

PELIKULANG KOMIKS: TOWARDS A THEORY OF FILIPINO FILM ADAPTATION

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation built and proposed an emergent Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation theory in the 1950s. It employed the grounded theory approach to unveil data that led to a contextualized, localized or indigenized study of adaptation.

An inventory of extant texts led to the selection of four (4) films representing Filipinized genres such as the korido film, fantasy-adventure, comedy and historical film. The semiotic analysis drew from the approaches of Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour and Rick Altman. Contemporary adaptation criticism was also employed to explain constructs specific to Filipino culture.

A social film history based on unstructured interviews with ten (10) key informants provided the context to the texts analyzed. This was supplemented by periodicals published in the fifties. The meta-issues of the theory addressed the state of the archives and current discourse. The concepts and assumptions about komiks-to-film adaptation supplemented the framework of the proposed theory that shall be called *a vernacular and hybrid theory of Filipino film adaptation*.

Key words: source text, semiotics of adaptation, Filipino genres, adaptation criticism, Filipino film adaptation theory, vernacular, hybridity

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Reflexive Introduction to Adaptation Studies, or The Limits of Western Film

Adaptation Theory

The making of film out of an earlier text is virtually as old as the machinery of cinema itself – Dudley Andrew, “Adaptation”

*...Every age can justly claim to be an age of adaptation. The desire to transfer a story from one medium or one genre to another is neither new nor rare in Western culture. It is in fact so common that we might suspect that it is somehow the inclination of the human imagination, and despite the dismissive tone of some critics, not necessarily a secondary or derivative act. – Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation**

Film adaptation scholarship is the study of the artistic, social and cultural processes involving the transposition of a source text into a film. As a field of study, it often finds its locus in two or more disciplines. In its infancy as a sub-area of film theory and literary criticism, adaptation studies were widely known by the scholars’ analytic agenda of aesthetic formalism that exclusively maps out how great books of literature were translated into films. In recent decades however, contemporary adaptation studies has grown to embrace the notion of a text existing and in dialogue with other texts or what Stam (in Naremore, Ed., 2000) refers to as “intertextual dialogism” (p.64). With the so-called cultural turn in film studies, the literary source is not as privileged anymore as it was before. The source text may be anything from comic book to online games. More notably, adaptation from this perspective implicates not only film studies but all the other fields that are engaged in the enterprise of interpretive work. Viewed from this perspective, adaptation may now be addressed using diverse frameworks: film studies,

literary criticism, media studies, critical communication studies, art studies, cultural studies and related fields.

Yet, despite adaptation studies' ostensible interdisciplinarity, its emergence as a field has been generally perceived as insulated and parochial. Andrew (in Naremore [Ed], 2000) even describes it as that which is "frequently the most narrow and provincial area of film theory" (p.28; also in Andrew, 1984, p.96). Naremore (2000) for his part avers that "the very subject of adaptation has constituted one of the most jejune areas of scholarly writing about cinema" (p.1) and is a "moribund field" (p.11). Ray (in Naremore, Ed., 2000) confirms this, noting that "throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, 'Film and Literature' fell into thorough disrepute" (p.38). Like Andrew, Ray refers to the dual trajectory of adaptation that lends to a lack of core assumptions that will define it as a field or discipline.

This researcher would like to frame this reflexive introduction from this perspective of the adaptation field's difficulty to gain ground throughout the past decades. This introduction also presents the theoretical standpoint that has guided this researcher in her previous incursions on the subject. The objective is two-fold: to present the theoretical position of her previous researches on the subject and to explain the reason for the current update.

Film adaptations that have employed a postmodernist attitude towards the source by evoking parody, deconstruction, intertextuality, reflexivity and other devices and tropes that set the said paradigm distinct from the previous one it is trying to subvert (modernism) constitute this researcher's prior interest in the subject. In 2006, a big chunk

of said researches was published in book form bearing the title *Postmodern Filming of Literature: Sources, Contexts and Adaptations*.

The succeeding discussions hope to provide an overview of the main discussions of *Postmodern Filming of Literature* and the other publications that this research has spawned, in so far as this would be relevant in comparing the assumptions of the said book to that of the present study.¹

Dominant adaptation discourse in the West has been generally framed from the perspective of literature and has been critically validated using mostly English-language films. For example, classical myths and romances have been one of the most favoured source texts in Hollywood and European cinemas. The Arthurian cycles,² for instance, have encouraged both conventional film adaptation styles and postmodern updates. A conventional film adaptation attempts to provide filmic equivalencies to narrative details in the original, which is usually a work of literature. A postmodern film adaptation, however, deconstructs the source text by reflexively interrogating the original contexts, theme, mood or characterizations done in the precursor material.

To illustrate the workings of the dominant discourse in analyzing both traditional and postmodernist adaptations, the case of the historical genre is insightful. The historical genre, rendered in any type of precursor form, is one of the most adapted into film. Prior texts that delve on historical personalities and events – romance, epics, historical novel/drama, biography, among others – are frequently translated into another medium because they mostly contain spectacular elements that naturally engage the cinematic. Adaptations of historical material, both successful and failed, are now currently being

presented as alternative to traditional historiography. For example, the story of the Cid ³ is fecund for its cultural value and notable for its mythmaking tendency because it features both historical and hagiographical story details. Moreover, in the Centennial Jose Rizal biofilms (*Jose Rizal, Bayaning 3rd World*) ⁴ between 1998 and 2000, for instance, the tropes of historiographic metafiction have been employed to meld historical with fictional sources. Adaptation here becomes a conduit to mediating semiotically between the real and the mythical, history and fiction. Meanwhile, while textual analysis of the transfer from a prior text to a target text and the sifting and re-interpreting of the historical content are interesting points of analysis in studies of adaptation, the role of political economy and cultural policy, especially those propelled and authored under a colonial regime, should also be critically examined with the same amount of interest and rigor. The Rizalian adaptations ⁵ reflect this complex view of historiography and semiotic constructions of history and biographies.

The canon has always fascinated the film world – Shakespeare and Austen particularly. The canonical status of Shakespearean materials and the adaptations these have generated would prove to be the huge boulder by which all adaptation practices and criticism would be measured against. Shakespearean materials continue to be inexhaustible, prompting Fischlin and Fortier [Eds] (2000) to say that “as long as there have been plays by Shakespeare there have been adaptations of those plays (p.1).” Whether it is the classical approach or the postmodern spins,⁶ Shakespeare remains a towering figure. Fischlin and Fortier add (2000):

Adaptation as a material, performance practice can involve both radical rewritings, and a range of directorial and theatrical practices, from the omission or addition of passages (or even scenes) to suit a particular director’s requirements to

the creation of a material practice that takes into account the public demand for spectacle, one that places Shakespeare in direct competition with the rock concert, sporting event, or cinematic blockbuster. (p. 17)

Aside from Shakespeare, the canonical works that are being adapted in the cinemas of the United States and Europe were those by Anglo-American authors.

Naremore (2000) has in fact labelled Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and their literary successors by the names of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf as “the usual Anglo-American literary suspects” (pp.10-11) because their works have seen various incarnations on screen. Austen’s novels,⁷ for instance, has been one of the most beloved screen sources because her Regency plots and themes seemed to have foreshadowed Hollywood’s marriage plot and the woman’s film, which are two popular sub-genres of romantic comedy. Philippine cinema would have its own version of these sub-genres in the 1950s.

The sources of cinema may be inspired by works of fiction or may be forged from reality itself. Recent adaptations in mainstream global cinema employ metafiction to challenge the premise of realistic representation and to provide fresh experiences of story-making.⁸ The devices of metafiction such as the blurred distinctions between reality and fantasy, reflexivity, authorial intrusion, foregrounded viewer, multiple points of view, theorizing, discursiveness and inconclusiveness of endings were derived from fiction books and found a new life in their film renditions.

Certain attempts to merge genres in the print medium are designed to increase narrativity and performativity of written texts. For instance, a work of reportage or nonfiction may be merged with fictional techniques⁹ and could provide a template for a hybridized film genre. Transposed into a film, a multi-generic source finds a new life and

expands its texture. Moreover, cinematic devices that sometimes influence narrative techniques in fiction books may also be covered by adaptation scholarship. Likewise, allusions to cinema culture could be used as a subtext to the major themes of another work.¹⁰ Given these examples, the coverage of adaptation studies has truly been broadened and has opened its horizons to embrace inter-disciplinarity and what Bazin (qtd in Naremore, 2000) calls “mixed cinema” (p.1).

The problem with dominant adaptation discourse is that it has only, so far, addressed the matter of adapting precursor texts that have attained a certain “cultural status” (Andrew, 1984, p. 97); usually a monolithic art form such as a literary work. Mainstream theory has yet to address the cultural politics that has baffled Third World cinema. A work of adaptation may become a site to resist racial stereotypes, address problematic class representations and negotiate cultural identity. The potential of cinematic adaptations to become a platform for projecting images of nation is palpable. One could begin with the language spoken in films, the stories that are told, the genres that are invoked and the cinematic style that is fashioned in vernacularizing and indigenizing film adaptation theory. In other words, a postcolonialist perspective is missing in dominant adaptation discourse, which means re-directing the focus of film adaptation criticism from residual aesthetic formalism into the political, cultural and ideological underpinnings of a film practice distinct to a nation. Filipino film adaptation from this view is examined on the basis of its postcolonial, Third World, high-context, folk-popular and oral/aural characteristics and not upon the imperialist, book-bound, symbolic/word-based literary-rootedness that descend from the Western logos and rationality.

The discussions above summarized this researcher's previous incursions into adaptation discourse. This reflexive introduction hopefully accomplished two things: Firstly, it has explained the ideological roots of the dominant discourse. Secondly, it has foregrounded the limitations of received theory in explaining Filipino film adaptation. It is the second one which should be the basis for a proposed emergent Filipino theory. To illustrate this point, one could raise the issue that while it is possible to compare comic book-based films from other countries with Philippine komiks series-turned-movies, they are still essentially different; a "case of apples and oranges," as Desmond and Hawkes (2006, p.34) would refer to the different media languages. The context, the sensibility and the iconography of Filipino komiks in the 1950s were specifically cast in a postcolonial mode, historically experienced by the artists and readers and signified a more personal, more secular values of the generation that produced these. It is the politics of cultural difference rather than patterns of similarities that should guide the study of culturally-specific practices of adaptation.

The Filipino film audience of the 1950s were oriented to source texts that were introduced to them through colonization. These were narratives re-appropriated for the native eyes. Film sources, from the time of cinema's infancy in 1919 up to the 1950s, consisted of *moro-moro*, *sarswela*, *bodabil*, vernacular prose, short verses, *balagtas*, *dupluhan*, oral folklore, short stories, novels, theatre, radio drama, *komiks* and many more. Because the adaptations were produced in consonance with the specificities of culture that produced them, it may not be fair to explain these using any of the received theories from the West. The Filipino source texts and adaptations have a language of their own, a technology of their own and sensibility of their own. This dissertation is therefore

an attempt to explore komiks-to-film adaptation through the phenomenology of Filipino adaptation practice. The ground is fertile and is waiting to be opened up.

B. Background and Rationale

1. *Film in the Philippines*

a. The roots of film technology

Motion picture technology is rooted in “photography,” “projection” and “stills in motion” (Fang, 1997). In 1878, photographer Eadweard Muybridge, upon the instance of Leland Stanford, experimented on the production of successive images in a pack and rifling these to produce the appearance of horses moving along a track (Fang, 1997). The Muybridge experiment, effecting the illusion of motion on still photography, had been reinforced by Etienne Jules Marey’s efforts to experiment on the use of a “photographic gun,” which was a way of preserving the frame-by-frame recording of a moving image on film. This device could also shoot more pictures than that of Muybridge (Gleasner, 1983; Fang, 1997).

The subsequent development of motion pictures revolutionized instantaneous photography. The latter however refused to die as a medium even as moving images increasingly became a novelty. Still photography continued to provide an indelible impact on the future of cinema. As Kracauer (in Mast and Cohen [Eds], 1979) opined: “The nature of photography survives in that of film” (p.7).

A mechanical contraption that came out as an adjunct to film technology is projection, which is an idea that goes back thousands of years through the ancient

Chinese and Japanese shadow plays. The modern lantern shows appeared in the 1600s courtesy of the Romans and reached their popularity as an entertainment form in the 1800s (Gleasner, 1983).

Meanwhile, connected with the technology of film projection is the idea of persistence of vision whose concept is based on the capacity of the human eye to retain split-second stimuli in the retina to produce the appearance of moving image (Fang, 1997). The inception of the idea of persistence of vision goes back to the ancient times. The Roman poet Lucretius was credited for conducting a pioneering inquiry into the concept of persistence of vision and this was later supported by the experiments of Ptolemy. Eventually, in 1824, Peter Mark Roget wrote a paper titled “The Persistence of Vision with Regard to Moving Objects,” which brought the discussion further onto the 19th century.

Soon after the idea of moving pictures took root, new technologies for the peep show were invented, beginning with toys such as the zoetrope, phenakistoscope, thaumatrope, praxinoscope and others (Gleasner, 1983). Thomas Alva Edison’s kinetoscope or peep shows served as mechanistic portents of future moving picture technologies to come.

From photography, film drew the basic properties that function to record reality. Catch-phrases such as “material reality” and “physical existence” and words such as “actuality,” “nature,” and “camera-reality” circulated because these have been associated with the realistic tendency or the documentary nature of film (Kracauer, 1979), which then was fast becoming the most appealing of entertainment forms. The resultant craving

of audiences for photographic realism also created the demand for public exhibition. On December 28, 1895, the Lumieres showed their documentaries depicting Parisien scenes. The Edisonian individually-viewed peep shows would soon be rendered extinct as the Lumieres created a public fetish for theatrical presentations.

Initially, the industrializing cities of America and Europe were exposed to newsreels that depicted everyday 19th century scenes. Later on, when the novelty of newsreels wore off, the idea of film telling a story became an unavoidable consequence. By the early 1900s, stories and plots were inserted in the viewing repertoire of the audiences. George Melies pioneered in filming staged stories through his 10- to 15-minute fictional materials. The introduction of narrative in film led to a new art form. With form becoming a super-addition to the photographic quality of the film, the technical properties of editing that are “exclusively peculiar to film” would soon be re-shaping the medium (Kracauer, 1979, p.9).

The technology of motion picture started out as part of the obsession to capture reality since the ancient times. The early savants were guided by what Bazin (in Mast and Cohen [Eds.], 1979) calls “the myth of total cinema” (p. 23); the need to expose the photographic function of film. When sound, color, story and other evidences of development made themselves obvious, the artistic purposes became as much a great argument for cinema as its ability to “capture the slightest incidents of the world about us” (Kracauer, 1979, p. 8). What the earliest realists such as Lumiere purported as what the cinema is all about was the complete opposite of how idealists such as Melies envisioned its role in advancing human imagination.

b. Film in the Philippines: The Early years

The last years of the Spanish colonial administration in the Philippine islands saw the introduction of new technologies that helped usher the would-be nation onto the 20th century. The first electric plant was installed in the islands in 1895, paving the way for widespread enjoyment of entertainment engineered through the help of sound, film and projection machines (Pilar, 1994; Sotto, 1992).

The first Lumiere cinematographe was acquired by Mssrs. Leibman and Peritz, Swiss businessmen who showed a number of Lumiere films in 1897. In 1898, a businessman by the name of Señor Pertierra presented his Scientific Show titled *Espetaculo Cientifico de Pertierra* [Pertierra's Scientific Show] in Escolta, Manila after acquiring a 60mm Gaumont Chronotographe from France. Antonio Ramos followed suit with the showing of some 30 films using a Lumiere cinematograph. While the early cinematografos were being brought to the country and beginning to entertain the natives, the country was in between the Spanish and the American empires (Deocampo, 1998; Tolentino, 2001). It is not a common happenstance that the height of two colonial eras would coincide with technological and cultural upheavals. For the Filipinos, these happenings enabled them to face the new century with modernity as prime aspiration, among other things.

At the turn of the century, the U.S. government sent a Philippine Commission (initially the Schurmann Commission and later the Taft Commission) to collect facts about the islands that will help the new colonizers in deciding the fate of the Filipinos. The Commission's work was underway when a handful of Filipinos tried their hand at

film entrepreneurship. Carunungan (1983) reports the year 1912 as the beginning of the Filipino film industry with the showing of two films. One was Edward Meyer Gross's *La Vida de Rizal* [Life of Dr. Rizal] and the other was Albert Yearsley's *Life of Doctor Rizal*.

Fresh from his apprenticeship abroad, the enterprising Jose Nepomuceno was among the first group of Filipino filmmakers who produced the early silent movies in the country. His first feature film was *Dalagang Bukid* (1919), which was based on the sarswela of Hermogenes Ilagan and which made use of live musical backdrop. Aside from new means to control lighting, Nepomuceno worked to improve cinematography and laboratory processing (Giron, 1994). Meanwhile, another pioneer of film technology by the name of Vicente Salumbides partnered with Nepomuceno and brought into their collaboration what he learned abroad regarding photoplay writing, acting, editing, make-up, and close-ups. The technology for sound finally arrived in 1932.

In the years prior to the Second World War, film companies such as LVN and Sampaguita began operating. Alfonso (1990) refers to the 1930s and 1940s as the "Decade of Technical Experimentations," which set the stage for the events and developments of the 1950s. Alfonso (1990) further describes that the 1950s "was a decade of enthusiasm, competition and awards" (p.112). True to form, the decade was also crucial in the full flowering of narrative cinema, aided by the developments in color technology and cinematographic practices.

2. *The rise of komiks*

National hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, was not only a stalwart of the novel form but also of the early prototype of komiks in the Philippines. Rizal was believed to have written the first Filipino cartoon strip while he was paying his friend Juan Luna a visit in Europe in 1886 (Maslog,1988; Roxas and Arevalo,Jr.,1985). In fact, Rizal's cartoon rendering of the fable "The Monkey and the Tortoise" was published in London in 1889.

By the early 1900s, magazines like *Telembang* [Bell; Bell Sound] and *Lipang Kalabaw* [Carabao Magazine] began publishing cartoon strips that served political ends (Maslog, 1988; Roxas and Arevalo, Jr., 1985). As the century wore on, the first full pledged comic books began appearing. Lent (2009) has ascribed the beginning of komiks in the Philippines to the early samples introduced by U.S. soldiers during the Second World War. *Halakhak* [Laughter] was the first to feature komiks tackling a variety of plots like stories about love and about mythical heroes. From the 1920s up to the post-war years, the careers of komiks writers such as Antonio S. Velasquez and Francisco Reyes shone brightly. "Kenkoy" was to be the first cartoon strip that will be serialized beginning January 11, 1929 in the pages of *Liwayway [Dawn]*, a then popular magazine (Roxas and Arevalo, Jr.,1985).

The serialized comic novels, to be referred thereon in its vernacularized spelling, "komiks," dominated the 1950s and the 1960s. Coincidentally, the peak of the komiks magazine took place alongside the so-called golden age of Philippine cinema in the 1950s. It would continue its popularity until the mid-1980s. Komiks's long period of dominance has prompted writers like Del Mundo,Jr.(1986) to call it a "national book" of

the Filipinos. In the 1990s, the komiks re-appeared through its variant, the graphic novel. The new version of the komiks created a considerable amount of following that prompted some occasions for film adaptations.

Since 1929, the komiks has become a new literature of the Filipinos. As popular literature, the academy is yet to give it sufficient and serious attention as a field of scholarship. The state of komiks as a subject of research and discourse garnered a little improvement following the so-called “cultural turn” in the 1980s which gave wider latitude of acceptance to popular culture. This is in spite of the facts that komiks has taken on the same social function once performed by established literary forms (Reyes, in Roxas and Arevalo, Jr., 1985). In addition to its new social significance, komiks has also become a new source of lore and a new language to take delight and curiosity in. Reyes (in Roxas and Arevalo, Jr., 1985) adds:

The komiks steadily supplanted the other forms of literature as it forced the plots and characters of earlier literary types – the myths, epics, *awit* and *corrido*, novels and short stories – to conform to a new set of codes and conventions. It was not only language that helped constitute the komiks stories; as important was the visual aid of illustration that cooperated with language to evoke reality. What the reader could only imagine in reading prose works and komiks actually visualized through vivid illustrations. (pp.48-49)

The closer correspondence between film and komiks in terms of visual language provided a challenge to the once dynamic interaction between film and word-based literatures. In a matter of time, the relationship between film and komiks would weaken the link between the film and the novel. With film and komiks, Filipino culture entered a new stage of literacy based on words juxtaposed with images.

3. *Film Theory as Film History*

The *Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia Volume on Film* (1994) refers to the 1950s as the decade when that film adaptation of komiks began and flourished. In future decades, when komiks-based films would resurrect intermittently, the efflorescence of the '50s in terms of this combination and dialogue would be looked at with nostalgia and remembered glory.

The decade was colourful on all fronts. It saw the rise of three political leaders who rose to the presidency, namely: Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay and Carlos P. Garcia. Four years after President Manuel Roxas declared the country finally free from colonial rule at the conclusion of the Second World War, the country was rebuilding and beginning to determine its destiny as a sovereign nation. A number of challenges stormed the political landscape such as the continuous resistance of the Hukbalahap (Huk) or *Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon [People's Movement Against the Japanese]*. The members of the movement refused to surrender after the Japanese enemies had left the Philippine soil because the new dispensation failed to curb the problems inherited from the colonial and war years. Aware of problems deeply connected to the land, the administration of the various presidents foresaw that solving the agrarian problem will help quell the Huk uprising in the countryside.

After Magsaysay's tragic death in 1957, the Garcia administration adopted the "Filipino First" policy (perhaps the first collective expression of economic nationalism after the war). Meanwhile, rebuilding the damages wrought by the war seemed to be most

difficult on the moral psyche front. What used to be justified during the war – stealing from the Japanese, treachery, graft – refused to go away during peacetime. The toll inflicted by the war on moral culture became so grave. The collective post-traumatic stress that reared its head throughout the 1950s became a foreshadowing of things to come in the moral life of the nation.

The 1950s was generally referred to as a decade of nationalism (Agoncillo,1974). One of the initiatives to pursue a programmatic nationalist vision for the young republic was the passing and promulgation of the Rizal Bill which mandated the reading and study of Rizal's life and works in colleges and universities. There was the impulse to retrieve the identity that was shattered by painful colonial experiences and the Second World War. Whether this renewed spirit made its impact on the films of the 1950s may not be easily assumed yet the background to the subjects, motifs, genres and the general attitude of filmmakers and audiences alike may also have been engendered by the cultural climate of the decade.

While this is not a historical study, it theorizes about a historic time of Filipino cinema. In that way, the study theorizes on social film history and historicizes theory as well. Inglis (1990) contends that “the best kind of media theory to begin with is a historical one” (p.4). There is a truism to Inglis' opinion. Each attempt to adapt prior material in the various film eras may be assumed as part of a continuum that began in the 1950s. There is also the urgent need to collect the artifacts (films and komiks) while these are still extant. There are ways by which one could go back to the beginning of the story. This study is one possible journey.

Most importantly, since adaptation studies may now be freely addressed from a position of cultural specificity, to examine Filipino cinema's appropriation of the idea has now become more relevant. Along with this worthy agenda for research is the unveiling of new theoretical assumptions that will unshackle Filipino film discourse from the hegemony posed by received, dominant and totalizing bent of Western theory.

B. Statement of the Problem

In view of the above rationale and background, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

How can a semiotic study, adaptation criticism and social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s lend insight into the development of a theory of Filipino komiks to film adaptation?

C. Statement of Objectives

In view of the above problem statement, this dissertation seeks to implement the following General Objective:

To construct an emergent theory of Filipino komiks to film adaptation through a semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism of extant texts and a social history of adaptation practices in the 1950s.

In view of the above General Objective, the study seeks to implement the following specific objectives:

1. To present an analysis of the internal processes of komiks-to-film adaptation through selected and appropriate semiotic approaches and contemporary adaptation critical lenses;
3. To present a description and analysis of the social history of the film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s from a number of salient points, namely: the Filipino culture of “recycling stories;” generic mediation and the propensity for romance; aesthetics of adaptation; the Filipino predisposition to foreign borrowing and native appropriation; the institutional matrix or cultural economy of production; and the maintainance of status quo or the making of a prevalent type of adaptation;
4. To construct or emerge a vernacular and hybrid Filipino film adaptation theory.

D. Significance of the Study

With a huge array of Western-derived theories and paradigms that are being taught in film theory classes, the Filipino student is oftentimes left wondering if there is such a thing as a Filipino film theory and a Filipino film adaptation theory. Various disciplinal and interdisciplinary conferences within the ASEAN region have already begun advocating for the conceptualization of an Asian communication theory or at the very least, for de-Westernizing communication theory. The same has been true with media and film theory.

To build a theory and to propose conceptual frames with which to analyse culturally-specific film practices is a tall order. However, the efforts to Filipinize theory have begun decades ago. Theory is rooted in history, so Lumbera (1997) once advised. In his essay titled “An approach to the Filipino film,” he notes the importance of situating local critical practices from a historical perspective:

...each time we speak of the art of the cinema in the Philippines, it is absolutely essential that we locate Filipino films in the context of our history, noting their peculiar features (faults as well as virtues) as manifestations and effects of traditions and conditions created by our colonial past and by our struggle to exorcise that past (p.195).

Corollary to this, Lumbera also suggests the need to theorize on aesthetic standards using the local context through analysis of “specific works located within a particular cultural continuum” (p.195). In recent decades, poststructuralists and postcolonial approaches have provided fresh insights into understanding works from the historical and cultural specificities of a nation. For Lumbera (1997) however, this is an option that could unveil a set of indigenous aesthetic standards:

To give our own films fair viewing, Filipino critics will have to start developing aesthetic standards that are attuned to Filipino films. In this endeavour, they will not be working alone, for more and more Filipino scholars and critics interested in other areas of cultural studies have been searching for an alternative to aesthetic norms developed in Western countries (p.195).

Although we could not advocate a simple dichotomizing between Western aesthetics and local aesthetics, an alternative discourse could hopefully address the phenomenology of the Filipino film adaptation practice that should serve as basis for a set of aesthetic standards and indigenous framework for criticism.

This research may also be found significant to bringing in the intertextual dialogue happening between the komiks and the film using the lenses of film theory and cultural studies. The interdisciplinary character of adaptation studies helps situate scholarship of this kind within the parameters of poststructuralist theory and postcolonial criticism, offering new insights into the theory of interpretation.

Basic communication studies may also be benefitted by film adaptation research. Since two media forms converge in the study of komiks-to-film adaptation,

communication scholars may be impelled to reconsider scholarship that delve on medium theory, narrative discourse, theory of genre, reception analysis and memory studies.

Most importantly perhaps, adaptation discourse using grounded theory may serve to illustrate that data-to-theory approaches are not the exclusive domain of hard social science research. Phenomenological and hermeneutic studies may also adopt the grounded theory approach using new data-gathering protocols and innovative processes.

There is the lamentable paucity of studies on adaptations in the Philippines, of theory-building projects that problematize received Western discourse and of locally-contextualized appropriations of practices borrowed from foreign cultures. This study is a modest attempt to fill in a small portion of that gaping research fissure.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

We now live in a media-saturated environment dense with cross-references and filled with borrowings from movies, books, and every other form of representation.- James Naremore, *Film Adaptation*

A. Introduction

The amount of related literature on adaptation studies in the Philippines is very scarce, and this has prompted this researcher to write and publish *Postmodern Filming of Literature* in 2006. Foreign studies about literary works that were turned into films are frequently located within Western paradigms and are mostly addressed from the perspective of literature. The obvious dominance of Western literary framework in the study of film adaptations presents a handicap to research efforts. Studies are eschewed in favour of analyzing novels turned into film and there is a scarcity of scholarship on film adaptations whose source texts are a combination of literary and visual art media such as comic books and serialized comics.

The difficult situation of adaptation studies mentioned above may be attributed to film adaptation's perceived marginal position within film studies. Most adaptation studies are built on the premise of the existence of a "superior" prior model or literary work. Murray (2008) refers to this as "adaptation studies' residual attachment to print culture" (para.1, <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb>. Retrieved 22 March 2011). Narrative elements in the original would be matched with their filmic equivalencies and the success and failure of the adaptation will be judged according to this process. In recent years, as literature undergoes a re-definition in the light of postmodernism and poststructuralism, the tendency of adaptation studies to confer a high status upon the literary origins of

adapted work and the amount of condescension towards the film version have been considerably diminished. Today, both source and adaptation are treated equally as cultural texts.

Both western literature and local studies have been cited in this chapter. Included also are anthologies that present analyses of the film adaptation process and bibliographies annotating case samples. These were mostly of Western provenance. In terms of local studies, the majority of materials cited were film histories or historical works tackling the development of film in the Philippines. This researcher's own publications were not mentioned anymore because these have already been cited in the first chapter.

Naremore (2000), in referring to the area of film and literature in general, complained that the field "prompted so little distinguished work"(p.38). This is especially true of Philippine adaptation. While interest in the komiks as popular literature and as mass medium has been constant, its pairing with film has only generated very little discussion. This review then hopes to make up for the dearth in the scholarly discussion on film and komiks.

B. Film Technology in the Philippines

Film technology was brought to the Philippines in 1897 beginning with the introduction of the Lumiere cinematographe (Pareja,1990;Tolentino,2001). Most literatures that mentioned the coming of film technology in the country discussed it as an almost standard introduction to the history and development of early cinema in the Philippines. A couple of articles (Sotto, 1992; Pilar,1994) mentioned the year 1895 as a crucial prelude to cinema because it was the year when the first electric plant was

established. However, a number of authors (Sotto,1992; Pilar,1994; Deocampo,1998; Tolentino, 2001) agreed that 1897 was the year of the start of a full-pledged film industry but this was still under foreign management. It was in the year 1897 when the first cinematograph was acquired. De Pedro (1994) and Pilar (1994) mentioned the earlier attempt of Señor Pertierra to acquire a motion picture machine. When the Pertierra movies were finally screened, these were observed to be “merely a presentation of stills and chronophotographs” (Sotto, 1992, p.5). The sources cited above helped the present study in positioning the introduction of film technology as an adjunct to colonialism. Such context also helped in situating the matter of adaptation as a cultural form that was born out of foreign borrowings and native accommodation.

Leibman and Peritz presented the first movies in the Philippines using the Lumiere cinematographe. A number of film historians (De Pedro, 1994; Pareja, 1990; Pilar, 1994; Sotto, 1992) agreed that it was a Lumiere cinematograph that the country first acquired and not an Edisonian cinematograph. Later, Antonio Ramos was credited as Leibman’s and Peritz’s co-exhibitor (De Pedro, 1994; Pilar, 1983; Pareja, 1990). A musical background was said to have accompanied their exhibitions (De Pedro, 1994; Pilar 1983). These pieces of historical information are crucial in understanding the impact of the first years of foreign technology acquisition on the future of the industry and the special attention that the 1950s film producers devoted to management planning and in building capital outlay.

A number of the literatures (Pareja,1990; Pilar,1983,1994; Carunungan,1983; De Pedro,1994; Del Mundo,1998) chronicled the first foreign movies that were shown in the country and the early theatre houses that exhibited these productions. In connection with

the data on the first film exhibitions, majority of available film histories (Sotto,1992; Pilar,1994; Pareja,1990; Pilar,1983/1994; Carunungan,1983; Del Mundo,1998) agreed that the showing of two Rizal films in 1912 (*La Vida de Rizal* and *El Fusilamiento de Dr. Jose Rizal*) was the event that marked the beginning of a Filipino film industry. Jose Nepomuceno was named as a great Filipino pioneer (Carunungan,1983; De Pedro, 1994; Martin, 1983; Pareja,1990; Sotto,1992; Pilar, 1983) in acquiring film technology and experimenting with it. The matter of distribution and exhibition became an important concern to the industry in the 1950s. Life Theatre and Dalisay Theatre were the exhibition houses that catered to local productions. Likewise, the interest in color processing in later years was a direct influence of the efforts of early industrialists such as Nepomuceno and his collaborators.

The available literature detailing the introduction of the film technology in the country drew their data from both primary sources and secondary sources. One of the two important sources of primary data was Vicente Salumbides' *Motion Pictures in the Philippines* (1952) who wrote his account in the 1950s when the industry was in full swing. As a direct witness of the events he wrote about, Salumbides' account is traditionally regarded by scholars as one of the most authoritative and reliable. The only disadvantage of the Salumbides book is that it was written in the style of a compilation rather than in the scholarly ways the academe may find more meaningful. Another was Trinidad Maño's masters' thesis titled *Literature and the Movies* (1949), which was written after the war; actually on the eve of the so-called Golden Age (1950s).Vicente Salumbides has been credited by a number of authors (Martin, 1983; Salumbides, 1952) as an innovator because of his early experiments with the use of close-ups, the "vision,"

and cutback scenes to enhance acting and visuality. Both the Salumbides book and the Maño thesis were contemporaneous to the 1950s so that these qualify as important primary sources in understanding cinema from opposite extremes - the industry players and the academics.

Literatures that mention the actual filming of realistic subjects had been cited by De Pedro (1994), Sotto (1992), Del Mundo (1998) and Pilar (1994). The first Filipino film companies have been noted too in these writings with entries mentioning the Gross-Brown and Yearsley films about Rizal. These references also take note of how the film reels and documentaries that entertained moviegoers in the early years were surpassed by the feature films in terms of popularity. The above sources were incisive in charting the shift in the film content - from *actualities* and newsreels to the story film. The aesthetics of the narrative film became more defined in the 1950s.

In addition to the above primary sources, biographical books such as *Don Jose and the Early Philippine Cinema* (Quirino, 1983) and *Doña Sisang and Filipino Movies* (Mercado [Ed.], 1977) also discussed technologies such as the latest cameras, color, sound and film processing laboratories that were acquired during the early years of the industry until after the war. In current scholarship, biographical works that inform film historiography are held in high esteem. They are as informative as the straight historical exposition because they shed light on cinema history from the perspective of individual careers of filmmakers and executives.

The first time sound was heard in a Philippine movie presentation was in 1910 and this was mentioned by De Pedro (1994) and Giron (1994). Martin (1983) and Sotto (1992) cited the 1932 film *Ang Aswang* as the first Filipino talkie. Meanwhile, color came

in 1911 (Pareja,1990) and a couple of literatures (Carunungan, 1983; Del Mundo, 1983) mentioned the 1930s *Ibong Adarna* (LVN) as one of the early Filipino experiments in color technology. Moreover, quite a number of references (Alfonso, 1990; Pilar,1994; De Pedro, 1994; Salumbides,1952; Pareja, 1990) paid attention to the technical acquisition and experimentation in the 1930s and 1940s. Authors agreed that the 1950s perfected the studio system, which made possible the acquisition of technology such as the Ansco color (Mercado, 1977). The lead time for the processing of negatives also became faster and the procedure became more sophisticated. The body of literature just mentioned has been relevant in the chronicling of the film technological acquisitions in the 1950s, which became imperative as film narrative and storytelling became more innovative.

C. Relationship between Philippine Cinema and Its Source/Precursor Texts: Historical Perspective

Philippine cinema began almost at the tail end of Spanish rule in the country. Film technology was first brought in the country in 1897. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, Harry Brown and Albert Yearsley did their respective *Noli Me Tangere* films (1915). Pilar (1994) considered these films, among others, as the “precursors” of *Dalagang Bukid*, one of the early projects to establish the affinity between film and a precursor text. Back in those days, prior texts are normally a dramatic piece or a literary work. The entrepreneurial enthusiasm of the pioneers surely rubbed off on the 1950s producers. In understanding the almost auteurist influences of a Doña Sisang or the Vera-Reyeses, the literature cited above have been very informative. The predecessors and inspiration of Filipino producers set the stage for a modern century where the mechanical arts such as the cinema became a profitable novelty.

This nascent relationship between film and literature was evidenced by succeeding productions: *El Filibusterismo* (1916, Brown), *Florante at Laura* (1916, Brown), and *Walang Sugat* (1912, Yearsley). The next decade further proved cinema's dependence on the novel with productions such as *Ang Lumang Simbahan* (1928), *Child of Sorrow* (1931), *Punyal na Ginto* (1933), to name a few [Pilar, 1994]. Meanwhile, Lumbera (1989) noted the importance of Philippine literary sources to cinema in the early period, most especially the works of Francisco (Balagtas) Baltazar and Jose Rizal. These 19th century writers were "the chief sources of tradition" for they were successful in churning writings that are considered today as classics of Philippine literature. Balagtas and Rizal "have given the (film) industry situations and character types that continue to this day to give meat to films both great and mediocre"(p.8), says Lumbera (1989). In addition, majority of the serialized novels in magazines like the *Liwayway*, were prime source for movie material.

Sotto (1992) noted that the character types and motifs that sources like the 19th century *awit* and *korido* feature became easily assimilated in the movies. For instance, the qualities of the romantic hero, the ambience of a medieval European kingdom or the exoticism of a South Sea island setting that are found in said metrical romances and tales have been repeated so often in films. Moreover, Pareja (1990) contended that the sourcing of literary classics and other materials like historical events, zarzuela hits, and religious stories was a calculated move by the producers to court the enthusiasm of audiences in the early years of Philippine cinema.

Lumbera's *Pelikula: An Essay on Philippine Film*, produced for the Cultural Center of the Philippines (1989), noted that in the early years, vignettes from Philippine

literature were ready sources of material. Films like *Sisa* (1941) would borrow a character from the *Noli Me Tangere* and would expand her part into a full-length story film. The 1950s also became prominent in the treatment of film as art. The establishment of film awards and the professional way by which major studios engaged in long-range planning for their productions ensured that film aesthetics were never abandoned in the quest for profit.

The above references detailing the relationship between literature and film in the early years are incisive to tracing the evolution of the influence of early printed narratives on 1950s cinema. These would make further impact on evolving new storytelling devices for cinema.

Oral and written literatures that were used as sources for films were “already in the mass consciousness,” says Tiongson (2000, p.28) in his article titled “The imitation and indigenization of Hollywood.” The literary precursors have implanted images in the people’s mind and these circulated like epics cycles that are repeated in various renditions. Producers were therefore exploiting the element of mass familiarity with material.

This practice is noted by Quirino (1983) in his *Don Jose and the Early Philippine Cinema*, specifically recalling Jose Nepomuceno’s choice to make his first movie the zarzuela known as *Dalagang Bukid*. Aside from the popularity of the zarzuela writer of *Dalagang Bukid* (Hermogenes Ilagan) and the popularity of zarzuela as theatrical form, the material becomes more appealing when the original zarzuela players agree to reprise their roles in the film version.

As already mentioned, Salumbides (1952) provided an important source of information on early Philippine cinema. As director, he adapted *Florante at Laura* using “1200 lines of poetry, 400 of which were directly quoted from the book”(p.27). Along with the works of Lumbera, Sotto, Tiongson, Quirino that have been mentioned above, Salumbides’ work sheds important light on the role of cultural memory in perpetuating story materials and in gaining the sustained attention of film audiences.

Related literature on the interlocking forms of theatre and film abound (Giron, 1994; Martin, 1983; Tiongson, 1983; Lumbera,1997) owing to the continuing influence of colonial theatrical forms like the carillo, sinakulo, komedya or moro-moro and zarzuela decades after the colonizers have left. The zarzuela, now an appropriated art form, is now spelled “sarswela,” finally nativizing the theatrical. It reached its peak in the 1930s but soon lost its patrons when it began competing with the movies. Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio (1972) in her book *The “Seditious” Tagalog Playwrights: Early American Occupation* ascribes the dwindling audience of the 1930s sarswela in Tagalog-speaking regions to the growth and spread of mass media forms such as the movies.

The relationship between film and literature was notable in the decades before the war but it fizzled out after liberation. As Pareja (1994) has reported:

It is certainly distressing to note in the contemporary period the paucity of film products based on literature, as compared to the output of the 1930s and 1940s in what some historians refer to as the first ‘golden age’ of Philippine cinema (p.22).

The subject pertaining to the sources of cinema merited only some passing mentions in discussions of general Philippine film history. Materials delving on film criticism and cultural history were responsible in explaining local practices of adaptation, specifically theater’s influence on the movies. Tiongson’s (in Lumbera, 1983) now

canonical “Four Values in Drama and Film” explores how the world-views of colonial theatre made profound influences on the motifs and themes of early local movies. On the side of film motifs, themes and plot structure, Clodualdo Del Mundo, Jr.’s *Native Resistance: Philippine Cinema and Colonialism 1898-1941* (1998) presents a post-colonial reading of *moro-moro* and *sarswela* movies, noting the almost natural transfer of film styles from their progenitors in the traditional dramas during the colonial years to latter film renditions. The said practice, Del Mundo maintains, is an example of Filipino accommodation of foreign narrative forms.

The above relevant literature detailing the strong link between theatre and film in the early years of cinema history was necessary in introducing the subsequent shift of interest to komiks and radio dramas as prime sources of film adaptation in the 1950s.

1. Komiks into films

Soledad Reyes has written most of available Philippine literature on the komiks, including 1950s film adaptations of komiks (Reyes, 2001). The popular appeal of films based on komiks was seen again in the 1980s (In Roxas and Arevalo, Jr.,1985; Reyes, 2012b). In addition to the intermittent return of komiks materials to the big screen, film stars were born largely because of the iconic komiks characters they played (Reyes, 2009a). Melodrama also established an affinity with the form of komiks (Reyes, 2001), which featured characters from the peripheral sectors of society, unlike their western counterparts who were somehow representatives of the middle class America or Europe (Reyes, 2003).

The komiks also functioned the way morality plays used to signify in colonial Philippines; a “source of aral at aliw”(Reyes, 2009b, p. 149). This accounted for the didactic mode in the stories.

Whether functioning as morality plays or as entertainment media, komiks has been a major source of film materials for decades. Almost over one-half of the movies in the Philippines have been based on komiks (Lent, 1993) and a little resurgence of the medium has been identified owing to the “spin-offs” that were done in the 1980s and 1990s (Lent 2008).

A number of literatures on the comic book-film connection delve on some thorny issues mostly arising from the initial perception of komiks as an “illegitimate medium” before it got accepted into “mainstream media” (Flores, E., 2004).

Eisner (1985) posits comics as a form of reading imagery and framed expressive anatomy or a sequential art. In contrast to cinema, the panels that framed texts and images are read in a sequential manner. Film, Eisner adds, “is an extension of comic strips” but unlike comics, it “enjoys absolute control of its reading” (p.40).

For Eisner (2008), the comics are a narrative form or a storytelling medium. As “a literary/art form and as it matures, it aspires to recognition as a legitimate medium” (p.xii). In fact, the period between 1967 and 1990 had seen this attempt of comics at literariness in world-wide practice.

Roxas and Arevalo, Jr.’s (1985) book titled *A History of Komiks of the Philippines and Other Countries* tackles the industry of the komiks throughout its history and its value as a cultural form. The book includes a discussion on the beginnings and development of the komiks worldwide. *A History of Komiks of the Philippines and Other*

Countries was perhaps the first encyclopedic treatment of comics as a subject of scholarship in the country.

Similar to Roxas and Arevalo Jr.'s and Reyes' contention, Del Mundo, Jr. (1986) recognizes the various roles of the komiks as industry, as potent medium, as our National Book, and as Pabulum of Art Appreciation. This multiple roles of komiks may also be considered in thinking "how it should grow as a medium" (p.185). As he said in another literature: "A common (but not necessarily the best) source of ideas for local movies is the comics" (Del Mundo, Jr., 1981, p.21).

Del Mundo's description of komiks as industry was the same *raison d'être* for the inclusion of a chapter on komiks (Bejo, 1988) in the Crispin Maslog-edited book titled *Philippine Communication: An Introduction* (1988).

Some literatures pertain to the careers of individual comic artists whose works were sought by the fifties movie industry. An example is Patrick Flores's [Ed] (2001) *Komiks: Katha at Guhit ni Francisco V. Coching*. In a chapter that deals with Coching's relationship with the movies, Justino M. Dormiendo discusses film adaptations of Coching's comic stories. Dormiendo recalls Coching's almost cinematic vision in his komiks stories, judging by the filmmakers's attitude towards these stories: "So skillfully realized are Coching's images that many of his directors are believed to have shot their picture with comic book in hand, guided by his serial frame by frame" (p.51). The 2001 monograph was later complemented by another Flores-edited 2010 definitive book of the artist titled *The life and art of Francisco Coching*, an update published by the Vibal Foundation, Inc. and Francisco V. Coching Foundation. The 2010 publication added discussions on Coching as a complete artist and on komiks as a legitimate visual art.

John Lent (2009) traces *The First One Hundred Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons* (2009) in his latest work, beginning with colonial editorial cartoons until the rise of comic strips and the serialized comics. In Boboy Yonzon's Foreword to the book, he notes Lent's reference to Philippine komiks's "rich tradition." Recently, studies of komiks done by the industry movers themselves came out to complement the academic scholars' perspective. One was Randy Valiente's and Fermin Salvador's *Komiks sa paningin ng mga tagakomiks* (2007), which features articles by komiks blog writers and collectors of old komiks prints such as Dennis Villegas and Gerry Alanguilan.

A number of the above-mentioned literatures are at the very least concerned with comics' stature as art form, choosing to work along the postmodern framework, addressing the blurring of distinctions between high art and low art. Their point of discussion is trained more specifically on how converging media (Dowd and Hignite, 2006; Blackwood, 2008) like anime, manga and digital technology have blurred the lines between what is "artistic" and what is popular.

The comic books' central draw that has an impact too on the film versions are the characters. There is an extensive body of foreign and local literatures delving on an analysis of a "new" mythology that the comic books create through the heroic stories they feature. For instance, "Superman began life as a kind of populist statement" (Ponicwozik, 2002). Dick Tracy was said to have been given many on-screen treatments (Yacowar, 2008). Moreover, several characters that originated from the comic books provided inspiration to Hollywood (Gustinnes, 2006). When the characters are less popular than Superman or Batman, their characterizations are expected to be well drawn out or "explained" (Mitchell, 2000). Hughes (2003) *Comic book movies*, for instance, comments

on Hollywood film adaptations of twenty (20) superhero-based stories from 1978 to 2003, from *Superman* to *Hulk*. Moreover, Reyes (in Roxas and Arevalo, Jr., 1985) opines that these Hollywood examples are no different from the Filipino komiks writers' predisposition to kowtow to "literary prototypes."

The subject matter of comic books seems to be a main draw and is translatable into a box office formula (McAllister, Gordon, and Jancovich, 2006). These are considered "accessible" themes in this age of postmodernity that is obsessed with post-industrial woes and pluralism; in other words, society's way of maintaining a link to myth (Casey and Fraction, 2007).

Reyes (in Del Mundo, 1986) acknowledges the folk origins of the komiks subjects which drew from the Spanish colonial years, novels, short stories, archetypes, medieval romance, magic, the epic hero, SMERSH and sports, the macabre, love, humor, pseudo-science and opinion-molding themes. Meanwhile, in "The structure of meaning in komiks" (1991), she suggests a structural approach to unravelling the meaning in Filipino komiks, which contain identifiable motifs drawn from local folklore, the barrio setting, and themes such as nature and relationship with fellowmen and with God.

Even into the 2000s, the influence of Hollywood comic characters made their impact on local audiences. While Filipino filmmakers adapted the stories of foreign characters like Captain Marvel, Superman and Wonder Woman into the local setting, the storylines were Filipinized or provided local contexts (Flores, E., 2005).

The tension between the komiks as fertile prototype for Filipino films and the perceived disadvantage of its apparent "simplicity" remain the subject of the scanty literature found on the subject. The *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994) identifies three advantages

of movies based on komiks: Firstly, the wide readership of komiks results into more demand for fidelity. Secondly, the limits of comic book seriality create an opportunity for better on screen storytelling. Lastly, adaptations of komiks allow the participation of both readers of komiks and film viewers in the consumption process.

Meanwhile, certain disadvantages of the film compared to the komiks version include the supposed limitations of a two-hour storytelling film medium in compressing the episodic structure of the serialized comic story (*CCP Encyclopedia*). In spite of these disadvantages, the ability of komiks to chart the careers of actors who would be handpicked to play specific heroic roles and the straddling of the medium in between dramatic realism and romance in matters of styles and motifs have been cited as plus points for cinema.

The above-cited literature on komiks aided this research in understanding the unique language and grammar of the medium that somehow found their affinity with cinema and paved the way for reworking popular stories in another form.

2. *Aesthetics of Adaptation*

Majority of writings on adaptation trace the relationship of film with monolithic literary forms such as poetry, fiction, nonfiction and drama. Mostly published in the West, adaptations are analyzed within progressive and linear influence of print culture on visual culture. Although the case has been different in the Philippines, this subsection elaborates on available adaptation studies done in various contexts.

George Bluestone's seminal work titled *Novels into Film* (1957) explores the distinction between the language of the novel and the language of the film and their respective limitations. The novel is a time art, he says, while the film is a spatial art; the

novel having three (3) tenses (past, present, future) and the film only one (present). The filmed novel, in his estimation, would always be a different take on the original. He suggests that the unique properties of each medium or “a system of priority and emphasis” be the guiding principle; thus, offering that “time is prior in the novel, and space prior in the film” (p.61).

One of Bluestone’s most important discussions in his book has to do with tense and temporality (Cardwell, 2003). His successors who share his assessment about filmic temporality suggest that time in cinema can be made broader than chronological time. Moreover, Bluestone includes a comparative case study of six (6) novels turned into film in *Novels into film*, thereby pioneering an approach of analyzing adaptations where elements in the novel are matched with their equivalencies in the film – now called The Bluestone Approach.

Morris Beja (1979) presents the similarities and parallels between the narrative principles of narrative film and of narrative literature in *Film and Literature*. He not only compares the role of verbal and cinematic language in narrativizing through some twenty-five (25) case analyses, he also points to the economic background of film production. Notable in his introduction is the reverse influence of film on literature.

Stuart Y. McDougal (1985) follows in the tradition of Bluestone where issues intrinsic to literature and film are addressed “to define the unique properties of each medium” (p.7). The comparative approach helps probe “relative strengths and weaknesses” (p.7). In *MADE INTO MOVIES: From Literature to Film*, some twenty-two (22) cases are analysed according to specific formal elements such as plot and structure,

character, point of view, the world of inner experience, figurative discourse, symbol and allegory and time. McDougal calls adaptation “the metamorphic art”(p.3).

Some authors do not subscribe to the idea of a unidirectional relationship between film and literature. They rather posit the relationship between source texts and target texts as a dialogue or an exchange. Keith Cohen’s (1979) *Film and Fiction/The Dynamics of Exchange* takes up the influence of the rise of cinema on the aesthetics of the modern novel, citing the influence of visual art techniques on the cinema and the influence of the cinematic on the classic modern novel (1895-1925) in terms of temporal distortion among others.

The drama, which is universally accepted as one of the oldest literary forms, is perhaps most influential to Philippine cinema. Tiongson (1983a, Tiongson, 1983b 2000) and Lumbera (1997) provide extensive explorations of this idea. Previously cited, Tiongson’s (in Lumbera and Maceda,1983) “Four Values in Filipino Drama and Film,” articulates the role of colonial aesthetics on 20th century cinema. In his other work titled “From Stage to Screen: Philippine Dramatic traditions and the Filipino Film” (in Ma. Guerrero, 1983), Tiongson mentions that “it should by now be clear that the contemporary Filipino film cannot be understood without uncovering its roots in Filipino theatrical tradition”(p.93). Lumbera (1997) shares Tiongson’s thoughts in his essays titled “An Approach to the Filipino Film” and “The Dramatic Impulse and the Filipino” (1997).

In the course of scouring graduate papers on adaptation scholarship, this study was able to identify only three theses by Filipino students on the subject of adaptation. Two of these were masters’ theses and one was a doctoral dissertation, the latter being authored by this researcher.

Trinidad Maño submitted her masters' thesis titled *Literature and the Movies* in 1949 at the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Santo Tomas at the dawn of the film industry's first golden age. Maño claims that the movies were an extension of literature after the war, which was quite a liberal view at that time. Maño, like Gould Boyum (1985) assigns to adaptations an educational function, adding that the "visual and auditory aids screen versions of great literary masterpieces are made popular and accessible to the masses"(p.6). The thesis upholds the idea of the intersection of two art forms and the autonomy of each medium as having "the essential similarities and differences between literature and the movies" (p.6) and suggests that the movies should be seen for the separate categories through which it may be able to communicate best.

Leoncio Deriada's master's thesis, *Cinema as Literature*, submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Xavier University in 1970, follows the argument that cinema is one of the fine arts and therefore, an extension of literature. For Deriada, cinema does not only serve the purpose of entertainment but also the purveyance of "the true, the good, and the beautiful." Cinema is considered literature because it is "basically a form of drama" (Deriada,1970).

Meanwhile, film historian Lena Strait Pareja (1994) explores the nascent stage of adaptation practice in the Philippines, from the time Jose Nepomuceno produced his version of *Noli Me Tangere* in 1930, in her article "Philippine Literature and Cinema" (*Diamond Anniversary of Philippine Cinema*). Pareja's essay also cites that the "translation" is considered the filmmaker's style in adapting literature, wherein the novelists may decide to do the translation themselves or remain "in the sidelines" for others to do the work.

This body of related literature on the aesthetics of adaptation has been informative in surveying discourses on Western aesthetics in relation to local publications and in justifying the argument that a localized theory has become a timely and pressing concern.

D. Literatures on Adaptation Criticism and Theory

The literatures theorizing on the relationship between film and literature initially projected a dual face. On the one hand, these literatures worked around the rubric of literary criticism. On the other, these have been assimilated under film theory. This dual trajectory of adaptation discourse seemed to have slowed down its progress as a sub-area of film studies.

Available bibliographies are helpful in charting the course of adaptation theory. Mostly exploratory, bibliographies “deal with general aspects of the literature/film problem”(Wicks, 1978). Ross’(1987) *Film as Literature, Literature as Film: An Introduction to and Bibliography of Film’s Relationship to Literature* is a comprehensive bibliographic listing of the relationship of literature and film and vice versa, as well as with the other arts. It also discusses the careers of literary writers who also did film writing in various eras of Western cinema.

Subsequent bibliographies like Peter S. Gardner’s *Literature and Film: An Annotated Bibliography of Resources* (1992) have acknowledged the interdisciplinary intersection between literature and film. Anthologies listing the novels made into movies with their summaries and production data show the dynamic industry that Hollywood became and continue to be in the arena of adaptation. John C. Tibbets’s and James M. Welsh’s *Encyclopedia of novels into film* (1998/2005) is an important resource because it lists down “novels that may be of secondary importance as literature but have nonetheless

achieved a certain popularity on their own as a consequence of their being filmed”(p.xi). The above-mentioned lists and bibliographies are important primary resources that complement film-literature scholarship in the English language and literary studies. References of this kind in Philippine cinema remain scarce.

1. Adaptation Criticism

Early adaptation criticism has been dominated by the fidelity issue, which revolves around the idea of a “superior” source or prior text (Sinyard,1986) and a condescending attitude towards the film version (Beja,1979; Gould Boyum,1985). Sometimes, the language of adaptation criticism is violently unfavourable to film (Stam in Naremore, 2000; Hutcheon,2004). Words like “parasites” and “savages of the twentieth century” have been used by writers such as Virginia Woolf and Hannah Arendt to refer to movies that depend on books or pre-existing materials (Gould Boyum, 1985). This condescending attitude stems from the alleged tendency of Hollywood to “dumb down” novels. Moreover, the opinions derogatory to adaptations have been ironically picked up by popular magazines (Travers, 2000) where tolerance for popular entertainment should be expectedly high. As early as 1957, Bluestone has already proposed for the identification of equivalencies rather than the tracking down of comparative units that emphasize differences in the properties of the media.

Early adaptation criticisms are “working from English literature perspective”(Whelehan,1999) and this accounts for the prevalence of the narratological approach (Bluestone,1957; Beja,1979; McFarlane,1996) that initially dominated the field. One example is the recent adaptation of E.M. Forster’s *A Room With a View*, which religiously follows the narrative structure of the novel (Levine,1989).

The element of the narrative is common to literature and film. Robert Scholes' "Narration and narrativity in film" (in Mast and Cohen [Ed], 1979) defines narration in terms of the seeming presence of a narrator inside the text while narrativity connotes an active engagement of the audience. Film accomplishes narrativity through the efficient approximation of the novelistic elements and the use of filmic properties that the audience could relate to.

Similar to Scholes' and Bluestone's contention, Seymour Chatman (in Mast and Cohen, 1979) in his "What novels can do that films can't (and vice versa)" argues that the separate raw materials that divide the novel and film narrative do not need to estrange them totally. While the narrative is not the only point of intersection between film and a prior text, it is integral in the study of adaptations. Furthermore, a review of Abbott Porter's *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Welsh, 2002) raises the issue of transformation of narratives when these migrate from one medium to another and from one cultural context to another.

There seems to be two genres that dominate the focus of adaptation criticism: drama and fiction. In the case of dramatic sources, the towering accomplishments of Shakespeare and the various translations of his works are hard to ignore (Welsh, 2005; Fischlin and Fortier [Eds], 2000). In the case of fiction, methodologies comparing novelistic properties and filmic translation become repetitive (Raw, 2008) and sometimes fail to include other forms of narratives like video games (Philips, 2010).

William Kittredge's and Steven M. Krauzer's [Eds] *Stories into film* (1979) acknowledges the difference between the short story and film but somehow understands that the visual properties of the latter are the ingredients through which film adaptation

may realize its function as art. Nine (9) short stories and film translations are discussed to somehow prove a counterpoint to the idea that the novel is closest to film in terms of narrative parallels. The short story can be read in one sitting; the film may be viewed in one session. Yet the fact remains that more research articles and books delve on the relationship of film with the novel than with the short story.

Fidelity criticism – the amount of allegiance that film pays to its source - has been challenged in various literatures in the more recent times (Raw, 2011; Cooledge, 2010; Whelehan, 1999; Tibbetts, 2008). Phillips (2010), in one of his reviews, has expressed this “wish to lay to rest” the idea of faithfulness. Lipkin (1986) reports that after the war in Europe, during which the new wave had influenced filmmaking, Francois Trauffaut attacked fidelity criticism claiming that it becomes “nonsensical in the face of the extreme diversity and complexity of the original sources and the essential similarity of the range of completed adaptation”(p.157). Rizzo (2008) ascribes the privileging of the literary source over the film source to the traditional belief that the verbal culture has more depth than the visual culture.

New critical approaches have been pursued lately by scholars. The use of intertextual and postmodern approaches (Cooledge ,2010; Ray in Naremore,2000;Stadler,2003) have been aimed in order to liberate adaptation criticism from the enclave of new criticism (Ray in Naremore,2000) and to project adaptation as a form of criticism itself (Whelehan,1999; Sinyard,1986; Stam in Naremore,2000; Balfour,2010). This would also mean using the cultural studies approach (Whelehan,1999; Stam in Naremore,2000; Balfour,2010). The same approach has lately been applied to Shakespearean works (Fischlin and Fortier, [Eds.], 2000). Corollary to

the cultural studies approach is the type of reading that trains its lens on the issue of race and in giving space to the works of minority writers or writers with unique ethno-racial background (Stovall, 1996).

Aside from fidelity criticism, older paradigms in adaptation studies work around auteur theory and genre (Whelehan,1999). Even then, the engagement of genres has since been recontextualized in adaptation studies. Geraghty (2008) focuses on how genres are mixed in the practice of adaptation; how the use of space and time is revealed through camera work and editing; and, how important are the roles of the performers and the activities of reviewing movies and doing publicity work inside the adaptation industry. Tibbets and Welsh revised their book *The Encyclopedia of Novels into Film* (1998) into a second edition (2005) to problematize the author in the adaptation process, declaring that “it is a matter of decentering the authorial present and centering our own engagement with the text”(p.xxi).

The comparative case-studies continue to be the more popular analytic approach even in the present decade although these have been frequently updated in the 1980s. This is evident in a number of publications that employ variations of the comparative approach (Bluestone,1957; Beja,1979; Kittredge and Krauzer, 1979; Boyum,1985; McDougal, 1985; Sinyard, 1986; McFarlane, 1996; Desmond and Hawkes, 2006). Normally, the comparative approach begins with a general introductory essay that discusses the relationship between literature and film (or drama and film and novel and film for that matter). Its succeeding chapters would present the comparative case studies, sometimes comprising 80 to 90 percent of the discussion. A capstone or an epilogue would conclude the book-cum-anthology of criticisms.

Neil Sinyard (1986) presents ten (10) cases of literary texts translated into films including the bio-pics and film's relationship with theatre in *Filming Literature*. He argues that film has inherited the role of novel as narrator or storyteller, saying that "the legacy of the nineteenth-century novel is the twentieth-century film" (p.vii). He protests against the common prejudice against adaptations of classics and considers the documentary nature of film as serving the same function of 19th century novel. Furthermore, he shares the belief that adaptation is itself a form of criticism.

In view of some repetitive and overly formalistic reading of the works, the case studies seem to have lost its appeal (Raw,2008). Meanwhile, Gould Boyum (1985) provides a radical break from the comparative case approach, instead proposing adaptation as reinterpretation. Gould Boyum considers the filmmaker a reader or an interpreter. By adopting a reader-response view, the work of the viewer is perceived as active; one who is "inscribed in its text"(p.73). The viewer's task is to apprehend with "anticipation and retrospection" an interpretation (filmed version) of an interpretation (the novel in the reader/viewer's mind).

Following the case-study approach, Brian McFarlane (1996) tackles the narrative affinities between the novel and the film but also highlights their different signifying systems. In *Novel into film: An introduction to the theory of adaptation*, he avoids issues of authorship, the industrial and cultural contexts of adaptation and the level of responses to the texts so he could delve more into the intrinsic components of the texts.

Desmond and Hawkes (2006) use the same formalist approach in discussing ways of performing case analyses of novels, short story, play, nonfiction, animation in *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*. They problematize the fidelity issue and the

different signifying systems between film and literature. They also prefer a more eclectic approach, suggesting either a microscopic application where “students of adaptation investigate in fine detail a small part of the literary text and the corresponding part of the film” (p.80) and the macroscopic application where “the student investigates the whole literary text, paragraph by paragraph, stanza by stanza, or dialogue by dialogue” (p.80).

Cartmell’s and Whelehan’s [Eds] (1999) analysis is two-way in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. “From text to screen” cites examples from a number of Shakespearean films and other literary works. In “From screen to text and multiple adaptations,” the book tackles popular texts like *Batman* and *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*. Their collection of analyses works around a cultural studies approach, which “foregrounds the activities of reception and consumption, and shelves – forever perhaps – considerations of the aesthetic or cultural worthiness of the subject of study” (p.18).

While critics do not ignore the narratological approach, they also problematize the narrative issues, namely: the infusion of history, nostalgia, ideology, audience, pleasure and intertextuality. For instance Eric Rentschler (Ed.) in his *German film and literature: Adaptations and transformations* (1986) posits that post-war adaptations of literary sources succumbed the Socialist prerogative to critique Germany’s Nazi past, which had been greatly articulated in novels and other literary forms (also in Acker,1989). Meanwhile, the study of the cultural and political contexts of adaptation has become a battle cry for some critics (Phillips, 2010). Recently, the use of cultural approaches (Bignell, [Ed.], 1999) has enriched readings and theorizing.

Soledad Reyes (1991a) suggests two modes with which to understand the transfer of Philippine literature or any source text to film: the romance mode and the realistic

mode. These two modes that affect literature are also the same tendencies that influence filmmakers who follow the swinging of the pendulum from the fantastic and escapist stories to works of social realism – even extreme naturalism – that reflect the aesthetics and personal ethics of the creators.

Some Filipino critics prefer a more poststructuralist approach to adaptation criticism by bordering on theory. In his lecture titled “Literature through film, Film through literature: Adaptation criticism as metacriticism,” Patrick Campos (2009) proposes a Filipino adaptation critical framework using Roland Barthes’ functional analysis of narrative, Gerald Genette’s concept of transtextuality and Caroline Hau’s notion of excess. He proposes “con-text” wherein criticism in itself is a text that is reflexively inscribed in the works of adaptation.

So far, only Campos (2009) and this researcher have engaged in adaptation criticism in the Philippines, sampling local literary works as these migrate to the screen. This small niche occupied by Philippine adaptation criticism is expected to widen as other trends such as the auteurist approach, semiotics and genre enter the arena of discourse.

The literatures on adaptation criticism solidify the conclusion that Western approaches to the study of adaptation are limited in understanding local practice. This will be further taken up in succeeding discussions.

2. Adaptation Theory

Literatures on adaptation theory, similar to literatures on adaptation criticism, are situated in between film studies and literary criticism. While literatures on adaptation

theory should contain discussions of adaptation criticism, it is expected also to delve on adaptation practice.

The problem of fidelity has dominated early works on theorizing about adaptations (Bluestone, 1957; Beja,1979;McDougal,1985). There are however a group of critics who have chosen to present adaptation as a form of criticism (Boyum, 1985; Stam,2005;Bazin,inNaremore,2000;Andrew, in Naremore,2000;) and a growing number more who view it as an intertextual dialogism (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999; Naremore, 2000; Stam, in Naremore, 2000; Stam, 2005; Arriola, 2006; Campos, 2009).

In recent years, scholars working along the field of cultural studies and poststructuralist and postmodern theory, have presented a more liberal view of the source-adaptation relationship, debunking fidelity criticism in favour of the culturological. This idea has found more presence in film and literary research journals recently (Hutcheon, 2004, Leitch,2007; Olney,2010).

Kline (1996) interprets the above-mentioned critical paradigms into so-called four (4) normative theories of adaptation: (1) translation paradigm, (2) pluralist paradigm, (3) transformation and (4) materialism. The translation paradigm is the matching of elements of the source with the narrative properties of cinema. The pluralist and the transformation paradigms work the same way as the “adaptation as criticism” view. These allow factors external to the work such as auteur and contexts of adaptation to be the main discussion point. Meanwhile, the materialist view however is what Andrew (1986) calls as “a sociological turn” of adaptation studies, which trains its lens on political economy, cultural economy and social history of adaptation.

Naremore (2000) has published what may probably be the first book on the theory of adaptation using new theoretical paradigms as these are currently practiced in the U.S. and some parts of Europe. His *Film Adaptation* explores scholarships on adaptation including Bazin's idea of adaptation as the "cinema of digest" and Dudley's "sociological turn" of adaptation. While Naremore presents cases, he also prioritizes the cultural studies approach adopted by scholars like Hutcheon (2004) and Leitch (2007). Naremore was one of the first scholars to situate adaptation studies within its contexts.

