

Firmament Occupation: The Philippine Star System

Joel David

Inha University, Incheon, Korea

joeldavid@inha.ac.kr

Abstract

Although vital to the existence of the Philippine movie industry, stardom has rarely garnered scholarly attention apart from the auteurist (film-artist) or biographical modes. Part of the reason is external, in the sense that media-studies approaches to star-text discourses emerged relatively recently, and may still be in the process of further refinement. However, a crucial internal reason is that the primary Philippine example, Nora Aunor, inadvertently affirms the earlier, now-conventional approach by virtue of her singular dominance as both top star and top multimedia performer. This study will track relevant trends in star studies vis-à-vis Philippine scholarly output, and will then look at an extreme example of Aunor-as-auteur by way of demonstrating the predicament her presence has posed for local scholarship.

Keywords: audience; auteurism; reflexivity; Nora Aunor

About the Author

Joel David is Professor for Cultural Studies at Inha University in Incheon, Korea. He holds a Ph.D. in Cinema Studies at New York University and was founding Director of the University of the Philippines Film Institute. He is the author of a number of books on Philippine cinema, now archived at his *Amauteurish!* blog <<http://amauteurish.com>>. His latest volume, titled *Millennial Traversals*, is also posted on the blog as the country's first exclusively open-access solo-authored book.

Kritika Kultura 25: 249.

Not surprisingly for a country whose people had once been regarded as the most active movie-goers in the world (*Guinness Book of World Records*), the Philippines has tended to have a surfeit of movie stars, even sharing a distinction with the US, its former colonizer, as the only countries to have ever had former movie stars as elected presidents. (I would argue though, and only half-jokingly, that we had the better actor, notwithstanding the divergent fates the two ex-presidents confronted.)

What is surprising is the paucity of star-text discourses, despite the still-unsurprising proliferation of scholarly studies on Philippine cinema, and despite the facts that movie journalism tends to focus on star personalities, and that fan appreciations tend to constitute the bulk of typical social-network discussions; a number of local book publications, in fact, comprise film-star biographies, and recently star autobiographies have also started to emerge. While biographical elements are a crucial component of star-text discourse (Fischer and Landy 3-4), hagiography can

only assume an incidental stature at best, as one among several possible objects in star studies.¹

A convenient way of explaining (if not explaining away) this dismal state of affairs is by pointing to star-text discourses in the West, which after all, and for better or worse, is the first source of local scholarly trends, especially in popular culture. Prior to the advent of cultural studies, discussions of stars took on the complexion of heroic-artist narratives, the precursor of auteur studies. Auteurism could bolster certain basic issues in studies on film artists, including performers, as will be discussed presently; however, its usefulness in star studies is secondary at best, with some exceptions that prove the rule. And such an exception, a star-auteur, will be the concluding subject of this article.

Star Discourse

Perhaps inevitably, one of the first book-length studies of stars as cultural phenomena was from a compatriot of Roland Barthes – whose essay “The Face of Garbo” exemplified the new possibilities of the approach, although it proceeded from photographic assumptions in contemplating the mask-like countenance of Greta Garbo (Barthes 56-58). Edgar Morin’s *Les stars*, translated into English as *The Stars*, recounts the predicaments (and then some) of star studies as recapitulated earlier, prior to providing intensive reconsiderations of such figures as Charles Chaplin and James Dean in order to move beyond the standard Marxist critique of stars as industry (specifically studio) products, toward an inspection of their function in the audience’s figuration and navigation of the distinctions between the real and the imaginary (Morin 13).

Kritika Kultura 25: 250.

Significantly, Morin takes pains to point out that the term “star system” should be invested with more precision than the everyday pejorative usage of how serious political or art films may be compromised by the salaries and demands of popular performers (6-7). And just as he manages to state that from 1920 to the early 1930s, when such a system prevailed in Hollywood, a “glorious era” held sway (Morin 6), so may we be able to reconsider how, with the dismantling of the so-called First Golden Age of 1950s Philippine cinema, an era of independents took hold. In contrast with the current lionization of the independent film producers of the digital shift in local cinema, the period between the First Golden Age and the Second (which began roughly in the mid-1970s) is virtually uncontested as one of “Rampant Commercialism and Artistic Decline,” as described by Bienvenido Lumbera (181-84) in his essay “Problems in Philippine Film History.”

The 1950s First Golden Age was ascribed to the stability enforced by a limited number of studios – i.e., since they were assured of full control over local distribution, their annual profits were permanently guaranteed; as a result, they could afford to fund prestige projects geared toward local and foreign awards competitions every so often. Studies that mention the insidious underside of such a monopolistic system – the blacklisting of unruly talents, for example, or the marginalization of competitors who could not match the vertically integrated resources of the majors – were often relegated to biographical write-ups on specific participants, never in relation to discussing the problems of Golden-Age production. The end of this studio system, brought about by the busting of the production-and-distribution monopoly (following the Paramount decision in the US) and the rise of actor-moguls (representing a more powerful type of independent producer), did result in the

“Rampant Commercialism” decried by Lumbera, but the question of “Artistic Decline” is another matter altogether.

In fact the decade of the 1960s was characterized by an impressive, pioneering, taboo-breaking, politically charged vulgarity, of a sort never seen before or since in the country, and that would be essential to explaining why the Second Golden Age (roughly 1975 to 1986) held far more promise and managed to meet more expectations than the First. Moreover, most filmmakers who made their mark during the First Golden Age actually produced what a number of people would consider their best products during the subsequent non-“golden” years² – Gerardo de Leon with *The Moises Padilla Story*, *El Filibusterismo*, or the long-lost *Ang Daigdig ng mga Api*; Lamberto V. Avellana with *Scout Rangers*;³ Cesar Gallardo with either *Kadenang Putik* or *Geron Busabos* (starring former President Joseph Estrada); and Eddie Romero producing and writing Cesar J. Amigo’s *Sa Atin ang Daigdig*. The sheer proliferation of innovations alone would be worth a compendium all its own – transformation of actor-producers, as already mentioned, into auteur-moguls, double-digit annual production totals, transitions to color, regularity of Cebuano

Kritika Kultura 25: 251.

production and international co-production (including links with US “blood-island” and “blaxploitation” films), eager bandwagon participation by politicians (including then-presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos), depictions of heretofore unseen images of graphic screen violence, musical-teen-idol unruliness, social turmoil, and straight and queer soft-core pornography.

A highly qualifiable additional item may be mentioned as well – the emergence of the leading lights of the Second Golden Age, Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal, with the latter producing what is arguably the best debut film by a Filipino filmmaker, the reflexive *Pagdating sa Dulo*. More significantly, several other talents – among them (in rough chronological order) Celso Ad. Castillo, Danny L. Zialcita, Elwood Perez, Joey Gosiengfiao, Romy Suzara, Jun Raquiza, Peque Gallaga, and Butch Perez – who would be active during the Second Golden Age and whose major achievements would be produced during or thereafter, also made their presence felt this early. Like the First Golden Age, the Second was marked by a measure of stability brought about by the entrenchment of studios – three at a time, same as during the earlier era, but this time with independents occasionally claiming a share of the market and the government providing a mostly supportive, though occasionally threatening, intervention.⁴ Similarly, the current (potentially) Golden Age of digital productions shares with the Second Golden Age all of the latter’s institutional features, with two crucial modifications: most of the government’s subsidiary functions have devolved to private agencies; and digitalization has taken over, with the major studios focusing mainly on television and only occasionally on film projects, and the independents virtually entirely utilizing video format.

The Role of Stars

In fact though this discussion of Philippine cinema’s two confirmable Golden Ages and their interregnum observes the standard film-historical focus on producers and directors, the vital structuring agency for the 1960s’ (through mid-’70s) period of independent cinema would be local movie stars initiating a star system, in the sense that Morin intended. Any casual glance at the 1960s

filmography would reveal as much, with the most active studios associated with the era's biggest stars: Fernando Poe Jr.'s FPJ Productions, Joseph Estrada's Emar Pictures (later JE Productions), Dolphy's RVQ Productions (referencing the performer's actual name, Rodolfo Vera Quizon), Amalia Fuentes's AM Productions, Susan Roces's Rosas Productions, Chiquito's Sotang Bastos Productions, Gloria Sevilla's MG Productions (with Mat Ranillo Jr.), Eddie Rodriguez's Virgo Film Productions. The trend persisted through the ranks and beyond the era, so that latecomers or less-prominent performers had their own outfits: (in alphabetical order) Alona Alegre's AA Productions, Bernard Bonnin's BB Productions, Niño Muhlach's D'Wonder

Kritika Kultura 25: 252.

Films, Ramon Revilla's Imus Productions, Tony Santos's Tony Santos Productions, Romeo Vasquez's RV Productions, Vivian Velez's Amazaldy Film Productions, Donna Villa's Golden Lions Films, Ramon Zamora's Monza Films; in one instance, one of the team-ups between Fernando Poe Jr. and Zaldy Zshornack (for Alex M. Sunga's *Kilabot sa Barilan*) yielded Poe-Zshornack Productions.

