

VOLUME 1 2026

PLUMA

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

BEYOND THE LESSON

Stories of Purpose,
Passion, and Service

TINIG SA PISARA

THE ART OF TEACHING

MGA GURO MGA BAYANI

Mga piling akda para sa Araw ng mga Guro

Php 250

mepublication.com



Sa Mga MAMBABASA

May mga salitang matagal bago maisulat. May mga kuwentong naghihintay ng tamang pagkakataon upang marinig. At may mga tinig na, sa kabila ng kanilang halaga, nananatili sa mga pahina ng kuwaderno, sa tahimik na sulok ng silid-aralan, o sa isip ng isang manunulat na nag-aalinlangang magsimula.

Ang unang tomo ng publikasyong ito ay inilulunsad nang may paniniwalang may puwang para sa mga tinig na iyon.

Sa bawat pahinang inyong bubuklatin ay may bakas ng karanasan, pagninilay, gunita, paninindigan, at malikhaing pagtanaw sa mundong ating ginagalawan. Magkakaiba man ang pinagmulan at paraan ng pagkukuwento ng aming mga manunulat, pinag-uugnay sila ng iisang hangarin: ang makapagsulat ng isang bagay na karapat-dapat basahin, pag-isipan, at dalhin lampas sa pahina.

Hindi namin hangad na ang mga akdang narito ay basta matapos basahin. Higit naming ninanais na may isang taludtod na manatili, isang kaisipang muling balikan, o isang kuwentong biglang maalala sa isang ordinaryong araw.

Sapagkat dito nagsisimula ang tunay na buhay ng isang akda. Hindi sa sandaling ito ay nailimbag, kundi sa sandaling may isang mambabasang nakatagpo rito ng bahagi ng kaniyang sarili.

Sa inyong pagbuklat sa unang pahina, binubuksan din ninyo ang unang yugto ng aming paglalakbay.

Maligayang pagbabasa.

Prof. William P. Nucasa
Punong Patnugot-Filipino

To Our READERS

A publication begins with writers, but it finds its purpose in readers.

This inaugural volume arrives in your hands as more than a collection of written works. It is a meeting place for ideas, experiences, questions, and perspectives that deserve room beyond the places where they were first conceived. Some pieces may invite reflection; others may challenge familiar ways of seeing. A few may simply remind us of something we had forgotten to notice.

That is the quiet power of reading. We enter a page expecting to encounter another person's words, only to discover that somewhere between the sentences, we have begun examining our own lives.

As an editorial community, we believe that meaningful publication is not measured merely by the number of pages produced or works gathered. Its value lies in the conversations those pages begin and in the thoughts that continue long after the magazine has been closed.

Volume I marks our beginning. Like every beginning, it carries both promise and responsibility: to remain open to new voices, to value thoughtful expression, and to build a publication worthy of the writers who entrust us with their work and the readers who give that work their time.

Thank you for being among the first to turn these pages.

May you find something here worth carrying with you.

Dr. Victor T. Reyes
Editor-in-Chief-English



Before PLUMA, There Was Already a Dream



February 12, 2022.

We had no idea back then where that first book would take us. There was no PLUMA yet and no long list of publishing milestones to look back on. All we had was *Co-Love-Oration*, our very first anthology, and a group of writers from Filipino Poets in Blossom who took a leap of faith with M.E. Publications. They trusted us with something deeply personal: their words.

We hold onto the memory of that first book not because it was seamless, because it wasn't, but because it was the spark that started everything.

There is a quiet, irreplaceable magic when a writer holds a finished book and sees their name printed on the page. Maybe that was the exact moment we realized what we were actually building. We were not just printing pages; we were building a home for voices waiting to be heard.

So we kept moving forward. More manuscripts found their way to us, and more names filled our pages as *Blossoms Journal International Magazine* soon followed.

What began as a single anthology grew into a vibrant collective of storytellers we never anticipated bringing together. Along the way, we found a shared path with KAFAMPI. We held the same unwavering belief in Filipino writers, especially those who simply needed someone to open the door, and that shared purpose gave us the resolve to take our next bold step.

Four years after printing our very first page, we find ourselves standing at another beginning: **PLUMA Magazine International.**

When deciding on the vision for this inaugural issue, we could have chosen any direction. But whenever we asked ourselves where our stories truly began, we kept returning to the same people: our teachers.

Long before any of us ever dared to call ourselves writers, there was a teacher circling a misspelled word, handing back a draft marked with edits, and encouraging us to try one more time. Someone took the time to read our clumsy early drafts and saw the promise beneath them. They might have long forgotten those quiet classroom moments, but we never did.

That is why our launch issue is *BAYANI: A Literary Tribute to Teachers*. This is not to build another statue in their honor, but because the best way to pay tribute is simply to remember.

Our hope is that somewhere out there, a teacher will turn these pages and recognize a piece of themselves in these stories. May they finally know that the student they once told to keep writing never stopped.

This is PLUMA, and this is where our next chapter begins.

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Dr. Shirley L. Milanes' Lifelong Symphony of Education, Culture, and Service

Some educators are remembered for the lessons they teach. Others are remembered for the lives they transform. For Associate Professor III Dr. Shirley L. Milanes, Dean of the College of Education at Pangasinan State University–San Carlos Campus, the true measure of a career in education lies not in titles earned or awards received, but in the people empowered along the way.

