

## A Note From The Editor

We are happy to present *Diliman Review*, volume 54 (2007) with five well research articles, two poems, one short story, and three book reviews.

**Senator Antonio Trillanes IV** in August 2007 filed Senate Bill No. 1467 entitled “An Act Defining the Archipelagic Baselines of the Philippine Archipelago, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 3046, as Amended by Republic Act No. 5446” or otherwise known as the “Archipelagic Baselines Law of the Philippines”.

In his *DR* article “The Baseline Issue”, Senator Trillanes gives us a history of the discourse on the baseline issue, starting from the baseline bill of former Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani in 1993, to House Bill No. 1212 filed by Congressman Antonio V. Cuenco and HB 3216 which Congress substituted for HB 1212., to HB 1212 again which was sent back to the House Committee on Foreign Relations by Malacañang. According to Trillanes, this paper for *Diliman Review* “intends to explain and justify the position adopted in SB 1467 and to differentiate it with the other options, as well as, clarify other closely related subjects surrounding the baselines issue.

Actually, his article goes all the way back to the 1898 Treaty of Paris which stated the territorial limits of the Philippines and the KIG borders defined by PD 1596, both of which are the bases of the NAMRIA (National Mapping and Resource Information Agency)-supplied nautical charts used by the Philippine Navy. He explains that without a new baseline law, RA 5446 which is not UNCLOS compliant, as well as PD 1599, another “pre-UNCLOS unilateral declaration of our country’s EEZ, as mandate to enforce maritime laws in these areas” have been used. “In short, as of the moment, we have two sets of boundaries (PD 1599 and Treaty of Paris with PD 1596), and we will yet define another one (UNCLOS)”. UNCLOS III or the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is the

international agreement produced by UN conferences from 1973 to 1982 which consists of 320 articles and 9 annexes ratified by at least 155 countries to date and which officially came into force on 16 November 1994. UNCLOS III “defines, among others, the limits of the territorial sea, contiguous zone and the EEZ of a coastal or archipelagic state”. Trillanes pushes for the UNCLOS III option which he considers superior to PD 1599 and the Treaty of Paris; and argues that as a “self respecting people living within a community of nations, (we) should not have two sets of boundaries that we can use for our own convenience. It is simply not fair; it is simply not right. Therefore it is in our country’s best interest to adopt solely the UNCLOS option”.

Senate Bill 1467 (Option 1) is UNCLOS compliant and Trillanes’ article argues why this bill is superior to the other baseline options prepared by NAMRIA “to cater to the different political persuasions of policymakers”— Option 2 (official position of Malacañang and DFA position paper, 2 August 2005); Option 3 and Option 4 (option adopted by HB 3216). He ends his article with several recommendations including: “the passing of SB 1467 and its counterpart in Congress before May 2009....so that our country can officially claim the limits of our National Territory that is consistent with the international covenant of UNCLOS;... push for the submission of particulars of the outer limits of the continental shelf to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf before the 12 May 2009 deadline...; modernize our fishing methods and technologies....; invest heavily on marine scientific research and exploration of the EEZ and continental shelf...; reach out to other claimant States of the contested territories...; comply with other UNCLOS obligations of an archipelagic state; modernize the Navy and Coast Guard...; conduct a legislative inquiry into the Tripartite Agreement for Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking”.

From an article about a “reasonable course of action” for the baseline controversy which is imbricated in a highly complex network of national security, economy and foreign policy issues, we go to a discussion of a controversy in Philippine art history.

**Reuben Ramos Cañete** in “El Spoliarium with its Others: Philippine Art History and its Discursive Contentions” starts by quoting from Donald Preziosi’s assertion that art history’s “rhetorical battles owe their marching orders as much to the agonistic fragmentation naturalized by the modern disciplinary knowledge as to substantive differences...” (*Rethinking Art History*). Cañete also asserts that art history as discourse is complicit with the production of a privileged “authorial” (the art historian’s) position that may also be contradicted by other art history discourses and that the dominant art history of any given time closely follows, and is infused with the dominant philosophies, literary theories of its time.

