

Ateneo de Manila University

**Archium Ateneo**

---

History Department Faculty Publications

History Department

---

2022

## **RELATIONAL NATION The Appreciation of Characters in Rizal's Noli me tángere in Two Philippine Public High Schools**

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr

Christian Jil R. Benitez

Ma. Elizabeth J. Macapagal

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/history-faculty-pubs>



Part of the [Educational Methods Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education Commons](#)

---

# RELATIONAL NATION

## The Appreciation of Characters in Rizal's *Noli me tángere* in Two Philippine Public High Schools

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.  
Ateneo de Manila University  
fvaguilar@ateneo.edu

Christian Jil R. Benitez  
Ateneo de Manila University  
cbenitez@ateneo.edu

Ma. Elizabeth J. Macapagal  
Ateneo de Manila University  
mmacapagal@ateneo.edu

### Abstract

In implementing the Rizal Law, the Department of Education's K-12 Curriculum Guide emphasizes the study of characters in Rizal's novels as a means to cultivate patriotism among the youth. In this light, this paper presents ethnographically how students from two public high schools in Rizal Province relate with characters in *Noli me tángere*. In the classroom, these characters have developed a status akin to "real" historical beings. Concomitantly, students use tropes that connect these characters to their own lives, relationships, and understandings of the social world. The students' relationships elicit moral standards for imagining the nation and embodying their own patriotism.

### Keywords

characters, orality, public education, tropes, Rizal Law

### About the Authors

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr. is Professor in the Department of History, Ateneo de Manila University. He is the author of *Clash of Spirits: The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island* (1998), *Maalwang Buhay: Family, Overseas Migration, and Cultures of Relatedness in Barangay Paraiso* (2009), *Migration Revolution: Philippine Nationhood and Class Relations in a Globalized Age* (2014), and *Peripheries: Histories of Anti-marginality* (2018). He is working on a book on ilustrado nationalism. He has chaired the Technical Panel on General Education of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) since 2015.

Christian Jil Benitez teaches at the Department of Filipino, Ateneo de Manila University, where he earned his AB-MA in literature. Hailed as the Poet of the Year 2018 by the Commission on the Filipino Language, his critical and creative works in both Filipino and English have been published in various anthologies and journals, including *eTropic*, *Rupkatha*, *Philippine Studies*, and *Katipunan*. His first book, *Isang Dalumat ng Panahon*, which interrogates the Philippine notion of time through the rubrics of the tropical, the poetic, and the material, is forthcoming from the Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Ma. Elizabeth J. Macapagal is Associate Professor and former Chair of the Department of Psychology, Ateneo de Manila University. She received her MA in Social Psychology from the Claremont Graduate University and her PhD in Social Psychology from the Ateneo de Manila University. She was former editor of the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* and has coauthored articles and books on General Psychology and Social Psychology in the Philippines, peace and political psychology, and cross-cultural psychology.

## INTRODUCTION

Given the intuited urgency at the time for “a re-dedication to the ideals of freedom and nationalism for which our heroes lived and died,” on 12 June 1956, Pres. Ramon Magsaysay signed into law Republic Act (RA) 1425, which ordered the inclusion in the curricula of all schools in the country courses on the “life, works, and writings” of the national hero José Rizal (“Republic Act No. 1425”). RA 1425, also known as the Rizal Law, particularly underscores the need to study Rizal’s novels, *Noli me tângere* and *El filibusterismo*, deemed as “constant and inspiring source[s] of patriotism with which the minds of the youth, especially during their formative and decisive years in school, should be suffused.” In pursuit of instilling patriotism among the youth and fostering in them “moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience” and “the duties of citizenship,” the law enjoined the translation of Rizal’s novels into English, Filipino (Tagalog), and other “principal Philippine dialects” as well as their production in “cheap, popular editions” so that they could be “distributed, free of charge, to persons desiring to read them.”

The mandated reading of Rizal’s novels has been implemented mainly in secondary schools. As reiterated in an order issued decades later, in 1995, by the then Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS), the *Noli* and the *Fili* remain to be “required reading[s] in the third and fourth year high school respectively” (“Reiterating the Implementation”). In the reform of Philippine basic education in the school year 2012–2013, which transitioned the country’s educational system to the K-12 design, the compulsory reading of Rizal’s novels is carried over to the curricula of the newly-defined junior high school, particularly in Grades 9 and 10 (see *K to 12 Gabay* 172–173, 183–186). However, instead of the half to a full school year devoted to studying the *Noli* and the *Fili* in the old curriculum, the K-12 curriculum has significantly reduced the time apportioned to these novels in the said grade levels, limiting each novel to a mere quarter period—the last one in every school year, no less.

In implementing the Rizal Law in this new education program, the present Department of Education or DepEd (*K to 12 Gabay* 172, 183) curriculum guide is notable for emphasizing the study of characters in the novels toward the purported “understanding” (“pag-unawa”; 183) and “appreciation” (“pagpapahalaga”; 183) of them as “literary masterpieces” (“obra maestrang pampanitikan”; 183). Particularly in the curriculum for Grade 9, twelve (or over a quarter) out of the forty-four expected learning outcomes from studying the *Noli* directly involve the “characters” (“tauhan”; 172–173) in the novel, including one that specifically mentions and focuses on the character Sisa (172–173).<sup>1</sup> These character-related learning outcomes anticipate the students’ eventual capacity to “recognize” (“nakikilala”; 172) the characters from mere statements, “infer” (“nahihinuha”; 172) their traits, “reveal”

(“nailalahad”; 172) their grievances, “identify” (“natutukoy”; 172) their individual significance to the plot, and even “project” (“nahuhulaan”; 172) their possible fates beyond the scope of the novel. Three of these learning outcomes also explicitly expect the students to hone their capacity to “express” (“naibabahagi”) their “personal emotion” (“sariling damdamin”) in response to the situations of these characters. Ultimately, these learning outcomes are in place to work toward the “performance standard” (“pamantayan sa pagganap”) for the final quarter period in Grade 9, namely, showcasing a movie trailer or storyboard that “deconstructs” (“bina[ba]lgo”) the “traits” (“katangian”) of the characters in Rizal’s novel.

### THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following the template provided by the education bureaucracy, the two public high schools in this study (discussed in the next section) emphasize the learning of Rizal’s novel through its characters, and they do so by way of different bodily performances. For instance, as a means to gauge the students’ understanding of the *Noli*, a teacher from one of the high schools assigns them the task of creating a movie trailer for the novel, with students enacting the key characters. The teacher cites the activity as a “part” (“kasama”) of—and implying it to be integral to—the curriculum guide provided by the DepEd itself. Meanwhile, some teachers in the other high school assign students to dramatize important moments from the novel through *pagsasatao* or the embodying of specific characters, which oftentimes includes delivering monologues made by the students themselves, written from the imagined perspective of the characters they attempt to channel.<sup>2</sup> In the same school, some teachers also approach the *Noli* not in terms of reading through the chapters sequentially, but through a deliberate focus on the individual arcs of selected characters, which entails discussing only selected chapters deemed relevant to these narrative threads.

Considering such decreed attention to the characters in the *Noli* as a means to implement the Rizal Law and thus “suffuse” the minds of Filipino students with “patriotism,” this paper asks: How do the students in these two public high schools appreciate the characters in the novel? What tropes or discursive turns do they use to express their understanding of these characters? What do their apprehension of these characters indicate about the sense of nationalism that the Rizal Law aspires to instill in them?

We attempt to answer these inquiries through an analysis and interpretation of the responses of Grades 9 and 10 students who were asked about the characters from the novel. These responses were clustered in terms of the predominant tropes or discursive turns, which do not merely refer to the explicit figures of speech deployed in the students' responses, but as well the evoked "connection between things so that they can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility of their being expressed otherwise" (White 2). In other words, such method of analysis acknowledges and underscores the students' particular "manner and method of . . . discourse [as] arguments in themselves," given that their very means of explicating their appreciation of the characters of the novel are, in fact, "an initial moment already of discoursing" (Benitez 239). Through such "metadiscursive reflexiveness" (White 4) of our interpretation of the students' responses, we end with an exploration of the possible ways for how they embody and practice their own patriotism.

### THE DATA FOR THIS STUDY

As explained in greater detail in a previous article (see Aguilar et al.), in the conduct of our case study of the teaching and learning of Rizal's novels, we selected two public secondary schools in Rizal Province. One school was selected in an urban setting (referred to as High School U), while the other school represented a rural milieu (High School R). The actual fieldwork commenced on 27 January 2020 and ended when the Covid-19 pandemic struck and classes were suspended beginning on 12 March 2020. Thus, the data collection ended earlier than expected, but we were able to conduct fieldwork for a total of twenty-three class days. Our field researchers observed classroom activities in the Filipino classes of these two schools, and they conducted unstructured interviews with teachers and students in the course of the fieldwork.

