal deeper layers of homosocial, male-centric connectivity and affect, within the Philippine Ilustrado movement, in addition to discursive violence toward and exclusion of women.

Conclusion

In sum, in anti-colonial writing, borders are not limited to the geopolitical divisions of “us” and “them.” Luna’s performances of masculine love and affect-infused threats indicate that the division within the anti-colonial community can be ritualized and channeled into a framework for unity and self-determination. In this way, the staging of the border can move beyond the function of justifying imperial projects, as with the “Wild West” shows and World Expos, or responding to colonial injustices, as seen in Martí’s and Luna’s linguistic activism that principally addressed and aimed to defuse or invert inequalities of the colonial relationships. The staging of internal borders, the divisions that fracture notions of fraternity, nationality, and identity, can work to overcome these divisions, while maintaining a productive understanding of the contingency of such notions. These performances promote a form of thinking about the nation as a perpetual process of repeated division and reconciliation, the sharing and reinterpretation of traditions and covetous, cultural isolationism, a series of contradictions, reiterations, and renovations.

The following chapter analyzes how these internal borders are born from the process of return, which Rizal calls the “devil of comparisons.” Once you return from travels like Martí’s and Luna’s, both you and your homeland have changed, producing what Benedict Anderson calls a
“dizzying” double vision. Two novels by Rizal and Puerto Rican patriot Eugenio María de Hostos extrapolate this double vision through the form of the novel. In *Noli me tangere* and *Peregrinación de Bayoán*, anti-colonial messages situate themselves on the tense frontier between the preservation of content and the meanings that chaotically multiply through processes of rapid transmission, like gossip, that characterize modernity. This diffusion of meaning dramatically impacts the function and content of these novels, with revolutionary and fatal consequences.
Chapter Three:

Dangerous Differences

The Stakes of Interpretation in Novels of Return

Tú eres el mismo río que regaba la apacible comarca que dio hospitalidad al peregrino:
   si yo pudiera detenerme, Jatibonico, escogería tu orilla,
   y a la sombra del palmar que veo aquí, haría un bohío:
   una hamaca, pendiente de un mango y de una ceiba,
   tu soledad y tu silencio me darían sosiego...
- Hostos, Peregrinación de Bayoán

¡Y digo yo; tremenda deducción no sacaría un indio ni siquiera un tagalo!
- Rizal in response to Barrantes’s critique of Noli me tangere

Through the process of reflecting on travels across seas and imperial borders, writers of Spain’s late colonies erect borders of their own. Antonio Luna, the Filipino chemist-turned-general, captures this procedure best in the prologue to his 1891 compilation of travel writings in Spain, Impresiones. Luna writes, “si a través de estas páginas vislumbras al indígena de Filipinas, puedes cerrar el libro,” or “if through these pages you perceive the indigenous man of the Philippines, you can close the book” (iii). If, on the other hand, you see a Spanish citizen with enough voice and intelligence to critique his own fatherland, you can continue reading, but with patience. “Soy novato,” he says (iv). I’m a novice.

Luna lays the foundation of two divergent, discursive borders in this prologue: a rigid division to be patrolled between those who should continue reading and those who should not, and the complex identitary schism that occurs repeatedly within the figure of the author. First of

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1 “You are the same river that irrigated the peaceful region that showed hospitality to the pilgrim: if I could stay, Jatibonico, I would choose your shore, and the shadow of the palm I see here, I would make a hut: a hammock, hanging from a mango tree and a ceiba tree, your solitude and silence would give me quietude”

2 “And I say; not even a Indio or a Tagalog would make such a tremendous deduction!”
all, who should read on and why? This highlights a strain of narrative hostility and hints of inaccessibility throughout this work and texts of its kind. Luna desires to control the interpretation of his writing, limiting his readership to comrades and allies. For Luna and other writers of Spain’s late empire, interpretation is a struggle between forces of transformation and forces of preservation. Like Luna’s prologue, anti-colonial writing of the era reveals how literature situates itself on the porous line between the destabilized and chaotic mutations of significance represented by gossip and the rigidity and apparent permanence embodied by law.

Luna’s defensive stance points to another implicit question: is the author Spanish or Filipino? What is the border between these national/cultural groups? Can one be Spanish and write against Spain? And consequently, does the writer belong to the community of readers he invokes, despite being a novice? Or is his status as novice an example of feigned modesty that inversely asserts Luna’s authority over any reader who doubts his expertise?

The experience and chronicles of travel underline the transitional aspect of identity and the precariousness of power in the three colonies — Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines — that remain under Spanish rule long after most of the Americas had won independence. Travel promotes divisions and borders within colonial subjects. They are insiders and outsiders. They interchangeably identify with colonizer and colonized. They experience life through the lens of being both “savage” and “enlightened.” Two novels register the denouement of such unsettling travels: the return to the homeland, followed by processes of estrangement and incomplete reincorporation, that lead to another departure from the homeland. Peregrinación de Bayoán, by Puerto Rican Eugenio María de Hostos, and Noli me tangere, by Filipino José Rizal, address the following conundrum, if travel abroad is a process of disorientation, what does the return home
imply? Is the return a component of or an impediment to the formation of a national community? The authors experiment with the possibilities of return in the form of the novel, implying that the reading of literature consists of a repeated return, a tension between the permanence and transience of meaning.

Fittingly, the prologues to these novels give us a foretaste of the creative and divisive roots of meaning and community emerging in the interstices between rising and falling imperial powers. Hostos prefaces the first edition of *Peregrinación de Bayoán*, his only novel, published in Madrid in 1863, with a warning: “Los que no peregrinan, que no lean,” or “If you do not pilgrimage, do not read on” (97). This novel is for pilgrims who, like Hostos, are willing to search for truth by wandering through foreign lands and strange ideas. The prologue to the first edition continues the fiction of the novel; Hostos insists that he edits and republishes a veridical intimate diary of Bayoán, a Puerto Rican traveler on his circuitous maritime path back to Spain, after an unsatisfying return to his homeland. However, this changes in the prologue to the second edition, published in Chile ten years later. Hostos abandons the fictional ruse by commenting on the process he went through to invent and mask his own political explorations through the elaborate life and voice of an ideal Puerto Rican subject. These contradicting prologues fracture the figure of Hostos into multiple pieces. They reveal him to be writer and reader of his own work, in which he is a fictional editor and, albeit briefly, both a character who participates in the diary’s plot and a narrator, who contributes several entries to Bayoán’s diary.

Beyond Luna’s preface, the most proximate Philippine paratextual corollary to Hostos’s prefaced warning that non-pilgrims “proceed with caution,” is less obvious, but no less suggestive (Sommer 1999). In the foreword to Filipino novel *Noli me tangere*, Rizal also specifies his ideal
readership and defamiliarizes the self. The foreword is subtitled “A mi patria,” or “To my fatherland,” signed not by Rizal, but by “the Author,” and geolocated from “Europe 1886.” The foreword proceeds:

Deseando tu salud que es la nuestra... haré contigo lo que con sus enfermos los antiguos: exponíanlos en las gradas del templo, para que cada persona que viniese de invocar a la Divinidad les propusiese un remedio... trataré de reproducir fielmente tu estado sin contemplaciones... sacrificando a la verdad todo, hasta el mismo amor propio, pues, como hijo tuyo, adolezco también de tus defectos y flaquezas.

Desiring your health which is ours, too... I will do with you what the ancients did with their sick: they exhibited them in the steps of the temple, so that each person who had come to invoke the Divinity could propose for them a remedy... I will try to reproduce your state faithfully, without contemplations... sacrificing to truth everything, even my love of self, because, as your son, I also suffer from your defects and weaknesses (5).

Rizal exclaims that his country suffers from such a sensitive, social cancer that even the most minimal contact would cause sharp pain. Then, he continues to do just that, uncover the wound, poke at it, and subject his country and himself — he also suffers from all the country’s ills — to a world of pain, in the hope of soliciting a remedy from a passerby.

Rizal specifies that the reader is an outsider, like a stranger on the path from the temple, who can suggest remedies for a sick country. This ideal reader-stranger is not Spanish or Filipino because he or she is not implicated in the illness of the country, unlike the author, who in exposing the cancer of his country also exposes his own vulnerability. The author represents both the ailing patient and the physician, frustrated before his own illness that seems to lack remedy. Rizal situates himself on the outside and inside of this vital problem, a bifurcation of self that is compounded by the fact that he does not specify whether the Patria he speaks of is Spain or the Philippines. Does his ill body correspond to that of an empire to be reformed or a colony demanding independence, from which the parasitical empire should be violently extracted?
The typical generic purposes of prologues and prefaces written by the author (as opposed to those written by colleagues or critics) are two-fold: they orient the reader before entering the world of the novel, and they allow the author a space in which to reflect candidly on the process and difficulties of writing the book, as well to suggest (directly or indirectly, sincerely or ironically) its aesthetic, intellectual, and political objectives. Rizal’s and Hostos’s prologues, on the other hand, disorient the reader, attempting to dissuade many from continuing to read. Their tone is anything but candid; rather, they guardedly hint at and obscure the political opinions that inform the novels that follow. By doing so, they avoid censorship at the same time that they engage coyly with the supposed “deficit of legitimacy” from which their voices presumably suffer (Rivera Nieves 67).

The prologues beckon their readers to rise up from their divans. The novels’ ideal readers are similar to the protagonists; they are always on the move, either on pilgrimage to somewhere or coming from the temple. In a sense the relationship between reader and writer is ruled by equal parts hostility, coercion, and identification. To different degrees, the authors show themselves to be evasive toward and aggrieved by readers who presume to know about the colony. They use the prologue to dictate the terms of the novels’ reading, telling the reader how to think and how to move. Finally, there remains a desire for a measure of identification between the readers and the protagonists, all of whom are in a state of flow, displacement, wandering.

This sets the stage for the central drama that plays out throughout the novels: is the return possible? The novels narrate these characters’ return from Europe, during which they navigate sentimental affairs frustrated by the political realities of the colony. After living in the metropolitan heart of the cultural patrimony that these characters identify with and are rejected by – an experience of existential disassociation – where can colonial intellectuals return? How do
these authors interpret the dilemmas of return through the means afforded to them by the genre of the novel? What does the geographic return have to do with these writers’ return to figures and texts of imperial history? Does return imply repetition or difference?

Theories of return rightfully mark a center of gravity in the aesthetic, intellectual, and political analyses of Hostos’s and Rizal’s novels. Critic José Emilio González asserts that Bayoán’s travels represent a spiritual odyssey because he returns not to the homeland, but to himself \(^3\) (quoted in Rivera Nieves 68). Philosopher Irma Rivera Nieves insists on rendering this claim even more nuanced; she asserts “En su continuo ir y venir, Hostos regresa lo mismo a la patria que a la metrópoli, aunque no son en modo alguno, equivalentes. Hay pues regresos en plural: a la metrópoli a proseguir estudios o a cumplir con la embajada o regresos tristes a la patria sojuzgada” (68). That is to say, “in his continuous going and coming, Hostos returns just as much to the fatherland as to the metropolis, even though they are not in any way equivalent. There are, then, returns in plural: to the metropolis to pursue studies or to complete an embassy or sad returns to the subjugated fatherland.” Once he leaves the homeland for the first time, Rivera Nieves implies, Bayoán never goes anywhere; he is always returning. Return is not impossible, but rather becomes ubiquitous. This gives his “sentimental patriotism” a “political dimension;” his patriotism becomes “banished and borderless” in that he defends both his “patria geográfica” (Puerto Rico and the Antilles) and his patrimonial fatherland (Spain) which are both tyrannized by a political structure that opposes freedom (72-3). The return diminishes the power of borders in organizing the political allegiances implied by Hostos’s novel, Rivera Nieves asserts.

