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Aside from the journal which is published twice a year (February and August), Kritika Kultura also publishes monographs and literary editions. All content are open-access and published electronically.

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AIMS, FOCUS, AND SCOPE
Kritika Kultura is an international peer-reviewed electronic journal of language and literary/cultural studies which addresses issues relevant to the 21st century, including language, literature and cultural policy, cultural politics of representation, the political economy of language, literature and culture, pedagogy, language teaching and learning, critical citizenship, the production of cultural texts, audience reception, systems of representation, effects of texts on concrete readers and audiences, the history and dynamics of canon formation, gender and sexuality, ethnicity, diaspora, nationalism and nationhood, national liberation movements, identity politics, feminism, women's liberation movements, and postcolonialism.

Kritika Kultura is interested in publishing a broad and international range of critical, scholarly articles on language, literary and cultural studies that appeal to academic researchers in government and private agencies and educational institutions, as well as members of the public who are concerned with exploring and examining contemporary issues in the complex nexus interconnecting language, literature, culture, and society.

Kritika Kultura seeks to promote innovative scholarship that challenges traditional canons and established perspectives and enhance work that bridges disciplinary research around the issues enumerated above, especially in the promising lines of work in Philippine, Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino-American studies.

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ABOUT LITERARY SUPPLEMENT NO. 1:
KRITIKA KULTURA ANTHOLOGY OF PHILIPPINE NEW WRITING IN ENGLISH

The Philippine literary community has a relatively longstanding tradition of releasing anthologies focusing on young writers. However, it can be gleaned that the notion of the “new” remains unarticulated, as recent anthologies simply focus on the “young,” and what becomes apparent is the persistent maintenance of an aesthetics solidified in various creative writing institutions and workshops, a notion that is rapidly rendered inaccurate by a healthy production of writing that these anthologies do not include.

What this issue of Kritika Kultura intends to accomplish is to represent the kind of writing that is rarely published, the kind that is not often legitimized by mainstream publications. The kind of writing that we, as editors, can confidently call “new.”

New, in this case, as the word that most succinctly describes literary texts that are mindful of—by way of formal response/appropriation and/or thematic confrontation—several cultural phenomena such as the preponderance of piracy, the simultaneous/schizophrenic sociopolitical conditions of the nation, the “new” government that includes so many of the old names, the highly provisional stances in criticism pertaining to society and art, the currency and increasing value of topicality and ephemera (as evidenced by BPOs, SEOs, and Facebook), the persistent dominance of celebrity culture, and the gossip paradigm of discourse. The anthology welcomes contributions that transgress genre boundaries, revise traditional modes and forms, formally engage with the largely oral, nontextual/extratextual literary practices of the Filipino audience, and display a technical alertness to the quandaries presented by blog-driven writing, Facebook fiction, protest poetry, the malleability of languages, the hegemony of academic publishing in “legitimate” literature, the dominion of western literary models, and, in light of these, the strategic and arguably fictionalizing construction of Filipino identity.
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Anamnesis

Kristine Marie Reynaldo

HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS (HPI):
[1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]

SELF-DIAGNOSIS:

