

This issue of *Humanities Diliman* offers readers works that revisit texts and cultural practices in the Philippines and Asia, and engage with them through different critical lenses. A renewed understanding of these familiar texts surfaces from the teasing out of their unexplored aspects enabled by a range of methodologies.

While the first two essays examine texts from the same historical juncture—the Philippine Commonwealth period—and sharpen the focus on the profound implications of colonial encounters, the third essay traces the history of an industry in the Visayas, Philippines, and looks into various undertakings to revitalize it. The fourth essay directs our attention to Bali, Indonesia and unravels the intricate spatial orientations of the island. For the first time, in this issue, *Humanities Diliman* includes a peer-reviewed monograph, an extensive inquiry into the implications of a literary character who has for more than a century affected the appreciation of women’s issues in the Philippines and has so deeply permeated not only our consciousness but also our everyday lives. Two reviews, one of a book, the other, of an art exhibit, close this issue.

The first essay by John Adrianfer Atienza re-examines the role of newsreels during World War II. “Reel Images of War: Reading *Pathé* Newsreels on the Liberation of Manila During Wartime Philippines” focuses on newsreels about the Philippines found in the film archive of the *British Pathé*, one of the first newsreel companies that made available its news footage online. Atienza chronicles the emergence of the newsreel form and its development, in particular how the addition of a narrator or voice-over framed the reels and therefore primed the audience’s viewing experience. As much as the war popularized the newsreel, the latter, specifically *Pathe’s* collection characterized by a convincing documentary style, played a significant role in creating the image of the United States as the savior of the Philippines. The essay’s analysis of various elements of the war newsreels such as sound, narrative intonation, vocal commentary, and film angle, demonstrates how these functioned as propaganda techniques which enhanced the image of the US as a superpower. Significantly, the geo-political context of *Pathe’s* newsreels presents scholars with the possibilities of further studies of newsreels from other companies such as Paramount Pictures (*Paramount News*), 20th Century-Fox (*Movietone News*), Universal Studios (*Universal Newsreel*), Hearst Corporation (*News of the Day*), and RKO Radio Pictures (*Pathé News*), to ferret out their political orientations.

Also touching on cultural and historical dynamics is the second essay, Jen Mutia Eusebio’s “Literary Contact Zones and Transnational Poetic Space in the Philippine Commonwealth Era: The Poetry of Rafael Zulueta da Costa and José Garcia Villa,”

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which returns to the works of two major Commonwealth poets in English—Rafael Zulueta da Costa and José Garcia Villa—and places both writers and their works in their poetic-narrative spaces. The brief historical background of the Philippine Commonwealth era highlights how its literary culture was informed by world politics and aesthetics. A compelling discussion of the Commonwealth Literary Award and the lives of Zulueta and Villa lay the ground for the argument on the complex Anglo-Hispanic transcultural and translational processes involved not only in the creative practices of the two poets, but also in those of the early Filipino poets in English. Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone” allows the surfacing in the texts of cultural encounters between two colonial eras. Moreover, the peculiar subject-positions of Zulueta and Villa nuance the readings of their works. As the essay illustrates, literary spaces are never simple as they are always politically and culturally multi-layered and overlapping.

Faye Fuentes’s and F.P.A. Demetrio III’s study on the *hablon*, “Paghahablon sa Miagao, Iloilo: Pagsusuri sa mga Isinasagawang Estratehiya para sa Muli Nitong Pagpapalakas,” is perhaps one of the few studies on this tradition of weaving in Iloilo. Usually seen by the younger generation in its contemporary use, the *hablon* has a mottled history inextricably linked to that of Iloilo and its “proto-industrialized” system of manufacturing and trading textile. The essay discusses the emergence of textile weaving production in several towns—Oton, Tigbauan, Guimbal, Igaras, Miagao, San Joaquin, Jaro, Alimodian, and Leon—and the reasons for its decline in almost all of them, except in Miagao. Interestingly as the essay explains, *hablon* weaving in Miagao continued as a specialty handicraft in the early twentieth century, reached its peak in the ’50s to ’70s, but declined in the ’80s. Using the process value chain of Michael Porter and the general principles of strategy evaluation of Richard Rumelt, the study assesses the strategies employed to bring life once again to an industry that was once popular and remains to be an important part of Iloilo’s cultural heritage.

