THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Johven Velasco (1948-2007) left behind a draft for a book and a circle of colleagues and students who revered him for his unusual combination of talent and compassion. Although the current volume is, strictly speaking, a work in progress, Velasco managed to maintain a balance between clear thinking and a rigorous grounding in theory. Films from diverse periods and genres, along with the star personas of a number of luminaries, get a much-deserved and long-overdue critical treatment that only a fan specialist with Velasco's visionary approach could provide.

Cover Design: Aya Danielle Aranas and Carlo Terry
Consultant: Ige Ramos

Johven Velasco

HUWARAN/HULMAHAN ATBP.

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The Film Writings of Johven Velasco

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOEL DAVID

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The University of the Philippines Press
Diliman, Quezon City

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Context: An Introduction

Joel David

TA 7a[min]g: emo material coming up.

* * A basic personal contradiction underlies the existence of this introductory essay. Johven Velasco had asked me, as his colleague and sometime mentor, to write one for his first book, *Huwaran/Hulmahan: Reading Stars, Icons, and Genre Films in Philippine Cinema,* then at the manuscript stage (n.b.: a distinction must be made between the aforementioned *Huwaran/Hulmahan* and the present *Huwaran/Hulmahan AtbpJ* My reply, in so many words, was that an intro would be more useful for a young author who needed some sort of validation from an established personage; in his case, he'd had enough stature to introduce himself, so to speak, so I told him he'd be better off asking friends like me to just review his manuscript for the benefit of the reading public.

The outpour of grief that attended his sudden death on September 1, 2007, might have surprised those who knew him as only an occasional credit or by-line or lumbering, cane-dependent figure. Velasco, for the most part and increasingly toward the end of his life, epitomized as nearly complete a combination of Othernesses that anyone could find in an individual in his situation. He was a teacher without the necessary advanced qualifications, illegitimate and impoverished in a middle-class milieu, intelligent and overweight in the face of middle-brow pop culture's philosophobia and lookism, spiritual amid the materialist orientation of liberal academia, principled even when surrounded by pragmatists, and openly queer by any measure, when most men from generations younger than his still opted for the comforts and conveniences of the closet. To top it all, his was a looming presence—about as in-your-face as Otherness could get.

When he lost his full-time teaching position at the University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI), his *cri de coeur* in the form of a mobile-phone SMS became the equivalent of a much-quoted haiku, the lamentation of a Pinovjọb: *Bakit ako pinarurusahan? Naging tamad ba ako? Naging masama ba ako?* [Why am I being punished? Did I turn lazy? Did I become venal?] No one had the heart to point out to him that what had changed was not so much him but the world around him. For where he had remained an old-school maestro, benevolent toward friends and gentlemanly toward enemies, everyone else, even those who walked the hallowed halls of academe, had long already internalized the dog-eat-dog values that typify periods of developmental haste.

Huwaran/Hulmahan was one of the means by which he had hoped to recover from the devastating financial and psychological blow dealt by the loss of his UPFI instructorship, the one incident from which he could actually never recover, the straw that finally broke his overburdened back. He had originally been assigned to a number of noncompensatory academic functions, all of which he tackled in his usual selfless and enthusiastic manner. But when the time came for everyone else to take stock of his situation vis-á-vis the university's up-or-out policy for untenured faculty, no one came to his defense to explain to higher authorities, in the most urgent possible manner, why he had not been able to make any headway in completing his master's degree.

When he told me this kind of casually brutal though legally defensible negligence would not have happened if, among other factors, I had stayed on instead of decamping for the proverbial greener pastures, I figured I owed him a favor, but I let him apply on his own terms. In response to a call for papers to the Korean conference I was coordinating, he submitted the *Huwaran/Hulmahan* manuscript—to which I had to answer that he had enough quality material to constitute an entire panel unto himself. His response to his experience of attending the conference was to reassess his predicaments and formulate a few resolutions, but the form it took was an amazing and much-circulated (and tragically self-prophetic) epistolary piece that now serves as the epilogue of this collection—a funny, self-deprecating, astutely observant, yet ultimately heartbreaking narrative that reflected as much of the peoples surrounding him as it revealed a heretofore unheralded ability: Velasco the raconteur. Philippine film commentary is rife with personal essays, but "Korean

Rhapsody" stands out for having been written during its author's fullest maturation, where a peculiar combination of wisdom and kindness suffuses the usual gestures toward camp, ambition, self-doubt, and defiant hopefulness.

Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp. may be translated as "Modeling/Molding Etc." The present volume differs from Velasco's earlier compilation in that it contains, apart from his autobiographical essay and all the original *Huwaran/Hulmahan* pieces, a number of journalistic contributions that started appearing in a number of periodicals since the start of Velasco's term as UP faculty, as well as some of his plans for revisions (notably the splitting up of the longest article into one essay and a short fan article). Upon my return from my stint as exchange teacher in Korea, I kept asking him about his *Huwaran/Hulmahan* manuscript, with the intention of convincing him to submit it as the equivalent of a creative thesis before presenting it to a university press for publication. He was receptive to the idea—it was consistent with the resolutions he listed in his personal reassessment—yet in a few months he seemed to have turned against everything he wanted to continue or complete, and instead talked, albeit jokingly, about setting himself up for his eventual retirement. The day he failed to wake up, he was scheduled to take a trip to a farm to consider some options in agribusiness, a direction that he'd said he was reluctant to take. His partner of several decades, Jess Evardone, stayed over at his house to keep him company, and was the first person to discover that he had passed away. But in staying on first in the hearts of a few, and later in the minds of many more, his Otherness was thus in the end both completed by his death yet paradoxically also now fully absent.

An expanding circle of friends decided that Velasco's legacy was worth maintaining, and the present volume is only one of several planned outputs. In putting together all the writings we could salvage, from hard drives and disks through email attachments to scanned manuscripts, I came to realize in hindsight that Velasco's hesitation in getting his original manuscript published was not really because he had given up on accomplishing anything. On the contrary, he had lately discovered the psychic rewards of being a public intellectual operating in the feedback-intensive field of popular culture, so much so that one way, perhaps the only way, and definitely the first way of looking at *Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp.* is that it is a work in progress, whose final form would have been

defined possibly a year or two later had he lived on, depending on the insights that he could have drawn from his intensive coverage of the local movie scene.

Yet the current manuscript, for all its gaps, overlaps, and reversals, already constitutes an impressive achievement in itself, one that makes it possible to canonize its author as the millennium's first major Filipino film commentator, relegating a significant number of other aspirants (myself included) to the status of also-rans, Salieris to his Mozart. Even in its still-to-be-finished state, *Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp.* is indicative of Velasco's ability to bridge distant and contemporary periods and subject their emblematic phenomena to sharp critical scrutiny leavened with wry humor. But more than a mere display of intellectual acrobatics is one quality that remains in full, regardless of the condition of the compilation or of its individual articles: Velasco's unabashed affection for his material, his refreshingly frank appreciation and admission of cultural pleasure, as evident in the collection's emphasis on performers and their films.

"In Praise of the Film 'Star,'" the very last article he wrote and his first to be published posthumously, serves to determine the general direction of the collection as a whole. It is quickly followed (in Part 1: Fan Texts) by a series of fan articles, and the selection of subjects says as much about the author as it does about the performers themselves: chronologically, Velasco first wrote about someone he identified with (Susan Roces), then about those he had known personally, which in a sense amount to the same thing. The articles grow in length as Velasco proceeds to problematize questions of culture and political economy. Before discussing stardom itself, we turn to a section where Velasco foregrounds the issue that lurks behind everything he wrote as an academic—i.e., gender politics, the best thing, he said once, that graduate studies ever gave him. When he first heard me use the word "transgressiveness" as an indicator of progressivity he remarked that he'd always wanted to aspire to that type of ideal, and was glad that it could now be openly acknowledged in contemporary scholarship; I must add that he took the concept much farther than I could have imagined it could go in Philippine film studies.

Hence under Part 2: Gender Texts he goes to town in imbuing female personae with masculine attributes and vice versa, and objectifies

the Filipino male with admirably shameless delight, to the extent of embracing (figuratively in print and, who knows, literally in real life) a veritable stable of "bad" boys. In returning to a consideration of the movie star (Part 3: Star Texts), he discourses with renewed authority, effectively restoring to prominence the real-life reel couple he regarded as king and queen of the make-believe world that had provided him with much-needed solace during his formative years. The collection closes with a large group of articles, Part 4: Film Texts, that in one respect derive directly from his fascination with star personalities; the other respect is the one that also justifies Velasco's position as our foremost film expert in the new millennium: he could write knowingly about the present, without the need to demonstrate any high-art or film-buff pretension, mainly because he maintained so much fondness for a past he knew firsthand. This section ends with his challenge to both organized and practicing Filipino film critics (often two discrete categories, as it happens nowadays): after demonstrating how to properly evaluate first a festival period and then a calendar year of sustained film practice, Velasco points out, in laypersons' terms, precisely what makes award-giving and comparative auteurist analyses so dissatisfying—i.e., their practitioners use critical-sounding evaluation as a subterfuge instead of facing up to the manifold challenges and contradictions of genuine critical writing.

All of which brings us back to Velasco's primary' motive for writing—his love for all kinds of media of expression, whether belonging to high art or mass culture. In retrospect it wasn't just the discursive potentials of local cinema that Velasco approached with this strange (in both senses of unusual and queer) combination of tenderness, acceptance, and rigor. Whenever he reflected on his personal and professional misfortunes, his tendency to break down in private followed by his refusal to protest the many injustices visited on him seemed then a confirmation of the multiplicity of weaknesses that inexorably brought about his utter marginalization and ultimately his demise. But with this volume in hand, it has become evident that he was determined to fight after all, and the form that his resistance took was the hardest for anyone to muster, more so for someone in his condition: to struggle, to the bitter end if necessary, for love of everyone, and to respond to those who abused him with an even greater dose of forgiveness and understanding.

He died enviably, peacefully in his sleep, just as he had lived unenviably for most of his too-short fifty-nine years (or a full sixty, by

East Asian reckoning), constantly worrying where his next red centavo would come from just so that he could write one more article, teach one more class, mentor one more advisee, direct one more script, crack one more joke, celebrate one more friend's achievement. *Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp.* is one among several proofs of how generous he had been, to a country, a society, and a university that could not properly figure out just how much he was giving out, so that he could be given in return the basic things he needed in order to attain all that he had ever asked for—a decent living, nothing more. First our Job, then our Christ: he died brokenhearted so that we could all now, if we choose to do so, relish the many delights bequeathed unto us by his peculiar state of grace.

Quezon City
December 2007

About the Editing

Adjustments to Johven Velasco's original texts were primarily stylistic in nature, following standard prescriptions for humanities material; in the case of "Korean Rhapsody," nearly all Filipino passages (constituting about a fifth of the original) were translated to English. Whenever possible, audiovisual features (the majority of citations) are identified in the text by their respective directors; plays are listed according to author(s), and TV programs according to host(s). (A further explication of filmographic and other nonbibliographic entries appears in the introduction to the Works Cited section, which also serves as a glossary for Filipino titles.) Appendices appear right after the articles they pertain to rather than as part of back matter. All other significant editorial changes in the text are footnoted as editor's notes where appropriate—a thoroughly practicable option in light of the near-absence of notes in Velasco's material. Finally, I take full responsibility for any perceived obsequiousness toward political correctness, starting with the use of feminine pronouns to refer to people in general (resulting in a few instances of linguistic awkwardness whose resolutions have evaded me so far); any errors that may have arisen in the course of making adjustments to Velasco's original texts remain mine to acknowledge and hopefully to correct in future editions.

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Subtext: Acknowledgments

Foremost among the proponents of Johven Velasco's cultural and ethical legacy is the woman he regarded as his sister, filmmaker Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, who in seeking to recuperate his name has become as much of a sister to everyone else, and who proves through her tireless advocacy of Velasco's representations just how remarkable he had been in inspiring people. Jess Evardone's significance in Velasco's personal narrative transcended boundaries that he always acknowledged, and some others we may never know. Rodolfo D. Diamante, Ed Instrella, Eduardo J. Piano, and James Amparo complete the circle of friends who keep looking for ways to assuage their loss of his presence by honoring his memory. Other names available from Velasco's recollections include Ana C. Nolasco, his "dearest Baby"; Sonny Mendoza, with whom he had his first publishing stint as well as his final appointment; Gardy Labad and Liza Magtoto, his friends from theater; Manny Melgar, who extended help during his difficult stretches; Anne Marie de Guzman, Roehl Jamon, Ed Lejano, Jr., and Amor Olaguer-Aljibe, his colleagues among the UPFI junior faculty; Ellen J. Paglinauan, former Dean of the College of Mass Communication, whose support for him he never tired of mentioning; Raya Martin, Charliebebs Gohetia, Joey Herrera, Jerrold Tarog, Libay Cantor, and Ruben Canlas, Jr., who kept his memory alive in their blogs and films. Mike Rabanal, Jasper Zarsuela, Joni Gutierrez, Claudine Pira, and Herman Claravall were some of the countless students whose lives he had touched. In finalizing this manuscript the editor wishes to acknowledge the selfless participation of Ricardo Lcc, Gardo Vcrsoza, Jaclyn Jose, Fortune Mendiola, Theo Pie, Taeyun Yu, and Violeda Umali (some of the many people Velasco had known and of whom he was also fond), as well as Caloy Gaba, Ronnie and Jonel Mendoza, and the Yap family of Naujan, Mindoro Oriental, in whose residence the first draft

took shape, and Guia and Boboy Yonzon of Tagaytay, who provided refuge for a working over of the review draft.

A number of the pieces here had been previously published in earlier versions and with other titles, so recognition is due the following: *Pelikula: A Journal of Philippine Cinema* 2.2 (Sept. 2000—Feb. 2001) for the currently titled "Susan Roces: A Very Special Participation" and 3.1 (March—August 2001) for "Blending Commerce with Craft: The Metro Manila Film Festival 2000"; *Plaridel* 1.1 (February 2004) for "Imitation and Indigenization in Filipino Melodramas"; *Sanghaya 2004* (2005) for "An Optimistic View of a Year in Review"; *Proceedings of the Whither the Orient: Asians in Asian and Non-Asian Cinema Conference, Kimdaejung Convention Center, Gwangju, Korea, 28-29 October 2006,* ed. Joel David (Seoul: Asia Culture Forum, 2006) for "Feminized Heroes and Masculinized Heroines" and a revision of "Imitation and Indigenization in Filipino Melodramas"; *Philippine Star {or* "Squalor and Salvation" (June 10, 2006); and *Manila Times's* 2007 issues for "Awards Season: Looking for No. 1" (April 24); "Celebrity Bad Boys: Some Fleeting Impressions" (May 5); '"A Joan de la Croix Film' ... Excuse Me, How's That Again?" (May 8); "The Smorgasbord Taste of the Filipino *Mas a"* (May 15); "Random Post-election Thoughts on the Celebrity Candidate" (May 22); *"Komiks* on Television: Recycling Pinoy Pulp Fiction" (May 29); "Pinay with Flexed Muscles, Pinoy with Fluttering Eyelashes" June 12); "Macho Desnudo" June 19); and "In Praise of the Film Star" (Sept. 4).

Plaintext

A Revision ofJohven Velasco's Self-Introduction

Johven Velasco (b. Jovenal Dulay Velasco, Jan. 28, 1948; d. Sept. 1, 2007) was in the process of finishing a master's course in Media Studies at the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication, where he had taught film studies and production courses at the UP Film Institute for over a decade, and had also served as Assistant Coordinator for Archives. He taught broadcasting courses at St. Scholastica's College and film and scriptwriting courses at the College of St. Benilde, and conducted workshops in film appreciation, scriptwriting, video production, and acting. He had been a member of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) starting in 1980, where as one of the resident directors and one-time head writer at its Broadcast and Film, Inc. (BFI) section, he wrote and/or directed teleplays and *telecines,* two of which won awards. For the GMA Telesine Specials where the PETA-BFI had line-produced movies made for television, he directed *Oriang: Ang Marangal na Dalit ng Lakambini* [The Lady's Dignified Lamentation], which won the Bahaghari Awards in 1996 (where it also dominated the major technical awards), as well as the Star Awards for Television that same year as Best Movie Made for Television. The following year, he directed and co-wrote *Relikaryo: Ang Agnos ni Maria Clara* [The Reliquary of Maria Clara], which won the Best Movie Made for Television prize at the Star Awards for Television in 1997. In 2001, he wrote and directed *Nonoy,* an advocacy docudrama on young people in conflict with the law. Jointly produced by the PETA-BFI and the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPPC) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), it was the recipient of a production grant by the Cinema Values Committee of the National Commission

for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), where he subsequently served one term as Acting Head of the Cinema Committee. Velasco was also once in charge of publication in PETA; was head of the Cultural Center of the Philippines's (CCP) Special Publications Office, which published the prize-winning *Tuklas Sining* [Art Discovery] series; and was one of the managing editors of the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art.* He had in addition written several articles and papers on aspects of Philippine cinema published in academic journals and popular magazines, as well as papers read in international and local conferences. His death occasioned several published, online, and onscreen tributes and acknowledgments from his students and colleagues, and he was posthumously conferred the CBCP-ECPPC's Special Gawad Paglilingkod (Service Award) as well as a plaque of recognition from the Parole and Probation Administration.

PARTI
Fan Texts

In Praise of the Film “Star”

For a change, let us praise movie stars. Or more appropriately, let us take a second look at them. When I was starting to appreciate films, I had the impression that actors were superior to stars—if one was called an actor, she had more value than someone being referred to as star. Actors understand their craft and calling and undergo rigorous training as a matter of professional and personal self-discipline before they can be recognized as legitimate performers. Not so with the stars, who merely have to be themselves, flash their killer smiles, and wave their hands at screaming fans. On- and off-screen, movie stars stay the same—what you see is what you get—whereas with actors, who assume the traits and qualities of whatever characters they portray, there is always something new to discover every time they perform.

We are not disputing here these distinctions between the actor and the star, for these are not entirely inaccurate. But as one learns more about the nature of cinema, neither do these distinctions emerge as clear-cut as they earlier seemed. They are, in fact, also not entirely true, for many stars are, fortunately, also good actors; otherwise they would have faded away in good time, once their hour on the stage (or screen) was up.

More so than theater as a performance venue, film is largely a system of visual codes and symbols. Maybe it has to do with the fact that image details could be magnified a thousandfold on the screen and larger-than-life images have a tendency to stick to one’s consciousness. This way, faces shot at close range convey messages faster and more effectively than spoken words or ideas. In time they become signs and symbols with deeper meanings, especially when the images are reinforced through constant repetition.

This is an important reason behind the practice of typecasting. Cast the face of a particular star personality and immediately you convey the essence of a character onscreen. More than half of the filmmaker's job is done through appropriate casting. Let's take for instance Kim Chiu, the personification of the sweet, innocent, and fragile little girl who begs for instinctual protection from any big brother or sister, mother or father. She has the face of an Asian *telenovela* star, which makes her look very contemporary and "in fashion." Similarly, Gerald Anderson's Amboy [American-boy] appearance and pedigree embody the Fil-Am breed of young Filipinos who have caught the fancy of local showbiz followers—a poster child of the Filipino expatriate who has come home to trace his roots and engage in some money-earning preoccupations on the side. Typecasting may eventually prove to be a limitation for an actor who wants to project versatility, but for someone who knows the inherent value of a star as a consumer commodity in mainstream cinema, any emblematic recall turns into a cherished quality.

Film actors are consumer products and each one needs a distinctive star or screen image for a profitable market position. Packaging, therefore, is of utmost importance, and oftentimes, the package imprisons its beneficiary. Rare are the instances when a star successfully negotiates for a change of image, for that is tantamount to changing a consumer product's uniqueness—best concretized in its package—amid a proliferation of other similar products vying for buyers' attention. Yet for some actors, the decision to stick to an image or package proves wise, for it facilitates longevity. The personality behind the image may remain imprisoned but nevertheless, some of them manage to achieve profounder forms of respectability and influence as cultural icons. Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) and Dolphy are premier examples, as are Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos.

Indeed, film stars are a curious lot. From their emergence until they attain the stature of cultural icons, each one represents a confluence of contradictions. On the one hand, they are consumer products that are packaged and sold along with their films; on the other, they are product endorsers, selling their own films as they do other consumer products, with the bigger ones among them capable of adding unto themselves insurance value for the commercial viability of their forthcoming film projects. At one point, they are products manufactured in answer to the needs of their manufacturer-producers, who in turn respond to the

demands and specifications of their consumers, the moviegoing public; at another, they are power wielders who command individual as well as public adulation and identification. They promote certain very materialistic ends in a capitalist society, while at the same time they serve some mythical and ideological functions in that same society.

Not all big screen stars, however, reach the stature of cultural icons. It takes charisma, a special quality and power to influence and to inspire and to which the public offers an emotional investment of commitment, prompted by some psychological or ideological needs, to which the star image provides an answer. This is a very special quality that has some origins in religion, a sort of "gift of grace" that eventually assumes social significance. In the religious context, charisma refers to individuals mostly or in some cases a group of believers who claim to possess special powers, such as speaking in tongues or healing. In the second context, charisma is a form of political legitimacy, as identified by eminent economist-historian-classical sociologist Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* It refers to the special personal qualities claimed by and for an individual, making her capable of influencing large numbers of people who may eventually become her followers. Furthermore, this power or authority is based on an emotional commitment to or belief in the special personal qualities of a leader. Apparently, the charisma of cinema icons lies somewhere in between. In the cinematic context, particularly in the local scene, charisma is best illustrated by the Nora Aunor phenomenon.

A cinema-based cultural icon is one whose works and screen persona or lifestyle represent certain cultural or ideological values of her time and as such, on the one hand, command awe, admiration adulation, and inspiration, and on the other, inspire identification or emulation. If a wax museum for local films were to be installed, those images and their respective roles would best represent the corresponding icons. The stars cited, either through their archetypal characters onscreen or through strong personal qualities and lifestyle, represent the marked cultural and ideological values of their respective times.

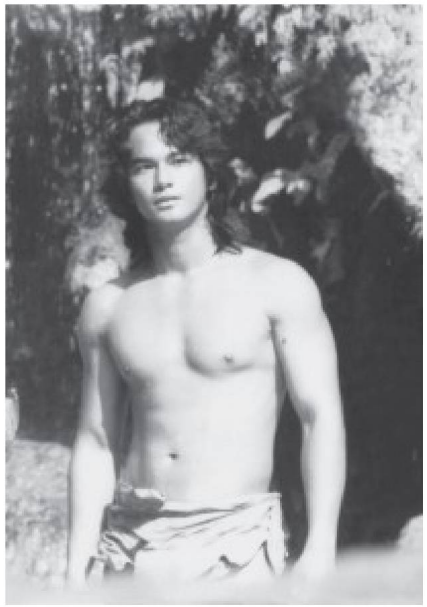
A few things have to be clarified at this point, however. The person behind the star docs not necessarily have to embody, in real life, the qualities ascribed to her or her screen persona. But this is of small consequence because the business of star imaging has little to do with

reality. Much of it has to do with appearances, the representation of an absence or what is not really there. Then, too, the star image has many meanings and different groups assign various meanings to the star, and a particular meaning may be valid only for a particular time. For instance, the sweet, prim-and-proper Susan Roces of the early 1960s has become the feisty, politicized widow of the early 2000s, still emblematic but definitely far removed from her earlier image at the opposite side of the temperament pole. Finally, while most of the icons have been typecast in their roles for the most part of their career and therefore imprisoned in their images, a few would be fortunate enough to successfully negotiate for more variety. Vilma Santos remains an outstanding example in that several times, she successfully bid for some shifts in her image, thereby portraying a variety of roles and ably responding to the ideological needs of the times.

And how do the icons impact on the individual and her society or culture? Since cultural icons embody a set of characteristics that people want in and for themselves, they allow a culture to perpetuate its myths and dominant cultural values. Still wonder why to many of us, stars and icons are special and important, oftentimes more than actors could ever be?

Gardo Versoza: From Star to Icon

Gardo Versoza started in the movies in 1990. A well-built nineteen-year-old hopeful originally named Peter Menen Torres, he was first cast as a military trainee in a small, independent production titled *Irosin* (Buenaventura, dir.) and was immediately noticed by enough members of the entertainment press to nominate him Most Promising Male Newcomer in the Star Awards for that year (Raul Zaragosa eventually won). He next appeared in a youth-oriented drama film by another independent producer, Carlo Finioni, who was initially in the lingerie business and into fashion-and-talent promotion. Thereafter, since he was beginning to like the career that his mother had wanted for him, he decided to hire a manager, who took Versoza to Robbie Tan of Seiko Films, then known for bawdy sex comedies and melodramas called TF or "titillating films," because the producer was looking for leading-man material to support his studio queen, Gretchen Barretto, and occasional visiting queen, Dawn Zulueta, as well as the pretenders to their thrones, Rita Avila and Rina Reyes.



Gardo Versoza in *Machete,* a Seiko Films Production.

Photo courtesy of Ed Instrella and Gardo Versoza.

THE SEX BOMB FIZZLES

Versoza's first Seiko film, however, was a melodrama opposite Barretto titled *Ubos Na ang Luha Ko* (Chionglo, dir.), where he played a neighborhood toughie and lothario whom the girlfriend's surrogate mother did not like for her ward—a typical character created by *komiks* novelist Pablo S. Gomez, in other words. That assignment served as his screen test for Seiko Films and he passed it with flying colors. He was signed to a two-year contract that was eventually renewed for another three years, when he clicked with the audience in TFs that subsequently became bolder as the genre evolved to STF or simply ST, meaning "sex-trip" films.

His emergence as the new male screen sex symbol started after Versoza filled the vacuum that Cesar Montano had created after the latter decided to leave the Seiko studio to concentrate on action films. Versoza became Machete 2 to Montano's Machete 1 [both *Machete* films were done by director-writer Mauro Gia Samonte] and thereafter dominated the big screen and the covers, centerfolds, and inside pages of movie fan magazines with his image of a scantily clad screen stud with curly, shoulder-length lion mane. In the marketplace of the local cinema industry; he sold his body for the public to ogle.

A dozen ST films and some five years later he was still around, after initiating and partnering new screen sex goddess Rosanna Roces and the self-reinvented, formerly sweet-imaged teen-star, Abby Viduya, who later changed her screen name to Priscilla Almeda. Both actresses were willing to show more flesh and sizzle with more red-hot passion onscreen for a leading position in the female sex-symbol race. Versoza, however, decided to shift career gear. He felt that he was not getting any younger and wanted to find out if he could act by taking more challenging roles (Ed Instrella, interview by author). The truth was he was no longer willing to give, uhm, stiff competition to newcomers Leandro Baldemor and Anton Bernardo, who were only too eager to match the fiery intensity of Roces and Almeda, pound for pound of flesh and passion.

Versoza did not renew his contract with Seiko and started to seek new projects, this time of the action-film genre. But those that he got were low-budgeted projects that tried to compensate with more substantial storytelling for what they lacked in thrills and visual pyrotechnics that extended car chases and magnificent car explosions wrought. The movie-

going public was lukewarm, however, toward his change of image. Besides, the genre was lorded over by bigger and more established senior stars such as Rudy Fernandez, Phillip Salvador, Lito Lapid, Ronnie Ricketts, and Bong Revilla, as well as by junior action stars Jeric Raval and another actor also shifting gear, Zoren Legaspi, who had, however, a studio matriarch's son for a manager. Versoza's newfound field, in other words, was not exactly open to Johnnies-come-lately.

Gardo Versoza's experiences are not isolated in a primarily commercial industry that occasionally claims to acknowledge and give importance to talent and craft. Actors are consumer products and each one needs a distinctive star or screen image for a profitable market position. Packaging, therefore, is of utmost importance and oftentimes the package imprisons its subject. Rare are the instances when a star successfully negotiates for a change of image, for that is tantamount to changing a consumer product's uniqueness—best concretized in its package—in a surplus of similar products vying for buyers' attention. Yet for some, the decision to stick to an image or package proves wise, for it means longevity. The personality behind the image may still remain imprisoned but nonetheless evolves to higher respectability and influence as a cultural icon. Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ) and Dolphy arc premier examples.

Pampered by fan following and spoiled by their adulation, a level-headed hopeful may through the years turn into an unbearable prima donna who throws her weight around and misses her commitments. Several of them, unable to keep up with escalating expectations or put up with pressure coming in from all directions, turn to drugs and other types of forbidden thrills. Still some of them realize, one hopes in time, what a commodity and a spectacle the industry has made of them, so that they may be able to resolve to pick up the pieces. Fortunately, a few manage to muster courage and valiantly escape from the packaging that has imprisoned them. But if keeping and maintaining an image is difficult, changing it proves doubly difficult and risky. The case of Gardo Versoza comes back to mind.

CHANGES ...

Versoza negotiated for respectability by trying to act, a talent which he discovered he had and used in his TV-drama guestings. The recognition of this gift came via two acting awards: a Best Supporting

Actor trophy at the 1996 Manila Film Festival for Francis "Jun" Posadas's *Emong Salvation* and a Best Actor award for Olivia M. Lamasan's "Oto-San," an episode in *Maalaala Mo Kaya,* the only prize for performance in a television drama at the 1999 Golden Dove Award of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas [Philippine Broadcasters Association]. In addition, his performance as Jose Rizal, the folk hero, in Mario O'Hara's *Sisa,* was cited as one of 1999's best, according to the standards of the Young Critics Circle, a group of academe-based critics from the University of the Philippines. But the original impression that he was a non-actor, because of the image that his type of film projected, remained stuck to his persona, reinforced by an unpopularly received performance as the plebeian national hero, Andres Bonifacio, in Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Jose Rizal.* Although the director took full responsibility for her actor's interpretation of the beloved patriotic character (Instrella interview), the disclaimer did nothing to change the moviegoing public's opinion of Versoza's worth as an actor. Much later, he became a mainstay in the early afternoon GM A-7 sitcom, Jeffrey Jeturian's *Biglang Sibol, Bayang Imposibol,* where he succeeded in demonstrating comic flair and timing.

Both producers and the public turned a deaf ear, metaphorically speaking, to Versoza's plea for a change of image. Other stars, in historical contrast, were able to shift screen personalities more easily, depending upon their latest movie, but these are the types of versatile performers known more for their craft than for their public image, whose fine craftsmanship is an integral part of their screen image. If ever Lorna Tolentino, Jaclyn Jose, Amy Austria, and, before them, Elizabeth Oropesa, Chanda Romero, and Daria Ramirez successfully parlayed their respective identities from sexy stars to serious dramatic actors, they were from their emergence touted as fine performers and were handled by serious and respectable directors early on in their careers. This assured the public that, indeed, they were serious actors who just happened to be a little bit more daring when it came to shedding their clothes if that had been what the public demanded of them at the moment. Thus, Tolentino and Austria (introduced in a Brocka vehicle) had Marilou Diaz-Abaya as one of their directors; Oropesa had Danny Zialcita and Ishmael Bernal; Chanda Romero had Brocka, Bernal, and Eddie Romero; Ramirez also had Eddie Romero; and Jose had Brocka and Chito Rono.

Semiotics, as much as shrewd business sense, has much to do with the public's aversion to a star's change of image. Just as an exercise,

imagine Rosanna Roces as a martyr wife and mother, or Anjo Yllana giving Christopher de Leon stiff competition in dramatic roles. Movie stars have become not merely consumer products but signs as well; after all, the cinema itself is modern culture's primary sign system. And members of the public, by tacit agreement, largely provide the meaning or significance for the sign, the signified for the signifier, taking the cue from both the visual codes and practices associated with the signifier. Unlike the female sex stars who did not stay long aboard the bold-film bandwagon and "redeemed" themselves early enough by noted film directors who saw vast thespic potential in them, Gardo Versoza had been doing nothing but ST films that revealed little of his acting potential for five years, the tenure of his contract with Seiko Films. The movie-going public had irrevocably associated him with the visual codes and practices that came with his image as a male sex symbol—the stripped and cavorting variety, the bed acrobat and stud. Neither did he have an aesthetically inclined and recognized mentor-benefactor-filmmaker or producer in the business, nor enough of an active fan following. A sudden change of image was not forthcoming. The producers, the industry, and the public would not allow it. He could not have done it alone, for although a star may be able to participate in the creation of her image, the star herself is not a self-construct. In fact, film scholar Christine Gledhill says that the star is a construct with several components: "first, the real person; second, the 'reel' person/the character he or she plays; and third, the star's persona, which exists independently of, but is a combination of the other two" *{Stardom* 314).

Richard Dyer adds:

> The film industry makes the multi-faceted star-image, so does the star, and the audience selects; in this regard, the star-image has four component parts: first, what the industry puts out; second, what the media (critics and others) say; third, what the star says and does; and fourth, what we [the audience, the public] say, what we can select, even to the point of imitating the star ... and each audience will select a different meaning. *{Heavenly Bodies* 3-4)

Perhaps a hiatus from the movie scene—long enough for the public to erase Versoza's original image from the viewers' minds—would have helped, but that would mean taking the big risk of being unable to return

to the market forever. Versoza instead opted for an earlier shift; that, too, involved risks, for it meant abandoning his profitable market position at the earlier moment. True enough, despite the laudable intentions on his part and probably as a lamentable commentary on the state of affairs in our largely commercial film industry, Versoza soon floundered in the sea of cinematic consumer offerings that continued to increase geometrically.

WHITHER THE STAR

The star is a social construct, whether as consumer good or as cultural signifies She is manufactured, nurtured, and developed through the combined efforts of the producer-capitalist with specific and strong profit motives, the talent manager who makes business decisions in behalf of the client, the media agencies that hype and promote—or vilify—her, the filmgoer-consumer who fetishizes her as an object of pleasure and desire, and the star herself through the screen roles that she takes on in creating a screen persona with a particularly identifiable quality and lifestyle. Initially, for a profitable market position in an industry of illusions, the star assents to the terms of a package, an image, which eventually imprisons her.

For some, like Gardo Versoza, this becomes limiting and therefore motivates the star to opt for some change. The attrition rate for this exercise is extremely high; only a chosen few like Vilma Santos are able to succeed in negotiating for a change of image. For others like FPJ and Dolphy, although the package confines and limits, it brings through the years nationwide acceptability, respectability, and significance for the star who evolves into an icon signifying certain cultural values and ideological contradictions through her screen persona and her products.

But not all stars evolve into icons. It takes charisma, a special quality and power to influence and to inspire and to which the public offers an emotional investment of commitment, prompted by some personal psychological or community ideological needs, to which in turn the star image provides an answer. The psychological and ideological meanings assigned to a star, however, are both time-bound and group-validated. Gardo Versoza as a star failed to negotiate for change that could have propelled him to greater heights and hence help in his evolution into a cultural icon. Rather than lack of skill or of endearing personal qualities, the possible cause of the failure was the lack of cultural and ideological

identification of his star image. Although the male sex symbol-stud appropriately comes during a moment of sexual liberation, the image does not conform to very strong and traditional notions of masculinity equated with physical strength, moral courage, and redeemer-daring and resolve. In fact, in displaying the stripped masculine body, exposing it as an object of sexual fantasy and the desire of whatever market, the stud has been feminized by the screen apparatus, making local machos apprehensive about a felt crisis in male sexuality. Is it any wonder then that after being a screen stud, his initial crack at popularity, Versoza found acceptability[7] in his bid to change screen image as a lovable gay character such as the one he played as Nora Aunor's bosom friend in the soap opera *Bituin* [Deramas, Lazatin, and Sevilla, dirs.]?

On the other hand, although coming from the same bold film genre as Versoza, Rosanna Roces had better chances of evolving into an icon. For one, she conjured up the archetypal image of the biblical Mary Magdalene who needed a second chance in her personal and social life. More important, her persona responded to a need of the times—the empowered woman—a hardworking wife and mother, economically independent, confident with her sexuality, and possessed of her own mind with which she spoke out with confidence and bravura. Therein lies an instructive tale of contrasts, one that we can better understand by looking at as many other similar cases as time and effort will allow.

3 Performers

1 - JACLYN JOSE: BACK IN HER ELEMENT

Onee again multi-awarded film actor Jaclyn Jose[1] has delivered an exceptional performance in the independent release *Sarong Banggi,* directed by first-timer Emmanuel de la Cruz. Initially shown last year in the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival and Competition at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, it is due for a regular run in downtown theaters this August. "A refreshing turn for Jaclyn—she exudes warmth. Her acting in one word is supreme" is how multi-awarded screen playwright Armando "Bing" Lao describes Jose's performance in the said film. Bing recalls back in 1984 a reed-slim discovery who appeared with four other hopefuls in Baby Pascual and Associates' *Chikas,* whose script he submitted when he was just starting to write for local films for his friend, director William Pascual.

The production staff and later the public were presently hailing the refreshing Filipino-American mestiza with her raw acting style, described as spontaneous and sincere. In a subsequent move that catapulted her to the lead role in Chito Roño's directorial debut, *Private Show,* the new discovery delivered a similar, characteristic performance.

Jose reinforced her growing reputation for fine acting in subsequent films that Bing Lao had also written, Pascual's *Takaw Tukso* and Rono's

[1] Editor's note: She got K: although the Internet Movie Database (cf. <http://us.imdb.com/search>) lists "Jacklyn Jose" as primary entry, Jose's manager Ed Instrella, over the course of several SMS exchanges January-February 2008), made a case for the use of 'Jaclyn" as the first-name spelling of the actor's screen name. In a forwarded message, Mary Jane Guck Jose's real name) expressed her concurrence with Instrella's opinion: *"nagkakamali langyung iba pero hayaan mo naP* [others are mistaken but just let them be] (February 17, 2008, 4:41 p.m.).

Itanong Mo sa Buwan, both of which earned for her Best Actress trophies from various award-giving bodies. Although gifted with one of local cinema's most haunting and eloquently mobile faces capable of articulating a gamut of emotions, detractors have, on the other hand, criticized her monotonic speech pattern. In due time, she would correct this shortcoming as she did television soap operas and drama series that required a style of acting that contrasted markedly with the subtlety and control that she was becoming known for. Jose was able to explore and exploit the best of both film and television in the exercise of her craft. Hence, in her hands, melodramatic readings to denote heightened emotions would be significantly toned down. Her involvement in TV soap opera has in fact broadened her reach as she feels less inhibited in releasing occasional and appropriate emotional salvos as may be required by a scene.

Her short but meaningful and fulfilling experience in theater also helped her a lot, notably in Ricardo Lee's *Pitik-Bulag sa Buwan ng Pebrero* and Oscar Wilde's *Salome,* which she did for Tanghalang Pilipino of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. In those 1990s productions, she had the opportunity to explore the use of her voice. But facial expression has remained Jose's primary' tool, perfect for the visual medium that cinema is.

Theater and television drama director Khryss Adalia, who directed Jose in television miniseries such as *Familia yỹragoza* and *7e ̄Amo, Maging Sino Ka Man,* says of the actor's work, again, in *Sarong Banggi'.* "Her rich experiences in film and TV have made her a consummate actress capable of understanding the text to the point where she can act, interact, and block herself in any given space with impressively precise understanding of material." Indeed in *Sarong Banggi*,Jaclyn Jose is back in her element as she dominates the film all throughout with her quiet intensity. For one, her face, from the scene where her thoughts meander, speculating on the internal lives of passersby at the Roxas Boulevard's Baywalk, to her climactic cry of remorse and pain, conveys sheer visual poetry throughout. This she duplicates in a comparatively low-profile performance in another independent film also shown last year, Brillante Mendoza's *Masahista.*

If you ask the actor herself what she thinks of her performances in the said films, she would smile and dismiss them as "no big deal. *Ginagawa ko lang ang hinihingi ng* script *na interpretasyon ko sa karakter na ginagampanan ko."* But she quickly admits: *"Ganado ako sa paggawa ng mga pelikulang ito. Maliliit*

at mababa ang budget *pero malaki naman ang* fulfillment *mo bilang isang artista"*[2] manifesting a soft spot for the same type of independent filmmakers for whom she started performing in the early 1980s.

She is also glad to lend a hand to fresh talents on the big screen such as Angelo Ilagan, a young man in search of experience whom she initiates in *Sarong Banggi,* as well as Coco Martin, who played her son in *Masahista.*

Certainly, the years have been kind to Jaclyn Jose—to a visage that gets lovelier as she acquires maturity. If in her youth her nubile body was her biggest asset, in her maturity it's her face, upon which a thousand and one experiences and a wide range of emotions flicker perceptibly. She has learned to accept what she had discerned are the realities and givens in the world that she had chosen to live in. And that gives her the sense of balance and stability and the peace of mind that she now relishes with her own small family, whether in good moments or even in more trying times.

2 - COCO MARTIN: THE AMORAL INGENUE

In literature, theater, and film, the ingénue is an innocent, inexperienced, unworldly young woman. In film, specifically, this character represents the untarnished youth who moves around in corrupt adult society, gets introduced to its amoral ways and lifestyles, and eventually either retains her pristine innocence or loses it. In the 1958 musical winner for Oscar Best Picture, Vincente Minnelli's *Gigi,* Leslie Caron played such a character, a reprise of a similar role she did earlier in 1953 for Charles Walter's *Lili.* Caron's ingénue characters had retained their innocence even as they moved around the world of courtesans in Paris, as in the case of Gigi, or of derelicts and scum in a small-town circus-carnival, in the case of Lili.

On the other hand, Sue Lyon's Lolita in Stanley Kubrick's 1962 film adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's eponymously titled novel, and

[2] First quote: "I just do what the script requires in terms of interpreting the character that I'm supposed to depict." Second quote: "I'm enthusiastic about making these films. They may have small and cheap budgets but they provide you with great fulfillment as an artist."

Coco Martin in *Masahista.* Produced by Centerstage Productions.

Photo courtesy of Brillante Mendoza.

Carol Baker's child-bride in Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll* (1956), are examples of more transgressive ingénues. They start off as innocents and subsequently reveal a disturbing personality facet: they seduce mature men even as they keep their childlike ways and manners. Hollywood gave a new name to this relatively recent evolution of a character mold—the "nymphet"—and local cinema adopted the prototype in many adult dramas of the late 1970s through the '80s, when many trusting, starstruck, nubile newcomers were luridly introduced.

Thus, if in the late 1950s Susan Roces typified the first mold where the ingénue's innocence is preserved despite her descent into the bowels of Manila's criminal underworld in such films as Sampaguita Pictures' *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak,* in the late 1970s Alma Moreno incarnated the second variety as she raised the temperature of Vic Silayan's elderly character (in tandem with a village stud) in Crown-7's film by Ishmael Bernal, curiously similarly titled *Ligaw na Bulaklak.*

In terms of representation as cultural icons of their respective generations, Roces and Moreno may have been poles apart, but they shared a common quality, particularly in their youth. Both had sweet,

innocent faces. Through the years, however, even youthful sweet innocence and freshness would permute. More so the ingénue's. And as postmodernist lifestyles continued to blur distinctions, the typography has now expanded to include the male actor. Allan Paule in Lino Brocka's *Macho Dancer* best exemplified it, as did Lawrence David in Mel Chionglo's *Sibak,* both made in the 1990s. Now, it is Coco Martin who bids to represent local cinema's latest amoral ingénue, as he appears in Brillante Mendoza's debut film, *Masahista.*

Amoral ingénue as a name tag may be a seeming contradiction in terms, but then, with the passing of years, local cinema's ingénue has not only crossed gender boundaries but moral grounds as well. We live in an era where the cinema apparatus has similarly shifted its voyeuristic focus, from the female to the male sex object projected onscreen, largely for the benefit of the gay gaze, whereas before it was only the female actor who would be stripped naked and feasted on by the patriarchal gaze. Like his female counterpart, the male sex object remains an ingénue in physical form: a child's face on a grown-up man's physique. But this time, also, his moral stance has changed correspondingly.

Now the male ingénue readily partakes in the rituals of the corrupt adult world, at times even taking center stage—for example, in *Masahista,* as a masseur much sought-after by his predominantly gay clientele. Yet uncannily, he reemerges from his worldly immersion, seemingly unscathed and still childlike, retaining basically good old-fashioned values tempered by street-smart pragmatism, perhaps even secretly rebelling against his situation which he realizes nevertheless is a fair price to pay for his rite of passage to adulthood in a Third World social environment. In *Masahista,* Coco Martin himself, despite the daring scenes of nudity and graphic sex with Allan Paule, who now plays the gay writer-client, arouses more than the gay character's libido, inciting the latter's nurturing, maternal instinct, the compulsion to cuddle and protect the man-child. Of course, cynics amidst us will quickly point out that Freudian psychoanalysis had long disclosed the Oedipal sexual tension that exists between "mother" and child.

In real life, the young actor replicates the character Iliac in the film. A seemingly clueless young man in search of his own place in the sun, this twenty-one-year-old graduate of Hotel and Restaurant Management from the National College of Business Administration finds

himself thrust into the madding world of local showbiz, a world that may be colorful and exciting on the surface but which also slyly sends mixed and contradictory signals that confuse especially the uninitiated.

Martin has essayed bit roles in a few films before, such as in Augusto Salvador's *AngAgimat: Anting-Anting ni Lolo,* where he played Jolo Revilla's schoolmate bully; appeared in a few television and print ads; and was all set to be launched to stardom in Jeffrey Jeturian's *Sa Pagkagat ng Dilim,* until the project got aborted initially by production problems and later by the "disappearance" of its distressed female lead, Aleck Bovick. And now he is publicly accused in print and on air for reportedly having impregnated the controversial Katherine Luna, *"Babae sa Breakwater"* (title character of Mario O'Hara's 2003 film), who appears with him in both *Pagkagat* and *Masahista.*

Even before the exhibition of the film that is expected to finally launch him to stardom, he is already preceded by controversy and hounded by a not-so-friendly press. He therefore dreads interviews with some of its members who appear determined to nip his career in the bud by calling him unflattering names, just because he had initially refused to appear in television and talk about very private matters that he feels involve not only him and the would-be mother but an unborn child that should be spared from an on-air freak show. But then he knows that he has to learn how to confront his fears, if he wants to succeed in his chosen career. Giving in to tremendous pressure, he finally appeared on television and confessed to fathering the controversial female actor's child, *"para matapos na po ang lahat ng ito"* [so we can end all these (controversies)], with a bowed head. He would be more comfortable, he added however, if the woman allowed the baby to submit to a DNA test, fully aware that hitherto, before the procedure gained acceptance, only the woman could say with finality or choose to point to who the father of her child was, especially in the context of the guessing game that preceded the admission, where several other actors were similarly speculated to have sired the child. Admittedly, it was a confused confession—an admission with reservation.

Will local cinema's latest male ingénue survive the pressures of showbiz, and for how long? If he docs, will he be able, like the ingénue, to emerge with his sanity preserved and "innocence" intact? One hopes he would, for if you get to talk to him and make him relax with the

impression that you mean no harm, his thoughts and sentiments manifest internalized good, old-fashioned values that his grandmother, who brought him up for most of his formative years after his parents separated and each one raised a new family of her or his own, had taught him.

And so goes the circus that is local showbiz, a grand spectacle that assaults the senses on all fronts, whether one be child or adult.

3 - ANGELO ILAGAN: IMPRESSIONS OE A FRACTURED ANGEL

The cherubic face matches the first name. The surname? It is adopted for the screen from a famous clan of theater and film artists that include such luminaries as Jay Ilagan, Robert Arevalo, and National Artist for Film Gerardo de Leon. He is, however, not a direct descendant of the famous Ilagans, though related to them somehow His maternal grandfather was a brother of the famous prewar star Corazon Noble, mother of Jay Ilagan. And that is probably why the kid is interested in acting. *"Nasa dugo ang pag-aartista"*—as the looks run in the blood, too. Angelo Abad in real life, the boy is on his fourth year in high school at Clairemont School in General Trias, Cavite, where he resides with his mother, a stepfather, and his two siblings: a brother three years older, and a younger half-sister.

The kid's first film, *Sarong Banggi* (E. de la Cruz, dir.), was an entry to the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival and Competition in 2005 and was shown in a limited run at the Cultural Center of the Philippines during the festival. The boy was only fourteen going on fifteen when he started on the project (he just turned sixteen in 2006), after an audition where would-be co-star Jaclyn Jose personally handpicked him over other hopefuls. He is not exactly a newcomer in the business, for although his first film will finally be shown on a regular run in the commercial cinema circuits only in late August 2006, he has appeared during the interval in a popular television soap opera, *Mga Anghel na Walang Langit* (Cayetano et al., dirs.).

That was when the boy got his baptism of fire. Early in his career he was accused of unprofessional behavior, of being*pasaway* [unruly]. It was also during this time that a domestic problem was blown up and feasted upon on air, first in blind items and finally fully covered in

Angelo Ilagan and Jaclyn Jose in *Sarong Banggi.* Produced by UFO Pictures for the Cinemalaya Film Festival.

Photo courtesy of Ed Instrellaand UFO Pictures.

television showbiz-gossip programs. It certainly drew more audience attention to the newcomer who could act, besides, and it was certainly good for the soap, intentionally or not. But for the kid?

Face-to-face with him the second time around, one is tempted to ask what the real score is—regarding the unprofessional behavior, the family scandal—but finally decides not to. Spare the kid, especially one as angclic-looking as this one. Although one wonders how such an angel could break some hearts, one saw that even cherubim can apparently get hurt. Behind the pained, angelic face is a quick mind and articulate voice. One remembers the first time he met the boy, at the height of the controversy over his "unprofessionalism." Then, he finally showed up at the taping of the TV soap that was about to close, where earlier the staff and even his handlers had difficulty locating him.

"Nawala po kasi cell phone *ko,"* he tried to explain. *"Nagkukulang po kasi angpera ko"*[3] he said in answer to questions on why he couldn't be on

[3] First quote: "My cell phone was lost"; second quote: "I tend to run out of pocket money."

the set when he was expected to be there. He elaborated further but most details were lost, except for one: his deep concern for his family. Truth to tell, the kid could argue his case credibly and whatever doubt one initially felt over whether someone so fragile could protect himself from harm was all gone. Here was an armadillo that could summon its armorlike bony plates when it senses danger. Now, one distinctly remembers only what the guy says he would do in case he loses his place in showbiz or vice versa.

"Nag-aaral po naman ako. High school *pa nga lang po"* Besides, he talked about other preoccupations. "JVagdk'-design-design *po ako ng mga* vinyls and decals *para sa mga kotse,* /zog-tf-airbrush painting *din po ako."** He claimed he makes some money from that, with the help of an elder cousin with an automotive shop. He would think and talk fast and appeared serious for his tender age—even mature. Or street-smart. He was a bit angry then, but more pained.

The second time that one sees him, he is more relaxed and playful, like kids his age. But the pained look would still surface every now and then. He talks about his studies. "Favorite *ko po* history, *'yunpong mga istorya at nakaraan ng ibang tao"*[4] [5] [6] spoken like a true-blooded Cavïteno with a keen sense of the past, and claims that though he is neither that good in math nor keen about science, he is not poor in either one either. But he drools over basketball.

One is disarmed about certain admissions he makes: *"Nagingpasaway nga po siguro ako. Siguro Hindi ko masyadongpinahalagahan noon ang pag-aartista ko. Pero gusto ko po ang pag-arte. Malaki rin po ang maitutulong nito sa pamilya namin.* JVa-realize *ko po ito nang makita ko ang mahabang-mahabang pila ng mga gustong* mag-audition *para sa* StarStruck Season 3. *Ang dami-daming gustong pumasok dilo. E ako po nandidito na kahil papaano. Dapal ko lang pong pag-ingatan ito, di po baP** He apologizes with a straight face devoid of any showbiz affectation.

[4] First quote: "I'm still studying. I still have to finish high school"; second quote: "I also make designs of vinyls and decals for cars, and I do airbrush painting."

[5] "My favorite is history, the stories and experiences of other people."

[6] "I admit I did become unruly. Maybe I didn't value my status as an actor then. But I do like acting. With it I'll be able to support my family. I realized this when I saw the really long line of people who wanted to audition for *Starstruck Season 3* [Dantes et al., hosts]. So many of them wanted to get a break. But in my case I'd already arrived somehow. So I should take care of what I've got, shouldn't I?"

As before, one still senses the steely interior behind the fragile look—exactly the way he appears as a young boy being initiated into the adult world by an aging woman of the world played by Jaclyn Jose in *Sarong Banggi.* Break in the boy gently into the harsh adult world, more so that of local show business.

Rico Yan: Posthumously Recognized and Constructed

I was already copyediting a graduate term paper on stars and icons[7] when I heard about the untimely death of popular young star Rico Yan. Like the rest of those who knew the guy by virtue of his having been a media personality I was shocked. Between largely disrupted stages of work on papers for my other graduate classes and reading the final submissions of my students, I would be glued to my television set, trying to find out the latest about the late young star. I was simply curious ... no, I was concerned, involved, affected, as if a member of my own family had just died. Later, I would discover that that was not an isolated feeling for someone who had not even been a remote member of the dead young man's family.

I didn't know Rico Yan personally, although I was aware he was the grandson of former ambassador Manuel Yan, who in turn was the brother-in-law of my paternal aunt. The familial connection is remote and not even blood-related, but still sufficient to induce me to take a personal interest in Yan. On second thought, our connection appears much closer due to the star/spectator relationship.

Not that I am or had been an avid fan of his, but more because I was, in general, personally interested in showbiz and its denizens, having been a fervent follower of an icon of Philippine cinema in my earlier years. In the paper that I mentioned, 1 traced the trajectory of local film stars, from the time of their construction to the point of their evolution into cultural icons. Since not all stars evolve into icons, I gave a short list

[7] Cf. "Packaging and Imaging for a Profitable Market Position," the first article in Part 3: Star Texts.

of those whom I considered icons from among the stars of immediate pre-World War II years to the present. Rico Yan was not one of them.

