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# philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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## Romancing Tropicality: *Ilustrado* Portraits of the Climate in the Late Nineteenth Century

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# Romancing Tropicality

## *Ilustrado* Portraits of the Climate in the Late Nineteenth Century

In contrast to the literature's dominant focus on Western constructions of tropicality, this article explores representations of the tropics by the colonized, specifically the climatological conditions of the Philippines as portrayed in the late nineteenth century by the Europe-based native intellectuals known as *ilustrados*. Their anticolonial sentiment was intertwined with visceral estrangement from Spain and idealized views of the tropics, which reversed the colonizers' racial-geographic prejudice and asserted an identity as a civilizable tropical people capable of genius. Rizal's return visit to the homeland in 1887, however, made him agree with the Spanish premise about the climate in order to argue that colonial rule was the greater disaster.

**KEYWORDS: TROPICS · CLIMATE · DISASTERS · RACISM · INDOLENCE · NATIONALISM**

Writing on 1 June 1889 as a Manila-based correspondent of *La Solidaridad*, Pedro Serrano Laktaw under the alias D. A. Murgas<sup>1</sup> described the Philippines as overrun by a distressing mix of disasters. He states, “I write you . . . under the weight of an overwhelming temperature of 39 degrees in the shade, under the influence of an infected atmosphere, and under the effects of terrible geological phenomena. It is extremely hard to find in any single locality such confluence of disasters like those that afflict us at present” (Murgas 1996, 260). He then lists the disasters: “The cholera epidemic . . . is wreaking grave havoc on the lives of these peaceful inhabitants; . . . horrific fires devouring and reducing whole towns to ashes; earthquakes sowing panic in the whole archipelago; suffocating heat; commercial paralysis—all join in the chronic misfortunes that extinguish the happiness of this ill-fated country” (ibid.).

The mix of calamities devastating the lives of people painted a dire scenario. The reported disasters were of all kinds: meteorological conditions marked by an “infected atmosphere”<sup>2</sup> and rampaging fires, probably from a heat wave; geophysical conditions, specifically, terrifying seismic disturbances; and anthropogenic conditions as evinced by the devastating cholera epidemic and crippling economic woes. No single cause is identified, and there is no suggestion that one calamity is related to another—only that the compounded disaster is part of a series of chronic misfortunes that beset the homeland.

The letter was meant to inform compatriots in Europe of conditions in the Philippines whence it originated. The situation was not always as desperate as this portrait of mid-1889, but reports of natural disasters, along with unsavory political events, in the homeland reached Spain on a periodic basis.

In Europe, however, the *ilustrados* particularly José Rizal, Marcelo del Pilar, Graciano López Jaena, and Antonio Luna wrote about the tropical climate and the hazards of nature from a different vantage point. They were among the most prominent youth from the Spanish Philippines in Europe at that time. Embedded in some of their writings were views on climatological conditions in the Philippines, which have hardly been analyzed in Philippine historiography.

In the wider literature much attention has been given to European and American constructions of what David Arnold (1966) has called tropicality, of the tropics as both a physical and mental space, a geographical imaginary, but there is hardly any scholarship on native views, particularly in the

nineteenth century. Tropical inhabitants would not have had a comparative frame to articulate views on the climate unless they traveled to other climatic zones of the world. Without such dislocation, which Westerners experienced in their own transcontinental expeditions and geographic mobilities since the sixteenth century, peoples of the tropics could only make comparisons in terms of annual variations within their own zone. Thus the *ilustrados* were in a privileged position to conceptualize the tropics from their location in Europe. Writing from afar they looked at the climate of the homeland from a comparative perspective. What did they see?

### ***El Demonio de las Comparaciones***

Benedict Anderson (1998, 2) characterized the comparative approach as involving a phantom: the specter of comparisons, his rendition of Rizal’s *el demonio de las comparaciones*.

In an early chapter of Rizal’s *Noli me tangere*, Crisostomo Ibarra, who has just returned to Manila from overseas, rides a carriage through the capital’s “busiest suburb” and “all the noise, movement, even the sun itself, a particular odor, the motley colors, awakened in his memory a world of sleeping remembrances” (Rizal 1996d, 49). Ibarra notices that the streets “are still unpaved. When the sun shone for two consecutive days they turned into dust which covered everything, made passersby cough, and blinded them”; when it rained, the streets become muddy (ibid.). Among other things, Ibarra observes that the Escolta “seemed less lovely” (ibid., 50), while the Fabrica de Tabacos de Arroceros reminded him of the strong scent of tobacco that “made him dizzy as a boy” and “automatically (*maquinalmente*) drew his imagination towards the barrio of Lavapies in Madrid, with its riots of cigarette girls so fatal to the ill-fated policemen” (ibid., 51). But while all these sights and remembrances had put a smile on his face, “the sight of the botanical garden drove away his gay reminiscences” for at that moment the devil of comparisons (*el demonio de las comparaciones*) transported Ibarra out of Manila and “placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe . . . rich and well-tended, and all open to the public” (ibid.).

Manila’s botanical garden, as Anderson (1998, 2) put it, is “shadowed . . . inescapably by images of their sister gardens in Europe. [Ibarra] can no longer matter-of-factly experience them, but sees them simultaneously close up and from afar.” Ibarra finds himself, “so to speak, at the end of an inverted telescope” (ibid.). In such a situation, the world is upside down, triggering in Anderson’s words “a kind of vertigo” (ibid.).

Ibarra could no longer look at the sights of Manila without comparing them to Europe. Thus, the streets were *still* unpaved, unlike the paved roads of Europe; Escolta seemed *less* lovely, compared with the high streets of Europe; the botanical garden looked pathetic unlike the opulent gardens of Europe. (Significantly Ibarra did not compare the botanical garden to the exuberance of tropical vegetation, undomesticated, not manicured, and anathema to modernity.) Ibarra succumbed to the demonio that incites envy and despair at the homeland's lack of progress. Whereas one was content with the garden of one's innocence, after having seen another world one could no longer see the old in the same way prior to one's sojourn. The sight of Manila's garden transposed him to Europe, rendering the familiar distant while the distant near—the inverted telescope.

Although still living in Europe when he published the novel in 1887, was Rizal already imagining what it would be like for him to return to Manila? Was he anticipating that he would no longer see the old familiar surroundings in the way he did prior to his travel overseas? Probably, at least as far as the botanical garden was concerned. In late 1883 among the sights he visited in Paris was the Jardin des Plantes, which, as he narrated to his family in Calamba, left him awe-struck (Rizal 1962, 59–60)—the likely basis of Ibarra's homecoming reaction. But on the broader question of the climate, Rizal, in my view, was not quite ready to concede Ibarra's vision as his own.

In this article I examine the question of how Rizal as well as Del Pilar, López Jaena, and Antonio Luna—although perhaps not representative of all ilustrados but certainly among the most influential—viewed the climatological conditions of Las Islas Filipinas from their location in Europe in the late nineteenth century. Did they look at the climate in the homeland from an inverted telescope? What sort of vista did they see, and why did they see it that way? As argued in this article, the ilustrados' anticolonial sentiment colored their perception of Spain's climate and landscape, leading to a sense of estrangement with the metropole, which also shaped their comparative perspective on the physical attributes of the homeland that was expressed in a marked tendency to romanticize its tropical attributes. This romancing of the climate became central to the imagining of the nation because engagement with ideas about the tropics was also a form of wrestling with the colonial power's views of tropical inhabitants, which were intertwined with racist notions. Engaging in a nascent form of climate politics, these ilustrados shared the European mindset that nature exerted

a determinative influence on people; however, instead of a baneful nature as adduced by Spaniards, they reversed the sign and asserted creativity and fluorescence as the tropical climate's imprint on the natives—an ontological assertion that remained within a climate reductionist perspective.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1880s Rizal would change his vision: hewing closer to the colonizer's mindset, he acknowledged the tropical climate's ill effects on humans—the moment of the inverted telescope. Nevertheless, both Rizal in Europe and his confreres in the Philippines shared the conviction that, although the tropical climate could be calamitous, there was a far worse disaster: Spanish colonial governance. Let us retrace the narrative to the early 1880s.

### **Romancing Nature in Rizal's *Brindis***

On the evening of 25 June 1884 a banquet was held at the Restaurante Inglés in Madrid in honor of two painters who gained unprecedented recognition at the *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes de Madrid*. Juan Luna received one of the fifteen gold medals awarded in that competition for his painting, *El Expoliarium (The Spoliarium)*, while Félix Resurrección Hidalgo received one of the forty-five silver medals for his painting, *Las Vírgenes Cristianas Expuestas al Populacho (The Christian Virgins Exposed to the Populace)*. Sympathetic Spaniards attended the banquet along with the youthful ilustrados.

Rizal, who had been in Europe for a couple of years and just six days earlier turned 23 years old, delivered a much-applauded speech, later known simply as *Brindis*. The speech created a stir in Manila (Schumacher 1997, 51–52) for its bold assertion of equality between Filipinos and Spaniards and its reference to a day when the Spanish flag would cease to wave over the Philippines, a passing mention that eclipsed the many avowals of the union of Spain and the Philippines. Consequently the colonial establishment in Manila began to label Rizal a *filibustero*.<sup>4</sup>

Understandably the political content of his toast to Luna and Hidalgo has attracted much attention since the time Rizal first made these remarks. For this article, however, we focus on Rizal's references to nature, the principal trope he used in resignifying the works of the two painters. Rizal also used science and technology as a secondary trope, which he blended with references to nature.

