

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

As popular culture, film is a voracious medium that feeds on material from traditional literary forms and recent media products to create narratives with which to mesmerize its audience. In the Philippines, movies have been made from plays, novels, folk tales, legends, and even poems, capitalizing on the presumed familiarity of the public with the events, characters and themes of these traditional/popular narrative genres.

In the decades following World War II, filmmakers discovered that Filipinos had been growing less and less print-oriented, gravitating instead to entertainment provided by radio and television, and more especially by illustrated popular novels called *komiks*. Consequently, there has been in recent years a proliferation of films based on narratives created for the mass audience, the same audience on which producers pin their hopes for mega-profits.

Both for the serious student of film and the conscientious practitioner of the art, it is instructive to know how film as art and entertainment has related to literature, theater and popular culture in exerting its own brand of witchery on Filipinos it has captivated.

The most significant sources of influences on the Filipino film are: significant events in Philippine history; outstanding personalities from all classes both past and present; theater forms popular at a given period, like the *komedya*, *sinakulo*, *sarswela*, *drama*, and *bodabil*; folk traditions in oral literature, music, dance, and the visual arts; formal literary tradition, as exemplified by the *awit* and *korido*, novels and short stories in Tagalog, English and Spanish; popular *komiks*, which feature fantasy stories and melodramas; radio, which popularizes soap operas and musical dramas; television, with its long-running drama anthologies, situational comedies, music competitions, and variety shows; and foreign films, which introduce trends and fads followed by local movies.

From these diverse sources and influences, the Filipino film developed its own genres, stories, characters, themes, techniques, and styles of acting, scriptwriting, directing, production design, music and sound scoring.

History

The first two feature films produced in the Philippines had historic origins. *Dr. Jose Rizal*, 1912, produced by Edward M. Gross, recounts the hero's life from his childhood in Calamba, Laguna, where he was born, to his last days in Fort Santiago where he was imprisoned before he faced a firing squad at Bagumbayan. *La vida de Jose Rizal* (The Life of Jose Rizal), 1912, produced by Albert Yearsley, focused on a historic event, the hero's execution. It was appropriately titled in Spanish, *El Fusilamiento de Dr. Jose Rizal* (The Execution of Dr. Jose Rizal).

History was the vitalizing force that impelled movie makers during the early years

of the silent films era. Gross went back to history for the sources of his two other pictures: *Los Tres Martires: Gomez, Burgos y Zamora* (The Three Martyrs: Gomez, Burgos and Zamora), 1912, which centered on the martyr-priests who were executed following the Cavite uprising in 1872, and *La conquista de Manila* (The Conquest of Manila), 1912, which glorified the Legazpi expedition.

Historical films based on lives of heroes are successful when they are attuned to the times of their audiences. The recognition of Rizal by the American colonial government as the Philippine national hero elevated his stature as a patriot above all others. The Gomburza film also rode on the popularity of Rizal at that time, making mention of the fact that he was only 10 years old when the three martyr-priests were executed. These films stirred feelings of patriotism among the audience.

Julian Manansala, dubbed the “Father of the Nationalistic Film,” based most of his films on Philippine history. His first film, *Patria Amore* (Beloved Country), 1929, earned the ire of the Spanish community which sought an injunction to prevent the movie from being shown. It was a time when independence was a burning issue, and the film was based on the Philippine Revolution. In another film, *Dimasalang*, 1930, Manansala highlighted Rizal’s behind-the-scenes role in the Revolution. In *Mutya ng Katipunan* (Muse of the Katipunan), 1939, he delved deep into the life story of Melchora Aquino, aka Tandang Sora, so that Filipinos would know her better.

Historical films based on biographies of famous heroes and heroines are *Diego Silang*, 1951, about the hero of Ilocos Sur; *Dagohoy*, 1953, about the rebel who led the longest revolt against the Spaniards; and *LapuLapu*, 1955, about the warrior of Mactan who felled Magellan in Cebu. Films based on historic events include *The Tragic Death of General Luna*, 1930, which dramatized the events leading to the assassination of the famous revolutionary general during the Philippine-American War; *Heneral Gregorio del Pilar*, 1949, which highlights the martyrdom of the “boy general” at Tirad Pass; and *Manila: Open City*, 1967, which is set during World War II.

True-to-Life Stories

The nature of an individual’s claim to public attention is an important consideration in deciding whether to use his or her biography as subject matter for a movie. A cursory survey of the subjects of recent film biographies will show a preponderance of entertainment capitalizing on sex, violence, and assorted deviances or perversions. Notoriety, for one, as spread by print and broadcast media, leaves a deeper impression than bland innocence. The story of Teodoro Asedillo, a school teacher-turned rebel, who was hunted down by government forces in the mountains of Tayabas, provided director Vicente Salumbides with material for *Pugad ng Aguila* (Eagle’s Nest), 1938. Another rebel provided the subject for the first film of Lamberto Avellana, *Sakay*, 1939. The controversy over this film biography of Macario Sakay, the revolutionary leader tagged as a bandit by the American colonial government, led Avellana to comment 40 years later that, if he were to do a remake of his film, he would treat it

differently.

Jose Domingo Badilla was close to his times when he made *Princess Tarhata*, 1931, based on the real-life story of the daughter of the Sultan of Sulu. She was one of the early Filipino scholars sent to the United States for studies and upon her return set up schools for the education of Filipinos in Mindanao. A second version of the Princess Tarhata story, *Tarhata*, 1941, was made by Sampaguita Pictures starring Corazon Noble, and a third, *Tarhata*, 1957, marked the debut of Lolita Rodriguez in Philippine filmdom.

