

## Introduction

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE *PHILIPPINE HUMANITIES REVIEW* (PHR), we return to the original objectives of the journal of the U.P. College of Arts and Letters. After three issues of commissioned papers on the *komedya*, the *sarsuwela*, and the College's research agenda, the journal brings together a collection of eight works by scholars and creative writers who responded to the PHR's call for papers. These papers are divided into the traditional classifications of research and creative work, but like most articles previously published in the PHR, such distinctions are discarded by the writers. One finds in some of the works, a crossover of styles and a blurring of genres.

Symptomatic of the seeming eternal struggle of the Humanities to prove itself relevant—both, as an academic and artistic discipline and as a profession worthy of state support and national distinction—are the issues discussed in the essays and articulated in the creative works. They reflect what the Humanities as an intellectual rigor have become in the twenty-first century.

Katrina Angela R. Macapagal's edgy essay distinguishes the logic of pastiche from that of parody and how the aesthetics of both are seen in the videos of American performance artist, Lady Gaga and her local counterpart, Lady Gagita. Looking at the socio-political implications of the videos of these two performers, Macapagal attempts to determine the possibilities of cultural resistance in the videos of Lady Gagita which seemingly mock—intentionally or unintentionally—those of Lady Gaga. By raising a number of important questions in relation to cultural production, some of which are not categorically addressed, the essay challenges us to look at a cultural practice from several possible angles.

With the increasing popularity of independent films in the country in past few years, a number of Filipino directors have gained recognition in various film festivals and competitions abroad. It can no longer be denied that indie films have gained strength. But what does “indie” really mean? As an active member of the Cinemalaya Film Congress from 2007-2010, Patrick F. Campos had the opportunity to dissect the politics of various independent film organizations and the assumptions of the different theoretical frameworks used by the critics who joined the congress. Campos’s experiences serve as the basis of his essay, which teases out both the politics in naming the “indie film movement” in the Philippines and the discourses that have contributed to what it means to be “independent” in Philippine cinema.

In a nation with one out of nine Filipinos is an overseas worker, discussions on the plight of the Pinoy abroad have been numerous. Because there is hardly anything new to say about the diaspora of 10 million Filipinos, Eulalio R. Guieb III’s work provides a defamiliarizing experience for the reader. His peculiar textual weaving which the editors chose to preserve, describes how the Filipinos in Montreal construct their sense of home, identity, and selfhood amidst global changes. Using Clifford Geertz’s approach to culture, and writing his observations and insights in a manner similar to that of creative nonfiction, Guieb allows the reader an intimate view of the complex network of relations that inform the production of identity of Filipinos far away from their homeland.

Still on a very contemporary issue related to labor and employment, Neil Kenneth Jamandre’s essay looks at a phenomenon that is both a source of boon and bane for the Filipinos. With 400,000 call center agents, our country has overtaken India this year—the latter has, according to estimates, around 350,000. This shift in preference for the Philippines

is not only based on the improvements in our outsourcing business but also on the preference of foreign companies for our American English. Jamandre, thus, zeroes in on the communicative struggles in the call center industry, currently the nation's answer to mass unemployment. After discussing the talent saturation experienced by call centers in Manila, he moves on to analyze the various communication factors that influence the decision of Filipino call center agents or Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) to continue working for their companies, and then compares the job retention factors in Metro Manila with those of Region 6, which has become another favoured region for Business Process Outsourcing companies.

There are four creative works in this collection, all of them challenging the readers' perceptions of religious abuse, crime, body, and childhood.

Eugene Y. Evasco's "Ang Lihim sa Loob ng mga Pader" avoids the stereotypical depiction of the Spanish friar as the evil enemy but instead presents a priest who, out of his genuine interest in Philippine plants, studies them and even helps heal the dog of a Filipino boy who befriends him. This is perhaps one of the first children's story that has for a major character, a compassionate Spanish friar who, without hesitation, goes out of the walls of Intramuros in order to cure the *indio*.

In "Magnanakaw," which reads like a detective story, Chuckberry J. Pascual wittily unravels the epiphanies of his story's protagonist. It is in pursuing a petty thief that this protagonist unexpectedly finds answers to a number of queries he has about life in general. The deceptively simple story actually presents other ways of looking at crime, theft in particular, class, gender, and violence, and how all these overdetermine an individual's position in society.

Another work that makes the reader reflect on prejudices and biases is U Z. Eliserio's "Kami sa Lahat ng Mataba." He injects humor in a personal essay that dwells on rather embarrassing subject matters—physical appearance and personal disposition. His is a funny and self-

deprecating look at his body and temperament, which at the same time, questions the reader's long-held assumptions and views on weight, obscenity, and frailty.

Finally, there is Erick Dasig Aguilar's graphic depiction of child abuse, a moving story of how a child is initiated into life's sad realities when he witnesses the violence committed by his uncle against his grandmother. The boy's summer vacation in what he thought was an idyllic province, becomes a painful lesson on cruelty as he himself becomes the target of his uncle. Set in Rosales, Pangasinan, the story successfully weaves Ilokano words with Filipino, which helps highlight the disturbing situation of the protagonist.

We believe that this PHR issue embodies the wide range of interests and concerns in the field of Humanities. Both the essays and creative works are reflective of the continuous dialogue of this field with other areas and disciplines such as film, media, and communication networks in the context of globalization. We hope that this collection of interdisciplinary works will encourage other scholars and creative writers to continue in their production and transfer of knowledge despite the daunting challenges of the discipline. As more nations are becoming hardwired in the twenty-first century, cultural practices have indeed faced more obstacles, and even resistance. But as Jerome Kagan reiterates in his book *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities* (2009), "the humanists perform critical functions. They remind society of its contradictions, articulate salient emotional states, detect changing cultural premises, confront their culture's deepest moral dilemmas, and document the unpredictable events that punctuate a life in a historical era." Thus, notwithstanding these difficult times for those in literature, culture, and the arts, we believe that the essays and creative works in this collection could inspire more students to engage in the worthy cause, that is the Humanities.

G.C. & R. P., December 2011