Rizal (2011; cf. Rizal 2009) provides a broad context for interpreting the triumphs of Luna and Hidalgo, while displaying naïve optimism and a historicist bent. He considers their achievements as part of the inevitability

of progress, resulting from contact with “Occidental peoples,” an encounter that “awakens” the natives like an “electric shock” after centuries of slumber. Seen linearly, this historic moment shows that “the patriarchal era in the Philippines is passing.” This awakening, in Rizal’s view, confirms the “eternal laws of constant evolution, of transformations, of periodicity, of progress.”

Why, one might ask, has this awakening happened only now? Rizal (ibid.) suggests that History has its own “sun” and in the past it “shone on other continents”—probably referring to Europe and North America—leaving the Orient and “that race” (*aquella raza*) “in lethargy” (*aletargada*). The mention of lethargy is a mild reference to charges of native indolence that Rizal would take up in a much later essay, but against which he is arguing in the Brindis. This polemic is now possible because the “sun” of History has reached the homeland. What is more, with Luna and Hidalgo, “the illustrious deeds of her sons are no longer wasted within the home” but rather shared with the world given that “the oriental chrysalis is leaving the cocoon; the dawn of a long day for those regions is heralded in brilliant shades and rose-colored dawns” (ibid.).

Amid this portrait of inexorable movement now that the Sun of Progress has beamed on the Orient, Luna and Hidalgo become embodiments of “the glory of genius and the splendor of the homeland” (*la gloria del genio, el esplendor de la patria*) because, as Rizal (ibid.) expostulates, they have imbibed “the poetry of nature, nature magnificent and terrible in its cataclysms, in its evolutions, in its dynamism. Nature sweet, tranquil, and solemn (*melancólica*) in its constant, quiescent display. Nature that imprints its stamp on whatever it creates and produces. Its sons carry it wherever they go” (ibid.).

In the Brindis Rizal extols nature in the tropics as concomitantly cataclysmic and tranquil, magnificent and terrible. His contemplation of nature indicates a view akin to that of many Europeans who regard nature as disenchanting and objectifiable but with a causative power over humans. This complex nature, in Rizal’s view, provides “the spring in the mechanism” that positively animates and propels its people in whatever they do wherever they find themselves, producing in the case of Luna and Hidalgo creative genius.

In saying that both Spain and the Philippines glory in these achievements, Rizal (ibid.) declares, “genius has no country; genius

sprouts everywhere; genius is like light and air, the heritage of everyone—cosmopolitan like space, like life, and like God.” But even as Rizal claims that genius is “cosmopolitan” and seemingly unmoored from nature, genius is also the very specific effusion of tropical nature, a nature that to begin with is already embedded in a “race” with a capacity for genius, measured using a Western standard.

In expounding on “the poetry of nature” that bursts forth in the canvases of Luna and Hidalgo, Rizal’s hermeneutics transforms these paintings, with their historical and mythological themes from ancient Europe, into a sort of canvas for “painting” in the minds of his audience the magnificence and awesomeness of tropical nature in his distant homeland. In using the colonizer’s language in lieu of the paintbrush, he turns Luna and Hidalgo’s Western themes into not just direct expressions of tropical genius but also symbols of the homeland’s “splendor” that his audience can visualize and even hear in their imagination. Thus Western representational art becomes in the Brindis art that figures and prefigures the Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

In meditating on Luna’s *Spoliarium*, Rizal (ibid.) speaks not of muted voices but of noise and violence that one can sense arising from the canvas “with as much vigor and realism as one hears the deafening noise of thunder amid the crashing sound of waterfalls or the awesome, terrifying shaking of an earthquake.” As Rizal puts it, “The same nature that engenders such phenomena also intervenes (*interviene*) in those brushstrokes.” The shadows and terror in Luna’s painting resonate with “the dark tempests of the tropics, the lightnings and the obstreperous explosions of its volcanoes.” The violence of tropical nature is fearsome, but it is the generative fount of creativity in Luna’s *Spoliarium*.

In contrast, Rizal (ibid.) speaks of Hidalgo’s *Las Vírgenes Cristianas* as evoking “the purest sentiment, ideal expression of contemplation, beauty and frailty, the victims of brute force.” Rizal depicts Hidalgo’s painting as “all light, colors, harmony, sentiment, transparency, like Filipinas is in her moonlit nights, in her quiet days, with her horizons that invite meditation.” Rizal explains Hidalgo’s muse as “the brilliant blueness of that sky, the lullaby of its sea breezes, amid the serenity of its lakes, the poetry of its valleys, and the majestic harmony of its hills and mountains.” The quiet beauty but also vulnerability of nature, Rizal adduces, is the inspiration of Hidalgo’s *Las Vírgenes Cristianas*.

Despite apparent differences, Rizal (ibid.) suggests that the palettes of Luna and Hidalgo both reflect “the magnificent rays of the tropical sun” (*los*

*esplendorosos rayos del sol del trópico*). The reference is not to a metaphorical Sun of Progress and not to the mythical sun revered by precolonial natives,<sup>6</sup> but to the sun of astronomy and of our galaxy. Bracketing aside the political import of this speech, we may observe how Rizal idealizes nature, though not nature in general, but nature in the tropics. He refers not to any sun, but specifically to the tropical sun. This tropical nature is equally great and fearsome, radiant as well as darkly tempestuous. Its power is manifested in the indelible “imprint” it inscribes on people of the tropics, an imprint to which Rizal links the creative genius of Luna and Hidalgo.

Although Rizal’s formulation is not strictly deterministic—nature merely “intervenes” in the brushstrokes—nature’s imprint is of such potency that it accompanies the people of the tropics even when they are outside of it. The transportability of this imprint explains the achievements of Luna and Hidalgo in Spain, where the climate apparently exerts no influence on their artistry. Rizal, too, delivers his glowing toast and discursively repaints those paintings as representations of the homeland not in the Philippines but in Europe. In the Brindis we observe the idealization of tropical nature: Rizal, looking as it were through a normal telescope, brings near the violence of nature but does not deem it calamitous, merely an element of nature’s poetry.<sup>7</sup>

Rizal’s deployment of naturalistic and disenchanting imagery may be understood as his direct riposte to what is only gently alluded to as “lethargy”: the pervasive assumption about the tropical climate as breeder of primitivity, but now proven to be maker of genius. Rizal’s expostulations were an extended response to the Spaniards’ racist taunts about native inferiority. If this supposed inferiority had been due to the tropical climate, as many in Europe had presupposed, then Luna and Hidalgo served as resounding evidence against the denigration of the native. Rizal inverted the dominant paradigm to argue that the tropics were a cradle of artistic genius and creativity.

### **The Visceral Strangeness of Spain**

If Rizal and other ilustrados romanticized the tropics—its climate and the disasters it spawned—one apparent reason was that in Spain they missed the climate and tropical environment they had known since their tender years. The experience of the nontropical served as occasion for “returning the gaze” of empire. If “the *visceral experience* of strange weather was often the first shock—and the most persistent memory—of a tropical stay” (Livingstone 2002, 73), then the ilustrados also registered an analogous visceral experience of Spain and its landscape as strange, disappointing, and

alienating. If traveling by Europeans was a form of “scripting” the tropics, so was the ilustrados’ travel to Europe, particularly to Spain, “an intrinsically hermeneutic project” (ibid.) of reading and interpreting the Mother Country. The encounter of body and spirit with geographic otherness resulted in an articulation of difference, of an identity based on being *of* the tropics, which became inseparable from the ilustrados’ political estrangement even with the physicality of the metropole.

Antonio Luna, who arrived in Spain in 1886, felt appalled at the landscape of the Iberian Peninsula. Writing in the 31 October 1889 issue of *La Solidaridad* under the penname Taga-Ilog (1996a, 444), Luna recalled his growing apprehension as he looked out of the train that he was riding, presumably for the first time, from Barcelona to Madrid, beholding a sight he deemed shocking: “we had been traversing Castilian territory and every moment my rising anxiety was mounting. The mountainous country, arid and deserted; nature, miserable and impoverished; the fields, without vegetation and everywhere rocks and crags.” It reminded him of what an Igorot—one who was beneath his own sense of being, but who had been brought to the Peninsula for the 1887 Barcelona exposition (Aguilar 2005, 617)—exclaimed: “Here there is much hunger because there are nothing but rocks” (Taga-Ilog 1996a, 444). Luna explained that what the Igorot beheld “was a *desert* compared with the cheerful nature of their forests” (ibid.). Luna did not comment on the Igorot’s presumption of widespread hunger, but he understood the sensibility behind the statement, for compared with the lushness and gaiety of the Cordillera Mountains in the Philippines he saw Spain’s terrain as a veritable desert. With his political agenda, Luna closed his eyes to the vegetation and the many rivers found between Barcelona and Madrid.

On seeing the much-hyped Puerta del Sol, Luna felt nothing but disappointment. To express this feeling, he conjured the high expectations of someone from the homeland, who would be “accustomed to breathing the pure air of our forests and our jungles, where neither the rays of the sun nor the rain penetrate, or to looking at the tranquil sea that fades in the blue of the horizon” (ibid.). Luna might not have lived in the forests and jungles of the Philippines, but he would have been familiar with the wooded countryside<sup>8</sup> and the fresh air on the coast such that he envisaged the homeland’s “pure air” against which the implied “inferior air” in Spain suffered by comparison. He imagined the homeland, not in terms of roaring seas but of a “tranquil sea” that stretched into the horizon. Such a person from the Philippines steeped in a natural environment would have entertained illusions about the

“modern” built environment of the Mother Country, only for these illusions, Luna wrote, to come crashing down to earth at the sight of Puerta del Sol. As he struggled with Madrid’s failure to dazzle him, Luna fantasized about the homeland’s idyllic nature.

