

and a profession. In this respect, *Cockfight* is a valuable contribution. The problems the book surfaced are actually not peculiar to elections, but obstacles that have long been plaguing Philippine media. But other than the usual tirade on media's irresponsibility and penchant for the paltry during elections, it does little to facilitate one's understanding of the relationship between media and politics. —SHARON M. Q UINSAAT, UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN.

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Chay Florentino-Hofileña. 2004. *News for sale: The corruption and commercialization of the Philippine media*. Quezon City : Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. 120 pp.

The book *News for Sale* written by veteran journalist Chay Florentino Hofileña is one of the latest installments in the various volumes produced by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) on corruption. However, unlike PCIJ's other publications which mostly have the government as subject of investigation, *News for Sale* focuses on the corruption of the Philippine media during elections. The 2004 edition is the sequel to the 1998 volume written by the author of the same title. Like the 1998 edition, it relied on documentation and interviews with journalists, candidates and media handlers of politicians and political parties for its data.

As expressed by journalists who contributed short pieces in the book, it is not easy to talk about corruption in the media. Malou Mangahas in the book's sidebar wrote that it has become more convenient for journalists to "err on the side of silence" as exposing corruption brings no reward to the whistle blower. If one were a reporter, exposing those on the take would open oneself up to ostracism by peers. The irony is while journalists relentlessly pursue criticisms against others who are not their peers and "ruin reputations built over lifetimes at the snap of a finger," they keep silent about the vile confronting them (95). They also would not take the grandest

crusades to rescue institutions except their own. But ethics, which is “what we ought to do as professionals,” should be the call of every journalist (96). The author therefore makes a very important contribution by exposing a malaise that not every journalist is willing to write about.

According to the 1998 and 2004 editions of *News for Sale*, the two recently concluded national elections show that “corruption among journalists in the Philippines is institutionalized. It is endemic in the media environment. It is not simply a case of individual reporters gone wrong but of a media structure that has condoned corruption and allowed it to continue and proliferate in various forms (1).” The extent of corruption in the media is proportionate to the amount of funds spent by candidates in the elections. Spending for the media began to shoot up during the 1998 elections when Jose de Venecia waged an uphill battle against celebrity Joseph Estrada. Because of the already high spending in the 1998 elections and the lower campaign contributions in the 2004 elections, the pay-off levels in the latest elections did not surpass the old levels.

In both the 1998 and 2004 elections, a sizeable amount of campaign funds were used to pay off journalists. The author likewise noted that as more candidates are coming from the entertainment industry, the practice among entertainers to pay off entertainment writers for publicity was carried over into the foray of politics. What more, politicians who do not come from the entertainment industry started to tap entertainment writers as publicists to better their chances against their entertainer competitors.

To discuss the extent of corruption in the media, the book details in each chapter how corruption takes place in television, radio, and print. In the 2004 elections, television lorded it over radio and newspaper. A study conducted by Pulse Asia in March and April 2004 showed that the public mostly relied on television for information about the candidates and campaigns during the recently concluded elections. When asked what source of information and news about the candidates and campaign is the most credible, 67 percent of the respondents said television, radio followed at 20 percent, while only 5 percent said newspaper. Even across socioeconomic classes, television was the most credible medium (27). Another factor that contributed to the supremacy of television is that there are more people now who have access to television than in the past. A recent study conducted by the Nielsen Media Research shows that in the country’s urban areas,

over 96 percent have access to television, compared to 78 percent for radio and about 40 percent for newspapers (26).

Seeing the supremacy of television, politicians scrambled to appear on television talk shows and sitcoms. Campaigners have predicted early on that 70 percent of their budget would go to television. Non-showbiz candidates even hire talent managers to handle their campaigns and to get themselves appear on television. Moreover, as in the past, candidates for the 2004 elections hired the services of movie personalities to pitch for them not only in television advertisements but in the campaign trail itself. Big spenders for television exposures ended up winners in the elections. This is especially true in the case of senatorial candidates who in earlier surveys were tailenders but ended up winning the top slots because of constant television exposure. As in the radio and print media, bribes went to influential opinion-makers in television who have to be maintained to regularly dish out favorable press releases regarding the paying candidates.

