

THE SPOLIARIUM OF JUAN LUNA THROUGH THE LENS OF THE FILIPINO-ORIENTED METACRITICISM OF LUMBERA AND ALMARIO: IMAGE OF TRUTH AND DISCOURSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Juan Luna's masterpiece Spoliarium through the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio Almario in order to determine how it may be read as an image of truth and a discourse of national identity. The research employed a qualitative design, specifically a metacritical approach, to analyze selected texts, essays, and interpretations of scholars and critics concerning the artwork. Based on the results, it was found that the Spoliarium is more than a representation of colonial tragedy; it is an artwork that reveals truths rooted in the history, experiences, and patriotic sentiments of the Filipino people. Through the Filipino-oriented metacriticism, Luna's art is recontextualized into the national discourse as a visual narrative portraying both the suffering and rising of the nation toward the formation of a Filipino identity. Thus, the study shows that art is not merely an expression of aesthetics but also a conduit of patriotic consciousness and truth rooted in the essence of being Filipino.

Keyword: *Spoliarium, identity, art, nationalism, decolonization*

1. INTRODUCTION

In every beat of the history of art in the Philippines, Juan Luna's Spoliarium remains a symbol of national sentiment, an artwork that serves as a mirror of the wounds of colonialism and the Filipino people's continuing search for their own voice. Painted in 1884 and exhibited at the Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid, the piece not only brought home a gold medal but also ignited a profound discourse on the dignity and identity of the "Indio" in the eyes of the West (Guillermo, 2018).

At first glance, the Spoliarium appears to depict the corpses of gladiators being dragged into the dark corridors of the Colosseum. However, upon deeper reading, it is an allegory of Filipino society under colonial rule a silent cry of collective sorrow, suffering, and yearning for freedom (Reyes, 2015; Flores, 2010).

Nonetheless, more than a century later, the Spoliarium has become a battleground of varied interpretations: from Western readings focused on form, composition, and technique, to nationalist interpretations highlighting

sentiments of revolt and patriotism. Many of these, however, still align with Western aesthetics a perspective centered on the concept of "universal beauty" and "classical proportion," which does not always correspond to the native sensibilities of the Filipino (Guerrero, 2019). Lumbera (2000) described this perspective as a form of colonial aesthetic standard, wherein art is measured using foreign criteria and Filipino artists appear merely as followers of European models.

On the other hand, there have been attempts to read the Spoliarium as a narrative of the nation. From the viewpoints of José Rizal and Graciano López Jaena, the artwork has been linked to the condition of the country during a period when foreign powers were destroying the dignity and lives of Filipinos. According to Rizal (cited in Almario, 2016), the Spoliarium is "a reflection of our lives," a reminder of the suffering and hope of the people. However, this interpretation remains limited, as it is often confined within Western methods of art criticism a paradox that restricts a deeper understanding of art as a Filipino experience (Hornedo, 2002; Tolentino, 2018).

In recent studies, it is noticeable that many readings of the *Spoliarium* continue to rely on Western paradigms such as formalism, realism, and art-historical analysis. Although valuable, these approaches do not fully consider the particularities of the Filipino historical, cultural, and ideological experience (Sarce, 2023). As a result, a call has emerged for a decolonized reading of art, one that is grounded in the nation's own worldview, language, and spirit.

According to Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000), it is essential "to return our view of art and knowledge to our own culture" to correct colonial frameworks that obscure the Filipino's genuine experiences. In this spirit, the discourses on decolonial aesthetics have emerged, which aim to foreground local sensibility and metacriticism as foundations for the analysis of art (Tiongson, 2020; Pineda, 2022).

In response, the perspectives of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio S. Almario serve as vital lenses for Filipino-oriented metacriticism. Lumbera (2016) is known for his advocacy of the Filipinization of criticism a call to center art and literary analysis back on the people, where aesthetics is never detached from language, history, and collective struggle. Almario (2019), meanwhile, emphasizes the role of language and national memory in shaping identity and asserts that culture must be examined as part of the discourse of nation-building. Using their ideas as metacritical lenses opens the possibility of reading the *Spoliarium* in a way truly grounded in Filipino experience one that sees the artwork as an image of truth and a discourse of national identity.

