

INTRODUCTION

THIS RWS OPEN ISSUE FEATURES ESSAYS AND ARTWORKS THAT DEAL WITH SOME OF THE VARIED CONCERNS OF FILIPINO WOMEN IN AND OUT OF THE COUNTRY. The first article by Clement C. Camposano offers a fresh look at the ubiquitous *balikbayan* box and the transnational mother. What is the significance of sending *balikbayan* boxes for some transnational mothers and what insight does this practice offer as we continue to understand the ways by which people cope with migration and the transnational life?

In the article “Enacting Embeddedness through the Transnational Traffic in Goods: The Case of Ilonggo OFWs in Hong Kong,” Camposano examines the practice of sending *balikbayan* boxes and reads this as a way by which migrant women, especially migrant mothers, “undermine structures of male domination at home.” While the practice brings back women to the traditional domestic sphere by their enactment of the expected gender roles, for instance, as caring / nurturing mothers concerned with household matters, the practice in fact functions as a strategy (or a tactic) that allows them to undermine the very same structure they seemingly uphold. Camposano offers to understand this in light of Michel de Certeau’s concept of a “guileful ruse,” which is accordingly, “a tactical maneuver which allows participants to carve out spheres of relative autonomy within forms of gender domination that bind them to the process of social reproduction.”

As Camposano would illustrate through his brief ethnography of Ilonggo women migrants in Hong Kong, the women are able to indirectly rework gender role expectations as they also create new roles for themselves, in the process, taking hold of the power, and its

attendant privileges, that they have gained by being major income earners for the family.

The next article in this issue brings us back to the country, and to the countryside at that, whilst suggesting the general contours of the possible connections among the topics of migration, countrywide development and poverty. The article underscores one of the continuing issues confronting farming communities: out-migration and the weak developmental policy and support for small-scale farmers. At the center of this related issue of poverty and out-migration are the women members, mostly the young and the elderly, of families who are left behind as they continue to support and keep the family.

Carmeli Marie C. Chaves in the article “In the Hands of Indigenous Peoples: The Future of Upland Coffee Regions in the Philippines” looks into the particular case of upland farming regions in the country. The paper highlights the inter-related issues of poverty, out-migration, the challenges of small-scale farming, and the use and conservation of ancestral domains as these are experienced in the coffee regions of the Cordilleras and Mindanao.

From challenges on the ground, the third article in this issue brings us onto the discursive field, where struggles may be fought semantically but nevertheless the blows are felt concretely. In “Discourse and Rape: An Analysis of a Trial Proceeding,” Venus Papilota-Diaz presents a linguistic perspective to understanding how women rape survivors are re-victimized in trial proceedings by way of language-use and the linguistic strategies used in questioning, during cross-examination, for example.

Papilota-Diaz employs Gricean principles, speech act theory, and Hymes’ theory of context to illustrate how rape complainants get re-victimized through language-use. The essay also discusses some foreign and local rape myths deployed by lawyers in trial proceedings as components of the discursive frame in which rape cases are tried and adjudicated.

In the interstices of the discursive, the cyberspace and the physical world, the life experience of call center agents bring to light new forms of work-related issues produced in late capitalism. Leavides G. Domingo-Cabarrubias charts the studies and research

conducted on the gender-differentiated impact of call center work in the review essay, “Gender Matters in the Call Center Industry: A Review of Literature on the Effects of Call Center Work on Women.” The review of literature “covers [selected works on the issue] and examines whether the gender-differentiated impact of call center work has been adequately explored.” It asserts “while men and women may be similarly exposed to the same stressful working environment and demanding workload, the effects are not necessarily the same.” As indicated by previous studies, call center work has specific effects on women workers such as “health problems of pregnant and lactating mothers, safety concerns of women working at night, as well as conflicts between working hours and the demands of task performance and domestic and family responsibilities. A highly stressful job, coupled with graveyard shifts and unpredictable schedules, can have significant effects on women’s traditional caring roles at home as well as on the gender division of labor within the household.”

Also featured in this issue are artworks: literary and visual that display (and examine, yes, that, too) different facets of a woman’s, and a young woman’s, life through imagery. Esther S. Garcia’s paintings capture moments of life through color, while Isabela Banzon catches the traces of a feeling, a memory through thoughtful choice of words that allow us a grasp of these—feelings and memories.

Women’s issues and concerns are diverse as the articles and artworks featured in this issue illustrate. They are also not necessarily specialized issues and concerns. Instead, they are issues encountered in the daily living of people, in the practice of a profession or work, or in the daily struggles fought to recuperate a life.

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Editor