At the start of the school's fourth quarter in January, Grade 10 students were interviewed about their understanding of the *Noli*, which they had studied in the previous year. We were able to collect data on the study of the *Noli* among Grade 9 students as well, but the interviews were held toward the end of the fourth grading period to give the students as much time as possible to cover the novel in class. Because of the delayed start of the fourth quarter, the entire novel had not yet been fully discussed in class by the time the interviews were conducted.

From each secondary school, two sections in Grade 9 and Grade 10 were selected, one being the honors section while the other was a regular section. This selection process was coordinated with the school administrators. Students in these sections were also selected for semi-structured interviews based on procedures determined by the teacher. To the students who were named for the study, we sent a letter written in Filipino addressed to the students' parents, explaining the study and requesting their informed consent, including for the digital recording of the interview. The students presented the signed consent form during the actual face-to-face interview, which took place either during their break time or after class.

For the two secondary schools, a total of 68 students were interviewed. Although we had wanted an equal number of students from both schools, only 28 students were interviewed in the smaller High School R as it had fewer students compared with the larger High School U, where 40 students were interviewed. As it turned out, an uneven number of male and female students were interviewed, with 45 female and 23 male students in total.

The interviews with students were semi-structured in format: the interviewer used an interview guide, but the questions were open-ended to elicit and probe the views of the students. The questions ranged from how they studied the novel to what they thought about it and Rizal's penning of his novel, and whether they thought it was worth studying. For the topics discussed in this paper, we asked questions such as who among the characters in the novel they remembered, who their favorite character was, who among the characters they did not like ("hindi gustong tauhan"), and to which character they could relate. No personal questions were intentionally asked of the students. All questions were asked in Filipino and all the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Extracts from those interviews are cited in this paper, together with accompanying English translations. At the outset, we had no prior expectations whatsoever, and we read through the students' responses and identified themes that emerged from the transcriptions. We did not use any software for the thematic analysis of the interview data and class observation journals. Given the small number of respondents, we counted any quantifiable information manually.

### **THE "REALITY" OF CHARACTERS IN *NOLI ME TÁNGERE***

In the entirety of the DepEd (K to 12 Gabay 119, 126, 140) curriculum guide, the character or *tauhan* is a literary element that is almost always referred to as located

within a given textual world, such as an “oral fable” (“tauhan *sa* napakinggang pabula”; emphasis ours; 119), a “short film” (“tauhan *sa* napanood na maikling pelikula”; emphasis ours; 126) or even an “animation” (“tauhan *sa* napanood na animation”; emphasis ours; 140). This situating of the character echoes the common understanding of the said literary element as “a person *in* a novel, play, or film” (“tao *sa* isang nobela, dula, o pelikula”) (Almario 1244; emphasis ours), or “any entity, individual or collective . . . [that] exist[s] *within* storyworlds . . . as [a] participant” (Margolin 66; emphasis ours). These definitions emphasize how the characters are conceptualized as either mimetic, “as human-like, as non-actual yet recognizably individual persons,” or as literary artefacts that fulfill some function in the text, or as a blending of these two traditions (Polvinen and Sklar 6–7), and yet ultimately separated from what is deemed as life itself. In these rather formalist definitions, it is crucial to underscore how the existence of the character appears to be always premised as within the world of a text, critically implying in this sense that characters are never tantamount to “persons’ as individuals in the real world” (Jannidis), regardless of their possible resemblance to “real persons” especially in a realistic work of fiction. This demarcation between the character and the real is the foundation of the customary appreciation of the former—arguably, including in the present DepEd curriculum guide—as “an artistic product or edifice constructed by an author for some purpose,” a “non-actual but well-specified individual presumed to exist in some hypothetical, fictional domain,” or “just . . . text-based mental models of possible individuals, built up in the mind of the reader in the course of textual processing” (Margolin 76).

In the case of Rizal’s *Noli me tángere*, the prescribed study of the novel for Grade 9 students—given material constraints such as the limited number of textbook copies of the novel and the large omissions from the novel in the course of producing its textbook versions—has permitted the characters to not only emerge from and exist within Rizal’s novel, but also to arrive through other forms of engagement with it. For instance, a handful of students from both High School R and U, while admitting to not having read the novel in its entirety, relate that they still somehow acquire a knowledge of the characters through modes of learning primarily based on orality, such as their teacher’s lectures and their classmate’s reports and performances in class (see Aguilar et al.). The internet similarly contributes to such knowledge acquisition through the circulation and fortification of existent stereotypes in the wider Philippine society, which inform the students’ construction of Rizal’s characters. Rizal’s novels have undergone transmedial storytelling, as evident in the numerous abridged versions and summaries, movies, *komiks*, videos, and other materials that exist in multiple sites ranging from the classroom to different digital media, often with no regard for the original source text. Considering then the banality of material constraints in many public schools in the country and the individual tactics these hindrances elicit from the students and teachers alike, we



reckon that most of the students do not get acquainted with the characters of the *Noli* based on their interaction with the full novel itself. As such, these characters can hardly be construed as “literary” since they are largely conceived by way of non-lettered alternatives.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, reading is not the only—and, all the more so, the primary—means by which the students learn about the characters in the *Noli*. Considering especially the canonical, if not legendary, status of Rizal’s novels, which is further solidified by the Rizal Law itself, the characters in the *Noli* have acquired lives of their own beyond the novel’s storyworld and out of Rizal’s hands. And so, while these characters can be taken indeed as fictive people in the most literary sense, they have also managed effectually to jump out of the pages of the *Noli* and embody an existence independent of the said novel: in practice, particularly in the context of contemporary Philippine classrooms, these characters have developed a status akin to “real” historical beings, as demonstrated in some of the students’ responses below.

Consequently, it appears that when the students construct their image of particular characters from the novel, the readerly processing of the *Noli* even in its watered-down versions—that is, in its abridged or *pinagaan* renditions—plays only a limited part, if anything at all. For more than the *Noli* itself, it is the oral and transmedial transmissions of the details regarding the characters, regardless of their faithfulness to the novel, that become the powerful source for the construction of these characters in the mind of the student. Such methods of transmission, while largely taking place within the classroom, are inevitably affected by and inclusive of ideas and beliefs held in society writ large. In effect, in the performance standard mandated by the DepEd curriculum guide that aims at a “deconstruction” of the characters from Rizal’s novel, what is unwittingly desired to be changed is the very students’ and the school system’s constructions of the said characters, for they were not constructed to begin with as students found them in Rizal’s novel.

For instance, when the Grades 9 and 10 students from both high schools were asked to recall characters from the *Noli*, Padre Damaso emerged as the one most remembered by the students, with 63 out of 68, or nearly 93 percent, mentioning his name (table 1).<sup>4</sup> Crisostomo Ibarra is only the second most remembered character, with 85 percent of the students mentioning him. Trailing behind Ibarra is Maria Clara, who is remembered by less than two-thirds of the students. In this list, Sisa and her two sons follow Maria Clara, and after them comes Kapitan Tiyago, who is mentioned by 30 percent only of the students. The latter recall rate for Tiyago is especially notable since, had the students read the first chapter of the novel, the said character would have been more memorable for them. As such, it can be inferred that the ranking of characters according to recall is evidently a

product of classroom activities rather than interaction with the novel. The students' ideas about these characters and their traits would thus depend largely on inputs in classroom processes.

Although the most remembered, Padre Damaso is derided as an evil person, “symbolic” of the evil of Spanish colonial rule, and is the character most disliked by the students. Interestingly, only three out of all the students in the study pointed to Padre Salvi, the real antagonist in the story, as the character they did not like.

**Table 1.** The characters from *Noli me tângere* most remembered by students from two public high schools in Rizal Province, January–March 2019

Characters	High School U		High School R		TOTAL (N=68)
	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 9	Grade 10	
Padre Damaso	19	17	14	13	63
Crisostomo Ibarra	19	16	12	11	58
Maria Clara	20	15	14	9	44
Sisa	14	15	6	5	40
Basilio	10	14	5	4	33
Crispin	8	11	5	1	25
Kapitan Tiyago	12	2	4	3	21
Padre Salvi	9	5	3	2	19
Elias	11	4	2	0	17
Donya Victorina	3	7	1	2	13
Don Rafael	4	0	8	0	12

Interestingly, the students particularly remember Padre Damaso as the friar who assaulted the character of Pia Alba, which gave way to Maria Clara's birth. However, as Caroline Hau crucially contends, the nature of the relationship between Padre Damaso and Pia Alba is not really ascertained in the novel and can be interpreted in different, and even competing, ways (“Did Padre Damaso Rape Pia Alba?”). They could even have possibly been engaged in a romantic affair despite their individual circumstances, namely, Damaso's being a priest and Pia Alba's being married. Nevertheless, based on the students' response, it appears that the idea that Padre Damaso raped Pia Alba has become so deeply entrenched and widespread in the Philippine school system that for the students it seems to have acquired the status of a “fact”—indeed, a “reality” of Padre Damaso's character—rather than a mere instance from the array of possible interpretations of Rizal's novel. The product of this union, Maria Clara, has also acquired a formidable reality. In the 1960s, Nick Joaquin commented that, as a novelist, Rizal “succeeded so well that his heroine has become a folk-figure, the only one of all his characters who has attained this highest form of literary immortality” (“The Novels of Rizal” 70).<sup>5</sup> Today it would

appear that Damaso has superseded Maria Clara. Some students even claim the existence of a historical Padre Damaso, whose personhood Rizal was supposed to have captured incorrectly in the novel.