\(^3\) “…el regreso no es aquí a la patria sino a sí mismo.”
Rizal scholars frame the problem of always returning as a disorienting double experience: the “devil of comparisons.” They hone in on the use of this term — “el demonio de las comparaciones” — in a passage from Noli me tangere’s eighth chapter, “Recuerdos” or “Memories.” Protagonist Crisóstomo Ibarra gazes at the Manila botanical gardens and projects upon them the image of European gardens. He experiences the return as a devilish double vision. The scholar on nationalism, Benedict Anderson, calls this experience “dizzying,” saying that Ibarra sees an image of the gardens through an “inverted telescope” which distorts both the gardens and his perception of himself. The return implies that Ibarra “can no longer matter-of-factly experience [the gardens], but sees them simultaneously close up and from afar” (1988, 2). Historian Vicente Rafael links the process of return and the subsequent dizzying double vision with Anderson’s concept of “empty, homogenous time.” Simultaneity, as the condensed experience of modernity, materializes in “authorial mobility and omniscience,” as well as the expansion of the “technologies of mechanical reproduction” and communication through telegraphy. These “sense of a ‘meanwhile’” which bewilders an Ibarra who stares at multiple, superimposed gardens at the same time, precariously points to a paradigm shift in community formation no longer “based on face-to-face contact.” Such forms of communication, embodied in the experience of return and the use of linguas francas, promote the emergence of new communities through anonymity and the transcendence of the differences implied by linguistic and geopolitical borders (Rafael 2005, 78-9).

Scholars of both Rizal’s and Hostos’s work signal the return as a moment that diminishes or transcends the power of borders, by promoting either a borderless patriotism or a community that transcends previously accepted cultural, political, and linguistic borders. The following chapter examines a border that does not fade away, but rather renews its importance and impact
with every reading of the novels. Communication is a border space between openness and rigidity, between permanent and transient meaning. This shows interpretation to be both an obstacle to and required condition of freedom.

_Peregrinación de Bayoán_ illustrates the return as a constant reframing of meaning in which the novel participates guardedly. Meaning transforms with each reading over the years, but with explanatory footnotes and a prologue that shifts the novel’s political objectives, Hostos endeavors to orchestrate these transformations. Thereby, the first edition and the second edition of the novel conjure radically different ideas of community and political action, often through the same words. _Noli me tangere_ explores this reframing of meaning as an event that occurs at all levels of lexical communication. Scenes that feature gossip and the proliferation of popular voices highlight how meaning in the novel, like with gossip, is transmitted in volatile ways that transgress social divisions. Literature that inhabits the border between permanent and transient meaning allows for messages to contravene the borders of political action and literacy established by colonial authorities and the clergy, limits that exclude popular classes from administrative and cultural agency.

While Hostos’s returns are decisive and confined, the return in Rizal permeates the novel’s form. Hostos’s novel narrates three central returns that structure a circuitous, yet concrete metanarrative, a story about Hostos’s story. His three returns are the return to Columbus, to Spain, and to the novel ten years after its initial publication. This series of returns illustrates a transforming historical and political project that reflect three decisive transitions in colonial politics and Hostos’s biography. Through these three transitions, the borders of the country Hostos imagines solidify, crumble, and are reconstituted on a dramatically divergent path. In _Noli_
me tangere, on the other hand, the return manifests itself on the plot level in the “devil of comparisons,” a condition of double vision or simultaneity that haunts the protagonist at all points in the novel after returning to his homeland from Spain. On the formal level, the simultaneity represented through heteroglossia and gossip promotes a certain kind of freedom and mobility that are not possible under the rules of the colony. This condition promotes a simultaneous reformation and deformation of messages and the limits of the community of communicators that transmit those messages. Both Hostos and Rizal show how the return organizes narratives of self and national discovery in the colonies of Spain’s late empire, while calling into question the allegiances and borders implied by the project of turning colonies into nations and crowds into countries.

Diary of Returns

Puerto Rican Hostos scholar José Emilio González asserts that Bayoán’s return is not towards “our country here,” but rather to himself, a rediscovery of self (quoted in Rivera Nieves 68). This marks a key difference between travel and pilgrimage. Travel is for subjects whose identity is already settled and subsequently reaffirmed by the practice of visiting other lands. Pilgrimage, on the other hand, is a creative, spiritual process, where one transcends individuality by confronting the contradictions of one’s own identity and probing the ethics of different forms of interpersonal interactions (quoting Julio César López, González 52). Rediscovery of oneself describes, therefore, simultaneous acts of refamiliarization and defamiliarization similar to Benedict Anderson’s “inverted telescope;” one must recover and draw near to a lost notion of self through a process of distancing and estrangement.
Three concise events of return register the winding and bifurcating path of individual identity and national thought in *Peregrinación de Bayoán*: the return to Columbus’s diary, the return to Spain, and the author’s return to the novel ten years after its initial publication. These events highlight three divergent functions of the return, each of which link political and sentimental registers of discourse: reconciliation, disenchantment, and displacement. Through Bayoán’s reflections on Columbus and the novel’s structure as an inverse columbine trajectory, Hostos uses the text to frame a reconciliation with Spain. Hostos endeavors to include the Spain of discovery—as opposed to the Spain of conquest—within the nation he reflects on. However, with the characters’ return to Spain, disillusion realizes itself through the loss of narrative voice on behalf of Bayoán, who cedes the narration of the diary to the “editor” “Hostos.” Without the illusion of reconciliation with Spain, Bayoán loses his voice and the novel, its formal coherence. The novel hinges upon this commentary fortified upon this generic innovation/implosion until Hostos republishes the novel in 1873. This final return to the novel appends to the first edition a candid prologue, a historical key for reading the novel as an allegory through an explanation of the characters’ names, and a series of footnotes that critique Spain directly. These additions aim to dictate the significance of the novel, where the first edition allowed for ambiguity. They illustrate how the novel is not just a space of contested authority between colonized subject and the colonizer, but also between colonized subject and himself. This makes clear the rich possibilities and pesky obstacles that arise when a colonial intellectual, who as a pilgrim is stranger to his or her self, nonetheless endeavors to erect a community through his or her writing.

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4 While the novel represents the internal division between a pilgrim’s irreconcilable sentimental desires and national duties, the structures of return that organize the novel illustrate how the continual formation and frustration of its political designs are expressed consistently through sentimental tropes.
This resonance and dissonance between the private and the public, between sentimentality and the political, result in large part from the novel’s generic form: the intimate diary. The novel is organized in 16 months of journal entries, between October 12 and February 23 of the second year. All but a handful of these entries are penned by protagonist Bayoán, a young Puerto Rican patriot planning his return to Spain where he had studied in the past. In this forthcoming trip, Bayoán plans on representing his country in the fight for the rights of all the Antilles.

The beginning of his path takes Bayoán on the maritime trail through the Caribbean and toward Spain, stopping at all the islands where Columbus had landed, some 400 years prior, but in inverse direction. On this trajectory, Bayoán meets Guarionex and his daughter, Marién, with whom he falls in love. The journal entries register the profound dismay from which Bayoán suffers when assessing the order of his allegiances: does he first answer his heart or his head, his love for Marién which drives him to establish a simple and happy life in the Caribbean or his love of country, which motivates him to return to Spain and sacrifice everything for the cause of his country. For a moment, it appears he can have both; fate brings Marién and her family unexpectedly with Bayoán after he decides to leave her for Spain. However, she suffers at sea and falls sick. Bayoán also meets an old revolutionary on board with whom he spends many hours conversing about the past and future of the Americas. The man is old and alone and his life as survivor highlights a certain devastation and disenchantment related to the revolutionary fight.

The ship arrives to Spain when the old man is about to die, but news of a Cuban epidemic and the subsequent quarantine prevents him from stepping foot on land. He is buried at sea. Finally they land, but Marién is deathly ill. Bayoán marries Marién in Spain, but they do not consummate the matrimony. The figure of “Hostos” meets Bayoán, who gives the journal to his
compatriot. “Hostos” takes up the pen and completes the journal, relaying the final steps of the plot: Marién’s death, Bayoán’s depression, and his lonely return to country whose independence he has not achieved.

Several critics implicitly and explicitly conflate Bayoán and Hostos, occasionally using the name “Hostos” when referring to the novel’s protagonist, and occasionally saying outright: “Hostos se convierte en personaje novelesco con el nombre de Bayoán,” or “Hostos becomes a novelesque character with the name of Bayoán” (González 59). While this melding is erroneous — for starters, the two men meet within the plot of the novel — such conflation stems from both the narrative play of doubles and the similarity between the novel’s plot and Hostos’s biography. Hostos was no stranger to travel and returns. He moved back and forth between Bilbao of the Basque country and San Juan three times in intermediate and secondary school between 1852 and 1858 before settling in Madrid to study at the Universidad Central de Madrid, where Martí, Luna, Acosta, and Rizal also studied (Hostos 25-8).

In 1863, Hostos published Peregrinación de Bayoán and became a member of the Society of Abolitionists. In the following years, he supported the movement of liberalism in Spain with the hope that if it were to triumph, the structure of government in the Antillean colonies would radically transform or receive independence. However, with the September Revolution of 1868, the opening of the “Sexenio democrático” which would lead to the 1873 rise of the Spanish Republic, the liberals refused to end the subjugation of Puerto Rico and Cuba. In turn, Hostos renounced Spain officially in a speech at the Ateneo de Madrid on December 20, 1868. Soon after, Hostos left Spain for New York, where he would develop his movement in defense of Cuban and Puerto Rican independence and Antillean unity, a message he would propagate in subsequent
travels throughout the Americas, from Lima to the Dominican Republic to Chile, where he published the second edition of his novel (25-8).

With regards to the question of whether the return fosters or frustrates the formation of a national identity, let us return to the question of genre. The intimate diary links the registers of the political and the sentimental, the private and the public. Rachael Langford and Russell West touch on the evasiveness of the intimate diary genre. They assert, “...the diary, as an uncertain genre uneasily balanced between literary and historical writing, between the spontaneity of reportage and reflectiveness of the crafted text, between selfhood and events, between subjectivity and objectivity, between the private and the public, constantly disturbs attempts to summarize its characteristics within formalized boundaries” (8). Likewise, the process of keeping a diary automatically implies a repeated bifurcation of self. When reflecting on one’s day, a diary writer narrates and comments on the events of the day for his or herself. The diary keeper is writer, character, and audience of the same text. The return to the events of a day employ the faculty of memory filtered through the imperfect intermediary of language; this linguistic manifestation of memory promotes writing as an event that blurs the line between rediscovery and refashioning. The diary blurs the line between history and literature.

And furthermore, marking the first of three returns that structure this chapter, the text blurs the line between Hostos’s literary diary and a specific diary which has been taken as history, Christopher Columbus’s diary of his first voyage to the Americas. Hostos’s return to Columbus’s diary begins with the starting date of the novel, October 12, or the day in which the Spanish admiral “discovered” the island he called San Salvador, whose name given by the native peoples of the region was Guanahani. The citation of the admiral’s diary continues in two distinct ways:
through following the path of the “discoverer” in an inverse direction toward Spain and through articulating commentaries about Columbus that redeem the historical figure and his act of “discovery,” while still condemning the violent continuation of that seminal moment, or in other words, conquest.

The sixth diary entry of the novel, dated October 17, is first to mention Columbus explicitly. Bayoán invokes the admiral as the young Puerto Rican nears the shores of Santo Domingo, which had been annexed again by Spain in 1861. Bayoán addresses Santo Domingo with accusation and empathy; empathy for its continued colonial struggle under the “War of Restoration,” and accusation of being the center of colonization that had mistreated and kicked out Christopher Columbus and his brothers in 1500. The struggle over the continuation of Santo Domingo’s colonial status crystallized centuries of tensions that Bayoán ambivalently addresses in 14 paragraphs that shift from apostrophizing Santo Domingo to addressing Columbus to putting words in Columbus’s mouth.

