

## INTRODUCTION

ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH AGENDA in the broad field of the arts and humanities in the twenty-first century is particularly difficult task. To begin with, national policy and private capital in the past decade have been primarily directed towards the global market-driven fields of science and technology at the expense of the equally significant national and cultural education. This has resulted, among others, in the decline of an already waning middle class interest in field of humanities as a college degree, let alone, as a profession. Resource allocation for cultural research and other related endeavors has also become increasingly stringent. It is thus inevitable and unfortunate that instead of concentrating on scholarship and serving the nation, research institutions and individuals have been forced to scramble for measly funds or jockey for positions of power. In addition, policies on education and the national language are being evaluated by bureaucrat and capitalist educators or demagogues whose judgments are based on unfounded fears of linguistic decline (e.g., blaming the education in the national language of the post-1987 Constitution generation for their inability to find employment despite the call center boom) and on either a misunderstanding of the weaknesses in the current educational system or a misperception of it as the result of the general decline in the Filipino children's learning capabilities.

Thus, it is not surprising why we have yet to see a clearly delineated national agenda on the arts and culture. While we are witnessing a steady decline of enrollees in courses that hone artists, writers, actors, translators, teachers, and critiques from whose ranks guardians of civil and human rights emerge, the state and several ruling cliques have proven ill-prepared, if not neglectful, in dealing with

matters of national culture. It is in the current millennium when the number of massacres, enforced disappearances, and illegal detention of journalists, artists, poets, teachers, and students has increased in a manner that would even surprise statisticians of a martial law regime. And it is also within the past few years that our efforts to strengthen our national culture have been continuously negated by state intervention as exemplified by the shameless meddling of the former president in the conferment of the National Artist award. More than a hundred years after the death of our national hero, we still witness how issues of greater national concern—be they economic, social, cultural, or artistic—continue to be reduced to the level of fundamentalist beliefs. Confronted with these realities, how do we as scholars and teachers in the humanities respond?

It is clear that as an academic institution that is home to more than a hundred intellectuals who may not always share the same views on a range of issues such as the Reproductive Health Bill or the relevance of Jose Rizal today, the U.P. College of Arts and Letters (CAL) is nonetheless bound by its vision to unite under a clear agenda that defines and directs both our institutional and even our national thrust in the humanities. Despite the many personalities that belong to groups of various political, economic, cultural, and sexual orientation, the fact is, we should not wait for the state to lay out the ground on which we will most likely perish. It is imperative that we determine our direction lest this be imposed on us. We cannot afford to be complacent and must therefore propose a research agenda that asserts the national significance of the arts and letters. It must be one that does not only complement the current trends in science and technology but also compete with the developments in the “hard” and “soft” sciences. Notwithstanding our acknowledgment of the need to strengthen the sciences in the country, we clearly recognize

the equal importance of the humanities which enable us to analyze and understand what it means to be “Filipino.” After all, our academic existence is grounded on the very idea of what it means to be “human.” With this in mind, establishing a research agenda in the broad field of the arts and letters becomes not only a manageable task, but a unifying and an emancipatory act.

This special issue of the *Philippine Humanities Review* (which also appears in e-Book form) is a collection of essays that includes the papers of Felipe de Leon, Jr., Patricia May Jurilla, Wystan de la Peña, Jovy Peregrino, and Antoinette Bass-Hernandez, originally read in the 2008 CAL forum on research agenda sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Foundation (CASAF). Added to this collection is the paper of Elena Rivera Mirano and Patricia Marion Lopez that supplements the article of De Leon. This issue, mainly intended for teachers and students of CAL aims to inspire researches as well as help the College formulate a new research agenda, highlighting its areas of specializations. Although this issue is long overdue, we consider Rizal’s sesquicentenary a timely year for its publication. Perhaps another collection will come out in time for Bonifacio’s in 2013 or Mabini’s in 2014. Hopefully the next *pingki* (spark) does not come as late as Jacinto’s sesquicentenary in 2025.

Gonzalo A. Campoamor II