A BRIEF ON
SA MGA KUKO NG LIWANAG

(OR WHY MAYNILA SHOULD EVER BE MASCULINE)

● Ave Perez Jacob

I. THE CITY AND THE NOVEL

MANILA of one's adolescent years was a squalid corner in proletarian Tondo. The relatives with whom one used to live are still there, though now more than ever they are in constant threat of relocation. Like the rest of their prolific kind, they have been made more numerous by marriages and pregnancies —a collective yes to the population explosion.

Those people in that suffocatingly filthy quarter of Paraiso in Bangkusay still have no running water. But they do have a public toilet and bath which they like to call the "White House." It is near the factory gushing forth *inumin ng tunay na lalaki* and adjacent to the multi-national P&G-PMC where, if you want to reach the Sunog-Apog of Edgardo M. Reyes' **Sa Mga Kuko Ng Liwanag,** you can get a ride on a tiny outriggered banca and admire your reflection in the black polluted water of the estero while you hold your nose.

In one's fond memory, Manila then was heroic Tondo. Was it not the hallowed ground of Bonifacio and his *revolucionarios* and, long before them, of Sulayman and his brave Tagalog warriors? Yet the first district, as votes and politics would categorize it, had also spawned the likes of Asiong Salonga, the so-called Robin Hood of Calle Angustia. And Calle Inocencio had also hit the headlines with the rise of the dreaded *Grease-Gun Gang*, and later Bangkusay too with the devil-may-care exploits of the *Tres Cantos Gang*.

Were these latter elements all that bad? The young who had been forced to imbibe a foreign culture heavily dosed with the heady mystique of Billy The Kid and Jesse James, John Dillinger and Al Capone, would be hard put to respond with a coherent answer. Nevertheless one could be positive that in Tondo, as elsewhere in Manila, these underworld characters and those who succeeded them were never without fans. They who flaunted their criminal notoriety with verve and flamboyance, surely they enjoyed a certain degree of glamor in life. And in death, too, some had the aura of legend.

Of larger-than-life figures, there was a man living alone in a working class house several meters from the foot of Pritil Bridge, going to Maypajo. One would knock timidly, respectfully, on his door and be overwhelmed by a rare presence. He was of the stuff that made Tondo muscular and masculine, stentorian and great. Across a coffee table or from an improvised platform, his voice vibrated with visceral and intellectual conviction. But so soon he died, and one could only console himself with a parting glimpse of his remains inside the Gagalangin Church before the long sad trek to Cementerio del Norte. They named after him a plaza.

Meanwhile, secondary education was Jose Abad Santos High School in Binondo. What a training ground for would-be ***machos***! The buildings were a set of rectangles, the dirty walls massive and ancient like those of Intramuros, and the windows secured with thick perpendicular iron bars. No wonder the school used to be a prison for delinquent boys. There was a police sub-sta-

tion in one of the buildings but that was hardly enough to dampen the exuberant vitality of the working class youths.

Violent rumbles sometimes made gorier than usual by knifings and gunshots were almost a daily occurrence. The meek and frightened were definitely in the minority so that not-so-young punks who made the mistake of posing as students extorting pin money invariably ended up running for dear life or staggering drunkenly with bloodied heads and broken ribs. Gangs from rival schools never dared try to invade their home grounds. How could they when in neutral territory or even hostile turf the sons of Palomar, San Nicolas, Angustia, Bangkusay and of other no less infamously ferocious ghettoes always managed to prove their mettle and come out on top? The children of Kuomintang Chinese sheltered in their two exclusive schools in the vicinity held them in holy terror. And where before the roughnecks of Arellano High in Sta. Cruz (of which for a time JASHS was a mere branch) considered them inexperienced charges, they proved them wrong in many an "allied" encounter with enemy camps and were forthwith treated grudgingly as more than equal.

The Luneta was virtually no-man's-land after dark. Chain-swinging teen-age hoods infested it as well as blackmailing cops. Better not venture into it without trusted company, without first fortifying yourself with *cuatro cantos* in a hidden Chinese *sarisari* store, without a miniature samurai sword or an icepick. It was unbelievable that in so menacing and dangerous a place, there also was romance. For instant delirious sex you could have behind a scabrous tree, against a jagged boulder, on a secret patch of sere smelly grass.

