# Nations, Nationalisms and *Los últimos de Filipinas*: An Imperialist Desire for Colonialist Nostalgia

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Spain after World War II found itself isolated from the emerging Cold War order, a direct result of its support of the losing Axis powers. Scarred by the civil war that further plunged it into economic ruin, Generalissimo Franco was determined to pull his country out of recession and back into international scheme of things now run by postwar industrial powers such as the United States. The Spanish cinema in a nation of cinema addicts was the perfect vehicle for the said agenda, serving both as a lucrative idelogical state apparatus in disseminating the Francoist ideology while catering to popular needs. Released in 1945, Antonio Roman's *Los últimos de Filipinas* marked Spain's first phase of defascistization and was both a commercial and critical success. The film dramatizes and romanticizes the gallant resistance of 50 Spanish soldiers against the attack of Tagalog revolutionaries in Baler after American troops landed in the Philippines, Spain's last colony. *Los últimos de Filipinas*, an elegy to the passing colonial heritage, became Franco's tool for national reunification and international reintegration, all at the expense of a former colony and its people.

Antonio Román's 1945 film *Los últimos de Filipinas* (The Last from the Philippines/Last Stand in the Philippines) is part a body of cinematic works that marks "Spain's first phase of defascistization."[1] As an "authorized" film in General Francisco Franco's postwar nation-building project, the film seeks to valorize Spain's glorious past for the dual purpose of instilling national pride and stirring international interest in Spain's readiness for integration into the new world economic order. Set in its former colony the Philippines, Spain's last days of colonial involvement are renarrativized in the tropes of imperial heroism. Such heroism, however, is imbued with a colonialist nostalgia, since this attempt to reconstitute the nation's glorious colonial history was made during an era when Spain sorely lacked the industrialization and hegemony that are possessed by newer postwar imperial powers — the US and most western European nations. The film's turn of the century setting marks the historical end of Spain's colonial adventure. But as it cedes the Philippines to the US, the time is nevertheless transformed into the privileged moment of postwar memorialization of its colonial heritage: one characterized by valor and dignity, even in loss and defeat.[2] In the process, the film presents a way of erasing Spain's violent imperial history, especially experienced abroad; this erasure, in turn, is also a way

of refurbishing its national ethos in the first phase of defascistization. Thus, the film narrative and context conflate time and space in ways that are geared towards the constitution of a postwar national valor and international acceptance.

Two operations work in the film's conflation of time and space: an imperialist desire for the reconstitution of the lost empire, and a colonialist nostalgia for the utopian order in the colony.[3] Though concepts like imperialism and colonialism have come to be understood as the discursive institutionalization of effects and affects of lasting hierarchies of subjectivities, powers, and knowledges, in this essay the term imperialism will refer to a nation's global expansion through empire-building, while colonialism will refer to the enforcement of the empire within the localized space of the colony.[4] In this sense, imperialism is the language of empire, and colonialism the vernacular of the colony.

The psychoanalytic notions of desire and nostalgia further complicate the working of empire and colony. Desire is characterized by its impossibility and failure; the manifestations of ideal representation become unreachable for and unsatisfiable to the subject. As desire is a permanent state, so too is the consequent alienation from the object of desire. Spain's imperialist desire becomes a continuing state of aspiration, frustration, and alienation from its empire-building and the subsequent fall of the empire. Nostalgia is similarly imbued in a paradox: not only does destruction of the object lead to the mourning of what has been destroyed, but innocence is claimed in the aftermath. Spain's colonial nostalgia, therefore, refers to the loss of its colonies and the innocence assumed thereafter. Constructed around the masculinist ideals of valor and pride, such innocence effaces the literal and epistemic violence unleashed and experienced in the colony; moreover, the movement reverts not to the colonized but to the construction of ethos and subjectivity of the colonizer. What lingers is a lost vision of a utopian colony where hierarchical spaces of knowledge and power lie within the realm of the colonizers' prerogatives. What is mourned are the death, passage, and memory of a "traditional" colony. Thus, a colonialist nostalgia refers to the destruction and the memorialization of both the colonial violence and innocence, a dual mode of remembrance and forgetting in the narratives of nations and nationalisms.

In examining the rewriting of Spain's history in *Los últimos de Filipinas* for the national objective of "glorifying the national culture and its unification under the Francoist regime," this essay will argue that both imperialist desire and colonialist nostalgia are embedded within Spain's nation-space.[5] It will also explore the implications of that rewriting for the postcolonial relations between Spain and the Philippines, particularly since there is a dearth of materials on this topic. Specifically, I am interested in the way the Philippine nation, nationalism, and culture have been utilized for Spain's own national project. This paper foregrounds the issue of identity construction through othering, one that deliberately misrecognizes the Philippines' own nationalist project. The film's setting (1898) is significant for the Philippines, as political scientists and nationalist historians mark the moment as the founding of Asia's first republic.[6] The anti-colonial struggle waged against Spain becomes the unifying nationalist cause that paves the way for a macro-wide consolidation of diverse ethnic groups, classes, and regions. The founding moment, however, is dually marked — as the nation's birth, and as the onset of its consequent tutelage under the United States. This further complicates the analysis of Philippine society and culture, problematically described as "400 years of the convent and 50 years of Hollywood."