Affectionately known as the campus' "Singing Dean," Dr. Milanes has spent more than three decades nurturing future educators, championing cultural preservation, serving communities, and embracing innovation. Behind her accomplishments is a philosophy rooted in a simple yet profound desire: to make a meaningful difference in the lives of learners.

That calling has guided her since the beginning of her teaching journey. "My passion for education stems from a desire to make a meaningful difference in students' lives," she shares. For Dr. Milanes, teaching has never been confined to the delivery of lessons or the completion of academic requirements. Rather, she believes that "effective teaching goes beyond sharing knowledge—it inspires, guides, and empowers learners to reach their full potential with compassion, patience, and integrity."

Those values have remained at the heart of her work, whether inside the classroom, within university halls, or among the communities she serves.

As her career evolved, so too did her responsibilities. Among the many leadership positions she has held, serving as Dean of the College of Education proved to be both her greatest





challenge and one of her most rewarding experiences. The role demands the delicate balance of advancing institutional goals while remaining attentive to the needs of students, faculty members, and the wider community.

Far from viewing leadership as a position of authority, Dr. Milanes sees it as a commitment to service. The experience, she explains, “strengthened my commitment to collaborative, fair, and accountable leadership,” while reinforcing her belief that “leading by example builds trust and inspires a shared vision.” This perspective has shaped her approach as an academic leader, fostering an environment where collaboration and shared purpose thrive.

Yet beyond her work in administration and teacher education, another passion has defined much of Dr. Milanes’ journey—her dedication to preserving culture through music and literature.

As a composer and author of Pangasinan folksongs, she recognizes the powerful

relationship between culture, education, and identity. In a rapidly changing world, she believes that preserving local heritage is not merely an act of remembrance but a vital educational responsibility. For her, “culture, music, and education preserve identity and enrich learning.” Through her compositions and writings, she seeks to inspire younger generations “to value their heritage, language, and traditions while fostering cultural pride through meaningful learning.”

Her work in cultural preservation has become an extension of her work as an educator. Just as teachers pass knowledge from one generation to the next, cultural advocates ensure that traditions, stories, and languages continue to endure.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that one of the recognitions closest to her heart is the Seal of Literary Excellence in Poetry Writing. Although she has received numerous awards throughout her distinguished career, this particular honor carries a deeper significance.

“Every award is a blessing,” she reflects, “but among all the recognitions I have received, the Seal of Literary Excellence in Poetry Writing holds the deepest meaning for me.”

For Dr. Milanes, the award represents far more than personal achievement. It symbolizes years of devotion to literature, culture, and education. More importantly, it reaffirms her conviction that “the power of words can inspire minds, preserve our heritage, and transform lives.” The recognition serves not as a culmination of her efforts but as an inspiration to continue serving “with humility, excellence, and a greater sense of purpose.”

That spirit of service extends far beyond the university campus.

Among the experiences she cherishes most are her extension initiatives with the Badjao community, adopted schools, and partner barangays. Through programs focused on proper grooming and personal hygiene, computer literacy, technical writing, project proposal development, and family engagement in education, she witnessed firsthand the transformative power of learning.

What left the deepest impression on her was not the completion of projects or the delivery of seminars, but the visible growth among participants. Seeing individuals develop practical skills, gain confidence, and assume greater responsibility within their families and communities reaffirmed her belief that education can change lives in meaningful ways. As she puts it, “extension work is a powerful catalyst for lasting and meaningful transformation.”

Her commitment to lifelong learning has also taken her beyond Philippine shores. Lecturing in Japan and Thailand exposed her to diverse educational systems and cultural perspectives that broadened her understanding of both global education and local identity.

The experiences taught her the value of discipline, innovation, and respect for tradition. More importantly, they strengthened her resolve to prepare students for an increasingly interconnected world. Reflecting on these opportunities, she notes that they “broadened my perspective on education and cultural diversity” and reinforced her commitment to helping students become “globally competitive while remaining proud of their Filipino identity and cultural heritage.”

Today, that global perspective informs another area of her work: educational research and innovation.

As artificial intelligence and machine learning continue to reshape the educational landscape, Dr. Milanés remains optimistic about the opportunities they present. However, she is equally firm in her belief that technology should complement rather than replace educators. “I believe AI and technology will enhance—not replace—teachers,” she says, emphasizing the importance of preserving the human dimension of learning.

While technological tools can personalize instruction, improve assessment, and streamline lesson preparation, she believes teacher preparation programs must also cultivate ethical responsibility. Future educators, she argues, should be equipped not only with digital competencies but also with the wisdom to ensure that innovation remains meaningful, responsible, and centered on learners.

After more than thirty years in education, the principles that first inspired Dr. Milanés continue to guide her work. “My guiding principle has always been to serve with integrity, humility, and excellence,” she says. It is a philosophy evident in every role she has embraced—as educator, dean, researcher, composer, author, mentor, and community servant.

Looking toward the future, she hopes her legacy will not be measured by professional accomplishments alone. Instead, she wishes to be remembered for something far more enduring.

“My greatest legacy is not the awards or positions I have held, but the lives I have touched.”