The film scholar who contributed significantly to the cultural study of movie stars was Richard Dyer, who wrote more extensively on queer studies and also discussed race and music, but also devoted two volumes overtly to the subject. In *Stars*, Dyer utilized his interdisciplinary orientation in order to argue persuasively for the audience's reading of popular films according to their perception of the stars in the film-texts. In its follow-up, *Heavenly Bodies*, he inspected usually overlooked sources, mainly publicity material but also including reports and gossip items, as complementing screen imagery in the construction of the personas of certain specific performers: Marilyn Monroe's sexuality, Paul Robeson's raciality, and Judy Garland's queer appeal. Dyer began his configuration of star-text issues by positioning star personas against binaries familiar to lay readers: private/public, individual/society, people/stars, and so on (*Heavenly Bodies* 15). He quotes an exceptionally self-aware performer, Lena Horne, regarding her survival strategy as premised on a display of expertise, which nevertheless kept getting read by audiences as an exemplification of black sexuality, and provides his own perceptive conclusion:

We're fascinated by stars because they enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production (capitalism), with its particular organization of life into public and spheres.... [The star phenomenon] constantly jogs these questions of the individual and society, the natural and artificial, precisely because it is promoting ideas of the individual and the natural in media that are mass, technologically elaborated, aesthetically sophisticated. That central paradox means that the whole phenomenon is unstable, never at a point of rest or equilibrium, constantly lurching from one formulation of what being human is to another. (*Heavenly Bodies* 17-18)

In a more recent volume, *Picture Personalities*, Richard deCordova builds on these aforementioned studies, specifically the inadvisability of ascribing the meaning of the film-text to any single agent, especially (following standard auteurist practice) the director (18). Like Dyer, deCordova draws attention to the circulation of knowledge surrounding a performer, but he also anchors his reading of performances on "formal markings" that individualize the actor, in order to be able to accommodate other intertextual associations, including the actor's individualization in

other films (19-20): “formal devices do not function in isolation,

Kritika Kultura 25: 253.

but rather in conjunction with categories outside of the film text, categories that the strictly formal analysis cannot account for” (21).

In Philippine scholarship, star-text studies (beyond the occasional fan-based appreciation and more recent biographical publications) are rare. Among the book-length ones, the most significant recent output would comprise two Tagalog-language texts, Rolando B. Tolentino’s *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake* and Cesar D. Orsal’s *Movie Queen*. Tolentino takes off mainly from the studies of Dyer in order to interrogate the politics of difference as embodied by contemporary Filipino movie stars according to their respective personae: Richard Gomez’s masculinity, Robin Padilla’s rebel, Aga Muhlach’s wholesomeness, Sharon Cuneta’s virginity, Rosanna Roces’s unruliness, Judy Ann Santos’s ordinariness, Kris Aquino’s politically inflected presence, and Manilyn Reynes’s vernacularism. While such specific readings necessarily date his studies of still-evolving star images, Tolentino locates his inspection of the local star system (loosely defined) in the interstices of studio imperatives and audience reception (1-9). Orsal on the other hand appropriates a more historically extensive approach while focusing on female stars, as implied in his title; he allows producers and star-builders, specifically Marichu Vera Perez-Maceda, Inday Badiday, Ethelwolda Ramos, Lily Monteverde, Armida Siguion-Reyna, and German Moreno to collectively define the term “movie queen” (26-27). Understandably he needed to rely on the more basic framework of Barthes, and his non-film specialization results in the problematic assertion that female stars had been prominent throughout the history of Philippine cinema (Orsal 10), although in another instance he (still problematically) states that the end of World War II allowed female Filipino stars to break out of stereotyping and become “*salamin o identipikasyon ng mga ideolohikong ipinalalaganap sa lipunan*” [mirrors or identifications of ideologies propagated in society – my trans.] (135). In a later portion of this article I will be providing a different chronology and rationale for the ascendance of female stars over their male counterparts.

The most intensive Philippine star-text studies appear in essays by Bliss Cua Lim, with “Sharon’s Noranian Turn” as an estimable sample of utilizing two different star personae, Sharon Cuneta’s and Nora Aunor’s, and pointing out their contextual differences as well as their intertextual overlaps. Two other studies, Lim’s article “Fandom, Consumption, and Collectivity in the Philippine New Cinema” and Patrick D. Flores’s “*Makulay na Daigdig*” [Colorful World], enhance the understanding of Aunor’s phenomenal impact on Philippine culture by delving into the unusual devotion by which her fans attend to her (in Flores’s study) as well as her own critical responses to her position as an object of fan worship (in Lim’s study). Further groundwork may be found in studies that deal with larger cultural issues that reveal the significance of star texts as a matter of course. Neferti Xina M. Tadiar’s *Fantasy-Production*, for example, situates the Philippines’s postcolonial longings within “an

international system of desiring-actions among nations... [making] the case for the continuing power of the imaginary of the international capitalist system to shape and set limits to the possible imaginings of the contemporary postcolonial nation-state and its peoples” (22); in critiquing “fantasy-production” as well as pursuing “alternative imaginaries and the unorthodox possibilities for historical change that they might bear” (23), she encounters the instantly mythical clash between martial-law dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his nemesis’s widow Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, but also ends up with the country’s biggest star, Nora Aunor, whose figure was subjected to claims on both sides of the political extremes (23-24). The present study will also be eventually highlighting Aunor as an exceptional type of Philippine star, but without situating her as a figure for any other star to be measured against, without configuring her specifically or exclusively as an agent of cultural change vis-à-vis her fan following, and without positioning her in larger historical currents beyond the ones where she had been a direct participant.

Pinoy Star System

If we grant Morin’s assertion that movie stars can constitute a system when they have the means of not only influencing their own projects to their career advantage, but also reaping exclusive profits from said projects (beyond or in addition to the traditional flat salary and/or percentage points), then we may be able to identify a period (1960s, in fact) when this system emerged. More important, we should also be able to affirm that what existed has always been at best a subsystem, since even though the studio arrangement declined momentarily, it never really went away. Another way of stating this is: the performers in the star subsystem had claims to ownership of (usually) one studio based on each performer’s capability of attracting enough audience members to sustain the continuance of her particular studio; on the other hand, a “regular” studio (usually not owned by a star) would have access, in theory, to all available stars, and sometimes be able to contract several of them, including the studio-owning ones, to create a stable of talents. In the latter case, the studio would then be a multistar (rather than a single-star) production company.

This formulation enables us to speculate on the motives behind the formation of the local star subsystem: the First Golden Age’s essentially multistar studios insisted on the Fordist production mode (Jessop 42-62), where talents would be employed according to a factory principle of constant work with prefixed salary. The instability of such an arrangement can be inferred from the fact that popular culture products tend to possess far more volatile and unpredictable profit trajectories, so that at certain junctures, some talents will outperform several others. When this occurs, the more gifted and/or fortunate talents will feel shortchanged and will tend to agitate for more suitable compensation. However, the industry’s vertical

integration provides the studio owners with the advantage of dictating their terms and insisting on limits, with the more ambitious talents faced with the threat of blacklisting by mutually protective rival studios.

These, among other reasons, became the rationale for the US Supreme Court's oligopoly-busting Paramount decision, known formally as *United States v. Paramount Pictures Inc.* (334 US 131 [1948]), or the Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948. The Philippine industry was able to hold off the adoption of this legal principle through the 1950s – hence enforced stability on the part of the studios and their financial confidence in occasionally slating non-profitable prestige productions during the decade, an era that gave rise retrospectively to the “Golden Age” designation (Garcia 39-54). The end of studio domination thereby also saw the sudden proliferation of star-owned studios. The major studios (LVN Pictures, Premiere Productions, and Sampaguita Pictures) of the 1950s, however, never folded up until much later, and their ranks were joined by similar multistar production houses such as Ambassador Films, Lea Productions, Tagalog Ilang-Ilang Productions, Larry Santiago Productions, Nepomuceno Productions, and Hemisphere Pictures. The situation remained unchanged even with the return of studio domination during the 1980s (David, “Studios” n.p.).

In observance of the strategy of upholding the general principle via a cursory inspection of cases that detracted from it as apparent exceptions to the rule, we might mention two instances of studios that partook of properties associated with their “others” – i.e., a star-owned production entity that never featured the star in the studio's biggest projects, except as a supporting performer; and a purportedly multistar studio founded on the promotion of a single performer. The former example, Golden Lions Films (also credited as Golden Lions [or Lion] Films Productions and Golden Lion Films International) lists 35 films as production company and six as distributor on the Internet Movie Database or IMDB. None of these films starred its purported owner Donna Villa, although she did appear in some of its titles as supporting performer. The latter example, Viva Films, became known as the home studio of Sharon Cuneta, daughter of the long-time mayor of Pasay City; Cuneta worked exclusively with Viva from her emergence in 1981 until 1995. After the February 1986 “people-power” uprising that ousted the Marcos dictatorship, the outfit was sequestered and investigated for possible misuse of public funds, but was subsequently cleared by the investigating agency, the Presidential Commission on Good Government.

Upon closer inspection, however, each case would not strictly hold up as an unqualified exception. Golden Lions was closer to the model of the late '60s through mid-'70s incarnation of Nepomuceno Productions (a.k.a. Luis Nepomuceno Productions), which served primarily as a vehicle for the directorial output of Luis

Kritika Kultura 25: 256.

Nepomuceno; Golden Lions functioned as home studio for Donna Villa's husband Carlo J. Caparas, who launched and popularized the series of so-called massacre films with the outfit, most of them associated with presidential daughter Kris Aquino (Lim, “True Fictions” 62-75). Viva Films, for its part, was associated with Sharon Cuneta for only 43 out of her nearly 60 films (one of them, *The Lilian Velez Story*, a Caparas massacre movie co-produced with Golden Lions; interestingly, Aquino was positioned as the oligarchy-sourced anti-Marcos counterpart of Cuneta). Viva's own record is even more definitively multistar, since it lists 480 films as producer and over 200 as distributor, and was known at one point as the stable of a group of young male stars called “*bagets*,” after the eponymously titled 1984 blockbuster of Maryo J. de los Reyes.

