

AUTOPLAGIARIST:
AN EXEGESIS OF THE NOVEL *ILUSTRADO*



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ABSTRACT

The novel, *Ilustrado*, and this exegesis *Autoplagiarist*, seek to create a clear understanding of the development, challenges and limitations of Philippine literature, with a focus on its fiction in English, and its relationship with Philippine society. They seek to demonstrate: that Philippine literature in English (PLE) is as Filipino as writing in the native languages; that in today's world a novel can, and in many cases should, be rich enough to appeal to a local and international audience; and that *Ilustrado* fits comfortably within that tradition and points a way forward.

Ilustrado, the novel, was written expressly with the issues of Philippine literature and society in mind and addresses questions of authenticity, relevance, language, thematic recurrence, meta-narrative and the current place of PLE in international writing. *Autoplagiarist*, the exegesis, looks briefly at Philippine history and the societal forces that have acted on its culture, surveys Philippine literature with a focus on writing in English, examines the tradition and *Ilustrado*'s place within it and finishes with a discussion of the novel *Ilustrado* and the creative issues it sought to address. Research and analysis conducted for *Ilustrado* and *Autoplagiarist* yielded clear patterns exhibiting the enduring effects of social and historical events upon the development of PLE. Further, recurring themes and issues Filipino writers regularly address in their work became apparent. From these, possible pathways into the future were posited for a tradition often weighed down by its past.

This thesis argues that inertia and rootedness have come about through the literary tradition's preoccupation with authenticity, nationalism, causality, didacticism and angst. It also attempts to demonstrate how *Ilustrado* faced these challenges within the novel's implicit and explicit exploration of structure, verisimilitude, scope and the recurring themes that persistently characterise the Philippine novel in English.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

In 2008, *Illustrado* won the Man Asian Literary Prize as well as the Palanca Award, the Philippines' highest honour. It will be published this year in more than 18 countries and translated into 13 languages. The novel submitted as my thesis is the unpublished version that won the prizes, but which existed prior to my working with an editor at Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for photocopying and loan.

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I would also like to acknowledge the vital research on Philippine literature, particularly Philippine Literature in English, undertaken by all the scholars cited within this paper. I am indebted to them for their seminal contributions to the burgeoning literary tradition from which I come.

I also gratefully acknowledge the judges of the Palanca Award and the Man Asian Literary Prize, who saw the merit in *Ilustrado* before it was fully completed.

INTRODUCTION

This exegesis takes its title from the autobiography of *Ilustrado*'s main character because it examines the relationship between the fact that served as the foundation for the novel and the fiction from which the book is made. This paper discusses the research that culminated in an understanding of the social and literary histories that were integral to *Ilustrado*'s evolution. It also looks at the influence of precursors in fiction that led to the author's aesthetic, narrative and thematic choices. Lastly, it locates *Ilustrado*'s place within Philippine Literature in English (PLE) and presents the theories that informed the novel's intentions.

For a better understanding of the mosaic-like fragmentation of *Ilustrado*, and its process of creation, this exegesis is as straightforward and methodological as possible. It adheres to the notion that the best way to explain something complicated is to do so simply. It seeks to underscore: that PLE is as Filipino as the literature in the native languages; that in today's globalised world a work can, and in many cases should, be rich enough to appeal to a local and international audience; and that *Ilustrado* attempts to point a way forward from the postcolonial issues that have characterised PLE.

This exegesis has been structured into four sections. The first is an overview of Philippine history, an understanding of which is integral to the arguments that follow in this paper. The second looks at Philippine literature, particularly PLE, analysing how choices of language have influenced the formation of the country's literature, thereby helping to shape Philippine identity. An examination of the socio-historical background provides an overview of antecedent literary traditions, revealing the chronotopic intersections that make up Philippine

literature. These two sections provide essential information necessary for an understanding of the formation of *Ilustrado*.

The third section looks at identity and the national experience, discusses the problems PLE faces, and contextualises *Ilustrado*. It argues that one plausible solution for what ails PLE is to step away from postcolonial precepts to a more post-postcolonial – or cosmopolitan – worldview. Because these first three sections are concerned with the Filipino perspective of Filipino history and literature, the exegesis focuses primarily on the ideas of Philippine scholars, other than where it proves necessary to illustrate precursors, useful parallels or to make enlightening counterpoints.

The fourth section is an overview of the research and writing process undertaken in the creation of *Ilustrado*, indicating the creative problems faced and the solutions it attempted in confronting specific social and literary issues. Aesthetic decisions concerning language, narrative scope, verisimilitude, theme and structure are discussed. Other works by Filipino authors are examined to understand shared issues.

These four sections chart a trajectory from the beginning of the literary tradition from which this author comes, to the present place *Ilustrado* attempts to carve out for itself and then to notions of what may follow in Philippine literature.

1. FOUR CENTURIES IN A CONVENT; FOUR DECADES IN HOLLYWOOD

Filipino culture is a singular pastiche of Malay, Chinese, Spanish, American, Catholic, Islamic, animist, ancient and modern influences. Similarly, Philippine literature is a singular pastiche of historical influences, informed by 377 years under Spanish rule, 41 years under America's "benevolent assimilation", four years under Japanese occupation and many more years of indirect influence from neighbours, immigrants, returning members of the diaspora and the forces of twentieth-century globalisation. As an archipelago of more than 7,100 islands, this melting-pot is made even more flavourful by the fact that the 94 million Filipinos (National Statistics Office) come from various ethnic and regional backgrounds and speak more than 170 native dialects, with English and Pilipino – Tagalog – as the official national languages. The effect of this shared experience on literary history will be examined later; this section provides the foundation for that discussion by focusing on the country's social history that started with the Spanish conquest of the Philippines, continued through the colonial and postcolonial influence of the Americans and developed during the six decades since independence. Cognisance of this history is essential for an understanding of *Ilustrado*'s challenges, intentions and scope; this section provides necessary background information and is not intended as an analysis of the history of the country.

In the sixteenth century a confluence in Europe of religious zeal, advances in maritime technology and the profitability of trade in goods acquired from Asia resulted in a journey that changed the history of the people who became known as Filipinos. The 1519 expedition of Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese mariner in the service of Spain, sailed westward from Europe to find a shorter route to the Spice Islands (the Moluccas, in today's Indonesia). His five ships and 235 men sailed around South America, across the

Pacific Ocean and reached the Philippines on 17 March 1521 (Agoncillo, *History* 71).

Magellan's role in the voyage ended when he was killed in a battle with the tribal chieftain Lapulapu on the island of Mactan, though one ship sailed by 19 Europeans and four Malays eventually returned home, completing the world's first circumnavigation and confirming to Europe the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the roundness of the earth and the existence of the archipelago that a later conquistador – Miguel Lopez de Legazpi – would, in 1565, name and establish for King Philip II of Spain.

The Spanish settlement of the Philippines has been chronicled as a long period under Imperial Spain in which three forces played the most important parts: rich in resources, the archipelago had clear economic value; situated on the doorstep of Asia, it had strategic worth; and with a large so-called heathen population, it was ripe for proselytizing and conversion by Spanish Catholic friars. Conquest in terms of these three characteristics would later be reprised by the Americans and Japanese, in their own ways. The archipelago's regional divisions and its many dialects worked against the unity of the peoples of the islands, making it easier for Spain to subjugate them and govern.

This period of Philippine colonial history, though long and complicated, is, in the formation of national identity, arguably less eventful in comparison with the period straddling the Spanish departure and the American arrival. Two related elements, however, are highlighted as integral to this paper – language and education.

For most of their tenure, the Spanish governed with as little contact with the native indios* as was workable. Despite the fact that their power was meant to be derived from both church and state, it transpired that the only Spaniards with regular contact with the broader indigenous population were priests or friars of local parishes. Schools were intended to be built for the general population but, aside from the universities in the main

* Given that this paper is by a Filipino writing in Philippine English about PLE, words that exist in Philippine English are not italicised as foreign words. This same treatment has been applied within the novel *Ilustrado*.

cities, the majority of schools were often meagre and difficult to access in more rural locations, and there was a paucity of teachers. Further, to be more effective in their mission, the priests were usually the ones to learn a new language – that of the locals (Arcilla 50). These factors contributed to a limited literacy amongst the population that, where it existed, centred on catechetical texts. The students who received education were taught only enough to read, write and perform arithmetic to either prove useful to the Spanish state or be indoctrinated in the Spaniards' religion. For nearly 300 years this arrangement persisted, producing a very small class of literate natives. The Spanish language did not take hold amongst the general population, but a religious preoccupation was assured in whatever literature or art would eventually germinate. Further, the arrangement maintained a divided and pliant population, and uprisings against the comparatively few Spanish were easily put down because revolts never extended beyond linguistic or island boundaries. The country's identity remained fractured – neither Spanish nor Filipino. Edward Said, in the context of Jean Genet's work, argues that "imperialism is the export of identity" (Said, *Genet* 229). In this instance, Spain was happy to export only just enough identity to keep the colonised colonised. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, this began to change.

In the 1800s, the success of its cash crops and the colony's role in the galleon trade had given the Philippines a measure of prosperity and development. In 1863, a royal decree by Queen Isabel II established an extensive free educational system in the colony. This system – consisting of elementary, secondary and tertiary schooling – helped establish a new, rising, middle class. This development changed the course of Philippine history. In three decades the improved education resulted in a generation of thinkers, and for the first time provided a lingua franca that would unite the country – Spanish. This shared tongue fostered common unity amongst the Filipinos (Guerrero 22), imbuing in them the sense of nationalism that Terry Eagleton, in *Nationalism, Irony and Commitment*,

describes as “speaking of the entry into full self-realisation of a unitary subject known as the people” (9).

The burgeoning Filipino identity came into being on two levels. At the national level, the schools provided either the foundation or full education for key local figures in the Philippine Revolution of 1896, such as, to name but three, Andres Bonifacio (who founded the Katipunan, a secret secessionist society), Apolinario Mabini (who later drafted the first Philippine constitution and was known as the “Brains of the Revolution”), and Emilio Aguinaldo (who led the revolution and became the new nation’s first president). On the international level, the school system allowed some Filipino students to further their education abroad, exposing them to liberal ideas, and they formed the group of thinkers, activists and revolutionaries we now know today as the *ilustrados* (*ilustrado* means *enlightened* in Spanish). Among these are: Jose Rizal (the national hero, polymath and writer of the two most revered Philippine novels, both written in Spanish, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*), whose execution in 1896 by the Spanish fuelled the revolution; Graciano Lopez Jaena (known as “The Prince of Filipino Orators”), who founded the Propaganda Movement in Spain which lobbied for reforms for the Spanish government in the Philippines; Marcelo H. Del Pilar (known as “The Great Propagandist”), who edited *La Solidaridad*, the main newspaper of the movement; and Antonio Luna, whose study of tactics and combat led to his post as a general and chief of war operations for the revolutionary army against the invading Americans, as well as his founding of the Academia Militar (which trained their forces). The common goals these figures worked toward was first reform, then, when calls for reform went ignored, revolution in 1896. Together the local organisers and those in Europe formed the first cohesive picture of Filipino identity. Ultimately, their efforts were to fail in everything except establishing a first sense of nationalism. As the historian Teodoro Agoncillo explains:

The Propaganda Movement in Spain, while not successful enough to produce concrete results in the form of serious innovations in the political, social and economic life of the country, nevertheless started a wave of nationalistic feeling that led to a widespread consciousness of unity. (Agoncillo, *Revolt* 33)

It is remarkable that in a period of three decades, a single generation, universal education led to this for the Filipinos. The Propaganda Movement, the Katipunan, the Revolution, the declaration of the First Philippine Republic, the creation of the national anthem and the national flag, and the subsequent war against the Americans shaped a people's view of themselves as a unified nation.