It is a statement that encapsulates both the woman and her life’s work. She hopes future educators will teach with passion, lead with integrity, embrace innovation, and continue preserving the cultural heritage that shapes collective identity. And if her own journey inspires others to pursue those ideals, then, in her words, she will consider that “my greatest achievement.”

For the Singing Dean, the melody of service continues. It resonates in every student mentored, every community empowered, every song composed, every poem written, and every educator inspired. Long after the applause fades and the awards are set aside, that melody—rooted in integrity, excellence, and compassion—will continue to echo through the generations she has helped shape.





“My greatest legacy is *not* the awards or positions I have held, but the lives I have touched.”

Shirley L. Milanes



TOSOC *Means* TO PIERCE

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. LEUNAMATILEME G. TOSOC, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IV, AKLAN STATE UNIVERSITY—KALIBO



They were playing Scrabble, the way they always did, her father laying down a word and waiting with the small satisfaction of a man who has just cornered a triple-letter score. It was the middle of the pandemic. The house was quiet in the particular way houses get quiet when the whole world has agreed, for once, to stay still. Dr. Leunamatileme G. Tosoc felt a tingling in her breast and thought nothing of it. Women feel things. Bodies hum and ache and settle. She picked her next tiles and kept playing.

The tingling did not settle. Over the following days it sharpened into something with a temperature, a burning that would not be reasoned with, and when the roads finally opened again she went to see a doctor. A sample was taken. Then came the part every patient knows and no patient is ever ready for — the waiting,

which stretches time until a few days feels like a season.

When she returned for the results, the doctor did not make her ask twice.

“I guess I do not need to tell you more about the result,” the doctor said. She knew Dr. Tosoc had a background in the health sciences, knew she would understand exactly what malignant meant without the softening. And she did.

She did not cry. That is the detail she returns to, still, years later — not the tears that didn’t come, but the thought that arrived instead, immediate and total: her children. One in senior high school, one still in elementary. Everything else — the biopsy, the word malignant, her own body — arranged itself around that single fact. She would have to be strong, and she would have to make the strength look effortless, because the alternative was watching two children carry a fear that was hers to carry.

• • •

Dr. Tosoc did not begin as a teacher. She trained first in physical therapy, at what was then Fatima Medical Science Foundation in Valenzuela City, before an older, quieter pull toward language and literature won out. Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in Filipino. A master’s in teaching Filipino in 2014. A doctorate in Filipino Language Teaching in 2019, earned on a CHED scholarship, the K-12 transition years when the whole country’s classrooms were being rebuilt underneath the people standing in them. Today she is an Assistant Professor IV at Aklan State University—Kalibo, and has carried, at various points, the titles of Head for Academic Affairs, Chair of Alumni Affairs, Campus Information Officer.

But underneath the titles is a simpler throughline: she was a campus journalist once, a young woman who discovered that words could inform and also inspire, heal, transform. She wanted to be a writer. Life redirected her toward a classroom instead, and it took her a long time to understand that the classroom and the page were never really separate ambitions — that teaching, done a certain way, is its own form of storytelling, told



one student at a time, over years.

She talks about a student who once admitted he'd heard about her long before he ever sat in her class — friends, classmates, even boardmates who had never studied under her but spoke of her anyway, the way word travels about certain teachers. He waited, curious, until he could enroll and see for himself. By the end of the semester, he told her, he understood. She still carries that. Not because it flattered her, but because it confirmed something she has come to believe about the work: that the smallest things a teacher does are often the ones that outlast the semester.

• • •

Before the diagnosis, her days had a shape she recognized — full, structured, aimed forward. Teaching. Graduate work. Research and extension responsibilities stacked on top of each other. She was, in her own words, busy making plans, the way people are busy making plans when nothing has yet interrupted them. She felt healthy. Cancer was, understandably, the last thing on her mind — a thing that happened to other people, not to a woman actively teaching, studying, still nurturing a long-shelved love of writing that she assumed she'd return to eventually, once things settled down.

Cancer does not wait for things to settle down.

Chemotherapy began. After the second session, her hair started coming out, and she describes seeing herself bald as one of the most emotional moments of the entire ordeal — not because vanity demanded otherwise, but because a mirror had suddenly started telling the truth her body had been trying to hide. There were the endless blood draws, the weeks strung together by appointments, the veins that grew stubborn and hard to find until medical technologists apologized, again and again, for the extra punctures.



She turned it into a joke, because that was one of the only tools left in her hands. Don't worry, she'd tell them. I'm already used to it. Besides — remember my last name. Tosoc. In English, that means to pierce. It worked, more or less, the way small jokes work in hard rooms: everyone laughed, including her, and for a moment the needle was just a needle again.

• • •

The classes moved online, the way everything did that year, and she kept teaching through it — declining only a graduate-course offer she knew her body couldn't absorb on top of treatment. On Zoom and Google Meet she sometimes wore a wig. Sometimes she angled the camera close, cropping out what chemotherapy had done to her. But she never tried to hide the diagnosis itself.

She wanted her students to understand, plainly, what breast cancer could look like — that it does not check credentials or ask permission, that early detection is not an abstraction. Rather than putting distance between her and her students, the illness closed it. They saw their teacher, and they also saw a person, and the two turned out not to be so different after all.

