

NI  
Not 'komiks'  
the right  
word is  
'illustrated'

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS



Official Organ of the Kapangan ng mga Publista  
at mga Patnugot ng mga Komiks-Magasin sa Pilipino

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## DPI, Kapisanan co-host conference workshop

In a bid to correct the mistaken notion of some writers that locally published illustrated magazines are meant for children, the Committee of Publishers of the KKKPK recently passed a resolution which seeks to drop the word "komiks" and replace it with the word "illustrated" in the titles of member publications.

The resolution, which is now under consideration by the Philippine Council for Print Media, is as follows:

**A RESOLUTION TO PETITION THE PHILIPPINE COUNCIL FOR PRINT MEDIA TO ALLOW KKKPK MEMBERS TO DROP THE WORD "KOMIKS" FROM THE TITLES OF THEIR PUBLICATIONS AND TO USE INSTEAD THE WORD "ILLUSTRATED"**

WHEREAS, there are people who still think that our komiks-magazines are meant for and read only by children;

Whereas, people continue to go to this mistaken notion thinking that our komiks magazines belong to the category as the American comic books with comic strips for the kids like Mutt & Jeff, Popeye, Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse;

Whereas, our komiks-magazines have an altogether different history so that  
*Please turn to page 5*



A conference-workshop aiming to make illustrated magazines more relevant to the New Society has been set by the KKKPK in early 1978. It will be sponsored in cooperation with the Bureau of National & Foreign Information, Department of Public Information, 585, EDSA, Pasay City. A keynote address has been invited to deliver the keynotes address.

Publishers and editors of illustrated magazines and government information writers will attend.

The workshop has the following objectives:

1. To develop a broad perspective of the role of illustrated

magazines in the New Society;

2. To harness the illustrated media in disseminating government information and instilling positive and progressive social values; and

3. To examine and analyze current trends and the role of national government in the prevailing national spirit.

Dean Gloria Feliciano of the Institute of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines and renowned writer Nick Joaquin are among those expected to speak during the conference-workshop. Dean Feliciano will touch on Filipino values and the illustrated press, while Nick Joaquin will dwell on artistic and literary values.

Other topics of the conference-workshop will be the treatment of sex and violence and the illustrated medium as a vehicle of information.

Tentative site of the two-day conference-workshop is the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling, Laguna.

A seminar-workshop had been set by the KKKPK earlier this year, but it was postponed. It was meant to broaden the base of the first KKKPK seminar held during the early days of martial law.

The first seminar sought to acquaint KKKPK members with their responsibilities as writers and publishers, and also during that period that KKKPK formulated the specific guidelines on sex and violence.

It is hoped that the conference-workshop, which the KKKPK will co-host with the BNFI, will further improve and elevate the quality of illustrated magazines in the Philippines. ■

## Writers are among top-paid mediamen

Contributors of local illustrated magazines are among the highest paid mediamen today.

Several of the better known and more prolific writers earn a five-figure total yearly from writing illustrated serials. Apply in weekly installments for six months at the least. Quite a few, due to exceptionally tremendous mass appeal, for more than a year.

The first-rate "nobelists" are paid from P30 to P40 per illustrated page, and each installment of the serial has usually four to five pages each. The writer thus earns from P120 to P200 per installment per week, or a maximum of P800 per month for each serial.

It is not unusual for good writers to produce from 10 to 20 different serials running simultaneously. A "nobelista", writing more than 10 serials at a time, would therefore earn a six-figure income a year.

Apart from this amount, the writer also gets paid from the sale for the story's motion picture rights. Serialized stories command a high price because of their reproduction in the general public. The serialization film producers bank on the thousands upon thousands of komiks readers who avidly followed the serial as potential ticket-buyers. It is not surprising, therefore, that top-rated serials are eventually made into movies. However, as a general rule, publications do  
*Please turn to page 4*

## For our soldiers 'Project Pasko'



This year many of our soldiers won't be home for Christmas. They remain at their post in some unfriendly hill or jungle fastness in Southern Philippines. This is because bands of terrorists still menace the peace of the populace. That is why, it will mean a lot to them if they can receive greetings from folks back home. Or copies of komiks-magazines.

Knowing fully well what the komiks-magazine mean to our soldiers, especially during the Christmas season, the KKKPK recently launched

### "Project Pasko."

Several thousand copies will be forwarded by the Kapisanan to the Philippine Army Civil Relations & Information Service at Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila. From there, the PACRIS will take care of distributing the copies to the soldiers in the field.

This is not the first time that the Kapisanan has sent copies of member-publications. For several years now, komiks-magazines have been distributed to military stations. Soldiers on "R&R" (rest and recreation) invariably request for komiks-magazines as reading material.

The KKKPK's "Project Pasko" will be launched in coordination with the office of Lt. Col. Oswaldo P. Villanueva, deputy and executive officer of CRISG of the Philippine Army. ■

## Marketing illustrated magazines

The marketing of illustrated magazines is an aggregate of functions which involves moving the periodicals from publishers to buyers. While there are other facets of marketing, only the aspect of physical distribution will be discussed here. It is one of the most important aspects of marketing in a publishing company.

In the publishing business, the circulation of a magazine or periodical means its total print order per issue. The print order is normally calculated by adding the actual orders of the agents for a particular issue plus certain allowances for anticipated additional demand and those to be given out as complimentary copies.

The job of distributing illustrated magazines is assigned to

*Please turn to page 5*

## The appeal of comics magazines

BY ROLLIE DE JESUS

(The following is a reprint of a two-part article which appeared in the Focus Magazine issues of October 29 and November 12, 1977. -Ed)

ONE NEEDS no keen perceptions, no statistics, no special data to know that Filipinos of all shapes and sizes are mad about comic books. Just look around. Comic books or magazines have proliferated and rooms stand almost every street and alley. There is such a big floating readership that magazine and newspaper stand owners are finding it more profitable to rent comics than sell them. Publishers therefore have no qualms in publishing a floodtide of these materials, said to already total two million copies every week, and these are gobbled up by addicted readers, especially the young despite the objections



of parents and moralists.

Comics are so popular that even legitimate magazines such as *Litwayway*, *Bulaklak*, etc., find it advisable to include illustrated novels or short

*Please turn to page 6*

# The "KOMIKEROS"

## 2-The man of letters CLODUALDO DEL MUNDO

By HERCULES DEL MUNDO

Clodualdo del Mundo, my *tatay*, had always caught my fancy by telling glowing accounts on writing techniques.

He once told me that a good writer usually hears his characters speaking for themselves. Everything he said was of course credible. For Danding, as he was fondly called, had written unflinching for nearly five decades.

He started early at the age of 18, when he won first prize in the Tribune's monthly literary contest held in 1929. His piece, "The Outlaw," was a short story written in English. After the initial success, he opted to write in the vernacular, coming up with hundreds of pieces in various media, organizing writers' groups, working for the general improvement of writing, becoming a critic of note as the "Tao sa Parolang Ginto," and in the process becoming a staunch defender of Pilipino.

What fascinated me up to now was his zeal in writing, sitting the hours away with type-writer, while maintaining close contact with people and events moving around him. Character, he emphasized, is the greatest element in any story. He always stressed the fact that ideas can become worn-out, but characters do not for they acquire universal qualities.

The emphasis on character basically explained the wide appeal of his stories to the public.

