FROM THE EDITOR

When scholars and writers position their own subjectivity relative to the topic at hand, they often engage the content of their texts via a system of signifiers that interlock their feelings for the topic with the whole chain of meanings, memories, experiences, and studied gestures that not only make them human, but make the more critical enterprise of scholarship possible. The ability to reflect upon one's discipline keenly as a basis for the production of new knowledge is not merely a time-worn tradition in humanities, but is also a verifiable practice of grounding one's textual production within verifiable limits of human interpretation, understood within the historical context of one's production, and aimed for both practical and long-term solutions that are both provable and imaginable. This "logical" chain that holds feeling and knowing together as a single signifier has been explored in semiotics through syntagmatic analysis, which ordinarily governs the rules that "require" one set of terms to precede another set, allowing one to understand how a sequence of events within the texts is formed into a narrative. The article "the," for example, precedes a noun, and not a verb. By translating this system of analysis from within language rules to how a scholar engages their topic, an understanding of the syntagmatic allows the author's subject position to be understood based on the logic system proposed through the narrative construction of one's topic.

In this current issue of *Humanities Diliman*, Volume 13 Number 1, we see how the authors of five articles and one review transpose their own knowledge production with their own subjectivities as scholars and advocates that envision knowledge through their particular lens of hermeneutics, positionality, and memory. The comparative analysis by five authors (Deborrah S. Anastacio, Gem Carlo B. Ausa, Feorillo A. Demeterio III, Jamie G. Guerrero, JianneIrissa P. Piguing, and Sofia Mae R. Romero) of the English, Filipino, and Cebuano translations of the original Spanish lyrics of the Philippine National Anthem serves to establish a relative "distance of translation" based on the theories of Freidrich Schleiermacher. Using a Likert Scale of analysis, the five authors tease out the relative distance of these translations from the original Spanish in terms of their actual textual meanings. Based on this analysis, the authors conclude that the Filipino translation by Felipe de Leon is the closest; the English translation by Camilio Osias and A. L. Lane was moderately near/far; and the Cebuano translation by Jess Vestil was the farthest. These were calibrated based on Schleiermacher's contention that the meaning of a foreign text could not be adequately expressed in a vernacular language that has no comparative terms. Rather, the vernacular speakers had to "be drawn in" to the

ISSN 1655-1524 Print / ISSN 2012-0788 Online

foreign text through the process of "transplantation" (akin to that of agriculture), to enable one's native language to be "enriched" through the contribution of other foreign languages.

The project of "indigenizing" a foreign text using a process of grafting and transplantation is therefore key to the enrichment of native/national languages, which the authors imply could not exist within the ideological vacuum imposed by colonial or (nativist) postcolonial states, and in which meaning becomes malleable and transferrable only through acclimatization and familiarization of the foreign into one's own. This residual "conflict" between the narrative of a hermetic nativism that characterizes anticolonial nationalism, versus a cosmopolitan heterogeneity of linguistic texts informed by the Filipino colonial experience with the Spanish empire also manifests in the study of Philippine Literature during the Baroque Period by Isaac Donoso-Jiménez. Contending that Philippine literary criticism has inadequately studied these texts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Donoso-Jiménez recuperates the works of Gaspar de San Agustin; and the anonymous poets who wrote of the military exploits of Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera (1637), and the untimely death of Prince Balthassar Carlos (1649). Of these, San Agustin's output as a chronicler, essayist, and poet in both Latin and Spanish takes the lion's share of analysis. By "re-stretching" the concept of Filipino Literature away from an exclusively native viewpoint and back into its originally Spanish context (the literary works produced by Spaniards living in the Philippines), Donoso-Jiménez also returns this "neglected fragment" back into the literary attention of Spain itself, along with (postcolonial) Filipinos who continue to manifest their cultural affinity for Spain and its languages. Invoking the Baroque tradition of literature as a cipher that encodes the specifying aesthetics of these texts, Donoso-Jiménez also implies the poetics of performativity, and dramatic flights of the imagination, that this tradition entails within an Asian context, a locale whose exoticness—and very real dangers—to the Spaniard added to the allure of writing and dramatizing texts as a subject position within the pragmatics of empire and faith.