In early 1898, foundering relations between the United States and Spain broke completely when the American warship *Maine* exploded in Havana harbour, resulting in the death of more than 200 servicemen. On 25 April, war was proclaimed between the two countries. In May, a series of battles took place in Manila Bay between the American navy and the Spanish forces. Meanwhile, Aguinaldo, who had met with the American consul in Hong Kong as well as with Commodore George Dewey, had been sold American arms and ammunition and had been instructed to continue the fight against Spain and form a dictatorial government if Spain surrendered. Aguinaldo said he was assured that the U.S., being a former colony itself, would not seek the Philippines as its colony and would recognise Philippine independence (Francia, *The Philippines* 138). Aguinaldo returned from Hong Kong to the Philippines and renewed the struggle. When Spain finally surrendered to the United States, the Filipinos quickly established their own government, wrote their constitution and worked to have their independence recognised internationally. Spain, however, had been negotiating with the U.S., and the Philippines was quietly sold for \$20 million to the Americans in the Treaty of Paris of 1898. The hand-over was kept secret from the Filipinos (Francia, *The Philippines* 141). In February 1899, the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty and the Philippines became a territory of the United States (Agoncillo, *History* 212). This double-cross was clear enough to earn detractors among the colonisers

themselves. Mark Twain, writing of the Filipinos, addressing “the person sitting in the darkness”, wonders:

There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive’s new freedom away from him and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land. (Twain 50)

The bitter Philippine-American War followed, officially ending in 1902, though isolated pockets of resistance continued until 1913. The U.S. firmly established a colonial government that was different from that of the Spanish. The imperialism the Americans exported was more cleverly effected. While it took the Spanish more than three centuries to educate the Filipinos, the Americans wasted no time. In 1901, before the war was even finished, the U.S.S. Thomas docked in Manila Bay, unloading more than 500 teachers who were to establish a wide public school system. These instruments of soft-power set out to teach the Filipinos the English language, American history and culture, and U.S.-style democracy. The colonial overseers established government institutions patterned after those in the U.S. and over the next four decades came to promise autonomy then independence once the Filipinos could prove capable of governing themselves. Where the Spanish united the Filipinos in shared centuries-old frustration, the Americans’ “benevolent assimilation” and language won the Filipino people over. Agoncillo notes the following:

The mental attitude that despises one’s own and loves anything foreign is the natural result of American “altruism” bolstered by propaganda. While Spaniards almost killed the Filipinos by maltreatment, the Americans, on the other hand, almost smothered the Filipinos with “kindness”. (Agoncillo, *History* 382)

With English as the new lingua franca, and wooed by the Americans’ ostensible largesse, Philippine identity quickly took on American characteristics, and it was during this time that the first wave of Filipinos migrated to America. By the 1930s, the Filipinos’ peaceful efforts toward reform and autonomy had managed to secure a promise of imminent independence. Yet, on the eve of the Second World War, Filipinos had become

so enamoured of their colonisers' lifestyle that Filipino soldiers fighting alongside Americans wanted to be "200 per cent Americans" (San Juan, *Globalising*).

On 8 December 1941, hours after attacking Pearl Harbour, the Japanese air force bombed strategic locations in the Philippines. Months of siege and invasion followed in 1942 until the American forces surrendered. The Philippines had yet another colonial master forced upon them. The occupation by the Japanese during the Second World War dictated learning yet another language, Nippongo, another allegiance and another set of promises of autonomy and independence. The Japanese, intent on winning Filipino allegiance, tried to persuade them that rule by a fellow Asian nation was preferable to Western imperialism, but the disparity between the often brutal Japanese and the benevolent American masters meant Filipino hearts yearned for General Douglas MacArthur's return (Francia, *The Philippines* 184). In 1945, the Americans liberated the Philippines and granted them independence. The new Philippine Republic was war-torn and crippled.

The five post-war decades saw a country working to establish its own identity. With favourable American access to Philippine resources, trade and other sectors of the economy written into the Philippine constitution, and continued U.S. involvement in the country as a proxy war was fought against the communist forces of the disillusioned poor, anti-American sentiment began to ferment. By the mid-1960s, when Ferdinand Marcos was president, a new sense of nationalism had taken root. In his inaugural speech in 1965, Marcos declared:

This nation can be great again ... each generation writes its own history. Our forbears have written theirs. With fortitude and excellence we must write ours ... It is our people bravely determining our own future.
(*Mandate*)

Marcos set about rehabilitating society, while his wife Imelda, the so-called Iron Butterfly, poured millions of pesos into buildings and institutions for culture and the arts,

ostensibly so that Philippine identity could proudly take its place on the international stage. It was also during this era that Marcos's alliance with the Americans against the communists at home and in Vietnam brought against his administration the full force of a budding nationalism. By the time he declared martial law in 1972, the Philippines had moved firmly into a militantly nationalistic mindset. Partly because of the efforts of successive presidents to develop national identity, and certainly because of the disparity between the rich and the poor, young student activists embraced their roots, and a popular culture in Tagalog and the many dialects began to grow. During martial law in the 1970s, as socialism and Maoist communism became more and more appealing to the dispossessed population, a strong distrust of the bourgeois began to characterise the arts, social discourse and polemics. This bias is seen to this day in the art criticism and discourse in the Philippines

The Marcos regime was weakened in the 1980s by the people's growing disillusionment and fatigue under his dictatorship. In August 1983, the opposition figure Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino was assassinated in Manila on his return from exile in the U.S. In late 1985, Marcos announced a snap election for the following year, to prove that democracy reigned and to add legitimacy to his rule, but the dubious results in which he defeated Ninoy's widow, Corazon, worked the population into bubbling discontent. In February 1986, thousands of people massed on the main thoroughfare of EDSA Boulevard, in what is now known as the peaceful People Power Revolution. Mass defections in the government and armed forces meant Marcos's grip on power had slipped and he fled the country for asylum in the U.S. Corazon Aquino was sworn in as president on 25 February 1986.

In the years since, successive governments have tried to deal with the problems of poverty and endemic corruption. Efforts toward industrialisation and socio-economic growth were hampered by the Asian economic crisis, attempted coup d'états, the failed

presidency of Joseph Estrada – who was ousted and convicted for plunder (Francia, *The Philippines* 303) – and the general distrust of government and the minority of bourgeois who control the majority of wealth. In the past decade, the Philippine economy has benefited (somewhat artificially) both from the 9-million-strong diaspora, whose members work abroad and remit home billions of hard-earned dollars annually, and multinational investment in local industries such as call-centres, whose workers are prized for their English-language fluency. Blessed with freedom of speech and media, the people have also turned to new technology – socially minded blogs and SMS text messaging – to discuss and better understand the country’s issues, as well as motivate the political involvement of the people. In May of this year, 2010, an historic general election was held in which the party of the unpopular president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo failed to retain power. Arroyo was succeeded by Benigno Aquino III, son of the former president and democratic martyr.

The writing of Philippine history continues, as does the evolution of Filipino identity. More difficult times lie ahead. As the Filipino journalist Luis Francia puts it: “The daunting challenge of a twice-colonised people is to assimilate constructive aspects of the past and forge a new identity that unstintingly acknowledges history, but in ways that liberate rather than constrict us” (xix).

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF A COMPLICATED NATIONAL LITERATURE

Literature tells the story of ourselves. Literature in the Philippines is as much a pastiche of influences as the other aspects of our culture. Into the great melting pot of our national collection of stories have been added works in our many languages, pre-historical oral myths and riddles and epics, and traditions that initially began as mimicry of the colonisers. The Philippines' long period of colonial occupation has shaped our literary and cultural history and has been involved in varying degrees of education, assimilation, imitation, reaction and resistance. While this section of the exegesis touches briefly on the pre-historical and Spanish-era literatures, the primary focus is on Philippine Literature in English, which began during the American occupation of the Philippines. As stated earlier, language and history take centre stage in this discussion, since they are at the centre of any national narrative. This section seeks to outline how the adoption, adaptation and choice of languages have formed a multifaceted literary tradition that history has made uniquely Filipino. Poet and critic Gemino H. Abad puts it this way: "Both language and history are crucial factors ('makers') from which our writers forge that 'native or Filipino matter,' i.e., our mythology or imagination of ourselves" (*Likhaan* 5).

The literary tradition that existed before the arrival of the Spanish dates back centuries, with a pre-history on the islands determined, by archaeological findings, to reach as far back as 50,000 years. When the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century they met Filipinos who "knew the use of gold and textiles, and how to smelt iron and make glass, and probably spoke a language or languages from which all modern Filipino tongues are derived" (Scott 37). The word *probably* is telling, because much of our literature from the prehispanic era has been lost. As the Filipinos became Christianised and Hispanised, their traditional form of

writing grew into disuse. Their texts were discarded or neglected, and those that endured the passage of time could not survive the efforts of Spanish friars to destroy what they saw as pagan artefacts.

What is known, however, is that we had a syllabary called the *alibata*, which consisted of three vowels and fourteen consonants. It was also known that:

As literary works created in the setting of a society where the resources for economic subsistence – land, water, forest – were communally owned, the oral literature of the pre-colonial Filipinos bore the marks of the community. The subject matter was invariably the common experience of the people constituting a village – food gathering, creatures and objects of nature, work in the home, field, forest or sea, caring for children, et cetera. (Lumbera and Lumbera 2)

The works that have survived, however, owe their existence to tribal groups who either resisted Christianising (as happened in the south in Mindanao) or whose isolation kept them from Spanish influence (as happened to the mountain people). Through these groups there persists what remains of the oral traditions of riddles, proverbs, working songs, lyric poetry, ritual rite and epics.

Language and education (via passed on traditions) dictated then, as it does now, the evolution of the country's literature. Columnist and scholar Miguel Bernad comments that in relation to Philippine literary history "the first thing that comes to mind is language, the medium" (2). This paper now looks at how Spanish-era literature subsumed that which predated it.

The arrival of the Spaniards began the long process of replacing the most persistent of indigenous works with Christianised versions, setting up a pattern of Hispanising literature that would persist through the following three centuries. The content of early written literature during this era was focused solely on religion, which is not surprising since the Spanish religious orders owned the printing presses. The first book printed in the country was the *Doctrina Christiana*, printed by the Dominican order in 1593. The other religious orders also set up printing presses, to facilitate the spread of Christianity, and they produced lexica,

grammars and catechetical texts (Phelan 159). In the early 1600s, the first book by a Filipino was produced by Tomas Pinpin, a printer working for the Dominicans. Intent on providing his fellow Tagalogs with a grammar book for learning Spanish from the perspective of a native speaker of Tagalog, the result was *The Learning Book for Tagalogs Studying Spanish*. Despite efforts such as these, lack of access to education meant that most Filipinos could not read or write beyond what was sufficient to understand catechetical texts. Those few with a strong grasp of the Spanish language, like Pinpin, were called *ladinos*, or *Latinised*. The first Tagalog work that exhibits “signs of conscious design and careful composition” (Lumbera and Lumbera 38) was the long poem “The Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ Our Lord”, composed by Gaspar Aquino de Belen, who wrote in the employ of the Jesuits and translated Spanish catechetical works. From this work came the *pasyon* genre of poetry, as well as the *sinakulo* stage play, both about the final days of Christ.

In the eighteenth century, Philippine literature branched into more secular forms as Spanish language and mores came to be considered a sign of education and status. This influence became so great that works in Tagalog and other vernaculars took on the shared themes of this imported tradition. The genres that developed were balladesque but give evidence of readers and writers developing in the use of their adopted language and that language’s literary forms. Toward the mid-nineteenth century, the *komedya* genre of stage theatre reached the height of its popularity. Like the works that obsessed and maddened Don Quixote, the *komedya* focused on a very European view of idealised medieval life, in which love, chivalry, piety and loyalty were espoused during dramatic adventures in faraway exotic lands, culminating in the victory of Christianity over Islam. From those same themes, the *awit* and *korido* forms of narrative poetry took their focus, becoming popular with large audiences to whom the poems were sung. These forms eventually reached their pinnacle around the 1830s, and the master of them was the writer Balagtas. Only three of his works survive: a

farce, a komedya and an awit. The most popular of these is the awit *The Life Florante and Laura Went Through in the Kingdom of Albania*. It is considered the masterwork of Tagalog poetry of the era and is today taught widely to high school students. The poem, on Albania's oppression under the rule of an invader, allegorises the Philippine situation and foreshadows the rise of Filipino nationalism. Works in prose also made their appearance in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Of particular interest to understanding the formation of national identity in Philippine literature is the difference in subject matter between the work of Modesto de Castro, who published the *Exchange of Letters Between Two Maidens Urbana and Feliza* (1863), a book of manners proscribing and prescribing the social behaviour of Hispanised Filipinos, and two prose works published some two decades later, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891), by the most famous of ilustrados, Rizal. The subject matter of his novels seems opposite to de Castro's: Rizal's books were banned by the Spanish government for their subversiveness. In less than thirty years, Philippine prose in the adopted tongue had gone from slavishly mimicking the colonisers to rebelliously criticising them.

Just as the establishment of universal education in 1863 had provided the seed for social revolution, it had the same effect for literature, in that the writing of the latter half of that century became revolutionary in form and content. The ministrations of the Propaganda Movement in Spain, led by Filipino expatriates such as Lopez Jaena and Del Pilar, gave the first clear voice to a people's consciousness through the ilustrados' new facility with the essay form. Discussing national identity and the colonial situation back in the islands, these essays were published in *La Solidaridad* and other Spanish newspapers sympathetic to the Filipinos' pleas for reform. The longer works that followed did the same. As literary scholars Bienvenido and Cynthia Lumbera point out:

Philippine literature may be said to have come of age during this period, in that it had become aware of its distinctness as the product of a colonised people struggling

against the rule of a foreign power. The self-conscious literature that this emergence brought forth marks the beginning of a truly Filipino literature. (47)

The best known and now the most celebrated of these texts were the novels of Rizal. His were not the first novels by a Filipino, since Pedro Paterno's love story and tour through local folklore and customs, *Ninay*, had been published in 1885. They are, however, the first example of realist writing, inspired by Rizal's exposure to the century-long European novel tradition that the multilingual ilustrado encountered during his studies abroad. More importantly, their banning by the Spanish colonial government saw them destined to play a large role in the forging of Filipino identity. Written in Spanish, printed in Germany and smuggled into the Philippines, *Noli Me Tangere* (or as Filipinos call it, *the Noli*^{*}) used satire to point out the oppression of Filipinos by Spanish friars and officials, as well as the excesses, absurdities and tragedies of the Filipinos themselves. When the book was first published, the 26-year-old author was threatened with excommunication and the book was banned. His next novel, the sequel *El Filibusterismo* (or *the Fili*), is even more radical than its predecessor. Where the *Noli* seems more in line with Rizal's dedication to reform as the way forward for the Philippines, the *Fili* at first seems to espouse violent action, since its protagonists, frustrated by the slow rate of social progress, take to sabotage and planned rebellion. They end tragically – Rizal's warning to those who choose violence over reform. Despite its pacifist message, the *Fili*, like the *Noli*, was banned. Increasing revolutionary activity in the early 1890s, the books' appeal to the subversives and the appropriation of Rizal as a leading symbol of the independence movement implicated the young author, despite his stalwart dedication to reform and his condemnation of the burgeoning revolt. In 1892 the colonial authorities ordered his exile in the southern peninsula of Dapitan. When the Katipunan's rebellion turned into national revolution threatening the colonial regime, Rizal was executed by firing squad in Manila in 1896.

