

From Self-Orientalization to Revolutionary Patriotism

Paterno's Subversive Discourse
Hidden in Romances

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Abstract

Paterno's writing often exhibits a strange combination of overly melodramatic, hypersensual, and trite language with fierce and patriotic calls to arms, as if the first were mere camouflage for the second. However, the intense contradictions of his political life and his reputation as a turncoat, a sycophant first to the Spanish and then to the American colonial authorities, makes the reader question the authenticity of this nationalistic language, even though it is, in fact, a leitmotiv in his literature. Whether it is part of literary romanticism's penchant for nationalism and love of individual and collective freedom, or the personal reaction of a Filipino subject under subsequent foreign occupations, it is the reader's call to decide. I argue, however, that it is important not to see these calls to insurrection and national liberation as isolated cases, like in his opera *La alianza soñada*, but as a resourceful (sometimes opportunistic) commonplace that appears time and again in all his fiction throughout his literary career.

Keywords

Pedro Paterno, revolution, subversive discourse, patriotism, self-orientalization, exoticization, Romantic *cursilería*, national allegory, national identity, romance, pioneer, *La alianza soñada*, *Aurora Social*, *Boda a la moderna*, *La braveza del Bayani*, *La dalaga virtuosa*, *La fidelidad*, *Maring*, *amor de obrero Filipino*, *Ninay*, *Sampaguitas*, *Los últimos románticos en la erupción del volcán de Taal*.

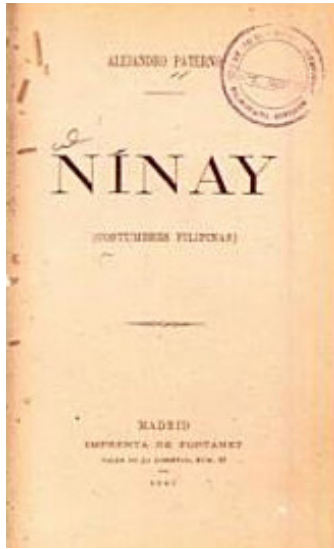


Fig. 1. The title page of *Ninay*, the first Filipino novel, written by Pedro A. Paterno in 1885



Fig. 2. Book cover of *Los Ultimos Romanticos* written by Pedro A. Paterno in 1911



Fig. 3. The Philippine negotiators for the Pact of Biak-na-Bato. Seated from left to right: Pedro Paterno and Emilio Aguinaldo with five companions (left to right: Tomas Mascardo, Celis, Jose Ignacio Pau, Antonio Montenegro and Mariano Llanera); Taken from the U-M Library Digital Collections. Philippine Photographs Digital Archive, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan.

When reading Filipino writer and politician Pedro A. Paterno's (1857-1911) works, contemporary readers may be turned off by an outdated *cursilería*, a somewhat tacky sappiness for today's standards, which was, however, at the time common among other Spanish-language Filipino writers, as well as Romantic writers in Spain (where Paterno moved as a teenager and stayed for some twenty-two years working as a lawyer) and sometimes also among *Modernista* writers in Latin America.¹ After all, these transpacific literary influences (or transatlantic, since Paterno lived in Spain for decades) between Latin American Modernistas and Filipino *ilustrados* are possible if we consider the chronology of the publication of key texts by the Modernista forefathers, including José Martí's *Ismaelillo* (1882), *Versos Sencillos* (1891), and "Nuestra América" (1891), as well as Rubén Darío's *Azul...* (1888), *Prosas profanas y otros poemas* (1901), and *Cantos de vida y esperanza. Los cisnes y otros poemas* (1905). Most precede the publication of Paterno's fiction. The fact that in Paterno's case, this *cursilería* is perhaps even more pronounced than in the writings of other Filipino authors may be part of the reason why he is a nearly forgotten figure in Philippine letters. But Filipino historian Resil Mojares proposes another reason for his decline: "That Paterno has sunk to insignificance has to do in part with his politics. Nationalist historiography has cast him as symbol of the class that betrayed the Philippine Revolution" (3).

In any case, the melodramatic and overly romanticized exchanges between idealized lovers (exaggeratedly brave and strong young men; exceedingly delicate and beautiful young women) in these romances hide surprisingly subversive passages, where one reads the word "feminism" and passages encouraging readers to take arms against foreign powers oppressing the Philippines. Thus, even though it is not entirely clear what Paterno means by "feminism," the collection of novellas *Aurora Social* is dedicated "To the angelical single women of the Liceo de Manila, who preserve the Filipino Soul and are flag bearers of feminism in the country."² Yet the purported fervent patriotism of some of these passages does not reflect who Pedro A. Paterno truly was. Jorge Mojarro has described him as "a dexterous social climber" (n.p.) and Adam Lifshay as a "Seditious Sycophant" in the title of the chapter dedicated to him. And to use the Filipino historian Ambeth Ocampo's

words in an article titled “Looking Back: The First Filipino Novel,” included on 4 December 2005 in his bi-weekly editorial page column “Looking Back,” in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*:

Remember, Paterno was one of the greatest “balimbing” (turncoat) in history (perhaps he was the original “balimbing” in Philippine political history). He was first on the Spanish side, then when the declaration of independence was made in 1898, he “wormed his way to power” and became president of the Malolos Congress in 1899, then sensing the change in political winds after the establishment of the American colonial government, he became a member of the First Philippine Assembly.

