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## **Privileging Roots and Routes: Filipino Intellectuals and the Contest over Epistemic Power and Authority**

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# Privileging Roots and Routes Filipino Intellectuals and the Contest over Epistemic Power and Authority

Reynaldo Ileto's "Orientalism in the Study of Philippine Politics" (1999) highlighted the problematical relationship between colonialism and knowledge production in American scholarship on the Philippines. In recent decades the target of the critique has shifted to Filipino-American and overseas Filipino intellectuals. This article examines the changing intellectual and material contexts in which Philippine-based, often middle-class, intellectuals claim epistemic privilege in representing the Philippines by virtue of "authentic" experience and knowledge. These claims involve a contest over the power and authority to speak (on behalf) of the Philippines and the role and subject positions of intellectuals in relation to a "Filipino nation" that is in the throes of transformation.

**KEYWORDS: ORIENTALISM • ILUSTRADO • INTELLECTUALS • SCHOLARSHIP • REYNALDO ILETO**

**R**eynaldo Ileto's essay, "Orientalism in the Study of Philippine Politics" (1999), a germinal and stringent critique of key political science texts on the Philippines, generated some debate in Philippine studies by highlighting the collusion between colonialism and knowledge production that underpinned—and, Ileto argues, continues to underpin—epistemic claims made by American scholarship on the Philippines. This debate was more than just about ideas; it was also deeply "personal" because Ileto's piece was perceived by some of the scholars he criticized as an attack on scholarship written by *Americans*.

A closer examination of the debate on Orientalism in Philippine studies and the concept itself as originally propounded by Edward Said lays bare a politics of location that conjoins issues of space and mobility and of the intellectual's individual and collective position in society. In this politics of location, the question of locality—of place as scale of analysis—has as much bearing on the (postcolonial) intellectual's fraught relationship to power and knowledge as the intellectual's social position. In calling attention to the geographical, social, and political concerns that inform the seemingly disinterested labor of the mind, the debate highlights the ineluctable entanglement of the personal in any intellectual endeavor. By "intellectuals" I refer to people whose work entails grappling with ideas, a category that includes, but is not limited to, academics, journalists, and writers. At the heart of the debate lie questions of the ability, right, and obligation of the intellectual to represent the nation in terms of speaking of and for the country.

A close reading of Ileto's Orientalism piece and the responses to it of Philippinists, both American and Filipino, leads us to the larger Anglophone intellectual milieu in which Ileto appropriated Said's concept of "Orientalism," enabling us to address head-on the crucial but problematic role of the intellectual as insider and outsider vis-à-vis his or her "object"/"subject" of study and audience. Far from being peripheral to Orientalism and its critique, the question of "the personal," that is, the intellectual's own role and position in society—or, more accurately, *across* different societies—is central to the exchange not only between Ileto and his interlocutors, but also to Said and his interlocutors.

The Orientalism debate indexes longstanding but as-yet unresolved issues about the intellectual's claim to epistemic authority. While the

insider-versus-outsider dichotomy lends itself to being naturalized when it is conflated with the dichotomy of native versus foreigner, the reality of increasing global flows and movements of ideas and peoples has introduced complications that test and blur the limits of both dichotomies, necessitating an analytical perspective that probes the linkages between "inside" and "outside" rather than presuming their separation. Such complications are very much evident in the Philippines, with its contemporary experience of large-scale international migration, including that of its intellectuals. In a situation wherein "Filipinos" themselves make epistemic claims and produce knowledge about the Philippines, can their scholarship—or, for that matter, that of a number of influential American scholars of the Philippines—be evaluated solely through an Orientalist critique? If critical distance is a necessary condition of intellectual work, is it compromised by geographical distance? If exteriority—being situated "outside"—is the defining attribute of Orientalism and its construction of the "Rest" as the negative other of the "West," does this apply as well to "natives"—the proverbial "insiders"—who live outside their countries of origin? Can local intelligentsia claim epistemic privilege and authority to speak of, if not on behalf of, their nations on the strength of their rootedness in "home," regardless of the social, racial, gender, regional, and other divisions that obtain "back home"?

### **Insider versus Outsider: The Problem of (American) Scholarship on the Philippines**

In "Orientalism and the Study of Philippine Politics"<sup>1</sup> Ileto (ibid., 41) discerned in the rhetoric and substance of modern-day approaches and writings a throwback to colonial discourse, with its "ideas of evolutionary development, racial difference and hierarchy, and superiority of 'the West' vis-à-vis 'the East.'" Pulitzer-prize-winning Stanley Karnow (1989, 43, 44), for example, analyzed Philippine politics principally in terms of an outmoded model of patron-client relations rooted in assumptions of a recalcitrant "Filipino culture" that was largely personalistic in nature, governed by "passions, kinship ties, debts of gratitude and personal loyalties." In blaming Filipino culture for derailing the adaptation of American-style democracy by Filipinos, Karnow (ibid., 45) helped cement the idea of Filipinos as "the negative 'others' of the Americans."

Ileto (1999, 52) faulted Carl Lande for pinpointing local personalistic ties as the key analytical unit of the political system and "bemoan[ing] the

‘entanglement’ of local, private, personal concerns, with conflicts in the national scene” (ibid., 53). Several authors of the edited volume, *An Anarchy of Families* (McCoy 1993)—notably Alfred W. McCoy,<sup>2</sup> Michael Cullinane, and John T. Sidel—were criticized for retailing a series of simplistic binaries such as “family versus state, particularistic versus nationalistic, violence versus law, clientelism versus genuine democracy, where the former is the negative pole” (Ileto 1999, 61).

Ileto took issue with the reduction of Filipino political behavior to a matter of factional loyalty and rivalry, a reduction that downplays the role of nationalist sentiments as well as alternative visions of “community in which power flows from the bottom up, as well, and in which indebtedness is not simply a one-way, oppressive, relationship but rather a reciprocal one” (ibid., 49).

The “Orientalism” essay was read by some scholars—including at least one of the scholars criticized by Ileto—as a blanket critique not only of *American* scholarship on the Philippines, but also influential “American” scholars of the Philippines. If one were to subject the essay to a purely internal examination of its scope and rhetoric, such an interpretation would not be completely without basis. Because the Orientalism essay focused exclusively on texts written by American or America-based scholars, it *appeared* to draw a line between America-based or American scholars and their Filipino counterparts.

Ileto’s dissatisfaction with American scholarship was not rooted in dislike of the personality of the American scholars, but rather in what he saw (rightly or wrongly) as their purveying of a “personalistic” Filipino political culture. In fact, ideas of “the personal” constitute the central concern of Orientalist critique itself. Orientalist critique drew on—and was itself informed by—a politics of location that was at once broadly geographical in its reach and deeply personal in its scope. Even as it focused attention on the problem of intellectual inquiry in general (Curaming 2011; Birch 1983), it also brought up forcefully the issue of the scholar’s stance in relation to both knowledge and power. Its polemic on intellectual inquiry combined considerations of person and place, of standpoint and situatedness. In criticizing the Orientalist binary between “Orient” and the “West,” it—as well as the debates it generated—would install binaries of its own. In particular, two binaries—“foreign” versus “native,” outsider versus insider—would gain traction in the Philippine debate on Orientalism.

Given that texts are produced by specific persons working within specific sites and contexts, no critique can be undertaken that does not, in a sense, also examine how a writer is shaped by the issues and concerns of her time and place. Ileto (1999, 57) proposed to read Lande’s propounding of an updated framework of “patron–client factions” in the context of Lande’s position as a scholar vis-à-vis anti-Communism and the “mainly Marxist-nationalist challenges to the postwar construction of history and politics.” Here, Ileto’s (ibid., 57–58) consideration of the ideological leaning of the scholar led him to the biographical specifics of the intellectual.

In his response, Lande (2002, 127) disagreed with Ileto’s insinuation that his own research may have been “colored” by such biographical specifics as race, friendship with political personages, even gender, and he faulted Ileto for assigning “malign intent” where there was none. Lande also declared that “[a]n unstated implication of Ileto’s piece is that the study of a country’s politics should be left to its own citizens, who presumably know it best” (ibid., 127). Furthermore Lande argued that there was “value, too, in the more detached eye of an outsider” (ibid.).