* The fact that Rizal's novels have such universally accepted, affectionate nicknames is indicative of their place within the Philippine national consciousness.

The legacy is still felt today, though his books are no longer taught in Spanish in high school, but in Tagalog translation. This shift from Spanish to Tagalog is important. During the early phase of the Philippine Revolution, Rizal's execution, and the deaths of his colleagues in the Propaganda Movement through illness and poverty in exile in Spain, made it seem that their efforts had proved fruitless. Changes, however, were taking place at home. As the independence movement became more popular it also became more populist, and the Katipunan adopted Tagalog as the best way to reach the masses in the regions around the Philippine capital. Poetry, manifestos, essays, newspapers and open letters were written in the vernaculars, finally giving a home-grown voice to the national identity. With this, and with the arrival of the Americans, came the first intimations of the death of a still maturing literary tradition – Philippine literature in Spanish. Bernad explains it this way:

Filipino writers in Spanish flourished at the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. But this flowering of a culture never bore fruit: its roots were soon withered. This is not to deplore the coming of English to our shores. [Its] coming was by no means deplorable: it was a cultural windfall. It does explain, however, why Philippine letters, which had finally flowered ... died out so quickly ... Philippine letters had to seek other roots in a different cultural soil. That is why after sixty years of English in the Philippines, [PLE] is so young. (105)

The burgeoning tradition in the new English language officially began in 1901, with the arrival of the Thomasites. During the first decade of the language's adoption by the Filipinos, a multiplicity of writing also developed in many languages, providing for the first time a broader conception of a Philippine literature, divided in language but united in focus and direction. Newspapers and magazines flourished in English, Spanish, Tagalog and the other regional vernaculars. As social and political changes left their marks on the country, the multilingual, multi-class strains of the Philippine literary tradition forged onward, with novels, awits, komediyas, poetic debates (balagtasang) and lyric poetry being produced in Spanish and the vernaculars. Anti-American plays and poetry, such as Severino Reyes's *Walang Sugat* (staged in 1902), were couched in allegory and found instant popularity. This tradition of artistic subversiveness continued through the American regime, and its

occurrence and persistence can be seen as a testament to the democratic ideals the U.S. fought so hard to impose on the Filipino people: where Rizal was exiled, threatened with excommunication and later executed, artists who challenged the American-imposed Sedition Law, such as the playwright Juan Abad, were given due process of law, finding themselves arrested, charged and, as in the case of Abad, even released after the Supreme Court deliberated on appeals.

This milder form of suppression, along with the development of other literary forms and the growing acceptance of the English language, provided an incentive for writers of various backgrounds to test themselves in the new tongue. However, this development had drawbacks. Not only did it require years to master the language, the main disadvantage was that the use of English, as with Spanish before, contributed to social stratification between the educated and the working classes. Literary critic Resil B. Mojares, in his study of Filipino fiction before the Second World War, explains:

The rise of English to prominence, with its attendant factors, sharpened the fragmentation of the audience, relegated vernacular fiction to the lower rungs of the cultural ladder, hampered the growth of the vernaculars in artistry and alienated to a significant extent English writers from the popular culture. (142)

Culturally, the ground gained by the revolution seemed to have been lost, and the sovereignty of both Philippine culture and literature was diminished.

However, just as it took a generation for the effects of the new Spanish school system to be felt in Philippine literature, so, too, an appropriate time had to elapse before the American school system bore literary fruit. The first novel in English written by a Filipino, *A Child of Sorrow*, by Zoilo Galang, appeared in 1921 (Buhain 33). Its sentimentalism makes it more akin to the earlier tradition of Tagalog writing than to the American literary tradition. The publications that followed, however, showed that local English-language writers clearly favoured the short story form, owing to the abundance of periodicals as literary outlets. As writer and scholar Isagani Cruz states: “The twentieth century was a century for short fiction”

(x). This affinity for the briefer form can today be seen as distracting, in that up until this point there had only been a very anaemic tradition of the Philippine novel in English. During the American colonial era and afterwards, Filipino expertise in the short story form quickly allowed them to exhibit mastery of their new language.

In 1925, in the *Philippines Herald*, the short story “Dead Stars” was published by a 31-year-old woman named Paz Marquez Benitez. It is considered by literary scholars to be the first work of short fiction published in English. In schools today, students are taught that it is the seminal work of a century-long writing tradition, and short stories from the period clearly owe much to it. About a young man who marries out of social expectations and must abandon the love he has for another woman, like *A Child of Sorrow* the story clearly draws from the earlier literary themes in Spanish and Tagalog writing. *Dead Stars*, however, represents the link between those traditions and what would become the English-language short story tradition. In his survey of short fiction in the 1900s, Cruz confirms this: “In this classic story can be found the seeds of Philippine short fiction in English” (15).

In 1925, Galang published *Box of Ashes and Other stories*, the first collection of short stories by a single author to be published. This collection was followed two years later by Jose Villa Panganiban, who wrote *The Stealer of Hearts*. In 1933 an even more important work, *Footnote to Youth*, appeared. Its writer, Jose Garcia Villa, emigrated to the U.S. two years later. For the first time, a Filipino writer went on to success abroad, with Villa became a leading figure amongst the New York avant-garde poets, working as an editor at the publishing house New Directions and having his work nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in 1943. Taught in Philippine schools, his poetry was included in the Norton Anthology of American Literature, where his biographical note describes him not as a Filipino, but as a minor American poet. Writer Jose Dalisay, in his study of the Philippine short story in English, notes the following:

We mastered the form and the language very quickly – so quickly that, given the ambitions of the times, Villa reached the summit of American approbation in being cited by Edward J. O’Brien as one of “the half-dozen short story writers in America who count”. (*Likhaan* 141)

During the American colonial period, Tagalog fiction also thrived, though compared to the sea-change that PLE represented its historical effect is less pronounced. Tagalog fiction did, however, come to reflect, “with greater realism the ongoing process of Americanisation of Philippine society” (Lumbera and Lumbera 97) – a process that PLE, with its emulation of American writing, was unable to discuss, and in fact clearly fed. As Filipinos pressed for political independence from the U.S., Philippine literature became increasingly involved in nationalism, although most writing of this nature was not in English. *Banaag at Sikat* (*Glimmer and Plain Daylight*), written by Lope K. Santos and published in 1904, and *Bayang Nagpatiwakal* (*The Country that Committed Suicide*), written and published by Lazaro M. Francisco in 1932, are good examples of these. The former was meant to introduce socialism to the masses, while the latter criticised American control of the Philippine economy. As early as the first decade of the American occupation, while the country moved into industrialisation and worker and peasant organisations were formed, a tradition of Tagalog novels such as Santos’s developed, written less for art and more to educate and guide Filipino workers. This continued into the 1930s as the Great Depression took its toll on the American colony. Work from other writers such as Faustino Aguilar and Carlos Bulosan were intended to appeal to and represent the masses and their concerns. The nationalist language and scope of such writing can also be seen in the Tagalog literature that came after the Second World War.

The two parallel developments in Philippine literature – that in English by students of the Americanised school system, and that in Tagalog or the vernaculars by writers sometimes more alienated by the colonial experience – had a long-lasting impact on Philippine literature of the post-war era. When the Philippines finally achieved its independence, with the U.S.

handing over sovereignty on 4 July 1946, the new republic became engaged in a protracted process of self-determination and definition. The war with the Japanese left the country broken, and the political landscape was fraught with neo-colonialism, since the departed Americans retained indirect influence in government and advantageous economic arrangements that allowed them to benefit from the Philippine market and the former colony's natural resources. The establishment of the Fulbright Program also gave Filipinos opportunities to study in America, enabling the second wave of Filipinos to leave for the U.S., with two major effects: those who stayed "Stateside" and became writers helped to develop the tradition of Filipino-American literature (an important adjunct of PLE); and those who returned to the Philippines continued the Americanisation of Filipino identity. As happened in earlier historical periods, this process was rooted in the teaching of language and literature. Francia, a former editor at New York's *Village Voice* who emigrated to America in the early 1970s, recalls his schooling in the Philippines of the 1950s and 60s:

Given the slant of our education, not a single class in [PLE], or in any of the country's major languages, was ever taught. (That situation has since been remedied – proof that a sense of nationalism has finally made some impact on the private school system.) ... Steeped as I and my peers were in Western literature, we looked upon our own literature in English as a poor relative, to be visited from time to time as an act of charity. Our indifference was inevitable. (xi)

In terms of culture, the imposition of English and Tagalog as the official national languages (a dichotomy that exists to this day), along with the influx of cultural artefacts from the U.S. (film, books, music and TV programming jettied in from "Stateside"), inevitably had deep effects. In terms of literature, the return of American-educated Filipinos imported a predilection for New Criticism. This evolution of critical analysis of Philippine writing would bring the literature's direction full circle, first away from the socially engaged writing of the ilustrados, toward popular sentimentality, onward through art for art's sake, before finally returning to social engagement. For example, according to Abad, the course of Filipino poetry in English from 1905 to the present saw three "overlapping phases" or "dominant strains":

Romantic from 1905 to the 40s; formalist or New Critical from the 50s to the 70s; and a “liberative or post-structuralist space” from the 70s to the present (*Habit of Shores 4*).

Philippine New Criticism, on the one hand, fostered the development of artistry, craftsmanship and rigour in Philippine literature – producing such stylists as Nick Joaquin, NVM Gonzales and Kerima Polotan. On the other hand, the New Criticism pushed literature further away from the vital role it had played in the Propaganda Movement and during the American occupation, initially distancing it from the social realities of the country. This eventually encouraged a debate about relevance and purpose, and avant-garde writers such as Tony Perez, Paul Dumol and Rolando S. Tinio turned to playwriting in Tagalog, even (quite radically for the time) translating the works of Arthur Miller, Samuel Beckett and others into the vernaculars. This multi-lingual discourse continued on both sides of the language divide, with writers in English trying their hands at Filipino themes and genres (for example, epics, folklore), and writers in Tagalog and other vernaculars claiming more traditionally Western genres (novels, short stories, Modernist plays and poetry). Some writers, most notably Tinio, used both English and Tagalog, choosing one or the other depending on what subject he was working with, even mixing the two by using the colloquial Tag-lish that is regularly heard on Philippine streets and television today.

The 1960s saw a surge of nationalism as the government’s “Filipino First” economic policies challenged American influence and advantage. Student nationalist movements in the universities began to foster a greater interest in defining Filipino identity as something distinct from Western influence – and in so doing focused on the social problems of the country. This period, a peak in the pendulum swing of national identity politics, is particularly important in understanding the current position of Philippine literature. It was during this time that the contemporary attitudes toward writing’s place in society formed, with work in the different languages seemingly at odds with each other. The debate this divide engendered,

though relevant at the time and influential on future directions, is what has currently kept contemporary Philippine literary criticism more engaged with analysing a literary work's social relevance than its overall merit – a condition *Ilustrado* seeks to address. According to the Lumberas:

While the novelists in English were preoccupied with the peculiarly middle-class problems of identity, young Tagalog novelists ... were more concerned with problems the masses were facing in the 1960s – deception by their so-called leaders, violence perpetrated by those in power against recalcitrant citizens, and grinding poverty in the countryside and the city. (197)

This direction reached a head in the tumultuous 1970s with the final rejection of the ideas of art-for-art's sake and New Criticism. President Marcos's new constitutional convention in 1970, intended to create a new Philippine Constitution based on reform and governance, spurred an examination of what was necessary for the country. Social conditions and Marcos's perceived allegiance to neo-colonial America galvanised the youth, who both protested and wrote songs and literature against the government and Western "imperialists". By the time that Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, nationalist militancy was in the ascendancy and it was subsequently forced underground where it gained more focused momentum. This of course had effects on the literature being produced – pushing it more into Tagalog and/or toward socially engaged subject matter. This change is perhaps best personified by Emmanuel Lacaba, a young poet who came from an elite Manila university and gave up a life of comfort to join the communist New People's Army in the countryside. Lacaba's poetry took on more social themes, though he persisted in writing in English. Other writers would do the same with their work, such as Cruz, Dalisay, Alfred Yuson, F. Sionil Jose, Marjorie Evasco and many others still working today. By the time Filipinos had lived through the long dictatorship of Marcos, the literary tradition would be firmly rooted in nationalism – something that still persists, as do the same social problems the written works sought to address. Given the lack of success in this period's literature in finding readers and effecting social change, it is plausible to conclude that a different tack is necessary.