In this diary entry, Bayoán addresses Santo Domingo disappointedly, saying “Tú también me entristeces, ciudad funesta a América... Corazón en tus primeros días de la América arrancada por Colón al Océano” or “You also make me sad, city treacherous to América... Heart in your early days of the America ripped out of the Ocean by Columbus” (104-5). The apostrophe proceeds in a seemingly contradictory manner. On the one hand, Hostos blames Santo Domingo for being the first center of Spanish colonization in the Americas and for unleashing a chain of events that devastated the Antilles and stymied the progress represented by Incan, Mayan, and Aztec civilization. On the other hand, Hostos censures the city for martyrizing and imprisoning the
venerable and unhappy genius, Christopher Columbus, “el único que te quería” or “the only one who loved you” (105).

In another case of conflating Hostos and Bayoán, critic Ernesto Álvarez asserts that this passage documents how Hostos feels the suffering of his continent within his own body. Hostos discovers a “colonized subjectivity” by readdressing the figure of Columbus and, thus, sets out to reframe history from this “completely new” point of view of the colonized subject (246). Hostos specialist Manuel Maldonado-Denis uses this passage to identify the author’s differentiation between the processes of discovery and conquest. While the events are undoubtedly linked, conquest speaks to a heritage of sacking and extermination (100), and discovery points to an event of intellectual liberation; Hostos says Columbus was a “discoverer of a truth, and not of a world” (quoted in Maldonado-Denis 99). The events are linked in that conquest increasingly unravels the work of the genius Columbus, who insisted on navigating the world through science. America, a region that had represented the victory of reason, comes to embody the violent stymying of cultural exchange and the perpetuation of ignorance.

José Emilio González says that through this passage, Bayoán makes the political project of his journey explicit. He attempts to “rediscover or to know again the material space which the Antillean peoples inhabit” (52). And just as Columbus does not discover a new world, but a new form of knowledge, Bayoán does not invent a new geopolitical body, but rather underlines an alternative consciousness that challenges, without invalidating, the monolithic forms of Western European knowledge. Such a challenge is implicit in the tone, which first addresses Santo Domingo in the second person informal, “tú,” before addressing Columbus with the same “tú,” but from the judgmental voices of Justice and Light. This verbal approach to Columbus is
cautious, yet entitled and assertive; it culminates in the moment in which Bayoán directly addresses the discoverer using the second person informal, before assuming the voice of Columbus, himself.

In these direct addresses, Bayoán presumes that Columbus returns to his work disenchanted. The result of his voyage does not match up to his intentions and he blames himself. Bayoán approaches Columbus to a point of near full identification with the Spanish admiral, reflecting on his own frustrations through Columbus’s voice.

Three moments of redirected repetition show this identification to be not only imperfect, but defiant of the colonial status quo. First, Bayoán repeats forms of the word “adivinar,” to divine or guess, once in relation to Bayoán’s guess and the second time in relation to Columbus’s predictions. They are performing the same acts in different time tenses, a connection governed, like divinations, by a form of logic that is equal parts mystical and historical. The last repetition is of the word “natural;” Bayoán speaks through Columbus to recast the notion of nature; there is
human nature cast against natural nature. In human nature, injustice always inversely highlights an obscured virtue, valued by natural nature. This implied multiplication of natures links to the repetition of the word “world.”

The central strange repetition of the word “world” in the first second person address of Columbus by Bayoán reveals a departure in typical discourse about contact and conquest. Dichotomies of contact between two worlds, an “Old World” and a “New World,” have littered historical discourses of colonialism that focus on both the European “discovery” of the Americas and the ensuing embassy of imperialism. This logical construction promotes Eurocentric ideas of the barbarism and underdeveloped aspect of pre-contact Indio societies of the lands that would be called the Americas, as well as the assumption that with colonization came civilization. However, the two-world construction put forth by the diary keeper Bayoán in Hostos’s novel promotes a deviation from this form of thinking. One world — “the world that darkness was not able to hide from your view” — represents discovery: a new consciousness or truth, achieved by the cult of reason, in which knowledges native to the Americas and European knowledges need not inherently contradict each other. The other world — “the world that had made unhappy” — represents the ongoing struggle of conquest, in which reigned the injustice of men and the unfair “natural” order through which one must quash one form of knowledge in order to assert the control of another. Under this “world” both the Indios and Columbus were punished.

Consequently, this return to Columbus and his unsullied view of the “unblemished” islands is not just a “rediscovery” or “recognition” of the Antillean region, it is a recovery and transformation of Spain, a gesture that points to a possible reconciliation through discursive defiance. After all, Bayoán’s gesture of putting apocryphal words in Columbus’s mouth represents
an act of defiance and admiration. Instead of being spoken for, the colonized subject asserts his right to speak through the Spaniard. But unlike Rizal and Acosta whose annotations coopt imperial voices to critique the empire embodied by Spanish historians Morga and Abbad, Bayoán hopes to redeem Columbus through the creative citation. He uses Columbus to draw a border between the “Spain of discovery” and the “Spain of conquest,” pledging allegiance to one while positioning himself to take down the other.

“¡Otra vez! ¡Otra vez!...” The logic of repetition, a return to a previous event in the present, dates back not only to the two contradictory forewords of the novel and the repetition of Columbus’s journey, but also this opening exclamation of the first entry to the journal, dated October 12. Bayoán laments about the pain of repetition, and then he repeats himself. This proliferation of the present becomes most evident when Bayoán approaches Cuba on November 11 and gazes upon the Jatibonico River, saying

You are the same river that irrigated the peaceful region that showed hospitality to the pilgrim: if I could stay, Jatibonico, I would choose your shore, and the shadow of the palm I see here, I would make a hut: a hammock, hanging from a mango tree and a ceiba tree, your solitude and silence would give me quietude: I would think about your inhabitants of old, and missing them, I would cry: mixing my cry with my peace would give to the days of my life an enchantment they do not know. (123)

This passage is marked by the contradiction of repetition and the passage of time. The implicit negation of the imperfect subjunctive “pudiera determe” points to an impossibility of stopping both his journey and the passage of time. “Si pudiera determe,” if I could detain myself, acknowledges the impossibility of such action: I cannot.
Bayoán calls Jatibonico “the same river,” referencing both the diary of Columbus’s first voyage, in which he skirts the coast of Cuba, and the Greek philosopher Heraclitus’s reflection on time that one cannot bathe in “the same river” twice. Only in writing can Bayoán make it the same river, because the diary — and in Hostos’s case, the novel — permits the writer to sketch alternative laws of nature and time. The diary and the novel work like dreams, where the rules of physics and politics are temporarily suspended, allowing Bayoán and his readers to dream like Columbus dreamed: “Vamos a sonar como soñó Colón” (122). Time waits for no one, but Bayoán daydreams (this passage is labeled “Noviembre 11. Por la tarde,” after all) about it waiting for him. Perhaps this way he can articulate an Antillean community through a reconciliation of its pre-contact societies and an intrepid, virtuous Spain, whose union history proved to be impossible. Return is less a repetition and more an articulation of community through a collective undoing of history; we will dream like Columbus dreamed despite everything that has since happened. The space of the word “like” denotes similarity just as much as it denotes a departure, an American difference and a collective will to address and undo the pain of colonization. Subsequently, the second return, Bayoán’s return to Spain, undermines the already difficult endeavor.

On November 23, Bayoán lands in Nuevitas, Cuba to visit his friend Guarionex and family, but instead of paying them a visit, he remains in the port trying to find a boat that would take him to San Salvador or Guanahani, the island where Columbus first landed. Here lies a consolidation of affect, his proximity both to the love he would meet a few days later, Guarionex’s daughter Marién, and to the island he feels the need to visit. Marién, however, stands in the way. He falls madly in love with her, staying with her family from November 28 to January 11, during which time he forgets his national obligations and then, dreadfully, remembers them.
La dicha ha sofocado al deber, y entregado al amor en nada pensaría... ¿Soy digno de Marién... por sólo amarla con pasión...? Mal hijo de mi patria, mal ciudadano, mal hombre, porque me olvido de mi patria, que me necesita, de mis conciudadanos que me llaman a servirla, de la humanidad... Por mi misma felicidad debo pensar en mis deberes: mi deber es partir.

Fortune has suffocated duty, and submitted to love, about nothing would I think... Am I deserving of Marién... just for loving her with passion...? Bad son of my fatherland, bad citizen, bad man, because I have forgotten about my fatherland, that needs me, about my fellow citizens that call me to serve it, and about humanity... For my own happiness I have the duty to think about my duties: my duty is leaving.

Would he be deserving of her if he didn’t leave her to fight for his fatherland? This contradictory reflection leads Bayoán to favor his happiness by rejecting the happiness Marien could give him. He decides then to leave, an agony filled experience realized on January 11, when he sets sail to Spain to defend the rights of the Antilles.

Bayoán’s path brings him past Guanahaní on January 21, the first island where Columbus landed in 1492, which appears like a dream on the horizon. Bayoán compares his eagerness to see the island with that of Columbus’s anxiety to land during his slow approach to the continent he misidentified as India (184). Bayoán admires the island from a distance, but refuses to look closer, afraid of what he might find:

Si está habitada, yo me tapo los ojos para no saberlo: no quiero ver lo que he visto en todas partes: nada de lo que había, ni virtudes sencillas, ni bondad, ni vicios sin embozo: todo lo que no había; virtudes aparentes, embozada maldad, civilización de vicios: egoísmo, es decir, sociedad; codicia, es decir, comercio, agricultura, industria; felonía, es decir, leyes sociales...

If its inhabited, I will cover my eyes so as not to know it: I don’t want to see what I have seen everywhere: nothing of what there was, no simple virtues, no goodness, no hidden vices: everything of what there was not, apparent virtues, hidden evil, civilization of vices: selfishness, that is, society; greed, that is, commerce, agriculture, industry; felony, that is, social laws... (185)

This passage illustrates how history, a catalogue of the events that happen in the meantime, is the frontier that divides the present from locations in the irrecoverable past. A sense of irony betrays the chief obstacles to return. Similar to Acosta and Rizal’s comments on the tradition of violent irony associated with the use of “encomienda” in the imperial histories they comment, Bayoán’s diary identifies the coercive double-speak when addressing colonial society, commerce, agriculture,
industry, and social laws. These social structures can represent nothing more than forms of coercion when realized through conquest, which represents the history that prohibits the return to Columbus’s discovery of truth and corroboration of reason that occurred through the event of landing in Guanahani. By refusing to look closer, Bayoán resists embracing the return so desired in his diary.

The fate of the winds, however, brings him to return against his will. The ship is rerouted because of storms and points itself finally, on January 28, toward a cloud that looks like a hazy island, or an island that resembles a stationary cloud, Puerto Rico. As he travels around the rural coasts of Puerto Rico toward San Juan, Bayoán uses the distance to project upon the faint island the desires of return, fueled by a creative imagination, “Una luz... otra luz ¿alumbrarán alguna familia jíbara que en nada pensará más que en el día siguiente? Tal vez, sentados en su hamaca, canten indolentemente los esposos mientras gritan y juegan los muchachos,” or “One light... another light would they illuminate some bucolic family of Jíbaros that thinks about nothing but the next day? Perhaps, sitting in their hammock, the spouses sing with indolence while their kids yell and play” (195). Imagination and distance permit a return that the political realities of his island do not.

In Puerto Rico, Bayoán coincidentally encounters Guarionex and Marién who have decided to accompany him to Spain and fate has led them to his home island where the young patriot has by chance landed on January 30. They stay in a country home for two weeks and the bucolic return seems just as imaginary as Bayoán’s cross-sea projections of Jíbaro life; his diary entries are filled with poetic descriptions and anxiety filled exclamations of cabin fever. It is a return, but not to his fatherland: “pregunto por mi patria y no la encuentro, porque no es patria el
lugar donde nacemos, si nos quitan el derecho de servirla; si entregan su felicidad a los que la
desdeñan, si nos niegan la posesión de lo que es nuestro,” or “I ask for my fatherland and I don’t
find it, because the place where we are born is not our fatherland, if they take away our right to
serve it; if they submit their happiness to those who disdain it, if they deny us the possession of
what is ours” (217). He must leave Puerto Rico in order to make a true return possible, to return
“deserving” of a homeland. And off they set on February 15 to Spain.