The Star-Auteur

The search for exceptional instances in the Philippine star system currently culminates in the case of Nora Aunor, who holds an intensively chronicled record as a rags-to-riches aspirant who defied then-uncontested conventions for stardom, premised on Western-sourced categories of race (specifically skin color and height), class, urbanity, educational attainment, gender, sexuality, and morality, and who effected a determined and calculated transition from phenomenal stardom to front-rank artistry. The productivity of studying what may be termed Noraniana – which in fact had already been in place for decades, with journal articles, books, anthologies, and doctoral dissertations, as well as an actual physical library (see “Noraniana Collection Project” n.p.), all focused on the subject, plus at least one film (Clodualdo del Mundo Jr.’s *Superfan* [2009]) and one novel (Ricky Lee’s *Si Amapola sa 65 na Kabanata* [2011]) that features so-called Noranians (die-hard Aunor fans) – tends to lead local scholars back to the old-school auteurist approach, rather than to the updated star-text studies summarized earlier (see Figure 1 as an example of Aunor’s iconographic fine-arts stature).⁵

Kritika Kultura 25: 257.



Figure 1. Thomas Daquioag’s “Binasurang Papel” [Trashed Paper], mixed technique (acrylic with paper sculpture) from the *Papelmismo* exhibit (Galerie Anna, 2015), described by the artist as his critique of the government’s “[snubbing of] her major contributions in the film industry when she didn’t make the cut as a National Artist” (de Guzman n.p.). The line “My brother is not a pig!” is lifted directly from Aunor’s dialogue in Lupita Aquino-Kashiwahara’s *Minsa’y Isang Gamu-gamo* (1976), the first Filipino movie that criticized the presence of US bases in the Philippines; the entire artwork relies on the Filipino reader’s pop-cultural familiarity with Aunor’s cinematic and real-life struggles across nearly four

decades. Used with permission of the artist.

To demonstrate the predicament introduced by Noranian scholarship, I will be attempting to follow the auteurist line in the strictest sense of the convention, i.e. a consideration of the artist's accomplishment as total filmmaker, proceeding from Aunor's star-system ownership of her own production outfit, NV (later NCV) Productions, through a preliminary reading of a "film" she had created as director, writer, and performer (Figure 2). Historically, Philippine cinema has had certain instances of performers, even female ones, who turned to direction; most of these, however, were individuals who rarely had lead roles and sometimes became less active as actors once their directorial careers took off. The Silos brothers (Manuel and Octavio), Gregorio Fernandez, Rosa Mia, Leroy Salvador, Efren Reyes (Sr.), and Gerardo de Leon are examples from the First Golden Age, while later generations would have the likes of Eddie Garcia, Laurice Guillen, Joel Lamangan, and Mario O'Hara. Cases such as those of Manuel Conde and Fernando Poe Jr.

Kritika Kultura 25: 258.

once more yield qualifications that account for their exceptional situations. Conde had mastered film comedy (circa the First Golden Age and later) so astutely that his non-star stature could be counteracted by the effectiveness of his presentation. Poe, for his part, rigidified his performative style in order to complement the persona required by his essentially unprogressive star vehicles, where a peace-loving Everyman is forced by lumpen villains to take violent measures in pursuit of personal justice (a comparatively lesser example of such a director-performer, in the melodramatic love-triangle subgenre, would be Eddie Rodriguez). Possibly the closest instance to Aunor's example is a still-active non-directing talent, Gloria Sevilla, who produced her films and dominated a (circumscribed) Philippine film industry, that of Cebuano-language cinema, despite having been non-fair-skinned. (In fact Sevilla's 1968 production, Leroy Salvador's *Badlis sa Kinabuhi*, which she co-wrote and starred in, may be counted as one of the finest achievements not just in Cebuano-language cinema but in Philippine melodrama as well.)



Figure 2. The only Philippine female star constantly photographed peering through camera lenses: left, during one of her early productions as the titular tribal character in Gerardo de Leon's *Banaue* (1975); right, on the set of one more of her self-directed productions (unfortunately uncompleted), *What I Did for Love*, started in 1988 and immediately preceding *Greatest Performance* (Devera, "Nora Aunor" n.p.).

Auteur criticism arguably straddles the historical distinctions between classical and contemporary theorizing in film, in the sense that it had a totalizing vision behind it (typical of classical theory projects), but that it also lent itself to an immediate and comparatively simple deconstruction of its basic assertions, as befits any self-aware postmodern position. Its premise – that any film is ascribable

Kritika Kultura 25: 259.

to an individual creative intelligence – was merely a confirmation of what informed critics and practitioners were already long aware of; its larger implications, however, could be and were marshalled for political agendas by its original French proponents in their bid for industrial supremacy.

Film authorship underwent a transformation, from the "*politique des auteurs*" to the auteur theory, in its initial transition from France to the US. "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," François Truffaut's *Cahiers du Cinéma* essay, did not so much define directly a new policy as oppose one already in existence, the French cinema's tradition of quality, for its supposed failure to provide film directors with genuinely creative options in the practice of their profession (233-35).⁶ In heralding the arrival of the "auteur theory" in the US, Andrew Sarris more than mistranslated the *politique des auteurs*. Sarris's project can be seen as even more retrograde than that of the *Cahiers*, particularly in his hierarchization of mainly American (or US-exhibited) filmmakers topped by a "Pantheon." Although John Caughie remarks that Sarris's reconfiguration of industrial interference as constituting the source of creative tension between an auteur and his material had facilitated "the 'auteur-structuralist' shift" ("Andrew Sarris" 61), it would be more accurate to state that Sarris had actually been resistant to objections to his propositions.⁷

That the equivalent of a French New Wave, dubbed the New American Cinema in retrospect, was emerging during the late 1960s, the same period of the publication of Sarris's book, may have reinforced this impression of the practical – though not the critical – viability of auteurism. Auteur-structuralism, as already mentioned, represented a rectification of the *politique des auteurs* in terms more useful for politically responsive critical applications. Drawing from the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, which in turn was based on the studies of linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and of phonology by Roman Jakobson, auteur-structuralism (alternately called cine-structuralism) was attributed by Charles Eckert to English practitioners (152). Brian Henderson, in "Critique of Cine-Structuralism," echoes Geoffrey Nowell-Smith in defining the approach as the uncovering "behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment in a director's work [of] a structural hard core of basic and often recondite motifs" (167), disputes Peter Wollen's conceptualization of the auteur as "not a conscious creator but an unconscious catalyst and even...that the auteur-structure is only one code among many" (176), and recommends "the principle of intertextuality" to overthrow the empirical and metaphysical tendencies of structuralism

itself (179-80).

From this stage, auteurism encountered historical materialism, which in effect resulted in a decentering of the authorial role. A number of European theorists may be credited for laying the groundwork for poststructural analyses in film in particular and culture in general, but the target area of application remained

Kritika Kultura 25: 260.

Hollywood. The infusion of Marxist concerns about the workings of social contexts in both the production and reception of films ensured that the earlier formalist slant could now be more easily discarded. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's monumental project, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, can be seen as an ironic culmination of Sarris's attempt to valorize Hollywood cinema, in the sense of upholding the historical prominence of Hollywood practice yet rejecting the reducibility advocated by both formalism (including auteurism, in its predilection for artistic genius) and orthodox Marxism (in its prescription of economic determinism).

Auteurism Reconfigured

To return to our concern with the present topic, auteur criticism in the US, even in the now seemingly primitive formalist extreme propounded by Sarris, can be seen as having had an enabling function in other contexts, if only by sheer reactive imperatives. Its effects outside of the US – and the First World that the US represents – can be traced in the emergence of Third-World consciousness and the subsequent development of forms of national resistances to political and cultural colonizations. Even such a study of Third-World filmmaking from a First-World perspective as Roy Armes has conducted includes a discourse on “individual authorship” (73-86) that does not seek to deconstruct auteurist concepts in the manner that, say, Truffaut's or Sarris's texts invariably provoked.

An explanation could be constructed from the Foucauldian concept of the “discursive formation – not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of” (Brennan 46-47; also mentioned in deCordova 22 and in King 169). This formation can be and has been traditionally conceived in terms of power relations between the (neo)colonized and the (neo)colonizer, with resistance movements impelled to set up counter-structures of their own in order to challenge the dominant order. Auteurism can therewith be seen as the means by which the formerly politically disenfranchised Third-World cultural artist was invested with an authority that could lend itself to the more immediate purposes of social change. Within this context, the initial dilemma encountered by First-World critics of not finding a progressive political agenda from auteurism's original aesthetic program was no longer applicable; the very fact that Third-World film practitioners could now be regarded as authority figures (using the liberal-humanist framework that was even then being derided in the West) was cause enough for the institution of repressive measures in Third-World national experiences by governments that were often in (neo)colonial collusion with First-World powers. The Brazilian Cinema Novo movement, as a case in point, adhered to the model of critically

articulate filmmakers that the *Cahiers* critics-turned-filmmakers represented, even as they criticized their New-Wave counterparts for the latter's alleged political insensitivities (Solanas et al. 11).

To some extent the problematics of Third-World auteurism can be formulated alongside the American, or actually Hollywoodian, account, in so far as most national film industries hold up Hollywood as both commercial ideal and primary competitor. Thus issues of representation, for example, can be enriched by intertextual analyses of both local and Hollywood samples. The larger challenge for what may be termed Hollywood's outside Other, however, lies in the globalization of Hollywood itself, concomitant with the call by scholars in Western countries for the erasure of national boundaries. In cinema this had long ago been realized in the incursion of American film products in most parts of the world, a tendency exacerbated by the so-called video revolution; but a reversal of direction is also emerging, with still-exploitative relations in place.

