HOW ARE HISTORICAL TEXTS TO BE READ?
MY FINAL REJOINDER TO JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.

Floro C. Quibuyen
University of the Philippines Asian Center
quibuyen10@yahoo.com

About the Author
Floro C. Quibuyen is Associate Professor in Philippine Studies at the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines. His latest book is *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism* (Ateneo de Manila UP, 1999), considered “one of the most provocative books” for the 1990s decade in the 10-volume *Southeast Asian History Readers*, published by Iwanami-shoten in Japan. Dr. Quibuyen’s professional experience ranges from teaching (University of the Philippines and the University of Hawaii at Manoa) to filmmaking and video production.

Editor’s Note

The two authors debated on many aspects of Philippine historiography and the study of Philippine national hero Jose P. Rizal, the Reform Movement, the Philippine Revolution, and the American occupation of the Philippines. In particular, the authors discussed their differing views on the use of historical sources (Schumacher’s criticism of Quibuyen’s use of Coates, Craig, Palma, Laubach, Quirino, Valenzuela, and Buencamino, and Quibuyen’s defense of such sources); the utilization of theoretical and conceptual tools in the study of history (Schumacher’s point of the basic differences between a historian interested in the use of empirical method and a political philosopher “primarily interested in theories” who made use of Marx, Fanon, and Gramsci); and the presentation of historical facts and the various modes of interpreting historical phenomena and conditions.

1


I would have been grateful at this endorsement but Schumacher added that my “Gramscian Marxist jargon” was distracting and “irrelevant to an understanding of Rizal”
because he has been able to arrive at conclusions similar to mine without using my complex terminology. In my reply, “Rizal and Filipino Nationalism: Critical Issues,” I argued that Schumacher and I had differed fundamentally regarding 1) sources and interpretations; 2) the political visions of Burgos, Del Pilar, Rizal and Bonifacio; 3) the ideological currents of the 19th century; and 4) the failure of the Revolution and the impact of American conquest.

I also pointed out Schumacher’s factual errors. Among these are his claims about Burgos (he was the source of Rizal’s concept of the Filipino nation—false!), Bryan (he was an anti-imperialist who supported Philippine independence—false!), Rizal (his Kristong Pilipino image was limited to certain number of Tagalogs, mostly among the colorums—false!), the Dominicans (Paciano was grateful for their generosity—a misleading half-truth!), the Pact of Biak-na-Bato (it was the best choice for Aguinaldo—false!).

However, in his last and final rejoinder, “Reply of John N. Schumacher to Floro Quibuyen’s Response to the Review of His A Nation Aborted,” Schumacher ignored the points I made. Unmindful of the facts I brought up in my counter arguments, he accuses me of dwelling on “theories”—in contrast to his interest in “facts” and adherence to the “empirical method”—and not reading his 1973 book!

Schumacher’s brief against my reply to his review of my book is a terse one: “[Quibuyen] could not have read [my] book [The Propaganda Movement] very carefully to make some of the erroneous assertions not only in his book, but of his article replying to me.”

Aside from these unspecified errors, I am also accused of four unscholarly misdemeanors: 1) trying to impress Schumacher with “arguments from authority”; 2) refusing to recognize my “fallibility”; 3) denying the “obvious meaning” of the Del Pilar text, and, thus, disagreeing with Schumacher “without reading the writings of [Del Pilar]”; and 4) conveniently [ignoring] the crucial words “with intent” in my citation of the 1948 Genocide Convention definition.

Schumacher also scolds Ateneo’s internationally circulated journal, Philippine Studies: “Most scholarly journals do not allow such replies as Quibuyen’s.” I can only hope that this was not the reason why Philippine Studies disallowed a last rejoinder from me.

I am compelled, however, to address Schumacher’s remarks—in the interest of truth and fairness. Hopefully, a more open journal will not be deterred by Schumacher’s rebuke of Philippine Studies. Needless to say, my disagreements with Schumacher do not in any way diminish the esteem that I continue to hold for him.¹

Schumacher ought to be the first to know that Philippine Studies seriously considered my reply to his review of my book. A month after receiving my draft (22 March 2001), Schumacher’s fellow Jesuit, Fr. Joseph A. Galdon, then editor-in-chief of Philippine Studies,
wrote me, “We will have our editors review it and will let you know if it is okay to publish it in *Philippine Studies*.” About three months later (11 July 2001), Fr. Galdon sent me the welcome news, “Our editors have approved your article and we are happy to publish it in the March 2002 issue of *Philippine Studies*.”

