

Phantom Limbs in the Body Politic: Filipinos in Foreign Cinema

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The Philippines's experience with its last foreign occupant, the US, resulted in an entire package of fraught "special relations" that, coupled with the country's problematic responses to the challenges of self-government, ultimately led to a global dispersal of the population, effectively turning the Philippines into the major Asian nation arguably most reliant on its citizens' overseas remittances. This paper takes the position that diasporic Filipinos, for a variety of reasons starting with the effectiveness of maintaining unintrusive presences in alien cultures (including the acceptance of menial positions), have possibly developed and have enabled others to perceive them as silent and discreet figures once they step into the circuits of globalized labor exchanges. Just as overseas Filipino characters have started being acknowledged in non-Philippine overseas film productions, their presences therein partake of this self-effacing configuration of global citizenship.

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Because of its historical and geographical circumstance, the Philippines had been the first Asian point of contact for European colonizers during their westward expansion across the Americas and into the Pacific. The Philippines's experience with its last foreign occupant, the US, resulted in an entire package of fraught "special relations" that, coupled with the country's problematic responses to the challenges of self-government, ultimately led to a global dispersal of the population, effectively turning the Philippines into the major Asian nation arguably most reliant on its citizens' overseas remittances. For this issue we take the position that diasporic Filipinos, for a variety of reasons starting with the effectiveness of maintaining unintrusive presences in alien cultures (including the acceptance of menial positions), have possibly developed and have enabled others to perceive them as silent and discreet figures once they step into the circuits of globalized labor exchanges. Just as overseas Filipino characters have started being acknowledged in non-Philippine overseas film productions, their presences therein partake of this self-effacing configuration of global citizenship.

Audiovisual media, starting with film, had arrived in the Philippines during the traumatic moment of transition between the defeated Spanish and the purportedly liberating American colonial occupants. The roughly century-and-score presence of film (assuming a historical continuity between its current digital form and its earlier celluloid incarnation), unlike the officials who introduced it, has remained and managed to play significant roles in various sociopolitical upheavals. More significant for the practice, recent developments in technological convergence and the introduction of film studies and training have allowed Filipinos heretofore unprecedented access to the medium, not just as consumers but also as creators.

The triumph of audiovisual media had a confirmation of sorts during the turn of the 1980s, which coincided with the peak years of martial rule (before the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos sealed its doom with the assassination of former Senator Benigno S. Aquino Jr. in 1983). An early '80s edition of the annual *Guinness Book of World Records*, in fact, discovered to everyone's surprise (when it used per-capita measurement, instead of the current absolute total) that Filipinos were the most active movie-going people in the world (McWhirter, 1983). The situation was more than mere accident: the Marcos dictatorship, in order to validate its claim to observing democratic processes, allowed cinema greater leeway than other media. The Marcos couple were in a sense star-struck figures, since Ferdinand Marcos won additional voters when a biographical picture of his alleged heroic deeds was supposedly censored (when in fact its exhibition permit was only delayed), and Imelda then-Romualdez had earlier screen-tested for Sampaguita Pictures (same outfit that produced Ferdinand's bio-pictures) before she left for Baguio and wound up married to Ferdinand shortly thereafter.

Continuing Contributions

Hence one of the legacies of the Marcos dictatorship was the politicization of the Philippines's celebrity population: several artists participated in progressive democratization movements (just as a few, not surprisingly, opted to support the Marcoses), while political parties have since been eager to recruit showbiz personalities because of their inbuilt popularity and bands of loyal, often uncritical, followers. The daughters of the Marcoses as well as their successor, Corazon Aquino (Benigno's widow), became involved in film activity – Imee Marcos as producer and Kris Aquino as film and TV performer. More recently, two presidential elections, one in the 1990s and another in the 2000s, had the country's biggest male icons, Joseph Estrada and Fernando Poe Jr. respectively, participating as candidates, with Estrada winning and subsequently resigning.

Within the terms of the coverage of this paper, with politics left out, film remains a major Philippine activity even from the perspective of outsiders. Since the 1950s, when European film festivals looked toward Asia for fresh product, the Philippines was sending entries alongside Japan and India, albeit with less distinguished results. The martial-law period provided greater incentive for foreign-festival participation, since promoters at major events, including the Cannes Film Festival, found that playing on democratic nations' guilt went a long way in acquiring recognition for their new discoveries from less-privileged countries, many of which had been former colonies of Europe. The Philippines enjoyed a special position in this regard, since its most recent colonial occupant (and still-current neo-colonizer) was the US – a fact that enabled European events to criticize by association the continent's (and the world's) major rival, the US and its Hollywood film industry.

While several articles and book-length studies have focused on the Philippines' triumphs in the global festival circuit, scant attention has been paid until recently to another type of "Philippine" film presence: that of the country, in terms of its locales, people, and/or culture (including its languages) in what may be termed less-Filipino as well as non-Filipino cinema. Occasionally some attention may be focused on these types of productions, but the fact that the films had been made in the Philippines and/or featured Filipinos would turn out to be incidental to these titles' global reception – with the predictable exception of Filipino audiences. Only with the Best Director award at Cannes in 2009 for Brillante Mendoza's *Kinatay* (2009) was the film's Philippine origin necessarily acknowledged; the Palm d'Or winner thirty years earlier, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), was also known as a Philippine-made film mainly by those who were aware of its manifold production problems despite the fact that its theme was the Viet Nam War. Another US film on the same topic, Oliver Stone's 1986 Best Oscar film winner *Platoon* (1986), was less known as a Philippine-made production, as were a number of other Viet Nam War movies as well as Oscar-recognized titles [e.g. Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982) as well as the sequel to David Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), titled *Return from the River Kwai* (McLaglen, 1989)].