The essay begins with a discussion of nation formation and the limits by which such construction and imagination are possible. The interrelations between the film narrative and context, and the various times and spaces alluded to are illustrative of the problematics in which the nation has been constituted in cinema. I will outline these issues by using conjectural motifs in the film to show how the narrative produces Spain's national project while suppressing that of the Philippines'.

## Nations, Nationalisms and Cinema

While there is a general agreement with Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as an imagined community, what has been widely adapted in cinema studies, however, is film's taking over of print media in the technology by which to imagine the nation.[7] Two issues of content are elided in the process of emphasizing the "form" of imagination: the usage of vernacular and the historical context (Protestant Reformation). The vernacularization of print allowed not only the media to be widely disseminated to the people but also the shifting historical religious configuration to be understood by these readers. Technology, by itself,

does not produce the mechanism for imagination; the content of what is being "technologized" invariably matters too. The underlying premise of content is a political consciousness. In Anderson's analysis, it is a resultant shift in linguistic and religious affinities that eventually produces the grid for the imagination of community in the poststructuralist sense, or the birth of nation-states in the socio-political sense. What I am emphasizing here is the absence of a discussion linking technology (film) to what is being technologized (political consciousness); in short, a linking of film's form with the content of nationalism.

Political consciousness relates to the nationalist project of identity formation through differentiation. This means that subaltern identity is constructed in relation both to the hegemonic identity and to other subaltern identities. Nationalism is a conscious political project because it seeks to actualize the transformation of structures. However, nationalism also comprises a political unconscious component because it is emotive and constituted on the individual level. The nationalist unconscious may be thought of as the individual's everyday practice of nationalism, a parole in the langue of nationalism. Such utterances of the conscious and unconscious kinds underscore the constitution of the nation; as Ernest Renan says, "a nation's existence is a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life."[8] Individuals, as Anderson similarly mentions of communities, therefore, "are to be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined."[9]

The various "styles" are linked to the various ways nations, nationalisms, and cinemas are configured in culturally and historically specific contexts. An assessment of theories of nation is necessary to call attention to other theories of nationalism and the ways these have been inscribed in cinema, a process that opens new possibilities for figuring nationalism's dialectics of inside/outside, and time and space. Within nationalist consciousness, for example, it is possible to further schematize inner and outer nation (community vs. nation). This allows for the analysis of multiple mechanisms, one of these includes the constitution of the various embodiments of nations" in cinema. Spectators who are able to read how filmic codes interface with national symbols are also capable of constructing deeper "structures of feeling" than those who are unfamiliar with these codes and symbols. The nation is imagined not as a monolithic entity but as a multiple embodiment of individual or people's nationalism(s). The nation is constituted in relation to other political,

economic and cultural categories of class, gender and sexuality, race and ethinicity, among others. A film of national allegory is read through the interfacing of these categories with the local, regional and global conditions.

Another way the nation has been mapped is through nationalism's invocation of women. The female figure is posited as the personification of the nationalist discourse, simultaneously representing the condition of oppression and confirming the ideal of racial purity. Family melodrama or social drama films are read as national allegory through the engendering of women as index of the relentless struggle towards an ideal nation.[10] This engendering of women also functions in allegorical readings of historical drama films or films based on folktales and epics. By reworking the nationalist discourse along the dialectics of the inside/outside and its figuration in the female subject, I will link concepts of nation and nationalism with cinematic technology, as a way of generating specificities in which a nation identifies with the larger regional, international, or "Third World" collective.[11]

"Whose imagined community?" asks Indian subaltern historian Partha Chatterjee, a question which resonates as a critique of Anderson's proposition. While bringing a critical perspective to a traditional socio-political conceptualization of the nation entity, Anderson "treat[s] the phenomenon as part of the universal history of the modern world," obscuring other nationalisms and ways of constructing community.[12] Furthermore, in contextualizing Europe's construction of nation (largely focused on the development of print-as-commodity), Anderson's references to Asian experiences and literatures are reduced to the backdrop. The nation's grid is still integrated in the European history of national imaginary, reducing the Asian "moments" to nodes by which to reiterate such constructedness of nation.

