

## INTRODUCTION

This issue is a culmination of the collaborative efforts of the National Centennial Commission-Women Sector (NCC-WS) and the University Center for Women's Studies (UCWS) to celebrate the centennial of the Declaration of Philippine Independence from Spain by putting women where they belong—in history books.

Except for four articles, the papers in this issue were presented in the UCWS-assisted NCC-WS National Symposium on “History Makes Women, Women Make Herstory” which aimed to help women and men write women's history through feminist historiography; the Roundtable Discussion on Gender and Education which was one of the monthly activities for drumming up and sustaining interest in the centennial celebration/celebration of Filipino women as history makers; and the International Congress on “Women's Role in History and Nation Building: Evolving Women-Centered Paradigms for the 21st Century” which sought and succeeded in documenting women's history making. They are grouped into three: The first are focused on feminist historiography; the second, on the practice of the first; and the third, on telling one's story.

Included in the first group are the following:

1. “Wither Women's History?” by Ma. Luisa Camagay sketches the development of women's history. It attributes the emergence of women's history to the women's movement as well as the coming of age of social history. The women's movement sensitized women to the marginalization of women in society and the need to empower them as

partners of men in history making and nation building. The coming of age of social history is the shift from political and diplomatic history to social history which created space for the underside of history: accounts of people marginalized by society as a consequence of class, ethnicity, and nationality. Feminist historians would later add gender as a variable leading to the quest for new sources of data, periodization, and mode of writing. This development has moved women's history from compensatory history and contributory history to women's history.

2. "Returning Women's Memory: Some Notes on a Gender-Sensitive Historical Methodology" by Maria Nela Florendo takes off from Camagay's paper. It discusses how women's history can be written by challenging/replacing historiography that generalizes, adheres to the dictum of no-document-no-history principle, and sacralices objectivity. The over emphasis on state-formation which has given rise to a kind of history which treats the population as though it were homogenous despite ethnic, economic, and gender differentials must give way to local history. Local history, on the other hand, must respond to the challenge of the demand of documentation of assertions of historical persons and events. The key is to place woman in the center, listen to her voice, and record this voice as close to its source as possible. This means as far as data gathering is concerned, deconstructing written documents, which almost always have been produced by a man/upper class/white or dominant ethnic group/conquering nation's point of view. With regards to oral history, which in most cases is the only recourse, considering the lack of written records about women, the technique is to engage in a "reflexive process whereby both the narrator and the researcher have become subjects of

the research process.” As for the concern about listening to the voice of the written text or the interviewee, the technique is to situate the written or oral text in its social context, and to pay much attention to textual gaps and silences. The paper reminds us that to reconstruct the past by locating women and making them visible in historical writing will “simply fall into the trap of mere narration of important persons, places, and events” unless causal relations, which is the crux of history, is discussed in context. “Women are not marginalized in a social vacuum; historical explanations of the process of marginalization are essential in the reconstruction of women’s history.”

In answer to the problematics of locating the ‘historic’ and the ‘heroic’ women, the paper discusses how these could be defined by looking at ‘everyday life’ and the ‘heroic life’ in a new light. The concept of the ‘historic’ woman “captures and preserves the woman in her domain or sphere and social context.” This means looking not only at the public sphere where traditional historians have situated history making but also at the private or domestic sphere where most of women’s history making takes place. As for surfacing the ‘heroic’ woman, Florendo suggests the generation of a woman-centered periodization. Nodal/turning points such as “crisis situations like a natural disaster, new technology, resistance movement, economic depression, etc.” are identified where women could be placed in context. General questions to ask are: What is the impact of a particular woman in the community or social group? What is the contribution of the woman in upholding and advocacy of women’s rights and cause?