EMPATHETIC-IDEALISTIC ATROPHY

TREATMENT PLAN: ?
Even in the morning, when the air is still cold, the streets of Manila already stink, of garbage, of exhaust, of dog shit, of last night’s spoiled leftovers and alcohol-spiked vomit splattered on the gutter. Every morning, trucks weave through the city to collect the trash, and every morning the stench remains, stalking all the walkers of the city, clinging to hair, clothes, breathing down necks, sighing under soles of shoes. Living with it for too long, we no longer notice it, the smell driven to the outskirts of our consciousness. Everyday we shuffle along the same routes to work, to school, to the market—these streets constitute the setting of our days; above this midden we navigate, the city allows us a living.
She will not sleep tonight. At the end of a night’s worth of peddling, past the streets and the dark, is home; beyond home is the future she is young enough to look forward to. Home is where things wait—buckets of sampaguitas to string for next day’s sale, the neighbors’ laundry, the overdue homework to be accomplished in the hour between ironing and preparing her siblings’ next meal bought on credit from the nearby sari-sari store. Home is the hundred obligations her mother and father don’t undertake because they are both drug addicts and are hardly ever there, and so, the girl must be mother, father, big sister, breadwinner, and student. This is melodrama; this is reality. How comforting it would be for the imagined to stay safely imagined, where it could be criticized for lack of subtlety.
The taxi with a busted aircon whisked me through soulless streets at midnight. My head swam floundering in the smell of cold sweat and pine as the driver talked of Circles and Nowhere. Don't believe them, he said, when they tell you that hard work and diligence will get you Somewhere—bah! I've been driving around these streets for thirty years, I stay awake from dusk to dawn, and God knows I've made an honest living, and yet I have nothing, even this car isn't mine. They are lying when they say you reap the fruits of your toil—you don't, not when somebody else owns the field. Look at me. I drive all day and find I haven't moved an inch.
When the last nationwide search for the next president began, nine hopefuls stepped up, drowning the people in a deluge of TV ads, posters, videos, websites, flyers, fanpages, jingles—as their kind do every few years. Who will save this country? The candidates set themselves up as messiahs, the lamb chops of God, clean and aromatic, to the despairing, starving throng, promising that they, and they alone, can revive the nation. And the people sing the candidates’ viral tunes and debate the virtues of botox for their presidential bet, because, indeed, the political arena is a cockpit for stately fowl, the stage of a 24/7 variety show. Entertainment is far cheaper than justice; better chew on a daydream than bite the bullet. Reality is too costly, and nobody wants to pay the price.
In Dagat-Dagatan, one afternoon, I saw a child defecating in the street as other children played catch with a scrawny dog. A row of women slumped over washboards in front of shanties, scrubbing and beating sheets in Mr. Clean suds whiter than the sky while down the road flowed a river of plastic bags and mud and piss. On TV poverty seldom seems real—the wailing women, the rugby boys with bleached hair fighting over space for a televised grin. If I tell you how, on sorties, I slipped into alleys between tenements, trying not to gag on the stink, how I skidded on market slop, wouldn’t you say it’s sensationalism, more words for show? I went there to say there is hope, to say we can do something for our country, to say don’t sell your vote, to say support new politics, to say there can be something better than this, my voice almost cracking with feeling. They took the fliers I handed out to check for hidden bills. Seeing nothing but words, they threw the fliers away.

BACK TO HPI
The windows of the yoga studio were shuttered close to keep out the rain. Inside the air was heavy with the scent of lavender incense and mint. We sat around in a circle in various stages of repose on the polished beech floor, and talked of the country and our dreams of progress, of imaginal cells and social threefolding, of workshops and initiatives, of a grassroots movement and sustainability. We lunched on alfalfa, fresh tomatoes, soy milk, and whole-wheat bread, and talked some more, all twelve of us, for all of sixteen hours. Once in a while I would drift off and watch our reflections in the mirror spanning the opposite wall, watch the lips forming words, the gesturing hands, the bodies posing in thought, and wonder if we were only fooling ourselves.
The hospital doesn’t smell of death. It smells of bitter medicines in little plastic cups that must be taken hour after hour, of fecal matter and mucous, of unwiped saliva and blood, of urine suffusing the sheets, the mattress, becoming a yellow puddle on the floor—it smells of senility. My friend lies on one of many hospital beds, wheezing, his left lung punctured with an ice pick when he was robbed at 2 a.m. ten days earlier while on his way to the call center where he works. He gave them his bag and they gave him a wound, and now here he is, in a hospital gown, with the tubes and the dextrose and in bandages, like in the movies.

BACK TO HPI
I could smell the blood from where I sat in front of the TV screen showing corpses from a thousand kilometers away. A few months later a faded poster on a gray lamppost would declare WE WILL NOT FORGET NOVEMBER 23. We will not forget the 57 dead, the mothers and sisters, the journalists and lawyers, the innocents unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, the 57 shot point-blank, beheaded, mutilated, buried alive in a big muddy pit with their crushed cars, slaughtered because they posed a threat to the lord of the land.

BACK TO HPI
The smell of antiseptic hung around the atrium of the main mall after they took the body away. I knew, because the white canvas covering the remains was gone. The day before, when the student took flight from the top storey of La-la-land and splattered on the atrium floor, the guards quickly covered up his shame. They dispersed the witnesses and onlookers, who walked away wondering if people fell headfirst because the head is heavy. The mind certainly is.

An hour after the fall, the place showed no signs of disturbance. The white canvas was a mere roadblock to the mall-goers who went about their business as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened—only one or two passersby tried to sneak a look at the body, and they were promptly shooed away. My friend and I lingered at the site of death, mulling over it, until a guard approached us, telling us not to loiter. Nothing happened here, he said, nothing at all.

That life was nothing, that death was nothing, the world spun madly on. Blood had to be cleaned up, authorities had to be called, inconveniences had to be covered up, sales had to be made. Whatever drove that student to topple over the edge, whatever he wanted to say by breaking himself in a public place—all that was lost, the way his guts were wiped off to reveal gleaming tiles.

BACK TO HPI