Sidel’s (2002, 129) response went farther than Lande’s in problematizing the role of non-Filipino, particularly American, scholars who, following Karnow’s lead, merely highlighted the inadequacies of Philippine democracy against an “idealized American standard.” Sidel explicitly differentiated himself, along with Alfred McCoy, from the likes of Karnow, declaring his solidarity with and support of Filipino progressive forces in the post-Marcos era “who were working to deepen the process of democratization . . . and to expose and undermine those forms of local authoritarianism that seemed to be thriving under conditions of formal democracy in the country” (ibid., 131–32). Sidel (ibid., 132) pointed to instances when his “own research proved to be useful to Filipino investigative journalists and political activists.”

Sidel (ibid.) offered a nuanced take on the vantage point afforded the foreign, in particular American, scholar as “outsider,” saying that it “was not the supposed analytical clarity and comparative perspective that is said to come with distance, but my relative ‘untouchability’ as a well-connected ‘Kano poking around in dangerous waters without fear of getting hurt.’ In defense of McCoy, Sidel (ibid., 135) noted that “this is the same historian who has spent decades detailing American complicity in dictatorships and in the drug trade in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world, and whose

work on Philippine social and political history has portrayed Spanish and American colonialism in highly unflattering terms.”

Sidel’s (ibid., 133) acknowledgment of his fraught position as a “non-Filipino” scholar of the Philippines in fact led him to eschew cultural explanations in favor of “macro-political and macro-sociological conditions that gave rise to this kind of politics, and the microeconomic conditions that shape patterns of variations—over time and across localities—in the success of bosses in entrenching themselves in power.” But this repudiation of cultural explanation—resulting in a “portrayal of Philippine democracy utterly devoid of culturally specific references to Filipino values, preferences and practices” (ibid., 138)—came at the cost of “denying the Philippines any distinctiveness and Filipinos any voice or agency in the making of their own politics” (ibid., 133–34).

The demarcation between “foreign”/American and “Filipino,” “insider” and “outsider” drawn by the exchange between Iletto and Lande and Sidel was given a fresh twist by maverick intellectual, Arnold Molina Azurin (2002, 142), the one Filipino who also contributed a response to Iletto. Azurin (ibid., 144) illustrated the gulf between visiting researchers and the people whose country is the object of study of these researchers, in that the former “sooner or later unearth some remains of ‘chiefdom’ [or] . . . notion of settlement structure and dynamic” held on to by the latter.

For Azurin (ibid., 145) geographical distance between foreign scholars and their sites of “fieldwork” translates into intellectual myopia: “research ventures [are] certainly limited at the outset as to subject, time frame, funding, and certain risk factors,” compounded by institutional constraints posed by a “publish-or-perish, and finish-or-fail” academic regime (ibid.). A far more costly consequence of this distance between foreign and Filipino perspective is that “as an outsider” the foreign researcher “cannot have real access to much of the ‘native’ insiders’ experiential recollection, as well as the phenomenological twists and turns of consciousness, self-identity and vested interest from one time to another among individuals and among local communities—especially when the local language is unknown to him” (ibid., 149).

Azurin (ibid., 149–50) stated that unlike Filipino researchers foreign scholars do “enjoy distinct advantages particularly in the Philippines” such as “better funding support . . . and the proverbial hospitality of Filipinos,” and “when faced with grave threats, they can seek protection from their embassies or pack up and go.”

Unlike Iletto, however, Azurin (ibid., 150) adopted a more sanguine view of the relationship between foreign and Filipino scholars, and a positive perspective on the “outsider’s privileged vista” that does not cancel that of the insider. Azurin suggested, moreover, that we “regard these contraposing privileged vistas as a dialogue in reflexivity, in the hope that a yin-yang dialectic may emerge out of the continuing contention” (ibid.).

Azurin (ibid., 141) in his own way got “personal” by bringing up Iletto’s own motives (e.g., the fear that other scholars might be “intruding” into Filipino scholarship and self-consciousness) as well as location and position as scholar (i.e., his “eminence in the field [being] assured by his worldwide citation quotient”). Azurin invoked territoriality (“turf”) and used the language of contention and competition to characterize the relationship between foreign and Filipino scholars.

But with regard to Iletto, the question of what Azurin called “privileged vistas of the insider/outsider” came to the fore because of Iletto’s own (problematical) position as a Filipino scholar based abroad where “he has found himself eventually as *neither an insider nor an outsider*—and has therefore engaged in the rarefied epistemic discourse from the vantage point of ‘migratory scholarship’” (ibid., 150, italics added). In Azurin’s essay the binary between insider and outsider is made to coincide with that of Filipino versus foreigner, a conflation that renders “distance” simultaneously in existential, geographical, and national terms. While Filipinos may more readily draw such demarcations (at the risk of disregarding individual scholars’ particular engagements with their field of study) when the Philippinist is a foreigner who comes from another country, things get more complicated when the Philippinist happens to be Filipino. Internal hierarchies do exist, after all: if Filipinos are the consummate insiders and foreigners are by definition outsiders, some Filipinos nevertheless have a better claim at being insiders than other Filipinos. For Azurin (ibid., 144) one of “us [Filipinos] who have mostly stayed at home,” Iletto may be Filipino, but he is also a Filipino living and working abroad, and this fact of being based elsewhere affords the migrant scholar a privileged vista while also rendering that same vista problematic. Azurin posed a thorny question: might not Iletto’s critique of Sidel and others reflect Iletto’s own grappling with the problematic position of the Filipino migrant scholar who is neither strictly an insider nor outsider? In so doing, Azurin (ibid.) revealed the existence of an internal border that separates Filipinos abroad from Filipinos who have remained in the Philippines.

## Roots versus Routes: Orientalism and the Problem of Exteriority

The existential and spatial exteriority of the intellectual in relation to the “field” or “area” on which he or she works cannot be easily dismissed as a “personal” attack or else a peripheral line of inquiry that has no bearing on the merits or otherwise of a given work of scholarship.

The problem of the “personal” and the issue of exteriority it raises are in fact crucial rather than incidental to Orientalist discourse and its critique. Ito's intervention is part of a cross-continental, Anglophone conversation (and a heated one) among progressive nonwhite intellectuals about the problematic status of the progressive Third-World migrant intellectual. To understand the implications of Ito's essay, we need to revisit the book it cites, Said's landmark *Orientalism*, and the critical responses to that book by Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad.

In *Orientalism* Said (1994, 11) argues that the intellectual's role in producing such knowledge is not tangential to the scholarship at hand, but the very condition of possibility of that work. Otherwise the intellectual can merely disclaim the “circumstances of *his* actuality” as European or American, for instance, and hence disregard the fact that he or she “belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer” (ibid.).

According to Said (ibid., 21, italics added), a fundamental attribute of the Orientalist text is its “*exteriority* to what it describes.” The writer or scholar of the text “makes the Orient speak and describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West,” reducing the writer's or scholar's work to “representation” (ibid., 20–21).

In the hermeneutical process of converting distance into meaning, “*cultural, temporal and geographical distance* was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise” (ibid., 222, italics added). Distance fuels the sense of estrangement and may hinder (self-)cognition and empathy (for others), all the more so if the scholar enters into a close relationship with the state (ibid., 326). Orientalism basically disempowers the “natives,” who are “rarely seen or looked at” or else “seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or taken over” (ibid., 207), and who “had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives” (ibid., 86).

And yet Said does not see the solution in a simple reversal of the West/Orient binary. Well aware that his own education grants him the privilege of access to the knowledge systems of the West, Said values the detachment of intellectual “exile” (Biddick 2000, 1241). Exile is, for Said, a “deeply painful spatial problem” (ibid., 1242). Although Said is careful to distinguish between different motives for immigration and exile,<sup>3</sup> he is keen nevertheless to pinpoint the liberatory possibilities of exile, embodied by the migrant intellectual. Migrant intellectuals can play a role in “challenging the system” and “describing it in language unavailable to those it has already subdued” (Said 1994, 333) in the very space of empire, so to speak (ibid., 332–33). Said's celebration of the contribution of the migrant intellectual is rooted in his own life experience as an academic and activist based in the US and his contribution to the Palestinian Question. But the intellectual implications of mass migration, in particular the influx of intellectuals from the Third World into the First, render Said's privileging of exile vulnerable to critique.<sup>4</sup> For “exile can run the risk of becoming a dangerous way of keeping out of touch, out of time, out of history” (Biddick 2000, 1245).

