

Pelikula

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September 1999

Jose Rizal

Piling Pelikula ng 1998

Charito Solis

1999 Manila Filmfest

Marilou Diaz-Abaya

**Cinemanila International
Film Festival**

Mike de Leon

Pelikula at Kasaysayan

ni Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr.



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The UP College of Mass Communication Foundation, Inc.

Incorporated in March 1992, the Foundation is a non-profit organization which manages private institutional programs that undertake, develop, promote or enhance communication education, research, training and other activities geared toward national development goals, which include political democratization, equalization of access to communication media and cultural transformation and integration. The UCMCF is the only institution in the country that offers, through its Film and Audiovisual Communication Department, a four-year degree program in Film. Other academic programs of the College are Journalism, Broadcast Communication, Communication Research, and the Graduate Program in Communication. Aside from its academic programs, the concerns of the UCMCF include research and outreach.

LRP Foundation, Inc.

The Laurel-Rufino-Prieto Foundation, Inc. (LRPE), established in 1934, is a non-profit organization which has been involved in development projects, which aid the economically disadvantaged through grants given to such organizations/institutions as the Sisters of Mary, who run Restarans and Giftshops; the Ospital ng Makati, specifically its Pediatric Unit which needs medical equipment; and the Mother Rosa Memorial Foundation which gives tutoring to members of the San Roque community in Parangay. The LRPE also operates the Louise's 35K Cinema in Makati. Recently, the Foundation ventured into media development projects, such as the Louise B. Prieto Journalism Awards which acknowledges writers whose work have had an impact on the course of the nation's history. This film journal is the LRPE's most recent effort to help create a more critical address for the Filipino film.

An Agora of Ideas



Journals about the Filipino film have been published before, such as the *Mag-aaral* at Manunulat sa Pelikulang Pilipino's *Sampelikula* (1975), the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines' *SineManila* (1984) and Mowelfund's long-running *Movement* (1985). Unfortunately, most of these either died after the first issue or became occasional publications due to lack of logistical or organizational support.

Meanwhile, the needs which prompted their publication in the first place remained unanswered and remain so to our day. Responding to these needs, the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP-CMC) and the Laurel-Rufino-Prieto Foundation decided to combine forces to come up with a journal which hopefully will be blessed with a life longer than those of its worthy predecessors.

Managed by the Film and Audiovisual Communication Department of UP-CMC, *Pelikula* shall address not only the circles of scholars, teachers and students of cinema but the wider audience outside academe, especially, the film artists, technicians, producers and managers as well as film-related institutions and film aficionados. The semiannual publication hopes to serve as the arena, or better still, the agora or marketplace where the usually separate sectors of academics, practitioners and film buffs can interact and exchange data and ideas on the local cinema. The fruits of such exchange can only redound to the benefit of all parties concerned.

In a regular section, *Pelikula* shall publish comprehensive reports on the annual output of the film industry, regular or special film festivals, workshops and conferences, award-winning films, and significant events related to film. It shall also prepare filmographies (general or individual, annual or period) as well as articles documenting the achievements of film artists and technicians. In collaboration with the Communication Research, Broadcast Communication and Journalism departments of the UP-CMC, *Pelikula* shall publish comparative studies between film and the other media arts as well as surveys and other collections of data gathered through scientific research on topics related to film (e.g., the star or story preferences of urban as compared to rural audiences). In all, *Pelikula* hopes to become one of the principal sources for film data that will be useful not only to academicians but also to producers and managers of film companies.

To encourage a lively but critical discourse on cinema, this journal shall devote its main section to articles which analyze and evaluate films both as art and as a form of mass communication. As art, a film may be gauged from the point of view of artistic integrity or as shaped to a large or small extent, by the many conditions and givens of the industry which make it what it is (e.g., the star system, the mode of production, genre conventions, colonial aesthetics, etc.). As a form of mass communication, a movie may be evaluated in relation to how it means, or how it affects audiences and predisposes it to accept or reject the values or messages expressed, or even omitted, by the film (e.g., concepts of class, gender, race, ethnicity as well as standards of good and bad, of beautiful and plain). All analysis is pursued in the firm belief that films, even those made for "sheer entertainment," are not innocent, that they do in the final analysis make a stand, reaffirming or subverting the ruling establishment. It is hoped that this type of analysis will be read by those who view filmmaking as a business, harmless and inconsequential as *balut* making.

As a matter of policy, the journal shall take all steps to make sure that all points of view, all voices big or small, are heard. Interviews and articles shall feature not only directors, producers and writers, but cinematographers, production designers, editors, sound persons and film crew as well. In the same vein, the articles, reviews or reports may be written not only by scholars or critics but by film practitioners themselves, no matter how lowly they may be in the filmmaking hierarchy. To facilitate expression, English or Filipino may be used.

Finally, to create a strong sense of history, *Pelikula* shall commission articles on the earlier periods of Philippine cinema, feature films and film artists of yesteryears, and prepare a regular album of stills and ads of old movies. These will hopefully create among academicians and practitioners alike a deeper understanding of how the industry developed through the decades, thereby drawing inspiration from its achievements or avoiding the pitfalls of the past.

In the spirit of true democracy, *Pelikula* shall encourage a pluralism of approaches, a multiplicity of ideas, and freedom to express all these, even if they are contrary to the views of the editorial board. However, the journal shall also endeavor to highlight the achievements of the industry and present its inadequacies or failures only in the spirit of constructive criticism. *Pelikula* unconditionally dedicates all its efforts to the growth and the professionalization of the Filipino film industry. ☐

Usapang Pelikula

Marami nang nalimbag na dyornal tungkol sa Pelikulang Pilipino sa nakaraan, tulad ng *Sampelikula* (1975) ng Mag-aaral at Manunulat sa Pelikulang Pilipino, ang *SineManila* (1984) ng Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, at ang *Movement* (1985) ng Mowelfund. Sa kasamaang palad, karamihan sa mga ito'y naka-isang isyu lamang o lumabas na lang nang panakaraka dahil sa kakulangan ng suporta sa pinansya o sa organisasyon. Samantala, ang mga pangangailangang syang ninas nilang tugunan ay hindi natugunan at hanggang ngayo'y kailangan pa ring tugunan. Bilang pagkilala sa mga pangangailangang ito, nagkalsa ang UP College of Mass Communication (UP CMC) at ang Laurel-Ruffino-Prieto Foundation na magtulungan upang mailabas ang isang dyornal na harinawa'y mapagkalooban ng buhay na mas mahaba kaysa nakamit ng mga bayaning nauna sa kanya.

Bagama't ito'y pinamamahalaan ng Departamento ng Pelikula at Awdyobiswal na Komunikasyon ng UP CMC, pagtutuanan ng parsin ng *Pelikula* di lang ang mga grupo ng eskolar, guro at estudyante kundi ang mas malawak na audience sa labas ng akademya, lafo na ang mga artista, teknisyen, prodyuser at manedyer sa pelikula, at pati na rin ang mga Institusyong may kinalaman sa pelikula at mga taong may apisyon dito. Layon ng publikasyong semi-annual na ito na magsilbing arena, o mas maganda pa, bilang agom o palengke kung saan maaaring mag-ugnayan at magpalitan ng datos at ideya tungkol sa pelikulang lokal ang karamiwa'y di nagkakakilalang sektor ng mga akademiko, taong pelikula at apisyonado. Tyak na walang libuunga kundi kabutihan ang ganitong Interaksyon.


Sa isang regular na bahagi, maglalathala ang *Pelikula* ng mga komprehensibong ulat tungkol sa taunang output ng industriya ng pelikula, mga regular o espesyal na festival, mga palihan at kumperensya ng pelikula, mga pelikulang nanalo ng award, at iba pang mahahalagang pangyayaring may kaugnayan sa pelikula. Maglalabas din ito ng mga filmography (pangkalahatan o pang-indibidwal, taunan o pang-isang panahon) at pati na mga artikulong nagtatala ng mga nagawa ng mga artista at teknisyen ng pelikula. Sa tulong ng mga departamento ng Pananaliksik sa Komunikasyon, Broadcast at Peryodismo, maglalathala ang *Pelikula* ng mga pag-aaral na komparatibo sa pagitan ng pelikula at iba pang sining midya at pati na rin mga sarbey at iba pang koleksyon ng mga datos na nalikom ng syentipikong pananaliksik hinggil sa mga paksaing may kaugnayan sa pelikula (e.g., ang hinahanap na istorya ng manonood sa styudad at manonood sa probinsya). Sa pangkalahatan, nilalayan ng *Pelikula* na maging isa sa pangunahing imbakan ng mga datos na magagamit di lang ng mga akademiko kundi ng mga prodyuser at manedyer ng mga kumparyang pampelikula.

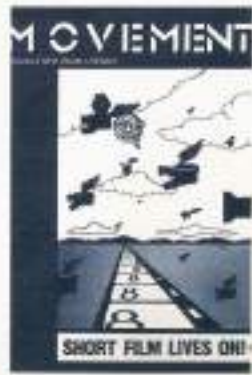
Para mapasigla ang mapanuring diskusyon sa pelikula, ilalagan ng dyornal ang pinakamalaking seksyon para sa mga artikulong sumusuri at nagtataya sa pelikula bilang akdang pansining at bilang anyo ng pangmadlang pangkomunikasyon. Bilang akdang pansining, ang pelikula'y maaaring suriin mula sa perspektibo ng kabuuang pansining (artistic integrity) o bilang bunga, humigit kumulang, ng mga kondisyon at sitwasyon ng industriya na siyang sanhi kung bakit ito nagkanito

(e.g., ang sistemang istar, mode of production, kumbensyon ng genre, estetika ng koloryal, etc.). Bilang anyo ng pangmadlang komunikasyon, ang pelikula'y maaaring pag-aralan sa aspekto ng *kung paano ito nagkakaroon ng kahulugan* o kung paano nito naapektuhan ang mga manonood at hinihimok sila na tanggapin o itakwil ang mga pagpapahalaga o mensaheng pinahayag o di pinapahayag ng pelikula (e.g., konsepto ng uri, gender, lahi, etnisidad at pati na pamantayan ng mabuti at masama, maganda at pangit.) Ang ganitong pananaliksik ay batay sa matibay na paniniwala na ang pelikula, kahit ito ma'y ginawa para pang-alfw lamang, ay hindi inosente, na sila, sa sumatotal, ay may pinaniniindigan, na umaayon o kumukantra sa naghaharing establisimiyento. Sana'y mabasa ang ganitong mga pagsisuri ng mga taong ang tingin sa pamemelikula'y walang pinagliba sa paggawa ng balat, na walang binatbat o sagsay.

Bilang patakaran, gagawa ang dyornal ng hakbang para tyakin na ang lahat ng pananaw, ang lahat ng tinig malaki man o mallit, ay marinig. Ang papaksain ng mga interbyu at artikulo ay di lamang mga direktor, prodyuser at manunulat kundi pati mga sinematograpo, production designer, editor, namamahala ng tunog at film crew. Gayundin, ang mga artikulo, rebyu o ulat ay maaaring sulatin di lamang ng mga iskolar at kritiko kundi ng mismong mga taong pelikula, gaano pa man sila kababa sa hierarkya ng pamemelikula. Para maging malaya ang pamamahayag, maaaring gamitin ang Ingles o Filipino.

At huli, upang makalikha ng malakas na kamalayan sa kasaysayan, magkokomisyon ang *Pelikula* ng mga artikulo tungkol sa mga naunang kabanata ng pelikulang Pilipino, magtatampok ng mga pelikula at artista ng nakaraan, at maglalathala ng isang regular na album ng mga still at patalastas ng matatandang pelikula. Sana'y makapagbigay ito sa mga akademiko at taong pelikula ng higit na malalim na pagkaunawa sa kung paano lumago ang industriya sa loob ng mga dekada, industriyang ang kahusaya'y maaaring pagkunan ng inspirasyon at ang pagkakamali'y maaaring kapulutan ng aral.

Sa diwa ng tunay na demokrasya, itataguyod ng dyornal ang pluralismo ng mga lapit, ang pag-usbong ng maraming ideya, at kalayaan sa pagpapahayag ng mga ito, kahit pa ang mga ito'y salungat sa paniniwala ng editorial board. Gayunman, sisikapin din naman ng dyornal na itampok ang mabubuting nagawa ng industriya at libalahad lamang ang mga kakulangan at kamalian nito sa diwa ng positibong pamumuna. Walang pasubaling iniaalay ng *Pelikula* ang lahat ng kanyang pagpupurgagi para sa pag-unlad at sa propesyonalisasyon ng industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino. 



Film and History/ Pelikula at Kasaysayan

As a final salute to the centennials of the Philippine Revolution against Spain, the Kawit Declaration of Independence and the Inauguration of the Malolos Republic, the maiden issue of *Pelikula* foregrounds the theme "The Philippine Revolution of 1896 and the Filipino Film" and problematizes the topics related to the filming of history, such as the role of the film director as historian, the suppression or marginalization of the common people in historical films and the political effects of the historical films on the present.

Examining the possibilities and parameters of fictionalizing history on film, C. del Mundo, Jr. states that every filmmaker creates his/her own historical reality in film, so the important question is not whether such a reality is historical or not but whose voice is heard in it. Listening to the voices in a sampling of historical films, P. Flores argues that in most of these films the voices of the non-*ilustrado* and non-hero are drowned out by the stentorian recitation of the grand biographies of established heroes. For his part, J. Dormiendo believes that even the voice of a hero like Rizal is not heard clearly because most of the films on Rizal in our history have failed to capture the person and period of the hero, either because of inadequate research or the misinterpretation of issues and characters.

To demonstrate how history was visualized in film, C. Hernando presents an album of stills and ads of selected films from 1939 to 1999 which dealt with the characters and events of the 1896 Revolution. Highlighting a child of the Revolution, L. S. Pareja writes a capsule biography of Julian Manansala, an early director who in the 1930s sought to keep the spirit of the Revolution alive in his films. Finally, in a long but substantial interview, respected film director Marilou Diaz-Abaya talks about, among others, her training and influences, the local industry and her noted films, including the multiawarded historical movie, *Jose Rizal*. **12**

Bilang huling pagpupugay sa sentenaryo ng Rebolusyong Pilipino laban sa Espanya, sa Deklarasyon ng Kalayaan sa Kawit at sa Inaugurasyon ng Republika ng Malolos, ilang ang unang isyu ng *Pelikula* sa temang "Ang Rebolusyong Pilipino ng 1896 at ang Pelikulang Pilipino" at tutukuyin nito ang mga paksaing may kinalaman sa pagsasapelikula ng kasaysayan, tulad ng papel ng direktor ng pelikula bilang historyador, ang pagsupil o pagsasasantabl ng karamiwang tao sa pelikulang pangkasaysayan, at ang epektang pampolitika ng pelikulang historikal sa kasalukuyan.

Sa kanyang pagsusuri ng mga posibilidad at hangganan ng pagsasa-rikayon ng kasaysayan sa pelikula, sinabi ni C. del Mundo, Jr. na lumilikha ang bawat filmmaker ng kanyang sariling realidad na historikal sa pelikula, kaya't hindi mahalagang itanong kung ang realidad niya ay historikal o hindi, kundi kanihong tinig ba ang nagkakapuwang dito. Sa pakikinig naman niya sa mga tinig sa ilang mga pelikulang pangkasaysayan, pinatunayan ni P. Flores na sa karamihan ng mga pelikulang ito ang mga tinig ng mga di-*ilustrado* at ng di-bayani ang natatabunan ng maalingawngaw na pagsasalaysay ng mga dakilang buhay na pinagdaanan ng mga kilalang bayani. Sa ganang kanya, naniniwala si J. Dormiendo na kahit nga ang tinig ng mga bayani mismo tulad ni Rizal ay di rin narinig nang malinaw dahil karamihan ng mga pelikulang pumaksa sa buhay ng bayani ay di nagtagumpay sa paghuli sa pagkatao at panahon ng bayani, dahil sa kakulangan ng pananaliksik o dahil sa maling interpretasyon ng mga isyu at tauhan.

Para maipakita kung paano isinalin sa pelikula ang kasaysayan, may alay si C. Hernando na isang album ng mga still at anunsyo ng ilang pelikulang pinili mula 1939 hanggang 1999, na naglalarawan ng mga tauhan o pangayari ng Rebolusyong 1896. Itinampok naman ni L. S. Pareja ang isang anak ng Rebolusyon sa kanyang maikling talambuhay ni Julian Manansala, sinaunang direktor na noong mga 1930 ay nagpuesig ng penatiling buhay ang diwa ng rebolusyon sa kanyang mga pelikula. Sa wakas, sa isang mahaba ngunit malamang panayam, tinalakay ng ginagalang na direktor sa pelikula na si Marilou Diaz-Abaya ang kanyang naging edukasyon at impluwensiya, ang industriyang lokal at ang mga makauunong riyang pelikula, kasama na ang pelikulang historikal na *Jose Rizal*, na hitik na hitik sa parangal. **13**



Joel Torre as Rizal in Mike de Leon's *Bayaning Third World* (1995)



Nasaan Ang
Saysay sa

KASAYSAYAN

(o, Paano Ba Dapat Isapelikula ang Kasaysayan?)

NI CLODUALDO DEL MUNDO, JR.

The question of history and representation is a question that concerns the notion of narrative. In this essay on the textualization of history through film, it is important to understand the conventions of film, from the practice of casting to the notion of seamless narrative. Beyond representation, the more important question to consider is "Whose voice do we hear?" A single, authorial voice is basically a distortion of reality, for history is a complex of voices, a cacophony of competing narratives. The challenge to the filmmaker is to find a way to go beyond conventions and give space to unheard voices that are drowned out by dominant ideology.

Ito ay hindi isang pagsusuri ng pelikulang **Jose Rizal**. Bagamat babanggitin ko ang pelikulang ito sa takbo ng saraysay, ang akting interes ay busiisin ang isyu ng kasaysayan at pagsasapelikula nito. Sa pag-aaral ng pagsasapelikula ng kasaysayan, mahalagang maunawaan ang kumbensyon ng pelikula tungkol sa pagsasalaysay. Bukod dito, kailangan ding unawain ang iba pang nakagawian nang praktis sa pelikula.

Anu-ano ba ang mga kumbensyong dapat isaisip tungkol sa pagsasapelikula ng kasaysayan? Paano nito naiimpluwensyahan ang paglalahad o paglalarawan?

I

May natatanging kakayahan ang pelikula. Bilang midyum ng paglalahad, may kakayahang huliin ng pelikula ang tumog at larawan ng anumang pangyayari. Madali tayong madadala ng pelikula sa nakaraan — halimbawa, sa pamamagitan ng archival footage ng Corregidor noong Pangalawang Digmaang Pandaigdig, ng naisapelikulang panayam kay Aguinaldo, ng footage ng EDSA revolution, o ng simpleng rekording ng kaninumang lumpas na kaarawan. May kakayahan ding dayain ng pelikula ang ating mga mata. Maari tayong dalhin nito sa isang lugar na gawa-gawa lamang ng imahinasyon at gawin itong kapani-paniwala. O maaring buhayin ng pelikula ang mundo ng isang isinadulang kasaysayan. Ngunit, para madala tayo sa mundo ng imahinasyon o isinadulang kasaysayan, kailangang magpadala tayo rito. Kailangang ibitin natin ang ating pagtatataka o kawalan ng paniniwala.

Ang Rizal na inilalarawan ni Austin Coates o Rafael Palma sa kani-kanyang talambuhay ng bayani, bagama't may mga bagay na base lamang sa espekulasyon, ay si Jose Rizal na binubuo sa ating imahinasyon sa pamamagitan ng kanilang salita. Ang ating batayan ay ang kilala nating larawan ni Rizal na nadaragdagan ng pangatlong dimensyon sa pamamagitan ng mga detalyeng naurigkat ng awtor tungkol sa buhay ng bayani. Samantala, ang Rizal sa pelikula ay kailangang idaan sa aktor. Halimbawa, ginamit ni Marilou Diaz-Abaya sa pelikulang **Jose Rizal** si Cesar Montano. Hindi isang manikin ni Rizal si Montano. Kilala siyang aksyon istar, popular na kapareha ni Marcel Soriano sa **Kayo ni Mister, Kayo ni Mixit**, at isang artistang natsismis sa kung sinong kapwa artista. Dala-dala ng aktor ang bagaheng ito sa pelikula — at, higit sa lahat, dala-dala niya ang kanyang itsura, ang kanyang katawan. Kailangang

ayusin si Montano sa pamamagitan ng meykap, pananamit, pagkilos at pananalita upang magmukhang “Rizal.” Ngunit, bukod sa paghuhubog na ito, mahalaga pa rin ang pakikitsa ng manonood upang mabuo ang ilusyon. Kailangang ibitin ng manonood ang kanyang pagtatataka; kailangang tanggapin niya ang aktor bilang Rizal at magpadala sa pelikula. Kung tunay na istar ang gagawap, marahil ay mas mahihirapan siyang papaniwalain ang manonood sa kanyang pagbabagong-anya. Ang sabi nga ni André Malraux, isang nobelista, kritiko at pulitikong Pranses: ang mahusay na

pangyayari. Pinag-aaralan niya ang mga tauhan bilang puno't dulo ng aksyon at hinahanap ang kabuuang istruktura na walang subaling patungo sa isang uri ng katapusan. Gayon din ang filmmaker na nagtatangkang isadula ang kasaysayan. Ang kalibhan nga lamang ay mas mahigpit ang pangangailangang makabuo ng buong-buong salaysay sa pelikula.

Isang kumbensyon sa pelikula ang salaysay na may umpisa, gitna at katapusan. Malinis ang takbo ng salaysay; kung bago sa damit ay hindi halata ang tahi. Walang gusot sa mga pinagdugtong-dugtong na pangyayari.

May natatanging tinig na binibigyang-puwang ang bawat pelikula, ngunit mahalaga ring isaalang-alang ang tinig na pinatatahimik, pinipigil.

aktor ay nakapagbibigay-buhay sa iba't ibang papel; ang istar ay dahilan ng maraming skrip na sukat na sukat sa kanya. Gayumpaman, maski sino pa ang gumagap na Rizal — si Montano, si Joel Torre, si John Arcilla, si Pen Medina, o si Aga Muhlach — mahalaga ang pakikitsa ng manonood upang maging matagumpay ang ilusyon.

Matapos mahubog ang aktor bilang Rizal, ilalagay siya sa espasyo kung saan gagapin ang aksyon. Ang mapipiling pook ay ayusin upang maging Dapitan o Kalamba o Puwera Santiago. Gagamitin ang mga detalyeng makapagpapabago sa isang espasyo upang maging natatanging lugar — mga muwebles, lampara, kurtina, hanggang sa napakahalagang *cocinita de alcohol*. Bukod sa disenyong pamproduksyon, papasok na rin ang sinematograpiya upang huliin ang liwanag ng panahong iyon. Sa gawa-gawang mundong ito, ilalagay ang aktor. Kung matagumpay ang paghuhubog ng mundong ito, magiging kapani-paniwala ang paglalahad at hindi mahihirapan ang manonood na ibitin ang kanyang pagtatataka. Papasok siya sa mundo ng pelikula at magpapadala sa filmmaker saan man siya dalhin nito.

II

Ang paglalahad ng kasaysayan ay isang pagsasanay sa pagsasalaysay. Ang istoryador ay isang mananalaysay, isang kuwentista. Bumubuo ang istoryador ng daloy, ng kumekyong nagtatagni-tagni sa iba't ibang

Maaring suwayin ang kumbensyon ito, pero kung isa kang filmmaker sa gitna ng industriya, bakit mo naman bubulabugin pa ang nakagawian na ng manonood? Maaring gumamit ng kung anu-anong teknik, halimbawa'y pagpasok ng nakaraan sa kasalukuyang aksyon, ngunit malinaw pa rin ang daloy ng mga pangyayari. Walang pagdududa, walang pag-aalinlangan, ang tauhan ay patungo sa isang malinaw na wakas. Sa madaling salita, ang pelikula, ayon sa kumbensyon ito, ay simple. Nakaakit ang simula, maligting ang gitna, malinaw ang wakas. Paano kung may mga bagay na hindi malinaw sa kasaysayang isinapelikula? Paano kung may pinag-aawayan? Paano kung may iba't ibang bersyon ng pangyayari? Ganoon nga ang buhay ni Rizal. Isang halimbawa ay ang mga hulig sandali ng bayani. Totoo bang pinakasalan niya si Josephine Bracken? Totoo bang may pinirmahang retraktasyon si Rizal at binawi niya ang lahat ng kanyang sinulat? Totoo bang nagbalik-loob si Rizal sa simbahang Katoliko? Totoo bang nangumpal siya noong bisperas ng pagbitay sa kanya? Totoo bang may hawak siyang rosaryo noong bitayin siya? Totoo bang hinalikan niya ang krus na iniharap sa kanya ng isang Hesuwita? Totoo bang ang kanyang libing ay naangkop para sa isang Kristiyano?

May iba't ibang bersyon ng mga hulig sandali ni Rizal, iba't ibang tinig. May nagsasabing totoo ang retraktasyon. May nagsasabing peke ito. May nagsasabing imposibleng gawin ito ng isang Rizal na matatag ang paninindigan. May nagsasabing bumigay ang isip ng bayani, nag-“flip” ang

Kung tunay ang hangaring sagipin sa limot ang anumang bahagi ng kasaysayan, kailangang huwag magpatalo sa kumbensyon ang filmmaker upang ang kanyang pagsasalaysay ay di mawalan ng saysay.

pobre. Dahil kinakailangang gumawa ng isang malinis na salaysay, kailangang mamili ng kanyang bersyon ang filmmaker. At ganoon nga ang ginawa ni Marilou Diaz-Abaya sa kanyang **Jose Rizal**. Bagamat hindi tinalakay ang isyu ng retraktasyon, ipinahiwatig sa pelikula ang posisyon ng filmmaker tungkol sa isyung ito: Sumubsob si Rizal sa balikat ng isang Hesuwita at humagulgol. Hinallikan ng bayani ang krusipihong iniharap sa kanya. May hawak siyang rosaryo noong dalhin siya sa *escuadra* ng mga sundalong babait sa kanya. Kapani-paniwala ba ang paglalahad na ito? Dahil hindi nga tinalakay ang retraktasyon, hindi naging isyu sa salaysay ni Abaya ang mga detalyeng inilalahad. Sa loob ng kanyang salaysay, hindi problema ang paghagulgol ni Rizal, hindi problema ang paghawak sa rosaryo o paghalik sa krusipihon. Hindi nangangahulugang walang batayan ang inilalahad ni Abaya. Sa katunayan, ang opisyal na bersyon ng retraktasyon ni Rizal ay ang bersyon ng mga Hesuwita, ang dokumento ni Padre Vicente Balaguer. Ang malinaw ay ginamit ni Abaya ang batayang naayon sa kanyang pananaw at hindi magdudulot ng gusot sa kanyang malinis na salaysay.

III

Kailangan ding isa-isip na may limitasyon ang filmmaker tungkol sa haba ng kanyang pagsasalaysay. Di gaya ng awtor ng nobela, kathambuhay man o hindi, na hindi nakatali sa nakatakdang bilang ng mga pahina, kailangang tapusin ng filmmaker ang kanyang salaysay sa loob ng isa't kalahati o dalawang oras. May kumeksyon ito sa bilang ng palabas ng pelikula na nais mangyari ng eksibitor o may-ari ng sinehan. Kung hahaba pa sa dalawang oras ang pelikula, mababawasan ang bilang ng palabas at gayon din ang maaring kitain ng sinehan. Ngunit paminsan-minsa'y nababali ang alituntuning ito, gaya ng tatlong oras ng **Jose Rizal**. Sa mga pagkatakataong ito, kadalasa'y ginagawang mas malaking spektakulo ang pelikula upang hindi mainip ang manonood. Sa paglalarawan ng buhay at panahon ng bayani, ang **Jose Rizal** ay isa ring spektakulo ng mararangang eksena at mga larawan ng madugang rebolusyon. Ang paglalahad ng kasaysayan sa pelikula ay kinakailangan ding maging spektakular. Kung

makaapekto ito o makapagpapaligting sa paglalahad ng salaysay, ang manonood lamang ang makapagpapasabi.

Dahil may limitasyon ang haba ng karaniwang pelikula, hindi maliwasang mamili ang filmmaker kung ano ang kanyang inilalahad. Marahil, ang mahalagang itanong ay: Sa pamimiling ito, kaninong tinig ang nabibigyan-puwang sa pelikula, kaninong tinig ang naririnig? At sa pagbibigay-daan sa isang natatanging tinig, ano ang hindi natin naririnig? Ano o ano-anong tinig ang naiimpit o sadyang pinatatahimik ng filmmaker?

Sa pelikulang **Jose Rizal**, bagama't hindi tahasang pinakita ang retraktasyon, naririnig pa rin ang tinig ng simbahan sa mga larawan ng pagsisi ng Rizal ni Abaya at ang pagkapit nito sa rosaryo. Ayon kay Abaya, sa ilan niyang pahayag, ang pokus ng kanyang pelikula ay ang pagiging manunulat, ang pagiging artista ni Rizal. Ang ibig sabihin ba nito ay walang kumeksyon sa kanyang pagiging manunulat o artista ang retraktasyon gayong sinasag dito ang kanyang pagtatakwil sa lahat ng kanyang mga sinulat? Sa pamamagitan ng salamangka ng marubdob na eksena, pagganap ni Montano, disenyong pamproduksyon, sinematograpiya, musika, nagawa ni Abaya na gawing malinis ang kanyang salaysay, kahit na di pinansin ang isyu ng retraktasyon.

May natatanging tinig na binibigyang-puwang ang bawat pelikula, ngunit mahalaga ring isalang-alang ang tinig na pinatatahimik, pinipigil. Ang dokumentaryo ng *Bookmark* tungkol kay Rizal, **Buhay ng Isang Bayani**, ay tahimik din sa isyu ng retraktasyon. Ginamit ang teknik ng editing at pagkukumento upang mabilis na makatawid ang salaysay tungo sa pagbitay. Ang nangyari sa pagitan ng simpleng cut o dissolve ay di mamamalayan. Ang salaysay ay malinis; hindi kita ang tahi; lalong hindi makikita ang pinagtabasan.

Kung isang natatanging tinig ang namamayani sa pelikulang gaya ng **Jose Rizal**, nangangahulugan bang dapat magkaroon ng ibang pelikulang may naiibang tinig, isang kontrapunto sa narinig na? Kung natuloy ang naunyang **Rizal** ni Mike de Leon, na pangungunahan sana ni Aga Muhlach, naririnig ang tinig ng ibang istoryador, yaong tinig na kontra-estabilisimyento, ang tinig na di naniniwalang tinallikuran ni Rizal ang kanyang mga sinulat upang magbalik sa simbahan. Nangangahulugan bang mas malapit sa katunayan ang gayong pelikula?

Walang mapatutunayan ang gayong **Rizal** kundi isang salaysay na nakatali sa isa pang tinig, ang kontrapunto ng **Jose Rizal**.

Malinaw na ang nakagawiang pagsasalaysay sa pelikula — ang salaysay na malinis, hindi kita ang tahi — ay isang pandaraya pala; kundi man pandaraya ay isang salamangka, dahil isang tinig lamang ang pinaririnig. Ang pagsasalaysay ng kasaysayan na nagmumula sa isang tinig ay paghuhuwad ng realidad, dahil ang kasaysayan ay binubuo ng iba't ibang tinig, ng nagkakasala-salabatat nagkakasalungatang mga salaysay. Hindi ibang tinig ang may awtoridad.

Ang hamon sa filmmaker ay kung paano magagawa sa loob ng isang pelikula na narinig ang iba't ibang tinig na ito. Hindi maipagkakailang ang filmmaker ang mamamahala sa mistulang kakoponiyang mga salaysay at mabibigyan-diin ang tinig na nanaisin niyang mangibabaw, ngunit ang mahalaga'y hindi niya papatayin ang mga tinig na may karapatan ding narinig.

IV

Kung gayon, hindi pala ang isyu ng paglalahad ang mas mahalaga sa pag-aaral sa pagsasapelikula ng kasaysayan. Maaring gawing kapani-paniwala ang paglalahad na ito ng mahusay na direktor, aktor, *production designer*, sinematograper at iba pang tekniko ng pelikula. Ang mahalaga ay hindi tayo dapat basta-basta magpapadala sa salamangka ng pelikula. Ang payo nga ni Bertolt Brecht, isang Alemang mandudula, makata at teorista, kailangang ikumpara ng tao ang paglalarawan ng buhay sa isang gawang-sining sa mismong buhay na inilalarawan, kaysa sa pagkukumpara niyon sa isa pang paglalarawan. Ngunit, paano kung ang buhay na inilalarawan ay lumipas na? Paano mababawi ang nakaraan?

Dito dapat pakinggan ang iba't ibang tinig mula sa nakaraan. Sa salaysay ng buhay ni Rizal, dapat pakinggan ang tinig mismo ni Rizal na naririnig sa kanyang mga akda at ilang tomo ng mga liham, ang iba't ibang pahayag at dokumento tungkol kay Rizal at sa kanyang panahon, ang iba't ibang salaysay ng mga istoryador, pati na ng mga kultong umabong sa panahon ng bayani. Dahil ang mas mahalaga palang surin sa pagsulat o pagsasapelikula ng kasaysayan ay hindi ang kagalingan ng

paglalahad kundi ang tinig na namamayani, dapat maging sensitibo sa kung anong tinig ang binibigyan ng awtoridad.

Iminungkahi ni Natalie Zemon Davis, istoryador at may-akda ng *The Return of Martin Guerre*, na mahalaga ang pakikisalamula ng istoryador sa mga nabubuhay pa, kundi man sa historical subject mismo ay sa mga taong maring kumatawan dito. Malinaw sa kanya na ang pagsasalaysay ng kasaysayan ay di lamang nangagaling sa isang tinig, kundi sa iba't ibang tinig at ang lalong mahalaga'y magmula ang pagsasalaysay na ito sa mga tinig na natatabunan ng namamayang ideolohiya.

Sinu-sino pa ang dapat maring tungo sa pagbubuo ng salaysay ng kasaysayan — bukod sa mga istoryador na nagkaroon ng pagkakataon o kapangyarihang ipalimbag ang kanilang iba't ibang kuwento? Paano mabibigyan ng tinig ang di nagkaroon ng kapangyarihang ito? At para sa filmmaker:

Paano makagawa ng pelikulang kontra sa nakagawiang pagsasalaysay? Hindi biro ang gamitin ang pelikula sa paglalahad ng kasaysayan. Madaling mauunyangi ng mga kumbensyon ang mabuting hangarin. Madaling matatabunan ng mababaw na allwan ang hangaring maging malalim. Gayumpaman, kung tunay ang hangaring sagipin sa limot ang anumang bahagi ng kasaysayan, kailangang huwag magpatalo sa kumbensyon ang filmmaker upang ang kanyang pagsasalaysay ng kasaysayan ay di mawalan ng sagsay. [2]

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Freeze Frame

JULIAN MANANSALA: Child of the Revolution

By LENA S. PAREJA

Julian Manansala set the trend for the nationalistic film in the silent pictures era with his initial film production, *Patria et Amore*, 1929.

Manansala wrote the story and screenplay, directed the film, and acted the part of the principal actor. His leading lady was Sofia Lotta, also known as Miss Cotabato. So intense was the anti-Spanish sentiment in the film that it almost did not make it to its theatrical exhibition.

It was the third decade of American rule after the Philippine Revolution, but the Spanish elite in Manila continued to exert their undue influence in business and social circles. The Spanish aristocracy who looked down on the Indios were appalled that a film such as *Patria et Amore* would dare to depict them as villains and oppressors. They lost no time in filing an injunction to prevent Manansala from showing his movie.