Indeed, in spite of Paterno’s importance and visibility in several key episodes of the birth of the Filipino nation and as a pioneer in the history of Filipino literature (his *Ninay* was the first novel written by a native Filipino in any language and his *Sampaguitas y otras poesías varias* [Jasmines and Various Other Poems, 1880], the first Filipino Spanish-language poetry collection), his reputation was tainted by this proclivity to political opportunism and to become an obsequious collaborator first of the Spanish and then of the American colonizers.

Subversive discourse, however, must not have been foreign to Pedro Paterno, whose wealthy Chinese-Filipino father, the reformist Máximo Paterno, was exiled in the Mariana Islands for ten years for allegedly participating in the 1872 Cavite Mutiny, often considered the first step of the Filipino nationalism that would lead to the 1896 Philippine Revolution. His younger brother, Maximino, was also arrested for insurrection by Spanish authorities (Mojares 18). And Pedro Paterno himself, was, like José Rizal, accused, during the Trial of Rizal in 1896, of inciting the Katipunan (a secret Filipino revolutionary society founded by patriots in 1892 and aimed at gaining independence from Spain through revolution led by Andrés Bonifacio) by writing about pre-Hispanic Philippine history and exalting Tagalog civilization.³ In particular, Paterno’s strange study *La antigua civilización de Filipinas* [*The Ancient Civilization of the Philippines*] was blamed for promoting rebellion against Spanish rule by celebrating pre-His-

panic Tagalog culture. As Mojares points out, “It must have rankled too that despite his identification with Spain he was still, in Spanish eyes, a ‘native’” (19).

Five years later, Paterno would volunteer to become a mediator between Spanish Governor-General Fernando Primo de Rivera and the Filipino rebels, managing to convince the revolutionary leader, General Emilio Aguinaldo, to sign the Pact of Biak-na-Bato on 14 December 1897 which ended the revolution and sent its leaders into exile in Hong Kong. According to Eugenio Matibag, Paterno’s brokering of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato and his presidency of the Malolos Congress ensured “the *ilustrado* hegemony over the islands in the twentieth century” (37). To the Spanish authorities’ surprise, when Paterno returned to Manila, he requested, in return for his mediation, to be granted a dukedom, a seat in the Spanish Senate, and payment for his services in Mexican pesos; in the end, he only received the Grand Cross of Isabel.

In September 1898, he was elected head of the Malolos Congress (the insurgent Revolutionary Congress of the Revolutionary Government of the Philippines) where Filipino nominal independence was ratified, until he was captured by the Americans in April 1901. Paterno would later be released from prison after swearing loyalty to the United States’ rule. Under US rule, Paterno became vice-president of the Nationalista Party and representative of a district in Laguna in the Philippine Assembly. Eventually, he advocated for US colonial tutelage and continued to support it as editor and owner of the newspaper *La Patria* (1902-1903) and as the collaborationist author of the pro-American libretto for the play *La alianza soñada* [*The Dreamed Alliance*] (1902), the first Filipino opera, and *Pagdating ni Taft* (1905). He even dedicated the 1907 English translation of his 1885 novel *Ninay*, “To Mrs. William H. Taft.”

In light of these contradictory life choices, this essay will analyze the significance of this mixture of romance and revolutionary discourse in Paterno’s understudied works, which are among the first in Spanish-language Filipino literature.

Pioneering Filipino Historical and Ethnographic Studies

In both his literary and his ethnographic works, Paterno exhibits an avid interest in highlighting the richness of native Filipino civilization before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. Likewise, he celebrates and explores the peculiarities of contemporary Filipino culture. In his 1911 novella *La fidelidad*, for instance, Paterno follows the *costumbrista* tradition, describing the generalized happiness of the population during the “*Fiesta de San Pablo*,” the colorful decorations with Filipino and Japanese lanterns in the shape of fish, stars, or flowers, the bands that play *pasodobles*, stands selling inexpensive toys, people eating *lechón* (suckling pig), fireworks, and many more. He also includes passages where we learn about Filipino superstitions, customs, and traditions, in a *costumbrista* language (he actually uses the word “*costumbres*” in the subtitle of his first novel *Ninay* [*costumbres Filipinas*]), that is reminiscent of *Tradiciones peruanas* [*Peruvian Traditions*] (1863-1910) by Ricardo Palma. Considering that Paterno’s publication of *Aurora Social*, *La fidelidad*, *Los últimos románticos*, *La braveza del Bayani*, and *Ninay* took place between 1910 and 1917, it would not be too far-fetched to contemplate the possibility that he had access to the Peruvian’s writings while he was living in Madrid. As is common in Palma’s *Tradiciones*, Paterno sometimes keeps a dialogue with his readers and includes sociopolitical commentary in his novellas. While Palma situates his *tradiciones* in the colonial (sometimes precolonial) past of Peru, Paterno locates some of his stories in the present or in a recent past of a Hispanized archipelago, but also in a remote or mythological, ancient, indigenous past before the Spanish colonization, which he vindicates as worthy of study.