Skepticism exists regarding the way "imagination" prefigures the nation. What is perceived to be a political stake is transformed into an individualized act, and Anderson's practice neglects issues of historical and cultural specificities. His notion of imagination as a "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (as in the now classic example of an individual privately performing a mass ceremony by reading a newspaper while meanwhile imagining that other fellow nationals are doing the same) opens a poststructuralist ballpark that incorporates and universalizes

all other imaginations within its own trajectory.[13] This conceptual frame flattens intertextual historical and cultural connections. As Chatterjee intervenes, the nation's grid becomes the sole mode by which other imaginations are measured: "if nationalisms in the rest of the world have chosen their imagined community from certain 'modular forms' already available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?"[14]

Similarly, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Renan (to a lesser extent) also privilege the industrial revolution as the fundamental moment of the emergence of nations.[15] Renan debunks the equivalence of race with nation, and sovereignty with ethnography and linguistics. In doing so, he makes the nation a metaphysical configuration, "a soul, a spiritual principle, the direction in which social formations are in some ways destined to evolve."[16] For Gellner, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist."[17] As Anderson has pointed out, Gellner's proposition of "invention" is vested in the notion of falsity and fabrication rather than creation and imagination. This approach privileges the notion that there is a logical progression of human civilization which finds its highest embodiment in "nation". In Gellner's mind, high culture needs to be the hegemonic form in relation to the various folk cultures in the constitution of a nation. However, for Hobsbawm, the nation is a novelty in liberal bourgeois thought, signifying a shift from the traditional thinking of "nation" as a bonding of people based on certain commonalities — ethnicity, language or history.

Simply put, what print capitalism is to Anderson's grid, the industrial society is to the rest of these theorists. A form of sociological determinism is posited from which the emergence of nations is always already determined as a western socio-political and historical phenomenon. The underlying ideology of such an imposition is the Enlightenment project whose objective is "to participate in the common work of civilization."[18] As Chatterjee observes of Anderson and Gellner's works (to which I add Hobsbawm's), "[they] see third-world nationalisms as profoundly 'modular' in character. They are invariably shaped according to the contours outlined by given historical models: 'objective, inescapable imperative', 'too-marked deviations...impossible'."[19] Renan, on the other hand, is for the most part silent on non-European societies.

What can be filtered from these theories of nation is the inverse move that constructs a meta-theory by which other non-western formations are to be "subjectivized." This means that the circuits of nationhood have already been entrenched for non-western societies, and these are the sites from which their own narratives of nation are to be derived. Or to state it in another way, since the langue of nation has already been encoded, only a "Third World" parole is possible, not a "Third World" langue. Though it supposedly allows for a multiplicity of imagined nations, even Anderson's theory has already set the parameters which limit the imaginations.

## Los últimos de Filipinas, Imperialist Desire and Colonialist Nostalgia

Like western theories of nation, *Los últimos de Filipinas* stakes out universalist claims which emanate from the scope of its own project: the construction of a national subjectivity/identity through a manichean dialectics of selfhood and othering. The film, after all, is designed to augment Franco's project of nation-building: to doubly forge national pride and international recognition, both drives politically motivated. International efforts to isolate Spain for supporting the Axis powers until 1943 should be recalled here. Franco's staunch postwar anti-communist policy furthers the national agenda for international recognition and announces its readiness to be integrated in the Cold War era. Spain needed to pull itself out of the economic recession that was largely caused by the Civil War, and cinema provided one possible source of income. "With more cinema seats per capita than any other European country, the Spain of the 40s and 50s was a nation of cinema addicts."[20] Thus cinema could serve both as a lucrative ideological state apparatus in disseminating the official Francoist ideology while catering to popular needs. So recognized was the propaganda content of *Los últimos de Filipinas* that the film went on to win first prize from Franco's movie business union. Critic Emilio Sanz de Soto would go to the extent of calling *Los últimos de Filipinas* "without a doubt our best historic film and our best patriotic film."[21] Drawing "29,966 spectators, with 452,6211 *pesetas*" in 1945, the film was considered a commercial success.[22]

The film dramatizes the resistance put up by 50 Spanish soldiers under the command of Captain de las Morenas, and later by Lieutenant Martin Cerezo, against the attack of Tagalog revolutionaries in Baler after US troops had conquered the Philippines. It is an account of the troop's

349-day defense amidst "isolation, sun, fatigue, struggle, loneliness and nostalgia."[23] A. Rigol and J. Sebastian correctly note the "double point of view" through which Antonio Román (a pseudonym for Antonio Fernández García de Quevedo) frames this historical film: first, the film narrative is set in 1898, which makes possible the reference to an "authentic episode" from Spanish history (specifically, Spain's "loss of [its] last colonies towards the end of the 20th century"); secondly, the film was produced in 1945, a fact which evokes the "political, economic, and social peculiarities of Spain in the first years of Franco."[24] The tension of the film derives from the oscillation between these temporal and spatial zones — an oscillation which calls attention to Spain's national identity while it simultaneously obscures that of the Philippines.

*Los últimos de Filipinas* is an elegy to the passing colonial heritage. Even Román's career declined after the film project. As if considering Román emblematic of Spain, de Soto says of the filmmaker, "If he had continued in the line so personal and so brilliant at its start, today Román would be one of the decisive names in the history of our [Spanish] cinema. But that delicate line, changed, in spite of the most laudable attempts to renew it, he would never again regain the inspiration of his youth."[25] The loss of colonialism would continue to haunt Spain in the postwar years of the Franco era, becoming a source of national angst that helped prevent the nation from fully industrializing and modernizing.