Increasing Interest

The number of recent studies inspecting what we might provisionally label "Philippine cinema's global thrust" would include, in chronological order, a book, *Dream Factories of a Former Colony*, by José B. Capino (2010), which tackles Filipino films that look at American presence and influence in the Philippines; Bliss Cua Lim's (2012) article "American Pictures Made

by Filipinos,” which covers B-films made by Philippine producers and/or directors primarily for US drive-in release; and *Bamboo Gods and Bionic Boys*, based on its author Andrew Leavold’s (2008) dissertation proposal, that expands on Lim’s material by including films made in the Philippines by foreign sources intended for global distribution. This study would constitute the first step in complementing the aforementioned texts by focusing on something more elusive – the occasional (and increasingly insistent) appearance of any kind of reference to the Philippines in non-Philippine cinema.

The larger framework by which these types of work could be subsumed would be that of globalization, specifically the Philippines as having persisted, for virtually its entire modern existence, in an “always-already” globalized condition, proceeding from its formation, in contravention to indigenous Southeast Asian historical processes, as an artificially formed European-owned territory (the first in the region) and its colonial and arguably postcolonial designation as a nation without borders, through the emerging consensus among progressive intellectuals that a definitive sense of nationhood had been impossible to attain and might never be achievable (see Bello, Docena, de Guzman & Malig, 2004), culminating in the country’s uniquely near-exclusive reliance on labor export. Even Arjun Appadurai’s (2001) description of globalization as contemporarily perceived may be taken to represent the Philippines’ predicament from its inception as a nation:

The various flows we see – of objects, persons, images, and discourses – are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent. They are in what I have elsewhere called relations of disjuncture. By this I mean that the paths or vectors taken by these kinds of things have different speeds, axes, points of origin and termination, and varied relationships to institutional structures in different regions, nations, or societies. Further, these disjunctures themselves precipitate various kinds of problems and frictions in different local situations. Indeed, it is the disjunctures between the various vectors characterizing this world-in-motion that produce fundamental problems of livelihood, equity, suffering, justice, and governance. (pp. 5-6)

For all the admittedly overwhelming implications afforded by this insight, Appadurai (2001) points out a bright spot that provides a justification for proceeding with our present project: “If globalization is characterized by disjunctive flows that generate acute problems of social well-being, one

positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics...is the role of the imagination in social life” (p. 6). Although specifically addressing academics, his clarification of the challenges posed by globalization – the peculiarities of its optics, the filtering via area studies, and the nature of research activity – inform, on a basic level, the endeavor being undertaken by this study.

The Philippines’s stature as an “always-already” globalized country has meant, for the most part, that it has always been a globally available nation, both in the present sense that Filipinos regard themselves and are regarded by others as migration-ready citizens, and in the historical sense that the country is territorially “open” in allowing foreign intervention as well as in enabling foreign powers to solicit the country’s support for their expansionist causes. The possibly unprecedented success of US neocolonization in the Philippines may be attributed to a mutual minimalization of presences: the invisibility, on the one hand, of foreign manipulation, detectable only when one regards the relative success development policies in neighboring postcolonial territories vis-à-vis the Philippines’s observance of global corporate interests; and on the other hand, of the “silence” of the local response, in the sense that the ruling elite accepts its *comprador* (native manager) function, including the profits the said function provides, and relegates the underclass to serve foreign interests as pliant, versatile, long-suffering, essentially feminized workers.

Process

The study is based on a database of non-Filipino films the researcher had been compiling since the early 1990s. Originally the list was intended to point in the direction of films that exemplified multiple-character narratives, but because of the focus on Philippine cinema, the foreign titles already acknowledged by foreign authors served to provide a background for earlier published studies. What emerged, which will be the primary organizing principle in this paper, was the need for a taxonomy of a wide range of film samples. These would range from the use of the Philippines (whether entirely or partially) as locale, to the appearance of one or more Filipino character(s), to any mention of the country. In certain instances the “emergence” of the Philippines would be entirely incidental, perceptible for example only to people who would recognize a native language or performer.

For the present paper, certain “typical” samples will have to be excluded, not because these would be predictable, but because the appearance of the Philippines would be precisely the point of the exercise and so would be subject to a more conscious handling of material by the filmmaker(s) – i.e., films about wars involving the US military, mostly set in World War II; similarly, films wherein the Philippines was meant to stand in for another

(actual or fictional) territory, usually Viet Nam or some anonymous exotic locale (as in the '60s *Blood Island* and '70s women-in-prison American exploitation films) will have to be the subject of another type of study, starting with the aforementioned papers by Bliss Cua Lim (2012) and Andrew Leavold (2008).

In effect, the films to be sampled either anticipate or recognize the current dispersal of Filipinos in pursuit of overseas employment. Using a reverse chronology in pursuit of genealogical investigation advocated by Michel Foucault (1977) in explicating a history of the present,¹ the study will dwell at some length on contemporary films depicting working-class Filipino workers, including women consigned to work in liminal capacities as domestic help or sex professionals. These texts will be subjected to a combination of casual (as opposed to close) reading, in order to situate the Filipino presence in the larger (foreign) narrative context, and structural analysis, to understand the function of the Filipino presence vis-à-vis the larger social and historical forces at play; examples of actual close readings of similar texts may be found in the other essays in this collection. Other relevant cinema-studies approaches, notably the auteur/genre approach advocated by *Cahiers du Cinéma* (see Comolli & Narboni, 1976), as well as queer-inflected gender criticism (see Kleinhans & Lesage, 1985), will also be deployed whenever necessary to enhance the study's interpretive efforts, with special attention to the issue of visibility (Wilton, 1995).

Hence the pursuit of Philippine presences in non-Philippine cinema will deploy a variety of strategies depending on the nature of the taxonomic category, including pre-internet investigation, especially forensic phonetics (or the attempt to draw evidence from spoken language, sometimes incidental to diegetic dialogue); deployment of a presence/absence binary rather than positive/negative images, premised on the assumption that a momentary imaging might have to be depicted in an offensive, inappropriate, and/or inaccurate manner in order to make an impression; basic empirical analyses; and a range of standard film approaches, including genre/auteur analysis, psychoanalysis (particularly gender criticism), and structuralist semiotics. The approach will not be exhaustive but rather selective, with samples selected on "best available so far" basis, inasmuch that further "better" examples may yet be produced or discovered.