Stam (2005) explores the art of adaptation not only within the framework of the realist novel and cinema but also along current practices of magic realism and postmodern fiction. With analyses of texts like *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lolita*; artists like Orson Welles, Vicente Minnelli, Woody Allen; and, movements like modernism and French New Wave, he has expanded the terrain of adaptation by taking a postmodern perspective and by viewing each text as an occasion of multicultural dialogism, wherein realism and fidelity to source are considered limited lenses compared to approaches to genres and cultural meanings.

Unfortunately, studies on how genres of media migrate from one to another remain scanty. Adaptations from drama to film have already been subjected to various analyses (Lapeña-Bonifacio, 1972; Tiongson, 1983a/1983b; Lumbea, 1997) but other source-texts like novels, oral literature and komiks have yet to be visited more thoroughly.

Proposals for new theoretical paradigms to study adaptations require attending to issues and problems confronting film's relationship with its sources. Firstly, the debunking the fidelity issue may liberate the film from condescending perception

(Hutcheon, 2004; Phillips, 2010; Stam, 2005; Reynolds, 1993; McFarlane, 2000; Cartmell and Whelehan, 2007; Vela, 2009). Secondly, the view that adaptation is “part of an intertextual, intersemiotic, interinstitutional series” (Palmer, 2007, p.4) must be heavily supported by theories derived from film theory, literary theory, and cultural studies (Stam, 2005; Olney, 2010; Murray, 2008; Stadler, 2003). Lastly, the objective of an adaptation theory is not only crafting a methodology that will replace the comparative case studies approach that has dominated the area for decades. Instead, an eclectic view combining “analytical insight and methodological innovation” (Murray, 2008) must be the new concern (Kline, 1996; Leitch, 2007; Olney, 2010; Campos, 2009).

The relevant literature on adaptation theory helped this study in designing a methodology combining a textual approach with a materialist analysis. The Western theories may be contentious but these may also be used for a fair and objective comparison between textuality and intertextuality in different settings. Current adaptation theory also lends insight on a cultural analytic approach that tries to avoid the essentialist tendencies of a number of received assumptions.

E. Synthesis and Critique

The preceding review of related literature presented a topical-thematic arrangement of the discussion without losing sight of a historical overview. The four (4) main topics by which the literatures were clustered include the Film Technology in the Philippines, Relationship between Philippine Cinema and Its Source/Precursor Texts from a Historical Perspective; the Aesthetics of Adaptation, and; Literatures on Adaptation Criticism and Theory.

“Film technology in the Philippines” briefly surveys the works that mention the Filipino filmmakers’ response to the acquisition of film technology before and after the Second World War, more specifically the importation of camera equipment, technology for projection, sound technology, color processing, and film processing laboratories.

The sub-heading “Relationship between Philippine Cinema and Its Source/Precursor Texts from a Historical Perspective” outlines the historic relationship between Filipino film and its sources from the time of early cinema history. Theatre forms dominated the influence. Historical studies and critical essays reveal how the theatre provided a steady supply of materials to the early film industry. During the pre-war years, theatre, Tagalog novels, histories and folklore were the major sources of stories. In the postwar, komiks, radio scripts and true events became the more preferred film sources. Very few comparative case analyses of sources and adaptations have been done until Del Mundo, Jr.’s (1998) *Native resistance: Philippine cinema and colonialism 1898-1941*.

The “Aesthetics of Adaptation” section begins with fidelity criticism and ends with postmodern approaches. Dominated by foreign literatures, the section identifies a dearth of studies analyzing the practice of adaptation. Maño (1949), Deriada (1970), Arriola (2006) and Campos (2009) are among the Filipino researchers who has written on the subject with the latter two performing some close textual readings.

The Literatures on Adaptation Criticism and Theory are in their transitional state. Since Bluestone’s 1957 book, the discontent with fidelity criticism led to a spate of literatures offering new theoretical paradigms that draw insights from postmodernism and cultural studies. There is growing interdisciplinary character to the emerging discourse.

The literatures on theorizing, on account of their provisional status, are still emergent but they have rescued the field from what Naremore (2000) called a “moribund” state of the discourse and has transformed it into something that is now thriving, with scholars and practitioners quickly catching on and making a change.

The gaps that this study addresses, advised by the related literature, point to the limitation of Western theory in explaining the phenomenon of Philippine adaptation. The study used Western theories and approaches only as a political nexus. This meant that while Western theories are not debunked or negated, these only serve as guidepost for comparison. This review of related literature then serves the dual purpose of helping problematize received theory and building emergent constructs and concepts that may possibly explain Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation practice in the 1950s.

III. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The best kind of media theory to begin with is a historical one.

– Fred Inglis, *Media Theory*

Cinema is a kind of pan-art. – Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*

A. Theories and Concepts

This chapter contains the theories and concepts that undergird this study, including concepts pertaining to indigenization or contextualization of theory, the language and grammar of comics, film semiotics, contemporary adaptation theory and criticism and social film history. This chapter is capped by a research paradigm or conceptual framework that will explain the research process and the theory-generation process.

1. *Contextualizing Film Adaptation Within the Specificities of Filipino Culture*

Film adaptation presupposes the act of borrowing from precursor materials and transposing these stories into film. There are two ways by which the foreign is melded with the local, as far as the matter of film adaptation is concerned. One has to do with aesthetic elements (stories, film styles, technological mediation, etc.) that may permeate Filipino film adaptation practice. The other is through the norm of adaptation discourse that influence theorizing or scholarship on the subject. The said dual axes of adaptation inquiry is analogous to the two-pronged character of the present endeavour, which investigates komiks-to-film adaptation practice in the 1950s and attempts to build a

theory from the data that were generated. The two applications become mutually exclusive in the process. The latter (theory-building) is heavily dependent on the outcome of the previous mode (inquiry on 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation).

The body of related literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals the dominance of Western adaptation discourse in the Philippine academy and the paucity of local studies that have been contextualized within the Filipino modes of experience. In view of this dearth in the literature, the framework of the study will be built around existing theories and concepts that delve on indigenization/vernacularization/localization/contextualization of knowledge drawn from psychology and other branches of social sciences that pioneered in such an endeavour. Theories and criticism authored by foreign postcolonial scholars will also be cited to explain the affinity of the Filipino cinema with that of other formerly colonized nations. Like the Philippines, other countries were introduced to film during their colonial history; thereby forming “hybridized” cinemas and cinematic adaptation practices.

The current initiative of the academe to explain disciplinal inquiries within the specificities of the culture of people who experienced them revolves around broader, interdisciplinary concepts. Film adaptation practice may draw from these larger discourses. The words “contextualization,” “indigenization,” “vernacularization,” “localization” are used interchangeably to refer to the process of addressing what is Filipino in the said practice. “Hybridization” is the aftermath of vernacularization.

The subject of Filipino film adaptation theory finds itself homing under the larger discourse of postcolonial and national cinema, which this researcher will not anymore thread upon, on account of the broad terrain of said body of knowledge. Rajadhyaksha

(2000) acknowledges the difficulty of pinning down a definition of postcolonial criticism in film in the light of the expanding contemporary discourses arising from post-structuralism in cinema and older interests such as feminism, psychoanalysis, and modernism. Although contentious, the term “Third Cinema” seems to be more akin to the urge to contextualize film adaptation discourse in Filipino realities. As “developing” and “third world” cinema, Filipino cinema, in the words of Roy Armes (1987) is “the most important cinema in Southeast Asia” and “offers a full reflection” of its colonial background (p.151). To understand Filipino film adaptation as an offshoot of its position as “third world cinema,” this researcher treads on local experience and explain the phenomenon of film adaptation from such lenses, instead of drawing from received theory; thus, moving towards a contextualized discourse.

- a. Drawing from *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* [Filipino Psychology] and other contextualized local sciences

Since the 1970s, Virgilio Enriquez (1994) pioneered indigenization of knowledge and research in psychology in what he labels as “Sikolohiyang Pilipino [Filipino psychology].” As an academic discipline, Sikolohiyang Pilipino is the formal study of the “indigenous” psychology of the Filipinos as this has been informed by their history, culture and “dynamic interaction” (p.27) with factors external to their situation.

Enriquez’s sikolohiya is in response to the widespread call for indigenization of knowledge in the social sciences, which has been dominated by Western modes of thought. Kim (1990) opines that unlike the natural sciences where the external world may be approached *a priori* to human thought, the cultural sciences, including psychology, enlist the participation of human beings as conduit to the generation of knowledge.

Human thought is *a posteriori*; it is the people who uncover it and it is not merely received passively. Furthermore, “indigenous psychologies uphold the view that each culture needs to be understood in its own frame of reference” (p.379).

Enriquez (1994; In Pe-Pua, 1989) offers a cultural meaning of *adaptation* (general context, not referring to film adaptation) too as a way of appropriating foreign concepts into Filipino realities. He proposes that the theories, perspectives and research methods that address native or local concerns be expressed in local language. In the field of Filipino psychology for instance, he says that the Filipino language is never limited in articulating discourse; rather, it is the foreign language that is incapable of expressing Filipino concepts (Enriquez, In Bautista [Ed], 1996).

In proposing the indigenization of social science theory, Enriquez works through immersion in culture, in language, and in the history of our people. Only then could we be capable of producing local knowledge. Enriquez further explicates:

...at higit na mahalaga sa lahat ay ang patuloy na pananaliksik sa mga konseptong sikolohikal sa Pilipino. Saksi ang wikang Pilipino sa pananaw na ang sikolohiya ng mga Pilipino ay tungkol sa *kamalayan* na tinutukoy sa kanyang damdami't kaalamang nararanasan, sa *ulirat* na tumutukoy sa kanyang kaalaman at pagkaunawa, sa *diwa* na tumutukoy din sa kanyang mga haka at hinuha, sa *bait* na tumutukoy sa kanyang ugali, kilos o asal, sa *loob* na tumutukoy din sa kanyang damdamin, at sa *kaluluwa* na siyang daan upang tukuyin din ang kanyang budhi. Ang mga paksang ito ay kasalukuyang pinag-aaralan ng mga iskolar na Pilipino sa ibat-ibang disiplina.[...What is most important of all is continuous research on the psychological concepts in Filipino. The Filipino language has an affinity with the psychology of the Filipinos in asserting the consciousness of his feelings and experience, his knowledge and understanding, of thoughts that capture his ideas and understanding, behaviour, actions and conduct, his inner life that gives form to his feelings, his soul that is the path to his conscience. All these topics are being studied by Filipino scholars of various disciplines.]. (Enriquez, In Pe-Pua, 1989, p. 65; citing Mercado 1974; Salazar 1974)

Enriquez finds an ally in Zeus Salazar, the stalwart of the movement to Filipinize concepts in history and anthropology called “Pantayong Pananaw.” Salazar contends that because the social sciences aim to understand human thought and conscience, these should give voice to what is distinct and unique in the Filipino race. In order to do that, the borrowing of foreign concepts should be matched by an equally earnest pursuit of theorizing and researching about local knowledge. The key to original idea is translation. As Salazar (In Pe-Pua [Ed], 1989) further articulates:

Sa gawaing (ito) ng pag-aangkop, ng pagbabagay ng mga natuklasang sikolohikal sa larangan ng teorya at metodolohiya, napakahalaga ang pagsasalin. Kung tutuusin, ang buong problema ay problema ng pagsasalin [In this endeavour of fitting, of making suitable what has been considered psychological in the field of theory and methodology, translation is very important. In fact, the whole problem is a problem of translation.].(p.49)

Even the word “indigenization” should be qualified (Bhabha, 1994; Enriquez, 1994). For Enriquez, the word “indigenization” is associated with modernity and development. Therefore being indigenous connotes being “uncivilized.” In recent decades, the word “contextualization” is preferred because it sounds more “neutral” (Enriquez, 1994, p.2) than “indigenization.”

The present research appropriates the above indigenization literatures from psychology and related social sciences to frame the emergent concepts of this study from the specificity of the Filipino culture and film adaptation practices in the 1950s. Four (4) terminologies from the literatures have been adopted to explain the process of contextualizing theory within Filipino film adaptation practice, namely: (1) indigenization, (2) localization, (3) vernacularization, and (4) hybridity.

b. Four Axes of Contextualization

(5) Indigenization

Indigenization presupposes the existence of a native, a local, who has direct experience of one's culture and therefore possesses first-hand knowledge of said culture. Atal (1990) says that indigenization is meant to "provide the insider's view of culture and society" and "enable better explication of native categories of thought" (p.41). Indigenous ways of life existed prior to colonial encounter. The native ways were not exactly obliterated during the period of colonial encounter. The indigenous was also not discarded away as new ways of life were introduced from the outside. For instance, Felipe de Leon, Jr. (1990) considers the people's art as that which is rooted in indigenous psychology. It is art that is "integrated in everyday life" (p. 318). This means that aesthetics and values are inseparable and are linked to the life ways of the community. They are not separate or autonomous compare to the specialist art or the art forms that are learned through formal training and study.

Indigenization as an approach to the study of film adaptation is taken to mean as appropriating foreign concepts (filmmaking being a Western-introduced concept from the very start) and treating these borrowings by melding these with local ways until these are amalgamated or nativized. Another way of defining the word is by seeking the native elements in every cultural expression.

(6) Localization

In terms of localization, this research draws heavily from Homi Bhabha's (1994) *The location of culture*. Bhabha explores the process of identity formation of a postcolonial subject who has been bred in both foreign (colonial) and local cultures. The

local subject and the location of his/her culture (the nation) do not remain the same after encountering the foreign. The transformation is a double-bind. The local, who is now rooted in the specificity of his/her past and culture, is also part of the world. “The personal-is-the political; the world-in-the home,” as Bhabha (1994, p.11) explains the postcolonial subject’s alternate existences.

It is within this context that localization may be defined. Film adaptation practices are located in possibly all cultures in the world but in this study, it is being investigated within its location in Filipino culture, specifically Filipino narrative life. As Bhabha (1994) articulates: “The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasion”(p.9). By locating adaptation in culture, we do not fall into the trap of isolating a practice from the larger terrain of narrative culture. Instead, we see adaptation as an adjunct and an expression of history and culture.

(3) Vernacularization

The vernacular is usually pertains to the use of any of the languages in the Philippines, sometimes connoting specific dialects. To connect its wider application in culture, Houston A. Baker, Jr.’s (in Leitch [Ed], 2001) definition from *Blues, ideology, and Afro-American literature: A vernacular theory* is most useful. Baker defines the word “vernacular” in two-ways. Connoting the relationship of a slave to his master, the vernacular is defined as a person “born on his master’s estate; home-born.” Meanwhile, as a feature of the arts, the vernacular is viewed as a “native or peculiar to a particular country or locality” (p. 2227).

Both definitions of the “vernacular” are useful to the present study. Certain film adaptation practices may be “home-born,” “native,” and “peculiar to a particular country

or locality.” The word “vernacularization,” being also a noun, connotes appropriating foreign concepts in the Philippine context. Since the word “vernacular” is linked to local language. Filipino film adaptation is posited as cinema speaking the language of the native literally and of localizing the practice of adaptation metaphorically.

(7) Hybridization

Bhabha (1994) is helpful in exploring the concept of hybridity for film adaptation. He defines the word hybrid as “new, *neither the one nor the other*” (p.25). Bakhtin’s (1981) definition in *The Dialogic Imagination*, although limited to linguistic expression in literature, is also useful in this account. He defines hybridization as “the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and space” (p.429). If one were to adopt Bakhtin’s conception, film adaptation becomes the result of a dialogue between texts or what he calls “double voicing.”

Bhabha furthermore, argues for indigenizing theory through the concept of hybridity; by being open to outside discourses and by destroying binaries or the dichotomies between dominant discourse and minority discourse (such as foreign influences and native appropriations for example). This means being open to a Third Space of enunciation where “hybridity” may find a fertile ground. A more eclectic attitude, rather than an essentialist one, is prescribed because this may be more beneficial to theorizing. As Bhabha (1994) asks: “In what hybrid forms, then, may a politics of the theoretical statement emerge? What tensions and ambivalences mark this enigmatic place from which theory speaks?”(p. 22).

The concept of hybridity is an important aspect of theorizing on film adaptation, the latter being an amalgam of various concepts that draw from both native and borrowed discourse and from pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial contexts.

1. *Western Theories and Concepts Useful to the Textual Analysis of Komiks-to-Film Adaptation*

c. Semiotics of Film

(1) Theoretical Roots of Film Semiotics

The words “semiotic” and “semiology” are usually used interchangeably to mean the study of signs, signification and signifying systems. The two founding fathers of modern semiotics were responsible for the apparent variations in terminologies. The Swiss thinker Ferdinand de Saussure laid the foundation for European structuralism and semiotics from which film semiotics owe its conceptual framework. Saussure was interested in the rules and conventions of language, its arbitrary character, or what he called language that governs speech. In his landmark work *Course in General Linguistics* Saussure proposed the use of the word “semiology” for a new science of signs. To quote Saussure:

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek semeion ‘sign’). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked in advance. (qtd in Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p.4)

The other founding father of semiotics, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, preferred the word “semiotic” because its proper study refers to the “formal doctrine of signs” (in Chandler, 2002, p.3). Latter-day scholars of semiotics

would use the term “semiotics” because they interpreted it as something that points to the direction of an emerging discipline (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992) rather than as a fixed science. Initial applications of Saussure’s and Peirce’s work, however, were in linguistics. As the definition of the sign broadened, Saussurean and Piercean theories became more applicable to other texts such as the film image or the cinematic sign.

Roman Jakobson, a stalwart of latter-day semiotics, emphasizes the underlying structuralist view that attends semiotics as a discipline. Structuralism is always seen as semiotics’ twin discipline simply because the analysis of the signs, such as the cinematic sign, is based on the deep structure of images and the relations among them inside a systemic whole.

(2) Film (as) Language

A major contention in Saussurean semiotics is its focus on the *langue* or the language system rather than on the *parole*, the speech acts or specific practice of language use. For Saussure, the relationship between the signifier (the signal for a concept) and the signified (a representation of the mental concept) is arbitrary. A language system necessarily engenders an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. Saussure opines that “the rightful purpose of linguistic investigation was to disengage the abstract signifying system of language” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p.33) to reveal how the rules and conventions work; a task the filmolinguists want to provide a counterpart to. At the same time, the analyst may unveil the difference between the so-called natural languages and the film language.

Christian Metz was one of those pioneering filmo-linguists who aspired to produce in film what Saussure had done to linguistics. In his early works, Metz had been preoccupied with the question of whether film is a language at all. In “The Cinema: Language or Language System,” a chapter in *A Semiotics of Cinema* (1991), Metz contends that film is not a language system (langue) but it is a language (langage). The semiotician does not consider film a language system because it only allows for deferred communication, which means the lapse of time between production and reception and other activities pertaining to cinema-going. Film cannot also be a language system because it does not really possess the arbitrariness that Saussure has assigned to linguistics (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). Instead of arbitrariness, the relation between signifier and signified is “motivated” or may be considered analogous.

(3) Basic Film Narrative Units

The shot is the most basic filmic expression that “defines a moment of time” (Withers, 1983, p.15). As a film narrative unit, it assumes various definitions; namely: “the minimal unit of montage,” “the basic unit of composition of cinematic narration,” “the unity of intra-shot elements,” and “the unit of cinematic meaning” (Lotman, 1976, p.26).

The scene however is “a group of shots with a unity of location” (McDougall, 1985, p.399). On the other hand, a longer filmic expression, the sequence, is “a group of interrelated scenes usually building toward a climax” (McDougall, 1985, p.400). The “shot,” “scene,” and “sequence” are traditionally perceived as the cinematic equivalence of “word,” “sentence,” and “paragraph,” which are the grammatical units of language.

Metz notes the different properties of verbal language and film language. Unlike the word, says Metz, the shot is infinite: orchestrated by the filmmaker and bears a large amount of information that is “actualized” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992).

(4) Christian Metz’s Grand Syntagmatique

The above-quoted definitions of “scene” and “sequence” reveal the fact that the two words are often used interchangeably (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). An example of the overlapping of definitions came from McDougall (1985; previously cited): “Scene is a group of shots with a unity of location”(p.399) and that “sequence is a group of interrelated scenes usually building towards a climax”(p.400). Both units of narrative seem to mean the same thing except that one is a bigger chunk of narrative than the other. These also connote that “unity of location” and “building toward a climax” can happen in a “group of shots” or a “group of interrelated scenes.” A clearer dichotomy between scene and sequence is still far from sight.

An understanding of what constitutes a “scene” and a “sequence” is at the heart of Metz’s Grand Syntagma, which was his effort to break a film into narrative units. A syntagm “is an orderly combination of interacting signifiers which forms a meaningful whole” (Chandler, 2002, p.262). The Grand Syntagmatique or the Eight Syntagmatic Types is a model to unlock the ways “time and space can be ordered through editing within the segments of the narrative film” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis’s, 1992, p. 40). The following is Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis’s (1992) summary of typologies and descriptions of Metzian syntagmas:

- (1) the AUTONOMOUS SHOT – a syntagma consisting of one shot, in turn subdivided into (a) the SINGLE-SHOT SEQUENCE, and (b) four kinds of

INSERTS: NON-DIEGETIC INSERT (a single shot which presents objects exterior to the fictional world of the action; the DISPLACED DIEGETIC INSERT (“real” digetic image but temporally or spatially out of context); the SUBJECTIVE INSERT (memories, fears) and the EXPLANATORY INSERT (single shots which clarify events for the spectator);

- (2) the PARALLEL SYNTAGMA – two alternating motifs without clear spatial or temporal relationship, such as rich and poor, town and country;
- (3) the BRACKET SYNTAGMA - brief scenes given as typical examples of a certain order of reality but without temporal sequence, often organized around a “concept”;
- (4) the DESCRIPTIVE SYNTAGMA – objects shown successively suggesting spatial coexistence, used, for example, to situate the action;
- (5) the ALTERNATING SYNTAGMA – narrative cross-cutting implying temporal simultaneity such as a chase alternating pursuer and pursued;
- (6) the SCENE – spatio-temporal continuity felt as being without flaws or breaks, in which the signified (the implied diegesis) is continuous, as in the theatrical scene, but where the signifier is fragmented into diverse shots;
- (7) the EPISODIC SEQUENCE – a symbolic summary of stages in an implied chronological development, usually entailing a compression of time;
- (8) the ORDINARY SEQUENCE – action treated elliptically so as to eliminate “unimportant” detail, with jumps in time and space masked by continuity editing. (pp. 40-41).

To achieve the level of discourse, film follows a set of “signifying procedures” that result into a narrative. As mentioned, syntagmas are “units of narrative autonomy in which elements interact semantically” (p.37). These units are images and sounds that are organized spatially and temporally. When moving from one image to another, from one unit of sound to another, the film becomes a language.

In view of this grand syntagmatique, syntagmatic analysis then is the film semiotician’s “structuralist technique” (Chandler, 2002, p. 263) to unveil the parts of a segments and the relationship of each part with another. For Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (1992), the grand syntagmatique is only one of the codes that govern film as a textual system but its strength lies in its being “the most precise model to date for dealing with the specific image-ordering procedures of the narrative film”(p.48).

The following discussion extends Metz's syntagmatic types further through another analytic framework that looks at narrative units from the level of the segment.

(5) Raymond Bellour's Segmenting/Analyzing

In spite of Metz's towering influence on the systematic analysis of film semiotics, latter-day scholars attempt to extend his model or typologies by approaching the units of analysis from shot and syntagma to the level of the segment or fragment. Bellour's *Segmenting/Analysing* (In Rosen, 1986) is more a method than a theory that argues for a "primitive or semiprimitive segmentation" wherein the textual whole of the film is seen through a "systemic modelling of the narrative units" (p.70). Bellour references Stephen Heath's criteria of segmentation which looks at the "unity of action, characters and place as the designator of what constitutes a narrative unit or segment" (p.70). Bellour's detour from Metz's is not to diminish the value of the grand syntagmatique but rather to ensure its continuing soundness as an analytic approach. Only, Bellour emphasizes larger narrative units that could comprise one whole idea or unity in a series of many inside a single film.

In the study therefore of adaptations, the importance of the bigger unit of the story and its plot stands alongside the requisite analyses of the shot, the scene and sequence. From the analysis then of the basic units of the language, one could move onto the semiotic of narrative that is organized through the typologies of genres.

(6) Semiotics of Film Narrative/Film-Narratology

"Narrative" is a broad term. Scholes and Kellogg (1976), in their now authoritative book *The nature of narrative*, refer to the narrative as a work that is "distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller"(p.4).

The concept of the narrative then presupposes “performance” (the presence of a story and a story-teller). In “Narration and narrativity in film,” Scholes (in Mast and Cohen, 1979) defines a film narrative in relation to the act of narration, “a process of enactment or recounting which is a common feature of our cultural experience”(p.420). Since narration is the act itself, the narrative pertains to the occasion wherein the din of story details sinks and simmer down.

Metz and fellow semioticians drew from the works of structuralist scholars Vladimir Propp and Claude Levi-Strauss to analyse the phenomenology of the narrative in cinema. Some elements are identifiable from the Russian folktales and the myths that were Propp’s and Levi-Strauss’s objects of analysis. One element is the narrativity wherein the telling is perceived as real while at the same time, the audience senses its unreality. Metz (1991) then defines a film narrative as “a closed discourse that proceeds by unrealizing a temporal sequence of events” (p.28).

What Metz (1991) has meant by “closed” is that the narrative presupposes a beginning, a middle and an ending. By “discourse,” he meant that narration is being “made by someone” or a narrator. In cinema, the discourse is primarily made by the “camera-narrator” or the “image-maker,” what Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (1992) also call external cinematic narrator. This is of course supplemented by the intrinsic narrator (fundamental narrator, primary narrator) who may be the director, the scriptwriter, the cinematographer, or the komiks writer.

The events in the story are unrealized because while they are rooted in reality and they are narrated/performed. Because the events are represented through the film image, they are not reality themselves. And the fact that the narrative has a beginning and an

ending accounts for its temporality. For Metz (1991), filmic time is a “doubly temporal sequence” because the narrative exists in a time (“the thing told”) and the actual time of narrating; hence, “the time of the significate and the time of the signifier”(p.18).

Film-narratology has also an affinity with genre analysis, which may also adopt a structuralist approach or the “structuralist analysis of narrative” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p.76). While narratology works on the level of the syntagma or the relationship of the signifiers with each other, genre provides typologies or taxonomies based on recurrent patterns, formulas, conventions and codes of the narrative elements that typify a corpus of texts.

Narrative structure and generic patterns are closely connected in relation to adaptation. As Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (1992) opine:

Narrative analysis traditionally endeavors to disclose the deep structural patterning beneath the surface features of the artefact. It is the autonomy of the narrative structure from media-specific manifestations that permits narrative forms to be translated into any medium. A novel may be transformed into a film, for example, or into a ballet, and while wholly changing its surface texture, its narrative form retains a recognizable outline, an identifiable shape. (p.75)

The following discussion cites the means by which film narratives drawn from precursor texts engage in generic transposition and mediation.

(7) Genre as Semiotic Code

Kaminsky (1977) defines genre as “a body, a group, or category of similar works; this similarity being defined as the sharing of a sufficient number of motifs so that we can identify works which properly fall within a particular kind or shape of film”(p.20).

Film genres may be uncovered through a structuralist analysis of the narrative. There are two schools or approaches, according to Rick Altman (1999; In Stam,

Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992) that may be employed to arrive at generic classifications. One is through semantic analysis and the other is through syntactical analysis.

The semantic approach “deals with the relation of the signs and messages produced by narrative to the larger cultural system which gives it meaning” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p.76). This may include the following:

- a) Format of the Genre – the story category, like what Altman has called by the label *musical*, *adventure*, etc. This is also similar to the plot formula such as the *korido* film, etc.
- b) Setting – the physical, geographical and historical backdrop of the story; including mood/atmosphere evoked.
- c) Characterization – the dramatic persona, the roles he/she plays, the traits they display in the film/komiks samples that may represent someone or something connotatively.
- d) Basic Themes – the subject matter and the general ideas about life and culture in the film/komiks samples that may be repeated in other texts.

Analysis using the semantic approach gets only to the surface of things or what is apparent. As Altman (1999) offers: “Semantic approaches to genre thus serve the important social function of providing easily sharable and consistently applicable vocabulary” (p.89).

The syntactical approach, on the other hand, is “the study of the syntagmatic ordering of plot events as a kind of armature of narrative progress and development” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p.76). The syntactic elements may include the following:

- a) Story/Narrative Structure and Strategy

Scholes (in Mast & Cohen, 1979) defines story as “a narration that attains a certain degree of completeness” (p.420). An example of the story may be the legends or

folklores that are almost “complete” or recognizable even through various renderings. The plots of these stories have their built-in resolution. A narrative is a process of narration, which “is sufficiently coherent and developed to detach itself from the flux of cultural interchange, we perceive it as a narrative” (Scholes, 1979, p.420).

An example of the narrative is a komiks story possessing a stock plot that is transposed in a new setting or is told in another manner. It may also be a new story bearing echoes of a familiar plot development. Moreover, syntactic elements that focus on story and narrative include “similar (sometimes formulaic) plots and structures, predictable situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions” (Chandler, 2002, p. 159).

b) Film Adaptation Mode

The film adaptation mode is the type of translation that the film employs in relation to a source text. This has been more extensively explained in the section on “Film Adaptation Theory and Criticism.” (See page 74)

c) Iconography and Filmic Techniques

Chandler’s (2002) criteria are adopted here; namely:

- iconography (echoing the narrative, characterization, themes and setting) – a familiar stock of images or motifs, the connotations of which have become fixed; primarily but not necessarily visual, including décor, costume and objects, certain ‘typecast’ performers (some of whom may have become ‘icons’), familiar patterns of dialogue, characteristic music and sounds, and appropriate physical topography; and
 - filmic techniques – stylistic or formal conventions of camerawork, lighting, sound-recording, use of colour, editing, etc. (viewers are often less conscious of such conventions than of those relating to content)
- (p.159)

For Altman (1999), the strength of the syntactical approach over the semantic is that it “surrenders broad applicability in return for the ability to isolate a genre’s specific meaning-bearing structures”(p.220).

Inside the vocabulary of film-narratology or the semiotics of film narrative, syntactical analysis is closely allied with the syntagmatic analysis. While syntactic analysis covers criteria such as narrative, setting and filmic techniques, syntagmatic analysis covers the reading of segments or fragments (Bellour, 1986) in relation with other segments in a text.

d. The Vocabulary and Grammar of the Komiks Medium

As visual art and as mass communication form, komiks has a distinct vocabulary and grammar. It is the assumption of this study that as source text to adaptation, the komiks possesses a vocabulary and grammar that somehow serve also the purpose of cinema as target text. This section of the chapter presents the basic formal elements of the komiks in relation to those of film. It also describes how adaptation works through the finding of equivalencies in the film medium or how the precursor text and the target text may just simply intersect.

In this subsection, the definitions by Eisner (1985; 2008) and McCloud (1994) of comics were cited because local practitioners, including the study’s key informants considered Eisner and McCloud as two of the most authoritative ones. While Eisner approaches comics from the perspective of aesthetics, McCloud views it from certain theoretical frames.

(1) Comics as a form of reading

With the birth of comics, a new type of reader is born. Eisner (2008) avers: “The reading process in comics is an extension of text. In text alone, the process of reading involves word-to-image conversion. Comics accelerate that by providing the image.” (p.xvii).

As a mode of reading, komiks requires the reader to be literate in both words and pictures. The reader follows the episodic narrative flow through transitions and occasions for closure. McCloud (1994) add: “Space does for comics what time does for film” (p.7). Back in the Bluestone era, film has been associated with spatiality and the verbal arts with time or temporality. Today, both spatiality and temporality are presumed to be the properties of the komiks and the film. New theories begin to challenge the supposed exclusivity of temporality and spatiality of certain media.

The grammar of comics is based on the premise of sequential art. It means that “in its most economical stage, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When these are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a language – a literary form, if you will” (Eisner, 1985, p.8). In his latter definition, Eisner (2008) emphasizes the element of the story; thus, comics are “a form of sequential art, often in the form of a strip or a book, in which images and text are arranged to tell a story” (p.xvii). Meanwhile, sequentiality is also a reading device. The eyes are trained to read from left to right of the page frame. For Eisner (1985), sequentiality is “a medium of control”(p.40). The eyes may wander on to the next panels or page frames when the reader loses patience or gets curious with what will happen in succeeding panels. In

comparison, a film viewer sees only “one frame at a time” (p.40) because the projection machine controls his/her view.

However, Scott McCloud (1994) considers Eisner’s definition problematic because it is “strictly neutral on matters of style, quality or subject matter,” to which his solution is to “separate form from content” (p.5). The comics, along this train of thought, becomes a “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”(p.9). Meanwhile, any definition of comics for McCloud, including his, is a work in progress.

In relation to film, which is also sequential in terms of time, comics is sequential in terms of space: “Each successive frame of a movie is projected on exactly the same space – the screen – while each frame of comics must occupy a different space.”(McCloud, 1994, p.7). Moreover, a panel may be complemented by the balloon which is a device to approximate speech. For Eisner (1985), “it attempts to capture and make visible an ethereal element: sound” (p.26). The film has the distinct advantage of possessing sound.

(2) The vocabulary and grammar of comics

The comics make use of a combination of words and images. However, even if only images remain, comics may still communicate. Comics succeeds in communicating a message or in telling a story when it is efficient in deciding the amount of visual imagery and words to expose and when to reduce them. McCloud (1994) calls this communication function of comics as “blood in the gutter” (p.60). For example, a drawing of a head of a man presupposes the ability of the reader to imagine his full body. This is almost similar to the close up of a face in a film. This attempt on visual metonymy

is based on the ability of the senses to see completeness out of fragments of images.

McCloud (1994) refers to this as *closure*, which is “the phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (McCloud, 1994,p.63). In film, the counterpart of closure is the angle of shots, perspective and transitions. This idea of closure enlists more reader participation in comics; a situation similar to a film that excises some visual details to engage more viewer activity or visual emphasis.

Comics can contract and expand time and space through closure: “If visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics, closure is its grammar,” says McCloud (1994, p.67). Time and space are indivisible in comic art. McCloud labels this convergence of two modes as “time frames” while Eisner (1985) calls this “timing” and “framing”. These ascriptions point to how comics indicate time and explore space in polishing the grammar of storytelling. The panels “act to contain the reader’s view, nothing more” (Eisner,1985, pp.43-44). Directed by the borders that separate frames, the panels structure the narrative and suggest emotions. Various styles of panel containment create the angle with which the readers could see the story.

For McCloud (1994), the practice of putting panel borders is crucial to framing time in comics. Time is connected to space. Through the influence of other media forms such as the cinema, the concept of motion has been introduced in comics. Eventually, the idea of sound followed suit. Eisner (1985) called this *encapsulation*, which is a means of capturing events and breaking these down into segments or panels.

The images in deliberate sequence achieve the level of discourse when they become narrative tools. Eisner (2008) defines the graphic narrative as “a generic description of any story that employs image to transmit an idea. “ (p.xvii). The Eisner and

the McCloud description of the grammar of comics reflect two modes: the literary and the visual. The story (literary) element is propelled through the image (visual) and the two become indivisible.

The vocabulary and grammar of the comics as it translates into a narrative is the one that becomes fodder to films. The prior treatment of a story in comics becomes a structuring device and a preliminary storyboard for film. The parallels between comics and film are many, and the super-addition of motion and sound in the latter have also been prefigured somehow by the early savants of and brought to aesthetic heights by the recent champions of comic art.

3. Adaptation Theory and Criticism

a. Formalist Modes of Film Adaptation

Adaptation literatures in the West are replete in terminologies that try to approximate the amount of fidelity that the film establishes in relation to its source. One term common among them is the word “faithful” (Gianetti, 1990). Adaptation is faithful when the film retains the structure and idea of the source material. When the original material is recreated in filmic terms, in which the “spirit of the original” has been kept intact through supplying equivalencies, the type of adaptation is called faithful adaptation (Gianetti, 1990). In Dryden’s 17th century language, modern day scholars trace the provenance of the idea. Translation has also been referred to as “paraphrase or translation with latitude” where the author’s view is prevalent although the exact words may not be retained (cited in Gould Boyum, 1985, p.69). Wagner however calls this commentary, where the spirit of the original is kept but not in the literal sense. Gerald Barnett (cited in Gould Boyum, 1985) calls this type of adaptation as “imitations.”

Faithful adaptations have become the more frequent translation route for filmmakers in early adaptation history. Eventually, it suffers a backlash because it is perceived as a comparative method that privileges the source text and treats the film as a mere copy. This matter has prompted Brian McFarlane's (1996) to say that the "discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue"(p.8). Bluestone's very forceful arguments for the matching of equivalencies between two media in *Novels into film* have long shaped dominant adaptation practice and influenced critical reading approaches also.

If a film has closely followed the source, the method is called literal adaptation (Gianetti, 1990). This type of adaptation may be more applicable to plays where actions and dialogues are lifted from a dramatic text and are exactly transposed in the film. In its older sense, the poet John Dryden called this translation method "metaphrase" or translating "word by word and line by line" (qtd in Gould Boyum, 1985, p. 69). Geoffrey Wagner (qtd in Gould Boyum, 1985) rather calls this "transposition" or a form of adaptation, "in which a novel (for example) is directly given on the screen, with a minimum of apparent interference" (p.69).

Another type of adaptation is what Gianetti (1990) and Barrett (cited in Gould Boyum, 1985) label as loose adaptation where "an idea, a situation is taken from literary source, then developed independently"(Gianetti, 1990, p.362). A classic example of this was Shakespeare's practice of taking influences from earlier medieval storyline and then developing his material from there. In Dryden's seminal categorization, this has been called "imitation" where the original guides the translation in a very liberal sense.

Wagner (cited in Gould Boyum, 1985) refers to this as *analogy*, which means departing from the source material but also producing something analogous or comparable.

b. Contextual Modes of Film Adaptation

The formalist modes of adaptation have become insufficient in addressing contemporary practices. Since formalist adaptation is mostly neutral on the impact of narrative cultures on the practice of adaptation, its application is limited when dealing with Third World cinemas or postcolonial cinemas like 1950s Philippine cinema. According to Andrew (1984), “it is time for adaptation to take a sociological turn” (p. 104). By “sociological,” Andrew means that we should consider the contexts of adaptation as a point of reference in adaptation criticism, instead of focusing on the stature of the precursor text and the finding of equivalencies of literary elements in cinematic terms; otherwise called the comparative approach.

There are some underlying ideological assumptions that are linked to the contextual approach. Firstly, it debunks what Barton Palmer (2007) calls the “grand theory” of film adaptation, which valorizes “cinematic specificity” instead of concerning itself with “the intersemiotic relationships that generate and define the formal features of film adaptations” (p. 2). This means that the source text (usually literary in Western theory) is valued more highly than the translation, a subject tackled already in Chapter 1 and will be elucidated further in Chapter 8.

Secondly, the contextual approach draws theoretical assumptions from cultural studies, specifically the subject of intertextuality. Julia Kristeva was believed to be the first to appropriate the word (Allen, 2000) through her reading of Mikhail Bakhtin’s

works. Kristeva considers the “text as a network of sign systems situated in relation to other systems of signifying practices (ideologically marked sign usage) in a culture (Makaryk, 1996, p. 568). Bakhtin’s (1981) word for this view of artistic utterance is “dialogic,” which Allen (2000) defines as “the idea that all utterances respond to previous utterances and are always addressed to other potential speakers, rather than occurring independently or in isolation”(p. 211). Genette’s (1987) own terminology is “transtextuality,” which is “the textual transcendence of the text...defined roughly as ‘all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts’” (Genette, 1997, qtd in Allen, 2000, p. 221). Intertextuality then, in the context of adaptation, is the tendency of the film to adapt not only from a single source such as komiks but also from other texts that circulate in a narrative tradition. As Allen (2000) opines:

Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext.

Thirdly, adaptation practices, being influenced by the material conditions of production, such as the studio system, require a balanced treatment between the internal analysis of form and the external analysis of social and cultural forces at play. Barton Palmer (2007) refers to this view as the “middle level theory” which implicates “the material history of films and filmmaking” (p.2).

Andrew suggests three (3) modes of contextual adaptation practice that take into consideration the question: “What conditions exist in film style and film culture to warrant or demand the use of literary prototypes?” These are:

(1) Borrowing

Andrew (1984) considers “borrowing” as the most widely practiced mode of adaptation where “the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text” (p.98). The source has accomplished a certain level of cultural status or has attained a certain level of popularity, if not prestige. The film is bent to recreate that success. Meanwhile, in addition to the film riding on the success of the original material, it is also poised to earn a reputation of its own.

Andrew’s point of reference in “borrowing” is western adaptation where the prior text is usually a canonical work that has attained a certain stature such as a Charles Dickens’ novel. The role being played here by the film is that of a re-interpreter. Meanwhile, the matter of “borrowing” may work differently when both the source text and the target text are popular visual forms, similar to the case of film and komiks. In this context, there is no issue of source superiority or the unfounded fear that adaptation may end up to be a poor copy.

(2) Intersecting

Intersection requires a certain level of openness to the unique properties of cinema. In intersecting, the “analyst attends to the specificity of the original within the specificity of the cinema,” (p.100), which is almost similar to the Bluestone approach of finding equivalencies.

While film and komiks are both visual media, there are properties unique to each medium. To ensure the success of the translation, the narrative constitution of komiks is matched by certain narrative equivalencies in film.

(3) *Fidelity and Transformation*

Fidelity is being faithful to the letter of the original (similar to literal and faithful adaptation previously mentioned). Kline (1996) calls this the translation paradigm. “The letter would appear to be within the reach of cinema for it can be emulated in mechanical fashion” (Andrew, 1984, p. 100). Over the years, this paradigm has been derided for its insularity and for rendering criticism sterile for many decades.

Meanwhile, Andrew (1984) opines that in transformation, “the task of adaptation is the production in cinema of something essential about an original text” (p.100). This means that the spirit of the original rather than its letter is emphasized. Transformation as an approach may parallel or straddle in between two of Kline’s (1996) paradigms: “pluralist paradigm” which is centered on the specificity of cinema and the “transformation paradigm” which allows cinema to interpret the source text.

A certain level of fidelity is required in the transformation paradigm but the context of faithfulness is different from that of a literal translation. It is similar then to Gould Boyum’s (1985) concept of “re-symbolization” (p.73), which is like the creation of a new text. The film may adopt the narrative structure and strategy of the komiks but using the multiple tracks of cinema and through occasions warranting deletions, additions, abridgement, condensations, ellipsis and other adaptation devices.

Chandler’s (2002) four basic transformations of signifiers or commutation test), which he also drew from various authors (Allport and Postman, 1945; Newcomb, 1952; and Quintillian (c.35-100 AD) offer an extended view of the pluralist and transformation approached. He calls paradigmatic transformation “substitution” and “transposition” of

details (similar to Bluestone's finding of equivalencies) and syntagmatic transformations those "additions" or expansion of film details and "deletions" or condensation of film details (p.90).

Andrew's definitions differ from those of other theorists like Bluestone and Sinyard in that his presupposition pays attention to the larger historical and cultural contexts that underpin adaptation practices. He adds that a particular film era views its treatment of sources differently from another: "The choices of the mode of adaptation and of prototypes suggest a great deal about cinema's sense of its role and aspirations from decade to decade" (p.104).

These categories of adaptation in relation to fidelity (literal, faithful, loose) and according to context (borrowing, intersecting, fidelity and transformation) may interact then with any of the director's creative choices (repetition, update, re-interpretation) and the producers' business strategies (formula-making, ideological construction, star-building, cultivation of fandom) as well. Yet, despite some contemporary views of adaptation that have been suggested by current theory, these are still limited in capturing an accurate picture of Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation in the fifties, so far as it may only be fully illumined on the level of cultural specificity.

4. Social Film History

In pursuing a grounded theory approach to film adaptations, the social history of the movies may complement the semiotic analysis and contemporary adaptation criticism. Metz considers external approaches of this kind as the "cinematic fact," which Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis explain as

the cinematic institution taken in its broadest sense as a multi-dimensional sociocultural complex which includes pre-filmic events [the economic infrastructure, the studio system, technology], post-filmic events [distribution, exhibition, and the social or political impact of film] and a-filmic events [the décor of the theatre, the social ritual of movie going]. (p.34)

Social film history has broader considerations. In the opinion of Ian Jarvie (qtd in Allen and Gomery,1985), a researcher doing social film history may investigate any of the following research questions:

1. Who makes movies and why?
2. Who sees films, how and why?
3. What is seen, how and why?
4. How do films get evaluated, by whom and why? (p.154)

The present study particularly trained its lens on question number 1 (Who makes movies and why?) and number 3 (What is seen, how and why?), which will be answered through the inventory of extant texts and the unstructured interviews.

The premise of social film history in emphasizing “what has been seen” is based on the assumption that movie-going culture, the dynamic production activities and the quantity of films produced by the companies may be linked to something bigger than the industry, i.e., “the values and beliefs of a society” (Allen and Gomery, 1985,p.158). An inventory of films produced during a certain decade, such as an inventory of films based on serialized komiks magazines, may be “windows into the national psyche” (p.158).

Allen and Gomery (1985) argue that reducing the movies to mere escapist entertainment may not be a “cogent” one. Far from passive audiences, movie followers make decisions to escape “into something.” Moreover, the films are posited as “social representations” that mirror the themes, motivations, aspirations and other values that people nurture in their lives. The movies that were produced in an era may be collectively

considered as “history of film as cultural document.” As Palmer (1993) articulates in *The Films of the Eighties: A Social History*:

The importance of film history lies not in the images or themes of individual films but in the emplotted metaphors and motifs shared by groups of films that together portray, approach, and often even comment upon specific historical event or sociohistorical trend (p.6).

Among the cinematic facts or contexts that were taken up as these arise from the analyses of texts and interviews, include the Filipino culture of recycling; the aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation; the borrowing of foreign elements and their native appropriation; the role of the producers, stars and fandom in sustaining the adaptation industry; and the ideological implication of the prevalent type of adaptation in the fifties.

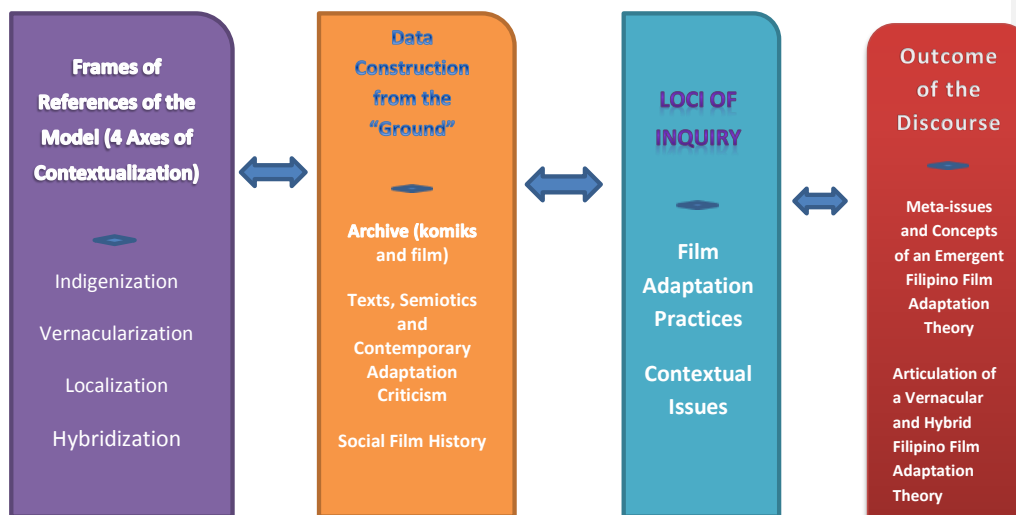
Meanwhile, the answers to the question “Why these films were seen?” will be sourced out from the film adaptations analysed and their contexts of production as well. The subject of social film history need not be elucidated further because it is synonymous with the materialist paradigm of adaptation criticism that has been taken up above as an extreme form of contextual approach, drawing inspiration from political economy of cinema, cultural economy of cinema and reception theory.

The theories and concepts cited in “*Contextualizing Film Adaptation Within the Specificities of Filipino Culture*” serves as the philosophical assumptions of the theory-building endeavour. Meanwhile, “*Western Theories and Concepts Useful in Analyzing the Semiotics of Komiks-to-Film Adaptation*” has aided in researcher in data construction and analysing film adaptation of komiks as a meeting of two languages. The succeeding discussion explores how the data constructed and its analysis lent insight to the making of a Filipino film adaptation theory.

B. The Research Model and the Theory-Building Model

In view of the theories and concepts outlined above, the following figure graphically represents the combined research model and the theory-building model of this dissertation:

Figure 1: *Researcher's Interpretation of the Research Model and the Theory-Building Model*



The (4) frames of references of the model represent the philosophical basis of the theory-building aim of this study. "Indigenization, vernacularization, localization and hybridization" are four axes of contextualization. There are occasions when they mean the same thing and there are also times when they warrant finer delineations from each other. Contextualization is a research objective and a research outcome at the same. It is also a research method and a theory at the same time.

In so far as this study employs a grounded theory approach, the data gathered led to the theory. The data that were excavated and constructed from the "ground" may be categorized into the following: the archives (extant komiks and film); textual analysis

(semiotics and contemporary adaptation criticism); and, social film history. The archives represent material artefact as they are retrieved. They become “texts” when they are subjected to semiotic analysis and contemporary adaptation criticism. Through unstructured interviews of key informants, a social history is constructed to paint a picture of the external forces that drove komiks-to-film adaptation practices in the 1950s.

Meanwhile, the loci of inquiry are film adaptation practices and their contexts. These should limit the scope of a purported broad discourse whose outcomes consist of the theoretical discussion of the dimensions of the emergent theory (philosophical assumptions or meta-issues, concepts) and the ultimate articulation of a “vernacular and hybrid” theory of Filipino film adaptation theory.

C. Definition of Terms

The following are the definitions of major conceptual terms that constitute the study framework:

Adaptation criticism – critical activity and frameworks pertaining to works of adaptation. Two critical approaches that have been employed by Western critics include the following:

- **Fidelity criticism** – the critical framework used to evaluate the degree of allegiance a work of adaptation has to the source text. Also associated with the Bluestone approach.
- **Contemporary Adaptation Criticism** – makes use of poststructuralist, postmodern and postcolonial theories to examine the intertextuality that governs the process of adapting from a prior text.

Adaptation theory – a conceptual frame that governs the philosophy and aesthetics of translating a source text into a movie.

Contextualization – study of adaptation from the perspective of the historical and cultural contexts of a specific cinema or country.

Four axes of contextualization of film adaptation theory – refers to the four manifestations of contextualizing film adaptation theory in the Philippine setting; namely: indigenization, localization, vernacularization and hybridization.

Film adaptation – in this context, the film based on komiks; also called target text.

Filmography of the 1950s– a comprehensive listing of films produced during the 1950s to account for the film climate of the era.

Grounded Theory – an inductive approach to theory-construction wherein conceptual mapping, theoretical sampling and data analysis are done simultaneously with data construction.

Hybridization – the heterogenous mixing of various elements, foreign and local, universal and specific.

Indigenization – building a theory from the specificity of culture.

Inventory of Extant Komiks and Extant Films – a list of texts that survived in both their source versions (komiks) and their film translations.

Komiks – Tagalog appropriation of the English word “comics.” It usually connotes comic books in the United States, In the Philippines, it is better known as a serialized reading material.

- Vocabulary of komiks – the elements of komiks as visual and narrative art.
- Grammar of komiks – the art of separating komiks elements into panels in order to effect closure; how each element of the grammar contributes to storytelling in a sequential manner.

Localization – identifying the place of a specific culture in adaptation and vice versa.

Semantical-syntactical analysis – generic analysis of films that look into the content of texts and the relationship of the parts to create a narrative structure.

Semiotics of film – theories and concepts pertaining to cinematographic language and its particular units; translated in this study as the language of adaptation.

Social Film History – an approach to historical film study that deals with what films were viewed in a certain era (list/inventory) and why these were seen (genres); and the social contexts surrounding the komiks adaptation practice of into films, i.e. 1950s.

Source text – the prior text or precursor text. In older, traditional adaptation studies, it is usually a literary text but in recent scholarship, it simply pertains to the provenance of the story or to a cycle of circulating story idea. In this study, the source text under investigation is komiks.

Filipino Cinema in the 1950s – the decade traditionally labelled as the first Golden Age of Philippine Cinema. It is generally perceived as the decade when the relationship between komiks and film began.

Vernacularization – foreign influences and their native appropriations as these are expressed using local language, idiom, tropes, etc.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

It is method that generates the facts that become evidence within theory.
-J.A. Anderson and T. Meyer, (qtd in In K.B. Jensen. 1991)

A. Research Design

1. *Theoretical Roots of Grounded Theory*

Grounded Theory is not a theory in the strictest sense. It is rather a qualitative research method that pays premium to data construction before the development of theoretical constructs and concepts. Grounded Theory is rooted in the same intellectual tradition of the human sciences, more specifically the works of 19th century German philosopher William Dilthey who was “concern[ed] with the problems of choice, value and understanding, and their influence on the activities of expression and interpretation” (Lindlof and Taylor , 2002, p. 29).

Dilthey’s emphasis on interpretation and on the idea of humans inquiring about their social world and entering into a dialogue with others constitutes what is called *verstehen*. Other philosophers who shared Dilthey’s belief were F.D.E. Schleiermacher, Hans Gadamer, Max Weber and Edmund Husserl. The scholarship of these people also found an affinity with that of Alfred Schutz who problematized the question of intersubjectivity. Schutz explored the phenomenological situatedness of individuals and how they come to an understanding of their social environment (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

While grounded theory derived its persuasion from the above-mentioned intellectual traditions, it drew its methodology from the works of George Herbert Mead

and John Dewey of the Chicago Interactionist School and the Pragmatist school respectively (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Symbolic interactionism posits that people construct their world from their interaction with others and derive meaning through the language that they share with each other. The pragmatists's conception of the social world, however, is in agreement with that of the symbolic interactionists. The pragmatists affirm the usefulness of practical knowledge on the lives of the people who are acting as part of a collective group.

Grounded Theory was initiated by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss through their landmark study on dying in hospitals in the 1960s wherein their analytic and theoretical explanations of field data became the seminal exemplification of the research method. This research culminated in the publication of their book titled *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967 (Charmaz, 2006).

Kathy Charmaz (2006) describes the grounded theory approach in its more recent applications as follows: "Stated simply, grounded theory method consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct an original analysis of your data." (p.2). She also summarizes and re-states the premise of grounded theory from the original Glaser and Strauss formulations into the following Grounded Theory Process:

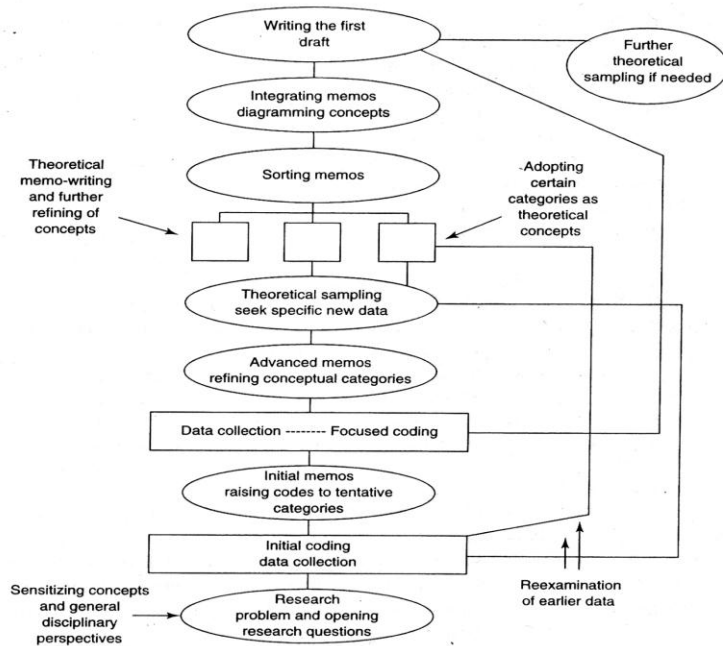


FIGURE 1.1 The grounded theory process

(Charmaz, 2006, p. 11)

On the basis of its philosophy and method presented above, grounded theory has guided this study in explaining the phenomenon of Filipino film adaptations of komiks and its social history in the 1950s, using the data that were generated prior to the conceptualization of an emergent theory of film adaptation.

2. *Grounded Theory and Cinema Studies*

As film technology reached the Philippine shores in the late 1890s, the U.S. film industry also became a ubiquitous presence. As Filipinos grew exposed to films imported from the Hollywood, their native eyes saw and perceived these as their model for narrative (Del Mundo, 1998). Early Hollywood cinema followed a formula of storytelling based on Western logos and causality or what Bordwell and Thompson (2010) refer to as

Classical Hollywood Narrative Cinema. The Hollywood apparatus for storytelling also influenced a critical practice that affirms the said type of cinema.

Film adaptation studies in the United States and Europe has a longer tradition that is handed down to us along with its prescribed critical frameworks. Western adaptation practice presupposes a dynamic print culture that inspires re-symbolization in another form. It gives paeon to a “cultural model” that “is already treasured as a representation in another sign system” (Andrew, 1984, p. 97). In other words, adaptation theory is tied to a book culture.

However, certain cultures do not follow the “print to visual” route. Filipinos may be more associated with what Walter Ong (2002) calls a condition of secondary orality; what with the persistence of oral mode of communication in improvised religious dramas, cellphone texting, fiesta-like infotainment shows and small town political discourse. The arts and media in the Philippines developed around contexts that were specific to their colonial past and native culture. Postcolonial and Third World Cinemas, says Wimal Dissayanake (2000) reflect more ruptures than linearity. He says that these cinemas must be treated as “sites of discursive contestations, or representational spaces, in which changing social and cultural meanings are generated and fought over” (p.144).

Filipino adaptation practices and theory may be regarded as “discursive contestations, or representational spaces” by which we could better understand why postcolonial national cinemas such as that of the Philippines should not be judged using the rubric of received theory. Instead, Filipino adaptation theory should be treated as a site that has been forged by its history and culture.

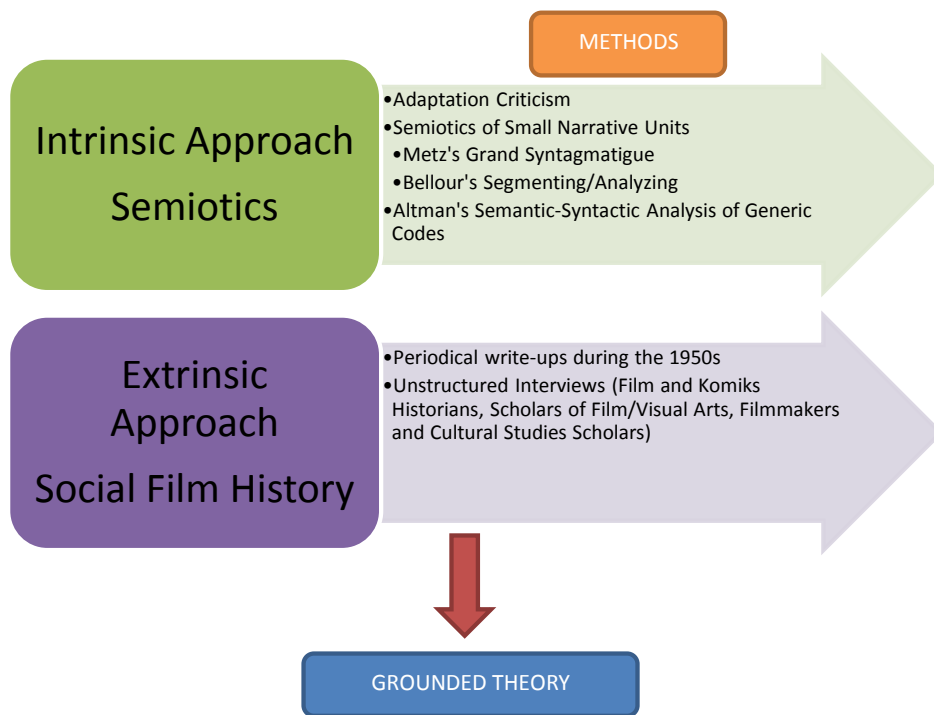
Insofar as grounded theory requires the collection of data before any activity pertaining to theoretical formulation, the design of research is anchored on exploring all possible data sources. In the process, this dissertation's sole research question - "How can a semiotics, adaptation criticism and social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s lend insight into a proposed theory of the Filipino mode of adaptation practice?" - has necessitated both an internal and external approach to the study of adaptations or the understanding and analysing of the phenomenon textually and contextually.

The intrinsic study of komiks to film adaptation is structuralist in orientation; structuralism being the basis and temper of semiotics, one of the types of textual analysis employed. The source text (komiks) and the target text (film adaptation) both possess a vocabulary and grammar that inhere in each form. The intrinsic analysis isolates the work and examines its structural elements and the constituent parts that contribute to communicating the semantic elements of the film. It also analyses extra-textual elements under the rubric of adaptation criticism.

The extrinsic study of adaptations, also called social film history, investigates the contexts of the phenomenon that include the Filipino culture of recycling, the aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation, foreign borrowings and native appropriations, production contexts and ideology. The contextual study of adaptations is based on the premise that external or socio-historical factors provide a view of adaptation from the perspective of the larger culture.

Taken together, the internal view and the external view of film adaptation of komiks comprise the two-pronged approach of the grounded theory employed in the

study. The entire research design is depicted in Figure 2 (below).
Figure 2: Model Illustrating Overall Research Design



The following discussion will explain specific methods that were utilized in this theory construction project.

B. Research Methods

1. *The Inventory as a Research Method*

The inventory was a pre-requisite to the identifying the extant films with extant komiks sources – either printed or stored on microfilm – between the years 1950 and 1959. To do an inventory meant consulting listings of films that were either a part of graduate theses or produced by film-related government and private agencies.

The lists of films were produced by the Special Film Collections librarians. These included the List of Copyrighted LVN films and the online list of Sampaguita films that are for sale through kabayancentral.com. In the case of komiks, doing an inventory required scanning microfilmed copies of magazines and doing on-site notations (i.e., while scanning specimen copies) about the provenance of the texts such as dates, issue numbers and pages.

Bibliographies assisted in identifying the extant copies that are deposited in public and academic libraries. These lists have been prepared by the library staff of institutions such as the National Library of the Philippines, the University of the Philippines Library - Media Services Section, the Lopez Museum and Library and the Manila Bulletin Print Library.

Filmographies are the lists of works arranged according to year or according to film companies or directors. These have been commissioned and published by institutions such as the Mowelfund (Movie Workers Welfare Fund) or by individual scholars or theses and dissertation writers.

All three types of listings – lists, bibliographies and filmographies - have been consulted to identify extant films with extant sources.

2. Documentary and Archival Research

Documentary and Archival Research refer to the actual documentation, duplication and management of the primary sources of the study, which included the comparative assessment of various listings of films and komiks, komiks prints and copies of films.

a. Documentation

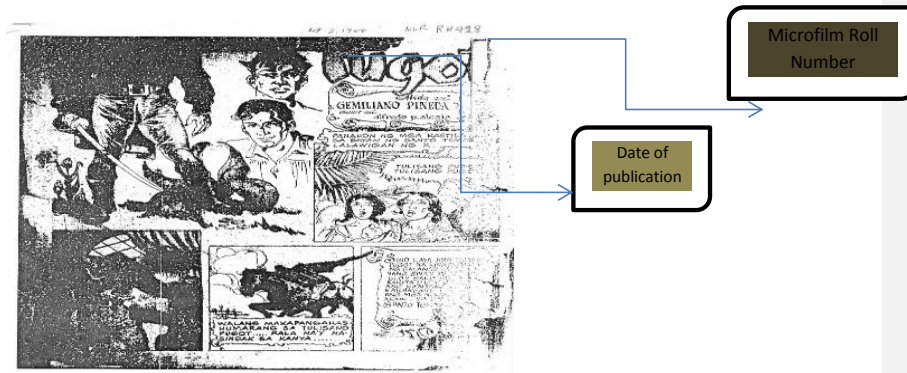
Documentation refers to the identification and description of the provenance of komiks sources and the film adaptations. The Media Services sections of the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), University of the Philippines-Diliman (UPD) and the Lopez Museum and Library (LML) and the print library of Manila Bulletin (MBL) were scoured for the identification of available komiks sources. An inventory form was designed to document each issue and the pages where the komiks episodes were exactly found.

The provenance of the majority of the komiks serials were mixed-format magazines such as *Liwayway* and *Ilang-Ilang*. A mixed-format magazine features diverse genres in each issue. Genres such as short stories, komiks series, poetry, editorial, news bits and feature articles about entertainment and sometimes general knowledge were placed side by side. The said layout design of the magazines was a strategy to widen the readership circulation of the magazine.

Each extant copy of the magazines from 1950 to 1959 was examined in order to note down the regular appearance of each episode of a komiks series. Each episode was listed according to date of publication, noting down the number of pages per komiks series. The missing episodes in the komiks prints were noted down for future reference, to be sourced out from other collections. Manila Bulletin has the most complete copies of the *Liwayway* while the Lopez Museum and Library has kept a considerable number of the *Ilang-Ilang* enough to extract a complete run for the film *Kambal-Tuko*.

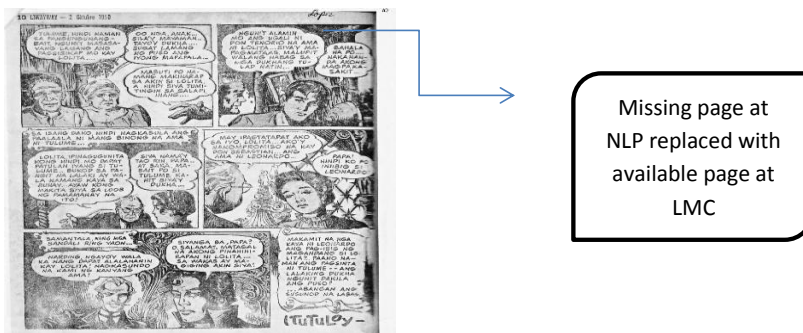
An example of documentation is provided below:

Figure 3: Sample documentation of komiks archive



Sample issue of komiks from National Library of the Philippines, with notations on date of publication and microfilm roll number.

Figure 4: Documentation of missing page



The second page of the October 2, 1950 of *Tulisang Pugot* (*Liwayway*, First Issue) is missing at the National Library. An available copy was located at the Lopez Museum and Library. Later on, a second colored copy has been located at the Manila Bulletin Print Library.

By the time the titles of komiks stories that were featured in *Liwayway* and *Ilang-Ilang* have been noted down, the list of extant films was also in a state of near completion. Coincidentally too, the book format version of *Lapu-Lapu*, which was originally featured by *Pilipino Komiks*, was made available through the Atlas-Coching Foundation publication.