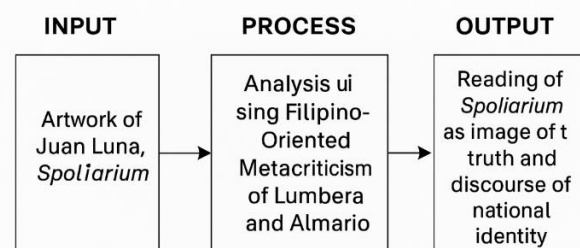
Metacriticism, according to Eagleton (as cited in San Juan, 2017), is the "analysis of analyses" a reflection on the ideologies underlying interpretations of art. In the Filipino context, it is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a return to the people's language, sentiment, and spirit as the basis of criticism. As San Juan (2019) noted, Filipino-oriented metacriticism is a form of cultural liberation an attempt to recognize art as an expression of the nation's history and collective identity.

This study assumes that the *Spoliarium* is not merely an image of death, but an image of truth a truth that transcends physical reality and reaches into the deeper experience of being Filipino. Through the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of

Lumbera and Almario, this research seeks to explore how Juan Luna's artwork becomes a conduit of national consciousness an art that does not simply recount colonial wounds but expresses existence, hope, and the continuing formation of identity as a nation (Almario, 2016; San Juan, 2019; Reyes, 2023).

Overall, this study contributes to the shaping of a theoretical framework of Filipino-oriented metacriticism an intellectual movement that aims to center the Filipino experience in artistic analysis. By reading the *Spoliarium* as an image of truth and a discourse of national identity, this research demonstrates that Juan Luna's art is not merely a historical artifact but a living discourse of our existence as a nation a continuous reflection on who we are, where we came from, and how we will continue creating our own truth.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



This research is anchored on the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio Almario as the primary analytical lens. Filipino-oriented metacriticism is a critical approach that promotes reading art and literature based on Filipino history, experience, and consciousness an outright rejection of the overwhelming domination of Western theories in experiencing and understanding aesthetics.

According to Lumbera (2016), it is necessary to "Filipinize" the perspective in reading art in order to return to the people the patriotic spirit that colonialism had taken away. Almario (2019) similarly asserts that the reading of art must be "nation-oriented and culture-oriented," for it is in these domains that the true identity of Philippine literature and visual art is rooted.

In this context, Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* is examined not merely as a work of technical mastery but as a conduit of truth and national discourse. The artwork is interpreted through the lens of Filipino-oriented metacriticism to reveal

the relationship among art, history, and ideology. As Reyes (2020) notes, art is a “space of resistance and remembrance,” where images become forms of reclaiming Filipino history long silenced by foreign narratives. Meanwhile, Santos (2021) emphasizes that colonial visualities such as those shown in *Spoliarium* can serve as mediums of critical reimagination, enabling a revolt against the Western gaze that dictates the “Filipino identity.”

From the perspectives of Lumbera and Almario, art must not be regarded as separate from society. Their metacriticism urges researchers to read each artwork as the voice of collective history. Thus, in this study, the *Spoliarium* is treated as a societal text a visual discourse revealing systems of power, suffering, and hope within the Filipino experience. Through Filipino-oriented metacriticism, the research examines how the elements of the artwork composition, color, light, and imagery embody “historical truth” (De la Cruz, 2022) while simultaneously shaping a collective image of national identity.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Juan Luna’s *Spoliarium* is recognized as a symbol of patriotic sentiment and an artwork that awakened national consciousness during the period of colonial rule. However, it is notable that most existing studies on the artwork are still grounded in Western lenses of analysis such as formalism and realism, which limit the understanding of the historical, cultural, and ideological context of the Filipino. In this situation, the need arises for a reading based on the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio Almario, both of whom advocate criticism rooted in patriotic spirit, history, and Filipino culture. Through their ideas, it becomes possible to discover how the *Spoliarium* is not only a work of art but also a discourse of truth and nationalism.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following questions:

1. How can Juan Luna’s *Spoliarium* be read and understood through the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Lumbera and Almario as a representation of truth within the country’s historical and cultural context?

2. In what ways does this reading reveal the discourse of national identity in Luna’s artwork?

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This research focuses on the metacritical reading of Juan Luna’s *Spoliarium* through the Filipino-oriented perspectives of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio S. Almario. The study covers the examination of Filipino concepts emphasized by Lumbera such as the Filipinization of criticism and the relationship among art, language, and society and by Almario, whose ideas center on national memory, language, and Filipino culture. These concepts are used as the primary analytical lens to determine how Luna’s artwork becomes an image of truth and a discourse of national identity within the context of history, colonialism, and nationalism.