The alterations that occurred in the following decades seem to attest to this.

With the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983, and the People Power Revolution and fall of Marcos in 1986, the Filipino narrative, again, shifted. The gradual rise of the middle class and globalisation in the eighties, nineties and naughts saw a movement back to the centre – in which literature is comprised of diverse genres, subjects, uses, writers and readers. This collision of social engagement and pure storytelling, in any of the country's languages, perhaps must now be one of the main ways forward for a literary tradition that for too long seemed divided against itself. Rizal's unapologetic fusing of social realism with globally influenced literary sensibilities, emblematic of a Spanish-language Filipino literary tradition that was reaching for maturation, is suddenly all the more relevant as an indicator of what lies ahead for a new generation of PLE writers. Dalisay describes this new wave of writers in English:

Bourgeois-liberal; very few will profess an active solidarity with the barefooted, bushwhacking Marxism of old. Their locales and sensibilities are overwhelmingly urban, even crosscontinental. They are generally well-schooled, well-read and well-travelled, which lends their works a certain consciousness of form, a deliberation of design. Their chosen issues tend to be those of gender and sexuality, the environment, cultural identity and individual freedom. (*Likhaan* 144)

It is in this era that chick-lit, science fiction and fantasy, graphic novels, crime and mystery writing, horror stories, gay and straight erotica, memoirs and such forms have started to find their place in Philippine literature. The emergence of these less socially minded works indicates a growing maturity in the literature – for literature must not be just the literary, but must also comprise the material that is being read every day; in other words, for literature to be a literature, it needs to be read.

Philippine literature has been long in the making – rooted in history and hydra-headed in its influence and output. The evolution of PLE has always played an important, yet contentious part. According to Abad: “We used to talk about the course of [PLE] as though it passed somewhat miraculously through three stages: a period of apprenticeship, a period of

emergence and growth, and a period of maturity” (*Habit of Shores* 1). Yet, as can be discerned from the many influences on the broader national literary tradition (history, language, form, regional specificity, audience, purpose), there were many periods of apprenticeship, multiple periods of emergence and growth, and dubious definitions of maturity. The Philippine literary tradition has grown in fits and starts, with each facet informing the others, and each preceding genre or form inciting continuations or rejections in what would come afterward. In many ways, though it has grown and emerged as distinct from the literatures of its neighbours and colonisers, it is still in a period of apprenticeship as it slowly finds its own self-mastery; and yet, Philippine literature can be seen as already mature, given its self-reflection and conscious actualisation that saw it through all the confusing periods of change and perpetual debate about its role in society. It is very much a literature distinguished for its involvement with itself as a “complex conjuncture of Western modernity and Third World underdevelopment” (San Juan, *Salvaging the Disappeared*). Within its own story lies the very vital role that PLE continues to play.

3. THE EMERGING FILIPINO THROUGH PHILIPPINE LITERATURE

Ilustrado was first published in April of 2010 and its place within Philippine literary history remains to be seen. Nevertheless, a discussion of the book's intended place is central to this exegesis. To understand this, the issues the book sought to avoid or address must first be analysed. This section looks at the confusion of cultural identity and national experience in relation to Philippine writing and attempts to find *Ilustrado*'s place therein. It examines the idea that a facile postcolonial retrospective analysis will not yield understanding, for academic hypothesising of the real world is limited, and only through the act of writing the literature into being can its future be illuminated. Because of this, it may be time for a post-postcolonial – or cosmopolitan – worldview for Philippine literature. A practitioner's practical perspective is taken: most important to Philippine literature are not the questions surrounding its essence, identity, or validity but rather a decisive acceptance of its diverse, often contradictory, always mobile multi-facetedness. This new perspective is what *Ilustrado* aims to understand and be a part of.

Moving targets, however, are always hard to hit. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue that “postcolonial discourse itself consistently inhabits this liminal space, for the polarities of imperial rhetoric on the one hand, and national or racial characterisation on the other, are continually questioned and problematised” (131). It is therefore more difficult, or perhaps impossible, to hit a target moving within this shifting landscape. Thus, it is problematic, perhaps unquestionably unattainable, to construct anything more than a theoretical understanding of a nation's literature while we are located within its very development, for national consciousness, especially in the Philippine context, is itself in a state of flux. Although a reading of national consciousness through literature draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of intersections and their

fixedness (in this case, the Philippine experience and how it has been chronicled), it is important to look beyond, at Homi Bhabha's question:

We are led to ask whether the emergence of a national perspective – of an elite or subaltern nature – within a culture of social contestation, can ever articulate its “representative” authority in that fullness of narrative time and visual synchrony of the sign that Bakhtin proposes. (*Location of Culture* 144)

It is productive to instead look at the collisions, oppositions and fissures within the culture, rather than either the already actualised literary chronotopes or the influences that have historically come from outside. Certainly, postcolonial experience is always an imposing influence, and charting parallels with discourse in other former colonies (such as Indian writing in English, as exemplified by the Salman Rushdie versus Amit Chaudhuri debate) is helpful, but what is essential to this discussion is the Philippine context, and how its literary culture has absorbed, adapted autonomously and continues to evolve uniquely as a representation of Filipino identity.

Why Filipino national identity is so fraught is not so much a product of minority versus majority, nor primary or secondary socialization as one would see in, say, Filipino-American writing, or Muslim writing in the Philippines. The answer lies much deeper. As Paul Berger and Thomas Luckmann explain:

In primary socialisation there is no problem of identification. There is no choice for significant others ... Primary socialisation thus accomplishes ... what may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual – to make appear as necessary what is in fact a bundle of contingencies and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth. (154)

In primary socialisation in the Philippines, there *is* indeed a problem of identification. This problem is deeply rooted in the oppositions between its multiple languages and class consciousness. As history shows, the accident of a Filipino's birth results immediately in fragmented identity, where we as a people are still attempting to articulate ourselves to each other (across regions, dialects, classes). A Filipino is immediately born into a polarised country, in which the bundle of contingencies places him or her in immediate opposition. What he or she is given by chance is

mirrored, and sometimes undermined, by what chance has denied. This is not by any means unique to Filipinos, but the multiplicity of alternate ideas of what it means to be Filipino makes it especially difficult to forge not just a cohesive view of the nation but also the self in relation to the nation. In a bilingual, multicultural country like Canada, for example, the teaching of the two main languages, French and English, seeks to bridge the cultural divide, and in Parliament members alternate equally their questions and answers in both languages; education, convention and consciousness have created a system that works, and therefore a national identity that is a singular dichotomy. In the multilingual, multiregional Philippines, those elements are not in play in its system, and therefore a Filipino born in, for example, the Visayas region is not guaranteed the more-level playing field that is mandated by government and culture in countries like Canada or Singapore or Malaysia.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan dissident, points out that "in a class-structured society, or in a situation where one nation or race or class is dominated by another, there can never be any neutral education transmitting a neutral culture" (*Decolonising the Mind* 148). This is very much the case in the Philippines. In fact, the country can be said to be a nation of de facto minorities, over which the Tagalogs hold dominance through geographic and historical luck. Franz Fanon reminds us that "colonial domination has marked certain regions out for privilege. The colony's economy is not integrated into that of the nation as a whole" (qtd in Bond 97). That structure persists in the Philippines to this day. Therefore, while the Visayan is Filipino, he must master Visayan to be authentically local, learn Tagalog in order to succeed in national politics, English in order to succeed in business or academe, and leave the Visayas in order to participate fully in the activities and discourse that make up mainstream Philippine culture. Further, within the Visayas, there are multiple minority languages, and multiple islands whose distance to the Visayan urban centres put them ever further away from mainstream Filipino culture. The identity of such people would be Ilonggo, or Cebuano, or Antiqueño, or others, all under the umbrella of Visayan, which itself is

under the overall catchall of Filipino. Though all people born and raised in the Philippines consider themselves Filipino, plurality persists in fragmenting the national identity – within its own shores Filipinos are characterised as the Other to each other, because without a system that truly embraces and empowers heterogeneity, the only “true” Filipino now is (if one is permitted to take this to the extreme) a person who is necessarily homogenised: that is, one who is from the provinces, has a mixture of Filipino, Chinese, Spanish and perhaps American ancestry, speaks their local dialect as well as English and Tagalog, was educated in Manila, and commutes between their traditional home and the national capital. To be sure, there are such Filipinos, but in a nation of more than 90 million, they are uncommon.

One must again look retrospectively to understand this more fully in regards to Philippine culture, and especially literature. If literature is, as Stendhal says, the mirror on the high street by which a culture sees itself, then what would Filipino readers see of themselves? In any mirror they would see a plurality (their many languages, regional and ethnic origins, class backgrounds, separate but overlapping histories). But if they were to look at the mirror that their literature is supposed to be, they would see less a plurality than a brazen dichotomy: works predominantly in English and Tagalog, with token nods to regional writing peeking through from behind.

This context of language and its place within Philippine identity is obviously sufficiently complex to warrant another doctoral study. For this exegesis, however, it is important only to understand its importance. A simple etymology of the very name Filipinos have for themselves illustrates how deep this issue runs. Toward the latter half of the nineteenth century a shift took place that proved revolutionary in its way and can be seen as a metaphorical foreshadowing of the actual revolution that would spark in the 1890s. For more than two centuries, the word *Filipino* referred only to Spaniards born in the Philippines, whereas any non-Spanish person in the colony was simply an indio. Rizal sought to subvert *indio* as a derogatory term (similar to the way in which African-Americans have appropriated

the word *nigger*) and turned it into “los indios bravos”. But in the retrospective view of history, his good intention are seen to have been superfluous. As the people of the colony became united via education and a common language, the term *Filipino* grew to refer to mestizos (Spanish-Filipino mulattos), Chinese-Filipinos and Westernised indios. This is an interesting shift: a term that was once exclusive, creating a caste system, became inclusive, creating a name for a people. This resonates with Jacques Derrida’s metaphor of the Babel story as the root of the necessity and impossibility of translation – “the effect for the appropriation of the name” (243). It might be said that Derrida’s proposal of *The Bible* story as the source of humanity’s linguistic divisiveness can also be seen as the source of humanity’s unity – the Shemites were suddenly divided by language, but also united against God. The appropriation of *Filipino* works in this way – “So that we may never be scattered” (Derrida 243). A group of people divided by tribalism, language and regionalism – once alienated as indios – suddenly became united under the umbrella of a defining term: *Filipino*.

The sense of Filipino identity, therefore, from the earliest use of the term, is clearly defined by its relation to the Other (in the way Said uses the term), with the Other being the Spaniards and later the Americans. As happened in other colonies, parroting of the colonisers’ manners and attitudes became characteristic of the upper classes (a colonial mentality still deeply ingrained today in the Philippines, even though the idols have changed). Just as other artefacts and phenomena imported from abroad are taken by Filipinos and made their own, Said’s idea of the Other has evolved into an essentially Filipino permutation – the Westernised Filipinos viewing the un-Westernised as the Other. The Lumberas explain this process with great clarity:

In the centuries to come, a distinction would be made between those Filipinos who settled where they were in easy reach of the power of the Church and State, in pueblos (taga-bayan – meaning “of the towns”), and those who kept their distance from the colonial administrators and their native agents, staying close to the sources of their livelihood in the mountains or the hinterlands (taga-bukid – “of the forests”; taga-bundok – “of the mountains”). The distinction went beyond indicating mere geographic origins and took on overtones of cultural snobbery as the effect of colonialisation seeped deeper into the consciousness of lowland Filipinos. In time, taga-bayan came to be a flattering term for the

Hispanised and, therefore, “urbane and civilised” Filipino. In this way did the non-Christian Filipinos come to be regarded with condescension, if not outright contempt and suspicion, by lowlanders who soon began to think of themselves as the more “genuine” Filipinos. (37)

In this explanation, it becomes evident that for a long time the Other has not so much been the Muslims, Spanish, Chinese, Americans or Japanese, for their Otherness was the result of an external factor; the more important Other in terms of Philippine identity has for centuries been ourselves and the fault lines that divide Filipinos as a people. Bhabha points out that “there is always, in Said, the suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser, which is an historical and theoretical simplification” (*The Other Question* 77). To avoid the reductionism that is sometimes the pitfall of postcolonial studies, there is importance in focusing on how Filipinos themselves have advanced this phenomenon. As English and Tagalog, the internet and text-messaging, media and TV programming, and arts and education set by those in Manila continue to further imbed Metro Manila culture as the dominant form of culture in Philippine identity, another polarisation has taken place – what is remembered versus what has been lost. What we remember of our past is integral to how we see ourselves. This has direct links with how Philippine literature (which is, as Ngugi describes in *Decolonising the Mind*, “language as culture...the collective memory bank of a people’s experience” (150)) presents itself, and begs the question of whether or not we can return to, recreate, or define the “truly” Filipino. Indeed, what is taking place is a constant, recursive questioning. If identity is lost, how can we recreate it? If it is recoverable, is what we recover accurate? If it is recreated, can the recreation ever be considered authentic? The problems surrounding this misplaced collective memory is called by Francia “a decidedly painful colonial hangover” (xiv). He expounds:

For most Westernised Filipinos – and I certainly can be categorised as such – the Other exists but as a rudimentary reminder of what the pre-Western inhabitant of the archipelago was like, or was imagined to be like. Here ultimately lies the cruel legacy of colonialism: The Other refers to what was once our familiar but now has become foreign; and what was once foreign has now become our familiar. If the idea of the Other appears as an exoticised objectification of the alien in contemporary Western society, in the Philippines what has been exoticised and commodified has been the deepest part of ourselves. (xiv)

This has ringing reverberations within Philippine literature. It reflects the popular questions that Filipino critics will ask of a work by a Filipino published at home or, especially, abroad: For whom is this work being written? Is this work authentically Filipino? Underlying such inquiries is the suspicion – founded or unfounded – that a work is pandering to those beyond the Filipinos, that it feeds the Western reading public’s Orientalist appetites, and that, in so doing, it reinforces stereotypes rather than elucidates the distinct yet elusive nuances of Philippine reality.