One remembers with special affection those salad days if only because they were a time of harsh impressions clawing deep into the malleable psyche, a season of giddy excursions into the frontiers of experience that altogether would strike an imperious pose in a widened perspective of life.

Intramuros was dead. Years later one would read about its never-never existence in some writer's elegant and sensual

invocations of things frilly, delicate and decadent. He couldn't help it if he cursed aloud such tripe. Because even then one knew in his bones that the extravagant garden of coy *señoritas* and pale *señoritos* should be entombed and stay that way forever—lest its malevolent graveyard perfume contaminate yet another generation.

The homos (poor creatures!) haunted the ruins of Intramuros like vampires in search of fresh blood. They were mostly *mestizos*, seminal representatives of the likes of Padre Damaso and Padre Salvi. They were the products of Ermita and similar *ilustrado* enclaves. An expert blow-job they would demonstrate on anybody in need not so much of perverted sex as fare money or a free meal. Instances there were when a guy or two of one's company would play the decoys while the rest lay crouched and hidden in the tall *talahib* grass. At a given signal, as the fairies gathered round moaning and squealing in vulgar admiration of succulent Tondo meat, the ambushers would jump at them yelling like demented maniacs. And the homos would scamper away shrieking hysterically, disappearing as ghosts in the shadowy nooks and crannies of old Intramuros.

There was some kind of poetic justice in the fact that thousands of the landless and homeless took over the place and squatted on it. Where for centuries it was the seat of the ruling class, now at last the brothers of the workingmen of Tondo, Sta. Cruz, Sampaloc, San Andres, Sta. Ana . . . they reigned supreme there. As squatter area, dead Intramuros came alive with the boisterous ways of earthy folk. And in a sense it must be reminiscent of the Bangkusay of Sulayman. Boloes, spears and darts were its reception committee's greeting to arrogant intruders and trespassers.

But such an interlude was not for long. In the name of peace and order, sanitation and urban renewal, in order to "preserve history," people there and those from similar "eye-sores" were driven to Sapang-Palay and Carmona. Only a few months ago, in a visit with community workers and nutrition experts to those people in their transplanted state, one found them still very much a part of Manila. The rural setting had created no

particular headway in altering their psychology. Observing them, listening to them talk, one had the impression that he had travelled miles only to be with the same class of people as those in Tondo and the rest of the poorer quarters of the city.

Perhaps this is so because one who comes from a place like Tondo can never escape it. As space it is nuclear (Manila as a city started in the shores of Bangkusay and there is a "Little Tondo" in most other cities throughout the archipelago) and as a state of mind it is contagious and enduring.

Glaringly self-evident and pervasive this surely was even during college days. Manuel L. Quezon University (*Universidad Ng Mga Loko Sa Quiapo*, they used to say) throbbed with ambitious proletarian youths hungry for so-called higher education. Within its narrow confines one saw his own image reflected in many a contemporary whose consuming passion was to put one over the students of Ateneo, La Salle or San Beda. Yet even without really trying, their likes succeeded in many ways. Witness a brilliant Quezonian whose mark as a campus figure predestined him for greater and more solid achievements outside it. One was a freshman when he listened to him — one of the first three students to the People's Republic of China and Soviet Russia — listened to him raptly (mind-blowing was a term yet to be coined) as he enumerated the blessing of socialist reconstruction in one quarter of the globe.

In retrospect, perhaps what matters after all is that one as with the others survived in the milieu of such a university. And if they did, nothing could really stop them. As a place of learning it was a far cry from the effete "groves of academe". To be more precise, student life there was not a preparation but the gritty struggle for life itself.

The proximate perils that abounded there were not so much physical as morally corrupting. If you could not afford beer in the restaurants that lined R. Hidalgo and Quezon Boulevard, gin and rum were aplenty in a hole-in-the-wall store in Barbosa or inside decrepit houses in Mendoza that doubled as drinking

places. Or you could chip in with classmates to buy a "long-neck" and drink on the sly in one of the *barung-barongs* that hugged the back walls of the university as if seeking protection from the black circling estero.

Sleazy hotels were only a few steps away, cheek-by-jowl with cheap dormitories and cramped rooming houses, and the whorehouses of Elizondo couldn't be missed. The streets and alleys were never empty of winos, beggars, prostitutes, peddlers, vagrants and mean-looking characters who had done time in the city jail several blocks to the north or in Muntinlupa. But then after all Quiapo was just a more commercial and slightly *petit bourgeois* version of Tondo and if you were of the latter, you need not worry a bit because you had seen and experienced far worse things.