But times had changed. The new Governor-General of the Philippines, Henry L. Stimson, was inclined to favor the Filipinos over the Spaniards and he made no secret about it. At the time of the controversy, Stimson was about to leave his post to assume a cabinet position under President Herbert Hoover. Before he left, he saw to it that American justice would be on the side of Manansala. The Spaniards' plea for an injunction was denied and *Patria et Amore* was allowed to be shown. It was a landmark decision that caused the establishment of the first Board of Censors for Moving Pictures through Act No. 3582 of the Philippine Legislature, 1929.

Enthusied by the outcome of his case, Manansala decided then and there that he would make only nationalistic films or movies that carried a strong message of patriotism and love of country. His next film, *Dimasalang*, 1930, starring Mary Walter and Gregorio Fernandez, also

dealt with the Philippine Revolution. *Pag-ibig ng Kadete*, 1934, appealed to the nationalism of the youth, while *Kilabot ng mga Tulison*, 1934, addressed the problem of peasant unrest.

During the transition from silent films to the talkies, Manansala stopped making films for five years. He resumed filmmaking in 1939 at the helm of one of the most outstanding movies of the year, *Mutya ng Katipunan*. In the cast were Arsenia Francisco as Marina Dizon, Ricardo Brillantes as Emilio Jacinto, and Roman Reyes as General Patiño, the man who turned traitor and sold the Katipunan out to its enemies. Scenes of Jose Rizal's execution, the capture of Tandang Sora, and the tearing up of cedula at the Cry of Balintawak were among the film's highlights.

The last movie Manansala made before World War II broke out was *Tawag ng Bayan*, 1940, also starring Arsenia Francisco and Ricardo Brillantes. With deep foreboding, the film was a call to the Filipino youth to come to the service of the Motherland.

Manansala was a native of Masantol, Pampanga who was born in the year that the Philippine Revolution broke out, 1896. He obtained a law degree from Liceo de Manila. His parents were Miguel Manansala and Lucia V. Mendoza. He married Donata P. Quito with whom he had four children: Antonio, Bonifacio, Carolina and Donata. He died on November 13, 1970. [2]





Plotting the People Out

By PATRICK FLORES

TINATALAKAY NG SANAYSAY ang teoretikal na balakid sa pagbalangkas ng kasaysayan bilang pantipunang praktika at pang-araw-araw na pakikibaka sa ilang piling pelikulang Filipino. Tinutukoy ang kasaysayang pampelikula (film history)/kasaysayan ng pelikula (history of film) at mga pelikulang pangkasaysayan (historical films) bilang lunan ng kontradiksyon at posibilidad. Ipinapakita ng sanaysay na nagkukulang ang dalawang larangan sa pag-ugat sa kasaysayan bilang "buhay" na binibigyan ng anyo, wika at pulitikang ekonomiya ng sining pelikula, sa isang banda, at ng ideolohiya ng pag-olala at pagsakatuparan sa kasaysayan, sa kabila. Sa pamamagitan ng pagsusuri sa mga pelikulang Filipino na nagsasangkot sa pangkasaysayang praktika (historical practice) bilang tema at adhika (at dahil dito ay kakaiba sa mga pelikulang pilit na ikinukulang ang kasaysayan o sa partikular ang rebolusyong Filipino 1896-1898 sa hawla ng kabayanihan at "mahalagang yugto" o "grand event"), tinatangka ng sanaysay na humabi ng bago at harinawa'y makabago at makapagpabagong diskurso ng pelikula, kasaysayang Filipino, historiograpiyang pampelikula, at pelikulang pangkasaysayan ng ating panahon. Hangad ng pag-aaral na ito na palawakin ang mga sakiaw ng salitang "pangkasaysayan" para idamay hindi lamang ang pangyayari o lunan o pangunahing tauhan ng rebolusyon, kung hindi ang lahat ng ahente at istruktura ng kolektibong transpormayon.

Scanning the centennial mass media commemorations of 1996-1998, we discern a disproportionate stress on the iconographies of grand history as our main access to the recovery and the reliving of historical memory, to the making present of the revolution as we retroactively take up its cause. These iconographies tend to treat history as a frieze with static figures enacting preordained events, or a tableau of a grand ceremony serving as backdrop to marmoreal heroism. This sort of commemoration (or memorialization) saps history's veins of vigor, and inevitably partakes of as well as sustains State-led initiatives of remembrance; in the long haul, it prevents us from probing the very substance of history, the intricacies of revolutionary lives well lived.

Moreover, this kind of memory work fails to appreciate certain shifts in frameworks not only in the discipline of historiography as signalled by gains in the conceptual labors of the French nouvelle histoire school; but also in theory and practice of social transformation as the organic conjuncture of interactive forces, and not solely the brainchild of the vanguard party or regime. These turns in paradigms compel us to reencounter and reinvent reality and change transformatively through an intersec-

tion of technologies involving the aesthetic, the ethnographic, and the ideological. Finally, this mode of recollecting history, as instigated by government's "centennial" philosophy and as it directly relates to the issue of this essay, negates the power of a mass medium like cinema to negotiate the collective and popular processes of everyday life to "contest, vision, and revision" the revolution in the filmic doubletake of prefiguration and posthumous presence "today."

The task at hand is to reconsider how a particular discourse such as Philippine cinema fleshes out the revolutionary moment and its energy in the matrix of the personal and the political in which the operative terms cease to be institution or self, but rather social personhood, the translocal moral world, and the ethical accountability to transform an oppressive material condition. A concatenation of tensions proceeds from such a reformulation: the dialectic between the local and the global as well as that between agency and structure. And here we begin our investigation of the aesthetic of revolution, or the revolutionary aesthetic, in Philippine cinema. The itinerary starts with the constraints inscribed by Philippine cinematic historiography itself.

As a colonial idiom, Philippine cinema has always been compelled to shed the trauma of its historical conception. Critical commentary on how it deals with reality, through tropes of confrontation and escapism, occupies paramount space in Philippine film studies. The contention is this: how Philippine cinema deals with the reality of the world around it makes it and breaks it in the contested territories of progressive art and commerce. The problem, of course, is also this: how Philippine cinema is manipulated to fit into the conventional niches of social relevance and entertainment vitiates its very possibility as "mass" and "popular" culture which need not be viewed in solely



Ramonik Samanta and Daria Raveloz in Jose Mari Avellana's *Damong Ligaw* (1997)

As we realize by now, the problem lies not in the stars, but in historiography.

populist, liberal democratic, and orthodox materialist terms and, in fact, may be used to broaden the parameters of the very rubrics of "mass" and "popular," and consequently enlist the radical democratic predispositions of allegedly homogenous, but actually contending, audiences.

Petronilo Bn. Daroy has alerted us to Philippine cinema's secretion of class as central category of filmic reality. In a critical essay on Celso Ad Castillo's *Daluyong at Hobogot*, a story of post-war Manila "recovering from the wreckage of World War II" (Daroy 1983: 189), he adumbrates a future for Philippine film criticism as he makes technique reference "historical truth" and, therefore, frees it from its conventional instrumentalist role. According to Daroy:

Through a series of intercutting, he shows three related sequences – Iguis rushing headlong to meet his adversary, the bourgeois Ricky Belmonte; Iguis' brother (Rez Cortez) standing at attention in a courtroom listening to a judge render a sentence on him; and the laborers going on strike in a factory. Through the technique of intercutting, Castillo manages to show these three sequences as relating to three forms of violence, namely: the organized workers against the exploitative system; institutional violence against the individual; and the type of anarchistic or senseless violence that man within a given context of society perpetuates against his own kind. These final sequences are a testimony to Castillo's power as an artist and his capacity to make a profound understanding of social issues. Given this equipment, he really does not have to evade historical truth. (Daroy 1983: 191)

Rafael Ma. Guerrero does not seem to agree with Daroy's placement of the cinematic narrative in the thick of class, and argues that conflicts in Philippine film belong properly to morality plays than to social dramas: "Rich and 'poor' become simply convenient classifications. If not merely descriptive expedients utilized to flesh out a film homily on the naïve but widely held notion that 'love conquers all' and, one might add, even hurdles class barriers." (Guerrero 1983: 116). It is perhaps beyond Guerrero's reckoning that class identity or social difference constitutes as much moral accountability as values delineated in terms of "good" and "evil" or the desire of transcendence do, in fact very precisely so because class could never be grasped in abstraction in so far as, according to Marx, "social life is essentially practical." Moreover, filmic life is practical in

the sense that it can never be apprehended disembodiedly but as "lives": lives portrayed and lives portraying.

Against this resistance to the "social," a different current of thought flows from Zeus Salazar's interpretation of the action hero as an indigenous paradigm which resists all forms of colonial importuning and aggravation. As a natural element of the epic tradition, the action hero of the *pelikulang babaklan* is kin to the epic hero, and so battles all forces colonial and imperialist in a mythological continuum. Such thinking fails to come to grips with the ideological structure of the genre as well as the manner in which "non-indigenous" agencies may coopt it; Salazar's scheme, while it may bring us closer to "local tradition," is essentialist and can never aspire to generate transformative possibility. This search for identity, indeed, brings us nowhere. The most recent important literature to be written on Philippine cinema, Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr.'s *Native Resistance: Philippine Cinema and Colonialism, 1898-1941*, commits the same egregious error in the way it calls for a return to roots and an affirmation of the idea that the "national" is "already embedded in the indigenous theatrical conventions of the *moro-moro* and *sarswela* movies." (Del Mundo, Jr. 1998, 128) Surely, del Mundo is unfazed in the face of the historical specter that hispanic theater as "Philippine" form is mediated through, though not exclusively determined by, a particular hegemonic political economy. To simply make it reflect the national is not only theoretically clumsy, but politically untenable as well; and not because the "colonial" is a passive agency, but because it is made to carry formulaic nativist values.

It is in this terrain that we stake out the problems of Philippine films dealing with the "historical" as it relates to class and ethnicity; we have yet to explore the domains of gender and sexuality, spirituality and ideological commitment as components of the scheme. As we realize by now, the problem lies not in the stars, but in historiography. And from this trail of uneven literature ensues a deceptively and dubiously "titanic" project, Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Jose Rizal* (1998) which embodies the worst of the commemorative aesthetic of the establishment as well as the gravest lapses of Philippine cinematic historiography. We almost wish that the film had not been made at all. But since that is now impossible, we can only strive to write it off as an unsustainable intervention in Philippine filmmaking and in our very own his-

tory-in-the-making. Instead, away from this catastrophe and embarrassment of riches, we train our focus on those films which might be able to demystify the revolution by laying bare the lives that make and undo it, by re-presenting the historical.

The two versions of *Sakay* – by Lamberto Avellana (1940) and Raymond Red (1993) – strike at the root of the politics of filmic representation, with Avellana's take reeking of American propaganda and Red's interpretation of the hero as millenarian figure hobbling through *malvete*. Both films succeed in either dehumanizing Sakay as bandit or humanizing him as martyr, but fail in historicizing him as historical agent who had to appropriate certain tools to transform his society, to assume the subject-position of a recalcitrant, who in the end would bear the stigma of being a "brigand" and the cross of martyrdom. Macario Sakay fails to live again at all, which is ironic because it is his life that is at stake here. A little reconsideration is in order, however, for Red's project. While it obviously wishes to place Sakay in the context of local history and folk heroism through a historiography "from below," it unfortunately does not come close to home: the continuity of the American hegemonic grip on the Philippines. The film, in other words, localizes a very global (or, better still, translocal) and contemporary mechanism.

This failing likewise plagues Peque Gallaga's *Virgin Forest* (1985) which only exploits the texture of American imperialism and the contentious cooptation of the Macabebes in the capture of Philippine revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo to serve as scenery to the mangled lives of a fallen *mestizo*, an adulterous *indio*, and her fisherman of a lover. They are sucked into the vortex of the film's dilemma as they are taken captive by the Macabebe "mercenaries" and two American officers disguised as prisoners of the Filipino revolutionary forces at Tayabas in the province of Quezon. As they forge bonds in the trek through the forest (the modifier of which in the film's title is a glaring concession to the producer's plan to sell it as a "bold" and "sexy" outing), it dawns on them that they must ally themselves with Aguinaldo and prevent his capture in Palanan. This change of heart bears no fruit. While we perceive here the attempt to configure the nation through the diverse biographies of its constituents in the realms of class, race, and gender, we are not led to come to grips with the modes by which these biographies must cohere to underwrite the moral obliga-



Sarah Emmanuel in Peque Gallego's *Virgins Forest* (1985)

tion to support Aguinaldo. Undoubtedly, while we cannot endorse American imperialism, we cannot also just turn a blind eye on the political habits of "revolutionaries" like Aguinaldo. In brief, the three characters cannot be held accountable to their deed as doers of revolution as the film fails to reveal the extent to which they stake out emotional engagement, ideological investment, and ethical interest as citizens of the revolution. One critic even had to lament that the revolution has nothing to do with them and that they have nothing to do with it, when in fact they are continuities and contingencies informing the very politics constituting both figure (them) and ground (revolution).

This tableau-like proscenium resists the portrayal of the revolution as a social movement powered by a range of humanities and labors and bodies politic grappling with a range of capital and structures and predicaments. This dominant impulse would, however, be lent a little rigor by two picaresques from Eddie Romero: *Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?* (1976) and *Aguila* (1980), which depict the lives of Kulas and Daniel Aguila respectively as they come of age against the epic canvas of a transforming Philippine and clan history. The problem here is that this history is not at all rendered transformative, with events coming and going and speaking of the subject, but with the latter not carving the making of the event. In fact, at the end of the films, the heroes retreat into a kind of nativist nationalism that props up patriarchal and paternalist (if not altogether clientelist) agenda in the name of the sort of Philippine identity so easily manipulated by dictatorships as evidenced by Marcosian methods of recent igno-

minious memory. To cite instances: After the ashes of the revolution settle, Kulas enjoins children of Marulas, Bulacan to forget about their being of "Marulas," an ethnic moment in their subjectivity that invests them with a sense of place and abode, and consequently internalize the essence of being "Filipino." And Daniel Aguila opts to live with the Aetas of Zambales as the life choice to finally end all his peripatetic and polytropic adventures. In light of the repressive Marcos rule, all this makes sense as allegory of the nation's *tadhana* (destiny) and its Tasaday-style claims to primeval birthright.

The most feasible experiment under the rubric of "films on the revolution" is Jose Mari Avellana's *Domong Ligaw* (1997) which tells the story of the revolution through the life of a young man who is severely taken to task - physically and emotionally - by his father, a member of the Katipunan. As the father professes the ideals of the revolution, so does he maltreat his son for not being revolutionary enough in his ways, for being indolent, and for aspiring to the mores of the masters. We later realize that this mode of feudal discipline is meant to "revolutionize" the young man and prepare him for a life of revolution. What interests us here is that this film is genre-wise a "love story" of the young man and a girl in his hometown. It is a romantic narrative replete with wooing and love poems, yet infuses the revolution with true romantic affection and devotion of the undying kind. At the end of the film, the hero and his beloved do not so much ride into the sunset as take their place in the trenches of war, dug by patriarchal prowess and masculinist initiation, which unfortunately (but not unusually) repose in the man

the gift of epiphany and moral progress.

Still, it is to be hoped that Philippine cinema create more films of this mold, but not necessarily of this means. The nouveau riche pretensions of the people behind *Jose Rizal* cerily remind us of ilustrado politics and an Aguinaldo-like betrayal. Because we cannot allow history to repeat itself in Philippine cinema, we cast the first stone in that direction: to finally kill the nerve of the delusional imagination of nation building and start reflecting on the supplements of our selves and the impossibility of completing the project of a national/note wholeness, but undoubtedly heralding the emergence of healing across a range of ruptures and retentions.

Our filmmakers must pay sensitive and keen attention to the "historical" film as an aesthetic system that is informed by a sense of history and historiography; a sense of theory of the medium as art and therefore as form, language, and mode of production; and finally a sense of political program that articulates codes of address and facilitates exchanges among meaning makers. All this gives cinema a certain rature and resonance: an activist nostalgia. We can learn a few lessons from Stephen Heath who points out that "the present of a film is always historical, just as history is always present - a fact of the present not a fact of the past, an elaboration of the presence of the past, a construction in the present, for today, where the present is then equally always already historical, itself the process of that construction, a terrain of determinations and places, itself a political reality." Indeed, from *Asedillo* to *Batang PX*, from *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamu* to *Sa Kuko ng Agila* - films of the past but of current significance - the revolution is much more interesting and worthier of dying for as a deeply intimate and a broadly collective sacrifice. ■

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The 1896 Revolution in Film An Album of Stills & Ads

by CESAR HERNANDO

Several nationalistic or historical full-length feature films have been made since the advent of cinema in the Philippines almost a century ago. Films were made about the Filipinos' struggle against the Spanish colonial rule. Among the most memorable of these are Florbiano de la Cruz's national heroes like Lamberto V. Avellana's *Lapu-Lapu* (1954), Gregorio Fernandez's *Dagohoy* (1953), Gerardo de Leon's *Padre Burgos* (1949) and *Diego Silang* (1951), Carlos Vander Tolosa's controversial *The Tragic Death of General Luna* (1931), Ramon Estrella's *Ang Babay at Pag-Ibig ni Dr. Jose Rizal* (1956), and the earliest Rizal biographies both made in 1912 by Americans: *La Vida de Dr. Jose Rizal* by Edward Gross and *El Fusillamiento de Dr. Jose Rizal* by Albert Yearsley. The Philippine Revolution of 1896 has been another source of material for screen biographies, like *Andres Bonifacio*, *Tandang Sora*, *Gen. Gregoria del Pilar* and *Emilio Aguinaldo* and fictional stories set against historical events, like Julian Masansala's *Patria et Amore* (1929), *Punit na Bandila*, *Walang Sugat* (1913, 1939 and 1957), *Gamito Kami Noon*, *Paano Kaya Ngayon?* (1970) and *Damang Ligaw* (1997). Some of the films made on events or characters of the Philippine Revolution against Spain are noted here.



TENIENTE ROSARIO (1937)

Parlatone-Hispano Filipino

Directed by Octavio Nino/Story: Gregorio C. Coching/Music: Jesse Silos & Juan Silos Jr./Cost: Lucita Coyena, Rogelio dela Rosa, Andres Cantanera, Soledad Roxales, Francisco Palma, H. Fagan, Manuel Soler, Teddy Benavides

The film revolves around a fictional heroine of the revolution, played by Lucita Coyena, who moves against a backdrop of real events.



WALANG SUGAT (1939)

Filippine Films

Directed by Enrique Herrera-Davila/From the operetta by Severino Reyes/Cast: Rosa del Rosario, Leopoldo Saceda, Juana Angeles, Florentino Ballecer, Jaime G. Carrellol, Pedro Faustino, Vicente Ocampo, Paula Manat, Pating Carvajal, Salvador Zamora

Based on one of the most popular Tagalog *sinigla*, this movie is about Tasyong who leads a revolt against the Spanish officials, friars and the *ganados* (villains) to avenge the death of his father, in spite of the objections of his lady love Juli.



TANDANG SORA (1947)

Corazon Roque Productions

Directed by Lambero V. Avellana/Screenplay: Daisy H. Avellana, G.R. Alba/Cinematography: William H. Jansen/Music: Ray Alinsod/Cast: Rosa del Rosario, Leopoldo Salcedo, Eddie Infante, Quiel Segovia, Fernando Royo, Luis Salvador, Lopino, Hanasan, Pedro Faustino, Rita Rivera, Leroy Salvador, Crescing Aligada, Totoy Torrente, Eddie San Jose, Arsenio Trillian, Bayona Bros.

The movie focuses on Tandang Sora or Melchora Aquino, who cared for the sick and the wounded Katipuneros during skirmishes and battles against the Spaniards.

HENERAL PAUA (1956)

Larry Santiago Productions

Directed by Felix Villar/Story: Gregorio Zaide/Music: Tony Marquez/Cast: Danilo Montes, Cynthia Zamora, Ramon D'Salva, and guest stars: Teody Belarmino, Reynaldo Dante, Ben Perez, Rodolfo Ruiz

The movie is about the only general of the Philippine Revolution of Chinese blood, who headed the revolutionary forces in Bicol.

THE STORY OF A CHINESE GENERAL
WHO HELPED THE PHILIPPINES
IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY



GEN. GREGORIO DEL PILAR (1949) LVM Pictures

Directed by Gregorio Fernandez/
Story: Rafael Jose/Screenplay:
Armando Garces/Cinematography:
Enrique Rosales/Cast: Jose Padilla Jr.,
Tessie Quintana, Teody Belarmino,
Jaime Castellvi, Eddie Infante,
Gregorio Fernandez, Bayona
Casimiro, Armando Garces, Juanito
Montes, Tony Dantes, Rita Amor,
Horace Curry, Jose de Villa, Justina
David, Florencia Vicencio, Natoy
Catindig

One of the dashing and youngest generals of Emilio Aguinaldo, Gen. Gregorio del Pilar and his soldiers met a tragic death when they were ambushed by the American army at Tirad Pass in Isabela.

WALANG SUGAT (1957)

LVN Pictures

Directed by Lamberto V. Avellana/Based on the original *sonnet* by Severino Reyes/Music: Francisco Buencamino Jr./Cinematography: Mike Accion/Cast: Mario Montenegro, Charito Solis, Tony Santos, Vic Silayan, Joseph de Cordova, Oscar Keesee, Rosa Aguirre, Tony Dantes, Fe Galang, Jose Vergara, Arturo Moran, Miguel Lopez, Simplicio Pajarillo, Tito Garcia, Ric Gutierrez, Mario Roldan, Andres Ineri

This is the third film version of the famous musical play. The first one made by Albert Yearsley in 1913 was a silent movie. The second, made in 1939, starred Leopoldo Salcedo. In the 1957 version, Teryong was played by Mario Montenegro and Julia by Charito Solis.



ANDRES BONIFACIO, ANG SUPREMO (1964)

Bayanihan Film Productions

Directed by Eduardo del Mar and Teodorico C. Santos/Screenplay: E. del Mar, Henry Culino and T.C. Santos/Music: Tony Maiquez/Cast: Eduardo del Mar, Lolita Rodriguez, Carlos Padilla Jr., Marietta Miranda, Oscar Roncal, Fred Galang

Inspired by the books he read (among them Jose Rizal's novels), Andres Bonifacio organized a secret society with the initials K.K.K., the first in Asia to raise arms and resist colonial rule nationwide. Katipunan membership spread like wildfire all over the country but the fever was dampened by local politics and in-fighting.

GANITO KAMI NOON, PAANO KAYO NGAYON? (1976)

Hemisphere Pictures, Inc.

Directed by Eddie Romero/Screenplay: Eddie Romero and Roy Iglesias/Music: Lutgardo Labad/Cinematography: Justo Paulino/Production Design: Laida Lim-Perez and Peque Gallaga/Editing: Ben Barcelona/Sound: Demetrio de Santos/Cast: Christopher de Leon, Gloria Diaz, Leopoldo Salcedo, Eddie Garcia, Druareh, Rosemarie Gil, E.A. Rocha, Tsing Tong Tsai, Johnny Vear

A picaresque reedition of life during colonial times. A naive peasant boy named Kulas comes to realize his identity as a Filipino amidst the flames of the Philippine Revolution against the Spaniards and later, the Americans.



BAYANI (1992)

ZDF

Directed by Raymond Red/Screenplay: Raymond Red/
Music: Alan Hilario/Cinematography: Raymond Red and
Yam Larnas/Production Design: Cesar Hernandez/Editing:
Raymond Red and Lauro Rene Manda/Producers:
Raymond Red and Christoph Janetzko/Cast: Julio Diaz,
Crispin Medina, Grace Amilbanga, Ronnie Lazaro, John
Arcilla, Raymond Alsona, Juliene Mendoza, Connie
Lauigan-Chua, Soliman Cruz, Raul Arellano, Edru
Abraham

Loosely based on the life of Andres Bonifacio,
the film attempts to penetrate the inner psyche of a ficti-
tious revolutionary leader.



DAMONG LIGAW (1997)

Premiere Entertainment Productions

Directed by Jose Mari Avellana/Screenplay: Jose Mari Avellana/Story: Ceres
Alabado and Jose Mari Avellana/Cinematography: Ricardo Remias/Production
Design: Mannel Samaniego/Music: Irwin Cafuguan/Editing: Dante Nueva/Pro-
ducer: Boots Anson Roa/Executive Producers: Cirio H. Santiago and Ernesto C.
Rojas/Cast: Romnick Sarmenta, Beth Tamayo, Robert Arevalo, Daria Ramirez,
Rusico Carpio, Marco Ballesteros, Lawrence David, Alvin Anson, Perla Bautista,
Ronnie Lazaro

Inspired by Ceres Alabado's novellette *King Kong 1896*, this film is about
a fictitious peasant youth's coming of age during the revolution, his domestic
woes and eventual political awareness.

EMILIO AGUINALDO (1998)

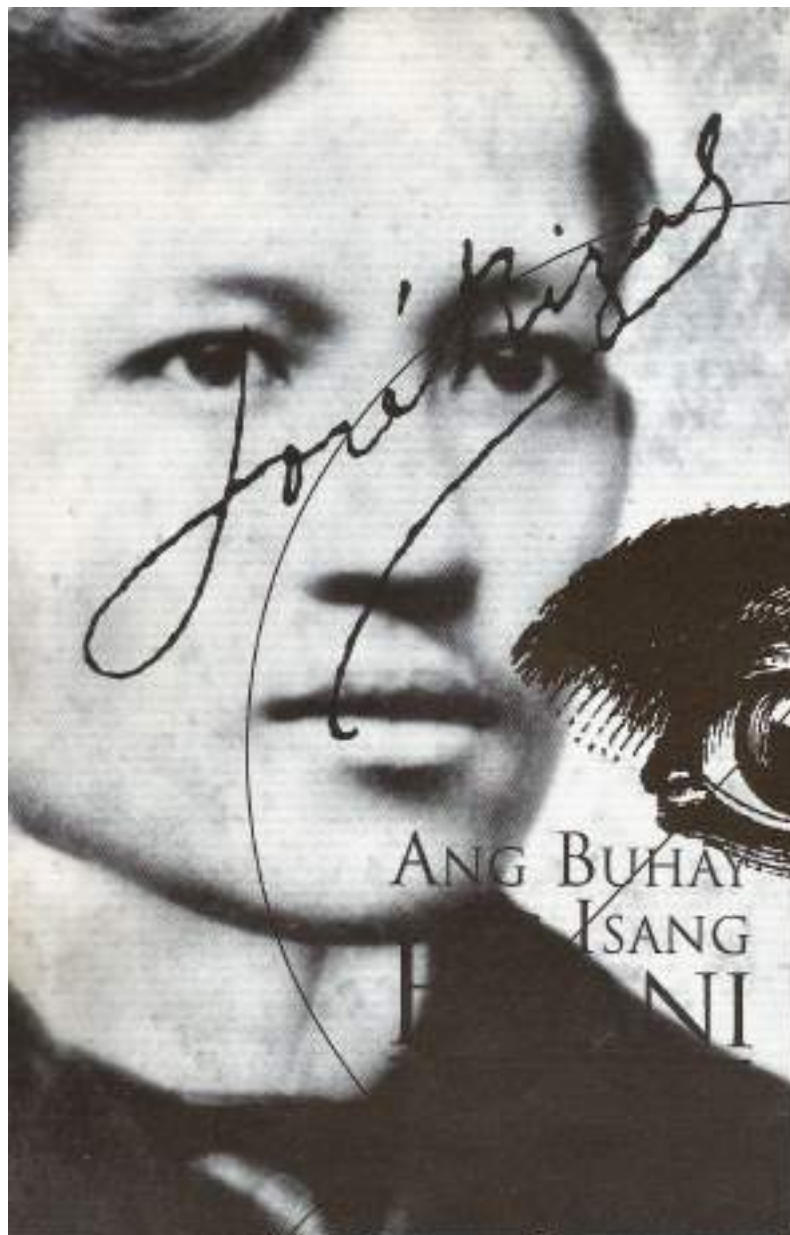
National Centennial Commission,
Presidential Management Staff and NTRCB.

Directed by Jose Mari Avellana, Joey Romero/Screenplay: Dennis Marasigan,
Paul Dumol/Music: Mike Villegas/Cinematography: Ricardo Remias, Ben Lobos/
Production Design: Mannel Samaniego/Cast: Cedric Nicomedes, Romnick
Sarmenta, Rachel Alejandro, John Regalla, Ronnie Quizon, Alvin Anson, Ralson
Alonso, Miguel de Lara

These docu-drama is about General Emilio Aguinaldo, who figures
prominently in the declaration of the Philippine Independence from Spain, the
ratification of the Malolos Congress and the proclamation of the first Philippine
Republic.



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ANG BUHAY
KANG
HINI

...one dies
...or what one
loves, for native
land and
cherished ones?

JOSÉ
RIZAL



MARAMI NANG PAGTATANGKA sa mahabang panahon ng ating kasaysayan na isapelikula ang buhay at kamatayan ng ating pambansang bayani, Jose Rizal. Mula noong 1912 nang mahirang siyang pambansang bayani, dalawang pelikula ng dayuhang prodyuser (Edward Meyer Gross-Harry Brown at Albert Yearsley) ang magkasabay na ipinalabas sa Maynila. Nagtagisan ang dalawa sa takilya para akitin ang mga manonood. Nuong 1930, isang Filipino direktor – si Jose Nepomuceno – ang unang nagtangkang magsapelikula ng nobela ni Rizal, ang *Noli Me Tangere*. Pagdating ng 1950s, isang pelikulang pantalambuhay, *Buhay at Pag-Ibig ni Jose Rizal*, ang ipinalabas, sa direksiyon ni Ramon Estella at nagtampok kay Eddie del Mar bilang Rizal. Sinundan ito ng *Noli Me Tangere* at *El Filibusterismo* na dinirehe ni Gerardo de Leon noong 1961 at 1962, bilang bahagi ng pagdiriwang sa sentenaryo ng kaarawan ng pambansang bayani. Nitong dekada 1990 at kaugnay ng dekada ng nasyonalismo, tuluyang namukadkad ang mga pelikula tungkol sa bayani. Unang-unang lumabas ang *Buhay ng Isang Bayani* noong 1996, isang mahusay na docudrama mula sa Ateneo de Manila University at Bookmark. Sinundan ito noong 1997 ng *Rizal sa Dapitan* ng Mov-Pix International sa direksiyon ni Tikoy Aguiluz. Matapat na isinadula ng pelikula ang naging buhay ni Rizal sa pagkakatapon sa Dapitan at mga taong nakasalamuha niya noon. Noong 1998, sa taon ng sentenaryo ng proklasmasyon ng kalayaan, ipinalabas ang *Jose Rizal* ni Mabilou Diaz-Abaya, and pinakamalaking produksyon sa buong kasaysayan ng pelikula sa ating bansa. Bagamat maluhog at marangya ang pagbuhay sa panahon at mga tauhan, hindi naging matagumpay sa pangkalahatan ang pagsasakatuparan ng intensyon ng pelikula. Noong 1998 rin lumabas ang kontrobersyal na *Sisa* ni Mario O'Hara, na tumukoy sa relasyong sekswal ni Rizal at ni Sisa.

Desperately Seeking Rizal

By JUSTINO DORMIENDO

It is, at the outset, safe to presume that no other Filipino – living or dead – in the entire history of Philippine cinema can surpass the enduring popularity of Jose Rizal as protagonist. Since moving pictures first came

to the country at the turn of the century, filmmakers have been enamored with the man whose life story has become an inexhaustible lode of historical and histrionic possibilities that lend themselves to the medium.

Jose Rizal as subject had its roots with the advent of cinema in this country, starting from the early years of the American occupation, when Rizal was proclaimed the country's national hero by the Second Philippine Commission in 1912. The same set of criteria used in the selection of Rizal could have very well motivated the first batch of filmmakers in their early attempts to dramatize Rizal's life on film.

The very stuff of his life – his manifold intelligence, his indomitable courage and his extraordinary sense of nationalism – has served as fodder to the popular imagination among a people long fascinated with tales of heroes and their exploits. Taking advantage of the Rizalian spirit then sweeping the

country, an American businessman, Harry Brown, who owned Galety Theater, immediately contacted Dr. Edward Meyer Gross – the author of a successful stage play, *La Vida de Rizal* – with an offer to produce Gross' work on film. Gross, a fanatical Rizalista who was married to Titay Molina (a popular *sarswela* performer of her time), promptly set out to work on the Rizal project, using his wife as the lead and in the role of Maria Clara and Honorio Lopez, the famous Tagalog writer, in the title role.

While the Brown-Gross production was underway, another theater owner, Albert Yearsley, who operated the Empire and Majestic theaters, learned of his competitor's project. Having realized the potential of doing the same material, he immediately dispatched his cast and crew to make his own version of the Rizal story, which, when finally completed, amounted only to a 20-minute reenactment of Rizal's last hours, aptly billed *El Fusilamiento de Dr. Rizal*. What Yearsley produced resembled more closely a documentary than a feature film.

Many years later, the country's fledgling cinema would churn out other projects inspired by, if not derived from, Rizal's life

and works. Gross would later make a film on the three martyr-priests Father Gomez, Burgos and Zamora, a follow-up to his Rizal film, which apparently also cashed in on Rizal's growing popularity by making mention of the fact that Rizal was only 10 years old when the three priests were executed in Cavite.

In 1930, long after Jose Nepomuceno, who was to be regarded as the Father of Philippine Cinema, made his niche as the creator of the first all-Filipino production, *Dalagang Bukid* (1919), his outfit adapted Rizal's novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, into film.

In the years that followed and as the studio system continued to prosper during the rest of the decade, the subject of Rizal and other heroes began to wane in favor of more commercially propitious projects.

It would not be until the fifties, a period which came to be known as the First Golden Age of Philippine cinema, that a new film project on Rizal would finally reach the screens. Titled *Buhay at Pag-ibig ni Jose Rizal* (*The Life and Loves of Jose Rizal*), the 1956 film starred Eddie del Mar as Rizal, with Ramon Estella at the helm of the three-hour production which depicted the highlights in the hero's life. Although the director was one of the top-ranking directors of the time, Estella's film did not live up expectations, saddled as it with the simple task of recreating the events in the hero's life. Estella, however, would be honored that same year by the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS) as best director for another film, *Desperado*, which also won best picture and editing awards.

It was a decade later that Rizal's work would be adapted into film by Gerardo de Leon, thereby enriching the content of local films. In Gerardo de Leon's *Noli Me Tangere* (1961) and *El Filibusterismo* (1962), the spirit of Rizal's oeuvres are successfully captured through the artistic merging of the well-known literary masterpieces and the director's dynamic visual style.



Le Vido de Rizal (1912) left; Eddie del Mar in Ramon Estella's *Buhay at Pag-ibig ni Jose Rizal*

Noli, which has been recently restored, was shown in time for the centennial of Rizal's birth. *El Fili*, made a year later, remains a cinematic landmark in its attempt to capture Rizal's second novel through the director's mise-en-scene. In both films, the viewer sees the process of adapting literary masterpieces into the screen which succeeds because of its faithful adherence to the period and its accurate portrayal of the gallery of characters originally depicted in Rizal's novel.

A much later attempt to adapt Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* into film came in 1992 by way of a made-for-television movie project. Funded by the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the 12-part series, written and directed by Eddie Romero, was intended to popularize the novel among Filipino mass audiences, particularly the student sector who stood to benefit from the weekly screening aired on Channel 5.

Romero, a veteran filmmaker whose career spans five decades, offered the script to the CCP which decided to produce it as one of its contributions to the celebration of the Decade of Nationalism (1987-1998). The result was a modest effort to faithfully preserve Rizal's novel in the film medium, its rich gallery of characters (played by a lineup of actors both film and stage), as well as the period in which they lived. Moreover, the TV series successfully adhered to the original flavor of the novel, with the dialogue retaining, for the most part, the essence of Rizal's message.

It would take another four years before another work on Rizal would

appear. This is the Ateneo de Manila University-Bookmark production of *Jose Rizal - Ang Buhay ng Isang Bayani*, which was released in 1996 in video format, in commemoration of the centenary of Rizal's death.

