

“Patria é intereses”¹

Reflections on the Origins and Changing Meanings of *Ilustrado*

Miguel Syjuco's acclaimed novel *Ilustrado* (2010) was written not just for an international readership, but also for a Filipino audience. Through an analysis of the historical origins and changing meanings of “ilustrado” in Philippine literary and nationalist discourse, this article looks at the politics of reading and writing that have shaped international and domestic reception of the novel. While the novel seeks to resignify the hitherto class-bound concept of “ilustrado” to include Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), historical and contemporary usages of the term present conceptual and practical difficulties and challenges that require a new intellectual paradigm for understanding Philippine society.

KEYWORDS: RIZAL • NOVEL • OFW • ILUSTRADO • NATIONALISM

Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado* (2010) is arguably the first contemporary novel by a Filipino to have a global presence and impact (fig. 1). Published in America by Farrar, Straus and Giroux and in Great Britain by Picador, the novel has garnered rave reviews across the Atlantic and received press coverage in the Commonwealth nations of Australia and Canada (where Syjuco is currently based). The *New York Times* (2010) included the novel in its list of "100 Notable Books of 2010." In 2008 *Ilustrado* won both the Man Asian Prize (fig. 2) and the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for the Novel in English, and was slated for translation into thirteen languages before it had even been published (Barber 2010). Only F. Sionil Jose's writings, available in twenty-two languages, can claim a wider reach, but this reach is measured in terms of a body of work rather

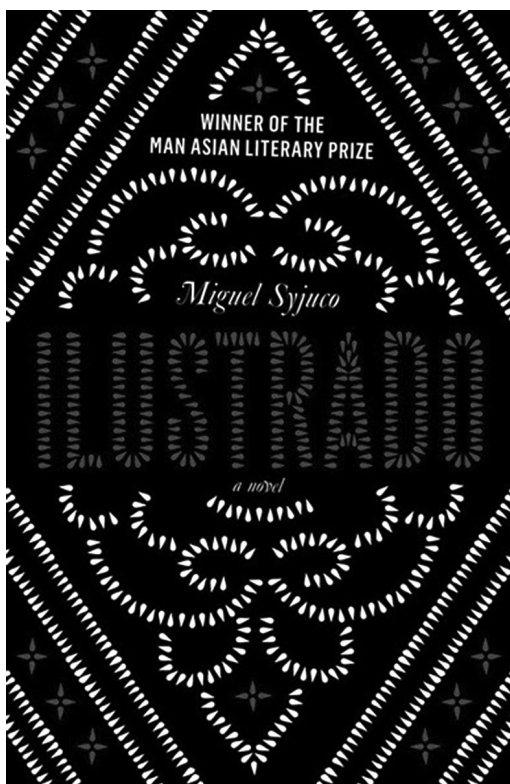


Fig. 1. Cover of Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado*, designed by Jonathan D. Lippincott.



Fig. 2. Miguel Syjuco with his Man Asian Literary Prize trophy for his novel, *Ilustrado*.
Source: *The Ampersand* 2008

than a single novel and an international reputation that was cemented over decades rather than two short years.

Syjuco's meteoric rise in part is a function of the prestige and attention that winning an international award automatically confers on an aspiring author and the speed of information flows and greater connectivity enabled by the Internet, which allows such good news to be disseminated around the world. But the scope and ambitions of *Ilustrado* suggest that the novel was written not simply for an international audience as part of the author's mission to establish himself as an international writer. It is, more properly, a *Philippine* contribution to what Goethe calls "world literature" (Garlitos 2008),² one that, Janus-faced, is meant for both international and domestic readerships (Colbert 2008) and must perforce juggle issues and

questions that concern not only the “world republic of letters” (Casanova 2004) but also the community of readers who call themselves “Filipinos.” Navigating between and within these two sets of audiences is tricky, since issues that concern one set of readers may not be of interest or relevance to another. Literary criticism (in English, especially) in and outside the Philippines tends to view “Third World” texts through the filtering lenses of academically institutionalized postmodern and postcolonial theory and studies, with their own fixed notions of what a “good” novel should be and their preferences for heteroglossia, fragmentation, nonlinear narratives, self-referentiality, and so on. Such critical perspectives tend to gloss over or erase issues such as nationness and socialism that are crucial to the writing of histories within the so-called Third World but are deemed unfashionable or else parochial or outdated by the metropolitan centers of the North and the literature departments of the South (see Brennan’s [1997, 12–207] critique of postcolonial criticism, and the essays by Edel Garcellano 2001).

Ilustrado does not shy away from the “unfashionable” issue of nationalism. As its title suggests, the novel is concerned with issues that are central to Philippine literary discourse. Foremost among these is the set of questions, “On what, and for whom, does the Filipino writer write, and why?” Another set of questions centers on the provenance and usage of the word *ilustrado*. What does the word “ilustrado” mean? Who has used it, and for what purposes? Does it or can it have contemporary relevance? This article does not offer a conventional, detailed review of Syjuco’s novel; instead, it presents a series of critical reflections on the dominant motif of that book. Well aware of the fraught contestation over the meaning and significance of the word “ilustrado” over the past hundred years, *Ilustrado* (2010) proposes a resignification that highlights the term’s historical value as a critical stance, while attempting to expand the term beyond its educational and class-bound denotation to include new social forces represented by the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). This article provides, via literary criticism, a preliminary investigation of the historical origins and changing meanings of *ilustrado*, and some tentative answers to the question of its contemporary relevance (or lack thereof) for debates on Philippine nationalism.

***Ilustrado* in the Shadow of Rizal**

To Syjuco’s credit, he is not oblivious of the politics of reading and writing for domestic and international audiences.³ One self-imposed challenge that

Syjuco confronted was how to write a novel that would appeal to an audience that included both Filipinos and non-Filipinos without being weighed down by self-exoticization and didacticism (Garlitos 2008), failings he identifies as common among Filipino writings, especially novels in English. Syjuco’s conscious efforts to avoid pandering to a non-Filipino readership’s demand for the exotic (see his criticism of Australia-based Arlene Chai in A. David 2010b) have not been enough to shield him from charges of writing mainly for non-Filipinos because the literary strategies he deploys in *Ilustrado* are mainstream in contemporary Anglophone literature and translation but not generally favored by Filipino writers published in the Philippines and are viewed as politically suspect. Adam David’s “scathing” review (2010a), for example, calls the novel a “FilAm book”—notwithstanding the fact that Syjuco was raised in Vancouver and educated in Cebu and Manila (Ateneo), and the novel was first conceived as Syjuco’s Creative Writing dissertation in Adelaide and extensively revised while the author worked in New York and Montreal—because of the association of “postmodern” writing (a label Syjuco himself rejects; Colbert 2008) with a brand of representational politics that is seen as complicit in the other-ing/abjecting of the Philippines.⁴ These charges focus on the content and literary strategies of the novel and the ways in which they manage the tension between writing for a Philippine audience and for a “world” of readers. But these criticisms also tell us something about the differing assumptions and expectations that inform Filipino and non-Filipino reception of novels about the Philippines written by “Filipinos,” thus bearing out the truism that the novel is a genre that is “at once buoyantly migratory and yet the source of acutely contentious cultural politics” (Prendergast 2004, 23).

This issue of who the Filipino writer in English is or should be writing for, as well as what he or she ought to write about, is not new. In terms of form and content, *Ilustrado* invites comparison not so much with any American or even Filipino-American novel as with two of the most important novels ever produced by a Filipino, José Rizal’s *Noli me tangere* (1887, 1961a) and *El filibusterismo* (1891, 1961). *Ilustrado* overtly acknowledges the long shadow cast by this exemplary *ilustrado* and his “foundational fictions” (Sommer 1993) on the Filipino imagination. Moreover, in its choice of title and subject matter, Syjuco’s novel foregrounds the thorny issue of the *ilustrado*’s contested role in the making of the Filipino nation in a far more explicit manner than any other novel has done since Ninotchka Rosca’s *State of War* (1988).

Ilustrado and its illustrious forebears share a common provenance: they were written by highly educated professionals in a “foreign” language and first published outside the home country before being circulated in the home country. Although Rizal claims that he is writing for Filipinos, the *Noli*’s narrator, in addressing the reader as “friend or foe,” assumes that there are readers who are “insiders” and “outsiders,” not only “Filipinos” but Spaniards and perhaps Europeans and others as well (Anderson 1998, 239–40; Hau 2000, 81–84). Rizal and Syjuco’s novels also entail experimentation with form, resulting in stylistic innovations that represent a qualitative leap for the Filipino novel in English.

Syjuco’s novel, though not without its critics (in particular, Salamat 2010; Kelleher 2010; Mars-Jones 2010; David 2009),⁵ has been generally acclaimed in the Philippines and abroad and as of this writing is widely available in Philippine bookstores and through Amazon.com. It is worth noting that Rizal’s novels, by contrast, initially had very limited circulation outside and inside the Philippines, owing to the lack of distribution, compounded by the inexperience in such matters of an author who was able to publish his novels only with funds generously provided by well-meaning (and well-off) friends and by the subsequent banning of the novels by Spanish colonial authorities. Moreover, their limited and mixed reception by Spanish and Filipino reviewers was trying on the thin-skinned Rizal, as his exchange, delivered in a tone of defensiveness, with Barrantes (Rizal 1890a/1996) and Del Pilar (Rizal 1933, 248–49) shows. A more crucial difference is the overwhelming impact of the *Noli* and *Fili* on the Philippines, an impact that is in excess of these novels’ impact on world literature, where, except for the passionate advocacy of Benedict Anderson, there have been far fewer appreciations of the novels as works of art compared to an almost universal acknowledgment of the novels’ political and social import.⁶ It is too soon to tell what the fate of *Ilustrado* will be in the “world republic of letters” (Casanova 2004), but there can be no doubt that its position in Philippine literature is already secure.

One condition of being published abroad is that things and terms that a writer takes for granted when writing for a Philippine audience need to be explained to non-Philippine readers. Syjuco has stated in an interview that

The idea of *ilustrado* is not something calcified and lost in the history books. It’s a potentiality. *Ilustrado* is a Spanish word for ‘enlightened.’ But it’s also a very ironic way of using the term *ilustrado*, because this

book is about the failure of the leadership, of the elite Filipinos who should know better, and how they’ve failed to really do their part in helping our country. (Tam 2010)

In glossing the term “*ilustrado*” for an international readership, both the novel and Syjuco in his interviews highlight two defining characteristics. One is the equation of “*ilustrado*” with the specific experience of education and travel abroad and more generally with the Filipino “upper class” (see, e.g., Lim 2010; Lau 2010). The other is the ambiguous status of the *ilustrado* as hero and villain in Philippine nationalist (and literary) discourse. The novel’s elaboration of these two points puts *Ilustrado* squarely within a Philippine literary tradition that goes as far back as Rizal, even as author and novel offer a critical resignification of “*ilustrado*” for contemporary audiences and political purposes.

Equating “*ilustrado*” specifically with education and migrancy and more generally with wealth dovetails neatly with current popular understanding of that term in the Philippines. In the recent national election, for example, Sen. Francis Escudero’s endorsement of Jejomar Binay’s vice-presidential candidacy featured the slogan, “Ang bise-presidente ko, hindi mayaman, hindi *ilustrado*, kulay Pilipino” (My vice-president is not rich, not *ilustrado*, Filipino-colored). By sandwiching “*ilustrado*” between two adjectives that denote class and racial origins, the slogan effectively sullies its original denotation of “enlightened” or “learned” (see the critique by Nery 2010). Escudero’s transformation of *ilustrado* from praise into pejorative is meant disingenuously to downplay both the endorser’s (Escudero’s) as well as the candidate’s (Binay’s) own “*ilustrado*” credentials. Both men, in fact, have similar educational and professional backgrounds, which include undergraduate as well as law degrees from the University of the Philippines and stints in government. Escudero’s (self-)repudiation suggests that, as far as the modern-day *ilustrado* is concerned, to be labeled one is a political liability.

Indeed, a closer look at the term presents us with a number of conceptual difficulties. Singling out a very small, albeit exemplary, group of Filipinos who were educated abroad while simultaneously invoking a socioeconomic class as a whole tends to obscure the actual historical complexity of the term, which points instead to an important and telling lack of precision and a checkered career of shifting references across the past century and a half.

Historicizing “Ilustrado”

“Ilustrado” has been a notoriously slippery term, often used in conjunction—and sometimes conflated—with a variety of labels ranging from “elite,” “cacique,” and “*principalia*” to “the haves,” “middle class,” and “upper class,” labels that carry with them associations not only of wealth and social status, but access to power, race and/or ethnicity (with mestizonez as a defining characteristic), and occupation (Cullinane 2003, 26–35).⁷ To compound matters, the literary and intellectual traditions of the Philippines have been shaped by polemical debates on the “Great Divide” between *principalia* and *tao*, between elites and masses, between haves and have-nots (cf. Agoncillo 1956; Constantino 1975; Iletto 1998; and Zeus Salazar’s essays in Navarro et al. 1997). *Ilustrados* are figured as “contaminated” (in Mojares’s [2006, 498] evocative characterization), Janus-faced heroes and villains, celebrated for their contributions as the “brains of the nation” (also Mojares’s [2006] phrase, based on *cerebro del país* from Rizal [1889a/1996, 205]) and individual acts of patriotic self-sacrifice and heroism while being vilified as a “class” for their “betrayal” of the revolution and their cooptation by and accommodation with the colonial and postcolonial states.