The two most substantive critiques of migrant intellectuals, Arif Dirlik's “The Postcolonial Aura” (1994) and Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992), do emphasize the perils of “distance,” both intellectual and geographical, *from* the so-called Third World as migrants travel to the First World. Dirlik (1994, 329, italics added) traces the advent of the “postcolonial” to the time when “Third World intellectuals *have arrived* in First World academe,” or more specifically, to their increased visibility, respectability, and assertiveness in First-World academic institutions. The exemplary figure is the hybrid, fluid “postcolonial subject” (ibid.) who is no longer simply a part of the comprador intelligentsia but rather a member of the intelligentsia of global capitalism (ibid., 356).

In citing the divergence in perspective and positions over the matter of constituting the “native intellectual” as the “postcolonial intellectual” found in the exchange between postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and intellectuals in India, Dirlik (ibid., 343) underscores the necessity of analyzing “differences of power that go with different locations.”

New Delhi-based Aijaz Ahmad (1992, 1993) had made a similar move a few years earlier in his critique of Said. Ahmad (1992, 207–8) rejected Said's celebratory image of the immigrant intellectual in the West as



necessarily “anti-imperialist.” For Ahmad (1993, 174, italics added), the general tendency of immigration is to reinforce certain class privileges in such a way as to complicate the *public* claims made by migrant intellectuals who either study or teach in “*metropolitan* universities.” Ahmad (1992, 86) insisted that

[T]he combination of class origin, professional ambition, and lack of a prior location in a stable socialist praxis predisposes a great many of the radicalized immigrants located in the metropolitan university towards both an opportunistic kind of Third Worldism as the group form of oppositional politics and a kind of self-censoring, which in turn impels them toward greater incorporation in modes of politics and discourse already authorized by the prevailing fashion in the university.<sup>5</sup>

In Ahmad’s 1993 response to his critics following the publication of *In Theory*, he explained the original context of his critique. He had written and presented his critique to mostly university people located in Delhi, India (hence my italicizing the word “metropolitan” in the above quotation), who as it turned out “are pressed by a wide range of frequently conflicting political and intellectual positions in the country and are *themselves located in cosmopolitan and privileged institutions inside India, thereby commanding far more influence than mere numbers would indicate, but which are also deeply marked by intellectual currents in the Anglo-American university*” (Ahmad 1993, 161, italics added).

Ahmad (ibid., 162) in fact uses the word “metropolitan” to refer to academic institutions *within* his home country of India and *in* the First World (particularly Anglophone First World). Not only is Ahmad cognizant of the impact of Anglo-American theory on people who would be called “native intellectuals,” but he also acknowledges—though, tellingly, only in passing—the fact that differences of power operate not only *between* different national locations but also *within* specific nation-states. Ahmad thus maintains a conceptual separation between “inside” and “outside.” His principal critique is directed at the First-World *outside*, where migrant intellectuals reside.

## Which “Middle Element”?

### Filipino, Filipino-Foreigner, Overseas Filipino

Said’s privileging of rootlessness as the enabling condition of humanistic detachment helped lay the foundation for Postcolonial Theory, which has tended to elevate—and has been rightly criticized for elevating<sup>6</sup>—hybridity and travel/migrancy into foundational concepts of radical agency. Postcolonial Theory’s uncritical celebration of the radicalism of routes provoked stringent critiques from Dirlik and Ahmad, who brought up forcefully the persistence of “roots” and underscored the complex and often asymmetrical relationship between migrant intellectuals based in the First World and their countries of origin and the “native intellectuals” remaining “back home.”

But discussions of native intellectuals’ own problematic positioning have been confined largely to debates *within* the nation and have not been part of the transnational dialogue *between* intellectuals “back home” and intellectuals “abroad.” It is telling that Ahmad qualified his own positioning within a “metropolitan” Delhi only in his response to his critics, but not in the main text of *In Theory*. Similarly, Ileo’s “Orientalism” essay rendered itself vulnerable to criticism of its “racializing” stance because, read as a stand-alone piece, it focused primarily on America-based/American scholarship.

In his response to Lande, Sidel, and others, Ileo (2002, 153) cited his (1988) earlier critique of Teodoro Agoncillo, Renato Constantino, and Jose Ma. Sison and their unilinear emplotment of Philippine history in order to shore up his claim that neither did he target “American scholars alone” nor insist “that the study of Philippine politics should be best left to Filipino nationals.”

Ileo (2002, 169, italics added) tried to find a middle ground between non-Filipinos and Filipino nationals by making a case for the “power of the *local* intelligentsia” as a key mediating figure in both Philippine politics and scholarship. He linked his discussion to Temario Rivera’s (2000) study of the largely urban, educated middle classes that have played “important political roles in varying conjunctures since the declaration of independence in 1946” (Ileo 2002, 172).<sup>7</sup> Since segments of the middle classes work within as well as outside the purview of the state, they exhibit different persuasions across the political spectrum. Eschewing the use of the term “middle class,” Ileo (ibid., 173) proposed instead to apply the term “middle element” to social groups as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, representing an “indeterminate entity whose fractions could put their talents to contradictory

aims.” He highlighted the local rootedness of individuals from this group and distinguished them from their itinerant colleagues, Rizal, Mabini, and Del Pilar, who “originated from similar towns in the Tagalog provinces” but “already moved out of this ‘feudal’ environment dominated by some despot or the other.” It is this middle element whose political actions and affiliations were highly contingent but who “were in the towns, had never left, or had returned from the sojourns” that Iletto invested with the power and potential to “critique and subvert” the “real existing bossism.”

That a migrant scholar like Iletto should make this point says something about an important shift in the demographic and institutional contexts under which the Philippines is studied and represented. In counterposing the visible–invisible figure of the locally rooted, native “middle element” as mediator and agent of both Philippine history and historiography to that of American, America-based, and/or American-oriented scholarship, Iletto lifts the lid on the contentious issue of epistemic privilege and authority that informs the relationship between American and Filipino scholars. But as Azurin’s reading of Iletto’s piece shows, raising the issue of the “middle element” also means raising the issue of epistemic privilege and authority as it pertains to the relationship *among* “Filipino” scholars themselves.

In the Philippines the idea of the “returning” native intellectuals has a history dating back to the nineteenth-century Propaganda Movement, even though some of the movement’s most prominent members—M. H. Del Pilar and Graciano Lopez Jaena, among them—died abroad. But the context in which Dirlik and Ahmad published their critiques is different from that which obtained 150 years ago: the current idea of “returning” intellectuals no longer carries with it the political charge and cachet that it once had, when *ilustrados* did not merely signify education, wealth, or geographical location, but also, under specific contexts, a critical stance that could potentially result in persecution by the colonial state (see Mojares 2006, 414). Tainted by its association, if not equation, with the term “elite,” *ilustrado* has acquired negative connotations.

To be sure, there have been recent attempts to resignify the term “*ilustrado*” by applying it to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Noted writer and columnist Jessica Zafra (2008, 12), for example, has argued that

The diaspora brought the benefits of travel to a wider public. Like the 19th century *ilustrados*—the first people to call themselves

“Filipinos”—modern-day Filipinos have been exposed to new ideas, attitudes, and technologies. They bring their recently-acquired knowledge back home, where it challenges traditional ways of thinking, or at least opens up discussion.

Randolf David (2010) compares the OFWs with “Filipino travelers of Rizal’s generation” in terms of loyalty to, and concern over, the nation. David (*ibid.*) calls the OFWs “influential agents of change” and, like the *indios bravos*, the “most demanding constituency of the Philippine nation. . . . Their mobility, their broad international experience, and their rich encounters with various cultures have made OFWs truly modern,” and a “critical fulcrum of our society’s transition to modernity.”<sup>8</sup>

Booker-Prize-winning author Miguel Syjuco has stated in an interview that

The idea of *ilustrado* is not something calcified and lost in the history books. It’s a potentiality. *Ilustrado* is a Spanish word for “enlightened.” But it’s also a very ironic way of using the term *ilustrado*, because this book is about the failure of the leadership, of the elite Filipinos who should know better, and how they’ve failed to really do their part in helping our country. (Tam 2010)

More recently, a young physicist named Reinabelle Reyes (2012) has talked about highly educated Filipinos working in universities and research laboratories abroad (but particularly in the First World), whom she labels “Third-Culture PhDs” (TCPs), based on “Third-Culture Kids . . . raised in a culture outside their parents’.” They possess multilingual abilities, doctorates, more rigorous work ethics, and a “heightened cultural intelligence and sensitivity”; they acquire not only “valuable—and highly valued skills,” but also “the gift of perspective, of the unnatural instinct to *not* take anything for granted, of the capacity to see the ordinary with fresh eyes. . . . Most importantly, like the 19th-century *ilustrados*, 21st-century TCPs learn firsthand that things don’t have to be ‘the way it has always been’” (*ibid.*).