In any case, Paterno’s nostalgic reconstruction of the precolonial past may have hidden a political agenda. According to Matibag, his use of *costumbrismo* to romanticize and exoticize his native country, particularly in *Ninay*, had the goal of introducing Filipino culture to Spanish readers as “ancient and robust, presenting a mixed or hybrid culture of elements identifiable as Malay, aboriginal, Chinese, Spanish, and Indian” (41). This way, Filipino and Spanish cultures are subtly presented in equal terms for the European reader while simultaneously asserting belonging to the Spanish nation and

beginning the articulation of a discourse of national identity. John Blanco also explains that Filipino authors' liberal use of the *novela de costumbres* is quite different from their Spanish peers' approach, particularly regarding the subject matter chosen. Filipino *ilustrados* focus on precolonial, pre-enlightened people, in contrast with Spanish *costumbristas'* interest in the construction of the idea of nation through the literary representation of the new socioeconomic and political changes experienced by the contemporary, urban middle class in the metropolis (Blanco 210-11).

Paterno's writing is sometimes also reminiscent of a watered-down version of another Peruvian work: the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales de los Incas*, where the author describes himself as a person who is familiar with both civilizations, the Inca and the Spanish, and who is trying to correct the errors of historians, thus teaching the reader about a great civilization that has just been destroyed by the Spaniards upon their arrival in 1521. It is difficult to know, however, whether Paterno read the *Comentarios reales*. In any case, as a Filipino version of Garcilaso, and taking advantage of the triple epistemic privilege of first, being Filipino and having been brought up in the Philippines, secondly, having lived and studied in Spain for many years, and thirdly, having travelled the world, Paterno also wants to bring his homeland to the imaginary of Peninsular intellectuals, all the while attempting to insert the antiquity of Tagalog civilization within the march of universal history. Incidentally, this same rhetorical strategy was also attempted in Peru, in another indigenous work, Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala's *El primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno*. And like Poma de Ayala does referring to his own ethnic group, Paterno also claims that indigenous Tagalogs had the equivalent of Christian beliefs even before the Spanish colonization. However, Paterno probably did not have access to this manuscript, since it remained forgotten in Denmark's Royal Library until it was discovered in 1907 by German scholar Richard Pietschmann. It was not published until 1936.

Another literary text by Paterno that is full of ethnographic information is his melodrama *Ninay (costumbres filipinas)*, written when he was only twenty-three years old. In it, the autobiographical protagonist asks a young

man named Taric who is narrating Nínay's story to give all sorts of details about Filipino culture and history as if he were talking only to Europeans. In addition to this narrative excuse, numerous footnotes and several lengthy appendices complete the excessive cultural translations for the non-Filipino reader and comparisons with other world cultures. At one point, one has the impression that the love story is nothing but an excuse to insert all these numerous notes and explanations of Philippine history, traditions, customs, and folklore. Interestingly, as in other works by Paterno, Filipino culture seems to be seen, not by a native Filipino, but through the colonizer's eyes. Thus, we read about women with "slanted eyes;"⁴ cholera is referred to as "the Asiatic illness;"⁵ there is "an amazing, Oriental luxury;"⁶ Asians are essentialized in "the old traditions of the Orient;"⁷ and many others. Yet, Matibag considers *Nínay* a key text to understand how Paterno used costumbrista narrative tools to produce a "textualized codification of a Hispanized Philippine culture" (36) and "a foundational discourse of an emergent national culture" (37) built upon hybrid Spanish and Asiatic cultural characteristics. Paterno, in his search for a unique national identity, becomes a sort of medium of the Philippines' "spectral nationalism" as an overseas possession first of Spain and then of the United States: "a ghostly image of Filipino national identity is embodied in the evocation of *Nínay* but contextualized by the reminder of her death and her survivors' remembrance, such that the disembodied *Nínay* figures forth the spirit of a nation suspended between worlds, and allegorically between the colonial despair and the nationalist hope" (Matibag 45).

Regardless of the evident lack of scientific rigor in his autoethnographic (to use the Victorianist critic James Buzard's term) publications or the debatable aesthetic merit of his literary production, there is no question that Paterno was a pioneer of Filipino literature and ethnography, that he was proud to write as a Filipino, and that he celebrated his ancestors' culture in literary and ethnographic writings such as *La antigua civilización Tagalog* (1887, the same year of the *Exposición de Filipinas* in Madrid), *Los Itas* (1890), *El cristianismo en la antigua civilización tagalog* (1892), *El Barangay* (1892), *La familia tagalog en la historia universal* (1892), *El individuo tagalog y su arte en la*

exposición hispano-americana (1893), and *Los tagalog* (1894). Even the inclusion of the word “*Sampaguitas*” (white flowers used by Filipino women to make necklaces or headbands) in the title of his poetry collection suggests his intention to create an authentic Filipino literature. Mojares astutely speculates, however, that “Paterno’s turn to the homeland may have been occasioned as well by his awareness that it was in speaking *of* and *for* the country that he could be a consequential voice in the metropole” (10).⁸ His questionable motivation or academic failures notwithstanding, it would be fair to consider Paterno one of the initiators of a Filipino proto-nationalism and of an incipient inward look toward national identity in Philippine letters.