Sampaguita also made a film out of the life and times of Rudy Concepcion, one of its more popular prewar actors, titled *Ang Kasaysayan ni Rudy Concepcion* (The Story of Rudy Concepcion), 1952. He died under mysterious circumstances at the height of his popularity and throngs of movie fans turned out for his wake and funeral. From the lineup of films using real-life stories, film biographies may be grouped into three categories.

There are films about contemporary men and women who are presented as exemplars of civic and humanitarian virtues. Reporter Rodolfo Reyes penetrated a drug-running gang in the early 1960s and two movies were made of his feat: *Dope Addict*, 1961, by Ding de Jesus, and *Sa Piling ng mga Sugapa* (Among the Drug Abusers), 1977, by Gil Portes. A soldier who distinguished himself in the anti-insurgency campaign of the 1950s is the central figure in Nilo Saez's *Nicolas Feliciano: Ang Huk-Fighter ng Tarlac* (Nicolas Feliciano: The Huk-Fighter of Tarlac), 1978. Following the EDSA revolt of 1986, a string of movies about converted rebels includes the biographies of Bernabe Buscayno, Victor Corpus, and the rebel-priest Conrado Balweg, each one implying that the fall of the Marcos dictatorship pointed to better times ahead.

There are also movies based on the lives of notorious personages, particularly criminals. Gerardo de Leon's *Hanggang sa Dulo ng Daigdig* (To the Ends of the Earth), 1958, is an imaginatively embellished account of the career in crime of the outlaw Nardong Putik. The Joseph Estrada starrer, *Asiong Salonga*, 1962, was the first of a spate of films whose commercial appeal is based on material purportedly taken from the lives of real-life underworld characters. *Hindi sa Iyo ang Mundo, Baby Porcuna* (The World is Not Yours, Baby Porcuna), 1978, a film by Danny Zialcita, carried an admonition to would-be criminals. During the martial law regime, the Board of Censors compelled producers to include in their film titles a warning or judgment on the biographical account contained in the movie.

Lastly, there are films based on biography as political advertisement. To this group belong the films commissioned by politicians to project themselves and their political programs during an election campaign. *Iginuhit ng Tadhana* (Drawn by Fate), 1965, a film bio on Ferdinand E. Marcos who was running for president against the incumbent Diosdado Macapagal, attained the status of a cause celebre when it was refused a permit for exhibition by the Board of Censors. To counter the impact of the Marcos film on the voters, Macapagal supporters funded a film on the life of their candidate,

Tagumpay ng Mahirap (Triumph of Poverty), 1965, which however failed to get Macapagal reelected. Another film in this category is the *Arsenio Lacson Story*, 1963, with Fred Montilla in the role of Manila's colorful mayor.

Fidelity to truth and reality in a film biography augurs well for filmmaking in the Philippines. Among the better films by Filipino directors are some productions depicting contemporary figures who are held up as exemplars of virtue or uprightness as well as movies about the scum of Philippine society.

Theater

In the 80-year history of the Filipino film, the relationship between cinema and theater has been so familiar and familial that it is almost taken for granted. From 1912 to the 1950s, the mainstream cinema was created by directors, actors and writers who either “migrated” to the screen from the traditional stage or continued to straddle both worlds: *sarswelista* Titay Molina, Atang de la Rama and the Ilagan clan; *bodabilista* Pugo and Tugo, Katy de la Cruz, Bayani, Dolphy, and the Salvador clan. Moreover, this cinema had to orient itself to audiences which had been reared on the content and production conventions of the komedya, sinakulo, sarswela, drama, and bodabil. On the other hand, since the 1960s, the artistic films of the New Cinema have been made by directors, actors, and designers who imbibed the influences and styles of modern Western theater (and film as well) from Americanized schools and non- or semiprofessional drama groups in or outside of academe.

The komedya is a play whose story is usually taken from or patterned after those of metrical romances called awit and korido. Also known as the *moro-moro*, it tells a long-winded story (usually taking from 3 to 9 days to finish) about struggles between the Christian and Moorish kingdoms in medieval Europe. Important features of the komedya are the *torneo* (tournament) in which courtiers and peasants of various kingdoms fight each other to win a princess' hand and the battles between princes and princesses and armies, which invariably end in the victory of the Christian kingdom, with the *moro* being baptized in the end. *Minda Mora*, 1929, based on Severino Reyes' tale of a Muslim princess, is typical of this tradition.

LVN Pictures produced movies based on famous awit and komedya, such as *Principe Teñoso* (Prince Teñoso), 1942, as well as komedya-type movies like *Aladin*, 1946. When one of the LVN directors, Manuel Conde, formed his own production company, he also turned to the komedya for the plots of his movies, such as *Prinsipe Paris* (Prince Paris), 1949, and *Siete Infantes de Lara* (Seven Sons of Lara), 1950. Today, the komedya survives in action films which feature the *bakbakan* or fight between the forces of good and evil and the *palasintahan* or love scenes between idealized heroes and heroines who are eventually reunited in spite of overwhelming odds.

The sinakulo or passion play is a theatrical version of the *pasyon*, a verse narrative on the life, sufferings, and crucifixion of Christ. It survives in movies billed as “Lenten

offerings” which have Christ-like heroes or Mary-like heroines such as Rosa Aguirre in ***Siete Dolores*** (Seven Sorrows), 1948, or Rosa Mia in ***Pitong Kalbaryo ni Inang*** (Seven Calvaries of Mother), 1962. Their meekness and sacrifices are invariably rewarded in the end. One of the most notable screen sinakulo is ***Kalbaryo ni Hesus*** (The Calvary of Jesus), 1952.

The sinakulo survives most strongly in the Filipino’s value system, which always favors the underdog. In films like ***Roberta***, 1951, the much-abused heroine (Tessie Agana as the neglected orphan) suffers physical injury, maltreatment, and oppression, but is rewarded in the end. Rosa (Charito Solis) in ***Malvarosa***, 1958, suffers insults, misinterpretation, and trials from her five brothers but forgives them for their misdeeds.