A few days before he died, he told me a story he had planned to replace a comics serial. He described a character which at once appeared to me for the character resembled him: reserved and traditional, but nonetheless carrying priceless and valuable traits that could withstand the test of time.

Tatay's obsession with timelessness in character could best explain why he wrote with restraint and clarity. His characters acquired lives of their own. They never spoke of things alien to their nature.

Building up this discipline in writing, he was able to penetrate almost all media: radio, film, television, stage and print. In the latter, he engaged in its varied forms: novel, short story, poetry, as well as editorials, columns, and surprising to most people, the comics. Tatay was one of the best "komikeros." Comics was an art form for him.

In its early stages, the comics was closely associated with another popular medium: the radio. Versatile comic writers at that time were engaged in radio drama writing.

Thus, while he was serving as editor of the illustrated stories in *Liwayway*, Danding was busy writing for radio.

He wrote then the most



colorful of his characters—Prinsipe Amante—both for radio and comics. The radio serial, which came first, was vaulted as the greatest drama program ever aired. When it was filmed, it took 18 months of production. The whole of Escolta was jam-packed with people when the movie was premiered.

During the height of "Prinsipe Amante's" popularity, Danding's contemporaries were at loggerheads on the literary parallelism of the story. Some alluded to various western sources such as King Arthur and Robin Hood. Danding took the speculations as compliments but good-humouredly explained a technique in his writing, "If my writer-friends would only acquaint themselves with Philippine folklore, instead of having their minds steeped with the works of Dumas, Forbes and Blasco Ibanez, they could have readily recognized... characters which compare favorably with any figure of imagination."

The fantasy world of "Prinsipe Amante" was accepted as real, for Danding created living characters. Luis Taruc confirmed this fact when he wrote a letter to Danding during the height of the HMB rebellion saying that he liked the program and actually identified with one of the protagonists.

The success of "Prinsipe Amante" in the three media transformed into reality the fantasy of a writer making his profession profitable. In 1950, Danding managed to build for his family a house which was fondly called "the house that Prinsipe Amante built."

But the success of the story did not merely stem from his creative mind. Danding had to keep a writing regimen that occupied most of his waking hours. For "Prinsipe Amante" alone, he had to wake up early in the morning, type stories "even when his eyes were still closed," and come up with finished scripts by seven in the morning.

Actually, he had been prepared for the demands of radio and comics serials. Before the war, he worked around the clock as literary writer, teacher, and newspaperman. He was sleeping for only two hours each day for a period of one year, taking naps in between the change of duties. At that time, he was saddled with providing for the family his father left him, and his own family, when he married I luminada Agnis, a pharmacist, in 1939. Danding's other stories were also successes in the movies

associate. Comics, he lectured once, is basically the effective use of visualization and dialogue. These techniques easily transformed nearly a hundred of Danding's comics stories into the film medium.

Two stories, which appeared in the comics magazine of the Ace Publications stood out in quality and social content—"Malvarosa" and "Kadananang Putik".

"Malvarosa" was envisioned by Danding to be a social criticism of the times by creating a drama out of squatter's lives. The story betrays his preoccupation with timelessness of character when he described Malvarosa as, "hindi bulaklak na nagasabog ng samyang malalangah, kundi dahong nalaga sa tangkay ng panahon na may halimuyak na ang kamanyang ay nakikipagtagala sa kabila ng mga taon." Recently, interest in the story was revived when "Malvarosa" was included in the list of best Filipino films chosen by Lino Brocka.

The other story, "Kadananang Putik", which was about man's infidelity, won for Danding the FAMAS best movie story award in 1960.

For about twenty years, his comics stories were fertile ground for the movies, providing varied themes in films, like "Tuko sa Madre Kakaw", "Nakausap ko ang Diyos", "Diyos Isang Kanta", "Basilio Boston", "Apat na Anino", "Damong Ligaw" and "Kamay ni Cain."

He capped his movie writing career with an ironic touch; in a symposium for screenwriters, he announced his displeasure with the way producers handle film stories. He enumerated three things that the producers were busy with: 1. money, 2. money, and 3. money. He was never bothered by the fear of losing his source of income by making remarks. Throughout the passing of years, he was still the critic, ever the "Tao sa Parolang Ginto."

In the comics, he became an overseer for content by becoming the head of the APEP-COM after the term of Tony Velasquez in the late 60s. He was qualified to assume such post. Years earlier, he made the best critical study of comics, the honors of which he shared with the late Marcelino.

His presidency in the APEP-COM came at an auspicious time, the "bomba" craze was prevalent. Taking a firm stand against any form of outside censorship, Danding batted for self-censorship, foreshadowing similar procedures at present.

During his terms, he continually emphasized comics as an art created by two artists: the writer and the illustrators. For himself he looked at comics writing as an integral part of his literary activities for it communicates with the masses.

Danding's career could be best summed up by a Tanaga he wrote, which the family chose for his epitaph: "Higit na kayamanan na maipamamana, lyang kadakilang tunay na pambalana."

# Komiks as medium of information

By MARIE HENSON-ALONZO



MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN - after reading the comic books, many were convinced to practice family planning.

Comics are no longer comical. In fact, some are dead serious. They carry such serious subject matters, will you believe it, as population, nutrition, pollution and drug addiction.

It is these subjects, however, that have made the formerly objectionable comic books an acceptable and effective vehicle for information and education. Previously considered a corrupting influence on children, the comic books now form part of the array of mass media being used by government agencies for their campaigns to inform and educate the people.

Publishers are thus taking a long hard look at these popular publications and debating whether to continue calling them "komiks". Some have come up with the suggestion to call them "illustrated magazines". The new term is more expressive of their novel contents.

Definitely, most comics are no longer funny. However, comic book publishers continue and make sure that their publications retain their entertainment character at the same time that they imbue them with developmental and moral values. Humor is still an essential ingredient of most comics, the laughter serving to cushion and make the information learning process painless and more effective.

Comics now rank as one of the most commonly used channels of communication, according to a review of developmental communications studies made by the Institute of Mass Communications of the University of the Philippines. The National Media Production Center also made a survey and found comics to be the most popular reading matter of the people. Forty-four per cent of the research respondents read comic books, 26 per cent read newspapers, and 23 per cent read anything they can lay

their hands on. Primarily an awareness- and interest-arousing vehicle, the komiks-magazines were in many instances, found to be very useful in family planning, in motivating mothers and fathers to practice family planning. In a readership survey conducted by the Social Communications Center, 8 out of 10 housewives were very much convinced to practice family planning after reading the comic books.

The popular booklets, statistics show, change hands often than most publications. They are more easily picked up and read because of their attractive colors and easy to understand illustrated contents. Some comics now flaunt on their front covers the fact that they are "de-color", "in vari-color", and "in color".

It has been shown that the target audience understands developmental messages better if they are presented in comic booklets or in semi-illustrated pamphlets. This is explained by the fact that the target readers, mostly rural and urban low-income families, are not very literate and have to rely on the illustrations to help them better understand the text. People also opt for realistic renditions, true to life illustrations, not loaded too much with details.

Governmental and civic organizations have also returned to the formerly denigrated comicbook as one of their most effective vehicles in conveying their messages.

The "Kilusang ng Wastong Pagkain" put out "Family Komiks", a comicbook cum magazine carrying cartoons, comicstrips, vignettes and articles on nutrition, as well as recipes. The Philippine Atomic Energy Commission came out with its comics version. The atomic scientists brought down to the comprehension level of the comics reader the importance of nuclear energy for peaceful uses. "Ang Tao" komiks of the Social Communications Center, was published not only in Tagalog but also in Ilocano, Cebuano and Hiligaynon.