Romantic *Cursilería* and Self-Orientalization

Paterno fell into a frequent self-orientalization of his own ethnic group in several of his texts. Tellingly, he was a collector of Filipino and other “Oriental” artifacts and antiques that he exhibited on various occasions in Madrid. However, Mojares—in part basing his opinion on the fact that Paterno was one of the few Filipino intellectuals in Madrid who did not protest the exhibition of non-Hispanicized native Filipinos as “living specimens” in the 1887 *Exposición de Filipinas*—argues that “While he promoted an appreciation for Philippine artistic achievements, he did so out of diletantism, exoticism, and vague sentiments of patriotism” (13). Perhaps his long stay abroad led Paterno to see his people through the eyes of the Western colonizer.

In some of Paterno’s works like *Ninay*, the appearance of Orientalist motives is only sporadic. There is, for example, a description of an Indian harem (or *mahl*) in Appendix C of this novel. By contrast, in other cases the Orientalist outlook is more pervasive. In his novella *La fidelidad*, for instance, we first find an idyllic relationship between a young, humble, Filipino fisherman, Paco, and his beautiful fiancée, Trínig. Then, after Paco suspects that Trínig may have drowned during a storm at sea, he loses his mind and obsessively goes to the beach everyday hoping to find her. In reality, however, his beloved fiancée was saved by a rich and handsome fisherman named Daniel with whom Trínig will live, surrounded by all kinds

of luxury, for several years in his hometown of Lipa, in Batangas. Years later, when Trining returns to Manila and finds Paco in an insane asylum, she decides to leave Daniel and reunite with her first love, even though he is now insane. It is understood in the denouement, however, that her former fiancé eventually recovers his sanity and that they will live happily ever after.

The aforementioned sappy tone in Paterno's fiction (and poetry) begins early in the first paragraph of the romance *La fidelidad*: "And the fisherman and the fisherman's daughter recognized each other in the shadows, under the soft starlight. The waves, in high tide, fell rowdy over the beach; their foam later dissolved, white, vaporous, in a rumor of *tapis* [aprons], of *sinamays* [fabric used to make traditional Filipina blouses], and caresses."⁹ From the beginning, as is evident, the author does not refrain from using words in Tagalog, which are sometimes explained in the text (and therefore subordinated to Spanish), while others are left untranslated, making the non-Tagalog speaker guess the meaning from the context. This Tagalog vocabulary proudly asserts Filipino culture while simultaneously providing the text with a Filipino atmosphere and supposed authenticity, in spite of the fact that Filipino daily life is obviously being romanticized. In particular, Filipino women are often Orientalized, perhaps for the sensual titillation of non-Filipino readers. On the other hand, the vocabulary used by the characters sometimes lacks credibility: Paco, for instance, tells his fiancée that the day's catch has been "admirable" (10), a word not normally expected from a humble fisherman in this situation.

Another novella, *La dalaga virtuosa y el Puente del Diablo* [*The Virtuous Single Woman and the Bridge of the Devil*] (1910), subtitled *Leyenda filipina* [*Filipino Legend*], opens with scientific overtones, explaining how, a million years ago, the Philippines was part of the Asian continent and how there used to be elephants on the archipelago. Incidentally, as Mojares reveals, Paterno's many books "on Philippine culture and history were judged an embarrassment by his contemporaries from the day they saw print" (3) because they lacked scientific rigor and because he allegedly invented sources. In any case, before moving on to narrate the legend mentioned in the subtitle, Paterno delves into native religious beliefs before the Spanish colonization. The

third chapter describes an exoticized and sexualized Tagalog young virgin naked by the shores of a lagoon. In an Orientalist fashion, the woman is objectified through the description of her physical beauty and sensuality, as well as the fetishization of her virginity:

They say that she was white as the moonshine, slender as a *bonga* [betel palm], sweet as the honey in our sugarcane. They say that her eyes were languid, that her full lips were red, her cheekbones wide, her breasts divine, her hair blonde and long, so long that she would drag it, loose, on the surface of the water, and her adorable feet and hands, and her walking, were all poetry and all about her, anyway, was divine and Oriental (11-12).

The description of the young Tagalog woman's whiteness and blondeness, together with the use of the word "Oriental," are again indicative of how ingrained Western standards of beauty imposed by Spanish colonization were in the author's worldview or, perhaps, of the fact that he had a Spanish (instead of a Filipino) reader in mind. Paterno, however, resorts to a benevolent type of Orientalism, which is common in Spain and Latin America, in which "the Orientals" are essentialized and exoticized, but without the repressive and manipulative intention of demonizing or portraying them as lazy, deceitful, or irrational. One of the many definitions provided by Edward Said for Orientalism was the following: "A Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). In Paterno's literature, however, the Orientalist discourse that romanticizes Filipino characters into essentializing archetypes is clearly not a strategic tool for colonial domination or for the justification of imperialism.