Reyes vows to “come home” and “look[s] forward to going back—not to return to the home I left, but to start on the one I’m going to help build.” This promise of return, which incidentally Reyes has fulfilled in coming home to teach at the Ateneo de Manila University, is the most powerful antidote to the



conception among some Filipinos (predominantly middle-class ones) based in the Philippines of “departure as betrayal,” an accusation often pinned on Filipino migrants, especially those who settle in the US (Vergara 2009, 137). The promise of return, however, is neither universally shared nor universally applied among Filipinos. Jonathan Ong and Jason Cabañes (2011) point out the different values that are assigned to elite-migrant bodies—particularly modern-day *ilustrados*—as opposed to their less privileged counterparts. They argue that these values are linked to the necessity (or lack thereof) of return: “to be good Filipinos, elite migrants should come home, *balikbayans* should *intermittently* come home, and OFWs are of greater value when they are *away* from home” (ibid., 220). By returning, the modern-day *ilustrados* can fulfill their “moral duty” to the nation while availing themselves of the “opportunities for advancement and leadership waiting for them at home” (ibid.).

In his analysis of Filipino middle-class ambivalence about migration, Koki Seki (2012) documents the boundary-making and -breaching moves by which some members of the middle classes seek to differentiate themselves from the masses, on the one hand, and the upper classes, on the other hand, while others aspire for reform and change through networking and alliances with the “common people.” Such class and status anxieties on the part of middle- and upper-class Filipinos do indeed help shape representations of Filipino migrants. In a study of the feminization of Filipino labor and the crisis of masculinity that it engenders, Resto Cruz I (2012, 536) argues that both the negative public perception of Filipino migrants and the critical view of the Philippines articulated by Filipino migrants themselves are, *pace* Seki, part and parcel of the “same middle-class consciousness that swings from identification with the Philippine nation-state to a disavowal of its existing hierarchies.” What these perceptions highlight is the “middle-class conundrum of wanting several things at once, including effective change in Philippine society, maintaining a distinction between themselves [the middle classes] and the elites and the lower classes, and achieving social mobility at a time when such mobility can perhaps be realized only by working overseas” (ibid.).

This ambivalence is most evident in representations of—and attitudes toward—Filipino migrants to the United States. Benito Vergara Jr. has written compellingly of how Filipinos in America are perceived by Filipinos “back home.” He argues that “notions of Filipino identity and belonging are evoked

to regulate the class and national inclusion or exclusion of middle-class individuals outside the country” (Vergara 2009, 135). Filipinos’ “departure” for America is seen as a “betrayal of the nation to pursue what are seen as purely personal interests” (ibid., 137), while the mere fact of remaining at home is already lauded as a form of “heroism” (ibid.). Underlying this middle-class rhetoric of betrayal is a form of nationalism. Thus, even when migrants are not labeled as traitors, they are nevertheless coded as people who have opted out of the “national” community created out of shared sacrifice and suffering (ibid., 138). Moreover, such charge belies a form of resentment harbored most often at Filipino migrants to the US, who are seen as attaching themselves to the erstwhile colonizer and current hegemon, and enjoying easy access to First-World (or, more accurately, American) amenities, consumer goods, and lifestyles.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss the resentment felt by Philippine-based scholars against OFW and Filipino-American/foreign intellectuals as a simple case of envy.<sup>9</sup> This resentment is a byproduct of, but also fueled by, important differences in prestige, access to resources, and relationship with power between metropolitan sites of knowledge production and “areas” in which attempts at building what S. H. Alatas (2002, 153–54) calls an “autonomous social science tradition in Asia” are underway.<sup>10</sup> Filipino and other Third-World intellectuals not only carry heavier burdens in terms of teaching loads; they must perforce grapple with the most basic problems of lack of research funds and access to library and other scholarly resources such as books and electronic journals.<sup>11</sup>

Those who readily see Filipino migrants to the US in general as enjoying access to First-World amenities by virtue of relocating themselves to the (colonizing) metropole draw on a distinction between OFWs in general and OFW intellectuals in particular. Although OFWs now come from a variety of social backgrounds, they are generally assumed to be of middle- or lower middle-class origins, they work in non-middle-class occupations while abroad, and they are denied the privileges of permanent residency in the countries in which they work. But OFW intellectuals, by virtue of their occupation and their “highly valued” and marketable skills, are more likely to obtain permanent residency or citizenship in their country of immigration and therefore more vulnerable to being lumped together with the “middle-class” Filipinos in America and elsewhere as well as their “Fil-foreigner”<sup>12</sup> progeny.

Indeed, a notable development of recent years is that the very terms by which an Orientalist critique has been leveled against American scholarship on the Philippines have been carried over into critiques leveled against both Filipino-American and overseas Filipino scholarship on the Philippines. That there is as yet no language or framework for a nuanced understanding of this phenomenon can be seen in Adam David's (2009) "scathing" review of the manuscript of what would become Miguel Syjuco's (2010) Man Asian-prize-winning novel *Ilustrado*. In calling the book "very elitista," David (2009) strings together the adjective "elitista" with the term "FilAm," a near conflation that is also reductionist in its glossing over many facts of Syjuco's Filipino origins and its eliding the contradictions inherent in Syjuco's own life story (Hau 2011, 7).

The reasons for the negative view of the "Fil-Am" intellectual lie in the demographic changes wrought by the international migration of Filipinos and their increasing visibility in academia, particularly in the United States. Not only have Filipinos outstripped the Chinese to form the largest contingent of Asians in America, but the former's access to higher education has also enabled more Filipino Americans to enter American academia as students and teachers. In turn, the deterritorialization of Filipino labor has seen a number of Filipinos born and raised in the Philippines enter PhD programs in America, graduate, and obtain jobs in American academia.<sup>13</sup>

They are part of a larger trend in which, as Dorinne Kondo (2001, 25) has noted, "people who were formerly the objects of representation by the dominant are ourselves entering the academy and the arts in order to 'represent ourselves,' however problematic that enterprise might be." The Orientalist premise wherein "natives" are not consulted has been nullified by new global and regional arrangements in which intellectuals—Asian Americans as well as Asians in America—with "autobiographical ties" (Chakrabarty 2001, 107) to Asia now actively mediate the production of knowledge about Asia. Autobiographical ties that link Filipino and Filipino-foreign intellectuals to the Philippines enable these intellectuals to lay claim to knowledge of their object of study.

But the very persistence of these ties—the decision on the part of Filipino Americans and Filipinos in America to "turn" if not "re-turn" (to use Vergara's [2009] term) to the Philippines—also complicates their relationship with their object of study as well as the (Filipino) subjects who inhabit that site of study. The issue is not simply one of differences in audience, perspectives,

intellectual and political agenda, impact, and consequences. It is one of language and access to worlds as well. Resil Mojares (2006, 400–1) has pointed to the ambivalent position that bilingual "cultural intermediaries" (then called *ladinos*, *indios* who "could speak Spanish and, more broadly, had become versed in Spanish ways" [ibid., 400]) occupied in Philippine colonial society. For Mojares these intermediaries' fluency in a language other than their own "is a skill at once attractive and dissembling, admired and mistrusted" (ibid., 401). Fluency in English, the language of power and privilege in the Philippines and a regional and global lingua franca by virtue of British and later American hegemony, has deepened rather than mitigated this ambivalence about the intellectual. Immigrants and overseas Filipinos, by virtue of their physical location, claim direct access to the cultural and intellectual resources of the metropole, particularly the US, which in the twentieth century replaced Spain/Europe as the zone of cultural validation and geopolitical power. The intellectual dominance exercised for many decades by colonial and contemporary Anglo-American and European social science traditions has meant that academic degrees awarded in the US or Europe are accorded more prestige than those awarded in home countries. Publishing abroad—particularly in Thomson-Reuters-indexed journals—now carries more weight and, just as important, cash incentives, in the eyes of university bureaucrats who are eager to play the internationalization game and improve the global rankings of their schools.<sup>14</sup>

