

# Happily ever after: Representations of gender politics in *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!*

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Happy endings have inevitably been the goal of mainstream films, from action, melodrama, and comedy to the most popular of all—romance films. The fascination of Filipinos with love stories and comedy has been inseparable as more and more romantic comedy films are being produced every year. This shows the way Filipinos view and believe in romance; to fall in love is not only accompanied by pain but also with laughter—not to mention, a kind of laughter that will make you shed tears. This element of comedy has been present and consistent in the experience of Filipino audiences. It enlivens the mainstream film industry and is entwined with the Filipino preoccupation with love, hope, and happy endings. Given the strong presence of comedy in romance films, this paper aims to ask the following questions: what is it with comedy that makes a love story so compelling? What is this type of story that is so satirical yet pragmatic? And who gets the happy ending?

In popular culture, men and women are often captured in images that are packaged side by side with picture-perfect representations, exaggerated performances, and situations where their characteristics are defined and magnified. Action and melodramatic films are evident examples of this which have established a strong audience and continues to maintain their popularity in media. This type of relatability from the audience shows a gender-related preference to film spectatorship (Kenny, 1995). Men and women in films generate audiences in their likeness or lack thereof. Moreso,

film genres relatively coincide with gender expectations that push the discussion on gender and other identities further.

Men and women, in media as much in real life, are not as black and white as it appears to be. Queer identities for instance, have also been part of popular media specifically in Philippine cinema. As unconventional and peculiar their characters are, their gender representation have brought great humor to the big screen. Today, comedy films are avidly watched by Filipinos nationwide, and it can be said that the Filipino sense of humor is entertainingly vibrant when gay characters play the star.

One of the best-known directors in this field is Wenn V. Deramas. He has been entertaining the Filipino audiences with his box-office hits, many of them starring Vice Ganda (a popular gay entertainer), in films such as *Petrang Kabayo* (2010), *Praybeyt Benjamin* (2011), and *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* (2012). Gender discourse, as the theme of these films, depicts an understanding of how Filipino society constructs gender in relation to non-heterosexual identities.

As queer roles and characters find their way in the industry, gender representations have been complex yet self-explanatory; Amid gender play, repetitions and irregularities, queer identities open more space for new characters, roles, and gender relations. Hence, films and film genres are given more possibilities to expand, alter and include other identities that exceed the popularized genders in the mainstream media. In *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!*, for instance, sexual binaries (masculine-feminine; heterosexual-homosexual) are consistently singled out and corrected vis-a-vis the character's worth and place in the society. The film suggests the power of gender performativity and imitation in attaining one's well-being through social acceptance. Thus, this paper aims to examine how gender, in its composite fluidity, is represented by *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!*.

Moreover, this paper examines the popular social construction of gender when gender becomes fixed and standardized into "either-or" gender, where there is "right and wrong" gender, and gender that is fixated with rules. While on the other hand, gender is defined by Sedgwick as the space of differences between men and women. With this definition, this paper dares to determine these spaces of difference along with the type of men and women who can be seen in these spaces. These objectives will be determined by how the characters transcend in the film.

Furthermore, this paper seeks to obtain gender's significance in maintaining harmony (if there is such) in the midst of ambiguity; and consequently to determine the driving force of gender that perpetuates role, behavior, and culture in the realm of film vis-à-vis Filipinos' perception of the non-heterosexual identities that they interact and negotiate with. Lastly,

this paper delves into gender politics that draws in social repressions—gender stereotypes and/or homophobias—as opposed to socially sanctioned identities. The analysis of gender politics in *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* will be stipulated through the lens of queer theory as elaborated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008) and Judith Butler (1990).

## **Gender Representations in Philippine Mainstream Cinema**

### **The Heterosexual and The Homosexual**

By understanding gendered identities in Philippine mainstream cinema, *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* by Wenn Deramas will be reviewed as to what and how it is to be masculine-feminine and heterosexual-homosexual. Consequently, gender representation, as the premise of query, will be examined as the production of Filipino society that popular culture replicates, reinforces, and repositions.