The cruelest part of the timeline is a coincidence her voice does not dress up: while she was losing her hair to chemotherapy, her father's colon cancer, once treated, came back. As the eldest child, the only daughter, she did what felt less like a decision than a fact of who she was — she took over his care. There were long stretches, she says, when she forgot she was a cancer patient herself, because she was so occupied with being his. She stayed by him. She was present at the end.

She does not point to a single sentence he said to her, some final piece of wisdom passed down like an inheritance. What she keeps instead is plainer than that, and harder to hold: the chance itself. The chance to be his caregiver, comforter, companion, in whatever strength a daughter's love could manufacture out of a body that had every reason to be too tired for it. She calls it a chapter she carries with both sadness and pride.

• • •

There was one New Year's Eve when both of them were still fighting — her father in a wheelchair, brought outside so he could watch the fireworks, the family gathered close around him the way families gather when they suspect, without saying it aloud, that they are counting something. The sky went up in color. She stood beside him and did not let herself think about what she was afraid of. She thought instead about what was actually happening: they were together. Complete. Welcoming a year neither of them was guaranteed to see the end of.

She does not remember that night as sad. She remembers her father smiling at the fireworks, and she holds onto that image specifically — not the illness that followed, not the grief that was still ahead of her, but the ordinary, extraordinary fact of a family standing outside together in the cold, watching light break open the dark.

• • •

Somewhere in the middle of all this, she found her way back to writing — the ambition she'd set down

years earlier under the accumulated weight of work and family. It returned to her first as a coping mechanism, a way to metabolize fear before it curdled into something worse, and it became, gradually, something closer to purpose. One of her literary works, "Sa Gitna ng mga Mensahe," grew directly out of the stories her students had entrusted to her over the years — the private things people say when they think no one else is really listening.

She is careful, when she talks about what cancer gave her, not to make it sound like a gift she'd ask for again. She is equally careful not to pretend it took nothing but pain. Both things are true. She discovered a resilience in herself that she hadn't known was there, and she discovered, more slowly, that needing help was not the failure she had long assumed it to be. For years she had operated on the belief that strength meant carrying everything alone. Cancer corrected that belief the hard way — by making solitude impossible, by forcing her to lean on family, colleagues, students, and discovering that the leaning did not diminish her.

She teaches differently now. Not because a curriculum changed, but because she knows, in a way she didn't before, that every student in front of her might be carrying something invisible — a private chemotherapy of their own, a father somewhere between recovery and decline, a diagnosis they haven't told anyone about yet. She has become, she says, more patient. More willing to see a student's silence as information rather than disengagement.

• • •

To the teachers still showing up while quietly fighting their own battles — illness, grief, money, the ordinary catastrophes that don't come with a diagnosis but weigh just as much — her message does not perform strength. It undercuts the whole idea of performing it. Strength, she says, was never about pretending things were fine. It was about continuing to move, however slowly, while they weren't.

Be kind to yourselves, she tells them. You do not have to carry it alone. Asking for support is not weakness; it is closer to wisdom than most people are willing to admit. And do not underestimate what your presence is doing for the people in front of you, even on the days it feels like you have nothing left to give them.



If she could sit down across from the woman she was on the day she heard the word malignant, she says she would not tell her it would be easy. She would tell her she was allowed to be afraid, allowed to cry in silence, allowed to ask why. She would tell her that her children would become the reason she kept fighting, and that she would go on teaching through all of it — through the chemotherapy, through her father's decline, through every needle that had to find a stubborn vein. She would tell her that the scars she was so afraid of would eventually become something else: proof, not evidence of damage but of having gone through it and come out on the other side, still herself, maybe more herself than before.

Despite adversities, hope ignites. It is the line she returns to, the one she says carried her through the worst of it. It sounds, spoken by anyone else, like it might be a slogan. Spoken by a woman who buried her father while losing her own hair to chemotherapy, who kept teaching through a pandemic and a diagnosis at the same time, who once made a room full of frightened medical technologists laugh by turning her own surname into a joke about being pierced — it sounds instead like something closer to a fact she fought to establish. Not a comfort handed to her. A conclusion she earned.

Tusok.

*Gaano ba kalalim ang tusok
bago sabihing masakit ito?*

*Sa balat ba sinusukat,
sa ugat,
o sa bahaging walang karayom
ang kayang umabot?*

*Ilang beses kailangang tumagos
bago matutuhan ng katawan
na ang sakit
ay hindi laging hudyat ng wakas?*

*Nalagas ang buhok ko,
ngunit hindi ang kamay
na humahawak sa aralin.*

*Habang tinuturuan kong bumasa
ang mga batang nasa aking harapan,
binabasa ko rin ang sariling katawan,*

*hinahanap kung saan nagtatapos ang takot
at nagsisimula ang tapang.*

*May dalawang batang
tinatawag akong Ina.
May mga mag-aaral
na tinatawag akong Guro.
At may isang amang naghihingalo
na minsan ding nagturo sa akin
kung paano mabuhay.*

*Habang ako'y nilalabanan ng kamatayan,
ako naman ang humawak sa kamay niya
nang siya'y tawagin nito.*

Doon ko nalaman:

*hindi pala lalim
ang sukatan ng tusok.*

*May karayom na umaabot lamang sa ugat.
May sakit na umaabot hanggang buto.*

2nd Gawad Pamana ng Pluma International: Filipino Literature as Cultural Legacy and Global Dialogue



BAGUIO CITY, Philippines – Beneath the drizzles that blanketed the already chilling mountain city of Baguio on May 31, 2026, an altogether different atmosphere emerged within the Diamond Ballroom of the Supreme Hotel Convention Plaza. There writers, educators, scholars, artists, public servants, and cultural advocates gathered for the 2nd Gawad Paman ng Pluma International, an event that transcended the conventional boundaries of an awards ceremony and became a celebration of Filipino cultural identity itself.