While Yan was among the more popular young stars of this generation, still I believed that he was just one of several others—a star, yes, but not big enough to possess iconic stature. He was no box-office prince, nor did he command a huge, hysterical fan following. Charisma—that quality common to movie icons—is something I was not sure he had. If ever he did, it was primarily because he was the other half of a popular young love team, the other having been his real-life girlfriend Claudine Barretto—whom I considered a slightly bigger star than him, until I saw the overwhelming reaction of the public to his sudden death from what would later be pronounced acute pancreatitis. I never realized he was that popular! Neither had his tremendous impact on the local moviegoing public ever occurred to my mind! Is it possible that a star could fast-track to iconicity after death? Why ever not?

Hollywood itself has had a few examples. James Dean did only three films. Although critically acclaimed by a sector of the American film industry, he had been unable to establish his star stature and reputation as one of the finest actors of his generation until after his death—another untimely one—in a car crash. It was then that accolades were heaped upon the star and, instantaneously, he became a legend.

Another case was Marilyn Monroe: she made more films than James Dean did and had, in addition, quite established a reputation—or notoriety—as a screen sex symbol. But it was only after her death that the public elevated her to the revered stature of an icon and she thereafter became the subject of many academic studies on stars as Dean, too, had become. So why not Rico Yan? What makes a film star a cultural icon, after all?

Since I had to submit my paper within a few days, I could no longer include Rico Yan in my study of stars and icons. But there would be no sense of completion of the work if I ignored a most recent case that presented itself for study or serious analysis—especially since the case of Rico Yan eloquently informs the processing of a star as a social construct: the role of the media in this construction and in myth-making, the role of the fans and the public at large, and of the star himself—even in death. Moreover, we have here a vivid illustration of the dynamics among the different agencies that construct stars and icons.

Career on a Plateau

Rico Yan started out as a "cutesie" endorser of a skin moisturizer (Eskinol Master) for young men, and thereafter of many other products that were being sold to youngsters, from biscuits (Eggnog) and pizzas (Greenwich) to mobile-phone products (Talk 'n' Text). Starstruck, he entered showbiz by joining a search and became a member of the first batch of the Star [Cinema] Circle of young actors being groomed for stardom. A decade passed and within the period he became one of the top young stars of the country, along with Judy Ann Santos and Claudine Barretto, to both of whom he was partnered and linked romantically onscreen and in real life.

It couldn't be said that he was the most popular among the young male actors as both his love teammates Santos and Barretto were among the young female actors; neither could it be said that he was a poor second to any one of his contemporaries nor was he trailing behind a number of them. He was about as recognized as Marvin Agustin, Bojo Molina, and Wowie de Guzman then (the latter two actors have since then slipped in popularity), and much later, a little less popular than Piolo Pascual, Jericho Rosales, Diether Ocampo, and Dingdong Dantes, the current teenage heartthrobs.

He formed a zany comic triumvirate with Agustin and Dominic Ochoa in the tradition of the Apo Hiking Society; Tito, Vic, and Joey; and John Estrada, Randy Santiago, and Willie Revillame when the latter trio split after Revillame was given his walking papers from the ABS-CBN family and show, *Magandang Tanghali Bayan* [actually *MTB*\. The consolidation of the Yan-Agustin-Ochoa trio was good for the waning solo popularity of its members; it may not have propelled their careers to greater heights, but at least it prevented their continuing slippage, especially with the emergence of much younger matinee idols in the persons of Cogie Domingo, Patrick Garcia, Carlo Aquino, and John Pratts. Since the star image of Rico Yan was saccharinely wholesome, there were no intrigues that would have otherwise put him on the front pages of entertainment rags. Curiously, in the entertainment world where even private lives are turned into spectacles, the silence on the Rico Yan front was a disturbing state. It meant that his career had effectively plateaued.

Rico Yan must have known the implications of this precarious state in local entertainment, if his several business interests and concerns had been any indication. A graduate from De la Salle University, the top business school in the country, he applied the lessons he had learned in his personal nonshowbiz life. He became a young entrepreneur and as such formed partnerships with friends and former classmates in a few food businesses. He also cultivated interests other than showbiz. He was deeply interested in politics, it is said, or in the country's dynamic political situation. He was also a spokesperson for the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports, traveling around the country and giving pep talks to keep the youth away from drugs and other forms of mischief.

He maintained a few fallbacks, in short, just in case his career refused to perk up. In an interview with *Persona* while promoting his latest—and last—movie, Rico Yan said: "If I don't make it big in show business, at least I should be able to say that I did my best." But fate would intervene. While spending Holy Week on a working vacation in Palawan, he died in his sleep on Good Friday, the 29th of March, 2002.

Dead Man's Magic

Curiously, Rico Yan impacted as a star on the Filipino public more in death than when he was still alive. The public attention over the death of the young star rivaled any that had been given to any charismatic national leader. Ninoy Aquino's funeral may still hold the record for attendance, but certainly Rico Yan's funeral hogged media coverage more than those of National Artists Lucio San Pedro and Levi Celerio, themselves populist figures, who died shortly after the young actor did. The death of a certified mo\de icon, Nida Blanca, may have captured greater national attention than Yan's did, but it was because the former's was a sensational murder case in the tradition of a pulp detective mystery-thriller that had not yet found closure even after several years. And if the television coverage of the stars' respective funerals provided any basis, Rico Yan's was the bigger attraction.

Indeed Rico Yan's funeral was the equivalent of a box-office hit, even more than Olivia M. Lamasan's *Got 2 Believe,* the top-grosser of Yan's career and of the Barretto-Yan love team. For one thing, Barretto and Yan did not appear onscreen as a love team for several years, although

their fans continued to follow up on their activities as real-life sweethearts on television. For another, the accelerated promotion for the movie projected the principals as a young couple so much in love with each other, even hinting at plans for marriage in the not-so-distant future.

The first two-week exhibition of the romantic comedy established the movie's blockbuster standing: it was extended for an extra week's run. At the time of Yan's death, some unofficial reports claim, the movie was into its eight-figure (in Philippine pesos) gross take. After his death, it broke the hundred-million-peso barrier. Non-Rico Yan fans were curious: who was this bubbly young actor suddenly drawing national attention in death? Barretto-Yan fans were seeing the movie twice, thrice, even more. It was like paying last respects to a fallen idol over and again.

Yan's death and funeral were hyped up by media, undoubtedly. But undoubtedly, too, the public reaction and gestures of sympathy were largely spontaneous and genuine. There may have been several *uzis* [diminutive pun on *usiseros* or curiosity-seekers] out to conduct some stargazing, but a great majority came because they genuinely cared, as they admitted in interviews. Some of them even came from the far-flung Visayas and Mindanao, and would stay for hours under the scorching heat of the summer sun or overnight in front of the De La Salle Greenhills campus gates, which were shut close at certain intervals at the request of the late person's family who wanted to have some private moments with their departed member.

Originally, the wake as planned would be held at the Sanctuario de San Antonio in an upscale row at Forbes Park, but in anticipation of huge crowds of fans who intended to pay their last respects, the young actor's body was transferred to De La Salle Greenhills, his alma mater. That a dead man could have such a command of loyalty and affection from people, most of whom he had not even met much less interacted with, is truly amazing. No doubt about it, although posthumously disclosed, the young actor had charisma, after all. In my earlier paper, I had adopted the Max Weber-inspired definition of charisma as a special quality, originally possessed by some religious leaders or groups and later political leaders who inspire awe, unquestioning obedience, and emotional investment among followers on the basis of some outstanding personal traits that, as a result, enable them to claim legitimacy for the power that they wield. The impact of film stars who have evolved into

cultural icons, best exemplified by the Nora Aunor phenomenon, was given as an outstanding example.

The Role of Media

In the construction of a public image, the media is a pivotal agency. And in the case of Rico Yan, from his start as a commercial model to the hour of his death, television broadcasting had taken center stage, perhaps even more than cinema did. Yan was a product of television's image-building and myth-making prowess. From his early ads for Eskinol Master and Eggnog through Greenwich Pizza and Talk 'n' Text, TV advertising projected the young man as the quintessential effervescent youth, full of life, energy, spontaneity, and possibly some hints of Dennis-the-Menace mischief. The toothsome smile and the dimples did it, as did the boyish, almost-shaggy hair and casual grooming. He was everybody's young, *pilyo* [naughty] but still respectful son; everyone's youngest *kitikiti* [skitterish] brother. This image was replicated in print as well as radio ads.

When he became a movie star, Yan projected the same personality, although when he started doing drama both on the big cinema and small television screens, he assumed an appropriate air of seriousness, responsibility, and intelligence. Outside showbiz, feature as well as publicity write-ups projected him as, indeed, a serious, responsible, and intelligent youth with good business acumen for his age. He was also a leader, a role model for young people as a social-civic activist of various interests and concerns. All these qualities created a public image, a screen persona unique among young actors of local cinema today.

The persona was not far from the "real" Rico Yan, although for stars and icons we could not really point out—or ever know—the real from the virtual, since the images or appearances dominate and overwhelm. Let us just assume that most of the time, he was what his image communicated. This image reached mythic proportions immediately after his death. Day-to-day, in blow-by-blow-account fashion, both his home network, ABS-CBN Channel 2, and its archrival in TV broadcasting supremacy, GMA-7, tried to outdo each other in bringing the latest scoop on the Rico Yan demise.

Channel 7's show host Arnold Clavio was also vacationing in Palawan at the Dos Palmas Resort Hotel where Rico Yan and his group

mates were staying. With the other guests of the resort-hotel, Clavio's and Yan's groups were having a merriment session that consisted of singing, bantering, eating, and drinking. Since there were children present, it was all nice, clean fun. That was during the eve of Rico Yan's death, on Maundy Thursday. When the young star was rushed to the hospital early the following day and was subsequently pronounced dead on arrival, Clavio was able to transmit the tragic news to his network studio. Thus, GMA-7 outscooped its rival. ABS-CBN 2 followed very soon thereafter (in Julie Yap-Daza's Friday-night program, *Tell the People Now).*

Thereafter, the two channels sent posthaste their news-and-public-affairs teams headed by Karen Davila for Channel 2 and Jessica Soho for Channel 7, to give the latest report *in situ* for their respective newsbreak interjections. Initial reports were filed by both teams the late afternoon of the actor's death, at about the same time that the body was being brought home by his father and his brother, both of whom flew to Palawan from Manila. Between tears and polite pleas to respect the privacy of their grief, father and brother and best friend Dominic Ochoa would nonetheless try to answer questions asked by the two reporters, who in turn claimed to have experienced great difficulty in balancing their duty as broadcast journalists to a public that wants to be informed and their deference to the feelings of the beleaguered family members. Although the more sensitive sectors of the audience would squirm in their seats over the discomfort that the bereaved were being subjected to, they nevertheless remained glued to their TV sets. It was truc-to-lifc drama unfolding right before their eyes, a tragedy similar to those concocted for soap-opera serials that propel programs to the heights of the ratings game. Even in death, Rico Yan was a commodity to be sold in the market of the local entertainment industry, like all stars are meant to be. And the marketing of this particular star, we would later realize, was never as frantic and brisk in his lifetime as it was after his death.

It was a Good Friday and traditionally—and as if in conspiracy with the great unknowable forces that create newsworthy events such as tragedies ("9-11,ảnyone?)—there would be no incident worthy enough to distract the viewing public from the reflective and contemplative practices reserved for a time of remorseful piety over the commemoration of Christ's death. But this was different. Indeed, death spares no one, not even the young with so much promise ahead. Others would relate it

to the season: What is the Easter message of Rico Yan's sudden death? Why else would God take his life away on that particular day?

Somehow, the answer to the last question was provided by an article written by a Jesuit priest, Tito Caluag, a personal friend and spiritual adviser of the fallen matinee idol. They had talked before the young actor left for Palawan. He was in pain and was in search of enlightenment, for he was at the crossroads of his personal and professional life. He was planning to use the Holy Week vacation to contemplate and had hoped that when he came back, he would have made some crucial decisions. Caluag inferred that it had to do with Yan's pursuit of his image as role model for the youth, for developing a greater sense of their responsibility and active participation in societal transformation that would start with working for the betterment of their selves.

Other tales about Rico Yan and his good deeds would fill the air through news bulletins and features as well as through special testimonial and commemorative shows that were staged (pun unintended) by colleagues from both networks. Television was filled with what could be called, in retrospect, the Rico Yan mania the week following his death. His home network studio, aside from airing the latest in the young actor's wake where friends, relatives, colleagues, and no less than the President of the Republic paid their last respects, replayed earlier shows where Yan had appeared, in addition to documentaries hurriedly prepared in memoriam of the actor. Film critic Lito Zulueta (C6) called it "a pornography of grieving."

Meanwhile, the rival channel contributed its bit, mostly with clips from Yan's movies and nonshowbiz activities that were previously covered for news programs. Of course, some materials were borrowed from Yan's home network and were properly acknowledged, but still, overall, their coverage of the late actor was a poor second to that made by the latter's network studio. Except for one case: GMA-7's Arnold Clavio was able to take a video recording of the partying that happened at Dos Palmas the eve of Yan's death. The event was the last covered with Rico Yan alive, a precious piece of property—and it was not even ABS-GBN's. And clips were shown on Channel 7's daybreaker, *Unang Hirit*^ aired 5:00—8:30 a.m., along with subsequent interviews with select people who were fortunate enough to be in Yan's company several hours before his death—the resort's in-house physician (who subsequently first attended

to the body of the expired actor), the nurse and innkeepers, and the children over whom the young actor was solicitous, including one whose birthday celebration a few days after Yan had promised to grace.

In subsequent coverage attempts, it was reported that the GMA-7 crew members were practically blocked out by Channel 2 officials who stage-managed the goings-on at the De La Salle Greenhills campus. The latter's equipment would be strategically positioned before the crew from other network stations would be allowed to enter. This was most obvious during the day of the burial itself, from the requiem Mass celebrated in the school gymnasium to the interment in the family mausoleum at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque. Confronted with the accusation, the ABS-CBN camp responded: naturally, since Rico Yan was the network's talent and besides, the actor's family consented so that order and solemnity might be ensured during the wake and the burial. A declaration of property rights, we must agree. Not even the death of an apparently commonly cherished colleague could declare a ceasefire to the network war.

Between commemorative shows, fans and friends were interviewed and they all said nice things about the guy: his humor, his intelligence, his philanthropic deeds—like silently donating money to sick fans or giving much, much more for the merchandise that *sampaguita* [jasmine] and cigarette vendors sold him—his solicitousness and thoughtfulness where his immediate family was concerned, his having been a trouper toward troubled colleagues and coworkers, and so many other bits of information that collectively formed a halo around the visage of the young actor who was given another week, at least, to remain longer in our midst as he animatedly talked and performed in all those reissued programs. Combined with his bubbly personality that the public saw optimally projected on TV, it was as if the young actor had never been allowed to leave so suddenly. And that was what the public wanted. They could never have enough of the late young actor (Daza, *Tell the People Now).* Not enough, so that for one week, Rico Yan commemoratives and testimonials would make up about a fourth of primetime news, with segments distributed throughout the program; not enough, so that newsbreak segments would feature the latest happenings during the wake. This was as true of the late actor's home studio as it was of its rival studio. Fortunately, there were three other nationwide networks in

commercial television and they would exercise more restraint and give more prominence to news items of more significant national importance and interest.

Chismis: The Underground Media

If the network news contributed to the postmortem construction of a mythical, larger-than-life image of Rico Yan, *chismis* or gossip—another prevalent preoccupation among Filipinos—presented a not-so-flattering, contradictory image of the late actor. The rumors centered on his personal romantic relationship with celluloid love teammate Claudine Barretto, as well as on his true state of mind and emotion the night—and a few days before—he died.

Talk had it that the actor left for Palawan with a heavy heart over his breakup with Barretto after a violent confrontation, allegedly over another actor, Raymart Santiago, who was then capturing the amorous interest of the young lady. The final quarrel allegedly happened right after a dinner date to celebrate the couple's anniversary of their four-year relationship offscreen, and a few days after the actor's twenty-seventh birthday. Supposedly in a fit of jealousy and anger—the grapevine said that Barretto had wanted a breakup—Yan allegedly laid hands on his lady love and the camera installed in an elevator of the condominium where the young actress resided recorded a disturbing scene where Yan was banging Barretto's head on the wall. It is said that Barretto was shouting for help and that before the actor finally left the premises, she threatened to sue him, and was thinking of presenting the elevator recording as evidence. Furthermore, rumor had it that before the group of Rico Yan left for Palawan, best friend Dominic Ochoa allegedly purchased some tablets of Ecstasy, said to be a current favorite drug among young actors seeking escape from the pressures of their personal and career lives. Rumormongers surmised that the young actor could have been under the influence of this drug, as he was seen extremely "ecstatic" in professing love to everyone he interacted with during the merrymaking the night before he died and most probably, too, when he met his death very early the following day. Finally, it was said that Barretto was devastated upon learning about her former boyfriend's death and had to be given medication. Moreover, she was not able to see the remains of the late actor immediately because she first had to ask permission

from the Yans who allegedly initially refused, until sister Gretchen threatened to call a press conference where they would spill the beans. It was also said that the Yans subsequently left the chapel quietly when the Barrettos arrived.

The following had been confirmed in subsequent interviews with friends and family members in TV talk shows and news breaks, as well as in print in both broadsheets and tabloids: (1) Yan was emotionally depressed before he left for the Holy Week vacation—he was troubled and was intending to use his trip as an opportunity for some self-searching; (2) Santiago admitted that indeed he was courting Barretto and was, in fact, with her and her sisters Gretchen and Marjorie spending their Holy Week vacation in Subic, Zambales, though he said that he and a companion were billeted in a different hotel; (3) Yan and Barretto had ended their four-year relationship, with Yan himself intimating this when he reportedly dedicated one of the songs he sang during the Las Palmas evening merriment "to the woman who is now out of my life."

On the other hand, the following had been neither confirmed nor denied, or had been denied outright:

First, the purchase of Ecstasy tablets. Ochoa denied this categorically and in connection with the rumor that his friend had taken some of this or any prohibited drug. This denial was made in answer to the allegation of screen sex goddess and TV talk show host Rosanna Roces, who swore by the testimony of an allegedly reliable source who said that Ochoa was seen buying some tablets in Cubao. Roces also took the cudgels for Barretto and in so doing insinuated that there may have been a discrepancy between the image projected by the late actor and the real person behind the image. Rosanna was subsequently suspended by GMA-7 executives, who immediately made a public apology to the Yan family for the "insensitivity" of their host-talent.

Second, the violent lovers' quarrel. All quiet on both fronts, so far. However, also in Rosanna Roces's then-program *Startalk* (Francisco et al., hosts), the staff tried to interview Barretto, who fled to Hong Kong shortly after her former boyfriend had been buried. On a phone patch, it was sister Gretchen who responded and there threatened again to tell all in a press conference if some members of the Yan family would not stop harassing her younger sister with their nasty mobile phone text messages. The phone patch was disconnected posthaste, allegedly because

of some technical problems. Speculations grew wilder as a result. As a postscript, when the Barretto sisters returned from Hong Kong after a day or two, two Star Cinema officials—executive producer Malou Santos and film-TV director Olivia M. Lamasan—were seen protectively whisking away Barretto from inquisitive reporters. It was not clear, however, who they were protecting.

Third, the cold reception of the Yan family. The viewing public could, again, only resort to conjecture, in the absence of any statement issued from either quarter. Barretto, who valiantly tried to attend the final necrological services at De la Salle Greenhills and the interment at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque obviously did not—was not allowed to—occupy any seat of prominence or distinction usually reserved for the loved ones of the departed. In addition, no camera shot of any member of the family receiving the young actor's former girlfriend was ever shown.

The Public's Peculiar Response—And Some Insights

The events and the coverage attending the wake and interment of the late young actor, in other words, were nothing short of dramatic and intriguing. Along with testimonials on the good, wholesome image of Rico Yan came hushed whispers of not-so-flattering disclosures that, in fact and ironically, added to the mythmaking surrounding the construction of a legendary image. The fans and the public, as a result, chose to believe the superlatives and ignored any intimation that would vilify the name, honor, and image of the young actor who had been declared a role model for the Filipino youth of today, and after whose name a foundation would soon be launched in order to pursue Yan's vision for the youth, and honor his commitment to them.

The images of cultural icons are not necessarily untarnished. FPJ was reportedly wild and unreasonable after having had too much drink. Nora Aunor had not always been professional and had bouts with chemical abuse and emotional depression. Vilma Santos figured in a "Betamax scandal." Dolphy was a womanizer and so was Joseph Estrada who, in addition, had an unenviable history of corrupt and graft-ridden public service and governance. Most of these have not been "officially" established; they were more like open secrets, but still, the public chose to believe the myths.

Why? Because it seems that that is part of the package of being a cultural icon who embodies a cultural or ideological value and meaning; the public chooses to invest in a persona or an image which is largely illusory Like film genres from which stars and icons originate, the latter perform mythical functions in working out conflicts, contradictions, and differences that are most possibly irreconcilable in real life but may be resolved at least onscreen or in a socially constructed persona. Icons are admired and revered; one identifies with and imitates them. On the one hand icons are ordinary people with personal contradictions like most of us, but on the other hand they also possess extraordinary qualities and talents that we aspire for as we continuously struggle toward perfection. The qualities and talents most often the real person possesses; most often, too, the qualities and the talents that are attributed to a persona, to an icon, are actually our own personal or community aspirations projected onto the persona. That way, the icon serves its mythical function as an ideological symbol. This is the reason why, I strongly suspect, an icon is not easily destroyed. Take the case of Joseph Estrada who—despite obvious infractions in the ideal image that were gradually disclosed over time—continues to signify the liberation of the masses by one of their kind (which is not even true of Estrada's class origin, in the first place). Because to destroy the icon is not to destroy the person's real personal qualities but rather the people's aspirations and life meanings, the ones that they have chosen to project onto the icon's persona.

To Rico Yan, in the short time after his death, had been attributed the ideals and aspirations of those among the contemporary youth who are intelligent, responsible, informed, and involved. The young people who queued up during the wake and those who watched on their TV sets wanted those attributes in themselves; the mothers and the fathers, likewise, longed for those qualities in their sons and daughters. Yan's persona—whether created in conspiracy or in confluence by his producers, whose motivation may have still been primarily that of profit; his business manager, whose most important function was to build up, consolidate, reinforce, and protect or maintain a meaningful image with the help of the agencies of media, specifically cinema and television broadcasting and advertising; and finally the public, whose members were by no means active participants in the construction of his image—definitely served an ideological function at this time when lost youth look for some strong

anchor in a society that continues to disappoint and frustrate as it gradually reveals its weaknesses and corruption. He had what it took to be an icon. If the image survives the rumors that vilify it, then he will truly be elevated to the level of a cultural icon, one that has been posthumously recognized and constructed.

Opinion-maker Teodoro C. Benigno, in one of his columns in the *Philippine Star,* expressed worry over the fact that the public's overwhelming response to the death of the young actor indicated that the masses turn to entertainment celebrities or pop idols rather than to national political leaders for role models ("The Asian Challenge/Rico Yan Phenomenon" 11). So what's new? It happened before with Papa Imo and other so-called millenarian or quasi-religious leaders during periods of revolt. It happened, too, in the case of Valentin de los Santos and his Lapiang Malaya followers. These are disturbing commentaries on where the identification of the masses and their interest truly lie. Except for a very few, our national political leaders—insofar as the masses are concerned—have not measured up to the latter's expectations of leaders and role models, not enough for them to project onto the latter's personae their own aspirations and life meanings.

PART 2

Gender Texts

“Feminized” Heroes and “Masculinized” Heroines

If you want to know a community’s cultural values, go see its genre films, one of the surest sites of a people’s aspirations, and not merely that of visionary though individual artists. There a culture’s dominant ideology, as well as the position of men and women, are generally manifested. This is especially true for film genres in their classical phase of development. But despite a set of conventions which audiences expect in any specific film genre, the genres themselves undergo changes or permutations. At times, moreover, two or more genres intermingle. More significantly, at other times, a film may question the ideology or values of its own genre. These are the revisionist genre films, which infuse an alternate vision, a revisioning of a genre’s classical ideology (cf. articles in Grant).

Of particular interest to us are three contemporary Filipino films with several commonalities among them, all relevant to the genre-, studio-, and star-system mix crucial in the promotion of new or in the reinforcement of existing values among the moviegoers. These are *Kailangan Kita, Milan,* and *Sabel.* First, all three films produced in the early 2000s can be properly classified as romantic melodramas. Second, all are produced by established film studios in the Philippines. Third, the films feature the brightest young female stars in contemporary Philippine cinema, at least with established, marked star/screen personae, if they have not yet joined the ranks of stars turned cultural icons (the few of which include the late Fernando Poe, Jr. [FPJ], Dolphy, Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, and even Sharon Cuneta).

Claudine Barretto is the female protagonist for both *Kailangan Kita* and *Milan* of Star Cinema, while Judy Ann Santos plays the title role in *Sabel* of Regal Entertainment, Inc. Male lead roles are played by Aga Muhlach *(Kailangan),* Piolo Pascual *(Milan),* and Wendell Ramos *(SabeH).* Of the three, both Muhlach and Pascual have established star/screen personae of their own. Ramos, on the other hand, started to get noticed for lead dramatic roles just recently. In addition, these films were directed by the foremost young filmmakers who joined the mainstream industry in the 1990s and now have established names and reputations: Rory B. Quintos for *Kailangan Kita,* Olivia M. Lamasan for *Milan,* and Joel Lamangan for *Sabel.* These new names have infused innovations in both content and style not only in the subject films but in their other films as well.

This essay focuses only on the gender roles of the protagonists and their relationship with one another, although all three films are multifaceted and polysemic, rich in texture and in issues confronting contemporary Philippine society. Both Claudine Barretto and Judy Ann Santos, the leading young female stars of this generation, are also known

Aga Muhlach and Claudine Barretto in *Kailangan Kita.*

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as the drama queens of local television soap opera, with their movies widening their influence and clout among local audiences. As television stars, both by design (of their studios and career managers) and necessity (in the context of what constitutes popular drama in local TV), they have acquired through the years the small-screen persona and image associated with soap-opera female lead characters, the quintessential young, martyrlike, and oppressed women of family melodramas, notably in Emil Cruz, Jr. and Jerry Lopez Sineneng's *Mara Clara: The Movie* and Sineneng's *Esperanza: The Movie* Judy Ann Santos); and in Wenn V. Deramas's *Mula sa Puso* and *Saan Ka Man Naroroon* (Claudine Barretto). Both actors have parlayed these images onto the big screen, if only because their more popular TV soap operas have subsequently been adapted into film.

Of the two, it is Claudine Barretto who had the earlier opportunity to play transgressive character roles that go against the grain of the *mabait at api* [good-natured and oppressed] role model. Apart from depicting middle-class adolescents in Star Cinema's youth-oriented movies, she was an arrogant daughter and sister to two same-faced siblings (they were triplets) in the TV soap *Saan Ka Man Naroroon,* and an OFW domestic's similarly haughty and rebellious daughter who took drugs and engaged in premarital sex in Quintos's movie *Anak.* On the other hand, it was only recently that Santos took a quantum leap forward from her sweet, wholesome image in *Sabel.*

But first, about Barretto and her leading men.

Lena and Jenny: The Filipina as Martyr-Plus

Two recent film roles that established not only Barretto's reputation as one of the country's finest young actors but also as a cinematic symbol of the contemporary Filipino woman were those of Lena in *Kailangan Kita* and Jenny in *Milan.* As Lena, she is the ignored Bicolana daughter relegated to kitchen and dining-room chores, who suffers in comparison with her more intelligent, accomplished, and celebrated sister, a supermodel based in New York and now about to return home to get married to her Filipino celebrity chef boyfriend, Carl (Aga Mulach). Like his fiancée, Carl is also an expatriate who is coming back home ahead of her to meet the latter's family and personally attend to the early preparations for their wedding. Actually, this constitutes a

homecoming trip for him, back to the land of his birth and maturation which he had not seen in seventeen years.

Lena here is still the obedient, servile, and soft-spoken daughter. But she transcends this stereotypical image because she possesses great, if stoic, character strength, more formidable in nature than that of any of her siblings or even of her sister's fiancé. Although self-sacrificing in that she has chosen to stay with her family rather than join her fleeing dissident boyfriend Jericho Rosales), a member of the Communist New People's Army (NPA), she continues to be a faithful and staunch defender and supporter of the political conviction and revolutionary cause of her lover, defying the rigid feudal order of the family patriarch Johnny Delgado) and risking the latter's continuing ire and condescension.

This strength does not go unnoticed by Carl who, in fact, is initially taken to task by Lena because of his pesky comments and bratty Amboy (American Boy) ways, as well as because of his seemingly apolitical stance that yet manifests a quick-to-condemn attitude and uninformed bias against NPA rebels. It takes Lena's conviction to open Carl's eyes, not only to many questions about social realities in his birthplace which he had abandoned for a better life in the US, but also to an apparently forgotten Filipino identity. Lena is also instrumental in making Carl understand and forgive the father (Dante Rivero)—who had earlier left them, his family, for the revolutionary underground movement based in the mountains of Sorsogon. Carl's initial stance to shut off from his consciousness any references to his father and their family's earlier life in Bicol is symptomatic of the heavy emotional baggage that he had been carrying all these years. Lena's passion about matters of the heart and about social justice, on the one hand, and Carl's playful, passive, and apolitical stance even as he is quick to prejudge ideological radicalism, on the other, create the polarities that proUde the romantic tension that draws the two lonely souls to each other. Although later, Carl's fiancée apparently demonstrates that she holds her career in a position superior to her forthcoming marriage to Carl by not appearing at least a day before her wedding (busy as she was with a fashion pictorial in Europe), it would no longer matter to Carl, who had by that time fallen deeply for the younger sister whom he thinks of liberating someday soon from her father's feudal treatment.

This is a contemporized, rehashed theme of the story of Adam and Eve. But where in the patriarchal biblical version Eve is seen as a temptress who leads Adam to damnation after inducing him to partake of the fruit of wisdom and knowledge, this time in *Kailangan Kita,* Lena's Eve becomes Carl's Adam's eye-opener, who offers the true fruit of wisdom and enlightenment. This is the biblical, patriarchal myth revisioned altogether, overturned in fact.

A similar pattern of female-dominated heterosexual relationship is extended and reconfigured in another Star Cinema film, *Milan.* This time, the woman becomes a defender-protector to her ward, who subsequently becomes her lover. Barretto plays Jenny in this film, an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) domestic in Milan, Italy. She is intelligent, worldly-wise, and resourceful, making her figure dominant among the other OFWs who had decided to stay together in one dormitory-like house that, in addition, provides sanctuary—for a fee—to other Filipinos who have illegally come to Italy for some work. A recent drifter is Lino (Piolo Pascual), a young, good-looking but naive groom looking for his bride (Iza Calzado) of several months in Milan. A mechanical engineer who had lost his job, he decided to follow his missing wife to Italy on borrowed money and through illegal entry via the Swiss border. Lost in a totally new place, he eventually lands in Jenny's dorm, recruited by the grand *signorina* herself, where he meets a motley crowd of OFWs with a variegated array of angst (thankfully depicted nonmelodramatically). Amid a backdrop of poignant subplots of the difficulties and loneliness endured by self-sacrificing (for their respective families back home) overseas workers, Jenny and Lino's romance blossoms. What is interesting, however, is their characters' dynamics, which illustrate contemporary Filipino gender roles that not only blur boundaries but more significantly cross borders.

Claudine Barretto's Jenny is spirited, even flamboyant, when Lino first sees her. He mistakes her for a native Italian, for she speaks the language fluently. She is also well-connected, as we find out later, through other Filipino workers' groups all over Italy. Although she takes two or three jobs at any single time, she brokers for jobs that other Filipinos look for, and sells prepaid mobile phone cards on the side. She is, needless to say, hardworking and driven, primarily because she works not only for

herself and her upkeep in Italy, but more so for her family back home, specifically for a mother and a spoiled brother who depend on her for even the purchase of a tricycle or pedicab, which she ultimately agrees to send money for due to the insistent intercession of her mother. Later, we learn that she is college educated, although a dropout, and belonged to a family that used to own a car—in other words, well-off and middle-class—until her father was imprisoned for using other people's money fraudulently for a business where his partners duped him. Due to this reversal of family fortune, she had to work overseas as a domestic in Milan after she tried odd jobs, including "modeling" for an adult girlie joint. In Milan, although during most of her waking hours she is preoccupied with hard work, she nevertheless finds time for some fun such as taking an Italian boyfriend, about her age, from whom—it is suggested—she also gets some convenient arrangements for her upkeep. For instance, at one point she gets from him a pair of winter clothes, one each for Lino and her younger brother (Ryan Eigenmann), who subsequently visits her in Milan.

To Lino, Jenny had been initially a mother hen. Although she gets from him rental money more than what is fair (she places him in her own room that has a big curtain for a divider between his bed and cabinets and hers), she is the type who would worry[7] earnestly and look for him frantically when he gets lost in the city, or solicitously accompany him during her days off from work as he looks for his wife; she would tap her network of connections in search of the woman, guide him on how to properly cross the streets, take him to his rides, and prepare snacks for him during these wife-searching trips, look up jobs for him, even as she admonishes and reprimands him whenever he would go into temper tantrums over unwanted jobs, or nags him about the necessity of finding work if he wanted to stay longer in Milan until he finds his wife. Later, she protects him from hurting when she finally gets a lead to where his wife is and discovers that she had married an Italian for convenience and bore the latter a child, prompting the young wife to totally cut ties from her Filipino husband to spare him from sharing her "already shattered life." Jenny keeps this a secret from Lino, who meanwhile has slowly begun to fall for Jenny himself.

Later, Jenny becomes lover to Lino, solicitous and thoroughly understanding, to the point of spoiling him; sclf-sacrificing, to the point

of keeping up with his subsequently acquired bloated ego and attitude problem; and martyrlike, to the point of willingly giving him up when she learns that he has not completely forgotten his wife. She tells him her secret and brings him to the wife to see for himself what has become of her. Of course, the ever-confused guy takes this previous knowledge kept secret by Jenny as an act of betrayal.

Piolo Pascual's Lino, in contrast, is a laid-back underachiever compared with his other family members. He decides to leave the country and follow his wife, who had gone to Milan for work shortly after their marriage (she had this planned even before Lino insisted on marrying her before she could leave) but who had since missed communicating with her young husband. Directionless and mindless, he remains oblivious to the great difficulty about to confront him in a strange land, especially with a meager amount of money in his pocket. He is confident that he will find his wife, and that he can persuade her to go back home. But Lino is no decisive, strong man who is in control. He has, in fact, never grown up and constantly alternates between being childlike and being childish. Yet he has a good heart, and even better looks, in terms of both face and physique. One's impulse is to cuddle and protect him, and Jenny is no exception. Appropriately so, because the young man is lost without a guardian and needs to be constantly reminded how adults should behave. Jenny fulfills that role. And sooner than they both expect, he is falling for her, first because he is thankful for all her help and later, because he must have realized how helpless he had been without a woman beside him. The wife originally provided the crutch. Now it's Jenny, and what a great and able replacement for a loss. He himself tells her that she had provided him direction and purpose in life, teaching him to be patient and motivated. Things turn sour later, however, when Lino's childish tantrums grow into violent fits of jealousy over Jenny's attention and solicitousness toward her visiting brother, when Lino's newfound self-confidence monstrously develops into a bloated sense of self-worth. And then the final blow: he loses both women, apparently.

By themselves, Jenny and Lino are memorable Filipino-film characters, but what makes their relationship riveting are the dynamics between them. They arc a perfect match insofar as character spine, desire, will, and motivation are concerned. Moreover, they amply illustrate the changing image of the Filipina and the Pinoy macho.

If Barretto's contemporary Filipino woman's image remains nurturing, servile, and martyrlike, even as she crosses traditional gender-boundary roles (usually assigned to the Filipino macho) as protector and provider which she now is to her ward and man, not to mention to her entire family (as projected, too, by Vilma Santos in both Chito Roño's *Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?* and in Quintos's *Anaty,* Judy Ann Santos's contemporary Filipino woman is even more violative of the traditional. As "Sabel," Santos redefines the modern-day Filipina's obligation to herself first, and then to others outside of herself second—a contemporary Filipina's individuation as a woman and as a person.

Judy Ann Santos's "Sabel": Individuation of the Filipino Woman

Judy Ann Santos's "Sabel" is multifaceted, a complex, multidimensional character; the audiences of *Sabel* would initially suspect that she is schizophrenic. We first see her as a nun on apostolate work in a penitentiary, an unconventional type given to unbuttoning her habit and exposing her undergarment to pacify a restless inmate by diverting his attention and energy from fits of violence. Definitely a curious if not a weird stance, this however serves to foreshadow a more unexpected and baffling disclosure that she later confesses to her spiritual adviser: she had cooperated willingly in her "rape," performed by an inmate, Jojo (played by Wendell Ramos), because she wanted "to reach out to him who is full of hatred in his eyes and in his heart" for having been imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. The "rapist" is subsequently declared not guilty of the crime he was originally accused of and gets acquitted. After his release from prison, he looks for and finds her, now out of the nun's habit and thoroughly hip and transformed in looks and demeanor. He professes love for her and they subsequently live together happily for some time, until she would go into melancholic fits and hallucinations that finally prompt her to leave him—perplexed, needless to say. In his search for her, he would see and talk to different people, related to or acquainted with her, and their accounts paint Sabel in varying lights, mostly unflattering. To her mother, who is herself an unconventional character, Sabel is a dutiful and loving daughter to her father but a difficult one, intransigent even toward the woman with whom she is constantly at odds in a love-hate relationship; to a boyfriend, she is aggressive and fiercely expressive of her sexuality, rather promiscuous and self-

Judy Ann Santos in *Sabel.*

Judy Ann Santos and Sunshine Dizon in *Sabel.*

Both photos courtesy of Regal Entertainment, Inc., Lily Monteverde and Roselle Monteverde through the assistance of Joel Lamangan.

destructive, regardless of what people may say. Jojo agrees with Sabel's mother that she is prone to destroy relationships such as that between her mother and a suitor, as well as that between her best girlfriend and the latter's boyfriend whom Sabel had snatched away. All the more the faithful and patient lover gets confused, for the picture that people paint is the complete opposite of the Sabel that he had known. On the other hand, Sabel's spiritual adviser—himself a controversial man of the Catholic Church, living with a wife and a son—corroborates the lover-searcher's better impression of the woman he loves: she is a "good" person, a nun worthy of her calling.

His untiring search leading him to nothing, Jojo is finally diverted from his seemingly futile preoccupation when another woman distracts him and convinces him, through her loving ministrations, to marry her. He begets her a son and a still-to-be-born second child. Just as he has given up his search, the man chances upon Sabel once more in the Cordillera highlands, where she is about to be tried in court for the murder of a lawyer from a lowland city. She now lives with an ethnic community, the Ibalois, along with her seven-year-old boy whom she introduces to her former lover as his son, as well as her present doctor-spouse who, the man soon discovers, is another woman. She is subsequently acquitted of the crime for lack of evidence and largely on the basis of the testimony of Ibaloi tribcspeople, who provide her with an alibi, a consensus reached by the whole community. Finally, Sabel confesses to her former lover that she indeed killed the victim—an abusive lawyer of a lowland estate-development corporation grabbing ancestral land from the natives—after the lawyer brutally raped Sabel's lesbian partner. She parts as friends with Jojo, as she declares that her search for purpose and direction in life was concretized in her commitment to the Ibalois with her female spouse and her son. Sabel also makes peace with her mother, whose other more pleasant facets gradually surface as did her daughter's, as we come to know them better.

Sabel's narrative line is indeed intriguing and perplexing for the most part. Never content with settling for an intimate portrait in his films, the filmmaker, Joel Lamangan, invariably opts instead to draw up large canvases, expansive societal murals. And he paints in both broad strokes and details in styles unconventional and innovative, leaving confused the average audience member steeped in conventional linear storytelling

and fixated on realistic and naturalistic cinematic treatment, more so in this film where he employs a series of flashbacks that are actually visualizations of present-time oral narrations or dialogues between characters that, in addition, alter spatial order and temporal chronology. Lamangan also uses his narrative and characters as expressionistic, symbolic representations of concepts. In *Sabel* the stylistic treatment is for once thematically motivated and appropriate.

More philosophical and sociological rather than literary and psychological, *Sabel* questions and challenges certain standard perspectives through which Filipinos view things. It probes into their long-held premises about people and the social order. It questions establishment canons and standards. The film is peopled with transgressive characters none of whom may be taken as a role model, for it challenges our essentialist viewpoints about people: what a man or a woman should be, how a religious representative should behave, how a woman should handle her sexuality; or of the social order: what constitutes morality or crime, where justice may be truly served (whether inside or outside the courtroom), and other similar issues. It underscores the symbolic interactionist/social constructivist view that reality is socially constructed (Jary and Jary 272-73). People who constantly interact and communicate define, determine, and create reality, the meaning of their lives, experiences, and environment, and where there is no shared meaning, they negotiate for one.

"Sabel" as a character is not coherent and consistent in the Aristotelian-aesthetic sense, neither because she is schizophrenic nor because her characterization is poorly developed, but because she is seen through the eyes of different people with their own respective biases and interests, their own realities. Perhaps she is a composite of all those viewpoints; maybe as a woman and as a person she is continuously defining and redefining her individuality and only toward the end of the film do we witness her individuation as a subject. In Lamangan's societal mural, Sabel represents contemporary Filipino women who have gone through similar experiences and are confronted with realities about themselves not necessarily compatible with the traditional view of what a woman's essence is, or how she should behave as one. The contemporary Filipino woman is as multifaceted as her variegated experiences in the modern—postmodern?—world, as complex as the issues that confront

her are. To force her to observe a particular code of conduct or gender role is to limit her vast potential. The same principle applies to her male counterpart: the character played by Ramos, while most of the time sensitive, patient, responsible, and in control, is also shown as violent, irrational, and prone to childish tantrums, and easily succumbing to female wiles.

Changing Image of the Filipino Macho Onscreen

The sensitive male has gradually replaced the traditional machos onscreen, typified by the action heroes of the late 1950s and '60s, exemplified through the likes of FPJ, Joseph Estrada, Lito Lapid, and Rudy Fernandez, among others. Their manliness was premised on their physical strength and skill in hand combat, on their hero- or redeemer-like resolve and daring. They were the mythical or the working-class heroes out to redeem their townspeople from oppression and bondage caused by either "evil forces" in mythical films or by the ruling class and reactionary forces in films of social realism.

Also traditionally macho was the debonair matinee idol of romantic films and musicals of the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s; they were the morally upright males who may not have been spared from temptation, but after succumbing to one, they had the courage and dignity to amend and atone for their sins. Christopher de Leon (in Bernal's *Relasyon* and *Broken Marriage)* and Richard Gomez (in Jose Javier Reyes's *Ikaw ang Lahat sa Akin)* continued the tradition even as they started the sensitive-male image onscreen, fraught with as many emotional problems as his female counterpart, openly shedding tears—as none of their earlier and older counterparts would be shown doing—or depicting rage. Man enough to admit his faults and oftentimes a good family provider, it is when he is not the latter that he undergoes personal emotional crises of self-worth—in other words, still traditionally feudal and patriarchal in outlook, ever protective of his pride as family head and chief provider.

Aga Muhlach's sensitive male is somehow a cross between the debonair and the man-child types, unembarrassed in showing some "feminine" qualities Jose Javier Reyes's *Narinig Mo na Ba ang L8test?* and *Kung Ako na Lang Sana,* Quintos's *Kailangan Kita),* naturally starting with sensitivity and extra tenderness and sweetness, close to being soft, expanding toward but not limited by engaging in what are traditionally

regarded as largely female preoccupations such as cooking and housekeeping, but more significantly, willing to share with his woman some responsibility, especially as partner and contributor to the family's material upkeep. Here, somehow, traditional boundaries set for gender roles and demeanor are transgressed and blurred.

Another local screen macho is the misunderstood "bad boy," the James Dean clones like Lou Salvador, Jr., Romeo Vasquez, and Zaldy Zshornack of the mid-1950s through the '60s, and Robin Padilla of the '90s to the present. He is the man-child given over to juvenile delinquency. Still another Filipino screen macho is the beefcake-actor who showed more muscle and flesh in the sex-oriented movies of the late '70s through the '90s and even up to now, notably in gay-oriented films. Thought to be a symbol of virility and sexual liberation, the male sex symbol onscreen is now deemed "feminized." By stripping him of his clothes, his films consign him to an object position, no better than where the naked woman onscreen has been and about which Laura Mulvey earlier protested in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," her seminal work on feminist film criticism. Just as Mulvey had observed how the woman becomes a willing or unwilling victim of the subject male's voyeuristic pleasure and sex fantasy, the present-day stripped male similarly becomes an object of the controlling gaze, this time not of patriarchal males but of liberated females as well as of gay males, some of whom have joined the ranks of film directors and writers, and many of whom now stand to be openly counted among the audiences for films showing naked male bodies, unlike the time when they had to keep mum about their fantasies and desires. Could this be the reason why erstwhile Seiko male sex symbol, Gardo Versoza, stripped in many of his contract films with the studio, has become more acceptable to local audiences in gay roles than as the action hero that he aspired to be when he decided to change his screen image after his studio contract expired?

Just as androgynous, if not more so and in a different sense, is the Filipino male screen image that Piolo Pascual represents. "Beautiful" is how this creature is best described at the present moment, the Filipino answer to both Adonis and David. Anytime, he could answer the bid of Glenn Close's Marquise de Mcrtcuil for her Lc Chevalier Danceny (played by Keanu Reeves) in Stephen Frears's *Dangerous Liaisons,* or of ancient strongmen like Alexander the Great for a boytoy after a weary

war, or of Thomas Mann's hero in his novelette *Death in Venice,* for his own Tadzio. Never before had any local male film hero been so beautifully and tenderly photographed and gazed at onscreen as Pascual was in *Milan,* making him *the* object of desire and pleasure, more than Barretto. And the iconography did not start in that film; in fact, the image is the same representation of the actor in many of his publicity shots for his films or for his music records and cassettes—languorously lying on his back and staring back intently but meekly at his admirer with a faint smile. In short, a male ingénue, the boy a mother or a girlfriend instinctively protects and leads by the hand. The actor's character as Lino in *Milan* strongly reinforces the image.

Significances

Insofar as the projection of the image of the contemporary Filipino woman on the big screen is concerned, the film *Sabel* is doubly significant in that it was Judy Ann Santos who played the protagonist. Her dominant screen image and star persona evoke sweetness and light, everything nice and wholesome; in other words, all things that the female role model is—the very qualities that her fan followers and admirers like her for. That she consented to play such a violative character as Sabel was a daring career move that is cognizant of present realities and value changes. The film, while a critical success, award-winning moreover, was a box-office flop. Maybe the ordinary movie audiences were not yet ready then to accept her change of image. Yet this is important insofar as the revisioning of prevailing values regarding gender identities and roles is concerned. As pointed out earlier, genre films and film icons are crucial in the promotion of new values among the larger number of members in a community or culture—or in the reinforcement of existing ones.

It may be argued that *Sabel* is remotely a genre film where community aspirations and dominant ideology are found; it may not even be of the revisionist variety that the two other subject films are. Perhaps, it is more of a filmmaker's personal visionary film. But even in *Kailangan Kita* and more so in *Milan,* that compromise with the dictates of a studio setup and demands of a conservative moviegoing public steeped in formula films (for example, that romantic dramas and comedies should have the obligatory happy ending, where hero and heroine invariably end up together no matter how realistically far-fetched), it is shown that

altered social realities and relationships have slipped into the Filipino social fabric. For example, the phenomenon of the Filipino migrant worker seems to have added an additional burden on the Filipina's shoulders, both as wife and mother left at home, or as migrant worker herself. Similarly, it can account for an increased absenteeism of the crucial father figure in many Filipino homes, in the case of male migrant workers, making masculine influence tenuous among Filipino sons.

Women directors Quintos and Lamasan have to be congratulated, for despite the commercial imperatives with which they had to contend, they effectively privileged fundamental gender issues through the projection of altered images. Suffice it to say that even on the conservative Filipino film screen, gender images and roles are changing, reflective of current constructions of realities. Traditional notions, identities, and roles are starting to be questioned, alternatives are being presented. Time to reconsider or discard altogether the stereotypical, starting with labels such as "feminine" and "masculine" or "feminized" and "masculinized," as in the very title of this critique.

Pinay with Flexed Muscles, Pinoy with Fluttering Eyelashes

Time was when feminists complained about the representation of women on the big screen. One was pictured as either a martyr or a vamp, either a virgin or a whore. True enough, when once I got involved in a book project that assessed Filipino films of the 1980s, we found out—in the course of gathering the synopses of the films of that decade—that some 70-80 percent of the topics centered on the Fernando Poe, Jr.-inspired vendettas after an earlier massacre of one's own family or of the whole community, and of village damsels in distress running away from home to escape from the clutches of lecherous stepfathers or uncles or hometown suitors only to end up in the big city as disgraced prostitutes.

The images were worldwide; in fact, it was a Western feminist film critic who first pointed an accusing finger at the patriarchal male gaze of directors and producers as well as of male moviegoers as responsible for placing the female actor stripped of her clothes as an object of desire, and the character that she portrayed as a martyr of the hearth. That was subconscious masculine desire and design brought out onto surface consciousness, and naturally, things were bound to change somehow, as years passed. Now women are showing more strength in disposition and will; now they are flexing some symbolic, sometimes literal, muscles.

The local big screen is no different, if we were to watch the romantic dramas and comedies of mainstream cinema, notably those coming from the foremost movie outfit Star Cinema. I wish to focus on several of its films in the initial years of the new millennium and the stars who appeared in them, notably on Rory B. Quintos's *Kailangan Kita* (2002), Olivia M. Lamasan's *Milan* (2004), Cathy Garcia-Molina's *You Are the One* and *U Got Me* (2005 and 2006, respectively), and Jose Javier Reyes's *Kasai, Kasali,*

Kasalo (2006). For some reinforcement, let's also include Joel Lamangan's Regal production *Sabel* (2003), remotely a genre film, however, since it may be more properly classified as a private, visionary film.

In *Kailangan Kita,* the character played by Claudine Barretto, while remaining subservient and servile to the other members of her family (headed by the feudal Johnny Delgado and two elder brothers), showed stoic strength of character and conviction. Although she remained with her family and did not join her childhood boyfriend when the latter fled to the mountains of Sorsogon as an NPA rebel, she continued her relationship with him and pursued occasional clandestine trysts whenever he would return from the mountains.

On the other hand, Barretto also played the go-getting overseas domestic worker in *Milan* who took charge not only of her own life as she continued to send money back home to help in the upkeep of a mother and an elder brother, but also of a drifting man-child played by Piolo Pascual who was, in turn, looking for his young bride who had left him earlier to find work in Milan.

Similarly, in *You Are the One,* Toni Gonzaga played a strong-willed Pinay who took under her wings the Fil-Am consul in the American Embassy, played by Sam Milby, who was looking for his biological parents in Manila. Much later in *You Got Me,* Toni was a tomboyish lady cop who, compared with the police rookie again played by Sam Milby, was miles ahead in terms of drive and determination.

Judy Ann Santos, who incidentally is celebrating [circa 2007] her twentieth year in the business, has her share of strong women film characters. For her, as a pragmatic, strong-willed advertising executive in Joyce Bernal's *Don't Give Up on Us,* romantic love takes a backseat even with a gorgeous and assiduous lover boy like Piolo Pascual, who portrayed a more artistically inclined free spirit. In the Metro Manila Film Festival blockbuster *Kasai, Kasali, Kasalo,* Santos certainly was no pushover wife to Ryan Agoncillo.

Earlier, she essayed what could probably be considered the turning point of her career in Regal Films' *Sabel,* just as Vilma Santos once did in Celso Ad. Castillo's *Burlesk Queen.* There Judy Ann Santos's character refused to play the traditional gender role assigned to women. There too, in fact, she was freely expressive of her sexuality, and forever exploring as she continued to pursue her own individuation as a woman

and her own person, from being a religious in prison ministry who willfully cooperated with the process of her rape by an inmate, to being a prime suspect herself in the murder of a real-estate development lawyer who had violated her lesbian spouse. Quite a milestone indeed for an actress whose earlier star persona had been sweet, conservative, and traditional.

Santos, Barretto, and Gonzaga, to a certain extent, had been built up as stars in the usual leading-lady mold—sweet and nice, proper and demure, conservative and traditional. But their handlers and the stars themselves had found it wise not to sustain such an image in keeping with the times. Leave the syrupy and ladylike images to the Tita Durans, Gloria Romeros, and Susan Roceses of the past, since, after all, even Susan Roces had come out lambasting a sitting President of the republic on national television and had taken to the streets! The portrayal by the young actors of roles that are a far cry from the *api-apihan* [martyrlike] pubescents on television soap operas somehow signified a paradigm shift.

And what about the contemporary Filipino macho? If we consider the male characters opposite our female *bidas* [heroes] in the cited films, surely they show a lot of weakness in character spine and resolve. Piolo Pascual in both *Milan* and *Don't Give Up on Us,* Sam Milby in both *Ton Are the One* and *U Got Me,* are entirely phlegmatic Lotharios, young boys to be protected or wards to be held by the hand by their lady loves. So if we have contemporary Pinays flexing their muscles, do we find our contemporary machos fluttering their eyelashes?

Of course, the films cited are in themselves not sufficient to make such a generalized conclusion. But certainly, they make for significant indicators about changes brewing in the images of contemporary Filipino men and women. That similar changes can likewise be seen in Quintos's *Anak,* with the character portrayed by Vilma Santos whose family burden tripled as she took an overseas job as a domestic and that of her rebellious daughter (Barretto again) who took drugs and engaged in premarital sex, strengthens the observation.

In comparison, Joel Torre, who played the Santos character's emasculated husband, had a diminished role as head of his family and household. Here and in similar other films on overseas workers, the man's traditional role as main provider of the family has been significantly altered, with the woman ending up as the breadwinner or, if she is the

spouse who stays back home, assumes singular responsibility for raising her brood. Indeed, the phenomenon of overseas Filipino workers has largely influenced, too, the shift in gender roles, and ultimately the images of contemporary Filipino men and women in mainstream cinema.