To systematically perform the grounded theory approach, the availability of the komiks samples from the era was first established while constructing a definitive list of extant films. The lists of films available for copying provided by ABS-CBN for LVN Pictures and by kabayancentral.com for Sampaguita Pictures were matched with extant komiks materials available for printing. Inquiries have also been made on the completeness of the available films or their state of preservation.

b. Duplication or the Securing of copies of extant texts

The National Library of the Philippines was one of the main sources of copies of the identified komiks series from the *Liwayway*. The issues and pages of the *Liwayway* that are available at the National Library have been printed direct from microfilm. The missing pages from the years 1950 to 1952 were secured from the collection of the Lopez Museum and Library. The remaining missing issues and pages from 1953 to 1959 were secured from the Manila Bulletin Library using a digital camera. Whenever there still are missing episodes, (for example *Liwayway*, January 1, 1951, which was missing at NLP, UP and LML), the print library of Manila Bulletin became the final source of copy.¹ A digital camera was used to secure a copy of the missing episodes/pages and the blurred pages secured from the NLP and UP.

The extant Sampaguita Pictures films were secured from kabayancentral.com., while the copies of the extant LVN Pictures films were procured from the KAIZEN Company after securing due permission.

c. Management of the primary texts

The komiks prints were examined for completeness. The blurred copies have been noted down for future reference. The state of completeness of the komiks prints may

affect subsequent textual analysis so that securing a more complete set became an important task.

The twelve films acquired have been viewed and shot/sequence-listed to facilitate referencing in the subsequent analysis stage and the noting down of credits and intertitles.

3. *Unstructured Interviews of Key Informants*

Ten (10) key informants consisting of komiks and film historians, filmmakers and scholars were sought for the unstructured interviews. The interview responses revolved around the key informants' views of film adaptation of komiks, its aesthetic practice and contexts. Their responses also provided a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation and the social and cultural contexts of the intersection between film and komiks.

The following were the key informants sought for the social film history:

a. Visual Art Historians and Critics

(1) Santiago Pilar – wrote on early cinema; teaches film in the fine arts curriculum and art history;

(2) Patrick Flores – teaches art history; museum curator; wrote on film and komiks;

b. Komiks Practitioners and Collectors

(1) Randy Valiente – komiks artist; publisher of studies on komiks; collector of old komiks prints; blogger;

(2) Boboy Yonzon – publisher of studies on komiks; son of Hugo Yonzon, Jr., a 1950s komiks artist;

c. Komiks and Film Historians

(1) John Lent – komiks and film historian; leader of professional organizations on Asian comics;

(2) Bienvenido Lumbera – National Artist for Literature; film historian; cultural historian;

d. Cultural Studies Scholars

(1) Soledad Reyes – komiks scholar; scholar of popular studies in the 20th century;

(2) D.M. Reyes – wrote on Coching’s art and film studies; essayist and literary critic;

e. Filmmakers

(1) Nick Deocampo – documentary filmmaker; film historian

(2) Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr. – independent filmmaker; postcolonial film critic; son of Clodualdo del Mundo, 1950s komiks writer.

C. Research Instruments

The research instruments for the unstructured interview were prepared for the identified key informants. A sample research instrument is provided in Appendix T.

The interview schedules for the unstructured interviews of key informants differed from each other. There was no single or standard interview guide used or set of questions asked of all ten (10) key informants. The knowledge of each informant is very specific to their discipline or research interest. Few scholars specialize in both film and komiks, with the exception perhaps of Lent, Pilar and Flores. Lent is a historian of mass communication who publishes works on komiks and films separately. Pilar and Flores are

visual art historians. Pilar approaches film and komiks from the perspective of fine arts while Flores' lenses are framed from the point of view of art studies.

Valiente and Yonzon are both komiks practitioners. Valiente is also an avid collector of old prints and runs a blog about komiks, similar to what his colleagues Dennis Villegas and Gerry Alanguilan are currently doing. He is also very active in the komiks conference circuit. Yonzon's interest in komiks comes from a publisher's point of view. Yonzon is also son to a 1950s komiks illustrator.

Lumbera, Reyes (S.) and Reyes (D.M.) are both cultural studies critics. While Lumbera has an extensive body of work on film studies, the two Reyes have concentrated instead on the study of komiks. While Soledad Reyes and D.M. Reyes are steeped in the theory and criticism of popular culture, Lumbera is a practical critic and an astute historian.

Deocampo and Del Mundo are both independent filmmakers. While Deocampo concentrates on documentary filmmaking, Del Mundo works on feature films. Deocampo is also a respected film historian while Del Mundo's published dissertation while historical in approach is also a fine specimen of postcolonial criticism. Another reason for Del Mundo's inclusion in the list of key informants was that he will be able to provide his own recollections of his father's work in the 1950s as one of most prolific komiks writer of the era.

For the reasons cited above, the interview schedules were tailor-fitted into the background and scholarship of each informant. A preliminary research or investigation on their biographical sketches was performed before the crafting of the interview questions.

There were occasions when the questions had to be re-phrased during the interview proper for a number of reasons, which include the following: (1) Some informants felt they could only provide answers to questions pertaining to one medium and not on both media; (2) The informants said they need to double-check data pertaining to the 1950s because of the remoteness of the era; and (3) The informants considered their responses on the subject of theory as mere conjectural.

D. Concepts and Indicators

The following table lists down the concepts and indicators of this study:

Table 1: Concepts and Indicators

Concepts	Indicators
The State of the Archive pertaining to komiks-to-film adaptation	Filmography of the 1950s and Identified Extant Films Based on Komiks
The language of the source text in relation to the language of adaptation and the manner of their use in the process of translation	Semiotics of Adaptation from the perspective of Genre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Semantic elements b. Syntactic elements c. The mode of adaptation d. Iconography and Filmic Techniques Semiotics of Small Narrative Units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Metz's Grand Syntagmatique b. Bellour's Segmenting/Analyzing
Issues unique to the text samples that may be analysed beyond language and structure	Contemporary Adaptation Criticism of the Selected Texts
Contexts of Adaptation	Social Film History (Key Informants' Opinions and Insights)
Emergent Filipino Film Adaptation Theory	Meta-issues and Concepts Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Adaptation

The concept "State of the Archive" is matched by the indicator "Filmography of the 1950s and Identified Extant Films Based on Komiks." Although the inventory is part of social history, this concept has been placed first in the sequence because it is a pre-

requisite to the selection of texts and doing close analysis of said texts. The inventory may not be entirely explained because of all the films listed down, only twelve remain extant. Of the 12, only four (4) film samples may be described and analysed in relation to the whole film climate of the fifties.

The general concept “Language of the komiks source in relation to the language of film adaptation and their manner of use” has been indicated by “Semiotics of Adaptation from the Perspective of Genre,” which is specified in two sub-indicators, the semantic elements and syntactic elements. “Semiotics of Small Narrative Units” is performed only in the komiks/film *Lapu-Lapu* through Metz’s Grand Syntagmatique and Bellour’s Segmenting/Analyzing.

Moreover, the “issues unique to the text samples that may be analysed beyond language and structure” make use of the critical lenses of Contemporary Adaptation Criticism. The treatment here will be eclectic, which means that the critical approach will be guided by the unique textuality of the komiks-based film or what is salient to it.

The concept “Contexts of Adaptation” is explicated through its indicator “social history or the opinions and insights of key informants” who are acknowledged experts in the practice and study of film and komiks . The internal study of adaptations (semiotics and adaptation criticism) will be complemented by an external analysis (social film history).

Finally, the concept “Emergent Filipino Film Adaptation Theory” has been indicated by the “Meta-issues and Concepts” and “Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Adaptation ,” which present the discourse on theory after data construction has yielded significant preliminary and subsequent theoretical samplings.

E. Sampling of Texts

One of the major tasks performed before subjecting the sample texts to semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism and contextualizing these through social history was producing a comprehensive inventory of extant films and their extant komiks sources.

Some of the lists, filmography and documentations consulted included the following:

1. Carmen Momblanco's 1979 thesis on the filmography of the 1950s ;
2. Rowena Francia's thesis on the history of Sampaguita Pictures where the 1950s filmography is appended;
3. The MOWELFUND list (Diamond Anniversary of Filipino Cinema, 1994);
4. LVN Films' list of copyrighted films available at ABS-CBN and the KAIZEN Company; and,
5. kabayancentral.com's online list of extant classic films.

As regards the komiks, three microfilm collections (the National Library Collection collection, the Lopez Museum and Library collection and the UP-Diliman Library Media Services collection) and two print archive collections (Lopez Museum and Library and Manila Bulletin) were consulted for the listing down and for securing prints of the komiks in the weekly series. A Sample Extant Komiks Inventory Form is provided in Appendix D. The comprehensive inventory of films produced in the 1950s and their identified komiks-sources is listed in Appendix C.

As a result of said inventory of microfilm, printed sources and film collections, four (4) texts were sampled from the twelve (12) extant films with extant komiks-sources.

The texts are listed in the following matrix:

Table 2: Matrix of Films Studied

Title	Komiks Writer/Illustrator	Title of Magazine	Year of Release	Film Company	Director
<i>Bernardo Carpio</i>	Fausto Galauran	<i>Liwayway</i>	1951	Sampaguita	Artemio Tecson
<i>Kambal-Tuko</i>	Nemesio Caravana	<i>Ilang-Ilang</i>	1952	LVN	F.H. Constantino
<i>Tulisang Pugot</i>	Gemiliano Pineda/Alfredo Alcala	<i>Liwayway</i>	1953	Sampaguita	Octavio Silos
<i>Lapu-Lapu</i>	Francisco Coching	<i>Pilipino Komiks</i> (book format)	1953	LVN	Lamberto Avellana

The four (4) texts selected for analysis and interpretation represent four genres, namely: *korido* (metrical romance), fantasy-adventure, comedy and historical film. Said texts were made to cohere with the issues salient in the social history: (1) the drawing of sources from texts other than the komiks-source and the practice of recycling; (2) generic mediation and the aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation; (3) borrowing from foreign sources and their native appropriation; (4) the role of the producers, stars and fandom in the adaptation process and (5) the institutionalization of a prevalent type of adaptation during the era.

According to the salient points identified, the texts were subjected to semiotic analysis (small narrative units and genre criticism) and contemporary adaptation criticism. The films and their corresponding salient points are enumerated below:

1. “Korido” film - *Bernardo Carpio* – The Filipino culture of recycling: generic mediation and the aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation
2. Fantasy-Adventure- *Tulisang Pugot* – Foreign borrowings and native appropriation
3. Comedy- *Kambal-Tuko* – The role of producers, stars and fandom in adaptation
4. Historical genre - *Lapu-Lapu* – Close Textual Analysis; Semiotics (Grand Syntagmatique and Segmenting/Analyzing) and Historical Fiction Film

F. Data Analysis

The following matrix represents the analytic strategies employed in each type of data gathered:

Table 3: Data analysis matrix

Concepts	Indicators	Sources of Data	Theory	Analytic Strategy
Semiotics and Contemporary Adaptation Criticism	a. The vocabulary and grammar of komiks b. The language of film c. Genres d. The mode adaptation e. Salient points arising from the texts	Extant Films and komiks prints/microfilm	-Film Semiotics - Film Narratology /Genre -Contemporary Adaptation Criticism	Semiotic analysis -Metz' Grand Syntagmatique - Bellour's Segmenting/ Analyzing - Altman's Semantic-Syntactic Analysis - Eclectic/Contemporary Adaptation Criticism
Social Film History	-Opinions and Insights of Key Informants -Secondary Literature from Periodicals published in the 1950s	-Unstructured interviews -Periodical write-ups	-Social film history -New Film History	Descriptive-Analytic

The issues arising from the textual analysis have been provided their contexts in the social film history discussion. The social film history of 1950s' adaptations was derived from the unstructured interviews with key informants and from the periodical write-ups in movie magazines. Social film history maintains the attitude of historicism, which documents the contexts that have shaped the rise and growth of an art form or medium.

The semiotic analysis of films adapted from komiks was divided into three parts. The semiotics of film narrative according to genre explained the semantic and syntactic elements that were invoked in the translation process from komiks to film. Contemporary adaptation criticism was used to analyse salient features of the texts that connect with social history of the film era. The theories of Christian Metz and the methodology of Raymond Bellour were used to analyse the small narrative units.

The interviews and periodical write-ups became the sources of social history. The film and komiks historians were sought for their views on the relationship between the two media and the contexts of film adaptation practices in the 1950s. The visual art scholars lent insight into the language and aesthetics of film and komiks. The filmmakers/cinematographers were consulted on the technological developments in the 1950s and how these shaped filmic storytelling during the so-called golden years. The komiks cartoonists/practitioners were sought on their views on the contribution of komiks as source texts to 1950s cinema. And finally, the cultural studies scholars were asked to illuminate the phenomenon of adaptation in relation to the whole cultural milieu of the 1950s. Moreover, the periodical write-ups supplemented the insights of the key informants.

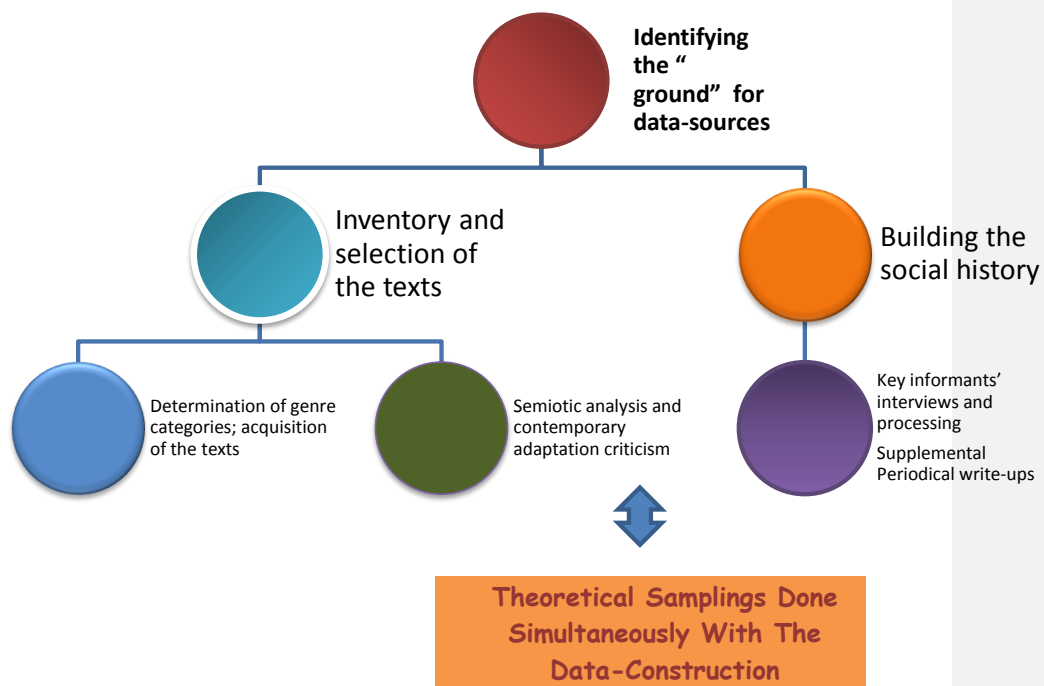
After all the data were accounted for, a theoretical and reflexive essay on the emergent theory was prepared.

The analytic strategies that were employed to explain each indicator of the cluster of concepts were guided by the theories taken up in the Framework of the Study.

G. The Grounded Theory Process of this Study

The grounded theory process that this study pursued is illustrated in the figure below to account for the steps that were taken in accumulating data and eventually turning theoretical samplings out of these.

Figure 5: *The Grounded Theory Process of this Study*



Firstly, the “ground” for data sources has been identified. One question was also asked: “What does the data suggest?” (Charmaz, 2006, p.47). This is also called “initial coding and data collection” in which the raw data were examined to identify the theoretical concept it supports and to identify other areas where more data are needed. In the present study, this initial coding pertains to the inventory of 1950s films and the

contributions of adaptations to the era. The possibility of extancy and non-extancy of texts were considered at this point.

Next, “initial memos raising codes to tentative categories” was completed. The preparation of memos “constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyse your data and codes early in the research process,” says Charmaz (2006, p. 72). This step was carried out through the identification of the extant films and their extant komiks-sources. Once the samples from the twelve extant films have been selected and their corresponding komiks-sources as well, the preparation of theoretical categories – mostly on the genres of the texts – reached the preliminary stage.

“Focused Coding” was carried out through the actual acquisition of the films and the komiks-prints. This required the documentation of the provenance of the archive, the story sources of the texts, the missing episodes and noting down the degree of the completeness of the copies acquired.

Next to coding, the study supplied genre categories to determine if the acquired texts are representative of the genres that circulated in the 1950s. The preparation of interview schedules for the key informants was also completed during this stage. Once the preparatory materials for semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism had been accounted for, the interview responses were compared with what the inventory has revealed. The genres were also taking shape as the semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism progress.

As soon as inventory had been completed, the genres were listed down. These became “theoretical samples” that “seek specific new data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11) and these should come from the responses of the key informants sought for the interviews.

The interviews were supplemented by periodical write-ups or movie journalism pieces during the period. The texts and the interviews helped shape theoretical categories. Some were becoming more crystallized and some remained blurred, if not nebulous during this stage of the research.

The next step in the process meant “refining the analyses” of the texts and the interviews and giving more sheen to early theoretical samples. This led to “integrating memos or diagramming concepts” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11), which is actually about outlining the dimensions of the theory. Littlejohn’ and Foss’ (2010) meta-issues and concepts served as conceptual guides for a more logical arrangement to the ideas pertaining to the emergent vernacular and hybrid theory.

Finally, writing the emergent theory capped the grounded theory process, hoping to further polish and revise the drafts. The next two chapters will present the results of the study that will hopefully lay the foundational concepts that will constitute the *emergent theory*.

H. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study covers only a single decade, the 1950s, which has been cited in various studies as an important decade in the study of film-komiks relationship (CCP Encyclopedia, 1994). A number of references have named the 1950s as the Golden Age of cinema (CCP Encyclopedia, 1994; Garcia,1983) and of komiks in spite of how other scholars would like to view this label.

This study’s focus is to propose a theory of film adaptation that necessitated the grounded theory approach as method. The data uncovered to produce an emergent theory were sourced out from an inventory of 1950s films, a semiotic analysis, criticism of

komiks to film adaptation, and a series of interviews with film historians, filmmakers, visual art critics, komiks practitioners, cultural historians and cultural studies scholars.

One of the limitations of the study pertains to the paucity of the komiks and film archives. In addition to the dismal state of the archives, majority of the practitioners in the fifties have already passed away. No oral history projects were conducted to collect their opinions and insights. There are also no actual audio or videotaped recordings of their recollections or transcripts of such that exist in some vaults of library archives. These first-hand accounts would have greatly enriched the current researches of this kind.

I. Research Schedule

Following the proposal defense in November 2011, this research revised the proposal which has been presented to her adviser in January 2012. After the adviser's approval of the dissertation proposal, this researcher began data construction in January 2012. From January to May, 2012, all the extant komiks series with extant komiks prints have been documented and acquired. The determination of extant films was also done during this period. Copies of the films were acquired in May 2012.

The grounded theory approach advises that data construction be carried out simultaneously with preliminary analysis. The unstructured interviews with key informants were carried out between January 2012 and July 2012, during which the screening of films and preliminary note-taking were also being accomplished. The actual writing of the semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism began in June 2012 while the field interviews were being conducted. Theoretical samplings were also being done simultaneously through the semiotic analysis, adaptation criticism and social film history

based on interview responses. The first draft of the dissertation was completed in October 2012. The oral defense took place on January 30, 2013 and the revisions were done thereafter.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:
SEMIOTICS AND ADAPTATION CRITICISM OF SELECTED TEXTS

An original is allowed its life, its own life, in the cinema.

– Dudley Andrew, “Adaptation”

A. Korido Komiks into Film: Revisioning Old Forms and Content in
Bernardo Carpio (1951)¹

1. *The “ Sources ” of the Komiks-Source*

Bernardo Carpio, the komiks series, was published in *Liwayway* Magazine from November 27, 1950 to March 26, 1951. Drawn from previous korido versions, the komiks rendition was created by Dr. Fausto J. Galauran, a Tagalog novelist of the era. A scholar that has written extensively on metrical romance, Damiana Eugenio (1995), places *Bernardo Carpio* under the category of a korido while Reynaldo Iletto (1998) calls it an *awit*. Both labels, however, refer to the same thing in its English equivalent: metrical romance. Lumbera (1986) notes in his now canonical *Tagalog poetry: Tradition and influences in its development* that this little confusion in the labelling began when “corrido has been used loosely by Spanish chronicles as a generic term for the Tagalog metrical romances,” (p.52) whether they originated from the Spanish ballads or from Mexican versions. The only difference Eugenio (and Epifanio de los Santos as well, according to Lumbera [1986]) has detected is that the *awit* is sung and rendered using 12 syllables per line (dodecasyllabic) while the korido makes use of 8 syllables per line (octosyllabic). For the purpose of this study, the 1951 film version shall be referred to as

a “korido film” for the reason that the name “korido” is a generic label that may be applied to both.

Eugenio (1987) reports that versions of *Bernardo Carpio* exist in their Spanish form. However, “the immediate source of the Philippine romance of Bernardo Carpio seems to be Lope de Vega’s play, ‘Las Mocedades de Bernardo del Carpio’ or a popular version of it,” avers Eugenio (1987, p.45). Supposedly, the earliest version of the romance titled *El Bernardo la Victoria de Roncevalles* was transformed by its Filipino translator into *Historia Famosa ni Bernardo Carpio Sa Reinong España Na Anac Ni Don Sancho Diaz at ni Doña Jimena* (Castro, 1985).

Comment [h1]:

The story of Bernardo Carpio has been no stranger to popular adaptation treatments, having seen quite a number of incarnations in drama, in prose novel and in komiks. Traditionally attributed to Jose Corazon de Jesus or “Huseng Batute,” the Philippine korido features a Bernardo who is a Spanish native, son of Don Sancho and Jimena. He is raised by Don Rubio and later, by his uncle-king Don Alfonso. Gifted with superhuman strength, Bernardo searches for his real parents and serves his native Spain by routing all of her enemies. After his successful campaigns in honor of Spain’s glory, Bernardo retires in a mythical place situated in between two mountains that continuously collide against each other. One of the most evident manifestations that the Philippine version departs from the original Spanish korido is found in a small detail where Bernardo Carpio is reported to have promised the king Alfonso that he is bent to defeat all “*anito*-worshippers”(Castro, 1985, p. 10).

Certain features of the original Spanish romance and the Philippine version manage to find their way to influence modern komiks and film treatments. Two of these

features consist of the approximation of orality that is invoked by the original story and the liberties taken by the adapter in recreating the precursor story.

Firstly, the evocation of orality is felt in the expository lines in the first chapter of the komiks: “*Narito ang kasaysayan na sa simula pa lamang ay agad nang pumupukaw ng puso at kalooban.*” [Here is a story that from the very beginning stirs the heart and the soul]. Galauran, adapting from the tale traditionally recited orally and enjoyed by its hearers in a communal setting, inserts an unseen narrator in this brief prologue that somehow doubles as an expository device to introduce the late Spanish period setting of the story. The unseen narrator is directly addressing the audience, which is a residual style of old awits. As Reynaldo Iletto (1998) informs us in his “Bernardo Carpio: Awit and the Revolution,”: “Awit stories were often dramatized, or at least sung in public” (p.3). The said orality of *Bernardo Carpio* is affirmed by Castro (1985): “This oral nature of *Bernardo Carpio* accounts for the repetition not only of the key words but the recounting of episodes” (p.12).

The prologue, in fact, is an estimation of the effect that it might evoke from the hearers: “*(S)a simula pa lamang ay agad nang pumupukaw ng puso at kalooban.*” This confirms what scholars (Eugenio, 1995; Medina, Jr.,1976) say of its extreme popularity in the 19th century. Iletto (1998) adds:

So powerful was the impact of awit on the popular imagination that the average indio in the nineteenth century can be said to have dreamt of emulating chivalrous knights riding off to the Crusades or saving beautiful damsels from distress (p.3).

The prologue in the film, given this popular memory of awits and korido of old, is banking on the same sentiment, inviting a new generation to hear an old tale in a new

platform. For a fact, the pages of *Liwayway* komiks re-told and sung the exploits of *Bernardo Carpio* for eighteen weeks.

Meanwhile, the film version offers a counterpart to the korido/awit prologue through a shot of a hand wiping the dust in an antiquated leather-bound book (in the cliché-ish style of the period) before opening and showing words written in old Roman script, placed beside a candle burning to give illumination to the following words:

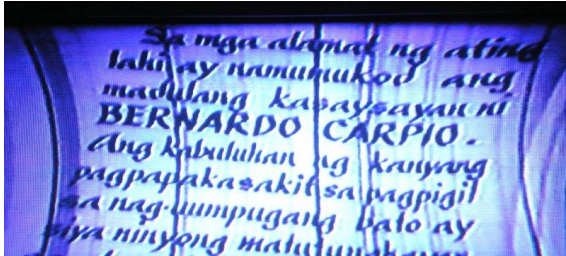
Ang mga alamat ng ating lahi ay namumukod. Ang madulang kasaysayan ni Bernardo Carpio. Ang kabuluhan ng kanyang pagpapakasakit sa pagpigil sa nag-uumpugang bato ay siya ninyong matutunghayan sa alamat na ito. [The legends of our race are distinct. This colourful story of Bernardo Carpio, the value of his sacrifice by stopping two gigantic rocks from crashing into each other: you will see it in this legend.]

This matter of direct expository narration is a residual influence of the korido, which is predisposed to “directly addressing his audience in turns” (Mojares, 1998, p.61) and then progressing from there chronologically. As Castro (1985) reports:

Like the other metrical romances Bernardo Carpio’s structure is linear narration. It begins with the story of Bernardo’s parents, his illegitimate birth, his extraordinary childhood, his exploits, then his quest for the identity of his parents, his victory over his uncle, ending with his vanishing in the mountains.” (p.13)

The opening scene in the komiks also allows for a linear unravelling of the heroic actions, while the film entertains no pretension that the viewer has a foreknowledge of at least the essential story of the circulating lore. In fact, the film almost hints at the tragic ending: “*Ang kabuluhan ng kanyang pagpapakasakit sa pagpigil sa nag-uumpugang bato ay siya ninyong matutunghayan sa alamat na ito. [This colourful story of Bernardo Carpio, the value of his sacrifice by stopping two gigantic rocks from crashing into each other: you will see it in this legend.]*. There is an assumption that film viewers are familiar with the legend and how it will end.

Figure 6: Film prologue in *Bernardo Carpio*



The film prologue approximates the orality of the korido and the traditional exposition in the komiks version.

That the ending is almost known to the viewers at first instance is somehow part of korido's technique to end in a "moralizing passage followed by an apology" (Mojares, 1998, p. 62) or in the case of *Bernardo Carpio*, an implied way of explaining his last act of heroism.

The second issue that comes in between the Philippine korido and its popular treatments in komiks and film pertains to the poetic license employed by the adapter to render the story as he saw it fit. This is also connected with the questions of authorship of the story material. *Bernardo Carpio* has no known author and is considered to be Spain's "patriotic answer to the French Chanson de Roland," (Castro, et.al., 1985, p. 1). While taking stock of the precursor story(ies), the Filipino korido version attributed to Huseng Sisiw transformed Bernardo Carpio into a Filipino hero. The details that were only retained in the Philippine version of the korido were "the most interesting and dramatic" (Eugenio, 1987, p. 45).

Galauran komiks's spin has also taken liberties in Filipinizing the story. The screenwriter who worked on the adaptation scenario, Cesar Amigo, seemed to be Galauran's willing accomplice, turning the script into one that follows the "spirit" of the

komiks. Artemio Tecson, the film's director, recreates the static images and sometimes unimaginative and flat rendering in the komiks panels into a film that religiously adhered to Galauran's komiks story in terms of essence and structure by making it more exciting through cinema's additional tracks.

2. *Film Adaptation Mode and Techniques: The Korido as Komiks as Film*

The film employs minimal departures from the komiks story. The close correspondence between the komiks story and film may be set in contrast with the departures of the komiks version from the Philippine korido (which also departed heavily from the original Spanish corrido). In the Philippine korido, the Spanish King Alfonso opposes the secret love relationship between his sister Jimena and Don Sancho. Out of their deep love for each other, Jimena and Sancho consummate their love and bear Bernardo who has been separated from them at birth due to the machinations of the king's general, Don Rubio. In the end, Bernardo Carpio is reunited with his parents as a series of events unravel his true identity and as his unique physical strength earns him a place in the kingdom as a defender of Spain from her enemies and usurpers. The original is a tale of chivalry and adventure, which is evident in its Spanish title *El Bernardo la Victoria de Roncevalles*. The Philippine korido however bears the feel of a heroic legend; that is, an allegory or a backstory for a future "king of the Tagalogs," which was mentioned in passing in Rizal's second novel, *El Filibusterismo*.

One of the film's few departures from the komiks is traceable in the opening scene. While the komiks begins in the Philippines, continues in Spain, and returns to the Philippines, the film begins in Spain. Only with the appearance of the spirit of his dead mother before him that Bernardo learns that he must "go back" to the Philippines. All

throughout his childhood, Bernardo is not aware of his true racial origin, until the apparition of his mother's ghost.

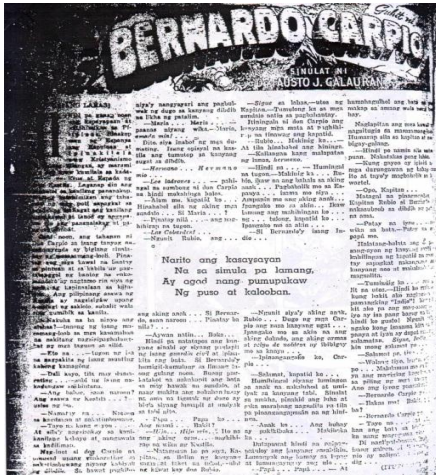
The komiks story sets the pace and the tone for a Filipino version of the adventure tale on screen. While Galauran's prose version (written like a *maikling kuwento* or a short story for *Liwayway* readers) provides more details and backstories, it is the komiks version that directly connects with the film. The highlights of the plot that the komiks draws from the prose portion are almost the same details that the film chooses to present, including a few sequences such as the pursuit of Bernardo and Luningning by the men of Prinsesa Minda and the meeting with the witch residing in the forest; Bernardo's battle with the giant-keeper of the colliding rocks, among others.

Overall, the Galauran-authored komiks story has served as a storyboard and a structural guide to the film. The borrowings were numerous but the film has also transformed the material into an epic movie and an action movie as well. The invocation of said genres are evidenced by a number of battle scenes that show large-scale production designs, choreographed fight scene, several experiments in cinematography to show breadth and scope of the scene and other details that may only be imagined in the komiks rendition.

The following two figures reflect the dual-format of the komiks story, one in prose and another in komiks format. *Liwayway's* heterogenous readership profile allows for this kind of mixed-genres format. The prose version of the story may also be attributed to the career of Galauran as a prose writer and as one of the stalwarts of the

Tagalog novel in his time. He was adept in both prose writing and komiks writing, showing the extensive connection of *Liwayway* with the literary sector.

Figure 7: Dual-format style of Bernardo Carpio (prose part)



The prose version is written in the format of a maikling kwento (short story). The prose version has more complete details than the komiks version

Figure 8: Dual-format style of Bernardo Carpio (komiks part)



The komiks covers only the barest outline of the events detailed in the prose version. However, the komiks dictated the iconography in the film. (See Appendix E and F for larger reproduction of the prints.)

While the components of korido story go from frame to frame in komiks in an episodic way, with a profusion of balloons containing dramatic exchanges, the images in the film work these out through evocative mise-en-scene, placing Bernardo with his love interest, Luningning, or his opponents, amidst the background of natural surroundings such as seas, native settlements, dense forests, hills and mountains, and dark, mysterious caves.

The use of the backdrop to recreate early Filipino life in the film is impressive, in which the komiks-source is weak. The komiks graphics for the backdrop presents only the barest outlines of the settings for action. In contrast, the film features scenes taken at sea, under the water and amidst dense forests and caves. The mise-en-scene captures tribal and community life in action such as feasting in prolonged scenes using long takes, high angle shots and low angle shots; ritual scenes introducing a newly-discovered hero; matchmaking between the hero with the princess; and, the activity of pirates at sea, which would have been normal in those times when the shorelines were yet unbounded and foreign aggression was a constant threat.

Figure 9: *The seascape in Bernardo Carpio (komiks treatment and film)*





The sea serves both as background for action and as antagonist in Bernardo Carpio. The sea is one of the places where Bernardo's heroic exploits are exhibited.

The virile Cesar Ramirez gave life to the komiks hero. As Bernardo Carpio, his fabled strength has been matched by the beauty of Luningning, played by Ramirez's real-life wife Alicia Vergel. The happiness of the lovers is threatened by the jealous Princess Minda who, true-to-form and expectations, is played by the quintessential character actress, Bella Flores. What is very prominent in a romance is the willingness of the lovers to make sacrifices for collective good, which is exactly what the characters will accomplish at the conclusion of the story. As foundational romance, the tragic fate of "star-crossed lovers who represent particular regions, race..." (Sommer, 1993) like Bernardo and Luningning is metonymic in significance. Their romance reflects a deeper love for the land and a longing for its freedom, in an allegorical manner.

The komiks depict the young Bernardo as one who knows his status as "indio" while the film depicts him discovering his roots only when the story reaches the point where his uncle Rubio accedes to his exile and conscription as a galleon slave. Despite the slight variation, the quest motif is apparent in both renditions.

The quest motif in this romance is made apparent through iconography and cinematography. Twelve (12) panels through some three episodes in the komiks depict Bernardo as galleon slave which have been treated through 3 to 4 sequences in the film, showing mid shots of a sinking ship. This turning point, wherein the character receives both torment and opportunity through a twist in the plot, is a characteristic feature of the metrical romance.

Moreover, the film has been able to employ certain properties unique to the medium. An example of a convention unique to the film is the musical sequence. In the early part depicting the life of Bernardo as part of the Old Ramu's household, Luningning is shown singing to celebrate the successful fishing adventure. A second musical sequence is featured as part of a performance before the court of Rajah Cayman where Luningning dances to instrumental music depicting the story of a love triangle. The musical and dance interludes are injected like a frame story device to refer to that other love triangle between Bernardo, Luningning and the princess in the outer story. The employment of musical sequences is made diegetic to the narrative. The fishing sequence alludes to the courtship between Bernardo and Luningning, while the court performance serves as metaphor for the eternal triangle, another stock convention in the korido.

Figure 10: *Music and dance sequences in Bernardo Carpio*



Clockwise. Komiks treatment of Luningning's dance. Alicia Vergel as Luningning performs a dance narrative that depicts a bitter love triangle, which is also happening in the outer story; thus, the frame story device. A tribal dance is held to celebrate Bernardo Carpio's capture.

Adventure and cinema seem to have been born for each other. For this reason, cinematic space becomes a welcoming host to a number of the standard devices such as “abductions and gallant rescues, separation and reunion, trials and performance of tasks” (Mojares, 1998, p. 62). To capture this cinematically, there has been an attempt to project the properties of the epic genre by employing numerous long shots, long takes, high angle shots and low-angle shots in the battle, pursuit and court assembly scenes. Some

dissolves and montage editing are utilized in the “pursuit” scenes in the forest to condense the time that has elapsed since Bernardo and Luningning have escaped Princess Minda’s abode.

In addition to above, the prologue and the epilogue in the film prove to be more effective than that of the komiks in introducing the point-of-view narrator, at least as it is employed in the opening and closing scenes (the latter shown below). As the Spanish corrido is translated into a komiks story, the Bernardo Carpio tale becomes a local legend. But as the komiks becomes a film, the epic genre is invoked. This cycle of mutations leaves an opening for the perpetuation not only of a borrowed story but also of a heroic tale that alludes to the founding of a new race. This resolution the legend owes to a mythical hero whose tragic flaw – pride – is also the same trait that led him to tragic grandeur; offering himself as the human sacrifice so that world may be saved from destruction. To the Tagalogs, he represents someone whom they look up to as the future liberator of “Filipinas” from her oppressors. Iletto (1998) in “Rizal and the underside of Philippine history” comments on the ending of the “Filipinized” story that the komiks and the film re-translations picked up: “At this point the awit ends, but various appendices have been added to it, not to mention the belief in Bernardo as the Tagalog king, that verify its status as a living text” (p.38).

Figure 11: The final installment of Bernardo Carpio showing the hero's final act of heroism and the film rendition



The final image of Bernardo Carpio in komiks has been recreated in the film and becomes one of its iconic images.

3. *Propelling the Romance Mode*

Bernardo Carpio is set in actual Philippine historical time, the Spanish colonial years, but the exact year is not made explicit. Bernardo's father is an *encomiendero* who married a native woman; an intermarriage that Rubio, Sancho's brother, resents. The backdrop and mood somehow point to the period prior to the revolutionary period of the 1890s.

The lifestyle of the island people that Bernardo meets after he escapes the Spanish galleon where he serves sentence reflects a tight communal system that is untrammelled by the Spanish-controlled colonial town set-up. The community is governed by rajahs and princesses and their independent settlements seem undisturbed by the Spaniards. There is the noticeable influence of Malayan customs in the dances and rituals in the tribal court and the people's belief in *Bathala* (native god) reflect the thriving of an animistic and pagan community during the supposed height of the Spanish empire in the Philippines. It is obvious that the komiks creator and the film translator have no wish for historical accuracy. Whether the intent is to emphasize temporality or to discount historicizing is beside the point. The komiks and film writers were working towards addressing the 20th century audience whose literacy in the word and in the images were different from that of the avid listeners or readers of the 19th century korido writer/chanter or the pamphlet versions peddled in the streets.

That there is a conscious reference to "Pilipinas" is obvious and is a resolute attempt to clear all traces of the original Spanish story, which is about kings and knights

and not about rajahs and slaves. In Chapter 1 of the komiks story, Don Rubio, a Spaniard, is angry that his young and orphaned nephew, Bernardo, is an indio:

Kung bakit ako nagkaroon ng pamangking “Indio” ay hindi ko malaman. Ngunit naipangako kong isasama kita sa Espanya... “[Why I have a nephew who is an indio, I don’t understand...but I have promised to bring you to Spain...].

In Galauran’s komiks story, Bernardo is a half *indio*, born in the Philippines but is raised in Spain after his parents have been murdered. He is eventually sent back to his native land by accident. In the film, he is a Spaniard or so he thought because he spent his childhood in Spain. Therefore, the slight variation of Bernardo’s origin in the film elicits varying perception regarding his racial origin. In the komiks, he is a Creole who was born in the Philippines but in the film he is a Spaniard who was sent back to the Philippines. In the film, he is a Peninsular, even if he accidentally finds himself a slave in a galleon ship.

Moreover, in Chapter 9, now grown-up and fugitive from being a conscriptee in a galleon ship, the castaway Bernardo is accosted by the island girl Luningning and the exchange reveals two native people’s confusion about their racial identity and social position inside the colonial dispensation:

*Ang pangalan ko’y Luningning. Ako ay isang Indyo, este...isang...Pilipino.
Pilipino? Iyan ang tawag sa amin ng mga Kastila.
Ito? Pilipinas?
[My name is Luningning. I am an Indio, er...a Filipino.
Filipino? That’s what Spaniards call us.
This? Pilipinas?]*

This exchange between Bernardo and Luningning that reveals their limited knowledge of their identity as native and as “Pilipino” sheds light on korido’s treatment of past as mere backdrop; always subordinated to escape and entertainment. Eco (1985) says that romance treats “the past, as scenery, pretext, fairy tale construction” (p.18). The

label “Pilipino” in the latter period of the Spanish colonization was a class category used to describe the Spaniards living in the Philippines. Therefore, the above exchange reveals the knowledge available to the natives that “Pilipino” is the more accurate label for their kind; that although addressed briefly is unfortunately unproblematized in both the komiks story and the film.

While the korido is usually a tale of adventure featuring knights with prowess for combat and sworn to the ideals of chivalry, it may also trace a hero’s beginnings. However, it is operant in both komiks and film that the temporal nature of Bernardo Carpio’s story is given premium by making it appear that it is unfolding at the time of the telling; that it is in the here and now.

Bernardo Carpio begins in medias res (in the middle of things). The “middle of action” is a burglary inside a prominent Spanish home and the murder of its master and mistress has rendered a young boy orphaned in one stroke. The middle part is actually the beginning of the Filipino story; everything else before that is a Spanish story.

The subsequent misfortunes that have befallen Bernardo have happened on account of the sinister plot of a wicked uncle/foster father, a regular in a would-be hero’s ancestry and a staple in the korido. Castro et. al. (1985) avers that this trope has a specific function: “In the metrical romance the reverse moral order, where virtue is oppressed and vice triumphs, is usually provoked by a member of the family” (p.5).

Exile is the next challenge of the hero. The relative’s betrayal will drive him to a faraway Philippine island where he will “begin” his race’s story, so to speak. This trope of prologuing and epiloguing in both komiks and film somehow captures the very essence of the surface format of the korido. The elements of the actual (details about the

Spanish colonial period) meld with the hagiographic (Bernardo's fabled origins and his mysterious strength).

In keeping with one of the central themes of the korido, the film highlights the passionate quality of Bernardo's and Luningning's love for each other. It is a love story thrown in the midst of collective conflict and made more poignant by the amount of sacrifice they must make in the story's stirring conclusion. Love is always connected with adventure (Macey, 2000; Lumbera, 1986; Eugenio, 1995) and this has been made evident in the literature of the korido both in its early forms and its modern renderings.

Bernardo's and Luningning's love is the catalyst to most actions and conflicts in the story. With a love so strong and willing to face all odds, a triangle is inevitable. The third member of the eternal triangle is prominent and titled, true to expectations. Prinsesa Minda, daughter of one of the vassals of the Rajah Cayman, presents herself as a formidable and vicious rival. The romance is incomplete without the theme of the eternal triangle. In the story, this is physically embodied by the scorned princess and towards the end, it is the heroic mission of Bernardo which will come in between him and Luningning.

To survive the daring adventures that are forthcoming, the hero of the romance is endowed with super-human strength, usually through the intervention of a fairy or the spirit of a dead mother, similar to the case of Bernardo Carpio. The hero is beset by many tribulations that serve as a challenge to his heroism. A man of many paradoxes, Bernardo is feisty when hurt and is easily provoked but he is also quick to extend help to the needy. Although a man gifted with strength, his ego is at times inflated. For instance, he challenges the lightning to try his strength and he loses his powers in the process.

Bernardo's enormous powers and admirable virtues are also the source of his tragedy. His hidden pride and uncontrollable wrath match his kind and generous spirit in equal measure. Iletto (1998), reading nationalistic strains in the Philippine korido, offers that "his lack of self-control is a sign of discontinuity of his childhood experience" (p.21). Iletto is sure that the folk people who got hold of a copy of this korido/awit or heard it sung had associated the "lack of self-control" from the lack of a father figure. Del Castillo and Medina, Jr. (1974) opine that the korido often tackles "the lives of orphans and disowned children" (p.124). In form and in metaphor, the theme of identity is deeply entrenched in the korido. This absentee father (Spain or colonizer) causes the identity crisis of the native people, which of course the Bernardo character was made to represent.

Corollary to the theme of identity crisis, the korido contains a quest theme, which represents the protagonist's goal to resolve the crisis of the self. In this case, the quest theme pertains to Bernardo Carpio's search for ancestry and parental roots, or connotatively, the quest of the colonized for an understanding of the "discontinuity" of his free, nativist past. This sense of nostalgia becomes more operant as the adventure motif leads the hero to exile. *Bernardo Carpio*, the komiks story and the film rendition, reflects what Fanon (1963) has referred to as the tendency "toward the past and away from actual events" (p.225). In the fifties, there were too many of this retreat into the past as a way of the postcolonial trying to bring together the fragments of the Filipino story.

Sacrifice becomes the ultimate twin of love that was earlier pointed as a central motif of romance. There is always one more challenge that faces the lovers and one that is hard to resist: the resolve to preserve the freedom and justice of their people. Both the komiks and the film end the story with Bernardo Carpio preventing the end of mankind

by keeping the two boulders of rocks from colliding and the loyal Luningning staying by his side, clutching his body in the final scenes. The moralizing and didactic impulse of the korido makes its appearance in the prose version of *Liwayway* story as an unseen narration states:

Diyan natapos ang kasaysayan ni Bernardo Carpio.

Hanggang sa panahong ito, ang buhay at napagsapit ng...sa Pilipinas ay dinadalit pa, at nagpalipat-lipat sa bibig ng maraming matatanda. Hangga ngayon, si Bernardo Carpio ay nasa pagitan ng nag-uumpugang bato, parusa sa kanya ng Diyos dahil sa paghamon sa Kadakilaan at kalakhan ng Lumikha.

[So the story of Bernardo Carpio ends.

Until now, the life and end of the hero is still sung in the Philippines and is transmitted through the mouths of many old people. Until now, Bernardo Carpio is positioned in between the two huge colliding rocks; his punishment from God for challenging His greatness and the power of the Creator.]

In spite of the obvious religious implication and moralizing attitude adopted in the komiks version, the film employs a more secular spin on the ending. There is a shot of the last page of that enormous book being closed while a voice-over narration recites how the sacrifice of Bernardo Carpio continues even as the story comes to a close. From the religious tone of the komiks to the iconic final images in the film, the romance mode of the korido reminds one that popular culture, though a casualty of mass entertainment, may also bear the promise of “allegorical mediation” (Flores, personal communication, June 16, 2012). Jameson (1981) has always talked about this mediation. If we consider *Bernardo Carpio* as an innocent romance material in the Fyeau mode, then we miss the

point that latter-day adaptations “under wholly altered historical circumstances” (Jameson, 1981, p.131), carry forth an ideological vision that looks at the story as a

fragment of a past once disrupted; what Rizal and Bonifacio read beyond the essential story of the mythical “Tagalog king” and promise that he inspires among the people.

B. Appropriation as Indigenization: Foreign and Popular Sources in Tulisang Pugot/Headless Bandit (1953)²

1. A Confluence of Foreign and Popular Genres

The depths of popular consciousness are constituted by layers of sources, influences and borrowings. The *Liwayway* komiks story *Tulisang Pugot* by Gemiliano Pineda and Alfredo Alcala and its subsequent Sampaguita Pictures film version is one example of story material that draws heavily from various foreign and popular genres. Ostensibly, the story is an example of *fantasy*, which is form of literature or film consisting of an imaginative portrayal of a plot or events that delve on the supernatural. The focal character, introduced in the very first page of the initial instalment of the komiks version, is a supernatural being. The initial panel is actually a foreshadowing of events in the story when the fearsome headless *tulisan* (bandit) is already on the loose. A woman shrieks in terror as she utters the words “Tulisang Pugot! Tulisang Pugot!”.

In so far as the initial panel has already abandoned all pretensions of the rational in favour of the mysterious, the story also qualifies as an example of a generic term related to fantasy: the fantastical. Edward Quinn (2006), in his *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, defines the fantastical as a “literary type that mixes realistic and supernatural elements without offering an explanation to the reader” (p.159). Since *Tulisang Pugot* pivots in between the supernatural and the realistic drama, it somehow invokes the fantastical. Herein, cosmopolitan pueblo in 19th century Philippines, a picture

of a colony at the verge of change, is shown in contrast with the fabulous tales spun around the headless bandit.

Fantasy was one of the major literary forms during the Spanish period, along with the religious and dramatic literatures that were used to indoctrinate the natives in Christian teachings. The colonial miracle plays and the adventure tales were in fact variations of this fantastic literature. The natives were themselves predisposed to fantasy because pre-Hispanic oral literature that included myths, epics and short verses obviously contain elements of fantasy and supernatural: belief in the supernatural, a fetish for charms and amulets and curious fatalism that one may link to a belief in a higher power.

By the 19th century, romantic literature was already circulating in urban places where a new mercantile class was rising, although “the corridos and awits would have to contend with the still-dominant religious hymnals and exhortations” (Medina, Jr., 1976, p. 63). The romances that were brought to the country encouraged further the native Filipinos’ love for fantasy. Iletto (1998) offers:

Having filtered into the Philippines via Mexico, such stories drew no objections from friars as subject matter for indigenous literature. After all, loyalty to a European king and Christendom’s triumph over the Moors were constant themes in these stories; they were useful in strengthening the indio’s loyalty and utang na loob to Spain and Catholicism. (p.2)

From the American period up to the 1950s, variations of the genre continued to interest the natives. Foreign fantasy komiks and film materials would usually garner their local counterpart as soon as they reach Philippine shores (*CPP Encyclopedia*, 1994). One such material is actually a variant of fantasy: the gothic. The gothic, which normally appears in novelistic form, “is a type of fiction that employs mystery, terror or horror, suspense, and the supernatural for the simple purpose of scaring the wits out of its reader”

(Quinn, 2006, p. 184). Usually set in the medieval manor or a mysterious castle, the plot of the gothic thrives on the suspenseful and the gory.

The gothic form became a regular feature in 1950s komiks but it was better known by a more familiar term – the fantasy-adventure. *Tulisang Pugot*, for instance, approximates the fantasy mode by making references to a remote setting - the 19th century Spanish pueblo and its interlinked families. Suddenly, the real and probable colonial world is interrupted by the arrival of a unique creature: a headless bandit. From thereon, an eerie atmosphere haunts the mise-en-scene. The komiks and the film establish themselves with similar stories such as Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and other gothic tales where a headless rider or ghost becomes the focal character of the story. What is unique about the komiks depiction and the film rendition of the headless bandit character is that they signal the fantastic and calculate audience response. Rabkin (1976) attests that “the fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180 degrees” (p.41). The komiks's prologue creates that “astonishment” in the initial pages while the movie has to wait until the middle part to turn the narrative into the unexpected.

Meanwhile, a substantial part of *Tulisang Pugot* is also an adventure tale or a cloak-and-dagger romance. Eco (1985) considers this kind of historical material a swashbuckling story which “chooses a ‘real’ and recognisable past” (p.18). Peopled by fictional characters, the film aims at simply propelling the fantasy-adventure genre as entertainment. In a way, the cloak-and-dagger romance, also known by the label cape-and-sword tale, descended from the Spanish period drama, the *comedia de la capa y espada* or the moro-moro. The influence of the moro-moro is noticeable in the swordfight

sequence between Don Fernando (Tulisan Pugot/Tulume) and his arch nemesis, Leonardo. In fact, Tiongson (1983) links the action genre to the komedya: “Today the komedya survives in the so-called ‘action films’ in which the clear-cut forces of good and evil engage each other in combat” (p.85).

The enlistment of a fantastical character reveals the affinity between the fantasy-adventure genre and the gothic tale. Similar fictional works that include a headless bandit character, such as the one depicted in *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow* (recently adapted in a Hollywood film starring Johnny Depp) or even the cloak-and-dagger romances such as Alexander Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Man in the Iron Mask* and their knightly heroes, Tulisan Pugot evokes a sense of mystery. By enlisting the presence of a ghastly headless bandit in the midst of a cosmopolite pueblo and a busy walled city where imperial gaze sees all indio-related activities as suspect, the story smacks of deliberate anachronism.

Figure 12: *Fantasy and magic in Tulisan Pugot*



Left to right. The eeriness of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and components of local folklore seemingly influenced this fantasy-adventure.

Tulisan Pugot does not aim at achieving historical realism but rather at recreating the adventure genre. One can hazard an explanation as to the Filipinos

penchant for the adventure genre, which was popular not only in the 1950s but perhaps all throughout all periods of their narrative tradition. Medina, Jr. (1976) explains that the primary concern of early Tagalog poets “was his immediate reality – man and nature” (p.3). For the pre-colonial native, the real merges with the fantastical. This may be called a quality of the Filipino which is predisposed to the uncanny, which means “seemingly supernatural in origin or character” (*Edges of reality: Confronting the uncanny*, 1999, p. i). Being deeply connected with nature – as evidenced by their earliest myth of Malakas and Maganda – the native Filipino has no difficulty merging reality and fantasy.

The *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994) says that “the fantasy film transports the viewer to an imaginary world” (p.88) and draws a number of images from folklore. Some studies however aver that “these dark monstrous forces” that visit the world of fantasy “could have been representations of the hidden fears and terrors of the collective psyche” (Reyes, S., 2009a, p.17). The presence of the *tulisanug pugot* may reflect this repressed feeling of persecution and bitterness that the indios feel towards the bigoted colonial officials and the abusive principalia that they endow this creature of the night deadly powers to exact collective revenge. The komiks and the film are saturated by this feeling, perhaps riding high on the nationalistic fervour of the fifties generation that could give voice to the uncanny and the outlawed as a means of subtle historical analysis.

Tulisanug Pugot is therefore a specimen of how the popular writer and filmmaker make use of the materials at their disposal. At the turn of the 20th century, the romance novels were favourite reading materials of Filipinos. The works of Dumas, Sir Walter Scott and their contemporaries were read by the komiks novelists and filmmakers alike. “Foreign films with fantasy characters have spawned a number of Filipino counterparts,”

adds the *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994, p. 88). The interest in these types of materials persists to this day, prompting Soledad Reyes's observation that the romance mode is a dominant tendency in recent literary and popular history.

2. *Painting Local Color*

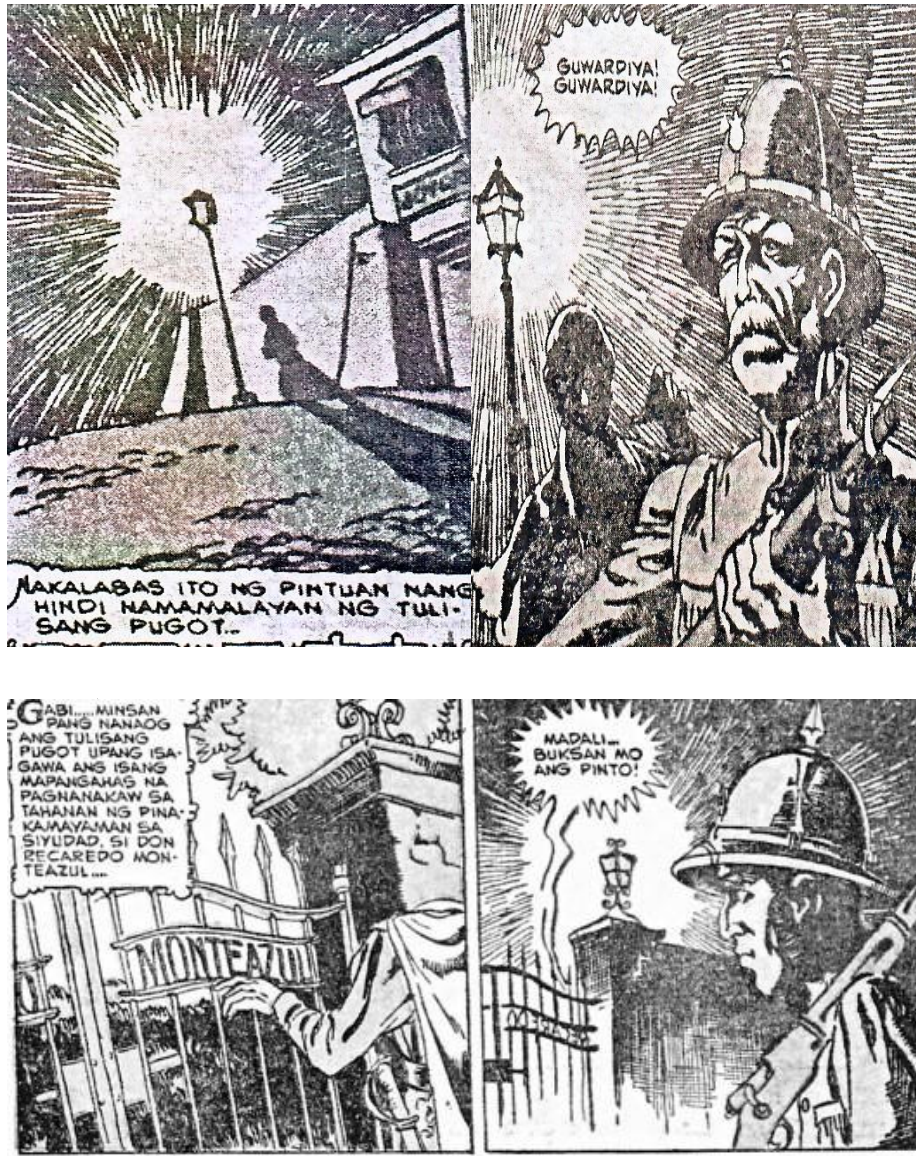
The komiks story does not specify the actual milieu or time of *Tulisang Pugot*. In fact, while the story may be said to have been set in the late 19th century, there is also a noticeable impulse of the narrative to obscure its setting. This may be observed in the early part of the komiks story. The prologue in the komiks does not categorically state the exact year of the opening event and the locale where it has taken place. Thus, the narrated prologue goes: "*Panahon ng mga KastilaSa bayan ng Santo Tomas. Lalawigan ng X.*"[Spanish period....The town of Santo Tomas in the province of X].

The more setting-conscious komiks reader can make an educated guess through the details scattered here and there. Fortunately, as the reader pursues the sequence of the events, the detail depicting the displacement of families from the lands that they cultivate allows an opening for a sort of an unravelling of a fictional setting. The picture of the protagonist Tulumé and his poor family being displaced from the land of a member of the principalia or landed and gentrified native indios, suggests the period of the Spanish *encomienda* and the banditry that is happening in the countryside. Rizal depicted the bandits of the 19th century in his second novel *El Filibusterismo* as people driven to the hinterlands by the yearly upsurge of tax tributes to be paid. They live in the margins of social existence, constantly leading precarious lives. This has been immortalized in the character of Kabesang Tales.

The film removes this prologue altogether, inviting the viewer instead to thrust right into the fictional embrace of the Hispanic setting and mood. By removing the expository background in the komiks, the film explores the temporal – time-wise and spatial-wise – and propels the narrative without the prologue and the foreshadowing. For Bliss Cua Lim (2012), this vagueness of fictional time is an ingredient of fantasy art, citing Henri Bergson's whose ideas about time and temporality explore the supernatural mode of fantasy as happening not in calendrical, "homogenous" and quantified time but in a temporal mode or in the here and now. Fantasy therefore risks anachronism and historical irrationalism.

It is within this perspective that most Filipino fantasy-adventure films, from the korido to the historical fiction genre, may be considered. The idea of temporality is also crucial in explicating the social function of the form. To approximate this temporal mode of fantasy, the setting becomes a point of entry in evoking the here and now. The following panels from the komiks illustrate this suspension of calendrical time (19th century) in favour of the "homogenous empty time" (the persistent present):

Figure 13: *Alcala's rendition of a supposed-19th century setting in Tulisang Pugot*



The panels depict the fictional *Sto. Tomas* as a fictional 19th century town with old-style lamp posts lining the streets and the guardia civil in their signature military attire doing their nocturnal surveillance.

The overarching motif in *Tulisang Pugot* is that of love and adventure. In the opening chapter, the closing exposition in the komiks version (usually signalled by “*Abangan ang susunod.*” [Watch out for the next chapter] or the teaser/preview of events to come) makes sure that the plot pivots around the love angle:

Paano naman ang pagsinta ni Tulume – Ang lalaking dukha ngunit dakila ang puso? ...Abangan ang susunod na labas”[What will happen to Tulume’s love – This man who is poor but loves deeply... Watch out for the next chapter].

The love of Tulume for Lolita is not in the same level of the courtly loves of knights for the ladies in medieval tales. This is a love made impossible because of class division and colonial injustice. Consequently, the male protagonist’s transgression of social boundaries earns the hostility of people of wealth and power in Sto. Tomas. A series of challenges, tests and separations and crises must be conquered in this unequal colonial social world. Here, the Filipino komiks writer and filmmaker re-configure the story of the lovelorn by injecting more complexities arising from race (colonizer versus indio) and class (principalia versus poor indio).

The komiks version begins with a prologue depicting the middle part of the story as the *Tulisang Pugot* is shown currently sowing terror and dread among the townspeople of Sto. Tomas. The technique of *in medias res* (in the middle of action) necessitates the employment of flashback so that the narration could flip back to the early story of Tulume’s deprivations and the unfortunate incidents that led him to banditry. The use of *in medias res* serves the function of introducing a conflict that foreshadows the adventure tale about to unfold. The film is not so keen to on invoking the devices of flashback and foreshadowing and instead chooses to utilize chronological time to launch the events.

The film employs certain departures from the komiks mostly to condense the expansive tendency of the original. Among the scenes in the komiks that were deleted in the film include the following: The wedding of Don Fernando and Lolita; the scenes showing Fernando providing support to the Katipuneros; the revelation of his true identity to his father-in-law; his being tagged as a supporter of the Katipunan; and, his confrontation with the Katipunan members.

Meanwhile, some of the altered circumstances in the film include the following: Firstly, the lovers' reunion at the cemetery, culminating in Don Fernando revealing his real identity (as Tulume and as Tulisang Pugot) to Lolita. In the komiks story, the couple reconciled in the forest where they decided to build a simple home. Furthermore, the discovery of Don Fernando's real identity in the komiks takes place when he voluntarily reveals himself to his father-in-law, to Lolita and to the Komandante Humberto. Secondly, Leonardo dies at the hands of Fernando who defeats him in a swordfight in the middle of a party. In the komiks, Leonardo's death takes place in the household of Don Fernando after he attempts to take advantage of Lolita. These changes in the film, among others, do not really affect the essence of said circumstances. They are still true to the spirit of the barest outline of the story.

The film is structurally faithful to the komiks narrative, in spite of a number of deletions. While the komiks story and the film version border on anachronism, the location and the mise-en-scene proved to be visually appealing. There is the swordplay, colonial style furnitures and fixtures, the showcasing of set props, the 19th century costumes and fashion of the landed gentry and the *indio*, and the characters' placing in a mise-en-scene.

Alfredo Alcalá's beautiful and evocative art work in the *Liwayway* komiks, which is an almost close and eerily similar style to that of Coching, provokes engaging renderings on film. Alcalá's experiment in light and shadows approximates the gothic feel of the supposed-19th century setting. The film opted to depict the interiors more than the exteriors in tackling those eerie evenings in Hispanic Philippines as the headless bandit would sow menace or surprise its next prey.

Benjamin Resella's art direction is both accurate and complex. Furnitures and fixtures with ornate detail make up most of the movable props and these are a combination of European-styled and locally-sourced materials. In addition, 19th century style gas lamps, azoteas with ornamented ballusters, table tops adorned by hand-woven cloth of lace and cotton, antique clocks, large study table made of oak, wooden *bauls* (chest), paintings concealing old-style safes, native-made sofas and love seats made of molave and *palo-china*, interiors showing high ceilings, ornamented staircases and even small details such as swords mounted on the wall and flower vases make up the physical surroundings that refer to the period.

The exterior backdrops are equally evocative of typical rural life in 19th century Philippines: a native hut; the huge farm fields of a haciendero; a stream of crystal clear waters where women wash clothes and carabao drink and bathe; a dense forest; a huge colonial style *bahay na bato* (stone house); a prison camp; and, gardens and plazas with flowering plants and shrubs making up a gnarl around the patios.

Figure 14: *Rural and colonial setting in Tulisang Pugot, film version*



From top. Tulume tending to a carabao. The home of Don Tenorio with 19th century furnishings. An archway under a colonial-times bridge.

Moreover, the costumes by Totoy Torrente of “Jardin de Modas” (perhaps a tailor of renown in the 1950s) complement the props and backdrops. The repertoire of costumes combines the native *baro at saya* (piña blouse and long skirt) for the girls belonging to the middle class (Baste, Barang, cameo players) and the Maria Clara attire and the European gowns of the era. The costumes are of two types: the local Maria Clara made of piña and the silk-ruffled long dresses of women in Europe that Lolita, Teresita and other middle class women wear. A parasol completes their dresses in scenes shot in exteriors such as gardens, plazas, churchyards and graveyards. In addition to the costumes of the rich are the native *barong* and the European suit for the men and occasionally Fred Montilla’s cape and sword as the bandit. Fred Montilla, Eddie Garcia, Myrna Delgado and Tita Munoz carry their costumes well, with the illustration of Alcala in the komiks serving as a primary sketch of the appearances of the characters and their eventual places in the frame.

Figure 15: Alcala’s sketch of 19th colonial-era wardrobe



Lolita in 19th century Maria Clara-styled gown and Tulume a.k.a. Don Fernando in European suit.

The films costumes are carefully laid out, with a beautiful ensemble of native clothes, accessories and fashionable gowns and overcoats that were current in Europe in the late 19th century.

Figure 16: *Totoy Torrente's costume design for Tulisang Pugot*



In Alcalá's world, the men are dashing but gentle and the women are coy but fashionable, something Torrente helped recreate through his costume designs. European fashion and Filipino sense of style meld to adorn the humans framed through the mise-en-scene.

The cinematography may also have been influenced by the fluidity of the komiks narrative and illustration that combine drama-intensified panels complete with balloons and interior monologues and mere scenic depiction with minimum expository narration. The directors of photography, Higinio Fallorina and Felipe Santiago, capture in their black and white photography the interplay between the physical world of the 19th century with the actions using a number of shots such as the establishing shot, the long shot, the close up, the mid shot, the low angle shot and the high angle shot, and the ambience. In one sequence for instance, cinematographic and editing techniques attempt to capture the turmoil in Tulume's mind. He has just lost his parents and the land that his family tills, and he has just turned facially disfigured after Leonardo throws acid on his face. As he enters the forest, walks miles and miles, the editing techniques employed are a series of dissolves and superimpositions.

The representation of Tulume in the komiks version is also more realistic. He has a comely and plain face. In a particular panel, Don Tenorio even describes him as ugly. The film departs from the physical description by showing a handsomer Tulume in Fred Montilla, obviously to present a tougher rival to Eddie Garcia's Leonardo. There also have been attempt to lighten the dark, brooding mood of the original komiks story by infusing bits and pieces of comedy whenever scenes of Baste and Isko, played by Chichay and Tolindoy, appear. Their scenes and dialogues serve as comic relief to the sequences assigned to Tulume. Baste's and Isko's characters have been added in the film to serve as foil or buffoon to the hero. Within the realm of genre literature, this is another "breach" or an attempt to deploy generic heterogeneity.

Overall, the genres invoked in this komiks/film include fantasy-adventure, costume drama and comedy. This only supports our claim that history and politics are not exactly the priority of story. Rather, history and politics are pretexts that help propel the prime genres effectively. In the process, the story's potential as a postcolonial piece has been doused in favour of escape.