A third force in the Othering of the Filipino comes, this time, not from within, but from outside – though not from America or Europe. The Philippines’ place within Asia itself has fostered a tradition of influence often overlooked in the Filipino postcolonial theorist’s gaze Westward. For centuries predating the arrival of the Spanish, Islamic (and to a small extent, Buddhist) cultures interacted with and influenced the native Malay Filipinos by way of China, Borneo and Indonesia and points further afield. And for as many centuries, Chinese and Japanese traders also included the Philippines in their sphere of travel. Even during the Spanish colonial era, Chinese immigrants arrived en masse in the Philippines. Their effect on Philippine culture has been so complete that it is impossible to separate the strands (one need look no further than Philippine cuisine to see them). This influx of influence further diluted what some may quixotically consider true Filipino identity. Yet its importance belies the East-West dynamic. Philippine National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin offers this reminder:

Shouldn’t we begin to realise that, during this [Spanish] period, two processes were going on simultaneously and side by side: one, the process of “Westernisation”; the other, the process of “Asianising” – and that the latter process may have been the more powerful one since, after all, Asians then flocking to our land, especially the Chinese, greatly outnumbered the Westerners? (5)

Filipino national identity has indeed not just been influenced or altered by Westernisation, but by Asianisation as well, along with the fragmentation of its pluralistic singularity and centralisation of government and cultural institutions, languages and classes. Therefore, the constant

unanswered, perhaps unanswerable, problem of what is Filipino identity inevitably fosters a suspicion of anything that Philippine literature tries to show us of ourselves. The suspicion pervades unabated, masquerading as critics' objections about language, authenticity and audience. These questions are tied directly with another issue raised about a literary work: its relevance.

As discussed in the earlier sections, after Philippine literature discarded its catechetical purposes it became activist, and in doing so became more self-conscious about its place in Philippine society. Literary theorist Caroline Hau points out that in the Philippine context:

Literature plays an important mediating role in the development of nationalist consciousness because it is deeply implicated in the social processes that create the conditions for knowledge and action; more importantly, it organises the relationship between knowledge and action. (19)

This role of action, even intervention, is not unique to Philippine literature. To see parallels in other former colonies one need only look at the work of other postcolonial writers, such as Fanon, who wrote that to “educate man to be actional ... is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act” (222), or Ngugi, who argued that literature is “a people’s creative consciousness of their struggles to mould nature through cooperative labour and in the process acting on and changing themselves” (35). But what is of key interest to this study is how this conception of literature’s possibilities has translated into the work produced by Filipino writers working in English.

This desire for causality has defined the direction of PLE. Yet it can be argued that its overearnest application also served to weigh it down, creating work that is overly didactic and insular. If the loss of our collective memory is, as Francia called it, a colonial hangover, then our obsessive attempt at reclaiming our collective memory can be called a postcolonial hangover. In reaction, our writers have tried too hard to fill in the gaps. “Art does not develop in a vacuum,” says current National Artist for Literature, F. Sionil Jose, “the artist is responsible not just to his art but

to society as well” (7). He articulates the prevailing view of what literature and art should be in the Philippines. What he says may be true, or noble, or at least well-intentioned, but the question remains: Is overacting on this creed hurting the quality of our writing? Of the hundreds of short stories and scores of novels in English by Filipinos, few have made it on to the world stage (and none translated from the vernaculars ever has). For a century-long literary tradition in English, requiring no translation to reach millions of Anglophone readers, it is strange that such energetic output has not gained more international visibility. According to a study by Grace Talusan (*Loneliest Thing on Earth*), in the last 20 years only 20 novels were published internationally by Filipinos. And those few that have proved successful abroad are by those writers who sport hyphens (Filipino-American, Filipino-Australian): Bino Realuyo’s *The Umbrella Country*, Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*, Arlene Chai’s *Last Time I Saw Mother*, Han Ong’s *Fixer Chao* and Carlos Bulosan’s *America is in the Heart* are popular examples. Internationally, the books of Sionil Jose have been the most widely published by an unhyphenated Filipino, with several novels published by Random House in the 1990s. Aside from these, there has been a disturbing paucity. Blaming quality and content is the most logical explanation, but the contradiction between the two is what makes most sense – the content of the Filipino novel causes the quality to suffer.

In his survey of the 14 major Filipino novels in English from the last century, Rofel Brion, head of the English Creative Writing programme at Ateneo de Manila University, outlines a common thread:

All the novels under study are rather didactic in a nationalistic way. Each one, after all, is set against crucial events in the history of the Philippines. One can consider the novels fictionalised chronicles – some more fiction than fact, others more fact than fiction – of Philippine history. And the historical events are not mere backdrops; they, in fact, shape the lives of the novels’ characters. Ultimately, what each novel means to say always has something to do with being Filipino. (25)

Certainly, it cannot be denied that nationalistic didactic efforts can be viewed as patriotic. What is arguable, however, is their effectiveness. Can it be considered restrictive for a literary

tradition, even in the appropriated tongue of English, to be so specific in its goals? Even the fiction published and read at home has been, up until this last decade, comprised of works that fall squarely in that well-intentioned genre of social-realism. Even those that tilted toward elements of genre fiction are tinged with social morals. “Literary criticism,” says literature professor Joseph Galdon, “has often demanded that the Philippine novel in English be proletarian, or nationalistic, or something else. The novel has not been allowed to be what it must essentially and primarily be – a story” (15). This, admittedly, is changing. As stated previously, only in this last decade of the century-long tradition has there been published a detective novel (*Smaller and Smaller Circles* by F.H. Batacan), a wide array of chick-lit books (by Tara Sering, Andrea Pasion and Maya Calica, to name a few authors), horror writing (*Waking the Dead* by Yvette Tan), gay erotica (*Black Silk Pyjamas* by Danton Remoto and *Ladlad* edited by J. Neil Garcia), and science-fiction and fantasy (the serial *Philippine Genre Stories* and *Philippine Speculative Fiction* anthologies). This blooming of literature that is expanding beyond the socially relevant, and exploring its own purpose and possibilities of craft, indeed can be said to show the imminence of a new maturation of Philippine writing (in the way contemporary literary theory sees pulp literature as vital counterpoint to canonical literature). But in this nascent maturity, as a corollary one can still see how young (and perhaps “immature”) the Philippine literary tradition remains.

What has served as the tradition’s binding, in the way privileged Chinese women had bound feet, is that which returns this paper’s focus to an earlier issue: authenticity. The question of a work’s authentic Filipino-ness has been an easy way to cast aspersions on its relevance, and therefore its worth. To wit: If the author of the work is not “truly” Filipino, can the work be truly relevant to Philippine society? And, according to what has been a prevailing attitude rooted in the nationalism of the 1890s and the activism of the 1970s, if the work is not relevant, how can it be useful? These assumptions border on prejudice, in that they discount the overall importance of story and, perhaps especially, because they reinforce a conception of literature that has detrimentally led

to it not being read. If social realism was being read by the Filipino masses, or even by educated Filipinos outside the incestuous literary circles, the relevance argument would have traction. A look at Filipino reading habits and book sales proves such ideas spurious.

Karina Bolasco, of Anvil Publishing (the largest publisher in the Philippines), notes that in 1995 research indicated that there were 2,500 bookstores in the country, which amounted, on average, to one store per 34,000 people. The stores, however, were concentrated in the urbanised Metro Manila area, so that the poorer regions away from the National Capital Region only averaged one bookstore per 200,000 people (*Trends in Philippine Publishing*). In a paper on Philippine independent publishing, Antonio Hidalgo cited a 2003 study by the top survey organisation in the country, the Social Weather Stations, which showed that in that year 90 per cent of Filipino adults had read books and 68 per cent had read non-school books, although 58 per cent of that last number could only afford to spend 200 pesos (AU\$4.75) or less on books for the entire year (*On Literary Publishing*). The survey also found that 57 per cent of all readers preferred to read non-school books in Pilipino, with only 30 per cent preferring English, and the remaining percentage split by those who preferred regional languages. The exigencies in this landscape are clear. And yet, in publishing there exists a front in what Philippine scholars recognise as the Great Cultural Divide between the masses and the elites. According to Hidalgo:

This divide explains why there is a mismatch between what many of our best writers write and the needs and preferences of most readers. Too many Filipino writers write in English, while most readers read in Filipino; the best writers concentrate on writing fiction, while most readers want information books; because of class differences in lifestyles and experiences, the content of the best Filipino literature in English is often at odds with what most readers want from fiction, so they turn, instead, to telenovelas, formulaic romance novels in Filipino and, lately, badly written ghost and horror stories in Filipino. (*On Literary Publishing*)

Is it possible that there is a hypocritical aspect to literary writers and critics in the Philippines who are quick to dismiss work as inauthentic or irrelevant? If their goal is social relevance, given Filipino reading habits, wouldn't these writers be writing in Tagalog works that raise the standard of, and imbibe with social and moral messages, the telenovelas, romance and

horror novels, and melodramatic works that the Filipino public have been proved to enjoy reading? Writing of activist prescription is, simply, ineffective – because for writing to be effective it must be read. Yet the reading public in the Philippines eschews such literary works. Necessarily, then, writers in English look abroad for readership. Francia explains that “being published outside of the country, then, is prized not so much for its cachet as for the opportunity of tapping into a much greater reading public. Of course, to be shut off from a wider audience is not the mere result of market mechanisms but more precisely of a lack of empowerment” (xix). While the latter sentence is true, the Internet and growing international interest in Asian writing should dictate a rise in prominence in books being published abroad by Filipino writers, but as yet this has not happened. The realities of this situation effectively mean that Filipino writers are not writing solely, or even mainly, for publication at home, but for publication abroad in order to gain readership back home. Nowhere else is the proverbial colonial mentality more obvious or, arguably, necessary. And yet this necessary evil puts a writer in direct confrontation with the longstanding tradition of Philippine literary criticism. The question persists: Can a work written, or edited, or published, or marketed, or celebrated abroad be considered authentically Filipino?

To edge closer to an answer, it is helpful to look at other questions of authenticity in literary discourse, particularly in writing that involves the indigenous – because the question of authenticity in Philippine writing is very much preoccupied with indigenesness. The case of New Zealand writer Keri Hulme is particularly noteworthy, because her work has been both lauded and criticised – lauded for what it seeks to represent, and criticised for not being authentically Maori enough for such representations. Hulme, who has only a single great-grandparent who is Maori, won acclaim for a work that draws from Maori culture, representing full-blooded Maori characters as well as mixed-race Maori interacting with white New Zealanders. Yet fellow New Zealand writer C.K. Stead criticised Hulme’s Booker Prize-winning novel, *the bone people*, saying the book was “willed, self-conscious, not inevitable, not entirely authentic” (102), especially to win the Pegasus

Award for Maori Literature. Similarly, such questions of authenticity are raised when considering a mixed-language and mixed-influence tradition such as Philippine literature. As Margery Fee points out in her study of *the bone people*, “the ideal of ‘authenticity’ has been proved to be, like so many others, relative and context-bound” (12). She cites Fourth World writers of mixed race, such as Hulme, but also Aboriginal writers such as Sally Morgan or Métis writer Beatrice Culleton, who, because of their upbringing, grew up in ignorance of their ancestry. Fee points out that such “complication” is important, because it “emphasises the dubiousness of the commonplaces about Aboriginal writing” (11).

