

## FROM THE EDITOR

Locating, situating, placing, mapping, (de/re)territorializing—these have become recurring tropes in recent decades, signifying what Frederic Jameson describes in the early nineties as “a certain spatial turn” in the social sciences and humanities.<sup>1</sup> These strategies indicate, on the one hand, the variability and slipperiness of determining the contexts for particular critical engagements. And they embody, on the other hand, the rhetorical devices that circumscribe texts that are subjected to scrutiny.

The emphasis on *paglulugar* (roughly, place-ing) has grown in importance in various approaches to cultural, literary, performance, and media studies since the 1980s and in certain fields have already reached moments of rupture and transformation. In critical theory, geographers like Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, and David Harvey— influenced by Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974/1991)—have pushed spatial thinking forward in different directions and have sparked theoretical debates on spatiality. If understanding space, in any field, is not simply a matter of observing what is out there but is rather a complex operation of imagining, navigating, structuring, representing, and mastering, then the usually preliminary phase of *contextualizing* a study is, at the outset, fraught. Such an assumption has turned the act of *paglulugar* itself into a productive political activity.

In international studies, the growth of “area studies,” especially in the U.S., where federal resources generously funded researches on “foreign” societies and cultures during the Cold War, is now in a period of crisis.<sup>2</sup> Primarily interdisciplinary in nature, area studies or regional studies spread across the globe in the post-Cold War period, and the call to uproot and relocate them from their North American and European orientalist origins to the very postcolonial regions which were the “objects” of study has grown louder. These developments are complicated by the accelerated mobility of migrants, tourists, and intellectuals. In fact, many Western-trained scholars who hail from the postcolonies have returned home to recontextualize and relocate locally entrenched fields and approaches of study.

In Philippine studies, the decolonizing project of writing nationalist histories has given way to uncovering ‘a history from below’ and to researching local histories silenced by both colonialism and the clinging to a (or the) National History. In this context, *paglulugar* is paramount because it highlights the location and situation of scholarship, reorienting it from monolithic discourses that tend to flatten differences toward the grassroots which teem with dynamism. Ramon Guillermo, in his critique of nativism in Philippine studies, captures well the direction of such critical

scholarship, when he asserts that *paninindigan*, or one's conviction, is as important as or even more important than *pook*, or the specificity and knowledge of place.<sup>3</sup>

One may think of the articles contained in this issue of *Humanities Diliman* as instances of the ongoing developments and contestations in spatial, postcolonial, cosmopolitan, regional, and local scholarship. The article that opens this issue, "Urban Anxieties in Davao Horror Short Films," by Katrina Ross A. Tan and Laurence Marvin S. Castillo, trains its lenses away from Manila-based "Philippine cinema" and focuses instead on the short films from the budding film industry in Davao City in Mindanao. Their study contextualizes horror films from Davao and reads them as expressions of the people's anxiety over their location in the national periphery, in an urban formation haunted by rurality, and in a growing cosmopolitan space frustrated by uneven development. The essay reads meanings of place *in* selected films but also situates the contribution of these films in the production of a "regional cinema" that offers an alternative view of national cinema.

Oscar Tantoco Serquiña's article, "Manning the World: Staging Filipino Migrant Masculinities in *Katas ng Saudi*," revisits the 1987 play by the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) called *Katas ng Saudi*. It is about four construction workers who find jobs in the Persian Gulf in the post-Marcos period. The paper analyzes the melodramatic form of the play and the representation of mobility in the narrative to show how movement and relocation destabilize conventional tropes of masculinity. It argues that labor migration and the vicissitudes of diasporic living transform the meanings of masculinity and its vaunted relationship to nation-building.

Derived mainly from his field notes written while researching performances in different parts of the archipelago as well as personal experiences, Sir Anril Pineda Tiatco's "Panata, Pagtitipon, Pagdiriwang: Contextualizing Cultural Performances in the Philippines," historicizes the concept of cultural performance in the Philippine context. Tiatco analyzes a number of public performances and from them deduces the concepts of "devotion," "gathering," and "celebration" as a way of paradigmatically appreciating the motivations and modes of expressions of local cultural performances. He argues that public performances are enacted as artistic expressions in small-group situations, but the motivations of the performers and participants are at bottom personal devotion. Seen in this way, analyzing cultural performances becomes a gateway for understanding a Filipino community composed of individuals, groups, and the public.

Roland Erwin P. Rabang's "The Leccio: Ethnicity and Indigeneity in the Ilokano's Observance of Semana Santa" likewise argues for a located and situated understanding of a cultural-religious form. The *leccio*, an oral expression that dramatizes the lamentation of Mother Mary, who beholds the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, is often compared to the *pasyon* form because of their similar subject matter. Rabang, however, asserts that the *pasyon*, which is a Tagalog form, differs from the Ilokano *leccio*, which draws upon another non-religious form of mourning the dead, the *dung-aw*. The author closely compares the *pasyon* and the *leccio* and shows how groundedness in local tradition renders the expression and meaning of these two cultural-religious forms differently.

"Ang Mga Ideolohiyang Politikang Nakapaloob sa Rosales Saga ni F. Sionil Jose" by Feorillo Demeterio III and Joshua Mariz Felicilda seeks to describe the political ideas found in Jose's well-known quintet of novels, *The Pretenders*; *My Brother, My Executioner*; *Tree*; *Mass*; and *Poon*. The article uses political categories inspired by the work of Hans Slomp, namely the spectrum that runs from radical libertarianism, radical authoritarianism, liberal libertarianism, liberal authoritarianism, moderate, conservative libertarianism, conservative authoritarianism, to reactionism. They deploy this schema to evaluate and plot the political views expressed in the novels, such as views on status quo, social change, the state, and other related concepts.

Finally, Azra Ghandeharion and Behnaz Heydari's "When Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism Synthesize: Critical Discourse Analysis of Iran's State TV Advertisements" analyzes hundreds of detergent advertisements broadcasted over Iran's government network across a period of four years to determine how "alien" or Western names, whose use are legally prohibited, are selected and used over Persian alternatives or equivalents. In so doing, the authors demonstrate how advertisements circumvent the law, appropriate "colonial" ideas, and interweave these ideas with Iranian anticolonial discourse.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke U P, 1991).
- <sup>2</sup> See related papers in *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies*, ed. Neil Waters (Hanover, VT: Middlebury College P, 2000).
- <sup>3</sup> *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw* (Quezon City: U of the Philippines P, 2009).

  
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