In propelling local color, the komiks artists and the filmmaker also negotiate and imitation of foreign modes, genres and motifs. In postcolonial literatures, this practice may be made analogous to colonial mimicry, which Bhabha (1994) describes as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (p.86, italics supplied by Bhabha). That “other” is the colonial other. *Tulisang Pugot* brings together ingredients of borrowed stories but it also reflects a variant of fantasy and the gothic that draw from folklore and adventure stories that recall the daring stunts of pre-colonial epic heroes. This brings to mind Fanon's (1963) observation of the native intellectual's project of building national culture after the colonial period: “There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of heroes and the types of weapons” (p. 240).

Colonial mimicry persists until after the colony is finished. In fact, it helps define whatever indigenization process is going on because it endows a quality of ambivalence and texture on the postcolonial texts. Bhabha (1994) calls it the “double vision,” (p.88), wherein colonial discourse persists but within the destabilizing, disruptive and subversive bent of localized texts. *Tulisang Pugot*, following the mode of predictable material, is bold enough in some way to retrieve the image of the *tulisan* who has long been

misunderstood in the story of Filipino resistance movement. The komiks/film, while an example of romance “in a displaced form” and “is rooted in this notion of escape” that Reyes, S. (1991, p. 28) talks about in “The romance mode in Philippine popular literature,” may be a step back to the past and its re-examination.

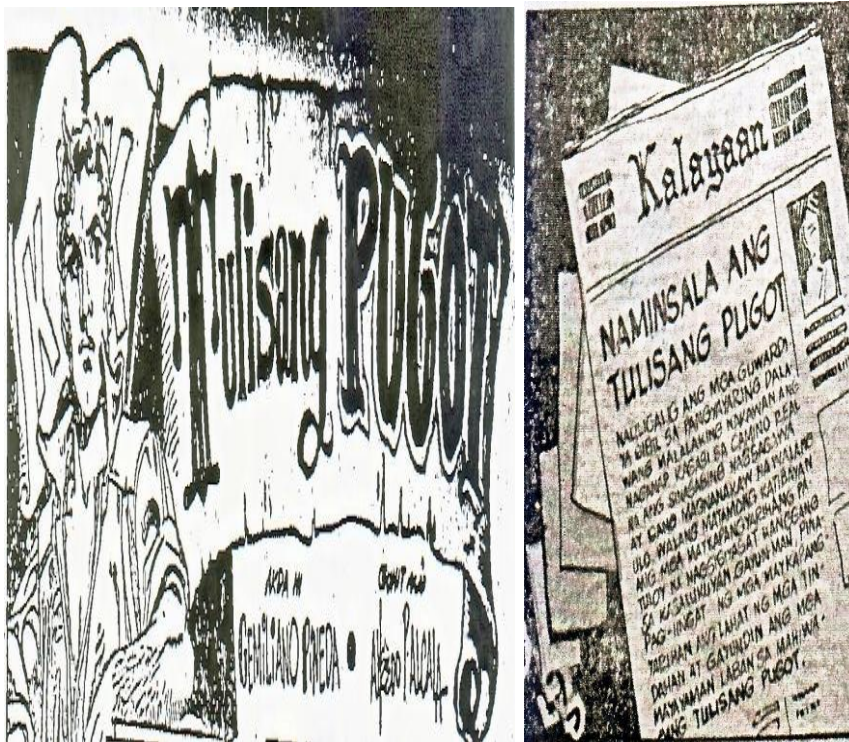
The reason for the persistence of colonial mimicry and the native assertion of local and indigenous impulses at the same time may be rooted in the social meaning of the stories. In view of this, the following section will outline the colonial themes that could have been tackled and those that have been alluded to but not directly problematized by the story. Here, the concept of merging foreign borrowings or colonial mimicry with native appropriation may find their explanation in the meaning generated by the story.

3. *Colonial Themes Invoked/Suppressed*

Don Fernando, a prosperous gentleman from Intramuros, decides to settle down in Santo Tomas. The gentleman’s new hometown’s name – Sto Tomas – is generic. No one can tell exactly where it is. And *lalawigan X* (province X) is a reference to a typical town. Since Don Fernando has been depicted in the story to be helping finance the secret operations of the Katipunan, we can locate the story’s time to the late 19th century, approximately before the battle of Pugadlawin. The closest time is a few months or even a year prior to the Revolution of 1896. By putting Don Fernando’s story in the foreground and the story of a brewing revolution in the background, the colonial themes, whether these were invoked or suppressed in the komiks, are articulated nevertheless.

The komiks story actually made an effort to situate the actions during the period of general anxiety and anticipation – the months prior to the breakout of the revolution. The following is mast head of the 44th chapter of the komiks series that evidently associates the main character, Tulume/Tulisang Pugot/Don Fernando, with the revolutionary movement and a panel from the 14th chapter depicting the *Kalayaan* newspaper headlining the headless bandit as the new enemy of the people:

Figure 17: *The revolution as subtext*



Left. The KKK symbol is background to the foregrounded image of the Don Fernando character in this komiks' mast head. Right. The short-lived *Kalayaan* newspaper headlines the brigandage, allowing for real and fictional events to meld in the plot.

Tulisan Pugot is peopled by characters of all social classes in 19th century Philippines. There are powerful encomienderos who constitute the local principalia in Sto. Tomas: Don Tenorio, Don Sebastian and Don Mamerto. According to Medina, Jr. (1976), the principalia or the landed gentry is part of the “brown aristocracy” (p. 42) because this is a group of natives/indios who have accumulated wealth and have been allowed to own haciendas. The problem is, the principalia depicted in *Tulisan Pugot*, represents this abusive coterie that victimizes its own kind.

Meanwhile, there is the *nouveau riche* who comes from an undisclosed origin: Don Fernando. There is the refined lady of the gentry: Lolita. There is the other woman that completes the love triangle: Teresa. There are the keepers of the law: the Komandante Humberto and the Guardia Civil, the imperial police. There are the loyal friends and servants: Baste, Isko and Pampilo. And most of all, there is the avenging hero in disguise – the *tulisan pugot*. During daytime, he is the handsome and wealthy Don Fernando. At night time, he is the mysterious headless tulisan, the Robinhood of Spanish Philippines, who robs from the abusive and the rich, to avenge his former self, Tulume, from his tormentors.

The film plot captures this intricate social hierarchy. The costumes help a great deal in delineating each social role. *Tulisan Pugot* shows character delineations familiar to avid followers of romance: Tulume’s filial devotion; Lolita’s helplessness; the conniving tendencies of the landed class; and, the social stigma that physical disfigurement creates. These character delineations are not exclusive and specific to Filipinos but they are familiar qualities that create a template for more typages to come,

especially so when the protagonists and villains react to and inhabit a world where the most critical point of contention is rooted in the problem of land ownership and class conflict.

Tulume's miseries are rooted in his social status. Son to poor tenants of an abusive encomiendero, Tulume's die is cast. He is constantly reminded to observe his proper place. As he pursues Lolita's affections, he comes in conflict with people of influence, beginning with Leonardo who masterminds his fall, disfigurement and exile.

Greed and abuse of power and influence are at the heart of Tulume's misfortunes. Leonardo admits no defeat and through his father, Don Sebastian, and his willing accomplice, Don Tenorio, Tulume's landlord, a household of farmers will be displaced, a father will be sent to jail, a mother will die of heartbreak, and a husband will follow her to early grave.

The themes of greed and abuse and the underlying subtext of class struggle inside a colonial setting are part of a causal chain that leads to the other themes of the romance genre: revenge and retribution. Tulume's quest for personal justice becomes more urgent as a succession of persecution becomes pivotal to his transformation into a tulisan. Firstly, Leonardo, not content with Tulume's loss of family and of livelihood, carries out another wicked plan. Leonardo destroys Tulume's face by splashing acid on it and disfiguring it permanently. Suddenly penniless, alone and ugly, Tulume takes a walk through a dark forest. The movie has treated Tulume's sojourn in the forest as a metaphor for his state of mind, depicted through a montage of shots and dissolves that evokes the long period of his soul-journey.

Secondly, the same forest that Tulum has traversed in his darkest hours will open a ray of light, a window to justice. A bird is trapped in a thick bed of shrubs and Tulum, the despondent and lost traveller, frees it from its entanglement. The bird turns into a fairy who keeps possession of one white and one black head cloak. The white when worn has the magical power to give its wearer a handsome face, the black, an invisibility cloak that could make the wearer appear headless. The fairy gives both cloaks to Tulum so he may start recouping his losses. The cloaks in his possession become the proverbial invincible *anting-anting* (magical charm) to start the adventures of the mysterious handsome gentlemen/fearsome bandit. Herein, the tropes of fantasy-adventure and romance are utilized to propel the image of the persecuted hero, whom Tiongson (1983a) considers as an embodiment of the colonial value of “mabuti ang inaapi” (Hurrah to the underdog!). While traditional connotations are linked to the colonial religious Christian value of suffering, the komiks/film threads on the secular embodiment of a native who has been victimized by the complex conspiracy of colonial oppression and class conflict.

Connected to the themes of greed and abuse and revenge and retribution are the themes of love and heroism. Both the komiks and the film succeed in placing love at the center of the narrative and heroism as its important adjunct. Tulum and Lolita are divided by class. But as in all romance stories, the class that divides the lovers is bridged by infusing a turning point in the plot. The underdog is able to change his stars and makes a comeback as a member of the gentry. Eventually, as he sets the revenge in spiralling motion, the disguise becomes the refuge of the hero.

Part of the operations of the komiks and the film that usually succeed among their audiences is the excitement brought by this resolve of the underdog to avenge himself

and to hope for a reversal of fortune. In realizing this, the plot must enlist other sub-themes such as mistaken identities and creating a climactic moment for the eventual revelation of the identity of the avenger to the villain when the right time commences.

The effectiveness of the film in recreating a new idiom for fantasy and escape is achieved through the employment of local color in evoking the same larger-than-life aura of characters in foreign cloak-and-dagger romances (*The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Man in the Iron Mask*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*), and even of a gossamer of memory of local ones (Simoun, Kabesang Tales) through sheer fantasy, with the setting/locale surreptitiously serving as the alternate arbiter of thematic significance.

The komiks story, as mentioned previously, has been more radical than the film in addressing the subject of banditry as far as the inclusion of the Katipunan episode is concerned. The film performs marked departures from the komiks story by easing it of its political content. In the komiks story, Don Fernando secretly provides funds to the Katipunan. The film totally removes the Katipunan sequences altogether, clearing it of any political overtones that may come in with a bandit character for a main protagonist and with the subtext of the agrarian problem creating the conditions for the rise of banditry and of the revolutionary movement. In the same breath, the deletion of the Katipunan sequence deprives the film viewers a chance to see history from the lens of fiction. This makes *Tulisang Pugot* a work of romance instead of the more allegorical historical fiction.

Figure 18: *The Katipunan scenes that did not make to the cut*



The Katipunan scenes in the komiks version were dropped in the film, obviously to clear the story of any subversive themes or postcolonial reflection.

Had the film retained the Katipunan sequence in the komiks, Fred Montilla's Tulume/Tulisang Pugot would have joined the pantheon of heroes of historical-fantasy-adventure who have met, at least within the fictive realm of the genre, actual heroes in history such as Andres Bonifacio. The removal of the Katipunan scenes is deemed to clear the material of any political content and to retain only the invocation of the fantasy-adventure genre in all its escapist nonchalance. It is noticeable that Tulume's return to Sto. Tomas as Don Fernando almost smacks of the aura of Crisostomo Ibarra returning as the avenging Simoun in *Fili*. It reeks of remembrances of histories and historical fictions past, but then the film has opted to drop the revolutionary life of Tulume, in effect robbing him of his possible role in the shaping of pre-nationhood heroes.

The film highlights the revenge and the banditry themes, obviously intersecting with a number of the social contexts of the fifties that is most eminently represented by the Hukbalahap-government standoff. The banditry theme has been treated as a means of personal vendetta rather than a widespread social issue that was rooted in the corrupt colonial policy of Spain. Iletto (1986) considers the tulisan as "one of the suppressed figures of Philippine history" (p.9) because he is portrayed and filtered through the interpretive lens of bourgeoisie class which represents or misrepresents him according to the interest that it seeks to protect.

The tulisan remains a figure cloaked in mystery, "a hidden and slippery figure" because they are "without a proper Christian name and lineage" (Iletto, 1986, p.9) and they come from an obscure place. In spite of their marginal position in subservient societies, their charisma and the mystery and inspiration that they evoke among the masses who agonize over the abuses of the Spaniards and their local consort of wealthy

“insular Spaniards or criollos who were born in Spain,” or the mestizo class or those “whose fathers were Spaniards but whose mothers were either Filipinos or Filipino-Chinese”(Agoncillo, 2003, in Churchill [Ed]p.317) and the principalia or the landed class among the natives. Out of such obscurity, Tulume comes forth and manages to disguise as Don Fernando. Like his real-life models in history, Tulume as *tulisang pugot* is regarded as a romantic rebel by the masses but feared and hated by the landed class. As *taong labas* (outsider), the bandit escapes the logic of the everyday life of the colony and lives on borrowed time.

True to the didactic tendency of the komiks, the tulisan is one de-cloaked and submits himself to the Katipuneros who are grateful for his secret support for the movement but does not agree to brigandage. The film exploits the adventure idiom by emphasizing the spectacle rather than the politics that the character represents. In the end, the film version of the komiks becomes more of a problematic moral tale than a social piece. A very promising komiks-novel and genre film descend into an escapist vehicle without the pathos and the social significance of what-might-have-been a story of colonial resistance. *Tulisang Pugot* as a piece of *pelikulang komiks* may be instructive not in what it represents by way of charming mise-en-scene but by what it cares to evince and treats as peripheral.

Furthermore, the fact that a potentially subversive story is rendered evasive does not mean that its politics has been totally muted. The local color evokes what the theme suppresses. The komiks/film treads dangerous grounds but refuses to move forward as a mouthpiece for anything. In the rose-colored world of the fifties, that was simply enough.

C. Filipino Comic Vision in *Kambal-Tuko/Conjoined[Siamese] Twins* (1952)³

1. *Elements of the Filipino Comedy Genre in Kambal-Tuko*

The komiks story and the film version of *Kambal-Tuko* invoke the comedy genre. A pair of Siamese (conjoined) twins and their adventures, misadventures and rite-of-passage are central to the convention of the comedy genre that has been deployed. The komiks-source serves as the inspiration for the film in depicting the twins' as they confront the norm of simple provincial life in the 1950s and their later sojourn in the city. The predominantly comedic style of the film employs a crime sub-plot towards the climactic part where a bit of a serious mood is cast. The film thereby employs mixed registers, compared to the lighter and happier mood of the original komiks story.

The impulse to the comical is a universal one but for the Filipino, humour is a way of life. Beyond its entertainment function, the comic genre assumes a cultural importance, what Henri Bergson (1956), in his essay *Laughter*, calls “a social signification” (p.65). As a genre of komiks-to-film adaptation, comedy seems to have a longer tenure. From the *Halakhak* komiks during the American period to the humorous comic strips, the form has been a regular feature in both mixed-format magazines and magazines primarily devoted to komiks. The genre has led not only to a long list of comedy films that eventually migrated into television and other media, but has also launched quite a number of comic artists into full stardom. Filipino cinema in the 1950s became instrumental in transforming story materials into memorable screen images that eventually became part of cherished cultural memory. Bergson links laughter, comedy's prime object, to life's “vital impulse” (qtd in Sypher, 1956, p. viii). In its Filipino

application, a vital impulse is located in the people's humorous spirit, which komiks and cinema have perennially portrayed.

Mast (1973) avers that a film may be categorized as a comedy through two ways. The first one pertains to the existence of a comic plot and a comic climate in a film. The other does not necessarily follow a comic plot but features a comic climate that is "pervasive enough" (p.12) so that the resulting impact on the viewer is comic. In other words, comedy is always misperceived as that which arouses boisterous laughter through some funny twists in the plot. It may just be a condition of hope, if we take Frye's (1969) interpretation of comedy as the mythos of spring. Because Frye's take-off is myth, he associates comedy to the struggle of the hero to finish a task that will give his story a happy denouement.

The Filipino comic is a child of his/her art's history, deriving conventions, images and contexts from colonial precursors and latter-day native appropriations of the form. The influences and residues of komedya and bodabil of pre-cinema days became a seepage that energized and provided heavy cultural references to Filipino stage acts – from the honoured occasions of witticisms down to the level of physical comedy.

The Filipino appropriation of the genre, though heavily influenced too by American comedies, reflects a need to situate the plot within the specificity of the local setting or what is usually referred in literary fiction as *local color*. *Kambal-Tuko* reflects such interplay of folk humor and improvised stand-up, skit-like comedy of bodabil. In its komiks version and in its movie rendition, the element of the folk is a function of the setting that contributes to the shaping of a comic climate. Towards the middle part of the story, the funny twins migrate to the city where they easily imbibe the street smart

attitude of the urban-bred. But then the arc of the comic narrative is always driven by the crisis of the self in relation to society and that is always a happenstance that is partly propelled by the setting. The characters return to the province and there live their remaining days in bliss.

The contrast between rural life and city life is also brought out on a literal level and on a metaphorical level. Poverty has been associated with rural life. The *kambal-tuko* has been adopted by a millionaire and brought to the city. Soon the twins' life makes a complete turn-around from abject poverty to a life of privilege, from barrio freaks to wealthy gentlemen.

When Don Pedro approaches the twins' parents to propose their adoption, he argues the wealth and comfort that he could provide the children. When the twins have been brought to the city, the new environment has only reinforced the distinct temperament of each child. The city is the ultimate school where the boys will reach maturity. Without the deceptive and active lifestyle of the city, Popoy and Momoy will not be able to realize what they have and what they may lose at an instant. The city activates the metaphorical function of the setting where existential choices will be meted and human courage will be stretched to their limits.

The setting serves to support the physicality of the comic aesthetic or its tendency to highlight bodily movements as a major expression of humour. As children, Popoy's boundless energy and naughtiness and Momoy's subservience and victim role are set against the scenic innocence of their childhood rural village. The trees they climb, the stream they bathe in and the folk games they play in the barrio help establish the precocity and abandon of the children. The komiks version treats these childhood scenes

lengthily, basking in playful renditions of the twins' iconography (by an unidentified artist) in their most contorted poses and mishaps. In contrast, the film treats the twins' adult life lengthily with actual Manila locations and upper middle class houses' interiors serving to present the two young men getting more constricted by their physical handicap, which does not really prevent them from getting into trouble.

Figure 19: *The setting as shaper of character*



The actions and mannerisms of the twins have been shaped by their environment as children in the village and as adults in the city.

The twins, Popoy and Momoy, played by Togo and Pugo respectively, are personalities in contrast. Popoy is naughty and selfish. Momoy is kind and obedient. They are loved unconditionally by their foster father, Don Pedro. As adults, Popoy and Momoy are cheerful and fun-loving. They are fortunate to find their wives, Anne/Viring (komiks/film; for Popoy) and Lilay (for Momoy), whose temperaments match theirs. Like her love interest Popoy, the socialite Viring likes fun and the good life. Lilay is loving like Momoy and values family life more than material comforts. The twins' contrasting ways are projected against the patience and understanding of their foster father.

Within the operations of comedy as genre, characters are either stereotypes or clownish or both. This cannot be truer in Momoy and Popoy. While they are unique, and perhaps even grotesque, the personal qualities of each twin child are representative of two stereotypes who respond to new wealth and environment. Stereotypical characterizations are strewn all over: The robbers are in gangster-style outfits and look menacing. The twins are crude in manners and their new-found wealth in Don Pedro's household does not really tame their natural curiosity and adventurous spirit.

Meanwhile, as clowns (or fools or follies), the two characters may be functional in elucidating the message of the komiks and film. The fool is an object of laughter because although he is simple, he represents something of cultural significance. Stott (2005) offers:

An historically complex and paradoxical character, claiming a variety of overlapping roles including clown, buffoon, jester, scapegoat, and clairvoyant, the fool recurs as a symbol of contradictions and quandaries (p.46).

These multiple roles were seemingly the very same theatrical acts and supporting parts performed to bring saliency to the message of both tragedy and comedy.

By employing the devices of comedy, the komiks and film plots have been able to explore the concept of freakishness and the cruel way by which society treats such unfortunate individuals. This is what Mast (1973) meant by the subject matter of the comedy alerting us about the comic climate. Abnormal beings are perceived as grotesque in the context of the normative flow of village life. The nature of their relationship with an insulated society may reflect an unfounded fear of the grotesque and the unusual.

Kambal-Tuko also represents this deep fear of having abnormal children (such as a pair of conjoined twins). The precocity and naughtiness of the twins are even attributed to this sort of “impairment.” Within the world of komiks and film, abnormal beings have to survive in a society that imposes strict normativity. In the case of *Kambal-Tuko*, the physical defects of the protagonists are treated lightly. As Reyes (1986) says of the characters of the fantasy: “What should easily arouse pity triggers a humorous response instead. The characters in these komiks are the perennial butts of society’s jokes” (p.174).

The fleeting condition of social status –of wealth and of poverty- is also explored in the story. Born to a poor family in a rural village, the twins are saved from poverty when the wealthy Don Pedro takes them under his custody. They grow up knowing money and comfort but soon they are to lose everything when their foster father incurs bad debts and dies in a robbery attempt. Their respective wives stay loyal to them in their hour of need. Overall, the theme of the impermanence of social status and wealth is an overarching moral, told in a series of funny situations. This tendency to project the larger problems of society explains the significance Bergson (1956) has always assigned to

comedy and laughter. Meredith (1956) however notes that comedy was one of the ancient muses of writers ever since the Grecian polis but not a highly revered one. This is not entirely true in the Philippines where comedy is synonymous to Bergson's (1956) "social gesture," P. 73) a communal rite.

Dramatic realism and comic relief become the stylistic choices in representing the grotesque within the flow and rhythm of folk and city life. These are the moralizing agency of the comic. As Reyes (1986) has opined, these operations of the comical are culturally-rooted. "What might appear as gross and vulgar to the Western taste is lapped up by the komiks' fans who have been weaned on earthly folk humor" (Reyes, 1986, p.174). The film magnifies this buffoonery by inviting the viewer to partake of its implicit social meaning. As Bergson (1956) eloquently puts it: "Our laughter is always the laughter of a group" (p.64).

Meanwhile, the film version expands the coverage of the komiks-source of *Kambal-Tuko*, which is lean, episodic and which contains independent segments pertaining to the adventures of the twins in both their younger years and period of adulthood. The film is more unified and focused on the life of the twins as adults, preparing the story for a conclusion where the characters are compelled to accept the importance of happiness over wealth. Some minor details on the courtship between Momoy and Lilay and between Popoy and Anne/Viring have been changed in the movie. In the komiks, Anne is half-American. In fact, Momoy has vehemently opposed his brother's choice for a girlfriend because he fears that she is materialistic and capricious. Other than these minor departures on the character and the major departures on the length

and ending, the film has retained the basic plot structure of the early part of the komiks version.

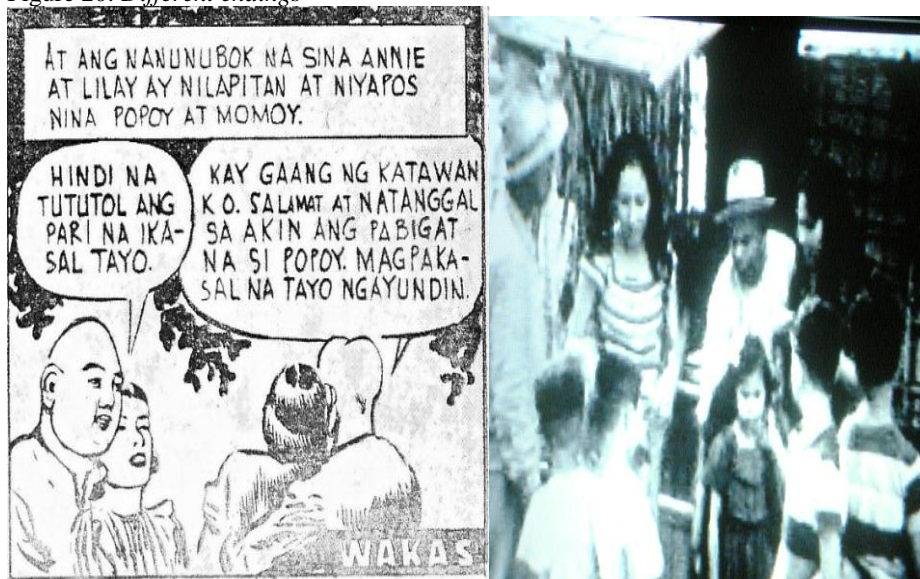
The film removes a significant part of the childhood life of the twins and condenses the scenes that would provide a backstory to the twins' life as adults. It also provides longer exposure on the surgery that the twins underwent so they could function separately. The komiks' denouement is focused on the surgery and the subsequent marriages of the twins. The film's emphasis however is dual: the pre-operation and the post-operation phase in the life of the twins. It is a plot type that is indeed characteristic of comic films, which is focused on the main character(s) task and how said task will be accomplished (Mast, 1973). What seems to be a formula plot in Mast's (1973) and to other scholars who come up with typologies of the genre is a form of archetype from Frye's (1969) perspective. The hero of classical comedy is compelled to overcome a challenge. As Frye (1969) articulates it: "The obstacles to the hero's desire then, form the action of the comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution" (p.164).

The film presents a varied concluding sequence. While in America undergoing operation in a hospital, the twins have left their foster father, Don Pedro, alone in their house with the househelp. A robbery attempt at the mansion leads to the old man's fatal heart attack. The movie makes a turn towards drama with the twins losing their father and their inheritance. Eventually, the twins lose their material wealth due to bad debts and the huge expenses of the surgery. Although they spend their remaining years of their life in poverty, the twins and their growing families remain contented and hopeful.

In the end, the optimism of comedy resurfaces as the twins are blessed by a good family life. As Frye (1969) would have foreordained, the unseen audience of comedy expects that the story exhibits some meaning:

Comedy usually moves towards a happy ending, and the moral response of the audience to a happy ending is “this should be,” which sounds like a moral judgement. So it is, except that it is not moral in the restricted sense, but social (p.167).

Figure 20: *Different endings*



The komiks ends with the separation of the twins through surgery while the film ends with the now poor twins, separated, married and with children who are also born conjoined twins.

2. *Personality Comedians as Genres*

The cult of the personality is one of the by-products of the mass popularity of film in the 1950s. The sense of identification that audiences had with the stars of the era has solidified into cult following. One of the results of this phenomenon was the rise of genres that have been built around the personality of the actors. These existed alongside the regular and expected thematic genres.

Personality comedians were born in a time much earlier than cinema. Vaudeville acts have been around since the American period. Their kind of physically- and verbally-saturated performances found a way to influence not only screen acting but also plots and storylines. Also called the clown genre, personality comedian genre is built around the persona of the “act” or the celebrity who has popularized a certain theatrical piece. Gehring (1997) places it as “the most basic and the most obvious of types” because they are so commonplace or popular. Nobody could ever miss the act because it is “dependent upon a front-and-center comic figure, or figures” (Gehring, 1997, p.1). The American prototypes of the personality comedians were Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, and in more recent history, Robin Williams, Steve Martin, Eddie Murphy and Jim Carey. Locally, Pugo, Togo, Dolphy and many more artists, past and present, are Filipino versions of the clown genre.

The personality comedy also follows a convention, but one that is unique to the comedian. The material “provides a humor hall tree upon which the comedian can ‘hang’ his comic shtick – specific routines and/or variations of them that lend themselves to the establishing of the all-important screen comedy persona” (p.2). The Pugo-Togo routine existed before *Kambal-Tuko* and the komiks-turned-film is only one variation in the assembly line. The characters are linked either by blood or by destiny and there is this seeming contrast in the personalities that lend to occasions for repartee, bullying and physical humor. It is obvious that the komiks creator of *Kambal Tuko*, Nemesio Caravana, has envisioned his pre-filmic characters to be shaped by the Pugo-Togo *shtick*. Casting was decided even before the komiks story ran its course.

The anonymity of the komiks illustrator makes sense in the current argument that it is the live comedic actor who influences the komiks' iconography. The illustrator makes no claim to the artistic product. After all, it could be a group of artists collaborating in this piece. The artworks credited to a certain "Jet" are simple and cartoony. Each panel page is equally divided into six panels, with dialogue balloons and depictive panels in equal quantity. The emphasis of the writer and illustrator is to highlight the comic situations and the plot-driven storyline. The children who always get into trouble – more on account of Togo's/Popoy's naughtiness – grew up to become privileged men. During their childhood, their male nanny, Pablo, washed their hair in hot water and there the legend of the bald children was born. The cartoony style employed by the komiks artist calls for the clowns of cinema to make their contributions on the characters' comedic persona.

Figure 21: *Cartoony figures*



The illustrator (credited only as “Jet”) used the cartoony style to highlight the comic situations in the plot.

The film takes advantage of the devices of comedy to capture the humour that the komiks originally created. One of such devices is the “high premium on physical and verbal comedy” (Gehring, 1997, p. 11). The physical comedy is better known as a part of the slapstick repertoire. According to Stott (2005), “‘slapstick’ is generally understood as physical humour of a robust and hyperbolized nature where stunts, acrobatics, pain, and violence are standard features” (p.92). Humorous situations, funny physical appearances, gestures, mannerisms, slapstick comedy and continuous bantering are regular features in several Pugo-Togo movies and those are also demonstrated in full force in *Kambal-Tuko*. Even the central conflict in the film, the abnormality of the Siamese twins, already calls for laughs and other physical choreography depicting how the characters perform their

everyday activities and how their physical discomfort lead them to some ugly brush with normal people and police authorities.

Figure 22: *Slapstick*

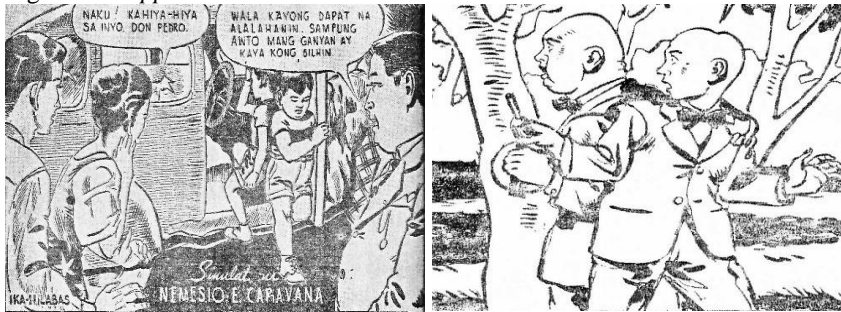


Slapsick comedy is central to the plot, as in all Pugo-Togo starrers

To achieve slapstick's perfect timing, cinematography, costume and musical portions are readily summoned to add texture to comic episodes. The cinematography tries as much as possible to capture images of rural life in the early minutes of the movie and images of city life in the latter, with a number of assembled shots showing flashy cars, mansions, and busy Manila streets. This cinematographic style is perhaps propelled to compensate for the cartoony, cardboard images of the setting in the komiks. The profusion of middle shots and close ups are sometimes joined by wrap-around or dolly shots to shoot the twins from a two-dimensional vantage point.

The costumes are fashionable, with Pugo and Togo donning matching suits that are in the style current in the 1950s and the girls, Lilay and Viring, wearing haute couture dresses of the period. The komiks has been the primary guide in costuming the roles. The rural characters and the house help (Pablo) don their usual "*kamisadentro*" (undershirt) and "*baro't saya*" (piña cloth and skirt) costumes and wealthy individuals such as Don Pedro their expensive suits. The contrast between the rural and the urban wardrobes represents an underlying clash between tradition and modernity. In fact, part of the initiation of the twins has to do with coming to an understanding of how economic status defines their relationship with other members of society.

Figure 23: *Appearances and wardrobes*



Expressive anatomy in komiks also shapes characterization and portrayal in film.

A musical sequence shot in a park is featured but unlike other Pugo-Togo movies, the main actors are not the performers. In another musical portion, the twins and the partners figure in a Tango dance in a party, which may be an indirect reference to the other movies where Pugo and Togo sing, dance and perform physical comedy skits.

Figure 24: *Dance number*



True to the usual Pugo-Togo film, a dance number is featured in Kambal Tuko. The dance performed in the komiks is Charleston and Tango in the film version.

Finally, the movie takes advantage of the hilarity that freakishness seems to elicit from the audience of comedy. Many literatures on film comedy note that the image of the clown comedians as underdog (Momoy) and scapegoat (Momoy and Popoy) hides beneath the veneer of their “anti-social nature” (Gehring, 1997, p. 182). There is an implied politics that personality comedians bring into their role because they are made to stand as a representative of contained fears, longings and other suppressed feelings.

The personality comedian becomes a genre of film itself because he influences material content or becomes the reason for the creation of an idea for film itself. Cinema’s clown however does not entertain in a vacuum; he is a product of his ancestry and of viewer identification. As Gehring (1997) articulately puts it:

While the gift of laughter is celebration enough for a viewer, tracing a personality comedian’s influence on other comedians and/or popular culture in general provides further insight into the genre. Ideally, such a familiarization better allows one to evaluate new and/or different examples of the genre. Most important, such a schematic overview may provide unique personal insight for the individual viewer. (p.183)

Kambal Tuko would be one of Pugo's and Togo's last film outings in 1952 before the latter's untimely death, but their partnership influenced the perpetuation of the clown genre in decades to come. Their routine was familiar as it was predictable but to the avid watchers of the genre in the fifties, the personality comedy represented more than generic entertainment. It was a vehicle to see two views of life; what Sypher (1956) refers to as "human" on the one hand and "a perspective by incongruity" (p.255) on the other. Taken together, these two constitute what we call a work of art, but that which is carried forth through laughter; "to make truth laugh," as Umberto Eco (1980, p. 598) once eloquently puts it.

D. *Lapu-Lapu* De-Coded: A Case Exemplar through Various Lenses

Two ways of semiotic analysis have been employed in this section on *Lapu-Lapu*. The first is a close textual analysis of the komiks-to-film transposition. Two sub-approaches of semiotics employed that analyze small narrative units (in comparison to the genre analysis or film narratology employed in the three other films) are Metz's Grand Syntagmatique, which analyzes "units of narrative anatomy" (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 40) called syntagmas and Bellour's Segmenting/Analyzing, which analyses segments or fragments, which are expectedly smaller units of narrative compared to the syntagmas. In addition, *Lapu-Lapu* will be analysed as a type of historical fiction film.

1. *Lapu-Lapu* (1954)⁴: A Close Textual Analysis

On November 7, 1953, Francisco V. Coching's *Lapu-Lapu* began to appear in *Pilipino Komiks*. It was the start of the serialization of a 25-episode re-telling of Lapu-Lapu's life. In 1954, LVN Pictures, Inc. released Lamberto Avellana's adaptation of the

komiks story. The screenplay adaptation was penned by Donato Valentin, Jesse Ramos, and Jose Avellana, Sr. The film is faithful to the komiks original except for certain occasions requiring compression of time, abridgement of a number of events for enhanced dramatic effect and combination of some characters to create composites instead.

The film's prologue attempts to approximate that of the komiks where a splash page introduces Lapu-Lapu to the reader. Eisner (1985) avers that as the "launching pad for the narrative," the initial page is called "splash page" instead of "first page" when it functions as "decorative unit" (p. 62). Coching's splash page (see Appendix I) covers a whole page featuring a montage of images highlighting events to come in the life of the main protagonist, along with a prominent outline of Lapu-Lapu, bigger than other human images in the frame and an "expository box" introducing the setting and background of actions still to unfold.

The film's prologue begins with details of the setting including the time of the story, the introduction of the conflict and the unfolding of the credits. Narrated in English, the first frame writes the year "1521" and is super-imposed on a succession of still photos that eventually segues into an establishing shot depicting the shores of Mactan where three foreign ships are docked. Then the voice-over narrator enumerates the three ships' names: Concepcion, Victoria and Trinidad. A commentary on Spain's imperial might and the reason for the voyage that brought the ships there in the first place has been added.

The Spanish voyage is bound for Southern Philippines where the captain and his crew are soon to encounter the natives of Cebu, Bohol and Mactan. The foreigners were

not forewarned, continues the voice-over narration, that one of local leaders will resist their invasion in full force. Then the camera trains its focus on a fierce-looking local prince by the name of Lapu-Lapu, son of the Lakan of Mactan. The shots devoted to Lapu-Lapu serve as an equivalent to the images of Lapu-Lapu in the splash page just mentioned above. The splash page leads to the panels depicting the setting - the island of Mactan, her topography and the disposition of her people. While the film starts in the actual filmic time of narration as a means to signal the start of the actions in a temporal mode, the komiks' opening panels are more of a series of expositions that serves to establish the character Lapu-Lapu in relation to the story of Mactan.

The film's prologue and the opening credits are contained in a montage of shots depicting Lapu-Lapu walking towards what appears to be his residence. The frames suggest that Lapu-Lapu has been away for quite some time and has been summoned back for a serious happening in his father's house. The long shot depicting this makes sure that it was a long walk, with Lapu-Lapu looking apprehensive.

Entering the Lakan's house, Lapu-Lapu is welcomed by his weeping sister Yumina, who brings forth the sadness of their father's imminent death. Apparently, the whole household has been awaiting Lapu-Lapu's return from days of hunting in the jungles of Mactan. The Lakan is to perform his last act of bequeathing the title "Lakan" upon his son Lapu-Lapu who has already become a legendary figure among his people. While the komiks version shows a panel depicting the act of transferring the title from father to son, the film compresses details and instead opts for an elaborate long take of a funeral pyre; thereby economizing on actions that have been depicted in some seven panels in the komiks version. The film takes advantage of long shots to depict the awe

elicited by the funeral pyre, denoting the passing of a ruler and connoting the birth of a new one. A low-angle shot and a tilt shot showing Lapu-Lapu ascending a makeshift staircase to light the funeral pyre seem motivated by the newly-acquired stature of Lapu-Lapu and the sense of pride he inspires among his people. The elaborate ritual evokes the mood of a typical epic film sequence and the abrupt shift from English narration to Tagalog dialogue – while disorienting to the viewer - begins a distancing from the expository mode to the dramatic mode.

The next chapter in the komiks shows Lapu-Lapu being prodded by his court to take a wife, now that he has a newly-acquired status as the Lakan of Mactan and these details find their parallels in the film. Coching's panels choose to treat the matter in a serious manner, that the task of choosing a wife out of a parade of beautiful and able local women has become a focal problem and turning point in the character development of Lapu-Lapu. The film decides on a more humorous treatment of the whole ritual of choosing a wife. This matchmaking custom bothers Lapu-Lapu and the film attempts to show his discomfiture through various angles of close-ups on Mario Montenegro's facial expressions while in the act of receiving the female candidates in his court. In a snap, the pressured and stressed Lapu-Lapu decides to leave the island for a few days to go hunting and find the woman he will marry.

In his absence, Datu Palaw, Lapu-Lapu's chief warrior, will oversee the kingdom. While the conversation between Lapu-Lapu and Palaw prior to the Lakan's departure has been given five panels in the komiks, enough to provide a little backstory about Palaw as trusted servant and friend to the Lakan, the film opts to economize by not supplying a filmic equivalency to the descriptive characterization of him in the komiks version.

Instead, Palaw's character evolves via the dramatic mode. The second chapter is partly devoted in fact to introducing the readers to the love Palaw offers the Dayang (Princess) Yumina who unfortunately does not reciprocate the feeling. The film is totally silent on this unrequited love angle altogether.

Taking advantage of the film's use of breathtaking seascapes and landscapes as backdrop in exterior scenes, there is the employment of a high angle shot of Lapu-Lapu bringing his vinta towards the deeper part of the sea with the help of his boatmen, leading to intercutting scenes in the forest showing Lapu-Lapu in search of wild animals. While the film scenes in the forest aspire to objectively depicting "search" in a dual sense (in a physical sense, to hunt for wild animals to hunt and in a psychological sense, to look for a wife), the komiks sequence attempts to bring forth Lapu-Lapu's state of mind. While rowing his boat towards the island of destination, a balloon depicts his inner thoughts:

Kung saan ako tutungo'y di ko alam...Ngunit mabuti na ito kaysa isang lakang di makatulog at walang malay sulingan."

[Whatever my destination is, I am not so sure about...But this is better than a Lakan who cannot sleep and is restless.]

The third chapter in Coching's komiks story is translated with almost exact equivalents in the Avellana adaptation: Lapu-Lapu targets and hits a bird with perfect precision. The only problem is that the prize catch has another claimant, the beautiful Miraha, daughter of Lakan Dupil. An argument over a dead bird ensues. Lapu-Lapu devises a way to persuade the woman that they roast and divide the bird. After a few more exchanges, the defiant and feisty Miraha relents to her hunger and asks to partake of the meal. What the komiks depicts as a budding romance treated in a tongue-in-cheek manner becomes easily translatable on-screen with a long sequence of intercutting shots depicting game, coyness and amusement. Both the komiks and the film make sure that a

romance subplot adds texture to the larger story of Mactan facing imminent foreign aggression. This has been achieved through a combination of close-ups and medium shots of the two characters to highlight Lapu-Lapu's virility and strength and Miraha's beauty and agility.

That idyllic meeting of Lapu-Lapu and Miraha perhaps constitute one afternoon of actual time but filmic time can compress events. In effect, the meeting and the declaration of love between Lapu-Lapu and Miraha take place within the same sequence and along the same temporal continuum. The komiks panels and the film sequence showing Lapu-Lapu's courtship of Miraha, interrupted by the arrival of Naya, Miraha's lady-in-waiting, and the urgent message she brings, serves as transition to the next sequence. The *Dayang* Miraha, Naya announces, is being called by her father, the Lakan Dupil, to be in court to witness a contest of strength between two suitors vying for her hand in marriage.

The next sequence sees Rahab (Lakan Sula's son, Lapu-Lapu's enemy) and Kim Long, a Chinese merchant/pirate, ready for one-on-one combat before the Lakan Dupil's court. Lapu-Lapu's timely interruption changes the direction of the contest into a competition among three contenders. Through long shots and parallel cutting, the film captures elaborate fight scenes using an assortment of knives and blades. The battlements, the armory, the contest arena and the crowd in court are shown in a series of intercutting shots. While the defeat of Rahab and subsequently of Kim Long are treated in two chapters in the komiks series (Chapters 5 and 6), the film shortens the two single-combat events to abruptly cut to the kidnapping of Miraha by one of Kim Long's allies when the Chinese pirate faces near defeat in Lapu-Lapu's hands. Lapu-Lapu runs after

the pirate ship carrying Miraha and through a brief struggle is able to free the princess. The Chinese pirate is killed in the process and Miraha swims to safety. The abduction scene is more elaborate in the film than in the komiks story and the rescue of the hostage as well. The action-packed abduction scene in the film uses long shots and high-angle shots showing the commotion on board the Chinese vessel, going as far as including actual underwater shots.

There are some details in the film that are a departure from the komiks. One is the introduction of a new character as transition device. When Lapu-Lapu left Mactan “to seek a wife,” he asks Palaw to sound the *kalatong* [gong] as a sign that the Lakan is needed in Mactan and should come back immediately. In the film, Lapu-Lapu sends his boatman or lookout back to Mactan to let his people know that he will spend a few days in Lakan Dupil’s kingdom to recuperate from the wounds that he incurred from saving Miraha from Kim Long.

While all these events are taking place, the three Spanish ships are advancing towards Cebu under the command of their Portuguese captain by the name of Magallanes. Through his native interpreter Enrique, Magallanes seeks audience with Humabon, king of Cebu, to buy food and other goods. Both the film and komiks depict Humabon’s demand for tribute which the captain has rejected because his purpose in Cebu is to trade goods. On a piece of cloth, Humabon has imprinted a drop of his blood with an instruction for counterpart imprint of blood from the Portuguese captain so they could seal their business contract. In addition, the Spaniards are also being graciously invited to a feast.

Meanwhile, Lapu-Lapu's return to Mactan, as well as Miraha's meeting Arturo, one of Magallanes' men, is portrayed through a series of scenes. Through parallel cutting, the feast in Humabon's court and the courtship of Yumina by Arturo are presented in an attempt to condense and abridge the scenes, especially those pertaining to the love angle that span throughout a number of chapters in the komiks series. The film retains the sequence pertaining to the court performance held in honor of the Spanish visitors and the presentation of skills in swordmanship.

The film departs slightly from the komiks in portraying Sula's plot to bring down Lapu-Lapu. Sula enlists the collaboration of Dupil to convince Lapu-Lapu to accede to paying tribute to the Spaniards. Miraha is to be the messenger of information. The original komiks story presents Sula as the sole perpetrator to convincing Lapu-Lapu to pay tribute, with the latter nurturing a suspicion that whichever he decides eventually, the duplicitous Sula will work for the enemies anyway. In the komiks version, Dupil dies before the invasion of Cebu. With the passing of her father, Miraha decides to join her people with Lapu-Lapu's men.

All the sequences devoted to the Spanish side of the actions carry dialogues in the Spanish language. This is probably an attempt of the film to achieve a bit of authenticity. However, this decision to use Spanish speaking lines in scenes where Magallanes and his men interact creates an impression of the Portuguese captain as a fierce, merciless and stubborn leader. Quite differently, Magallanes in Coching's brush strokes is humanized. In one moment, Enrique seems to voice out his conflicted thoughts on turning against his captain or and helping his own people by warning them of the imminent assault. When Enrique asks Magallanes if he could be of any help during the final attack on Mactan, the

captain replies that he empathizes with Enrique's feelings about working against his own kind. The Portuguese advises instead that his interpreter remains at the boat. As Enrique's interior monologue reveals:

Kay gandang kalooban mayroon ang aking panginoon, ngunit madaling maanod sa makamandag na sulsol ng kanyang mga buhong na kapanalig [What a kind heart my captain possesses, but easily swayed by the poisonous prodding of his evil allies].

Moreover, after they have fled the ship and reached Mactan, Enrique, Arturo and Barbosa have been imprisoned because Lapu-Lapu doubts their news about the impending attack. Enrique is eventually hit by an arrow and dies in Arturo's arms. Enrique's death – a slight departure from the komiks - brings pathos to his character. He appears humorous in the film, the equivalent of a jester in classical drama. Enrique vacillates between opportunism and patriotism and this detail has added texture to Avellana's interpretation.

The battle scenes are prolonged in the film and seem to approximate the spectacular grandeur of a typical epic genre. A long take depicting the defeat of Magallanes, the retreat of the remaining soldiers to the ships, and Lapu-Lapu giving a public exhortation to his people to resist any form of oppression in the future, seals the denouement in the film. In the background, "Lupang Hinirang" is heard being sung. While Coching reverts to the expository style by commenting on Lapu-Lapu's heroism, Avellana's adaptation, by playing "Lupang Hinirang" in the background, positions the Lapu-Lapu story as a foundational story. The spirit and inspiration of the national anthem that was composed only by the tail end of the 19th century have been foreordained by that battle that took place 400 years earlier, when the concept of nation was still nascent, if not yet totally nebulous.

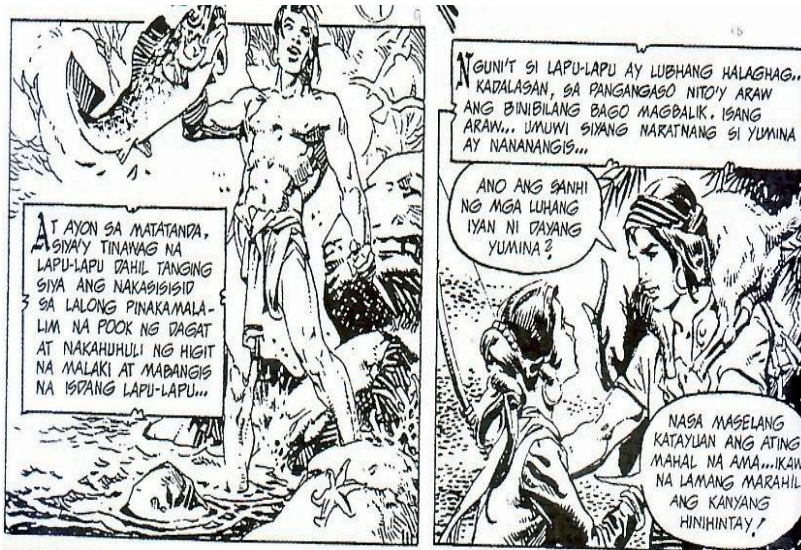
2. *Lapu-Lapu As An Exercise in the Semiotics of Film Adaptation*

a. Lapu-Lapu Read Through Metz's 8 Syntagmatic Types

A number of the syntagmas in *Lapu-Lapu* may be cited as examples of each type that Metz's enumerates into The Grand Syntagmatique.

The first type of syntagma is the autonomous shot which includes the single-shot sequence. In the initial part of the film, Lapu-Lapu is introduced through a long, continuous shot or a long take. He is seen from afar walking towards his father's house. The entire walk is a single-shot sequence and is obviously done to economize on sequences while exposing character development and presenting the backstory. Although the autonomous shot is found in the opening part of the film, it may also be considered as an explanatory insert or "single shot which clarify events for the spectator" (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 40). It explains the stature of Lapu-Lapu among his people and it also serves as a backstory with the events unfolding in *medias res* or in the middle of things.

Figure 25: Transition from expository to dramatic



An abrupt change of scene from the expository style found in the left panel to the dramatic in the right panel is the counterpart to the long take in the film that shows *Lapu-Lapu* returning from hunting and being welcomed by his sister Yumina.

Figure 26: The autonomous shot, the explanatory insert and the long take



This still photo is from the long take depicting *Lapu-Lapu* returning home. It is superimposed on the opening credits in order to compress events and economize filmic time. This is an example of Metz's autonomous shot, specifically the single-shot sequence that serves the purpose of providing a backstory to the character and the story events that begin in the middle, i.e. the death of the Lakan.

The second type of syntagma, parallel syntagma, is employed in Segment 14 (See b. Analysis of Smaller Narrative Units in *Lapu-Lapu* (komiks and film) through Bellour's Segmenting/Analysing) wherein parallel to Yumina's interest to get acquainted with the

foreign visitors, Lapu-Lapu gets increasingly close to Miraha. In the Metzian typologies, the parallel syntagma may signify two contrasting realities. The relationships of Lapu-Lapu and Miraha and of Yumina and Arturo, although of parallel development, allow for ironic contrast instead. While Lapu-Lapu's affection for Miraha is a welcome development for both their tribes, Yumina's affection for the Spaniard Arturo is doomed from the start; forbidden in the unequal social world of pre-colonial and colonial times.

Figure 27: *Parallel loves, separate endings (komiks treatment)*





Top. Lapu-Lapu wooing Miraha. Below. Arturo courting Yumina. These two separate sets of panels are examples of the parallel device which Coching employed to depict the parallel situations of the blossoming love between Lapu-Lapu and Miraha and between Arturo and Yumina.

Figure 28: Parallel loves, separate endings (film rendition)



The two photos depict the film's rendition of the komiks' parallel love plot. This is an example of Metz's parallel syntagma. Although the two loves ended differently, they signify thematic parallelism.

Two groups of sequences – Lapu-Lapu expressing to Miraha his wish to go home and Magallanes' meeting with Humabon – are another set of examples of parallel

syntagma. While alliances of the heart are happening with Lapu-Lapu's increasing fondness for Miraha and vice versa, the rajah of Cebu seems to be forming alliances too with Magallanes. While Lapu-Lapu wishes to return home, Magallanes' men are gradually making advances towards the islands by enlisting the support of local leaders.

Figure 29: *Alliances of the heart and of power (komiks treatment)*





The above separate frames from different parts of the story depict the increasing closeness of Lapu-Lapu and Miraha with each other and the alliance being formed between Magallanes and Rajah Humabon. The film depicts this sub-plot through a parallel syntagma.

Figure 30: Alliances of the heart and of power (film rendition)



These two stills are drawn from sequences that when taken together are examples of a parallel syntagma. While Lapu-Lapu and Miraha are forming alliances of the heart (left), Magallanes and Humabon are forming alliances of trade and commerce (right).

The bracket syntagma is exemplified in the hunting scene: the idea of finding himself draws Lapu-Lapu towards the forest. While seeking his heart's true desire, he chances upon Miraha. Since the bracket syntagma is built around a concept of "search", Lapu-Lapu is allowed to go on a journey, so to speak.

Figure 31: *Lapu-Lapu's hunting trip in a nearby island as "bracket" concept (komiks)*



The komiks version has depicted Lapu-Lapu's physical and metaphorical hunt in the forest through five panels. Two of the panels are reproduced above.

Figure 32: *Lapu-Lapu's hunting trip in a nearby island as "bracket" concept (film)*



The film depicts the forest hunting sequence through a bracket syntagma. It is built around the idea of finding a catch and metaphorically discovering his heart's desire.

The opening shots showing the three Spanish ships that eventually dissolve into images of native settlements are an example of a descriptive syntagma. The locale is identified (native settlements in Cebu and Mactan) and the objects (the ships) help "situate the action" (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 40) while explaining the prospective narrative and the conflicts associated to said place and objects.

Figure 33: *First issue's splash page showing montage of images*



The komiks presents the descriptive backstory on Lapu-Lapu through this montage of images from various episodes of the story. This is the splash page of the first issue. See Appendix I for bigger reproduction of the print.

Figure 34: *Setting “to situate action”*



These three stills are an example of Metz's descriptive syntagma. Shots of Spanish ships from left [with “1521” superimposed over the images], then the middle shot with images of the ships but without the credits superimposed over them, and in the far right, native settlements with credits superimposed over it function to describe the situation or to provide a backstory.

Alternating syntagma is also called “narrative cross-cutting” (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). It shows shots separated through space but is “chronological, consecutive and non-linear (p.44)” One example is the abduction scene. Miraha is abducted by Kim Long’s men and brought to the pirate’s ship. Lapu-Lapu runs after the abductors. The cross-cutting between the abductors’ location and Lapu-Lapu’s position and between the abductor running away and the Lapu-Lapu pursuing the abductor are examples of alternating syntagma.

Figure 35: “Run and Pursuit” Scene as Alternating Syntagma (komiks treatment)



The abduction of Miraha in the komiks version features some “run and pursuit” sequences that presage that of the film. Alternating images of Kim Long running and Lapu-Lapu pursuing him are evident in these two page frames.

Figure 36: "Run and pursuit" as alternate syntagma (film rendition)



The abduction of Miraha by Kim Long features a "run and pursuit" alternating syntagma showing Kim Long running, Lapu-Lapu pursuing and the people by the shore waiting with baited breath.

The final scene is a “scene” by the Metz’s criterion. It is a group of shots that shows Magellan’s and Lapu-Lapu’s famous confrontation. What is supposed to be the climax of Lapu-Lapu’s legend is curiously depicted through only six panels by Coching. The set of panels is developed around the theme of freedom or the foundational myth of a successful and heroic resistance against the colonizers.

Figure 37: Scene of Final Confrontation (komiks)



The komiks depict the final confrontation between Magellan and Lapu-Lapu briefly but it is built around the themes of freedom and heroism.

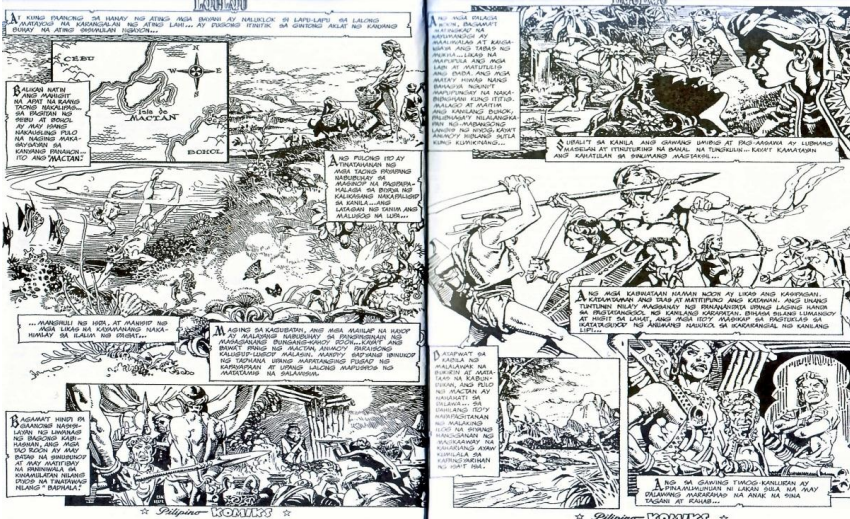
Figure 38: Scene of Final Confrontation (film)



This shot (still photo [Flores, 2010, p.209]) is the final image in the final confrontation scene following Magellan's defeat at the hands of the Lapu-Lapu and as the cowering Spaniards run to their ships. The foundational myth of the nation was formed through this image.

Lapu-Lapu's return to Mactan and the courtship scenes are episodic sequences because they represent one part of a series that contribute to a whole idea. The first part has to do with the background of Lapu-Lapu and Mactan and the second part with the idea of challenge (returning to face the enemy).

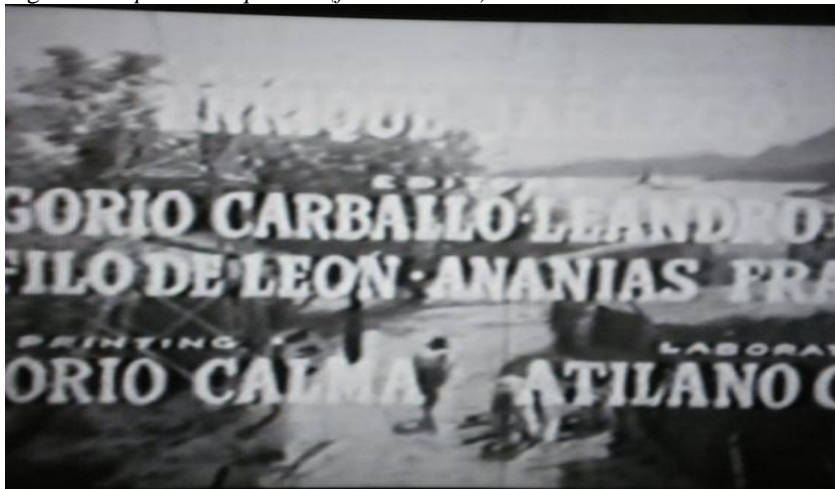
Figure 39: Episodic sequences (komiks treatment)





These are two separate frames that employ episodic sequences. The first one (top) summarizes the background of Lapu-Lapu and his land and the second one (second row) summarizes his return to Mactan to face the greatest battle of his life.

Figure 40: Episodic sequences (film rendition)





In the first photo, Lapu-Lapu's background is narrated as he walks towards home over super-imposed credits. This is an "episode" that will explain his relationship with his people and land. In the second photo, a rejuvenated Lapu-Lapu returns to Mactan to face his foreign enemies. This is an example of Metz's episodic sequence because the next part of the plot is built on Lapu-Lapu's campaign against the Spaniards.

The sequences detailing Lapu-Lapu's wounding during the contest of strength in Dupil's court and the quick courtship between him and Miraha are examples of ordinary sequences because these are presented by condensing time and "jumps" in space; thereby showing temporality and ellipsis. The scenes are not prolonged and the condensation of said scenes does not actually affect the logic of the narrative.

Figure 41: Ordinary sequence (komiks treatment)



The contest to win Miraha's hand in marriage is an example of an independent episode intended to showcase Lapu-Lapu's skill as a warrior.

Figure 42: Ordinary sequence (film rendition)



The film rendition of the test of skills to win Miraha's hand in marriage is an example of Metzian ordinary sequence. The film uses long shot to show the contest from a distance while Coching's rendition in the komiks show a more "anatomical" treatment of the contest through a blow-by-blow images of the fight scene.

The analysis of *Lapu-Lapu* presented above focused on the smaller narrative units of film. The succeeding discussion will focus on the segments through Bellour's approach.

b. Analysis of Smaller Narrative Units in Lapu-Lapu (komiks and film) through Bellour’s Segmenting/Analysing

Lapu-Lapu has been subjected to Bellour’s Segmenting/Analysing to understand the transfer from komiks to film at the level of the segment. From left to right, the table shows how each group of panels (segment) in komiks corresponds with each segment in the film as this has been broken down into sub-segments, shots and syntagma.

Table 4: Lapu-Lapu (komiks and film) Subjected to Raymond Bellour’s Segmenting-Analysing With Modifications

Komiks Chapter	Segment	Panels	Action	Film Section	Supra-Segment	Segment	Sub-Segment	Characters	Shots	Syntagma	Action
I	1	1-9	Background on Lapu-Lapu and his people; the coming of aggressors to Mactan.	A	I	1			1	Autonomous shot	Voice-over narration (in English, with stirring background music). The year “1521” is flashed on the screen. Three ships land on the shores of Cebu.
									2	scene	The chief of the voyage and crew are about to meet the fearless Lapu-Lapu.
						1		The people of Mactan; Lapu-Lapu	3-4	sequence	Credits start here. Montage sequence depicting native settlements in Mactan appears.
									5-10	sequence	Lapu-Lapu appears and starts walking towards the house of the Lakan, his father while the credits continue to be superimposed on the moving images.
I	2	10-13	Lapu-Lapu returns to his dying father.		II	2	a	Lapu-Lapu and the people.	11-23	sequence	a. The Lakan dies and an elaborate funeral pyre is

											held.
	3	14-17	After a funeral pyre is held, Lapu-Lapu becomes Lakan. He is requested to find a wife.			3	b	Lapu-Lapu and his advisers.	24-29	sequence	b.Lapu-Lapu succeeds his father's position. The elders suggest that he takes a wife.
II	4	18-19	a. Beautiful maidens are presented to Lapu-Lapu.		III	4	a	Lapu-Lapu, Yumina	30-50	sequence	a.A succession of fair maidens present themselves to Lapu-Lapu.
		20-28	b.Lapu-Lapu refuses to choose a woman he does not love.				b	Maidens, Court Guests	51-57	sequence	b.Lapu-Lapu refuses to choose among the maidens.
II	5	29-34	Lapu-Lapu wishes to leave and search his true love; requests Palaw to take care of the kingdom.		IV	5		Lapu-Lapu, Palaw, Yumina	58-61	sequence	Lapu-Lapu leaves the guardianship of the kingdom to Palaw and says goodbye to Yumina.
II	6	35	Lapu-Lapu rides his boat to an undisclosed island.			6		Lapu-Lapu, Miraha	62	shot	a.Lapu-Lapu rides his boat.
		36-39	Palaw expresses his love for Yumina.								
II	7	40-44	Lapu-Lapu reaches an island, hunts for a bird and shoots one down.					Lapu-Lapu	63-68	sequence	b.Lapu-Lapu reaches a nearby island and goes on bird-hunting.
III	8	45-58	Lapu-Lapu meets Miraha and they have a discussion over a catch.		V	7	a	Lapu-Lapu, Miraha	69-74	sequence	Lapu-Lapu meets Miraha with whom he has a discussion over a bird catch.
	9	59-67	Lapu-Lapu and Miraha get to know each other better. Lapu-Lapu is falling in love.				b	Lapu-Lapu	75-84	sequence	Lapu-Lapu inquires about Miraha's name and they get to know each other better. Lapu-Lapu declares his feelings for Miraha.