Cañete’s discussion focuses on an analysis of the various narratives surrounding Juan Luna’s *El Spoliarium* (executed from 1842-1884), the claims that this work “formed the foundation of modern-day (i.e., post colonial ) nation itself “; and the contending perspectives on this art work in order to expose “the metanarratives that both inform and frame the topic “Philippine Paintings” in art historical discourse” . The aesthetic metanarrative, the founding (still debated) document of Filipino art criticism by Jose Rizal (and later by Graciano Lopez Jaena) on Luna’s *El Spoliarium* (first gold medal at the 1884 Madrid Exposicion) and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo’s *Virgenes Cristianas Expuesto al Populacho* (9<sup>th</sup> silver medal), according to Cañete, “argues for the humanist re-privileging of genius as the aesthetic episteme that simultaneously confers symbolic distinction upon its awardees, and seals their respective agential efforts within the dialectic of (Western-determined) racial progress and evolution”. As Rizal states: ...The oriental chrysalis is leaving the cocoon...To you (Spain) is due the beauty of the diamonds that the Philippines wears in her crown. She produced the precious stones; Europe gave them the polish...” This view of Rizal’s “orientalist triumphalism” enunciated through “the key terms of Enlightenment humanism” is critiqued by Cañete as the juxtaposition of a “primeval Natural Order” against a “civilized Western Self” and explained in the context of the Filipino Madrid community’s/the Euro-based reform movement and the efforts to persuade “the Hispanic State to accelerate the process of colonial modernization”. Cañete’s close reading of Rizal’s and other ilustrado discourses on these paintings point to other problematic issues which

Cañete further discusses. He then moves to art history of the 1940s as illustrated by E. Aguilar Cruz' rejection of Luna and Hidalgo and the latter's praise of the "autochthonous tradition" represented by Fabian de la Rosa "whose nativist credentials chiefly constitute his ability to (according to Cruz) 'nurture his talents in an indigenous atmosphere' ...thus reducing the subject position of the (always problematic) 'Filipino' into a dichotomic contrast with the European". The fate of Luna is illustrated by Cañete in his discussion of the discourses of Emmanuel Torres in the 1960s (negative towards Luna), Dominador Castañeda (sympathetic towards Luna) in the 60s, Alice Guillermo in the 80s (making Luna politically relevant to the times), Patrick Flores and Marian Pastor Roces in the 90s (representing art history's self reflexive turn and an understanding of Luna's and others paintings as hybrid and ambivalent signs). Cañete concludes that "the discursive terrain around paintings like *El Spoliarium* originates from larger theoretical and historical issues like modernity and postcolonial epistemology".

**Jose Duke Bagulaya** in "The Ilustrados as Literary Critics: Philippine Literary Criticism under Spanish Rule" points to Graciano Lopez Jaena's praises (*La Solidaridad* 1989) for his compatriots who had won prizes at the Exposition Universal de Paris as giving us "a glimpse of the ilustrados' view of culture, an important starting point for any history of the development of Philippine Literary Criticism during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century". He argues that "the ilustrados contributed pioneering ideas in Literary Criticism and that literary criticism as a social act is "a specific field of cultural production" which can either be under the relative domination of the field of power" or can be relatively autonomous from it; thus making literary criticism the site of contesting, even "contradictory literary pronouncements". Bagulaya's essay "aims to analyze the nature of literary criticism of the ilustrados through a study of the literary controversy which was ushered in by the contradictory evaluations of Jose Rizal's novels" represented by the debates between "two major camps—the ilustrados and the friars" as well differences of critical opinions on the novels amongst the ilustrados themselves. Bagulaya also traces the history of the canonization of Rizal as national hero and sacralization of his works. He discusses the publication of *Noli me Tangere* in 1887 which was

hailed by the Spanish speaking elite in the Philippines and the Filipino expatriates in Spain as “obra maestro de un Filipino”.

**Ruth Jordana Pison** in “The Heart of the Nation: Merlinda Bobis’ *Banana Heart Summer* starts with a scene from the novel where Nana Dora says to the twelve year old narrator, Nining, that “Close to midnight, when the (banana) heart bows from its stem, wait for its first dew. It will drop like a gem. Catch it with your tongue. When you eat the heart of the matter, you’ll never grow hungry again”. Years later, as a cook in Oregon, Nining recalls stories of her homeland set in the 60s, particularly the stories of the inhabitants of Remedios, a street “of wishful sweets and spices” who formed a community of families whose lives are bounded by the church and Mt Mayon in Albay, Bicol. The older Nining re-views the social divide illustrated by the small houses squeezed between the houses of the rich, the squabbles between the Calcium Man (seller of vitamins) and the poor penniless Tiya Asun who keeps cursing the latter for overpricing his wares in spite of the fact that she can hardly afford to buy these anyway; and of construction worker Tiyo Anding’s suicide by jumping from a ledge of a building after hearing that the owner was laying them off. She recalls with bitterness, the constant anger of her mother, disowned by her wealthy family when she married below her class; and how this anger took its toll on her emasculated father and Nining herself who bore the effects of her mother’s anger on her scarred back. Nining’s departure to a foreign land, Pison connects with the fates of countless other Filipinos who had to leave the Philippines out of dire poverty, a sign of the nation’s failure to care for its people. Thus, Nining’s recollection of her last summer in Remedios is tinged with bitterness but also with an understanding that these stories are what she feeds on as she prepares the food of her country for her boss in Oregon. Nining realizes that she can only find peace there if she can forgive both her country and her mother.