The troop's isolation in the Philippines is analogous to the isolation of the Francoist regime from other nations. The value of defending the empire to death is the latent hegemonic nationalist call. In the construction of a national ego ideal, the film narrative glorifies the "conversion of the historical massacre into a religious sacrifice, one that is focused on the fetishization of virility and sacrifice."[26] Catholic orthodoxy is entwined with militaristic adventurism. Ironically, in the move toward defascistization, the reaestheticization of politics invariably directs us to the fascistic nature of the film narrative, and consequently, its ideological imperative — the national project.

Nowhere do the flag and belfry so readily symbolize the nation's materiality and spirituality than in *Los últimos de Filipinas*.[27] While the flag constitutes the material basis of nation, one of masculine struggle in the defense of the nation, the belfry constitutes its spiritual basis, one that connotes racial purity and righteousness. Together with other patriotic

symbols like the sabre and cross, the flag and belfry reconstitute a religious-civil alliance that brought about Spain's colonialism in the first place. Conversion and coercion were potent processes that sought to instill Spanish hegemony in the colonies. Such fetishization of national colonialist symbols calls to our attention the constructedness of symbols, especially those which have become reliable icons of national heritage.[28] In constant usage and without parody, the symbols would nonetheless evoke a transhistoricity of filmic and historical times. Against worsening odds, the triumphs of both the troop and the Francoist regime then become more meaningful for the nation. With the disappearance in the film of a *banca* that provided the only means of contact with the outside space, the troops realize their total isolation. They move into the church compound, fortifying its defense against the Tagalog revolutionaries. A Spanish flag is hoisted in the church belfry. At one point in the film, Captain de las Morenas in the film states that the flag "[]is not a challenge, it is simply to give testimony that we are here." Lieutenant Martin would complement this statement, "that we are here and that we are not planning to leave." So central is the flag that historical accounts would further report, "when the wind and the elements tore [the flag] to pieces they patched it up with sacristans' red surplices and with yellow mosquito netting."[29] Like a phantasmagorical figure, the flag on the belfry provides a haunting presence particularly in the absence of a context to give meaning to the signifier. With the US victory over the Spanish armada in Manila Bay, signalling the end of Spanish colonialism, a Spanish flag in a far-flung area becomes a signifier without a signified. The flag is now a relic of the past that is Spanish colonialism.

However, just as the flag haunts the Tagalog revolutionaries, so is the flag also haunted in the contested space and location from which it is poised. The flag haunts the troops, constantly calling attention to their willingness to die in defense of the nationalist cause. Lieutenant Martin wrote, "to see that glorious flag flying against the blue of the sky made it seem that all Spain was watching us and encouraging us, making us hope for its gratitude and remembrance if we did our duty well."[30] Suffering and death become options in the struggle to defend the territorial space. The friar brims with spiritual assurance to the doubtful: "God will provide. He orders and resolves our lives, he enlightens us while we are here and he can call us when He wants...One has to look higher than heaven, where the heaven of the astrologer ends, the heaven of God begins." Thus, a kind of "national Catholicism" is called upon in the

defense of the colonial territory; later in the film, such piety and heroism are rewarded with state honors and pensions for the endurance of their struggle.

Franco's own regime had a strong relationship with the church; "the architects of the new economic policy [of the mid-1950s period] which was to reconcile rapid industrial growth with its conditions' were technocrats associated with the Catholic lay order, Opus Dei."[31] Much earlier, there were two interpretations of Spain's reunion with Catholicism during the Civil War (1936-1939), both of which are anchored on the premise of the "'state of progressive despair' at the disappointing performance of Spain, once the greatest imperial power in Europe...The Republican sought to raise Spain... by imitating the 'progressive' nations. For the more vocal Nationalist ideologists of 1936 only a return to the vision of a universal empire and the inward-looking values of Philip II could save Spain from the continuing ravages of a decadent materialism."[32] The film seeks to have it both ways, enshrining Spain's colonial legacy even as it anticipates acceptance within the international community.

The investment in symbols and significations was attuned with the Francoist hegemonic project in Spanish cinema. *Los últimos de Filipinas* invokes the righteousness of the struggle to continue defending the nation, through numerous montage sequences that show men heroically battling against the odds, under the shadow of icons (flag and belfry) which underscore both the political and religious dimensions of the scenes. The film encourages spectators to sympathize with Franco's isolation as the people's own isolation. A nationalist cause is founded on the people's affinity with national figures and conditions. Thus, nation acquires resonance in the film through its ability to be imagined and constituted differently and heterogeneously in and against the national project. A familiarity with the transhistorical usage of national symbols constitutes a deeper structure of national being. Spectators become aware of themselves as citizens of the nation.