One Grade 9 male student (Student Respondent No. 9U7) came across a video in YouTube and reached the conclusion that what “the book” said about Damaso was wrong:

Kasi po, may napano'd po kasi kami sa YouTube. 'Yong sinearch po namin, “Padre Damaso.” Base po sa napanood namin, parang pinapalabas doon, parang ano, hindi, hindi po totoo 'yong mga sinasabi or nasabi sa libro. Parang pinapalabas po nila mabuti si Padre Damaso. Meron po siyang kinanta doon, parang 'yong linya na ang dami-daming sinabi sa kanya na hindi naman totoo.<sup>6</sup>

We watched something on YouTube. We looked up for ‘Padre Damaso.’ Based on what we’ve seen, it was shown there that, it’s like, no, what’s being said in the book is not true. They were trying to show that Padre Damaso is good. He sang something there, he had a line that goes something like there are a lot of things being said about him that are not true.

In effect, the student argues that “the book,” meaning Rizal’s novel, could be wrong about Padre Damaso because presumably there exists a “real” Padre Damaso in history—that is, one that is purportedly found outside the *Noli*—and that, “in reality,” this Padre Damaso was not like the way he was portrayed in the novel. This suggests then a construing of Padre Damaso’s character as an entity separate from, if not prior to, Rizal’s creation of him in the *Noli*.

This blurring between the characters as they were written, described, and presented in Rizal’s novel and as they are already embedded in an interpretative discourse is also reinforced through the structure by which the *Noli* is typically taught in schools: by first introducing Rizal and discussing his life, then moving to studying the novel.<sup>7</sup> While such structure does answer to the call of the Rizal Law for studying the “life, works, and writings” of the national hero, it also easily invites the students to create direct correspondences between Rizal’s biography and the plot of the novel—associations that are misleading, the most crucial of which is the outright attribution, perpetuated by some teachers no less, that Ibarra is actually Rizal “in real life.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, a teacher from High School U (Grade 9 Teacher Respondent No. U1), for instance, relates that among the things that the students are expected to learn from studying the *Noli* is “knowing . . . what is the connection of the events in the *Noli* to Rizal’s life” (“matutunan . . . ano ‘yong kaugnayan . . . ng mga pangyayari d’on sa *Noli* sa buhay ni Rizal”; our trans.).

It then becomes understandable how the aforementioned understanding of the characters in the *Noli*, which finds recourse outside the novel itself, becomes a plausible tendency for the students, who merely follow their teachers, who in turn often regard Rizal's novel primarily from a historical-biographical approach, that is, the novel as a concealed biography of Rizal and a historical account of his milieu.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the author looms larger than his novel, which need not be appreciated as a literary work but rather deciphered for clues to possible connections with the author's life. Because of the students' negligible knowledge about Rizal, they become dependent on the teacher who, depending on inclination and temperament, may regale students with stories about Rizal's amorous pursuits and other tales.

### THE CLASSROOM MODEL OF CHARACTERS

In the theoretical discussion of literary characters, the cognitive-psychological perspective argues that readers create mental models of characters especially given the ontological incompleteness of characters. Readers can know characters only to the extent that the author has described them explicitly or impliedly in the text, with other aspects of the characters inevitably left as gaps. The perspective of cognitive theories of the reading process contends that readers create mental models of the characters they encounter in a work of fiction. Jan Auracher and Akiko Hirose provide evidence that "readers—often against their better judgment—tend to grant fictional characters a personality" and "that, in so doing, readers rely on cognitive strategies that are also used in encounters with real people" (796). In this way, societal "stereotypes exert an influence on the way readers perceive fictional characters" (796). By imposing their knowledge of the world on the narrative, "readers make characters transparent, meaning that their behavior becomes comprehensible" (797): they fill in the gaps and infer the inner motivation that drives the characters' actions. In the process, readers construct "fictional characters as mental images or mental representations . . . that complement and enrich the characters' purely propositional existence" (797). Thus, characters are understood through the interplay of textual features and the readers' own cognitive processes, which are influenced by the broader circumstances of their lives.

In studying the *Noli me tángere*, however, students generally read, if they ever do, only the assigned chapters in abridged versions of the novel for their class presentations. And so, even with such textbook versions of the novel, there is still very limited engagement between the students and the *Noli* itself as a literary text. Nevertheless, the students are able to tactically construct mental models of the

characters they encounter in the novel largely through the processes of classroom orality and other transmedial dispersions of the novel. For instance, the teacher can describe the characters in their lectures, and the assigned students can further elaborate these characters, embellishing them especially during their class reports and various modes of classroom theater, such as *pagsasatao*. In this way, the students become capable of forming mental representations of characters in the *Noli* based largely on extra-textual sources.

One powerful strategy that students use is through turning to their own life experiences to which they compare the character's dispositions. The analogy they make between a character and that character's actions and circumstances, as gleaned from classroom activities, and their own actions and circumstances, help them understand and appreciate the characters in the novel, and they do so with a sense of wholeness afforded by mental models. Their life experiences range from those of their personal lives to that of their families, their peers, and the larger society as observed from their vantage point. These life experiences are blended with ideas found circulating on the internet about the characters in Rizal's novels—which become all the more persuasive in constructing characters with personality, imbued as they are with elements derived from actual sociological reality that are blended with tropological insight. Through these cognitive processes, students familiarize themselves with the putative historical figures that live in the world of the *Noli*, producing what can be called as the “classroom models” of these characters.

What must be emphasized about these classroom models is how they are ultimately founded on the social and interpersonal relationships most familiar to the students. As expounded upon in this paper, the students think about these characters in reference primarily to the everyday family and peer relationships and broader social class relations in which they partake and that they observe. They are also able to think historically through focusing on (stereo)typical behaviors and social relations deemed to have existed in the late nineteenth century, which they extrapolate, if not project, to the present time and take as evidence of continuity in Philippine history at large. And so, while Benedict Anderson rightfully asserts that “it is impossible to read *Noli Me Tangere* today in a way a patriotic young Manileño of 1897 would have read it [that is] as a political grenade” (“Hard to Imagine” 232), the students' understanding of present social realities and their received ideas about the *Noli* itself nevertheless permit the emergence of an understanding of the novel and its characters. We now turn to an analysis of the students' classroom models of the characters in *Noli me tângere* in terms of the discursive turns they use.

### “I AM LIKE THE CHARACTER”

To arrive at the classroom model of characters in Rizal’s novel, students turn to their own lives as points of comparison for these characters, allowing them to see themselves in the characters. Formally, the character is known through classroom activities, and the student glimpses that she is like the character. The complex reality, however, is that the very apprehension of the character—the outstanding trait of a character that is given attention—is influenced by the student’s habitus. This process of character appreciation appears instinctive for the students whose ages ranged from 14 to 16 years, within the developmentally complex stage of adolescence, when questions about the self are at the forefront of their thoughts (see Ogena). Thus, an aspect of one’s self that is most salient to the student becomes the pivot for cogitating on a character. In the end, the character is simplified but made relatable to the student.

For instance, a 16-year-old female Grade 10 student from High School U (Grade 10 Student Respondent No. 10U13) said she identified with Ibarra—“I am also like Ibarra”—because of her closeness to her own father and her educational aspirations, which she saw as akin to Ibarra’s:

Feeling ko po kay . . . ano din, kay Crisostomo Ibarra din po kasi, ano e, malapit din po kasi ako sa Papa ko at tsaka yung . . . gaya niya rin po, pinangarap ko rin na mag-aral abroad, ‘yong hindi dito. E kasi po siya ‘di ba nag-aral po siya doon, tapos noong pagkabalik niya po sa San Diego doon lang po nagsimula ‘yong *Noli*?

I feel po toward . . . like I am also like Crisostomo Ibarra po because, you see, I am also close to my father and also . . . like him, I also dream of studying abroad, rather than here. Didn’t he study there po, and when he had returned to San Diego it was only then that the *Noli* started?

In this case, the student signals that she empathizes fully with Ibarra’s quest to find out how his father, Don Rafael, perished and what happened to his father’s remains. She would have done what Ibarra did had she been in his shoes. Concomitantly, her dream to study “abroad,” somewhere “not here” (“hindi dito”; our trans.), is an aspiration that already materialized in Ibarra’s sojourn to Europe to study. Ibarra had gone ahead; she would follow in his footsteps. Ibarra’s motivations for studying overseas are not articulated, but the student fills that gap with her own reasons for desiring an overseas education. Ibarra becomes a full-bodied persona. Thus, for this student, Ibarra’s return to the homeland is very significant such that, in her view, the novel begins only after Ibarra returns to San Diego (rather than to Manila, where the novel opens).