Winter posed a particularly severe challenge to the ilustrado’s spirit. Antonio Luna (Taga-Ilog 1996b, 22) could only exclaim of his experience in Madrid, “*What a miserable season! What dreariness on Christmas Eve; such frigidity . . .!*” (*¡Ingrata estación! ¡Cuanta tristeza en Noche Buena; cuanto frío . . .!*). He declared unequivocally, “I am tired already of white snow” (ibid.). He stepped out into the street while it was snowing heavily, and in the freezing darkness was confronted by a “beggar, almost naked and barefoot, with a child in her arms inadequately clothed in filthy rags” (ibid., 24). He reached for the pocket of his vest, but his “fingers were paralyzed by the cold”; he did manage to get money and give it to the woman, but he thought, “*And they will say this is Christmas Eve, when the cold paralyzes even the hand that likes to practice charity*” (ibid.).

Rizal (1938, 67) did not write much about how he felt about winter, but after a couple of months in Berlin he told Blumentritt, in a letter dated 26 January 1887, “this climate is not healthy for me.” Since the early part of the previous December he had complained that he could no longer work as in the past, for he experienced chest pains and feared he had contracted tuberculosis (ibid., 40–41). By late January he “could no longer work as much at night as before, because if he did his temperature would soar and he would sweat horribly throughout the night” (ibid., 67). He self-medicated. As he strained to get his first novel printed, scrimped on his finances, lifted weights to improve his physique, his health deteriorated; yet, febrile or not, he continued to work in an ophthalmic clinic, attend lectures in anatomy, learn English and Italian, master French, attend conferences, and translate works on the Philippines (Guerrero 2010, 151–52). His winter in Berlin was one of misery that he endured for his *patria*’s sake. Rizal, however, does not tell us how he coped mentally with this privation, but Luna does.

Luna’s recourse was to indulge in fantasies about the homeland, with its Christmas Eve parties and the young ladies with whom he danced until dawn: “in pursuit of another memory that enlivens the soul, we flew across thousands of leagues, over there where the cheerful season sings of the Birth of Christ, under the thick canopy of trees that intertwine and embrace each other, and among the plants and flowers that by their perfume intoxicate . . .” (ibid., 22).

Del Pilar (1955, 32), who left Manila on 28 October 1888, wrote to his brother-in-law and confidant Deodato Arellano on 19 February 1889, saying that in Barcelona his “soul” was languishing away in winter: “Physically I am in good health . . . but I cannot say the same for the health of my soul, while I am far from you and the light of the homeland does not shine on me.” He then expressed his estrangement from Spain in woefulness: “They say that this is the land of delights, but I believe it is so only in a superficial sense. Everything here is rickety and miserable. The sun has no warmth, the sky is without stars, the moon is devoid of splendor, the fields are barren, the flowers lack fragrance, and even the rain when it falls, it falls in atomistic droplets” (ibid.).

Unlike Antonio Luna, Del Pilar did not refer to people or anything in the built environment. Rather he pointed to nature and expressed his lament about the sun, the moon, the sky, the fields, the flowers, and even the rain—realities perceived from the positionality of a colonized subject in the heart of the metropole. They all fell short of what he conceived as the homeland’s glorious nature, which he craved for internal wellness, the “health of his soul.” After listing the failings of nature came Del Pilar’s (ibid.) declaration: “[A]nd everything forms in remarkable contrast and makes us contemplate the magnificent expressions of the prodigious nature that rocked our cradle.” Tropical nature in its serenity and fitfulness was the nurturance of the soul the ilustrado coveted in the dead of winter.

In lieu of nature’s manifestation on the Iberian Peninsula, Del Pilar (ibid.) pined for nature in the homeland, describing it thus: “There, that blue sky studded with stars, the sparkle of the moon in this season, the scorching rays of the tropical sun, the lushness of its fields, the overflowing fragrance of the flowers.” No ilustrado, Del Pilar included, waxed nostalgic about the typhoons and other natural calamities back home. Neither were they concerned about calamities in Spain, such as those caused by catastrophic floods (Llasat et al. 2005; Barrera et al. 2005). Rather, Del Pilar (1955, 32) quickly shifted his focus and began to characterize “oriental” society whose blissful state the Spanish friars had ruined: “And above all, the tenderness, the sincerity and warmth of our oriental customs evoke lovely and heartfelt memories in my soul, provoking tears at the thought that such happiness granted by God is darkened by the impiety of those who purport to be ministers of God.”

The jab at the Spanish friars was not unexpected, for after all his departure from the Philippines in October 1888 was an act to preempt incarceration for

leading the antifriar movement in the Philippines (Schumacher 1997, 120–26). Amid his exilic experience, Del Pilar depicted his homeland's tropical nature in grandiose, nostalgic terms. The warmth of the climate was matched by the “sincerity and warmth of our oriental customs.” In Del Pilar's subtle formulation one could detect hints of Rizal's idea of nature as making an imprint on tropical people, which distinguished them from the metropole's inhabitants. The visceral strangeness of the Iberian Peninsula, its climate that they experienced as alienating, and the ilustrados' disappointment with many aspects of Spanish life enabled them to see the colonial master as no longer unreachably superior; a growing conviction of equality was welling up within them.

### **Occluding Calamities**

One of the contradictions of the ilustrados' romanticization of the tropical climate was the tendency to pass over the human suffering brought about by calamities that resulted from natural hazards back home. As a result, they did not consider the mitigation of death, disease, and destruction inflicted by such events as a target for commentary and intervention. Despite their grand project of modernity, they did not participate in “the modernist aspiration of mitigation” (Head and Gibson 2012, 704). Apparently they did not see “disasters” the way we do now. But they probably had an appreciation of native resilience, which could have been subsumed in the poetry and equilibrating dynamic of nature. The Spanish colonial state, however, did introduce measures to anticipate as well as respond to calamities, including changes in the architecture of churches and other structures to withstand earthquakes, the establishment of the Manila Observatory in 1865, and an “impetus for public works” (Robles 1969, 256) in the 1860s in response to earthquakes and typhoons. These interventions would have been apparent to anyone, but they passed the ilustrados without mention. Although Rizal and Antonio Luna had a medical science-related education, the ilustrados' interest in technical matters would appear to be at a level that did not take in what is now referred to as disaster risk reduction.<sup>9</sup> There was a far greater risk—of a political nature—that preoccupied their minds.

Undoubtedly the islands had experienced destructive typhoons in the course of the centuries, with a particularly severe one occurring in 1867 that resulted in inundations, shipwreck, and the death of close to a couple of thousand people (Ribera et al. 2008).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the frequency of typhoons

appears to have accelerated, at least in terms of recording efficiency after the establishment of the Manila Observatory: “Between 1877 and 1887, the annual frequency of identified typhoons shows a dramatic increase, reaching as many as 20 typhoons and more than 30 typhoons plus storms per year after 1880” (ibid., 7). The colonial government began to send out typhoon warnings with the initiation of a telegraph service in 1872, enabling some local governments as well as communities to take precautionary measures and thereby mitigate disaster risks (Bankoff 2012, 338–42). Still the typhoon that struck in October 1882 left more than 15,000 people in Bulacan “without shelter” (ibid., 335).

The ilustrados would have lived through numerous typhoons before their sojourn to Europe. But because they came from the wealthy class of natives and lived in large, sturdy houses unlike the poor who called friable huts their homes, these youth might not have experienced directly the severest horrors of typhoons. Any knowledge of the destructiveness of typhoons could have been occluded by their intense longing for the tropical climate and estrangement from Spain's climate.

Also minimized in the ilustrado romance of the tropics are the periods of drought that, like floods, are associated with the El Niño–La Niña Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

In fact, an analysis of Manila's wet season rainfall between 1865 and 1919 reveals considerable annual variations characteristic of the familiar El Niño–La Niña weather oscillation. Thus while the average rainfall for June, July and August amounted to 1,039 millimetres, annual totals varied from a low of 496.2 mm in 1892 to an astonishing 3,068.8 millimetres in 1919. Rainfall patterns suggest possible periods of drought in 1874–75, 1885–87, 1892–94, 1897, 1903, 1909–10 and 1916–16 [sic] followed by years of high rainfall with consequent higher likelihood of flood in 1876–77, 1888, 1896–96 [sic], 1898–1900, 1904–05, 1911–14 and 1917–19. (Bankoff 2003, 51)

The ilustrados discussed here lived through droughts in the Philippines before they left for Europe. But, as Greg Bankoff (ibid., 48) acknowledges, “flood and drought, though no less destructive or infrequent, were not so spectacular and belonged more to the commonplace order of daily existence

in the archipelago.” Nevertheless, the fall in food production and eventual spread of hunger precipitated by droughts had catastrophic outcomes for societies and global power asymmetries (Davis 2001).

Although flood and drought could be put aside as quotidian events, earthquakes, which did not spare the wealthy, were another matter.<sup>11</sup> The earthquake of 1863, which decimated scores of people,<sup>12</sup> also killed Fr. Pedro Peláez inside the Manila Cathedral. Because Peláez led the secularization movement, which asserted the right of native secular priests to administer parishes based on canon law, his death had far-reaching political implications (Blanco 2010). Fr. José Burgos took up the issue of secularization, transforming it into a campaign against Spanish racist assertions about native inferiority (Schumacher 1999). The 1863 tremor and Burgos’s leadership and eventual execution in 1872, which had a direct personal connection to Rizal (Schumacher 2006), were submerged in his broad reference to “the awesome, terrifying shaking of an earthquake” in his 1884 toast to Luna and Hidalgo. The romancing of the homeland’s climate muted the political import of the 1863 earthquake. Just as ilustrados did not see disasters the way we do now, they also did not regard calamities as constituting an arena that called for their intervention.