Resistance to and non-recognition of signs and significations, however, present a divergent dynamics of nation-building that can be antithetical to the "official" nation, or it finds affinity in "community" in the more localized variations of the hegemonic nation. The usage of Castilian ("the language of empire") in the film attempts to homogenize the vocabulary of nation. Speakers of Catalan language or advocates of

Basque nationalism, for example, would register various gradations of acceptance and/or resistance to the film. Franco's nationalism, like the nature of state nationalism according to Eric Hobsbawm, is a "double-edged strategy": "as it mobilized some inhabitants, it alienated others...it helped to define the nationalities excluded from the official nationality by separating out those communities which, for whatever reason, resisted the official public language and ideology."[33] The refusal to belong or to assimilate becomes a choice since "not all are allowed to become full members of the official nation."[34] In other words, unlike the experience for the newspaper reader in Anderson's imagined community, the nation is a heterogeneous construction of recognition and acceptance (misrecognition and resistance) to collective bodies and geographies of nationhood. The narratives of nation are analogous to the modes of experiencing the "nation thing."

The national project of identity formation and international respectability was not to take effect until 1953, "with the Concordat and the rapprochement with the US, when the greatest democratic state accepted Franco as the 'sentinel of the West', the most reliable anti-Communist during the Cold War."[35] It was only in the further isolation of the communist Eastern Europe bloc that Spain was relieved of its own isolation. However, even in 1962, as historian Raymond Carr points out, "the acceptance was never complete...the EEC (European Economic Community) refused to consider Francoist Spain as a potential member of the Community."[36] It was only later that Spain was finally accepted as a member of the EEC. Spain's nationalist project was an effort to become integrated within the new league of economic and political nation-states that dominated the post-World War II global restructuring. However, the libidinal economy that fuels this effort to establish Spain's position in the global division of power remained vested in its colonial heritage. The renarrativization of this heritage, Anderson contends, involves a process of selective amnesia (of its history of literal and epistemic violence) and remembrance (a rememorialization of colonial heroism). To privilege a colonial history that is gasping its last breath implies a nostalgia for an imperial history (modelled on US imperialism) that never existed in the first place. Yet Spain uses this same history to position itself within the new world order.

Spain's ceding of the Philippines to the US signalled the end of most European colonialism and the beginning of the neocolonialist era, with

the US leading the new world order. Spain's early involvement with twentieth-century imperialism was minimal; it focused instead on managing the internal tensions among regional nationalisms and national political conflicts which would culminate in the Civil War. Thus, Spain's investment in its colonial heritage during an era of modern imperialism was symptomatic of its ineptness in grappling with the various informational and technological changes of the postwar period. However, Spain's desire for global integration followed the narrative of the modern nation that privileged industrialization as its modernizing feature. Its slow industrialization and its struggle for acceptance into the international community, therefore, stretched its historical narrative of colonial glory to the limits.

The film emphasizes two issues within its imagined imperial history: first, the centrality of the church in the colonial space; and second, the reactivation of the imperial family narrative in the exchange of the Philippines (from an aging colonialist to an emerging imperialist power). These two issues expose the contradictions in Spain's subsequent failure to grapple with newer operations of neocolonialism and late capitalism, an order that was mastered by the US, the nation which was to possess the Philippines at the turn of the century.

The geopolitical spacing of the church and municipal building indicates the relinquishing of most of the Spanish civilian government's political and cultural functions to the church and its friars.[37] The friars' proselytizing endeavors brought to their reach more people and geographies. They had longer terms in the areas than civilian officials; they also managed the education of the children of the town elites, knew the verncacular languages, and owned huge tracks of land. Thus, the *pueblo* system — the construction of towns with the church as center: the municipio, plaza and the marketplace beside it; the residences of the town's elites around it; and the cemetery and school within its compound — proved to be effective in the administration of local feudal space, yet ineffective in the ensuing development of transnational capitalism involving new modes of neocolonial administration (overseas banking, postal and telecommunication systems, public school education, minimum social services, sanitation and public health management, etc.). In the film, disappearance of the *banca* as the sole connection to the outside space characterized the crucial lack of technological empowerment in the wars against both the Tagalog revolutionaries and US. The quick

defeat of the Spanish armada by Admiral George Dewey's naval fleet signalled a change of power, one in which a fleet with a better technological advantage triumphs and paves the way for a new imperial master.[38] Furthermore, Spanish heroism in Baler was based on the belated realization of US triumph: the recognition of endurance and bravery is also a recognition of the time it had taken for the news of Spanish defeat to the US to be realized.

Spain was prepared to engage neither in an imperial war nor in wars of independence. As the film is produced in the period of defascistization, the history of colonial state violence is omitted from the film narrative. As the film is produced in the period when Spain is renewing its efforts to join the global community, the reconstitution of Spanish heroism becomes the spiritual drive, so to speak, in the project of inter/national image-building (invoked in the value of aristocratic dignity and heroism even in the face of defeat). However, even within the Catholic church, Spain's "national Catholicism" would prove to be too limiting, with events like the Second Vatican Council providing greater openness and dialogue with the lay people. In choosing to align with the church, Spanish hegemony did not realize that the nation was fast becoming the new secular religion.