Another student, a 17-year-old male Grade 10 student from High School U (Grade 10 Student Respondent No. 10U20), also identified with Ibarra but for a reason that owed to a different set of personal circumstances. He appreciated Ibarra for his sacrifice and steadfastness and his refusal to give up on life despite all the problems thrown his way. Ibarra's character evokes this student's own endurance and determination to soldier on amid the hardships of life. The student said:

Si Ibarra po sa paraang . . . paglaban po niya sa buhay . . . kahit marami ng humahadlang sa kanya. Uhm, ako po madaming . . . madaming pinapagawa sa 'min pero, pero iniisip ko po na, may taong mas maraming ginagawa kesa sa 'min . . . kaya dapat kaming magtiis. . . Kasi maraming mga taong naghihirap.

Ibarra po in his manner . . . of fighting for life . . . even if he encountered many obstacles. Uhm, in my case po, I have many . . . many things are demanded of us but, but I think po that there are people who are doing even more than us . . . so we need to endure. . . . Because many people are suffering.

The travails of this student were not the same as that of Ibarra, but through his classroom model of this character, he resonated with Ibarra's perseverance through life's hardships. The student portrays himself as facing a deluge of demands, but like Ibarra he would endure suffering ("magtitiis"; our trans.) and meet those demands. Then he consoled himself by rationalizing that many others faced problems that were more intense than those that confronted him. The motivation for Ibarra's perseverance is not enunciated, but the student can fill in this gap with his own resolve.

These two cases demonstrate that students arrive at an appreciation of a character like Ibarra through the troping to oneself. The circumstances of these students differed, but the analogy of the self with a character in a story triggered cognitive processes that resulted in the students' close identification with that character, but from an angle unique to the individual student. In this tropological landscape, many students identified Ibarra as their favorite character (table 2).

**Table 2.** Number of students from two public high schools in Rizal Province who chose these characters from *Noli me tángere* as their favorite, January–March 2019

Character	Grade 9		Grade 10		N=68
	High School U (20)	High School R (15)	High School U (20)	High School R (13)	
Crisostomo Ibarra	5	12	10	4	31
Maria Clara	3	3	4	3	13
Sisa	3	0	5	2	10
Elias	6	0	0	1	7
Tiyago	2	0	0	0	2
Others	-	-	3	3	

Aside from kinship and friendship ties, romantic relationships also become salient during adolescence. From this perspective, it is understandable why the love story of Crisostomo Ibarra and Maria Clara is reverberant with students. In fact, some students reported that Maria Clara was their favorite character mainly because of her loyalty to Ibarra and their relationship. The students perceived Maria Clara and Ibarra's relationship as a complicated one because these characters needed to fight for their love. From the outset, however, Maria Clara was deemed outstanding because of her total devotion and "real love" ("tunay na pagmamahal"; our trans.) (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R1) for Ibarra despite the latter's physical absence while he was in Europe, rendering this character as just like the student who struggles with loving and being loved and with fidelity in a romantic relationship. "I am also like Maria Clara" is the trope for understanding this particular character in the story. The complex historical context of the relationship between Ibarra and Maria Clara is flattened, and what becomes preeminent is their seemingly transhistorical love story—which was how about 30 percent of the students described the novel (Aguilar et al. 340).

A 15-year-old female Grade 9 student from High School U (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U20) explained why she admired Maria Clara:

Kasi po, 'yong pagmamahal niya po kay Crisostomo Ibarra po. . . 'yong ano po siya, loyal po siya . . . sa salita po niya . . . tapos ano po 'yong puso niya sa kanya, as in doon lang nakatuon kay Crisostomo Ibarra.



[Interviewer: Mm, tapos ikaw?] Parang ganoon din po, iniidol-, ina-idolize ko po siya kasi ang galing po ng heart niya kasi kahit malayo si Crisostomo, siya at siya pa din po 'yong nasa laman po.

Because po, her love po for Crisostomo Ibarra po. . . . you know po, she is, she is loyal po . . . . in her words po . . . and then po her heart is just for him, as in, she is focused solely on Crisostomo Ibarra.

[Interviewer: Mm, and you?] I'm like that too, po, I idol-, I idolize her po because her heart po is so good because even if Crisostomo was far away, it was him and him alone po that she thought of po.

Other students identified with other characters in the story by employing a similar rhetorical strategy. The case of Kapitan Tiyago is interesting, although only a couple of students identified him as their favorite character.

In one section of Grade 9 in High School U, the teacher (Grade 9 Teacher Respondent No. U1) characterized Kapitan Tiyago as *sunud-sunuran* (“docile,” “submissive,” “compliant”; our trans.)—a character construction that predominates among students from that section due to the influential role of the teacher in the construction of Tiyago as a classroom model. The teacher stated in the interview: “Kapitan Tiyago may be a captain, but he has no power because he is *sunud-sunuran* to the friars” (“si Kapitan Tiyago, kapitan nga siya, pero wala naman siyang kapangyarihan kasi *sunud-sunuran* naman kasi siya sa mga prayle”; our trans.). The teacher reduced Tiyago to a flat character, with few other outstanding traits other than his obsequiousness, which produces blind obedience to every word uttered by the Spanish friars. This characterization of Tiyago as *sunud-sunuran* is echoed in several internet sources that use exactly the same term.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the negative portrayal of Tiyago in the classroom, some students brought their own understanding of themselves to make sense of Tiyago's character. A 14-year-old male Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R13), for instance, describes Tiyago as a wealthy figure who is superficially accepted by the people, “but behind his back, receives all sorts of insults” (“kapag nakatalikod na po siya, doon na po siya nakakatanggap ng anu-anong salita”; our trans.). Another 14-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U6) said that Tiyago was her favorite character, saying, “I'm nice po but there are also times when I'm also selfish po” (“Mabait po ako pero po may time po na selfish din po ako”; our trans.). This specific combination of being kind and nice (“mabait”; our trans.), and presumably altruistic—which these students explained in terms of Tiyago's donations to the church—and being selfish at the same time was also

mentioned by a 16-year-old male Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U7) who disliked Tiyago, yet he also admitted that he could relate best with Tiyago's character. This student elucidated, "Just like Kapitan Tiyago po, isn't he kind but also sort of selfish po? I'm just like him po. I'm nice but sometimes I become selfish po, especially when it comes to the important things that I have" ("Parang si Kapitan Tiyago po, 'di ba mabait ta's pero may pagka-selfish po siya? Parang ganoon din po ako. Mabait ako pero minsan nagiging selfish po ako sa, lalo na sa mga importanteng gamit ko"; our trans.). In these instances, students saw beyond the teacher's unflattering portrayal to perceive in Tiyago their own struggle between altruism and selfishness.

A 15-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U8) also said that she could relate to the character of Kapitan Tiyago precisely because he is *sunud-sunuran*: "Kapitan Tiyago is subservient po to the curates. I can relate po because my parents are strict po. So I need to obey them when they say I should be home by this time, I would rush home. If they prohibit something, then it's off-limits po" ("si Kapitan Tiyago po kasi sunud-sunuran po siya sa mga kura. Ako po, nakaka-relate ako kasi strict po 'yong parents ko po. Tapos, so kailangan kong sumunod sa kanila kapag gan'tong oras, uuwi kaagad ako. Kapag bawal, bawal po"; our trans). In this case, the parent-child relationship provides the template by which the student can say, "I am also like Kapitan Tiyago." The appreciation of Tiyago as a relatable character is fostered by her fear of her parents, which makes her compliant. Implicitly, she uses her own fear to understand why Tiyago behaved in a fawning and compliant mode toward the Spanish friars. Thus, characters in Rizal's novel as "oral literature" become legible to the extent that students creatively respond using their own understanding of themselves and their lifeworld.

#### **"THE CHARACTERS RELATE TO EACH OTHER LIKE THE WAY WE DO"**

Another trope that students used in appreciating characters in the story frames the relationship of these characters as similar to the way the students relate to each other. This analogy, which is explicitly relational, includes but goes beyond individual identification with a character. The analogical relationships, however, are schematized and idealized. They are simplifications of what can be found in Rizal's novel. Because students do not read and at most rely upon abridged textbook versions of the novel that leave a desiccated text, the classroom model of the relationships among characters in the novel is reduced to a caricature. Nonetheless,

the classroom model helps students to arrive at an empathetic understanding of these characters.

This type of comparison was preponderant among a handful of students, particularly those who came from the same Grade 9 section in High School U and mentioned Elias as their favorite character. The teacher of that class emphasized the relationship between Elias and Ibarra, but the classroom model has reduced that fraught relationship into one of friendship, which served as the template for the students' appreciation of Elias.