Macho Desnudo

In the preceding article ("Pinay with Flexed Muscles, Pinoy with Fluttering Eyelashes"), I wrote about how the contemporary Filipino woman has assumed a stronger disposition and a tougher demeanor as presented in mainstream Filipino films, at least in the romance dramas and romantic comedies of the leading film outfits, notably Star Cinema's. In the face of this development, the Pinoy macho has certainly paled in comparison. He has been showing weakness of character, in contrast to the screen macho we used to see on the big screen, often as the action hero whose manliness hinged either on physical strength and skills in hand combat and fight stunts, or in his hero-and-redeemer-like resolve. As exemplified by the likes of Fernando Poe Jr., Joseph Estrada, Lito Lapid, Rudy Fernandez, and much later Phillip Salvador and Bong Rcvilla, the traditional macho onscreen was the mythical or the working-class hero out to save his townspeople from the oppression and bondage caused by such evil forces as the ruling class and their ilk in films of social realism.

Traditionally macho was also the debonair matinee idol of romantic films and musicals, the likes of Leopoldo Salcedo, brothers Rogelio and Jaime de la Rosa, Nestor de Villa, Armando Goyena, Luis Gonzales, and Eddie Rodriguez of the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s. They were the morally upright male lead characters who may not have been spared from temptation (particularly Eddie Rodriguez of the mid-'60s in husband-wife-mistress domestic triangles in films such as Armando de Guzman's *Sapagkat Kami'y Tao Lamang}* but who, after succumbing to one if ever, had the courage and integrity to amend and atone for his sins.

Christopher de Leon and Richard Gomez upheld the tradition even as they also started the image of the sensitive male onscreen. Man enough to admit his faults and oftentimes a good family provider, it is

when he is not the latter that he undergoes a personal emotional crisis of self-worth. In other words, we still find these characters as traditionally feudal and patriarchal in outlook, ever protective of their macho pride as family head and chief provider. It was Aga Muhlach, however, who started and continued the sensitive-male image. His is a cross between the suave, debonair, and the man-child types, unembarrassed in showing some "softer" qualities, naturally starting with sensitivity and extra tenderness and sweetness and expanding toward but not limited to engaging in what are traditionally regarded as largely feminine preoccupations such as cooking and housekeeping.

Much later, the sensitive male would morph into a variant, the androgynous "beautiful boy" projected by Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby especially in the early part of their careers (see their publicity pictorials). Besides the suave leads and the bad-boy machos, there is another type of macho onscreen—the beefcake actor who showed more muscles and flesh in sex-oriented movies from the late '70s through the '90s. Leading the pack were the Seiko hunks: Gardo Versoza, Leandro Baldemor, Leonardo Litton, Rodel Velayo, and Anton Bernardo. Much earlier, in the 1970s and '80s, there were Vic Vargas, Ricky Belmonte, Ernie Garcia, Al Tantay, Orestes Ojeda, Gino Antonio, and Daniel Fernando. Even sweet-faced young boys like Patrick de la Rosa and Albert Martinez, and serious young actors like Christopher de Leon, Mark Gil, Michael de Mesa, Phillip Salvador, Richard Gomez, and Cesar Montano were all stripped of their clothes on the big screen and in fan magazines. These days, the stripped machos—actors-turned-models and models-turned-actors—are seen on the covers and the inside pages of glossy fashion and gay-oriented magazines or endorsing skimpy underwear in posters and larger-than-life billboards on national highways.

And let us not forget the film ingénues. They are the innocent, adolescent boys initiated into the mundane and corrupt adult world where they eventually take center stage as macho dancers, masseurs, or call boys. These were the characters that launched to stardom Allan Paule *(Macho Dancer),* Lawrence David *(Sibak),* Coco Martin *(Masahista),* and most recently Tyron Perez *(Twilight Dancers)* via films directed by noted filmmakers like Lino Brocka, Mel Chionglo, and Brillantc Mendoza, and which made the rounds in the international film festival circuits abroad.

The male ingénue on the local movie screen is actually a crossover instance of gender boundary lines. His prototype and female counterpart was the nubile nymphet of the early '70s, Alma Moreno, as she appeared in Ishmael Bernal's *Ligaw na Bulaklak* and *Menor de Edad?* Curiously, in paintings and sculptures such as, for example, Michelangelo's murals on the ceiling of no less than the Sistine Chapel in Rome, or in the Spanish artist Goya's *Maja Desnuda* (The Naked Maja), the naked human form abounds. And no big deal! But the nude male or female onscreen is fair game for voyeuristic gazing. It must be the nature of film, a medium which is inherently spectacular, where any viewer, through the camera, can enter into the privacy of a character's bedroom, be privy to her most intimate secrets, and probe into her mind and feelings through expressive cinematic technique.

Once thought to be a symbol of virility and sexual liberation, male sex symbols onscreen and in magazines are now deemed "feminized," not necessarily because, disrobed, they look more feminine—although some of them do—but because they become as much of a commodity as female sex symbols did before them. By being stripped of his clothes, the male gets consigned to an object position, no better than where the naked woman onscreen had been. Similarly, he becomes an object of the controlling gaze and desire, this time not of the patriarchal male but of the liberated female as well as of the gay spectator. Some of the latter have joined the ranks of film directors, writers—producers even—and many of them now stand to be openly counted among the audiences for films showing naked male bodies, unlike before when they sat discreetly in the dark among the other members of the audience, mum about their fantasies and desires. Could a similar trend also explain why these days we have stronger female characters onscreen—the "masculine" females—who become, on the other hand, subjects of identification for the audience? Or characters created in the image and likeness of their creators?

[8] Editor's note: The author possibly mistook the appropriately titled *Menor de Edad,* which did not have Alma Moreno in the cast, for another Bernal film from the same year (1979), *Lagi na Lamang Ba Akong Babae?*

Celebrity Bad Boys: Some Fleeting Impressions

It must have started with James Dean, the Hollywood icon who died in a car crash after starring in three films in the mid-1950s, or even earlier with Marlon Brando, another Hollywood icon. Besides being distinguished actors in the book of many film critics, both acting greats projected the bad-boy image. Brando was the uncouth macho Stanley Kowalski in Elia Kazan's adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire,* the motorcycle-riding *Wild One* (Benedek, dir.), and the Mexican rebel *Viva Z^{a}P^{aia}* (Kazan, dir.). Dean became the quintessential teenage rebel on the strength of the projection of his misunderstood-youth characters in both Kazan's *East of Eden* and Nicolas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Although both actors had sensational good looks, it was James Dean who had captured the imagination and admiration of local movie fans then, perhaps because it was during his time that the sociological issues of juvenile delinquency and of the generation gap were subjects of intense discussion. In fact, the local movie industry (which aped Hollywood more closely then than it does now) had at least three virtual James Dean clones, each coming from a major studio: Sampaguita Pictures' Romeo Vasquez, Premiere Productions' Zaldy Zshornack, and LVN Pictures' Lou Salvador Jr., who bore a striking facial resemblance to the original Hollywood icon and was thereby billed the 'James Dean of the Philippines." What Vasquez and Zshornack lacked in resemblance to the original, however, they made up for in gait and demeanor.

To young readers and movie fans, these characteristic qualities in gait and demeanor are what we now see in Robin Padilla, who in this generation best projects the bad-boy image. Intentionally, we say, because

bad-boyism (pardon the coinage) in local movies is a market-positioning strategy. Amid a sea of new faces in the industry a candidate for stardom would have a better stab at recognition and recall from the moviegoing public if she succeeds in projecting a distinctive image. In the present time, this is called "niche marketing," and generally it seems to be an effective strategy up to a certain point—i.e., while the actor is still young.

Often the image is reinforced by the impression the public gets of the actor's actual personality. This is why those who project wholesome images are careful about their deportment in public, lest their offscreen activities send signals contrary to how they are pictured on the big screen. Of course, the screen image becomes more credible and sustainable if the person projecting it somehow actually possesses the qualities attributed to the star persona; for one thing, less work is required from the personality and her publicists. Otherwise, it could mean a series of infractions or violations of the image by the personality and the inevitably forthcoming denial or cover-up by her handlers.

But what if the image projected is that of a bad boy to start with? With the image comes several assumptions: that the young man in question is restless and impulsive, that he is prone to mischief and misdemeanor precisely because he is misunderstood, neglected at home, desirous of genuine love and affection, and angry at what he deems is a hypocritical adult world—perfect ingredients for the classic juvenile delinquent. This was the kind of character that the Vasquezes (notably in Armando Garces's films *Sino'ng Maysala?* and *Ako ang Maysala!),* Zshornacks, Jojo Salvadors, and Robin Padillas played in many of their movies during each one's respective heyday. And since Life uncannily imitates Art as Art does Life, the real and the reel personae have often coincided.

Precariously, the infractions of this type of youth are tolerated by the public for they would be good for the reinforcement of the image. Receiving the adulation that these talents had been craving for, in fact more overwhelmingly than what might have been expected in nonpublic life, obtained during an impressionable and vulnerable age, and acquired in a place not exactly the best environment to grow up in—that is, on the movie set—the young talents soon become the image they had been asked to project: bad boys! While then they had marijuana, dope, and cocaine, now they have acid, *shabu,* and Ecstasy. Then as now, there are brawls, rumbles, and gang wars.

In fact the movie bad boy may not be far different from the kid next door. Yet the playgrounds where he cavorts, the digs where he and his friends have their "gimmicks" are peopled with more volatile tempers per square foot. And all eyes are on them! Celebrity hangouts have become larger in areas like Boracay and Embassy at the Fort but increasingly they have shrunk as territorial patches, making more common the invasion of virtual privacies and trespassing of properties just as imaginary. And have you noticed, now we not only have bad boys from the movies but also from the recording industry, modeling world, and fabled families as well? Take such names as these: Ace Vergel, Cesar Montano, Andrew Wolfe, Borgy Manotoc, Niño Muhlach, John Rendez, John Regala, John Estrada, Jay Manalo. Maybe this then is where *Life* ultimately really imitates *Art.*

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PART 3

Star Texts

Packaging and Imaging for a Profitable Market Position

Film stars are a curious lot. From the time of their construction until they reach the stature of revered cultural icons, they embody a number of contradictions. On the one hand, they are consumer products that are packaged and sold along with their films; on the other, they are product endorsers, selling their own films as they do other consumer products—the bigger ones among them, moreover, capable of adding unto themselves insurance value for the commercial viability or success of future film projects. At one point, they are products manufactured in answer to the needs created by their manufacturer-producers, who in turn respond to the demands and specifications of their consumers, the moviegoing public; at another point, they are power wielders who command individual as well as public adulation and identification. They promote certain very materialistic ends in a capitalist society, at the same time that they serve some mythical and ideological functions in that same society.

It is a wonder why the serious study of film stars and their systems should only be a fairly recent preoccupation. The movie star system, which is said to have started in France, is generally more associated with Hollywood and its studio and film-genre systems; there, by the 1920s, it had been established (Hayward 337-38). Except, however, for some biographical works on certain stars, articles on star personae, and reviews of star performances, the systematic, scholarly study of stars started only with Richard Dyer in his pioneering seminal work, *Stars,* published in 1979. On the local front, much less, the scholarly and academic study of stars of Philippine cinema and related systems is now only in its infancy. Rolando B. Tolentino came up with two books, the first one, *Richard*

Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake, Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen at Iba pang Sanaysay, published in 2000. Published also that year was another book that Tolentino edited, *Geopolitics of the Visible,* which features, among its studies, the discourses by Patrick A. Flores and Neferti X. M. Tadiar on the Nora Aunor star persona and Aunor as a cultural icon. The cinema journal *Pelikula,* for its part, devoted a special issue (September 2000-February 2001) on stars and fans, written in a more popular style.

These works, along with those of Dyer's *Heavenly Bodies,* Christine Gledhill's compilation *Stardom,* Susan Hayward's *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies,* and Patrick Phillips's "Genre, Star and Auteur—Critical Approaches to Hollywood Cinema" (Nelmes 161-208), provided the concepts and frameworks that inform this study. The researcher's interest revolves around the star as a social construct, a media text, and a cultural icon. Therefore, this paper will attempt to trace the trajectory of the star from her manufacture and packaging as a consumer product through her evolution into a cultural signifier that embodies national cultural and ideological values. The star persona of Gardo Versoza[9] will be used to introduce the scope of the study, as well as to bridge its sections for continuity. The choice of the star is primarily due to personal accessibility, but more important, Versoza's experiences make a good example for the process and phenomenon of star-imaging, from construction through promotion, negotiation for change, and finally failure in the bid for acceptability and respectability as an icon.

The trajectory[7] also follows and illustrates, in effect, the dynamics among capitalist-producers, media agencies of star-imaging (radio, television, fan magazines, and other print materials including publicity photos), the audience-consumers, and the star herself—all of whom are involved in the construction of the star and her image. Admittedly, this study is limited as a preliminary survey on local stars and their impact on the public. The researcher hopes to pursue and further explore, in future projects, issues on stars and star systems, as manifested in focused case studies of particular icons. For indeed, stars—most especially icons—continue to have a profound impact on their society.

[9] More fully expounded in the article "Gardo Versoza: From Star to Icon" in Part 1: Fan Texts.

Star-Packaging Practices through the Years

Choosing the Package

When a starstruck hopeful decides to embark on a movie career, with her manager or benefactor, she determines a market position: how can she best be noticed by the moviegoing public? How can she be distinguished from those who arc already in the field and others who arc likely to join later? What unique and singular quality a newcomer projects, therefore, is identified and played up. An image is decided, for successful imaging is an initial step to stardom.

There are several factors that help determine a star image. Number one, of course, is the newcomer's own personality. What character qualities do the face and figure/physique, passion, and temperament of the candidate for stardom evoke? Outgoing personalities, like those of Marvin Agustin and of Jolina Magdangal at the start of their respective careers, would be perfect for the image of the energetic, hip-hopping youths of their time, and their rather everyday looks served well the need of the young movie audiences for identification. On the other hand, more retiring, introverted personalities like those of Piolo Pascual and Jericho Rosales, again during the initial years of their careers, were fit for the image of the brooding, reticent serious actor. Thus, then, one expected Agustin and Magdangal to be seen everywhere, while Pascual and Rosales, comparatively, almost nowhere or only in select appearances.

But that was true only during the initial phase of Pascual's and Rosales's stardom. Later, recognizing the matinee-idol charms of both men, that with proper image buildup could potentially command hysterical fan following, the ABS-CBN Talent Center, which co-managed the young actors' careers along with their respective personal managers, decided to field both actors, along with three other actor-studs in the ABS-CBN stable, in a boy band called The Hunks, known more for its members' good looks and gorgeous physiques rather than for their more-virtual-than-real voice quality. Boy bands, for a time, were a craze among local audiences, following a trend among foreign singing artists who were seen then on MTVs or were visiting the country for promotional shows. Most of the foreign boy bands boasted of good-looking members, something which did not escape the notice of career managers. This was where the advantage of The Hunks lay. While other local bands, with

unquestionably better vocal quality, musicality, and definitely wider range may have had one or two good-looking members, none could claim that all their members were as attractive as The Hunks collectively or individually. So presto, The Hunks went on rigid and regular bodybuilding regimens, so that their figures would complement their arresting faces—for the benefit of their increasing largely young feminine and gay markets that continually grew more aggressive and demonstrative. The band is now also a recording talent group and "concert artist," in much the same way that Patricia Javier and Ara Mina were, although their true talents lay elsewhere.

Consumer and studio needs dictated the early shift in the packaging of Pascual and Rosales. The ABS-CBN Talent Center is an agency of an entertainment conglomerate that includes a radio and television network (Channel 2), a film outfit (Star Cinema), and a recording company (Star Records). The TV station offers, among others, both variety-show/song-and-dance programs, continuing-series soap operas, and drama anthologies. Piolo and Jericho were originally drama talents, for that was where their looks and potentials could be explored, for television and film. However, the studio bosses thought their talents could be maximized to answer the demand of other programs; thus the two, who were earlier seldom seen guesting in the network's musical programs, became singing sensations practically overnight.

Meanwhile, the dramas and soap operas that local household audiences fed on also needed the talents of both Pascual and Rosales, but this time, preferably in tandem with a love partner, in the tradition of Claudine Barretto and the late Rico Yan and Jolina Magdangal and Marvin Agustin, who initially had soap operas to their names: thus, Judy Ann Santos (whose earlier love teammate, Wowie de Guzman, left the tandem and subsequently faded to near-oblivion) and Christine Hermosa.

It helps a lot if the screen personality projected by an actor is similar to or compatible with the actual personality of the private person, but this is easier said than done. So a very important consideration in the choice of image is what the talent can actually do, what image she can easily project. If, for example, the talent is considered for light musicals for the fans, can she sing or dance? Is the action-star hopeful physically fit and properly agile? Is the aspiring sex kitten uninhibited and daring

enough to publicly confess some intimate details about her life? Can this fresh talent really act or does she otherwise have acting experience in campus theater? The considerations seem obvious and logical but in the Philippine context, where the overriding consideration is what the industry needs at the moment, these have to be consistently either adjusted or distorted.

During the season of bold films, an aspiring talent need not have genuine acting talent—as actors are supposed to—but rather a special kind of attitude. Since big female breasts are nonnegotiable qualifications for bold movies, a flat-chested hopeful can still make it if she is willing to undergo breast-augmentation surgery: Indeed, surgery seems to provide most of the answers to many qualification problems. Full-denture makeovers are commissioned not only to improve the quality of one's teeth and make them sparkling-white and ready for toothpaste commercials but also to correct any defect and improve the contour of one's face, in the same way that noses are lifted and eyes widened to improve ordinary-looking facial features. And if breast augmentation is acceptable and desirable, can penile enhancement be far behind? A screen stud of outstanding physique can still compensate for what he may lack in measure with the help of a face towel tucked like an extra-large spring roll in his crotch to make him appear more delectable in bikini-trunk pictorials. And how many sweet young things, whose careers never rose higher than the ground upon which German Moreno's saccharine *That's Entertainment* stood, opted to reinvent themselves as femmes fatales, as what Priscilla Almeda, Glydel Mercado, and Ara Mina did, but perhaps not as adroitly as Madonna once reinvented herself several times over?

Why the fuss about bodies and body parts? Because stars reach their audiences through their physiques to become objects of identification or imitation or desire (Gladhill, *Stardom* 210)—the same reason aging female stars lament that when they mature, good roles hardly come their way, thus once prompting prewar Hollywood movie queen Joan Crawford to sigh, for instance, what hard work being a star was, presumably referring to what she did to continuously feed the sex fantasies specifically of her male fans, and even those of the female fans who wanted to imitate or copy certain physical attributes of hers (Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies* 1).

Since bold films cannot exist alone in the field, youth-oriented movies—where characters, aside from crying, sing and dance a lot—are presented as foils. Young hopefuls predisposed to this type of movies undergo similar adjustments, which most of the time prove harrowing—to their audiences. Ages are lowered and heights are raised in publicity materials and public documents, dancers are made out of two-left-footers on national television broadcasts, and singers out of rainy-day croakers in CDs and cassette tapes, and even more unthinkably, recognized as consumer-endorsed Gold- or Platinum-Record awardees (cf. Judy Ann Santos and Ara Mina despite obvious vocal limitations). Others who frequently guest in television variety shows lip-synch unnamed professional backup singers' voices and pass them off as their own. In the creation and projection of a public image, in short, unabashed cheating is also involved, in much the same way that truth in advertising is violated in the case of other consumer products.

What's in a Name? Who's Got the Title?

Oftentimes, especially in the 1950s and the '60s, the projection of the intended image starts with the screen name: "Gloria Romero" sounds classier and more elegant than "Gloria Galla" does; "Susan Roccs" evokes moonlight and roses more than "Jesusa Sonora" could; and "Rosa Rosal," despite the fact that both first and last names are derived from sweet and fragile flowers, surely belongs not to a demure lady but to a feisty one, as the sound emitted when the name is uttered would suggest, just as "Carol Varga" sounds femme fatale-ish as the actor who carried the name intended to project her screen personality. Similarly, rock-heavy and hard-sounding syllables as in "Gar-do Ver-so-za" and "An-ton Ber-nar-do" give a brutish, masculine ring to the screen names.

At times, however, it is the screen image that gives a distinct character to the name; for instance, "Bella Flores," which means "beautiful flowers," might as well be the designation for a sweet, Polḷvannaish personality and could be uttered softly and sweetly. But the screen personality, the ultimate virago, which the actor subsequently projected, made it more proper to utter the name tauntingly and arrogantly—"Bella Flores!" So important is the screen name that in the late '50s, studio companies held name-giving contests. This was how the nondescript "Mr. and Miss Number One" were changed to Juancho Gutierrez and Amalia Fuentes

respectively, to give a more distinctive screen personality and easy recall to the actors who subsequently carried the names.

Corollary to name-giving is title-conferment. This, however, is done some time after the star has achieved a track record of sorts, making her distinguished for something. Thus we have "Movie Queens," applicable to most every generation, with occasionally more than one all contending over their respective eras: Rosa del Rosario, Rosario Moreno, and Mila del Sol during the prewar years; Tita Duran and Carmen Rosales during the immediate postwar years; Gloria Romero and Nida Blanca in the 1950s; and Susan Roces and Amalia Fuentes in the 1960s. The subsequent movie queens of the 1970s through the 1980s, Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos, were more appropriately addressed as "The Superstar of Philippine Media" and the "Star for All Seasons" respectively. Sharon Cuneta was the "Megastar" of the 1980s and 1990s, while her archrival Maricel Soriano was the "Diamond Star."

Among male stars, Fernando Poe, Jr. held the distinction of being the "King of Philippine Movies" for several decades and generations, a title he inherited from Leopoldo Salcedo of the prewar and immediate postwar years. FPJ is in addition *the* "Action King" to Rudy Fernandez's, Phillip Salvador's, Ronnie Ricketts's, and Bong Revilla's 'Junior Action Kings." A list of nobilities of the local action-film genre does not end there, for you also have Jeric Raval and now Zoren Legaspi as "Action Princes." Robin Padilla is the "Bad Boy of Philippine Movies" as Dolphy has been the sole "Comedy King" since the 1950s, and despite the presence and efforts of younger comedians of varied styles, no one else has or had been in the running. These titles are meant to consolidate, assert, and reinforce the stars' status and foothold in the industry. But in reality, they were originally merely suggested by the stars' or their studios' respective publicists, picked up and hyped by the entertainment media, and gained currency and consequent legitimacy among the movie-going public; the titles may just as well have been state-conferred, carrying as they do the strength and power of a papal bull or monarchical edict. It is to the credit of the titleholders, however, that they have lived and measured up to the expectations that their titles denoted. Otherwise, the title loses currency among the moviegoing public, as in the case of Manilyn Rcyncs, whose performance and qualities as a star failed to measure up to the demands of being "Star of the New Decade."

Studios as Dream Factories

Stars are manufactured where dreams for sale are conceived—in the studio factories. And as in all other industrial factories, house rules and regulations, oftentimes stringent ones, exist. During the studio era of local cinema (1930s to the early '60s), movie outfits—specifically LVN Pictures, Sampaguita Pictures, Premiere Productions, and Lcbran Films, the so-called "Big Four" movie studios[10]—molded their respective stars according to the needs of the genre films that each one specialized in, as Hollywood did during its studio years. For example, Sampaguita Pictures, known for musicals and comedies, especially in the late '50s, developed Cinderella- and Prince Charming-types, from the girls- and boys-next-door to regal beauties and matinee idols—hence their glamor queens and princesses (Tita Duran, Gloria Romero, Susan Roces, Amalia Fuentes, Barbara Perez, Josephine Estrada, Rosemarie Sonora, Gina Pareño, et al.) and their dashing princes and knights in shining armor (Pancho Magalona, Fred Montilla, Luis Gonzales, Juancho Gutierrez, Romeo Vasquez, Eddie Gutierrez, Jose Mari, Pepito Rodriguez, Bert Leroy, Ricky Belmonte, et al.). Not all of them knew how to sing and dance, but they all had the sunny disposition and faces apt for the musical. Technology, in the form of lip-synchronization and playback and editing, made them all excellent singers and dancers.

Of course, there were exceptions. The husband-and-wife team of Pancho Magalona and Tita Duran had to develop and hone their dance skills as did Nida Blanca and Nestor de Villa at LVN, which also specialized in musical comedies in addition to medieval costume pictures. The latter outfit developed Castillian-looking royalty types such as actresses Delia Razon, Cecilia Lopez, Lilia Dizon, and actors Nestor de Villa, Mario Montenegro, Jaime de la Rosa, and Armando Goyena, among others. Premiere Productions launched action stars in the persons of Jose Padilla, Jr., Fernando Poe, Jr., Zaldy Zshornack, and later Joseph Estrada, who, however, had started with LVN. The studios also developed drama queens with seemingly aloof personalities such as Lolita Rodriguez, Rita Gomez,

[10] Editor's note: Other references, including one of mine, mention "Big Three" studios, since the four institutions did not coexist at exactly the same time (cf. Joel David, "Studious Studios").

and Paraluman of Sampaguita Pictures, and Emma Alegre, Charito Solis, and Rosa Rosal of LVN.

It was also at about this time that movie stars were regarded with condescension by the upper crust of society. This image problem was addressed most vigorously by Sampaguita Pictures, which had a stable of contract stars. For many female candidates for stardom, joining the studio was no different from enrolling in a finishing school (Lena S. Pareja, interview by author). Personality development sessions were held and aspiring stars fielded in fashion shows where models included *colegialas* and daughters of well-heeled families of the Manila metropolis. Filipino fashion czar Ramon Valera and then-emerging fashion designers Pitoy Moreno, Ben Farrales, and Aureo Alonzo had all contributed to transforming the studio's beauties into glamor queens, for which Sampaguita stars have since been known more than for acting ability. Gloria Romero is credited for breaking the social barrier that tacitly excluded movie stars from upward mobility in high society. And subsequent movie queens from the studio were cast in the same ladylike mold.

In their contracts, Sampaguita studios specifically stipulated that the talents should conduct themselves decently, meaning they would not engage in activities or publicly exhibit behavior unbecoming of a morally upright person. This particular proviso eventually came to be known as the "morality clause" in a Sampaguita Pictures talent contract (Pareja interview) and where it could not be properly observed by errant "employees"—stars big and small, leads and supports received regular weekly pays and were treated equitably—the infractions and violations were hidden from the public. In an interview this writer had with Susan Roces more than twenty years ago, Roces confessed to being a chain smoker who would consume two packs of cigarettes a day; yet because she had to maintain her sweet and virtuous image and be a good role model to her young fans, she neither allowed the latter to see her smoking nor allowed herself to be photographed in the act.

To be sure, greater infractions had been committed by other stars. Concealment of their pecadilloes could be done then because, unlike today, the studios controlled the publicity' machinery and the press output. All press releases and other publicity materials came from regular studio publicists in the studio's payroll and all requests for interviews and

appointments were arranged, monitored, and controlled. Thus the studio maintained the decent images of its stars, which was well because, apparently, virtues or virtuousness could still be saleable then as a norm, unlike today when notoriety seems to be preferred, as seen in how personalities seeking public attention pursue it obsessively How else could one explain Rosanna Roces's fashion statement in an awards night ceremonies that stirred a hornet's nest from Church officials to politicians and members of the censors' board? Or a sexpot starlet's gimmick to promote her launching movie by proclaiming, "I am still a virgin"? Wearing a deeply plunging neckline to optimally display her already-obvious physical assets, the starlet, with her statement, seemed to belie both the existence of reality and the power of semiotics rather than proclaim her true, very private status. Virginity has never been an issue for actors in the bold-film genre but such public pronouncements guarantee curiosity and gossip, premised on the glaring discrepancy between signifier and signified.

In the same vein, if during the Sampaguita days personal matters were kept private, these days skeletons are exhumed from the closet and displayed before the cameras for all the public to marvel at. Dirty linen are also considered best washed in public, via entertainment talk shows such as Boy Abunda et al.'s *The Buzz,* Paolo Bediones et al.'s *S-Files* [defunct], and Butch Francisco et al.'s *Startalk.* Lamentably at times, these public-laundry spectacles find prominent slots even in otherwise respectable and dignified evening news programs such as Arnold Clavio et al.'s *Saksi,* Mel Tiangco et al.'s *24 Oros,* and Ted Failon et al.'s TV *Patrol World,* where the public learns about the latest in, say, the Kris Aquino-Joey Marquez brouhaha that succeeded in eclipsing more important national developments in the media. Details of such tales of scandal may not be so different from the staging of bloody spectacles in a Roman coliseum, but then, you get a free show, the people's bread-and-circus in a postmodern age, that allows us to pry into stars' private lives through the boob-tube lens. Everything becomes fair game for mass consumption.

Meanwhile, of the media-audience dynamics in the construction of the star image, Dyer observes of the Hollywood scene:

> Audiences cannot make media images mean anything they want to, but they can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them. Moreover, the agencies of fan magazines and clubs, as well as box-office receipts and audience research, mean that the audience's ideas about a star can act back on the media producers of the star's image.
>
> This is not an equal to-and-fro—the audience is more disparate and fragmented, and does not produce centralized, massively available media images; but the audience is not wholly controlled by Hollywood and the media, either. *{Heavenly Bodies* 5)

Feedback here in the Philippines is facilitated mosdy through fan mail or audience polls and surveys in showbiz-oriented shows on television.

Keeping and Maintaining an Image, Negotiating for Change

Creating an image is easier than keeping and maintaining it. For oftentimes and soon enough, the talent rebels. A love team required to display affection toward each other in public soon shows true sentiments: one or both are in love with (an)other partner(s). For instance, Angelu de Leon exchanged sweet nothings with Bobby Andrews on- and off-screen for public consumption; for personal conception, however, she chose Joko Diaz, a junior action star from her mother studio, Viva Films, and who, like other action heroes, needed no regular love interest. With her premarital teen pregnancy, the sweet image her studio wanted her to project collapsed, as did her love team with Andrews and, nearly, their respective careers. Thereafter, to salvage her name from early anonymity, and since her Viva handlers believed that she was still their prized possession and best bet for stardom, Viva's image-builders tried to reinvent De Leon rather frantically—as a sweet bold star-cum-dramatic actress, via Joel Lamangan's *Bulaklak ng Maynila',* as well as a liberated young woman of the new millennium, via Jose Javier Reyes's *Bukas na Lang Kita Mamahalin,* where she appeared with Diether Ocampo. De Leon's chop-suey imaginary did not last long. After a second pregnancy that resulted from a similarly indiscreet liaison with another man, her studio finally gave up and downgraded her to character support roles for younger upstarts and hopefuls, as in the early-evening soap, Gil Tejada, Jr.'s *Sana ay Ikaw na Nga,* on GMA-Channel 7. A handful of other scenarios have continued to unfold, most significant of which is the attempt to negotiate a change of image.

If ever a local star had successfully managed to alter her screen image, it was Vilma Santos. She started out as a child star and became a teen star in romantic musicals, the other half of the love team with Edgar Mortiz. A poor second to Nora Aunor for many years when the latter—who like Santos was initially the other half of another teenage love team with Tirso Cruz III—turned serious actor and started winning awards and critics' recognition, Santos made a drastic, crucial decision to show more flesh onscreen when she agreed to tackle the title role in Celso Ad. Castillo's *Burlesk Queen.* Fortunately, the public warmly accepted her new image and the critics took a second, hard look at her subsequent performances. From then on, she made a string of successful portrayals of a variety of adult roles: mistress, prostitute, ex-convict, psycho killer—many of them *kontrabida* or antihero roles.

In his article "Vilma Reads Her Fans," Cesar D. Orsal, a local cinema observer and cultural studies scholar, analyzed the Vilma Santos exception in hindsight:

> Feeling the cultural pulse of the society in the late 1970s, [Santos] took advantage of the growing liberalization of the Filipino audience. Her instincts proved her right. She made movies which she felt would not only cater to the expectations of her fans but to the changing community as well.
>
> In the early 1980s, different ideologies were affecting the Filipino audience, which redefined the image of role models. [Santos,] for her part, fostered the rise of career women, who, imbued with self-awareness, illustrate what Jackie Stacey observes: "The star gazes up to the classical ideal of herself, becoming too, a spectator, examining herself represented through someone else's imagination" *{Star Gazing* 34).
>
> She likewise took on the new representations of women, which she claims to have recognized in herself, and which, at the same time, affected her female fans. (54-55)

Santos took a big risk, though, when she played the role of a politicized nun in Mike de Leon's film of social realism, *Sister Stella L.* But then, for the "Star for All Seasons," variety worked, something which not even Nora Aunor, her archrival to preeminence among the female actors in local cinema from the 1970s to the '90s, could claim.

Resistance to Change

At times, on the other hand, resistance to change is self-imposed. In this regard, the Poes were a prime example. The wholesome and positive public and screen images of both Fernando Poe, Jr. and Susan Roces had been maintained through the years, since the 1950s or about half a century ago [until Poe's death in 2005]. On- and off-screen, FPJ was the soft-spoken perfect Gentleman and Susan the quintessential Lady, and as movie king and queen, they *should* have made the ideal showbiz couple, role models for all movie-star husband-and-wife teams in real life. Thus, while occasionally, there had been rumors of a less-than-blissful domestic life, the couple kept discreet about this, neither denying nor confirming anything except to admit that "like all other couples, we have our differences but we work hard at keeping our marriage work" (said the wife in the same interview with this researcher cited earlier). Both refused to expose the privacy of their Greenhills mansion to the loud, outdoorsy spectacle of the Showbiz Carnival. And despite remaining biologically childless, they managed to stay married for more than thirty years, whereas much younger and supposedly more blessed couples were suing each other in divorce or annulment proceedings or simply leaving each other and living separate lives with their respective new partners. Quite a feat, indeed.

Are the Poes a case of the public image dictating what the private life should be? Not impossible, since the two were known for keeping and maintaining through the years even the tiniest trappings and signature items of their respective star personae and public images. For some fifty years, FPJ had kept the Tom Jones sideburns and the equally ubiquitous light-blue, long-sleeved polo shirt. Susan Roces, despite dramatic changes in body size, shape, and weight, had kept her bouffant hairdo similar to what former US First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy (later Onassis) first introduced in the early 1960s. For the couple, their star packaging had remained consistent, defying the march of time. But then, apparently they knew the secrets of their trade more than the consuming public had been aware of. More important, they were able to transcend their packaging from screen commodities to cultural icons. And icons have signature marks, from the ideals that they represent to the emblems of their physical appearance.

The Cultural Icons

The Poes are screen and cultural icons as Tita Duran and Pancho Magalona, Leopoldo Salcedo, Rogelio de la Rosa, Carmen Rosales, Joseph Estrada, Dolphy, Gloria Romero, Nida Blanca, Charito Solis, Amalia Fuentes, Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, Sharon Cuneta, Maricel Soriano, Christopher de Leon, Robin Padilla, Richard Gomez, Aga Muhlach, Judy Ann Santos, and possibly Rosanna Roces are. The list may be a little longer—or shorter—but at the moment [circa the mid-20008], these names are what stand out. Not all big screen stars, even some of the biggest stars of their time, were able to reach the stature of cultural icons. As Patrick Phillips pointed out: "some people but not others are capable of becoming icons. These are people whose extraordinary energy draws the camera to them, rather than those whom the camera constructs" (183).

A cinema/cultural icon is one through whose works and screen persona or lifestyle certain cultural or ideological values of her time are represented. As such, an icon commands on the one hand awe, admiration and adulation, and inspiration, and on the other hand, identification or emulation. To mention some: FPJ is "Ang Panday" [The Blacksmith], the mythical hero who will redeem his people from the clutches of evil forces; Joseph Estrada is "Geron Busabos" [Geron the Tramp], a representative of the masses who will lead his class from oppression to liberation; Dolphy is "Jill" and "Facifica Falayfay," the lovable cross-dresser who eventually regains machismo or "Ompong," the village simpleton with native wisdom; Gloria Romero is "Kurdapya" or "Dalagang Ilokana," the metaphorical ugly duckling who turns into a patrician beauty of regal bearing; Susan Roces is "Maruja," the sweet, virginal *señorita* and dutiful daughter who gives up her virginity only to the one man she truly loves and to whom she remains faithful even after his death; Nora Aunor is "Elsa" of *Himala,* at first glance a small, insignificant-looking lass from an obscure town, but one who possesses tremendous powers of persuasion and inspiration; Vilma Santos is the liberated, working woman of the 1980s-1990s in the person of the kindhearted mistress with a wifely martyr complex of *Relasyon* or the working wife of *Broken Marriage,* who has to balance the demands of her home and those of her profession; Judy Ann Santos is "Esperanza," the youth burdened with the self-imposed mission of bringing back together

a family that has disintegrated, and lately "Sabel," a contemporary Filipina pursuing her individuation as a person; finally, Rosanna Roces is "Ligaya," a woman of ill repute who struggles to turn over a new leaf and find her place in the sun with the man who has made her a virtuous woman. On the other hand, Sharon Cuneta is the articulate, accomplished, and moneyed career woman we regularly see on television knowledgeably and competently interviewing her talk-show guests with decorum. Maricel Soriano is the former's foil in that she speaks her mind, unhampered by amenities. The late Nida Blanca (in her youth and early phase of her career) and Amalia Fuentes, both of earlier separate generations, provided the Soriano prototype of the feisty social rebel.

Clearly, the stars cited above, either through their archetypal characters onscreen or through strong personal as well as persona qualities and lifestyle, represent marked cultural and ideological values of their respective times. Gledhill put it succinctly as she pointed out the emblematic as well as cultural values of stars: "they signify as condensers of moral, social, and ideological values" *(Stardom* 215). The trait that facilitates this process of signification is charisma. This is a special quality that has its origins in religion, a sort of "gift of grace" that eventually assumed political significance (Jary and Jary 68). In the religious context, charisma referred to individuals mostly or in some cases a group of believers who claim to possess special powers, such as speaking in divers tongues of fire or healing. In the larger cultural context, charisma is a form of political legitimacy identified by eminent economist, historian, and classical sociologist Max Weber. It refers to the special personal qualities claimed by and for an individual, making her capable of influencing large numbers of people who may consequently become the person's followers. Furthermore, this power or authority is based on an emotional commitment to or belief in the special personal qualities of a leader.

In the cinematic context, particularly in the local scene, charisma is best illustrated by the Nora Aunor phenomenon. Patrick A. Flores quotes the late National Artist for Film Fino Brocka on his observation of the superstar's charismatic quality:

> She is the only star I know who could silence a crowd. After the premiere of [Brocka's] *Ina Ka ngAnakMo,* a big crowd waited for her outside the lobby. People were unruly. Her car was being

> bumped by the crowd. All she did was put a finger on her lips and raise her right hand, and it was like the parting of the Red Sea. You could hear a pin drop....
>
> [The fans of Nora Aunor] love it when she needs them.... [They are] basically the lower-class—the maids who work all day and night to have Sundays as their day of recreation, the slum dwellers, the market vendors.... My biggest shock was when I found [out] that my producer was a member of the Nora Aunor Fans Club. She came from a rich family, graduated from an exclusive finishing school in Spain, and here she was slaving for a heroine I thought only the poor people identified with. For the past five years, she has been working with Nora Aunor as a secretary with no pay. She was producing the movie because she wanted Nora to get out of her slump then. (77-78)

A few things have to be clarified at this point. The person behind the star does not necessarily have to embody, in real life, the qualities ascribed either to her or to her screen persona. But this is of small consequence because the business of star-imaging has little to do with reality. Much of it has to do with appearances, the representation of an absence or what is not really there (Hayward 339-40). The ousted President of the Philippine Republic, Joseph Estrada, is an all-too-perfect example. Then, too, the star image was both polysemic and historical (Hayward 343). Either it had many meanings, or different groups assigned various meanings to the star, and a particular meaning would possess a temporal or epochal specificity. The late Nida Blanca's persona as a social rebel may have been applicable during the early phase of her stardom, but not all throughout a career that spanned five decades. Finally, while most of our local icons have been typecast in their roles for the most part of their respective careers and therefore imprisoned in their images, a few, as in the already cited case of Vilma Santos, have been able to successfully negotiate for more variety.

And how do the icons impact on the individual and her society or culture? Again, Phillips provides a clarification:

> The fact that the star is a "maximized type," that is as perfect an embodiment of a set of characteristics as can be imagined, allows the culture to perpetuate its myths, be they of masculine heroism, female beauty, or of self-actualization through lifestyle. Inasmuch as western consumer capitalism is built on the cult of the person, the development of a unique individualized identity through image, [then] the ideological reinforcement provided by the star image is very powerful. (191)

And where the US-led consumerist West goes, so we follow, or just ask any sitting President of our sovereign Republic.

Random Post-election Thoughts on the Celebrity Candidate

The fact that many actors and celebrities ran and lost in the recently concluded local and national elections manifests that Filipino voters have matured politically: such is the typical post-election assessment coming from several political analysts, opinion makers, and academics. Like many other statements made in connection with elections and the behavior of the electorate, that supposedly intelligent statement nonetheless calls for further scrutiny or even deconstruction, even by a layperson (in the field of political science or sociology) like myself—in other words, a non-expert "challenging" the consensus of the "experts." Irreverent and presumptuous I may be, but in a democracy which is supposed to be open to various views and opinions, some of which may initially appear naive or uninformed, this exercise may, it is hoped, find its place.

"Ideology" is one topic that has fascinated this writer in the course of his graduate film and media studies. It places in the proper context many notions that he originally took as simply "just the way they are." One of these is the prevailing view that in order to govern and lead well, one must have attained a certain degree of education—classroom education, to be exact. Who can quarrel with that? Rich or poor, we have all been told since early childhood about the importance of formal education—the reason parents would slave away to be able to provide their children with decent schooling, why the best gift that children could give in return is to study well, or why we feel inferior if all we could afford in terms of money or skill or intellectual capability is vocational training! A college education is deemed to be the key to upward social mobility, the passport to a comfortable lifestyle.

Of course we all know by now that that ain't necessarily so! But still the notion either dies hard or is often taken as truth etched in stone or metal, from whence proceeds the thinking that only the educated can lead well.

But says who? The Constitution and its framers? Actually the Constitution demands nothing of that sort. It has cleverly stayed away from declaring what could later be misconstrued as an undemocratic or biased attitude that privileges a particular social class—the educated elite, those who until now can still afford the formal education that could serve as a passport to anywhere in local or global society. Were the ranks of the "educated" middle class to grow, those of the ones who still "can't afford" (as we semi-erroneously though often appropriately put it) grow even faster. And nothing in historical experience has contravened this observation. For while history, even recently, has not shown us that we became better off as a nation with a less-schooled leader, neither has it proved that this nation "[became] great again" with a learned and accomplished lawyer or economist at the helm.

The field of cultural studies has defined ideology as a system of beliefs or narratives whereby a culture or community explains to its members why things are as they are. It is how the said community or culture makes sense of everything it believes in or rationalizes, and how it naturalizes all its operations. To illustrate, the Book of Genesis makes "natural" the dominance of men over women in its explication of why women should always obey their husbands, following wherever they lead. The story of Adam and Eve, where the latter was created out of a rib of the former as he lay asleep, has since provided the legitimating cultural basis for what would later be known as patriarchal ideology. Local feminists ought instead to find a way to propagate the story of how our own Maganda and Malakas came to life: created at the same time after an overeager bird had pecked at and split the bamboo stem that bore them into earthly existence, our pre-Hispanic first woman and man had emerged in always-already egalitarian circumstances. And who initially propounded the story of Adam and Eve? Indubitably, one old Hebrew storyteller—generally acknowledged to have been Moses—allegedly inspired by God, who more often than not is visualized as physically male, too. Had the storyteller or Moses been a woman, or had God been represented in Western art as feminine, perhaps it would

be the dominance of women over men that "masculinists" will be protesting against today!

To return to our post-election concerns, what gave the educated middle class the feeling that it is their birthright to rule the country? The answer lies in the ideology of the educated, for it is in the nature of ideology that the ruling class articulates it, and its purpose is to subsequently produce others of its kind or class; in other words, the perpetuation and survival of its own species for continuous domination is the primary goal, as per the Marxian take. Sad to say, it is not only the members of this class who subscribe to this thinking but others as well who may not belong, but who nonetheless identify with the interests of this class, whether by self-delusion or through the effective hegemonic persuasion of the ruling class.

In a democracy like the Philippines', things get more complex and complicated. For here, the folks and the *masa* have the numbers, and as a political analyst had pointed out earlier, those who have the numbers may elect the leaders, but the leaders are pre-chosen by the political elite whose sphere coincides with that of the educated middle class and the social or the propertied sector. These twin realities make for a strong motivation for either vote-buying or election-related violence, which in turn leads to any number of unpredictable scenarios, including coup d'état attempts.

Given this context in local elections, which middle-class sector will gladly allow a less-schooled candidate to occupy high public office? Certainly not a popular movie star or a celebrity! Unfortunately for the educated elite, those who vote candidates into office—not those who have, but those who *are,* the numbers—know their movie icons, favorite actors, and prizefighters better than those who belong to the more socially distinguished professions. Many nonshowbiz candidates know this, which is why most of them painstakingly learn how to be entertainers! How else could one explain why an otherwise proper and distinguished Joker Arroyo would be caught dancing to a Cordillera rhythm during his campaign sorties when he can be associated with neither Blackjack nor even with a nose flute-playing Gemma Cruz during her beauty-queen days? Or why is the University of the Philippines' College of Mass Communication said to be the training ground for future politicians, a distinction which the UP's College of Law had earlier possessed?

That is why most of the educated elite will never allow an FPJ to run this nation, even if some of his sympathizers and followers thought that he had won the latest presidential election. That is why, too, better that a Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, a Harvard-trained economist, should occupy the position instead, even if some quarters believe she cheated her way to the presidency. This is also probably the reason why it seems so difficult for us to boot her out of office just as it was so much easier to do it to an Erap Estrada, when the scandals that they have been involved in and the crimes both are accused of are largely similar.

But these were stuff that few elections past were made of. Maybe most of us have learned from these earlier examples. But have we, really? The bias against celebrities persists. Experts gladly proclaim: our electorate has finally "matured," meaning they now vote as the educated elite would vote—on the bases of platforms and issues, not personalities! Then follows an enumeration of celebrity losers ... but the list of celebrity winners is just as long! Moreover, just as many from the more "distinguished" professions have also lost—and won! So what "maturity" are we really talking about here?

This is not a defense of celebrity politicians, just a description of how things are, as seen from a differing perspective.

FPJ: The Mythic Icon as *Artista ng Bayan* in Foregrounding Popular Culture and Aesthetics

Fernando Poe, Jr. (Ronald Allan Kelley Poe in real life) is the sixth from cinema to be named, National Artist. Like the five film masters who came before him—namely, Lamberto V Avellana, Gerardo de Leon, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, and Eddie Romero—he was a film director. Unlike them, however, he was distinguished more as an actor. This does not mean, however, that like other actors whose preoccupation was primarily to portray roles with utmost skill and sensitivity, he had limited control over his work. The fact is as producer, director, co-writer, and lead actor of most of his significant pictures, FPJ exercised almost total control over his work, as much as 99 percent, as claimed by his manager Susan Tagle. This makes him a film auteur in the real sense of the word: he controlled both the content and the form of his artistic productions, like the other film auteurs who were named National Artists before him.

Of course, he had limitations too in this regard, just as Avellana, De Leon, Brocka, Bernal, and Romero did during their respective periods. While for the others these limitations comprised the commercial imperatives of an art industry, in the case of FPJ his limitations were self-imposed, in accordance with his personal vision as a filmmaker profoundly in touch with an audience to whom and for whom he had always endeavored to make his work accessible. He was unmindful of what supposedly more discriminating critics—staunch advocates of a particular aesthetic sense and set of artistic standards not always compatible with his own—might have thought and said.

FPJ: The Mythic Icon.

Photo reprinted with the permission of Jeffrey Sonora.

Both as actor and director, FPJ's position was unique and distinctive. He was phenomenal. His works were embodied in his own screen/star persona, painstakingly created, constructed, nurtured, and sustained through many years in the films that he had produced, directed, and acted in. Of course, the construction of this image was not his alone but rather in collaboration with his public or fans, his publicists, and the entertainment media. This made it doubly significant—that the construction of the image constituting the principal text of his works was a collaborative work of sectors or members of the culture industry that he served.

His materials were drawn from the Filipino folk's stories of oppression and struggle, their dreams and aspirations. His biggest achievement consisted of the projection through this image on the big screen—and beyond—of the values the Filipino *masa* [masses] held closest to their hearts. This mythic image had inspired his film audiences and a tremendous fan following through the years, from the late 1950s to his death in 2004, or nearly half a century. He was an artist and, more than

that, a cultural icon, intimately in touch with and affecting a community largely comprising the Filipino folk and the masa, his primary audience.

The FPJ Screen/Star Persona

To many of FPJ's critics, he was a "limited" actor, in that he portrayed over and again only a handful of similar roles or characters. He was the quiet man of simple wants and desires, the underdog who patiently endured injustice, avoiding trouble and confrontation with great prudence to the very end, but when his patience reached its limit, *"kapag napuno na ang salop"* [when the container filled up], he would explode and woe unto the perpetrators of his, his family's, or his townspeople's oppression! Or he was the legendary folk hero, forced to retreat after being driven away by evil forces that had dispossessed his town, but soon back to liberate his townspeople from their bondage.

His image as underdog was projected in films such as Gerardo de Leon's *Apollo Robles* (1961), Efren Reyes's *Batang Maynila* (1962), Armando Herrera's *Mga Alabok sa Lupa* (1967), Pablo Santiago's *Batang Matadero* and Jose de Villa's *Mga Batang Estibador* (both 1969), Gerardo de Leon's *Ako ang Katarungan* (1962), Herrera's *Tatak ng Alipin* (1975), Abraham Cruz's *Totoy Bato* (1977), Celso Ad. Castillo's *Asedillo* (1971), Ben G. Yalung's *Partida* (1985), and Ronwaldo Reyes's *Ang Probinsyano* (1997), among many others.[11] The mythical hero, on the other hand, was highlighted in Castillo's Azzg *Alamat* (1972), Ronwaldo Reyes's *Ang Pagbabalik ng Lawin* (1975) and his *Panday* series *(Ang Panday* [1980], *Ang Pagbabalik ng Panday* [1981], *Ang Panday: Ikatlong Yugto* [1982], and *Panday IV* [1984]), and the action-adventure films adapted from *komiks* materials, such as Pablo Santiago's *Ang Kampana sa Santa Quiteria* (1971), Castillo's *Santo Domingo* (1972), and Ronwaldo Reyes's *Alupihang Dagat* (1975), again among several others.

Adding to his critics' chagrin, FPJ was also the screen hero who single-handedly wiped out an army of enemies with his bare hands and

"Editor's note: Ronwaldo Reyes was Fernando Poe, Jr.'s *nom de camera.* From this point onward, unless pointed out by Velasco, Poe's agglomeration of *auteurist* functions will remain unremarked in the text. One minor oversight is the fact that the aforelisted *Mga Batang Estibador,* although an FPJ production, did not feature Poe as an actor. Another matter about the film appears in the introduction to the Works Cited section.

staccato punches, or with his sharp-shooting pistol drawn from the hip by the left hand, or with a high-powered gun out to annihilate an entire enemy universe. It was a characteristic performance style that to his critics defied both reality and logic. Because he was a "limited" actor and since most of his films revolved around his screen persona, his films—where he was either his own producer or simply a hired actor—were similarly "limited" artistically.

To the followers of FPJ, this is not necessarily true. While the aforementioned character types dominated his repertoire, he played other characters as well. During his initial years as an actor, although he started out in an action stunt-oriented film, Mario Bari's *Anak ni Palaris* (1955), he also did antihero characters, notably in *Kamay ni Cain* (1957), directed by Gerardo de Leon, who had been one of his early favorite filmmakers. In the film, he was the black-sheep brother to the meek and mild character played by Zaldy Zshornack. He also played the leader of a gang of misunderstood youngsters prone to trouble and the commission of misdemeanors in Santiago's *Lo[9] Waist Gang* (1956).

Later in his career, he would appear as romantic lead to his wife Susan Roces in such melodramas as Ronwaldo Reyes's *Langit at Lupa* (1967) and Armando de Guzman's *Divina Gracia* (1970), as well as in several romantic comedies and comedy-dramas like Efren Reyes's *Ang Daigdig Ko[9]y Ikaw* (1965), Armando Garces's *Sorrento* (1968), Manuel Cinco's *Karnabal* (1973), Pablo Vergara's *Mahal, Saan Ka Nanggaling Kagabi?* (1979), and Santiago's *Manedyer ... Si Kumander* (1982). Also in romantic comedy-dramas, he would appear with current leading female box-office stars in such movies as Santiago's films *Bato sa Buhangin* (1976, with Vilma Santos), *Little Christmas Tree* (1977, with Nora Aunor), *Batang Quiapo* (1986, with Maricel Soriano), *Kahit Konting Pagtingin* (1990, with Sharon Cuneta), and *Ang Syota Kong Balikbayan* (1996, with Anjanette Abayari); and in Boots Plata's *Isusumbong Kita sa Tatay Ko* (1999, with Judy Ann Santos who played his daughter). He likewise formed tandems with then child star sensations such as Niño Muhlach and Sheryl Cruz (Herrera's *Ang Leon at ang Daga* [1976] and *Ang Leon at ang Kuting* [1980], respectively), and Vandolph Quizon (Tony S. Cruz's *WalangMatigas na Tinapay sa Mainit na Kape* [1994]). Though some of these were potboilers done for the sheer entertainment of the fans, FIJ nonetheless invariably imbued such pictures with positive folk values.

More significant than this versatility as an actor which his fans attribute to his status as the "King of Philippine Movies," however, was the second look given him by a few critics and academics, who recently started pointing out that what were considered the "limitations" of FPJ as an actor were, in fact, the very source of his genius and heft as an artist of a medium that dwells largely on images and symbols. Developments in learning, notably in anthropology, sociology, and the other social sciences; linguistics and cultural studies; as well as postmodern thinking and articulation, initiated the querying of traditional concepts and notions. For instance, in culture and the arts, romantic and idealist concepts and models of art and beauty, aesthetic standards, and canons were challenged, their supremacy as overarching theories undermined.