Many film melodramas have evolved from another sinakulo character, Mary Magdalene, who is depicted as a wanton woman with a heart of gold. The late Rita Gomez became famous for portraying this character in movies like ***Talipandas***, 1958. Films like ***Tatlong Magdalena*** (Three Magdalenes), 1960, and ***Alas 5 ng Hapon: Gising na ang mga Anghel*** (It’s Five O’clock in the Afternoon: The Angels Are Awake), 1975, a film about the bar-girls of Olongapo, also have Magdalene types.

Probably the most prolific of all the dramatic progenitors of the Filipino film was the sarswela, (descended from the Spanish *zarzuela*), a musical comedy which supplanted the komedya in Manila from 1900s to the 1930s. It is essentially a love story with songs and dances as highlights.

Many sarswela were transplanted directly from stage to screen. Severino Reyes’ ***Walang Sugat*** (Not Wounded), 1902, was first made into a film by Albert Yearsley, 1912, and ***Filippine Films***, 1939, the latter starring Rosa del Rosario and Leopoldo Salcedo. A third version was made by LVN in 1957 with Mario Montenegro and Charito Solis, directed by Lamberto Avellana. Hermogenes Ilagan’s ***Dalagang Bukid*** (Country Maiden), 1919, was the first Nepomuceno film and starred the original sarswela stars, Atang de la Rama and Marceliano Ilagan. ***Mahiwagang Binibini*** (Mysterious Lady), 1939, which launched Carmen Rosales’ film career, was based on a sarswela by Servando de los Angeles, ***Ang Kiri*** (The Flirt). His other sarswela, ***Ararong Ginto*** (Golden Plow), was made into an LVN movie by Manuel Conde in 1941 and starred Mila del Sol and Leopoldo Salcedo.

From the tradition of the drama come the situation comedies revolving around misunderstandings, as in the ***Tugo*** and ***Pugo*** movies; and the melodramas about persecuted children as portrayed by Tita Duran in ***Alipin ng Palad*** (Slave of Destiny), 1938, and miserable wives as typified by Rosario Moreno in ***Tunay na Ina*** (Real Mother), 1939. Finally, the influence of bodabil may be seen in musicals with lavish production numbers featuring pop songs and dances, as seen in the grand musicals of Sampaguita Pictures: ***Vod-A-Vil***, 1953; ***The Big Broadcast***, 1962; and ***Guy and Pip***, 1971.

In general, the following characteristics of the traditional stage were “inherited” by mainstream Filipino cinema: plots consisting of “major” events arranged chronologically and designed to come to a “correct” ending—through a series of coincidences, revelations, chance encounters, and other forms of *deus ex machina*—which reaffirms the values of the establishment; idealized characters who are clearly identified as heroes or villains and who speak a language associated with their stereotypes; acting which is equated with masks of expressions and sets of gestures and mannerisms that symbolize rather than express emotions; direction which merely strings together rather than interprets characters and situations; cinematography which often merely “records” rather than interprets the characters, situations, and moods of a story; and editing which evokes the leisurely pace of komedya performances in rural areas.

With the exposure of directors, actors, and designers to modern western theater since the 1960s and their immersion in productions of plays by Ibsen, Strindberg, Williams, Miller, and Durrenmatt, a definite change may be observed in the conceptualization and execution of the films of the new cinema. Viewing film as art, the new cinema is partial to: stories which highlight the uniqueness of individuals; plots which develop character more than action; dialogue, costumes, makeup, and sets that delineate character and mood; acting that is internalized and individualized; direction that pulls together all aspects of production into a cohesive artistic whole; cinematography that visualizes content, defines time/mood/character, through lighting, composition and camera movements; and editing which supports the internal rhythm of a film.

Folklore

The cinema did not draw its material from Filipino oral traditions until the late 1920s when silent film producers turned out such films as *Ang Multo Sa Libingan* (The Ghost in the Cemetery), 1927; *Ang Manananggal* (The Vampire), 1927; and *Mang Tano: Nuno ng mga Aswang* (Old Man Tano: Ancestor of Vampires), 1932. Beliefs and superstitions about preternatural creatures, spirits, and ghosts of an animist past still haunt the Filipino psyche. The darkened movie theater or cinema house is a natural setting for the telling of scary stories. These considerations must have motivated the producers of the first Filipino talking picture, *Ang Aswang* (The Vampire), 1933, to base their material on folklore.

The use of folklore, however, is not confined to the retelling of horror tales. Jose Nepomuceno’s *Mariang Alimango* (Maria, the Crab), 1938, is a captivating folk fantasy influenced by the Cinderella-type folk story. Towards the end of the story, the huge crab that befriends the lonely, oppressed girl washing clothes by the riverside is transformed into her fairy godmother.

The *alamat* (legend) has long been a favorite source of material for Filipino films. *Bernardo Carpio*, 1951, and *Mariang Sinukuan*, 1955, were based on legends about strong men and beautiful women. Manuel Silos’s *Anting-Anting* (Amulet), 1934,

presented a romanticized version of the “Malakas at Maganda” (The Strong and the Beautiful) legend. Another legend, the tale of the enchantress Maria Makiling was the subject of Carlos Padilla’s *Makiling*, 1938.

Where the subject matter is not drawn directly from folklore, a filmmaker may choose to adopt the narrative structure of the *alamat*. As a narrative form, the *alamat* allows a writer to make use of exaggeration or even fantasy, in dealing with a serious subject. Thus, directors/scriptwriters wanting to suggest to moviegoers a particular way of looking at the narrative choose to frame characters and incidents within a legend. In *Sawa Sa Lumang Simboryo* (Python in the Old Dome), 1952, director Gerardo de Leon modulated the implausibilities in Amado Yasoña’s komiks story by making the film narrative appear to be a tale contained in the ballad sung on the soundtrack. Consuelo P. Osorio’s movie about the early years of Spanish colonization, *Alamat ng Perlas na Itim* (Legend of the Black Pearl), 1949, endowed its story with romance by claiming that the narrative was drawn from a legend.

