

# Introduction

The motifs that emerge from the articles in this issue are shaped by the burden of cultural and social responsibilities. Under this pressure, the challenge to respond has generated critical analyses of creative products and laid bare issues affecting both individuals and society.

Essentially, cultural responsibility encompasses identity affirmation and articulates convictions in a full-blooded sense such that issues integral to culture are taken as objects of critical concern. In the same manner, social responsibility raises questions when consciousness is pitched against the hard edges of some human plights.

In this issue, such responsibilities resonate with cogent relevance in developing critical orientation and a keen awareness of the forces and circumstances affecting the nation and its communities. The contributors present their position with resources of insights on this terrain of intellectual provocations. For instance, the entangled colonial legacy of the country stands in complex relation to the literary texts and to the song analyzed by Ma. Cienna Jaucian and Efner Agustin, respectively. Both authors have taken the role of cultural thinkers scrutinizing traditional assumptions and harnessing exegetical tools and concepts to practical criticism.

Jaucian's "Capitalist Gimmickry in Selected Postmodern Bicol Fiction" views the literary products at an angle to the capitalist system, as well as ascribes their nature to postmodernism. Citing literary critic Sianne Ngai's theory on gimmicks as "indicators of ambivalence and exploitation occurring in late capitalist societies," the author poses the question, "How is capitalist gimmickry demonstrated and employed by the selected Bikol postmodern literary texts?" Specifically, Jay Salvosa's "Cinarding" and Dennis Gonzaga's chapbook *#WeHealAswang* are the literary pieces construed by the author as

sites for gimmicks because of their style and urban setting. As reconceived folklore, the works are characteristically decomposable into their constituent elements that permit a wide range of interpretations.

Competently wielding her critical arguments, Jaucian has produced a well-reasoned discourse. She has clearly determined the mode of classifying the Bicol texts and efficiently rendered critical conclusions as to their meaning and significance. She has uncovered gimmickry as a concomitant principle that knits together the content and style of the literary pieces. Her critical approach has enabled her to integrate propositions with sound causal inferences: operational concepts by authors such as Ngai, Marx, Robinson, and Jameson serve directly or indirectly to explicate in intelligible terms her perspective and hypothesis. Although the interplay of ideas is fraught with sociopolitical assumptions, it has sharpened her critical insights, thus establishing the credibility of her contention.

Significantly, Jaucian's critique of postmodern Bicol fiction has come to terms with the ramifications of gimmickry that takes possession even of ordinary people like the Bikolnons. She underscores the shady undercurrent of capitalism peddling its commodities and producing the splintered values of its victims in her analysis. The reading of the works focuses on the subtleties and complications instigated by gimmickry. By virtue of the concept, a kind of sociocultural snapshot unfolds: the ungainly shadow of capitalism is thrown over the fictional world of the Bikolnons who bear the brunt of this global menace.

On the other hand, Efner Agustin's "From Nothing to Everything: Reading and Reterritorializing the Song(s) "Waray-Waray" scrupulously points out the contingent nature of a song with versions based on sociopolitical coordinates. It is also towards the colonizing tradition that the author's analysis is directed. He finds "internal colonization and reterritorialization" as the requisite and fundamental concepts to draw critical responses from the discussion of

the lyrics of the song's variants. His application of the concepts illustrates the sociopolitical dynamics even of musical production.

Assuming the dominant role, internal colonization takes the same path as the imperial colonizer. Agustin reckons that the capital city of the Philippines is considered the controlling power over the regions of the country. Known as Imperial Manila, it has been recognized to have politically controlled art production, including regional songs. In the case of "Waray-Waray," the legitimation of the Manila version cannot be ignored. Calling Manila a "cultural juggernaut," Agustin deftly weaves his way into his appropriation as well as validation of internal colonization exemplified by this Bisayan song that became popular after being used in a movie. Consequently, the Eastern Bisayan has been cast as a stereotype of an aggressive, belligerent character, and this portrayal is overbearingly biased, if not downright condescending. In response to the institution of such an unfavorable perception in the Manila pop version, Agustin takes a progressive stance to maintain the integrity of the original rendition of the song and "reterritorialize" the image of the Warays. In doing so, he manages to shoot some balanced cultural and historical perspectives into "Waray-Waray."

The third article, "From Wrong Living to Right Living: Understanding the Desistance Process of Filipino Parolees," provides a rational approach to comprehending the generally unsettling crisis of post-prison life. Karyl Christine Abog has featured parolees whose lives have been at a constant pitch of uncertainty due to their shadowy pasts, but their commitment to following the parole agreements on which their conditional release hinges has enabled them to be reintegrated into their communities.

She focuses on the stages of their desistance process "in terms of transitions, challenges, and factors that aided in their adjustment." With the privilege of parole release, the former prisoners went through the three-stage desistance process: (1) formation of commitment to change, (2) discontinuance, and (3) maintenance. To capture and highlight the numerous aspects of the process, Abog documented

conversations with the respondent parolees, revealing the strains of their psychological struggles as well as their testimonies about moving on. She adopted the “life course perspective,” which she deemed appropriate, considering the context of the research participants. Her conclusion is that “desistance is a result of a combination of individual actions with situational contexts and structural influences.”

The last article, written by National Artist for Literature, Virgilio Almario, “Mula Saysay at Salaysay o Paano Dapat Isálin ang Creative Non-Fiction?” (From Saysay and Salaysay or How Should Creative Non-fiction Be Translated?) communicates some critical demands of translation. With his fabled precision and authoritative confidence in using Filipino, he seeks to deal meaningfully with the language’s resources and convey the technical processes governing the structure and usage of words. He marshals Filipino words to arrive at his engendered translations. While doing so, he asserts the ultimate value of the scientific approach to translation and proposes a thorough investigation of translated words as a serious commitment to the National Language: *Ang panukalà kong pagsisiyasat sa bawat lumitaw na pagsasálin ay isang makabuluhang tungkulin sa ating Wikang Pambansa.* (My proposal to investigate every translation that appears is an important duty to our National Language.)

Using the polemics surrounding the translation of “creative non-fiction” into Filipino as a springboard, he brings to light numerous linguistic encounters, particularly those between Filipino and the languages of the colonizers, namely, Spanish and English. He provides the historical context, cites linguistic movements of Filipino translation, and poses a challenging question: “Manghihiram o Lilikha?” (To Borrow or to Create?). In reference to the life of the national language and its possible diminution because of traditional colonial consciousness as regards translation, Almario sustains his discerning mode of engagement:

*Higit na marangal at kapaki-pakinabang ngayon ang pagtuklas sa ating sarili. Para higit na maukol ang ating wika at edukasyon para sa kapakanan ng ating sambayanan.*

(Now more than ever, the search for identity has become a noble and useful endeavor. With that, our language and education might be better directed for the benefit of society/national development.)

The quoted lines echo the sociocultural responsibility intimately related to the issues covered by the articles in this volume. With resolute vigor, these rational discourses convey critical realities that are ultimately interconnected. Literary art, language, and music call into play congruent values—particularly those gleaned from the historical, sociological, and cultural context of the Filipinos.

J. C. Mallari