Chris Barker in *Cultural Studies* traces the prejudice against popular culture deemed "low":

> Historically, the policing of the boundaries of a canon of "good works" has led to the exclusion of popular culture for judgments of quality derived from an institutionalized and class-based hierarchy of cultural taste. Such a hierarchy, formed within particular social and historical contexts, is employed by its apologists as representative of a universal set of aesthetic criteria. However, judgments about aesthetic quality are always open to contention and, with the passing of time, and the increased interest in popular culture, a new set of theorists argued that there were no legitimate grounds for drawing the line between the worthy and the unworthy.
>
> Evaluation was not a sustainable task for the critic; rather, the obligation was to describe and analyze the production of meaning. This had the great merit of opening up a whole array of texts for legitimate discussion. (41)

In the same vein, Barker reminds and warns us: "Concepts of beauty, form and quality are culturally relative. Beauty in Western thought may not be the same as that to be found in other cultures.... Art as aesthetic quality is that which has been so labeled by Western cultural and class elites" (42).

With the characteristically postmodern blurring of boundaries, distinctions between fine and popular art, between "high" and "low" or popular culture similarly collapsed. Classical literature ceased to be the main preoccupation of English and comparative literature departments.

Popular literature and soon the movies were also soon being seriously analyzed. Colleges of fine arts included graphics and advertising arts, sometimes even comic-book art, in their curricula—until mass-communication departments were established and the battle for academic turfing in some universities here and abroad ensued.

Similarly, popular music and songs merited serious study, side by side with conservatory music; the ethnicities of some cultural communities were adapted and transformed into avant-garde musical idioms in traditional culture capitals in the West. In theater, along with classics of the so-called legitimate stage—predominantly of the Western world, English and American theaters—local traditional and popular theater, such as the *komedya, zarzuela, bodabil,* and even the urgent theater of the streets and the countryside, variably referred to as people's theater, guerrilla theater, or even agitprop (agitation propaganda), landed in some school curricula, or were at least practiced in the streets during demonstrations and rallies as virtual practicum activities. Theater people had been so enriched by practical experience during the Marcos regime that people's theater had been reported on, investigated, and assessed in academic journals.

The screen/star persona of Fernando Poe, Jr. is now read as the principal text of his work as an actor, the beacon image of his vision as a filmmaker, both as a director and as a producer. Structural linguistics (notably semiotics) and genre film criticism provide the critical frameworks that led to a better appreciation of the man and his films. Both illustrate the importance and functions of community myths which have universal narrative structures and archetypal characters, so that FPJ's mythical epics share a common narrative strategy and plot structure with George Lucas's *Star Wars* or James Cameron's *Titanic,* themselves popular films in Hollywood, also dismissed by many critics as commercial, non-artistic, or less serious. Such critical frameworks also point out that the vision and ideology promoted by mythic stories and genre films are those of an entire community, just like in any ethno-epic or folktale. Here the collective consciousness—or the collective unconscious, to Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung—and pervasive values of whole societies, not just those of individuals, prevail.

This is not to diminish, however, the importance of the private vision of an individual artist, one who may be prophetic, but to appreciate

on equal footing the prophetic vision as well of a folk storyteller who embodies the thoughts, sentiments, and values of his entire community. The emphasis clearly is on community representation rather than on assertion of individual identity. The art of one is not necessarily inferior to or of less value than that of the other. Finally, these critical frameworks foreground the star not only as a performer but also as a representation—a Visual Signifier—of cultural values and dominant ideologies, as well as of a society's ideological contradictions.

The Films of FPJ and Popular Aesthetics

Alfonso B. Deza, a theater, television, and film actor who is also a professor of communication research at the University of the Philippines, completed a thesis on FPJ which came out as a book titled *Mythopoeic Poe,* where he discoursed on the FIJ image as a film hero and wrote about how his masa audience perceived him, both as screen hero and as a person:

> FPJ as symbolic resource is admired for his helpfulness and sympathetic mien, especially toward the poor and needy, apparently emanating from his strong belief in God. He is gentlemanly in his ways, respectful of others, and empathizes with their situation. He is not wont to boasting and flaunting but is instead modest and humble and simple in conduct. However, when the situation arises that puts his *paninindigan* [principles] to the test, he transforms into a courageous hero of inner strength ready to defend the oppressed and fight for his country to the death. (51)

Deza's survey of the FPJ audiences also discloses how they assess the filmmaker's works:

> FPJ films are appreciated first and foremost for the lessons they impart to the audience .... A specific lesson is hope for the poor, as expressed in the following responses: you may be poor but you can still have hope in life; the film (would have) meaning for the oppressed and the downtrodden.
>
> Second-rank cluster of responses shows that the films are appreciated when they are reflective of real life, and in particular, when they are reflective of the daily joys and struggles of the masa (his films are truthful).... FIJ films are likewise appreciated for their wholesomeness (for everyone, young or old), and restraint in exploiting to the hilt the element of sex (not fond of boldness; not sneaking in materials on sex).... FIJ films are not run-of-the-mill productions. These do not come out often because they are well-planned and executed (strongly appealing to the preferences of consumers; pleasurably received by the public).... Apparently, aside from being considered a discriminating actor (choosy in the selection of characters to portray, yet (also) careful about the quality of the role or of the film's execution), respondents also consider FPJ a dedicated filmmaker committed to making quality Filipino films, and as such, [he] is an asset to the Philippine movie industry' (tireless in making Filipino films; industrious, organized, careful in making films). (57-58, Filipino passages trans, by ed.)

Intimations of Folk Aesthetic Sense That Call for Further Study

A few of Fly's films depict corruption among local government officials and the local elite (cf. Yalung's *Partida* [1985]), as well as in the police force (Ronwaldo Reyes's *Muslim Magnum .357* [1986]). Significantly, a few members of FPJ's audiences see some hidden narratives in his films, notably Ronwaldo Reyes's *Alupihang Dagat* (1975) and Efrcn Reyes's *Baril na Ginto* (1964):

> The fishermen read into the narrative of FPJ films the inherent messages of solidarity and collective action. However, they realize, and not without a tinge of regret, that these messages are not perceived by everyone because they are not given due stress in the story, but are, instead, drowned in the din of the fight [sequences]. (Deza 108)

Roehl Jamon, another professor from the UP Film Institute, made additional observations on the nature of an FIJ hero:

> Whether as a Muslim warrior, a farmer, a rebel, or an ex-con, FIJ adheres to a strict code of conduct similar to the Bushido of the Japanese, the art of war of the Chinese, and the integrity of an officer and a gendeman. An FPJ hero is always unassuming, ever patient, and never strikes the first blow. He is always on the side of the law, even if he has to take justice into his own hands. ("The Women of Fernando Poe, Jr." 24)

Jamon discussed the position of women in FPJ films, an important topic in cultural studies, in a lecture that subsequently formed part of his graduate thesis. According to Jamon, though traditionally patriarchal in many other ways, FPJ films have a very high regard for women:

> An FPJ hero always has great respect for women. Women are always respected and always protected whether they are family members or casual acquaintances. Female villains share the same measure of respect, [so much so that] an FPJ character never hurts them. They can only be neutralized by another female, usually the heroine, or by an accident initiated by their fellow villains. . ..
>
> Any FIJ character will enjoy the company of other women, but deep inside, he harbors strong guilt for his supposed infidelities, because he remains faithful to his wife or fiancee. Even after the death of a wife or sweetheart, an FIJ hero cannot easily love another woman because his faithfulness extends beyond the grave. It would need a very good justification and strong public consent before FIJ succumbs to the allure of another woman. (23-24)

For most of the films of FPJ in the 1960s through the early '90s, however, Jamon observed that "the woman cannot be overly aggressive in front of the man, because if she is, she will have to be punished to put her in her proper place" (71). But Jamon sees a gradual shift in the imaging of the women of FPJ, starting in the mid-1990s through the 2000s, where the formerly submissive partners "arc replaced by the more liberated and daring sweethearts who know what they want and how to get it" (96). Jamon cites the character played by Nanette Medved in Ronwaldo Reyes's *Isang Bala Ka Lang Part II* (1996), as well as the rookie female cop January "Lumen" Isaac) in Tony Y. Reyes's *Pakners* (2003), among many other samples.

More significantly, there had been a marked change in the FPJ image and star genre. In Ronwaldo Reyes's *Ang Alamat ng Lawin* (2002), the second-to-the-last film that the icon had directed and starred in before he launched his candidacy for the Philippine presidency (subsequently leading to his death in 2004), FIJ himself re-envisioned his favorite film genre as well as the image and significance of the mythical leader.

In *Alamat ng Lawin* he used cinematic metaphor to present an ideology that empowers the Filipino youth. Significantly, in an unprecedented gesture, he appeared in only about two-thirds of the film's total running time, opting to give the limelight to the mara-looking child actors who were the film's protagonists—not Lawin or FIJ! In this revisionist project, the actor-director even questioned the dependence of the people on the individual mythical hero for their redemption, strongly suggesting that a people's liberation from oppression of all sorts lies largely in their own hands. FIJ's archetypes do change after all—in keeping with the times. When traditional notions of art as well as canonical aesthetic standards are being challenged; when popular culture—and, with it, popular aesthetics—is fast gaining acceptability and the respect that it deserves, the choice of Fernando Poe, Jr. by his peers in cinema art and industry, by fellow artists coming from other art sectors, and by the top administrators of both the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines representing the art and culture policymakers and administrators, is most timely and appropriate.

But perhaps the translation of the prestigious title in the native tongue is most apropos for the man, the artist, and the cultural icon—*"Artista ng Bay an?'* Atang de la Rama, Levi Celerio, Ernani Cuenco—to mention a few—had all been declared National Artists earlier. Like FIJ, they represent popular aesthetics. It is hoped that the selection of FIJ starts to bring in more artists from popular culture—radio, television, the *komiks.* and of course the movies—and representing popular aesthetics that only a handful of our academics and critics have bothered to investigate, much less promote. The common folk have their own aesthetic sense, too, don't they? And like all others, their spirits are ennobled and their lives uplifted by distinguished works of art that are informed and redefined by updated thinking, attitudes, and standards.

APPENDIX: EXCERPTS FROM "RE-ENVISIONING THE MYTHICAL HERO" (DRAFTED FOR THE A/m.srt *NG BAYAN* CITATION)

In playing characters in typical FIJ genre films in their classical or revisionist modes, he had won recognition as an accomplished actor and director (as Ronwaldo Reyes); in fact he had been elevated to the FAMAS Hall of Fame as a lead actor, and won a few other acting awards from other award-giving bodies. The award bestowed upon him by his peers, no less than the members of the progressive Directors' Guild of the Philippines, testifies to his craft as a film director and auteur.

In the early 1960s, he led a group of actors who became the producers of their own films, choosing their own kind of pictures, unfettered by the demands of the studio system. He was, in short, a trailblazer and a leader of an earlier movement for independent film production.

FPJ was a staunch advocate of film preservation by example, doing his part by preserving most of his films.

For his outstanding contributions to the development of Philippine cinema, and for his films' profound influence on the Filipino folk and masa, his primary audience....

For this artist's kind of art that members of his community find accessible, relevant to their life concerns, inspiring, and empowering....

For his leadership in an art industry constantly struggling for professionalism, unity, and recognition and respectability by the other sectors of the art community....

Fernando Poe, Jr. is conferred the title *"Artista ng Bayan."*

Susan Roces: AVery Special Participation

I was an avid "Susanian"—that was how a devoted fan of Susan Roces, local cinema's queen of the 1960s, was called. I liked her a lot because of her striking resemblance to my mother, and a lot of friends and relatives said that, then, I looked exactly like my mother. Of course, that was not completely true; in fact, much of it was fantasy. Nonetheless, in childhood games—mostly played alone in front of a mirror—I was my idol's dead ringer.

In *Star Gazing,* Jackie Stacey observes:

> The connection between the spectator and the star established through childhood games of pretending to be one's favorite star is also remembered as a consequence of shared physical appearance . . . not based on pretending to be something one is not but rather selecting something which establishes a link between the star and the self based on a pre-existing part of the spectator's identity which bears a resemblance to the star. (161)

Stacey calls this practice "resembling," a form of identification that takes place even after a fan views her idol onscreen. This is one among several forms of cinematic identifications in the star/spectator relationship. But let me first share with you my experience as a Susan Roces fan and how my idol figured prominently in the construction of some aspects of my identity.

Mirror Games and Images Onscreen

I was born illegitimate; in fact, I carry my mother's maiden surname and I never saw my father either in person or in pictures. My mother and

Susan Roces glamour photo.

Photo reprinted with the permission of Jeffrey Sonora.

her three sisters raised me without a father and with a virtually absentee grandfather, who lived on the upper floor of our house but could not get involved with our lives as much as he might have wanted because of a jealous second wife. Of course, I had my *yaya* [nanny] too, since mine were a working mother and two similarly working aunts. A third aunt, actually the eldest, was married and lived in Cavite. When they went out to work and myj^<7 was busy with house chores, I would sneak into their room and play by myself in front of a mirror. During those moments, I would be assured that, indeed, 1 looked exactly like my mother, with her makeup, high-heeled shoes, and party dresses.

That was in the early 1950s when I was of preschool age. When I turned seven, in 1954,1 was old enough to be admitted to the cinema so my mother would take me to Times Theater, a second-class movie house on Quezon Boulevard, to watch her favorite Hollywood stars—Ginger Rogers, Cyd Charisse, Debbie Reynolds, and June Allyson. My mother was fond of musicals and dramas but she rarely took me to the latter. On weekends, when she and my aunts would go out on dates, my caregiver would take me to watch Tagalog-language movies, which I eventually enjoyed after recovering from an initial fear of black-and-white local films after watching Teodorico C. Santos's *Guwapo,* whose hero's disfigured face haunted me nightly for some two months.

1 first saw Susan Roces onscreen in Luciano Carlos's *Mga Reyna ng Vicks,* a movie adaptation of a popular radio drama program made by Sampaguita Pictures, her home studio. I thought she acted naturally and T took an instant liking to her sweet and refreshing beauty. More important, she resembled my mother. At a *santacruzan* [religious procession] in the Luneta, however, I was converted from a silent admirer to a devoted fan. She was *Reyna de las Estrellas,* Queen of the Stars, radiant in a white, finely sequined, figure-hugging *terno.* She wore a bejewelled crown from which tiny beaded stars radiated. From where I stood—at the foot of the float that momentarily stopped before me—she looked like an unreachable goddess raised high on a pedestal. Hers was indeed "the face that refreshes," as Sampaguita publicity blurbs claimed, especially when her lips curved in a peculiar manner. Several mornings thereafter, that smile and the warm, open face would be replicated before the mirror. I remember, too, having wrapped my body tightly each time with a white bedsheet.

Swanie or *Manang* Inday [Elder Sister Inday], as we, her fans, would fondly call our idol, began her film career in 1956, but I started being a Susanian only in 1958 and continued to be one for many years thereafter, possibly until 1978, when I personally interviewed her for an article for *The Review,* a monthly publication that I was then editing.[12] My Susanianism lasted from elementary to my early professional years, from childhood to adulthood—some two decades, to be more exact. I saw all her movies at least once, most of them on opening day, so I would see her autograph her photos in person. When multiple theatrical exhibitions for local movies became the fashion, I would see her current movie in *all* the theaters where it was exhibited. I bought and devoured fan magazines and clipped pictures and articles about her. I collected photographs that were sold on the sidewalks near Life and Globe Theaters in Quiapo, where I selected them surreptitiously lest an acquaintance or, worse, a classmate catch me in the act and discover my closely guarded secret.

Many times I wrote her fan letters as I did letters to the editors for several publications. But all of them have remained unsent to this day. I subscribed to the *Weekly Graphic* and the *Literary Song-Movie Magazine,* clipped ballots and solicited several others to ensure that she would win in the publications' respective popularity polls (she did win more than once over closest rival Amalia Fuentes). Several times too, I attempted to be around wherever she would make an appearance, such as during the birthday celebration of a colleague of hers who lived in our community. Lillian Laing lived on our street, and each time she celebrated her birthday, she would invite coactors. On such occasion, we—I and a young nephew of a good friend, several years my junior (who would later grow up to become a top young film director by the name of Jeffrey Jeturian)—would join countless others to watch the invited guests, from outside the fence. On one such occasion, Susan came dressed demurely, carrying a teddy bear. I strongly suspect that since then, Jeffrey had been hugging his own teddy bears before he turned to Japanese dolls.

Swanie was a versatile performer, who proved it by playing disparate roles. But while she projected different personalities in her

[12]Editor's note: This reference is listed in the Works Cited section as "Susan Roces, interview by author (Metro Manila, 1978)," inasmuch as no copy of the magazine can be located for details of publication.

movies, her public or star image developed by her home studio was that of the quintessential sweet Lady—with an upper-case L—prim and proper, elegant and regal. "It was her image as a Lady of queenly grace and bearing that I fantasized about," confided Jeffrey. "She embodied my ideals of beauty, of femininity. She had qualities that I admire in a woman and maybe I secretly wished that I had them, too," he laughed, self-mockingly.

I'd also fostered an emotional identification with my idol. I would be hurt when others would say that Amalia Fuentes was prettier than Susan or that my idol had big legs. To convince myself that this was not true, I would clip pictures showing her in full shot with legs "not that big *naman\"* I had never been involved in any fan quarrels, but alone I would be hurting silently if Susan were criticized. Jeffrey, in contrast, would cry. But he would then challenge any detractor to a fight. He was much younger and would defend our idol more passionately. Jeffrey, too, once felt as happy as the bride that Susan was when she got married to Ronald Allan Poe (more famously known as Fernando Poe, Jr. or FPJ) on December 25, 1968. Jeffrey's mom was a distant relative of the Poes but they were close enough to get invited to the wedding reception, to which Jeffrey tagged along with his parents.

Susan Roces was not only an object of identification for me. She also served as muse to several talents that I would later develop as a result of my adulation. The letters that I wrote her and some entertainment editors, which have remained undelivered, sparked my interest in writing. Soon, I was doing articles about Susan. They were never sent to any publication either. Her face was so consistently in my consciousness that I could pick her out from a crowd of, say, Black Nazarene devotees during the annual January procession, if she were ever present. A concrete result of this obsession is the modest skill I developed in portrait sketching, and up to now I could still line-draw her face from memory.

My development of personal skills was not limited to writing articles or portrait sketching. The photos that I had collected and the pictures that I had clipped from magazines were organized in albums. Soon I discovered that I had a knack for layouting, which proved useful in my future publication projects. The talent found ultimate fulfillment when I made the cover design and article layouts for my interview with her on

the set of Lino Brocka's *Gumising Ka, Maruja,* which was published in *The Review.*

My prose writing branched out to creative writing. I began to write scripts for television, theater, and the movies. One of my biggest creative fulfillments was when I wrote three teleplays ("Huling Biyahe," "Panata ni Doray," and "Darating si Ate Eliza") for Susan Roces's drama anthology, *Panahon,* which was aired in 1992 on Channel 2. Fantasies and fantasizing, I realized, need not be unproductive.

Cinematic Identifications

In preparation for her book, *Star Gazing,* Jackie Stacey collected correspondences sent by British female readers of two women's magazines who were responding to the advertisements that she had placed. Her respondents described different forms of identification in spectator/star relations, and Stacey categorized them into two broad classes: identificatory fantasies and identificatory practices. The details of the respondents' recollections, in most cases, read like Jeffrey's and my experiences as fans.

Fantasies, per Stacey, happen during the viewing experience, and they include devotion, adoration, and worship (116-18). Cinematic pleasure seems to be derived from the division between the worshipped and the worshipper, the goddess and the mortal (130-32). For the most part, my stance as a fan fit the arrangement: I worshipped from a distance and never joined any of her fan clubs, whose members had more access to and personal interaction with her. Other forms of fantasy are transcendence, aspiration, and inspiration; in all cases, pleasure comes from the imagined transformation of self by the fan. In transcendence, the fan imagines herself taking on the role and identity of the star while watching her idol onscreen. I remember believing myself to be the character my idol was portraying, most especially when the character was a movie fan herself, as in Carlos Vander Tolosa's *The Big Broadcast,* or a secret admirer, as in Tolosa's *Prinsesa Gusgusin.* When she turned freelancer and did more dramatic roles, I would see myself in one of the twin characters she was playing, usually the misunderstood evil sister as in Romy Villaflor's *Ana-Roberta* or Armando de Guzman's *Divina Gracia.* The latter case was peculiar because I was identifying more with a character far removed from the image in my mind of my idol and myself. Stacey

says this identification is based not on similarity but on difference. This in turn prompts the next form of fantasy: aspiration and inspiration. Here fans aspire to acquire the attributes or personalities of their role models—for example, Ava Gardner and Rita Hayworth for their sex appeal and glamor, or Katharine Hepburn, Joan Crawford, and Bette Davis for their confidence and independence. I took a different turn. The fantasy was more of inspiration to create rather than to aspire toward.

But identification does not only take place in the imagination while watching a movie. Identificatory practices—pretending, resembling, imitating, and copying—take on social meanings beyond the cinema. A pretending fan assumes the identity of the star in a temporary game of make-believe (Nora Aunor's transvestic impersonators are examples of such fans). My private mirror games were manifestations of resembling. Imitating refers to the replication of gestures, speech, and star personalities and abilities, such as singing and dancing, while copying refers to the duplication of appearances: dress, hairdo, makeup, etc. (Stacey 162-67). Since I did not have either the daring or the desire to wear Susan Roces-inspired dresses in public, I sketched dresses and gowns that I thought would look fabulous on her.

Misrecognitions

Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic film theory, specifically the mirror phase, elucidates my early childhood experience of identification through the familial mirror and later through the cinema screen that projected an Ideal Self; the identification first with my mother, and next with my screen idol. In "The Film Spectator," Patrick Phillips explains the significance of Lacan's theory:

> a child is born with a sense of incompleteness, a "lack." There is thus a desire from birth to fully "be," with life spent trying to overcome or fulfill the lack, something which we can never accomplish. To compensate for the failure to re-establish a sense of personal completeness or unity, the child will console itself with imaginary solutions, especially idealized images of itself as "complete." The child's first illusion of wholeness is the mirror and the sense that "that must be me." More profound is the mirror provided by the mother who "reflects" a particular identity back to the child. The mirror images are a kind of mirage, a narcissistic

> self-idealization, a misrecognition, because the imagined "real" is, in fact, always unattainable. (143-44)

It is also within the realm of psychoanalysis that the construction of gender identity comes in, for as Stacey says, "Within the psychoanalytic theory, 'identification' has been seen as the key mechanism for the production of identities" (130). Laura Mulvey argued that the look that controls spectatorship is that of the patriarchal male gaze which sees the woman as a passive object of scopic or voyeuristic desire ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 19-22). Later, in the 1980s, feminist film theories advanced that cinematic desire in the female spectator consists of identification with the woman object onscreen. But what if the spectator that identifies is biologically male? Moreover, what if the fantasies of this male spectator involve neither romantic nor erotic desire?

I can only offer an honest self-analysis of my experiences, in hindsight. This I realized: the psychic construction of my gender identity was an integral part of my broader identification with my mother, with an Ideal Self projected on the cinema screen. The identification of this particular male spectator was feminine. It was a misrecognition on my part that, like my mother and my idol, I was female.

My misrccognition of the image in the mirror and on the screen was not only psychological; it was also ideological. The screen and star personae of Susan Roces embodied sweetness and light, sugar and spice and everything nice, and even an age of innocence or, more aptly, of naiveté. She was a movie queen and a fantasy goddess. In 1968, in my last year of college at the University of the Philippines, the bedrock of dissent and radicalism, I would quit classes and ignore calls for participation in demonstrations over campus and national issues because I would rather watch Susan's current movies downtown, although I might have already seen them many times over. Of course, martial law would not be declared by Ferdinand Marcos until four years later, nor had the First Quarter Storm started in Diliman. But there were stirrings and rumbles, and while fellow State University scholars were raising each other's political consciousness, I was lost in a world of fantasy with my idol.

The intensity of my fan-atic idolatry would not be much different in the 1970s as it had been in the '60s. After her marriage in 1968,

Susan would appear in less movie projects, but most of them would be special. Since I had left the UP campus at this time and started working in my early office jobs, I was all the more isolated from national political developments and activism. Toward the close of the 1970s, I would join the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), and it was largely with this community that my social consciousness and political awareness grew and developed, not to mention my introduction to and immersion in Manila's gay nightlife.

To join PETA, 1 attended an invitational integrated-arts workshop at the Palihang Aurelio V Tolentino, named after the playwright who was a political activist as well during the early American regime in the country. It was more than a theater workshop. We had premiers on the national situation and exposure trips to the slums of Tondo as well as to the plush hotel lobbies at Roxas Boulevard. I'd seen similar places before in Susan Roces movies but in real life, they seemed more daunting and awesome. My first PETA play was Malou Jacob's *Juan Tamban,* about a street urchin, based on a real-life character, who ate rats and cockroaches to survive, and a middle-class sociology student whose life and sense of values the boy touched and influenced. The play was as mind-boggling as it was heartrending; I lost sleep for several nights, guilt-ridden over my insensitivity to fellow human beings. Other PETA plays followed, all making me start seeing things from a different perspective. At the same time, I was watching more Lino Brocka films. I had been impressed with his early work; now somehow, I felt some affinity with him, what v\ith his having been PETA's executive director then. I was ecstatic, therefore, when I learned that he would be directing Susan for the first time in a dream project. I sought my idol out for an interview, which Lino himself arranged.

The interview on the set of *Gumising Ka, Maruja* at the Museo ng Buhay Pilipino [Museum of Philippine Life] in Parañaque in 1978 was personally significant. Face-to-face with my idol, conversing with her and listening to her as she talked about her career in hindsight and her great expectations of the future as an artist and as a person, I suddenly realized that my Ideal Self, my screen idol whom I adored and worshipped from a distance, was after all accessible, just like any other human being, and different! I had even more reason to admire her. Despite the dark-brown rouge and lipstick that she wore, appropriate for the sepia-toned

portions of her film, the radiance and the charm had been preserved well through the years. She talked sense and spoke good English. She was warm and gracious. But then in addition, something else happened: the mystery was gone.

The demystification started when I realized that I, the fan, had finally developed a separate identity. Perhaps by that time, when I was starting as a young professional and developing consciousness about more mundane concerns, I might have already had constructed my own person, which derived from a complex mix of genetics, familial contexts, environment, socialization, education, and most especially, the various identifications made from infancy to adulthood that helped construct a distinct identity for the rest of my adult life.

Thanks to the Idol and Muse, without whose "very special participation"—though so far unbeknownst to her—the construction of this Self might have been seriously impaired.

PART 4

Film Texts

Imitation and Indigenization in Melodramas in the Late 1950s

One of the unquestioned assumptions regarding the introduction of film in the Philippines by the Americans at the turn of the twentieth century is that Filipino filmmakers wound up importing not only the technology but the manner of producing and promoting films as well. Moreover, with the rampant imitation of Hollywood film genres and stories, some believe that even the ideology of Hollywood had been imported. This is especially true of the narrative fiction or feature film.

Foremost elements in the Hollywood style of producing and promoting films that Filipino producers readily adopted were the studio and star systems. These came as a package, wrapped in film-genre segmentation as marketing strategy. Each Hollywood studio had specialized in a particular genre or two and the exclusive participation of particular actors from the studio's stable of contract stars distinguished one genre from the others. The genres, moreover, had specific territorial/geographic as well as gender-oriented targets, and furthermore, catered to specific audiences: westerns and crime stories, for example, targeted the predominantly male audience, while melodramas and musicals, the predominantly female. The other genres were patronized more or less equally by both male and female audiences.

In the Philippines, a similar setup had been established. Our concern in this paper, therefore, is as follows: In adopting the form and presumably the content of foreign models, have early Filipino genre films likewise imported the social and cultural values of their models? How valid is the assumption that with the importation of the technology, the ideology arrived with the package as well? This is important because

the Philippine experience in this regard is not an isolated case but common among several Asian cinema cultures, notably of those nations with colonial experiences and/or who were introduced to motion pictures by the Americans. Specifically, we shall evaluate two Filipino melodramas of the late 1950s as subject films and compare them with Hollywood models using three criteria: content, consisting of the internal conventions of the genre that include story theme and subject, characters, and plot development; the ideology and cultural values that they carry and promote, including the position of women; and formal, expressive substance that would include the external conventions of the genre adopted by the films, as manifested primarily in their mise-en-scene.

Melodramas of the 1950s are chosen because the period marks the heyday of the studio system in Philippine cinema that emerged in prewar (World War II) years and flourished postwar. Armando Garces's *Sino'ng Maysala?* (1957) and Tony Cayado's *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak* (1959), the subject films of this study, were both produced by Sampaguita Pictures, one of the "Big Three" movie studios of postwar years. It was also in the 1950s when the valuation of Hollywood formula films was de rigueur, notably with the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, along with the psychological suspense thrillers of Alfred Hitchcock and the crime-detective movies that starred James Cagney and Humprey Bogart, as fetish actors of the genre. The Sirk melodramas, such as *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956), and *Imitation of Life* (1959), were popular among Filipino moviegoers, notably the women who went for the so-called weepies or tearjerkers.

Neither of the subject local films was inspired by any specific Sirk film, however. *Sino'ng Maysala?* at best took off from Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and, remotely, Elia Kazan's screen adaptation of the John Steinbeck classic novel *East of Eden* (1955). Both films starred James Dean, the young American film-star sensation of the 1950s who became a cult icon following his early death in a car crash—after making only three major films, the third being George Stevens's *Giant* (1956). All three, too, were popular among local audiences. And herein lay the Hollywood inspiration. Alive or dead, Dean commanded hordes of fans the world over, or at least wherever Hollywood films were shown. In the Philippines alone, there were at least three James Dean clones whose star personae were patterned after that of the Hollywood teen idol; one

of them was Sampaguita Pictures' Romeo Vasquez, the juvenile male lead in *Sino'ng Maysala?* The Dean clones projected the "misunderstood youth" or "bad boy" image, which up to the present (as exemplified by Robin Padilla) has constituted a lucrative market positioning in Philippine cinema. Lou Salvador, Jr., of LVN Pictures, another major film studio, was "officially" the "James Dean of the Philippines," for he bore the closest physical resemblance to the Hollywood original, more than the two other pretenders did (the third Dean clone was Premiere Productions' Zaldy Zshornack).

While Salvador, however, appeared mostly in youth-oriented musicals and Zshornack in action films, Vasquez found his berth in youth-oriented melodramas, in which his mother studio specialized. This actor was the principal male star of *Sino'ng Maysala?,* a family melodrama. *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak,* on the other hand, though purportedly a gangster film, foregrounds the gangster's various relationships with the female characters who gravitate toward him, rather than his career in crime which merely takes off practically in the second half of the film. In fact, it is the criminal connection and activities of the femme fatale, played by Bella Flores, that are given more prominence; she was the one who recruited to the criminal world the ingénue character, played by Susan Roces, another young star then being groomed by her mother studio for big-league stardom just like Vasquez, and the gangster played by Eddie Garcia. In effect, the film is more of a site for women's issues and positions as Hollywood melodramas tend to be. It is in this context that *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak* is taken as the second subject film.

HOLLYWOOD MELODRAISIA

Melodrama in Hollywood became popular in two eras that each bore the impact of two global wars: one, pre- and post-World War II; the other, the 1930s-1940s and the 1950s-1960s. In both instances, the men who earlier went to the battlefield returned to their families to discover a significantly altered domestic situation (Hayward 121). The American woman or wife had taken a job to eke out a living, whether as factory worker or office assistant or small-scale entrepreneur. Generating her own income, the woman subsequently became economically self-sufficient, independent, and assertive. In some cases, the woman became

liberated as well from her traditional gender role of rendering subservience toward her man and family, as well as from patriarchal or feudal sexual mores. Such was Mildred Pierce, a character portrayed by then-comebacking Hollywood movie queen, Joan Crawford, in Michael Curtiz's eponymously titled 1945 film: she became a successful entrepreneur and single parent after her husband left her.

In contrast, the American male was starting to feel inadequate and insecure as a result of the stripping away of his formerly complete domestic power. Often he stayed home, relying on his postwar pension. He was no longer the chief provider, nor did he continue to exercise economic dominance. Onscreen, in the so-called male melodramas, this inadequacy was depicted as a form of emasculation that made the family patriarch incapable of providing his sons with proper guidance and, more important, a sterling example of manhood; the father figure suddenly crumbled. Such was the case of the fathers of the James Dean characters in the films *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause.* In some cases, like in *Written on the Wind,* male inadequacy, despite economic and industrial power, is sublimated in a condition of sexual impotence that had been tragically bequeathed from the family patriarch to his scion, just as sexual aberration was bequeathed from the mother to the daughter.

Still the position of the woman was nothing enviable vis-à-vis that of the man. While she enjoyed economic independence and power, she had not been completely liberated from her traditional servile role; she continued to be the homemaker and caregiver, the manager of household chores, the self-sacrificing nurturer of her children. Hence, the marty r wife and mother complex (Hayward 204), played up in the melodrama, as exemplified again by *Mildred Pierce* and *All That Heaven Allows,* recently remade and deconstructed by Todd Haynes as *Far from Heaven* (2002). Worse, in film noir, the woman takes a negative image as a femme fatale (Hayward 120). The mysterious female is dubious and dangerous, sly and treacherous. The main suspect in a crime under investigation, she is subsequently declared the culprit, sent to prison, or eliminated outright. Such is the character Brigid O'Shauhnessy, played by Mary Astor, in John Huston's classic noir, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). In both cases, the woman, despite her new familial and societal position, continues to be oppressed and repressed on the big screen. For her newfound subjectivity, she has to pay a stiff price.

What ideology and cultural values, on the other hand, do the Filipino subject films carry and promote? What is the position of the woman in these films?

Sino'ng Maysala? A Showcase of Feminine Pulchritude and Power

Privileging the Star Persona

Si.no'ng Maysala? tackled the social issue of juvenile delinquency and its lead actor, Romeo Vasquez, inevitably had to be someone being built up as a matinee idol. He was given overwhelming star support by the studio's brightest luminaries, such as Paraluman, Rogelio de la Rosa, Gloria Romero (the reigning movie queen then), Lolita Rodriguez, Ric Rodrigo, and Luis Gonzales. The female stars, moreover, were then the glamor queens of a studio that was best known for its stable of film personalities generally regarded to have had the prettiest and handsomest faces in the local film industry.

The Star is so celebrated that in this film, for example, the characters assumed the star's screen names rather than the other way around. [See this article's appendix for a more detailed story line.] Gloria Romero was Gloria, Lolita Rodriguez was Lolita, Susan Roces was Susan, and Romeo Vasquez was Bobby, a nickname for his real name, Roberto Sumilang. The only exception was Paraluman, whose character was named Carmen, since "Paraluman" even in the 1950s sounded archaic or probably because, according to one insider, the role was originally meant for Carmen Rosales, another movie queen, who for one reason or another backed out of the project (Lena S. Pareja, interview by author). Needless to say, the female stars—along with their love teams—were among the biggest, if not the brightest, box-office attractions of the studio and as such would not be content in playing support roles. Actually that was more of the studio's decision rather than that of the stars themselves. True enough, each of the three female leads who played sisters were given sub-narratives of their own, intentionally and cleverly plotted in flashbacks and intercuts to give practically equal screen exposure and significance to each one. The resulting convoluted plotting, in effect, made for a five-in-one story, including that of the juvenile delinquent, and that of the family as a whole. Being a family melodrama, that was not much of a problem. The subplots were simply the stories of each

sibling in the family, and thematically, the three sisters' respective love experiences had had tremendous impact on the young brother and contributed to his delinquency.

Bourgeois Ideology of the Filipino Family

The dramatic inquiry of *Sino'ng Maysala?* concerned how a middle-class Filipino family could recover from bankruptcy and cope with the individual problems of its members. As with most melodramas worldwide, the story is family- and class-ccntcrcd. The family is the site not only of the dramatic conflicts among characters but also of ideological contradictions (Elsaesser 280-81). On the one hand, there is the high cultural value of keeping a family whole and intact at whatever cost; on the other, there are the various self- and selfish interests that threaten that value.

In foreign models, these values have been identified as bourgeois, since the roots of melodrama as a theatrical genre lie in the morality play, and as a fiction genre, the French romantic novel (Elsaesser 279-80), both identified with the bourgeoisie. In the Philippine setting, that value seems to be common among all social classes. Uncommon are the concerns that haunt the middle class no end: marrying someone from at least the same class or preferably from the higher class—the direction of social mobility should always be upward, not downward—and hypocritical moral uprightness. These local values and concerns are shared by the Hollywood models, for ultimately, the melodrama genre promotes the ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy (Hayward 203).

It cannot be hastily claimed, however, that these ideologies were an influence of the Hollywood film genre model alone, for these values had been present even in the markedly Hispanic-influenced theater and literary traditions that immediately preceded the American occupation (for one, Fausto J. Galauran, a popular novelist of that time, is credited for the film story which was adapted from his novel serialized in a vernacular magazine of popular literature, Zzżt^zzwy); rather, the Hollywood influence is more of a reinforcement of already-existing values.

The difference then lies in the position of women. Although initially blamed for the suicide of the family patriarch after his bankruptcy that

resulted from the misguided extravagance of the women in the family, the latter are nevertheless presented as possessing strong character spines. The eldest daughter Carmen took over the administration of the family finances; furthermore, although initially bothered by moral qualms, she eventually defied societal conventions and ostracism by resuming her aborted romance with a former boyfriend originally considered beneath their class and social standing but now more affluent than they are after he had married a wealthy woman. Another daughter, Gloria, whose boyfriend was sent abroad by his family, waited not in martyrlike masochistic fashion but rather in stoicism. The third one, Lolita, rebelled against accepted mores and decided to take matters into her own hands: she took on another boyfriend about whom she was not at all serious. Even the accusation of the women characters' guilt and responsibility over the delinquency of the youngest sibling was more of a recognition of their authority and moral ascendancy and the responsibilities attendant thereto rather than an approbation of character flaw and weakness, unlike in Hollywood melodramas and films noirs.

In contrast, the male characters were less finely etched. The family patriarch died at his own hand at the beginning of the film. The male suitors, portrayed by big stars in their own right, were virtually relegated to partnering the prima ballerinas, so to speak. The male juvenile delinquent was no wall to lean on, either; in fact, it was he who needed to be protected and guided. It was only the mother figure whose presence was unusually minimal, but this was probably because she was portrayed by a character actor, Rosa Mia, the quintessential Mater Dolorosa (Our Lady of Sorrows) of the Sampaguita lot—who had to take a backseat to the stars. Nonetheless, the maternal character accepted in great humility and nobility her responsibility over her family's and her son's fates.

Mise-en-Sċene and External Conventions

Melodrama's formalist expression is found in a film's mise-en-scène elements. In the Hollywood model, especially in the Freudian films of Sirk—notably *Written on the Wind*—what could not be said or explicitly shown onscreen were expressed in symbols and metaphors (Elsaesser 288-89). Initially, the device was used to circumvent stiff censorship laws—even before Sirk's time. In time, it became conventional formal practice. Hence, colors, objects, and settings expressed externally the inner turmoil

and conflicts of the characters. Harsh reds and yellows were used by Sirk to express the passion and the repression of his characters—for instance, replicas of an oil-drill tower made into an executive-table piece became phallic symbols, while a small pistol stood for its owner's impotence.

Less Freudian but stylistically melodramatic as well were the opulent interior house decors of the bourgeoisie, complete with large mirrors—not just one but several—and even larger closed windows, presumably of similar number, framing the rains that fell outside. In addition, huge winding stairs with iron-grill balustrades were conveniently used as set for characters who go up and down as the family experiences reversals of fortune (Elsaesser 298). All these are replicated in Filipino melodramas, from the 1950s as in those of Sampaguita Pictures, to recent times, as in the glossy melodramas of Viva Films and even those of Lino Brocka's small-town family melodramas in the late 1970s and '80s. In many Sampaguita productions, moreover, the female leads were dressed in elegant gowns designed by the then-fashion czars of Philippine haute couture—Ramon Valera, Pitoy Moreno, and Ben Farrales, complete with sparkling jewelry. And they were photographed and made incandescently beauteous in approximatedly glossy Hollywood glamor shots.

Excess, indeed, is a stylistic hallmark of melodrama (Gledhill, *Stardom* 212-13), whether Hollywood or local, most especially in the Philippines where many things are apparently overdone. Excess is evident not only in production design and lighting but also in music-and-sound scoring.

Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak. Power-Sharing Onscreen between Man and Woman

The excess is reinforced to this day in our television dramas and soap operas. A consideration of the final court scene in *Sino'ng Maysala?* amply illustrates this point. Here the Hollywood model is pushed to the extreme, for as mentioned earlier, the melodramatic tradition had not been exclusively influenced by Hollywood. We had our own tradition in theater even before Hollywood was introduced to us. Euro-Hispanic culture of an earlier colonizer had beaten Hollywood to the draw in this regard. And this tradition and heritage of formalistic excess on stage had had a profound influence in our modes of expression—thus, the *komedya/*

senakulo/sarsuwela acting style of our performers (Tiongson, "From Stage to Screen" 88-92), along with the frequent flights of fancy in our dramatic situations.

Film-Noir Iconography and Internal Conventions

Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak takes off from the classic Hollywood gangster-film noir, primarily because it largely adopts the iconography or external conventions and visual style of the genre: black-and-white cinematography; images of the seamy side of the city such as *esteros* [estuaries], isolated streets, and under-the-bridge settings; nightclub and safehouse scenes made even more mysterious and foreboding by sharp-contrast, low-key chiaroscuro lighting; and a final scene showing the tragic death of the gangster protagonist in a tableaulike, curtain-call blocking.

Similarly, in the film we find the genre's internal conventions of organized criminality, manifested primarily in drug pushing; duplicity and treachery; the presence of underworld characters with menacing faces, such as the ganglord, the up-and-coming pretender to his throne, the gang moll or femme fatale, the sidekicks and bodyguards perpetually holding cither pistols or high-powered guns, and the initially innocent-looking recruits or ingénues to the criminal world; violence; and the absence of the family (Harvey 171-82). While a gangster movie in terms of adopting both the external and internal conventions of the genre, the film can also be considered a melodrama for the dominance of the female characters and the foregrounding of women's position, as strongly suggested by the film title, both in the society that it depicts and in its screen representation. *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak* is actually of mixed genre, and here the representation of women is not necessarily singular. The traditional coexists with the progressive or radical.

Reinforced Ideology Despite Revisioned Internal Conventions

The protagonist of a Hollywood gangster film is invariably male. Even in film noir where the femme fatale is accommodated with a relatively foregrounded screen position, the protagonist, the detective, is still male. In *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak,* however, screen and narrative positions arc apparently equally shared by both the male and the female

protagonists, Greta and Conrado. Still, if we take into account the other significant characters in the film, it may be said that the balance is actually tipped in favor of the female. As in *Sino'ng Maysala?* the women take central exposure in the second film.

In *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak,* the adult women characters—except for femme fatale Greta (Bella Flores)—take traditional women roles in that they pine for the man they love, waiting for him to shower them with attention and affection, in his own time and at his own pace; on his own terms of pleasure, in short. Lily (Nelly Bayion), Annie (Marlene Dauden), and later even Vicky (Daisy Romualdez) to a certain extent made their lives revolve around their man (singly played by Eddie Garcia), the first two women as willing victims, and the last one reluctant but nonetheless still open-season game to predatory masculine charms, and perhaps just a few notches better than her matronly boss, the sex-slave Mrs. Lim. Moreover the man, in exchange for love and presumably sex—if censorship laws had been more relaxed then as they are today—commands unquestioning obedience and loyalty, right or wrong. Projected on the screen is the woman as amorous conquest and slave, definitely an unflatteringly chauvinist image of the female gender.

On the other hand, Greta represents a progressive image of the woman: she is in control. Although initially presented in an unflattering light because of her criminal occupation and illicit preoccupations, she proves to be nobody's pawn till the end. Moreover, she demonstrates nobility' of character when, risking her life, she decides to save an innocent friend whom she herself had earlier introduced to the criminal world, the film's ingénue (Susan Roces). This is a revisionist image of the femme fatale, or in local cinema, of the female villain, who in this film possesses redeeming values. That the part was played by Bella Flores, the quintessentially viraginous villain of local cinema, makes it doubly revisionist.

The male protagonist Conrado (Eddie Garcia), on the other hand, simply plots his action and dramatic premise: to succeed, to reach the top, wherever he may be. The characterization of his Hollywood counterpart is more defined and fleshed out: the gangster is of humble beginnings, an outsider dreaming of a better life, and in America, the land of opportunity, anyone is encouraged to improve her lot by dint of hard work. But the gangster wants to accumulate the most in the shortest

time possible, so he resorts to illegal means. Society will not allow this and so in the end he must die to impress upon everyone else the principle that "crime does not pay." This is wishful thinking because in real life, at times and seemingly more frequently nowadays, crime *does* pay. Although the local subject film failed to etch in high relief the social and psychological circumstances of the gangster protagonists, it nonetheless serves the mythical function of a crime film story' (Mitchell 163-65)—Conrado dies; Greta also dies but is forgiven, it is strongly suggested, because she demonstrated a redemptive heroism in the end. In this regard, the genre film follows the Hollywood model. After all, who will quarrel with such a traditionally capitalist "moral" lesson?

Shared Value and Concern

In the case of both subject films, there is a shared value and concern: the proper guidance and unconditional protection of the youth. Adult characters—and viewers—are admonished to be upright models for the youth. The depiction of the characters' erring ways constitutes a stern warning against negative behavioral examples and a nagging reminder of social and moral responsibility. The first film, right or wrong, identifies adult responsibility over a contemporaneous social problem—juvenile delinquency. The second, on the other hand, seems to point out that the corruption of the youth constitutes the worst possible criminal act. Maybe the pontifications sound uptight, especially to contemporary cinema audiences, but those were the days of relative innocence; those were also the days of rising youth unrest. Embodied in the genre film is a society's wishful thinking, the articulation of present fears finding vicarious resolutions and assurances anticipated in the film's finale. As the curtain draws to a close, the consumers ought to know if the film that they watched had served its mythical function. That consideration precedes all others, including a film's artistic or literary merit.

INDIGENIZATION

As mentioned earlier, the melodramatic tradition in Philippine drama and storytelling is not the sole influence of Hollywood. Traditional Philippine theater had its own conventions, foremost of which is the presentational, cxpressionistic style, something unlike the more realistic or the naturalistic representational style of the West (Tiongson, "Imitation

and Indigenization" 29-30). Excesses therefore are carried over to film in the form of convoluted plotting, stock characters and characterizations, so-called mask-acting, and other general indicators of performance approaches. The tradition is carried over not only in contemporary Filipino films but also in radio and television dramas or soap operas as well. To a particular aesthetic sense and taste—for example, the Western, idealist, Aristotelian aesthetic sense—these may be negative features, but not necessarily so. Fortunately for Filipino films of this mold, post-classical critical frameworks such as those of structuralism's "deep structure" and archetypal characters of myths and legends, as well as those of genre film studies that value film primarily as a site of a culture's ideology or dominant cultural values, have been more appreciative and accommodating of indigenous styles and aesthetic sense.

Of course, additional inspiration for indigenization (as Tiongson also points out) come from popular sources like history, folk narratives found in oral literary tradition and in the more contemporary comic book materials of fantasy and tales of the underworld, and even sensational human-interest stories found in the tabloids. They account for the increasing "Filipino-ness" of the content of local film stories that provided the counterflow to sheer imitations of Hollywood.

Toward a Future

Undoubtedly, Hollywood models have had tremendous impact and influence in Philippine cinema. It all proceeds from the economic model: filmmaking, as a commercial concern, developed through the years as its attendant industry engaged in the production, marketing, and distribution of consumable cultural artifacts made in a factorylike, assembly-line setup. Yet it is also a profound cultural activity that engages in the production and interpretation of meaning. Nowhere else is the dichotomy best exemplified more than in one of the features of mainstream filmmaking—genre films that involve both the studio- and star-systems. Genre films fulfill both economic and cultural functions, notably in a society's mythical imperatives embedded in narratives and symbolic images.

Hollywood has provided various models for local cinema along this line. We opted to study here the Filipino melodrama of the late

1950s, specifically two productions of Sampaguita Pictures, a major film studio of the era. We aimed to identify the accommodation as well as the resistance of Filipino melodramas of Hollywood models. The choices and the number of our subject films are both this study's focus as well as its limitations. The two subject films adopted many of the external conventions of the Hollywood model, notably the iconography. The same thing may be said of the genre's internal conventions, although it cannot be claimed that these features are completely and solely coming from Hollywood. Even before filmmaking technology came to the Philippines, Filipinos had had a long melodramatic tradition in their Hispanic-influenced theater and literature. Here, indigenization largely enters the picture. The tradition is carried over in present times not only in our theater and film but also in our television and radio dramas.

The question of ideology presents a similar case. Melodrama extols the virtues of capitalism as it reinforces the ideology of patriarchy and the bourgeois family. Yet it cannot be said that the ideological values are Hollywood imports. Rather they represent the long-lasting impact of the Filipino people's earlier historical colonial experience even prior to Hollywood's arrival in Filipino culture. Happily, specific cultural values raise their enlightened heads amid the negative impact of dominant ideologies. We particularly refer to the deferential regard for women despite the historical imposition of patriarchy. The attitude indicates largely the true position of women in native Filipino culture.

Appendix: A Family Tragedy

Sino'ngMaysala? starts with a grand party attended by guests in gowns and suits and tuxedos to celebrate the birthday of the family patriarch. The guests are jolted when they hear a gunshot—the celebrator had killed himself in the master bedroom. The lawyer-friend explains the reason for the suicide—he is bankrupt and has nothing else left but his house; the lawyer also accuses the wife and the daughters of extravagance.

Posthaste, Carmen vows to take over. She starts to sell the many pieces of jewelry that she had extravagantly collected over the years on her father's account, to continue sending her siblings to college. One sister is taking up Medicine and the other Law; the youngest, the brother, is about to graduate in high school. She is helped by a former boyfriend,

Roger, now married to a neurotic but filthy rich wife whom he had married for convenience after the family of Carmen rebuked and rejected him because of his social and economic status then.

Carmen's post-tragedy liaison with her former boyfriend becomes a gossip item and subsequently a widely circulated scandal, exacting a heavy toll on her siblings. Both Gloria and Lolita are left by their equally middle-class boyfriends, due to family pressure that warned both from "messing up" with a family of questionable moral values. While Gloria suffers in silence and merely waits for the boyfriend, Luis, to come back enlightened, Lolita decides to spite all mankind by playing around; she takes another boyfriend after Eddie.

Ironically, the new boyfriend Ric, who originally came from an impoverished family but made good after a sympathetic lawyer took him under his wings, is sincere and faithful. Ironically too, Ric, now a successful lawyer himself, becomes a good friend and protector of Bobby who has been involved in juvenile shenanigans as a result of his disgust with eldest sister Carmen's liaison with a married man. It was he who helped Bobby extricate himself from his troubles with the law, apparently an earlier, similar experience and favor that Ric is now repaying.

So thankful is Bobby to the young lawyer whom he does not know is his sister's boyfriend that when he accidentally reads the sister's diary, where she wrote of her true feelings for Ric, the brother self-righteously takes the side of the boyfriend and turns, in further disgust and mistrust of mankind, to more delinquencies that finally lead to his detention.

In court, Bobby pleads guilty, in defiance of his family's and lawyer's instructions. Each of the women in his family—from the mother to the sisters—subsequently plead guilty themselves over their youngest family member's errant behavior. In a final aria, the judge pontificates about the elders' responsibility to guide the youngsters properly

Komiks on Television: Reycling Pinoy Pulp Fiction

At the rate old stories from *komiks* [serialized graphic novels] are being rehashed for television drama material these days, one might suspect that the members of the creative staff of local television entertainment must have run out of fresh ideas, a disability which many of their detractors would speedily point out had always been there anyway. ABS-CBN started the ball rolling with its series of local pulp fiction "classics" featured in the program appropriately titled *Komiks* (Salud et al., dirs.). These materials had been adapted on the big screen, most of them a generation or so ago, many of them coming from the pen of Pablo S. Gomez (Luciano Carlos's *Inday Bote,* and *Inday, Inday sa Balitaw,* Mauro Gia Samonte's *Machete,* Lino Brocka's *Pasan Ko ang Daigdig).* A few of the PSG-authored classics had deserved grander treatment earlier in the form of drama series (Wenn V Deramas and Andoy Ranay's *Kampanerang Kuba,* Lino Cayetano et al.'s *Mga Anghel na Walang Langit),* or the eight-week episode of Eric Salud and Trina Dayrit's *Hiram na Mukha,* billed as a *sineserye* [film series]. A colleague of "Tito Pabs" in the komiks industry then, Carlo J. Caparas, had his *Panday* (Del Carmen and Natividad, dirs.) featured as a series on the same channel. The latter's *Bakekang* was also made into a drama series (Adalia and Tejada, dirs.) on GMA 7.

Recently concluded was another komiks-derived material, Francisco V Coching's *Pedro Penduko* [Trina Dayrit et al.'s *Da Adventures of Pedro Penduko*\. Other *sinenovelas* [film novels] (as they are called on GMA) currently showing are *Sinasamba Kita* (Lamangan, dir.) and *Pati Ba Pintig ng Puso?* (Tejada, dir.). And of course, currently running, too, is the romantic drama series starring Piolo Pascual and Claudine Barretto, which was originally

the Mike de Leon-directed *Hindi Nahahati ang Langit,* that now carries the title of the original film version's theme song, *Walang Kapalit* (Deramas, dir.). All of them were originally komiks materials subsequently adapted to the big screen.