The difficulty of establishing a single working definition of *ilustrado* in socioeconomic, migrant, and educational terms can be seen in the problem of categorizing people like Apolinario Mabini, who counted as *ilustrado*, whose father held office but was unlettered, who himself held high office in the revolutionary government, who never went abroad (unless one counts the Sublime Paralytic’s forced exile to Guam by the Americans as “travel”), and who possessed neither land nor capital and was therefore far less well-off in comparison with urban and provincial elites. Not all who completed university in Manila were rich, even as being wealthy or highly educated did not automatically make one an *ilustrado*.⁸ Not all Chinese or Spanish mestizos were rich or *ilustrado*, and not all *ilustrados* were mestizos or creoles. If, alternatively, one argues in favor of education as *the* defining characteristic, one is still left with the vexing question of just what degree, so to speak, of education—secondary or the equivalent of a *bachiller en artes*, tertiary or licentiate and professional title, a postgraduate degree?—suffices to propel one into the ranks of the *ilustrados*. In Manila in the late nineteenth century, one needed to have been one of the 1 percent (about 40,158 people) of the population who between 1861 and 1898 had graduated from the University of Santo Tomas and earned a licentiate or professional

title to be called *ilustrados* (Cullinane 2003, 29),⁹ but this qualification did not necessarily obtain in the provinces, where men like Aguinaldo were considered to be educated even though they may not appear so in the eyes of the urban elite (ibid., 27). More, there were people like Juan Abad and Aurelio Tolentino who were not counted as *ilustrados* because they were not as well-off nor as well educated as Rizal and Trinidad Pardo de Tavera or Emilio Jacinto and Pío Valenzuela (among whom there were already substantial differences in wealth), but whose talents, literary and intellectual output, and eminence made them as arguably “*ilustrado*” as Rizal or the Balmori brothers, and certainly more *ilustrado* than their wealthy, educated but less talented contemporaries.

The semantic indeterminacy of *ilustrado* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is amply borne out in Michael Cullinane’s (2003) magisterial study, which defines *ilustrado* as an “educated elite” (ibid., 2) and identifies four “basic characteristics”—wealth, ethnic origin, officeholding, and education—in terms of which the Filipino elites are routinely described (ibid., 9). These characteristics may (and often do) overlap, but they are by no means one and the same. Cullinane’s study suggests that “*ilustrado*” is less a class in itself than a subset of an overlapping but also internally differentiated elite that can be distinguished by its spatial location (urban or provincial or municipal); socioeconomic status (the distinction, for example, between an urban elite that has a large constituency of creoles and Chinese and Spanish mestizos, and an urban, mostly *indio*, middle sector that derived its living from employment in the colonial bureaucracy and the commercial houses of the late nineteenth century); access to power through social networks that link political players in the municipalities, provinces, cities, and capital; and relative proximity to and distance from the *tao* who make up the majority of the Philippine population. Because women were barred from attending university in the Spanish era—the 1888 petition by the women (from the mainly Chinese-mestizo families) of Malolos for a night school where they would be taught Spanish was hailed by the Propagandists as a breakthrough (see the excellent study by Tiongson 2004)—the feminine noun “*ilustrada*” was almost unheard of at the time.¹⁰

There is, in fact, one additional distinction that distinguished the *ilustrado* from either *principalia* or elite.¹¹ The etymology of the word plays on the metaphor of “light” in the “enlightenment,” holding up knowledge (via education) against the “darkness” of ignorance, error, and obscurantism.

Here, the *ilustrado* is not defined sociologically by mere acquisition of wealth, education, or power, but politically by a *critical* stance that linked the term with words like *progresista*,¹² *reformista* or *reformador*, *librepensador* (often appearing in the English form, “freethinker”), *liberal*, *volteriano* (Voltairean), and, most famously, *filósofo* and *filibustero*. Although *filibustero* was a highly potent ad hominem that conjured the specter of subversion (and provoked persecution) in Rizal’s time,¹³ rating more mention in *La Solidaridad* than any of the above terms, including *ilustrado*, it is *filósofo* (*pilosofo*) that has survived over time in popular usage, but primarily as a derogatory label for people who dare to answer back or question the authority of the name-caller, usually an older person or “superior.” (Rizal’s response, of course, was to create the memorable Tasio, labeled *loco* by his enemies, but clearly a *filósofo* in a positive sense, one whose learned exposition on the origins of purgatory is as bracing as anything from Voltaire and the French Encyclopedists.)¹⁴

Ilustración (Enlightenment), from which the word *ilustrado* is derived, has a Spanish lineage that goes back to the *tertulias* (Spanish equivalent of the French *salons*)¹⁵ from the 1680s onward, and flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century under the reformist Bourbon king Charles III (1716–1788). The popular synonym for *Ilustración* was *las Luces* (lit. the Lights), a plural form that was often used in conjunction with adjectives like “Catholic” and “Christian” (Schmidt 2005, 137; see the important studies by Ruiz Torres 2008; Dominguez Ortiz 2005; Sanchez-Blanco 1992), even though in early modern Spain the forces that were most likely to counter the Enlightenment were the universities, the clergy, and the nobility (Deacon 2004, 301). Events inside and outside Spain in the late eighteenth century, notably the French revolution, led to the suppression of Enlightenment publications (ibid., 303) until the War of Independence of 1801–1814. Until 1852 the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*—published by La Academia Española since 1734—simply noted *ilustrado* as a past participle of the verb *ilustrar*, which had the following meanings: *dar luz o aclarar alguna cosa, ya sea materialmente, ya en sentido espiritual de doctrina y ciencia* (to give light or clarify something either materially or in the spiritual sense of doctrine and science); and *inspirar, o alumbrar interiormente, con luz sobrenatural y divina* (to inspire or illuminate internally with a supernatural and divine light) (a third meaning of *ilustrar* was “to ennoble”) (La Academia Española 1822, 450).¹⁶ *Ilustrado* was also noted as a derivation of *ilustradismo* (La

Academia Española 1852, 382), which does not have an entry on *Ilustración* as movement. In other words, until the mid-nineteenth century, “*ilustrado*” still had religious connotations and was not widely associated with the secularist notion of enlightenment. Instead, it is the polysemic *Luz* that carried the ideals of the Enlightenment, referring, among many other things, to *Ilustración* and knowledge (*conocimiento*), and to intellectual luminaries, i.e., “the eminent man who enlightens others with his science” (*el hombre eminente que ilustra a otros con su ciencia*) (La Academia Española 1822, 501). The movement was by definition plural, since it was embodied by its (many) leading lights (*luces*), *iluminados* whose enlightened stance was also a critical, often political, one that provoked opposition from some groups while also earning the admiration of others.

Advocates of the Enlightenment constituted an intellectual, publishing, and translation network whose members were spread out across Europe and the English and Spanish colonies in the Americas and linked by familiarity with each other’s work and participation in conversations that would become worldwide in scope by the nineteenth century.¹⁷ These advocates were known as *philosophes* (in French) and *Aufklärer* (in German). Although there were British adherents of the Enlightenment, no exact English equivalent of the French and German terms exists (Porter 2001, 3); the English word “Enlightenment” entered the language via translation from the German *Aufklärung*, through the works of Immanuel Kant.¹⁸

The Enlightenment stance of the *philosophes*/*filósofos* was a questioning, critical one (Gay 1995, 3–6, 9) summed up in Kant’s invocation of an exhortation from Horace’s *Epistles*, *Sapere aude* (dare to be wise) (Kant 1784/1970, 54). In the context of colonial Philippines, this interrogative stance was critical of the forces and institutions—including schools—that promoted ignorance and obscurantism in a colonial society that was conceived and organized along the lines of a “political theology” that legitimized colonial rule through Christian conversion as an act of liberation while granting religious orders extraordinary powers, thus making friars—often the most visible representatives of Spanish rule—the targets of nationalist critique (Rafael 2010, 161–64). It is not an accident that Freemasonry had huge popular appeal (Mojares 2006, 432–34). The most vocal of the so-called *politiquillos*, *ilustradillos*, *abogadillos*, *mediquillos*, and *apoderadillos* (“men with little power,” as they were pejoratively called) (ibid., 459, 436), fell afoul of church authorities who also controlled the educational system

in the Philippines (*Fili* forever impugned the reputation of the premier institution of higher learning, University of Santo Tomas, which was decreed the Universidad de Filipinas in 1870, and its author would no doubt have subjected the present-day University of the Philippines to the same treatment had he survived well into the American period). The appeal of Spanish was as an enabling language that facilitated communication not only among Filipinos in the Philippines at a time when there was as yet no national language program, but also linguistic access to and intellectual engagement with Spain, and participation more generally in the Enlightenment and its projects.

Ilustrado, in its modern sense of a learned, educated person (note, however, that this definition does not link education to travel abroad), first appeared in the Spanish Royal Academy dictionary in 1869, and would acquire a nationalist connotation in the Philippines in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹ Majul (1977, 12) has argued that the term was not colloquially used in the Philippine context to speak of educated Spaniards as a group, but instead referred mainly to Filipinos. Although “*ilustrado*” was used in Spain, it appeared to have had limited circulation in the Philippines even in the late nineteenth century. Pedro Serrano Laktaw’s 1889 dictionary does not have an entry on “*ilustrado*.” From 1889 to 1895, “*ilustrado*” most often appeared in adjectival form rather than noun form in *La Solidaridad*, and although it was indeed applied mainly to Filipinos, usually by non-Filipinos (or, to be more precise, by one foreigner in particular, Ferdinand Blumentritt), on at least one occasion, the adjective form was used to describe Spaniards and Chinese (in China).²⁰ The significance of this usage becomes clear when we consider the qualitative difference between using “*ilustrado*” as an adjective, which treats learning as one attribute among many other possible attributes (such as being rich or handsome), and “*ilustrado*” as noun, which makes learning *the* distinguishing characteristic of the person under discussion.

If in Philippine usage, *ilustrado* referred mainly to Filipinos rather than to Spaniards, the reason for this is not that, compared to the situation in Spain, educated Filipinos were proportionally smaller in number relative to the population (Del Pilar [1891/1996, 337] in *La Solidaridad* argues otherwise) and therefore tended to stand out. A more likely reason is that, in the late nineteenth century, acquiring education in the Philippines and abroad put the “*ilustrado*” at political risk of being labeled “*filibustero*.” “*Ilustrado*” connoted varying degrees of approval and disapproval: while

it had positive associations when used by Filipinos (to the extent that, in the present day, the Tagalog phrase *walang pinag-aralan* [unschooled] is considered an invective), it may have a negative connotation, depending on the political sympathies of the Spaniards and foreigners who used it.²¹ A negative variant of the term such as *ilustradillo* was pinned on the most vocal elements of the educated, whom conservatives (usually friars) considered to be a nuisance if not threat to colonial and ecclesiastical authority.²²

Travel ≠ Education ≠ Leadership

Perhaps the most influential characterization of the *ilustrado* appears in Rizal’s (1889a/1996, 205, 206) essay “Filipinas dentro de cien años,” which coined the well-known phrase “cerebrum of the nation” (*cerebro del país*) and refers to an “educated class” (*clase ilustrada*) of “Filipino writers, free thinkers, historiographers, philosophers, chemists, physicians, artists, jurists, etc.” The word *ilustrado*, when it occurs as a noun, encodes the classic idea of the educated Filipino as a deterritorialized entity: “Por mucho que los Filipinos deban á España, no se les puede exigir que renuncien á su redención, que los liberales é ilustrados vaguen como desterrados del patria suelo . . .” (However much the Filipinos owe Spain, they cannot be expected to renounce their redemption, to have the liberals and educated among them wander as exiles from their own native land . . .) (Rizal 1889b/1996, 242). Rizal’s reference to *ilustrados* in “exile” abroad is a polemic against both the system of education in the Philippines whose brand of instruction (“si educación puede llamarse la brutalización de que hablamos”; if the brutalization of which we speak can be called education [Rizal 1890c/1996, 203]) does not properly educate Filipinos by nurturing free thinking, and the system of government that is quick to persecute those who voice their criticisms of the status quo, thereby driving *ilustrados* abroad. Rizal’s invocation of “exile” underscores this sense of travel abroad as an involuntary condition brought about by persecution back home and forced upon educated Filipinos by geopolitical differences that assume spatial form as “distance” between “Free Europe,” on the one hand, and colonial Philippines, on the other hand. In another essay, Rizal writes that “*personas muy ilustradas*” are not lacking in the Philippines, but “in a country where suspicion and arbitrariness are in the service of reactionaries, showing signs of *ilustración* is like clinking the gold coins in one’s pocket when one is in a cavern of bandits” (*en un país donde la suspicacia y la arbitrariedad están al servicio del retroceso, dar señales de*

ilustración es hacer sonar el oro en el bolsillo cuando se está en un caverna de bandoleros) (Rizal 1890b/1996, 71). (The most vocal champion of “los filipinos ilustrados,” Ferdinand Blumentritt [1890/1996, 244], reinforces this impression by arguing that “every ilustrado native, by being ilustrado, is accused of filibusterism” [cada indígena ilustrado, por ser ilustrado, es acusado de filibusterismo].)

