

FROM THE EDITOR

Characters portrayed in traditional narratives are distinguished from protagonists who speak in modern texts. In the former, characters embody types of persona—in a sense, wear “masks”—inscribed by societies unto them as a means of constraining their social behavior. In the latter, protagonists are represented as having individual sincerities unique to autonomous selves. We clearly see the differences of these two ideas of selves in the five articles of this second issue of *Humanities Diliman*, year 2014.

In J. Neil C. Garcia’s essay “Reclaiming the Universal,” one reads protagonists in poetry projecting subjectivities that are sincere to the modern postcolonial Philippine experience. Garcia selected and analyzed a few poems written by some Anglophone Filipino writers of English from the 1940s to the 1970s, i.e., before the nationalist movement heralding Filipino language displaced them. Garcia explains that the use of English from the writers’ position is always already translational and ironic—for not only is the language not theirs, it is at the same time emergent from asymmetrical socio-political colonial relations and history that the poems then resolutely subvert. Thus, according to Garcia—echoing Bhabha’s notion of hybridity and ideas from other postcolonial champions of *mestizaje* and the syncretic—Anglophone poetry by Filipinos simultaneously conforms to the foreign, or what is deemed universal, but reclaims it as well.

We are familiar with this trope in postcolonial theory, this writing that is “double-voiced.” While this assertion is not new, Garcia succeeds best in his illustrations. He repeatedly drives home the point that the Anglophone Filipino writers—like guests in the house of liberal humanism armed with the ideology for formalist New Criticism—resisted universal linguistic determination by grounding their lyrical effusions in historically particularized or highly situated local contexts. The way Garcia does this is by partially examining the biographical backgrounds of poets from that period, among whom were Edith K. Tiempo, Angela Manalang-Gloria, Carlos Angeles, Bienvenido Santos, Nick Joaquin, Virginia Moreno, and Roland Tinio. While we understand fiction and real life to be two different spheres, the fact that biographies can bleed into the crafting of fiction—as Garcia insinuates—draws in the notion of the modern self with its sincerity: Gloria’s old maid self, Moreno’s feminism, and Tinio’s cryptohomosexual orientation. They all secrete into the poems’ protagonist selves so to speak. This mode of projecting sincerity is an effect of a modern self who, belonging to the national community, is resolutely sincere to local environment.

The next piece, which is about Palawan's traditional long narrative song *Dumaracol* (an eponym of the hero of the tale), drastically contrasts the notion of the autonomous modern self. In this article—considered the first extensive documentation of this specific indigenous verbal art practised by the Kalamianen Tagbanua from the islands of Northern Palawan—author Eulalio R. Guieb III takes note of the various aspects of the long narrative song's content and context: where it is found, who the bearers of the tradition are, the kind of language by which it is sung, the episodic nature of its diegetic unfoldings, and so on. In a world of mythology, persons are not individuals who are sincere to their own desires. They are caged in, given “masks” by society, so as to reproduce specific duties and responsibilities. The narrative of this long song is not individually owned but shared communally, proof of which are its looseness of content and its being based upon a belief that it has been passed on from the group's ancestors and across generations. The protagonist of the narrative is a hero whose being is fixed by custom—he is by birthright privileged but has the inalienable duty to defend his territory from outsiders, in this case from the intruding Moslems who, in history, actually did raid the Palawan islands.

From mythology, we enter the realm of history in the Philippines again. The third article discusses music making in 19th century Spanish colonial Philippines, particularly in the context of modernity in which participation in the prestigious Spanish cultural institution of brass bands had become a form of cultural capital, especially for those who came with none from the lower social class. Following Bourdieu's influential postulate regarding the interconvertibility of the social, the economic, and the discursive as symbolic resource for acquiring prestige and, hence, social mobility, Arwin Q. Tan explains how the few Filipino band leader maestros in the country then had destabilized hierarchy, which stood for power in the old colonial world. Personal achievement is a hallmark of modernity and the idea of mobility resonates with the concept of the individual who is motivated to choose rationally. The old world is represented by ceremonies that socially function as publicity for agents of the Spanish empire, thanks to the Regimental Bands whose sacrificial music served it. Yet, the hierarchy imposed by the colonialists was not cast in stone (at least during the latter part of 19th century, with the change in political economy in the colony) because there were indeed cracks in it through which a few Filipino achievers were given recognition in the form of music leadership. For the meritorious Filipino musicians, the caste-like organization was undermined; it was infiltrated by achievers who had the knowledge and skills of Western music. This symbolic capital enabled them to rise as individuals. Again, they are sincere individuals with singular desires.

The fourth article in the issue pertains to writing books meant for children. Wennielyn F. Fajilan analyzes eight prize-winning children's stories produced from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s. In line with what I have pointed out, she takes the modernist concept of the sincere self, through which children have experiences that are authentic to their selves—warranting the production of special books that cater to their developmental skills and needs. The title of the article alone manifests the assumption that children have sincere selves. What is good about the essay is that Fajilan selected diverse authors of children's books who did not build stories from abstract stereotypes of Filipino families but were sensitive to the varied circumstances that Filipino children are facing due to particular choices that their parents had made.

The last article reverts to the world of ritual and sound, but in the context of the day-to-day flag-raising ceremony in a modern cultural institution: the University of the Philippines. An earwitness, author Robin Daniel Z. Rivera recounts with nostalgia his experience of the daily ceremony back in his school days from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. Through the campus-wide temporal coordination of subjects by the university's carillon and brass band sounds, the ritual of flag raising marked the daily routine of work. He compared and contrasted the old practice with that of the present wherein the key sounds are no longer heard and the flag ceremony is no longer considered a collective herald for synchronizing the commencement of work on campus. Not only has the ambient street noise risen to higher levels in recent decades, thus obstructing the sonic artifice, there is also a sense that, according to Rivera, the once mechanical solidary of workers in the past has fractured or devolved into groups isolated from one another. In such a transformation, we get a sense of the loss of meaning in the sonic ritual of the past.

Lastly, this issue offers two engaging reviews of recent important publications. The first is an evaluation by Teresa Lorena A. Jopson that reinforces E. San Juan Jr.'s reading of Rizal as a subversive thinker who was way ahead in formulating a liberatory decolonization that is still relevant to current social issues, particularly in the fight against gender discrimination. The other review, written by Marlon Sales, is about Mariano Franco Figueroa's philological assessment of the Spanish language in the Philippines. This book is a highly welcomed addition to the area of Spanish-Filipino studies, through which understanding can be facilitated by reading Spanish texts in their correct historical contexts.


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