Folkways have the appeal of exoticism in that they generally suggest customs and cultural practices from remote times and places. Films supposedly set in precolonial Philippines would claim that they are authentic accounts of the lives of early Philippine folk. Three movies set in precolonial times purport to show how Filipinos in ancient times lived: Gerardo de Leon’s *Banaue*, 1975; Eddie Romero’s *Kamakalawa* (Day Before Yesterday), 1982; and Lamberto Avellana’s *Waywaya*, 1983. In these films, a grasp of the authentic early culture of the inhabitants was tenuous at best, so the directors had to depend heavily on the resourcefulness of the scriptwriter and the production designer to simulate lifeways and customs supposedly of the remote past. Folklore and “fakelore” have been mixed with impunity in more recent films using folk materials. This is to be observed in the series of film biographies of real-life social outcasts and underworld characters with which Ramon Revilla has endeared himself to fans of action films. Revilla attributes to the characters he plays superhuman powers allegedly acquired through the agency of an *agimat* (charm) or *anting-anting* (amulet). *Hulihin si Tiagong Akyat* (Capture Tiagong Akyat), 1973, was the first in the series which has become “folkloric” through sheer gimmickry.

In *Once Upon a Time*, 1987, Peque Gallaga tried to wed the past and the present by freely mixing traditional creatures of the folk imagination and contemporary character types. He secured the services of the popular film comedian, Dolphy, and an array of big stars in cameo roles for his movie. Critics, however, have raised the question of how far folklore may be reinterpreted in our time without losing its relevance and appeal to moviegoers who may be presumed to remain active participants in the traditional culture of the Filipino folk.

Perhaps the best-known use of folklore as movie material was Manuel Conde’s series of film interpretations of the Juan Tamad legends. In 1947 Conde, for the first time, took from folk tales the character of the simple-minded country bumpkin who goes by the name, according to the locality, of Juan, Suan, or Pilandok. His first film, a satire on the nouveau riche of the postwar years, was simply titled *Si Juan Tamad*

(Lazy John), 1947. The following year, Conde returned to the comic folk figure and made him a bumbling tattler in *Juan Daldal* (Talkative John), 1948. There was an interval of 11 years before Conde again picked up his favorite alter-ego.

This time the target of his humor was the Filipino politician and this was made explicit by the title, *Juan Tamad Goes to Congress*, 1959. Three years later, *Juan Tamad Goes to Society*, 1960, poked fun at the foibles of the rich and famous in Manila's elite. The last film in this series, another satire on politicians, had a remarkably long title, *Si Juan Tamad at si Juan Masipag sa Pulitikang Walang Hanggan* (Lazy John and Industrious John in Never-Ending Politics), 1963.

Juan Tamad in another guise is the central character in *Pedro Penduko*, 1954, a comedy by Gerardo de Leon based on a komiks serial by the famous illustrator, Francisco V. Coching. The misadventures of the character have been made familiar by the many versions of the Juan Tamad tale. Celso Ad Castillo picked up the Pedro Penduko character for a comedy-action film titled *Ang Mahiwagang Daigdig ni Pedro Penduko* (The Fantasy World of Pedro Penduko), 1973.

In Latin America, Brazilian and Cuban filmmakers have delved deeply into their respective folk traditions to create films that are able to stir audiences outside their countries. Ishmael Bernal's *Himala* (Miracle), 1982, about a barrio girl who becomes the center of a religious cult after she claims to have been the object of an apparition of the Virgin Mary, is also about folklore, but it has something very contemporary to say about faith and deceit, about innocence and lust, about life and death in Philippine society today.

Literature

Literary forms and genres—epic, poetry, novel, short story, play—are important sources of film material. It is possible to argue that the best products of the movie industry have come from this relationship between film and literature.

Two writers of the 19th century, Francisco Baltazar (Balagtas) and Jose Rizal, have given the film industry a rich source of subject matter and themes through the classic works that made them famous.

The Balagtas epic, *Florante at Laura* (Florante and Laura), was first made into a silent movie by Edward Gross in 1917, but the subtitles did not do justice to Balagtas' fine poetry. Two decades later, Vicente Salumbides came up with a talking picture version, *Florante at Laura*, 1939, which incorporated more than 400 lines of the original poem in the dialogues of the speaking characters. The film was so successful that Salumbides did a remake in 1950 with the assistance of Nemesio Caravana, a Tagalog writer who later became an important director of period (costume) pictures.

Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) has had three film versions: one by Edward Gross in 1917, another by Jose Nepomuceno in 1930, and a third one by Gerardo de Leon in 1961. Of the three, the de Leon film is the only one available; a copy was restored by Harold Brandes of Germany's Federal Archive and turned over to the Philippine government by the Goethe-Institut Manila in 1990. The other Rizal novel, *El Filibusterismo* (Subversion), has had two versions: one produced by Gross in 1917 and the other directed by de Leon in 1962. Both the *Noli* and the *Fili* versions by de Leon won the FAMAS awards for best picture in the years that they were shown.

The Rizal novels' legacy to Philippine cinema has not been restricted to their narratives. They have also provided distinctive character-types as the subjects of other movies: *Maria Clara*, 1938; *Sisa*, 1951; *Elias, Basilio, Sisa*, 1972; and *Juan de la Cruz*, which was started in 1974 by Gerardo de Leon and left unfinished at his death in 1981.