Elsewhere, in a short piece called “Los viajes” (Travels), first published in *Diariong Tagalog* in 1882 and reprinted in *La Solidaridad* under the nom de plume Laong-Laan, Rizal (1889c/1996, 77) celebrates the joys of travel through which the traveler, exposed to different areas, acquires new knowledge and perspectives that enable him to rectify his judgments and ideas, dispel his own prejudices, and introduce (with necessary modifications) good practices (*usos*), things, and riches from other countries to bring about social, religious, political, and economic progress, which Rizal envisions in corporeal terms as “the perfect circulation of blood through the vessels of the economy” (*la perfecta circulación de la sangre por todos los vasos de la economía*). But it is important to note that this celebration of overseas travel’s emancipating and revivifying aspects is largely missing in Rizal’s novels, where travel is figured as a form of lotos-eating (Ibarra) and tainted by vengeance and crime (Simoun). Likewise, in “Filipinas dentro de cien años,” the point being made is not the liberatory potential of travel per se but the spatio-political difference between Filipinas and Europa (and, to a lesser extent, España) that translates into the difference between being filibustero in one place and propagandist in the other. Travel is thus simultaneously a politically necessitated flight from repressive Filipinas to relatively freer España and Europa, as well as a political project to bridge the differences between these spaces by working in Mother Spain for the improvement of the conditions in colonial Philippines.

As influential as this formulation may be, the link between travel and education is not, however, exclusive to the situation of so-called ilustrados. In a speech delivered at the Ateneo Barcelona on the subject of “Filipinas en las Exposición Universal de Barcelona,” Graciano Lopez Jaena (1889/1996, 7) alludes to the more than twelve to twenty thousand Filipino seafarers (*marineros*) scattered all over the ports of England, France, America (particularly New York and Philadelphia) and Spain (in particular, a town near Barcelona):

pobres marineros! Jente [*sic*] sencilla, franca, sumisa, han salido de nuestras islas, de sus hogares sin rudimentos de alguna civilización, huyendo desesperados de las travas y de las opresiones de que eran víctimas; venido á esta parte del mundo donde la libertad impera, ó á aquella otra parte del Atlántico, donde el progreso y la democracia asientan con base firme sus dominios; y ved ahí, señores, como de seres degradados convertirse en ciudadanos, contemplar las maravillas de civilización, educarse con afanosos esfuerzos, ilustrarse y adquirirse por sí mismos un conocimiento relativo de la forma social, todo es uno, es una obra de las dignificaciones humanas. No sabiendo algunos leer y escribir, aprendieron á leer y escribir.

poor sailors! Simple, frank, humble people, they have left our islands, their homes, without the rudiments of civilization, desperately fleeing the constraints and oppressions of which they are victims. They have come to this part of the world where liberty reigns, or to that other part of the Atlantic, where progress and democracy are firmly established. There you see, gentlemen, how, from being degraded, they convert themselves into citizens, contemplate the marvels of civilization, educate themselves with keen endeavor, enlighten themselves and acquire knowledge relating to the social order, it all comes down to one thing, a work of human dignification. Some, not knowing how to read and write, learned to read and write.

While Lopez Jaena tends to project the Propaganda Movement’s concern with political exile induced by the brutalization and oppression of Filipinos in the colony onto the motives and decisions of these sailors to work abroad,²³ he nevertheless notes that the experience of living abroad can be a transformative experience that enables these sailors—who do not themselves come from the ranks of ilustrados and the upper classes—to educate themselves, become “citizens,” and acquire knowledge, in other words, to become ilustrados themselves.

In *La Solidaridad*, it is not Rizal but Rizal’s friend, Ferdinand Blumentritt, who most frequently uses the term (often as an adjective of “filipinos”). His article, “Los asuntos de Filipinas están de moda” (1891/1996, 302), conjures up the specter of an ilustrado-led revolution, the stuff of Wenceslao Retana’s and other conservatives’ nightmares:

claro es que los ilustrados que tanto sufren bajo el recelo y las vejaciones vengativas de la alianza fraile-chulo é illusocracia castila, al fin preferirán poner en peligro su vida y libertad por una guerra de independencia.

it is clear that the ilustrados who suffer so much suspicion and vengeful humiliation in the hands of the alliance of friar-soundrels and Castilian illusocracy will in the end prefer to risk their life and liberty in a war of independence.

This notion of ilustrado leadership would become an important trope in the late revolutionary and postrevolutionary periods.

But a critical stance, even a nationalist one, did not necessarily translate into leadership of, and support for, the revolution that actually broke out in 1896. Mabini and Antonio Luna were known to have initially opposed the Katipunan-led revolution.²⁴ In fact, the participation in the revolutionary government of urban and provincial elites, including ilustrados, exacerbated the internecine conflicts among different factions vying for leadership. Many ilustrados, fearing the ascendancy of non-ilustrado and “military” elements in the Republican leadership, withdrew their support of the Republic in favor of accommodation with the Americans (Cullinane 2003, 53; Agoncillo 1960; Constantino 1975). Far more crucially, the period of transition from Spanish to American rule underscored the fact that the (self-)anointing of the “highly educated” as “natural” leaders,²⁵ while evident in the late Spanish and revolutionary periods—provincial elites like Aguinaldo deferred to the better-educated urban ilustrados, while Mabini came into bitter conflict with what he called *influyentes filipinos* (Mabini 1931, 308) like Pedro Paterno and Felipe Buencamino in the revolutionary government—was by no means written in stone. Key members of the Katipunan were not “ilustrados” at all, but rather members of the urban middle sector of office and commercial house employees and petty bourgeoisie, and initial support for the revolutionary government in the countryside was led by municipal elites, who were not necessarily “ilustrados” (Cullinane 2003, 49).

The cementing of education and leadership happened after the outbreak of the revolution and especially during the American period, with serious consequences for “ilustrados” as a group label. The necessary link between education and revolutionary leadership of the nation was famously made

by Trinidad Pardo de Tavera (1906/1928, 179–80) who, in a speech before a gathering of Filipino and American teachers in 1906, explicitly refuted the role of the “uneducated classes” in the “movement for Philippinism” (ibid., 180) by claiming that “The Filipinos educated in Spanish schools in the Philippines, under a strictly Spanish system, were the individuals who brought about the revolution which ended Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines” (ibid., 179).

Ironically, however, by the time Pardo de Tavera made this confident but disingenuous assertion, the critical stance represented by the ilustrado and its associations with persecution and exile were in some sense rendered obsolete by the coming of the Americans. The Americans succeeded in marginalizing the Catholic Church, an important focus of ilustrado political critique in the nineteenth century, while introducing a different language (one whose checkered history of implementation would exacerbate rather than contain and bridge class differences), a different political project, and a different version of the Enlightenment.²⁶ The system of suffrage that they introduced set property and educational and professional qualifications that barred women, the poor, and non-ilustrados from voting. Their own brand of education had a distinctly technical, utilitarian bent (nicely summarized by Glenn May [1980] as “social engineering”) that promoted “professional” careers in science, business, and law. They also put into place a system of electoral government that defined leadership in terms of education, and awarded elective offices as well as positions in the state bureaucracy to “educated” candidates, thus turning education into the preeminent instrument of individual (and familial) upward social mobility and self-advancement, and turning professional titles into qualifications and highly prized status symbols. (Such practice continues to this day with politicians, business people, and media scribes scrambling for titles, honorary doctorates, and affiliation with Ivy League universities.)

When the critical stance once represented by the ilustrados remigrated back to academia in the 1950s and 1960s, it already bore a different political sensibility and intellectual framework that, although often formulated by people who would have been classified as ilustrado, explicitly repudiated ilustrado leadership and privileged workers and peasants over the petty bourgeoisie, rich and middle-class peasants, intellectuals, professionals and students, and the wealthy class.²⁷ The new political sensibility and intellectual framework were forged in the context of a “socialist ecumene”

(Bayly 2007), anchored on leftist thought (again partly mediated by ilustrados like Isabelo de los Reyes in the late nineteenth century) and experiences within both local and international political and social movements that, from the Commonwealth era through the Second World War and after, had radicalized a small number of ilustrados (see the fine discussion by Iletto 1998).

The changing fortunes and definitions of ilustrado have a direct bearing on the utility and signifying power of the term. Its lack of precision and its multiple shifting meanings (in the parlance of literary criticism, its “referential excess”) make “ilustrado” an eminently flexible term that is open to a range of resignification and appropriations. But it is at one and the same time a contentious term that speaks eloquently of the fraught and contested nature of Philippine nationalism itself. Although education has a correlation with wealth in the sense that in the Philippines it is usually the wealthy who are able to afford higher education for their children (with a far smaller group being able to send their children abroad), “ilustrado” is not always or necessarily synonymous with the so-called upper class, not even the equally difficult-to-define term “middle class,” which stepped into the academic spotlight in the second half of the twentieth century. “Ilustrado” carries with it a historical residue of critical interrogation and political resistance (more accurately, political persecution) that can and did take the form of heroic, self-sacrificing *individual* acts directed against the very classes—upper and middle—that have a history of collaboration and accommodation with the regimes in power. The lack of a semantic fit of these many meanings generates, among writers and intellectuals who take it upon themselves to think about the nation and their own positions within that nation, both identification with, and critical distancing from, the middle and upper classes, a stance that can be summed up basically in the following words, attributed to Crispin Salvador in *Ilustrado*: “Pity not the elite, but do not condemn them all” (Syjuco 2010, 70).

Problematizing the “Ilustrado” in Rizal’s *Noli me tangere*

The provenance of this self-problematizing of the ilustrado alongside the problematizing of the elite goes as far back as the *ur*-text of Philippine literary nationalism, Rizal’s *Noli* (Hau 2000, 48–93, 286–90). Vigorous scholarly debates over Ibarra and Elias, the two protagonists, have read these two

characters as reflecting a class-cum-racial split between the Spanish mestizo rich and the native poor (rendered as a split between reform and revolution and between Rizal and Bonifacio) or else a split within the author’s own political sensibilities and sympathies. But if we treat the *Noli* as a literary text rather than a political treatise, a more complex picture emerges.

In the *Noli me tangere*, the relationship between Ibarra and Elias is dramatized in terms of a friendship based on indebtedness and intellectual debate, and forged in part by differences in perspective arising from differences in their background, education, social status, and proximity to ordinary people. There is a class and racial/ethnic component in the delineation of these two main characters. With Ibarra, Rizal introduces the brown mestizo (i.e., brown-skinned, mestizo-featured), an idealistic but naive type that will be reincarnated most prominently as Ninotchka Rosca’s Adrian Banyaga and Reine Arcache Mevin’s “green-eyed Filipino” in “The Birth” (Melvin 1999, 121). Born to a Spanish-mestizo father and an indio mother and educated in Europe, Ibarra is the prototypical ilustrado who returns to the Philippines with dreams of putting up a school and marrying his sweetheart Maria Clara. But his involvement with Maria Clara and the affairs of the town are a frequent source of distraction that earns him enemies not only among the friars and officials, but among different kinds of people as well. Padre Damaso’s concern for Maria Clara’s welfare and Padre Salvi’s lust for her impel the former to oppose Maria Clara’s union with Ibarra and the latter to plan a false uprising that is pinned on Ibarra.

Elias, on the other hand, appears in the novel as unattached (it is instructive that the only chapter Rizal chose to excise is the one on Elias’s relationship with Salome, who is in love with Elias, and readers learn as well that Elias is in love with Maria Clara), one whose background stands in contrast with Ibarra’s and indeed is partly a byproduct of the actions of Ibarra’s grandfather. He is mistaken several times by others and by Ibarra as a *probinsyano* (the word Ibarra’s servant uses to announce him during their first private meeting is *campesino*, literally “a man from the country”) (Rizal 1887/1961a, ch. 33, 185). In their first conversation, Ibarra, taken aback by the obvious intelligence and dignified tone (not without a certain hauteur) of Elias’s conversation, asks him whether he has “studied” (“habéis estudiado?” [ibid., 186]), a question that Elias initially evades. Elias’s exchanges with Ibarra are clearly those of an intellectual equal, leading Ibarra to tell him, “I don’t know who you are, but I guess that you are not an ordinary man”

(“adivino que no sois un hombre vulgar” [ibid., 269]). It turns out that both Ibarra and Elias graduated from the same “Jesuit College,” although Elias chose not to go on to university. With Elias (whose name would be adopted by Indonesian activist Tan Malaka as an alias, surname Fuentes), the *Noli* introduces a different sort of character, one who is not by Manila standards an ilustrado but whose obvious talents and sensibilities make him equal, if not superior, to the ilustrado. What distinguishes Elias from Ibarra is Elias’s ability to travel long distances not outside, but inside, Filipinas (most crucially, the forest and mountain strongholds of *remontados* beyond the reach of the colonial state) and his proximity to the *gente* (“people”),²⁸ proximity that sensitizes him to the grievances, suffering, dissatisfaction, and restiveness of “the persecuted” (*los perseguidos*). Interestingly, Ibarra and Elias’s first exchange of opinions centers on their disagreement over the status of the Civil Guards, with Ibarra declaring them a necessary evil for ensuring the security of the towns and Elias denouncing the institution as a source of abuse and suffering among the people (ibid., ch. 49, 269–72).