Nora Aunor's available auteurial record affirms a record of progressivity even with the omission of her directorial efforts. Her production-house output, from NV [later NCV] Productions (after her formal name Nora Cabaltera Villamayor), accounted for less than thirty of her nearly two hundred film appearances, but this may be attributed to the production-house investments' extreme fluctuations in fortune, from major hits to big-time flops, including at least one instance each of a literary adaptation, art film, period project, costume epic, noir thriller, and postmodernist comedy; the less-profitable titles also served to boost her stature as serious performing-arts aspirant, which she later complemented with well-received stage and concert appearances. Her single available directorial credit, for *Niño Valiente* (1975), was one of the few NV films where she did not appear, despite its title's use of her legal name's initials; it evinces a still-conventional approach toward genre filmmaking, specifically the Western-inspired action caper premised on the quest for justice by an initially mild-mannered hero (*a la* Fernando Poe Jr. or FPJ). It would take over a decade, when she had secured her reputation as the country's premiere film performer, before she would attempt another stab at film directing. In this respect, Aunor's influence may be seen to parallel those of other actors who attempted to intervene in affairs of state, all of them, at the highest level, male: Rogelio de la Rosa had planned to run for president but changed his mind at the last minute; Joseph Estrada ran and won but was subsequently deposed owing to a perceived dysfunctional effect his governing style had on the country; and FPJ ran, almost won, but supposedly lost because of alleged vote-buying by the then-incumbent leader (who had succeeded Estrada and was therefore still qualified to run for president). The difference is that Aunor's political attempts were all regarded as eventual failures – she went on record to support presidents who became increasingly unpopular (Lim, "Fandom, Consumption, and Collectivity" 197-198), and her own 2001 gubernatorial run in Camarines Sur, her

home province, failed humiliatingly and might have partly accounted for her decision to take an extended sojourn in the US. Hence despite her recognized ability to effect changes owing to her great popularity, one can safely conclude that, for a complex of reasons, and in contrast with her own industry colleagues, she could not (yet) introduce these changes directly, as a political aspirant

in electoral exercises.

Greatest Performance

A year after *Niño Valiente*, Aunor, who had already done several projects with prestige directors from the First Golden Age (most prominently Gerardo de Leon, whose last completed film was her 1975 starrer *Banaue*), contracted a theater and film writer and performer, Mario O'Hara, who had just released his debut film, *Mortal*. O'Hara was then associated with Lino Brocka, having written scripts and performed for him through several films; Brocka had refused to work with Aunor, referring to her derisively as "that superstar" (Vera n.p.) but apparently changed his mind after O'Hara's project, *Tatlong Taóng Walang Diyos*, won for Aunor the first Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (Filipino Film Critics Circle) prize for Best Performance by an Actress. O'Hara directed Aunor in ten films, about as many as she had had with two other Filipino filmmakers, Maryo J. de los Reyes and Joel Lamangan; the O'Hara credit wins out only if we count in a twenty-five-episode television series, as well as plans for future collaborations cut short by his death in 2012.

The bulk of Aunor's film projects with O'Hara had been completed when she announced her next directorial effort, *Greatest Performance of My Life* [subsequently shortened to *Greatest Performance*, hereafter *GP*]. It was slated for inclusion in the 1989 edition of the Metro Manila Film Festival but was rejected for allegedly being excessively "dark" (Devera, "Video on Tumblr" n.p.; see Figure 3). Despite the propensity by rejected MMFF entrants of voicing their complaints regarding the festival's approval process, Aunor kept quiet and suspended work on the project – permanently, as it turned out. *GP* was not the only project that Aunor had abandoned after encountering some form of disappointment (Devera, "Nora Aunor" n.p.), but it was the closest to having been completed. Also consistent with her temperament, once she had given up on an undertaking, she would refuse to reconsider completing it and would discourage its circulation. Apparently what remains of the film is a seriously deteriorated video transfer of the celluloid interlock, a rough assemblage comprising edited footage with original sound but still missing some music, sound effects, post-production optical effects, and color grading; typical of the circumstances of Philippine film preservation, all original material has been lost.⁸ For this reason, a reading of *GP* utilizing reception study methods will be impossible to implement, inasmuch as its original "audience" would have been limited to Aunor, her technical crew, her small circle of advisers, and the Metro Manila Film Festival's screening committee, while the movie's

Kritika Kultura 25: 263.

post-celluloid viewers would be even more restricted, given her insistence that all traces of the film be destroyed and its availability limited to a single collector's copy of a less-than-satisfactory video transfer.



Figure 3. Clockwise from top left: Opening with the end, with the body of Laura (Nora Aunor) being carried out of the concert venue; a fan of Laura (played by biological son Ian Kristoffer de Leon) visits the now-empty venue and watches the stage; informal interlock credit using Aunor’s nickname is superimposed on the fan’s gaze; the object of his gaze is Laura during an earlier concert where her decline began. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

What is immediately evident from *GP* is not only how self-aware Aunor had been about the dynamics of stardom, but also, and more exceptionally, how eager she was to pursue a deconstruction of the star system. If we take the interlock as a finished film (the same way, for example, that Pauline Kael had insisted on reviewing the rough cut of Robert Altman’s *Nashville* for the *New Yorker* – see account in Stuart 279-285), we might be able to understand how ambivalent the MMFF might have been regarding its decision to exclude it from its festival line-up (see Figure 4); on the other hand, we might also be able to realize why Aunor decided to accept the festival screening committee’s decision and instead take out her frustration on the project by suspending it. I would not venture to speculate for now whether the rarity of *GP* restores it to the status of the unique, personal, and inaccessible that provides the “aura” possessed by premodern art (Benjamin 221):

for as long as a copy (no matter how degraded its condition is) remains, its status as cultic artifact is always-already potentially reproducible, in much the same way that certain films or film segments that were once regarded as lost and that were subsequently rediscovered could be preserved, copied, and disseminated once more to the wider public.



Figure 4. Clockwise from top left: Laura is unable to complete her concert and is forcibly escorted offstage because of her unstable condition; at home with her live-in partner she lights up, then pours herself a drink; when she quarrels with him he turns violent on her and she has to cower under some covers. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

After the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986, the MMFF lost a crucial measure of political and, more important, financial support. (Its global counterpart, the Manila International Film Festival, foundered even during the Marcos period because of the focus on governance directed by foreign media and human-rights organizations; in 1986, as a result of the controversy over the snap presidential elections that would result in a military-led revolt, the event was cancelled altogether.) Hence the post-'86 MMFF felt pressure from its sponsoring agency, the Metro Manila Development Authority (formerly the Metro Manila Commission, later the Metro Manila Authority) to function as a self-sustaining event. By 2006, the festival itself officially acknowledged this pressure by

including “commercial viability” as a criterion for determining film quality (Abunda n.p.) – a measure dropped four years later, after extensive controversy over the MMFF’s awards decisions. Aunor might have premised her decision on previous MMFF “dark” material that won the festival’s best-film prize – a female stripper’s onstage death dance in Celso Ad. Castillo’s *Burlesk Queen* (1976), the murder-suicide of a retired policeman and his household in Mike de Leon’s *Kisapmata* (1981), the small-town

Kritika Kultura 25: 265.

crimes of passion involving adultery, incest, patricide, suicide, and infanticide in Marilou Diaz-Abaya’s *Karnal* (1983), the double-suicide of a mother and daughter by self-immolation in their own brothel in Celso Ad. Castillo’s *Paradise Inn* (1985).

Aunor herself had starred in several such “dark” winners: Eddie Garcia’s *Atsay*, her iconic housemaid role, in 1978; Ishmael Bernal’s *Himala*, her most widely acclaimed performance as a skeptical faith healer, in 1982; Mario O’Hara’s *Bulaklak sa City Jail*, her women-in-prison saga, in 1984. The difference is that all these aforementioned films, unlike *GP*, were made during the festival’s more sanguineous period, the Marcos era. As if to reward her quietude over the rejection of her production, the MMFF continued to recognize her entries in future editions, awarding best film to Gil Portes’s *Andrea, Paano Ba ang Maging Isang Ina?* in 1990, Elwood Perez’s *Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M.* in 1991, and Joel Lamangan’s *Muling Umawit ang Puso* in 1995; she would also continue receiving festival best actress awards to emerge as the performer with most multiple wins.

Resonances

GP (short for *Greatest Performance*) is marked by Aunor’s intensive long-term collaboration with Mario O’Hara: its cinematographer and production designer – not (yet) listed in the interlock’s opening credits – were Johnny Araojo and Len Santos respectively, both of whom had worked on her O’Hara projects, as well as on some of Lino Brocka’s pre-Aunor projects. The movie therefore partakes of the dark-red color scheme (exacerbated by celluloid film-base deterioration) and disorienting camera placements that O’Hara utilized for his films noirs with Aunor, particularly his 1984 releases, *Condemned* and the MMFF winner *Bulaklak sa City Jail*.