Comic booklets were formerly regarded and read as entertainment vehicles. They have acquired new and welcome functions to inform and to educate. Paradoxically enough, while heretofore they have been vehicles of escapism, now they are conveyors of realism which one has to ultimately face up to. ■

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# More of the new breed of illustrated magazines

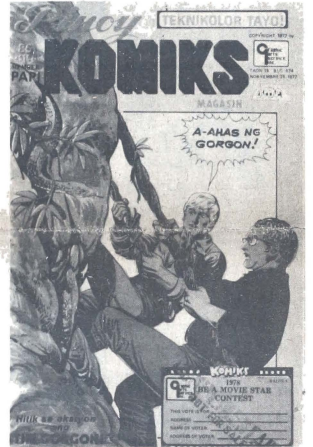
On this page are eight more of the 44 different illustrated magazines under the KPPAP. Of these eight, Tagalog Klasiks is the oldest and Weekly Ravelo Komiks is the youngest. The Modern Romances and True Confessions Magazine is the latest member.

This brings a total of 45 magazines being monitored by the Kapisanan. Its Committee of Publishers sees to it that the members follow the self-imposed guidelines on content.

A very noticeable trend in the content of member-publications is the growing prevalence of non-entertainment materials. Example are those coming from the Bureau of National & Foreign Information. The materials are on government projects and programs and are written by a special staff of the BNFI.

Member-publications also publish articles of informative and educational value to enrich the reader's life: nutrition, child care, general information, scientific discoveries and what-have-you. Which makes contemporary illustrated magazines a far-cry from those of pre-martial-law vintage which did anything and everything to entertain-just to sell.

The titles on this page are published respectively by (left to right): Ace Publications, Inc.; El Dorado Publishing House, Inc.; R.A.R. Publishing House; Adventures Illustrated Magazines, Inc.; Graphic Arts Service, Inc.; Solter Press & Publishing House, Inc.; Atlas Publishing Company, Inc.; and Affiliated Publications, Inc.



## FEEDBACK

### What they say about komiks-magazines



"KOMIKS-MAGAZINES attenuate my boredom," says Carlos Erea, Sr., a jeepney driver of Parañaque, Metro Manila. "As members of KODA (Kabuhisan Operators and Drivers Association) in Parañaque, we are dispatched and assigned to certain routes before we could make a trip. There are many members, so that waiting for my turn becomes tedious. Salamat na lang, my wife is a regular komiks buyer. I pass my time reading them in my jeepney."



"I LIKE the cartoons", Angel Castro III, a Commerce student at the University of Sto. Tomas says. "There is a different touch of humor. I'm not really fond of reading the other materials in the komiks. Basta cartoons, kwela. Pinoy na Pinoy!"

"A GOOD alternative for a movie," Mrs. Remedios Villagas, a chicken dealer at the Faysay Public Market, told us. "You know, I have to work from morning till night. Usually, I go home at about nine-thirty Monday to Sunday. I have no time for the movies, and television hurt my eyes. I read komiks instead till I fall asleep."



"I AM fascinated with the different novels and short stories," says Rolando P. Gitlada, a security guard at the Republic Supermarket. "My kind of job needs company. Keeping awake at night watching this building is no easy job,

and reading komiks helps. Add to this, the information that I get from komiks and you can see why I like komiks very much."

"KOMIKS are informative and educational", Ms. Zaida Sto. Tomas, a coed at the Commerce Department at the University of Sto. Tomas. "There is a marked change in the contents of local komiks today. Komiks have started giving information on the government, civics and the school activities, like the YCAP. Oh, yes -they also entertain."



Patricia Santos, of Precy's House of Beauty, said. "Some customers don't want conversation. They should be entertained with some other means like music and of course, magazines and komiks."



"KOMIKS short stories give moral lessons", says Mr. Rodolfo Agati, General Manager and Proprietor, R/E Forwarders, Inc. "It makes no difference, reading komiks in Tagalog and reading English magazines and books. Clear and concise, the stories could be understood easily. Businessmen like me sometimes have no time to read paperbacks because it takes too much time. My wife? She is a librarian (Mrs. Ester Agati) at the Bacalar Elementary School. And she has the time to read komiks. She likes novels."

"Yes, I read komiks, and why not? It propagates our national language", says Ms. Linda Felizaro, a staffer at the Registrar's Office of the Engineering Review Center, Manila. "Some people, especially those in the upper level, snob komiks for the simple reason that it is written in the vernacular. My God, are they not Filipinos? We should be proud that there are magazines written in our native tongue."

"KOMIKS help me entertain my customers while I do my job", a beautician, Ms. Le-

"KOMIKS give me relaxation", says Pat Eduardo Gonzales of the Investigation Bureau of the Metro Manila Police South Sector. "I'm too busy with my job, the tension sometimes fray my nerves. After a day's work, I sit down and read some entertaining magazines. And usually, I read komiks."

Note: Pat. Gonzales, being an investigator, doesn't want to be photographed.

when American comic book publishers started recruiting local talents. Pioneer illustrators, attracted by bigger pay and excited by the thought of being read internationally (American comic books are distributed world-wide), have left. Several of them are now in the United States. Many are still around, illustrating for U.S. comic books and being paid in dollars and at almost three times the amount they used to get. ■

## Illustrated serials are often film hits

Illustrated serials stand a bigger chance of success at the box-office than original movie scripts. This is an accepted fact in the local motion-picture industry.

It is not surprising, considering that a serial story has its tens of thousands of avid readers as potential theatre-goers. In fact, the motion-picture industry records among its box-office hits several illustrated serials.

One memorable serial-turned-film hit is "Roberta", a major achievement of Mars Ravelo. It was published in the Liwayway Magazine with the late Eldipio Torres doing the illustrations. Filmed by Sampaguita Pictures after its studios were gutted by a big fire, the movie broke all box-office records in 1951.

Main reason for the success of the film (aside from the fact that the serial was a re-sounding hit) was the precocious child star Tessie Agana, who played the title role. "Roberta" launched the six-year old moppet on a movie career which has not been equaled since by any female child star.

"Roberta" made author Ravelo filmdom's most sought-after and the highest paid serial writer. The film rights to one of his "nobelas" was recently purchased by a film company for P40,000.

"Roberta" gave the cue to other motion picture producers. "Darna", another of Ravelo's serials, was filmed by Royal Productions. Produced and directed by the late Fernando Poe, Sr., it starred Rosa del Rosario in the title role. "Darna" was to enjoy several equally successful sequels both in the illustrated magazines and in the movies.

Other Ravelo "nobelas" were filmed. Like "Miss Tiliapia" which starred Gloria Romero and introduced Susan Roces and Romeo Vasquez; "Boksingera Daw" with Susan Roces playing the title role; "Basahang Ginto" starring Alicia Vergel; and several other illustrated serials all successful at the tills.

At about the same time, Pablo S. Gomez was also making a name for himself as a serial writer. His serials like "Gilda", "Bella Filipina",

Neophyte scriptwriters and artists, if really talented, can live well on their craft. The bigger publications pay a minimum of P10 per illustrated page of the script which is usually three to four pages. And a talented and prolific short story scriptwriter can produce at least two stories a day. He gets paid upon approval of the story. Besides, he is not expected to stay as a short story writer forever. Any writer worth his salt will strive



AMALIA FUENTES AND JUANCHO GUTIERREZ IN FILM VERSION OF COCHING'S "MOVIE FAN"-in the film industry's record of motion picture hits, several serialized novels.