Regarding the possible causes for the spate of komiks-to-TV adaptations, I would like to present a different take on the matter, a less mischievous one than the exhaustion of ideas on the part of creative staff members that I mentioned at first. First of all, our networks probably wish to introduce to younger generations the works of some of our komiks giants. It is about time that they be given the tribute that they deserve; they certainly have contributed much to Pinoy popular culture. But surely, no forms of recognition are forthcoming from judges of more "discriminating" artistic taste. (Francisco V Coching had been nominated for the National Artist Award several times but just as often ignored. Ramon Valera of Philippine haute couture was luckier; he made it after only a few nominations.)

A rehash of their works may suffice to betoken appreciation for their contributions. Despite the fact that in the present TV versions, the original authors may no longer recognize their work due to the adjustments and further adaptations (read: alterations) made to comply even more with the demands of the present audiences, the reruns are a gesture good enough for them, thank you. And then again, the token fees for authorship—and copyright ownership—coming from the networks may be another present-day blessing for an achievement in the glorious past, thank you again!

Undoubtedly, these rehashings capitalize on the popularity of the originals. For one, the komiks materials had earlier been adapted for the big screen; meaning, they had been box-office hits, attesting to their popular acceptance among Pinoys. There is a big chance that this present generation will also appreciate such material, not to mention the possibility that among those watching at home would be some now-older viewers who had enjoyed the original versions on widescreen a generation earlier. An element of nostalgia is involved here. More than that, however, is a clutch of several other significant reasons. Komiks stories or novels constitute a genre of popular literature. Previously ignored for serious study, popular literature is now investigated in higher institutions of learning side by side with classical literature, as people's theater is alongside

"legitimate" theater. Popular songs have likewise acquired the respectability formerly accorded to art songs and conservatory music.

The phenomenon is generally credited to the poststructural blurring of boundaries between high or fine art, on the one hand, and popular art and culture, on the other, among the many other distinctions that have now been erased between former dichotomies. But even before that, the value of these popular genres had already been emphasized in academe by structuralists. In literature, especially regarding narratives, we are indebted to two scholars, the Belgian-born French social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and the Russian Vladimir Propp. The former studied the folk narratives of Native Americans, the latter the fairy tales of his culture, and both came up with similar conclusions. Except for some small details that may have varied, all the narratives that they investigated were structurally the same. There are opposites or contending forces—binaries—that initially opposed each other, poised to collide, then toward the end either they reconciled or else one would prevail over the other, this time with less tension.

The binary oppositions become clearer with a listing of some examples: man : woman, old : young, law and order : wilderness and lawlessness, white : black, rich : poor, schooled : unschooled. And the expectation that these opposites will eventually reconcile is the mythical wish. When a story ends with such reconciliation, then it is said to have performed or fulfilled its mythical function to the satisfaction of the reader. The readers (and viewers) all feel safer, even if only in our narratives, assured that strong contending forces will not collide but will instead eventually reconcile, and we will be protected from annihilation. And there is usually a pronounced moral lesson at the end, often reinforcing prevalent cultural values.

Perhaps there is no longer any need to explain why in the komiks or genre films (mainstream, commercial) it is possible for the good to tame the bad or the wild, for a housemaid to be loved by the family scion, for a man and a woman to end up together in marriage despite seemingly irreconcilable differences. Have you counted the genre films or soap operas that ended with a wedding scene? Happy ending, *di ba?* All our komiks, soap operas, and genre films—as arc myths, legends, ethno-epics, biblical parables, Victorian novels, and morality plays—arc productive sites for the study of our dominant cultural values, our

ideologies good or bad, worth perpetuating or requiring immediate rejection and change. These popular genres, unlike those works deemed more artistic and thought-provoking, carry the vision not just of one prophetic artist or writer but of the whole community, whose collective vision may be just as prophetic and which may find wider social or community resonance.

And have you noticed the way these narratives come back to us again and again, like the pulp fictions now being rehashed on local TV? Maybe we cannot just dismiss them as telltale signs of the paucity of our authors' imagination and creativity, or as stubborn redundancies, or even simply as nostalgia. Perhaps at this point, we can borrow and paraphrase the metaphor for myths and archetypes by some scholars, notably by Carl Jung, his students and followers, and Joseph Campbell: formed and shaped as riverbeds by the rains and streams in one historical epoch, they may have eventually dried up, only to be filled up again by the rains and streams of a succeeding epoch. They are templates and molds to be filled up again and again, each time updated with fresh insights.

So next time you switch TV channels and are confronted with komiks and *fantasya,* why not stay tuned for a while? There may be more to see than what our preconceived notions and biases tend to cover up. We might see more of ourselves, our values, our culture, in the context of present realities and tensions.

3 Releases

1 - BORROWED STANDARDS: *HIRAM NA MUKHA*

Joel Lamangan's *Hiram na Mukha* (Viva Films, 1992) is a fine example of an effective adaptation of a komiks material to film, especially as addressed to contemporary audiences. It adopts key features of the original medium, innovates with techniques and styles of the second, and comes up with an updated genre sample of komiks melodrama. Moreover, it enables contemporary film critics to employ critical standards that are more relevant and attuned to Filipino culture.

Hiram na Mukha was originally a graphic novel by Pablo S. Gomez, serialized in *Filipino Komiks*. It is typical komiks material—melodramatic and characterized by a seemingly implausible and unrealistic plot and populated with stereotypical characters. It tells the story of Clarissa (Nanette Medved), born with simian facial features much like her mother (Daria Ramirez), with whom she appears in a freak show at a local fairground to eke out a living. They live in an unsympathetic if not downright hostile neighborhood led by a *capitana* (Lorli Villanueva) with a cacique mentality, and her similarly minded daughter (Cherry Pie Picache), who stones their house to harass them into leaving their community. The normal-looking parent and child disapprove of the freakish mother and daughter's physical looks—they call the latter *mga unggoy* or monkeys—and blame them for the misfortunes that seem to have befallen the community (as it turns out, they were driven away from another village for similar reasons).

There are a few enlightened characters who are more sympathetic to the mother and daughter's plight, starting with the grandmother (Caridad Sanchez), who stoically bears the insults and humiliations heaped upon her daughter and granddaughter and who provides a

Nanette Medved and Daria Ramirez in *Hiram na Mukha.*

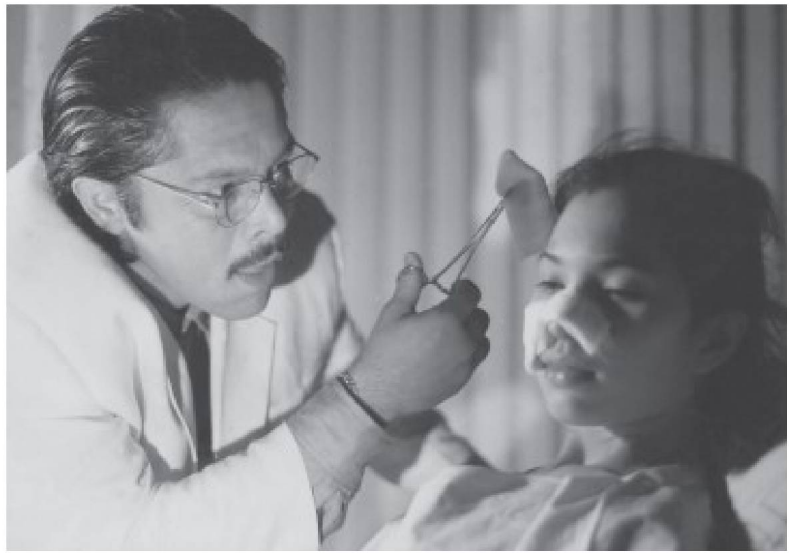
Photo courtesy of Viva Films through the assistance of Joel Lamangan.

shoulder for her granddaughter, who often laments and questions their fate, to cry on. Among the sympathetic neighbors are Medel (Cesar Montano), a mysterious young Ilongo native who stays with an uncle (Ray Ventura), another shoulder for Clarissa to cry on; and a prostitute (Lucita Soriano) with a heart of gold. In fact, the latter takes mother, daughter, and grandmother to her shack in an isolated lot that apparently serves as a reservation-sanctuary for the community's misfits and outcasts after a violent confrontation between the mother-and-daughter tandem and the rest of the neighborhood.

Making their situation worse, the mother contracts acute tuberculosis, forcing her daughter to seek gainful employment. But as soon as Clarissa uncovers her hideous lower face, prospective employers declare no vacancy. Fortunately, at least for the development of the plot, a lecherous nightclub owner takes notice of Clarissa's shapely figure. He offers her a stint in his joint—after she consents to undress and show him her figure right there and then. She is then hired as a mysterious temptress who covers her face with fabulous masks as she dances before the club's

nocturnal customers. Among the latter is an eccentric doctor (Christopher de Leon), actually a cosmetic surgeon bearing mad-scientist characteristics and voice, who takes pride in transforming faces of insecure damsels tortured by what they think Mother Nature had inadequately provided them with. He offers Clarissa a deal and she grabs at the rare opportunity that suddenly comes her way. With the help of the mad doctor, Clarissa turns into a beauty so ravishing that the doctor himself falls in love with his creation. But the physical transformation takes an initial toll. Clarissa's mother passes away without seeing her daughter's new mien, precipitated by the neighbors' final inhuman act of setting their house on fire. Posthaste, the bereaved daughter takes the hostile neighbors to task for their inhumanity and reveals her true identity. She also throws at them some paper bills after which everyone scampers, showing the superior position she now holds over them.

The doctor invites his Galatea for a vacation in his private resort island. The grandmother and Medel, who turns out to be a long-lost godson of the doctor, tag along with them. Initially receiving Clarissa



Christopher de Leon and Nanette Medved in *Hiram na Mukha.*

Photo courtesy of Viva Films through the assistance of Joel Lamangan.

with condescension are the doctor's trusted caretakers, a couple (Rosemarie Gil and Dante Rivero) and their daughter (Maritoni Fernandez), the doctor's erstwhile paramour; the threesome secretly covet the doctor's properties, so they later plot against Clarissa whom they fear might eventually inherit the doctor's wealth. Clarissa, who now answers to the name Alicia, rises to the challenge: she shows that pangs and claws she has too. Using her power and influence over the doctor whom she agrees to marry, she manages to discredit her nemeses and cause them to fall from the doctor's grace. Clarissa turns monstrous, in fact, after she acquires physical beauty, prompting her grandmother to leave her with her benefactor after giving her erstwhile humble and unassuming ward a piece of her mind.

Meanwhile, Clarissa agrees to marry her Pygmalion but clandestinely carries an affair with her true love Medel, to whom she discloses her true identity. Medel himself has a personal agenda: all along he wanted to exact vengeance against the doctor who earlier caused the separation of his parents and the subsequent death of his father after the latter discovered the doctor and his wife in bed. The doctor's comeuppance occurs when he finds himself in a similar situation with his godson and his Galatea whom he catches in the act of making love. The doctor still decides to proceed with the wedding ceremony, which he uses to turn the table on the unsuspecting lovers. During the ritual, he discloses what he knows and makes the young lovers run for their lives as he hounds them like game during open season. The hunt ends in a duel between the doctor and his godson, who subsequently wins the match and marries Clarissa, now humbled and remorseful enough for a change of character.

If one looks for realism or naturalism as found in most /Xmerican films, or for subtlety and introspection typical of character-oriented European films, one would not find such qualities here. As mentioned earlier, Pablo S. Gomez's *Hiram na Mukha* consists of typical komiks material—convoluted, seemingly implausible and unrealistic plot; two-dimensional characters; and situations highly charged with baroque outpourings of emotion and sentimentality. It is these characteristics of komiks material that stop serious filmmakers from tackling such adaptations on the big screen which, rightly or not, has been regarded as a medium for realism. These types of stories arc supposedly just not realistic enough;

they are too loud, too blatant. In the hands, however, of Joel Lamangan, whose *Hiram na Mukha* is his third feature, the material becomes a valid and challenging subject for exploration and experimentation. The director transcends the limitations inherent in the conventions of the komiks as a genre. In fact, he maximizes its potential by exploiting its very weakness. Toward this end, he employs two strategies: ride along but assume a sardonic tone, effecting a reflexive, critical stance; and update the form by employing techniques of contemporary cinema, largely of American influence.

Let us take Lamangan's first strategy, the use of parody. Komiks material tends toward exaggeration, but in *Hiram na Mukha.* Lamangan pushes this quality to the hilt. The opening sequences set the tone and temper of the whole film. The people's reactions to the apelike mother and daughter are gross exaggerations; they simply are too cruel and inhuman in their perpetually choleric stance against their hideous neighbors. Characters do not talk, they shout with indescribable abandon. Succeeding sequences reinforce the director's treatment and style. In scenes that are consistently intense and urgent, the performances are uniformly passionate and high-strung, even for the comparatively sedate and subtle Cesar Montano as Medel. Christopher de Leon courageously and confidently delivers his lines an octave lower at one time and on another at a maximal degree of intensity; underscoring the mad-scientist quality of his character. Apparently, the actor had been aware and was convinced of the director's stylistic treatment, enough to risk his reputation as a "fine" dramatic actor. Meanwhile, Nanette Medved performs as a radio talent would.

It is not only in the performance that one notices the exaggeration. Production design, specifically costume-dressing, makes a good illustration. For instance, Nanette Medved in the scene where Clarissa returns to the slum area after her cosmetic surgery, and upon learning that her mother has died, wears a chic scarlet dress complete with matching red stiletto-heeled shoes and a wide-brimmed hat that would put to shame any sun baffler modern architecture has ever devised. Still another: the beauteous, post-operation Medved character rides a white stallion wearing an ankle-length gown—red again in one scene, and silky-white in another—risking life and limb in case the stallion gets overly excited over the goddess who had mounted it. But if we talk of the visualization

of transformation and personification of physical beauty, then the costume design makes sense—on an expressionistic level.

Actually expressionism and formalism, rather than realism, is apparently the style most appropriate for this material. As demonstrated in *Hiram na Mukha,* the style gives the treatment of scenes a sardonic tone, a reflexive stance. By exaggerating the already exaggerated, the director pokes fun at and becomes critical of his own work as well as the conventions of the komiks melodrama. In effect, the film becomes black comedy—if we were to insist on using Western aesthetic concepts and standards. The expressionistic style employed, moreover, opened to the director a wide range of possibilities for mise-en-scène and semiotics as tools to enrich his scenes, and for the film audiences and critics to interpret particular scenes on levels and in registers other than the obvious and superficial.

A second strategy which Lamangan uses in his experimentation is the adoption of the techniques of contemporary cinema, largely Hollywood's. First, the storytelling structure. While local komiks stories are generally narrated in linear fashion, they do not necessarily follow the clear-cut three-act structure. In fact, most komiks stories—and local-movie narratives for that matter—consist of more than three acts—a fact that explains why their plots are often convoluted! While the three-act structure of storytelling was originally propounded by Aristotle in his *Poetics*^ it was the American screen playwright Syd Field who updated the canon for narrative writers for the visual medium in the paradigm named after him (cf. *The Screenwriter's Workbook).* Accordingly, the three-act structure would need an active protagonist or main character who has a clear objective—she knows what she wants and the plot follows her as she pursues her objective until she either wins it or loses it, thereby marking the end of the narrative. Thus what we recognize as plot is actually the narrative trajectory of how a character wins or loses her objective.

By adopting the principle behind the three-act structure, Lamangan and his screen playwright Ronald Carballo successfully give the audience a clear-cut, well-defined story, weeding out the clutter that characterizes a komiks novel. While subplots have been retained, they are contained within the three acts of the story. The Syd Field paradigm gives the dramatic context of each act: Act 1 is the setup where the writer establishes the protagonist, her problem, and what she decides to do about her problem.

The problem constitutes the main character's objective and the perceived stumbling block toward the accomplishment of the objective. The block is called the antagonist, which may take the form of a person, a number of characters, or a place, an object, nature, the main character herself, or a condition or situation. Act 1, therefore, establishes not only the protagonist and her objective but the main conflict as well.

Act 2, also called the conflict, dramatizes how the protagonist hurdles her stumbling blocks in deeds that result in little victories or defeats. Sometimes the second act is called complication, for the blocks increase in size, number, and complexity, and the main character's struggle escalates. Act 3 demonstrates how the protagonist makes a crucial decision about what to do with her problem after surmounting—or being heavily battered by—her obstacles, a decision which will end in her final victory or defeat. Significant in the Syd Field paradigm is the strongly prescribed proportion of acts: Act 1 should constitute the first quarter of the entire story, Act 2 the next half, and Act 3 the last quarter.

Hiram na Mukha follows the linear approach of storytelling but not the three-act structure as prescribed in the Syd Field paradigm. Clarissa's problem of acceptability of her physical looks in her own psyche and in her relationship with her neighbors that prompts her to will a transformation of her looks constitutes the first act; it ends when she acquires physical beauty and takes her hostile neighbors to task. Act 2 comprises the transformation of both her manners (to conform to the ways of higher society) as well as of her character, including her secret liaison with Medel. At the end of the act, the mad doctor discovers the affair. Act 3 comprises the doctor's disclosure of his knowledge about his Galatea's unfaithfulness during the wedding ceremony up to the duel between him and his godson and Clarissa's realization of her folly.

Counterpointing the development of Clarissa's story is that of Medel: his motive for coming to Manila is suggested in Act 1, fully disclosed in Act 2, and his vengeance against his godfather finally implemented in Act 3. Even the story of the doctor, who is shown as the antagonist through all three acts, is plotted within the dramatic contexts of the movies' acts: Act 1 establishes his stature in the field of science as well as his super-objective—to create a paragon of physical beauty using his skills in cosmetics surgery; Act 2 shows him transforming not only the physical attributes of his creation but her manners and character as well;

and Act 3 shows how he punishes an errant creature of his. The development of the main story as well as of the principal subplots, therefore, is effected through the classical linear structure.

Hiram na Mukha departs from the Syd Field paradigm, however, in that the prescribed proportion is not followed: Acts 1 and 2 are more or less similar in length, and the final act is made an apparent but nonetheless important appendage—the consequence of all actions that precede it; in other words, still the resolution which is dramatized in one extended sequence. Because of this, the structure of the film may be considered as comprising only two acts. Nonetheless, the plot twists and turns are kept neat and clear-cut, unlike the typically convoluted melodrama plotting that tends to branch out in different directions.

Aside from the structure, Lamangan uses devices that keep contemporary audiences awake and interested. Editing is brisk, incidents joined with gripping urgency. The introduction and disclosure of Medel's back story uses flashbacks with strong psychoanalytic imagery. Morever, there are a few Freudian images of eroticism and sexual deviance that add spice to characterization and storytelling. With *Hiram na Mukha,* Lamangan proves to the critics of komiks that material of this sort can be made interesting and updated for contemporary local movie audiences. In fact, in one of my classes at St. Scholastica's College some years ago, 1 showed the film in connection with a discussion of semiotics. To my pleasant surprise, the class of young ladies, most of whom came from the middle and upper-middle class, who were largely condescending toward both local komiks and melodrama, said that the film sustained their attention and interest. Lamangan's exploration and experimentation had succeeded, apparently.

Exploring Other Critical Frameworks for the Film Narrative

What Lamangan did in *Hiram na Mukha* was adapt the komiks storytelling structure, as well as characters and characterization, to conform to the linear structure of most Hollywood films. Taking the cue from some basic conventions of komiks material, in addition, he exaggerated some elements to make the film parodic. While this is a fine example of creative transformation of komiks material for more critical contemporary audiences, I feel that there was no need to do so. Komiks is genre material; *Hiram na Mukha,* specifically, is a komiks melodrama subgenre of popular

literature that takes after two earlier literary genres, the biblical morality tale and the folktale with its own moral lessons and folk wisdom securely in place. Being so, the material can be appreciated and evaluated more appropriately by using genre-analysis frameworks rather than standards that had evolved from some literary canons of Western origin. To use the latter, in fact, may lead us unfairly to the conclusion that komiks material is inherently inadequate, if not outright inferior and pedestrian (this one stems from a failure to appreciate the nature of the material).

Film genre study, even in the West, is a late development in critical scholarship. It started only in the 1950s, specifically as an attempt to create some critical frameworks for the study of the western and the musical—two genres largely associated with Hollywood, although in the case of the musical, its beginnings can be traced neither to American cinema nor to its theater. Hollywood films—the most popular worldwide among national cinemas especially after the Second World War and, therefore, too ubiquitous to be ignored—are mostly generic, rather than the type of works with distinct personal imprints of individual film geniuses that dominated the critical limelight of European or European-influenced film critics steeped in auteurism.

Ironically, the fetish for the auteur led to genre studies, for certainly, how can any self-respecting film critic ignore the works of John Ford, an exponent of the American western, for example, or those European filmmakers who emigrated to Hollywood like Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, Max Ophuls, Vincente Minnelli, and later Douglas Sirk? (The latter in fact had been the subject of many a genre study on the American melodrama such as *All That Heaven Allows, Imitation of Life,* and *Written on the Wind,* to mention a few.)

Simply put, genre films are the popular films which most audiences patronize. They are classified according to thematic and narrative types and iconographic conventions to facilitate distribution and market segmentation, or niche marketing efforts, in today's parlance. Commercial in their production intent, they are addressed to the mass market and not to any specific, discerning class or segment of audiences fortunate enough to be exposed to academically revered canons of literature. But alas, even the mass market is not as monolithic but is rather segmented. Audiences may not be discriminating but this is not to say that they are not culturally informed—as a matter of fact they arc, although they may

not be aware of this "qualification" nor are they able to articulate what they think and feel like critics and educated audience members do.

The audiences for genre films watch the same film types over and again, for these films generally reinforce closely held cultural values and serve certain ideological functions. The musical extols the ideal of marriage or heterosexual union, as the romantic or screwball comedy does, and in addition, the sense of community and of capitalism; the western justifies the conquest of frontier lands or the wilderness for progress and civilization; the gangster upholds social mobility through hard work and personal aptitude at the same time that it condemns crime and lawlessness; science fiction warns us about the danger of science and technology when not harnessed toward pro-human ends.

The principal tool for genre analysis is the concept of the binary oppositions of the mid-twentieth-century intellectual movement referred to as structuralism, which claimed that societies and cultures can be studied through an analysis of its basic structures. In a particular society, accordingly, there will be contending forces or opposites, such as: good vs. bad; old vs. young; male vs. female; nature vs. culture; etc. Further, in the study of folktales or primitive literatures of traditional cultures, some structuralist anthropologists like Claude Levi-Strauss have found out that these stories had a common structure—the presence of binary opposites—and hence called this the deep structure of stories that seemed to be universal.

Another concept relevant to this study is the so-called mythical function of genre films. According to this concept, as members of a society, we are apprehensive of the presence of the forces that contend in our midst, so that somehow we wish that they would eventually reconcile to bring us peace and stability. Hence the happy endings of stories and the moral lessons gained as insights. "Moral lessons" are actually reinforcements of deeply held cultural values, whether right or wrong. Patriarchy as a dominant cultural value in many societies readily comes to mind. This has become an ideology, in fact, that extols the dominance of the male over the female.

Genre films are said to be the site of these cultural values and ideologies. And herein lies the importance of studying genre films. Expressed in the mythical wishful thought required by a genre film, this reconciliation of contending forces precedes all other considerations in

the appreciation of a film—over those, in fact, of aesthetic qualities, which in the first place are a matter of cultural predisposition and pedagogical exposure and influence mostly coming from the West. Besides, even the canons of Western aesthetics have been questioned by postmodern thinking that brings to the surface hitherto marginalized voices, the very same ones we ought to be able not just to recognize, but to celebrate.

2 - SQUALOR & SALVATION: *KUBRADOR*

Jueteng in the Philippines is a numbers game, a lottery, a game of chance. But while such games abound in the country, this one has figured prominently in recent Philippine political history. The immediate past president of the Republic was ousted through people power. Among the charges of high-placed corruption in his government, this leader and a son of his, who now sits as a senator in the Upper House of the Philippine Legislature, had been accused of receiving bribe money to ensure the continuous operation of the numbers game, which constitutes illegal gambling in the country.

Gina Pareno in *Kubrador*.

Photo courtesy of MLR Films' Attorney Joji Alonso.

The ousted president's constitutional successor, initially perceived to be unassailable as she apparently stood on higher moral ground, ironically found herself just a few years later in a similarly scandalous situation, also along with some members of her immediate family, including a son who this time sits as a congressman in the Lower House. The situation has led to a politically beleaguered presidency well into the present.

Some Philippine authorities believe that this numbers game should be made legal, since gambling has been deeply entrenched anyway in Filipino culture. Besides, it provides a source of livelihood to the numerous unemployed, especially in the countryside. Jueteng persists, open secrets disclose, because it is not only tolerated but even perpetuated by the collusion among several parties concerned—the national as well as local officials and politicians; the police, also local and national; and the predominantly impoverished majority of the populace who find employment as collectors and checkers.

Whenever the jueteng issue heats up, raids and apprehensions are staged—temporarily. These token gestures are made to appease those who disapprove of the illegal common person's lottery, notably some bishops and archbishops. "Some" because allegedly a good number of church officials are also beneficiaries of jueteng money conveniently at hand to bankroll Christian charity projects! At the base of this nationwide, deeply entrenched gambling operation are of course the Filipino folks and masses who place their bets, ranging from as low as a measly peso to as high as several hundreds or even thousands. The stakes may be high, for some winnings can go up to tens and hundreds of thousands of pesos, depending on one's bet or investment. Certainly this constitutes an irresistible come-on for people whose only weapon against abject poverty and lack of opportunities in life is a folk-sensical hope that to the more privileged may appear to be nothing but sheer folly and misplaced optimism.

If ever other bishops frown upon the game, it is because they know the scam behind such activities: operators collect small money from the poor, which add up to quite a fortune, and they then run away with the bulk of the money and leave slim pickings to the unsuspecting bettors (or if the latter are aware, they wouldn't mind as long as they have the chance to augment their subsistent family incomes). Everybody gets rich—

the operators and their cohorts in high places—all except the poor folk who are appeased with token, once-in-a-blue moon small winnings.

This is the sociopolitical context of Jeffrey Jeturian's *Kubrador.* The title refers to Amelita or Amy, a postmenopausal wife to an inutile but solicitous husband who seems to have abdicated his role of taking charge of his family and household, and mother to adult children who still turn to her for financial help and family upkeep. She collects the bets and places them at the table of the hench- or frontmen of a Big Operator who is never seen in daily operation and whose identity oftentimes is top secret. They may be the townspeople's favorite *politico* or a top law enforcer, who knows?

Although Jeturian's film is a composite story of lesser lives, of the sacrificial children of jueteng rather than the perpetrators who make a big killing each time, it defies plot-oriented retelling. It simply follows the film's protagonist (excellently portrayed with great sincerity and sensitivity by Gina Pareño) as she goes through her daily routine of collecting bets and winnings on behalf of her clientele, bailing out an apprehended neophyte collector, bribing a police officer, collecting contributions on the side for the wake and burial of neighbors who recently died, and transacting sundry businesses with practically her whole neighborhood, whose members seem to accord her respect and affection.

Rising action is not what makes the film engaging, in fact. It is the film's visual and aural textures that tell all on several levels, from the micro-story of a lowly slum-dweller valiantly struggling for survival, or of a bereaved family lamenting the senseless death of their recent college graduate, their only hope to lead them in their escape from a life of wretchedness, to the macro-tale of a society steeped in corruption and injustice, where superstition becomes the people's only means of clinging to sanity and salvation. The film is replete with subtle potshots at foibles every ordinary Filipino is familiar with, reminiscent of examples and situations recently heard over the radio, shown in television, or read in sensationalist tabloids.

The film presents an acid-etched portrait of a strong-willed woman of great strength and endurance as the centerpiece of a societal mural embellished by details of squalor, depression, inequality, yet also of faith and hope that are almost mystical and divine. The filmmaker's treatment of his material is a most appropriate fusion, on the one hand, of the

stark reality of social realism, rendered in approximately reflexive documentary style (long takes of handheld shots, cinematography and production design that simulate rawness and crudeness, spontaneous interaction among actors devoid of artifice and self-consciousness); and on the other, the atmosphere of magic realism as images of unrelenting hope that things will soon turn out for the better, and unconditional faith in the supernatural, constantly supplicated and oftentimes obligingly protective of those who have completely surrendered their fate unto its hands.

A few quarters have said that this film is Jeffrey Jeturian's best to date. We wouldn't put it that way. Oftentimes, he sinks his teeth into genres he had not tried before, employing unconventional styles each time. And each time, too, he makes sure to delve deeply into his well-selected materials.

3 - THE SMORGASBORD TASTE OF THE FILIPINO *MASA: ANG CUTE NG INA MO*

Are you amazed at how local stars promote their latest movie on TV? Or how pleased customers endorse the movie that they have just watched? *"Ang ganda-ganda! May iyakan, tawanan, kantahan at sayawan"*™ they would enthuse, enjoining the public to watch a particular title. No wonder Star Cinema's *Ang Cute ng Ina Mo* has made a killing at the box-office. It is an explosion of colors and textures not only in terms of its location, props, and costumes but also in the performance of an all-star cast and in the genres that the movie mixes. In sight and sound you get assaulted from all directions.

Mind you, these are not pejorative comments, since after all, the movie got a B rating from the overly generous Film Ratings Board; besides, *"marami rin pong aral na mapupulot dito"* [many lessons can be gleaned from this product], as folks would say. Honestly now, I enjoyed watching the film; it gave me some insights into what the state of Pinoy taste may be and why it is so. The Pinoy is fond of seeing things plentifully and colorfully. It must be the deeply rooted influence of fiestas, which in themselves also comprise an explosion of sight and sound. The extent

[13]"How wonderful! [The movie] has tears, laughter, singing and dancing."

of one's gaze should always be filled up: no empty space, please! And this has influenced the way we decorate our living rooms, where walls are punctuated with photographs of members of our extended families and framed diplomas of the children; or consider the family altar, where images of saints proliferate like mushroom, with candles and flowers to boot. In due time, too, the altar would enshrine the ashes of one's dear departed contained in ornate urns.

The filled-up-space aesthetic is also seen in Maranaw carvings of florid vegetation, as in the Mardi Gras-inspired parades and street dances in Panay, in the Pahiyas harvest festival in Quezon Province, in the rococo-baroque architecture of the Hispanic colonial churches up North, or on the jeepney chassis when Sarao Motors was still lording over their manufacture. Art critic Emmanuel Torres calls these instances evidence of horror vacui, the fear of empty space. Maybe the Pinoy's collective experience of perennial deprivation and want also had something to do with this. Maybe she feels more secure to see filled-up space, as this augurs a season of harvest and plenty at last!

It isn't surprising therefore, especially when it comes to dining, that the Pinoy should behold abundance on the table—heaven's answer to her long, long season of drought. To the common person, whether eating in a *carinderia* or partaking in a fiesta, the more the merrier, even though to her more affluent cousin fine-dining at a five-star hotel, less is more! To the gourmet, it wouldn't be good for the taste buds if a variety of dishes were to be taken in one sitting: "One at a time and chew your food slowly, all the more to savor the fine taste," the typical Pinoy is admonished.

But the common Pinoy is different; her mouth is more accommodating, tongue more curious, palate and taste buds more versatile, eyes more insatiable. She cannot be satisfied with just one particular flavor. Although she takes into her mouth one viand after another at split-second intervals, the Pinoy knows that they will eventually blend in her digestive system. So why observe any particular order of consumption? Why should soup be taken to start a meal as the Westerners do, when in the traditional Chinese *lauriat,* it i[s] served midway during the meal as rice is served toward the end? In fact to the Pinoy at home, the soup is mixed with the rice on his plate from the very start—rice and the VAT-free noodle soup. *"Sab aw na, ulam pa!"* [Soup also functions as viand!]

When it comes to entertainment, the Pinoy is similarly awed by exuberance. She prefers her favorite television show to be a mixture of song-and-dance routines, with comedy skits, games of all types, and mini-beauty contests thrown in. Similarly, in the movies that she watches, the Pinoy looks not only for what would make her cry but also those that would make her laugh, dance, and sing. It would be better if she would be a little scared too, or if a little stunt and action routine would rev up the blood circulation of her husband and son, in addition. The more genres are mixed, the more the Pinoy feels she gets back what she has paid for.

Still wondering why many of our foods are mix-matched as is our favorite *merienda* or dessert, the *halo-halo?* Again, the fiesta eclecticism. Chop suey, *bulanglang diningding, pinakbet, sapin-sapin* and *guinataan*^ make up the impressive list of gastronomic evidence pointing out the truly eclectic Pinoy taste, as the corner *sari-sari* [variety] store further confirms. Truth is, our culture and history are such, to start with—a multiethnic population, multiracial colonial masters, multicultural consciousness. And because the Pinoy is multi-this and multi-that, her taste is necessarily eclectic, although the more sophisticated and learned among us are like the Westerners, who swear by the principles of consistency and minimalism, and are believers in restraint and control, as in their literary works or visual arts.

Ah, yes, that's because the Pinoys also have multiple identities! And in our eclecticism, we are unconsciously postmodern. We do have the penchant for blurring boundaries as well, but that's another topic altogether.

[14] *Bulanglang, diningding,* and *pinakbet* are variations on regional recipes that feature a wide array of bitter vegetables, some of which include blossoms and tubers. *Sapin-sapin* and *guinataan* are rice-flour-based desserts, the first dry and layered *{sapin),* the second served with starchy' produce and coconut milk *{gata).*

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Blending Commerce with Craft: Metro Manila Film Festival 2000

Many local cinema watchers agree that the entries in the 2000 Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) constitute the best crop we have had since 1976, when Eddie Romero's *Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?,* Lupita Aquino's *Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo,* and Lino Brocka's *Insiang*—now all considered classics of Philippine cinema—were first shown simultaneously to local audiences. This is true only to a certain extent, however, because considerations of commerce always come into play in every festival.

The MMFF cannot afford to exhibit only films of high aesthetic merit and integrity, contrary to the most fervent prayers of those who regard film seriously. Highly commercial films most often find their way into the final list of official festival entries. The politics is that of postcolonial survival: the festival must rake in the money lest lobbyists for American films convince theater owners and bookers to pressure city legislators to give up the festival slot, which is timed with the season when lots of spare leisure money circulate in the target market. To ensure earnings, the MMFF therefore has to be mora-oriented.

The masa, in the abstract, determined the choice of subjects: family drama for *Tanging Taman* and *Sugatang Puso',* prison exposé for *Deathrow',* youth horror-shockers for *Spirit Warriors',* gay Dolphy for *Markova: Comfort Gay,* this time with two of his sons also in drag; and finally, the bio-flick of a controversial real-life crime buster for *PingLacson: Super Cop.* All popular genres, in addition, were represented, at times in combination: action-drama *{Deathrowp,* comedy-drama *{Markova)',* family melodramas *{Tanging Taman* and *Sugatang Puso)',* and finally, two fantasy films—*Spirit Warriors,* horror-suspense-comedy; and *Ping Lacson,* action—fairy tale.

What made the commercial entries of the festival stand out, however, was cinematic craft. Local cinema has indeed taken big strides in postproduction craft and technology, although practitioners themselves lament that we are still several notches behind most film-producing countries due to the perennially limited budget and lack of state-of-the-art equipment. Happily, production values—uniformly high in all festival entries, even for "small" films like *Sugatang Puso*—were of festival quality and gave no indication of budgetary scrimping. Although the choice of subjects was masa, the filmmakers wanted to say something significant about these same subjects.

Spirit Warriors, a film about spirit questing among a group of private-school students interested in photography, is a showcase of technical capability and fine cinematic craftsmanship. The film is a landmark local achievement in special effects, unlike in many earlier local fantasy and horror movies. Through the use of hair-raising visuals that are as beautiful and dynamic as they are scary, Chito Roño and his cast succeed tremendously in their goal of simply setting out to entertain their audience, judging from the uproar of screams and laughter inside the movie houses. Never mind the hodgepodge of cinematic influences—Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* Pcque Gallaga and Lore Reyes's *Once Upon a Time,* and M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense.* The next time around, we wish that Roño would sink his teeth deeper into more substantial fare.

Ping Lacson: Super Cop wants us to know more about the man, a controversial national fĩgure, crimebuster by profession but himself accused of crime. Implicated in a police rubout in the celebrated Kuratong Baleleng case, he and his men were brought to court and subsequently acquitted. Heavily plot-oriented, the film tells the protagonist's story in nonstop, fast-paced action scenes that occur in ten-minute intervals, depicting Lacson's crime-busting operations. The Kuratong Baleleng case is glossed over so that at film's end, the topic remains as inscrutable as when the film started. We see not the man but only the superhero. In effect, the film ends up an episodic contemporary fairy tale meant to mythologize both the subject, Ping Lacson, and the actor, Rudy Fernandez, both of whom announced plans to run for public office during the forthcoming elections.

Jose Javier Reyes's *Sugatang Puso* is a small family drama, with a simple, straightforward plot that resolves even before the viewer could finish her popcorn. It tries to probe deep into the relations between estranged couples (Christopher de Leon and Cherie Gil, whose characters had a premarital relation that bore them a child) and estranged parents and their child (played by De Leon and Gil on the one hand, and Patrick Garcia on the other), as well as between total strangers drawn into a superficial filial intimacy by force of a subsequent marriage (the new wife, played by Lorna Tolentino, and the Patrick Garcia character, who comes to live with them, along with the wife's son from a previous marriage, played by Carlo Aquino). Although the film is as small-scale as a living-room drama for television, it is nonetheless disarmingly heartwarming and sensitive. It is marred in some parts, however, by inadequate shot coverage—as in, for example, the scene where the De Leon and Tolentino characters discover that it is the latter's son who got killed in the street-gang shootout and not his. The actors' blocking and the corresponding shot make it improbable for the wife to see her husband's facial expression (he was visibly relieved), so that we are surprised to hear her remark later how she could not forget his reaction when he realized that it was not his son who had died.

Grander themes and directorial vision animate the rest of the festival entries. Gil Portes's *Markova: Comfort Gay* centers on the confession, in an interview conducted by a popular broadcaster, of an aging gay choreographer-makeup artist, a real-life character. During the war, he and his other gay friends were forced to render sexual service to weary Japanese soldiers. The main dramatic problem of *Markova* is credibility. Another, closely related to the former, is the repression of truth. Throughout his life, most especially when he was first professing his sexuality, the narrative commends the gay character for being true to himself. Curiously, no one seems willing to believe what he says thereafter. His pronouncements are always held suspect—all because of his sexual orientation. This observation is articulated somewhere at the end of the film, like an afterthought, after the broadcaster has interviewed Markova. Worse, it seems to function as a veiled rejoinder by the fĩlmmakers themselves, who apparently have difficulty believing their own material. The issue should have been brought out of the aging gays' dormitory and dramatized in the skeptical world outside, to provide the needed

dramatic focus in contextualizing the three episodes of Markova's life. The narrative is instead told in thematically loose episodes that merely divide the gay character's life in three chronological stages, interjected with Q&A sessions during an interview that takes place in the historical present. The stages comprise his youth, including repression and liberation; his adulthood, showing his flowering and "defloration" as a wartime comfort person; and his maturity, including his contemplation and reflection on the past. Given this structure and context, the storytelling becomes largely traditional, expository, and predictable, and as a result, one is prompted to ask rhetorically at the end of the narrative: so what? What insight does his story give us? In all three stages of his life, Markova—because of his gay nature—had a problem of credibility in various forms compounded with a resultant repression of the truth about himself. Finally, uninspired visualization contributes to the film's failure in revving up the bland and conventional story structure. One misses the visual rendition of the flamboyance, irreverence, and taunting levity that characterize the gay world.

Joel Lamangan's *Deathrow* has bigger intentions—to expose the appalling penitentiary conditions on death row and, in effect, the criminal justice system in the country. The film does this by recounting the myriad tales of inmates who pine away while awaiting execution, and of corrupt prison officials who connive with incarcerated big fish and henchmen to push drugs inside the maximum-security compound. The film's centerpiece story is that of a minor thrown into death row for his participation in an armed burglary-cum-murder committed by restless, adventurous youths against a neighborhood grandma. Unequivocally pro-life, the film has a powerful conviction and thesis: no youth should be thrown into prison, much less sent to death row, since to do so is to consign fragile bodies and souls to a living hell where people are at their worst. Unfortunately, the film winds up subverting its own thesis. At the end, another youth, the actual gun-wielder who had managed to escape earlier, is apprehended and thrown—where else? Of course, the filmmakers can always argue that the second youth is actually eighteen years and a day or two old. But the visuals do not support such an argument.

Deathrow is marred, in addition, by a lack of thorough research. As a result, important details necessary for a better understanding and truthful

presentation of the case studies and issues it exposes are conveniently glossed over. In the same way, incidents are contrived to advance its thesis or dramatically substantiate its exposés. For instance, how could a minor—visibly underage and distressed—be convicted to death row to serve time or await execution in the company of hardened criminals, despite the law protecting such individuals from this fate? This is not to say that this can never happen; in fact, at least one such case of this sort has been documented. In this particular instance, however, we need more details to understand how a law can be circumvented or how a system collapses on itself. Screen time is devoted instead to an anthology of cases where each actor is given the obligatory dramatic moment. Fake identification cards provide a flimsy, easy way out of narrative complications, which require other extraordinary circumstances and contexts to be valid.

Similarly the manual of procedure for execution—accessible to anyone who cares to know how exactly death by lethal injection is done—is conveniently ignored to give way to melodrama. Prison officials, workers, and volunteers, as well as the prisoners themselves, can readily point out several lapses; for one, the conditions presented in the exposés are more appropriate to municipal and city jails. All those physical and emotional assaults that the young protagonist endures could hardly happen in maximum-security confinement. The same goes for gang wars and prison riots. While we submit that, at times, details may be sacrificed for dramatic license, the responsibility for thorough research is imperative when one purports to present authentic conditions that lay people would not ordinarily know. Otherwise, the details avoided or glossed over become gaping loopholes in an otherwise powerful and laudable film project.

Of all the festival entries, *Tanging Taman* enjoyed the most commercial success and audience acceptance. Made specifically in celebration of the Catholic Church's Jubilee Year, the film tells a story of reconciliation, forgiveness, and reunification among members of a family which had earlier long disintegrated. Among the reasons for the dysfunction were the pursuit of personal interests, preoccupation with selfish concerns, and reliance on individual approaches and coping mechanisms appropriate to mostly economic problems—all compounded by the inability or outright refusal of characters to engage in healthy

dialogue, especially where other members of the family were involved. But as the characters kept the hurt to themselves, gaps between them continued to widen and wounds deepened in time: so typically Filipino, in short.

The family matriarch in the film, a religious woman for whom the church serves as a refuge, completely surrenders herself and the fate of her family to a Supreme Being in a moment of frustration because of her inability to pull her children together. Whatever or Whoever that Being is sends, in response, not a miracle but a problem: the matriarch is afflicted with much-dreaded Alzheimer's disease. With a mutual problem to hurdle, the family members gravitate toward one another and consequently start to dialogue among themselves, allowing resentments rooted in childhood to surface and eventually erupt into open hostility. But before the family completely disintegrates, a bigger problem occurs—unknown to the family, one of their members is fighting for dear life at the mouth of a grand river to where he has been carried by a flash flood caused by a sudden downpour. The family members search for the boy and in their helplessness they rise above their self-centered bickering, to reach out to a greater outside force which could save their loved one's life. The crisis also provides an opportunity for everyone to admit her or his guilt, express contrition for wrongdoings, and subsequently forgive and reconcile with one another. A "miracle" happens, one which eventually brings peace and harmony, and the healing starts.

Audience identification with *Tanging Taman* is not only personal; it is also broadly cultural. Philippine lowland culture is largely Christian-Catholic and therefore marked by a strong dimension of faith which is regarded as a community value. The experiences, sentiments, and thoughts of the family in the film are familiar. They are the very same ones that we experienced as a nation during recent national political crises. The processes are cunningly parallel: near-disintegration prompted by selfish interests and attitudes, a problem that draws us together and makes us realize that we are all affected and cannot remain uninvolved, the decision to set aside differences in order to confront a bigger problem, a crisis prompting us to lift up our hearts, our minds, and our wills in unison at EDSA II to an outside force or Supreme Being because we realize that our capabilities and strengths even in solidarity are still limited. And finally, the "miracle" docs happen, everything else seems to fall in place

as if by grand design—but only after we did our part with the best of our resources and to the best of our abilities. When all else seemingly fails, faith finally takes over.

Laurice Guillen's *Tanging Taman* shows the filmmaker's deep personal understanding of the dynamics of a dysfunctional Filipino family and of the Catholic faith, the last coming from the heart in contrast with ecclesiastical or academic knowledge, which draws largely from scholarly activities. This superior perception is creatively translated into powerful cinematic imagery. *Tanging Taman* has given us some brilliant gems in Philippine image-making. The mirror-shot and the subsequent three-shot of people on a bed eloquently demonstrate how a mother and her daughter have finally resolved their differences through the intercession of a member of the third generation; the camerawork in the family confrontation scene illustrates with sharp precision that even the smallest, unsettled personal problem progressively affects the entire family in a frenzied chain reaction; and the high-angle shot of Jericho Rosales's character's car erratically moving in frantic circles clearly mirrors the frustration, confusion, and desperation that its driver had been undergoing at the moment. There are more such achievements, and if only for these powerful images, *Tanging Taman* deserves all the trophies that it won during the festival awards night.

The MMFF has showcased the impressive abilities of local filmmakers. Most of our movies now sport a technically professional look. The credit partly goes to the infusion of fresh blood into the industry. More and more college-educated and institute-trained apprentices are gaining some foothold and acquiring professional on-the-job training in the industry. Several of them now work as key artistic and technical personnel in productions, others as members of the production crew. Similarly, postproduction houses with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and adequately trained professional staff, like Roadrunner Network, which attended to the postproduction assemblage of four of the festival entries, have made their services accessible. The trend deserves to continue.

More than anything, however, the recent MMFF affirms that the country's best resources for the industry arc its actors, who render effective, truthful, and sincere performances whether in solo or in ensemble work. Veteran performers reveal that the secret of their durability is their well-

honed talent, just as second-generation senior actors prove that they deserve their reputation as some of the country's finest dramatic lights. Similarly, theater actors who shuttle between stage and movie sets are equally brilliant in both media. The most assuring discovery, however, is that our popular young stars can act, confidently pitting their talent against that of their veteran counterparts. Special mention [circa MMFF 2000] goes to Jericho Rosales, Patrick Garcia, Jeffrey Quizon, and Gogie Domingo. If only for the sake of these young performers, a new lease on life should be given to the local film industry; which has been suffering reverses since the 1994 Manila Film Festival awards scam, and most especially because of the drop in production statistics in the past years: 145 films produced in 1998, 124 in 1999, and little over 80 in 2000.

But does this mean that all will be well? Our filmmakers still need to work on a few significant aspects of filmmaking. For instance, the gap between intention and execution should be continuously narrowed, just as conviction and vision must be supported by craft. It is important that what one actually says is exactly what she wants to say in the way that she wants to say it. Content must improve with form; one should not be allowed to trail behind the other. Perhaps neither *Ganito Kami Noon* nor *Insiang* may be technically superior to any of the recent MMFF entries, but both continue to be regarded as classics because of what they say and how they say it.

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An Optimistic View of a Year in Review: Philippine Cinema 2003

As figures in the production and box-office statistics of mainstream Philippine cinema steadily decline, industry practitioners and concerned sympathetic observers are increasingly alarmed. Fewer and fewer movies are being made by producers, whose ranks dwindle continually. Clearly this is an indication that for the past several years, box-office take and ultimately profitability, on account of escalating production costs, have plummeted in an increasing pace and owing to a downward pull.

The dismal situation of the moribund industry has prompted mainstream film practitioners to take stock of themselves and institute measures to abet the outflow of life-sustaining force that gets depleted at several points. The improvement of products, albeit in the context of a commercial environment, remains a premier goal, not only to lure audiences back into the movie houses but also to address partly the industry's depressive self-image.

Yet Philippine cinema is not solely equivalent to the mainstream industry. Independent and alternative filmmakers, whose ranks are increasing, are starting to make their presence felt. Here the picture looks brighter, maybe not in terms of profitability but rather in pointing toward other orientations that Philippine cinema may take. Sooner or later, however, independent and alternative filmmakers may face a similar problem that their mainstream counterparts do now: viability. Ultimately, for both mainstream practitioners and alternative filmmakers, survival is of paramount concern and should be made the foremost agenda, along with vision setting.

The Mainstream Industry

A composite picture of the state of mainstream cinema industry may be assembled through the following focal points: production statistics; the annual Metro Manila and Manila film festivals; the harvest of award-winning films; and the industry's attempt to crash into the global market through international film festivals and possible foreign distribution.

Production Statistics and Notes

In 2003, the mainstream Philippine cinema industry produced a total of 80 pictures, 14 titles short of the 2002 production, marking it as the fifth year of continuous decline. In 1998, there were 145 productions; in 1999, 124; in 2001, 103; and in 2002, 94. In terms of genres, sex-oriented dramas and comedies topped the list with 44 flicks or a little over 50 percent of the year's production. Major directors such as Joel Lamangan *(Ang Huling Birhen sa Lupa* and *Bugbog Sarado),* Mel Chionglo *(Xerex),* Tikoy Aguiluz *(www.xxx.com Diva),* and Celso Ad. Castillo (with reprises of his earlier works, *Nympha* and *Virgin People III)* did films of this genre, as did comcbacking director Elwood Perez *(Lupe* and *Ssshhh ... She Walks by Night).* (Cirio H. Santiago, another comebacking director, did for Premiere Productions *Operation: Balikatan* for the Manila Film Festival in June.) Viva Films introduced its new directors also through sex dramas and comedies.

Action drama and comedies, which used to compete with the sex-oriented movies in box-office popularity, registered merely eleven pictures or 13 percent of total production in 2003. Other genres complete the production list as follows: drama, nine pictures; comedy, eight; romance, six; fantasy, three; and horror, two.

Viva Films topped local production with thirteen films, most of which were sex-oriented. The second, Star Cinema with eight pictures, on the other hand, concentrated on romantic dramas and comedies, such as Wenn V Deramas's *Ang Tanging Ina* and Joyce E. Bernal's *Mr. Suave,* which were among the highest box-office gross-takers for the year. *Ang Tanging Ina* set a new box-office record, reportedly with almost P200 million[1] ,

[15] As of end of 2007, roughly US$ 5 million, following a conversion rate of US$ 1 = P40; only this first amount will be provided with its US-dollar equivalent in the article.

for its entire run all over the country, making comedienne Ai-Ai de las Alas the new box-office queen (although her next picture, Jose Javier Reyes's *Pinay Pie,* did not do as well, despite the presence of two other box-office attractions, Joyce Jimenez and Assunta de Rossi).

Regal Entertainment, a major player and one of the most prolific production outfits in less difficult times, produced only six pictures, as did El Niño Films. Other major outfits that produced much less than they used to were Imus Productions with only two pictures (Humilde "Meek" Roxas's T/zg *Kapitbahay* and Marlon Bautista and Augusto Salvador's *Bertud ng Putik)* and FPJ Productions with only one (Tony Y Reyes's *Pakners).* Of the twenty-nine companies that were active during the year in review, five were new players: Nu Art Movies (Danilo Cabreira's *Asboobs: Asal Bobo),* Wild World Entertainment (Angelito J. de Guzman's *Boldstar,* Joey Romero's *Mapupulang Labi,* and Francis Posadas's *Bayaran* from 2002), Vintage Productions (Neal "Buboy" Tan's *Kalabit),* Entertainment Warehouse (Mario O'Hara's *Babae sa Breakwater),* and Sacramento Films (Posadas's *Sex Scandal).*

Of the major outfits, Viva Films was the most active in giving breaks to college-educated and technically trained young filmmakers such as Louie Ignacio *(Pangarap Ko anglbigin Ka)* from television and Robert Quebral *(Sex Drive)* from the ranks of alternative filmmakers. They joined the ranks of two other young directors who both did their second pictures last year also with Viva: Lyle Sacris *(First Time)* and Quark Henares *(Keka).* Star Cinema, on the other hand, gave their sister company's (ABS-CBN) television directors John J. Lazatin and Don Cuaresma their film breaks in a teen-film project, *My First Romance,* a box-office hit like most of the company's romance outings. The two-story juvenile romance merited a "B" rating, moreover, from the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB) of the newly created Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP).

The most celebrated directorial debut was Mark Meily's. Coming in from advertising, Meily wrote and directed *Crying Ladies,* an entry for the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines from Unitel Pictures, another new outfit making its second film (the first was Laurice Guillen's *American Adobo* from 2001). Meily won the festival's Best Director award and his work, Best Picture. The film also got an "A" rating from the CEB.

Other fresh blood entering the industry included the following: writers Mitchiko Yamamoto (Maryo J. de los Reyes's *Magnifico),* Dindo

Perez Joyce E. Bernal's *Till There Was You*\ Erwin Romulo, Lyndon Santos, and Ramon de Veyra (Sacris's *First Time),* and Chris Martinez Jeffrey Jeturian's *Bridal Shower,* released in 2004); cinematographer Odyssey Flores (De los Reyes's *Magnifico* and *Laman,* released in 2002); and musical directors Jobin Ballesteros (Erik Matti's *Prosti* and *Gagamboy,* released 2002 and 2004 respectively), Vincent de Jesus (Meily's *Crying Ladies),* and Jerrold Tarog (Perez's *Lupe* and Augusto Salvador's T/zg *Agimat: Anting-Anting ni Lolo,* released in 2002). Outstanding new finds among the performers were Vhong Navarro Joyce E. Bernal's *Mr. Suave* and Matti's *Gagamboy),* Katherine Luna and Cristopher King (O'Hara's *Babae sa Breakwater),* and Juliana Palermo (Aguiluz's *www.XXX.com).*

The Manila and Metro Manila Film Festivals

The Metro Manila Film Festival held during the last two weeks of each year serves as a Janus-faced event marking the state of the industry at any particular period. On one side, being a year-end grand event in the industry, it serves as a record of achievements—that nonetheless discloses the shortcomings—of a closing year, and on the other, forward-looking face, it projects a continuing thrust for trends that have emerged during the past year and continue to trek onto the forthcoming year. Two consecutive MMFFs (that of 2002 and of 2003, each of which spilled over into their succeeding years), therefore, are significant indicators of the state of the mainstream cinema industry for a particular year. Progress and continuing trends are manifested in these bookend benchmarks.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the 2002 and 2003 MMFFs. In the first place, the festival was not geographically limited to Metro Manila as in the previous years. It included, starting in 2002, other key cities outside the premier metropolis, such as San Fernando City in Pampanga, Cebu City in the Visayas, and Davao City in Mindanao—hence the monicker Metro Manila Film Festival, Philippines 2002. Subsequently in 2003, the festival included the cities of Cebu, San Fernando, and Cagayan de Oro in northern Mindanao.