It is fortunate that such frenetic beat, dazzling colors and attendant nuances and meanings as manifested by the city of one's adolescence have been caught, portrayed and preserved in the stories of writers whose creative energies had been blest with generous helpings of Tondo machismo. Masculine and sincere, rebellious and talented, their powerfully honest if starkly cruel depictions of life as they knew and *lived* it took the literary impostors by storm. As a consequence, those who drooled and foamed in the mouth cranking out innumerable lugubrious romances and stupid fantasies were struck dumb and never recovered.

Without doubt the novels of Edgardo M. Reyes, Rogelio R. Sikat, Dominador B. Mirasol and Rogelio L. Ordoñez have made Pilipino literature richer and more vigorous. In fact their combined literary output, animated and angered by the more visible agents of corruption, exploitation and injustice in society, has generated a revolution in thought and emotion from which there is no turning back.

Again one must say that of course these writers are of Tondo . . . of places and experiences germaine to Tondo. Reyes lived somewhere in the area of Sunog-Apog. Mirasol revelled in the atmosphere of Calle Bato in North Bay Boulevard and

together with Ordoñez (he of Cavite and Calle Tayabas) wrote **Apoy Sa Madaling-Araw.** Sikat as a student spent several years in Sta. Cruz district though he is of the Nueva Ecija peasantry —a subject so timeless and incendiary as to be excoriated with tragic relevance in his novel **Dugo Sa Bukang-Liwayway.**

It augurs well for one and all that Reyes' **Sa Mga Kuko Ng Liwanag** (another novel of his, **Sa Kagubatan Ng Lunsod,** has also been made into a movie) has been translated into a film highly appreciated by the public. And as if in confirmation of more cinematic treats to come in the way of local moviegoers, the screenplay adaptations of Mirasol's **Mga Halik sa Alabok** and Sikat's **Dugo Sa Bukang-Liwayway** are being prepared as of this writing. So is the late Amado V. Hernandez's opus, **Luha ng Buwaya.**

If such pieces of work have succeeded in revitalizing and transforming what used to be a phlegmatic Pilipino literature, would it be too far-fetched to presume that as cinematic materials they could also serve the long-felt needs of an industry wallowing in inane productions? The prospects are enormous (and who would not expect for the best?) but first let us see how the screenwriter and the director handled **Sa Mga Kuko Ng Liwanag.**

II. THE SCREENPLAY AND THE MOVIE

Narcissistic can be an apt term for most luminaries of local filmdom. If they are stars, they are in love with their own bodies; if they are producers, they are in love with their own selves for making so much money. And yes, they believe and fall in love with their own press releases too. It is inevitable that in their narcotic trance everybody should fall in love with everybody in the game—a collective ego trip propelled by the indiscriminate hossanahs and halleluiahs of paid promoters and drumbeaters. Their motto, you guessed it: Don't rock the boat!

In such a vociferously stifling and money-mad atmosphere, art is relegated to the unenviable position of a poor relation that

must wait at the backdoor. This is so because the rule has always been for producers and stars alike to cater to their own inutile brainstorms or buy the sterile products of comics magazines. Cases are extremely rare and far between when something like art is introduced boldly at the frontyard of the industry and accorded the treatment it deserves.

Indeed this set-up presents formidable odds on the artistic accomplishments of writers like Reyes. He ought to be grateful that his novel has been filmed at all. Yet he likewise has plenty to grieve about and one can only commiserate with him.

The screenplay of Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. and the movie itself as directed by Lino Brocka improved the plot of the novel in only one particular aspect. Nobody can quarrel with them in deleting that portion where for a few pesos Julio Madiaga kills a man in the dark of Agrifina Circle. Accidental or not (Julio merely wants to knock the man unconscious) his motive is definitely mercenary and utterly condemnable, patently not in keeping with his character as a poor but decent young man from Marinduque in search of his sweatheart in the bowels of the city.

After this concession to their better judgment, del Mundo Jr. and Brocka are open to devastating broadsides. To put it bluntly, they mushed up and emasculated an austere masculine novel and they, therefore, muffed the chance of creating a truly good movie out of an exceptionally excellent material.