On another level, Spain's ceding of the Philippines to the US involved a renarrativization of the imperial family mythology, one imbued with a discourse of sexualization. Spain's relinquishing of its colony involved a feminization of nationalist pride, as an older generation relinquished control to a younger, more modern imperial power. The 1898 defeat would continue to determine the prerogatives of Franco and his regime: "To the end of his life Franco regarded political parties as responsible for the disaster of 1898 (which had robbed him of a career in the navy) and the decline into the 'chaos' and 'communism' of the Republic."[39] However, in the film, Spanish national masculinity is recuperated for 1945 audiences through the valorization of the heroism of its colonial past.

In this sense, the exchange of the Philippines between an old colonial and a new imperialist order involved the constant positioning of the Philippines in the feminine space as virgin and resistant woman vulnerable to rape. Senator Alfred J. Beveridge's real estate pitch for US conquest of the Philippines positioned the nation as a child-virgin territory waiting to be put to good use: "This island empire is the last land left in all the oceans. If it should prove a mistake to abandon it, the blunder once made

would be irretrievable. No land in America surpasses in fertility the plains and valleys of Luzon." "The Filipino...put through a process of three hundred years of superstition in religion, dishonesty in dealing, disorder in habits of industry, and cruelty, caprice, and corruption in government." "The archipelago is a base for the commerce of the East."[40] Though there is no reference to Spain's faulty colonialism and its failure to bring the promises of Enlightenment ideals to the colony, the speech covertly blamed Spain for its failure to maximize the resources of the terrain — a failure that justified their takeover of the passive territory. When native resistance ensued, conquest became the recourse. The colonized nation is figured as an unruly woman, a trope that justifies the use of rape and violence in the pursuit of "manifest destiny," "benevolent assimilation," and the "white man's burden." Pacification of the female nation-space instigated the very same processes of nostalgia, destruction, then mourning.

With the exception of a Filipina character in love with a Spanish official, the film involves an all-male Spanish cast. Portrayed by a Spanish actress, the Filipina character Tala (guiding light) is made to represent the unattainable union of Spain and the Philippines; though the male officer realizes the impossibility of such a union, she mistakenly believes it is possible until the very end. The Filipina is despised by her own countrymen because of her xenophilia; hence, her impurity prohibits her from functioning as mother of the nation. In the 1945 context of the film, Spain once again negotiated between a masculine position (privileging heroism/ bravery) and a feminine role (immersed in nostalgia for an aristocratic colonial past). During the same postwar period, the Philippines continued to be relegated to a feminized position — liberated by US forces from Japanese rule and later forced by the US to accept Japanese war reparations. However, Spain's effort to rejoin the international community was heavily focused on getting US attention. The film's opening credits immediately acknowledge the US embassy's assistance in the making of the film. The reversal in the US's role from enemy to ally both in filmic and historical times suggests a homosocial comradeship among imperialists.

The conspicuous absence of women in representations of both Spain's and the Philippines' nationalist struggles reifies the patriarchal imperatives of the nation project itself. "The fetishization of virility and sacrifice" in the film can be read as the drive that fuels the material

struggle for nationhood.[41] Interestingly, even the spiritual aspect of the struggle, a traditional domain of women, is further aligned with men avowing chastity. The soldier's affinity with the friar's religious convictions provides the ideal to die for in the struggle for nation. However, no spiritual dimension is attributed to the Philippine nationalist struggle except its association with the sexuality of the sole female character, who is deemed impure. Thus, woman's sexuality is the abjected object in the film narrative, marking the impossibility of signifying neither union nor independence of nations.

In instilling *amor propio* (dignity and love for the self), *Los últimos de Filipinas* became torn between self-love and self-hate, a conflict that further shifted configurations of time and space. The colonial past was made to haunt and glorify the present; Francoist Spain sought out the US as partner; and the Philippines was exchanged between imperialists. The film foregrounded the usage of Philippine national and bodily spaces, as well as its nationalism, but only as the liminal terrain on which Spain inscribed its own (inter)national project. Thus, Philippine identity and nationality were significant only as part of a peripheral vision whose sole function was to narrativize or mobilize a "coherent" image and subjectivity of the center.

This critique of the discursive rewriting of Spanish history (involving the double gesture of inscription and erasure) foregrounds some issues in Philippine colonial and postcolonial relations, and provides some contemporary intertextual (cultural and historical) references. Filipina critic Neferti Xina M. Tadiar has reconceptualized the constructedness of the Philippines in the Asian Pacific rim as one involving a sexualization of transnational operations ("the marriage of the Philippines to the US and Japan with Australia as the midwife").[42] These dynamics continue to expand as Filipino and Filipina workers are circulated overseas; among the two million migrant workers, some 60,000 Filipinas are working in Spain as housemaids. The Spanish colonial residue in the transnational era is manifested in other areas of Philippine popular culture. In the postwar films, the family narrative is reworked by using Spanish mestizos and mestizas as villains, who threaten to destabilize the social cohesion of the family and community. (Later in the foregrounding of US and Philippine popular imaginations and the marginalization of Spanish heritage, the villainous Spanish mestizos would be replaced by Filipino *mestizos* and Americans.) The colonial privileging of whiteness as ideal

