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Editorial Introduction

Rethinking, Narrating, Consuming Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asia

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As this special issue would not have been possible without the generosity of certain individuals during these most trying times, this modest introduction must necessarily begin with gratitude. My co-editor, Yue Zhang, and I would like to express our sincerest thanks to the tireless and gracious people behind *Rupkatha*. It is because of their vision and efforts that *Rupkatha* has become a truly global journal of interdisciplinary Humanities, a home to many ideas that challenge and extend the borders of what it means to do Humanistic research in order to all the more properly respect its integrity. We hope that this special issue that features works from and about the East and Southeast Asian regions, along with their associated diasporic communities, will contribute to the noble vision of *Rupkatha*. We extend our gratitude to the numerous scholars who shared their expertise as peer-reviewers and whose generosity ensured the success of this special issue. We are also very grateful to our editorial assistants Mr. John, Fong Chi Chon and Mr. Chris, Miao Chi both of whom often went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the smooth production of this special issue. Mr. Chris, Miao Chi was also responsible for managing the book reviews that are part of this special issue, and we would like to thank him even more for a job well done. Of course, we must also thank all those scholars, both established and up-and-coming, who responded to our call for submissions. The response to this special issue could only be described as overwhelmingly robust, which is indicative of the unquestionable vigor in the field of contemporary East and Southeast Asian literary and cultural studies. Indeed, the sheer diversity of the submissions makes it a challenge to collectively introduce the essays without the risk of taking away from their inevitable multiplicity by imposing an artificial thematic unity. Thus, while the concerns of the essays included in this issue cannot be fully contained within their assigned thematic categories, and by no means should be read exclusively within such, I shall nevertheless risk grouping them based on what I conceive to be their principal critical concern—that is to say, rethinking, narrating, consuming.

A substantial number of essays in this special issue have attempted to rethink concepts that have been ossified through convention by bringing them into contact with cultural texts from and about Southeast Asia, revitalizing both concept and cultural text in the process. Carlos Piocos's "Women Trespassing Borders: Imaginaries of Cosmopolitanism from Below in Mia Alvar's *In the Country*" interrogates dominant conceptions of cosmopolitanism by exploring "versions of cosmopolitanism from below" and in the process "examines the intersections and contradictions of class, gender and race in cosmopolitan imaginaries of mobilities in Southeast Asia." Locating his theoretical intervention within the new materialist and decolonial turns, Christian Jil R. Benitez's

"Bagay: Articulating a new materialism from the Philippine tropics" examines Bagay poetry to "articulate a Philippine rendition of new materialism, through the notion of *bagay*" and its characteristic tropicality. Extending his previous work on Chinese Filipino culture, Joseph Ching Velasco's "From Private Eye to Public 'I': The Chinese Filipinos in Charlson Ong's *Hard-Boiled Fiction*" examines how a generic literary form is strategically disfigured when relocated in the postcolony so that it may speak to post-colonial and diasporic concerns. Hazel T. Biana's "Traversing Paths/Pasts: Places of Filipino Philosophy" focuses on the concept of place in the work of selected Filipino philosophers to argue that place reveals "the trajectories of their type of philosophizing" and thus played a significant role in the development of Filipino philosophy. Anton Sutandio's "Skinned Performance: Female Body Horror in Joko Anwar's *Impetigore*" examines the ambivalent status of the female body in cinema to argue that "the portrayal of non-traditional female characters suggests an attempt to challenge the mainstream patriarchal narrative in contemporary Indonesian horror cinema, and at the same time hints at the perpetuating subjectification of woman's bodies." Also focused on the representation of the body in cinema is Lynda Susana Widya Fatmawaty et al.'s "The Politics of Gendered Subjects in Indonesian Post-Reform Films."

Some essays in this issue are critical inquiries into processes of narrating the nation, which as Homi Bhabha astutely observes, is a process that "does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric...but also...attempts to alter the conceptual object itself" (p. 18). Kavitha Ganesan's "Which tongue? The Imported Colonial Standard or Motherland Vernacular? Exploring "Death" as the Birth of Postcolonial Malaysia in Muthammal Palanisamy's Funeral Chant" examines two versions of a funeral chant (written in English and Tamil) to elaborate on how death functions as a "metaphor to the birth of the nation" with the aim of demonstrating how a form of narrative in-betweenness that emerges out of the process of translation becomes a way within which a "diasporic Indian's 'becoming' national identity is reconstructed." Louie Jon A. Sánchez's "The Teleserye Story: Three Periods of the Evolution of the Filipino TV Soap Opera" posits that the *teleserye* (Philippine TV soap opera) is a cultural form that is "reflective of the country's life and times, its evolution interconnected with the ebb and flow of Philippine history." Niccolo Rocamora Vitug's "Pop Song Translations by Rolando Tinio as Script and Subversion of the Marcos Regime" examines the arguably ambivalent and complicated politics of a Philippine National Artist by paying attention to his song translations. Jie Zeng and Tian Yang's "English in the Philippines from the Perspective of Linguistic Imperialism" examines the advantages and disadvantages of the continued dominance of the colonial language in the Philippines. Marikit Tara Alto Uychocho's "Apostol's Creed: Unveiling the Political Fictions of Colonialism and Nation in the Diasporic Novel" revisits the tension between postcolonial studies and postmodern theory and attempts to locate global critique in a contemporary metafictional novel.

There are also essays included in this collection that are concerned with how markets impact cultural production, reception, and consumption. Maria Gabriela P. Martin's "Autopoetics, Market Competence, and the Transnational Author" participate in what has seemingly become its scholarly genre: the critique of postcolonial studies. Her essay examines how "program fiction" standardizes texts marketed as postcolonial, a process that speaks to the "auratic authority of postcolonial studies in the First world literary marketplace." Io Chun Kong's "Revisiting theatre of the minoritarian in neoliberalism: The Embodied Memories in Denise Uyehara's and Dan Kwong's

Auto-performances" examines how minoritarian artists negotiate to work in a neoliberal environment. Kong examines auto-performances not merely as forms of individual aesthetic expression but as a politics of multiculturalism.

We hope that the works included in this special issue become an invaluable and generative resource to scholars working in the field. The final words of gratitude must then be offered to the readers of *Rupkatha* for their dependably gracious gift of attention. Thank you.

References

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