

**PRIVATE LIVES, PUBLIC PASSIONS:
THE HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION
OF MOTHERHOOD IN JUAN LUNA'S ART***

*Raquel A. Reyes**

A people without history is not redeemed from time,
For history is a pattern of timeless moments . . .

T.S. Eliot, *Four Quarters*

Tracking Turning Points

Writing in his memoirs, Felix Roxas recalls one evening in Paris when he and the distinguished Filipino painter, Juan Luna, were out to dinner with two women artists. It is two o'clock in the morning, and the group of four, cozily ensconced in a private corner of a restaurant, orders from a menu of strawberries, asparagus and champagne. As Roxas goes on to narrate, the moment and the "presence of those ladies" moves Juan Luna to speak of and to remember the killing of his wife and mother-in-law; Pretty soon he began to talk and started to recount—while the ladies were comfortably seated—without omitting any detail, everything that had happened to him on that melancholy afternoon. When blinded

* This paper, written in the midst of fieldwork, is a work in progress and does not endeavor to present a conclusive statement. It is largely the product of four months of primary research work in the Philippines.

** Raquel A. Reyes is a British Academy scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

with anger, he broke down the door of the bathroom where his wife and mother-in-law had taken refuge, only to die by the revolver in his hand. The lady guests were terrified by what Luna related; but Luna, who was extremely excited, had to go home because he felt ill and had become dizzy.¹ This moment which Felix Roxas is describing with all the unselfconscious innocence of an eyewitness account is the aftermath of a historical event that Philippine nationalist historiography has suppressed—the murder of the wife and mother-in-law by the famous Filipino painter Juan Luna. If we were to believe Roxas, in this moment we learn how Luna carried on with his life in the immediate days after the shooting and the effect of its recent memory on him. We learn how Luna was able to speak about what he had done. We envision him wild-eyed, gripped by a terrifying excitement as he recalled how, one day in September 1892, in what became a celebrated case of a “crime of passion,” he took a revolver to the head of his wife, Paz Pardo de Tavera and that of his mother-in-law, Doña Juliana Gorricho, and killed them, with his five-year-old son being the only witness of the event.

Considered as the “first nationalistic painter,” Juan Luna’s career as painter and later diplomat of the Revolutionary Government in Philippine nationalist history flows smooth and untarnished. More eloquently, Philippine National Writer Nick Joaquin recognizes Juan Luna to be the “first manifestation of the Filipino to the world” and names him as the “archetypal Filipino.” Joaquin maps Luna’s life and artistic career in terms of “epiphany” and “recognition scenes” that mark, according to Joaquin’s schematics, the coming of age of the Filipino identity. Under this nationalist agenda, the killing of the Pardo de Tavera women is retold as a dramatic struggle between Good and Evil: “Luna faces an ordeal in Paris: a sensational court trial. But the presses in Paris and in Spain rally behind the artist, especially when there is an effort to malign his race as barbarous. Luna’s canvases are deemed evidence enough of his country’s culture. Though his antagonist is a wealthy Creole family of aristocrats, the eminent in both politics and society likewise rally in his defense.”² Taking another example, E. Arsenio Manuel’s long biographical entry on Luna in his *Dictionary of Philippine Biography* contains only this brief and very polite note though, granted, more explicit: “The tragic family affair of September 23, 1892, when he shot to death his wife and mother-in-law and wounded his brother-in-law, Felix Pardo de Tavera, arrested, to a marked degree, his artistic activities.”³

But Philippine nationalist history remains haunted by the murders, presenting, according to Ruby Paredes, a “paradigm of the problematic perspective” in Philippine nationalist historiography that does not readily admit to such “historical embarrassments.” Paredes’ critique is insightful, observant as

it is of how nationalist historiography remolds a case of murder into a “morality play”: “Juan Luna is the Filipino patriot, a talented painter who brought glory to his native land, an *Indio*, and therefore a real Filipino. The Pardo de Taveras are the wealthy, Hispanicized elite, incapable of being or becoming Filipino. Paz Pardo de Tavera abjures the ideals of Filipino womanhood, particularly those of fidelity and steadfastness. Her rejection of Juan Luna has become a metaphor for the family’s rejection of the ideals of a Filipino The acquittal of Juan Luna ... is seen by the nationalists as the ultimate vindication of the Filipino hero and the defeat of the unfaithful.”⁴ Paredes here rightly points to the troubling of Philippine nationalist historiography and the need to bring to the surface the irreconcilable and the discomfiting that taint the nationalist historical picture. Further, she has also noted the ability of the nationalist historiography to deflect anxieties by tightly harnessing history to the political projects of nationalism. Yet, is this recognition of suppression and omissions enough? From the time the event occurred to contemporary accounts, the tragedy of the women’s death underwent a disturbing transformation. Reconceived as “*la tragedia de Luna*,” parricide was excused as a man’s deep misfortune to have suffered from decadent and corrupted women, the end result of a crisis not only of masculinity but, in the context of a developing political individualism, a state of affairs that presented an obstacle to the patriotic project. It was a transformation that justified the avenging triumph of male sexual supremacy, valorized manly misogyny and authorized the literal destruction of a threatening female sexuality.

The killing of the Pardo de Tavera women belongs to a realm that would seem irrelevant to the history of the Propaganda Movement and outside the serious study of nineteenth century Philippine nationalism. As a domestic event, it resonates as one of the more plausible omissions in Philippine nationalist historiography, its absence being an effect of the privileging of certain modes of analysis and approaches that have placed emphasis on the political, the economic and historical orthodoxies. And particularly within art historical discourse, it is a symptom of the continuing perpetuation of the privileged masculine individual, the figure of the male artist as “Genius.”⁵ Yet the omission has not been total. Its muted traces, I would agree, are suggestive of other moments embedded in the male patriot culture of the Propaganda Movement that draw together the discrete categories of the public and the private.