More important, immigrants and their "Fil-foreign" descendants do not, or no longer (if they ever did), follow a unilinear and unidirectional path of migration, permanent settlement, and assimilation in the host-turned-home country.<sup>15</sup> The paths tend to be circular,<sup>16</sup> and involve any number of departures and returns, whether briefly, regularly, occasionally, or for extended periods of time, if not permanently, particularly for those who elect to study and work on the Philippines. Circulation means something more than Rhacel Parreñas's (2010) notion of "circular migration." For Parreñas, Filipino entertainers' repeated "returns" to Japan as short-term migrants or contract workers—returns that do not necessarily entail permanent settlement in the host country (i.e., Japan)—distinguish this type of migration from "transnational migration," which is based on the typecase of the permanent migrant. What is often understood as "transnational migration" may in fact already involve experiences of "circular" migration, as seen in the case of Philippinist OFW and Filipino-

foreign intellectuals who have permanently settled or were born and raised abroad, but retain or create multiple linkages and affinities (material, intellectual, imaginative, professional, and virtual) to the Philippines. For those who “work on” the Philippines, the repeated “returns” take the form of fieldwork, library research, and short-term stays and employment in the Philippines. To complicate matters, some OFW intellectuals who are permanent residents may not feel “equally entrenched in host and home societies” (ibid., 303), let alone “maintain equal allegiances to home and host societies” (ibid.); allegiances, particularly in the case of first-generation migrants, may remain lopsided in favor of the Philippines, even in the absence of segregation in their receiving country. In the case of Filipino-foreigners, their identification with host and home country may also be complicated by the blurring of distinctions between “home” and “host” based on their experiences of acceptance *and* rejection in *both* “host” (in this case, the Philippines) and “home” countries, as well as their political commitments. As Parreñas (ibid., 304) rightly points out, “there is probably no iron relationship between assimilation and transnationalism.”

The Saidian idea of permanent “exile” may have largely been replaced by an idea of “diaspora” that incorporates the “temporal dimension of return” (Biddick 2000, 1242), but we have yet to get used to the intellectual implications of repeated departures and returns in place of the final, one-way ticket back to, or out of, home. However much Filipino intellectuals working abroad may consider themselves as no more than OFWs, their migration is not easily or safely subsumed into a narrative of *bagong bayani* (“new heroes”), whose work abroad has been coded as heroic sacrifice for and contribution to the nation.<sup>17</sup> If “Fil-foreigners” are viewed as doing disservice to Filipinos by taking jobs and opportunities (in acting and soccer playing, for instance) away from deserving Filipinos, OFWs “betray” the country by taking and using their skills and talents elsewhere. Worse, their research agenda may even threaten the integrity of the nation.

An instructive example is the heated exchange over Facebook between OFW intellectual Patricio Abinales, then based in Kyoto University, and the Philippine-based retired UP professor Zeus Salazar. Salazar accused Abinales of serving as a comprador scholar who sells data about/from the Philippines to Japan and other Western countries when he is abroad and, at the same time, sells “theory” to fellow English speakers in the Philippines (Chua 2010, 22).<sup>18</sup>

The debate becomes complicated when we regard the fact that most Japanese area studies specialists publish in Japan as well as regionally (most often in the countries they study), as they consider that the audience for whom they write is not necessarily in America or Europe. Abinales’s sojourn in Japan arguably gave him both the space and opportunity to write for a Philippine audience, and he has published most of his books in the Philippines (through the Ateneo de Manila University Press). (In contrast, scholars based in the United States would first have to secure a book contract in the US and then arrange for copublication in the Philippines. Although Philippine university presses have their own refereeing system, most of the time copublication appears more like reprinting than putting out a real Philippine edition. Nonetheless, the decision to make the book available in the Philippines is welcome, part of these America-based scholars’ engagement with a Filipino reading audience.)

In taking seriously the *audience* for which one writes and conducts research, one’s location matters insofar as it poses specific constraints on research and writing for multiple sites and audiences: whether, for example, there is time to revise or rewrite a book that has been published in America for students and scholars based in American universities for a specifically Philippine audience; whether it makes sense to write one’s book in Indonesian or Thai or Filipino rather than English (or as well as English) to reach a non-English reading audience in these countries; or whether resources can be tapped to encourage a true dialogue—rather than in-house conversation among America-based academics or a one-way monologue from America to Southeast Asia—not only between scholars based abroad and based in the region, but among scholars based in the region.<sup>19</sup>

In another passage, again addressed to Abinales, Salazar elaborates on what he means by “comprador scholar” and, in doing so, accuses Abinales of promoting separatism:

Ang tinutukoy ko ay ang iyong pagbebenta mo ng sarili bilang “iskolar” ng at tungkol sa Pilipinas sa isang banyagang kapangyarihan na isa rin sa mga nagsasamantala sa Pinas . . . at naging kolonisador din nito. At halos lahat ng sinusulat mo tungkol sa Pinas ay upang alipustain ang kalagayan dito, sa halip na matulungan ito na makaahon sa kanyang kalagayan, sa kanyang pagkalugmok. At ang tinutumbok ng lahat ay upang mahiwalay ang isang bahagi ng bansa . . . hindi mo man lang

mapagtibay ang loob ng bansa para makalaban ang mga puwersang nagtatangkang mapaghiwa-hiwalay ang mga Pilipino. Alam ko, hindi mo itinuturing ang sarili bilang Pilipino, kaya pulos pang-aalipusta ng kalagayan ng bansa ang ipinagbibili mo sa mga Hapon at Amerikano . . . . (Chua 2010, 24)

I am referring to the way you sell yourself as a scholar from and of the Philippines to a foreign power that is one of those that oppressed the Philippines . . . and had been a colonizer of it. And almost everything that you write about the Philippines is meant to cast aspersion on the situation here instead of helping to improve its situation, to uplift it. And what it aims at is to separate one part of the country . . . you can't even strengthen the *loob*/resolve of the nation to fight against the forces that are trying to divide Filipinos. I know, you don't consider yourself a Filipino [sic], that's why you're bent on selling your put-downs of the country's situation to the Japanese and Americans.

Salazar charges Abinales with promoting separatism that threatens to dismember and divide the nation, and, worse, selling his derogatory views of the country to its former colonizers—the Japanese and the Americans. But he himself remains silent, in the face of repeated prodding from Abinales, about his own involvement in the *Tadhana* history-writing project under Ferdinand Marcos (1976). Abinales turns the tables on Salazar by pointing out that, while Salazar was “selling” (*ipinagbibili*) his services to Marcos, other intellectuals in the university elected not to collaborate (ibid., 27) and that Salazar was writing *Tadhana* for his “dictator boss” (*boss mong diktador*) Marcos while the military was massacring Moros and other people from Mindanao “in the name of the nation” (ibid., 28). For Salazar, Marcos at least is not someone who is a destroyer of the country (*tagalansag ng bansa*) (ibid., 24). It is this identification with the nation—even in its authoritarian, repressive form—that enables Salazar to claim the moral high ground.

Citing Salazar's taking Abinales to task for making “treasonable” (ibid., 35) remarks favoring Mindanao separatism, Lisandro Claudio (2013, 60) argues: “That Salazar would declare allegiance to an elitist despot like Marcos and a convicted plunderer like Estrada for the sake of national unity exposes how easily the centripetal tendency of nationalism dovetails with elite state formation.” The uncritical embrace of the nation in the name of national

unity, which shades off into identification with the state and its leaders, represents one extreme consequence of a “nationalistic” standpoint that is critical of OFW intellectuals but turns a blind eye to its own problematical status in the Philippines and the inequalities and hierarchies that obtain therein.

As mentioned earlier, the idea of “return” seeks to resolve the “departure-as-betrayal” tension by reterritorializing “Filipinos” as well as Filipinoness.<sup>20</sup> Yet, returning “Filipinos” come up against the epistemic claims and authority exerted by those who remain behind. Does this mean that American, Filipino-American, and overseas Filipino intellectuals should disengage from the study of the Philippines? Should they give up the responsibility to exercise “[t]he power of naming, in particular of naming the unnameable, that which is still unnoticed or repressed” (Bourdieu 1990, 149)? James Clifford (1997, 84) has argued eloquently in favor of attending more closely to the dialectic between roots and routes in “local/global situations where displacement appears increasingly the norm.” His incitement to question the “[b]inary oppositions between home and abroad, staying and moving” (ibid.) seems particularly salient for Philippinists, whether Filipino or foreign, or overseas Filipino or Fil-foreign. “Staying home,” he tells us, can be a “political act, a form of resistance” (ibid., 85), but so too can “making home” wherever it may be. To speak of “us” “Filipinos” as opposed to “them” “Fil-foreigner” and “OFWs,” or for that matter, “American” or “foreign” Philippinists in the name of the Filipino people and nation (let alone the state) in an uncritical manner is both dubious and self-serving.