Taxonomy

Films set partially or entirely in (a country identified as) the Philippines. Samples of early cinema, originally called *actualities* (after the French term) and later described as "attractions" because of how they were regarded by their audiences, included scenes of the country as colonial territory. Early samples

such as Antonio Ramos's *Escenas Callejeras* (1898) depicted the arrival of modernization, if not the persistence of tradition or the inevitability of the exotic; later films, made by Americans led by Thomas Alva Edison (1899), who produced reenactments of scenes from the Philippine-American War as part of a series on the Spanish-American War, usually in distinctly non-Philippine settings and with non-Filipino performers (including African Americans to represent Filipinos). The technical crudeness of the medium tended to be matched by the presentation's theatricality, sentimentality, and pro-colonial slant. During the Classical Hollywood period, a prominent example would be Henry Hathaway's *The Real Glory* (1939), which recounts the efforts of US soldiers in training a native Filipino tribe to fight Muslim warriors.

In a sense, these actuality and early narrative images would be the predecessors of films produced during the Second World War (Table 1). The difference this time was that the medium (and its concomitant industry) was sufficiently developed so that the films could boast of stronger reality effects. Several heroicizing features, Hollywood as well as Filipino, presupposed the bravery and/or martyrdom of American and Filipino forces, alongside the persistent demonization of the invading Japanese. This imaging may be tied in with a so-far uninspected racial suppression of the East Asian ancestry of film performers during this period, with fair features ascribed to European origins as suggested by screen surnames; or, when the East Asian features are too pronounced, the performers get relegated to secondary roles such as villains or femmes fatales, or in less-respected "body" genres such as comedy (with the genre's biggest star, Dolphy, eschewing the use of his Chinese family name, in contradistinction to his descendants).

Table 1.

Examples of Foreign Films Set (in Whole or in Part) in the Philippines.

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|--|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Actualities (early attractions): 2 primary types | Pre-1939 | US | Edison, Thomas et al. | |
| Real Glory, The | 1939 | US | Hathaway, Henry | Gary Cooper |
| Air Force | 1943 | US | Hawks, Howard | John Garfield |
| Bataan | 1943 | US | Garnett, Tay | Robert Taylor |
| Corregidor | 1943 | US | Nigh, William | |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| December 7th - the Pearl Harbor Story | 1943 | US | Ford, John and Gregg Toland | Walter Huston |
| The Dawn of Freedom | 1944 | Japan | De Leon, Gerardo and Abe Yutaka | Fernando Poe, Leopoldo Salcedo, Carmen Rosales |
| Back to Bataan | 1945 | US | Dmytryk, Edward | John Wayne, Anthony Quinn |
| They Were Expendable | 1945 | US | Ford, John | Robert Montgomery, John Wayne |
| American Guerilla in the Philippines | 1950 | US | Lang, Fritz | Tyrone Power |
| No Place to Hide | 1955 | US | Shaftel, Josef | |
| Eddy Duchin Story, The | 1956 | US | Sydney, George | Tyrone Power, Kim Novak |
| Cavalry Command (Day of the Trumpet) | 1958 | US | Romero, Eddie | |
| Surrender - Hell! | 1950 | US | Barnwell, John | |
| Fires on the Plain | 1959 | Japan | Ichikawa, Kon | |
| Raiders of Leyte Gulf, The | 1963 | US | Romero, Eddie | Leopoldo Salcedo, Michael Parsons |
| Back Door to Hell | 1964 | US | Hellman, Monte | Jack Nicholson |
| Walls of Hell, The | 1964 | US | De Leon, Gerardo and Eddie Romero | FPJ, Michael Parsons |
| Ravagers, The | 1965 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Saxon, Roberto Arevalo, Michael Parsons |
| Impasse | 1969 | US | Benedict, Richard | Burt Reynolds |
| Stoney | 1969 | US | Davis, Wray | |
| MacArthur | 1977 | US | Sargent, Joseph | Gregory Peck |
| Women of Valor | 1984 | US | Kulik, Buzz | Susan Sarandon |
| Bataan Death March, The | 2000 | US | Martin, J.V. | |
| Bataan Death March | 2003 | Philippines | Jacob, Robin | |
| Death March of Bataan | 2008 | Philippines | Loeser, Rainer | |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---------------|------|-----------------|--------------|--|
| Amigo | 2010 | US | Sayles, John | Joel Torre, Rio Locsin, Chris Cooper |

The romantic appeal of nationalist narratives (once described with the pejorative term “jingoistic”) set in exotic locales may be seen as the most basic component in the furtherance of this made-in-the-Philippines trend, with post-war Philippines configured as open space for foreign treasure hunters, adventurers, gangsters, mad scientists, and several other self-aggrandizing characters banished from the center (usually Hollywood) because of their morally problematic stature. While these types of films may be recuperated as the presentation of varied types of *Otherness* from the neocolonial center, and (as mentioned earlier) are tackled in now-available studies, we venture to present what we may term an *Other of the Other*: two Japanese films set in the Philippines, one shot in the country during the war – i.e., Gerardo de Leon’s *Liwayway ng Kalayaan* (1944) (see Figure 1), described by Japanese film scholar Abé Mark Nornes (1995) as “unquestionably one of the finest and most effective Japanese films from the Pacific War” (p. 67); and another, shot in Japan but representing the rout of the Japanese Imperial Army in the Visayas, Kon Ichikawa’s *Nobi* (1959), described by Pauline Kael (1965) as “quite possibly the best anti-war movie ever made” (p. 205).