In a different "polarity" of subject positions, Luna Sicat-Cleto's reflections on her scholarship to Italy under the Erasmus Mundi Mobility grant invest the resulting "autobiographical" texts with a naturally recurring rhythm of languages (English and Filipino) resulting from her own personal and academic background, which deploys a threefold reflection of her own nationalist orientation; her use of English as either academic medium or stopgap language between her native self and the foreigners around her; and her study of Italian as a requirement of her grant, a language to which she ties her own project of "translating her identity" using her study of the Italian poet Elsa Morante. Morante's translated work *History* thus

becomes her own launchpad into reflecting upon her own abjected status as an underfunded, alienated scholar, whose spaces of reflection cohere uncannily with that of Morante's characters, set during Mussolini's dictatorship. Sicat-Cleto's own encounter with contemporary Italy, from its noisy college students, to its serene architecture, and the disjunctive everyday horror of migrants struggling to survive and prosper in the city of Genoa informs her textual reading with an urgently "travelogue" feel that makes her autobiography both a gender-sensitive translation of conflicting cultures, as well as a timely document on the consequences of globalization, and the continued marginal status of those from the global South when they are forced to go up north.

On the other hand, Patricia Marion Y. Lopez's study of the Marian Flores de Mayo rituals in the southeastern Cebu coastal town of Oslob looks deeply at the complex "entanglement" of meaning that results when a canonic Catholic text of the prayers associated with Mary as Mother of God and Virgin Most Pure collides and slides into the precolonial Bisaya folk world of enchanted spirits and intercessors, resulting in a terrain of contention between the "official" texts on Marian devotion produced and supervised by the town's parish priest; and the alternate meanings and suppressed voices of "unofficial" discourses produced by the Marian devotees themselves. This results in the local knowledge system of Mary being characterized as a contested and negotiated field between the clergy and the faithful, where the celebration of Marian devotion through the Flores de Mayo rituals alternates between "traditional but unofficial" meanings that manifest a more precolonial belief system of direct ("divine female") intercession, versus the "traditional but official" canon of Mary as intercessor in behalf of Jesus Christ.Oslob's own economic penury, worsened by natural disasters such as the fire that gutted Oslob Church in 2008, is interdicted by Lopez as a source of most of these devotees' anxieties and need for intercession. In addition, the invention of a new ritual in the form of the spectacle-driven Toslob Festival further "popularizes" the image of Mary in Oslob as an empowered intercessor of the faithful's prayers, potentially undermining in a mass cultural manner the official Church discourse of Mary as subordinate to both her Son and Father. These struggles continue to play out in the production of guidebooks (*Han-ay sa Oslob*) where the attributes and biblical sources of Mary's grace (and power) are read aloud—thus ingrained performatively—by devotees during the regular novenas held in Her honor. The need to persuade and live out faith through dramatization and imagination thus clashes with the theology of Marian devotion as a corollary to the direct grace offered by Jesus. Finally, Lopez singles out the feminine devotees of the Marian rituals as a cipher that textually rearranges the effect of faith by gendered affiliation: Mary as Powerful Mother.

By pointing out the polysemy of texts in relation to the Marian devotion in Oslob, Lopez also implies the subject positionality of the author as one who interdicts the spaces between officiating and "resistant" discourses, widening them far enough apart for us to see the sources of these gaps as a continuity of subjectivities engrossed by—and, in turn, hegemonized under—dominant narratives of "community" and "church." Such narratives, however, can be embedded as ciphers within the form of texts, necessitating the proper system of excavation to "bring forth" these hidden meanings from the texts themselves. This requires a critical analysis of texts as "pregnant with meaning," and therefore loaded with signifiers that denote the ideologies, historical conditions, and economic praxes of their producers.

