PELIKULANG KOMIKS

Toward a Theory of Filipino Film Adaptation*

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Abstract

This paper tackles the major assumptions of a proposed/emergent Filipino komiks-to-film adaptation theory based on archival texts from the 1950s. An inventory of extant texts has led to the identification of twelve komiks-to-film adaptations representing Filipinized genres such as the korido film, fantasy/folklore, family drama, woman's film, personality comedy, and historical film. Textual analysis of uncovered texts has been complemented by a social film history based on unstructured interviews with ten komiks and film scholars and retrieval of archival film journalism pieces. The main concern of this paper is to present the concepts and assumptions about komiks-to-film adaptation that will constitute the proposed Filipino film adaptation theory. The main arguments of the prospective theory follow either one or all the definitions/phases of contextualization, namely: indigenization, localization, vernacularization, and hybridization. The prospective theory will be referred to as *Pelikulang Komiks*.

Keywords

About the Author

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> Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one.
> – Dudley Andrew, "Adaptation"
> "The best kind of media theory to begin with is a historical one."
> – Fred Inglis, *Media Theory*

Introduction: Background on 1950s Filipino Komiks and Film[1]

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 into 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, "Pelikula Incunabula"; Sotto).

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 Seňor 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 cinematrografos were being brought to the country and beginning to entertain the natives, the country was in between the Spanish and the American empires (Deocampo; Tolentino). At the height of two colonial eras, technological and cultural upheavals were happening too in the islands. Said events enabled the Filipino 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)[2] to collect facts about the islands that will assist the new colonizers in deciding the fate of the Filipinos. The Commission's work was underway when a handful of Filipinos tried their hands at film entrepreneurship. Carunungan 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 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), based on the sarswela of Hermogenes Ilagan. It made use of a live musical backdrop. Aside from new means to control lighting, Nepomuceno worked on improved cinematography and

laboratory processing (Giron 17). 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 their operations. Alfonso refers to the 1930s and 1940s as the "Decade of Technical Experimentations," which set the stage for the events and developments of the 1950s. The said decade, Alfonso continues, "was a decade of enthusiasm, competition and awards" (112). True to form, the decade was also crucial in the full flowering of narrative cinema, aided by developments in color technology and cinematographic practices.

THE RISE OF KOMIKS[3]

Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, was not only a stalwart of the novel form but also of the early prototype of komiks in the Philippines. Rizal is believed to have written the first Filipino cartoon strip while he was paying his friend Juan Luna a visit in Europe in 1886 (Maslog; Roxas and Arevalo, Jr.). 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; Roxas and Arevalo, Jr.). As the century wore on, the first full-pledged comic books began appearing. Lent 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 mythical heroes. From the 1920s up to the post-war years, the careers of komiks writers like 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 popular magazine back then (Roxas and Arevalo, Jr. 4).

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' long period of dominance has prompted writers like Clodualdo Del Mundo, Jr. 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 elicited a considerable amount of following that prompted some occasions for film adaptations.

The Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia Volume on Film identifies the 1950s as the decade when the film adaptation of komiks began and flourished. In future decades, when komiks-based films would resurrect after a hiatus of sorts, the efflorescence of the '50s would continue to be regarded with nostalgia and remembered glory (76).

Reconstructing 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation through the archive

The main object of this study is to propose a Filipino film adaptation theory wherein the retrieval of extant komiks and film archives becomes a crucial anterior activity. The uncovering of the archive then becomes a prerequisite to theory-construction. Corollary to this, theorizing is almost always inescapably historically-situated and dependent on material evidence.

As research method, archival documentation 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 involves proper documentation of its manner of retrieval and its management, that is, noting down its status of completeness, looking for a duplicate copy, and the like. In other words, the archival researcher chronicles the archive and discusses its retrieval process at the same time. The processed data becomes 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.

The 1950s was an important period in Filipino film history. Of the 90 films cited as "Major Works" in the *CCP Encyclopedia*, eighteen (18) are from the 1950s. In his list of Ten Best Films up to 1990, Joel David surveyed the opinions of critics, filmmakers, and scholars, and determined that two (2) of the 10 films ranked as "best" up to 1990 were released in the 1950s (134-135). Perhaps other cursory surveys are purported to produce similar results that could 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 always become a primary concern.

In her lecture titled "Archival Fragility and Anarchival Temporalities in Philippine Cinema," Bliss Cua Lim reveals that only 3,000 out of the almost 8,000 films produced since the beginning of the Philippine film industry in 1919 survived. The amount of the remaining archive is so lamentable 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.

The inventory as springboard to theory-building

Any theory-building project is highly contingent on the amount of the extant or available archives that are pertinent to the subject of inquiry. The inventory is a prerequisite to identifying the extant films with extant komiks sources—either printed or stored on microfilm—between the years 1950 and 1959.

In the case of komiks, doing an inventory requires 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.