Directed by Butch Nolasco from Jose Bernard Capino's script, the film chronicles the life and times of Rizal, starting from his birth in Calamba in 1861 to his execution in Bagumbayan in 1896. The film makes extensive use of narration, recreation, and other documentary techniques to show the highlights of Rizal's life. What is truly admirable in the P2.6 million production is its attempt to define Rizal's greatness in layman's terms, with the help of the originals of his books, letters, and memoirs that have been preserved in various archives, including those at the National Library and the Ateneo University.

The film presents a concise, yet fully rounded man (played by Pen Medina) in all facets of his character—son, student, artist and writer, and hero—as culled from his writings, a voluminous body of works including his published diary, *Memorias de Un Estudiante de Manila* and his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* as well as letters exchanged between him and his family, relatives and friends. What emerged are a fairly well-documented portrait of Rizal and his milieu and the gallery of characters with whom he came in contact in his relatively brief but productive life.

The narrator (Joonee Gamboa) does well in his task of tying up the otherwise episodic mode of storytelling. Equally laudable are the actors who help in fleshing out the Rizal personae such as Connie Lauigan-

Chua (Teodora Alonzo), Ernie Cloma (Francisco Mercado) and Wylie Casero (Paciano Rizal). The film makes a heroic effort at chronicling Rizal's journey mainly through the superimposition of an old man in the New World, Europe, and the United States, where he sought greater wisdom and worked for freedom from colonial bondage. There are segments in the film that pay valuable attention to the role of his friends and patrons who helped him, such as Ferdinand Blumentritt, an Austrian friend and benefactor who helped him publish his novels.

This film is clearly a highly informed treatise on Rizal the man, the process of his maturity, and the real source of his greatness as a human being and as a Filipino. Through the collage of well-chosen events in his life, and a well-documented research that allows a peek into the mind of the man who towers above his contemporaries, the viewer is ultimately given a truly sympathetic and truthful portrait of the hero.

The second film project that attempted to delve into Rizal's character is Tikoy Aguiluz's *Rizal sa Dapitan*, which was released in 1997 by Mov-Pix International Pictures. Reportedly made a budget of P5 million, the film wisely limits the material to the hero's exile in Dapitan, the idyllic town in the north of Mindanao where Rizal lived for almost four years. This is the world circumscribed by his exile, with Rizal as a virtual prisoner of the colonial government. Heroically, Rizal transcends this idyllic paradise which was conceived as a vast prison cell.

Rizal, convincingly played by Albert Martinez, is captured in his many-faceted persona. He is a civic-minded educator who transforms the townsfolk, particularly the young men who become his wards. His diverse talents — in engineering, agriculture and other sciences — are also portrayed in the film. Most of all, the audience learns of Rizal's virtuous character, his great tenacity, and his strong family bonds through well-chosen episodes in his life as an exile. The synthesis of his humanity is at the crux of the film, and made all the more convincing through its careful recreation of the period and the assembly of actors.


What the film shed light on are Rizal's strong ties with his family. That brief reunion with his mother and sisters who came to visit

him and help him out in his chores is particularly instructive. Equally insightful is the attempt to dramatize his relationship with Josephine Bracken, who was smitten with the hero's charms, and decided to come back to become his wife. As his affection for her deepened, he became a loyal husband to her, notwithstanding the negative reactions caused by the priest's (a certain Fr. Obach) disapproval of their marriage.

If the film should be faulted, it is in the choice of some actors such as Amanda Page who, as Josephine Bracken, is clearly of an Oriental mold. It is also glaring that the film is sadly lacking in logistics, evident in its failure to visualize specific places or sites being discussed by the characters. If

nothing has been spared for the sake of historical authenticity. Also laudable is Rody Lacap's cinematography, an achievement which is no mean feat, considering the perils and difficulties of capturing the atmosphere of a bygone era through extensive camera work and the use of mood lighting that evokes the feeling and mood of particular characters and scenes.

The film, as written by a trio of screenwriters, Ricky Lee, Jun Lana and Peter Ong Lim, aspires to greatness in its scope and magnitude, but sadly falls flat in its attempt to recreate the hero's life and times, an over-long process that somehow does not work in its vaunted attempt as a filmed biopic. Among the foremost critics of the film are

Jose Rizal-Ang *Buhay ng Isang Bayani* is clearly a highly-informed treatise on Rizal the man, the process of his maturity, and the real source of his greatness as a human being and as a Filipino. 

shown at all, these places are presented in tight shots that somehow limit and impede our better appreciation of the environment. However, the claustrophobic setting that Dapitan rightly conjures appropriately symbolizes perhaps the hero's slowly shrinking world.

Which finally brings us to the third film, *Jose Rizal*, produced by GMA Films, and released in time for the centennial anniversary of the country's independence in 1998. The film directed by Mariou Diaz-Abaya was originally assigned to Mike de Leon, who quit soon after the project was plagued by delays and production setbacks. Made at P80 million, with additional funding from the National Centennial Commission, the project is the most expensive Filipino film in memory, and also ranks as among the most controversial. Critics were divided in their opinion, with reception being almost equally divided between adulation and censure.

Those who have praised the film have pointed out its technical achievement. For example, the film is exemplary in its meticulous attention to detail, proof positive that

noted historians and Rizal scholars who detest the trivialization of Rizal's political ideas and beliefs, particularly about the Revolution.

Lacking a clear focus, the film goes to great lengths in creating Rizal's life and times. But a number of critics have pointed out that specific scenes in the film pass off as factual issues which are still highly debatable — such an issue is Rizal's retraction, which is shown as having been resolved with the close up of the rosary he carries to Bagumbayan.

Likewise rendered as historically inaccurate are certain scenes from the film. For instance, the film insists that the Mercado family lived in Tondo, when in reality they lived in Binondo. Then there is that fatal scene showing Maria Clara jumping to her death from the church's tower, and many more.

Even more glaring is the film's mortal error in failing to show Rizal as a product of the times and of the spirit of liberalism that helped usher in the political ideas from Europe. Perhaps the films could have cap-

tured in one telling sequence through a voice-over narration the lasting influence on Rizal's political life of these ideas that radically altered the mode of thinking of Rizal's politically mature generation.

The acting, similarly, is saddled with heroics from the large assembly of performers who did not have the vaguest idea of the characters they were playing. Cesar Montano, as Rizal, may have indeed made a valiant effort to imbibe the character in speech and dress but these do not add up to our understanding of the character. This becomes even more apparent in the overlong trial sequence, where he tries to speak Spanish but to no avail. Also ineffectual is Gloria Diaz as Teodora Alonzo, one of the most articulate women of her time, who is made to look and behave like a peasant, as she pleads with the Governor General to spare her son from death. The manner in which Doña Teodora humbled herself before the Governor General was, scholars believe, not in keeping with her character.

There are graver problems for a film that aspired to cover everything that amounts to anything of consequence in Rizal's life, yet regrettably omits the salient aspects of his story, such as his friendship with Blumentritt. That scene too with Andres Bonifacio -- with the latter voicing his admiration for him -- strains credulity. It was most unlikely that the two actually met in person before the Revolution.

Finally, the greatest blunder of **Jose Rizal** the movie is its failure to elevate Rizal as a world-class figure, a Filipino who rose above his fellowmen and lived and died according to his political dogmas. Instead of showing us Rizal -- the man, the artist, the hero -- in all his humanity and greatness, the film leaves us nothing but the portrait of a man doomed twice-- first by his malefactors in history and later by a film that finally obliterates itself by the sheer depravity of its unfulfilled heroics.

A decidedly different film on Rizal that came and went in 1998, almost unnoticed, save for the few reviewers and critics who took due notice of it, is Mario O'Hara's **Sisa**. Produced by Regal Films at a rather meager budget of less than P3 million, together with other low-budgeted "pito-pito" films by Lily Monteverde's company, **Sisa** posits a highly



Edlie Romero's video adaptation of Rizal's **Noli Me Tangere** (1992)

Jose Rizal needs a more glorious resurrection in Philippine cinema than all the sorrowful mysteries conjured in his name.

original, if altogether incongruous, premise on the hero. O'Hara, as the film's writer-director, claims that Rizal had, in fact, sired a son by Sisa, who is depicted here as being not merely a fictional character from his novel, **Noli Me Tangere**, but indeed his lover, wife and soulmate. The child of their supposed union is the boy Basilio, who also happens to be a character in his novel.

While O'Hara goes to great lengths postulating his unlikely premise, Sisa (played by the bold star Aya Medel) is shown not as the symbol of the battered Filipina wife and mother but as Rizal's object of affection in a liaison during the last years of his life. She is, in O'Hara's wild imagination, both lover and temptress, a woman who even after her death revisits Rizal in his lonely prison cell to provide him company and cheer. The two are shown in lively banter and coupling, a fact which may indeed be far-fetched and remotely possible, but remains at the crux of the filmmaker's totally fanciful imagination.

As necessitated by a film of this nature and logistics, O'Hara makes a heavy use of the element of magic realism, allowing his fancy to take over where fact is sorely missing. Thus, we see Sisa in person (though she, for the most part, appears as a spirit)

dancing animatedly, gambling, or simply materializing out of nowhere. While one is inclined to give the film the benefit of artistic license, considering the director's altogether strange hypothesis, there is little room for dramaturgic conviction, let alone, verisimilitude. And need the performer who impersonates Sisa be as hollow, whimsical and one-dimensional as shown on screen? Need Gardo Versoza (who plays Rizal, after botching his Bonifacio in cameo role for Diaz-Abaya's film) be as emotionally and intellectually vapid as depicted on screen? Should O'Hara be totally and crassly irreverent in his posturing, simply being ludicrous in his portrayal of this tragic heroine from the **Noli**? It's a damning premise which does not do justice to the woman nor to the man, falling as it does within the realm of wild speculation.

Jose Rizal needs a more glorious resurrection in Philippine cinema than all the sorrowful mysteries conjured in his name.



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Philippine Cinema in 1998

An Industry Report

By LENA STRAIT PAREJA

SA PAGSISIMULA NG TAONG 1998, nakipag-ugnayan ang malalaking kompanyang tulad ng Regal, Viva, Octoarts at Star Cinema sa mga maliit na independent na produksyon tulad ng R.S. Films, Available Light Productions, Tikbalang Productions, GMA at Filmex para matugunan ang mga mahigpit na pangangailangan ng kanilang mga pelikulang gagawin – sa gitna ng krisis na sumasalanta sa mga ekonomiya ng Asia. Malaki ang natipid sa badyet ng Good Harvest Productions, ang isang sangay ng Regal Entertainment, nang idaos nito ang 10-araw na festival noong Oktubre 1998 para ipakilala ang kanilang mga maliitang-badyet na pelikulang "pito-pito" na nilikha ng mga bagong direktor mula sa mga pamantasan at ilang mga beteranong direktor. Ang unang eksibisyon ng pelikulang Pilipino sa Guam at Hongkong bilang estratehiya sa pagpapalawak ng market ng industriyang lokal ay naging matagumpay, kung kaya't maaring maging regular na ang pagpapalabas ng mga pelikulang Pilipino sa mga lugar na ito. Napansin din naman ang mga pelikulang lokal sa Berlin, Toronto, New York, Singapore, Pukuoka, Tokyo at iba pang siyudad na pinagdausan ng mga film festival. Nagdala ng sigla sa industriya ang eleksyon ng aktor/prodyuser na si Joseph Ejercito Estrada bilang pangulo ng Republika ng Pilipinas, lalo na nang itakda niya bilang tagapangulo ng Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) ang isang aktor-prodyuser din na liberal at nang ipangako ng Pangulo na gagawa siya ng hakbang upang mapagaan ang napakabigat na mga buwis na nakapataw sa industriya ngayon. Walang pasubaling maisusulong ng mga artistang Pilipino, na malpapantay sa pinakamagagaling sa mundo, ang lalo pang pag-unlad ng industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino sa susunod na milenyo ng pagbabagong panlipunan.

Every year has its ups and downs, its major tragedies and minor triumphs, its irrelevant bickerings and moments of truth. But 1998 was a year like no other in Philippine cinema. It started auspiciously enough with a return to the tried-and-true formula of good guy versus bad men when *Pagbabalik ng Probinsiyano* opened on January 4. The film did well at the tills but it would be FPJ Productions' only movie production for the entire year. A bigger role awaited Ferrando Poe, Jr. come May when his campaign for a new Philippine president would end with the election of his bosom friend, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, to the highest post in the land.

Only a month before, movie industry stalwarts were apprehensively vocal about the alarming situation in Philippine movies. Pointing to the results of past years' Metro Manila Film Festivals (MMFF), 1997 was turning out to be the worst year in Philippine cinema history; MMFF grossed 20 percent lower in 1997 than the earnings in



Film actor Joseph Ejercito Estrada is sworn in by Chief Justice Andres Narvasa as 13th President of the Republic of the Philippines on 30 June 1998, at historic Barasoain Church, Malolos, Bulacan. Bosom buddy and action star Ferrando Poe, Jr. looks over Estrada's shoulder.

1996 which was also 20 percent lower than 1995 receipts. The poor showing of local movies had prompted theater owners to reverse their 1996 ratio of booking films. Instead of giving local movies a 60 percent ratio over 40 percent foreign, it was now the other way round: 70 percent foreign films to 30 percent local movies.

When Star Cinema's *Ang Lalaki sa Buhay ni Selya* and Regal Entertainment's *Ikaw Pa Rin Ang Ibigin* opened at the same time in February during the second week of showing of Hollywood's cascading superblockbuster, *Titanic*, studio film executives awaited the results with bated breath. Only after it became evident that the Rosanna Roces starrer and Charito Solis' last movie could hold their own above the waters did everyone breathe a collective sigh of relief. It would have been to their advantage had they secured playdates that did

not pit one high-budget film against the other. But neither Regal nor Star Cinema had any choice on the matter because playdates were very tight. Theater owners called the shots because a major Hollywood movie was always in the offing every week, and for a much cheaper price than a local film.

Ikaw Pa Rin Ang Ibigin was Charito Solis' farewell performance. The best actress of Asia in the 1960's (*Dahil sa Iyang Buokokok*) who played Gautama Buddha's wife in a Japanese international production, Charito was still the busiest film and television star of the 1990s. Notwithstanding her Hall of Fame Award as a five-time FAMAS best actress, she accepted any role however small the part for as long as it was significant. She shuttled from location shooting to teletube tapings and had barely finished the Regal movie when she suffered a stroke and died of cardiac arrest on January 9, 1998 at the age of 62.

Death also claimed several other well-known actors and a film director in 1998: Pancho Magalona on April 7, Leopoldo Salcedo on June 10, Georgie Quizon on August 8, Pablo Santiago on August 16, and Anthony Alonzo on October 15.

Magalona was the teenagers' heartthrob of the 1950's who married Sampaguita Pictures star, Tita Duran, and earned laurels as a multiawarded international film actor. Debonair, dignified, and ever the smiling gentleman, Pancho Magalona set new standards of professionalism in his career as an actor. He was 76 when he succumbed after more than a year of confinement at the Lung Center.

Salcedo was known as "The Great Profile" of Philippine movies. He was a top star of the prewar era and one of the most sought-after actors of the succeeding decades up to the 1990s. He was already 81 years old when he played the role of a father who encouraged his revolucionario son to continue with the struggle in Raymond Red's historical film, *Sakay*. He was 86.

Georgie Quizon, a comedian, was the youngest brother of the acknowledged "King of Comedy" (Dolphy). Anthony Alonzo was a popular action star who later joined politics and was elected Quezon City councilor. Director Pablo Santiago made most of the films of Fernando Poe, Jr. and some films of Joseph Estrada including *Digmaon ng mga Angkan*.

The local movie industry is not moribund, sick, or dying, said "Mother" Lily Monteverde as she sought to belie the claims of others who would sound the death knell of Philippine movies.

When veteran actor-comedian Dolphy (Rodolfo V. Quizon) complained of severe chest pains and was rushed to the Makati Medical Center on July 29, four days after his 70th birthday, many people feared that he would not make it. But he emerged a new man after going under the knife for a double heart bypass and was soon exchanging Erap jokes from his sickbed with the new Philippine president, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, who paid him a personal visit. Six months later he showed up at the Cultural Center of the Philippines to receive his CCP Centennial award with lovely wife Zsa Zsa Padilla by his side.

The local movie industry is not moribund, sick, or dying, said "Mother" Lily Monteverde as she sought to belie the claim of others who would sound the death knell of Philippine movies. To make good her word, Regal Entertainment joined up with

R.S. Productions to produce *Kahit Pader Babanggain Ko* for a March release, teaming up Phillip Salvador and Rosanna Roces for the very first time. When it merely rang down the box-office tills despite stiff competition from Hollywood films, Mother Lily announced loud and clear: "It's not a dead industry. It's survival of the fittest. It's a game where good films will survive."

The year 1998's total output of 145 new films is 54 films less than the previous year's 199 record. On the overall, the output of Regal Films, MAQ, and Good Harvest (combined total: 35 films) was still the one to beat. At the head of the pack was Chito Rono's *Curacha, Ang Baboeng Walang Pahlaga*, whose shock waves caused titanic tremors all the way from Mowelfund's *Kasaysayan* at Pelikula in February to Jess Sison's Centennial Film Celebration in June and the Toronto Film Festival in Canada in September 1998.

At first, *Curacha* seemed headed for oblivion when Sison's MTRCB gave it an X-rating because of Rosanna Roces' "daring" scenes, but the Malacanang Appeals Committee reversed the decision and allowed the film to be shown uncensored. Set against the backdrop of the aborted coup d'etat against President Cory Aquino's government in 1989, the film drew vivid parallels between Rosanna's personal life as a "torera" (live sex performer) and the turmoil of the times.

Regal's two other films starring Rosanna Roces were heavy in star power, with leading men Phillip Salvador in *"Kahit Pader Gigibain Ko"* and Richard Gomez in *Babae sa Binata*. It was Gomez's first film after tying the knot with commercial model Lucy Torres of Ormoc in the "Wedding of the Year," which some reporters had also called a "blockbuster."

To offset negative criticism of her "pito-pito" movies whose quality, according to some, was greatly undermined by her shoestring budgets, Mother Lily directed supervising producer Joey Goslingfiao to mount a Good Harvest Film Festival at a Megamall Cinema in October. The Festival featured 10 new films by outstanding but inactive veteran directors and their new generation counterparts. The impressive list included Mario O' Hara, Behn Cervantes, Jeffrey Jeturian, Lav Diaz, Cris Michelena, Ces Evangelista, Junn Cabreira, Jimmy Ko, and Jose Johnny Cruz.

Behn Cervantes, who had not made a film in two decades, opened the festival with his social realist *Masikip, Masakit, Mahapdi*, an anthology based on three one-act plays by Alberto Florentino: "The World Is an Apple," "Cavort With Angels," and "Cadaver." His low budget for talent fees did not prevent Cervantes from assembling a magnificent cast composed of Jaclyn Jose, Joel Torre, Julio Diaz, Rita Magdalena, Hazel Espinosa, Rita Avila, Daniel Fernando and Alan Paule. But having to finish the movie in 10 shooting days was an excruciating experience.

The festival premiered two new films from Mario O'Hara, who had not been heard from also, despite previous successes in scripting and directing during the times of Brocka and Bernal. *Sisa*, his closing film, was met with mixed reactions. It was no more the story of Sisa, the madwoman in *Noli Me Tangere*, than an account of the final week of 1896 that led to the execution of Jose Rizal. But the other film, *Ang Babae sa Bubungang Lata*, was well received critically and commercially, with Aya Medel, hailed as the new sex symbol to challenge Rosanna Roces' reign in local filmdom. In the words of a film reviewer, Lito B. Zulueta, not only did this film "manage to achieve something close to a classic cinema" but it also helped to "point the way to the deliverance of Filipino cinema." (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 10/11/98) It was the highest grosser of the festival.

The other discovery of Good Harvest was new filmmaker Lav Diaz whose movie, *Serafin Geronimo: Ang Kriminal ng Baryo Concepcion*, was based on a winning script which he also wrote and submitted as an entry in the annual scriptwriting contest sponsored by the Film Development Foundation of the Philippines. It was chosen by Festival Programmer David Overbey as a Philippine entry in the 1999 Toronto In-



Raymond Bagatsing and Richard Joson in Lav Diaz's *Serafin Geronimo: Kriminal ng Baryo Concepcion*.

ternational Film Festival. Overbey's sudden death in late December 1998 did not prevent Toronto's festival organizers from honoring his decision to showcase this film internationally.

Easily the critic's favorite at the festival was the Nida Blanca movie, *Sana Pag-ibig Na*, by Jeffrey Jeturian, also a new filmmaker, whose unique approach to a domestic tragedy broke new grounds in filmmaking. Sadly, it was lost on the film audience who shied away from the movie exhibition. When the opening day intake failed to reach the required quota set by the theater owners, supervising Regal producer Joey Gosiengfiao asked Director Jeturian what they should do about the film's "first day, last day" predicament. The new filmmaker, who had to augment budget costs from his own pocket replied, "Well, I may just have to 'eat' my good reviews in the meantime."

If Regal's focus was on local exhibition, Viva Films' strategy was the opposite. Instead

of cutting down on the budget, the thrust was on market expansion. The Viva/Neo/Falcon Films combined accounted for a total output of 21 pictures in 1998, some of which are now regularly shown in Guam and other places where there is a heavy concentration of Filipino workers and expatriates.

Viva Entertainment's Vic del Rosario had passed on bigger responsibilities to his children Veronique and Vincent, who have taken charge of Viva Television and Viva Films (together with its subsidiaries, Neo and Falcon), respectively. As executive producer of Viva Films, Vincent is naturally cautious about alarming budgetary constraints. The currency crisis of 1997 had compounded problems in movie production, shifting from bad to worse. Before the peso depreciation, a big-budget movie cost between P15 million to P20 million, a medium-budget movie between P5 million to P8 million, and a low-budget movie from P2 million to P3 million. After depreciation, the only budget that their executive producers could realistically consider was P12 million, including promotion. Anything lower or higher was either out of the question or too risky.

To even up the playing field, Viva executives set out to forge uneasy alliances with other big names in the industry who were also grappling with mounting costs of production and diminishing returns at the box-office. Setting aside one-third of their programming schedule (21 films) for 1998, they tried to predict what the coming-of-age Filipino audiences would want to see in their local movie fare.

Quality, not quantity, was the overriding concern of GMA Films executives Butch Jimenez and Jimmy Duavit when they channeled a major hunk of their film budget into the making of only one picture, Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Jose Rizal*.

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Co-production contracts were drawn up between Viva and not-so-strange bedfellows as Peque Gallaga's Tikbalang Productions (*Dama de Noche* and *Gangland*), Eric Quizon's Kaizz Ventures (*Pusong Maman*), Joey Javier Reyes' Available Light Productions (*Dahil Ba Sa Kaniya?* and *Pagnanasa*), RNB Films (*Balesubas*), J I R Productions (*Strobel, Gestapo ng Maynila*), and FLT Productions (*Talak ng Bibig, Kabig ng Dibdib*).

The efforts to show their films regularly in Guam have paid off handsomely for Viva. After successfully screening the Bong Revilla-Charlene Gonzales starrer, *Ben Delubyo*, to a full house at the 3-month old Guam Megaplex in Tuman, Viva followed it up with an action-drama, *Balesubas*, starring Ace Espinosa and Pia Pilapil. Next came the romantic melodrama, *Dahil Ba Sa Kaniya?* starring Aga Muhlach and Mikee Cojuangco. This was the first time RP movies were shown regularly in Guam.

The four action kings who lorded over Viva and Neo in 1998 were Cesar Montano in two films, *Kasangga* and *Warfreak*; Bong Revilla in *Ben Delubyo*; Rudy Fernandez in *Ginto't Pilak*; and Robin Padilla, although his *Talak ng Bibig, Kabig ng Dibdib* with Maricel Soriano was more comedy than action. Joko Diaz and John Regala in *Squalo* proved they could be pretenders to the throne in the next generation of action kings.

Curiously, Viva Films had no entry in the 24th Metro Manila Film Festival which opened on December 25, 1998.

The third in most number of films made in 1998 was Star Cinema with 18 pictures. Of

this number, only one was a co-production, Carlos Sigalon-Reyna's *Ang Lalaki sa Bahay ni Selya*. The investment paid off handsomely for Star Pacific Cinema when *Selya* returned from the 1998 Berlin International Film Festival with a Teddy Special Jury Award and a string of offers to show in other international film festivals.

An experiment that paid off well was the premiere showing in Hongkong of *April, May, June* before it opened in Manila. Agot Isidro, Chin Chin Gutierrez and Alma Concepcion did not make it to Hongkong but one of their leading men, Robin de Roza, attended the screenings.

Star Cinema producers Malkou Santos and Eric Cuatico banked heavily on serious dramatic fare with Lualhati Bautista's *Bata Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?* directed by Chito Roño and starring Lipsa City Mayor Vilma Santos. But they also gave way to youth oriented films like Rory Quintos' *Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay*, which reunited the Judy Ann Santos - Rico Yan love team. In the action field, the important film of the year was Rudy Fernandez's *Birador*, directed by Edgardo Vinarao.

Quality, not quantity, was the overriding concern of GMA Films executives Butch Jimenez and Jimmy Duavit when they channeled a major hunk of their film budget into the making of only one picture, Marlou Diaz-Albaya's *Jose Rizal*.

In his review, Pablo A. Tariman hailed the movie as "a Filipino film for all seasons." (*Philippine Star*, 7/1/98). Another writer described it as "a movie that was taking almost forever to finish." Nestor U. Torre's comment that some

viewers at the premiere showing found the film "difficult to follow" was shared by others who nevertheless agreed that it was "definitely an important film and an emphatic human viewing experience that succeeded in making the beloved hero live again." (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 7/3/98)

When it opened to Filipino audiences at the 24th Metro Manila Film Festival in December, there was no doubt that *Jose Rizal* would romp off with both critical acclaim and box-office success. But it was equally evident that its huge cost of production (reportedly P70 million) could not be recouped by domestic exhibition alone and GMA must pin its stakes on world distribution.

GMA Films had started its 9-picture output for 1998 with Jun Urbano's *My Guardian Debil*, a low-budget satirical comedy which also had modest returns. (As they candidly put it, "It only made so-so money.") This was followed by Marlou Diaz-Albaya's *Sa Pusod ng Dagat*, which had a world premiere in Berlin and an official press conference, a rare honor accorded a Filipino film at any international film festival. After seeing *Sa Pusod ng Dagat* in Berlin the director of the Lincoln Film Center, Richard Peña, wrote to GMA producers Butch Jimenez and Jimmy Duavit, inviting their film to grace the 1998 Philippine Centennial Celebration in New York City as the opening film at the Lincoln Center.

Sa Pusod ng Dagat did not fare well at the local tills when it opened at Manila theaters in June but GMA pinned its hopes of ROI on foreign film buyers. Among the interested parties were international film distributors who wanted to show it in Switzerland, Canada, Singapore, and some parts of the United States and Europe.

In between high and low budgets for experimental and exceptional films, GMA struck a balance with medium but "safe" budgets for Orly Ilacad's octuarts for the rest of its six films in 1998.

Octuarts/GMA's first two releases in January were a Michael V. comedy *Anting-Anting*, and an Ian Veneracion action flick, *Guevarra sa Batas Ko...Walang Hari*. But not even the obvious popularity of the song, *Sinaktan Mo ang Puso Ko* could save Michael V's career when a film version came out in April. As a result, production for the rest of the year focused on anti-heroic, youth-oriented action films: *May Sayad* (Ronnie Ricketts), *Marahas*, *Walang Kilalang Batas* (Raymart Santiago) and *Armadang Huday* (Ian Veneracion).



Newcomers Angel Aquino and Gerald Madrid in Jeffrey Jeturian's *Sana Pagi-ibig Na*.

The three film outfits that made four pictures each this year were Robbie Tan's Seiko Films and two independent companies, Taurus Productions and Shangten Films.

Seiko's problems with erstwhile exclusive contract star Rosanna Roces affected Robbie Tan's programming although the film company produced the same number of films as the year before. Its claim to fame as producer of bold films was challenged by Taurus Productions, whose headliner was Ynez Veneracion. But Taurus stopped making pictures in the middle of the year when Ynez figured prominently in a controversial tussle with media reporters over some shad-aw hotel tryst.

All four pictures of Shangten Films were also sex-oriented and megged by only one director, Cesar Sb. Abella.

The producers who made only two pictures each were Starlight Films, Rainbow Films, Skorpion International, Filmmakers' Workshop, GP Films, and Amartz Films.

Premiere Entertainment's three pictures for this year were all megged by veteran directors. Augusto Salvador's *Kid Manalo*, *Akin Ang Ulo Mo* was an action film, Ben Yalung's *Ama Namin*, a searing drama on family life, and Romy Suzara's *Canino Brutal* a sex-oriented film starring the sex goddess herself, Rosanna Roces.

Among the 30-odd producers who each made only one film in 1998 were several majors like FPJ Productions (*Pagbabalik ng Probinsyano*), Reyna Films (*Tatlo... Magkasala*), RVQ Productions (*Tatay Nic*), Crown Seven Ventures (*Kasal-Kasalan*), and Merdeka Films (*Karinyosa*).

Gay films took center stage this year, beginning with the much talked-about *Ang Lalake sa Buhay ni Selya* which won the Special Jury Award at the Teddys, a side competition for films with gay themes at the Berlin International Film Festival. *Pusong Mamon*, a film by Joel Lamangan and Eric Quizon where Eric plays a flamboyant chef, also impressed David Overbey who invited it to Toronto as a 1999 entry. *Miguel/Michelle*, the film about a balikbayan transvestite portrayed by Romnick Sarmenta, was so poignant in handling delicate family matters, Gina Alajar's portrayal of a lesbian in *Tatlo... Magkasala*, Efen Reyes' lonely hearts club character in *Babae sa Bintana*, and Alan Paule's closet gay depiction in *Selya* are all stand-outs in this year's line-up of unforgettable celluloid personalities.

Local movies' favorite "bad boy" Robin Padilla was released from incarceration into the custody of the Quezon City Probation and Pardon Office where he will report twice a month in keeping with the conditions set forth under the Conditional Pardon granted to him by President Ramos.


It was a year of reconciliations. Robin's friend and 1993 Miss World second runner-up title holder, Ruffa Gutierrez, personally went to Manila City Hall to say "I'm sorry" to Mayor Lito Atienza, for her involvement in the Manila Filmfest scam of 1994. Five years after it happened, the Mayor said it was now time to forgive and forget. "Ruffa has suffered so much the past years," he told an ABS-CBN news team, indicating that he would ask the city council to lift the ban on the movie star's movies and shows in the city.

More than just a mere brush with the law was actress Sandy Andolong's harrowing experience when airport policemen detected a low-caliber gun inside her handbag just as she was about to board a Northwest flight to Los Angeles together with her husband, multi-

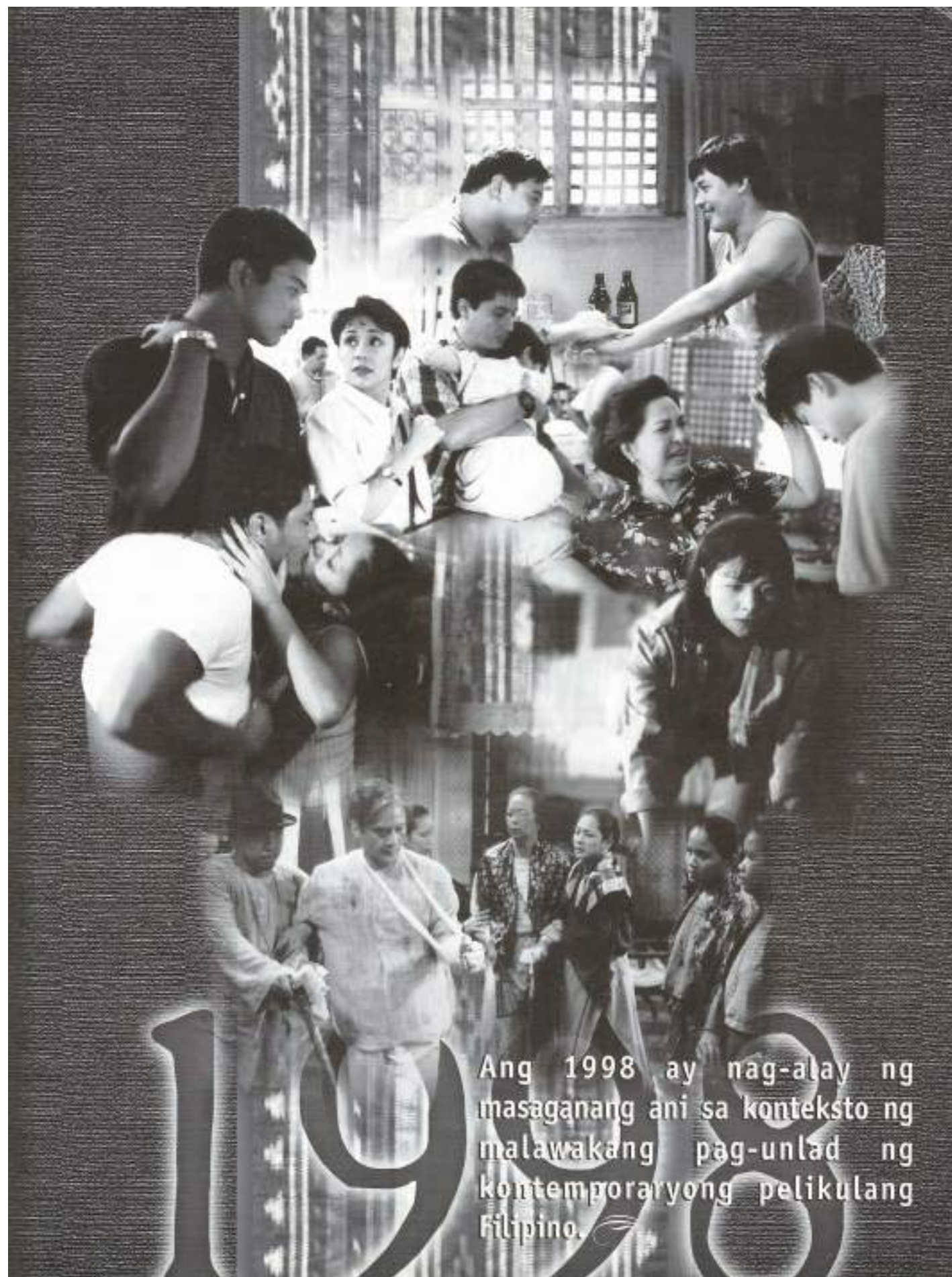
President Joseph Ejercito Estrada vowed to help the movie industry by reviving the Film Ratings Board and spearheading a move to convert the multimillion peso amusement tax collection into a fund for the development of the local industry.

awarded top actor Christopher de Leon. Despite her claims that it was a housemaid who accidentally put it there, Sandy was charged with illegal carrying of firearms by the State Prosecutor and she had to wait several months for her day in court before she could be set free to travel abroad again. The much-awaited Film Development Incentives Bill was approved on Third Reading by the House of Representatives but it hit a snag when the Senate failed to pass it before the Tenth Congress adjourned. After the elections, the Eleventh Congress convened in July and the bill was re-filed in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

In his speech at the Metro Manila Film Festival "Gabi ng Parangal" in December 1998, President Joseph Ejercito Estrada vowed to help the movie industry by reviving the Film Ratings Board and spearheading a move to convert the multimillion peso amusement tax collection into a fund for the development of the local movie industry.

The year that had begun with a burden of anxiety for the local film industry finally came full circle with the promise of hope. Filipino movies will prevail, thanks to the indomitable spirit that compelled movie producers to defy the odds, and thanks to the ingenious filmmakers whose dogged determination to create miracles belie the limited resources with which they have to cope. Faith in the Filipino talent, which is comparable to the best in the world, and a little help from the government, will see Philippine movies through the next millennium of social change. 