Festival organizers and film producers intended to hit two birds with one stone in this expanded event: first, it brought their promotional campaign for the local moviegoers' revitalized and continuing patronage of Filipino films to a wider reach; and second, it was a ploy to partially address the film-piracy problem that had been plaguing the local film

industry for the past several years. In the past, pirated copies of film-fest entries would be found in the not-so-clandestine local markets right after or sometimes even during the festival period. Bringing the films to the regional markets simultaneously with their exhibition in Metro Manila, it was thought, would discourage or limit the buying of pirated discs.

MMFF Philippines 2002, for all intents and purposes, was a show of force: first, among local film producers and industry' leaders responding to a call for unity' in addressing their common and foremost problems; and second, in the form of government patronage. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo gave P50 million that was divided among the producers of the official nine entries.

Seldom do Fernando Poe, Jr. and Dolphy together join any particular film festival. Neither wishes to counterproductively cancel out the other's supremacy in the box-office which is likely to happen should both have entries in one festival. Little did they know, however, that their box-office ranking would be below the mid-mark. Dolphy's *Home Alone da Ribber* (Quizon, dir.) finished sixth with P28,294,383 while Fernando Poe, Jr.'s self-directed (as Ronwaldo Reyes) *Alamat ng Lawin,* seventh, with P20,423,553. Rudy Fernandez, another box-office action star, finished second to the last with Edgardo Vinarao's *Hula Mo, Huli Ko's* P10,334,808. At the tail-end was William Mayo's *Lapu-Lapu* with P5,706,036.

Top-grossers were Lamangan's *Mano Po* (P67,337,414) a family melodrama with an all-star cast from Regal Entertainment. Its winning practically all the awards during the festival's awards night consolidated its position, followed by the children's holiday fares, Tony Y. Reyes's *Lastikman* (P59,192,093), with Vic Sotto, and Salvador's *Ang Agimat* (P46,814,834), with Ramon "Bong" Revilla, his father, and his son. The action-fantasy film, Chito Roño's *Spirit Warrriors 2: The Short Cut* grossed P39,941,856, while another family drama, Roño's *Dekada TO,* with Vilma Santos and Christopher de Leon, supported by Star Cinema's young matinee idols, finished fifth with P37,324,256. The MMFF Philippines 2002 grossed a total of P315,299,233.

Clearly, box-office power in the industry had changed configuration, with the giants now giving way to younger attractions who are next in line. Also, the all-star cast formula no longer spells magic at the tills. Its winning practically all the major and technical awards in the festival, rather than its all-star combination, ensured *Mano Po's* top financial

position. The box-office results may also indicate that the popularity of drama on the big screen had been dissipated by daily melodramatic fare on television soap operas. The festival entries apparently strove for box-office potential more than artistic integrity. This was true, to a certain extent, because the premise of film festivals here is to make money, more so in the recent events organized by an industry which had been suffering continual reverses. A closer look at the festival entries, however, shows that if local film producers aimed for profit, it was not by shortchanging their audiences, as some detractors or critics of the practice would have us believe.

Production values for all festival entries of the MMFF Philippines 2002 were generally of above-average quality. In terms of scope and scale of their films, casting, technical quality, and visual and sound effects, the producers indeed spent more for their entries than they would ordinarily for productions exhibited at other times of the year. The message they delivered to their market was that they could invest in production values, if that would attract more viewers—their perceived audiences and markets, that is.

Contentwise, most of the films were significant in that they tried to inspect hitherto unexplored or seldom explored areas. *Mano Po* delved into Chinoy [Chinese Pinoy] culture and tackled a sociological issue—the spate of kidnappings, mostly of Chinoys. *Dekada '70* relived our experiences during the Marcos dictatorship and dramatized the latter's impact on a middle-class Filipino family. *Alamat ng Lawin* is a revisionist Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ) film that talks of people empowerment and questioned misguided reliance on the mythical hero as redeemer and leader. *Ang Agimal* also tackled empowerment, this time of the individual, with engaging, technically competent visual and sound effects, as did *Spirit Warriors 2,* a youth-oriented fantasy-suspense-thriller with strong native mythical-cultural elements. *Lapu-Lapu* dramatized an episode in our precolonial history and lauded the qualities of an uncompromising (to stranger-conquerors) native chieftain. *Home Alone da Ribber* floated environmental concerns, and *Lastikman* tried to understand the psychology of an antisocial subject even as it provided entertainment for its perceived juvenile audience. Finally, *Hula Mo, Huli Ko* played around the star personae of its lead actors (Rudy Fernandez and Rufa Mae Quinto) to bring an entertaining and technically competent cop-adventure movie

dealing with quasi-religious cults. The films may not be at par with the taste of the more discriminating elements, but for local cinema's perceived general audiences, the entries exhibited marked improvement—certainly not trash the way that local films are oftentimes unfairly dismissed.

Whatever trend the box-office results of the MMFF Philippines 2002 portended would impact on the productions of 2003. The straight action film could no longer thrive as a favored genre. With the exception of FPJ who, nevertheless, did only one film—an action-comedy with a national sports champion, Efren "Bata" Reyes in *Pakners* (which, however, failed to measure up to the blockbuster status of earlier FIJ films)—most of the leading action heroes transitioned to the smaller television screen as comedians or dramatic performers. Comedies did better at the tills but new and young actors such as Janno Gibbs, Ogie Alcasid, Michael V, Vhong Navarro, and Ai-Ai de las Alas proved to be stronger attractions than the veterans. De las Alas, in fact, as mentioned earlier, was hailed as the new box-office queen on the strength of her *Ang Tanging Ina.* The Vhong Navarro-starrer *Mr. Suave* also did well at the tills. And of course, Vic Sotto returned to the big screen as *Fantastic Man* (T. Reyes, dir.), to be the second biggest top-grosser in the MMFF Philippines 2003.

The succeeding and expanded MMFF 2003 grossed a little higher than its predecessor did by Pl 1,409,527—not much really. As in 2002, the top-grossers were expectedly the children's holiday fare—Bong Revilla's starring vehicle *Captain Barbell* (Alejandre, dir.), with P62,064,626, and the Vic Sotto-starrer *Fantastic Man,* with P54,729,096—both of which attempted fuller characterizations, especially of their respective villains. *Crying Ladies* (P50,348,329) performed below the median until it was judged MMFF Best Picture, and then landed third in overall earnings. With a theme seldom tackled in local movies as well as with innovative scripting, shots and camera movements, it fared better in Metro Manila, where it landed second, than outside the metropolis. A similar situation could be said of *Bridal Shower* (overall gross of P26,351,689). A sex-comedy in the tradition of the popular American television program *Sex and the City* (Darren Star, creator), *Bridal Shower* fared better in Metro Manila than in the provinces, where *Gagamboy* (P21,320,778)—another fantasy-comedy for children which was distinguished by good visuals, and which finished eighth in overall standing—was seventh to *Bridals* eighth. In fact, in Metro Manila,

it placed sixth, following Jose Javier Reyes's *Malikmata* (P35,731,785), a well-crafted suspense thriller, and ahead of Joel Lamangan's *Filipinas* (P27,384,566), an allegorical family melodrama illustrative of the nation's contemporaneous sociopolitical conditions. Erik Matti's elegantly mounted *Mano Po 2* (P47,534,904), which provided a glimpse into Chinoy culture, finished fourth in overall standing, while Gil Portes's *Homecoming* (P 1,242,986), about a town's reaction to a SARS-infected OFW *balikbayan* [returnee], languished at the tail end.

As in the previous MMFF Philippines, local film producers who participated spent on production values and casting in order to prove that they were not shortchanging their patrons and audiences. The trends that emerged in the 2002 festival were reinforced in the succeeding one. The absence of straight-on action pictures as well as of action superstars was noticeable. In addition, all-star combinations failed to guarantee blockbuster hits, as shown by the relatively phlegmatic showing of both *Mano Po 2* and *Filipinas.* Nonetheless, the festival remained a huge commercial and promotional success.

One sour note, however: if strong insinuations that influence-peddling or outright vote-buying are involved in the selection of festival awardees, especially in the earlier MMFF, turn out to be true, then the awards have been debased and are no longer desirable for the prestige and respect that they bring, but rather for the additional cash that they haul in at the box-office. A hallmark of excellence in artistry and craft has become a deplorable marketing strategy.

The mid-year Manila Film Festival in June, in comparison with the December festival, has been lackluster. Nonetheless, it yielded some of the better films of 2003, notably Joel Eamangan's *Ang Hiding Birhen sa Lupa,* that deals with the corruption of the body and soul in staged miraculous apparitions in a superstitious and hypocritical community, and Ricardo "Bebong" Osorio's *Alab ng Laiṅ,* on Filipino guerrillas' exploits during World War II.

While some quarters may lament the commercial thrust of film festivals in this country, with some of them even advocating the abolition of such annual practices, it must be pointed out that mainstream filmmaking is, in principle, indeed commercial from the very start. Ever since we imported the technology of filmmaking from the Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, the commercial thrust, manner of

producing, distribution, and exhibition of local films have always followed the Hollywood model. In fact, filmmaking here in the Philippines presently developed into an industry, underscoring its commercial nature.

Awards and Recognition

Two films shared the limelight during the award-giving season in 2003 for films produced the year earlier: Ronõ's *Dekada TO* and Portes's *Mga Munting Tinig.* The former was Best Picture for the academe-based group of critics, the Young Critics Circle (YCC), Pasado, and its splinter group Tanglaw, as well as the Catholic Mass Media Awards. *Mga Munting Tinig,* on the other hand, was the choice of the Star Awards and the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS). The Gawad Urian of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino [Filipino Film Critics Circle] (MPP) declared a tie between the two films for their Best Picture prize, but gave the Best Director award to Portes, who won as well for the same categories in the Star Awards and the FAMAS. Roño, however, was the choice of the YCC and the Tanglaw critics.

The Film Academy of the Philippines, as usual, had a surprise winner in Mayo's *Lapu-Lapu,* which was ignored in the awards night of the MMFF Philippines 2002. The film also clinched the Best Director and the Best Actor awards for William Mayo and Eito Eapid, respectively. The FAMAS surprise package came via the acting category, where along with veteran and multi-awarded actor, Eddie Garcia, who won for Lamangan's *Bahid,* newcomer sexpot Alek Bovick was named Best Actress for Francis Posadas's *Tampisaw.*

More or less consistent among the award-giving bodies were the performances of Vilma Santos, Best Actress for *Dekada TO* (Star Awards, Gawad Urian, Pasado, Tanglaw and the Young Critics' Circle). In the YCC, she tied with Piolo Pascual in the same film for best performance of the year. The young actor Pascual was a grand-slam winner for Best Supporting Actor in all award-giving bodies. Kris Aquino was Best Supporting Actress for the original *Mano Po* in the Star, FAMAS, and Tanglaw awards. Other Best Supporting Actress awardees were Elizabeth Oropesa (Urian for *Laman)* and Cherry Pie Picache (FAP for *American Adobo).* In the Best Actor race, the Star Awards had Yul Servo for *Laman,* while Tanglaw named Christopher de Leon for *Dekada TO,* and the MPP gave its Gawad Urian to Jay Manalo for his work in *Prosti.*

Needless to say, some awards nights were marred by controversies, foremost of which were those involving the FAMAS and the Film Academy of the Philippines. The MMFF Philippines 2002 had its share of controversies when *Mano Po* swept practically all the prizes, ignoring a favorite among critical observers, *Dekada TO.* Given that different award-giving bodies have varied sets of standards and taste; that even in one group, at times, the members cannot seem to agree on their individual choices; that even individuals of seemingly similar artistic orientation still read and appreciate films from different perspectives—one wonders why we keep on looking for Number One when we can never even agree on what or who Number One should be. In this context, therefore, ties, triple-ways, and even group winners are more welcome. If awards are supposed to be vehicles for appreciation, recognition, and incentives for jobs well done or for trailblazing work, then perhaps a reexamination of criteria and processes is in order. After every awards night, sad to say, recriminations among industry practitioners, their supporters, and plain observers ensue, casting doubt on whether award-giving systems and processes meet their avowed objectives.

A case in point is the Film Academy of the Philippines, which recently revised its voting procedures. Smarting from the embarrassments brought about earlier by the *Jose Rizal* case (the body ignored the film during the awards season because its director, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, allegedly had discriminatory preference for non-academy members for her artistic and production staff), and the recent case of *Lapu-Lapu,* a new set of citing, nominating, and voting procedures was devised for adoption starting in 2004, to protect the academy's choices from the vicissitudes of an *"atin-atin/layo-tayo"* [ours/us] all-boys' club that discriminates between insiders and outsiders.

The Beller Films of 2003

The Cinema Evaluation Board of the Film Development Council of the Philippines gave an "A" rating, and therefore a 100 percent tax rebate from the national and municipal governments, to only two films: Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Noon at Ngayon (Pagsasamang Kayganda)* and Meily's *Crying Ladies.* Rated "B" with a concomitant 60 percent rebate were eleven films, namely, De los Reyes's *Magnifico,* Osorio's *Alab ng Lahi,* Lamangan's *Walang Kapalit, Ang Huling Birhen sa Lupa,* and *Pilipinas,* Henares's *Keka,*

Aguiluz's *www.XXX.* com, Jose Javier Reyes's *Kung Ako na Lang Sana,* Lazatin and Cuaresma's A Ą *First Romance,* Matti's *Mano Po 2,* Portes's *Homecoming,* and Jeturian's *Bridal Shower.* Add to the list O'Hara's *Babae sa Breakwater* and Jose Javier Reyes's *Malikmata* and we have the mainstream industry's lineup of the better films of 2003. In the list, Viva Films had the most number of films (four) rated "B," while Star Cinema had three (one of which was Rated 'A"). Among directors, Lamangan had three films in the list. At the time of this writing, three award-giving bodies have named their choices for the best of 2003. The YCC has named O'Hara's *Babae sa Breakwater* as its best while the Star Awards for Movies opted for De los Reyes's *Magnifico,* which was also the choice of Tanglaw.

Bid for the Global Market

Magnifico won the Kinderfilmfest Grand Prix and Crystal Bear awards in Berlin in early 2004. First invited to the Karlovy Vary (Czechoslovakia) in July 2003, where it played to an audience which was 99 percent Czech, it is now going the rounds in the more than ten festivals in Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Earlier, Portes's *Mga Munting Tinig* competed in various festivals in the USA and won best film, director, and screenplay awards at the Palm Beach Film Festival. It is having its theatrical run in the US, with Sky Island Films as its distributor. Handled by Mongrel Media in Canada, it played there for one week. *Crying Ladies,* which opened in the US in February 2004, is being distributed there by Tony Gloria's Unico Entertainment, a sister company of Unitel Pictures. It was the lone Filipino film at the recent LA film market.

Ferdinand D. Lapuz of Ignatius Films-Canada, a festival-circuit regular and publicist for many Filipino films abroad, says:

> Filipino films have found their audience internationally. Way back in 1994 to, say, 1996, we expected the Filipino community to support Filipino movies only during festivals. But after three years, non-Filipinos are lining up during screenings of Filipino movies. Filipino directors who are regular in Toronto like Siguion-Reyna, Lamangan, Chionglo, and Portes have their admirers. These foreign-film aficionados would watch [these directors'] films when they see their names in the festival book. (Lapuz, interview by author)

By participating in international filmfests whether in exhibition or in competition, Filipino producers hope to enlarge their very limited home market. Luckily, their films are getting noticed. Other Filipino titles currently doing the rounds include: *Ang Hiding Birhen sa Lupa,* Toronto, Bratislava; *Prosti,* Udine Asian, Toronto: World Cinema, Tokyo, Sitges, Brugge (2004); *Bridal Shower,* Singapore (2004) and Udine (2004); and *Dekada '70,* New York Asian, Montreal World, Quebec, and Hawaii.

Dekada '70 was the Philippine entry to the Makati Cinemanila International Film Festival held August 2003; its lead star, Vilma Santos, was named the festival's Best Actress. Now on its fifth year, Cinemanila is fast becoming a much-awaited annual event, being the country's only global filmfest. Local audiences were treated to some of the best of global cinema, notably Pedro Almodovar's *Hable con ella* (Spain); Fernando Meirelles's *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil); Lars von Trier's *Doguille* (Denmark); and Niki Caro's *Whale Rider* (New Zealand), among others. The Grand Prize, the Lino Brocka Award, was won by Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Uzak* (Denmark); while *Cidade de Deus* and Tanaka Hiroyuki's *Blessing Bell,* from Japan, tied for the Grand Jury Prize as runners-up. *Whale Rider* received a special prize, along with Aparna Sen's *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* from India and Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* from Palestine, which also received the Netpac Award for Best Asian Film. The Philippines' *Dekada '70* won a Special Citation award as runner-up to the Netpac award. The festival also featured a retrospective of the works of the celebrated Hong Kong director, Wong Kar-wai. Significantly, the opening film of the festival was an independently produced Filipino-American feature distributed by Sony Pictures, *The Debut.* Seen through the eyes of a Fil-Am youngster, the film depicts the growing-up blues of an ethnic Filipino in America. A Fil-Am actor himself, Dante Basco, plays the protagonist. Gene Cajayon, the film director, is another Filipino-American. Featured in the film are Filipino actors Eddie Garcia, Tirso Cruz III, and Gina Alajar.

Independent and Alternative Filmmaking

It was in an earlier Cinemanila forum that film director and festival organizer Tikoy Aguiluz predicted that within the current decade, digital video technology would realize its full potential and revolutionize filmmaking in the country (as it has elsewhere in the world). Tony Gloria of Unitel Pictures and producer of *American Adobo* and *Crying Ladies*

furthermore advised young filmmakers to explore the new technology. This was a response to the continuously escalating cost of film stock. In digital filmmaking, which makes use of video technology, celluloid is replaced by digital tapes that may later be transferred to or blown up into film. Initially hampered by low picture quality in terms of the resolution of its end product, the technology has since improved with the use of digital cameras, notably so-called mini-DY which produces acceptable broadcast or theatrical-exhibition quality in its image acquisitions. Digital filmmaking lowers production cost, although there are still problems to contend with when it comes to large-screen projection. Nevertheless, it has provided young independent filmmakers with access to an affordable mode of filmmaking. With much lower production cost, independent filmmakers are liberated from the imperatives of a commercial setup. And true enough, young filmmakers have been turning to this technology, such as Jon Red *(Astigmatism* and *Still Lives* from 1999), Ed Lejano, Nonoy Dadivas, and Chuck Escasa (the omnibus *Motel,* made in 2000), Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil *(Angels,* made in 2001), Milo Paz *(Taxi ni Pilo,* also from 2001), Crisaldo Pablo *(Duda),* and even Gil Portes *(ID,* from 2001).

Independent filmmaking is done outside the mainstream circuit of production and distribution, i.e., the studio or big-production outfit systems. Usually, it is low-cost and pursues subjects and themes not ordinarily tackled in commercial filmmaking for a wide market. It is noteworthy to cite that even in mainstream cinema, the spirit of independent filmmaking can emerge, in that the choice of themes and subjects are regarded as noncommercial. For 2003, Violett Films' *Magnifico,* Teamwork Productions' *Homecoming,* Entertainment Warehouse's *Babae sa Breakwater,* and Unitel Pictures' *Crying Ladies* come to mind. However, since these projects opted for mainstream marketing and distribution schemes and networks, such as the use of popular film stars and exhibition in the usual commercial venues, they may be regarded at best as quasi-independent. Incidentally, all these films used celluloid film. Meanwhile, thoroughly independent in other aspects except for the use of the mainstream exhibition circuit is the gay-themed *Duda,* which premiered toward the end of 2003 and played a limited regular run at an SM cinema in early 2004, indicating modest acceptance by a portion of the mainstream market.

Strictly independent are the filmmakers who may be identified as alternative as well, not only in their production setup but also in their choice of material and filmmaking style, which may range from the short film, the experimental in narrative structure, or altogether non-narrative presentation, reflexive documentaries, animation, and other unorthodox approaches. These filmmakers are enthusiasts enamored of harnessing film—and video as well—to express and communicate their personal visions. New blood has provided the energy that revs up the dynamo of alternative filmmaking in the country: Rejecting the confining parameters of mainstream cinema, these individuals chose to trek in a different direction, working in a production setup and system that freed them from commercial imperatives. For them, profitability is not the highest value; personal vision expressed in their craft is.

There are at least three competitions that have encouraged the young in this endeavor: the Gawad CCP Para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Video (the CCP even conducted a feature-length filmmaking workshop to better equip prospective contestants), on its sixteenth year in 2003; the UP Film and Video Festival, on its fifth year; and the eKsperim[E]nto Film and Video Festival. Significantly, the CCP film and video competition has encouraged regional filmmaking. In its current Gawad, Joenar Pueblo's *Hablon* won not only the first prize in the Experimental category' but also a Special Award for Best Regional Entry. Meanwhile, billed as the first full-length Ilonggo film, Jan Philippe V Carpio's *Balay Daku* won a Special Certificate for Full-Length Feature.

The institution of filmmaking courses in several colleges and universities such as De La Salle University and the Ateneo, a degree-conferring undergraduate (B.A. Film) as well as a postgraduate (M.A. Film) academic program at the Film Institute (UPFI) of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UPCMC), and the specialized workshops conducted by both the Mowelfund Film Institute and the UPFI have tremendously encouraged newcomers to go into filmmaking. Peque Gallaga, for his part, continues to guide and inspire budding filmmakers from among the students of De La Salle Bacolod. With film studies becoming an academic concern, interest in cinema has been invigorated. Supplementing academe's efforts arc conferences and symposia. In 2003, the UPFI, in cooperation primarily with the Japan Foundation and Kodak Philippines, sponsored the Asian

Film Forum in January; in July, UP and the Cultural Center of the Philippines sponsored the Sangandaan Conference and Festival to assess the impact of American colonization on Philippine society, art, and culture. In this conference, a section was devoted to Philippine cinema.

The UPCMC Foundation and the Laurel-Rufino-Prieto Foundation, a private agency, co-published *Pelikula: A Journal of Philippine Cinema.* Although the bi-annual folded up after four issues, the UPCMC now publishes *Plaridel: A Journal of Philippine Communication, Mass Media and Society,* expanding its scope to include not only film but journalism, broadcast communication, and communication research as well. In 2003, too, Nick Deocampo's first in a series of historical studies on Philippine cinema came out under the title *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines.* The Film Desk of the YCC, in celebration of their tenth anniversary, came up with an anthology of commentaries on Philippine cinema in the 1990s, and a documentation of their annual citations. Titled *Sampúng Taóng Sine: Philippine Cinema 1990-1999,* it was published by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and came out in late 2002.

It should also be mentioned that Viva Video issued VCD formats of some of the classics of contemporary Philippine cinema, such as Gerardo de Leon's *Sanda Wong,* Lino Brocka's *Miguelito: Ang Batang Rebelde,* Ishmael Bernal's *Ikaw ay Akin,* Lupita Concio's *Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo* and *Magandang Gabi sa Inyong Lahat,* Celso Ad. Castillo's *Burlesk Queen,* Mike de Leon's *Batch '81,* the Nora Aunor trilogy *Fe, Esperanza, Caridad* (G. de Leon, Avellana, and C. H. Santiago, dirs.), the Vilma Santos-*starrer Dyesebel* (Borlaza, dir.), Dolphy's version of *IbongAdarna* (P. Santiago, dir.), and the FPJ-starrer *Pitong Gatang* (E. Reyes, dir.), among others. It is hoped that more Filipino film titles, especially but not only the works of the masters, will be made available in video as source materials for a better-informed assessment of Filipino films. In this connection, perhaps titles in private collections like those of Sampaguita, LVN, FPJ, and ABS-CBN (which reportedly holds 2,000 titles, including those produced by the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines such as Bernal's *Himala,* Peque Gallaga's *Oro, Plata, Mata,* and Abbo Q. de la Cruz's *Misteryo sa Tuwa)* be made more accessible to film scholars and the general public in video format.

PROSPECTS

There are several indications that suggest that the future of Philippine cinema, the mainstream industry included, is far from bleak. Independent and alternative filmmaking gains ground as interest in the short film, animation, experimental films, and documentaries grows in viewership and even in following. Shows exhibiting student works have sprouted and developed larger audiences. In December of the year in review, GMA-7 brought its *I-Witness* documentaries (Aguinaldo et al., hosts) to the large screen and these were viewed by an audience consisting predominantly of students. Although these were broadcast documentaries, the growing interest in the genre is encouraging. Moreover, it indicates the growing interaction and interface between the two media, film and television, earlier regarded as competitors and rivals for the attention and patronage of practically the same audience. The convergence has earlier been noted in this article, if only in terms of the sharing of talents both before and behind the camera and, of course, in technologies that combine image-construction processes. We may see more of such convergences in the coming years, initially prompted by the exploration of ways and methods to cut down production costs and expand—or even segmentize—viewership or the market.

The case of the mainstream cinema industry is similarly encouraging. In the first place, industry leaders themselves are adopting measures to address their myriad problems, foremost of which is to improve the quality of their products, undergo self-examination and criticism, and initiate and adopt reforms. The Film Academy of the Philippines has provided an example in adopting a new set of citing, nominating, and voting procedures in the selection of the year's best among their peers, starting in 2004. With a new group of leaders, it hopes to embark on vigorous campaigns toward self-improvement. In this regard, both government and nongovernment agencies are only too willing to help. For instance, the implementation of RA 9167 that created the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), although criticized by some sectors in the industry itself, constitutes a good start, assuming that the support of the government in the effective implementation of the law is sincere and genuine. The officers of the FDCP and the UPFI arc reportedly exploring the possibility of instituting diploma and certificate programs for industry practitioners wishing to update and upgrade their knowledge and skills in filmmaking. Similarly the aforementioned academic institution, in cooperation with the Directors Cuild of the Philippines, has started a series of lectures-symposia on industry practices to underscore the realities of the industry situation. There are more areas of cooperation waiting to be tapped.

In both mainstream and independent and alternative filmmaking, the importance of the infusion of fresh blood, whether in terms of practitioners or of audience members, can never be overemphasized. It needs to be allowed to provide equally fresh ideas, approaches, and styles of making films, or even some idealism perhaps. The market for the industry, especially among the students, should be continuously developed, informed, and educated. Finally, more updated and appropriate frameworks of film analysis and criticism—that consider cinema not only as artistic product but also as cultural artifact and social practice, not only a fine art but also a manifestation of popular culture—should be further developed to transform the role of academics and critics from hard-hitting detractors or clandestine promoters to critical partners in the development of Philippine cinema in all its aspects and forms.

Awards Season 2007: Looking for No. 1

It is awards season and once again the frantic search for "the best" or "No. 1" goes on. Actually, for this year, local award-giving started as early as two months ago with the Young Critics Circle, the Golden Screen Awards of the Entertainment Press, the Star Awards of the Philippine Movie Press Club, and the Gawad Tanglaw, an academe-based body. The Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS), Gawad Urian, and the industry's own Euna Awards are slated to follow suit shortly before or after the summer ends. Ironically, though they—and we—never agree on what and who No. 1 is, award-giving bodies persist. This could be the reason why more and more such groups are being formed. There are at least two entertainment press groups, two other critics' circles, and two academe-based groups. At present, the Film Academy of the Philippines' Euna Awards has no spin-off or splinter group yet and the FAMAS can claim singular honor as the longest-existing but not necessarily the most credible or prestigious award-giving body. Then there await the Catholic Mass Media Awards, with marked moral values and standards. Independent/digital filmmakers have their own set of awards, too.

All these groups want their respective choices proclaimed "the best." Still, at times even within a group, members cannot agree and so they come up with ties or even triple ties, because no one is willing to give way to the choice of others and hence they cannot reach a consensus. The fact is all of us may have forgotten the wisdom in the old adage that says that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. And film award-giving bodies are kin and kindred with beauty-contest organizers at all levels: local, national, and international. They are a dime a dozen and they all

have their respective advocacies at best, or at worst, their own biases; even worse, it is perceived that some of them can also be influenced or compromised by pressure groups, by money or in kind. In addition, their choices are never largely or popularly accepted. There are always disgruntled and griping spectators somewhere. Just ask the Metro Manila Film Festival organizers.

Truth is, "the best" is not chosen by any definitive scientific measure or standard. In the case of film awards, making a choice is largely subjective and no single aesthetic sense or framework prevails; and to risk repetition, it is influenceable. Is this necessarily bad? Not so, as long as no group claims to be the most authoritative, the most credible and prestigious, the best. Or as long as we are all aware of their respective biases. For frankly, each one is out to give awards self-servingly to canonize its choices, to validate its own aesthetic sense, its own taste. Unfortunately or fortunately, taste cannot be legislated or regulated; it is acquired and nurtured in the context of one's life, existence, and environment. Just as no two persons are exactly alike, they cannot always have the same taste and preferences. Initially they may find commonalities but in time they will differ and disagree.

Time was when film awards were given to recognize best efforts and encourage artists and craftspersons to provide their utmost. Now awards only foster discord and animosity among nominees and their respective camps and followers. Ironically, they even discourage some of the truly talented. When an award-giving body singles out someone or something as the best, it effectively marginalizes others who or which may be equally good or even more so. So what right has any single group to impose its own taste through awards that proclaim the best? Not especially in postmodern times when a plurality of voices is allowed to be heard and noted and the primacy of any single artistic canon can always be questioned. Or where film is polysemic or has no single meaning or interpretation and can therefore be appreciated on various levels and contexts. Perhaps it is enough that five films or so (maybe a little less or a little more as the case may be) are named as the best for the year and the final choice is left to the individual viewer.

For me, the occasional tics and triple tics arc welcome and constitute a step in the right direction. That way less are marginalized by proclamation. Why single out any one of them as No. 1, when noteworthy

talents abound among Filipino film artists? And we never have or never will agree on who and what is No. 1, anyway. The proliferation of award-giving bodies is also welcome. This underscores the fact that different groups have different tastes, critical frameworks, and standards; hence, their choices vary. So why can't we have our own, our personal "bests"?

How then do we regard awards that look for "No.l"? Treat them like we do most industry or media events. They effectively drum up interest in the industry, which will be good for a moribund enterprise. Most of us ordinary mortals will just have to trust our own aesthetic sense—Western-influenced, classroom-bred, or homegrown and nurtured. Anyway, unless one is a critic in a professional journal or publication, an academic specialist discussing lessons in a classroom, or a member of the jury in an award-giving body, she is not obliged to articulate or explain her own aesthetic sense and standards.

In a sense, laypersons have a better deal. There is less danger of anyone imposing her taste on others, whether wittingly or not.

"A Joan de la Croix Film" ... Excuse Me, How's That Again?

It has been common practice in both mainstream and alternative filmmaking for the past several decades to identify and introduce a film to viewers by citing the name of its director, recognized as she is as the author of a film, its *auteur,* the filmmaker. Well and good, for here there is the appropriate acknowledgement of her position as the premier artist and craftsperson of film, although to the large number of moviegoers, a film is better remembered by its stars. That issue was settled a long time ago, for although the writer may have been responsible for the story's original vision, the creation of the characters, and the arrangement of storytelling structure, it is the director who is responsible for the visual interpretation and implementation of the writer's words. And cinema is a medium that tells stories through moving images. That is one major reason why a film director, with or without the scriptwriter, oftentimes feels justified about changing a script when she sees fit, to conform to her physical visualization of images originally suggested by the writer.

Like many industry or professional practices, however, the stamping of ownership or authorship by the director—despite the fact that filmmaking, like theater work, is a collaborative effort—may be abused. It could, in fact, degenerate into malpractice. Indeed, how many directors can rightfully claim to be auteurs, a term originally reserved by French film critics and subsequently American cinema scholars for those who consistently pursue a recurring theme or imprint a distinctive style in their work? At times, the term applies to a director who also writes the script of his work or who, aside from orchestrating the various contributions of the other artists and craftspersons in the production,

also acts as largely responsible for the other two most important skills involved in filmmaking—namely, the cinematography that "paints with light" the images that are thus created and captured or photographed; and the editing that juxtaposes the images and thus gives film its final form. (Surely, the film actor will understandably react to this hierarchy of importance in the filmmaking process.)

The distinctive circles of European auteurs included Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Vittorio de Sica, Bernardo Bertolucci, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Max Ophuls, Jean Renoir, Jean-Euc Godard, Frangois Truffaut, among several others. Hollywood's list included John Ford, Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Elia Kazan and, much later, David Eynch, Martin Scorsese, and Francis Ford Coppola, to mention a few. Japan had Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Nagisa Oshima.

In Philippine cinema, we can start with the six National Artists for Film: Eamberto V Avellana, Gerardo de Leon, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Eddie Romero, and Fernando Poe, Jr.—yes, FPJ, in fact even more so because he not only directed, wrote, and acted in his more significant films, but also produced most of them, making him completely responsible for the film that you liked or disliked watching. Although Avellana, De Leon, Brocka, and Bernal were seldom credited for the scripts of their films the way Romero is, everybody in the local film circle knows the extent of their control over their film material.

Of the younger crop, Mario O'Hara, Jose Javier Reyes, and Lav Diaz often write the scripts that they direct. Raymond Red and Yam Laranas photograph theirs. Still younger alternative or digital filmmakers, such as Mes de Guzman (who also writes his scripts), not only photograph but also edit the works that they direct—and produce. So can we say then that they and a few others are the only ones who may claim sole ownership of their works? How about the other artists, notably the writer, from whom may have come the original vision of an acclaimed film-text?

Although influential when it was popular in the 1950s-1960s, the auteur theory in film fell into disfavor in due time, in the '70s and '80s. It tended to proclaim greatness among directors even if their later works were not at par with earlier distinctive ones. It also discriminated against a few superior filmmakers who unfortunately opted to pursue and employ

more varied themes and approaches. An outstanding example was Michael Curtiz who directed an American film classic of melodrama, *Mildred Pierce,* and the romantic war-drama, *Casablanca.* Who remembers him now with the stature he originally possessed?

One suspects that the auteur theory may have been largely responsible too for bloated directorial egos that we still have around us up until these days—the director as superstar, the director who believes in complete or total control as if he were the only artist at work, with the rest merely meant to obey his wish and command as production assistants do. Sometimes, the distinction "A [so-and-so] Film" we see in movie ads and opening credits serves as a way of branding a product, especially if its director has quite a following. It could serve as a box-office come-on, patronage through reputation, faith in artistic excellence of an anointed artist.

On the other extreme, this branding and stamp of ownership may be an ironic homage. How can a filmmaker claim ownership of her work when her content and form may have been dictated by a producer whose sights were set primarily on box-office results? And how many times have we heard about a director who cried "Foul!" after a producer or her representative had taken the liberty to edit the director's work without the latter's knowledge or consent? So next time a director makes a film, a credit that says "Directed by Juana de la Cruz" may suffice and may in fact be more appropriate. That way, the other artists involved in the project accorded separate individual credits, as the director is given, are consequently equally recognized too, and would feel grateful and proud in being allowed to own the final result as well.

Text Message: Korean Rhapsody

My dearest Baby:

I am writing you a very long letter because here I recall a virtual blow-by-blow, moment-to-moment account of my experiences in connection with my recent trip to Korea. Here, too, I include my reflections and insights about what I had to go through; most important, my discernment of the message of God for me. This is practically one important chapter in my life and so, this chapter-long account!

Honestly, while I was going through my experience, I wondered why I had to go to Korea, when I could have saved myself the trouble, headache, and heartache if I just stayed home and did what I would usually do, especially at the close of one semester and during a subsequent brief break. But as usual, God works in baffling ways, leaving us to discern the message behind and the meaning of each experience, pleasant or unpleasant.

Honestly, too, the Korean experience was largely unpleasant. But it was the unpleasantness that gave me nuggets of lessons and wisdom. Hence, while I couldn't say that I love Korea, neither could I say that I hate it (which was exactly how I felt when I was there—I hated the whole experience!).

I start from the very beginning.

The Invitation

I received the invitation from a former colleague and dear friend, Joel David, who now teaches in South Korea, to submit some paper proposal for an international conference on Asian cinema to be held in Gwangju, rather belatedly. It was in mid-Septcmbcr; earlier he sent a general imitation for the faculty of the UP Film Institute (UPFI), but for one reason or another, this was not relayed to me. Perhaps because after a year of absence in the UPFI due to health reasons, I now teach as a Senior Lecturer with a much lighter load; hence, I go there only on Wednesdays when I teach two sections of the same course on Basic Scriptwriting for the whole day.

Joel correctly surmised that the message might not have reached me, so he sent me one personally through my email, for he said that if there was anyone he wanted to bring to Korea to this conference, it was me. Joel had been sort of a mentor to me. Although younger, he holds a doctorate in Cinema Studies. He was also the one who brought me to Cebu some two years earlier also to deliver a paper before the students there, along with four other colleagues. Apparently he has always been impressed with what I do. At the start of the recently concluded semester when he was in town, he slipped into my class without my noticing it to accompany a Korean student who was taking my course to request that I and the members of the class please speak in English most of the time for the benefit of the Korean. He had described me as "a very good teacher, but more than that a beautiful person inside and out"—a most flattering if embarrassing compliment, needless to say, especially since I've always regarded myself as "physically challenged"! Ha-ha-ha!

Of course, I was excited, especially since he said that 1 could use the same paper, with minor alterations, which I presented in an earlier international conference that was held in Manila some three years back. Initially I contained my excitement because I didn't have the money—and still don't—to get there. The money that I could use while there could be the prospect of an honorarium of US$300 for each paper read. Besides, everything else, including the money for all expenses that I would incur in connection with procuring travel documents, I would have to raise first. The reasons were big enough for me to initially ignore the invitation until Joel wrote about some good news: the organizers agreed to completely cover the travel expenses of each Philippine participant, meals and accommodation, including a round-trip ticket to and from Korea. That prospect finally excited me. So I asked Joel if I could present another paper, something which would require me little time to finish. I presented to him my proposal (to prospective publishers) for a book project on genre films in Philippine cinema; it included abstracts

of eight or so essays that I had already written for my master's classes in Media Studies. He chose "Feminized Heroes and Masculinized Heroines: Changing Gender Roles in Contemporary Philippine Cinema." It could be included in one section of the conference, on Sex and Gender in Asian Cinema. He said, to augment my honorarium, he could assign me two papers for presentation. So one which I presented in an earlier international conference called Sangandaan (which assessed the American influence and impact on Philippine art and mass media), he included too. The paper was "Philippine Film Melodramas of the 1950s: Two Case Studies of Accommodation of Hollywood Genre Models," now given a new title: "Philippine Melodramas of the 1950s: Imitation and Indigenization."

I was able to submit the complete papers by October 10, [2006], the deadline; these texts were the ones used for publication in the proceedings released during the conference (I now have a copy so precious to me). So in that book I have two papers. Needless to say, for the oral presentation I made some more changes.

The Preparations

My perpetually harassed condition started with the preparations for the trip to Korea. For one, it was toward the end of the semester and I had required my students to submit their final requirement—a full script for a short film, where before I had just asked them to write a sequence treatment for a full-length film of at least sixty sequences (I finished reading them and thereafter held one-on-one consultations or tutorials with each one of them regarding revisions). In the two sections that I handled, I had a total of thirty students since these were production and laboratory classes with limited enrollment precisely because of their classification. So you can just imagine the volume of texts that my eyes, with their diabetic retinopathy (translation: easily tired because of bloodshot arteries), had to read. And then shortly thereafter, my computation of their final grades was due a week before October ended.

Second, I was also in the midst of a publication project for our prison ministry, a small volume on Restorative Justice, which my friend Rudy Diamante of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and 1 were putting out for an October 10 launching—the same deadline

for my conference papers both of which I still wanted to revise and update! So how about my papers and travel documents?

Luckily, I had my good old partner Jess Evardone to do the legwork for me. Initially, he did the application and follow-ups. Unluckily, we were already pressed for time then—less than one month to work on them. And here we encountered a lot of problems, especially in connection with my passport, wherein after several inquiries which we made several days beforehand, we were told finally what and how things should be done, since I was applying for practically a new passport in lieu of one that had expired some ten years ago! With regard to getting the right information, Lilian Barco, a dear friend at the Cultural Center of the Philippines—am sure you know and remember her, Baby—was most helpful. She also encouraged me a lot, along with Rudy, to keep on following up the papers no matter how futile it might seem. This entailed the procurement of a copy of my birth certificate first at the National Statistics Office and then at the Manila City Hall, work that took Jess and me more than two weeks to accomplish, going back and forth to government agencies to procure supplemental documents like a voter's affidavit, an affidavit of loss, various certifications, etc., since my birth certificate could not be found. It seemed that the earliest records they had were those of the 1950s and I was born three years earlier! That meant money—precious transportation money and whenever I was involved, I had to take a taxi each time; Jess would commute, for he was stronger and healthier physically and had the necessary energy.

Luckily, the amount you and cousin Bong sent had been received; luckily because I had not received my pay then—not a single centavo—from UP. Meanwhile, I had to spend too for my daily needs for food and transportation, laundry, maintenance medicine, and monthly bills. Was I cursing UP! The sem was almost finished and we senior lecturers had yet to be paid. Whatever [the officials'] reasons (they said there were some requests from our college to upgrade the pay rate of some of us and the necessary processing of papers delayed our official appointment as a group), we couldn't understand. It was a simple case, I thought, of institutional incompetence, insensitivity, and arrogance! Needless to say, too, the money you'd sent me was dwindling, since where on earth was I going to get funds for following up papers? Good thing I had been paid the balance for Rudy's publication, since he had advanced months earlier

some money when I would be needing it on account of no payment forthcoming from UP; the money had certainly helped a lot, too.

When finally the Department of Foreign Affairs accepted all the documents I submitted—until the last minute, I had to run to the National Bureau of Investigation for clearance (Rudy graciously allowed an office staff member of his to help me in this regard) and procure my elementary-school academic transcript, for they said they needed old documents to verify that I was really the person applying for a passport, *haay!*—I said to myself: "I just might be able to pull through!" I had also asked Joel and the conference organizers to send over original documents to bolster my visa application in the absence of money-related certifications, like bank statements and ITRs and certificates of employment with presumably inadequate figures—requests that they did not have to provide for my other colleagues who were also invited. I said to myself, almost teary-eyed: "How difficult to grow old and poor in the Philippines!" Prayer was my only recourse and you, and Rudy, and my other friends were requesting other friends as well for prayers for my travel intentions!

Manny Melgar, whom I had not seen for a long time, all of a sudden was renewing acquaintances and graciously offered help. If I needed some money, he told me not to hesitate to ask. Deep inside, I knew that it would come to that, that I would ask for help because I was using up what you had sent me and still did not have any guarantee of funds coming in from UP, although the staff there promised to do everything since I told them that I was leaving and needed all the money I could have for my expenses.

We were all hoping that I could get my pay before I left. Manny's offer was propitious. I was able to procure a ticket with his help. He said he could ask his travel agent to charge my ticket to his office account. That meant a lot since there was a promise of reimbursement when I reached Korea. (Flashforward: originally I opted for Cebu Pacific to get to Incheon, near Seoul, because they offered the lowest fare available—only $350 plus taxes, cheaper than if I took the flight that would get there via Hong Kong. But with Cebu Pacific, I would have to go to Cebu first. There were direct flights from Manila but those would have been with Asiana and Korean Air, which charged the highest—$550 plus taxes. Middle ground would have been Cathay Pacific via Hong Kong, which charged $400-plus, if I needed a second booking in case the visa could not be released on time.)

The difference in air fare should not have mattered since the organizers would be paying for it, but I would still have to raise the necessary amount before I got the reimbursement in Korea; that would have posed a problem, nonetheless. With Manny's offer, everything seemed to be falling in the right place, moneywise—except for the UP thing—so a ray of hope was provided. Any additional money I could spare in the meanwhile, I could use for my dentures and eyeglasses, all of which had required attention much, much earlier but couldn't be addressed for reasons you already know.

When I finally got my new passport, it was during the week that I was intending to leave for Korea, on a Monday afternoon, three days before the original flight sked. Luck of lucks, the following day, Tuesday, was an official holiday, the Muslim Ramadan celebration, in effect subtracting a precious day from my visa application and processing that would have normally taken at least one full week, according to the embassy guidelines. I tried to file my visa application papers on Monday morning, even without my passport. Anyway I thought I could just show the visa officers my claim stub—that I was to get my new passport that afternoon—since I wanted to impress upon them the urgency of really expediting my visa, since I was scheduled to present my first paper that Saturday. They turned me down, saying that they could not attend to my papers without the passport. I agreed with them, but I was still hoping for a shot at the moon, that they would assist me out of pity for my plight.

Also at this point, there was a need to constantly communicate with the organizers to exert pressure on the consul here to expedite my papers. Because I couldn't do the overseas calls since I have no phone at home, Rudy volunteered to do them for me from his office in Intramuros. Besides, he knew that I had to concentrate on the revisions of my papers for my presentations (not to mention the visual aids I still had to prepare) and at this point I was much too tense to be able to concentrate. So he told me to forget everything and concentrate on writing—and if possible, to see my doctor for approval of my plans and for a certification of my fitness for the trip. I was able to get a certification from my doctor in absentia. It was Jess who did the following up! (Much later, after my trip,

I would learn that there was an initial hesitation on the part of my doctor to issue any certification without his having seen me first.)

So it was Rudy burning the lines to Korea and the embassy, while I wrote. At this point I was hoping to find out whether I could get the visa or not. That was torturing me. I was already ready to give up the chance for the sake of my peace of mind. I could feel my blood pressure rising and when Elvie took it once, I had hit 160/100, where my "normal" rate was 120/80. And I was eating more than I should, because of the tension.

Wednesday afternoon, Rudy was able to talk to Korea about the [conference organizers] talking to the consul here. They promised they would, but when he checked on it the following day, they hadn't been able to touch base because the consul was out. The following day, it was my turn to check things out. Rudy and most of his staff would be in Muntinlupa City in connection with the observance of Prison Awareness Week. But he told me to finish my papers in his office, use his computer for my urgent emails to Korea and for my papers, and conduct follow-ups by phone. Preparing for the miraculous release of my visa, I brought along already my luggage for the trip—just in case!

This was when I was told that my application had been rejected. Asked for what reason, the secretary simply answered: "consul's decision." But 1 thought I should call up Korea again and tell them about this development. The [conference organizers] said they were surprised about the rejection and told me that the consul had already agreed. They promised to check again. When I called back they said that there had been a miscommunication and that I could get the visa that afternoon. So I promptly called my travel agent who couldn't get me a ticket until the visa was okay. We were to meet late that afternoon and I had to take the latest flight out of Manila. It would be Korean Air, much more expensive, but direct, leaving 12:02, the first couple of minutes of Saturday morning, the day of my first talk!

When I reached the embassy shortly after lunch, I wanted to talk to the consul personally, to make sure. The staff didn't allow me to do so; instead, they gave me a number and asked me to wait to be called. After about fifteen minutes, they called my number and those of several others. Since I couldn't walk fast and was relying on an aluminum cane

(that Manny M. had gifted me with earlier), others approached the window before I could and I was so happy to see that each person was being given her or his passport one after the other. Visa at last! True enough when I received mine, I had a visa as well. But there was a discrepancy—under "Sex" they had checked "F"! Maybe it wouldn't be noticed, so *bahala na* [let fate decide]. Later my friends would kid me and say that was because in my passport photo, I looked like an East Asian *mama-san*\

By this time, I was without any US dollars to bring. Fortunately, Rudy had 5500 in his personal account. He would lend me the dollars and wanted me to take some extra amount to play safe. Fortunately, too, the first batch of my UP money had finally been released, so I was able to pay Rudy for the first 5300. The remaining 5200 bills I would return when I got home. I had no intention of spending all the 5500 there, neither the whole of 5300, just in case an emergency arose (later I would be glad I brought the dollars).

My objective really was to raise money from whatever small honoraria I would receive, in fact, for my future needs. I might encounter another delay from UP, for example. Going around Gwangju or Seoul, naturally, was out of the question. In the meanwhile, I would just have to be content with whatever I could see when I took a bus, train, or taxi ride—and the conference venue, the Kimdaejung Convention Center. There might be some nice things to see around the center. I'll just go back once more when I've become a millionaire! Another shot at the moon!

KOREA AT LAST!

The trip to Korea from the airport here was most pleasant because I heeded the advice of Rudy, who told me to request for special assistance and a wheelchair. I was given priority in everything and then as it turned out, the destinations were far and had to be reached quickly. The aluminum cane given by Manny also served as a useful prop for my "semi-disabled" drama. Earlier, Rudy with his office car and Jess and Rudy's office staff' who drove the vehicle took me to the airport after I got my plane ticket. I must have looked so helpless and clueless because the last time I went out of the country was some fifteen years earlier, to China! But as 1 said, it was very pleasant! Maybe because 1 was too tired

the previous days and nights, I promptly fell asleep. I woke up when breakfast was served at about 3 a.m.

My ordeal in Korea started, not while I was still at Incheon Airport (for I was again given wheelchair service and whisked off by airport personnel), but when I started to leave the airport. Earlier, when I informed my Korean contact about my final and definite flight and told her that I would be landing at 4:20 a.m., she advised me to take the train to Gwangju instead of the bus which would leave too late at 8 a.m. Since the trip, whether by bus or by train, would be some four hours, she said that I may be able to catch the 5:20 a.m. express train ride or the 7:30 a.m. sked. Unfortunately, our flight was delayed by twenty minutes. I took a bus going to Seoul from the airport because that was where the train station was. Aside from the fact that I didn't know what bus to take and was merely relying on what the Koreans I would approach told me, all of whom spoke very, very little English or none at all, I didn't know that it was a one-hour drive from the airport to Seoul! Definitely I would not be able to catch the 5:20 train. Since the Tourist Information Centers were not yet open by that time, I just had to take my chances, *bahala na!* So when I took the bus, I didn't know for sure that I had boarded the right one and if it would take me to the right station. I sat near the driver and asked him every now and then if we were approaching the station already but he didn't respond. I didn't know if he felt annoyed with me or he just didn't understand what I was saying.

When finally the driver told me that I had to get off already at a certain place, he just indicated that I had to cross the street and walk toward what I presumed would be the station. This he did after he took out my luggage. After the bus had left, I kept asking people there for directions but no one knew how to speak English. Others would just point in some direction. I didn't know if I was getting them right but I did cross the street and walked about two blocks until I spotted a huge building which I presumed would be the train station. Then I saw a flight of stairs that looked like it was two storeys high. My God, how could I climb this when I had to use a cane, I was hand-carrying a shoulder bag, and I had a piece of wheeled luggage that I had to drag along! Fortunately, to one side I found an escalator.

When I reached the station, the place was so huge and I had to pee badly. And further inside where the ticket booths were, so many people

were all in a rush. I wanted to go to the rest room first but no one could understand me even when I was pointing to my groin! Finally I decided to get my ticket first. I wound up talking to the booth lady for some five minutes because we had difficulty communicating with each other. I just sensed that she was telling me that the 5:20 train had left and that the 7:30 train was full, so I settled for the one leaving at 9:20—meaning I would arrive at the Gwangju terminal past 1 p.m., too late for my first talk. What could I do?! And because my bladder was full plus I was tired and tense, some drops were starting to wet my pants before I could reach a toilet that someone was finally able to point out to me. Baby, they walk such long distances! I was glad my pants were colored black so no one noticed the accident I just had.

After visiting the toilet I was able to find a tourist-information center that was open. They could speak and understand English but not the type of American English that we use, so we still had some difficulty in conversing. My train would still be leaving after an hour so I managed to pray the rosary. By then I knew already which gate would lead me to my train. What I discovered later was from that level, I still had to descend nearly two storeys' worth of steps that were deep and narrow. I was afraid that the luggage (I was traveling light but my stuff added up) I was pulling behind me would slip and drag me instead through to the subway level. I was having difficulty, more so because I wanted to reach the platform before the train left without me again. Luckily, an executive-looking elderly Korean must have seen how much difficulty I was having and volunteered to help me! He brought my luggage to ground level and waited for me. Of course I thanked him profusely. Earlier I was cursing Korea and the Koreans, but it was precisely a Korean who helped me with my luggage!

When the train stopped before me, I jumped into the nearest coach, put my luggage into the compartment overhead, and looked for my seat number. But someone was occupying it; meanwhile there were empty seats, so I opted for the one near the end and exit point, but when the train started to move and the conductor started to make the rounds, I was told that my seat was in Coach 12 and I was in Coach 8! I was told to vacate the seat I was occupying. I was begging the conductor to let me sit there where I was, but he was adamant. So I tried to tell him that I was sick and I even told him I would collapse! I exploited my acting skills

and even presented my doctor's certificate, but still no go. I stayed put until someone claimed the seat. I had no choice except to leave but since I couldn't walk four coaches away, I pleaded to just stay in that area between two coaches, where there was a small seat for the train conductor. Then I just saw and heard the conductor talking to a man. Apparently he requested the guy to take my seat in Coach 12 and I was given the man's seat nearby, in the same Coach 8! By this time, I was feeling heavy in the chest, exhausted and tense. Crying silently, I asked myself why I had to go all the way to Korea only to suffer this way! 1 took medicine to help me breathe better. I was feeling so sleepy but I struggled. I didn't want the prospect of shutting my eyes and never waking up again!