The boat arrives to Cadiz on March 17 after a month of storms and solitude. Bayoán had
hidden his internal torments from his ailing bride, who was weaker by the day, and from a new
companion on the boat, a sick former revolutionary. With this old patriot, Bayoán conversed for
hours about the past of the Americas and the frustrations associated with the struggle for a better
future. But as they arrive with the hope of granting the old man a comfortable death on land, they
learn that news has spread in Spain of a “temida enfermedad de las Antillas,” a “feared infirmity of
the Antilles” a highly contagious form of black vomit (251). They send the boat back to sea with
no provisions and no destination, the sea where the old man dies and is buried as the sailors
ridicule him and threaten to read his diary out loud. Bayoán, identifying with the internal and
political struggles of the anonymous soldier, berates his fellow sailors and rescues the diary. His
interactions with the old man had taken the form of conversations with his future self and with
the old man’s sinking to the bottom of the sea, Bayoán watches a piece of himself disappear, as
well, beneath the waves.

Bayoán’s long awaited return to Spain is thwarted when he is blocked at the border, his
entry into the country likened to a feared illness. Despite his return to Columbus and to
Guanahani, his continued attempts to curate a Spanish character with which he can identify, and
his refusing to turn away completely from the country that subjugates his own, Bayoán receives the treatment of a foreign body. Despite his designs to return to Spain to sharpen his demand for freedoms in the Antilles, the opposite occurs.

He lands April 2 and his voice is immediately passive, “nos permitieron desembarcar” or “they allowed us to disembark” (283). The crossing over the border that was supposed to fortify his political claims, make him dignified of having a country and a love, ends up depriving him of agency and speech. He ceases to write journal entries between April 2 and the 27, returning to his diary only to register the confusion he feels before his continued banishment: “¿por qué me desconsuelo? ¿por qué vuelvo atrás la vista, estremeciéndome con presentimientos dolorosos?” or in other words, “why do I distress myself? why do I return my gaze, shaking with painful foreboding?” (284). He addresses Madrid, accusing the city of killing his hopes and dreams. He remembers how his initial stay in Madrid had contaminated him with a venom of knowledge that left him restless back in Puerto Rico but homeless in Europe. He tries and tries to keep hope, saying “Gloria, justicia, verdad, yo llegaré a vosotras...!” or “Glory, justice, truth, I’ll arrive to you...!” but something unexpected happens; in searching for his voice in the metropolis, Bayoán loses it.

Abruptly the narrative structure of the novel transforms on page 288, in the middle of the journal entry to April 30. The voice of the editor named “Hostos” butts in and concludes the ellipses that prolonged and suspended the previous exclamation about glory, justice and truth: “El generoso jóven no llegó,” “the generous youth never arrived” (288). The narrator, under the guise of being the editor of Bayoán’s veridical diary, continues to describe the character of Bayoán and the editor’s friendship with the inquisitive and tormented subject. The comments on Bayoán’s
character, however, begin to suggest a meta-literary backdrop. Hostos the editor/narrator says “La costumbre de meditar lo incapacitaba para ese cambio fácil de pensamientos y palabras, necesario entre los hombres. Su silencio significaba para los unos orgullo, para los otros, ineptitud,” or “The custom of meditating made him incapable of switching easily between thoughts and words, the practice that is necessary between men. His silence meant for some pride and for other ineptitude” (290). This commentary points to an experience the reader might sympathize with during the reading of this book: monotony.

Monotony made modification mandatory, some scholars suggest. Julio César López asserts that the structural divergence was a narrative artifice that Hostos used to “revitalize a story whose dynamism had languished in passages overcharged with reflections, in tedious abundance of discourse, and in allusions no longer effective to sustain the tension of the plot” (288n).

And while the plot undoubtedly languishes at times, scholars must first consider how narrative decisions participate in or provide obstacles to the problematics proposed by the novel. How does the change in voice impact the problem of return in Peregrinación de Bayoán? Does the young Puerto Rican patriot return to his country or return to himself?

The generous young man never arrived; his ideals were not realized. As Hostos states in his second prologue, for his character (and the young author) the problems of country and liberty, glory and love, the ideals of marriage and family, human progress and individual perfectioning are

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5 “¿Resulta tardío este artificio narrativo que acaso Hostos Quiso emplear para revitalizar un relato cuyo dinamismo había ido languideciendo en afluentes recargados de reflexión, en tediosa abundancia de discurso, y en alusiones ya poco eficaces para sostener la tensión de la trama?” (288n)
not mere intellectual subjects, but matters of life and death.\textsuperscript{6} Disenchantment, or the mortality of ideals, is concomitant to death.

The generous young man never arrived. This phrase — pronounced by an outsider — works as a one-line obituary. It ritualistically praises the departed. It underlines the death of Bayoán’s dreams and voice and marks the anticlimax of the entire novel: the moment in which all previous tension proves frustratingly and perpetually lacking of conclusion. All that follows — the marriage with Marién, her following the health of another sick youth as a mirrored drama of her own agony, Bayoán’s continued pensiveness, Marién’s death, Bayoán’s contemplation of suicide and eventual return to Puerto Rico — forms the denouement of the novel, the falling action narrated in large part by the editor.

This latter return nullifies the previous return, the return to Columbus and a Spain of Discovery. Bayoán tries to overcome the burden of history by retracing Columbus’s path of discovery in reverse, thus unworking the devastation and division of conquest. But even when he gets to Spain, after a long and torturous detour, he never arrives. Bayoán believes that a dignified return to Puerto Rico cannot happen without a difficult return to Spain, but in the end he arrives nowhere, living in flux, between happiness and dignity, between Puerto Rican freedom and uprising against the Spanish. The novel of so much circumnavigation and circumlocution ends up representing a tale of stagnation: the impossibility of return when a Puerto Rican insists that his peoples’ liberation is entwined with the Spaniards’ parallel deliverance.

\textsuperscript{6}“El problema de la patria y de su libertad, el problema de la Gloria y del amor, el ideal del matrimonio y de la familia, el ideal del progreso humano y del perfeccionamiento individual, la noción de la verdad y la justicia, la noción de la virtud personal y del bien universal no eran para mí meros estímulos intelectuales o afectivos; eran el resultado de toda la actividad de mi razón, de mi corazón y de mi voluntad; eran mi vida” (68-9).
The fragmentation of the narrative voice is not only the dramatic concretization of the bifurcation of self that all diary writing implies; it is more so the culmination of the internal divisions which the colonial intellectual simultaneously erects and attempts to overcome. Just as Bayoán might feel as another character hijacks his journal, the author Hostos faces himself as a stranger when explicitly introducing the character “Hostos the editor” into the plot of his novel. This resonates with Julia Kristeva’s proposed model of overcoming ostracism by recognizing that all members of a society are foreigners, or “strangers to ourselves,” a model that paradoxically promotes peace yet impedes the formation of an “us,” a finite community of included peoples (1-3). However, while Kristeva insightfully comments on the psychoanalytic framework of speaking in a foreign tongue and the position of woman as perpetual foreigner, her writings have difficulty establishing grounding in political relationships still governed by colonialism. By recognizing himself as foreign and as a stranger, Bayoán does not overcome ostracism, but becomes an ostracizer of himself. He proliferates his enemies and the obstacles that resist the realization of his dreams, eventually losing what he set out to solidify through his return to Spain, his voice.

Hostos finds himself before a stranger again when he returns to reread his novel ten years later. “Este libro me ha sido funesto. Por eso lo amo tanto” (68), he quizzically explains. “This book has been disastrous for me. Because of this, I love it so much.” Why does he love something that tortures him? Why does he return to it? Perhaps to bring the book back into the fold, to give it a new purpose and new meaning.

This prologue radically transforms the narrative structure of the novel, just as the return to Spain had introduced a new narrator. What had been represented in the first prologue as a veridical diary written by a historical figure, merely edited by Hostos, becomes something new
through the second prologue. This 34-page text reveals the diary to be a creative structure upon which the Puerto Rican author erects a fictional novel. Hostos reflects on the “history of this book,” its publication, and its reception as though they had their own rising and falling action: a struggle between personality and impersonality. The author has been martyred for letting his personality shine through the text despite conscious, structural efforts to efface himself from the process of writing the book.

While Hostos laments the sentimental naïveté and political ingenuousness on display in the novel written by his younger self, he slyly recasts the entire novel through two means: footnotes added throughout the text whose principle purpose is to clarify and specify, and the “clave” or key prefixed to the novel which directs the interpretation of different characters and places as “symbols.” These changes perhaps shiftBayoán’s exemplary status, from being an example of a citizen to emulate to being an example of what not to do. His errors are reframed in the second edition so that readers do not repeat them.

Certainly, the changes implied by the prologue, footnotes, and key displace a story that looks through the Antilles for a reconciliation with Spain towards a story that moves back in the direction of an Antillean federation that could depart from the yolk of colonization, an attempt to rekindle an affair the novel portrays as fatal. Can this be done? The prologue and second edition show return to be a process of constant shifting, which recognizes the presence of borders in all places. This raises a final question: is the community this recasted novel aims to construct

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7 “Voy a relatar la historia de este libro,” or “I will tell the story of this book” (65).
8 Hostos included himself in the novel as editor and character in order to emancipate himself from the position of author. Despite the self-effacing function, critics cite this nontraditional inclusion of self as an unwelcome incursion of “personality” into the novel. This illustrates a convention at the time: an author could establish his or her identity only through style or voice, but could never address such a problem explicitly or ironically by speaking about his or herself within the plot of the novel.
articulated through the perpetual difference implied by the return or despite such a radical
difference?

The prologue describes young Hostos at the time of the initial writing of the novel as
idealistic and detached from reality. Hostos, ten years older, describes his younger self as “twice a
child”:

...una vez, por la edad; otra vez, por la exclusiva idealidad en que vivía... El problema de la patria y
de su libertad, el problema de la gloria y del amor, el ideal del matrimonio y de la familia, el ideal
del progreso humano y del perfeccionamiento individual, la noción de la verdad y la justicia, la
noción de la virtud personal y del bien universal, no eran para mí meros estímulos intelectuales o
afectivos; eran el resultado de toda la actividad de mi razón, de mi corazón y de mi voluntad; eran
mi vida. Y como mi vida no tenía conexiones estrechas con la realidad, sólo perceptible para mí en
los movimientos de la historia o de la sociedad que justificaban mi ideal o armonizaban con él, cada
encuentro con las realidades brutas era un desencanto, una desilusión, un desengaño.

...once, because of my age; again, because of the exclusive ideality in which I lived... The problem of
the fatherland and of its liberty, the problem of glory and love, the ideal of matrimony and of the
family, the ideal of human progress and individual perfectioning, the notion of truth and justice,
the notion of personal virtue and universal good, weren’t for me mere intellectual or affective
stimuli; they were the result of all of my activity of reason, of my heart and my will; they were my
life. And as my life had no close connections with reality, which was only perceivable to me in the
movements of history and society that justified my ideal and harmonized with it, each encounter
with brutal realities was a disenchantment, a disillusion, a disappointment. (69)

The prologue sets out to differentiate cleanly the realm of the ideal from the realm of the real, the
work of fiction and the work of history within the novel. If the desire for reunion with Spain was
constructed upon a foundation of weak idealism, the Antillean union proposed and supported in
the second edition is fortified by reality.

Despite this effort, a degree of contamination between fiction and reality remains. By
describing a certain myopia of idealism and the fragility of its illusion when it comes in contact
with reality, it becomes difficult to determine whether these words only describe young Hostos, or
Bayoán, as well. These descriptions plant the seed of conflation between Bayoán and Hostos that
some critics build upon through their analyses of the novel that confuse the character from the
author, and even the author from his fictionalized form within the novel. The link between
Bayoán and young Hostos seems to be stronger than the bond between young and older Hostos, promoting the question: is fiction or reality the adhesive that bonds the Antillean community that Hostos proposes through his recasting of the novel?

