

Pauca Facit Magna

No comprehensive history of the Philippine media—print, film, radio, television—has been written even at this late date. While this situation is certainly cause for concern, it is not at all surprising. Many historical *lacunae*—representing important radio and television programs, films, personalities, organizations—dot the historical landscape and need to be filled by research before the total lay of the land may be appreciated. But researchers themselves are often hampered by a serious dearth of primary sources for research on the print media, radio and film during the American colonial period (1899-1942) because crucial library holdings were reduced to ashes when Manila became the second most devastated city during World War II (WWII) and because the archiving of documents on paper and on reels at that time left much to be desired. And this is true even of the post-WWII period when radio and television scripts were simply discarded after the shows, tapes of radio and television programs were reused till they were unfit for any use and miles and miles of films on celluloid were sold and recycled to be hawked on sidewalks as New Year horns.

Such neglect happened mainly because producers believed that these programs and films were made “only for entertainment” and profit, and, once these ends were served, could be disposed of as junk or given away to make room in the warehouse for new programs and films that were being churned out in increasing volumes to keep up with the rising popularity of the media in

the post-war era. Even university libraries saw no reason to gather and preserve these materials then, because media studies and cultural studies showed the import of such materials only in the 1970s and 1980s, just as the serious evaluation of film as art and as social artefact did not gain currency until after the founding of film critics' organizations like the *Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino* in the mid-1970s. By the time the scientific and systematic study of the media became the concern of scholars both inside and outside academe, most of the precious and irreplaceable sources of information on these media—written materials, recordings of radio and TV programs, copies of films on celluloid, and even the personalities who produced, managed and created the content of all these media—had disappeared or were nowhere to be found.

But thankfully the situation began to change in the last three decades. With the establishment of Communication Arts programs in many schools and the intensifying influence of media and cultural studies in academe, the lack of printed and audio-visual studies on the Philippine media was severely felt. Responding to this situation, an increasing number of undergraduate theses, M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations in communication arts, media studies and even literature and visual arts now focused on various aspects of print media, radio and television programs and cinema in the Philippines, even as more books and articles on all the media and their personalities began to be published. Academic journals opened their pages to refereed articles on various aspects of media and, when more and more of these materials appeared, journals devoted entirely to communication and media studies were founded, among them the present journal *Plaridel*.

And as media studies grew, so did the awareness of the urgent need to collect and conserve the source materials that are indispensable to such studies. University libraries, such as that of the University of the Philippines (UP), have now prioritized the gathering of radio and television scripts and digital copies of television programs and Filipino films both old and new as well as studies on media produced by academe and/or published by university and other publishers. Major networks like ABS-CBN have created and maintained audio-visual archives which store not only their own media products but other film archives as well, such as those of LVN Pictures and FPJ Films. The film collections of the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP, started in 1982), the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) and the University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI), as well as private film collections such as those of Lamberto Avellana and Bancom are now maintained by the newly-established National Film Archives of the Philippines, under the Film Development Council of the

Philippines (FDCP). And for the pre-WWII materials which are now almost impossible to find in the Philippines, Filipino scholars have gone abroad to find and secure copies of these materials from the U.S. Library of Congress and National Archives. It should be noted that the copy of the 1937 film *Zamboanga* discussed in this issue by Jose Buenconsejo was discovered by film scholar Nick Deocampo in the U.S. as were many of the periodicals and archival materials he used for his two books on the Filipino Cinema which are reviewed in this issue. Similarly, radio scholar Elizabeth Enriquez found many of the radio sources she used for her article on Filipino broadcasters during WWII in the U.S. Library of Congress.

But the media studies published by Filipinos inside and outside academe are significant not only for their growing numbers but, more notably, for their analyses of the products, producers and personalities of print media, film, radio and television (a) from the perspective of the Filipino nation (i.e. emphasizing Filipino interests versus those of other nations) and, often also, (b) from the point of view of the Filipino masses (as opposed to the Filipino economic, political, religious, social elite), who are the principal consumers and markets of these media products. Among the most often employed theoretical frameworks or approaches for local studies on media are Marxism and political economy, feminism, queer theory, auteurism, structuralism and semiotics, orientalism and post-colonialism, and Third Cinema as well as home-grown theories like *Pantayong Pananaw*, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and *Pilipinolohiya*.