still pervades the "colonial mentality" in the Philippines: saints and religious icons all have Anglo-European features; movie stars are usually fair skinned and have "western" features; the US is readily preferred when given a choice among western and Asian countries, including the Philippines.[43] However, cultural politics continues to shift with economics, as more investments and assistance pour in from Japan and Taiwan rather than the US; investments also continue to rise from the Philippines' Southeast Asian neighbors. Hence, the seemingly declining Spanish influence on contemporary Philippine culture needs to be reexamined especially if we are to understand why its legacy remains significant today in the areas of religiosity, folk cultures, and "colonial mentality." It is no overstatement to say that such a legacy continues to overdetermine Philippine political culture through the perpetuation of patronage politics or "cacique democracy" in elections, family dynasties, and nation-building.[44]

This essay presents some conjectural linkages at stake in Spain's construction of nationalism, one that marginalized another culture's efforts at nation-formation and nation-building. It may prove useful in connecting an anti-imperialist critique (in the turnover of imperial powers, from Spanish colonialism to US neocolonialism) with postcolonial criticism (the disjunctures in the Philippines' nation-building project). This liminality foregrounds the more recent national drives to refigure the Philippine nation-state: from President Ferdinand Marcos's megalomaniac enforcement of modernization to Corazon Aquino's period of static foundational development, to Fidel Ramos's vision of the Philippines as the new Asian economic tiger with infrastructures in place by the year 2000. As multinationalism becomes the dominant economic mode of production, its cultural translation involves a complex negotiation between its enforcement from the outside and its indigenization (through assimilation and resistance) within the national setting. The proliferation of giant malls in Metro Manila, for example, can be read along the matrix of cultural and historical grids. The practice of a "mall culture" in Philippine urban centers represent the multinational enforcement and reception in the national space, involving among others, the transmutation of promenade space of the plaza in the Spanish colonial era into the present day air-conditioned "Lunetas," after the most popular park; the construction of an ideal transnational space housing everything within one roof; the franchisement of middle class entertainment and culture; the problematics involved in the more complicated task of organizing

labor and people; the dream materialized of “First Worldization” in a “Third World” (Ramos’s Philippines 2000); and a trope for discussing gentrification in a social formation where seventy percent of the people live below the poverty level. These connections provide a context for understanding the ways in which a “people without a history” have been positioned in the margins — a context that moves the Philippines to the foreground or at least in some relational space. ❁

## Endnotes

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1 Marsha Kinder, *Blood Cinema The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993), p.152. Other prototypical Francoist films include, *Raza* (1941), *Inés de Castro, A mí la Legíon (The Foreign Legion for Me)*, and *Escuadrilla (Squadron)*. Considered by John Hopewell as parody of Francoist cinema, on the other hand, are: *La princesa de los Ursinos (The Princess of the Ursinós*, 1947), *Locura de amor (Love Madness*, 1948), *Agustina de Aragon* (1950), *La leona de Castilla (The Lioness of Castile*, 1951), *Alba de América (Dawn of Freedom*, 1951), and *Lola la piconera (Lola, the Charcoal Vendor*, 1951). These “six historical super-productions [were] made by Cifesa in a doomed attempt to rival American cinema at home and abroad” (*Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema After Franco* (London: BFI, 1986), p.42).

2 Nationalist historian Renato Constantino writes, “By the time the Treaty of Paris through which Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States was signed on December 10, 1898, Spain actually controlled only a few isolated outposts in the country. The Filipino people had won their war of liberation” (in collaboration with Letizia R. Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: R. Constantino, 1975), p.219.

3 What has been disseminated are “imperialist nostalgia” (Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth The Remaking of Social Analysis.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. pp.68-87) and colonial desire” (Robert Young, *Colonial Desire Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race.* London: Routledge, 1995). Related to the colonialist nostalgia for “the colonized culture as it was 'traditionally' (that is, when they first encountered it),” imperialist nostalgia refers to a situation “where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (69). Colonial desire, on the other hand, refers to “a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, inter-racial sex, hybridity and misce-

genation" (xii). I take a shifting correlation to refer to Spain's colonial legacy and imagined imperial history.

4 For a discussion of the historical development of the term "imperialism," see Eric Hobsbawm, "Age of Empire," *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), pp.56-83; and of "colonialism," see J. Jorge Klor de Alva, The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience: A Reconsideration of "Colonialism," "Postcolonialism," and "Mestizaje," *After Colonialism Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 241-275.

5 Kinder, p.150. Also see Peter Besas, *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema Under Fascism and Democracy* (Denver: Arden Press, 1985), pp.27-28.

6 The proclamation of independence was made on June 12, 1898, which marked the first public display of the Philippine flag and the first public playing of the national anthem. However, "while the June 12 [proclamation] was a declaration of independence from Spain, it put the United States in the special position of protector of that independence" (quoted in Constantino, p.211).

7 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991).

8 Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), p.19.