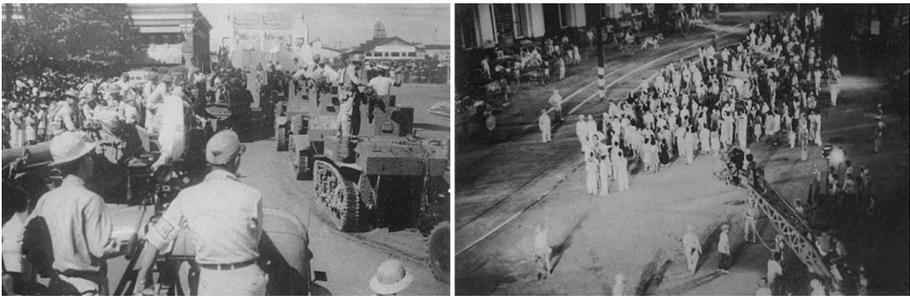


Figure 1. Scenes from the location shoot of *Liwayway ng Kalayaan* (Gerardo de Leon, 1944), also known as *Dawn of Freedom*, credited to Gerardo de Leon and Yutaka Abe. (Pictures courtesy of Pinoy Kollektor, used with permission)

Foreign films where one or more Filipino character(s) appear(s).

These titles, necessarily from the US, purport to reflect one or more of the following historical upheavals: the effects of American colonization or wars (anti-US resistance, anti-Japanese occupation, Cold War anti-insurgency and anti-terrorist) as capable of touching, as it were, the everyday affairs

of even the most ordinary US citizens; the spread of Filipinos as exported labor; and the rise in prominence and visibility of Filipino migrants and their (sometimes pure, sometimes mixed) descendants, following the deliberate reconceptualization of Asians as the US's model minority (see Klein, 2003); some of these films, especially contemporary ones, derive some plot issue or point from identifying the performer's nationality as Filipino, as in some of the films that feature Rob Schneider. A few other films (not confined to just the US) point to the increasing presence of Filipinos in foreign regions, notably (aside from North America) the Middle East and East Asia, including "prestige" (i.e., film-festival) projects from Japan and Korea (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Examples of Films with Characters Identified as "Filipino"

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|--|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|
| Actualities (early attractions): 2 primary types | Pre-1939 | US | Edison, Thomas et al. | |
| Superclock | 1975 | US | Trikonis, Gus | Nancy Kwan |
| God of Killers | 1981 | Hong Kong | Hui, Ann | Chow Yun-Fat |
| I Am Blushing | 1981 | Sweden | Sjoman, Vilgot | Bibi Anderson, Bing Fabregas, Larry Hagman, Chanda Romero |
| Cinq et la peau | 1982 | France | Rissent, Pierre | Eiko Matsuda |
| No Way Out | 1987 | US | Donaldson, Roger | Kevin Costner, Gene Hackman, Sean Young |
| Signed: Lino Brocka | 1987 | US | Blackwood, Christian | |
| Dangerous Life, A | 1988 | Australia | Markowitz, Robert | |
| Days of Being Wild | 1990 | Hong Kong | Wong Kar-Wai | Leslie Cheung, Maggie Cheung, Andy Lau |
| Mission Manila | 1990 | US | Mackenzie, Peter M. | |
| Goodbye America | 1990 | US | Notz, Thierry | James Brolin, Michael Yoirk |
| Gray's Anatomy | 1996 | US | Soderbergh, Steven | |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|--|------|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| The Suspect | 1998 | US | Lam, Ringo | |
| The Guys from Paradise (The Hell of Manila - German Title) | 2000 | Japan | Miike, Takashi | |
| Manila | 2000 | Germany | Karmakar, Romuald | |
| Tazza, The High Rollers | 2006 | Korea | Choi Dong- Hoon | |
| I Come with the Rain | 2009 | Hong Kong | Tranh Anh Hung | Josh Hartnett |
| The Bourne Legacy | 2012 | US | Gilroy, Tony | Jeremy Renner, Rachel Weisz |
| Tropical Manila | 2012 | Korea | Lee Sang-woo | Jerald de Vera, Kim Su-Nam, Maries Chanel Rebucas |

Films set abroad that mention the Philippines or any Filipino(s).

The fact that the Philippines or its people has to be mentioned denotes that these films would be set during the sound era, although it might still be possible to rediscover silent films that also mention the country in its intertitle(s). Several instances of these may be found in Classical Hollywood and even post-Classical Hollywood films set in the US during the World War II period, where a character mentions serving (as military personnel) in the Philippines, and presume that the audience would fully understand the reference. These types of films are capable of generating intense cross-cultural studies (Campos, 2013; David, 2013; & Yu, 2013) proceeding from but not confined to the positive-images debate (Artel & Wengraf, 1978) in cultural activism. All the films focus on the migrant Filipino experience (see Table 3), with one of them, Lee Han's *Wandeugi* (2011), taking the next step, so to speak, by having as its title character a first-generation Filipino Korean who discovers that his initially estranged mother is a migrant wife. Another exceptional example of a US film interfacing with Philippine history is Richard Benjamin's *My Favorite Year* (1982), where the migrant Filipino character, a Brooklyn-based boxer named Rookie Carroca, is married (presumably to acquire US citizenship) to the Jewish mother of the narrator; Carroca is played by the late Ramon Sison (Figure 2), a medical doctor and jazz musician, who started out in films playing a medical doctor to the title character in Joseph Sargent's *MacArthur* (1977), befitting his real-life appointment as US Army Colonel. Beyond the irony of Sison playing a comic

boxer who cooks the family's pet parrot, his familial circumstance provides the more profound irony of his being the older brother of Communist Party of the Philippines founding chair, Jose Ma. Sison.



Figure 2. Ramon Sison plays Rookie Carroca in Richard Benjamin's *My Favorite Year* (1982): the character welcomes Allan Swann (Peter O'Toole) to his home (left photo) but gets crowded out (right photo) when Swann charms Carroca's Jewish wife (Lainie Cazan), as their stepson (Mark Linn-Baker), who narrates the story, and Uncle Morty (Lou Jacobi), witness how Swann overwhelms not just the family but the entire neighborhood with his movie-star demeanor. (Left photo – publicity still from MGM & Brookfilms; right photo – screen capture by the author)

Table 3.