Even though, as Floro Quibuyen (1999, 2) has rightly argued, it is simplistic to equate Ibarra with Rizal and Elias with Bonifacio, one cannot entirely dismiss the fact that both ideological and narrative tensions within the novel derive their force from the chemistry and interaction between these two character types, whose heated intellectual exchanges and fraught history of familial entanglement underscore crucial differences in their personal backgrounds, political perspectives, and life choices. These opposing viewpoints are delineated through the figures of, on the one hand, the wealthy provincial elite with urban connections, a brown mestizo educated abroad, idealistic but not in touch with what is happening on the ground, and, on the other hand, an indio whose urban-middle-sector grandfather was a bookkeeper in a Spanish commercial house, who was brought up rich (because his grandfather fell in love with a woman from a wealthy family) but who elected to finish only a bachiller en artes at the Jesuit College, and whose tragic family history of persecution and misfortunes ultimately leads to his decision to renounce wealth and upbringing and throw his lot with Capitan Pablo’s men deep in the forest, beyond the reach of the colonial state. Ibarra and Elias’s differences in background and social location point to differences in their political choices and sympathies, and it is easy enough to see where Rizal’s (if not the reader’s) sympathies lie,²⁹ but the ideological and narrative tensions are “resolved” in the novel by Elias’s noble act of

self-sacrifice to save Ibarra’s life. (A hundred and one years later, Ninotchka Rosca’s *State of War* [1988] neatly reverses this Rizalian denouement: where Simoun’s bomb fails to detonate at the wedding party in the *Fili*, the bomb planted by the guerrillas does so spectacularly at the town festivities in *State of War*, and where Elias sacrifices himself to save Ibarra, the brown mestizo Adrian Banyaga and American mestiza Eliza Hansen are instead sacrificed by the author, leaving the radicalized Chinese-Spanish-Filipino mestiza Anna Villaverde to give birth to Banyaga’s son, who will join a new generation of freedom fighters.) Elias’s death paves the way for a sequel, in which a vengeful Ibarra returns to the Philippines as a “foreigner” after sojourning abroad and uses his wealth to stage an armed uprising against the state.

Divided Philippine “Middle” and “Upper” Classes

This fraught interplay of proximity and distance among people with variable degrees of education and wealth is not a unique theme. A preeminent theme of Philippine writing in English, divided loyalties and split consciousness have a sociological basis in the nature and situation of the Philippine upper, including middle, classes, which have tended to be socially coherent, culturally ascendant but not hegemonic, and politically divided and vacillating (the following arguments are adapted from Shiraishi [2008, 7–9, 15]). The percentage of people who constitute the “middle” and “upper” classes has remained proportionally constant through much of the past century and a half, making up no more than 10, at most 15, percent of the total population. Those in so-called “middle-class” occupations (professionals and technicians; executives and managers; and white collar office workers) formed 9.4 percent of the total working population in 1956 and 11.5 percent in 1965 on the eve of Marcos’s rise to power (Hattori et al. 2002, 299).³⁰ While attainment of education is a crucial ideological prop of these people’s claim to exercise leadership by representing the nation (not only in the sense of speaking and acting on behalf of the nation but also portraying it), their political and cultural ascendancy has never been secure enough to make them hegemonic or inure them to criticism by their own “people.” Far more seriously, different political movements and groups from the leftists to the Muslims and indigenous peoples have periodically challenged the Philippine state and its right to control the meaning and definition of the nation, a fact that has indelibly imprinted itself in the intellectual debate and scholarship of the past hundred years.

The political and social crises that have periodically wracked the Philippines have their roots in the anemic performance of Depression-era Commonwealth and postcolonial Philippine economies and the failure of the postcolonial state to bring about an equitable redistribution of wealth and resources. Although the economy posted decent average growth of GDP in the 1950s (6.5 percent) and 1960s (5.1 percent) and peaked at an average of 6.3 percent annual growth rate in the 1970s (Balisacan and Hill 2003, 7–9), it stagnated in the first half of the 1980s due to the debt crisis and the political crisis triggered by the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. Throughout the Marcos era, those in the middle-class job categories remained proportionately unchanged at 11 to 12 percent of the total working population. Even with economic reforms and liberalization in the post-Marcos era, particularly under the Ramos administration, when the Philippine economy posted modest growth rates of around 4.1 percent between 1986 and 1997, those with middle-class jobs remained proportionately constant at 11.5 percent in 1995 (*ibid.*).

To an important extent, the Filipino middle and upper classes have been the beneficiaries of educational development that started earlier and proceeded more steadily than in any other Southeast Asian country. The number of students in higher education for every 100,000 population was 1,808 in 1975; 2,641 in 1980; and 2,760 in 1995 in the Philippines. (In contrast, it was 316 in 1975 and 2,096 in 1995 in Thailand [Hattori et al. 2002, 299].) This development, which has its origins in the late Spanish and American colonial periods, has nurtured people in professional and business occupations that are overwhelmingly concentrated in Manila and other major urban centers (Rivera 2001, 232). But, owing to patterns of economic development in the country where a form of import-substitution industrialization had an early start (and subsequent fitful career), the new “middle classes” thus created are now grounded more in the private sector than in the state bureaucracy.

Filipino middle classes, along with their richer compatriots, exhibit a pronounced sense of self-awareness of themselves as a group separate from peasants, workers, and the urban poor. But their relative autonomy from the state has meant that, while a portion of the middle and upper classes occupies important positions in the state bureaucracy and holds public office, other portions have been at the forefront of reformist as well as radical political and social movements aimed at challenging the state and led by communists,

church-based organizations, NGOs, and the private sector.³¹ Even as middle classes have readily claimed and exercised political leadership in various political movements for and against the state, they remain ideologically divided, and their political effectiveness depends on their ability to forge often temporary, issue-based, and fragile coalitions with other classes.

Moreover, decades of stunted economic development have created an acute awareness among middle classes of the deep social divisions rending Philippine society (Rivera 2001, 244–45). Michael Pinches (1999) has argued that the ideological leadership of the Filipino elite has come under pressure in recent decades because of the continued failure of the Philippines to lift itself out of its economic malaise. Such middle and upper class critical (self-) awareness, fueled by periodic social crisis and economic stagnation that have been blamed on predatory elements among their classes, undercuts any claim of moral and cultural hegemony and legitimacy that their members might be tempted to assert. Stunted economic development has kept Philippine middle classes small in number; socially separate from peasants, workers, and urban poor; politically visible but divided and dependent on larger social coalitions; and, in the past three decades, dispersed as social and economic pressures have forced the Philippine state to adopt by default a policy of exporting its labor force from the mid-1970s onward, leading to the deterritorialization of Filipino labor, which includes members of the middle and upper classes.

This ideological “split” within the middle and upper classes haunts nationalist discourse, especially as it bears on the question of speaking of and for the “people” (Hau 2004, 114–15) in a “foreign” tongue. English is a colonial language and a language of the Philippine middle and upper classes. It is also a language with a century-long history as a regional (and global) lingua franca under British and American hegemony, knitting communities of traders, capitalists, professionals, and activists: it was, and remains, the language of commerce and of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), but it was also the language of Asianism and the Comintern.

Canonical texts of Philippine literature in English have dealt with the national question of “who and what we are” (Dalisy 2010) and the difficult challenge of imagining the nation *as a whole* (to paraphrase Benedict Anderson’s [1991] idea of nation as “imagined communities”), by holding up a mirror in which the writer as *ilustrado* sees himself reflected as at once part of the problem and, with varying degrees of tentativeness, solution to

that problem. This makes Philippine literary texts in English especially vulnerable to criticism that the “who and what we are” that are the focus of the canonical texts are none other than the ilustrados themselves, and carry no viewpoints other than the ilustrados’ and their “class” perspectives. Adam David (2009), for example, criticizes *Ilustrado* this way: “The book also efforts [sic] to make sociopolitical pronouncements about the Philippines, only they’re made from the tisoy upper crust to the nognog burnt bottom of the buko pie of Pinoy Society—it’s a very elitista book, a very FilAm book.”

This self-reflection, at once solipsistic and critical, on the part of the middle and upper classes is the main theme of two of the most important novels in the prewar period, the 1940 Commonwealth Literary contest winners *Winds of April* (honorable mention) and *His Native Coast* (first prize). In N. V. M. Gonzalez’s *Winds of April* (1940/1998), the narrative drive is propelled by a sense of restlessness and searching on the part of the protagonist, frequently reinforced by scenes of travel and mobility in which the protagonist and other characters board a bus, a train, and a boat for migration, education, or work, and at one time watch a plane circle above them. It is a world of broadening horizons, where one already has relatives who have gone to the United States. The novel is a *Künstlerroman* that charts the development and emergent consciousness of the artist-writer. But this “freedom” on the part of the writer to search for himself and figure out what he wants to do, the novel strongly suggests, is a luxury underwritten in large measure by the sacrifice and hard work of less privileged others. In the novel, the protagonist’s father takes on a succession of jobs, never succeeding in any one, in order to earn the money needed to pay for the narrator’s education. One of the sad ironies is that, while the son writes poetry and dreams of being published, the father can barely eke out a living as a seller of books.

In Juan C. Laya’s *His Native Coast* (1940/1972), a repatriate ilustrado, embittered by his sojourn in Depression-era America, where he takes up a series of menial jobs to pay his way through college (while his younger brother makes a stab at a writing career in the Philippines), returns to his hometown. Resisting pressure from his family to take up a stable career in civil service, he chooses to reinvent himself as an entrepreneur, and goes about implementing his school-acquired know-how in business management to set up a company to collect produce and market them in the urban areas. Run along the impersonal, efficient lines of the modern corporation, this company relies on the pooled resources and labor of his relatives, and is

initially successful in bypassing the Chinese middlemen who control the supply and collection chain of commodities. But his own lack of knowledge of things on the ground (a failure reminiscent of Rizal’s Ibarra), complicated by his romantic involvement with a “modern” woman (a flapper, small-town, loose-moral version of the *Fili*’s Paulita Gomez), leads him to make a series of miscalculations that cost the company dearly, so that he is forced to liquidate the company and start from scratch in another place.

OFWs as the “New Ilustrados”?

Words like “patriotism” and “responsibility” and “redeem” and imageries of return (as opposed to migration as abandonment and escape) recur throughout Syjuco’s *Ilustrado* (2010, 54, 66, 108, 127, 162, 165, 180). But the novel differs from the other novels of the ilustrado in several ways. Written at a time when a large number of Filipinos, the majority of whom were already employed before they started working abroad and who completed their education in the secondary if not tertiary levels, have become deterritorialized, *Ilustrado* reconfigures the ilustrado by imagining the protagonist, the writer Crispin Salvador, as an (ageing) expatriate returning to the Philippines after years of exile in America and Europe. Unlike Ibarra, who returns as a “foreigner” to foment violence and exact vengeance on the people who destroyed his life and dreams, *Ilustrado* foregrounds the return of the ilustrado, a writer who was also once a veteran activist, as a (wish) fulfillment of the ilustrado act of taking responsibility, of reaching out and connecting with his “people.” In interviews Syjuco has made much of OFWs as having the “potential” (“potentiality” is a recurring word in Syjuco’s interviews and the novel) to be a “new class of ilustrados” (Lau 2010).³² He has stated that

We have these heroes who have gone abroad, learned all they could, and returned to create our revolution. We call them Ilustrados, the Enlightened. And in this day and age we have Filipinos who are doing the same thing . . . We can come back and create a social revolution. That’s what an ilustrado can be. It’s an attitude against the hopelessness that we have in the Philippines, that we can’t change. (Lim 2010)

Syjuco’s own life story illustrates the potentiality of the ilustrado to break ranks with his “class.” Defying his father’s³³ wish that he study law and

enter politics, Syjuco took up a succession of jobs, including editor of the Philippine online journal *Local Vibe*, entry-level work at the *New Yorker* and *Esquire*, fact-checker for *The Paris Review*, medical-trial guinea pig, retailer of handbags over E-Bay, and assistant to a bookie at the horse races (Long 2010; Lau 2010), most of these while working toward an MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University in the U.S. and a PhD, also in Creative Writing, at the University of Adelaide in Australia. He has claimed solidarity with the OFWs, explaining that “These jokes [in the novel] are the folklore by which we explain ourselves . . . I don’t see myself as any different from all the other Filipinos who have gone abroad looking for opportunity, to be a nurse, a labourer, a maid or a prostitute.” Elsewhere Syjuco declares that “I think my experience abroad is very much the same as that of the millions of expatriate Filipinos who make up our wide diaspora. It’s filled with the contradictions of freedom, loneliness, safety, insecurity, independence, alienation, opportunities, failure, dollar salaries, higher cost of living, clean air, brutal winters, etc. Life abroad is a double-edged sword” (Long 2010). Syjuco’s sincere gesture of solidarity with the OFWs differentiates him from members of the middle and upper classes, including expatriates, who have customarily looked down upon the majority of OFWs who are in non-middle class occupations.³⁴

Interestingly enough, this sense of kinship and solidarity with OFWs, while stated in the chapter where “Miguel Syjuco” boards a plane for the Philippines, does not translate to any actual, as opposed to imaginative, interaction between “Miguel Syjuco” and his fellow OFW returnees on the plane (a fact also noted by Fuller 2010). The interaction between the OFW (who is sketched as a thieving, loud-voiced sort) and “Miguel Syjuco” is largely an imagined one; for all that the narrator speaks of the OFWs on the plane as “my people” (Syjuco 2010, 22) and claims solidarity with them, the Great Divide is not so easily breached.³⁵ Things in “real” life are no better. Crispin Salvador’s stint as a leftist guerrilla is only a short interlude between his “exile” at home and exile abroad. *Ilustrado* resolves the threat of permanent exile by means of the homecoming of the errant artist at the end of the novel, but 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.