"MN", and "Apat na Taga" became movie hits and gave stiff competition to Ravelo's works. Other name writers cropped up: Clouddalo del Mundo ("Prinsipe Amante", "Haring Espada") and Francisco V. Coching ("Hagibis", "Waldas").

Recent film hits from the illustrated magazines are Caparas' "Totoy Bato", Gomez' "Aluphahng Dagat", Aragon's "Naga-apoy na Damdamin", and Plaza's "Dabianan". The latter seems to have received the fad for the unglamorous heroine. Yesteryears' hits featuring homely heroines were "Miss Tiliapia", "Kurdapaya" and "Cofradia", "Bakekang", a popular serial featuring a homely-looking woman, is now being filmed with Nora Aunor in the title role. It seems unlikely she will be the last of the "ridiculous" heroines. Several publications are already preparing "nobelas" that have common (and, therefore, unglamorous) people for lead characters. Chances are several of these works will be filmed.

One may ask: Why do people flock to movies made from stories they already read in the illustrated magazines? It is perhaps the thrill of seeing their favorite serial heroes and heroines "come alive" on the screen. There have been several cases however where the movie audiences were disappointed with the film versions. But that is another story. ■

## WRITERS

(from page 1)

not share in the proceeds from the sale of the movie rights for serialized stories.

Top-notch artists (illustrators, in industry parlance) likewise earn as much as the more popular writers. Several leading artists are paid P55 per illustrated page or P275 per installment of the serial. Veteran artists can finish a five-page installment in less than one day. Many of them illust-

rate from five to fifteen "nobelas" at a time with the help of neophyte illustrators.

It is through this system (fledgling artists working under a veteran) that the industry develops fresh talent. For most illustrators are without formal training in their craft, like most scriptwriters. That is why the dearth of good illustrators (and scriptwriters) is perennial problem of many publishers.

This problem was aggravated

# The Review views illustrated magazines

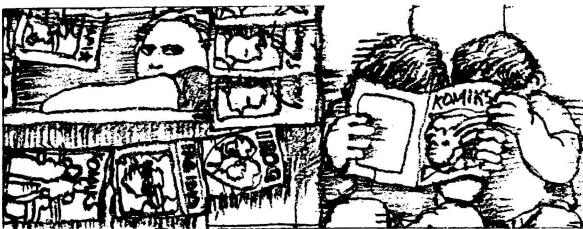
In 1976 the top four audited English weeklies—*Women's Journal*, *Mod*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Expressweek* and —had a combined average net paid circulation of 235,905. On the other hand, *Lwayway* alone accounted for 122,574, more than half the total circulation of the four English weeklies.

If you bring in the *komiks*, which are officially classified as weekly magazines, the English weeklies simply disappear from view. *Wala sa kalilinginan, 'ika nga*. In 1976 the big four in the *komiks* field—*Pilipino*, *Huwaga*, *Taga-log*, and *Express*—had combined circulation of 538,209, more than double the total circulation of the top four English magazines.

In fact, the circulation of the *komiks* alone dwarfs that of all English newspapers and magazines combined. The estimated circulation of the 50 *komiks* on the market is two million. Repeat, two million. Assuming six readers to a copy, you get a regular readership of 12 million.

"The number is really much more," reports a brochure on *The Illustrated Press*. "If those who borrow or rent their copies are counted, they will bring the total up to 16 million readers. Compared with the population of 44 million, 16 million readers represent a diffusion rate of 1 to 4. That puts the comic-magazines in the category of a truly mass medium."

THE EXTENT of mass acceptance of the *komiks* can be gleaned from the fact that they, alone in the field of print media, can survive solely on sales. Advertising revenue, the life-blood of the other media,



is welcome but not absolutely necessary to ensure the continued existence of the *komiks*.

The ACI data also reveal a steady drop in the circulation of virtually all publications—except the *komiks*, which registered a dramatic rise in circulation.

The combined circulation of the three major morning dailies in English, for instance, dropped from 438,262 in 1974, to 404,853 in 1975, to 391,444 in 1976.

Down the same slope went the circulation of the Iloko *Bannawag* (from 34,564 in 1974 to 30,040 in 1976) and the Cebuano *Isayaw* (from 60,128 in 1974 to 50,200 in 1976). The Ilongo *Hiligaynon* has ceased publication, possibly because circulation diminished to the point of unprofitability.

The tight money situation and the increase in selling price brought about by higher newsprint costs may have had something to do with the general circulation drop, which also affected *Lwayway* (from 544 in 1974 to 122,574 in 1976). But then, how account for the fact that *Pilipino Komiks*, to cite only one example, went up from 98,847

sold copies in 1974 to 151,481 last year?

Before martial law, the 100 *komiks* in existence (the number includes bomba *komiks*) had an estimated total circulation of 1.5 million. As earlier noted, the number of *komiks* has gone down to 50, but their combined circulation has gone up to an estimated two million, an increase of more than 30 percent.

NO DOUBT about it, *Pilipino* is a profitable commodity. *Komiks* would be a losing proposition if they were to use English.

But the kind of *Pilipino* used is also important, says R.R. Marcelino, editor of three comic-magazines (*Bonang Movie Specials*, *Pogi and Hapi-Hapi*) and president of the *Kapisanan ng mga Publikista at mga Patnugot ng Komiks-Magasin sa Pilipino* (KPPPK), the organization that brings together publishers and editors of 43 *komiks*.

R.R. Marcelino (the initials stand of Ramon Ramos) points out that a recent survey has revealed the chief reader of *komiks* to be young adults. "We try to adapt our language to this young

(Excerpts from the article, "The Selling of *Pilipino*," published in *The Review magazine* issue of October 1977.)

audience," he says. "In other words, we avoid *malalim na Tagalog*, *makalumang Tagalog*. Hindi 'yan click sa kabataan, lalo na sa mga hindi native speaker ng Tagalog. At the same time, we also avoid vulgar *salitang kalye* as much as possible, like *ermat*, *erpat*, *trip*." A word like *ermat* is degrading to parents. We want the *komiks* to act also as some kind of a guide."

Simplicity is likewise important. "Short and simple sentences are the most effective. No kilomeric sentences. No convoluted sentences. You'll lose audience attention. And there should be a minimum of text in each frame. More visuals."

However, it's not primarily the language that sells *komiks*. Plot would probably be paramount, but Marcelino believes the choice of characters also has a lot to do with the success of a *komiks* serial.

"Our most successful serial revolves around one major character," he explains. "We use the Nora Aunor formula. As heroes and heroines we choose ordinary people that the masses can identify with. For instance, Juan Tornado, a

pastor ng kalabaw who becomes a world boxing contender, a local boy who makes good. Of course, this is not a definite trend. There are many exceptions. *Astronaut*, for instance—but the attraction is this serial is that the lead is Filipino."

If publishing *komiks* is profitable, so is writing for the *komiks*. The best Filipino novelists in English cannot survive on novel-writing alone, but the top serial writers for the *komiks*, if they are not only popular but also prolific, can live comfortably off their *komiks* earnings, not to mention the sale of movie rights.

Marcelino says the top price for serial writers in his publications is P40 per printed page. At five pages per installment, that's P200 a week, or P800 a month. If you have a dozen serials running in as many comic-magazines at one time, as is usually the case with writers who are much in demand, you can make as much as P9,600 a month.