Rolando B. Tolentino's extensive study of the *Shake, Rattle, and Roll* horror movie franchise, starting from 1984 until 2014, is utilized as referents to the "actual horror" being existentially experienced by the nation at the same time as its iterations were being screened. Pointing out its unprecedented success as the most successful franchise in Filipino cinematic history, Tolentino also flags the industrial processes by which such successes were guaranteed: it featured the biggest stars of that year; established the reputations of new directors, screenwriters, sound editors, and cinematographers; and the steady migration from "art house" to commercial blockbuster film formats. The three-episode format of the franchise also guarantees "across-the platform" participation of otherwise bitter studio rivals. However, Tolentino's study hedges on the primary idea of the franchise as a "mirror" that reflects the horrors of Philippine society during its period of screenings: the Marcos dictatorship's increasing dysfunction and downfall from 1984 to 1986; the rise of neoliberalism and the return of traditional oligarchies under Corazon-Cojuangco Aquino, to be sustained by Fidel V. Ramos until the present President Benigno Simeon Aquino III (1986-2014); the political crises experienced from Marcos to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; and the financial crises under the Ramos and Estrada periods. What Tolentino identifies as crucial indicators of these events in the franchise are "the anxieties, and making-do processes and mechanisms of both ordinary people represented by characters in the film, and the imperative of profit and state formation as rendered by the choice of horror stories to tell, stars and film technicians to incorporate, and the general competition to stay afloat in the annual nationwide film festival through the horror series. In short, horror films can be read as symptomatic of nation-formation involving on the one hand, state formation or how (mis)governance gets to be represented and state issues amplified, and on the other hand, subject formation or how citizenry is enforced by the state and embodied by citizens at the ground level."

In this terrain of scholarship, film criticism becomes an entry point to discuss the filmic texts (plot, location, script, lighting, etcetera) as symptomatic of historical texts (politics, economics, social relations, ideological structures). In other words, the terms "form" and "context" serve as syntagmatic referents within the chain of signifiers that is unearthed and tracked by the film critic. In the case of film ethnography, this connection is made even more directly through the evocation of a particular "cultural space" in which both filmmakers and ethnographic subjects inhabit and "perform."

Ma. Christine Muyco's review of the films by MichiyoYoneno-Reyes and Yoshitaka Terada focusing on the Kalinga peoples of northern Luzon serves as a location point in which the critic's own familiarity with ethnography and ethnomusicology comes into play. Muyco immediately "sounds off" the aural tonality of Kalinga life by contrasting the "quiet intimacy" of daily village life, as depicted in *Music in the Life of Balbalasang*: *A Village in the Northern Philippines*, with the raucous cacophony and ensemble dancing in *Sounds of Bliss, Echoes of Victory: A Kalinga Wedding in Northern Philippines*. Both silence and sound correlate to the cultural character that Muyco sees in the Kalinga, with their reputation for stoic village life in the everyday broken only by the sound of gongs, which denoted either the celebration of a wedding, or in the past, a victory celebration over the latest headhunting expedition. This rhythm between the silence of everyday life versus the sound of festive occasions are located in the filmic text of Yoneno-Reyes and Terada as contrapuntal segments that also shows the filmmakers' sensitivity to the aural conditions of Kalinga life. Their cinematography reflects this counterpoint: long steady shots of villagers at work; and sharply edited vignettes of celebration. The filmmakers' long experience with documenting (if not being part of) Cordillera life is also intersected by Muyco, thereby closing the gap created by the formal division in ethnography between documenters and subjects. Their familiarity with the subject has also allowed them to "pull back" from the temptation of editorializing narratives (both films do not contain overdubs, which is the norm in documentaries, and only locations are indicated by flash-and-fade texts), and allow the Kalinga to "speak for themselves," in a way, through English subtitles done in certain conversational sections. The current cultural heterogeneity of these people is seen in the initial Roman Catholic wedding rite at a church, followed by the traditional wedding celebrations in the couples' hometown. The couple is also themselves indicators of globalized transformation, as they met outside the country and will reside in the United States after the marriage.

Muyco's identification of the various musical forms found in these videos also point to her own positionality as Filipino ethnomusicologist, and the value of these films as timely tools in documenting the increasingly fading traditions of the uplands, beset as it is by globalization and popular culture. By pointing to the need for archiving local culture, the review also draws parallels between the needs of the five peer-review articles to establish logical, inferential, and advocated scholarship that helps transform humanities in the Philippines from canonic certainties to reflexive possibilities of exploring the present and the past as textual continuities framed by the syntagmatic relationship between author and text.

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