

Among the more recent issues of *Humanities Diliman*, Vol. 22 No. 1 features the most diverse fields of research and topics—novels, paintings/murals, songs, dances, and jewelry crafting. Readers will find gratifying the range of critical engagements in this issue as each article carefully explores its object/subject of analysis.

Ivan Emil A. Labayne’s “Paglalaglag sa Multong-Modernidad ng Lungsod at Nayon: Tatlong Akda ni Jun Cruz Reyes bilang Paglalaboy-laboy” is a playful reading of Jun Cruz Reyes’s *Ilang Taon na ang Problema Mo?, Tutubi, Tutubi, wag Kang Magpahuli sa Mamang Salbahe*, and *Ang Huling Dalagang Bukid at ang Authobiography na Mali: Isang Imbestigasyon*. Using the figure of the *palaboy* to capture the image of the “flaneur” in the three narratives, Labayne’s study ultimately argues for the peculiarity of the Filipino palaboy which is not quite the Western *flaneur*. In the novels, the wandering figure is a student activist during Martial Law, a researcher amidst society’s marginalized, and a writer-teacher who commutes back and forth to the city and his hometown (much like Reyes himself)—all of them moving in both urban and rural spaces. In recontextualizing the European flaneur in terms of time and space, the study postulates that it is not modernity that has produced the palaboy in the Philippines but a “multong modernidad” or ghostlike modernity. Reyes’s writing is described as observant, critical, cognizant of problems, and “kumikislot-kislot,” a very apt description that has a range of meanings in English, all referring to a kind of movement—wobble, twitch, jerk—but not quite capturing the essence of the word. Labayne is able to capture the constant movement of characters and language in Reyes’s narratives as his critique likewise bears a sense of playfulness.

“‘Hiyas At Haraya’: Ang Dinamika ng Kapital Mula sa Karanasan ng mga Mag-Aalahas sa Meycauayan, Bulacan” (“Jewelry Narratives’: The Dynamics of Capital Based on the Experiences of Jewelers in Meycauayan, Bulacan), by Vladimir B. Villejo and Leslie Anne L. Liwanag takes us to Meycauayan, Bulacan, the jewelry capital of the Philippines. A very important industry rooted in tradition and sustained by skilled “plateros” (goldsmiths) and “mananaras” (stone setters), Meycauayan’s jewelry making deserves a deeper examination, particularly in a time when craftsmanship is forced to be adaptive and responsive to modern techniques, technologies, and market demands. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capital and Michael Porter’s value-chain process to explain the industry’s system, the study elaborates on the various forms of capital integral to jewelry-crafting—cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and

economic capital. The extensive background on the beginnings of jewelry making in Meycauayan enables a better appreciation for a network of relations in the community behind this cultural heritage. Villejo and Liwanag's interviews with artisan jewelry makers reveal a web of connections and transactions that could account for the dynamics of other businesses, in particular those in the jewelry industry, which are rooted in family, local, and cultural traditions.

A similar concern to that of Villejo and Liwanag is raised in a study on the reasons behind the steady production of three popular local delicacies in Antique—the *sapal*, *piking*, and *bandi*—almost taken for granted for their ubiquity. “Ang *Pagbuot sa Buut* ng mga Piling *Batid* sa Delikasyang Antiqueño” (Understanding the Buut of Selected Experts in Antiqueño Delicacy) by Faye N. Fuentes highlights the importance of looking at the creation of delicacies as always involving careful preparation that reveals communal values and attitudes. In examining the cultural significance of Antique's production of *piking* (made of cassava, muscovado sugar, and coconut cream/milk), *bandi* (made of sugar, peanuts, and coconut), and *sapal* (made of *tapay* which is a combination of ginger, rice soaked in water, black pepper, sugar, and *kutitot*, a kind of chili pepper), Fuentes uses Vicente Villan's Three Fields of Buut of Panay and ties them to Leonardo Mercado's discussion on the mental, emotional, and ethical aspects of the formation of personhood. The study likewise refers to major works in Filipino psychology to complement Villan's *buut* constituted by *huna-huna*, the mental realm; *batyag*, the emotional realm; and *lawas* the biopsychological realm. Fuentes's choice of *buut*—similar to the Tagalog's *loob* and the Ilokano's *nakem*—as a key to understanding the Antiqueño unravels not only the formation of their personhood through the making of *piking*, *bandi*, and *sapal* but also explains why these delicacies are continuously produced despite the small profit gained from selling them.