My approach may rightfully be treated with some suspicion: How do domestic issues, the private and personal, affect the formation of late nineteenth

century Philippine nationalist discourse? The question, on the one hand, is an enticement—to flesh out, through details that form something of a substratum of history, the quotidian ways and practices of people who struggled to forge an identity distinctive, if not resistant, to the regime of European colonial authority. On the other hand, it is an attempt to restore one level of understanding that had been placed outside standard political and historical explanatory modes and to work towards revealing the deception of nationalism's transformational grammar. Fundamentally, however, I intend my question to echo and take advantage of the productiveness of feminist thought in its critical treatments of the static male:female:public:private paradigm encapsulated by the public/private binary. I approach with suspicion the tendentiousness of structures of symmetrical oppositions that frame agency and power, drawing upon the strength of Catherine MacKinnon's insight: "Privacy is everything women as women have never been allowed to be or have; at the same time, the private is everything women have been equated with and defined in terms of men's ability to have."⁶

This essay intends to track what I want to consider as an important turning point in the making of the Filipino nationalist self, defined here as the apprehension of a political subjectivity constitutive of a Filipino identity in the sense of "nationality." I want to suggest that far from being outside the political interests and activities of the Propaganda Movement, notions of gender and sexuality served to dramatize its phases and influence the development of a "nationalist consciousness." As I hope to show, meanings of femininity, masculinity and definitions of sexual identity were interlinked with formulations of a political identity that would pose a paradox in Juan Luna's creative life—when political progressiveness went hand in hand with misogyny and racism. Focusing on Juan Luna's Paris period, I follow a process that generated both the fierce idealization of domesticity and maternity and fears of rampant and uncontrolled female sexuality—responses that found expression in the allegorical representations of female symbols, in particular, the symbol of the Mother. Specifically, I examine the pictorial imagery of the figure of the Mother in two paintings by Juan Luna that powerfully depict two opposing representations of Motherhood, the *España y Filipinas* and the *Luling Castigado por su Mama*. As representations of the Good and the Bad Mother in Philippine nationalist discourse, I want to illustrate how the *España y Filipinas* and the *Luling Castigado*, in pictorial form, tell of the emerging male nationalist bourgeois self whose confident affirmation was grounded in the allegorization and critique of womanhood. Within such a process, I argue that the violent murder of the Pardo de Tavera women marks a turning point that fixed the definitions of masculinity and femininity firmly within nationalist prescriptions, collapsing male sexual supremacy and masculine identity into its

discourse of political and racial identity. Yet, as we shall see, the fit was an uneasy one. The detail of Felix Roxas' account of Juan Luna betrays the cultivated bourgeois self crumbling under the weight of a memory that short circuits the force of nationalist discourse.

By reflecting on the relation of the domain of the domestic and the private, and its penetrations into the context of the Philippine Propaganda Movement and its political exigencies, my aim is to blur separated spheres. Centrally positioning gender relations as a crucial determinant in cultural production and in signification, it is an approach that attempts to pursue the tensions and inherent vulnerabilities of a project whose fragility and fears are deeply embedded in the undercurrents of its nationalist insinuations.

Gender and the Project of Assimilation

The period from the 1880s to the middle of the 1890s witnessed unparalleled activity in the area of literature and the arts by men who brought about the vigorous flowering of a cultural awareness that could particularly and peculiarly be recognized as Filipino. It was a significant and important cultural dimension to a movement that through newspapers, manifestos, speeches and journalism sought to prove and gain equality from the ruling peninsular Spaniards for the Filipino—a term which, by the mid-nineteenth century encompassed the *insulares*, the *Creoles* or Spaniards born in the Philippines, Chinese *mestizos* and *indios*.⁷ The artistic and literary achievements of the men of the Propaganda Movement in Europe—the *ilustrados*, recognized for being the “creators of a national consciousness” as characterized by the historian John Schumacher,⁸—are seen to bear some historical relation to the Romantic movements that spawned nationalism in early nineteenth century Europe. Indeed, the connection, as in the case of Jose Rizal, preeminent among the expatriate Filipino student community in Europe at that time, is seen to directly find its inspiration in the German post-enlightenment thinker Herder, an influence which Quibuyen goes so far to describe as “uncanny.”⁹

Crediting creative literature and fine arts of its role in the creation of a distinct Filipino national culture, Schumacher locates the prodigious creative output of the *ilustrado* students as corresponding to two overlapping phases in

the nationalist movement—the first are equality, reform and assimilation, and second, the call for the recognition of a distinct national identity.¹⁰ A key figure in the *Propagandista* circle and the Filipino expatriate community in Europe, Juan Luna, painting in the Academic style of the time, reflected and represented these influences and the developing character of the movement. Oft-cited, his monumental work *Spolarium* and the award of a first gold medal in the Madrid Exposicion Nacional de Bellas Artes of 1884 was heralded by the Filipino community as unassailable proof of the equality of the Filipinos to their Spanish colonial rulers. Marking the occasion that also paid tribute to another Filipino artist, Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo, who was awarded for his canvas *Las Virgenes expuestos al Populacho*, the historic speech delivered by Rizal at the Banquet to honor the artistic triumph foreshadowed the assimilationist nature that the propaganda campaign in Europe would assume. That campaign was then still in its embryonic form: “...that mutual embrace of two races who hold each other in love and affection, united morally, socially, and politically for the space of four centuries, so that they may form in the future one single nation in spirit, in their duties, in their outlook, in their privileges.”¹¹