Yet *GP* also departs from O’Hara’s reliance on happy endings, a tendency he seemed to have acquired after the trauma of the box-office failure of *Tatlong Taóng Walang Diyos*, his first collaboration with Aunor; it would take him the next millennium, directing a project with Aunor’s daughter (*Pangarap ng Puso* [2000]), before he could append an unhappy ending once more to an ambitious production. *GP* may be described as a melodramatic woman-centered love triangle, but that would be understating its predilection for the perverse. The men attempting to claim Laura (the Aunor character), a famous singer, are both genuinely obsessed with her, but in violently destructive ways (see Figure 5); only a class-determined gulf, bridged by Laura, separates the two – Cholo (played by Julio Diaz), a down-and-out band leader delineating a variation on the *Star Is Born* male loser, and Briccio (Tirso Cruz III), a smitten impresario who arranges to rehabilitate her for her drug dependency but whose psychosis causes him to imprison her in his mansion.⁹



Figure 5. Left to right: Laura during the opening concert appears to be singing to several people obsessed with her, starting with her unknown fan (see Figure 1); Briccio (Tirso Cruz III), oblivious to his jealous wife, will be plotting out ways of possessing Laura; Cholo (Julio Diaz), Laura’s live-in partner, is emasculated by her success and lingers in the sidelines to watch over her. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

Both men are affected by drugs in antipodal ways, with Cholo unable to control his addiction and Briccio unable to maintain his medication. Even then, Laura’s chemical dependency is far worse than either of them could possibly abide, from an excess of “hard” substances to the legal commodities (liquor and cigarettes – see Figure 4) proscribed by physicians for people whose success depends on the upkeep of their vocal endowment. (Ironically, Aunor would lose her ability to sing several decades later not from any of the habits indulged in by Laura, but from a botched cosmetic surgical procedure performed in 2010 by a Japanese clinic.) Early enough in the narrative, before the conflicts with either lover are even depicted, Laura drinks alone in a pub and gets befriended by four anonymous men, who slip a mickey in her drink and take her to a motel to gang-rape her (Figure 6). In a later scene she returns to the pub, gun in hand, but she allows the panicked group to escape and punishes herself instead by intensifying her addictive behavior.



Figure 6. Upper row, left to right: chummy with men, Laura hangs out with her all-male band members including Cholo; later, rejected by her long-time promoter for her dissolute conduct, she drinks alone in a bar where four anonymous men eye her across the room; two of the men proceed to stalk her. Lower row, left to right: she accepts an offer of drinks from the men but one of them slips a pill into her glass; the men take her to a motel, where she realizes their intention to rape her; immobilized by the drug, she is unable to fight back. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

The sexual violation of any Aunor character is always intended to bear a mark of excess, proceeding from the origin of her persona in the wholesome musical teen-idol roles that were invariably poised as the “moral” counterweight to the then-raging soft-core “*bomba*” films.¹⁰ Her attempt to redefine her persona as “working-class Filipina,” from domestic to overseas worker, further conferred on her star figure a measure of sanctification – a quality foregrounded in her faith-healer role in *Himala*, the movie that, prior to *GP*, had raised the most serious issues regarding mass adulation and its spiritual dimensions. The intertextual resemblances between the two films go beyond the rhetorical level (including a climactic *Nashville*-inspired onstage assassination¹¹). The Aunor-persona’s filmographic ravishers are always determined by their historical roles: an invading Japanese officer in *Tatlong Taóng Walang Diyos*, a domestic patriarch in *Atsay*, military torturers (implicitly) in *Andrea*. Just as *Himala*’s Elsa is figuratively punished for her opportunistic quackery by having to endure rape and being unable to effect a miracle that would save her most loyal follower from the same fate, so does Laura have to suffer sexual abuse seemingly for her cavalier attitude toward her talent and success. More significantly, not only does the persona confront an entire gang onscreen rather than the usual individual and/or distanced debaucher; in the instance of *GP*, the men do not seem to occupy any importance, whether in the movie’s or in the country’s affairs: they just happen to be around when an opportunity to take advantage of a wasted woman presents itself, and disappear from the narrative after she threatens a retaliation.

Star Performance

The dissipation of the Nora Aunor persona in *GP (Greatest Performance)* moves beyond the description by Briccio's jealous girlfriend of Laura as "*adik, lasengga, kaladkarin*" (addict, drunkard, slatternly). Her dependence on Briccio develops after her inability to maintain her expenses, to the point where a sheriff confiscates her belongings, including her band's musical instruments; her immediate response is to binge out on alcohol on her now-empty floor, then when the liquor runs out, she gets stoned on drugs, nearly getting raped once more by one of Cholo's band members (Figure 7). The details of Aunor's lifestyle, as paralleled in Laura, were confirmed by Aunor herself in an extensive no-holds-barred interview, conducted during her return to the Philippines in 2011, after a US sojourn of eight years (Paredes and Maglipon 88-154). The interview affirmed the general accuracy of her self-portrayal in *GP*, with one crucial detail that effectively made her real-life "performance" more sensational: while admitting to serial partners,¹² she also admitted that she had explored same-sex arrangements, stating "Darling, *hindi naman dapat ikahiya kung ano tayo*" [we should never be ashamed of what we are] and, regarding the possibility of being bisexual, "*Baka nga gano 'n ako*" [I guess I might be that way] (118-20).



Figure 7. Clockwise from top left: Laura seeks the help of a new producer (Michael de Mesa), but he attempts to ravish her; later, stoned on drugs and alcohol, she passes out and one of her band members also attempts to take advantage of her condition but is prevented by a colleague; thrown out of a bar for unruly behavior, she messes up traffic as she attacks the joint's bouncers; Briccio passes by, picks her up, and takes her to a rehabilitation clinic, where she continues thrashing about and has to be restrained by orderlies. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

Kritika Kultura 25: 269.

The foregrounding of queerness in Aunor's historical narrative ensconces her stardom stature on a so-far unique plane of existence. The closest to her example – of a top-ranked movie personality also regarded as an exemplar in performing arts – would have been Marlon Brando's extensively quoted admission that, "Like a large number of men, I, too, have had homosexual experiences and I am not ashamed" (Carey, qtd. in Stern 70). Yet in Brando's case, he had already long-abandoned the pursuit of stardom and was on the way to deliberately developing a physical unattractiveness that appeared to mock his earlier sex-symbol standing and challenged producers and audiences to accept his new image as a morbidly obese (though still histrionically talented) eccentric. Aunor, for her part, parlayed the controversy over her exemplary frankness into a successful return as leading multimedia performer, this time with attendant global recognition.

On the other hand, a more generic sense of queerness diverts the narrative from fully conforming to the standard requisites of the tragic-artist framework. An example would be the aftermath of the gang-rape scene, which shows how Laura manages to secure a handgun in order to attempt to punish her rapists. Upon her arrival the next morning at the pad she shares with Cholo, the latter undergoes an outburst of jealousy that quickly escalates into one-sided physical violence; as if beating her up were not enough, Cholo looks for his gun and loads it while Laura hides behind a large teddy bear. Since all the events take place in the same room, Cholo walks back to Laura and threatens her further, saying he knows where she is and that she should come out until he finishes counting to ten. His tone of voice, however, becomes increasingly playful (complemented by the teasing manner with which he twirls around the gun, eventually phallically caressing it, in his hands). Laura emerges behind him and they wind up frivolling around like little kids, with Laura asking Cholo to kiss her on the spots where he had hurt her (Figure 8). The political incorrectness of the patriarchal prerogative bestowed by the narrative upon Cholo is not only qualified by his less-privileged status as, in effect, Laura's dependent (not to mention feminized in relation to [fire]power); it also ends in a reversal of roles, with Laura, following the masochist-as-controller line observed by several authors (see, for example, Deleuze), instructing him on how to comfort her. Moreover, the incident occurs in the morning, after Cholo wakes up and Laura (momentarily) recovers from her rape trauma, so there could be no mistaking that the aberrant behavior might have been induced by any of the substances that they normally consume.¹³



Figure 8. Clockwise from top left: Laura finds her own way home after the rape incident; jealous because of her absence, Cholo turns violent once more and looks for his gun; Cholo plays with his gun as Laura, hiding behind him, tries to determine whether his playful mood is for real; after reconciling with Cholo, Laura sneaks away with his gun to confront her rapists. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

The issue that Aunor raises, with *GP* as (still-hidden) precedent, confronts standard semiotic logic on the performance of stardom. Barry King's "Articulating Stardom" differentiates star performances from regular theater impersonation, wherein "the 'real' personality of the actor should disappear into the part or, conversely, that if the range of the actor is limited to parts consonant with his or her personality then this constitutes 'poor' acting" (168), complemented by "re-skilling" in consideration of the technological requirements of film as a medium (171). Stars, per King, develop "as a response to the interaction of three areas of discursive practice or economies – systems of control that mobilize resources in order to achieve specifiable effects. These are: the cultural economy of the human body as a sign; the economy of signification in film; and the economy of the labor market for actors" (167). The first area is defined by the ideal of naturalism, where (unlike in theater) the actor re-presents "cultural markers that he or she bears as a private individual for

character portrayal” (173); the second involves two processes: hypersemioticization, an “intensification of the process observed in theater” (175), and the displacement of interiority, defined as the “tendency of film to transform the actor into an ostensive sign, its problematic insertion into the norm of impersonation” leading to a behaviorism that shows the “surface of things” (177);

Kritika Kultura 25: 271.

the third requires stars “of limited or average ability [to invest] their energies in the cultivation of a persona [that] represents something within their control and a means of competing with actors who have ability in impersonation” (179).