Like food and cooking which reflect community identity and engagement, works of art capture a community's beliefs, practices, and everyday experiences. More importantly, art could visually narrate social and cultural contradictions and complexities.

“Power Behind Powerlessness: The Myth of *Konko Wingking* in Javanese Culture through Damar Kurung Painting” by Aniendya Christianna, Acep Iwan Saidi, Riama Maslan Sihombing, and Nuning Yanti Damayanti elaborates on how Damar Kurung,

a traditional form of painting from Gresik, East Java renders the latter's social and cultural realities. The study lays the groundwork for a thorough grasp of the Javanese concept of *konco wingking* or "friend behind," and places significant emphasis on the traditional role of Javanese women as wives and mothers rooted in patriarchy and feudalism, and reinforced by the New Order regime's state *ibuisim*. In particular, the analysis looks at Masmundari's works and their rendering of various myths—including the *konco wingking*—about women's and men's functions in society. Aside from playing a critical role in preserving the Damar Kurung form, Masmundari was the last female artist to do so until she died in 2025. By deploying Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory of mythology and Michel Foucault's concept of power, the study pursues how women in Masmundari's paintings navigate power structures that are ideologically circumscribed. Ultimately, by meticulously looking at the Damang Kurung's details, Aniendya et al. argue that despite the myth of *konco wingking*, Masmundari's works are able to retell how women negotiate their position and roles in both private and public spaces. It is thus important to recognize that Javanese women, in the context of their culture, and unlike women from the West, do find empowerment in their particular kind of femininity, calmness, and resiliency.

If the analysis of Masmundari's works punctuate the significance of paintings as they reveal Java's social and cultural fabric, "Paggunita at Pagmamapa sa Nawawalang Obrang 500 Years of Philippine History ni Carlos 'Botong' Francisco" (Remembering and Mapping the Lost Work 500 Years of Philippine History by Carlos "Botong" Francisco) by Jay Israel B. De Leon, Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio III, and Wilma M. Cruz foreground the importance of reconstructing the missing panels of National Artist for Painting Botong Francisco's 500 Years of Philippine History (500YPH), a mural visualizing selected events in Philippine history. The study, a valuable contribution to both Philippine history and Philippine art history, highlights not only Francisco's work but also the historical and cultural context of its creation—the Philippine International Fair (PIF). Held during the administration of former President Elpidio Quirino, the PIF was envisioned to show the world the cultural, social, political, and economic achievements of the Philippines, hence its theme "500 Years of Philippine Progress." By placing Francisco's mural in an interesting historical narrative of the 1950s, in particular its disappearance after the fair, the study emphasizes the work's importance and how an old footage of the 1953 PIF digitally uploaded in 2021 helped in determining the color scheme and final layout of the lost panels.

Readers will find fascinating de Leon et al.'s demonstration of how Edvin Varland's footage, digitally uploaded by his relative Marcus Varland, examined vis-a-vis a fairly recent reconstructed sketch of *500 YPH* and the mural *Filipino Struggles through History* (1964) paved the way for the reconstruction of the historical narratives in the mural's panels. The study's close examination of details in the panels shows Francisco's artistic and historical vision and digital technology's vital role in the field of art reconstruction and preservation.