As the Philippines continues to navigate the complexities of globalization, digital transformation, and linguistic diversity, the gathering offered a timely reminder that literature remains one of the most enduring instruments through which nations

preserve memory, cultivate identity, and imagine their futures. Livestreamed through M.E Publications' Facebook platform, the event reached audiences across the Philippine archipelago and among Filipino communities overseas, transforming a local gathering into an international cultural dialogue.

At its core, the **2nd Gawad Pamana ng Pluma International** reaffirmed a conviction increasingly echoed by scholars and cultural practitioners worldwide: languages and literatures are not merely artistic pursuits. They are repositories of collective experience, vehicles of cultural transmission, and foundations of social cohesion.



A Celebration Rooted in Community



The event was organized through the collaborative efforts of the Kapisanan ng mga Filipinong Awtor at Manunulat sa Pilipinas, Inc. (KAFAMPI), Association of Social Sciences Educators for Treasures and Traditions (ASSETT) of the Philippines, Inc., and M.E Publications, institutions whose partnership demonstrated the importance of collective stewardship in sustaining literary and cultural traditions.

The morning program opened with multilingual greetings delivered by host Adrian Fisga Luague, whose use of various Philippine languages symbolically reflected the linguistic richness of the nation. The gesture resonated deeply within a country that recognizes more than a hundred languages and dialects, each carrying unique histories, worldviews, and literary traditions.

From the outset, the ceremony emphasized inclusivity and cultural interconnectedness. Rather than positioning literature as an elite pursuit, the event framed it as a shared national inheritance accessible to communities across geographic, linguistic, and social boundaries.

This approach reflects a growing movement in the Philippine literary circles to broaden participation in cultural production while recognizing the diverse voices that contribute to the nation's evolving narrative.

Honoring Excellence in Filipino Letters

A defining feature of the event was the conferment of the Gawad Tugatog ng Akdang Tuluyan (Seal of Literary Excellence in Prose Writing) and the Gawad Tugatog ng Panulaan (Seal of Literary Excellence in Poetry Writing).

Awarded only once every three years, these distinctions represent some of the most significant recognitions bestowed upon Filipino writers and poets. The rarity of the awards underscores their prestige and highlights the rigorous standards through which literary excellence is evaluated.

The recognition of writers reflected the remarkable breadth of contemporary Filipino literary production. Their achievements spanned genres, languages, and regions, illustrating the vitality of a literary tradition that continues to evolve while remaining grounded in cultural memory.

Throughout the proceedings, speakers underscored the role of literature in shaping public consciousness. Messages from M.E Publications Director Eleuteria “Helen” Sarita, and ASSETT of the Philippines President Dr. Joseph Cristobal, along with a song number by the singing journalist Antonio Ma-at, known professionally as “Dream,” contributed perspectives that blended scholarship, advocacy, and artistic expression.

Their messages converged around a common theme: literature remains essential not only because it records experience but because it enables societies to interpret and reimagine that experience. Through stories, poems, essays, and critical reflections, writers help communities understand their past while navigating contemporary challenges.

Acceptance speeches delivered by Dr. Erlinda B. Tibus and Dr. Jennifer A. Gorumba further reinforced this perspective. Both speakers highlighted gratitude toward mentors, institutions, and fellow writers while emphasizing the responsibilities that accompany literary recognition. Their remarks reflected a broader understanding of authorship as both creative and civic undertaking.

Literature in the Digital Age

One of the most striking aspects of the gathering was its simultaneous physical and digital presence.

While attendees filled the ballroom in Baguio City, viewers from across the Philippines and abroad participated virtually through online broadcasts. This dual format illustrated how digital platforms are reshaping cultural engagement, enabling literary events to transcend geographical limitations.

For many Filipino communities living overseas, digital access has become an increasingly important means of maintaining cultural connections. Events such as the Gawad Pamana ng Pluma International serve not only domestic audiences but also members of the global Filipino diaspora seeking meaningful engagement with their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The livestreaming of the program reflected a broader trend in contemporary cultural practice: the fusion of traditional artistic forms with modern communication technologies. Rather than diminishing the significance of literature, digital platforms have expanded opportunities for literary communities to reach wider audiences and foster transnational conversations.