The first Filipino novel in English was made into a movie of the same title, *A Child of Sorrow*, 1930, with the author, Zoilo Galang, directing the film version. Another writer in English, Felicidad Ocampo, had her novel made into the motion picture *Dahil Sa Pagibig* (Because of Love), 1938. She was known as "the only Filipino novelist with technical background in Hollywood."

In the 1930s the Tagalog novel serialized in *Liwayway* magazine was a rich source of film material. The list of Tagalog novelists and their works includes: Antonio Sempio's *Punyal na Ginto* (Golden Dagger), 1933; Teofilo Sauco's *Ang Magmamani* (The Peanut Vendor), 1938; Fausto J. Galauran's *Ang Birheng Walang Dambana* (The Virgin With No Shrine), 1937; Remigio Mat Castro's *Hiram na Ligaya* (Borrowed Happiness), 1937; Venancio Aznar's *Nang Magulo ang Maynila* (When Chaos Came to Manila), 1937; Iñigo Ed Regalado's *Madaling Araw* (Break of Dawn), 1938; Gregorio Coching's *Batang Tulisan* (Young Bandit), 1938; Simeon P. Arcega's *Inang Mahal* (Mother Dear), 1938; Jose Esperanza Cruz's *Mga Sugat ng Puso* (Wounds of the Heart), 1938; Susana C. de Guzman's *Kalapating Puti* (White Dove), 1938; Buenaventura G. Medina's *Ruiseñor*, 1939; and Lazaro Francisco's *Singsing na Pangkasal* (Wedding Ring), 1941.

In many cases where the novel was exceedingly popular, the author was featured more prominently in the movie ads than the film's stars and director. The emphasis on the source of the narrative content of the film was indicative of the value producers assigned to its literary creators. In some instances, the contemporary reputation of certain writers derived more from their contribution to films than to literature. Lazaro Francisco, Iñigo Ed Regalado and Fausto J. Galauran continue to figure in discussions concerning authors of Tagalog literature whose novels were turned into films, but Teodoro Virrey, Gregorio Coching, and Jose Esperanza Cruz are better remembered as authors of film narratives.

Publishing houses like Limbagan ni P. Sayo and Imprenta Luz Naciente also contributed material to the film industry via Tagalog literary works published in book

form. Among the more popular movies of the early 1930s were the films based on the outstanding works of two “Hari ng Balagtas” (King of Poetic Jousts): Jose Corazon de Jesus’ *Sa Pinto ng Langit* (At Heaven’s Gate), 1932, and Florentino Collantes’ *Ang Lumang Simbahan* (The Ancient Church), 1932.

Among the new Tagalog writers, Edgardo M. Reyes has made one of the most celebrated contributions to film. *Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, his masterpiece, was rendered into a screenplay by Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. and directed by Lino Brocka under the title, *Maynila, Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (Manila, in the Claws of Light), 1976. The film was a hit both among critics and audiences, launching Reyes into a career in the film industry. His other novels made into movies were *Ligaw na Bulaklak* (Wild Flower), 1976, directed by Ishmael Bernal; *Sa Kagubatan ng Lunsod* (In the Jungle of the City), 1975, directed by Nick Lizaso; and *Mga Uod at Rosas* (Worms and Roses), 1982, directed by Romy Suzara. Reyes, the novelist, was eventually drawn into the industry first as a scriptwriter for *Atsay* (The Maid), 1978, and then as director of a film for which he wrote the screenplay, *Bangkang Papel Sa Dagat ng Apoy* (Paper Boat in Sea of Fire), 1984.

Ricardo Lee is a young fictionist from Bicol who made a big splash by winning contests in literary circles. When Martial Law was imposed in 1972, Lee found himself without an outlet for his poignant, disturbing short stories. He decided to learn the language of film by apprenticing with various filmmakers. His collaboration with Jose F. Lacaba on the screenplay of Lino Brocka’s *Jaguar* (Guard), 1979, gave him initial exposure as a scriptwriter to reckon with when the film won a best picture Urian award. After *Brutal*, 1980, Lee emerged as the chief writer-turned-filmmaker of the industry, authoring filmscripts of varying subjects and ambitions: *Salome*, 1981; *Moral*, 1982; *Himala* (Miracle), 1982; *Karnal* (Carnal), 1983; *Sinner or Saint*, 1984; and *Private Show*, 1986, among others.

In recent times, imaginative writers in English have been able to break into film with less fanfare and more aplomb. Nick Joaquin’s short story, “May Day Eve,” was one of the vignettes in Joey Gosiengfiao’s *Babae, Ngayon at Kailanman* (Woman, Now and Forever), 1977, which featured two other short stories, “Wedding Dance” by Amador T. Daguio and “Juego de Prenda” by Wilfrido D. Nollado. The film’s script writers were also prominent literary figures: Jose F. Lacaba and Alberto Florentino. Gosiengfiao gave filmic expression to two other Nollado screenplays: *La Paloma, ang Kalapating Ligaw* (Paloma, the Wild Dove), 1974, and *Sunugin ang Samar* (Burn Samar), 1974.

Some of our finest directors—Lamberto V. Avellana, Eddie Romero, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal—had done creative writing before they became filmmakers. Jose “Butch” Dalisay Jr. and Lualhati Bautista are writers who have brought the gift for creating complex characters into their screenplays. Their talents had been recognized by contest jurors before they came into the industry with such works as *Miguelito*, *Ang Batang Rebelde* (Miguelito, the Young Rebel), 1985, and *Sakada* (Seasonal Cane Worker), 1976.

In their training, writers are taught to pay careful attention to details of character or action that would make the narrative meaningful, or at the very least, credible. Mainstream Philippine cinema is constantly accused of being incorrigibly infantile. Fortunately, there have been men and women of literature whose entry into the industry made feasible the making of films that are mature and intelligent.

