

A TRIBUTE TO LULU REYES

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As many of us, I discovered *Kritika Kultura* through Lulu Reyes, whom I met twice in Leuven (Belgium). Of course, a journal is always different from its editor—and that is the way it should be, unless one wants to combine the roles of editor and contributor (either as reviewer or as author), which is not a healthy situation—but the energy and the many centers of interest of Lulu have always framed my reading of the journal—even after her editorship—as well as my contribution to it.

If I had to summarize what Lulu learnt me, and I emphasize the word “learnt,” it is the necessity of linking the social and the formal dimensions of our scholarly work. On the one hand, I had been (heavily) trained in the hyperformalist approach that was dominating Belgian academia during and immediately after structuralism. On the other hand, the many surprises of life had brought me to a department of Cultural Studies where formalism was rather seen as a handicap, if not a stain. And the conclusion I tended to draw from this situation was that both perspectives were necessary and legitimate, provided they did not interfere too much with one another. In other words: I shared both Stanley Fish’s critique of naïve academic commitment (see *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change*, 1999) and the typical Cultural Studies rejection of the academic ivory tower (as voiced by all those who “made” Cultural Studies, from Richard Hoggart to Stuart Hall, from Simon During to bell hooks), without knowing very well how to handle the situation in practice.

The wonderful talks I had with Lulu helped me push forward my own thinking (and working) on the formal versus social dichotomy. The wonderful thing is that she never tried to convince me to just follow her example or to resign what I had been doing until then. She demonstrated instead, by her own life and her own work,

that it was possible to give priority to the social use and use value of academic work, while not making concessions at the level of old-fashioned yet always vital academic professionalism. That she had to work in material and other conditions that were difficult, to put the least, that she was capable of running a journal that had nothing to envy to the best in the field, and that she succeeded as well in creating a real community, were permanent sources of admiration, and sometimes I even felt jealous of the vibrant atmosphere that must have produced this kind of constellation.

The globalization of academic life is often a euphemism of normalization, standardization, and the hegemonic rule of a limited set of cultures, languages, and systems (it would be too easy to blame the US, for other superpowers do not behave differently). *Kritika Kultura* is for me the encouraging sign that it is possible to make a positive use of globalization, which also brings us many crucial new insights and keeps our academic life sharp and crispy (without the pressure of the global, we all risk spreading other forms of streamlining and standardization, namely “our” way of thinking). The journal takes the best of international scholarship, while always reading it with a critical eye and twisting it in order to make room for less powerful voices.