Works like *Ilustrado* must therefore be taken in their own context, above and beyond these generalised questions, in order to avoid commonplace preconceptions and assumptions. When this author set out to write *Ilustrado*, it was with the full knowledge that this question would eventually be raised: Can a work like *Ilustrado* be considered an authentic piece of Philippine writing, because it is written in English, is about Filipinos who lived abroad, is written by a Filipino who lives abroad, and is predominantly about the Westernised upper-classes of the Philippines? *Ilustrado* represents an explicit answer to that question. Griffiths argues that Aboriginal Australian literature should not “mythologise or fetishise” the “sign of the authentic” lest it hinder efforts to “evolve an effective strategy of recuperation and resistance” (70). Philippine literature will find the same practice a continuing hindrance to its development. *Ilustrado*, as story first and foremost, and message second, sets out to prove that by example. Griffiths also points out that the different voices used to represent a people “may well be the same process at work” (70). *Ilustrado* is certainly only one of the many different voices representing the same process of constructing Filipino identity.

For the reasons highlighted earlier – the elusive definition of *Filipino*, the polarisation of national consciousness, the bias favouring nationalistic literature – Philippine literature, including PLE, must indeed evolve an effective strategy of recuperation and resistance for it to develop further into distinctiveness and quality, for it to be authentically true to itself, or truly authentic.

Indeed, in its attempt to be more nationalistic, Philippine literature has so far proved to be inauthentic – overly exclusive, hagiographic, narrow in its definition of the Philippine experience, and caught up in the quixotic quest for purity of identity. Filipino literary theorist Fernando Zialcita comments on the construction of identity in this way:

Identity simultaneously includes and excludes. To define yourself as part of a group is to distance yourself from those who are outside it ... Today, however, the notion of a “national culture” is under attack, for what is called a nation is not monolithic. It brings together peoples who differ from each other in religion, ethnicity, social class and gender. Moreover, the “national”, if it indeed is real, constitutes only one dimension of an individual’s reality.
(3)

We arrive again at the conception of pluralism as truly authentic and organic. This flipping of the conception of authentic is important. Griffiths says that “the demand for ‘authenticity’ denies Fourth World writers a living, changing culture. Their culture is deemed to be Other and must avoid crossing those fictional but ideologically essential boundaries between Them and Us, the Exotic and the Familiar, the Past and the Future, the ‘Dying’ and the Living” (76). Though speaking of Fourth World writing, Griffiths’s words ring true in regard to Philippine writing. Pure and “authentic” Philippine writing is a myth that has proved divisive, self-serving and hindering, and examination of our social and literary history underscores that. What is now in actuality authentic is exactly that which was once considered inauthentic.

The pertinent question, therefore, has never been whether PLE can be truly Filipino. The pertinent (and perhaps, impertinent) question, rather, is whether Philippine literature can be truly whole without its tradition of writing in English. Echoing Chinua Achebe, R.K. Narayan and other writers from former colonies who chose to work in the language of the colonisers, Abad reminds us that “English in Filipino hands, under the pressure of his own circumstances and choices, becomes not English, but Filipino. If he is at first possessed, he comes also in time to possess both the medium and the message in his own way, by the language of his blood” (*Reading Past Writ* 9). From a contemporary Filipino practitioner’s standpoint, the past debates seem like excuses to not

write, to not move away from the past and into the future, to not venture out of the academe and write something that actually reaches and moves people. As the writer Tinio, himself undeniably nationalistic, casually points out:

The best thing for the Filipino writer in English is to write in English. If tomorrow I suddenly decide to read nothing but Tagalog poems, perhaps even to write Tagalog poems – well, isn't that nice? Perhaps I will, and perhaps I won't, but whatever I choose to do is certainly nobody else's business. (619)

Suspicion of PLE is indeed understandable from the perspective of Filipino. In Milan Kundera's recent long essay, *The Curtain*, he cites as an enduring problem the "provincialism of small nations" (37). A small nation like the Philippines, therefore, combines a flag-waving patriotism with suspicion of what Kundera calls the "large context" of the world (*The Curtain* 37). This has been noted earlier in this exegesis as an element of the nationalistic bent in Philippine literary criticism; yet such an attitude may not only be outdated, but also detrimental. And not to mention also unrealistic. On the subject of Kundera's essay, Jonathan Derbyshire explained in the *New Statesman* that "provincialism is the inability to imagine one's national culture in the large context, and Kundera thinks it has done great damage to our understanding of literary history. If we were to view the history of the novel in the large context, we would see, for example, that Laurence Sterne was reacting to Rabelais, or that Flaubert was living on in Joyce" (*Rise of the New*). And that Rizal was inspired by Swift, and Hagedorn was reacting to Rizal, and that *Ilustrado* was influenced by Cervantes, Bellow, Joaquin, Borges, Hagedorn, and many more.

Accordingly, while a study of our past allows hindsight and perspective, the Filipino writer must move forward from provincialism and intellectual isolationism into the wider world. Ngugi, writing in the last millennium, notes:

In terms of the structures of domination, subordination and resistance, a common global experience is emerging. Gradually a vocabulary of concepts of domination and revolt become part of a shared intellectual tradition" (*Writers in Politics* 149).

Today, contemporary Philippine writing, with its Marxist and postcolonial preoccupations, seems to be mired in the past. The shared intellectual experience the Kenyan writer referred to is certainly a reality that is more readily available in this globalised world – in the way that the Internet, along with international business, effortlessly shares languages, ideas, symbols and systems. One can now take Ngugi’s words as a call for a perspective that is post-postcolonial: in a world without colonies and with more fungible cultures and porous borders, a perspective that is global, or cosmopolitan, certainly makes sense.

As Mary Kaldor writes, “globalisation is a wild process involving interconnectedness and exclusion, integration and fragmentation, homogenisation and diversity” (*Cosmopolitanism*). She says that what can be called “The Global Civil Society” is an alternative to the simple idea of a stratified, compartmentalised, world: “An alliance with the cosmopolitans” (*Cosmopolitanism*). That “wild process” is far from clear cut, and that is perhaps where its richness lies in terms of literature. It defies handy limitations and enters a new frontier of subject-matter, form, audience and authorship. Elias Norbert points out that the ideas of “culture and civilisation” were seen, in the eighteenth century, as “processes, while in the twentieth century they represent something almost entirely static” (225). As discussed earlier, Filipino culture and civilisation have been anything but static, and yet discourse in recent decades has tilted toward a predilection for fixedness that is clearly artificial. With this firmly in mind, possibilities for a new direction for Philippine literature must be considered.

This return to process, to an outward drift, to the confusion of change, is the way ahead for Philippine literature. *Ilustrado*’s place is between the long tail-end of postcolonialism and the first intimations of what may come afterwards. Indeed, both *Ilustrado*’s metanarrative and postmodern characteristics counter Jean-Francois Lyotard’s statement that postmodernism displays “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv), as *Ilustrado*’s postmodern characteristics (multiple endings, fragmented structure, the incredible as metaphor for the credible) contradict the artificiality of

metanarratives (as Andrew Linklater defines them) as “totalising pretensions” (63). This is because there is no defined totality to the story/stories put forth in *Ilustrado* – they are clearly limited stories belonging to a larger, indeed infinite, collection of what has been written and what might have been written or may be written still. Further, *Ilustrado*’s specificity as a novel, and the novel form’s ability to resonate with universal extranational truths that a novel’s fictionality presents as non-factual, is counter to Michel Foucault’s warning against a universalisation that imposes distinct and exclusive views of human identity – “societal regimes of truth” (*Language, Counter-memory, Practice* 131). *Ilustrado* is exclusively Filipino and inclusively international, a paradox that is not a paradox in the dawn light of a post-postcolonial view. This view, by this author’s definition, negates the traditional questions of the Other, discounting such conceptions as exclusive (a reaction to the exclusions of empire) while proposing a discourse that is inclusive. And if it is inclusive, then Philippine literature must now more than ever include the story of the diaspora and its interactions, and should mirror its inward gaze with an outward look into the world the Philippines is presently colonising in its own way. This asks ever more of the Filipino writer, though its rewards promise to be plentiful to the reader. The Irish/Turkish/Dutch/British/American author Joseph O’Neill’s peripatetic life imparted upon him a questioning view about nationalism that offers a sensible salve to the unquestioning certainty of the neo-nationalists in the Philippines:

Nationalism proposes that a person’s freedom is justly maximised if the obligations limiting that freedom are set by the group with which he has most in common – i.e. his nation. A Frenchwoman’s freedom is best entrusted to a French government. Cosmopolitanism, by contrast, proposes that, as an ethical and therefore political matter, a person can belong only in a global community ... As a matter of daily reality and to a degree previously unknown, we are faced with the experiences of others everywhere. This imposes new demands on consciences and nationalistic categories. Literature is not immune from such demands; one might even suggest, since we writers are concerned with reality and conscientiousness, that literature should be unusually interested in these demands. (53)

It follows that what is of importance is no longer literature’s emergence from colonial experience or global influences into its own brand of being. Nor is a formalist reading paramount. What is important is literature’s ability to represent the everyday life that lies beyond the theories of

politics, history, sociology or literary criticism. As Eagleton puts it: “The text does not contain, *in potentia*, dramatic ‘life’: the life of the text is one of literary significations” (*Science of the Text* 65). In this case, what matters more than the signifiers is the signified: the life. For Philippine literature, particularly, what is important is not that it can be read through a Marxist or postcolonial or feminist perspective; what is important is that it is read, and that what is read reflects portions of real life and the ideas contained therein, and not the opposite where ideas contain, and therein limit, real life. In Derbyshire’s article, J.M.G. Le Clézio’s Nobel lecture, given in Stockholm in December of 2007, is discussed:

Having construed literature, in good postcolonial fashion, as a means of expressing “identity”, Le Clézio recognises that in order to be heard, an “Indian from the far north of Canada”, say, must write in the “language of the conquerors” – in English or in French. That may be “unjust”, he admits, but translation into one of the world’s linguistic “monarchs” is the price of getting a hearing. (*Rise of the New*)

Within this discussion, *Illustrado* attempts to place itself. It reflexively poses questions within its narrative and dialogue, which it then seeks to answer. *Illustrado* explicitly questions and tries to answer within its pages the issues of language, of authenticity, of relevance that may have sought to limit and define the novel. In this, *Illustrado* attempts to redefine conceptions of Philippine literature itself. Whether or not it was successful in doing so remains to be seen. But what is important is what it sought to do: question the limitations of Filipino literature, and therefore question the limitations of Filipino identity. Francia, sharpening Bhabha’s idea of hybridity and the Third Space for the Philippine context, reminds us that it is the space between the possible and the impossible that holds what is important and interesting to the discourse of Filipino literature:

We have often been accused of not knowing ourselves, of lacking a clear-cut, well-defined cultural sensibility. It is an accusation born of the belief that culture is a neat package, convenient for handling and weighing. This concept, intrinsically related to ideas of racial purity and a defensive insularity, is the complete antithesis of living Philippine culture, an attempt to pasteurise and sterilise it. And many of us are forever attempting to be irreducibly pure when what we really want to be is irreducibly Filipino. In the Philippine context, what is foreign and what is indigenous has always been a tricky and ultimately impossible subject. For better or worse, Filipinos have unconsciously perfected the art of mixing the two up, confounding definitions and scholars. To be purist in such a situation is not just to be a hopeless romantic but to turn away from the modern Filipino as he or she is: Malayan, Chinese, Indian, Hispanic and American – somewhat like a Cubist painting with blurry lines.

As in the painting, a synthesis is involved, a recognition, an acceptance of confusion that can be seen in positive terms. (xiii)

The confusion is a key element, not for it being a catalyst toward definition, but as a catalyst toward accepting the multitude of stories that a multiplicitous society presents – not only as a subject for academic analysis, but, more importantly, as a subject for literature. Tinio, as a scholar and practitioner of the forms that the academy seeks to autopsy and reduce, emphasises this aspect of a literature alive with possibility:

I mean, somehow, the idea of cultural confusion appeals to me, and I hope that it happens everywhere else even as I suspect that it happened to the Greeks and Romans and the Europeans. The trouble is that we look at the past and the present through the eyes of scholarship, and scholarship being in love with death, it necessarily kills what it brings to life. (618)

4. *ILUSTRADO* AS PRACTICE

Kundera, in *The Art of the Novel*, says “every novelist’s work contains an explicit vision of the history of the novel” (ix). By corollary, every Filipino writer’s work contains an explicit vision of the history of Philippine writing. This author and *Ilustrado* are no different. The act of writing *Ilustrado* represents a deliberate response to the tradition of unique strengths and weaknesses that make up Philippine literature. The author seeks to translate the histories and theories discussed previously in this paper into a work of literary art. To do that, it has been necessary to directly address, through the formation of *Ilustrado*, the issues of structure, verisimilitude, scope and recurring themes that persistently characterise the Philippine novel in English. Though many technical and aesthetic issues arose in the writing of the novel, due to limitations of space only these broad issues are analysed; examples are also provided to show both *Ilustrado*’s reaction and its efforts to be a key part of the literary tradition. It must be noted, however, that *Ilustrado* necessarily seeks to not only be a theoretical response, but also a novel, in all definitions of the word. Therefore, in this section the theories are left behind and an examination of practice replaces them. As Eoin Flannery writes of Irish literature: “There is a marked willingness within many critical analyses to persistent deferral; too often the security of abstraction and conceptual circuitousness disabuses theory of its practical potential” (359). *Ilustrado* the novel defers no longer and attempts to go beyond abstractions into the potentialities of practice.