As a 16-year-old male student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U5) in that class explained, the mutual help that his circle of friends (“magkakaibigan”; our trans.) extends to each other, particularly when they are grappling with emotional and mental health issues, produced in him an affinity for Elias. In effect, the student's tacit statement declares: “Elias and Ibarra behave in the same way we do.”

Kasi minsan, Ma'am, nakaka-relate ako kay Elias, Ma'am, kasi minsan may mga kaibigan din ako, Ma'am, na ano, Ma'am, minsan, sa 'ming magkakaibigan may mga kaibigan ako minsan tinutu— ano, Ma'am, in terms ng ano, Ma'am, minsan may struggle, Ma'am. May mga . . . 'pag ano, Ma'am, may mga depression, sila po 'yong laging nandiyan para tumulong sa 'kin. Ta's minsan 'pag ako naman, Ma'am, 'pag may mga kaibigan ako na nade—, ano, Ma'am, nagkaron ng depression, Ma'am, ano po, pinapasaya po namin sila, Ma'am, dinadamayan, Ma'am.

Because sometimes, Ma'am, I can relate to Elias, Ma'am, because sometimes I also have friends, Ma'am, who, you know, Ma'am, sometimes among our group of friends I have friends who I sometimes he—, you know, Ma'am, in terms of, Ma'am, sometimes there is a struggle, Ma'am. There are . . . when you know, Ma'am, there are depressions, they are the ones who are always there to help me. Then sometimes when it's my turn, Ma'am, when I have friends who are dep—, you know, Ma'am, who undergo depression, Ma'am, we make them happy, Ma'am, we empathize with them, Ma'am.

One can argue that Elias made a deliberate decision to not betray Ibarra but rather to succor and protect him. This complexity is effaced in the classroom model so that Elias is understood as “naturally” inclined to assist Ibarra, in the same way that this student “naturally” receives help when he is undergoing “depression” and gives that help when another student in his group of friends also feels “depressed.” The life-and-death issues that confronted Elias and Ibarra are commuted to the everyday but deeply felt issues in the lives of these adolescent students.

Another student, a female 16-year-old in Grade 9 (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U17), explained that having someone to talk to about their problems was a mark of great friendship, which she saw in Elias:

May mga kaibigan din po ako, parang pwede po nila akong pagsabihan ng mga problema, kagaya ni Elias. Ganoon po. Matutulungan po kahit sa mga problema po, ganyan.

I also have friends po, who can unburden themselves po by telling me about their problems, just like Elias. Like that po. They can be helped po even with problems po.

In the case of this student, Elias is the friend who lends a listening ear, not someone with whom Ibarra grappled with concerning the appropriate course of action in colonial society.

The problems that these students confront are very unlike those of Ibarra's and Elias's, but other students appreciate Elias because of the notion of sacrifice that they discern as central in construing the character of Elias. When sacrifice is invoked, the student's reference group ceases to be the circle of friends in favor of the family, deemed to be the site of altruism as an unquestioned moral principle. Said a 14-year-old female student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U15):

I think po kasi yung sacrifice niya [Elias] din po, like siya po is wala ng family, ta's ginagawa niya po 'yon para sa lipunan po. Sa 'kin naman po is, like sacrifice po para sa family o since nasa Iloilo po sila ta's lumuwas pa talaga ako dito para dito mag-aral kasi mas maraming opportunities dito, para na rin po sa kanila.

I think po of the sacrifice he [Elias] also made po, like he didn't have a family po, and he was doing it po for the society po. In my case po, I also sacrifice po for my family or because they are in Iloilo po and I had to leave to come here so I can study here because there are more opportunities here, but this is also for them po.

In her explanation, Elias no longer had a family so he sacrificed for the society at large ("lipunan"; our trans.). But because she still has a family, her sacrifice is being made for their sake. Her sacrifice is studying in Rizal Province, which entails separating herself from her family in the Visayas as a student migrant. Making the most of the educational opportunity that has opened up for her is a strategy of upward social mobility, not just for herself but also for her family, whom in the future she will be better able to support when she gets a job. In this student's classroom model, her sacrifice for her family is commensurate to Elias's sacrifice for the nation.

Similarly, a 14-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U10), who was the eldest of four siblings, noted how she admired Elias for his sacrifices as she saw herself in Elias's shoes, especially in helping out her siblings. She was referring to the common expectation among ordinary Filipino families that the eldest bore the responsibility of taking care of the younger siblings.

Kasi, Ma'am, simula nga po noong una, na ano po, 'yon ang hilig niya [Elias] pong magsakripisyo. Ang hilig niya pong tumulong, ano ta's lagi niya pong inaalala 'yong bayan niya. Kasi . . . alam ko po sa sarili ko tumutulong naman din po ako. Minsan po, nagsa-sakripisyo 'ko sa mga kapatid ko.

Because, Ma'am, from the outset po, you know po, he [Elias] was really inclined to making sacrifices po. He was fond of helping others po, and he always thought po of his country. Because . . . I know po myself that I also extend help to others po. Sometimes po, I sacrifice for my siblings.

The relatively low socioeconomic status of these students<sup>11</sup> and the fact that both are female have inculcated in them the importance of a behavioral pattern of sacrificing for significant others, best exemplified in the novel by Elias.

Overall, among these students, the appreciation of Elias as a character is derived from his relationship with others either as a helpful friend or a self-sacrificing member of a collectivity, conceived as either society or the family. The operative trope runs along the concept that "the characters relate to one another in the same way that we do."

### **"THE PEOPLE THEN ARE LIKE THE PEOPLE NOW"**

A third type of trope used by students to comprehend characters as a category is through comparison that finds equivalences between the people then and the people now. This is seen acutely in the way students imagine the power of Spaniards in the late nineteenth century, who are apprehended as a ruling class in the past in terms of "the rich" people that they observe at present. Resort to this template is made possible by the students' cognizance of their low socioeconomic status. Power is seen along the axis of wealth, which is conspicuous in a country marked by deep socioeconomic inequalities, rather than political power, of which the Spaniards had a monopoly as the sovereign ruler. Despite this asymmetry in economic and

political power, the tropological approach glosses over this difference and finds meaning in the hegemonic position of Spaniards then and rich people now. This explicit comparison was made by a 14-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U6) from High School U, who said:

Kung ihahalintulad ko po 'yong sa Kastila po, which is 'yong mayaman po ngayon, 'yong Pilipino po 'yong tayo lang po 'yon, wala pong masyadong pera. . . 'yong mga mayayaman po parang wala po silang . . . hindi naman po sa walang pakialam, parang 'di po nila, 'di po nila ine-encourage po 'yong ano po, 'yong kakayahan po ng mga Pilipino po.

If I were to compare po that of the Spaniards po, which are the rich po now, the Filipinos po would just be us po, without po a lot of money. . . The wealthy po seem not to have... it's not po that they don't care, it's like they don't, they don't encourage po the abilities of Filipinos po.

Specifically, the rich are said to not nurture the poor to develop their abilities; in other words, the rich monopolize the opportunities for self-development, and there is no equal access to opportunities. The student's perception of her low social status is heightened by her keen awareness of her life prospects compared to the rich. She wonders about her future because, without the needed resources, she cannot expect to develop her talents. The wealthy live in their own world and are detached from students like her. This perception of the lack of compassion of the Filipino wealthy for the poor provides a framework for understanding Spaniards as a ruling class in the late nineteenth century. Her conception of Spanish colonial oppressiveness is informed by how the poor feel squeezed by the rich at the present.<sup>12</sup>

A 16-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R11) from High School R stated that the Spaniards were cruel ("malupit"; our trans.) toward the people ("yong pagiging malupit ng mga Español sa mga tao"; our trans.). When asked if she sees something similar happening at present, she said:

[May] pagmamalupit po. Opo; 'yong halimbawa po kapag may kasalanan. Kapag marami kang pera, kapag may kasalanan ka po, babayaran lang po ng pera, ok na po. Pero kapag ikaw naman po ay mahirap, kahit hindi mo kasalanan makukulong ka po.

[There is] cruelty po. Yes po; an example po is when you commit an offense. If you are wealthy, in case you commit an offense po, you just need po to pay with cash, then that's okay po. But if you happen to be poor, even if it's not your fault, you'll be imprisoned po.

This student knows that the criminal justice system is deeply skewed against the poor, while the rich go scot-free because of bribery. The poor may be innocent, but they end up behind bars. As another 16-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R2) from High School R similarly puts it, “Sometimes, the powerful—say, you have a high position, it can be used for ill purposes . . . for example, you committed a crime, you use your power to absolve yourself” (“Minsan, ‘yong may kapangyarihan, kunwari mataas ‘yong posisyon mo, nagagamit po sa masasama . . . kungwari nagkasala ka, gagamitin mo ‘yung kapangyarihan mo para mapawalang-sala ka”; our trans.). Other words used by Grade 9 students from the same high school pertaining to such injustice include “discrimination” (“diskriminasyon”; our trans.) (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R6; Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R8), “degradation” (“[pag-a]alipusta”; our trans.) (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R7), and “trampling” (“[pag]tapak-tapak”; our trans.) (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R4) of the poor. All this injustice at present is a form of cruelty (“pagmamalupit”; our trans.) that is ultimately projected backward to the Spaniards.