Performing an inventory means consulting lists of films that were either a part of graduate theses or produced by film-related government and private agencies. Said lists include the following:

1. Carmen Momblanco's 1979 thesis on the filmography of the 1950s (MA thesis)
2. Rowena Francia's thesis on the history of Sampaguita Pictures where the 1950s filmography is appended
3. The MOWELFUND list published in *Diamond Anniversary of Filipino Cinema* (1994)
4. LVN unpublished list of copyrighted films courtesy of ABS-CBN
5. kabayancentral.com's online list of extant classic films.

The lists of films were produced by the Special Film Collections librarians. These include the List of Copyrighted LVN films[4] and the online list of Sampaguita films[5] through kabayancentral.com, a website selling vintage 1950s films.

Bibliographies assist 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 Memorial 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—were consulted in order to identify extant films with extant sources.

Archival research and documentation are two of the most useful data-gathering methods in the study of a film era. Archival and documentary research refer to the actual retrieval, accounting, documentation, duplication, and management of the primary sources of the study, which include the comparative assessment of various listings of films and komiks, komiks prints, and copies of films. These also refer to the identification and description of the provenance of komiks sources and the film adaptations. As regards the komiks, three microfilm collections (the National Library of the Philippines [NLP] Collection, the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library collection (LMML), and the UP-Diliman [UPD] Library Media Services collection), and two print archive collections (Lopez Museum and Library [LML] and Manila Bulletin Library [MBL])[6] were consulted for the listing down and for securing prints of the komiks in the weekly series.

The provenance of the majority of the komiks serials are 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 expand the readership circulation of the magazine.

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

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.

The availability of the komiks samples from the era has been established before 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 have been 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.

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

As a result of the inventory of the microfilm collections, printed sources and film collections, twelve (12) extant films have been identified as having extant komiks-sources.

The 1950s as a site of Filipino cinema studies proves to be challenging when considering the state of the archive. After the war, Philippine film 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 reveals that a 1951 UNESCO survey listed the Philippines as the ninth top film producing country of that year.

The following table lists down harvest of the 1950s:

Table 1: Number of Films Produced in the 1950s by Year

Year	Number of Films Produced
1950	74
1951	73
1952	77
1953	98
1954	71
1955	83
1956	83
1957	83
1958	94
1959	96
Total	832

A total of 832 films were produced from 1950 to 1959. Of the 832 films, 263 were produced by LVN and 203 by Sampaguita. The films produced by Premiere Productions and Lebran Film Company, two others companies contemporaneous with LVN and Sampaguita, are no longer extant.

Meanwhile, the next table presents the number of films produced by the big four film companies in the 1950s and the status of their extancy:

Table 2: Number of Films Produced by the Big Four Production Companies of the 1950s

Production Company	Number of Films Produced (1950-1959)	Number of Extant Films
LVN	263	94
Sampaguita	203	82
Premiere	31	Non-Extant
Lebran	21	Non-Extant

Of the 263 films by LVN, only 94 are extant. Of the 203 films by Sampaguita, only 82 remain. Some twelve films have been identified to be extant with extant komiks sources.

The texts are listed in the following matrix:

Table 3: Matrix Showing Extant Komiks with Extant Film Adaptations

Title	Komiks Writer/ Illustrator	Title of Magazine	Year of Release	Film Company	Director
Sohrab at Rustum	Nemesio Caravana/ Maning P. De Leon and Ben Alcantara	*Liwayway*	1950	LVN	Nemesio Caravana
Bernardo Carpio	Fausto Galauran	*Liwayway*	1951	Sampaguita	Artemio Tecson
Haring Solomon at Reyna Sheba	A.P. Laudico/ Jesus Ramos	*Liwayway*	1952	LVN	Lamberto Avellana
Rodrigo de Villa	Nemesio Caravana	*Liwayway*	1952	LVN	Gregorio Fernandez
Kambal-Tuko	Nemesio Caravana	*Ilang-Ilang*	1952	LVN	F.H. Constantino
Kerubin	Clodualdo del Mundo/ Fred Carrillo	*Liwayway*	1952	Sampaguita	Octavio Silos
Munting Kerubin	Clodualdo del Mundo/ Fred Carrillo	*Liwayway*	1953	Sampaguita	Octavio Silos
Tulisang Pugot	Gemiliano Pineda/ Alfredo Alcala	*Liwayway*	1953	Sampaguita	Octavio Silos
Lapu-Lapu	Francisco Coching	*Pilipino Komiks* (book format)	1953	LVN	Lamberto Avellana
Aristokrata	Nemesio Caravana Clodualdo Del Mundo A.P. Laudico	*Liwayway*	1954	Sampaguita	Olive La Torre
Tucydides	Dominador Ad Castillo/ Vir S. Mariano	*Bulaklak*	1954	LVN	Artemio Marquez
Despatsadora	A.C.Batungbakal and Nemesio Caravana/ Bes Nievera	*Liwayway*	1955	Sampaguita	Tony Cayado

The 1950s was an important film era in the Philippines. The major film studios of the said decade drew heavily and dynamically from various sources such as radio

dramas, novels, colonial morality plays and popular forms, traditional theater, folklore, true events, and komiks. Alongside radio dramas, the major sources of stories of film studios in the 1950s were the *komiks* content of magazine serials such as *Liwayway, Bulaklak,* and *Ilang-Ilang.* The dynamic relationship between the komiks industry and the film industry has become important in accounting for the film adaptation practice and film adaptation history in the country. As it bears implications on the adaptive practices of artists in latter-day film eras, the need to theorize on the subject has become an urgent concern of this writer.