First and foremost, the choice of structural design had to be decided before *Ilustrado* could be written. In considering its architecture, the definition of design given by Charles Eames was pertinent. Eames says that design is “a plan for arranging elements in such a way as to best accomplish a particular purpose” and that “design is constraint” (14). Therefore, both purpose and

constraint were vital in the construction of *Ilustrado*. Due to the necessity of capturing the diversity of perspectives that have been discussed as integral to the Philippine reality – Bakhtin’s heteroglossia – a conventional linear structure was abandoned as unworkable. Examination of other successful Filipino novels allowed for the consideration of possibilities: a novel structure following alternating characters (as in Dalisay’s *Soledad’s Sister*), or told from alternating perspectives (as in Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*), though these options were also later abandoned. Instead, an idea for bricolage, germinated from personal experience, became the most promising. In 2004 I was working for *The Paris Review*, on their Writers-at-Work interview series, checking facts about each interview subject by accessing a broad range of sources – interviews, literary biographies, essays, online resources, memoirs, introductions to their works and other sources. It became clear that such a fragmented portrait of the artist would be an interesting way to present a novel. This proved fascinating but difficult to execute. Later, as the manuscript for *Ilustrado* became a monolithic, unmanageable mass of 200,000 words, a documentary I saw about traditional weavers in the southern Philippines proved inspiring. The traditional textiles made by the old T’Boli tribeswomen are first formed from single threads spun, dyed, collected and woven together to make patterns. Because of this image, the manuscript of *Ilustrado* was then pulled apart, with the different narrative threads then developed on their own before being woven together to create patterns. An intriguing result came about, in that the narrative momentum differs from the Aristotelian narrative structure (conflict, rising action, denouement, conclusion). What takes prominence are the thematic elements and their relation to the characters. These themes served as binding elements, much as motifs do in jazz and classical music. My experimentation with the book’s formal structure was further informed by music, specifically the Hungarian composer György Ligeti’s concept of micropolyphony, in which “large structures grow from an insectoid buzz of activity, each instrument playing the same material at its own pace ... The dominant process in Ligeti’s music is one of emergence – shapes come out of the darkness, dark cedes to light” (Ross 476).

Though *Ilustrado*'s structure is inspired by personal realisations, *Ilustrado*'s structural framework illustrates the literary use of bricolage. It does so on many levels.

First, *Ilustrado* utilises the research and life experience that comprised the author's frame of reference and expertise up to the point of and during the writing – material that is, as Claude Levi-Strauss points out in his writing on this aspect of the artistic process, “whatever is at hand” and important for “its potential use” (18).

Second, *Ilustrado* as bricolage also expands the canvas of the novel, using that material to include pop, Filipino and intertextual (dialogic) literary references that broaden readers' experience of the novel – the novel, though limited to itself, becomes inclusive through the resonance gained by dialogue with other sources. This made *Ilustrado* a clear example of the novel as being, in Foucault's words, “caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences” (*Language, Counter-memory, Practice* 23).

Third, *Ilustrado*'s very structure is quite literally bricolage, as its fragments of at-hand material (various contemporary literary and non-literary forms) are stacked on top of each other to form a whole. In fact, part of the process of ordering their fragments involved a system the author devised in which each narrative thread was colour-coded, each fragment was printed on a sheet of cardboard and cut into single strips, and then backed by Velcro and arranged on poster boards corresponding to the chapters of the novel. This system – resembling the physical act of building a structure out of blocks – allowed the author to explicitly act as bricoleur, experimenting with multiple permutations of the fragments until the final combination was determined.

Lastly, *Ilustrado*'s loose structure allowed a broad expanse of narrative time (150 years of Philippine history), a deep examination of society (Philippine politics, religion, culture, literature, values), and intertextual references (from national and international sources) to be seamlessly

installed within the architecture of the new novel, presented in the relatively short book it has become.

In *Ilustrado* as bricolage, the author, therefore, appropriates all these elements and purposes to make a new house of fiction in which literature and ideas can live, taking material that has already been used and making it his own by, as Levi-Strauss says, “putting this another way and in the language of the bricoleur” (18). In Hidalgo’s critical review of the manuscript of *Ilustrado* when it won the Philippines’ Palanca Award in September 2008, this structure was highlighted, confirming that the author’s intended construction is indeed effective for the reader:

Using a wide variety of materials in a novel is often called bricolage – literally, construction by using whatever comes to hand. Its expert use in *Ilustrado* achieves several objectives. It imbues the novel with a wonderful makeshift and uncertain quality that evokes real life. It also broadens the canvas of the novel by using pop culture and sharpens its content by limning its characters and present realities with light from learned analysis of the past. (“First Look” E1)

Given the long tradition of realism in Philippine literature, achieving a sufficient modicum of verisimilitude also proves a major challenge. A second related issue is a recurring tendency toward exoticisation in previous works by Filipino authors. A third related issue is also the paucity of satirical works in the Philippine tradition from which to draw as a model. *Ilustrado* sets out to address these in turn.

Ruth Ronan, in her book *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, says that “fictional worlds form a subset of possible worlds” (51). She posits that trans-world identity – the ability to retain real-world identities in fiction – is closely involved:

Trans-world identity is hence closely connected to the problem of naming in theories of reference. One may infer from theories of reference that identifying entities across worlds depends on the rigid designation carried out by proper names and descriptions. That is, trans-world identity raises the question of whether an entity can preserve its essential identity despite being characterised, located or even named differently in different worlds. Can an entity be subject to trans-world identification when its name, its essential and/or contingent properties have been changed? (51)

In a novel such as *Ilustrado*, where the city of Manila is in its own way a character, and where fictional characters serve as archetypes for actual figures in Philippine society, the challenge in creating verisimilitude in fiction without writing a roman-a-clef is pronounced. *Ilustrado* creates another world by keeping the setting intact – fictional Manila as factual Manila – and changing the characters so that a “possible world” is created. In fact, the multiple endings of *Ilustrado* self-consciously underline the many possible endings of the story in this possible world, fragmenting the possible world into multiple possible words (exemplifying, in the process, William Gass’s conception of *metafiction*); in doing so, both the verisimilitude and the artifice of the novel itself are affirmed. In changing the characters but not their setting, however, the trans-world identity becomes problematic, because the factuality of the setting suggests a veiled factuality for the characters. This raises the problem of self-censorship, particularly in writing about Philippine society and history on as wide a scale as *Ilustrado* attempts. *Ilustrado*’s remedies are informed by literary techniques both from the Philippines and abroad.

In the opening page of Hagedorn’s *Dog eaters*, the Marcos-era Philippines takes shape, although Hagedorn explicitly makes a claim for the fictionality of the work by writing a disclaimer. However, Brion points to the fiction’s relationship with the factual Imelda Marcos:

The author’s note to *Dog eaters* proclaims that: “This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogue are products of the author’s imagination and not to be construed as real. Where the names of actual persons, living or dead, are used, the situations, incidents and dialogue concerning those persons are entirely fictional and are not intended to depict any actual events or change the entirely fictional character of the work.” This, of course, only highlights the fact that the novel is really about the Philippines during the Marcos era. There is no question, for instance, who this Madame is, not only for Filipinos, but for everyone else with a little CNN/Time /Newsweek literacy: *Madame* reveals: “Her unabashed belief in astrology, the powers of psychic healing, Darwin’s theory of evolution and the loyalty of her homosexual constituents.” (37)

Hagedorn, therefore, was able to coyly deny the trans-world identity of, in this case, Imelda Marcos, while simultaneously affirming the portrayal of Manila in the 1970s, in which Imelda Marcos plays a big part. *Ilustrado* uses this effect similarly, with an epigraph that states both the

fictionality of the work while pointing the finger, so to speak, at the guilty parties represented by the archetypes. Self-censorship ceases to be a problem, because the novel is no longer in danger of being libellous, while the work retains its social resonance through insinuations of guilt.

From works by international authors, *Ilustrado* took the device of the unreliable narrator, in order to affirm the fictionality of the Miguel Syjuco narrator/character, as well as to create a tenuous setting in which factual places, events or people could be set. As did the narrators in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, the narrator in *Ilustrado* undermines his own reliability in many ways. First, confessions are sporadically made about information previously withheld from the reader. Second, a mysterious parallel narrator (in the italicised fragments) contradicts the events recounted by the main narrator. Third, both narrators involved in the book admit to faulty memories. Such unreliability, therefore, licenses the presentation of the factual, by reminding the reader that the book is a work of fiction – a collection of stories being recounted and told by narrators who admit to being, or are discovered to be, forgetful or mendacious or suffering from self denial.

The Philippine literary tradition's relationship with self-exoticisation also presented a challenge where the verisimilitude of the novel could suffer. If *Ilustrado* had fallen into this pattern, then everything it presents would be tainted by Othering, for there certainly is nothing more classically problematic in postcolonial discourse than Third World literary works that pander to First World readers. In this, unfortunately, *Ilustrado* had many cautionary tales from which to draw, though it must be noted that this phenomenon may or may not be deliberate on the part of the authors. For example, in Filipina-Australian Arlene Chai's novel, *The Last Time I Saw Mother*, the narrator describes the protagonist as possessing "catlike, Oriental eyes, high cheekbones and olive complexion" (8). Another example (though the exoticisation may have been both unavoidable and effectively exotic) occurs in Tess Uriza Holthe's *When Elephants Dance*, in which the first page is suffused with what may be considered a greatest-hits medley of tropical exotic references,

mentioning camote, papaya, durian, the “Amerikanos”, coconut palms, violet sunsets, mah-jongg, a matron with a face “like a geisha’s”, ceiling fans made of straw and a folksy proverb in the first line that is turned into a metaphor for the Second World War – “When the elephants dance, the chickens must be careful” (1). A further issue is that exoticisation may be a deliberate decision made either by the author or the publishers of his or her book: the blurb on Filipino-American Bino Realuyo’s novel, *The Umbrella Country*, describes the streets of Manila as being “where the earth is as brown as tamarind and the pungent smells of vinegar and mashed peppers fill the air, where seasons shift between scorching sun and torrential rain” (book cover). It seems that these writers (or their editors) are working with the West in mind; while this is not objectionable in and of itself – for that is where the biggest market of readers live – it is the extent to which their work exhibits exoticisation that calls into the question the authentic. Zialcita comments on the relationship between the exotic and the authentic in this way:

How true is it that while other Asians have retained their original culture, the Christian Filipinos have lost theirs? The problem is that “authenticity” is confused with “exoticism”. And exoticism is identified with being non-Western. The more non-Westernised a culture, supposedly, the more authentic it is. (21)

Another clear example of this at work pertains to the italicisation of Philippine words. These words are not foreign to the Filipino writer or reader, and yet they are italicised in an English-language novel just as words in, for example, Latin or Swahili would be. This raises questions again of translation, of authenticity, outlining the foreignness of the setting and characters, even though within the novel neither the characters nor setting are foreign at all. Often this is done deftly, in order to teach readers of all nationalities what the Filipino words mean, as in Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*: “Andres looks at me meaningfully, then frowns when I start laughing. ‘*Baboy*,’ he sneers, calling me a pig. I blow him a kiss” (31). In this excerpt, Hagedorn deftly teaches the reader the meaning of *baboy* while retaining the way the Filipino character would speak. But other authors

are not so skilled or deliberate. In Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, there is a certain lumpiness to a passage like this:

He was then a janitor at the *presidencia*, or town hall, and helping us support my brother Macario who was still in high school. I went from house to house in the neighbourhood, climbing coconut trees out of which, if I picked five of the fruit, I could have one nut for myself. Toward the end of the day *compradores*, or buyers, would come to the grove and buy all the coconuts, including my share. (17)

Such italicisation is more the rule than the exception for PLE, and its harmful effects are readily visible. *Ilustrado* makes two decisions to avoid this, and in doing so attempts to feel more, so to speak, organic, despite the genre of fiction being nothing if not artifice. First, because the novel is written in English, Tagalog words are not sprinkled around for local colour, but are translated into English, while Philippine syntax is consistently held; where there is no translation into English, the words are left unitalicised, assuming, correctly, that the entire novel is written in Philippine English, which includes in its lexicon many words from the vernacular. Second, *Ilustrado* explicitly addresses this issue by having the characters discuss the problem.