This comparative lens for understanding a categorical entity that existed in a bygone era is the student’s tool for apprehending the past by way of the present. The classroom model that students create is influenced by teachers who wittingly or unwittingly construct specific characters in accordance to the teachers’ own schema of historical continuity. This approach is effective not only in implementing the demand of the Rizal Law for “a re-dedication to the ideals of freedom and nationalism for which our heroes lived and died” in the past (“Republic Act No. 1425”), but also in corresponding to the tendency of students to appreciate the novel in the present didactically, i.e., as a moral guide (Aguilar et al.). In other words, the characters’ behaviors are given utmost attention in studying the novel since these behaviors are easily assimilable “lessons” for the present time. This tendency is exemplified by the portrayal of Kapitan Tiyago as *sunud-sunuran*, as mentioned earlier.

Kapitan Tiyago is not merely a stereotype but a character that has become an archetype through which his supposed character flaw continues to manifest even in the present-day.<sup>13</sup> Thus, *sunud-sunuran* serves as a trope to identify historical continuities that students discern at present, enabling them to interpret current events and Philippine society along this line.

Interestingly, a 14-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U3) from High School U discerned Kapitan Tiyago’s behavior in the Philippine government’s response to the maritime dispute with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), saying:

Parang base po sa nababasa ko po sa internet, parang daw ano tayo sunud-sunuran daw sa mga Chinese. Pati rin daw po ano, 'yong ilang part ng Philippines, kagaya po ng West Philippine Sea, inaangkin po nila na kahit sa 'tin po at nanalo tayo sa tribunal, sinasabi nila sa kanila daw po 'yon kahit hindi naman.

Based on what I read po in the internet, they say we're sunud-sunuran to the Chinese. They say po that some parts of the Philippines, like the West Philippine Sea, are being claimed po by them even if they're ours and we won in the tribunal, they say that it belongs to them even if that's not the case.

This student is knowledgeable about the decision issued by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in July 2016 that the Philippines has exclusive sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea and that China's "nine-dash line" is invalid. Nevertheless, the administration of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte has not insisted on that legal victory; on the contrary, it has acquiesced to the PRC's presence and activities in Philippine waters, thus manifesting what this student sees as the historical continuity in the problem of Kapitan Tiyago's obsequiousness ("sunud-sunuran"; our trans.) to foreigners.

Another 14-year-old female Grade 9 student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U10) from High School U frames the issue in terms of the Philippines being reduced to the status of a province of the PRC ("yong pagiging probinsya ng China sa atin"; our trans.). However, she puts the kowtowing behavior to the PRC exhibited by the Philippine government under Duterte on the same plane as how the poor in general are subordinate and subservient to the rich in the Philippines, the power dimension being a basis of comparison that enables students to appreciate characters in the *Noli* as oral literature. When asked what she would tackle if she were to write her own novel, the student said she would narrate the country's current problems:

Parang 'yong inaano kasi doon, porket mahirap ka, wala kang ano, e, wala kang, 'di ka puwedeng magpaliwanag, e. Parang, parang gusto ko siyang ihalintulad sa *Noli* po, 'di ba? 'yong mga kura 'yong nasa matataas. So, wala ka ring karapatang lumaban.

It's like what's being pointed out there, just because you're poor, you have no, you have no, it's not possible for you to explain. It's like, it's like I would like to compare it to the *Noli*, isn't it? The priests, they're high above. So you also have no right to fight.

The class inequality, which these students keenly experience, enables them to see the poor as unable to resist the rich and powerful. One has "no right to fight."



Without passing judgment on whether people in the past were fundamentally the same as or different from the people at present, students do perceive behavioral similarities, which inform their classroom models of these characters. Thus, the oppression of the poor then is like what happens today. The hegemonic Spanish friars then are like the powerful people now. The rhetorical framework for understanding categories of actors in history and at present parallels the schema for appreciating characters in the *Noli* as like the self or the relationships of characters in the story as like their relationships today. The present provides the template for understanding the past, with the two periods linked together by tropes.

### MORAL PRECEPTS AND THE RELATIONAL NATION

The character of Elias in relation to Ibarra contains the potential to nourish the national imagination based on an appreciation of the interpersonal dynamics between these two characters. Caroline Hau argues that Elias's sacrifice of his life on behalf of Ibarra signifies the nationalist moment in the *Noli*, a "moment when hatred and revenge are transformed into love, sacrifice, and solidarity, when blood enemies can become friends" (*Necessary Fictions* 87).

For Elias's sacrifice to be understood as nationalist, we need to ask why Elias gave his life for Ibarra. As one student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U10) we had quoted earlier said, Elias "is inclined to make sacrifices po" ("ang hilig niya pong magsakripisyo"; our trans.), that is, it appears to be in his nature to be selfless. This view, however, flattens Elias's character. A couple of students explained that Elias is simply a good friend, and what he did was what every good friend would do—a view that inverts Hau's point that the moment of sacrifice was the point of transformation from being blood enemies to friends. In many of the classroom models of Elias, the enmity between the ancestors of Ibarra and Elias is brushed aside; as a consequence, there really is no moment when Elias faced the choice between vengeance and solidarity.

The answer appears to be in Elias's realization that he was deeply linked to Ibarra through their entwined family histories and his decision to forge a deeper relationship with Ibarra rather than to sever those ties (by either killing Ibarra or simply dissociating from him). Thus, Elias and Ibarra were related not by "friendship" but by a profound kinship that transcended literal kinship and the hatred with which Elias's kin group had held Ibarra's. Elias had imagined a "community" with Ibarra, not just because both were tied by personal acts of reciprocity and indebtedness,

but because of the simple fact that their lives were intertwined, and one can choose, like Elias, to forsake vindictiveness, pursue comradeship, relinquish happiness, and even risk one's life for a higher cause. Elias recognized that Ibarra was fundamentally concerned about the homeland, and despite disagreement on how to pursue the homeland's best interests they shared a common love for that same homeland.

How are students to perceive the nationalist moment, especially in view of orality and transmedial storytelling? The low recall of Elias—amounting to only a quarter of all students in the study—is indicative of the teachers' minimal emphasis on Elias as a character. Nevertheless, the seven students who pointed to Elias as their favorite character suggest the possibilities of a student-derived nationalist moment, notwithstanding the schematized understanding of Elias's relationship with Ibarra. Evidently, these students see relationships as paramount, be they with kin or friends. As we have seen from these students' statements, their relationships can exact the best from them, providing them a reason to sacrifice for others, particularly friends and family, who form a moral community to which the individual student belongs. This small community constituted by the students' everyday relationships with peers and family can be expanded to the larger society as the arena for the living out of moral codes. Thus, the precepts that are said to be extracted from the story as presented in the classroom and mentioned as general principles in our recorded conversations with students are ultimately founded on the knowledge of their existing relationships.

In fact, a sizeable number of students in this study, nearly two-fifths, share the commonality of reporting moral precepts, which they learned from the interpersonal relations of specific characters in the novel (who serve as models to be either emulated or avoided). These moral principles include authenticity, respect, generosity, contentment, eschewing selfishness, and avoiding opportunism (Aguilar et al. 346–348). For instance, a 15-year-old Grade 9 male student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R14) from High School R plainly underscores the importance of the *Noli* for its valuable “learnings” (“matututunan”; our trans.), such as “not being too selfish po and not being too hurtful to other people po” (“wag pong masyadong makasarili at saka ‘wag pong masyadong palasakit sa tao”; our trans.). Meanwhile, a 14-year-old Grade 9 female student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U10) from High School U cited above admonished: “Help others po like what Elias did” (“Tumulong po sa kapwa tulad ng ginawa ni Elias”; our trans.). A 16-year-old Grade 10 female student (Grade 10 Student Respondent No. 10U13), also from High School U, gave a commentary on social rank and hierarchy: “Like po . . . in the first chapter po, it's like they were arguing there po who would sit at the head of the table as whoever had a higher position, but in my view po it's not really important po . . . what our position is for us to be recognized” (“Katulad po . . . yung sa unang kabanata po kasi, parang nagtalo po sila doon kung sino'ng uupo sa dulo ng hapag

kasi kung sino yung mas mataas yung posisyon, tapos para sa 'kin po, hindi naman po kasi importante yung . . . posisyon natin para makilala tayo"; our trans.). These moral principles were also expressed as discursive turns, with the students' selves interpenetrating the characters in the story.