	10	68-71	Naya, Miraha's lady-in-waiting, barges in to announce that her lady is wanted in court. Lapu-Lapu learns of Miraha's real identity.				c	Naya, Miraha, Lapu-Lapu	85-86	sequence	Naya interrupts and announces that Miraha is wanted in court. Lapu-Lapu learns that Miraha is a princess.	
III	11	72-82	Lapu-Lapu learns that two suitors are vying for Miraha's hand in marriage. He declares his love for Miraha who returns his affections.	B	VI	8	a	Lapu-Lapu, Miraha, Naya	87-89	sequence	Lapu-Lapu learns that two suitors are vying for Miraha's hand in marriage. Lapu-Lapu wants to join the joust but Miraha is afraid for his life.	
	12	83-98	In court, Lakan Dupil introduces Miraha's two suitors. Lapu-Lapu interrupts and bids to be the third combatant.				b	Lapu-Lapu, Servant	90	Diegetic insert	Lapu-Lapu asks his servant to get his kampilan.	
							c	Lakan Dupil, Miraha, Lapu-Lapu, Rahab, Kim Long	91-120	sequence	In court, he interrupts the start of the combat to offer himself as the third combatant.	
							d	Lakan Dupil, Lapu-Lapu	121-138	sequence	Lakan Dupil orders Lapu-Lapu's arrest. Later, Dupil learns that Lapu-Lapu is the Lakan of Mactan. Lapu-Lapu is allowed to join the fighting.	
V	13	99-107	Lapu-Lapu proves to Lakan Dupil the sharpness of his kampilan		VII	9						
	14	108-115	Lapu-Lapu wants to prove further the sharpness of his kampilan by challenging Rahab and Kim Long.									
	15	116-127	Lapu-Lapu defeats Rahab.				a	Lapu-Lapu, Rahab,	139-142	sequence	Lapu-Lapu fights and defeats	

	16	128-133	Lapu-Lapu prepares to fight Kim Long. He learns about his dirty tricks.				b	Audience Lapu-Lapu, Kim Long	143-156	sequence	Rahab. Lapu-Lapu prepares to fight Kim Long who plans to employ dirty tricks. Lapu-Lapu fights and is about to defeat Kim Long.
	17	134-150	Lapu-Lapu fights and defeats Kim Long.								
VI	18	152-159	Kim Long abducts Miraha.		VIII	10	a	Kim Long, Miraha, Lapu-Lapu,	157-161	sequence	Kim Long abducts Miraha.
VII	19	160-201	Lapu-Lapu stages a rescue.				b	Lakan Dupil, The court	162-170	Sequence	Lapu-Lapu stages a rescue.
VIII	20	202-205	Lapu-Lapu survives the sinking of the pirate ship.				c		171-174	Sequence	Lapu-Lapu survives the sinking of the pirate ship.
							d		175-176	sequence	Miraha takes care of Lapu-Lapu's wounds. Lapu-Lapu stays at Lakan Dupil's court for the meantime.
					IX	11		Magallanes, Enrique, Crew	177-178	sequence	Magallanes' ships prepare to land Cebu and Bohol. A canon is fired.
IX	21	206-211	Lapu-Lapu hears the kalatong sounded to summon him back to Mactan. He bids Miraha goodbye.			12		Yumina, Palaw, Emissary, Lapu-Lapu, Miraha	179-182	sequence	Yumina hears the canon fired. Palaw sends an emissary to Lapu-Lapu. Magallanes' men continue to fire.
IX	22	212	Three ships are docked along the shores of Cebu.				a	Magallanes' men, Enrique, Humabon	183-191	sequence	Magallanes' men reach the shores of Cebu.
		213-220	Magallanes asks Raha Colambu about Humabon.				b	Enrique, Humabon	192-196	Sequence	Magallanes' men and Enrique talk to Raha Humabon of Cebu who asks

			Canons are fired and Humabon talks to his datus.								for tribute.
	23						c	Magallanes	197-199	Sequence	Magallanes refuses to pay tribute .
							d	Humabon, Magallanes	200-202	Sequence	Humabon and Magallanes agree to a blood compact. The Portuguese is invited to a feast. The other Lakans are invited too, including Lapu-Lapu.
IX-X	24	231-236	Lapu-Lapu has returned and learns of the foreign ships that the fishermen have seen.		XI						
	25	237-239	Lapu-Lapu asks Yumina whether Palaw is her suitor; tells his sister about Miraha.								
						14	a	Yumina, Palaw	203-204	sequence	Yumina goes to the trading place to see the foreigners against Palaw's caution.
X	26	240	Humabon's people prepare the feast. Magallanes prepares to meet Humabon.				b		205-207	sequence	Lapu-Lapu wishes to go home but promises his love to Miraha.
	27	241-249	Magallanes meets Humabon.				c	Magallanes, Humabon	208-221	sequence	Magallanes meets Humabon. At the feast, Arturo meets Yumina. A dance presentation is offered for the guests.
	28	250-251	Barter follows. Yumina takes part. Lapu-Lapu observes								

			from afar.							
29	255-258	Yumina meets Arturo who has an interesting exchange proposal for Yumina.								
30	259-260	Magallanes is invited to feast. A presentation is held.	XII	15	a	Lapu-Lapu, Miraha	222	Autonomous shot	A urgent message reaches Lapu-Lapu. Lapu-Lapu is summoned back to Mactan.	
31	261-268	Arturo woos Yumina.			b	Lapu-Lapu	223-227	sequence	Lapu-Lapu bids Miraha goodbye to go back to Mactan. He goes back to Mactan.	
32	269-271	The Spaniards admire the material objects that the natives possess.			c	Lapu-Lapu, Yumina	228-231	sequence	Lapu-Lapu gets angry upon learning that Yumina has left to see the foreigners.	
33	272-281	Magallanes orders a presentation in using the sword. Lapu-Lapu observes.			d	Magallanes, Humabon	232-236	sequence	Magallanes orders a presentation in using the sword. Lapu-Lapu observes from a distance and asks Palaw to look for Yumina.	
					e	Yumina, Arturo, Enrique, Lapu-Lapu	237-243	sequence	Meanwhile, Yumina is talking with Arturo through Enrique's interpretation. Lapu-Lapu summons his sister. He expresses his displeasure with his sister.	
34	282-283	Lapu-Lapu has a plan to take hold of an armor.			f	Lapu-Lapu, native	244-245	sequence	Lapu-Lapu orders that pieces of pearls be exchanged with a foreigner's armor.	
35	284-291	Gadang announces that Yumina is being summoned by her brother.			g	Lapu-Lapu, Yumina	246	shot		

			She agrees to see Arturo again that night.								
			Gadang announces that Yumina is being summoned by her brother. She agrees to see Arturo again that night.								Lapu-Lapu repeats to Yumina his prohibition to see Arturo again.
											Lapu-Lapu tries the might of the armor Palaw has brought to him.
XII	36	292-296	Palaw convinces a Spanish crew to exchange his armor with some pieces of pearls. Meanwhile, Yumina rides her banca with a heavy heart.		XIII	16		Lapu-Lapu	247	shot	Lapu-Lapu tries the might of the armor Palaw has brought to him.
	37	297-301	Lakan Sula and his two sons learn of the events. The Lakan has a plan to get even with Lapu-Lapu by pitting him against the foreigners.								
	38	302-310	Lapu-Lapu tries the might of the armor Palaw has brought to him; orders the training of his men in fighting armoured enemies and the production of sharper kampilans.								
											Yumina begs her brother's forgiveness.
XIII	39	311-317	Gadang and Yumina discuss the		XIV	17	a	Yumina, Gadang	248-249	sequence	Gadang and Yumina discuss the dayang's

			dayang's growing love for Arturo and the problem it brings. The dayang decides to see Arturo again.							growing love for Arturo and the problem it brings.
	40	318-324	Lakan Sula visits Lapu-Lapu who could sense his scheming and cunning.							Gadang and Yumina discuss the dayang's growing love for Arturo and the problem it brings.
	41	325-330	Magallanes has convinced Humabon to be converted to Christianity. The preparations for his baptism are underway.							
	42	331-337	Arturo and Yumina and Gadang and Bartolo meet each other secretly one night.			b	Arturo, Yumina	250-258	sequence	Arturo and Yumina and Bartolo and Gadang meet each other secretly. Arturo and Yumina pledge their undying love to each other in spite of its possible unhappy consequences.
XIV	43	338-360	Arturo and Yumina pledge their love for each other.							
	44	361-366	Palaw catches Arturo and Yumina's idyllic encounter;							

			accuses Arturo of being an opportunist.								
XV	45	367-387	Palaw challenges Arturo to a fight.								
XVI	46	388-396	As Palaw almost strikes Arturo in victory, Yumina intercedes for the man she loves. Palaw argue about the reason for his anger.								
	47	397-402	Palaw urges Yumina to leave Arturo and the lovers bid goodbye.								
					XV	18	a	Lakan Sula, Lakan Dupil, Natives	259-277	sequence	Lakan Sula visits Lakan Dupil to urge the latter to work with the foreigners.
							b	Miraha, Lapu-Lapu, Natives	278-279	sequence	Miraha is sent as emissary to Lapu-Lapu to convince the latter to join forces with Sula and Dupil.
							c	Lapu-Lapu	280	shot	Lapu-Lapu further tests the strength of the Spaniard's armor.
							d	Miraha, Sula's sons, Lapu-Lapu	281-304	sequence	Miraha arrives Mactan with two of Sula's sons. Lapu-Lapu refuses her proposal. Miraha says he could forget their promise to each other. Lapu-Lapu orders more weapons produced.
XVI	48	403-407	The baptism in Cebu takes		XVI	19	a	Spaniards, Natives	305-310	sequence	The baptism takes place in Cebu.

			place. Humabon tells Magallanes that among the lakans, only Lapu-Lapu has not participated in the event.				b	Yumina, Enrique	311	shot	Yumina witnesses the event; asks Enrique how he learned the Spanish language.
							c	Sula, Magallanes, Lapu-Lapu, Yumina, Miraha	312-318	sequence	Sula goes to Magallanes and tells the Portuguese that Lapu-Lapu does not want to participate. Yumina and Miraha hear Sula's lying.
XVII	49	408-411	Magallanes inquires from Humabon who is leading the other kingdom. It is Sula, Humabon replies. Magallanes decides to invade Mactan while Humabon offers help.								
	50	412-413	Noticing the queen of Cebu's attraction for her new religion, Magallanes gives her an icon of the child Jesus and orders the burning of pagan idols.								
	51	414-416	Magallanes sends his emissaries to Lapu-Lapu with a letter for the lakan.								
	52	417	Yumina is missing								

			Arturo.								
	53	418-420	Lapu-Lapu shows Palaw a locally-made baluti. Since Palaw likes it, Lapu-Lapu orders the production of several pieces for the warriors.								
					XVII	20	a	Magallanes	319-325 326-333	sequence sequence	Magallanes orders a dialogue with Lapu-Lapu.
							b	Miraha, Lakan Dupil			Miraha informs her father Dupil about Sula's treachery and they vow support for Lapu-Lapu.
	54	421-428	News of the arrival of emissaries reach Lapu-Lapu. The letters contains word that the lakan should kiss the captain's hand in submission.				c	Barbosa, Lapu-Lapu	334-351	sequence	Barbosa brings Magallanes' letter to Lapu-Lapu. The lakan does not understand the letter. Barbosa laughs and Lapu-Lapu insults him too. He will not submit to anyone.
		421-428									
XVIII	55	429-431	Lapu-Lapu's emissary informs Barbosa that he will not submit. Barbosa threatens Lapu-Lapu who asks the foreigners to leave.		XVIII	21	a	Native, Spaniard, Barbosa	352-354	sequence	A native is hit by a Spaniard. In a fight, Barbosa is pinned down but he is freed right away.
	56	432-433	Arturo cautions Barbosa not to be too rash.								
	57	434-440	Lapu-Lapu asks Enrique to tell Barbosa that he will not relent. Arturo				b	Barbosa, Lapu-Lapu	355	shot	Lapu-Lapu allows Barbosa to leave with a threat that he will no longer be tolerated later

			intercedes for cooler heads. Barbosa leaves. Arturo speaks with Yumina before leaving, which Lapu-Lapu notices.							on.
	58	441-443	Arturo talks to Barbosa about his rash decisions.			c	Emissaries, Magallanes, Barbosa	356-362	sequence	The emissaries report the happenings to Magallanes. Barbosa says he is suspicious of Arturo's loyalty but the captain does not entertain the thought.
	59	443	Arturo talks to Barbosa about his rash decisions. Magallanes interrupts his men's altercation. Sula's two sons came and connived with the Spaniards. The attack on Mactan is planned.							
	60	444-448	The emissaries report the happenings to Magallanes. Barbosa says he is suspicious of Arturo's loyalty.							
XIX	61	449-457	Magallanes interrupts his men's altercation. Sula's two sons came and connived with the Spaniards. The attack on Mactan has been planned.			d	The natives	363-364	sequence	The natives are trained.
						e	Barbosa, Magallanes	365	shot	Barbosa and Magallanes discuss Arturo and his alleged siding with Lapu-Lapu's men.

	62	458-469	Magallanes seeks another audience with Lapu-Lapu. Arturo and Bartolo are left behind upon Barbosa's suggestions. Lapu-Lapu does not relent.				f	Barbosa, Arturo	366-375	sequence	Barbosa and Arturo have an altercation. Arturo is arrested.
XX	63	470-477	Miraha arrives to offer her loyalty.								
	64	478-485	Datu Pandan offers help. Miraha is a new sultana with the death of Lakan Dupil. The lovers renew their love.								
	65	486-490	Barbosa returns to Magallanes and allies to bring Lapu-Lapu's word of non-surrender. An attack is planned.								
XXI	66	491-495	Magallanes discusses details of the plan. Sula and his sons are triumphant.								
	67	496-497	Arturo and Bartolo learn of the plan and decide to tell Lapu-Lapu's camp.								
	68	498-500	Barbosa seems to have heard of their discussion. Arturo is soon arrested.								

	69	501-507	Arturo and Bartolo are brought to Magallanes who desist on giving them a death sentence.								
	70	508-511	Barbosa flogs Arturo.								
XXII	71	512-514	Barbosa threatens to kill Arturo; leaves instruction to guard.								
	72	515-523	Lapu-Lapu's people make preparations for the imminent attack.								
	73	524-528	Miraha consoles Yumina's grieving heart.								
	74	529-530	Magallanes prepares and thinks of Lapu-Lapu as the only person who does not submit to him.								
	75	531-532	Someone goes down Arturo's cell and plans to help him escape.	XIX	22		Enrique, Arturo, Barbosa	376-377	sequence	Enrique brings Arturo food. Barbosa drives him away.	
XXIII	76	533-550	Enrique helps Arturo and Bartolo to escape.		23		Enrique, Arturo, Bartolo, Guard, Magallanes	378-383	sequence	Enrique helps Arturo and Bartolo to escape. Enrique joins them. A guard discovers the escape and tells this to Magallanes.	
	77	551	Arturo and Bartolo jump from the ship and swim to their freedom.								
	78	552-553	Magallanes gives instructions to Barbosa,								

			Serrano and Del Cano.							
XXIV	79	554-557	Magallanes wants to ensure his victory.							
	80	558-559	Magallanes asks Enrique not to come with them since it is his people who are under attack.							
	81	560-563	The ships sail to the shores of Mactan. These are seen in Cebu and by Sula and his sons.							
	82	564-574	Arturo and Bartolo reach Mactan but they are apprehended by Palaw.	XX	24	a	Arturo, Bartolo, Palaw	384-400	sequence	Arturo and Bartolo reach Mactan but they are apprehended by Palaw.
	83	575-580	Lapu-Lapu doubts the two men's motive and temporarily detains them until the proof comes. Yumina is crying over the situation.			b	Lapu-Lapu, Arturo, Bartolo, Yumina	410-409	sequence	Lapu-Lapu doubts the two men's motive and temporarily detains them until the proof comes.
					c	Lapu-Lapu, Arturo, Bartolo, Yumina	410-416	sequence	Yumina is crying over the situation; begs her brother for mercy. She gives the two men water in their cell.	
XXV	84	581-587	Yumina begs his brother to give the two men mercy. Lapu-Lapu is unrelenting. By sunrise, the Spanish ships have arrived.	XXI	25	a	Spaniards, Sula, Magallanes	417-420	sequence	The Spaniards prepare to attack. Sula reminds Magallanes of his promise to make him king of Cebu if they emerge victorious.

										<p>Barbosa refuses to save Arturo from the burning hut.</p> <p>A message reaches Lapu-Lapu. The Spaniards are near.</p> <p>There is massive fighting.</p>
						b	Lapu-Lapu	421	sequence	Lapu-Lapu prays to badhala.
						c	Spaniards, Natives	422-423	sequence	The Spaniards land. Voice over narration: Magallanes commits mistake in his strategy. He thought 60 men are enough to defeat Lapu-Lapu and his men.
85	588-591	The Spaniards remain on the ships. Rahab and other native turncoats take to burning the huts.	D	XXII	27	a	Palaw, Lapu-Lapu	424-426	sequence	Palaw announces the arrival of the Spaniards. Rahab and other native turncoats take to burning the huts.
						b	Rahab, Natives, Barbosa, Arturo, Lapu-Lapu	427-450	sequence	Barbosa refuses to save Arturo from the burning hut. There is massive fighting.
86	592-593	With Palaw's help, Yumina sets Arturo and Bartolo free before the fire hits their cell.		XXIII	28		Yumina, Arturo, Bartolo	451-454	sequence	Yumina sets Arturo and Bartolo free before the fire hits their cell.
87	594-597	There is massive fighting.								

88	598-601	In one occasion, Arturo saves Palaw's life. The latter thanks him. Arturo fights Barbosa and Palaw Datu Tagani.			29	a	Arturo, Palaw	455-456	sequence	Arturo seeks peace with Palaw. Palaw fights the evil datu.
						b	Lapu-Lapu, Enrique	467-471	sequence	Lapu-Lapu fights.
						c	Magallanes, Natives	472-475	sequence	Enrique runs to Magallanes to seek mercy and stop the fight. Another person stabs him in the back.
89	602-605	After so many have died in both camps, Magallanes asks his men to go back to the ships. Many Spaniards go back to the ships in terror.			30	a	Arturo, Barbosa	476	shot	Arturo fights Barbosa.
						b	Miraha, Natives	477-481	sequence	Miraha arrives with her men and help Lapu-Lapu's camp.
						c	Enrique	482	shot	Enrique is killed.
						d	Lapu-Lapu	483	shot	Lapu-Lapu is reconciled with Miraha.
90	606	Arturo is wounded but Yumina says he will never die.	E		31	a	Barbosa, Arturo	484	shot	Barbosa wounds Arturo.
						b	Lapu-Lapu, Magallanes	485-486	sequence	Lapu-Lapu fights Magallanes.
91	607	Miraha is by Lapu-Lapu's side who stands waiting for the enemies. Mactan will never succumb to her invaders.		XXIV	32	a	Lapu-Lapu, Natives	487	shot	Arturo is deeply wounded.
						b	Lapu-Lapu, Magallanes	488-490	sequence	Lapu-Lapu defeats Magallanes
						c	Lapu-Lapu, The natives	491	shot	The remaining Spaniards return to their ships. Lapu-Lapu makes his speech: "Mactan will never surrender to invaders". In the background, "Lupang Hinirang" is heard being sang.

							d	Lapu-Lapu, The natives	492	shot	Lapu-Lapu and the natives freeze and dissolve into closing credits “Wakas” (End).
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3. *Lapu-Lapu as Historical Fiction Film*

In *Lapu-Lapu*, Coching was not merely re-creating a quasi-historical character for the charm or for the novelty of it. In this komiks series, the komiks creator is obviously participating in an unconscious project of defining his race through the platform of the historical genre. The artist accomplishes this through the brushwork or the line and the extended story. His line, which Flores (2010) describes as “sinuous, invested, never tentative,” (p.16) attempts at endowing Lapu-Lapu the hero the fine grace of an extraordinary warrior. The women, Miraha and Yumina, are gifted with both strength and sensuality, of earthiness and innocence. The other heroes and villains are rendered through their expressive anatomy: realistic, symbolic and metonymic. The iconography is generally evocative by virtue of its visceral and sensuous styles.

Avellana's rendition is a historical fiction film. It is built around a historical event, which it chooses to portray and interpret at the same time. The historical fiction film is unlike other variants such as the costume film, which merely places a story in a historical setting without risking an interpretation. Therefore, the historical fiction film plays a political function because it uses its discursive platform to interpret events. Says Grindon in his book *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film* (1994): “This interpretive role places historical films in a context of historiography and enables them to have an impact on the public that often exceeds that of scholarship in range and influence” (p.2).

Grindon also outlines three generic elements that he considers to be staple ingredients of the historical fiction film: biography, romance and spectacle. Working along classic lines and responding to the artful iconography that Coching lavished on the

komiks original, Avellana's *Lapu-Lapu* exhibits variations of Grindon's generic elements.

History is about people but it is also about the land. It is the "portrayal of the individual as the catalyst for historical change" (Grindon, 1994, p.22). Historical biographies of great men are inextricable from the story of the land. Lapu-Lapu and Mactan are intertwined and this has been clear in Coching's prologue for the komiks version:

At kung paanong sa hanay ng ating mga bayani ay naluklok si Lapu-Lapu sa lalong matayog na karangalan ng ating lahi...ay dugong inilit sa gintong aklat ng kanyang buhay na ating sisimulan ngayon...Balikan natin ang mahigit na apat na raang taong nakalipas...Sa pagitan ng Sebu at Bohol ay may isang nakausling pulo na naging makasaysayan sa kanyang panahon...Ito ang "Mactan.[As to how in our roster of heroes, Lapu-Lapu is enthroned for the greater honor of our race...Blood is inked in his golden book of life that we will begin telling now...Let us go back to four hundred years ago...In between Cebu and Bohol, there is a pointed island that was historic in her time...This is Mactan.]

In doing character sketches such as Lapu-Lapu, Soledad Reyes (2012) says that Coching drew influences from the novelists of his time, being the son of Gregorio Coching, a novelist who wrote for the *Liwaway*. Coching's characters and heroes are created out of a moral frame; they are bent to solve an ethical crisis or confront a situation larger than themselves. Appropriating the psychological realist style that was the influence of the modern novel, Coching's heroes face psychological conflicts that manifest externally in their actions and decisions. To depict his virility and emotional consistency, Coching drew Lapu-Lapu's anatomy using a combination of classic outlines and playful illustrations. In the film, *Lapu-Lapu's* portrayal is helped by a profusion of close ups to portray emotions. The long takes that comprise most of the cinematographic execution also highlighted Lapu-Lapu's interaction with his surroundings.

In terms of heroic biography, *Lapu-Lapu*, the komiks and the film, serves as a counter-text to historical accounts circulated by Western writers that valorize the image of Magellan in world history. Western-authored history books have become a conveyor of distorted representations of Lapu-Lapu and the natives, more specifically the materials that were more reliant upon the accounts of Pigafetta and of David Barrows (“The death of Magellan,” and “Death of Magellan,” in *Tiempo and Tiempo*, 1980). In many of these accounts, the natives and Lapu-Lapu were depicted as cunning and were never given credit for their “civilized” and superior fighting skills. These Western-authored hagiographical writings enhanced Magellan’s image in the world’s stage.

In the context of these dominant historical writings written from the perspective of the West, the Lapu-Lapu story of the komiks and the film may be considered as a counter proposition, an alternate historiography. Through an extended yarn, the hero is both humanized and celebrated. Grindon (1994) offers this kind of fictionalized histories as literatures and cinemas that perform a political function: “Central to interpretation in history is a concept of historical cause, the representation of the significant forces producing social change”(p.5).

Spectacle is the device of the epical film. Coching’s panels capture the characters and the background to the actions in a classical style but made a little more complex by the playfulness of their rendition and the viscosity of the human movement. Alanguilan (in Flores [Ed], 2010), for instance, observes that Coching “drew figures that were literally exploding with kinetic energy, delineated with brush strokes that were bold, strong, and confident” (p.177). Both the human figures and the landscapes achieve the purpose of physically embodying the fictional world through their historical resonances.

As Flores (2010) suggests, Coching's story paved the way for one of Avellana's 1950s opuses:

To a significant extent, he becomes a co-author of the film because it is through the komiks that the world of the story is first ordained, peopled by souls, strewn with situations, and ennobled by existential pathos (p.27).

Coching approximated parallel cutting in the komiks which Avellana interpreted for the cinema. This has been complemented through the use of long shots, elaborate battle scenes, stirring music and an assembly of primary and secondary characters.

The Avellana work aspires to approximate a historical fiction film genre, which revolves around the biographical character whose heroism redounds to the collective life of the people. Fictional embellishments have been added to provide an adequate backstory. Both a genre film and an anti-genre film, *Lapu-Lapu* employs the conventions of spectacle and romance and reinterpret these at the same time. Spectacle and romance collaborated to portray the relationship of the hero to his land and the importance of love in his own struggle. The individual in relation with the group finds a third force in the object of love. As Grindon (1994) elaborates:

The spectacle emphasizes the extrapersonal forces (social, economic, geographic, and so forth) bearing on the historical drama. The spectacle's relation to the romance expresses the links between the individual, nature, and society, and serves as vehicle for historical explanation. (p.15)

Romance is inextricable from the historical fiction film, which is metaphorically strung onto the actions to convey the clash between personal happiness and collective good. Usually, the romance sub-genres feature parallel plots: one depicting the love story between two people (Lapu-Lapu and Miraha, Arturo and Yumina, Bartolo and Gadang) and the other the "love story" between the hero and the land (e.g. Lapu-Lapu and Mactan). One is a literal love story and the other is a metaphorical love story. Some of

the difficulties faced by the heroes and heroines in realizing their loves comprise the minor conflicts in the story. Yumina lost the Spaniard Arturo to death. Lapu-Lapu's obligations to his land forced him to make difficult decisions about his personal life. The close-ups and the mid-shots were utilized to show the interactions of the lovers; their excited glances, their pained expressions. The romance theme is sweet as it is poignant.

Lapu-Lapu, however, is "romance" in another sense. While it is replete in personal love stories, it also talks of the metaphorical romance between the hero and his beloved land. It is the love story between Lapu-Lapu and Mactan. It is a romance of the Filipino's proto-nation. In this way, *Lapu-Lapu* may be read as a national romance even if it harks back to a time and place when the Philippines was not yet a nation. It may be considered a foundational fiction in the same way that the "Malakas and Maganda" story has been traditionally regarded as a foundational myth.

Furthermore, the film employs the foundational romance motif, which similar quasi-historical vehicles such as the Arthurian films utilize as narrative trope. The foundational romance motif is built upon the story of a nation yet to be born. Lapu-Lapu may be considered an exemplar of a proto-nationalist. Sommer (1993) says that foundational fictions are national romances, which refer to a fictional take on the supposed "beginnings" of a nation. In Latin America for example, writers from formerly colonized nations carried out the project of producing narrative art such as the novel to be able to go back to the story of "nation" prior to colonial encounter. In addition, Sommer (In Bhabha, 1990) notes the dual signification of the label "romance" in current use so that it will not just be limited to what is broadly national or what is parochially personal: "By romance I mean a cross between our contemporary use of the word as a love story

and a nineteenth century use that distinguished romance as more boldly allegorical than the novel” (p.75).

As a historical fiction film, *Lapu-Lapu* allegorizes a “nation” in its nascent stage. Lapu-Lapu’s heroic choice became the impetus for the establishment of a nation. When Avellaña employed *Lupang Hinirang* as background music to cap Lapu-Lapu’s monumental victory, he was interpreting beyond Coching’s creative vision. Avellana in fact extends the meaning of the story from a proto-nationalist storyline to a foundational fiction film that subtly foregrounds the historical fiction film as possible alternative to the official historiography of the Mactan story.

Whatever ideological vision that Coching and Avellana would wish that their creations be read, the art works stand independently to represent their time. *Lapu-Lapu* somehow exemplifies what Jameson (1981) considers romance both as a mode and as an ideology. Drawing from Frye, Jameson notes how romance has been historicized through its modal constitution. The past of *Lapu-Lapu* and the story of resistance waged more than 400 years ago fall under the romance mode template. Its displacement is a reminder for the present generation of a shining moment of heroism. Avellana, working around the ideology of proto-nationalism, reads his history “under wholly altered historical circumstances” (Jameson, 1981, p. 131) and turns in a fifties creative re-reading of nationalism but now in the context of republicanism. The Lapu-Lapu story, as it is rendered in film, becomes the esteemed text that should connect the present to that lamentable but continuing story of the unfinished revolution.

E. Summing Up

This chapter analysed four films based on komiks using two lenses – semiotics (of small narrative units and of genre) and adaptation criticism. It reveals the internal workings of typical 1950s texts of *pelikulang komiks*. The four genres covered – korido, fantasy-adventure, comedy and historical film – were explained according to the issues salient to their textualities. Three of the films reflect the operations of generic mediations from komiks to film and the last text, *Lapu-Lapu*, has been subjected to specific semiotical approaches. As historical genre, *Lapu-Lapu* proves that even within the commercialized atmosphere of the 1950s, komiks creators and filmmakers occasionally produced texts that may be considered nationalized romances. Moreover, the samples analysed in this chapter have been noted for their salient features such as their manner of drawing from older sources, the tendency to romance and escape, the practice of borrowing from foreign sources and appropriating these locally and the influence of popular culture. The social contexts of these samples will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

VI. A Social History of *Pelikulang Komiks* in the 1950s

Aaaaaahhhh – the Fifties! Any avid Filipino movie fan who is past twenty may still treasure fond memories of those gay Fifties when local movies rode the waves of cash and ballyhoo. – Jessie B. Garcia, “The Golden Decade of Filipino Movies”

*Context is crucial when we study the political significance of art.
– Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, *Adaptations of Shakespeare**

A. The Social Importance of Recycling Stories for Cinema

1. A Culture of Recycling

In the early 1950s, when films such as *Bernardo Carpio*, *Sohrab at Rustum*, *Haring Solomon at Reyna Sheba* and *Rodrigo de Villa*, were providing entertainment in downtown Manila, the korido had long declined its appeal as literature and as a material for oral performance. As the korido bowed out, cinematic spin-offs were just beginning

their lives. Translated into their more popular forms – that is, in their more palatable, accessible package – koridos were better known as costume dramas or period films. A great number of these materials were re-told in komiks and were re-translated into film. The translations were either in terms of entire plots or a mere episode from the original strand. Brought by Spanish missionaries, peninsulars, and conscriptees in the galleon trade that plied the Acapulco-Manila route, the stories were recycled and were continuously re-appropriated for a hundred of years after these were introduced to the native society. Recycling these materials became almost a regular part of the creative repertoire of komiks, films and practically all narrative forms in vogue in those times.

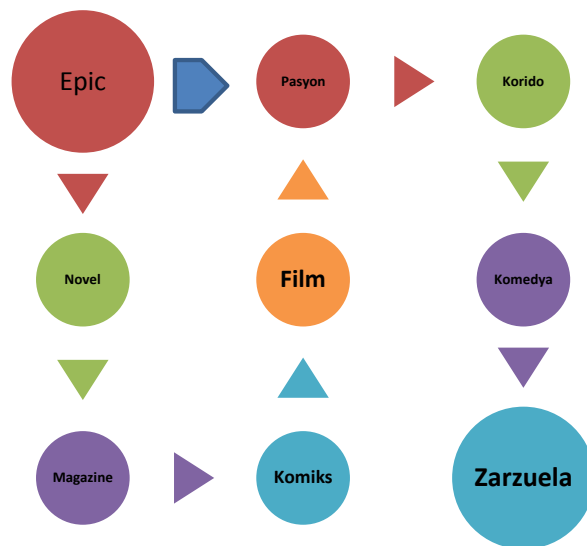
Recycling was not only a marketing strategy employed by the production firms, although it was an indelible product of studio management, but also a way of generating what Stanley Fish calls “interpretive communities” (in Leitch [Ed], 2001, p. 2085). Recycled materials were as socially important as those originally conceived for cinematic production. Although the culture of recycling exists universally, there are certain contexts unique to the Filipino adaptation practices.

Recycling is a practice that was not exclusive to the fifties. Even during the colonial period, Filipinos recycled stories from earlier period through newer media platforms. Bienvenido Lumbera (1997) claims in “Popular culture as politics” that the introduction of pasyon during the Spanish period “was eminently successful in blotting out the tradition of the native epic” (p.156), which we know preceded the korido. For Resil Mojares (1998), the korido was the one that bumped the epic from popular circulation. If we are to find explanation then to the practice of recycling in the 1950s,

history and culture may provide an answer. Before foreign contact, avers Mojares (1998), there was an existing body of oral narratives that came by way of folktales, ballads and epics and they possess motifs and themes that are “continually splitting off, recombining and amalgamating” (p.10). There was a native hand – perhaps a chanter or storyteller – that kept the stories in circulation. The komiks and film storytellers are far from different. They were following an unconscious urge to recycle what has been told before an audience who is familiar with the material at hand.

The cycle of mutations of genres, of mixing, of substituting, may be represented through the following diagram:

Figure 43: How Story Cycles Re-configure Genres



The story of recycling is part and parcel of adaptation discourse. Many of the sources of film adaptation have been based on earlier sources and this is exemplified by *Bernardo Carpio*. As a product of the adaptation industry, the recycled material is

pumped back into the circulation through a meeting of minds between the production sector and the audience. The producers determined what to recycle and the audience would answer back. Monina Mercado's (1977) book *Doña Sisang and the movies* reports how the grand matriarch's preferences shaped a huge part of the material that were adapted by her company during the golden years of the fifties:

Doña Sisang was particularly partial to rural romance and films based on the traditional *awit and corrido* which is why she doted on *Ibong Adarna*, *Prinsipe Tiñoso* and *Florante at Laura*. (p.16)

Producers like Doña Sisang proved to be successful in studying the fictional imaginary and the entertainment fare that would click with movie audiences.

Moreover, the influence of both European and Anglo-American romances in the komiks' story content, in Santiago Pilar's view, was one of the determining factors in its popular reception in the fifties. English romance novels such as *Ivanhoe* melded with Spanish koridos such as *Siete Infantes de Lara* and captured the consciousness of the Filipinos to create what he calls the *korido tradition*. Thus:

The romantic adventure was very much alive. After all, very feudal din ang ating ekonomiya and I suppose nobody would really like to watch yung mga science fiction at that time. Malakas ang impact ng *Siete Infantes de Lara* [The romantic adventure was very much alive. After all, our economy was very feudal and I suppose nobody would really like to watch science fiction at that time. The impact of *Siete Infantes de Lara* was huge.] (personal communication, March 10, 2012).

In D.M. Reyes's opinion, komiks had been crucial in bringing back old forms of literature and re-introducing these to 20th century audiences of the komiks and the movies. In the '50s, komiks and film faced competition with other media, more specifically radio. It would not be long before television will be introduced in Filipino homes and would soon contribute to the breakdown of the studio system. The

“interdependence of technologies,” says D.M. Reyes, was beginning to re-shape content.

Story materials are needed to “sustain” the “continuous operation” of new mechanical

arts. Old content has been excavated and is re-introduced to a new generation:

After a while it seems, they were dependent on big discourse like literature to draw from in terms of content. And I think gradually this is where we find komiks playing an integral role in interacting with other forms of media (personal communication, April 16, 2012).

Komiks became the go-between, the mediator between the old, usually oral, literatures and motion pictures. In fact, the komiks served as transitory vehicle of the stories towards their eventual destination - the movies. For example, below is shown the last episode of *Bernardo Carpio* (*Liwayway*, March 26, 1951) stating in its marginal footer section that a film version is currently in the works. The caption only proves that the film project has started while the komiks series was still running. Apparently, the progression of the komiks story has already been re-configured in anticipation of the filmic rendition:

Figure 44: Final instalment with footer announcement of the film-in-the works



This culture of recycling – so well manifested between the komiks and the film as in other narrative cycles that Filipinos grew fond of in its imaginative history – led to a number of cinematic peculiarities. One is the propensity for remakes. In a December 1, 1957 issue of *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, Sampaguita Pictures was alleged to be re-offering remakes of three films that many film enthusiasts would find familiar, namely: *Paru-Parong Bukid*, *Nasaan Ka Irog?* and *Bakya Mo Neneng*. Dr. Pinggot Perez, then Sampaguita executive, has been quoted for saying: “Remakes are sure investments...For one thing, we do not reproduce pictures just for the love of it. They have to be hits” (p.23).

While Dr. Perez could explain remakes from the financial and profit aspect of filmmaking, there is another way of rationalizing recycling from the perspective of a society’s narrative culture. Foreign author Bryan Yeatter (2007) gives an insightful comment on the provisionality of Filipino stories that lends to this impulse to recycle. In his book *Cinema of the Philippines: A history and filmography, 1897-2005*, Yeatter (2007) conjectures:

Filipinos are storytellers: always have been, and maybe it’s this love of storytelling that has made the film medium so immensely popular in the islands. It also might account for the rather longwinded nature of so much of Philippine cinema. It sometimes seems that Filipinos hate to see a story end (p.4).

In view of the insights mentioned above as regards the link of adaptation contexts to a society’s culture of recycling, one could only agree with Naremore (2000) that “the study of adaptation needs to be joined with the study of recycling, remaking and every other form of retelling;” in other words “a general theory of repetition” (p.15).

Naremore’s advice could not have come at a more fitting time than today as adaptation

discourse has untangled itself away from the practice of merely looking at fidelity to the original, towards examining how a culture recycles its stories.

2. Generic Mediation and the Impulse towards Romance

This study identified four (4) extant films based on komiks stories that reworked koridos which have been in circulation since the Spanish period. Castro, et.al. (1985) has even cited Dean Fansler's conclusion that the korido has been popular among the natives for three hundred centuries. The korido has been long in circulation that it is given a separate genre category in Filipino narrative history. In that way, the korido film is a genre film or a generically-modeled film.

Grant (qtd in Moine, 2008) defines genre films as "those commercial feature films which through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations" (p.99). This practice of classifying stories by cultural scholars pre-dates cinema and bears a literary pedigree that goes as far back as Aristotle so that it is safe to assume that codification serves a more important function than simply tracing patterns of plot developments and stock conventions in a story.

In relation to the previous discussion on recycling, genres "indicate a form of seriality" (Moine, 2008, p. 99) that stay in circulation because of factors external to it such as industrial strategy, audience preference and other issues pertaining to reception. Genres have a social function. It is believed that genres are made recognizable to the audience who in turn find resonances in the conventions of story, their values, beliefs, fears, aspirations and other emotional and psychological baggage that they bring in the viewing process. Filmmaker and historian Nick Deocampo maintains that "(that) is the whole purpose of genre, to codify. They are palatable, accessible. And there you have a

direct relationship between the viewer, user, reader” (personal communication, July 4, 2012).

The korido followed the same path in the 1950s. Each time the “spirit” of the korido was invoked, or its original form of narrative poetry, it was its earlier, deeper connection with the Filipino “hearers” of the oral form that is brought back. Take the case of *Bernardo Carpio*. Before the komiks version by Faustino Galauran was published, the korido have been in existence variously as a major piece for oral recitation. Castro (1985) even notes Rizal’s reference to the hero Bernardo Carpio in *El Filibusterismo* and in Andres Bonifacio’s writings as well. In the poetic form, the employment of the present tense is pervasive, as if the hero is still alive. Castro adds that “this social function of the *Bernardo Carpio* is not surprising” (p.11) in so far as the korido has “replaced the epics in the Christianize lowland” (p.12).

Eugenio (1995) reports that it was the birth of the print media that partially caused the decline of the popularity of the awit and korido in their recited form. But even if the communal, improvisational and performed aspects of the korido that were recited in town fiestas and other social gatherings finally lost their appeal, the pages of the komiks rescued them from the threat of obscurity and oblivion.

Early cinematic productions were so heavily indebted to dramatic forms. Traces of moro-moro and sarswela made their residual impact in the dramatic treatment, plot, characterization and motif of ‘50s films. Pilar ascribes the skit-like tendency of early cinema to the sarswela. In his estimation, the Philippines “did not develop a tradition of scriptwriting so we base the structure of our films, the structure of our narratives, on existing genres.” Our early cinematic tradition was actually based on “adaptation from

the various genres that are already current in the Philippines, which is comedia, the sarswela, the korido, the passion of Christ” (personal communication, March 10, 2012).

However, while komiks forms its own genres, film is constantly reworking its own taxonomies. This classification of films does not have to parallel the genres of komiks. “Very few Filipino directors have a sense of style,” National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera avers. The directors of the era developed more affinity with narrative, which is shaped by the structure of the genre. Thus,

Usually naka-depende lamang sila sa narrative content ng pelikula. Ang mas malaking impluwensya ay ang narrative na nakasulat sa nobela, ang narrative na pinakita sa komiks. Yun ang nagdidikta ng ginagawa ng director. [Usually they only depend on the narrative content of the film. The greater influence is the narrative in the novel, the narrative in the komiks. That dictates what the director will do.] (personal communication, February 3, 2012).

The transfer from one literary genre to another requires a re-configuring of some semantic and even syntactic elements of story-cycle in the receiving “vehicle” or media. As Altman (1999) theorizes: “Even when a genre already exists in other media, the film genre of the same name cannot simply be borrowed from non-film sources, it must be recreated” (p.35). Film categories do not have to parallel the genres of komiks. Serial writers who stayed rooted in their literary careers were surer of how to siphon previously existing genres onto the pages of komiks. Del Mundo Jr. prides in the fact that the work of his father, Clodualdo del Mundo, covered four genres: cape and sword drama, action, science fiction and social drama (unpublished essay, n.d.). These were all influenced by older literatures.

The social function of film adaptation genres is based on repeatability and memory work through imaginative reconstruction in filmic terms. The listeners of the korido were substituted by the readers of the komiks, in expectation of another receiving

vehicle in film. To recall Moine's (2008) thoughts: "A genre film proffers (or imposes) genre indicators to the viewer, which the latter receives and activates by relating them to his or her memory of the genre"(p.89). This could not be truer in the case of remakes, which has an affinity with adaptations. Remakes allow for the evolving cultural traits of a group of viewers in a country to be treated with importance. Gerry de Leon, interviewed by *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* writer A.N. Munoz in 1957, offered the case of remakes as a way of identifying the changing feelings of audiences as regards stories that have been revisited over and over in cinema: "So you see it is actually the audience that bring about the change" (p.24).

If we take stock of the larger than life aura of Bernardo Carpio through the focus of the film on his "birth" or beginnings and through the komiks serving as transitional storyboard, we may assume that the "korido genre" has been truly deeply-rooted in its social contexts. The Bernardo Carpio of the 19th century was politically important to the struggles of the revolutionaries and for an evidence of this, one may reflect on the words of S. Flores who rendered the korido for high school students in 1949:

Sang-ayon sa ating matatanda, ang Bernardo Carpio ay siyang Ama ng lahat ng mga bayaning Pilipino, na itinago lamang ng Panahon sa dibdib ng ating mga kabundukan. [According to our ancestors, Bernardo Carpio is the father of all Filipino heroes, and he has only remained resting in the heart of the mountains.] (p.118).

In contrast, the Bernardo Carpio of the komiks, which became the source of the Sampaguita Pictures' 1951 version, was the young yet naive half-breed whose initiation into life's struggles will lead him to his heroic mission. It is the kind of story treatment that allegorizes foundational fictions, the romance of a nation's beginnings, if we are to judge by prominent stature of Bernardo Carpio as a mythical folk hero of the Philippines.

For a fact, the legends surrounding Bernardo Carpio were a product of these popular renditions. Reynaldo Ileto (1998) notes in his essay “History and Criticism: The Invention of Heroes” that the fabled “Bernardo Carpio mountain” called Mount Tapusi or a cave in Montalban, Rizal has become a meeting ground for Katipunans members. The katipuneros surely heard of the story of Bernardo Carpio who is believed to be retiring in a cave. Eugenio (1987) reports that local folks believe that “someday, he will rise to save his people from oppression”(p.47). Furthermore, the *Historia Formosa* has been read and believed to be internalized by Andres Bonifacio in his writings and actions. This encroachment of the legend upon the real and the historical may be attributed to the various treatments, komiks and film included. For this reason, popular texts like *Bernardo Carpio* have become relevant to Filipinos in various eras of its circulation for the potential discourse that they contain, and through the seemingly harmless generic mediations that sifted, re-interpreted and re-introduced the reworkings to various eras. The genres mutated but the story’s essence remains immutable and transcendent.

The komiks-to-film adaptation of the era reflects various manifestations of the romance mode, and this has a direct link to the social world. The mythical world of *Bernardo Carpio* for instance is a containment of a quest for an ideal world, a Utopian society. It harks back to a past that is Edenic, idyllic and simpler until local tribe leaders began abusing their power and until the colonizers started unleashing their greed and unjust colonial policies. It also essays the birth of a hero.

The hero of the Filipinized metrical romance is of unknown, “inferior” birth, a half-breed and a self-sacrificing exile, possessing a heroic calling. He will undergo what Frye (1969) calls the task of a quest or the following three stages:

the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero (p.187).

True to form, Bernardo Carpio as hero of romance is known by his heroic adventures. His actions to save a rajah being attacked by pirates, to save his love Luningning from her tormentors and his ultimate act of sacrifice in preventing two mountains from colliding with each other and from propelling the world to its catastrophic end, have earned him a rightful place in the Filipino heroic imaginary. In the 19th century, when both Rizal and Bonifacio were supposed to have acknowledged Bernardo Carpio's mythical significance and in the 20th century when the komiks-based-film was produced, the legend has performed two social functions that Frye (1969) calls the "wish-fulfilment dream" and a "genuinely 'proletarian' element in the romance" (p.186).

As wish-fulfilment dream, the various renderings serve as a form of escape (Lent, personal communication, February 2, 2012; Reyes, S., 1985). A manifestation of this wish-fulfilment is an escape to the past. Here, Italian semiotician Umberto Eco's (1985) three ways of narrating the past may be found helpful. One way of narrating the past is through romance. He places the Breton cycle, the Tolkien trilogy and the gothic genre as prime examples of romance. As romance, "the past as scenery, pretext, fairy-tale construction, to allow the imagination to rove freely"(Eco, 1985, p.18).

The setting in *Bernardo Carpio*, for instance, functions more specifically to provide a background for action. This was what Eco means by the past becoming just a "pretext, fairy-tale construction, to allow the imagination to rove freely." There is the atmosphere of a mythical time, the feel of the faraway. As Eco (1985) further says,

romance does not really need a historical setting. “Romance is the story of an elsewhere” (p.18).

There is also, as Frye has opined, a “proletarian” basis in the romance. The characters have been marginalized by their societies and through their pain and anguish, struggles to transcend mere vindictiveness. As Reyes, S. (1991) opines, popular texts may be guilty of two-dimensional characters and of employing happy endings but they bear an element of protest by implication: “What was present as manifest content was actually shaped by the ongoing struggle present in life but absent in the texts”(p.37).

In the fifties, there had been no attempt to conduct reception studies that may assess the significance ascribed by the viewers on korido movies such as *Bernardo Carpio*. If one were to gauge reception culture through the promotional write-ups and magazine coverage, the most salient images that were highlighted in movie journalism back then were depicting the final heroic act of Bernardo Carpio and the romantic scenes; thereby, propelling the romance mode. The following covers, movie stills and write-ups respectively from *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* and *Ilang-Ilang* elucidate this point:

Figure 45: *Literary Song-Movie Magazine Cover Featuring Bernardo Carpio*



The *-Song Movie Magazine* cover for the May 1951 is a variant of the still photo capturing the final scene in the movie.

Figure 46: *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* Review Featuring *Bernardo Carpio*



Melia Velazquez and Cesar Romero in Bernardo Carpio's "Bernardo Carpio"

MOVIES OF A GUIDE TO YOUR LOCAL

have another reason to be sorry for themselves. Their hobbies are not love with their money—and on the moral is clear enough, who we have

BERNARDO CARPIO (Sampaguita)

Starring: Melia Velazquez, Cesar Romero
Directed: Antonio Torres
Reviewed by: [Name]

The story play is based on the famous legendary tale of the same name. Boy of a Spanish father and native mother, Bernardo becomes an orphan in childhood, is brought to Spain by his uncle, but is killed because of his mixed origin, his mother appears one night in dreams and leads him to an un-

der made him mad and in his violent anger wrecks the ship. Eventually perishes, but Bernardo is rescued by a pretty native girl, Lusinging. The princess saves him a trial noble, and a neighboring native princess lures him into her palace. But Lusinging pleads him to return. This is the princess who punishes Lusinging and makes her blind. To return Lusinging's sight, he goes after a three-eyed giant who guards two mountains from falling on each other, kills him and eats the contents of the third eye. He becomes a prisoner of the princess, but before she can

Movie reviews in the 1950s were not reviews in the strictest sense but extended summaries or synopses of the film's basic story. The above is a Literary-Song Movie Magazine feature on Bernardo Carpio.

The more important function of the korido in society lies in its allegorical potential. Eugenio (1987) calls *Bernardo Carpio* a “nationalized” romance because it goes back to our origins as a nation. The film version of these komiks story is a visual reconstruction of a potentially allegorical vehicle. What came out is a story re-told; greatly improved by the mise-en-scene, by the cinematographic conventions pertaining to the spectacular and epical battles, the costumes and props of the Spanish centuries, and the musical portions that fill in the visual and auditory tracks anticipated in the pages of the komiks.

The society of the 1950s was hooked on romance not only because it was a “mechanism for escape” (Reyes, 1985, p.52) and a “wish-fulfilment dream” (Frye, 1969, p. 186). There is a possibility too of an “allegorical mediation” (Flores, personal communication, June 14, 2012) that connect the temporal scene of the romance with the present or the time of the telling, what J.R. Jackson (1989) calls “displacement of environment” (p.49). Jameson also identifies a displacement of meaning as part of the dialectic of the romance. The post-war world may be ascribing a political and contemporary context to even the most obscure korido film. Jameson (1981) articulates this argument well in the following quote:

A history of romance as a mode becomes possible, in other words, when we explore the substitute codes and raw materials, which, in the increasingly secularized and rationalized world that emerges from the collapse of feudalism, are pressed into service to replace the older magical categories of Otherness which have now become so many dead languages. (pp. 130-131)

This dialectical view of romance – Frye’s view of romance as mode of the history of a society’s means of expressing collective feelings and Jameson’s problematic of romance played out in a substituted, more contemporaneous environment – helps to understand that producers’ will is influential but the willing co-optation of the audience is more potent. They decide that which should be re-cycled. This same audience may possess an idea of society that coheres with the Utopian vision of the movie, an escapist imagination, and more importantly, a layman’s role critical to what Jameson (1981) calls “vivid apprehension of what happens when plot falls into history, so to speak, and enters the force field of the modern societies” (p.130).

To illustrate further: Iletto (1998) reads something deeper than “wish-fulfillment” or a “proletarian” message to the Bernardo Carpio story. The story, hijacked from its Spanish original, is now rendered as a Filipino heroic legend:

The myth of Bernardo Carpio is translated into the history of the Tagalog people, which feeds into the construction of a Filipino people. Not only was Bernardo Carpio the man in the mountain who would come down to free his people from oppressors, but as Bonifacio and his compatriots in the Katipunan saw it, each lowly indio could be Bernardo Carpio. The latter’s story, well known and loved by all, was being played out on the “national” level. (p.26).

Komiks and film somehow diluted this nationalistic message but the subtext of oppression and liberation are not really entirely lost; only displaced in time because the historicity is de-emphasized in favour of apolitical temporality.

3. *A Tale of Two Visual Languages: Notes on the Verbality and Visuality of*

Filipinos

a. Definition of Filipino Komiks

The history of comic art in the Philippines is inextricable from colonialism. Media historian John Lent, whose insights have been sought for this study, raises this point in

his book titled *The First One Hundred Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons* (2009), which was published by another key informant, Boboy Yonzon. Lent notes the influences of American comic book art, that was brought to the country during the Second World War, on succeeding generations of Filipino comics writers and illustrators – from Tony Velasquez to the graphic novelists of more recent years. To clarify the nature and characteristics of comic art, a number of key informants have been asked regarding the definitions of comics by two scholars who are most influential to local practitioners of the art: Will Eisner and Scott McCloud.

To recall, Eisner (1985) defines comics as that which “employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When these are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a language – a literary form, if you will”(p.8). In short, comics is sequential art. McCloud (1994), finding Eisner’s definition “neutral on matters of style, quality or subject matter”(p.5) offers a tentative, “work-in-progress” definition: “a juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”(p.20).

Clodualdo Del Mundo, Jr., a filmmaker and scholar, thinks sequence is truly an indelible part of the medium. The eyes follow the direction of the panels from left to right; thus, the idea of sequentiality. For popular culture scholar D.M. Reyes, this sequentiality is a function of the nature and aesthetics of komiks. There is this spatiality in the komiks that you also find in the movie, except that in the latter, space is linked to time. Film’s temporality is mediated by space. In reading komiks, one has the temptation to stop, skip panels and jump to another set of panels in the series. Boboy Yonzon, a komiks illustrator, publisher and son of a fifties practitioner, thinks that the arrangement

of the panels into sequence may “impel” the reader to skip pages. The temptation to interrupt the sequence leads to the episodic structure of komiks, which is analogous to a television program with commercial breaks (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

The Eisner and McCloud definitions do not actually contradict but rather complement each other. For local comics enthusiasts Randy Valiente, said definitions are useful in understanding Philippine “komiks.” Arts studies scholar and curator Patrick Flores thinks that these are not mutually exclusive definitions. Sequentiality and juxtaposition are both present in komiks. The dichotomy between sequentiality and juxtaposition is a misapprehension that parallels a similar issue in cinema regarding the montage argument and the mise-en-scene argument. This false dichotomizing should be revised, he insists. Thus

...nag-mo-move din naman ang montage through editing and then ang mise-en-scene naman is actually a montage. [...Montage moves also through editing and that mise-en-scene is actually a montage.]. (Patrick Flores, personal communication, June 14, 2012)

For Del Mundo, Jr. and Santiago Pilar, a film/visual art history scholar, the elements of drawing and the elements of narrative are inseparable in komiks. In the early stage of the development of comic art, the drawing was merely a profusion of plain lines. Color was added later on. Del Mundo, Jr. and Pilar for instance, agree that komiks “is an illustrated story” (online communication, July 8, 2012; personal communication, March 10, 2012).

It is interesting to note however that the komiks practitioners themselves subscribe to a simpler definition of komiks. Yonzon views komiks the Eisner way: “a series of illustrations” (personal communication, March 28, 2012). Valiente however echoes McCloud’s, “words and letters, words and drawing,” and regards komiks as

“basic” and “visual entertainment” (personal communication, March 27, 2012). Both informants do not have a struggle with the appeal of komiks’ language: “Magaan kasi basahin yung ganun” [It is easy to read it that way.] (Valiente, personal communication, March 27, 2012).

Traditional komiks, meaning the 1950s komiks, may be described alongside the Eisner definition, according to Soledad Reyes, a cultural studies scholar. The komiks of this period is “luma”[old style], “yung sunod-sunod ang narrative niya” [narrative is sequential] and “linear.” It is unlike that of the latter period: “medyo jazzed-up” [a little jazzed-up], “medyo magulo, like sometimes one whole page is occupied by only a frame” [a little chaotic, like sometimes one whole page is occupied by only a frame] or modernist like the *Zha-Zha Zaturmah* example (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

The McCloud definition foretells things to come in the landscape of komiks art. It leaves an opening for the semantic and reception issues. D.M. Reyes contends that the McCloud concept “recognizes the need to convey information or to fulfil a certain curiosity at least” (personal communication, April 16, 2012). Komiks therefore elicits a response, whether it is merely informational or aesthetic or arising from the combined literary and visual elements.

In the 1950s, komiks was perceived only as a novelty of popular entertainment. The “aesthetic” label came only by way of hindsight. The practitioners of the period, more than anyone else, felt deep connections with medium and saw in it exciting possibilities. Del Mundo, Jr. elaborates:

During my father’s (Clodualdo del Mundo, Sr.) time, I don’t think they were thinking in terms of art or aesthetic response. They were concerned with story told

in pictures. They believed in the form and had high respect for it. Now they are redeemed. (online communication, July 8, 2012)

Whether seen as a fleeting, commercial, “low art,” or a new art form, there are finer elements of the graphic and the narrative components that need clarification for now.

b. Intersections between Verbality and Visuality

It has been noted in previous chapters that adaptation discourse in recent years has shifted from the Bluestone system of equivalencies into a more pluralistic approach. In current modes of adaptation practice, scholars view texts to be engaged in dialogue. There are no more pure forms; only texts engaged in influencing and referencing each other. Valiente (2007) notes the word-orientedness of Philippine komiks compared to the visual-orientedness of foreign comics. This means that the narrative aspects in the komiks are tied to the word. “Madaldal kasi ang komiks ng Pinoy” [Filipino komiks are too full of talk, too verbal.] (Valiente, personal communication, March 27, 2012). Valiente thinks that this wordiness may have to do with the tendency to economize on the number of pages devoted to each episode. A page devoted solely to drawings may be seen as a waste of space. Crowding in the panels is normal in Filipino komiks.

Yonzon agrees with Valiente. Mars Ravelo and Pablo Gomez, he offers, are komiks writers who use more words than visuals. However, Yonzon says that the profusion of words though does not really discourage filmability: “I don’t think yung [the] wordiness ng [of] komiks can prevent you from doing a good film out of it because it [film] is definitely a different medium”(Yonzon, personal communication, March 28, 2012). Lumbera agrees. Wordiness in komiks may be ascribed to the initial “orientation of the audience” and the writers as well. Lumbera cites the example of two artists who

have different styles in employing the verbal: Coching and Ravelo. Coching enters the narrative through his drawings while Ravelo approaches the visual through words: “content in terms of incidents, content in terms of exchanges in a dialogue,” Lumbera explains (personal communication, February 3, 2012).

Pilar does not subscribe to Filipino komiks’ alleged wordiness and its possible link to the dramatic elements in film. Film language is about movement, not really so much about words. As Pilar articulates:

And when you say film language it is the visual that talks, less dialogue. It is the visual and it is the movement. Kasi [Because its] time and space. Space is what you see, the physical space on the screen and at the same time it moves. In other words there are two kinds of movements the movement of the character, the movement of the camera and then finally the editing...(personal communication, March 10, 2012)

For Pilar then, spatiality shapes the language of film, not the words that are tied to the dramatic.

It must be mentioned then that komiks is a two-dimensional medium while film is a three-dimensional medium. The two tracks that govern the aesthetic operations of komiks consist of words and images. In the case of film, visual images and words are also complemented by the audio track. The wordiness of komiks that Valiente mentions may have to do then with the print medium’s appropriation of the illusion of sound. Flores argues that the wordiness of komiks may be linked with the influence of radio. It may also be reacting back to film, specifically its “audio-visuality.” In a medium where sound is only imagined, it may be possible to have an “over-investment in verbal description.” This illusion of sound in print “requires manifestation through words, the orality. And then the expectation for sound might be the context for this wordiness”(personal communication, June 14, 2012).

Soledad Reyes offers a more cultural interpretation: “Lola Basyang mentality, oral tradition mentality.” The narrative forms before cinema and komiks have shown this predisposition. “Pati mga tula natin. Maingay, maindayog” [Take a look at our verses. Wordy and flowery.] (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Scholars of komiks as art form, including those who dabble in film studies (Flores) and television practice (Yonzon) acknowledge the mediating factors in komiks to film adaptation, aside from the extensive borrowing, intersecting or transforming of stories. As Flores articulates:

Ang medium [film adaptation] kasi constituted na rin siya by its relationship with komiks, with radio, with oral culture so sanga-sanga na yan [The medium of film is also constituted by its relationship with komiks, with radio, with oral culture, so that they intersect with each other.] (personal communication, June 14, 2012).

In the context of *Bernardo Carpio* for example, a korido film that traces its roots from orally performed literature then treated in printed form through komiks, the story comes full circle. The multi-track aspects of cinema, with the super-addition of musical portions and spectacular scenes allow for the dry and straightforward style of the komiks version to be rendered in a mode where the romance is in its true elements. Interviewed by Delfin Gamboa for the October 1951 issue of *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, *Bernardo Carpio* director Artemio Tecson has been referred to as “Sampaguita’s Cecil B. de Mille” (p. 86) because he specializes in film epics. S. Flores’ 1949 korido version for high school students call it “isang epiko” (an epic). This only shows that certain stories call for certain kinds of film genres and the enlistment of the audio-visual tracks of cinema. Even with the sparse or minimal style of the *Bernardo Carpio* komiks version, the fact that it has been based on an old korido story calls for the summoning of the

elements of spectacle and musical to render on screen a romance of a heroic life and of one of the nation's most cited foundational myths.

B. Appropriation as Indigenization: The Foreign and the Local in 1950s Komiks-to-Film adaptation

1. *Appropriating Foreign Genres and Motifs*

The very nature of adaptation is hospitable to outside influences. Adaptation is concerned with a meeting and confluence of texts. Colonial experiences dictated that our cinema become the melting pot of various influences.

a. Residual Spanish Influences on the Fantasy-Adventure komiks-turned-film

The influences of Spanish colonization on Philippine cinematic adaptation run deep – from the literary and dramatic genres that were brought by the colonizers to their story content or plots. The fantasy-adventure motifs and other elements of 1950s komiks and their cinematic rendition drew heavily from the *korido* that once appeared in traditional dramas in the Spanish era and early American era. This *korido* came alongside the devotional literature that the Spanish missionaries used to proselytize and to convert the natives into Christianity with. In so many ways, these religious literatures were composed within the framework of the Christian miracle, which is an ideological ally of romanticism in whose terrain the fantasy genre was born.

The content of the *korido* has been sifted and migrated into traditional Philippine theatre, specifically *komedya* and *sarswela*. Tiongson (1983) offers the *komedya* or *moro-moro* as the precursor of present-day action films that contain the stock convention of a love story. He refers to these stock elements of *komedya* as *bakbakan* (fight scenes) and *palasintahan* (love angle; love scenes). If we look closely at fantasy-adventure and its

variants, the cloak-and-dagger romance or the cape-and-sword romance, fights scenes and romance are indispensable ingredients. Del Mundo, Jr. (1998) for instance, cites *Ibong Adarna*, an extant pre-war film, as an example of an awit that was turned into a komedya and then into a movie. The magical elements of the fantasy-adventure, along with the fight scenes and the romantic interludes, are also featured in *Ibong Adarna*.

Fantasy enables the viewers to see a world diametrically opposed to reality. Rabkin (1976) says that there are “ground rules” by which we could perceive the narrative in contrast to normative reality. The fantastic challenges the norm by enlisting “a diametrical reversal of the ground rules within a narrative world” (p.42). The participation of the viewer in this activity is what we refer to as a “form of escape” (p.43). The fantasy-adventure films based on komiks that drew on Spanish sources, exemplified by *Tulisang Pugot* in this dissertation, challenges a norm of reality inside the sub-genre of historical film, which should be about the authentic and the real in the first place. But there is no attempt to inject historical realism in the story. The place and the time are just a convenient backdrop to fantasy and romance.

Komiks seemed to play the role of mediating between early Spanish precursors (korido, traditional dramas) and the film. The instances of mediation ensured that revisions, more than allusions, would be more rampant and salient. Flores agrees that komiks is a seatbed for fantasy. This is where the form shapes mindscapes. Komiks is responsible for the “creation (of) condition (of) fantasy” (personal communication, June 14, 2012), which is rather reduced in radio and film because of their added audio tracks that expand sensory stimulation but diminishes the role of the imagination. “Dun sa komiks, walang sound. Imagination fills it out.” [*In komiks, there is no sound.*]

Imagination fills it out.] (personal communication, June 14, 2012). Soledad Reyes agrees: “The komiks can go into fantasy. The theatre is limited to politics and other family (plots)” (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

The Spanish influences were always residual, and in the 1950s, these will be further sifted and assimilated, either in a direct and nostalgic manner or in more referential or allusive styles.

b. Hollywood’s Impact: The Case of Fantasy-Adventure komiks-turned-film

In the 1930s, when the sarswela was bowing out, the cinematographic techniques and narratives imported from Hollywood were becoming more evident in local cinema. Pilar opines that in the first decades of Philippine cinema, American cinema was becoming a prime source for the techniques of filmmaking and of subject matter. “Form and content,” two inseparable entities, (D.M. Reyes, personal communication, March 10, 2012) were appearing in the form of cinematographic techniques, editing and genre. “The importation of more sophisticated cameras naturally oriented us into a film language,” says Pilar. “From being word-oriented...cinema adopted or created a film language.” (personal communication, March 10, 2012).

Two types of film products were imported during that decade from the United States: film technology and Hollywood films. By the 1950s, Hollywood films were being screened in downtown Manila theatres. Majority of the theatres were running Hollywood films. Alano (in Constantino and Lo, [Eds], 1994) reports that Ideal was running MGM movies, Lyric Warner Bros. films and Avenue was exclusive to Paramount. Only two theatres, Life and Dalisay, catered to local cinema. Meanwhile, there are genres from Hollywood movies that the 1950s moviegoers were oriented into, namely: “(1) the

American comedy, (2) the burlesque film, (3) the dance and vaudeville film, (4) the crime and gangster film, (5) the western, (6) the psychological and social drama, and (7) the horror or fantasy films” (Tiongson, 2000, p. 23). A number of these genres will have their local imitations later on and resulted in what Tiongson (2000) refers to as the “idolatry of Hollywood” (p.23).

Flores thinks that American-inspired film genres, studio and star system had become “the best arguments for Hollywood” (personal communication, June 14, 2012). The idea of imitating Hollywood materials reached a fevered pitch in succeeding decades. Filipino film producers provided a counterpart to every Hollywood model – be it a story material or a studio management style. From 1950s to 1960s, says Lent, “the Philippine movies also adapted from U.S. films – Dr. Yes, To Tokyo with Love, Jaime Bandong, etc.” (online communication, February 2, 2012).

The conscious borrowings from foreign sources were actually commented upon by local film journalists from the 1950s. Mario Chanco, then writing for *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, saw it as a dearth in creativity and resourcefulness:

What I feel most in dudgeon about is the growing tendency among certain of our movie folks to borrow alien cultural stories for the Philippine screen. It seems highly absurd that in the midst of comparative story abundance, there should be starvation of a sort to compel us to look to a foreign country’s folklore” (April 1951, p. 27).

Yet Chanco’s lament seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. Filipino filmmakers nurtured this interest in Hollywood and pursued frenetic importation of materials from Hollywood in the fifties while also getting busy shaping their local version. “What was accessible, we will do it also,” Pilar attests. Yeatter (2007) confirms this:

Philippine cinema, like Philippine culture itself, has always exhibited this type of mimicry. No nation seems to have as genuine an affection for American popular culture as the Philippines (p.2).

Be that as it may, Hollywood influences were not sifted in a linear fashion because adaptation processes were more complex. Residual Spanish influences would re-appear and would be merged with American elements. To court the audience, references to anything foreign continue to be a main draw. Del Mundo articulates this straying of influence from one colonial culture to another:

The question of influences is quite complicated...when it comes to storytelling, characterizations, performance – influences can come from other dominant dramatic forms of the period. Radio dramas and komiks are not “pure” themselves; they are influenced, too, by other forms, both local and foreign. I agree that Hollywood would be a major influence, as well as other cinemas – I think Avellana, particularly *Anak Dalita*, was influenced by Italian neorealism. (online communication, July 8, 2012)

The average '50s Filipino viewer has also been introduced to American narrative formula called the Classical Hollywood Narrative Cinema. According to Deocampo, this classical style “came after the more syncretic, the linear style of the so-called early cinema period” which was “not following a story.” In the early years of the silent movies, shots were arranged in successive manner. To elicit understanding, subtitles and intertitles were supplied. The early films were just a bit of an improvement of the ancient storytelling tradition. It was Edwin S. Porter’s *Great Train Robbery* that changed the whole way of film storytelling and propelled it towards the “classical” type we know today. When filmmakers

started assembling films, wherein one shot has a linear connection to the other shot, and a linear continuity to the other shot following one line of the story, then the linearity, the linguistic element of the film start to come in. Even if it was silent, film was speaking. People could understand. Having established that, the style of putting together films in order to create a story, this is called the classical Hollywood cinema. (personal communication, July 4, 2012)

The exposure of directors to foreign influences and the knowledge of audiences regarding Hollywood films have intensified the influence of the classical style which is distinct for its Aristotelian formula plot in which events are strung together along a causal chain. The 1950s saw the maturation of the Classical Hollywood Cinema in local practice.

Filipino film directors' exposure to Hollywood cinema was not only a product of avid movie-going and educating one's taste in English-language movies. In fact, local talents were always elated by their encounter with foreign artists who would shoot films in the Philippines or would come for a visit. In 1950, the *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* reported the filming of the Hollywood film titled *An American Guerilla in the Philippines* starring Tyrone Powell ("Screen Sidelights" by Snooper, May 1950). The film's producer, Twentieth Century-Fox, recruited local talents led by Rosa del Rosario to play the Filipino roles. The Filipinos' willingness to experience Hollywood-style filmmaking was a manifestation of their aspiration to internationalize and to understand cinema beyond the confines of the local.

Hollywood was a prime spinner of fantasy-adventure or swashbucklers in the 1950s and served as an impetus to local versions. The comics series *Classics Illustrated* inspired Filipinized versions of the korido in *Liwayway* and *Tagalog Klasiks*, a magazine devoted to literary and popular classics. Other influences such as gothic fiction were also being taught in school during this period. The 1950s witnessed the maturation of Philippine writings in English. Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and similar gothic-style works were not alien to the reading tastes of Filipino komiks creators and film directors. The American teachers or the Thomasites were the prime instigator of this

education of Filipinos in the romanticism of Walter Scott and Victor Hugo and the realism of William Faulkner and Charles Dickens. Anglo-American writings were simply accessible. Reading tastes became polarized between the English readers and the Tagalog readers.

While the romantic strain in Philippine letters in the 1950s has found a rival in the more gritty realistic style, the reign of fantasy-adventure stories in cinema did not seem to end. Mars Ravelo's *Darna* and *Dyesebel* came out during the period and became two of the most recycled on-screen heroines until the most recent times.