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Ang 1998 ay nag-alay ng masaganang ani sa konteksto ng malawakang pag-unlad ng kontemporaryong pelikulang Filipino.

THE YEAR 1998 was a banner year in Philippine cinema. After a dearth of quality productions in the previous year (with the exception of one or two films of note), Philippine cinema witnessed a wide and far-ranging output in 1998 from big studio and quasi-independent units. An analysis of these films reveals certain patterns. First, the dominance of artists produced by film schools becomes more pronounced. Second, richer filmic innovations are introduced by artists. Third, the entry of talented actors into the movie scene provides an impetus that destabilizes the dominant star system. And lastly, the growing role of film criticism is becoming ensured. As a result of these developments, the reinternationalization of Philippine cinema in the post Brocca era is once more poised. If there is something to be learned from the 1998 film output, it is the need for study and visioning—complexifying, rather than simplifying, films in the kind of historical and social predicament they implicate.

Agos sa Pinilakang Disyerto:

Ilang Piling Pelikula ng 1998

Ni ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO

Kung ang mga produksyon ng 1998 ang pagbabatayan, maaring sabihin na nakamarka sa taong ito ang kasalukuyang direksyon ng pelikulang Filipino. May mga pelikulang tumatalakay sa malawakan at subkultural na isyu hinggil sa pamilya, komunidad at bansa. May mga pelikulang piniling gumawa ng mga inobasyon sa estilong teknikal.

Taon ito ng malakihan at quasi-independent na mga produksyon. Lumabas ang **Jose Rizal** at **Bata, Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?**, mga mahalagang pelikulang may layuning panlipunan—ang interogasyon ng historikal at modernong pamilya at ng pagasabansa. Lumabas din mula sa isang malaking istudyo ang **Sa Pusod ng Dagat** na ang estilo'y mala-fictional art film, na may sariling realidad na figuratibo at unibersal-humanistiko; at ang **Curecha**, isang sumeal na paglalarawan ng pulitikal at seksual na kaguluhan sa likod ng kudeta ng 1987. Batay sa mga pelikulang ito, natampok ang GMA Films at Star Cinema hindi lamang sa kanilang kinita sa takilya kundi sa kasinangan din ng kanilang pelikula. Hinatak ng **Jose Rizal**, ang pinakamahal na produksyong pampelikula (P80 milyon ang tantya), ang pinakamalaking kita na tinatayang umaabot sa P100 milyon.

Mula Regal Entertainment, ang Good Harvest Productions ay nagsimula ng mga inobasyon na dulot ng sistemang pito-pito, mga madaliang pelikula na malit ang badyet. Namumukod-tangi sa kanilang ginawa ang **Serafin Geronimo, Kriminal ng Baryo Concepcion**, isang makataong paglalarawan sa kondisyon ng buhay ng isang anti-hero, at ang **Sana Pag-Ibig Na**, isang melodramang pampamilya ukol sa pagtataksil at pagbabalik-loob. Dalawang pelikula naman ni Mario O'Hara ang nakilala sa taong ito, na naka-iggaw sa mga limitasyong dulot ng malit na

badyet. Ang **Sina** ay isang inobathong paglalahad ng seks sa buhay ni Rizal. May matalas na sinasabi ito hinggil sa pagiging isang konstruksyon lamang ng kasaysayan. Makikita ito sa huling eksenang gumamit ng montage editing. Sa paggamit ng mabilisang pagpapalit-palit ng mga imahen mula sa mga larawang historikal, inihayag ng pelikula ang pagiging fiksyonal ng kasaysayan. Ang editing ay nagwakas sa larawan ng mora-mora. Matalas namang nagsisiwalat ang **Ang Babae sa Bubungong Lata** ng kondisyon ng mga nasa mababang antas ng showbiz na kailangang tumira sa loob ng mga musolco o pagitan ng mga puntod sa Cementerio del Norte.

Mula sa Viva Films lumabas ang dalawang pelikulang tumatalakay sa subkulturalang nagigiit ng kanilang identidad sa lipunan, inilarawan ng **Pusong Mamon** ang buhay ng dalawang "yuppieng" bading at ng isang babaeng dahil sa presyur ng lipunan ay nagnais pa ring maging bahagi ng buhay ng dalawang ito. Tinalakay ng **Gangland** ang magulo't komplikadong subkultura ng lumpeng kabataan, ang digmaang nagaganap sa pagitan ng mga grupo nito, at ang paglalarawan ng midya dito. Ang **Babae sa Bintana** ay tungkol sa digmaang panteritoryo ng mga pulls, at ang epekto nito sa buhay at pagmamahalan ng mga tauhan na nakapaloob at nakapaligid dito. Inilarawan naman ang tauhang transekswal sa **Miguel Michelle** at ang klosteng baklang nagpasyang maging tapat na asawa sa isang babae sa **Ang Lalake sa Buhay ni Selye**. Tinangka ring talakayin ng **Nagbibinata**, ang huli sa trilohiya tungkol sa kabataan ni Jose Javier Reyes, ang mga sulfranin at relasyon ng mga binatilyo sa kamilang pamilya, kaibigan at kasintahan.

May ilang mahalagang katangiang makikita sa mga naturang importanteng pelikula ng 1998. Kung ano pa man, ang

1998 ay nag-alay ng masaganang ani sa konteksto ng malawakang pag-unlad ng kontemporaryong pelikulang Filipino. Una, pinagtibay ng mga produksyong pampelikula ang mahalagang papel ng film school. Ang limang malaking produksyong pampelikula ay pinanday di lamang ng mahabang kasaysayan ng pagdidirehe sa pelikula kundi ng pormal na edukasyon sa pelikula ng kanilang mga direktor. Si Marilou Diaz-Abaya (**Rizal** at **Sa Parod ng Dagat**) at Chito Roño (**Bata, Bata, Babae sa Bintana** at **Curacha**) ay paawang produkto ng film school. Si Diaz-Abaya ay gradwey ng Loyola Marymount, samantalang si Roño ay nag-arnal sa New School for Research. Maging si Carlitos Siguion Reyna (**Ang Lalo sa Bahay ni Selya**) ay produkto rin ng programang MFA sa Film Production sa New York University. Ang sinematograpo na si Ariel Reyes (**Serafin Geronimo**) ay nag-arnal sa Moscow. Ang masinop na paggamit ng mga kaalamang teknikal sa pelikula ay mas sistematikong natututuhan sa mga film school. Sa kasalukuyang yugto ng pelikulang Filipino, matataguriang "class issue" pa rin ang pag-aarnal sa film school dahil ang maykaya lamang ang nakapapasok rito, lalo pa't ang mga ito'y nasa labas ng bansa.

Gayumpaman, hindi pa rin lubusang nawawala ang sistemang *apprenticeship* sa pelikula, bagkus lalo pa itong lumalakas at lumalawak. Si Jeffrey Jeturian (**Sana Pag-ibig Na**) ay nanggaling sa telebisyon, samantalang si Lav Diaz (**Serafin Geronimo**) ay mula sa *alternative filmmaking* sa U.S. Nandito pa rin ang mga beteranong artista mula sa iba't ibang henerasyon na patuloy na lumilikha ng pelikula, tulad nina Romy Vitug, Charlie Peralta, Peque Gallaga, Rody Lacap, Jess Navarro, Ramon Reyes, Nonong Buencamino, Jessie Lasaten at Len Santos. Gayundin, marami ang may kaugnayan sa unibersidad, tulad nina Leo Abaya (U.P.) at Diaz-Abaya (Ateneo). Tumitind ang pangangailangan sa pormal na edukasyon upang mapabuti ang mga aspektong teknikal,

artistiko at ideolohikal sa produksyong pampelikula.

Ang ikalawang kapuna-puna sa mga pelikula ng 1998 ay ang mas malawak at makabagong paggamit ng aspektong teknikal. Mas makinis, partikular sa usaping teknikal at artistiko, ang mga pelikula. Sa aking palagay, hindi pa masasabing kalakaran na ang mga pagbabagong ito dahil pasulpot-sulpot pa lamang ang mga inobasyong ito sa ilang mga pelikula. Ang mga halimbawa ng inobasyong teknikal ay ang fast-motion transition editing sa **Babae sa Bintana**, ang sinematograpyang gumagamit ng maraming establishing shots at *natural lighting* sa **Bubungang Lata** at ang *montage editing* sa huling bahagi ng **Sino**.

May dalawang pelikula na gumamit ng kakaibang estilo ng pagkukwento. Pabaligtad ang paglalahad ng istorya ng **Serafin Geronimo**. Nagsimula ang aksyon sa kuwento sa isang rebelasyon—ng taong kumidnap sa bata. Ngunit ang pinakanakaangat sa usapin ng teknikal na inobasyon ay ang **Gangland**. Kakaiba ang naratibo ng pelikulang ito pagkat *full-circle* ang pagbabalik sa unang eksena. Sa aking pakiwari, ito ang unang pelikula na may hayagang pagtatangkang maging postmoderno. Tinatalakay ng pelikula ang eklektisismo ng subkultura ng kabataan, ang estetisasyon ng karahasan, at ang nagbabagong imahen ng siyudad bilang tauhan sa pelikula. Matagumpay na pinaganib ng pelikula ang iba't ibang media format, tulad ng video, 16mm at ang pangunahing midyum nitong 35 mm. Hindi lubusang matagumpay ang pelikula sa ensemble acting, bagama't mahusay ang diyalogo at ang pagganap ni Ryan Eigenmann sa papel ng pangunahing tauhan.

Tulad ng **Gangland**, may dalawa pang pelikula na gumamit din ng inobasyon ng *self-reflexivity* (sa *self-reflexivity*, ang pinapanood na pelikula ay tungkol sa produksyon ng ibang media text.) Tinatalakay ng **Bubungang Lata** ang produksyong pampelikula; sa partikular, pinakikita nito na ang nagaganap sa labas ng

pinilakang-tabing ay nakakaapekto sa nangyari sa loob nito. Tinutukoy naman ng **Sino** ang produksyon ng kasaysayan. May kahalagahan ang *self-reflexivity* dahil kritikal nitong minamarkahan ang mga elemento at bisyon sa pelikula. Sa isang produksyong tinaguriang "seamless", inlalantad ng estilong pampelikula ang masalimuot na proseso sa pagbuo ng produksyong tinutunghayan ng manood. Samakatuwid, kinukwestyon ng *self-reflexivity* maging ang kalakaran sa panood.

Ang ikatlong mahalagang nangyari sa mga produksyong pampelikula ng nakaraang taon ay ang pagpasok ng mga aktor na may natatanging talento. Integral ang maging pagganap ng mga baguhang aktor sa pagpapaligting ng mga tunggalian sa naratibo ng pelikula. Kasama sa mga aktor na ito sina Ryan Eigenmann (**Gangland**), Gerald Madrid at Angel Aquino (**Sana Pag-ibig Na**), Carlo Aquino at Serena Dalrymple (**Bata, Bata**), at Richard Jason (**Serafin Geronimo**). Bagama't maasahan pa rin ang ibang beteranong aktor na tulad nina Jaclyn Jose, Anita Linda, Jaime Fabregas, Nida Blanca at Vilma Santos, nagsisimula nang lumabas ang ilang mga baguhan, na nagbabadya nang higit pang pagsulong ng larangan ng pag-arte sa pelikula. Isang indikasyon ito na higit nang kinikilala sa pelikula ang propesyonalisasyon at ang komitment sa pagpapapataas ng kasinangan sa iba't ibang larangan ng pelikula.

Ang kaapat na dapat pansinin at ang naging papel ng kritisismong pampelikula sa pagsusuri ng mga ginawang produksyon. Naging mahalaga ang papel ng kritiko sa pagkilala ng mga natatanging pelikula sa mga produksyong "pito-pito", ang uri ng produksyon na tinututulan ng lahat ng nagmanais na mapabuti ang pelikula. Kinukursinti ng produksyong pito-pito ang mga taliwas na kalakaran sa pelikula—ang mapanupil na paraan ng produksyon, ang napakaliit na badyet para sa suweldo at produksyon, ang paspasan at di-makataong estilo ng paggawa, ang kawalan ng suporta sa pagbebenta ng pelikula, at ang pagtatali sa pelikula sa hinahingi ng cable company. Piransin ng mga kritiko ang pagtatagumpay at pag-igpaw ng ilang pelikulang pito-pito sa mga opresibong kalakaran ng ganitong uri ng produksyon. Ang pagpansing ito ay may dalawang implikasyon. Una, sa isang banda, ang pagpansin ay maring magdulo sa lalo pang mapanil na kalakaran. Maring isipin ng prodyuser na kaya naman palang gumawa ng masimang na pelikula sa napakaliit na halaga. Sa gayon, magiging mas maigting ang

(Suwelan sa pahina 47)

Ngunit ang pinakaangat sa usapin ng teknikal na inobasyon ay ang **Gangland**. Kakaiba ang naratibo ng pelikulang ito pagkat *full-circle* ang pagbabalik sa unang eksena. Sa aking pakiwari, ito ang unang pelikula na may hayagang pagtatangkang maging postmoderno.

AWARD - WINNING FILMS OF 1998
Compiled by Lena S. Pareja

AWARDS	YOUNG CRITICS CIRCLE 23 February 1999	STAR AWARDS 13 March 1999	GAWAD URBAN 24 March 1999	FAMAS 6 April 1999	FAP 25 April 1999
BEST PICTURE	BATA, BATA PAAAO KA GINAWAY? (Star Cinema)	JOSE RIZAL (GMA Films)	BATA, BATA PAAAO KA GINAWAY? (Star Cinema)	JOSE RIZAL (GMA Films)	BATA, BATA PAAAO KA GINAWAY? (Star Cinema)
BEST DIRECTOR	Chris Roto (Bata, Bata...)	Marlou Diaz-Abaya (Jose Rizal)	Marlou Diaz-Abaya (Jose Rizal)	Marlou Diaz-Abaya (Jose Rizal)	Edgardo Vinzon (Binador)
BEST SCREENPLAY	Ludhri Bautista (Bata, Bata...)	Ricky Lee, Jun Lana and Peter Ong Lim (Jose Rizal)	Ludhri Bautista (Bata, Bata...)	Ricky Lee, Jun Lana and Peter Ong Lim (Jose Rizal)	Ramon Onegilla, Jr. (Binador)
ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY		Jun Lana (Sa Puso ng Dagat)			
ADAPTED SCREENPLAY		Ricky Lee, Jun Lana and Peter Ong Lim (Jose Rizal)			
BEST ORIGINAL STORY				Ludhri Bautista (Bata, Bata...)	
BEST PERFORMANCE	Wina Santos (Bata, Bata...)				
BEST ACTOR		Cesar Montano (Jose Rizal)	Raymond Bagatsing (Sana't Ginawit)	Cesar Montano (Jose Rizal)	Rudy Fernandez (Binador)
BEST ACTRESS		Wina Santos (Bata, Bata...) Nida Blanca (Sana Pagiging Ikaw)	Wina Santos (Bata, Bata...)	Nida Blanca (Sana Pagiging Ikaw)	Wina Santos (Bata, Bata...)
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR		Ricky Lee, Jun Lana Jaime Fabrega (Jose Rizal)	Jaime Fabrega (Jose Rizal)	Ricky Lee, Jun Lana Jaime Fabrega (Jose Rizal)	Carlo Aquino (Bata, Bata...)
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS		Anita Linda (Babal sa Bubungang Lata)	Seena Delymphe (Bata, Bata...)	Anita Linda (Babal sa Bubungang Lata)	Seena Delymphe (Bata, Bata...)
MOVIE CHILD PERFORMER		Carlo Aquino (Bata, Bata...)			
BEST CHILD ACTOR				Carlo Aquino (Bata, Bata...)	
BEST CHILD ACTRESS				Seena Delymphe (Bata, Bata...)	
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY	Ray de Leon (Babal sa Bubungang Lata)	Romy Vito (Sa Puso ng Dagat)	Rody Lacap (Jose Rizal)	Rody Lacap (Jose Rizal)	Junito Perlas (Binador)
BEST EDITING	Roberto Valdebe (Sana Pagiging Ikaw)	Jess Nicasio and Marel Dayot (Jose Rizal)	Danny Garcia (Gangland)	Jess Nicasio and Marel Dayot (Jose Rizal)	Edgardo Vinzon (Binador)
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN		Leo Abaya (Jose Rizal)	Leo Abaya (Jose Rizal)		Manny Morfe (Bata, Bata...)
BEST ART DIRECTION				Leo Abaya (Jose Rizal)	
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS				Raul Bulson (Ang Puso ng Paskil)	
BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS				Rolly Sto. Domingo (Jose Rizal)	
BEST MUSICAL SCORING		Nanong Buenavista (Jose Rizal)	Nanong Buenavista (Jose Rizal)	Nanong Buenavista (Jose Rizal)	Defina Garcia (Pusing Manan)
BEST ORIGINAL THEME SONG		Tofo Santos, music; and Lore Reyes, lyrics (Gangland)		Nanong Buenavista (Jose Rizal)	
BEST SOUND	Albert Michael Idoma (Carmela)	Albert Michael Idoma (Jose Rizal)	Albert Michael Idoma (Jose Rizal)	Joe Cimaco (Sana't Ginawit)	Ramon Reyes (Sa Puso ng Dagat)
NEW MOVIE ACTOR OF THE YEAR		Ryan Eigenmann (Gangland)			
NEW MOVIE ACTRESS OF THE YEAR		Seena Delymphe (Bata, Bata...)			
SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD		Albert Martinez (Rizal Sa Dapitan)			
ULIRANG ARTISTA		Conrado Sanchez			
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD			Mona Lisa		
DARLING OF THE PRESS		Eric Quizon			
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DR. CIRIACO SANTIAGO MEMORIAL AWARD				Marique Wilson	
GERMAN MORENO YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD				John Magdangal	

AWARD *W*INNING FILMS of *1998*



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JOSE *R*IZAL

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BABAE SA BINTANA

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	:	ROSANNA ROCES
	:	JOHN ESTRADA
	:	JOHNNY MANAHAN
	:	EFREN REYES, JR.
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ANG BABAE SA BUBUNGANG LATA

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DIRECTOR	:	MARIO O'HARA	SOUND ENGINEER	:	JOE CLIMACO
WRITER	:	MARIO O'HARA	ACTORS	:	MIKE MAGAT
(Based on Agapito Jozquin's One-Act Play, "Bubungang Lata")					AYA MEDEL
CINEMATOGRAPHER	:	REY DE LEON			ANITA LINDA
					FRANK RIVERA
					EDWIN O'HARA
					ALEX JIMENEZ



STAR CINEMA

BATA, BATA, PAANO KA GINAWA?

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 CHITO ROÑO :
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 CHARLIE PERALTA :
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MUSICAL DIRECTOR :
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 ACTORS :

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 ALBERT MICHAEL IDIOMA :
 VILMA SANTOS :
 ALBERT MARTINEZ :
 ARIEL RIVERA :
 RAYMOND BAGATSING :
 CARLO AQUINO :
 SERENA DALRYMPLE :
 CHERRY PIE PICACHE :

BIRADOR

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 SOUND ENGINEER :
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 JAIME FABREGAS :
 CONRADO "BING" SANTOS :
 RAMON REYES :
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 DONITA ROSE :
 VICTOR MERI :
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 EMILIO GARCIA :
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WILLIAM TAN

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PRODUCER
DIRECTOR
WRITER
STORY

CINEMATOGRAPHER

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CHITO ROÑO
RICKY LEE
RICKY LEE
CHITO ROÑO
CHARLIE PERALTA

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MUSICAL DIRECTOR
SOUND ENGINEER
ACTORS

JAIINE DAVILA
TATUS ALBANA
JAIINE FABREGAS
ALBERT MICHAEL IDIOMA
ROSANNA ROCES
JACLYN JOSE
MIKE MAGAT
RUBY MORENO
ARA MINA
LITO LEGASPI

GANGLAND

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TOYO GENTICA IV
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JASON SALCEDO
JUNELL HERNANDO
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VIVA FILMS

STAR CINEMA



ANG LALAKE SA BUHAY NI SELYA

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ORIGINAL SOUND

SOUND RE-RECORDING

ACTORS

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ROSANNA ROCES
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ALAN PAULE
GARDO VERSOZA
EVA DARREN
RENATO DEL PRADO
PEN MEDINA

JESSE ENRIQUONE



MIGUEL/MICHELLE

PRODUCTION OFFICE
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DIRECTOR
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CINEMATOGRAPHER
EDITOR
MUSICAL DIRECTOR
PRODUCTION DESIGNER
SOUND ENGINEER
ACTORS

FOREFRONT FILMS
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GIL PORTES
GIL PORTES
RICKY LEE
MARIEL CRUZ
JORGE JARLEGO
JOY MARTEL
TANNY PEREZ
VIC MACAMAY
ROMNICK SARMENTA
CRIS VILLANUEVA
MYLENE DIZON
GLORIA DIAZ
REY VENTURA

NAGBIBINATA

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EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
PRODUCER
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WRITER
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
EDITOR
MUSICAL DIRECTOR
PRODUCTION DESIGNER
SOUND ENGINEER
ACTORS

STAR CINEMA
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MALOU N. SANTOS
JOSE JAVIER REYES
JOSE JAVIER REYES
EDUARDO JACINTO
MANET DAYRIT
ERIC ANTONIO
MITOY STA. ANA
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STAR CINEMA



VIVA FILMS

PUSONG MAMON

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LENE PRODUCERS
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VIVA FILMS
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DOLOR GUEVARRA
JOEL LAMANGAN
ENRICO QUIZON
RICKY LEE
MEL MENDOZA-DEL ROSARIO
ROMY VITUG
JESS NAVARRO
DENNIS GARCIA
TATUS ALDANA
LORNA TOLENTINO
ALBERT MARTINEZ
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SA PUSOD NG DAGAT

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WILLIAM TAN

SANA PAG-IBIG NA

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	:	LEE MEILY			

WILLIAM TAN



SERAFIN GERONIMO: KRIMINAL NG BARYO CONCEPCION

PRODUCTION OUTFIT

GOOD HARVEST/REGAL ENTERTAINMENT

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LAV DIAZ

WRITER

LAV DIAZ

CINEMATOGRAPHER

ARIEL REYES

EDITOR

RANDY BRIEN

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

ELMER BAIS

COSTUME DESIGNER

MIKE GUISON

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

RONNIE QUESADA

ACTORS

RAYMOND BAGATSING

ANA CAPRI

TONTON GUTIERREZ

ANGEL AQUINO

DENDI GALLARDO

RICHARD JOSON

WILLIAM TAN



SISA

PRODUCTION OUTFIT

GOOD HARVEST/REGAL ENTERTAINMENT

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

LILY MONTEVERDE

PRODUCER

JOEY GOSIENGFIAD

DIRECTOR

MARIO O'HARA

WRITER

MARIO O'HARA

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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GEORGE JARLEGO

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JESSIE LUCAS

ACTORS

GARDO VERSOZA

AYA MEDEL

PATRICK GUZMAN

MARCUS MADRIGAL

FRANK RIVERA

EVANGELINE PASO

OGIE JULIANO

Mas higit na sariwa ang hanging dala ng maliitang produksyon kaysa ng malakihan sa taong 1998.

kahilingan na gumawa ng mahusay na pelikula kahit hindi lubos ang suportang materyal ng kompanyang pampelikula. Ikalawa, at sa kabilang banda, ang pagpansin ay maaaring maging dahilan ng pagpasok sa industriya ng mga taong may kuwento, bisyon at inobasyon na hindi napapadala sa kalakaran. Kahit hindi lubusang kumita ang ganitong mga pelikula, ipinagbunyi pa rin ng mga kritiko at maging ng *international film festival circuit* ang mga ito at itinuturing na mahalaga para sa pagkakaunlad ng pambansang sinema. Pangunahing halimbawa ng mga taong ito sina Diaz at Jeturian.

Mas matagumpay na napagsanib ni O'Hara ang kasinangan at komersyo sa kanyang mga pelikulang pito-pito. Popular ang gamit ng seks ngunit nagiging masalimuot ito pagkat ipinapakita sa konteksto ng malakihang bisyon ng pelikula. Sa *Sisa*, inilalarawan ang pambansang bayani bilang taong may libog at koneksyong fiksyonal kay Sisa at Basilio. Sa *Bubungong Lata* inilalarawan ang papel ng seks sa buhay ng mga taong lumilikha ng pelikula.

Ang kritisismo din ang nagbungay ng mga usaping ideolohikal, na nagtatanong kung kaninong interes ang itinataguyod ng pelikula at ng mga elementong panlipunang isinangkap dito. Ang layon ng mga ganitong kritisismo ay mapabuti pa ang kalakaran ng panonood at paggawa ng pelikula. Sa ganitong perspektibo, nalitand ang problematikong ideolohikal sa marangyang produksyon ng *Jose Rizal*. Ang makabayang pananaw sa kasaysayan ay isinasantabi ng pelikula dahil si Bonifacio ay ginawang panatikong tagahanga ni Rizal at si Rizal ay nilarawan bilang Kristo. Makikita rin sa pelikula ang pundamentalismong katoliko sa pagtukoy kay Rizal bilang mabining sugo.

Ganito rin ang batayang problema ng *Ang Lalake sa Buhay ni Selya*. Binuksan nga nito ang isyu ng kabaklaan pero sinara din ang usapan tungkol dito sa pamamagitan ng solusyon na ayon sa konserbatibong Katolikong perspektiba—ang pagpapasya ng bakla at ng asawa nitong itiser na ituloy at alagaan ang kanilang “sagradong relasyon”. Bagama’t kinikilala ng pelikula ang isang subkultura, mas tinitingala nito ang kapangyarihan ng namamayaning kaayusan na sumusupil sa subkulturang ito.

Ang *Bata, Bata*, mula sa nobela ni Lualhati Bautista ay may inihahayag na perspektiba hinggil sa pagkababae at sa liberasyon ng mga babaeng kabilang sa panggitnang uri. Ang naging problema sa

pelikula — na ginawa mga dalawang dekada matapos masulat ang nobela — ay tila lipas na ang isyu ng liberasyon ng babae. Bagama’t may updating sa isyu ng kababaihan (ismama ang isyu ng pambubugbog sa asawa), nanatig pa rin ang *(hetero)sexual politics* sa aspekto ng pagpapalaya ng pangunahing karakter. Matatandaan na nakalaya lamang ang pangunahing tauhan sa kanyang nakalpas matapos niyang makipagtalik sa dati niyang asawa. Hindi pinakita ng pelikula na ang ganong pagtatalik ay sumasagasa naman sa pagkatalo ng kasalukuyang asawa ng lalake. Ang ganitong “sexual politics” ay walang pinag-iiba sa male heterosexism.


Mahusay ang pag-ugit ni Roño sa pelikulang *Curocho*. Epektibo ang mga imaheng ginamit sa pelikula, tulad ng Birhen Maria na sumampal sa pangunahing tauhan, ang barkong nagdadala ng pangako ng pagtakas, ang pagbabalik ng unang torera, at ang mga holen ng may-ari ng kasa. Maganda rin ang paggamit ng pagdodroga ng babaeng tauhan para maitakda ang mood at tono ng pelikula. Napakaraming isyung binabanggit ang pelikula at maraming inobasyon sa estilong pampelikula ngunit hindi pinagtataguri-tagni ang kritikal na relasyon ng mga bagay-bagay at tauhan. Gayundin, maraming “hinihiram” ang pelikula sa iba pang pelikula: mula kay Fellini, ang eksena sa perya at mula kay Bernal, ang eksena sa parke sa umaga. Dapat itanong kung ano ang korelasyon ng mga ito sa isa’t isa, at sa kapuluhang sekswal at politikal na tinutukoy ng pelikula. Ano nga ba ang bisyon ng pelikula?

Ang *Sa Pusod ng Dagat* ay may batayang problemang antropolohikal. Ang kuwento ay tungkol sa lalaking napilitang maging kumadrona dahil ito ang trabaho ng kanyang ina at walang ibang anak na pagmamamahan nito. Ginawang eksotiko ang mga mito ng mga sirena. Wala ring batayang pagsisiyaset sa papel ng kumadrona sa isang maliit na isla. Maaari kayang ang tagabigay ng buhay ay maaring maging tagakitil nito? Ang mga katanungang ito ay nagpapahiwatig na ang pelikula ay nakalutang pagkat walang malinaw na batayang historikal at materyal na nagpapaliwanag sa pagkilos at pag-isiip ng tao.

Bagamat may magkaibang pagtrato sa mga pangunahing tauhan sa dalawang pelikula ni Diaz-Abaya, kapwa sila may katangiang “unibersal” pagkat hindi ganap na inilalahad o inihayag ng mga pelikula ang historisidad at materyalidad na lumilikha ng ganitong pagkatalo. Ano halimbawa ang naging epekto

ng lahi at uring pinagmulan ni Rizal sa pagkatalo niya sa nalalabing panahon ng kanyang buhay? Ano ang materyal na kondisyon ng isla na matutukoy bilang dahilan kung bakit tinatanggap na lamang ng lalakeng kumadrona ang gulong ng buhay?

Mas higit na sariwa ang hanging dala ng maliitang produksyon kaysa ng malakihan sa taong 1998. Sa kabila ng mga nakatakdang limitasyon ng mga ito, mas higit na napag-isipan at nalsasaayos ng “maliliit na pelikula” ang mga elementong bumubuo ng pelikula upang mabuo at mailahad ang napakahalagang bisyon nito. Dapat ngang ipagbunyi ang maliitang produksyon, lalo pa’t ang mga ito ay nagsisimula nang umikot sa mga international film festival na siyang nagtatanghal sa buong mundo ng nagaganap sa loob ng bansa at sa pelikulang lokal. Tunay na lumabo ang representasyon ng pelikulang Pilipino sa ibang bansa matapos yumao si Lino Brocka noong 1992. Tinalikuran ni Bernal ang paggawa ng pelikula bago pa man ito yumao noong 1997. Matagal ding di gumawa ng pelikula si Mike De Leon. Tanging sina Kidlat Tahimik at Nick Deocampo ang masigasig na nagbibigay ng alternatibong representasyon ng bansa sa kanilang mga dokumentaryo.

Sa kabila ng lahat, ang mga pelikula nina Sigalon Reyna, Roño at Diaz-Abaya ay mahahalaagang kontribusyon pa rin sa depinisyon ng susunod na yugto ng pambansang cinema. Ang pamantayang kailangang igpawan ng sinumang direktor ngayon ay ang pamantayang nabuo ng New Cinema ng dekada 1970 at 1980. Ito ang panahon ng malawakang kilusang pampelikula na nagbunga ng napakaraming pelikulang may napakataas na kalidad, sa loob at labas ng industriya. Inaasahan na sa susunod na kabanata ng pagkaunlad ng pelikulang Pilipino ay malalampasan na ang mga nagawa ng New Cinema. Ang apat na katangian na napansin sa mga produksyong pampelikula ng 1998 ay mahihigitan pa sa hinaharap kung patuloy na maitatasa ang antas ng kasinangan na naahot ng mga pelikula sa taong ito. 

Rolando B. Tolentino finished his Ph.D. in Film, Literature and Culture at the School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California.

1998 PHILIPPINE FILM INDUSTRY OUTPUT

Producers		Forms and Types	
Regal, Good Harvest, MAQ Films	34	Drama	48
Viva, Neo, Falcon Films	23	Sex-Oriented	46
Star Cinema	18	Action	31
GMA Films	9	Comedy	15
Seiko, Taurus, Shangten (4 each)	12	Fantasy	3
Premiere, Skorpion (3 each)	6	Historical	1
Rainbow Skorpion, Amartz, GP, Filmmakers Workshop (2 each)	12	Musical	0
One-picture producers	30		
Total	145 pictures	Total	145

1998 FILMOGRAPHY

1. Regal Entertainment (34 pictures)

A. Regal Entertainment	Director
1. <i>Sorry Segovia</i>	Jose N. Carreon
2. <i>Lumakad Ka sa Apoy</i>	Jose N. Carreon
3. <i>Ikaw Pa Rin Ang Ibigin</i>	Maryo J. de los Reyes
4. <i>Codename: Bomba</i>	Ethan C. Pflon
5. <i>Buhawi Jack</i>	Philipp Ko/Teddy Gomez
6. <i>Kahit Mabuhat Kang Muli</i>	Ethan C. Pflon
7. <i>Curacha: Ang Babang Walang Pahinga</i>	Chito Rorfo
8. <i>Sige, Subukan Mo</i>	Franco "Jun" Posadas
9. <i>Walang Katumbas ang Dugo</i>	Toto Natividad
10. <i>Sagad sa Inil</i>	Uro de la Cruz
11. <i>Ang Babae sa Bintang</i>	Chito Rorfo

B. Regal/RS Production

1. <i>Kahit Pader Giglish Ko</i>	Joey del Rosario
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C. Good Harvest Productions

1. <i>Casa Verde</i>	Joey Romero
2. <i>Silawharing Damdamin</i>	Michael Locsin
3. <i>Makin na Bala</i>	Ricardo B. de Guzman
4. <i>Sgt. Larry Layan at Yur Sercis</i>	Leo Valdez
5. <i>Banal</i>	Cesar Evangelista
6. <i>Tanong Kasalanan</i>	Johnny Cruz
7. <i>Kargado</i>	Pong Mercado
8. <i>Gagawin Ko Ang Lahat</i>	Tata Esteban
9. <i>Akela Ko Ikaw Ay Akin</i>	Cesar Evangelista
10. <i>Saksi 14 Mga Babang Makasalanan</i>	Teddy Gomez
11. <i>Inil ng Laman</i>	Tata Esteban
12. <i>Pares Para Trip ng Puso</i>	Manny Castañeda
13. <i>Babae sa Bubungang Lata</i>	Mario O'Hara
14. <i>Serafin Geronimo: Kriminal ng Bayo Concepcion</i>	Lay Diaz
15. <i>Hangga't Kaya Kong Lumaban</i>	Junn F. Castro
16. <i>Halin Natin Ang Ligaya</i>	Cris Michelena
17. <i>Masikip, Masakit, Mahapdi!</i>	Behn Cervantes
18. <i>Ang Joker at Ang Pistilero</i>	Jimmy Ko
19. <i>Sans Pag-ibig Na</i>	Jeffrey Jeturian
20. <i>Megagandang Hayop</i>	Cris Michelena
21. <i>Sa Piling ng Iba</i>	Jeffrey Jose Cruz

D. MAQ

1. <i>Sambatin ang Ilogon Mo</i>	Jose N. Carreon
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2. Viva Films (23 pictures)

A. Viva Entertainment

1. <i>Slaw</i>	Mark Reyes
2. <i>Tatsulok</i>	Tracy Aguiluz
3. <i>Kasangga, Kahit Kelan</i>	Toto Natividad
4. <i>Ang Lahat ng Ito'y Para sa Iyo</i>	Mac C. Alejandre
5. <i>I'm Sorry, My Love</i>	Joyce Bernal
6. <i>Ginto't Plak</i>	Romy V. Suzara
7. <i>Ang Erpat Kong Asig</i>	Felix E. Dalay

B. Viva and Others

1. <i>Strebel, Gestapo ng Maynila (J&R)</i>	Ricardo "Bibong" Osofo
2. <i>Dahil Ba Sa Kaniya? (Viva Available Light)</i>	Jose Javier Reyes
3. <i>Dama de Noche (Tikbalang Productions)</i>	Lore Reyes
4. <i>Pusong Mamon (Kaizz Ventures)</i>	Joel Lamangan/Eric Guizon
5. <i>Tutek ng Bibig, Kahit ng Dibdib (FLT)</i>	Joey del Rosario

C. Neo Films

1. <i>Ikaw na Sans</i>	Mac C. Alejandre
2. <i>It's Cool... Bukol!</i>	Ira Pelito
3. <i>Wangbu Ikaw, Normal Ka Ba?</i>	Toto Natividad
4. <i>Squid</i>	Jose "Kaka" Balagtas
5. <i>Ben Deludyo</i>	Neo Jariego
6. <i>Warfreak</i>	Toto Natividad/ Cesar Montano

D. Neo and Others

1. <i>Balacubas (RNB Films)</i>	Augusto Salvador
2. <i>Pagnanasa (Available Light)</i>	Don Escudero
3. <i>Gangland (Tikbalang Productions)</i>	Peque Gallaga/Lore Reyes

E. Falcon Films

1. <i>Sahong</i>	Felix E. Dalay
2. <i>Dr. X On The Air</i>	Felix E. Dalay

3. GMA (9 pictures)

A. GMA Films

1. <i>Sa Puso ng Dagat</i>	Marlou Diaz-Abaya
2. <i>Jose Rizal</i>	Marlou Diaz-Abaya

B. GMA-Filmmax

1. *My Guardian Debit* Jun Urbano

C. OctoArts/GMA

1. *Aning-Aning* Ipe Peliso
 2. *Guevara: Sa Bata Ko, Walang Hari* Pepe Marcos/Manuel Cinco
 3. *Shaktar Mo ang Puso Ko* Tony Y. Reyes
 4. *May Sayad* Rom-Rick
 5. *Marahas*
 6. *Walang Kinkilalang Bata* Francis "Jun" Posadas
 7. *Amadong Huday* Augusto Salvador

4. Star Cinema (18 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Haba-Haba Dool Puli-Puli Pool* Ehen "Lodging" Jariego
 2. *Kung Ayaw Mo, Hutag Mo* Jerry Lopez Sinenang
 3. *Mulang Balik ang Tamis ng Pag-ibig* Boots Plata
 4. *Tung 3 Tatay Kung Pakitong-kitong* Ehen "Lodging" Jariego
 5. *Bhadar* Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao
 6. *Nagbibilata* Jose Javier Reyes
 7. *Dahil Mahal na Mahal Kita* Wenn K. Deramas
 8. *Ata Eh Can Bisyalo Halo Halo Hoy (Laging Pansalo ang mga Unagoy)* Ehen "Lodging" Jariego
 9. *Labs Kita, Okay Ka Lang?* Jerry Lopez Sinenang
 10. *Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?* Chito Roño
 11. *Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay* Roy B. Quinsao
 12. *Notorius* Toto Natividad
 13. *Magandang Hatinggabi!* Laurenti Dyogi
 14. *Hilig* Jose Javier Reyes
 15. *Myelo (Uno, Dos, Tres Pilyos)* Edgardo "Boy" Vinarao
 16. *Puso ng Pasiko* Peque Galapag/Lore Reyes
 17. *April, May, June (Mga Babae)* Manny Castañeda
 18. *Ang Lalaki sa Buhay ni Selya (Star Pacific Cinema)* Carlo Siguan Reyna

5. SEIKO FILMS (4 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Kahit Saan, Kung Puuede* Fernan Salumbides
 2. *Pag Dumikit Kumakapit* Humilde "Meek" Roxas
 3. *Pak* Humilde "Meek" Roxas
 4. *Berlugo (Seiko/R.S. Productions)* Augusto Salvador

6. TAURUS FILMS (4 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Miss... Gabi Na!* Dante Pangilinan
 2. *Tumakas Ka sa Mundong Makasalanan* Karlo Montero
 3. *Tahan Na, Heto Na ang Ligaya* Rolly Bernardo
 4. *Sexy Dancers* Karlo Montero

7. SHANGTEN FILMS (4 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Sukuhan* Cesar Sb. Abella
 2. *Bakas* Cesar Sb. Abella
 3. *Tukso ni Charito (Shangten/El Niño)* Cesar Sb. Abella
 4. *Divino, Anak ni Totoy Mola* Cesar Sb. Abella

8. PREMIER ENTERTAINMENT (3 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Kid Manila, Akin ang Uno Mo* Augusto Salvador
 2. *Carillo Brutal* Romy V. Suarez
 3. *Amo Namin* Ben M-7 Yalung

9. SKORPIO FILMS (3 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Nene* Rico Membo
 2. *Star Dancer* Dante Javier
 3. *Paloma, Nakakatalaki Ka* Dante Javier

10. STARLIGHT FILMS (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Kung Ligaya Ka sa Piling ng Iba* Lando Jacob/Willem Pascual
 2. *Masarap ang Unang Kagal* Mike Miconera, Jr.

