

MESSAGE

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It is at once a pleasure and a surprise to realize that *Kritika Kultura* has now reached its 30th issue and its 15th year. Journals are rare that have succeeded in maintaining a global sense of the situation of culture and critique as essential elements in the resistance to new forms of the old domination of capitalism and colonialism while at the same time staying true to the immediate geopolitical context of their own site of production. *Kritika Kultura* has over the years fulfilled that mission, publishing a genuinely internationalist range of articles that have brought different locations in the global cultural and intellectual struggle into conversation while at the same time focusing those conversations through the peculiar “angle of reflection” (to quote the German-Jewish poet Paul Celan) that the Philippines’ unique history of successive colonialisms and decolonizing movements furnishes.

But *Kritika Kultura*’s success in this respect should not be surprising. As I learnt on my first visit to the Philippines, some ten years before the founding of the journal, Philippine social and cultural movements have a long history of refracting the lessons and inspiration of radical critical thought and practice from all over the world, while embedding those suggestions in the ongoing, diverse, and highly syncretic forms of local cultural production. On that heady and inspiring visit, which packed more learning and stimulus into a short ten days than I have experienced anywhere, I learnt much in particular about the Philippine radical theater tradition, exemplified by PETA and other theatrical collectives and embodying a long history of resistance that had been articulated by performance arts of many kinds, from the *Pasyon* to the *zarzuela*. The rich and flexible capacity for integration that Philippine cultural forms manifested made room for the lessons of Brecht and Boal, Peking Opera, and Japanese or

Indonesian theatrical modes, even as they furthered indigenous traditions of dance and martial arts. Witnessing this was for me an unforgettable lesson on the capacity of movements of resistance and decolonization to be at once highly specific to their local conditions and radically open to the influence of global struggles against domination.

At that time, one of my principal teachers—in the very best sense of that term—was Lulu Torres Reyes, whose invaluable work on Philippine theater continues to resonate for me. It was therefore an honor to be invited by her, Founding Editor and now Editor Emerita, to become a member of the international editorial board of *Kritika Kultura*. Her energy and intellectual acumen were better guarantors of the success of the venture than any advice I might be able to offer, but I was proud to be associated with the journal from the start and in particular with its broad and adventurous mission. My initial visit to the Philippines had coincided with the first Gulf War in 1991, a fact that opened me to new reflections on the continuities of US imperialism. The founding of *Kritika Kultura* followed hard on the heels of 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, which were the initial salvoes of the ongoing “global war on terror.” To found a critical cultural journal at that moment, when the resurgence of explicit imperial designs on the world and the will to engulf every stirring of alternative vision seemed to be darkening the horizon of hope, was not only an act of great optimism but an affirmation that was peculiarly apposite to the history of the Philippines: If US extra-territorial imperialism cut its teeth in its genocidal invasion of these islands, it never ceased to meet articulate and savvy resistance, nor did it succeed in extinguishing the desire to realize the alternative possibilities that every indigenous and colonized culture holds to.

These are not easy times to keep a critical journal alive: It takes not only exceptional energy and dedication, but also a combination of vision and commitment that ensures the relevance and the reach of an intellectual and cultural project beyond its immediate context. That relevance seems to me to have always been guaranteed by *Kritika Kultura*’s founding mission and its articulation of a deep tradition of Philippine cultural production, that openness to the world which Lulu’s own writings celebrated in its theatrical practice. From my own small “angle of reflection,” that of Ireland, I have been delighted to see—thanks mostly to the editorial work of my friend and colleague, the theater scholar Victor Merriman—a conversation open between Irish and Filipino scholars and practitioners. But that is no more than a small index of the capaciousness of the journal, whose contents pages time after time reveal its commitment to the critical analysis of culture globally and especially on East and Southeast Asia.

Lulu Torres Reyes is to be saluted and thanked for the vision and commitment that has for fifteen years ensured the realization of this project. And it is to be hoped that this 30th issue of the journal marks the beginning of yet more decades of its fruitful contribution to global cultural analysis.

Maraming salamat, Lulu, and hanggang sa muli.