Hostos adds a key to his second edition of the novel, a one-page guide to the history and meaning of the names he uses for characters and settings of Peregrinación de Bayoán. “En este libro se emplean con frecuencia los nombres indígenas de las Antillas y se ha dado nombres indígenas a los personajes de la obra,” (99). That is to say, Antillean indigenous names are used and given to the characters of the novel. The reader must study this “clave” before reading the novel in order to understand its meaning “effortlessly,” or “sin esfuerzo.” “Borinquen” refers to Puerto Rico and “Luquillo” is the central mountain range of the island. “Haití” speaks to the entire island of Española, not just the Francophone “black republic” to the west. “Guarionex” was the most powerful cacique of Haití in Columbus’s time. “Bayoán” was the first Boricua to doubt the immortality of the Spaniards. “Marién” is the name of the most beautiful region of Cuba.

Hostos concludes the key by driving home the point: “Estos tres nombres: Guarionex, Bayoán, Marién, representan en este libro la unión de las tres grandes Antillas, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Cuba;” “These three names... represent in this book the union of the three greater Antilles: Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Cuba” (99). Several questions remain: is this union a new addition to the second edition of the book or does it represent content included in the first edition resolutely highlighted now without fear of censorship? Does this “representation” oppose the idealism Hostos laments in the prologue, reframe it, or propose a different ideal?

The key was not included in the original because of fears of censorship, Julio César López asserts (Hostos 99n). The second edition of the novel, published in friendly and free Chile, can rid
itself of the limitations on meaning and incentive for elusiveness imposed by the endeavor of publishing an anti-colonial novel within the imperial metropolis. Everything can finally be made explicit. But is the original meaning transparently being explained or is new meaning being created through this explanation and repetition? The prologue’s insistence on departing from idealism frames the second edition of the book as a return to the real.

The footnotes Hostos adds to the second edition illustrate how this return is a project that explicitly critiques Spain. Hostos adds seven footnotes to his novel, the first six of which critically comment on Spain’s precarious claim to power in the Antilles. The first footnote accompanies his first mention of Columbus, explaining that Bayoán’s critical apostrophe to Santo Domingo is informed by its 1861 reincorporation into the Spanish empire (104). The second note establishes a present date for the footnotes (1873) and the original novel (1863), repeating the structure of the prologues that regret having been a child and having dreamt in the first edition of the novel. This second note proceeds to make an explicit judgment about Spain’s incapacity to reconcile with the Americas (106-7). The third note recounts the failed community Columbus left on the island Isabela on his second expedition (115) and the fourth note explains a parable included in Bayoán’s novel as a condemnation of colonial Spain (198). The fifth note reflects on the national character of Puerto Ricans and how it has been corrupted by Spain (213) and the sixth note explicitly implores that Spain end its rule in Puerto Rico (215). The seventh and final footnote that Hostos includes in the novel describes an anxiety he feels before the futility of writing and revisiting his novel: “a martyrdom of having wasted time”\(^9\) (288).

\(^9\) “el martirio de haber perdido el tiempo” (288)
These notes retroactively demonstrate how the prologue and key participate in a recasting of the novel: the original novel that hinged upon the return to Spain, colonized subjects plentifully reentering its fold as full citizens, transforms into a text that critically chronicles colonized subjects’ desire to find reconciliation with the metropolis. Ambivalence transforms into denunciation, reconciliation into rejection. In the place of reconciliation, Hostos highlights the groundwork for an Antillean community that was already suggested in the character names of the first edition.

By assigning the formation of an Antillean community in opposition to the idealism of youth, Hostos does not claim that such a people is any more concrete than the proposed reconciliation with Spain. In the end, Hostos does not change the plot development that the union between Marien and Bayoán is predestined for failure. However, by reframing the novel through allegorical nomenclature, critical footnotes, and a frustrated prologue, he situates the potential for an Antillean community in the realm of the real, that is, rooted in the violent reality of colonialism that binds the islands and their people. This reality — their violent exclusion from intellectual enrichment, historical consciousness, and the development of a viable political voice — makes their community possible at the same time that it forms an obstacle to such a construction.

In this vein, the rendering explicit of the history of such names lets the novel become not only comprehensible for foreign allies in Chile and beyond, but also educational and formative for local Antillean audiences who might be entrenched in discourses of regional differences and inter-island rivalries. While the idealism of reconciliation with the Spain of discovery melts upon contact with reality, as Luna asserts in his “Impresiones madrileñas de un filipino,” the idealism that informs the formation of a Antillean community is both fueled and frustrated by the divisions of reality.
Within this allegory, realism and idealism are not mutually exclusive, as proposed by Hostos’s prologue, but rather they tensely inform and contradict each other. They represent flanks of Hostos’s intellectual identity in constant struggle with each other. The return is the stage for these struggles, which depart from the historiographical struggles analyzed in Chapter One and interpersonal struggles of traveler and metropolitan probed in Chapter Two. The return dramatizes no longer an author in ambivalent power struggle with a figure of imperial authority or an exclusive and insulting metropolitan. The return realizes a struggle of a colonial intellectual to coerce a former version of himself. The “return to self,” as a turning towards oneself as an “other,” makes evident a series of internal borders transgressed and erected between the writer and himself, who attempts to make explicit the indices of a community, while proving to be an obstacle to such a community, at the same time. These internal borders illustrate the difficulty to reach agreement between diverse members of a country or society when such an agreement is difficult even just with himself. How can colonial intellectuals write about their communities when they are “strangers to themselves”? The result is a fruitful source of reflection and dialogue, the repeated foundations and obstacles to the formation of a community. The novel presents to the reader Hostos’s return to a “disastrous” work, his “martyrdom of wasted time,” as well as his many reasons for loving it so.

**Returning to the “Devil of Comparisons”**

The border between the renovation and the violent regulation of meaning proves porous in *Peregrinación de Bayoán*. The same space of struggle between the proliferation of interpretations and the authoritarian seizure of significance plays out in José Rizal’s work, from his annotations to Antonio Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* to the Filipino author’s most famous novel, *Noli me
tangere. In his historical annotations, Rizal struggles to invalidate the narratives put forth by imperial authorities, asserting that he is the privileged determiner of historical legitimacy. At the same time, his commentaries multiply meaning and doubt by multiplying the number of historical voices included on the space of the page, especially through the disagreement between the main text and the paratext.

_Noli me tangere_ also resides upon the line between fixed meanings and interpretive freedoms. This tension is propagated through three central ambiguities. The prologue entitled “A mi patria,” or “to my fatherland,” does not specify which homeland is the recipient of this book. Is it Spain or the Philippines or a different country yet to emerge? The novel’s characters, furthermore, debate without conclusion the best path for the colony: reform within Spain or a revolutionary break from Spain. Finally, even the climax of the plot is shrouded in shadows of possible free readings and misinterpretations. The narrator describes a strange man who dies immediately after ordering a promising youth to study. The man also orders the boy to burn the man’s body on a pyre next to the child’s mother, who also had just died. The narrative leaves it unclear whether the man is Crisóstomo Ibarra, the rich, traveling, mestizo protagonist who had supported reform throughout most of the novel, or Elias, the autodidact revolutionary who had saved Ibarra’s life earlier in the novel. Most Rizal scholars ignore this ambiguity, taking for granted that Ibarra will return in Rizal’s second novel, _El filibusterismo_, in the form of Simoun, a jaded, anarchist jewelry dealer. If we return to read the novel as though _El filibusterismo_ had not yet been written, the climax’s inconclusive identification gains narrative power. For example, Irma Rivera Nieves, a Puerto Rican scholar of philosophy, asserts that Ibarra dies at the end of the novel and thereby structures her analysis of the work. While this might suggest that she has not read Rizal’s
ominous sequel, her reading does not contradict the textual evidence provided in *Noli me tangere*. Fresh readings like this one underline the ingredients for free interpretation that are inscribed in the novel itself.

As opposed to Hostos, who returned to his novel and attempted to harness its meaning, Rizal had no time to do so. Even though Rizal never prescribes revolution through the novel, but rather stages debates between different characters about the merits of reform and revolution, the novel is interpreted as revolutionary by both colonial authorities and Filipino insurgents. Consequently, the governor of the Philippines, Camilo Polavieja, condemned the author to death. Even had Rizal the time, the format of the book suggests that Rizal does not necessarily support the kind of overt assignment of meaning and systematic reframing of the argument.

Return is not a function of control in Rizal, but rather a bewildering condition that unsettles fixed interpretations. Rizal declares the experience of return to be a “devil of comparisons,” a “restless double consciousness,” in Benedict Anderson’s terms (1988, 229). The traveler can’t help but project his or her homeland upon the scenery when abroad, nor can she or he cease to feel like a foreigner when returning to the homeland. Anderson judges this scene as exemplary of the chief condition of modernity: simultaneity. Vicente Rafael explains that the devil of comparisons unlocks Ibarra’s physician-like gaze; he can now see the signs of a social cancer in the same country that he had so longed for before returning.

At its core, the devil of comparisons speaks to the blurring border between here and there, local and foreign, Spain and the Philippines, revolution and reform, even correct and incorrect. By destabilizing fixed divisions, the novel becomes a laboratory of free interpretation. Rizal repeatedly struggles with the conventions of a controlling narrator, seeking formal strategies to unlock
unforeseen potential meanings and the voice of the people, while also obliquely perpetuating forms of control over his characters and his readers. This leads to the centrality of gossip in *Noli me tangere*, as both a specific register of popular knowledge that had been previously excluded from historical and literary texts, and as a chaotic characteristic of all forms of communication and interpretation. Does the people gain a voice through this novel or does Rizal pay attention to a voice that was always there? Does Rizal use the people as his voicebox against their will, or do the people strike back through their own interpretive freedoms?

In the end, Irma Rivera Nieves’s reading of Ibarra’s supposed death is not a misreading, just a reading marked by the devil of comparisons. Not only is it plausible and verisimilar within the logic of an isolated reading of *Noli me tangere*, it effectively displays a form of narrative dexterity. It shows how freedom is made possible through failure. As Rafael insists, this is a “novel about failure” (2005, 86) and in so being it fosters the possibility of growth, futurity, maintained relevance, potentials that triumphant chronicles of imperial history or novels of “success” could not promote.

Rizal’s adult life, similar to Hostos’s, is marked by a repeated journey of return, whether he is returning to the Philippines, returning to Europe, or even returning to Manila from exile in the southern Philippine frontier land of Dapitan. As stated in Chapter One, Rizal lived in Europe where he studied, traveled, and published, starting in 1882 (*Noli* 374). In Berlin, in 1887, Rizal published *Noli me tangere*, before returning to the Philippines, where the novel was banned. Soon after, Rizal was forced to leave the Philippines, traveling to Hong Kong, Japan, and the United States, before returning to Europe. Rizal set up shop in London, where he discovered the text he would annotate, Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*. This happened in 1888, the same year *La
Solidaridad was founded in Barcelona, of which Rizal was named honorary president (378). In 1890, Rizal moved to Paris and then returned to Madrid, and the year after, the same year he published *El Filibusterismo*, he moved back to the Philippines via Hong Kong (380). He formed the “Liga Filipina” in 1892, an association of reform-demanding colonial intellectuals, and then returned to Manila. In Manila, he was promptly arrested and exiled to the south of the Philippines, where he remained until 1895. He then was granted his wish to work with the Spanish army’s medical corps in the empire’s fight against Cuban separatists and returned to Manila en route back to Spain, from where he would travel to Cuba (384). However, revolution broke out in the Philippines just as Rizal was arriving to Spain, and the imperial officials blamed Rizal for the uprising, sending him back on one final return to Manila, where he was executed on December 30, 1896 (386).