When I reached the terminal in Gwangju, I thought things would be better but on the contrary, there were again many steps to climb, upward and downward. Fortunately this time, the upper areas featured escalators for the disabled. And because it was midday, the Tourist Information Center was opened. I asked where I could take a cab to bring me to Noblesse Hotel where I had reservations. It turned out to be some distance from the terminal. The woman at the center wrote the name and address of the destination in Korean and instructed me to give it to the taxi driver. When I asked where I could take a taxi, she pointed to a waiting area where there was a long line of people waiting for a taxi! Oh no, 1 thought, not again!

Fortunately, a taxi driver approached me. It must have been the equivalent of our "colorum" [illegal] cab. I told myself: I'll get ripped off, but what the heck! I might be able to reimburse the expense and at least I'll be able to get a ride. He took two passengers, I and another Korean who did not speak English, but I could sense that they were discussing where my hotel could be. Then the driver would call someone by mobile phone until finally they told me that they already knew the location. It turns out their taxi drivers were considerate. Because of our language differences I wound up just showing them a handful of Korean won and asking them to pick the right amount of money. I think they're honest because they would pick an amount and would issue me change! Of course, I was overwhelmed because their won is calculated by the thousands—$100 is nearly W 100,000 or $1 is W 1,000. So my train fare was W33,000 and my taxi fare from the airport was some W4,000 or more. I was only too glad when finally I reached the hotel.

I took a bath after resting for a while and proceeded to the convention center W2,000 away from the hotel. Though I called to tell the organizers that I had arrived, no one picked me up. They assumed that everybody knew everything! *Haaay, naku!* Also by then, they were extremely busy already attending to the needs of the various modules. When I got there, I thought our module would be on the second floor but then I learned that it was on the fourth floor. There were elevators but I still had to walk to where they were—a bit too far for me. Later I would learn that the escalators that seemingly were not in operation were actually working. One just had to step on the landing and it would automatically operate! That way they save on energy when they're not in use! He-he-he! I was thoroughly clueless.

Of course my colleagues and Joel were happy to finally see me materialize in front of them. But I was already very, very late for the presentation of my first paper. That was the time I first felt really tired. But at least I survived! By then Rudy had called up the organizers, since although he was one of those really egging me to go on with my papers no matter how dim the prospect was of getting a visa on time (like you, he so wanted me to be able to get out of the country), he said that after he had brought me to the airport, reality sunk in. He said he began to worry how I would manage to make it, taking the train alone by myself in a strange land and not necessarily in the pink of health. He said he couldn't sleep because he had to keep praying. And since he was feeling guilty' the first thing he did the following morning was to check if I had arrived safely and intact! I myself was surprised how it all could have happened.

KOREA, SECOND DAY

After the series of sessions that Saturday, 1 immediately went back to the hotel alone. Some of my colleagues stayed behind at the convention center premises for some of the functions that evening or to go around the city I intended to work on my second paper and edit it for a fifteen-minute oral presentation. Besides, I hadn't had lunch yet. So I had dinner delivered early to my room. Shortly thereafter, I was feeling tired so I decided to sleep first. But I opened all the lights in the room and turned on the TV to be sure that I'd wake up early enough so that 1 could still work on my presentation for the following day. I also drank

plenty of water so my full bladder could wake me up in the middle of the night!

From my window, I could enjoy the city lights that remained on till the wee hours of the morning in all those buildings that surrounded the hotel. So I opened my window, not realizing that it had no secondary glass, only a screen—which was a mistake because it was colder outside than inside the room; but the cold wind of near-winter was an effective wake-up material! I was able to work from 2 a.m. till morning.

I went to the convention center and seminar room earlier than the 10 a.m. schedule since I wanted to test the visual aids that I'd asked a student of mine, James Amparo, to prepare for me. These consisted of film clips from my subject local films, although I was thinking of reading my paper in its entirety first and if I still had time, just play the clips afterward. Unfortunately, I was unable to show anything because my reading alone already exceeded the time by five minutes! The day before, because I wasn't able to read my paper, the film clips which Gardo Versoza, my actor-friend and a talent of Ed Instrella, prepared for me weren't shown either! But then at past 10 a.m. the other panelists still hadn't arrived. They probably slept late, I thought. Good thing I had colleagues from UP who also apparently wound up here by accident.

We looked for the rest and they were on the second floor. Again, changes had been made regarding the venue without everybody being informed. I almost missed my slot again because when we entered our seminar room, the keynote lecture was midway through and I was supposed to speak first in the opening panel for that day! Joel himself was getting frantic, wondering what was happening to me this time! Another cause of tension, not to mention our confusion in descending to the second floor and looking for the right seminar room! My heart surely got a beating there in Korea, I thought. When it was my turn to speak, I chose to do so from the panel table, although others used the podium across the room. I wouldn't have been able to stand for twenty minutes; I would have had to sit down. Since I was with my "prop"—my aluminum canc—they readily understood. I delivered my paper in lightning speed. I made sure though that what I was saying was understandable; wcll-cnunciatcd I thought! I wished!

Someone approached me later. He was the keynote lecturer for the day, Jonathan Hall of the University of California at Irvine's

Department of Comparative Literature and Film and Media Studies. He said he liked my paper and befriended me quickly.[16] He was friendly to us Filipinos and had seen some of our films that made the rounds in festivals abroad. Later during lunch, I would be able to talk to a few others. Honestly, I thought my paper was relatively lightweight compared to some of those that were delivered. Some were Ph.D. holders so their material foregrounded theoretical concepts. Mine had some types of conceptual frameworks but these were more simply formulated—which according to some observers was why they found it interesting. Or so they said, and so I hoped.

There were two more two-hour sessions after ours so the session for the second and final day finished late in the afternoon. We were then invited to partake of a farewell dinner in some downtown area, but before we went to the place in the bus that would take us there, the honoraria and reimbursements were distributed in the form of managers' checks of W 100,000 each or SI00. I received only six checks or $600 and the coordinator said that that was it. Although earlier we were told that the amount of honoraria to be given might be lowered, I didn't know it would be to that extent! So I approached Joel and told him that what I had gotten wouldn't be enough to cover even my plane fare! I was not the only one in our group to have the same problem. A commotion started. Some were even promised their checks the following day.

Joel might have felt personally responsible—though he should have not—so he gave me two additional W 100,000 checks from his own honorarium when we were already in the restaurant. At least the total of $800 would cover my plane fare plus a little over $ 100 for my honorarium for the two papers. No longer covered were reimbursements for my transportation fare while in Korea, like my bus fare to and from Incheon Airport, from the train station in Seoul to Gwangju, taxi fare, and trips back to the airport. I spent nearly $200 in all, including the airport terminal fee of P550 in Manila. Apparently, my payment was based on the plane

[16]Editor's note: Jonathan Hall was one of two individuals (along with the other keynote lecturer, Laikwan Pang) who selected the conference's best-paper winners. In the graduate-student category, Velasco's "'Feminized' Heroes and 'Masculinized' Heroines" was short-listed and came close to being the only prize-winner from the Philippines.

fare I reported when I was still booked with Cebu Pacific and then with Cathay Pacific. Korean Air was my last resort, but it was the only one available after my visa was finally confirmed. I told the coordinator about this last booking on the day that I arrived there, by phone. I was able to get my tickets early evening of Friday, a few hours before I went to the airport! I guess they were unable to attend to everything because of so many other tasks that had to be done, although personally I thought the whole thing was a bit disorganized. That was one more cause of my difficulties, many of which were unnecessary if only the event had been better organized and the organizers had not been too presumptuous in assuming that things were already clear when they were not at all.[17] This was the first time that they were handling a weeklong cultural and academic event of that magnitude. Our Art and Cinema module was just one of the ten or so modules; in fact, it was held on the last two days of the entire conference-festival. Not too bad, considering that in some conferences where you also read your paper, you don't get any honorarium at all. And to think that the papers I presented were recycled stuff! Not too bad then.

I had intended to talk to the coordinator the day after but changed my mind after I was given the additional $200. First off, it was a risk that might have not prospered. Joel himself was going back to the university where he was teaching, hours away from Gwangju, early the following morning since their classes would already resume that day. Then I thought that although I could stay one day more in my hotel, what for? Everybody else was leaving since they had arrived earlier and since the accommodation was free only for four days, they had maximized their stay already. What would I be able to do by myself? I couldn't hang

[17] Editor's note: Velasco's observations were on the mark. What compounded the problem, for him and everyone else, was that the organizers decided during the last minute to slash amounts previously approved for the participants, possibly because of budgetary overruns. Those who were receiving travel reimbursements had their paper honoraria "folded in" with their plane fare, so in effect Velasco was getting full reimbursement for all travel expenses (based on his Cathay-Pacific estimate), including expenses in Korea, rounded off to the lower-hundredth dollar. As coordinator of the film conference (the "coordinator" in Velasco's text was a different official), my functions did not extend to the disbursement of funds, although I maintained in several official exchanges that all my recommendations for fuller reimbursements-plus-honoraria payments were initially cleared by higher-ups.

around by myself since first of all, the walking distances were so great and taxi fare cost so much. Even with a companion I'd be embarrassed because I feel that I become a burden to whoever is with me—I have to be waited for and assisted. Even if no one complains and in fact a few oblige me, like the night of the dinner party when we were asked to walk some ways because of another change in venue, we got left behind by the rest although my colleagues from UP and Jonathan Hall waited for me. I didn't want to use up the small amount of pocket money I still had with me. As it was, I didn't really lose financially but what I made was way below my expectations. And I still had my loans to repay! *Haay—what a life!*

Besides, in the morning, we still had to have our manager's checks encashed and the Korean won bills exchanged for dollars. I didn't want to risk the possibility that there'd be no foreign exchange at Incheon Airport (there was, as it turned out), and I wanted to ease the tension of holding onto a thick wad of W800,000! The first thing I did was to move up my homeward flight schedule from the 31st to the 30th of October. When I was able to do this, I sent Rudy an email that I would be arriving that evening instead of the following day. He and Jess were supposed to pick me up and later he told me that he called up Elvie here at home to inform everyone that I was coming back home ahead of the original schedule.

I chose to leave midday Monday for Seoul along with colleagues from UP who were also going to Seoul and staying there overnight. Since they were leaving Korea early the following morning for Hong Kong and Macao, I would be alone for practically one whole day if I had opted for my original flight schedule. That plus the extra expense for a hotel in Seoul convinced me to leave ahead of the others. My companions brought me to the bus station, because they were taking the train this time. Since it was past 1 p.m. when we reached the station, I had to rush again. The bus ride to Incheon Airport would take four hours and I had to be there three hours before our 8 p.m. flight. In my hurry my eyeglasses fell out from my breast pocket without anyone of us noticing it. So when I got my ticket, I couldn't discern which gate to go to because there were several of them. I had to ask again and contend with difficulties in English again and rush again. My bus was about to leave when I arrived. I was the last to board it.

Later I would discover that in the same bus there were two foreigners whom I had befriended earlier. One was a German teaching also at the UPFI (whom I had not previously met in Diliman since I'd been going there only once a week), and the other one a half-Filipino living in Cubao. They took care of me from the time we got off the bus to the time we were attending to our tickets. By this time, however, I was given a special concession as a disabled person. The wheelchair service helped me get through ahead of the other two. Later, one of them, Raul Pertierra, an anthropologist who teaches at the Ateneo de Manila University, was telling me that both of them thought that I was amazingly brave in venturing to travel alone, given my physical condition. If they knew that I had been unaware of all the difficulties involved and that I would not be able to get the 8600 I was hoping for, I would have refused to go! Ha-ha-ha!

So, in short, tension and physical exhaustion consumed me up to the last moment. The airport was heaven compared to my experiences outside it! At least, I told myself, I had in hand a thick volume that contained both of my conference papers. Later, Raul would ask if he could have my paper on changing gender roles in contemporary Philippine cinema published in *Filipina,* an international journal that he was editing. Of course, I felt flattered by his suggestion! Earlier, I met the chair of the Department of Arts and Letters at UP Baguio, who was with our contingent. I told her I was interested in teaching at Baguio and she said that they were really looking for some lecturers in Broadcast Media. My graduate course, as you know, is Media Studies so she said I should send in my application at once. I'd like to explore that possibility: I would teach six units every Wednesday in Diliman and then probably travel to Baguio at midnight, arriving early Thursday morning. My classes could be on Fridays, so I could stay until about Monday evening at the latest. I would have to look for a dorm, too. I figured that after deducting expenses for travel and board and lodging, I might have something left over, at least for my meds! Change of environment's my goal. I also want to meet non-Metro Manila students. I was impressed a few years ago by students at UP Cebu, who were enthusiastic about film and media. I'm sure every weekend I'll be entertaining friends from Manila! Isn't that exciting? Actually, later, I would also like to teach in Cebu or Iloilo or Davao—there are UP Colleges there.

Reflections, Insights, and Discernment

While I was undergoing my physical ordeals in Korea, I would ask myself why I had to go to a strange land only to experience these "unplcasantrics." Why did God make me go through all these things? My faith was solid: He willed it because He wanted me to learn something. He willed it because He knew that the Korean trip would be good for me. But why must I learn things through this baffling way that seemed to be the exact opposite of what I was expecting? What were His messages for me from the very start, from the preparation stage where I already experienced hardship in order to get what I wanted in the end? I couldn't help asking these questions. I had enough time to reflect, during the bus and train rides, the waiting time at the stations, even while on the plane.

Laidback, Complacent, and Not Driven

First, I realized a few important things about myself, my attitude, my stance. This I learned right from the preparation stage. I wanted to go to Korea but was so halfhearted I didn't make it an important goal. Good if it came along, but if not that would have been fine too, wouldn't miss it! Honestly, you Baby and Rudy were more enthusiastic about it than I was. If it had been up to me, I'd have just let go—regarding the whole exercise as a nuisance since I didn't even have enough money to start with. When you offered to lend me some money first, I started reconsidering, especially when Joel added that I would practically be going on organizers' expenses. That emboldened me to borrow additional money from Cousin Bong who responded immediately. Even Manny's travel agent said, when I told her that the conference organizers would shoulder my travel and board and lodging expenses, especially so when our Korean conference organizers talked to the consul here to expedite my visa application: "You must be an important person for them to do that or your papers must be important inputs in the conference!" In a way, this was true. But the context is this—I wasn't the only one granted those types of privileges. Nonetheless, why should I have hesitated, especially since I know that all my friends were praying hard that I would be able to leave? That would have been disappointing of me.

But Baby, in hindsight, I took much after Mommy, didn't I? She was readily accepting of things that came her way, to the point of not

fighting for much of what she might have wanted for herself Although I'm sure she had also fought hard for things that to her were really important, foremost of which was getting our house in the city, maintaining and improving it, and of course seeing all of us through school on a government employee's measly salary and whatever Daddy would give or contribute—for the most part, she was simply contented. Even at her deathbed, I strongly suspect she willed to go rather than survive and subsequently burden (to her mind) all of us.

Such ready surrender to fate in itself is not bad, in fact at times this is good for one is cushioned against frustration and disappointment; one also does not overreach or go overboard, but sometimes this attitude becomes counterproductive since one tends to be complacent and practically uncaring if precious opportunities knock on one's door. Take my case. You were right when you said: "You have to decide what it is that you really want and what you think you should have for yourself and then work for it relentlessly" or something to that effect, when you had wanted me to go on and work at getting my travel papers and documents no matter how hopeless it may appear, and then pray hard. Rudy had another way of putting it: "I believe that for something to happen, we have to will it first and work hard at it before God helps us. He has to know that we really want it before He gives us anything." So, therefore, He himself is taking the cue from us. But that's not how I am. I tend to be rather laidback, I realize now. At the pretext of protecting myself from disappointment, I would desire things halfheartedly And most of the time, I wouldn't get what I want—maybe because I didn't desire it strongly enough.

I guess something similar happened in the case of my unfinished M.A. I had a few grades of "incomplete" because 1 lacked time to attend to completing them, since to me my obligations to my own students constituted a priority, but a few of my teachers were more than willing to give me some concessions because they knew what I was capable of doing; they would give me easy terms, but I said to myself, "Forget it—I don't need titles and degrees after my name." Because I still had to complete my academic requirements, I was not allowed to take my comprehensive examination. I played hurt, rather than fight for it by doing what was necessary! I rationalized that I don't need an M.A. in order to be a good teacher, because I know that I am a good teacher, and

most of my students tell me so, in their evaluations toward the end of each semester. But without the degree I wouldn't receive a higher pay scale—that's a requirement I just can't lick! Of course, that wasn't the only reason I did not relentlessly pursue my M.A. The other reasons I shall dwell on later.

The Power of Prayers Especially When They Come from a Community

During the preparation stage, when we would follow up travel papers and documents, I was made aware of the power of prayers. Many times, there were many obstacles that were thrown my way that made it extremely difficult and trying to acquire all the necessary documents. Each time, however, I would get what I needed in the nick of time—my passport, visa, and all those documents that were required to get them. Often I'd think I'd reached the end, but something would come through subsequently. I attribute it to the prayers of a lot of my friends, and of friends of friends. Rudy asked for them, from people who knew me. Many would text me and tell me they were praying for me and assure me that I would be able to get my documents in time. Later some would confess: "Why were we praying that Joven would get to leave when we know that he is not that healthy and strong enough to make such a trip? He would be going to a strange land, where no one would be fetching him and attending to him from the airport and that he would be traveling alone by train in a strange land?"

I especially remember what Ed Instrella texted me; he said, "When someone prays for a person, God sends many angels to that person!" He even included graphics of a multitude of wings. True enough, I thought and felt many "angels" were sent my way: kind strangers, well-meaning and helpful friends, all would help me, sometimes from out of nowhere, sometimes old friends suddenly renewing acquaintances like Manny Melgar and Larry Capuras. Manny would be responsible for a major contribution, the deferred payment of the plane fare that escalated as a result of the late issuance of my visa and the last-minute change of airline. New friendships were made, like with Christine Carlos, who encouraged me to persist with my visa follow-up when we bumped into each other at the Korean Embassy. She had a similar problem and was responsible in initiating contact between our Korean organizers and the consulate here. Gerry, an officemate of Rudy, who helped me with the

various affidavits and powers of attorney—those meant a lot too. There were a lot more! All kindred spirits!

When I finally received my visa, my cell phone was busy with congratulatory text messages, telling me how much God loves me and that all along they knew I would get it! It was all a community effort, friends praying in unison. Undoubtedly yours were a part of all that! Unbelievable but true and I just can't dismiss it as coincidence. Rudy called it a small miracle at work! He credited it to God first and to the Blessed Mother second. Didn't I tell you too myself that I was also asking for the intercession of Mommy and Aunties Sylvia and Ening—and that with you here on Earth and them with the Blessed Mother in heaven, I was relying on very potent women power? Ha-ha-ha! Effective!

Insights on My Health and My "Death Wish"

The physical ordeal that I had to experience made me realize one important thing about my health. I may be somehow disabled or physically challenged, but I still do have a good heart. I survived Korea, didn't I, despite the high tension and physical exhaustion? Maybe it's about time to refrain from thinking that any moment I would die. Maybe I would anyway, but who is not in the same situation? All of us may go anytime God wills it, that's why we should always be prepared. But to be immobilized by that thought is defeatist. That was my perspective, after my two mild localized strokes, especially so after Lito Tiongson (not to be confused with Nic, a different colleague) died. He was younger and healthier and was so concerned about my diabetic condition, but he had to go earlier after he contracted cancer.

That development debilitated me more—I was thinking surely I'd be next!—practically giving up whatever I wanted for myself—like being able to direct again for film, perhaps? Or to be able to write more scripts. I would tell myself, I am not as lucky as some of those I know—or not as talented! But what of it? I never aspired to be Number 1 anyway, just to be able to do work that can make me exploit my talent and creativity and imagination, to earn me some form of recognition and good money to maintain even just a modest lifestyle! But I never did anything decisive and dramatic about these. Sometimes I'd despair before God whenever it seemed that I was not getting the breaks I thought I deserved, whereas others seemed to get theirs with relative ease. But I would realize, it's

God who has the right to question me because He had given me talents that I still have to fully explore and maximize.

I have three or four script projects that remain unfinished; I should finish writing them even without a concrete project in sight. I have directed both for theater and for television, and those early works that I thought were mere exercises but nonetheless won awards one way or the other had turned to be *the* works of my lifetime, terminal works, not mere exercises—I'd never been able to follow through on them. I chicken out at the mere thought that my work might not be acceptable to people whose tastes and opinions I respect, rather than pursue a project that I felt strongly about regardless of what others may think. I wait for the praise and approval of some friends and where none is forthcoming, I torture myself into thinking that maybe they think that I am not even half as talented as I thought I was.

I turned to teaching and discovered I liked it so much, my Celestine Prophecy, a calling that Mommy was not able to pursue herself, having graduated from the Philippine Normal School only to end up a government employee and secretary to the big bosses in their office. But I stopped pursuing an M.A. degree when I was just a few steps away! I had been daydreaming rather than setting visions and pursuing them!

Of course, I had little successes here and there, like in publication, but that had never been my goal. But now I earn a bit from it, and I have learned to love it too. I have many other preoccupations that brought me small successes. I must be thankful for them without, however, losing sight of my real goals in life! One important lesson, too, I learned after Korea: while it is true that my poor financial condition—a part of the package that I decided to take early on in my life when I chose the career path I would pursue, he-he-he!—has rendered me largely immobile when at times I thought I should be more active, it should not really pose a stumbling block since it seemed that by God's grace, kindred souls come along and are only too willing to help. God will provide, as I mentioned, through angels that He would send. There are plenty of them and they have made me feel their presence during my Korean experience—they come in various forms and shapes, not necessarily all with money offerings and dolcouts as they extend their helping hands: relatives and loved ones, old friends and acquaintances, new friends, and even complete strangers.

So it isn't true that I am not getting the proper breaks in life, a thought that made me feel desperate and frustrated, to the point of practically having a death wish. My first stroke was probably a result of that—I was overeating and was being reckless with my health because I thought nothing was happening with my life. But God gave me another chance. And then one more. And then this Korean experience! He was practically holding my head to the ground so I could reflect and awaken! I am glad that with His immense grace, I was able to discern what His messages were behind Korea.

I may have not seen much of the country I visited—practically nothing at all, but I saw much, much more—I saw myself and my entire situation in the proper context. I have seen my shortcomings and for the first time I recognize and admit them. I need to change certain attitudes that have inhibited my full flowering! At the age of sixty?! Why not? With God's help, nothing is too late or impossible! Wasn't that the message behind the photo-finished documents? I hope God gives me another chance—and the breaks, too? Please continue to pray for me!

Resolutions

After reflection and discernment come the resolutions! And so I resolve—

- To finish my book project. Except for the introduction, I have almost completed the contents of the book, titled *Huwaran/ Hulmahan: Reading Stars, Icons, and Genre Films in Philippine Cinema.* It is a collection of eight extended essays on the subjects suggested in the title, most of which I'd written during my master's study. Some of my colleagues have read it, and they're enthusiastic about it. Am presenting a proposal to possible publishers, although I'm inclined to approach the UP Press, since they're looking now for titles to publish for the centennial celebration of the university in 2008! I plan to finish the introduction that will complete the text of my book this December [2007].
- To finish my M.A. Having talks now with the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in my college. Will keep you posted about it. A priority. Can be done within next year [2008]. Will continue to teach as my main source of living. Personally, I want to hop to various universities and colleges around the country. Baguio could be it for starters.
- To do a digital film by next year. I have already talked to some of my students who will serve as members of my artistic and production staff. Will be working within possible local institutional and private funding. I will write the script with two of my students early next year and will direct the film with some of my students again as my associate directors. We'll do it workshop style—we'll learn as we do! Tentative title is: *Luv U, Nay! (Pahingi nga Pong Pangload)* [Love U, Mom! (Please Pass on Some Money for my Cell Phone)], a fun movie with sociological undercurrents.
- To finish writing the following unfinished scripts or see through the logical conclusion of some of them—[up to] production:

  Hostiyang Bigas [Rice-Based Sacred Host]. A rock musical on [Spanish-era martyr priests] Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora. Currently at the scenario stage already. Three or five years from now?

  Bigkis [Girdle]. Theater adaptation of Nick Joaquin's novel, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels.* Script completed. Just awaiting production. Maybe late next year?

  Anak ng Pari [Child of a Priest]. A film script on married priests and the social responsibility of the Catholic Church in a Third World country. Originally written for Gil Portes, in the scenario stage. If Gil is not using it for a near-future film project, I will ask him to give it back to me for direction and production. This is one film I'd like to write and direct. For next year, maybe?

  Ang Pangalan Ko'y Urduja. [My Name's Urduja]. Film script, expansion of a telecine script written and produced before for PETA and Channel 7. Interaction between a contemporary woman and the mythical character, Princess Urduja; a contemporary woman's individuation empowered by a legendary character. Late next year or two years from now; actually either this or *Anak ng Pari* for late next year.

So you see, if God wills that I finish all of these projects, aside from the entirely new ones that I am confident He is sending my way, then I may have several more years to live! Ha-ha-ha! Thank you so very much, Baby, and to everyone who helped and encouraged me!

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Cabreira, Danilo, dir. *Asboobs: Asal Bobo* [Dumb Behavior]. Perf. Eddie Garcia, Jeffrey Quizon, Paolo Contis, Vhong Navarro, Nancy Castiglione, Jenny Miller, Long Mejia, Bearwin Meily, Rico J. Puno, Bayani Casimiro II, King Gutierrez, Joey Marquez, Dennis Padilla, Pekto, Halina Perez, Derick Rasalan. Nu Art, 2003.

Cajayon, Gene, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *The Debut.* Co-scriptwriter John Manal Castro. Perf. Dante Basco, Jayson Schaal, Brian Card, Mindy Spence, Nicole Hawkyard, Brandon Martinez, Ernie Zarate, Gina Alajar, Emelita Moll, Gina Honda, Tirso Cruz III, Bernadette Balagtas, Rawlins Apilado, Derek Basco, Joy Bisco, Luis Gonzales, Robbie Pagatpatan, Emmanuel Coquia, Isaiah Dacio, Abe Pagtama, Fe de los Reyes, Roland Kerr, Darion Basco, Dion Basco, Conrad Cimarra, Eddie Garcia, Blas Lorenzo, Alisha Floresca, GiGi Floresca, Leslye Maninang. 5 Card, Celestial Pictures LLC, GMA Network Films, National Asian American Telecommunications Association, Visual Communications, 2000.

Caluag, Tito II. "Good Night, Sweet Prince...." Eulogy for Rico Yan. April 4, 2002. Posted on Saint Paul College of Manila High School Alumnae Network. December 29, 2007 <http://paulinians.homestead.com/files/goodnight. htm>.

Cameron, James, dir. and scriptwriter. *Titanic.* Perf. Leonardo di Caprio, Kate Winslet, Billy Zane, Kathy Bates, Frances Fisher, Gloria Stuart, Bill Paxton. Twentieth Century-Fox, Paramount, and Lightstorm, 1997.

Carlos, Luciano, dir. and scriptwriter. *Inday Bote* [Bottle Girl]. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Maricel Soriano, William Martinez, Richard Gomez, Nova Villa, Roderick Paulate, Dely Atay-Atayan, Max Alvarado, Christopher Paloma. Regal, 1985.

——------, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Inday, Inday sa Balitaw* [Girl, Girl of the Song]. Go-scriptwriter Jose Javier Reyes. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Maricel Soriano, Susan Roces, Roderick Paulate, Matet de Leon, Eddie Gutierrez, William Martinez. Regal, 1986.

Caro, Niki, dir. and scriptwriter. *Whale Rider.* Keisha Castle-Hughes, Rawiri Paratene, Vicky Haughton, Cliff Curtis, Grant Roa, Mana Taumaunu, Rachel House, Taungaroa Emile, Tammy Davis, Mabel Wharekawa-Burt, Rawinia Clarke, Tahei Simpson, Roimata Tamana, Elizabeth Skeen, Tyrone White. ApolloMedia, New Zealand Film Commission, New Zealand Film Production Fund, New Zealand On Air, Pandora Filmproduktion, South Pacific Features, 2003.

Carpio, Jan Philippe V, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Balay Daku* [Huge House]. Co-scriptwriter Mae Astrid Tobias. Perf. Joy Ramirez, Mandy Alimon, Glynn Medina, Lindy Osmeña, Riega Dioneo, Nadjah Lee Española, Magdalena Siva, Dodo Baquiller, Judith Victorino, Rudy de la Peña, Tyrel Storm Gamboa, Insiang Johnson, Paul Moles, Eric J. Dima-ala, Michael Joseph David. Jan Philippe V Carpio and Maitet V Carpio, 2002.

Castillo, Celso Ad., dir. *Ang Alamat* [The Legend]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Pilar Pilapil, Paquito Diaz, Romy Diaz, Frankie Navaja, Jr., Jose Padilla, Jr., Lito Anzures, Nello Nayo, Vic Varrion, Robert Talby, Johnny Long, Belo Borja, Nonoy de Guzman, Chito Guerrero, SOS Daredevils. FPJ, 1972.

———, dir. and scriptwriter. *Asedillo.* Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Barbara Perez, Jose Romulo, Carlos Padilla, Jr., Rebecca, Imelda Hanan. FPJ, 1971.

———, dir. *Burlesk Queen.* Scriptwriter Mauro Gia Samonte. Perf. Vilma Santos, Roily Quizon, Leopoldo Salcedo, Joonee Gamboa, Rosemarie Gil, Canuplin, Rio Locsin. Ian, 1977.

---------, dir. *Nympha.* Perf. Maricar de Mesa, John Apacible, Antonio Aquitania, Tirso Cruz III, Gloria Diaz, Dino Guevarra, Rhona Reyes. Regal, 2003.

——------, dir. *Santo Domingo* [Saint Dominic]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Boots Anson-Roa, Alona Alegre. FPJ, 1972.

——------, dir. *Virgin People III.* Scriptwriter Ron Bryant. Perf. Barbara Milano, Allona Amor, Monina Perez, Celso Ad. Castillo, Mon Confiado, Allen Dizon, Richard Quan. Heraxus and Emulsion, 2003.

Cayado, Tony, dir. *Mga Ligaw na Bulaklak* [The Wild Flowers]. Scriptwriter Emmanuel H. Borlaza. Perf. Susan Roces, Romeo Vasquez, Daisy Romualdez, Tony Marzan, Eddie Garcia, Marlene Dauden, Nelly Bayion, Bella Flores, Martin Marfil, Bert Olivar. Sampaguita, 1957.

Cayetano, Lino, Mae Czarina Cruz, Maryo J. de los Reyes, and Edgar Mortiz, dirs. *MgaAnghel na WalangLangit* [Angels Without a Heaven]. TV series. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Nash Aguas, Nikki Bagaporo, Carl John Barrameda, Ana Capri, Bob de la Cruz, Marianne de la Riva, Johnny Delgado, Ryan Eigenmann, Bella Flores, Igi Boy Flores, Erich Gonzales, Angelo Hagan, Cheska Iñigo, Agot Isidro, E. J. Jallorina, Alfred Labatos, Nathan Lopez, John Vladimir Manalo, Alma Moreno, Miles Ocampo, Eliza Pineda, Gigette Reyes, Racquel Reyes, Lovely Rivero, Marissa Sanchez, Sylvia Sanchez, Sharlene San Pedro. ABS-CBN, 2005.

Ceylan, Nuri Bilge, dir. and scriptwriter. *Uzak* [Distant]. Perf. Muzaffer Özdemir, Emin Toprak, Zuhal Gencer, Nazan Kirilmis, Feridun Koc, Fatma Ceylan, Arif Asgi, Ahmet Bugay, Ayhan Ergiirsel, Erhan Ersoy, Cemal Giilas, Engin Hepsev, Ercan Kesal, Hakan Kuldan, Asli Orhun, Ahmet Özyurt, Bahaltin Surler, Ebru Yapici. NBC Ajans and NBC, 2002.

Chionglo, Mel, dir. *Sibak* [Midnight Dancers]. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Ryan Aristorenas, Perla Bautista, Noni Buencamino, Richard Cassity, Gandong Cervantes, Luis Cortez, Lawrence David, Cherry Pie Picache. Tangent, 1994.

———, dir. *Twilight Dancers.* Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Tyron Perez, Cherry Pie Picache, Allen Dizon, Lauren Novero, Ana Capri, William Martinez, Arnel Ignacio, Joel Lamangan, Jerry Lopez Sineneng, Glaiza de Castro, J. E. Sison, I. C. Mendoza, Terence Bayion, Kris Martinez, Chester Nolledo. Centerstage, 2006.

---------, dir. *Ubos na angLuha Ko* [I've Cried Out All My Tears]. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Susan Roces, Gretchen Barretto, Sheryl Cruz, Romnick Sarmenta, Joey Galvez, Mario Montenegro, Gardo Versoza. Seiko, 1991.

——------, dir. *Xerex.* Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Aubrey Miles, Jon Hall, Kalani Ferreria, Jake Roxas, Allen Dizon, Ynez Veneracion, Luis Gonzales, Liza Diño, Rodolfo Solis, Jr., Karlo Enriquez, Raquel Villavicencio, Dexter Doria, Armida Siguion-Reyna, G. Ford Lara. Regal, 2003.

Cinco, Manuel, dir. *Karnabal* [Carnival]. Scriptwriters Ronwaldo Reyes and Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Paquito Diaz, Max Alvarado, Chichay, Lito Anzures, Dencio Padilla, Frankie Navaja, Jr., Johnny Long, Robert Talby, Nonoy de Guzman. FPJ, 1973.

Clavio, Arnold, host. *Unang Hirit* [First Strike]. Daily morning show. Dir. Roehl L. Jamon. GMA-7, 1999- .

Clavio, Arnold, and Vicky Morales, hosts. *Saksi: Liga ng Katotohanan* [Eyewitness: League of Truth]. TV daily news program. GMA-7, 1995- .

Concio, Lupita [Lupita Aquino-Kashiwahara], dir. *Magandang Gabi sa Inyong Lahat* [Good Evening to Everyone]. Scriptwriter Orlando Nadres. Perf. Nora Aunor, Tirso Cruz III, Imelda Ilanan, Cristina Reyes, Butz Aquino, Romy Mallari, Virginia Montes, Ricardo "Bebong" Osorio. Premiere, 1976.

———, dir. *Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo* [Once a Winged Ant / Once a Moth]. Scriptwriter Marina Feleo-Gonzales. Perf. Nora Aunor, Jay Hagan, Gloria Sevilla, Perla Bautista, Eddie Villamayor, Paquito Salcedo, Lily Miraflor, Leo Martinez, Nanding Fernandez, Luz Fernandez, German Moreno, Carlos Padilla, Jr., Michael Sandico, Ricky Sandico, Leopoldo Salcedo. Premiere, 1976.

Creed, Barbara. "Film and Psychoanalysis." Hill and Gibson 75-88.

Cruz, Abraham, dir. *Totoy Bato* [Tough Totoy]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Lita Vasquez, Van de Leon, Paquito Diaz, Vic Diaz, Dencio Padilla, Lito Anzures. FIJ, 1977.

Cruz, Emil Jr., and Jerry Lopez Sineneng, dirs. *Mara Clara: The Movie.* Perf. Judy Ann Santos, Gladys Reyes, Wowie de Guzman, Susan Africa, Minnie Aguilar, Paolo Contis, Bonifacio Cruz, Eagle, Dan Fernandez, Mel Kimura, William Martinez, Jinky Oda, Juan Rodrigo, Christopher Roxas, Leni Santos, Agatha Tapan, Beverly Vergel. Star, 1996.

Cruz, Tony S., dir. *Walang Matigas na Tinapay sa Mainit na Kape* [No Hard Bread Can Withstand Hot Coffee]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Alice Dixson, Vandolph. FPJ, 1994.

Curtiz, Michael, dir. *Mildred Pierce.* Scriptwriter Ranald MacDougall. Perf. Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Zachary Scott, Eve Arden, Ann Blyth, Bruce Bennett, Lee Patrick, Moroni Olsen, Veda Ann Borg, Jo Ann Marlowe. Warner Bros., 1945.

Dantes, Dingdong, Jolina Magdangal, and Raymond Gutierrez, hosts. *StarStruck Season 3: The Nationwide Invasion.* Interactive reality-based talent search of *StarStruck* series. GMA-7, 2005-06.

David, Joel. "Studious Studios." *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema.* Pasig City: Anvil, 1990. 126-28.

Dayrit, Trina N., Jerome Pobocan, Wenn V Deramas, Dondon Santos, and Eric Salud, dirs. *Da Adventures of Pedro Penduko.* TV series within Eric Salud et al.'s *Komiks* series. Scriptwriters Aloy Adlawan, Galo Ador, Keiko Aquino, Agnes Gagilonia-Uligan, and Joel Mercado. Perf. Matt Evans, Melissa Ricks, Jake Cuenca, Gloria Romero, Albert Martinez, Agot Isidro, Olyn Membian, KitKat, Nina Jose, Deejay Durano, Bembol Roco, TJ Trinidad, Mico Palanca. ABS-CBN, 2006-07.

De Cordova, Richard. "Genre and Performance: An Overview." Grant 129-39.

De Guzman, Angelo J., dir. *Boldstar.* Perf. Rey "PJ" Abellana, Candy Alison, Allen Dizon, Jeffrey Gonzales, May Rivera. Wild World, 2003.

De Guzman, Armando, dir. *Divina Gracia* [Divine Grace]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Nello Nayo, Ruben Rustia, Norma Blancaflor, Mary Walter, Vic Varrion, Lourdes Yumol, Salvador Jose, Lorna Tolentino. FPJ, 1970.

—------, dir. *Sapagkat Kami'y Tao Lamang* [Because We're Only Human]. Scriptwriter Johnny Pangilinan. Perf. Eddie Rodriguez, Lolita Rodriguez, Marlene Dauden, Lyn D'Amour, Joseph de Cordova, Anthony Gonzales, Patricia Mijares, Nello Nayo, Joe Sison, Maria Theresa. Hollywood-Far East, 1963.

De la Cruz, Abbo Q., dir. and scriptwriter. *Misteryo sa Tuwa* [Joyful Mystery]. Perf. Maria Montes, Tony Santos, Sr., Johnny Delgado, Ronnie Lazaro, Arbee Antonio, Lito Anzures, Ray Ventura, Alicia Alonzo, Amable Quiambao, Mario Taguiwalo, Vangie Labalan. Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1984.

De la Cruz, Emmanuel, dir. and scriptwriter. *Sarong Banggi* [One Evening]. Perf. Jaclyn Jose, Angelo Ilagan, Alcris Galura, Miguel Guno, Pierro Rodriguez. UFO, 2005.

De Leon, Gerardo, dir. *Ako ang Katarungan* [I Am Justice]. Scriptwriter Augusto Buenaventura. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Van de Leon, Lou Salvador, Jr., Adorable Liwanag, Oscar Keesee, Jr., Paraluman. Premiere, 1962.

—------, dir. *Apollo Robles.* Perf. Fernando Poc, Jr. Premiere, 1961.

---------, dir. *Kamay ni Cain* [Hand of Cain]. Scriptwriter Cesar Amigo. Perf. Zaldy Zshornack, Edna Luna, Fernando Poe, Jr., Leonor Vergara, Max Alvarado, Berting Labra, Lily Marquez, Nello Nayo, Paquito Salcedo. People's Pictures, 1957.

---------, dir. *Sanda* PTmg. Scriptwriter Teodorico C. Santos. Perf. Danilo Montes, Gil de Leon, Lilia Dizon, Ligaya Lopez, Jose Padilla, Jr., Lola Young, Vicente Liwanag, Mario Bari, Bruno Punzalan. Manuel Vista, Jr. Production and Ho Chapman, 1955.

De Leon, Gerardo, Lamberto V Avellana, and Cirio H. Santiago, dirs. *Fe, Esperanza, Caridad* [Faith, Hope, Charity (women's names)]. Perf. Nora Aunor, Dindo Fernando, Jay Ilagan, Ronaldo Valdez, Divina Valencia, Bert Leroy, Jr., Ruben Rustia. Premiere, 1974.

De Leon, Mike, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Batch '81.* Co-scriptwriters Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr. and Raquel Villavicencio. Perf. Mark Gil, Sandy Andolong, Ward Luarca, Noel Trinidad, Ricky Sandico, Jimmy Javier, Rod Leido, Bing Pimentel, Criselda Cecilio, Mike Arvisu, Vic Lima, Dodo Cabasal, Edwin Reyes, Nanette Inventor, Joe Jardi. MVP and Sampaguita, 1982.

—------, dir. [uncredited]. *Hindi Nahahati ang Langit* [Heaven Cannot Be Sundered]. Scriptwriter Mia Concio. From a story by Nerissa Cabral. Perf. Lorna Tolentino, Christopher de Leon, Edu Manzano, Dina Bonnevie, Gigi de la Riva, Nestor de Villa, Jimmy Javier, Chito Ponce Enrile, Gloria Romero, Jennifer Sevilla. Viva, 1985.

---------, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Sister Stella L.* Co-scriptwriters Jose F. Lacaba and Jose Almojuela. Perf. Vilma Santos, Jay Ilagan, Laurice Guillen, Tony Santos, Ruben Rustia, Rody Vera. Regal, 1984.

De los Reyes, Maryo J., dir. *Laman* [Flesh]. Scriptwriter Wali Ching. Perf. Albert Martinez, Elizabeth Oropesa, Yul Servo, Lolita de Leon, Kenneth Ocampo. Regal, 2002.

--------- , dir. *Magnifico.* Scriptwriter Mitchiko Yamamoto. Perf. Jiro Manio, Lorna Tolentino, Albert Martinez, Mark Gil, Gloria Romero, Tonton Gutierrez, Gelia Rodriguez, Amy Austria, Danilo Barrios, Cherry Pie Picache, Girlie Sevilla, Alison VII, Jon Romano, Susan Africa, Isabella de Leon. Violett, 2003.

Del Carmen, Retchie, and Toto Natividad, dirs. *Panday* [Blacksmith]. TV series. Scriptwriter Carlo J. Caparas. Perf Jericho Rosales, Heart Evangelista, Victor Neri, Rafael Rosell, Phillip Salvador, Derek Ramsay, Gino Paul Guzman, Vanessa Grindrud, Michelle Bayle, Dimples Romana, Anna Larrucea, Marla Boyd, Paw Diaz, Erich Gonzales, Bernard Palanca. ABS-CBN, 2005-06.

Deocampo, Nick. *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines.* Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003.

Deramas, Wenn V, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Ang Cute ng Ina Mo* [Your Mom Is So Cute]. Co-scriptwriters Mel Mendoza-del Rosario and Arlene Tamayo. Perf Ai-Ai de las Alas, Anne Curtis, Luis Manzano, Deejay Durano, John Lapuz, Vince Saldaña, Nikki Bacolod, Rycharde Everley, Lou Veloso, Makisig Morales, Jojit Lorenzo, Cheena, Pen Medina, Shamaine Buencamino. Star and Viva, 2007.

——------, dir. and scriptwriter. *Mula sa Puso* [From the Heart]: *The Movie.* Perf Claudine Barretto, Rico Yan, Diether Ocampo, Patrick Garcia, Jaclyn Jose, Nida Blanca, Princess Punzalan, Juan Rodrigo, Anna Larrucea, Efren Reyes, Jr., Eula Valdez, Carlos Morales, Andrea del Rosario, Candy Pangilinan, Eva Darren. Star, 1999.

--------- , dir. *Saan Ka Man Naroroon* [Wherever You May Be]. TV series. Perf. Claudine Barretto, Rico Yan, Diether Ocampo, Leandro Muñoz, Gina Pareño, Cherry Pie Picache, Eric Quizon, Jackie Lou Blanco, Rustom Padilla, Susan Africa, Charlie Davao, Vivian Foz, Noni Buencamino, Shamaine Centenera, Ray Ventura. ABS-CBN, 1999-2001.

——— —, dir. *Ang Tanging Ina* [The Only Mother]. Perf. Ai-Ai de las Alas, Marvin Agustin, Kaye Abad, Mark Acueza, Jestoni Alarcon, Pinky Amador, Carlo Aquino, Serena Dalrymple, Eugene Domingo, Ketchup Eusebio, Heart Evangelista, Tonton Gutierrez, Yuki Kaduka, Shaina Magdayao, Jiro Manio, Edu Manzano, Mandy Ochoa, Dennis Padilla, Angelica Panganiban, John Prats, Alwyn Uytingco, Nikki Valdez. Star, 2003.

———, dir. *Walang Kapalit* [Irreplaceable]. TV series. Scriptwriter Keiko Aquino. From a story by Nerissa Cabral. Perf Claudine Barretto, Piolo Pascual, Edu Manzano, Dina Bonnevie, Amy Austria, Jodi Sta. Maria, Bobby Andrews, Nikki Valdes, Deejay Durano, Candy Pangilinan, Lloyd Samartino, Susan Africa, Eda Nolan, Victor Basa, Joem Bascon, TJ Trinidad. GMA-7, 2007.

Deramas, Wenn V, John D. Lazatin, and Malu Sevilla, dir. *Bituin* [Star]. TV series. Perf. Nora Aunor, Michael de Mesa, Cherie Gil, Carol Banawa, Gardo Versoza, Desiree del Valle, Ricardo Cepeda, Emilio Garcia, Celia Rodriguez, Tess Antonio, Frank Garcia, Geff Rodriguez, Efren Reyes, Jr., Cherry Pie Picache, Carlo Muñoz, Lui Villaruz, John Apacible, Rodel Velayo, Mat Ranillo III, Sylvia Sanchez, Jessa Zaragoza, Tado, John Lapuz, Harlene Bautista, Chat Silayan, Rochell Barrameda, Anita Linda, Jestoni Alarcon, Michael Santana, Ogie Diaz, Boy Abunda, Kris Aquino, John Lloyd Cruz, Gigette Reyes, Kuh Ledesma, Julia Clarete, Romnick Sarmenta. ABS-CBN, 2002.

Deramas, Wenn V., and Andoy Ranay, dirs. *Kampanerang Kuba* [Hunchbacked Lady Bell-Ringer]. TV series. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf Anne Curtis, Jomari Yllana, Eula Valdez, Jean Garcia, Cherry Pie Picache, Yul Servo, Patrick Garcia, Jodi Sta. Maria, Christian Bautista, Luis Manzano, Desiree del Valle, Edgar Mortiz, Jaime Fabregas, Meryll Soriano, Malou de Guzman, Arlene Muhlach. ABS-CBN, 2005.

De Villa, Jose, dir. *Mga Batang Estibador* [Stevedore Kids]. Perf Paquito Diaz, Robert Jaworski, Perla Bautista, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Jose Romulo, Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Manolo Robles, Vic Varrion, Mario Escudero, Rcsty Sandel, Ding Salvador, Bob Padilla, Johnny Long, Romy Diaz, Mary Walter, Jose Garcia, Roberto Talabis, Zcrnan Manahan. FIJ, 1969.

Deza, Alfonso B. "Mythopoeic Poe: Understanding the *Masa* [Masses] as Audience through the Films of Fernando Poe, Jr." M.A. thesis. University of the Philippines, 2002. Published as *Mythopoeic Poe: Understanding the* Masa *as Audience through the Films of Fernando Poe, Jr.* (Quezon City: Great Books, 2006).

Diaz-Abaya, Marilou, dir. *Jose Rigal.* Scriptwriters Jun Lana and Ricardo Lee. Perf. Cesar Montano, Joel Torre, Jaime Fabregas, Gloria Diaz, Gardo Versoza, Monique Wilson, Chin Chin Gutierrez, Mickey Ferriols, Pen Medina, Peque Gallaga, Bon Vibar, Subas Herrero, Tony Mabesa, Alexis Santaren, Ghiqui Xeres-Burgos. GMA Films, 1998.

———, dir. *Noon at Ngayon (Pagsasamang Kayganda)* [Then and Now (Beautiful Camaraderie)]. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Dina Bonnevie, Cherry Pie Picache, Jean Garcia, Eula Valdez, Laurice Guillen, Jericho Rosales, Marvin Agustin, Paolo Contis, Ramon de Veyra, Patrick Garcia, Aiza Marquez, Jenny Miller, Dimples Romana, Jodi Sta. Maria. Star, 2003.

Dissanayake, Wimal. *Melodrama and Asian Cinema.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society.* British Film Institute Cinema Series. London: MacMillan, 1986.

--------- . *Stars.* London: BFI, 1979.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." Grant 273-308.

Estrada, John, Randy Santiago, Willie Revillame, Roderick Paulate, Amy Perez, Ai-Ai de las Alas, Bayani Agbayani, and Rico Yan, hosts. *M[agandangJ T[anghali]B[ayan]* [Good Midday Country]. TV variety show. Dirs. Edgar Mortiz and Bobbet Vidanes. ABS-CBN, 1998-2005.

Failon, Ted, Karen Davila, Julius Babao, Alex Santos, and Bernadette Sembrano, hosts. *TV Patrol World.* TV daily news program (formerly *TV Patrot).* ABS-CBN, 1987- .

Field, Syd. *The Scriptwriter's Workbook.* New York: Dell, 1984.

Film Desk, Young Critics Circle. *Sampúng Taóng Sine* [Ten Years of Films]: *Philippine Cinema 1990-1999.* Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2002.

Flores, Patrick A. "The Dissemination of Nora Aunor." Tolentino, *Geopolitics of the Visible* 77-95.

Francisco, Butch, Joey de Leon, Lorna Tolentino, and Lolit Solis, hosts. *Startalk.* TV weekly talk show. GMA-7, 1995- .

Frears, Stephen, dir. *Dangerous Liaisons.* Scriptwriter Christopher Hampton. Perf. Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Michelle Pfeiffer, Swoosie Kurtz, Keanu Reeves, Mildred Natwick, Uma Thurman, Peter Capaldi, Joe Sheridan, Valerie Gogan, Laura Benson, Joanna Pavlis, Nicholas Hawtrey, Paulo Abe do Nascimento, Francois Lalande. Lorimar, NFH, and Warner Bros., 1988.

Gallaga, Peque, dir. *Oro, Plata, Mata* [Gold, Silver, Death]. Scriptwriter Jose Javier Reyes. Perf. Joel Torre, Sandy Andolong, Cherie Gil, Fides Cuyugan-Asensio, Liza Lorena, Manny Ojeda, Mitch Valdes, Lorli Villanueva, Ronnie Lazaro, Abbo Q de la Cruz, Mely Mallari, Agustin Gatia, Mary Walter, Robert Antonio, Carmelo Sta. Maria, Gigi Dueñas, Kuh Ledesma. Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1982.

Gallaga, Peque, and Lore Reyes, dirs. *Once Upon a Time.* Scriptwriters Rosauro de la Cruz, Peque Gallaga, and T. E. Pagaspas. Perf. Dolphy, Richard Gomez, Janice de Belen, Chuckie Dreyfuss, E. A. Rocha, Gloria Romero, Tessie Tomas, Joel Torre, An jo Yllana. Regal, 1986.

Garces, Armando, dir. and scriptwriter. *Ako ang Maysala!* [I'm the One at Fault!]. Perf. Amalia Fuentes, Romeo Vasquez, Rosa Mia, Van de Leon, Greg Martin. Vera Perez, 1958.

——------, dir. and scriptwriter. *Sino'ng Maysala?* [Who's at Fault?]. Adapted from the novel *Sino'ng Maysala?* by Fausto Galauran, serialized in *Liwayway* [Dawn]. Perf. Rogelio de la Rosa, Gloria Romero, Lolita Rodriguez, Ric Rodrigo, Luis Gonzales, Susan Roces, Van de Leon, Etang Discher, Eddie Garcia, Paraluman, Romeo Vasquez, Zeny Zabala. Sampaguita and Vera Perez, 1957.

———, dir. *Sorrento.* Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Paquito Diaz, Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Joe Sison, Nello Nayo, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Manolo Robles, Vic Varrion, Mario Escudero, Resty Sandel, Romy Diaz, Bob Padilla. FPJ, 1968.

Garcia-Molina, Cathy, dir. *You Are the One.* Scriptwriters Raz de la Torre, Carmi Raymundo, and Vanessa Valdez. Perf. Toni Gonzaga, Sam Milby, Jodi Sta. Maria, Susan Africa, Anita Linda, Roldan Aquino, Rio Locsin, Lito Pimentel, Eugene Domingo. Star, 2006.

--------- , dir. *You Got Me.* Scriptwriters Raz de la Torre, Francis Lua, Carmi Raymundo, and Vanessa Valdez. Perf. Toni Gonzaga, Sam Milby, Zanjoe Marudo, Johnny Delgado, Dick Israel, A. J. Dee, Jayson Gainza. Star, 2007.

Gledhill, Christine. "Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera." *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* Ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage, 2001. 339-84.

—------, ed. *Stardom: Industry of Desire.* London: Routledge, 1991.

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Grant, Barry Keith, ed. *Film Genre Reader.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Griffith, Richard. "Cycles and Genres." Nichols 111-17.

Guillen, Laurice, dir. *American Adobo.* Scriptwriter Vincent R. Nebrida. Perf. Christopher de Leon, Dina Bonnevie, Ricky Davao, Cherry Pie Picache, Paolo Montalban, Randy Becker, Keesha Sharp, Sandy Andolong, Gloria Romero, Susan Valdez-LeGoff, Sol Oca, Wayne Maugans, Martha Millan, Lorli Villanueva, Jojo Gonzalez. ABS-GBN, Magic Adobo, Outrider, and Unitel, 2001.

--------- , dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Tanging Yaman* [Only Wealth / A Change of Heart]. Co-scriptwriters Raymond Lee and Shaira Melia Salvador. Perf. Gloria Romero, Hilda Koronel, Dina Bonnevie, Edu Manzano, Johnny Delgado, Joel Torre, Cherry Pie Picache, Marvin Agustin, Jericho Rosales, C. J. Ramos, Shaina Magdayao, John Prats, Carol Banawa, Dominic Ochoa, Janette McBride, Lou Veloso, Jose Mari Avellana, Leo Rialp, Lucy Quinto, Mae-ann Adonis, Jiro Manio. Star Cinema, 2000.

Harvey, Sylvia. "Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir." Belton 171-82.