In these days of developmental journalism, *komiks* are receptive to "serious and relevant articles." Marcelino says he is willing to pay P40 per printed page for "serious" material, which means P80 for about four or five typewritten pages. It isn't much, but considering that a prestigious English morning daily pays a maximum of P75 for the same number of pages, it's nothing to sneeze at either.

"And the beauty of writing for the *komiks*—at least the better known ones—is that the writer can get paid upon acceptance of his contribution. One of the most frustrating experiences of the freelance writer for English publications is waiting for months to see his contribution in print, and then waiting for months on end to get paid."

## MARKETING ILLUSTRATED

from page 1

a Circulation Manager, who is the equivalent of a Sales Manager in other manufacturing firms. For the past several years up to the present, the most popular way of distribution is through the appointment of agents or distributors all over the country.

For Metro Manila releases, the usual procedure is to deliver the copies to the circulation office where the copies are picked up by the city agents. From the city agents, the copies find their way to various sub-agents, particularly newstands, newsboys, and sari-sari store owners who sell directly to the ultimate buyers.

Copies for Central, Southern and Northern Luzon are normally delivered from the plant to the various provincial agents by hired forwarders. Other provincial copies are delivered through the various bus companies, Philippine National Railways, Philippine Air Lines, interland vessels and the Post

Office.

Based on sales records, Greater Manila and Central Luzon constitute the biggest market for illustrated magazines, accounting for approximately 70% of the total volume. The Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Southern Luzon, the Bicol Region, Western and Eastern Visayas and Northern and Southern Mindanao make up for the other 30%.

Publishing companies differ in their circulation policies. While some may elect to appoint only a few agents, others may favor having as many agents as possible for a wider distribution base. There are those which may encourage sales through subscription while others may shy away from it because of the fulfillment work involved. Some companies may favor sending promotional copies to agents as a way of improving sales. Others may not. Furthermore, others may extend liberal credit terms to their agents, while others

may impose C.O.D. or prepaid transactions. As in other businesses, there can never be an ideal circulation policy which will fulfill all sectors. What may prove to be effective for one company may not be applicable to another company.

The distribution of illustrated magazines may appear to be an easy task. In reality, it is beset by multifarious problems that require constant alertness and immediate action. Some of the most common problems are the "smuggling" of copies, the encroachment of territories by agents, delayed deliveries, inadequate delivery facilities to some areas, loss of copies while in transit, shortages and the perennial problem of motivating agents to increase their sales.

From the foregoing, it is not difficult to understand why the Circulation Manager is one of the most important executives of a publishing company. ■

## NOT KOMIKS

from page 1

word *komiks* appended to their titles was not meant to be used in the sense of being funny, amusing or humorous, but to describe magazines which use comic strip form as a vehicle to unfold a narrative sequence;

Whereas, it has become clear that our *komiks*-magazines started off and have evolved as fiction magazines illustrated form for the mature Filipino audience;

Whereas, *komiks*-magazines today contain an average of six to seven illustrated fiction serials and two to three short stories and they also devote a number of pages to movie stars and movie stories;

Whereas, after the declaration of martial law, our *komiks*-magazines added pages on current events, family planning, farming, proper nutrition, SSS news releases, water and energy conservation and other serious feature articles for adults;

Whereas, it is now obvious that our *komiks*-magazines have ceased to be exclusively pure entertainment publications and have become effective disseminators of information and education for our adult population, especially in the rural areas; and

Whereas, statistics based on two surveys conducted last year reveal that 73.9 percent of all those who buy and read *komiks*-magazines are adults who are 20 years of age or older;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the members of the Kapisanan ng mga Publikista at mga Patnugot ng mga Komiks-Magasin sa Pilipino petition the Philippine Council for Print Media that they be allowed, if they choose, to drop the word "komiks" from the titles of their magazines and in its place use the word "illustrated," in the firm belief that the word "komiks" is no longer relevant and accurate description of the contents and purposes of their magazines. ■

# THE APPEAL

From page 1

stories in their regular issues. More significant is the rendering of the two celebrated novels of Rizal — *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* — in comics magazine form. Indeed, many portions of our history and the biographies of certain historical personalities have come out in print as comic books. We also find some versions of such Western classics as *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count Of Monte Cristo*, et al and equally classic children's stories as *Cinderella*, *Alice In Wonderland*, et al printed as comics and in Pilipino.

At the rate comic books and magazines are being read, chances are there is going to be a shortage (if there is none yet) of talented comics writers and illustrators. Why this intriguing phenomenon? What makes comics magazines so appealing, so acceptable to the general public? On the other hand, what makes the comics so controversial?

## A misnomer

Before we go on, it must be understood that "comics" as applied to the subject under study is a misnomer, as the late writer Clodualdo del Mundo had pointed out. Generally taken, the term comics connotes something comic, humorous, funny. Compared to the prewar versions of these comic books or magazines — which were more or less faithful to the accepted definition — the current versions hardly have any humor or if they have, are not at all that humorous.

In McLuhan's theory, comics fall within popular arts, which may be seen as a clown reminding us all of the life and faculties that we have omitted from our daily routine. This clown ventures to perform the specialized routines, acting out in a funny way the mores, tenets, the life-styles,

and the existing preoccupations of human society as much as he dramatizes existing taboos, representing the integral man, but never the man in a specialized situation since the integral man is quite inept in such a situation. So we witness for instance, in the nostalgic, serialized version of *Kenko*, *Buhay Pilipino*, or in the adventures of *Kalabog En Bosyo*, the art of the comics medium and the art of the clown.

Today, comic books and magazines tell stories in pictures, which are very much like novels or short stories, interspersed with conventional comics (in the comical sense) strips. Novels are, for obvious reasons, serialized, a chapter coming out weekly, to give the readers something to look forward to — an anticipation which goesads them into buying or renting succeeding issues.

Written in the vernacular of the times, the substance of novels, novelettes or short stories is generally adventure, love, or both, and which may also veer to fantasy, or feature sex, violence, bits of humor, or what-have-you. Added attractions are write-ups on movie-sports-radio/TV personalities, news pages, letters from readers, a lore section, one on pen pals, an advice-to-the-lovelorn page, and the confused, translated reprints of certain interesting articles culled from foreign publications of special interest, as well as the lyrics and chords of popular songs, household tips, and whatnot. Because of the wide range and diversity of the contents of comic magazines, these publications appear to a wide range of readers whose characteristics are as varied and different as the number of available comic magazines selling for 85 centavos each or rented for five centavos a seating. There is therefore, something in these books of particular appeal to specific types of comics readers or even nonreaders (that is, the irregular customer who picks up a comics publication only on certain occasions, to kill time perhaps).

To the young, comics magazines bring to life through colorful and vivid illustrations the fantastic and incredible feats of a *Darna* against evil persons and monstrous creatures. To the average housewife, comics magazines can be an effective antidote to boredom, just as they can be a source of amusement or escape from office routine to working people during coffee breaks. To the household help, comics magazines bring lively gossip about the stars and celebrities or a salve to painful disappointments, to frustrations, a way to find a pen pal, or even to act as inspiration, to restore hope. To a great many students who would rather read comics than prescribed books, the former is a way of filling idle hours and, hopefully, a stimulation toward contracting the reading habit, or generating predilection for a better kind of literature.