2. *Indigenization/Vernacularization*

Indigenization and vernacularization imply appropriating foreign materials and transmuting these onto local practice. According to Deocampo (2003), "through indigenization, foreign cultural influences became nativized, taking on native trappings" (p.xv). There are two points in Deocampo's definition: one has to do with the existence of foreign influences and another presupposes the pre-existence of the native. The "native" as it interacts with the foreign, within the context of adaptation, is the interest of this subsection.

The word "vernacular" is a term used to refer to a local language or a particular dialect. Exemplified in Houston Baker, Jr.'s explanation of the blues as a vernacular literature of African-Americans, the word vernacular has come to be appropriated in contemporary discourse to mean that a foreign idea has been translated using the vernacular literally or using local contexts metaphorically. To vernacularize is to translate.

Foreign imitation is inevitable in a culture that had spent most of its known history as a colony of another country. Whether by virtue of colonial cultural policy or by collective will to ape the alien, foreign influences on local cinema did not stay in their pure form. These were sifted through the native lens. In the 1950s, the foreign sources of local cinema also paved the way for the vernacular. As Tiongson (2000) avers: “Where imitation ends, indigenization begins” (p.24).

Pilar defines Filipino film adaptation as whatever “style, approach, technique, which may be unique to Filipino film arising from the needs that entail the creation of these films or these adaptations.” (personal communication, March 10, 2012). Pilar’s definition presupposes an understanding of how Filipino filmmakers borrow from the outside and appropriate what in a way is distinct, or “unique to Filipino film.” But determining uniqueness requires an understanding of the formative process – “arising from the needs that entail the creation of these films or these adaptations.”

“Uniqueness” is a loaded term. What we claim as unique in our culture may also be identified as a common feature of adaptation in other formerly colonized nations. One example is the cultural significance assigned to the fantasy-adventure genre in our culture. Our pre-historic past produced ethno-epics, which are the precursor of the modern fantasy-adventure genre. Our epics bear resemblances and share conventions with foreign epics (Campos, 2009b).

Yet it may still be worthy to understand how Filipinos vernacularize alien concepts. As a case in point, the fantasy-adventure komiks *Tulisanang Pugot* draws from various foreign sources. Ostensibly, the Washington Irving novella *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* will come to mind but the film also draws obviously from 18th and 19th century

romantic novels such as those by Dumas and Hugo. Locally, the story finds an affinity with stories such as *Rodrigo de Villa* and other metrical romances. *Sleepy Hollow* is a probable source for *Tulisang Pugot* yet its Spanish-era setting equally lends a historical specificity to its plot. In other words, the historical basis of the story and the use of the Tagalog language are two steps taken towards vernacularizing disparate foreign elements.

From European and Anglo-American fantasy-adventures to the local setting, there is an obvious displacement not only temporally but also spatially. The romance of the late 18th century and the early 19th century have been reinterpreted into 19th century colonial Philippines. The medieval castles in Europe have been replaced by a Spanish pueblo peopled by the local principalia or affluent natives/indios who were allowed to own lands.

The act of appropriation is the beginning of Filipinicity, which is another word that Hornedo (1989) employs to refer to the native. Using the jeepney as a symbolic exemplar of the “visitor” in folk and popular culture, Hornedo proves the wisdom of what Frank Lynch, an American anthropologist, says about appropriation: “Today’s native was yesterday’s visitor” (qtd in Hornedo, 1989, p.12). Once we have taken something from others, we cultivate it and give it a name. Hornedo (1989) further offers: “For the Filipino there is such a thing as appropriation by extension” (p.15).

For Lumbera, the natural transfer from one environment to another is rooted in the narrative tradition:

Yes, ang adaptasyon dikta yan. Merong native sensibility na nagtuturo sayo na ito ang iyong gawin. Meron kang pinagmumulang local...So sa adaptasyon meron kang sisidlan o molde na ginagamit at ang molde na yon ay inilalapat mo sa material na ito with the consciousness na maganap, na magawa mo ang iyung intensyon.” [Yes, adaptation is dictated from somewhere. You have a native sensibility that tells you what to do. You have local origins. In adaptation, you

have a vessel or mold and in that mold, you fit in a material with a consciousness that you will be able to do it according to your intention.] (personal communication, February 3, 2012).

Adaptation practitioners knew their audience and the native sensibility. Works of adaptation motivated a transfer of “passion” from one medium to the other. If komiks stories “resonate” with the audience, Yonzon, Jr. says, then it is a good “reference” point for cinema (personal communication, March 28, 2012). Rafael calls this “migratory enthusiasm” (Lecture, November 10, 2004). The person’s interest in one medium will one day move on to other media.

Language plays a major role in the dynamic interaction between komiks, film and their foreign sources. The local language is repository of the soul of the native. D.M. Reyes recounts that after the war, there were two major “streams” in the literary field: Filipino literature in English and the literature in the vernacular. The writings in English were not easily translatable to Tagalog-speaking films. The vernacular writings of the decade easily became a natural ally of cinema. These supported the idea of the popular. “Vernacular” and “cinema” almost become synonymous with each other. D.M. Reyes contends:

Ang sagot ko [My answer] is, it really has to do with the vital role that language plays. So, [the] materials the people were well-acquainted with, because the language aided them in that acquaintance, so to speak. And here I’m talking about materials from the komedya, materials from the awit and korido that were spills over from the Spanish influence. I think those materials had been widely popularized, using what was then known as Tagalog or what we call today Filipino helped a great deal in determining what is popular. So, I think there are other things. But the transition from one medium to another, I would like to think, is integrally and vitally qualified by language. And perhaps other rubrics that will qualify the idea of popular. (personal communication, April 16, 2012)

In fact, there was a prevailing view in the 1950s that the movies were the foremost propagator of the National Language (Generoso, *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, April 1951). Salumbides even complained in his 1952 book that in spite of the important role of the movies in developing the National Language, the government still imposed amusement tax that had direct effect on the film industry. Vernacularization of filmmaking has been largely attributed to the language of cinema, Tagalog.

Moreover, it seemed that local producers advocated for more support to local cinema in the face of tough competition posed by Hollywood films. A June 16, 1958 editorial commentary of *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* carries this sentiment of putting “endemic” against the “foreigner’s point of view.” In fact, the editorial notes the heavy patronage by provincial people of local movies, “being less exposed to foreign influence, can still appreciate what is indigenous to them,” while city people were “mentally predisposed to alien influence – as a matter of taste and sometimes of pretense” (Editorial, *LSM*, p.1). Although movie journalists were not directly concerned with vernacularization, they were convinced that the competition between English-language movies and Tagalog films of the era was crucial in developing the local and the native.

To provide another concrete picture of how vernacularization works, the importance of music in fifties films specifically in works of adaptation should be noteworthy. The korido films are always accentuated by musical numbers and choreographed dance presentations. Usually making their appearances during court assembly scenes and courting scenes, the musical portion fulfils other functions such as highlighting the leitmotif, accompanying character introduction or transitioning to another scene. A.N. Munoz, writing for *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* on February 16,

1958, considers the musical portion of the film as a means “to transform the element of unreality, fantasy and myth into something real, alive and believable” (p.27). This tendency to musicality of the Filipino film is an impulse towards vernacularization. Usually rendered in a *kundiman* (love song), the musical portion usually highlights the sentimental life of Filipinos.

D. M. Reyes admits that vernacularization is not linear and pat. Technology, studio decisions, popularity, and the story material contribute as well to the transfer process. “Adaptation is very complex process,” opines D.M. Reyes; it is not just a case of the vessel whose contents will be transferred to another or what we call “pagsasalin” [transfer] in Filipino. Rather, it is complicated by the “various conditions” of culture:

The complexity and the politics of translation tell us that it’s not just the matter of finding the linguistic equivalence from one language to another. Somehow there are also cultural equivalents. (personal communication, April 16, 2012)

“Hollywood movies could only spawn its own kind and it became nativized, indigenized, owned,” Decocampo articulates. Indigenization is about native psychology, forged by collective character and is circumscribed in form. “The Graphic Arts director told me years ago, it was because Filipinos are romantic people” adds Lent when asked why escapist entertainment dominates local cinema. However, the romance mode being not unique to the Filipinos, Lent senses that a native sensibility is melded with individual needs and gratifications: “Perhaps also, because these either serve the purposes of self-identification of the masses in the case of realism and escape or hopeful wish fulfilment in the case of romance” (online communication, February 2, 2012).

The romance mode, avers Medina, Jr. (1976), has always been a category to explain Filipino character. Speaking of the pre-colonial Tagalog, his subservience to

romantic agony characterizes much of the lyricism of his poetic compositions, but as this is tied to the personal. This romantic strain did not die but seemed to heighten during the colonial years and in the fifties cinema. The romantic trait in fact received a new rendering in the fantasy where the focus character is a marginalized individual who wants to rise one day to a position of significance.

The foreign and the native are not mutually exclusive in Filipino film adaptation in the 1950s. As film draws from komiks-sources, which earlier borrowed from foreign plots, it is the convergence of two media and of two narrative impulses, one visitor and one local, and not their separateness, that should matter in defining Filipino adaptive style. Yeatter (2007) puts it more aptly:

Within is a fascinating and complex amalgam of styles and artistic modes that have always tended to set Philippine cinema apart, often making it seem like a culture vying against itself, between two worlds, too Asian to be thoroughly Westernized, too Westernized to be thoroughly Asian. In this age of modern media, as cultural divides seem to be lessening, this kind of cultural osmosis may no longer seem particularly unusual (p.2).

C. The Institutional Matrix of 1950s Komiks-to-Film Adaptation

1. *'Producers as Critics'*

It was ironic that the studio system in the Philippines reached its high point in the 1950s when that of Hollywood was almost decimated. It was the American model that served as a template for the Filipino film studio management style. Bazin (in Schatz, 1988) refers to the old guards of the American industry as the "genius of the system" who adopted a distinct management style. These vanguards were the studio executives who shaped "classical" American cinema since the early years. As Schatz (1988) further explains:

It's taken us a quarter-century to appreciate that insight, to consider the "classical Hollywood" as precisely that: a period when various social, industrial, technological, economic, and aesthetic forces struck a delicate balance. That balance was conflicted and ever shifting but stable enough through four decades to provide a consistent system of production and consumption, a set of formalized creative practices and constraints, and thus a body of work with a uniform style – a standard way of telling stories, from camera work and cutting to plot structure and thematics. (pp.8-9)

From 1930 to 1948, the Hollywood model "flourished as an oligopoly" and were "vertically integrated" (Cook [Ed], 1985, p. 10). The Philippine version somehow took after the oligarchic quality of the Hollywood template because a handful of families and entrepreneurs dominated the industry, enough to influence an indigenized application of the studio system and film genres and their content as well for a number of years.

Like their Hollywood counterpart, Philippine studios of the fifties were engaged in almost all aspects of production, distribution and consumption of films. The big four Philippine studios in the 1950s – LVN, Sampaguita, Premiere and Lebran – were run by executives who designed a system that will control all creative output. They rationalized all production, distribution and consumption activities: conceptualization; financing; importation of technology; sourcing and development of story materials; contracting stars and resident film production directors and artisans; promotion; and, continuous generation of formulas such as genres to ensure the perpetuity of the Fordist assembly line of management. This required "long-term planning" (*CCP Encyclopedia*, 1994) and engaged in managing and contracting stars whose public image was also protected.

Studio formulas were connected to certain "specializations" that each studio nurtured. The *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994) reports that Sampaguita Pictures specialized on "youth movies"; LVN on "costume pictures"; Premiere on "action films and crime stories; and, Lebran on "Western classics, the Bible, and ancient history" (p.40). The link

between story types and company specialization was what Cowie (1988) refers to as the “two pivotal functions” of classical Hollywood cinema, which the author identifies as “narrative and profit” (p.179). This seemed to be the same spirit that influenced Filipino studios’ style of management that balances between acceptability and saleability of film content.

Corollary to this, producers were also aware that generic transpositions from popular source texts like komiks onto the cinema would be sure-fire box office decisions, as illustrated by the case of Mars Ravelo’s *Roberta* which was turned into a successful Tessie Agana film and rescued Sampaguita from near bankruptcy when its studio was gutted by a fire in 1951 (Francia, 2003). Generic mediation in this case (melodrama and children’s stories) became a winning business strategy.

The subheading “Producers as Critics,” which has been placed to serve as a subtopic to guide this section, was an appropriated phrase from Altman (1999) in his book *Film/Genre*. Even in Hollywood, there is the prevailing assumption that producers are entrepreneurs whose decisions proceed from their wise reading of industry trends and audience preferences. This projects an image of the movie mogul who responds to the genrification process or the creation of formulas as an “*ex post facto* operation,” (Altman, 1999, p. 44) which means that they order the repeat of the material that clicked with the audience previously. Altman (1999) thinks that this assumption may not be accurate at all:

Film production constantly involves a process of criticism that actually precedes the act of production. Almost every film is meant to serve the function of creating synergy by locating successful device and carrying it to another film where, if it again succeeds, still further success is guaranteed (p. 44)

In other words, the producers may be acting as readers, viewers and critics themselves. They determine genres by acting on their own perceptions and contexts. Nothing can be farther from the truth when speaking of the Filipino producers of the 1950s. And no other producer embodies the *producer as critic* role than Doña Sisang or Doña Narcisa Buencamino vda de Leon. As Del Mundo, Jr. (online communication, July 8, 2012) has mentioned, and as confirmed by the Monina Mercado-edited book, *Doña Sisang and the Movies* (1977), the matriarch's preferences had a strong influence on the production's ideological content. Her love for awit and korido was the reason for the great quantity of costume pictures or historical fantasy films that were released by LVN, not to mention her interest in music that also made the musical number, complete with a full orchestral arrangement, an indispensable feature in her movies.

Doña Sisang was elected the president of LVN since its establishment in 1938. The old lady's co-founders were Carmen Villongco and Eleuterio Navoa. The film production company was considered as one of the four major producers during the studio era (1930s to 1950s), alongside Sampaguita Pictures, Premiere and Lebran. It stopped making movies in 1980 but continued to maintain its film laboratory processing unit for many more years. Doña Sisang served as the company's executive producer until 1961 during which time the industry was experiencing the break-up of the studio system. LVN has been credited for producing almost one half of the all the films released in the 1950s. The last film it produced was *Kakabakaba Ka Ba?/Are You Nervous?*, which was released in 1980.

Before the war, LVN was known to have produced classics that were spin-offs from the traditional drama such as the moro-moro or comedia and the sarswela (Del

Mundo, Jr.,1998). *Giliw Ko* (My Love) was LVN's first production in the '30s. One of its acclaimed pre-war movies was *Ibong Adarna* (The Adarna Bird, 1941), which the *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994) has adjudged to be the "first Filipino movie with color sequences painted frame by frame"(p.273). The contribution of LVN Pictures to the 1950s studio system, to film adaptation and to Filipino film history in general, has always been largely attributed to Doña Sisang. Salumbides wrote in 1952 that her life "is an inspiration to all Filipino women"(p.24) . Mercado's description of the grand matriarch in the 1997 book she edited titled *Doña Sisang and Filipino Movies* confirms Salumbides's tribute to her work attitude:

Gifted with an incandescent energy, Doña Sisang involved herself in the movies produced at the LVN studio. She worked on every detail: story, script, cast, director, music, costume and editing"(p.6).

Manuel de Leon, Doña Sisang's son and LVN General Manager during his mother's reign at the studio, told Mercado (1977): "Before my mother started producing movies, I don't think she had seen a motion picture in her life" (p.10). For one who was not formally trained as a critic, Doña Sisang embodied the producer who would exert tremendous influence on the subjects of her film company's production.

Doña Sisang as producer/critic made sure that her ideology will shape the content of LVN films. She preferred the costume movies where she could relive the metrical romances that entertained her youth. These romances are melded with the musical sub-genre not only because she came from a musically-inclined family but because she loved a variety of Filipino musical genres. By insisting on the adoption of certain genres, she regularized content and formed audiences. As critic, she subconsciously pursued to educate tastes rather than being prodded by industry trends. A *Kislap* Magazine article

commemorating her 72nd birthday in 1949 narrates her actual work routine that made sure that nothing extraneous to her ideological program gets into her movies. In this write-up, the picture of Doña Sisang as a zealous critic at work is given shape:

Pagkakain ng tanghalian, sa oras ng pamamahinga ay nagbabasa naman siya ng nobela at mga “script” at diyan ako lubusang humahanga sa matandang babaing itong sadyang kaibang-kaiba ang likas na katalinuhan. Sa araw-araw na ginawa ng Diyos ay hindi lamang limang nobela at script ang kanyang natutunghayan at bawa’t isa niyan, sa sandaling matapos niyang basahiy maliwanag na maikukuwento sa inyo... [After lunch, during break time, she will read novels and script and here I truly admire the old woman for her natural intelligence. Every day that God created, she could read no less than five novels and scripts, which she could narrate to you from memory...](Canseco, 1949, p.5)

The effort that Doña Sisang poured over selecting the literary sources for her films, she also applied on many other activities of production such as watching the daily rushes, critiquing her directors’ work for the day, costume-fitting and scouting new faces to join her company’s roster of stars. Onto the content and production values of her movies, the fifties generation saw a glimpse of how Doña Sisang turned filmmaking into a family affair – from celebrating her birthday with a big bash to encouraging a high standard of quality work among her employees or re-engineering her stars’ public image. In 1949, both *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* (November 1949) and *Kislap* (November 2, 1949) carried an editorial and a number of articles respectively in their issues to celebrate the old woman’s 72nd birthday.

When LVN, along with other producers of the industry, began to falter in the 1960s, after Doña Sisang retired, her son Emmanuel was asked his opinion about the general downturn in the industry. His reveals that there are occasions when producers become less effective as critics:

I can’t tell exactly. Maybe we failed at the box-office because we did not develop new stars. You know, the movie business is always a gamble. A producer has to

keep track of the ever-changing mood of the people (qtd in Gotera, "Memories of LVN's Glorious Days," Daily Express, October 10, 1980, N.d.)

The youthful glow and mood of the harvest of LVN's rival company, Sampaguita Pictures, represents another variation of the "producer as critic" role in the formation of genres and of audiences in the 1950s. Born a tad earlier than LVN Pictures, Sampaguita Pictures was a product of the fortunate collaboration between members of the Vera family and a number of entrepreneurs who gambled at the idea of a film producing company. Pedro Vera proposed to his co-incorporators that they enlist the expertise of Luis Nolasco who had just left Luis Nepomuceno's Parlatone Hispano-Filipino and who was an experienced scriptwriter and production manager. Together with actors Elsa Oria and Rogelio dela Rosa and directors Carlos Vander Tolosa and Manuel Silos, Nolasco joined Sampaguita, which started with a capital outlay of P20,000 and a newly-built studio (*CCP Encyclopedia*, 1994; Salumbides, 1952; Francia, 2003)

The first Sampaguita production was titled *Butuing Marikit* (Beautiful Star, 1937), the first of the musicals that the production firm would release in the next couple of years. During the war years, Sampaguita did not produce any movie but by 1946, under the management of Judge Jose Vera, it released a Gerardo de Leon-directed movie titled *So Long, America*. By 1951, Sampaguita will be one of the big four studios in Philippine cinema alongside LVN, Premiere and Lebran, only to suffer a major setback when its studio caught fire. It was the post-fire production titled *Roberta*, a true box-office success, which brought Sampaguita back in the saddle again. The company would produce films for a number of decades more until it finally closed down in 1995.

Francia (2003) consulted the Amended Articles of Incorporation of Sampaguita filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1987 and quoted the company's objective in her study, which follows:

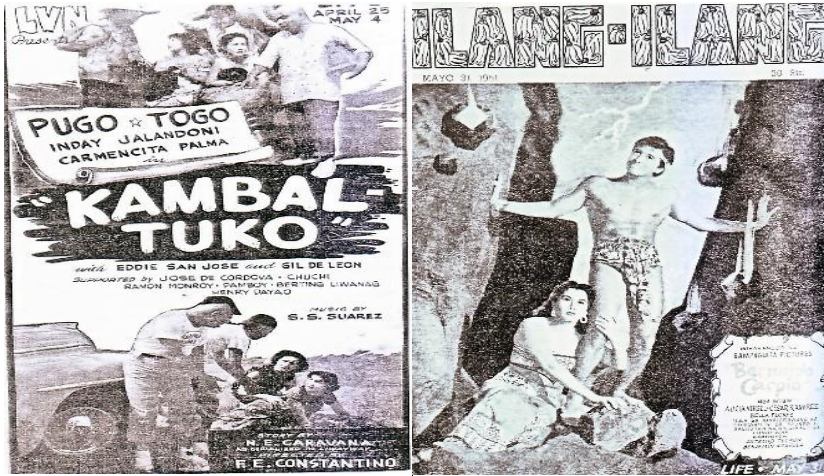
To make, produce, design, prepare, stage, exhibit, and arrange for all manner of plays, dramas, and exhibitions, suitable for presentation and reproduction as photoplays, silent and sound motion pictures or film productions of any kind... (p.92).

The company made sure that pre-existing forms would be the prime sources to their projects. In the 1950s, Sampaguita sourced out komiks and radio stories with more frequency (Francia, 2003). The youth films of Sampaguita were the evidence that the Veras employed a critical practice that shaped its corporate identity and production identity. Altman (1999) observes that after a type of material has been positioned and recycled, the next thing on the agenda of the industry is to ensure audience formation on account of such:

If the first step in genre production is the creation of a reading position through critical dissection, and the second is reinforcement of that position through film production, the required third step is broad industry acceptance of the proposed reading position and genre. (p.46)

To earn the consensus of the masses, advertising and promotions were conducted to ensure box office success. For example, the following advertising for LVN's *Kambal-Tuko* and Sampaguita's *Bernardo Carpio* carry company identity and captures the genre where each thrives. *Kambal Tuko* capitalizes on the bodabil-influenced acts of Pugo and Togo in previous outings. *Bernardo Carpio* capitalizes on the reel/real life romance between Cesar Ramirez and Alicia Vergel, the film's stars:

Figure 47: Ads for *Kambal Tuko* and *Bernardo Carpio*



Movie poster for *Kambal Tuko* reflects LVN interest in “remembered” entertainment from the past such as *bodabil* and *komedya*. Sampaguita’s promotional cover ad for *Bernardo Carpio* reveals the company’s strategy to represent an old story in a way that is fresh or new through the off-screen background of the stars.

Aside from movie advertising, the studios also conducted movie premieres to promote their movies. The attendance of stars and prominent personalities would give a boost to a forthcoming movie and as implied by a March 1950 editorial of *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, was instrumental in bridging the gap between those who think of local movies as low art and those who patronized them. To elicit a broad acceptance of the material that has been previously dissected by the producer who deemed it appealing, premieres have been institutionalized and glamorized. As the *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* (March 1950) editorial puts it: “Premieres are gala affair” (p.2).

The producer-as-critic role is an important social aspect of moviemaking in the fifties because it allowed for the narrative fetish of the film company become also the reading position of the masses. Generic cycles are good only for as long as the producer

could read astutely the pulse of the audience on a per film season basis. This has been articulated by Premiere's executive producer, Dr. Ciriaco Santiago:

We know soon enough when a picture is a flop. People don't go to see it. Then along comes some sleeper, perhaps one with stars or actors you don't often hear about. Something registers in the public mind; some responsive chord is struck and they come in battalions. I've never been able to figure it out entirely (Chanco, "How to become a producer," *Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, August 1950, p. 20).

Sampaguita Pictures proved the truism of Santiago's claim with the child-tearjerker genre, *Roberta*, the company's post-fire hit. A fire also gutted Premiere studio but the company regained its strength and even released *48 Oras* (*Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, April 1950), now a classic from the era. LVN would also have surprise hits such as *Rose Tattoo ng Buhay Ko* which featured Diomedes Maturan (Mercado, 1977). The meeting of minds of the producers and the viewers were frequent, aided by post-filmic activities such as advertising and promotions. On occasions when they fail to converge in terms of taste and preferences, the producers take these as part of the gamble. This attitude has been typified by Doña Sisang who was allegedly heard to have said when one of her projects bombed at the box office: "Talagang ganyan. Swerte swerte lamang." [*Such is business. It's about luck.*]. After a flop, the producer moves on to another critical activity of reading the next genre's configuration or its possibility for an update. This time, she hopes her reading would be right on target.

2. The "Aura" of the Stars

In the opening scene of the 1990 novel titled *Dogeaters* by Filipino-American novelist Jessica Hagedorn, the main character recalls in a dreamy soliloquy her avid movie-watching in 1950s downtown Manila where Hollywood films are exhibited at such regularity than any movie-addicted viewer could watch. Her recollections teem with

images of stars such as Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson, Agnes Moorehead and Gloria Talbott. She caps this movie-watching sessions with her cousin over snacks as they excitedly recite favourite lines and recall images from the recently-screened film. In the latter pages, the novel would describe local movies that were in competition with imported Hollywood runs and the Filipino actors and actresses - who are obvious counterparts of the American stars - that also enjoy quite a following from another audience group.

Dogeaters' dreamy reconstruction of the 1950s reflects the impact not only of movies but of stars on the collective psyche of the viewing public. So impactful are the stars' persona that films adapted from komiks materials that were in turn previously drawn from the popular acts of the movie stars themselves. The sources of the komiks stories then were not only the korido, Hollywood genres and native sources but also cinematic materials; thereby, effecting a reverse flow of influence from cinema to komiks.

The title of this subsection, "The 'Aura' of the Stars," appropriates the word "aura" not in a literal sense but in an ironic sense. Walter Benjamin (1968) in his essay *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* avers that the stage actor is different from a film actor in the sense that the former has maintained the aura of the performer because the persona of the actor and the impact of their roles stay within the limits of the theatre stage, unlike the film actor who has been the subject of promotion advertising and due to mechanical reproduction is seen in a repertoire of roles that are almost of the same mold. "The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the 'personality' outside the studio" (p. 231), Benjamin adds.

The result of advertising and promotional build-up is a persona that is tied to the roles the actor plays. As a result, roles and images become almost inseparable. Benjamin (1968) insists further: “The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of the personality,’ the phony spell of a commodity” (p.231). This cult of personality may be seen in how the studios of the fifties orchestrated the practice of creating film roles that were associated with specific stars.

The stars invoke the characters they play through a conscious matching of public persona with fictional characterizations that sometimes almost reach a mythic dimension in the eyes of a rabid and adoring moviegoer. Deocampo and Pilar note that in movie stars, public persona limns onscreen characterization. In the fifties, the onscreen personas of comedians Pugo and Togo came from various sedimentations of industry strategizing where film narrative content descends from their previous work as comedians. In the 1930s, Pugo and Togo had separate careers as singers, then sarswelistas, then bodabilitas, then stand-up comic, then radio comedians, and then movie actors.

The two actors’ successful career together merited quite a number of magazine stories. In “Tagumpay ng mga Panut na Ulo” [*Success of Bald Heads*] (*Literary Song-Movie Magazine*, June 1950), their beginnings are traced and the legend of their bald heads. Their personal sorrows and family lives have been the subject of quite a number of magazine articles too (*The Story of*; LSM, November 1949; *Comedians , too, are people*, LSM, September 16, 1958; *Ang kasaysayan ni Togo ay isang komedyal*[*The story of Togo is a comedy*], LSM, January 1950). LVN capitalized on the two actors’ chemistry that the company lined up a number of films built around their antics: *Dalawang*

Prinsipeng Kambal (Two Twin Princes), *Edong Mapangarap (Dreamy Edong)*, *Kambal Tuko*, to name a few. Nemesio Caravana's komiks story *Kambal Tuko* obviously drew from the personality comedians as materials that LVN and director F.H. Constantino picked up eventually and turned into movie fiction. In the story, the children lose their hair in one freak accident and the images of the grown-up twins unmistakably point to Pugo and Togo as the source of the story.

The Pugo-Togo personas elicited a cult following so that when Togo died suddenly in 1952, his wake and burial drew crowds and led to so many magazine stories celebrating his life and works ("The Show Must Go On," *LSM*, December 1952; "Screen Sidelights," *LSM*, November 1952; "Mga Huling Araw ni Togo [The Last Days of Togo]," *LSM*, November 1952). In its November 1952 issue, the *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* ran an editorial commemorating the passing of the comedian, stating his contribution to popular entertainment:

To thousands of people, it was a great tragedy because it was the passing of a laughter – a laughter that tried to make bearable the lives of countless many during the dark days of enemy occupation, a laughter that gave a ray of cheer to many poor people burdened by the many cares of trying to keep themselves alive (p.2).

Komiks contribute in shaping the iconography of the characters, protagonists and heroes in the film version. It can be safely assumed that the physical embodiment of the film characters was first imagined through the pages of the komiks. Both the komiks and the film have always been derided for rendering stereotypes, unlike the complex psychology that novels endow on their characters. Braudy (1977) opines that this kind of thinking has been shaped by the comparison usually drawn between 19th century French and English novels and their film versions. The film, being a mechanical art, is partial for

the overt, the seen and the portrayed. “The visual imperatives of film therefore tyrannize and reduce our sense of character” (Braudy, 1977, p.183). Komiks contribute to the shaping of the outer life rather than the inner life of characters, being the first draft on the canvass.

Cinema and komiks in the 1950s were competing with Hollywood materials, as that opening scene in *Dogeaters* colourfully describes. Recalling the “maganda ang maputi [White is beautiful]” disvalue of drama and film that Tiongson (1983) ascribes to the Spanish colonial aesthetics, the fair-skinned actors and actresses, with a bias in favour of Filipinos with foreign blood and those raised in upper middle class gentile manners, were easily cast. Mercado (1977)’s Doña Sisang’s biography mentions that the LVN matriarch did not do screen test and relied on first impression and good on-screen registers of former extras and bit players. Thus:

Those were the days of the mestizo and mestiza. Stars, in the Hollywood manner, dressed and spoke and behaved like stars. There was an aura about them that invited hero-worship – they could do no wrong. At LVN, Doña Sisang ruled with a firm but gentle hand. Under her keen and watchful eye, the young men and women she picked to develop into stars grew up, flourished and achieved superstardom. (p.38)

The fifties stars sometimes had to live in the shadow of foreign influences and models. To wit, Del Mundo, Jr. adds:

There may be unique, influences that can be traced clearly to Hollywood, e.g. the preference for “mestizos” and “mestizas” (the ‘50s had the local counterparts of Liz Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, Pier Angeli, Anthony Perkins, Elvis Presley, etc.). Tita Duran in *Tunay na Ina* copied Shirley Temple (Del Mundo, Jr., unpublished essay, n.d.).

While Hollywood prototypes influenced local stars in re-fashioning their career, a residual Spanish sensibility motivated actors who were bred in sarswelas and began as silent actors such as Rogelio de la Rosa and Pugo and Togo. Pilar mentions that

sarswelistas of the early days of cinema were schooled in Hispanic influences, living and breathing these with gusto, and perhaps this attitude of embracing anything foreign was carried on until the 1950s. Thus:

Except for a few, our earliest actors were also Kastila [Spanish]. Most of our earliest actors and actresses came from the sarswela. They knew what was current in Latin America and in Spain (personal communication, March 10, 2012)

It may safely be said that that while public personas were shaped through the influence of the Hollywood mode of linking genre/content with film roles, it was the Spanish sensibility of the *ilustrado* glamour and bourgeoisie consciousness that also guided their idea of public lives. Film stars would imbibe this quest for glamour, even if this would create a “tension” between the goals of aristocracy and the audience preference: “So many high society women went into films because they want ...to be seen. It was status symbol...” (Pilar, personal communication, March 10, 2012).

The stars of the fifties were projected to be role models of society. For instance, Salumbides (1952) indicates in his book the following as one of the duties of the stars: “Avoid vice, immorality, crime and other scandals that will shock and disappoint the fans and alienate their admiration and patronage” (p.70). For example, quite a number of magazine stories have been used to feature and promote the personal lives of the actors. When the actor Fred Montilla starred in a movie where he plays a boxer, a magazine article was published to feature the actor’s former stint as a boxing hobbyist (“Fred Montilla: Ang Kampeon[The Champion],” *LSM*, December 1949). When he starred in Sampaguita’s *Baguio Cadets*, a feature story on his educational background, on his reading habits and on his knowledge of current issues came out (“With a heart for the underdogs,” *LSM*, July 1950). The story tries to project him as a civic-minded actor.

The changing aura of the stars or their “shrivelling,” as Benjamin (1968) has mentioned as a result of the substitution of the actor’s cult of personality, reflects a confluence of extra-filmic aspects, namely: the film role, the actor’s screen image, the producer’s career plans for the actor and the genres that the actor works around. As Braudy (1977) comments on the inextricability of acting role and actor’s image:

The film actor does not so much perform a role as he creates a kind of life, playing between his characterizations in a particular film and his potential escape from that character, outside the film and perhaps into other films (p.194).

3. *Fandom*

In the 1950s, the institutionalization of the star system was pursued for the formation of audiences. The film viewers were either fans of particular genres or fans of movie personalities. The fans made their approval of films and stars known through the box office results but they also engaged in fan-related activities that present-day scholars such as Sandvoss (2005) call “fan productivity”(p. 28).

The word “fan” is associated with the word “fanatic,” which traces its origins in its Latin derivative “fanaticus” meaning “of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee” (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 12). In its modern connotation, a fan is any follower of a celebrity, a media form, a particular sport, or any other media products and whose range of involvement with the person or entity admired/adored depends on the meaning or value he or she derives from it. Fandom then connotes a subculture and as this was practiced by followers of 1950s Filipino cinema, a sort of pockets of social formation driven by the cult of the movie personalities. Sandvoss’s (2005) defines fandom as

the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text in the form of books, television shows, films or music, as well as popular texts in a broader sense such as sports teams and popular icons and stars ranging from athletes and musicians to actors (p.8).

In the 1950s, fans interacted with stars through fan mails and indirectly through letters to the editor of movie magazines like *Literary Song-Movie Magazine* and *Kislap*. Occasionally, fans would be treated to a fans day at the LVN and Sampaguita compounds. They also were given a very rare chance to see their favourite stars in premiere screenings. The fans saw their stars less in the fifties, unlike today where mall tours and television guestings are made extension of promotions and publicity for the actors. The aura of actors, according to Benjamin (1968), declined with the birth of mechanical art which rendered it reproducible and accessible. As far as the 1950s stars are concerned, a little semblance of this aura remained intact because the public appearances of stars were rare and tightly-controlled by film producers like Doña Sisang.

After a fan has made his or her selection of a celebrity to admire or emulate, the emotional investment comes as a necessity. Theorists such as Hills (2002) believe that this “emotional attachment” distinguishes a fan from a non-fan. The fan participates in “a form of cultural creativity or ‘play’ which moves, non-competitively, across the usual boundaries and categories of experience” (p.90). Hills (2002) cites Silverstone’s (1999, in Hills, 2002) description of play as that which

enables the exploration of that tissue boundary between fantasy and reality, between the real and the imagined, between the self and the other. In play, we have a license to explore, both ourselves and our society. In play we investigate culture, but we also create it (p.90).

The “play” may be manifested in the primary medium used by a 1950s fan to establish a connection with a star: the fan mail. Fans who send fan mails to their favourite stars occupy this region “between fantasy and reality, between the real and the imagined” because they re-live their perception of the idols through confirmation. By letting their

feelings known to their object of admiration, they expect a response that will confirm their fantasy. Vic Generoso, a movie writer for *LSM* mentions numerous letters his magazine “received from movie fans who complain about how negligent some local movie stars are to fan letters” (p.16). The writer notes this as a common problem of stars’ neglect of their fans even if “movie producers have a good respect for artists receiving a good volume of fan mails because it is, usually indicative of the artist’s following, a fact which may make all the difference between a box-office hit or a flop” (p.16).

The fan mail is an accurate picture of the fantasy-reality play that Hills (2002) refers to in propelling fandom as indicator of stars’ aura. Generoso (1950) thinks that fans’ motivation to write to their favourite stars could not be easily pinned down:

The psychology underneath, elusive. Others say it is the very human tendency of trying to bask in reflected glory. A Freudian will claim that it is complex for a past conscious and unconscious frustration. Perhaps it is surpassed[sic] desire (p.16).

This penchant of the fans in projecting their self-image on their favourite stars may be partly ascribed (or blamed), says Generoso (1951) on the ubiquity of movie presses that create an insatiable craving for more information about movie idols. In a series of articles titled “Movie and public interest,” Generoso articulates more of his psychoanalytic analysis of fan activities:

This solicitude or anxiety of the movie fan is understandable, psychologically. He has lived, through his favourite star, a romantically vicarious life on the movies. The star is only his alter ego reflected on the screen. The repetition of this experience creates some sort of merger of personality between the fan and the artist. Hence the great influence that the artist holds the fan. (Generoso, March 1951, “Movie and public interest,” Third Installment, pp. 16, 56)

While a number of fans get their hearts’ desire when they receive a response from the stars, some movie-going people claim they have not sent any letter at all because they

see the reality that stars may have big egos and responding to letters are beneath them. A certain Teotina Olavides of Tuhod, Lanao wrote this to *LSM* in its September 1952 issue:

I for one have not written to any Filipino actress or actor, for I have learned from information that they are what we call “high hats,” thinking that they are already on top of the world. I appreciate your frankness in writing them a letter through the From the Mail. They should realize that their fans have also contributed in great measure to their success. Congratulations for your nice letter to them in your last issue. (p. 14)

Yet the stars also recognize the importance of fan mails in their respective careers. In Generoso’s (“Fan Mails and Movie Artists,” *LSM*, July 1950) article quoted above, he enumerates how the stars handle fan mails. Teody Belarmino considered these “moral builders”(p.16). Fred Montilla found it “very encouraging to know that there are people interested in what you are doing” (p.16). Jaime de la Rosa relegated the task of answering mails to his wife because he is saddled with work. Pancho Magalona and Tita Duran acknowledged their fans contribution to their success. Gina Imperial had two secretaries helping her answer the letters. The responses were varied but they only indicate that the fans’ activities are perfect barometer of their viability as stars.

Stars may use the movie magazines to reach out to their followers or to increase their exposure further and earn new fans. This reproduction of actor Bob Soler’s personal ad (*LSM*, September 1958, p. 61) is an example of a star directly addressing his fans either out of heartfelt gratitude or self-promotion:

Figure 48: *Star addressing fan base*



An actor's personal ad becomes a hard-sell promotional gimmick to invite new fans to take notice of a star occupying the second-tier or third-tier in the business.

Premieres and other promotional activities were also intended to engage the fans.

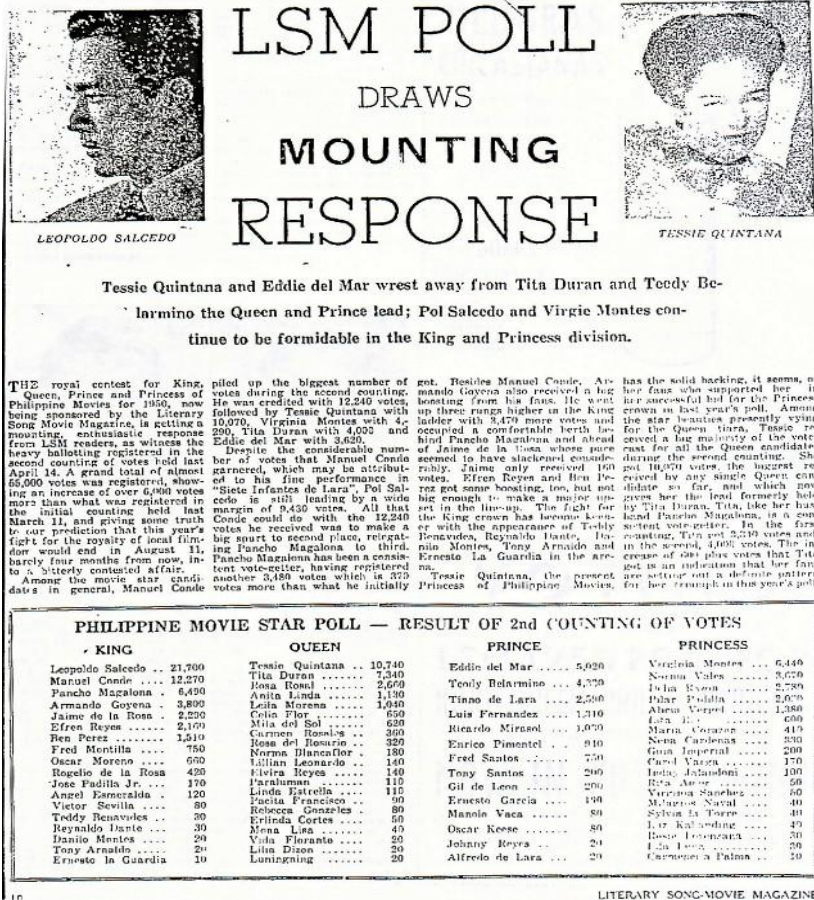
Some promotional gimmicks were over the top so that the more discerning fans could sense their foolhardiness. The following quote from an LSM editorial titled "Coaxing the Boxoffice [sic]" (August 16, 1958) attests to this:

In the legitimate desire to ballyhoo a picture and to coax a sluggish boxoffice, during lean periods or when competition is exceptionally keen, local studios resort to promotion schemes of all kinds, ranging from sometimes fabulous giveaways in the form of raffles to ingenious publicity stunts. Because they have come to be accepted as part of show business, movie fans have taken them for granted, and in some instances, have even grown callous to them. (p.2).

Fans may also be called to respond to a stars popularity contest such as the Philippine Movie Star Poll by the LSM in 1950, in which the titles at stake were the following: King of Philippine Movies, Queen of Philippine Movies, Prince of Philippine

Movies and Princess of Philippine Movies. Even if fan participation is summoned to determine the most bankable stars, the *LSM* claims that the contest was meant to raise the awareness of actors and actresses that they are appreciated for their acting excellence. The magazine associated popularity to “the raising of the standards of local movie products” (p.2). The following is a reproduction of an *LSM* article detailing the initial results of a 1950 poll:

Figure 49: A 1950 Popularity Poll by a Movie Magazine



Results of a 1950 popularity contest in Literary Song-Movie Magazine showed how bankability is tied to fandom.

The fandom of 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation descended from three audience groups: one as fans of the stars, another as fans of komiks story and finally, the fans of the film versions. It is possible that the three groups were one and the same or they may be three separate entities. The creation or formation of audience types and of fans is attributable to the form and content of films adaptations, not only to the stars. Komiks

was “able to form an audience na may relationship sa image and story” [able to form an audience that has relationship to image and story]” says Flores (personal communication, June 14, 2012). Recurring images and storylines invite devoted patronage.

Lent explains that in the post-war years, komiks-sources for film, aside from radio drama were more appealing than literary materials because of “their mass popularity, their regularity, their appeal to what Bert Avellana called the bakya audience” (online communication, February 2, 2012). Avellana, who coined the word “bakya” in the 1950s, also did films that were based on komiks. Lent adds that directors Lino Brocka, Ismael Bernal and Peque Gallaga once told him that “these were reasons” for the appeal of komiks-based films. Film companies exploit this fact; “they (komiks) had a built-in audience from which filmmakers could benefit,” Lent elaborates.

For the reason that the rise of komiks-based movies has been linked to the changing audience preferences, as evidenced by the shift from the novel-based reading interest of the 1930s to the komiks-based reading interest of the 1950’s, the formation of a mass audience should be understood from the perspective of the material conditions of the time and the nagging issue of class distinctions. The people’s reading habits were shaped by life’s conditions and work habits. Popular consumption is thereby linked to class. As D.M. Reyes explains:

We have to consider that after a while, the idea of popularity will have to be qualified by material conditions as well. What am I saying? We have to ask. Did the masses really have sufficient time to read? And what is the quality, what is the nature of the material that they are reading? I don’t mean this as a low down remark but if you are selling bananas or meat in the market, what is the chance that you could read a novel by Macario Pineda, Lazaro Francisco or Inigo Ed Regalado while you are doing that stuff? So I think the publishing industry also have to think of a material that will suit the specific nature of the material reality. And here it will look at framed material that is a combination of illustration, you know line drawings, and dialogue balloons and a narrative that you could infer

from one moment to another quickly at a glance. I'd like to think that was more practical, more suitable and easier reading than the reading of novels. (personal communication, April 16, 2012)

Audience taste is culture-specific. Even the film styles or the predisposition to the realistic style and to the romantic style are culture-specific. The realistic and the romance modes in cinema parallel those of the komiks "to a certain degree," says Lent. "But then, we must ask why were romantic and realistic komiks popular with Filipinos?, asks Lent (online communication, February 2, 2012). "Audience identification" (Turner, 1988, p. 132) to the films based on komiks and to the stars who breathe life into the characters that they invented may be crucial in the formation of fandoms.

Fandom and shifting audience tastes are inextricable from each other. There were those who were fans of the genre and not of specific stars. In fact, editorials have always addressed the issue of the quality of films in the 1950s and the two audiences/crowds called "the provincial crowd" and the "Escolta crowds" who divided the universe of local filmdom. An *LSM* editorial titled "New Horizons" (October 1952) tackles the "provincial" quality of local movies that cater to what Avellana has called the "bakya" crowd. Meanwhile, the "Escolta" crowd was too small but this group appreciates a Manuel Conde film like *Genghis Khan*, which was screened at the Venice International Film Festival that year. This dichotomy between two crowds rendered fandoms in small pockets or fragments. In fact, it is possible that a group of fans was more interested in quality films or what is called in latter times as "cult" films.

An indication that fandom in the 1950s was not only celebrity-focused but also film-focused and genre-focused, may be seen in quite a number of fan mails that read like practical criticisms of the films currently being exhibited downtown. For example is a

quote from letter that is addressed to the *LSM* editor complaining about the inaccuracy of a film synopsis that was printed by the magazine: “How about exerting more effort to refrain from committing mistakes in publishing the synopses of pictures in the “Movies of the Month?” (LSM, “Wake Up,” December 1949)

Or, a complaint on the incoherence of film scenes:

I have recently seen Mr. Nemesio Caravana’s picture “Kuba Sa Kiyapo” in a theatre here. It is indeed a nice picture and I admire it, but there is one part which I cannot understand. One night, when Ana (Mila [del Sol]) went to the house of Doro (Pol [Salcedo]), she saw Andres sleeping. But when Andres woke-up, it was Doro. Ana could not believe it, but Doro told her about the truth of the miracle. While they were embracing each other, Ana’s father saw them. Now. What right has the father of Ana to drive Doro away if the house was Doro’s? (LSM, “Please Explain,” December 1949).

Moreover, if fans were particular about lapses in the narrative progression, they were also keen to note some significant improvements in local filmmaking and the gradual erasure of boundaries between high-brow film audiences and the low-brow film genre fan as the following reproduction of a fan mail by a certain J.T. Ataviado of Sta.

Ana, Manila:

I thought I was going to see “Kuwentong Kutsero,” not because I am a local-made movie enthusiast, but because I wanted to compare the stage version of that presentation with its movie counterpart. By mistake, however, I was taking in another Filipino movie, and just for the heck of it, I braced myself for an ordeal. To my surprise, however, I found the movie quite entertaining. I saw the trailer of another movie, and I also saw another one, and also “Kuwentong Kutsero,” and I think I’ll be seeing more Filipino movies from now on. They certainly have improved a lot. One thing about the “Kutsero” show, it had more coherence and unity of theme. The other two pictures suffered from lack of coherence, because they tried to cover too much ground instead of concentrating on a central theme. Otherwise, they were good. There was a little “hamming,” but I think even Hollywood is guilty of that sometimes. (LSM, “Much Better Now,” August 1952, p. 12)

Fandom in the 1950s was an unconscious, random and unorganized social community which rallied behind particular stars or art forms (komiks and film or film

adaptations). In the absence of available reception studies such as oral histories, it may be challenging to exactly pin down what motivated them to realize their craving for identification with the stars or the movie content; their production of their own texts such as fan mails to stars and letters to movie magazine editors; and, their attendance to fans day and movie premieres. By way of inference and by simply judging the texts they have left behind (letters, frequency of genres recycled), we could glean that the fandom of *pelikulang komiks*, and of all types of movies in the 1950s for that matter, were truly what Sanvoss (2005) has referred to as “a mirror of consumption” (p.165).

D. The “Prevalent” Type of Adaptation: Status Quo Re-embodied

Film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s was the embodiment of the convergence between two popular forms of entertainment. They mirror each other’s role in the shaping of popular consciousness. In the seeming escapist bent of most of the stories that the film adaptations narrated, there is the common perception that the content of *pelikulang komiks* was mostly self-contained and unmindful of things outside its fictional realm. The problem of referentiality has always been a contentious issue in most of popular media. The truth is, the very containment of a fictional idea and its representation reflect so much about the culture and social condition that produced it. In other words, film adaptation of komiks in the ‘50s did not only serve the purpose of entertainment but also became a bearer of the era’s ideology, both overt and covert.

Taken collectively, the fifties films based on komiks may be considered to be guilty of producing the “prevalent” type of adaptation. The idea that it is possible that there is prevalence of a certain style of adaptation in a given era has been borrowed from Richard Maltby’s (2000) essay “To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book”: Censorship and

Adaptation in Hollywood, 1924-1934” where he posited that a Production Code in effect during the golden age of Hollywood studios was responsible for preventing some modernist novels with controversial themes such as *An American Tragedy* to be translated into a movie. This regulatory scheme was performed largely by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. (MPPDA) or what was better known as the Hays Office, which implemented some gatekeeping of materials that they perceived to be offensive to the movie-goers. Since the prevalent type of book then was the rebellious, modernist novel, many of these now canonical works were prevented from becoming the prevalent type of adaptation, unless they are sanitized or cleared of controversial content.

In the case of 1950s Philippines, komiks and radio were the staple source of film adaptations and were already packaged to be palatable and cut for translation in their original form. During the Magsaysay presidency, a Committee on Decency was formed consisting of model teachers, parents and churchmen whose job was to bring together publishers and practitioners of the komiks industry (Del Mundo, 1969). The major komiks magazines in the fifties later organized themselves into the Association of Publishers and Editors of Philippine Comics-Magazines (APEPCOM) which was a self-regulatory board responsible for coming up with a “Golden Code” that will guide the content and presentation style of komiks materials (Roxas and Arevalo, Jr., 1985). Even if there was censorship in the film industry, the materials that were sourced from komiks and imported into cinema had already undergone filtration through the APEPCOM.

Insofar as majority of the films released in the 1950s were genre films, it was very easy for this prevalent type of adaptation to surface. Moine (2008) refers to Altman’s

semantic-syntactic model in summarizing the “purpose of genres” within the larger contexts of film economics, culture and history. This purpose lends to the shaping of a prevalent practice; thereby, the status quo. Moines (2008) avers:

A genre comes into being and is recognized when it organizes as set of semantic features into a stable syntax – that is, when a filmic formula is put in place that is recognizable to a public audience (p.63).

Through generic identification and mediation, the film industry shapes the form that will communicate some very old and obscure moral stances most of which are contentious and unexamined. Cinema and its source texts in the ‘50s became the carriers of the cultural values of their time.

A source may carry the value of its age or of a previous time. One of the values that were sifted from their original form during the Spanish period and found their way in the themes of komiks and films was medievalism. Patronage was deeply-entrenched and was metaphorically inscribed in the feudal stories that upheld the lives and adventures of kings, counts, knights and vassals and their subjects, retainers and servants. The ideological bent of these stories were part and parcel of the material history of cinematic adaptations. As Alice Guillermo (1983) has remarked: “It is not industrial technology but the continuing feudal economy that shapes Filipino popular art”(p.283).

The korido-based komiks stories reflect a medieval world view based on a feudal economy. Patronage politics was in place. This was the subtext to most action-adventure and the historical genres. Medieval norms were transposed into hardened values such as observance of class hierarchy and order, filial piety, and proper social decorum. There are also the underlying imperialist strains in *Lapu-Lapu*, *Bernardo Carpio* and *Tulisang Pugot* where colonizers exact tributes from the colonized; where half-breeds or mestizos

suffer through the social hierarchy in place; and, where tenants fall victims to the principalia's abuse of power and greed.

For Pilar, the preponderance of the influence of the korido sensibility meant that the medieval values were still in place even in industrialized '50s. While the idea of chivalry and romance inspired a generation of komiks and film readers, the values of the prevailing agrarian economy are hard to miss. Pilar claims this was something the church also encouraged.

Seemingly anachronistic amidst the industrializing temper of the 1950s, the medieval values tackled by the korido-based komiks turned into movies appealed to the masses and pleased sectors of the church and other moral guardians of the times. "Medieval Europe is bodily transported into the pages of the komiks, where love is the controlling concept together with traditional fidelity, obedience, and generosity" (Reyes, S., 1986, p.174). Medieval values are a reworking of the status quo. Genre films, Hess (in Grant [Ed], 1977) observes, "never deal directly with present social and political problems" because these intend to present "satisfaction rather than action, pity and fear rather than revolt" (p. 54).

The maintainance of the status quo through komiks-inspired movies had three (3) social implications: (1) the deployment of the industry's perception of the moral function of art; (2) the unabashed recycling of old materials instead of resorting to innovation; and, (3) the embedding of bourgeoisie mentality under the guise of courting commercial viability.

The matter of status quo was reflected intrinsically in the films and extrinsically in the contexts of film production. Adaptations, by opting not to problematize the

contentious values in the source texts, became the reason for the perpetuation of some disvalues and old, unexamined beliefs. The values in the source text may not also be carried into the film version. The film may choose to highlight a different sub-theme or downgrade the themes expressed in the source text. In so far as the values were generally unchallenged, they become the norm. As Hebdige (in During, ed., 1993) explains, ideology “by definition thrives beneath consciousness”(p.362). Prevailing ideological constructs in the ‘50s indirectly served the purpose of strengthening generic categories and their repeatability.

Values are contingent to their times. As Herrnstein Smith (1984) has said in *Contingencies of Value*, it is not the social institutions that dictate the value of works but the manner by which said institutions cooperate with the various contingencies that arise in a given milieu. In the case of adaptations, the themes have been contingent to prevailing contexts— be it the church dogmas, the ‘50s morals and conventions, or the leaders’ vision of progress. The adaptation process may be used as an indicator of the values a given society nurtures. It also bears evidence of its role either as a conduit to prevailing norms or as a covert interpreter. As Kracauer argues:

What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions – those deep layers of mentality which extend more or less below the dimensions of consciousness (qtd in Chapman, Glancy and Harper, 2007, p. 3).

In the fifties, the values that were upheld were in keeping with the upper class deemed as the status quo. What contributed to the making of prevalent materials was the heavy involvement filmmakers and movie executives in influencing the subjects and the treatment of particular themes in the movies. Known for her fondness for awit and

korido, Doña Sisang showed her preference for romance-adventure movies and musicals. Through her education and exposure to the performing arts, literature and the media in the pre-war and post-war periods, Doña Sisang formed her artistic vision and production values around the ideas that she knew best. Even the innocent musical portions in the movies reflect a deep bias for both the lofty and the saccharine. As Del Mundo, Jr. recounts:

The studio heads themselves might have exerted their influence through their preferences and prejudices. Doña Sisang, for example, preferred local ternos and barong Tagalog for LVN actors, and the native songs, of course. Almost all LVN films have local song numbers.” (online communication, July 8, 2012).

The musical and the costume drama became the instrument for the LVN’s headstrong matriarch to propel her personal philosophy through the medium of cinema. Mercado (1977) reports: “True and faithful love, unity in the family, respect and obedience for authority, honest work, worship of God, she took every opportunity to underline them as movie themes” (p.7).

For the people who worked under Doña Sisang, filmmaking was an important marriage between form and morality. The legendary film producer insisted her personal ethos upon a generation who has been weaned from the values of old; courtly values that were buried amidst the post-war concerns, industrialization of the cities and the state-sponsored programmatic nationalistic project that pervaded the time. Mercado (1977) continues:

Her moral vision was clear and uncompromising. In her movies, sin is recognized as sin and not passed off as psychological aberration. Good is acclaimed as good and every struggle is duly credited. There is reward for virtue as there is penalty for wrongdoing. If only for this vision alone, in which her stand was unshakable, Doña Sisang as a moviemaker was also a value-setter. (p.7)

To wit, actor Jaime de la Rosa adds: “She always tried to inject something of the Filipino in each and every movie she made. Huwag kayong paparis sa mga dayuhan [Do not imitate the foreigners.], she used to say us”(in Mercado, 1977, p. 48).

Doña Sisang’s sense of nationalism is confirmed by other actors and comes out naturally instead of an off-putting propaganda. Mercado (1977) recounts that for the matriarch, personal philosophy is business philosophy:

The movie material she chose was nationalistic, to begin with – this was the observation of Pugo, premiere comedian at LVN. He notes that there was no out and out effort to preach history or culture. There was just a first choice of stories that primarily reflected Filipino culture and lifeways. This was a natural choice with Doña Sisang and not something that she did as a deliberate crusade. (p.48)

Moreover, didacticism was a residue of the medievalism. Soledad Reyes avers in her essay “Aspects of ‘Medieval Vision’ in Selected Tagalog Novels” (2012) that popular works such as the novel imbibed the medieval tendency to structure the world inside fiction by overtly tackling the need to strike harmony and balance. This was also one of the identified reasons for some of the contrived plots, forced endings, unmotivated actions and poor character psychology that have been imbibed by komiks and films. Overall, we associated this to the romantic tendency of stories or the tendency to escape reality because absurd turn of events could only happen under the pretext of romance and not under the banner of serious fiction.

The tendency to escape into romance forces a plot development and ending where the solution is rushed and made palatable to the audience. Lumbera thinks that a sense of irony was missing in many of the komiks stories, their film versions and even in other popular narrative media. Philippine stories seemed to avoid tackling irony or the

incongruence between what the characters want and what actually transpires. Instead, a fairy tale ending resolves the whole ordeal of the protagonist. Lumbera adds:

Ang mga Pilipino, wala silang concept ng irony na ang ibig ko lang sabihin ng irony ay given a particular narrative e ang development noon ay naiimpluwensyahan ng consciousness na ang dami daming motives, ang dami daming nangyayari sa buhay na hindi nagbibigay sa isang manunulat ng isa lamang konklusyon. [Filipinos have no concept of irony. What I mean is in a particular narrative development, there is the consciousness where a number of motives and experiences in life will give the writer not only one conclusion.] (personal interview, February 3, 2012)

The audience is always the film's scapegoat, says Lumbera. The contrivance of the plot, the forced ending, the unmotivated resolution and the lack of irony were sacrificed in the name of mass appeal. Lumbera explicates this further:

Yes tumatakas siya sa magiging konklusyon na malungkot. Ngayon ang punto ay yung manunulat e nagmadali ang solusyon yung nobela niya na dapat humaba pa. Kaso ang nobela niya, sa *Liwayway* ito lumabas. Kailangan matapos na niya at kailangang kasiyasiya sa mga mambabasa ang kanyang konklusyon. [Yes, it tries to avoid an unhappy conclusion. The point is the writer is rushing the conclusion which should still be prolonged. But his novel is running in *Liwayway*. He needs to finish it and to make the conclusion acceptable to the audience.] (personal interview, February 3, 2012)

To salvage the awkward turn of events in the story, the komiks or film story will turn to moralizing that draws from some remembered Christian teachings from the Spanish period.

Movie journalism became a means to check on the materials used in the movies, including those that were imported from the komiks. An example of an editorial commenting on the subject matter of komiks is reproduced below:

A summary review of locally made films recently exhibited with an isolated exception or two, will reveal to any ordinary moviegoer who needs not necessarily profess to be a connoisseur of movie art the extreme mediocrity of our movie products and the painful lack of originality in their thematic presentations.

The reason is not far to seek. A cursory perusal of their scripts shows that our movie studios have run out of new subjects. The stories are either hurriedly rehashed versions of some old literary abortions or crude attempts at originality with fantastic results that should certainly tax the credibility of even the most tolerant enthusiast of Philippine movies (*LSM*, July 1950, p.2)

Doña Sisang made sure to marry her personal philosophy with business survival. Her son recalls that “her personal preferences apart, she chose not to rock the boat of traditional audience expectations” (Mercado, 1977, p.16).

Moreover, maintaining the status quo was also meant not upsetting the prevailing bourgeois mentality which was then melding imbibed Spanish values with the newly-arrived ideas from the United States. Local filmmaking was believed to be a ploy of rich, aristocratic film producers “to adopt Hollywood techniques and American values,” argues Pilar. “Kasi ang mga namumuno sa filmmaking were mga upper class of society” [Those at the helm of the filmmaking industry belonged to the upper class of society.] (personal communication, March 10, 2012).

The tendency to escape from realistic themes, the deliberate avoidance of some complex issues of the war and the willingness to cater to the least common denominator as far as entertainment values are concerned are some of the identified implications of bourgeois mentality propelled in the name of economic survival. The genres are crucial to this. As a cinematographic site where “meaning is inscribed and symbolized” (Moine, 2008, p.206), genres become the means by which the aims of textual production (films, film genres) and of cultural economy (producers, stars, fans) cohere or reflect each other. This is one occasion when form and content could develop the same aims and seek to mirror each other. The capitalist drive of the bourgeoisie class propels themes palatable to a mass audience whom they do not want to upset or unsettle. But audience formation is

not a fixed entity. Eventually, newer media forms will re-shape audience tastes. Fortunately, the world is more complex than the need to propagate producers' bourgeoisie ideology. The political and cultural form audiences as well. In the 1950s, it seemed to be only a matter of time.

E. Summing Up

This social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s tackled a number of salient ideas, namely: (1) the Filipino culture of recycling; (2) generic mediation and the romance mode in Philippine narrative culture; (3) the Filipino aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation; (4) foreign borrowings and native appropriations; (5) indigenization/vernacularization; (6) the institutional matrix of 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation from the perspective of producers, stars and fans; and (7) the maintainance of the status quo or the making of the prevalent type of adaptation. These topics were also identified to be the same issues salient in the textual analysis (semiotics and adaptation criticism) tackled in the previous chapter. Through this external view of adaptation, the study pictured the materialist background of the adaptation industry. It is clear in this exploration that practices of narrative culture are always contingent upon the commercial bent and cultural economy of the media and vice versa.

VII. META-ISSUES OF AN EMERGENT THEORY OF FILIPINO FILM ADAPTATION

The archive has always been a pledge, and like every pledge [gage], a token of the future.

– Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*

D. Reconstructing 1950s Komiks-to-Film Adaptation Through the Archive

Every form of theorizing is historically-situated and determined by material conditions. Excavating what remained of the komiks and film archives has been a prerequisite to determining the scope of this inquiry. The historical site of this inquiry is limited to the 1950s for the reasons that have already been cited in previous chapters. In consequence, the nature of knowledge that has been generated is historical; that is, structuralist in its manner of analysis and reflectionist in its discussion of social film history. Historical knowledge about the 1950s is also limited to the remaining archives (extant komiks prints/microfiche, extant films), reference sources (listings, bibliographies, filmographies) and scholarly opinions and insights (key informants).

The archive is material and artifactual. Archival documentation as a research method helps in generating information on (1) the provenance of the archive; (2) how the archive has been catalogued and stored, and (3) the status of its present condition. Archival work entails proper documentation of its manner of retrieval and its management (noting down its status of completeness, looking for a duplicate copy, and the like). In other words, the researcher bears the responsibility of studying the archive and discussing her archival process at the same time. The processed data will be the result of analysis and meta-analysis; that is, analysis of the data/archive/text per se and meta-analysis of its provenance, constitution and the like. Conducting archival work has

allowed this researcher to understand the potentials and limitations of studying the 1950s as a film era.

The 1950s was an important period in Filipino film history. Of the 90 films cited as “Major Works” in the *CCP Encyclopedia*, (Tiongson, [Ed.], 1994), 18 (eighteen) are from the 1950s. In his list of Ten Best Films up to 1990, Joel David (1995) surveyed the opinions of critics, filmmakers and scholars and two (2) of the 10 films ranked as “best” up to 1990 were released in the 1950s. Perhaps other similar cursory surveys would yield similar results and would attest to the importance of the 1950s in the whole history of Filipino cinema. For this reason alone, the state of film archives from the era has become a primary concern in recent decades.

In her lecture titled “Archival Fragility and Anarchival Temporalities in Philippine Cinema” (September 26, 2012), Bliss Cua Lim reveals that only 3,000 out of the almost 8,000 films produced since the beginning of the industry in 1919 survived. The amount of the remaining archive is lamentably so that she refers to contemporary Filipino film research as a field that is suffering from an “acute temporal crisis.” Among the reasons that she cited for the loss of film archives include neglect, the fragility of the films themselves, and the long period of time before the National Film Archives of the Philippines was established to take charge of preserving these cultural artifacts.

Komiks have a different story to tell. The komiks magazines were never collected in public libraries. Only the magazines that contained komiks sections were collected, catalogued and preserved. For example, only the mixed-format magazines that printed komiks survived today. Soledad Reyes (1982) recounts that one of the limitations of her

study on the Tagalog novel was that she was only able to base her corpus on the *Liwayway* and *Aliwan* because these were the only serials that remained extant.

At the National Library of the Philippines, only *Liwayway*, *Bulaklak* and *Kislap-Graphic* were collected. Many of the magazines are incomplete or with missing issues, torn pages, and unreadable prints due to the poor quality of the microfilming procedure done on the original copies.

Only *Aliwan*, *Liwayway* and *Ilang-Ilang* are found in the collections of the Lopez Museum and Library. At the Manila Bulletin Print Library, the state of the *Liwayway* print collection is fragile. This has not been transferred yet to microfilm or captured in digitized form.

Meanwhile, none of the public and university libraries collected, catalogued and preserved komiks magazines such as *Pilipino Komiks*, *Tagalog Klasiks*, *Hiwaga*, and the like. Del Mundo Jr. informs us: “The National Library used to have komiks in its collection. But they were borrowed and read [maybe by the library staff themselves] until they disappeared.” He also revealed that the personal collections are as fragile: “The same thing happened with my father’s collection. Relatives borrowed and never returned them”(online communication, July 8, 2012).

If there are extant copies, these are under the safekeeping of the artists’ estates and private collectors like Danny Dolor, Dennis Villegas, Randy Valiente and Gerry Alanguilan who buy prints and photocopies of old magazine issues. Some of the komiks series that came out in komiks magazines, like Coching’s *El Indio* and *Lapu-Lapu*, were released in book forms recently through the initiative of the artist’s family.

The komiks archives belonging to the 1950s are scarce due to a number of reasons. In the fifties, there was a lack of consciousness in preserving the komiks prints as a cultural artifact. Lent opines that this problem, which is not exclusive to the Philippines, prompted him to establish an Asian institution that will help preserve the art form in the region: “Extant comics books of the early years are scarce nearly everywhere. That is why I started the Asia Pacific Animation and Comics Association in China” (online communication, February 2, 2012).