The study is limited to the analysis of existing critical texts, articles, and academic commentaries about the *Spoliarium* (from 1980 to 2024), including essays, theses, and exhibition materials that offer interpretations of the artwork. The research does not include the technical or physical aspects of the painting (e.g., composition, materials, restoration), nor does it involve new empirical interviews with critics or artists, as the focus remains on metacritical analysis examining existing readings and interpretations of the artwork.

The study is also limited to the use of Filipino-oriented metacriticism by Lumbera and Almario as the main theoretical framework. Other Western theories such as formalism, Marxism, or postcolonialism are not used as primary lenses, although they may be referenced as supporting discussions to understand previous interpretations. Within this scope, the study aims to provide a clear, patriotic, and culturally grounded reading of the *Spoliarium* as a discourse of truth and national identity.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically the metacritical approach, to examine the readings and interpretations of Juan Luna’s *Spoliarium* through the Filipino-oriented lens of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio S. Almario. Its aim is to uncover the ideological and cultural elements underlying the critical discourses on the artwork as an image of truth and national identity.

Through the analysis of selected texts and essays, the study seeks to present a deeper understanding of art as a reflection of Filipino experience.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is grounded in a qualitative research design because it seeks to understand and deepen the meaning of discourses surrounding Juan Luna's Spoliarium as an image of truth and national identity. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research focuses on examining social experiences and meanings through careful interpretation of texts and contexts.

In this study, the metacritical approach is used, an approach primarily concerned with analyzing existing criticisms or readings of a work of art. Metacriticism, according to Eagleton (as cited in San Juan, 2017), is an "analysis of analyses," which examines not only the text but also the ideologies and perspectives embedded in the interpretations. In the Filipino context, metacriticism goes beyond technical evaluation; it is a return to native sensibility and national consciousness as the primary basis for understanding art.

7. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research uses metacritical analysis as its main methodological approach. Under this method, existing interpretations and criticisms of the Spoliarium are examined to determine how it is understood from a Filipino-oriented perspective. This approach aims to analyze the discourses surrounding the artwork's readings how these interpretations portray, represent, or limit the concepts of truth and national identity.

Using the insights of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio S. Almario, Filipino-oriented metacriticism is applied as the theoretical foundation for evaluating the ideological forces present in the texts that analyze Luna's work. This approach makes it possible to see the contrast between Western lenses and the local Filipino perception of art and culture.

8. SOURCES OF DATA

The primary data for this research come from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, theses, essays, and lectures that discuss the Spoliarium, the art of Juan Luna, and the theoretical perspectives of Lumbera and Almario on Filipino aesthetics and nationalist consciousness. These include contemporary

sources from 2015 onward, such as works by Guillermo (2018), Sarce (2023), and cultural publications by the University of the Philippines (UP Tribute, 2021).

These materials were carefully selected based on relevance, credibility, and their ability to shed light on the objectives of the study. No direct interviews with critics or artists were conducted since the focus of the study is on analyzing existing critical and discursive texts about the artwork.

9. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that identifies and examines recurring themes across selected texts (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

First, the critical texts on the Spoliarium and the perspectives of Lumbera and Almario were collected and organized.

Second, these texts were examined to identify major themes such as "image of truth," "discourse of national identity," and "Filipino-oriented reading."

Third, the themes were arranged and synthesized to create a broader interpretation showing how Luna's artwork becomes a vessel of truth and nationalism within the cultural and historical consciousness of the nation.

This process was carried out through careful interpretive analysis, and every interpretation was grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Lumbera and Almario.

10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards for academic research. Since the data were derived from published texts and sources, the primary ethical concern was the accurate citation and acknowledgment of all referenced ideas using parenthetical citations and a reference list following APA format.

The researcher ensured that no part of the study violated intellectual property rights and that all ideas were used solely for academic and critical purposes. In this way, the integrity of the research and respect for previous scholars were upheld.

11. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Bienvenido Lumbera and Virgilio S. Almario. Its purpose is to show how Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* can be read and understood as an image of truth and a discourse of national identity within the historical and cultural context of the Philippines. The results are organized thematically to clearly illustrate the connections among art, history, and ideology through a Filipino-oriented lens. Overall,

the findings highlight the emergence of the *Spoliarium* as a vessel of patriotic consciousness and a reflection of the Filipino experience.