However, because of the violent or sexy contents of the comics magazines — and the danger of readers getting addicted to them — these magazines are regarded by critics as dangerous. Mincing no words in indicting comics, they say that comics magazines are a waste of time and money as well.

Some serious indictments have been made against the comic books or magazines, one of which is that these so-called comics often celebrate violence, if not downright crime. Hence, it can only attest the tendency toward violent behavior in similar fashion that the movies do. Also, the preferred subject and often even the general approach of comic books tend to undermine the moral education of children, if not actually destroying it. Crime and violence are made to appear natural factors of life, and an acceptable way of solving problems, of escaping predicaments. Fantastic characters with supernatural powers carry youthful readers further still from reality and responsibility.

Another valid criticism is that the vulgar quality of comics humor or behavior of characters prevents the children who had become addicted to them from developing any kind of sound judgment or good taste. Again, the energy and enthusiasm that children devote to these comics, even if the material did no harm, keep them from moving toward more constructive or beneficial occupations. The healthier sources of a child's fun, excitement, adventure, and knowledge should be active play, creative involvement, person-to-person interaction rather than second-hand experience.

Against these, comics defenders point out that comics are the folktales, the fairy tales of today which have natural appeal to children (and adults, too) and fill certain basic human needs. The moral lessons of the comics are more preachy, the advocates say. The heroes may be unrealistic and definitely superhuman but they know the difference between right and wrong. Bad men are al-

ways punished. Crime does not pay is the message in every story.

To the charge of vulgarity, the reply is that the question of good taste or bad taste is not a basic one, and cannot be used to approve or condemn any medium of communication or entertainment. The reader needs to be given a chance to discover new values and to learn to discriminate in the exploration of every medium that he finds interesting.

Finally, many children who hate to read or are slow learners become so fascinated by the popular comics that they learn to spell out the words attributed to the characters. In the case of "classics" stories presented in the form of comics strips, children reading them might be stimulated further to improving their reading and thus develop a predilection for reading.

## No laughing matter

Whether or not comics critics are justified in condemning comic books or magazines or their refutation of the former's arguments, the fact stands out that comic books and magazines are effective in communicating with their audience. The fact that there is serious concern over the possible ill-effects these publications might have on young, impressionable minds attests to this. That being the case, it is no longer a laughing matter since there is nothing comical about a dramatic means of communicating, effectively. Neither, historically, was there anything humorous in the way two powerful adversary countries sworn to uphold opposing ideologies waged verbal and illustrated war against each other and attempted to resolve the heated Cold War by winning the minds of people everywhere through comics magazines. Nor is there any gain in the fact that, quantitatively, comics magazines enjoy a broad, wide range of audience, their circulation comparable to other means of communications.

The very fact that there is a dearth of all sorts of comics magazines is proof of this, and, in mind you, these comics do not rely on paid advertisement for their survival. But, perhaps, the most significant — and the crowning glory — is the recognition by no less than government agencies specializing or dealing with mass communications that the comics form is the most effective way of disseminating information directly to the grass roots. Hence, what with comics magazines already a favorite source of movie themes or film plots, because people "dig" them, editors and population experts are persuaded that the comics would prove the best medium too in spreading information, and thus influencing the readers' attitude towards family planning.

But, why the wide popularity of these comics magazines among the rank and file, the *bakya* crowd, the grass-roots population?

The decisive preference of comic magazines by almost everyone can be explained, by these publications' availability, accessibility, and readability, with the contents or messages easily understood. Compared to a television set or a transistor radio, comics are priced low enough to be available to the lowliest reader, not to mention the advantage of being available through rent or by simply borrowing it.

More so, comics magazines have visual attractions: the stories are illustrated and colored. Whether or not there is some kind of attraction or subconscious attraction colored illustrations have, which prods a curious or lively mind to read on, the thing is, compared to English language pocketbooks or magazines, comics are easier to comprehend since they speak the native language — Pilipino, or Visayan, or Ilocano. Apparently, interest, because of understanding, is the key to the whole issue. One buys (or rents) a copy of a comics magazine because of interest aroused in him, in the first place surfacing because the reader understands what it says.

But, one may object: English is the second language of the Filipinos! True! But, alas, the fact is, even the literate Filipino has not actually mastered this foreign language; this is even more true with the largest audience in the country — the masses. How could, therefore, any large number of people be interested in something which is completely meaningless to them? In a way, we may explain why, despite the fact that the Philippines is the Asian country imposing English language books, magazines, periodicals, etc. in the greatest number, these reading materials are not necessarily the most saleable or popular. Besides, there is always that ultimate constraint that restrains the purchase of foreign publications from buying: the almost prohibitive prices which, to the average worker (more so with the below-average worker), is simply beyond him. This ends all arguments.

In any case, language, obviously, plays a highly significant role in the life of man. Since "language synthesizes the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of human nature," it is, needless to say, the vital instrument that conserves or helps conserve human culture and experience. This is so because "linguistic symbols and forms attain stability and constancy," says Ernst Cassirer, "it becomes capable of resisting the dissolving and destructive influences of time. Hence, whether a language is personal, abstract, or objective, it is central to the life of man for it is both the instrument of the human mind and the reflection of its soul."

Inasmuch as a language is a system of symbols by which men understand each other and the world of experience, a people's experience is best understood and appreciated in their native tongue. "As an



animal symbolism," Professor Lydia Profeta notes, "man has a symbolic imagination and intelligence; all human activities are necessarily dependent on language and symbolization for communication of meaning." It follows therefore that to communicate properly, one must be understood. This understanding, in turn, creates interest.

No wonder there was harshness when Jose Rizal spoke through Simoun (*El Filibusterismo*), as he castigated Basilio: "... To what are you tending now, with your instruction in Castilian (or English, presently), a pretension that would be ridiculous were it not for its deplorable consequences! You wish to add one more language to the forty odd that are spoken in the islands, so that you may understand each other less and less. ... "You are letting yourselves be deceived by big words and never go to the bottom of things to examine the results in their final analysis. Spanish (or any other language) will never be the general language of the country, the people will never talk to you, the conception of their brains and the feelings of their hearts cannot be expressed in that language — each people has its own tongue, as each has its own way of thinking. ... "

Without doubt, a language expresses a people's peculiarities, oddities, aspirations — no matter how nonsensical, which no other language can. To use, therefore, the language of other people without absolutely mastering it (to express one's mind is to invite confusion. This is why one expects translation to suffer. Similarly, one cannot expect to gain an audience's interest if his way of thinking and speaking is totally different from that of his audience. At best, perhaps, he can earn some curiosity, maybe awe, but ultimately this will subside as fast as a passing fancy.

And, if we are to be honest about it, this may explain why up to now Filipino literature written in English somehow lacks the vitality because a native theme written in a foreign tongue suffers inaccuracies for want of proper idioms, the appropriate peculiarities, and flair. Perhaps, too, this explains why there is that lethargic or indifferent attitude of our students towards literature, and a supreme unconcern for developing a liking for reading, let alone an obsession for it, as in the case of those Western counterparts.

UNLIKE OTHER types of communication, comics magazines fully utilize the native tongue. They take complete advantage of a rich variety of native idioms which reflect the current modes of thinking, or perhaps recall the past, or sometimes even boldly look forward to the future.