While the political strategy of assimilation lay at the core of the Propaganda campaign demanding equal rights for the Filipino colonial subjects through the granting of Spanish citizenship and Filipino representation in the Spanish Cortes in the 1880s, it was, from its earliest phase, articulated in an eroticized language wherein equality could be asserted or justified by calling upon the natural bonds of love between a mother and a son. In his nuanced account of the role of the figure of the Mother played in the production of a nationalist consciousness among the male *ilustrados*, Vicente Rafael underscores the familial terms in which the relationship was expressed. Conflating real mothers with figurative mothers, the trope of the nation as Mother was imagined as the “source of the vernacular” from which a vocabulary could be obtained and a concept of nationhood articulated. Legitimizing and authenticating the imaginary binds to *amor patriae*: “The love of country was thus far from disinterested inasmuch as it engendered, in the double sense of the term, the idea of the nation. By doing so, nationalist discourse reflected as much as it refracted domestic politics.”¹² Enshrining an idealized motherhood, *ilustrado* men turned women into metaphors and symbols of maternity, light and beneficence, a public imagining carved and fashioned from the private memory of their own mothers: “your son lives; he lives for the Philippines; and in living for the Philippines, lives for your love, for your affection,” enthuses the Propagandist orator Graciano Lopez Jaena in a dedication to his Mother.¹³

Yet the struggle for complete assimilation with Mother Spain was routed by *ilustrado* sons through emotional currents that appealed to the maternal, its operation hinging on the representation of an idealized motherhood, invoking the figure of the Mother—a trope of ideal femininity upon which patriotic men yielded their loyalty and pledged allegiance—carried with it other implications within gender relations. The *ilustrado* writers seized the authority to subordinate women to their public imaginings, an act that, while commanding women with moral injunctions, paradoxically pushed them forward as political participants. Responding to news from the Philippines concerning a group of women from the town of Malolos, Bulacan who had petitioned their provincial governor to allow them to establish a school where they might learn to speak Spanish, the Propaganda newspaper *La Solidaridad* in 1889 printed the following paternal advice: “...we would like to send a thought to the charming young ladies: that when tomorrow comes and they become mothers, they might not forget that they owed their advancement to this country [Spain]. May they not forget that their sacred duty as Spanish Mothers and as Spanish women is to infuse to the tender hearts of their children undying love for Spain.”¹⁴

Phantasmic Females and the Virile Fraternity

Certainly, the representational efficacy of viewing the nation as gendered feminine is dependent on a particular image of a woman as maternal and nurturing or chaste, dutiful and daughterly. In 1888, the front cover of *La Ilustracion Artistica* carried a picture of Luna’s painting which he entitled *España y Filipinas*. Embodying what was perhaps the high point of the Propaganda Movement’s assimilation phase, the painting can be seen as its visual celebration. Though they were close friends, Rizal was dismissive of Luna’s painting, critically remarking to Ferdinand Blumentritt, “Luna has always been a Hispanophile. He never wanted to paint anything against the Spaniards. His painting, Spain and the Philippines, shows the Philippines on the road to the temple of glory, led by Spain. Now, he is doubtful; he does not know what to think or say.”¹⁵

Taking their cue from Rizal, contemporary art historians keen to maintain the nationalist perspective in Luna’s artistic career give scant attention to an image whose theme was seen to glorify Spanish colonialism.¹⁶ Viewed as a “shameful portrayal of Spanish benevolence” by Flores,¹⁷ the painting only seems

to stress the unresolved inherent ambivalence in Luna's artistic life during that period: his yearning desire to prove himself equal to Europeans while grappling with the alienating "expatriate condition" that simultaneously denies his aspirations. This is used to explain and justify the passion fueling Luna's journey to "Filipinoness." As Alice Guillermo writes: "This can be viewed as a cautionary tale: the idea of an artist from a colony absorbing cosmopolitan idioms and becoming fully integrated into a mainstream abroad, enjoying equal status, opportunity, and recognition, becomes illusory since he is from the outset working from a structural disadvantage, that of being the eternal outsider."¹⁸

I want, however, to pay more critical attention to what this explanation elides, that is, the complexity of interests informing Luna's cultural affiliation and the importance of these iconographic representations of femininity in the promotion of all male interests in the nationalist project. In order to elicit such an interpretation, I follow a specific perspective of art as a "social practice, as a totality of many relations and determinations" taking between its social locations and semiotic meanings.¹⁹

Luna's *España y Filipinas*, painted in 1886, is an allegorical rendering of the imagined relationship between Mother Spain and her colony, Filipinas, imaged as a daughter figure.²⁰ A vertical composition, the two female figures, Madre España and daughter Filipinas, ascend a sweeping staircase scattered with flowers towards a glorious sunrise, the sun a bright, shining orb whose light illuminates the scene (see Fig.1). Emphasizing matrilineal descent, the empowerment of mothers here is shown by Luna as positive—guiding, nurturing, loving and protective. Luna paints them with their backs turned to the viewer, effecting a distancing that emphasizes the intimacy between the two figures, as signified by



Figure 1

España's arm around the waist of Filipinas, her other arm leading the way forward, pointing to the sun and a dramatic brightening sky symbolic of the Future and Progress. Madre España is the larger of the two females, a single white shoulder is bared, and the white arm amply encircles the slightly built brown body of Filipinas. The ideal model of maternity here plays a crucial role in representing the acquisition of Progress, to be bequeathed by España to daughter Filipinas, whose future position as a Mother also prefigures the beginning of Philippine nationhood. But it is this maternal imagery which crucially fuses gender and Empire, casting white women as the bearers of an imperial and racial hierarchical order, to which brown Filipinas both bows and aspires. España is resplendent in a sumptuously flowing, richly crimson robe cloth symbolic of civilized advancement; her head crowned with laurel leaves classically denoting superiority and glory, while Filipinas is barefoot, a sign of primitiveness; the simple white native *camisa* and blue skirt she wears is evocative of her subordination, her innocent and immature position dependent on Madre España for her advancement and upliftment.²¹