Table 1

Research Question 1: How can Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* be read and understood through the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Lumbera and Almario as a representation of truth in the country's historical and cultural context?

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Interpretation Based on Filipino-Oriented Metacriticism	Historical & Cultural Context
1. Truth as Collective Experience	a. Imagery of suffering as mirror of society b. Art as testimony of patriotic sentiment	<i>Spoliarium</i> is read as a depiction of the collective experience of Filipinos, not merely a Western representation of tragedy. Lumbera (2016) emphasizes that art must emerge from the "experience of the people." The gladiator corpses symbolize Filipinos oppressed under colonial rule.	19th-century colonial oppression of the Indios created systemic suffering. The somber scene in Luna's work becomes a metaphor for the Filipino people's agony under Spain.
2. Truth as Resistance to Western Aesthetics	a. Rejecting "universal beauty" as a standard b. Restoration of native sensibility	According to Almario (2019) and Lumbera (2016), the <i>Spoliarium</i> should not be confined to European artistic standards. Filipino-oriented criticism emphasizes native emotion, history, and cultural experience as measures of truth.	Art academies were dominated by Western ideals. Luna subverted these by using their techniques to reveal colonial violence.
3. Truth as Expression of Patriotism	a. Suffering as source of unity b. Rebirth as a symbol of nationalism	The figures in <i>Spoliarium</i> are seen not just as dead bodies but symbols of unity and the awakening of national sentiment. Almario (2019) notes that art becomes a "voice of the people."	For the ilustrados, art became a tool for nationalism. Rizal and López Jaena viewed <i>Spoliarium</i> as a reflection of Filipino life.
4. Truth as Hope and Rise of the Nation	a. Light as symbol of resurgence b. Truth as strength of the nation	Filipino-oriented readings emphasize not only suffering but hope. The light in the painting represents the nation's rising consciousness. Lumbera (2016) argues that art must reveal truth to awaken the people.	During the revolutionary era, art was used to inspire liberation. Luna's work symbolizes the birth of Filipino consciousness.

Based on the Filipino-oriented metacriticism of Lumbera and Almario, the analysis reveals that Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* is a visual representation of truth not empirical or objective truth, but truth rooted in the collective emotions, experiences, and history of the nation. The images of corpses being dragged along a dark corridor are not merely scenes of violence but metaphors for the enslavement and suffering of the Filipino people. As Lumbera (2016) states, art is a channel of "social experience," and thus the *Spoliarium* becomes evidence of that experience in visual form. In this reading, the artwork is not merely an art of tragedy but a depiction of historical truth the existence of colonial oppression and the violent silence of a voiceless society.

The results also show that the Filipino-oriented reading functions as a resistance to colonial standards of aesthetics. In the traditional Western perspective, the *Spoliarium* is often praised for its realism and Luna's use of "classical proportion." However, according to Almario (2019) and Lumbera (2016), such interpretation is limited because it privileges the technical aspects over the ideological content of the artwork. Filipino-oriented metacriticism shifts the center of analysis from form to essence. Here, art is no longer measured by "beauty," but by its ability to express the truth of the nation. In this reading, the *Spoliarium* becomes a decolonized artistic space where the colonial gaze is replaced by the Filipino's own cultural sensibility.

Furthermore, the results reinforce Almario's view that art is a bearer of national memory. The *Spoliarium* emerges as an instrument of "cultural memory" (Nolasco, 2020), linking the

past of colonization to the present state of patriotic consciousness. The figures in the painting are not merely symbols of death but of unity in the midst of suffering. Here, the patriotic truth mentioned by Lumbera becomes visible art as the "voice of the people." In this reading, Luna's artwork becomes a point of awakening, a reminder of the ongoing struggle for dignity and identity.

Above all, the *Spoliarium* serves as an image of hope and rising. Under the Filipino-oriented metacriticism, the light piercing through the dark space of the composition symbolizes the nation's hope. As Reyes (2020) explains, art is a "space of resistance and remembrance," and thus Luna's work does not end in grief but in resurgence. This type of reading shows that truth does not rely solely on the representation of reality but on the social purpose of art to awaken, to express, and to inspire the nation.

In sum, the *Spoliarium* can be read through the lens of Lumbera and Almario as a living Filipino truth a truth with the face of suffering, the voice of the people, and the light of hope. Under Filipino-oriented metacriticism, Luna's artwork becomes a mirror of collective consciousness and a vessel of nationalistic remembrance. The painting is not only a monument of the colonial past but an ongoing discourse of truth and the existence of the Filipino people in the present time.

