

UNITAS

SEMI-ANNUAL PEER-REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL ONLINE JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH IN LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

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Intercultural Performance

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Joaquin's *The Woman Who
Had Two Navels*: Historical
Transformations Bereft of
Social Transformation

GABRIEL GONZALEZ



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History and Coverage

Established in July 1922, **UNITAS** is one of the oldest extant academic journals published by a university in the Philippines as well as in Asia. Still, **UNITAS** is perhaps the oldest extant academic journal of its kind in the Philippines and Asia in terms of expansive disciplinary coverage and diverse linguistic representation through the decades. While always cognizant of disciplinary specialization, it has been “multi-disciplinary” in publishing scholarship that is intra-disciplinary within the humanities and the arts, and interdisciplinary across the other disciplines. As it was in the beginning, it has aimed for “unitas” by conjoining disciplinary difference through its pages.

Moreover, it has been multi-linguistic on the whole, allowing itself to evolve from a journal published purely in Spanish, and then in English, becoming bilingual eventually in the various issues in which articles are written in Spanish and English, or

as has been the case in the last several decades, in English and Filipino. And, of late, **UNITAS** has also published articles in other languages.

Apart from its disciplinary inclusiveness and crossovers, in almost 100 years of its existence, **UNITAS** has expanded the conceptual terrain of academic and topical coverage. It has published on cutting-edge and time-honored themes in which both established and emerging voices in research and scholarship are heard in articles that range across traditions, modernities, movements, philosophies, themes, politics, geographies, histories, musical types, architectural styles, gender relations, sexualities, government and non-government institutions, educational philosophies, media, forms, genres, canons, pedagogies, literary and cultural relations, and comparative studies, among others, in book review essays, critical commentaries, scholarly papers, and monographs. Such an expansiveness has allowed for establishing new lines of inquiry or exploring new lines of thinking about old ones.

Editorial Policy

UNITAS invites work of outstanding quality by scholars and researchers from a variety of disciplinary, intra-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary principles, protocols and perspectives for its readership consisting primarily of academics, researchers, and graduate students, as well as of a diverse public consisting of scholars and leaders who are at the forefront of their fields and advocacies, undertaking research on multidisciplinary aspects of national and global issues within and beyond academia broadly from the perspective of but not limited to the human sciences.

In general, **UNITAS** aims to publish leading-edge and challenging articles and monographs in regular and special issues in relation to the critical currents and themes of the nation, the Asian region and the world which try to meet the various problems and opportunities of today's globalization.

Although single-authorship of articles remains typical, **UNITAS** encourages the submission of papers that are co-written by authors working across multi-cultural and multi-linguistic settings, which have resulted from an inter-cultural, inter-regional or inter-national collaboration of researchers in an effort to internationalize knowledge production, circulation and reception.

In particular, under the rubric of literary and cultural studies in Asia, **UNITAS** aims to be a platform for ethically engaged studies that represent intersections of national and international literatures, arts and cultures, crisscrossing critical and creative categories, authors and readers, "East" and "West," "North" and "South," text and

context, close readings and fieldwork, original works and translations, and theoretical and practical methodologies.

UNITAS welcomes submissions from all locations of the globe which are published in English, Philippine national and regional languages, and other foreign languages. Non-English language articles are required to submit an extended abstract in English containing the full argument rather than just a digest of the main idea.

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In This Issue

The first part of this issue consists of two essays that deal with theater theory and practice.

Mitsuya Mori's "Double Nora: A Japanese Intercultural Performance" reflects upon his experience in directing Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in which a 19th century Norwegian play transforms into "a modern *noh* play" in Japan. With Mori's conceptual and practical innovation, a canonical European drama literally and figuratively moves hand in hand with traditional Japanese theater. In his production, titled *Double Nora*, two performers play a role: a *noh* actor and a modern actress. Indeed, together on stage, they act simultaneously and the audience sees this double act. Mori explains that "when one is performing, the other is behind and watching the scene." In this unique adaptation that re-imagines Ibsen's famous play, spaces for a richer, more layered, and dynamic theatrical and interpretive possibilities are opened up across many levels –from the aesthetic to the intercultural.