In the case of radio, some stations earn so much during election time such that their earnings during the campaign are enough for them to survive until the next election season. Although radio has lost out to television in terms of reach and power, radio still performs the function of providing redundancy as it can “bombard listeners with impressions created by television and print” (57). Hence, candidates still make it a point to have presence on radio. Corruption in this medium takes the form of radio stations offering package deals consisting of the airing of political advertisements and anchors/commentators churning out favorable opinions and news about the candidates. Aside from this, some politicians buy airtime to have talk shows in radio stations.

Despite their smaller audience compared to television and radio, candidates still scramble to influence the contents of tabloids and newspapers. Print media is important to the candidates because of their “agenda-setting power, the influence they wield on the opinions of the political class, and their visibility” (78). In the last three elections, corruption in the print media is as rampant as in the broadcast media as “editors, reporters, and columnists acted as agents selling column inches in broadsheets and tabloids to the media strategists of candidates” (78). The selling of space, however, is more rampant in tabloids than in the broadsheets. Because of the wider mass reach of the tabloids which costs about P6 per copy as compared to the broadsheet’s P15 to P18, many candidates allotted more funds

in advertising in tabloids. This is also because it is much more difficult to bribe editors and reporters in broadsheets. There was even a tabloid mafia where several tabloids would all carry the same headline story at the same time to create greater impact for a fee. Nonetheless, recognizing that broadsheets are more credible than tabloids, media strategists of candidates still try to influence the contents of broadsheets by calling on editors to pass on “tips” or “news leaks” favorable to their clients.

So what is being done about corruption in the media? The book writes that some media organizations have drawn up standards and code of ethics that journalists should follow in the conduct of their profession. The organization of press groups, the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), already has guidelines and standards that should govern the behavior of journalists.

A few organizations have complemented the efforts of PPI by making guidelines regarding the behavior of their journalists. Examples of these are the *Manila Times* and the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI). In the case of the PDI, part of the reminders is for its reporters “to maintain their independence by paying their own way” (106) during campaign coverage. However, the big television networks, ABS-CBN and GMA 7, are still in the process of drafting their own codes. Because entertainment shows are increasingly being invaded by politicians, it is therefore important for the TV networks to put up guidelines on how these shows are to be conducted vis-à-vis electoral politics. Moreover, it is noticeable that most tabloid owners are still silent on what their courses of action are regarding the ethical behavior of their reporters during elections.

The other recommendations given by the book on what to do about the problem include the need for newspapers, television networks, and radio stations to emphasize the ethical standards that professional journalists should adhere to. This can be done by conducting regular in-house training programs among their workers. Said recommendation should also be complemented by instituting change at the structural level. Journalists “through the PPI or the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas* (Organization of Broadcasters in the Philippines [KBPP]) or a media nongovernment organization (NGO), could initiate dialogues with public relations outfits, business organizations, and political parties to help institutionalize a code of ethics” (113). More importantly, the book emphasized that without the commitment of publishers and owners, the fight against media corruption could not be won.

Florentino-Hofileña should be commended for writing the book. As mentioned earlier, it is not easy for a journalist to talk or write about the corruption gripping the media industry. Writing about the corruption of media is an important bold step toward finding solutions to the problem. Solving the problem is important because given the extreme influence of media in shaping people's opinions, it would be tragic for the public to make choices based on information that are skewed in favor of those who can pay if corruption remains unabated. The book is very well-written. The author's strength as an investigative and reputable journalist is evident in the book. She was able to interview sources who are in the know on how corruption is committed in the different media. These sources would not have spoken if they were not interviewed by a seasoned and credible journalist. Likewise, the author ably documented the cases of corruption. As contentions are backed by reliable documentation, the book did not hesitate to identify erring media players.

The book should also be commended for its recommendations on how to address the problem. It would be interesting to make a follow-up report on how the efforts of news organizations at instilling ethical codes among journalists have been faring so far. Have the television networks and majority of tabloids where corruption is more rampant during elections followed the lead of these organizations? What steps have been taken to realize the book's suggestion of including other sectors such as campaign strategists and political parties in efforts to curb the systemic problem of corruption? A follow-up report on these initiatives and whether these have made significant inroads would be very interesting. Hopefully, there would be more good news to write about than the bad. —**MA. GLENDA LOPEZ WUI**, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY.

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***Papogi, the imaging of Philippine presidents.* Directed by Butch Perez. Philippines: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004. 58 minutes, Filipino, color.**

Papogi, the imaging of Philippine presidents, produced by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) tells the story of how Philippine presidents manage their political images. Directed by Butch