The reason for the scarcity of old komiks prints had to do with an even bigger problem: the condescending attitude towards popular culture in the early decades of the 20th century. It means, says Valiente, “mababa ang tingin talaga nung 1950s kaya di kinokolekta [They think low of the komiks in the 1950s that is why it was not collected.]. (personal communication, March 27, 2012). Valiente recalls too that he was once assistant editor in a komiks publication company and the back issues were just piling up in one big room. No one was doing an inventory of the collection. Until one day, the company closed down and the building was demolished. Nothing is heard any more of the komiks copies.

Lent agrees to this issue of the dismal state of the komiks archive: “The comics and their originals were tossed away or used as shredding because of the condescending attitude that they were inferior, low culture products that should not be read, let alone saved” (online communication, February 2, 2012). Yonzon, for his part, opines that this state of the archive reflects “our lack of appreciation for our legacy” (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

The fragile material of komiks prints lend to their further vulnerability in the hands of the neglectful: “All paper, whether it is komiks or not talagang panggatong” [All paper, whether it is komiks or not are material to build fire.], claims Pilar (personal communication, March 10, 2012). D.M. Reyes agrees that the “life cycle of komiks as it were, is a very practical, well threshed-up, well-lived” cycle...But then it may be preserved in another manner: “Siguro [Perhaps] archiving in terms of memory” (personal communication, April 16, 2012).

The divide between high art and low art for almost a generation has contributed to the scarcity of the archive. University curricula that have been steeped in the canon and the classics contributed to the dissociation of the popular arts and media from critical interrogation. Lumbera argues:

This is an attitude found among college educated. Mga so-called intelligentsia. Na porke itong gumagawa ng komiks e mga audience-oriented writers na wala namang university training or higher education, e mababa ang pagtingin sa mga gumagawa nito. Pati yung mga output ng mga komiks writer e hindi umaayon sa standards of excellence, ng literary excellence ng mga college educated na mga Filipinos. [This is an attitude found among college educated. The so-called intelligentsia, because komiks writers were audience-oriented or without university training, they think it is inferior; that it does not conform to standards of literary excellence of college-educated Filipinos.] (personal communication, February 3, 2012)

Lumbera adds that the librarians who made decisions as to which materials to collect were college-educated and were also guilty of this condescending attitude towards popular media.

Corollary to this violent condescension towards popular art in previous decades is the privileging of the English language, says Soledad Reyes. Because they thought the komiks “bakya” or kitsch, “very few *naman* [really] touch it with a ten-foot pole,” citing

A.V. Patanne who was one who sent vitriolic against komiks in the '50s. (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Things began to change in the late '60s. Some say '70s. Avers Del Mundo, Jr.:

Certainly, you can attribute the absence of komiks collections to the condescending attitude of librarians and scholars themselves (in the '50s and beyond). The same with film. It was only in the late '60s when the academe became interested in the popular arts." (online communication, July 8, 2012)

D.M. Reyes agrees: "I think there has been a shift in the attitude towards it because sometime in the '70s, the critical interest turned into the social import, the social impact of such a past time." He also opines that "in the 70's, critical scholarship was more empowered because there were evolving theories alongside sociological criticism, alongside of popular culture, or alongside the socio-political nature of the interpretation" (personal communication, April 16, 2012). D.M. Reyes also cites the growing "interdependence between technologies" and the erasure of the divide between high art and low art as contributory to this new scholarly interest in popular media.

The 1950s as a site of Filipino cinema studies proves to be challenging when considering the state of the archive. After the war, the studios began rebuilding and revitalizing their resources. Sampaguita, LVN, Premiere and Lebran would dominate film production. In the 1950s, the four big studios produced 90% of the entire production of the industry. Pareja (2003) reveals that a 1951 UNESCO survey listed the Philippines as the ninth top film producing country of that year.

Today, the remaining film archives are currently facing the danger of loss; of anarchism, as Bazin (cited in Cua Lim, Lecture, September 26, 2012). The scantiness of primary texts has far-reaching implications on what could be known and studied about the era. Fortunately, through social history and oral history, the primary texts that

remained and those that are lost already may be validated and contextualized using the opinions, insights and recollections of scholars, practitioners and children of deceased practitioners.

The 1950s may only be accessible through its texts. As Hutcheon (1988) has said, the past is something that is only known to us through “its trace, its relics”(p.119) so that “we are epistemologically limited in our ability to know that past”(p.122). This echoes Foucault’s assessment that it is the discursive practice that constitutes an epistemology; for after all, the texts are only an expression of the past. It is the language utilized to construct the discourse that makes possible a critical examination of that past. This discursive practice pertaining to adaptation, though limited and impaired by the absence of or by the current fragility of the remaining archive, should be able to provide a continuity between past and present film eras.

There is a need to pursue further documentation of the period by conducting textual analyses and historical studies. Cua Lim (2012) exhorts today’s scholars to never allow “so many images come and go without interpreting the meaning of loss for the benefit of future generations” (Lecture, September 26, 2012).

The archive is not just the material objects or texts like komiks prints, films and movie ads. Foucault (1972) calls the archives as “systems of statements (whether events or things)” (p. 128) that were a product of “discursive practices” responsible for their enunciation in the first place. The extant texts were specific statements of “events,” which in the context of this study refer to the sourcing and the adaptation process. These are also “things” or specific works of komik art and adaptation. The social history constructed by conversing with scholars, practitioners and surviving kin re-assert these

“systems of statements” that allow for the events (adaptation) and things (texts) to be understood in retrospect.

The interview responses by key informants are a collection of opinions, insights and reflections on the adaptation practices-as-events. In that way, the interview responses may also be considered as an archive. As Foucault (1972) avers, the archive “is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration” (p.129). The responses of the ten key informants constituted a social history of 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation from different vantage points. These were discourses-cum-archives that have been complemented by the historicity and textuality of their very existence. As Hutcheon (1988) opines: “The lesson here is that the past once existed, but our knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted”(p.122).

Moreover, through the help of periodicals published during the decade, one could also reconstruct the political economy and cultural economy of the era. Published movie stills, ads, reviews and press releases may provide relevant information. For instance, Momblanco’s (1979) seminal work exemplifies the use of periodical sources in her unpublished thesis titled *Philippine motion pictures 1908-1958: A checklist of the first fifty years* (University of the Philippines-Diliman). Her work became a major source of film information about production and distribution of films from the early years of cinema until the ‘50s.

The sources of knowledge about Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation in the 1950s are crucial institutional support to inquiries of this nature. These are three-fold: institutional, individual, and secondary.

The *institutional sources* are academic in provenance and these were collected, catalogued and displayed for a variety of reasons: (1) to supplement university film courses; (2) to document old films and komiks as cultural artifacts; and (3) to account for the number of extant archives that require restoration and preservation. The *institutional sources* of data/archive include academic and institutional libraries such as the National Library of the Philippines, the Lopez Museum and Library, the Manila Bulletin Print Library, the University of the Philippines Library, ABS-CBN Film Library and the Film Archives of the Philippines.

The *individual sources* are the collections in the hands of film and komiks collectors, bloggers, surviving families of 1950s practitioners and scholars. Their archival collections serve a number of objectives: (1) to document the extant works of 1950s artists; (2) to engage in a network of fellow aficionados and collectors; and (3) to support individual research activities on the subject.

Secondary sources are reference materials on the subject such as film history books, film encyclopedias, komiks history books, blog sites, and individual biographies of 1950s practitioners that may supplement primary data. Some of these sources were produced as academic reference materials. Some were self-published by the hobbyists on the subject. Quite a number of these sources were graduate theses and dissertations that were written to fill in identified research gaps in the field.

E. Countering the Dominant Adaptation Discourse

In so far as the theory being propounded is affected by historicity, the style of analysis employed requires a certain degree of *new historicism*, an approach used in literary studies and cultural studies which postulates that “forms of discourse, artistic or

documentary, popular or elitist, interact with and are determined by other discourses and institutional practices in a specific historical moment” (Makaryk, 1996, p.125). In film studies, the counterpart practices of new historicism may be gleaned in what Glancy and Harper [Eds] (2007) call “new film history.” The new history relies on the primary sources of the era and considers films as “cultural artefacts with their own formal properties and aesthetics, including visual style and aural qualities” (p.8). In many ways, the theory that has been constructed out of this present endeavour is also a way of writing about Filipino film history during the 1950s.

Following this line of argument, the wisdom of Michel Foucault is incisive. The French philosopher investigated the formation of the knowledge from the perspective of discursive practices that occurred throughout history. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault suggests that an “episteme” is not knowledge per se but it creates the condition by which we could gain knowledge about anything. Episteme, Foucault says, is “the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems” (p.191). Our knowledge about anything is not exactly the totality of the knowledge we have received or ought to receive, but the knowledge that has been shaped by the prevailing discourse of the times and the language in which the said discourse was spoken. The episteme of an era is a pre-condition to the shaping of an epistemology (Makaryk, 1996).

There are two ways by which episteme is referenced in this study. One is the episteme of adaptation discourse in the West and the other is the episteme of adaptation discourse in the Philippines. Western adaptation discourse is referenced in this study for a number of reasons: (1) Academic study of adaptation is done in Philippine universities by

referencing Western examples in film and literary syllabuses; (2) Similar to foreign universities, the study of adaptations is being performed more often in the English/Literature departments so that these are mostly framed from the perspective of literary theory and criticism; and, (3) Available reference materials on adaptation that have been deposited in Philippine university libraries mostly pertain to Anglo-American film adaptations that are used as springboard in the study of English-language literature and cinema.

Leitch (2003) opines that there is no adaptation theory, only adaptation criticism. The normative idea of a theory residing within a discipline and is governed by what Ray (2000) calls a “presiding poetics” is seemingly absent in adaptation discourse. And if there is a semblance of a theory at all, this would have been drawn from Western discourse, which has been guided by the “neoromantic assumptions about the preeminent value of the source text” (Barton Palmer, 2007, p.1), the valorization of the original, the “veneration of art” and the “hostility to translation” (Ray, 2000, p. 45). This attitude is rooted in the fact that a source text in a Western adaptation is mostly literature-based. This episteme on adaptation was formed and maintained through the hegemonic influence of Western adaptation criticism during the era that gave rise to the first scholarly work on the matter.

The year was 1957. George Bluestone just came up with his *Novels into Film*, the first book on the subject of adaptation where he laid down what scholars today refer to as the Bluestone approach. The theory posits a system of equivalencies between the filmic and the novelistic. Later on, the Bluestone theory lost its appeal as critics began to question the privileging of the pre-conceived “superior” status of a prior text that a film is

either borrowing or transmuting. Because the Bluestone and subsequent scholarships on adaptation were fixated on the relationship between film and literature, the “episteme” of Hollywood and the rest of Western cinema became focused on the preconceived idea of a transcendent prior text and a suspicious translation that is feared to be an outright “defilement” of the original.

Perhaps what has been more disconcerting to the critics of the Western episteme is that there has always been a lack of interest in Third World Cinemas that were formed during the period of their encounter with Western empires and the study of the adaptation practices of these cinemas. English-language adaptation practices became the norm. The tendency “to valorize the literary canon and essentialize the nature of cinema” (Naremore, 2000, p. 8) shaped the attitude of the dominant discourse. This episteme was built on a long and hardcore Western tradition that conferred status on high art and original creation and for a long time subjugated the idea of the “popular.”

The episteme of Philippine adaptation, if there is such a thing, is inevitably linked to that of Western discourse. In fact, the apparent “absence” of a Filipino film adaptation theory may have to do with the limitation of Western aesthetic discourse to explain the presuppositions of local practice. Received theory, which also dominates the Philippine academy, cannot explain local practices entirely because the sources of Filipino film adaptations were different from that of Western films.

Historically, the link of Filipino film with strictly word-based sources was not as strong as its link with theatre and folklore – at least from the 1930s to the 1940s. There was only a brief time in the 1930s when serialized novels were the major sources for the movies (Pareja, 1994).

The Western episteme is predisposed to the “symbolic” or to the word. The Filipino episteme is orally-shaped, performative and more aligned with multi-track media forms such as komiks, radio and film. The episteme that shaped Filipino film adaptation discourse has been a confluence of forces. Replete in foreign borrowings (genres, themes, motifs, studio system), it was also deep into native agency (local color, vernacular language, appropriation, accommodation, hybridity) and further re-shaped by social history (formula filmmaking, audience formation, institutional ideology). It was constituted by discursive practices that allow for the migration of materials from source text to destination wherein the mutations have been naturalized and embraced. This episteme influenced scholarship in the academy in the post-war during which the subject of adaptation and popular media were unfairly branded as “low brow” or *bakya*.

In the ‘50s, Lamberto V. Avellana derided the “bakya” audience whom he said has no appreciation for excellent films. Jose Lacaba (in Ma. Guerrero, 1983) traced the evolution of the connotation of the word “bakya” from its derogatory connotation until it was cleared of such stigma in the ensuing decades as postmodern, poststructuralist and deconstructivist approaches opened up to embrace the discourse of popular art. The new popular has been endowed with a political correctness of sorts. As Lacaba has described its current usage:

The connoisseurs of bakya, if they are at all aware of their bakya-ness, need not be ashamed of their affections. One thing they can do if they would proclaim their difference, if they would take pride in being outsider to the exclusivist culture of the In Crowd, is to use a term of reproach, bakya, as a badge of honor – the way their forebears used the word Indio. (p.123)

It is possible that the absence of a theory with which to investigate this hybrid form called adaptation may be attributed to the long era that saw critics and academics

systematically dichotomize high art and “low art.” In addition to this age-old problematic, Flores also laments that adaptation studies have always been addressed from the perspective of literature (personal communication, June 16, 2012), which presupposes that all cultures are book-bound and are predisposed to prefer the “writerly” texts or the highly literary and discursive. This would mean assessing the form as narrative art or privileging the literary elements over the iconographic and the performative.

Since the beginning of written history, the symbolic or the word-based knowledge had always been given a first-order importance while the visual and performative arts were placed in the unenviable second tier in the hierarchy. With the entrance of pop-cultural texts and the assimilation of cultural studies into the mass communication curricula in the ‘80s, the lines that once demarcated art from pop have been blurred forever. This finally democratized the consumption of the mechanical arts (Benjamin, 1968).

F. The Trajectory of Adaptation Discourse and the Nature of Locally-Based Inquiry

It has been mentioned in the preceding subsection that critical studies on popular culture have only taken root in the ‘60s and ‘70s. For that matter, komiks and adaptation studies have only been given attention recently. Soledad Reyes observes that “the studies on komiks are scanty.” There are certainly bloggers whose interest is komiks but their sites contain only prefatory materials and hardly engage in analysis. The word “sufficient is relative but there is a dearth” (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Yonzon’s relates to us that he met quite a number of collectors while working on the book *The First 100 Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons* with Lent and was quite amazed at the number of archives in personal collections. He says it was like “putting

puzzles together. You are looking at the prehistoric era.” (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

Del Mundo Jr. concurs:

I don't think komiks is studied closely. Patrick Flores has published something on the works of Coching. There's a hurriedly-done local encyclopedia. John Lent has contributed his book. A major reason is the absence of an archive. The on-line archive is an alternative, but it just introduces one to the subject. (online communication, July 8, 2012)

Meanwhile, D.M. Reyes is optimistic that komiks will one day be given sufficient critical scholarship:

I would say given the demands of critical scholarship, we have an evolving tradition of studies in komiks right now. But I would not say that there is enough of it.... Also because of the need to evolve a certain critical perspective that will frame the study. I mean right at the very beginning of it, there was just some concern about the entertainment value of komiks. So people were patronizing komiks because they want to be entertained. I suppose around that time, critics were also grappling for perspective and without really having been done around pop culture or even postcolonial theory for that matter, then I guess early on it was difficult to have something theory [sic] that will aid critical scholarship in the komiks. (personal communication, April 16, 2012)

Regarding the subject of adaptation scholarship, the dearth is now being addressed. For Flores, the subject may be approached from the perspective of film criticism: “Film criticism as a mode of scholarship, as seen as a compendium of texts like film critics who have written reviews on adaptation.” Film criticism is not adaptation discourse in a “full-blown sense,” but it is a beginning (personal communication, June 16, 2012).

To which, Del Mundo, Jr. agrees: “I'm not aware of any theoretical study like this one you are doing. Essays on comparisons of the original and the adaptation exist and not much else” (online communication, July 8, 2012).

Meanwhile, part of the ontology of film adaptation of komiks is its materiality as a film type, as industry, and as cultural text. “There is not one view of film,” avers Grace Alfonso (1989). Film “may be viewed as a medium of art, as science, as a means of information, and as a tool of national development”(p.20).

In the 1950s, the relationship between the komiks and film was two-pronged: 1) there was an audience for komiks-based films, and (2) the replication of a story in another medium was an accepted practice to satisfy said audiences. As a film type, adaptation represented a cycle of generic mediation and audience formation.

The ontology of film was inevitably linked to a commercial industry. The 1950s, the so-called “Golden Years,” were known for a number of accomplishments in various areas. According to Alfonso (1990), the decade’s four milestones include the following: (1) It was the age of “the common man as film audience; (2) It was when filmmaking was affected by “factors of popularity, acceptability and viability;” (3) It occasioned the rise of the big four major studios; and (4) “The recognition of the Filipino filmmaker” was unprecedented in film history (p. 112).

Alfonso’s thoughts somehow touch on the issue of quality and growing autonomy of film art and this may have something to do with the fact that film and komiks attained their so-called “golden age” in the same decade. This “golden age” concept is contentious to a number of the key informants to this study. Yonzon says that any discussion pertinent to so-called golden ages would just be pure “hindsight” (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

The discomfiture of scholars in airing their views regarding the issue of the golden age lies in the difficulty of pinning down an accurate set of standards by which a

sense of “prestige” may be constituted. Every answer was tentative; every explanation came with a caveat. One such example was Del Mundo Jr.’s response to the question of whether “golden age” is an accurate label to attach to ‘50s film and komiks:

I am not one to play the game of labelling historical periods into golden ages. I guess the reason why the ‘50s is referred to as a golden age in komiks and cinema is the achievement of the period. (online communication, July 8, 2012).

It is understandable for Del Mundo Jr. to be careful about getting involved in the labelling game because his father was one of the most prolific komiks creators during the ‘50s. In an unpublished essay titled *Lessons My Father Taught Me About Komiks*, Del Mundo, Jr. mentions that he could also risk exposing his own personal choice:

If I were to play the game of pinpointing the golden age of Philippine *komiks* (the Pinoy counterpart of comics, usually appearing weekly with a number of continuing illustrated novels), I would choose the ‘50s. It was the age of Ace Publications, the precursor of Graphic Arts Services and Atlas Publications that appeared later in the ‘60s. It was the time of *Pilipino Komiks*, *Hiwaga* [Mystery] *Komiks*, *Espesyal* [Special] *Komiks*, and *Tagalog Klasiks*. This is not an objective, unprejudiced speculation, simply because my father, Clodualdo del Mundo, was a major player during this period, together with Mars Ravelo and Francisco V. Coching. The three of them were considered the “big three” during this period of Filipino *komiks*. The other formidable players at that time were Nestor Redondo, Alfredo Alcala, and Pablo Gomez, the youngest of the batch. (n.d.)

Even if a scholar does not have the same dilemma as Del Mundo Jr., the “golden age” label is problematic. Deocampo says that the “basic assumptions” about golden ages “were (just) handed down to us, notions that...are very nebulous anyway” (personal communication, July 4, 2012). Many golden ages have been identified: 1930s, late 1970s, early 1980s and then now the digital decade. The ‘50s was a “classical” decade, a notion Deocampo says has been a description that was handed down by those who canonized the period.

Lumbera suggests that scholars not use the word “golden” so that anyone who supports a certain artistic period will not be in a defensive tone. Yet in the next breath, he does define the meaning of “golden age”:

Ang term na golden age usually in classical sense refers to accumulation of excellent works kaya tinawag na golden age pero later sa media, yung golden age ay simply popular. Yung isang anyo na mas maraming mambabasa at (panahon na) maraming output na lumalabas ay tinawag nilang...pero hindi yon ang termino na dapat gamitin dahil sa original concept of golden age (nangangahulugan – sic) na mga awtor at akdang dakila ay lumitaw sa isang panahon. [The term golden age, in a classical sense, refers to accumulation of excellent works that have been referred to as golden but in media, this golden age merely refers to that which is popular. These are forms which invite many readers or a period with many outputs. But that should not be the term to use because the term golden age means that great creators appeared in a certain period.] (personal communication, February 3, 2012)

Both Yonzon and Flores raise the quantity of works produced in a certain era in relation to its quality as a point of consideration in judging an era’s accomplishment. “Sa quantity, sa quality, marami talaga” [In terms of quantity, of quality, it is numerous really.], says Yonzon, speaking of komiks: “Basing it on the kind of output... you would say that the ‘50s culture produced a lot” (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

For Flores, the golden period is distinguished by the personalities who embody the age. “If you will subscribe to the term,” then it may refer to the “idea of a peak in production or the production of exemplars” or when there was the proliferation of “master artists” or “best practices or recognition abroad” (personal communication, June 16, 2012).

The belatedness of the labelling is also an issue connected to the golden age debate. Valiente mentions that in the ‘80s, when the book *A History of Komiks in the Philippines* was published, there was no mention of the ‘50s as the golden period of

komiks. For him, this label “golden” is an afterthought, a way of belatedly recognizing the healthy rivalry of artists in producing the most beautiful drawings in the fifties.

Pilar links the golden age to the stature of literariness of materials, the komiks being a venue where literary classics found a new home. He explicates:

The komiks was also beginning to develop a literary structure. But then the influence here is also American comics. American comics novel. In other words, lahat ng [all] classics of literature were in comics version.” (personal communication, March 10, 2012)

Meanwhile, Lent thinks that Philippine golden age of komiks parallels that of the U.S. and the Filipinos have also become comfortable owning the label:

Perhaps because that was the term applied to US comics of that time. It could be also because many comic books were appearing at the time and they were (and continued to be) very popular. Nonoy Marcelo called them the national literature. And, the Philippines’ master cartoonists were working then (online communication, February 2, 2012).

Sometimes, the golden age is a mere sentimentality. As Pilar opines: It may just be a label because we look at it with nostalgia (personal communication, March 10, 2012).

While the idea of ‘50s as golden age for film and komiks separately, and perhaps still arguable when taken in a more hybridized form as *pelikulang komiks*, the key informants seem to agree that a period that has seen the full flowering of creative output, quantitatively and qualitatively, should be given importance in discourse. Soledad Reyes calls the golden age as a sort of a “preponderance;” people were “inventive.” The age was “exploratory,” and the atmosphere was a sort of a “renaissance.” Reyes finds the artists commendable because “they were able to traverse, to go to other imaginable lands and depict characters that were not found in earlier forms.”(personal communication, April 25, 2012). D.M. Reyes calls it “super-abundance” made possible not only out of

“inspiration” but also by “material reality.” He further ascribes the role of a previous crisis to renewed creativity:

I think there is a certain merit in claiming that that super-abundance had to take place during the ‘50s because it was also a period of recovery. It was also a period of restoration. And the material conditions paved the way for that super-abundance to happen. (personal communication April 16, 2012)

Lent thinks the golden age may not be limited to the ‘50s: “I would extend the era (golden age) into the 1960s” (personal communication, February 2, 2012). Even Valiente claims that until the 1960s, films continue to draw heavily from komiks. After that period, local artists left the country to seek better opportunities abroad.

The difficulty of regarding the ‘60s *pelikulang komiks*, after that much praised heaped upon the ‘50s, is exactly the reason why scholars hesitate to give an all-encompassing definition of a golden age. Del Mundo Jr. voices this out in the e-mailed essay:

The problem with pinpointing the golden ages in history is that the periods that happen before and after the purported golden eras are naturally looked upon as low-standard metal. And after a golden age, everything is presumed to go downhill. The reading of history is seen through rose-tinted glasses and accomplishments are confined within the preferred period. But sometimes, it can’t be helped. There are periods in history when the accomplishments are of such high quality that the historian searching for stories to describe what really happened finds nuggets of gold. (*Lessons My Father Taught Me About Komiks*, n.d.)

Meanwhile, adaptation also functioned as a cultural agency for negotiating received and changing values such as the role of the family in the growing urbanization of the ‘50s or the meaning of a hero in such times.

A work of adaptation is doubly-signified and because of that its relevance increases too. It is a form of literacy in appropriation, in making references, in alluding, in borrowing, and many other forms that indicate the relationship of two texts or two

media. For example, Coching's masterful work, *Lapu-Lapu*, became an avenue for another medium to replicate its themes and increase its reception potential.

According to Bordwell and Thompson (2010), the art of film is a happy combination of creativity, technology and business. As an industry and as an art form, film adaptation of komiks became a major facet of 1950s popular culture. By producing adaptations, the 1950s helped prolong the shelf life of many stories that were summoned from long ago and continued to provide entertainment in another medium. Certain adaptations rode on the popularity and sometimes on the canonical status of the source. An example may be the korido, which is a component of elementary and high school textbooks. Translated into komiks and into film, a korido expands its life and perpetuates as part of the circulating lore or national narratives. To quote Ellis (qtd in Sanders, 2006): "Adaptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory" (p. 24). The ontology of film adaptation of komiks therefore has been made complex by the multiple roles cinema plays in any society.

Meanwhile, any activity that involves theorizing is also an occasion to take a reflexive look at the subject-position of the researcher. No theory exists in a vacuum, and theorizing implicates the ideological perspective of the theorist. As Lumbera comments:

Meron kang preconception dahil yan ang iyong gabay towards the point that you are going to make eventually. Ang iniisip ng mga nag-o-observe sa mga theory-making, para bang you start na blanko ang iyong isipan which is ridiculous dahil hindi pwedeng ganon. Meron ka nang concept na hindi mo pa nalilinawan, yung research mo is precisely to find the data that will make you certain na ang pinupuntahan mo ay tama.

[You have a preconception because that is your guide towards the point that you are going to make eventually. An observer of theory-making thinks that one starts with a blank mind, which is ridiculous because it could not be like that. You have a concept that is not yet clear on your mind. Your research is precisely to find

data that will make you certain that you follow the right direction.] (personal communication, February 12, 2012).

The subject-position of the researcher is an important consideration in conducting grounded theory for cinema studies. In the case of the present study, the researcher worked inductively. Like Michaelangelo likening the process of creation to being a midwife to nature, the grounded theorist's task is to let the data out of a dark womb. Theorizing meant synthesizing all constructs and concepts from the perspective of Filipino adaptation of komiks as a vernacular expression and as a hybrid cultural text. This was carried out by keeping Western, extant, or received theory at bay and instead re-focusing Filipino film adaptation by looking at it as a postcolonial, emergent and hybrid form.

Every theory reflects a political position. Soledad Reyes says that all theories originate from certain positions; "In other words, the interconnectedness of ideas. You are not naman [really] going to work at it in a vacuum." Reyes says that foreign ideas are not anathema to a Filipino discourse but an understanding of our contexts should be paramount: "Expose yourself to western theory but then whatever you ever get from it is something that is relevant to our needs as a nation." (personal communication, April 25, 2012).

Any theory of art and media is inextricable from its ideological construction. D.M. Reyes says that an adaptation theory is possible both as an aesthetic or a political one:

I think it's both feasible and necessary. To me it's an aesthetic matter but it's also a political matter. And the reality is there, we have always been adapting... So I think it's an aesthetic matter. But its also in political matter because what we see is not a very simple process of transplantation from one culture to the other. Somewhere along the way, mayroon [there is this] Shakespearean sense of the

seachange. There is something that is given up and something that is gained along the way. So to me that complexity really deserves critical scholarship and theorizing. *Kasi* [Because] otherwise *kung* [if] simple case lang siya ng adaptation, eh di copy *na lang sana tayo ng* [we would just be a copy of] the source. But what has happened is we were able to evolve something not only generically but politically as well. And even culturally. So I guess, it would be unfair to call us the mutant and therefore, kailangan ng [we need] scholarship to pursue that. (personal communication, April 16, 2012)

The drawing up of a theory of adaptation should be able to explain the complexity of social and cultural environment of the 1950s, of the political economy of film and komiks, and the interdisciplinarity of the exercise. Flores advises this researcher against a pat, neat and linear way of theorizing:

Oo it is, but siguro with caution in a way that it will not be seen as uni-directional. Na parang it is seen as complex conversation across forms na hindi yung one just absorbs the other. Well ano ba ang achievement mo? Well, the achievement is a theory of form, theory of translation siguro. Achievement din yung pagkakaroon ng interdisciplinarity. Parang in the arts, parang multiple lagi ang conception ng artistic practice. Artificial naman kasi ang impositions ng academy like sculpture, painting. Di ba artificial din naman ang impositions ng theory? Film studies, art criticism. Di ba dito sa film adaptation, you are able to contribute insight into a more fluid interaction and then siguro audience-formation. Achievement din yon. Meaning that forms an audience.

[Yes, perhaps with caution in a way that it will not be seen as uni-directional. That it is seen as a complex conversation across forms that does not just absorb the other. Well, what is your achievement? The achievement is theory of form, theory of translation perhaps. Interdisciplinarity is achievement. In the arts, that it should be a multiple conception of artistic practice. The impositions of the academy like sculpture, painting are artificial. The impositions of theory are artificial. Film studies, art criticism. In film adaptation you are able to contribute insight into a more fluid interaction and then perhaps audience-formation. That's an achievement too. Meaning that forms an audience.] (personal communication, June 16, 2012).

As a final word, theorizing on the relationship between komiks and film in the 1950s, on account of all these insights, require knowledge of the state of the archive, an understanding of the dominant discourse and its impact on Filipino adaptation practice, and the realities of building an inquiry from the specificities of one's culture.

VIII. TOWARDS A FILIPINO FILM ADAPTATION THEORY

*...Beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably. There are the epistemological acts and thresholds described by Bachelard: they suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it off from its empirical origin and its original motivations, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities; they direct historical analysis away from the search of silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing-back to the original precursors...they show us that the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuous increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured – Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge**

Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one. – Dudley Andrew, “Adaptation”

This chapter outlines the major assumptions of an emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation based on the dimensions of theory suggested by Littlejohn and Foss (2008), which consist of concepts and principles. Instead of “principles,” this research opts for the label “assumptions” because the theory supposedly constructed in this research is an emergent one.

The meta-issues or philosophical assumptions of the proposed theory have been explicated in the preceding chapter in so far they deal will topics that pertain to the “making of the theory” or the meta-theory. Meanwhile, the present chapter will be capped by an explication of the Theory of Adaptation that the study wishes to advance. Furthermore, the discussions in this chapter will also be supported by the data constructed and the concepts drawn from the literatures of contemporary adaptation discourse as well.

G. Major Concepts and Assumptions of the Theory

1: Filipino Source Text

Filipino source text may be defined as a story material adapted into a film. This source text may have been derived from pre-existing materials such as a novel, a dramatic piece, a short story, a comic book, a radio drama, among others. Furthermore, it may also be part of a cycle of texts. The older “sources” of a source text may either be drawn from foreign literary and non-literary materials or from native pre-colonial narratives and may no longer be existing in their “pure state,” which means that the sources in their present form are already a composite of various influences, borrowings,

allusions or references. Thus, a major assumption of this theory may be stated as follows:

A source text of Filipino film adaptation such as a komiks series derive story materials from older sources and/or co-existing sources that circulate as part of the Filipino narrative cycle in a given era, e.g., the 1950s.

A Filipino source text may or may not be the point of origin of a certain story. The older source of a komiks story based on a korido, for instance, may either be an early Spanish-inspired drama or a piece of folklore. The historical pieces (e.g., *Sohrab at Rustum, Haring Solomon at Reyna Sheba, Rodrigo de Villa, Bernardo Carpio*) drew from the korido. One of the romances cited in this study, *Tulisang Pugot*, drew from history and from the foreign gothic novel tradition as well. The domestic drama (e.g., *Kerubin, Munting Koronel*) drew from Spanish colonial theatre and from Hollywood melodramas as well. The romantic comedy and the woman's film (e.g., *Aristokrata, Despatsadora*) drew from both Hollywood and Philippine romances. The fantasy films (e.g., *Tucydides*,) drew from folklore, lower mythology and the comedies (e.g. *Kambal-Tuko*) drew from bodabil and radio drama.

Story cycles are prevalent in Philippine oral tradition. Eventually, this mode of practice became widespread in cinema too. The assumption goes that as an old narrative form bows out, it reappears in another mode. There usually is a "transfer of passion" or as Rafael (Lecture, November 10, 2004) terms it, a "migratory enthusiasm" from one cultural form to another. The content is fixed but the hosts vary. The arrival of new "hosts" and sometimes the replacement of the old (such as oral tradition) may be attributed to "changes in the belief system" and "changes in material conditions" (Mojares, 1998, p.20). The first has to do with new elements being introduced from the

outside and the second with adjustments in social and economic systems. Of the “changes in belief system,” one may cite the shift of interest from religious to secular themes. This “change” was also be inspired by the newly-acquired independence of the Philippines by 1946, which created an appetite for freer expressions and newer forms. Of the “changes in material conditions,” one may consider the rise of mechanical arts that influenced the shift of focus from drama to films or from novels to komiks.

Cultural memory or the recollections of the people of the story materials that existed in previous eras and were handed down through various modes of narrative transmissions play a significant role in the craving for recycling. Remembrances of oral lore and old literature were crucial in shaping the content of cinema. Komiks writers and screen writers were reconstructing cultural memory by going back to the materials that have already been rendered in previous forms such as the komedya and the sarwela. This accounted for the variations and modifications in some details of the new renderings. As Annette Kuhn (2002) has said in *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger: Cinema and Cultural Memory*:

For an understanding of cultural memory, it is important to attend to the ways in which memory is produced in the activity of telling stories about the past, personal or shared; to the construction and narration of these memory stories; and in the present instance to the ways in which cinema figures in and shapes these memories. (p.9)

Derivation is therefore a naturalized activity in any culture. Linda Hutcheon (2004), for instance, argues that “all art is derived from other art” (para 2) and that the act of referencing is an “inclination of the human imagination” (para 1)

(<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb>.Retrieved March 22, 2011.). Hollywood, for instance,

has been circulating the so-called “derivative films” (Naremore, 2000, p.10), which accounts for half the total productions.

The idea of derivation is one thing, the word or symbol that signifies “derivation” is another. Lumbera, for instance, objects to the term “derivative” as descriptor for adaptation because “it is derogatory to cinema” (personal communication, February 3, 2012). He proposes instead for a label that will be respectful of both precursor text and the update.

There are other labels synonymous with “source text” that suggest finer delineations of the idea. In analyzing the various adaptations of Shakespeare on film and other media, Fischlin (2000) made reference to Robert Miolas’ (1992, in Fischlin and Fortier, 2000) other substitute names for the word “source”: “deep source, resource, influence, confluence, tradition, heritage, origin, antecedent, precursor, background, milieu, subtext, context, intertext, affinity, analogue” (p.10). To this, Andrew’s (1984) terminologies may be added: “prior conception,” “cultural model,” and “prior text” (p.97), Palmer’s (2007) “pre-sold properties”, and Genette’s (1997) “anterior text” or “hypotext” are also synonymous to source text, precursor text and prior text. A source text, as it is signified in Filipino adaptation practice, departs from the Western definition in certain ways.

The labels offered by Miolas, Andrew, Palmer and Genette presuppose the perceived superiority of the original text over the copy that one may associate with a dynamic book culture. The status conferred upon the source text reflects the “transcendent” value that Western practitioners assign to the precursor text. Naremore (2000) blames it on “a mixture of Kantian aesthetics and Arnoldian ideas about society”

(p. 2), that influences this valorization of originality and patent and the downgrading of the copy or the work of adaptation. Andrew (1984) observes that this unexamined view of the precursor text as a “pure” state of being is prejudicial and limiting to the creative promise of a potential target text: “Adaptation delimits representation by insisting on the cultural status of the model, on its existence in the mode of the text or the already textualized” (p.97).

Gould Boyum (1985) hints that it were the “biases and preconceptions” against adaptations as the underlying reasons for the scant critical work on the subject. Western scholars influenced by this paradigm thought that “great” books may be endangered by adaptation. One may just listen to Vachel Lindsay’s (in Gould Boyum ,1985) wordings. He once referred to cinema as “parasite,” which “prey” on works of great literature (p. 6). This unexamined disdain for a copy, for popular or for “pan-art” has delayed the conduct of serious scholarship of derivative texts such as film adaptation. In the ‘80s, a spate of contrary opinions and protests that culminated in the postmodern critics decrying

the continuous exaltation of art and the condescending attitude towards popular culture began to open doors for adaptation discourse.

Philippine adaptation practices in the 1950s did not carry that much baggage and the film did not suffer that kind of violent condescension, at least in available critical works from the era. The affinity of Filipino cinema with folk and popular sources had always been strong (*CCP Encyclopedia*, 1994). Tiongson (2008), speaking of Manuel Conde’s films, points out that the practice of sourcing folk literature not only transmitted the stories but also revitalized these through cinema. David (1995) acknowledges folk sources’ contribution in enhancing the aesthetic value of cinema through “a distant, self-

referential manner, often expressed in the form of comic treatments” (p.15). This is obvious in the film *Kambal-Tuko*. In addition, “popular sources,” says David (1995), “have managed to constitute a staple specifically in print-to-film crossovers,” (p.15).

To a certain extent, folk and popular sources enabled Filipino cinema in the 1950s to expand its target audience. Cinema interacted with various kinds of texts. As Naremore (2000) opines: “We need to think about how certain texts are adapted cross-culturally” (p.12). Why should a Filipino director, for instance, become worried about changing some details in a story like *Bernardo Carpio* when it has been based on a komiks version, which is a version of several renditions of a Filipino korido that was originally derived from a Spanish corrido? Fausto Galauran, the komiks writer, “Filipinized” the Spanish corrido that Jose Corazon de Jesus revised substantially in the 19th century.

2. *Komiks-to-Film Adaptation Industry*

The matter of sourcing is rooted in a nation’s narrative culture but komiks and film in the 1950s operated and circulated also through the commercial bent of mass entertainment. Without the adaptation industry, any culture of narrative recycling will not flourish. Adaptation industry not only influenced cinematic practices in the fifties but also re-configured the aesthetics and the operations of the komiks industry. Thus, another assumption of the theory goes as follows: *In view of the close relationship between the komiks industry and the film industry in the 1950s, the komiks story normally served as the “first draft” of the film version. Therefore, a source text may function as a transitional text.*

The 1950s film industry worked very closely with the print industry, more specifically the komiks. In fact, the relationship between film and komiks, according to

the *CCP Encyclopedia* (1994), was “a trend that started in the 1950s”(p.76). It was a convergence of two media whose combined appeal may be attributed to the expanding sector of Filipino mass society in early 20th century that identified with the iconographies, the narratives and the ideologies that were inscribed in the works.

A little history lesson may help. After more than 300 years of being fed with religious narratives and devotional literatures by the Spanish colonial regime, the Philippine society of the late 19th century craved for more secular reading materials and entertainment forms. By the time of the Spanish-American War in 1897, a year before the Spanish colonial government ceded the Philippines to the United States, the technology of film was introduced to the Filipinos. Thereafter, the technology of cinema (camera and projection) would be a ubiquitous presence in the Islands; first as a means for the colonizers to document scenes depicting the empire and later, to introduce the exhibitions of foreign films in downtown Manila.

The U.S. colonial government brought universal education, taught the natives English, introduced Anglo-American literature, and solidified the practice of journalism and printing industries that were partly responsible for the early comic strips in *Telembang* and *Lipang Kalabaw*. The entrance of more publishers to the scene led to newer forms of publications. By then, Filipinos have reached their saturation point with religious and didactic materials being rammed down their throats during the preceding Spanish century. The time was ripe for the parallel ascendancy of film and komiks. The motion picture began to take over the prime slot once assigned to komedya, bodabil and sarswela.

Meanwhile, the popularity of the Tagalog novels which ran for three decades (1910s to 1930s) and which spun several film adaptation projects was gradually giving way to komiks. Popular imagination was ready for a new stimulator. As Arminda Santiago (1993) notes: “The emergence of a new literary form known as the komiks novel, that was like the traditional serial novel but consisted of more pictures than words – this form was very popular among the lower classes” (p.59). *Liwayway*, established in 1926, was beginning to allot more spaces to komiks by the 1940s.

The side by side co-existence of prose works (serialized novels or *tuluyan* and short stories or *wakasan*) and serialized komiks (*tuluyan* and *wakasan* also) was on for several decades. Writers like Fausto Galauran would dabble in both prose novels and komiks novels. Other writers such as Susana de Guzman and Nemesio Caravana directed movies. Another group of komiks creators represented by Francisco Coching, Clodualdo de Mundo and Pablo Gomez worked closely with the film industry.

A new type of literacy has emerged (Reyes, S., 1982). A new generation became attuned to the visual media while still hooked into their reading habits. The merging of two literacies – word-based and image-based – became the very basis of the dynamic interchange between film and komiks that culminated in the 1950s.

Among the fine stalwarts of komiks culture in the 1950s were the *Liwayway Magazine*, *Ilang-Ilang Magazine* and *Pilipino Komiks*. These were only three of the printed materials that cooperated very actively with Filipino producers by spinning out a constant supply of stories that read like transitional texts for another medium.

The beginnings of the *Liwayway* may be traced to the early decades of the 1900s when the publishing scene was mostly tri-lingual. The magazine came into being after

Don Alejandro Roces bought two newspapers, *La Vanguardia* and *Taliba*, from their original owner, Don Martin Ocampo in 1916. By 1925, Roces has added an English daily called *Tribune* to his chain of newspapers (Reyes, 2012; Villegas, 2007). The tri-lingual output of his newspaper chain created three kinds of audiences based on their linguistic profile. There were those who clung to Spanish, those who preferred Tagalog, and those who found English a potential lingua franca.

In 1922, in between Roces' acquisition of *La Vanguardia* and *Taliba* and his founding of the *Tribune*, a magazine called *Photo-News* was released. Roces and Severino Reyes co-edited the magazine which had three sections: English, Tagalog and Spanish (Reyes, S., 2012a). Eventually, *Photo-News* floundered because its tri-lingual identity has turned into a disadvantage. Its patrons bought the magazine to read only the section written in their preferred language; the other sections written in languages where they are not proficient remained unread. The more practical readers eventually discontinued their subscription to the magazine (Villegas, 2007). Not long after, *Photo-News* was scrapped.

In the next few months, Roces and Reyes would go back to the drawing board to conceptualize a magazine that will be written in the language of the majority of patrons: Tagalog. On November 18, 1922, *Liwayway* arose from the debris of *Photo-News*, to become the venue of popular writings in the vernacular. The aims of the *Liwayway* editors were clear at the outset. They were bent to please the masses who read Tagalog but this should be carried out without sacrificing the literary inclination of the magazine (Reyes, 2012). The key to *Liwayway*'s success lies in its ability to combine a mixture of

forms and genres. The readers devoured these new materials for the new reading experience being offered them. As Reyes (2012) has noted:

Waring itinakda ng ganitong pormat – ang paghahalo-halo ng mga anyo – ang susunod pang mga yugto sa kasaysayan ng Liwayway sa susunod na mga dekada. Nabuo and pormula ng matagumpay na magasin sa unang dekada ng magasin, at ito ang muhon sa susunod pang mga taon [It seemed that this format – the mixing of forms - would constitute the next chapter in the history of *Liwayway* in the next decades. The formula for a successful magazine has been conceptualized in the first decade of the magazine, and this became its foundational strength in succeeding years.]. (p.200)

Liwayway's openness to diverse forms was beneficial to the rise of komiks, which developed from a few comics strips to the longer and episodic serialized novels. The magazine attracted some of the best komiks writers and illustrators whose productions were sought by film executives. The stories, before they completed their run in the komiks, would have already been contracted by film companies. The film producers, aware of the mass following of certain stories, were ready to gamble into projects that they deemed would be potential blockbusters. Movie patrons, previously hooked onto the komiks were enticed to re-experience the stories through the screen adaptations. Lumbera (1989) notes this in his CCP publication titled *Pelikula: An Essay on Philippine Film*:

Contemporary popular novels followed from week to week by avid readers of *Liwayway* magazine were ideal materials for entertainment fare for mass consumption. As print entertainment with their own audience following, these novels when transformed into movies drew into the moviehouses readers interested in seeing their favourite characters turned into almost flesh-and-blood people moving and talking on the screen. (p.9)

The 1950s was perhaps one of *Liwayway's* most productive decades for it was successful in enlisting the talents and building the careers of komiks novelists such as Francisco Coching, Clodualdo del Mundo, Larry Alcala, Pablo Gomez, Mars Ravelo and

many more. These talents also foresaw that movie adaptation projects that would seal one of the most dynamic partnerships between two mass media in recent times.

Even if *Liwayway* was not the only magazine that featured komiks stories in the early years, we should not discount its contribution to komiks history. Roxas and Arevalo, Jr. (1985) declare in their book titled *A History of Komiks of the Philippines and Other Countries* that “it was the komiks section of this magazine (*Liwayway*, November 30, 1931 issue) that gave birth to the Philippine komiks industry” (p.12). In spite of the impediments that came its way, *Liwayway* proved to be unyielding. When magazines solely devoted to komiks were born, *Liwayway*'s komiks section did not bow out but instead maintained its mixed format that happily bring together serialized prose novels, serialized komiks, poetry, comic strips and current events features in each issue into the hands of an avid weekly magazine reader.

Similar to *Liwayway*, *Ilang-Ilang Magazine* (subtitled *Ligaya't aliw ng lahat ng tahanan*) featured komiks series. The magazine was founded by Ilang-Ilang Publications, Inc. in 1946 with Inigo Ed Regalado as editor. Komiks writers/illustrators Francisco Reyes and Mauro Malang contributed to the magazine. Like *Liwayway*, *Ilang-Ilang* is a mixed-format magazine that featured literary selections, new articles and entertainment news (<http://komiklopedia.wordpress.com/?s=Ilang+Ilang>. Retrieved 14 September 2012).

Pilipino Komiks was put up by Don Ramon Roces' Ace Publications in 1947. Roces, who was then publisher of *Liwayway Magazine* wanted to put up a komiks magazine or a magazine solely devoted to komiks. While *Liwayway* regularly featured komiks series, it has always been a mixed-format magazine. *Pilipino Komiks* was the first

experiment on a komiks-only reading material. Roces sought Tony Velasquez who “did not give him chance to change his mind” ([Villegas, 2005](#); <http://piliipinokomiks.blogspot.com/2005> Retrieved 14 September 2012.). The first issue of *Pilipino Komiks* came out on June 14, 1947 with a total print of 10,000 copies. In the next few decades, *Pilipino Komiks* would see the publication of some of the most memorable and longest running series. Coching’s *Lapu-Lapu* was published in *Pilipino Komiks*. *Liwayway*, *Ilang-Ilang* and *Pilipino Komiks*, three of the magazines covered by this study, were only some of the reading materials that contributed to the growth of komiks art and provided a steady supply of materials to cinema.

A number of observations regarding the relationship of komiks with cinema in the 1950s are worthy of mention. One is the practice of buying the filming rights to komiks stories before they even finish their run in the magazines. Another is the fact that komiks creators sometimes dabbled as film directors and scenarists. And yet another noticeable practice in the 1950s was the promotion and advertising of films in the pages of said magazines which have also been featuring stories about stars and films as part of regular sections.

The source text of a Filipino film adaptation – be it komiks or radio drama – was, in many instances a *transitional text*. The komiks writer is aware that his work is only a springboard to another. This was made obvious by the usual promotional footnote to the second to the last installment of a komiks story which would bear the tagline “Kasalukuyang isinasapelikula ng LVN Productions” [Presently being filmed by LVN Productions] or “Kasalukuyang isinasapelikula ng Sampaguita Pictures” [Presently being filmed by Sampaguita Pictures]. The source text as a transitional text enables a historical

continuity between and among the sources, foreign and local, that Philippine cinema builds its idiom around and about. It also enables the Filipino filmmaker to enter into a dialogue with a text so that he/she may create a new one. As Stam (2000) argues: “The source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues that the adapting film text can then take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform” (p. 68).

A film adaptation works along the technological operations unique to the cinema so that its uses for a source text may vary according to the creative vision harnessed in the translation mode. Thus, another assumption of the theory may be stated in support of this point: *The komiks source of film adaptation may serve as a storyboard, as a structural guide, as an essential story, or as a co-storyteller.*

The storyboard, which bears a resemblance to a series of komiks panels, is defined as “a series of individual drawings, or forms... Each frame represents a single shot or part of a shot. Captions indicate the action, dialogue, or camera position or movement (Withers, 1983, p.182).

Both the komiks and the storyboard capture sequentiality. The only difference between the two, in Eisner’s (1985) opinion, is that the komiks is meant to be read while the story boards “bridge the gap between the movie script and the final photography” (p.146) by suggesting techniques for cinematography, staging and lighting.

The komiks functioning as storyboard may also have been dictated by the limits of technology. The “static” quality of komiks narrative influenced camera techniques, offers Deocampo:

Parang kinopya nila ang komiks kasi kung cinematic ka, marami kang anggulo. Marami kang rolyong gagastusin. Kung marami kang anggulo, marami kang ilaw. Aabutin ka nang siyam-syam. E gusto nilang tapusin agad within 14 days...kaya kunin mo na lang yang komiks na yan. Sundan na lang natin.

[It's like the komiks story have been copied because if you are cinematic, you need more angles. You will use up many reels. It will take long. They want to finish within 14 days so that they just followed the komiks.] (Personal communication, July 4, 2012)

The storyboard suggests the visuals that will be re-imagined in a movie and sometimes there is a thin line dividing the komiks-source as storyboard and the komiks source as a *structural guide*. This was true of *Bernardo Carpio*. Herein, the classical Hollywood narrative structure is hewn closely to the work of adaptation, structuring the story details around a causal chain, which is akin to the mythical journey of the hero as Frye (1969) would have explained. The narrative, sometimes used interchangeably with the term story, is structured through a device called plot. The classic idea of the plot has been drawn from Aristotle's *Poetics* where the events of the story have beginning, a middle, and an end. Other theorists like Gustav Freytag have expanded the classical plot into five parts, namely: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and catastrophe/resolution/denouement (Desmond and Hawkes, 2006). Deocampo explains CHNC's idea of unity that impacted '50s Filipino cinema:

It tells a linear story. There is continuity. It is comprehensible and there is a unity of space and time. So this kind of filmmaking, the comprehensibility of this appeal to all audiences later on even if there is no language that is being spoken. You know that when you are going out of the door, you are going into the streets...Now, this kind of style appeals to the common denominator. (Personal communication, July 4, 2012)

The CHNC provided a template to 1950s cinema but it did not dislodge the influence of the episodic tendency of the films, which David (1995) thinks was "carried over from the printed medium" (p. 15). The komiks descended from a family of media (dime-novels, chapbooks, newspapers, magazines) that was characterized, first and foremost, by seriality. In addition, Emmanuel Reyes (1989) in "Form in the Filipino

film,” notes the scene-orientedness of local films, which “tend to bank heavily on individual scenes instead of sizing them up in relation to an overall plot”(p.15). This so-called scene-orientation of local films is a departure from the supposed character-driven plot of CHNC and is coming from some deep sources of the Filipino sense of episodic and serial dramaturgy.

In certain adaptations, the source text provides the “essential story” or the “nuclear story.” Here, the “spirit” of the story (Andrew, 1984) takes precedence over the “letter.” To accomplish this, a number of additions and deletions or expansions and condensations are done so that the material undergoes a considerable amount of transformation in the process. The additions and deletions done on *Tulisang Pugot* and *Kambal-Tuko*, for example, indicate that the films have established a connection with their respective sources in terms of the “essential story.” The structure is made secondary to the essence of the story. Expansions and condensations were more numerous in cases where prior story content is essentialized.

Finally, the source text becomes a “co-storyteller” when the film enhances both the essence and the spirit of the prior text in a reverential manner. The prior text is an autonomous work but it is also served by adaptation. As a case in point, *Lapu-Lapu* the komiks has contributed to *Lapu-Lapu*, the film. The komiks’ visual iconography inspired its counterpart in motion. Flores opines that *Lapu-Lapu* is an example of a komiks series whose story and illustration were done by a single person, i.e., a complete artist. Whilst Avellana’s film rendition is excellent, Coching should be named as his “collaborator.”

Flores adds:

Tapos yung iconography niya influenced the film e so in a way co-filmmaker siya. ..Film is a collaborative medium....Without the iconography, wala din.

[His iconography in a way influenced the film so he was the co-filmmaker...Film is a collaborative medium. ..Without the iconography, there is nothing.] (personal communication, June 16, 2012)

Therefore, the notion of a source text as co-storyteller works along the premise of adaptation as a dialogue or a form of communication between two texts.

To illustrate the point elaborated above, the texts analysed in Chapter 5 have been grouped and identified according to their function as source text in the following table:

Table 5: The komiks stories as source texts, in relation to their target texts

As storyboard	As structural guide	As essential story	As co-storyteller
<i>Lapu-Lapu</i> <i>Bernardo Carpio</i>	<i>Bernardo Carpio</i>	<i>Tulisang Pugot</i> <i>Kambal-Tuko</i>	<i>Lapu-Lapu</i>

3. Filipino Film Adaptation Form and Mode

The transfer of a story material from one medium to another entails a process called adaptation. Story elements from a source text are transposed in filmic mode using basic and technical properties that inhere in the medium. The basic property of film refers to its ability “to record and reveal physical reality, and hence, gravitates toward it” (Kracauer, in Mast and Cohen, p.8). If the prior text is a komiks story, the series of panels that constitute a segment or an episode find their equivalencies, to use Kracauer’s terminology, in terms of moving images or the “physical reality” of the story details. In addition to the camera being “a reproductive medium,” it is also able to speak a language of its own. This language may be reduced to small units, namely: shot, scene and/or sequence. Still with the example of komiks as source text, a series of panels may constitute a scene and in certain cases, a single shot.

The transfer process may be different if the source text is a single-track or a symbolic/verbal medium such as the novel, the short story and works of printed nonfiction. In komiks, cinema has found an ally. As Horn [Ed] (1976) articulates:

...The comics come closer to the movies than any other form...Both tended to the same end: the creation of dialectical movement, either through optical illusion (cinema) or through kinetic suggestion (comics). (p. 56)

Film's technical properties refer to the elements that are manipulable by artists and technicians. One technical property of cinema is editing, which forms the grammar of narrative film. It provides mechanisms for the transitions in scenes such as cuts and dissolves. Other elements such as the mise-en-scene, sound and color are part of the creative vision to render a story by enlisting technical work pertaining to staging and post-production. "It is well to point out at this juncture that many techniques which came to be called 'cinematic' originated in the comics," says Horn [Ed] (1976). "Montage," he adds, was the rule in the comics well before Eisenstein came along, and the techniques of cutting, framing and panning were used by such early practitioners as Opper, McCay and Feininger" (p.56). Moreover, it is only fair to mention, Horn adds further, that the illusory audio in komiks, represented through the balloon and other dramatic suggestions and approximations implanted in the frames, has influenced its employment in film.

The basic and technical properties of the film medium are universally applicable. However, Filipino adaptation practice in the 1950s operated according to its own predispositions and technological limitations. Fifties cinema recreated the visual iconography of komiks. Filipino film adaptations re-imagined komiks materials by first approaching the narrative structure of the original. Thus, an assumption of the theory that links to the form and mode of adaptation is stated as follows: *The practices of 1950s*

komiks-to-film adaptation reflected the practitioners' knowledge of formal elements of film as a medium in dialogue with komiks.

Certain tendencies of the Filipino komiks that have not been well elaborated in previous literatures have been unravelled in this study. For example, we have to disabuse the notion that Filipinos are more visually-oriented than literary- at least in the case of reading komiks. Valiente (2007) thinks that while American comics thrive on visual storytelling, Filipino komiks is word-oriented or script-dominated. In the fifties, there was an attempt to balance the graphics and the words in the panels and to approach the narrative through this supposed marriage between literature and visual art. Cinema has also wrestled with the same challenge.

As the source text is used as structural guide, the filmmaker adds or deletes in filmic terms, not in komiks terms. The same is true of the “essential story” mode. In all types of Filipino source texts (storyboard, structural guide, essential story, co-storyteller), an establishing shot becomes the choice to find an equivalent to the expository prologue in the komiks. Generally, the expository epilogue in the komiks would be elided in the film version.

The presentational mode dictated the narrative style. According to Scholes (in Mast and Cohen, 1979), the presentational form is the “immediate” dimension of utterance exemplified by “language, gestures,” and other externalized verbalization of narration. For instance, voice-over narrations are used only in the prologue of film and not in the main body. This is the equivalent of the expository narrative in the komiks' splash page. Under the presentational mode, the story details unfold in a linear way, approximating the sequentiality of komiks panels but through cut-to-cut film editing

style. There are no breaks from the narrative diegesis into a meta-narrative type. In other words, the fictive mode is not interrupted to accommodate some documentary and non-diegetic elements, except of course in the prologue and the epilogue where the typical 1950s film tried to show a little semblance of authorial voice or point of view.

Furthermore, when two or three characters are in the frame, the use of reaction shots became more profuse. In some instances, parallel montage and intercutting of thematic shots were experimented on. This is exemplified in Avellana's *Lapu-Lapu*.

The long take is noticeable in art house films like *Lapu-Lapu* while the genre films (the rest of the films under scrutiny) used simpler cut-to-cut transitions. The long take is resorted to in order to allow the viewers to find their subjective attention within the frame, instead of the editor and a few engineering staff in the cutting room directing focus and therefore, emphasis.

Some directors in the fifties were obviously in dialogue with the komiks materials. Some directors were working on their own, expanding or condensing as they saw fit. It is noticeable that the director who was more in touch or more faithful with the source text ended up being more original (Avellana, Caravana). The directors who decided to make departures from the source were sometimes dictated not by artistic choice but by audience preference, by the pressure to economize on shots and by the surveillance being carried out by the censors. Avellana's respect for Coching was too obvious to be missed, so that the director came up with a respectable piece. Meanwhile, F. H. Constantino's film version of *Kambal-Tuko* is longer and darker than the Caravana-authored komiks story, which has a thin storyline, fewer details and more tendencies to

the slapstick. These examples show the extent of the dialogic relationship, which Bakhtin (1981) discoursed about articulately.

The use of mid shots and close ups were utilized predominantly in the fifties to highlight characters and to propel their dramatic scenes, which Emmanuel Reyes, (1989) calls “overt representation”(p.17). The more epical scenes, where an ensemble of protagonists, antagonists and extras fill up the frame, utilized the long shot, the low angle shot and the high angle shot to cover specific vantage points and to call attention to the placing of actors against an exterior backdrop that consisted of artificial sound stages and actual locations. Establishing shots showing backdrops in stasis were conveniently used to transition from one segment to another.

Costumes and backdrops complement character exposition and projection of atmosphere. There was attempt to be accurate in designing and executing period costumes and recreating backdrops and to be more stylish, perhaps to compensate for black and white photography. The mise-en-scene, though uncomplicated in intimate scenes, were however made more elaborate in battle and assembly scenes. Moreover, musical numbers were found in almost all films and genres (korido, fantasy, adventure, historical piece, comedy), sometimes with songs and arrangements originally-composed for the material and choreographed group dance numbers as well to express a certain predilection for staged and stylized entertainment in the courting scenes or in the climactic part.

Filipino film adaptation practices in the fifties had been handicapped by limited technology. Latter advances in film technology would improve cinematography, color

and sound engineering. Along with the growth of filmmaking science was the shaping of an iconography that contributed to modern Filipino visual culture.

Meanwhile, *Filipino adaptation mode* means the status of the film adaptation in relation to its source text. The adaptation mode of the 1950s was a combination of “borrowing” and of faithful adaptation. Borrowing in Andrew’s (1984) definition is an “extensive” (p.98) kind of derivation where the film hopes to win anew the same audience that has been entertained by the previous text. This was true of the shared audience following of komiks and film in the 1950s.

1950s adaptation was closely related to Andrew’s concept of fidelity of adaptation or Gianetti’s “faithful adaptation,” where the film follows the source text to the letter. The film is said to be faithful to the “letter” when its story details are following the narrative structure of the essential story. Very seldom did movies in the 1950s transform the source, except in a few parts where details have to be condensed or expanded. The addition and deletion of details were done mostly to make the inherent properties of cinema work to the advantage of the adaptation. The films usually prioritized economy of details and efficiently identified performative moments in the source text – i.e., presentational, dramatic and externalized - and created occasions to render these cinematically.

4. *Filipino Cycle of Genres*

Filipino film genre means the types or categories of films that have been evoked by a work of adaptation. The genre of adaptation may parallel the genre of the source text but it may also employ sub-genres. Filipino film genres in the ‘50s include the korido-based films, the melodrama (the domestic drama or the child-themed drama), the

romantic comedy or the woman's film, fantasy, comedy and the historical fiction film, among others.

While the influence of Hollywood on Filipino film genres in the 1950s was far-reaching, local cinema also came up with story types that were diverse and were spin-offs from some earlier native sources. One example of multiple generic evocation in a single film is the korido movie, which would usually employ varieties of sub-genres such as drama, action and musical. The success of genres is hinged on audience formation. A genre is an embodiment of the close affinity of the audiences with an assembly of story types and themes that were circulated, referenced, invoked and re-interpreted in that era. Therefore, it is only fitting that one of assumptions of emergent theory should delve on the "recycling" of genres that Filipinos have been fond of. Thus: *The genres invoked in the komiks and are adapted in the film dictated the conventions, tropes, themes and motifs that were recycled by the industry.*

Genres are categories of films that are made distinct by certain uses of cinematographic language. A category of film may have its own set of conventions. One example is the musical portion in a courtship scene in a film following the genre of romantic comedy. Another example is the sword fight in korido-inspired komiks story turned into film. The said conventions have been borrowed from European metrical romances, cloak-and-dagger or cape and sword genres but these may also be residual influences of pre-colonial heroic literatures like the ethno-epic, where the fight sequence is a stock convention or device. The use of stock devices in a source text is translated using the properties of film. As Tudor (In Grant, 1997) opines: "The film 'converts' the images to its conventional language" (p. 19).

A trope is a figurative invocation of certain themes, motifs or patterns that are repeated in a cluster of films evoking the same category or type. A generic trope may be distinct to a Filipino film although it may still reveal traces of foreign influences. One example is the “search” motif that is found in both foreign and local narratives.

A work of adaptation repeats the genre, conventions and tropes of its source text in an attempt to recycle a former experience pertaining to the text or to replicate its popular success. This idea echoes Andrew’s (1984) explanation of “borrowing” as a mode of adaptation: “Here the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text” (p. 98).

The genres of Filipino film adaptation in the ‘50s reflected both Hollywood borrowings and native appropriations. There are two ways by which films are classified into genres. One is “a priori” or the identification of films based on received criteria and the other is through “common cultural consensus” (Tudor in Grant, 1997, p. 18).

Contrary to the general perception that Filipino generic categories were copied from Hollywood or from transhistorical (Moine, 2008) genres, the local audience of the 1950s had also a part in re-configuring those plot types according to their preferences, confirming what Tudor (in Grant, 1997) has articulated: “Genre is what we collectively believe it to be” (p. 19).

Adaptation serves the purpose of generic mediation. Stam (2005) confirms this interpretative role of adaptation: “The art of filmic adaptation partially consists in choosing which generic conventions are transposable into the new medium, and which need to be discarded, supplemented, transcoded, or replaced”(p.6). Korido-based costume

pieces, fantasy and comedy reflect the interplay of the foreign and the native. These local genres are further demonstrated by conventions and tropes.

The generic conventions and tropes deployed in a work of adaptation are responsible for the recurring motifs, stock characters and recurring themes. Lost foundlings, bastard sons, missing fathers, mistaken identities, disguises, warring kingdoms were recurring motifs. Commoners-turn-heroes, neglected wives, poor single girls, wicked uncles and stepbrothers, bandits, freaks are stock characters. Search for identity, the eternal triangle, restoration of peace, maintenance of harmony in the home, class conflict, agrarian problems, marriage plot, acceptance of freaks are recurring themes. To quote Braudy (in Mast and Cohen, 1979): “The genre film lures its audience into a seemingly familiar world, filled with reassuring stereotypes of character, action, and plot” (p. 449).

The source text and the adaptation share common features of the genres that audiences in the fifties grew familiar with over the years and later became cycles of industry formulas. Eisner (2008) for instance has observed that comics’ employment of stereotypes is “an accursed necessity” because the medium is expected to represent “recognizable reproductions of human conduct” (p.11). Repeatability of images makes immediate recall and audience identification easier. Genres therefore second-guess audience reaction, or direct it in some instances, or “remind” us of their former invocations of the same conventions and tropes (Braudy, in Mast and Cohen, 1979).

Some artistic productions move beyond generic conventions and troping. Films like *Lapu-Lapu* were impelled by aesthetics rather than formulaic entertainment. When applied to adaptation, the director adapting a komiks story translates not only the story

elements of a source text but also struggles with the genre invoked by the material. As Naremore (2000) observes: “Some directors have been intent on faithfully illustrating their sources, whereas others have been motivated by a desire to interrogate or ‘read’ the prior text” (p.12).

Adaptation then, from the perspective of generic conventions and troping, requires a certain dose of “genre literacy” (Leitch, 2010; “Abstract,” <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?> Retrieved 22 March 2011). After all, a filmmaker is situated in between two creative choices: summoning the source text and creating a new work, what Andrew (1984) calls “a leap and a process” (p. 97).

Generic conventions and tropes also enabled the appropriation of certain stories from diverse sources. In the long run, the “cycles” cause the return, repetition, or reprise of old stories, which (Sanders, 2006) calls “a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself” (p.18). Genres are also called cycles because they circulate and return. Nichols (1976) in citing Griffith’s “cycles and genres,” acknowledges genre films’ “cumulative” effect on society. Gledhill (in Gledhill and Williams, 2000), meanwhile, reports that a number of critics “favour the concept ‘cycle’ over genre,” (p. 226) because it points to the role of the industry in shaping particular story categories.

5. Filipino Komiks-to-Film Characters

The humans who peopled the universe of the 1950s komiks were also recruited to grace the film screen. They are the protagonists of the korido who resemble the epic heroes of long ago in their “greatness and magnanimity” (Reyes, S., 2001, p.158). The characters of fantasy come from the lower class, unlike their foreign counterparts who are

from the middle class (Reyes, S., 2003). They are defined by their struggles and their motivations and actions drive the plot forward. In a historical genre, they are the immortal hero-founders of the proto-nation. In comedy, they are the clowns, or buffoons or characters who serve satiric ends.