Alex Taek-Gwang Lee's "Re-considering Brecht and Sartre" examines the debates between two major figures in modern European intellectual history: Bertolt Brecht, the theater practitioner and theoretician, and Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher and writer. Notably, both of them have had a significant impact on many theatrical and theoretical movements of the 20th century beyond Europe. Cutting across a number of aesthetic and philosophical issues, Lee discusses the Brechtian conceptualization of epic theatre which focuses on method, assuming a distinction between actors and audience. Sartre, on the other hand, "presupposes the transcendental unity of actors and audience in which everybody shares an equal capacity to think and communicate with each other," assuming no distinction between actors and audience. Lee views Sartre's criticism of Brecht as raising several important issues about theatre, even as the debates underscore the close relationship between theatre and philosophy.

The second part consists of five essays in memory of one of the Philippines' major authors, Nick Joaquin/Quijano de Manila.

On 24 February 2018, lectures were delivered by invited esteemed professors from several universities in a forum on the theme, "Questions of Ethics: Social Transformation in the Works of Nick Joaquin." Jointly hosted by the Research Center for Culture, Arts and Humanities (RCCA), the office of the Scholar-in-Residence, Department of Literature, and the Faculty of Arts and Letters, the said forum was the second installment of the Nick Joaquin Centennial Forum held during The Research Fortnight 2018. The first installment had taken place in 2017.

The forum was meant to highlight "the critical edge" that underpins the continuing relevance of Joaquin's works in an attempt to delve anew into their significance. Joaquin, who had been declared a National Artist in 1976 and recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Literature, Journalism, and Creative Communication in 1996, has been called "the greatest Filipino writer next to José Rizal" by National Artist, F. Sionil Jose.

There are ties that bind Joaquin and UST from which he received an Associate in Arts degree. He entered the St. Albert College in Hong Kong and became a Dominican seminarian before deciding to pursue a writing career. After his death, as part of his will, his personal library and books were donated to the UST Library.

Like Rizal, the “critical edge” of Nick Joaquin/Quijano de Manila owes to his role as a “keeper of our national memory,” to quote F. Sionil Jose again—that which lies in the imagination of the readers of his creative writing and journalism.

This collection of essays in this volume may be said to be an attempt at gathering anew such memories—not just as recollection but as ethical vision toward social transformation.

In “Nick Joaquin’s Apocalypse: Women and the Tragi-comedy of the ‘Unhappy Consciousness’” by E. San Juan, Jr., reconciling polarized memories is symbolic of the “predicament” of the *Ilustrados* in “a project of extracting universality from particularized dilemmas.” In Joaquin’s art, the “Unhappy Consciousness” functions as “the testimony of mere utopian longing or the allegory of a compulsively repeated tragicomedy rescued from an embalmed past.”

“E. San Juan’s Creative Oppositional Criticism” by Francis C. Sollano links San Juan’s keynote lecture, “Joaquin’s Apocalypse: Women and the Tragi-Comedy of the ‘Unhappy Consciousness,’” to two previous works, namely, *Dialectics of Transcendence* (1984, written in 1967) and *Subversions of Desire* (1988). Sollano affirms that Hegelian difference and opposition are fundamentally productive” as illustrated by San Juan’s Joaquinian scholarship in which dialectics is visibly at work.

In Vincenz Serrano’s “Total Midnight All Over the Land Escaping Minute by Minute into the Small Hours”: Historiography and Baroque Poetics in Nick Joaquin’s *A Question of Heroes*,” it is argued that the long sentence with which Nick Joaquin concludes *A Question of Heroes* is “an index of his temporal capaciousness, which from a baroque perspective, signals on the one hand recuperation and resistance, and artifice and deformation on the other.”

“Nature and Cultural History in Nick Joaquin’s ‘Doña Jeronima’” by Lily Rose Tope provides a new take on a Joaquin story drawn from his use of natural elements through “a range of natural imagery” which are viewed as “expressions of ideological and philosophical engagements in his narrative as well as carriers of the thematic grip in his fiction.”

“Joaquin’s The Woman Who Had Two Navels: Historical Transformations Bereft of Social Transformation” by Gabriel Jose Gonzalez, S.J. argues that “Connie Vidal’s claim to having two navels is indeed a manifestation against colonization and a cry for an authentic social revolution.” As such, the “unresolved moral dilemma that the Monzon brothers face at the conclusion of the novel” suggests “that authentic transformations that lead to real lived freedoms require changes even in the personal and social moral structure.”