The subsequent parts of the article attempt to outline the major assumptions of an emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation based on the dimensions of theory suggested by Littlejohn and Foss, which consist of concepts and principles.[7] Instead of "principles," this article opts for the label "assumptions" because the theory supposedly constructed is an emergent one. The major assumptions outlined in this paper will be supported by the data constructed from the ground and by the concepts drawn from the literatures of contemporary adaptation discourse as well. The uncovered archival texts and the social history of film adaptation constructed through interviews of komiks and film scholars have been elaborated in this writer's previous publications.[8]

The following discussion will outline the major concepts and assumptions of the proposed theory. This will be capped by an explication of a Theory of Adaptation that the study wishes to advance.

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 child-themed family dramas (e.g., *Kerubin*, *Munting Koronel*) drew from Spanish colonial theater 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., *Tulisang Pugot*, *Tucydides*) drew from folklore and lower mythology. The comedies (e.g., *Kambal-Tuko*) drew from bodabil and radio drama. *Lapu-Lapu*, however, is an attempt at an original historical film based on a komiks series.

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 puts it, some sort of a "migratory enthusiasm" from one cultural form to another (Lecture). 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 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" can also be inspired by the newly-acquired independence of the Philippines in 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 sarswela. This accounts for the variations and modifications in some details of the new renderings. As Annette Kuhn 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. (9)

Derivation is therefore a naturalized activity in any culture. Linda Hutcheon, for instance, argues that "all art is derived from other art" and that the act of referencing is an "inclination of the human imagination." Hollywood, for instance, has been circulating the so-called "derivative films" (Naremore 10), which accounts for half of its 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 Interview). He proposes instead a label that will be respectful of both the 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 and Fortier references Robert Miolas's other substitute names for the word "source," namely: "deep source, resource, influence, confluence, tradition, heritage, origin, antecedent, precursor, background, milieu, subtext, context, intertext, affinity, analogue" (qtd. in Fischlin and Fortier 10). To this, Andrew's terminologies may be added: "prior conception," "cultural model," and "prior text" (97). Palmer's "pre-sold properties," and Genette's "anterior text" or "hypotext" are also synonymous with "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 blames it on "a mixture of Kantian aesthetics and Arnoldian ideas about society", that influences this valorization of originality and patent and the downgrading of the copy or the work of adaptation (2). Andrew 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" (97).

Gould Boyum hints that the "biases and preconceptions" against adaptations in their early period of existence partly constitute underlying reasons for the scant critical work on the subject. Western scholars influenced by this paradigm used to cultivate the opinion that "great" books may be endangered by adaptation. One

may just listen to Lindsay's reference to cinema as "parasite," which "prey" on works of great literature (qtd. in Gould Boyum 6).

This disdain for a copy, for popular or for "pan-art," has delayed the growth and development of serious scholarship on derivative platforms such as film adaptation. In the '80s, a spate of contrary opinions and protests that culminated in 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 kind of baggage. In fact, the adaptive films 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 (Cultural Center of the Philippines). The practice of sourcing folk literature not only transmits the stories but also revitalizes the said stories through cinema (Tiongson 74-74). David 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" (15). This is obvious in the film *Kambal-Tuko,* which makes use of physical comedy to illumine the dichotomy between the urban and the pastoral in 1950s conception of space and mise-en-scène. In addition, "popular sources," says David, "have managed to constitute a staple specifically in print-to-film crossovers" (15).

To a certain extent, folk and popular sources assisted the Filipino film industry in the 1950s in expanding its audience. Cinema interacted with various kinds of texts. As Naremore opines: "We need to think about how certain texts are adapted cross-culturally" (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 in the 19th century? For instance, Fausto Galauran, the komiks writer, "Filipinized" the Spanish corrido that Jose Corazon de Jesus revised substantially in the 19th century. On account of the above background on the Filipino source texts for cinema, one can say that a dynamic culture of recycling is in place—a culture that does not bother with questions of originality, copy, authorship, and patent that would have befuddled any film industry in the West or the established cinema cultures of the world.

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 within the context of mass entertainment. Without the adaptation industry, any culture of narrative recycling will not flourish. Adaptation industry not only influenced cinematic practices in the '50s 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*, was "a trend that started in the 1950s" (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.

