Editor's Introduction

Filomeno V. Aguilar

Philippine Studies vol. 53, no. 4 (2005): 457–458

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Editor's Introduction

Changing contexts reconfigure ethnic identities (such as on the Cordillera and among the Philippine Chinese) that have the capacity to appear natural, primordial, and fixed, but are in fact new. Changing contexts thus demand astute analysis, which articles in this issue seek to provide. Moreover, because an emphasis on structures may belittle individual behavior, the articles take the position that social identities and representations do affect behavior and, ultimately, the larger structures.

Nostalgic representations such as that of the Ifugao rice terraces can have the very real effect of dispossessing people of their land, argues Deirdre McKay. Ironically, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 is suffused with "imperialist nostalgia," prompting peoples to search for identities that can be attached to localities as they advance claims for ancestral domain. As a consequence, we are witnessing the invention of new "tribal" identities. McKAY traces the story of the Adyangan or the Ihaliap as coming into being precisely through engagements with the colonial and postcolonial state. She concludes that, on the Cordillera, the idea of an authentic and precolonial geographic identity is itself part of the colonial imaginary, which, contrary to the notion about its destructive nature, has stimulated the production of localities in novel, multiple, and cosmopolitan ways.

The *Mano Po* film series and *Crying Ladies* owe their popularity, explains Caroline Hau, to the reworking of Chineseness that over the last three decades has been associated with East Asia's economic development. Despite important differences and limitations, these films celebrate the "new Chinese," which, according to Hau, is a product of the successful transnationalization of ethnic Chinese businesses and populations. The mainstreaming of the Chinese in these films ensues from an integrationist perspective, and contrasts sharply with older conceptions

of Chineseness. Moreover, the new Chinese is entwined with historically new meanings of mestizoness that enable Chinese to lay claim to a Chineseness tied to Filipinoness but not reducible to Filipino. Akin to McKay's argument, Hau contends that Chineseness, with all its slippages, is part of a politics of ethnicity by which individuals in states and communities construct, invent, and negotiate their everyday lives.

Filipino writers in English, Robby Kwan Laurel shows, are deeply ambivalent toward the language of their craft, largely because of the narrow conception, and cultural politics, of English as a colonial and elitist language (a point that also appears in Hau's article). But the realities of a globalized world, with its varieties of Englishes, acclaimed works in these Englishes, and the flourishing of creole languages, compel a rethinking of English. Despite American English as its touchstone, the appropriation and colonization of English and its use for specifically Filipino ends makes Philippine English genuinely Filipino. With such an expansive view, Philippine English can be used legitimately, along with Filipino and other local languages, in the difficult task of generating literary works that can catch the imagination of Filipino readers.

An examination of representations of social relationships within the Philippine Congress leads Rupert Hodder to argue that one can discern a legislature that is undergoing transformation from informality to formality. Hodder is not unmindful of the structural and cultural features of Philippine society as context. He analyzes the consequences of weak parties, the splintering of interests, the insecurity of the executive, the politicization of the bureaucracy, and the intrusion of kinship and business in the legislative process. But Hodder sees problems of the legislature as *also* deriving from institutional and procedural arrangements, which—in the context of how these are represented—work to constrain and shape the behavior of legislators. Institutions do function, he argues, and legislation cannot be discounted as a means to introduce change in Philippine society.

The first issue of volume 53 dealt with the partiality and instability of representations of social and historical realities. This issue, which concludes the volume, underlines the creative (re)invention of identities; their contingent, porous, and political nature; but also the impact of representations on both ideational and material aspects of the social world.