In a published article written by del Mundo Jr. himself ("From Novel To Script, From Script to Screen," **Daily Express**, July 7 and 8, 1975) he claimed that upon discovering the work of Reyes in 1970, he then and there decided to adapt it for the screen. After reading the product of his labors, one cannot escape the urge to conclude that he had fallen helplessly in love with the novel. But nobody should fault him for having succumbed to its virtues. After all at the time he "was a graduate student in communication arts at the Ateneo de Manila University" and, parenthetically, he had that aching desire to show something to his peers.

His crime is that as one so enamored, he had failed to comprehend the object of his affection. This is quite apparent when he made the assertion that the novel's plot is "romantic" and in a similarly simplistic and convenient manner reduced "Mister Balajadia, the crooked foreman; Misis Cruz, the fat recruiter; Ah Tek, the Chinese who owns Ligaya; and a policeman in civilian clothes" to the roles of traditional *contrávida* in the short unhappy life of Julio Madiaga.

Now such a ridiculously barefaced understanding of a serious literary work could have sent any other author of less emotional control into fits of hysterics and tantrums. (One could *not* imagine Reyes gnashing his teeth, *sabunot ng mga kamay ang buhok*, and refusing to admit knowledge of anybody from Ateneo save possibly Rizal.) Putting it straight, it takes little intelligence to realize that the thread of the story is far from being "romantic" and that the author only used it as a means to picture and interpret the city he has known and experienced. To this extent the novel is autobiographical (Reyes, before he became a writer, worked in several construction sites and, when he really did write and for a time found it unprofitable, attempted to join an advertising agency selling soap among other things; fortunately for him and for Pilipino literature he was turned down) yet it is also much more than that: an intensely honest portrayal of the working class — their incoherent and impossible struggle against the squalor that constricts and the poverty that demands their lives in contrast to the impersonal and dehumanizing imperatives of the city.

That del Mundo Jr. was not able to grasp its real essence could be gleaned from his own words: "There is this material, a short novel. I re-read it, I don't remember how many times. I visited Ongpin and Misericordia." How sad to know that before he could write the screenplay, he first had to be a tourist in the city of his own country. And what tourist can really feel the pulse of Chinatown, remember the ever-changing face of Avenida Rizal or fathom the lives of Sunog-Apog folk? If for nothing else, his visit to the seamy sides of Manila ("cinematic" is his favorite word to describe them) smacks of his

parochial upbringing and bourgeois pretensions. How, therefore, could it be possible for him to prevent this seeming "love affair" with his material from becoming a disaster?

But those who haven't read the novel would be taken in by his false ardor and predict otherwise. They would believe shamelessly self-serving words like: "I thought that whoever would read my script should know that these places are real, these events are real, and these people are real. So I used words to describe each scene." Or they would swallow such cute modesty as: "And I'd like to think that in some ways the screenplay enhanced some portions in the novel."

For the record, he lifted bodily numerous descriptive passages from the novel, oftentimes word for word, and injected them into his screenplay -- indeed he could be accused of plagiarism if what he had written was not a screen adaptation. In fact he was safe so long as he stuck to his original material. But everytime he attempted to be smart, say by changing portions of dialogue "which did not seem natural" to him, he stumbled and fell flat on his face. How could he satisfactorily improve the terse, down-to-earth dialogue of Reyes?

Witness that exchange when Julio is accompanying home the limping Atong after the death of Benny in the construction site:

Julio : *Sobra talaga'ng itim ng estero n'yo.*
Atong: *Wala naman yatang esterong di maitim, e.*
Julio : *Sa unang tingin ko lang e nangangati na 'ko.*
Atong: *Sanayan din 'yan . . .*

That is natural for del Mundo Jr. but it is not in the novel because Reyes would not deem it proper for Julio to be even remotely insulting to the circumstance of a friend and for Atong to be emphasizing the obvious.

The screenplay as an adaptation of the novel should have been selective and discriminating, expanding and elaborating as need be on what the material only suggests or insinuates. As it is, del Mundo Jr.'s labors proved only to be largely imitative,

bulky and unimaginative. To be charitable, he really did try very hard but what had caught his fancy was something way beyond his class. He must suffer the consequences for over-reaching himself. Reyes in turn could have avoided much anguish if only he had pre-empted the right to do the screenplay himself.