The moral commands articulated by the students arguably guide their lives in a manner consistent with the goals of the Rizal Law: "moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience," and responsible citizenship. However, the students are not blind but are keenly aware of the moral failings of contemporary Philippine society and state and those who dominate it, enabling them to imagine the inequities of Spanish colonial power in the past. Nevertheless, Rizal's novel itself is deemed as speaking against those excesses. If there is something to be learned from studying this piece of oral literature, it is that moral standards must be applied to all, even to those beyond the immediate circle of one's social relationships. As a 14-year-old Grade 9 female student (Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U18) from High School U admonished: "Each one of our fellow Filipinos po should be respected po. Not only Filipinos po, everyone po" ("Dapat pong irespeto ang bawa't kapwa po natin Pilipino. Hindi lang po Pilipino, lahat po ng tao"; our trans.). Thus, although the students may begin with the "moral lessons" they learned from the novel, the values the students identified can be seen as proceeding from the assumption that one shares a moral kinship with other members of the broader human community, with whom they must relate based on the dictates of morality, civility, and citizenship.

In other words, students may not be able to analyze the novel in ways that accord with high literary criticism—indeed, they do not even read the novel in its abridged textbook forms, and more so in its whole translated versions—but the cognitive processes they deploy to appreciate characters already contain the kernel for moral principles, which are exemplified either positively or negatively by the characters in Rizal's novel. Therefore, it can be argued that, from the perspective of their meaningful social relationships, students conceptualize the larger collectivity of the nation, expressed as "ang bawa't kapwa po natin Pilipino" ("each one of our fellow Filipinos"; our trans.), *kapwa* being the quintessential relational term. Thus, the nation is perceived from the standpoint of real human ties—that "small locality" (Joaquin, "A Heritage of Smallness" 351) from which "indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship" become imaginable (Anderson, *Imagined communities* 6)<sup>14</sup>—rather than from a highly abstracted and impersonal notion of a given, superordinate reality. As such, their view of the nation is humanized, which may be the same insight that one can gain from a full reading of Rizal's novel.

## CONCLUSION

The actual and even greater potential of the secondary school classroom to humanize the nation ultimately validates but also challenges the recourse of the curriculum guide mandated by the DepEd (*K to 12 Gabay 4*) to focus on the characters when studying Rizal's *Noli me tângere*: such choice appears to not only hone the communicative skills (“kakayahang komunikatibo”; our trans.), critical thinking (“mapanuring pag-iisip”; our trans.), and literary appreciation (“pagpapahalagang pampanitikan”; our trans.) expected from Grade 9 students by the end of the school year, but it also provides a human representation through which the students can concretely understand the patriotism with which the Rizal Law aspires to suffuse them in the first place. At the same time, although perhaps most unwittingly on the part of the education bureaucracy and as a pedagogical strategy it needs deepening, this focus on characters in the *Noli* becomes a crucial instruction to further understand the concept of nation as demonstrated through encountering the novel itself. The very work of supplementing and even exceeding the inevitable gaps in the characters of an oral literature ultimately embodies the practice of imagining the nation most intimately, in how each student partakes in constructing, and deconstructing, these communal figures by imparting them pieces of themselves—parts of their families and friends—as well as their other social relations that are gathered to and bonded with these characters. In doing so, the students connect to “real” historical figures, affording them a genuine bond with the past, providing them a genealogy and historicity that render Rizal's novel consummately relevant. In this way, the novel and its characters that have been historically, and legislatively, asserted to be Rizal's become national—the nation's—indeed: it is the proverbial death of the author (see Barthes), with the text now written and rewritten, time and again, by and with the Filipino youth themselves. And so, what then are the biographical-historical approaches that so frequently preface the study of *Noli me tângere* in the Philippine education system but an ironic assertion that Rizal, the national hero, is indeed dead, despite his head's most hauntingly inescapable presence in the everyday—on our very one-peso currency? Yet, Rizal lives on, if only in the orality of the Filipino high school classroom.

## NOTES

This study was supported by a Standard Grant from the University Research Council (URC), Ateneo de Manila University, for which we are most grateful. Ma. Elizabeth Macapagal also received a School of Social Sciences (SOSS) research load grant. Cornelia C. Soto was a member of the original research team but had to step down from academic responsibilities for family reasons; we thank her for her contributions to this study. We are grateful for the research assistance provided by Leah Aldave, Loreen Eslao, Leah Estepa, and Heidy Herna, as well as the administrative assistance of Fe Mallillin. We are also grateful for the comments and suggestions of the referees, which led us to refine the argument. Finally, our deepest gratitude goes to the students, teachers, and principals whose participation in this study we truly value.

1. A learning outcome under the category of “Writing” (*Pagsulat*) expects the students to become “capable of presenting a scenario building about Sisa in the modern times” (“naitatanghal ang scenario building tungkol kay Sisa sa makabagang panahon”) (*K to 12 Gabay* 173; our trans.).
2. Although used often by both the Grade 9 teachers and students in one of the high schools—particularly, High School U, located in an urban area—to relate their experience of going through the mandated reading of the *Noli*, the term *pagsasatao* is only mentioned particularly in the Grade 10 DepEd curriculum guide, in the learning outcome that expects the students “to be capable of appropriate embodiment of the characters in the novel” (“naisasagawa ang angkop na pagsasatao ng mga tauhan ng nobela”; trans. ours) (*K to 12 Gabay* 185). For instances of *pagsasatao*, see Bautista (“Pagsasatao ’11 Champion”; and “Pagsasatao ’11 (1st winner)”).
3. Here, the qualifier *literary* is materially understood by way of its etymological sense, namely, from *litera* or the “letter” (see Williams 150-154), hence harking back to the notion of the printed word, as in Rizal’s novel, in contrast to other textual media.
4. The names of the characters in Rizal’s novel are spelled according to how they are rendered in Filipino textbook versions.
5. On the various and conflicting reinterpretations and reappropriations of Maria Clara, see Hau (“The Afterlives of María Clara”).
6. The student most likely refers here to the trailer of the movie *Damaso* (2019) directed by Joven Tan (see “Damaso”).
7. For examples of video lectures that provide introductory historicizing in studying the *Noli*, see Ayson; Cardano; Delos Reyes; Isulat; and Revozo. It is worth noting that in these “historical backgrounds” (“kaligirang pangkasaysayan”; our trans.), the *Noli* is foremostly described as Rizal’s first novel, after which the

discussion follows a biographical arc that leads to the historical appreciation of the novel in relation to the larger Philippine context.

8. A quick search on the internet regarding similarities between Rizal and Ibarra also yields such biographical attribution. For example, a response to the question “Who is Crisostomo Ibarra?” describes the character as “representing the personality of the hero Dr. Jose Rizal, whose goal was to give education to the youth for he believed that the youth is the hope of the country” (“nagrepresenta sa katauhan ng Bayaning [sic] si Dr. Jose Rizal na ang layunin ay ang bigyan ng edukasyon ang mga kabataan sapagkat naniniwala siya na ang kabataan ay ang pag-asa ng bayan”; our trans.) (“Sino c crisostomo ibarra?”). On another occasion, Ibarra is deemed to “depict” the “small group of Filipinos who had a chance to study abroad and dreamt of improving the country” (Malaran), namely, the *ilustrados* to which Rizal belonged.
9. As quotidianly understood, the historical-bibliographical approach foremostly assumes a correspondence between a work of literature, its author’s life, and the condition of the world at large in this specific point in history (see, for instance, Malaran; and Magallanes). In other words, “this approach sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work” (Guerin et al 51).
10. See, for example, Villanueva; and “Magandang Pag Uugali ni Kapitan Tiago.” It is worth noting that this particular qualifier of being *sunud-sunuran* has been attributed also to other characters in the novel, although the students in this study did not do so. For instance, in Fuentes’s opinion piece, the term is used to describe Maria Clara in her purported subservience to Tiyago as his daughter (“naging sunod-sunuran si Maria Clara sa ama nitong si Kapitan Tiyago”; our trans.). Meanwhile, a Grade 10 teacher from High School R (Grade 10 Teacher Respondent No. R1) echoes this appraisal of Kapitan Tiyago, although without necessarily using the same aforementioned adjective: “The Kapitan . . . I remember him there in a chapter like he doesn’t have a commitment . . . after all, he is the leader, and perhaps he also feels fear” (“si Kapitan . . . maalala ko siya do’n sa isang kabanata, para siyang walang paninindigan . . . palibhasa siya ‘yong pinuno, siguro may takot din siyang nararamdaman”; our trans.).
11. In the Philippine education system, middle- and high-income households tend to send children to private schools, which are deemed to provide quality education an observation that applies to all levels of schooling but particularly in junior and senior high school (*Philippines basic education* 24; Albert et al 32–33). Low-income households, or the bottom three-fifths of all income classes, overwhelmingly send their children to public schools. Compared with other levels, enrollment rates are starker at the junior high school level, where the “financial cost of schooling” is cited as one of the main deterrents to attending school (*Philippines basic education* 23). While those who are in school may have access to somewhat more resources than those who could not even enroll, the incidence of poverty is pervasive in public secondary schools. Accordingly, the students in this study are familiar with poverty and can empathize with the poor, or they themselves may come from poor households.