A sense of incommensurability of perspectives haunts the novel. Syjuco the author has spoken of his own frustration at being dismissed as a *coño* kid (A. David 2010a; 2010b). Unsparing in his criticism of the upper class (his scathing portrait of the drug-addled, uncultured, and hypocritical representatives almost verging sometimes on caricature),³⁶ he is nevertheless well aware that part of the price he has paid for dissecting the follies and foibles of this class of people is a reluctance, an inability perhaps, to write about people other than “his” class. This reluctance, couched as a conscious decision, is rooted in a very real fear of being castigated for “inauthenticity,” or worse, misrepresenting the people he does not know well. In an interview, he has stated that

I let the Miguel protagonist crucify himself (he’s a selfish, drug-abusing, *coño* with no sense of duty, though he does know he’s done something wrong with his life). Plus, I eschewed the whole trope of trying to write from the P[oint]O[f]V[iew] of a beggar/urchin/revolutionary/jeepney-driver/maid/prosti/thief/whatever, because I knew that would always be inauthentic, coming from someone of my background. (A. David 2010b)

This bifurcation in Syjuco’s sympathies and sensibilities has not escaped his interviewer, Bruce Millar of *The Australian*, who comments (with a hint of acerbity) that Syjuco’s attempt at erasing internal differences among OFWs renders him vulnerable to criticism by others:

Here, he [Syjuco] is at grave risk of sounding like the young men from his own class he satirises in the book for calling each other “Fligga” when they return from college in the US with a taste for rap music. After all, the maid or the prostitute has hardly had Syjuco’s opportunities to study for a masters at Columbia, followed by a PhD at the University of Adelaide, where he worked on early drafts of *Ilustrado*. (Millar 2010)

While the literary strategies of the novel—an assemblage of excerpts from Salvador’s writings, blogs and comments, hearsay, newspaper articles, and jokes, with alternate endings to some of the plotlines—lend themselves to being read as “postmodern” (see, e.g., David 2009; Hidalgo 2008), *Ilustrado*

is fundamentally an old-fashioned humanist text that celebrates the artistry of the writer. The final chapter, which reveals that the protagonist “Miguel Syjuco” is himself a character in Crispin Salvador’s novel and Salvador the writer, far from being fashionably dead in Foucauldian parlance (Foucault 1969/1979), is alive and active and very much at the heart of the novel, which is in fact “his” work—affirms the responsibility of the Filipino writer and Philippine writing to serve as instruments of social change. In imagining the death of one of the protagonist-narrators, “Miguel Syjuco,” as an act of taking responsibility by sacrificing oneself for others (in the novel, “Syjuco” drowns while trying to save two children during a flashflood), the novel renders in figurative language what the author has stated in various interviews, exemplified by the following excerpt:

“I have to believe that literature can effect change, otherwise I would have no purpose in my life and would have wasted four years on *Ilustrado*,” he [Syjuco] says. “Is it as effective as me running for congress in a grassroots campaign? I don’t know. But what I do know is that writing is the thing I am best at, and I don’t have the stomach, the ability, the strength or the courage to enter the political arena. And I think writing can be a political act, if only to let those people accountable know they are being watched. Literature can be a conscience.” (Millar 2010)

The dilemma of the exiled ilustrado is further resolved at the end of the novel by Crispin’s homecoming (even though real-life ilustrados like Marcelo H. Del Pilar and Graciano Lopez Jaena failed to return to the Philippines and died in Barcelona within six months of each other in 1896). To some extent, this ending is an imaginary resolution of the contentious issue of “brain drain”³⁷ resulting from the exodus of professionals and intellectuals. However much intellectuals working abroad may consider themselves as no more than OFWs, their migration is not easily or safely subsumed into a narrative of the *bagong bayani* (new hero), whose work abroad has been coded as heroic sacrifice for and contribution to the nation. Instead, intellectuals are subject to criticism, usually from fellow intellectuals and members of the middle classes (in tones not untainted, at times, by self-congratulatory righteousness), for “betraying” the country by taking and using their skills and talents elsewhere. Crispin Salvador’s return resolves this thorny issue of

brain drain, and yet its affirmation of homecoming as return to the fold of the nation is belied by the author Syjuco’s own inability, given his personal and professional commitments, to guarantee his own eventual return to the Philippines except for brief visits. A *New York Times* article states that “Mr. Syjuco, who has already sold a second book to a North American publisher, identifies himself as a Filipino author but says that overseas life gave him the distance needed to see his country’s problems” (Lau 2010), and quotes Syjuco as admitting, “I don’t know if I could have written this if I had stayed in the Philippines.” This privileging of long-distance travel as a condition for “seeing” the country’s problem renders the author vulnerable to accusations that he gives short shrift to the admirable efforts of intellectuals and activists, some of them entirely homegrown while others are part of the “Brain Gain” returnees, who “see” and work from within the Philippines, against so many odds.³⁸

More significantly, the idea of the OFWs’ “flight” to other countries does not carry with it the historical association of travel with (political) exile and resistance, but is instead coded as economic “necessity” and “opportunity.” Thus, “return” in the current context of massive labor outmigration from the Philippines does not necessarily mean “return to serve the country,” but may involve other motives and trajectories—such as “return because the contract is over,” “return because I have no choice” or “return because the host country is not safe or doesn’t want to hire OFWs,” and “return in order to retire”—which do not lend themselves to being simplistically coded as active contribution to the nation.

More than 120 years ago, a returning Filipino was a figure both foreign and sinister, capable of fomenting revolution without either care or thought to its costs and consequences. Simoun’s return to the Philippines is rendered in Rizal’s novel as a form of irresponsibility. Against a vengeful Ibarra, Elias’s conjuring of the specter of innocent victims was not because he objected to violence per se, for he himself had at one time been ready to cast his lot with Capitan Pablo’s band of remontados, but because he did not think that Ibarra was doing so with any serious thought to the consequences of his plan of vengeful action and because, later on, Simoun aimed to destroy Philippine society with no clear plan of how to reconstruct it. Things have changed a great deal since Rizal’s time. Now, the returning expatriate is hailed as a hero by virtue of having returned or, better still, decided to remain in the Philippines, while those who have chosen to remain in the country readily claim the moral high ground against their deterritorialized compatriots. Whereas the risk before was that the

ilustrado, by returning, brought new ideas that threatened the stability of the colonial regime but risked being irresponsible because of his tendency to think in abstractions and disregard concrete issues and questions that mattered “on the ground,” the ilustrado-as-expatriate runs the risk of irresponsibility by not returning at all, by staying abroad indefinitely and taking his and her energies and talents and resources elsewhere.

Arguably, deterritorialization of Filipino labor has acted as a safety valve against an explosive revolution that brings about substantial social change. Conventional wisdom holds that overseas migration—the option of escape or exit—is a way to ease the social pressures that would otherwise have elevated public dissatisfaction with a political regime to the tipping point of revolutionary violence (Bade 2003, 116). Demanding the return of these OFWs to force things to change, however, is neither politically viable nor feasible, given the extent to which Philippine society and economy have already been irrevocably transformed by the labor-export trend of the past three decades. There has been a social “revolution” of sorts, but not one that fits the conventional wisdom of overthrow of a regime and the creation of a just and equitable society. Instead, international labor migration and market forces have created a situation in which a large number of Filipinos, in the course of pursuing their “interests” and those of their families, have become “middle class” by Philippine standards because of their greater earning power abroad, but who, because of their occupations, are not necessarily considered middle-class either in their home country or in their host countries. And they have become middle class *in* the Philippines by being (and often remaining) abroad, somewhere else, in ways that enable them to circumvent the socialization process—*de buena familia*, attending the right schools, working in “middle-class” occupations, marrying the right kind of people—undergone by the traditional middle and upper classes in the Philippines. The irony, though, is that their children, many of whom remain in the Philippines, are now more likely to undergo this process of elite socialization as OFW parents enroll their kids in private schools, including church-run institutions. (The response of the elites is to eschew the older exclusive schools in favor of even more expensive international schools and barricade themselves in ever more exclusive residential enclaves such as Punta Fuego in Nasugbu, Batangas [Castañeda-Anastacio 2010].) The ranks of the Philippine middle and upper classes will remain divided among themselves but continue to be replenished by children of OFWs,

who are now instrumental as well in keeping these private schools and other middle-class institutions afloat.³⁹

This disjunction of life trajectories can be seen in Filipina entertainers from Japan carrying genuine Louis Vuitton bags that only the upper class can afford in the Philippines, or the Filipina domestic worker who is fluent in Hebrew, Cantonese, Italian, Greek, Japanese, and other non-English languages, thereby gaining access to value systems and ideas that the by-now largely Anglophone middle and upper classes do not have (except in American-mediated translation). Some of them are accumulating capital (whether financial, social, or cultural) that used to be the birthright only of the privileged. Similarly, educational paths do not always follow the well-trodden one of tertiary and graduate education abroad followed by return to the Philippines, since professionals who receive higher education abroad tend to stay on after they complete their graduate degrees. Conversely, we also have Filipina college graduates and schoolteachers who leave their jobs in the Philippines to work as domestic helpers abroad. Others take on “dirty, dangerous, and demeaning” jobs that do not make full use of their talents and skills, and do not contribute to developing their individual capacities and potentials. In the meantime, entertainers are becoming entrepreneurs in their hometowns in the Philippines, and there are now huge numbers of workers whose experiences of travel and working abroad make them just as cosmopolitan as the upper class from the Philippines, even though their status as workers has meant that they, unlike their more privileged compatriots, have had to fight harder for their right and claim to be “at home in the world” (Aguilar 2002).

OFWs are as internally differentiated and politically divided as middle and upper classes have been historically, but they are now also living the kind of lives and gaining the kind of experiences that make it difficult, if not obsolete, to use terms like “ilustrado.” Ilustrado is not reducible to the middle and upper classes and their brand of cosmopolitanism, yet it remains bound by association to these classes because its frame of reference is basically Philippine society and its (internal) hierarchies. For OFWs, who have to deal not only with contradictions internal to their “homeland,” but with the contradictions engendered by geopolitical and economic differences between their “home” and the nearly two hundred host countries or territories where they live and work, the injunction to serve *the* nation may not hold any water, given that in their own minds they are serving their nation(s) precisely by working abroad, through their effort at bettering themselves

and their family, and at times paying the price of loneliness and alienation for being abroad. Not all of their stories involve unrelenting suffering and abuse; there are also happy endings and adventures. Not many of them elect to cast a vote in elections, and may not ever do so unless their interests as OFWs are threatened, for instance by state taxation. In many cases, diasporic philanthropy—the act of giving back to “home,” which may be hometown or province rather than country or “nation,” and which may not necessarily be the Philippines—cannot sometimes be so easily distinguished from their own entrepreneurial activities and their self-interests as well as the interests of their families (Yap 2010). Their experiences abroad strengthen their local identities and identifications—their ethnic, linguistic, religious, hometown, and provincial affiliations—but also significantly reinforce their consciousness of themselves as Filipinos. Unable to rely on, and unwilling to trust, the Philippine state to deliver basic goods and services, they nevertheless expect the Philippine state to protect them when they are abroad and to educate their children and deliver basic social services “back home.” “Back home” their presence registers in the economy as net capital inflows (remittances minus capital outflows) that now represent about 12.8 percent of the GNP (Asian Development Bank 2010a, 1). Their remittances represent income that is harder for the state to capture, but also income that tends to be consumed in everyday life or saved for retirement—hence, the higher growth in the service sector of the Philippine economy, and in areas such as retail, finance, and real estate development, rather than in manufacturing or agriculture (a trend noted by Balisacan and Hill 2003, 13).