It is inevitable that the glaring anomalies perpetrated by the screenplay on the novel are now the burden of the movie. And if one is to invoke the dictum of command responsibility (alibis and protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, del Mundo Jr. must have been over-awed by the much-applauded Brocka) the director stands accused.

They transposed the novel's time element to 1970 but forgot to make the necessary alterations consonant to that arbitrary change. To say the least, the resultant inconsistencies are laughable if not irritating. It must be made clear that the author conceived the novel in the late fifies and actually wrote it in the early sixties. In those days the minimum wage was four pesos daily, remember? Believable then that construction workers should be robbed and receive less than the daily wage . . . for Atong to dream of buying his sister a one-peso pair of shoes, for a guy to have a three-peso lay, for Julio to be only twenty-one years old.

Time interposes implacable changes or don't they know it yet? A film that is supposed to be an audio-visual testament to a particular point in time must be faithful to it in order not to strain belief. When they chose to transport the material to the year in question, foremost in their minds must have been the delicious itch to have Julio Madiaga witness a demo before he fulfills his fatal mission.

They should have created an arresting and really unforgettable nostalgia movie instead. The range as well as the impact of Reyes' novel cover the legend that was James Dean (Lou Salvador Jr. who plays the role of Atong in the film was groomed as the local version, flaming red jacket and all) the proliferation of gangs like the *Sigue-Sigue*, *OXO*, *Bahala Na* and their

satellites. Between its taut palpitating lines one could almost hear the screaming headlines of the day . . . the irrevocable climb to notoriety of a Boy Golden, the death of a friend's friend at the Brown Derby, the shooting of a teen-age boy while scampering up the stairs of a soda fountain beside the theater showing West Side Story.

The Manila that was, its masculinity and the *angst* then prevalent, could have been recalled via brief and selective exposition as background or in juxtaposition to the travails of Julio and the others. But since Brocka and company elected to be *more* contemporary, the viewers of the film are denied the chance to be nostalgic. Worse still, they are insulted by *bakla* scenes.

Of all the irregularities done to the novel, the insertion of fairies doing their thing is the most galling and unpardonable. In making Julio a call boy of the home clientele, they destroy his manhood and degrade him. Why? The culprits may advance a number of reasons: to lengthen the movie, to prepare Julio for sex with Ligaya in a cheap hotel, to let it all hang out and start a gay liberation movement in the country, to appeal to the *bakla* audience, etc.

An educated guess is that they also wanted to establish decadence on another level. If that were so, why did they not exploit the job landed by the practical and coldly ambitious Imo? It offers interesting possibilities. Making a living as an advertising man is in itself a practice in prostitution, only it is a lot more subtle and glamorous. How many of these smart perfumed men in coat and tie (women AEs are known to sleep with their clients) have actually used sex to corner big accounts? The fact is a true-blue advertising genius would sell even his doddering grandmother to prove his A-1 salesmanship.

It is obvious all along that in tackling a major literary work for the first time, Brocka and company didn't know what to do with it. Take the case of the building, a towering part of the novel that inspired the author's most memorable poetic

lines. Footage alloted to it is no better than the commercial for a steel company. The savage alienation of the working class could have been brought home to the audience with poignant urgency by showing shots of the finished structure: monolithic and proud, luxuriously decorated inside and filled with well-dressed business-like people . . . the workers who built it being refused entrance.

And one missed that symbolic moment when the blood of Benny which spilled on the gravel is shovelled, mixed with the fresh concrete and poured down the hatch to become permanent part of the building. Likewise that particular scene when the contractor comes to the site, all the foremen including Balajadia hopping around him like mother hens, one tripping down because of over-eagerness to outdo the others in pleasing the master—a comic instant rich in pathetic undertones.

Vis-a-vis the novel, Brocka's film can be weighed in several other ways and found equally inadequate. As one who is being billed as the best director hereabouts, he should not have stooped down to mannerisms that are so palpably stale and run-of-the-mill. That church scene with the burning candles has been so overworked by countless local and foreign films to the point of a rusty gimmick that only from the most incorrigibly maudlin could it succeed to wring a tear. And the following scene inside a moviehouse where Julio and Ligaya talk while the screen flickers with the passion of Christ on the way to Calvary . . . ah, that must be something out of Mars Ravelo! Then he takes us inside a hotel room and we see the lovers resting after sex. What a lousy mean way to culminate Julio's painful search. But in the context of the protracted (almost a quarter of the movie's length) *bakla* interlude, that suits Brocka perfectly.