Representing the union of España and Filipinas, the gestures and clothes sentimentalize and romanticize colonial conquest. Yet the maternal image is also reconfigured around an ethos of *ilustrado* desire. Central to the Propaganda campaign and shaping much of the efforts of the *Propagandistas* is a critique of the friars in the Philippines. Often bitter and scathing, the accusatory attacks leveled against the friars by the *ilustrados* condemned them for their moral and spiritual bankruptcy, their sexual and pecuniary avariciousness; called "myopic," "pigmies," "rachitic wet nurses, corrupt and corrupters" it was essentially the friar orders, rather than Spanish colonialism, who were seen as primarily responsible for spreading mystifications and for the overall backwardness of the country.²² Commenting on the theme and subject matter of Luna's painting, Lopez Jaena is adamant: "...done with masterful but light strokes and revealing a genius' brush whose brave colors produce marvelous efforts, surprising brave perspectives. . . . But have to point out an oversight of the great artist. Although incompetent, I allow myself a criticism of his painting, because it lacks one detail, a very important detail: a friar on the third step blindfolding with a handkerchief the eyes of the *india* so she may not see the path of glory towards which Spain leads her."²³

For the *ilustrados*, the friars represented Mother Spain's abusive sons whose all-pervasive authority over the Philippine populace and society they needed

to subvert and displace.²⁴ Countering insult for insult, the friars posed in one sense the negative mirror image of the *ilustrado* sons whose own kinship to Mother Spain they sought to prove. While this desire for legitimacy, both political and metaphorically familial, found its impetus in the Movement's anti-friar struggle, it also brought about an awakening consciousness of what manhood should mean, generating a heightened awareness of sexual differences and men's physical and moral specificity.

The lines of convergence can be drawn between gender and nationality, as terms which can be seen to similarly operate in and through a system of difference. This is enabled by Benedict Anderson's implicit recognition of the nation as a "deep, horizontal comradeship," a community with an affinity for male society, a compelling "fraternity."²⁵ Such associations give theoretical space to the fond embrace of homosociality and the formation of a national identity, a linking that is peculiarly instructive in the context of Philippine nationalism and the *ilustrado* milieu in Europe in the late nineteenth century. The 1880s was a high point in Luna's life and the life of the Filipino community to which he belonged. Riding on the crest of the triumph of his *Spolarium* from which he was given royal recognition from the King of Spain, Luna went on to receive prestigious commissions, enjoying a wide and influential circle of friends, which in turn benefited the Filipinos and raised the profile of the Movement. He completed several of his most acclaimed paintings, including *Pacto el Sangre* and *La Batalla de Lepanto*, and numerous award winning paintings whose themes were seen to be inspired by his new wife, Paz Pardo de Tavera.²⁶

Leaving Madrid, he moved to Paris in 1885, at the time the artistic capital of the world. By 1886, he was seriously courting Paz Pardo de Tavera, daughter of Doña Juliana Gorricho and youngest sister to the two brothers T.H. and Felix Pardo de Tavera. Philippine-born, of Spanish noble ancestry, with an outstanding history of intellectual and political achievements in the Philippines, the Pardo de Taveras were a wealthy, cultured family whose emotional and political allegiances lay with the Philippines.²⁷ The *Propagandistas* gravitated to their home, enjoying gatherings knitted together by the common interest in the Philippines and Doña Juliana's gastronomic orchestrations, as Rizal reported to his parents: "...On such days we do nothing else but talk about our country—its likes, food, customs, etc. The family is very amiable. The mother (widow) is a sister of Gorricho and remains very Filipino in everything."²⁸ Where the "first bastion of the Filipino spirit is the palate" as Carmen Guerrero Nakpil wryly comments,²⁹ food became an important medium in bonding the exiles into a nationalist community of men. Again, in a letter to his family, Rizal deliciously recalls the Philippine meal and indigenous

mode of eating: "On Throve Tuesday we had a luncheon dinner at the house of the Paternos ... With our fingers, we ate rice, stewed chicken, *adobo*, *fritada*, and *lechon*. We were Felix Resurreccion, Emilio and Esteban Villanueva, the two Paternos, the two Llorentes, Figueroa, Vicente Gonzalez, Raymundo Perio, Manuel de Iriarte, Eduardo Lete, Juan Fernandez, Federico Calero, and I. During the meal we spoke Tagalog. This reminded me of Pansol when we ate there..."³⁰ Preparing indigenous Philippine, indigenized Chinese and Filipino-Hispanic dishes, Doña Juliana Gorricho carefully recreated a cuisine that tangibly reconstructed, at least for the expatriate palate, a sense of a particular identity and the fond recollection of a birthplace. Meticulously noting down in her kitchen notebooks each recipe used for the dinner parties, she writes: "Do not forget to place in each recipe how it is cooked in Manila, the names of the vegetables used there and how it should be cooked in Europe and the names of vegetables used here." For the young, somewhat homesick *ilustrado* men, the dishes they ate at Juliana's salon: *pancit*, *sotanghon*, *sinigang*, *adobo*³¹ nourished the remembering of tastes and customs of home and memorialized the vernacular bonds of intimacy and love that drew upon images of mother-muse which, as we have seen, figured as the source of nationalist imaginings.