Examples of Foreign-Set Films That Mention the Philippines (the Country or Its People).

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---|------|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| Operation Petticoat | 1959 | US | Edwards, Blake | Cary Grant, Tony Curtis |
| Reflections in a Golden Eye | 1967 | US | Huston, John | Marlon Brando, Elizabeth Taylor |
| Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, The | 1974 | Germany | Herzog, Werner | Bruno S. |
| My Favorite Year | 1982 | US | Benjamin, Richard | Peter O'Toole |
| Money Pit, The | 1986 | US | Benjamin Richard | Tom Hanks |
| Her Alibi | 1989 | US | Beresford, Bruce | Tom Selleck |
| All Under the Moon | 1993 | Japan | Sai Yoichi | Ruby Moreno |
| Roosters | 1993 | US | Young, Robert M. | Edward James Olmos, Sonia Brags |
| Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, The | 1994 | Australia | Eliot, Stephen | Guy Pearce, Terence Stamp, Julia Cortez |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|--------------------------------|------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|
| C'est la vie, mon cheri | 1994 | Hong Kong | Yee Derek | Anita Yuen, Carina Lau |
| Stem: The Turkish Bath | 1997 | Turkey | Ozpetek, Ferzan | |
| The Versace Murder | 1998 | US | Golan, Menahem | Franco Nero |
| Strangers with Candy, Season 1 | 1999 | US | Lauer, Peter | Amy Sedaris, Stephen Colbert, Orlando Pabotoy (as Orlando Pinatubo) |
| A Bittersweet Life | 2005 | Korea | Kim Jee-won | Lee Byung-hun |
| Maid, The | 2005 | Singapore | Tong, Kelvin | Alessandra de Rossi |
| Paper Dolls | 2006 | Israel | Heymann, Tomer | |
| Jellyfish | 2007 | Israel | Keret, Etgar and Sheera Geffen | Ma-nenita De Latorre |
| Mona, Singapore Escort | 2007 | Singapore | Morel, Jowee | Iza Calzado |
| Mammoth | 2009 | US | Moodysson, Lukas | Gael Garcia Bernal, Michelle Williams, Marife Necesito |
| Thirst | 2009 | Korea | Park Chan-wook | Song Kang-ho, Mercedes Cabral |
| Wandeugi | 2011 | Korea | Lee Han | Kim Yun-seok, Ah In Yoo, Jasmine Lee |
| Leona Calderon | 2012 | England | Morel, Jowee | Virginia McKenna, Junix Inocian, Pilar Pilapil |
| The Taste of Money | 2012 | Korea | Im Sang-soo | Baek Yun-shik, Maui Taylor |

Interestingly, a number of US films are able to assume that the audience will be able to understand what a Filipino or the Philippines is, without any need to depict someone identified as such. In Preston Sturges's *The Lady Eve* (1941), for example, the romantic couple make a toast "to Manila" – where it might be presumed they refer to the country's (alongside the US

Army's) resistance to Japanese occupation. In Pedro Almodóvar's *La ley del deseo* (1987), made just after the peaceful anti-dictatorship revolt of February 1986, the main characters opt to go to a café that just happens to have the name "Manila" (reminiscent of the Spanish chocolate bar named Filipino). An even more unusual case is Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1962), where the Philippines is not mentioned at all, and the title is meant to refer to "A French kids' wish-granting game [where] 'philippine' means 'sweetheart'" (Greenspun, 1973). Several other types of films, set after World War II, situate the country as a destination for exoticism, sex tourism, small or illegal business, and/or retirement. Table 4 provides a sampling of the aforementioned possible range of titles, where the characters refer to the Philippines and/or Filipinos but the narrative does not confirm the presence of anyone from the Philippines.

Table 4.

Examples of Foreign-Set Films That Mention the Philippines with Either No or Indirect Depiction.

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Lady Eve, The | 1941 | US | Sturges, Preston | Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda |
| Letter to Three Wives, A | 1949 | US | Mankiewicz, Joseph L. | Kirk Douglas, Joe Bautista |
| Incredible Shrinking Man, The | 1957 | US | Arnold, Jack | |
| Adieu Philippine | 1962 | France | Rozier, Jacques | |
| Jaws | 1975 | US | Spielberg, Steven | Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfuss |
| "Crocodile" Dundee | 1986 | Australia | Faiman, Peter | Paul Hogan |
| Law of Desire | 1987 | Spain | Almodovar, Pedro | Antonio Banderas, Carmen Maura |
| Sea of Love | 1989 | US | Becker, Harold | Al Pacino, Ellen Barkin |
| Passion Fish | 1992 | US | Sayles, John | |
| Sum of Us, The | 1994 | Australia | Burton, Geoff and Kevin Dowling | Russell Crowe |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---------------------|------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mars Attacks! | 1996 | US | Burton, Tim | Jack Nicholson, Michael J. Fox |
| Grosse Pointe Blank | 1997 | US | Armitage, George | John Cusack, Minnie Driver |
| 8MM | 1999 | US | Schumacher, Joel | Nicolas Cage, Joaquin Phoenix |
| Man on the Moon | 1999 | US | Forman, Milos | Jim Carrey |
| Training Day | 2001 | US | Fuqua, Antoine | Denzel Washington, Ethan Hawke |
| Anger Management | 2003 | US | Segal, Peter | Jack Nicholson, Adam Sandler |
| Mr. & Mrs. Smith | 2005 | US | Liman, Doug | Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt |
| Walk the Line | 2005 | US | Mangold, James | Reese Witherspoon, Joaquin Phoenix |