Heritage Beyond the Written Word

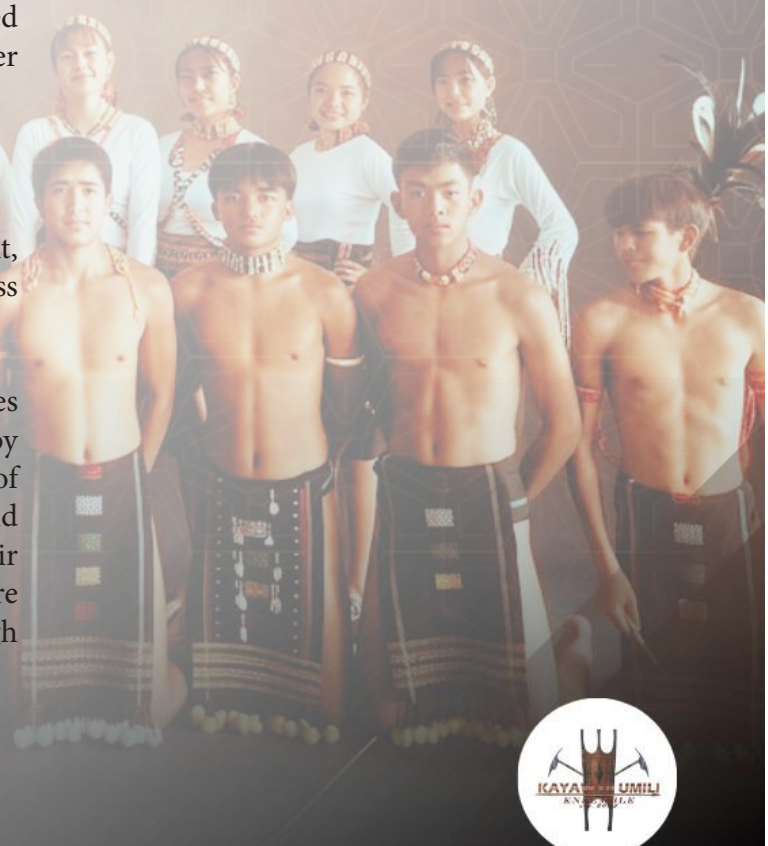
Although literature occupied the center of the event, the celebration also highlighted the interconnectedness of artistic forms.

The afternoon program hosted by Kenedy G. Flores and Jo Anne E. Kiniado, featured performances by the Kayaw di Umili Ensemble, whose presentations of Cordilleran dance traditions brought movement and music into dialogue with literary expression. Their performances served as a vivid reminder that culture is not confined to texts alone but is embodied through rituals, performances, and communal practices.

In many indigenous and local traditions throughout the Philippines, storytelling extends beyond the written page. Songs, dances, oral narratives, and ceremonial practices function as equally important vehicles of cultural knowledge.

The presence of the ensemble therefore expanded the event's cultural scope, demonstrating that literary heritage exists within a larger ecosystem of artistic and communal expression.

Their performances energized the audience while reaffirming the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in all its forms.





Leadership and Cultural Service

The gathering also acknowledged the vital role of public service and institutional leadership in sustaining cultural initiatives.

Messages delivered by local government officials and community leaders emphasized the values of integrity, resilience, and service. Their participation reflected a growing recognition that cultural development is not solely the responsibility of artists and educators but also requires support from public institutions.

This perspective was particularly evident during the presentation of the Gawad Sulong Pamumuno, which honored leaders whose contributions have strengthened educational and cultural institutions.

Acceptance speeches by Atty. Robert John J. Doneza and Dr. Michele J. Dulay emphasized leadership



as a form of stewardship. Rather than focusing exclusively on professional accomplishments, both speakers highlighted the importance of empowering communities, nurturing future generations, and creating opportunities for collective growth.

Their remarks echoed a broader theme present throughout the day: that cultural advancement depends upon collaboration among writers, educators, policymakers, and citizens.





Recognizing Emerging and Established Literary Voices

As evening approached, attention turned to the inaugural Pamana ng Pluma Literary Awards, which celebrated outstanding literary works in both Filipino and English.

The competition showcased the continuing diversity of contemporary Philippine literature, with recognized works exploring themes ranging from identity and memory to resilience and social transformation.

In the Filipino category, “Marka” by Princess S. Calacala received First Prize, while “Agunyas ng Amag” by Eugene Gabrielle A. Nacino earned Second Prize, and no winner for the Third Prize. Honorable Mentions were awarded to Jermaine Emil L. Unas’ “Salimuot sa Tasa ng Kape”, Jude Alexander M. Punzalan’s “Pagitan ng mga

Tinig”, and Romeo G. Balonzo, Jr.’s “Mga Panaghoy ni Dumagat Remontado”.

In the English category, no winner for the First Prize, while “The Scarcity Beast” by Ena Marion D. Tuano received Second Prize, and “The Anatomy of a Sinking Chair” by Ma. Jenelle B. De Martin earned Third Prize. Honorable Mentions were awarded to Alberto C. Felisilda, Jr.’s “When Virtue is Silenced”, Vince Benedict A. Tanjay’s “The Remainder”, and Dave L. Rellanos’ “A Love So Blind”.

The recognition of works in both Filipino and English reflected the multilingual realities of Philippine literary production. It also highlighted the ability of Filipino writers to engage local experiences while participating in broader global conversations.



The Enduring Power of Cultural Recognition

The evening's culminating honors included the presentation of the *Gawad Sulo*, recognizing individuals and institutions whose contributions have generated lasting impact across sectors and generations.

Among the recipients was **KWF's Chief Commissioner Atty. Marites A. Barrios-Taran**, who received the *Gawad Sulo sa Pagtaguyod ng Wika* for her dedication to language preservation and advocacy. The ***Liwayway Magazine*** received the *Gawad Sulo ng Panitikan*, while SUC President **Prof. Charisma S. Ututalum** of Sulu State University, and University President **Dr. Elbert Manangan Galas** of Pangasinan State University were recognized through the *Gawad Tanglaw ng Akademya* for transformative educational leadership.