Facilitating a savoring of edenic rememberings, women were central in the promotion of masculine solidarity, essential as phantasmic females that enabled men to explore relations between themselves. The spontaneous forming of the all-male club *Los Indios Bravos* by Rizal, in particular, provided an opportunity for the construction of masculinity that might fit the agenda of a nationalist generation. Inspired by a Wild West Show seen at the Paris Exposition in 1889, the group that included the Luna brothers emphasized the pleasures of a masculine identity birthed exclusively by men upon the bed of political protest. Rather than accepting the term "*indio*" as a humiliating identity, they would, instead, wear it as a "badge of honor" representing virile values of bravery and courage. Coupling male artistic and intellectual creativity with disciplined regimes of physical exercise and sport, the *Propagandistas* were not only marking themselves off from the racist slurs and stereotyping they were encountering in the *Peninsular* as suggested by Rafael,³² the fencing jousts and sharp shooting competitions in which Juan Luna often emerged as a star were passionate public displays of patriotism where the aim was restoration of a moral order whose terms they defined. A tantalizing hint of the secret moral codes that governed the group can be discerned in Rizal's letter to the *Indios Bravos* advising one member to mend his ways: "I should like to inform Lauro that there are very many bad news about him that those in Madrid

are spreading or have spread already, so that it is very necessary that he change his behavior and defend his honor in order that the name *Indio Bravo* may not be tarnished and also that the feelings of ... may not be hurt, in case the bad news reaches her ears.”³³

Bad Mothers and the Tragedy of Paz Pardo de Tavera

While surviving photographs have preserved a little of the mood and atmosphere of Paris social gatherings, showing the presence of women who participated, relatively little is known about the Pardo de Tavera women in the household, what they thought, or how they spent their time. Rizal seems keen to insist on their patriotism, beauty and cultured refinement, mentioning more than once the sincerity of their “Filipinoness”: “As I already told you, there we always talk about the Philippines. Doña Juliana is a genuine Filipino through and through, *nor sus cuatro costados*, as it is commonly said.” Significantly, it is his description of Paz Pardo de Tavera that has proved problematic in identifying her: “... Her daughter Paz speaks French and English and she is very amiable, and also very Filipino. She dresses with much elegance.... She is beautiful and svelte and it is said she is going to marry Luna.” Paz Pardo de Tavera has recurrently suffered in Philippine history from misidentification. In a revelation that led to the retitling of a portrait thought to be of Paz Pardo de Tavera, Philippine historian Ambeth Ocampo points out the startling physical discrepancy between the sitter depicted and the physical appearance of Paz as he identifies her in photographs: “Compared with photographs of Paz, who had a square jaw, sharp eyes and a large masculine face, the woman in the painting has an oval face and beautiful dreamy eyes ... I am convinced she may not be Paz Pardo de Tavera at all.”³⁴ As if only women conforming to a certain standard of beauty can be matched with national heroes, Paz’s physical features, her “large masculine face” doom her to an anomalous position in Philippine historiography, her physical appearance marking her out as ambiguous, oddly unfeminine and therefore unlikely to be the choice of the virile artist. Physically mannish in reality, she defies the description of Rizal, which has, in effect, primarily misled contemporary historians in their identifications as they search out, from their own interpretations, the “slim, beautiful and svelte.”

With her position in history tenuously clinging to the fact that she married a national hero, the figure of Paz Pardo de Tavera has been in one sense doubly erased. While historians have cropped her in photographs or misidentified her,³⁵ the Pardo de Tavera personal family history has exacted its own erasures. Burdened

by the painful memory of their murders, her brother, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, is said to have systematically destroyed all remnants of his sister's life in Paris, the period spanning her entire adult married life.³⁶ Married at twenty-four on December 1886, by the age of thirty, Paz Pardo de Tavera was dead, leaving, it seems, little more than a fan and a *manton de Manila* shawl.³⁷ Yet, like the resurrected phoenix rising from the ashes of such erasures, the figure of Paz Pardo de Tavera refuses historiographical death and silence, troubling Philippine history by her presence, transformed from Mother-Madonna to Medusa and the object of intense male hatred.

We can grasp the moment of this transition in Luna's painting *Luling Castigado por su Mama*. Suitably, indeed perhaps poetically metaphorical, the painting hangs in the Philippine Museum as the undisplayed obverse side of a canvas that depicts a placid,



Figure 2

peacefully serene rural scene of the French countryside through which Juan Luna on vacation ambled.³⁸ The *Luling Castigado* captures a key moment considered to have contributed to the deteriorating marriage of Paz and Juan Luna, that of Paz in the act of punishing their young son Luling (see Fig. 2). Like the female figures shown in the *España y Filipinas*, the woman figure is painted with her back turned towards the viewer. She looms large in the foreground of the frame, a direct contrast to the little boy across the room who is small and frail-looking. Clothed in black, her prominence casts a threatening, dark, rustling figure over a home scene that seemingly would otherwise be a picture of safe, homely domesticity. The puffed fullness of her skirts and mutton leg sleeves, fashionable at that time, signifies further the feminine abuse of power and maternal authority she exercises over a subject clearly weak and powerless—a frightened little boy still dressed in his nursery clothes of knickerbockers. The figure of the woman



Figure 3

here represents bourgeois violence and excess. She clutches a long cane behind her back, denotative of power, authority and discipline. Only the external viewer is privileged to see the cane (see detail, Fig.4), while the boy can only fearfully imagine it, hence heightening the terror scene that shows her to be advancing menacingly towards him, cowering by the fireplace and covering his eyes in dread (see detail, Fig.3). Her bourgeois status, defined by her clothes and her chignon hairstyle and the interior of the room, is depicted as a contrast to the brutality which we might imagine she will, in the next moment, descend. At the far wall, there is a mirror situated over the fireplace whose reflective surface insinuates the presence of a cold, silent witness. It is roughly painted picture, mostly unfinished, giving a sense of immediacy and urgency which adds to its power—a moment whose spontaneity is lent a greater force of truth.