Prior to the 19th century, native society had been exposed to religious narratives and devotional literatures by the Spanish colonial regime. By the late 19th century, colonial Philippine society was consuming secular reading materials and entertainment forms in great quantity. 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 facilitate the exhibition 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 form of stimulation. As Santiago 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" (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 (S. Reyes. *Nobelang Tagalog* 2-3). 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*. The said magazines and periodicals cooperated very actively with Filipino producers by spinning out a steady 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 (S. Reyes, "Ang Liwayway at ang Panitikang Tagalog"; Villegas, "A History of Liwayway Magazine"). The tri-lingual output of his newspaper chain created three kinds of audiences based on 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's 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 (S. Reyes, "Ang Liwayway at ang Panitikan Tagalog"). 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, "A History of Liwayway Magazine"). 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 onset. They were bent to please the masses who read Tagalog, but this should be carried out without sacrificing the literary inclination of the magazine (S. Reyes, "Ang Liwayway Magazine at and Panitikang Tagalog" 200). The key to *Liwayway*'s success lay 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 Soledad Reyes notes:

> *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 *Liwaywa*y 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.] ("Ang Liwayway Magazine at ang Panitikang Tagalog" 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 readily sought by film executives. Before they have even completed their run in the komiks, the komiks stories would already be eyed by film companies for translation on screen. 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 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. (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 had also foreseen the potential of movie adaptation projects that would eventually lead to one of the most dynamic partnerships between two media industries in recent times.

Even if *Liwayway* was not the only magazine that featured komiks stories in the early years, we cannot discount its contribution to komiks history. Roxas and Arevalo, Jr. claim 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" (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 style that happily brought in one package 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 Iñigo 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 (Regalado).

Pilipino Komiks was put up by Don Ramon Roces's 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, *The Story of Ace Publications*). 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* were only some of the reading materials that contributed to the growth of komiks and provided a steady supply of story 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—has been, in many instances, a *transitional text*. The komiks writer is aware that his work is only a springboard to another text. 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 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" (68).

A film adaptation works along the technological operations unique to 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 any of the following functions: 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 182).

Both the komiks and the storyboard capture sequentiality. The only difference between the two, in Eisner's 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" (146) by suggesting techniques for cinematography, staging, and lighting.

The komiks story, functioning as storyboard, may also have been dictated by the limits of technology. The storyboard suggests the visuals that will be re-imagined in a movie. Sometimes though, there exists a thin line dividing the komiks source as storyboard and the komiks source as a *structural guide.* This was true of *Bernardo Carpio*. In acting as both source and guide, 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 would have explained. The narrative, sometimes used interchangeably with the term *story*, is structured through a device called *plot*. The idea of the plot has been drawn traditionally from Aristotle's classical definition in *Poetics* where the events of the story have a 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 19).

The CHNC provided a template to 1950s cinema, but it did not dislodge the influence of the episodic tendency of the films, which David thinks was "carried over from the printed medium" (15). The komiks descended from a family of media (dime-novels, chapbooks, newspapers, magazines) that was characterized, first and foremost, by seriality. In addition, E. Reyes 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" (15). This so-called scene-orientation of local films is a departure from the supposed character-driven style 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 takes precedence over the "letter" (Andrew). To accomplish this, the material undergoes a number of additions and deletions, or expansions and condensations. 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 compleat 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 Interview)

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 analyzed in previous chapters have been grouped and identified according to their function as source text in the following table:

Table 4: The Komiks Stories as Source Texts, in Relation to Their Target Texts

As storyboard	As structural guide	As essential story	As co-storyteller
Sohrab at Rustum *Bernardo Carpio* *Lapu-Lapu* *Despatsadora*	*Haring Solomon at Reyna Sheba* *Bernardo Carpio* *Kerubin* *Munting Koronel*	*Rodrigo de Villa* *Tulisang Pugot* *Aristokrata* *Kambal-Tuko*	*Lapu-Lapu*

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 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 smaller units, namely: shot, scene, and/or sequence. Following the discussion of the example of komiks as source text taken up in the above, it can be asserted that 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 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). (56)

Film's technical properties refer to the elements that may be manipulated 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-scène, 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. "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" (56). Moreover, it is only fair to mention, Horn further says, 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. The cinema of the '50s 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 is connected 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, the notion that Filipinos are more visually-oriented than literary—at least in the case of reading komiks or komiks culture—may not be accurate at all. Valiente thinks that while American comics thrive on visual storytelling, Filipino komiks is word-oriented or script-dominated. In the '50s, 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, the presentational form is the "immediate" dimension of utterance exemplified by "language, gestures," and other externalized verbalization of narration (417-433). 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 listed above) 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 '50s 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 (e.g., Avellana and Caravana). The directors who decided to make departures from the source were sometimes dictated not by artistic choice but by either the perceived audience taste, or by the pressure to economize on shots, or by the surveillance being carried out by the censors. Avellana's respect for Coching was too obvious to be missed so that he came up with a respectable adaptation of *Lapu-Lapu*. 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 cater to the slapstick. The examples just mentioned illustrate the extent of the dialogic relationship, which Bakhtin discoursed about articulately in his works.

The use of mid shots and close ups were utilized predominantly in the '50s to highlight characters and to propel their dramatic scenes, which E. Reyes calls "overt representation" (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. Perhaps to compensate for the black and white photography, there has always been an attempt to be accurate in designing and executing period costumes, in creating backdrops, and in being more stylish as well. The mise-en-scène, though uncomplicated in intimate scenes, were made more elaborate in battle and assembly scenes. Moreover, musical numbers were found in almost all films and genres (korido, fantasy, adventure, woman's film, child-themed family drama, historical pieces, comedy), sometimes with songs and musical arrangements originally composed for the film and choreographed group dance numbers, revealing a certain predilection for staged and stylized entertainment in the courting scenes or in the climactic part.