As a form of literature, comic books and magazines sometimes express intrinsic meanings, sometimes vividly succeed in the objectification of experience, or in the

projection of the native imagination, or the stimulation of contemplative thought. As a form of arts, the comics partake of the literary ideal — that of enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure, although not in abstractions. Hence, a good comic book does not only offer good stories in the form of serialized novels; it also supplies vivid illustrations. The best of these may very well have the makings of an art all their own.

For this and other reasons, Mr. Cloudado del Mundo was very emphatic in saying that there is much to be said for, rather than against, comics magazines or books.

In the first place, comics writing for an audience is already a craft that must be taken seriously. Anyone who regards comics writing as something which anybody can do or merely view as a step along the way to "real" writing does not know what he is saying.

Writing for the comics publications takes a lot of imagination. That is why for a budding writer, comics writing is the best way to learn how to visualize ideas and to write effectively in a terse, lucid, coherent manner. For an established writer, comics writing can accelerate his pacing and tempo in the discharge of his craft, while also keeping him attuned to the times.

However, in taking comics writing as a serious art, Mr. del Mundo pointed out that it does a budding writer, every word employed should be holy or that it should be grave or pompous or heavy-handed. For instance, he said, some of the most delightful humor in writing today is in the comics magazines. Some of the wildest nonsense is there, too. But the writers are saying something seriously in their humor and in their nonsense — something that is real and meaningful to them and they are saying it in the best way they can without writing down to their audience, an audience whose keenness and perception must always be respected.

#### A misconception

Apart from the fact that comic books and magazines are identified by a misnomer, there is also a popular misconception about them. What is not actually appreciated is that a published story must be a finished, well-rounded work of art — not just a tall-tale concocted offhand, conveniently invented to amuse the children on the spur of the moment. To think so is, perhaps, a greater crime than allowing children to read comics.

In any case, we find that stories in comic books have to be good, that is, suitable for cold prints and illustrations. The stories, for children or not, have to be thoroughly formed and shaped and sharpened before they can be printed and illustrated. Very important in comics, thus, is the idea. Without a good idea, the comic writer is dead.

A good idea, though, can best be defined if left alone to develop by itself; that is, a creative writer should be able to know and make his own definition. Basically, however, the hero of a story should be vivid, alive, with the basic situation and things that happen, realistic. Overall, stories should be fascinating to the audience. Generally, there is a theme, some truths one believes in, such as "one can master fear," not a moral tacked onto the story and the events narrated, acted out by the hero and other characters. Hence, there is drama and movement.

Movement, whether action or changes of scenery, is necessary to comics material. These elements provide the artist the opportunity to make different pictures within, in the process, test his skill in his craft. And, this is where the audience can be captured, since illustration is the art which sets comics magazines apart from the art of storytelling through the written word.

Some stories when told orally or as a written piece are compelling even when there is no perceptible movement. But in the comics, stories without movement are dead. It does not, therefore, follow that subjective stories, though good in themselves, would be suitable for comics magazines.

Now, there is (like true literary art) the matter of style, which is the writer's trademark. He develops it through actual writing, or in the process of trying out techniques, or thinking and reading, and while in the heat of telling a story. This is also true in the case of an illustrator. Style, as you may know, is something that must be developed and acquired by the writer (or a comics illustrator) in somewhat a similar fashion as that of a painter who leaves his imprint on a canvas.

While some people think that anyone can write just like that for the comics publications, by just letting his imagination run wild, it takes quite an amount of time and patience actually to turn out a good work. For instance, since action or movement must be illustrated words spoken by the characters must be terse, vivid, accurate. Lifeless and unnecessary words simply have no place in comics dialogues, first, because of the need for economy of space. Of course, this does not mean that big words have no place in the narrative comics strips. But the development of a "controlled vocabulary" which would click with both the young and the adult is a specialized art born out of the writer's awareness of life and things and people around him. To gain the audience's interest, the writer (and illustrator) must be aware of himself and his audience. It is, therefore, helpful to remember that the audience is as varied as each is different indeed from one another yet united by certain emotions and common experiences and



tempored by the native soul. Thus, the comics creator should have a perception of emotions, an understanding of man's experience and should have an insight into life, plus having the capability of turning back one's mind to the time when he was a child and how it was with him then. In a broad sense, then, the comics creator must have a pinch of naivete, a dash of sentimentalism, and a capacity for dreams. All these help make a story realistic and alive.

Concern over comics magazines being read by children is understandable and perhaps justifiable. Admittedly, there are blood, sex, crime, violence, vulgarity in comics magazines. Undoubtedly, there is a need for uplift, if not excellence, in the reading materials accessible to children just as there is always room for improvement in our educational system or its aspects.

Meanwhile, what can the young, impressionable minds read? Many of the books and printed stories are hard for them to understand or the characters, settings, and motivations are as alien to them as the word superlativifragilitateexpialidocious.

Surely, there must be some reading matter easily and cheaply available to the young. Too, there must be some way to train the people of a nation to read and develop a liking for literature. But developing this virtue in a people who had at an early age commenced to deal with ideas, who have come to recognize a system of values which includes such capabilities as insight, compassion, tolerance, patience, and understanding of human behavior carries with it a responsibility of towering importance. For whether a child becomes a career woman or housewife, a mathematician or a mechanic, a teacher or a businessman, a hawkler or a musician, a statesman or a common worker, these values learned are basic to their fulfillment as human beings.

And since children are not born with these values, their understanding and appreciation of comics stories and of life do not spring up full-grown. These qualities come from reading, and discussing, and learning from the adults. These come from experienced guidance toward the discovery of wisdom and beauty; these come, because authors and teachers, librarians, and parents

provide the reading materials which speak of wisdom, beauty, and joy. It is, on the one hand, the adult's responsibility to guide, not dictate; and on the other hand, the state's responsibility to control and supervise in a realistic manner the publication and the contents of periodicals and books, including comics magazines.

In the meantime, good comics magazines (there are some, by the way) which project the gay, the sad, the joyous, and touch on wisdom, are collectively providing a basis, a means to develop a nation of readers, a national community of people who understand themselves and conditions around them, whether these pertain to violence, crime, sex or blood, and thunder! After all, courage, compassion, humility, honor, or human decency — as well as the vulgar and the ugly — are not just learned from lectures, special seminars, sermons, or from specialized studies in the classrooms. These are learned from the realities of life, from people around us, from the actual, existing conditions which are so aptly pictured and lucidly portrayed by the behavior, the language, the mode of living, the conditions, and the values of the characters who are presented and march through the pages of the comics stories. Because of the advantages comics magazines can readily offer, it may be very helpful if concerned agencies make full use of this medium in disseminating information and in providing a cheap means of developing a nation of readers.

But for now, two questions arise: Are we condemning the comics because of our inability to understand and appreciate the realities around us, or because of our fear born out of failure as persons to adequately and properly guide our young and communicate with them?

Or is it that we prefer "decent" foreign publications for their status value, even if the language used in the first place is beyond us, and the way of life and experience of the people written about are absolutely and totally different from us. And do we patronize the lowly local comics despite their being honest enough to mirror our bigotry, hypocrisy, native flair, and sense of values and decency, even in their "vulgar" ugly way, for the same reason — to retain status? What's the real answer?

# Komiks publishing now a big industry

Thirty years ago, it was difficult to imagine that komiks publishing would become what it is today: a big industry giving steady employment and income to thousands of Filipinos.