Films shot entirely or partly in the Philippines, with the country anonymized. As previously mentioned, this area is under intensive coverage from a current research project by Andrew Leavold (2012), with useful groundwork laid by Bliss Cua Lim (2012). This area of practice was responsible for two undercurrents in American cinema, essentially sub-genres (Table 5). The first, under horror, comprised the “Blood Island” films initiated by Gerardo de Leon’s *Terror Is a Man* (1959), which had the alternate title (and source of the trend’s name) *Creature from Blood Island*; Robert Sklar (1975) once postulated that because whenever wars were in progress the US government would pressure Hollywood to assist in the war effort, “echoes and shadows” (p. 337) of the Viet Nam conflict could only be provided in specifically this realm of practice. The other trend, under action adventure (with an overlap with soft-core pornography) was what in a sense the Blood Island series transmuted into – penal-colony women-in-prison (WIP) exploitation films; curiously, several of these, including Eddie Romero’s *Black Mama, White Mama* (1973), launched the career of Pam Grier (a mixed-race performer with Filipino ancestry), the biggest female star in a mainland-US trend, Blaxploitation (see Figure 3). These types of films necessarily avoided identifying the Philippines as any specific place, except possibly in publicity materials.²

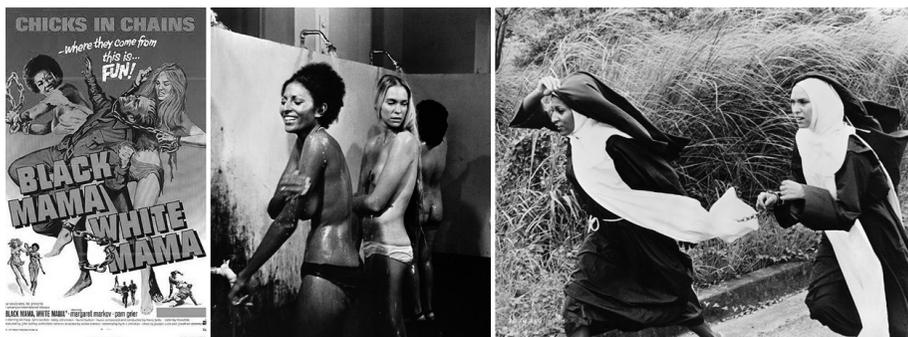


Figure 3. Eddie Romero's *Black Mama, White Mama* (1973) features Pam Grier and Margaret Markov as a racially mixed odd couple, thrown in women's prison and initially squabbling because of a difference in principle, with the black woman intent on pulling off a get-rich-quick scheme and the white woman seeking to fulfill her revolutionary ideals; the opportunity to escape forces them to rely on each other and eventually change each other for the better. (Theatrical poster and publicity stills from AIP & Four Associates)

Table 5.

Examples of Films with the Philippines Representing an Anonymous Locale.

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|--|------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Terror Is a Man | 1959 | Philippines | De Leon, Gerardo | |
| Blood Drinkers, The (Kulay Dugo ang Gabi) | 1964 | Philippines | De Leon, Gerardo | Amalia Fuentes |
| Blood of the Vampires (Ibulong mo sa Hangin) | 1966 | Philippines | De Leon, Gerardo | Amalia Fuentes |
| Brides of Blood | 1968 | Philippines | De Leon, Gerardo and Eddie Romero | John Ashley |
| Mad Doctor of Blood Island | 1968 | US | De Leon, Gerardo and Eddie Romero | John Ashley |
| Beast of Blood | 1971 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Ashley |
| Beast of the Yellow Night | 1971 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Ashley |
| Big Doll House, The | 1971 | US | Hill, Jack | Pam Grier |
| Women in Cages | 1971 | US | De Leon, Gerardo | |
| Big Bird Cage, The | 1972 | US | Hill, Jack | Pam Grier |
| Daughters of Satan | 1972 | US | Morse, Hollingsworth | Tom Selleck |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---------------------------|------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Superbeast | 1972 | US | Schenck, George | |
| Beyond Atlantis | 1973 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Ashley |
| Black Mama, White Mama | 1973 | US | Romero, Eddie | Pam Grier |
| Twilight People | 1973 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Ashley |
| Woman Hunt, The | 1973 | US | Romero, Eddie | John Ashley |
| Savage Sisters | 1974 | US | Romero, Eddie | Rosanna Ortiz |
| TNT Jackson | 1974 | US | Santiago, Cirio H. | |
| Jungle Holocaust | 1977 | Italy | Deodato, Ruggero | |
| Night Games | 1980 | France | Vadim, Roger | |
| Story of the Dolls, The | 1984 | Germany | Hubert, Frank | Tetchie Agbayani |
| Platoon | 1986 | US | Stone, Oliver | Charlie Sheen, Johnny Depp |
| Whiteforce | 1988 | Australia | Romero, Eddie | |
| DNA | 1997 | US | Mesa, William | Jürgen Prochnow |
| Island of the Living Dead | 2006 | Italy | Mattei, Bruno | |

Several other productions followed the US's (literal) exploitation trend and set their production locales in the Philippines. With the end of the Viet Nam War, or "after the Communist victory, it became possible [for Americans] to look back" (Sklar, 1975, p. 337); but with Viet Nam then closed to relations with the US, various other Southeast Asian countries had to stand in for the country, starting with the Philippines (see Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* [1979]). Apart from Viet Nam, the other countries and territories that the Philippines was made to represent included Indonesia, Thailand, East Timor, North Korea, Panama, and the Amazon jungle (see Table 6).

Table 6.
Examples of Films with the Philippines Representing another Locale.