Both the critic Julia A. Kushigian in her book on Hispanic Orientalism and the author Juan Goytisolo in the preface to the 2002 Spanish translation of the Edward Said's *Orientalism* provide a similar explanation of the reasons Hispanic Orientalism differs from its French and English counterparts: "[it] does not present the Oriental society as static and reactionary" (Kushigian 109); rather, it stems from "a spirit of veneration even when it signifies an implied respect for the 'enemy'" (Kushigian 14). The main traits of Hispanic Orientalism, according to Kushigian, are the following:

(1) its open-endedness that promotes an unstable relationship between East and West, wherein its elements are in a constant state of flux and renovation linking the past to the present, reality to fantasy, and so on, thereby never presenting a complete and closed image, (2) its polyglot nature imbuing itself with a cultural and creative consciousness that actively arises from a history of cultural and military invasions, as much of the Iberian Peninsula as of Hispanic America, and (3) its persistent dialogue with the East and inter-animation of images, reinforced by intertextuality or an exchange among works unfettered by genre boundaries, that seeks not to erase distinctions but to celebrate them, thereby bringing the Other closer (14).

Although these traits certainly apply to the three authors studied in Kushigian's book, in my view, there are plenty of examples of a less "respectful" and "venerating" Orientalism in Hispanic literature. But this is not Paterno's case, whose literary use of Orientalism is indeed intended to translate the virtues of Filipino culture and people for the foreign reader.

Returning to *La dalaga virtuosa y el Puente del Diablo*, when the Devil, disguised as a young man, tries to seduce the naked young woman, she promises to reciprocate his love if he builds a stone bridge in the lagoon for her. To her surprise, the Devil builds it in less than fifteen minutes. She then flees and takes refuge in her temple. Frustrated because he cannot enter the temple, the Devil now disguises himself as a beautiful woman, but once again the woman does not fall into his trap. Then, he brings the waters of the lagoon closer to the temple until its walls collapse. Fortunately for the young woman, this time she is rescued by a Tagalog god. In the end, the devil transforms himself into a caiman and decides to live in the lagoon until present day. This is, according to the narrator, the legend of the Bridge of the Devil. We learn that, at the time of the publication of Paterno's book, visitors could still see the bridge as well as the temple in that area.

In the second novella included in *Aurora Social*, titled *Maring, amor de obrero filipino* [*Maring, Filipino Worker's Love*] (1910) and dedicated to Filipino workers, the beautiful protagonist, Maring, is again Orientalized: "Maring raises her arms to begin the dance. She raises, slightly lifted, her bust, elevating her breasts, which showed their softness, snaking her body into a spiral column and spilling around herself her naïve voluptuousness,

following the rhythm of the music.”¹⁰ As if embarrassed by his own lascivious, quasi-voyeuristic description of the fictional woman, the narrator immediately clarifies (in a rather ridiculous manner) that he is not describing a pornographic scene, since the virginal movements of the Oriental dance were similar to those of Saint Theresa dancing in front of other nuns in the convent. Yet the story proceeds to Orientalize not only the protagonist but, by extension, all Filipino women:

Maring, like all Filipino women, pleases. She pleases more than the really beautiful women of other climates. Because Maring possesses a gift of nature, something special, which is her oriental grace. What does it consist of? We don't know. Perhaps her wet lips, which promise to delight? Perhaps her caressing smile, which attracts the souls? Perhaps her flashing eyes, which make the senses faint? We don't know (83-83).

After comparing the beauty of Filipinas with the movements of animals, the narrator insists, again as if seeing his own people through the eyes of the colonizer, that Filipino female workers are “Oriental grace itself.”¹¹ And several other passages exoticize Maring claiming, for example, that she does not need the tortuous corset to voluptuously mark their trembling breasts (85).

In one last example of a romance in which Filipino women are Orientalized and sexualized, the 1911 novella *Los últimos románticos en la erupción del volcán de Taal* [*The Last Romantics in the Eruption of the Taal Volcano*], we find the passionate and sensual love story of Andong Katig and the beautiful Chilang, who elope, planning to make love at the top of the Taal Volcano. As is typical of unfulfilled Romantic love, right before they can make love, the volcano erupts and they die buried under the lava. In one of the many instances in the plot where the Filipino woman's body is sexualized and objectivized for the Western reader, the protagonist, Chilang, calling herself “Oriental,” thinks to herself:

And wasn't she, then,
a sweet virgin, dying of daydreaming, wounded
of sensuality, a visionary of love, when
during the day, in the sunlight, when waking up

on the white bed full of aroma of *sampaga* and
of her ardent and oriental flesh, hugging
the pillow, would kiss her lace, believing
to feel in them the breath of another
flesh, the heartbeat of another soul? Or when
at night, before the bevelled moon of her
wardrobe, stripped naked, to contemplate herself,
her color of milk and pale rose bushes in the
formidable triumph of sublime lines and slenderness? (28-20)

As will be seen in the next section, this overly sentimental and corny language contrasts with the aggressive, nationalistic, and patriotic tone of Paterno's revolutionary calls to arms, in which he appeals to Filipino men's patriotism and willingness to generously give their life for the Fatherland.