In the film, Mike (a male bisexual character) broke up with Lester (a gay character) to marry Gemma (a female heterosexual character) (Deramas, 2012). Lester had been Mike's benefactor and boyfriend for several years. When Lester found out what Mike was planning, he decided to pretend to be a heterosexual man and woo Gemma away from Mike. His plan was then to get Gemma to fall in love with him instead, to force Mike to return to him. Lester's first move to woo Gemma was to become her savior in a staged hold-up and choreographed fight with the help of his recruited flamboyant gay friends. In this way, he confidently presumed that Gemma would form a great impression of him, allowing him to take Mike's place in her affections. What makes the staged fight even queerer is that the choreographed brawl is inspired by a classic fight scene in *Lipad, Darna, Lipad!* (Di. Borlaza, 1973) starring arguably the most iconic Filipino superheroine, Darna, who has herself been featured in at least twelve films since 1953 (Capino, 2006). Darna sports an outfit that looks a lot like that of Wonder Woman; she fights against the antagonists and saves the day. Utilizing this imagery, Lester triumphantly saved Gemma from the bad guys and escorted her home. Gemma introduced Lester to her family and narrated his bravery in saving her. Her family was very pleased and impressed with his manliness. With Lester passing as a heterosexual man, he then continued to court Gemma with his grand gestures. "Paniwalang-paniwala siyang lalaki ako!" [I made her believe that I'm a man!] (Deramas, 2012, 0:32:38), says Lester to his gay friends.

The bravery of Lester's character manifests the conventional masculinity that is acknowledged by Gemma and her family. In this manner, any man who embodies masculinity significantly affirms to be a heterosexual man. With

Lester's portrayal, henceforth, what does masculinity mean in Philippine popular cinema? It is said that high melodrama with the hypermasculine fisticuffs (fist fighting) and gunfights Filipino action films create a strong supplementary audience of female spectators who patronize its didactic pleasures (Capino, 2006) which in this case, contributes to Gemma's character in the film. On a different note, the director's choice of iconography translates another phantasmic idea of masculinity to compliment Darna's identity. Darna, who appears to be a heroic identity in a woman's body executes bravery with her strong fists, suggests an empowered woman which can also be converted to masculinity. Masculinity is therefore an act of performativity that is expected in a heterosexual man. This entails that gender is performative in which either a man or a woman can be masculine and can be empowered in ways of being masculine (Butler, 1990).

Subsequently, what are the implications of the gender-heterosexual in Gemma's character? Gemma, as a heterosexual woman in the film, evaluates her self-worth and choices in the premise of her life's love story. She chooses to maintain her relationship with Mike (without knowing his past relationship with Lester) and turns to her family in times of trouble. Gemma is attracted to the male opposite sex, masculinity, and marriage. She desires to have a partner who is accepted by her family; hence, Gemma's identity also depends on the preference of her family.

In addition, Gemma as a heterosexual woman is fulfilled by the presence of the opposite sex which is also in favor of the concept of marriage. Gemma's family wants a successful and masculine man for her; failure to meet these standards will affect Gemma's relationship with her family and at the same time leave her identity unfulfilled. "Kaya ka na bang buhayin ng lalaking 'yan?" [Can that man provide you a good future?] (Deramas, 2012, 0:21:59), says Gemma's father, referring to Mike. Thus, being a heterosexual woman is constructed not only by the ideology of a heterosexual man but also dictated by one's family.

Gender is thus a social construct rather than a natural phenomenon (Jackson, 2006); meanings are negotiated and institutionalized in social interaction and daily social practices. It is constantly constituted and reconstituted within localized contexts and levels of subjectivity through which we experience desires, and emotions, in which we make sense of gender and sexuality (Jackson, 2006). Henceforth, what does it entail about masculinity and femininity as a reproduced gender determinant of heterosexuality?