Filipino film adaptation practices in the '50s had been handicapped by limited technology. Latter advances in film technology would show improvements in cinematography, and 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 definition is an "extensive" kind of derivation where the film hopes to win anew the same audience that has been entertained by the previous text (98). This has been true of the shared audience following of komiks and film in the 1950s.

Adaptation in the 1950s 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 follow 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 the assumptions of the 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 exemplifying the 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 and 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 opines: "The film 'converts' the images to its conventional language" (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 is in agreement with Andrew's 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" (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 18). Contrary to the general perception that Filipino generic categories were copied from Hollywood or from transhistorical genres (Moine), the local audience of the 1950s also had a part in re-configuring those plot types according to their preferences, confirming what Tudor has articulated: "Genre is what we collectively believe it to be" (19).

Adaptation serves the purpose of generic mediation. Stam 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" (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, and warring kingdoms were recurring motifs. Commoners-turned-heroes, neglected wives, poor single girls, wicked uncles and stepbrothers, bandits, and 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, and acceptance of freaks are recurring themes. To quote Braudy, "The genre film lures its audience into a seemingly familiar world, filled with reassuring stereotypes of character, action, and plot" (449).

The source text and the adaptation share common features of the genres that audiences in the '50s grew familiar with over the years and later became cycles of industry formulas. Eisner, for instance, has observed that the comic's employment of stereotypes is "an accursed necessity" because the medium is expected to represent "recognizable reproductions of human conduct" (11). Repeatability of images makes immediate recall and audience identification easier. Genres therefore second-guess audience reaction, direct it in some instances, or "remind" audiences of their former invocations of the same conventions and tropes (Braudy 449).

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 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" (12).

Adaptation then, from the perspective of generic conventions and troping, requires a certain dose of "genre literacy" (T. Leitch; Hutcheon). After all, a filmmaker is situated in between two creative choices: summoning the source text and creating a new work, what Andrew calls "a leap and a process" (97).

Generic conventions and tropes also enable 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 calls "a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself" (18). Genres are also called cycles because they circulate and return. Nichols, in citing Griffith's "cycles and genres," acknowledges genre films' "cumulative" effect on society. Gledhill, meanwhile, reports that a number of critics "favour the concept 'cycle' over genre," (226) because it points to the role of the industry in shaping particular story categories.

5.   Filipino Komiks-to-Film Characters

The characters in the komiks reprise their roles in the film screen. They are the protagonists of the korido who resemble the epic heroes of long ago in their "greatness and magnanimity" (S. Reyes, "The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 158). The characters of fantasy come from the lower class, unlike their foreign counterparts who are from the middle class (S. Reyes, "Of Borders and Margins"). 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 the comedies, they are the clowns, or buffoons, or characters who provide a satiric function.

The iconography of the characters/protagonists/heroes in a source text like komiks influences their portrayal in the adaptation. The graphics in the komiks guides the visual rendering in film, the signifier being close to the signified. There is the contribution of motion and sound in an illusory way. As Flores 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" (*Life and Art of Francisco Coching* 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 of the film era.

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. S. Reyes 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. (*From Darna to Zsa Zsa Zaturnah* 13)

In other words, part of the motivation for adaptation has been the familiarity of the audiences with the characters and heroes whose adventures they have 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 says "is as necessary to the character as a skeleton is to the actor who plays it" (qtd. in Gould Boyum 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 real-life figures whose heroic exploits are mythologized in a way that almost overshadow 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, S. Reyes says, "The characters had to be instantly recognizable as 'real' in the sense that they embodied composite features of familiar types found in life" ("Francisco V. Coching" 119). Flores avers that audience identification with characters is connected with "the whole performance of imitation and intimacy" (*Art and Life of Francisco Coching* 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 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 emplematic 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. (60)

When these characters are brought to the film screen, they either retain their ambiguous stance or they are "simplified, even melodramatized" (Kline 70). In Filipino adaptation, they may also be "enhanced by the persona of stars" or "enlivened by the tricks of genre" (Flores, *Art and Life of Francisco Coching* 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 of the nation.

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 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. (*Life and Art of Francisco Coching* 19)

Philippine komiks in the 1950s also depicted the human form along simple and realistic lines, and this had an impact on the characterization and physical rendering of heroes in the movies. The setting in the '50s komiks cohered with the expressive anatomies of the characters, reflecting the impulse towards realism, with streaks of exaggeration, and an unconscious predilection for the norm 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 is befitting their mythical and quasi-historical origins. Sometimes humorous, sometimes sensual, the royals and the princesses are portrayed as larger than life. They are presented visually in exaggerated postures, displaying mannerisms that go with their noble background and performing extraordinary roles that gave them an aura of invincibility.