National Allegory and the Discourse of Revolutionary Patriotism

Whereas in *Maring, amor de obrero filipino*, Maring is described as the “very image of the Motherland,”¹² her boyfriend, Berto, represents an archetypal fearless Filipino. Not only is he unafraid of fierce beasts, but he even challenges the factory inspector at the cigarette factory where he and Maring work, when he tries by all means to steal his girlfriend from him. One can certainly read between the lines that Paterno is proposing Berto as the brave man whom every young revolutionary Filipino should emulate. Besides exhibiting supernatural strength while saving several citizens from animal attacks, the hero withstands the attacks of the inspector's henchmen and even dares to strike him in public. Towards the end of the story, when Máximo, the evil factory inspector, tries to rape Maring while the cigarette factory is burning, Berto suddenly appears and strangles him with his own hands. The novella, therefore, is a national allegory where Máximo represents the usurping power (the colonialism of Spain and the United States), Maring is the nation, and Berto, young Filipinos whose historical destiny is to return the homeland to its legitimate owners: Filipino men. However, Berto's physical description implicitly suggests that the process of national liberation will be tortuous: “Contrasting with her, so ideal, was the figure of Berto, her

boyfriend. Berto was handsome, robust, even taller than she, with very big eyes and very red lips; but all tanned, as an Indian, as if over his Herculean back, would *one day destiny put a cross*" (6-7 emphasis mine)¹³

Along the way, *Maring, amor de obrero filipino* celebrates pre-colonization culture, with explanations of Tagalog religious beliefs and of the *duplo*, the traditional Filipino vigil. The novella incorporates, at one point, a more directly subversive language. Thus, when an American officer tries to run over a poor worker by the factory entrance, the narrator describes the pitiful and reprehensible reaction of the Filipino:

The cowed worker, intimidated by the policeman's big body and baton, even though he had done nothing wrong, and even though they were spitting on his rights, surrendered passively, with that damned passivity that seems to be a sign of slavery among us as a result of our ignorance of the rights and civic duties of each individual; because ignorance intimidates (111).¹⁴

Only Berto, who knows his duties but also his rights, defies the American policeman when the latter orders him to be quiet. Time and again, Berto refuses to obey and even threatens to strike the foreigner. Incidentally, in a self-promotional sentence, Paterno argues that Berto knows his rights because "everyday he learned that Filipino Citizen Manual,"¹⁵ a textbook written by the author himself, under the title *Gobierno civil de las Islas Filipinas o Manual del ciudadano filipino*, published also in 1910. This passage, more appropriate for a political rally than for the language of a romance, is soon followed by similar insurrectionary arguments. Thus, when Máximo fires Berto for saying "Long live Bernardo Carpio!"¹⁶ (a legendary strong figure in pre-colonial Philippine mythology who causes earthquakes) and hopes that the worker will become an indigent and his girlfriend Maring, a prostitute, his fearful co-workers step away scared by the inspector's wrath, a scene that spurs the narrator to declare that "those people were more scared of Máximo than of God! It is so true that slavery engender[s] tyrannies, that there are no slaves where oppressors don't exist!"(115).¹⁷

In the third story in the volume *Aurora Social*, the contrived romance *Boda a la moderna* [*Modern Day Wedding*] (1910), a young man named Don

Juan meets a woman named Judit and her mother on a train. Judit begins to tell him stories about the 1896 revolution against the Spaniards, which he missed as he was living in France. In an unconvincing denouement, they end up falling in love and getting married. Although this love story lacks verisimilitude, in reality it seems to be a mere narrative excuse to deliver the author's political ideology. Judit, becoming Paterno's mouthpiece, tells Don Juan about the events that changed the history of their country as well as the reason why Filipinos have gone from being considered mere *tulisanes* (bandits) to becoming free and honorable people: "Because we now know how to kill, we know how to die for our honor and dignity: we know how to defend our rights with bullets, against canons and machine guns" (35).¹⁸ Then, plausibly considering himself one of them, Paterno has his alter-ego Judit remind the reader that the patriots who led this dramatic change should never be forgotten.¹⁹ Judit continues to narrate General Emilio Aguinaldo's uprising, including heroic events such as the national episodes of Kaintu and Taytay, which she deems equivalent to those of Sagunto and Numancia in Spanish history.