In a dualistic sense, the Pardo de Tavera women are victims of domestic violence. The episode of their murders is a consequence of male patriarchal violence, the tragic result of a dangerous machismo turned murderous. Paz Pardo de Tavera was seen to transgress the boundaries that patriarchy sets for women. Her sins were therefore manifold. Despite having two brothers, Felix and T.H. Pardo de Tavera, both already qualified physicians whom she was close to, she is accused of maternal neglectfulness with the death of their second child, Bibi, who succumbed to an illness while still in infancy. She is shown as being in the habit of beating her young son, the *Luling Castigado* painting evidently catching her, as it were, in the act. Though never satisfactorily substantiated, she is accused of infidelity. Adulterous, which itself carries the implication of a morally debase nature, Paz Pardo de Tavera is placed in the category of the Bad Mother whose children do not survive. The textual violence with which Philippine nationalist historiography treats the transgressive historical female figure is disturbingly conventionalized. “How ironic,” writes art historian Pilar Santiago, “that Luna

who, in the name of human dignity, sought personal recognition... [was] betrayed by his own temper. Whereas his wife Paz, as is evident from her life and letters, had little regard for honor and self-respect and could never understand... her husband's quest for recognition was in behalf of human dignity." Paz Pardo de Tavera came to embody the feminine defects and weaknesses that threaten to bring down progressive efforts, signifying selfishness, duplicity, frivolousness and unfaithfulness. Santiago rhetorically asks: "How could she rally behind a husband whose idea of joy was winning for his country the white man's privileges?"³⁹

But their deaths are connotative of other levels and meanings. Luna's marriage to Paz Pardo de Tavera can be read as affirming of a bourgeois sexuality that, when situated in the context of the Propaganda Movement's political strategy of assimilation, cuts through boundaries of racial privilege and racial difference. The marriage was a sexual and marital arrangement that seemed to happily toss together racial categories of *indio*, Luna being a Philippine native of "brown complexion," thick lipped, black eyes, Malayan type,⁴⁰ with the Spanish mestizo blood of the Pardo de Taveras.

However, this harmonious fusion that at the time could be seen to characterize the term Filipino was a fragile one. According to Luna's defense lawyer, underlying the motives of Luna's crime of passion is the question of race: "There was talk of racial differences; Luna is native and the Pardo family, Spanish mestizos. It is this matter that is supposed to have brought difficulties to the marriage..."⁴¹ While historians have also been quick to point out the financial element contributing to the end of their marriage, Luna being largely



Figure 4

supported by his more wealthy wife and mother-in-law,⁴² he remained very much caught in the grid of colonialism's intimate racial hierarchies as Baluyut notes, "... the Pardo de Taveras represented to him... a self that proclaimed its national

loyalty and genuine Filipinoness while retaining the social, racial and cultural structure established by Spanish colonialism for its own advantage.”⁴³ As early as 1890, we can already discern Luna’s creeping resentfulness towards his mother-in-law. In a letter to Rizal he cannot resist a comment on Doña Juliana’s artistic ignorance and, what appears to have been her bias in collecting only Spanish art objects: “Doña Juliana is asking if all the works of St. Augustine are in Latin. If that is so, then she has no use for them, as you well understand... What a mean and narrow criterion! It is true that ignorant people believe that the best painters in the world come from their race.”⁴⁴

In thinking about the possibility of a link between the development of a “nationalist consciousness” and sexuality, it seemed to me that running beneath the energy of these two intersecting confidences were particular male anxieties that could fruitfully be explored to illuminate what has become a triumphalist account of the process of attaining a “Filipino” identity. Returning once again to the painting *Luling Castigado*, I want to emphasize here how this particular image of the Bad Mother can be seen as impacting on Luna’s sense of “becoming.” The child in the corner cannot look upon the woman figure, too terrible and dangerous is she. She is the powerful figure of the castrating female, who, according to Freud, represents the male dread of the Medusa and the fear of the female sex: “To decapitate: to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration and is linked to the sight of something. Numerous analyses have made us familiar with the occasion for this: it occurs when a boy, who has hitherto been unwilling to believe the threat of castration, catches sight of the female genitals, probably those of an adult surrounded by hair, and essentially those of his mother...”⁴⁵ Clearly, the woman in Luna’s painting is not meant to be seen as an *indio* woman. She is powerful, privileged and cosmopolitan. Concomitant to Luna’s angry portrayal of a Bad Mother, my reading might not seem too unreasonable in its suggestion that the painting may also be seen as illustrative of Luna’s anguish as he confronted his fear, perhaps his imaginary fear, of a disruptive, sexually and economically liberated female that threatened his definitions of gender and race, plunging him into a crisis of identity.

During Luna’s trial, his lawyer spoke of a “strange trait” in Luna that made the case unusually difficult. The “trait” was in fact Luna’s race, unlike the European, and therefore problematic. “You have before you a man who is not moved by the same impulses like we are. God has made him so. We have to pry into his nature, his soul and inquire if he should be judged like a Frenchman.”⁴⁶ Though convicted of murder, the famous leniency with which Luna was treated, condemned to pay the sum of one symbolic French franc, was attributable to his

lawyer's successful construction of the Filipino native as a savage, a verdict that had the effect of publicly fixing his identity and reinstituting patriarchal order in the wake of an unruly female sexuality.

Predictably, news of the outcome of Luna's trial was greeted with fraternal solidarity towards Luna. However, reporting erroneously the verdict of an acquittal, the comments appear awkward, sliding into inarticulacy and vagaries. While admitting that "justice" had been obtained, Luna's act was uncomfortably rationalized as an expression of a man's sensitivities and his ability to "feel": "The great emotions of the spirit are better felt than expressed and so, we shall not attempt the futile task of expressing our feelings further. Our dear friend and fellow countryman has shown that he knows how to feel deeply; to his noble character we leave the task of feeling our sentiments."⁴⁷