The presentation of the *Gawad Uliran* further underscored the event's emphasis on exemplary service and lifelong commitment to excellence.

Collectively, these recognitions demonstrated that cultural development is sustained not by isolated achievements but by networks of individuals and institutions working toward shared goals.

A Living Inheritance

The event concluded with a communal dance led by the Kayaw di Umili Ensemble, transforming the ballroom into a space of shared celebration. Participants joined together in a symbolic expression of continuity, participation, and collective belonging.

As the final remarks echoed through the venue, a central message emerged with remarkable clarity: culture survives not because it is preserved in museums or archives, but because it is practiced, celebrated, and transmitted from one generation to the next.

The 2nd *Gawad Pamana ng Pluma International* demonstrated that literature remains far more than artistic discipline. It is a living inheritance capable of connecting communities, strengthening identities, and fostering dialogue across borders.

Through voices, verses, and values, the legacy of the Filipino pluma continues to inspire, educate, and endure.

Huling Lapat ng Tisa

Charles Errel G. Reyes, LPT, MAT

Numancia Integrated School

*Sa paglapat ng iyong puting tisa sa pisara
Mga pangarap ay kumislap sa diwa;
Animo'y talang nagninging na bigla
Nagbukas ng mga pinto ng pag-asa.*

*Tiyaga't dedikasyon sa paglilingkod
Ang bakas ng tisa mong kalugod-lugod;
Di kailanman nakitaan ng pagsuko't pagkapagod
Sigla't husay sa pagtuturo ang palaging handog.*

*At ngayon ay dumating na nga
Upang lisanin mo ang paaralang sinta;
Silya't libro'y lihim na mangungulila
Sa tagapagtutrong dati'y kasa-kasama.*

*Sa iyo kami lagi humuhugot ng inspirasyon
Kadakilaan mo sa puso'y nakabaon;
Ipakikilala ka sa darating na henerasyon
Pagkat tunay na bayani ka sa lahat ng panahon.*

*Pagpupugay sa iyo na naglingkod nang lubos
Pag-akay, paggabay at pagtututrong puspos;
Ang iyong puting tisang hindi nauupos
Sa tali ng kamangmangan ay siyang lalagot.*

Ilaw sa Landas ng Pagbabago

Angelica T. Laman

Tomas Pua Sr. Integrated School

*Sa araw-araw na pagpasok sa paarala'y lagi silang handa
Hawak ay libro at tisa na panulat sa pisara
Sandata ay bibig at dila kasama na ang pasensiya
At madalas ay lakas ng loob upang hindi manghina.*

*Sa bawat gawain hindi alintana ang pagod
Kahit pa habulin ng mga dokumentong sugod nang sugod
Salamin ng pagmamahal sa propesyong kanilang
sinumpaan
Kahit gabihin sa paaralan ay ayos lang.*

*Hindi natatapos sa paaralan ang kanilang trabaho
Sa tahanan, hindi pa rin sila makaupo
Aligaga sa pangangailangan ng kanilang pamilya
At mga gawaing hindi nila natapos at iniuwi pa.*

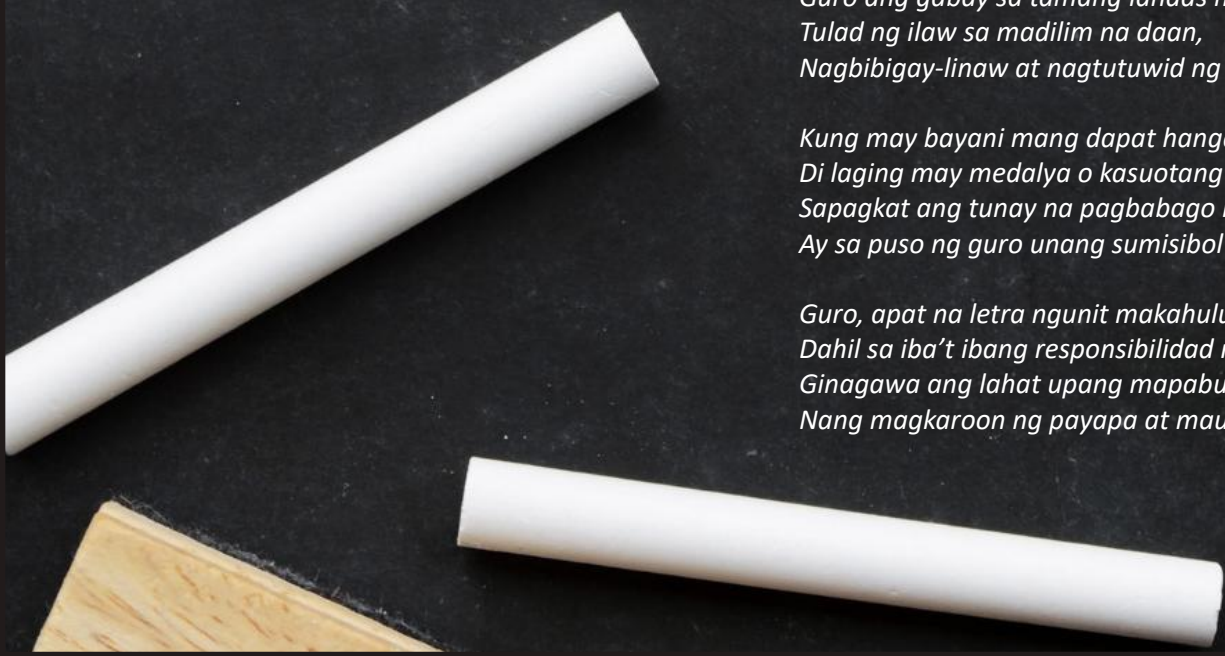
*Kung sahod ang pag-uusapan
Sasabihin nilang kinakaya pa naman
Sagarang pagbabadyet ang tinutuntungan
Walang layaw-layaw sa loob ng tahanan.*