### **Homogenized Tropics, Cosmopolitan Climate**

We should also note that, while the Philippines was their main referent, the ilustrados generally framed their views of the climate in terms of the tropics. That a tropical region of the globe existed was, by then, no longer in doubt conceptually. In the Caribbean “the complex of ideas associated with the tropics was first assembled” and then “exported, particularly through medical and botanical texts, to other intra-tropical regions, such as India and Southeast Asia,” despite sharply different environmental and social conditions (Arnold 2000, 9). Inevitably the ilustrados identified with the tropics. However, as David Arnold (ibid.) also points out, “while naturalists and geographers commonly distinguished between hot, wet lowlands, dry savannas, and cold alpine areas, the first of these was taken to typify the tropics as a whole.” Ilustrados and their Spanish opponents and interlocutors shared this homogenizing of the tropics equally—an “imagined singularity” (Livingstone 2002, 84).

In some European circles there emerged a perception of the tropics as paradise, full of natural abundance and luxuriant vegetation—often showcased and concomitantly domesticated in the botanical gardens of

Europe (responsible for captivating and transposing the homecoming Ibarra). In the early part of the nineteenth century, for instance, the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt “helped invent the tropics as a field for systematic scientific enquiry and a realm of aesthetic appreciation” (Arnold 2000, 8).<sup>13</sup> The ilustrados felt the need to assert this positive view to their audiences in Spain, in the face of either a lack of knowledge or a biased view about the Philippines.

But an apparently more potent negative view of the tropics circulated widely in Europe. As Arnold (ibid.) has noted, “Europe’s engagement with the tropics contained, almost from the outset, a duality that made the tropics appear as much pestilential as paradisiacal. Powerfully negative representations of the tropics centered on primitiveness, violence and destruction.” Against this malevolent view of the tropics the ilustrados contended to assert an alternative hermeneutics.

As they journeyed to Europe by sea, the ilustrados would have acquired direct personal confirmation that the tropical sun shone not only on the islands of the Philippines but also on other parts of the tropical world. This observation might appear commonsensical, but it alerts us to a character of the ilustrados’ writings that did not regard the climate in the narrow and exclusivist sense of a “national weather,” the result of the extreme territorialization of climate in the course of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> The process was already afoot in the nineteenth century. “As weather measurements became standardized and the new meteorological science of the 19th century took shape, weather became domesticated and rationalized. New national climate identities were invented” (Hulme 2010, 272). Among the ilustrados, however, this narrowed perspective was not operative. On the contrary, they evinced a cosmopolitan recognition of a broad swathe of the earth in which were found the islands they called their homeland.

### **The Politics of Romancing the Landscape**

On 25 February 1889 Graciano López Jaena (1996) delivered a landmark speech at the Ateneo Barcelonés on the theme “Filipinas en la Exposición Universal de Barcelona” (The Philippines in the Universal Exposition of Barcelona). The speech was interrupted several times by applause and assent from the audience, who at the end burst into overwhelming praise and thunderous applause. The entire speech was transcribed by a stenographer and three days later printed in full in the second issue of *La Solidaridad*, of which López Jaena was the editor.

In arguing that the Philippines was not well represented in the 1887 Barcelona exposition, López Jaena sought to educate Spaniards about the Philippines. At the outset he admitted his “patriotic interest” and desire to present the Philippines to Spaniards so they could make an impartial judgment about the islands, “the pride of Spain, coveted by foreign nations” (ibid., 18, 20). He wanted to call the Spaniards’ attention to their country’s Asian colony, appreciate its natural richness and economic possibilities, and put in check the friar dominance that had stymied its progress. He wanted Spain to stop neglecting an otherwise inestimable treasure in the East. For this purpose he sought to educate his audience.<sup>15</sup>

López Jaena began his speech by describing “the nature of that Spanish land of the Orient.” After specifying the coordinates of the territory on the Mercator globe, “straddling close to the equatorial line,” he located the islands squarely within the Torrid Zone (*zona tórrida*), one of five zones in a climatological classification devised by Strabo (63 BCE–23 CE) to refer to “a region so burnt up with heat as to be uninhabitable” (Sanderson 1999, 670). Debunking this ancient idea, López Jaena (1996, 20) ascribed to the islands the “ideal” climate: “the atmospheric variations equilibrate thereby the effects of excessive heat so that, in general and always, one enjoys in those islands invigorating autumn or eternal spring. Therefore its climatic conditions can be presented as the ideal type that human physiologists pursue in their scientific investigations.” One need not fear for one’s health in this “paradise of Oceania” where the European “prescriptions” about hygiene “are certainly unknown . . . and completely ignored” because of the inherent healthfulness of the climate (ibid.), thus contradicting European notions of the tropics as disease-ridden.<sup>16</sup> Not only are the islands habitable, they enjoy perfect climate.

In a pioneering expression of what later nationalists would turn into a mantra of the Philippines as rich in natural resources, López Jaena (ibid.) listed in detail “the wonders of nature” that produced an abundance that could put even the New World to shame: “The fertility of the soil is such that her fauna and her flora constitute a real prodigality that some say is better than that of the American world, which is replete with wonders and enchantments.” This tropical nature brings about spontaneous productivity: an overabundance that is not diminished by even the severest calamities.

Disasters from natural hazards do not tarnish the idealized climate for their destructiveness is superficial, their “anarchy” being only an outward

appearance. López Jaena (ibid., 22) asserts that geological events are part of nature’s organic cycle, which revitalizes the islands and fertilizes the soil:

Las inundaciones y tempestades son frecuentes en las islas, lo mismo que los terremotos y otros fenómenos geológicos siendo sus estragos terribles al parecer; mas estas mismas revoluciones de la naturaleza, presentadas siempre en aquellas latitudes, bajo la forma de la anarquía por su fuerza y por su intensidad, lejos de dañarlas, las vivifican, pues que en sus alas llevan a los valles el limo fecundante formado en las montañas con detritus minerales y orgánicos a la acción lenta de los siglos.

Floods and tempests are frequent in the islands, like earthquakes and other geological phenomena, their terrible destructiveness being apparent. Yet, these revolutions of nature which always happen in those latitudes and under the guise of anarchy due to their strength and intensity, far from harming the islands, revitalize them, for in their fury they bring to the valleys the fertilizing mud abounding in detritus minerals and organic matter formed in the mountains over the course of centuries.

López Jaena (ibid.) summarizes the physical description of the Philippine islands in these words: “I venture to say that the extensive aggrupation of those scattered Spanish islands in Oceania is like a *bouquet* of flowers that with a noble hand Provident Nature has pinned on the breast close to the heart of Mother Spain.” The history of imperial conquest is brushed aside by the explicit suggestion of a “natural” connection between the Philippines and Spain. But López Jaena (ibid.) laments: “It seems surprising, gentlemen, that those beautiful islands, whose exuberance is amazing, whose natural resources should suffice to constitute the happiness and the splendors of any nation, state, or kingdom: it seems incredible that they have long been forgotten by Spain.”

Evidently López Jaena’s romanticizing of the tropical climate and landscape was intended to achieve a specific political objective, that is, for the Philippines to be valued anew in the Peninsula so that its thoughtful officials would take decisive action to develop the islands by, among others, curtailing the power of the Spanish friars.

## Tropicality, Natural Resources, and the World Market

In raising the specter of “foreign” intentions over the Philippines and cajoling Spaniards to act—akin to playing on the fear of foreigners that Spaniards in the Philippines nurtured since the colony’s formal opening to world trade at the start of the nineteenth century (Aguilar 1998, 15–26)—López Jaena (1996, 28) said that “Foreign nations know every inch of the Philippines, even its densest forests, while Spain, despite owning it, totally ignores it.” Indeed, when presenting its stated aims in its very first issue, *La Solidaridad* lamented this neglect by declaring that Spain “sleeps while all its agricultural, industrial, and commercial interests, except for those of monastic character, are all being exploited over there by foreign commerce” (La Redacción 1996, 4).<sup>17</sup> In response to this idling—indolent—Mother Country, López Jaena (1996, 30) goaded “Spain, especially commercial and industrial Cataluña, [to] be interested in knowing the Philippines.” Paradoxically, the Barcelona exposition of 1887 was conceived by Overseas Minister Victor Balaguer precisely to display Spain’s new imperialism, which among others sought to increase commercial relations between Spain and the colonies and undermine competing foreign interests; López Jaena (*ibid.*, 24) declared it a disappointment both to him and Balaguer.

After exhorting the Catalans to export the “immense assortment” of their merchandise to the Philippines, López Jaena (*ibid.*, 30) declared, “The Philippines offers you in return its abaca, its cotton to supply your factories, *sibucáo* and other tinctorial woods for dyeing your textiles, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, spices, for the enjoyment of life.” He saw nothing objectionable in offering the country’s primary commodities and even its raw natural resources to the Mother Country. López Jaena considered the importation of manufactured goods and the export of primary commodities as indispensable to the progress of the Philippines.