11. RAINBOW FILMS INTERNATIONAL (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Tig Kita, Type Mo Ba?* Xenio Jun Cudia
 2. *Mam, Turuan Mo Ako* Ruben S. Abalos

12. SKORPION FILMS INT'L (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Kabiyak 2* Dante Javier
 2. *Campus Scandal* Neil Tan

13. FILMMAKERS' WORKSHOP (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Love and Desire* Barry ChurFicky Briscoe
 2. *Panganib sa Din* Herman Yaw/Ricky Briscoe

14. GP FILMS (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Lucio San Miguel Walang Kaluluwa* Mike Rejon Makiling
 2. *Jesus Salonga Ayas Boy Indian* Roi Vizron

15. AMARITZ FILMS (2 pictures)

- Director**
 1. *Shirley* Neal Tan/Vic Belano
 2. *Sugat sa Puli* Jose "Kaka" Balagtas

16. PRODUCERS WITH ONLY ONE FILM EACH

Production Company	Title	Director
1. FPU Productions	Pagbatal ng Probinsyano	Ronwaldo Reyes
2. Merdeka Film Productions	Karinyosa	Eli Peliso
3. MHR Productions	Sgt. Hidalgo	Manuel Marcos
	Bala ng Karamoran	Francis "Jun" Posadas
4. Sunrise Film	Akin ang Iyong Dangal	George Val Kabriente
5. Infinity Film	Uod sa Laman	George Val Kabriente
6. Diamond Film	Ayas Boy Tigas	Tony Y. Reyes
	(Ang Probinsyano ng Wala)	Carlo Siguan Reyna
	Tatlo... Magkakasala	
7. Reyna Films		
8. Diamond Harvest	Laban Ko Ito	Jan Norwood
	Walang Dapat Madamay	Joey Romero
9. Platinum Productions	Walang Kalapungit Nil	Emco Guison
10. Garbafil International	Pagdiding ng Parahon	Porto Aluz
11. Eastern Entertainment	Pakawitang Puso	Mugronza
12. VPS Productions	Takaw Tulon	Bobby Santiago
13. ATB-4 Film	Beng Edo, Taka Lang	Neil Tan
14. Canary Film	Ang Kilabot sa Misa Pakipot	Dante Pangilinan/ Fern Salumbides
15. Gift Productions	Sa Mung Pagpatal ng Hamag	Cesar Sb. Abella
16. Queen Film	Batang Magdalo	Emaralda Sanico
17. RVO Productions	Tatay Ni	Ben Faleo
18. Glo-Arn Film	Alpin ng Akin	Tita Estaban
19. Forefront Film Productions	Miguel Michela	Gi Porlas
20. Arthur Film International	Obsesyon	Rol Bernardo
21. MFP Productions	Larung Buloy	L. Garcia
22. Silver Star Ent. International	Tukaw ng Parahon	Teddy Gomez
23. Image Production	Kung Dawagin Sila ay Sexy	Neil Antonio
24. My Way Film Co. Ltd.	Sagupaan Si	Philip Ko
	Ang Huling Digmaan	
25. Arlyn Film	Sala Natin Itanong	Rolly Bernardo
	Kung Kasalanan	Carlo J. Casares
26. Golden Lion Film	Alwag ng Pandiy	Edgardo Vinarao
27. Crown Seven Ventures	Kasal-Kasalan (Sakalan)	Jerry Trizone
28. (No producer specified)	Kayo Ko Pero Masakit	Ehen Reyes Jr
29. (No producer specified)	Bibid or Not	Nito Muntach
30. Leo Film	Ini ng Dugo	Rico Tamaran

Interview

Direk Marilou Diaz Abaya



ANNE MARIE DE GUEZMAN

It was important for me to get out of my class, my middle class, which I thought was stifling. And this desire to escape from it was pushed by Ishmael Bernal who introduced me to a universe which I was forbidden to enter all my life by the nuns, by the priests.

By ELLEN ONGKEKO

Q: You took up your masters in film abroad at a time when the industry was dominated by men who learned directing on the job. What pushed you into this direction?

A: In third year high school, I met Manolo (Abaya). I was 15 years old. From the first date, there were always bags of cameras sitting between us, because he was already into stills photography. In short, films. I was interested only [in] theater. I was doing Assumption plays for the CCP with Tita Conching Sanico. I didn't consider myself a television or film buff, even though I was born in 1955. I read a lot, I was into literature. In college, I was interested in Asian Civilization. It is just that I registered late and the History Department was closed so I got pushed into [Communication Arts] by Manolo. When we graduated, he decided he was going to pursue [photography] professionally, which is why he applied at the London International Film School. But we weren't married yet, so my parents refused to let me study there. I ended up in the Loyola Marymount University in LA. It was a Catholic Jesuit University which is about the only place my parents would let me go, to do my master of arts in film and television. December 1977, we came home, got married, moved to London, where I just wanted to get pregnant, you know. But Manolo said no. I finished a sem earlier than Manolo whose course was longer. After about a week, I got bored with the London winter and ended up doing a year at the London Film School myself before we came home. He immediately went about to set up Sining Filipinas Productions. With the capital of the Abayas, Manolo's family decided to finance what Manolo wanted to do as his first feature film. But he was not interested in directing. He wanted to produce it, to photograph it, to edit it. They didn't have a director so I ended up directing *Tanikala*. When we started shooting, I was five months pregnant. When the film was ready for release, I had just given birth.

Q: So you were sort of pushed into film directing?

A: All my life. I grew up in a home filled with classical art and Philippine antiquities.

My parents are both lawyers, but they are art collectors too. As children—there were seven of us—we were forced to take up classical piano, classical ballet, the works [but] all the creative disciplines that as a child I was privileged to learn... frustrated me. I felt inadequate as a musician, as a dancer, as a theater person, as a painter. My mother's medium was really painting [but] when I did my first film in college—a dramatization of *singkil*—I realized that it was the medium that could finally combine all my interests and transform my frustrations into something that made sense on film and television. But it was not anything I thought I would like to do committedly.

I stopped making movies in 1986 and concentrated on television and public affairs, doing *Six o'clock News* and *Public Forum*. It was the time when the industry took a very bad dive. I just couldn't find anyone who was not interested in doing just sex movies—which is why I stayed on and on on TV and didn't come back until 1991. It was only then that I realized that while television was very kind to me (it was very reliable, very fulfilling, very important work), while it gave me a career that allowed me to have an orderly family life after the first shot on the first day of my comeback film, *King Ako'y Iwan Mo*, my ninth film, I went to the bathroom and wept, because I was so happy. I didn't realize just how badly I had missed making movies. And from that moment, I knew that this is just what I wanted to do, for as long as I could. Then it became a commitment. [Now] I make films cause I can't help it. I tried

to resist, because I have this illusion that I'm a better teacher than a director but that's really what drives me.

Q: Let's go back to your first film. What were your intentions in *Tanikala*?

A: Basically, I was driven by the discipline of imaging and imagery. I felt doing a historical period film offered a lot of possibilities. This was something I stumbled upon in conversations with Pablo Gomez, who wrote the original story. It was actually a very popular comics [story], which in the 1980's was the rage. So I thought, maybe it will make money, maybe it will be popular. That was one consideration.

Q: Were you happy with that first project?

A: No. I was not happy at all. I'm grateful for the experience because of Susan Roces and Romeo Vasquez and Rita Gomez, and Eddie Garcia, who in my first film taught me what it is to be in love with your work. And to serve it well. Later, I realized that there were cultural limitations. I didn't belong, I did not know my audience, I was a stranger to them, and they were strangers to me. Also I chose a topic that I was not really personally engaged in.

Q: Your second film had a very different tone from your first, even if they were both released in 1980. *Brutal* was more grim, more realistic. Was there a paradigm shift in terms of consciousness or was it just part of a career strategy?

A: When Jesse Ejercito called (looking for a director for *Amy Austria*) and asked me to direct whatever I wanted, I decided I was going to do only something that I personally felt passionate about. *Brutal* was based on the experience of a friend, which I told Ricky [Lee] about. That became the idea for the material for *Brutal*. And that became more or less my guidelines for most of the films I've made. Of the 17 films I made, I always tried to work only on materials that are personally stimulating to me. The three occasions when I did not honor my instinct, were always when I would not succeed—like *Boystown*, *Macho Gigolo*, and *Sensual*. That's why when I did *Sensual* in 1985 (it was released February 1986, during the People Power Revolution), I knew that if sex was going to be the game, I was going to be bored and therefore inadequate. Mainly because I had already done *Brutal*, *Moral*, *Karnal*, *Baby Tsina*, all exploring women as objects of romance, of sex, of society, of crime, etc. I was tired of it by 1986. The shift from *Tanikala* to *Brutal* was a deliberate decision to learn from my mistakes in *Tanikala*, and to try and limit my choices of films to only those that I personally could connect with.

Q: Did you have any commercial concessions when you did *Brutal*?

A: No. I did not know what was commercial. Jesse did that for me. Always. He taught us what Filipino filmmaking was going to be like.

Q: From *Brutal*, you moved on to a number of films tackling women's issues. But you mentioned in one forum that you grew up in a gender-free atmosphere.

A: My mother had seven children, breastfed and tutored us all and never stopped working in the bank, and became first woman vice-presi-

dent of Philippine National Bank, in nearly 60 years of its history. So I saw my father cook, saw my mother work. I thought, interchangeable lahat Lyon. Manolo was the craziest in his family. He had pigtales up to his waist, more earrings than I did. We exchanged nail polishes and all that.

Q: So if it was not internal angst, where did you get all that feminist sensibility very evident in your early films?

A: Well, [from] people that I knew from observation. But at the same time, my own [experience], because I was reacting to hundreds and thousands of Philippine films that showed women only this way and I resented it, because I was not like that. That was not how I felt, that was not how we [women] made love, that was not how we suffered. Nag-react ako daan. Remember, iyong pasok ko noong 1980, naglipana ang "bold stars" all over the place. So iyong anger na iyon, sa akin din iyong galit na iyon talaga.

Q: You've cited cultural relevance as one of the most important things in judging a film. How did this evolve considering that you came from the Assumption, so-called bastion of elitism, and were schooled in foreign schools whose cultural milieus are different from ours?

A: Because I really settled down in the Philippines and wanted to belong here. It was important for me to get out of my class, my middle class, which I thought was stifling. And this desire to escape from it was pushed by Ishmael [Bernal], who introduced me to a universe which I was forbidden to enter all my life by the nuns, by the priests.

Q: How was Bernal crucial in your evolution?

A: With Ishmael, basically, [it was] an intellectual adventure, a voyage that we shared together. Intellectually, we were coming from north and south poles. I was intrigued by the universe of Ishmael, the universe of Ermita artists, of Malate intellectuals, of the UP and he introduced me to many books that I had not read. And vice versa. Ah... and this medieval convent that I think he was secretly attracted to. We provoked each other about politics, about religion, about psychology, about anthropology.

Q: I'm trying to trace the development of your consciousness...

A: Consistently active. I was out in the streets with Ishmael and Lino Brocka, because I was Lino's treasurer for the longest time in the KDPP (Kapisanan ng mga Direktor ng Pelikulang Pilipino). I was in the streets, basically for anti-censorship rallies and protests. I was in the Concerned Artists of the Philippines for quite a time with Lino. Mel and I were his alalays. I was new, I mean, you know Laurice and I are the wrong gender and the wrong age, and we're in the white house, consorting and fraternizing with these big name directors. So we pretty much kept to ourselves but we were out in the streets. We followed [Lino] to prison and all that. My battle with censorship started in 1980 with *Brutal*. Armida defended that. So it goes back that [far]. But political, economic, social agenda was the stuff of my life and therefore the stuff of my films, throughout the '80s.

Q: Your recent film, *Milagros*, divided even the women progressives. Some thought it was anti-feminist?

A: I can't help having women as central characters in my films because the films I make correspond to my condition at the stage of my life when I'm directing those films. So, in 1980, I'm 24 years old. You're very idealistic and also very angry. And unforgiving about the handicaps of your environment. That's what my films look like and feel like. They're angry, they're very sure that there are political solutions, social solutions, economic solutions. All of these solutions are very clear in my early films. But as you move on to middle age, when I started to do *May Nagmamahal Sa Iyo*, with Ricky Lee again, I am looking at a woman who has attained her economic self-reliance. She's gone to Hongkong, now she has money, she can live by herself, she's useful. So she has finally become liberated and then for what? So the film asks: finally, after all of these gains I've obtained for myself—and so have millions of women worldwide, post feminism, obtained all these—we're still not happy. Why? [She] realizes that the very reason she was trying to gain



Sharmaine Amoyn in *Milagros* (1997)

all of these material, economic, social and political prosperity was for someone she loves very dearly, her child, but one who is no longer there because it was too late. The film actually begs the question. What is motherhood and womanhood really all about? In the final analysis, it has nothing to do with biology or your uterus, it really has to do with your will to love someone because she finally finds a child who she learns later isn't her real child, but has learned to love the child anyway, and from there it was natural that I would proceed to *Milagros* (especially at that time when I was mourning Ishmael's death) where I'm saying I don't think that the end of all of these is to become a liberated woman in this world. I think more important is our quest for spiritual liberation, no matter in what form we shape it. And while *Milagros* violently divided the critics and the audience, I am not surprised. I am very patient with that kind of response. Because what is important is that I finally have the courage to say that we don't have answers. We only ask important questions. We can make up the answers ourselves, which *Milagros* did and I'm saying to the critics who accused it of anti-feminism, that there is no sharper form of liberation than the one that *Milagros* discovered for herself. *Milagros* is undereducated, naive, disorganized—[but] all of these traits that [we] criticize *probinsyonas* about are actually her strength because she chooses the way she [wants to] live. She tells her mother, no, I'm not going home with you, I'm going to pay for my father's debts and serve in this house of men. That was her decision. So she deliberately makes a choice on how she is going to spend her life. She also makes a conscious deliberate decision on how she's going to die. She will climb Banahaw and see what is to be found there.

This is the ultimate liberated woman. A woman who successfully lives the way she chooses and dies the way she chooses. That this can be missed by even the feminists themselves is understandable, because, if you have locked yourself only into a material framework, then a spiritual framework or a framework of ambivalences will become very uncomfortable and to many women, undesirable. But in my '40s, mourning Ishmael Bernal, I ask a different set of questions about what really matters. Then I am more patient about the answers. Also the power of the woman's imagination which is the power of Milagros, the power to wish, the power to invent, the power to imagine that it is her father that is there beside her—to me, [this] is the ultimate virtue of any human being, but most especially of a woman who usually is so restricted and confined that she is inhibited from living her fantasies, living her illusions. Milagros succeeds in doing this, and to me, ultimately, she is the most liberated of all the women in my films. Dr. Bien Lumbera saw that. This was written by Rolando Tinio for me in 1987.

Q: Did you brainstorm on the idea, meaning, were you on a spiritual quest as early as 1987?

A: Yes, I would discuss and brainstorm with Rolando, and he would always be ten steps ahead of me. I had a difficult time coping with his mind and when the screenplay was completed, of course, Ishmael reads it, he says, "it's a masterpiece, but you can't direct it kasi hindi mo pa liyan naintindihan..." So I lost every ounce of confidence, naturally. I started preparing *Milagros* for Jesse Ejercito about a month before Ishmael died. [His death] totally overhauled the meaning of the film for me. What you saw is a result of my mourning of Ishmael's death.


Q: What changed?

A: In the beginning I wanted to explore naivete as I would explore naive art or naive psychology. After Ishmael died, I realized, she [Milagros] was not at all naive. Or she was not just naive. That there was actually a significant growth from naivete to full realization of what she was doing. That was the result of Ishmael's death. I realized it after he died, because I was bursting with this need to eulogize Ishmael and to make sense of his own life, in my own.

Q: How about Rizal, would you consider it as your most political film?

A: No, I don't think so. As a matter of fact, it's the least political film, because it challenges the common notion that heroes know what they're doing, that they're made of strong stuff, and that they volunteer to march to their deaths and their destiny. It tells you that this is an extraordinary human being and is therefore extraordinarily sensitive and therefore extraordinarily vulnerable to anxiety, to pain, to doubt, to reluctance, to hesitation, to all these which are conventionally considered weaknesses or character flaws. But which the film says are precisely what make him worthy of his destiny—that despite the fact that he was a genius and a prodigy, his soul was restless and in pain, that he had a strong sense of guilt, of self-doubt, that he was continually struggling with his demons, that it was always a fight between his personal happiness and social, political obligations, that he did not want to die, that he did not want to give up his life, that he was afraid to die. He was afraid of his own works. He was afraid that his works were not worth anything and that if he died, his works would be forgotten too. I mean, the film shows you just how deeply flawed he was in many, many ways, but that he was worthy of redemption because he had the grace to make sacrifices. The film says, a human being who is superbly talented, gifted and privileged and who makes sacrifices is the best example of a human being. Political impressions that the film generates are largely due to our own biases already there even before we watch the movie because if you watch how the movie behaves internationally, it does not at all behave on a political level, [but] rather on a psychological level. They're looking at a man (they don't know him from Adam) from an obscure country of origin like the Philippines. They are looking at an artist, at a person who writes so powerfully, that his novels, whether he likes it or not, result in political consequences which he even

tries to evade. That is why he is reluctant to [endorse] armed revolution even if only intellectually. He was already suspecting that revolution would be inevitable. The film is saying, he was not born a politician or a hero. He was born a prodigious artist and an intellectual who could not help writing what he did. But in the end [he] reconciled, as can be proven by his final poem, when he says, yes, maybe education is not the only battleground. We each are deployed in different battlegrounds. It doesn't matter as long as you can fight and fight well. So, it is because I take this framework and [because of] my intimacy with the artist and his demons that [the film] derails historians and critics who each see their own political definition of Jose Rizal. Therefore, they're on the lookout for political and historical accuracy. That becomes problematic to those people who wish to see political and historical definitions as clear as black and white. For example, on the question of Andres Bonifacio, if I did not identify him, if I did not name him, if he were an anonymous revolutionary leader, I don't think there would have been as much uproar. The film needed Andres Bonifacio to mark a political development that was becoming more and more urgent. The Spaniards were not afraid of Bonifacio's writings. They were afraid of his leadership in an armed revolution. That was what the film needed him for, only, to mark the development of the Katipunan and how urgently the Spaniards felt it needed to be quelled. In the same way, that that's all you need to see Teodora Alonso for, just as the marker of his [Rizal's] spiritual and educational development, Paciano for his political mentorship. If I were to make a film about Andres Bonifacio I would probably see Jose Rizal in a few sequences where the impression you will get of him is that he was a pacifist and just that. And then, you will also get complaints. I think it's less the problem of the film than the problem of a predisposed politicized, historicized audience...

What is motherhood and womanhood really all about? In the final analysis, it has nothing to do with biology or the uterus; it really has to do with the will to love someone. 

Q: But was it intentional on your part to picture Bonifacio as an amateurish, fanatic revolutionary?

A: Yes, because it is a fact. It is a historical fact that he bungled a lot of military operations. He had passion but not enough strategy. Historically, he lost so many battles and it was for his temper that Aguinaldo feared they would lose more.

Q: Do you think you were able to capture Rizal's whole persona?

A: We chose to look at Jose Rizal as a novelist. That sets the parameter for which universe we are exploring... the universe of the writer, the novelist, and the propagandist. That universe is in the realm of the imagination. It is not in the realm of actual reality. Also, there will never be enough written or visualized [works] about Jose Rizal. I think, that would do justice entirely to his whole value as a human being. But that's also what heroism is all about. It is also about enigma, and the film would like to leave some space for that enigma. An example of which is the confession he made with the Jesuit priest prior to his execution. The content we do not hear because it is not relevant. What is important is that I am convinced that he had a conversion, a final reconciliation, appeasement of the soul. If you looked at everything he wrote in his own penmanship, I am convinced that he did not find that equanimity until the moment before the march. If there was one universal observation made by all who were present, it was about Jose Rizal's serenity in his march. I mean, people are still fighting if he wore a black tie or a white tie but nobody argues about his serenity.

Q: But there were many who argued against some points you raised in your film.

A: I'll take that black and white tie as an analogy. Half of the books and documents says

that he wore a white tie, the other half says he wore black. On my site in Marang Bataan, I realized that from a certain angle you would not really see whether it is white or black, on the other hand, if you look at him frontally you might see black. So in a way, perspective has everything to do with it, not only a perspective about the tie literally but also about the meaning of his works and his whole life. All these dilemmas [were] processed 24 hours a day over a year of [shooting] *Jose Rizal*.

Q: There's so much data on Rizal. How did you process these to find your focus?

A: I did not start reading about him when I said yes to the project in June 1997. Aside from school, for 10 years Randy David and I would do Jose Rizal [for *Public Forum*] twice a year [June 19 and December 30] so there was a continuing update of new abstracts, new scholarship, new findings, redefinition...none of which I thought would be relevant to any film I was going to make in the future. This is providence. Again it is something that I speak and write Spanish. Pero, hindi pa rin tumitibok yung puso ko. They were sending me memos about Paciano... Teodora Alonso... Ferdinand Blumenbritt. Then finally I said wait, something is very wrong. Throw away all these books, and throw away these tracks and tracks of documents. I want to read only Spanish, I want to read the documents. Which is what I did. Then you can see, ah, he's not so sure about this chapter. Ah, so he erased this ten thousand times. Sometimes you can see kung ano yung in-erase niya at yung ni-replace. So then this is the nearest thing you can get to a VTR of Dr. Jose Rizal. You don't have a recording, you don't have a moving picture of him, so you have to watch his penmanship. Then you know when he is sure, when he is angry, when he is in doubt, when he doesn't know what he is doing. Then you will see the pattern of his fears and anxiety. At the same time, we simply collected all the documents available and there are many

from the original facsimile of the documents from November to December 1898, the log sheets of the warden, the tribunal findings, the arrest papers...everything in Spanish.

Q: Rizal got some very negative reviews.

A: Yeah, and I always take comments very seriously, all comments — good, bad, indifferent, violent. And I file them away in my memory and literally in boxes because as a student *naman* I'd like to see what time would do to them. The trophy to me lasts only for as long as I'm making my speech of thank you's. After that, you have to let it go because in the final analysis, time will judge you. Besides the reading of your work, the appreciation of your work will keep on changing with time. That is why it is important that you make films which you are convinced are important to you.

Q: You seem to take it all in stride?

A: Verbal and published attacks against my films still hurt as much as they did on my first film, *Tanikala*. But now I'm faster at sizing the hurt, the significance of the attack. I've been in the industry for 19 years. I've made 17 films. I've only had three certified box-office hits and they're decades apart: *Brutal*, *Ipaglaban Mo* and *Jose Rizal*. The rest are various degrees of flops at the box-office. And only three films—*Brutal*, *Ipaglaban Mo* and *May Nagmamahal Sa Iyo*—pleased everybody. The rest of my films divided audiences as well as critics. For example, in the case of *Moral*, it was either panned or ignored completely. And there were only two people who actually paid attention to it, Dr. Bien Lumbera and Joel David. Both of them Manunuri. It was not until about the '90s when *Moral* and *Karnal* were declared outstanding films of the year by the Manunuri. And it was not until the retrospective of Ricky Lee's works, two years ago, I think, that it was shown to teenagers, to college students in UP, the very audiences I was seeking out in 1983, who weren't there, who were suddenly there in 1996. A dozen years after when they were finally laughing, shouting, crying at all the right places.

Q: What do you think of film criticism in the Philippines?

A: Each era, each decade carries with it a certain orientation. There are new actors, new audiences but the reporters of the press are

The political impressions that *Jose Rizal* generates are largely due to our own biases, already there even before we watch the movie.

While I have always respected very deeply and consistently observed cultural values in the industry like pakikisama and the family system, I don't make the mistake of substituting them for professional excellence.

always there. You see them all the time, you are relating to them all the time and you can actually find [out] where they're coming from. But it is difficult to deal with a sector like the critics who are sometimes there, sometimes not and who do not write enough and consistently. I think there was no commensurate critical appreciation of the good harvest of Philippine works in 1998. It is a gross negligence which trophies during a commercial-ridden awards night do not clarify or enlighten to an audience. And in almost 80 years of Philippine filmmaking, how many scholarly books have been written on Philippine cinema? Philippine film criticism has not tolled in commensurate proportion to the toils of Filipino filmmakers.

Secondly, I think that a serious transgression has been committed by a large number of potential critics who chose to become movie reviewers and movie reporters and publicists all in one. You lose confidence in what they say because you don't [know] why they say it. Another issue was raised by Carlitos Siguton-Reyna in a forum, which I support—that this is largely a generation of audiences who own their own video cameras; so pretty soon, even filmmakers might become obsolete because people are making their own home-made films. Filmmakers are therefore pressured and challenged to make films that are extraordinary, that are more than home-made. Because the audiences are themselves becoming filmmakers, they are also becoming qualified to be critics. It is not only the cameras that they are beginning to own. They have access to world cinema, through DDD and laser disc, through cassette and internet, and cyberspace. They can make direct connections with foreign cinema and will make up their minds, [thereby] displacing the traditional popularity of published criticism. It is a significant pattern; it is worth watching because then the whole function of criticism will need revision.

Q: There are different film concerns. What are you willing to give up and what are non-negotiable when you make a film?

A: The writers are non-negotiable, the materials are non-negotiable. The main cast...the rest, we can discuss.

Q: Only three of your films are box-office hits and yet you have moved on and on. That is quite a feat considering our industry. How do you do it?

A: Much of it is providence. Much of it is not of my own doing.

Q: But if it is only providence, that's difficult for others to learn from. And it isn't also just talent.

A: Yes, there are 70 million talented people and there are only 150 films to be made. But there is one element. It has something to do with the fact that I never relate to people only on a professional level; goodwill has been a crucial factor. With the producers in particular, if the goodwill is soundly founded...that you are not here to make a fast buck on them, that you are not capable of stealing, that you're not just itching for an adventure, that you will bring in [the project] on time, within budget, and try to make the family as happy as possible, that just might work. The reason why I obsessively prepare in preproduction is so that I can enjoy it in production and nakakahawa iyan. Nakakahawa lalong-lalo na sa producer ang enthusiasm, nakakahawa iyong patience. At nakaka-push ng projects. Iyon 'yung goodwill. Eventually, as my works accumulated, and the reputation not only here but internationally accumulated, then slowly, confidence in you also accumulates. Then it becomes easier to persuade producers to take the risk with you. It did not start with *Jose Rizal*. It started with *Brutal* and the other movies I did. Also, minimal [risk] naman eh, I don't make that many films. It is intentional that I just do one a year. I cannot proceed faster than that. So it is not as if they have to take four risks in a year with me. They know my agenda, that I just love films. So then they figure that risk must be worth it. Over the years that accumulated very, very slowly, and because I do so few films, they tend to be more carefully prepared and more carefully made. So at the very least, the producer does not feel sorry about losing on a good film as he would on a bad film. Goodwill and the expression of the goodwill takes a lot of patience, patience talaga, constant dialoguing with your producer.

As a director never na trabaho lang ito, eh. I can't do that. Trabaho ito na mahal ko. It's both professional and personal. I care for the professional perfection and discipline as much as I care for the personal well-being of the people. I make films with my Kuya, Ate, Nanay, Tatay, Tito. Lahat 'yan sa akin 'yan. I think my mode of communicating and relating to my staff is maternal, more than directorial. The technical vocabulary is more easily digested, if communicated in maternal terms. Even when I express my commands, it is always in maternal, family or human terms—in terms of emotion to which they respond better, I'm trying to show just how personal filmmaking is to me even in the way I relate to other people.

Q: Is this the tribal culture in showbusiness which you talked about in one forum? You even traced your lineage to Bernal's tribe.

A: It is connected [to that]. By and large, the industry [still] runs along bloodlines, than on merit. I mean, you become a filmmaker because your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, your grandparents, your uncle, great-grandfather were filmmakers. So that was considered a kind of informal but social requirement. You didn't come in from nowhere, [or] just because you have the diploma. [If you did,] you were considered suspect. There was a lot of resistance in *Tanikala*, when we introduced ourselves to the industry, which I was able to cope with, only because Manolo set up a built-in system that made us a whole "ecosystem" by ourselves. He built up a company that became self-sufficient, and independent of the industry in a sense. That's how we were able to get a start. And by the second film, with Jesse Ejercito as my very early mentor, I had the kind of guidance and real professional support that served me very well, for which I am very grateful, and which I don't forget. It was through Jesse that I met two other people, who became very, very important to my career—Ishmael Bernal and Douglas Quijano.

Q: What are the pros and cons of this tribal culture. Is the recent FAP scandal tribal culture?

A: In my letter to Eddie Romero in response to his announcement of the measures that the Academy is taking to repair the image of the industry and to discipline the erring members, I told him that while I have always respected very deeply and very often consistently observed cultural values in the industry like pakikisama and the family system, I don't make the mistake of substituting them for professional excellence. Kasi dito magiging problema ang tribal culture sa halip na maging asset to Philippine cinema. It is this "family system" vis-a-vis a corporate system that has produced the masterpieces worldwide. Even the Taiwanese Tai Ning Yang works as a family but he does not let the family system [hinder] his experimentations, his explorations of new forms, new substances, new themes. So 'yung value ng pakikisama, 'yung value ng family system, pinapahalagahan ko. But these, the directors and I in DGPI are saying, should not corrupt the value of public recognition by your peers. For example, 'yung awards, hmm... parang ang nangyari tayo-tayo. Magsama-sama tayo lalo na ngayon sa panahon ng krisis, wala tayong trabaho. Tayo-tayo ang magbibigay ng trabaho sa isa't isa; samantalang ang sinasabi namin, magsali pa tayo ng marami pang iba kasi may matututunan tayo sa kanila at sila may matututunan sa atin. Palakihin natin ang pamilya, 'wag palititin. I keep on saying that this is a lapse. I hope it is temporary, a lapse in judgment about what to value and what not to value. It has serious consequences and I'm not certain we can recover from it entirely. If we reinvent ourselves and move forward, we may yet repair the damage done by this, the damage to our credibility as an industry.

Q: You're one of the founders of DGPI. What is its difference from KDPP?

A: The most serious ailment [of KDPP] was overweight siya sa mga member na hindi naman nagdidirek at ang impression namin was that maraming nasa loob ng KDPP para makahanap ng guarantees to work, which nobody can [give], except yourself. At ang feeling namin hindi nagsisipag ang KDPP na mag-organisa ng educational and cultural programs. 'O di pinulang kami ni Laurice, at doon binuo ang desisyon na tumiwalag na nga. Halos isang taon ang pagbubuo [ng DGPI]. In the meantime, Laurice found herself on the crossroads and she chose to pursue her religious mission which is why sa akin naiwan yung DGPI. 'Yon. Tapos tuloy-tuloy na siya. [Ang] stress talaga [ng DGPI ay] sa educational program, outreach program, con-

ferences and pursuit of new technology and talent.

Q: Let's talk about your creative processes. Do you always brainstorm with your writer from the very start?

A: The only thing that was "given" to me, was *Sa Pusod ng Dagat*. Because it was a winner already. All others started from concept. Even a film like *Ipaglaban Mo*, I would be given the framework but I would choose the stories, and basically the material, and work on it with Ricky.

Q: In terms of style and structure, what guideposts do you follow? As early as *Moral* you did not follow the typical Filipino film structure?

A: It [the structure of *Moral*] pursues a rising action and a resolution. In that sense, it is still traditionally constructed. But the fad at that time was having comic twists and turns in the plot. That it does not have, because it takes you a while to realize that the fragments of the four lives were moving into a rising action and finally into a resolution. In *Brutal*, we were discouraged by every other person in the industry from doing flashbacks because nakakalito. Oo, nakakalito. But I don't know what can be more nakakalito than *Jose Rizal*.