European heroic characters like Bernardo Carpio have been imported during the colonial years for the consumption of the native through the metrical romance form and other popular narratives. As S. Reyes asserts, heroes who are indigenized meld foreign mannerisms with those of the folk: "These characters exuded other-worldly air, since medieval Europe was indeed 'another world' to the Filipino" ("The Philippine Komiks" 172).

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 are complex, and they meld well with their backdrops. Alcala's visual rendition of Caravana's late 19th century setting, characters, and manners are 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, the filmic translation becomes also highly textured in terms of mise-en-scène, art design, and costume.

 Imaginative iconography in the source text translates easily into film and it is possible too that film iconography influenced printed media in return; g*enres* becoming *cycles* in the truest sense of the word. As Sanders opines, "Texts feed off each other and create other texts" (14).

6.   Cultural Economy of Adaptation

Filipino film adaptation in the '50s 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 consisted of the people who propelled the commercial drive of the industry and the social and cultural aspects of the creative enterprise. 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 would 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 would 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 would be merged 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 '50s, the role of the actor became 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 their screen versions. The cultural economy of adaptation has always been implicated in the film production process. Ideology, the aura of stars, and the fans' enthusiastic following made sure that story materials were not so far-fetched from what was taking place behind the camera. As Horkheimer and Adorno, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 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. (99)

The six concepts and assumptions enumerated above somehow provide texture to the emergent theory of Filipino film adaptation theory, which is further explicated in the following discussion.

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 further crystallizes *Pelikulang Komiks* as a Filipino film adaptation theory. While the section on concepts and assumptions draws conclusions from the specific archival texts uncovered and the issues pertaining to production and consumption of komiks and films, the

current sub-section presents the main arguments of the supposed emergent theory. Moreover, the flow of the discussion is guided by the following diagram:
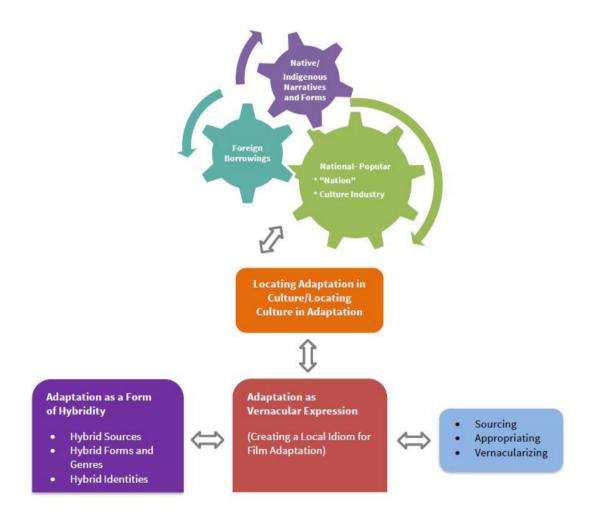

Fig. 1. Theoretical Model for *Pelikulang Komiks*
(A Vernacular and Hybrid Theory of Filipino Film Adaptation)

Ideas 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, which 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. The country then 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* enumerates three 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. (1151)

The above dictionary meanings of indigenous refer to three perspectives. First, the set of meanings presents the dichotomy between the natives' natural possession and outside influence. Second, it makes a reference to the place of origin of a trait as a pre-condition to what is indigenous. Third, 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 notes how slippery the term "native" 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 from mainland Asia by boat and migrated to the islands. After some time, the early settlers would be regarded as the first discoverers or natives of the islands. These early peoples eventually became indigenous to the place (17-18). For Hornedo, the famous Frank Lynch pronouncement—"Today's native was yesterday's visitor" (qtd. in Hornedo 12)—is very apt to describe the native who originally came to these islands as a stranger.

The cinema was not indigenous to the Filipinos, and neither were the early theatrical forms and early prototypes of the novels that have become part of their narrative tradition. Brought from the outside through colonial encounter, these early foreign narratives prepared the Filipinos for cinema, which they considered both a novelty and a continuation of early narrative traditions. 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 offers that pre-literate societies were "enriching their lives and enhancing memory with verbal and metrical patterns of epic poetry, story and song" (11).

Joaquin, in his monumental essay titled "Culture as History," avows that we could glean the history of a nation through its cultural developments, specifically in the level of its adoption of "new tools, or novelties in media" (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 Interview)

In his study of the rise of the Filipino novel, Mojares 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, 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" ("The Literary Relations of Tagalog Literature" 313). The natives who greeted the early missionaries were predisposed to singing and to producing verses that capture the reality of the everyday. The fictional works of early Filipinos "had a minimum of characterization and a great amount of fantasy" (Lumbera, "The Literary Relations of Tagalog Literature" 313). The artistic temperament that we associate with contemporary Filipinos seems to have been rooted in their nativist past.

During the Spanish years, new narrative forms such as the pasyon and didactic prose were introduced and became influential enough to displace the epic. In pre-colonial times, epics were recited for days by the chanters who possessed excellent memory and improvisational skills. These oral forms 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. 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 reconfigured ancient genres and rendered these 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 reveals this as the reaction of the native—whether 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 one's postcolonial identity, the native may mistake that being familiar with the culture of their colonizer is 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 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. (218)

Bhabha, 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" (91). Somehow, this parallels what Rafael calls "colonial uncanny" (Lecture).