9 Anderson, p.6.

10 For a discussion of the correlation of women and melodrama in an allegorical context, see Ana M. López, "Tears and Desire: Women and Melodrama in the Old' Mexican Cinema," *Mediating Two Worlds Cinematic Encounters in the Americas* ed. John King, Ana López, and Manuel Alvarado (London: BFI, 1993).

11 By "Third World," I am referring to both ideology and neocolonized formations as imbricated by colonialism and late capitalism, as well as by indigenous modes of production.

12 Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?," *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 5.

13 Anderson, pp.35-36.

14 Chatterjee, p.5.

15 E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1990); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

16 Renan, p.19.

17 Quoted in Anderson, p.6.

18 Gellner, p.20.

19 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.21.

20 Raymond Carr, *Modern Spain 1875-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.164.

21 Emilio Sanz de Soto, "1940-1950," *Spanish Cinema 1896-1983* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto de Cine, 1986), pp.124-125.

22 A. Rigol-J. Sebastian, "España: Los últimos de Filipinas (1945) de Antonio Román," Film_Historia (1:3, 1991), p.182. My own essay builds on several issues raised in this article.

23 Voice-over in film's opening sequence, quoted in A. Rigol-J. Sebastian, p.176.

24 A. Rigol-J. Sebastian, pp.176-177.

25 Quoted in A. Rigol-J. Sebastian, p.176.

26 Kinder, pp.150,153.

27 Such fetishization of the flag is also reproduced in the film *iAy Carmela!* (Carlos Saura, Iberoamericana Films, 1990).

28 See Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.13-14.

29 Carlos Quirino, “Epic Stand in Baler,” *Filipino Heritage* Vol. 10, ed. Alfredo Roces, (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, 1978), p.2156.

30 Quirino, p.2156.

31 Carr, p.156. He goes on to define conditions as: “the creation in Spain of a market economy where prices would control the allocation of resources, and the integration of that market into the capitalist economy of the West.”

32 Carr, p.148. “The premise state of progressive despair” is coined by Spanish historian Americo Castro.

33 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p.150.

34 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p.151.

35 Carr, p.169.

36 Carr, p.169.

37 Bienvenido Lumbera and Cynthia Nograles Lumbera refer to a hierarchization of the native population and their cultures in the *pueblo* system, “a distinction would be made between those Filipinos who settled where they were within easy reach of the power of the Church and State in *pueblos (taga-bayan*), and those who kept their distance from colonial administrators and their colonial agents…(*taga-bukid, taga-bundok*)…In time, *taga-bayan* came to be a flattering term for the Hispanized and, therefore, urbane and civilized” Filipino, while *taga-bukid/taga-bundok* was to mock the indio who had not learned the ways of the colonial masters…In this way did the non-Christian Filipinos come to be regarded with condescension, if not outright contempt and suspicion, by lowlanders who soon began to think of themselves as more “genuine" Filipinos” (“Literature Under Spanish Colonialism,” *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology* (Metro Manila: Kalayaan Press, 1982), p.31.

38 Only after two hours of battle, Admiral Partricio Montojo y Pasarón’s flagship was already destroyed in battle. General Basilio Augustín Davíla, the Spanish governor, issued a call to the Spanish population in the Philippines using a similar “Catholic nationalist” rhetoric against the Americans, “The aggressors shall not profane the tombs of your fathers, gratify their lustful passions at the cost of your wives and daughters, appropriate the property that our industry has accumulated to provide for your old age…Prepare for the struggle! Let us resist with Christian resolve and the patriotic cry of Viva España!” (quoted in Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image America’s Empire in the Philippines* (London: Century, 1990), p.103.

39 Carr, p.169.

40 Senator Alfred J. Beveridge, “Our Philippine Policy,” *The Philippines Reader A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom (Quezon City: Ken, 1987), pp.23-26.

41 Kinder, p.153.

42 Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, “Sexual Economies in the Asia-Pacific Community,” *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

43 For a discussion of “colonial mentality,” see Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1992). In Maria Luisa Canieso-Doronila’s survey and analysis of national identity formation among elementary students, only 10% ranked the Philippines as their first preference as mother country. American, Japanese and Saudi Arabian nationalities were more preferred. “The present finding is in accord with a 1979 content analysis of the Grade IV World Bank-funded textbook in Social Studies which showed that the Philippines ranked third, after the United States and Japan in the degree of esteem in which it is held by Filipinos, as indicated by the frequency of favorable mention in the textbook” (Doronila, “The Nation In Its Relationship With Other Countries: A Content Analysis of an EDPITAF Textbook in Social Studies,” *Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review*, XLC: 1-4 (Dec 1981), pp.67-83, quoted in her *The Limits of Educational Change National Identity Formation in a Philippine Public Elementary School* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1989), p.72.

44 Among the body of works that discuss the patron-client relationship in Philippine political culture are Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," *New Left Review*, p.169 (May/June 1988); Vicente Rafael, “Patronage and Pornography: Ideology and Spectatorship in the Early Marcos Years," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32:2 (Apr 1990); and Alfred W. McCoy ed., *An Anarchy of Families State and Family in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press/Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994).