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Haynes, Todd, dir. and scriptwriter. *Far from Heaven.* Perf. Julianne Moore, Dennis Quaid, Dennis Haysbert, Patricia Clarkson, Viola Davis, James Rcbhorn, Bette Hcnritze, Michael Gaston, Ryan Ward, Lindsay Andretta, Jordan Puryear, Kyle Timothy Smith, Celia Weston, Barbara Garrick, Olivia Birkelund. Clear Blue Sky, John Wells, Killer, Section Eight, TF1, USA Films, Vulcan, 2002.

Henares, Quark, dir. and scriptwriter. *Keka.* Perf. Katya Santos, Wendell Ramos, Vhong Navarro, Ryan Eigenmann, Luis Alandy, Bobby Andrews, Andrea del Rosario, Ramon de Veyra, Quark Henares, Jordan Herrera, Marky Lopez, Lia Martinez, J. C. Parker, T. J. Trinidad, Tuesday Vargas. Viva, 2003.

Herrera, Armando, dir. *Mga Alabok sa Lupa* [Dust on the Earth]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Divina Valencia, Johnny Monteiro, Paquito Diaz, Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Manolo Robles, Vic Varrion, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Mario Escudero, Bebong Osorio, Resty Sandel, Ramonito, Joe Cunanan. FPJ, 1967.

--------- , dir. *AngLeon at angDaga* [The Lion and the Mouse]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Marianne de la Riva, Nino Muhlach. FIJ, 1975.

--------- , dir. A/zg *Leon at ang Kuting* [The Lion and the Kitten]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Nino Muhlach, Sheryl Cruz, Sandy Andolong, Leopoldo Salcedo, Dencio Padilla. FPJ, 1980.

———, dir. *Tatak ngAlipin* [Mark of the Slave]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Tina Revilla, Leila Hermosa, Josephine Garcia, Rosemarie Gil. FIJ, 1975.

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Ignacio, Louie, dir. *Pangarap Ko ang Ibigin Ka* [My Dream Is to Love You]. Scriptwriter Mel Mendoza-del Rosario. Perf. Christopher de Leon, Regine Velasquez, Dingdong Dantes, Marissa Delgado, Lara Fabregas, Rudy Francisco, Vanna Garcia, Rosemarie Gil, Gladys Guevarra, John Lapuz, William Martinez, Noel Trinidad. Viva, 2003.

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Jacob, Malou, playwright. *Juan Tamban.* Dir. Lutgardo Labad. Perf. Cecilia Bulaong Garrucho, Roberto "Toffy" Padua, Tessie Padua, Ed Pagayon, Ed Instrella, Spanky Manikan, Jonathan Romulo, Dante Balois, Estrella Antonio, Arlene Abuid. PETA, 1979. Published as *Juan Tamban,* ed. Apolonio Bayani Chua, PETA Kalinangan Ensemble Script Series 1 (Quezon City: Philippine Educational Theater Association, 1984).

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Jeturian, Jeffrey, dir. *Biglang Sibol, Bayang Imposibol* [Sudden Emergence, Impossible Nation]. TV series. Head scriptwriter Bibeth Orteza. Perf. Gardo Versoza, Princess Punzalan, Delia Razon, Sylvia La Torre, Michael de Mesa, Lara Fabregas, Lara Morena, Ynez Veneracion, Dindin Llarena, Gladys Guevarra, Lyka Ugarte, Nestor de Villa, Celia Rodriguez, Gary Estrada, Alessandra de Rossi, Jeffrey Quizon, Banaue Miclat. GMA-7, 2001.

--------- , dir. *Bridal Shower.* Scriptwriter Chris Martinez. Perf. Dina Bonnevie, Cherry Pie Picache, Francine Prieto, Christian Vasquez, Rodel Velayo, Alfred Vargas, J. R. Valentin, Douglas Robinson, Boots Anson-Roa, Gina Pareno. Seiko, 2004.

--------- , dir. *Kubrador* [The Bet Collector]. Scriptwriter RalstonJover. Script supervision by Armando Lao. Perf. Gina Pareño, Nico Antonio, Soliman Cruz, Ran del Rosario, Alfonso Deza, Nanding Josef, Domingo Landicho, Johnny Manahan. MLR, 2006.

——------ , dir. *Sa Pagkagat ng Dilim* [Upon Nightfall]. Scriptwriter Armando Lao. Perf. Jay Manalo, Aleck Bovick, Katherine Luna, Coco Martin. Angora, 2004 (unfinished).

Joaquin, Nick. *The Woman Who Had Two Navels.* 1961. 2nd ed. Makati City: Bookmark, 1991.

Kazan, Elia, dir. *Baby Doll.* Scriptwriter Tennessee Williams. Perf. Karl Malden, Carroll Baker, Eli Wallach, Mildred Dunnock, Lonny Chapman. Warner Bros., 1956.

————, dir. *East of Eden.* Scriptwriter Paul Osborn. Perf. Julie Harris, James Dean, Raymond Massey, Burl Ives, Richard Davalos, Jo Van Fleet, Albert Dekker, Lois Smith, Harold Gordon, Nick Dennis. Warner Bros., 1955.

————, dir. *Viva Japata!* Scriptwriter John Steinbeck. Perf. Marlon Brando, Jean Peters, Anthony Quinn, Joseph Wiseman, Arnold Moss, Alan Reed, Margo, Harold Gordon, Lou Gilbert, Frank Silvera, Florenz Ames, Richard Garrick, Fay Roope, Mildred Dunnock. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1952.

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Kubrick, Stanley, dir. *Lolita.* Scriptwriter Vladimir Nabokov. Perf. James Mason, Shelley Winters, Peter Sellers, Sue Lyon, Gary Cockrell, Jerry Stovin, Diana Decker, Lois Maxwell. Seven Arts, 1962.

Lamangan, Joel, dir. *Bahid* [Smear]. Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Eddie Garcia, Dina Bonnevie, Assunta de Rossi, Dicther Ocampo, Chinggoy Alonzo, Manuel Aquino, Rico Barrera, Lito Beltran, Jim Pebanco, Paolo Rivera, Froilan Sales, Gilleth Sandico. Regal, 2002.

————, dir. *Bugbog Sarado* [Black and Blue]. Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Maui Taylor, Victor Neri, Andrea del Rosario, Jordan Herrera, Marky Lopez, Carlo Maceda. Viva, 2003.

--------- , dir. *Bulaklak ng Maynila* [Flower of Manila]. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Christopher de Leon, Jomari Yllana, Elizabeth Oropesa, Angelu de Leon, Bembol Roco, Jake Roxas, Melisse Santiago, Lester Llansang, Perla Bautista. Viva, 1999.

————, dir. *Deathrow.* Scriptwriters Ricardo Lee and Manny Palo. Perf. Eddie Garcia, Cogie Domingo, Angelika de la Cruz, Jenine Desiderio, Jaclyn Jose, Pen Medina, Ray Ventura. GMA Network Films, 2000.

———, dir. *Filipinas* [Philippines]. Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Armida Siguion-Reyna, Maricel Soriano, Richard Gomez, Dawn Zulueta, Aiko Melendez, Victor Neri, Wendell Ramos, Raymond Bagatsing, Angeli Bayani, Mike Campos, Anne Curtis, Andrea del Rosario, Sunshine Dizon, Tanya Garcia, Sarah Geronimo, Jim Pebanco, Richard Quan, Gilleth Sandico, Ernie Zarate. Viva, 2003.

———, dir. *Hiram na Mukha* [Borrowed Visage]. Scriptwriter Ronald Carballo. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez, serialized in *Filipino Komiks.* Perf. Nanette Medved, Christopher de Leon, Cesar Montano, Lucita Soriano, Maritoni Fernandez, Cherry' Pie Picache, Dante Rivero, Rosemarie Gil, Daria Ramirez, Caridad Sanchez, Lorli Villanueva. Viva, 1992.

———, dir. *Ang Hiding Birhen sa Lupa* [The Last Virgin on Earth]. Scriptwriter Raquel N. Villavicencio. Perf. Jay Manalo, Ara Mina, Maui Taylor, Elizabeth Oropesa, Gina Alajar, Angeli Bayani, Cholo Escaño, Hazel Espinosa, Tanya Gomez, Marky Lopez, Mike Magat, Daria Ramirez. JAGGS and Viva, 2003.

———, dir. *Mano Po* [Your Blessings]. Scriptwriter Roy G. Iglesias. Perf. Maricel Soriano, Kris Aquino, Ara Mina, Eddie Garcia, Richard Gomez, Jay Manalo, Tirso Cruz III, Amy Austria, Gina Alajar, Boots Anson-Roa, Eric Quizon, Cogie Domingo, Maxene Magalona, Allan Paule, Carlo Maceda. Regal, 2002.

———, dir. *Sabel.* Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Judy Ann Santos, Wendell Ramos, Iza Calzado, Rio Locsin, Sunshine Dizon, Al Tantay, Allan Paule, Jeffrey Hidalgo, John Apacible. Regal, 2003.

———, dir. *Sinasamba Kita* [I Worship You]. TV series. Scriptwriters Don Michael Perez and Anna Aleta A. Nadela. From a story by Gilda Olvidado. Perf. Sheryl Cruz, Wendell Ramos, Valerie Concepcion, Carlo Aquino, Bing Loyzaga, Gina Alajar, Mark Gil, Jackie Lou Blanco, Ricardo Cepeda, Allan Paule, Raquel Villavicencio, Tony Mabesa, Jordan Herrera. GMA-7, 2007.

———, dir. *Walang Kapalit* [Irreplaceable]. Scriptwriter Raquel N. Villavicencio. Perf. Sharon Cuneta, Richard Gomez, King Alcala, Paolo Bediones, Dino Guevarra, Miriam Quiambao, Gilleth Sandico, Charina Scott. Viva, 2003.

Lamasan, Olivia M., dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Got 2 Believe.* Co-scriptwriter Mia Concio. Perf. Rico Yan, Claudine Barretto, Dominic Ochoa, Carlo Muñoz, Nikki Valdez, Cherry Pie Picache, Noel Trinidad, Laura James, Angel Jacob, Vhong Navarro, Wilma Doesnt, Maribeth Bichara, Jackie Castillejos, Nina Ricci Alagao, Cherry Lou. Star, 2002.

---------, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Milan.* Co-scriptwriter Raymond Lee. Perf. Claudine Barretto, Piolo Pascual, Ilonah Jean, Iza Calzado, Ryan Eigenmann, Lotlot de Leon, Ana Capri, Irma Adlawan. Star, 2004.

---------, dir. "Oto-San" [Domestic Helper (Filipino pun on Japanese form of address)]. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. *Maalaala Mo Kaya* episode. Perf. Gardo Versoza, Jiro Manio. ABS-CBN, 1999.

Lapuz, Ferdinand D. Interview by author. Metro Manila, 2003.

Lazatin, John J., and Don Cuaresma, dirs. *My First Romance.* Scriptwriters Theodore Boborol, Theresa de Guzman, and Mel Mendoza-del Rosario. Perf. John Lloyd Cruz, Bea Alonzo, Heart Evangelista, John Prats, Gherie Gil, Joel Torre, Liza Lorena, Chat Silayan, Susan Africa, Chanda Romero, Mico Palanca, Anna Larrucea, Dominic Ochoa, Edwin Reyes, Sarita Perez de Tagle. Star, 2003.

Lee, Ricardo, playwright. *Pitik-Bulag sa Buwan ng Pebrero* [Casting Lots during the Month of February]. Dir. Joel Lamangan. Perf. Gina Alajar, Jaclyn Jose, Joy Soler de Castro, Bernardo Bernardo, Ricky Hora, Malu de Guzman, Ginnie Sobrino, Bon Vibar, Jim Pebanco, Mae Quesada, Dorothy Hope Matriano. Manila Film Center, 1989. Published as *Pitik-Bulag sa Buwan ng Pebrero* (Quezon City: Kalikasan, 1989).

Lejano, Ed, Nonoy Dadivas, and Chuck Escasa, dirs, and scriptwriters. *Motel.* Perf. Toffee Calma, Joseph Pe, Jun Sabayton, Ricky Baizar, Arvin "Tado" Jimenez, Aki Zabarte, Allen Dizon, Jojo Contreras, D ovee Orellaneda, Edsel Abesames, Nicolai Ferry, Louie Manansala, Lilia Conde. Breathless Cinema, 2000.

Lucas, George, dir. and scriptwriter. *Star* IKzry. Perf. Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, Peter Cushing, Alec Guinness, Anthony Daniels, Kenny Baker, Peter Mayhew, David Prowse, James Earl Jones. Lucasfilm and Twentieth Century-Fox, 1977.

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Matti, Erik, dir. *Gagamboy* [Spiderboy]. Scriptwriter Dwight Gaston. Perf. Vhong Navarro, Jay Manalo, Aubrey Miles, Long Mejia, Bearwin Meily, Rene Boy Facunla, Andrew Schimmen, Benj Besa, Kiel Rodriguez, Jay Aquitania, Mon Confiado, Ogie Diaz, Benjamin Abelarde, Chris Cruz, Nikko Manalo. MAQ and Regal, 2004.

———, dir. *Mano Po 2: My Home* [Your Blessings 2: My Home]. Scriptwriters Roy C. Iglesias and Lily Y. Monteverde. Perf. Susan Roces, Christopher de Leon, Lorna Tolentino, Zsa Zsa Padilla, Kris Aquino, Judy Ann Santos, Carmina Villaroel, Jay Manalo, Cogie Domingo, Alessandra de Rossi, Richard Gutierrez, Zoren Legaspi, Karylle, Chynna Ortaleza, Angel Locsin. Regal, 2003.

———, dir. *Prosti.* Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Aubrey Miles, Jay Manalo, Pinky Amador, Hazel Espinosa, Paolo Rivero, Raquel Villavicencio. Regal, 2002.

Mayo, William, dir. *Lapu-Lapu.* Scriptwriter Jerry O. Tirazona. Perf. Lito Lapid, Joyce Jimenez, Dante Rivero, Vic Vargas, Archie Adamos, Arsenio Bautista, Cris Daluz, Patrick de la Rosa, Julio Diaz, Dinah Dominguez, Mark Lapid, Maria Isabel Lopez, Conrad Poe, Jeric Raval, Robert Rivera, Cloyd Robinson, Gloria Sevilla, Bob Soler, Alma Soriano, Ian Veneracion, Bon Vibar. Calinauan Cine Works, EDL, and Seed of Zion, 2002.

Meily, Mark, dir. and scriptwriter. *Crying Ladies.* Perf. Sharon Cuneta, Hilda Koronel, Angel Aquino, Eric Quizon, Ricky Davao, Julio Pacheco, Shamaine Buencamino, Sherry Lara, Gilleth Sandico, Joan Bitagcol, Johnny Delgado, Edgar Mortiz, Raymond Bagatsing, Bella Flores, Lou Veloso. Unitel, 2003.

Meirelles, Fernando, and Kaťia Lund, dirs. *Cidade de Deus* [City of God]. Scriptwriter Braúlio Mantovani. Perf. Alexandre Rodrigues, Leandro Firmino, Phellipe Haagensen, Douglas Silva, Jonathan Haagensen, Matheus Nachtergaele, Seu Jorge, Jefechander Suplino, Alice Braga, Emerson Gomes, Edson Oliveira, Michel de Souza, Roberta Rodrigues, Luis Otávio, Maurício Marques. 02 Filmes and VideoFilmes, 2002.

Mendoza, Brillante, dir. *Masahista* [Masseur]. Scriptwriter Boots Agbayani Pastor. Perf. Coco Martin, Jaclyn Jose, Allan Paule, Katherine Luna, Paolo Rivero, Kristoffer King. Centerstage and Gee, 2005.

Minnelli, Vincente, dir. *Gigi.* Scriptwriter Alan Jay Lerner. Perf. Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jordan, Hermione Gingold, Eva Gabor, Jacques Bergerac, Isabel Jeans, John Abbott. MGM, 1958.

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Natividad, Toto, dir. *Ping Lacson: Super Cop.* Scriptwriter Willy Laconsay. Perf. Rudy Fernandez, Lorna Tolentino, Herbert Bautista, Ricky Davao, Angel Locsin, Alvin Anson, Ace Espinosa, Glydel Mercado, Travador Ramos, Jr. Millennium Cinema, 2000.

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Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. "Minnelli and Melodrama." Nichols 190-94.

O'Hara, Mario, dir. and scriptwriter. *Babae sa Breakwater* [Woman at the Breakwater]. Perf. Katherine Luna, Kristoffer King, Gardo Versoza, Amy Austria, Alcris Galura, Yoyoy Villame. Entertainment Warehouse, 2003.

———, dir. and scriptwriter. *Sisa.* Perf. Gardo Versoza, Aya Medel, Patrick Guzman, Marcus Madrigal. Regal and Good Harvest, 1999.

Ongkeko-Marfil, Ellen, dir. *Angels.* Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Gina Alajar, Nonie Buencamino, Wena Basco, Joan Tan, Michael Angelo Caangay, Soxy Topacio, Jackie Castillejo, Giselle Sanchez, Sylvia Sanchez, Connie Lauigan Chua, Mel Kimura. Star, 2001.

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Osorio, Ricardo "Bebong," dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Alab ng Lahi* [Passion of the Race]. Co-scriptwriter Robin Padilla. Perf. Robin Padilla, Jacky Woo, Eddie Garcia, Raymond Bagatsing, Anne Curtis, Vanna Garcia, Yoshuke Natsuki, Princess Punzalan. RCP, 2003.

Pablo, Crisaldo, dir. and scriptwriter. *Duda* [Doubt]. Perf. Andoy Ranay, Paulo Gabriel, Larry Burns, John Lapuz, Jojo Nones, Rey Pumaloy. Grupong Sinehan and UP Cineastes Studio, 2003.

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Pascual, William, dir. *Chikas* [Chicks]. Scriptwriter Armando Lao. Perf. Tanya Gomez, Jaclyn Jose, Dan Alvaro, Rey "PJ" Abellana, Karla Kalua, Lovely Rivero, Rachel Anne Wolfe. Baby Pascual & Associates, 1984.

———, dir. *Takaw Tukso* [Prone to Temptation]. Scriptwriter Armando Lao. Perf. Jaclyn Jose, Julio Diaz, Anna Marie Gutierrez, Gino Antonio, Anita Linda, Daniel Eernando. Ultravision, 1986.

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Perez, Elwood, dir. *Lupe.* Scriptwriter Jigz Recto. Perf. Andrea del Rosario, Jordan Herrera, Leandro Muñoz, Lara Fabregas, Marissa Delgado, Jem Navarro, Joanne Quintas, Sheree. Viva, 2003.

———, dir. *Ssshhh ... She Walks by Night.* Perf. Belinda Bright, Ricky Davao, Jay Manalo, Ynez Veneracion, Pinky Amador, Zed Carion, Marissa Delgado, Bianca Lapus, Lovely Mansueto. World Arts Cinema, 2003.

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Plata, Boots, dir. *Isusumbong Kita sa Tatay Ko* [I'll Report You to My Dad]. Scriptwriter Dindo Perez. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Judy Ann Santos, Aileen Damiles, Leandro Muñoz, Rey Abella, Caloy Alcantara, Ding Alvaro, Angel Aquino, Robert Arevalo, Rey Comia, Nonoy de Guzman, Manjo del Mundo, Paquito Diaz, Gerald Ejercito, Bernie Garcia, R. G. Gutierrez, Berting Labra, Kier Legaspi, Anita Linda. Star, 1999.

Portes, Gil, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Homecoming.* Co-scriptwriters Alolfo Alix, Jr. and Senedy Que. Perf. Alessandra de Rossi, Elizabeth Oropesa, Bembol Roco, Lester Llansang, Bryan Homecillo, Irma Adlawan, James Blanco, Dexter Doria, Christopher "P. J." Malonzo, Allan Paule, Richard Quan. Cinema Partners, Frontera Media, Kidlat Entertainment, and Teamwork, 2003.

---------, dir. 7D. Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Ricky Davao, Glydel Mercado, BJ de Jesus, Ronnie Lazaro, Ricky Rivero, Richard Quan, Roy Alvarez. Star, 2001.

---------, dir. *Markova: Corrfort Gay.* Scriptwriter Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr. Perf. Dolphy, Eric Quizon, Jeffrey Quizon, Ricci Chan, R. S. Francisco, Melvin Lee, Loren Legarda, Freddie Quizon, Ronnie Quizon, Andoy Ranay. RVQ, 2000.

---------, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Mga Munting Tinig* [The Small Voices]. Co-scriptwriters Adolfo Alix, Jr. and Senedy Que. Perf. Alessandra de Rossi, Dexter Doria, Gina Alajar, Amy Austria, Bryan Homecillo, Pierro Rodriguez, Irma Adlawan, Keno Agaro, Sining Blanco, Noni Buencamino, Mhalouh Crisologo, Christian Galindo, Nanding Josef, Tony Mabesa, Lailani Navarro. CAP Philippines and Teamwork, 2002.

Posadas, Francis "Jun," dir. *Bayaran* [Mercenary]. Perf. Jay Manalo, Maricar de Mesa, Carlos Morales, Kristel Valencia, Millet Abalos, John Apacible, Ricardo Cepeda, Simon Ibarra, Rizza Licaros, Daria Ramirez. Wild World, 2002.

—------, dir. *Emong Salvacion: Humanda Ka, Oras Mo Na!* [Get Ready, It's Your Turn!]. Scriptwriter Humilde "Meek" Roxas. Perf. Eddie Garcia, Beth Tamayo, Ara Mina, Georgia Ortega, Ronnie Ricketts, Gardo Versoza, Raymond Keannu, Dennis Roldan, Ruel Vernal, Rez Cortez, Manjo del Mundo. Regal, 1997.

————, dir. *Sex Scandal.* Perf. Danna Garcel, Isabella Gomez, Anne Borromeo. Sacramento, 2003.

————, dir. *Tampisaw* [Wallow]. Scriptwriter Dennis Evangelista. Perf. Aleck Bovick, Aimee Torres, Ana Capri, John Apacible, Melissa Mendez, Alberto de Esteban, Paolo Rivero, Pinky Amador, Roy Alvarez, Nonong de Andres, Jessica Pica, Lynn Madrigal, Josie Alvarez, Gerry Roman, Donato Geluz. Tri-Vision, 2002.

Pueblo, Joenar, dir. and scriptwriter. "Hablon" [Hand-Woven Plant-Fiber Fabric]. Experimental film. Joenar Pueblo, 2003.

Quebral, Robert, dir. *Sex Drive.* Perf. Maui Taylor, Katya Santos, Wendell Ramos, Antonio Aquitania, Pinky Amador, Gwen Garci, Ogie Diaz, Jay Garchitorena, Mark Lapid, Ardi Aquino, Kevin Maxwell. Viva, 2003.

Quintos, Rory B., dir. *Anak* [Child]. Scriptwriters Raymond Lee and Ricardo Lee. Perf. Vilma Santos, Claudine Barretto, Joel Torre, Amy Austria, Cherry Pie Picache, Baron Geisler, Leandro Munoz, Gino Paul Guzman, Sheila Mae Alvero, Tess Dumpit. Star, 2000.

————, dir. *Kailangan Kita* [I Need You]. Scriptwriters Emmanuel dela Cruz, Raymond Lee, and Shaira M. Salvador. Perf. Aga Muhlach, Claudine Barretto, Dante Rivero, Jericho Rosales, Johnny Delgado, Liza Lorena, Cris Villanueva, Cholo Escano, Gerald Madrid. Star, 2002.

Quizon, Eric, dir. *Home Alone da Ribber* [Home Alon(g) the River]. Scriptwriter Ben Feleo. Perf. Dolphy, Jolina Magdangal, Zsa Zsa Padilla, Vandolph, Eddie Gutierrez, Long Mejia, James Blanco, Palito, Boy2 Quizon, Jeffrey Quizon. RVQ, 2002.

Ray, Nicholas, dir. *Rebel Without a Cause.* Scriptwriter Stewart Stern. Perf. James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Jim Backus, Ann Doran, Corey Allen, William Hopper, Rochelle Hudson, Dennis Hopper, Edward Platt, Steffi Sidney, Marietta Canty, Virginia Brissac, Beverly Long, Ian Wolf. Warner Bros., 1955.

Red, Jon, dir. and scriptwriter. *Astigmatism.* Perf. Robin Padilla, Albert Martinez, Francis Magalona, Jeffrey Quizon, Ronnie Lazaro, Alessandra de Rossi, Jaime Fabregas, Dido de la Paz, Errol Dionisio, Noni Buencamino, Hector Macaso, Celso, Raul Morit, Gary Rada, Benjie Felipe. Pelipula, 2004.

————, dir. and scriptwriter *Stillives.* Perf. Noni Buencamino, Allan Paule, Joel Torre, Ynez Veneracion, Ray Ventura. Jon Red Production, 1999.

Reyes, Efren, dir. *Baril na Cinto* [Golden Gun]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Nova Villa, Johnny Monteiro, Lito Anzures, Nello Nayo, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Victor Bravo, Vic Varrion, Avel Morado, Larry Silva, Vicente Liwanag. FIJ, 1964.

--------- , dir. *Batang Maynila* [Manila Kid]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Dencio Padilla, Rebecca, Paquito Diaz, Jay Ilagan, Benny Mack, Manolo Robles, Max Alvarado, Jess Lapid. FPJ, 1962.

————, dir. *Ang Daigdig Ko'y Ikaw* [My World Is You]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Oscar Keesee, Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Vic Varrion, Mario Escudero. FIJ, 1965.

--------- , dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Pitong Gatang* [Seven Measures (name of a poverty-stricken village)]. Co-scriptwriter Ruben Rustia. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Zaldy Zshornack, Shirley Gorospe, Leonor Vergara, Carol Varga, Ruben Rustia, Elvira Reyes, Lito Anzures, Levi Celerio, Dely Atay-Atayan, Dadang Ortega. Premiere, 1959.

Reyes, Jose Javier, dir. and scriptwriter. *Bukas na Lang Kita Mamahalin* [I'll Start Loving You Tomorrow]. Perf. Angelu de Leon, Diether Ocampo, Tessie Tomas, Marianne de la Riva, Lara Fabregas, Bernard Palanca. Available Light and Viva, 2000.

—------, dir. and scriptwriter. *Ikaw ang Lahat sa Akin* [You are Everything to Me]. Perf. Richard Gomez, Maricel Laxa, Janice de Belen, Marco Ballesteros. Regal, 1992.

--------- , dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Kasai, Kasali, Kasalo* [Marriage, Inclusion, Partnership]. Co-scriptwriter Mary Ann Bautista. Perf. Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Gloria Diaz, Gina Pareño, Ariel Ureta, Soliman Cruz, Derek Ramsay, Lui Villaruz, Tuesday Vargas, Kat

Alano, Gerard Pizzaras, Nina Medina, Juliana Palermo, Cheena, Cacai Bautista. ABS-CBN and Star, 2006.

—------, dir. and scriptwriter. *Kung Ako na Lang Sana* [If Only It Had Been Me]. Perf. Sharon Cuneta, Aga Muhlach,Jennifer Sevilla, Christine Bersola, Dominic Ochoa. Star, 2003.

————, dir. and scriptwriter. *Malikmata* [Apparition]. Perf Rica Pcralejo, Marvin Agustin, Dingdong Dantes, Ana Capri, Jackie Castillejos, Ricky Davao, Wowie de Guzman, Eugene Domingo, Kristel Fulgar, Madeleine Nicolas, Barbara Perez, Tyron Perez, Nikki Valdez, Shintaro Valdez. Canary, 2003.

--------- , dir. and scriptwriter. *Narinig Mo na Ba ang L8est?* [Have You Heard the L8est?]. Perf. Aga Muhlach, Joyce Jimenez, Gloria Romero, Tessie Tomas, Bernard Palanca, John Prats, Mandy Ochoa, Gabe Mercado, Joy Ortega, Carlo Muñoz, Dick Israel, Mel Kimura, Julia Clarete. Available Light and Star, 2001.

————, dir. and scriptwriter. *Pinay Pie* [pun on "fanned"]. Perf. Joyce Jimenez, Assunta de Rossi, Ai-Ai de las Alas, \Thong Navarro, Carlos Agassi, Pinky Amador, Onemig Bondoc, Kimberly Diaz, Vangie Labalan, Carlo Maceda, Edward Mendez, Jenny Miller, Dustin Reyes, Rafael Rossel, Gilleth Sandico, Brad Turvey. Star, 2003.

--------- , dir. and scriptwriter. *Sugatang Puso* [Wounded Heart]. Perf. Lorna Tolentino, Christopher de Leon, Cherie Gil, Patrick Garcia, Jennifer Sevilla, Anna Larrucea, Jodi Sta. Maria, Carlo Aquino John Apacible, Pinky Amador, Eva Darren, Gilleth Sandico. Available Light and Regal, 2000.

Reyes, Ronwaldo, dir. *Ang Alamal ng Lawin* [The Legend of the Hawk]. Scriptwriter Manny R. Buising. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Ina Raymundo, Sharmaine Arnaiz, Franklin Cristobal, Alex Cunanan, Romy Diaz, Khen Kurlo, William Romero, Augusto Vieta, Cathy Villar, Ryan Yamazaki. FPJ, 2002.

--------- , dir. *Alupihang Dagat* [Sea Centipede]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Elizabeth Oropesa. FPJ, 1975.

————, dir. *Isang Bala Ka Lang Part II* [Just One Bullet Will Get You, Part II]. Scriptwriter Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Nanette Medved, Bernardo Bernardo, Subas Herrero, Anita Linda. Vision, 1996.

—------, dir. *Langit at Lupa* [Heaven and Earth]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Lou Salvador, Jr., Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Manolo Robles, Vic Varrion, Vic Uematsu, Resty Sandel, Joe Cunanan, Diego Guerrero, Ding Salvador, Robert Talby, Bert La Fortesa, Katy de la Cruz. FPJ, 1967.

————, dir. *Muslim Magnum .357.* Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Vivian Foz, Eddie Garcia, Paquito Diaz, Vic Diaz, Romy Diaz, Ruel Vernal, Renato del Prado, Eddie Arenas, Luis Castro, Jaime Fabregas, Christopher Paloma, Michael Roberts, Max Alvarado. EDL, 1986.

--------- , dir. *Ang Pagbabalik ng Lawin* [The Return of the Hawk]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Tina Revilla. FPJ, 1975.

--------- , dir. *Ang Pagbabalik ng Panday* [The Return of the Blacksmith]. Scriptwriter Tommy C. David. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Tina Revilla, Rosemarie Gil, Lito Anzures, Jose Romulo. FPJ, 1981.

—------, dir. *Ang Panday* [The Blacksmith]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Liz Alindogan, Lito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Martha Sevilla, Max Laurel, Bert Olivar, Vic Varrion, Max Alvarado. FPJ, 1980.

--------- , dir. *Ang Panday: Ikatlong Tugto* [The Blacksmith: Third Chapter]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Lito Anzures, Bentot, Jr., Dang Cecilio, Monette Garcia. FPJ, 1982.

—------, dir. *Ang Panday IV* [The Blacksmith IV]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Marianne de la Riva, Lito Anzures, Bentot, Jr., Eddie Infante, Max Alvarado, Monette de Guzman. FIJ, 1984.

--------- , dir. *AngProbinsyano* [The Bumpkin]. Perf. Fernando Poe,Jr., Dindi Gallardo, Amanda Page, Mumay Santiago. Viva, 1997.

Reyes, Tony Y., dir. *Fantastic Man.* Scriptwriters Chito Francisco and Michael V Perf. Vic Sotto, Ara Mina, Michael V, Leo Martinez, Valerie Concepcion, Rez Cortez, Joey de Leon, Romy Diaz, Goyong, Nanette Inventor, Dick Israel, Allan K., Zoren Legaspi, P. J. Malonzo, Alicia Mayer, Rudy Meyer, Rochelle Pangilinan, Marissa Sanchez, Jimmy Santos, SexBomb Dancers, Danica Sotto, Mico Sotto. M-Zet and OctoArts, 2003.

———, dir. and scriptwriter. *Lastikman* [(E)lastic Man]. Perf. Vic Sotto, Donita Rose, Michael V, Jeffrey Quizon, Michelle Bayle, Anne Curtis, Joey de Leon, Ryan Eigenmann, Joonee Gamboa, Goyong, Dindin Llarena, Maureen Mauricio, Pocholo Montes, Elizabeth Oropesa, Evangeline Pascual, Oyo Boy Sotto. M-Zet and OctoArts, 2003.

--------- , dir. *Pakners* [Partners]. Scriptwriters Manny R. Buising, Ely Matawaran, and Ronwaldo Reyes. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Efren "Bata" Reyes, Ai-Ai de las Alas, Joey de Leon, Paquito Diaz, Johnny Delgado, Romy Diaz, Gerald Espiritu, Toni Gonzaga, January Isaac, Dick Israel, Pocholo Montes, Candy Pangilinan, Rico J. Puno, Tiya Pusit, Oyo Boy Sotto. FIJ, 2003.

Roces, Susan. Interview by author. Metro Manila, 1978.

Romero, Eddie, dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Ganito Kami Noon ... Paano Kayo Ngayon?* [Thus Were We Then ... What Happens to You Now? / As We Were]. Co-scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Christopher de Leon, Gloria Diaz, Leopoldo Salcedo, Dranreb, Eddie Garcia, Tsing Tong Tsai, Rosemarie Gil, Johnny Vicar, E. A. Rocha, Laida Lim Perez, Jaime Fabregas. Hemisphere, 1976.

Romero, Joey, dir. *Mapupulang Labi* [Red Lips]. Perf. Candy Allison, Marcus Madrigal, Maye Tongco. Wild World, 2003.

Roño, Chito, dir. *Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?* [Child, Child, How Were You Created?]. Scriptwriter Lualhati Bautista. Perf. Vilma Santos, Albert Martinez, Carlo Aquino, Serena Dalrymple, Angel Aquino, Cherry Pie Picache, Raymond Bagatsing, Ariel Rivera, Rosemarie Gil, Andrea del Rosario. Star, 1998.

———, dir. *Dekada '70* [Decade (of the) '70s]. Scriptwriter Lualhati Bautista. Perf. Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon, Piolo Pascual, Marvin Agustin, Kris Aquino, Ana Capri, Dimples Romana, Jhong Hilario, Carlos Agassi, Danilo Barrios, Carlo Muñoz, Tirso Cruz III, Orestes Ojeda, John Wayne Sace, Marianne de la Riva. Star, 2002.

--------- , dir. *Itanong Mo sa Buwan* [Ask the Moon/The Moon Child]. Scriptwriter Armando Lao. Perf. Jaclyn Jose, Mark Gil, Anita Linda, Lucita Soriano, Tita Muñoz, Mia Gutierrez, Susan Africa. Double M, 1988.

———, dir. *Private Show.* Scriptwriter Ricardo Lee. Perf. Jaclyn Jose, Gino Antonio, Leopoldo Salcedo, Yvonne, Bella Flores, Aurora Boulevard, Lucita Soriano. Baby Pascual & Associates, 1986.

--------- , dir. *Spirit Warriors.* Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Joel Alano, Roy Alvarez, Vhong Navarro, Danilo Barrios, Spencer Reyes, Christopher Cruz, Pamela de los Santos, Jhong Hilario, Cris Vertido. MAQ, Regal, and Roadrunner, 2000.

———, dir. *Spirit Warriors 2: The Short Cut.* Scriptwriter Roy C. Iglesias. Perf. Vhong Navarro, Jhong Hilario, Danilo Barrios, Spencer Reyes, Christopher Cruz, Gloria Romero, Jaime Fabregas, Dexter Doria, Roy Alvarez, Marlou Aquino, Warren Austria, Alex Carillo, Connie Chua, Jemarth Lalic, Dan Pasia, Jose Peping, Marissa Sanchez. MAQ, Regal, and Roadrunner, 2003.

Roxas, Humilde "Meek," dir. and scriptwriter. *Ang Kapitbahay* [The Neighbor]. Perf. Albert Martinez, Joel Torre, Belinda Bright, Michelle Estevez, Daria Ramirez, Sofïa Valdez, Edwin Reyes, Cloyd Robinson, Buddy Palad, Ivan Camacho, Marilou Ver, Frank Holmes, Anthony Ranguani, Ed Juanio, Lando Tacorda. Imus, 2003.

Sacris, Lyle, dir. *First Time.* Scriptwriters Ramon de Veyra, Erwin Romulo, and Lyndon Santos. Perf. Jen Rosendahl, Gwen Garci, Myles Hernandez, Kristine Jaca, Hazel Cabrera, Asia Agcaoili, Raymond Bagatsing, Ryan Eigenmann, Roy Sevilla Ho, Ana Leah Javier, Yda Manzano, Lia Martinez, Jem Navarro, Katya Santos, Tado, Joel Torre, Ella V Furball and Viva, 2003.

Salud, Eric, and Trina Dayrit, dirs. *Hiram na Mukha* [Borrowed Visage]. TV series. From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Heart Evangelista, Geoff Eigenmann, TJ Trinidad, Katya Santos, Cherry Pie Picache, Eva Darren, Sharmaine Centenera-Buencamino, Marissa Delgado, Anna Leah Javier, Justine de Leon, Matutina, JE Sison. ABS-CBN, 2007.

Salud, Eric, Dondon Santos, Wenn V Deramas, Jerome Poblocan, F. M. Reyes, dirs. *Komiks* [Serialized Graphic Novels]. TV series. Scriptwriters Pablo S. Gomez, Agnes Gagilonia-Uligan, Rod Santiago, Galo Ador, Joel Mercado, Elena M. Patron, Keiko Aquino, Francisco Coching, R. R. Marcelino, Vic J. Poblete, and

Aloy Adlawan. Perf. Cassandra Ponti, Michelle Madrigal, Gloria Romero, Maja Salvador, Angelika de la Cruz, Aaron Junatas, Dominic Ochoa, Melissa Ricks, Bea Alonzo, Bernard Palanca, Jodi Sta. Maria, Chokoleit, Carlos Agassi, Matt Evans, Anne Curtis, Judy Ann Santos, Kristine Hermosa, Diether Ocampo, Nash Aguas, Agot Isidro, Jake Cuenca, Kitkat, John Prats, Sharlene San Pedro, Joseph Bitangcol, Joross Gamboa, Toni Gonzaga, Shaina Magdayao, Piolo Pascual. ABS-CBN, 2006-07.

Salvador, Augusto, dir. *Ang Agimat: Anting-Anting ni Lolo* [The Amulet: Grandfather's Talisman]. Scriptwriter Peque Gallaga. Perf. Ramon Revilla, Bong Revilla, Jolo Revilla, Nancy Castiglione, Gina Alajar, Mylene Dizon, Jaime Fabregas, Coco Martin. Imus, 2002.

Samonte, Mauro Gia, dir. and scriptwriter. *Machete.* From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Cesar Montano, Rita Avila, Joel Torre, Vivian Foz, Rina Reyes, Toby Alejar, Rocky Ramos. Seiko, 1990.

——------, dir. and scriptwriter. *Machete 2.* From a story by Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Gardo Versoza, Snooky Serna, Rosanna Roces, Priscilla Almeda, Don Umali, Joboy Gomez. Seiko, 1994.

Santiago, Cirio H., dir. and scriptwriter. *Operation: Balikatan.* Perf. Rey Malonzo, Eddie Garcia, Patricia Javier, Christian Boeving, Davee Youngblood, Nate Adams, Monsour del Rosario, Carlo Maceda, Joe Mari Avellana, Jess Eapid, Jr., Archie Adamos, Ernie Zarate, Nige Hoggen, Joe Zucchero, James Paolleli. Premiere, 2003.

Santiago, Pablo, dir. *Batang Matadero* [Bullfighter Kid]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Vilma Valera, Paquito Diaz, Eito Anzures Victor Bravo, Pablo Virtuoso, Dencio Padilla, Manolo Robles, Vic Varrion, Resty Sandel, Romy Diaz, Diego Guerrero, Ding Salvador, Justina David, Jose Romulo, Delong Tinoco. FPJ, 1969.

——------, dir. *Batang Quiapo* [Quiapo Kid]. Scriptwriter Jose N. Carreon. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Maricel Soriano, Rez Cortez, Sheryl Cruz, Anita Einda, Kristina Paner, Manilyn Reynes. Regal, 1986.

---------, dir. *Bato sa Buhangin* [Stone to Sand]. Scriptwriters Herminio "Butch" Bautista and Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Vilma Santos. FPJ, 1976.

---------, dir. *IbongAdarna* [Adarna Bird]. Scriptwriter Tony Serrano. Perf. Dolphy, Rosanna Ortiz, Panchito, Babalu. Roda, 1972.

———, dir. *KahitKontingPagtingin* [Just a Tittle Consideration]. Scriptwriter Amado Eacuesta. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Sharon Cuneta, Ricky Davao, Rey "IJ" Abellana, Paquito Diaz, Bing Eoyzaga, Dencio Padilla, Subas Herrero, Romeo Rivera, Manjo del Mundo. Viva, 1990.

———, dir. *Ang Kampana sa Santa Quiteria* [The Bell at St. Quiteria]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Boots Anson-Roa, Rosanna Ortiz, Max Alvarado, Eito Anzures, Victor Bravo, Dencio Padilla, Vic Varrion, Zarnan Manahan. FPJ, 1971.

——------, dir. *Little Christmas Tree.* Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Nora Aunor, Chichay, Dencio Padilla, Bibeth Orteza, Jimmy Santos. FPJ, 1977.

---------, dir. *Lo"* PTzzV *Gang (Ito Ba ang Ating mga Anak?)* [(Are These Our Children?)]. Scriptwriter Jose C. Garcia. Perf. Corazon Rivas, Fernando Poe, Jr., Berting Labra, Boy Francisco, Zaldy Zshornack, Lani O. Padilla, Boy Sta. Romana, Herminio Bautista, Wilma Zamora, Bobby Gonzales, Tony Cruz, Nello Nayo, Jose Garcia, Max Alvarado, Mario Antonio. Larry Santiago Productions, 1956.

———, dir. *Manedyer ... Si Kumander* [Manager ... It's Commander]. Scriptwriter Pablo S. Gomez. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Janice de Belen, Juan Carlos Bonnin, Leopoldo Salcedo, Chichay, Palito, Carmi Martin, Wendy Villarica, Tina Loy, Ang Tatlong Pinoy, Mely Tagasa. FPJ, 1982.

---------, dir. *Ang Syota Kong Balikbayan* [My Girlfriend the Returnee]. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Anjanette Abayari, Maritoni Fernandez, Paquito Diaz. Viva, 1996.

Santos, Teodorico C., dir. and scriptwriter. *Guwapo* [Handsome]. Perf. Reynaldo Dante, Ramon D'Salva, Anita Linda, Carol Varga, Lopito, Vicente Liwanag, Nello Nayo, Angelina Razon, Isa Riño, Max Alvarado, Bino Garcia, Tony Bebong, Ponching Adriano, Larry Valdez, Kiko Legaspi. Manuel Vistan, 1954.

Schrader, Paul. "Notes on Film Noir." Belton 153-70.

Sen, Aparna, dir. and scriptwriter. *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer.* Perf. Rahul Bose, Konkona Sen Sharma, Bhisham Sahni, Surekha Sikri, Sunil Mukherjee, Anjan Dutt, Esha Chauhan, Kalyan Ray, P. P. Bajaj,

Rahul Mulani, Shernaz Patel, Theron D'Souza, Mona Ghosh Shetty, Vijaya Subramanium, A. V. Iyenger. Triplecom Media, 2002.

Shyamalan, M. Night, dir. and scriptwriter. *The Sixth Sense.* Perf. Bruce Willis, Haley Joel Osment, Toni Collette, Olivia Williams, Donnie Wahlberg, Peter Tambakis, Jeffrey Zubcrnis, Bruce Norris, Glenn Fitzgerald, Greg Wood, Mischa Barton, Trevor Morgan, Angelica Torn, Lisa Summerour, Firdous Bamji. Barry Mendel, Hollywood, Kennedy/Marshall, and Spyglass Entertainment, 1999.

Sineneng, Jerry Lopez, dir. *Esperanza: The Movie.* Scriptwriter Dado C. Lumibao. Perf. Judy Ann Santos, Dante Rivero, Charo Santos-Concio, Joel Torre, Marvin Agustin, Piolo Pascual, Lito Legaspi, Bembol Roco, Elizabeth Oropesa, Rosa Rosal, Chat Silayan, Angelika dela Cruz, Carmina Villaroel, Tommy Abuel, Spencer Reyes. Star, 1999.

Sirk, Douglas, dir. *All That Heaven Allows.* Scriptwriter Peg Fenwick. Perf. Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Agnes Moorehead, Conrad Nagel, Virginia Grey, Gloria Talbott, William Reynolds, Charles Drake, Hayden Rorke, Jacqueline de Wit, Leigh Snowden, Donald Curtis, Alex Gerry, Nestor Paiva, Forrest Lewis. Universal, 1955.

———, dir. *Imitation of Life.* Scriptwriters Eleanore Griffin and Allan Scott. Perf. Lana Turner, John Gavin, Sandra Dee, Robert Alda, Susan Kohner, Dan O'Herlihy, Juanita Moore, Karen Dicker, Terry Burnham, John Vivyan, Lee Goodman, Ann Robinson, Troy Donahue, Sandra Gould, David Tomack. Universal, 1959.

---------, dir. *Magnificent Obsession.* Scriptwriter Robert Blees. Perf. Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Barbara Rush, Agnes Moorehead, Otto Kruger, Gregg Palmer, Sara Shane, Paul Cavanagh, Judy Nugent, Richard H. Cutting, Robert Williams, Will J. White, Helen Kleeb, Rudolph Anders, Fred Nurney. Universal, 1954.

———, dir. *Written on the Wind.* Scriptwriter George Zuckerman. Perf. Rock Hudson, Lauren Bacall, Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone, Robert Keith, Grant Williams, Robert J. Wilke, Edward Platt, Harry Shannon, John Larch, Joseph Granby, Roy Glenn, Maidie Norman, William Schallert, Joanne Jordan. Universal, 1956.

Spielberg, Steven, dir. *Raiders of the Lost Ark.* Scriptwriter Lawrence Kasdan. Perf. Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, Paul Freeman, Ronald Lacey, John Rhys-Davies, Denholm Elliott, Alfred Molina, Wolf Kahler, Anthony Higgins, Vic Tablian, Don Fellows, William Hootkins, Bill Reimbold, Fred Sorenson, Patrick Durkin. Lucasfilm and Paramount, 1981.

Stacey, Jackie. *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

Star, Darren, creator. *Sex and the City.* TV series. Perf. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrail, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Chris Noth, David Eigenberg. Darren Star, HBO, and Sex and the City, 1998-2004.

Stevens, George, dir. *Giant.* Scriptwriters Fred Guiol and Ivan Moffat. Perf. Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, James Dean, Carroll Baker, Jane Withers, Chill Wills, Mercedes McCambridge, Dennis Hopper, Sal Mineo, Rod Taylor, Judith Evelyn, Earl Holliman, Robert Nichols, Paul Fix, Alexander Scourby. Giant and Warner Bros., 1956.

Suleiman, Elia, dir. and scriptwriter. *Yadon ilaheyya* [Divine Intervention]. Perf. Elia Suleiman, Manal Khader, George Ibrahim, Amer Daher, Jamel Daher, Lufuf Nuweiser, Read Masarweh, Bassem Loulou, Salvia Nakkara, Naaman Jarjoura, Rama Nashashibi, Saiman Natour, Fairos Hakim, Khalil Jarjoura, Hamada Shamout. Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Gimages, Lichtblick Film- und Fernsehproduktion, Ness Communication & Productions, Ognon Pictures, Soread-2M, Arte France Cinemá, 2002.

Tadiar, Neferti, X. M. "The Noranian Imaginary." Tolentino, *Geopolitics of the Visible* 61-76.

Tan, Neal "Buboy," dir. and scriptwriter. *Kalabit* [Stroke]. Perf. Ara Mina, Raymond Bagatsing, Carlos Morales, Alma Soriano, Wilson Go, Alvin J. Bernales, Katherine Short, Jenell Kwan, Lyn Jordan, Mylene Tripol, Inday Garutay, Telly Babasa, Danny Labra, Jimmy Concepcion, Delon Gamboa. Vintage, 2003.

Tanaka Hiroyuki, dir. and scriptwriter. *Kofiiku no kane* [Blessing Bell]. Perf. Susumu Terajima, Naomi Nishida, Itsuji Itao, Ryoko Shinohara, Sansei Shiomi, Kazuko Shirakawa, Seijun Suzuki, Toru Tezuka, Kôji Yokokawa. Blessing Bell Film Partners, 2002.

Tejada, Gil Jr., dir. *Pati Ba Pintig ng Puso?* [Should the Heartbeat (Be Counted)?]. TV series. Scriptwriters Kit Villanueva Langit and Luningning Interino-Ribay. From a story by Helen Meriz. Perf. Yasmien Kurdi, JC de Vera, Eddie Gutierrez, Chynna Ortaleza, Karel Marquez, Arci Muñoz, Jennifer Sevilla, Marco Alcaraz, Pinky Amador, Kier Legaspi, Maureen Larrazabal, Marcus Madrigal, Karen de los Reyes, Sweet Ramos, Paulo Avelino, Ramon Christopher. GMA-7, 2007.

--------- , dir. *Sana ay Ikaw na Nga* [I Hope That You're the One]. TV series. Perf. Dingdong Dantes, Tanya Garcia, Angelu de Leon, Jaclyn Jose, Elizabeth Oropesa, Chesca Garcia, Chinggoy Alonzo, Tirso Cruz III, Wendell Ramos, Meryll Soriano, Bobby Andrews, Maricar de Mesa. GMA-7, 2002-03.

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Tolosa, Carlos Vander, dir. *The Big Broadcast.* Perf. Amalia Fuentes, Susan Roces, Jose Mari, Eddie Gutierrez, Dolphy, Panchito. Sampaguita, 1962.

--------- , dir. *Prinsesa Gusgusin* [Princess Raggedy]. Scriptwriters Ruben Fallorina, Bert Mendoza, and Hernan Torres. Perf. Romeo Vasquez, Susan Roces, Tito Galla, Nelly Bayion, Bella Flores, Zeny Zabala, Rod Navarro, Etang Discher, Georgie Quizon, Bert Olivar, Nancy Carlos. Sampaguita, 1957.

Torres, Mar S., dir. and co-scriptwriter. *Mga Reyna ng Vicks* [The Queens of Vicks]. Co-scriptwriters Venchito Galvez, Chito Tapawan, and Bert Mendoza. Perf. Gloria Romero, Susan Roces, Amalia Fuentes, Rita Gomez, Ric Rodrigo, Luis Gonzales, Romeo Vasquez, Dolphy, Nelly Bayion, Etang Discher, Eusebio Gomez, Zeny Zabala, Juancho Gutierrez, Rosa Mia, Eddie Garcia, Bella Flores, Venchito Galvez. Sampaguita, 1958.

Velasco,Johven [asJoven Velasco], scriptwriter. *"HulingBiyahe"* [Last Trip], *"Panata ni Doray"* [Doray's Vow], and *"Darating si Ate Eliza"* [Elder Sister Eliza's Arriving]. *Panahon* [Season] episodes. TV drama anthology. Perf. Susan Roces. Channel 2, 1992.

————- [as Joven Velasco], editor. 77/^ *Review.* Monthly magazine. Philippine Education Co., 1978-79.

Vergara, Pablo, dir. *Mahal, Saan Ka Nanggaling Kagabi?* [Love, Where Did You Come From Last Night?]. Scriptwriter Fred Navarro. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Susan Roces, Tina Monasterio, Veronica Jones, Dencio Padilla, Jerry Pons, Victor Bravo, Vic Varrion, Tina Loy, Metring David, Popoy, Marissa Navarro, Imelda Papin, Rod Navarro. FPJ, 1979.

Villaflor, Romy, dir. *Ana-Roberta.* Scriptwriter Ben Feleo. Perf. Susan Roces, Jose Mari, Zeny Zabala, Rosa Mia, Nello Nayo, Mary Walter, Limbo Lagdameo, Martin Marfil, Bert Olivar, Bruno Punzalan, Ven Medina. Ambassador, 1965.

Vinarao, Edgardo, dir. *Hula Mo, Hull Ko* [Your Guess, My Arrest]. Scriptwriter Humilde "Meek" Roxas. Perf. Rudy Fernandez, Rufa Mae Quinto, Alvin Anson, Jenine Desiderio, Mike Gayoso, Levi Ignacio, Mel Kimura, Romy Mallari, Carlos Morales, Joey Padilla, Mely Tagasa. Reflection, 2002.

Von Trier, Lars, dir. and scriptwriter. *Dogoille.* Perf. Nicole Kidman, Harriet Andersson, Lauren Bacall, Jean-Marc Barr, Paul Bettany, Blair Brown, James Caan, Patricia Clarkson, Jeremy Davies, Ben Gazzara, Philip Baker Hall, Thom Hoffman, Siobhan Fallon, John Hurt, Zeljko Ivanek. Zentropa, 2003.

Walters, Charles, dir. *Lili.* Scriptwriter Helen Deutsch. Perf. Leslie Caron, Mel Ferrer, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Kurt Kasznar, Amanda Blake, Alex Gerry, Ralph Dumke, Wilton Graff, George Baxter. MGM, 1953.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner, 1958.

White, Patricia. "Feminism and Film." Hill and Gibson 115-29.

Wilde, Oscar, playwright. *Salome.* Trans. Rolando Tinio. Dir. Anton Juan. Perf. Jaclyn Jose, Allan Paule, Ogie Juliano, Marisa Tinsay, RJ Leyran. Tanghalang Pilipino, 1993.

Wood, Robin. "Ideology, Genre, Auteur." Grant 59-73.

Yalung, Ben G., dir. *Partida* [Getaway]. Scriptwriters Benjamin G. Yalung and Tony Calvento. Perf. Fernando Poe, Jr., Armida Siguion-Reyna, Paquito Diaz, Romy Diaz, Elsa Agana, Eddie Arenas, Bing Davao, George Estregan, Bomber Moran, Miguel Rodriguez. Cine Suerte, 1985.

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The Editor

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