Finally, Judit goes on to celebrate feminism (64) and the positive ways in which Filipino women changed. Instead of resigning themselves to submissively lamenting their misfortune, she explains, they now bravely take revenge and kill their enemies. Women travel by themselves because they have learned to defend themselves and to demand respect: "In today's Filipino home, they do not only preach submission, but also dignity, honor. Killing to defend the people's freedom! Killing for the fatherland: what a sweet way to die!"²⁰ Judit herself claims that she would not mind becoming a martyr for the fatherland and for the advancement of her people. More interestingly, the author, through his protagonist's voice, proposes Meiji Japan as a model to imitate. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) fought over the control of Manchuria and Korea had recently taken place and the Empire of Japan had shocked the world by defeating a European power, the Russian Empire. Now, perhaps implicitly condemning the colonial imposition of the United States soon after the end of Spanish rule, Paterno sees no reason why the Philippines could not follow Japan's footsteps: "Being

wise, artistic, or industrious is not enough for the Japanese people, it is not enough to be taken seriously and respected as one of the big, free nations, but it is enough to know how to kill, killing many white Russians and dying for their fatherland” (66).²¹

Renewed encouragement to young Filipinos to bravely die for their fatherland, like true patriots, abound in Paterno’s writing. Thus, another “novella” (which is, in reality, a brief short story) titled *La braveza del Bayani* [*The Bayani’s Bravery*] (1910) tells the romance between an old native warrior’s beautiful daughter, Bituin-Lupa, and her brave lover, Anak Irog. When the father, named Gat Lawin, returning from a war against the Muslim invaders, finds Anak Irog kissing his beloved daughter, he furiously challenges the young man to a duel. Anak Irog accepts but prefers to die rather than making his beloved Bituin-Lupa suffer with her father’s death. Impressed, the old man agrees to their marriage and even asks them to give him a brave grandson, closing the romance with an exalted celebration of the bravery mentioned in the title:

—May this arrow break
the heart of any grandson who does not know how to die
for our People’s freedom! (23)²²

Paterno, as stated, also wrote plays and operas. According to Lifshey, the plot of his play *La alianza soñada* ironically “called for a united stand by Filipinos to expel foreign invaders” (17), even though it was staged with governor (and future U.S. President) William Taft in the audience. In it, we see a mythical Muslim invasion of Luzon in the sixteenth century. Surrounded by dancing *anitos* (spirits or small gods), Lapu, an indigenous seer, dreams about a comet that turns into a group of stars similar to the US flag. He sees this as a sign of the future fraternal “dreamed alliance” in the title between the United States and the Philippines. We then learn about the outrage of three Tagalog villages, Pasig, Kainta, and Antipolo, after the Muslim invaders—in yet another Orientalist gesture by the author—demand them to surrender local virgins [*dalagas* or unmarried women] for their harems or else, they will burn the villages. After Tagalog leaders request

Lapu's advice, he recommends to secretly unite through a blood pact and to drink a magic potion he has created: "We would be more in number and in weapons, if we had a union. A well united people is always strong, and no one can defeat a united people" (30).²³ And later, "For our union; for our alliance, let's all die. Death to whomever retreats, death to traitors! Let's march, then, either triumph or death" (30).²⁴ One can imagine how Lapu's rhetoric, pronounced at the very moment of the American takeover of the archipelago, may have exalted the Filipino audience's thirst for freedom and independence. However, let us not forget that, as has been seen, Paterno used a similar rhetoric in previous works, even though he remained, all along, a collaborationist of the Spanish authorities. Moreover, even though in April 1901 Paterno was arrested by American authorities for leading the Malolos Congress, by the following year when his play *La alianza soñada* was performed, he was already the editor and owner of the openly pro-US rule newspaper *La Patria*.

In any case, finally united, the Tagalog leaders toast to dying for the fatherland and for the beloved Filipino people (a leitmotiv in Paterno's writing, as previously seen), to the beauty of their (once again exoticized) voluptuous maidens, and to Bathala, their name for God. In the fourth act, the virgins, who are now being held by the "Moors" of Borney, pour poison on the lusty invaders' drinks and then drink the poison themselves in desperation. Then we find Tarik, a defeated Filipino leader also being held captive who asks his beloved *dalaga* to kill him with a dagger; she does so before committing suicide. In the end, however, the united Filipino villagers manage to defeat the Muslim usurpers and to recover their "possession," the young virgins, celebrating it with the chant (perhaps, as Lifshy claims, in anticolonial defiance of Taft and the American audience present at the Zorrilla theater where the play was being performed), "Long live our freedom!" (26).²⁵ The fact that the actors spoke in Tagalog plausibly prevented the American audience from realizing what was being chanted. The drama closes—rather awkwardly—with the combination of the US and Filipino national anthems, Filipino characters hugging the Statue of Liberty, and with the protagonists forming the star-spangled banner on a rainbow.

According to Lifshy, the play allegorically (and, in his view, probably also unconsciously on the part of the author) encourages the audience to read between the lines that the “dreamed alliance” of the title is not really between the United States and the Philippines but among the three Tagalog villages: “It is only through the union advised by Lapu, the coming together as a single people, that Filipinos are able to regain their endangered land and their endangered virgins” (24). Lifshy further adds that the reference to the historical leader Lapu Lapu, who killed Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, celebrates the “iconic inaugural repulsion of invaders in the islands” (25), and therefore indirectly encourages historical resistance and the rebellious union of Filipinos against the American invaders. Paterno would later write a sequel opera to *La alianza soñada* titled *Magdapio [Fidelity Rewarded]*, which critics have also considered a propaganda play.