“What makes her stories compelling though, is the intricately woven tales of food that serve as metaphorical narratives of people’s lives”, including the narrator’s own, and aim at making people recall the past through its flavors and smells, asserts Pison. In the chapter

titled “Hot Coconut Guava”, Nining “draws an analogy between the fruit/vegetable (guava) and the storyteller”. On page 116 of the novel, the storyteller says: “I am only as good as my use to you, in this case as a storyteller, as rambler of recipes, as reminiscer of sensations, as the older version of a bewildered child, But not quite old enough to escape this humbling state of bewilderment, this daily ambush by life’s divergent exigencies. Is it a fruit, is it a vegetable”. In re-telling these stories, Pison says that “the body is implicated; narrative and the rhetoric of memory are tightly imbricated”. But the story is not singular for the story of the body is also connected with “the narrative of history”. The harmonious balance that should be achieved in concocting *dinuguan*, a Filipino dish with pig’s body parts and spices, is likened to the symbiotic relationship between a body’s heart and spleen, or between members of a family and by extension, a nation. “Getting the right mix is crucial” (the art of *pagtitimpla*) in Nining’s cooking, and eventually in her own project of being at peace with her mother and her homeland. Food is “the closest memory that Nining has of her family and hometown; thus the conflation of body, story, history, and narration/writing. As Nining prepares the banana heart dish for her boss, she remembers Nana Dora’s tale of the banana heart which she heard when she was a child of twelve—to eat the heart of the matte is never to know hunger again. The hunger she felt (the absence of love from her mother) can be assuage by swallowing the dew that drops from the banana heart (to gain the wisdom that will appease her mother and bring to the older Nining as well). Nining finally writes a letter of forgiveness to her mother. As Pison says, the letter of forgiveness which Nining had sent to her mother “could well be a ‘letter’ of reconciliation to the nation which had failed to nurture her (Nining).

**Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns’** essay titled “Alter(n)ation: Costume Metaphors in Filipino American Performance Art” focuses on the deployment of the Philippine *terno*, the national dress, by contemporary Filipino American artists. The *terno*, is the “marker of Filipina identity”, asserts Joe Salazar, the Philippines foremost designer most known for his *terno* designs of deposed first lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

Burns gives a brief genealogy of the *terno* that emphasizes alteration and transformation, to resist facile binaries of the nation as traditional and the diaspora as the site of modern and innovative modifications. This historicization of the *terno* underscores it as an emergent form in which to situate the uses of the *terno* in Filipino American performance projects within the history of the *terno* itself.

The essay thus explores the semiotics of the *terno*, particularly the creative reconfigurations of the infamous “butterfly dress” by two U.S. based diasporic performance art groups, Barrionics and Mail Order Brides (M.O.B.), as a dense metaphor for the “proper and improper Filipina”. These artistic deployments of the *terno* lay bare unquestioned notions of Filipina femininity and nationalism to be fabrications of colonialism, militarization, and globalization.

Specifically, the essay focuses on the artists’ deployment of drag and intertextuality as performative devices to defamiliarize feminine constructs that operate both in the nation and the diaspora, as well as to foreground the imbrications of colonial histories and our neocolonial present in the current global circulation of Filipina bodies. Through these performance methods, these artists in the Filipino diaspora spectacularize the inchoateness of categories of gender, race and sexuality. Their performance works delink the dressee from the dress, the  *terno* from the Filipina, the dress from the girl and the boy, the dress from the straight and from the queer, the dress from the diaporic and from the national. Within such figurations, the *terno* emerges as an over-privileged icon —of ideal womanhood and of the mother nation—whose iconicity is rerouted through bodies that do not belong.

This volume 54 of *Diliman Review* also contains the poems of Edel Garcellano (“Father’s Day” and “For Emma Narvas Espiritu”) and the short story of U Z. Eliserio (“Maganda ang Hinahanap”).

It ends with three reviews of scholar, critic, poet, and activist E. San Juan’s *Balikbayang Mahal: Passages from Exile* (lulu.com, 2007) by Tamara Powell, John Streamas and Charlie Samuya Veric. “A project of homecoming traversed through multiple languages (Filipino,

Chinese, Russian, German, French, etc.), this palimpsest of signs/tropes seeks to map one expatriate's itinerary via disruptions, and deterritorializations shared by all colonized peoples in revolt—a universal experience given local habitation and a name. Exile is the name of this process of self-reflection, criticism, and love for whoever is returning, the beloved fulfilling the promise of national liberation in the birth pangs of revolutionary struggle” (qtd. From the book's blurb).

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