

## FROM THE EDITOR

The conceptual relationship of words in the world and the significances and meanings that motivate that link are clearly tackled in the articles of this issue of *Humanities Diliman: A Journal on Philippine Humanities*. Here these meanings are not abstract but completely social in nature as the articles force us to see the complexity of the word-world-meaning nexus evident in the various performative Filipino expressions carefully explored by the authors of this issue.

Joyce Arriola talks about the “recycling” of the Bernardo Carpio narrative across time, from the Filipino *awit/korido* (metrical romance borrowed from the Spanish *corrido*) to its incarnation in the early twentieth century into prose and *komiks* as a *Liwayway* magazine serial, which Arriola traces as the “source text” of the 1951 Bernardo Carpio film produced by Sampaguita Pictures. Arriola argues that the borrowing of the Bernardo Carpio story has been necessarily inflected with local Filipino sensibility that, from its initial Spanish source, the Filipino *awit/korido* evolved to a genre that conformed to the characteristics of the indigenous epic narrative. One such characteristic is the mythical hero’s quest for something— in the case of Bernardo Carpio, it was the search for identity. Another characteristic is that of romance, which manifested in the story as it was appropriated to the magazine serial. It was this source that was transmuted into film or—to use Arriola’s term— “recycled.” In the adaptation of printed words to multitracked, sequenced filmic images, the mythic content of the Bernardo Carpio story remains intact because the narrative itself continues to be relevant to the postcolonial Filipino identity in that the mythic persona of Bernardo Carpio provides an ideal image of the audience.

The search for a defining subjectivity in the world through words is what Oscar Serquiña Jr. eloquently offers in his essay, an assessment of the state-initiated poetry project *Tulaan sa Tren* that was implemented in Manila’s Light Railway Train (LRT) cabins and stations. Inspired by similar “populist” dissemination of art elsewhere, Serquiña did not critique the project in a simplistic either/or manner but subtly weaved a dense account that foregrounds the uniqueness of sensing a Metro Manila train ride—where a passenger, for example, defers to oppressive social regulations such as being packed inside train cabins like sardines while simultaneously being given the opportunity to sight Manila’s “rurban” or uneven development just

outside their windows. The select pool of contemporary poems Serquiña examines expresses a range of moods and attitudes towards place and nation, many of them decrying the weak urban planning of the 1980s. Widely lauded in online blogs, the poetry reveals a disquieting reality especially in the context of the massive migration to Metro Manila of the rural poor, who are deemed as the refuse of modernity and centralization from which they are excluded.

From words in poetry, the issue moves to examine words in theater as fictionalized world. Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco writes about his reception and analysis of the 2006 monodrama by Chris Martinez titled “Welcome to IntelStar.” Set in a call center training room with the trainer as the central character, the play is a satire about the use of global English and how it precipitates the effacement of local identity, hence performing as a “trap” that serves the material imperative of multinational corporations to maximize profitability of the business processing sector. While it is easy to understand the trope of “entrapment” in the context of globalization, Tiatco discovers, as he recollects his watching of the play, that he himself was seduced by the play’s message—shedding light to the reversal in positions where the theater experience itself is a kind of trap, consequently undoing the author’s negative attitude towards globalization. Tiatco reflexively situates his position by problematizing the anti-globalization rhetoric to talk about the indeterminacy of “reality” and “illusion” in a theater experience. It is in this moment that one turns cynical: all words in the worlds are seemingly half-truths.

But what makes this deconstructive moment compelling? The last two articles in this issue reveal something more fundamental. Both broach on the issue of power that, sedimented beneath discourses, is what generates the saliency of words that interlocutors articulate as they wade through the conflicting social worlds they are confronted with.

Efmer Agustin talks about the linguistic hierarchicalization between what are considered works of Philippine “national” literature, propagated from the center of power (Manila), and its subaltern, the Eastern Visayan “regional” literature, particularly those written in the Waray-waray language. Agustin reviews Voltaire Q. Oyzon’s book of poetry, *An Maupay ha mga Waray*, to counter the claim by National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera that regional “dialects” such as Waray-waray do not have semantic depth and richness of expression. The author contends that the valuation of the worth of regional languages by national authorities is a

form of internal colonialism that should be resisted. After all, the assertion of Filipino identity and national language is itself a resistance to Spanish and American cultural domination in Philippine history. Here I wonder if symbolic violence in linguistic hierarchy can ever be undone or at least prevented. Reading Agustin's work, it seems that it cannot because his assertion is premised upon a rather insidious ethnocentrism that can easily slip to bias in judgement. The linguistic relativist point of view, which would have specified the sheer differences of languages in relation to one another, would have posed as an alternative to this, but that would run against the polemic that Agustin's paper is supposed to achieve.

The last essay of this issue, which is a reading of Gamalinda's novel *My Sad Republic*, focuses all the more on power and meaning. In particular, it unearths these dynamics in a Philippine island during the country's revolution against Spain and the island's subsequent subordination to the Americans. The essay's author, Jaimee Faith Santos, is certainly correct in pointing out the Bakhtinian heterogeneity of social worlds that envelope the different characters of the novel—native faith healer Isio, who leads the rebellion; the Lady of the house Asuncion, who is akin to Maria Clara in Rizal's *Noli*; the landed Spanish mestizo Agustin; the son of Asuncion and Agustin, Felipe; and American interloper Capt. Smith. Amidst the tumultuous and discordant relations where love is given and lost, the novel clearly foregrounds, at least as far as Santos's interpretation would allow us to understand, the difficulty of speaking of and for the Filipino nation. In short, the author highlights the struggle for leadership in the country, taking this as indicative of the problem of voicing the word of the nation. Thus, in this essay, we appreciate how much power is an ally of discourse, i.e., how power, in the last instance, is what gives meaning to social relations.

Through all the rich and engaging essays contained in this issue of *Humanities Diliman*, I hope readers are encouraged to reflect on the dialectic between texts and social worlds and the meanings that mediate them both.

  
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