In a carnivalesque mirroring of Rizal’s biography, *Noli me tangere* narrates the return of a young idealist to the Philippines. In addition to rekindling a love affair with a childhood companion, María Clara, the protagonist Crisóstomo Ibarra wants to disseminate the riches of knowledge he has accrued in seven years of study in Europe. Alongside the plot lie countless portraits of Philippine life in the late 19th century, scenes of cock fighting, affected accents of social climbers, the struggles of the poor, torture at the hands of colonial officials, among others. The main thread of the plot follows Ibarra, who wants to build a school, to teach all Filipinos Spanish, and to promote reforms that allow Filipinos more liberty within the colony and more representation in imperial politics. However, Ibarra soon comes to discover that his father has died in suspicious circumstances that point to friar wrongdoing. On top of that, his father’s body has been disinterred and left to decompose in the depths of a lake. This leads him into power struggles
with local priests, as well as debates about idealism and realism with an old philosopher, Tasio, and a young autodidact revolutionary, Elias. The school plan falls through and Ibarra is pursued by colonial authorities after being betrayed by María Clara, who finds out that she is the biological daughter of the most violent of priests, Padre Dámaso. Ibarra flees his house with the help of Elias, who also discovers that Ibarra comes from a family that had slandered and attacked his own. An anonymous man, either Ibarra or Elias, at the novel’s close, offering as last words the command “go study” to a promising, young poor boy, who must burn the man’s body next to his mother’s on Christmas Eve. The readers find out, with El Filibusterismo, Rizal’s second novel published in 1891, that the anonymous man must be Elias, because he cannot be Ibarra. In Rizal’s novel, Ibarra returns once again to the Philippines to reclaim his love, María Clara, and to wreak havoc among colonial authorities and opponents alike.

Rizal pledges allegiance to the freedoms of narrative, as made evident in his response to a critic’s vitriolic review of Noli me tangere. In the January 1890 edition of cultural review La España moderna, Spanish colonial official and writer Vicente Barrantes publishes a critique of the Filipino novel in the “Sección Hispano-Ultramarina.” Barrantes says that Rizal represents the Filipinos in worse light than their harshest critic, citing a passage from the novel in which the Captain General praises the protagonist and insults the Philippine people in the same gesture. The Captain General says to Ibarra:

— ...¡Puedo serle a Ud. útil en algo, tiene Ud. algo que pedir?
Ibarra reflexionó.
— Señor —contestó—, mi mayor deseo es la felicidad de mi país, felicidad que quisiera se debiese a la Madre Patria y al esfuerzo de mis conciudadanos, unidos una y otros con eternos lazos de comunes miras y comunes intereses. Lo que pido, sólo puede darlo el Gobierno después de muchos años de trabajo continuo y reformas acertadas.
S. E. le miró por algunos segundos con una mirada que Ibarra sostuvo con naturalidad.
— ¡Es Ud. el primer hombre con quien hablo en este país! —exclamó teniéndole la mano.
— V. E. sólo ha visto a los que se arrastran en la ciudad, no ha visitado las calumniadas cabañas de nuestros pueblos: V. E. habría podido ver verdaderos hombres si para ser hombre basta tener un generoso corazón y costumbres sencillas. (212-3)

“Can I be of service to you in something? Is there something you would like to request?”

Ibarra thought a moment.

“Señor,” he answered, “my greatest desire is my country's happiness, a happiness I would like to be owed to the mother country and the efforts of my fellow citizens, united with one another with eternal ties of common vigilance and common interests. What I request is something the government can only give after many years of constant work and specific reforms.”

His Excellency looked at him for a few seconds, with an expression Ibarra accepted with graciousness.

“You are the first real man with whom I have spoken in this country,” he exclaimed, extending his hand.

“Your Excellency has only seen the city's opportunists. You haven't visited the run-down shanties in our towns, where your Excellency would see the true men, if for being a man what is needed is to have a generous heart and simple customs” (Translation by Augenbraum, 2006, without pagination)

Barrantes's comment is: “¡Ni hombres considera usted á sus paisanos, Sr. Rizal! Tremenda injusticia, que, repito, no cometería un español, ni siquiera un cristiano,” or “You don’t even consider your compatriots men, Mr. Rizal! A tremendous injustice that, I repeat, a Spaniard wouldn’t commit, not even a Christian” (La España moderna, Enero 1890, 177). He interprets this scene as a condemnation of Filipinos on behalf of Rizal, a manifestation of haughty elitism, egocentrism, and being out of touch with the struggles of Filipinos.

La España moderna, to which prominent authors like Galdós, Unamuno, Pardo Bazán, Clarín, Menéndez Pelayo and others contributed, considered as its objective the promotion of alternative, non-bourgeois political and aesthetic opinion and criticism, principally through famous and important voices of Spanish modernity (Asún Escartín 135-136). ¹⁰ In reviewing Rizal’s

¹⁰ From “La editorial 'La España Moderna’” by Raquel Asún Escartín. “La España Moderna... nacía con el propósito de convertirse en 'una publicación que sea a nuestra patria, y en general a los países que hablan nuestra lengua, lo que a Francia la Revue des deux mondes: suma intelectual de la edad contemporánea'. Informativa, enciclopédica, rigurosa, europeísta, amena y de alta cultura intentó vincular a las primeras figuras del universo intelectual español, que, pensaba el director, escribirían expresamente para ella. Todos los temas, desde los históricos, científicos, jurídicos, económicos y antropológicos a las obras de creación literaria, iban a tener cabida en sus páginas siempre que tuvieran el aval de una firma prestigiosa... una rigurosa alternativa cultural a la burguesía ascendente proporcionando los elementos que contribuyeran a la formación de una opinión sólida y crítica, capaz de interpretar todas las manifestaciones del pensamiento y el arte contemporáneos” (135). That is to say, “La España moderna... was born with the purpose of becoming 'a publication that is for our fatherland, and in general for the countries that speak our
novel in this prestigious magazine, Barrantes aims to make it clear that Rizal’s name does not belong among the previous Mount Olympus list of modern Spanish thinkers, calling him “novelista de mis pecados, almacén de contradicciones” or “novelist of my sins, storehouse of contradictions” (179).

Rizal publishes his response to Barrantes on February 15, 1890 in the Spain-based Philippine fortnightly La Solidaridad. He begins by hyperbolically praising Barrantes, using flagrant sarcasm, and proceeds to quote and critique the original text. His initial marker of irony is exaggerated praise and self-deprecation. He calls Barrantes “Excelentísimo señor,” “most excellent sir,” and proceeds to describe his social position: “miembro de las Reales Academias Española y de la Historia, dos cumbres desde donde deben aparecer como pigmeos u hormigas los escritorzuelos como yo, que para escribir tienen aún que hacerlo en un prestado idioma,” or “member of the Royal Spanish Academies of Spain and of History, two peaks from which writers like me must appear like pygmies or ants, writers who have to use a borrowed language in order to write” (62).

language, that which was for France the Revue des deux mondes: the intellectual sum of the contemporary age.’ Informative, encyclopedic, rigorous, Europeist, pleasant, and of high culture, it tried to link the primary figures of the Spanish intellectual universe, that the director thought, wrote for the journal. All the themes, from the historical, scientific, juridical, economic, and anthropological ones to the works of literary creation, were going to enter its pages as long as they had

11 A comparative analysis between the polemical writings of Rizal and Martí would be a welcome addition to this project. For example, Rizal’s response to Barrantes could be paired with Martí’s March 25, 1889 response to the article in Philadelphia’s The Manufacturer article entitled “Do we want Cuba?” The article, published on March 20 of the same year, opposes U.S. annexation of the Caribbean island because of the devastated state of the island – due to brutal imperial practices – and the supposedly brutish state of its people. These two articles offer a glimpse of the double and contradictory space inhabited by residents of Spain’s remaining archipelagic empire of the late 1800’s. They are excluded from participation in cultural and economic modernity by Spanish imperial authorities, and then critiqued by the U.S. for being pre-modern and unworthy of its expansionist gaze, due to their previous treatment by Spain. Two colonized authors’ two polemical responses to the slanders that open this chapter serve as clear illustrations of these functions of duplicity. Martí and Rizal use irony to rebut the articles that exclude Cuba and the Philippines from plentiful participation in modernity. Both letters are written in the language of the critic: Martí in English and Rizal in Spanish. Martí uses one word in his native Spanish, while Rizal uses none in his native Tagalog. Both letters engage with the critics’ arguments on a point by point level, quoting the critics’ texts and meticulously refuting their arguments. Both letters begin with formulaic courtesy; only Martí’s ends with courtesy, closing the frame in which he situates his rebuttal. Both articles use ironic literary gestures to challenge the authority and claims of their critics, affirming in the process their own place of cultural advantage.
Comparing himself to a pygmy or an ant, Rizal affectedly demeans his multi-faceted double position as a Filipino novelist writing in Spanish, being reviewed in and yet excluded from *La España moderna*.

His hyperbolic and ironic reverence of Barrantes and self-deprecation suggest that he believes the opposite to be true. He then seeks to defend this conclusion through logical, legal, and literary thinking. Rizal proceeds to identify all the moments in which Barrantes resorts to fallacious and unsophisticated strategies of literary interpretation. As Rizal points out, Barrantes confuses categories, as made visible when Barrantes opposes the categories of Spaniard and Christian. “(¿Parece que el mejor cristiano es menos que el último español, Sr. Barrantes?)” Rizal adds between parentheses, “(It seems as though the best Christian is inferior to the worst Spaniard, Mr. Barrantes?)”. Barrantes hastily deduces universal rules from individual cases, judging that Rizal’s general opinion of Filipinos can be understood through this isolated anecdote of indirect judgment.

Rizal returns the syntactical structure Barrantes uses to the source, critiquing the Spaniard’s judgment in both content and form:

> ¡Y digo yo; tremenda deducción no sacaría un indio ni siquiera un tagalo! Porque para hacer un silogismo de cuatro patas, como dicen los dominicos, y deducir una universal de una secundaria, se necesita suponer: 1º que el capitán general y yo somos parejos (yo no le arriendo a S.E. las ganancias); 2º que el capitán general habló con todos los filipinos antes de hablar con el Sr. Ibarra; 3º que en cada conversación S.E. conoció a fondo a su interlocutor, y 4º que S.E. no se exagera nunca...

> And I say; not even an Indio or a Tagalog would make such a tremendous deduction! Because in order to make a four-legged syllogism, as the Dominicans say, and to deduce a universal from a secondary, one needs to suppose, 1st that the Captain General and I are equal (I don’t leave His Excellence any of my earnings); 2nd that the Captain General spoke with all Filipinos before speaking with Ibarra; 3rd that in each conversation His Excellence profoundly knows his interlocutor, and 4th, that his excellence never exaggerates... (64)

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12 Vicente Rafael says that “Rizal’s gesture is obviously a ruse, mocking the exalted status of his interlocutor” (Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign* 98).
By meticulously undermining Barrantes’s arguments one by one, proving each of them to reveal unsophisticated literary and political thinking, Rizal both challenges the superlative excellence of his critic, as well as his own ant-like stature. The irony of the repeated syntactical structure casts light on Rizal’s use of Spanish, a “borrowed tongue.” Just because he uses the colonizers forms does not mean that he is subservient to the colonizer. His use is differently framed and inflected, creating a different language and world through this clever repetition. Through such a structure, Rizal asserts a certain power over Barrantes, since the latter he asserts is an unsophisticated reader for whom literature represents unaffected representations of the author’s thoughts. Barrantes not only doesn’t get Rizal’s novel; he doesn’t get literature.