I mean, the audiences were severely underestimated. And I'm so grateful that they finally proved that they were no longer willing to be underestimated by appreciating the film as they did. In *Moral*, there are no flashbacks, but there are four dramaturgical lines being pursued. So, they said again, iniiwan mo iyong mga characters, malilito [ang audience]. Hindi na nila matatandaan kung saan nanggaling, kung saan mo iniwan si Gina Alajar, the next time you pursue her. But we pursued it anyway. And that's a risk. But it's part of the adventure nga eh, that Ricky and I always like taking. So, we just pursue it because we are convinced that it will work, but also understand that it was always a risk.

Q: You are also a teacher. Of all the things you've learned from LA to London to your last film, what are the most important things that shaped you and which you as a director are passing on to your students?

A: The discipline of craftsmanship. The imagination is something that you are either gifted with or not. You are gifted with other things possibly. Aptitude is something that's there or not there. It's the discipline of crafting a film that has sustained me through different conditions and different films. The ba-



Lorna Tolentino, Sandy Andalang, Ana Marin, and Gina Alajar in *Moral* (1982)

sics of attacking the technology of filmmaking and the discipline of pursuing excellence is timeless. And that I've learned from the London International Film School. Many things have changed since. Technology has changed, but the reason we make films has not really changed and the way we strategize the filmmaking will still be a success or a failure, depending on whether we attack it well. [It is] straining and killing yourself for excellence, without compromising your multiple other obligations first of all, shooting it on budget, on time, and all your other professional and administrative, and family, and social and political obligations to all the people you work with. To preserve and defend that which constitutes integrity... that is painful mentally, physically. You feel like I'm going to die na, but just one more step. Whether it's a pito-pito 2.5 million film or an 80 million film, [you ask yourself] is this the best that I can do? And [you] make that judgement—what? 20, 30 times a day, in preproduction, production and postproduction. That's what constitutes your integrity.

Q: Coming from the middle class, are you not torn in your use of metaphors between self-expression and reaching out to a wide audience?

A: I think that was a real problem in the first part of my career in the '80's. I don't think it is a problem anymore in the '90's. *Ipaglaban* is hardly formulated and it addresses very serious legal issues, di ba? That made a lot of money, so I sense the emergence of a new audience that is educated, literate, discriminating, critical. They are the ones who are now watching National Film Festival directors' films which they weren't going to in the early '80's. I think the gap is shrinking, this gap I was so conscious and feeling guilty about, during the early part of my career.

Q: But is there a consciousness to reach out to an audience?

A: When I think of audiences, I think of Randy David and his children, I think of my drivers and my domestic staff, I think of my gaffer, I think of lots of people I know. I cannot, I don't think in terms of just statistics. I have to see their faces.

Q: And you try to talk to them.

A: Yes, and these are the people that I have as much respect for as myself and whom I never



Groce Amibangso and Vic Silayan in *Karnal* (1983)

underestimate—or I would never have done *Six o'clock News* and *Public Forum* for a decade and succeed in them. It is the audience of *Public Forum* that kept affirming what Randy and I knew, felt we knew—that even if a huge sector of these audiences were less than formally educated, they were very sensitive, sensible and intuitive by nature. [They have] the kind of intelligence that surpasses knowledge.

In the case of *Rizal*, they were there, and when we realized that audiences found an emotional rather than intellectual connection with the film, we were pleasantly surprised. We didn't think they would appreciate it as deeply and as emotionally [as they did.] It is the ultimate reward—the emotional impact it created which I know will last far longer than the intellectual appreciation of the film. When I was making the film I looked at my two sons, the generator man and his family, all the people I know and I just thought of them in a room and I thought they won't have any trouble understanding the film, complex and complicated as it may be, because they are as complex and complicated anyway as people.

Q: Most of your films now seem to be geared to the international market. Is there a difference between making films for a local and for an international market?

A: Nandoon pa rin lahat ng taong minamahal ko [na ibig kong magkagusto] sa ginagawa ko, nadagdagan lang sila. Ngayon nandoon na rin iyong mga kaibigan ko from Finland, Kenya, Japan, China, Nicaragua, Spain. Pero may definite faces pa rin sila. Mas malaki lang iyong sinehan, dinagdagan ko lang iyong mga tao na ini-imagine ko na nanonood ng pelikula ko. Hindi ko dini-displace iyong Filipino audiences.

Q: How are Filipino films received abroad?

A: I can see that for both [festival directors, critics, scholars and public audiences], the handicap [to appreciating our films] is, that the country of origin, the Philippines, is [to them] still an obscure country and at this time, uninteresting. We're not on CNN, unlike China, Japan and Iran. We have no impact on their lives. In 1986, we had a chance to be known but we blew it because we only made *Pido Dido*.

We made fun of the revolution that the world worshipped and revered. We trivialized it. We lost our chance. The second common irritant is the melodramatics. Our films are generally very, very noisy, very, very, talky. Inuuhog iyong screen. It's an irritant to the sensibilities of [some] audiences. [In contrast], the poetry of China and Iran are calming, soothing and inspiring. [However] there is a group of festivals that are particularly hospitable to South-

east Asia, Africa and South America. [These are run by] festival directors [who may know] Lino Brocka and have a residue of goodwill [for the Philippines]. Over the last five years, audiences have been building up for Philippine cinema. And they're no longer looking at one or two names; they're looking at a new generation of Filipino filmmakers. What they like about our films is also what some don't like about it—the emotional rawness. In an age where there is so much anxiety, millennial anxiety sometimes, ito nga iyong gusto nilang makita. Sige, mag-outburst ka, ganoon. Sige [hayaan mong] maging raw and naked iyang emotion mo. Kung ano iyong nakakainis sa iba, iyon din ang hinahanap ng iba. So internationally, we only have good things to look forward to. Last year Filipino films were in more than about 40 festivals worldwide. And sales are being made for television, for distribution and so on. Slowly but steadily, we're getting there.

Q: Finally, artists have won their fight against censorship with Armida Sigulon Reyna as head of the MTRCB. But some quarters feel that the industry has gotten worse because of the prevailing liberalism and cite the number of sex films which are all over the place today.

A: Napakadaling gamiting dahilan ang issue ng censorship para sa mga suliranin ng industriya. Kung lumuwag na iyong censorship, sino ang nagsabi sa iyo na sex lang ang gawin mo? Iyon lang talaga ang gagawin mo if you just want to make the fastest and easiest money in the fastest time. This is still the quickie mentality. Don't tell me that there are not enough talents, because there are. Ang problema is napaka-capital intensive ng paggawa ng pelikula and not every single person can afford to do a feature film. So nandoon pa rin [ito] sa mga kamay ng ilan lamang na may kakayahang mag-finance o mag-produce ng isang pelikula. Damihan man natin ang bagong

henerasyon ng filmmakers at audiences, kung Jurassic park pa rin ang nagfi-finance, Jurassic park pa rin iyong nage-exhibit, sila 'yung first and final [problems, ang matatawag na] "commercial censors". Wala na tayong political censorship. [Pero] nananaig pa rin ang commercial censorship. Sometimes, the love of money overpowers the love of cinema.

Q: So, what do you think is the state of the industry today?

A: A lot of producers are complaining that the film industry is dying. If not already dead. Ako kasi, I am a hopeless optimist. If the old order is dying, we should bury it as soon as possible, with maximum respect, calm, and sobriety, but bury it. Because [there is a] new order or generation that is redefining what the Philippine movie industry should be all about. [This generation] made all these wonderful pieces in 1998, that are alive and kicking and have audiences. After *Jose Rizal*, the films of Joel Lamangan, Carlitos Sigulon Reyna, Chito Roño, and many others, did remarkably well at the box office. [It is] as if the audiences were affirming and confirming that "hey, we're here, we'd like new stuff." We are looking at a new industry. It's a baby that is only now beginning to walk, learning to talk. And I often mention the guys in the frontline [of this new order.] These are Carlitos Sigulon Reyna, Joel Lamangan, Chito Roño, Gil Portes, Mel Chionglo, Peque Gallaga, Lore Reyes, Tikoy Aguiluz, Joey Reyes, Lav Diaz, and Jeffrey Jeturian. At alam ko marami pang iba. Sandali na lang iyan. I can almost smell the new industry, prevailing and asserting itself. Ang advantage ng generation na ito, mayroon siyang kakambal na generation ng audiences na cinematically literate. Kasi wired at may access, hindi lang sa pagpapanood kung hindi sa paggawa—to tell their own stories with their own cameras. That's a new development. Tapos nagkakaroon [pa] ng multilingual, multi-racial complexion ang world cinema ngayon.

Dapat join tayo doon. Nawawala na iyong mga territories, eh. I mean there are Chinese-Americans. There are Americans practicing Kung Fu. So it's becoming really multicolored...the complexion of world cinema. Our biggest advantage is we can make excellent films at still, comparatively speaking, very small budgets.

A big problem is displacement. Noon ang visible lang na nalalao ay ang mga artista, di ba? Ngayon kasi, buong sektor ang madi-displace eh. Bagong camera, bagong editing, bagong style. Tapos napakadali nang palitan [ng mga dating nasa produksyon] kasi nga may audiences na may sarili nang camera at editing machines na hindi na kailangang dumaan pa doon sa deka-dekadang pagti-training at paga-apprentice bago siya makahawak ng camera professionally, o makapag-edit. Ngayon, dalawang taon ka sa film school, OK ka na eh. Handa ka, skilled ka na, prepared. So mas mabilis at mas dramatic ang experience ng displacement. Ito ang nagpapalubha ng resistance to move on, to accept new ideas. Kasi self-preservation iyan eh. At saka self-defense. Ang mga taong nagpupumilit na tumirik sa status quo ay iyong mga taong nawawalan na ng gana o talento o kakayahan na harapin ang mga maliwanag at napaka-dramatic na pagbabago, na inevitable. So in self-preservation, they will invoke seniority, loyalty—to justify their continued employment—over merit and qualification. Hindi lamang professional problem 'yan kundi social at economic problem din. Doon-na lang sa pito-pito, ang mga producers in all studios ang hinahanap niyan young blood. Noon matagal ang displacement ng artista. Noong dumating ang technological changes, patay kang bata ka.

Q: Is there any other problem you'd like to focus on?

A: Nasanay tayo nang may mga predictable formulas, na may mga reliable superstars [Di natin nakita ang] emergence ng bagong audience na wired na. Cyberspace audience na iyan. It did not happen overnight. In other words, iyong lahat na petro dollars na kinita na ng mga OCW's, hindi lamang iyan nakabili ng VHS, laser discs, at lahat ng ibang appliances. Nakapagpaaral din iyan ng bagong henerasyon ng mga anak at kapamilya, na ngayon in the second and third generation, ay may iba nang option, hindi Saudi lang. Puwede na silang bank teller dito sa Maynila. Hindi iyan nangyari overnight. It started 20 years ago. The producers played blind. So huwag silang magtataka kung

Trabaho ito na mahal ko. It's both professional and personal. I care for professional perfection and discipline as much as I care for the personal well-being of the people.

bakit kumita ang *Jose Rizal*. A better educated audience means an audience with more options for jobs. And therefore, with more disposable money and therefore with more options to entertainment and therefore with more discrimination. Armado na sila ng sarili nilang camera, ha. So pati iyong act ng storytelling with your camera is no longer the exclusive domain of the filmmaker. Nor is film appreciation, scholarship or history any longer the exclusive domain of the historian, the scholar, or the critic. The audience is becoming very, very powerful and the producers can no longer cope. This requires an equally young, new generation of producers and critics. We now have the filmmakers and the audiences. Kailangan humabol ang producers at ang critics.. So, isa tyon sa problema.

Balik tayo doon sa being insular. I have everything I need in my own backyard. I'm complacent, aani na lang ako nang aani. Nandiyan ngayon iyong great divide—between this group of pioneering directors who want to break away from the status quo and producers who are desperately clinging to it and shouting at government to save them. No amount of legislation will make better films. Or a more effective cinema. It [legislation] can relieve some business annoyances. But it will not make better films. Only better minds will make better films. The audiences are already there. In other words, kailangan magre-start ng makina. Siguro baka kailangan magpalit ng nagmamaneho. Kasi

nagpalit na iyong pasahero at iyong destinasyon ng pasahero.

Q: And where are you in this whole movement for change? What do you think is the role of cinema in Philippine society today?

A: My earlier films had political, social, economic agendas. *Brutal* had a legal agenda, and so did *Ipaglaban Mo*. *Ika-11 Utos ng Diyos*, and *Moral* had a social, educational agenda. For a long time, I concentrated on a material agenda, a sharply defined feminist agenda which later I did not want to reject but wanted to move on to the next dimension of womanhood. To me kasi, we are always looking at the material requirements—food, clothing, shelter. But even if we get all three, we are not yet happy, we don't have any peace of mind. [We must explore] the realm of the imagination—from social realism to magic, to fantasy and the realm of imagination. We find this as important, as enriching and as nourishing as bread. Where am I? I am trying to explore every space I can in this entire spectrum—from actual reality, to the reality of my dreams, my illusions, my fantasies, my imagination. That entire spectrum is the playground of cinema and a good cinema is one that produces films in the entire spectrum.


What I'm trying to say is that a cinema is good for as long as it serves the imagination of the society. A film succeeds if it can stimulate

the imagination of our audiences—whether it be about Insiang, Selya or Miguel/Michelle and Jose Rizal.

Q: Which to you is your best film?

A: I don't know what my most important film is; later generations will probably decide that. Time is the best arbiter, it will say what is my most important film. The only thing I can [identify] are the two films that have been the most personally significant to me as a person, as a woman, and these are *Moral*, written for me by Ricky Lee and *Milagros*, written for me by Rolando Tinio. These are bookends of my constant need to re-invent myself, to re-invent my environment. These are my personal favorites, the ones that are personally meaningful to me. They have echoes and resonances inside my heart, more than any of the other films I've done.

Q: You wear many hats—film director, producer, teacher, mother, wife, organizer. Which is most important to you?

A: My humanity, my worth as a human being and as a person. My soul is important to me. It's very important to me. I think about it all the time. 

Ellen Ongkeko, directs television dramas and is now preparing for her film directorial debut.



MARILOU DIAZ-ABAYA: FILMOGRAPHY

1980	Tanikala	1986	Sensual
1980	Brutal	1993	Kung Ako'y Iiwan Mo
1981	Macho Gigolo	1994	Ika-11 Utos
1982	Moral	1995	Ipaglaban Mo
1982	Boystown	1996	May Nagmamahal Sa Iyo
1983	Minsan Pa Nating Hagkan ang Nakaraan	1997	Milagros
1983	Karnal	1998	Sa Pusod ng Dagat
1984	Alyas Baby Tsina	1998	Jose Rizal



Charito Solís in her first starring role in Niña Bonita (1955)

Charito Solis

Alagad ng Sining, Diyosa ng Kagandahan

NI MARIO A. HERNANDO

Charito Solis was one of the biggest and most enduring stars and greatest actresses of Philippine cinema, having appeared in countless films, many of them classics like *Kundiman ng Lahi*, *Malvarosa*, *Emily*, *El Filibusterismo*, *Ina*, *Kapatid*, *Anak*, *Kisapmata*, *Hinugot sa Langit* and *City After Dark*. She was famous for her dramatic roles, even if ironically two of her earliest movies at LVN Pictures, her home studio, were light comedies. She had a style which only enhanced her realistic and sometimes larger-than-life portrayals of a wide range of characters, from demure peasant girls and pathetic victims, to seductive sirens and later martyr mothers. They were heart-breaking performances that enthralled moviegoers. They were crowd-pleasers and yet they had a lasting, shining quality.

When LVN closed shop in 1961, she reinvented herself by doing other, more challenging roles. She dared where no other local actress had dared before, deglamorizing herself by appearing with very little or no makeup, blackening her skin and wearing a prosthetic to play an aged woman. She even defied conservative trends in filmmaking then by playing a has-been actress brutalized in a gang-rape, and baring her breasts as a mountain maiden. All this for the sake of realism.

She was paired with all her home studio's leading men, from Jaime de la Rosa and Leroy Salvador, to Nestor de Villa and Pancho Magalona, but in later decades was romanced on screen by ever-increasingly younger partners like Christopher de Leon. She did two pictures in Japan, the first being the colossal *Gautama Buddha*, and in the late '60s starred in a series of glossy, color melodramas for Nepomuceno Productions. If early in her career she benefited from her films with such masters as Lamberto Avellana, Gregorio Fernandez and Gerardo De Leon, her association with such recent masters as Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal and Mike de Leon resulted in more classic films, including a highly-acclaimed and crowd-drawing stage presentation, all of which cemented her reputation as an artist of the highest order. The actress admitted that her sad past and growing-up years without a father and in poverty served as the wellspring of the boundless emotions she depicted in her films.

Sa kasaysayan ng pelikulang Pilipino, natatangi, nangingibabaw at kapuri-puri ang ambag ni Charito Solis bilang alagad ng sining. Kahanay niya sa panteon bilang isa sa makinang na bituin at seryoso at mahusay na artista ang mga tinatagulang superstar na sina Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, Fernando Poe, Jr., Dolphy, Gloria Romero, Pancho Magalona at Nida Blanca. Sa loob ng tatlo o halos limang dekada, nagpamalas si Charito ng makatotohanan at makasining na pagganap. Mahalagang sangkap ang pagganap na iyan sa integridad ng isang pelikula. Maging kanagdagang kinang sa isang napakagandang pelikula pero kadalasa'y tanging dahilan kung bakit nagkaroon ng kabuluhan ang ibang sana'y maging mga pangkaraniwang pelikula lamang.

Nakinabang ang entablado, radyo at telebisyon sa galing ni Charito, pero napakatindi at napakahaba ng pagsikat niya sa pelikula kaya't siya'y tinatagulang "movie star," "movie actress" at "Drama Queen of Philippine Movies." Ang mga titulong iyan ay dahil na rin sa pagganap sa mga pelikulang umantig sa damdamin ng napakaraming manonood. Marami sa pelikulang ito ay matuturing na klasiko, tulad ng *Kundiman ng Lahi* (1959) ni Lamberto Avellana, *Malvarosa* (1958) at *Emily* (1960) ni Gregorio Fernandez, *El Filibusterismo* (1959) ni Gerardo de Leon, *Ina, Kapatid, Anak* (1979) ni Lino Brocka, *Kisapmata* (1981) ni Mike de Leon, at *City After Dark* (1980) ni Ishmael Bernal. Popular na popular naman ang mga ginampanan niyang pelikula tulad ng *Dahil Sa Isang Bulaklak* (1967) at *Igorota* (1968) ni Jose Nepomuceno, *Araw-Araw, Gabi-Gabi* (1975) ni Danny Cabreira, at *Don't Cry For Me, Papa* (1983) ni Maryo J. de los Reyes. Kakatwang isipin na ang dalawa sa tatlo niyang unang pelikula ay komedi: *Niña Bonita* (1955) katambal si Jaime de la Rosa at *Charito, I Love You* (1956) katambal si Leroy Salvador. Sa kabataan niya'y isa pang komedi ang kanyang ginampanan, ang isa sa epektibong seriyeng satirikal ni Manuel Conde, ang *Juan Tamad Goes to Society* (1960).

Mula dekada '80 hanggang '90, lumabas din si Charito sa katawa-tawang papel sa pelikula at sa komersyal (na nag-aanunsyo halimbawa ng detergent), at telebisyon. Pinagsama sila ni Gloria Romero



Charito with Rebecca del Rio in *Malvarosa* (1958)

at Nida Blanca sa TV sitcom na pinamagatang *Fifty Carats, O Di Ba?* At nakasali siya sa mga soap opera (*Tierra Sangre* sa PTV-4 at *Mula sa Puso* sa ABS-CBN). Pero sa pakikipag-usap namilya halatang ipinagmamalaki niya ang sitcom na *Okey Ka, Fairy Ka*, kung saan siya gumaganap sa pangunahing papel na Ina Magenta, kakatwang engkatarang hiyenan ni Vic Sotto. Kung sikat na sikat man si Charito mula nang ikalawang hati ng dekada '80 hanggang unang hati ng '90, ito ay dahil sa *Okey Ka, Fairy Ka*. (May mga nauna pa siyang TV shows noong matatapos na ang dekada '60, na siya ang pangunahing tampok, pero drama pa rin ang kadalasang papel tulad *The Charito Solis Show*.)

Isa siya sa pangunahin at matagalang artista sa industriya na sa unang pelikula pa lang ay bida agad; title role pa ang papel. Ipinakilala siya ng tyuhling si Felicing H. Constantino, isa sa paboritong direktor sa LVN Pictures, kay Dofa Narda Buencamino vda. De Leon, and prodyuser at grand matriarch ng LVN studio, na naghahanap noon ng bagong mukhang ipakikilala sa gagawin pa lamang na pelikulang *Niña Bonita*. Katulad ng paniwala pa rin ngayon ng mga prodyuser, ang tagumpay sa takilya ng unang tambalan hina Charito at Jaime de la Rosa ay dapat masundan at sinundan nga ito ng isa pang pelikula nang taon ding iyon, ang *Dinayang Pagmamahal*.

Tulad ni Della Razon at Nida Blanca, si Charito'y higitang bituin ng LVN - maraming tagahanga na walang sawang

tinatangkilik ang bawat labas - kaya't sa mga sumunod na tao'y sumud-sunod ang kanyang pelikula. Apat na pelikula o higit pa noong 1956, lima noong 1957, anim noong 1958, apat noong 1959 at pito noong 1960. Ang mga Reyna ng Pelikula ay may kani-kaniyang katambal: Si Carmen Rosales kay Rogelio de la Rosa, Gloria Romero kay Luis Gonzales, Nida Blanca kay Nestor de Villa. Hindi man siya nahirang na Reyna ng Pelikula tulad ng mga nabanggit, reyna naman si Charito ng drama. Pero walang permanenteng kapartner. Ngayo'y nakaugaliang pagsamahin ang bantog na leading lady at ang iba-ibang leading man; ganyan din noon ang nangyari kay Charito. Nakatambal niya sa magkakasunod na pelikula ang lahat na sikat na aktor ng LVN: si Jaime at Leroy, si Mario Montenegro sa *Ullang Bituin* (1956), Nestor de Villa sa *Big*

Shot (1955) at *Ang Langit Ko'y Ikaw* (1959), Armando Gayena sa *Sanga-Sangang Puso* (1957) at *"Welga"* (isang bahagi ng *Medalyong Perlas*), Eddie Rodriguez sa *P10,000 Pag-ibig* (1957), kung saan kasama rin niya ang bagumbagong artistang si Jose Ejercito (ina naging Joseph Estrada), Diomedes Maturan sa *Rose Tattoo ng Bahay Ko* (1958) at Pancho Magalona sa *Emily* (1960). Pati si Fernando Poe, Jr., ngayo'y Hari ng Pelikulang Pilipino, ay nakapareha ni Charito sa bakuran ng LVN nang ito'y hiram sa Premiere Production para sa pelikulang *Sandata at Pangako* (1959). Hindi lamang mga ka-edad ang naging kapartner ni Charito. Sa tagal ng kanyang pagganap bilang bida, pabata nang pabata ang kaniyang nakatambal, mula kay Dindo Fernando at Phillip Salvador hanggang kay Christopher de Leon.

Masasabing mamera ang drama stars sa industriya, noon man o ngayon. Pero namukod-tangi si Charito kahit kailan. May sariling estilong makatotohanan at kapani-paniwalang paglalarawan ng tuhan, angkop sa personalidad, at tanggap na tanggap ng manonood. Noong una'y pinuna siya sa di-umano'y "predictable" at "mannered" na pagganap. Ang parating nakikita ng kanyang mga kritiko ay ang nanginginig na baba, di-maliwasang bunga ng madamdamin at kalunus-lunos na pagganap; sa katunayan, epektibo ito sa *Kundiman ng Lahi* at *Emily*. Naging trademark pa nga iyo ni Charito, pero di nagtagal at itinigil na niya ang ganitong

uri ng pag-arte. Bagay na nakahuti sa estilo niya na patuloy na naging orihinal, bago at kasorpre-sorpresa.

Bigay-tudo ang dedikasyon sa sining at di-alintana ang noo'y namamayang konserbatismo sa lipunan at sa paglikha ng sining, kaya't buong-puso niyang binuhos ang sarili sa ginagampanang papel. Ang luha niya'y tunay na luha, hindi Eye-Mo. Ang ngiti'y iba't-ibang klase; may pilit na ngiti, may mayuming ngiti, at may pilya o mapang-akit na ngiti. Balitang-balita sa industriya na ang sampala'y tunay na sampalan. Walang problema kay Chato kung kailangang magpapangit, magpaitim o magpatanda. Pero kahit na wala, kakaunti o sobra ang meykap, mabababaag pa rin ang ganda at alindog.

Naiiba rin siya sa karamihang sikat na artista na mga mestisa. Di maitatwang siya'y Pilipino – at Agyano sa kabila ng pahayag na siya'y may dugong Italiano. Walang bahid ang kanyang kutis at kahit na nang mga huling taon niya'y halos walang kulubot at mantsa ito. Pero pwede rin siyang gumanap na Koreana sa **Unlang Bituin** (1956) o Haponesa kaya. Noong 1960, pumunta siya sa Japan upang gumanap na asawa ng Buddha, ang pangunahing artistang babae, sa **Gautama Buddha** (1960) o (**Sakya**) pelikulang maituturing na pinakamalaha sa bansa nang kapanahunang iyon (kasagutan ng Hapon sa **The Ten Commandments** ni Cecil B. de Mille). Si Kojiro Hongo ang gumanap na Buddha, na katambal muli ni Charito sa isa pang pelikulang Hapon, ang **The Princess and I** na ginawa noong 1961. Kung pinalad lamang si Charito – at ang industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino – na mapalabas at mabigyan ng sapat na publisidad sa iba't ibang bansa ang **Kundiman ng Lahi** at iba pang pelikula niya mula pa noong dekada '50, sama'y nagkaroon siya ng pagkakataong maging *international superstar* – malamang na naging umong babaeng superstar mula sa Asya, bago pa man nagkapangalan ang Tsining si Gong Li.



Rita Locsin, Charito Solis, Laurice Guillen, Lakita Rodriguez, and Manny Djezo in *Ino, Kopatid, Anak* (1979)

Nagsara noong 1961 ang home studio ni Charito, ang LVN, tahanan ng mga pampamilyang pelikula. Tila naklayon lang ito sa panahon – at sa pag-unlad ng sining ni Charito. Di pa noon uso ang nabansagang “bold genre” sa pelikulang Pilipino, kategoryang tumutukoy sa mga pelikulang “bold” o matapang, mapusok at mapang-akit (sa pagpapakita o pagsasadula sa mga bagay na sekswal o erotiko). Walang pakundangang pinatunayan ito ni Charito sa pelikulang **Angustia** (1963) sa papel ng laos na artistang hinalay ng apat na lalake. Kung nagdudulot man ng usapin ang paghuhubad ng mga kasalukuyang artista sa kani-kaniyang pelikula, natatawa lamang dito si Charito, dahil ito'y napagdaanan niya. Nagpakita siya ng dibdib bilang taga-bundok na napadpad sa Maynila sa **Igorota** noong 1968, isa sa mga malupo, pulido at may-kulay na pelikula ng Nepomuceno Productions. Natural lamang na patok na patok sa takilya ang mga seksing pagganap ni Charito. Mula pa man nang sumikat siya, hindi nawawala sa kamalayan ng manonood ang dalawa sa mahalaga niyang katangian: isa siya sa pinakamagandang mukha sa buong kasaysayan ng Pelikulang Pilipino, at kung hindi man siya naging Reyna ng Drama, malamang na siya ay tinaguriang “number one sex symbol,” na may katawang balingkinitan at malusog at mayamang dibdib.

Gayumpaman, sa kabila ng pagiging mapang-akit, at napakaselsi at “hold” ni Chato, hindi bastos o malaswa ang pelikula. Ang mga lagapan na tsimis tungkol sa buhay-pag-ibig ng bituing ito ay nagpaigting lamang sa kanyang mystique, sa kanyang imahen bilang artista, bituin at mapagmahal na babae. Di tulad ng maraming bagong artista, hindi naghangad ng publisidad si Chato. Siya ang simundan at hinabol ng pansin ng madla – natural lamang sa isang tunay na bituin. Kaya't habang hinuhulaan ng publiko kung sino ang kasalukuyang kasintahan niya, tahimik at masugid niyang hinarap ang pamemelikula.

Hindi naman nakaligtang pansinin at parangalan ang kakayahan niya bilang artista. Sa katunayan, bago pa man humakot ng tropeyo sa larangan ng pagganap si Vilma Santos at Nora Aunor mula sa iba't ibang pangkat na namamahagi ng gawad para sa pelikula, paulit-ulit na pinarangalan si Charito ng FAMAS Awards (tulad ng mga National Artist na sina Gerardo de Leon at Lamberto Avellana) hanggang sa siya'y maluklok sa FAMAS Hall of Fame. Hinirang siya bilang Asia's Best Actress sa Asian Film Festival para sa pelikulang **Dahil Sa Isang Bulaklak** (1967). Binigyan si Charito ng Manunuri ng

Masasabing mamera ang drama stars sa industriya, noon man o ngayon. Pero namukod-tangi si Charito kahit kailan. May sariling estilong makatotohanan at kapani-paniwalang paglalarawan ng tauhan, angkop sa personalidad, at tanggap na tanggap ng manonood.

Pelikulang Pilipino ng tatlong Gawad Urian: isa para sa Pinakamahusay na Pangunahing Aktres (**Ina, Kapetid, Anak**), at dalawa sa Pinakamahusay na Pangalawang Aktres (**Kisapmata at Karnal**). May mga tropeyo rin siya mula sa Manila Film Festival, Catholic Mass Media Awards, Film Academy of the Philippines, at Philippine Movie Press Club (namamahagi ng Star Awards). Ginawaran siya ng PMPC ng Ullrang Artista Award, isang parangal para sa *Lifetime Achievement*, noong Marso 1997, ang pinakahuling karangalang natanggap niya.

Nang sumakablang-buhay si Charito noong Enero 1998, kapapalabas pa lamang ng pelikula niyang pinamahalaan ni William Pascual, ang **Sandakot na Kaligayahan** (1997) sa papel na salbahang biyenan ni Jaclyn Jose. Yumao na siya nang magbukas naman ang posthumous at pinakahuling pelikula, kung saan malilit lamang ang papel niya, ang **Pag-ibig Ko Sa Iyo'y Ibang-Iba** (1998) na pinamahalaan naman ni Maryo J. de los Reyes at pangunahing tampok sina Aga Muhlach at Aiko Melendez.

Mayaman, matatag at walang kupas ang kontribusyon ni Charito sa Pelikulang Pilipino. Malaking bagay na tunay na artist din ang mga namahala sa kanya, mula kay Awelana, Conde, Fernandez at Gery de Leon, hanggang kay Mike de Leon, Marilou Diaz-Abaya at Maryo J. de los Reyes. Maganda rin ang bunga ng pakikipag-ugnayan niya sa yumao na ring direktor na si Lino Brocka (**Ina, Kapetid, Anak**), dahil si Lino ang nag-udyok sa kanya na gumanap sa entablado katapat si Lolita Rodriguez sa **Larawan**, ang salin sa Pilipino ng dula ni Nick Joaquin na **A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino**. Tampok naman si Charito sa dalawa sa pinakamahusay na pelikula ni Ismael Bernal, ang obra maestrang **City After Dark** at **Hinugot sa Langit** (1985). Lahat na yata ng papel na hahamon sa kakayahan ng isang artista'y nabigyang-buhay na ni Charito. Siya ay naging api at babaeng nilapastangan. Naging baylarina, madre, mahiyang taga-bukod, luka-luka, pinagpipitagang maestra, ibong mababa ang lipad, panatiko sa relihiyon, inang martir, inang pabaya, inang disente (pero may nakaraang hindi disente). Naging mayaman, naging mahitrap.

Sa tunay na buhay, inamin ni Charito na kahirapan at kapaitan ng buhay ang kanyang kinaginan. Ipinanganak na Rosario Violeta Solis noong ika-6 ng Oktubre, 1935 sa Sta. Cruz, Manila, isa sa apat na anak sa labas ng kanyang amang manunulat. Lumaking walang ama. Pinaampon ng ina sa isang tiya noong panahon ng Hapon. Nag-aral sa mababang paaralan sa San Pablo, Batangas at nagpatuloy sa mataas na paaralan sa University of the East. Hindi niya kinaila ang nakaraang ito; sa pakitawar pa nga niya'y ang mga karanasang ito ang nagsilbing balon ng mga damdaming nilarawan at nilinaw sa mga tauhang ginampanan, mga tauhang parating mabubuhay kapag pinatay na ang ilaw sa sinelan at sinimulan nang palabasim ang pelikulang tampok ang diyosa ng kagandahan at kapanalig ni Thespis. **11**

Mario A. Hernandez is editor of *Sunday Malaya* and founding member and former chair of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY OF CHARITO SOLIS

1955 Niña Bonita
1955 Dinayang Pagmamahal
1956 Charito, I Love You
1956 Ullang Bituin
1956 Medalyong Pardo ("Waga" episode)
1956 Big Shot
1956 Doma Juana Gang
1957 Walang Sugat
1957 Tirrit ng Ibon
1957 Sanga-Sangang Pasa
1957 P10,000 Pag-ibig
1957 Krisis
1958 Villa Mlagmasa
1958 Malvarosa
1958 Ana Maria
1958 Casa Grande
1958 ("Gerilyang Putaput" episode)
1958 Rose Tatnan ng Buhay Ko
1958 Limang Dalangin
1959 Gimintang Tingi
1959 Mucho Dinero
1959 Kundiman ng Lahit
1959 Ang Langit Ko'y Ikaw
1960 Emily
1960 Juan Tumulid Goes to Society
1960 Unos sa laor
1960 Dahila
1960 Kong Ako'y Mahal Mo
1960 Gautama Buddha (Japanese production)

1961 Luis-Laliga
1961 Samlata at Pangako
1961 The Princess and I (Japanese Production)
1962 El Filibusterismo
1962 Jibini
1963 Mga Batang Hiyas
1963 Maria Dolores
1963 Augusta
1964 Gimintang Ani
1966 Mga Pag-ibig ni Christine
1967 Dahil Sa Isang Balaklak
1967 Manila: Open City
1968 Ignora
1968 Pipa
1969 Ang Putubi
1975 Anaw-Anaw, Gabi-Gabi
1977 Bata, Ngipon at Kullanan
1977 Beerhouse
1977 Walang Katapusang Pag-araw
1979 Modelong Tanso
1979 Inii
1979 Ina, Kapetid, Anak
1979 Gabun
1980 Manila By Night (City After Dark)
1981 Playgirl
1981 Kisapmata
1982 Batch '81
1983 Don't Cry For Me, Papa
1983 Karnal



Charito Solis and Oscar Keesee in Gerardo de Leon's *El Filibusterismo* (1962)

1984 Sinner or Saint
1985 Hinugot sa Langit
1989 Tatlong Mukha ng Pag-ibig
1991 Ipagpatawid Mo
1992 Kaw Pa Lang ang Minsal
1993 Dahil Mahal Kita (Dolores Cortez Story)
1993 Saan Ka Man Naroroon
1995 The Floe Contemplation Story
1997 Sandakot na Kaligayahan
1998 Pag-ibig Ko Sa Iyo'y Ibang-Iba



Chris Villanueva and Ricky Davao in Mike de Leon's *Bayaning Third World* (1999)



Mike de Leon

Conversations with

By CLODUALDO DEL MUNDO, JR.

Miguel or Mike de Leon could have been christened the *enfant terrible* of Philippine Cinema. He was already into filmmaking and photography in his early twenties; at 27, he produced and directed the photography of Lino Brocka's *Maynila... Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975). But he is now one of the golden boys, over fifty, and feeling the encroachment of middle age on his physical body. However, those who have witnessed his tempestuous temper would agree with the second half of that title — he could well be “Miguel, the Terrible” — after Eisenstein's *Ivan, the Terrible*.