Conclusion

Overall, Paterno’s writing often exhibits a strange combination of overly melodramatic, hypersensual, and trite language with fierce and patriotic calls to arms, as if the first were mere camouflage for the second. However, the intense contradictions of his political life and his reputation as a turncoat, a sycophant first to the Spanish and then to the American colonial authorities, make the reader question the authenticity of this nationalistic language, even though it is, in fact, a leitmotiv in his literature. Whether it is part of literary romanticism’s penchant for nationalism and love of individual and collective freedom, or the personal reaction of a Filipino subject under subsequent foreign occupations, it is the reader’s call to decide. I argue, however, that it is important not to see these calls to insurrection and national liberation as isolated cases, like, say, in his opera *La alianza soñada*, but as a resourceful (sometimes opportunistic) commonplace that appears time and again in all his fiction throughout his literary career.

Notes

1. His full name was Pedro Alejandro Paterno y de Vera Ignacio, also spelled sometimes Pedro Alejandro Paterno y Debera Ignacio. Some references claim he was born on 27 February 1858.
2. “*A las dalagas angelicales del Liceo de Manila conservadoras del Alma Filipina y adalides del feminismo pátrio.*”
3. The *Kataas-taasan, Kagalang-galangan, Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* [“Supreme and Honorable Society of the Sons of the Nation”] was also known as Katipunan, or KKK.
4. “*Ojos rasgados*” (57).
5. “*El mal asiático*” (8).
6. “*Un lujo asombroso, oriental*” (46).
7. “*Las antiguas costumbres del Oriente*” (99).
8. Paterno’s hunger for glory is suggested in one of the poems included in his collection *Sampaguitas*:

Subiendo una alta montaña
Vi á la Fama encantadora.
Para ser grande, le dije,
¿Qué debo hacer, bella diosa?
—No sigas ningún ejemplo
Si quieres hallar la gloria;
Sé Platón ó sé Alejandro,
Que hallaron sendas ignotas.
No en copia servil te arrojes
Por la senda que otro explora,
Con la pluma de tus hechos
Escribe una nueva historia. (7)

9. “*Y el pescador y la hija del pescador se reconocieron en las sombras, bajo el suave brillar de las estrellas. Las olas, en el pleamar, caían alborotadas sobre la playa; sus espumas se deshacían luego, blancas, vaporosas, en rumor de tapis, de sinamays y caricias*” (9-10).
10. “*Maring levanta los brazos para comenzar el baile. Sube ligeramente erguido su busto, alzando más alto sus senos, que mostraron su morbidez, serpenteando su cuerpo en columna salomónica y derramando en torno voluptuosidad ingenua, al compás de la música*” (80).
11. “*La propia gracia oriental*” (84).

12. "Imagen de la propia Patria" (5).
13. "Contrastaba con ella, tan ideal, la figura de él, Berto, su novio. Era Berto hermoso, recio, aún más alto que ella, con ojos muy grandes y labios muy rojos; pero todo moreno, como indio, como si sobre sus espaldas hercúleas, alguna vez el destino, fuera a poner una cruz" (6-7).
14. "El obrero acobardado, intimidado ante el corpachón y la porra policiacas, aunque en nada había faltado, y sí a él le escupían al Derecho, se rendía pasivo, con esa maldita pasividad que entre nosotros parece ya signo de esclavitud por ignorar los derechos y deberes cívicos de cada individuo; pues, la ignorancia intimida" (111).
15. "Todos los días aprendía el Manual del Ciudadano Filipino" (111).
16. "¡Viva Bernardo Carpio!" (114).
17. "¡Tenía más miedo á Máximo, que a Dios, aquella gente! ¡qué cierto es que la esclavitud engendra tiranías, que donde no hay esclavos no existen opresores!" (115).
18. "Porque ahora sabemos matar, sabemos morir por nuestra honra y dignidad: sabemos defender nuestros derechos con balas, contra cañones y ametralladoras" (35).
19. One of his poems, included in the collection *Sampaguitas y poesías varias* (1917), professes the same idea:

¿Qué se hicieron los ínclitos varones
 Que legaron sus nombres á la historia?
 ¿Dónde encontrarlos regios panteones
 Que guardan sus cenizas y memoria?
 ¿Dónde esta con harapos y girones,
 Cual leve resto de su antigua gloria,
 La clámide á sus hombros suspendida,
 Más en sangre que en púrpura teñida? (25)

20. "En el presente hogar filipino no se predica únicamente la sumisión, sino la dignidad, el honor. ¡Matar por defender la libertad del pueblo! ¡Morir por la patria: qué dulce morir!" (65).
21. "Que no le vale al pueblo japonés el ser sabio, artista ó industrial, para ser considerado y respetado entre las Naciones libres y grandes, sino el saber matar, matar muchos blancos rusos y morir por su patria" (66).
22. "—¡Y sea esta la flecha que parta el / corazón del nieto, que no sepa morir por / la libertad de nuestro Pueblo! (23).
23. "Seríamos mayor en número y en armas, si tuviésemos unión. Un pueblo bien unido siempre es fuerte, y nadie puede con un pueblo unido" (30).
24. "Por nuestra unión; por nuestra alianza, muramos todos. Muerte al que retrocede ¡muera el traidor! Marchemos, pues, ó triunfar ó morir" (30).
25. "¡Viva nuestra libertad!" (26).

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