Unlike the upper classes that enjoy relative freedom of mobility and have a lot more options on where they want to live and what they want to do (a freedom that, if we follow the logic of brain drain, automatically confers on them the status of heroes when they choose to stay in the Philippines, with an army of maids to keep them in comfort and luxury), the majority of OFWs have no choice but to embody their nationalities in the sense that their rights (or nonrights) as citizens, their mobility, and their welfare are in crucial ways determined and regulated by the passports they carry, by their nation-state’s prestige (or lack thereof) and standing within the international system of states, and both sending and receiving nation-state’s ability or inability to protect or welcome the workers (Odine de Guzman [2011] characterizes OFWs as a “traveling nation”). The links between them and their family and nation are mediated by money, and the power

of money to effect transformation of the physical landscape, the economy, social relations, and politics in a way that is concrete yet abstract, imaginary and real, “inside” and “outside” at the same time (as theorized by Rafael 1997). Often treated as no more than an abstraction, as labor power and statistics by the state or part of the labor-saving appliances and furniture by their employers, they are politically and culturally “invisible”⁴⁰ in the host countries whose infrastructure they build, whose women they empower to work outside their homes, and whose progeny and elders they care for. (The times when they congregate in groups are sufficient to disconcert the citizens in Singapore or Hong Kong, just as the congregation of protesters along EDSA during EDSA Tres in 2001 provoked much outcry, bordering on fear and disgust and deploying the same imagery of noise, dirt, and promiscuity applied to overseas Filipina domestic workers, on the part of some middle and upper class people.) They are, for increasingly large portions of their working careers, not “here” in the Philippines, and yet, as primary providers of their households back home, their decisions about what is bought, who goes to school, and what to do with their earnings are often delivered long-distance yet carry weight and have executory force and real consequences at home.

This spectral nature of the OFWs’ simultaneous presence and absence, visibility and invisibility in *both* their home and respective host countries is something that current scholarship has only begun to seriously explore and analyze.⁴¹ Their presences and absences in the Philippines and around the world and their complicated links to “homes,” while conditioned and regulated by their nationality (or in some cases nationalities), can no longer be fully controlled or contained by any single nation-state, and involve multiple claims and forms of belonging, and a variety of decisions and actions that are not easily subsumed by either a discourse of contribution to the nation or a discourse of betrayal of that nation.

Conclusion: Old Issues, New Realities

Ilustrado’s use of the unreliable narrator affirms, rather than undermines, the century-old Rizalian imperative and mission to write a novel whose “people and events are all imaginary, but the truths they represent—the flawed humanity, the mistakes we make, the potential for good and bad, the celebration of who we are and can be—are all real” (Long 2010). This makes the novel the latest in a long line of Philippine literary texts that are written in the shadow of Rizal, but it also lends the novel a curiously nostalgic air,

as if this novel were not about the politics of the here and now, but about an already bygone era. Times have changed: novels that would have gotten one executed more than a hundred years ago can now win awards and acclaim beyond an aspiring writer's wildest dreams; novels that raised the specter of the "filibuster" were deemed dangerous in the past, but novels that deploy the pilosopo-language of the left to advocate social change while distancing themselves from the actual political movements that push for these changes have been in the mainstream for decades (Garcellano 2001).⁴² The challenge of patriotism is that of loving one's country, not because one is taught to do so or because one's happiest memories are rooted in it or because one can only be happy in it, but because "to it I owe my misfortune" (*porque le debo mi desgracia*), as Elias bitterly tells Ibarra (Rizal 1887/1961a, ch. 49, 275).

Far more ironic, while protagonist "Miguel Syjuco" and one of his girlfriends can feel good about themselves by being politically correct in America, where they are vocal in their criticism of faraway China's occupation of Tibet and miserable human rights record, their "creator" Crispin Salvador elects to return to a Philippines that, in its comic and tragic complexity, is something to which few works of imagination have done justice, but to which writers and artists need to render themselves receptive as they struggle to give it form, figure, meaning, and value in their works of imagination, to help imagine and produce a "world" that, in the best sense of world literature, can be shared by Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike. In the Philippines, as with much of the global South, this making oneself "receptive" has taken the form of politicization and activism, and brought artists and writers and intellectuals into closer contact with people outside their own narrow circles.

Unlike Juan Laya's *His Native Soil*, *Ilustrado* ends rather than begins with the return of the native, and stops short of showing us the inhospitable conditions under which Filipino residents suffer and endure, the permanent state of war in which everyday and extrajudicial violence targets journalists, activists, and other civilians. Activism, while still resilient, is under considerable siege and has less presence and visibility in arenas where it had once flourished, arenas such as schools and universities, the primary incubators of modern-day ilustrados. Professionalization of education has gone hand in hand with the marginalization of the liberal arts in favor of professional schools that train lawyers, business managers, and doctors for financially remunerative careers in the Philippines and abroad. We have lawyers and doctors and engineers aplenty, but very few public intellectuals (Anderson 2010b).

Syjuco is well-aware of the limitations of writing a novel that is addressed to a "people" who generally have neither the time nor inclination nor leisure nor resources to read a novel in English, but this knowledge, fortunately, has not prevented him from writing: "[t]he idea that literature has its limitations, despite it being limitless—that's the whole paradox of it—keeps me training and trying to run as quickly as I can" (Bland 2010) ("What should keep us writing is precisely that possibility of explosions" [Syjuco 2010, 205].) Part of his affirmation of literature's value and significance for the Philippines and the world has involved recuperating the concept of ilustrado as critical stance rather than mere status marker and symbol, and the broadening of the term to encompass contemporary migrant workers as a whole.

This resignification, however, is haunted by questions of class and space and mobility, questions that the novel attempts to resolve by conferring political value not so much on the activism of intellectuals and workers, which may be undertaken in places other than their countries of origin, as on the necessity of their "return" to the Philippines. Such a (re)territorialization of ilustrado-as-stance-not-status is, however, fraught with its own new set of unresolved issues, not least of which is the lack of popular appeal of this option, the social transformation already wrought by decades of outmigration that have changed the parameters of the economy while simultaneously reinforcing and undermining the traditional, elite-driven ways of doing politics, and the beleaguered status of activism that necessitates, and asks of people, something more than the by-now orthodox adoption of a critical, oppositional stance against the "upper class" (who, after all, *isn't* critical of the ruling elites and the mess they have made of this country? Judging from the venomous reaction to the Gucci Gang over the Internet, even the "elites" themselves are critical!). Syjuco's novel amply demonstrates the fact that the terms by which "ilustrado" can be resignified and reappropriated are not only beset by conceptual and practical difficulties that are as old and fraught as in Rizal's time, but are revealing as well of new realities and challenges that exceed the paradigms, whether realist or postmodern or post-postmodern, through which we have sought to understand them and change our society/societies.

Notes

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Jun Aguilar and Ben Anderson, whose constructive comments and encouragement enabled me to venture beyond literature into history. I also thank Angelli Tugado and the staff of Philippine Studies for their support. All errors (including those of translation) in this article are my sole responsibility.

- 1 "Patria é intereses" (literally, "Fatherland and interests") is the title of ch. 59 of José Rizal's *Noli me tangere* and is translated by Charles Derbyshire (Rizal 1912/1976, 373) as "Patriotism and Private Interests" and by Soledad Lacson-Locsin as "Patriotism and Self-Interest" (Rizal 1996, 384).
- 2 On world literature as project, see Cheah 2008 and the essays in Prendergast 2004, especially Francesca Orsini's discussion of the inequalities of global literary practice in Orsini 2004.
- 3 "What is Filipino writing? Living on the margins, a bygone era, loss, exile, poor-me angst, postcolonial identity theft. Tagalog words intermittently scattered around for local color, exotically italicized. Run-on sentences and facsimiles of Magical Realism, hiding behind the disclaimer that we Pinoys were doing it years before the South Americans. You know I once found one of my books in the Latin American section of a reputable bookstore?" (Syjuco 2010, 207).
- 4 The exemplary postmodern novel of the Philippines is Jessica Hagedorn's *Dog eaters* (1990), but even *Dog eaters* is not immune to the lure of authenticity and ethical demand for an author writing about the Philippines to assume some form of political responsibility toward her subject matter. Despite the novel's use of postmodern literary conventions and strategies to foreground the vexed politics of representation and referentiality (Hau 1993), the novel gestures at the necessity of acts of political resistance—not just "acts of literature" (Derrida 1991)—against the status quo by positing marginalized call-boy Joey Sands's radicalization as a guerrilla in the tradition of *remontado* rebels, beyond the purview of "postmodern" Manila. This radicalization tellingly assumes the form of physical relocation from city to country and (just as problematical) finding true love in a heterosexual relationship.
- 5 Marya Salamat (2010) writes: "But beyond that, unlike the original *Ilustrados* who, though product of the rich had managed to go with the masses and tell their stories from their point of view, this refurbished *Ilustrado* tries at times to tell the story of the masses from the viewpoint still of the elite where they came from. As such, when it is not being cerebral and is supposedly chronicling the signs of the times, it reads like patronizing, even joking and making fun, of the masses." Adam Mars-Jones (2010), while lauding the novel for its evocation of modern Manila, criticizes *Ilustrado*'s "sententious" rhetoric and lack of pacing, and has this to say about the excerpts from Salvador's writings: "His thriller and his books for children are equally feeble, and even the historical novel *The Enlightened* is closer to the Cookson-axis than the Tolstoy-axis of the genre." Adam David (2009), commenting on the 2008 version that won the Palanca award, characterizes the novel as "textbook postmodern" and writes: "The narrative voice also tends to be monotonous at times, it's just really written by one author, a glaring slight considering one of the book's main conceits is the cacophony of bibliography of at least two completely different authors of high lit . . ." Kelleher (2010) writes: "As a debut, it is quite strong, but *Ilustrado* never really justifies the high level of praise it has received . . . What we have, then, is a frustratingly uneven story which works so well at times, that when it fails—which is often—it is worse than if it had never succeeded at all and was simply relentlessly bad." My own dissatisfaction with the novel has to do with its tendency to overwrite, which results in prose that is sometimes overripe ("it is the accepting moment of a dying night"; "bows his head to the persistence of jet

lag" [Syjuco 2010, 56, 66]) and at other times reminiscent of shoddy, even nonsensical, graduate student papers, such as the following "fragment" from an essay by Salvador: "The Alienation of the Elite is the unpolitical effect of the political. It concerns the plutocracy's own legitimate, and sympathetically human, frustration with this downward-spiraling human condition, and not just the malaise of having" (ibid., 70). This kind of writing—which makes for interminable reading—requires the reader to accept at face value the novel's claim that Salvador, who turns out to be the central figure of the novel, is the "panther of Philippine letters" if not a Nobel Prize contender, even as these "facts" about Salvador are playfully undermined by the novel's suggestion that they may or may not be apocryphal. The final sentence of the novel is disappointingly muddled: "Home, with the discovery that we are only enlightened at a new beginning, at what we perceive to be the end" (ibid., 304). This regrettable tendency is happily offset by passages of beauty, poignancy, and humor, particularly the narrative that covers protagonist "Miguel Syjuco's" childhood and love affair in New York. It does, however, leave one with the feeling that the effusive praise (almost always with a soupçon of criticism) lavished on the novel by the media in America and the U.K. might be owing more to praise inflation or multicultural political correctness that suspends judgment on works by non-"white" writers than to the actual merits of the novel.

- 6 Two non-Filipino colleagues have confessed to me that they find nothing original or pioneering about Rizal's novels and have a hard time distinguishing the novel from similarly themed novels from other countries. The issue may not be one of the *Noli* or *Fili*'s aesthetic virtues, or lack thereof (although this criticism is vitiated by the fact that neither of my colleagues reads Spanish and appreciates the kind of satire and mixed Spanish Rizal uses), since the relative absence of aesthetic value has not prevented minor works such as Alexandre Dumas fils' *La Dame aux camélias* (1848) from having an enormous impact on modern Chinese literature (see Chow 1991, 72–75), for instance. Rather, we need to attend to the actual circulation, translation, and reception of literary works that complicate the idea of smooth traffic and mutuality of exchanges and interactions within world literature and between world literature and "national" literature. This does not imply a necessary contrast or conflict between world literature and national literature; it only attests to the uneven and asymmetrical nature of literary exchanges and interactions and the need to attend to modes of transmission and conditions of circulation, translation, and reception—subject to contestation from different sites, whether global, regional, national, or subnational—that confer value and significance on a novel for one set of audiences but not necessarily for another. See Cheah 2008 for an elaboration of the normative component of world making that necessitates a rethinking of world literature not in terms of universal progress and development, but, rather, contestation from different sites and claims of world making.
- 7 A number of studies have addressed this slipperiness of concepts, among the most thoughtful of which are Owen 1974; Guerrero 1977; Majul 1977; Guerrero 1982; Schumacher 1991; Simbulan 2005; and Cullinane 2003. In literary studies, the most interesting interventions in the debate on the heroic and villainous *ilustrado* are the essays on Rizal in Daroy and Feria 1968 and Nick Joaquin's (1977) iconoclastic (often scathing) study of ten Philippine "heroes" and spirited defense (1988) of a "history by a minority" composed of the "middle class, petite bourgeoisie, landed gentry principalia, ilustrado." For in-depth studies of Filipino intellectuals in the nineteenth century, see the classic works by Schumacher 1997 and Mojares 2006.
- 8 Cullinane (2003, 363 n. 56) notes, for example, that although Mariano Limjap and Telesforo Chuidian, both Chinese mestizos, were wealthy, well educated, and well connected socially, they were not considered *ilustrado*.