But I have known Mike even before *Maynila*. That is not to say that I know him well. I don't think anybody knows him well. He is the most private, i.e. aloof, person there is in the local film industry. But having worked with Mike in five of his eight films, and the ninth that he is presently struggling to finish, I can say that I have seen him up close to give me an idea of the person beyond his stereotypical image.

Mike's obsession is films and filmmaking. From 1975 to 1985 was a decade of active filmmaking for him. After producing *Maynila*, he directed his first film, the eerie and mysterious *Itim* (1976), with Tommy Abuel and Charo Santos, the erstwhile colegiala who is now the steely executive producer of Star Cinema. *Itim* belongs to that

landmark year in Philippine cinema which saw Lino Brocka's *Insang*, Eddie Romero's *Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?*, Lupita Cancio's *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamu*, Ishmael Bernal's *Nunal sa Tubig*. After *Itim*, Mike did *Kung Mangarap Ka't Magising* (1977), a lightweight romantic film characterized by lush, lightly saturated colors and hummable tunes, starring Christopher de Leon and the beautiful Hilda Koronel. *Kung Mangarap* was shown during the Metro Manila Film Festival when Cebo Ad. Castillo's *Burlesk Queen* swept the awards and Rolando Tinio, together with his unthinking co-jurors, castigated the other filmmakers. It was the first time that Mike spoke up publicly and sarcastically thanked the jurors for the technical award, the pampalubag-loob that was bestowed on his film entry.

About two years later, Mike worked on three films back-to-back: the crazy comedy *Kakabakaba Ka Ba?* (1980), the film that antedated other films with “nuns” swinging wildly on screen; the violent *Batch '81* (produced in 1981, released in 1982), the primer on fraternity life that should be “irrelevant” today, but unfortunately continues to be made relevant by uncontrolled fraternity hazings; and the tragic *Klapmeta* (1982), the film that demonstrates his masterful handling of a psychological drama.

The historic developments of the early 1980s, particularly the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, moved Mike de Leon to make **Sister Stella L** (1984), the story of a nun's commitment to fight authoritarian rule and oppression. Mike wanted to produce it himself for his group Cinema Artists, but for some reason financial support from the Film Fund did not materialize. Mother Lily (Monteverde) of Regal Films heard about the project, loved the "L" in the title and asked for an appointment with Mike. "We met over dinner," Mike narrates. "I gave her an idea of the story. She agreed that it would be good for Vilma [Santos]. So, we talked some more. In between, she asked the waiter for the phone. Then out of the blue she asked if Nora [Aunor] would be okay for the role. I said maybe, but we would need to re-write the script for her. Then, right in front of me, she talked to Vilma on the phone. 'O, kasama ko ngayon si Mike de Leon... bagay din pala kay Nora ang role.' I could hear Vilma saying 'Hindi... akin 'yan, akin 'yan.' That's how she got Vilma!" Mike witnessed for himself the wily producer at work.

Sister Stella L was finished under Regal, but Mike had to hurdle serious attempts by Father Remy (Monteverde) to stop the film. Mother Lily's husband sent Mike a letter stressing that they were businessmen, not political propagandists. Somehow, the film got finished, but not without Mother Lily's support. And

ing when Mike was not finished yet with the mixing of the audio tracks. The producers were forced to cancel the screening when no print was in sight. The stars who came all dressed up for the occasion were fuming mad. Mike became the villain in this story and his comment in one interview — "Why all the fuss over this silly movie?" — did not help him any. Mike removed his name from the credits, but he did see the film to the end. "They made sure that I had already finished the film before firing me." Ironically, **Hindi Nahahati ang Langit** is Mike's most commercially successful movie.

A video project for Sony followed — **Bilanggo sa Dilim** (1985), with Joel Torre and Cherie Gil. Sony Philippines had a grand plan to open video theaters in Manila. **Bilanggo sa Dilim** was shown once, marking the beginning and end of the grand plan. The project, constrained by limited budget, was just not feasible.

In 1985, Mike was offered to direct another melodrama, to be produced by Regal, with a formidable cast of stars including Gabby Concepcion, Aga Muhlach, Richard Gomez and Vilma Santos. There was no script yet except for a scene that was in Mother Lily's mind. Mike recalls the scene. "Graduation ni Vilma, may party, tapos nabaril 'yung tatay n'ya. Sabi ni Mother Lily, basta ang kailangan ko lang 'yung hawak-hawak ni Vilma ang tatay n'ya, duguan, nakasuot pa ng pang-graduation. She had already visualized the trailer." Well, the scene

Another melodrama was presented to him in the early 1990s, **Dahl Mahal Kita**, with Christopher de Leon, Vilma Santos and Tiso Cruz III. The project lasted for one shooting day. The shooting schedule of Christopher and Vilma could not be reconciled. Mike, the real superstar on the set, walked out on the project. I thought it was bound to happen. Mike, after all the years of filming his projects according to his vision, did not deserve the melodramatic schlock that the industry was offering him.

Today, Mike is back, struggling to finish a film that he himself is financing, producing and directing. The working title — **Bayaning Third World**. The subject is Mike's other obsession, Jose Rizal. Mike taught himself about the national hero. "We only had a token Rizal course... one unit. I took him up seriously after college." But let us go through the history of this Rizal project for a moment.

The opportunity to turn his obsession into film came in 1996, when Cinemax, the not-so-original original name of GMA Films, offered Mike to do a film about Jose Rizal. Aga Muhlach was cast as Rizal, a choice that raised the eyebrows of critics. "I thought Aga was the one who could pull it off — show the human side of Rizal. The Rizal doing mundane things and going through a lot of emotional scenes, like losing his child. It was Aga's presence that I was after. It was melodrama, a super production, so I thought a superstar should be there."

Mike de Leon

not without Mother Lily's periodic calls. "Like one time, she called to ask 'pwedeng ipasok si Snooky?' I just said 'No.'"

After seeing the film, Mother Lily visited Mike: "Nakokonsensya ako, sabi ni Mother... magreform na ako," Mike recalls that momentous occasion. "Magbabago na raw s'ya... she said it with all seriousness... it was not a funny situation." But, today, Mike tells that story like a scene from a black comedy.

Mike is not too enthusiastic anymore about **Sister Stella L**. "It looks dated to me... too didactic... during that time, it was okay... I think we were all sincere." But time has a way of changing one's view; Mike is not thrilled by it anymore.

Mike also dabbled in an utterly commercial project, **Hindi Nahahati ang Langit** (1985), a material based on komiks. The shooting with Christopher de Leon, Dina Bonnevie and Lorna Tolentino went smoothly, but the post-production was something else. The producers (Vanguard Films), Mike recalls, scrimped on the budget, like sending only four or five rolls of magnetic sound film when he needed ten. To top it all, the producers scheduled a premiere screen-

ing when Mike was not finished yet with the mixing of the audio tracks. The producers were forced to cancel the screening when no print was in sight. The stars who came all dressed up for the occasion were fuming mad. Mike became the villain in this story and his comment in one interview — "Why all the fuss over this silly movie?" — did not help him any. Mike removed his name from the credits, but he did see the film to the end. "They made sure that I had already finished the film before firing me." Ironically, **Hindi Nahahati ang Langit** is Mike's most commercially successful movie.

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In 1991, like manna from heaven, an offer to do a film came from the Asia Center of the Japan Foundation. An omnibus film to be made by filmmakers from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines was conceived by the Asia Center. Mike's name was recommended by Tadan Sato, respected Japanese critic. The result was "**Aliwan Paradise**" a segment of **Southern Winds**. Using the now-archetypical characters of **Maynila... Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag** (Julio Madala and Ligaya Parasol), Mike's film is a dark comedy about our society that is mired in entertainment.

I visited the set once in Mindoro. The crew was waiting for the night shoot. The shooting went smoothly during the day, more or less, I was told, although Mike was quite unhappy with the costume. "Delgras [the officer who escorts Rizal to Dapitan] looks like a clown," Mike told me. After nightfall, dinner was served. Mike took note of the poor catering service, saying that the crew would not be satisfied with just a cup of rice. The first set up was a shot of the Casa Cuadrada against the night sky. The crowd was unruly. To top it all, Aga was a bit late. The scene was set for a display of his proverbial temper. After the shot, Mike shouted "Cut" followed by an expletive and "Pack up!" Everyone was dumbfounded. The shoot was not only packed up for the night; the crew and staff were asked to go back to Manila the next morning. It was a nightmare for the line producer. But, in fairness to Mike, it must be noted that his emotional outburst was triggered, motivated if you will, by production problems that could have been avoided by a little more care and effort. The man could just not take inefficiency and incompetence.

The scene, Mike's expression of discontent with the production, would be repeated a few more times. Later, when Aga resigned to fulfill other commitments, Mike's exit followed suit and the project was aborted. Looking back at that debacle, Mike admits — "The project was too big... the pressure was too much for me... producing and directing it myself." Mike's loss was Marilou Diaz-Abaya's gain. Marilou took over the project and finished *Jose Rizal*, the film that would be the top grosser in the 1998 Metro Manila Film Festival.

However, the story did not end there. After a time of soul-searching, Mike realized that the Cinemax project was not the kind of film about Rizal that he wanted to do; there was something lurking in his mind, a different film about the national hero. "There is a lot to be said about Rizal. After all, several books have been written about him," Mike explains. Referring to films that have been done recently, particularly *Rizal sa Dapitan* by Tikoy Aguiluz and *Jose Rizal* by Marilou Diaz-Abaya, he continues, "Their premise is Rizal, the hero. I don't take that for granted. There is a tendency for that kind of premise to cloud our understanding of Rizal. The man was full of contradictions. Unfortunately, cinema is a great simplifier... and these contradictions are not explored."

How different would your Rizal be? "I don't deal much with his human side. Our original screenplay for Cinemax tried to achieve that. This is not melodrama. I'm more interested in issues that put into question his heroism. Like, the retraction controversy. We face this issue head on. It is not merely a question of whether he returned to the fold or not. What's more important is, did he retract his writings, his pronouncements, his lifework? If he did, then, what's so heroic about him? The film is more cerebral." There, Mike mentions the dirty word that might just drive the audience away. "And the film is turning out to be darker and more comic than I originally envisioned. The title *Bayaning Third World* has become appropriate."

Among the films that I have done with Mike, I think *Bayaning Third World* is the most unpredictable. There is no telling how the film would finally shape up. It is experimen-

tal in the real sense of the word, although Mike abhors the word. "Pag hindi kasi alam ng filmmaker ang ginagawa n'ya, experimental ang tawag."

The film is in black-and-white, another non-attraction for the common viewers. The

film shifts from the present to the past, the contemporary characters confront the historical characters, and the film moves further into the past. Mike rationalizes his use of black-and-white, "In our original screenplay for Cinemax, there was a plan to separate the present scenes in color from the flashbacks in black-and-white... but, in this film, the present meets the past so that scheme won't work. Moreover, color tends to accentuate the surface. I'm more interested in ideas, so I hope that black-and-white would help the audience to think more than admire the surface."

Looking at that decision to use black-and-white, Mike says that the production is a great learning experience. "We don't know how to use black-and-white anymore. Tests had to be made in the lab. Production design had to be conceived in black-and-white. We had to think black-and-white... how the colors would translate in shades of gray." Black-and-white is not cheaper, either. Black-and-white raw stock is more expensive than color and has to be ordered from Eastman Kodak in advance.

The problems that the production had to go through were incredible. Aside from technical challenges, Mike had to face the major problem of casting. Knowing that he did not have the money to cast a superstar, Mike and his staff searched for Rizal in various theater groups, aside from the industry's





Joel Torre and Lara Fabregas in *Bayaning Third World* (1999)

actors' guild. Auditions and screen tests were held. Choices were made, only to be changed after more screen tests or even when shooting had started. "GMA had an unwritten agreement with their major actors that they would not appear in our film," Mike says, and that made the search more difficult. He tried several actors, known and unknown, signing up one, then another, and still another to play Rizal, but somehow he could not convince himself that the choice would work. "We would have been spared the agony of casting and rejecting actors if Joel had joined us earlier," Mike refers to Joel Torre, who plays Ibarra/Simoun in Marilou's *Jose Rizal*. Anyway, after GMA had wrapped up its shoot, Joel appeared in the nick of time, just as Mike had signed a contract with yet another actor to play Rizal. After some talks, Mike made his decision. Joel was cast as Rizal, with Lara Fabregas as Josephine Bracken, and Ed Rocha as Padre Balaguer. Ricky Davao and Cris Villanueva would play the contemporary filmmakers.

Mike is putting his own money where his mouth is. He estimates that the film would cost him anywhere from 11 to 12 million pesos up to the first answer print. The film is now in post-production and Mike continues to shape and re-shape the film. While problems continue to plague this production, I don't think anything is going to stop him from finishing it — not even the fire that gutted his house last year before Christmas.

In April 1999, Mike celebrated the third anniversary of his Rizal project. His involvement with Cinemax started in 1996. In August 1997, he started to re-think this project and made a commitment to produce his own film. The making of *Bayaning Third World* is entering its second year. But Mike is bent on finishing it this year. Hopefully, we will see this opus before the end of the first quarter.

Oh, yes... I witnessed a few more outbursts of his tempestuous temperament. But like a good screenplay, these outbursts were properly motivated. 

[In *Bayaning Third World*,] I'm more interested in ideas, so I hope that black-and-white would help the audience to think more than admire the surface, -- Mike de Leon 

One Hundred Titles One Hundred Reasons

By MIGUEL Q. RAPATAN



Pumili si Mel Tobias ng, sa kanyang palagay, ay ang 100 mahuhusay na pelikulang Pilipino na maaaring ipagkapuri sa mundo. May datos tungkol sa mga pelikulang ito at mga larawan ng mga eksena mula sa mga ito, mga poster at mga larawan ng mga kilalang direktor. Ngunit maaaring punahin ang libro dahil sa mga sumusunod. Una, walang malinaw na pamantayang ginamit sa pagpili ng mga pelikulang isinama sa libro, pagkat di naman nasunod ang criteria na inilahad sa simula. Pangalawa, di nabigyan ng perspektibong historikal ang mga pelikula kung kaya't di malinaw kung bakit importante ang mga ito. Sa pangkalahatan, di pa rin nalinaw ng libro sa mambabasa, lalo na sa dayuhan, kung ano ba talaga ang mahalaga sa mga pelikulang ito at sa industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino.

Mel Tobias

One Hundred Acclaimed Tagalog Movies

Vancouver, British Columbia: Peanut British Publishing, 1998

In his book *One Hundred Acclaimed Tagalog Movies* with a subtitle "Sineng Mundo Best of Philippine Cinema," the author Mel Tobias invites the reader to take a "voyage of discovery about Philippine cinema." As stated in the book's back cover, Tobias offers to his readers "an excellent reference and guide" filled with "poignant and entertaining reviews of classic Philippine films." With a bulleted list of the various styles found in Philippine movies from the 1940s to the 1990s, Tobias promises the reader a colorful survey ("first of its kind!") of the premier works of Philippine cinema.

These promotional tags may entice the reader to pick up and scan the book. In particular, the hype may attract the non-Filipino film buff who may be completely ignorant about Philippine cinema. In pages of generally clean and readable text, Tobias presents to such a reader his choice films in alphabetical order and parenthesizes the English translation for Filipino titles. He

states the names of the film director and the cast members and then proceeds to summarize the film's story. At times, Tobias gives some background related to the stars or production conditions of the film. Black- and-white production stills from the films are generously spread throughout the book, often occupying more space than the text.

There is much to quibble and complain about the book. Cineastes who seek the hard stuff and want to know the specific groundbreaking accomplishments of Philippine cinema will not find that kind of information here. Instead, one runs into pieces of scant and superficial writing that are as skimpy as Daniel Fernando's underwear in the book's cover picture taken from *Scorpio Nights*. By the time one is done with the book, one still wonders why any one should pay attention to Filipino films and how Tobias is able to declare in large boldface type that there *are* indeed

one hundred "Tagalog" movies worth talking about.

There are a number of other glitches such as the book's omission of films like *Giliw Ko*, incomplete production notes about each film's producer and year of release and the intermittent use of Tagalog instead of Filipino. However, these lapses are minor compared to the book's most annoying flaw which is the author's lack of criteria that explain the selection of films. The author's failure to articulate an organizing framework leaves the reader to second guess the author's basis for a film's inclusion. In some reviews (like those of *Aguila* and *Aliw*), Tobias insinuates that successful films are those that "excel in making art with commercial appeal." However, with other films, Tobias applauds their depth of social commentary and the director's exploration of taboo themes and defiance of commercial trends. For instance, in *Segurista*, Tobias commends Tikoy Aguiluz for his "serious filmmaking in a country often dominated by 'tits and ass' melodramas passed off as dramatic cinema art."

While these polarizing remarks may confuse the reader on where his critical biases are, Tobias in his introduction flags to the reader the reasons for his one hundred titles: "they either appeared at major film fests, or created major advances in the art of cinema." However, the author ultimately undermines his standards by citing then cutting up films which, in his own words, have no artistic merit. For instance, about the film *Goodbye America*, he concludes that "the end product was disorganized and did not achieve the total success that had been expected of Philippine film thinly disguised as a Hollywood B-movie." In another review on *Uhaw*, the Merle Fernandez sizzler, Tobias again decries that "nothing commendable can be said about the erratic cinematography, stiff acting, careless editing, pedestrian canned soundtrack music or the amateurish

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dialogue that is more suited for radio drama."

On the other hand, in masterpieces like Gerry de Leon's *El Filibusterismo* and *Sanda Wong*, Tobias' takes are full of synopsis but empty of critical content. In other reviews where Tobias praises a film, he makes grandiose pronouncements that ring hollow and do nothing to deepen our appreciation for the filmmaker's efforts. For example, on Gerry de Leon's *Moises Padilla Story*, he simply tosses out a line about the director's skill for making "the camera a major part of the screenplay" and neglects to elaborate on what this exactly means. Regarding Pablo Santiago's *Batingaw*, Tobias again does not qualify his terms and concludes his review by calling the film "a cinematic quantum leap rarely achieved in the history of Philippine cinema." In other articles, instead of systematically accounting for a film's brilliance, Tobias ends up serving behind-the-scenes trivia about an actor's offscreen romance with another actress (see *Hihintayin Kita sa Langit*) or an actress' family's reaction to her onscreen nudity (*Company of Women*).

Another reason for Tobias' tendency to make sweeping generalizations and platitudinous observations lies in his inability to provide a historical perspective of the development of the Filipino film.

Moreover, because Tobias is reaching out to the foreign cineaste, this history must be accompanied by a brief cultural orientation on Philippine lifeways and issues in order to contextualize Tobias' frequent remarks about the confining conventions and stereotyped representations of Filipino life. Had these chronology and cultural compass been given, the nuances of Tobias' claims about a certain film's trailblazing achievements would have been understood and substantiated.

These gaps in Tobias' book emphasize the perennially-voiced need for a detailed, authoritative, and concise history of Filipino cinema. One can even go on to argue that until such time when this definitive volume is written, books like Tobias' compilation present cursory readings and vacuous assertions. One hopes that in the next centennial, this critical history will emerge and provide for us a hundred reasons to celebrate Philippine cinema. ■

Miguel Q. Rapatan is a Christian Brother and professor in the Department of Communication, De La Salle University.



The 1999 Manila Film Festival

The Pinoy at the Turn of the Millennium

By Jade Francis Castro

Ang anim na pelikula ng 1999 Manila Film Festival ay tungkol sa mga temang kinakaharap ng Pilipino ngayon: korap na pulitiko, abusadong pulis, asawang nangangaliwa, illegal na pagsusugal at Viagra. Ang mga genre na ginamit ay komedi, drama, aksyon at suspense. Ang *Ako'y Ibigin Mo*, *Lalaking Matapang* ay tungkol sa pakikibaka ng taumbayan laban sa isang meyor na ginagamit ang pera ng bayan para sa sariling proyekto. Ang *Mister Mo*, *Lover Ko* ay may mensaheng kakaiba: di dapat mag-away ang misis at ang kerida pagkat iisa ang kanilang kaaway; ang lalaking gumagamit sa kanila. Ang *Tigasín* ay umiinog sa isang grupong nagbibili ng pekeng viagra sa kalalakihan. Ang *Basta't Ikaw*, *Nanginginig Pa* ay tungkol sa isang probinsyano na nagsadya sa siyudad para maging singer pero umibig sa isang babaing maganda at lista. Ang *Saranggola* ay istorya ng isang pulis na bumaril sa bata na naglalaro ng saranggola sa kanyang bubong, at ang kanyang anak na lalaki na di malaman kung isusuplong o pagtatakpan ang ama. Ang *Luksong Tink* ay tungkol sa isang nagpepeke ng pasport, na nakasaksi ng pagpatay sa isang kongressman.

Years from now, we may look back to the 1999 Manila Film Festival (MFF) and see it for the event that it was — the final MFF of the century. As such, this set of six films serves as a testament to the state of Philippine National Cinema at century's end. And that it is.

While the Film Fest committee cites "star power" and "artistry" among the criteria for selection, in the last analysis this is not what the Festival stands for. More than anything else, the films are about us as a movie-going nation — what we want to see and which things concern us in the year 1999. For one thing, all six entries include plot elements that are topical: corrupt politicians, abusive cops, extramarital

affairs, illegal gambling, viagra. The genres range from comedy to drama, action to suspense, crowd-pleasers to "art" films — indicating the rich diversity of Philippine films and the varied tastes of the Philippine audience. But most significant of all, the films represent the values of our time — good or bad. They depict, in one way or another, our attitudes, the things we believe in, the things we hold dear, or at the very least, the things we deem worthy of cinematic representation.

Ako'y Ibigin Mo, *Lalaking Matapang* speaks of a distrust towards the government, but modifies this statement by film's end. The mayor of Barangay Matarik (Rustom Padilla) is

a corrupt, violent official whose latest misdeed is the digging up of buried Japanese treasure and keeping it for himself. Unfortunately for him, there is a new teacher in town, Leon Lopez (Lito Lapid) who, as you might expect from a Lito Lapid character, is a strong, silent man who can do anything: he twirls his knife, does a three-sixty on a high bar, eats a snake, saves the barangay. But he is, most of all, a "lalaking matapang". The title is culled from the lyrics of "Leron Leron Sinta," which is given special attention by the musical intermission where Miss Violy (Vina Morales), in a girl scout's uniform, sings the song, and also by Willie Yuz's musical score.

All throughout the film, we hear variations on the "Leron Leron" theme playing in the background. The characterization seems important, albeit slightly condescending to women: "lalaki" is stressed by the presence of a female romantic interest, Miss Violy, while "matapang" is accentuated whenever Leon puts himself in the forefront of conflict, fighting thugs who harass a woman in the marketplace or a drunken alcoholic who abuses his son.

Director Jesus Jose is one wily craftsman. The action sequences – expertly edited by Orlando Vinarao – have bite. But Jose lends sensitivity to scene after scene, creating symbolic moments whenever he can. In one scene, a bulldozer tramples school buildings in preparation for digging under school grounds. Here, Jose visualizes, with force, grace, and a little sentimentality, a cry against the twisted priorities of corrupt government officials. Education for the public's benefit must give way to money for the Mayor's benefit. It is a dramatic sequence, with children carrying benches out of the classroom. In slow motion and a frustrated Miss Violy trying desperately to write her lesson on the board. In another scene, the Mayor and his goons force the masses into the *barok*, literally, and when the community rises to battle their oppressors, everyone ends up dirty but happy. Then, in the film's conclusion, the Governor, whom we see for the first time, arrives and promises to return to the people what is rightly theirs. "Mabuhay si Governor!" they all shout – obviously a reference to the film's star himself, present Governor of Pampanga. The people's distrust, apparently, is not directed towards the government in general, but only towards the corrupt elements in that government. The people, according to the film, are willing to trust a person who can go down in the dirt with them.

The film also suggests that somehow, we as a people, have not forgotten World War II, or for that matter, have not fully forgiven Japan. The Mayor's partner in crime is a Japanese businessman whose name sounds degradingly like a brand of MSG. One of the *barangay* members was a teenager during the War, and he proclaims that the treasure was stolen by the Japanese and that now it must be returned to the Filipinos.

By contrast, *Mister Mo, Lover Ko* presents values that are much more contemporary. The film centers on two women: the bigshot's wife Melody (Elizabeth Oropesa) and the bigshot's mistress Malita (Glydel Mercado). The bigshot is Ford Punongbayan (Eddie Gutierrez). Screenwriter Lualhati Bautista shows us she has not lost her feminist flair, and here, with director Joel Lamangan, she explores the relationship between the wife and the mistress, offering the very defiant notion that the two women should

If *Mister Mo, Lover Ko* is overtly feminist, then *Tigasin* is decidedly patriarchal.



Above: Glydel Mercado and Elizabeth Oropesa in Joel Lamangan's *Mister Mo, Lover Ko*
Left: Eddie Garcia and Victor Muri in *De Jarlega, Jr.'s Tigasin*.



not be at odds with each other because they actually share a common enemy: the man.

Bautista, herself a middle-aged woman, has found an equivalent in Melody, who is not only the soul of this movie, but also one of the most refreshing female characters in recent Philippine cinema. At 42, Melody is beginning to have angsts about her sexuality. But she is gorgeous, and Oropesa, wonderfully comic, is a case in point for perfect casting. In one scene, she stands in her nightgown in front of the mirror, holding her breasts up, and the actress, by the sheer magnificence of her presence, is a convincing paradox: how can a woman so beautiful think herself unsexual? The problem is not her, she later realizes, but society – her husband included – because of how it regards older women as less sexual than their male counterparts.

The joy of *Mister Mo* is in the way everything seems to be moving towards impropriety. Suddenly, Aris (Richard Quan) and Red (Jim Pebanco), long-time buddies, lock into a romantic kiss; then, the Priest (Tony Mabesa)

gets off on hearing Melody's lurid confession; then, Melody jumps her driver (Darmy Ramos); and so on. Lamangan makes everything seem natural, and like last year's *Pusong Mamon*, which he co-directed with Eric Quizon, he keeps it fun, lively, and witty, while never losing sight of the subject matter: sex. Sometimes, though, he pushes the film towards the slapstick, with the exaggerating camera of Director of Photography Romulo Araojo (as in quickly zooming in for a close-up) and especially with Dennis Garcia's musical score, punctuating every punchline with a vaudevillean horn sound. Because of this, the film sometimes has a cartoonish charm, but sometimes, regrettably, it is just plain cartoonish.

After all the impropriety, though, the film makes a full circle and returns to proper decorum. Malita ends up with her true love Noel (Gary Estrada), Melody and Ford make up, and Reagan the Driver is dismissed but given due compensation. Because for all the film's liberated ideas, it is traditional in one respect: in the end, everyone must do the right thing.

If *Mister Mo* is overtly feminist, then *Tigasin* is decidedly patriarchal. The title alone refers to an activity of the male genitalia, which is only appropriate since the whole film is centered on – and seems to be obsessed with – the penis. In the entire film, Eddie Garcia, as SPO Greg Marcial, uses his trademark catchphrases – "mancy," "batuta ni Drakula" – whenever the opportunity arises (no pun intended.) And there is plenty of opportunity.



Left: Ricky Davao and Lester Lansang in *Gi Pantes Saranggola*; Below: Lorna Tolentino in *Jose Javier Reyes' Luksong Tinik*.

“Hindi ako masamang tao,” Jomer tells his son in tears after he is revealed in front of the investigator. We believe him, and silently, we echo his words and make them our own.

The story concerns a serial killer whose murder weapon, it turns out, is a fake drug patterned after viagra. The victims die with a hard-on and a smile on their face. Assigned to the case are Marcial (Eddie Garcia) and Ramon Ignacio (Victor Neri), a young cop who never sticks to the rules — an *astig*, and thus the more wholesome double-meaning of the film's title. They soon discover that it is not a serial killer they are dealing with, but a big-time underground operation that manufactures fake viagra and sells them door-to-door. In the film's final plot twist, they also discover that the mastermind is Ignacio's own girlfriend Jessica (Alma Concepcion), who, in the final car chase sequence, gets blown into bits when her car explodes. There is an unsettling dose of dark humor in the film that makes it at first feel like a twisted kind of comedy, perhaps even about the consequences of instant pleasures. But all such possibilities are negated by director Ike Jarlego, Jr.'s insistence on keeping the conventions of the buddy-cop genre. Alas, the little pleasures of the film — the shoot-em-up sequences, the one-liners — although fun, are just as instant and they do not last long. What lingers is the thought that the only significant female character is a villain who dies, and that, if the pleased reactions of the movie theater audience would be any indicator, the macho attitude is still a very much accepted part of Philippine society.

The same thing could be said about *Basta't Ikaw, Nangliligay Pa*. This time, the macho man is Vic Sotto, who, as shy provinciano Enteng, finds himself surrounded by beautiful women who fall all over him, and by men who are “ugly” enough to serve as comic reliefs:

boisterous, charcoal-skinned Nog-Nog; equally boisterous Igna, whose bald head keeps getting hit; and a boisterous (still) dirty old fag who keeps falling down and squirming painfully on the floor.

In the beginning of the film, Enteng's mother (Nova Villa) brings home to Enteng one marriage prospect at a time. The reason she is doing this is so that Enteng can finally give her a grandchild. Enteng is privileged enough to reject the women due to their flaws; one is “matakaw,” another is a Sisa-type. When Enteng moves to Manila to pursue his dream of becoming a singer, he meets the only woman who does not seem to care for him, Selya Ligaya Curacha (Rosanna Roces). Naturally, the tough, hard-to-get woman attracts him, and although she overpowers him in every respect — as the owner of the boarding house he lives in, as the *barangay* chairwoman — he pursues her. Later Selya is in danger of being

gunned down by illegal video *karera* operators who are her enemies. Enteng brings her to the province to hide, and as a condition, she must pretend to be his wife. There, they play games of cat and mouse: Enteng's goal is now to sleep with Selya. They then join a couples' sing-and-dance contest, where they win, use the money to build a deep-well pump for the town, defeat the bad guys who have tracked them down, and finally, separate as Selya goes back to Manila. In the end, though, Selya realizes she loves Enteng and returns to the province to marry him.

The film, directed by Tony Reyes from a script he co-wrote with Ely Matawaran, is actually very old-fashioned, with only a few details added to make it a little relevant for the general public. Provinciano goes to the city to be a singer? Old. Mother wants a grandchild? Old. City girl and country boy fall in love? Old. The only timely element in the plot concerns the illegal gambling ring. That, and the jokes, which are mostly references made to bits and pieces in today's Pinoy pop culture. Roces plays a woman named Selya Ligaya Curacha — funny because it compounds the titles of three famous Rosanna movies. Similarly, Enteng is a funny monicker because Vic Sotto practically owns the rights to it ever since *Okay Ka, Fairy Ko*. In the Rambol Club where Enteng sings, a big platinum-haired bully threatens to pounce on Enteng. His name is Asi, he carries a basketball and he keeps repeating “Mismo!” — the way baller Asi Taulava does it in the PBA commercial.

But in essence, the film is old-fashioned escapist entertainment. With at least four com-



***Luksong Tinik* probably stands out as the one film that best captures the spirit of the turn of the millennium, where fear and doubt reign, and the uneasy formula for redemption lies within the goodness of the soul.**

MANILA FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS 1999

BEST PICTURE

Saranggola
GMA Films, Inc. and Teamwork Productions

GATPUNO ANTONIO

VILLEGAS AWARD

Saranggola

MANILA CULTURAL AWARD

Saranggola

BEST DIRECTOR

Jose Javier Reyes, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST STORY

Gil Portes and Jose Dalisay, Jr., *Saranggola*

BEST ACTOR

Ricky Davao, *Saranggola*

BEST ACTRESS

Lorna Tolentino, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Gary Estrada, *Mister Mo, Lover Ko*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Giselle Tuengi, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST CHILD PERFORMER

Lester Llansang, *Saranggola*

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Eduardo Jacinto, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST EDITING

Vito Cajill, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

Martin Masadun, *Mister Mo, Lover Ko*

BEST MUSICAL SCORE

Jesse Lucas, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST SOUND

Roadrunner Network, Inc., *Tigasin*

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

Roadrunner Network, Inc., *Tigasin*

BEST THEME SONG

Joy Marfil, *Saranggola*

BEST MAKE-UP

Myra Zulueta, *Lukong Tinik*

BEST SHORT FILM

Rehab, Glenn Cruz (Director)

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Augusto Buenaventura

BEST FLOAT

Mister Mo, Lover Ko

The films are about us as a movie-going nation – what we want to see and which things concern us in the year 1999. All six entries include plot elements that are topical: corrupt politician, abusive cops, extramarital affairs, illegal gambling, *viagra*.

plete musical numbers and the theme song even played in sweet, boogie, and cha-cha versions, the film embodies most of all the Filipinos' love for song and dance.

Unlike *Basta't Ikaw*, *Saranggola* is about as timely as you can get. Loosely inspired by a real-life incident in October 1998, the film tells the story of Jomer Agustines (Ricky Davao), a cop who is irritated by the noise of a boy flying a kite on his roof and shoots him. His son Rex (Lester Llansang) witnesses the event and is in a dilemma whether to keep the information to himself or to speak the truth.

Director Gil Portes, who co-wrote the script with Jose Dalisay, Jr., has always been privy to timely issues (e.g. the environmentalism of *Mulanay* and *Puerto Princesa*, the pragmatism of *Miguel/Michelle*) but with *Saranggola*, the issues—of gun control and abusive policemen — are second only to the story and the characters. Portes makes a moral and political stand, but he does it quietly, and he first allows the viewer to explore with him the battles that rage inside the conscience and the forces that tear apart father and son.

The sequence where the boy gets shot is a cinematic tour de force. Brilliantly edited (by Tare Ellenberger) and beautifully shot (cinematographer Louie Quirino, who proves social realism need not be boring; it can look arresting too), this is the high point of the film, with the potency of a bomb ready to explode. But what follows is even better: a world stuck in a perpetual state of mourning. Everything and everyone is quiet — the town, mumbling only their suspicions that Jomer killed the boy; Rex, as he makes a solemn trip to Baclaran; and the movie audience, stunned by the power of the drama that is unfolding.

As Jomer, Davao, in an excruciatingly tender performance, shuttles between guilt and pride as if it were part of the same beast. As Rex, Llansang, smart as he is young, is the personification of confusion. And those two characters combined depict a very timely — even timeless — dilemma: the burden of moral responsibility. "Hindi ako masamang tao," Jomer tells his son in tears after he is revealed in front of the investigator. We believe him, and silently, we echo his words and make them our own.

Lukong Tinik takes a similar look on human goodness. It tells the story of Beth Pineda (Lorna Tolentino, breathtaking and sincere), who witnesses the murder of a Congressman and is now in danger of being gunned down by the killers. Being in the business of selling fake passport ID's, Beth is herself not innocent to the ways of crime. But she is, as circumstances would prove, a "good" person.

Writer-director Jose Javier Reyes creates a metropolis of greed and corruption, where the goal of people — from powerful officials to the scoop-hungry media to the tinliest of citizens — is only to preserve their own interests. In this film, everybody is betraying everybody. Ado (Mon Confiado) shoots his friend Ed (Monsour Del Rosario) in order to keep their illegal business a secret and thus keep himself from going to jail. In the film's crucial twist, it is revealed that the man behind the killing of the Congressman is in fact his best friend, another Congressman. But Beth rises above them all the moment she risks her life in pursuit of a loftier goal: justice. At first, she is afraid and unsure, until she finds herself battling the forces head-on. Apparently, she is not alone. The Congressman's daughter (Lara Fabregas) is doing the same thing for the reputation of her father. A young TV reporter (Giselle Tuengi) at first seems to be in it for the prestige, but, like Beth, in time she finds a cause she believes in.