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Represented Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|----------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Boys in Company C, The | 1978 | US | Viet Nam | Furie, Sidney J. | Andrew Stevens |
| Apocalypse Now | 1979 | US | Viet Nam | Coppola, Francis Ford | Marlon Brando, Charlie Sheen |
| Children of An Lac, The | 1980 | US | Viet Nam | Moxey, John Llewellyn | Shirley Jones |
| Year of Living Dangerously | 1982 | Australia | Indonesia | Weir, Peter | Mel Gibson, Sigourney Weaver, Linda Hunt |
| Brothers | 1982 | Australia | East Timor | Bourke, Terry | |
| Intrusion Cambodia | 1983 | US | Cambodia | Gallard, Jun | |
| Purple Hearts | 1984 | US | Viet Nam | Furie, Sidney J. | Ken Wahl, Cheryl Ladd |
| Platoon | 1986 | US | Viet Nam | Stone, Oliver | Charlie Sheen, Johnny Depp |
| Return from the River Kwai | 1989 | US | Thailand | McLaglen, Andrew V. | Timothy Bottoms |
| Indio | 1988 | Italy | Amazon | Margheriti, Antonio | Brian Dennehy |
| Indio 2 (The Revolt) | 1991 | Italy | Amazon | Margheriti, Antonio | |
| Dean Men Can't Dance | 1997 | US | North Korea | Anderson, Stephen Milburn | Michael Biehn |
| DNA | 1997 | US | Malaysia | Mesa, William | Jürgen Prochnow |
| Brokedown Palace | 1999 | US | Thailand | Kaplan, Jonathan | Claire Danes |
| Noriega: God's Favorite | 2006 | US | Panama | Spottiswoode, Roger | Bob Hoskins |
| My Lai Four | 2006 | Italy | Viet Nam | Bartola, Paolo | |

Foreign films with performers of Filipino descent passing as non-Filipinos. The recent rediscovery of Elena Jurado, “a young Filipina who appeared in a few silent films in America in the early 1920s and sued a motion picture company in San Francisco, and then vanished” (Pascual, 2014, n.p.), indicates how early Filipino talent sought opportunities in Hollywood as well as how early American film audiences were curious about people from the country that their government had occupied. Jurado in fact is currently listed at the Internet Movie Database as having appeared in two early sound films by directors who were subsequently recuperated by French critics: Raoul Walsh in *What Price Glory* (1926) and Howard Hawks in *A Girl in Every Port* (1928). An even more famous female performer, Dimples Cooper, was better known for her real-life role as unruly mistress of Douglas MacArthur (Manchester, 1978), rather than the few Hollywood productions where she appeared uncredited. More contemporary and still-active performers, owing to the increased professionalism in talent management, have tended to have better exposure and longevity than the earlier mentioned ones (see Table 7).

Table 7.

Examples of Films with Filipino Performers who Play Non-Filipino Characters.

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|
| What Price Glory | 1926 | US | Raoul Walsh | Edmund Lowe, Victor McLaglen, Dolores del Rio, Elena Jurado |
| A Girl in Every Port | 1928 | US | Howard Hawks | Victor McLaglen, Robert Armstrong, Louise Brooks, Elena Jurado |
| West Side Story | 1961 | US | Wise, Robert and Jerome Robbins | Natalie Wood, Rita Moreno, Jose de Vega |
| Blue Hawaii | 1961 | US | Taurog, Norman | Elvis Presley, Jose de Vega |
| Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill! | 1965 | US | Meyer, Russ | Tara Sutana |
| Emerald Forest, The | 1985 | US | Boorman, John | Meg Foster, Tetchie Agbayani |

| Primary Title | Year | Primary Country | Filmmaker(s) | Star(s) |
|---|------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| Gymkata | 1985 | US | Clouse, Robert | Tetchie Agbayani |
| Descent, The | 2005 | England | Marshall, Neil | Natalie Mendoza |
| Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides | 2011 | US | Marshall, Rob | Johnny Depp, Penelope Cruz, Daphne Joy, Michael Rosales |

Foreign films where a Philippine language can be heard but is not identified. At this time, only two foreign productions can be confirmed as containing a Philippine language, specifically Tagalog, without the narrative identifying the language, much less its country of origin. The first, William Wyler's *The Letter* (1940), is an adaptation of a play by W. Somerset Maugham; the action takes place during the colonial period in a British Malaya plantation and subsequently moves to Singapore for a trial sequence. The crime that precipitates the investigation and said trial is committed at the beginning of the narrative, when a married white woman (played by Bette Davis) shoots a white man (later disclosed as her lover, who had left her for a "Eurasian," actually highly Orientalized, woman) late in the evening. The awakened coolies congregate around the body and whisper among themselves, but in fact can be heard to be saying "Ano'ng nangyari? May binaril. Patay na yata" [What happened? Someone was shot. He must be dead already]. The other film, made 65 years later but, like the earlier one, co-produced by Warner Bros., is Francis Lawrence's *Constantine* (2005), where a demon-possessed woman utters "*Papatayin natin sila!*" [We'll kill them all!] prior to being exorcised by the title character, played by Keanu Reeves; apparently the director had intended a different line to be spoken and wanted to underline the fact that one of the performers, Jhoanna Trias, was a Filipina ("Keanu Reeves Hired Me," 2005).

These cases resemble that of a film whose narrative is set in neighboring Indonesia but whose locales and native performers are familiar to Filipino audiences – *The Year of Living Dangerously* (Weir, 1982). In this instance the Indonesian characters are supposed to, and do, speak in untranslated Bahasa, particularly during exchanges with the major (Western) characters. But in frenzied crowd scenes, the characters shout distinctly in Tagalog. The discrepancy would be apparent only to fluent speakers of either language, thus playing into the standard assumption that Other peoples tend to sound (as well as look) alike to those who are privileged in relation to them.

Preliminary Observations

While acquiescing to the caveat that any conclusions based on the preceding examples may be altered by further discoveries or developments, it would still be instructive to determine for the moment certain basic trends. Table 8 lists the numbers of films from Tables 1 through 7 according to decades these were produced and released, from the 1930s to the early 2010s. Although the US leads the rest of the world in the production of films that (at the very least) touch on the Philippines, the most active decades were the 1930s, when the Philippines was newly pacified colonial territory, and the 1970s, when it lent itself to representing (apart from itself) Viet Nam, then the US's most recent expansionist attempt.

Table 8.