Pointing more specifically to art forms being deliberately used in the construction of national identity are the last two articles in this issue: "Songs of Collective Memory: Commemorating Marinduque Battles During the Philippine-American War" by Bryan Levina Viray and "Choreographic Flexibility in the Invention of Chinese Classical Sleeve Dance from 1949 to 2022" by Yalinzi He, Sang Woo Ha, and Kwan Yie Wong.

Viray uses the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) as a framework to examine how cultural heritage is built on a process of national myth-making. He presents the earlier efforts to create a sense of national identity in the context of the Philippine-American War and provides examples to illustrate how civic rituals are integral to the discourse of nationhood. The study shows, however, that the constitution of what is considered a national heritage is a process not without tension; in the Philippines, the authorized discourse of nationhood emanating from the Center is not free from critical examination or reframing. In particular, Viray focuses on songs of collective memory during battle commemorations in Marinduque and claims how AHD likewise happens at the local level. A close reading and comparative analysis of the works of three composers include the decisions the latter had to make in writing the songs (e.g., choosing specific words in relation to national/ist anthem templates and determining the musical genre to use such as the typical march as opposed to the ballad/pop). Viray successfully illustrates the multi-layered process of heritage making, emphasizing that the expression of identity is never simple as it involves the articulation of various aspirations enmeshed in a range of discourses.

Like musical compositions, dances are likewise subject to political forces and could be utilized by the state in its deployment of a national discourse. As some of the earlier articles have argued, national and cultural identities are built *around* and *on* various forms of art, performances, and performativities.

It is this more palpable link between dance and nationhood which is elaborated on in “Choreographic Flexibility in the Invention of Chinese Classical Sleeve Dance from 1949 to 2022” which dissects the invention and evolution of the Chinese classical sleeve dance. Tracing the transformation of this dance to the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, which witnessed efforts of the government to revive traditional culture, the discussion moves on to how the opening of China to the West in the 1970s resulted in the creation of various forms of sleeve dance. Interestingly and quite unexpectedly, however, is the inclusion of more Chinese cultural elements to the sleeve dance after China became part of the World Trade Organization in 2001. Instead of being Westernized as a result of the profound impact of globalization, the sleeve dance—specifically the Shenyun sleeve dance which is the focus of the study—showed less foreign elements. To account for the choreographic changes and aesthetic adjustments, Ha et al. use Eric Hobsbawm’s theory of invented tradition and Yatin Lin’s concept of flexibility in examining the various strategies used by the choreographers of Shenyun sleeve dance in response to the political and cultural policies of China. Like Viray’s study of commemorative songs, Ha et al.’s analysis shows how cultural practices and forms such as the sleeve dance which was popular in ancient Chinese courts from the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC-256 BC) to the Song Dynasty (960-1279) could be continuously reinvented as it shapes and is shaped by China’s envisioned national culture.

This issue closes with a review of a recently published book by the University of the Philippines Press: *The Pabalat (Wrapper) Designs of San Miguel de Mayumo’s Pastillas de Leche* by Shirley V. Guevarra. Loren Agaloos’s critical review of the book draws the readers’ attention to another form of folk art—the wrappers or *pabalat* for *pastillas de leche* in San Miguel, Bulacan. Agaloos highlights particular sections of the book in order to stress that although pastillas making is a thriving industry and has gained recognition as a significant part of Bulacan’s cultural heritage, the making of elaborate and colorful paper cut designs of pabalat artists appears to be a dying art form. In discussing Guevarra’s work, Agaloos reiterates the urgency of addressing the concerns raised in the book, in particular the need to preserve pabalat making and its artists, many of whom are women.

We hope that this issue’s articles on literature, food, jewelry making, painting, musical composition, and dance spur research on similar topics, particularly

on cultural traditions that merit scholarly attention. Equally important to the theoretical conversations which the studies in this issue surface are the historical and cultural details that each of them provide as part of their rigorous examination. Definitely, much is to be gained by exploring varied approaches and theoretical perspectives, and raising critical questions that offer pathways to different cultural texts and practices.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

RUTH JORDANA L. PISON
Editor-in-Chief