When *Ilustrado* author Syjuco publicly criticized Sen. Vicente “Tito” Sotto III for plagiarism and declared his support for the Reproductive Health Bill, an internet blogger sneered that these efforts were “the least Syjuco—newfound idol of the Starbucks-sipping, High-Street-trotting crowd—could do for the poor, suffering Filipinos who have always been close to his heart all those years he has been away in North America, Europe [sic] and Australia” (Saavedra 2012). Syjuco (2012) shot back, “You doubt my dedication to our country? Please. I could walk away in a heartbeat. But I don't. And I won't let the likes of you make me.”<sup>21</sup>

Syjuco's refusal to “walk away”<sup>22</sup> issues a broader challenge against the epistemic authority exercised by Philippine-based intellectuals. For if the foreign area specialist can no longer assume a position as a detached “onlooker, privileged to watch how the drama unfolds without being caught

in it” (Young 1984, 16 citing Fairbank 1982, 125), the same holds not only for the deterritorialized “native intellectual” but also for the home-based “native intellectual.” The problem of speaking for “one’s” country involves two senses of representation (“proxy and portrait,” or speaking of and speaking for) that are related, but can neither be completely sundered nor conflated (Spivak 1988, 275–76). The problem of representation cannot simply be buried under claims to “authenticity” and “authority” that automatically and uncritically privilege one group of “native” “knowers” over another. As Spivak (ibid., 295) writes:

**In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* “unlearns” female privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized.**

The claim to epistemic privilege and authority exercised by Philippine-based Filipino intellectuals rests on a number of assumptions: that the social location of certain people—their position in a social structure, their situatedness in specific social relations—grants them special insights and perspectives about particular problems or issues that may not be available to people of a different social standing.

Marx made the classic formulation of epistemic privilege in regard to the proletariat (Bar On 1993, 85), a formulation that in turn rested on the lived reality of “marginality” as experienced by the poor. This notion of epistemic privilege was adopted eventually by feminists as part of standpoint theory.<sup>23</sup> But the idea that all knowledge is knowledge from a perspective and that “some perspectives are more revealing than others,” particularly when these perspectives are of socially marginalized groups (ibid., 83), is not a simple, commonsensical one because there are different ways of being socially marginalized (ibid., 88–89). If epistemic privilege is basically a “function of distance from the center” (ibid., 89), and there are multiple experiences of oppression and marginalization, the concept also carries the risk of positing “distance from the center” as some kind of idealized, liberated space outside of power. If power is both centralized as well as diffused, such that there is not only one center (the most powerful one being the state) in which it can

be contained or localized, then to what extent is epistemic privilege a useful concept?

Moreover, claiming epistemic privilege raises more questions (Anderson 2011) than answers, and demands precisely that the analysis go beyond the mere assertion of “nation” as a unitary force to explore the contradictions that arise out of the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of “Filipino” and “the Filipino nation.” Which social location is capable of generating more reliable knowledge? What is the scope of this privilege? How is this privilege justified? What other perspectives need to be factored in to generate more reliable knowledge? How can such knowledge be rendered accessible to others? Does one gain better perspective simply by occupying a given social location? To ask these questions is to demand more intellectual work rather than suspend it.

This problem becomes acute in situations where intellectuals claim epistemic privilege in the name of the nation, and run the risk of conflating nation with state and occluding class, ethnic, and regional differences within the nation.<sup>24</sup> The nation is itself a subject of contention and debate, and its inclusionary and exclusionary claims and practices are well known. The nationalistic stance adopted by homebound Filipino intellectuals vis-à-vis overseas Filipino, “Fil-foreign,” and foreign intellectuals is not entirely free of the tendency to homogenize and essentialize the nation. This comes at the cost of a more critical consideration not only of the nation itself but also the fraught position of intellectuals (particularly in relationship to the state and to the question of class<sup>25</sup>) and the politics of knowledge production between and within nations. This stance may also risk, at times, producing a fatal blindness, a failure to “‘unlearn’ privilege” (Spivak 1988, 295), because a stringent critique of colonialism by foreign powers is not matched by an equally stringent critique of the exclusionary ideologies and practices and the centrifugal tendencies of the nation itself. In effect, in treating external and internal critiques as analytically discrete rather than linked, such an intellectual stance works against Philippine studies.<sup>26</sup>

Intellectuals, by virtue of their occupation, constitute a heterogeneous group of people with differing and often conflicting loyalties, stances, and perspectives. As Ileteo’s (2002, 172) discussion of the Janus-faced “middle element” and its role in Philippine history shows, intellectuals’ relationship to the state, to elites, to other intellectuals, and to the “people” in and beyond their home country can be very complex and shifting, a fact that is



further complicated by the Philippines's own position in the world. And yet this complexity is largely glossed over and left unexplored when intellectuals invoke the "nation" in order to regulate—to define, delimit, even exclude—the participation of intellectuals speaking from different vantage points and geographical spaces in the Philippine intellectual field.

### **Toward Regional and Global Dialogue and Collaboration**

Ileto's salvo against "Orientalism" in key Philippine political science texts compels us to consider the problematical relationship of scholarship to its object and subject(s) of study (Curaming 2011). The debate that Orientalism provoked has also had the salutary effect of raising the thorny but relatively unexamined issue of intellectuals—whether foreign or Filipino or Fil-foreign or overseas Filipino—and their relationship to each other and to the Philippines in ways that go beyond the terms by which Said originally framed his main arguments. Questions of exteriority and distance can no longer be so easily mapped onto an inside-versus-outside, metropole-versus-periphery, West-versus-the-Rest, or departure-versus-return dichotomy.

Indeed, as Ileto (2011, 106) himself has argued forcefully, Filipino scholarship is shaped by its specific location and history:

The process of simultaneously being formed by and contesting the political, social, and cultural hegemony of Spain and the United States, and to a lesser extent Japan, has made most Filipino intellectuals keenly aware of the dilemmas in positing pure forms of the "Western" or the "indigenous," or the local versus the global. Filipinos, moreover, are not physically "fixed" themselves; their "nation" also travels to the nooks and crannies of the wider world they inhabit. The shifting locations—such as Spain, America, Japan, and Australia—from which they have voiced their political concerns, further complicates [sic] the identification of a domestic intellectual tradition.

Filipino international migration is a fact of life, with an estimated 4 million people who identify themselves or are identified as "Filipinos" in America, and more than 10 million Filipinos living and working abroad. For this reason, the *will to ignorance* exercised by Filipinos "back home" toward "Fil-foreigners" and Filipinos abroad—the refusal to factor their experiences and perspectives *from afar* into what it means to be and call oneself Filipino—

is becoming less and less defensible and tenable. Here, too, a certain class bias is at work: for as long as OFWs work in non-middle-class occupations outside the Philippines, they can be hailed as bagong bayani because they do not, after all, pose any threat to the status and standing of the Filipino intellectual as representative of the Filipino nation and society, to his or her claim to speak of and speak for the nation.

But when this privilege is threatened by competing claims of "other" Filipino intellectuals, then some Philippine-based intellectuals feel the need to defend their turf by invoking a rhetoric of (self-) "sacrifice" that attempts to conflate their situation with that of the poor, and then draw on this conflation to distinguish themselves from the Filipino intellectuals abroad. The real disparity between income earned in the Philippines (even with attempts on the part of elite universities to increase faculty paychecks)<sup>27</sup> and income earned abroad<sup>28</sup>—a disparity that makes a middle-class lifestyle harder to maintain back home—should not downplay the risk of the rhetoric of "sacrifice" and "suffering" invoked by Philippine-based intellectuals glossing over the exploitation of poorly paid and predominantly female domestic servants whose labor grants these intellectuals back home the time and resources to do their work.

The invocation of the relationship between immigration and careerism, too, is a blanket generalization that needs to be tested again and again against the individual cases and biographies of, as well as the position taken by, the intellectuals—both foreign and Filipino—in relation to the country and "people" whose cause they champion. Assuming a critical stance on behalf of the nation does not annul the responsibility of the intellectual to exercise critical vigilance with regard to the nation within which she locates herself and speaks. Said (1996, 44) put it best when he said, "just because you represent the sufferings that your people lived through which you yourself might have lived through also, you are not relieved of the duty of revealing that your own people now may be visiting related crimes on *their* victims."