3. “How to Make Women Visible in History” by Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo does not only flesh out the skeletal frame

of Florendo's paper but add a few more bones. It discusses both public and private spheres of life as sites of history making. An examination of both spheres that is educated by the following guidelines yields the fact that what is heralded and memorialized as history making in the upper world of men is standing on the unheralded and unmemorialized lower world of women, and no matter what previous writers say or failed to say in their writings, women are history makers, period. To retrieve women's past the following must be taken into consideration: First, use gender as an important key in the comprehensive analysis of society; that women are different from men and the "difference favors men because they benefit from women's labor and sexuality;" second, to beware of "the male standard which claims that only those methods which men invented and which worked in their favor are the only valid ones;" third, the method to be preferred "unites subject and object, places the researcher and research subject in one dialectical process, captures the fluidity and complexity of life, sees the present as part of a continuous unfolding of time linking past and future, and gives form and voice to the meanings and realities of the invisible, the unheard, and the disempowered in society;" fourth, research should not only be about women but for women; fifth, the research process must be one of "deconstructing the masculinity of traditional research, and constructing a new framework where new questions are asked about the experiences of women from their own point of view of their own personal lives." And, not to forget, of course, that theories are products of particular social contexts. To use Western theories without regard to the fact that Philippine society and Filipino women have their own specific givens at any particular time and place could lead

to falsifications to the detriment of the Motherland and her daughters.

The second group of papers are examples of the practice of feminist historiography:

1. "Connecting the Forgotten/Anonymous with the Remembered/Famous: German Women Typesetters and Dr. Jose Rizal" by Albina Peczon Fernandez brings to the fore the power of the historian. Disconnecting a particular event from the whole that is the continuum of history and memorializing it with written words gives the historian the power of life and death: S/he breathes life into what s/he includes in the narration thereby memorializing them, and kills those which s/he excludes thereby condemning them to oblivion. Restoring the memory of the unmemorialized is possible by locating the connecting links of the disconnected and reconnecting the severed to the continuum. The unnamed German women, for example, become visible in history when their work as typesetters is connected to what is considered as historically significant and written about — liberation movements, e.g., the women's movement which aimed to liberate women from enslaving ideas and practices, the movement of the Filipino people to liberate their Motherland from Spanish rule, and the literary movement which sought to usher moribund Philippine letters into the Age of Realism where literature could function better as mimesis and manipulation for the Filipino people in search of a nation.
2. "The Filipina as Artist and Art Subject in 19th Century Philippine Art" by Rosa Maria Magno Icacasi and "Women Artists and Gender Issues in 19th Century Philippines" by Raissa Rivera are companion articles. Both discuss how women have been banished from art history: The categorization of their production, no matter how

artistic, as mere 'craft' rather than 'art'; their social construction as man's 'other' which disabled them from asserting themselves as artists at par with men, and making their production of artwork a professional career because they paid more attention to themselves as daughters, wives, sisters, or mothers of men than as artists. Both articles also show that women's history can be retrieved from men's texts through a woman-centered reading.

Icagasi's article examines the imaging of women in men's art. According to her, women were not made objects of the 'male gaze' but rather as 'objects of admiration'.

3. "Wither the Roses of Yesteryears" by Carmen Abubakar examines male-produced documents such as the *silsila* (genealogies), chronicles written by Western visitors like the American John Foreman, for the purpose of retrieving the history of Muslim women. The author, at the outset, reminds us that indeed there is no history but histories. Social contexts vary. So do people. To write therefore about Moro women as though they were homogenized is folly. What the writers of the documents she used were about women in the royal families of Sulu. Their social context differed from the women of the under class. The following findings therefore must not be universalized: 1) Women were not secluded nor excluded from public affairs; and 2) Women led very active lives and were not significantly circumscribed by their assigned gender.

Also underscored by the author are the chroniclers' selection of women to write about: They invariably chose those of the upper class, and those women "who further(ed) the motives of the colonizers, providing a big contrast to the persistent and unyielding resistance of the men."

4. “Gendered History in Danger: When the Subject Becomes the Writer” by Maria Stella Sibal Valdez chronicles the process she went through in her desire to produce a paper on the women in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) during World War II. In the data-gathering stage she realized that written documents on the ROTC are mostly about male members whose heroism is measured by man-made standards. Very little could be found about the ‘other’ members, and the task of gathering data about any of them is full of frustrations. There is the very real problem with names. It was difficult, if not impossible, to track down the women listed as members of the organization. Women’s names are not fixed. Surnames are changed as a consequence of marriage and re-marriage. The instability of a woman’s name vis-a-vis the stable man’s name made the writer realize her predicament as a woman—a creature who is defined in terms of her relation to men.