The iconography of the characters/protagonists/heroes in a source text like komiks influenced their portrayal in the adaptation. The graphics in the komiks guides the visual rendering in film; the signifier being close to the signified. All that needs to be added are motion and sound. As Flores (2010) has spoken of Coching's example: "The graphic in reciprocations of the chance of change in form inflects the cinematic with the iconography of the komiks, its logic of practice" (pp. 22-23). The two media then shared in the responsibility of shaping the iconic Filipino man and woman in the 1950s. Thus, another assumption of the theory is as follows: *The characters in the Filipino source text reflect their society and milieu. They are contingent to the narrative tradition, the komiks' iconography and the film adaptation process.*

Filipino characters and heroes, even the extraordinary and grotesque, resonated among the audiences. In the world of film and komiks, the grotesque and the freak, such as Pugo and Togo in *Kambal-Tuko*, were accepted and embraced because their story provided not only an escape mechanism but also an occasion for self-identification.

Reyes, S. (2009a) confirms this:

Within this frame of discourse, it is easy to see how the monstrous, the grotesque, and the terrifying, bloodcurling images that occupy the road to hell, on the one hand, and how the idyllic scenes, supernatural heroes and heroines bathed in light, eerie configurations of paradise that shape the ascent into heaven, on the other hand, can lend themselves to psychoanalytic readings (p.13)

In other words, part of the motivation for adaptation was the familiarity of the audiences with the characters and heroes whose adventures they followed in a prior text.

Sometimes, the audiences find catharsis in their heroes' stories, which reveal indigenous psychology and unconscious mythmaking.

Filipino heroes are not spared from archetypal interpretation. Many of them are types, which Frye (qtd in Gould Boyum, 1985) says "is as necessary to the character as a skeleton is to the actor who plays it (p.43)." Sometimes, the romance genre and the fantastic turn in heroes such a mestizo who escapes hard labor conscription in a galleon ship or an avenging dispossessed tenant. Heroes may also be based on a real-life figures whose heroic exploits were mythologized in a way that almost overshadows their historical personas.

The komiks and the film introduce characters that audiences find easy to identify with because these personalities exude a persona that are close to viewers' conception of character types. Of komiks' characters, Reyes, S. (2012), says, "the characters had to be instantly recognizable as 'real' in the sense that they embodied composite features of familiar types found in life" (p. 119). Flores (2010) avers that audience identification with characters is connected with "the whole performance of imitation and intimacy" (p. 29). The characters have gestures and appearances that are familiar to the audience.

Genre characters inhabit a world of their own. Yet, in the same breath, characters in komiks are complex because they are illumined by their cultural contexts. As Horn [Ed] (1976) articulates:

The protagonists of the comics, whether by design or by necessity, go back to the fount of our collective memories and aspirations. They represent some emblematic figure, some archetype linking us to the primeval drives and forces across the night of history. It is as if the comics had taken it upon themselves to

embody all our collective longings and try to give them some channel for fulfilment. And yet at the same time, it is asked that they toe the social line, and this dichotomy has often led to ambivalence and frustration (p. 60).

When these characters are brought to the film screen, they either retain their ambiguous stance or they are “simplified, even melodramatized” (Kline, 1996. “Abstract.” [http:// proquest.umi.com](http://proquest.umi.com). Retrieved 22 March 2011). In Filipino adaptation, they may also be “enhanced by the persona of stars” or “enlivened by the tricks of genre” (Flores, 2010, p. 18). Suffice it to say that characterizations in komiks face a new life in the film version where they extend their tenure and circulation in the visual and literary imagination.

Visual iconography is the instrument of komiks stories in creating appealing and charismatic characters and heroes. Filipino expressive anatomy is a special case. It thrives on familiarity and iconicity. It caters to the caricature in comedy but it is also capable of representing distinct mannerisms and making these memorable through iconic poses. For instance, Flores (2010) notes Coching’s art illustrations that have been translated cinematically:

The lunge, the gallop, the slap, the stretch, the bend, the counterpose, the thud – these are marked deeds of wilful beings who read out for the impossible and return the look with interest. Thus, we may say that Coching has partly crafted a Filipino manner, so to speak, an iconography of villainy and righteousness (p. 19).

Philippine komiks in the 1950s also depicted the human form along simple and realistic lines and this had an impact on characterization and the physical rendering of heroes in the movies. The setting in the ‘50s komiks was in coherence with the expressive anatomies of the characters, reflecting the impulse towards realism, with streaks of exaggeration and an unconscious pledge to a norm of beauty and a nostalgia for the rustic at the same time.

However, the heroes of the koridos such as Bernardo Carpio are presented in a more stylized manner that was befitting their mythical and quasi-historical origins. Sometimes humorous, sometimes sensual, the royals and the princesses are portrayed as larger than life: in exaggerated postures; displaying mannerisms that go with their noble background; and performing extraordinary roles that gave them an aura of invincibility.

We have to be reminded again that they were foreign heroes imported for the native eyes. As Reyes, S. (1986) asserts, heroes who are indigenized meld foreign mannerisms with the influence of folkways: “These characters exuded other-worldly air, since medieval Europe was indeed ‘another world’ to the Filipino” (1986, p.172).

The Filipino historical fiction film and fantasy such as *Lapu-Lapu* and *Tulisang Pugot* respectively, achieve artful iconography owing to the rich imaginations of their artists. Coching’s characters are physically beautiful, alluring and strong. Their gestures were complex and they melded well with their backdrops. Alcalá’s visual rendition of Caravana’s late 19th century setting, characters and manners were reminiscent of the ambience of *Noli*, *Fili*, and even of Coching’s Spanish-era stories such as *El Indio*. It may be assumed therefore that when the iconography of the source text is an art piece by itself, the filmic translation becomes also highly textured in terms of mise-en-scene, art design, costumes and other objects and human form in the frames.

Imaginative iconography in the source text translates easily into film and it is possible too that film iconography influenced printed media in return; *genres* becoming *cycles* in the truest sense of the word. As Sanders (2006) quips: “Texts feed off each other and create other texts” (p. 14).

6. Cultural Economy of Adaptation

Filipino film adaptation in the fifties was a product of many social and cultural contexts. The contexts of film production include the identification of formulaic story materials, the studio system and the star system. The cultural economy then consists of the people who propel the commercial drive of the industry and the social and cultural aspects of this. These factors sustained the industry in the 1950s. Thus, another assumption of the theory goes: *Some of the key components of the cultural economy of film adaptation such as the producers, the stars and the fans were implicated in the practices of Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation in the 1950s.*

The era's popular genres were also known by another label: formulas. The word "formula" is more operative in understanding the marriage between story content and business strategy. It meant identifying source texts that will spawn similar or familiar materials in a sort of an assembly line. The Fordist style of film management in the 1950s enabled the studios to "specialize" in certain formulas and in producing a cycle of genre films. Part of their creative function was to develop formulas for adaptation and ensure their repeatability and viability. The producers play the role of "critics" in reading industry trends and in re-configuring genres and story materials that will ensure the continuity of the production line.

The casting of actors for a film adaptation was sometimes influenced by their images and portrayal in the source text. The iconography suggested by a source-text merges with film roles and the aura of stars. Taken to their extreme, iconographies that were memorable and became almost identifiable with the actors who played the roles have been linked to the making of cultural icons and symbols. In the fifties, the role of the actor became so much intertwined with his/her real public image. The producer

directed the career of their contract stars and sponsored promotions, premieres and fans' days to court popular appeal for their movies.

Producers' prerogative and the image of stars were responsible for the formation of fandom. Some fans adored the stars but some were also fans of the komiks material who wanted to check on the film rendition. The cultural economy of adaptation was always implicated in the film production. Ideology, the aura of stars and the fans' enthusiastic following made sure that story materials were not so far-fetched from what are taking place behind the camera. As Horkheimer and Adorno, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002), have eloquently said:

The whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry. The familiar experience of the moviegoer, who perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left, because the film seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception, has become the guideline of production. (p.99)

The six concepts and assumptions enumerated above somehow provide texture to the emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation theory which will be explicated in the following discussion.

H. *Pelikulang Komiks*: A Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Filipino Film Adaptation

The previous section laid down the concepts and assumptions of an emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation. It discusses the general features of Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation. The following discussion, however, will further crystallize *Pelikulang Komiks* as a Filipino film adaptation theory. While the section on concepts and assumptions draw conclusions from the specific texts analysed in this study and the contextual issues raised in the social film history, the present sub-section is interpretive

and reflectionist in terms of presenting the main arguments of the emergent theory.

Moreover, the flow of the discussion is guided by the following diagram:

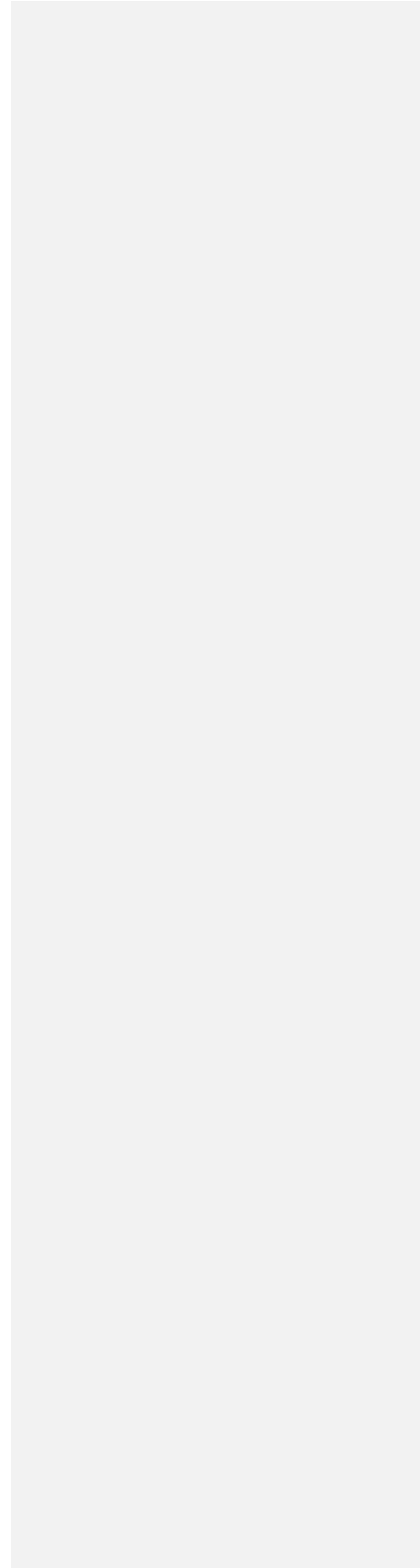


Figure 50: Theoretical Model for *Pelikulang Komiks* (A Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Filipino Film Adaptation)



The idea of “native” or “indigenous” may be viewed as more contentious than what may be apparent, especially when understood within the context of 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation. The country’s colonial experience was a long period of exposure to the colonizer’s imperial institutions that were responsible for the almost total obliteration of native culture. Therefore, the Filipino native of the 1950s may have been a product of centuries of evolution and filtration. Then, the country was a young republic and was afflicted by the nationalistic fever that hit the nation in the aftermath of the war.

The denotative meaning of the word “indigenous” reflects the situation of the native in relation to its opposite or contrary notion: the “foreign” or the “outsider.” Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1993; also qtd in Kim, 1990) enumerates three (3) aspects of the word indigenous:

“native (1) not introduced directly or indirectly according to historical record or scientific analysis into a particular land or region or environment from the outside; (2) originating or developing or produced naturally in a particular land or region or environment; (3) of, relating to, or designed for natives” (p.1151).

The above dictionary meanings of indigenous refer to three perspectives. Firstly, the set of meanings presents the dichotomy between the natives’ natural possession and outside influence. Secondly, it makes reference to the place of origin of a trait as an arbiter of determining what is indigenous. And thirdly, it reflects the agency of the natives themselves in defining who they are and what they are capable of.

In spite of the existence of denotative meanings, Hornedo (1989) notes how slippery the term “indigenous” can be. He says that today’s native descends from the early settlers in the Philippines thousands of years before the Westerners arrived. They came by boat from mainland Asia and migrated to the islands. After many generations

were born, the said early settlers came to be regarded as the first discoverers or natives of the island. These foreigners became eventually “indigenous” to the place. For Hornedo, Frank Lynch’s pronouncement – “Today’s native was yesterday’s visitor.”- is a very apt description of the native who was once a stranger.

The cinema was not indigenous to the Filipinos, and so were the early theatrical forms and early prototypes of the novels that have become part of our narrative tradition. Brought from the outside through colonial encounter, these early foreign narratives prepared the Filipinos for cinema, which they considered a novelty and as a continuation of said narrative tradition. It is not possible then to build a Filipino film adaptation theory without an understanding of cinematic adaptation’s role in the Filipino narrative tradition that can be traced all the way to pre-colonial times.

Before the coming of the Spaniards in 1521, the communication forms in the country were predominantly oral. This was true of all civilizations before the advent of writing and printing. Fang (1997) offers that pre-literate societies were “enriching their lives and enhancing memory with verbal and metrical patterns of epic poetry, story and song” (p.11).

Nick Joaquin (1975), in his monumental essay titled “Culture as History,” avows that we could glean the history of a nation through its cultural developments, specifically in its level of adoption of “new tools, or novelties in media” (p.5). Influenced by Marshall McLuhan’s dictum, “the medium is the message,” Joaquin avers that we have been historically transformed by our encounter with foreign colonial powers. Lumbera agrees to this role of material history in the rise of media:

Para sa akin, history and culture ang nag-de-determine kung paano tayo kumikilos, tumitingin, nagpapasya. [For me, history and culture determine how we act, how we see, how we decide.] (personal communication, February 3, 2012),

In his study of the rise of the Filipino novel, Mojares (1998) avers that newer literary/media forms such as the 20th century novel definitely took on many of the features of early narratives that served as prototypes of the form. The ethno-epics were already in existence in the Philippines prior to Spanish contact and served a number of functions in pre-colonial Philippines aside from providing amusement and delight. In both its ritualistic and its artistic function, the epic is a key to understanding the pre-colonial native.

The qualities of the native that found their way in the narrative forms of the 20th century were forged in ancient times. Lumbera (1967), in characterizing the qualities of indigenous Tagalog poetry, observes that the native poet “was lyrical in temper, realistic in imagery, transparent in verbal texture and simple in technique” (p. 313). The natives who greeted the early missionaries were predisposed to singing and linked their versification to the reality of the everyday and their fictional works “had a minimum of characterization and a great amount of fantasy”(Lumbera, 1967, p.313). The artistic temperament that we associate with contemporary Filipinos seemed to have been rooted in their nativist past. Eventually, the native’s encounter with the colonizer will pit this native upbringing against foreign ways.

Eventually, the Spaniards introduced new narrative forms such as the pasyon and didactic prose that sidelined the epic. In pre-colonial times, epics were recited for days by the chanters who possessed excellent memory and improvisational skills. Each of these

epics had the fractured feel of the episodic. When Spanish dramaturgy and storytelling devices were introduced through religious and community rituals, the epic went into history. Deocampo adds:

...with the coming of the Spaniards, somehow they gave us a template on how to tell a story. There is a clear beginning, middle and end. In other words, the dramaturgy went with that language and language for storytelling...Hinulma na natin ang pagkukuwento natin doon. Hindi inosente yun. Ang daming pinatay na mga practices natin. Ang daming na-marginalized. Ang daming pinatay na pamamaraan ng pagkukuwento.[...with the coming of the Spaniards, somehow they gave us a template on how to tell a story. There is a clear beginning, middle and end. In other words, the dramaturgy went with that language and language for storytelling... We adopted the storytelling techniques from them. That's not innocent. It killed a lot of our practices. It marginalized our practices. It killed many of our storytelling techniques.] (Deocampo, personal communication, July 4, 2012).

New storytelling devices provided a competition to pre-colonial-styled narratives.

Says Deocampo: "It dislodged all the other indigenous ways of telling stories and what stories were they? Yung [Like] Lam-Ang, yung [like] *Hinilawod* and all of these Maranao myths and all those spoken in our native languages"(personal communication, July 4, 2012). Some of these Spanish narrative styles were imbibed in cinema and some were sifted first through the komiks medium. Hispanismo is all-embracing, a seepage on various domains of culture. Spanish narrative forms served to pre-figure the ancient genres in a new package, and the native narrative tradition was never the same again.

With the Americans, cultural narratives developed from traditional to innovative, from didactic to secular. The English language and apprenticeship in the craft of writing gave new impetus for the native to express his/her soul in a borrowed tongue and a foreign idiom. Fanon (1963) reveals this as the reaction of the native – whether of an intellectual, an artist, or a simple man – in relation to the "mother country." Forced to seek his colonial identity during and after the Western encounter, the native takes the task

of studying or forging national culture. His/her initial steps are wrought by various activities of imitation and mastery of the colonizer's narrative forms. To understand their postcolonial identity, the native may mistake that being familiar with the culture of their colonizer was the first step to knowing the enemy. The roots of imitation, of conscious borrowing from foreign forms in the 1950s, may be linked to a longing to acquire universal knowledge. Fanon (1963) articulates:

This is because the native intellectual has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own. (p. 218).

Bhabha (1994), who also acknowledges Fanon's influence on his work, ascribes this attitude of the native to master the art of the colonizer as part of a habit of colonial mimicry. However, Bhabha sees this mimicry as having two implications: one favourable and another problematic. Mimicry, for Bhabha, is a site where colonial memory and influences meant not only adopting a standard or an idea but also subverting it: "The ambivalence of mimicry – almost but not quite – suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" (p.91). Somehow, this parallels what Rafael calls "colonial uncanny" (Lecture, November 10, 2004).

What Fanon has described as the tendency of the native to imbibe or to imitate foreign culture has been evident in the cycle of borrowings that the 1950s film industry engaged in. From the *koridos* to the fantasy-adventures, from the historical genre to the comedies, the influences of both Spanish and American forms were intertwined with the sources of *komiks*. Del Mundo, Jr. (1998), in his book *Native resistance: Philippine cinema and colonialism 1898-1941*, draws a vivid picture of how easy it was to build the

local film industry from the example of the American entrepreneurs. At the same time, appropriation of foreign influences was crucial in forging a postcolonial consciousness. As the illustration in the above Figure implies, foreign sources and native tendencies are engaged in a circular mode and are “splitting off,” to use Mojares’s (1998) term, getting entangled with each other to create the komiks-based cinema of the 1950s. Together, they become cultural products that create both the *national* and the *popular*.

The word “nation” is implicated in assimilating 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation within the fold of national cinema. Prior to cinema, two print-based media was performing the task of implanting the idea of community that was once assigned to the pre-colonial communication forms. The novel and the newspaper grew alongside the spread of capitalist economy in urban centers. Forerunners of the narrative film and the serial komiks, the novel’s and the newspaper’s seriality became crucial in shaping a sense of community along the “homogenous empty-time” that Benjamin (qtd in Anderson, 2003, p. 24) has mentioned or the notion of “meanwhile” (Anderson, 2003, p. 25) in the life of the nation. Conceptions of community defy time.

The novel and the newspaper were therefore responsible for “thinking” the nation, which is defined by Anderson (2003) as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p.6). In other words, the nation was only an idea. It was only “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2003, p. 6). Eventually, colonized societies that imagined the nation with the help of the novel and the newspaper would soon be consumed by the desire to free themselves from colonial oppression.

Anderson's thoughts are relevant to the secular themes of komiks-to-film adaptation. Departing from the predominantly religious themes during the Spanish years, the secular themes during the period of independence explored various aspects of modern life. As Soledad Reyes (2001) opines: "Collectively taken, they served as indices to the nation's varied images of itself" (p.11).

History books refer to the 1950s as the Decade of Philippine Nationalism. This must have something to do with the general feeling of exuberance that the Filipinos had following the colonial years. Flores notes that Filipinos who lived in the '50s would say that the atmosphere was characterized by effusiveness. The constructed notions of nation were almost "essentialist" but were also "exhilarating" (personal communication, June 16, 2012). Moreover, Hollywood casts a huge shadow on the pervading feeling of Filipinos to express their art in a nationalist way. The presence of Hollywood influences should not be a problem in an era of nationalism. It is the assimilation of influences that should be interesting to film history. Deocampo concurs: "Hollywood cinema was really the dominant cinema that we have but we really nativized it. We owned it through capitalization, through intellectual production, through our own devouring or consumption of the medium" (personal communication, July 4, 2012).

The empire has answered back, which is a sort of a re-enactment of a usual postcolonial narrative. The dynamism of the decade in terms of the quantity of films and the constant sourcing of komiks stories was perceived as something important, if not merely novel. The young nation has created various artistic expressions that are to be enunciated for the first time. Deocampo adds: "There was this expedient need to create a nation, to create an identity" (personal communication, July 4, 2012).

It was “the afterlife of the colony” (Flores, personal communication, June 16, 2012) and so the desire to assert one’s identity was a very palpable reality for Filipinos. Flores has labelled three ramifications of the idea of the postcolonial Filipino: the native, the national, and the nationalist. The recovery of what is native by conducting an inventory of local forms; the identification of what is national which means understanding “collective identity” such as defining “*musikang pambansa*,” (national music); and the formation of nationalists, “which is about the struggle for freedom to be sovereign, to be free from foreign intervention,” were surely reflected in the arts (Flores, personal communication, June 16, 2012).

The nation is a pervading presence in *pelikulang komiks*, maybe not in a direct way but in an oblique way. One example that may be cited to prove this point is the treatment of the past that has been sifted from komiks to film. Prior to its filtration in the komiks, the past eludes the Filipinos because popular forms seem to be a least likely platform for tackling what Ileo (1998) refers to as an “unfinished revolution.” The past is a complex discourse to be represented in popular culture, yet it was an undeniable staple material in fifties komiks adaptations.

The subject of the past is perceived to be a means of constructing identity through fiction. For Reyes, S. (2001), to look back at the war years was just too painful to bear for the komiks writers so that they decided to avoid it. She adds:

This intense preoccupation with the past which began early in komiks’ history further deepened in the early 1950s. With the economy in shambles, the infrastructure almost completely destroyed and its people still trying to recover from three years of a repressive Japanese regime, the country had very little to look forward to. What they possessed were memories, but recent memories of soldiers in the “Death March,” of children and old people dying of starvation, women raped by Japanese soldiers, mindless violence and bloodshed, among others, were too painful to recall and utilize as materials for fiction. (p. 159).

The films, similar to komiks, chose to depict the very remote past not entirely to learn from it as to maintain the status quo. Those films set in a modern setting are reworkings of the same old themes of the conflict between a land-grabbing hacendero and a dispossessed land owner. Yet there are other forms of domination that rework the residual patron-client relationship in the films. While the komiks writers and filmmakers seemed to be less critical of the old values that needed to be further re-examined, they were however reflective of urban woes, of the spreading din of industrialization, and of crass materialism that challenged family values.

If radical critique of society in the escapist treatment of the past was almost non-existent, sometimes it was the fictional take on a historical figure that offers a potential political reading of history. The Coching-Avellana *Lapu-Lapu*, in its avowed proto-nationalism, combines coherent storytelling with excellent photography, art design, sound and other accoutrements of iconography and mise-en-scene. Another text, *Tulisang Pugot*, may be too fantastic and evasive of politics but its sheer depiction of the late 19th century that evokes the eerie and the gothic presents a possibility for critique via iconography.

The past as subject for *pelikulang komiks* is not only about the Spanish period. Various periods of oral and written history of the Philippines were also tackled by komiks stories by borrowing plots from awit and corrido (Reyes, 2009c). The distant past is a trope by which the film story may be able to achieve a resolution of old issues. But the indiscriminate evocation of the period film and its problematic values had been revisited by adaptation not in a didactic mode but in a nostalgic mode. It is not a revisitation of the past in a postmodern, “ironic” way (Eco, 1985). Instead, the intention in recapturing the

past may be to retrieve a sense of pride that has been crashed by wartime experiences. There was the need to make sense of the past, to return to what used to be untrammelled and whole.

The past serves as a school for the honing of the visual iconography of the 1950s. It “would help endow the komiks with a certain sensibility that defined its specificity,” says Reyes (2001, p. 164). This specificity does something else; it is a key to the heroic ideal of the Filipino. It served both as a value and as a generic trope. The concept of nation penetrated *pelikulang komiks* either through the use of the past as trope or by employing myth-making. As Horn [Ed] (1976) offers:

The problem of creating a milieu at once ordinary and different is the lot of all mass media which also aspire to becoming art forms. To answer the challenge, the comics may resort to the wholesale creation of a mythical ontogeny (p. 60).

The creation of a national mythology becomes the ultimate and the most positive work of popular forms. It is where heroes fulfil their role in the collective destiny of the people, their stories becoming allegories for greater ideals beyond the enclave of fiction.

But then the bright lights of criticism, of mythography, were easily dimmed by commerce. This Janus-faced content of film adaptation easily gives bent to campiness. It surrenders politics to entertainment. As the Figure above shows, the confluence of foreign borrowings and indigenous elements in *pelikulang komiks* reflect both scripting the nation and fuelling a culture industry. The latter is inevitable in so far as cinema is a technology borrowed from the West and is propelled through the capitalist enterprise. As Arnes (1987) offers: “For all Third World countries, then, film is an imported form of communication” (p.35).

All societies gave birth to oral communication forms that “are indigenous, having grown out of specific cultures in which they are rooted historically” (Armes, 1987, p. 35).

Cinema has been a notable exception being not native to any *third cinema* as the Philippines. Lumbera (1997) in “Popular culture as politics,” says that popular culture such as film “refers to cultural forms and their respective content, which had been introduced from without, before these had been assimilated into the sensibility and value-system of the people” (p.155). It may be differentiated from folk culture which

denotes the traditional culture that a distinct community of people has evolved (sometimes in isolation from others) in its struggle with nature, and in the process of accommodation and resistance experienced by each community in its multifarious relationships with outsiders (Lumbera, 1997, p.155).

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) aver that the craze to access a number of entertainment forms was a creation of the values of the bourgeoisie whose vested interest in filmmaking has been linked to the propagation of certain ideological constructs that will maintain the status quo or ensure the elite’s hold on the infrastructure of thought. The result is repetition. As Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) argue in a chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* titled “The Culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception”: “Culture today is infecting everything with sameness” (94).

In so far as the *pelikulang komiks* of the 1950s engaged both the national and the popular, we can say that colonization was only one factor implicated in the complex borrowings of content and form. The growing consciousness of the masses has also been shaped by the Enlightenment doctrine of rationalism and a new excitement over the kind of cinema current in those days. Although not immune from being victims of deception, the masses gave new voice to the idea of nationalism that has been forged by or made complex by capitalism. While negotiating an idea of nation requires looking inward and

exploring “native elements,” one could not avoid doing such under the sponsorship of capitalism and the culture industry.

Adaptation is not exclusive to cinema. It is an artistic practice that has been in existence as far as the known history of the Filipinos is concerned. In locating adaptation in culture, the scholar is not limited to any specific art form or cultural practice. The whole of cultural tradition is implicated in understanding specific moments of adaptive art and ways of sourcing materials from narrative lore and cultural memory. Filipino adaptation practices in the 1950s were distinct because these were rooted in a culture of recycling. Stories and narratives were assimilated from various sources –foreign and local – and were rendered in the vernacular (native language), using local color and idiom. Adaptations re-symbolized source texts into films. As Gould Boyum (1985) has argued, any action done on the source text is act of signification: “An adaptation is always, whatever else it may be, an interpretation.” (p.73). In this sense, the past and the present merge in a work of komiks-to-film adaptation.

In another sense, locating culture in adaptation allows for a more comprehensive view of adaptation. It is about culture as a whole, the kind of stories we recycle and the type of materials that help explain the present. As D.M. Reyes further articulates:

I think what was being adapted onto the screen coming from komiks was material that was more evocative of the currency, of the recency of the experience (personal communication, April 16, 2012).

Adaptation is inherently contradictory. One of its feet is rooted in the past; another in the present. “The komiks mine the indigenous experience, dipping into the wealth of powerful images and symbols for the present to see,” Reyes, S. (2001, p. 161) adds. Familiar colonial symbols were instruments to understand the nation and the

people, “lest they forgot who they are,” says Reyes, S. (2001, p. 158). “It is a reflection of who we are,” Yonzon adds. In fact, it is possible that old stories with their simplistic ideological positions reflect or could reveal “a civilization that has been buried under” and needs to be brought out in the open (personal communication, March 28, 2012).

The values carried forth may also subvert status quo. Soledad Reyes, for instance, suggests that it may be useful to search for an “indirect correspondence” between the times and what the stories represent. One example would be the antagonists who fought the popular superhero *Darna*, which according to the contention of one online analyst, Reyes cites, serves as a metaphor for the “social-economic forces that bedevilled the Philippines after the 2nd World War” (personal communication, April 25, 2012). These kinds of interpretive leaps are what Flores calls “allegorical mediation” (personal communication, June 16, 2012) because the readings may range from a more personal take to the more political and revolutionary level.

Valiente agrees. After the war, with the memory of their harrowing experience at the hands of the Japanese, Filipinos worked towards the rejuvenation of their spirit. The Second World War, he says, impelled Filipinos to find their moorings. There came a need to carve an image of a new Filipino that is ideal, chivalric, heroic. Regarding this, Flores cites critic Alice Guillermo’s assessment of the contribution of komiks writer Francisco Coching and muralist Carlos “Botong” Francisco to modern art in general: They “formed th(e) visuality of the heroic Filipino of the ‘50s. (personal communication, June 16, 2012).

“Sourcing” in the Filipino sense is not the linear and one-way style of borrowing or drawing elements from a prior text. It is recycling materials from various periods of

cultural development across forms, across genres and across meanings. In the act of updating a material, both capitalistic drive and cultural impulses are at play. On the one hand, familiar materials sell, on the other, it is cathartic.

Sourcing is paean to the past –albeit in a more unconscious way. The adapter recreates older materials into komiks and into films because he/she had memories of various epochs that require understanding. Fanon (1963) declares the postcolonial artist's role in re-building national culture: "The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (p. 232).

"Appropriation" in the context of komiks-to-film adaptation means re-fashioning materials, whether foreign or indigenous, into a new form, a new genre or a new meaning for Filipinos. Hornedo (1989) interprets appropriation as a way of adding to what the "visitor" or the foreigner has brought to this land: "For the Filipino there is such a thing as appropriation by extended possession" (p.15). One day, traces of foreign borrowings would have already melded smoothly with the local to be ever visible. This was the route taken by the sarswela and komedya. Komiks-to-film adaptation was only one point of entry in that long highway of cultural adaptation. There is perhaps no other more articulate way to illustrate appropriation than the example of the Bernardo Carpio story, which followed multiple routes. From a 19th century Spanish corrido, the story became a legend about the Filipino folk hero.

"Vernacularization" is a very powerful tool to asserting indigenous culture through the complicated maze of foreign borrowings and local filtrations. To

vernacularize is to express an appropriated material in the language, idiom and metaphor of the Filipino. Film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s, that artistic product brought about by the merging of foreign and native materials, is a vernacular narrative. Rafael, who articulates the concept of the vernacular discourse very well in his writings, opines that the vernacular “forebears the foreign” or “hosts the foreign” and “gives it something different,” so that “the vernacular becomes other than itself” (Lecture, November 10, 2004).

There are various interpretations of the word “vernacular.” In his work titled “Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory,” Houston A. Baker, Jr. (in Leitch [Ed], 2001) defines the vernacular (as applied to the arts) as “native or peculiar to a particular country” (p. 2227). For Hornedo (1989), the operational term is “addition.” One may recall the example of the Willy’s jeep, an American type of vehicle, which was re-modelled by Filipinos to suit his need for transport and personal comfort. Furthermore, “the Filipino addition to the jeep and the tricycle is not appendage but identity, a habitation and a name”(Hornedo, 1989, p.16).

Vernacularization as a form of adaptation in cinema works along the principle of addition. Moreover, *pelikulang komiks* presents itself as a type of vernacular narrative, alongside the Tagalog novel, epic, awit, korido and pasyon because it delivers a story that is exclusively retold by combining the conventions and tropes - foreign and local. This aptly parallels what Leitch [Ed] (2001) has commented on vernacularized forms like blues music: “The vernacular is an expression of the popular as well as the local” (Introduction to “Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory,” p. 2225).

The success of *pelikulang komiks* in capturing the imagination of the masses in the '50s was not a unique case and is traceable to older narrative forms. In early American period, other forms of narratives reflected traces of adaptation practices and their popular reception. Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979), for example, chronicles the revolutionary potential of the *pasyon* (verse narrative illustrating the passion of the Christ), which has been received and deconstructed by the masses to signify their personal struggles as a colonized people. Like Ileto's *pasyon*, komiks and cinema bear great potentials for protest and change. The past and the present, the folk and the popular merge in the komiks and in film.

The historical roots of Filipino film adaptation practices are linked to linguistic translation. After all, vernacular cinema and vernacular adaptation are partly about the vernacular language that they employ or speak. If one were to trace the ability of Filipino media forms to refer or to borrow from diverse sources, the dramatic years of the Spanish period would come to mind. In Vicente Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism: Translation in early Spanish Rule* (1988), adaptation is posited to be synonymous with translation. Natives in early Spanish rule barely spoke the Spanish language but they took to imagining in their own Tagalog language or vernacular Christian concepts that contain messages about freedom and justice. Rafael (1988) articulates that these nascent concepts of vernacularization may be beneficial to present day scholars of culture:

By looking at the translation – or, more appropriately, vernacularization – of conversion in Tagalog culture, we can also discern native responses to the dominant and dominating interpretation of the past (p. 21).

Using the template suggested by Anderson, Ileto and Rafael therefore, translation, vernacularization, indigenization and adaptation become synonymous with each other.

Colonial mimicry led us to a culture of adaptation and recycling but it also gave us a chance to develop an international mind which today serves us in good stead as we wade through our migratory and exilic experiences. As Flores explains:

The world is within the Filipino. Di mo na dine-decolonize kasi inaangkin na nga ng mga Filipino. The Filipino is entitled to that world kasi kasama na tayo dun e bakit ide-decolonize pa yun? We just re-make it, re-world it. Atin yon, kaya tignan mo at ease naman ang mga artist natin gumawa. Hindi naman sila anxious na we are doing this to decolonize. Halata naman na atin ito. We are in this world. [The world is within the Filipino. You don't decolonize because (foreign materials) were already appropriated by the Filipinos. The Filipino is entitled to that world so why de-colonize that. It is ours. Look, our artists were at ease with it. They are not anxious that we are creating art to de-colonize. It is obvious. We are in this world.] (personal communication, June 16, 2012).

Filipino film adaptation of komiks reflects this worldliness of the native artist.

The summoning of various texts, the mixing of heterogenous genres and the emulation of various effects from the audience reflect a knowledge of the world outside and the world within. To this, Hornedo's definition of Filipinism may be instructive:

Filipinism is the process of exorcising the alienness of the borrowed technology by bringing into it the familiar and social marks and features of Filipinicity thus giving the new creation a familiarity, a habitation and a name (p.17).

Looking into a text such as *Bernardo Carpio*, the familiar is achieved by assigning a home and a name to the legend. The Spanish hero, after more than a century, became a Tagalog king who is asleep in a cave called Mount Tapusi. One day, he will rise with an army who will liberate his nation from oppression. This appropriation of Bernardo Carpio fits the criterion in Hornedo's addendum. Filipinism, he says,

involves the eminent right of the free to name the world they create. The creative adoption of the "visitor" in order to make it native is an assertion of freedom. It is an affirmation of independence of spirit. (p. 17)

In other words, appropriation of foreign elements and their indigenization as a key feature of the 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation were the result of a convergence of sourcing and adaptation processes and the intervention of the commercial aspects of filmmaking and consumption. The result was a hybrid cinema which is probably a key to unravelling a Filipino adaptation theory.

The hybridity of Filipino film adaptation refers to the co-mingling of influences and intertextualities in the target text. As a hybrid form, the work of adaptation participated in the business of interpretation and re-cycling of borrowings, influences and story materials onto other forms. Moreover, adaptation served as evidence, not only of the Filipinos' propensity for various textualities, but also of their conscious referencing of various texts in circulation.

Fanon (1963) enumerates three (3) phases by which a national culture is created during the postcolonial period. In the first phase, "the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power" (p.222). This means that the artist is literate and open to the forms, genres, plots and motifs that were brought from the outside. They should serve as template of what is possible. The komiks looked out for the metrical romances, the fantasy, the musical-comedy and the historical genres. The film saw the potential to recreate the experiences by adding movement, soundtrack, music and mise-en-scene. As culture, film extends the komiks experience by forming audiences and transforming movie-going into an irresistible social institution.

Fanon's second phase talks of the native now remembering his pre-colonial identity:

Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory: old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed

aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies (p.222).

This accounts for the pervading feeling of nostalgia for an Edenic past that visits the adapted stories. Old lore is rendered in new forms. “The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental” (Fanon, 1963, p. 240). For example, *Lapu-Lapu*, its avowed nationalism through a story of a hero that was pre-national, reflects on a ruptured past. The film interacts with the komiks version through representational and modernist iconography that only a Coching and an Avellana could summon and communicate effectively.

Fanon’s third phase moves toward a national culture. Now, the native intellectual or artist has turned “into an awakener of the people” (p.223). The native interprets the past and brings this to the attention of the masses. While it is difficult to undertake the role of “awakener” through the platform of mass culture, which is commercialized and compromised, the “nation” is nevertheless present in popular entertainment. It may not be overt or radical but it is present nonetheless.

In shaping then a vernacular and hybrid theory of Filipino film adaptation, Homi Bhabha’s work titled *The location of culture* (1994) is instructive. Bhabha introduces the notion of hybrid cultures by cautioning scholars from essentializing the status and condition of the postcolonial subject in committing only to the notions of “the native,” “the indigenous,” “the national.” Bhabha looks into the encounter of the formerly colonized with the culture of the empires as an occasion for cultural difference, not cultural diversity. This negotiation of cultures allow for the opening up of a new space – non-essentialized, unfixed, integrative. Bhabha adds:

To that end, we should remember that it is the 'inter' - the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people.' And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. (pp. 38-39)

The merger of the foreign and the native elements in *pelikulang komiks* creates a new space. Therefore, instead of erecting binaries between the foreign and the native, between Hollywood and local, between European stories and native sources, we can look at it as a way to view the larger world; what Reyes (2003) calls “transnational formation” (pp. 21-22) or what Bhabha refers to as “the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (p. 2397) or what Baker (in Leitch [Ed], 2001) terms “vernacular expression” (p. 2237).

Jameson (cited in Rajadhyaksha, in Hill and Gibson [Eds], 2000) considers all third world texts as national allegories. Even the most private and mundane stories reflect notions of nation. The “nation” then comes in many guises and *pelikulang komiks* contributed its share in that programmatic vision to reconstruct identity. As Jameson (cited in Rajadhyaksha, in Hill and Gibson [Eds], 2000) adds: “The story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society” (p. 35).

Film adaptation of komiks stories in the 1950s involved the invocation and recycling of various genres. Stories from Spanish colonial years were recast side by side with contemporary stories and although these were produced with business profit in mind, these were socially important to the viewers. The task of this theory-building enterprise is not to criticize the creative compromises done in the 1950s or to read much importance beyond the simplistic storylines that were recreated. The task of theorizing is

to understand how the *pelikulang komiks* came to represent the Filipino in the fifties and this requires a methodology that is eclectic enough to embrace the various impulses that were current in the times. As Jameson (1981) has suggested very aptly, cultural analysis should involve the “simultaneous recognition of the ideological and Utopian functions of the artistic text”(p.299). The theorist then should be both a positive and a negative hermeneut to have a wider latitude of acceptance in dealing with the complex interactions between the foreign and the native in the films or better yet, in explicating the “third space of enunciation;” as Bhabha (1994) has playfully referred to the instability of postcolonial identity formation.

The film industry of the 1950s imported foreign technology, reprised European story materials, employed the Classical Hollywood Narrative template and emulated the studio system of the United States. Yet, the actors spoke the vernacular. The backdrop, though depicting ancient Jerusalem and Persia or medieval Castille, was inhabited by “Filipinized” characters. And the manner of narration is loose, episodic, improvisational and digressive. This hybridization, “the mixing within a single concrete utterance, of two of more linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and social space,” as Bakhtin (1981, p. 429) has defined it, has inflected a colourful texture to Filipino cinema. No other example could be more telling than the dialogue that happened between komiks and cinema in the 1950s.

In a typical *pelikulang komiks* in the fifties, the contour of the human form in a mise-en-scene, the real and artificial backdrops, the fashionably-tailored costumes and accessories, the music heard and the sentiments parlayed, were unmistakably Filipino. Collectively, they created cinematic images that eventually joined our cherished cultural

memory of the era. Those memories were shaped and visualized through vernacularization, which means appropriating a foreign technology of mechanical art, importing stories from other cultures, mining indigenous narratives from some remembered pre-literate past, shaping a cinematic language, installing a narrative style, and propelling both old, refurbished forms and new expressions of visuality, literariness and performativity that cannot be anything other than *Filipino*.

IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Summary of the Study

The Summary of the Study discusses the general and specific objectives of the study through an overview of the general findings. The study's general objective to propose an emergent theory of Filipino komiks to film adaptation through a semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism of selected extant texts and a social history of adaptation practices in the 1950s was implemented by carrying out three major tasks connected with the specific objectives that are outlined and summarized in succeeding discussions.

An inventory of extant films with extant komiks sources became a pre-requisite to identifying the extant texts and in selecting the samples that were eventually subjected to a semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism. Available listings (Momblanco, 1979; Mowelfund, 1994; Francia, 2003) were consulted to produce a filmography of 1950s cinema.

A total of 838 films were produced from 1950 to 1959. Of the 838 films, 263 were produced by LVN and 203 by Sampaguita. The films produced by Premiere and Lebran are no longer extant. Of the 263 films by LVN, only 94 are extant. Of the 203 films by Sampaguita, only 82 remain. Some twelve (12) films have been identified to be extant with extant komiks sources. Four (4) of the films were sampled from the list for the semiotics and adaptation criticism parts of the study, namely: *Bernardo Carpio*, *Tulisang Pugot*, *Kambal-Tuko* and *Lapu-Lapu*.

The study adopted the grounded theory approach, which is a research method that encourages the drawing of concepts and constructs from data. Instead of available theories guiding the building of conceptual framework, the study suspended theoretical

assumptions prior to data construction. Preliminary theoretical samplings were drawn from the data generated which later on crystallized into an emergent Filipino adaptation theory.

1. *A Semiotic Analysis and Adaptation Criticism of Selected Texts*

Four films and their komiks-sources were sampled from the identified 12 extant films with extant komiks-sources to examine the filmo-linguistic operations of adaptation and salient issues affecting komiks-to-film adaptation practices in the 1950s. The semiotic analysis was divided into two types. The first type was the semiotics of narrative or semantic-syntactic analysis of generic codes. This approach was used to read three (3) films (*Bernardo Carpio*, *Tulisanang Pugot*, *Kambal-Tuko*) that have been identified as genre films. The films have been analysed on the basis of generic features, including replicable patterns, characterizations, motifs, iconography and cinematographic techniques that are distinct to particular plot types (the korido film, fantasy-adventure and comedy).

The second type of semiotic analysis deployed involved the analysis of small narrative units using Metz's Grand Syntagmatique and Bellour's Segmenting/Analysing. The two methods were employed to analyse the film adaptation of the komiks story *Lapu-Lapu*. The Grand Syntagmatique was employed to identify the various kinds of shots and how these may be viewed independently from the chain of narrative units called syntagmas. The Segmenting/Analyzing approach was able to compare the sequential structure of komiks and how this has been transposed into film segments; from panel to shot, from frames to segments. The segment is unique because it is supposed to possess a unity of time, place and action.

The three (3) genre films (*Bernardo Carpio*, *Tulisan Pugot*, and *Kambal Tuko*) highlighted how the language of cinema, guided by the precursor language of the komiks narrative, unravelled the elements of the genre or the generic category each film invokes. These generic features of the korido film, fantasy-adventure and comedy were made to cohere with the social contexts of adaptation, which include the culture of recycling, generic mediation and the propelling of the romance mode, the aesthetics of adaptation, the indigenization of foreign elements, the cultural economy of production and the maintainance of a prevalent type of adaptation.

The film version of *Lapu-Lapu* showed its clear allegiance to the komiks story. It also interprets the source-text by finding filmic equivalencies to the komiks version's iconography. The long takes were utilized to approximate the seamless and unified plot of the Coching story but there were also departures from the komiks in sequences where Avellana chose to employ condensations, composite characterizations, and expository beginning and an exhortatory ending. The film is an example of the historical fiction film because it invokes the motif of the foundational romance.

The adaptation criticism of the four texts has been written on the basis of the salient features of each text. In *Bernardo Carpio*, the emphasis is the practice of recycling older sources and the predominance of the romance mode in Philippine texts. In *Tulisan Pugot*, critical analysis is focused on the overt practice of drawing from foreign sources and appropriating using local idiom. *Kambal Tuko* reflects on the social significance of Filipino humor and the role of the stars' personality in shaping story content. Finally, *Lapu-Lapu* demonstrates the aesthetics of komiks' iconography in dialogue with filmic iconography. This has been approximated through semiotic analysis. The film is also a

type of historical fiction film which reflects on a story of resistance against colonial powers. Certain concepts from poststructuralist and postcolonial theories and criticism have been employed to carry out an adaptation criticism of the texts. Said concepts include intertextuality, adaptation, colonial mimicry, the nature of comedy and allegory.

2. *Social History of the Film Adaptation of Komiks in the 1950s*

The second specific objective of the study embarked on describing and analysing the social history of the 1950s film adaptation process. It was carried out through unstructured interviews of ten (10) key informants consisting of komiks illustrators, film historians and scholars, filmmakers and cultural studies scholars. An extrinsic picture of the adaptation process came out of the social history, which investigated the Filipino culture of recycling; generic mediation and the impulse towards romance; the aesthetics of komiks-to-film adaptation; foreign borrowings and native appropriations; the institutional matrix of production; and, the prevalent type of adaptation in the fifties that catered to the status quo. The social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s unravelled a stage in Philippine film history wherein the form and content of film and komiks were shaped by their material realities.

3. *An Emergent Theory of Filipino komiks-to-film Adaptation in the 1950s*

The ultimate objective of the study reached its fruition through the third specific objective. Out of the insights and methods of inquiry revealed through semiotics, adaptation criticism and social history, the conceptual framework for an emergent theory was unveiled. The conceptual discussions were divided into two: the meta-issues governing the emergent Filipino film adaptation theory (Chapter 7) and the main discussion of the theory (Chapter 8) concepts, assumptions and the discourse on *A Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Filipino Film Theory*.

Some of the theoretical assumptions that came out of the conceptual discussion pointed to a number of adaptation practices that are specific to Filipino cultural contexts. Filipino adaptation was a product of colonial history and of a unique relationship between a Filipino source text and the film medium. Through iconography and generic mediation, adaptation introduced fictional heroes who represented the Filipinos' craving for wish-fulfilment, desire for escape and attachment to a number of cultural values. More importantly, adaptation became a venue for vernacularizing a hybrid cultural form that drew from foreign influences and appropriated and negotiated native stories that circulated way before the technology of cinema was even brought to the country. Adaptation accommodated the Filipinos' ability to make sense of received stories and to create new meanings.

B. Conclusions

The conduct of semiotic analysis, adaptation criticism and social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s lent insight to a proposed theory of Filipino film adaptation. The grounded theory approach generated archival data and interview responses where emergent concepts for the prospective theory were drawn. These data were supplemented by periodical literature published in the fifties.

Filipino film adaptation in the 1950s was part of a long line of artistic practice of borrowing from source texts. Prior to this development, theatre, novels and folklore provided story materials to early cinema.

Semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism of selected texts lent insight to a proposed emergent theory through its close reading approach to genre and to the language and properties of a source text and how these have been borrowed, intersected

with or transformed in a film. Of the three modes of adaptation defined by Andrew, it is the matter of fidelity and transformation that applied to majority of the texts analysed. Gianetti's "faithful" adaptation is synonymous to Andrew's category. This meant that a number of films used the source texts as structural guide. To replicate the success of the original, cinema built on familiarity, generic tropes and studio identity that ensured that the films were received as a body of circulating narratives that reflect a wished-for social order. This also meant that intertextuality has guided the flow of sources and influences from source-texts to works of adaptation.

Filipino adaptation mode in the 1950s was largely conventional. The semiotics and adaptation criticism also solidified certain conclusions about adaptation. The genres were the key to the propelling of the Filipino culture of recycling. The semiotics of film narrative paved the way for an examination of genres as the link between the texts and audience formation. Contemporary Cultural Criticism of the sampled texts has been incisive in bringing forth the issues that exist beyond language or semiotics. Poststructuralist theories complimented the structuralist approach of semiotics.

The semiotics of small narrative units – segment and syntagma – enabled the close textual analysis that scrutinized the process by which two media shared iconographies or found ways to parallel or to depart from each. Adaptation criticism served as bridge connecting the texts and the contexts. The social history of Filipino film adaptation in the 1950s revealed how Filipino culture of recycling (which is rooted in narrative culture); the romantic mode of Filipino narrative; the aesthetics of adaptation; and the contexts of production (producers, stars and fandom) constituted the works of

adaptation. The material conditions of adaptation shaped its content and provided a deeper understanding of the ineluctable relationship between text and context.

The emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation is a work in progress but made possible the retrieval of data from the ground. This was conceptualized with the end in view of unravelling a vernacular and hybrid theory that pays premium to Filipino appropriation of the film medium that was in dialogue with its source texts. As vernacular theory, Filipino film adaptation is perceived to have developed its own idiom through its own manner of expression. As hybrid theory, Filipino adaptation is an amalgam of foreign appropriations and local borrowings and is a heterogenous mixture of forms, genres, themes, motifs and tropes that do not only descend from a single source-text but is also a filtration or bears residues from a cycle of texts existing in our narrative culture.

The study treated received theory only as a guide. The emergent theory that derived constructs and concepts from the actual practice of adaptation was what the archive yielded, what the semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism illuminated, and what the social history of film adaptation has contextualized. This emergent theory hopefully contributes not only to Filipino film adaptation theory but also to the discourse on culture in general.

X. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into the implications of the present study and a number of recommendations for future studies of this kind. There are three levels of implications presented: theoretical, methodological and practical. Meanwhile, the recommendations for future incursions on the subject have been drawn from the said implications and the gaps that have been identified through the present study.

A. Implications

1. Theoretical Implications

This study embarked to propose a theory of Filipino film adaptation based on the dynamic interaction between film and komiks in the 1950s. It has implications then on film theory and possibly, even cultural theory. Using the data-to-theory or the grounded theory approach, theoretical samplings have been drawn from chunks of raw data that have been incrementally built through several stages of data construction.

Grounded theory in Filipino cinema studies is very scarce, which is consistently predisposed to textual analyses and critical approaches. Throughout the last two to three decades, the disappearance of a significant amount of archive created the need to generate more data and studies on film archive retrieval. The conduct of social histories and reception studies has become more urgent too with the rise of contextual or extrinsic approaches to film studies, apart from textual analyses or close readings.

The grounded theory approach has a potential to yield theories that are forged by data and this could complement projects engaged in close textual analyses. Moreover, the grounded theory approach may lead to a more thorough understanding of audience formation, of generic mediation, of the processes of political economy of cinema and of

other activities relating to cinema culture that have been investigated in the past using the deductive approach or the theory-to-data style of inquiry.

In addition, the study exposed contemporary film theory's tendency to be hybrid, interdisciplinary, even anti-disciplinary in its attitude towards adaptations. A confluence of production and creative contexts intrude into and enrich the adaptation process. A culture of borrowing, referencing and adapting connect art and media with the larger and even more provisional discourses.

All this time, scholars have decried the commercial bent of mainstream cinema that translates into a culture industry that manipulate the content of cinema, repeat genres at no end and form passive audiences. Texts migrate to other texts not so much as to enrich each other but to replicate the popular appeal of the precursor text and to extend the commercial viability of the material through adaptation. In the process, movies have been dismissed as nonsensical and too popular to ever merit an academic discussion. As a major argument of the emergent theory that this dissertation is proposing, the relationship between two popular texts such as film and komiks reflect deeper structures of thought that represent the Filipino means of self-identification, fantasy and escape – polar opposites to ancient catharsis and sense of irony.

Some of the meanings these texts carry maintain the status quo. Some reflect a surprising and refreshing insight into the popular mind. Some have potential for profundity, only to frustrate the viewer with its contrived conclusions. Some refer to older narratives that existed before colonial Philippines came into being and long after the empire was no more. Some represent the Filipino mind-set at the time of the telling. Some totally disregard historical time and latch on deliberate anachronism and

unprovoked temporalities. Some are foundational and some have unveiled a brewing resistance.

Scholars may not be able to fully map out the commercial mind behind these stories but they could unravel layers of consciousness that continue to pander to collective wish-fulfilment. The role of theory is not only to critique but also to unveil what the ground has opened up all this time. Only a thorough and well-examined scrutiny of data that pertain to intertextual dialogism, generic mediation, social history of cinema and audience formation could inform a theory of film adaptation, coupled with a balanced view of material culture and archive. When biases are examined, prejudices are checked, and ideological stances are enunciated with self-awareness, a prospective theory of adaptation, no matter how contentious, may possibly merit fair attention and animated discourse.

2. Methodological Implications

The 1950s cinema archives are in a very fragile condition, specifically the nitrate-based films that survived the decades. Only four pre-war films have been identified as extant and more than one-half of the 1950s films are gone. Retrieval of “lost” films and documenting and analysing existing ones should merit the attention of more researchers. Theoretical works on what remained in the archive may help paint a clearer picture of a certain film era. Annotated filmographies and annotated bibliographies of researches, theses and dissertations will serve as basic sources to researchers still looking for a locus of study and to scholars who are engaged in identifying research gaps and piecing together fragmentary information.

Reflexive studies such as this shed light on methodology. When the researcher is self-aware at every step of the grounded theory process, theoretical samplings merge with data-gathering methods and help clarify methodological issues. In a theory-building enterprise, a self-reflexive researcher knows his/her biases, prejudices and ideological stance and this knowledge informs the entire research process.

This film research project engaged qualitative research methods and instances of critical research. It used both the intrinsic approach to adaptation through semiotic analysis and adaptation criticism and the extrinsic approach through social history. The theory-building part necessitated some grounding in critical discourse.

The text samples although limited by the availability of extant archive were justifiably enough for the building of generic categories and for the employment of two types of semiotic analyses; one for the analysis of smaller narrative units and another for the analysis of larger narrative units (generic codes and narratology). The case samples were also useful in pointing out the difference between auteurist adaptation and genre theory approach to adaptation.

The key informants, although second generation sources of opinions and insights, were the experts and scholars in the field. Two of the informants were children of 1950s practitioners of film adaptation of komiks and provided both personal recollections of their fathers' careers and scholarly opinions on the subject.

The research instruments, consisting of the interview guide, the komiks inventory form and the film scene/sequence list, accommodated both external and internal approaches to the subject matter. The focus and content of interview guides vary, depending on each key informant's field of expertise and subject positioning. The komiks

inventory form was an effective documentary tool to account for each archival document as this has been retrieved from the library collection. Finally, the scene/sequence lists aided the researcher in doing the close textual analysis of each film because these entailed a shot-by-shot and scene-by-scene accounting of the images. Notes on filming techniques were furnished during this stage.

The inventory of filmography is an important method introduced by this dissertation because it is a quasi-scientific approach to unravelling what has remained of the archive and at looking at them inside out. Moreover, the social history of film adaptation of komiks in the 1950s produced refreshing insights into the cultural economy of said film era through theoretical hindsight, afterthought and honest criticism of both the triumphs and the failings of the industry during the period. The semiotical analysis gave out an almost-forensic view of each text and how they illumined the era's episteme and practices. Contemporary adaptation criticism drawn from poststructuralist, postmodern and postcolonial theories were critical in analysing adaptation as an intertextual event.

The findings of the study were able to inform a prospective film adaptation theory and a prospective cultural theory as well. While the theory that emerged is still in its infancy, the data that had been mined were extensive enough for a further reading, perhaps using other more contemporary theoretical and critical lenses.

Future researchers who would employ mixed methods in film research will surely agree that ruminations on form and content applying extant theory may be greatly complemented by the grounded theory approach and the engagement of sub-methods such as archival research, documentation, reception study, analysis of political economy, social history and oral history.

3. Practical Implications

Aside from the importance of studying the disappearing archive, there are practical uses to this type of research. Film studies usually appear so esoteric to the practical world but it is one of the branches of cultural studies that shed light on discursive formations and how societies embrace or better yet, create these formations.

Adaptation may provide texture to current practice, specifically regarding popular spin-offs that repeat storylines and formulas on the one hand, and the all-too-realistic, even naturalistic, styles of independent films, on the other. A middle ground approach, one that respects a system of borrowing, referencing, appropriating precursor texts enriches not only film but also its source text. Prior texts are updated, re-symbolized or even parodied and this practice brings attention to the narratives that are in turn tied to cultural memory or to the audiences' ability in finding new meanings in the already-said.

Cinema memory can be cultural memory. The country has undergone various phases of living the "nation" and cinema culture played a great role in it. There was a time that film was considered as a key to national integration. Film was seen as a subtle educator under this rubric. Also, there was a time when cinema was thought to be a key to nation-building so that value-laden films were encouraged and even subsidized by the state. The ones that were recognized by other nations were celebrated and canonized.

There are those who think that films could function as bearer of cultural values and history. The cycles of stories repeated through adaptation may be useful when viewed from that perspective. More so, when cinema takes the role of critic and moral visionary, the audience are also led to the so-called "liminal" and "uncanny" aspects that

may help them in understanding national cinema not a single identity, but rather a formation that consists multiple, fractured, and sometimes contradictory elements.

Majority of the texts studied in this dissertation carry contentious messages and they require further elucidation. Framing these texts from the perspectives of structuralism, semiotics, adaptation criticism and genre theory has their limitations but because these were analysed as narratives with distinct tropes, they served the purpose of illuminating their milieu and the episteme of their film era. There was also the danger of over-reading them; yet, they could not just be dismissed as mere technologically-aided fictions that pandered to the masses' predilection for the predictable.

Cinema is the narrative of the possible and adaptation is its willing accomplice. When one is done appreciating the cinematography, the mise-en-scene and the narrative, one could finally train his or her focus on the raw material of the film, its basic constitution as an archive. The more reflective film aficionado will surely be thankful that the archive was recovered at all. Film, more than anything else, is an artefact of culture. To contemplate it as such is already a gain.

B. Recommendations

This theory-building study, as advised by the grounded theory approach that it employed, recommends the engagement of discourses that are meant to build conceptual frames for future film researches. Theorizing and experimenting on against-the-grain methodologies such as the data-to-theory approach or the grounded theory will provide an understanding of a phenomenology of Filipino interaction with the various communications media. Instead of relying on received or extant theory from the West,

film scholars may generate localized or contextualized knowledge of adaptation practices born out of their own experiences and discursive processes.

The study also recommends a thorough study of the archive through data-gathering methods such as documentation, bibliography-building, filmography-building, archival description and historical analysis. The extant films should be subjected to close textual analysis and examined according to the critical standards of the era and through current theoretical lenses as well. Textual analyses should however be matched by a manageable social history of a film era.

Most importantly, the study recommends further studies that should lead to or advocate for the retrieval and preservation of extant films for their sheer historical and cultural value. An action research or a policy research may complement current academic scholarship on film to make more emphatic the call for the preservation of the fragile film archives of the country. Studies that are theoretical in nature may be encouraged simultaneously with projects that have more practical applications on education and film literacy, to ensure that films are not only treated as artifacts to be analysed and discoursed about but also as repositories of cultural memory.

ENDNOTES

Notes for Chapter 1: Introduction

¹ The book's contents have been published in separate articles before these were brought together in a single volume.

² From "Medieval Mythmaking and Hollywood Storytelling: Traditional and Postmodern Arthurian and Grail Texts," which is Chapter 2 of *Postmodern Filming of Literature*. First published as an article in *Ad Veritatem*, Vol. 2 No. 2, March 2003, pp. 389-422. Three texts were analysed as following the Arthurian legend and the grail myth: *Excalibur* (1985), *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *The Fisher King* (1991) to illustrate how the myth is played out through different contexts.

³ Topic taken up in "The Film Epic as Alternative Historiography: Revisiting *El Cid* (1961)," *Unitas*, Vol. 82 No.1, June 2009, pp. 197-213. The article was originally part of the dissertation titled *Postmodern Filming of Literature* but it was not included in the book because the 1961 version of *El Cid* was not entirely postmodern in style and approach.

⁴ Discussed in "Cinema as Historiographic metafiction: The Postmodern Rizalian Texts," *Journal for the Arts, Culture and the Humanities* Vol. 2 No. 1, March 2003, Pp. 43-58. The article is Chapter 6 of *Postmodern Filming of Literature*. It is the revised version of the paper read at the First Philippine Art Studies Conference held on October 24 to 26, 2002 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

⁵ Subject explored in "The Impact of United States Colonization on the Rizalian Tradition in Cinema and Literature: A View of the *Popular Arts as Postcolonial Historiography*," *Plaridel: A Journal of Philippine Communication, Media and Society* Vol. 3 No. 2, August 2006, pp. 49-74. The article is a revised version of the paper presented at the Sangandaan 2003: An International Conference on Arts and Media in Philippine-American Relations, 1899-2002 held on July 7 to 11, 2003 at the Philippine Social Science Council in Quezon City, Philippines.

⁶ Shakespearean adaptations were discussed in "Postmodern Shakespeare," Chapter 3 of *Postmodern Filming of Literature*. This was first published in article form in *Ad Veritatem* Vol. 3 No. 2, March 2004, pp. 549-616. Among the literary texts/films analysed were Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1605), Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1982) [an adaptation of *King Lear*], Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) and the metafilm *Shakespeare in Love* (1998).

⁷ Jane Austen's novels and their film adaptations such as *Sense and Sensibility* (1811; 1995 film version), *Emma* (1816; 1996 film version) and *Clueless* (1995; adaptation of *Emma*) have been discussed in Chapter 4 of *Postmodern Filming of Literature* under the title "Love and Romance in a Postmodern World: Jane Austen and the Woman's Film." A revised excerpt was published in *Unitas* Vol. 77 No. 4, December 2004, pp. 455-475 under the title "Women's Film in Teaching the Works of the 18th and 19th Century Women Novelists in English: The Case of Jane Austen and Her Predecessors." The said excerpt was also read at the First Joint CDCE-CETA International Congress on English Programs held on April 2 to 4, 2003 at the Thomas Aquinas Research Complex of the University of Santo Tomas.

⁸ Taken up in "Aspects of Metafiction: The Breakdown of Eastern and Western Rationalism," Chapter 5 of *Postmodern Filming of Literature*. Among the metafictional works and the film

versions analysed were John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (film by the same title by Alan J. Pakula, 1985) and Ryunosuke Akutagawa's *Rashomon* and *In a Grove* (*Rashomon* by Akira Kurosawa, 1950).

⁹ This topic has been elaborated in "A third way to film the story: a Filipino film adaptation of a work of literary journalism," published in *Southeast Asia Research* Vol. 18 No. 2, June 2010, pp. 271-300. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 5th EuroSEAS Conference held on September 12 to 15, 2007 at the University of Naples L'Orientale, Naples, Italy. The texts specifically discussed were Quijano de Manila's "House of Zapote Street" (1961) and its film version titled *Kisapmata* [In the Blink of an Eye, 1981] directed by Mike de Leon.

¹⁰ The influence of cinematic narrative devices on the novel was taken up in "Dogeaters: Films as Subtext in Transposed and Invented History," which was published in *Ideya: Journal of the Humanities* Vol. 6 No.2/ Vol. 7 No. 1, March 2005/September 2005, pp. 105-117. This was originally part of the dissertation *Postmodern Filming of Literature*.

Notes for Chapter IV: Methods and Procedures

¹ The Manila Bulletin Print Library has been discovered very late in the data-gathering phase. Only the missing chapters and pages were secured from the said library.

Notes for Chapter V: Semiotics and Adaptation Criticism of Selected Texts

¹ As a komiks story, *Bernardo Carpio* is unique in that it was presented in *Liwayway* in both its prose form and in its komiks form. One side of the magazine spread is in prose while another side is in komiks format. The reason for the two formats has not been established but one may conjecture that it may probably be a ploy to make the series appealing to the two types of readers that *Liwayway* had in those times: the prose reader and the komiks reader. In addition, Galauran was a writer known for his prose works, specifically the Tagalog novel that catered to a mass audience.

The first film version by Sampaguita Pictures was lost to a fire that gutted the studio in 1951 (Francia, 2003). It was already canned and was ready for theatrical exhibition when the fire happened. After it recovered its losses though some blockbuster releases such as *Roberta*, the film company ordered a new version produced. The film sample examined in this study is the second post-fire version produced by Sampaguita. The film finally premiered on May 30, 1951 at Life Theater.

² *Tulisan Pugot*, the komiks serial, began its run in the *Liwayway* on October 2, 1950 and saw through fifty (50) issues. This story, written by Gemiliano Pineda and illustrated by Alfredo P. Alcala, had its last chapter published on September 17, 1951. It came in a one-spread format which means that two pages are devoted to the series every issue per week. The Sampaguita movie adaptation that starred Fred Montilla in the title role and Myrna Delgado as his love interest, *Lolita* was directed by Octavio Silos. It premiered on August 23, 1953 at Dalisay Theater.

³ *Kambal-Tuko*, written by Nemesio E. Caravana and illustrated by a certain Jet, began publication in *Ilang-Ilang* Magazine on May 10, 1951 and ended on December 27, 1951 through thirty-four (34) installments. The film version by LVN Pictures was directed by F.H. Constantino who also

worked on the screenplay adaptation. The film that starred Pugo and Togo premiered on April 25, 1952 at Life Theater.

⁴ *Lapu-Lapu*, the komiks, has been released in book form in 2010 (after some restoration work has been done allegedly on the graphics) so that technically, it is the most complete version of the komiks in one compilation. Another of Coching masterpiece, *El Indio*, also came out in book form prior to *Lapu-Lapu*.

Notes for Appendices

Appendix C – Filmography of the 1950s, listing identified komiks-sources and availability

¹ List of Films drawn from the *Diamond Anniversary of Philippine Cinema* (1994, Mowelfund).

² Komiks sources of LVN films and by other film companies drawn from Momblanco's (1979) list.

³ Komiks-sources of Sampaguita Films were drawn from Francia's (2003) master's thesis *Sampaguita Pictures (1937-1995)*. Abbreviations of library sources for komiks include the following: NLP (National Library of the Philippines), UP (University of the Philippines Diliman Library), LML (Lopez Museum and Library), MLPL (Manila Bulletin Print Library).

Appendix N – Film Credits and Synopses

¹ Synopses are based on the film version. A short note on the additions, deletions or parallels between the komiks story and the film version has been added after each synopsis.

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