Indeed, the question of intellectual authority is neither neutral nor merit based. Race, location, and language may have a bearing on how ideas are received. Would Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979) have been as critically acclaimed had something similar been written by an American? Would it have garnered the same attention if it had been written in Filipino? Why did Glenn May's (1996) questioning of the Bonifacio sources create such controversy, while an earlier questioning—delivered



at a public lecture—of the authenticity of the same sources by Ambeth Ocampo did not?<sup>29</sup>

The domination of intellectual production by Anglo-American and to a lesser extent European institutions has created situations in which certain scholars can claim to “know” the Philippines without ever having achieved fluency in any Philippine language other than English or Spanish. Scholarship in English and produced in metropolitan centers tends to be read and cited more often than scholarship in Filipino and other languages. This lesser citation of non-English works is due not only to the lack of access to limited-circulation and poorly archived Philippine-language publications in the Philippines, but also to such works being routinely dismissed as derivative or lacking in “theory” and/or “analysis” or, worse, “distorted” by nationalist and “parochial” concerns—as if theory formulated out of American and European experiences and exigencies were not itself provincial (Chakrabarty 2000).<sup>30</sup> Just as egregious has been the tendency of some scholars based abroad as well as in the Philippines to treat the “West” as a source of Theory, to be “applied” (uncritically and unselectively, as Alatas [2002, 150] puts it) to a Philippines that only ever exists as an illustration, a case study, or a set of empirical “data.” Equally problematical is the propensity to treat debates in Anglo-American academia as if these debates—rooted as they are in specific institutional, geopolitical, economic, and ideological imperatives—were “universal” in their import and implication.

Crucially the institutional setting of American academia, in particular, sets its own limits on what can be studied and how. “Areas” matter insofar as American interests say that they matter—just as Southeast Asian studies were promoted by the exigencies of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, so too Arabic and Middle East studies were boosted by the war in Afghanistan, while programs focusing on Eastern Europe disappeared with the fall of the Berlin Wall. While economists often enjoy a close working relationship with government officials and business groups (a fact that applies also to the so-called Berkeley mafia in Indonesia and American-trained technocrats in the Philippines), American social scientists working on Asia have a complicated relationship to state power. Although certain elite universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Georgetown, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins have supplied professors/specialists for important senior official, policy-making, and advisory positions in the American government, for complex reasons this has not always been the case for Southeast Asian studies and their

home institutions or programs in Cornell, Berkeley, Wisconsin, and others. Stalwarts of Southeast Asian studies such as James Scott, George Kahin, and Benedict Anderson have been critical of American policy on Southeast Asia and the American state, or, in Scott’s case, the state itself as an entity.

But if Southeast Asian—including Philippine—studies scholars do not necessarily have a direct relationship with the American government and the official exercise of power, there is nevertheless a form of discursive and institutional “power” generated out of the workings and concerns specific to an American academia more generally that creates its own form of insularity and parochialism.

American journals and university presses have their own niche in a highly segmented publishing market. Often subsidized by publication grants from the universities in which their authors are based, these university presses rely on peer review and cater to a limited readership consisting almost exclusively of fellow academics and their captive students (to whom they assign these books as “required reading”). It is this small market of academics and university press editors that sets the fads, fashions, and trends of particular disciplines. The tendency, then, is for scholars whose tenure depends on publishing in this academic circle to write with this specific audience in mind, complete with jumping through academic hoops in the form of “required” citations to demonstrate “knowledge” of the field under study.

When the question shifts from representation to production,<sup>31</sup> the politics of location matters. What would a social science tradition of research and writing look like if it were produced, as Alatas (ibid., 151) argues, with “specifically Asian problems” in mind? An autonomous tradition would be one where knowledge produced under specific contexts and with specific questions in mind in metropolitan centers would not be uncritically and unselectively “applied” to a given “area.” (Neither should such scholarship be ignored in the name of nativist scholarship.) Can knowledge production and collaboration and exchanges responsive to the needs, questions, problems, agenda, exigencies, and challenges that arise out of the very “areas” for which knowledge is produced be promoted without excluding either global or national conversations? Here the question is not one of race or nationality of the scholar, but rather the *audience* for which one writes and conducts research. Location matters insofar as it poses specific constraints on research and writing for multiple sites and audiences.

Promoting local, national, regional, and global conversations without becoming subservient to metropolitan (in its local, national, and supranational senses) discourses is crucial to the creation of communicative zones in which debates can be conducted intensively without degenerating into *ad hominem pataasan ng ihi* (pissing contest).<sup>32</sup> More important, global, regional, national, and local dialogue can promote confidence among scholars and institutions based in the so-called open region in which Southeast Asia is now embedded, and provide ways to think out of the boxes created by hegemonic academic cultures and traditions (whether from America or in the Philippines or other places) and think across disciplines, languages, and institutional settings.

Promoting regional dialogue and collaboration that is open to local, national, and global conversation but not subservient to metropolitan centers of knowledge production—one where the question of audience and agenda, rather than race and nationality and foreignness, are the central issues—is one way of breaking the current and unproductive impasse and its silences (and silencings).

Even more important is the issue of how intellectuals can contribute to the creation of emancipatory knowledge, one that contributes to world knowledge while also uplifting and improving the welfare of communities and peoples. Indeed epistemic privilege works most effectively insofar as it can be used to empower social movements and enable members of the socially marginalized groups to speak for themselves.<sup>33</sup> But when epistemic privilege is asserted and authority exercised by middle-class intellectuals, who claim to speak on behalf of the Filipino people and nation but leave their own positioning and the politics they serve uninterrogated, it can just as easily become an exclusionary practice by which self-proclaimed and self-selecting “insiders” attempt to regulate the intellectual force field,<sup>34</sup> exercising one-upmanship and silencing “outsiders”—a category that now includes certain groups of “Filipinos”—and barring them from contributing to the debates and to emancipatory politics, as if the experience of “being abroad” were not part of what it now means to live as, and call oneself, Filipino.

## Notes

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- 1 The essay is based on one of three lectures that Ileto (1999) delivered as holder of the John A. Burns Distinguished Visiting Chair in History at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa.
- 2 McCoy (2009, 41–43) responded to Ileto’s critique (without naming names) by arguing that American colonial rule did not draw on “Orientalist” scholarship in the way that the British and French did because of the “exceptional” nature of the American empire and the people who administered it. American colonial officials—most of whom were “discharged soldiers, accidental colonials” rather than graduates of elite universities—relied not on the knowledge provided by the expertise of Orientalists, but on technologies such as “cadastral mapping” and “scientific reconnaissance,” among others, which provided “hasty, inherently superficial” information used to formulate “quick, cost-effective solutions.”
- 3 Said (2000, 181) writes of the need to distinguish among exiles, refugees, expatriates, and émigrés, but chooses to stress the commonalities—rooted in solitude and estrangement—rather than differences among them.
- 4 For critical commentaries on Said’s use of the figure and trope of the border-crossing “exile,” see JanMohamed 1992 and Shohat 1992.
- 5 Ahmad (1992, 173) “emphasize[s] that the modalities of [Orientalism’s] influence were by no means uniform”: while “it encouraged some to cultivate an academic kind of nationalist radicalism and very textual attitudes towards histories of colonialism and imperialism, it also enabled numerous younger academics, who had already been politicized through some other route, to arrive at new modes and areas of inquiry, mainly in the literary field.”
- 6 See for example Cheah’s (2006, 80–119) critique of Homi Bhabha and James Clifford’s ideas of cosmopolitanism and privileging of migrancy as the most radical form of transformative agency.
- 7 To be (and identify oneself as) middle class involves not only considerations of finance and status, but also social experience and cultural production, following Moskowitz’s (2012, 78) notion of class as a “social and cultural construct as well as a financial and political one.” On the need to understand the “middle class” as “a working social concept, a material experience, a political project, and a cultural practice,” see Lopez (2012, 21). For the Philippine case, Kelly 2012 proposes to understand the concept of “class” in terms of position (“location of an individual in a societal division of labor and a stratified structure of wealth”), process (how “surplus labor” is produced, appropriated and distributed), performance (as consumption and as embodiment), and politics (“solidarities that arise from it and, at the same time, define it”).