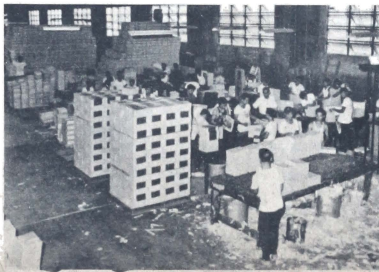
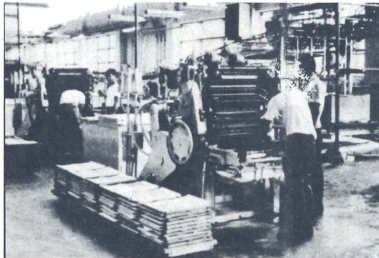
It all began in 1947, when the first komiks-magazine called Filipino Komiks came out. It had a fortnightly-circulation of 10,000 copies, and a handful—not more than ten people—were involved in putting out the magazine.

Antonio Velasquez, creator of Kenko, was the publisher and editor, but he had no editorial staff to speak of. Except a layout artist, who was paid by piece work. This was because at the time—and the practice has been continued since—most of the magazine serials were produced and illustrated by contributors. In the production department, there was only one stripper. The cameraman doubled up as the platemaker. The press was manned by three pressmen, while two circulation clerks took care of distributing the copies to agents and stands.

Today there are 44 different komiks-magazines coming out on different days every week, from Monday to Friday. They have a combined circulation of over two million copies a week. And they reach out to the farthest corners of the archipelago, from Aparri in the North to Jolo in the South.

To be able to produce this huge circulation of copies, komiks publishers must stock enough supply of newsprint, coated paper and ink to feed their presses; films, plates and chemicals for their platemaking; staple wires for stitching and plastic straps to wrap and bundle the copies. It has been estimated that komiks-magazines alone use up 12% of the total newsprint produced yearly in the Philippines of 62,500 metric tons—or about 7,500 metric tons a year. On the other hand, magazines other than komiks use 8% and books account for only 4%. Newspapers, however, consume 53% of the total newsprint output. Which puts the komiks magazines next to newspapers as the most widely read media in the country today.

There are now a total of 12 komiks publishing houses. Two of the biggest publish about 8 magazines each, while the smaller houses have two to six publications each. Among the more popular titles are Filipino Komiks, Tagalog Klasiks, Hiwaga, Espesyal, Aliwan, Darna, Superstar, Movie Specials, Wakasan, 'Lamour, Bulaklak, Ravelo and Wow. The circulation leaders have each a weekly circulation of over 150,000



PRESSROOM AND SHIPPING SECTIONS OF A KOMIKS-MAGAZINE PRINTER—thousands directly earn their livelihood from the industry.

copies.

Each publishing house boasts of a highly skilled and experienced work force composed of competent editors, layout and lettering artists and proofreaders collaborating with a corps of creative top-notch scriptwriters and illustrators. A typical publisher with three komiks-magazines depends on at least 30 contributors to fill out the pages of his publications with serials and short stories, issue after issue, week to week.

The production department for the komiks-magazines has also become an array of the most modern and sophisticated printing machines and facilities. Such as electronic typesetting compositors, film processors, process cameras, color separation cameras, flip-top platemakers, sheet fed and rotary press equipment with speeds up to 20,000 copies an hour, stitching machines and three-knife cutters. All of this productive capacity geared to give the readers the best in quality printing within the deadlines required for a nationwide distribution of copies.

And to man all this equipment is a complement of first-rate technicians: typesetters, strippers, cameramen, platemakers, pressmen and stitchers. As the copies move out, they are counted, wrap-

ped and tied into the right number of copies and bundles ordered by more than 500 komiks-magazine distributors all over the Philippines, who in turn serve thousands of sub-agents, newstand and sidewalk vendors, sari-sari store-owners and newsboys.

The bundles are loaded into waiting delivery vans for shipment to outlets in Metro Manila and the provinces. Copies are also sent by bus, train, ship and plane to far points in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. No doubt there are thousands who are dependent on komiks publishing for their livelihood. And many more will be enlisted and employed as the publications multiply in number, circulation and quality.

After the declaration of martial law, the komiks-magazines have begun including pages of non-entertainment features and serious articles on family planning, farming, nutrition, child care, ethics, stenography, etc.

This new trend will surely require an additional different kind of expertise on the part of komiks publishers and editors. It is a big job but it has to be done if komiks-magazines will continue to grow and remain relevant to the kind of new reading style that their readers want. ■

# In mass media Komiks writers are the most prolific

The most prolific writers are in the illustrated magazine industry. The present record-holder is Carlo J. Caparas who has 30 "nobelas" being serialized simultaneously in several magazines until lately. Caparas, it seems, produces less than that number now but he could still be first as far as output is concerned.

Before Caparas, the most prodigious komiks-writer was Mars Ravelo. The author of "Roberta" and "Darna" was writing some 20 serials simultaneously at one time. Pablo S. Gomez ranked close second.

Another prolific "nobelista" is Jim Fernandez, whose "Aztec" and "Astronaut" were big hits a couple of years back. Fernandez writes some 10 serials at present. Outstanding among them is "Anak ni Zuma".

Other scriptwriters are not as prolific, but their output is enough to amaze readers. Worthy of mention are Elena Patron, Marty Gee, Aragon, Neissa Cabral, Rio Oreta, Luro Nunag, Manuel Ramirez, Rico Bello Omagap, L.P. Calixto and Danilo Román.

Among well-known illustrators, we have Mar T. Santana, Rod A. Santiago and Ading Gonzales who are also now entering the field of scriptwriting.

It should be mentioned here that many of the more successful scriptwriters have been illustrators too, or are artistically-inclined. Ravelo started out as a writer-cartoonist, drawing the very successful series, "Buhay Filipino" and "Rita" before he took up full-time scriptwriting. Caparas can draw very well. So does Gomez, Omagap and Calixto. Scriptwriters have to have an extra keen mind's eye to visualize the scenes that are to be illustrated. That is why artists have an edge over non-illustrator writers.

How do these scriptwriters manage to write a good number of serials that run simultaneously without sacrificing quality?

First of all, it must be noted that writing for the illustrated magazines is commercial writing. As differentiated from writing for the literary mag-



RAVELO (L) & CAPARAS - The reader first, themselves next and the critic lastly, if at all.

azines, komiks scriptwriting demands that the practitioner of the art writes to please his reader first, himself next and the critic lastly, if at all. And the artist or illustrator does the other half of the story-telling.

The scriptwriter, therefore, does not have to contend with style, syntax and all the other things that the literary writer must be careful about. His first concern is that his story is easily understood by his reader. His text and scenario must be as simple as possible, and visually eye-catching.

In the script, therefore, the writer takes pains to explain to the artist-collaborator what must be illustrated. Some scriptwriters go as far as illustrating the artist what size of frame to use for the scenes.

Doesn't the scriptwriter mix up the characters of his serials? He does sometimes, but this is the editor's responsibility.

Most scriptwriters submit the synopsis of their "nobelas" to the publications before serialization. But the more popular ones only have to verbally narrate to the editor the synopsis—sometimes only the theme or the germ of the story. That's how much the editor trusts them.

It is standard practice for "nobelistas" to submit their scripts chapter by chapter. Very rarely are serials submitted in full. This is because the scriptwriter wants more time to think about the details of the story in-between chapters. He can make the story more interesting than when he concentrates only on one serial and finishes it in a couple of days. This would appear odd to writers in other media, but writing for the komiks is really a unique craft.

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**A Joyous Christmas**

**and a Prosperous**

**New Year to All!**

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