Table 2

Research Question 2: How does the artwork convey the discourse of national identity within the historical and cultural context of the Philippines?

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Interpretation (Filipino-Oriented Metacriticism)	Historical & Cultural Context
1. Art as Vessel of National Consciousness	a. <i>Spoliarium</i> as symbol of unity b. Remembrance of heroism amid violence	Luna shows art as a space where collective suffering becomes a basis for unity. National identity is built upon shared experience and history.	In the 19th century, art became an instrument of nationalism, influencing the ilustrados' call for unity.

2. Colonial Wounds as Foundation of Identity	a. Remembering trauma b. Liberation from colonial art standards	The <i>Spoliarium</i> retells the nation's colonial trauma. Recognizing the wound leads to reclaiming identity.	Colonialism suppressed Filipino identity, replacing it with foreign models. Revisiting art restores national dignity.
3. Language, Culture, and Art as Pillars of Identity	a. Art as visual language b. A Filipino aesthetic	Art acts as a “language of the nation,” expressing the silent experiences of the oppressed. Luna's use of color and form reflects Filipino emotionality.	Culture and language anchor national identity; Luna's art aligns with Rizal and Almario's cultural advocacy.
4. Formation of a Decolonized Identity	a. Reclaiming the narrative b. <i>Spoliarium</i> as symbol of patriotic consciousness	The artwork rejects Western hegemony and asserts Filipino identity. Luna's painting becomes part of the national project of building consciousness.	<i>Spoliarium</i> signaled the birth of Filipino consciousness in art history.

The results of the analysis show that Juan Luna's *Spoliarium*, through the lens of Filipino metacritics as articulated by Lumbera and Almario, serves as a discourse on national identity a visual space where history, culture, and collective consciousness converge. According to Lumbera (2016), art must stem from the “life and society of the nation,” and in this sense, Luna's work becomes a testament to the existence of Filipino consciousness. Through its visual representation of suffering and hope, the *Spoliarium* illustrates the process of identity formation: from captivity to the reclamation of one's voice.

The first theme, art as a conduit of national consciousness, demonstrates that art possesses the power to unify the sentiments and intellect of the people. In the *Spoliarium*, the scene of violence is not merely tragic but embodies the collective anguish of the oppressed. Viewed in this way, the work becomes a symbol of national unity amidst colonial darkness. As Almario (2019) asserts, art

is a “national language of experience,” and in this instance, Luna serves as the spokesperson of the people's collective emotions.

The findings also reveal the notion of the colonial wound as the foundation of national identity. The scenes of agony in the *Spoliarium* are not only reminders of the past but also acknowledgments of the history that shaped Filipino identity. From this perspective, the trauma of colonialism becomes a source of strength and resilience. Recognizing the wound is equivalent to recognizing history, and it is here that the true identity of the nation takes root an identity that knows how to suffer, reflect, and rise again (Reyes, 2020).

The third theme highlights that language, culture, and art are interconnected pillars of national identity. As Almario (2019) emphasizes, “art is a language that links the past and the self.” The *Spoliarium* becomes the visual language of the nation, expressing patriotic sentiment that words alone cannot convey. Through Luna's use of color, composition, and emotion, the aesthetics of

Filipino identity emerge art that arises from lived experience rather than foreign formulas.

Ultimately, the work represents the establishment of a decolonized identity. Through the Filipino metacritical perspective, Luna's art stands as resistance against Western hegemony while simultaneously reclaiming nationalist consciousness. As Lumbera (2016) notes, art should serve as an instrument of national awareness; in this context, the *Spoliarium* becomes a monument to self-assertion art that returns to the nation to awaken, question, and convey truth.

According to the Filipino metacritics of Lumbera and Almario, the *Spoliarium* is not merely art rooted in history but a discourse on national identity. The work demonstrates that being Filipino is cultivated through acknowledgment of the past, language, and the spirit that binds the people together. From this reading, art transcends mere representation of beauty; it becomes a medium of memory, emotion, and patriotic conviction. Thus, the *Spoliarium* remains a living testament to Filipino identity a work of art that draws strength from history and continues to uphold the national spirit.