Thus, Schumacher would have done everyone a service—especially Fr. Galdon (now retired) and the editorial board of the *Philippine Studies*—had he specified my “new errors.” I, for one, would have been grateful to Schumacher. Not only would it have contributed to my growth as a scholar, but also, and more importantly, educated the thousands of students and teachers who rely on *Philippine Studies* as a valuable resource on Rizal and Filipino nationalism.

Those who have read my reply to Schumacher’s review can judge for themselves if I was trying to impress Schumacher with “a historian’s argument from authority.” A major issue separating me and Schumacher is the question of how to regard the entry of the United States forces in the Philippines at the turn of the century—was it, as I put it, a “genocidal American conquest” or was it, as Schumacher prefers to call it, “the American intervention” (Schumacher 552). One of the sources I cited in explicating the term “genocidal” was a Vatican official whose designation Schumacher seemed to question. The title “Vatican foreign minister” was from CNN news, which I cited in my endnote no. 12. I cited Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran’s description of the TNI’s repression of East Timor civilians as “genocidal” because of Schumacher’s claim that it is a “gross exaggeration” to refer to America’s “intervention” in the Philippines as “genocidal” when compared to the far higher death toll in former Yugoslavia or Rwanda (more on genocide in Section 5).

My references to Marx, Gramsci, Fanon, and “militant student organizations” were not meant to advance a “historian’s argument from authority,” much less impress Schumacher. They were meant to disabuse him of his misconceptions about these names (in his book review)—that’s why I put them in my “Postscript.”

Schumacher chides me for my failure to recognize [my] own “fallibility,” unlike Rizal. This reminds me of the time when Rizal was accused of exactly the same thing by a Spanish Jesuit, Fr. Pastells, who, obviously, felt exempt from such judgments, particularly
in his disagreements with a colonial ward. But that was more than a hundred years ago, during the moribund days of the Spanish Empire. So let’s focus on Schumacher—does he recognize his own fallibility?

Consider the issue of Rizal’s Morga. In pages 194-196, I disputed Schumacher’s claim that Rizal committed an “obvious fallacy” on the question of the friar haciendas by demonstrating that 1) at least one premise of Schumacher is false; and 2) that, at any rate, his argument is irrelevant to Rizal’s point. I cited Fr. Chirino’s observation of the irrigated fields of Laguna, and UP historian Jaime Veneracion’s recent book on the history of Philippine agriculture (there were irrigated fields in pre-colonial Bulacan) to disprove Schumacher’s claim that before the friar haciendas were set up, e.g., Calamba (a region in Luzon), there were no irrigated fields at all in those places. I also argued that even if Schumacher’s premise were true, his argument would be irrelevant to Rizal’s point, which was not merely about the creation of haciendas but also about their expansion, “either by additional land purchases or donations, or outright usurpation.”

How does Schumacher respond to my argument? Instead of addressing my citation of Fr. Chirino and Dr. Veneracion, Schumacher changes the subject. He turns his attention on Marx, while repeating his criticism of Rizal. Schumacher pronounces: “for Marx, facts still had to yield to ideology”; Rizal “in his Morga more than once erred, distorted certain facts—he was after all writing propaganda, whether or not one wishes to call this a lie.” Which facts yielded to ideology in the case of Marx, or yielded to propaganda in the case of Rizal, Schumacher does not say. He also assumes that we all agree on his notions of “ideology” and “propaganda.” Convinced of the absolute truth of his assertions, he feels no need to demonstrate it to us—because, as he puts it bluntly, he “has no intention of wasting anyone’s time.”

Regarding our disagreement over whether Del Pilar was a separatist or an assimilist, it would have been better for Schumacher to directly answer my question on page 207—“Did Del Pilar actually say that ‘the effective strategy was to aim first at assimilation’?” Considering his knowledge (and my alleged ignorance) of “all the other letters where Del Pilar makes similar assertions,” Schumacher could have at the very least cited a more convincing passage than the one he cited in his book review. Instead, Schumacher simply asserts that the separatist meaning he gave to Del Pilar’s text is the “obvious meaning” and dismisses my contrary reading of it by accusing me of not having read Del Pilar. He
How Are Historical Texts to be Read?

is certain that I haven’t read Del Pilar because “Del Pilar’s books appear neither in the references for the Philippine Studies article, nor in the bibliography of Quibuyen’s original book.”