Rizal asserts that this different world has different rules; he says to Barrantes, “Hasta ahora, no pudiendo yo dar libertades a mi país, se las doy a mis personajes y le dejo a mi capitán general decir lo que quiera sin cuidarme de la reciprocidad,” “Until now, not being able to give freedoms to my country, I give them to my characters and I let my Captain General say what he wants without presuming any reciprocity” (64). This highlights how the novel functions as a space of freedom. As Vicente Rafael says, “Unlike the colony, the novel conjures a world where characters are free to behave in ways appropriate to their background and circumstances. The author may intervene, but he does not violate the essential freedom of the characters” (2005, 99). This coincides with Rizal’s investment in science, which he calls “the free sphere of scientific facts” (Rizal, quoted in Thomas 4). Megan Thomas asserts that Rizal claims to be a citizen of the “world that recognized no political boundaries or authority, but only the authority of reason and evidence” (Thomas 4). Literature, like historiography, botany, ophthalmology, and linguistics, offers Rizal an escape from the constraints of the colony.
Rizal reflects on the political potential of this literary “freedom,” seeking to establish literature as his patrimony as opposed to Spanish imperial traditions of exploitation, corruption and neglect. Rafael adds, “Rizal invokes the laws of classical poets and rhetoricians that precede the Spanish empire—laws that have ...a precolonial... origin, and that allow characters to speak and live independently of their author” (99). The liberating laws of literature have deeper roots than the colonial laws that disenfranchise.

Rizal shows how the forms furnished to him by the colony can communicate multiple, contradictory messages, all dependent on interpretation. Likewise, Rizal — citing classical manuals of poetry and rhetoric — speaks about the novel as a multiplicity of voices, as opposed the strictly regimented and unchanging univocal doctrine implied by Barrantes’s critique. This prefigures Bakhtin’s notion of “heteroglossia,” the set of temporal, social, and political conditions that determine the always-unique significance of a message. This meaning, which is always shifting, transforming, and returning, is linked to the diversity of voices that the Russian critic would deem a necessary and defining condition of the novel some thirty years later.

One curious aspect of the claim that literature is a space of freedom is the use of the possessive pronoun “mi” in “mis personajes” and “mi capitán general”; Rizal gives his characters liberty, but they are still his. Through literature, he enacts a divergent form of governing his subjects, yet not one free of hierarchy and hegemony, just with different rules. This underlines a difference between the freedom Rizal promotes through his historical footnotes and the freedom defended through his novel. In the footnotes to Morga’s Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas, analyzed in Chapter One, Rizal preserves radical disagreement by keeping the original text intact. He adds his voice, which destabilizes imperial entitlement and logic, but promotes doubt instead of a
hegemonic account of “what really happened.” Through the novel, Rizal encourages freedom of speech between characters he invents and controls. There remains, therefore, a degree of tension between the people’s voice and Rizal’s function as writer.

Does Rizal let the people speak and interpret his novel as they wish? Barrantes’s adds his two cents to the debate:

...aparte la tesis (las dentelladas) contra el orden público y el orden religioso (la Guardia civil y los frailes) en todas las demás, ex abundantia cordis, el conocimiento práctico que tiene V. le ha llevado a V. a pesimismos que ningún español ilustrado se permite. Quioquiap, a quien V. se parece bastante como observador y pintor de las costumbres indias, aunque como estilista levanta el sobre V. muchos codos, Quioquiap mismo no tiene a los filipinos en tan pobre concepto como V.

...beyond the thesis (the toothpicks) against public order and the religious orders (the Civil Guard and the friars), in all the rest, ex abundantia cordis, the practical knowledge that you have has taken you to degrees of pessimism that no enlightened Spaniard would be allowed. Quioquiap, who you closely resemble as an observer and painter of the customs of the Indios, although in style he is many elbows above you, Quioquiap himself would not have such a poor vision of the Filipinos as you do, sir. (177)

Barrantes accuses him of attacking his own people worse than the most notorious of critics, and instead of defending his people, Rizal deftly counterattacks Barrantes’s character and academic integrity. By doing so, Rizal obliquely commends himself but never directly counters the accusation of his prejudice against his own people. In fact, even though Barrantes’s logic is off, his point about Rizal’s pessimism and prejudice against his own people is not completely invented.

This can be seen in Rizal’s 1884 essay “Estado de religiosidad de los pueblos de Filipinas”, to which he appends as epigraph a quote from César Cantú’s Historia Universal: “El vulgo, pues, que no estudia esta lengua veía en todo misterios; y por su ignorancia o bien se engañaba por sí mismo o daba pábulo a las imposturas de los demás,” or “the commoner, thus, who didn’t study this language saw mystery in everything; and because of their ignorance, either they tricked

13 Specifically, Barrantes refers to Quioquiap, pseudonym for Spanish critic of the Philippines Pablo Feced. Feced wrote Filipinas: Esbozos y pinceladas, a collection of short costumbrista-style works of prose that type-casted Filipinos, illustrating their vices and the need for strong Spanish rule, defending the friars.
themselves or they fed the impostures of the others” (“Estado...”, NLP Digital Collections, 4). As Raquel Reyes says, Rizal believes the masses’ ignorance to be not only the work of the friars, who foster widespread miseducation, but also “the handmaiden of clerical oppression” (128). In repeating a word often used in Spanish texts about simpleton and credulous indios in his third sentence — “superstitious” — he believes the people to be victims of the friars and at the same time unwitting allies in their campaign of cruelty.14 This fascination with and suspicion of the uneducated masses is a central point to Rizal’s hesitation toward revolution.15 In this scheme, education is a double-edged sword; it is central to the eventual liberation of his country (when the masses stop being superstitious), but it is also a force of division and exclusion against those who don’t have it.

These masses creep into the story in the form of wild, popular voices who interpret the plot in many divergent directions. Noli me tangere opens with an exploration of the city through the vehicle of a spreading rumor. Like an electric commotion, a rumor of an elaborate dinner that is to be held that same night, at the end of October, shook the people of Manila of all social levels. Gossip is a repeated verbal location of Rizal’s fascination with the masses. Vicente Rafael asserts that beyond this passage, Rizal seems repeatedly drawn in by the voice of the people. Rafael says:

> It is as if he feels the pressure of their interests and is compelled to follow the different routes of their desires especially as these are expressed in the form of rumors and gossip... Rizal was... intensely interested in hearing what those below had to say, or at least in imagining what they might if given a chance to be heard. There is then a persistent fantasy about the crowd as a site of apprehending other possibilities, recognizing other figures, and registering as well as responding to

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14 Reyes continues: “The fervent piety of the Filipino masses, Rizal elaborated, was rooted not in deep understanding, reflection and knowledge but in ignorance and paganism. The essence of Filipino religiosity could be distilled as superstition, indoctrination and blind acceptance, rooted in a desperate desire to atone for guilt and to placate a deity whom the priests portrayed as vengeful and merciless. The only reading matter approved for the faithful... Rizal saw as opiates that dulled the people's minds and perpetuated their enslavement” (128).

15 Vicente Rafael says, “Rizal abhorred democracy as 'mob rule' and was more of a republican, preferring elite representation to the Spanish parliament (and when that failed, independence, but led by Filipino elites)” (“Obama in Cuba”).
other messages. In recording the crowd’s presence, Rizal sought to accommodate and account for an expressive force that emerges from its midst” (72-3). Acknowledging and capturing the people’s voice was an essential step in transforming a “crowd” into a “people,” as Rafael asserts (86). This idea — that an attention to gossip can work to unify a people — initially seems to contradict the theory of gossip put forth by literary critic Edgardo Cozarinsky. In Museo del chisme, Cozarinsky says that the Latin root for Spanish “chisme” comes from “schisma,” indicating fracture, discord, plurality, and schizophrenia. This points to the mutability of meaning through its constant repetition, transmission, and divergence (20). Cozarinsky goes as far as suggesting that the “pure transience” of gossip underlines the transitory aspect of perhaps all lexical representation; any communication bears the potentiality of being transmitted and thus transformed. Despite this emphasis on division, gossip also points to a social practice of gathering. Gossip in French, “potiner,” comes from the noun “potin,” or the social practice of women gathering around a pot to cook and discuss the latest news of the village (Cozarinsky 19).

Does gossip promote the formation of a community in Noli me tangere or the impossibility of forming a unified message or movement? Does Rizal capture or coerce the people’s voice in his novelistic endeavor? Several scenes structured upon gossip demonstrate that while Rizal’s prose focuses on the people’s voice in his first novel, he is less interested in its content and more motivated to explore the ways in which their voices appropriate and transform stories, and how these transforming messages allow for the dissolution of social borders.

Gossip as a medium for the transmission of a message reveals the instability of semiotics, the deformation and reformation of meaning through a message's transmission. During a sermon by Padre Dámaso, the function of gossip becomes clear through popular reinterpretations of the
priest’s highfalutin, yet meaningless oration. Let us begin with the sermon. Dámaso structures his discourse in two parts, the section in Spanish followed by the portion in Tagalog, littering misstated Latin phrases throughout. During the Spanish part, Dámaso intersperses contemporary political references that condemn subversion with fire and brimstone discourse on sin and perdition:

‘Vosotros, grandes pecadores, cautivos de los moros del alma, que infestan los mares de la vida eternal en ponderosas embarcaciones de la carne y del mundo, vosotros que estáis cargados con los grilletes de la lascivia y concupiscencia y remáis en las galeras del Satán infernal, ved ahí con reverente conpunción al que rescata las almas de la cautividad del demonio... al guardia civil celestial, más valiente que todos los guardias civiles juntos, habidos y por haber’ (el alférez arruga el ceño)... (174)

‘You, great sinners, prisoners of the dark side of the soul that infests the seas of eternal life on powerful embarkations of the flesh and the world! You, burdened with the shackles of lasciviousness and concupiscence, who row in Satan's infernal galleys, look on with reverence and humility at what will redeem a soul from the devil's captivity... heaven's Civil Guard, more valiant than the whole Civil Guard here with us now, or those we have had in the past, or those we shall have in the future!' The ensign frowned. (Translation by Augenbraum, 2006, without pagination)

Augenbraum’s translation misses one of Dámaso’s central points, the affiliation of sinners and pirates suggested through the phrase “Moors of the soul, that infest the seas of eternal life” (my translation). This use of the term “moro” refers not to Moors of northern Africa, but the Muslim populations of the southern islands of the Philippines, to whom conquistadors had assigned the cartographically confused moniker, “Moro” (analogous to “Indio,” in a sense). The Moros were infamous for their efficacy in the art of piracy. The suggestion of piracy links to the term “filibustero” or freebooter, imported with governors who had previously worked in the Caribbean. The term, which originally comes from Danish for pirates who were abundant in the Caribbean as well, shifted to indicate subversion of any kind when used in the Philippines (Anderson 2005, 59-60). In this same passage, Dámaso critiques both subversive free thinkers and the secular Civil Guard who do not punish the “filibusteros” as thoroughly as the heavenly Guard would. This
causes the “alférez,” or ensign, to furrow his brow, as indicated by the narrator in a parenthetical phrase that interrupts the relation of Dámaso’s sermon.

The “rude Indios” either yawn in response to this Spanish portion, or invent their own stories from the few words they are able to “fish” from the paragraph: “guardia civil, tulisán, S. Diego y S. Francisco” (174). Having seen the “mala cara” or long face that the alférez had made, in combination with the bellicose gesticulation performed by the friar, they “deduce” another story:

...dedujeron que le regañaba a aquel porque no perseguía a los tulisanes. S. Diego y S. Francisco se encargarán de ello, y muy bien, como lo prueba una pintura, existente en el convento de Manila, en que S. Francisco con sólo su cordón había contenido la invasión china en los primeros años del descubrimiento. Alegráronse pues no poco los devotos... no dudando que una vez desaparecidos los tulisanes, S. Francisco destruiría también a los guardias civiles. Redoblaron pues la atención siguiendo al P. Dámaso... (174)

...they deduced that the latter was upset with the former because he would not pursue these bandits. San Diego and St. Francis would take charge of that, and do it very well, which has been proved by the painting hanging in the parish house at Manila, in which St. Francis, with only a rope belt, fought back the Chinese invasion in the early years of the Discovery. This made them happy, especially the most reverent among them... for they had no doubt that once the bandits were gone, St. Francis would then destroy the Civil Guard. They redoubled their attention and followed Father Dámaso... (Translation by Augenbraum, 2006, without pagination)16

The public in this sermon does not strictly participate in gossip, in that they do not verbally repeat and transform the message, but rather rescue and recreate stories in their own imagination. However, the process through which they reimagine the priest’s language and plot illustrates the function of gossip, the tangential departure of significance that occurs with the oral transmission of a message. This transformation, according to Rafael, suggests “distinctive Tagalog strategy of decontextualizing the means by which colonial authority represents itself” (1988, 2-3). Gossip marks the spaces where a popular voice struggles to make intelligible and perhaps hospitable

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16 Augenbraum, the translator, once again misses a key twist in the text. The friar uses the Tagalog word, “tulisán” to speak about bandits, showing either or both 1) naturalization and familiarity with local languages and social codes, and 2) coercive use of the Indios’ language to fortify his own power, which is conversely fortified upon the Indios’ incapability to speak Spanish, fostered by friar miseducation.
certain messages that disenfranchise them. In so doing, the process of making a message intelligible often involves a detour or a process of discursive disarmament.