Although the relationship of femininity in Gemma's character to Lester's performative masculinity is ambiguous, femininity can be derived from Gemma's subjectivity in the center of gender normativity. Starting

with Gemma as the object of desire of a heterosexual man that supports, exaggerates, and defines Gemma's femininity (as a property of the female heterosexual). Another and the most prominent indication is Gemma's sexual attraction to heterosexual men at the outset of her character's introduction. With this example of Gemma's femininity, feminine is shown to be inferior to the masculine or "macho" which brings gender even further by tapping the film's "macho" supremacy culture; where Lester, the star of the film, was initially introduced as an effeminate man like a heterosexual woman and Gemma who lacks the essential qualities of being a "macho". Thus, femininity is more represented in Lester's character than Gemma. In this manner, representations of gender are interrogated beyond the Filipino patriarchal understanding of heterosexuality which leads to an interrelated question: where "gender" coincides and searches for its place between the conventional "masculinity" and "femininity" spectrum in the Philippine setting? This shall be looked into as the characters in the film enact their confrontations with each other.

### **The Love Triangle**

Popular Philippine cinema is said to be composed of three types of genres: action, melodrama, and comedy. These genres have left a lasting impression on the American film industry. Male and female audiences have been fascinated by the pronounced gender-related preference for either action or melodrama films (Kenny, 1995). Melodramatic films remain a popular genre among women; the conflict of the love triangle has led to more profound climaxes where romance is in the form of three main characters which are mostly male-centered. Two women sharing the same man depict representations of mistresses, second wives, and families. These are also found in popular Philippine art cinema in the likes of Ishmael Bernal's films: *Nunal sa Tubig* (1976) and *Ikaw Ay Akin* (1978) are some Filipino classic films that have female protagonists who control the action and emotional structure.

In the full trailer of *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!*, a different kind of love story is introduced—a "love triangle" theme unfolds where two people compete with each other to win a person's heart. Sequentially, the conflict is interpolated in such a way that gender is appropriated. It started with Mike's love affair with Gemma, then proceeded to Lester's love affair with Mike, to Lester's heartbreak when he saw Mike's wedding proposal to Gemma, to Lester's disguise as a heterosexual man to distract Gemma's engagement with Mike, to Mike's discovery that Lester (his past lover) is his rival for Gemma's affection. The film also carefully exemplifies the genders of each character—Gemma as a woman, Mike as a man, and Lester as someone

pretending and trying to be a man. As the film is constructed with the queerness of the love story, it embraces the hybridity of the common conflict situations in many melodramas. However, the conflict has been taken into a different premise which is in the comedy genre.

Philippine comedy is generally broad. Popular storylines are said to replicate effeminate gay men who are grounded in slapstick and physical humor (e.g. cross-dressing stereotype) and are sources of comic ridicule (Kenny, 1995). Having said that, such hybridity is cultivated by *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* which brings forth another glimpse of gender construction that propagates comedy through gay men protagonist characters. These identities are brought into an alternate, perhaps more liberating, release (Kenny, 1995) through which classic romantic love is reconsidered in the context of new kinds of relationships outside conventional representations of desire and heterosexuality.

As Foucauldian queer speculation, what is this type of love triangle? Power and power relations are evident in the progression and deterioration of the film, considering the thematic conflict of the popular love story. This also speaks about the representations of gender identities. Heterosexual characters are typically given the roles of either the triumphant or the defeated man or woman. In contrast, *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* disrupted a kind of love story that is not in a formula of two characters competing for one's ultimate love; rather, the film uses two types of triangulated relationships. First, two genders (heterosexual-homosexual Gemma and Lester) are appropriated to one gender (bisexual man Mike) wherein the gay character is the only one who tries to win back the heart of the male bisexual character. Second, two genders (gay-male bisexual Lester and Mike) try to win the heart of a female heterosexual with the objective of proving one's righteousness at the level of their manliness, yet the gay character also has a subliminal objective which is to use manliness to distract the female heterosexual character so the bisexual man will return to his premise.