King describes the last (the economy of the actors’ labor market) as fostering a “tendency towards the formation of personae as a monopoly strategy” (179), although he extols the example of Brando’s Method style as “a successful adaptation of impersonation to the pressures of personification, deploying impersonation to refer back to the person of the actor, the consistent entity underlying each of his or her roles” (ibid.). With Aunor in *GP*, we are able to arrive at a situation where the star amplifies the signification of her persona by not only wresting complete control of her project (as other entrants in the star system were wont to do) but, more important, by designing her role as a distillation of all her previous star vehicles (even playing with earlier producers’ tendencies to foreground her name, as when a previous Aunor movie title had modified a popular song to “Tell Nora I Love Her” and in *GP*, she restores to her character the name Laura). Furthermore, she turns this hyper-reflexive strategy inside-out, by compiling biographical details too extreme for normative star applications, and that would surely have been rejected by any other producer (as the producer-dominated MMFF did) as too damaging for her, or any other star’s, image (a few samples of which are mentioned in Figure 9). The process of Aunor’s personification in *GP* therefore proceeds from a self-impersonation that leads to an affirmation of her persona in a decidedly counter-intuitive manner, where rather than heroicizing her character, she pursues a thoroughgoing, arguably unforgiving deconstruction of her own “superstar” persona.



Figure 9. Left to right: Laura, like Nora Aunor in real life, hangs out with even the least among her fans (here a young child, the helpless witness to her downfall and destruction); the men in her narrative behave abusively, but the hierarchy of villainy in *GP* is determined by class and race, as big-timer Briccio (played by fair-skinned Tirso Cruz III, Aunor’s most durable love-team partner), eliminates his rival Cholo; Aunor also provides Laura with harrowing withdrawal scenes in *GP*’s rehabilitation sequences. [NCV Films, frame captures by author, used with permission.]

Conclusion

Star-text studies in the Philippines may have been arrested by (or fixated on) the assumptions and methods introduced by auteurism, owing to the exceptional “superstar” instance represented by Nora Aunor. By focusing on her reflexive self-creation, *Greatest Performance*, we may see how impossible this ideal has been, whether literally (in the sense that the film-text has been rendered invisible to the public-at-large by Aunor herself), critically (in that however it embodies a performance peak, the question of how she responded to script, direction, and production pressures cannot be separated from the fact that she performed all these functions herself), or academically, inasmuch as all other Filipino star aspirants will tend to be subjected to Aunor’s expert conflation of persona and impersonation, to the extent where she can repudiate the heroic elements of her stardom and emerge even more credible and victorious, with (using a variation on Dyer’s binaries) her “good” artistic and self-critical self overcoming her “bad” dissipated and negligent lifestyle. Circumstantially, the film also serves several conflicted functions, starting with its impossible centrality to a discussion of her persona (because of its historical “invisibility” to the public), ultimately enabling-yet-occluding any claim, credible to the few who had been able to view it, that it literally contains her “greatest performance.”

It would be even more futile for scholars of Philippine stardom to jettison the example of Aunor as an extreme that would be near-impossible to approximate, even in other national film cultures. Since her presence has hovered over, and in fact permanently redefined, local popular culture over the course of five decades, the only available approach would be to proceed by clarifying where any other Philippine star exists in relation to the still-evolving Aunor iconography. In this respect we find a persona whose essence has been so overwhelming that it has suffused Philippine cultural discourse, always-already at the very least spectral and at the same time very much alive and insistent on maintaining and modifying the same influence that she had originally engendered.

Notes

- 1 The editors of a recent star-studies anthology, *Stars: The Film Reader*, regard the prevalence of biography as inevitable, but propose that such material, which tends to suffer from “banal and quotidian” details (Fischer and Landy 4), be spiced up with scandal, as “another way of extending the spectacle of the media screen to the everyday world and legitimating the exceptional character of the star in a society that valorizes personal excess or crisis” (5). They also propose further elaborating on the biographical approach by looking for elements such as the mythical, the performative, and the socio-political (6-7).
- 2 The late critic-historian Agustin Sotto maintained that the 1960s “was also the period when the top directors shot their best works” – Ninth Period, “History of Philippine

Cinema (1897-1969)” (n.pag.).

- 3 *Scout Rangers* (now unavailable) was selected by the late film critic and director Pio de Castro III as superior to the rest of Lamberto V. Avellana’s output; in a conversation regarding the selection of Avellana for the Philippine critics circle’s life achievement prize (see Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino), de Castro claimed that Avellana had expressed surprise and agreement with his choice (interview with author, Quezon City, June 1981).
- 4 Because of periods where newly founded studios overlapped with about-to-be-defunct ones, a number of observers maintain that four is the magic number of studios. Justifications for and speculations on the numerological principle of having three participants – a major, a rival, and an underdog – can be found in David, “Studios Studios” (n.p.).
- 5 One remarkable film project (among several others) that references Aunor, but also resembles the specific auteurist product to be studied in this article, is an unfinished film by the late Celso Ad. Castillo, titled *Ang Lalakeng Nangarap Maging Nora Aunor*, or The Man Who Dreamed of Becoming Nora Aunor. Only a teaser had been completed, screened at the Manila Film Center during Castillo’s early-’80s soft-core pornographic releases. Fan pictures of Nora Aunor are shown over her first hit recording, Jules Styne and Bob Merrill’s “People” (associated in the West with Barbra Streisand and the *Funny Girl* musical and film). Then a final glamour photo is revealed via a sudden zoom-in along with the film title, and it’s the face of Castillo, made up as Nora Aunor, complete with distinctive facial mole and feather boa. The contrast between the hypermasculine filmmaker and his “Norian imaginary” (a term that still had to be coined during the period) was simultaneously startling, funny, and unforgettable. The film, according to insiders, was supposed to be about

Kritika Kultura 25: 274.

the derangement of an Aunor fan, and had already had a finalized storyline (Castillo was known to improvise extensively on his film sets).

- 6 A measure of the success of Truffaut’s mainly implied proposition can be seen in the reaction of *Cahiers du Cinéma* founder André Bazin, who cautioned that “there can be no definitive criticism of genius or talent which does not first take into consideration the social determinism, the historical combination of circumstances, and the technical background which to a large extent determine it” (251). The *politique des auteurs*, however, proved capable of international dissemination, not the least because it supplied a means of confluence for like-minded critical writers to bond together and make their own films, with the ostensible purpose of demonstrating the possibility of imbuing each body of work with the individual filmmaker’s personality. Yet the *Cahiers* critics were more fortunate (or shrewd) in their appropriation of certain technical innovations, including “fast filmstocks, lightweight cameras, new lighting equipment, and the liberation from the Hollywood set that all this implied” (Monaco 10), that made it possible for their films to be more financially

feasible, and therefore potentially more profitable, than the studio-bound projects of which they were critical in the first place.

- 7 In a footnote, John Caughie enumerates the exchanges among Andrew Sarris, Pauline Kael, and the British publication *Movie*. Kael's "Circles and Squares: Joys and Sarris," although rarely paired nowadays with Sarris's "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" or "Toward a Theory of Film History" (his introduction to *The American Cinema*), manages to provide both a rejection of Sarris's premises as well as a call to be "pluralistic, flexible, relative in our judgments" – in short, eclectic, defined (though unproblematicized) as "the selection of the best standards and principles from various systems of ideas" (Kael, "Circles and Squares" 308). A more socially inflected critique was that of John Hess, who responded not to the practice of Sarris but to that of *Cahiers* by historicizing the politicization of French cinema after the Resistance and describing the *Cahiers* group's attempt to remove film from this area of concern as "culturally conservative, politically reactionary" (109).
- 8 Permission for the present author to "read" the interlock was verbally granted by Nora Aunor via Ricardo Lee as intermediary. The interlock file copy was remastered and lent by Jojo Devera. Credits are listed (with title cards separated by semi-colons and lines separated by slashes) as follows: NCV Films presents; Nora Aunor; Tirso Cruz III; Julio Diaz; Kristoffer Ian de Leon; in *Greatest Performance*; Starring: Rez Cortez; Lara Melissa de Leon; Jet Montelibano / Fe de los Reyes / Butch Elizalde; German Moreno / Michael de Mesa / Tony Carreon / Miguel Tanciangco / and Bella Flores; Nonoy Zuñiga / Bobby Taylo; Sound Supervision: Rolly Ruta; Film Editor: Ike Jarlego Jr. (FEGP); Musical Director: Danny Tan; In-Charge of Production: Vivian C. Recio; Line Producer: Ricardo Osorio; Associate

Kritika Kultura 25: 275.

Producers: Tita Villamayor / Oscar Villamayor / Eddie Villamayor; Executive Producer: Charlotte Jennifer de Leon; Producer: NCV; Written and Directed by: Guy.

- 9 A productive discussion of Nora Aunor's psychobiography, unfortunately outside the scope of this article, would involve some speculation of the degree of her susceptibility to a form of what Filipino historian Vicente Rafael has termed "white love": the male real-life romantic partners that she acknowledges, including her former spouse, are generally fair-skinned (Paredes and Maglipon 108-18), in always-striking contrast with her own skin color; some of these, notably Tirso Cruz III, Joseph Estrada, and ex-husband Christopher de Leon, had also been paired with her onscreen. In her film roles, however, she has also partnered with less fair-skinned actors – though the latter condition may be ascribed to the fact that males are "allowed" the prerogative of being darker via the social norm of associating skin darkness with masculinity. Her maternal status more intimately betokens this conflicted preference: her child by de Leon, Ian Kristoffer, took after her dominant-genetic brown skin color, but all her four adopted children (two of each gender) are mestizos. Interestingly, the race politics in *Greatest Performance* reflects perhaps her most successful dark-skinned male star pairing, that with Lito Lapid in Mario O'Hara's *Kastilyong Buhangin* (1980): in *GP*, Briccio, the mestizo character, turns out to be

dangerous in contrast with the “merely” damaged Cholo, whom he in fact winds up killing (see middle frame capture in Figure 9).