The first step of this process is recognition of an important or interesting subject matter. Cozarinsky says that the message gossip tends to structure itself around a small, juicy anecdote of a famous person’s life or an astonishing and unbelievable event regarding an anonymous person. The public in Dámaso’s sermon identify the Civil Guard, the tulisanes (or bandits in Tagalog), and saints Diego and Francis as the points of interest and protagonists of their reproduced message. The second step is relating the received information to the listener’s personal experience, which occurs in two key ways. The listeners reflect on the lesson in visual, mythical history they receive from a tapestry in the Manila convent about a saint rejecting a Chinese invasion in the early years of the Spanish history of conquest in the Philippines. Additionally, they align bandits with the Civil Guard as forces that infringe on the public’s freedom, who should be eliminated through divine intervention. Lastly, by filtering fragmented material through their subjective experience, they recycle the original plot and create a new story: the happy tale of a truly redemptive event of religious mystery: the Saints will first kick out the bandits from the country, and then, when they’re done, they’ll kick out the colonizers, too.

The priests are not the object of this particular imagining, but they still might be the butt of the joke. Notably, the parishioners do not directly attack the priest in this decontextualized narrative, especially because some of these imaginers are labeled by the narrator as “devout,” and could be speaking against the Civil Guard to side with the friars in a long-tense conflict between wings of imperial power in the Philippines. Despite not addressing the priests, their use of language undermines friar’s interest in keeping the Philippine masses undereducated, especially
with regards to speaking Spanish. The audience uses the little Spanish they know to articulate an anti-colonial message. Friars in the colony shared a related fear: that any Filipino who studied would believe his or herself to be equal to the Spanish and rise up against imperial power. This disruptive and “imperfect” use of Spanish also represents a comical and demonstratively self-effacing synecdoche of Rizal’s project in this novel.

Then, of course, the subject of gossip shifts to the priest. With more fire and brimstone, Dámaso exclaims that if a parishioner gas an evil member, he should cut it off and throw it in the fire. The narrator and two young students simultaneously interrupt the sermon. The narrator says, invoking the detail about the alférez’s furrowed brow, that Father Dámaso was nervous; he had forgotten both his sermon and its rhetoric. One student then says to his buddy, “¡Oyes!... ¿te lo cortas?” or “See? Are you going to cut it off?” and his buddy responds, “¡Ca! ¡qué lo haga él antes” or “Bah! let him do it first,” referring to the priest (176, and Augenbraum). Here, the first “lo” or “it” uttered by mischievous youngsters suggests sexual humor, the evil member taking the shape in their imaginations as the penis. By redirecting the command for castration, the second “lo” or “it” of the exchange, “let him do it first,” thus gains the weight of an accusation, that the priest’s member has led him to sin. This suggestion bears gravity in the plot, especially when it becomes clear that he has fathered María Clara, among others, while sporting the habit.

The public is not alone in engaging in gossip in this scene. The narrator, who interrupts the sermon with a juicy detail from a notable figure — i.e. the furrowed brow of the alférez — transforms the relation by reframing it and breathes new signification into this scene. Subsequently, when the narrator comments on the priest’s apparent nerves, which cause him to lose track of his speech, specifically in the moment when discussing the relationship between one’s
member and sin, the narrator participates in the young students’ joke, calling the priest’s piety into question. The novel, like all lexical transmission as Cozarinsky argues, embodies the function of gossip. It emits not a message with fixed and consistent meaning, but rather a message in flux, that bears the traces of its multiple and multiplying messengers. It assumes the form of a communication that suggests, debates, and questions as opposed to affirming or resolving.

Gossip shows itself capable of slipping between social divisions, connecting them through messages that slip in meaning and suggestions that threaten to undermine established social order. Destabilized in this scene are both the colonial governor’s monopoly on authority, infringed upon by both the priest and the parishioners, and the priest’s piety, subtly slandered by both parishioners and the narrator. Through gossip, Rizal forms part of what Vicente Rafael speaks about as a circuit of signification, “neither the origin nor the destination of the rumors, but merely a conduit, like a telegraph cable that transmits whatever messages are sent through it. Authorship in this case has to do with becoming a part of the chain of hearers and tellers through which rumors pass. It means becoming part of an anonymous mass, carried along by its expressive force” (2005, 90) As opposed to official discourse, rumors and the novel are messages that evade and undermine hierarchies; each rumor is equivalent to each other and are judged not by their “truth value” but by their “social effects,” their capacity to damage (2005, 90). Rafael continues, “Rumors... have the potential to travel across social boundaries, connecting those within and outside different groups... [through gossip] the crowd, in turn, responds to... violence in at least two ways: it mimics its language of blows and insults and so extends the reach of colonial power, in effect becoming its agent; or... it holds on to its secret, reserving something from the demands of
authority” (2005, 93). This binary becomes most evident in discussions between commoners about the chief accusation friars cast toward students and travelers, “filibustero.”

The crowd does not know how to pronounce the strange word, due in part to the quizzical lack of an “F” in native “F”ilipino alphabets. They distort it into many forms: “plibastiero”, “plibestiero”, “plibestiro”, “plibustiero”, “pelbistero” and “palabistiero” (204). Then, the crowd discusses its similarly evasive meaning; they don’t know what it means, but clearly identify its gravity. The word’s effect is “peor que escupir en la hostia en Viernes Santo,” in other words “worse than spitting on the host on Good Friday,” and might as well be spelled “R.I.P.” because it leads automatically to the gallows.17 Here, fear is the only clear message, as indicated by the three word paragraph that succeeds the passage in which the pronunciation and significance of the term “filibustero” are progressively dissolved: “Todos estaban aterrados,” or “Everyone was terrified.”

Gossip represents a tension between the subversive reformation of meaning that travels across social borders and a deformation of meaning that points only to fear as a residue of colonial power relations. For Rizal, the content of the people’s message frequently contradicts the form in which it is emitted. The form, gossip, implies a reformation of meaning destabilizes colonial governors’ and friars’ control of power. The content, however, points to stupefaction and fear, which fortify social divisions, serve the purposes of colonial authorities, and impede the path of progress.

Both the polemic about Rizal’s loyalty to the Filipinos and his reflections on gossip point to the persistence of simultaneity in his novel, Noli me tangere. The devil of comparisons manifests itself on the plot level in the disorientation experienced by a traveler who returns, changed, to a

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17 The speaker compares the word “plibustiero” with “santusdeus con requimmiternam,” a bastardization of “reiquem aeternam,” or eternal rest (204).
homeland that has also changed. He is a foreigner when he’s home, and when he’s abroad, he can’t escape the vision of home, projected longingly upon the foreign scenes. On the level of literary form, the devil of comparisons is realized as a constant narration of borders as scenes of imperfect simultaneity. Rizal’s homeland, to which he dedicates the novel in “A mi patria,” is both the Philippines and Spain, and it’s neither. The novel explicitly promotes both reform and revolution through the utterances of different, debating characters, and thus recommends no clear path for the future of the colony.

The conclusion of the novel provides little conclusion. The school project fails. Reform in the colony proves impossible. The reader doesn’t even know if the protagonist survives. The first time reader has to doubt whether the unknown man who dies next to the boy’s mother is the protagonist Ibarra, who fights for reform and education, or Elias, the poor revolutionary, who has no self or family to fight for, yet still fights. Irma Rivera Nieves is not wrong when she assumes that Ibarra dies at the end of the novel, an assertion Rizal scholars would counter by pointing out that Rizal returns in the disguise of Simoun in El filibusterismo. She underlines a narrative strategy through which the failure of concrete communication permits the proliferation of meaning, through which the novel that narrates the implosion of dreams can also open a path to the constant renarration of those dreams, projected frustratingly and hopefully into the Philippines’ future, where years of colonial subjugation under the U.S. awaited.

Return to the Future

The return over imperial borders points to another return, the continual return that marks the process of reading the novels. Like with the colonial societies that the protagonists perceive as
different and perceive differently after their time abroad, every time readers revisit any text, they find new meaning, a subject matter transformed in relation to a changing world and their changing subjectivities. In the context of Spain’s late empire, reading as a return frames an important transformation in the anti-colonial projects of Puerto Rico and the Philippines: the renovation of reformist texts into handbooks for revolution.

Neither Rizal’s nor Hostos’s novel prescribes revolution explicitly. As they first were published, the novels display hesitation and distrust before the prospect of revolution. However, both novels became central inspirations for revolutionary thought on their islands. Hostos participates in this transformation through his second prologue, which renounces his identification with Spain and laments the naiveté of his younger self that shines through the novel. Rizal, however, does not participate in such a transformation; his novel takes on a life of its own as his name becomes the code word for a revolution he never supported, although he does flirt with the possibility through the voice of some of his characters. When they published the texts, they relinquished control over them, an agonizing experience registered in the anxiety and hostility of the prologues. And when they return to the text, the Puerto Rican author tries to wrangle interpretation of his novel through a long and controlling prologue, while the Filipino author finds himself before an ever-changing text, distantly facing the new lives his novel has taken on. On top of that, the public’s divergent readings of Rizal’s novel led not only to revolution, but also to his execution. It remains a question whether this ill-fated end points to the success or failure of the novel’s dynamic and fluid narrative structure.

Anti-colonial literature of Spain’s late empire consistently imagine borders of countries-in-waiting, projects that entail constant struggle on the front between forces of preservation and
forces of renovation on both the interpersonal and individual levels. And while the interpersonal struggles are more evident, as seen with Rizal’s polemic with Barrantes, Martí’s with the puritan woman, Luna’s with Mir Deas, or Acosta’s textual wrangling with Abbad and contemporary apologists of slavery, the individual struggles underline these texts’ most powerful and confounding moments. How to achieve cultural maturity when you assign Europeans the contradictory roles of intellectual and political oppressors and emancipators? How to articulate a community when you simultaneously idealize and distrust the people of the country you struggle to build and defend? How to use the language of the oppressor to discontinue the pattern of oppression? How to discontinue the pattern of oppression without losing your own political prestige and cultural clout?

And yet, while these contradictions frequently lead to the frustration of political ambitions, they formalize the transition of imperial history from a declaration, like the “encomienda” or “requerimiento,” into a debate. They infuse difference and room for alternative notions of culture in literary and intellectual forms that more traditionally had been used to defend the project of conquest. While these texts tend to avoid firm conclusions and prescriptions, they inscribe in the literary present a potential return to a future self. They render the time, content, and effect of history malleable and thus make possible a slow process of national imagination and realization that continues to play out throughout the years that succeed in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, the years marked by continued subjugation under U.S. neo-imperial control. The texts anachronically justify our reading of them, by showing the importance of the return over the porous border of time. The texts prove to be palimpsests of struggle, with each phrase inscribed by the conflicts of conquest, of 19th-century anti-colonial fights, and contemporary 21st-century
debates over the security or relevance of borders, the creative and resistant languages of border-dwellers, and the geography of power in a globalizing world, still ruled by competing jingoisms.
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