Decadal Frequencies of Foreign Films Listed According to Country of Origin.

| | |
|-------|---|
| 1930s | US (20 films) |
| 1940s | US (9); Japan (1) |
| 1950s | US (7); Japan (1) |
| 1960s | US (11); France (1?) |
| 1970s | US (18); France & Italy (1 ea.) |
| 1980s | US (13); Australia (5); France, Germany, HK, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK (1 ea.) |
| 1990s | US (16); Australia (2); HK, Italy, Japan, Turkey (1 ea.) |
| 2000s | US (8); Korea, Israel, Italy, Singapore (2 ea.); Germany, HK, Japan, UK (1 ea.) |
| 2010s | US, Korea (3 ea.); UK (1) |

Of more than incidental significance would be the other countries that also paid attention, as it were, to the Philippines. During the World War II and early Cold War decades, it was (understandably) Japan, which regarded itself as the “Co-Prosperity Sphere’s” rightful ally, asserting its vision by displacing the Western powers in the East and Southeast Asian region. In the 1960s, France had its otherwise unrelated *Adieu Philippine* New Wave title, but by the 1970s onward, various other countries were taking the cue from the profitability of American B-movie productions made in the Philippines, encouraged by the incentives provided by the Marcos dictatorship and the subsequent interest in the people-power phenomenon. By the current millennium, foreign countries did not have to shoot film projects in the Philippines in order to

feature Filipino characters or themes, since the population had become increasingly diasporic. Equally as enthusiastic as the US during the current decade, for example, is Korea – which had displaced Japan as the source of the most number of visitors (as well as migrants) to the Philippines.

A related observation would be the participation of so-called auteurs, or major players in US and global film practice (Table 9). Again, the listing is necessarily casual and incomplete, but it nevertheless enables the country to claim to being one of the most active in terms of attracting Western talent, outside of the Western (i.e., non-Atlantic) hemisphere. As mentioned earlier, the Philippines in fact had taken a hand in propagating at least two US film trends, the “Blood Island” horror films of the 1960s and the women-in-prison-islands films of the early 1970s; each trend in turn influenced two mainland film movements – the Viet Nam War films in the first case, and the blaxploitation films in the second case. The patterns in the imaging of the Philippines had undertaken at least three perceptible (and historically determined) shifts on three levels: from site of peril to source of assistance; from colonial to global (if not Asian); and from identifiability to increasing spectrality via the OFW phenomenon.

Table 9.

World Cinema Auteurs (Directors and Performers) who Participated in Film Productions in the Philippines and/or Involving Filipinos.

| Directors | Actors |
|--|---|
| Fritz Lang Francis Coppola Ann Hui Oliver Stone Roger Corman Jonathan Demme John Sayles Vilgot Sjoman Peter Weir | John Ashley Tom Selleck Timothy Bottoms Marlon Brando Chris Cooper Pam Grier John Saxon Martin & Charlie Sheen |

Problematizations & Possibilities

The always-already globalized nature of the Philippines’ historical experience may be regarded as a source of complications that require their own specific measures. In terms of the contemporary boom in so-called independent digital production, we can bring up what may be termed “foreign attraction,” or the tendency of Filipino talents to appeal to foreign venues rather than to local audiences – a strategy that was once essential during the period of martial-law dictatorship, since local artists could use

foreign acclaim to legitimize the screening of films considered critical of the regime and/or the system it represented. The example or support of visiting foreign film practitioners encouraged this willingness (or eagerness) to submit local product to foreign festivals, but with the dismantling of most dictatorial systems of oppression, the “enemy” of local filmmakers has been reconfigured, from government functionaries who seek to implement politically expedient policies aimed at maximizing the positive images of people in power, to distribution and exhibition monopolists allegedly concerned with maximizing the profits that only mainstream productions could guarantee; in both instances, the local audience is the sector deprived of an opportunity to be provided with a wider range of available products. In fact the current “foreign attraction” trend is more worrisome, since several of the “indie” practitioners present themselves as talents rejected by their own people, in effect slandering a population unable to make its preferences and defenses better known and understood.

Cultural institutions similarly have the potential to contribute positively to this state of affairs. The government’s self-imposed limits (duly observed in academic institutions) proceed from the standard high-art and pro-literary disavowal, if not condemnation, of marginal products, including B-films and other products generally categorized as trash or detritus. Concomitant with this is the relative absence of contextualization in local exhibition, with analogue- or digital-media commentary available primarily to young middle-class audience members. One consequence of this lack in film-culture orientation is the absence of negative imaging in foreign film-texts – presumably a positive consequence of the cultural elite’s abhorrence of “bad” depictions of the Philippines and Filipinos. This is problematic and related to the problem regarding marginalized products, which have a tendency to present a wider variety of images, positive and/or negative.

These problems may be affected, though not necessarily solved, by certain observable trends in film production. Because of the increasing affordability of filmmaking equipment, more and more film-texts can be produced; also, the increasing accessibility of the worldwide web means that, along with the expected complaints about piracy, films can be uploaded and made available without having to go through the difficult process of commercial distribution. In order to prepare the audience for an appreciation of a wider range of possibilities, new film historiography should be promoted, of the type that can tackle history from below, overseas history, history of images, narratives of the marginalized, etc. Finally, elite institutions in government, education, and media can be challenged to develop, if possible, a national aesthetics, in order to provide a missing dimension whenever the idea of “Philippine cinema” is advanced.

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End Notes

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[1] In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault (1977) called for a “search for descent,” which he defined as “not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (p. 147).

[2] Several references to WIP films acknowledge the primacy of Philippine-set films, including a series made by Roger Corman (see Schubart [2007], p. 327, footnote 6 for Chapter 1). Publicity material for Stephanie Rothman’s *Terminal Island* (1973) – which came out later in the same year as *Black Mama, White Mama* (1973) and featured Tom Selleck, who had by then already starred in another Philippine-shot movie, Hollingsworth Morse’s *Daughters of Satan* (1972) – was in fact highly reminiscent of *Black Mama, White Mama* (see Figure 4). [Thanks to Brecht Andersch for mentioning Stephanie Rothman and *Terminal Island*.]



Figure 4. Comparison of publicity materials for *Black Mama, White Mama* (Eddie Romero, 1973) and *Terminal Island* (Stephanie Rothman, 1973).

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