- 9 Cf. Majul's (1977, 12) definition of *ilustrado* as "a person who had a profession, spoke and wrote Castilian well, and had been educated in any of the colleges."
- 10 Jun Aguilar has pointed out to me the salience of age or youthfulness, which has been overlooked in most studies on the *ilustrado*. Ambeth Ocampo (2010) underscores that there are no women in the canonical list of ilustrados. Only during the American period, when women entered college, did "Filipinas ilustradas" (*El Renacimiento Filipino* 1910, 13) become a common term.
- 11 I thank Benedict Anderson for prodding me to develop this line of argument of the *ilustrado* as stance and status.
- 12 *Progresista* was associated with the revolutionary periods of 1808–1814 and La Gloriosa of 1868 (see Mojares 2006, 468, citing Artigas y Cuerva 1911/1996, 166); interestingly, Artigas's book was published in 1911, during the "Progressive Era" of Teddy Roosevelt in the U.S. I thank Ben Anderson for pointing out this "coincidence."
- 13 Ch. 35 of the *Noli* (Rizal 1887/1961a, 200) records an hilarious exchange among "simple country people" (*sencillos campesinos*) concerning the awful but nebulous connotations of *filibustero* as compared with similar Spanish ad hominem attacks against the "natives" such as *tarantado*, *saragate*, *indio*, *betelapora*, and *ispichoso*. Filibustero undergoes mutation in the course of the conversation into *plibastiero*, *plibustiero*, *pelbistero*, and *palabistiero*, by which time one of the peasants decides to apply the term to thieving *guardia civil*, hurling the invective back at the *indio* representatives of the colonial state. In a letter to Blumentritt, Rizal (1887/1961b, 69) explains that the word *filibustero* is "little known in the Philippines. The masses do not know it yet. I heard it for the first time in 1872 when the tragic executions took place. I still remember the panic that this word created. Our father forbade us to utter it, as well as the words Cavite, Burgos (one of the executed priests), etc. The Manila newspapers and the Spaniards apply this word to one whom they want to make a revolutionary suspect. The Filipinos belonging to the educated class fear the reach of the word. It does not have the meaning of freebooters; it rather means a *dangerous patriot who will soon be hanged* or well, a *presumptuous man*." Even more than *ilustrado*, *filibustero* derived its semantic charge from the arbitrariness of colonial rule, which had the capacity to translate ad hominem attacks against people whose attitudes and actions challenge higher authority into real-life exile, imprisonment, immiseration, and execution.
- 14 In ch. 13, the *Fili* (Rizal, 1961b, 98) speaks of Placido Penitente's "fame" (*fama*) among his admiring friends as a *filósofo*, while Padre Millon disparages Placido by calling him a *filosofastro* (philosophaster). In the 1822 edition of *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, *filósofo* denotes people who study or know philosophy—which is glossed as the science that deals with the essences, properties, causes, and effects of natural things and the science that deals with the kindness and malice of human actions and explains the nature of virtues and vice (La Academia Española 1822, 387). *Filósofo* is also defined as "the virtuous or austere man who lives in retirement and escapes from distractions or concurrences" (*El hombre virtuoso y austere que vive retirado y huye de las distracciones ó concurrencias*; *ibid.*), a description that fits nicely with Rizal's portrait of Tasio.
- 15 In Nick Joaquin's *Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (1952/1991), these *tertulias* host some of Manila's finest young men, including the "scholar, artist, patriot" Renaissance man Don Lorenzo Marasigan. Joaquin explicitly links the critical stance of the enlightened to revolutionary patriotism, but also records the increasing marginalization of this generation of Hispanized revolutionary patriots in the American period.
- 16 I thank Glòria Cano and Resil Mojares for their help in researching the etymology of the term *ilustrado*.
- 17 See the contrasting views of Gay (1995; 1996) and Outram (2005) on whether the Enlightenment is a unitary phenomenon.
- 18 On the impact of the French Enlightenment on Bourbon Philippines, see the essays by Hornedo 2001; on the Philippine Enlightenment, see the pathbreaking work of Mojares 2006. According to Ben Anderson (2010b), "No one in England talks about the English Enlightenment, Scottish yes, while the French speak of philosophes, and the Spanish speak of *ilustracion*. In France, philosophes staked out an intellectual rationalist position aimed primarily at the Church, hence the members who were atheists, materialists, scientists, and so on. Philosophy in its widest sense aimed at obscurantism. Ilustracion was also aimed at the Church above all, which controlled education and beggared the society. In Scotland too, the Enlightenment was the enemy of fanatical reactionary Protestants, while in the UK neither Catholics nor Protestants had any crucial power, at least since the 1660s." I thank Perry Anderson for the information on German mediation of the English Enlightenment.
- 19 Glòria Cano (2010) explains that "the term 'ilustrado' was commonly used in the nineteenth century to describe the Spanish intelligentsia. That meant writers, historians, academicians, and others. For instance, the famous Spanish writer Benito Pérez Galdós was described as 'el ilustrado novelista Pérez Galdós'. Moreover, *ilustrado* is related to *progressiveness* and liberal ideas. Spanish dictionaries of history say the liberal historiography of the nineteenth century that worried over the problem of the national construction defined as 'ilustrados' those authors who had contributed to independence movements. This is applied to Latin American independence. In short the Spaniards used the term 'ilustrados' to describe educated Filipinos, but at the end of the nineteenth century, the word acquired a new dimension and this was extrapolated to the individuals such as Rizal who were constructing the Filipino national identity." The entry in Cuadrado Muñiz and Molina's *Hispanismos en el tagalo* (1972, 331) defines the term as "persona docta, instruida. cf. pulida, refinado, fino" (learned, educated person; cf. polished, refined, fine). Resil Mojares (2010) writes about the usage of "ilustrado" in the Philippines: "My sense is that it was not commonly used and that it may have acquired its current status in the literature only in the revolutionary or postrevolutionary period. The contest over knowledge/authority was at the core of the Propaganda Movement. It is, for instance, at the heart of Retana's interesting diatribe against those he calls 'antimonásticos.' He classifies the antimonásticos into 'two branches' ('ramos'), each subdivided into several 'groups' ('grupos'). He divides the first branch (elements in the colony) into (1) 'indios,' (2) 'españoles-filipinos,' and (3) 'peninsulares' (citing 'mestizos de chinos' as part of either the first or second group). His second branch (those based in Europe) consists of (1) 'inocentes' (Spaniards who have never been to the Philippines and are ignorant of its conditions); (2) 'expectantes' (young Filipinos in Europe who are nothing but wastrels, dandies, swellheads, etc.), and (3) 'exaltados,' politically-minded Filipinos in Europe, who (Retana says) do not number 'more than twelve' 'sospechosos' and 'revolucionarios.' While Retana assumes the air of a social-scientific analyst, he mixes categories of race, location, personality, knowledge (or lack of it), etc., in mounting a critique that denigrates his opponents (ignorant, half-educated, morally weak, misguided, opportunistic, and self-serving) and represents them as a mere aggregation of individuals/types, driven by various motives (Retana 1891, 54–65). In this context, the word 'ilustrado' was politically useful. What other word better captures the idea that they, the reformists, were 'the best elements of the islands,' well educated, etc., and

that they constituted a more-or-less coherent social group? It was, of course, most useful in representing the 'respectable' face of the nationalist movement and the revolution to the outside world, perhaps less so inside the country because of its potentially divisive class associations." In Latin America, the term "letrado/a" (lettered, learned, often associated with the legal profession) has been accorded special attention by the Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama (1984), who attributes the power and prestige enjoyed by the Latin American writer to the national literatures that emerged from *la ciudad letrada*, the New World city of letters and cultural milieu, in part defined by the educated elites, that conferred great value on access to writing (on the emergence of the letrado in early modern Spain, see Kagan 1974).

20 A search of *La Solidaridad* reveals the following usages of *ilustrado*, almost overwhelmingly as an adjective: "clases ilustradas del país" (quoting the Madrid journal *La Justicia*, "La situación de Filipinas," I, 6, 30 Apr. 1889, 61), "indio ilustrado" ("Bibliografía: 'Noli me tangere' ante la imparcialidad," I, 11, 15 July 1889, 126), "nobles é ilustrados hijos del país" and "los filipinos ilustrados" (Fernando Blumentritt, "Señor Quiquiao," I, 12, 31 July 1889, 134, 136), "muy ilustrados españoles" ("La representación parlamentaria de Filipinas," I, 17, 15 Oct. 1889, 190), "la juventud ilustrada del país" (Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Una contestación: Artículos dedicados al Sr. D. Jose de Lacalle," II, 25, 15 Feb. 1890, 34), "personas muy serias y muy ilustradas entre los indios" (Rizal 1890b/1996, 70, 71), "cuyos feligreses son poco inteligentes, poco ilustrados" and "no entra en el pueblo una persona más ilustrada que él" (Blumentritt 1890/1996, 241), "el indígena—ilustrado ó no ilustrado" and "clases elevadas y su juventud ilustrada" (Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Los frailes y los clérigos," II, 43, 15 Nov. 1890, 252, 254), and "clase ilustrada" (Marcelo del Pilar Gatmaitan, "Problemas Filipinos," V, 96, 31 Jan. 1893, 906). Ferdinand Blumentritt, whose two articles "El filibusterismo" (III, 52, 31 Mar. 1891, 363–65) and "Filipinas: Problema fundamental" (III, 53, 15 Apr. 1891, 376–80 and III, 54, 30 Apr. 1891, 388–94) dwell on the intimate relationship between "el ilustrado" ("Filipinas," III, 54, 30 Apr. 1891, 390) and "filibustero" (a relationship complicated by discussions of the creole and Chinese mestizo in the Philippines), appears to have been the most frequent user of the term. See also his "La separación de las colonias Españolas de la America continental: Reflexiones y consideraciones," V, 96, 15 Feb. 1893, 920, 923. There is also an anonymous piece, "La situación actual de filipinas," IV, 91, 15 Nov. 1892, 846–49, that repeatedly uses "ilustrado" as adjective in quoting a German newspaper article. In an article on China, "Consideraciones acerca del conflict chino-japonés," Blumentritt uses letrado, instruido and ilustrado interchangeably in discussing Chinese privileging of "ilustración científica" over military prowess (VII, 159, 15 Sept. 1895, 179, 180).

21 Wenceslao Retana's *Reformas y otros excesos* (1890, 85) contains references to *ilustrado* as a noun: "Ahora bien: cuando un ilustrado *tira al monte*, es inevitable que se le señale con el dedo. No son incompatibles, ¡claro que no!, ilustración y adhesión a la Madre-patria: es más; yo creo que los verdaderamente instruidos, nos son, por lo común, adictos, siquiera porque nosotros los peninsulares contribuimos principalmente en mucho a ensanchar la esfera de la fama de los hijos del país que se distinguen . . . En Filipinas hay dos modos de ser ilustrado: entienden algunos que a la ilustración le es inherente el más furibundo antimonaquismo; y al que de estos le caiga el estigma de sospechoso, bien caído le está." This passage is part of Retana's argument *against* the necessity of reforms, claiming, among other things, that the indio is inferior to the Spaniard and incapable of excelling in any field of European civilization, but conceding that there are natives who are well educated. Retana is concerned to reconcile the idea that the clergy are indispensable to the colony and the idea that natives can be enlightened through education, a position that pits

him against Filipinos like Marcelo H. Del Pilar who are both enlightened and critical of monastic sovereignty (*soberanía monacal*). I thank Jody Blanco for alerting me to this passage.