- 10 The first sex-film trend in the Philippines emerged seemingly naturally from the promiscuity of the 1960s independent-production trend, building up toward soft-core scenes in films that tackled moral issues in human relationships. The term *bomba* was reminiscent of widespread student and labor unrest, and also referred to the bombing of the opposition party’s proclamation rally (recently ascribed to leading figures in the Communist Party of the Philippines). That these events occurred in the capital city, Manila, may have also resonated with the self-description of an earlier popular politician, Arsenio H. Lacson, a three-term mayor who died in office; subsequently, another then-contemporary political figure, Roger Arrienda, also used “*bomba*” as his moniker. The film trend was cut short by the declaration of martial law in 1972, leading to retrospective speculation that sex-film productions may have been encouraged by the Marcos government in order to add a moral justification to the ensuing political crackdown (see Figure 10). A similar film trend was also observable during the Marcos regime’s later years, with the government’s theater complex, the Manila Film Center, serving as primary venue for so-called “bold” (later “*penekula*,” a portmanteau of penetration and *pelikula* or film) productions. We may note at this point that the emergence of Nora Aunor and her batch of previously unacceptable talents (starting with her *chinita* rival, Vilma Santos, and several working-class performers) may have been originally intended as a wholesome, more “moral” counterweight to the sexually frank *bomba*

Kritika Kultura 25: 276.

melodramas, but in fact the teen-star trend carried its own radical charge in terms of overturning traditional identity politics.

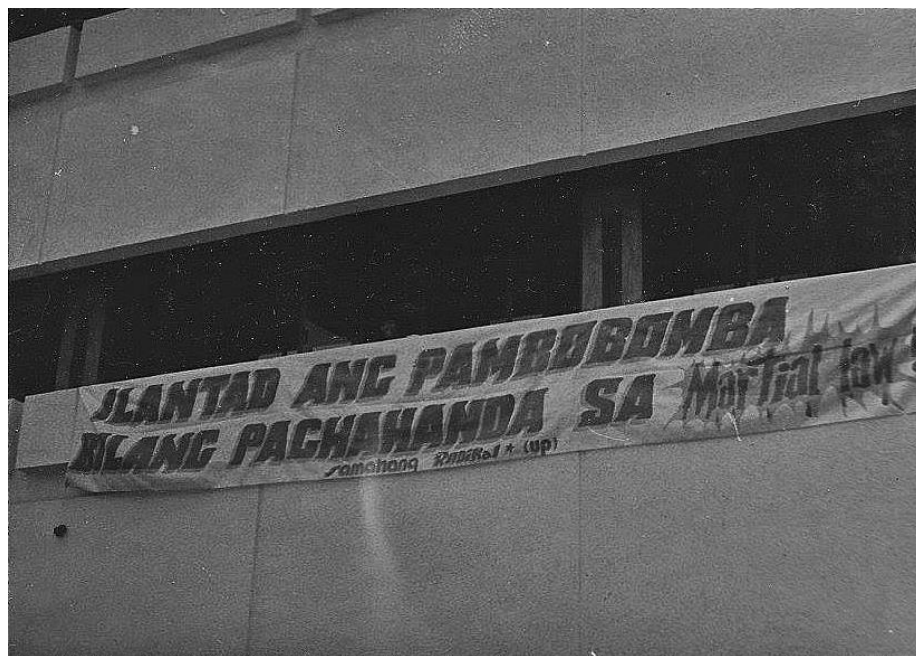


Figure 10. A banner, ascribed to the University of the Philippines chapter of the Samahang Radikal [Radical Association] and displayed during the pre-martial law protests at the UP Faculty Center, is an indication of the popularity of the term *bomba*. Apparently a reference to the Plaza Miranda bombing of the opposition rally that occurred on August 21, 1971, the slogan states: “Expose the [strategy behind the] bombing as a preparation for [the declaration of] martial law!” [Flor C. Caagusan collection, used with permission.]

- 11 The *Nashville* (dir. Robert Altman, 1975) influence suffuses the narrative in several crucial senses, notably in the behind-the-scenes warts-and-all depiction of the business aspect of popular music, and might account for an unexpectedly comedic attack, particularly in Aunor’s performance. In the concert that begins Laura’s story, for example, she fumbles several times in her singing because of her stoned condition; her manager orders a stage hand to get her off, she protests while walking away that her number has not been completed, then she gets replaced by vivacious dancers. The scene appears to be a homage to the onstage breakdown in *Nashville* of Barbara Jean (played by Ronee Blakley). These elements may facilitate the argument that the other local directorial “presence” in *Greatest Performance*, apart from Mario O’Hara, would be Ishmael Bernal, who acknowledged *Nashville* as his structural model for *Manila by Night* (1980) as well as an inspiration for several other projects. Bernal had also described Aunor’s exceptionalism among local stars, proceeding from her ability to master difficult lines of dialogue alongside complex directorial instructions and execute everything in one take, as owing to her being “a genius” (Bayani Santos Jr., interview with author, Manila, January 2013; confirmed via Facebook message, May 30, 2015).

Kritika Kultura 25: 277.

- 12 Though she never went to the extent of admitting to several partners simultaneously, as in *GP*, her most controversial liaison was with deposed President Joseph Estrada, who apparently had been so smitten with her that he wound up imprisoning and manhandling her (Flores 71). During the extended period when their affair attracted the attention of the movie press, certain reporters (possibly instigated by Estrada or his supporters) started writing about her prowess in the bedroom, and had to be silenced via libel charges. Her method of breaking free from Estrada’s obsessive clutches also supposedly involved conscripting women friends, who were later alleged to have been romantically involved with her.
- 13 A final possible influence on Aunor’s first arguably independent (would-have-been) release, aside from Mario O’Hara and Ishmael Bernal, can be tracked from the successful revival of her most popular love team, the one between her and Tirso Cruz III: the series was produced by Regal Films and directed by Elwood Perez, culminating in *Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit* (1989). This can be deduced from the other cinematographers involved in *Greatest Performance*, aside again from O’Hara regular Johnny Araojo: Sergio Lobo, associated with Aunor’s Bernal projects (most significantly *Himala*) and Ricardo Jacinto, who photographed the aforementioned *Bilangin ang Bituin* (Jojo Devera, Facebook message, May 30, 2015). The scene just described recalls an anecdote related by Perez, wherein a

producer who contracted his services confronted him with a handgun and he mollified her by offering some refreshments, whereupon they ended up like the close personal friends they had always been (Perez, interview with author, January 2015).

Kritika Kultura 25: 278.

Works Cited

- Abunda, Boy. "How the MMFF Grew in 4 Decades." Directline column. *Philippine Star*, Dec. 27, 2014. Web. July 7, 2015.
- Altman, Robert, dir. *Nashville*. Scr. Joan Tewkesbury. ABC Entertainment, American Broadcasting Co., & Paramount Pictures, 1975. Film.
- Armes, Roy. *Third World Film Making and the West*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987. Print.
- Amigo, Cesar, dir. *Sa Atin ang Daigdig* [The World Is Ours]. Scr. Eddie Romero. Premiere, 1963. Film.
- Aquino-Kashiwahara [credited as "Concio"], Lupita, dir. *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo* [Once a Winged Ant]. Scr. Marina Feleo-Gonzales. Premiere Productions, 1976. Film.
- Aunor, Nora, dir. & scr. [as Guy]. *Greatest Performance*. NCV Films, 1989 [unreleased]. Film.
- , dir. [as Nora Villamayor]. *Niño Valiente*. Scr. Agustin B. de la Cruz. NV Productions, 1975. Film.
- , dir. *What I Did for Love*. Scr. Raquel N. Villavicencio. NCV Productions, 1988 [unfinished]. Film.
- Avellana, Lamberto V., dir. *Scout Rangers*. Scr. Rolf Bayer. Zultana International, 1964. Film.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. 1957. New York: Hill & Wang, 1972. Print.
- Bazin, André. "On the *politique des auteurs*." Trans. Peter Graham. *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Ed. Jim Hillier. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985. 248-259. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968. 217-252. Print.
- Bernal, Ishmael, dir. *Himala* [Miracle]. Scr. Ricardo Lee. Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1982. Film.

- , dir. & scr. *Manila by Night*. Regal Films, 1980. Film.
- , dir. & scr. *Pagdating sa Dulo* [At the End]. Mever Films and Frankesa Films, 1971. Film.
- Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985. Print.
- Brennan, Timothy. “The National Longing for Form.” *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 44-70. Print.
- Caparas, Carlo J., dir. & co-scr. *The Lilian Velez Story: Till Death Do Us Part*. Co-scr. Tony Calvento. Viva Films and Golden Lions Films, 1995. Film.
- Carey, Gary. *Marlon Brando: The Only Contender*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1985. Print.
- Castillo, Celso Ad., dir. & co-scr. *Burlesk Queen*. Co-scr. Mauro Gia Samonte. Ian Film Productions, 1977. Film.
- , dir. & scr. *Ang Lalakeng Nangarap Maging Nora Aunor* [The Man Who Dreamed of Becoming Nora Aunor]. Unfinished film.
- , dir. *Paradise Inn*. Scr. Oscar Miranda. Amazaldy Film Production, 1985. Film.
- Caughie, John. “Andrew Sarris.” Introduction to “Extract from Andrew Sarris, ‘Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962.’” Caughie 61-62. Print.
- , ed. *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*. 1981. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- David, Joel. “Studious Studios.” *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema*. Pasig City: Anvil, 1990. 126-28. Posted online at the author’s *Amauteurish!* blog. June 10, 2014. Web. May 14, 2015.
- De Guzman, Nickky Faustine. “Paper Power.” *Manila Bulletin*, Mar. 2, 2015. Web. April 2, 2015.
- De Leon, Gerardo, dir. & co-scr. *Banaue: Stairway to the Sky*. Co-scr. Toto Belano. NV Productions, 1975. Film.
- , dir. *Daigdig ng mga Api* [World of the Oppressed]. Scr. Pierre L. Salas. Cinemasters, 1965. Film.
- , dir. *El Filibusterismo* [The Subversion]. Scr. Adrian Cristobal and Gerardo de Leon. Arriva, 1962. Film.

