



## FROM THE EDITOR

In addition to a globalization and commercialization of culture, we are also experiencing a mediatization of culture, which has brought both everyday culture and high arts into new social contexts. This not only makes them available to a larger portion of society but also transforms the very nature of these cultural practices. Social and material conditions of culture are important as a context for explaining cultural phenomena, yet culture has—also due to the media—experienced integration into new social and material practices as well. If we understand the mediatization of culture to mean the various processes through which culture is influenced by the modus operandi of the media, then media have become important facilitators of cultural experience. They have acquired the status of cultural institutions ... and have become cultural artifacts in their own rights. In addition, cultural practices in other domains ... become dependent on the media and their various affordances. Mediatization theory is particularly well suited for addressing such changes due to its focus on long-term transformations. By shifting focus from “mediation” to “mediatization,” mediatization theory has provided new impetus for examining the structural influence of media on a variety of cultural phenomena (Hjarvard and Petersen 2).

This lengthy introductory quotation critiques the very nature of the contemporary processes of mediatization as it impacts not only on politics (as was the concern of earlier media theorists like Kent Asp), but more importantly for scholars of the humanities, on human societies and their collective enunciation of notions of culture, language, and cultural production; as well as how they define happiness and contentment in daily life. Driven either by state-sanctioned monopolies of public service broadcast, or the capitalist orientation of media companies—especially the global media conglomerates that dominate every facet of media-as-cultural production in contemporary societies—mediatization has become an inescapable cultural logic in the age of modernity. In this issue of *Humanities Diliman*, volume 14, number 1, we explore articles that outline the extent by which mediatization structures our daily cultural experiences as audiences and participants, and show how publics react to certain “representations of culture” as presented by the media, in ways that avoid the overbearing weight of political domination that originally populated mediatization discourse, while attempting to point to directions that publics of the media can “liberate” themselves from the straightjacket of discursive monopoly, as well as the cutthroat existentialism of the market.

Among the more salient points in the analysis of mediatization is its tendency to create “media celebrities” that enhance audience public spectatorship to the events and programs that the media industry participates in, and constructs as a potent means of “message control.” Such a case is argued by Gerry Lanuza in his analysis of the papal visit of Pope Francis I to the Philippines in January 2015. The saturation coverage of the event by the country’s main media corporations (GMA and ABS-CBN) is argued by Lanuza as a symptom of “celebritization” that results in a particular highlighting of an already-popular public figure, “the rock star pope.” Utilizing the critical theories of the Frankfurt School, Lanuza argues that this “celebritization” process creates a (false) spectacle of the representation of the Holy Roman Catholic Pontiff that is often at odds with the message of simplicity, humility, and selflessness that Pope Francis himself advocates. This need for spectacle and the production of celebrity, rather, is rooted in contemporary market demands for attention-grabbing personalities that enthrall viewers/consumers for a sufficient time for the media company to then “repackage” this spectacle as a means of marketing the representation of such a celebrity as a product itself. Its symptoms can be analyzed in contemporary media’s focus on reality television, discovering musical stars through competitive and public-participative shows (*American Idol* or *The Voice*), or even the rise of instant celebrities or “celetoids” through viral videos. Lanuza specifically anchors the celebritization of Pope Francis to the historical, cultural, and religious contexts of the Philippines, where the veneration of Roman Catholic leaders has always been the norm since colonization, and where religious dogma and mediatization often blend together in instrumental methods to benefit the Church, and media.

On the flipside, however, global media formats that encourage the formation of social networks and identity- or agenda-focused organizations among users and viewers/interlocutors themselves could not have been possible without mediatization. Social media’s need to encourage massive numbers of interactive users to participate and immerse in interest-driven themes and agendas serve to create virtual communities where otherwise suppressed identities and voices can find “a room of one’s own,” as Virginia Woolf once wrote. This is especially true of the Philippine lesbian community, where public disapproval and state/church-sanctioned restrictions against homosexuality are especially felt, leaving social media as an avenue where one can publicly share their sense of themselves, and where their affirmation as gendered beings are confirmed. The online study of Nathaniel Oco, Alona Jumaquio-Ardales, and Rowell Madula of one such group, Lesbian Community or LESCO on Facebook, looks at how “Filipino lesbian-ness” is

accepted and encouraged in the “glocal” world of social media through the number of “likes” the group’s page receives. Utilizing the National Language Processing (NLP) method, the researchers “harvested” the texts generated via online comments and posts of the Facebook page, and then applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to “describe online discourses that reflect the identity and community of lesbians based in the Philippines.” Their conclusions portray a brief outline of the intensely self-aware nature of this “invisible community,” where the use of the third person pronoun (the ‘royal we’) signifies a communal orientation in staging their online discourses as lesbians; where exclamation marks point to an emphatic emotionality associated with their identity as lesbians; the use of first names signify an inclusiveness and yet “private-as-public” identification of their community status; and that their social status as locally oppressed but globally self-realized gendered beings becomes part of an agenda that energizes their continued participation in the Facebook group.