22 Cf. Padre Damaso's raging ad hominem in ch. 31 of the *Noli* (Rizal 1887/1961a, 174), which string together "—illo" references to race, occupation, and attitude, and specifically target Ibarra as well as the student who walked out of the sermon: "de familias malditas, de mesticillos orgullosos y soplados, de jóvenes sabihondos, filosofillos ó pilosopillos, de abogadillos, estudiantillos, etc." (Note the snide double pronunciation of filosofillos/pilosopillos.) Crucial to the *Noli*'s critical stance is the fact that, in his sermon, Damaso uses tropes that have come to be associated with the Enlightenment—philosophical truth (*verdad filosófica*), sun (*sol*) and light (*luz*) (171)—in their pre-Enlightenment, religious senses. In eighteenth-century Spain, *ilustrado* often appeared as an adjective of *siglo* (century), in works by the clergy such as Fernando Cevallos's *Dementias de este siglo, confundida por la sabiduría del Evangelico* (Dementias of this century, confounded by the wisdom of the Evangelical, 1776) and Jose Gomez de Avellaneda's (attrib.) "El Siglo Ilustrado. Vida de D. Guindo Cerezo, nacido y educado, instruido, sublimado y muerto según las Luces del presente siglo" (The Enlightened Century. The Life of Don Guindo Cerezo, born and raised, educated, exalted and died according to the Lights of this present century, 1776), which attacked reformists such as Pablo de Olavide (Ruiz Torres 2008, 470). One of the members of Olavide's *tertulia* in Seville, Antonio Capmany, had harshly criticized Spanish culture for having "spilled" (*derramado*) "the philosophical spirit, that illuminates all; the geometric spirit, that analyzes all; the experimental spirit, that analyzes all; the critical spirit, that examines and judges all (*el espíritu crítico, que todo lo examina y juzga*); good taste, that beautifies and selects; and sociability, which connects all lights (*las luces*)" (Capmany [1773], writing under the pseudonym Pedro Fernandez, *Comentario al suplemento del Doctor Festivo y Maestro del los Eruditos à la violeta para desengaño de los españoles que leen poco y malo*, cited in Ruiz Torres 2008, 469). *Los eruditos à la violeta* (Wise men without learning [1772]) was a famous prose satire by Jose Cadalso (a leading light of the *tertulia* in Fonda de San Sebastian in Madrid) that skewered the foibles and pretensions of those who had only superficial knowledge but tried to appear erudite. A good and succinct overview of the events in Spain and the Philippines out of which the Propaganda Movement emerged is Schumacher (1997, 1–18). Jody Blanco (2010) has pointed out in the Philippine context that "While peninsular Spaniards always harbored some form of racism, it doesn't become overt, sarcastic, and aggressive, or the subject of public discourse, until the Spanish feel threatened. That's around the administration of Carlos de la Torre (1868–1872). By the 1880s, it's almost unimaginable that any Spanish-speaking person in the Philippines would speak admirably of the Filipino students overseas by calling them 'ilustrado.' From Sanciango y Goson and Paterno on, those young men were nothing but trouble . . . 'Ilustrado' became current in the Philippines either by specifying what the natives lacked and needed; or by sarcastic reference to Rizal's self-identification of a kind of messianic mission. Retana [see note 18] dismisses both calls for reform and reformists as basically resentful and ungrateful people. Theoretically, one might say that Rizal's valuation of a *clase ilustrada* was meant to counter the discourse of Spanish and particularly friar 'prestige,' which by the late 19th c. had come to adopt an explicitly racist expression." On the crisis of colonial hegemony in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that shaped the concerns and debates of emergent public discourses on new "political communities" in late Spanish Philippines, see Blanco 2009. The picture painted in Ben Anderson's *Under Three Flags* (2005, 53–122, esp. 81–88) is much darker, situating Rizal within a world-historical stage that links politically turbulent "cacique" Spain (where public garroting and corrupt elections were common) to the persistence of "friar power" in the Philippines.

- 23 Lopez Jaena (1889/1996, 7) underscores the exilic nature of this labor migration by saying that when he suggested to the sailors that they return to the Philippines by evoking their sacred memories of their families, bonds of fraternity, and love for homeland, they answered with tears and sighs, "We remember our beautiful Philippines, but we will not return, nor do we desire to return, so that we won't be humiliated and oppressed by the friars". While oppression in the Philippines may have played a role in driving these seafarers to work abroad, it cannot have been the sole motivating factor behind such migration. Even if one assumes that Lopez Jaena was telling the truth about what the seafarers told him (or whether he had ever spoken to any of them, or even how many seafarers there were), there still remains the fact that Lopez Jaena tries to assimilate the seafarers' "plight" into the Propaganda Movement's political cause and critique. A fine study of the significance of Filipino labor migration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for rethinking the tenets of Philippine history is Aguilar 2011.
- 24 See Mabini 1931 and Majul 1960 and 1967 for a discussion of Mabini's changing assessment of the Katipunan; Vicente Rafael (2010, 166–72) provides an illuminating discussion of Mabini's notion of Revolution as "pure event," and an alternative account of Revolution as liberation.
- 25 Despite or perhaps because of its obfuscation of the non-ilustrado origins of the Philippine revolution, Pardo de Tavera's (1906/1928, 180) promotion of an urban-elite definition of "educated" as those who went to "the University" and Europe became influential when his speech was translated from Spanish into English and included in a compilation of "representative Filipino essays," published in 1924, with a revised and enlarged edition in 1928, that was used as a source book of readings for Filipino students and teachers.
- 26 See Kramer's (2006) pioneering study of the racial politics that informed the American brand of "calibrated colonialism" in the Philippines.
- 27 See, e.g., the probation period for candidates seeking membership in the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (1946), reprinted in Saulo (1990, 152); see also the rejection of the "old liberal leadership of the bourgeoisie" by the Communist Party of the Philippines (1968), reprinted in Saulo (1990, 199).
- 28 Elias tells Capitan Pablo in ch. 45 that he has looked for him from mountain to mountain, and traveled across two provinces ("he recorrido casi dos provincias") to get to him (Rizal 1887/1961a, 250). There is also a memorable scene in ch. 55 of Elias in flight, fleeing the town and running across the fields and into the woods after he learns that Ibarra's ancestor was the Basque who falsely accused his grandfather (ibid., 300).
- 29 Jose Alejandrino (1949, 3–4, cited in Quibuyen 1999, 44) quotes Rizal as allegedly declaring: "I regret having killed Elias instead of Crisostomo Ibarra; but when I wrote the *Noli me tangere*, my health was broken and I never thought that I would be able to write its sequel and speak of a revolution. Otherwise, I would have preserved the life of Elias, who was a noble character, patriotic, self-denying and disinterested—necessary qualities in a man who leads a revolution—whereas Crisostomo Ibarra was an egoist who only decided to provoke rebellion when he was hurt in his interests, his person, his loves and all the other things he held sacred. With men like him, success cannot be expected in their undertakings." Even if we discount Alejandrino's projection of his sympathy for Elias onto Rizal or the selectiveness of remembering conversations that were conducted many years ago, there is enough evidence in the *Noli* itself to verify the fact that Elias was a far better man than Ibarra (see Hau 2000, 86–87), even though the latter is ostensibly the "protagonist" of the novel. In his reply to Barrantes, Rizal (1890a/1996, 32) discourages any identification between him and Ibarra by saying that he, Rizal, is neither rich nor mestizo (i.e., Spanish) nor an orphan, and Ibarra's ideas do not coincide with his.
- 30 An Asian Development Bank (ADB) chapter on middle-class Asia (2010b, 8) cites a study that uses income to calculate the size of the middle and upper classes in the Philippines. Lower middle-classes that consume between US\$2 to US\$4 a day constitute 31.49 percent, middle-classes that consume US\$4 to US\$10 a day constitute 19.65 percent, and upper classes that consume US\$10 to US\$20 a day constitute 3.8 percent of the total population, based on 2005 purchasing power parity. Hattori et al.'s (2002) statistics are useful because they carry implications of educational background, lifestyle, income, and purchasing power that are not factored in by the "thinner" definition adopted by the ADB.
- 31 Ed Tadem (2010, 97) has argued that a prominent feature of the peasant movement in Central Luzon under both the old communist party and new communist party was the leadership of non-peasants, which included a "member of the landed aristocracy" (Pedro Abad Santos), a "businessman son of a Spanish landowner" (Mateo del Castillo), and "a former schoolteacher and son of a small landowner" (Juan Feleo). Jose Maria Sison belonged to a prominent landowning family. "In short, the theories and the main leaders of the agrarian revolution originated from outside peasant society and representation was being made on its behalf by outsiders bearing the ideology of the proletariat even if these outsiders came mostly from other social classes, including the middle and upper classes" (ibid.).
- 32 Cf. Randy David (2010)'s comparison of the OFWs with "Filipino travelers of Rizal's generation" in terms of loyalty to, and concern over, the nation. David calls the OFWs "influential agents of change" and, like the *indios bravos*, the "most demanding constituency of the Philippine nation." "Their mobility, their broad international experience, and their rich encounters with various cultures have made OFWs truly modern," and a "critical fulcrum of our society's transition to modernity." Similar arguments were made by David in his 29 Aug. 2008 U.P. Centennial Lecture, "Modernity and the U.P.: The First 100 Years," University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. I thank Ed Tadem for directing me to David's speech.
- 33 Augusto "Boboy" Syjuco Jr. was vice-president of the 1971 Constitutional Convention and served two terms in Congress as Representative of Iloilo. The elder Syjuco has been a subject of controversy: on 1 July 2010, members of the Public Labor Service Independent Confederation filed before the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission a motion to reconsider the case of plunder against the former director-general of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. The confederation also filed a P3.8 billion plunder case against Syjuco before the Office of the Ombudsman for alleged irregularities at the TESDA (Burgos 2010).
- 34 I thank Jun Aguilar for underscoring the importance of Syjuco's gesture of solidarity. Long's (2010) interview is couched as an interview with Syjuco's fictional literary critic and professional blogger Marcel Avellaneda.
- 35 There is a racial politics in the novel that involves a story line about a Filipino-Chinese couple from Binondo who kill their maid when she lets her *alaga* (ward) drown in the bathtub while she is busy texting. This couple is charged with murder and then attempts to bribe the judge into handing down a light sentence. The maid's boyfriend, who is suggestively named Wigberto Lakandula, attains celebrity status as "hero" and "villain" by taking the couple hostage in their house and eventually killing them. (Fortunately, according to the novel, their other son hides in a freezer, and survives the ordeal because his liberal amount of body fat insulates him.) This couple,

surnamed Changco in the novel, are the only characters who are labeled as “Filipino-Chinese” (apart from a news item about a memorial put up in Chinatown in memory of the kidnap victims). Other characters appear without ethnic labels, such as the magnate Dingdong Changco III (a not-so-veiled reference to Eduardo “Danding” Cojuangco, but no relation to the Binondo killers/ hostages mentioned above), and Petra Chingson (Jose Maria Sison in attractive drag), even though their surnames and real-life parallels clearly indicate that they are of Chinese mestizo ancestry. The point is that these mestizos, unlike the Filipino Chinese couple from Binondo, are not coded as “foreign” but are safely “Filipino.” Syjuco’s use of surnames but no descriptive label for these Chinese mestizos is only half a step forward from Rizal’s novels, where a striking absence of surnames serves to mark all mestizos as “not foreign” in contrast to the alien “Chinese” (see Benedict Anderson’s [2008, 31, 45] analysis of this historical occlusion of the “Chinese-ness” of the mestizo). This history of differentiation between Chinese mestizo and Chinese Filipino (and anti-Chinese sentiment among Chinese mestizos) is occluded in the *New York Times* article (Lau 2010), which states that Syjuco’s father is “Filipino-Chinese,” a term used in the novel and in the Philippine context to refer to ethnic Chinese, when what is meant is that Syjuco’s father is of Chinese mestizo ancestry. Syjuco has not been reticent about his Chinese ancestry, but then, in the age of a rising China, even Jaime Zobel de Ayala—the avatar of the “Spanish” elite in the Philippines—has publicly proclaimed his “Chinese” ancestry (*Shijie Ribao* 2007).

- 36 There is an episode where “Miguel Syjuco” has dinner with love interest Sadie’s family in posh Dasmariñas Village. Conversation around the table is regularly punctuated by the mother’s admonitions and instructions to the maid, and ends with the mother shouting “Inday! You bitch, where are you?” (Syjuco 2010, 198). While members of the upper and middle classes often complain to each other about how difficult it is to keep and train household help, concerns with the appearance of propriety and respectability make it unlikely that they would call their maids “bitch” in front of someone they had just met, even if that person is of their own class.
- 37 The issue of brain drain—a concept first applied to the exodus of highly educated British “human capital” to the U.S.—is a complex one. Sukhatme (1994) complicates the concept by arguing in favor of a qualitative difference between “apparent” brain drain, represented by the general outflows of professionals, and “real” brain drain, which only happens when a few exceptionally gifted “human capital” (people who act as hubs of research communities, for example) migrate to another country. For a Philippine discussion of the brain drain issue, see Bello, Lynch, and Makil 1969. The question of exile and literature, of whether a writer needs to be based in his home country to write “authentically” about it, further complicates the issue for Filipino writers, since exile has not prevented writers from writing excellent novels about their “home” countries (James Joyce’s *Ulysses* [1918/1922] being a spectacular example).
- 38 My thanks to Jun Aguilar for highlighting this issue.
- 39 I thank Jun Aguilar for pointing out this irony.
- 40 While this is said to be the case in the United States, and arguably in most of the East Asian countries (except perhaps politically in Hong Kong), it needs to be qualified in the case of Italy, where the substantial presence of Filipinos has contributed to reviving attendance at Catholic churches. I thank Jun Aguilar for this qualification.
- 41 For example, Parreñas (2001; 2008), though these works have tended to idealize OFW, especially women’s, negotiations as automatic forms of resistance; for a more nuanced, alternative formulation, see Cheah (2006, part two).

- 42 For a critique of the antileft sentiment and factual inaccuracies in *Ilustrado*’s account of Crispin Salvador’s stint as an NPA guerrilla, see Garcellano 2010.

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