Readers will find fascinating the fourth essay by I Nyoman Widya Paramadhyaksa and Ngakan Ketut Acwin Dwijendra, titled “The Complexity of Orientation in Traditional Village Architecture in Bali, Indonesia,” on the distinct nature of Balinese architecture, strongly rooted in what are considered sacred and profane. Adhering to cosmology and topography, the ordering principles found in Balinese structures are governed by certain axial orientations such as the mountain-sea axis and the sunrise-sunset axis that ensure order and balance. Generally visible in contemporary structures, settlements, and urban planning, these axes, however, find deviations in different villages. The essay elucidates on how the idea of sacred and profane are manifested in beliefs about the movement of water and the soul’s purity or impurity,

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the direction of the sun, a structure's or site's history, and the human body's own cosmology. Thus, spatial relations, although based on cosmological beliefs, are not static as topographical variations are present in local communities in Bali.

Just when we think everything has been said and written about Rizal's María Clara, Carol Hau returns to the multi-faceted character and problematizes how it has continued to haunt debates not only among writers and critics, but also among lawmakers. So aptly entitled "The Afterlives of María Clara," the monograph begins with an analysis of the provenance of María Clara's exemplarity as model and as victim and then proceeds to read the position of her character in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*. This "character-space" analysis is a complex one, as it pivots on the relationships of different character-spaces in the entire narrative, and is then tied to other texts published during the same period, hence further untangling the web of discourses surrounding the María Clara character.

And as if the "doubly mediated textual reimagining" in the novel is not enough to confound readers, the discussion moves to other debates among literary critics, suffragists, feminists, and legal practitioners who have all used the character in advancing particular ideological positions. As Hau's sustained argumentation clearly posits, María Clara's "neuralgic resonance"—a description that so keenly captures the figure's circulation—proves its endurance through processes of translation and adaptation, temporalization, commodification, and transmedial storytelling.

The two reviews in this issue, "Airlangga Pribadi Kusman's *The Vortex of Power: Intellectuals and Politics in Indonesia's Post-Authoritarian Era*" by Herdi Sahrasad and "Mars Bugaoan's *Appear Disappear ½ ¼*" by Jose Santos P. Ardivilla are equally insightful and opportune. Herdi's discussion of Kusman's book foregrounds the role of intellectuals in post-authoritarian Indonesia and how they have navigated Indonesian politics in an effort to help implement policies on good governance. As the review points out, the book unravels the tangled political and historical issues that inform the position of intellectuals in Indonesian society, presenting to the readers the challenges ahead in order to achieve genuine political reform.

Jose Santos P. Ardivilla's review of "Mars Bugaoan's *Appear Disappear ½ ¼*" leads the viewer's attention to the notion of "permanence" and how Bugaoan's online solo exhibition cathects this to the nature of art in general, and printmaking in particular. In the context of the pandemic, Bugaoan's works, as Ardivilla advances, accentuate the need to reframe "materiality," "time," and "space," concepts that the exhibit successfully examines.

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The breadth of discussion in the essays, monograph, and reviews attests not only to the broad scope of the field of humanities but also to how scholars have unrelentingly probed questions of textuality and cultural and material practices. In carefully conceived and carried out analyses, writers have shown how texts can be recalcitrant, thus producing a constellation of meanings. This is perhaps the most noteworthy in all the works in this issue—the discernible challenge that they pose to prevailing discourses, which in effect pushes the possibilities of comparative studies not just among texts and practices in the Philippines, but also between these and those in Asia. As the cultural constitution of meanings is always a complex process, this issue of *Humanities Diliman* is pleased to be part of the intellectual tradition in the humanities, and will continue to be so by constantly generating scholarship that will assure readers of the field's vitality.



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