In comparison, consider the way Reyes developed and pursued these pertinent sequences in the novel. Julio is hunting for the policeman who took his diary with Ligaya's only letter including the money intended for Perla, sister of the dead Atong. He espies Ligaya among the hurrying throng on the

sidewalk. It is an electric moment but the point of view is undemonstrative, acutely economical yet intense in gesture and emotion, again masculine. Then they enter a restaurant for pedestrians, talk and plan Ligaya's escape.

That is as it should be, and what dramatic possibilities that long dream-of meeting holds. In visualizing them sitting there in a corner talking almost in whispers, one is reminded of convicts with their wives or lovers inside the crowded visitors' hall of Muntinlupa: holding hands or clasping each very close to the other, eyes tightly shut and imagining . . .

The death of Ligaya brings back to mind a similar incident in the sixties when a female servant was maltreated and killed by her Chinese master. Gasoline was poured on her body before she was closeted in the bathroom and burned alive. One stood by half-expecting a race riot to erupt as the funeral procession passed along Rizal Avenue. Some of the mourners walking behind the cortege were brandishing angry placards denouncing the descendants of Limahong. A few of them actually shouted obscene epithets directed at the Chinese manning the cornerstores. Yet nothing happened.

There is no gainsaying the fact that since Spanish times the Chinese has always been our whipping-boy, the local equivalent of the helpless Jew in other climes and circumstance. Rightly or wrongly, this historical bugaboo has enlivened the imagination of many Filipino fictionists and Reyes is no exception to them. Perhaps his sole purpose in having Julio kill Ah Tek is simply to avenge the death of Ligaya. But one cannot escape investing his brutal and inexorable deed with larger significance: an act of exorcism that restores his manhood. And hopefully as a process this should signal the passing of the Chinese, in symbolical and literal terms, as evil personified in the landscape of Philippine literature. In order to be relevant and convincing, writers should turn to other far more insidious and potent forces, alien or not, that endanger the masculinity and greatness of the Filipino.

Finally, Brocka misunderstood even the ending of his material. Julio running away is a coward. Why should he be when he has been purified by his act and is prepared for anything? In the novel he just stands there looming over the fallen Ah Tek, his mind perhaps trying to nullify the menacing reality that people of his own kind are the ones who will punish him for his deed but otherwise he doesn't give a damn anymore. The slow dissolve to the lyrical silhouette of Ligaya (last of a series of frequent and repetitious flashbacks) vindicates del Mundo Jr.'s claim that the novel's plot is "romantic".

Nowadays it is not fashionable to pan Brocka. His legion of delirious admirers are quite exorbitant in their praises, attributing to him non-existent gifts. However, a sober appraisal of this his latest movie will bring to light the incontrovertible fact that its success derives *not* on the manner the material has been mishandled. It is to the credit of the novel that despite the anomalies and irregularities done to it, its innate spirit and compelling vitality remain unsmothered.

If Brocka is to be commended (and time and again he has been hailed for the wrong reasons) it is in his choice of the cast. Rafael Roco Jr. is superb as Julio. Tommy Abuel's Pol should earn him an award. His measured performance is a distillation of that unique brand of friendship that it seems only workingmen are capable of to help make a miserable life tolerable. And Lily Gamboa-Mendoza's brief appearance as Perla (that scene where Julio and Pol inquire about the death of Atong and she cries but stops herself only to say chokingly: *Siyanga pala . . . kumain na ba kayo?* —is revealing of the poor folk's concern for others in spite of personal loss) should promise her juicier roles in the future. Of course Mike de Leon's cinematography is cause for rejoicing.

After all is said and done, **Maynila: Sa Mga Kuko Ng Liwanag** constitutes a high-water mark in the annals of Philippine cinema. Yet one can safely guess that this will not be for long. If film buffs continue to talk about it in the days to come, the reason shall be more or less the same: they tried but failed to sissify a manly novel about an ever masculine city.

The point now is that whether one likes it or not, Brocka stands at the vanguard of today's crop of directors. Definitely he is setting the trend for young relatively unknown talents to come to the fore and be counted. Such a healthy development must not be aborted by the smugness of some money-oriented superstars and film moguls alike. On the contrary it should be encouraged to the fullest in order to realize once and for all the promise of new horizons for Philippine cinema.