

The current political climate of the Philippines has once again accentuated the import of historical narratives as they provide not just a temporal frame for events but also a way of making sense of and perceiving reality. If narratives are ways of meaning making that at the same time allow us to construct certain truths, then it is crucial to apprehend the process of writing history.

Fortuitously, all the essays in this issue have, at their core, the intricate link between history and narrativity. The critical lenses deployed by scholars whose works are included in this issue disentangle history, discuss modes of remembering and reality's mediation, and suggest the importance of mobilizing narratives.

The opening essay, "Locating the Asog: A Historical Account of Philippine Gay Identity in the Spanish Colonial Period" by Francis Luis M. Torres, examines the formation and construction of Philippine gay identities, in particular, the asog of Cebu. In tracing the roots of its representation, Torres analyzes two chronicles and five dictionaries to show the asog's tortuous inscription under the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines. The analysis explicates the definitions of the asog and the varying images associated with the figure. Torres's engagement with documents betraying the asog's presence demonstrates the conjunction of writing and colonial rule in the construction of gender and sexuality in the Philippines.

The discursive shifts in the valuation of the relationship between history and memory are themselves embedded in changing social, political, and cultural values. Such are interesting aspects in the analysis of films depicting national tragedies. In "The 1943 Bengal Famine and the Re-Enactment of Memory: A Study of *Ashani Sanket* (*Distant Thunder*, 1973) and *Akaler Sandhane* (*In Search of a Famine*, 1980)," Jigisha Bhattacharya investigates two movies on the Bengal famine, a significant yet hardly included crisis in canonical historical accounts of World War 2. In discussing the films' treatment of the famine, Bhattacharya points to the function of colonies to the British empire during the war and the failure of colonial policy. The films' reconstruction of the famine based on history and how the tragedy has been remembered alerts readers to the deep connections of memory, history, and narrativity. Bhattacharya's work illustrates the need to anchor readings of a politically charged subject matter such as the Bengal famine on political economy, cultural history, and literature.

Because history is a discursive practice, attention must be given to language, in which ideology resides. An example of how national history could be maneuvered towards political ends through linguistic and rhetorical strategies is seen in Charles Erize P. Ladia's "Contextualizing Duterte's Rhetoric: The Rhetorical Situation of

President Rodrigo Duterte's Public Addresses on the Philippines' Federal Shift." Ladia examines how former president Rodrigo Duterte carefully identified and highlighted issues to stir the public's opinion towards his desired outcome—the shift in the form of governance to federalism. However, Duterte's creation of rhetorical situations to convince the people of his proposal's wisdom fell through, a failure which could be attributed to the public's lack of identification with his vision and a general disdain for and suspicion of any constitutional change. Ladia's detailed analysis of Duterte's addresses lays bare the critical role of history in contributing to the success of rhetoric and political aspirations.

Reconstructing a past event can have different articulations and forms. What people decide to make part of history is informed by politics and the urge to remember. The theme park Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar (LCFdA) is an example of conscious efforts to preserve material culture. Unlike the other essays in this issue which dwell on the nature of history and memory, Hannah Grace R. Lopez, Generoso B. Pamittan, Jr., and Feorillo A. Demeterio III take a different approach in analyzing Bagac, Bataan's heritage theme park and its more than 50 colonial and traditional Philippine architectural structures spanning 400 hectares. In "A Critique of the Theme Park Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar Based on Some Principles of Heritage Conservation and Contending Perspectives," LCFdA's five strategies for the building/rebuilding of its architectural collections are used in discussing the structures transferred to Bataan. By presenting the preservation and restoration policies which guide the actual practice of Las Casas, the writers underscore the contending views on heritage conservation, all of which are generally grounded on assumptions regarding history and culture. Ultimately, readers are led to contemplate on what narratives could possibly emerge when historical structures are relocated to a new space and acquire new significations.

In the monograph, "Ang Paghiraya sa Bansa ni Don Belong: Pagsusuri ng mga Akda ni Isabelo de los Reyes sa Kanyang Yugto ng Transisyon (1897–1912)" ("Imagining our Nation through Don Belong: An Analysis of Isabelo de los Reyes's Works During His Period of Transition [1897–1912]"), Leslie Anne L. Liwanag and Michael Charleston "Xiao" B. Chua elaborate on the prominent ideas and themes that run through 17 works of de los Reyes. Significant in their discussion is how locating each work in specific grids of historical, political, social, and cultural circumstances clarifies the views of de los Reyes on class, labor, Philippine culture, religion, and nationhood. His are arguments that emerged from an understanding of western ideas yet are solidly grounded on Philippine realities in general, and those of the Ilocos region in particular. Liwanag's and Chua's treatment of the Ilocano intellectual's body of works strips away commonly held assumptions about the Philippines' struggle for independence from colonial rule and surfaces de los Reyes's brand of radicalism.

The two reviews in this issue directly confront the politics of historiography, in particular how state intervention and the ideology of colonial rule inform historical narratives. Perhaps the most controversial work in Philippine history is former president Ferdinand Marcos's history project, *Tadhana (Fate)*, whose writers were prominent UP professors and historians. This 21-volume book project (of which only four were published) is at the axis of Ramon Guillermo's review of Rommel Curaming's *Power and Knowledge in Southeast Asia: State and Scholars in Indonesia and the Philippines*, which assesses Curaming's comparative study of two state-sponsored written histories, that of Marcos (to whom authorship of *Tadhana* is ascribed) and Nugroho Notosusanto, the official historian of Suharto's New Order Regime. Guillermo highlights the political agenda of the two projects, the ties that bind the state leaders and commissioned historians, and the public's reception of the works. Aside from the projects' agenda, what readers will find fascinating to explore is the habitus of the historians involved and the state of history as an academic discipline in both the Philippines and Indonesia. As for the commissioned history in the Philippines, Guillermo raises a critical question regarding the decision of *Tadhana's* historians to renounce their authorship. In marking the crucial parts of Curaming's book, Guillermo likewise prompts readers to approach the discipline and practice of history with circumspection and foresight.

If Guillermo's review focuses on the implications of Curaming's work on state-sponsored history projects, Arwin Tan's examination of Mary Talusan's *Instruments of Empire: Filipino Musicians, Black Soldiers, and Military Band Music during US Colonization of the Philippines* makes explicit how extant scholarship on music history elides significant aspects of the story behind the Philippine Constabulary (PC) Band during the American colonial period. Tan's review recognizes Talusan's book as a pioneering work in musicology that emphasizes how race is entwined in the relationship between the African American bandmaster and the Filipino band members, and how the United States used the band as a symbolic representation of its successful establishment of a system in the colony. Although there are numerous accounts of the impressive performance of the band in the United States, Talusan's work fully grasps the ramifications of the colonial ties and their implications on how the band was received by its audience. As raised by Tan, an important contribution of Talusan's research is the concept of "imperial ear," which refers to how the colonizers' ears failed to detect the ability of the band members to achieve virtuosity as a result of the Filipino musicians' intelligence and the cultural history of band playing in the Philippines. In opposition to the view of the Americans that the band's achievements were mere outcomes of imitation or mimicry, Talusan's counter-narrative argues for alternative readings of the band's mastery of Western music and their skillful playing of musical instruments.

All contributions in this issue are critical endeavors to decolonize both Philippine history and the process of its writing. The essays emphasize the need to be keen on the operationalization of language in narratives in the context of historical contingencies. As discursive contexts inform the rethinking of narrativity, the discussions in this issue manifest the inexorability of contesting voices and views in history. We hope that the palpable tensions in the works and the varying research paradigms that frame the essays will inspire further studies in political, intellectual, and cultural histories.

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