I’m not sure if I follow Schumacher’s logic. Del Pilar is not in the bibliography of my original book and my reply-article; does this mean I haven’t read him? Unknown to Schumacher, Del Pilar is cited in my 1996 PhD dissertation—where Epistolario Pilar (I) is cited in footnote 9, page 664, and La Soberania Monacal in the Bibliography.

But let’s grant, for the sake of argument, that I haven’t read Del Pilar, and that the only text I’ve read of Del Pilar is the text cited by Schumacher in his review of my book. Does this argumentum ad hominem refute my contention? My contention is that the cited Del Pilar text only shows Del Pilar’s affirmation of a Filipino cultural identity, and that it is a big jump from this premise to the conclusion that Del Pilar was for the establishment of a sovereign Filipino nation, just like Rizal and Bonifacio.

Consider the following. Pedro Paterno extolled the indigenous civilization of the Filipinos, but—as everyone knows—he never embraced the nationalist project of separating from Spain. Fr. Jose Burgos affirmed the inherent worth of Filipino culture, all the while regarding himself as a loyal subject of Spain. This is evident in his Manifiesto, where he argued—“It is to our interest to maintain Spanish rule, sheltering ourselves under its great shadow, a source of protection and of the highest culture.” Thus, if we go by Schumacher’s reading of Del Pilar’s text, then we will have to also consider both Paterno and Burgos as separatists—which is absurd.

Moreover, if Del Pilar believed in separation just like Rizal and Bonifacio, as Schumacher claims, then why did Del Pilar not heed Rizal’s call to return to the Philippines to wage a more militant struggle, this time with the masses? The fact is, unlike Rizal and his fellow separatists Antonio Luna, Jose Alejandrino, and Edilberto Evangelista who all responded enthusiastically to Rizal’s call, Del Pilar clung on to La Solidaridad’s doomed propaganda campaign in Madrid to the bitter end (although there’s an apochrypal story that he did see the light eventually, at his deathbed). As I pointed out in my PhD dissertation:

Del Pilar stubbornly insisted that the best, least painful way to achieve progress for the Philippines was to get Spain to recall the reactionary friars from the Philippines and to grant the urgent institutional reforms. In this strategy, so thought Del Pilar, the Propaganda campaign in Spain was essential. It was for this purpose that the Comite de Propaganda in Manila sent Del Pilar to Spain in the first place. When he
gladly assumed his assigned task, Del Pilar was confident that the job could be done in one or two years. Thus, in 24 May 1889, he wrote Rizal, “For my part, I would wish to have the work of propaganda finished this year or next year at the latest.”

When, after two years, his mission had not been accomplished, rather than radically changing his strategy, Del Pilar hang on doggedly to his original project, still hoping (against hope) that his efforts and sacrifices would eventually bear fruit. It was over this question that Rizal broke from Del Pilar. When it dawned on him that the campaign in Spain was futile, Rizal called on the Filipino expatriates to come home, unite with the people, and wage a national, mass-based struggle that would lead to the formation of the Filipino nation. Thus, Del Pilar, and not Rizal, was the true believer in constitutional reforms. In this, he antedates the Filipino elite’s peaceful, parliamentary struggle for independence during the American colonial period. If anything, Del Pilar was the precursor of the modern bi-nationalist Filipinos.

Schumacher urges me to read Del Pilar alongside Rizal. My position is that we should even go further. We should read our Filipino thinkers alongside each other—Burgos, Paterno, Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, Apolinario Mabini—and even beyond the 19th century, to Manuel Luis Quezon and Claro M. Recto. As I’ve argued in my reply, the thread of binationalism runs from Burgos and Del Pilar to the American sponsored Quezon. As I’ve discussed in my book, the other thread—the radical separatist line—extends from Rizal and Bonifacio to the anti-imperialist Claro M. Recto. We need this broader context if we are to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of reform and revolution, assimilation and Hispanization, separation and independence in the history of Filipino nationalism.