This reckons a new formula in which one gender at the center, as well as the top, of the triangle is blurred. Instead, the love story becomes a battle between heterosexuality and homosexuality which makes the character of Lester fluid even more—amid gender relations and the “love triangle” structure. Additionally, the love triangle stretches the formula to an extent that is basically no longer a love triangle. A queer love story indeed; it directs the genders to political discourse wherein the identities practice their power within and among each other. This sets out innovation in rethinking romantic love from the classic love triangles that popular Philippine cinema has adapted. More than that, it leads to the question: which gender remains

at the center or the top of social constructions? Identities continue to argue as more and more people give meaning to them.

### The Macho Machine

As mentioned earlier, action films have appealed to both male and female audiences. Filipino machismo has been the conventional personification of manliness, wherein males are often judged by their strength. Prominent actor Fernando Poe Jr. embarked on a career that launched many similar career trajectories among masculine performers in the film industry, a template that drew in many spectators. Concerning the character of Lester, he does follow his instinct to act like a man and think like a man to win Gemma. Anything feminine is by its nature inferior to masculinity, hence, being an effeminate man becomes his closet. One example of this is a highlighted part of the film, when Gemma's father gets his haircut in Lester's salon:

Lester's gay co-workers/friends: *Parlor kami.* [We're beauticians.]

Lester ends the sentence: *Ng mga macho.* [...of real men.]

Lester's gay co-workers/friends insist: *Parlor!* [Beauticians!]

Lester persists: *Ng mga macho!* [Of real men!] (Deramas, 2012, 1:00:02)

The exchange of words continues until Lester invoked to his gay co-workers/friends the planned disguise they must enact. As he hides his real identity from Gemma and Gemma's father, the film builds up to its comic banter. With this, on the other hand, Mike's true character as the true man given his heterosexual masculinity is contrasted through Lester's ideal machismo. Moreover, Mike obtained machismo with his physiology, his body codes, and his relationship with Gemma as the central character of the movie's object of desire. Gemma's family without a doubt would see Mike's manliness by his commitment to Gemma and his absence of femininity. This surfaces the gender doer of manliness where it can be, at the same time, a social and natural phenomenon.

Moreover, in the same light of machismo, *Macho Dancer* (1987) by Lino Brocka—one of the most influential and significant Filipino filmmakers in the Philippine Cinema—engaged a social, sexual and economic relationship among gay (*bakla*), female heterosexual (*babae*) and suggestively pronounced bisexually behaving male (*macho*). This relationship is founded upon earlier sexual models such as the *babaylan-lalaki-babae* relations of pre-colonial Philippine culture. These identities are socially stabilized despite (or because of) a dominant patriarchal culture that negates homosexual (men-men desire) lifestyle wherein the *macho* is a desirable male, the *babae* serves to

stabilize the sexual identity of the male homosexual by bearing children by him, and the *bakla* is the source of the *macho's* income as well as his “other woman” (Cañete, 2011, p.349).

Scopophilia applies in filmic contestation that represents men as objects of desire for female heterosexuals or gay men (Mulvey, 1975). This recounts Gemma's and Lester's behavior patterns in *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* towards the *macho* (Mike). It is also consistent of Mike's character that he bluntly refuses to be with the *bakla* (Lester) which reflects his present societal belief systems. Hence, Filipino machismo deals with more than mere nature—it is a constant reflexivity between oneself and others, which also includes socio-economic and socio-sexual conditions.

### **The Popular Filipino Genders**

The title *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* is inspired by a song from a multi-award-winning Filipino band, Parokya ni Edgar. “This Guy's in Love with U, Pare” (1999) is one of the band's famous original rock novelty songs. The song is about a gay man who is in love with his male friend (*pare*). A gay desire for other men is suggested in the chorus: “*Bading na bading sayo...*” [So in love with you...] (Parokya ni Edgar, 2002, 1:02) however, *bading* or gay in this sense pertains to a popular culture *kabaklaan* or gayness, a man who is hiding his effeminate ways (e.g. who performs machismo) but at the same time who chooses to be a “macho-looking” *bakla* (Garcia, 1994). As the chorus continues: “*Bading na bading, converted bading, na nakikipag-fling sayo...*” [Who is very gay, remains a closeted gay, who flirts with you...] (Parokya ni Edgar, 2002, 2:33). Nonetheless, this is how a homosexual man is defined both ways. Lastly, the song implies a humorous stereotyping of male homosexuals as the prelude suggests surveillance over *baklas*. *Bading* may also reinforce the qualities of fake manliness rather than a gender terminology reinforcing mockery—homophobia. This song demonstrates the ways by which Filipino popular culture gives meaning to homosexuality.