What Fanon has referred to as the tendency of the native to imbibe or to imitate foreign culture may be 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., 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 (48). At the same time, appropriation of foreign influences has been crucial in forging a postcolonial consciousness. As Figure 1 implies, foreign sources and native tendencies are engaged in a circular mode and are "splitting off," to use Mojares's term. The foreign and the native get entangled with each other, creating the komiks-based cinema of the 1950s. Together, they constitute the *national* and the *popular*.

The word "nation" is implicated in the notion of assimilating 1950s komiks-to-film adaptation within the folds of national cinema. Prior to the rise of cinema cultures in the Philippines, two print-based media performed the task of implanting the idea of community, which was once assigned to the pre-colonial communication forms. The novel and the newspaper grew alongside the spread

of capitalist economy in urban centers. As forerunners of the narrative film and the serial komiks, the seriality of the novel and the newspaper became crucial in shaping a sense of community along the "homogenous empty-time" that Benjamin (qtd. in Anderson 24) has mentioned or the notion of "meanwhile" (Anderson 25) in the life of the nation. Conceptions of community defy time.

The novel and the newspaper were therefore responsible for the nation's becoming. The nation, as Anderson has elaborated, is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). In other words, the nation has only been an idea. It has only been "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 6). Eventually, colonized societies that imagined the nation, through 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 bordered on various aspects of modern life. As S. Reyes opines: "Collectively taken, they served as indices to the nation's varied images of itself" ("The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 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." 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 (Personal Interview).

The empire has answered back, which is a sort of 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.

It was "the afterlife of the colony" and so the desire to assert one's identity was a very palpable reality for Filipinos (Flores, Personal Interview). 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" (Personal Interview).

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 the least likely platform for tackling what Ileto refers to as an "unfinished revolution" (177). The past is a complex discourse to be represented in popular culture, yet it is an undeniable staple material in '50s komiks adaptations.

The subject of the past is perceived to be a means of constructing identity through fiction. For S. Reyes, to look back at the war years was just too painful to bear for the komiks writers so that they decided to avoid it ("The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 159). 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. ("The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 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 haciendero 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 chaos wrought by industrialization, and of crass materialism that challenged family values.

If a radical critique of society in the escapist treatment of the past was almost non-existent in the '50s, it was sometimes 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-scène. 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 (S. Reyes, "Readers and Viewers and the League of Extraordinary Creators" 149). 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 17). Instead, the intention in recapturing the past may be to retrieve a sense of pride that has been crushed by wartime experiences. There was a 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 Soledad Reyes ("The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 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 pursuing myth-making strategies. As Horn 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. (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, are easily dimmed by commerce. This Janus-faced content of film adaptation can be problematic when it surrenders politics to entertainment. As Figure 1 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 insofar as cinema is a technology borrowed from the West and is propelled through the capitalist enterprise. As Armes offers: "For all Third World countries, then, film is an imported form of communication" (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 35). Cinema has been a notable exception being not native to any *third cinema* as the Philippines. Lumbera 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" (155). Lumbera differentiates it 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. (155)

Horkheimer and Adorno 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 they argue in the chapter titled "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* "culture today is infecting everything with sameness" (94).

Insofar as the *pelikulang komiks* of the 1950s engaged both the national and the popular, we can say that colonization was only one of the factors 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, one 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 has argued, "An adaptation is always, whatever else it may be, an interpretation" (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 broader 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."

Adaptation is inherently contradictory; one 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," Soledad Reyes adds ("The Philippine Komiks: Text as Containment" 161). Familiar colonial symbols were instruments to understand the nation and the people, "lest they forgot who they are," says Reyes (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. In hindsight, the 1950s' practice of komiks-to-film adaptation was a last great adaptation era of such kind. A great era of adaptation only proceeds from a great era of source texts, and the komiks industry has seen major changes in decades past. As Yonzon has added: "I don't think we could dream of a comics creation with wide readership. I think the only thing we could do is to provide a platform for comics ideas to be expanded to other medium" (Personal Communication).

The values carried forth in both source texts and target text may also subvert status quo. S. Reyes, for instance, suggests that it may be useful to search for an "indirect correspondence" between the times and what the stories represent (Personal Interview). 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 Interview). These kinds of interpretive leaps are what Flores calls "allegorical mediation" because the readings may range from a more personal take to the more political and revolutionary level (Personal Interview).

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, and 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 the visuality of the heroic Filipino of the '50s" (Personal Interview).

"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.

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 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" (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 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" (15). There would come a time when 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 has been only one point of entry in that long process 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 in 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 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).

Meanwhile, 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. defines the vernacular (as applied to the arts) as "native or peculiar to a particular country" (2227). For Hornedo, 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…" (Hornedo 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 using conventions and tropes drawn externally and locally. This aptly parallels what Baker has commented on vernacularized forms like blues music: "The vernacular is an expression of the popular as well as the local" (2225).