The symbolic image of the Mother has been an integral feature of Philippine nationalism and the conception of nationhood, wherein critically, its culturally nuanced articulations have not rested solely on benevolent maternal images. The iconographic construction of Bad Mother was an important compelling element in the process of achieving nationalist individualism. The *Luling Castigado* painting is an astonishingly violent image of motherhood turned violent, which, when placed in the context of the development of nineteenth century Philippine nationalism, has unexpected resonances. The 1890s saw the demise of the Propaganda Movement in Europe, consigned in Philippine history as a supreme political failure. It was ultimately overtaken by the upsurge of a different force emanating from a wholly different formation and leadership—Andres Bonifacio and the Katipunan. In his seminal work, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Reynaldo Ileto convincingly argues from his reading of Bonifacio's essay, "*Ang dapat mabatid ng mga Tagalog*," that final political separation and independence from Spain, colonial ruler, was enacted on the basis of a particular understanding of a parent-child relationship which imaged Spain as an uncaring (*pabaya*), cruel and neglectful mother—a construction that allowed for Spain's substitution by the more benevolently maternal Mother Filipinas, matured from the subordinated daughter to the potent Mother symbol of the Tagalog masses, *Inang Bayan*.⁴⁸ Although this was a development utterly unforeseen by the *ilustrados* in Europe who, when confronted by its power, recoiled in horror, my point is to locate the iconographic representation of the Bad Mother as a potent mode of figuration powerfully provoking estrangement, ironically enabling the articulation of a nationalist consciousness and providing the foundation for Philippine independence.

Contrastive to the image of the Good Mother whom, as we have seen, is represented as an enlightened female figure, embodying progress and liberation from patriarchal tyranny within society, as envisaged by patriot sons, the Bad Mother conspires to thwart the sacred ideals and mission of male patriots, inciting hatred, a sense of betrayal, hence enacting the radical break between colonized and colonizer. On the level of reality, Paz Pardo de Tavera and her mother were both shot in the head by one of Filipinas' most loyal, most passionate patriot sons.

Notes

¹Roxas Felix, *The World of Felix Roxas: Anecdotes and Reminiscences of a Manila Newspaper Columnist, 1926-1936*. Translated by Angel Estrada and Vicente del Carmen. (1970), p.164.

²Nick Joaquin, "The Archetypal Filipino," *Weekend Magazine* (November, 1980), p.18.

³E. Arsenio Manuel, *Dictionary of Philippine Biography* (Quezon City: Filipiniana Publications, 1970), p.250.

⁴Ruby R. Paredes, "Ilustrado Legacy: The Pardo de Taveras of Manila," in McCoy, ed., *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* (Q.C.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994).

⁵Providing an outstanding critique of art history as a masculinist discourse, I have here in mind Griselda Pollock's dictum, "Art history itself is to be understood as a series of representational practices which actively produce definitions of sexual differences and contribute to the present configuration of sexual politics and power relations. Art history is not just indifferent to women; it is a masculine discourse, party to the social construction of sexual difference." Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the History of Art* (Routledge, 1988), p.12.

⁶Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminist, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," *Signs* 8, no.4 (Summer 1983), p.656.

⁷See Cesar Adib Majul, "Principales, Ilustrados, Intellectuals and the Original Concept of a Filipino Community," (*Asian Studies*, Vol.XV, April, August, December 1977:14).

⁸John N. Schumacher, S.J., *The making of a Nation: Essays on Nineteenth Century Filipino Nationalism* (Q.C.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991), 20.

⁹ Floro C. Quibuyen, *Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism: A Nation Aborted* (Q.C.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁰John N. Schumacher, "The Propaganda Movement, Literature, and the Arts," in *The Making of a Nation: Essays on Nineteenth Century Filipino Nationalism*. p.120.

¹¹Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement*, 1991, p.51.

¹²Vicente L. Rafael, "Nationalism, Imagery, and the Filipino Intelligentsia in the 19th Century," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1995), p.139.

¹³Graciano Lopez Jaena, *Speeches, Articles and Letters*. Translated and annotated by Encarnacion Alzona, Edited with additional annotations by Teodoro A. Agoncillo (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1994).

¹⁴"Nuestro parabien a las jovenes de Malolos" *Ecos de Ultramar Amor a España. La Solidaridad*, Vol.I, 1889. Translated by Guadalupe Fores-Guanzon (Fundacion Santiago, Philippines) p.9.

Congratulating the women for their initiatives, Rizal in his famous Letter to the Young Women of Malolos, links the education of women firmly to the task of Motherhood, which he ultimately viewed as a national service. Jose Rizal, "Message to the Young Women of Malolos," in *The Political and Historical Writings of Jose Rizal* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1965).

¹⁵Rizal's letter to Ferdinand Blumentritt, Paris, 10 April 1889. Reprinted in *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence* Volume I, 1886-1889 (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992).

Being far more critical of Spanish colonial rule and with greater foresight, Rizal privately realized sooner the futility the struggle for reforms and assimilation. See Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement*; Leon Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of Jose Rizal* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1998); Austin Coates, *Rizal-Filipino Nationalist and Patriot* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing, 1992).

¹⁶See, for example, Patrick Flores, *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (Q.C.: UP Office of Research Coordination, 1998); Flaudette May Datuin, Brenda Fajardo, Patrick D. Flores, Alice G. Guillermo, Rosa Maria M. Icacasi, Regalado T. Jose, Elena R. Mirano, Elenita S. Ordoñez, Norma A. Respicio, eds. *Art and Society* (Q.C.: University of the Philippines Press, 1997).

¹⁷Patrick Flores, 1998, *ibid.* p.29.

¹⁸Alice Guillermo, quoted in Flores, 1998, *ibid.* p.29.

¹⁹Pollock, 1988, *op.cit.* p.5.