Secondly, our understanding will be even more enriched if we viewed 19th century Filipino nationalism from a comparative transnational perspective. As I’ve explained in my reply, a comparison with Hawaii is instructive. For example, Ka Lahui’s concept of “a nation within a nation” would help us understand that the affirmation of native cultural identity and language is not tantamount to a call for an independent nation-state.

In his fifth remark, Schumacher commits another blatant misrepresentation of my argument. He declares, “Quibuyen, citing the 1948 Genocide Convention definition, conveniently ignores the crucial words ‘with intent.’” I urge Schumacher to turn to page
222 of my reply-article and actually read my citation of Article II of the 1948 Genocide Convention. Only one pretending to be blind or dyslexic could miss the phrase that I highlighted in bold letters—*with intent to destroy, in whole or in part*. Yet Schumacher asserts that no genocide occurred because “no American government wanted to wipe out the Filipino people.” I cannot believe that Schumacher could actually say this, for it would imply that he doesn’t know the meaning of the crucial phrase—*in part*.

If Schumacher actually reads the provisions of Article II, he will also see that genocide is not limited to “killing members of the group.” Article II explicitly states that an act “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” may also constitute genocide.

Schumacher’s assertion—“Millions died in World Wars I and II, but no one would call this genocide”—is laughable if it did not come from so distinguished a historian. Consider this fact:

The A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima killed between 70,000 and 80,000 people in one second, and an estimated 140,000 died by the end of 1945. In Nagasaki, an estimated 70,000 people died by the end of the same year. Tens of thousands of others died subsequently as a result not only of the blast and fire but also radiation, sometimes taking its deadly toll over many years. (Tanaka)

By the terms of Article II of the 1948 Genocide Convention, the dropping of the atomic bomb on two cities by the United States—the only country in human history to have done so—was an act of genocide.

Indeed Schumacher is right that no one wanted to wipe out the whole Filipino people. The goal, as the Generals stressed, was to force them to submit by whatever means necessary. As in any imperialist war of conquest (witness the tragedy of the first nations of North America), the killing of tens of thousands and “causing serious bodily or mental harm” to an even greater number of Filipinos was a military imperative—intended to destroy the people’s will to resist. By the definition of the Genocide Convention, the US government was guilty of the crime of genocide. No self-quotations by any professional historian—be he an award-winning historian with outstanding contributions to Philippine history—can alter this fact!
WHAT IS A HISTORIAN?

I have yet to find an argument based on fact in Schumacher’s reply to my reply to his review. Even on the level of facts, Schumacher does not address my arguments. For example, instead of directly answering my question on page 207—“Did Del Pilar actually say that ‘the effective strategy was to aim first at assimilation’?”—Schumacher brings up again his criticism (first raised in his book review) of the English translations of Dr. Encarnacion Alzona of the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission. I never disputed this in my reply. Then Schumacher invokes his PhD dissertation to emphasize the importance of context in the reading of texts. I could not agree more. So, what is Schumacher trying to say?

Sadly, Schumacher’s main argument boils down to a rebuke for my apparent laziness—my not seriously reading his book.

But why should Schumacher presume that my reading his 1973 book “very carefully” would convert me to his interpretations of Del Pilar and Burgos? As I’ve explained in my reply, Schumacher’s citation of Burgos flatly contradicts his claim that we have to go back to Burgos for Rizal’s idea of the Filipino nation. Regarding Del Pilar, I have argued that Schumacher’s interpretation is based on assumptions that I find unwarranted. Even if I read Schumacher’s book word for word one hundred times over, I will still question his assumptions regarding the meaning of concepts such as “assimilation” and “separation.” Simply appealing to facts or to original texts does not necessarily settle a disagreement in interpretation. The crucial question is, How are these texts to be read? This is the fundamental difference between Schumacher and me.

For myself, the value of a work of history, or the worth of a historian, does not lie in the absence of errors. Errors, in any case, are easy to spot, and just as easy to correct. In fact, this two-fold process of spotting and correcting errors is part and parcel of the pursuit of knowledge in all the disciplines.

In history, what is difficult and requires real intelligence and perspicacity is the work of interpretation—the construction of powerful concepts with which to weave the facts into a coherent narrative; a living story that has meaning and relevance to a people who constitutes its subject. This is what separates the little kids from the big guys. And, contrary to Schumacher’s belief, this serious work has nothing to do with whether one is a professional historian with a PhD in history. Simon Schama, celebrated professor of history at Columbia University, one of the big guys in the field, holds no PhD! (For that matter, the towering intellectuals of the 20th century did not hold a PhD—Nobel laureates Albert
Einstein and Bertrand Russell).