And so, the theme song of the film, “This Guy's in Love with U Mare!” evidently takes part in the construction of Filipino homosexuality. On the other hand, what broadens gender representation is the distinctions of subjectivity from the song it transpired from. Deconstructing terminologies such as “guy,” *pare*, and *mare* advances towards the modifications of gender identities and examines the immobilized ideologies in which speak a culture to which one belongs.

### **Understanding Gender: Binarism**

Philippine popular cinema fundamentally presents gender in layman's terms as a Western binary distinction, with a binary sexual orientation

(hetero/homo) becoming the most familiarized representations. Consequently, maleness and femaleness (*pagkalalaki* or *pagkababae*) persist in being interchangeable in the premise of heterosexuality and homosexuality despite gender orientations and bodily differences. On the other hand, keeping in mind that usage of language produces different contexts, understanding gender remains arbitrary based on the signified or concepts and meanings (Saussure's Science of Language theory). Contemplating gender representations through Filipino popular culture, gender and gender relations are reflected and defined. Consider this duality:

“*Pare*” (Masculine) – “*Mare*” (Feminine)

Who is this *Guy* (male), who is in love with *Pare* (male), and who is *Mare* (female)? The jargon used in the titles denotes the third term of gender and sexuality: the distinction of “sexes.” Nonetheless, as determined by Jackson (2006), the play of masculinity and femininity brings forth gender for it explores sexual identities and/or sexual desires. All the while, gender relationship governs relations, ordering not only sexual life but also domestic and extra-domestic divisions of labor and resources (Jackson, 2006).

This *Guy* therefore must belong to the male sex, whether he presents as masculine or feminine, as the “guy” in the film suggestively refers to Lester who is in love with Gemma. The *Guy* is dominantly masculine and *Mare* is dominantly feminine (as Lester-Gemma reenacts). Utterly, Filipino gender is expressed and understood in terms of the masculine-feminine grid of identity. On a different note, the representation of homosexuality (e.g. male-male desire) presupposes *Mare* as femininity that is found in Lester's character. *Guy* remains the conventional masculine identity the same as *Mare* as the counterpart of masculine-feminine regardless of sex. *Pare*, on the other hand, confirms masculinity which is absent in the song and present in the film. For that reason, gender binarism extends outside (male-female couple) but it is deeply embedded in Filipino gender norms. This is where homosexuality enters a heteronormative society wherein masculinity and femininity are questionable and at the same time responsible for resonating gender categories.

The gendering has been related to maleness and femaleness marginalizing other sexualities as deviant. As the Filipino childish round goes: girl, boy, *bakla* (gay), *tomboy* (lesbian); it then leaves homosexuality secondary in the gender hierarchy wherein it returns to its co-existential partner, heterosexuality. In the film, despite a wide spectrum of gender identities, gay and male bisexual characters are predominantly signified wherein female-female desire is nonexistent.

### ***This Guy in Love with U Mare! Politics***

Spectatorship has been established. This is a story about two types of relationships; eventually, who will have a happy ending? Who will Gemma choose? Will Lester succeed in re-winning Mike? Will the engagement between Mike and Gemma continue? As the power relations are embedded in the story, gender interventions are confronted through the characters' desires and actions as they succeed in finding the right partner who will fulfill their happiness. One of the common desires of the three characters is marriage. Gender is said to be constructed as a hierarchal social division and heterosexuality institutionalized which likely manifests Philippine's law and state (Jackson, 2006).