²⁰Several and almost identical versions of this painting exist. For the purpose of this essay, I am using the version that I viewed hanging in the Lopez Memorial Museum entitled *España y Filipinas*, though the painting is also known as *España guiando a Filipinas en el camino del progreso* which refers to the copy hanging at the Biblioteca Museo Balaguer in Spain, dated 1891. This version may be seen as Luna's first serious undertaking of this theme, being the result of a commission by the Ministry of Ultramar, purportedly after the minister had seen an earlier version which Luna presented as a personal gift to Pedro Paterno, a prominent member of the expatriate Filipino community and *Propagandista* which is not extant. The theme seems to have occupied Luna throughout the period from 1886 to 1891.

²¹The colors of the women's clothes may be coded to signify a flag or refer to revolutionary France whose principles inspired the *ilustrados*.

²²Rizal's speech delivered at the banquet in Madrid in honor of the Filipino painters, Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo, June 1884 in *The Political and Historical Writings of Jose Rizal* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1965), p.20.

²³Speech delivered by D. Graciano Lopez Jaena on Feb. 25, 1889 on the subject: "The Philippines in the Universal Exposition of Barcelona," in *La Solidaridad*, Feb. 28, 1889 (*La Solidaridad*, Volume I, Translated by Guadalupe Fores-Guanzon. Fundacion-Santiago, Philippines).

²⁴Responding to the charge of Governor General Terrero accusing the *ilustrados*, in particular Rizal, of being ungrateful sons of Mother Spain, Rizal writes: "And with respect to the Mother Country, we also accept the qualification of ungrateful sons, if by ingratitude is meant to say the truth so that the *abuses of her other sons* might be corrected (**my emphasis**), so that she might prepare for the future, and so that she may not be responsible for the numerous abuses that others commit in her name. We believed we acted well; we speak loyally; we believed that our Mother Country was a nation that loved truth and not a tyrant that abhorred it." Jose Rizal, "Ingratitude" in *La Solidaridad*, 15 January 1890 (Vol. II, *La Solidaridad*, *ibid.*)

²⁵Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983), pp. 5 and 7, respectively.

²⁶For a comprehensive list of Luna's finished canvases during this period, see Santiago Pilar, *Juan Luna: The Filipino as Painter* (Manila: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1980) and E. Arsenio Manuel, *Dictionary of Philippine Biography* Vol. II (Quezon City: Filipiniana Publications), p. 246.

²⁷This was certainly true of the Pardo de Tavera brothers, particularly T. H. Pardo de Tavera. Ruby Paredes provides an insightful account on the genealogy of the Pardo de Tavera family. See Ruby Paredes, "The Ilustrado Legacy: The Pardo de Taveras of Manila," *op.cit.*

²⁸Letter from Rizal to his parents, Paris, dated 1 January 1886 in *Letters between Rizal and Family Members 1876-1896* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1993), p. 204.

²⁹Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, "Where's the Patis?" in Nakpil, Carmen, *Woman Enough and other Essays* (Q.C.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), p. 119.

³⁰Letter from Rizal to his parents, Madrid, dated 13 February 1883, *ibid*, p. 91. Pansol is a spa town located near Rizal's family home, Calamba, Laguna.

³¹Doña Juliana Gorricho's Kitchen Notebooks, unpagged blue notebook. Pardo de Tavera Room, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

³²Vicente L. Rafael, 1995, *op.cit*, p. 149

³³Letter of Rizal to the "Indios Bravos," Paris, dated 5 October 1889, p. 380.

³⁴Ambeth Ocampo, "Who did Luna Pass off as his Wife?" in Ambeth Ocampo, *Looking Back* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1990), p. 169.

³⁵Already a marginal figure in the famous photograph of "Los Indios Bravos" depicting Juan Luna, Rizal and Valentin Ventura in fencing gear, the most common reproductions of this picture cut out Paz altogether.

³⁶From an interview with Mita Pardo de Tavera, granddaughter of T.H., I do not, however, believe this to be entirely the case. Although my field researches, thus far, have been unsuccessful in turning up any of her personal documents, such as her letters, the extant copies of Paz's letters quoted by the family's prosecution lawyer Felix Decorí during Juan Luna's trial, I have been more fortunate in finding extremely rare photographs of their wedding and domestic life.

³⁷From an interview with Mara Pardo de Tavera, Mita's daughter, who inherited these rather sad relics of her great grandaunt.

³⁸This painting on view is entitled *Normandie* and is undated.

³⁹Santiago Pilar, *Juan Luna: The Filipino as Painter*. Edited and with an Introduction by Nick Joaquin (Manila: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, Inc., 1980), p. 187.

⁴⁰Description from "Cour d'appel de Paris Chambre des mises en accusation no. 1750," Novembre 1892, courtesy of Ambeth Ocampo.

⁴¹"La Defensa de Don Juan Luna Novicio por el abogado Mr. Danet ante el jurado de Paris." Reprinted in *La Solidaridad*, 15 Abril 1893.

⁴²Ambeth Ocampo observes “Underneath this crime of passion is money. Luna may have been a prize winning painter, but he did not earn enough to support a family in Paris. He could not provide the comfortable upper-class lifestyle that his wife knew from childhood ... Most of the household expenses were shouldered by Juliana Gorricho not Luna.” Ambeth Ocampo, “Parricide in Paris: The Luna Murders.” Unpublished paper delivered at the Embassy of the Philippines, Paris.

⁴³Pearlie Rose Baluyut, “Juan Luna in Paris, 1884-1893: A Representation and Narrative of Becoming.” Unpublished MA Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997.

⁴⁴Juan Luna’s letter to Rizal, Paris, dated 12 October 1890 in *Letters between Rizal and his Fellow Reformists*, *op.cit.* p. 499.

⁴⁵Freud quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (Virago Press, 1995), p. 147.

⁴⁶“La Defensa de Don Juan Luna Novicio por el abogado Danet,” *op.cit.*

⁴⁷“Absolucion del pintor Luna,” *La Solidaridad*, Madrid, 15 Febrero de 1893.

⁴⁸Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Q.C.: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979), esp. pp. 101-106.