

## FOREWORD

The pursuit of knowledge is a search for meaning. We study literature, society, material culture, human behavior, natural phenomenon with the aim of moving closer to an understanding of how and why we exist and how we are positioned amidst the myriad reference points that enter our awareness.

In the book *Man's Search for Meaning*, psychiatrist Viktor Frankl emphasises that human beings are inclined to create meanings out of their lives and experiences and that meaning-making is a fundamental activity in every person's life. What we experience only starts making sense to us after a "person performs his or her psychological functioning of translating it into how he or she thinks and feels" (Krauss 762-763).

How do we create meaning? On one hand, it is socially constructed—formed through our interaction with others in and negotiation through different social fields. However, we also choose which meanings would serve our personal interests (Archer). Meaning-making is a way for us to gain some semblance of control, as it is only by attributing meaning to things and having them "signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways" that "intentional, deliberate control of them [becomes] possible" (Dewey qtd. in Krauss 762).

Culture ascribes meanings to things, events, behaviour and phenomena. Such segments of culture open themselves up for scrutiny, especially as they are represented in cultural products, textual or otherwise. The ways of “knowing” is one of the concerns in Ana Micaela Chua’s article on TRESE comics, which can be viewed as “a kind of mythological archive or cultural museum”. But Chua also emphasizes how myth and culture resist being “ossified”; rather, they remain “alive—changeable, if not ever-changing”. This same mutability of cultural narratives is problematized by Joelle Jacinto, this time looking into the performative transformation from oral form to ballet, in her work on the adaptation of the Maranao epic, the *Darangen*. Issues of cultural identity also surface in Erika Ann Sumilang-Engracia’s study of American adaptations of Japanese films, where she investigates the translation—or transformation—of silences, while it is intra-cultural translation that is explored in Ma. Cecilia Locsin-Nava’s analysis of Muzones’s *Shri-Bishaya*.

As meaning-making is essential to our sense of self, the construction of identity is also the focus of several articles in this issue. Gabriela Lee’s research on books for children opens up the conversation on how family—and its many forms outside the heteronormative—undergo “questioning and re-interpreting...in our stories”. The negotiation of norms and communal values also surfaces in Frances Jane Abao’s work despite the distance of her corpus in terms of genre and audience demographic: she describes the process of negotiating identities within a

community of readers as fans rewrite women characters from George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* into alternative storylines according to the demands of the fan base.

Iö Jularbal also addresses the authorship of identities, this time in the colonial sense, as "The Savage Speaks!" challenges dominant narratives about Igorot identity as constructed by non-Igorots. This practice of "reauthoring" is further extended as Clarice Ilustre scrutinizes Manalo's *Jolography*—how the marginalized who speak the "bastardized language...challenge authoritative discourses by reinscribing them with new meanings, values, and significances". Even in pedagogical practices, as in Marella Therese Tiongson's study on portfolio assessment, the emphasis remains on the constant negotiation with context in order to address the specific needs of both students and teachers.

Finally, in this issue, the creative nonfiction of Joel Mann; the short story of Francis Quina; and the poems by Pauline Lacanilao, Timothy Ong, and Lakan Umali will speak for themselves. Creative work, after all, is predominantly about the search for meaning and profundity in our brief lives.

**Marie Aubrey Villaceran**  
Issue Editor

**Works Cited**

- Archer, Margaret. *Making Our Way through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Translated by Ilse Lasche, 4th edition, Beacon Press, 1992.
- Krauss, Steven Eric. "Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer." *Qualitative Report*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2005, pp. 758-770.