The desire for marriage was primarily imposed by Lester, to the extent of organizing a wedding proposal at the start of the film. He also wanted to impress his friends by proving that Mike was going to propose marriage and that they would run off to New York to celebrate a same-sex marriage rite. In that scene, Lester secretly extended the wedding ring to Mike. As Lester acted the staged "wedding proposal" aloud, it turned out that Mike wanted to break up with him. Mike confessed his change of heart and reasoned that he was a Born Again Christian and that God was against gay relationships. Lester felt doubly betrayed when he found out that Mike broke up with him because of a female heterosexual (Gemma) who he had been dating for a year already.

After learning about Mike's marriage proposal to Gemma, Lester tried to win back Mike, believing Mike would return to him if he could sabotage his relationship with Gemma. Meanwhile, Gemma and her family delved into Mike's suitability as her future husband during their engagement period. Just when Gemma was starting to fall in love with Lester, Mike learned about Lester's plan; Lester, on the other hand, realized that he couldn't continue deceiving Gemma because she was a good person. Lester confessed that he was only pretending to be a heterosexual man. On Gemma's part, discovering Mike's past relationship with Lester made her furious with both of them. The three eventually made amends. Mike and Gemma got married while Lester supposedly found another man he would like to spend the rest of his life with—but it led to a new heartbreak because the man turned out to be a priest. This ending, though predominantly comedic, also depicts the unyielding cultural and social factors configuring the identities' politics. This substantially exemplifies the Philippines' long history of patriarchy, which pre-established the traditional form of the "pure relationship" that homosexuals or non-heterosexuals struggle with. Consequently, it is said that the "pure relationship" is a powerful concept that incorporates marriage's institutional dynamics and its relationship to

multiple forms of domination. Hence, this entails not only for the own sake of positive legal protections of such individuals but the idea of marriage that is not justified by reproduction but by love (regardless of sex and gender) resulting in social diversity (Meeks & Stein, 2006).

At the end of the film, a pure relationship regressed between man and woman and sustained a pro-heterosexual relationship in a gender-biased institution. Lester thus represents a repressed identity that belongs to a dominant culture where gender and social hierarchies constitute power. Apart from resolving the characters' "happy endings," homophobic and heterosexist thoughts are reinforced by identity categories. For instance, during Lester and Gemma's date at a comedy bar, two tactless gays and a similarly crude woman target Lester with supposedly funny insults. Lester's pretensions of being a heterosexual male are not very effective against the hosts, especially because of their keen senses. The hosts naughtily chant "*bakla*," which dodges imputations of political incorrectness supposedly because the perpetrators are also homosexuals and it's all for the sake of fun; true to Filipino mainstream culture, this self-referential and self-deprecating humor has become a norm to the masses. Akin to categorizing identities, sexuality is precisely the pleasure of producing instability of gender (Butler, 1990). Homosexuals calling heterosexuals gays or lesbians, or homosexuals calling homosexuals gays or lesbians speak to a realm of normalizing regimes and oppressing structures for gender which can never be fully expressed by performance or practice alone (Butler, 1990).

This may also respond to the epitome of gender politics where genders are produced in sets of differentiation and exclusions that could be valorized (e.g. homosexuals refer to gays, the effeminate and "macho" homosexuals, covert and overt gays, aggressive lesbians, etc.). In addition, with the play of language and paradigms, it is inevitable and necessary to touch on the discourse on gender politics albeit its inequalities and modes of oppression. In the same manner, an affirmation of homosexuality underpins homophobic discourse (Butler, 1990).

### **Lester versus Mike**

The production of the queer love story of Lester, Mike, and Gemma contributes to gender exploitation as social and power relations that legitimize patriarchal dominance and ideologies. By extracting the genders of the three characters, gender politics reveals the unprivileged identities and devalues the experiences of those who identify as non-heterosexual. Additionally, who are perceived to be "out," whether or not by their design, reveals yardsticks of gender and how society perceives and marginalizes certain gender identities.