What is Schumacher’s point in attributing my disagreements with him to my being a “political philosopher”? Is it to insinuate that, not being a historian, I have no expertise to dispute the findings of a professional historian? I will leave this for others to consider.

Is Schumacher implying that professional historians never have serious disagreements? Surely, Schumacher knows that historians have disagreed on which facts are relevant and significant. And even when they have agreed on the same set of facts, they have disagreed on the interpretation. In fact, such disagreements are what make history the liveliest of the social sciences in the Philippines.

This has been going on for some time. Thus, a number of historians have gone beyond the archival, documentary approach of the old positivistic paradigm to break new ground—from the *Pasyon and Revolution* of Reynaldo Ileto to the *Kasaysayang Bayan* (“History of the Country”) of UP historian Jaime Veneracion. Their empirical (yes, empirical), ethnolinguistic, ethnohistorical researches demonstrate, for example, that the ilustrados’ *independencia* and *nacion* are not equivalent to the Katipunan’s notion of *kalayaan* and *Inang Bayan*. A younger crop of historians, typified by members of ADHIKA (Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa, may Hilig at Interes sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas) [Association of Those Who Are Experts in and Who Are Interested in Philippine History] have followed their lead and have embarked on equally ground-breaking research.

I find this development exciting—especially the debates they generate. Debating critical issues on Filipino nationalism are crucial at this juncture in our history, when our people are navigating precipitously between the Scylla of populist fascism and the Charybdis of US imperialism in their desperate search for a just, democratic, and prosperous future. Instead of prematurely cutting them short, scholarly journals have the moral responsibility to encourage and facilitate such debates.
How Are Historical Texts to be Read?

NOTES

1. Once upon a time, when I was the only Rizal teacher in UP Diliman who disagreed with Renato Constantino, Schumacher graciously accepted my invitation and gave a scholarly presentation to my P. I. 100 class—I still owe him a sumptuous dinner treat for this.

2. Could this be, to venture a psychological hypothesis, due to Del Pilar’s refusal to admit defeat and failure? If he came home empty-handed, what would he then say to the Comite de Propaganda which financed his campaign? Thus, when in 1895 the Comite, through its secretary, Apolinario Mabini, informed him that the funds were no longer forthcoming and that he should close shop, Del Pilar responded with uncontrollable rage (see Ikehata, 1989).

3. Could this be, to venture a psychological hypothesis, due to Del Pilar’s refusal to admit defeat and failure? If he came home empty-handed, what would he then say to the Comite de Propaganda which financed his campaign? Thus, when in 1895 the Comite, through its secretary, Apolinario Mabini, informed him that the funds were no longer forthcoming and that he should close shop, Del Pilar responded with uncontrollable rage (see Ikehata, 1989).

4. Simon Schama, born in London in 1945, received his degrees from Cambridge in 1966 and 1969. He was fellow and Director of Studies at Christ’s College, Cambridge University, from 1966-76 before becoming fellow and tutor in modern history at Brasenose College, Oxford. He then spent 13 years as professor at Harvard. He is currently University Professor at Columbia University, New York, where he specializes in European cultural and environmental history and the history of art. His publications include Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813 (1977), which won the Wolfson Prize for History; Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel (1978); The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age (1987); Citizens: a Chronicle of the French Revolution (1989); Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations (1991); Landscape and Memory (1995); and Rembrandt’s Eyes (1999). Between 1999 and 2002 he was writing, presenting and filming the fifteen-part A History of Britain for BBC Television and the History Channel for which he has been nominated for an Emmy (2003). Three volumes of A History of Britain connected with the series (volume 1: At the Edge of the World; volume 2 The British Wars and volume 3 The Fate of Empire) were published between 1999 and 2002. He is currently at work on a book about the Anglo-American relationship and an eight part television series for the BBC, The Power of Art. He is also the art critic for the New Yorker. He was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth in 2001. See www.columbia.edu/cu/arthistory/html/dept_faculty_schama; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/1390893.stm
How Are Historical Texts to be Read?

WORKS CITED