This offer (*brindis*) of primary commodities suggested that López Jaena was a believer in free trade, which Rizal similarly favored. In his essay “Sobre la indolencia de los filipinos” Rizal (1996c, 392) linked commerce to political liberty, advancing his political-economic perspective while citing as evidence France, England, the United States as well as Hong Kong: “Why should it be strange that the Philippines remains poor in spite of its very fertile soil when History tells us that the most flourishing countries today date their development and their welfare to the day of their

civil liberties and franchises?” With liberty, they believed, commerce and affluence would follow.

López Jaena’s offer of primary commodities was rooted in a specific vision of tropicality that, as David Arnold (1996) has elucidated, signified a plenitudinous abundance, a discourse of primitive fertility awaiting the civilizing and modernizing intervention of the West, seemingly because nothing could be expected from the tropical inhabitants left to themselves. Indeed, this representation of nature’s abundance in the tropics was central to the drive of imperial powers such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands to control and exploit their colonies, including those in Southeast Asia, in the nineteenth century. Although this discourse, much like Orientalism, inhered in Western knowledge and superiority, it was also deployed by people from the tropics like López Jaena, who in his eagerness to see progress in his homeland unwittingly espoused a construct that was not only racist but also facilitative of imperialist and capitalist exploitation of the periphery in the world system.

## Reversing Tropical Degeneracy

By stressing the creative and healthful benefits of the tropics, the *ilustrados* sought to reverse a deep-seated European conception about the Torrid Zone as causing inherent degeneracy. As more areas of the globe were explored after the fifteenth century, the view of the Torrid Zone as uninhabitable was revised. But the original belief enjoyed a tenacity among Spaniards, despite the huge mass of colonies Spain had acquired in the Americas. From the period of conquest until the nineteenth century Spaniards marveled at what they witnessed in the Philippines.

The habitability of the islands caused wonderment in the seventeenth century. Writing in 1609 Antonio de Morga commented: “The ancients had asserted that most of these islands were deserted and uninhabitable, but experience has already demonstrated that it is fallacious, as one finds in them good temperature (*buenos temples*), many people, means of sustenance and other things suitable for human life” (Rizal 1961a, 255–56).<sup>18</sup> Articulating a sense of surprise was the Jesuit Fr. Ignacio Francisco Alcina (2002), who wrote extensively on the climate in the Visayas. Alcina (*ibid.*, 170) began by confronting the ancient belief: “despite the said latitude and the great proximity of the equator or the Torrid Zone, it might be inferred that all

these islands would share its heat (which some of the ancients believed to be so unbearable as to consider them uninhabitable); but all experience demonstrates that they are habitable and are very temperate (*más templadas*).” Both Morga and Alcina called upon “experience” to debunk the ancient supposition.

Alcina explained further: “the heat is not such as to impede habitation. Rather, in some places [the climate] is very mild (*muy templado*) and like a perpetual springtime, because the great abundance of rain . . . tempers the heat to a great extent. Also helpful is the variety of winds that refresh and usually blow through them” (ibid.). Alcina extolled the climate in ways that would resonate with López Jaena’s speech, except that Alcina was explaining the context for Catholic missions at the onset of Spanish rule while López Jaena three centuries later was pursuing a political agenda.

Even more obstinate was the view of the tropical climate as molding the constitution of peoples, a racial discourse that European philosophers articulated in the vocabulary of “moral climatology” that manufactured tropicality as “not conducive to spiritual development’ and therefore . . . not a suitable ‘theater on which world history is enacted’” (Livingstone 2002, 69–70). Moreover, “the moral complexion of the tropical imagination persistently reasserted itself, frequently in the trope of tropical degeneration” (ibid., 71–72). This view was responsible for the distinct status of Creoles who, because of “the accident of birth” outside Europe, were deemed “irremediably” different from and inferior to Peninsulars—“even though in terms of language, religion, ancestry, or manners [the Creole] was largely indistinguishable from the Spain-born Spaniard”—a major factor in the rise of nationalism in world history (Anderson 1991, 58).

By the early nineteenth century, Spanish friars had become ardent exponents of *españolismo* (Spanish patriotism), especially after the loss of Spanish America in 1821 had left them deeply threatened by the possibility of losing the Philippines also, in addition to problems that arose from the undermining of the Catholic Church and the general political turmoil in the Peninsula. “Among Spanish conservatives and reactionaries, which included almost the entire clergy, *tradicionalismo* had identified Catholicism and Spanish patriotism almost inextricably, and looked with nostalgic pride to Spain’s golden century when she brought the Catholic faith to the New World” (Schumacher 1997, 212). The resulting chauvinism “was decidedly

pronounced among the religious orders, sharing as they did the quasi-religious patriotism of traditionalist Spain” (ibid., 213). In this setting the supposedly retrograde effects of the climate on the natives’ character and culture became a powerful discourse, accompanied by exhortations to natives to feel grateful to Spain and the friars for uplifting and imbuing them with civilization.

One stark example is the booklet written by the Augustinian Fr. Casimiro Herrero (1874) and published in Madrid a couple of years after the Cavite revolt of 1872.<sup>19</sup> Herrero speaks disingenuously through a native, Capitan Juan, whom he identifies as the author of the text. Herrero argues strenuously that Spanish rule enjoyed legitimacy because it brought individual liberties, progress, and especially Catholicism to the islands.

In making this point, he avers that “we should not forget the great influence of climate” (ibid., 112), which he asserts is “the most influential cause” (ibid., 110) of the debilitated state of the native, a specie of environmental determinism blended with racism. “Under the heat of the Torrid Zone,” he argues, “the spirits are enervated, the muscles become lethargic, the nervous system is debilitated, all resulting in indolence, lethargy, and repose” (ibid.). At the same time, the natives’ “physical needs are reducible to a small set and nature provides profuse ways to satisfy them” (ibid.). In this situation, “The idleness, the vividness of imagination, the spectacular magnificence of nature, and the sensuousness that surrounds man . . . excite the desire to enjoy, the urge to gratify the senses, the love for easy living” (ibid.). The result is a lack of progress: “A man placed in such circumstances, without a force superior to his nature, thinks only of prolonging that languid and licentious existence, with no change, with no anxiety, with no exertions” (ibid.). Herrero’s (ibid., 110–11) argument then leaps to a supposed political implication:

la sumisión, ciega hasta el despotismo, es para el un beneficio, una necesidad, un elemento forzoso de su organización. Por esta razón en el Asia y demás países de la zona tórrida no se conoció en la antigüedad el gobierno republicano, antes al contrario, en todas estas naciones se gobernó con un despotismo sin limites una subordinación ciega y material por parte de los pueblos. Por la misma causa da tan malos resultados el gobierno del centro de América, que ocupan las mismas latitudes.

Submission, blind even to despotism, is for him an advantage, a necessity, a forceful element of his physiology. For that reason in Asia and other parts of the Torrid Zone a republican government was unknown in antiquity; on the contrary, all those nations had been governed with limitless despotism, the people rendering blind and actual obedience. The same cause gives the government such bad results in central America, which is found in the same latitudes.

The end result of a climatic condition that wears down the human body is said to be a combination of sensuality and desire for an easy life as well as a lethargic disposition. This slothfulness propels natives, like other inhabitants of the Torrid Zone, to prefer passive submission over rational action or active resistance, giving rise to Oriental despotism and the absence of republicanism.<sup>20</sup> It was this same submissiveness that predisposed the natives to colonial domination, which Herrero suggested was not vigorously opposed. Spain, he argued, rescued the natives from the effects of climate by introducing Spanish ideas and institutions, but this civilizing mission was possible because ironically climate had also made them languid enough to be dominated by Spain, “a force superior” to their nature. In this formulation, Spanish rule could override climatic effects on people.

Against this denigration of the native, the ilustrados advanced a contrary view of the tropics as generative of genius, creativity, vitality, and wellness. Given the Spanish friars’ discursive strategy, the ilustrados’ romancing of the climate, most publicly in Rizal’s 1884 Brindis and López Jaena’s 1889 speech at the Ateneo Barcelonés, was a riposte to hegemonic Spanish racial-cum-geographic prejudice.

Interestingly, much like López Jaena, Herrero (ibid., 109) acknowledged the mildness of the climate and the abundance of nature, which he explained as enabling the native population to grow. But, unlike López Jaena, Herrero emphasized that this abundance left the natives in a state of subordination to “patriarchal” authority. It also encouraged passivity and indolence because sustenance was easy to obtain.

Other Spaniards in the Philippines also extolled its climate, but from the vantage point of stimulating economic development and attracting entrepreneurial migrants from the Peninsula—akin to López Jaena’s concern for economic progress expressed in his 1889 speech at the Ateneo Barcelonés. One such Spaniard was Ramon Gonzalez Fernandez (1877),

whose *Manual del viajero en Filipinas*—published originally in 1875, a year after Herrero’s work appeared in print—received a gold medal from the Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Filipinas.

Gonzalez (ibid., 23) echoes Alcina’s marvel at what one could find in the Torrid Zone: “The Philippines is a rich and delightful region endowed by nature with a liberal and life-giving hand, where the sun is clear, the sky is tranquil, its magnificent position giving it the privilege of enjoying all the climes, despite being referred to as situated in the Torrid Zone.” The book describes different types of crop production and the wealth of minerals as well as the flora and fauna of the country. However, unable to extricate himself from the intransigence of Spanish prejudice, Gonzalez (ibid., 35) has unpleasant words about the native character:

*El indio es perezoso, olvidadizo y de poca comprensión natural: supersticioso, humilde y vengativo, apenas trabaja como no sea impulsado por una extrema [sic] necesidad y aun así tan pronto como la cubre burla la vigilancia del amo o hacendado.*

*The indio is lazy, forgetful, and with negligible innate understanding: superstitious, abject, and vengeful, averse to work unless impelled by an extreme need, and even mocks his master or landowner’s watchful eye as soon as he is concealed.*

Despite the different strains in Spanish views on the tropical climate, the unremitting accusation about native indolence, seemingly the hallmark of moral degeneracy, was a source of extreme vexation to the native intelligentsia. Such views would not escape the ilustrados’ rebuttal.

