

The current political dispensation in the Philippines has placed critical cultural expression under duress. The law is weaponized to silence journalists and broadcasters; independent and community media are harassed and threatened; films and screening programs are red-tagged; the audiovisual industries are subjected to irregular forms of regulation; public opinion on social media is algorithmically influenced by a well-oiled network of disinformation; and dissent is criminalized, branded as terrorism. The cultural archive, or the repository of the zeitgeist recorded in daily expressions and interactions, is being manipulated to legitimize fascism and reorient history.

This deliberate maneuvering is enacted in an almost thoroughly mediatised context of objective cultural accumulation, whose surfeit is beyond the capacity for any individual subjective assimilation. Nevertheless, in the same context can be found disruptions of the fascist machination and expressions of resistance that constantly seek the archive's reconfiguration. The counterfoil—or *resibo*—of these acts of resistance to the current political dispensation can be found all over digital space, always already available for reckoning the shape of our culture and the cry of our history.

It is in this context as well where the present issue of *Humanities Diliman* and the latest issue of *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society*,¹ for which I had the opportunity to serve as managing and associate editor, are seeking to make a contribution. These publications, alongside the previous issue of *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*,² are evidence of the continuing effort in the university, in the area of academic research and publication, to hold the line and make certain that there is a yield of countercultural material available for the writing of the people's history, now and beyond this present regime.

Rommel B. Rodriguez's "Artistikong Produksyon ng mga Bilanggong Pulitikal sa Pilipinas (2015-2018): Mga Piling Kaso at Tala" opens the issue with a study of the artistic and literary production of political prisoners in various parts of the Philippines both past and present. Rodriguez demonstrates how prisoners imaginatively mark their incarceration by leaving cultural memorials of their experience, thereby transforming and harnessing the meaning of this experience beyond mere imprisonment. He interprets particular sculptures, paintings, and poems, and evaluates the way prisoners actively shape and embody abstract ideas like justice and class struggle through a mode of art production available only to them. He asserts, ultimately, that even in their confinement, political prisoners can subvert their situation and act in solidarity with people who fight for freedom.

In the second article, “Beyond Strategic Maneuvering: Embodied Storytelling as Duterte’s Form of Argumentation,” Orville B. Tatcho analyzes Duterte’s rhetoric during the 2016 presidential debates. He foregrounds the content of the president’s assertions in the context of Philippine political culture, locates Duterte’s performance in the televisually mediated debates that catapulted the former mayor of Davao City to popularity as a presidential candidate, and interprets the would-be president’s “embodied storytelling” that calculatedly endeavored to humanize the figure of the president. Tatcho uses David Zarefsky’s framework of political argumentation to evaluate Duterte’s strategic maneuvering of ideas, issues, and personalities through postulations, appeal to emotions, and projections of a public persona. Of special interest is the way the paper revisits a number of Duterte’s early proclamations and promises before he was elected president and reflects on the manner he has fulfilled or abandoned them in the ensuing years.

The next article is less about political culture but is no less political in its intention. In “Karagatan at Kabaklaan: Ang Pagyanig sa Kasarian ng Kulturang Popular sa Pamamagitan ng Sirena ni Gloc-9 at Ebe Dancel,” Johann Vladimir José Espiritu offers a close-reading of the titular song’s lyrics, as well as the visuals and narrative of the song’s music video, to analyze the discursive space occupied by *kabaklaan* in local music. By drawing upon the work of J. Neil Garcia on the *bakla* and Dick Hebdige’s conception of subculture, Espiritu illustrates the ways the words of the pop song and their audiovisual iteration manifest a series of significations. These include struggles, protests, re/constructions, and re/establishments surrounding the figure of the bakla that simultaneously explicate the song’s political edge, the meaning of kabaklaan in contemporary Filipino urban society, and the prejudices of popular culture vis-a-vis gender politics.

The article “Telescopings and Moro-fications in the Four Arakyos of Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija: A Historical/Hagiographical Recontextualization towards a more Culturally-Sensitive Komedyang,” co-authored by Feorillo A. Demeterio III and Michael C. Delos Santos, focuses on four extant manuscripts of Arakyos, or localized versions of the *komedyang* theatrical form. Demeterio and Delos Santos reveal the contentious telescopings of historical events, persons, and places as well as the problematic moro-fications of the villains in these Arakyos. By doing so, they attempt to recuperate the enduring form of the komedyang and propose a way to move forward by rectifying and rendering the Arakyos as culturally sensitive narratives.

The final article, Dayang Magdalena Nirvana T. Yraola’s “Jose Maceda Exhibit Series, A Curator’s Reflection,” provides insights on the curatorial process that informed the series of exhibits on the National Artist for Music and ethnomusicologist curated by the author. These exhibits were *Listen to my Music* (2013); *reading Maceda*,

PRELUDE (2017); *Attitude of the Mind* (2017); and *What has it got to do with coconuts and rice: Listening to Jose Maceda* (2018). Apart from the unique appreciation the article offers on the work of the curator laboring at the intersection of art exhibition, music historiography, and ethnography, it also vivifies the role of the archivist and the importance of archival management in knowledge production and cultural preservation.

The five articles that compose this issue of *Humanities Diliman* delve into the various corners of the cultural archive. They employ a range of strategies and methodologies. Demeterio and Delos Santos as well as Yraola resurface objects, narratives, and sounds from rich archival sources that are not immediately accessible to the public without the expertise and curatorial judgment of their cultural overseers. Tatcho and Espiritu foreground words, performances, and sounds that continue to circulate in digital spaces just beneath the surface of popular culture, ready to be replayed, but remain only latently articulate without the careful and critical attention of the scholar. And Rodriguez clears a space in the cultural archive to herald the significance of the artistic and literary production of political prisoners whose works continue to challenge us who are not imprisoned to cherish our costly and hard-earned freedom everyday.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://plarideljournal.org>
- 2 <https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/kasarinlan>



Patrick F. Campos
Editor-in-Chief