The representations of choosing the right partner have several connotations regarding what it means to be a man, woman, or “in-between.” For instance, Mike’s change of heart, revealed in his decision to act as a heterosexual man and become financially stable for Gemma, encapsulates his manliness; meanwhile, Lester possesses manliness by masculinity, practicing the concept of *ligaw* (courtship between a man and a woman) and acting out a desire for the opposite sex (female). Failure to display these qualities will make a man less manly—*bakla* or gay—and certainly disqualifies them as the ideal partner for Gemma. Gemma, acting as the purveyor of the final verdict on manliness, becomes the mandatory woman vis-à-vis conventional heterosexuality. Through these representations, one of the film’s underlying messages on gender politics can be derived from the phantasm of manliness based on the premise of Filipino or Western masculinity. Masculinity and femininity in the Filipino sense, therefore, are also providers of homophobic discourse in which they are continuously being “policed.” On the other hand, gender is not the only thing taken into account in choosing the right partner; factors such as experience, class, racial, political, and cultural dynamics take part in one’s decision making.

### **Gemma versus Lester**

The boy marries the girl in the end—Mike and Gemma’s 1-year love affair progressed to a wedding vow while Mike and Lester’s 3-year relationship is suspended into an impossible union. Representation of heterosexual-homosexual rivalry implicates Lester as the deviant identity, encoding the “internalized” homophobia of heterosexuality. By following the love triangle formula, Lester is situated in a social “outside or inside” paradigm of what is dominantly accepted. As part of the social order, the role played blatantly portrays “Otherness” or “promotion of an ideal homosexual image” by the act of attempting to re-win Mike. Gender as a hierarchical social division between women and men governed by social institutions and social practices exist and repeatedly defined by who “do gender” in everyday practice which in turn, produces and reproduces what is only held in common by the majority (Jackson, 2006). With this, gender is easily codified and accepted through binary division which is also a persistent way of social and cultural life. This also represented a type of co-existence in the degree of masculinity and femininity.

### **Conclusion**

The realm of gender has its own politics but together with popular culture’s representations we can start, create and attain a political movement on gender equality that can influence the society to rethink old and biased

thinking that go against gender stereotyping. In its pure repetitions, “gender being” is established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed (Butler, 1990). As far as Philippine popular cinema goes, gender categories like gay (effeminate man), *macho* (closeted gay), lesbian (masculine woman), or heterosexual (opposite sex preference) will continue to produce pluralizing social systems if it does not expand to reinventions of identities. *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!*, in its comedic form, deliberately inculcates stereotypes of gays as financiers, sashayers, and effeminate, as well as naturalizing gender miming (heteronormativity) among the Filipino mass audience. Also, the representation of gender performativity and imitation activates a sense of gender familiarity that mirrors what is real in the Filipino culture. For this reason, even though gender may be seen as normative, gender is permanently at risk for what it fails to repeat (Butler, 1990).

In its comical purpose, having a gay protagonist is one of the important gender politics that the film assimilated by far. Moreover, the treatment of the comedy genre materializes a contributing factor to the attitudes of Filipino society towards non-heterosexual identities. Hence, the usage and choice of genre is equally vital to film producers and audiences with its effects to criticize reality and the present state of society (Bourget, 1995).

According to Sedgwick (2008), “Gender is the space of differences between men and women” (p. 59). The Philippines, as a patriarchal institution (in which heterosexuality is introduced as the normative gender), has been dominantly reflecting masculinity, femininity, or queerness (*pagkalalaki*, *pagkababae* or *pagkabakla*) as “the space” of gender differences as far as the film *This Guy's in Love with U Mare!* is concerned. Gender categories remain particular features in representing social structures wherein hierarchical categories are associated with inequalities of socially sanctioned behaviors, legal rights, and labor conditions. Hence, gender binarism (heterosexual-homosexual) appears to be generally and more sociologically understood as well as means of shadowing gender ambiguities for the mass audience. “In-between” identities that gender encompasses, on the other hand, are waiting to be cast or known. Lastly, productions of ideologies through dominant representations continue to be rewarded as they hybridize in different forms of media consumption—gender is radically one of them.

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