### **Homecoming: Rizal in Calamba, 1887**

Unlike Del Pilar and López Jaena, who lived in Spain until they died—López Jaena on 20 January 1896, Del Pilar on 4 July 1896, both from tuberculosis—with no chance of returning to the homeland, Rizal traveled back to the Philippines in 1887, after the publication of *Noli me tangere*. He landed in Manila in the evening of 5 August 1887 on board a vessel he had boarded in Saigon (Guerrero 2010, 183). He did not stay long in Manila but proceeded to his family home in Calamba, where his father, concerned for his safety, restricted his movements (ibid., 184). After staying mostly in

Calamba, at a time of deepening dissatisfaction with the management of the friar estate where Rizal's family were leaseholders (*inquilinos*), Rizal left the country again in mid-February 1888, about a fortnight earlier than his intended date of departure in March (Rizal 1938, 225, 232).

During his slightly over half a year in the Philippines, Rizal—after having lived in Europe for more than five years and despite the lengthy nautical travel—had a different experience of tropical heat. On 5 September 1887, a month after his arrival, he wrote Blumentritt from Calamba complaining, “es ist mir zu heiss, ich habe schon *zarpullidos*” (it's too hot for me. I already have rashes) (ibid., 199). Rizal was the *balikbayan* (migrant returnee) who had difficulties adjusting back to the hot climate. In an undeniably physiological sense—an instance of what David Livingstone (2002, 770) calls incarnated hermeneutics—the demon of comparisons reared its head. Rizal could no longer regard the tropics in the same way as before his return to the homeland.

Eventually he must have adjusted to the climate, although by the time he left in February he felt slightly unwell. Nonetheless, he admitted that in the early mornings, particularly at dawn, he would go for a walk to a hill, together with the guard assigned to watch him, in order to “enjoy the freshness of the morning” (Rizal 1938, 232–33), suggesting that the remainder of the day would be dominated by the tropical heat. Dawn was a brief slice of the tropical day that provided him the sensation of a temperate climate. As such, its enjoyment was akin to a repeated peering through the inverted telescope.

Back in Europe Rizal would reference the tropical climate, especially the heat, but devoid of romance. The adulation of tropical nature so prominent in the Brindis would disappear, his earlier argument about the relationship between the tropics and creativity seemingly forgotten. In its place Rizal's treatment of nature would veer closer to the Spanish thinking that he and other ilustrados struggled against, although he would give it a twist to reposit accountability on the colonial power.

### **Indolence and the Tropical Heat: Sancianco and Del Pilar**

In 1889, in the first part of his essay “Filipinas dentro de cien años” (The Philippines a Century Hence), which was serialized in *La Solidaridad* beginning in the 30 September 1889 issue, Rizal alluded to the influence of climate on people and their customs. As though concurring with Herrero, Rizal (1996a, 378) stated that the ancient Filipinos used to possess traditions

and laws, which were “the inspirations on their race by the climate and their manner of feeling.” Compared with Spaniards, “The Filipino loves his [country] no less and, although he is quieter, more peaceful, and is stirred up with difficulty, once he is aroused he does not hesitate, and for him the battle means death to one or the other combatant” (Rizal 1922, 35). Rizal attributed this structure of feeling to the climate, which he said had the same impact on people as on animals: “He has all the meekness and all the tenacity and ferocity of his carabao. Climate influences bipeds in the same way that it does quadrupeds” (ibid.).<sup>21</sup>

In the essay's third installment Rizal made reference to “impenetrable forests,” a “burning sun,” as well as “torrential rains” (ibid., 506).<sup>22</sup> The resplendence of the sun in the Brindis had given way to its scorching heat. In the concluding installment Rizal (1996b, 32) explicitly declared that the climate of the Philippines was “to a certain extent disastrous” (*hasta cierto punto funesto*). No longer just a source of hazards that produced disasters, the climate itself was the disaster “to a certain extent.” Rizal (1996c) would develop the idea of the hot climate as inimical to the homeland in his next essay that was serialized in *La Solidaridad* from 15 July to 15 September 1890.

In “Sobre la indolencia de los filipinos” Rizal (ibid., 322) admitted at the outset, “We must confess that indolence actually and positively exists there.” This tack contradicted the denial of the existence of indolence made by Gregorio Sancianco (1881, 237), who refuted “such vexatious” allegations in his book *El Progreso de Filipinas*. Sancianco (ibid., 223–27) pointed out that, where population numbers sufficed, the economic production in selected provinces and the country's overall export of primary commodities were solid proof that natives had been hard at work and therefore indolence did not exist. He also cited extracts from a number of reports that proved, in his view, the economic rationality of natives, who migrated in response to opportunities but otherwise would not work without guarantees that they would gain from the exertion of their labor (ibid., 227–37).

Because it was such a vexing issue—with Tomas de Comyn (1969, 24) early in 1810 suggesting the proscription of “idleness as a crime”—López Jaena (1996, 30) also weighed in on it in his famous speech at the Ateneo Barcelonés. He asserted that seafarers from the Philippines proved the native's industry, their work serving as “an excellent protest against the idleness and indolence attributed to the Filipino.” “In the native Filipino one finds a treasure of virtues and great love for work. Tell me if England and Holland,

whose merchant ships are rarely without helmsmen, supercargoes, or crew from those Islands, do not look for Filipinos exclusively for these jobs as they demonstrate great aptitude and competence” (ibid.).

A contrary view might protest that seafarers from the Philippines had excelled because they had been taken out of the tropics. But López Jaena was arguing against any inherent sloth in the native, as Spaniards had averred. Rizal’s approach was different.

### **Indolence and the Tropical Heat: Rizal**

In “Sobre la indolencia de los filipinos” Rizal (1996c, 322) opens his essay by acknowledging Sancianco’s argument and differing from it by proposing that, because “serious and disinterested persons” have adduced evidence contrary to Sancianco’s, it is “appropriate to study this question at its root, without scorn or sensitivities, without preconceptions, without pessimisms. And as we can serve our country only by telling the truth, however bitter it may be . . . let us examine the fact calmly, on our part putting on all the impartiality of which a man is capable, convinced that there is no redemption without solid bases of virtue.”

In a sophisticated line of argumentation, Rizal admits the existence of indolence—“we believe that indolence does exist over there”—but asserts that ultimately the colonizers are to blame for this state of affairs. By themselves Filipinos “can measure up to the most active people of the world,” but Spanish rule has not drawn out the best from them. Rizal emphasizes, therefore, that “instead of treating [indolence] as the *cause* of backwardness and disorder, we consider it as the *effect* of backwardness and disorder, contributing to the development of a *lamentable predisposition*” (ibid.).

Having advanced this general proposition, Rizal digresses and invites the reader to “study . . . in its exact value the predisposition due to nature” (ibid., 324). Nature predisposes people to a certain pattern of behavior, with hot and cold climates having markedly divergent effects on people: “The warm climate demands from the individual stillness and rest, just as the cold stimulates one to work and action” (ibid.). Indolence in the tropics is thus inevitable, a natural consequence of the climate.<sup>23</sup>

Suggesting that climate matters more than “race,” Rizal (ibid.) argues that even Europeans live in a manner similar to the natives when they are in the tropics. He points out that Germans and English, not just Spaniards, live in the tropics in abundance, leisure, and rest, surrounded by a retinue of hard-working servants. The tropical climate transforms Europeans into indolent

people, whereas they are not so in Europe. Rizal reduces their behavior to the climate, glossing over the Europeans’ pretensions to aristocracy while lording it over the colonized subjects.

If Europeans do not survive the tropics, it is because they do not heed precautions but rather abuse themselves. Rizal (ibid.) claims, “A man can live in any climate, if only he will adapt himself to its exigencies and conditions.” Having lived in parts of Western Europe that can be a lot colder than Spain, he asserts, “We, inhabitants of hot countries, live well in northern Europe whenever we adopt the precautions that the people there do” (ibid.). Similarly “Europeans can also adapt to the torrid zone, if only they will rid themselves of their fixations (*preocupaciones*)” (ibid.).<sup>24</sup>

Rizal’s assertion that a hot climate means rest and inactivity while a cold climate propels work and action is followed by a pseudoscientific assertion about the relationship between blood and climate. Negating the dread of winter expressed by Antonio Luna and Del Pilar and glossing over his own miserable experience, Rizal (ibid.) provides another perspective. He suggests that in the temperate zone a seasonal replenishment and reinvigoration of human blood occurs because of the changing seasons: in the cold of winter the blood is “fortified” (*fortalecido*) so that by springtime people have “fresh blood” (*sangre fresca*) (ibid.). In contrast, in tropical countries where there is no winter “the blood [is] thinned and impoverished by continuous and excessive heat” (*estenuado [sic; atenuado] y empobrecido en su sangre por un calor continuo y excesivo*). In this context people are naturally inactive, and to behave differently can be fatal because the “thinned and impoverished” blood cannot support vigorous activity. Rizal (ibid.) argues, therefore, that in the tropics “indolence is very natural, and we have to admit and bless it because we cannot alter natural laws, and because without it the race would have disappeared.” Indolence in this view is the physiologically justified way of coping with the heat, an evolutionary mechanism for the survival of the species in the Torrid Zone.<sup>25</sup>

Given this situation, Rizal asserts that nature compensates for the blood-impoverishing process caused by the heat by making the soil extremely fertile and productive. Whereas for Spanish writers like Herrero the productivity of the soil is part of a tropical environment that fosters laziness and for ilustrados like López Jaena this abundance suggests the economic potentials of trade, Rizal (ibid.) at this point sees it as a form of justice embedded in nature: “Nature . . . like a just mother, therefore has made the earth more fertile, more productive; it is a recompense. An hour’s work under that burning sun,

and in the midst of the pernicious and indiscriminate influences of dynamic nature, is equivalent to a day's work in a temperate climate; it is, therefore, just that the earth yield a hundredfold!"