Komiks

From komiks to film is a trend that started in the 1950s. This was the time when a komiks writer like Mars Ravelo commanded royalties higher than the talent fees of film stars or directors. When Sampaguita Pictures signed him up for a 10-picture, 5-figure contract in 1956, a *Manila Times* columnist wryly commented that, to break into the movie scriptwriting business, one must first break into the komiks circuit. Pablo S. Gomez was one of the komiks writers who became a successful scriptwriter and, later, movie director.

Films based on komiks materials are as varied as the types of stories they have spawned, capturing the collective imagination of readers and viewers alike. They run the gamut from the incredibly fantastic to the dramatically real, with characters that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. Mars Ravelo excelled in fantasy stories. The characters he created, like the mermaid Dyesebel, and the flying wonder woman Darna, have been depicted on screen many times. It was Edna Luna who first appeared in *Dyesebel*, 1953, followed by Vilma Santos in 1973, Alma Moreno in 1978, and by Alice Dixson in 1990. Rosa del Rosario appeared in the first two Darna pictures, *Darna*, 1951, and *Darna at ang Babaing Lawin* (Darna and the Hawkwoman), 1952, before she was succeeded by Gina Pareño in *Darna at ang Planetman* (Darna and the Planetman), 1969, Vilma Santos in *Lipad, Darna, Lipad* (Fly, Darna, Fly), 1973 and by Nanette Medved in *Darna*, 1991. Other Mars Ravelo fantasy characters who made it to the screen are the heavenly rooster in *Texas, Ang Manok na Nagsasalita* (Texas, the Talking Rooster), 1952; the weird statue who comes to life in *Mambo Dyambo*, 1955; and the talking horse in *Silveria*, 1958. Aside from Ravelo, other komiks writers of fantasy tales are Clodualdo del Mundo Sr., author of *Kerubin* (Cherub), 1952; Gemiliano Pineda, of *Tulisang Pugot* (Headless Bandit), 1953; and Dominador Ad. Castillo, author of *Cofradia* (Black Girl), 1953.

Dramatic realism is the forte of komiks writer Pablo S. Gomez, whose major triumph, *Batang Bangkusay* (Child of the Slums), is best remembered for vividly exposing the violence and poverty of Tondo. Other writers of komiks dramas are Rico Bello Omagap, who wrote for Nora Aunor in *Nasaan Ka, Inay?* (Where Are You, Mother?), 1970, and Elena Patron, author of the Lino Brocka film, *Kislap Sa Dilim* (Spark in the Dark), 1991.

The romantic tradition in komiks stories of action and adventure is traced to illustrator Francisco V. Coching. His works have produced such screen heroes as the jungle man

depicted by Cesar Ramirez in *Dumagit*, and the bearded rebel portrayed by Pancho Magalona in *Sabas, Ang Barbaro* (Sabas, the Barbarian), 1952. One of his most popular creations is the character depicted by Ramirez, in *El Indio* (The Native), 1953, a reference to the Filipino of Rizal's time who was depicted in Coching's drawings as tall, handsome, and muscular, with curly or wavy hair and clothes in the European style.

For a komiks writer like Tony Velasquez, the primary impulse is to tickle the reader's funnybone. Velasquez poked fun at "little brown Americans" by making his principal character Kenkoy, ape the Rudolph Valentino hairstyle, wear Western togs and exhibit mannerisms affected by Hollywood matinee idols. By making fun of the Pinoy colonial mentality, Kenkoy stressed traditional Filipino values embodied in his sweetheart, Rosing. The movie version, *Kenkoy*, 1950, starred film comedian Lopito and Filipina beauty Virginia Montes.

Another tickler of funnybones is cartoonist Larry Alcala whose famous duo, Kalabog and Bosyo, firmly established the comedy team of Dolphy and Panchito. Movie fans like to remember how Panchito would sing songs in the English language which Dolphy would translate literally into the vernacular, with sidesplitting results. *Kalabog en Bosyo* (Kalabog and Bosyo), 1959, was followed by a movie sequel, *Detektib Kalog* (Detective Kalog), 1963.

The love stories of Nerissa Cabral and Gilda Olvidado continue to win popular audiences as well as critical acclaim. Cabral's *Paano Ba Ang Mangarap?* (How Does One Dream?), 1983, and Olvidado's *Saan Nagtatago ang Pag-ibig?* (Where Does Love Hide?), 1987, were box-office hits and have both won FAMAS awards.

It is interesting to note that behind some of the most important stars of Filipino cinema, there is at least one memorable movie role or character taken from the komiks. This is true of Fernando Poe Jr. in his *Ang Panday* (The Blacksmith) I, II, III series of 1980, 1981, 1982; Rosa del Rosario in *Darna*, 1951; Gloria Romero in *Kurdapya*, 1954; Lolita Rodriguez and Dolphy in *Jack and Jill*, 1954; Fred Montilla in *Bondying*, 1954; Rita Gomez in *Diyosa*, 1957; Susan Roces in *Maruja*, 1977; Amalia Fuentes in *Baby Bubut*, 1958; Tessie Agana in *Roberta*, 1951; Carmen Rosales in *MN*, 1954; Alma Moreno in *Eva Fonda*, 1976; Gina Alajar in *Cofradia*, 1974; and Hilda Koronel in *Haydee*, 1970.

Movies adapted from komiks serials have built-in advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the komiks' wide readership would surely want to see the movie adaptation. However, this same readership and potential movie audience would often demand faithful cinematic translation. They will turn away from the movie if it is too "different" from what they have expected. There is little room for innovative scripting and direction since the movie must please its captive audience. On the other hand, compressing a long komiks storyline into a two-hour movie tends to magnify apparent violations of the rules of logic which are not immediately discernible in the original story. While the constraints of writing a serial that runs for weeks and months on end

inevitably lead to inconsistencies that are ignored by the komiks reader, the corresponding movie should rise above its print version if it must reach the level of art. Wrong plot turns and lack of attention to small details can become glaring, unforgivable errors when retold on the big screen.