12. This finding raises the question of how middle- and upper-class students in private elite secondary schools are able to imagine Spanish colonial oppression.
13. Interestingly, in the speech delivered on the occasion of Rizal's 150 birth anniversary, then President Benigno S. Aquino III used the term *sunud-sunuran* to describe, in Rizal's time, the "Filipinos that seemed already desensitized and blind to their enslavement and docility" ("mga Pilipinong tila manhid at bulag na sa kanilang pagiging alipin at sunudsunuran" our trans.)
14. It must be underscored that Anderson (*Imagined Communities* 6) specifically uses this phrase in describing Javanese villagers said to imagine the larger community to which they belong through a "particularistic" manner. In the present transposition of the phrase to the case of Filipino students, what bears to be recognized are the similarities in their "style" of imagining community, which according to Anderson is what "distinguishes" one community from another; in other words, something can be said regarding the possibility of imagining these disparate communities to be, in some ways, one.

## Works Cited

- Aguilar, Filomeno Jr., et al. "Learning without Reading *Noli me tângere*: The Rizal Law in Two Public High Schools." *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, vol. 69, no. 3, Sept. 2021, pp. 325–360. *Project MUSE*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/phs.2021.0022>.
- Albert, Jose Ramon G., et al. "Profile and Determinants of the Middle-Income Class in the Philippines." *Philippine Institute for Development Studies Discussion Paper Series*, no. 2018–20, Dec. 2018, <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps1820.pdf>.
- Almario, Virgilio, editor. *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*. Rev. ed., Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, University of the Philippines, 2010.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed., Verso, 1991.
- . "Hard to Imagine." *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, Verso, 1998, pp. 235–262.
- Aquino, Benigno S. III. "President Benigno S. Aquino III's Speech During the Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal." 19 June 2011. *Presidential Communications Operations Office*, [https://pcoo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Pnoyspeeches/Speeches\\_2011/speech2011\\_june19.htm?](https://pcoo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Pnoyspeeches/Speeches_2011/speech2011_june19.htm?) Transcript. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Auracher, Jan, and Akiko Hirose. "The Influence of Reader's Stereotypes on the Assessment of Fictional Characters." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2017, pp. 795–823. *JSTOR*.
- Ayson, Criselda. "Noli Me Tangere (Kaligirang Kasaysayan, Layunin)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Criselda Ayson, 18 March 2018, [https://youtu.be/Ct\\_oJ4dOVbA](https://youtu.be/Ct_oJ4dOVbA).
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image Music Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 142–147.
- Bautista, Kate. "Pagsasatao '11 Champion – Padre Damaso." *YouTube*, uploaded by KateZeL17, 19 Aug. 2011, <https://youtu.be/GiYtaVWexDo>.
- . "Pagsasatao '11 (1st winner) – Sisa." *YouTube*, uploaded by KateZeL17, 19 Aug. 2011, <https://youtu.be/bl3oZ4gN-SY>.
- Benitez, Christian Jil. "A Tropical Traumatology: Rereading the Folk in 'May Bagyo Ma't May Rilim.'" *Kritika Kultura*, no. 38, 2022, pp. 232–265. *AJOL*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.13185/KK2022.003811>.
- Cardano, Rowena. "Kaligirang Pangkasaysayan ng Noli Mr Tangere." *YouTube*, uploaded by Rowena Cardano, 1 Mar. 2018, <https://youtu.be/9tLbq3zL8Uc>.
- "Damaso | Official Trailer (In Cinemas November 20, 2019)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Reality Entertainment, 22 Oct. 2019, <https://youtu.be/gxv1zuahbJw>.
- Delos Reyes, Geraldine. "Kaligirang Pangkasaysayan ng Noli Me Tangere." *YouTube*, uploaded by Asignaturang Filipino Channel, 25 Feb. 2020, <https://youtu.be/mTy9WpuuaC8>.



- Department Order 6, s. 1995: Reiterating the implementation of Republic Act No. 1425. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines, 6 Feb. 1995, <http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-6-s-1995>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Fuentes, Jed Michael. "Kung Bakit si Maria Clara ay Hindi si Maria Clara." *Philippine Science High School – Central Visayas Campus*, 7 Dec. 2016, <https://cvisc.pshs.edu.ph/admission/22-gad-related>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R1." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R2." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R4." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R6." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R7." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R8." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 20 Feb. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R11." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R13." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9R14." Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U3." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 10 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U5." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 10 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U6." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U7." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U8." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U10." Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student respondent No. 9U15." Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U17." Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U18." Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 11 Mar. 2020.
- "Grade 9 Student Respondent No. 9U20." Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 11 Mar. 2020.

- “Grade 9 Teacher Respondent No. U1.” Interview. Conducted by Loreen Eslao, 26 Feb. 2020.
- “Grade 10 Student Respondent No. 10U13.” Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 30 Jan. 2020.
- “Grade 10 Student Respondent No. 10U20.” Interview. Conducted by Leah Estepa, 30 Jan. 2020.
- “Grade 10 Teacher Respondent No. R1.” Interview. Conducted by Heidy Herna, 3 Feb. 2020.
- Guerin, Wilfred L., et al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 5th ed., Oxford UP, 2005.
- Hau, Caroline S. *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946–1980*. Ateneo de Manila UP, 2000.
- . “Did Padre Damaso Rape Pia Alba? Reticence, Revelation, and Revolution in José Rizal’s Novels.” *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, vol. 65, no. 2, June 2017, pp. 137–199. *Project MUSE*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/phs.2017.0014>.
- . “The Afterlives of María Clara.” *Humanities Diliman*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2021, pp. 118–61.
- Isulat, Mitzi Riva. “Kaligirang Pangkasaysayan ng Noli Me Tangere | Noli Me Tangere ni Jose Rizal.” *YouTube*, uploaded by MatutoKayGuro, 28 Feb. 2021, <https://youtu.be/V5mhDDvqxko>.
- Jannidis, Fotis. “Character.” *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, 14 Sept. 2013, <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/41.html>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Joaquin, Nick. “The Novels of Rizal: An Appreciation.” In *La Naval de Manila and Other Essays*, Albert Florentino, 1964, pp. 59–75.
- . “A Heritage of Smallness.” *Culture and History*. Anvil, 2004, pp. 351–70.
- K to 12 Gabay Pangkurikulum: Filipino (Baitang 1–10)*. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines, May 2016, <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Filipino-CG.pdf>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Magallanes, Jonathan. “Introduction of Literary Criticism.” *Slideshare.net*, 20 Sept. 2018, <https://www.slideshare.net/jonathanbac01/introduction-of-literary-criticism>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- “Magandang Pag Uugali ni Kapitan Tiago.” *Brainly.ph*, 20 Nov. 2020, <https://brainly.ph/question/7266238>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Malaran, Denson. “Historical and Biographical Approach.” *Slideshare.net*, 4 Sept. 2017, <https://www.slideshare.net/DensonMalaran/historical-and-biographical-approach>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Margolin, Uri. “Character.” *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, edited by David Herman, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 66–79.
- Ogena, Nimfa B. “A Development Concept of Adolescence: The Case of Adolescents in the Philippines.” *Philippine Population Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2004, pp. 1–18, [https://www.pssc.org.ph/wp-content/pssc-archives/Philippine%20Population%20Review/2004/05\\_A%20Development%20Concept%20of%20Adolescence\\_%20The%20Case%20of%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf](https://www.pssc.org.ph/wp-content/pssc-archives/Philippine%20Population%20Review/2004/05_A%20Development%20Concept%20of%20Adolescence_%20The%20Case%20of%20Adolescents%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf).

- Philippines Basic Education Public Expenditure Review*. World Bank, 1 Oct. 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34670/Philippines-Basic-Education-Public-Expenditure-Review.pdf>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Polvinen, Merja, and Howard Sklar. "Mimetic and Synthetic Views of Characters: How Readers Process 'People' in Fiction." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019. Taylor & Francis Online, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2019.1687257>.
- "Republic Act no. 1425." *Official Gazette, Republic of the Philippines*, 12 June 1956, <http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1956/06/12/republic-act-no-1425/>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Revozo, AJ. "Kasaysayan ng Noli Me Tangere | Jose Rizal | Aj Revozo." *YouTube*, uploaded by Aj Revozo Vlog, 30 Aug. 2019, <https://youtu.be/H7jpPJarh5U>.
- "Sino C Crisostomo Ibarra?" *Brainly.ph*, 12 Jan. 2020, <https://brainly.ph/question/2543729#readmore>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- Villanueva, Olive. "Kabanata 6 – Si Kapitan Tiago." *Slideshare.net*, 11 May 2015, <https://www.slideshare.net/yheb/kabanata-6-si-kapitan-tiago>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021.
- White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford UP, 1976.