———, dir. *The Moises Padilla Story*. Scr. Cesar Amigo. MML, 1961. Film.

De Leon, Mike, dir. & co-scr. *Kisapmata* [In the Wink of an Eye]. Co-scr. Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. & Raquel Villavicencio. Bancom Audiovision Corp., 1981. Film.

De los Reyes, Maryo J., dir. *Bagets* [Teens]. Scr. Jake Tordesillas. Viva Films, 1984. Film.

DeCordova, Richard. *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1990. Print.

Del Mundo, Clodualdo Jr., dir. & scr. *Superfan*. Buruka Films, 2009. Film.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Trans. Jean McNeil. *Masochism*. New York: Urzone, 1989. 15-142. Print.

Devera, Jojo. "Nora Aunor: The Unfinished Films." *Superstar!* blog entry. Sept. 9, 2012. Web. March 17, 2015.

———. "Video on Tumblr: *Niño Valiente* (1975)." *Facebook* post. Mar. 30, 2015. Web. April 2, 2015.

Diaz-Abaya, Marilou, dir. *Karnal* [Of the Flesh]. Scr. Ricardo Lee. Cine Suerte & Yalung Group of Companies International, 1983. Film.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. London: Macmillan, 1986. Print.

———. *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, 1979. Print.

Eckert, Charles. "The English Cine-Structuralists." *Caughie* 152-165. Print.

Fischer, Lucy, and Marcia Landy, eds. "General Introduction: Back Story." *Stars: The Film Reader*. London: Routledge, 2004. 1-10. Print.

Flores, Patrick D. "*Makulay na Daigdig* [Colorful World]: Nora Aunor and the Aesthetics of Sufferance." Unpublished dissertation. University of the Philippines, 2000. Print.

———. "The Star Also Suffers: Screening Nora Aunor." *Kasarinlan* 16.1 (2006): 71-96. Print.

Gallardo, Cesar, dir. *Geron Busabos: Ang Batang Quiapo* [Geron the Tramp: The Quiapo Kid]. Scr. Augusto Buenaventura. Emar, 1964. Film.

———, dir. *Kadenang Putik* [Chain of Mud]. Scr. Cesar Amigo. People's Films, 1960. Film.

Garcia, Eddie, dir. *Atsay* [Housemaid]. Scr. Edgardo Reyes. Ian Film Productions, 1978. Film.

Garcia, Jessie B. "The Golden Decade of Philippine Movies." Rpt. from *Weekly Graphic* (April 26, May 3, & May 10, 1972). *Readings in Philippine Cinema*. Ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1983. 39-54. Print.

Guinness Book of World Records. Annual. New York: Bantam, 1983. Print.

Henderson, Brian. "Critique of Cine-Structuralism." *Caughie* 166-182. Print.

Hess, John. "La politique des auteurs, Part One: World View as Aesthetic." *Jump Cut* 1 (May-June 1974): 103-123. Print.

Jessop, Bob. "Fordism and Post-Fordism: A Critical Reformulation." *Pathways to Industrialization and Regional Development*. Ed. Michael Storper and Allen J. Scott. London: Routledge, 1992. 43-65. Print.

Kael, Pauline. "Circles and Squares: Joys and Sarris." *I Lost It at the Movies: Film Writings 1954-1965*. 1965. New York: Marion Boyars, 1994. 295-319. Print.

———. "Coming: Nashville." *New Yorker* 51 (March 3, 1975): 79-83. Print.

King, Barry. "Articulating Stardom." *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: Routledge, 1991. 167-182. Print.

Lamangan, Joel, dir. *Muling Umawit ang Puso* [The Heart Sings Again]. Scr. Ricardo Lee. Viva Films, 1995. Film.

Lee, Ricky. *Si Amapola sa 65 na Kabanata* [Amapola in 65 Chapters]. Quezon City: Philippine Writers Studio Foundation, 2011. Print.

Lim, Bliss Cua. "Sharon's Noranian Turn: Stardom, Embodiment, and Language in Philippine Cinema." *Discourse* 31.3 (Fall 2009): 318-358. Print.

———. "Fandom, Consumption, and Collectivity in the Philippine New Cinema: Nora and the Noranians." *The Precarious Self: Women and the Media in Asia*. Ed. Youna Kim. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 179-203. Print.

———. “True Fictions: Women’s Narratives and Historical Trauma.” *Velvet Light Trap* 45 (Spring 2000): 62-75. Print.

Lumbera, Bienvenido. “Problems in Philippine Film History.” Rpt. from *Diliman Review* (July-August 1981). *Revaluation 1977: Essays on Philippine Literature, Cinema and Popular Culture*. 1984. Rev. ed. Manila: U of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 1997. 177-187. Print.

Monaco, James. *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*. New York: Oxford UP, 1976. Print.

Morin, Edgar. *The Stars*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1972. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005. Print.

“Norianiana Collection Project.” *Superstarstruck: The Nora Aunor Fanatics Blog*. Dec. 11, 2010. Web. May 9, 2015.

O’Hara, Mario, dir. *Bulaklak sa City Jail* [Flower at City Jail]. Scr. Lualhati Bautista. Cherubin Films, 1984. Film.

———, dir. & co-scr. *Condemned*. Co-scr. Jose Javier Reyes & Frank Rivera. Golden Dragon Films & NV Productions, 1984. Film.

———, dir. & scr. *Kastilyong Buhangin* [Sand Castle]. Lotus Films, 1980. Film.

———, dir. & scr. *Mortal*. Cinemania, 1976. Film.

———, dir. & co-scr. *Pangarap ng Puso* [Demons]. Co-scr. Rey de Castro. Regal Films, 2000. Film.

———, dir. & scr. *Tatlong Taóng Walang Diyos* [Three Godless Years]. NV Productions, 1976. Film.

Orsal, Cesar D. *Movie Queen: Pagbuo ng Mito at Kapangyarihang Kultural ng Babae sa Lipunan* [Construction of Myth and Cultural Power of Women in Society]. Quezon City: New Day, 2007.

Paredes, Andrew A., and Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon. “Cover Story: Nora Superstar.” *Yes!* (October 2011): 88-154. Print.

Perez, Elwood, dir. *Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M.* [The Real Life of Pacita M.]. Scr. Ricardo Lee. MRN Film International, 1991. Film.

- , dir. *Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit* [Count the Stars in Heaven]. Scr. Jake Cocadiz & Jigz Recto. Regal Films, 1989. Film.
- Portes, Gil, dir. *Andrea, Paano Ba ang Maging Isang Ina?* [Andrea, How Does One Become a Mother?]. Scr. Ricardo Lee. MRN Films, 1990. Film.
- Rafael, Vicente L. “White Love: Census and Melodrama in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines.” *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000. 19-51. Print.
- Salvador, Leroy, dir. & co-scr. *Badlis sa Kinabuhi* [Life Line]. Scr. Gloria Sevilla. MG Productions, 1968. Film.
- Sarris, Andrew. *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*. 1968. New York: Octagon, 1982. Print.
- . “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962.” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy. 4th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. 585-588. Print.
- Solanas, Fernando, Bertrand Tavernier, Rene Vautier and Guy Hennebelle. “Round Table: The Cinema: Art Form or Political Weapon?” *Framework: A Film Journal* 11 (n.d.): 10-15. Print.
- Sotto, Agustin. “History of Philippine Cinema (1897-1969).” *Pelikula at Lipunan: Festival of Filipino Film Classics and Short Films*. [Quezon City]: National Commission for Culture and the Arts Cinema Committee, Film Academy of the Philippines, and Movie Workers Welfare Fund, 1994. Print.
- Staiger, Janet. “The Hollywood Mode of Production to 1930.” Bordwell et al. 85-153. Print.
- Stern, Keith. *Queers in History: The Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Historical Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Transgenders*. Dallas, Tex.: BenBella, 2009. Print.
- Stein, Jule (comp.), and Bob Merrill (lyricist). “People.” *Funny Girl*. 1964 (musical) & 1968 (film).
- Stuart, Jan. *The Nashville Chronicles: The Making of Robert Altman’s Masterpiece*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. Print.
- Sunga, Alex M., dir. & scr. *Kilabot sa Barilan* [Fearsome Gunfighter]. Poe-Zshornack Productions, 1964. Film.

Tadiar, Neferti Xina M. *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2004.

Tolentino, Rolando B. *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake, Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen at Iba Pang Sanaysay Ukol sa Bida sa Pelikula Bilang Kultural na Texto* [Richard Gomez and the Myth of Masculinity, Sharon Cuneta and the Perpetual Virgin and Other Essays Regarding Movie Stars as Cultural Texts]. Pasig City: Anvil, 2000.

Truffaut, François. "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." Trans. *Cahiers du Cinéma in English. Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 224-237. Print.

Vera, Noel. "The Imaginasian Film Festival in New York." *Critic after Dark*. Oct. 19, 2006. Web. May 14, 2015.