The level of enjoyment one gets from watching a movie rendition of a komiks story ultimately depends on how credibly the filmmakers, both the scriptwriter and the director, fuse together the various elements of the two forms. Komiks and film may be strange bedfellows but a harmonious collaboration between the komiks writer and the filmmakers may initiate a creative participatory process among readers and viewers so that they can become more appealing and less appalling.

Radio

Radio has provided Filipino cinema with two types of materials: the radio drama and the drama musical.

The radio drama is also known as soap opera since sponsors are usually manufacturers of laundry and toilet soap. Among such firms, the best known are Philippine Manufacturing Company (PMC) and Philippine Refining Company (PRC). Radio dramas may be comedy, fantasy, horror, or melodrama.

The best example of the comedy form in radio drama is Ading Fernando's story about the daydreamer Edong, which featured comedians Eddie San Jose, Bentot, Pugo and Tugo, and singer Sylvia La Torre. This spawned a series of films such as *Edong Mapangarap* (Edong The Dreamer), 1950; *Sebya, Mahal Kita* (Sebya, I Love You), 1957; *My Little Kwan*, 1958; *Yantok Mindoro* (Mindoro Rattan), 1960; and *Tang-Tarang Tang*, 1963. *Prinsipe Amante* (Prince Amante), 1950, and its sequel, *Prinsipe Amante sa Rubitanya* (Prince Amante in Rubitanya), 1951, were based on fantasy radio dramas. Listeners-turned-viewers were delighted to see Richard Abelardo's special effects and camera wizardry give visual meaning to their fantasies about kingdoms and castles, princes and princesses. Another film based on a popular fantasy radio drama was *Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang* (The Stories of Grandmother Basyang), 1958.

The horror type of radio drama is best represented by *Gabi ng Lagim* (Night of Horror), 1960. Radio announcer Ben David made a trademark out of the sinister laugh which only his unique vocal chords could provide.

Most radio soap operas fall into the category of melodrama. Lina Flor was hailed Queen of Radio Dramas when a movie based on her work, *Gulong ng Palad* (Wheel of Fate), 1950, started the trend of film melodramas based on radio plays. A drama of everyday life centering on the ups and downs of a typical Filipino married couple, it made the names of Carding and Luisa household words. Another popular Lina Flor soap opera was *Kasaysayan ni Dr. Ramon Selga* (The Story of Dr. Ramon Selga), 1951, which had to be filmed again when the original finished product, already in the

can, was destroyed in a big studio fire at Sampaguita. Other authors of radio plays whose works became popular film melodramas are Lourdes Carillo, C. Pagibigan Cruz, Mario Mijares Lopez, Aning Bagabaldo, and familiar names in Tagalog literature like Gemiliano Pineda and Clodualdo del Mundo Sr. Some of these writers became well-known movie directors: Mar S. Torres, Artemio Marquez, Susana C. de Guzman.

The other type of film based on radio shows is the drama musical or musical variety show. Some famous examples are *Mga Reyna ng Vicks* (Queen of Vicks), 1958, where housewives won the title, “Queen for a Day” on the strength of their true confessions, and *Tawag ng Tanghalan* (Call of the Stage), 1958, based on the popular amateur singing contest which has produced some of the nation’s finest singers like Diomedes Maturan and Nora Aunor.

Television

From the very start, the relationship of film and television (TV) has been both contradictory and complementary.

Successful TV programs and formats make good film material, such as *Bad Bananas*, *Buddy en Sol* (Buddy and Sol), and *Regal Shockers*, which have all been translated into movies. However, TV’s contributions to the film industry are not limited to comedies, dramas, and musical variety shows, although such titles as *Lovingly Yours*, *Helen; John en Marsha* (John and Marsha), *D’Sensations*, *Student Canteen*, and *Iskul Bukol* are well-known.

Television is a source of star material for film. Popular shows, like German Moreno’s *That’s Entertainment*, have provided the industry with a number of young talented stars. Among those who have entered the film industry via the television medium are Maricel Soriano of the *John en Marsha* TV series and Alice Dixson, who was launched to movie fame via a TV commercial when she became known as the “I can feel it” beauty-soap model. Comedian Rene Requiestas also made his name first on TV before becoming a movie star. Others get good exposure on noonday shows such as *Eat Bulaga* and wind up becoming very popular like Aiza Seguerra and Tito, Vic, and Joey.

TV is a good venue for regular exposure and for honing up the skills of movie hopefuls under build-up contracts. They are seen hosting TV shows, acting, singing, dancing, and the like. Weekly drama anthologies provide good vehicles for them to display their acting talents. The weekly drama special featuring a movie star, usually female, has been a favorite TV format for shows like *Hilda* (Hilda Koronel), *Gretchen* (Gretchen Barreto), *Aiko* (Aiko Melendez), and *Sheryl* (Sheryl Cruz). The most popular and longest lasting is the *Maricel Drama Special*, for Maricel Soriano. For the male stars, there are shows like *Palibhasa Lalake* (They’re Men, That’s Why), which has greatly enhanced the careers of Richard Gomez and Joey Marquez, and *Buddy en Sol*, which has done likewise for Eric Quizon and Redford White.

Television is also a good source of talents from other fields or aspects of film production like scriptwriters, directors, designers, and other production personnel. Among these are Jose Javier Reyes, Angel Cruz, Argel Joseph, and Gene Palomo.