This critical engagement with global media in the form of socially constituted online groups, while leaving the question of market forces that make this online existence possible, also brings to the fore the idea of “personhood” and “personality” at the heart of mediatization’s own constituent identity. If individuals with specific gender, ethnic, linguistic, or occupational markers are allowed online existences that then branch out into interactive networks, what about those of media companies who must distinguish from each other’s identities for marketing and representational reasons? How does, say, the BBC or NHK represent a specific “personality profile” in the minds of viewers compared to, say, Fox News or HBO, one that allows them to be both competitive as well as distinct? Fernando de la Cruz Paragas’s study of the annual reports (ARs) of the Philippine media conglomerate ABS-CBN focuses on a narrower version of this “corporate personality” by tracing how the company represents itself to its ownership and public through the methods, narratives, and agendas explicated by the AR, which is the most public document any media company can release due to state regulatory fiat. Paragas uses Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to analyze ABS-CBN’s “personality” in terms of its corporate profile, its various mission-vision statements, and the manner of its exhortation in encouraging positive markers to the company’s successes (and turning around the company’s failures) from 1986 to 2010. It is not surprising to find then that the company’s own historicity (born in 1953) and long ownership by the Lopez family have become the anchoring elements of its “identifying narratology,” one that increasingly webs itself both to a national viewing public, as well as reach out to an international audience through global satellite broadcasting. This are then

plotted out in terms of “service” and “success” that highlight these personality markers of the company as “one with the Filipino family,” and yet ruthless in its “excellent” pursuit of global capitalism through its endless diversification of media products.

Admittedly, not all cultural forms can be reduced to the discourses of mediatization. Historical painting, with its rich narratives and often problematic representations of peoples and the past, is one such “pre-mediatized” form. Nonetheless, one can argue that its public presentation in government or church-owned buildings and spaces produces a “mediatized” effect, especially in the contemporary period when their imagery is easily reproduced through smartphone cameras. However, the study of F. P. A. Demeterio III exclusively focuses on the clashing historiographic narratives that the history paintings of National Artist Carlos “Botong” Francisco (an artist who not only did paintings, but also set and costume designs for films, and illustrated *komiks*) seem to represent. In his study of four history paintings (*The Introduction of Christianity in the Philippines*, the first two panels of *Progress of Medicine*, *First Mass of the Philippines*, and *Introduction of the First Christian Image*), Demeterio argues that Botong’s use of formal or decorative motifs provides tensions with two traditions of historiography: Hegelian and Orientalism. In comparing the details of the paintings within the framework of their historical appropriateness in accordance to these differing historiographies, Demeterio brings out the conflicting constructions of historical memory that result when theory and imagination collide in the production of historical painting. This, in a way, reaffirms our contention of mediatization’s hold of the popular imagination to famous imagery, where canonical works of art are subject to endless debates of meaning and relevance by experts as viewed by global audiences, while the status of the artwork as a “venerated” or “celebritized” object (its “auratic value,” as Walter Benjamin would call it) remains unquestioned.

Issues of mediatization are somewhat echoed in the two reviews of this issue. Marc San Valentin’s exhibition review of Japanese photographer Yukihiro Masuura’s *Land of Sustainability, Cradle of Divinities: Ise and Izumo Kami No Miya* (2015) follows the exacting process of media production of the artist’s lush medium of printing large-format photographs into traditional *washi* paper; as well as his focus on two themes that have defined the artist’s relationship with art and culture, his initial training in France, and his return and rejuvenation in Japan. The first is seen in the initial series of photographs of sculptures of artists like Michelangelo and Rodin; while the second focuses exclusively on Shintoism’s two holiest sites, the Ise and Izumo Grand Shrines. It is the *Sengû* ritual at Izumo that San Valentin sees Masuura’s

integration as artist and cultural representative, however. This rare event of physically rejuvenating the inner holy of holies becomes for Masuura an act of return and reaffirmation of his Japanese-ness. Mediatized through enormous sheets of washi paper prints, the documentation of the shrine's inner sanctum and its priesthood serve to remind audiences that cultured sophistication need not run counter to one's historical and cultural roots.

For Carmita Eliza De Jesus Icasiano, that reaffirmation of cultural roots took the form of the exhibition *Inabel* (2015), which for the New York-based author "presented a dignified rendering of a traditional artisanal practice, with a distinctly forward-looking approach to heritage that bolsters a hope to save the weaving practice from oblivion." Recontextualization is the key term that Icasiano, in turn, weaves from the discursive fabric of the exhibition. Although considered traditional through the centuries of its material manifestation—and fit to be considered in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's definition of "intangible cultural heritage"—the Ilocano loom-woven fabric called *inabel* also makes its design relevant in the present through samples that define its practicality as source material for current fashion design, particularly in haute couture. This is not to say that the past is forgotten, however. Icasiano traces the *inabel*'s cultural value among Ilocanos to epics and historical sagas, a heritage value that is continued via traditional patterns and techniques produced by specialist weavers. It is the future of *inabel* that Icasiano more rightly sees as its redemption through recontextualization in the global fashion industry; and the formation of new audiences through innovative (undoubtedly international) exhibitions.

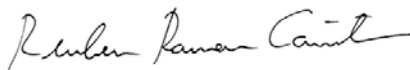
The preservation and promotion of heritage by cultural advocates and museums is, in a way, not much different from the needs of media corporations to "brand" their products to suit their particular corporate identities. As Hjarvard and Petersen argue:

Cultural entrepreneurs and institutions, however, are themselves seeking to actively take advantage of the media. As such, the push toward mediatization in the realm of culture is often a complex mix of developments in the media...of national cultural policies, and of cultural entrepreneurs' ability to use media to project their own agendas. Mediatization should not be understood as a linear process through which the media simply impose their logic on the cultural realm; the process is, rather, highly contextualized and dependent on the sensitivity of cultural practices to general social pressures toward mediatization as well as on internal possibilities for using the media for various cultural purposes. (3-4)

It is hoped that the four articles and two reviews of *Humanities Diliman*, volume 14, no. 1, will always remind audiences that the media is not always an overbearing, overpowering institution that cannot be resisted. For power, as Michel Foucault once mentioned, always requires resistance.

## REFERENCE

Hjarvard, Stig, and Line Nybro Petersen. "Mediatization and Culture Change." *Medie Kultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research* 54 (2013): 1-7. Print.



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