Nevertheless, while conceding that the tropical heat impoverishes the blood and leads to the native's life-saving aversion to labor, Rizal pins the blame on Spanish colonial policy and practices, especially the deficient education system dominated by friars that brutalizes and dehumanizes the natives, robs them of any incentive to work and accumulate wealth, stifles their adventurous spirit, and saps them of national sentiment. Rizal argues, "The evil is not that indolence exists more or less latently, but that it is fostered and magnified. . . . The evil is that indolence in the Philippines is an exaggerated indolence . . . an *effect* of misgovernance and backwardness, like we said, and not a *cause* of these" (ibid., 324, 326).

Ultimately Rizal attributes indolence to colonial rule, which does not mitigate but rather fosters and magnifies the "lamentable predisposition" toward indolence caused by the climate. In effect, he does not disagree with the Spanish view on the effects of tropical climate on people but admits it and turns it on its head. Moral degeneracy in the form of sloth is blamed not on climate but on colonial rule. Rizal's discursive strategy is more sophisticated than Sancianco and López Jaena's simple negation of native indolence, but it is not without its complications.<sup>26</sup> In any event, Rizal's change of perspective on the climate comes on the heels of his encounter with the demon of comparisons.

### **Colonial Rule as a Worse Calamity**

In contrast to the romanticizing of the tropical climate and the disasters spawned by natural hazards evident in the earlier writings of Rizal and in the texts of ilustrados in Europe, the letters they received from the Philippines reported calamities matter-of-factly or in a distressed tone, as we have seen in the letter of Serrano Laktaw at the start of this article. For these Philippine-based correspondents there was no inverted telescope. However, while they recognized the extreme effects of some climatological conditions, they also acknowledged calamities precipitated by human foibles. The acuteness of the social and political situation prompted the educated writers in the homeland to abide by a perspective on disasters that did not single out calamities arising from meteorological and geophysical conditions, but to recognize them alongside human calamities. This point of view found its way onto the pages of the Propaganda Movement's periodical.

An unsigned article on the administration of Philippine towns that appeared in the 15 August 1889 issue of *La Solidaridad* (1996, 300) lamented that "Torrential rains and floods are ordinary phenomena in the Philippines, which annually destroy roads and bridges." Because the municipality, much less the barangay, had no "corporate character" and "all municipal finances were centralized at the provincial capital" under the control of the provincial governor (Robles 1969, 79), the town mayor (*gobernadorcillo*) had no funds to undertake repairs. "If for their repair he can get men to work, he lacks materials for the job. The budget does not provide a single centavo for the purchase of materials" (*La Solidaridad* 1996, 300). Despite colonial state measures since the 1860s to assist and reward native officials in local finances and to rationalize the system of taxation, "the native officials found themselves in a more difficult position to comply with their duties" (Robles 1969, 249). Thus the town mayor felt the burden of undertaking repairs after a disaster struck; but they had to carry the burden because, in fact, according to the article in *La Solidaridad* (1996, 300), "roads and bridges [were] repaired annually." The article concluded that this system of administration was "incompatible with the aspirations of progress" (ibid., 302).

As Isabelo de los Reyes (1996, 306) also pointed out, "The *gobernadorcillo* has no compensation, receiving scarcely *twenty pesos a year*, [but] has great duties and responsibilities and, just like the *cabeza*, is frequently jailed for someone else's faults." *La Solidaridad* (1996, 300) explained the system as constituting a veritable disaster for native officials: "if [the village chiefs] do not turn over their [tax] collections to the public treasury, either because of their apathy or the arrears of the taxpayer, heavy fines are imposed on the town mayor. Yet for all these the town mayor has no coercive powers over the *cabezas* and over the taxpayers to compel them to meet their respective quotas." The whole system, according to De los Reyes (1996, 306), was "a real calamity (*una verdadera calamidad*) for the country, infinitely more burdensome than anything else."

In a similar vein, in the 15 March 1889 issue of *La Solidaridad* an unsigned article, "*Los agricultores filipinos*," commonly attributed to Rizal, stated that "Laguna is one of the more agricultural provinces and more prone to natural and human calamities" ([Rizal] 1996, 46). The article argued, "The Filipino agriculturist has to struggle not only against plagues and public calamities, but also against petty tyrannies and bandits. Against the former, yes, he is allowed some defense; against the latter, not always" (ibid., 44). One could at least prepare for natural calamities, it argued, but not for

the anthropogenic disasters of tyrannies inflicted by actors both within and outside the state structure. Pursuing this point, it went on to say that, after battling floods, locusts, fires, and poor harvests, the agricultural capitalist needed to contend with the constable (*alguacil*), the Guardia Civil, the judge, or an official of the province; those whose farms were located far from the town center also had to contend with the “*tulisan* [bandit], a terrible enemy” (ibid.).

Toward the end of his 1890 essay on indolence Rizal (1996c, 366) mentioned “submerged plains,” but his reference to “many calamities” (*tantas calamidades*) was aimed at the depredations caused by Spanish policies that decimated the native population. In another part of the essay, he pointed to calamities brought about by drought, rinderpest, and locust infestation, but decried the Spanish friars’ solution of resorting to nothing more than prayers, exorcisms, and processions (ibid., 394). “If the climate and nature are not enough in themselves to confound him and deprive him of all vitality” (*si el clima y la naturaleza de por sí no bastan para aturdirle y privarle de toda energía*), then misplaced religiosity and the overall colonial dispensation conspired to promote native indolence (ibid.). Ultimately, Rizal deemed colonial misgovernment the “real calamity” exceeding all others.

## Conclusion

In the context of the late nineteenth century, political exiles in Europe beheld the homeland from afar and romanticized it, even as their political sentiments heightened their estrangement from Spain’s environment. Given European notions about the tropics, the ilustrados’ idealization of the climate was a discursive political strategy. In romancing the tropics as generative of life and creativity, they were asserting a perspective that inverted the prejudiced view of Spaniards and other Europeans, but remaining within environmental determinism. Despite contradictions in their appropriation of tropicality, it became the basis for claiming cosmopolitan equality with the colonial master, while it also helped crystallize a collective identity, of being of the tropics, not as degenerate but as a civilizable people capable of producing genius.

Rizal’s return visit to the homeland in 1887 reversed his thinking, a homecoming process anticipated in the experience of Crisostomo Ibarra in *Noli me tangere*, who confronted the demon of comparisons on his return to Manila. Rizal’s visit to the homeland marked a dividing line in

his writings on the climate, a product of wrestling with the heat while haunted by the specter of comparisons. Henceforth he would cease to idealize the climatological conditions of the Philippines and would veer closer to the ilustrados’ opponents’ assertion about the inimical effects of a hot climate—in an exposition marked by putative objectivity and scientificity.

Rizal’s reinvented discursive strategy enabled him to look beyond the climate and pin the blame on colonial rule for native indolence, even if this trait was seen as already predisposed by climate. Unlike natural disasters that could be anticipated and for which some precautionary measures taken, the educated native elite in both Spain and the homeland deemed colonial rule as a worse calamity, a chronic disaster against which no possible state of preparedness was possible. Anthropogenic, colonial misrule matched and even exceeded the disasters spawned by meteorological and geophysical phenomena. At this worse calamity the ilustrados trained their sights.

## Epilogue

In the closing stage of his life Rizal wrote two lengthy poems that meditated on the climate as well as the landscape of his homeland (Rizal 1961b, 130–33, 138–39; Gwekoh 1929, 62–65, 75–77). Penned in 1895 during his exile in Dapitan in northern Zamboanga, where he was banished from July 1892 until July 1896, the twenty-four-stanza poem with the quiescent title “Mi Retiro” (My Retreat) looked back to the years he spent overseas until his second and final return to the Philippines, where he thought he would be in his family’s embrace only for a “demon” (*fiera*) to rapidly roar in and break into a violent “squall” (*turbonada*) (Rizal 1961b, 132; Gwekoh 1929, 65). His metaphor for the colonial state’s act of deporting him so suddenly to the south is consistent with the portrait of colonial misgovernance as a calamity. But in the end he thanked the hurricane (*tormenta*) that “whisked” (*batirme*) him to the “bosom of his native soil” (*al suelo de mi natal país*), a pleasant refuge (*asilo*) on the foot of a forested hill by the sea (Rizal 1961b, 133; Gwekoh 1929, 65). On the night that he awaited his execution, which would happen early on 30 December 1896, Rizal penned what is now called “Mi Último Adiós,” the poem through which he bid good-bye to his beloved country (*patria adorada*), a “realm caressed by the sun” (*región del sol querida*). Having lived amid nature in Dapitan, Rizal, on the eve of his death, took us back to the nature in the Brindis.