In true Reyes fashion, the movie is filled with characters whose lives ultimately converge, as in *Makati Avenue Office Girls* and his more recent teen-oriented flicks. But the best thing about *Lukong Tinik* is the little touches of irony: while Beth runs around the city trying to escape death, she carries with her a bright red bag with the word "LIFE" printed on it; after ordering her goons to finish off someone, the boss of the illegal passport ring proceeds to pray the rosary. Indeed, in the city Reyes creates, nothing is as it seems. It is a seriously messed up place, where Beth, the voice of truth and hope, scrambles to the beat of Jesse Lucas' synthesizer music hinting a world nearing the end of the century and the end of itself.

"Mabuting tao ako," Beth cries over the phone to her son as the hitmen slowly close in on her. Later, Beth would talk to the TV camera more eloquently, expressing how nobleness is borne out of selflessness, and change is brought about by people who act. Years from now, when we look back to the last years of the century, *Lukong Tinik* will probably stand out as the one film that best captures the spirit of the turn of the millennium, where fear and doubt reign, and the uneasy formula for redemption lies within the goodness of the soul. That said, let the year 2000 begin. **BT**

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The First Annual CineManila International Film Festival

By Jade Francis C. Castro and Mark Christian B. Villena

"I only wanted to make a film." That line, the last words of a gunshot-bleeding hero in the Indonesian feature *Kuldesak*, best speaks for the First Annual CineManila International Film Festival, held last July 3-10 at Shangri-la Plaza Mall Cinema, SM Megamall, and U.P. Film Center. Produced by the Independent Cinema of the Philippines in cooperation with the City of Mandaluyong, the event showcased more or less thirty feature films – eleven of which were for competition, and the rest, a mixture of contemporary and classic cinema, purely for exhibition – plus several short films and documentaries. Coinciding with the screenings were seminars and workshops on such topics as "Film Direction," "International Film Co-Production," "Film Criticism," and "Chinese and Hong Kong Cinema." With its billing as the "Sundance of Asia," along with Festival Director Tikoy Agulluz' emphasis on "the independent spirit," the event was that rare communion – at least here in the Philippines – of people who only wanted to make their films and people who only wanted to see the latter.

The independent spirit as defined here – of only wanting to make a film even if you have to bleed for it – is most apparent in the story behind Indonesia's *Leaf On A Pillow*, directed by Garin Nugroho, winner of the Lino Brocka Grand Prize Award. Producer Christine Hakim had related that she wanted to make a picture very dear to her, but could not find an actress to play the lead. So she did the unheard-of – the producer became the star of her own film. She portrayed the motherly Asih of the squatter community of the urban poor, and



Garin Nugroho, *Leaf On A Pillow*, Indonesia

won Best Actress (along with Ms. Ana Capri) for her performance. The movie concerns itself with the plight of streetchildren murdered in an insurance scam run by police and the mafia. One by one, the kids, brought to the city from the provinces and registered under false names, are murdered for the insurance money, a lamentable end to their wretched lives. As real streetchildren portrayed the characters, utmost sincerity was expressed in what must have been a difficult uncommercial film to produce. The pillow that the title speaks of is the one luxury that the children couldn't have in this life: rest from the anguish of their hand-to-mouth existence.

The Grand Jury Prize went to India's *The Terrorist*, directed by Santosh Sivan. It is the story of a woman fighting in one of India's rebel insurgent armies, who volunteered for a mission as a suicide bomber in the key assassination of a politician. Although she grew up in the armed movement as a fine warrior, a

growing emptiness amidst all this destruction overcomes her, just as she discovers the force of life affirming itself, as she gears up for the mission; she is now with child. The cinematography creates intimacy with her character (with plenty of close-ups), as powerful images signify the harried state she is in. Imagine the buckle for the belt-bomb tied over her belly-button, and the persistent parade of objects (cameras, French horns, etc.) as the assassination

mounts to its climax. Is she to press the button on herself, to be a "hero for generations to come," or allow the life in her to prevail?

The Philippines' own, *Pilo Balde*, directed by Jeffrey Jeturian, won a Best Actress award for Ana Capri, in her role as Gina, a poor girl from the slums with a fatal crush for a rich boy, who left her pregnant. While the poor-girl-loves-rich-boy-versus-poor-boy angle itself is quite old (remember *Pretty in Pink?*), the treatment itself is something quite new. Set in the background of a shantytown around a lower-middle class Bliss housing project, it is the story of the politics of sex amidst the inequitable distribution of water in an urban community. The movie describes the tiresome grind of mundane working-class life with precision, a situation where we were expecting the water from a pump-well to run out, as it may have during one leveling squatter fire. But the water came out in trickles and the pump handle got shorter by the film's end, suggesting that life goes on

(In a way reminiscent of the *napupunong-balde* metaphor in Lino Brocka's *Insang*.)

Ricky Davao won Best Actor for his portrayal of a cop, who impulsively took the life of an innocent boy looking for his lost kite on the roof, in Gil Purtes' *Saranggola*. While focusing on the tension between the father and the son (who was the only witness to the event) over the dilemma on the need to tell the truth, the resolution comes off quite happy, if a bit too easily. In spite of a few flaws in cinematography (the overlit dinner table and some very important, but out-of-focus, shots), the film is a good contender for the Moscow Film Festival this year.

From Iran comes *Birth of a Butterfly*, co-winner of the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC) Special Award (along with Jeffrey Jeturian's *Pila Balde*.) It is a movie with three stories set in the rural villages of Iran, in what must have been an earlier period in this century. The first story is a boy's coming of age with the death of his mother; the second, the pilgrimage of a family searching for a cure for their ailments; the third, the story of a Karan teacher with a penchant for miracles, who learned too late that with the power of his prayers, he could have prevented a flooding disaster. Finely directed by Mojtaba Rael, this beautiful tale of spiritual metamorphosis paints a rustic mural of traditional village life in mysterious Iran.

South Korea's *Power of Kangwon Province* (directed by Hong Sangsoo) depicts the lost weekend of two former lovers, spent in the resort town by the mountains of Kangwon. Unbeknownst to the other, each finds adventure by going off with a buddy, getting drunk and acting crazy in an attempt to get over hang-ups in their relationship. The drama appears to happen unmediated in front of a static camera, effectively focusing our attention on the lovers' frustration at being unable to let go of the loose-ends of an emotional entanglement. Stillness speaks volumes, and honesty is expressed through poignant images, such as the sole surviving pair of goldfish in a tub by the windowsill, as the film ends.

The other Korean film in competition, *Christmas in August*, centers on how a terminally ill man spends his final days. What is the



Hur Jin Ho, Christmas in August, South Korea

illness? The film really doesn't say. It doesn't seem to be important either; the film seems content with showing us the emotions that come when one has surrendered to the fact that death is knocking at the door. Indeed, there is a loneliness here that could only come from someone who understands the dying. Why else does the man run a photoshop but to surround himself with the immortality of pictures? Why else does he meet a woman he falls in love with only to let her slip away – as if to say we all must leave each other in the end? The pieces fit together perfectly, but there is way too much dreariness in this movie; halfway through it, we wished the man would just die already. That the film is slow and quiet, we can take. That it remains static in its entire 97 minutes, we can't. The film's cinematographer, Yoo Young-ki, recently passed away and the movie is lovingly – and poignantly – dedicated to him.

Indonesia's *Kalderak* is a "campy" youth film by several young directors (Mira Lesmana is billed in the program), a guerilla filmmaking affair in the literal sense of the word. The film's similarity to the structure of *Pulp Fiction* becomes obvious several times in the film, as the four or five stories try to weave their way together. But the attempt falls flat in the estimation of the reviewers, even as they look into the story for the pokey fun of seeing how it apes Tarantino. The film is definitely interest-

ing in some parts, but the ham acting surely distracts.

Family is the concern of New Zealand's *Via Satellite*, a sly, witty comedy that starts innocently enough (family member wins gold medal at the Olympics and TV crew wants a simulcast interview with the family) but gets deeper and darker as tiny bits and pieces of revelations emerge. Funny and warm, it is amazing how the film can tackle something domestic and never go melodramatic. The final scene is ecstatically moving, where the clan – now exposed as the messed-up bunch that it is – faces the television set as they reach out to a clan member on the other side of the world. Forgiveness comes from the heavens, beamed via satellite, emblematic of the film's statement that good communication and understanding are the best adhesives for family ties.

The only European film in competition, France's *I Stand Alone*, is not all that different in setting from the Asian entries. The film revolves around the dingy, marginalized parts of society, as in *Leaf on a Pillow* and *Pila Balde*. And like *Saranggola*, its protagonist is a no-good loser redeemed only by a glimmer in his soul. The film is about the psychological breakdown of a man who becomes increasingly beaten down by his life. Throughout the film, we hear a stream-of-consciousness voice-over, the inner thoughts of a psychopath in the mak-

Cinemanila is the best yet of recent film festivals. . . a showcase of films closer to the heart and closer to home.



François Girard, *Red Violin*, Canada

ing. While he beats his pregnant wife, watches a porn flick, molests his daughter, and creates havoc in a bar, he rambles on like an intro-spective, eloquent Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*. And like the taxi driver, this is a man who is a product of his society. Poor and unemployed, he blames the Arabs, the Germans, the rich, the faggots for his misery. But make no mistake. Director Gaspar Noe doesn't justify this man's actions; instead he sets the ugly man against the backdrop of an ugly world. And he makes sure we see it: the large hate graffiti on the walls, the slightly out-of-focus nightshots, the in-your-face style of filmmaking. Similarly the thudding sounds, the warning signs, and the end credits that roll like a poster for Nazi propaganda leave us wondering whether this has been a commentary on post-World War II alienation and disgust. This has got to be one of the most original films in the Festival.

Some of the most talked about and most viewed films of the Festivals were not part of the competition. According to Cinemanila staff, the film with the highest attendance was Brazil's *Central Station*, which isn't surprising considering how much publicity a foreign film can get with one Oscar nomination. But that's not the only reason people flocked to see this film. Because of its special advanced screening two weeks ahead and because it's the festival's opening film, *Central Station* had a fairly long time for word of mouth about it to circulate. And the word was good — which is to say, everyone who saw this movie loved it. Allow us to state further that anyone who did not like this movie deserves to be fed to the lions.

Central Station follows the adventures of Josue, a boy searching for his father, and Dora,

If the Sundance Film Festival has then Cinemanila might be closer to

the ex-teacher who helps him. The film is a spiritual road movie, a cross-generational bonding film, and a socio-economic-political commentary on just about any third world country in the globe. How many films you know can be all these things at the same time? The genius of *Central Station* is that it's all connected under one startling, tremendous vision. Director Walter Salles portrays a coun-

try steeped in poverty, crime, and illiteracy, searching for redemption, fueled only by faith. Josue's father, the elusive man he seeks, is named Jesus (as in Christ); every vehicle Josue and Dora board contains some kind of religious symbol; and the final town destination is a place of perpetual processions and devotions. In the end, Josue joins his half-brothers (named Moses and Isalah, no less) under one name, with the promise — through a letter that Dora reads for them — that the father will one day come. Salles finds the compromise between those who go entirely by faith (Josue) and those who only go by a shred of humanitarianism and salvaged dignity (Dora), presenting both as the two lanes travelling the same road. Could this be a manifesto for struggling people everywhere? For Filipinos, this film is immensely relevant. No wonder we're drawn to it.

"Moving at the speed of thought," *Möbius* boggles the mind, pushing the envelope of the science-fiction film in this Argentinian student production (directed by Prof. Gustavo Mosquera, Jr. for Universidad Del Cine, Buenos Aires). Consider these: a ghost train missing for four days in the intricacies of the city subway system; a mystery solved by a mathematician specializing in topology (the study of surfaces), who works for the architectural firm that constructed the Peripheral Line. Like the train that journeys to another dimension, the story runs on many levels: first, mystical (being able to fractionalize time and thought); second, scientific (the Möbius band, a surface that flows into itself); and third, political (the idea of a teacher that speaks of truth, when no one listens). This movie proves that the sci-fi film and a low-budget are reconcilable and can

certainly produce excellent results with a lot of imagination.

The Buttoners from the Czech Republic (directed by Peter Zelenka) is a collection of several short stories that converge into one grand explanation for the sources of man's myriad anxieties. A neurotic man, who killed another, forgiving the pilot-bomber of the Enola Gay (of Hiroshima fame); the efforts of sending human sperm into outer space wasted on the dumb; the idiosyncrasies of our unique characters that lead us into cosmic coincidences— these are just some of what these funny tales offer as insights into the quirks of the modern individual.

Belgian director Jaco Van Dormael did well with two exciting movies in *Toto The Hero* and *The Eighth Day*. The former concerns itself with misgivings over the past, being the story of a man's obsession over his "borrowed" life (thinking he was switched with another baby in a hospital fire); and with incestuous guilt, with the man's more-than-brotherly affection for an elder sibling. The second, is the story of a friendship between a man in midlife crisis and a young man with Down's Syndrome, longing for lost love. Both provide a way of looking at life from a different view. Transcendence, in both movies, results in overcoming the narrow psyche by taking another's perspective.

The other widely talked about Belgian film is *Ma Vie en Rose*, the story of a young boy who feels he's a girl and the problems this brings to his family and his community. The issue of transsexuality is presented matter-of-factly — there is no gender confusion here; the boy is sure he's a girl. The confusing part comes with trying to find an explanation. We see life through the boy's eyes; he exists in an ascetic, unsympathetic suburbia, but his identity is somewhere in fantasy — in the pink, Barbie-inspired world of his favorite TV program. The film has its funny moments, but what makes it shine is the honesty and courage of its big, big heart.

You know how it is when you walk out the theater feeling you have just been presented the meaning of life? That is how we felt after

in recent years been a star-studded media-frenzy event, the independent spirit than we may think. 

structured, beautifully produced film that follows the adventures of a violin; from its creation in 16th Century Italy to an auction in the U.S.A. just before the millennium – travelling to France, England, and China in between. It is an epic celebration of history, culture, music, passion, lust, love, science, beauty, and well, just about anything else in this life that makes it such a colorful and worthwhile experience. Yet even in its scale and scope, the film is always focused – its soul embodied in the small musical instrument. As Cinemanila's closing film, *The Red Violin* is an appropriate finale to a Festival that salutes grand visions and independent spirits.

We are fortunate enough to be living in a time when the country – or at least, Metro Manila – is becoming increasingly receptive to film festivals. This year alone, a handful of festivals have graced our theaters so that the Filipinos have been given the chance to see films that are usually pushed to the sidelines by the continuous slew of Hollywood blockbusters. But the Cinemanila International Film Festival was the best yet because here, the spotlight was on world cinema. This is a showcase of films closer to the heart and closer to home, which we would not otherwise have been able to see – not in a million years, not even on video.

The location was perfect. Everyone knows Megamall is the center of the Pinoy pop culture world. And with three of its twelve theaters playing Cinemanila films, access was available to a lot of people. And, if what you wanted to see wasn't playing there, you could always just walk to the neighboring Shangri-la Plaza and see what's on at Cinema 1. Meanwhile, the documentaries and shorts played in the University of the Philippines – as it is assumed that the audience for such films consists mainly of students and academics.


But the Cinemanila International Film Festival was not without its shortcomings. We know that the cost of producing the show was considerable, but friendlier pricing and a greater amount of publicity for the films would have pulled in more attendance, and consequently more revenue for the producers. A part of the general public may have been turned off by

the relatively high price of P75 per ticket, since a regular movie could be seen at nearly half the cost. While we know 75 bucks is more than worth it for a film like *Central Station*, the possibility of picking one of the duller apples in the basket (dare we mention them?) was a risk the Peso-conscious Pinoy wouldn't have wanted to take. A ticket booklet "na abot-kays ang halaga" would have helped.

Scheduling, too, was a serious problem as any viewer would have told you. Keeping up with it was like playing a game of "guess-what-movie-will-be-shown-tomorrow". To survive the mix-up, one had to follow simple rules: keep on your toes, don't believe everything you hear, wake up early in the morning to get a copy of the new schedule. Some of the films, like the much-awaited *Praise* (Australia) and *Of Gods And Monsters* (USA), never got to be screened (the prints came in late, hence were not rated by the MTRCB, according to Cinemanila sources). The upside is that the screening of more popular films was repeated more often, giving the public more chances to see them.

As for the seminars and workshops, it is quite lamentable that relatively few people attended, and that most of the talks lasted for only a short time. Maybe next time, the seminars should be given just as much hype as the screenings so that more people would be in-

terested to attend. We also suggest that the schedules for the seminars and the screenings not be simultaneous, so that people do not have to miss one for the other.

The other aspect of Cinemanila that made it unique is that it actually had a competition in which films from all over the world could participate. This, however, was not entirely new to the Filipino public. Memories of 1981 (Manila '81) and 1982's Manila International Film Festival (and the Asean Film Fest of the same year) remind us of an attempt at putting the Philippines on the map of world cinema. The glamorous affairs sponsored by the Marcoses were not without their ill-fated moments (remember the Manila Film Center dead?). But there is an important difference between those festivals and Cinemanila. In 1982, the highlight of the festival was the presence of Brooke Shields. Today, the star is Christine Hakim. The focus of Cinemanila goes beyond the showbiz glitz, and if the Sundance Film Festival has in recent years been a star-studded media-frenzy event, then Cinemanila might be closer to the independent spirit than we may think. 

Jade Francis Castro and Mark Christian Villena are seniors majoring in Film and Audiovisual Communication at the U.P. College of Mass Communication, Diliman.

THE WINNERS

Grand Prize (Lino Brocka Award)	:	<i>Leaf on a Pillow</i> (Indonesia)
Grand Jury Prize	:	<i>The Terrorist</i> (India)
Netpac Award	:	<i>Birth of a Butterfly</i> (India) <i>Pila-Balde</i> (Philippines)
Best Actor	:	Ricky Davao, <i>Saranggola</i> (Philippines)
Best Actress	:	Ana Capri, <i>Pila-Balde</i> (Philippines); Christine Hakim, <i>Leaf on a Pillow</i> (Indonesia)
Best Short Film	:	<i>Father's Toys</i> (Hong Kong)
Best Documentary	:	<i>Port of Last Resort</i> (Australia, USA)
Special Citation	:	Christine Hakim (Indonesia)

Towards World-Class Cinematography

By Robert Quebral & Chuck Escasa

Picture this. The same cutting edge film equipment used in foreign films will be standard gear for Philippine cinematographers in the very near future.

As the millennium approaches, the local movie industry intensifies its interest in the realm of the technical. The series of high-risk investments made recently by major studios point to a more adventurous outlook. Filmmakers will want to believe that their producers have finally seen the light -- that in order for Philippine cinema to be more globally competitive, the producer must put a more serious eye on the art of movie photography.

In previous years, the best tools in the country's film trade seemed to be the exclusive property of the advertising industry. The high production value invested on TV commercials (the total budget for a 30-second commercial can sometimes be enough to bankroll a full-length film) allowed the commercial directors and cinematographers to be virtual masters of their domain, commanding a wide array of state-of-the-art camera and lighting systems, and making the studio their playground for sampling the new and the radical. In the meantime, most of their colleagues in the movie realm helplessly looked on as the six to seven-figure fees of the megastars ate away at the camera department's budget, often forcing them to use low-grade equipment.

Don't look now. Is it possible that the fevers of change have infected the Philippine movie producers? In 1997, Carlitos Sigluon-Reyna hired Yam Laranas, a commercial cinema-

ographer, as his Director of Photography for *Ang Lalaki Sa Buhay Ni Selya*. Laranas used the newly-imported ARRIFLEX 535b camera and KODAK's newest film stock, the Vision 320T and injected the film with a fresh look. Chito Roño followed suit. His new film, with Neil Oaza as cinematographer, also uses the ARRI 535b acquired by a relatively new film outfit called Lightscape.

Here's a quick glance at Philippine Cinema's latest acquisitions:

CAMERAS

Arri 535b

This lightweight companion camera for the Arriflex 535 system is incredibly quiet, making it ideal for live sound production. Its arriglow viewfinder brightness control system has contrast adjustment capability. It also has an electronic inching button and electronic footage counter alongside the mechanical one. The camera can run film at 3 frames per second up to 60 frames per second and can be programmed at certain speeds. Shutter adjustment can be used with fixed settings at every 15° from 15° to 135° and 144°, 172.8°. The 144° is specially helpful in reducing the chance of getting flickers from unstable HMI lighting fixtures. Star Cinema, Lightscape and Crown Seven have one or two for their production units.

Arri 435ES

A new MOS camera system replacing the popular Arri 35-3. The electronic shutter and the programmable speed features enable the cinematographer to achieve extraordinary effects. In a continuous camera operation, film speed can be shifted with the shutter self adjusting to compensate for light loss and maintain original depth of field. RS Video and Cineforce offer 435ES for rent.

The Moviecam Camera system

Another Live Sound Camera system recently available here is the Moviecam. Initially used in filming Marilou Diaz-Abaya's *Rizal*, this camera owned by Filmex is often referred to as the true rival of Panavision in terms of simplicity and ease of use. The moviecam is



absolutely quiet and stable and is often outfitted with the best Cooke zoom and prime lenses.

LENSES

High Speed Prime Lenses

Most notable of high speed primes are the Zeiss T 1.3 super speed lenses. Available focal lengths are at 18mm, 25mm, 35mm, 50mm, 65mm and 85mm. Each lens has multilayer coating on all glass to air surfaces to optimize color saturation and purity. This guarantees uniform color correction and interchangeability.

Variables Prime Lenses

The Arri-Zeiss variable primes system is the most advanced high performance lens system available. The VP1, VP2 and VP3 combine for a continuous 16mm to 105mm range and maintains an absolute T 2.2 when changing focal lengths. These lenses would allow filmmakers to work faster in conditions that offer little time to shoot, e.g. the magic hour.

Swing Shift System

Swing Shift lens system is an innovation that allows the cinematographer to control the perspective and depth of field within a shot. The system consists of the main bellows unit that allows movement of the lens relative to the film and several different lenses mounted in special lens boards.

SPECIAL TOOLS

The Arri Varicon

A couple of years ago this contrast en-



Neil Oaza of Moviefund ready to shoot a scene with Apo Mino in Chito Roño's latest film.



hancement kit found its way to our shores via Star Cinema and RS Video. The kit is a system for controlling contrast in your film. It provides a continuously adjustable contrast over the entire photometric range of the film without affecting its resolution. It flashes a controlled and even amount of light to the shadowed area during exposure giving the operator the freedom to reduce the contrast while observing the results in the viewfinder. Varicon adds more detail in dark areas and can add colors to shadow areas without affecting the highlights.

The Color Meter

The varying color temperatures of natural and artificial light sources pose a great problem for the production that requires consistency in look and feel. The color meter deals with the shifting of color temperatures. With corresponding color correction filters this device allows the cinematographer to control color temperature and introduce corrections during filming.

FILM STOCKS

Faster, wider latitude, better contrast and color saturation, sharper images and better grain structures are what filmmakers look

for in their film stocks. Kodak, industry leader in film technology development, has made these latest products available worldwide.

Vision 800T color negative

This is the world's fastest color negative motion picture film made available recently. It has an exposure index of 800 in tungsten light and 500 in daylight. It offers the speed and latitude you need and the color reproduction that enables you to intercut seamlessly with other stocks. The speed doesn't take away the sharpness and grain structure you'd expect from products of slower speed. This implies an extended daytime and magic hour shooting time, or less lighting equipment.

Vision Premiere color print film

A quantum leap forward in film technology, this new print film stock produces richer blacks, more saturated colors and cleaner performance. Cinematographers strongly believe that the use of this stock may eliminate the need for custom contrast and color enhancement processes in film laboratories.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Special Processing Techniques


Custom processes are very popular in US and Europe. To create a distinguishing visual style, cinematographers collaborate with film laboratory technicians to formulate special tech-

niques to improve the visual palette. Local film labs may soon be compelled to concoct their own versions of these custom processes in order to keep up with the demands of the film industry.

Silver retention process, among others, is an image enhancing technique that primarily affects the contrast, color saturation, grain and level of black density in print images. This lab induced effect gives the film a special look depending on the degree of application.

Technicolor's ENR

Named after its inventor Ernesto Novelle Rimo, this custom silver retention process was designed upon Vittorio Storaro's request. First used in *Reds*, this step was used in all his subsequent works, among them *Dick Tracy*, *Little Buddha* and *The Last Emperor*. ENR is a proprietary color positive developing technique which allows for a controlled amount of silver to be redeveloped, thus increasing the contrast and giving more detail in the shadow areas.

Acquiring the above tools and techniques are a vital shot in the arm for Philippine cinema. The technology is here, and the time is now to capitalize. While we have the momentum. 

Robert Quebral and Chuck Escosa are award-winning independent filmmakers who have trained with and worked for Mowelfund.

THE FILM AND AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT U.P. COLLEGE OF MASS COMMUNICATION, DILIMAN

PROGRAMS

Four - year B.A. Degree Program in Film and Audiovisual Communication

Short - term Workshops:

October 1999: Multimedia Production Workshops (Photography, video production, animation, digital editing)
May 2000: Regional Workshops in Film and Media Literacy, Video Production, and Digital Editing.

FILM COURSES OFFERED

Introduction to Film, History of Philippine Cinema, Film Genres, National Cinemas, Film Language and Grammar, Basic and Advanced Scriptwriting, Directing, Acting, Basic Photography, Advanced Photography, 16mm Cinematography, Advanced Editing, Film Sound, Documentary, Experimental Film, Film Theory and Criticism, Animation and Special Effects, Film and Literature, Research in Film, Film Seminar, Special Projects, Thesis, Internship.

FACULTY

Fulltime: Grace Alfonso, Ph.D.; Jose Hernani David, Ph.D. Candidate (on leave); Anne Marie De Guzman, B.F.A.; Mary Anne Gaillard, M.A. Candidate (on leave); Roehl Jamon, B.A.; Eduardo Lejano, Jr. B.A.; Ellen Paglinawan, M.A. (Chair); Eduardo Plano, A.B.; Arminda Santiago, M.A.; Nicanor G. Tiongson, Ph.D.; Rolando B. Tolentino, Ph.D.; Jovenal Velasco, B.S.

Part-time Lecturers: Raul Bulaong, B.A.; Eliza Cornejo, B.A.; Emmanuel Dadivas, B.A.; Sari Dalena, B.A.; Diomedes Dillague, M.A.; Justino Dormiendo, B.A.; Armando Lao, B.S.; Amor Olaguer-Aljibe, B.A.; Lena Pareja, Ph.D.; Robert Quebral.

For more information, write to: **Chair, UPCMC Film and AVC Department**
Plaridel Hall, Diliman, Q.C. Tel./Fax: 920-6863

Pili, Polangui at Pastores

Mga Bunga ng Unang UP Film at Video Workshop sa Legaspi City

Ni Ed J. Piano

The UP Film and Media Literacy and Video Production Workshop was held in Legaspi City, Albay, through the auspices of the Film and Audiovisual Communication Department, College of Mass Communication in U.P. Diliman, as part of its summer outreach program. Co-sponsored by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Bicol University (BU), the workshop exposed the participants (mostly teachers of humanities and communication courses and media practitioners themselves) to critical theories and frameworks in the appreciation of films and media texts, the art and craft of film and video, and the basics of video production. The six noteworthy productions made by the participants include documentaries on the town of Polangui, Albay, the Pastores tradition of Maoay, Das, and the interaction between life and the forces of nature using the *rawit dawit*, traditional literary form of Bicol.



Lumalawig ang interes ng masang Pinoy sa pag-aaral ng pelikula. Pruweba nito: tuwing semester break, mapapansing di ilang institusyon at indibidwal ang nag-asalok ng seminar at workshop o palihan tungkol sa produksyon ng pelikula at video; bukod pa rito, taun-taon, palaki nang palaki ang bilang ng mga mag-aaral sa unibersidad at kolehiyo na nag-eeenrol sa kursong mass communication (karaniwang nakapaloob dito ang ilang asignatura sa pelikula tulad ng "Film Appreciation" at "Film Theory").

Magandang pambalanse ang pangyayaring ito sa sinasabi ng ilan na unti-unti na diumanong namamatay kundi man tuwirang patay na nga ang industriya ng Pelikulang Pilipino. Isa lang naman ang basehan kung bakit nasasabing namamatay na ito — paliit nang paliit ang bilang ng mga tagapanood ng pelikulang lokal, kaya't hindi na ito kumikita sa takliya. Bagama't malaki ang ipinasok na pera sa takliya kamakailan ng mga pelikulang *Jose Rizal* at *Isusumbang Kita Sa Tatay Ko*, hindi pa rin nakatitiyak na tuluyan nang babangon at sisiglang muli ang Sineng Pinoy sa susunod na panahon.

Masasabi ngang di na masigla ang takliya pagkat sawang-sawa na ang mga tagapanood sa mga pelikulang-de-bahon, mga kuwentong madaling hulaan ang kalalabasan, at mga pormula na kadalasang iginigiit ng prodyuser sa direktor at manunulat na akela yata'y hindi na sumusulong ang pag-iisip at panlasa ng nakararaming manonood. Gayunman, masigla naman ang iba pang aspekto ng industriya. Isa na rito ang pagpapalaganap sa iba pang doko ng bansa, sa mga rehiyong labas sa Kalakhang Maynila, ng karunungan hinggil sa araling pampelikula.

Ang Kamaynilaan ang sentro ng industriya ng pagpapelikula. Narito ang mga istudyo, post-production company, mga sinehang may kaakibat na makabagong teknolohiya katulad ng Louie's THX cinema, mga film school, at pati na mga gala/premiere night at awards night. Maging ang mga artista ay nakasiksik lahat sa mayayamang subdibisyon ng Metro Manila. Ang probinsiya, sa ngayon, ay nagsisilbi lamang bilang eksotikong lokasyon sa syuting.

Sa pagpapalaganap ng kaalamang pampelikula, mahalaga na hindi lamang sa isang lugar nakatutok ang mga taong nagpapahalaga rito. Dapat ding bigyan ng pansin ang malalayong rehiyon na bukod sa may mayamang kultura at tradisyon ay maaari ring katuklasan ng mga bagong talento.

Napanahon kung gayon ang isinagawang Film and Media Literacy and Video Production Workshop ng Film and Audiovisual Communication Department, UP College of Mass



Robert Oyretal (top) and Nancy Dodivas (above) of the UP CMAC Film Department demonstrate lighting techniques and the basics of non-linear or digital editing, respectively.



Roehl Jamon guides participants as they try out their first shots with video cameras.

Communication (UPCMC), sa Legaspi City, Albay sa Bicol. Ang palihan ay tumagal nang tatlong linggo nuong buwan ng Mayo at ito ay naidaos sa pakikipagtulungan ng National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), at ng Bicol University (BU) na kung saan ginanap ang mismong workshop.

Ang *integrated* workshop na ito sa Bicol ay isang hakbang ng UPCMC Film Department tungo sa layunin nitong maibahagi at maisulong ang kasanayang pampelikula sa iba't ibang rehiyon sa bansa. Sa pamamagitan ng mga pili at ekspertong lektiyurer at facilitator, hangarin din ng workshop na matulungan ang mga may potensyal na video-artist na makagawa ng sarili nilang video-drama o dokumentaryo na hango sa kultura at tradisyon ng kanilang lahi at bayan, pati na rin ng pagsasalawhan ng kanilang sariling karanasan at suliranin sa buhay.

Mahigit sa sampung oras ang biyaha patungong Legaspi City kung ang sasakyan ay bus. Dala ang halos lahat ng equipment mula sa Film Department, tinahak ng grupo sa pangunguna nina CMC Dekano Luis Teodoro at Propesor Ellen Paglinauan,

tagapamuno ng departamento, ang kahabaan ng daan patungo sa bayan ng Bulkan Mayon. Dinatnan ng grupo ang 24 na partisipant mula sa lungsod at karatig bayan. Karamihan sa kanila ay mga guro sa iba't ibang unibersidad sa Albay at ang iba naman'y media practitioners.

Kabilang sa mga natatanging lektiyurer ng palihan sina Dr. Nicanor Tiongson, dating bise-presidente at artistik direktor ng CCP, kilalang iskolar ng teatro at folk media, guro sa UPCMC Film Department; Dr. Roland Tolentino, guro sa UP Departamento ng Pilipino, kasapi ng Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino; Leo Martinez, kilalang aktor at tagapamuno ng Actors Workshop na siyang naglektur tungkol sa aktng; Leo Abaya, production designer ng pelikulang Jose Rizal, guro sa UP College of Fine Arts; at Dr. Leticia Mata, guro sa BU at eksperto sa usaping may kinalaman sa kultura ng Bicol. Kasama rin sa workshop si Propesor Evelyn David ng UPCMC Broadcast Department.

Ang iba pang guro mula sa UPCMC Film Department na nakibahagi sa workshop ay sina: Joven Velasco at Raymond Lee na naglektur hinggil sa scriptwriting; Ed Piano at Ed Lejano, direksyon ng pelikula; Robert Quebral at Roehl Jamon, sinematograpya; Nenoy Dadivas, editing; at Ma. Amor Olaguer-Aljibe, production management. Naglektur rin si Propesor Paglinauan tungkol sa Pelikulang Dokumentaryo.

Dahil sa palihan, nakapanood ang mga Bikolanong partisipant ng mga halimbawang pelikula nina Federico Fellini, Jean-Luc Godard, Elia Kazan, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, at iba pa.

Ang pinakamahalagang bahagi ng workshop ay ang aktuwal na paggawa ng mga kasapi ng video drama at dokumentaryo; mula sa preproduction hanggang postproduction. Nekatutuwang na sa kanilang produksyon ay mahusay na nagsalawhan ang kultura at tradisyong Bikolano.

Sa kabuuan, masasabing naging matagumpay ang kauna-unahang *integrated* workshop na ito ng Film Department, kung ang pagbabasehan

ay ang mga produksyon ng mga partisipant.

Ang *Pili, Sili, Pinangat at Polangui* ay 15-minutong video dokumentaryo tungkol sa kababaihan sa bayan ng Polangui, Albay na inaakala ng marami na siyang pinagmumulan ng mga "babaeng mababa ang lipad." Inilagay ng dokumentaryong ito sa kontekstong historikal-kultural ang "maling akalang" ito.

Ang *Deloy* ay 8-minutong eksperimental video na gumamit ng isang tradisyunal na uri ng tula, ang "rawit dawit." Isinabay sa tulang ito ang mga imahen ng pag-uulayaw ng buhay at kalikasan. Ang magagandang imahen ng video poem na ito ay kinunan sa matubing bayan ng Malinao sa Albay.

Ang *Pastores* ay 18-minutong video naratibo tungkol sa isang guro sa elementarya na naglalayon na maibalik ang isang namamatay na tradisyon (Pastores de Belen) sa Maoy, Das. Dahil dito, nabuhay muli ang isang pagmamahalang inakala niyang matagal nang nasaalam.

Ang *The Creator* ay 12-minutong video dokumentaryo na tumutukoy

Sa pagpapalaganap ng kaalamang pampelikula, mahalaga na hindi lamang sa isang lugar nakatutok ang mga taong nagpapahalaga dito. Dapat ding bigyan ng pansin ang malalayong rehiyon na bukod na may mayamang kultura at tradisyon ay maari ring katuklasan ng mga bagong talento.

sa isang manliliklok ng mga santo sa Baao, Camarines Sur.

Ang *Raul Alcomendras: An artist* ay 10-minutong video dokumentaryo tungkol sa obra maestra ng isang pintor sa Naga, Camarines Sur.

Ang pagpapalaganap ng kaalaman at kasanayang pampelikula sa mga probinsya ay dapat suportahan ng pamahalaan at ng mismong taga-industriya. Tamang hakbangin ito upang ang pag-aaral ng pelikula ay maibahagi sa higit na nakararaming tagapanood, maging sila man ay nasa liblib na lugar. Malaya at magiging responsable ang pelikula kung ang tagatangkilik nito ay aral at may matalinong pananaw sa larangang ito. Gayundin, higit na mabubuo ang pambansang kultura kung makaambag ang mga rehiyon sa paghubog at paglikha nito.

Ed J. Piano finished a five-year course in film and TV directing at the Moscow Film Institute (VGIK) in 1992 and now teaches at the Department of Film and Audiovisual Communication, U.P. Diliman