The final issue relating to *Ilustrado*'s verisimilitude is its satirical nature and its lack of predecessors in PLE. As discussed, an overly earnest approach to creating social realism has pervaded Philippine writing, leading to a paucity of satire. And yet, as Eagleton argues in *Against the Grain*, along with polemic (which *Ilustrado* has) satire is one of the "essential modes ... for a political revolutionary" (71). (One thinks of Aristophanes, Cervantes, Voltaire, Orwell, Chaplin, *The Chaser*, Stephen Colbert and *The Onion*.) This strange absence in the Philippines has meant that *Ilustrado* had to look both abroad and, aptly, to the height of Philippine political revolution, and the beginning of the Philippine novel form, to Rizal. Often overlooked is the fact that Rizal's novels underscored the absurdities of Philippine society at the time in order to give him leeway to criticise the sins of the Spanish and privileged Filipinos. Within his novels, Rizal pokes fun at the friars, the Filipinos and even the overzealous revolutionaries themselves. In *Noli Me Tangere*, the most

memorable instance of his satire of Filipino aspirations comes in the form of the social-climbing matron Doña Victorina de los Reyes de de Espadana. Intent on “improving” herself by marrying a Spaniard, she attempts to remake both her Spanish husband and herself. This mania even extends to her name, to which she appropriates an extra *de*, the Spanish version of the German *von*, which hints at nobility:

She annexed a *de* to her husband’s surname. The *de* did not cost much, but it gave the name a certain status. She signed as Victorina de los Reyes *de* de Espadana. The *de* had become an obsession with her. Neither the lithographer who made her cards nor her husband could persuade her to change her mind. “If I do not put more than one *de* it can be believed that you don’t have it, simpleton!” she said to her husband. (*Noli* 287)

Ilustrado, likewise, seeks to point out the injustices and excesses of current Philippine society by focusing on the absurdities of the different character archetypes – the rich, the poor, the religious, the politicians, the literary, the celebrities and others. In this way, the novel also attempts a level of verisimilitude, though in a palatable manner that suggests reality without suffering from the pitfalls of Philippine social realism.

Scope is also a big issue in the construction of *Ilustrado*, as the author, keeping the exegetical aspect of the PhD in mind, felt it a necessary and interesting challenge to discuss Philippine literature and history, while being mindful of both avoiding the didacticism of PLE and achieving a universality necessary for a work that appeals both to Philippine and international readers. Again, the bricolage structure allows for the multiplicities inherent in heteroglossia: indeed, *Ilustrado*’s structure functions in the same way an accordion folder functions, in that it can be expanded to create openings into which items can be readily inserted. This adaptability easily permits the characters to explicitly discuss, at a fair length, issues similar to those outlined in this exegesis, as in, for example, when Crispin discusses the problems of Philippine literature with Miguel (256), or Crispin tells an interviewer the difficulties of translating Filipino reality into literature in English (72), or Miguel bemoans Crispin’s rejection of activism for nationalistic writing (64).

Connected to this is the challenge of avoiding didacticism. Brion reminds us about Philippine novels: “I greatly suspect, though, that Filipino novelists in English very often write about Philippine society and being Filipino, even to the point of preaching about these concerns, in order to be more relevant to the rest of the nation” (40). The question, then, was, how can *Ilustrado* avoid the didacticism that Filipino readers consider a mark of pandering to the West while creating a work that explains the Philippine condition to readers anywhere? In other words, how can *Ilustrado* be both local and universal in that its inevitable readings from different perspectives would each be as deep and profound as each other, if not similar?

Nicholas Jose, discussing Australian literature (its postcolonial experience arguably making it a sister tradition to the Philippines), points out that “different cultural contexts generate different textual readings that are valuable for just that reason” (5). Yet the question persists: Is it possible to create work that is universal? Jose continues:

Perhaps “writing” becomes literature as it is consumed more than once, by more than one person, and, like the magic pudding, digested, discussed, regurgitated, reconstituted. And then taken as read. Writers of all sorts who circulate the writing of the past through its transformation in their own work are agents in that process, as of course are readers. Included here importantly are those who write about writing – critics, scholars, teachers. The literature of the past lives indirectly in the reading and writing of the present, its traces on us not always visible. (5)

Though *Ilustrado* has yet to be read by the readers in the world, it attempts its own writing and reading of itself, by digesting and discussing the multiple national and international stories and ideas before regurgitating and reconstituting them as a novel whose many fragments cover a broad scope. In fact, it’s a novel written about writing, concerning writers, critics, scholars and teachers – their many voices (again, heteroglossia) discussing with each other (again, dialogism), and therefore with the reader, the living literature from which *Ilustrado* comes, is part of, and seeks to change. Practically speaking, not only did the structure of the novel allow such a scope, but so did the forms it included. The blogs, interviews, polemical essays and articles allow for a certain justifiable didacticism, obtaining the effect that many Filipino novels have inelegantly attempted, though

Illustrado does so in a way that is both blatant and subtle, discussing the past history, present condition, and even positing a future for Philippine literature. Can a work, therefore, be specific and universal, local and international? Despite bearing the same didacticism and focus that weigh down previous Filipino novels in English, *Illustrado* attempts another strategy, by utilising lessons learned from both Filipino and non-Filipino works, choosing utility and wisdom rather than agonising over questions of authenticity of Filipino-ness. Ultimately, *Illustrado* responds frankly to the questions of authenticity: The novel is about an educated Filipino expatriate trying to figure out both his place in the world and Philippine literature, written by an educated Filipino expatriate trying to figure out both his place in the world and Philippine literature. Given that the so-called authentic ideal of the Filipino has proved elusive, and is almost certainly a chimerical myth, *Illustrado* comfortably finds its place as merely one of the many perspectives within Philippine literature.

The final aspect of *Illustrado* as praxis is an examination and presentation of the themes that characterise Philippine literature, as explored in the novel. Because of the Filipino novel's intentionality, its desire for causality and its constant awareness of itself within a tradition, the novel in English recycles themes, as if each new attempt was the one that might finally get it right this time. "Theme and motif," writes George Steiner, "which are the weave of intertextuality, demand, can only exist by virtue of, recognition" (299); the constant repetition of these themes in Philippine novels can perhaps be seen as the writers' collective cry for final recognition of the greater thematic issue, and *Illustrado* attempts, via intertextuality, to definitively highlight these themes by linking them within the fictional books that comprise it, as well as with other real-world books from both Filipino and international literature. To address the other themes, *Illustrado* takes a reflexive look at language, the complexities of departure, exile and return, as well as responsibility and its variations (filial, fraternal, maternal and paternal duty; nationalism; political accountability; the responsibility of taking action). *Illustrado* also examines the often didactic and always ubiquitous presentation of Filipino culture in Philippine novels. Brion, in his survey of Filipino novels, echoes Ashcroft,

Griffiths and Tiffin's discussion of *English* versus *english*, but locates it within the Philippine context; he also lists the recurring themes:

Their [novels], too, seem to say, whether or not the novelists admit this, that the language of the Philippine novel in English must actually find its own language: *an* English instead of *the* English ... There are some things that, I think, will be good to explore regarding these novels [in English]. A number of them end with dreams, or dream-like states, for instance. Many main characters travel back home, return to their roots, or settle in the hinterlands. Some novels are built around Filipino myths and legends. And many novels deal with writing, and the writer's role in society. (45)

Particularly striking is how much *Ilustrado* fits this profile – how its themes are those found in so many works that preceded it. This surprise comes from the fact that, in writing *Ilustrado*, I did not consciously set out to fit into the tradition. The contrary, in fact, is true. I naturally wrote first from where I came and from what I knew, not stopping to do any research that was not explicitly part of the novel. It is interesting and reassuring to me to learn that my novel fits Brion's, and other Filipino scholars' (Dalisay's in particular), reading and predictions of the evolution of PLE. Yet one hopes that rather than be mired in what has already been written, *Ilustrado* has contributed to this tradition at its furthest point, suggesting a way forward.

Ilustrado attempts to present these common themes as a broad overview, charting their ubiquity over the 150 years that have been the most dynamic for the country. The characters from the 1890s, 1960s, 1990s and the naughts of the second millennium are returning home after time away. They are revolutionaries, politicians or writers seeking causality, searching for their responsibility in a nation of shifting values that blur the lines between good and bad, selfish and heroic. In *The Enlightened*, Cristo returns home from Spain, rationalises his non-participation in the Philippine Revolution and later remedies his shortcoming in his stubborn fight against the Americans. In the memoir *Autoplagiarist*, young Crispin returns home intent on making change, yet eschews politics as too dirty and instead chooses journalism as his role in shaping the nation. In the main narrative of *Ilustrado*, both Miguel and an older Crispin serve as examinations of the global Filipino's role in national identity and destiny. As writers, they bring into question their own

relevance and discuss the potentialities of literature within the Philippine experience – though they are unable to resolve it (rightly so), as Crispin seems to ultimately choose action over writing (and yet the very existence of *Ilustrado* itself refers to action through writing). Within the jokes, excerpts, blogs and newspaper articles presented are snippets and explanations of Philippine culture as well as its politics throughout the decades. Within the dramatic set pieces are commentaries on the mores and manners of contemporary Philippine society. The constantly recurring theme of East versus West in Philippine literature is outlined at length in *Ilustrado*, as the characters leave and return to their country and overzealously adopt Western fashions, and as foreigners and foreign media (Bobby Fischer, the American military, news channels and others) serve as counterpoints to the local specificity of the novel itself. Lastly, and most surprising to this author, the dream-like states Brion points out as recurring figure largely in *Ilustrado*, as an unconscious (pun intended) nod to both the melodrama and magical realist traditions that have characterised Philippine literature.

Though these themes were re-presented within *Ilustrado*, the novel attempts to lay them to rest, to show them as exhausted. *Ilustrado*'s architecture seeks to allow the themes to brush up against, to contradict, to reinforce each other, so that the examination of responsibility is also an examination of cowardice, exile an examination of return, nationalism an examination of the diaspora, religion an examination of the secular; and within these seemingly contradicting examinations, the absolutes that are often the themes of Philippine literature are revealed as mere parts of broad spectra where the moral, artistic and national interests lie in the grey areas in between (the “confusion” cited by Tinio). *Ilustrado* attempts to serve as a call to final examination of the themes that are cultural and literary obsessions for the Filipinos.

Crispin, discussing Philippine literature with the character Miguel, explicitly emphasises this, articulating both *Ilustrado*'s intent and a reminder to Miguel Syjuco the author:

First step, get over it, man. I forget which jazz man said that it takes a long time before you can play like yourself. Be an international writer, who happens to be Filipino, and learn to

live with the criticisms of being a Twinkie. Anyway, your home country will be that common ground your work ploughs between you and your reader. ... But listen, of all those things we Pinoys try so hard to remember, what are those other things that we've tried successfully to forget? Figure that out and write about that. Quit hiding behind our strengths and stand beside our weaknesses and say, These are mine! These are what I'm working to fix! Learn to be completely honest. Then your work will transcend calendars and borders. (260)

Whether or not *Ilustrado* succeeds in this will only be determined once the novel has been read by Filipinos at home, Filipinos abroad, as well as foreign readers everywhere, and has proved itself tested against time.

CONCLUSION

In this exegesis I have examined the formation of *Ilustrado* by mapping the essential elements that informed its development. Traditions, issues, challenges, solutions and their sources were identified as vital influences for my novel's evolution. This study has also determined that Philippine Literature in English is authentic and essential to the Filipino experience, fixed *Ilustrado*'s place within that literary tradition and argued that as a work that appeals to both Filipino and international readers *Ilustrado* suggests one important way forward for Philippine writing.

In part one, to provide an understanding of the social terrain from which *Ilustrado* sprouted, a brief overview of Philippine history was charted. The effects of colonial and postcolonial forces on the Filipinos' actualisation of themselves were discussed in order to provide a framework for later exploring the importance of language and nationalism to their literature.

In part two, to provide an understanding of the cultural terrain that cultivated *Ilustrado*, a history of Philippine literature and its ongoing evolution was explored. Filipino scholars and writers were referenced to provide an understanding from the Philippine perspective. The intersection of history and language and its indispensability to the Filipino national narrative was the focus. The shared characteristics, issues, intentions and roles of the different linguistic facets of the country's literary tradition highlighted the valid and important place of PLE.

In part three, *Ilustrado*'s intended place within that tradition was identified. The challenges that the book sought to address were analysed in order to give context to its reaction to and rejection of such issues as language, authenticity, relevance and postcolonial confusion as hindrances to the primary role of literature: storytelling as essential to understanding real life via the rejection of

facile absolutes and the celebration of nuance and contradictions. Using theories from both Filipino and international thinkers, this section also underscored that given the global aspect of the Philippine experience, postcolonial concerns are now contrary to the realities of the Filipino experience and that a post-postcolonial or cosmopolitan perspective is what is now pertinent and necessary. In this way, a new narrative for the Filipino experience can now emerge.

Part four discussed the practical formation of *Ilustrado*, focusing on the literary and cultural issues the author faced as a Filipino writer. Aesthetic decisions regarding language, narrative scope, verisimilitude, themes and structure were discussed to illustrate the potentialities of the evolving novel form. Problems within works by other Filipino writers were examined to understand *Ilustrado*'s proposed solutions regarding both form and content.

This paper has located *Ilustrado* at the edge of a preceding tradition through an analysis of Philippine social history, Philippine literary history, theory and practice. It has also provided an exegetical explanation of the process of writing *Ilustrado*.

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