## Notes

When this article was at an early stage of incarnation, Carol Hau gave it a very incisive reading, and I have benefited tremendously from her comments. Thanks are due to two referees who gave extremely valuable comments and suggestions that have considerably improved this paper. For the encouragement he gave me on this project and his kindness in sending me a digital copy of Federico Montaldo's book, I am indebted to Xavier Huetz de Lemps. Jonathan Ong expressed keen interest in this project after I presented broad sketches of the argument at the national conference of the Philippine Sociological Society on "Crises, Resiliency and Community: Sociology in the Age of Disasters" held at the Mindanao State University, General Santos City, 16–18 Oct. 2014. This paper was presented subsequently at a seminar held on 21 July 2016 jointly sponsored by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and the Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University, where I benefited from the stimulating comments of Julius Bautista, Hosoda Naomi, Ooi Keat Gin, Serizawa Takamichi, and Shimizu Hiromu. Francis Navarro was most helpful in translating a difficult passage in the *Manual del viajero en Filipinas from Spanish to English*. I miss Ben Anderson, who no doubt would have given this paper a very warm, critical, penetrating, and stimulating reading. Any remaining faults and shortcomings of this article are my responsibility.

- 1 Serrano Laktaw headed the Comité de Propaganda in Manila (Schumacher 1997, 123). On D. A. Murgas as probably the alias of Serrano Laktaw, see Garcia 1965, 76; Thomas 2006, 387, 405–6 n. 12. Note that the playful pseudonym *murga* means nuisance.
- 2 Miasma, however, was not explicitly mentioned.
- 3 With climate change the human/nature binary relationship has been reversed; the emphasis now is on the impact of humans on the climate. Against a binary framework are calls for a perspective favoring "mutual constitution and embeddedness" (Head and Gibson 2012, 702), the "dissolving" of "nature-culture boundaries" (Hulme 2010), and the collapse of the "humanist distinction between natural history and human history" (Chakrabarty 2009).
- 4 On the origins of the word  *filibustero* in Spanish America and its arrival in the Spanish Philippines, see Aguilar 2011.
- 5 The thoughts in this and the previous paragraph were stimulated by the incisive comments of Carol Hau on an earlier version of this paper.
- 6 Cf. De los Reyes 1889, 63. Note that in this whole discussion ilustrados would appear to have left behind the magical worldview, including "meteorological fables" (*consejas meteorológicas*) recorded by De los Reyes (1994, 94–98).
- 7 A nascent idealization of place from a distance is evident in Rizal's "Un Recuerdo A Mi Pueblo (Kalamba—La Laguna)," which he composed as a 15-year-old student in Manila (Gwekoh 1929, 19–21).
- 8 In the late nineteenth century forests still covered 70 percent of the Philippine land area measured in reference to the present-day nation-state; Greg Bankoff (2004, 326–27) estimates, however, that the remaining forest cover was found on about 50 percent only of the area under effective Spanish dominion.
- 9 This statement applies specifically to the ilustrados discussed in this article. Other ilustrados, including those who did not travel to Europe, could have produced texts that commented on disasters and disaster mitigation, but I have yet to encounter them.
- 10 Ribera et al. 2008 provide a list of the most destructive typhoons in the Philippines and the Northwest Pacific based on the catalog of typhoons published in 1935 by Fr. Miguel Selga, SJ. The Harvard-trained Selga was director of the Manila Observatory from 1926 to 1946, the last Spanish Jesuit who headed the observatory. Selga's catalog of 652 tropical cyclones from 1566 to 1900 is analyzed in García-Herrera et al. 2007. Of the total 524 "typhoons" recorded, 422 (or 80.5 percent) corresponded to the second half of the nineteenth century, indicating improvements in recordkeeping.
- 11 See Saderra Masó (1910) and Repetti (1946) for catalogs of earthquakes that occurred over three centuries of Spanish colonial rule.
- 12 Victims of the 1863 earthquake, including many who had been orphaned, sent numerous appeals for financial assistance to the Junta Central de Socorros de Manila even a couple of years after the event (Gealogo 2016).
- 13 Rizal (1938, 68) complained to Blumentritt about the exorbitant cost of Humboldt's books, which he could not afford to purchase.
- 14 The nationalized weather hardly thinks beyond the territorial coordinates of the Philippines, encapsulated in the term "Philippine Area of Responsibility." For instance, an impending typhoon is closely watched, but once it has hit the country and moved on there is usually little concern for the weather disturbance's passage beyond the state's political borders. A proper content analysis of meteorological reports is needed. Note also that challenges to nationalized weather have come from transborder environmental events (such as the haze in parts of Southeast Asia) and global warming as both discourse and reality.
- 15 López Jaena's concern that in Spain people did not know about the Philippines was shared by other ilustrados. Antonio Luna, for instance, was aghast at the Spaniards' "complete lack of knowledge" about "a Spanish possession and colony, a piece of territory where the gold and red flag of Spain flutters" (Taga-Ilog 1996a, 446). In general the ilustrados were disillusioned to discover that official Spain was indifferent to Philippine affairs (Schumacher 1997, 24).
- 16 The question of whether Europeans could adapt to the conditions of life in the tropics sprung from the conceptual core of Hippocratic medical theory, which emphasized the careful mapping of disease environments in order to avoid places, peoples, and objects associated with illness. These ideas contributed to the emergence of the "science of hygiene," which held that "Individuals and the various races of humanity possessed an innate texture or bodily constitution which favoured health in certain locales and predisposed one to illness in others" (Osborne 2003, 92). On the rise of "tropical medicine" as "another way of reading the text of tropicality" and of the tropical climate as demanding "therapeutic performances," see Livingstone 2002, 74–77, 78.
- 17 For data on the geographic distribution of Philippine exports and imports from 1818 to 1894, see Legarda 1999, 133–36. Although the annual figures fluctuated widely, the proportion of all exports that went to Spain was not substantial: they ranged from 3.4 percent to 8 percent in the 1870s and from 4.45 percent to an unusually high 26.77 percent in the 1880s; in 1894 8.61 percent went to Spain. In terms of total imports, Spain supplied even smaller proportions that ranged from 3.22 percent to 5.24 percent in the 1870s and from 3.27 percent to 10.76 percent in the 1880s. In 1894, however, Spain supplied an unprecedented 36.59 percent of all Philippine imports.
- 18 However, Rizal (1961a, 258) corrected Morga, who labeled the months from June to September as "winter" and the months from October to May as "summer." Rizal noted that "in Manila by

December, January, and February the thermometer goes down more than in the months of August and September, and therefore in regard to the seasons it resembles Spain as all the rest of the North Hemisphere.”

- 19 At the time of the booklet’s publication, Herrero was commissary of the Spanish Augustinians; he would later become bishop of Nueva Caceres from 1880 to 1886 (Schumacher 1997, 214 n. 4).
- 20 Herrero’s thesis echoed Montesquieu’s ideas, which considerably influenced European attitudes on Oriental despotism in the eighteenth century and beyond.
- 21 This statement appears in the fourth and concluding installment of the essay, “Filipinas dentro de cien años” (Rizal 1996b, 35), but the original Spanish is missing in the reproduction by Fundación Santiago.
- 22 In a letter written from Paris on 4 December 1889, Blumentritt commended Rizal for his most recent writing in *La Solidaridad*, either the second or third installment of “Filipinas dentro de cien años,” saying “I like it more than the others; it has more zest, greater depth, and a wider scope” (Rizal 1938, 226).
- 23 Extreme heat was not seen as a disaster in the epoch prior to global warming. Today, however, it is recognized that “Extreme heat events are considered not only one of the most underrated weather hazards, but have, in fact, killed more people than any other disease in the United States as well as Australia” (Sabbag 2013, 3). “In terms of its effect on human morbidity, elevated temperatures are associated with increased rates of renal, cardiovascular, and respiratory disease, along with heat stroke, hyperthermia, and nervous system failure” (ibid.). Among workers extreme heat results in “poor decision making, psychological distress, diminished labor capacity, and increased risk of accidents” (ibid., 4). “In order to prevent overheating, workers must self-pace themselves by working less or by reducing labor intensity” (ibid., 5)—in another time and place, interpretable as indolence.
- 24 Gonzalez Fernandez’s (1877) *Manual del viajero en Filipinas* provides very detailed information to ease the Peninsular Spaniard’s adjustment and “acclimatization” to the Philippines, in addition to providing an overview of the historical, social, cultural, economic, institutional, and geographic conditions of the country. Cf. Federico Montaldo’s (1898) *Guía practica, higiénica y médica del europeo en los países tórridos (Filipinas, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Fernando Póo, etc.)*. See also note 16.
- 25 Rizal fails to note the changes in temperature in the course of the day. Although he lived in the countryside, he seemed unaware of farm workers’ practice of avoiding the noonday sun by working early in the morning.
- 26 Syed Hussein Alatas (1977, 98–111) critiqued colonial constructions of indolence among Malays, Javanese, and Filipinos, devoting an entire chapter to Rizal’s essay but pointing out that Rizal failed to note that indolence prevailed in urban centers but not in rural areas and to distinguish between indolence as a physiological predisposition and the lack of motivation due to an exploitative social system that erased motivation for productive work. In turn, Floro Quibuyen (2008, 126–35, 200–211) has taken Alatas to task for asserting that Rizal failed to see the real reason for the Spanish colonial discourse on native indolence. Both Alatas and Quibuyen mention Rizal’s proposition on the climate’s effects on indolence, but do not subject it to critical scrutiny. On the subject of coaxing a labor force into existence in the context of a subsistence economy alongside a sugar export economy, see Aguilar 1998, 82–90, 126–55.

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