On the one hand, television has become an extension of the film industry, giving exposure to its film products. Film and television share the same audience. The film audience is also the TV audience. For this reason, film producers have come to invade television not only to promote their films with trailer commercials and TV guestings but also to compete with other TV shows by way of one-hour drama anthologies, *sitcoms* (situation comedies) and other “specials.” Aside from TV advertising profits, film producers who are also producers of TV shows benefit in other ways. Regal Films, for instance, saves 17,000 to 19,000 pesos per 30-second trailer ad, which it would otherwise have to pay in cold cash if it did not have its own TV show on prime time.

Television also serves as media outlet for the industry’s old films and retrospectives, especially during occasions where film tributes are made to industry achievers or outstanding film personalities like Gerardo de Leon, Lamberto V. Avellana, and Lino Brocka.

The TV industry supports the film industry by giving employment to film stars and film workers who are idle in-between picture assignments. Working on regular TV shows affords a regular and stable income, compared to the highly unpredictable situation in the film industry. Some of the big stars like Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, and Sharon Cuneta have given more of their time and energies to their weekly TV shows like *Superstar*, *Vilma*, and *Sharon Cuneta Show* respectively.

Foreign Films

The influence of foreign films on local cinema has been perennial and strong, because the American colonial presence facilitated the entrance of Hollywood movies into the Philippines since the early decade, as well as the exposure of Filipinos to filmmaking in the United States.

As early as the silent-pictures era, the American influence was already seen in Philippine comedians. Hollywood’s Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel, and Oliver Hardy had their Filipino counterparts in Canuplin, Jose Cris Soto, and Bayani Casimiro. Later, Buster Keaton and the Three Stooges would also become models for other local comedians.

When talking pictures came to the Philippines, one of the biggest influences on local cinema was the Hollywood musical. Films like *Ziegfield Follies*, *Showboat*, and *Rosemarie* inspired such Filipino movies as *Nasaan Ka, Irog?* (Where Are You, Beloved?), 1937; *Bahay Kubo* (Nipa Hut), 1938; and *Paroparong Bukid* (Country Butterfly), 1938. If Hollywood had its Jeanette MacDonald and Deanna Durbin, Filipinos had their own Fely Vallejo and Elsa Oria, the “singing sweetheart of the

Philippines.”

In the genre of swashbuckling adventure, the principal hero was *Count of Monte Cristo* star Douglas Fairbanks Jr. as well as Errol Flynn. Those who went to Filipino movies like *Carlos Trece* (Charles XIII), 1953, learned sword-fighting from Efren Reyes and Johnny Monteiro. The war movie’s most popular hero was Audie Murphy in *To Hell and Back*. Fernando Poe Sr. in *Dugo ng Bayan* (I Remember Bataan), 1946, and Leopoldo Salcedo in *Fort Santiago*, 1946, epitomized the Filipino soldier’s courage and valor on the battlefield.

Johnny Weismuller in *Tarzan of the Apes* was represented in Filipino movies at various times as *Kulafu*, *Hagibis*, and *Og*. The latter, portrayed by Mr. Philippines title-holder Jesus Ramos, also appeared in the movie sequels, *Si Og Sa Maynila* (Og in Manila), 1952, and *Si Og Sa Army* (Og in the Army), 1953.

In the 1950s the most popular Hollywood young stars were James Dean and Elvis Presley. Filipino movie fans promptly established their own fan clubs for Lou Salvador Jr. and Eddie Mesa as the “James Dean of the Philippines” and “Elvis Presley of the Philippines,” respectively. Local stars imitated the looks, the swagger, attire, manner of acting and singing, and even the length of the sideburns of foreign idols.

Hollywood movies influence audience tastes as well as the kind of material or story the movies are to carry. The early 1960s produced the teeny-bopper flicks and the James Bond movies. This was the era of the young love teams in the musicals of Nora Aunor, Tirso Cruz III, Vilma Santos, Edgar Mortiz, Eddie Peregrina, and Esperanza Fabon. More mature audiences enjoyed the spy and detective plots of Tony Ferrer movies like *Sabotage*, 1966. Moviegoers also flocked to spoofs like *Mekeni’s Gold*, (a reference to the foreign movie, *McKenna’s Gold*); *James Bandong* (for the Ian Fleming spy, James Bond); and *Dr. Yes* (instead of Dr. No).

Western movies like *Gunfight at OK Corral* were also lampooned in such films as *Barilan sa Baboy-Kural* (Gunfight at the Pig Corral), 1962.

The 1970s saw the rise and development of directors, scriptwriters, designers and performers, many of whom studied film abroad or in local universities. They were familiar with Italian neorealism (Rossellini, de Sica) and surrealism (Fellini), the Swedish art film (Bergman), the French *nouvelle vague* (Truffaut, Godard, Resnais), the Italian *nouvelle vague* (Antonioni, Fellini, Rossi, Bertolucci), the Indian art film (Ray), and the Japanese art film (Kurosawa). It was the age of the decline of the Hollywood studio system and the traditional genres were being replaced by more complex characterizations, antilinear narratives, antiheroes, and arresting camera shots. The foreign directors who influenced Filipino directors at this time were Brian de Palma, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Francois Truffaut, and Robert Altman. They generally affected the style and content of Filipino new wave directors of the 1970s and 1980s like Mike de Leon, Ishmael Bernal, Lino Brocka, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, Peque Gallaga, Celso Ad Castillo and Laurice Guillen.

Conclusion

As an art form that grew out of the unprecedented advances in communications technology of the 20th century, film has demonstrated an almost unlimited capacity to swamp Filipinos with conflicting images of their society and of the world at large. The dominant images need to be examined for their truth and relevance to the realities of an impoverished society seeking to liberate itself from social, economic, and political constraints that hold back its progress. Knowing the sources of the images and the various angles of vision that fashioned them is to begin to understand how the negative images could be counteracted and the positive ones nourished. • B. Lumera, M. Lanot, R. Matilac, L. Pareja, N. G. Tiongson