*Pagpupugay sa mga pangalawang ama't ina ng mga mag-aaral
Na hindi nagsasawang magbigay ng kaalaman at pangaral
Kahit anong pagsubok ang dumating sa kanila
Hindi matitinag ang kanilang pusong dakila.*

*Habang ang mundo'y patuloy na nagbabago,
Guro ang gabay sa tamang landas nito
Tulad ng ilaw sa madilim na daan,
Nagbibigay-linaw at nagtutuwid ng kamalian.*

*Kung may bayani mang dapat hangaan,
Di laging may medalya o kasuotang makabayan.
Sapagkat ang tunay na pagbabago ng bansa,
Ay sa puso ng guro unang sumisibol at lumalaya.*

*Guro, apat na letra ngunit makahulugan
Dahil sa iba't ibang responsibilidad na ginagampanan
Ginagawa ang lahat upang mapabuti ang lipunan
Nang magkaroon ng payapa at maunlad na kinabukasan.*





Walang Pasok sa Kaarawan Ko

Melanie L. Golosinda, PhD

Bicol University

Basa sa ulan ang mga unang pahina ng aklat na binabasa ni Fabroa.

Sampung taong gulang siya noon. Nakaupo sa gitna ng baha, nakatuntong sa lamesa ng kanilang kusina. Kaarawan niya. Walang cake. Walang handa. Pero may isang kandilang nakasindi sa ibabaw ng lumang garapon ng tsokolate.

Sa labas, patuloy ang ulan. Sa loob, patuloy ang pagbasa.

“Basahin mo lahat,” sabi ni Ma’am Valdes.

Retiradong guro si Ma’am Valdes. Pero lumakad pa rin siya sa baha upang dalhin ang workbook na binili mula sa huli niyang pensiyon.

“Huwag mong hintaying tumila ang baha bago ka matuto.”

“Hinding-hindi po. Maraming salamat po.”

Iyon ang huling pagkakataong nakita niya si Ma’am Valdes. Nabalitaan niya kalaunan na kinuha ito ng mga anak na nasa Amerika.

Lumipas ang maraming taon.

Guro na si Fabroa.

Baha.

Bagyo.

Kaarawan din.

Walang pasok.

Nakaupo siya sa sofa ng kanilang salas. Sa labas, humahagupit ang hangin at pumapasok ang tubig sa bakuran.

“Sigurado ka ba?” tanong ng asawa niya.

Tumango siya.

“Walang pasok ngayon,” sabi niya. “Pero may mga batang naghihintay. Kailangan nila ng gabay.”

Pinindot niya ang livestream.

“Walang pasok. May bagyo. Pero kung may signal kayo, mag-aral tayo saglit. Hinggil sa mga dapat gawin sa gitna ng kalamidad ang ating paksa.”

Sa evacuation center, sampung bata ang nagsisiksikan sa harap ng iisang selpon. May inang nagbabantay sa power bank. May matandang nag-alok ng upuan para makasagap ng signal ang isang estudyante.

“Bakit hindi na lang siya magpahinga?” bulong ng isang kapitbahay.

“Kaarawan pa niya ngayon.”

Nairaos ang maikling talakayan. Nagpalakpakan ang mga bata. Nagpasalamat ang mga magulang sa napapanahon at makabuluhang leksiyon.

“Mag-iingat kayo. Manatiling ligtas saanman kayo naroroon.”

Biglang nagdilim ang bahay.

Nawala rin ang signal.

Brownout!

“Salamat at natapos ang klase bago mag-brownout,”

sabi ni Fabroa sa asawa, kalmado.

Pero balik sa realidad, Walang cake. Walang ilaw. Tulad noon.

Biglang umugong ang generator. Pinaandar pala iyon ng kaniyang asawa.

Pagbukas niya ng kaniyang phone, sa screen, daan-daang mukha ang bumungad.

Mga bata. Mga magulang. Buong evacuation center.

Sabay-sabay silang umaawit.

“Happy birthday...”

Sa gitna ng kanilang pag-awit, may isang batang may iwinawagayway na lumang workbook. Isa iyon sa mga workbook na iniregalo noon sa kaniya ni Ma’am Valdes.

May haplos iyon sa puso niya.

Sa labas, patuloy ang ulan.

Sa loob, may ilaw na.

Hindi mula sa generator.

Hindi mula sa kandila.

Mula sa mga batang nakatingin sa kinabukasan at gustong magpatuloy.

