

Introduction

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This volume of TOMÁS is devoted to a collection of critical essays that have managed to converge on the themes of revisitation and reinvention. The essays in this collection install the past—in whatever manner (thematic, formal, historical)—and then reinvent such in the same vein.

We begin with Carlomar Arcangel Daoana’s prizewinning essay, “Awestruck with Agency: Mark Andy Garcia’s *The Attack of the Righteous*.” This piece, which won the Metrobank Foundation-Alice Guillermo Award in Art Criticism in 2015, succinctly and skillfully analyzes the 2007 painting as a theater of war depicting the clash of cultural forces in a violent, jarring, noisy composition that clearly resists silence. In compact, lyrical fashion that only an esteemed poet like Daoana could articulate with understated flair, he helps readers understand how the brushstrokes and rhythms indicate the artist’s vigorous assault on the canvas, signifying dislocations of identity and/within history, and the need to depict a “wreckage” with “fever-pitch intensity” that incinerates. By jolting the beholder in a vision of society’s seemingly rage-filled urge to dominate, Daoana says, quite astutely, that in this artistic rendition of the horror from which humanity cannot tear its gaze away, “[t]he painting burns.”

Soledad S. Reyes’ “Ang Panitikan sa Panahon ng AlDub,” a revised version of her lecture delivered at the University of Santo Tomas in connection with its annual Paz Latorena Memorial Lecture, examines the phenomenal reality show known by the label “Kalyeserye.” Reyes

traces this emerging television genre to popular literary and theatrical traditions that have entertained Filipinos from the Spanish colonial years and up until the 1930s, during the final days of the sarsuela before it finally gave way to mass media such as radio, magazines and cinema. Reyes examines the impetus for the phenomenal rise of this brand of entertainment such as the TV segment's ability to resonate with ordinary folks and its summoning of narrative forms that are familiar to the viewers. Reyes' article is an attempt to paint a mini-cultural history of popular entertainment, recalling earlier forms of traditional drama staged in the streets or brought at their doorstep and where the whole barangay is conscripted to perform their respective roles. The love story and the inclusion of Filipino values such as obedience and filial piety are deployed as subtexts and are delivered through the physical and improvised comedy spiels. The Filipino craze for the episodic and spontaneous is stirred through the narrative/live segment. The narrative style therefore reinforces a nostalgia for old forms that once entertained the masses through some faint childhood remembrances of *tibag*, *Santacruzán*, *pasyon*, *panunuluyan* and other traditional theatrical forms that made use of the streets and individual homes as extended stage and where each member of community is on call for he or she may be conscripted to perform a part as the need arises or as the script—which is perennially in progress—explicitly prescribes the enlistment of some local folks who can summon, at short notice, their natural talent for drama and improvisation.

Tito R. Quiling, Jr.'s "Transient Spaces, Transitory Relations: The *Accesoria* in Peque Gallaga's *Scorpio Nights* (1985)" is a close reading of the 1980s classic using combined theories from architectural studies and film studies. The article deftly draws from the works of Gaston Bachelard and Juhani Pallasmaa on multi-sensory architecture, and of Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks on multi-sensory experiences in cinema to examine the idea of transitory spaces as a way of framing reality and the movement of human bodies. The notions of limited mobility, transitoriness, and communal relations amidst cramped spaces are used as metaphors or filmic tropes to depict the subject of sex and betrayal as these serve as "private" themes to allegorize the repressive conditions in Philippine society in the post-Martial Law era. Quiling, Jr.'s essay is an attempt to re-examine filmic spatiality as it intersects with *mise-en-scene*, as it assists in

depicting themes that have significances along the tradition of Filipino neorealist filmmaking, and as it deploys a critical reading of how ideological construction (transitoriness and transgression being juxtaposed at that) may be inscribed inside a family drama-cum-*bomba* film—which is, coincidentally, one of the most acclaimed films during Philippine cinema’s so-called “Second Golden Age.”

U Z. Eliserio’s “E Ano Ngayon?: Pagbabaybay, Wika, Pagsasalin” discusses a contemporary issue affecting the practice of translation and translation studies. Eliserio zeroes in on three references in order to essay conventional notions of the discipline according to what is deemed to be “good translation”: Corazon Villareal’s *Translating the Sugilanon*, Vicente Rafael’s *Contracting Colonialism*, and Ramon Guillermo’s *Translation and Revolution*. Central to Villareal’s argument are the contexts pertinent to any translation project such as politics and ideology. Villareal’s argument descends from the postcolonial perspective of considering language from the perspective of the native and not from the perspective of the colonizer’s dominant language. Rafael’s groundbreaking book, meanwhile, is cited to underscore a deconstructivist view of translation: seeing translation as fishing. However, such view is pitted against Guillermo’s which treats translation as “revolution.” Translation then for Eliserio is not only a matter of going from one language to another. It is about negotiating meanings and striking a possibility beyond correct orthography. In this light, translation becomes a reinterpretation—a truly creative act.

Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr.’s “Flights and Fixations: Displacement and Urban Living in Isabelita Orlina Reyes’ *Stories from the City*” analyzes this poetry collection as it tackles the subject of how deterritorialized individuals traverse two worlds: foreign lands (as immigrants), and their home city (Manila). The personae in Reyes’ poems find themselves estranged by both their adoptive country and their home city. While Serquiña, Jr. acknowledges Reyes’ poetic imaging of themes of alienation, diaspora and deterritorialization as significant contributions to a body of diasporic literature, he also observes the conflicted feeling the poet has for images of home because of the din and chaos in Manila. The poetic persona seems to be in between worlds, in a perennially transitory state. This evaluation of the poetry collection becomes an occasion for Serquiña, Jr. to call for a more balanced picture of Manila as a city, not only through the verses of whining, comfortable and moneyed transcontinental poets,

but also from the more emphatic poetic homage by those who live in the city, who walk in its streets on a daily basis, and experience its variegated faces—sunset and chaos and warmth included.

Jan Raen Carlo M. Ledesma’s “Quelling Disarray and Inscience: Altruistic Thralldom and Subject Formation in ‘The President of the Tribe’ and ‘Sam-It and the Loom’” analyzes the meaning of civilizing White Love as part of the so-called Benevolent Assimilation project by the Americans during their US Occupation of the Philippines. White Love comes in two forms: as a way of muting the natives or of requiring their subservience, and as a means of introducing them to the ways of civilization, US-style. Ledesma brings up in this article, using postcolonial critical frameworks articulated by Barbara Bush and Vicente Rafael, how the two short fictions develop the conflicting idea of a tyrannical native leader and the benevolent colonial/White social worker. The paper is able to bring focus to the trickery involved in understanding the full meaning of the word “civilization” from both the perspective of the colonizer and the colonized. The relativity of the meaning of the term may be ascribed to the ways the colonizer and the native perceive each other and how they could make full sense of the colonial project. The matter of subject formation is rightly, true to its object, a matter of subjectivity; a matter that continues to grapple post-War and latter-day Filipino fictionists.

Ralph Semino Galán’s “Transgressions and Transformations: Queer(ed) Spaces in Metro Manila as Rendered in Philippine Gay Poetry *from* English and in Filipino” connects queer poetry to specific spaces in Manila. These spaces are of two kinds: queer spaces such as the gay bar, the bath house and the backroom, and the queered straight spaces like the cinema and the fitness gym. The spaces become the sites where heteropatriarchal dominance is challenged, transgressed and transformed in order to give way to libidinal activities of gay communities. These are offered as alternative spaces to their closeted existence. Such spaces open up opportunities where heteroperformativity are welcomed and become occasions for poetical creations—such as those examined in Galán’s essay—to find inspiration in and to become a wellspring for imaginative construction of (alternate) gay personas.

Jhoanna Lyn B. Cruz’s “A Different *Jihad*: Autobiographical Narratives of Three Philippine Muslim Women Writers” tackles the plight

of three Muslim women who have been suffering the dilemma of living out their faith and resisting it at the same time. The subjects in this essay are under the rigid control of their family and of cultural and religious codes. At the same time, they imagine themselves living their own lives, free from any ideological bind that suppresses their freedom and their art. The three women presented their testimonies in the form of autobiographical narratives, which Cruz says follow a common thread, or a common expression. What came out are the narratives of three deeply conflicted women who suffer from varying apparatuses of control: male authority through the father; religious ideology; and oppressive heteronormative notions of gender identity. The women are pictured as creatures caught up in layers of contradictions: between love of one's father and fear of the same; between adhering to religious customs and transgressing such; and between being a virtuous Muslim woman and being an avowed lesbian. The women live in between closeted worlds, and it is a double bind. Aside from the literary significance of the autobiographical narratives, the use of the confessional mode becomes an indispensable rhetorical strategy. This has given the narratives the feel of urgency and authenticity—a unique testimony to the women's experiences as gendered subjects, as followers of Islam, and as Filipinos.

Finally, “Benigno P. Ramos, ‘*Poeta Revolucionario*’: Ang Responsibilidad ng Makata sa Gitna ng Ordeng Kolonyal,” where the Marxist critic par excellence E. San Juan, Jr. locates a poet caught up in the wrong time; branding a complex dialectic, the essay takes off as an exercise in unmasking controversies over literary ambivalence and at the same time exposing its uses. Although Ramos founded the Sakdal Movement during the Commonwealth years, he was labelled pro-Japanese following after his advancing the notion of a Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, or the idea of “Asia for Asians.” This association with the Japanese has obscured the value of his poetic works, which a succession of critics from Julian Cruz Balmaceda to Bienvenido Lumbera have praised for being fine examples of dialectics of form and content. San Juan has noted how Ramos reinvented traditional poetical form, efficiently combining personal emotions with objective situations. Ramos' collection of poetry, San Juan claims, have been influenced by his exposure to the US colonial project, which coincided with the idea of mass audience, of proletarian literature, the rise of printing and the resistance movement's call for

more emphasis on the communal voice of literature over individual expression. For this reason, San Juan clamors for a historical materialist understanding of Ramos' poetry in order to place his complex politics from a more enlightened perspective. This essay therefore brings back an age-old debate pertaining to the interconnectedness between poetics and the author's ethical stance.