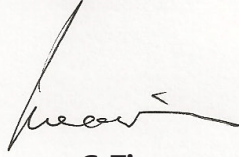
Responding to the continuing demand for research into the unexplored areas of media history, the present issue of *Plaridel* puts together articles, reviews, an interview and documents that hopefully will illuminate and record meaningful aspects of media history, that can contribute to the macro histories of Philippine media that should be written in the near future. Focusing on print media in the early 1900s, media scholar Eulalio Guieb III identifies the principal themes found in the journalistic essays in Tagalog in the *Renacimiento Filipino* from 1910 to 1913 and analyses these as local responses to the beliefs propagated against Filipinos by both the Spanish colonizer that had just been defeated by the Philippine revolution in June 1898 and by the American colonizer that had stolen the victory from the Filipinos through the forcible occupation of the islands from 1899 to 1903. Using a post-colonial lens, the essay highlights the use of these beliefs in the propaganda war conducted by Spain and America on the native population, in order to rationalize their respective colonizations of the Islands. For his part, ethnomusicologist Jose Buenconsejo uses Edward Said's insights into orientalism to illustrate how the American producers behind Philippine Films tried (in vain) to penetrate the Western market through the

exotic *Zamboanga* in 1937, a film which embodied and promoted an orientalist view of Filipino native culture through its use of an European-inspired narrative, an inappropriately chosen “ethnic” music, and the racist myth of the amok. In the third article, radio scholar Elizabeth Enriquez narrates how radio became a hotly-contested medium for colonial propaganda before and during WW II, with Filipino broadcasters working for the United States Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) and against the Japanese through regular broadcast in 1941 and through short wave in 1942-1945, and then for the Japanese (who forced them to collaborate) from 1942 to 1945, both in the Philippines and in Japan. Finally, literature professor Ma. Rina Locsin traces the history of the single-building movie theatre or *sine* in Baguio, the summer capital that the Americans built in the Cordillera in the 1910s. Using Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, Locsin shows how the Baguio sine started out as the exclusive site for the entertainment of the white colonizer in the 1910s and 1920s and ended up being taken over by the *Igorot* population for their own ends in the 1990s.

In the review section, the first essay by film scholar Patrick Campos evaluates the two pioneering film history books written by film maker and scholar Nick Deocampo, the first (2003) tracing the Spanish influence on Philippine *Cine* and the second (2011) identifying the American influence on the Filipino *Film*. The review discusses, among others, the nature of these influences and how these influences were received and transmuted by Filipinos according to their own culture and needs. In the second review, film critic and music composer Jema Pamintuan discusses the significance of Sari Dalena’s *Ka Oryang*, which won the Best Film award at the Cinema One Originals competition of 2011. For Pamintuan, the film is valuable 1) for its realistic and effective recreation of Martial Law’s repression of dissent in academe and the rural areas; and 2) for its portrayal of a woman, who like her historical namesake and heroine Gregoria de Jesus did not hesitate to commit herself, at the cost of much personal sacrifice, to the cause of liberation. In the interview section, theater artist Gabe Mercado talks about how he and his brother Paulo, then 13 and 15 years old respectively, worked as June Keithley’s assistants as she broadcast the momentous events that transpired from the beginning of the EDSA I revolt to the departure of the Marcoses on February 25, 1986. The interview provides an insight into the politicization of the youth in Manila and their contribution to the People Power Revolt. Finally, the last section gathers together materials connected to the Gawad Plaridel given by the University of the Philippines to Rosa Rosal in 2012: the citation which highlights her pioneering efforts in using television for public service through her programs *Kapwa Ko*, *Mahal Ko* and *Damayan*; the biographical essay by Broadcast Communication professor and lawyer Victor

Avecilla, which describes Ms. Rosal's personal background, her career as a multi-awarded film actor and TV personality, and her experiences as a lifetime volunteer for the Philippine Red Cross; and Ms. Rosal's Gawad Plaridel speech which proposes concrete steps that will put the medium of television in the service of the people.

It is hoped that this issue of *Plaridel* will not only fill up some of the *lacunae* in Philippine media history but will also encourage other scholars to make their own studies that will bring light and understanding to other particulars of our media history. It is through such micro studies that the greater narrative of Philippine media history will be completed. Indeed, *pauca facit magna*, little things create great things.



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This issue of *Plaridel* is dedicated
to the memory of four professors
of the U.P. College of Mass Communication

Lourdes Estela-Simbulan
(1957-2011)

Ellen J. Paglinauan
(1939-2013)

Andres G. Sevilla
(1937-2013)

and

Cesar M. Mercado
(1938-2013)