- 8 Similar arguments were made by David 2008.
- 9 On the critical value of “ugly feelings” such as envy, see Ngai 2005. “While envy describes a subject’s polemical response to a perceived inequality in the external world, it has been reduced to signifying a static subjective trait: the ‘lack’ or ‘deficiency’ of the person who envies” (ibid., 21). Through envy, “a subject asserts the goodness and desirability of precisely what he or she does not have, and explicitly at the cost of surrendering any claim to moral high-mindedness or superiority” (ibid., 34).
- 10 I thank Bomen Guillermo for helping me develop this point and the discussion that follows.
- 11 Not all academics who work abroad have the same access to resources, particularly in light of the budget crunch enforced by the recent American and European financial crisis, but those fortunate enough to be based in certain universities can avail themselves of excellent libraries in, say, Cornell or Michigan.
- 12 The term “Fil-foreigner,” which excluded overseas Filipinos, was coined by the mass media to refer to second-generation migrants, particularly those playing in professional basketball.
- 13 The rise of minority or ethnic studies programs in the US was enabled by the Civil Rights movement, Third World Peoples’ Movement, and anti-Vietnam War activism. But this institutionalization took place later than the establishment of area studies programs, which had their roots in the Cold War American containment imperative and policy. On the tension and dialogue between Asian American studies and Asian (area) studies, see Chiang 2009, 1–15; Chuh and Shimakawa 2001.
- 14 To take one example, the University of the Philippines provides the following cash incentives for publications: P55,000 for an article in ISI (Thomson-Reuters-indexed) journals and P100,000 for a book published by a recognized and reputable international publisher (Tadem 2013).
- 15 Space is not inert, either, but malleable to the degree that migrants can transform places “abroad” such as Daly City, California into the “Pinoy Capital” of America (Vergara 2009). For an anecdotal account of life among Filipino migrants and their Filipino-American children living in the Bay Area and how “Filipino” things, practices, even brand stores, are (re)produced there, see Mercurio 2012.
- 16 In recent decades there has emerged also the possibility of global awareness and solidarity among “Filipinos” and “Fil-Whatevers” (Cuevas-Hewitt 2010). On the creation of a pan-national Philippine identity through the internet, see Tyner and Kuhlke (2000, 247), who see this move as “a deliberate attempt to maintain a more global presence rather than a dualistic identity between a specific diaspora local community and homeland,” even as there remain class-bound and other limits on migrants’ engagement with the “homeland” and with other Filipinos over the internet (for a case study of elite migrants in London, see Ong and Cabañes 2011). Cuevas-Hewitt (2010, 122) calls for a “diasporic cosmopolitanism”—as opposed to diasporic nationalism and diasporic internationalism—that acknowledges the “irreducible multiplicity” of both the Philippine archipelago and the Philippine diaspora.
- 17 It must be noted, though, that rejection of intellectuals by certain vocal segments of the intellectual circle exists alongside efforts such as the University of the Philippines’s Balik PhD recruitment program to hire foreign-trained Filipino PhDs and postdoctoral fellows as faculty members.
- 18 This categorical lumping of Japan among “Western countries” (“Western” almost always means “American”) misses out an important point, particularly about foreign area specialists

working in Japan. There is no market logic at work in Japan academia similar to that prevailing in US academia wherein professors can increase their income through fees from speaking engagements and conferences and negotiate for promotion and higher salaries by soliciting offers and counteroffers from competing universities. Salaries of academics in Japan are pegged to age and rank and scholars can only earn extra money by becoming public intellectuals, working exclusively in Nihongo.

- 19 Drawing on Mignolo’s (2000, 191) formulation of “the place of theorizing,” Goh (2011, 13, 9) has argued forcefully in favor of the importance of “scholarly commitment to the region” to develop forms of “*thinking from and about Southeast Asia*” that go beyond the dichotomy between “the global and the local, the inside and outside, the old and new, the centre and the periphery, the stable and the unstable” by considering the “simultaneity and interaction” among these terms.
- 20 The dream of—and demand for—repatriation serves to further reinforce the epistemic privilege of being “rooted” in the Philippines. I thank Claudio (2012) for emphasizing this point.
- 21 I thank Miguel Syjuco for permission to quote his reply, published in Facebook, to Saavedra.
- 22 This refusal to disengage is also made by Chakrabarty (2001, 111) about the Subaltern Studies group members who are based abroad.
- 23 A good overview of the debates in feminist standpoint theory is Harding 2004.
- 24 On how class borders are erected and eroded in different spaces—city, airport, or abroad—see Benedicto (2009, 298) who argues that “the prominence of national belonging in the experience of travel is inflected with the spatial politics of class.” (see also Cannell 1999, 20 on how class disparity in the Philippines is a “daily, tangible experience”).
- 25 I thank Jojo Abinales for prodding me on this point.
- 26 “The elephant in the room is this: whether these works have advanced knowledge—in the Philippines and elsewhere—about the country and its people, its problems and efforts to solve it, etc, or—like many other Orientalists—those written by Kano and OFW scholars have merely made things more complicated and hence problematize further the national narrative. We are back to E. P. Thompson’s complaint that those who prefer cut-and-dried Platonism are the ones most impatient with actual history. The ones who see national explanations as their own privileged copyright are almost often the ones violently opposed to sincere efforts—alas coming mainly from Kanos and OFW—to understand the puzzles and problems that bedevil Philippine political development” (Abinales 2004).
- 27 Faculty salaries among the top Philippine universities range from P20,000 (for assistant professors) to P60,000–P150,000 (for professors), with De La Salle University paying the top salaries. I thank Tesa Tadem for the information on UP and La Salle pay scales, and Jun Aguilar for the information on the Ateneo pay scale. Based on measurements used by the National Statistics Office, those classified as “middle class” in the Philippines have the following: an annual family income of from P282,000 to P2.296 million; heads of families with college degrees; a house and lot; homes made of strong roofing materials; with an oven, airconditioning unit, and vehicle. This definition—based on salaries in elite universities—puts academics in the middle-income bracket, particularly if they belong to families where more than one member is working full time.
- 28 On the average salaries of faculty in America by rank and fields in 2010–2011, see *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 2011. The range in the humanities and social sciences is between US\$50,000 (assistant professor) and US\$90,000–US\$98,000 (professor) (Basu 2012). America-based

academics, although paid far less than, say, lawyers or doctors, still earn well above the average income. In Japan, median family income is about JPY 7 million. Assistant professors earn 6 million or less, associate professors (in their early forties) earn about 8 million, and professors (in their early fifties) 10 million.

- 29 This paragraph is greatly indebted to Ocampo 2013. See Curaming's 2012 excellent discussion of the divergent reception of two classics of Southeast Asian nationalism, Teodoro Agoncillo's (1956) *Revolt of the Masses* and George Kahin's (1952) *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*. Curaming highlights the subject-positions of their authors and the politico-academic contexts that informed the books' production and reception. Curaming (2012, 601) notes the importance of Agoncillo's embodiment of "growing strength, pride and confidence in home-grown scholarship" as a counterpoint to the oft-assumed superiority of foreign education and scholarship, even as the inward-looking tendency of homegrown scholarship may have led to its marginalization from Southeast Asian studies and provoked the "antipathy of foreign scholars (of the Philippines) who found among local scholars hostile competitors for a limited intellectual capital" (ibid.).
- 30 On academic dependency and the global division of intellectual labor in the social sciences, see Alatas 2003.
- 31 I thank Bomen Guillermo for helping me develop this point.
- 32 This point is not meant to suggest that conversation across local, national, regional, and global "areas" is smooth or easy. Just as there are pressures for Filipino intellectuals in the Philippines to publish in international (read: Anglo-American) journals, Filipino intellectuals in America and countries like Singapore and South Korea also confront pressures against publishing in the Philippines. For OFW intellectuals, the decision to publish only with a Philippine press can be neither self-evident nor "natural" but is often a difficult one, since it carries *personal* penalties, say, during their tenure application. I thank Vince Rafael for encouraging me to develop this point.
- 33 In my own experience as a student of literature and culture, I learned the most from the thoughtful critique, unstinting support, and intellectual generosity of academic interlocutors who are also activists from various movements in the Left.
- 34 Bourdieu (1990, 143, 144) argues that defining the limits of a given literary or scientific field lets practitioners regulate the "capital held by all the other producers," so that "it is their accomplishments which become the measure of all accomplishments." In the Philippine literary field, the main source of prestige is the literary award. Organizers tend to invite previous winners who are based in the Philippines to serve as judges, and judges are almost always Philippine-based, even if contestants are not.

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