If library work was an eye-opener to the researcher so was oral history. An interview with an eyewitness of the war revealed how patriarchy has succeeded in making women see themselves as man’s ‘other’, which translates into man as history maker and woman as a non-history maker. This was documented by an interviewee’s perception of herself as one outside history making because what she did were not ‘important’ acts: producing and reproducing the life of family members on a daily basis under the hostile conditions of the Japanese occupation, and the feeding of guerrillas who certainly would not have been able to fight the enemy if starved. The non-recognition of such acts as ‘historic’ and ‘heroic’ by the interviewee inputted itself in the researcher’s in-process construction of herself as a subject. To make the researcher’s story

short, the reflexive research she underwent turned her into a deconstructionist historian who soon became very bothered about a popular paradigm feminists use. Why, she asked herself, must the paradigm for looking at women as victims be the only one to be used? Considering women's contribution to history making, why not explore to the fullest the other paradigm, that very one which sees women as victors in their struggles, great or small?

5. "Nationalist and Militant Organizers: The Women in the 1906 Issues of the *Muling Pagsilang*" by Judy Taguiwalo decries the fact that while women suffragists, who mostly come from the middle and upper classes, got full coverage by newspapers, lower-class women did not. Bothered by this anomalous and unjust unequal distribution of memorialization through the written word, the writer looked for a newspaper likely to report on the activities of the women overshadowed by the bourgeois suffragists. Aware of the reputation of the *Muling Pagsilang* as a nationalist publication, she decided to concentrate her search for the 'missing women' in its pages. To her satisfaction as a class-conscious researcher she found the 'missing women': They were not in the prime spaces of the newspaper, the front and back pages, but in the inside pages. Unlike the 'other' women who were written about by male reporters, the under-class women composed mainly of workers in firms and cigarette factories, self-employed women, and vendors wrote about their own causes: American recognition of Philippine independence, separation of Church and State, rights of labor, and the granting of men's political rights to women. These took the form of letters to the editor.

The third group of papers are first-person accounts of women. They were chosen over those of the likes of Vice-



President Gloria M. Arroyo, Senator Loren Legarda, former senator and diplomat Leticia R. Shahani, and former Secretary of Labor Nieves Confesor in keeping with the NCCWS' agenda of making the yet unknown known. Except for the story of Carlita Rex Doran, all are published as submitted. If Doran's paper gives a fuller account of herself than the others, it is because she revised her original manuscript after discussing feminist historiography with the editor. The others, it is to be noted, left gaps in their narration. Like the World War II survivor interviewed by Valdez these women achievers did not consider their respective accomplishments in the homefront as part of history making. There is no doubt that if these gaps were made to speak, the women who silenced them would loom much larger than they have made themselves appear in their narration.

For the book review section we have Zenaida Quesada-Reyes subjecting three selected textbooks on Asian history used in many Metro Manila schools to a feminist reading. In her critique she alerts the classroom teacher of history to the presence of subtexts which, like the text, are gendered and gendering. S/he must therefore become, in the words of Ariel Salleh, 'resister' and 're/sister': S/he must be a 're-sister' by rejecting, opposing, and turning these against themselves by reading as a 're/sister' through feminist deconstruction and reconstruction, and thereby restore women's memory of themselves as makers of history.

Aida Santos' poems serve collectively as a bookmark. Indeed, after going through words, words, words, and more words on putting women inside the pages of history books a pause, which poetry requires for remembering experiences in tranquility, is needed for reflecting on how to make women live as empowered and empowering history makers. So that the reflective pause does not lead to the dreaded too-much-

analysis-leads-to-paralysis syndrome, the "1998 Manila Declaration of Herstory for the Third Millenium," is offered for guidance. This document was unanimously approved and signed by the almost three thousand women and men who attended the International Congress on Women's Role in History and Nation Building held on December 8–12, 1998, at the Midtown Hotel in Manila.

The UCWS will be remiss in its duty to value women's worth, and give credit where it is due, if she does not acknowledge Honorable Helena Z Benitez and Dr. Amelou B. Reyes, NCC-WS chair and deputy director and presently chair of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, respectively, for their invaluable work in pushing for HERSTORY as part of history books and a form of life that is conscious of what an empowered and empowering woman can do to hasten the Filipino people's march toward their historic goal of larger freedoms and a better form of life. UCWS thanks these two women, too, for allowing the Center to publish selected Centennial papers in this issue.

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