12. FINDINGS

Based on the conducted analysis, it was found that the *Spoliarium* is not merely a representation of death and tragedy, but a depiction of truth rooted in the collective consciousness of the Filipino people. From the perspective of Filipino metacriticism, truth in art is not confined to the technical accuracy of form or color; it embodies the sentiments of the nation. Luna's work presents forms of suffering, loss, and hope as part of a broader narrative of colonial history. According to Lumbera (2016) and Almario (2019), this understanding of art serves as a return to social consciousness a truth that transcends the visual and extends to historical and ideological dimensions.

Furthermore, the *Spoliarium* can be read as a discourse on national identity. The painting becomes a space for the construction of Filipino subjectivity, an artwork imbued with traces of colonial experience while simultaneously opening possibilities for hope and renewal. In this reading, the figures in the painting symbolize the nation: the wounded bodies represent the Filipino people, while the light at the end of the corridor serves as

a metaphor for hope and self-assertion. The *Spoliarium* functions as a visual narrative of collective identity, where art becomes a bridge connecting history, culture, and the consciousness of the people.

Overall, the study demonstrates that employing Filipino metacriticism as a lens provides a deeper, more nationalist reading of Luna's art. Rather than adhering to Western standards of aesthetics, the metacritical approach of Lumbera and Almario advocates for a return to the spirit of the nation, history, and Filipino experience as the basis of analysis. Thus, the *Spoliarium* is re-presented as art that does not merely display beauty but reveals truth, nationalism, and Filipino identity.

13. CONCLUSION

In summary, the research shows that Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* serves as a conduit of nationalist truth and a mirror of national identity. The work is not merely a representation of the fallen gladiators but an allegory of the Philippines' colonial experience the suffering of the people, the silence of the oppressed, and the call for freedom and dignity. Through the Filipino metacritics of Lumbera and Almario, the *Spoliarium* is re-situated within the nation's history, where art is inseparable from society and part of the people's ongoing struggle for truth and identity.

The study also demonstrates that the concept of "truth" in art shifts depending on the lens of interpretation. Within Filipino metacriticism, truth is not an abstract idea but a historical experience and collective emotion. As Lumbera (2016) emphasizes, art must be rooted in society to hold significance. In this sense, the *Spoliarium* is not merely a historical narrative but a remembrance of the forces that shaped national consciousness. The painting becomes a testament to social awareness and a history that unites Filipinos within a singular narrative of liberation.

Moreover, national identity emerges not as a fixed category but as an ongoing process of remembrance, acknowledgment, and self-assertion. According to Almario and Lumbera, Luna's art participates in this process by illustrating the nation's strength in returning to itself and discovering the meaning of being Filipino. Through the Filipino lens, art becomes the language of the people a language born from lived experience, historical wounds, and collective hope. Thus, the *Spoliarium* is not merely an image

of death but an art of revitalizing the nationalist spirit.

Intellectually, the study contributes to the development of a Filipino theoretical perspective on art and literature. Metacritical reading expands the boundaries of traditional art criticism by fostering a renewal of cultural consciousness. The analysis demonstrates that claiming one's own theoretical lens is an essential step in the decolonization of academia. From this perspective, the *Spoliarium* is no longer merely part of the Western art tradition but a living discourse of Filipino experience and nationalism.

In short, the *Spoliarium* can be regarded as a sacred mirror of the nation art that draws meaning from history and continues to speak in the present. The work affirms that art has the power to awaken, remind, and cultivate nationalist consciousness. Through Filipino metacriticism, the *Spoliarium* is reinstated as a testament to Filipino truth art that expresses not only beauty but also hope, resistance, and love for the nation.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

1. For researchers and art critics, it is advisable to expand the use of Filipino metacriticism in the analysis of other artworks and literary texts, enriching the discourse on national aesthetics and the decolonization of consciousness. This approach can serve as an alternative to the dominance of Western theories in academia.
2. For teachers and instructors of art and literature, Filipino metacriticism may be employed as a pedagogical lens, cultivating students' deep understanding of Filipino culture and nationalist consciousness by viewing art as a reflection of society.
3. For cultural and art institutions, projects, exhibits, and publications highlighting Filipino-centered readings and interpretations of classic works, such as the *Spoliarium*, should be promoted. This will help sustain the spirit of nationalism and cultural awareness among the public.
4. Future studies may broaden the scope of metacritical analysis to include other painters

such as Félix Resurrección Hidalgo or Fernando Amorsolo, or to explore film and theater. The perspectives of Lumbera and Almario may serve as foundations for a broader theoretical framework for Filipino aesthetics.

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