The success of *pelikulang komiks* in capturing the imagination of the masses in the '50s is not a unique case and may be traceable to older narrative forms. During the early American period, other forms of narratives reflected traces of adaptation practices and their popular reception. Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution*, 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 Rafael's *Contracting Colonialism: Translation in Early Spanish Rule*, 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 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. (21)

Using the template suggested by Anderson, Ileto, and Rafael, translation, vernacularization, indigenization, and adaptation become synonymous with each other.

Colonial mimicry has led to a Filipino culture of adaptation and recycling but it also opened a chance to develop an international mind which today finds coherence with their 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 Interview)

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. (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 rises again to 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. (17)

In other words, the 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 is a hybrid cinema that 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 the interpretation and re-cycling of borrowings, influences, and story materials onto other forms. Moreover, adaptation serves as evidence, not only of the Filipinos' propensity for various textualities, but also of their conscious referencing of various texts in circulation.

Fanon enumerates three 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" (222). This means that the artist is literate and open to the forms, genres, plots, and motifs that were brought from the outside. This culture should serve as template for what is possible. The komiks looked toward for the metrical romances, the fantasy, the musical-comedy, the family drama, and the historical genres. Through the film, the potential to recreate the experiences in another art form is realized by adding movement, soundtrack, music, and mise-en-scène. As cultural artifact, film extends the komiks experience by forming audiences and transforming movie-going into a 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. (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 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 execute excellently.

Fanon's third phase moves toward a national culture. Now, the native intellectual or artist has turned "into an awakener of the people" (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 a vernacular and hybrid theory of Filipino film adaptation, Bhabha's work titled *The Location of Culture* 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," and "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 allows 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. (38-39)

The merging 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, one can look at a larger world: what Bhabha refers to as "the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (38) or better yet, what Baker terms "vernacular expression" (2237).

Jameson 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* contributes its share in that programmatic vision to reconstruct identity. As Jameson adds: "The story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society" (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 assign greater social importance in the simplistic storylines that were recreated in the works of adaptations. As Jameson has suggested very aptly, cultural analysis should involve the "simultaneous recognition of the ideological and Utopian functions of the artistic text" (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 has playfully said in explicating the instability of postcolonial identity formation (37).

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 Unites States. Yet, the actors spoke the vernacular. The backdrop, though depicting ancient Jerusalem and Persia or medieval Castille, was inhabited by "Filipinized" characters. The manner of narration was loose, episodic, improvisational, and digressive. These disparate elements connote hybridization or "the mixing within a single concrete utterance, of two of more linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and social space," as Bakhtin has defined (429). 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 '50s, the contour of the human form in a mise-en-scène, the 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 the Filipinos' cherished cultural memory of the era. Those memories were shaped and visualized through vernacularization, which has entailed 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 forms and new expressions of visuality, literariness, and performativity that cannot be anything other than *Filipino*.

Notes

  * This article will be part of a forthcoming book (University of the Philippines Press) bearing the same title.

1. The introductory part of the paper, pertaining specifically to the archival data collected as a prerequisite to theory building, is the combined revised versions of two international conference papers, namely: "Researching 1950s Filipino Komiks-to-Film Adaptation: Film History as Film Theory" (read at the 22nd Asian Media Information and Communication Centre [AMIC] Conference held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on July 4 to 7, 2013) and "De-Westernizing Filipino Film Adaptation Theory" (read at the Asian Cultural Studies Now Conference held at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia on November 6 and 7, 2014).

2. 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. Public education was introduced and Anglo-American literature became part of the reading lists in basic and university education.

3. "Komiks" is Tagalog for comic series or comic books. It is rendered in this study in the vernacular, in keeping with the arguments of de-Westernization, which is appropriation and translation of terms into the local language.

4. LVN Pictures was established in 1938. The co-founders were Narcisa Buencamino vda De Leon, 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. De Leon 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 dramas such as the moro-moro or comedia and the sarswela (Del Mundo, Jr., "Native Resistance: Philippine Cinema and Colonialism 1898-1941" 69). *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 Encycopedia* (CCP) has adjudged to be the "first Filipino movie with color sequences painted frame by frame" (273).

5. 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 301; Salumbides 22; Francia 94).

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.

6. An English-language broadsheet whose owner has been able to acquire what remained of the Roces Publications, which published the magazine *Liwayway* Magazine since its beginnings before World War II.

7. This section onwards has been part of the revised paper read at the *AAS-in-Asia Conference* sponsored by the Association for Asian Studies from 24 to 27 June, 2017 at Korea University in Seoul, South Korea.

8. Previous publications of this author tackle the archival texts and analyses using various types of adaptation criticism. These are listed below:

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Lapu-Lapu. Directed by Lamberto Avellana, LVN, 1954.

Munting Koronel. Directed by Octavio Silos, Sampaguita, 1953.

Rodrigo de Villa. Directed by Gregorio Fernandez, LVN. 1952.

Sohrab at Rustum. Directed by Nemesio Caravana, LVN, 1954.

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