

Editor's Introduction

Among the commonly regarded acts constitutive of nationalism are the giving of one's life as well as exile from and voluntary return to the homeland. The production of a literary work also qualifies. For Filipinos these acts can be nationalist because of their strong association with the life of José Rizal, who is also widely considered the quintessential *ilustrado*.

Ilustrado, however, is a slippery term, as Caroline Sy Hau perceptively discloses in her critical reflections on Miguel Syjuco's acclaimed novel with the title *Ilustrado* (2010), which signifies one of many modes of appropriating the word. That the novel tackles the controverted role of *ilustrados* in the making of the Filipino nation permits Hau to raise probing questions about the provenance and usage of the word *ilustrado*. Although it is often associated with a privileged class position, educational credentials, and migrancy to Europe, Hau demonstrates that in the late nineteenth-century Spanish Philippines *ilustrado* referred specifically to native Filipinos whose actions invited the colonial state's label of these individuals as *filibustero* or subversives. Hau illumines—with profound implications for Philippine historiography—that *ilustrado* indicates, more than anything else, a critical stance vis-à-vis the establishment, a stance embodied in various acts of political resistance, sanctified by self-sacrifice. Thus in Syjuco's novel the main *ilustrado* figure is an exiled writer, a former veteran activist, who fulfills the *ilustrado* act of taking responsibility and connecting with “the people” by returning to the homeland. But return is not unambiguous. As Hau points out, “the tension between wishful thinking to connect with ‘the people’ and actual reality of distance from ‘the people’ is palpable throughout the novel, and it is this tension, rather than the mystery surrounding the ‘death’ of writer Crispin Salvador, that arguably constitutes its narrative drive” (28).

The novel, according to Hau, also raises the question of who the Filipino writer should address (whether an international or Filipino readership) and what he or she should write about. This question is not new—Rizal grappled with it in writing the *Noli* and *Fili*—but it moves Hau to make comparisons between Rizal's foundational fictions and Syjuco's fiction. What is remarkable is that, at a time when nationalism is unfashionable among the literati in the global North and in

postmodern academic circles, Syjuco's *Ilustrado*, argues Hau, "does not shy away" from it. The issue of nationalism is thus integral to the first contemporary novel written by a Filipino that has attained a global presence and appeal, although how nationalism is received by different readers is an open question.

One can ask to what extent writing *Ilustrado* may be deemed a nationalist, not just political, act by a diasporic Filipino. For, in a move not incompatible with the Philippine state's crowning of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as *bagong bayani* (new heroes), Syjuco proposes to expand the meaning of *ilustrado* beyond its elite and education-bound denotation to include OFWs as a major force—a vast potential—in the nation's life. The expatriate Syjuco identifies himself with OFWs, but simplifies their "exilic" life and impact on the homeland. Not without its contradictions, his proposal, contends Hau, opens several unsettled concerns.

Despite the salience of exile, Philippine history hardly celebrates the overseas imprisonment of Máximo Inocencio, Crisanto de los Reyes, and Enrique Paraíso, who were banished (rather than executed) for their role in the 1872 Cavite mutiny. In fact, these three were the "real planners" of the revolt, as Fr. John N. Schumacher, S.J., argues in an article that attempts a definitive history of the mutiny based on the underutilized reports of Governor Izquierdo. Despite conceiving a revolution, but at a time when no mass nationalist movement existed, these three men usually do not count as *ilustrados*—alluding to the significance of historic junctures in shaping meanings. Martyrdom on the basis of false accusations, Schumacher reiterates, was the lot of the three priests, Gómez, Burgos, and Zamora, whom the nation reveres. Among nationalist acts, death evidently ranks higher than exile. Yet no single act is univocal.

Many Muslims died in their resolute stand at Bud Dajo in 1906. That their death is seldom commemorated in mainstream Philippine history suggests larger determinants, including the crucial role and power of the perceiver. American imperialists found their death truly impressive, as Michael C. Hawkins argues. Uncontaminated by Spain, Moros were exoticized as the archetypal colonial subject, submissive but not conquered. However, fascination with Moro savagery was utterly masculine, Hawkins asserts, for the Moro women who died valiantly were denied any gender identity at all and pictured as victims of Moro misogyny. The dream of civilizing Moro masculinity justified American military rule.

Benedict Anderson's theory of (his trenchant but sympathetic way of perceiving) nationalism and his numerous works on Southeast Asia have been extremely influential the world over. This issue's interview with Anderson affords readers the opportunity to see aspects of the personal that, in world-historical context, help illumine his scholarship.